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The page numbers of the original publication are indicated in bold and between square brackets. I have made a few changes in the lay-out of this article as well as in the text, and especially in Appendix I; and I have added a few more references.

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RITUAL IN PLURAL & PLURALIST SOCIETIES: INSTRUMENTS FOR ANALYSIS¹

There is precious little theory on ritual in the Study of Religions, understood here as the distinct academic discipline of *Religionswissenschaft*. In Anthropology of Religion, there is an abundance of it, but it is, in my view, confused as well as confusing. In neither, however, has ritual theory been extended to ritual behaviour in situations of cultural and/or religious plurality and pluralism; i.e. to ritual behaviour in which groups co-existing in a society express their separate identities, boundaries, strife with, indifference to, or respect for, each other.² This article attempts to develop a ritual theory that may be applied also to cultural and religious plurality. It has two sections. The first develops a provisional operational definition of 'ritual', defined in a broad way to include religious as well as secular ritual behaviour. It is meant to serve as a heuristic instrument for general use in the study of ritual behaviour. In the second section, I tailor that definition for use in situations of religious plurality and pluralism.³

Towards a provisional operational definition of 'ritual'

An operational definition does not claim universal validity or applicability. It is expressly meant to be a hypothesis with heuristic qualities that should be tested, corrected and, if necessary, rejected.⁴ It is, therefore, always provisional and to term it so is [26] necessarily tautologous. The one I propose below is, however, provisional in a stronger sense. Ritual,

¹ I am grateful to Dr. J. Oosten for his incisive criticisms of an earlier draft of this study and that on the Ayodhya rituals of confrontation included in this volume below in Part II (cf. Platvoet 1996). They made me revise thoroughly the argument presented in this chapter as well as its application to the Ayodhya events.

² One of the very few and very recent exceptions to this rule is Baumann 1991. A few more studies from Political Anthropology on inter-ethnic violence will be noted below.

³ In another article in this book (cf. Platvoet 1996), I will apply this operational definition to the political confrontation that unfolded in India between 1984 and 1992 when large numbers of Hindus pressed for the demolition of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya. That analysis will lead to a few anti-Durkheimian conclusions.

⁴ Cf. Platvoet 1990: 181-183

in fact, is found in such a huge morphological diversity and serves so many different functions in human societies that scholars have not yet been able to define, and most likely will never succeed in defining it in unambiguous terms.⁵ Because it is a universal, polymorphous and multipurpose phenomenon, we need to develop much more theory before we can identify the analytically more important traits and functions of ritual⁶ and separate them from the less significant ones.⁷ For the time being I intend, therefore, to develop a fairly broad operational definition of ritual of the family resemblance type and accept it as a fuzzy category, in which one ritual may be defined by most of the traits or functions enumerated below, and another by a slightly different set of them, under the proviso that each is defined by a sufficient number of them. The virtues of such a polythetic definition are that it stays close to our pre-reflective use of the term, is flexible, and has a wide heuristic scope: it can accommodate a wide variety of rituals from very different cultures, periods and places. Its weakness is that it is a poor instrument of analysis. It should be seen, therefore, as only a first attempt to move away from the exclusively intuitive, pre-reflective use of the category ritual which has been the normal practice in the study of religions until now.⁸

As many disciplines take a theoretical interest, and some even several different theoretical interests, in this broad and complex object of study,⁹ a broad variety of operational definitions of ritual has been legitimately developed. My interest is primarily morphological, or descriptive. I seek to develop a 'substantive'¹⁰ operational definition of ritual for the comparative study of religions for two purposes. One is to identify the more common basic traits of 'ritual', and the other to show that this diverse type of human behaviour possesses the unity which we intuitively discern in it in both single societies and cross-culturally. My interest, however, necessarily includes also the 'functions' of ritual, for the morphology of ritual cannot be studied apart from its functions, as ritual is a specific mode of interaction between [27] humans which does certain things for and in them. In ritual, human society functions in the ritual mode. Provisionally then, I define 'ritual' as

that broad range of forms of social interaction between humans, and from one or several humans to other, real or postulated, addressable beings,¹¹ that is marked by a sufficient number

⁵ Cf. Tambiah 1979: 115-116

⁶ Cf. Grimes 1982: 117; Doty 1986: 80

⁷ Even so, several (operational) definitions of ritual have been proposed. I enumerate some of them in chronological order in Appendix I.

⁸ Cf. Lewis 1980: 6sq

⁹ Cf. Grimes 1982: 32; Doty 1986: 80-81

¹⁰ A substantive definition attempts to circumscribe what a phenomenon descriptively 'is' in contrast with a functional definition which tries to catch what it 'does' (in men or in societies).

¹¹ By 'real' I understand beings whose existence and social activities can be verified by sense experience or its technological extensions. Examples of real, non-human, addressable beings, with whom men may ritually communicate, are domesticated animals such as dogs. Another category of real addressable beings of the non-human kind among whom ritual interaction is found, are the higher mammals such as chimpanzees and gorillas who live in bands and teach their youngsters how to behave in them. Their ritual behaviour has not been included in this definition in order not to overburden it, though analytically it fully qualifies for inclusion. 'Postulated' refers to beings, the existence and activity of which can neither be verified nor falsified before a forum of neutral, competent observers but which believers believe to exist,

of the distinctive traits and functions set out below to merit that we classify them as ‘ritual’, conceived as a fuzzy, polythetic category of the ‘family resemblance’ type.¹²

The traits and functions of ritual cannot always be easily separated. They will, therefore, for the purpose of this paper be combined under the term ‘dimensions’ in order to serve as the diacritical features by which we may identify a ritual, even if they do not always, strictly speaking, actually constitute it. They are, for the time being, the following thirteen typical ‘dimensions’.

1. *the interaction dimension*

Ritual is a specific mode of social behaviour between addressable persons. This dimension restricts ritual to social behaviour acquired by learning in processes of socialisation as part of a culture. It excludes compulsive repetitive behaviour without communicative intent, as well as instinctive interaction.¹³

2. *the collective dimension*

As interaction, ritual needs a minimum of two participants - a ‘sender’ and a ‘receiver’ in terms of communication theory -, either of whom, however, may belong to the class of putative [28] beings.¹⁴ All rituals are ‘collective’ in this minimal sense. Many rituals, however, are collective in a stronger sense when they engage, among the visible participants, actors of several kinds, such as officiants and others who are in some way involved in a ritual, such as those for whom a ritual is conducted and a congregation. Rituals may be collective in the strongest sense when they engage a whole community, whether defined in terms of a secular or a religious cosmology. In the latter case, it is held by the believers to include both the visible, or verifiable, and the unseen, or non-verifiable, ‘participants’.

3. *the customary dimension*

Ritual is an ordered ‘flow’,¹⁵ or sequence, of social interaction, conventionalised and formalised by repetition and thereby made customary. It is constrained, given shape and structured by rules reflecting the relationships of sub- and super-ordination and/or peer relationships that exist between the participants, real and putative, and also by conventions about how it ought to be performed.¹⁶ Rules of sub- and super-ordination are often accept-

and with whom they believe they may, and do, communicate through ritual behaviour. They may also be termed ‘putative’, ‘meta-empirical’, ‘non-testable’, or ‘unseen’ beings. Cf. also Platvoet 1983: 187.

¹² On definitions of the family resemblance type, cf. Clarke & Byrne 1993: 7, 11-16.

¹³ Cf. Leach 1968: 520; Myerhoff 1977: 200; Kertzer 1988: 9

¹⁴ Cf. also Moore & Myerhoff 1977: 8

¹⁵ Rite and ritual are etymologically connected with <ri>, the Indo-European root which means ‘flow’ (Turner & Turner 1978: 243-244), and so with e.g. rhyme, rhythm, river as respectively the ordered flows of words, music, and water. For analytical instruments for the comparative study of rituals as sequentially ordered processes of social interaction, cf. Platvoet 1982: 30-34, 101-117, 138-155, 166-170, 183-197.

¹⁶ Cf. e.g. Goody 1977: 30-31; Tambiah 1979: 149; Lewis 1980: 11-12, 19, 22, 26; La Fontaine 1985: 11; for an example of the ‘logic’ ruling the order of Sinhalese exorcism rites, cf. Tambiah 1968: 176-178; 1979: 142-149.

ed as 'normal' and may be practised without reflection and discussion, especially when the social distance between the participants is great.¹⁷ It is then expressed in a rigorous enforcement of the 'proper' form, of precedence and protocol.¹⁸ Rules of peer relationships may be the object of much discussion and even heated dissent.¹⁹

As rule-governed behaviour, ritual is 'repetitive'. It normally proceeds along a set pattern established on earlier occasions, which has since become sanctioned as tradition.²⁰ As such, it tends towards formality, stereotypy, and rigidity. [29] And it has distancing effects upon the participants: it prevents spontaneous expressions (because they can be disorderly) and private emotions when these do not express the ones the ritual requires to be publicly manifested.²¹ They also distance the participants from their spontaneous selves, and from their private motives for, or interpretations of, the ritual. For the duration of the ritual, the participants are reduced to the roles, which the ritual prescribes for them, and to the purpose and theory embedded in the ritual.²² If a ritual allows of spontaneity and chaos, it does so 'in prescribed times and places', manners and styles.²³

4. *the dimension of traditionalising innovation*

Even though ritual behaviour is governed by rules and conventions, rituals are usually not static nor closed systems. A limited measure of change and innovation usually occurs due to a number of different factors. One is the plasticity of the memory of the participants in respect of the traditional form of a ritual.²⁴ Another is the discussion of that form when there is a conflict of interests among the participants who have a say in, or hold an opinion on, how a ritual ought to be performed. They may also hold, or propose, diverging interpretations of its meaning by competitively stressing different shades of the numerous meanings of the polyvalent symbols used in rituals at the expense of others.²⁵ Complex rites may also have a stable core with fringes more open to innovation.²⁶ Innovation may also take place by the introduction of new core symbols,²⁷ e.g. at times of religious or cultural revi-

¹⁷ On 'social distance' as an important analytical element of the 'field', or network of relationships between the participants, in which a ritual takes place and by which it is constrained, cf. Platvoet 1982: 31, 32, 84-101, 121-138, 158-165, 175-183.

¹⁸ Oosten 1990: 8

¹⁹ Staal (1979, 1986, 1989) holds that ritual is rule-governed behaviour without meaning. In his view, it does not have the expressive and communicative dimensions which I postulate. For a discussion of Staal's views, cf. Grapard 1991, Mack 1991, Strenski 1991, and the reply by Staal (1991).

²⁰ It may, in addition, be supported by other legitimations, such as having been instituted by the ancestors, or ordered by a deity (Lewis 1980: 23, 24, 34).

²¹ Tambiah 1979: 122-126. 'Ritual is not a free expression of emotions, but a disciplined rehearsal of right attitudes' (Tambiah 1979: 126).

²² Cf. Tambiah 1979: 127, note 1, 141; La Fontaine 1985: 14

²³ Myerhoff 1977: 7; for examples of comic episodes in Sinhalese exorcism rites, cf. Tambiah 1979: 144-146; Turner 1983: xxiii; Kapferer 1988: 74-75; 1991: 285-319.

²⁴ Cf. Tambiah 1979: 136. In a few religious and secular traditions, some rituals and their rubrics have been written down and are enforced by strict supervision. This has, of course, considerably fixed and frozen them, and has allowed for innovation and variation only in their more marginal elements.

²⁵ Cf. also Tambiah 1979: 115

²⁶ Tambiah 1979: 136

²⁷ Rosaldo 1972: 361; for another example, cf. Tambiah 1979: 158-160

valism,²⁸ or of tense strife between groups.²⁹ Such innovation is, however, short-lived.³⁰ It quickly becomes normative³¹ by being ‘traditionalised’ by ritual’s ‘capacity for routinisation’.³²

[30] A more speculative factor, but one with great explanatory power, is the ‘faculty’ for judging competently the form or the manner in which a ritual should be performed. Cognitive anthropologists have recently postulated such an innate ability in humans, because they appear to ‘learn much more than they are taught’,³³ and are able to achieve great cognitive results with little cognitive effort.³⁴ This mental faculty would also explain why humans show creative facility in using and manipulating the cultural complexes in aesthetic, dramatic, rhetoric, or skilful ways, when such special, often innovative, performances are required in specific contexts, such as those of aggregation, commemoration, or competition. And it would also explain why humans are able to judge whether newly devised ritual speech or behaviour patterns are well formed, effective and ‘proper’ expressions of the messages they are meant to convey.³⁵

5. *the expressive dimension*

Society is reflected in a ritual by the very fact and act of its members taking part in it. The socio-structural or cosmological³⁶ relations obtaining among the participants in a ritual are normally made manifest in the positions and roles allotted to the participants in that event.³⁷ Following Robertson Smith and Durkheim, most anthropologists have focused on this expressive dimension of ritual as a means of studying society.³⁸ Leach identified it as its communicative dimension.³⁹ Lewis, however, distinguishes between expression and communication, as not all that is expressed in a ritual behaviour necessarily functions as a message to be communicated between the participants.⁴⁰

[31]

²⁸ Tambiah 1979: 165

²⁹ Kapferer 1988: 94sq

³⁰ Tambiah 1979: 166

³¹ Rosaldo 1972: 361

³² Smith 1980: 113

³³ Boyer 1993a: 36.

³⁴ Atran 1993: 57, 59.

³⁵ Cf. Lawson & McCauley 1990; Boyer 1992; Boyer 1993b

³⁶ By ‘cosmological’ I mean the putative social relationships believers postulate between themselves and the meta-empirical beings whom they address in their religious rites.

³⁷ La Fontaine 1985: 11.

³⁸ For a brief survey of the history of anthropological theory on ritual as an expression of the structure of human society, cf. appendix II.

³⁹ Geertz (1966: 35) accuses Leach of ‘vulgar positivism’. In his view, religious ritual describes the social order only very obliquely and very incompletely because (religious) ritual is not shaped by the social order but shapes it itself. Though Geertz does not hold a religionist point of view in the study of religions (cf. Geertz 1966: 28, 35, 39-40; 1973: 112, 119, 123), in this matter, he voices a point of view dear to religionists.

⁴⁰ Lewis 1980: 33-38.

6. *the communicative dimension*

As interactive behaviour, ritual also consists in the communication of messages of various kinds. They may be divided into the explicit messages that are sent at the manifest level of the 'business at hand' that is to be transacted during a ritual,⁴¹ and the more or less implicit ones transmitted at the latent, or less than latent, level. The latter messages mostly respect the socio-structural relations obtaining between the participants in a ritual and as such express society.⁴² The explicit messages usually determine much of the content, or (apparent) matter, of a ritual.⁴³ The implicit ones may, however, constitute a more important agenda.⁴⁴ The way the participants receive these latter messages ranges from passing them over as if 'unnoticed'⁴⁵ to paying a great deal of attention to them and discussing them intensively. In the latter case, a socio-structural message, or the manner in which it is expressed, may 'intrude' into the manifest level of communication and compete for the attention of the participants with the emphatic messages of the business to be transacted.

[32]

7. *the symbolic dimension*

In rituals, expression and communication are achieved through symbolic action,⁴⁶ in particular by dense, core or pivotal symbols. These present 'key aspects of a whole system of culture and belief' in an economic way by clusters of 'consonant' referents,⁴⁷ the different meanings of which may become paramount at different times.⁴⁸ Apart from their polysemous meanings, these symbols also possess strong normative and emotive (or, in Turner's terms, *orectic*) aspects. Consequently, they carry and transmit a much heavier load than the multiple meanings they may, or may not, communicate as 'message'.⁴⁹ Lewis, therefore, correctly prefers to discuss ritual as stimulating various responses rather than as only communicating messages.⁵⁰

⁴¹ Cf. Lewis 1980: 23-24. The messages at this level may be subdivided into emphatic and phatic, depending on their content and their function in the communication process. Emphatic messages have a precise, often urgent content and usually a pragmatic intention requiring a response from the receivers. Phatic messages have a more diffuse content and usually a socio-structural function, which the receivers are expected merely to perceive, receive and assent to as 'normal' - though they may comment on them disparagingly or approvingly, if they are expressed in an unusual manner; cf. de Waal-Malefijt 1968: 198-199; Platvoet 1982: 29-34; Platvoet 1983a; Platvoet 1983b: *passim*.

⁴² The expressive dimension, or function, of ritual at the latent, or socio-structural, level has been the central concern of most anthropological theories on ritual, as I set out in somewhat greater detail in Appendix II. Its communicative function at the manifest level was analyzed only by (neo-)Tylorian anthropologists who defined religion as communication between believers and their postulated beings (e.g. Horton 1960: 211-212; 1972: 358; Goody 1961: 157-158; Spiro 1966: 96; Platvoet 1982: 24-35; 1990: 189). They also stressed its explanatory function (Horton 1960, 1964/1972; Morris 1987: 300, 304-309).

⁴³ For the analysis of the content of explicit messages, cf. Platvoet 1982: 32-33, 105-111, 141-149, 167-168, 189-193

⁴⁴ For their analysis, cf. Platvoet 1982: 31, 32, 84-101, 121-138, 158-165, 175-183 on the 'field', or network of relationships between the participants, in which a ritual is performed.

⁴⁵ I.e. noticing them subconsciously as 'normal', or 'ordinary', in an uncritical, pre-reflective manner and mood, because each participant's 'understanding' of them has been habituated to the use of these symbols by lifelong training in them. Cf. La Fontaine 1985: 12, and my remarks below on the power dimension of ritual.

⁴⁶ Cf. Kapferer (1991: 4): 'in ritual, ideas [...] are objectified and reified so much that they are made controlling and determining of action'.

⁴⁷ On cultures as constituted by dense 'consonant', or 'replicating', complexes of symbols, cf. Douglas

8. *the multi-media dimension*

The 'messages' and stimuli sent in a ritual may be expressed by the numerous, complex, polyvalent symbols that have been, and are constantly being, developed in each culture. They are clustered in e.g. verbal, facial, and other forms of body-language;⁵¹ dress, ornaments and other symbolic modes of presenting oneself with ostentation, or apparent lack of ostentation,⁵² such as music, dance, trance, and comic drama.⁵³ Others are gift-giving, and the (ritual) objects used. And again others are the (self)ordering of the participants into specific groups; the places and roles they are allotted, or assign themselves, in the space and the diachronic order of the ritual; and the manners in which the ritual space and time are ordered and adorned with the help of the plastic and pictorial arts; etc. La Fontaine points out that those who perform a [33] rite of passage, and those that are subjected to it, 'are themselves representations of concepts and ideas, and therefore, symbolic. Like the performers in a morality play, the actors stand for something other than themselves'.⁵⁴ Having several levels, and being usable for many purposes, the symbols used in a ritual are often organised in sets of overlapping metaphors. They may, moreover, be expressed and sent as messages in many guises and along several different channels. In brief, they serve as the repetitive and redundant and/or condensed polyphonic transformations of each other,⁵⁵ and are used not so much in order to transfer new information but to stimulate pattern recognition and configurational awareness and in order to produce 'total experiences'.⁵⁶

9. *the performance dimension*

All rituals, even the 'solitary' ones of believers towards a postulated being, are collective events (in a weak, strong, or stronger sense). They need to alert and focus the attention of at least the addressees, or the audience, to at least the central parts of the message(s). Lewis has emphasized the alerting quality of ritual. He defines 'ritual', therefore, as conspi-

1982³: 38, 64-71, 80-81, 149

⁴⁸ Turner & Turner 1978: 246

⁴⁹ Cf. Turner & Turner 1978: 243-251; Geertz 1966: 28sq; 1973: 113sq. Cf. also Tambiah (1979: 132-133): Ritual 'portrays many features that have little to do with the transmission of new information and everything to do with interpersonal orchestration and with social integration and continuity'.

⁵⁰ Lewis 1980: 34-35

⁵¹ Performance and performative approaches (see below) may single out two more 'dimensions' of ritual for separate analytical attention, that of the body as a central expressive device (e.g. Bocock 1974: 37; Myerhoff 1977: 200; Bourdieu 1990: 66-79; Parkin 1991: 12sq.; Bell 1992: 93); and that of the spoken word (e.g. Tambiah 1968).

⁵² Cf. Sperber & Wilson (1986: 49) on ritual as 'ostensive behaviour' in which the sender encodes the messages which he or she deems relevant for his or her audience.

⁵³ Cf. Kapferer 1991: 10-11, 245-319

⁵⁴ La Fontaine 1985: 13

⁵⁵ Cf. Leach 1972; 1978: 45-54; Tambiah 1968: 188-198; 1979: 130-149, 163-165; Ghosh 1987: 220. Cf. also Douglas (1982: vii, xiv, xx, 38, 64-71, 80-82, 149) on the universal human drive to 'achieve [cognitive] consonance in all the layers of experience' in ritual behaviour by 'replicating' symbols at several 'levels', such as nature, the human body, society, cosmology, myths, etc.

⁵⁶ Tambiah 1979: 134, 140-141; for examples, cf. Tambiah 1979: 142-149; La Fontaine 1985: 13-14; Kapferer 1991: xi

cuous behaviour bound by explicit customary rules and enacted with a certain feeling for formality and aesthetics for the purpose of focusing the attention of the participants on the event, on the arena in which it takes place, and on the more than ordinary significance that gestures, actions and objects may have.⁵⁷ Likewise, Moore & Myerhoff reckon as one of the formal properties of ritual that ‘most, if not all of it, is self-consciously “acted” like in a play’ by the use of stylisation and an evocative, presentational style.⁵⁸ By ‘stylisation’ they mean that ‘special’ behaviour which is constituted by ‘actions or symbols that are extraordinary in themselves, or ordinary ones [that are acted or] used in an unusual way’. By ‘evocation’ they refer to its alerting quality, producing not only an attentive state of mind in the participants but often also ‘an even greater commitment of some kind [...] through manipulations of symbols and sensory [34] stimuli’.⁵⁹ In some cases, they may ‘produce a concentration so extreme that there is a loss of self-consciousness, and a feeling of “flow”’.⁶⁰ They will also produce in the participants ‘an awareness that [the ritual events] are different from “ordinary” everyday events’.⁶¹

10. *the performative dimension*

Ritual may be performative in two ways. In a narrow sense, a part of social reality may be constituted by the ‘illocutionary’ use of speech acts, in the Austinian sense, and of other symbolic acts in rites of passages such as baptism, matrimony or installation into an office.⁶² ‘Simply by virtue of being enacted (under the appropriate conditions) [they] achieve a change of state, or do something effective’ in human minds⁶³ and in society. In a wider sense, rituals may be seen as continually re-creating and re-constituting society, real and postulated, by the very fact and act of the actors participating in them. For society, real and postulated, is expressed in rituals by the [35] relationships between the participants being enacted, and time and again re-enacted, in them.⁶⁴

⁵⁷ Lewis 1980: 7, 8, 13, 19-20, 46, 97

⁵⁸ Moore & Myerhoff 1977: 7-8; cf. also Geertz 1966: 28-29; 1973: 112-114; 1983: 26-30

⁵⁹ Cf. also Douglas (1970: 78-80) on the ‘framing function’ of ritual. It supplies the participants with a ‘marked off time or place’, which serves as the spatio-temporal frame that provides the participant with continuity from one session to the next and with ‘a method for mnemonics’. By thus ‘link[ing] the present with the relevant past’, ritual co-ordinates the brain and the body and ‘alerts a special kind of expectancy’ in the participants by which it creates and controls their experience. Cf. also Smith (1980: 113-116) on the sacred place as a focusing lens in ritual because it is part of a symbolic map.

⁶⁰ Cf. also Tambiah (1979: 140-142) on the psychological effects of intense ritual experiences such as ‘submission to a compelling constraint’, ‘transportation into a supra-normal, transcendental “anti-structural”, “numinous”, or “altered” state of consciousness’, ‘euphoric communion with one’s fellow beings’, ‘subordination to a collective representation’. These transporting effects do not contradict the distancing effect of ritual, but are precisely effected by means of the distancing mechanisms operative in ritual.

⁶¹ Tambiah 1979: 117; cf. also Kapferer 1991: 6-11

⁶² Cf. Tambiah 1973; 1979: 119, 127-129, 153-156; 1985; Ahern 1979: 7-16

⁶³ Tambiah 1985: 79; Ghosh 1987: 220-222. Cf. also Tambiah (1968: 202) where he contends that the magical rituals described by Malinowski, were not meant by the Trobriand to achieve effects in the external order of nature but in ‘the minds and emotions of the actors’. Ahern (1979: 9-16), however, distinguishes between strong and weak illocutionary acts. The latter have weak social effects only. They improve social relations by the expression of phatic messages of well-wishing. The former may either be performed in order to effect changes in the prevailing social relationships, or in order to bring about desired effects in the external order, whether by the unseen beings that are explicitly or implicitly addressed or by virtues inherent in the ritual action itself. Ahern holds that one can only establish by accurate ethnographic research,

11. *the aesthetic dimension*

From Leach's point of view, ritual is a formal, and therefore aesthetic mode of communication (about social structure).⁶⁵ Authors adhering to the performance and performative approach also stress that ritual as enacting and 'celebrating' society, or as performatively creating it, must be executed in not only traditional or 'proper' ways, but also in felicitous, well-formed and pleasing manners in order that they may effectively alert, focus and hold the enraptured attention of the participant, and/or achieve a ritual's performative goal. It provokes participant criticism if its officiants fail to perform it in a manner that is both well styled and traditional.⁶⁶

12. *the strategic dimension*

By condensing meaning, together with the moral and emotive aspects, in focal symbols, rituals cause the participants to fail to perceive the arbitrariness of the cultural order expressed in them. They achieve that also by other mechanisms such as repetition, redundancy, formality, distancing and habituation. All these induce the participants to take the cultural order for their 'natural world' and their normal situation. Ritual may cause them to experience as satisfactory a social condition, which may objectively be shown to be oppressive and exploitative. In ritual, critical analysis is anathema. It must be suspended. The fiction must be maintained that rituals are not made-up productions.⁶⁷ Bourdieu has analysed the mechanism of 'misrecognition' (*méconnaissance*) in the rituals of e.g. educational institutions (e.g. *les grandes écoles* of France), by which existing social divisions are maintained.⁶⁸ Bell, who defines ritual as the ritualisation of social acts, takes it as an effective strategy of power. Ritualisation is, she writes, 'a particularly "mute" form of activity. It is designed to do what it does [36] without bringing what it is doing across the threshold of discourse or systematic thinking'.⁶⁹ It produces 'expedient schemes that structure an environment in such a way that [it] appears to be the [objective] source of the [subjective] schemes and values that have created it'. Thereby it prevents the actors from recognising its arbitrary nature.⁷⁰ Bell, therefore, refers to that environment as a 'redemptive reordering'.⁷¹ It 'implies and demonstrates a relatively unified corporate body' by suggesting 'more consensus [among the participants] than there actually is'.⁷²

not by presumption, whether effects in the external order are intended.

⁶⁴ Geertz (1966: 29sq; 1973: 113sq; 1983: 26-30) stresses the constitutive role of rituals for the faith of believers and their community with their postulated beings through their rituals of communion with them. 'In these plastic dramas men attain their faith as they portray it' (1966: 29; 1973: 114). 'Reiterated form, staged and acted by its own audience, makes [...] theory a fact' (1983: 30). Cf. also Tambiah 1979: 139-140, 153-154; and de Coppet (1991a: 9): 'rituals create and construct [...] the social dimension'.

⁶⁵ Leach 1968: 523, 526; cf. also Lewis 1980: 16-17; Turner 1983: XXI; Kapferer 1991: 2, 10-11, 249-250

⁶⁶ Lewis 1980: 20; Tambiah 1979: 127; Ghosh 1987: 221

⁶⁷ Myerhoff 1977: 199

⁶⁸ E.g. Bourdieu 1990: 26; cf. also Kapferer 1991: 5

⁶⁹ Bell 1992: 93

⁷⁰ Bell 1992: 140-141

⁷¹ Bell 1992: 142

⁷² Bell 1992: 210. Cf. also Bloch 1985, and the discussion of Bloch's views on ritual by Van der Veer

13. *the integrative dimension*

By the properties of ritual outlined in the foregoing and in several other dimensions, rituals often powerfully contribute towards the inclusion of members into their corporate groups. Moreover, many rituals, especially the collective or representative ones, express and re-create the solidarity, identity, and at times the boundaries, of a group or a society by their being performed at a particular time and place, in the special manner in which its participants are ordered, and by the prominent display and manipulation of objects which express the unity and distinctiveness of that group.⁷³ By thus expressing and stressing its solidarity, identity, and boundaries, these rituals are normally strongly unifying *ad intra* and weakly divisive *ad extra*.

A caution

As ritual is a special mode of social intercourse, most of the dimensions set out above are not exclusive to it, several being features of ordinary social commerce as well. That is certainly true of the interaction dimension as well as of the collective, customary, expressive, communicative, symbolic and multi-media ones, and also perhaps the power and inclusion dimensions. As ritual is a mode of symbolic interaction, all these dimensions are the necessary, but not sufficient marks of ritual. However, in ritual behaviour, these dimensions seem to feature in purer and more effective forms due to the presence of those other dimensions which seem more specific [37] for ritual behaviour, to wit the performance, performative, and aesthetic dimensions as well as that of traditionalising innovation.

The definition of ritual in plural and pluralist societies

Due to the constraining legacy of Robertson Smith and Durkheim,⁷⁴ the comparative analysis of ritual by anthropologists has almost exclusively been confined to ritual as conventional behaviour of unified corporate groups that maintains solidarity, or order, within them or restores them, or secures the established power relationships. Rituals, in which groups cultivating distinct identities and positions vis-à-vis each other, express inter-group relations have only lately begun to receive due ethnographic attention because of e.g. recent atrocities of interethnic strife. So have societies in which boundaries between groups are ritually expressed and maintained. This is not because such rituals and societies are recent phenomena. Ritual as an expression of group-predicated relationships has always been prominent in non-plural segmented kinship societies in which kin groups have cultivated their separate identities and solidarity *ad intra* and expressed and maintained boundaries

(1994b: 81-83, 105). Bloch regards ritual as an efficient means of legitimising several sorts of domination by its traditionalising, highly authoritative modes of discourse and by its use, in religious rituals, of the supernatural for founding the social in it, making it inviolable by distancing it from everyday affairs.

⁷³ Cf. La Fontaine 1985: 11-12

⁷⁴ Cf. also Baumann (1991: 98-99, 113-115), who maintains that this legacy is due to 'a narrow and one-sided reading of Durkheim rather than to Durkheim's position itself'.

ad extra.⁷⁵ Inter-group rituals [38] have also been a marked feature of stratified societies in which social groups are hierarchically ordered after religious, social, economical, and/or political criteria. We meet them often also in ‘plural’,⁷⁶ or ‘pillar’, or ‘apartheid’, or caste societies. In them, groups living side by side restrict interaction by cultivating attitudes and practices of social segregation on the basis of colour, ethnicity, religion or other bars in order to develop distinct and exclusive ethnic, ‘racial’, and/or religious identities and boundaries. We also find them in the ‘pluralist’ societies that cultivate an ideology of not imposing restrictions on the interaction between groups with distinct identities. And we spot them too in the global community of the modern, secular states, the leaders of which meet occasionally to express the relations between their nations in a ritual manner.

Because of the Durkheimian perspective, certain empirical data about ritual have not yet been, or have only recently begun to be, faced in the theory on ritual. One is that the context of ritual is often not the mono-cultural society with a unified ritual congregation. It is rather a culturally plural or pluralist one which consist of several ritual constituencies that have at least windows on each other and in various ways make use of the ‘others’ in their rituals,⁷⁷ or use their rituals for expressing their relations to them. Another is that ritual may be, and may be meant to be, explosive rather than unifying.⁷⁸ A third suggests that ritual need not always be the customary rehearsal of earlier ceremonies but may sometimes also be a one-time-only event, explicitly constructed for just one occasion and for one purpose.⁷⁹ A fourth reveals that the public rituals of modern plural and pluralist societies are situated within an ‘imploding’,⁸⁰ global context.

⁷⁵ Cf. e.g. Horton (1972: 349): ‘sectional and individual rites abound in African communities, and they are concerned as much with disruption as with harmony’. Cf. also Douglas (1982: 59-64). She developed her ‘group’ – ‘grid’ concepts, ‘grid’ referring to the measure to which a society is internally structured, and ‘group’ to the degree it is boundary conscious (Douglas 1982: VIII, IX, 13-14, 24, 28-36, 57-61, 72-74, 82-106, esp. 103-105). She did so in order to distinguish four different types of societies, each with its own attitude to ritual. The first is that of the high group – high grid societies. They are ritualistic in a formal way. The second is the low group – low grid societies. They are a-ritualistic, or even anti-ritualistic. The third is the low group – high grid societies. They are ritualistic for manipulative purposes. The fourth is the high group – low grid societies. They are ritualistic for defensive purposes (Douglas 1982: 103-167). I must point out, however, that Douglas is not interested in ritual in plural or pluralist societies. Being more Durkheimian than Durkheim, she is interested only in self-contained societies, particularly the well-integrated ones. She holds that ‘the experience of closed social groups’ is ‘the most important determinant of ritualism. The better defined and the more significant the social boundaries, the more the bias I would expect in favour of ritual’ (Douglas 1982: 14). Her comparative interest is in establishing how different types of ‘societies’, taken as reified social structures, condition their cultures, symbol systems, and the ways in which these symbol systems are used in ritual. Cf. also Baumann (1991: 110-113) on the five manners in which the rituals of a group may implicate outsiders: bystanders, spectators, guests invited to enhance a ritual’s prestige, witnesses from outside to validate legal proceedings, and outside beneficiaries. However, only in the last case does Baumann refer to inter-group rituals in the strict sense of the word.

⁷⁶ This term was originally coined by Furnival (1948) for the analysis of the colonial societies of Burma and Indonesia.

⁷⁷ Baumann 1991: 110-113

⁷⁸ Cf. van Baaren (1983: 189): ‘Ritual is always a form of communication, but this is not the same as a form of community. Ritual may be employed to establish community as well as to decline it, to prevent or break it off’.

⁷⁹ In Moore & Myerhoff (1977: 9-10), two one-event-only rituals are briefly described. They were both de-

[39] In order to analyse inter-group ritual adequately, additional⁸¹ concepts need to be introduced for the analysis of some of the dimensions which have been set out above. They include four distinctions in the communication dimension with respect to the analysis of the messages, emphatic and phatic, which they carry. First, we need to distinguish between the direct, or overt, addressee(s) of a ritual and its indirect, or implied, addressee(s). E.g., messages seemingly addressed to the Hindu devotees of the god Ram at a rally may actually be meant for the Muslim section of the Indian nation. Secondly, therefore, one needs to distinguish between the overt, or stated, message(s) of a ritual and the implied message(s) it contains.

It follows, thirdly, that a distinction also has to be made between the field of direct ritual communication – that between the addresser and the direct addressee(s), whether they be real or postulated –, and the field of wider, indirect communication. That is, between the addresser and his audience attending on the one hand, and on the other hand those who are also addressed – be it explicitly or only by implication – even though they are not present. That field may be established by the local rumours about the event. In most modern societies, however, it is established by modern communication technology and powerfully dominated by the modern communication media. That wider field of indirect communication is dormant until it is actualised by e.g. prevailing tensions and the interests of the modern media in dramatic news. The extent of this indirect field may vary in range, from a locality, a region, a nation to even the whole world after the different impact which the media expect from a ritual as a dramatic event, or from the messages expressed, or perceived, in it.

Lastly, in competitive contexts, the implied messages for the indirect addressee sent through the wider communication context, may be the primary motive for that ritual behaviour. It will then be given much more prominence, volume, and forcefulness of expression, coverage in the media, and attention by the direct and indirect addressees than the overt message to the direct addressee(s). In non-competitive contexts, the implied message for the indirect addressee may be only a minor side issue.

The manner in which a message is sent in plural or pluralist societies may also greatly affect the symbolic and the multi-media dimensions of rituals. The members of groups with different group identities may understand the messages expressed in a ritual very [40] differently, especially if they maintain strong cultural or other boundaries towards each other and perceive another – often the other – group as competitor and threat. One reason for these differences in interpretation is that they may have different stocks of core sym-

dication ceremonies, one for a bridge and the other for an academic building. They brought together a 'motley' crowd in the apparent unity of an ephemeral occasion.

⁸⁰ The expression is Appadurai's. The technology of the modern media enables an increasing portion of mankind to witness live the major public events as they occur, or very briefly after they have occurred, on virtually any part of the globe. That again allows e.g. the diasporic Hindus in e.g. the USA and Canada to watch closely the political developments in India, and cultivate 'long-distance nationalisms' (B. Anderson, quoted in de Rijk 1994).

⁸¹ Additional to those we need for the analysis of 'ordinary' social and religious ritual communication in the 'face-to-face' encounter between social actors or between believers and the postulated beings they believe are addressed by them.

bols. Another may be that they may single out as relevant for them very different meanings from the spectrum of possible referents of a core symbol,⁸² or that they are differently, and even antagonistically, moved by its normative and emotive aspects. Ritual expression of boundaries and relative group status is particularly prominent when groups are engaged in competition, strife and conflict.⁸³ They may be expressed directly in ritual behaviour, when members of different groups interact, or when groups interact as groups or through their representatives. Or they may be expressed indirectly, when members of a group ritually display 'ostensive behaviour' in such ways that the members of another group cannot fail to notice the messages. They cannot, either because that behaviour is flaunted in front of their faces, as in provocative demonstrations by Hindus in Muslim quarters, or because the media repeatedly spell it out for them.

Ritual in plural and pluralist societies, therefore, may also strongly affect the dimensions of power and of integration, and disintegration. Whereas rituals in mono-cultural corporate groups consolidate the established order by the mechanism Bourdieu termed 'misrecognition', operating through the blinding forces of convention and custom,⁸⁴ rituals in situations of strife in plural societies may be one-time events constructed with disruptive intent and as eye-openers. They may quite openly aim at the passionate, and at times violent, exclusion of 'non-members' in order to include 'members' in a total and, at times, totalitarian way. Only recently [41] has attention been focused on the long-neglected fact that ritual always had a prominent place in the combat between hostile orders,⁸⁵ whether they be political, economic, military, religious, academic, etc. These orders are mental constructs rendered visible and reified in the symbolic behaviour, ritual and other, of the people in whose minds they are nurtured. The violence, inherent in master fictions such as nations, social orders or ethnic identities, may be concealed by e.g. the ritualisation of 'invented traditions'. They are the myths about the legendary foundation, naturalness, antiquity, cultural distinctiveness, or historical achievement or other imagined 'foundations'. Such constructs, though lacking historical truth, are used effectively for furthering political aims or for bolstering political power,⁸⁶ in particular in the more recent examples of the one-party nations of post-colonial Africa.⁸⁷ Violence may also be openly expressed in rituals designed to incite the passions of ethnic strife.⁸⁸

⁸² Cf. the discussion in Wijsen (1994: 29-31) of the concept of 'relevance' in Sperber & Wilson (1986).

⁸³ However, inter-group strife is not the only area of study for detailing the functions and morphology of ritual in plural and pluralist contexts. In my view, it needs to be balanced with another important area of research, that of accommodative ritual by which a distinct group seeks to establish, or maintain, integration with, or subordination to, another and especially a dominant group. An intriguing example is the ritual of 'resting in the (Holy) Spirit', which has caught on in charismatic groups in mainline Christian churches in recent years for exactly that purpose. Time and space forbid the inclusion of an analysis of this contrasting class of inter-group rituals in this volume. For other examples of the accommodative use of ritual, such as Christmas rituals and birthday parties in England by non-Christian immigrants, cf. Baumann 1991: 97-110.

⁸⁴ Because ritual structures the field of action and the minds of the actors in identical ways - which causes the participants in a field of ritual behaviour to take that field and the ritual behaviour it requires as 'natural'. It prevents them from perceiving its arbitrary character and strategic effects. Cf. e.g. Bourdieu 1971/1972, 1977b, 1980, 1990; Verboven 1987; Robbins 1991; Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992; Jenkins

A provisional definition of ritual

Operational definitions of ritual need not be universally valid, nor do they need to comprise all the traits that would have to be included, if ritual were to be accounted for analytically in all its complexity and variety. They may, therefore, also legitimately highlight in a selective manner those marks in this complex phenomenon that are central to the research aims of a particular discipline or scholar. That gives me the liberty to define ritual for my purposes⁸⁹ provisionally as

that ordered sequence of stylised social behaviour that may be distinguished from ordinary interaction by its alerting qualities which enable it to focus the attention of its audiences - its congregation as well as a wider public - onto itself and cause them to perceive it as a special event, performed at a special place and/or time, for a special occasion and/or with a special message. It effects this by the use of the appropriate, culturally specific, consonant complexes of polysemous core symbols, of which it enacts several redundant transformations by multimedia performance. Thereby it achieves not only the smooth transmission [42] of a multitude of messages - some overt, most of them covert - and stimuli, but also serves the strategic purposes - most often latent, sometimes manifest - of those who perform a ritual, *ad intra* – within unified congregations – or, in situations of plurality, *ad extra* – in the wider society –, as well as *ad intra*.

This operational definition of ritual is sufficiently broad to allow the attribution to ritual of both communicative and strategic functions, and to stipulate for each a wider scope than attributed to them by Leach and Bourdieu.

APPENDIX I

DEFINITIONS OF RITUAL
IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

N.B. Two cautions must be registered. First, no claim is made that this list is exhaustive. It is a bye-product of my study of the literature on ritual in the past year. I use it for analysing the historical development of the central concept of ritual theory. Others with an interest in this field may find it useful in conjunction with the brief history of some of the theoretical developments in

1992.

⁸⁵ Cf. Kertzer 1988: 2, 5-6, 178-179

⁸⁶ Cf. Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983

⁸⁷ Kertzer 1988: 178

⁸⁸ Kapferer 1988

⁸⁹ They are to test the heuristic utility of this provisional operational definition of ritual in an analysis of the ritual episodes at, or centring on, Ayodhya between 1984 and 1992 in the contest for power between three parties: a Hindu political movement, the Muslim 'community' in India, and the secular government of India. Cf. Platvoet 1995

anthropology of religion presented below in appendix II, and may wish to develop it further. Secondly, although definitions are theories *in nuce*, they do not replace an author's full ritual theory.

- 1909 **A. van Gennep** (1909: 13-14, 16-17, 23-24, 275) termed rites of passage those 'ceremonial sequences' with the typical three stage structure of separation, margin, and aggregation, by which the passage of humans from one social situation to another, or from one cosmic or social world to another is effected; i.e. from some state, which van Gennep viewed as 'sacred' in relation to certain other 'profane' ones, to another state. Van Gennep saw 'ceremonies, rites, cult' (17) as praxis which is at once religious and technical; which he therefore termed 'magic' (17). Rituals are magico-religious acts. He discussed the theories about their presumed efficacy extensively and proposed a new division of them (5-13, 17-18).
- 1912 **E. Durkheim** (1912: 56): 'Enfin les rites sont des règles de conduite qui prescrivent comment l'homme doit se comporter avec les choses sacrées'.
- 1951 **R. Firth** (1951: 222): ritual is 'a kind of patterned activity oriented towards the control of human affairs, primarily symbolic in character with a non-empirical referent, and as a rule socially sanctioned'.
- 1951 **Royal Anthropological Institute** (1951: 175): 'Ritual, like etiquette, is a formal mode of behaviour recognised as correct, but unlike the latter it implies belief in the operation of supernatural agencies and forces'.
- 1954 **Edmund Leach** (1954¹/1964²: 13): 'Ritual denotes those aspects of prescribed formal behaviour which have no direct technological consequence'. 'Leach sees [...] ritual as a "pattern of symbols" referring to the "system of socially approved 'proper' relations between individuals and groups"' (Goody 1961: 160). In 1968, Leach however rejected this traditional dichotomy between 'ritual' and 'technological' action as a much too Western concept. He noted that so far 'ritual' had been used either interchangeably with 'ceremony', or that the two were sharply distinguished. In the former case, 'ritual' denoted for anthropologists 'any non-instinctive predictable action or series of actions that cannot be justified by a "rational" means-to-ends type of explanation' (Leach 1968: 520-521), as it did for Goody (1961: 159, see below). On this definition, anthropologists would term handshaking, or the rites of purification by a high caste Hindu (non-rational) 'rituals' but would qualify the planting of potatoes for the purpose of growing them as a rational technological action, and not as a 'ritual'. Leach observed that 'rational' and 'non-rational' do not express here the actor or inside perspective, but the outsider perspective of the observer. So they are *etic*, not *emic* categories of recent European positivist origin. For a Hindu, however, religious purification rites would qualify as eminently 'rational'.

In the latter case of 'ritual' and 'ceremony' being sharply distinguished, 'ritual' is 'usually set apart as a body of custom specifically associated with religious performance', as above with Firth (1951: 222). Royal Anthropological Institute (1951: 175), and below with Monica Wilson (1957: 9), Turner (1967: 19; and 'ceremony' becomes either the umbrella category for both religious and secular stylised action or 'the residual category for the description of secular activity' only. In the fully institutionalised Western societies with churches and an unambiguous separation between religion and secular society, the distinction between (religious) 'ritual' and (secular) 'ceremony' is easy to apply. But not in 'exotic societies'. To overcome that problem, Gluckman (1962: 20-24) multiplied

analytic concepts, but Leach finds their usefulness ‘hard to imagine’ (Leach 1968: 521). ‘Ritual’, he said, is not ‘a fact of nature’, but ‘a concept’ that is ‘used in very varied ways’, depending on ‘background and prejudices’. Examining the use of the concept of ‘ritual’ by Robertson Smith, Durkheim, Van Gennep, Harrison, Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown and Mauss, Leach found that they all assumed that all social action belongs unambiguously to either the non-rational/mystical/religious/non-utilitarian/sacred domain or to the rational/common-sense/utilitarian/profane/secular sphere (Leach 1968: 521-522). In his view, they all erred in defining ‘ritual’ ‘unambiguously and exhaustively’ as ‘behaviour relevant to things sacred’ and ‘accounted for by mystical action’ (Leach 1968: 522-523).

Instead of this ‘scholastic illusion’, Leach proposed his ‘operational definition’, the merits of which, he said, ‘will depend upon how the concept is being used’ (Leach 1968: 521): ‘the term *ritual* is best used to denote the communicative aspect of [social] behaviour’, i.e. as referring to all actions by means of which we *say* things, mostly about human relationships and status, rather than *do* things.⁹⁰ But he immediately adds that many ‘rituals’ also do things, both from the perspective of the believers and from that of observers, as is clear from the effects believers seek and find in healing rituals, and from the cathartic function which Gluckman attributes to ‘rituals of rebellion’. But primarily, rituals convey messages,⁹¹ e.g. of submission, whether of an inferior to a superior in secular social life, or of a believer to a god in religious communication.

- 1954 [43] **S.F. Nadel** (1954: 99): ‘When we speak of “ritual” we have in mind first of all actions exhibiting a striking or incongruous rigidity, that is, some conspicuous regularity not accounted for by the professed aims of the actions. Any type of behaviour may thus be said to turn into a “ritual” when it is stylised and formalized, and made repetitive in that form. When we call a ritual “religious” 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’. Nadel viewed any excessively action as ‘ritual’ and so did not restrict it to religious action. His concept of ‘ritual’ is an ‘inclusive’ one (Goody 1961: 158).
- 1957 **Monica Wilson** (1957: 9), however, took an ‘exclusive’ position. She defined ritual as ‘a primarily religious action [...] directed to securing the blessing of some mystical power. [...] Symbols and concepts are employed in rituals but are subordinated to practical ends’. She used ‘ceremonial’ as ‘inclusive’ category, defining it as ‘elaborate conventional behaviour for the expression of feeling, not confined to religious occasions’. She included under it both religious ceremonials, such as Corpus Christi Day processions, and ‘secular’, atheist celebrations, such as the Red Army parades on the anniversary of the October Revolution.
- 1961 **Jack Goody** (1961: 159): ‘By ritual we refer to a category of standardized behaviour (custom) in which the relationship between the means and the end is not “intrinsic”, i.e. is either

⁹⁰ Or: ‘in ritual we are concerned with aspects of behavior that are expressive (aesthetic) rather than instrumental (technical)’ (Leach 1968: 525).

⁹¹ ‘All customary behaviour is a form of speech, a mode of communicating information. In our dress, in our manners, even in our most trivial gestures we are constantly “making statements” that others can understand’ (Leach 1968: 523). As ‘all of us in our private daily lives manipulate the symbols of an intricate behavioural code and readily decode the behavioural messages of our associates’ (Leach 1968: 524), the functional utility of ‘rituals’ is plain, for our day-to-day relationships depend on our mutual understanding and acceptance of the messages conveyed in them, e.g. about the status differences

irrational or non-rational'. He rejected Durkheim's 'inclusive' or 'extensive' definition of 'religion' and 'ritual'. Durkheim regarded the 'sacred'-'profane' dichotomy as universal and considered all practices relative to things sacred as uniting people into one single moral community as religious 'rituals', in particular mass ceremonials such as coronation services, Red Army parades and July 14 celebrations. Durkheim's definition therefore included into 'religion' practices which in a neo-Tylorian 'exclusive' definition would be regarded as 'secular', for Tylor had restricted 'religion' to practices relative to [communication with] spiritual beings.

Goody, however, defined 'religion' as 'the propitiation of non-human agencies on the human model', and added that 'religious rituals all involve supernatural beings'. By qualifying these practices explicitly as 'religious rituals' Goody implied that there are also 'secular' rituals. That is indeed the case, for unlike other neo-Tylorians like Monica Wilson, Goody did not 'equate ritual with religious action' only, but like Nadel accepted 'the "secular" nature of much ritual' (and 'ceremonial') (159). Both Goody and Nadel took therefore an 'inclusive' position. Goody was aware that 'in common usage and sociological writings', rite and ritual may also refer to 'other solemn observances' than religious acts, or worship, or to formal procedures 'not directed to any pragmatic end' (e.g. 'rituals of the table' and 'rituals of eating', which may, or may not, be religious).

Goody conformed to this wider ordinary and sociological usage by defining ritual as irrational or non-rational standardized (or conventional) behaviour and by including three kinds of actions into it. They are: (1) irrational magical action; (2) irrational and non-rational religious acts; and (3) 'a category of ritual which is neither religious nor magical' (159). In line with the positivism anthropologists had inherited from the rationalist founders of the discipline, Goody deemed magical acts irrational,⁹² because they have 'a pragmatic end which its procedures fail to achieve, or achieves for other reasons than the patient, and possibly the practitioner, supposes'. Some religious acts, such as 'many forms of sacrifice and prayer', he termed irrational for the same reason. Other religious acts, however, 'such as in many public celebrations', he regarded as 'non-rational'. He derived this ameliorative qualification from Parsons, who introduced it for referring to 'transcendental' acts which are based on 'theories which surpass experience' and are neither rational nor irrational, but non-rational.

The third category of 'neither religious nor magical' ritual, 'neither assumes the existence of spiritual beings nor is aimed at some empirical end, though they may have a recognised "purpose" within the actor frame of reference as well as some "latent function" from the observer's standpoint' (159-160). He includes into it 'ceremonials of the non-magico-religious kind: civil marriage ceremonies, rituals of birth and death in secular households or societies', as well as the 'rituals of family living' and communist 'rituals of liquidation', and similar types of formalized interpersonal behaviour (160).

Lastly, Goody defined 'ceremonial' as a more inclusive category. Following Radcliffe-Brown, he used it 'to refer to those collective actions required by custom, performed on occasions of change in social life. Thus a ceremonial consists of a specific sequence of ritual acts, performed in public' (159). Like 'ritual', it is not confined to religious acts. Its more

obtaining between participants in a social situation and behaviour appropriate to them.

specific marks seem its collective character and public performance. Therefore, the ‘rituals of family living’ and communist ‘rituals of liquidation’, and similar types of formalized interpersonal behaviour are ‘acts that we cannot speak of as public ceremonials’ (160).

- 1962 **Max Gluckman** (1962a: 22) defines ‘ritual’ as ceremony or ceremonial [involving] mystical notions.⁹³ He defines ‘ceremony’ and ‘ceremonial’ as ‘any complex organisation of human activity which [... is] expressive of social relationships’. He defines ‘mystical notions’ (after Evans-Pritchard 1937: 12) as ‘patterns of thought that attribute to phenomena supra-sensible qualities which [...] are not derived from observation or cannot be logically inferred from it, and which they do not possess’; and (quoting Wilson 1957: 9) as ‘primarily religious action ... directed to securing the blessing of some mystical power’. So, he included ‘magical’ and ‘religious’ activities expressing social relationships into the category of ‘ritual ceremonies’ (or ‘ritual ceremonials’), especially as he found them in ‘tribal societies’, and reserved the concept of ‘ceremonious ceremonies’ (or ‘ceremonious ceremonials’) for ‘secular’ activities expressing social relationships, as he found them especially in modern urban societies. A Corpus Christi Day procession is a ‘ritual’ ceremony, but an October Revolution parade is a ceremonious ceremonial, because it lacks reference to mystical notions.
- 1966 **Clifford Geertz** (1966: 1, 28-29; 1973: 87, 112-114) defines ritual as ‘consecrated behaviour [in which the] conviction that religious conceptions are veridical and that religious directives are sound is somehow generated. [Ritual is] some sort of 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. In a ritual, the world as lived and the world as imagined, fused under the agency of a single set of symbolic forms, turn out to be the same world, producing thus that idiosyncratic transformation in one’s sense of reality to which Santayana refers [when he writes that religion opens vistas upon another world to live in]’. ‘It is [...] out of the context of concrete religious acts of religious observance that religious conviction emerges on the human plane’. ‘Though any religious ritual [...] involves this symbolic fusion of ethos and world view, it is mainly certain more elaborate and usually more public ones in which a broad range of moods and motivations on the one hand and of metaphysical conceptions on the other are caught up, which shape the spiritual consciousness of a people’. ‘[W]e may call these full-blown ceremonies “cultural performances” [... in] which the dispositional and conceptual aspects of religious life converge for the believer, [i.e. ...] the plastic dramas [in which] men attain their faith as they portray it’.⁹⁴
- 1967 **V.W. Turner** (1967: 19; 1968: 15; 1978: 243) defined ritual as ‘prescribed formal behaviour for occasions not given over to technical routine, having reference to beliefs in mystical (or non-empirical) beings and powers’. Cf. also Turner (1974: 56): ‘ritual [is] symbolic behaviour [which] actually creates society for pragmatic purposes’.
- 1968 **Rodney Stark & Charles Y. Glock** (1968/1971: 256): ‘Ritual refers to the set of rites, formal acts and sacred practices which all religions expect their adherents to perform’

⁹² For a well-argued refutation of this tradition and Goody’s article, cf. Spiro 1964.

⁹³ Cf. also Gluckman (1963: 74): ‘Ritual is [...] to establish a good relationship with mystical powers’; Mary & Max Gluckman (1977: 237): ‘Ritual is performed for the benefit of the community, a benefit achieved through its postulated effect on unseen forces’.

⁹⁴ Cf. also Geertz (1983: 30): Ritual drama is ‘reiterated form, staged and acted by its own audience [which] makes (to a degree, for no theatre ever wholly works) theory fact’.

- 1971 **J.W. Fernandez** (1971: 56): ritual is 'the acting out of metaphoric predication upon inchoate pronouns which are in need of movement'.
- 1974 **R. Boccock** (1974: 37): 'Ritual is the symbolic use of bodily movement and gesture in a social context to express and articulate meaning'.
- 1978 **R. Delattre** (1978: 282): ritual is 'those carefully rehearsed symbolic motions and gestures through which we regularly go, in which we articulate the felt shape and rhythm of our own humanity and of reality as we experience it, and by means of which we negotiate the terms or conditions for our presence among, and our participation in, the plurality of realities through which our humanity makes its passage'.
- 1979 **S.J. Tambiah** (1979: 119; 1985: 28): 'Ritual is a culturally constructed system of symbolic communication. It is constituted of patterned and ordered sequences of words and acts, often expressed in multiple media, whose content and arrangement are characterized [44] in varying degree by formality (conventionality), stereotypy (rigidity), condensation (fusion), and redundancy (repetition). Ritual action in its constitutive features is performative in these three senses: in the Austinian sense of performative wherein saying something is also doing something as a conventional act; in the quite different sense of a staged performance that uses multiple media by which participants experience the event intensively; and in the third sense of indexical values - I derive this concept from Pierce - being attached to and inferred by actors during the performance'.
- 1981 **J. van Baal** (1981: 162-163): 'A rite is a religious act, i.e. every act concerned with an unverifiable reality which is both feared and sought. [...]. Every ritual has two aspects: the one is turned to the realization of contact and communication with the supernatural, the other to the expression of awe by the observation of a respectful distance'.
- 1982 **W.E.A. van Beek** (1982: 13-14) defines ritual as 'stable patterns of activity in which men address the supernatural'. (translation J.P.)
- 1982 **R.L. Grimes** (1982: 55) proposes a 'soft' definition of ritual as 'ritualising': 'Ritualizing transpires as animated persons enact formative gestures in the face of receptivity during crucial times in founded places'.
- 1983 **J.G. Platvoet** (1983: 187): "'Ritual" in its widest meaning may therefore be defined as any pattern of standardised behaviour for the purpose of communication between men and [postulated] unseen beings, men and men, men and animals, animals and men, and animals and animals, which exhibit these formal properties' [of *scilicet* repetition, self-conscious role or play acting, stylisation (i.e. the use of extra-ordinary action or symbols, or the extra-ordinary use of normal action and symbols), order and organisation (with moments or elements of chaos and spontaneity at prescribed times and places), evocation (in order to attract attention) and a collective dimension [...]] (Moore & Myerhoff 1977: 7-8)'.
- 1983 **Th.P. van Baaren** (1983: 189): 'Ritual is the usual appellation of that variant of conventional relations which in mutual social relations between people as a rule is called ceremonial, but which in religion too can be found as sets of conventionalised rules for the relations between human beings and gods or beings venerated'.
- 1983 **B. Kapferer** (1991²: 3): 'I define ritual as a multi-modal symbolic form, the practice of which is marked off (usually spatially and temporally) from, or within, the routine of everyday life, and which has specified, in advance of its enactment, a particular sequential ordering of acts, utterances and events, which are essential to the recognition of the ritual by

- cultural members as being representative of a specific cultural type’.
- 1985 **J.S. La Fontaine** (1985: 11): ritual is ‘the acts performed in an ordered sequence which has purpose and meaning for the people concerned’.
- 1986 **F. Staal** (1986: 42-43): ritual ‘is, like language, a *rule-governed activity*; [...] the assumption that rituals express meanings like language is not only unnecessary, but inaccurate and misleading’; cf. also 59: ‘[T]he chief concern of ritualists is with rules. They are constantly concentrating upon rules, and forms that are generated by rules. All [45] their preoccupations illustrate the nature of ritual as rule-governed activity’; also 217-219; and the title of Staal 1989: rites are ‘rules without meaning’.
- 1987 **E.M. Zuesse** (1987: 405): ‘For our purposes, we shall understand as ‘ritual’ those conscious and voluntary, repetitious and stylized symbolic bodily actions that are centered on cosmic structures and/or sacred presences’.
- 1988 **D.I. Kertzer** (1988: 9): ‘[I define] ritual as symbolic behavior that is socially standardized and repetitive. [...] Ritual action has a formal quality to it. It follows highly structured, standardized sequences and is often enacted at certain places and times that are themselves endowed with special symbolic meaning. Ritual action is repetitive and, therefore, often redundant, but these very factors serve as important means of channelling emotion, guiding cognition, and organizing social groups’.
- 1991 **David Parkin** (1991: 18): ‘Ritual is formulaic spatiality carried out by groups of people who are conscious of its imperative or compulsory nature and who may or may not further inform this spatiality with spoken words’.
- 2004 **P.N. Holtrop, E.R. Jonker & H. Mintjes** (2004: 1.5): ‘een ritueel is een soort *time-out*; dat wil zeggen een onderbreking van het dagelijkse leven die een vaste orde en vaste symboolhandelingen kent en op die wijze wel naar het gewone leven verwijst’. Dat doet het, menen zij met Clifford Geertz, ‘op zodanige wijze dat de overtuigingen over het alledaagse leven zo sterk aanwezig zijn dat ze stemmingen en motivaties teweegbrengen die bij de deelnemers de indruk van een feitelijke realiteit bevestigen.’ [Translation JP: ‘ritual is a kind of time-out, i.e. an interruption of daily life, with a fixed order and a fixed set of symbolic actions, which also refer to normal life’. The authors agree with Clifford Geertz that ritual uses [the symbolic actions] ‘in such an effective manner that the convictions about daily life are present so strongly that they induce in the participants moods and motivations which confirm to them the impression [that they refer to] an actual reality’.]

APPENDIX II

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL THEORY ON Ritual as Expressing Social Structure

The history of anthropological theory on ritual as expression of structure and society may be divided into an early, a modern, and a recent phase. The early phase coincides with the period in which anthropology studied small societies in the colonial context. In this period (\pm 1870-1960), ritual was equated by Durkheim (1912: 56) with religious, and by most other anthropologists, with religious and magical acts (van Gennep 1909: 5sq., 16-17), both of which they regarded as products of non- or irrational modes of thought (Tambiah 1968: 186). They opposed these to technological acts which they considered rational because they could be shown to achieve the results in-

tended in strictly causal ways (e.g. Malinowski 1948: 17-92; Firth 1951: 222; Radcliffe-Brown 1952/1971: 123-124, 143, 153-177; Nadel 1954: 99; Goody 1961: 159-160; Leach 1968: 520-523; 1972: 334). Whereas technology was viewed as an instrumentally effective, rational and spontaneous means to a pragmatic end, ritual was conceived as a rule-governed, routinized, symbolic and – contrary to the views and intentions of the actors (cf. La Fontaine 1985: 12) – as non-instrumental, as an arbitrary end in itself, and as expressing, reflecting, reinforcing and – as say Gluckman and Turner – regenerating social structure.

After 1960, when decolonisation caused anthropologists to turn to the study of complex societies also, they found that sociologists, political scientists and historians, as well as ethologists and dramatists applied the term ‘ritual’ not only to religious acts but also to the secular ceremonial behaviour of modern man and to certain types of animal behaviour. It caused anthropologists to expand their field of study and to include secular [46] ceremony in ritual (Moore & Myerhoff 1977). This inclusive definition caused anthropologists slowly to shed their preoccupation with the rational-irrational and the instrumental-expressive dichotomies and to shift towards the view that ritual is a mode, or aspect, of all social behaviour, characterised by either (increased) routinisation, formality and repetition (e.g. Goody 1977: 30-31), or by (the symbolic) communication (of social structure) (e.g. Douglas 1970: 78-89, 114-136, 148-153; 1982: 1-3, 8, 10-11, 20-21, 55; cf. also Bell 1992: 72-74). Both views attributed to ritual an integrative capacity as an ‘all-purpose social glue’ (Horton 1964: 349). Leach (1968: 523-524; 1972; 1978: 45-54) suggested that ritual be seen as acts that ‘serve to *say* things’ (Leach 1968: 523; his italics). He spoke of ritual as an ‘unknown language’ of which anthropologists must ‘discover the rules of grammar and syntax’ in order that they may ‘decode’ what ritual says about society (Leach 1968: 524; for an example, cf. Rosaldo 1968). In this quest, says Leach (1968: 523), ‘the social scientist [...] can expect little help from the rationalizations of the devout’ (cf. also Tambiah 1979: 120). Leach (1968: 524-525) refers only in passing and in a confusing manner to the power dimension of ritual.

This period also saw the emergence of new analytical paradigms. One was Tambiah’s (1968, 1979: 119, 127-130; 1985; cf. also Ahern 1979; Ghosh 1987) performative approach to ritual. It was part of the performance approach, in which ritual is studied in analogy with other cultural performances such as drama, theatre, spectacle, festival (Geertz 1966: 29-35; Schechner & Schuman 1976; Schechner 1977, 1985; Turner 1982; MacAloon 1984; Schechner & Appel 1989), game, metaphor (Turner 1974; Fernandez 1977), and text (cf. Geertz 1983: 19-35; Sullivan 1986; Bell 1992: 37-46) (cf. also Moore & Myerhoff 1977: 7-8; Lewis 1980: 7, 8, 13, 19-20, 46, 97). From this markedly interdisciplinary approach, ‘performance studies’ as well as ‘ritual studies’ emerged in the late 1970s in North American universities as distinct disciplines, the first within the social sciences and arts (Turner 1983: XXI), the latter in the academic study of religion with its own *Journal of Ritual Studies* since 1987 (Grimes 1982: preface; Grimes 1987). In tune with the emphasis on style in the performance approach to ritual, Grime’s concern is also with the several scholarly ‘styles’ in the study of ritual in the past (Grimes 1982: 1sq.).

In the last decade, attention shifted in particular to political rituals as the ritualisation of power (e.g. Lane 1981, Bergesen 1984, Cannadine & Price 1987, Kapferer 1988, Kertzer 1988), and to the hidden power dimension of rituals (Bourdieu 1977, 1979, 1982; Oosten 1990). From these studies, it is clear that ritual may serve not only to achieve ‘the peace and harmony typically promised to ritual participants’ (Turner & Turner 1978: 244) by legitimising and extolling the existing order, but also to change and even overthrow it. Bell, who defined ritual as the ritualization of so-

cial interaction, has recently extended this view to all ritual: 'ritualization is first and foremost a strategy for the construction of certain types of power relationships effective within particular organizations' (Bell 1992: 197, 206). She defined 'ritualization' as that privileged form of interaction of a social body within a symbolically constituted spatial and temporal context in which value-laden distinctions are used in strategic ways in order to differentiate that social event as more important or more powerful from other more quotidian forms of interaction by a variety of ways and means, which are specific to each culture. In Western [47] cultural traditions, ritual has been differentiated from ordinary social intercourse by formality, fixity, and repetition, but these features are not intrinsic to ritualisation or to ritual in general. They are 'frequent, but not universal strategies for producing ritualized acts' (Bell 1992: 8, 74, 90-93).

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