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NB: in the book, the references were incorporated in the footnotes. Therefore, the article does not have a list of references at the end. In the pre-publication version below, however, I have retained the list of references at the end of this article in order to keep footnotes short.

RITUAL: RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR

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“Definition is itself the historical product of discursive processes. [...] A transhistorical definition [...] is not viable.”¹

‘Ritual’ has by now established a virtual monopoly, terminological, conceptual and theoretical, for itself in the semantic field of terms denoting not only actions by means of which believers presume that they communicate with meta-empirical realms and beings, but also in clusters designating secular modes of expressive behaviour, social as well as solitary. The term rules supreme now, not only in scholarly research, but also in ordinary language, as witness two random quotes from the Dutch daily paper *Trouw* of 20.09.-2003. One refers to “the rituals and etiquette of [Parliament]”, i.e. a secular social interaction;² the other to “the immensely satisfying ritual of laying a table”, i.e. a form of solitary stylised behaviour.³ Darwin’s survival of the fittest and elimination of the weak may, therefore, be well applied also to ritual for having so successfully eliminated its semantic competitors.

The purposes, and parts, of this essay are three. The aim of the first and largest part is to present preliminary data on when, how and why the *etic*, or scholarly, concept of ‘ritual’ began to serve as an imaginative theoretical construct for specific heuristic, analytical and theoretical purposes in the academic study of, first, the social interaction, postulated by believers, between themselves and meta-empirical worlds, and soon also for secular communication between (162) humans, humans and animals, and between animals, and even for solitary, expressive, but non-communicative behaviour of humans and animals. My ulterior purpose is to develop a historical approach to the methodological problem of whether or not one should adopt an ‘exclusive’ or ‘inclusive’ definition of ritual, i.e. restrict it to religiously inspired behaviour, or include secular stylised interaction also into it. Its outcome is that that issue, however important it is in itself, is not so much determined by reflection on methodology or the practicalities of research as by the wider semantic and symbolic processes in the societies of which scholars of religions happen to be part. I suggest that the terminology of the study of religions and ritual studies is much more determined by processes of semantic change in Northwest European languages in the 19th and 20th centuries, and by other contingencies of our cultural histories, than by re-

¹ Asad 1993, 29-30.

² Ephimenco 2003, 13. All translations are by the author.

³ Forceville 2003, 43.

flexive methodologies. Even so, the goal of the second part is to argue for an inclusive approach to the methodology of the study of ritual on pragmatic grounds, and thus move towards a pragmatics of ritual studies.

However, neither the semantic developments described in the first part, nor my advocacy of an inclusive approach in the second, are innocent of the use of (symbolic) power in human societies. Therefore, thirdly, I will also briefly address the politics of defining ‘ritual’, be it only in my conclusion.

Ritual’s Rise

In this part, I first examine the cluster of terms which six prominent scholars of religions – three Dutch, and three British – used in the constitutive period of Science of Religions, 1860-1890, for designating the religious actions which are now termed ‘ritual’ by virtually all scholars of religions. I do so in four parts. I begin by briefly discussing the conceptual division of religion into ‘belief’ and ‘worship’ ruling early scholarship on religions. Then I examine first the cluster of terms which the three Dutch authors used for designating ‘worship’, and when and how they introduced the terms ‘rite’ and ‘ritual’ for it; and secondly how the same semantic changes occurred with the three British authors. In my fourth section, I propose an explanation of this semantic change. That explanation is clearly provisional, for I have not studied all the publications (163) of Tiele in that period, only two by Chantepie de la Saussaye, Kuenen, and Tylor, and only one by Lang and Robertson Smith.⁴ Not only is an examination of other publications by these and other Dutch and British authors in order, but so are publications in other European languages in this period, because the semantic clusters for denoting religious actions and their dynamics were quite peculiar in the several West European languages in the mid-19th century. It will, therefore, be necessary to research these semantic (164) histories in Western scholarship on religious and other stylised behaviour in this period much more fully before secure conclusions can be established. After this examination of the when and how, and my tentative explanation of the why of ritual’s early march-forward, I present a ‘bird’s eye view’ of the semantic developments after 1890 which led to ritual’s present conceptual hegemony. That survey is evidently even more sorely in need of substantiation by research than is my examination of the developments before 1890.

A dominant division

Religion was divided by Tylor in 1871 into “beliefs and practices”, the latter being defined by him as the “rites and ceremonies [which are a religion’s] outward expression and practical result”. He reiterated this division time and again as “ideas and rites”, “doctrines and ceremonies”, “doctrines and practices”, “doctrines and rites”, “belief and worship” and proposed to view belief as the theory of animism and worship as its practice. “Doctrine and worship correlate as theory and practice”, that is religious rites and ceremonies function, he said, as “the dramatic utterance of religious thought, the gesture-language of theology”. They are “expressive and symbolic performances” for “the practical purpose”

⁴ Tiele 1856, 1860, 1866, 1867, 1870a, 1870b, 1871a, 1871b, 1873a, 1873b, 1873c, 1873d, 1874a, 1874b, 1875, 1886; Chantepie 1871, 1887, I, 1-170; Kuenen 1874, 1882; Tylor, 1871; 1881, 87-109, 131-160; Lang 1887¹/1913⁵; Robertson Smith 1889¹/1894²/1927³/1972⁴.

of “intercourse with and influence on spiritual beings”.⁵ Tiele echoed him when he wrote in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* in 1886: “Every religion has two prominent constituent elements, the one theoretical, the other practical – religious ideas and religious acts”, or “rites”. He also termed them belief and divine worship, dogma and ritual, mythology and ritual, faith and worship, doctrines and rites, myths and rites, thought and worship, and – inverting the order – worship and mythology. The two elements, he said, are hardly ever neatly balanced, “some faiths being pre-eminently doctrinal or dogmatic, others pre-eminently ritualistic or ethical”.⁶ In 1887, Chantepie de la Sausaye likewise divided religion into *Cultus* (worship) and *Religionslehre* (religious doctrine), or “more generally, [into] religious action and representation”.⁷ Robertson (165) Smith referred to the same division when he remarked that no one had as yet attempted a systematic comparison of “the religion of the Hebrews [...] with the beliefs and ritual practices of the other Semitic peoples”. But he criticised the modern habit “to search for a creed, and find in it the key to ritual and practice”.⁸ Even Lang, who construed an idiosyncratic “essential conflict between religion and myth” and allotted to ‘ritual’ positions in both myth and religion, did not escape the constraining force of the dichotomy “belief and rites”.⁹

This ‘thought’ *versus* ‘action’ division in modern scholarship on religions is the springboard from which ‘rite’ and ‘ritual’ began their triumphal march forward towards semantic supremacy in scholarship on stylised behaviour, and outside it. Radcliffe-Brown, e.g., in his Myers Lecture before the Royal Anthropological Institute in 1945, follows the authors cited above in assuming “that any religion or any religious cult normally involves [...] beliefs [...] and observances”, and terms the latter “rites”.¹⁰ And Goody writes in 1961 that “generally the term [‘ritual’] has been used to refer to the action as distinct from the belief component of magico-religious phenomena”.¹¹

When and how

Dutch semantics, 1856-1888

The terms Tiele, Chantepie and Kuenen used for denoting the religious actions of (postulated) communication and community with the supernatural clearly reflected a Christian semantic past. For Tiele, the central terms in the texts examined were *aanbidding* (adoration), which he used 159 times,¹² *vereering* (worship), which, including the (166) English term ‘worship’ (in Tiele 1986), he employed 213 times, and *eerdienst*, (divine ‘service’ or worship), which he used 64 times. A fourth term was *cultus*, which he equat-

⁵ Tylor 1871, I, 23, 427, 500; II, 362, 451.

⁶ Tiele 1886, 358, 365, 366, 369, 370, 371.

⁷ Chantepie 1887, I, 48; cf. also 37-38, 52, 132, 135, 141, 162.

⁸ [165] Robertson Smith 1889/1972, IV, 16; cf. also 13, 15.

⁹ Lang 1887/1913, I, 3-5, 283; II, 147, 185, 186, 229, 238, 249, 280, 287, 365, 366.

¹⁰ Radcliffe-Brown 1952/1971, 154-155.

¹¹ Goody 1961, 147.

¹² The counts include not only how often the nouns (e.g. adoration, adorer) and the verb (e.g. to adore) have been used, but also the use of the adjective (adorable), and other forms of a term. How important a term is, is, moreover, apparent not only from the frequency with which it is used, but may also be measured [166] by how often a term is employed in set composite terms, e.g. nature-worship, sun-worship, etc. I do not, however, present data on this semantic phenomenon in this article.

ed with *eerdienst* and employed 12 times.¹³ The central term for Chantepie was *cultus*, which he used 283 times,¹⁴ in addition to ‘cults’, in the meaning of organised groups of believers who perform a distinctive *cultus*, which he employed 25 times. His second main term was *vereeren* (to worship), and *eeredienst* (worship), which he used 162 times. His supplementary terms were ceremony and ceremonial, which he employed 29 times, and adoration, which he used 14 times.¹⁵ Kuenen employed all four terms: worship 61 times; adoration 24 times; *vereeren* (to worship) with ‘to honour’ and ‘to reverence’, 22 times; ceremonies and ceremonial 6 times; and *cultus* and cult 5 times.¹⁶

Ritus, ‘rite’, appeared, in its Latin form, for the first time in 1871, when Chantepie asserted that it is “quite hazardous” for archaeologists to conclude “from the position of a skeleton to the existence of a *doodenritus*” (rite for the dead, burial rite) in Palaeolithic times.¹⁷ Tiele (167) used *ritus* for the first time in 1873, in a review of a book discussing what the discovery of fire may have meant for palaeolithic religion. He agreed that it did probably cause “a big reformation”, but cautioned that further study would also show that “not a little of the mythological matter and the *ritus* belonged to an earlier period”, when man worshipped (*vereerde*) not only humans, but also “trees and animals, sun, moon and stars”. From this passage it is clear that Tiele (167) used *ritus* in a quite broad meaning and as synonymous with *aanbidding*, *eerdienst*, and *vereering*, in brief as a synonym of worship. In the same year he also employed it in Dutch as *riten* (rites), which he equated himself with “religious actions” (*godsdienstige handelingen*), and as a synonym of *godsdienstplechtigheden* (religious solemnities). Here again, he used the term in quite a general and imprecise sense. The same broad meaning is apparent when he speaks about Vedic, Brahmanic, Parsi and Mosaic “rites”, in the meaning of the entire *cultus* or worship of these religions. Before 1886, he used *ritus* and *rite(n)* only 7 times, but the two terms appear 18 times in his contribution to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, all again in an imprecise meaning.¹⁸ Chantepie used ‘rite’ 34 times, a few times in a narrow meaning, but mostly in an unspecified meaning. But he also mentioned twice that “the gods” or a “ritualist [...] piety” might require “the strict observance of the *ritus*”, thereby intimating a feature which he and others specifically associated with *ritus*, rites (and ritual).¹⁹ Kuenen

¹³ All four terms are actually best rendered in English as ‘worship’, for as Protestants Tiele and the other authors discussed disregarded the sharp Roman Catholic distinction between adoration as due to God only, and veneration as proper for Mary and the saints. The authors examined used all these terms indiscriminately for any object of worship. Cf. e.g. Tiele 1856, 119, 127; 1866, 237, 238; 1870a, 164, 167; 1870b, 14, 22; 1871a, 99, 103, 105, 122, 123; 1870b, 384, 394, 406; 1871b, 378, 390, 395, 396, 402; 1873a; 14, 43; 1873b, 238, 240, 241; 1874a, 262. 1871b, 378, 390, 395, 396, 402; etc

¹⁴ I have counted *cultus* and other terms in both Chantepie 1971 (in Dutch) and Chantepie 1887, volume I (in German) which I treat here as one body of texts. So, here and below, I refer to the terms as he actually used them, whether in Latin (e.g. *cultus*), in Dutch (e.g. *eeredienst*), or in German (e.g. *ceremoniel*)

¹⁵ Chantepie used it 3 times in the (RC) meaning of ‘adoration due to God only’, but the other 11 times to denote the ‘adoration’ of gods and such diverse objects as fire, soma, the relics of the Buddha, etc. Cf. Chantepie 1887, I, 60, 67, 70, 73, 76, 85, 86, 87, 91-92, 107, 109, 118.

¹⁶ Cf. e.g. Kuenen 1874, 625, 628, 630, 631, 642, 643, 644; 1882, 11, 25, 26, 32, 33, 41-45, 151,

¹⁷ Chantepie 1871, 21. Chantepie (1887, I, 20), however, refers to traces of *Todtenopfer* (‘sacrifices for the dead’) and *Todtenmahlzeiten* (‘meals for the dead’) in Palaeolithic graves and seems to imply that these burial customs signify belief in life after death.

¹⁸ [167] Tiele 1873b, 250; 1873c, 394-395; 1874a, 230-231, 237; 1886, 358, 359, 361, 362, 364, 365, 366, 369, 370.

¹⁹ Chantepie 1887, I, 19, 50, 51, 58, 61, 62, 66, 69, 82, 96, 110-116, 121, 127, 134, 138, 142, 167, 168.

employed 'rites' only once, in the translation of the prayer in which the Koran (Sura 2: 122) has Abraham ask Allah to "teach us our holy rites".²⁰

Tiele, Chantepie and Kuenen employed 'ritual', and the pejorative term 'ritualistic', only after 1880, and even more sparingly than *ritus* and 'rites'. Tiele used ritual only 5 times, and only in a wide, general meaning, when he wrote that religions may be divided into "dogma and ritual", "belief and ritual [...] institutions", "mythology and ritual", and that the magic and sorcery of ancient Egypt may be labelled as "traditional ritual", and that some religions may be said to be dogmatic, others ritualistic.²¹ Chantepie employed 'ritual' 11 (168) times, only one of which carried the restricted meaning of *Opferritual* (sacrificial ritual). The other times he used it in an unspecified meaning, except that he pointed time and again to its special qualities of being ordered and requiring painstaking observance. E.g., "with the civilized peoples of the ancient world sacrifices formed the main part of an ordered *cultus*, a ritual. [...] The diligent and conscientious observation of the ritual was a condition for the unperturbed relation with the gods". Therefore, "the particulars for the choice of the gifts [...] for the gods [were] often laid down with painstaking precision in ritual prescriptions", for rituals demanded "strict observance". He observed that some ceremonies were "rites regulated in smallest detail by a complicated ritual", laid down in ritual books, tracts, texts and scriptures. The latter were sometimes a "kind of handbooks", presenting "prescriptions for the *cultus*", and explanations "where the *cultus* was a bit complex". Chantepie too used 'ritual' also to refer to shamanism as *Zauber- und Ritualwesen* (sorcery and ritual of some sort), and asserted that "in ancient religions human sacrifice was no longer part of the ritual". He used it in the same general meaning when he spoke of "ritual purity", of ethics being emphasised at the expense of ritual in some religions, of the coincidence of the ritual and civil year in some societies, and of feasts being characterised by an accumulation of ritual ceremonies. He implied the same imprecise meaning when he asserted that "magic and ritualistic views" are alien to some modern religious persuasions, and that "ritualistic and nomistic piety requires merely the strict observation of the *ritus* or the ceremonial law, and leads to the casuistry that corrupts morality so completely".²² Kuenen used 'ritual' and 'ritualistic' 8 times. He employed it twice to refer to it as *cultus* subject to "detailed regulations", and spoke of the "ritualistic code" with its "minute precepts about the sanctuary [at Jerusalem], the priests and their vestments, the sacrifices and ceremonial cleanness". But like Tiele, he employed it usually in the general sense of 'worship'.²³

The late and relatively rare usages of the terms 'rite', 'ritual' and 'ritualistic' by Tiele, Chantepie and Kuenen demonstrate that (169) Chantepie and Kuenen used these terms a few times, firstly, in the classical meaning of religious behaviour of which the orderly flow (*ritus*) was regulated by rules; and secondly, a few times also in Roman Catholic seventeenth century meaning of a *rituale*, a book containing the ritual rules, explanations and texts.²⁴ But they used them more often in the broad, imprecise meaning of the other current terms of worship, ceremony, *cultus*, and adoration. Thereby they dissolved 'rite' and 'ritual' from the classical meaning of *ritus* as the well regulated flow of religious ac-

²⁰ Kuenen 1882, 12.

²¹ Tiele 1886, 358, 365, 368.

²² [168] Cf. Chantepie 1887, I, 53, 82, 103, 104, 112, 113, 119, 123, 129, 137, 138, 140, 168.

²³ Cf. Kuenen 1882, 80, 160, 163n3, 166, 172, 179, 183, 220.

²⁴ [169] Chantepie 1887, I, 1882, 103, 138; Kuenen 1882, 179.

tions and established their current, prototypical, vague meaning by which we now grasp them intuitively as synonyms of, and additions to, the Christian cluster of terms of adoration, (religious) ceremony, *cultus*, *eerdienst*, *vereering*, and worship, and with as general a meaning as those terms have always had.

British semantics, 1871-1889

As is to be expected from authors writing in English between 1870 and 1890, the normal term for denoting religious acts was 'worship'. Tylor used worship 507 times.²⁵ Other main terms were 'ceremony' and 'ceremonial', which he employed 160 times, including the pejorative term 'ceremonialism'. Supplementary terms were 'adoration', which he used 47 times; 'veneration', which he employed 28 times; *cultus*, which he used 12 times; and 'celebration', which he employed 8 times. Andrew Lang used worship 249 times. Another important term for him was 'mysteries', which he employed 118 times. Supplementary terms were 'adoration', which he used 55 times; 'ceremony' and 'ceremonialism', which he employed 43 times; and 'cult', which he employed 29 times.²⁶ Robertson Smith's main focus was sacrifice. He employed that term 844 times. But he used 'worship' 518 times. Supplementary terms were 'feasts', which he used 128 times; 'ceremonies' with 'ceremonial', which he employed 105 times; 'communion', which he used 95 times; 'cult(s)', which he employed 38 times; 'service', which he used 38 times; 'adoration' and 'to adore', which he used 11 times; and *cultus*, which he employed 6 times.²⁷

(170) Tylor used 'rite(s)' 212 times. He employed it both as referring to some particular rite, (and once as being 'prescribed'), and in a wide, general sense as a synonym of 'ceremony', 'veneration', and 'worship'.²⁸ 'Ritual' and 'ritualistic', however, appear only rarely, and mainly towards the end of volume II of *Primitive Culture*, and not at all in the parts of *Anthropology* which I examined. Tylor used the pejorative 'ritualistic' only once. 'Ritual' appears only once in volume I of *Primitive Culture*, and 15 times in volume II. Tylor used 'ritual' twice in the 'Catholic' meaning of (*liber*) *rituale*, the book of rules and prescribed texts by which the worship of a particular Christian church is regulated. He also used 'ritual' both in restricted and wide and general meanings, and noted that some rituals were "complex", "elaborate", "systematic", or "dark".²⁹

Lang and Robertson Smith, however, used both 'rite' and 'ritual' frequently. But whereas Lang employed 'rites' 137 times, and 'ritual' 123 times, in *Myth, Ritual and Religion*,³⁰ that order was inverted by Robertson Smith. He used 'rites' 124 times in *The Religion of the Semites*, and 'ritual' 275 times. It would seem, therefore, that 'ritual' began its victorious march-forward in these two books. It did so by changing progressively from an adjective into a noun and by gradually shedding, as a noun, its former particular

²⁵ And in 26 set combinations; cf. e.g. Tylor 1871/1913, I, 143, 476; II, 35, 118-120, 184, 216-218, 221, 224-226, 229, 231, 237-239, 242, etc.

²⁶ E.g. Lang 1887/1913, I, 34, 73, 76, 74, 192, 200, 216-219, 261, 272-278, 312-317, 334; II, 1-5, 41-45, 128, 218, 229, 231, 233n2, 234, 235 (3x), 240, 248, 281.

²⁷ E.g. Robertson Smith 1889/1972, 3, 4, 17, 22-24, 27, [170] 35, 36, 38, 48, 56, 57,60, 76, 79, 80, 81, 96, 101, 111, 134, 147, 157, 165, 177, 185n 188, 190, 195, 209, 210.

²⁸ Cf. Tylor 1887/1913, I, 8, 23, 70, 84-85, 116, 461; II, 19, 118, 142, 164, 179,213, 196, 284, 285, 288, 363-442, 370, 373, 376, 409, 428, 424, 425, 428, 429, 439, 440, 441.

²⁹ Tylor 1871/1913, I, 116; II, 19, 118, 142, 196, 283, 288, 370, 373, 376, 409, 424, 425, 428, 439, 440, 441.

³⁰ The first book, to my knowledge, to have 'ritual' in its title.

meaning of *rituale* as a book of rules for worship in exchange for its modern vague and general meaning of synonym of ‘worship’. That enabled it to begin to replace the traditional Christian cluster of terms for ‘worship’. From these two books onwards, ‘ritual’, however, not only gradually eliminated the traditional Christian terms for ‘religion-in-action’, but also began to swallow up its parent, ‘rite’. The beginning of this important semantic change may be shown from the manners in which Lang and Robertson Smith used the terms ‘rite’ and ‘ritual’.

Lang virtually always employed ‘rite(s)’ as referring to specific religious actions. He also remarked twice unfavourably on them as “endless minute ritual actions”, or as “minute and elaborate”. Yet he (171) also used ‘rites’ often as a vague, general plural, such as in “classical rites”, “superstitious rites”, “savage rites”, “wild and cruel rites”, “religious rites”, “magical rites”, “rites and myths”, “rites and ceremonies”, “the rites of the Khoi”, or Egypt, or Dionysus. He also used ‘rites’ as a synonym, not only of ‘mysteries’, ‘ceremonies’ and ‘rituals’, but also of ‘worship’, ‘cult’, ‘adoration’ and ‘ritual’. So, despite Lang’s awareness that the term ‘rite’ referred to specific religious actions, there is also quite a marked tendency towards a generalist, unspecified usage of the term by the use of this ‘unspecified plural’.³¹ That tendency is even more marked in his use of ‘ritual’, ‘ritualistic’ and ‘ritualism’. Lang used ‘ritual’ some 40 times in specific meanings, such as that of a book of [ritual] “laws”, or *rituale*, ruling the performance of worship, cult or mystery; or as referring to single rituals; or to rituals specified by the name of a particular god; or by some other quality. But he used it more than 60 times in the broad, generalised sense of the stylised behaviour people demonstrate in ‘worship’,³² and employed it as an addition to, and a synonym of, the cluster of Christian standard terms for mythical, magical, superstitious, religious and other ‘worship’.³³

Robertson Smith used ‘rite’ some 80 times for referring to specific religious actions, and some 16 times in an unspecified meaning. More importantly, however, ‘rite(s)’ served for Robertson Smith as a synonym of, and supplementary term for, ceremony, (religious) ritual(s), ritual practice(s), “ritual and practice”, worship(s), “sacred acts”, religious institutions, “ordinances of religion”, “prescribed forms of cultus”, “practices of religion”, superstitions, “ritual acts”, “service”, “homage”, cult(s), (172) etc.³⁴ And ‘rite’ was patently a term of decreasing importance. Unlike Lang, Robertson Smith used ‘ritual’ much more often in a specific meaning than in a broad, generalised sense. Apart from employing ‘ritual’ some 20 times as an adjective, he used ‘ritual(s)’ some 110 times

³¹ [171] E.g. Lang 1887/1913, I, XLII, 31, 75, 112, 138, 145, 251-252, 257, 260, 270-271, 274-277, 333; II, 23, 26, 43, 63, 97, 103, 121, 138, 147, 185, 227, 229, 236, 237, 249, 251-252, 261, 272-274, 281, 283, 284, 287-289, 298, 365.

³² Cf. e.g. Lang 1887/1913, I, 13, 31, 126, 136, 192, 216, 217, 219, 224, 248, 251, 252, 254, 256, 266, 278, 307, 317; II, 4, 14, 32, 61, 62, 64, 67, 68, 87-89, 97, 97n1, 101, 104, 109, 110, 117, 118, 129, 131, 143, 147, 148, 185, 190, 205, 210, 211, 215, 218, 229, 231, 236, 249, 250-254, 256, 262, 271-276, 278, 283, 287, 292, 298-299, 355, 363, 365.

³³ Lang did not usually link ‘ritual’ in its generalised meaning with (religious) worship, because he constructed a dichotomy between myth as foolish fancy and (true) religion as reverent belief in a Maker, Master and Father. He connected the many instances of sanguinary, savage, horrid ritual with myth, magic, superstition, legend, abomination, etc., rather than with religion (Lang 1887/1913, I, 3-5; II, 186).

³⁴ [172] Robertson Smith 1889/1972, 16-19, 22-24, 55, 80, 84, 90, 138, 186-187, 191-192, 198, 201-203, 213-214, 221n3, 231, 232, 239, 240, 258, 263-264, 282, 291, 294, 314, 315, 317, 320-324, 327, 364-365, 348-349, 357-362, 364-366, 371, 373, 374, 394-395, 398-400, 404, 405, 409-411, 415, 416, 422, 424-426, 431, 438, 439.

in the sense of some specific religious act or activity. In addition, he employed it some 27 times to refer to peculiar larger conglomerates, or traditions, of religious activity, such as Semitic, Arabian or Hebrew ritual, and 6 times to indicate sets of rules, or “ordinances”, that govern religious actions. As for his unspecified use of ‘ritual’, he employed the term some 50 times in an abstract manner, 26 times to refer in a general way to “rituals”, “ritual practice(s)”, “ritual observance(s)”, “ritual traditions”, c.q. “traditional ritual”, “ritual formations”, “ritual institutions”, and “ritual systems”, and a few times to refer to ritual as “fixed and obligatory”, “established”, “restricted” or “ordinary”.³⁵ Lastly, Robertson Smith presented three times a brief analysis of “acts of ancient worship” that come close to a definition of ‘ritual’. In these passages he emphasised that ‘ritual’ in the [primitive] past had to have a material embodiment, and had to be rule-governed.³⁶

(173)

Why

The liabilities of ceremonial

Having shown when and how ‘ritual’ emerged as a term for denoting ‘religion-in-action’, it remains to show why it began, not only to complement but also to supplant the traditional Christian cluster of terms. The evidence presented shows that by 1890 ‘ritual’ had emerged as a most flexible term. It served, on the one hand, as an equivalent of, and synonym and substitute for, other terms denoting specific religious actions, such as ceremonies, cults, customs, feasts/festivities/festivals, mysteries, (religious or ritual) observances, practices, rites, and worships; and on the other hand, it denoted with equal ease unspecified religious activity. So it could also be employed both as a synonym and equivalent of other general terms, such as adoration, ceremonial, communion, *cultus*, homage, religious practice, religious service, veneration and worship, and begin to replace them. This versatility provided ‘ritual’ with the potentiality for substituting them all, the specific as well as the general traditional terms derived from the Christian tradition.

That ‘ritual’ would do so was, however, not yet obvious by 1890, for it was not the only rising star in this semantic field. From its Latin origin as adjective of *ritus* (rite), ‘ritual’ had developed in the 17th century, to *rituale* as a book of rules and prescribed texts for ordering religious action, after the *Rituale Romanum* of 1614 by means of which Roman Catholic liturgy had been made uniform; and after 1850 also to a noun for designating religious action itself in both specific and unspecified senses. The body of the texts by Tiele, Chantepie, Kuenen, Tylor, Lang and Robertson Smith examined shows that

³⁵ Robertson Smith 1889/1972, vi, ix, 2, 3, 4, 16-18, 18-22, 24, 25, 26, 28, 38, 44, 46, 47, 53, 86-87, 107, 108, 114, 116, 117, 119, 138, 151, 161, 165, 167-169, 172, 175-177, 180, 182, 184, 191-192, 195, 199, 200-203, 205, 212, 214, 215, 218, 219n2, 222, 223n3, 224, 230,-233, 236, 239, 240, 246, 248, 251, 252, 254, 256, 263, 275, 285, 288, 293, 295, 304, 308, 312, 320, 321, 325, 328, 331, 335, 340n1, 338-346, 348-351, 353, 356, 357, 361-365, 367, 368, 371, 373, 377-379, 382, 384-390, 393-395, 397-401, 403-404, 406, 408-411, 412, 414, 416n6, 418, 425, 423, 431, 435, 439, 440.

³⁶ Robertson Smith (1889/1972, 85): “All acts of ancient worship have a material embodiment, which is not left to the choice of the worshipper, but is limited by fixed rules. They must be performed at certain places and at certain times, with the aid of certain material appliances and according to certain mechanical forms. These rules import that the intercourse between the deity and his worshippers is subject to physical conditions of a definite kind, and this again implies that the relations between gods and men are not independent of the material environment. [...] Therefore, the gods too are in some sense conceived as part of the natural universe, and [...] men can hold converse with them only by aid of certain material things”. Cf. also 213, 439-440.

‘ceremony’ and ‘ceremonial’ had also set out on a similar trajectory. Apart from the fact that ‘ceremony’ was part of the traditional Western-Christian cluster of terms for denoting religious action and was, therefore, regularly used by all these authors – with the exception of Tiele –, as a synonym of ‘rite’ for denoting particular religious actions,³⁷ ‘ceremonial’ was increasingly employed (174) by them not merely as adjective,³⁸ but also as a noun in meanings that were synonymous to ‘cultus’, ‘ritual’, ‘worship’, and similar terms, and in both specific and general senses. Tylor used ‘ceremonial’ three times, and only in a specific sense. Lang employed it twice in a specific, and once in an unspecified meaning. And Robertson Smith used it six times to refer to a specific religious action, twice in a non-specific sense, and once in the prescriptive sense, to refer to a set of rules for purification, analogous to that of *rituale* as a set of prescriptions for religious action. Chantepie too used the adjective ‘ceremonial’ (*ceremoniel*) six times in a sense analogous to *rituale*, i.e. in the meaning of the ‘ceremonial law’ that contained the rules for the purity required for engaging in religious action(s).³⁹ So, between 1871 and 1889, the triad ‘ceremony’, ‘ceremonial’ (as adjective), and ‘ceremonial’ (as noun) was developing semantic functions quite similar to those which the other triad, ‘rite(s), ‘ritual’, as adjective’, and ‘ritual’ as noun, had been acquiring for denoting specific and non-specified religious action as well as the collections of rules for them.

The supremacy of the ‘ritual’ triad was, however, ensured by two liabilities under which the ‘ceremonial’ triad laboured. One was that it belonged to the traditional cluster and so was less fit than rite and ritual to serve for denoting not only religious, but also so called ‘magical’ and ‘superstitious’ action in all human societies and history. Another was that ‘ceremonial’, in the sense of a set of rules, developed a particularly intimate association with purity as a prerequisite for religious action in early scholarship on religious actions, whereas ‘ritual’ always referred to religious (and ‘magical’) action. Finally, ‘ritual’ gained superiority too because it proved to serve (175) scholars of religious actions better in theory development, and in the comparison of the savoury in the religions of humankind with the unsavoury.

As for theory development, Tylor argued that “as prayer is a request made to the deity as if he were a man, so sacrifice is a gift made to the deity as if he were a man”, thereby establishing not only the theory of “the anthropomorphic model and origin” of religion and ritual, but also proposing and developing the gift-theory of [primitive] sacrifice.⁴⁰ Robertson Smith likewise accepted that in ancient Semitic religion “the god and his own proper worshippers make up a single community, and that the place of the god in the community is interpreted on the analogy of human relationship”. But he argued against Tylor’s gift-theory of [primitive] sacrificial ritual, and in favour of his own analysis that

³⁷ [173] Tylor (1871) used ‘ceremonial’ 97 times; Kuenen (1882) employed it 3 times; Lang (1883) has it 37 times; Chantepie (1887) used it 25 times; and Robertson Smith (1889) [174] employed it 86 times. Cf. also below note 62 and the paragraph on MacCormack 1982 for the continuation of this tradition in modern Western scholarship in the study of the history of the ceremonies of both the ‘pagan’ and Christian Roman empire.

³⁸ Tylor 1871/1913, I, 96; II, 128, 196, 210, 297, 364, 380, 386, 387, 394, 396, 397, 403, 404, 429-431, 433-435, 437, 438, 440, 441; Kuenen 1882, 179, 203, 207; Chantepie 1887, 138, 139, 140, 168; Lang 1887/1913, I, 221; Smith 1889/1972, 158, 161, 179, 239, 301, 333, 401, 426.

³⁹ Tylor 1871/1913, II, 35, 224, 437; Lang 1887/1913, I, 209, 335; II, 254; Smith 1889/1972, 305, 339, 342, 367, 399, 403, 404, 427; Chantepie 1887, 137-138, 139, 140, 168

⁴⁰ [175] Tylor 1871/1913, II, 247-248, 364, 375-399.

originally sacrificial rituals were not only acts of communication with the gods, but also of (sacramental) communion with them and with all other members of a 'tribe', and so served to create and maintain the community of the believers with their god(s) and with one another.⁴¹

'Rite' and 'ritual' probably served better than 'ceremony', 'ceremonial' and the other traditional terms for the purpose of comparing religious, and so called 'magical' and other 'superstitious' activity across the whole depth and width of the history of the religions of humankind for these and later scholars of religions for two more reasons. The lesser one is that they may have regarded 'rite' and 'ritual' as better instruments for the production of an all-embracing 'objective' knowledge of human religious action, because they were felt to provide a wider and more neutral coverage of it by their easy inclusion of non-Christian religious actions, and their being free, unlike traditional Christian terms such as 'adoration', 'veneration' and 'worship', from typically Christian associations and theological interpretations. This quest for a total coverage, neutrality and objectivity certainly was an inspiration,⁴² be it an explicitly polemical (176) and reformatory one of opposing orthodox Christian "theological bias, which caused all religions to be regarded as utterly false", and the "philosophical bias which caused all religions [...] to be decried as mere superstitions".⁴³

Yet, the quest for an all-encompassing breadth, neutrality and objectivity seems not to have been the decisive factor why 'rite' and 'ritual' gradually emerged as the focal terms in the comparative study of religious action, for the six scholars examined freely used the traditional Christian *emic* terms for *etic* comparative purposes. And they did so eagerly for strategic reasons, because applying traditional terms to other religions was a slow but sure way of gradually divesting them of their specifically Christian connotations, and of fostering the relativist views about Christianity, dear to liberal theologians and positivist scholars of religions. The second and decisive factor was a legacy from the past which they shared: paganopapism.

The pagano-papist legacy

The main reason, I suggest, why 'rite' and 'ritual' gradually began to replace the traditional Christian cluster in the publications of these late 19th century scholars of religions is that they served them in a special way. 'Rite' and 'ritual' served the reformatory strategies of these scholars equally well as did the traditional terms, whether they battled orthodox Christian theology as liberal theologians, or, as secular scholars, confidently expected all 'superstition' to evaporate before the light of natural science.⁴⁴ But in addition, 'rite' and 'ritual' articulated their own deep-seated biases, ambivalences, and feelings of downright contempt, disgust and despair in facing the "monstrosities", "stupidities", "irrationality" and "superstitions", with which the history of human societies, cultures and religions confronted them in (177) such abundance, not only in "savage" and

⁴¹ Robertson Smith 1889/1972, 84, 111, 240, 243-245, 265, 267, 269-272, 312-387, 388-398, 400, 401.

⁴² Cf. e.g. Tylor's plea that "the true historian [...] shall be able to look dispassionately on myth as a natural and regular product of the human mind" (Tylor 1871/1913, II, 447; also 452); cf. also Tiele 1866, 237-240; 1867, 41, 44-48; [176] 1873a, 30-34; 1873d, 577-580, 582-583; Robertson Smith 1889/1972, 22-23..

⁴³ Tiele 1886, 358; also 1866, 224-244; 1867, 42-43, 52; 1870b, 26-27; 1871b, 374-376, 380, 390-392, 399-491, 403-406; 1873d, 580-582. Cf. also Tylor 1871/1913, II, 449-453; Lang 1886/1913, II, 344-366, Chan-
tepie 1887, I, 7-11, 22, 24; Kuenen 1882, 292-298; Robertson Smith 1889/1972, 424-425, 439-440.

⁴⁴ Cf. Tylor 1871/1913, II, 183, 450.

“barbaric” societies, but also in their own, “civilised” ones.⁴⁵ Moreover, detailing them, and ‘explaining’ them by the theory of survivals, or that of Robertson Smith that ancient ritual systems suffered from the congenital defect of being materialist and could, therefore, never embody spiritual truths,⁴⁶ suited their reformatory passion very well, as did other views of the cultural evolution of humankind then current.⁴⁷ They all felt a need to confront their contemporaries with descriptions and analyses of those cruel or foolish superstitions, for they must be converted to ‘enlightened’ Protestantism, or to the ‘scientific’ understanding of humanity’s cultural progress. The long tradition of virulent Protestant pagano-papism in the cultural backgrounds of these Dutch Calvinist, English Dissenter, and Scottish Presbyterian scholars of religions – whether they were liberal Protestants or secular adherents of a positive natural philosophy which had “simply deposed and banished (178) [religious authority ...] without a rival even in name”⁴⁸ – was clearly still in full swing in their perceptions and publications. They connected ‘rite’ and ‘ritual’ intimately not only with the quaint rites of sneezing, but also with the savage rituals of human sacrifice and cannibalism, foundation sacrifices, head-hunting and widow-burning, as well as the “dark, cruel madness” of the “doctrine of witchcraft”, the “morbid knavery” of “maniacal” demon-possession, “foolish” popish superstitions, and the long tradition of “oppression” of intellectual freedom and scientific progress by the Roman Catholic Church, which found its proof and apogee for Tylor in 1870 in the proclamation of the dogma of papal infallibility.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ [176] It is most outspoken in Lang (1887/1913, I, 4, 6,-8, 11-13, 52-53, 97, 112, 219, 251, 255, 257, 260, 275, 278, 301; II, 62, 97, 103, 147, 229, 236, 237, 249-250, 259, 260, 399-400); but also strong in Tylor (1871/1913, I, 13, 94-96, 97, 102, 106, 108, 128, 142, 437, 458, 459, 461, 464-467, 474, 486, 490; II, 7, 91, 229, 271, 307, 363, 370, 371-372 [the rosary as “devotional calculation machine”], 379, 389, 400, 403, 405-410, 415, 420-421 [demonic possession in modern England as a revival of ‘the religion of mental disease’], 425, 428 [“the revived mediaevalism of our day”], 438, 441, 443-444, 449, 450, 453). Cf. also Tiele 1870b, 22-23; 1871a, 100-101, 111, 117; 1871b, 384-385, 387, 393-394, 402, 404; 1873a, 6, 10, 15-20, 22, 25-26; 1873b, 244-250; 1873d, 576-577; 1874a, 235, 237, 244-245, 250-251, 254-256; 1886, 362, 364, 367, 368, 370; Chantepie 1871, 43, 71-72; 1877, I, 42-44, 53-60, 81-82, 93-100, 104-107, 110-111, 124-125; Kuenen 1882, 32-33, 36-45, 76, 100-101, 121-122, 154, 229, 293; Robertson Smith 1889/1972, esp. 415; also 55, 56, 58-59, 87-90, 119-139, 152-154, 159n1, 231-232, 261-262, 264, 282, 313, 321-325, 338-339, 357-359, 362-379, 395, 402-404, 409-410, 418-419, 422, 428.

⁴⁶ Robertson Smith 1889/1972, 439-440; Tylor 1871/1913, 23-25; II, 355-363, 421, 442.

⁴⁷ Cf. e.g. Tiele (1871a, 100-115; 1873a, 7-20; 1873c, 580-582; 1875, 183-189) on his rejection of theories of degeneration by which e.g. Max Müller and Chantepie (1871, 26, 32-34, 37, 41-43, 51-76, 102, 109; 1887, 21-34) explained the unpalatable facts of religious history, whereas Tylor criticised Lang’s theory that “comparatively pure, if inarticulate religious belief” in a moral Maker and Master came first – “even among the savages” – and “fanciful legend was attached later” (Lang 1887/1913, I, xv-xvii, 4-5, 310-328, 330).

⁴⁸ [178] Tylor 1871/1913, II, 450.

⁴⁹ Tylor 1871/1913, I, 97-104, 104-108, 138-141, 458-467; II, 124-142, 409-410, 415, 441-442, 449-453, esp. 450 (“the Roman scheme, [...] a system so hateful to the man of science for its suppression of knowledge, and for that usurpation of intellectual authority by a sacerdotal caste which has at last reached its climax, now that an aged bishop can judge, by infallible inspiration, the result of researches whose evidence and methods are alike beyond his knowledge and mental grasp”); 1881/1946, 90-91, 94, 97, 109. Cf. also Tiele 1856, 116-118, 125; 1866, 212n1; 1871a, 100; 1871b, 377, 385, 387-388, 395-396, 405-406; 1873d, 585; 1874a, 240-246 (242-243, “In order to maintain its own religious system, Rome has totally condemned modern civilisation [in 1870 in the first Vatican Council]. Absolutely correct! For in that civilisation lies the germ of a development in religion which spells disaster for all obsolete religion, the Roman Catholic one in the first place”); 244, “when the Pope has himself proclaimed infallible and at the same time damns

‘Rite’ and ‘ritual’, therefore, proved most suited for voicing and cultivating pagano-papist sentiments,⁵⁰ and for passionately advocating these views as ‘objective’, ‘scientific’ and ‘rational’. Tylor and Tiele were certain that their theories were, or would soon be, validated by the ‘laws of nature’ (*natuurwetten*) they had established, or would soon establish, by their research into human progress from primitive stupidity to modern enlightenment.⁵¹ And they were equally sure that their books must be used “as a source of power to influence (179) the course of modern ideas and actions” and show, and expose, “what is but time-honoured superstition in the garb of modern knowledge”. For, said Tylor, “the science of culture is essentially a reformer’s science” with the harsh and painful office “to expose the remains of crude old culture which have passed into harmful superstition, and to mark these out for destruction”.⁵²

This evolutionary paradigm and commitment prevented them from perceiving the conflict between their reformatory strategies and their quest for, and claims of, scholarly neutrality, objectivity and rationality. But they provided ‘rite’ and ‘ritual’ with a great leap-forward towards a monopolist position in the semantic cluster of terms by which scholars of religions denote religious action. ‘Rite’ and ‘ritual’ became focal terms for scholars, such as Frazer, Harrison and other members of the Cambridge ‘Myth and Ritual’ school, who had taken leave of religious worship, were anti-ritualist, and so could, and did, take not only an external and detached, but also unsympathetic, polemical position towards any religiously inspired behaviour.⁵³

A bird’s eye view, 1890-2000

Because of lack of time and space, I can only summarily indicate the developments after 1890. Detailed research into the semantic developments (180) in the terminology of late 19th and 20th century scholarship on ‘ritual’ is in order. It will certainly greatly nuance and modify, and perhaps, disprove, my outline below and present assumptions.

‘From inclusivism to exclusivism, and back’ is an appropriate caption for this period. It certainly is anachronistic to term the vocabularies discussed so far ‘inclusive’, for

all our freedoms, all the fruits of modern development as from the Evil One, then he demonstrates that he correctly understands on what conditions only he can maintain his authority”), 248.

⁵⁰ For similar analyses, cf. Janowitz (2004, 23, 28) on “the distorting lens of Protestant-based theories of ritual”; Tambiah 1990, 18-23, 31, 50, 53 (but note Janowitz’s important critique of Tambiah).

⁵¹ Cf. Tiele (1874a, 238-262) for the six *vaste wetten* (firm laws) of the development of religion. Cf. also Kuenen (1882, 7-8) on the “lofty task” of scholars of ordering religions in ‘higher’ and ‘lower’.

⁵² [179] Cf. Tylor 1871/1913, I, 3sq; II, 355-363, 443, 445, 450-453.

⁵³ “But worship as such, as homage to God, will be replaced by doing his will [...], by dedicating ourselves to Him, by a life of holy love, [...] by ‘adoration in spirit and truth’” (Tiele 1871b, 405-406; also 1886, 369). For Lang (1887/1913, I, 312, 315-317, 328) myth and most ritual were products of degeneration. He emphasised that the moral Maker and Master of the “low savages” was not worshipped, whereas “ritual and myth [...] retained vast masses of savage rites and superstitious habits and customs” (I, 251). For Robertson Smith (1889/1972, 16-18, 439-440), ritual was crucial for early, materialist religion, but not for the religion of “spiritual truth”. For Tylor’s anti-ritualism, cf. Tylor (1871/1913, II, 371) on civilisation arranging worship into formalist, mechanical routine. Only Chantepie (1887, I, 132, 136) regarded worship as more essential to religion than doctrine, and as the foundation of any religious, and even the Christian community, provided the latter also became a “community of faith”. On Frazer’s insidious anti-religious, anti-ritualist drive; cf. Ackerman 1990, 1, 10, 66, 70-74, 83, 95-96, *passim*. On Harrison and the Cambridge and other Myth and Ritual schools, cf. Bell 1997, 5-8. On the long history of Christian anti-ritualism in Manichean dualism, Puritanism, Jansenism, etc., cf. Bockock 1974, 38; Tambiah 1990, 6-8, 16-24.

scholars had not as yet become aware analytically of the ‘exclusive’-‘inclusive’ distinction, because these concepts had not as yet emerged. The earliest vocabularies may, therefore, be termed ‘inclusive’ only in retrospect, from our point of view, for two reasons. One is that clearly no separation had yet occurred between terms deemed exclusively fit for designating religious action, and other terms for indicating stylised secular social interaction. Ceremony and ceremonial, feasts, festivities and festivals, and other terms, later deemed appropriate only for denoting secular commerce, were used as freely for religious action as were adoration, *cultus*, veneration, worship, rite and ritual. The other reason is that none of these terms were deemed specifically, let alone exclusively, fit for designating religious action. That is clear from the fact that ‘religious’ was regularly added to them,⁵⁴ even though that was quite superfluous, for it was always clear from the matter examined and from the semantic contexts in which the terms were used, that the reference was to religious action only.

I discuss first the tendency towards reserving ‘ritual’ solely for religious action, and then how that development was arrested and reversed by quite a complex set of contemporary and later developments, involving as diverse disciplines as Psychology/Psychiatry, Ethology and Social and Political Sciences, as well as Anthropology, Religious Studies and Ritual Studies.

(181)

Towards exclusivism

In the first half of the 20th century, an ‘exclusivist paradigm’ was gradually established in both the religiously inspired ‘Science of Religions’ (*godsdienswetenschap*, *Religionswissenschaft*), pioneered by Tiele, Chantepie and Kuenen, of Protestant liberal theologians and a few post-Christian ones like Eliade,⁵⁵ and in the Anthropology of Religions initiated by Tylor, Lang and Robertson Smith, by ritual gradually eliminating all the traditional terms for denoting religious action. The victory of ‘ritual’ had become that complete by the 1960s⁵⁶ that a terminological near-monopoly was established for it in

⁵⁴ [180] For ‘religious adoration’, cf. Tiele 1870a, 167; for ‘religious ceremonies’, cf. Chantepie 1887, I, 109, 119, 128; Kuenen 1882, 332; Tylor 1871/1913, II, 436; Lang 1887/1913, II, 281; Robertson Smith 1889/1972, 330, 367; for ‘religious rites’, cf. Tiele 1874a, 237; Chantepie 1877, I, 119; Tylor 1871/1913, I, 97, 474; II, 90, 292, 362, 380, 383, 415, 416, 421, 438, 442; Lang 1887/1913, II, 23, 63; for ‘religious worship’, cf. Tiele 1871a, 99, 126; 1873b, 239; 1875, 128; 1886, 358; Chantepie 1887, I, 29, 43, 44, 61, 62, 66, 70, 76, 78, 86, 101, 166; Tylor 1871/1913, II, 157.

⁵⁵ [181] Cf. e.g. Alexander (1987, 179): “a prevalent trend [in Religious Studies] identifies ceremonial with secular, as opposed to religious or sacred interests”; Zuesse (1987, 405): “According to Rudolf Otto and Mircea Eliade [...], ritual arises from and celebrates the encounter with the ‘numinous’, or ‘sacred’”; Grimes (1987, 422): “religious ritual in contrast to secular ceremony”. Cf. also Bell (1997, 8-12) on ‘ritual’ in *Phenomenology of Religion*; and Armin Geertz (2004, 55-56) on Eliade as founder of the ‘new primitivism’ in the *History of Religions at the University of Chicago and the USA*.

⁵⁶ In the Frazer Lecture, which Radcliffe-Brown delivered in 1939, and in the Myers Lecture which he read in 1945, ‘rite’ and ‘ritual’ have become the standard terms, and the other semantic options, such as ‘worship’, ‘ceremony’, and ‘ceremonial’, are definitively receding. Radcliffe-Brown used ‘rite’ and ‘ritual’ 215 times, but ‘ceremony’ and ‘ceremonial’ only 22 times, and ‘worship’ only 18 times (Radcliffe-Brown 1952/1971, 133-152; 153-177). But he expressly included both ‘ceremonies’ and ‘collective and individual rites’ into the category of “specifically religious actions” (Radcliffe-Brown 1952/1971, 177). Radcliffe-Brown, therefore, did not initiate the tradition of defining ‘ritual’ as exclusively referring to religious action. He must rather be regarded, with Durkheim, as maintaining the inclusive tradition of early scholarship on religion and ritual, and as laying the groundwork for its re-emergence in *Anthropology of Religion and*

these branches of the study of religions.⁵⁷ Whereas the six pioneers had been (182) terminologically ecumenical and inclusive by their use of both the traditional terms and the new terms ‘rite’, ‘ritual’ and ‘ceremonial’, by the 1960s not only had the typically Christian terms, such as adoration, [divine] service, veneration, and worship, been nearly completely eliminated in the exclusive paradigm, but so were broader terms such as *cultus*, ceremony and ceremonial. It was also by this time that some scholars proposed that ‘rite’ and ‘ritual’ serve as term for religious action only,⁵⁸ and that they reserved, expressly or by implication, ‘ceremony’ and ‘ceremonial’ for secular stylised interaction such as occurred in civil societies and in ‘civil religion’.⁵⁹

Much more research is needed to establish precisely how, when, why and to what degree this restriction to one term only happened in these two disciplines. In both ‘Science of Religions’ – commonly termed ‘Religious Studies’ in Anglo-Saxon universities – and Anthropology of Religions, this definitional and terminological monolatry was, at least in part, due to the need felt for an all-embracing, unified, well-definable terminology in the study of so huge and complex a field as human religious action. In Anthropology of Religions ritual’s supremacy was, moreover, strongly fostered by two pre-occupations. One was the ‘Durkheimian’ functional view of religious ritual as productive of a society’s cohesion and expressive of its structure. The other was the positivist rational-irrational dichotomy anthropologists had constructed between on the one hand technological acts as demonstrably effective of the results to be achieved by them, and therefore as rational, and non-expressive of social structure, and on the other hand religious rites as ineffective in respect of the results intended by the believers, and therefore irrational, but as expressive of a society’s structure.⁶⁰ This rational-irrational dichotomy (183) is one of the several transformations of the opposition anthropologists continually constructed between the ‘primitive’, c.q. religious, mentality, or patterns of thought, and ‘modern’, c.q. secular mentality,⁶¹ which again are themselves two more transformations of the pagano-papist anti-ritualist bias noted above.

The return to inclusivism

Meanwhile, however, ‘ritual’ had been marching forward in a few other disciplines also. It had been introduced into Psychiatry and Ethology first as another, but soon served as the privileged, *etic* (scholarly) term for the classification, description and analysis of forms of stylised behaviour, solitary and communicative, and in particular for patterned

Ritual in the mid-1970s on the basis of their ‘functional’ definition of religion and ritual in which religion and ritual are studied solely in terms of their empirical function of solidifying societies.

⁵⁷ Cf. the definitions of ‘ritual’ by Van Gennep (1909, 13-14, 16-17, 23-24, 275), Durkheim (1912, 56), Firth (1951, 222), the Royal Anthropological Institute (1951, 175), Wilson (1957, 9), Clifford Geertz (1966, [182] 1, 28-29; 1973, 87, 111-112); V.W. Turner (1967, 19; 1968, 15); V.W. Turner & E. Turner (1978, 243) in Platvoet 1995a, 42-45.

⁵⁸ E.g. Firth 1951, 222; Royal Anthropological Institute 1951, 175; Wilson 1957, 9; Gluckman 1962, 22; Max & Mary Gluckman 1977, 251.

⁵⁹ Cf. Bocock 1974, 15, 39.

⁶⁰ Cf. Bocock 1974, 21-23, 24, 26; Goody 1977, [183] 25, 27; Platvoet 1995a, 45, also 37. For definitions of ‘ritual’ as non-technological behaviour and therefore irrational or non-rational, cf. Evans-Pritchard 1937, 12, 492; Leach 1954/1964, 13; 1968: 522; Goody 1961, 159. Cf. also the remark by Goody (1977, 31) that “the pejorative implications of formal, ritual, convention, etiquette, are in fact embedded in their very substance, [and] intrinsic to their nature”.

⁶¹ On the history of Western ‘primitivism’, cf. Armin Geertz 2004.

interaction among humans. One was Freud's study of *Zwangshandlungen*, the solitary obsessive actions which are only seemingly completely meaningless and trivial. Freud concluded that as the obsessive ceremonials constitute the rites of the neurotic's *Privatreligion* (private religion), so the rites and ceremonies of religion constitute a public, collective and "universal obsessive neurosis". Another was Reik's psycho-analytic interpretation of *couvade*, puberty rites, the singing of the *Kol nidré* (all vows) on Yom Kippur, and the blowing of the *shofar* (ram's horn). A third was ethological research on animal and human interaction, into which Julian Huxley introduced the notion 'ritualisation' in 1914. And a fourth was constituted by the analysis of patterns of human political and social communication in the Social and Political Sciences.⁶² It should (184) be noted that anti-ritual sentiments and biases inspired Freud's and Reik's analogy of neurotic ceremonial and religious ritual as well as the comparison of animal and human 'ritualised' behaviour by ethologists. They also informed some of the 'ritualist' analysis of the behaviour of humans in political and other institutional settings in modern Western societies, e.g. the mental asylum, by social and political scientists. After 1960, however, developments to be noted below caused anti-ritualist sentiments and biases to decrease markedly and more empathic approaches, exclusive as well as inclusive, to emerge.

In the second half of the 20th century, three other developments caused the exclusivist paradigm of anthropologists and historians of religions to fuse with that of the ethologists and sociologists into an explicitly inclusive definitional approach to the study of human communicative behaviour, religious as well as secular. The first, in chronological order, of these three developments was decolonisation and the effect it had on the study of ritual in British Anthropology of Religions in the early 1960s. The second one was a paradigm shift in 'Religious Studies' in the early 1970s. And the third one was a new type of 'ritual studies', emerging in the early 1980s. Together they (185) established not only the inclusive approach to 'ritual' but also its nearly absolute⁶³ semantic supremacy.

Anthropology of Religions

Decolonisation forced Anthropology of Religions out of its relative isolation in the study of (the so called) 'primitive religions' (a construct which never existed) in (supposedly) backward, colonial societies and to enter the study of religious behaviour in modern Arab and European rural societies, located in complex institutional and historical settings. This

⁶² Cf. Freud 1907, 1939, 1919; [184] Reik 1919a, xv-xix, 52n6, 58, 123, 133, 154, 157, 162, 171, 190, 191, 193, 194, 199, 210-213, 217, 220, 221, 225-229, 241-243, 248-255, 275n2, 290; Reik 1931/1958, 15-19, 83n1, 158, 190, 193, 198, 199, 209, 234, 236, 237, 239, 244, 256-259, 263, 266-267, 271-272, 275-276, 288-290, 295, 297, 300, 303, 324n1; Lorenz 1967, 47-71; Tinbergen 1968, 157-163; Huxley 1966; Bossard & Bolle 1950 on "rituals of family living"; Leites & Bernaut 1954 on communist "rituals of liquidation"; Goffman 1967, 19-23, 31-40, 44-45 (on the "ritual organisation of social encounters"), 56-76 (on two categories of "deference rituals", "avoidance rituals", and "presentation rituals"); Bocock 1974, 35-59 (on his "action approach" to ritual as the symbolic use of the [human] body for the articulation of meaning; he distinguishes civic, political and religious rituals [60-117], life-cycle and life-crises rituals [118-146], and aesthetic rituals [147-170], each with their own kinds of 'congregations', 'communities' or 'audiences', and modes of, and rules for, participation); Lane 1981 (on the several kinds of Soviet socialist rituals); Kertzer 1988 (on political rituals as ritualisation of power). On Freud's, Reik's and other psycho-analytic approaches to ritual as an obsessive mechanism by which tabooed desires are repressed and appeased, cf. Bell 1997, 12-15.

⁶³ [185] Near-absolute, for MacCormack 1982 points to an important exception to the general trend towards the semantic and notional supremacy of 'ritual'. See below on Geertz 1980 & MacCormack 1982.

shift brought it into a much closer contact with the disciplines employing the concept of 'ritual' for the study of human interaction in the institutions – political and other – of Western and other societies. It made anthropologists aware that the balance and integration of culture, religion and society, which their functionalist paradigm had postulated – incorrectly – for the relatively small and institutionally undifferentiated colonial societies, was absent not only from the large, highly differentiated, modern Western societies, but also from colonial 'tribal' societies, and certainly from the postcolonial states.

They also found in modern Western societies a different relation between ritual and religion than in 'tribal' societies. In the pre-colonial and early colonial societies, religion had been at most an embryonic institution and mostly only a smaller or greater aspect of the other, equally embryonic institutions. That caused rituals to have usually at least a minor, and sometimes a major religious referent, and so, after Durkheimian theory, to contribute to that society's integration. In the complex, but institutionally highly differentiated Western societies, which moreover were rapidly secularising, there was however clearly much ritual without any religious referent, yet some of it contributed greatly to a society's cohesion.⁶⁴

Anthropologists reacted to this confrontation with ritual in modern Western societies in several ways. I discuss only three. One (186) was to abandon the Durkheimian exclusive terminological link between 'ritual' and 'religious action' in favour of an inclusive approach. Another was to insist on the 'greater elaboration of ceremoniousness' in 'tribal societies' than in modern society as Durkheim's 'difference of kind' between mechanically solid and organically solid societies, and thereby maintain the essential link between 'ritual' and religious action.⁶⁵ A third one was to plead to abandon the term 'ritual' as denoting everything and therefore meaning nothing. Jack Goody is representative of the first and third reactions, Max Gluckman of the second.

In 1961, Goody published his 'Religion and Ritual: The Definitional Problem' not in an anthropological journal, but in *The British Journal of Sociology*. In it, he opted with Nadel,⁶⁶ and against Monica Wilson,⁶⁷ for an inclusive approach to 'ritual', because "both in common usage and in sociological writings, the term is frequently given wider significance" than religious action only.⁶⁸ For "common usage" he referred to the Oxford Dictionary; and for sociological writings to two recent publications by American socialologists on the "rituals of family living" in the USA and on the "rituals of liquidation" of political opponents in the Soviet Union.⁶⁹ Goody was also terminologically inclusive: he used 'rite' and 'ritual' 79 times in this article and 'ceremony' and 'ceremonial' 18 times. And though he opposed the "indiscriminate" use of 'ritual' and 'ceremonial' for designat-

⁶⁴ Cf. Bocoock 1974, 34-36, 40, 49.

⁶⁵ [186] Gluckman 1962a, 2, 5, 48-49.

⁶⁶ Nadel (1954, 99) considered as 'ritual' all "stylised or formalised" actions, "made repetitive in that form" and "exhibiting a striking or incongruous rigidity, that is some conspicuous regularity not accounted for by the professed aims of the actions". He regarded an action as a "religious ritual", if "we further attribute to the action a particular manner of relating means to ends which we know to be inadequate by empirical standards, and which we commonly call irrational, mystical, or supernatural".

⁶⁷ Wilson (1959, 9) defined 'ritual' as "a primarily religious action ... directed to securing the blessing of some mystical power", and 'ceremonial' as an "elaborate conventional form for the expression of feeling, not confined to religious occasion".

⁶⁸ Goody 1961, 158.

⁶⁹ Bossard & Boll 1950; Leites & Bernaut 1954.

ing religious phenomena,⁷⁰ he used both terms for religious as well as secular actions of an “elaborate conventional form”. But following (187) Radcliffe-Brown, he reserved ‘ceremonial’ for “a specific sequence of ritual acts performed in public”. So, both a Corpus Christi Day procession celebrating mystical powers, and the parade of the Red Army commemorating the October Revolution were ‘ceremonials’. But USA rituals of family living, and Soviet rituals of liquidation were not, because they were not public performances.⁷¹

Goody also began to slightly modify and tone down the positivist view and wholesale condemnation of all and any religious ritual as ‘irrational’. He continued to regard all “magical action”, and most religious actions, e.g. sacrifice and prayer, as “irrational”, because they have “a pragmatic end which [their] procedures fail to achieve, or achieve for other reasons than the patient [...] supposes”.⁷² But he added two more categories of ‘ritual’. One comprised “non-rational”, “transcendental” religious rituals, “based upon theories which surpass experience”. They have “no pragmatic end other than the very performance of the acts themselves, and cannot therefore be said to have achieved, or not to have achieved such an end”.⁷³ Examples are “the many public celebrations which involve supernatural beings”, e.g. “those collective actions [or ceremonials] required by custom [which are publicly] performed on occasions of change in the social life”.⁷⁴ The other category consists of secular rituals. They are “neither religious nor magical; [they] neither assume the existence of spiritual beings nor [are] aimed at some empirical end”. Examples are “civil marriage ceremonies and rituals of birth and death in secular households or societies”.⁷⁵

Gluckman, however, took his point of departure in Van Gennep’s statement that the more primitive societies are, the more they are religious, and Durkheim’s that a “regression of religion [...] accompanies the developing division of labour”. He added to these his own observation that in tribal societies social relations are “ritualised”, whereas in modern societies “congregations assemble to worship a general God and each man is in communion with the (188) Deity”.⁷⁶ He concluded that “the study of modern religion raises some very different problems from the study of tribal religion and ritual”.⁷⁷ Gluckman agreed with Goody that definitions are mere “proposals for convenience only” in order that words be used “in the most fruitful way”. But he sided with Monica Wilson in defining ‘ceremony’ and ‘ceremonial’ as any complex conventional stylised behaviour, secular or religious, by which social relations are expressed.⁷⁸ Such ‘ceremony’ or

⁷⁰ Goody 1961, 142-143.

⁷¹ [187] Goody 1961, 159-160.

⁷² Goody 1961, 159.

⁷³ Goody 1961, 154. Goody owed these insights to Parsons (1937, 429) and Pareto.

⁷⁴ Goody 1961, 159.

⁷⁵ Goody 1961, 159-160.

⁷⁶ [188] Gluckman 1962a, 19-20, 25-26, 49. Cf. also 42-43: “in tribal societies, rituals are built out of the very texture of social relations”, whereas in modern societies one finds “mere congregations with a generalised, universalistic belief at which people pray”; and Mary & Max Gluckman (1977, 231) on “the [...] ‘universalistic’ religions, in which adherence to beliefs was sufficient to give membership in congregations”.

⁷⁷ Gluckman 1962a, 25.

⁷⁸ Gluckman 1962a, 22. Cf. also Mary & Max Gluckman 1977, 230-231, 233, 234

‘ceremonial’ was ‘ritual’ behaviour, if religion⁷⁹ was involved, and ‘ceremonious’ behaviour, if it was secular.⁸⁰ Gluckman enumerated four kinds of ‘rituals’ among the South-Eastern Bantu: “magical” rituals “connected with the use of substances acting by mystical powers”; religious rituals, such as the cult of ancestors; “constitutive” rituals, such as rites of passage, which express or alter social relations by reference to mystical notions; and “factitive” rituals, such as fertility rituals, which increased the material well-being of a group. The latter, he noted, included elements from the other three: not (189) only sacrifices to the ancestors and the use of magical substances but also the performance of prescribed actions by members of the congregation in terms of their secular roles”.⁸¹

He devoted the rest of his contribution to the latter two groups of rituals. He analysed them as the “ritualization” of [Bantu] social relationships, that is as “stylized ceremonial in which persons [...] perform prescribed actions according to their secular roles [...] so as to secure general blessing, purification, protection and prosperity [...] in some mystical manner which is out of sensory control”.⁸² He expected to find this “high ritualization” of social relations “wherever people live in largish groups”, e.g. in Homeric Greece, early Rome, pagan Europe and modern ‘tribal’ societies. He proposed as a sociological explanation of it, “that each social relation in a subsistence economy tends to serve manifold purposes”, in part because of the “low level of technological development” of these societies, in part because “the uncertainties of anxiety about crops, [...] children, [etc.] become intricately involved in the social relations themselves”. In these societies, many special customs and stylised etiquette, with moral connotations and religious consequences, are developed to mark the numerous different roles males and females are playing at any moment, whereas “relations in our own families” are marked by “rather vague patterns of respect [...] or egalitarianism”, without any moral and religious associations.⁸³

Gluckman saw a “sharp contrast”, and even an incompatibility and difference in kind, between tribal and modern societies. In tribal societies, roles are segregated by taboos and ritualisation, because there are “radical conflicts in their very constitution” that need to be cloaked by ritual. In modern industrialized urban life, roles are fragmented by being played out on different stages, and by this spatial segregation “conflicts between roles are segregated”, or they are solved by judicial decision or other “empirical and rational procedures”. Gluckman acknowledged that the degree of ritualization of roles in tribal societies varied. He explained that variation by the degree of secular differentiation which had

⁷⁹ Gluckman borrowed his definition of ‘ritual’ from Evans-Pritchard (1937, 12) who defines it as “any behaviour that is accounted for by mystical notions”, i.e. by “patterns of thought that attribute to phenomena supra-sensible qualities which, or part of which, are not derived from observation or cannot be logically inferred from it, and which they do not possess”. The irrationality of ‘mystical’ behaviour is implied, for, says Evans-Pritchard (1937, 12), “there is no objective nexus between the [ritual] behaviour and the event it is intended to cause”.

⁸⁰ Gluckman 1962a, 22-23, 29n1, 30. Cf. also Mary Gluckman & Max Gluckman (1977, 231): “‘Ritual’ ceremonialism was stipulated [in 1962] to cover actions which had reference, in the view of the actors, to occult powers; where such beliefs were not present, it was suggested that the word ‘ceremonious’ be used”. For Mary & Max Gluckman (1977, 231, 236), it would, therefore, be a “contradiction in those stipulated terms” – though “not inherently so” – to term secular games, athletic contests, sport and drama, “secular rituals”. They preferred to continue to term them “secular ceremonials”.

⁸¹ [189] Gluckman 1962a, 23; cf. also Mary Gluckman & Max Gluckman 1977, 230-231.

⁸² Gluckman 1962a, 23-24, 49-50.

⁸³ Gluckman 1962a, 26-33, 36, 39.

occurred in social roles: (190) “the greater the secular differentiation of role, the less the ritual, and [...] the less mystical is the ceremonial of etiquette”.⁸⁴

It is apparent from these two summaries that Goody adopted an inclusive approach to the definition of ‘ritual’, because he included – or better: began to include – both ‘tribal’ and ‘modern Western’ rituals into the scope of his analysis and category.⁸⁵ It is also clear that Gluckman took an exclusive approach, be it a mitigated one,⁸⁶ because his theory was predicated by the dichotomous mindset fundamental to virtually all Anthropology of Religions till then: that of regarding ‘primitive mentality’ and society as religious, ritual, and irrational, and ‘modern mentality’ and society as technological, ‘objective’, rational, and secular. The message is that modern societies are not only inhospitable to, but also basically incompatible with religion and ‘ritual’: their “whole social bias is against [...] rituals”.⁸⁷ Though modern societies have pockets resembling tribal society, such as a college of Cambridge University, ‘ritual’ is “reduced to a minimum” in them, for even in those pockets ‘ritualisation’ does not develop. Modern societies merely have worship and (RC) ritualism.⁸⁸ Despite his own definition of ‘ritual’, Gluckman seemed unable to regard Christian worship as a ritual.

In 1977, Goody took leave of the concept of ‘ritual’, because it is “vagueness itself”, “accepts, implicitly or explicitly, a dichotomous view of the world”, and “we find widespread confusion” in its analysis. (191) Only when restricted to religion, he saw it as having “some minimal utility”.⁸⁹ But he admitted: “Of course if one defines ritual as a formalistic type of behaviour, leaving out any connotation of ‘religion’, then it would be absurd [...] to suppose that ‘ritual’ was any less common in Western societies than in any other. ‘Routinisation’, regularisation, repetition, lie at the basis of the social life itself”.⁹⁰ ‘Ritual’, therefore, might serve to comprise both secular and religious formal behaviour.

Goody’s leave taking article appeared in 1977 in a volume of papers on the study of ritual by anthropologists, entitled *Secular Rituals*. It may be regarded as concluding the paradigm shift from an exclusive to an inclusive approach to ritual in Anthropology of Religions.⁹¹ Gluckman, however, stuck to his 1962 proposal.⁹²

⁸⁴ [190] Gluckman 1962a, 33-40, 46-47, 49. 51-52. Kimball, who held that people in a secular urbanized world need rituals as much as anyone else, was “on a false trail”, said Gluckman, for modern rites of passage “do not involve any ideas that the performing of prescribed actions by appropriately related persons will mystically affect the well-being of the initiands”, or that misfortune requires “ritual dealing with mystical forces” to “achieve re-aggregation” (1962a, 37, 38).

⁸⁵ Goody was critical of the “ethnographic myopia” of functionalist anthropology of religions, and its too easy dismissal of earlier approaches to “funeral ceremonies and ancestor worship”. He pleaded that analytical tools be developed for a “comparative sociology” of “mortuary institutions” (Goody 1962, v-vi, 11, 13).

⁸⁶ ‘Mitigated’, because Gluckman did not dichotomise between secular ‘ceremony’ and ‘ceremonial’ on the one hand, and religious ‘rite’ and ‘ritual’ on the other. He proposed only that ‘ceremony’ and ‘ceremonial’ be used as the superordinate category for any stylised act, whether religious or secular, and that ‘ritual ceremonial’, or ‘ritual’, serve as the subordinate category for religious actions; and that the (awkward) ‘ceremonious ceremonial’ serve as such for secular ones.

⁸⁷ Gluckman 1962a, 48.

⁸⁸ Gluckman 1962a, 20, 43-45.

⁸⁹ [191] E.g. Goody 1977, 25-26.

⁹⁰ Goody 1977, 28. Cf. also below note 118.

⁹¹ Moore & Myerhoff 1977b.

⁹² Mary & Max Gluckman 1977.

An 'inclusive terminology' prevailed also in Clifford Geertz's study of the 'theatre state' (*negara*) of pre-colonial Bali in the nineteenth century,⁹³ and in that of McCormack of the political role of religion, 'pagan' and Christian, in the Roman empire between the first century BCE and the sixth century CE.⁹⁴ In both books, 'cult',⁹⁵ 'ritual' and 'rite',⁹⁶ and 'ceremony' and (192) 'ceremonial',⁹⁷ were used as synonyms for designating the elaborate, formal, stylised acts of these polities.⁹⁸ These rituals and ceremonials were by their very nature public, political and religious. A cosmological reference was always at the heart of the political rituals of the state cult of divine kingship on Bali, said Geertz;⁹⁹

⁹³ Geertz 1980.

⁹⁴ MacCormack 1982.

⁹⁵ Geertz used 'cult' not only for religio-political "state" rituals, such as the "cult of the universal monarch" (or "divine king", or "royal divinity"), the "king's cult", and "lingga-divine-king cults", that provided a Hindu cosmic basis for royal political power, but also for other types of religious behaviour, e.g. in connection with irrigation and the cultivation of rice (the "rice-mother/rice-wedding cult", the "rice-field cult", "rice cult"), the earth ("earth cult"), and witches ("the Balinese have a well-developed witch-cult") (Geertz 1980, 3, 76, 80, 85, 125, 131, 186, 222, 248). MacCormack likewise used 'cult' both for religio-political ceremonials for *post mortem* divinised Roman emperors and the goddess Roma, personifying the city of Rome (MacCormack 1982, 95, 100, 101, 103, 110, 112, 135, 141, 178), but also for 'proper' religious behaviour, such as the 'pagan' *cultus deorum* (MacCormack 1982, 19, 25, 67, 113, 120, 140, 141, 151, 280).

⁹⁶ 'Rite' and 'ritual' (as noun as well as adjective) were used by Geertz not only for religio-political "court rites", "court rituals", "rites of state", "mass rituals", "royal rituals", "state ritual" and *puputan*: "this strange ritual of dynasty-ending military suicide" (Geertz 1980, 11, 13, 18, 24, 85, 87, 103, 104, 108, 116, 120, 129, 215, 216, 217, 250, 252, 255), but also for purificatory rites, rites of invocation, rites for [192] the dead, the last rites, first fruits rites, Water Opening rites, realm-purifying rites and rites of passage (Geertz 1980, 49, 51, 82, 86, 117, 120, 125, 129, 132, 188, 193, 215, 216), and for popular and priestly rituals, communal rituals, season opening rituals, Water-Opening rituals, harvest rituals, regional and Balinese rituals, and complex realm-purifying rituals (Geertz 1980, 47, 50, 75, 76, 81, 103, 106, 108, 117, 122, 124, 126, 135, 156, 158, 167, 186, 188, 194, 215, 216, 217, 220, 222, 223, 237, 248). MacCormack too used 'rite' and 'ritual' not only for religio-political "complex courtly rituals", such as "the ritual of consecration", "the ceremony of *adventus* [as] the traditional rite of welcome for a ruler", "the 'ritual [of *adventus*] as a whole", the "rites of imperial funeral", "the ritual of imperial ascent to heaven", "accession ritual", "enthronement in the palace as a timeless visual expression of the accession ritual", "imperial *vota* as rites performed on anniversary of the emperor's accession", "rites of accession [of the emperor] absorbed into the ritual of the church", "rites of *consecratio*", "rites customary for an imperial accession" (MacCormack 1982, 6, 18, 78, 96, 127, 165, 237, 238, 244, 246, 253), but also for the "rituals of the Christian church", "Christian rites", "rites to honour a holy death", "ancient cult rituals", "funerary rites", and "ancient Roman agricultural rites" (MacCormack 1982, 9, 96, 132, 136, 145, 171, 246, 247).

⁹⁷ For their religio-political use, cf Geertz 1980, 102 ("state ceremonies"), 104 ("state ceremonails"), 108 ("court ceremonials"), 114 ("kingdom-wide mass ceremonies held at the palace"), 117 (the cremation ceremony of a king as *karya ratu*, 'king's work', "a religious corvée in which service and worship come down to the same thing"), 120 ("the whole ceremony [of a king's cremation] was a giant demonstration [...] of the indestructibility of hierarchy"), 122, 129 ("state ceremony"), 130, 131, 216, 241, 249, 250 ("court ceremonies"), 133 ("the king's ritual deactivation [caused him to be] imprisoned in the ceremony of rule"), 233 ("cremation [and] obeisance ceremonies"). For their wider religious use, cf. Geertz (1982, 53, 76, 80, 81, 105, 129, 193, 194, 215) on the ceremonies in *subak* (irrigation society) and other Balinese temples.

⁹⁸ Cf. also Geertz (1966, 28-29) on 'ritual' as the "ceremonial form" in which 'the moods and motivations which sacred symbols induce in men and the general conceptions of the order of existence which they formulate for men meet and reinforce one another'. Some rituals, he said, were "more elaborate and usually more public"; and he added, "we may call these full-blown *ceremonies* 'cultural performances'" (*my emphases*).

⁹⁹ Geertz (1980, 102, 104): "The state cult was not a cult of the state. It was an argument, made over and over again in the insistent vocabulary of ritual, that worldly status has a cosmic base, that hierarchy is the governing principle of the universe, and that arrangements of human life are but approximation, more close

and the (193) imperial ceremonies of Rome and Byzantium were performed in “an atmosphere of the supernatural penetrating into the natural order”, said MacCormack.¹⁰⁰ Only the terms ‘adoration’, ‘veneration’ and ‘worship’ were mostly restricted by them to explicitly religious acts directed towards divine, or (postmortem) divinised or other meta-empirical beings.¹⁰¹

In that ‘ecumenical’ cluster of undefined terms, ‘rite’ and ‘ritual’, and ‘ceremony’ and ‘ceremonial’ were used quite evenly by Clifford Geertz. ‘Rite’ and ‘ritual’ appeared 158 times, and ‘ceremony’ and ‘ceremonial’ 111 times in his study of the ‘theatre state’ of pre-colonial Bali. In addition, he used ‘worship(ers)’ 22 times, ‘cult’ 18 times, ‘drama’ 16 times, ‘theatre (state)’ 21 times, ‘veneration’ 3 times, and ‘to adore’ once. ‘Ceremony’ and ‘ceremonial’, however, were clearly MacCormack’s favourite terms in her study of the ceremonies of the *adventus* (arrival of the emperor as *deus praesens*),¹⁰² *consecratio* (divinisation of the emperor after death by a vote of the Roman senate),¹⁰³ and accession of the emperor in Rome and Byzantium.¹⁰⁴ She used ‘ceremonial’ 306 times, and ‘ceremony’ 252 times, whereas ‘rite’ and ‘ritual’ appeared only 32 times, ‘cult’ 27 times, ‘worship’ 15 times, ‘veneration’ 4 times, and ‘adoration’ 3 times. Judging by the literature she quoted, her predilection for ‘ceremonial’ and ‘ceremony’ over ‘ritual’ and ‘rite’ seemed fairly common among her fellow scholars of Roman and early Christian religion. Which is to be expected in the study of the ‘ceremonials’ of the pre- and post-Constantine Roman empire, for in Latin *caeremonia* had an explicitly religious connotation (e.g. in the set expression *metus ac caeremonia deorum*, ‘fear and worship of the gods’), much more so than *ritus*, *rite*, and *ritualis*, which merely connoted the proper order, or (194) ‘flow’, of the *cultus deorum* and any other public religious action.¹⁰⁵ It is likely for this reason that MacCormack translates *hunc veterum primi ritum non rite colebant*¹⁰⁶ by ‘this ceremony was not observed rightly by our earliest ancestors’ (my emphasis).¹⁰⁷

‘Religious Studies’

The second development was the paradigm shift that occurred in the academic study of religions in Faculties of Theology and Departments of Religious Studies in Western universities after 1970, when many of its scholars gradually exchanged the traditional liberal

or less, to those of the divine. [...] The state ceremonials of classical Bali were metaphysical theatre, theatre designed to express a view of the ultimate nature of reality and, at the same time, to shape the existing conditions of life to be consonant with that reality; that is, theatre designed to present an ontology and, by presenting it, to make it happen – make it actual”.

¹⁰⁰ [193] MacCormack 1982, 24, 26, 28, 31, 135-136, 180. MacCormack rejected as “unsatisfactory” the distinction between ‘secular’ and ‘ecclesiastical’ coronation ceremonies made by some other Byzantinologists, because “Church and state were not conceived of as distinct from each other”. Therefore, “it is misleading to distinguish between the secular and the ecclesiastical spheres in early Byzantium, for the distinction cannot be firmly anchored in the evidence” (MacCormack (1982, 242, 244, 246).

¹⁰¹ Cf. Geertz 1980, 51, 52, 53, 106, 115, 117, 155, 193, 221, 223, 235, 248, 263; MacCormack 1982, 25/-28n52, 27/28n54, 67/304n268, 120, 135, 138, 140, 244, 286, 315, 316, 373.

¹⁰² MacCormack 1982, 17-89.

¹⁰³ MacCormack 1982, 93-158.

¹⁰⁴ MacCormack 1982, 161-266.

¹⁰⁵ [194] Cf. e.g. MacCormack (1982, 78): “In the late third and early fourth centuries, *adventus* was still basically [...], its precise ritual notwithstanding, a very loose ceremony”.

¹⁰⁶ Flavius Cresconius Corippus (6th century CE), *In laudem Iustini*, I, 338.

¹⁰⁷ MacCormack 1982, 80, 309.

Christian foundation of their historical and comparative studies of religions and rituals for a methodologically agnostic, empirical, secular orientation. It coincided with the gradual de-institutionalisation of the ‘religionist’ and ‘positivist’ approaches to religion, which had been securely linked with respectively Faculties of Theology and Faculties of the Social Sciences until 1950.¹⁰⁸ All three positions – positivist, religionist, and methodologically agnostic – are found now in any institutional setting for the academic study of religions in The Netherlands,¹⁰⁹ and increasingly also in many other Western universities. Methodological agnosticism caused scholars to de-emphasise the doctrinal aspect of religions, to pay more attention to religious behaviour than they used to do, and to study religions as thoroughly immersed in, and contextualised by, their societies, and especially, under the influence of Foucault and Bourdieu, by the social history and political struggles in them. That is, to adopt an inclusive approach to ritual studies.

(195)

‘Ritual Studies’

The third development was the emergence, from the late 1970s onwards, of a different ‘ritual studies’ from the study of rituals discussed so far. In that study, scholars of different disciplines had been studying rituals at first as unsympathetic outsiders, and more recently as mostly sympathetic observers. The new ‘Ritual Studies’, however, emerged within Religious Studies on the interface between Liturgical Studies in Faculties of Theology, Anthropology of Ritual in the vein of Victor and Edith Turner in Social Sciences, and Performance Studies in Departments of Drama. It coordinated “the normative interests of theology and liturgics, the descriptive ones of the history and phenomenology of religions, and the analytical ones of anthropology”.¹¹⁰ It propagated an experiential approach to rituals and their “indigenous exegesis” by researching them as insiders, against the so called “objectivist” approach of the other disciplines. Its focus was not on theological reflection on them, nor on sociological analysis of their contexts, but on an “actional” approach to the study of rituals by “ritual experts”. The “overt action”, or performance, drama or play, and the body with its capacity to embody and express social roles and transmit, wittingly and unwittingly, cultural meanings and values, were its “central consideration”.¹¹¹

These ritual experts, therefore, took actively and creatively part in rituals in order “to maintain a ritual tradition’s cogency, relevance and legitimacy”, and had normative, practical or other vested interests in them because of their backgrounds in liturgical theology and the performance of drama and dance. This ‘Ritual Studies’ acquired departments of its own in a few US universities, and established its own *Journal of Ritual Studies* in 1987. Its advocates rejected the view that rituals are conservative, traditional, boring and structural, but view them as subversive, creative, exciting and processual. Victor Turner was their icon and ideologue, because he insisted that “real rituals effect transformation”,

¹⁰⁸ In the 1960s, some leading anthropologists such as Evans-Pritchard, Victor Turner, Robert Bellah, and Jan van Baal criticised the positivist ideology of the Social Sciences in part because of their personal religious beliefs, and in part on grounds of methodology, and either took agnostic or religionist positions in the anthropological study of religions.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Platvoet 2002, 131-136.

¹¹⁰ [195] Grimes 1987: 422.

¹¹¹ Grimes 1987, 422-423.

and that 'liminal' and 'liminoid' rituals create *communitas*. Thereby, said Grimes, rituals become "a hotbed of cultural creativity" and transformation.¹¹²

(196) 'Ritual Studies' emerged roughly one century after the term 'ritual' began its triumphant march forward in the academic study of religious and other ceremonial behaviour and in the languages of Western societies. Its approach to ritual represents a full U-turn from the pagano-papist biases of earliest 'ritual studies' that nourished the dichotomies of 'us' as enlightened and civilised *versus* 'them' as primitive and in need of our schools, religion and rule by denigrating ritual as superstitious, magical, childish, neurotic, stupid and irrational. It also questioned the sacred-profane dichotomy underlying the exclusive definitions of 'ritual' as religious action, and of 'ceremony' as secular behaviour. It followed Goffman in regarding 'ceremony' as a "self-symbolising", "self-conscious" and "self-reflective" mode, or layer, or sensibility of public behaviour in the rituals of small scale groups. But it also introduced a new dichotomy – of 'ceremony' as conservative versus 'ritual' as innovative – by taking Victor Turner's position that 'ceremony' reinforces social structures, and that 'ritual' transforms them.¹¹³

But 'Ritual Studies' is not representative of modern research into ritual behaviour. It is a reaction to the rapid secularisation, massive religious de-affiliation, and wholesale dismissal of much traditional ritual behaviour, religious and other, in Western societies after World War II, and the dire need for ritual creativity to fill those gaps.¹¹⁴

In the other disciplines engaged in ritual studies, *traditional* anti-ritual biases have, however, also been toned-down considerably. For one reason because much traditional ritual, religious and other, disappeared rapidly by itself, without anti-papist polemics or insidious strategies. For another, because even a- and anti-religious modern Westerners proved to be in need, as symbolic animals, of at least a modicum of ritual, old or new, and have become conscious through (197) ritual studies that they partake in a universal phenomenon.¹¹⁵ As a result, sympathy for, and empathy with, ritual increased among scholars of ritual and resulted in more objective description and analysis. Their massive change-over from exclusive to inclusive definition of 'ritual' resulted on the one hand in better analytical comprehension of its complexity as dense symbolic behaviour, but on the other hand also laid bare its numerous latent strategic functions, such as those of hiding innovation, of super- and subordination, and of 'redemptive hegemony' by 'misrecognition'.¹¹⁶ It also showed that there are many downright ugly rituals, e.g. those used for boundary maintenance and exclusion, especially in plural societies full of tensions and strive between 'communities',¹¹⁷ and in the global violent clashes between radicalis-

¹¹² Grimes 2000, 262-266; Alexander 1987, [196] 179-180. Cf. also V.W. Turner (1977, 45): "*Liminoid* phenomena [...] represent radical critiques of the central structures [of modern secular societies] and propose utopian alternative models"; and Bell (1997, 263) on Victor Turner as "the authority behind much American ritual invention".

¹¹³ Cf. Alexander 1987, 179-180.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Bell 1997, 263-265 on those gaps being filled on "the explicit authority vouchsafed to scholars of ritual" like Clifford Geertz and Victor Turner, whose unproven and contested theory about 'ritual' as a universal human process "empowers people to invent new ones".

¹¹⁵ [197] Bell 1997, 264-265.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Bell 1992, 74-110, 114-117, 141-142.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Platvoet 1995b, 2004. On 'plural' and 'pluralist' societies, cf. Platvoet & Van der Toorn 1995a, 3n1.

ed Muslim ‘terrorists’ and US hegemony. They are the violent rituals of war and confrontation for the explicit purpose of exploding instead of integrating society.¹¹⁸

The Pragmatics of Inclusion

Grimes, discussing the notion of ritual, was distressed by the “bedevilling problem of inclusion and exclusion”, “linguistic confusion”, and “the conundrum” which dictionary definition of ‘ritual’ to choose. There is, however, no bedevilling problem: there are merely options, each with its own advantages and disadvantages. For, as Grimes says correctly, “there is no end to the uses of ritual”.¹¹⁹ Below, I discuss first the advantages and disadvantages of an exclusive definition of ‘ritual’; secondly, why it an exclusive definition of ritual is neither feasible nor advisable; and thirdly, that it is more advisable (198) to stay close to the pre-theoretic understanding of ‘ritual’; and lastly, the advantages of an inclusive definition of ‘ritual’.

Advantages of exclusive definition

The advantage of ‘exclusive’, or narrow, definitions of ‘ritual’, whether by restricting it to ‘religious’ behaviour or to some other trait deemed ‘essential’ (such as stereotypy, repetition, meaninglessness, theophany, or liminality), is that they draw narrow boundaries around the kinds of behaviour which may be included into the category of ‘ritual’, and so allow for an unambiguous stipulation of ritual, i.e. of what it is thought and said to ‘be’ – or even what it ought to be.

The claim that scholars of ritual should establish a clear definition of it must not be dismissed offhand, for it honours a respectable tradition in Western scholarship, which has been cultivated greatly whenever a precise definition was feasible. That is especially the case in the natural sciences. The exact stipulation of their symbols has become not only traditional but even normative in them, for they analyse matter or processes into minute parts or aspects and must measure each exactly. As a result, their precisely stipulated symbols, standardized by international agreements, now constitute a global language by means of which scholars of the natural sciences transcend the idioms of their own languages and converse worldwide about research problems in formal, quantitative ways from which the biases and subjectivities inherent in their languages, cultures and world-views have been eliminated. In some disciplines the precise stipulation of terms and symbols is, therefore, a common and important research instrument.

Its major disadvantage is that such a minutely defined set of symbols becomes the jargon of a highly specialised, ‘esoteric’ community with virtually no ‘public intelligibility’, which is highly impervious to the semantic changes in the ‘ordinary’ languages of daily speech. Despite this disadvantage, it must be admitted that, if an ‘exclusive’, unambiguous definition of ‘ritual’ were feasible and advisable, it might be a very useful instrument of research, heuristically, analytically, comparatively, and theoretically.

(199)

Neither feasible nor advisable

There are, however, reasons for abandoning the search for an exclusive definition of ‘ritual’ as neither feasible nor advisable, and for settling pragmatically for either no defini-

¹¹⁸ Cf. my “anti-Durkheimian theses” (Platvoet 1995a, 37-41, 213-221; 2002, 261-262).

¹¹⁹ Grimes 2000, 259, 260, 267.

tion of it at all, or for numerous definitions of it. In the former case one may be opting for an inclusive approach implicitly; in the latter case, one does so explicitly.

The main reason for abandoning the search for an exclusive definition of 'ritual' is that it is not feasible, for 'ritual' belongs to a group of terms, such as 'religion', 'culture', 'society', the human 'mind', 'symbol', and other key terms and concepts,¹²⁰ by means of which Western scholars indicate the extremely complex central research objects of the 'human sciences'. Research into them in the past century has proved the cultural phenomena to which these terms refer ever more varied, variable, complex, dense, and dynamic. Definitions of these terms, however useful for heuristic, analytical, comparative and theoretical purposes, and necessary for critical scholarly dialogue, can now be seen as referring to polysemic, polymorphic and poly-functional phenomena of such huge cultural diversity and immense dispersion through time and space, that it is an illusion to expect that they will ever be defined in a manner that is acceptable to all (Western[ised])¹²¹ scholars of rituals, religions, symbols, cultures, societies, etc. No definition is likely to be unambiguously acknowledged by them as definitive, exhaustive and universally valid, even within a single discipline, i.e. as establishing forever and for all cultures the trans-temporal nature or essence of 'ritual' (or 'religion', or 'symbol', etc.). Moreover, the definitions as (200) well as the phenomena they refer to, are historically contingent, and therefore arbitrary.¹²²

An unambiguous definition of 'ritual', 'religion', etc., is in addition inadvisable, because the complexity and numerous functions of these crucial phenomena in the cultural histories of humankind, to which these terms refer, invite a multiplicity of disciplinary approaches, definitions and theories rather than one unified, exclusive approach. Exclusive definitions of 'ritual' will necessarily study merely a part, or an aspect, of the wider and more complex phenomena to which the term 'ritual' has come to refer. Exclusive definitions of 'ritual' are merely legitimate, feasible, and useful, if they are presented as operational or working definitions, that is as provisional definitions designed to serve as an instrument for a specific research into a particular part or aspect of the wide research area of 'ritual' without any claim to a trans-historical and trans-cultural validity.¹²³ But as

¹²⁰ [199] Goody (1977, 25) mentions totemism, taboo, mana, sorcery, magic, myth, "and above all ritual". He deems these terms "vagueness itself", "virtually useless for analytical purposes". In Anthropology, "these terms often accept, implicitly or explicitly, a dichotomous view of the world", as expressed in the several we-they oppositions, such as 'civilised'-'savage', 'Christian religion'-'primitive magic', 'modern science'-'any religion', 'rational'-'irrational'. The list of these terms, as well as that of these dichotomies, can be considerably expanded. His other objection is that 'ritual', being all-embracing, "inhibits the study of both variation and association. There is nothing to demonstrate either way, nothing to prove or disprove, support or contradict; all is equally acceptable". The broadness of the category of ritual renders falsification of analyses of ritual impossible (Goody 1977, 29-30).

¹²¹ For the moment there are, and for the foreseeable future there will most likely be, no non-Western scholars who are not, as scholars, highly Westernised, precisely because of 'globalisation'.

¹²² [200] I have proposed this argument also for the definition of 'religion' in Platvoet 1999a. Cf. also the semantic history of the term 'religion' in Platvoet 1999b. Other scholars have recently insisted that terms such as 'religion' are "imprecise, messy, everyday generalisations" (Harvey 2000, 10), that "can be defined, with greater or lesser success, in more than fifty ways" (Harvey [2000, 7], quoting J.Z. Smith [1998, 282]). However, though they constitute "imprecise tool[s], broad categor[ies] and wide, generic term[s]" (Harvey 2000, 7) only and invite numerous definitions, they are, says J.Z. Smith (1998, 282) useful and valid, for they establish the horizons which the different academic disciplines need.

¹²³ On operational definitions and their heuristic, analytic and explanatory functions, cf. Platvoet 1990, 181-183; 255, 260-261.

soon as their authors accept that their exclusive definitions are provisional working definitions only, they can no longer propose them as exclusive, but merely as one option among several other, equally legitimate, other definitions. The possibility of an exclusive, trans-temporal definition is moreover precluded and vitiated by fact that not only rituals, but also their definitions, are historical and dynamic phenomena, subject to continual cultural, semantic and terminological (201) change.¹²⁴ Their future developments, substantive, semantic, morphological and functional, cannot, therefore, be predicted, and their developments in the past cannot be repeated. Theories about them can, therefore, only be critically discussed. They cannot be proved valid by repetition and experiment.

The pre-theoretic use of 'ritual'

As, therefore, no single definition will ever exhaust what ritual 'really' is and delimit (*definire*) it from anything that is 'not-ritual', scholars may also research rituals without explicitly defining 'ritual'. In that case, they organise their research on the basis of their own pre-reflective understanding of what 'ritual' denotes and connotes for them. They derive that meaning and set of associations from how 'ritual' is used in their own environment, scholarly and other, in the daily language of conversation, newspapers, literature, classes and seminars, and perhaps lexical dictionaries. That pre-theoretical use of the term 'ritual' usually poses problems only for colleagues eager to discuss and evaluate critically an author's descriptions, analyses and theories of rituals in order to accept, modify or reject them, for such unarticulated use of the term 'ritual' admits of much vagueness. Inarticulate use of 'ritual' may also give rise to special unexplained emphases and the use of quasi-technical terms. The reader must then grope laboriously for an understanding of their precise meaning from the hints strewn through the text or implied, often darkly, in the argumentation. Even so, non-defining scholars can be shown to have contributed considerably, or even crucially, to the body of present-day received knowledge on ritual and rituals.¹²⁵

Pre-theoretical use of the term of 'ritual' will likely follow the vicissitudes of the semantic history of the term in the general linguistic community, or in one of its several (e.g. professional or scholarly) sub-communities. In either, its denotation may, therefore, be an exclusive or inclusive one, depending on the period or sub-community in which the term is used. The general drift of semantic change has, however, since 1950 been from exclusive to inclusive, as two dictionaries published in 1951, and two more recent dictionaries (202) document.¹²⁶ I suggest that further research will demonstrate that the pre-the-

¹²⁴ [124] Cf. Kreinath, Hartung & Deschner 2004.

¹²⁵ Bourdieu is a case in point. On his contribution to ritual studies, cf. Bell 1992, 97-99, 103-104, 112, 176; 1997: 77-79.

¹²⁶ [202] *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* (1951⁴) and *Verklarend Handwoordenboek der Nederlandse Taal* (by M.J. Koenen & J. Endepols, 1951²³) both restrict 'ritual' to religious rites, their prescribed order, and books containing the prescriptions. Curiously, this *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* takes an inclusive approach to 'rite'. It defines 'rite' as "a religious or solemn ceremony or observance", and refers to "the rites of hospitality", i.e. to an instance without religious connotations, before presenting other examples which at the time usually had religious connotations ("burial rites", "nuptial rites") or have a religious connotation only ("the rite of confirmation"; "the Latin, Anglican rite"). The *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1978) and *Van Dale Groot Woordenboek der Nederlandse Taal* (1992¹²), however, both take an inclusive approach to 'rite' and 'ritual'. The first defines them as "behaviour with a fixed pattern, usually for a religious purpose", but cites first "the ritual of warming the teapot" before referring to "ritual killings", and "Christian ritual". The second privileges the religious connotations

oretical use of the term of 'ritual' in the past five decades usually implied either an inclusive approach to the definition of 'ritual', or will show a shift from an exclusive to an inclusive definition.

Advantages of an inclusive approach

The same research will, I trust, also show also that, in the past four decades, most explicit definitions of 'ritual' have followed the general semantic drift towards an inclusive and less biased definition of ritual. If their authors were methodologically reflexive,¹²⁷ they will also have done so on the grounds that the inclusive approach has distinct advantages over the exclusive approach. One is its greater public intelligibility and, therefore, heuristic profitability. Another is that it holds greater promises analytically and theoretically, for it allows the comparative study of a much wider range of 'ritual' phenomena in more neutral and incisive ways, as the progress ritual studies have made since 1975 demonstrates.

Victor Turner's analysis of the transforming function of dense key symbols in the *limen* of rites of passage represented a major contribution to modern theory on ritual, as did his extension of the processual analysis of ritual liminality in 'tribal', religious societies to the (203) historical sociology of 'liminoid' processes and states in 'post-tribal', secular societies. That is also true of his emphasis on the role of inventiveness and free play in the "orchestration of many genres, styles, moods, atmospheres, tempi" in longer rituals, by means of which rituals "master radical novelty".¹²⁸ By emphasizing dynamic change in ritual traditions, Turner modified earlier views of ritual as prescribed, formal, stereotyped action.

The major weakness in Victor Turner's theory, however, was that it also thrived on dichotomies, be it the reverse ones of early ritual studies. It opposed egalitarian *comunitas* to hierarchic society, and the unstructured extra-mundane to the structured mundane. In "a wilful return to the well-known assumptions of primitivism",¹²⁹ Turner conceived primitive society romantically as unified and playful,¹³⁰ and viewed modern society as complex in desolate and alienating ways. Likewise, any religious 'liturgy' was viewed as holistic, for it united the gods and the people in their 'sacred work', whereas the profane ceremonies of secular society were considered as drably functional mechanisms of status allocation, that is of differentiation. Such a perspective does injury to both 'tribal' and 'post-tribal' societies, for it fails to remark the nasty in 'tribal' societies, and finds pleasure in modern societies mainly in leisure, that is in the freedom to escape from its constraints.¹³¹

of *rite*, *rituale*, *rituaal*, and *ritueel*, but also includes its secular uses, as in "the ritual of cleansing one's spectacles".

¹²⁷ In the meaning of scholars 'bending back' upon themselves in order to discover the biases and constraints inherent in their culturally conditioned terms, concepts, and theories. Reflexivity is therefore a specific kind of reflection for methodological purposes.

¹²⁸ [128] V.W. Turner 1977: 40.

¹²⁹ Armin Geertz 2004, 54.

¹³⁰ Quite ironic in view of his publications on Ndembu society, a highly unstable society full of 'cults of affliction'; cf. e.g. V.W. Turner 1967, 1968.

¹³¹ Cf. V.W. Turner 1977, 39- 48.

Bell, following Foucault and Bourdieu, has not only pointed to the dichotomous ‘us’ versus ‘them’ function of much of the studies of ritual so far,¹³² but also laid bare other crucial dichotomies underlying ritual studies. The ‘thought’-‘action’ opposition is, she says, intrinsic to ritual studies and serves unconsciously to oppose students of rituals as perceptive, reflective, secular, modern intellectuals to the ‘blind’ participants in them. Modern ritual theoreticians have included secular rituals into their field of study too, but like Tylor and Tiele still regard ritual as action expressing thought, and themselves as perceptive. Whereas Foucault, Bourdieu and Bell have laid bare (204) ritual’s hegemonic functions, Bell’s book forces us also to understand that students of ritual are privileging themselves, as modern secular intellectuals, who think they have taken leave of ‘ritual’, over participants in rituals. The latter, it is implied, need to become as ‘enlightened’ as they think they are themselves.

*In conclusion:
Ritual as a Dense Symbol*

Rituals are symbolic actions. Humans communicate messages to other ‘persons’, real or putative, human or animal, through numerous kinds of symbols as carriers of the messages they wish to transmit to others. One kind is linguistic. It includes the terms academic disciplines use to convey their concepts. Rituals and languages communicate through a wide variety of symbols, ranging from ‘precise’ to ‘pregnant’. The sciences likewise range from those operating with exact symbols to those communicating through complex ones. The natural sciences operate virtually exclusively with precise conventions, or stipulations, because their kinds of research objects and methods allow them to analyse them into very minute parts or aspects and measure each exactly with the aid of the systems of precisely stipulated symbols which they have agreed to construct and use for that purpose. When the cultural sciences began their researches of societies, cultures, religions, rituals, etc., the symbols ‘society’, ‘culture’, ‘religion’, ‘ritual’, etc. were at first perfectly clear and simple. Scholars intuitively understood the ‘ordinary’, prototypical, pre-reflective meaning which these terms had in their own daily languages. They needed to have only approximate grasp of them for communicating their own approximate understanding of it.

Comparison with other societies and cultures and further research has gradually proved the phenomena studied by means of them ever more complex and diverse. As result, the term ‘ritual’ is now a dense, polysemous, key and constraining symbol. By means of it, and under the sway of its virtually impenetrable terminological and conceptual hegemony, scholars of rituals communicate about the cultural phenomena they have included under ‘ritual’, blissfully unaware mostly of the several dichotomous strategies they practice under its ‘redemptive’, blinding rule. From Tylor to Turner to Bourdieu and Bell, the term and pregnant symbol of ‘ritual’, as well as the cultural phenomena indicated by it, have been, or may be, shown to be, not (205) merely a heuristic, descriptive, analytical and theoretical instrument, but also a political strategy for ordering human mental constructions, social, cultural and conceptual, after the undeclared interests of the scholars of rituals.

¹³² E.g. Bell 1997, 262

This article being already oversized, I must conclude by urging much more reflection on the politics of ritual studies in order that we may better understand how our unconscious biases and strategies continue to be part of our attempts to gain an as objective understanding as is possible of this fascinating part of humankind's diverse cultural histories. 'Ritual' being a pregnant symbol, it is, however, unlikely that its meaning will ever be exhausted, analytically and theoretically, whether as the symbol by which scholars of ritual communicate or as the cultural phenomena that are included under it. 'Ritual', says Bell, is resistant to reflection. It is a practice that does not see what it does; it is blind to what it produces; it is also mute: "it is designed to do what it does without bringing what it is doing across the threshold of discourse or systematic thinking".¹³³ That, I suggest, is true also, to some degree, of the term 'ritual'. Which is another reason for opting pragmatically for an inclusive approach to the study of rituals.

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¹³³ Bell 1992, 87-87, 93.

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