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INTRODUCTION

RITUAL RESPONSES TO PLURALITY AND PLURALISM

The origin of this book

The studies collected in this volume were presented as papers at an international conference in Leiden University on 14 and 15 January 1994. Except for Prof. Joseph Sadan, of Tel Aviv University, and Prof. André Droogers, of the Free University at Amsterdam, all the presenters were members of an inter-university research group, based in Leiden since 1992. It was established in order to study the role of religions in situations of religious pluralism. In what manner did religions respond to the presence of other religions in their societies, in ancient as well as in modern times? The need of a comparative study of the reactions of religious communities to religious plurality and pluralism[1] in diverse times and places, of their roles in these encounters, and of the changes these situations produced in them, had been brought home forcefully to this research group by the upsurge of religious movements which have pursued the reform of their societies as well as their religions with varying **[4]** degrees of militancy in the past two decades; not to mention the recent 'ethnic cleansing' atrocities perpetrated in the name of religious differences.

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[1] The research group only used the term 'pluralism' in its discussions before and during the conference, stipulating its meaning in its programmatic statement as: *the co-existence of two or more communities of believers with a different religion in a specific geo-historical setting.* That situation of co-existence of religions is found in many societies in the past as well as in the present. Platvoet, in his two essays in this volume, however, terms the *situation* of the co-existence of two or more religions within a society 'religious plurality'. He reserves the term 'religious pluralism' for that cultural and/or religious *ideology*, or attitude, which positively welcomes the encounter of religions. This mentality is typical of community religions, of the most recent religions, and of a recent [liberal] transformation of the major religions of the doctrinal, missionary type. That receptive attitude is, however, traditionally utterly foreign to 'orthodox' religions of that expansive type. They fostered, and foster, in their believers an attitude of competitive, if not aggressively militant, combat of other religions and reform of 'deviant religiosity' in situations of religious plurality by their exclusive claims to doctrinal truth and their missionary nature. They do so also in order to strengthen the identities, group cohesion and boundaries of their religious and/or ethnic communities. That attitude of watching over boundaries by the strict regulation and severe limitation of interaction *ad extra* is also a marked cultural trait, and ideology, of many 'plural', vertically or horizontally segmented societies. A further distinction, between (situations of) internal and external religious plurality, will be made below when the essays collected in the third part of this volume are discussed.

One project in the programme of this research group was specifically designed to contribute to the development of theory in an area of common interest to all the members of this research group. It was meant to serve as *trait d'union* between the other research projects which the members pursued within the programme. The aim of this project was to study how ritual, ritual injunctions and ritual categories were used for demarcating a religious community's boundaries and identity *vis-à-vis* other religions in situations of (religious) plurality. The conference and this volume of essays are the outcome of this joint research project.

The studies presented deal with a subject that has been severely neglected in the study of religions. The course of mankind's history has mainly been one of steadily increasing communication between its societies, both in amicable and profitable ways by the exchange of goods and ideas, and in hostile and destructive ones by prejudice, discrimination, plunder and war. Yet students of religions[2] have for a long time tended to ignore the role of religion in the encounters between peoples, nations, and religious communities. The major reasons for this omission were, firstly, their legitimate but virtually exclusive, and therefore one-sided, concentration on the correct representation of the insider views of the believers expressed in particular in scriptures and other religiously inspired texts;[3] secondly, their preoccupation with religions as well-articulated, structured systems of belief representations (or 'doctrines'); and thirdly, an ideologically inspired aversion against, and fear of, social-scientific, 'reductionist' explanations.[4]

Due to these descriptivist and systematizing bends, and fear of explanation, these scholars of religions paid little attention to the study of the ecological, social and other 'contexts' of a religion. That research may take two forms: study of the ways in which a religion has been shaped by its contexts, and that of the manners in which a religion has moulded its contexts by its functions, 'religious' **[5]** as well as 'secular',[5] in them. It follows that most of these scholars of religions have shown little interest in the study of the part a religion played in the shaping of identities in a person, group, people, or nation; in the functions of ritual behaviour in the social life of a group; in the rituals of boundary maintenance between ethnic groups, peoples, nations and societies with different identities, customs, cultures and religions which share a common public arena but are bent upon keeping their identities distinct and their communities separate; and in the processes of boundary dissolution and integration when there is no need or desire to keep groups apart or beliefs different.

It is only recently that this primarily notional approach to religions as systems of belief representations has begun to be complemented and corrected by ethological and contextual ones. The first takes religious behaviour as the central object of research; the second studies it as part of the believers' wider

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[2]   By which are meant here those in the historical and comparative disciplines of *Religionswissenschaft* as practised mainly in Faculties of the Theology in continental Europe and in Departments of Religious Studies in Faculties of Arts in the Anglo-Saxon world.

[3]   And also in myths, liturgies, devotional acts, iconographic and other arts, architecture, the organisation of the communities of believers, interviews, etc.

[4]   Cf. Platvoet 1994

[5]   The distinction between the 'religious' and the 'non-religious', or secular, functions of a religion may be made readily in modern western societies on the basis of the historical processes of institutional differentiation and separation which developed in the past few centuries and more recently in most other modern societies world-wide. That distinction can, however, be made only analytically, and not substantively, in many other societies and historical periods because religion is/was not a separate institution in them, set apart from e.g. the prevailing ecology, economy, social structure, political order, etc.

interests and goals, i.e. as not merely cult and devotion towards postulated beings, but as also part of social, political, economical, legal and other behaviours, including encounters, religious and secular, with outsiders and their communities and religions, and a religion's reactions to those encounters, and its reactions to internal religious diversity.

Its structure
Five of the papers presented at the Leiden conference describe responses of religions to situations of religious plurality. They deal with processes of change internal in religions in response to the situation of religious plurality, internal or external,[6] in which they find themselves. These mainly descriptive papers by van der Toorn, Beck, Kaptein, van Koningsveld, and Wiegers,[7] form the third part of this volume. Van der Toorn's article deals with a religious group in ancient Israelite religion; the other four are islamological papers. Three other papers deal, wholly or in part, with the ritualization of the encounter between religions. They are the also mainly **[6]** descriptive essays by Nugteren, Sadan, and Platvoet that form part two.[8]

They are preceded, in part one, by five articles of a mainly theoretical nature. They are Platvoet's on ritual theory;[9] Snoek's on the conditions under which a group may feel a strong or weak, or feel no need at all to demarcate itself from other groups;[10] Belier's on the absence of that urge among Australian Aborigines; Drooger's on a model for the study of the interaction among religions in a plural society;[11] and ter Haar's, on African Christian communities in the Netherlands which do not wish to demarcate themselves from Western Christian communities.[12]

Part I
Ritual theory, identity, and religious plurality

Platvoet, in his contribution to part I, reviews ritual theory in anthropology of religion in order to develop an operational definition of 'ritual' suitable for heuristic and analytical purposes in situations of religious plurality. His definition differs from the one the research group had adopted as its common instrument. That stipulated 'ritual' as any sequence of customary symbolic actions; a 'rite' as a customary symbolic action; 'customary' as referring to the standardization of symbolic actions through repetition in social interaction and their being learnt in the processes of socialisation; 'symbolic' as expressing and conveying meanings from a sender to a receiver, and therefore always entailing communication; and 'action' as comprising both verbal and non-verbal modes. In this inclusive definition 'ritual' was not, as scholars of religions usually do, restricted to religious rites, but expanded to include secular ceremonies as well.

On the basis of a critical study of the development of theories on ritual in anthropology of religion since Robertson Smith and Durkheim, Platvoet first develops a 'synthetic' operational definition of

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[6]   This distinction is explained below on page **[14]**/11-12.
[7]   Cf. van der Toorn 1996; Beck 1996; Kaptein 1996; van Koningsveld 1996; Wiegers 1996
[8]   Cf. Nugteren 1996; Sadan 1996; Platvoet 1996b
[9]   Cf. Platvoet 1996a
[10] Cf. Belier 1996
[11] Cf. Droogers 1996

ritual by delineating thirteen analytical dimensions of ritual,[13] and then constructs from some of them another operational definition for the analysis of rituals of confrontation between religions that meet in contests for political power. He defines 'ritual' provisionally as:

> an ordered sequence of stylised social behaviour that is different from ordinary interaction [between members of a society] by its alerting qualities by means of which it focuses its audience's, and at times a wider public's, attention onto itself as a special event at a special place and/or time and with a special message. It does this by the use of appropriate consonant complexes of dense core symbols specific to each culture. It achieves by them not only the smooth transmission of a multitude of messages – some overt, **[7]** many covert – and stimuli through the redundant transformations of the symbols used in multimedia performance; but also, in often unnoticed ways, the usually latent, and occasionally manifest, political and other purposes of those who perform a ritual, *ad intra* - within corporate groups -, as well as *ad extra* and *ad intra* in situations of plurality and pluralism.[14]

Contrary to recent trends in anthropology of ritual, Platvoet sees ritual not only as a hidden, and for that very reason, effective instrument of power, or, as was held in earlier theory, as the expression of social structure only, or again, as in earliest theory, as restricted to religious and 'magical' acts. He contends that apart from all these, ritual is also communication of both implicit and explicit messages, and may have overt in addition to its covert strategic goals. He also stresses that ritual is not necessarily customary: it may be a sequence of symbolic actions performed in a unique event designed and constructed for a particular purpose. He draws these 'anti-Durkheimian' conclusions from his analysis of the historical data which he presents in his contribution on the Ayodhya events.[15]

Snoek's contribution does not, it is true, deal with encounters between different religions, but between Masonic Grand Lodges,[16] and among Pentecostal churches,[17] i.e. between modern Western religious groups which share many similarities. On the basis of findings of group dynamics research, Snoek formulates a general hypothesis which may prove valid for any process of shaping, marking, maintaining and increasing the distinctiveness of a particular group's identity, including that of religious communities in situations of religious plurality. It suggests that the need and urge to mark out a group as different and distinct, will vary in proportion to its degree of similarity to other religious communities or denominations of the same type around it. The greater the similarity, the more urgent the need for demarcation from competing groups by stressing a particular, and in itself often arbitrary and insignificant, difference.[18] As in commercials, a religious group's confidence needs to be unshaken that it excels in at least one 'crucial' aspect, for it not to lose the members it has within its fold and to draw in others. Snoek states that conflicts between groups emerge because they are similar, and that they increase when they become more similar; but conflicts rarely occur between groups that are utterly dissimilar.

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[12] Cf. ter Haar 1996
[13] Cf. Platvoet 1996a: 27-37
[14] Cf. Platvoet 1996a: 41-42
[15] Cf. Platvoet 1996a: 38; 1996b: 213-221
[16] Cf. Snoek 1996: 55-61
[17] Cf. Snoek 1995: 61-64
[18] Cf. Snoek 1996: 53-55

However, when groups become, or are perceived to become, so similar as to be almost identical, they merge because the conflict of interests between them has collapsed.[19]

The chapter by Belier describes a case, which may be interpreted as support for Snoek's hypothesis as well as seriously qualifying it. It is important also because it describes a negative case: that of groups **[8]** which are, and see themselves, as socially and culturally distinct, and which regularly interact, also in religious rituals, but do not use religious ritual for expressing their distinctive identities nor for maintaining boundaries between them. The Australian Aboriginal societies - the Murngin[20] and Arunta[21] - analysed by Belier, were no strangers to war and violence, as is evidenced by the fierce Murngin fights on the 'matrimonial battle field' and the Arunta practice of ritualised revenge. Nor were they without some measure of group demarcation, particularly at the local level, through localized totemic clans with the Murngin, which were grouped into two exogamic moieties at the supra-local level, and through localized, patrilineal totemistic groups with the Arunta, grouped at the supra-local level in two groups of each two moieties. However, whereas war and violence divided the clans, rituals, which were often in some manner inter-group in character, united them.[22] Moreover, these communities struck a balance between division and union by allotting a particular period of the year to war and violence, and another to ritual. The general picture that emerges seems to show that rituals were, like articles of trade, in great demand and spread quickly among many local groups over a wide area.[23]

If we confront the unifying effect of Australian Aboriginal rituals with Snoek's hypothesis, two opposite reasons, in terms of Snoek's graph, may be adduced to account for this odd state of affairs: the Aboriginal communities were either so similar or so dissimilar as to have no need for the use of religious ritual as separator and identity marker. These theoretical solutions would leave Snoek's hypothesis unassailed. In view of the weak boundaries of many local Aboriginal communities and their integration into some sort of supra-local unity, e.g. among the Murngin that of belonging to one of two totemic moieties, the first argument, of extreme similarity undoing the need for demarcation, would seem to hold. However, other ethnographic data seem to suggest also that degrees of similarity existed between these societies, which theoretically ought to provoke the need for demarcation in them, such as the differentiation of the exogamic moieties by (fictional) 'languages' that were used as emblems for marking groups as different. The crux, and solution, of this problem seems to lie in the fact that the varieties of Aboriginal religion, cults and rituals were not used, in pre- and early colonial times, as instruments of competition in a market for scarce goods, such as women, but were themselves a scarce good also, and were, therefore, eagerly sought and bought.[24] Their religions being neither orthodox nor even orthoprax but in constant change through eager adoption of, and adaptation to, new inventions, were not capable to **[9]** serve separating goals. Nor was there any felt need to use them for boundary maintenance, as the need for unity was more pressing than the need for separation; besides, more effective means were available for that purpose whenever that need arose.

This ties in with remarks made by Belier in his conclusion about the developments of an Australian Aboriginal religion - in the singular! - in recent decades by the Aboriginal liberation movement. In the

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19 Cf. Snoek 1966: 66
20 Cf. Belier 1996: 70-78
21 Cf. Belier 1996: 78-84
22 Cf. Belier 1996: 77, 83
23 Cf. Belier 1996: 87-88

colonial situation, the need for Aboriginal religion as demarcation was felt in particular by white anthropologists sympathetic with the cause of the Aboriginals, some of who began to mix description with prescription.[25] That call for the demarcation of a collective Aboriginal ethnic identity, as a minority which suffered a two century long history of oppression by the Christian white majority, has recently caused some Aboriginal leaders (in particular those trained in Western ways and thought and able to fight it with its own weapons) to move towards a unified Aboriginal religion to serve their cultural and political purpose of separating a collective Aboriginal ethnic identity from the white community. One may, however, argue that Belier's statement that 'the religious definition of social differences is a result of colonial processes'[26] represents too narrow a view, although he is clearly correct in asserting that the religious definition of identity is 'not inherent in our humanity'.[27] It is merely one of the cultural options available to humankind, albeit the one that has been used widely, in very different ways, by many societies during most periods of the history of **hu**mankind. Belier's contribution proves that the Western colonization of Australia is also one of them.

André Droogers' contribution to this volume is important for yet another reason. He presents a conceptual framework designed to serve as an heuristic and analytical instrument in the study of religious pluralism – or plurality, to use Platvoet's term. This model is meant to help us discover the different ways in which religions respond, and may be expected to respond, to the situations of religious plurality in which they exist. Their reactions are, Droogers proposes, the outcome of the interaction between the three dimensions of a religion in a situation of plurality: its external dimension, its internal one, and the 'supernatural' one.[28] The external dimension pertains to the inclusive or exclusive positions which religions take *vis-à-vis* the religions they encounter in their society and the wider world: whether they see them as complementary, or adopt a polemical attitude towards them. The attitude a religious community takes to other religions is intrinsically related, Droogers contends, to its 'inner dimension': the relations prevailing among its members, **[10]** including the religious specialists, if any; and to its 'supernatural' dimension: the relations which the believers assume to exist between them and the meta-empirical beings which they believe exist and affect their lives. The core relationships in each of these three groups: external, internal, and 'supernatural', are also determined by the religious group's conception of power and meaning. And these again are not unrelated, because power entails, in part, the control of meaning in a religious community.[29]

Droogers specifies how power and interpretation are interdependent in each of the three dimensions of his model. In the external dimension, the definition who qualifies for membership of the community, and who does not, is not only a matter of the beliefs shared, but also of the relationships of sub- and super-ordination postulated, or not postulated, by their beliefs, and about who has the right to grant admission, which is an exercise of power. Moreover, even non-members may find themselves dominated by a religious majority which excludes minorities. In the internal dimension, power is at work when hierarchical offices are allocated; these appointments are legitimised by the beliefs shared and may be

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[24]   Cf. Belier 1996: 87
[25]   Cf. Belier 1996: 88
[26]   Cf. Belier 1996: 88
[27]   Cf. Belier 1996: 88
[28]   Cf. Droogers 1996: 92
[29]   Cf. Droogers 1996: 92-93

subverted from that same basis. If a strict hierarchy prevails internally, there is no room for pluralism, neither *ad intra* nor *ad extra*. Droogers suggests that when external pluralism is normal and not problematic, it is an extension of internal pluralism. In the 'supernatural' dimension, power is present in both the submission of believers to the unseen beings they believe to exist, and in their attempts to 'use' them for pragmatic and strategic purposes. The intertwining of power and meaning is reflected in the shared doctrines that provide the basis for both the submissive and the utilitarian attitudes towards the postulated beings. Religions with a heavy emphasis on submissiveness, assume an exclusiv**ist** position in situations of religious plurality, and it follows that utilitarian religions take tolerant, inclusive positions.[30]

Droogers proves the utility of his complex instrument by providing finely textured analyses of the attitudes towards plurality of Umbanda and Pentecostalism, two religions which are very popular in Brazil, which is a society that may serve, as perhaps no other, as a laboratory for the study of plurality and pluralism.[31] Droogers concludes with a plea, firstly to the social scientists to include the supernatural dimensions in their analyses, because it contains explanatory power for the 'terrestrial' processes of community building, identity construction, and power play; and secondly to scholars of religions to accept that the study of religions must include not only description but also explanation.[32]

Gerrie ter Haar's contribution is based on insights culled from Van Gennep's description of the tripartite structure of rites of passage, which Turner terms 'life crisis rituals', and his elaboration of it in his theory of liminality and ritual.[33] She applies these ideas to the situation and aspirations of the communities of Ghanaian Christians in Amsterdam, many of who are illegal immigrants.[34] In their liminal state between their origins in West Africa and their incorporation into Dutch society, these Ghanaian-led churches have no desire or use for demarcation from other Dutch Christian communities. On the contrary, they have an urgent need for communion with the Dutch churches, although this is often refused to them. The demarcation, in this case, is imposed from the outside. The Ghanaian communities stress their identity as Christians and – in the terms of Snoek's graph – their 'collapsing' similarity and identity with the Dutch Christian churches. But the latter select African-ness as the hallmark of these immigrant churches, thereby stressing their dissimilarity from the Dutch churches. That enables the latter to impose upon the former the demarcation 'African' and legitimise their keeping these immigrant Christian communities at a distance. They are considered so dissimilar as not to qualify for communion with Dutch churches. The African-led churches are thus driven into a double exile: away from their roots in Ghana and unwelcome in the communion of the Christian churches in the Netherlands.[35]

Ter Haar's analysis is not without a polemical sting. Following Turner, she explains the wish for integration of these churches by the interstitial position of their members in Dutch secular society. Many of their members are either under threat of expulsion as illegal residents or, if legal, unwelcome as black aliens. The marginalisation imposed on them at the secular level is neatly reflected in their exclusion at the religious level. The policy of the Dutch churches is a copy of that of the Dutch state and the European Community; and both are approved by the Dutch nation. By her innovative use of van

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30 Cf. Droogers 1996: 93-97
31 Cf. Droogers 1996: 97-110
32 Cf. Droogers 1996: 111-112
33 Cf. Ter Haar 1996: 116-117
34 Cf. Ter Haar 1996: 117-120

Gennep and Turner, ter Haar shows that the rituals of these communities serve as coping mechanisms, both at the individual and group levels, in the face of the legal, economic and religious liminality imposed upon them. It creates a strong sense of *communitas ad intra* - for which the need is understandably great and to which the members of these churches are naturally highly receptive - and a strong desire for *communitas ad extra*.[36]

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Part II
The ritualization of the encounter

In the second part, three separate studies deal with very different examples of the ritualisation of encounters between religions. The first, that of Nugteren, deals with an accommodative case, namely the rituals, by Buddhists of many different 'denominations', and Hindus, at the tree under which the Buddha is believed to have attained enlightenment. The second, by Sadan, deals with a remarkable exception to the fairly tolerant practice of **the** 'protection' Islam normally granted to non-Muslim religious communities in its territories. In the third, Platvoet shows that religious militancy may not be foreign to a religion generally regarded as the very paradigm of tolerance and accommodation.

Albertina Nugteren's paper begins with an examination of tree rituals in India and then describes those in Bodhgaya for the tree under which the Buddha Gotama is believed to have achieved liberating insight. Buddhists from all over the world, representing all its denominations, travel to Bodhgaya to circumambulate it in their distinctive apparels, venerate it in diverse other ways, and built their temples and pilgrim hostels around it.[37] And Hindus also come. Having performed their rituals for their ancestors at Gaya, a Hindu place of pilgrimage near Bodhgaya, many include a visit to Bodhgaya for a number of reasons. One is the incorporation of the Buddha into the Hindu pantheon as Vishnu's ninth *avatara* ('descent'). Another is that these two holy places form one cultic complex for them with strong morphological similarities in their ritual elements: at Gaya they circumambulate its 'immortality tree', and at Bodhgaya the tree of the Buddha's enlightenment; at Gaya they worship the footsteps of Vishnu, and at Bodhgaya those of the Buddha. Lastly, Bodhgaya had been in the care of a local Hindu *mahant* ('abbot') since the 18th century,[38] and has several statues of Hindu deities and a stone altar which have all been placed under a secondary tree now but stood under the very tree of the Buddha's enlightenment in former times. They still receive regular offerings and brief worship from Hindu pilgrims.[39]

Despite the general atmosphere of tolerance for the whole gamut of Buddhist denominational ritual and traditional Hindu worship, a touch of intolerance is not absent: Ambedkarite Indian Buddhists, recent converts from low castes, are inclined to lay monopolistic claims to Bodhgaya and not to tolerate Hindu worship of the tree of **[13]** enlightenment with sweetened water and milk, for fear that these

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[35]   Cf. Ter Haar 1996: 132-135
[36]   Cf. Ter Haar 1996: 135-142
[37]   Cf. Nugteren 1996: 150-159
[38]   It entitles him to full membership of the committee responsible for the upkeep of Bodhgaya (cf. Nugteren 1996: 153, 156, 158, 159).
[39]   Cf. Nugteren 1996: 156-161

liquids will cause the roots of the tree to rot.[40] Evidence, perhaps, that the communalist tensions of the last decade, described by Platvoet, have seeped through to even this place of pluralist ritual.

The second paper in this part is Sadan's contribution on the distinctive signs, colours and items of dress which Muslim authorities forced the non-Muslims to wear, or forbade them to wear, in order to set them apart from their Arab overlords, and in an extreme case to humiliate them. This happened in Yemen, in the Arabian peninsula, in the late 17th century when the authorities of the time, reacting to a messianic movement among the Jews of Yemen which they took as a revolt, deprived them of their status as 'people of the protection' for some time, and forced them, as a group, by legal decree to act as latrine cleaners – a humiliating job which the Jewish community assigned to its poor in return for pay. Sadan summarizes the controversy among Muslim jurists in Yemen over this decree in the 19th century.[41]

In the third paper, Platvoet examines the 'rituals of confrontation' in respect of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya, as part of a politically successful strategy of increasing 'communal' strife between Hindus and Muslims in India in the past decade. That policy, developed by some of a conglomerate of Hindu organisations, collectively known as 'the RSS family', aimed at de-secularising India and turning it into a Hindu nation in which the alleged privileges of communities professing a religion of non-Indian origin would be severely curtailed.[42] Platvoet describes how new Hindu rituals were developed for use in the electoral mobilization campaigns by RSS-related organisations. He shows that these rituals had the unifying effects *ad intra* and the divisive effects *ad extra* for which they were designed. Ritual may, therefore, also be non-customary symbolic behaviour in pursuit of overt political goals. It follows that ritual should be defined primarily from performance and pragmatic perspectives, as behaviour which is traditionalising but not necessarily traditional. On the basis of his analysis of the Ayodhya data, he defines 'ritual' as:

> collective, interactive, expressive, communicative, symbolic and performative behaviour with both customary, innovative and traditionalising properties, which uses multi-media forms of expression including aesthetic stylisation and theatrical performance, directed implicitly or explicitly towards the achievement of strategic goals which are often integrative in nature but may also have, and be meant to have, explosive effects upsetting the balance of power in a given society.[43]

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Part III
Responses to internal and external religious plurality

The third part of this volume comprises five essays. They treat the responses of certain religions to two distinct situations of religious plurality: 'internal' and 'external'. 'External religious plurality' is the situation of the actual co-existence of different religions within a particular society or in some wider context, such as that created by modern communication technologies, by which they may be perceived

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40   Cf. Nugteren 1996: 154, 156, 158, 163
41   Cf. Saddan 1996
42   Cf Platvoet 1996b: 188-189, 201-213
43   Cf. Platvoet 1996b: 220

as co-existing in some effective manner. It is the situation in which religions may meet each other on a more or less equal basis, as independent cultural institutions, each with its own community of believers and spheres of influence. 'Internal religious plurality', however, respects the situation of the prevailing diversity of beliefs, cults and practices within a religious community, i.e. among its members, or in the society, or societies, in which that religion happens to hold a dominant position. Internal plurality is the normal state of affairs in 'community religions', the largest category of human religions. It comprises all the religions of humankind before the first millennium BCE ('before the common era'), and all those that developed since then which are co-extensive with a particular society and did not, or do not, articulate their beliefs into a unified doctrinal system nor espouse claims that their doctrine is exclusively true and that of other religions, or most other religions, false. The attitude that prevails in these 'community religions' is the pluralist ideology of religious receptivity and adaptability. This attitude has also become a mark of humanity's most recent religions. Though they do articulate their beliefs, they are highly synthetic, use revelation again, and do not usually hold exclusivist positions.[44]

Internal plurality is, however, a problem in religions of the doctrinal kind that espouse exclusive claims to the validity of their beliefs. They do not cultivate an attitude of religious pluralism. This numerically tiny category – the three so called 'world religions' – entered the scene of the history of religions since the middle of the first millennium BCE. They reject as idolatrous the religious beliefs and practices embraced and practised by many, indeed by most of their (in their eyes nominal) adherents who do not conform to their orthodoxies. The tolerance of these religions towards such perceived deviations varied, and varies, in periods and places. They might, and may, condescendingly tolerate them as the ineradicable superstitions of the ignorant. Or they might, and may, actively **[15]** pursue their reformation by religious education. Or again, they might, or may, forcefully suppress them. Internal plurality, therefore, respects the ways in which an 'orthodox' religion, which has achieved a dominant or even monopolistic position in a society or number of societies, deals with its own internal variation in ('orthodox', 'less orthodox' and 'non-orthodox') beliefs and practices.

A very common source of this variation is the adherence of some, or often most, of a religion's believers to beliefs and practices proper to one, or several, religions that were indigenous in that area before the current 'orthodox' religion gained its position of dominance. Internal religious plurality, therefore, often respects the 'leftovers' from the situation of external religious plurality which that religion found in a particular area and society when it entered them, and which it has tolerated or been unable to eradicate.

The third part of this book consists of four papers, by van der Toorn, Beck, Kaptein, and Wiegers, which deal with case studies of religions coping with internal plurality; and one by van Koningsveld which describes the symbolic means used to resist the 'encroachment' of external plurality.

Van der Toorn's paper describes a case in the crucial period of transition in the history of the religion of Israel in Palestine between 1200 BCE, when internal religious plurality prevailed as the normal situation and pluralism was the dominant attitude, to the earliest emergence of orthodoxy around 400 BCE. It is the case of a kinship group, known as 'the house of the sons of Jehonadab ben Rechab', that protested in the late ninth century for political reasons against the official policy of religious pluralism in the state of North Israel by adopting a nomadic style of life in an agrarian and partially urbanizing

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[44] Cf. Platvoet 1993

society. Having lost its high position in the political establishment, the group protested against its fall from grace by observing a rule imposed upon them by their apical ancestor that forbade them to live in houses, to reside in towns, to cultivate vineyards and fields, and to drink wine. By adopting this lifestyle they condemned themselves to the status of foreigners in the land of Israel. By the time their self-imposed isolation had become a self-fulfilling prophecy and they an insignificant group, their nativist, puritanical and impotent protest had become a marker of their group identity.[45] That emblem was, however, so stirring a symbol of fidelity that Jeremiah used it to chastise the Judaeans of his time for their infidelity to their Lord. Van der Toorn compares the Rechabite lifestyle substantively with youth counter-cultures prevalent in our own times and society, and functionally with the use of archaic vestiary codes by certain elite groups, such as **[16]** academics and ecclesiastics, as a means of ritually affirming their high-ranking positions in society.[46] Within the field of contemporary moral and religious movements, the Rechabites also invite comparison with puritanical abstention movements, such vegetarians, AA, and Moral Rearmament, or with religious ones, such as the Watch Tower Society and other millenarian movements. The nativism of the Rechabites bears comparison not only with the numerous prophetic movements of modern times which Köbben defined as movements of social protest,[47] but also with the nativism of reform movements within the major doctrinal religions which usually aim to restore a religion's original purity by a 'return to its source', its earliest period, or its 'canonical' scriptures.

Beck's contribution analyses the compromise which Indonesia's largest Islamic reform movement, the *Muhammadiyah*, has struck between its reformist ideals and two major contingencies of its history: firstly, the intimate ties of its founder and most of its leaders with the court of the Sultan of Yogyakarta; and secondly, the political and cultural need of Javanese Muslims in general, and the Sultan's court in particular, of a ritual expression of Javanese Muslim identity. The most important expression of that identity is the major court ritual of *Garebeg Maulud*, dating from the early 17th century when kingship passed into the hands of a Muslim dynasty of doubtful origin. It is an Islamicized transformation of an earlier Hindu-Javanese kingship ritual in which Muslim beliefs about the Prophet as the perfect man, were merged with Javanese beliefs in the king as the semi-divine, perfect being at the centre of the universe. It was further integrated into official Islam by being celebrated on the Birthday of the Prophet (*Mawlid al-nabi*), and by the introduction into it of processions to, and recitations and blessings in, the grand mosque situated at the edge of the court area.[48] The central part, albeit ritually somewhat disguised, is, however, a highly elaborate royal *slametan* (community meal) in which the Sultan himself is the central officiant, offering himself and his house in the shape of five rice mounds[49] as sustenance to the people and the court, and receiving, as the centre of their universe, from them their unquestioning loyalty in return.[50] It is this part that cannot be reconciled with the demands of an Islam of pristine purity such as the *Muhammadiyah* intends to establish in Indonesia. This movement **[17]** has not, however, condemned it as *bidᶜa*, unlawful 'innovation', *khurafa*, 'superstition', or *shirk*, 'idolatry'. Beck

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45   Cf. van der Toorn 1996: 229-252
46   Cf. van der Toorn 1996: 253
47   Cf. Köbben 1964a
48   Cf. Beck 1996: 262-271
49   Two of which are shaped after the ancient Hindu Shaiva symbols of [male] *linga* and [female] *yoni*, the *linga* representing the Sultan himself and the *yoni* his spouse and consorts.
50   Cf. Beck 1996: 276

holds that the ritual has remained unscathed for two reasons: its centripetal, consolidating function for Javanese Muslim society, and the inability of the leaders of the *Muhammadiyah* to cut their ties with the court because it is at the centre of their world.[51]

Kaptein's contribution deals with a different type of tension between a local Muslim custom in Indonesia, deemed less acceptable to orthodox Islam, and its standard form propagated from within the heartland of Islam. Kaptein describes two forms of circumcision which date back to pre-Islamic times and were practised, after Islam had arrived, by many Indonesian Muslims, a number of non-Muslim Indonesian peoples, and also by some converts to Christianity. They are the form of circumcision in which part of the foreskin is removed, and the incision method whereby the foreskin is cleft but not removed, the *glans* however being exposed in both cases.[52] Starting his investigations in the late 19th century, Kaptein recounts the gradual replacement of this incision method in Indonesia by another form of circumcision in which the foreskin is partially or completely removed. An important role in this transition was played by the Indonesian Muslims who stayed for long periods in Mecca in the latter part of the 19th century for study purposes and asked for *fatwas*[53] in the matter of the licitness of circumcision by incision. They probably did so because their marriages into Meccan families caused their different manner of circumcision to become a matter of some dispute.[54] Kaptein discusses ten such *fatwas* and concludes that cleavage of the foreskin was not acceptable: anyone refusing to undergo full circumcision was pronounced a sinner and therefore incapable of acting as a woman's legal guardian at her marriage or as a witness to a marriage.[55] To avoid the grave moral, ritual, social, and even eschatological consequences of this state of impurity, many Indonesian Muslim residents of Mecca were circumcised a second time. As many thousands of pilgrims from Indonesia visited Mecca every year, this pronouncement soon began to be known in Muslim areas in Indonesia.[56] By 1920, incision of the foreskin had become quite rare in parts of the country where it had once been normal practice, and today it seems to have disappeared completely. Apart from the increasing pressures from scripturalist and reformist movements in Indonesia, Kaptein also mentions three other factors that contributed considerably to the **[18]** disappearance of the practice of incision: the medicalisation of circumcision on grounds of hygiene; its collectivization; and its centralisation in specialised clinics.[57]

If circumcision is an important identity marker of Muslims, the ritual use of Arabic, the language of the Qur'ân, is an even more important one. It is the required language of worship and learning throughout the 'abode of Islam', *ᶜajami*, 'heathen language[s]' being the tongue of the 'abode of war' over which Islamic rule was yet to be established by military means.[58] Muslim minorities in that 'abode of war' were, however, often unable to master that minimal command of Arabic which would qualify them to fulfil the requirements for its liturgical use. Wiegers' paper examines the touchy issue of the use of 'heathen' language translations of the Qur'ân in medieval Christian Spain that enabled the Muslim minority there to use it liturgically. That need became particularly pressing for the underground Muslim

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[51]   Cf. Beck 1996: 277-281
[52]   Cf. Kaptein 1996: 285-287
[53]   Authoritative statements on matters of Islamic law by a scholar of the law qualified to issue these.
[54]   Cf. Kaptein 1996: 287-289
[55]   Cf. Kaptein 1996: 289-296
[56]   Cf. Kaptein 1996: 297-298
[57]   Cf. Kaptein 1996: 298-300
[58]   Cf. Wiegers 1996: 303-306

minority in Spain in the 16th century, when the use of Arabic in speech and writing had been officially forbidden and knowledge of Arabic had to be passed on secretly.[59] In the second part of his article, Wiegers discusses the Islamic texts that were translated into Romance and Spanish from the twelfth century onwards until the expulsion of the Muslims from Spain in the period 1609-1614.[60] He also dwells on the discussions the translations provoked, particularly in the period of severe oppression that preceded the expulsion. Some Muslims defended translation on the ground that the persecution had made the community totally ignorant of Arabic, whilst others rejected it for that very same reason.[61] After their expulsion from Spain, however, Muslims continued to use Spanish in North Africa for another century. Some of them defended the need, and even the duty, to provide religious instruction in it because so many of these Muslims were still not proficient in Arabic, and because in the North Africa of the time – then under Ottoman rule – , Turkish was also used in religious education, even for people who knew Arabic.[62]

In the last part of his article, Wiegers presents examples of modern developments in which the opposition of the 'abode of Islam' to the 'abode of war' was replaced by the peace (*da^cwa*) that should prevail between them. That transition was marked by fierce debates, particularly in the reformist camp, about the lawfulness of translating the Qur'ân and using translations for liturgical recitation.[63] Wiegers discusses the positions of the Moroccan Salafists who argued in favour of the lawfulness of the translation of the Qur'ân into other languages, and those from the same movement who opposed it. The latter still reject it as a reprehensible 'innovation' **[19]** (*bi^cda*), whilst the former accept it on the grounds that a translation of the Qur'ân is no longer the Qur'ân, but that it is nonetheless an excellent instrument for the peaceful proclamation of Islam. It might be seen, they hold, as a spiritual *jihad* that replaces the military one by which Islam had been propagated in its early history.[64]

The data presented in these last three essays tend to show that the success or failure of a strategy for eliminating internal plurality depend – in the case of traits that have a high value and prominent function as identity markers of the unified religious community – to a large extent on 'external', i.e. non-religious, factors. The reason for the failure of the *Muhammadiyah* leadership to censure the *Garebeg Maulud*, lies in its roots in the Sultan's court. The circumcision by incision disappeared because of the social pressure in marital matters on Indonesian Muslims in Mecca, and because of the medicalisation and collectivisation of circumcision in Indonesia itself. Opposition to the translation of the Qur'ân greatly decreased because modern international relations between states no longer permit doctrinal division of the globe into 'the abode of Islam' *versus* 'the abode of war'.

In the latter case, this fundamental shift was brought about by external factors: in the wake of increasing economic interdependence and modern media reducing the world to a village, interpenetration of cultural and religious values and fashions is inevitable. This is also the context in which van Koningsveld examines a remarkable item in the last essay of this collection, the recent discussions in Sunnite Islam whether Muslim males may wear a hat and shave.[65] Dress and shaving, or non-shaving,

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[59]   Cf. Wiegers 1996: 312-316
[60]   Cf. Wiegers 1996: 307-311
[61]   Cf. Wiegers 1996: 309-311
[62]   Cf. Wiegers 1996: 312-314
[63]   Cf. Wiegers 1996: 316-318
[64]   Cf. Wiegers 1996: 320-322
[65]   Van Koningsveld 1996

may be used as important identity markers and separators by ethnic and/or religious communities, particularly by minorities vacillating between integration and separation. What was ordinary and unremarkable attire 'back at home', unfit for emblematic use, may become dress with a highly distinctive value and function in a diasporic situation. Much more attention and money may be spent on it than before; it often becomes more refined; and in some cases it may even be invented.[66] Indeed, dress serves as a universal and major marker of gender, and the veil, or its diminutive version, the headscarf, has become a hot issue as gender separator throughout the world of Islam and its diasporas.

[20] Van Koningsveld, however, discusses the prescribed attire of the head of the Muslim male, an issue that provoked much debate in Sunnite Islam since the middle of the 19th century. Head covering has traditionally been prescribed for men also, and the specific forms developed for it in the course of Islamic history have served as important markers of Muslim identity. Predictably, the earliest discussions took place in Paris, the 'heart' of the most important diaspora for Sunnite Muslims from North Africa.[67] At French universities, Muslim students and lecturers with an international frame of mind, pro-European attitudes, strong connections with the establishments and governments of their countries of origin, and taking what van Koningsveld terms the 'liberal' position, defended an accommodative position. They held that it was permissible for Muslims to wear the 'Christian hat' instead of a traditional Muslim headdress, because a hat was merely a matter of convenience rather than a strictly religious matter, the non-observance of which would constitute apostasy. Reformists also took that position. In response to a similar question about headdress from a Muslim in Transvaal, South Africa, Muhammad Abduh, founder of modern Sunnite reformism in Egypt, stated that as long as no apostasy was intended, the adaptation to local manners of dress was licit.[68] From here on, the discussion entered the 'world of Islam' itself, where Western dress was becoming fashionable also. Liberals allowed males to fulfil their prayer obligations with their heads uncovered and in any dress customary or convenient in the particular society in which they found themselves, provided no religious assimilation was intended. The growing of a beard was also regarded as being merely the best of a number of licit alternatives. Reformists declared that a Muslim could dress in any type of attire.[69]

These accommodating views were hotly contested by traditionalists who insisted that the *sunna* (customs) of the Prophet **we**re destroyed by the change of headdress and the shaving of the beard. The wearing of a hat during the *salat* (prayers) also prevented a man from touching the earth with his forehead in the prostration. The**y** argued that Western dress customs and other despicable habits constituted mental 'emigration' from the 'world of Islam' into the 'world of war', and is therefore apostasy; it can be undone only by *hijra*, (mental) 'migration' back into the 'world of Islam'. A recent traditionalist movement in Morocco strongly inveighed against the shaving of beards, stating that prayers said with a shaven face are null and void, and that those who assimilate become unbelievers by their public propagation of doubt. They were also said to defame religion, to admire human reason, **to**

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[66]   Cf. the essays on the 'invention of tradition' collected in Hobsbawm & Ranger 1993, and especially Trevor-Roper's on the invention of the kilt as marker of Scottish identity after the incorporation of Scotland into the United Kingdom (Trevor-Roper 1993).
[67]   Cf. van Koningsveld 1996: 329
[68]   Cf. van Koningsveld 1996: 331
[69]   Cf. van Koningsveld 1990: 332-335

reduce religion to a private affair, to remove it **[21]** from the public sphere, to allow the pernicious mixing of the genders in schools and social life, and **to** mock traditional morality.[70]

At issue is the status of the *sunna*, the 'tradition' of the Prophet, as a major fundament of Muslim life. Liberals and reformists sidestep the issue of its status, but their pragmatic approach effectively destroys much of the authority it had in the past. The traditionalists fight a loosing battle to restore it to its former status, because secularised citizenship has replaced religious communalism in the modern nation states also in 'the world of Islam'. Communalism was in need of distinctive dress; citizenship is not. The defeat of the traditionalists is covered up by the increasingly strict observance of the traditional norms in respect dress and coiffure by religious functionaries.[71]

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[70] Cf. van Koningsveld 1996: 335-342
[71] Cf. van Koningsveld 1996: 342-344

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