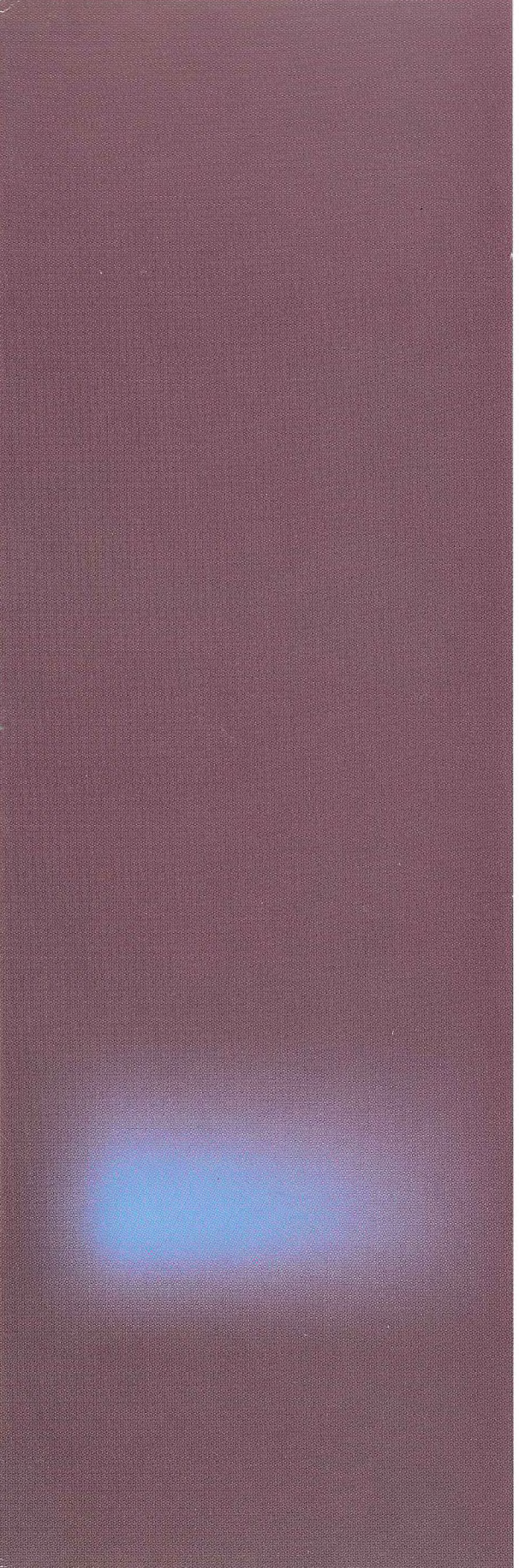
Approaching Religion

Part II

Edited by
Tore Ahlbäck



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Based on Papers Read at the Symposium on Methodology in the Study of Religions Held at Åbo, Finland, on the 4th–7th August 1997

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Editorial Note

From the 4th to the 7th of August 1997 the Donner Institute and the Finnish Society for the Study of Comparative Religion arranged an IAHR Regional Symposium in Turku/Åbo, Finland. The topic of the symposium was "Methodology of the Study of Religions". I would like to express my gratitude to the members of the Nordic Organizing Committee, Jan Bergman (Uppsala), Jeppe Sinding Jensen (Aarhus), and Einar Thomassen (Bergen), and to the members of the Board of the Finnish Association for the Study of Comparative Religion, Veikko Anttonen (Turku), Eila Helander (Helsinki), Helena Helve (Helsinki), Nils G. Holm (Turku), Ilkka Pyysiäinen (Helsinki), and Martti Junnonaho (Turku). The practical arrangements were taken care of by Tuija Hovi and Anne Puuronen from the Department of Comparative Religion at Turku University and by Monica Sirén and Björn Dahla from the Donner Institute in Turku. I would like to express my thanks to them.

In 1973, little less than a quarter of a century earlier, the Department of Folklore and Comparative Religion at Turku University had organized an IAHR Study Conference titled "Methodology of the Science of Religion". Certainly you should not arrange conferences on methodology at too short intervals. However, we were of the firm opinion that four conferences in a century is the correct amount.

The main difference between these two conferences is that the latter focused on the Nordic countries whereas the former was genuinely international. As a consequence, comparisons between the two conferences are difficult to make.

The conference publication from the 1973 conference Science of Religion: Studies in Methodology. Ed. by Lauri Honko. The Hague: Mouton, 1979. (Religion and Reason, 13) includes the commentaries of the co-referents and the discussion among the audience. The present publication is more "traditional" which means that no commentaries or discussions have been included.

We invited seven key-note speakers to the conference: Pascal Boyer (Lyon), Rosalind I. J. Hackett (Kentucky), Lauri Honko (Turku), Thomas Lawson (Kalamazoo), Thomas Luckmann (Konstanz), William E. Paden (Burlington), and Donald Wiebe (Toronto). They repre-

sent various subjects and approaches, such as cognitive analysis, the history of religions, epic studies, the sociology of religion, and the philosophy of religion. Since it was a regional IAHR-conference we circulated a call for papers in all of the Nordic countries.

"Methodology of the study of religions" as a conference topic is vague. In the call for papers covering letter we tried to limit the theme to the science of religion, including the history, phenomenology, anthropology, sociology and psychology of religions. Nevertheless, the theme remains extensive if you want to produce a coherent and well integrated conference publication. To elucidate the problem I cite from my Editorial Note in an earlier volume of this series, Dance, Music, Art, and Religion (Åbo 1996): "The organizers of a symposium such as this seem to face a problem that is impossible to solve: either they choose a very specific and regional theme, in which case they end up with a comprehensive and homogeneous volume but the specific theme excludes far too many from delivering a paper and attending the symposium, or they choose a very broad and woolly theme that results in a disparate, heterogeneous volume but gives almost every historian of religion in the Nordic countries a chance to deliver a relevant paper".

We can at least say that the theme of this conference was "broad enough by all standards".

What can be done to minimize the disadvantages of a broad topic when it comes to a publication? We have proceeded in the following way: The 37 papers – all of them relevant to the topic but very heterogeneous – have been formed into two main groups. The first group consists of papers dealing with method in an abstract or purely theoretical way. In the second group papers discussing method in a practical or applied way are included. These two groups complement each other: the papers in the first group are reflections on methods as tools for doing research whereas the papers in the second group can be considered demonstrations of how to use methods as tools in "real life". We have decided to publish the papers in two parts – the papers concerned with theory in part 1 and the case studies in part 2. Both volumes will be published during 1999.

I am grateful to Ann-Mari Dahlström for having prepared this manuscript. Without her effort there would be no conference publication whatsoever from the 1997 IAHR Regional Conference in Turku.

For more information on *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis* or to view a complete listing of contents, please visit us at our World Wide Web site at: http://www.abo.fi/instut/di/scripta.htm.

Tore Ahlbäck

NORA AHLBERG

Methodological Choice and the Study of Sensitive Issues

Defining My Concern

There has been relatively little concern with methodological issues within the study of religion, as compared with, for example, social or medical sciences, or somewhat surprisingly even with general history as maintained by Sjöblom (1999). The most obvious reason for this is in a tradition following on from a general resistance to what has, within the field, been labeled **reductionistic views**. Not infrequently has the need for theoretical and/or methodological refinement been neglected as unnecessary as long as the researcher knows — that is thoroughly knows — the facts of his or her subject theme. If one excepts the requirement that one should master a sacred language, researchers within the field have been acknowledged according to their expertise within a certain *world* religion — more specifically knowledge of its normative texts — rather than their methodological competence.

Another reason for this prolonged state of affairs (i.e. neglect of methodological issues) might be found in the **inter-disciplinarian nature** of the subject theme. The study of religion could well be compared to other overall umbrella-like or thematically organized subjects such as women's studies or minority and refugee studies, which are my own second field of interest. When so little is shared among scholars of different persuasions, except for the subject theme, the situation offers many benefits — like getting a fuller view from different angles or contrasting findings gained by diverse methods — but it also poses a range of difficult issues — not the least of a methodological kind — which are perhaps easiest to avoid. Moreover, such a situation may invite unfortunate or half-hearted combinations of conflicting methodological approaches which are not very good by any scientific standards. For example, the widespread tendency to treat qualitative methods as if they were simply derived from quantitative ones — as a kind of miniature case (i.e. the one out of a hundred) — may confuse more than solve the problems involved.

This article has sprung out of such considerations. As I see it, there is a need for a continuing clarification of how diverse methodological approaches relate to the study of religion in general, and what is more, of certain aspects of the role of the researcher in particular. Since I myself have been educated within separate — dare I say opposed — scholarly traditions — and today hold the position not only of professor of the history of religion at the university of Trondheim but also professor of psychology at the university of Oslo, and that in the medical faculty — I saw a chance to contribute towards such a discussion here in Åbo.

Because of this professional background of mine I have chosen to relate to that part of our subject theme which collects its own empirical material in *face to face* interactional situations, such as through fieldwork, clinical assessments or by way of interviewing. While textual studies are thus outruled, I nevertheless believe that my reasoning has a certain relevance for them as well; that is, if one considers formulations prevalent among some scholars that appear to bridge the two concerns, i.e. of written vs. oral sources[1]. Such formulations that I have in mind may, for example, by reference to Ricoeur (1991) and others[2] designate the *person* or research subject as a text to be read or religion and particularly ritual as a form of communicative language (Lawson and Cauley 1990, among others), or they may critically inquire about the motives of 'Those who write our history' (e.g. Bertaux 1991; Clifford and Marcus 1986).

On Sensitive Research

However, the study of religion is not only inter-disciplinarian in nature, but there is also an increasingly **multicultural awareness** within the field. Geertz (1999) refers to the ensuing concept of *scienceitis* or inclination towards self-scrutiny of the kind that brands all Western science as basically colonialist. While Wiebe (1999) further notes, how the present devaluation of neutral science, has, within the field of religious studies, come to prolong an approach which substitutes a mere understanding or, as I would add, an *emic* for an explanatory or *etic*ally derived analysis of religious phenomena.

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[1] On the diversity of sources and *territorial* concerns within the subject area more generally see Pye 1999 and Thomassen 1999.

[2] Luckmann 1999 makes use of *texts* in this way.

But what is more, time and again our subject theme turns out to be of a kind that could be labeled **sensitive in nature** as illustrated, for example, by my own research into Muslim female refugees (Ahlberg 1997). By sensitive research I mean studies which bear a potential risk of unwelcome social consequences or psychic costs for the participants or some social category that they may represent. For a closer scrutiny of the concept see Renzetti and Lee (1993: 3–13), who, among other things, distinguish between a broader definition denoting all somehow controversial studies which may have social implications for the subjects involved (i.e. almost any applied social research), and, more specifically, research which is, moreover, likely to become threatening for the parties involved.

It is perhaps enough here to remind the reader of the uneasy relationship between the study of Islam and the debate on Orientalism or human rights issues on the one hand (e.g. Lindholm 1992; an-Naim 1990; Ahlberg 1994), as well as the growing xenophobia directed at Third world migrants in many Western countries on the other (Shahid and Koningsveld 1991; Metcalf 1996).[3] In addition to the kind of topics which touch on *deviance and social control*, Renzetti and Lee (1993: 6) add a few more that are likely to be perceived as sensitive. They are where research intrudes into *the private sphere* or some deeply personal experience, impinges on *the vested interests of those in power* or deals with *things sacred* to those who do not wish them profaned.

But what particular issues are considered sensitive naturally vary cross-culturally; and what is initially believed to be a sensitive issue thus might not be such after all. For example the registration of personal belief in the Scandinavian context has not been considered necessary, or even *comme il faut* with reference to its sensitive nature as it is believed — besides to be a highly personal experience and private issue — to touch upon racist issues. But in many countries from where the migrants come it is quite to the contrary considered the

[3] At present, national asylum policies within the European Common Market and associated countries like Norway, are in the process of being coordinated in order that what has by the critics been denoted as *The Fortress Europe* (i.e. to keep Third World foreigners out) will be erected around it. And those few Muslims who do manage to cross the borders, moreover, frequently have to endure the negative stereotypes prevalent among their Western hosts, which are nurtured by the emerging North-South enemy-constellation of the post-communist era, and, however unfairly, tend to equate them with their very oppressors. For a study of the confrontation of Muslim and Western interests in the area of immigration see Ahlberg 1990.

first and foremost identificatory — that is collective — and quite unproblematic issue.

Research which at the outset may appear quite harmless can, likewise, later turn out to be potentially risky for its more or less unprepared practitioners. Such has been the case for several participants of an interdisciplinary seminar which I head at the Psychosocial Centre for Refugees (University of Oslo), for example, for a psychologist studying toddlers adopted from abroad who during her subsequent field contacts turned out to have been sexually abused by army personnel in their Latin-American orphanages prior to their adoption. Suddenly the image carried by the foster parents of their hard-won little Princesses were about to crack in an unforeseeable way, were this piece of information to become known. And her subsequent research involvement touching on the issue of trading with children has not made the situation more comfortable (Carli 1997). Likewise, a project by a Ph.D. student of mine in medical anthropology concerning the psycho-cultural adaptation of unaccompanied minor refugees form the Third World, has raised some initially quite *unexpected* issues connected to the more or less *terrible secrets* that they themselves may harbor concerning their (*real*) identities — such as having provided false age, name or familial relationships to the immigrant authorities (Harsløf-Hjelde 1996). A leakage of which kind of sensitive information, in the last instance, might threaten their very juridical status and thus protection in exile.

Yet another study by two psychology students of mine (Sinnes and Nilsen 1997) on preachers belonging in a religious revivalist movement of Northern Scandinavia and Finland, called Lestadianism, concerning their attitudes to mental health generally and the professionals working within the sector in particular, could provide another example. The movement at issue is characterized by a strong regional profile, frequently viewed as a sort of *ethnicized* version of Christianity intended for the Sami and the aboriginal Finnish immigrant or *Kveni* minority. Against the background of the overall political tensions concerning minority issues that prevail in its Northern Norwegian surroundings the results of this study may stay in danger of being dragged into the research external area of press sensational writing and/or being misused for political purposes. To the extent that the statistics may turn out to be of a sensitive nature, the same fortune could easily befall another Ph.D. *supervisee* of mine within psychology, who studies the relationship between externalizing (i.e. in this case criminal) and internalizing (i.e. as reflected in their mental health) coping strategies among youth of immigrant parents covering most of the said cohort in Oslo (Thorgersen 1997).

It is not the topic in itself so much as its relationship to the social context in which the research is carried out, that is of importance here. And that brings me to the role of the researcher. In addition to those implications which apply to the (primary) vulnerability of the research subjects (who, as a rule, have not initiated the process themselves) — in my and many of the cases referred to above, for example, Third World migrants and adoptees, who might suffer stigmatization from focusing on the problematic aspects of their exile situation — sensitive research may be burdensome to the researcher as well. Because the former aspects — especially as concerns members of lower status and/or minority groups — are relatively more well-known although not always attended to (even in the literature on method), in this connection I will focus on the latter largely unacknowledged aspect of the problem. Despite the fact that the power within the subject-object relationship of the research setting itself largely belongs with the researcher, this is not so in respect of the surrounding research external (community) setting in which, for example, a researcher into deviant groups who rely on emic involvement and/or a human rights commitment might become viewed as more or less *contaminated* by the research topic him or herself[4].

Research on sensitive issues thus raises a whole range of problematic issues of methodological relevance. It affects almost any stage in the research process rendering problematic the collecting, holding and/or dissemination of research data. And the problems that may arise from it in hindsight take many forms, such as political, ethical or legal, as well as those affecting the personal lives and security of its participants — researchers as well as subjects. All these considerations are worth serious academic pondering, not the least from the point of view of the choice of research method and design.

Polarities of Methodological Approach: an Issue of Varying *Inputs* as Well as of *Outputs*

The typological arrangement in *Figure 1* contrasts with what could perhaps be labeled a *Natural Science (NS)* — and by extension medical — versus a *Humanistic (HUM) Model* — in which I include the social sciences as well. It is representative of a division which often — though not quite correctly — is equated with quantitative *hard* versus qualitative *soft* data approaches (Bryman 1992; Holter and

[4] Cpr. what is said on secondary traumatization below on page 25.

Kalleberg 1996; Yin 1984; Silverman 1989). Here I have registered certain main differences between the two approaches which are of relevance to my argumentation. They include — besides the disparities in viewing reality as indicated on top of the scheme — a restricted, or in the eyes of its critics inflexible, focus which demands a high level of precision or operationalization and offers few — if not only one single — opportunity for measurement and data collection, versus one which — quite to the contrary — requires greater flexibility of performance.

Figure 1

Polarities of Methodological Approach

(view of social reality as external to actor)	(view of reality as socially constructed)
quantitative *hard* data (restrictedly reliable)	qualitative *soft* data (contextually rich)
sample generalization (measurement/replication)	content contextualization (*verstehen*/interpretation)
research assistancy (reliability of instruments)	researcher as participant medium (education of observers)
social survey/ experimental design (structured methods)	unstructured interviews participant observation/ case study design

The latter approach gives many more *opportunities for revision and contact*, not only between the researcher and his or her research subjects but also between the theoretical analysis and collecting the empirical material. In the Natural science model these are viewed — and thus methodologically protected — as highly separate operational units, which (by way of their very separateness) ensure or strengthen the validity of the analysis at issue. In this type of argumentation the researcher is supposed, first to formulate explicit propositions about the topic to be investigated and design the research *in advance* specifically to answer these questions and — note — nothing else (i.e. all else being considered irrelevant surplus or somehow *disturbing* data). This is why one is frequently cautioned not to change the focus of the enquiry during the process, as compared to the opposite view, which — quite to the contrary — may en-

courage the researcher to take up, for example, someone's genealogy while simultaneously paying due attention to all the surplus material that may emerge in the very process[5]. In other words, starting your research somewhere (e.g. in shamanistic rituals) in order — somewhat unexpectedly — to end up almost anywhere else (perhaps in the sphere of economy).

As complementary or even competing views these different scientific approaches largely depend on a different kind of input; to the extent that the very *disturbing* factors (i.e. in terms of reliability) of the one approach (which are as a consequence ruled out as errors), may in fact be considered the very best material to ponder by the other; that is, a material that has emerged while taking *a closer look*, and in the case of interviewing going beyond the mere research questions into considering their wider context.

While the Natural Science approach is modeled on the requirements of highly structured experimentation with the ideal of bringing *the world out there into a controlled (i.e. closed) laboratory* in mind, the latter model — derived from within the field of the Humanities — venture the opposite way *out there into the field*, being among other things, built *around participant observation in natura* (i.e. under field conditions) with an accompanying flexibility of thought and action as in unstructured methods. And that is the very aspect that makes the latter type of approach better suited for attending to problems of the kind discussed in this article, because it is about an intensified attentiveness in relationship to the surroundings.

For example, in the field of refugee studies which more often than not implies dwelling on sensitive and controversial issues, participant observation and in-depth interviews come to represent important methods because they rely on a sustained and intensive interaction in the cause of which any additional and/or adverse problems to affect the subjects (especially from what they reveal in the interviewing situation) are more easily detected, as vulnerable interviewees are also hopefully protected (sometimes the mere knowledge that someone is attentive to your plight is helpful, the idea Amnesty rests on).

There is a further concern for *the representativeness of the sample* considering some wider population (i.e. generalization) within the NS model, for which purpose some precise measurement is chosen which

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[5] This particular exercise was used by Peter G. Riviere at a Field methods course arranged by Refugee Studies Programme, Oxford University in 1994.

comprises a large but minutely exact battery of input. The very wording of a question and the fact that it has been used before (i.e. standardized) — for example, cross-culturally *in a wide variety of testing situation while remaining the same* — seems more important than pondering its shades of meaning or relevance as a concept to those being asked to respond (i.e. as long as they do respond). This is, of course, in order to minimize errors which hamper the replicability of the research design and reach a statistically relevant outcome, again, in contrast to the unique *processual* features of much HUM research which is difficult to replicate at will. That is also why in the latter case (instead of instrumental precision and reliability) one goes for educating the *researcher as a participant medium.*

However, such differences in scientific outlook do not merely concern the issue of the scientific procedure itself or even its design (that is, structured versus unstructured arrangements) but, moreover, they turn on how the end product is construed when taken as a *genre;* for example when published as articles of few words and figures or extensive monographs punctuated by quotations and detailed description. Already the employment of certain scientific concepts like causal or independent variables, standardization, reliability or generalization, will impose expectations forewarning the reader about the material to come. Here, the researcher is counseled to study the levels of correlation between types of treatment and their effects through examining a large number of passively recipient cases (i.e. hypothesis-testing). But by adopting such advice he or she simultaneously avoids the detailed study of internal processes and activities of particular *agents which bring these effects about*, that are better attended to within HUM designs, in which case the researcher is also free to concentrate on whatever numbers are favorable from the point of view of his or hers theoretical interests, if it be one single case. The ideal end result constitutes some kind of contextualized protocol which excels in conceptual analysis and subjective relevance; is revealing of both the researcher and his or her research subjects, while documenting the process as well as its content.

Thus, the issue of research design is not only about different inputs, but one ends up in a differing output, that is style of presentation, as well. And, therefore, it is to a certain extent also about the criteria on which we base our evaluations, because the way of posing the problems as well as presenting the findings are so different. For example, the scholarly debates which have recently been going on in Norwegian academic circles (as reflected, for example, in Apollon 1997) concerning *cheating in or the criteria for excellency of research*, similarly touch upon the said divisions. This is because of the turn

the exchange of views has taken, inasmuch as it is mostly concerned with technicalities of a kind that would be considered less relevant from the point of view of a humanistic concern which follows quite different scientific procedures. Such issues as whether the (ever-longer) authors lists we encounter within the medical field of study correctly reflect the work load of its participants (i.e. when a monograph is frequently written by one single author alone), or say, the fabrication, stealing or altering of (i.e. numerical) results where testing or laboratory experiments are involved, seem irrelevant for those working within the opposite camp.

Given the complexities of contextualizing the findings within the humanistic approach it is more unlikely — though, of coarse, not impossible — that a researcher would go unnoticed for very long while busy fabricating the required comprehensive setting or whole *story*. The case of Carlos Castanedas (1972; 1974a; 1974b; 1974c; 1977) series of publications from within the subject of anthropology, would be a rare example of the opposite; another would be the famous cover-up article by Alan Sokal *Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity* published in the post modernist periodical *Social Text* (Sokal 1996), which the author after publication admitted to have written on purpose as part and parcel of what has been labeled an ongoing Science War between the two approaches.

Some Problems of the Natural Science Approach

If we let the prevalent criteria for research excellency derived from the Natural Science model, such as, say, concerning the frequency of publications on an international level, be our sole evaluative guide, we might — from the point of view of a HUM model — end up with a highly selective focus. The case of professor Dorothea Fosså, the medical scholar who tops the statistics at the university of Oslo, could highlight some aspects of the problem. In an interview (Syvertsen 1997) she herself grants the following facts about her research activities:

The work day of this mother of four starts at two o'clock in the night (as it has for ten years now, for how could she otherwise have managed). Then, from eight o'clock on in the morning she follows an ordinary hospital doctor's day while her two research assistants punch out the latest experimental data results; which she herself receives in the late afternoon before putting down an article, and delivering it at the doorstep of a translator who, again, returns it before

midnight in order that our researcher may start another day doing the last check-up before posting her article off. And, she adds — we may assume somewhat mischievously — that her students are offered supervision at half past six in the morning.

I do not for a moment want to underestimate the obvious merits of the said scholar's astonishing working capacity nor the quality of her articles *all published in international journals of the very best repute*. What I do want to focus on, is a more general issue that the obvious pressures surrounding her research situation raise concerning the need for balancing between the requirements for quantity and quality for scholars of less energy. On how much we, in the name of science, demand from those — men and perhaps especially women — working within the field at the expense of what could for the benefit of my argument be called the requirement of an ordinary life. The strategic retreat to certainty by way of restricting the focus of a scientific investigation, tends to sweep away — not only scientific errors — but its time-consuming *imaginative underpinnings*. Added the accompanying fast growing tempo in the frequency of publishing, the result may be a science which seems certain in a very restricted sense only, not frequently turned over in a cross-cultural or even historical context[6].

The problems encountered in the NS model are thus both of a structural and pragmatic kind. For one thing, the very conceptual starting point may be at odds with the particular reality under study, while, at the same time, its revision might be difficult because this type of design tends to treat any irregularities as irrelevant errors to be discarded. For example, the feasibility of using self-assessment scales like the Harward Trauma Questionnaire, widely used in psychiatric research and developed in the West, in a cross-cultural setting may be questionable already when considering the problems of translating the measurable concepts into some smaller language of a non-literate context. But, what is more, in the wrong hands the very way of implementing such a survey, may, in the eyes of the immense trauma focused on in this instrument and the accompanying emotionality involved (and presumably aroused) by the intervention itself, appears as — if not *inhuman* or unethical, at least often — a premature questioning or testing of helpless and hapless refugees.

Whenever we are to ask research questions which are not straightforward and simple to answer (i.e. restricted in the above sense) but

[6] While simultaneously ignoring – not only the classics – but frequently any publications much older than a few years.

charged with subjective meaning for the objects of our research, or that are somehow considered as sensitive in nature, such a question in itself may, moreover, produce different answers at different points in time, because it initiates a process of reflection and afterthought. And, that is, without these different answers thereby necessarily being wrong or invalidated, to use a more scientific term, as they would be in a design built on the natural science model. For example, the straightforward asking of a tradition-oriented refugee patient whether (he or) she has been raped will almost certainly bring instant denial and accompanying attempts at keeping its possible occurrence a secret. This is also why non-western women generally do not seek help for the medical and psychological sequel of sexual violence. Instead they are referred for treatment for problems related to the trauma, such as diffuse gynaecological problems or suicidal gestures.

In one such case of my own, an illiterate Kurdish refugee woman herself did not even comprehend the torture she had experienced (i.e. in her case the electrical torture of her genitals) as such. This was since she had never visited a gynaecologist, which was what her somewhat unwilling torturer (himself perhaps forced to commit the atrocities?) was posing as, while claiming to burn away a cancerous tissue. And for all those years that had passed since the incidence (five of which were in exile) she has had no-one to ask (Ahlberg, 1997). The point from the perspective of religious studies is that sexual atrocities of this kind must be understood within their psychocultural and religious or regional context, as an issue regarding the proper place of women or what it means to be female. Thus, in due time, the same patient also reported how rebellious husbands were expelled as unbelieving *kafirs* by the local Iranian *pasdaran* revolutionary guardians who view their flight as synonymous with religious defection. The number of times a woman was raped in prison was, according to her personal (and very painful) experience, in direct proportion to the number of male relatives who were perceived as having fled their responsibilities as defenders of their wives' honor while (by way of their acts) leaving them unprotected.

Episodes of this kind, irrespective of any individual guilt, risk bringing the whole family into disrepute, which is why sexual violations remain underreported. And, therefore, why any one rehabilitative effort — not to speak of research interventions — which ignore this sensitive fact, especially if public revelations are involved, merely adds to the dilemma of those involved in this kind of suffering. The way of posing research questions is a frequently encountered problem in clinical research generally, and especially when it is,

moreover, cross-cultural in nature, because the research tools commonly used have traditionally relied so heavily on diagnostic procedures and testing batteries developed in line with the NS model. As the counter-argument runs, such a model fails to take account of its appropriateness in studying people; i.e. for objectifying people without acknowledging the fact that — as opposed to natural phenomena — *the research done may in fact come to affect them in decisive ways*, a feature which, again, becomes especially highlighted when using face to face interview methods and, especially, when studying differences between people across cultures.

Polarities of Subject-Object Interaction: on the Issue of Going Hunting for Data[7] in Sensitive Research

It is not my intention to dwell on the differences between diverse scientific models as such in this article, except for merely regretting the fact that, while issues of method have perhaps been undervalued in comparative religion, on the other hand, qualitative methods as largely resorted to in this subject, have frequently been unjustly treated in the social and medical sciences. The standard textbooks of these subjects exemplify a tendency to view qualitative methods as suited for some kind of restricted preliminary stage for developing hypotheses for a more proper quantitative study, while dwelling on the difficulties involved, if such a venture were to conform to a canon modeled on a NS approach. As a rule, the presentation of qualitative methods is confined to headings such as 'Some problems of...' and sandwiched within or appendiced to the main treatise.

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[7] In a research seminar that recently took place at the university of Trondheim (Dept. for Comparative Religion 1997) Thomas Luckmann was lecturing under the heading *Language – how to go hunting for data in social research.* A main point of his was in discussing the limitations related to the kind of *preproduced* texts traditionally used within the social sciences as compared to the benefits of what he himself formulated as "Shooting the bird in flight" or collecting *spontaneously occurring* empirical material (i.e. in its natural setting) as it goes on (i.e. without interference of the structural kind). Such data as, for example, represented by the ordinary conversations occurring between people *out there* (in the real life), are, according to him, needed in order to complement the present status of our knowledge within the area. That was when I was to ponder the further question as posed in this section: *What about the hunter in the picture* (i.e. the researcher in relationship to his or her field of inquiry)?

For example, in Moser and Kalton (1986: 270), when reviewing the methods available for collecting information, the authors starts out (in quite a negative way) by stating that interviewing introduces various sources of error and bias, which are then further treated under the heading 'Control and measurement of response errors' (Moser and Kalton 1986: 403). And moreover, from a reasonable fear of influencing the respondent's answer, later adds that 'On no account must the interviewer give an indication of her own views' (Moser and Kalton 1986: 278). However, someone writing from the opposite (such as, say, feminist) quarters might just as well start off by emphasizing — quite to the contrary — the strengths of a mutually interactive perspective. Paradoxically, the more subjective the material becomes in the process of an extended cooperation between the researcher and his/her research subject, the more reliable it also grows.

As a result of such marginalizing tendencies the soft approaches have got a reputation as somehow inferior, despite the fact that they represent an approach that is both time-consuming and demanding of its practitioners. Qualitative methods may paradoxically demand *more* — not less — than quantitative ones, from the researcher in terms of self-reflection, communicative skills and even ability to endure intimacy (especially with people of different persuasions), the way a maximum utilization of their distinctive character is dependent on a solid theoretical understanding as well as knowledge of the subject theme. In this type of inquiry the researcher is to be used as a participating medium, because it is more loosely structured and dependent upon basic knowledge of the research issues involved, issues on which only the researcher in her/his capacity of an *educated observer* can best take decisions, and the knowledge of which cannot easily be transformed to another *uneducated* assistant, at least without proper preparation.

That brings me to the next issue connected with the above difference in scientific outlook, which has, so far, been less considered, but, nevertheless is, in my view, of increasing importance particularly in comparative religion. As an extension of the above-mentioned flexibility demand, it is about the subject-object relationship, while reminding us that such differences also relate to diverse conceptualizations of the role of the researcher in relationship to his research subject (*Figure 2*). It is the inclusion of contextual factors in the soft method research design, which makes it necessary to take a closer look at the effect of the researcher as well.

Figure 2

Polarities of Subject-Object Interaction

restricted focus/content	flexible/associative content
preformulated/-coded structured questionnaire	open-ended/informal 'conversation with a purpose'
subject respondent	subject informant
short-term neutral	long-term trustful interaction
asymmetrical control/ distance	closeness/mutuality (dependence)

It is especially by way of the post-modernist impulses that the role of the researcher has come under closer scrutiny. Frequently critical voices are heard demanding that the author behind the product be accountable, inquiring about whose history or cultural interpretation, rather than, as the case is in the hard data focus, about the representativity of the research sample. By *de*-anonymizing the person behind the product one wishes to reach a greater reliability and extend the perspectives that are mediated as truths within the public sphere, not seldom to the benefit of a post-colonial, feminist or micro-historical presentation. Research projects of a kind that may have unforeseen, not seldom political implications, also presuppose the acknowledgment of the vulnerability of the researcher. The said developments have, for example, given rise to intense and, at times, provocative debates about the right of the research subjects to gain insight into research results (and the responsibility of the researcher to see to it) or the power of the powerless — quite often minority groups — to influence what kind of research is done on them; or about the further issue of whether, in the word of the anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen (1997) a professionally good researcher could not simultaneously be immoral as a person, to take just a few examples which have been debated in Norway lately.

Historians of religion have commonly been quite naive when it comes to such problematic aspects of the role of the researcher; as a rule they have been personalized and retold as gossip. In my own career also I have heard many rumors about other colleagues who are supposed to have been accused of being spies while on field work, or they have been exposed in public and charged with racism due to their results, and have had to live under threats of reprisals from

their own research subjects or foreign regimes, even fearing for their own safety. That is, if they have not been hindered in their pursuits by a variety of so-called *gate-keepers* by which I mean those who monitor the researcher's access to the empirical material, such as, for example, authorities set to review the use of sensitive or personal data, or some other corporate bodies involved in the issues and/or subjects of one's choice.[8] In an increasingly bureaucratized world researchers may increasingly (and often rightly so) be dependent on whether they have the *formal* credentials that may be required for entering the field, such as in my case, for example, as a clinical psychologist in addition to my interest and parallel education in cultural analysis. Renzetti and Lee (1993: 9–10) adds to this picture the issue of legal restrictions that increasingly affect (not only health workers, but) researchers.

What is important here is the fact that this has happened without the information being substantiated or taken seriously as a problem of research. What I ask for is thus an effort to systematize what experiences we have with the vulnerability of the role of the researcher within our subject area. Such backbiting should be brought to light as a problem of method, and the students prepared to handle the mass media, political and other authority figures who may decide on the societal fate of their research findings. I do not mean to say that real conflicts of interest are thereby done away with; my claim is of course more modest, like *minimizing* the personal pain and problems of public relations that may result from unprepared practitioners in the field, if anyone is to dare thread into the controversial waters that our subject seems so full of.

Instead of attempts at collegial stigmatization on the part of those of us who have been lucky to avoid problems like that (perhaps due to our cowardice?), we should put the issue as such on the agenda in order to prepare us better for real life situations. This is because the problems that may arise in connection with sensitive research are not so much about personal shortcomings or defeat, but, more often than not, about an unintentional politization of research problems and findings, and, above all, about an unfortunate personification of a

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[8] For example, in an article entitled "Interviewing Survivors of Marital Rape", Kennedy Bergen (1989) examines how a vast majority of those institutions approached refused her access, from reasons ranging from a plain refusal to acknowledge the occurrence of rape among their clients or protecting them from an overexposure to researchers, to the likelihood of their resisting such a critical scrutiny as a research process is when done by outsiders.

more general problem. In other instances, this state of affairs may bring self censorship which might render our research and its results innocuous. I think of the lack of studies critical of our main religious denominations (that is, if one excepts studies of societally marginal religious phenomena such as the new religions represent), or as already mentioned within the study of Islam in which case many scholars of our subject have kept silent concerning and/or avoided the more controversial themes. Is there not a risk that we may thereby become toothless?

Putting such issues on the agenda becomes all the more important in the face of the accelerating development that is presently evident within the subject of religious studies as the numbers of students keep rising alongside the increasing interest in religion as a phenomena in the public sphere. A development that poses greater responsibility not merely of how we choose to focus our studies — the ratio between critical as well as understanding perspectives — but also for how we are to prepare for the possible research external utilization of it.

On Context Dependent Data, the Ethics of Research and the Closeness of the Researcher to the Field of Inquiry

In the efforts to systematize problematic aspects that may arise from sensitive research there is much to gain from inter-disciplinarian co-operation. One thing that I myself have learned while carrying a double role as clinician-psychologist and cultural researcher-field worker, is that, while anthropology has a long experience from field-work concerning the subject-object interdependence, it has, nevertheless, shown less systematic efforts at understanding it theoretically. Psychology, on the other hand, has a lot to recommend itself when it comes to instruments for analyzing such dependencies in the form of theories about what are called attributional links and transference or object relations, while it still lacks in cultural sensitivity.

In addition, clinicians largely work through subject-object relations: in psycho-dynamic approaches that is their primary instrument. Moreover, they have the benefit of the *closed therapeutic or free exploratory space* as it is also designated, which permits in nature experimentation of a kind that offers the flexibility of a qualitative design while it still simultaneously offers a more controllable research situation than what is possible in field work, in which the researcher

— however unwillingly — is to a much larger extent drawn into the confines of his or her field as envisaged by the so-called *arrival stories*.

During my project on Kurdish refugees, which was based on year-long therapeutic contacts, I thus learned a lot about cross-cultural relations (especially, about gender, age or in/out group relations) from the way the clients related to me. Among others things, I learned from their occasional withdrawal behavior, or their viewing the mental health professionals as some kind of extended kin, as well as from their misunderstood expectations about getting help with practical issues. Among the more sensitive factors I — the therapist-researcher — had to confront in this connection, was the refugee research specific danger of retraumatization by way of the reactualization of the traumatic situation during the therapeutic/healing process, which is known, not only to affect the research subjects but the therapist/researcher as well.[9]

Because minority research generally, and that of refugees in particular, touches so heavily upon power relationships — if not criminal victimization (going back to the vulnerable situation of those applying for asylum and their more or less honest brokers and/or hosts) — on human atrocity and immense suffering — it becomes especially demanding also for the researcher. Clinicians speak of *secondary traumatization* or even social stigmatization from the refugee-specific setting, as I would, here, extend to include the researcher's chosen area of investigation. An effect which is seen more clearly within the context of the helping system, which is so to speak expected to remedy the situation. Refugee studies certainly raise a range of problems relating to ethics as well as politics, in addition to the refugee-specific psycho-social setting, which gets reflected also on those who get only indirectly involved.

The methodical starting point for this study of mine was actually in an interdisciplinary challenge coming from the field of cultural studies, and perceived within the mental health care sector, as to where the encounter between helper and patient should take place, and how

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[9] Enrique Bustos (1990) has written a highly enlightening article on the splitting mechanisms operating at the organizational level of the professional helping system concerned with refugees as seen in the Nordic setting. And I was once told from a reliable source at the Medical Foundation (a London based center treating torture and Holocaust victims) that when Tuesday was designated as a patient day then every other staff-member was regularly sick on Wednesdays.

it may affect their relationship.[10] In order to gain correct information both field worker and therapist make use of systematic emphasizing with the experiences and ways of thinking of persons, who may be very dissimilar to themselves. Neither of them gain from too much closeness and/or distance with their informants but have to alternate between the inside emic and outside etic perspectives. If there is much to learn for psychologists from the cultural sensitivity of the anthropologist, the latter would, however, benefit from the therapeutic insight into the reciprocal impact between the professional and the clients as *objects of expectations or attribution* in the eyes of each other.[11]

While participating in the lives of their informants, the field worker necessarily becomes a part of his or her field to a much larger extent than is needed within the confines of traditional psychotherapy, the very frames of which are meant to exclude or process such influences by way of the creation of an alternative *fictitious* stage. By the therapist's refusing extra-therapeutic help (i.e. in the *real* social world), the whole issue of the cross-cultural disadvantages affecting the patient (which are likely to remain after the particular therapeutic intervention has ended) are instead made explicit, while at the same time the patient's integrity and resourcefulness subsequent to having got the map right, is to a greater extent acknowledged. The curative element is not in persuading the patient, but in the fact that the therapist manages to communicate a correct understanding of the origin and function of the particular problem, as I would add *across culture*. Regrettably, such basic principles of therapeutic in-

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[10] The classical problem is that: If the therapist takes part in team-work across professional dividing lines undoubtedly in line with the general interdisciplinary requirements of this field, where there is a particular case (say, of child custody) under scrutiny, a risk of emotional leakage, manipulation and even contamination in the eyes of the patient is impelling. Moreover, for therapists to offer concrete help for problems pertaining to the social welfare or legal sectors may, in addition to the quackery involved from their lack of training, also leave the underlying long-term problems untouched.

[11] For the researcher, that means – in addition to the requirements of writing a research proposal and fund raising – also having to consider what particular kind of person he/she may represent (i.e. public relations or image so to speak) from the point of view of both the research subjects and the gatekeepers surrounding them. And that may apply whether any of them are even conscious of this fact, dependent as it is on what psychology would call the attributional links between researchers and those others whom they depend on for carrying out their work.

teraction are all the more easily lost sight of the greater the religio-cultural distance between the therapist and patient becomes.

In addition to ordinary research skills, refugee research frequently requires cultural sensitivity and even political sophistication from its practitioners. This is because it raises a range of sensitive issues that may affect all involved parties, who are at a potential risk from the psychological impact of traumatic material itself, as well as, from its misinterpretation by various interest groups in the society at large. Many important interests may be involved, which make it necessary to consider the research design from the point of view of maximum validity and minimum offensiveness as envisaged by the concept of *compassionate scholarship*. The researcher does wisely to reckon with the possibility of sanctions from infringement by those in power or by way of somehow incriminating or sensitive material becoming known (cpr. e.g. the harassment of exiled persons by their homeland regimes, or, in the case of asylum seekers, that the empirical data may throw suspicion on their motives as mentioned above).

Summing up

A main difference between the methodological approaches as referred to in this article — and illustrated by reference to minority studies — is in the closeness of the researcher to his field. One could perhaps state that while the researcher draws nearer to his field in *soft* approaches the theories remain further away from the empirical data (i.e. in that one creates greater vistas) while the opposite is true for those that work with hard data designs, that meta-theories are almost excluded (as pure speculation) due to the strict demands for operationalization, as the (effect of the) researcher is to a greater extend likewise excluded from the picture. Though in both cases the choices made must naturally be made explicit as must the researcher relate to a qualified discussion between experts who have some kind of relationship to the kind of empirical material or theoretical thinking that is at issue in the particular project.

There is professional agreement about the fact that the relationship between empirical facts and theory is problematic, mediated as it is through the work of the researcher and aided by some kind of measurement. Both sides in what has been called a science war accuse each other of renouncing the truth: While the quantitative side claims that qualitative methods merely produce fiction and speculations in the head of the researcher; the qualitative one accuses hard data oriented researchers of loosing themselves in numerical bric-a-

brac while reminding us of the fact that statistical validation is also dependent on conceptual definitions, is about a certain percentage of *something*. Numbers without a context remain meaningless.

Before what solutions are sought to this common problem assume widely different forms. While the *soft*-approach among other things seeks to include the effect of the researcher in the analysis, the *hard* one, quite to the contrary, wants to exclude it. This is because, unlike a conventional NS or structured intervention which seeks to hold constant the researcher's impact — as it does of all inputs — its unstructured HUM counterpart recognizes the inherent interactiveness or mutual dependence and psychological positioning of the researcher and his or her research subjects, as well as, the wider context it involves. Moreover, in a qualitative approach theories are not considered bare logical apparatuses for prediction, which is why they must not be judged on their predictive power alone, but on the plausibility of the image of the world they help to create (i.e. here the theories function to *anticipate* reality). Thus even in their capacity of theoreticians — as in that of field workers — researchers are themselves considered involved in the very creation, if not experiencing, of facts.[12]

Again, for those of us who are limited to collecting our own empirical material in interpersonal situations it is moreover important to remember that while the choice of *soft* methods frequently arises from difficulties in accessibility on the one hand, it may, on the other, bring a range of unwinding problems which result from the increased involvement by the researcher in his or her field of inquiry. This fact reminds us that the subject-object relationship here referred to naturally is not a question of a private but of a professional closeness\distance.

Sensitive research may impinge on all social research (however, not seldom, without the awareness of the involved parties) but it is most evident in demanding research contexts that tend to sharpen ethical dilemmas such as minority and refugee studies. A continued ignoring of the methodological issues inherent in researching sensitive topics would therefore be scientifically regrettable and potentially generate flawed conclusions on which theory, and then public policy, subsequently be built. We must confront theoretically and seriously the problems posed by this, for example, as concerns the role of the researcher discussed in this article. Few subjects would, in my opinion, be better positioned for doing just that than the study of religion.

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[12] For a discussion of the processes involved see e.g. Bjerre Nielsen 1995.

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GUDMAR ANEER

Unity and Diversity

Intentional Multidimensionality in Persian Sufi Language and the Method of Decoding It

Introduction

Jalal al-Din Rumi and Muhammad Hafez Shirazi are two of the great mystics, Sufis, writing in Persian in the 13th and 14th century. They are commonly referred to in the West just as Rumi and Hafez. Their poetry is still an essential part of the Turkish and the Persian religious and cultural settings. Hafez is today very much the national poet of Iran known for his elegance. Rumi on the other hand is the one known for religious depth, heavily influencing most of the countries in the Middle East and especially Turkey from the 13th century onwards. As an adult he lived in Konya, a city situated in what is now the country of Turkey and where the Mevlevi order commonly known as the 'Whirling Dervishes' did and still does influence both the religious and political life. The master and his order also influenced most of the other countries in the Middle East. The time from the twelfth century until the 14th century is often regarded as the epitome of Persian Sufism.

The objectives of this article are to suggest a method for analyzing the poetry of Rumi and Hafez within the discipline of History of religions. First a few poems and parts of poems will be presented. Then various aspects of the method such as historical-philological as well as those influenced by anthropology and their relevance for the study will be discussed. The focus is thus on the methodology and the aim is not to give a detailed and full analysis of the poetry presented. The poems are there for illustrating the relevance of various aspects of the method. The aim of writing this paper has been achieved, if the points made regarding method are clear at the end of it.

The Poetry

We will start with a few poems of Hafez. This one is translated by H. H. (Hafiz 1962: 109–110) without any further reference in the book to the full name:

O ask not

O love, how have I felt thy pain!
  Ask me not how–
O absence, how I drank thy bane!
  Ask me not how–

In quest, throughout the world I err'd,
And whom, at last, have I preferr'd?
  O ask not whom–
In hope her thresholds dust to spy,
How streamed down my longing eye!
  O ask not how–

Why bite my friends their lips, displeas'd?
Know they what ruby lip I seized?
  O ask not when–

But yester-night, this very ear
Such language from her mouth did hear–
  O ask not what–

Like Hafiz, in love's mazy round,
My feet, at length their goal have found,
  O ask not where.

Some poems of Hafez quite similar to the one above have been translated into Swedish. The introduction clearly shows that the translator, who is a Swedish author, sees only human love and ordinary wine in the poems (Hafiz 1991). Manoochehr Aryanpur on the other hand divides Hafez' poems into four categories in his *A History of Persian Literature* (1973: 232–234). They are: 1 Lyrics in which Hafez speaks of human love and ordinary wine. 2 Poems in which Hafez writes of mystical love in which wine and rose have a symbolic value. 3 Poems in which Hafez makes quick shifts from one theme, image, or allusion to another. They deal with mystical love and symbolic wine etc but in a more complex way than in no. two. 4 Poems with social and political undertones. He places the poem quoted above in the first category. It is thus possible for both scholars and non scholars in the field of Iranistics to regard the poem discussed

above as a human love poem. Many, especially Westerners, would read most of Hafez poems in such a way i.e. as if they were just about human love and ordinary wine.

Another one of the poems ascribed to Hafez is the following translated by A.J. Arberry (Hafiz 1962: 117–118),

The Light Divine

1

Within the magian tavern
The light of God I see;
In such a place, O wonder!
Shines out such radiancy.

Boast not, O king of pilgrims,
The privilege of thee:
Thou viewest God's own temple:
God shews himself to me.

2

Combed from the fair one's tresses
I win sweet musk today,
But ah! the distant fancy
That I should gain Cathay.

3

A fiery heart, tears flowing,
Night's sorrow, dawn's lament–
All this to me dispenses
Your glance benevolent.

4

My fancy's way thine image
Arresteth momently;
Whom shall I tell, what marvels
Within this veil I see?

Not all the musk of China,
The scents of Tartary,
Excel those subtle odours
The dawn breeze wafts to me.

5

If Hafiz plays at glances,
Friends, be not critical:
For truly as I know him,
He truly loves you all.

The first stanzas makes it harder to interpret this poem as nothing but a love poem. The light of God and the king of pilgrims indicate a religious setting. If that part is left out however we are once again close to the possibility of interpreting the text as an ordinary love poem.

The third poem of Hafez (Hafiz 1962: 129–130), referred to in this paper, has also been translated by A.J. Arberry. It is one of the most loved ones in Iran. Only parts of it will be quoted here.

Saki Song

1

Come, saki, come, your wine ecstatic bring,
Augmenting grace, the soul's perfectioning;
Fill up my glass, for I am desperate–
Lo, bankrupt of both parts is my estate.

Bring , saki, bring your wine and Jamshid's bowl
Shall therewith bear to view the vast void whole;
Pour on, that with this bowl to fortify

I may, like Jamshid, every secret spy.
.....
Bring wine, O saki, and its image there
to Jamshid and Chosroes shall greeting bear;
Pour on, and to the pipe's note I shall say
How Jamshid fared, and Ka'us, in their day.

Bring wine, o Saki, that the houris spice
With angel fragrance out of Paradise;
Pour on, and putting incense to the fire
The mind's eternal pleasure I'll acquire.

Bring, saki, bring your throne-bestowing wine;

My heart bears witness it is pure and fine;
Pour on, that, shriven in the tide of it,
I may arise triumphant from the pit.
.....
Why must I yet the body's captive be,
When spiritual gardens call to me?
Give me to drink, till I am full of wine,
Then mark what wisdom and what power are mine;
.....
Intoxicate, of saintliness I'll sing,
And in my beggar's rags I'll play the king.
When Hafiz lifts his voice in drunken cheer,
Venus applauds his anthem from her sphere.

In this poem a certain knowledge of Persian history and culture is required to be able to follow Hafez imagery. There also seems to be too many references to the religious sphere to interpret it in a strictly non religious way.

The influence of Jalal al-Din Rumi's poetry is not dominated by rather short poems like Hafez. Rumi is most famous for his long *Masnavi*. It's opening lines are in the translation of R.A. Nicholson (Rumi 1990: 5):

Listen to the reed how it tells a tale, complaining of separations–
Saying, "Ever since I was parted from the reed-bed, my
lament hath caused man and woman to moan.
I want a bosom torn by severance, that I may unfold (to such
a one) the pain of love-desire.
.....
'Tis the fire of Love that is in the reed, 'tis the fervour of
Love that is in the wine.

It is not likely that anyone reading this and the continuation of it would regard it as non-religious text. On the other hand there are a lot of short poems ascribed to Rumi, which could certainly be read as ordinary love poems just as the main part of Hafez poetry.

We now leave the text presentation for the discussion of the methodology.

Language and Religious Language

Before discussing the poems which we now have in written form but also transmitted orally in chanting, reciting etc. it seems to be a good idea to return to the *Cours de Linguistique Générale* by Ferdinand de Saussure. His view on language in this book has influenced most of the academic disciplines. However all these discussions referring to Saussure seems to be focused on language as the spoken and written language. Saussure's own way of discussing these matters already in 1915 (Saussure 1964: 27–39) indicates that he has a much broader perspective looking at the process of communication in its entirety, where the whole capacity of the brain is involved, but as a linguist he then focuses on written and spoken language. The entire setting is of utmost importance in discussing the poetry of Rumi and Hafez. It is obvious that their poetry is made for chanting, to be accompanied by music and definitely in the case of Rumi much of it has the rhythm of dancing (Ghomi 1993: 97–106). Any analysis of their poetry which does not take these things into account has reduced them to written documents with the logic of those documents. Then the whole influence of the music, the chanting and the dancing which is an important part of the poems when they were written is lost. This means that the influence on the emotions, what in the West is called the subconscious etc. is not understood, which then also goes for the composition of the poems, what they contain, what is sometimes called repetition etc. Thus the words as such are only one part of the poetry. When the poetry is sung nowadays it is usual for the singer to choose only a few lines and repeat them, not necessarily in the original order, to create the desired effect on the listener. Under these circumstances it is easy to understand the high esteem given to the musician.

The aim of the discussion above was to emphasize the relation of written words to music, singing and dancing. A situation where the primary function of the words can just as well be emphasizing rhythm, creating various moods etc. The relation to art picturing the saki, gardens etc. is also important regarding the totality of the set-

ting in which the words are only one part. Religious language in these poems should then preferably be understood as the totality of the communication process or if language is restricted to what is written or spoken it should be emphasized that the words often have a very special function within the total setting of communication in the Sufi context.

Another important part of the Sufi language of Rumi and Hafez is that many poems could be understood as ordinary love poems. We will soon return to the reason for this as well as to symbols in this language.

The Historical and Philological Aspects of the Method

One part of the development of history of religions has been emphasizing the necessity of historical work, placing the object of study in its historical setting. This has often been combined with emphasizing the importance of some knowledge of one or more languages relating to the object of study. We shall look at the relevance of these things for our discussion through a few examples.

A. Some parts of historical knowledge are essential for analyzing the poetry of Rumi and Hafez. One is the death of the 10th century Sufi called Hallaj. Since he said "I am the Truth", which was understood as God, he was killed for heresy, one of the major sins within traditional Islam being to put someone at the same level as God. Still, talking about the fate of Hallaj can be a very delicate matter. The result was, however, that a symbolic language became important, where it was not easy to tell if it was an ordinary love poem dealing with human beings or if it was about the union between man and God. Part of that setting is also the deep feeling of sadness when man and God are separated. The symbolic language created at times a safety essential for the Sufis. If there was not this kind of uncertainty regarding the meaning of love and beloved, things had to be hidden in other ways. It is obvious that Rumi's *Masnavi* is a religious text. But the union between God and man as well as many other things are very hard to specify in a clear way since king, Sufi, Rumi etc are merged into each other in such a clever way that the reader can seldom tell who is who. This multidimensionality of Rumi certainly has various reasons. One of them could be protection. Another one could be a deliberate way of leading the reader towards beginning to realize the unity between Man and God. Hafez' special way of creating multidimensionality most probably has at least these two aims, protection and guidance. Without the knowledge of the situa-

tion of Sufis at Rumi's and Hafez' time the hide and seek as well as the blurring of the picture can hardly be understood. With this historical knowledge the picture becomes clearer.

Another part of historical and religious knowledge necessary for analyzing the poetry of Rumi and Hafez is the importance of the concept of kingship in Persian traditions. In pre-Islamic times the king was regarded as the one closer to God than any other person. He was responsible before God for executing a just rulership. If the king lied, compare truth in the Sufi setting, he would loose his kingship and God would give it to someone else. As long as the king was a just ruler there would be peace among his subjects, animals would multiply, fertility would prevail, flowers would bloom etc. If the king was unjust peace would vanish, people would have a bad time, flowers would wither and birds would not sing. Many of these ideas were transmitted by Iranians from generation to generation and many of them were made part of the kingship ideology created for the Muslim Turkish rulers during the 11th century (Aneer 1985), which was then also passed on from generation to generation. Both Rumi and Hafez use the picture of the just ruler often identified with pre-Islamic kings, who guarantee peace and prosperity and are linked to the idea of the paradise garden with blooming flowers and singing birds. When tyranny is around the flowers loose their color and their fragrance and the birds do not sing any more. But in the end it is obvious in the poetry of both that the mystic has replaced the king. The mystic is the true king regarding closeness to God etc.

In the historical setting it should also be mentioned that Rumi spent his adult life in Konya as a religious personality having disciples. Hafez on the other hand seems to have spent much of his time writing poetry. Some of it was presented to rulers. Both of them lived at times of unrest. Hafez lived in the aftermath of the Mongols. There are certainly many more parts of history which are important for the analysis of the poetry in question. These have been given just as examples of how crucial historical knowledge is in these matters.

B. Some remarks on the knowledge of language. The great dilemma of every translator of Sufi poetry is the multidimensionality. When the poem is translated into a European language she or he has to choose one out of many possibilities thereby not even being able to indicate a few of the other ones. Part of the richness of the Persian language is not to repeat the same word. Often such translations as the fair one hide many different Persian expressions. One example is in the second of Hafez' poems presented above. The line in Arberry's translation is *Combed from the fair ones' tresses*. The Persian word translated by the fair one is *butan* which in a word by word transla-

tion rather would be idol. Arberry's translation conveys the right meaning since the symbol here stands for God, but it does not convey the character of the anti-language used by Hafez. Even more interesting is the continuation from the multidimensional point of view. Arberry translates *the distant fancy That I should gain Cathay*. The Persian text in Arberry's edition in the same book (Hafiz 1962: 66) has *the thought is certainly far away that I see/experience* khata. The latter has been interpreted as Cathay i.e. the country whereas the very same letters can mean sin. Then the line would be *the thought is certainly far away that I see/experience sin*, which should be put in the context of getting musk from the idols tresses. It would be quite easy to multiply these examples, but this may be sufficient for making the point that almost all the multidimensionality in the use of words is lost in a translation. That also influences the possibility of analyzing eventual patterns of Persian heritage as the background for the imagery.

The Functions of the Poetry

Iranians today often refer to giving people hope and comfort in a situation of turmoil, when they talk about Rumi's and Hafez poems. It is very obvious in the case of Rumi's *Masnavi* that it is intended to lead people who so wish to mystical understanding and pave the way to unity. The same is certainly true for many of Hafez' poems if we look upon them not as ordinary love poems, but speaking about unity between man and God and reflecting the hardships while traveling the path to unity. If we put the poetry of them both in relation to music, singing and dancing this heavily supports the function of leading man to unity with God. It is also evident that an important function of many of their poems is to create an identity which is partly a Sufi identity and partly a Persian identity as opposed to an Arab-oriented Muslim identity. Deeper studies of various functions would certainly be fruitful in analyzing these poems.

Symbolic Clusters

Clifford Geertz has discussed the question of creating meaning and symbolic clusters in various contexts. Many anthropologists have developed the ideas of symbolic clusters for example Professor Göran Aijmer at Göteborg university in Sweden. Here I will not discuss the

question of creating meaning in any deeper way, but I do suggest that the concept of symbolic clusters creating symbolic fields is important or rather crucial for the analysis of Rumi's and Hafez poems. It is important since various symbols are not treated as separate entities. We lose perspective, if we discuss the symbols one by one without realizing the connection between them and how much of their meaning is actually depending on combining them.

In the poems we have seen the recurring wine, love, lover and beloved. One of the combinations or clusters is thus wine being the symbol of love, lover symbolizing man and beloved symbolizing God.

Another such combination of symbols is the saki, the one who pours wine into the beaker or the bowl, the wine, the lovers and the beloved. Often in the poetry the saki merges with the beloved.

Still another combination of symbols is the tavern, the wine, magi and God. In many poems God is called the master, *pir*, of the magi. Magi, the Zoroastrian priest, is in early Arab-oriented Muslim literature a term for the worst type of a heathen. The Persian Sufis, as can be seen in the poems above, made this a word of honor for themselves. Magian tavern is a Sufi construct, combining the title of honor with the place of wine-drinking. The Zoroastrian priests certainly did not have taverns. The combination strengthens the Persian identity against Arab-oriented religious learned people in the same way as the fair one or actually the idol in the same poem above on the divine light.

Another important combination of symbols for example in the Saki song is the king, justice, prosperity, deep insight.

The various combinations of symbols, symbolic clusters, together create a totality from which parts are taken and combined in various ways in the poems. Seldom all of them are there together, but reading some poems with various themes gives the whole combination of symbols, which has been used by the poet. It gives the picture of a Sufi setting, where the essential thing is the path to the unity with God. With it goes the Persian identity indicated in the garden of roses symbolizing paradise, kingship, justice, prosperity, the love of nature etc. Only in combination do these symbols point to the complex situation of the Persian Sufis.

Conclusion

We have looked at the importance of parts of the historical and philological method for the analysis of Rumi's and Hafez' poems. That includes the historical setting as well as knowledge of the language to

be able to see the multidimensionality of words, expressions and lines of poems as well as the symbolic language.

We might add that the history of Hafez' poems is so complicated that only a thorough study of manuscripts can tell which of them are by Hafez himself. We have also discussed the functions of the poems, something which is very much of a certain anthropological way of working. Anthropologists are also important in the discussions on symbols especially symbolic clusters. Without combining the various symbols and seeing the meaning they bring about we are somehow lost in the wilderness running in various directions. Keeping the various parts of the suggested method together might make the scholarly journey easier.

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A Masquerade Is Not Watched from One Spot

Reassessing the Study of African Religions

Introduction

The search for an adequate methodological approach to the study of African Religions in their multiformity has been a fervent one. This problem has held the attention of scholars of African Religions for years, and may continue to do so (cf. Droogers 1985: 101; Binsbergen 1976: 203). Alyward Shorter rightly asserts that "without an adequate methodology, the riches of African Religion cannot be revealed and the scholar is tempted to despise the little he can see" (1975a: 39). Early descriptive approaches were mostly essentialist overgeneralizations whereby "African Traditional Religion" was presented as a single entity. They were also influenced by the approach of comparative religion to the study of "religious universals" which examined aspects of African Indigenous Religions in comparison with the same in other world religions. This presents us with an oversimplification of the nature, structure and practices of African Religions, thus glossing over their diversities and complexities.

Early anthropological approaches on the other hand dealt rather with religious systems of particular peoples, digging out important and minute details. They were, however, sometimes fiercely particularistic, and took their functionalist and structuralist quests too far, placing less attention on the interpretation and meaning of religious symbols and iconography.

Religion, however, should be studied in context, unlike the decontextualized approach to African Religions used by some earlier scholars. In this paper, a multidimensional approach to studying African Religions is proposed; an approach that can cope with the emphasis placed today on multidisciplinarity. Part of the author's work on selected festivals of Jos Plateau peoples is reflected here, using particu-

larly the concept of masquerades[1] to demonstrate this multidisciplinary approach. In assessing the study of African Religions, therefore, the subject matter is approached from a number of angles, since "one does not watch a masquerade from one spot" because of its mobility and complexity. The historical factor and its presence in this work is demonstrated in the use of masquerades, both for the reenactment, and as depositories of history, by most Jos Plateau ethnic groups. This helps in understanding the interplay between diachronic and synchronic approaches in the study of African Religions. In Jos Plateau festivals, attention is shifted away from preconceived rigid, *ahistorical* notions of African Religions, seen in God, gods, ancestors, and spirits, to the dynamic fluidity of history. In the cyclic festivals, life is seen as much more fluid, and responding to change. It is *historical* and not *ahistorical* in nature.

Moreover, when we look back at the approaches of previous scholars, an important theme is completely missing from their works, namely, gender as a category. It is clear that they used categories and "wore *blinkers*" that blinded them to gender issues. Gender is related to and permeates other spheres of human life, such as politics and power, economics, social and religious relationships. It is not a part left out which can be added or "fixed" later on. The problem is more radical than that, because, if gender is left out, the whole picture of religious history is marred, thus flawing the whole study. Gender relations are part of everyday reality, and taking gender seriously as a category of analysis furnishes us with unheard voices at the grass roots, and shifts attention from the official version of religious leaders. Women, for instance, are more active in areas considered marginal, even though they may be more powerful and powerfully involved than the people at the centre. This paper demonstrates why the study of African Religions should pay attention to gender issues.

Like gender, art as a paradigm of scientific investigation has also been glossed over by previous scholars of African Religions. This paper assesses an icon, (the whip) present in Jos Plateau peoples' festivals, using the approach of history of religions. Emphasis is also placed on the hermeneutics of icons and iconography. Finally, the insider/outsider approach to field work is also addressed, pointing out problem areas usually faced by an "insider". The politics of studying African Religion in a country like Nigeria, and the nature, structure

[1] The term masquerade does not in this case imply a procession, but denotes, among others, the incarnation cult of ancestors which exist among many African communities.

and activities of the department of religious studies in the University of Jos (Nigeria) are presented.

This paper is divided into six sections: The introduction forms the first. The second uses the art of masquerading to illustrate why a masquerade is not watched from one spot. It also examines attempts at reviving indigenous religions, using examples from strange arts of masquerading on the Jos Plateau as a challenge to the study of religious change. In the third, a critical survey of approaches used by scholars in studying African Religions is made.

Approaches to the study of African Religions today are proposed in the fourth section. These are polymethodic and multidimentional approaches, the contextual study of African Religions, the historical approaches (demonstrated in the art of masquerading), the need to balance synchronic and diachronic approaches, the use of art and iconography in the study and female studies. The fifth focuses on studying African Religions as insider. This section examines the problems of of the "insider" and the politics of doing research in history of religions in a Nigerian university. The conclusion strongly recommends a multidisciplinary approach for studying African Religions.

The Step of the Masquerade is the Step of the World

> Ogotomeli taught that the society of masks is the entire world. And when it moves onto the public square it dances the step of the world. Because all men, all occupations, all foreigners, all animals are carved into masks or woven into hoods (Griaule 1938: 179; cf. Dieterlen 1989: 34; Hackett 1996: 34).

The step of the leafed masquerade is believed by the Mupun and Ngas ethnic groups of the Jos Plateau as well as the Dogon (see quotation above) to be the step of the world. If this is true, then the dance of the masquerade is also the dance of the world. To learn the steps of the masquerade is to know the ways of the world. The world is wide, high and complex. The masquerade does not only use the whole world as its theatrical stage, but regards its performance as a part of the re-enactment of the movements of the cosmos. Furthermore, it provides a medium of interaction between humans and the spirit world. This clearly presents a picture of the masquerade as an object of marginality, the reverser of normality and abnormality. To watch the masquerade spectacle and drama as play, religious rite, and festival performance, one certainly cannot fully comprehend this

complex scenario, nor grasp the complete meaning of its functions in society, if one watches it while rooted in one spot or only observes one particular aspect of it.

The masquerade symbolizes the world which is sometimes equated with a market. Why is the world a market? The leafed masquerade performs in the market square, and in the town. This is also true for example of Yoruba masquerades, where birds atop the masks commonly symbolize transformative power and night-time activities (Hackett 1996: 133 f.; Drewal and Drewal 1983: xv; Campbell 1992). The world is a market because a market has a beginning (in the morning) and an end (in the evening) and so does all life. A market day has a fixed pattern of recurring (after every four, five or seven days), and human life is believed to go through rites of passage and rebirths. A market symbolizes transformation, and the power to transform, both of which are represented in the world. More importantly, a market symbolizes the world in a miniature form. It is an object of marginality, because it is a meeting point of both human beings and spirits. It is a place where all manners of persons, goods and spirits meet, either by day or by night. For this reason, the masquerade may walk along the road, perform dances and drink beer in the market square or the palace, and thereafter return to its grove. When it performs in a palace or compound, it is limited to the arena outside the houses. Its mobility, therefore, entails that the watcher of the masquerade spectacle follows it "throughout the world" to have better sight-lines of its performance. The scholar too, in a sense, cannot grasp the whole picture of what s/he is researching if s/he employs a single methodology of data collection and analysis.

On the Jos Plateau, the symbolism of the leaf masquerade — *Nanyim* "the female leafed one", or "the female owner of leaves" — among the Mupun, demonstrates not only the movement of the world, but its antiquity and the antiquity of ancestor beliefs among the people. A male masquerader wearing female clothing, i.e. leaves, which were worn in traditional times only by females, symbolizes the oldest of the masquerades. It points to pre-historic times when women wore leaves and men animals' skin. But *Nanyim* comes out carrying male objects, i.e. two long whips! The symbolism of whips and whipping points to a phallic object of fecundity, fertility and potency, especially when used on women. Women do not consciously think of mating while using the phallic pestle in pounding food stuff in the utrine mortar, or while stirring food in a (utrine) pot suspended on a tripod over a fire, with a (phallic) stick. Unlike them, a barren woman may actually refuse to run away from a masquerade until she has been beaten by it. Whereas, her child-bearing peers

would not behave in the same way. This is done in the belief that the whip carried by a leafed masquerade has the power to offer fertility to women.

When masquerades use whips on children, it is in the form of play, between temporary returning ancestors and those already reborn in the children. The shades and children are both friends and peers. The whipping of certain children by masquerades may, however, assume a playful form of enforcing discipline. However, when whips are used on men, it is done mutually, and without inhibition as a taste of manhood. Among the Ngas of the Jos Plateau, for example, during *mostar* "the beer festival of the moon", a group of youths called *jep tarmwa*, "the children of the moon", come out with whips in their hands and with their bodies painted white. They mercilessly beat each other, as they run and chase people they find on their way to the dancing square. People run "helter skelter" but still turn up in the square for the *mos tar* dance. The whipping is also carried out at dawn, signalling the end of *mostar* festival (Danfulani 1996: 45). In a Mangun first fruit festival, young men engage themselves in combat using plaited jute ropes, which make snappy sounds and can hit hard. This festival is held to test manhood and endurance. Through it men attract the love of girls to themselves (Danfulani 1996: 47).

When used by a masquerade performing in public, the whip becomes an object of marginality and liminality; it tells of the sacred nature and authority of the user, the visitor from the world of the spirits. It demarcates sacred space, i.e. the space immediately around the masquerade, from secular space. Even as the sacred travels into profane world of humans, it must maintain and transport a sacred space around itself. This space, which is dangerous to humans must be demarcated and the reach of the whirling whips assure and maintain its existence.

Recent Attempts at Reviving African Religions on the Jos Plateau: A Challenge to Scholars

Attempts are being made by some elders and youths in some communities on the Jos Plateau to revive traditional religion. A number of factors have led to this state of affairs. Some persons who converted from traditional religion to Christianity in this century converted back to traditional religion. Others remained nominal Christians, participating in major ritual activities of their communities. The call for revival of African culture in Nigeria, which reached its apogee with FESTAC 1977, led to the revival of cultural dances, use of traditional names, traditional titles and the rites and rituals asso-

ciated with them. Moreover, the hard economic crunch resulted in a high unemployment rate. The 1981 and 82 droughts forced the government in 1983 to embark upon the policy of a "back to the land" call. A massive response to that call led to urban rural migration. Most of the youths who returned were disillusioned by urban life and disappointed in the western system of education because they were unemployed. Faced with the stark realities of rural life, some of them are turning to the traditional religion, as a reaction to their disillusionment with everything western. They are discovering something better which has always been there — the religion of their forefathers.

Perhaps the deities may not be revived individually, but some of their rites, feasts and festivals are being observed. Animal sacrifices are being performed in their honour collectively, some of their shrines are being repaired, and ancestor veneration is being revived in the observation of various mask festivals. However, in reviving aspects of traditional religion, the dynamic nature of culture is proving to be an obstacle in the way of arriving at a credible form of the tradition in "the way it was practised by our forefathers." This point is illustrated by three examples from the art of masquerading on the Jos Plateau. Among the Mupun, a celebrated case was reported in the late 1980s where Christians had to remind adherents of Mupun traditional religion that in the past, *nwong* masquerades used whips for play and not stones. This was subsequent to an incident where a stone throwing masquerader appeared near the house of a Pastor and started hurling stones at the house. There was also the case of a masquerader that invariably got drunk in its regalia in Mupunland, while another who turned into a "macho man" was accidentally crushed to death by a passing motor car in Pankshin town. These acts are abominable to the cult, so these persons or their parents were fined accordingly for defiling indigenous religions. These cases illustrate the care the scholar of African Religions should take in observing innovative and changing patterns in indigenous practices over time.

The concept of leaves and whips (already examined) form only one aspect of *Nanyim* the leafed masquerade of the Mupun. The role of masquerades as agents for explaining religious change (discussed above) and as depositories of history (discussed below) form only a small part in the study of masquerades. As demonstrated in *Pebbles and Deities* (Danfulani 1995), this author is working of a new book,

Festival as Performance (to be published next year),[2] where major festivals and masquerades of some Jos Plateau peoples are presented from the following various angles and using historical, anthropological and phenomenological approaches. The Mupun have many other masquerades, most of them female. This study approaches the concept of masquerades from various angles, analyzing their myths of cosmology and taxonomy. Their function as a mechanisms for sociopolitical control and crisis management, and as agents for explaining death, spirit possession and ancestorhood is discussed. The role of masquerading in boosting tourism is also assessed in relation to the ills and advantages of tourism. While the ambivalent relationship between masquerades and women, and the question of whether women are really ignorant of the secrets of male masquerade cults is considered. It is clear that a single method cannot adequately lead to a scientific analysis of this concept.

A Survey of the approaches to the Study of African Religions

A synopsis of approaches to the study of African religions is examined in this section. In sketching a history of approaches to the study of African Religions, Jan Platvoet observed two major levels and developments: Scholars who see Africa as *object* and those that see it as *subject* (1996: 108 ff.). He examines the historical development of each of these two groups chronologically in three phases (from trader to academic anthropologist; then missionaries of liberal persuasion and recent historical studies). On Africa as *object*, the works of amateur ethnographers form the first level, being dominated by the reports of "traders, slavers, travellers, missionaries, military men, and colonial administrators" about African customs. "Academic anthropology" is the second level which follows. However, a diachronic perspective is absent in their works because functionalist theories of the day were *ahistorical*, using an " 'ethnographic present' which fixed African traditional 'societies' -and their religions- synchronically" (Platvoet 1996: 110).

The Kenyan anthropologist, journalist, playwright and critic, Okot p'Bitek vehemently criticized the "Judaeo-Christian spectacles" of

[2] This author is spending a year's fellowship period from the *Alexander von Humboldt Foundation* at the University of Bayreuth, Germany writing this book.

European scholars and African scholars for "hellenizing" African traditional concepts of God by "smuggling" the metaphysical concepts of Greek and Christian scholasticism, such as "omnipotent", "omniscient", etc. into African beliefs, thereby employing African deities "as mercenaries in foreign battles" (Platvoet 1996: 121; cf. p'Bitek 1971). In this type of African scholarship, "Western binoculars are used in examining African Religions, with Hellenistic and Christian categories providing the view finders" (Kalu 1991: 92). Ikenga-Metuh shares the position of p'Bitek, but thinks that he went too far in his criticism, since African religions are like and unlike Western religions (Ikenga-Metuh 1985: 1 ff.; cf. Ikenga-Metuh 1982).

Bolaji Idowu's "unitary ideology" has influenced many scholars and unfortunately still holds sway in many Departments of Religious Studies in Anglophone Africa. This comparative, synchronic, unitary "African Traditional Religion" (ATR) model, until recently impeded the historical study of African traditional religions. That paradigm was not only pan-africanist in its ideology, but also decontextualizing in its approach.[3]

Historical studies of African Religions were established late, appearing only in the 1960s and 70s, and African researchers are as yet few (Platvoet 1996: 115 ff., 117 foot note 73, 126). However, "regional and historical approaches are now challenging the hegemony of unitary ATR" (Platvoet 1989: 113 ff., 1996: 126; cf. Mbon 1996; Olupona 1996). Onunwa divides African approaches to African Religions into early African Nationalist writers, pre-independent writers, and indigenous Christian scholars of African Religions (1991: 110 ff.).

Alyward Shorter provides eight approaches to studying African Religions, demonstrating how they have been used by scholars of African Religions; exposing their strengths and weaknesses (1975a: 39 ff., cf. 1975b). He posits that the particularistic, enumerative and hypothesis of unity approaches have grave drawbacks. While the historical, limited comparative, categorical and thematic approaches possess more advantages than the former three, Shorter recommends

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[3] This is because of its religionist inspiration; specifically, the overriding need to use research in religion for the development of African (Christian) theologies; the accepted division of fields of study in the academy which assigned the historical study of African Religions to (historical) anthropology, art, and political or social history, while the *atemporal* systematic comparative, and crypto-theological one is assigned to Religious Studies (Platvoet 1996: 128). Thus anthropologists such as Paul Bohannan and historians such as J. A. F. Ajayi and E.A. Ayandele have produced some of the classic works on religion in Nigeria.

multidimensional approaches which combine the strengths of the last four. Harold W. Turner shares the same concern for a review of how African Religions should be studied (1981). This informs his position that the study of African Religions, like any other religion, requires the distinctive religious discipline of phenomenology of religion. This, he contends, should complement the anthropological, sociological and psychological approaches which focus primarily on the factors/milieu which condition religion, rather than on the religious phenomena themselves. These are thus merely ancillary to phenomenology and the history of religions which they study as distinctive human phenomena (Turner 1981: 1). Harold W. Turner concludes that the academic study of Religions is by " 'the nature of the field' a multidisciplinary and polymethodical enterprise", because "religion is a human activity and experience that is liable to be interwoven with all aspects of human life; {...} its study, therefore, requires, sooner or later, all the human sciences" (1981: 5). Platvoet (Turner 1981: 128 f.) sees good examples of this polymethodological approach to the study of African traditional religions in Olupona's study of sacral kingship among Ondo Yoruba and this author's *Pebbles and Deities*.

Proposed Approaches to the study of African Religions

As indicated earlier, the scholar of African Religions is comparable to an observer of a masquerade performance, who cannot observe the spectacle rooted in one spot. Thus there are no two scholars that have used a method or a number of them in exactly the same way. Lévi-Strauss is, therefore, correct when he said,

> I don't pretend at all that, because I think that way, I am entitled to conclude that mankind thinks that way too. But I believe that, for each scholar and each writer, the particular way he or she thinks and writes opens a new outlook on mankind. And the fact that I personally have this idiosyncrasy perhaps entitles me to point to something which is valid, while the way in which my colleagues think opens different outlooks, all of which are equally valid (1978: 4).

The Study of African Religions should be Multidisciplinary

Combining anthropological and phenomenological approaches with the historical has been proposed and carried out by a number of scholars of African religions, among them David Westerlund 191991:

18, Emefie Ikenga-Metuh (1984; 1985; 1991), Jacob Olupona (1991) and this author (1995). Combining the anthropological approach with the phenomenological is plausible and indeed, Michael Bourdillon rightly states that "social anthropologists have for a long time been prominent in the phenomenological study of African religions" (1996: 139). He states further that though some anthropologists have taken a positivist approach which seeks to explain rather than interpret, there are others "who try sympathetically to understand religion from the viewpoint of the participants" (Bourdillon 1996: 139). This is because data, the basis of our understanding, possesses limitations we need to recognize, the most obvious being those "of time and space." He asserts that

> You can only see and hear a limited amount. Even if you are studying a particular ritual which you can attend from beginning to end and which involves a small group of people who are present throughout the ritual, you are still not able to see what all the people do in preparation before, and after, the ritual. You cannot attend all similar rituals, and you may miss significant alterations or emphases which give meaning to the ritual only when understood against others. Rituals acquire meaning in a social context, and our access to that context is always limited. Our data is further limited by the cognitive baggage that we bring to observation...the very category in which we place the data involves bias (Bourdillon 1996: 139).

Furthermore, Ikenga-Metuh advocates the use of anthropological approaches together with phenomenological and theological ones (1991). He states, however, that

> The search for a methodology of studying African religions has been hampered by the assumption that African religion is so radically different from the major world religions that it requires a different type of study and a completely different methodology...African religion, like other religions, can be studied from different perspectives. There could be an anthropological, psychological, phenomenological or theological study of African religion. The methods used in anthropological studies are not identical with methods of phenomenological or theological studies. From this view, the study of African religions is polymethodical (1991: 148).

Harold W. Turner combines phenomenological and theological approaches in his study of places of worship (1979). While Olupona asserts that "from my field work experience...I shall propose a phe-

nomenological-hermeneutical investigation and interpretation of the mythological" (1991: 28). He states further,

> In recent times, the study of African traditional religions tended towards phenomenological-anthropological models. That is, a focus on field-work based materials and critical appraisal of the materials from phenomenological and anthropological perspectives. The procedure by which phenomenological investigation is accomplished has been described as a two-tiered process of 'morphological phenomenology' and 'hermeneutical phenomenology' (Olupona 1991: 29; cf. Brenneman, Yarian and Olson 1982: 14).

Two levels of phenomenological approach is attainable in data analysis. The first is classification, typology and structuralization of data collected from field work. The second is that of deciphering the meaning tacitly residing within religious phenomena being examined. Discussing the second level, Helfer asserts that

> The history of religion, as other disciplines, is grounded in an hermeneutical situation, that is an interpretative framework which establishes the possibility and limit of critical analysis and creative synthesis. The hermeneutic situation establishes the problems and provides the heuristic devices which determine the purpose of using a particular method and the manner in which it is used (Helfer 1968: 1, 2; cf. King 1995: 121).

Phenomenology is the articulation of the nature, structure and meaning of man's religious experience. Its articulative method is based on historical and systematic inquiry into concrete religious configurations, past, and present, pre-historic and historic. It arrives at the "integral understanding" of religious phenomena within the framework of history of religions (Kitagawa 1968: 200). It involves the interpretation, understanding and the meaning of religious symbols (King 1995: 123 ff.).

Scholars argue over the possibility/impossibility of a phenomenological study of religion (cf. Jensen 1993; Gilhus 1994). The controversy over reductionism (cf. Segal 1983; Pals 1986), and the contemporary tendency to sweep the phenomenological approach under the carpet as a "universalist school of thought" that was brought to age by Mircea Eliade is well known to us. Jeffery Dippmann has written an article in support of reductionism (1991) which was countered by Lome Dawson (1993), while Idinopulos and Yonan in *Religion and Reductionism* (1994) edited a number of papers on this controversy with contributors belonging to both sides of the divide. These not-

withstanding, the phenomenological approach is still a useful tool for data collection, classification and interpretation. James Cox provides a useful blueprint, going over six steps, for collecting and analyzing data using the phenomenological approach (1996: 167, cf. 1992: Chapter two). His advice to the researcher to develop *epoche* and *emphaty* to religious phenomena during the stage of data collection — not to tamper with religious phenomena, but to describe it from the insider view of the *homo religiosus* — and cultivate methodological conversion as scientific inquiry, as opposed to confessional conversion, helps to integrate the scholar who comes from the "outside", as "insider" (Cox 1996: 163 ff.). Of importance also is the need to cultivate critical ability to delve in minute detail into the hermeneutics, i.e. interpretation and meaning of religious beliefs, symbols and rituals (Cox 1996: 163 ff.; cf. King 1995: 123 ff.) of the data collected from the field using a combination of anthropological and phenomenological methods.

A multidisciplinary approach which employs the historical, anthropological and phenomenological approaches[4] is thus a more practical approach to the study of African Religions. Droogers states that "for eclectic purposes a meta-model, a model of models is needed" (1985: 123). This he refers to as the semantic (functionalist, intellectualist, and neo-marxist) model. Fabian underlined the need for the development of African models or approaches to the study of religion (1979: 11). While Fernendez correctly states that "we learn most about the religious thought and intentions involved if, instead of imposing molar concepts and the vocabulary of macro-analysis, we proceed from them to what they imply" (1978: 215). And in interpretative ethnography, Droogers encourages listening and speaking, i.e. discursive and critical narrative rather than just observing. He contends that we need a sharper and deeper historiographic consciousness (1985: 123).

The Contextual Study of Religion

Religion should be studied in context. This not only presupposes a rejection of the decontextualized approach, but a thorough understanding of the cultural matrix and contextual *sitz im leben* of the religion of the people under study. Perhaps a guided return to anthropological focus on field work, the use of primary materials, understanding of a peoples' culture particularly through a good command of their language and thought patterns will be very useful.

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[4] These may also be referred to as polymethodic/multidimensional approaches.

This will enable the researcher to do two things. Firstly, to use original African terms where Western categories may be found misleading or inadequate to express them, and secondly, to place these terms within their African contextual frames (p'Bitek 1971; Westerlund 1985: 87 ff.; Ikenga-Metuh 1982: 14; Ikenga-Metuh 1985: 1 ff.), where "religion is so much part of every day life that its isolation as a distinct area of study can be questioned" (Bourdillon 1996: 140). It is against this backdrop that a scholar who studies an African Religion without understanding the language in which it is expressed should know that s/he is not yet fully prepared for the task at hand.

Furthermore, the choice of a limited theme, for instance, applying the Limited Thematic Approach suggested by Alyward Shorter, may allow for insightful studies and place the study of African Religions within its African context. This may be pursued further by encouraging younger scholars to take up neglected themes in the History of Religions, such as gender and cross gender issues, and art history, particularly the study of icons and their meaning. For example, while North American archaeologists like Patricia O'Brien, are thinking that the Nok finds of the Jos Plateau may well represent the oldest iron works in Africa, the Nok artefacts still remain "naked" in the eyes of religious historians because of the inability of scholars to "clothe them" with religious interpretation. In the long run, meaningful interpretations for the Nok artefacts will be found only within a Jos Plateau cultural area, history and religious experience, thus placing them within their contextual environment. In such cases, emphasis should be placed on the search for meaning and interpretation of religious rites, ritual symbols, artefacts and iconography within the framework that they are understood by practitioners themselves.

The Historical Factor in the art of Masquerading

The historical factor and its presence in this work is demonstrated, first in the fact of the cyclic and fluid nature of Jos Plateau festivals, alternating from cropping to harvest and hunting. Secondly, it is proven in the use of masquerades, both for the reenactment, and as depositories, of history in some ethnic groups on the Jos Plateau and in the Benue/Kogi area.

Kasfir points out that the use of artifacts as historical evidence has been advocated for a long time by "Africanist historians" and that ethno-linguistic origins of Jukun masquerades provide evidence about Kwararafa political history (1985: 1). Kasfir also argues convincingly that the "tall ghost", "hooded cobra", or "the mask that

leans", a masquerade found in the Benue valley among the Idoma, Igala and Alago is of Hausa (Abakwariga) origin, and not of Yoruba or Igbira origin as is argued by other scholars. The strength of this argument is based on morphology, linguistic evidence and the mythical journey of masquerades found in Idoma ancestral chants and speeches. Kasfir collected and analyzed such historical chants and recitations of the *alekwu* masquerades of the Idoma. These oral narrations are public lectures, which are part of recounting and reenacting ethnic migration history (1985: 3 ff.).

On the Jos Plateau, pronouncements and speeches of masquerades, in addition to constituting vibrant sources of oral literature, ethical norms and codes of conduct, contain recitations about the origin of the community. These are instances of the encasement and depositing of the peoples' history. Two Ngas masquerades studied by Wambutda are involved in the reenactment and preservation of Ngas history (1982: 99 f.). These are *nwongngan* and *nwong moswong*. Recitation of masquerades in both Idoma and Ngas is thus invaluably important in charting the course/routes of migration of a people in pre-literate times (cf. Danfulani 1996: 36 f. and 46).

Masquerades therefore dramatize mythical struggles, courses of events and history, such as migration, and as such give rise to a compendium of oral history and literary texts. Masks and masquerades, therefore, serve as symbols and media of reenacting human history and reality. The dynamic fluidity of history is thus demonstrated in festivals which are repeated in cycles, celebrating life in its response to change.

Balancing the Synchronic and Diachronic Approaches

It is important for scholars of African Religions to draw a balance between the diachronic (historical) and synchronic (comparative) approaches in their research work, while gathering and analyzing research data. On the diachronic level, it is necessary for the researcher to show the historical process which has brought the religious phenomena to its present situation. Lack of adequate diachronic analysis in most works on African religion has inhibited progress in that field (Olupona 1991: 30). One of the ways to remedy this is the diachronic differentiation of chronological levels of field research data according to when they were collected. In Africa, scholars very often carry out research work over a long period of time. One of the most commonly committed mistakes is lack of provision of a "historical given". Secondly, historical data collected ten to twenty years ago, "historical data," maybe lumped together with "contemporary mate-

rials" collected only a few years ago. A "historical given" points clearly to time and space in the history of a people and their religion, while historical data informs us about the degree, factors and reasons for religious change, when it is compared with contemporary materials.

Female Studies; a Neglected Area

Female imagery and gender studies in African Religions is a grossly neglected area of study. A few works are just beginning to address this imbalance such as Matory who brings out the beauty of the hidden female power behind the operations of an old Yoruba kingdom (1994), Oduyoye and Kanyoro's *The Will to Arise* (1992) which has a collection of thirteen essays by African women theologians, and Rebecca Cervantes' *Women in Traditional Yoruba Culture* (1985). Paula Ben-Amos (1983), and Pamela A. R. Blakely (1993) among a few others have contributed a great deal to highlighting female voices which have been unheard for a long time. The author is currently working on female imageries in Mupun Religions, a theme which he finds challenging.

Art, Iconography and the Study of African Religions

Art, iconography and aesthetics is important in the study of religion. Art belongs to the religious mentality of Africans, and its techniques may be crucial in generating and sustaining life. For instance, the *zut*, the artistic tuft of hair that is left to grow at the centre of the head of the chiefs of Goemai, M'ship and Garram is believed to sustain the king's power and subsequently that of the people. Writing about this artistic show piece of the *Long Goemai* of Shendam, Neiers asserts that

> The Long's badge of dignity is a large ivory pin (about 15 centimetres long and terminating at the uncovered end in a disc about the size of a tenpenny piece). He wears it thrust in a tuft of hair carefully bound by a black ribbon on top of his head. This tuft contains a selection of seeds, the constant carrying of which by the chief is to ensure the fertility of the tribal fields. The Long never lays off this hair-fixture (1979: 76).

Marcel Griaule's interest in religion led him to focus on Dogon masks which he saw as central to their religious world view (Hackett 1996: 15; Ben-Amos 1989: 10). Marcel Griaule thus focussed on the mythological and cosmogonic system insisting that artistic symbols are the key to Dogon metaphysics. This gave birth to a great number of

studies which philosophically utilized mythology and cosmology to analyze art. However, this approach unfortunately led to a tendency to disregard the context and meaning of iconographic and artistic objects (Hackett 1996: 15; Ben-Amos 1989: 11). This explains the drifting apart of experts in the study of African art and religions. Hackett blames the lack of investigation of the visual arts by scholars of African Religions on Western scholarly traditions' quest for "rationality" and "objectivity" and privileging of written texts over visual ones; and on the reluctance of scholars to focus on visual symbols.[5] The iconology or interpretation of meaning in African Art is important (cf. Drewal 1988). Victor Turner states that art is not only a cognitive system, but it is also "meaningful experience and experienced meaning" (1986: 48). Art is rightly part of the religious and cultural matrix of Africans and expresses aspects of life in toto. When the scholar of African Religions treats the aesthetic qualities of icons as part of data collected from field work and not as "mere fetish", s/he may arrive at a richer and deeper hermeneutical meaning of what they really represent. The scholar of African Religions thus needs either to train additionally as an art historian, or work alongside art historians in order to facilitate inter-disciplinary research and the correct interpretation of religious icons.[6]

Studying African Religions as Insider

Problems of the "Insider"

A consideration of the insider/outsider or emic/etic approaches to field work which highlights the problem areas particularly faced by an "insider" is attempted here. The importance of arriving at a balance between the insider and outsider positions as a researcher of African Religions has been demonstrated by Westerlund who urges the researchers of African Religions, who cannot escape their "outsider" or "reductionist" position to as a matter of priority strive for the "inside

[5] Hackett states that this attitude stems from Protestant (and Muslim) backgrounds of some African scholars, the Catholics clearly being more disposed to the study of icons. Many draw a fine line between visual imagery used for religious purposes, and that associated with 'paganism' or 'idolatry', since religious images are generally only permitted for educational purposes (Hackett 1996: 15; cf. Goody 1993).

[6] Hackett's recent work, *Art and Religion* (1996) which the author has quoted extensively, is a good example of one which combines art and history of religions. The bibliography of the book lists current works in both fields.

view" (1991: 20, 23). He compares the approaches of the historian of religion and the anthropologist, questioning whether Western scholars should be seen as "outsiders" and African scholars, "insiders," or whether both Western and African researchers of African Religions should be considered "outsiders", while the adherents and practitioners of African religion be regarded as "insiders".[7]

However, African researchers of African Religions have been faced for a long time with obstacles peculiar to them in the field, precisely because they are "insiders" or are considered as such by their informants. For instance, Bourdillon states that insiders

> often do not notice things that seem to us commonplace. For an insider, much of religion is obvious rather than interesting. It takes an outsider to notice things that differ from other religions, and to try to make sense of these differences...the status of insider is not always clear cut (1996: 141).

Thus it is very often the case that outsiders, such as Western researchers, get information either which African scholars could not see, or were denied. Factors giving rise to such a situation is the exotic appeal of strangers to Africans, and their belief, among others, that Western researchers have plenty of money. Some believe that secrets are still kept if revealed to total strangers who take and discuss them far away from home.[8]

The Politics of Doing Research in History of Religions in a Nigerian University

The Religious Studies Department at the University of Jos, which is one of the twenty-five departments of Religious Studies which exist in some thirty-five Nigerian Federal Universities, runs undergraduate programmes in five different areas. These include Christian Studies, Study of Religions, African Traditional Religions, Islamic and Arabic studies. "Scriptural" Islam and Islam in Africa are studied historically in Jos, as in Universities of Ibadan and Ilorin in Nigeria, Durban-Westville, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Bellville in South Africa (cf. Platvoet 1996: 127; Abubakre 1996; Haron 1996).

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[7] Even though a Mupun speaker, the author found himself an "outsider" in Mupun society of diviners and had to learn the decoding language of *kos Pa* divination, while he was conducting research on the subject.

[8] Perhaps, the Hausa saying about the eye "that belittles only that person that it sees always" is another contributing factor (*Ido wa ki ka raina? Wanda nike gani yau da kulum*).

Apart from phenomenology, anthropology, sociology and psychology courses, which are offered both within and outside the department, as major and elective courses, students can in addition draw elective courses from within the department and also from the Arts, Humanities, and Education.

Jos also runs a Diploma in Christian Studies for mature students and church workers. The MA. and Ph.D Studies programmes constitute the following areas of specialization: African Traditional Religions, Arabic, Biblical Studies (Old and New Testament studies), Church History, Islamology, Inter-faith Relations, and Religion and Society.

Jos has an academic staff strength of almost thirty (including those on study leave, leave of absence and fellowship leave). Three of these are full professors, three are associate professors and others are senior lecturers, lecturers I, II, assistant lecturers and graduate assistants.

Research methodology is taught for two semesters in the Department of Religious Studies, at the University of Jos. Methodology of research is also taught at MA level, but according to the field of research. Students specializing in African Traditional Religions, for instance, have to offer two courses related to the methodology of studying African Religions. These are; *A Survey of Literature on African Religions*, and *Methodology of Studying African Religions*. In addition to these, students have to devote a section of, or a chapter in, their long essay/dissertation to the methodology of research at all levels (BA, MA and Ph.D.). They must isolate, formulate and discuss the methodology they use both in data collection (field work) and data analysis, in a proposal which also examines the aims, justification, the scope and limitation of their work.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Ikenga-Metuh conducted field research trips on the Jos Plateau with students offering African Traditional Religions at the 300 level.[9] However, due to financial constraints, such research trips are no longer conducted. Further, despite the seemingly huge staff strength, many courses in Arabic, Islamology and Philosophy are not taught due to lack of adequate

[9] The author participated in some of these field trips, both as a student and later as a staff member. During such field trips, students were shown practically how to conduct field research as they worked in groups. Their findings were later analyzed, typed and graded.

staffing.[10] Library facilities have greatly improved with its computerization, but vital works and journals are still lacking.

A pathetic area of the politics of teaching and doing research in Nigerian Universities is poor salary and a hard biting economic crunch. Poor, hungry and frustrated university professors have abandoned serious research in order to fend for their families as they try to make ends meet (cf. Olupona 1996: 186; Gifford 1995: 3). Their students suffer from poor supervision, poor research facilities and constant strikes by students or staff, both academic and non-academic. Part of this frustration and hunger has given rise to several glaring unorthodox practices across Nigerian university campuses.

A gross decrease has been registered over the years in number of students interested in studying religion, partly because of the Federal Government priority of 60/40 students' ratio studying the sciences to humanities. Other factors include the lack of future job prospects, a general economic crunch which does not favour the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, and an inferiority complex in students who read religion, leaving mostly only the clergy, who in addition to seminary education are proud to take a more secular degree.[11]

Furthermore, the *Jos Bulletin of Religion* has not produced subsequent issues after its second volume due to poor finance, and lack of will on the part of the more senior colleagues in the department who are either distracted by administrative load or by economic and research hardships. It is being resuscitated. However, the *Bulletin of African Religion and Culture* (BARC) has remained afloat (though several issues are behind schedule) due to the resourcefulness of its founder and long time editor, Emefie Ikenga-Metuh.

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[10] Virtually all staff members are overworked. This grossly affects research, since the time needed for it is taken up by heavy work loads. Many academic staff can not apply for promotion because of lack of publications which results from a lack of incentives and adequate facilities.

[11] The 'politics of survival' from the axe of 'rationalization' led to the withdrawal of education students who used to come to the department for major teaching courses such as Old and New testament courses, African traditional religion, philosophy, world major religions, etc. This decision was taken by the Faculty of education in order to justify their need for and recruitment of staff to teach religious education.

Conclusion: A Call for a Multidisciplinary Approach

The multidisciplinary approach is advocated in this paper. The author complementarily combined the historical, anthropological and phenomenological approaches in his *Pebbles and Deities* (1995). Various other approaches across disciplines can and have been successfully combined in other works. There are two ways of preparing for a multidisciplinary approach. The scholar may need to prepare by training in the various disciplines whose approaches s/he wants to use. This will make him/her conversant with the theories and methods obtained in such disciplines and their advantages and disadvantages. This is because it is important to combine only approaches that curb the disadvantages faced in others. The scholar may alternatively choose to work with colleagues in these other disciplines, such that each contributes to a joint work by using his/her skills, approaches and knowledge.

The multidisciplinary approach should also be reflected in the two levels of data collection and analysis of data collected from the field. It is true that some approaches may dominate in the process of field work, whether the qualitative or quantitative method of investigation is pursued, while others may be predominant in the examination of data and the writing process. This however, should be worked out such that the weaknesses of each chosen approach is balanced out by others. This notwithstanding, all approaches proposed in a multidisciplinary work should be clearly seen in the result. When experts look at the work, it should be clearly seen that the approaches of various disciplines are harmoniously and adequately blended into the it.

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MONICA ENGELHART

From the Native's Point of View – or Daddy-Knows-Best?

A call for papers to a session on Indigenous religions for the 1997 AAR conference seems to propose an "applied science of religion" similar to applied anthropology where the anthropologist makes use of her gained knowledge of a certain people to help this very people in its various intercultural affairs. An example is the assistance with defining and explaining Australian Aboriginal principles of land affiliation in court where claims for rights to land are negotiated (cf. Layton 1997).[1] As one of the issues proposed for discussion on the AAR conference, the session co-ordinator asks for papers investigating "misrepresentations of indigenous art and religio-cultural forms for commercialization purposes" and suggesting ways to help indigenous peoples challenge such misrepresentations and protect their integrity. The discord between the indigenous people's self-representation and the misrepresentations by the people of a dominant culture is thought to be overbridged by the academically schooled researcher, not only when it comes to cultural traits in general, but in the case of such deep personal commitments as religious notions as well. But defending other persons' or groups' ideas demands an understanding of these ideas, an issue which has been raised by students in the humanities for decades; the solution of the problem constantly oscillating between the impossibility of full understanding due to our culturally inherited ethnocentricity, and the possibility of this same understanding due to our biologically shared property of being human.

Throughout the 20th century in anthropology and in history of religions there has been a tension between on the one hand what Clifford Geertz in a paper first published in 1974 (reprinted in 1983) called "the native's point of view", that is, the conviction that we may get our understanding only from the studied object itself, and on the

[1] For surveys of the history of Australian Aboriginal land rights' claims, see Charlesworth 1984; Engelhart 1995; Harris 1979.

other hand the stance declaring that only the scientific observer is able to discern those underlying motives and circumstances which in the end explain an action or a cognition, with the help of some illuminating theory, which may be more or less jokingly characterized as the Daddy-Knows-Best-approach. The problem of understanding "the Other" arises as soon as we meet this other, but where the other seemed too much unlike ourselves, the demand became imperative, either to reject the other totally, or to find ways to communicate, that is, some form of understanding.

The Other in history

The history of the Europeans' meeting with and view of the other has been investigated by McGrane (McGrane 1989; see also Tambiah 1990; Trouillot 1991) among others. In the Renaissance, the other, that is, man in extra-European societies, was described, met and explained from a Christian point of view, as the demon, a something, external to humanity. Questions that were put were such as "would it be possible at all to teach the Gospel to these creatures?" (McGrane 1989: 11). "In the cosmographical discourse of the sixteenth century the non-European Other cannot be related to nor understood apart from the Christian Devil", McGrane states (1989: 11). The best treatment seemed to be the gun, to clean the world from the devil's gang. The question of humanity was connected to the possibility of salvation. The non-Christian other was equated with a madman, another totally dissimilar creature, whose chances of salvation were non-existent (McGrane 1989: 18).

The Europeans of the Enlightenment viewed the other from an intellectual point of view: the others were certainly humans, but humans of a lower kind, without the ability of rationality which characterized the European. The Other became the Savage. Though admittedly a human being he represented Nature, against which civilized man had to fight, and which he was bound — with God's providence — to conquer in the end (McGrane 1989: 47). Until the end of the eighteenth century, there was still a break between the European and the other. The evaluation of the savage other as a lower form of human being held sway also when the assumed break had been replaced by the notion of an historical difference, when the Savage became the Primitive, representing the earliest part of a unilinear anthropological time (McGrane 1989: 51), a time line which was expressed in various evolutionistic schemes of spiritual and material progression. The evolutionism in the late 19th and early 20th century

implied strictly speaking a rejection of the other. He had nothing to tell the student, except from being an illustration of a dark and (for the European) happily overcome past.

But a few decades into the 20th century, the views changed to a more open appreciation of the other, that is, people in foreign cultures (it was eventually acknowledged that there were other cultures). One way to come to this evaluation was through anthropological fieldwork, another was what may be called the phenomenological attitude in the history of religions. The historicizing perspective, aiming at finding origins to explain recent opaque beliefs and manners, gave way to the synchronic perspective which tried to explain bewildering facts through the circumstances in which they occurred. Explanations moved closer to the facts themselves and although anthropology long kept a functionalistic tinge, seeking the utility behind strange actions, its attempts to meet the other on his own grounds was the result of an attitude similar to the attempt of phenomenology of religion which claimed to be listening to the phenomenon in its own language. The success of this enterprise will be discussed below.

The Other today

Still, the other was the object under the scholar's lens. And this is the case still, since it is the ground for our very existence as researchers. It is a part of our business, to study others, not ourselves, even if the study may give us information also in this respect. In anthropology the distinction between the self and the other has begun to get blurred through the growing research by indigenous anthropologists who investigate their own culture. By this activity, it has been possible to demonstrate the conventional nature of the distinction and the political effects it has brought about. Since the 1980's, anthropologists have questioned their work as reporters: "problems of description become problems of representation" (Marcus and Fischer 1986: 9)[2] when the precedence of interpretation was acknowledged to having been staying with the anthropologist, that is, that the colonial influence had not been done away with. It has even been declared that the very concept "culture" operates to enforce separations that

[2] Cf. Clifford and Marcus 1986; James, Hockey and Dawson 1997 as further examples of anthropology's calling itself in question. For representations of the "otherness" of the anthropologist, see for instance Fowler and Hardesty 1994.

inevitably carry a sense of hierarchy (Abu-Lughod 1991: 138). But it seems as if anthropology and history of religions have to walk in opposite directions: while anthropologists close in upon the "selfness" of the student and her object and have to investigate what happens "when the 'other' that the anthropologist is studying is simultaneously constructed as, at least partially, a self?" (Abu-Lughod 1991: 140), the student of religions face the problem of digression from the "selfness" of the own confession to the "otherness" of religious configurations far from one's own experience and religious experiences that may seem very strange to the educated Westerner (cf. Goodman 1991). For anthropologists, the value of a disengaged study of foreign cultures has never been questioned. Historians of religion have still often to fight for the justification of such a disinterested study.

Although the field-working anthropologists claimed a position close to the data, they at the same time worked from the basis of certain theories, trying to explain the facts through hypotheses on hidden motives and circumstances. The notion of the unconscious level of the human psyche can be seen as the starting motor for several kinds of hypotheses of latent functions and structures of societies, which had to be disclosed by the student to get at the explanations of what happened and was discernible on the surface. Structures were laid bare, showing connections between different aspects of culture, such as kinship rules and economical transactions, authority and religious rites, and the functionalistic view kept its grip for a long period. From the anthropologist's point of view, religion was more a symptom of a fact than the fact itself.

For the phenomenologists, and for many students of history of religions, this was a way to diminish their object of study, and it was repeatedly maintained that religion was something very special that had to be studied in its own right, a phenomenon *sui generis*.[3] But both anthropologists and religionists faced in the end the same question: whose view is the "rightest": the believer's or the scholar's? Who comes closes to the truth, the one who is inside her own tradition and knows it emotionally, if not always fully cognitively or rationally, or the outside viewer who knows it intellectually with the help of all the means that comparison and various theories give? Who knows "best" what religion is? Who "understands" belief, organizations, habits and emotions that pertain to the elusive concept "religion"?

[3] For a discussion on "non-reductionistic" approaches to religion, see Pals 1987. The *sui generis* approach has been criticized by several scholars, for example Penner 1989; Segal 1989.

Reducing the Other

In the anthropological research, a row of theories were presented as explanations of religion. As expressions of components in a structure, religious phenomena also worked as confirmations of this structure, a functionalistic view which was presented early in the century. Psychologists explained religious phenomena by reference to individual and inter-personal conflicts which had to be solved or at least expressed, as well as conflicts imbued in the social system itself, as a result of its very structure. Economically interested researchers found that religions kept economy within given ecological frames, putting restrictions on the use of certain species, always or at certain times, or for certain individuals or groups, and politically religions were seen as creating, demonstrating, confirming and/or transmitting authority positions.

All these theoretical attempts to explain religions were considered reductionistic by the phenomenologists who claimed that it was impossible to translate the very special phenomenon "religion" to anything else in the kaleidoscope of socio-cultural facts. Understanding could be gained only by comparing religious facts with each other (see Sælid Gilhus 1984: 31), not with facts from other socio-cultural areas. However, the comparisons had to be supplemented by the student's empathetic ability of understanding, as a kind of vicarious participating. This the outsider's understanding of course put the phenomenologist on the same track as the anthropologist, since they both tried to find the truth of the Other through their own theoretical lenses — the difference between them was only that while the anthropologist usually declared his theoretical foundations, the phenomenologist had to resort to a kind of "esthetic" translation of the data found, declaring that the essence of religion could be found intuitively (Pyle 1979:199). There was even a certain timidity of theories, as if such monsters brought about a diminution or distortion of the religious phenomena (Wiebe 1983). The esthetic translation is of course most clearly discernible in Eliade's writings, unfortunately (or maybe, fortunately? see below!) his literary skills are not always attained by other phenomenologists. But consider this statement which gives the reader a fair impression of the imaginative ability of the researcher, but leaves her unaided in her curiosity of the thinking of the people investigated: "The Mbuti must transform their own dangerous, almost uncontrollable, passions into a yearning for peace and harmony, if they expect the wilderness at the center of the universe to respond and to be subdued by divine love" (Zuesse 1979: 52). It is all very beautifully put — but is it "mbutic"? Should we really resort

to this kind of "esthetic reformulation" of Eliade and some of his disciples? The trouble is that unless we have the same talent for fiction as Eliade, our reformulations will fall short of the mark, being just so many plain words, without the convincing power that emerges from a gifted author of pure literature.

The pitfalls of "understanding"

However, this convincing power may be dangerous in a scientific area. It is crucial that the sources are correctly used. In Sacred and Profane Eliade built his reasoning on the sacred center on an Australian myth but forgot in the earlier editions to mention that it was a myth and rendered the story as if it were about some living Aboriginal people. This reading gave a very odd impression of a group of humans reduced to a living as hunters and gatherers. The trouble is that his picture was so vivid, so plastic and so convincing. The book is studied in the introductory courses in history of religions at Stockholm university and as the students do not have much information about the early Australian Aboriginal culture, they almost unexceptionally believe that the Aborigines of Central Australia carried a pole on their wanderings unable to decide where to walk unless the pole showed the direction by falling. And the most interesting problem with all this is that although the text is commented upon by showing the absurdity of a hunting and gathering people walking in a direction where there may be neither game, nor edible plants or even water, just because their inherited pole fell in that direction, this picture sticks in many students' memories (which has often been demonstrated in the examinations) to the conviction that Australian Aborigines really lived in that way. But everyone also has a very clear apprehension of the importance of a sacred center for the religious man. Eliade's description helps the students to what may be called an "esthetic" understanding, founded on emotional grounds in a way both stronger and more long-lived than what may be gained in a rational way. But although Eliade in his literary way shows the students how the phenomenological abstraction *homo religiosus* might experience the world, his carelessness with the sources supplies a false apprehension of concrete Aranda-speaking human beings. And also if his rendering had been correct[4] we still know only something about the abstraction *homo religiosus* but stay doubting

[4] Eliade corrected it in later editions, cf. Smith 1992: 3, but the English pocket edition (Eliade 1987) is still the unimproved one.

concerning the Central Australian Aborigines. Is our knowledge of the abstract universal also valid for the concrete particular? In what extent is it allowable to maintain that we — all human beings, as human — "are in constant flight from our own concrete existence" and that we "... long for primordial being, and ... thirst for ultimate states that will remove us from our own insufficiences and mortality" (Zuesse 1979: 238)?

The impossible understanding

Since phenomenological theory concentrates on one facet of religion only, the experience of the sacred, leaving out social, structural, psychological, economical or political ones it is in fact as reductionistic as it claims the anthropological theories to be. And just like those theories, the explanations it offers are based on the viewer's understanding, not the actor's. In her study of theories of ritual, Catherine Bell points out how tightly integrated the thought-action dichotomy has become in the study of man so that even Clifford Geertz, who advocated a "thick description" (Geertz 1973), to get at the native's point of view (Geertz 1983), a few years earlier noticed that the outsider has only to reflect on what he sees while the insider integrates the action in a system of meanings (Geertz 1966: 29). Bell states: "Geertz is setting up a third structural pattern and a third permutation of the thought-action dichotomy. That is, ritual participants act, where those observing them think" (Bell 1992: 28). In ritual studies, the conflict between the actor's conviction and the student's is particularly clear. Jean La Fontaine separates two levels (or, "dimensions") of ritual: the level of action itself, which is a sequence of actions to accomplish a purpose, and the meaning of that action which La Fontaine explains as "sets of overlapping metaphors" for the various desired states or changes (La Fontaine 1985: 13). As Victor Turner was among the first to show, both these levels are acknowledged by the actors themselves (Turner 1970) — but among the academic investigators, only the second one is accepted.

In a recent article, Brian K. Smith raises this rather thorny issue of the student's view of her data, compared with that of the believers. How is it possible, Smith asks, to accept the ritual actor's declaration that a rite has effect? This fact, that an insoluble conflict arises between the "insider's" claim that a rite works, and the "outsider's" conviction that it does not, may even have to be avoided altogether (Smith 1996: 306). In other words, it would be entirely and perpetu-

ally impossible to get to an understanding like the one of the believer herself and it would not even be any use to try.

Becoming a Sumerian

But if we insist that it is worth trying? After all, the one and only object of our enterprise as scholars is to understand a mode of being in the world — not only our own, but others' as well. But shall we explain in order to understand, that is, understand rationally — or should we experience in order to understand, that is, understand emotionally, or intuitively? Should the Western student "go native" — or should she even convert to the religion she is investigating? (cf. Wiebe 1983: 301 f.) She could, of course, try to endorse the assertions of belief, participate with conviction in the rites and regard herself as a true participant — but if it comes to indigenous religions, she will be an eternal outsider and if she tries to change her life entirely for the one of the studied people she would have changed her viewpoint from history of religions to theology. An interesting kind of theology seems to be emerging in our Western culture, where university students turn, not to Christianity or to any other world religion such as Islam or Buddhism, but join groups adhering to "nature religions" such as Wicca, neo-shamanism[5] or Asa-tru, and study them from within. Could this be a way of getting a full understanding of a religion: start from the outsider's viewpoint to get the understanding given by comparison and explaining theories, and then by conversion change to the insider's position and gain her emotional understanding by full participation and identification? The difficulties of this process are self-evident. Firstly, it is dubitable whether the conversion after the first gain of a distanced, rational knowledge, based on comparative and/or external data, would bring about the same deep understanding as the one reached through being brought up in a tradition, secondly the problem of identity would be hard to solve, indeed, when the scholar gets interested in still another religion — not to mention if one wants to study the religions of antiquity — how does one become a Sumerian?

[5] The prefix neo- is, of course, the academic outsider's term.

Being a Believer?

In other words, the alternative of converting to the religion studied would be impossible and in fact it has been suggested more to show how absurd a religious equivalence of the anthropologist's "going native" would be — at least as a general recommendation for a successful process of investigation. But what about having to be a believer — in any religion, to be able to grasp the cognition of another dimension of existence, as Hultkrantz has put it (Hultkrantz 1985: 88)? Wilfred Cantwell Smith's suggested progression from the study of other religions as impersonal presentations of an "it" to a talk between believers about "us" is well known (Smith 1959). This means that if I am not gifted with the special mental ability to believe in a supernatural dimension of cosmos, I am disqualified to start upon a scientific journey in the history of religions. Or maybe we are permitted to modify the demand to exclude the unbeliever from phenomenology of religion? Religious understanding has sometimes been compared to musical understanding. It has been declared that just as only the musically gifted individual has the ability to understand music, only a religious person has the ability to understand religion. But also an unmusical person is able to get at an understanding of a piece of music by analyzing the score, even if she is unable to play, sing or enjoy the sound of music and this kind of understanding may be as deep as the more emotional one reached by a devoted but musically ignorant listener. In the same way the areligious student will be able to get an understanding of a religion through comparisons of different religious statements and actions, through descriptions of religious configurations in their place in time and space, and by investigating how and why they change without the special form of understanding brought about by a religious belief of her own, provided that she recognize religious statements and actions at all — if such an animal exists, which is, after all, the crucial question. From a phenomenological point of view, it may well be maintained that only one's own approach ascribes an independent existence to religions. The so-called reductionists are said to deny this existence, declaring that religion does not exist in itself and that what has been mistaken for religion, is in fact something else, psychological, social, political or whatever. This may be true, but even the staunchest reductionist would have to admit that there are people in this world who believe that supernatural agents exist, and who regard some beings, things, places, words and actions as holy, respected, avoided, dear or not to be trifled with. The grounds for this attitude and these notions may be anything but supernatural, but this does not deny them an existence of their own.

On the other hand, their grounds have to be investigated through a religiously disengaged approach. Our view of religions should not be overshadowed by the apprehensions of the believers of whatever confession (cf. Pye 1994). This does not mean, however, that we are permitted to leave their ideas out of the account.

A multi-reductionistic approach

The complexity of the material is the heaviest argument against every kind of one-sided reduction, be it social, political, psychological, religious or symbolic. Even a thick description, which admittedly volunteers an all-sided attempt, will make up an account only of the generic side of a religious experience — what we simply have to do is to collect our data both from the society's and from the individual's point of view. To cover all aspects of, for example, a religious rite, it may be necessary to perform a series of reductionistic "translations". Just as it cannot be accepted that the believer or the actor in a rite should have the prerogative of the final explanation, it is impossible to claim that it remains with the sociologist, the psychologist, the economist, the anthropologist, the phenomenologist or the student of any other discipline who takes an interest in the material. It has to be contended that each of these interpreters have permission, even the duty, to find an explanation from her own academic point of view.

A theory may be defined as a set of possible questions to put to a domain of reality.[6] If we choose 'religion' to be this domain and restrict it further to Australian Aboriginal religion, for instance, which is the area to which I have dedicated the most part of my studies, we will find that the totality of this research area offers several kinds of such sets of questions. We may start with questions of how the social system of the Aborigines is expressed through a religious idiom and find that the belief in mythic fore-fathers and fore-mothers having both human characteristics and those of some natural object mirrors the social system of categories, moieties and rules for marriage and reproduction. We will find that the anchoring of these rules in a supernatural dimension of existence renders them validity and permanence in a truly Durkheimian sense and that religious notions govern the individual's apprehension of his place in the world and his relations to other people. We will also find that as well as the supernatural affiliations define groups and behavior within groups, they govern inter-group relations and behavior determining times, places and

[6] For a list of varieties of meanings for 'theory', see Wiebe 1983:295.

extension of larger assemblies, such as the rites of male initiation, and that they also govern meetings for members of specialized associations, such as the various totemistic groups.

We may put economic questions to the data and find that territorial boundaries are defined mythologically so that a person's or a group's movements in and economical utilization of a certain area are expressed as mystical affiliations to supernatural beings in that area. The hunting and gathering economy can be shown to be supported by these rules of territorial affiliation. From a strictly economical point of view, it may also be stated that it is likely for a hunting and gathering economy to form religious beliefs in supernatural agents who are responsible for all kinds of natural objects, which is the case in Aboriginal religion, since man in this type of economy is dependent on the total natural environment without physically controlling any special part of it, such as cultivating some kind of cereal or tubers, or breed some kind of domestic animals or fowl.

Psychological questions to put to the material may concentrate on this very lack of physical control of the natural environment. The Aboriginal rites of restoration, known among religionists by the Aranda term *intichiuma*, may be explained as a way of securing such a control, solving a problem of uncertainty and anguish. In the same way, the rites of male initiation may be psychologically explained, by referring to Oedipus complexes, post-partum taboos, society's need of controlling and pacifying outrageous youths, difficulties of confirming a wavering sexual identity, or some other unconscious motive.

Politically, religions offer a vast field of interest. Also the Australian Aboriginal religion is a suitable object for research along these lines. It is easy to discover religious notions as grounds for differences in power between the genders, for example; the anthropological reports abound in description of how women were excluded from parts of rites or whole ritual processes, as well as from certain paths or whole areas of land, all on religious grounds. Lately, it has been shown that the opposite was also the case and that certain authority positions were assigned exclusively to women, on the same mythological principles (Bell 1983). It has also been reported how a man's religious status effected both his position of authority in general, and his economical status as well as his marital prospects. It is also clear that the male initiation rite worked as an introduction to such a career in the power-gathering process, and that this process went on as a series of initiations into various cults. The close bond between authority and religious beliefs is easy to notice in the Aboriginal world.

This list is just a thin selection of all the various approaches to the Aboriginal religion in Australia, each making up a theory of how this religion could — or even should — be explained. Depending on the student's theoretical orientation, they all throw some light on the phenomenon, but each light is unable to illuminate the whole picture. "The study of religion ... cannot be but cross-cultural and polymethodic", Pyle declares (Pyle 1979: 197). If we look at the theories as parts of a spectrum of different colors, we realize that all of them are needed to get the full, white light. So far, we have left out one approach that is of crucial importance when we are dealing with religions, and that is the individual aspect, which has to do with the experiential dimension of religion. Here is where the "native's point of view" comes in as an unavoidable part of our investigations. We have to gather information on how the believer/actor experiences his or her religion, otherwise our picture will not be complete. An "intuitive" translation by a religiously committed scholar in the phenomenological tradition can never be enough, even if it may transfer some kind of esthetic understanding to the reader of the same religious commitment, or at least from the same cultural affiliation. The important thing is that we view religious phenomena from all possible angles, to cover both their deep aspects, those so-called "latent functions" or deep structures that only the researcher from her culturally distanced position knows how to unmask, and the agent's, or the experiencer's own declarations, the group's generalized statements as well as the psychological aspect of the individual's own experience, rational as well as emotional. Statements that show Aboriginal attitudes are such expressions as "to grow up the land" or "to take care of the land", and reports of bodily stance during rites or at walking on certain paths, silence and respectful behavior, or rules of avoidance or of admission.

Clearly the two modes of understanding have to supplement each other. What is called for is what might be called a multi-reductionistic approach. Daddy, who may be a cultural outsider, or an academically trained indigenous scholar, would contribute sociological, psychological, economic-ecological, historical, art-theoretical, literary or folk-loristic, linguistic, symbolic or other theoretical explanations that may be useful in the studied area, as well as the perspective gained through comparison and an emotional and experiential distance to the material. The believer/actor, on the other hand, who in this context plays the role of the "native" would give the picture color and relief by filling it up with accounts of personal experience, the impact of values and emotions, the insider's evaluations of the outsider's distanced report and a direct relation of what Daddy

could never be able to understand in his indirect way of looking, even if he may come very close through his own experience.[7] "Being there" must be a prerequisite where it is possible. But the actor's or believer's own voice should always be listened for, and assigned the same value as the scholar's, neither higher, nor lower, regardless whether it is heard through documents or through interviews. Daddy's knowledge should never be permitted to obscure it, but the two have to illuminate each other.

I do not expect to have exhausted all the possibilities of interpretation in this paper. Students with other theoretical view-points should be able to complete the list. But I hope to have demonstrated how a single approach or attempts to leave the specific socio-cultural setting out of the account can only distort our view of the extremely complex phenomenon 'religion'.

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[7] I realize that this is a pessimistic view of our achievements, but one that has to be acknowledged.

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ROSALIND I. J. HACKETT

Re-Envisioning the Sites and Sights of the Late Twentieth Century Study of Religion

In the course of the 1997 spring semester, I undertook something of a globalizing sabbatical visiting Britain, Finland, Germany, South Africa, Senegal, Denmark, Ghana and Nigeria. I enjoyed and benefited from a whole range of stimulating insights from colleagues and students in the various places that I visited. I was made acutely aware of how different are the conditions in which our colleagues work in various parts of the world. While some enjoy enviable research support, others, such as in West Africa, cope valiantly with political, economic, structural and cultural adversities—let alone the growing information gap. At times, our method and theory debates look like a luxury in our comfortable, relatively unthreatened, and privileged (mainly Western) academic worlds.

That notwithstanding, this paper affords me a welcome opportunity to share some of the findings and observations from my itinerations. Its substance, therefore, would be better characterized as fragmented and eclectic, and exhortatory rather than technical. It also would be rightly termed an "aerial view". The gist is that the academic study of religion must now encompass more than it has done until now the effects of modern media and communications technologies, global consumption patterns, cultural mobility, and changing geo-political configurations. Religious actors and organizations are more than ever key players on the world stage. I am concerned that as scholars of religion we are being outpaced by these developments, whether because of the limitations of our vision, or the shortsightedness of our theoretical lenses.[1] I intend to argue, without the luxury of elaboration—since I have opted for breadth of scope rather than depth of

[1] Sociologists of religion do not seem to lag behind so much--the 1997 Society for the Scientific Study of Religion meeting in San Diego comprised panels on cyberspace and religion, Generation X and spirituality, globalization, press coverage of religion, religion in the media age, religion as popular and cultural practice, to name a few.

argument—that sites such as art, the media, Internet, outer space, diasporas, global culture, nature, and the public space deserve our critical attention—not just for reasons of content, but because these new or neglected sites offer a potential challenge to our categories and concepts. We have to shift our focus increasingly from bounded local cultures to transnational cultural flows and reexamine the significance of place (or non-place, see Augé 1995). We need to be part of the globalization debate, building on the excellent work of Roland Robertson (e.g. 1989) and Peter Beyer (1998; 1994) who have sought to emphasize the role of culture, and more specifically, religion, in worldwide social and cultural change. In this way the most interesting problems (which used to be ours according to Ninian Smart) are not monopolized or pinched from under our noses by our colleagues in cognate areas.

Furthermore, as a committed scholar of religion, who moves in a number of academic circles—notably African studies, anthropology, art history, cultural studies, and human rights—I continue to be dismayed at the way in which our scholarship is all too often ignored, underestimated or misunderstood.[2] That in part stems from the complex, controversial and challenging subject matter we treat (and non-specialists' fear of it), but also due to our own reluctance to alter our focus or tardiness in engaging current theoretical debates. I claim limited knowledge of the apparently fertile field of religion and cognitive science but am happy to say that this is obviously one subgroup of scholars who have put religious studies and religion on the scholarly map.[3]

Before I move on, let me just cite the case of cultural studies to illustrate what I mean about missed opportunities and being missed out. Religion is conspicuously absent from their academic slate. For example, in a recent publication on *Questions of Cultural Identity*, edited by Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (1996) there is not a single entry on religion. The same can be said of Ioan Davies' *Cultural Studies and Beyond: Fragments of Empire* (1995). This could of

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[2] An example of this would be the launching of the American Anthropological Association's Anthropology of Religion group in November 1996 in San Francisco where references to "comparative religion" were outdated--overly emphasizing the metanarratives of earlier scholarship.

[3] See, for example, the special issue of *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* on "Cognition, Culture, and the Study of Religion," vol. 8/2 1996. The journal as a whole has rapidly established itself as the primary site of stimulating methodological and theoretical discussion in the academic study of religion.

course be attributed to the Marxist leanings of earlier (British) scholars in the field who viewed religion as "residual" and as a "weak and waning presence" (Murdock 1997: 89), but it is also our responsibility for not engaging them in dialogue. There are efforts to counteract the inattention to religious issues. A recently produced book, edited by Hopkins and Davaney, *Changing Conversations: Religious Reflection & Cultural Analysis and* (1996) seeks to promote religion (although their lens is predominantly theological) as an integral component of cultural studies. I am also happy to note that one of my own colleagues in Religious Studies at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Mark Hulsether, who comes out of the American Studies/cultural studies tradition has cogently argued in his piece, "Three Challenges for the Field of American Studies: Relating to Cultural Studies, Addressing Wider Publics, and Coming to Terms with Religions" (1997) that religion does not deserve its omission from their scholarly ambit. There is also a new series, entitled "Zones of Religion" (edited by Peter van der Veer for Routledge) which links religion, anthropology and cultural studies.

Art: Seeing Is Believing

Of the various sites and sights I have chosen to discuss in this paper, I am beginning with an obvious one—obvious because it has become something of a *cause célèbre* for me in recent years. Furthermore, it usually generates interest and support rather than controversy. I am here talking about art. Since I became involved in the writing of my recent book on *Art and Religion in Africa* (1996a) for the series Religion and the Arts, I have become an advocate for a more central role for the visual and performing arts in our scholarly enterprise. I have also shown in a couple of other publications how art may provide a window onto religious change (1996b), as well as gender relations (1998b). I firmly believe that a focus on art can bring a fresh perspective to our studies, notably by challenging the hegemony of the written text in our academic discourse. I am also interested in the reasons for the marginalization or even outright neglect of the visual in the history of religions.[4] For instance, I have argued that the privileging of word over image in Western culture and the Protestant

[4] Similar "blind spots" are also encountered in anthropology. Cf. the edited work by Coote and Shelton (1992) which seeks to counteract the marginalization of art within anthropology.

fear of or trivializing of the visual are undeniable influences in this regard (1996a: 15).

I am not alone in this crusade. Doug Adams and Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, in the introduction to their book, *Art as Religious Studies*, rightly state that the "discipline of seeing" has been absent from the scholar of religion's tools of the trade (1987: 9). Of course one can point to scholars, notably those active in the American Academy of Religion's Arts, Literature, and Religion section, who have been concerned with the connections between religion and art. Space precludes an overview of the field, but a few brief remarks are apposite here. A new journal was launched by Boston College in 1996 entitled *Religion and the Arts*. Casting its net wider than the visual arts, it claims that "[t]he expression of religious sentiments in art is a deeply significant feature of all manifestations of religious belief and a foundational aspect of all cultures" and that it has been set up as a "timely response to a widespread new acceptance of the value of interdisciplinary appreciation of artistic religious expression for the understanding of religion as well as art itself."

Individual scholars, such as Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, have been active in publishing a number of relevant works and arguing for art to be viewed as a primary source in the study of religion (e.g., 1998, 1996, 1995, 1994, 1986). Apostolos-Cappadona has tended to limit her perspective to the Jewish and Christian traditions, however. This has been the case with some other scholars also who have focused on Christian art and in particular its theological and liturgical importance (see, for example, Dillenberger 1965). The American journal, *Image: A Journal of the Arts and Religion* (launched in 1994) also embodies the pragmatic, spiritual perspective. What a pity that the recently published *Oxford Dictionary of Christian Art and Architecture* limits itself to the Western world—thereby missing out on all the exciting manifestations of African Christian art and architecture over the last few decades (this was considered important enough by the way to make the front page of *Time* magazine some years ago!) (for the Pacific, see Moore 1995).

Ninian Smart added at a later stage (1989; 1996) the "material" dimension (in which he included art works) to his well-known six-dimensional framework of religious traditions (1983) (note: he does however place it last). The scholar of indigenous religions, Sam Gill, has a chapter in his book, *Beyond "The Primitive"*, on "Beauty and the Drainpipe: Art and Symbolism in Religion" (1982: 28–37). He argues, quite rightly, that oral cultures challenge us to look at the phenomenon of religion in a more nuanced and multi-dimensional way. When in South Africa in January 1997 I was happy to obtain a copy

of Kobus Krüger's (1995) book entitled *Along Edges: Religion in South Africa, Bushman, Christian, Buddhist.* He is attentive to the role of symbol in general in religion—but is interested more specifically in exploring the abstract symbolism of "Bushman" engraving art, some of which dates back 25,000 years.

Turning to the Scandinavian scene, Tore Ahlbäck's *Dance, Music, Art and Religion* (1996), resulting from a Donner Institute symposium in 1994, contains a tantalizing collection of essays on topics ranging from old Norse music, and contemporary Coptic images, to Madonna videos and the iconographic aspects of UFO mythology. Professor Jan Bergman's 65th birthday in 1998 elicited a fine collection of texts on religious iconography and iconology (Schalk 1998). These tend to be exceptions, as alluded to by Håkan Rydving, in his study of religious change among the Lule Saami (1993: 31). He observes that historians of religion have made little use of the sacrificial sites and their ritual remains for the study of Saami religion. He also cites the archaeologist and ethnographer, O. Vorren, who comments that such scholars (i.e. historians of religion) have found the written sources more attractive than an analysis of the artefacts of sacred sites.

Mircea Eliade, to his credit, always had an eye for the religious significance of artistic form (see Apostolos-Cappadona 1986; Eliade 1961). In addition to his passion for the Romanian sculptor, Brancusi, he also wrote about other traditions ranging from Eskimo to Hindu. Philosophers of religion have occasionally turned their hand to analyzing the relationship between religion and art, drawn by questions of aesthetics and the conflict within some religious traditions over representing the divine (e.g. Raschke, Kirk and Taylor 1977; Laeuchli 1980). Mark C. Taylor's impressive *Disfiguring: Art, Architecture, Religion* (1992) is an analysis and (re)construction of the interplay between religion and the visual arts. In his own words,

> ... a thoughtful exploration of some of the most provocative art of our time opens an alternative space for the a/theological imagination. ... It would not be inaccurate to understand this venture as an effort to rethink the interrelation of Kierkegaard's three spheres of existence: the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious (1992: 5–6).

Greg Alles, in his insightful and trenchant review of Taylor's work (1996), criticizes him for suggesting that among twentieth-century theologians Tillich was the only one to show interest in modern art, and for failing to give credit to the considerable efforts of the aforementioned Arts, Literature, and Religion section of the American

Academy of Religion. One would also want to give credit to Larry Sullivan for organizing a number of seminars at the Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions on the religious arts (see fall 1996 bulletin). The recently published, *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (1998), contains an entry by Margaret Miles on "Image."

I want to mention two aspects of my own work that I believe merit wider scholarly discussion. I have always argued that the concept of power is central to much of what outsiders and insiders might term "religion" (e.g. Hackett 1993). I am further arguing here that a focus on the arts is conducive to a more nuanced and polythetic understanding of the perceived sources and relations of power of the human and spirit worlds. It may in some circumstances force us to recast our perceptions of where "power" is located in a particular ritual setting, for example. It is not necessarily the largest, most colorful, most central or public masquerade that may be held to be the most powerful (as uninformed Western observers are prone to surmise). The most highly charged masks may be hidden away in the shrines, the most significant character may be the old woman chanting on the edge of the circle. The Nigerian art historian, Rowland Abiodun, has shown most convincingly in his work how the complex Yoruba philosophical concept of *aṣẹ* ("the power to make things happen") can only be understood through a careful examination of the verbal and visual arts (1994).

Second, my incursions into the realm of the visual revealed one problematic and challenging area in particular, that of representation. This is discussed in chapter two, "Envisioning and (Re)Presenting the Spirit World," of my book (1996a). The complexity of the perceived relationship between spirit forces and art objects is often glossed over by the too ready use of terms such as "representation." This term in particular elides or disguises the ways in which an art object may range from being associated with supernatural power to being an actual image or manifestation of that power. The work of several scholars has illuminated the dynamics of these processes of embodiment and (re)presentation. The whole area of masking is particularly apposite here. The ambiguity of the masking process and the notions of personhood it raises have been helpfully treated by the philosopher and anthropologist, David Napier (1986). A recent special issue of *African Arts* (31/2: 1998) on "Women's Masquerades in Africa and the Diaspora" offers a wonderfully rich and challenging set of essays on the performance and agency of women in relation to masking. Overall this would seem to be an area where scholars of religion could contribute much to the analysis and discussion.

Media

There is so much more to be said about art and the study of religion, but I would like to turn now to a somewhat related area, in that it may also involve the visual—that is the electronic and print media. One scholar alleges that the "mediaization of modern culture is more important than the alleged secularization and rationalization of social life" (Thompson 1990: 265).[5] The media have undeniably become a key site for the representation and invention of religious ideas and praxis. African traditional religions illustrate this well. One only has to recall such feature films as Angel Heart, The Believers, or Dr. No, or popular series like the X-files and Miami Vice, for example, to conjure up (pun intended) a very negative and fearful image of African-derived religions, with "voodoo" at the top of the list. Vodun practitioners do not stick pins in dolls. This is an invention of Hollywood or Hoodoo boutiques in New Orleans. More enlightened sources are available for examining the place of material objects in African religions, such as art historian, Suzanne Preston Blier's *African Vodun: Art, Psychology and Power* (1995), the French anthropologist, Marc Augé's *Le Dieu objet* (1988), and William Pietz's series of penetrating articles on the concept of the "fetish" (1988; 1987; 1985).

Turning to mediated sources within Africa itself, I would like to draw attention to the role of African governments (but let's not exclude here such foreign agencies as the British Council, the Goethe Institut and the Alliance Française) in promoting a "sanitized" and "safe" image of African religions as "spectacle" through staged festivals and performances. We should not forget either the role that academic texts, which are quite capable of taking on a life of their own in the wider marketplace, may also nurture popular images of a people's traditional religious heritage (see Shaw 1990). The construct of "ATR" (African Traditional Religion) is apposite here. A rapidly growing sector responsible for inventing tradition is the whole area of Christian inspirational literature and tapes. In particular, I am referring to the indigenous local production of the pentecostal and charismatic movements which have become so popular and influen-

[5] An international workshop on "Religion and Media" was organized in Paris in December 1997 by the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis in cooperation with UCLA's Paris Program in Critical Theory and the Institut Néerlandais. We look forward to their publication from Stanford University Press. A more focused project, whose results are also eagerly awaited, is the joint project on Yoruba Religious Publics of the School of Oriental and African Studies and the Centre for West African Studies in the U.K.

tial over the last two decades in many parts of Africa (see Hackett 1998a). These groups are founded on the dualistic theodicy and moral strictures of evangelicalism, and centered on the workings of the Holy Spirit. They specialize in generating demonic images of "traditional" religious beliefs and practices, whether it be to do with ancestors, witches, healing or libations (cf. Meyer 1992). Women fare poorly in all of this, being viewed as especially vulnerable to the wrong type of spirit possession, namely by troublesome and demanding water spirits (known more widely as Mamy Wata) (see Hackett 1996a: 147–149, 194–195). All of these mediated discourses are significant since they can enjoy wide circulation via government television and publications, or commercial and religious outlets. Regrettably (at least in my opinion), traditional religious specialists are either reluctant to, unable to, or prevented from, representing themselves via the modern media.

Keeping on the theme of the invention of religious traditions and circulatory flows of religious images and ideas, I should like to say more about how Christianity and Islam fare in the African context. Amazingly, virtually no studies of the relationship between religion and the media exist, despite the fact that many African countries have long supported religious programming of various types. This may include BBC-type mainline Christian Sunday services, the now hugely popular charismatic preachers and gospel music groups, Muslim sermons and talks—especially at Ramadan, as well as discussion programs on metaphysical questions, often including the functionaries of spiritual science groups such as the Rosicrucians. While access to airtime may be determined by government or financial considerations, it is not hard to argue that the media constitute an important new site for religious groups to generate images of self and other, and to compete for public space. So why, I ask my African colleagues, are they neglecting this area of potentially rich research, or why, for example, do my sociologist friends in Europe and the U.S. remain so parochial when they churn out their studies on televangelism? However, I am pleased to see the publication by anthropologists Babb and Wadley on the media and religious transformation in South Asia (1995). Some of the articles in a 1997 special issue of *Africa* on "Audiences in Africa" (guest edited by Karin Barber) tackle religion—see, for example, Launay 1997. I am here trying to underline the potential of religious broadcasting and popular, inspirational literature as areas for studying the creative interplay of local and global religious forces, whether the protagonists be Cerrullo, Idahosa, Bonnke, Gumi, Deedat or Farrakhan. More research, from diverse cultures, is required. Perhaps it requires transcending the view that

the media are trivial sources of knowledge—and rather perceiving them as a rapidly changing and challenging field of study with profound implications for concepts of religious community, spiritual power and its circulation, and relations between religion and the state (cf. Hoover and Lundby 1997; Hackett 1998a).

New Age/Old Hat?

Towards the end of the American Academy of Religion's annual conference in San Francisco some years back (1992), I remarked to Ninian Smart on the absence of panels or papers on New Age religion, an obvious topic for California. He heartily agreed with me. The situation has somewhat improved with California-based scholars such as Gordon Melton and James Lewis producing a number of useful texts on the subject (e.g. Lewis and Melton 1992). Some Danish, Dutch, British and German colleagues have lent credence to this subfield through their publications and research activity (see e.g. Heelas 1996, Bochinger 1995, Hanegraaff 1996). Steve Bruce has devoted a whole chapter on the New Age in his recent book on *Religion in the Modern World* (1996), and articles on the subject now appear fairly regularly in the *Journal of Contemporary Religion* (e.g. the January 1998 issue, vol. 13: 1). But there remains an ongoing discrepancy between the popularity and pervasiveness of this very eclectic and creative religious activity and scholarly attention. In some cases, younger colleagues (particularly if they operate within theology faculties) face stigma and discrimination should they choose this as their main academic focus. I attribute this to a reluctance on the part of more established scholars of religion to engage popular culture forms more generally, and face the more commodified and transient manifestations of religion.[6]

I am gratified to note on my travels that some bolder students and younger scholars, such as in Finland, are keen to take on New Age religious beliefs and practices. They have realized, at very least, that the latter challenge some of our conventional definitions of religion, our patriarchal categories, as well as our methods and sites of inquiry. The locus of investigation shifts from clearly defined religious figures and texts to popular, inspirational literature, music, healing

[6] Cathrine Albanese informed me that a number of graduate students in the Department of Religious Studies are now pursuing topics in contemporary religion, including the New Age, at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Personal communication, April 26, 1998.

and "experience-altering" techniques, "ethnic" artifacts, virtual gurus and outer space. Now I know Joseph Campbell's scholarly attributes have given cause for concern, but he must be given credit for recognizing the location of modern mythology in films such as Star Wars (Campbell 1988). With regard to New Age eclecticism, I myself find it a fascinating and useful academic exercise to explore with my students in the United States which aspects indigenous peoples select from their "religious" lives as part of the process of self-representation for the tourist market, or which artifacts and rituals get appropriated, revalorized and eventually commodified by outsiders.

Cyber-Spirituality

Most readers of this piece are probably avid Internet users, and some I know have constructed their own web sites, but how many have done fieldwork on the Net? Who has decided to investigate the myriad forms of religious activity in cyberspace? I first became aware of the ritual possibilities of the medium when an undergraduate student in my anthropology class some years ago wrote his research project on "Technopaganism" (I should add that he was a practising pagan and a computer science major!). Then another student, majoring in Religious Studies and Physics did a longer research project on "Cyberspirituality" as he called it; he focused on a very eclectic ritual group by the name of Techspirit-L whose members were exploring together different spiritual paths (Klasnja 1995). It was a fascinating project and it opened our eyes to the possibilities of this medium for reshaping the religious landscape and redefining the notion of religious community. It also raises the question of how local and global forces intersect and interact. While the Internet appealed primarily to persecuted or underground groups such as neo-pagans, it is now exploited by virtually all religious organizations.[7] The Muslim Student Association in the U.S., for example, has used it very successfully to strengthen their network. Many of you may remember Heaven's Gate, with its sacralized view of electronic communication, and the shock waves sent through the world by the extremist actions of such a group.

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[7] A national survey of teenagers shows that many teens in the US will eventually use the Internet for their only religious experience: <http://www.barna.org/PressCyberChurch.htm>.

Why therefore are we not being serenaded by a host of scholarly analyses of this medium of communication? (One welcome exception is the work of Stephen O'Leary (1996) and O'Leary and Brasher (1996)). Two answers spring to mind: first, the sheer volume of Internet material is intimidating. One of my students for a project on shamanism/neo-shamanism eight years ago came up with more than 7000 sites! How many might there be now? Second, we do not have the tools to decipher and evaluate these new sites or "texts". Are they oral, written, visual, or performative, or a combination of all of the above? O'Leary, in his groundbreaking article on "Cyberspace as Sacred Space" (1996: 787 ff.), introduces a historical dimension to this revolutionary transition to the digital age by comparing it to the social and cultural revolution effected by the Reformation when Luther and his printing press were able to break the monopoly of the Roman Catholic Church on scriptural interpretation. Let us turn the trickle of scholarly articles into a flow of ideas on this important and fascinating new field of research (see also O'Leary and Brasher 1996), and not leave it all for the sociologists and popular culture specialists.

Diaspora

Thinking about the Internet leads into another topic I wish to discuss briefly because of its importance for scholars today and that is the concept of "diaspora". In his book on "Global Diasporas", (1997) Robin Cohen discusses the changing meanings of the term from the original Greek meaning of dispersal through colonization to now imply a positive and ongoing relationship between migrants' homelands and their places of work and settlement. By the year 2000 he claims there will be ten times the number of nation-peoples (2000) than nation-states (200). Yet the religious component of this important phenomenon is insufficiently studied and remains secondary to "ethnicity"—as Martin Baumann claims in his article on "Conceptualizing Diaspora" (1995; see also 1997). Cohen argues that "religions can provide additional cement to bind a diasporic consciousness, but they do not constitute diasporas in and of themselves" (1997: 189) (a cursory reading of the U.S. produced Hindu magazine, *Hinduism Today,* might challenge this notion). Ninian Smart, in a 1987 piece, maintained that with increased globalization even small religious communities can maintain contact with their epicentres (whether through pilgrimage, or one would have to add now the Internet), and take on the aspect of "global" religions.

I do not intend to argue for or against the notion of a "religious diaspora" but I do want to suggest that the "cultural hybridization" and "creolization" of post-colonial times and spaces are crying out for our critical lenses. Some scholars have already noted the richness, in terms of religious creativity, of these "contact zones" (see, for example, Carrasco 1995; Carrasco 1996).[8] Renato Rosaldo refers to these "border crossings" as important "sites of creative cultural production" (Rosaldo 1989: 208). I do not wish to belittle the fine work done by such scholars as Kim Knott (1994), Malory Nye (1996) and Steve Vertovec (1993) on Asian communities in Britain, for example, but "hybridity" as a category in the study of religion and the attendant issues of cultural translation, cultural hybridity, critical religious self-reflexivity and the moral battleground of identity, deserve further investigation in my opinion (cf. Werbner and Modood 1997; Hannerz 1996; Stewart and Shaw 1994).

I consider that the question of diaspora has to be discussed more within a global context, or global processes, i.e. the rapid developments in communications technology, transport and information which bring the remotest parts of the world within easy reach (cf. Giddens in Ahmed and Donnan 1994: 1) The authors of *Islam, Globalization, and Postmodernity* (1994: 4–7) refer to the "elasticity of the diasporic tie" and the "reciprocal redefinition of identity at both ends of the migratory chain." This is obviously heightened by the use of the Internet. How is religion, or the concept of the sacred for that matter, affected by its detachment from territory when it can have virtual and imagined contact with that territory? (cf. Anttonen 1996 for a more contextualized view of the sacred).

Two North American examples come to mind while still on the subject of diaspora. A much heralded CD ROM by Diana Eck entitled "On Common Ground: World Religions in the U.S." (Columbia University Press, 1997; see also Eck 1996) is now on the market. No doubt many world religions teachers will avail themselves of this attractive, multi-media production. But is there not a risk that students will concentrate on the U.S. versions of Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, etc. with possible disregard for their earlier manifestations? In other words, the diasporic site might assume greater importance than the site of original development. Since the project is ongoing and there is no data available yet on use of the material, this remains a preliminary reflection.

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[8] Actually Carrasco takes the concept from Pratt 1992.

Karen McCarthy Brown's widely appreciated and hotly debated book, *Mama Lola* (1991) deals with the question of diapora in a more synergistic way. It is an account of her fourteen year relationship with a Haitian voodoo priestess in Brooklyn, New York. It describes and analyzes the diasporic Haitian community in New York and how their religion helps them survive in difficult conditions, and keeps them in touch with their homeland. In fact, Brown does this in a very creative way, by interspersing the factual narrative chapters on New York, with more fictional chapters on Mama Lola's Haitian ancestors. This book is important not just because of the content but also because of the writing style. It is a style influenced by the feminist leanings of the author, i.e. it is a type of subjectivist or experiential ethnography, and is underpinned by her concern to promote a more "honest" relationship between scholar and subject. She also conveys clearly and forcefully how religion is central to the life of a diasporic community, such as the one she describes in Brooklyn, New York, not just for reasons of cultural identity, but as a very strategy for survival.

Much of my research on new religious movements in Africa whether on Zionist churches in South Africa or pentecostal/charismatic movements in Nigeria over the years has convinced me that identity has been over-emphasized by many scholars at the expense of survival as an interpretation of religious movements, and their growth and appeal, etc. This leads into issues of religion and development, another neglected, yet potentially rich, area. Some Scandinavian colleagues (Dorthe von Bulow and Eva Evers Rosander) organized a very successful conference on this very topic in April 1997 in Copenhagen. Once again, it was quite obvious that scholars of religion had much to offer both in terms of their conceptual skills (notably in toning down excessive generalizations about "religion"), their fieldwork data and comparativist perspective.

Globalization

This is far too vast a subject to treat with any justice here, but I do want to reiterate my firm conviction that scholars of religion have much more to contribute to this debate than they have up to the present time. We glibly teach courses on "world religions", aided and abetted by the latest in glossy "world religions" textbooks, without seeing the "world" as a changing and constructed notion, not least due to the accelerated pace and complexity of exchanges facilitated by new technologies (Appadurai 1990: 6). Beyer (1998; 1994) and

Robertson (1989), as referred to earlier, have been instrumental in moving the discussion on globalization away from solely economic or political issues to the cultural and religious. Robertson's work is helpful in understanding the dynamics of the globalization process—namely the intersection, the interconnectedness, and the interplay between global and local/individual forces. He also emphasizes the universalization of particularisms and the particularization of universalisms, embedded in the concept of "glocalization". Religious ideas, symbols, figures, and institutions are intimately tied to these developments. We need, for example, to examine how the former might promote greater homogeneity or heterogeneity or both in terms of global cultural patterns. New Age-type religious practices would illustrate this type of dialectic well. So too would evangelical and pentecostal forms of Christianity, as they foster local agency while promoting global, homogenized literary, homiletical, and musical forms through their freely circulating audio-visual productions.

The Scholar of Religion as Public Scholar

I want to say something in closing about the increasing discussion surrounding the scholar of religion as "public scholar."[9] Some of you may say that this has little to do with the business of studying religion academically, but I say it does—especially if one expands the notion of methodology to how or where one *operates* as a scholar of religion. Our Danish colleagues, Tim Jensen and Mikael Rothstein, also think it does for they are planning an edited volume (in part) on the topic (see also Jensen 1998). Given my own place in some of these discussions, I want to offer some conjecture on the subject. I consider there to be at least two reasons why we find ourselves as scholars of religion in our respective contexts being called upon increasingly to offer our expertise in a public way.

First, religious activity is more evident than ever on the world stage and it is not just specialists of "sects and cults" who are sought after for sound-bytes. Articles on religion in U.S., newspapers are on the increase (cf. Silk 1995), for example, and a new public television series, entitled "Religion and Ethics Newsweekly" was launched in the fall of 1997.

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[9] I take the term from Martin Marty. See especially the Symposium "Martin Marty, *The One and the Many*" in *The CSSR Bulletin* 27,2 (April 1998). This comprises a series of excellent critical pieces by scholars of religion responding to Marty's new book (1997).

Second, I believe that there are only a few "ivory towers" left in the world where scholars of religion can function without defending themselves to the wider world and justifying their existence. This defense has become increasingly necessary for academic, political and/or budgetary reasons. For the last year I have belonged to the Committee on the Public Understanding of Religion within the American Academy of Religion which seeks to help scholars or religion understand better the "public sphere" and develop a more "professional" attitude to inquiring experts or members of the general public. In this regard, the former journalist, Mark Silk—also a member of the above committee, produced a very useful guide entitled, "A Religion Scholar's Guide to Dealing with the News Media" (for American Academy of Religion members).[10]

The pressures on scholars of religion to play a public and more pragmatic role in society are acutely felt in some parts of Africa, for example, where they are expected to play their part in national reconstruction. South Africa immediately comes to mind here, together with the book "Religion and the Reconstruction of Civil Society" edited by John de Gruchy and S. Martin (1995). Concerns about oppression and the need for scholarly criticism feed back into methodological and theoretical considerations—witness Martin Prozesky's important piece, "Proposals for a Criteriology of Religion" (1992; see also 1996). In many countries, religious pluralization and attendant religious intolerance and conflict have obliged scholars of religion to address these issues. Nigeria is a case in point, and one only has to look to the efforts of the Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions, which resulted in the publication of a lengthy volume, entitled *Studies in Religious Understanding in Nigeria* (Abubakre 1993) or Jacob Olupona's *Religion and Peace in a Multi-Faith Nigeria* (1992). My Nigerian colleagues have spoken to me over the years about their sense of obligation, sometimes pressure, to write on the contribution of religion to national development, especially in the area of values, as well as its role in the controversial issue of cultural unity/-pluralism (see Olupona 1996; also Hinga 1996 on Kenya).

As an international organization, the International Association for History of Religions, and its members, seek to be supportive of and proactive with regard to their colleagues in those parts of the world where they do not have the same access to academic resources, funding, or interaction. This should be done not just for altruistic reasons but out of a genuine concern to expand the conversation

[10] See the website for the new organization he has founded, the Center for the Study of Religion in Public Life <http://www.trincoll.edu/~csrpl/>.

among scholars, and to receive the insights and challenges of those coming from different cultural standpoints. There seems every hope that the upcoming XVIIIth Quinquennial IAHR Congress in Durban in the year 2000 will provide this type of forum.

This paper has suggested a number of pathways that are deserving of more exploration by scholars of religion. In sum, I argue that what we choose to include or exclude from our gaze affects the nature of our discourse(s) through and through. The whole business of "seeing" is integral to both the academic enterprise as well as the political economy of the academic study of religion. I have merely tried to highlight some of the exciting new areas that face us as students of religious ideas and phenomena, and point to their methodological implications.

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HELENA HALLENBERG

The Muslim Mystic Who Fasted in His Cradle — What Does a 19th Century MS Tell of a 13th Century Saint?

In the following paper I shall discuss the problem of interpreting literary sources, using one specific example, namely that of a Muslim saint of the 13th century, as depicted in a 19th century manuscript. I shall examine the problem on three different levels: 1) the form, 2) the contents, and 3) the context. First, let us have a look at the MS in question and its subject.

The MS and its subject

In the Library of Florence, there is an Arabic manuscript dated *Ramaḍān* 1250 (January 1835) and registered in the library catalogue in 1869–70. The MS is titled *Manāqib Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī*, or "The glorious deeds of Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī" (Manuscritti s. a.; Catalogo s. a.; Brockelmann 1949: 124; Brockelmann 1938: 153). The contents describe the legendary life of an Egyptian Sufi saint. The text also includes allusions to other religious characters from the 17th century, listed in chronological order. But the most space is dedicated to Ibrāhīm, whose miracles are depicted in a vivid manner starting from his early childhood.

Who was this man? From other sources we know that Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī lived between 653–696 / 1255–1296 and came from the little farming village of Dasūq in the Egyptian Delta. Some 200 years after his death he had become the national saint of Egypt, together with his contemporary Aḥmad al-Badawī (d. 675 / 1276). The tombs of both of these men are pilgrimage centers, and the Sufi orders established by them still function today — also outside Egypt. Very little is known of the life of this 13th century holy man. Al-Dasūqī's family background is traced to a Sufi origin by claiming that both of his parents had a linking to the main Sufi orders of the time, mainly the Rifā'iyya and the Shādhiliyya. He was educated first in a nearby vil-

lage and later at al-Azhar in Cairo whence he returned to his home village to teach. Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī lived during the Mameluk period, and there are stories about him taking part in the battles against the Crusaders and the Mongols.

The MS of Florence was thus written some six hundred years after the death of Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī. When describing the life of Ibrāhīm, the author starts with a miracle, told by Ibrāhīm himself: "I fasted in my cradle when I was one day old." This is by no means the only miracle described but I will use it as an example to illustrate problems involved with the study of documents.

1) The form

Let us now examine the MS more closely. What do we learn from its form and appearance? Can we learn something about the author? The name of the author is not mentioned anywhere in the MS, but we can draw some conclusions on the basis of the handwriting and the language used. It was definitely written by an Egyptian, most likely in Egypt, since on the back page there are calculations, irrelevant to the contents, made using Egyptian pounds. The somewhat clumsy handwriting, the obvious colloquialisms plus the many mistakes, both in spelling and grammar, lead us to think that the author was not a trained scholar (see e.g. MS 1: f. 17, 28). One might be tempted to think that the stories are based on oral tradition, which have transferred nearly unaltered from generation to generation — which is not unusual in the Arabic culture in which the roots of oral tradition lie deep. However, in this case we can find a literary source. The MS contains some exact quotations from an earlier work, namely the *Ṭabaqāt* of al-Sharnūbī (d. 994 / 1586), a Sufi genealogy. Either the author of the Florence MS used the *Ṭabaqāt* in a literary form or knew it by heart only — but at least we know that he must have been well versed in the existing tradition concerning al-Dasūqī.

Interestingly enough, the name of the author of the MS is given in the catalogue of the Florentine National Library as Muḥammad al-Bulqīnī. From where the cataloguist received this information, is obscure. Neither do we know whether al-Bulqīnī was the actual author or only the copyist of the text. But we can follow an interesting link: a man with the same name, Muḥammad al-Bulqīnī, was also responsible for the recording of the *Ṭabaqāt* of al-Sharnūbī. He is said to have been the student of al-Sharnūbī. This can be interpreted in two ways. Either Muḥammad al-Bulqīnī was a real student of al-Sharnūbī and thus his contemporary, in which case he must have still been alive

after al-Sharnūbī's death (994 / 1586) in order to have been able to record the *Ṭabaqāt* of his teacher. In this case he is the author of the text and it would be likely that he died fairly soon after his teacher, around the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries.

But since we know of no earlier versions of the *Ṭabaqāt* which would be edited by al-Bulqīnī, we must examine the other possibility, namely that al-Bulqīnī was a student in a spiritual sense and a copyist of a much later period. In that case, he must have been alive around the time when the MS of Florence was dated (1250 / 1835). This latter view is supported by Marcia K. Hermansen, who has used the lithograph edition of the *Ṭabaqāt* from 1863 and dates the contents of the text *and* al-Bulqīnī to the late 1800's, which seems more likely (Hermansen 1991: 326). Therefore we can assume that the author of the MS is the same al-Bulqīnī who wrote the *Ṭabaqāt* of al-Sharnūbī. This still does not reveal anything of al-Bulqīnī's person. We can presume that al-Bulqīnī either was a devotee of Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī or was asked to compose the work by some of his devotees.

2) The contents

Something about the contents has already been said, since they cannot always be treated separately from the form. But let us look more closely at the specific story we have chosen, namely that of Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī fasting in his cradle, told both in the MS of Florence and in its earlier model, the *Ṭabaqāt* of al-Sharnūbī. What does fasting in the cradle imply? In another context, it might prove that the child born is to become an ascetic, but in the Islamic context, this naturally refers to the fasting during the month of *Ramaḍān*, when one refuses both food and drink during daylight. In order for the fast to start, one has to witness the appearance of the new moon, and this has to be attested by the religious authorities.

There prevails a common opinion that Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī was born on the last of *Shaʿbān*, that is, the night before *Ramaḍān*, even if the year is very much disputed. The story of the fasting was not invented by the author of the Florence MS but was first told in the 16th century by Aḥmad Jalāl al-Dīn al-Karakī (> 1506). Al-Karakī was the head (*khalīfa*) of the Burhāmiyya order ascribed to al-Dasūqī, and therefore had all the interest to invest the saint with noble qualities. Al-Karakī wrote about the birth of Ibrāhīm: everybody was waiting for the appearance of the new moon, and among the persons involved was Ibn Hārūn, who was a local holy man and who is given a central

role in the story. Al-Karakī describes the events of that night (Khalaf Allāh 1969a: 34–35; see also 17, 37):

> When he was born during the night following the 30th of *Sha'bān*, in 653, there was doubt about the moon of *Ramaḍān*. So Ibn Hārūn said: "See if the little one is suckling today." His mother said that since the prayer-call [of *fajr*] he had refused her breast and had not suckled. --- Ibn Hārūn sent someone to tell her: "Do not worry, for when the sun sets, he will drink." And he then ordered the people to [start] fasting.

In another version told also by al-Karakī (Khalaf Allāh 1969: 37), Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī tells about the event himself:

> When I, the poor pauper (*faqīr)* --- was born from my mother, that was the year when I brought the glad tidings of fasting, for the moon was not to be seen. That was the first of my miracles from God.

It is an important point that at his birth the moon was not to be seen, and therefore the birth of al-Dasūqī and his refusal to suckle became the signal of the fast. Later authors stressed that there was no theological heresy involved. They interpret the story in the sense that the child's fasting only proved the birth of a remarkable man — it was not enough to prove the beginning of *Ramaḍān,* since theologically, one has to witness the new moon (Khalaf Allāh 1969a: 17; Khalidi 1965). Here we have thus stepped onto the realm of theological debate, reflecting the conflict about justifying veneration of saints in general.

For an Islamic saint, to be born on the eve of *Ramaḍān* is an appropriate time indeed – especially since a miracle concerning the beginning of the fast is connected with him. Such a story was a proof of the child's orthodox belief and of his meticulously correct religious observances from the very beginning of his life. The miracle proves that from his birth Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī had proper knowledge of the limitations of the holy law (*sharī'a*). The purpose of this story is to assure his followers that anything he taught is trustworthy since he has a direct and firm connection with the source of the *sharī'a*. During the centuries to follow, the story was mentioned in all the works describing the life and miracles of al-Dasūqī — even when no other supernatural act was mentioned. Later, other stories were produced to prove that Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī was conscious and aware of his fasting as a baby (on the theological reasoning concerning a child fasting, see Khalaf Allāh 1969b: 37).

In the earlier model of the Florence MS, namely the *Ṭabaqāt* of al-Sharnūbī, the same story is told by Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī himself. He is addressed by God and told to keep the fast:

> Among my miracles is that my Lord manifested himself to me on the night I was born and told me: "Tomorrow is the first day of fasting, oh Ibrāhīm." And so I fasted although I was only one night old.

Al-Sharnūbī also mentions another miracle taking place at his birth: for the honour of Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī drums were beaten on earth and in heaven (al-Bulqīnī 1889: 4). The story of the fasting in the cradle has remained in the later works; for example, a prayer book from the 1980's retells the story in the following way (al-Qāḍī 1968: 47–48):

> It is told that he fasted in his cradle. There was doubt about the moon of *Ramaḍān*, and Muḥammad ibn Hārūn was asked about the correct day — whether it was already *Ramaḍān* or still the end of *Sha'bān*. Ibn Hārūn then sent a *shaykh* to inquire about the newborn baby, and the mother told that the baby did not suckle after being born and that she was worried. Upon hearing this, Ibn Hārūn told the people to keep the fast for the rest of the day, and he sent a messanger to tell the mother not to worry, for when the sun would set, the infant would suckle.

We thus see that the story of fasting in the cradle gradually became an essential part of the image of al-Dasūqī. Therefore, it is not surprising that we should find it in the last century MS of Florence.

3) The context

So far we have concentrated on the explicit evidence that can be concluded from the MS itself. The basic question is thus, as with all literary sources, how do we know how to listen to the source. On the basis of the MS, we can thus make speculations about the author, the dating and the possible sources or models of the work. We can see that the MS describes the same holy man as the earlier works, in much the same manner. But what about the conclusions that cannot directly be drawn from the MS? Can we tell something about the motives for (re)-writing the story, the most interesting question being: why did al-Bulqīnī compose (or re-write) the same things twice? Why was there, at the end of the 19th century, a need to take up a 13th century saint? Here we cannot rely on the contents of the MS alone

but have to view it from a further perspective. The source is silent. Or is it?

First, we must note that the two works, namely the earlier work of al-Sharnūbī, and the later MS, are not identical, even if both are ascribed to al-Bulqīnī. Even if the same stories are told, they are introduced in different contexts. The *Ṭabaqāt* of al-Sharnūbī depicts Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī among three other saints, and all four are described as being rivals for power. Also an ample description of the other saints is included. The MS of Florence, on the other hand, introduces al-Dasūqī together with a list of other Egyptian saints, and, as is clear from the title *Manāqib Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī*, underlines the status of al-Dasūqī as the highest saint of all. The stress is therefore clearly on al-Dasūqī and, what is of importance, on Egypt.

Why should a re-writing of this kind take place at the end of the 19th century? Here we have to look at the historical context. In Egypt, after the rule of Muḥammad ʿAlī in the first half of the 19th century, there was a counter-reaction to the Westernization he had been propagating. Muḥammad ʿAlī had admired the West, and there had been exchange of teachers and students between Egypt and Europe. Muḥammad ʿAlī died in 1841, but his successors were not as favourable to Western ideas as he had been. The MS of Florence is dated 1835, shortly before Muhammad Ali's death, and can be seen as a token of the rising national awareness and of the Egyptian identity, which later found their expressions in the persons and writings of Muḥammad ʿAbduh (1849–1905) and Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1839–97). In developing these ideas, the national heritage had an important role.

Seen in this context, it was only natural that the saints were also examined in a new light. It is of interest, that most of the saints listed in the MS of Florence are of Egyptian origin. Al-Dasūqī provided a neat example of a national saint, and therefore, during the 19th century, he was taken into use again. This was simple to do, since the continuous change of tradition was already going on. He fulfilled many needs through his qualities — which of course are described in a very conventional manner: he was born in Egypt, therefore, he was a true Egyptian, he had opposed oppression and fought for the weak and thus served as a good example in fighting against the foreign influence in Egypt. He was also an ideal Muslim and a model for the Egyptian Muslim identity. The story of him fasting in the cradle served as a part of this image. Talking about the fasting, al-Dasūqī is made to say: "That was the first of my miracles from God." This, together with the list of miracles following, leaves the reader or the listener in expectation of new miracles. And what these

miracles were or could be, was left for the future generations to report. We thus see that the 19th century MS does not tell so much of a 13th century saint but of the 19th century ideals — and that this statement is due to a 20th century re-reading of the sources.

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TINA HAMRIN

Eric Hermelin and Mystical Hermeneutics

Interpretation beyond itself

Eric Hermelin (1860–1944) translated more than 10.000 pages Persian Sufi poetry, German texts by Jakob Böhme and Latin texts by Emmanuel Swedenborg, while locked up in a mental hospital for thirty-three years. Hermelin belonged to the Swedish nobility, but he always hated aristocratic pride. At the university in Uppsala, he felt a loathing for any toady student looking up to noblemen. As a student, and all the time until he was interned at St. Lars Hospital, he lived the life of a debauchee.

He got on the wrong side of conventional society and fell out with his father. Then he decided to keep himself to himself, to keep aloof and emigrate to the United States. This happened in 1883. In the land of dreams he thought he would find happiness, instead he found syphilis. Sick and drunk Hermelin met a traveling preacher, who had been a commissioned officer during the Civil War, fighting for the Federals. This man, Leander Whitcomb Munhall, gave Hermelin a new world view that led to another self-understanding. Munhall taught the twenty years younger Hermelin the importance of humor when trying to be radical, and Munhall demonstrated a radicalism in which irony was a means to repudiate ecclesiastical élitist concentration of power and to dissociate oneself from institutionalized church matters. Thanks to Munhall, the importance of the written word became clear to Hermelin, and the concept of emptiness became central. Also, it was pointed out that a necessity for happy living was to get rid of all ego-based wishes (Ekerwald 1976: 23–24). In 1885 Hermelin went through some severe religious crises, he drank a lot and he was in bad shape because of his venereal disease. Following Munhall, Hermelin became a soldier, but he was dismissed after seven months; his syphilis made life very difficult for him. Hermelin went to Germany to rest, there he became better and in 1886 he de-

cided to be enrolled for military service again. This time he went to England and signed on with The Middlesex Regiment, a contract for twelve years. In 1887 he was transferred to a battalion in India. To pay homage to his sheikh Rev. Munhall he called himself Hallan. According to Ekerwald, India was a success since it was so awful: his syphilis blazed up, he got the typhoid fever as well as malaria, dysentery twice, and the d.t.'s (delirium tremens). Out of five years in India he spent two years in prison. Hermelin was brought back to England as a prisoner, the judgment was "conduct very bad", and he was fired in 1893. Then he took himself off and went to The United States, Jamaica and Australia, where he was put in prison because of theft. Hermelin returned to Sweden in 1908, was immediately put in a hospital in Stockholm, and then in 1909 he was hospitalized in the south of Sweden for the rest of his life (Ekerwald 1976: 25–26).

I have concentrated on the ontology which is written in the margins, in occasional excursions which interrupt the poems being translated, and in the comments found in unpublished papers and in letters presented by Per–Erik Lindahl and Carl-Göran Ekerwald. Besides this, the stories told by Olle Hjern who's grandfather was a very good friend of Joseph Hermelin, the brother of Eric Hermelin, have been very helpful.

The chosen Persian poetry and the way Hermelin translated it illustrates an abstract ontology with a concrete example, while the margin invites the reader to a psychological, phenomenological case study (cf. Hussain Azad 1921; Mahmud 1926; Omar Khayyam 1928; Sana'i 1928, Attar 1929a, Attar 1929b, Attar 1931–43, Firdawi 1931, Niami Gandjavi 1933; Rumi 1933–39, Kalila wa-Dimna 1942). Reflections in the margin come with the understanding of the text being translated, it is the task set for Hermelin to persevere in time, to stay with the flux, to produce his identity as an effect. And this ultimately is a religious task.

When we think of something as "method", we pull it back into the orbit of those traditional concepts and categories which have organized the discourse of Western reason from the time of its ancient Greek inception. When it comes to hermeneutics, I lean towards a generalized idea of that activity, an idea assumed to comprehend all its differences of local application. Here, in this paper, I see hermeneutics as pilgrimage. The translation work of Persian Sufi poetry itself became a form of ritual practice in the hospitalized world of Eric Hermelin. Literally and symbolically, through the texts he translated, Hermelin made several journeys to a sacred center inside him. Hermelin's pilgrimage through interpretation was a way to act

out, and it gave him a new perception of the elusive 'self' and gave him a chance to affirm his religious identity.

Hermelin went deep and far beyond the text itself, and he often found internal conflicts since he did not simply cast an aesthete's glance over the material he interpreted. Hermelin's reading was intertextual since he saw 'a meaning' in one text through glasses dyed by another text. The translation of Hermelin is interrogating and reflects upon itself in an original manner. In this case, the translation process, the activity of reading, seems to be irreducible to concept or method. Generally, Hermelin was mixing exposition and critique with the text by Rumi itself, presented through detailed close-reading. The personality of the translator constantly shines through. Hermelin's vagabond-solitude never allowed itself to be captured or covered over by convention and 'musts'. As a translator he was engaged in a theatrical re-animation of the textual space of Rumi's passion. He often identified himself with the Persian Sufi poet, but his recreation when following a text was in accord with the meaning *he* found in it. "The truth of works of art is a contingent one: what they reveal is dependent on the lives, circumstances and views of the audience to whom they reveal it" (Warnke 1987: 66). According to Hans-Georg Gadamer, the integration of one's understanding of a text with its relevance to one's own circumstances, a kind of mediation of meaning with one's specific situation, by Gadamer called a "fusion of horizons", is what an aesthetic experience involves (Gadamer 1975). It was in the light of his own concerns that Hermelin interpreted Rumi's poetry. Between Rumi and Hermelin, whatever the distance or differences may be, the boundary appears uncertain. It is permeable. When I read Rumi through Hermelin, the boundary between them is crossed now and then, not only for there to be analysis at all but also for Hermelin's behavior to be understood. Hermelin was very influenced by the texts he translated. Because of Hermelin's comments in the margin, Rumis *Mesnavi*, in the Swedish version, has multiple levels of meaning. In Hermelin's work there are four hermeneutic models to be found. Through his translation we have a reconstruction, there is also an interactive interpretation, and beyond this an aesthetic reception. But above them all, an inward exegesis is observable, here called mystical hermeneutics. In the shape of words, Hermelin lets all the phenomena in the world of Rumi pass by, without being interpreted through an objective system, but being filtered through the heart and mind of Hermelin.

He distinguished clearly between the concept of the poem and the concept of the text. When the poetical work he was translating went as a text to his mind, to the philologist inside him, the poem went

straight to the rest of his body. Escaping from the mental hospital in Lund, in the south of Sweden, getting drunk while mingling with whores in Copenhagen, he gave life to the poems of Rumi, very much in a religious way, thanks to Jacob Böhme and Swedenborg. Hermelin carried his Bible with him and as partly Swedenborgian he believed that the Bible, expressing the divine mind, in some sense *was* God. When Hermelin broke through and established contact with reality, with nothingness, he felt flooded with light. But many times he fell into an abyss where all the conceptions he had devised about God collapsed. It was the God of Böhme and Rumi and Swedenborg who refused to submit to human nonsense.

In what way did his hermeneutical work transform his self-understanding? Well, he tried to find an interpretation that could both make sense out of the individual parts of *Mesnavi* and integrate them into a consistent whole, a picture of God and his creation, as he knew it all from Böhme, Swedenborg and the Bible.

The hermeneutics of Hermelin, the pilgrimage, brought forth the concept of nothingness. The starting point here is a text by Jacob Böhme, *Det öfversinnliga Lifvet*, about the life transcending the senses that Hermelin already in 1912 dedicated to his father (Lindahl 1976: 154).

To reach nothingness, free from the ego, from himself Hermelin, was his wish. What are these mystical insights, given to him through Böhme, who wrote: "In yes and no all things consist"? The nothingness of Hermelin was a state of the beyond. In his world with Rumi there were no judgmental relations left with regard to the outside world, hence neither yes or no. It was the indefinable, incomprehensible nothingness which, at the same time, is everything. The mystical experiences on the basis of which he described God as an *Ungrund* — a bottomless abyss from which the Trinity and the universe emerge, was inherited from Böhme. To the creative Hermelin the words of Böhme had a liberating effect. According to Hermelin, to arrive at God through the deepest internal birth, meant that faith should not be bestowed from without by a legend or theory — it should be cultivated from within. In this internal rebirth he saw God directly and believed in God, and at the same time he found his true life and felt infinite power. In Böhme's words *Stille ohne Wesen*, 'the stillness without anything', Hermelin stood still with God. When seen from one angle, God's spirit was unknowable; when seen from another, it was closely connected with Hermelin's spirit. At the base of this unity of consciousness he made direct contact with the face of God. Hermelin learned from Böhme that heaven is everywhere: wherever one stands or goes is heaven, and it is through the deepest

inner life that one arrives at God (*Morgenröte*). He learned about the unity of consciousness and its content. The God prior to revelation — an objectless will — reflects on Godself, that is, makes Godself a mirror; therefore, subjectivity and objectivity are separated and God and the world develop. The content of consciousness is established by unity, and there is no unity apart from the content of consciousness — they are not two separate things, but rather the two sides of a single reality. Hermelin thought about good and evil, not until they were reflected on were they separated. The will without an object (*Wille ohne Gegenstand*), in other words God, must have been both good and evil. In direct experience all phenomena of consciousness are one activity. By making this single activity the object of knowledge and reflecting upon it, the content is analyzed and distinguished in a variety of ways. In the process of this development, the whole at first appears spontaneously as one activity and then, through contradictions and conflicts, its content is reflected upon and discriminated (cf. Böhme 1918a; Böhme 1918b; Böhme 1920).

In Persian Sufi poetry Hermelin felt what his mind dressed in words. The state of non-ego was the goal of his mystical hermeneutics. At the very instant he lost himself, he was totally immersed in attention. Then the division between ego and the world was suddenly removed. It made no difference whether he said: I am outside with the objects, or the objects are within me. What mattered was that he no longer experienced his attention as a function of his embodied ego. The attention was lifted out of the space-time coordinates, whose intersection was his ego: oblivious of space, time and self. Böhme tried to mediate his revelations, and Hermelin tried to become a spiritual midwife through his translations. His life was constantly a life-and-death struggle. The intensity of that present, when he put his life at stake, was without beginning and without end, and it could vanish only because he vanished from it. Attention ceased when he was driven back into his subject-being; then all the dichotomies were back again: The self and the rest, a specific space and a specific time. Once his empirical ego had repossessed him, he could firmly anchor that 'instant of attention' in the moorings of his individuality, his time of life, his location, and he had lost what had lent that instant its inexchangeability — its nowhere and nowhen. That kind of attention must have ceased if he could ascribe it to a place and to a time. He had once more sunk back into individuation, or surfaced to it, whichever way one looks at it. Undoubtedly the ego-less state is a kind of ecstasy, a crystalline ecstasy of clarity and immobility, a euphoria of the eye which, from a surfeit of being able to see, loses sight of the objects.

The terrifying moment of sexual intermingling is also a transcendence of the boundary, when time and space disappear for the lover. It was another kind of dealing with the breathtaking beyond, to which Hermelin was carried by the pleasures of his body. As the senses took over consciousness disappeared. This encountering, this plunge into a flood of desire while Hermelin was carried away by the body to experience self-dissolution in orgiastic sensuality, was overwhelming. Then the body was not abandoned but magnified into the world body. Here, too, an ego disappeared by surrendering to the non-ego-like powers of urges. According to Böhme, the bodily actions will not defile the soul, the pure part within striving towards egolessness in the name of God. And in the texts by Rumi bodily actions are nothing but metaphors for a non-ego state in God.

The hermeneutics of Hermelin are mystical. His understanding of a Sufi text is not mediated by tradition; rather, his understanding of tradition is mediated by his experience of the text. Mystical hermeneutics is a hermeneutics of experience. Probably experience as Hermelin conceived it subsumed the subject, who cannot be thought of as a self-possessed, self-contained agent. It remains the case that what this experience wins for the individual is something like a free interpretive space, where one is able to abide with the text in what amounts to a condition of personal intimacy. To Hermelin, the point is simply to open up a place of intimacy, an intimate dwelling place with Persian Sufi poetry. Hermeneutics in this instance is a form of life. Hermelins task was not the unveiling of the meaning of a certain Sufi text that he translated — since he saw the poetry of Rumi as wide open, as open secrets — but meditation throughout his life upon what the text disclosed (cf. Bruns 1992: 124–136). The connection between text and note is often purely mystical and can be understood only from his philosophy. To the reader, some explanations are to be found in the "lifework" Hermelin created when the Swedenborgian teaching of influxus was being compared with certain expositions by Böhme (Lindahl 1976: 168–187).

Hermelin's work can be seen as a display of nonostensive references: the display of a world that is no longer the surrounding world, the projection of a world that is more than a situation. The hermeneutics of Hermelin shows personal commitment, he grasps the depth semantics of the text and makes it his own. Does this not introduce all the paradoxes of the hermeneutical circle? When trying to understand the hermeneutics of Hermelin, the margin of translated texts, understanding is entirely mediated by the whole of the explanatory procedures that precede it and accompany it. It is the life style of Hermelin in the footsteps of Böhme and other mystics. The

counterpart of this personal appropriation is not something that can be felt, it is the dynamic meaning released by the explanation which can be identified with the footnotes of a translated Sufi text, that is, its power of disclosing a world. Since the correlation between explanation and understanding, between understanding and explanation, is the hermeneutical circle, with personal commitment text interpretation necessary has a paradigmatic character. Therefore, the hermeneutical circle remains an insuperable structure of knowledge when it is applied to human things.

The mystical hermeneutics of Hermelin includes both outward and inward text interpretations. In external his understanding of a text is mediated by words and meanings, both of the Sufi poetry and of what has been handed down in tradition, whereas inward interpretation meant that he saw what the text said. With clear eyes he saw God's speech in the text, he did not just understand what the text said but he saw it, he knew it by experience. His understanding of Sufi poetry became a condition for understanding God's creation. The mystical experience of the text was not an event that was to be set apart from his life. The hermeneutical task entailed a return from the experience of text to the social world of argument, as if to bring even the most remote periphery of the secular world within the experience of divine intimacy (cf. Bruns 1992: 124–136).

According to the literature Hermelin translated, Böhme, Swedenborg and Rumi experienced moments devoid of subject-object that involved no awareness of either the self or another. Experiences phenomenologically and specifically of the individual God. Perhaps the experience, when Böhme and Rumi who stood face-to-face with God through revelation and Hermelin met God through intoxication, were phenomenologically indistinguishable in that they involved the same kind of nothingness, the same kind of light, and the same closedown of consciousness amid the sparkle and roar of perceptual confusion?

Conclusion

In Hermelin's case, an interaction between the self and features of a text as 'other' set in motion certain strategies on the part of his conscious self. Patterns of desire on the part of Hermelin's self gave rise to strategies of self-protection and concealment, and thus to overdetermination of meaning. Multiple meaning-effects emerged which were attributed to conflicts, ambiguities, and overlapping causes within the self of Hermelin. The active operation of these defensive strategies can be seen as transactions between the self and the other.

In the translation process Hermelin shaped his strategies and perceptions in ways which served their patterns of desire, and what they constructed reflected and served their own unique identity. Added up, the devices which constitute strategies of reading set in motion by the self's defense of its identity are: Defenses, Expectations, Fantasies, and Transformations. Hermelin's mystical hermeneutics produced not only understanding of texts, but often no less produced an increased awareness, with appropriate hermeneutical sensitivity, of self-perception and self-identity. A self-awareness and a strengthening of an individual and corporate identity as one who has a stake in the texts and that to which they bear witness constitutes an important reader-effect in this case of Sufi poetry.

But without any principle of suspicion, in Gadamer's terminology a premature fusion of horizons will take place before Hermelin has listened in openness with respect for the tension between the horizons of the text and the horizon of Hermelin. The textual horizon has collapsed into that of Hermelin's narrative biography, and is unable to do more than to speak back his own values and desires. Something socio-pragmatical was after all woven into the controversial bon vivant, when he used literary works to replicate himself. At the same time, the texts spoke from beyond the self.

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EILA HELANDER

Source Criticism and Cultural Models

Constructing Life Histories of Women Missionaries

"But is there enough data?" is a question many scholars have faced, when they have embarked on writing about women, who so far have been less visible in histography.[1] However, completed research projects have shown that lack of data has not been a major problem.

This was also my experience in 1995 when I started my research project on Finnish women missionaries and the local development in Africa. The project covers the time period 1946–1995 and four African counties: Ethiopia, Tanzania, Namibia and Botswana.[2] The skepticism of the male leaders of the mission society in question concerning the existence of data has proved to be unfounded. The abundance and variety, instead of scarcity, of data has become one of the major methodological problems of the research. Though the main focus in my project is on the local development in Africa, it is necessary also to deal with the life histories of women missionaries.

Primary data consist of written documents produced by women missionaries: official reports and circular letters, and personal diaries and private letters. All official records and some private diaries and correspondence are available in the mission archives. Several women, when they heard about the research project, sent in their personal diaries and private letters. Either private research projects or research efforts launched by the mission on women missionaries and started earlier on have produced taped interviews and returned questionnaires, which had not yet been analyzed, and were now made available to my use. I have also personally interviewed a number of women missionaries. Since I focus especially on the impact of

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[1] For example, in earlier mission histories women have been relatively invisible because scholars have relied on official church and mission documents that generally exclude women. See e.g. Flemming 1989: 8.

[2] The study concentrates on one of the leading mission societies in Finland, the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM). The study covers about 300 women.

women missionaries in a particular social and cultural setting, it became necessary to get the viewpoints of the people among and with whom they have worked. This I have done and still continue to do through field work in the respective countries.

Problems posed by the nature of data

Research work is an interpretive enterprise. The variety of sources poses some central methodological questions for constructing religious life histories (Burgess 1982). There is an apparent discrepancy between the source categories concerning the content of the information. Private diaries and letters provide information on women's work and life which is not available in official reports and letters. They reveal dates, events and individuals which are not mentioned elsewhere. In histography the question of discrepancy is normally solved by comparing the sources with an aim to arrive at the "true picture" of how things have been. Such a picture is believed to portray not only the true life situation of the individual or group in question but, depending on the nature of the data, also the epoch and time situation itself. From the viewpoint of social sciences and comparative religion one will ask: could the variety of sources be approached and utilized in some other way?

The second question posed by the data concerns the content of each source category. The information can be located on the continuum "highly subjective — stereotyped". Subjective information, including reflections on personal experiences may not be the best source e.g. for constructing the flow of historical events, but it is of uttermost importance if we want to show how "individuals respond to social constraints and actively assemble social worlds" (Plumer 1983: 5). It is precisely from this standpoint that I was led to ask about the value and validity of less subjective information in constructing religious life histories. The problem I faced was not the abundance of highly subjective information but data which followed certain patterns and could be termed as being stereotyped. Not only the official circular letters, which were sent to a wide audience, but also letters to family members tend to follow in both cases fixed patterns, though differing from each other. The same was the case with the interviews. In interviewing women missionaries concerning their past in mission work, the repeated standard formula of the information offered to me troubled me first. I found it difficult to grasp the "real" feelings and experiences of these women. This led me to ask: "Who determines the 'reality' of the given information?" During the course of the research

work, I have come to a conclusion that patterned, stereotyped information is more valuable than what has been thought thus far. Its usefulness and value depend on the focus of the research. Life history has been described as "the account of a life, completed or ongoing" (Mandelbaum 1982: 146). In studying the collective or individual religious life histories, it is important to focus not only on the flow of historical facts and events but also on the socio-cultural level, which determines the influence and even the presentation and interpretation of the history. At the social level the focus will then be on how women missionaries have coped and cope with the social settings they find themselves in. At the cultural level it is important to notice that women missionaries cross several cultural boundaries. When relating to their mission board or supporters, they act within the Finnish cultural framework. In their work they encounter a new culture in which encounter their role may vary e.g. from a total stranger to a marginal member. And last but not least, even the missionary institution itself has a culture of its own!

Like interviews, reports and letters are interactive products. They do not speak only of the writer's world, but also about the writer's perceptions of the recipient (Plummer 1983: 23).[3] It is important to recognize the purpose for which the documents have been written. All narratives are told in a particular socio-cultural setting and from a specific point of view. For example, one function of the official reports and circular letters has been to defend the mission work and to raise financial support. Such patterned forms of information reveal the cultural models of each cultural setting. According to Holland and Quinn, "Cultural models are presupposed, taken-for-granted models of the world that are widely shared (although not necessarily to the exclusion of other, alternative models) by members of a society and that play an enormous role in their understanding of that world and their behavior in it" (Holland and Quinn 1987: 4). "Cultural

[3] Thomas Luckmann elaborates the point: "Human communicative acts are *pre*defined and thereby to a certain extent *pre*determined by an existing social code of communication. This holds both for the 'inner' core of that code, the phonological, morphological, semantic and syntactic structure of the language, as well as for its 'external' stratification in styles, registers, sociolects, and dialects. In addition, communicative acts are predefined and predetermined by explicit and implicit rules and regulations of the *use* of language, e.g., by forms of communicative etiquette. Furthermore, communicative acts are a form of social interaction and are therefor predefined and predetermined by non-communicative rules and regulations: by institutions, a set of social relations, a system of production and reproduction, in short, by a historical social structure." Luckmann 1995: 176.

models" is a concept developed within anthropology. Within sociology the equivalent concept could be "collective representations". In other words, patterned information like religious slogans and phrases reveal important information about the cultural settings in which the women missionaries live and work.

Cultural models and communication

Cultural models not only frame people's experience. They supply also interpretations about that experience and inferences about it. Gubrium, Holstein and Buckholt point out that collective representations act as frameworks for organizing and making sense of everyday life. By entering into an interpretative process they mediate individual biography and interpersonal relations, reflecting and maintaining culturally promoted understandings of, and orientations to, everyday life (Gubrium, Holstein and Buckholdt 1994). Holland and Quinn argue that "When interpretation and inference call for action, the cultural understandings also define the actor's goals" (Holland and Quinn 1987: 6). This motivational aspect is emphasized by D'Andrade, who calls the cultural models cognitive schemas and sees as their main function to guide action. "...a person's most general interpretation of what is going on will function as important goals for that person" (D'Andrade 1992: 30). This applies also to a person's perception of the past. Strauss points out that cognitive schemas not only mediate the interpretation of on-going experiences but also the reconstruction of memories (Strauss 1992: 3). In other words, when the focus is on individual perceptions, feelings and experiences and not on historical facts, patterned information is to be viewed rather as ques or keys to women missionaries' perception and interpretation of the past.

Such arguments and approach to culture suggest that patterned forms of information may give more information also about individual lives than what is thought of at first glance. Holstein and Gubrium point out that the interpretative practice which involves the articulation of publicly recognized (and standardized) structures, categories or images establishes a middle ground between macro and micro forms of analysis. According to them, since interpretation is shaped by locally available and recognized and accepted resources, meaningful experiences are more socially that privately constructed phenomena (Holstein and Gubrium 1994: 267; see also Silverman 1987).

Thus, the collective representations provide a religious rhetoric e.g. for interpreting the cognitive conflict and stress in a new cultural setting. The repeated statements about difficult life conditions — even in situations where they do not differ considerably from what one has been used to in Finland — reveal one of the central cultural models of the missionary culture. Missionary life must consist of difficulties and trials and how an individual should not only survive but also come out victoriously! In the missionary culture the solution is found within the religious field: one is on the great commission, being sent out by God who has promised to supply the individual with the needed power to overcome all obstacles.[4] The emphasis is on a test, on the ability of a foreigner to encounter a foreign culture and be able to carry out the work for which one has embarked on in a strange situation. Looking at such data within the framework of genre analysis, it reveals that we deal here with a particular kind of communicative genre which organizes, routinizes and provides a solution to communicative problems that may arise between the missionaries and the recipients of their information. It upholds and maintains the missionary culture and the social order within it (see Luckmann 1995: 182).

It is important to notice that cultural conceptualizations of the world are not the only determinants of behavior (Holland and Quinn 1987: 6; Holstein and Gubrium 1994: 268). People are not automatons, who only adapt to patterned expectations. The availability of multiple sources saves the researcher from the danger of relying on one type of source only and the consequent danger of arriving at a one-sided picture. The discrepancy in information between the source categories is not only a question of historical accuracy but one of a cultural conflict. For example, accounts of personal diaries differ from public circular letters. Naturally the difference is understandable from the private-public -viewpoint. But there is more to it than that. Such sources can also be used to analyze how women missionaries balance between the different socio-cultural worlds they find themselves in. They give information on women's feelings, experiences and goals and motivations, and to what extent they are in line with the different cultural models of their socio-cultural settings.

[4] The same pattern can be discovered in the descriptions of academic field research. The very nature of field work is represented as that of overcoming obstacles. Instead of divine intervention the power not only to survive but to be able to carry out one's mission of academic work is drawn from one's academic skills!

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MARJA-LIISA KEINÄNEN

Rereading Finno-Ugrian Religion from a Gender Point of View

I intend to discuss the epistemological and methodological significance the perspective of gender has on religious studies. I will argue, along the lines commonplace within the gender studies in various disciplines, that the problem of women's invisibility is not *only* due to a casual oversight by male scholars, but it also has its roots on the conceptual level of the disciplines. The sources, concepts and models we work with are largely based on male experience and carry thereby a built-in androcentrism. The intrinsic androcentrism in our conceptual tools may result in a systematic exclusion of women and their experiences and practices from the scholarly studies of religion (cf. King 1995a: 19; cf. Moore 1988: 2 ff.; Code 1991: 60). Therefore it does not suffice to compensate for the absence of women by just 'adding the women and stirring' as the common expression has it, instead, a revaluation and revision of the whole "male paradigm" will be necessary. It implies critical scrutiny of the concepts and models as well as an attempt to bring to light the underlying assumptions, the *tacit knowledge* in Kuhnian terms, which has influenced and shaped male writing of religion.

I will illustrate the issue at hand by analysing the overviews in some central handbooks and entries in encyclopaedias (ERE, ER) on the Finno-Ugrian religions as well as the central monographs in the series *Suomen suvun uskonnot* (The Religions of the Finnic Peoples) on which these overviews are largely based. The reason I have chosen to study this type of data is that they play a central role in the socialisation of the students as well as a gateway for scholars into a particular religion. They serve also as a medium for internalisation of the central concepts and categories in the study of a particular religion. Furthermore, it is worth noticing that the university reading lists also communicate to students what constitutes relevant knowledge in religious studies (cf. Behar 1993: 314).

Judging from the lack of discussions of method in the literature under scrutiny the scholarly representation of religious phenomena

has been considered quite straightforward and unproblematic. It seems as if religious phenomena were seen as objectively existing entities which the ethnographer faithfully documented and registered for later processing into a monograph (see e.g. Krohn 1894: 1). The belief in the objectivity of the scholarly representation is also implicit in Honko's characterisation of Harva's method, when that method was at its best:

> In attempting to compose the most authentic possible picture of religious ceremonies by comparing different sources, Harva apparently learnt to respect good sources and gradually formed his own descriptive manner, in which information is grouped into a chain of facts and *in which theorizing has little place*. When a belief, custom or ceremony was well described the conclusions seemed to be almost self-evident. Even if the conclusions were not always sensational, this was better than squeezing out of sources what was not there. (Honko 1969–70: 60; italics mine).

The implication is that Harva managed to produce something that Van Maanen might call a realist tale, i.e. a tale with implicit claims of authenticity and value-freedom, a tale that anyone given the same sources or/and facing the same field would produce (cf. Van Maanen 1988: 45 f.). During the past decades the prior unproblematic view on ethnographic writing has been challenged and it is generally acknowledged that pure description does not exit, but that we are always dealing with an interpretation done from a certain perspective or perspectives. Even Harva's writing, in spite of his refraining from theorising,[1] was not unbiased, but was guided by certain underlying assumptions and preconceived ideas. The assumptions that are of central interest for us here are his implicit gender conceptions. Though not recognised as an analytical category by previous research, gender constitutes in fact one of the perspectives which has to a large extent steered the production of knowledge within religious studies. Its significance has been until quite recently overlooked. The purpose of my study is therefore to reread the aforementioned monographs and overviews from the perspective of gender in order to examine how the scholarly conceptions of gender has steered the prior construction of Finno-Ugrian religion. The selection of religious phenomena which have been presented as central and general in a particular religion or religions is not the result of an objective study, but has to a certain extent been a matter of judgement made from a cer-

[1] Theory for Harva was the 19th century theories of the origin of religion. Honko 1969–70: 60.

tain position within the gender system of a particular culture. I believe, it is in a higher degree than generally acknowledged, a matter of convention and evaluation what type of knowledge is considered relevant, i.e. worth recording and putting in the books.

A close study of the literature confirms one of the basic facts of women's studies; that the cultural complexes which are held to be central and general in a particular culture are largely representative of those of the male population. To somewhat radically rephrase Kaarle Krohn, one of the editors of the series *Suomen suvun uskonnot* and the author of the first monograph in the series, these representations describe the religion of Väinämöinen and his cousins from the countryside (Krohn 1914: 10). In spite of the fact that women were often banned from or were relegated to playing a marginal role in the alleged core complexes (e.g. bear ceremonialism, various sacrificial ceremonies, hero cult), these very instances have frequently been presented not only as central but even as general, i.e. as if engaging the whole population to the same extent and on equal terms (e.g. Honko 1968; Honko 1987: 332–4; Siikala 1987: 327 f.). The fact that women played an important role in ancestor worship hardly appears at all from the earlier descriptions (e.g. Harva 1964: ch 3, ch 4).

In order better to understand how these unbalanced representations have come about and attained a status as established knowledge we have to trace back the process of constructing religion in the history of research. It seems that Julius Krohn or rather his son Kaarle, who after his father's sudden death edited and complemented the first overview on Finno-Ugrian religions, namely *Suomen Suvun Pakanallinen Jumalanpalvelus* (The Pagan Worship of the Finnic peoples, 1894) set the pattern for later scholarship at least in two respects. Firstly, building on Castrén's work Krohn picked out the phenomena which were held to be common and original to Finno-Ugrian religions (Krohn 1894: 1; Krohn 1914: ch 3, ch 4; Harva 1996: 18). As Anttonen has mentioned, Krohn's work served again as a model for Harva, when writing his early study, that of the Saami religion (Anttonen 1987: 109). It has also influenced his later production, even though Harva did not follow Krohn slavishly and uncritically. The central religious complexes, introduced by these scholars have been faithfully reproduced by the later scholarship on the religions in question.

Secondly, Krohn's work also created the androcentric pattern which has implicitly directed subsequent research. The Finno-Ugrian *Urreligion*, the scholars sought to reconstruct, seems to have been predominately male religion, where women had quite a marginal position. The literature frequently presents women through negation.

Even the monographs which do include an occasional chapter on women, present them as objects of taboos, impure and even unholy (Karjalainen 1921: 50 f.; Karjalainen 1927: 235 f.; Lehtisalo 1924: 110 f.). The instances where women were observed to play a central part were either explained away as late development or they were disregarded as foreign influence, irrelevant to those who were involved in the project of reconstructing original Finno-Ugrian religion.

The scholarly treatment of women as marginal in the religious descriptions is in agreement with the oft-observed fact in women's studies that men are seen as the norm and women are just an exception to this norm. The title of Karjalainen's chapter *Die Sonderstellung des Weibes* is a good example on androcentric thinking, where women are just treated as a special case (1927: 235). This, of course is quite logical since the "normal subject", the scholarly writing of religion presupposes, is based on male experience (cf. Rosenhaft 1997: 23 f.; King 1995a: 19). Thus, the challenge the gender perspective offers to religious studies, metaphorically speaking, is not just the complementing of Väinämöinen's religion with that of his female counterpart Louhi.[2] As this asymmetrical juxtaposition already indicates, the gender perspective has much more profound consequences on the epistemology and methodology in religious studies. It necessitates the deconstruction of the male "normal subject" underlying the scholarly representations. The male "normal subject" has served as the basis for conceptualisation and classification. Androcentrism, which is built into the very tools of our discipline has led to a systematic exclusion of women's experience and practices from the phenomenological descriptions and presentations and is constantly reproduced through the "canonic" literature of encyclopedias, handbooks and classical monographs (cf. King 1995b: 235 f.).

In the following I will analyse in greater detail some aspects of the process of knowledge production in order to show in more concrete terms how androcentric knowledge has been generated and how androcentrism has influenced our religious constructs.

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[2] It is interesting to note that the antireligious activists in Soviet Karelia actually used Louhi as a symbol of women's "superstition". They defined their goal as expelling Louhi, the woman of the North, from Karelia, "who still with her spells [and] her church keeps the Karelian women in darkness..." Karjalan kommuuni 1922: 5.

Engendering androcentric knowledge

Fieldwork by Finnish scholars among the Finno-Ugrians and Samojeds was principally conducted by male philologists and ethnologists. It was only in 1929 that the Finno-Ugrian Society sent out its first female grant holder. She collected plant names in Estonia (Ravila 1933: 31). Women's activity within Finnish folkloristics and ethnology was roused in the end of 1920's, but their actual breakthrough was only after the war (Turunen 1996: 78). The primary goal of philologist-ethnographers was systematically to study and register the language they set out to study, but they also produced on the side monographs on mythology and religion. The travel reports draw a dramatic picture of the encounter between the fieldworker and the suspicious locals. Occasionally the researcher was associated with the feared Russian authorities or as the case was with Paasonen, he was believed to represent the Antichrist himself (Paasonen 1900: 2, 5). Thus, the barrier was high between a male researcher and the local men, but it was even higher between him and the local women (e.g. Karjalainen 1983: 58 f.; Balzer 1978: 103, 108). The fieldworker's sex was a concrete hindrance, which did not allow him access or insight into women's religion and culture. The existing sources on the Finno-Ugrian religions are thereby to a great extent a result of negotiations between a male scholar and a male informant-instructor, the latter, at least in the beginning often quite reserved and unwilling to cooperate, particularly in religious matters. Sometimes the local authorities more or less commanded a person to function as an instructor to the researcher (Karjalainen 1983: 144; see also Korhonen, Suhonen and Virtaranta 1983: 66, 71, 141).

It can be considered quite peculiar that the researchers ignored women as language instructors since women, being more bound to home would to a higher degree have preserved their language from foreign influences. Also the guide for Finnish dialect collectors (1924) did acknowledge women as better instructors, even though the collectors were warned about women's smaller ability of abstraction (Hakulinen 1924: 9; Kosonen 1988: 289). In the instructions for his lexical questionary 1931 Kai Donner defines the characteristics demanded of an informant as follows: "As a language instructor a suitable middle-aged, ca. 25–55-year-old, male person should be chosen everywhere, one who lives in the dialect area in question and either lives off the land or has lived off the land."[3]

[3] SK 1.

Since the issue of gender is our topic here I will not ponder upon how the hierarchical and complex relationship between the field-worker and informant affected the data collection and the subsequent ethnographic writing. Suffice it to say that the fact that women themselves were hardly consulted at all proves to be quite fatal when studying cultures, such as those of the Finno-Ugrians, where the gender systems were dualistic and complementary. Much information on women's religious ideas and practices has been left out or was attained through male informants.[4] Anthrocentrism has thereby been built into our source materials. Even if the male bias has been corrected somewhat by later research, which to a greater extent has focused on women,[5] our sources are lacking and the reconstruction of women's religion may seem a hopeless task. Since we cannot undo the scholarly oversight in the past and fill in the gaps, we are forced to settle with Gross's (over-?) optimistic claim that a complementation of sources with new materials is not an absolute necessity for a more balanced writing of religion. The problem according to Gross is not so much the lack of data but rather the prior evaluation of it by the scholars. She claims that the existing information has "been either overlooked or interpreted as evidence that women are unimportant, minor participants in a male-dominant society" (1996: 66). Since the evaluative and ideological elements seem to have played an important role in construction of religion I therefore find it necessary to examine in more concrete terms how a male scholar's frame of reference has steered the production of religious knowledge.

The male paradigm

As Harri Englund among others has pointed out the ethnography discussion has to a surprisingly great extent overlooked the importance of theory in ethnographical writing (1989: 28 f.). We can agree with Berreman, who maintains that "there can be no pure observation and no straight description without underlying assumptions — without a theory or theories — which determine what will be observed and what will be recorded." Therefore "all observation is se-

[4] For more detailed discussion of the double male bias, see Ardener 1975: 4 f.; Nenola 1986: 31 f.; Moore 1988: 3 f.

[5] I refer here particularly to the Russian scholars' growing interest in women's religious practices among the Finno-Ugrian peoples. See for example the conference publication Congressus Octavus Internationalis Fenno-Ugristarum 1996.

lective and all recording of observation is selective again." (Berreman 1968: 339; also Moore 1988: 4). In the following I will briefly discuss some of the basic assumptions and implicit theories which, I believe, have directed the process of constructing Finno-Ugrian religion all the way from field observation and/or archive studies, through selection of relevant data to the composition of the final product, a monograph on a particular religion or religions.

Judging from the writing of some central figures within the early Finnish religious studies, particularly Julius/Kaarle Krohn and Uno Holmberg-Harva, they all seem to share a commonly held axiomatic notion of women's limited participation in the religious practices among the Finno-Ugrian peoples. When dismissing a description in a Scandinavian tale of a temple on the Western shore of the river Dvina as fiction, Julius Krohn's criterion for dismissal was the central position the tale ascribed to women at the temple. The tale had it that the temple was guarded by "tens of witches" (*noita-akkoja*) and its female care-taker was of the size of a giant. Krohn judges the tale to be unreliable as a source on Finnic religious practice, not because of the caretaker's exaggerated size, which indicates that we are dealing with a mythical tale, but, because women were depicted as priestesses and servants at the temple. According to him this description is not in accordance with the notion he claims to be *general* among the Finnic peoples, namely that women defile a holy place (Krohn 1894: 15). The numerous references to women as various kinds of functionaries later in the same book, which actually contradict his generalising statement, passed by unheeded by him. Holmberg-Harva elaborated further upon the notion of women's "unholiness" in his article *Naisen seremoniallisen epäpyhyyden alkuperä* [The Origin of Women's Ceremonial Unholiness] from 1910. He opens his paper with the following assertion:

> *It is a fact* that many former and existing peoples still hold that it is inappropriate for creatures such as women to approach a holy place or participate in any sacred act that implies worship. This conception we will find especially among the nature peoples, but traces of it have been preserved even among the more developed religions (Harva 1910: 623; translation and italics mine).

Holmberg-Harva does not question the accuracy of the above statement. Quite the contrary, it is proposed by him as a general truth. What he finds debatable is only the prior explanations by different scholars for the notion of women's "unholiness". His entry on the priests and priesthood among the Finno-Ugrian peoples in ERE proceeds in a similar vein: "[w]omen, *as a rule*, could not take part in the

sacrificial service, and were deemed *unworthy* of the priestly office." (Harva 1918: 336, italics mine). Harva's generalising statement is somewhat contradictory since he admits in 1914 that among the Votiaks (Udmurts) women, at least in the more archaic regions, were allowed to take part in the sacrifices at home. He even mentions that there were particular functionaries, both male and female, at such feasts (Harva 1914: 85; Harva 1964: 130 f.). In spite of this, the assumption of women's exclusion from the religious sphere as "unholy" or "unworthy" runs through most of the series *Suomen suvun uskonnot* despite some evidence on the contrary in the books. Harva's monograph on Mordvinian religion (Harva 1942), where the feminine element was particularly strong, is a case in point. He describes a number of ceremonies where women actually played a central role, such as the "old women's porridge feast" (*Das Altweiberbreifest, baban kaša*) and "women's *bratšina*", i.e. "women's beer feast" (1952: 365 f., 386). Harva found the fact that Mordvinian women acted as prayer-leaders in a number of sacrificial ceremonies quite extraordinary. Since this observation did not agree with his conception of women's marginal role in religious practices, in order to save his view, he refuted these instances as being atypical of Finno-Ugrian religions and accorded them to "foreign influence", coming from the Russian side (1952: 419). It is symptomatic that he explains these ceremonies either as being of Russian origin or at least influenced by the Russians on the basis of the feast's Russian name and the Russian "tone" in the sacrificial prayers, while he at the same time had to admit that there was no evidence on *baban kaša* (women's porridge) type of feast among the Russians (1952: 380, 419). It is interesting to note that Paasonen, whose field notes and writing Harva largely has built on, is much more nuanced as far as women's roles in ceremonies were concerned in his article on Mordvins in ERE. Paasonen, unlike Harva, makes no reservations when presenting both men and women as sacrificial priests. He also points out that "[i]n some of the sacrificial feasts both sexes took part, but there were also distinct festivals for males and females respectively" (Paasonen 1915: 847). However, clinging to his conviction of women's marginal role Harva omitted these feasts from his overview on Finno-Ugrian religions in The Mythology of All Races (Harva 1964), where he just concentrates on the great feasts. Neither does Pentikäinen mention these ceremonies in his overview on Mari and Mordvin religions in his article in ER (1987) nor Honko in his overview on Finno-Ugric religions in ER (1987). It is first Siikala, who reinstalls this feast and women as sacrificial functionaries on the religious scene of the Mordvins in her entry on Finnic Religions in ER (1987: 328 f.).

Eleanor Leacock, among others, has thrown light on the significance the scholar's preconceived ideas, attitudes and evaluations may have on his representation of native religious ideas. She mentions as an example the different values laid in the concepts "menstrual hut" and "men's house". The menstrual hut bears negative connotation of impurity and perhaps even suppression, while the concept "men's house" is associated with authority and respect (cf. Leacock 1972: 40). Even the female scholars, who have been socialised in a malest research tradition may take part in the reproduction of androcentrisms as Balzer's critique of Rombandeeva shows (see also Fox 1987: 564, 571). The latter calls the place were a newborn's old cradle was hung as "the most 'impure' spot". Balzer's female informants, on the other hand, insisted on calling the place the female counterpart to exclusive men's sacred groves (Balzer 1978: 84; Rombandeeva 1968: 81). Bäckman has criticised Lehtisalo, who depicts the Tundrajurak images of women's tutelary deities as 'unclean', on similar basis, but she misses the point somewhat when she claims that the conceptions of 'danger', associated with these objects and places, were reciprocal. Meaning that "women had to be careful about certain places and actions while a man had to be careful about others." (Bäckman 1982: 151; Lehtisalo 1924: 111). For the first, we cannot simply equate impurity with danger as Bäckman does, even though these notions are interconnected. Secondly, there is an asymmetry in the reciprocal avoiding of certain places and things as Rydving has observed. Saami women, for example, were forbidden to tread the male religious sphere at any time, while men were banned only during sacred time (Rydving 1993: 146). It was the power emanating from women's bodily states, which made women and their domain dangerous to men. Thus, women in fertile age periodically embodied danger, whereas men were not in general thought to 'pollute' or otherwise threaten women or their sacred places.

These examples show clearly the significance the scholar's frame of reference and the perspective from where s/he studies the phenomena has on the interpretation of the religious phenomena, especially when we are dealing with the highly relative concept of impurity. If Hanti women's groves or objects were impure and dangerous from the male point of view, they were not so from women's, but, were instead perceived sacred by women (Balzer 1978: 84; Nenola 1993: 362). A scholar's undue fixation on the concept of impurity could even lead to sheer misinterpretation of women's religious practices. Harva, for example, depicts the porridge Saami women ate after a successful parturition as a purification meal and the eating ceremony as a purification ceremony even though he quotes Jessen in the next sentence

asserting that the celebration was arranged in honour of the birth goddess Sarakka (Harva 1996: 68; Harva 1964: 253).

It seems that Westermarck's critique, presented at his lecture in 1911, of the negative and generalising scholarly views on women's position in "cultures of lower level", went unheeded by Finnish students of religion. According to Westermarck, explorers had seldom supplied detailed presentations of the rights and duties of women among the people they described. Quite often their reports were contradictory, even in the work of the same author (Westermarck 1991: 16). As a matter of fact, it would take more than a half a century before Westermarck's point that religion did not just imply restrictions for women, but could also serve as a source of power, would be observed in Finnish religious studies (Westermarck 1991: 33; Nenola 1986: 51 f.; Apo 1995). A more balanced writing of religion would demand an approach where women are also seen as subjects within the religious sphere.

Due to the preconceived ideas or "general truths" on women's impurity and unholiness held by the leading scholars, women's marginality in the sphere of religion became an integrated part of the source materials and in the descriptions based on those very materials. The researcher ended up in a vicious circle where women's exclusion from the sacred sphere became a self-fulfilling prophesy. The ethnographer perceived what his preconceptions led him to perceive and his constrained perception came again to confirm his preconceived ideas. By shutting women out of the sacred places because of their alleged impurity and unholiness, Krohn and his followers came to establish the status of the Finno-Ugrian women as profane, 'outside the *fane*', 'sacred place' (King 1987: 282). Thereby this basic axiom came also to motivate and even sanction women's exclusion from the subsequent scholarly overviews on Finno-Ugrian religions.

Gender ideology and the selection of the core elements

The persistent idea of women's marginality in the Finno-Ugrian religions is even more peculiar if we view women's religious roles from the perspective of the dominating contemporary theory, namely manism. Since ancestor worship was supposed to have its roots in the Finno-Ugrian *Urreligion* (e.g. Krohn 1913: 23) and since women played a central role in ancestor worship it would have been quite logical to expect that women were assigned a position in the *Urreligion* which was congruent with her actual role in the ancestor cult. This, however, was not the case, quite the contrary. Firstly, as

already noted, women's role in ancestor worship seems to have gone unobserved by the early scholarship. Secondly, Holmberg actually derives the origin of women's exclusion from holy places from manistic ideas, namely from a fear for the spirits of the dead, who seek to intrude a women in order to get reborn (Harva 1910: 625, 627 f.). The fact that women's role in the ancestor cult was not acknowledged has also to do with the fact that this cult was an important element in the construction of national identity. Herderian nationalistic philosophy simply did not include women's traditions in a nation's cultural heritage (cf. Sawin 1990: 61; Fox 1987; also Utriainen 1995: 533 f.).

We could, of course, surrender to the generally held notion that women's exclusion from the scholarly accounts is simply based on the fact that women actually did not participate in the *most significant* religious practices in society. Likewise, we could explain the absence of female religious functionaries in the scholarly descriptions simply with the fact that there were no important female functionaries. One of Honko's criteria for a religious specialist is actually the "performance of an important function in the religious community." (1978: 85). The criterion of importance, however, begs the question who, and on what basis, has interpreted a certain ceremony or function as important (Gross 1996: 67). It also raises a further question why female functionaries and women's ceremonies, which, as the literature shows, have existed, have not been considered important and allotted the space in the literature they might deserve.

In order better to understand the persistence of the scholarly conviction on women's marginality within the religious sphere, we have to look for its roots in scholars' gender ideology and evaluations. This means that we have to take Leacock's and other scholars' critique of Western scholarship seriously. She criticises it for the tendency to interpret all cultures in terms of categories derived from their own society, for their failure to see women as actors on the scene of human history as well as for taking the hierarchic gender relationship, typical of their culture for granted even when studying foreign cultures (Leacock 1983: 263, 266). As appears from Bäckman's article on women's position in religion and society in Northern Eurasia also the source-writers as well as students of Finno-Ugrian cultures have made themselves guilty of imposing their gender ideology and hierarchies on the data they have studied (1982: 151 f.). Therefore our deconstruction project demands a closer study of the implications such an imposition might have on the actual representations of women within these religions. For the first we have to examine how the underlying principles that have governed the scholar's gender system have directed his study of cultures with different type of gender sys-

tems. I will take my point of departure in Hirdman's already classical model, though, bearing Leacock's critique in mind, I will mainly apply it to scholarly thinking in order to avoid the imposition of western feminist hierarchies on our complex data. Hirdman has identified two underlying principles in a gender system: Firstly, that of the gender dichotomy, i.e. the norm of keeping apart the male and female categories. Secondly, the principle of hierachy: men are the norm for the normal and the universal. These two principles, I believe, also were fundamental in the scholarly way of thinking and evaluating gender and they have on the conceptual level steered the scholarly observation and construction of religion. The gender dichotomy which is of vital interest here is the division of space into male/public and female/private spheres. These two spheres are perceived as standing in a hierarchical relationship to one another, the public/male holding primacy over the private, acquiring a normative position over the latter. Since the scholar as a representative of the public sphere holds the precedence of interpretation, he assigns this sphere the official reality whereas the private, female sphere is seen to represent the unofficial (cf. Hirdman 1988: 51 f.; Svalastog 1997: 46). This division has been of fundamental significance for the position women have been assigned in scholarly representations, not only in religious studies, but in cultural studies in general. Since the male/-mainstream version of cultural history has been based on events that take place within the public, official sphere, women have become invisible in the writing of history (Saarinen 1992: 122; also Gross 1996: 67 f.). From the man-as-a-norm principle it follows that the events within the male public sphere were not only considered more significant and important in a society than those in the private sphere, but they also were seen as representative and typical of the entire culture. And conversely the events within the private sphere were seen as insignificant in their assumed particularism.

When applying our model to the study of Finno-Ugrian religions it is obvious that the elements that have been presented as central are those which took place within the public/male sphere. It is obvious that male practices have been perceived as general and even typical of a given religion and have been presented as such. The spectacular sacrificial feasts of Volga Finns or the great bear feasts of Ob-Ugrians, gathering great numbers of spectators from miles away, are bound to be interpreted as central and even typical of that particular religion, even though they might only have taken place with an interval of several years and might only have involved part of the population. Spectacular and exotic events within the public sphere were bound to catch the eye of the researcher and would be inter-

preted as significant and important, while women's less conspicuous, but from their point of view not necessarily less important, events could pass unnoticed and unrecorded. A woman's preparing a sacrificial porridge might not have been interpreted as a *significant* religious act since this activity could be associated by the researcher, due to his cultural background, with the humdrum of secular every day life.[6] Women's religious practices, which seem to have been intertwined with their daily chores and their nurturing roles could be seen as extension of these chores and roles, would therefore be less liable to draw the attention and interest of an ethnographer.

Since men were observed to act on behalf of the whole group at public ceremonies, they were also thought to represent women in religious matters in general. This view, of course fails to recognise the existence of ceremonies where women played an active role as well as it ignores the fact that women's religious practices, which indeed tended to be of more private nature, from which men sometimes were strictly forbidden, also served the whole community, not just women's private ends. Furthermore, women's religious activities were by no means limited to the private sphere as this division of space falsely leads us to understand.

Androcentric classification of religious functionaries

The above-mentioned idea of the gendered spheres has been so fundamental and rigid that when observed to be inconsistent with social reality, the inconsistency has not invoked redefinition of the gender of the spheres, but instead, leads to redefinition of gender characteristics and roles of the human actors who operate on the "wrong" side (cf. Svalastog 1997: 46). From this it follows that women's activities as religious or ritual functionaries in the public sphere did not call into question the common perception of the public sphere as male. Instead, women's activity within the public sphere, was accepted, but was preconditioned by a redefinition of their gender characteristics or/and their gender roles. In other words, women in public roles were treated by the community as well as the scholar as social males or 'honorary men.' It is well known that it was mostly old, postmenopausal women, who, due to their natural bodily changes stood closer the category of males, were allowed to participate in men's re-

[6] For a more detailed description of the nature of women's sacrificial feasts, see Heikkinen 1992.

ligious ceremonies and who also acquired roles as religious specialists (Vilkuna 1956: 175; Balzer 1978: 128). As Shirley Ardener has pointed out "[t]he old may do things or exhibit characteristics, or lack certain features, which by definition women do not do, or do not have, or should have. /--/ [T]hey may have lost the 'specificity' of women, and are therefore *reclassified by their 'general', man-like characteristics*." (Ardener 1993: 26, italics mine). Ardener's assertion coincides with that of Karjalainen's informant, who explained old women's extended rights to participate in the men's ceremonies as being due to their no longer doing "the doings of women." (Karjalainen 1927: 241; Balzer 1978: 129 f.). The fact that women only seem to have acquired their "civil rights" in religious matters at an old age, to use Karjalainen's term, explains why scholars might have felt themselves justified in treating female religious functionaries as exceptions.

The idea of a man as a key religious functionary has been so fundamental to scholars, who had a background in a religion where women did not possess such roles, that they did not always recognise the existing female functionaries as such. Since the scholarly classifications of religious functionaries were based on the male "normal-subject," female functionaries fell outside the narrowly defined categories or had their gender characteristics redefined in order to fit in. In Finnish research women did not quite match the scholarly idea of *tietäjä*, 'seer', since it seems that the male tietäjä-heroes in Kalevala had led to the quite common conception of *proper* tietäjä as a "bearded male". Above all, Väinämöinen has served as the model for scholarly and popular notions of tietäjä and was finally canonised by Haavio as a prototypical wiseman (Haavio 1952). A "bearded male" as a prototype made a wisewoman appear in the eyes of the scholars as a deviation from the ideal (cf. Gröndahl 1997: 44 ff.). Consequently, in an article in Kotiseutu, titled "Special people", a wiseman was depicted in positive terms as a kindred spirit (*hengenheimolainen*) of Väinämöinen, personifying the spirit of our forefathers (I. M. 1913: 6), whereas a wisewoman was deprived of her feminine attributes so that she would better fit into the class of tietäjäs. The writer implied that one Kaisa Pöyry, whom he believed had been beautiful in her youth, had become ugly, even scary in her old age because of her occupation — tietäjä "mysteries" had made her eyes to bulge and roll in her head (Tikka 1913: 5).

In cases where women's actual roles were not in agreement with the scholar's views on proper gender characteristics and gender roles, i.e. were not considered feminine enough, these roles were either ignored or played down by the scholar. In cases where a scholar had a choice he could emphasise the role that better matched his ideas and

expectations. Since the roles of singer and lamenter agreed well with the scholarly idea of femininity, i.e. with women's alleged emotionality (see Utriainen 1995; Utriainen 1998), there has been a certain tendency to foreground women in these roles, while women in their allegedly unfeminine roles as powerful, "raging" seers were left in the background. Outi Lehtipuro has noted that the contemporaries of Mateli Kuivalatar, the principal singer of Kanteletar songs, would not have recognised her in Haavio's characterisation of her as a *rosa carelica* or as the "Muse of Finland" (Haavio 1985: 136). Quite contrary to the idea of ethereal poetess, she was known in her community as a powerful wisewoman and sorceress (Lehtipuro 1968: 144; Järvinen 1980: 143). In a similar manner, Toarie Huovinen, a "strong (*vankka*) *tietäjä*", whose knowledge and power was inherited by her grandson Miina Huovinen, widely known as a great tietäjä (*suurtietäjä*), is primarily presented by the scholars in her role as the ancestress of the well-known tietäjä-family (Haavio 1985: 84; Niemi 1921: 1094 ff.).

Also other female religious functionaries were ignored by the scholars as exceptions since they did not fit in the classificatory system, which was based on the practices of male functionaries. Harva's indifference towards the Mordvinian female sacrificial leaders could be explained by him not perceiving them as *proper* sacrificial leaders. These women certainly acted as ceremonial leaders, but did not themselves slaughter the animal when such a sacrifice was to be performed, but this was done by a male assistant (Harva 1952: 367, 371). The same might be the case with female shamans. According to Czaplicka a Yurak Samoyed shamaness was debarred from offering sacrifices to the domestic gods and did not act as religious leader in ceremonies (Czaplicka 1920: 174). Since the duties of these female religious functionaries differed from the male prototype these women might not have been considered *proper* sacrificial leaders or shamans.

Redefining female functionaries

The aforementioned Western scholarly tendency towards hierarchical thinking might also have led to a one-sided focusing on the important "big guys", i.e. on the great shamans and their "successors", *tietäjä*s, *taltós*, *tunos* etc., while female religious practitioners as well as "lesser" male functionaries, were ignored in their presumed insignificance. The assumed insignificance of female functionaries comes forth for example in the tendency to treat them as an anonymous

collective. Harva constantly refers to the aforementioned Mordvinian female ceremonial leaders simply as "a woman", "a woman versed in the matter" (*muuan asiaan perehtynyt akka*), or a "couple of women". We learn first from Harva's summary on the special traits of Mordvinian sacrificial customs that these women also bore special titles, such as a "sacrificer", "adorer" (*Opferin, Anbeterin*), which would seem to imply some sort of specialist role (1952: 414 f.).

This one-sided focusing on important "big men" might also have inhibited the development of a varied and more comprehensive typology of religious functionaries. As pointed out already, the consequence of the fact that the scholarly typologies are to a great extent based on male practice, is that female functionaries would not readily fit into the "male" classes, falling either outside of the classificatory system or would get distorted if pressed into it. As a good example we could mention midwives, who performed important religious functions, but have nonetheless been left out of the scholarly classifications and accounts.

Furthermore, the scholarly emphasis on the "big guys" might also result in a hierarchic pattern being imposed even where no such pattern existed. It is fully possible that these functionaries were not always perceived by the community as being at the top of the hierarchy, but were considered more as a *primus inter pares*. This would have particularly serious consequences for studies in women's religion if we accept the somewhat controversial view that women do not define themselves within the general hierarchical system of society, but rather within their social network of weblike relations. *Supposing* that women's religion was less organised in hierachical terms, emphasising social connectedness, it would consequently not be possible to classify female functionaries in Western hierachical terms. They would simply fall outside the major scholarly pigeon-holes, where the ordering principles were authority and autonomy (cf. Ozorak 1996: 18). Seen in this non-hierachical perspective Harva's treatment of Mordvinian female ceremonial leaders as an anonymous group would be understandable, since they might not have stood out in a crowd as authoritative, autonomous leaders. This would go also for the Karelian and Russian anonymous term *babkas* for old women, who on the village level practised healing and midwifery.

I will illustrate the problem hierarchical thinking might lead us with an example from my own work. My inquiries into health care practices of some elder Russian Karelian women did not lead to a proper understanding of their health behaviour. My understanding of their choices of healers was undermined by my very inclination to view these functionaries in a Western hierarchic order. In spite of my

ambition on value-free and sympathetic frame of mind, I had difficulties in appreciating the women's choice to consult a traditional healer instead of a doctor in cases where my experience told me that biomedical expertise would have been vital for the well-being of their children. In other words, I denied the *babkas* their status as healers, since my norm for a *proper* healer was an university-trained doctor. Unlike me, these women did not see the relationship between the doctor and the traditional healer in hierarchical terms, i.e. that the doctor was superior due to his expert training in medical matters, but instead, in equal and complementary terms. These women were quite convinced, on the basis of their experience, that doctors were superior in healing some illnesses, while the "grannies" were more competent in healing some others. Also their definition of competence differed from that of ours (Keinänen 1998: 198 f.).

As some historians have argued, we should refrain from viewing medical functionaries in traditional societies in the light of modern Western criteria on specialisation and professionalism, since most health practitionaries in non-Western societies, particularly women, would fall outside the scope of a definition based on the conventional and narrow concept of profession (e.g. Pelling 1987: 99 f.; cf. Green 1989: 444 ff.). Their point is also relevant when defining religious specialists within the frame of professionalism, as we can see from Honko's attempt to determine the status of lamenter as a religious specialist. Honko defines a religious specialist as a person, 1) who has a superior command of a specific tradition and 2) who performs an important function in the religious community. Since in certain regions the "best" lamenter did not always perform, but precedence was given to a person within the family, Honko finds it questionable whether the lamenter in these cases fill the social criteria of a religious specialist (1978: 85). Family members do not fall under the definition of professionalism, which emphasises the functionary's autonomy or social distance (cf. Pelling 1987: 104). Since we would even face the same problem of definition with other female specialists, for example midwives and healers, the former in some regions also specifically chosen within the extended family, we have to reformulate the criteria so that they would better agree with the social conditions of the cultures studied. I would suggest a following definition: A religious specialist is a person who was consulted as a religious functionary in their communities, either within the extended family or outside of it (cf. Pelling 1987: 99 f.; Lindemann 1993: 177) and who possessed, not necessarily *superior* knowledge, but *sufficient* knowledge demanded by these duties. This latter qualification is necessary since it is feasible that there are several persons on the same

level of competence and that the criterion of choice was not only the *superior* command of tradition, but social qualities and relationship could weigh as much in the choice of the functionary. A wide definition also makes it possible to include Harva's women "versed in matters" in the class of religious specialists. The same would also go for the Mordvinian male practitioners whose status as sacrificial priests has been questioned, because of the low degree of institutionalisation of their practices.

Conclusions

The male "normal subject" underlying the prior religious descriptions has been constructed in two intertwining processes. Firstly, the scholar, by focusing on men's ideas and practices in the culture he has studied, has created concepts, models and a classificatory system for religious phenomena, which tends to exclude and distort the phenomena which are based on women's perhaps differing ideas and practices. Secondly, these ideas and practices have been filtered through the male scholar's frame of reference. His ethnocentrism and preconceived ideas as well as the tendency to view his object of study in hierarchical terms has coloured the phenomena studied as well as his overall religious constructs. The challenge of the gender perspective on religious studies is to deconstruct the male normal subject and to elaborate more nuanced and comprehensive models and classificatory systems which also would encompass women's religious ideas and practices.

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ERIKA MEYER-DIETRICH

Ecology of Religion

A Hermeneutical Model

The aim of this paper is to present the outline of a new hermeneutical model in ecology of religion. The researcher who first offered an approach called Ecology of Religion to the investigation of the relationship between the natural surroundings and the expression of religion in that same environment was the Swedish ethnologist and historian of religions Åke Hultkrantz. The increase of research on ecology in several disciplines during the last decade is enormous. The problems of our planet's pollution may play a part in this development. Not only did they raise the awareness of these problems but also eventually supported insight into the dependency and interrelation between phenomena and their contextual framework and by this turned the perspective from isolated entities to interactions within a system.

The Hermeneutical Triangle

The Hermeneutical Triangle (see fig. 1), which Valerie DeMarinis uses in her hermeneutical approach to critical caring, applied psychology and psychology of religion (DeMarinis 1993), provides an excellent basis for the fundamental questions which must be answered in order to ground the theoretical model for the ecology of religion.

The insight that world view and truth claims are operating in theoretical formulations shows the necessity for the basic sector in the hermeneutical triangle. Because this bottom layer directs our theoretical choices we can hope for coherence in theory only after having come to terms with the nature of beings and entities, and their processes of dialogue and interaction. The hermeneutical foundation shapes the frame for the questions we are going to ask in the approach and the interpretation of their answers likewise. Only after having grounded our assumptions on research in a realistic context, can we strive for a theory that will work. No researcher can escape her or his cultural context, but hopefully may increase awareness.

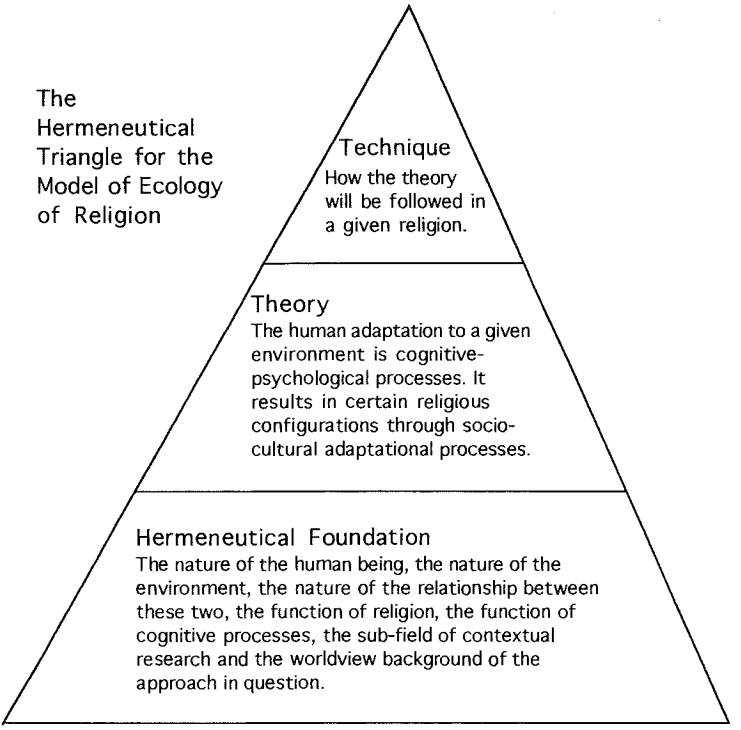

Fig.1

Within the discipline science of religious studies several areas have developed over the last decades, such as the sociology of religion or the psychology of religion, and have established themselves as fields in their own rights. Our field, the history of religions, is not among these newcomers. It is traditionally dominated by historical and comparative research. Beside these two a third subfield, that of contextual research, is more and more observed. It is a subfield that profits from the results and methods of investigation in other disciplines, e.g., anthropology, ethnology, geology, and, especially in our approach, from cognitive psychology, linguistics and ecology. Cognition and adaptation are two keywords which we need in order to orient us regarding the relationship between context and religion. A cognitive psychological perspective as a broad explanatory category will be followed in the investigation. Religion as lived by human beings is the focal point. This involves several questions. We have to investigate the function of religion, the nature of the environment, and the nature of the human being. We have to ask: what is the nature of the relationship which connects people to their world?

After having prepared the broad hermeneutical foundation, we shall be ready to enter the second sector of the hermeneutical triangle and create a model of the ecology of religion. The theory aims to understand human adaptational processes to a given environment as conditions for spiritual survival which can take form in religion.

Here the term "ecology of religion" serves as an umbrella to unify different methodological tools which are needed. As the term ecology implies, what is at issue is the impact of the environment on religion investigated through the interrelation between living organisms and their environment. From the fact that the subfield is defined as contextual research, it follows that the environment is principally a non-religious context.

The model consists of two sectors. One is the material condition of the environment which forms the cultural core as reality that is coped with through religion. By taking over Julian H. Steward's method from cultural anthropology and making it suitable for religion, Åke Hultkrantz (Hultkrantz 1966; Hultkrantz 1987) created his ecology of religion. This was thought as a complementary perspective to already existing diachronic methods within the history of religions. The advantage of Hultkrantz' ecological model is that he follows Steward in his basic assumption that adaptational processes are creative processes, and that he extricates the synchronical features from a given religion. Hultkrantz' ecological approach is partial. The ecological factor is only one possible cause of change and adaptation, beside historical influences and cultural diffusion. What Lauri Honko rightly observes is that the analysis proceeds from the material foundations of society and not from the world view of the individual (Honko 1985: 59). What belongs to the religious core is not so much a matter of choice but one of priority. One could call it with Svein Bjerke "the religious aspect of the cultural core" (Bjerke 1979: 239). This will remain the sociocultural part in our model.

The sociocultural aspects are slightly modified but most of all complemented by the other sector in our theory, which is the cognitive-psychological part. This deals with the embodiment of the environment, which leads to cognitive processes, that is, categorization and ritualization. These serve as resources to create our illusionistic world, that is in our context, religion. The term "illusionistic world" has been taken over from Paul W. Pruyser. He coined it for the "third world" which in this context lies between the inner world of our fantasies and the outer world of external things:

> The third world I am trying to define is the world of culture, i.e., the psychic and social "space" reigned by ideas that man lives by

> in his search for meanings. To set this world off from the other two, it can be described as the *illusionistic world,* for the symbolic entities germane to this world are properly definable as illusions. (...) Illusion includes mystery: since it is beyond the merely subjective and the merely objective, it has a special object relationship endowed with many surplus values about whose legitimacy one cannot bicker in terms derived from either the subjective or the objective (Malony and Spilka 1991: 166)

Although the term "illusionistic" is problematic in association with religion, it is adequate for the world to which symbols and imaginative and creative forces belong. Illusion grows out of imagination and has nothing in common with hallucination. Moreover, it is sketched by Pruyser as space between autistic dreaming and realistic working where people can engage in symbolic actions, shared with and supported by others. The term "illusionistic" depicts the qualities of this area as a world which is created by cognition and, once we have made the effort to free the word from its slightly negative overtones, the term will work well within our cognitive-orientated research.

The top of the hermeneutical triangle is occupied by technique, that is, the application and interpretation of our theoretical model for a given religion in a given environment.

Hermeneutical Foundation

Frame of reference for the approach

Our approach is placed within the field of history of religion. It is best understood as the subfield for contextual research. Although the environment is seen as a concrete physical entity, the research aims at an adaptation to this same environment which will turn it into a religious perceived one, that we usually call creation. This follows the principle of contextual research as Jacques Waardenburg outlined it. He characterizes this type of research through its main task, that is, to exemplify empirical coherence between religious forms and their context[1]. In contrast to investigations of social and historical contexts, which so far dominate the field, it is the context of the natural

[1] Waardenburg 1986: 145 "...der kontextuellen Forschung geht es ganz besonders darum, konkrete nachweisbare Zusammenhänge zwischen einer religiösen Gestaltung und dem Kontext, in dem diese auftritt, aufzuzeigen und nach Möglichkeit Erklärungen für diese Gestaltung zu liefern."

environment that is studied here. To this fact the approach owes its title and is therefore called the Ecology of Religion.

Historically the term ecology grew out of the discipline of biology. Ecology, a term introduced by Ernst Haeckel (1834–1919) to signify the relationship between biological organisms and their environment, was employed by this Darwinist for adaptational processes. From this follows that we can find that scientific literature on ecology still reduces every organism, the human being included, to a biological entity, both as an individual or a social body as is the case in Roy A. Rappaport's *Pigs for the Ancestors* (Rappaport 1968), and, that evolutionistic ideas still play a part in so far as they ascribe the main influence in adaptational processes to the environment as observable in Åke Hultkrantz' ecology (Hultkrantz 1966).

We do not agree with the world view that allows the use of the term ecology in Darwinism and Evolutionism. Adaptational processes of the human being are not identical with such processes in the domain of other biological organisms. That would mean to treat the cultural dimension of existence as if it had emerged through a series of events in the phylogenetic history of the human species. Neither can we support a world view which neglects the activity of the human being in cultural processes. Thus focusing on the result, that is, cultural achievements as if they had a life of their own, leaves the actor out and by this the empirical root of culture as something that is lived. Studying mutual relations and circular processes we have to observe the organisms themselves which share in the interaction, instead of making them a silent prerequisite. Therefore it is necessary to introduce the human beings themselves in the model.

The orientation for ecology of religion, as represented here, is the investigation of the direct interrelation of the human being, actor in all cultural processes, with the natural environment. If it were our intention to reduce human nature to a biological organism, then we could place our approach in the field of biology. But, because it is our intention to show that the human being by nature is essentially one that lives a religion and is enabled to do so through cognitive processes, it is cognitive psychology that offers the orientation for our research.

The nature of the environment

Because human beings are born into a given environment they exist in it and are surrounded by it in all directions, both vertical and horizontal. In our approach environment means the natural surroundings, topography, biotope, climate, natural phenomena and natural

resources in an area that people can interact with. But the environment is not identical with the physical world. Environment is something human beings relate to and it becomes their world first through this relationship. It is a world-as-interacted-with. This outer world comes into existence the very moment one is aware of oneself as an individual body. The properties which are relevant to the building of cognitive schemata are the interactional properties which derive from the classifier's interaction with the category. Likewise, in the ritual process it is the social body which creates the ritual space.

The environment as an entity is indivisible and continuous. It is essential for our approach to regard the environment as a whole in which the human being is integrated. The paradox we have to live with is that human beings are already occupying a place in an outer world while they are looking for a place in it in order to cope with this outer reality.

The environment is a unity highlighted rather than structured by the immediate situation which is identical with our point of view at that moment. We can compare it to the different views seen from a valley as compared with them from the hilltop. The landscape remains the same but our views have been very different. The unity is structured by complementary fields analog to the patches in a picture where every patch gets its significance through the surrounding composition. On the level of language it is expressed in James F. Weiner's words:

> The conventional status of any form of discourse is not ... a function of its role in underpinning or expressing a conceptual system, but is situationally determined only in relation to all other forms of discourse (Weiner 1994: 595)

The nature of the interrelation

The world around us is a unity which becomes structured by cognition. It is experienced as a picture in which nothing is isolated, but structured in a way that allows for complementary interrelation. Complementary means difference but not opposition. The interrelation between things does not need to be antagonistic. Compared to other world views, like the one which underlies Structuralism, the relationship between parts of the world is not the one of binary oppositional pairs. Rather, the relationship is an organic one in which each part accomplishes the organism. Human beings are part of this organism because of being situated *within* the environment.

This basic setting provides the circumstances for the interaction between people and their environment. What is at man's disposal to relate to the world around? It is the body.

The body follows the same principle of holistic interpretation as the environment does. It is seen as a unity that is indivisible although it can be viewed from different angles and, of course, different functions or parts of it can be highlighted. The human being does not *have* a body but *is* a body. In our investigation several aspects of the body will be emphasized while having in mind the concept of the body as unity.

Embodiment is an act of integration of experience. The fact that all processes by which the human being acts — as part of his world — are located in the body, makes the body an incarnation of our experiences. The processes through which human beings become aware of their environment are cognitive. Cognition is an act of knowing. Embodied image schemata form the elements by which understanding is built up in the conceptual system. Mark Johnson uses image schemata for an embodied, relative simple structure of spatio-temporal experience. This internal structure of image schemata is a Gestalt structure. That means they are coherent meaningful unities in our cognition which connect many different aspects of our experience. As Gestalt structure they are irreducible and as such constrain the way in which the schema organizes meaning. But as schemata they are malleable, too. It is a recurring, dynamic pattern of our perceptual interactions and motor programs that gives coherence and structure to our experience (Johnson 1987: 3). Because our bodies are very much alike we can assume commonly shared Gestalt structures for most of our physical interactions within our environment.

Johnson mentions bodily movement, manipulation of objects, and perceptual interactions as examples for embodiment. All three of these experiential processes are rooted in the body's position, viz. our upright position on two legs which enables us free hands to handle objects and a certain eye-level. Johnson's list of the most common image schemata shows this clearly. E.g.: as a being in an upright position we employ balance with reference to a vertical axis. Our panoramic view makes us the center of a world which radiates from our bodies. We are the starting point in a path schema etc. All human spatial-temporal experience is relative to the human being's size as old measurements e.g.: foot, a man's height, etc. show.

All human interactions with the environment like moving, manipulating objects, and eating are basic, they are natural kinds of experience because they are products of the human nature (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 177). The body orders and organizes the environment

which is experienced into a world that can be identified. Categorization as Mark Johnson and George Lakoff (Johnson 1987; Lakoff 1990; Lakoff and Johnson 1980) have represented it and ritualization in Catherine Bell's (Bell 1992) understanding of the term are processes not only to take the outside in. They, too, are instruments to connect these experiences within the body to use them in further structuring and identification of the outside.

Through its physical movements the body gives structure to the environment, giving way for understanding through ritualization. Ritual is a kind of activity in its own right. Central to it is the body which has its own way of knowing and functioning. The body as a social person is emphasized in aspects which constitute the human being as someone in whom the primacy of the body is responsible for categorization, in whom the body is the place for the social construction of reality, and in whom the body is the center for a person's lived experience. The logic of ritualization is embodied in physical movements of a body which is always conditioned by a certain context. This context is the structured and structuring environment. Bell is stressing this situational quality of ritual because it is crucial for her understanding of ritualization as a mutual interaction of the ritual body and the environment.

She asks first in what way does ritual distinguish itself from other practices. To answer this question she elaborates four characteristics of human activity. Firstly, human activity is always situational, that means the frame of reference is the specific context where it occurs. Secondly, it is strategic, as a real activity in time, it is a practical performance of effective schemata. Thirdly, human activity is embedded in a misrecognition of what it is in fact doing, that is, the intentional strategy of an action is dominating the material performance and is that what is seen by the participants. And fourth, the motivation, which is integral to the context of action, is able to reconfigure a vision of the order of power in the world. Ritualization might be denoted as the very activity which brings people into contact with those forces they believe to be real. Ritualization distinguishes itself from other practices because it is for people a practical way of becoming aware and of dealing with some specific circumstances. The important actors in this process are the social body, which generates the environment as a ritual space and the environment which, so structured, molds the body into a ritual one:

> By virtue of this circularity, space and time are redefined through the physical movements of bodies projecting organizing schemes on the space-time environment on the one hand while reabsorb-

> ing these schemes as the nature of reality on the other (Bell 1992: 99).

Bell describes the process of interaction between the social body and the environment analogous to Bourdieu's idea of this dialectical relationship:

> It is in the dialectical relationship between the body and a space structured according to mythico-ritual oppositions, that one finds the form par excellence of the structural apprenticeship which leads to the em-bodying of the structures of the world, that is, the appropriating by the world of a body thus enabled to appropriate the world (Bell 1992: 98)

This molded body is equipped with a "sense of ritual", an internalized practical knowing for the way in which things are done in a specific cultural context, a know-how that produces ritualized social agents, in which schemata for nonritualized situations, to render them more coherent with the values of the ritualizing schemata are embedded. This chain reaction, called by Bell "ritual mastery" makes ritualization an activity which involves the entire person and this person's whole environment.

To investigate the relation between environment and body is to look for bodily actions which take up dominant structures in the environment to use them in order to relate to it. Concepts which are built on spatio-temporal experience are a means of communication through speech actions. Rituals which employ structures from the environment are a means of communication through bodily performed actions.

Adaptation

Ecology of religion focuses on the human actor as a religious person. To understand the form that a religion takes in a given natural environment it is necessary to study the interrelation of body and environment. It is equally important to regard the human being as an actor who wants to survive under given environmental conditions.

For our approach the function of the human-environment-relationship is regarded as adaptation. Human operations which are exercised in order to survive can be denoted as adaptational processes. Adaptation is as much assimilation as adjustment. It starts with the embodiment of structures and schemata which are dominant in a given environment. In opposition to Darwinism, adaptability is not something given which, being either successful or doomed to failure, results in the selection of the successors as survivors. In

ecology of religion adaptability is *created* through the interaction of the body with the environment. Through embodiment and its associated operations, that is, ritualization, categorization, and the creation of the illusionistic world, the human being becomes adapted to the environmental macro-organism. That turns cognition itself into an adaptational operation.

This kind of relationship is in line with complementary interrelations in two respects. In the first place, because the processes involved are circular, it is through reformulation that they are creating adaptability in the human being. Secondly, because the environment and the human actor are an inseparable pair, they complement each other. It is the world as an entity and the adaptability of the body that provide the opportunity for human adaptational operations. They enable the human being to maintain a complementary interrelation, the kind of relationship that nurtures the ontology underlying our approach. Adaptation will be understood as strategy to keep this complementary relation between micro- and macro-organism intact.

To summarize: So far we can point to a world view which underlies our approach, that is, the world is viewed as a whole, consisting of complementary parts which are characterized by their relations. The human being is included in the macro-organism and equally related to it in a complementary manner. Adaptability is created through this relationship by embodiment of the environment and associated cognitive processes. The relationship is characterized by the centrality of the body.

Adaptational operations are regarded as those that are performed to secure material and spiritual survival. By material survival we think of all needs to physically uphold our body, like shelter and food. Spiritual survival includes all operations that support the sense for life in a non-materialistic way. The latter need not necessarily take the form of a socially shared religion although in our approach we are investigating this collective form. Spiritual survival means to turn the physical orientation in the environment into an immaterial one.

The natural environment serves in human adaptation as medium for spatial-temporal experience, as material circumstance that allows for certain kinds of production or sustenance activities, and as physical display that lays out its forms, objects and phenomena ready for people's symbolic perception.

Adaptational strategies are equally employed on the spiritual and the material level. Ecology of religion focuses on spiritual adaptation. The human cognitive-psychological processes are viewed as strategies for a person's spiritual survival and are indispensable to describe adaptational operations of the human being. The human dependency

on material needs gives rise to sociocultural adaptation, which is viewed as a strategy for people's spiritual survival, too. The latter is necessary to understand adaptational processes that result in certain religious configurations.

Religion

Our concern is religion as it is lived by human beings in a given environment. These three components together form an associative structure. Religion is viewed as a condition for spiritual survival of human beings who are participating in a common environment. To fill this function religion must be responsible for the world view through which people can find and maintain their place in the world. That religion accounts for a peoples' identity and ethnocentrism is a consequence of this function.

Spiritual adaptation to the natural environment as function of religion is a perspective we are not familiar with, although the definition of religion as a world view, through which people can find and maintain their *place* in the world, implies the question after the impact of the physical world on the religious one, too. It is the experience of the environment in combination with the material and the spiritual needs and their symbolism that is responsible for the forms by which religious contents are lived and communicated. In other words, environment is one of the factors that is responsible for what a religion looks like.

The nature of the human being

How do we understand the human nature in the world which we have described? Until now, we have taken up the relationship and its different aspects, being complementary, bodily, and adaptational, that bind human beings to their world. We have touched on the issue of making sense of the environment people find themselves in. Further, we have introduced the paradox that people, already existing in a given habitat, have to anchor their existence in the world, that is, to find a place and root themselves in it. This essential matter of survival is what we call religion. It is an expression of life. It is the human nature to be religious.

Central to the human nature is the body that enables people to be connected sensitively, physically, and cognitively to their environment. This connection is responsible for the human awareness of being in the world, which is central to human nature in our ontology and for our approach. This being *in* the world is constantly recurring at all levels of human relations between people and their environ-

ment: They view the world in pictures, very often even appearing as part of it. Through embodiment the experienced structures of the environment become their own basic structures in acting and in reasoning. Human beings relate their identity to this spatial and temporal unity and last but not least they refer emotionally to their world as a whole.

In order to live, this experienced outer reality must become a matter for the religious person. The world must be turned into a personal world for the believer. The autistic world is the inner force to carry out this transformation from a realistic into an illusionistic, that is, religious world. What Pruyser named the "autistic world" is constituted by the psychical inner forces, e.g.: fantasy, free associations, and ineffable images, that lie within the human nature in a somewhat raw, untamed condition. When these forces struggle with reality a third psychological realm is put forward in order to cope with reality while maintaining the person. Cognitive processes, that is categorization and ritualization, are the adaptive operations by which the autistic human being creates the illusionistic world in which symbolic and social action are possible. It is the world of culture that human beings need as condition for spiritual survival. It is the world they live in. By this, the non-religious context is given the status of a theoretical assumption as a world in which religion is possible, though not-yet realized by human interaction. The experience of being rooted in the world, or, in our words to be a complementary part in a meaningful whole, is not given once for ever but an ongoing process where making sense of the world is continually adjusted to the environment. To maintain spiritually a place in the world involves operations on two levels. The human being has to secure it both by strengthening the illusionistic world and by a practical, lived way through the realization of religious concepts and the performance of rituals.

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ABDELRHANI MOUNDIB

How to Study Religion in the Muslim World

Reflection on a Field Work Experience in the Middle of Morroco

From their very beginning up to now, the anthropological and sociological approaches to religion have disclosed two characteristics that may be pointed to as *sensitivity* and *complexity*.

Concerning the first characteristic, we notice that the anthropological and sociological study of religion was and still is creating a great deal of excitement and protest among religious people, especially those who are orthodox. the appearance of the anthropological approach to religion is a good case in point. When the pioneer anthropological studies appeared in the western culture, they were dismissed as studies of superstition which are farther afield from the advanced western religion, morality and civilization. That these studies have been considered as such has in itself contributed to making them objective and impartial analyses. In this vein, "one could ask searching questions about the historicity of myth among Polynesians; when asked in relation to Christianity, these same questions were, until quite recently, deeply threatening" (Geertz 1968: 398). The history of religious anthropology has recorded many victims of *sensitivity*, as an example we may refer to the case of the prominent Robertson Smith whose study of the ancient Sumerians resulted in his expulsion from Oxford University under the charge of atheism and heresy.

As for the second characteristic, *complexity,* it is concerned with the elusive nature of religion. The latter is a dimension that cannot be measured as easily as economic change. While theological and philosophical studies are concerned with religion relying upon contemplating religious texts, anthropological and sociological studies are concerned with religion as a reality relying upon how it exists in everyday life. That is why it is very difficult to delimit its boundaries. Religion is spread all over and combined with evrything. The question, as Geertz maintains, is not to define religion but to find it (Geertz 1971: 1). If religion is restricted to particular institutions in western

societies on account of their laic historical experience, it seems to be predominant in the majority of Islamic societies to the extent that it becomes difficult to distinguish between what belongs to Allah and what to Caesar. And this is due to the particularity of each Islamic society and to the specificity of its historical experience.

1. Tell Me How You Conduct Your Research, I Will Tell You What You Will Come up with.

Recently, sociologists and anthropologists have started avoiding methodological debates to the extent that most of them keep silent about the theoretical perspective that underpins/orientates their studies. Their silence now extends to include fieldwork with all its techniques and the difficulties it encounters — from the interviewer/interviewee relationship to data collection and categorization. It appears that their silence is due to their underestimation of the importance of fieldwork in determining the credibility of the study. But this is not true since fieldwork is fundamental to sociological analysis. Also it appears that this silence is due to the researcher's conceiving of fieldwork as his own private *cuisine* where no body else can trespass. Anyhow, the pretexts of this silence are not convincing at all, especially if we take into account the difficulties and risks which characterize fieldwork, let alone a fieldwork about a sensitive, elusive issue such as religion.

It is a common platitude among researchers that methodology plays an essential role in determining the importance and credibility of any study. The debate on methodology has taken a long time and considerable space in sociological and anthropological theorizing till it has approximately stopped with the end of the epoch of general theories, which has been substituted by the new epoch of the sectorial ones. This culminates in the emergence of what may be called eclectic methods. They are eclectic in the sense that they are a combination of diverse methodological constituents which belong to different theories. For example, the study of religion in the light of these eclectic methods no longer differs about whether to use the historical background information and analyze the social structures but vary only about how to make use of them.

My proposition in this paper is that there are some specific fieldwork techniques the researcher be it a foreigner or a native has to implement if s/he wants to overcome the difficulties and risks of field research which are associated with the status of religion, the area under investigation, in Islamic societies such as the Moroccan soci-

ety, for instance. This proposition is based on my fieldwork experience which can be summed up in three particular experiences. First experience: studying the role and status of saint shrines in Doukkala[1], Morocco. Second experience: studying Islamic books and their readers in the middle of Morocco. Third experience (a doctoral dissertation in progress): studying popular religiosity of the Moroccans in Doukkala. It is also based on other foreign researchers' fieldwork experiences in Morocco such as Eickelman's and others (Eickelman 1976; Eickelman 1981; Eickelman 1985; Rabinow 1977).

2. *Tell Me How You Introduce the "Version" of Your Research, I Will Tell You How Your Informant's Reply Will Be.*

The relationship between the researcher and the informant may be regarded as very complex, especially in communities where the degree of illiteracy is very high and where social sciences are newly established. Such communities exist in the Muslim World, communities like the Moroccan society where people, especially in the rural and remote regions, find it difficult to distinguish between the social researcher and the man of authority. They have been accustomed for a long time to see authority as the only apparatus which has the right to investigate in people's life affairs. Official investigators have always been doing censuses for the sake of tax-collection, an activity which has made people alert to any interviewer as well as reticent about their properties and belongings, choosing suitable answers for the occasion.

Also, these people do not apprehend the meaning and purport of academic research which has nothing to do with the authorities because such people do not have any idea about the majority of institutions that exist in their society and about their various functions. For these aforementioned reasons, it becomes a must for the sociologist/anthropologist to formulate a *version*/manner through which he introduces himself and what he does to his informant, a *version* that responds to the understanding of his informant and that is based on the researcher's pre-knowledge of his informant's mother tongue and his way of thought.

The necessity of formulating a *version* of dealing with one's informants becomes more impending while investigating a sensitive issue like religion which is very predominant in Islamic societies. Religion in such societies is a sacred topic of conversation to the extent that both researchers and informants are reluctant to talk about it, espe-

[1] Doukkala is a rural region in the middle of Morocco.

cially if the researcher is a foreigner ("nasrani"/ Christian)[2] who does not belong to Islam. This creates a double psychological barrier which first prevents people from talking about beliefs and customs they have been used to practicing more than talking about, and which secondly prevents them from talking to a stranger who neither believes nor practices their religion. Still, one of these so — called "nasara" has succeeded in formulating a *version* to deal with his informants in Morocco. Furthermore, he has established initial rapports with people built on mutual respect despite his difference from them in accent, colour and race, rapports which have lasted from the sixties up to the present time.[3]

3. Tell Me Where You conduct your research, I Will Tell You How You make your sampling.

One of the most prominent characteristics of sociological/anthropological research in religion is its study of religion in reality,

that is religion as it is conceived of and practiced in daily life. This study is based on the detection and analysis of the religious conceptions that determine people's existence. Max Weber has put it clearer when he says that it is impossible to understand individuals and communities alike if you do not understand their religious conceptions which are part of their cosmic conceptions of the world (Aron 1967: 530–99). Not only their religious conceptions the researcher has to investigate but also their religious practices which embody their conceptions and make them deep-rooted in reality (I use the word practices instead of rituals because the former is more comprehensive).

Therefore, the collection of these religious conceptions and practices necessitates direct contact with the informant. Also, the inclusive aspect of religion necessitates that the research sample should be open including all sex and age groups from all walks of life. But data collection about the religious conceptions and practices in Islamic societies such as the Moroccan society (especially the rural region and poor slums in cities) presupposes particular preparations (these preparations will be tackled later on) that take into account the nature of the relations between the different sex and age groups and to what extent the nature of these relations influences these groups' religious conceptions.

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[2] The word "nasran" is used by Moroccans to refer to any foreign white skin.

[3] I was present in a meeting that Dale F. Eickelman had with his ex-informants in Rabat, Morocco.

For instance, if we take the sample group of old-age people, we realize that they still preserve some religious beliefs which have become extinct or, at the very least, have undergone considerable change. I will take the example of my recent experience in fieldwork research when I was collecting data for my Ph.D. dissertation which is in progress. I found that there are forms of belief in *jinn* which have disappeared for a long time but have survived in the old peopel's mind. They still believe in what is termed in Moroccan dialect as "txraj" (apparition). This is a belief in the fact that *jinns* haunt remote and unpeopled places. These *jinns* usually appear at night and chase passers-by. *Jinns* are usually described as strange or animal-like apparitions. What we deduce from this example is that it is necessary to have a glance at this category of old people among one's sample groups. Why? It enables the researcher to detect the changes and the transformations that have occurred in the society's forms of belief. Beliefs change, but believers are not necessarily aware of the change. (Geertz 1971). Old people are the time-marker of change. Thanks to them the researcher has access to the ancient religious beliefs which exist no more. Still, the researcher does not have to focus only on this category of people while investigating the present modes of belief, otherwise this will jeopardize the external validity of his research. A research based on the old-age sample group will be investigating the past rather than the present.

Also, we do not have to give much attention to the sample group of young bachelors/single people in our study of religion in such a society like the Moroccan one. From my fieldwork experience with male bachelors in Doukkala, Morocco, I have realized that the bachelor does not enter the world of sex, the world of the sacred and the world of responsibility until he gets married. As a single person, he is not part of the decision-making community, and his opinions are worthless. In this sense, he is less involved in the social values in general and in the religious values in particular. As for the female groups, there is a considerable difficulty in dealing with them, especially in rural regions. It is prohibited for a stranger there to have a face-to-face conversation with a female, especially with the young ones whether they are married or unmarried. In such cases, the male investigators have to use trained female interviewers to have access to women's religious beliefs and practices which are commonly described as sorcery and witchcraft while they are basically religious.

So far, we notice that the focus in the study of religion should be oriented towards a different group of people, a category that may be termed "the intermediate group". In the Moroccan society, this sample group is that of young married fathers whose age vary between

25 and 50 years old[4]. This group seems to bear the religious beliefs in their modern forms for a number of decades.

3. Tell Me to What Extent You Use The Technique of Participant Observation, I Will Tell You How You Will Recognize the Strategies of the Interviewer.

Participant observation is regarded as the most operative technique in the study of religion, especially in societies where religious beliefs are interwoven in the very structure of people's consciousness and daily interaction, and where the degree of illiteracy is very high (here I refer to the example of the Moroccan society). Participant observation fills in the gaps left by the elaborate and open interviews that one does with his informants. As for the questionnaire and short interviews (entretiens), there is no use for them in societies where the oral aspect of culture is very predominant.[5]

While collecting data on religious practices, the researcher has to observe these practices in reality. The description of these practices by his informants is not enough. Because of their limited awareness/recognition, they cannot follow the ritual scenes in their chronological order. They rather speak about various ritual flashes they have remembered hither and thither. The informants' language cannot convey all the details of rituals and religious practices.

Therefore, the researcher has to rely on his external focalization to describe the ritual, using the informants' background information as an ethnographic data to back up his participant observation findings.

As for the collection of data on religious conceptions, it appears to be very difficult. Usually the informant does not have the ability to recognize things in their abstract form of existence. From my fieldwork experience in one of the Moroccan rural regions, I have been confronted with informants who cannot convey their conception of Allah. Their recognition of existence does not allow them to do that. In this case the researcher's task is to piece up the conception of Allah from the informants' details which are scattered hither and thither. As an example, the meaning of Allah as a great power may be determined from the informants conceptions of how Allah interferes in the world's events. Allah interferes to recompense the devout

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[4] In the Moroccan society, marriage is related to procreation. The cases where the couple decide not to procreate are very rare. Researchers determine the rate of birth - giving age for women between 16 and 49.

[5] The official census in Morocco determines the percentage of illiteracy at 67%. Also, what enhances this fact is the use of colors in voting.

believer, to test the faith of the believer in resisting the calamities that befall him. Also he interferes to punish the sinner who disobeys his orders. By collecting these details, the researcher can piece together an image of the meaning of Allah as it exists in the informant's mind, not as they express it in language. In short, the task of sociology in general, and religious sociology in particular, is to reconstruct the life experience with all its dimensions, an experience marked by ambiguity and confusion.

The use of participant observation to its largest extent enables the researcher to recognize some strategies that the informant uses in order to overcome the difficulties that result from the researcher's specific questions about topics that our current traditions prohibit us to speak about (Rabinow 1977: 132). Here, I will be contented with citing two of these strategies: The first one is what may be termed "attribution", the second is "overt lying". For the first strategy, the interviewee use the third-person mode to attribute his account of some practices to other particular people; he also uses expressions such as: there are people I know who do that / I know Mr so and so, he uses to do so and so or, he has told me about people he knows doing so and so. The informant resorts to this strategy to avoid the embarrassing questions he may be asked about things related to his intimate world such as the world of sexuality, religion or politics. Not wanting to involve himself, he uses the third-person pronoun. This, in fact, is but an impersonal version of speaking about one self. Once the researcher recognizes this fact he adopts the same strategy in asking questions to put his informant at ease.

As for the second strategy used by the informant — "overt lying" —, it is adopted in cases where the informant is reluctant to confirm his resort to some sort of behavior (such as the practice of witchcraft) despite the fact that everyone knows about it. When the informant practices something which is normatively disallowed, the researcher has to be content with learning about this fact, and not go on plaguing the informant with harassing questions that may mar the whole interview.

To learn about these practices and sorts of behavior, the researcher has to discover the general logic that governs his informant's behavior and way of thought. To discover this logic, he has to use participant observation to its largest extent.

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In this modest paper, I have attempted to explain the difficulties of fieldwork research in the sociological/anthropological study of religious beliefs and practices in Moroccan society — or, perhaps, in other

Islamic societies. These difficulties may be summed up in the misunderstanding that results from hastiness and reduction.

I have given some alternatives to avoid these difficulties such as the researcher's version of introducing himself to his informants, the way he chooses his sample, and how he should understand his interviewee's strategies when asked sensitive and embarrassing questions.

My purpose has been to participate, though modestly in this discussion about the methodology of studying religion within the field of sociology/anthropology. Also I have intended to point to the importance of fieldwork experience in social sciences. It is high time that we have to expose our *cuisine* to the outside world. Silence about fieldwork experiences means that we will keep repeating the same mistakes, which jeopardizes the progress of the sociological work.

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BRITT-MARI NÄSSTRÖM

Fragments of the Past

How to Study Old Norse Religion

The Source Problem

The state of the sources of the Old Norse religions presents a great problem. Most of them were written down two hundred or even three hundred years after the Christianization of the North, based on an oral tradition going back to the pre-Christian ages. This situation has led to an intense discussion about the Christian influence or even interpolations in the text or what are genuine proofs of Old Norse religion. The discussions apply to nearly every single line in the source material.

Certain motifs seem to originate in a common Indo-European tradition, whereas others leave us in the dark or allude to medieval traditions. The hypotheses about special myths in the texts oscillate noticeably between a view of these as sacred expressions of faith and seeing them as Christian mockery of pagan beliefs. The scholars in the field have for example different attitudes about the works of Snorri Sturluson. Eugene Mogk suggested that they were products of literary novels by Snorri himself; Hans Kuhn saw them as a collection of examples of syncretism; Walter Baetke regarded them as a zealous Christian effort to interpret the myths with reference to Paul's Epistle to the Romans, 1:18–23. It is stated in this passage, that the Almighty God appeared to all mankind in the creation, but after that some of them declined into paganism (Lindow 1985: 38).

Three different points of view

The scholars are divided in three main groups considering the question of the sources and how to value them. There are the deniers, or, perhaps, the very skeptical who take a skeptical, even hypercritical attitude to the study of old Norse religion. This school began with

Sophus Bugge in the end of the 19th century, noticing close parallels between the drama of Jesus Christ suffering on the cross and Odin hanging from a tree in the poem *Hávamál*. He claimed that there must have been an influence of some prevalent Christian topics, which had been transformed into a Nordic context. In the similar way the death of Balder and the mourning of his mother Frigg were similar correspondences (Bugge 1889: 291 ff.).

This school still believes that the notices about the pagan gods, made by Snorri Sturlason and other, anonymous authors, were a compound of stories, mainly emerging of the Old and New Testament. Even rites, such as Snorri's description of the sacrifice at Hlade, have been regarded as a recital of Israelite sacrifice in the Old Testament. They maintain that Snorri Sturlason as a Christian, had no idea of the Old Norse sacrificial ritual, but had copied the only ceremonies he was familiar with, i.e. the sprinkling of holy water and the narrative about the reddening of the door-post in the Old Testament by the victim's blood. Neither sprinkling nor smearing of blood has been an exclusively Christian rite in the history of religions, so there are no reasons to presume that such sacrifices never occurred in Old Norse Religion (Düwel 1985: 36 ff.).

The most extreme part of this school still claims that most of the Old Norse myths are free fantasies, composed by skilled Icelandic historians inspired by the account of Adam of Bremen about the sacrifices at the temple of Uppsala. As Adam never visited Sweden, it is easy to prove that the evidences of a pre-Christian pantheon are untrue, they say, neglecting that he got information from the Danish king, Sven Estridsøn, who had been visiting Uppsala for seven years. We may consider his notes about the golden temple and the many male human victims hanging from the trees as utterly incredible without denying his veracity in other descriptions.

The source material is sometimes regarded as being so fragile that the only way of dealing satisfactorily with this problem is to look upon the stories solely as literary phenomena recalling earlier myths and rites. Such a method is used by Margaret Clunies Ross in her recent book with the striking title "Prolonged echoes". She thus reduces the religion to literary expression, without discussing whether its rites ever took place (Clunies Ross 1994: passim).

The other point of view, prevalent among historians of religions took the opposite position, which meant that they believed every single word in the written sources as genuine proof of pre-Christian belief. One quotation such as "the winds of the raw heathen ages howl in the family sagas" illustrates the uncritical, sometimes even

naïve, attitude of these scholars, who received much contempt and mockery from the denying school.

It goes without saying that the third method must be a critical observation of the source problem, with regard to the influences of Christian and Classical sources while at the same time presupposing a pre-Christian religion in Old Scandinavia. This way is the hard way, between uncritical belief in every source and the hypercritical crushing mill, invalidating everything.

It is true that any attempt wholly to reconstruct the Old Norse religion must fail, but this is not so much due to the lack of sources as to the fact that we are never able to arrive at total insight into, and complete empathy with any religion from ancient times, no matter how many sources we have available. It has never been the task of a historian of religion to effect such a reconstruction, but to pay attention to perceptions and motifs which were important to those who practiced particular religions and then to place them in a social context.

A polytheistic pantheon

It must also be emphasized that the Old Norse religion did not consist of a monolithic or exclusive faith like — for example — Christianity and Islam. It was a polytheistic system, where many gods were worshipped, although the individual preferred to venerate one or a couple of them. As time went by, different gods and goddesses seem to have been worshipped under different names in different regions, like for instance Freyja, whose name in the eastern parts of Scandinavia was Fröja and western Freyja. Frigg who in Snorri's mythological system became another goddess, seems to have been venerated in the western parts as far as the place names tell us and she has also given her name to sites in Great Britain (Näsström 1995: 109).

Considering the study of myths and their provenance another problem must be taken into consideration as any attempt to give prominence to an "original" or "correct" version may plunge us into deep difficulties. The useful methods must, on the contrary, start out from regarding every myth, or fragment of a myth, as carrying a message of some value for the interpretation of the religions. With such a point of departure, we could locate recurrent motifs in the myths, not only belonging to Old Norse religion but in a widened perspective as far back in time as to the ancient Indo-European religions.

Dumézil and the tripartite functions

This path directs us to the theories articulated by Georges Dumézil and his followers. Unlike contemporary scholars, Dumézil considered Snorri's *Edda*, as well as other Icelandic sources, as being exponents of the old Indo-European traditions, making them corner-stones in his well-known hypothesis of the tripartite ideology in the early Indo-European societies.

Dumézil's method is, as one of his followers puts it, unique and based on two postulates: Primarily, the contention that mythology expresses social values which strengthen social coherence and secondly that a linguistic unity — like the ancient Indo-European Language — suggests a considerable measure of ideological unity, understandable in the terms of comparative method (Dumézil 1959: 38).

His influence on research of comparative religion is immense and has in the field of Old Norse religions affected such scholars as Jan de Vries, Gabriel Turville-Petre and Edgar Polomé among others. Nevertheless, critical attempts to scotch the tripartite system have occasionally been made and one of them by E. Page is often quoted. Still, Page's arguments are considerably weak and much of the criticism is, as Dumézil indicates in his reply, based on misunderstandings of the text and on misreading (Page 1978–79: 49–69). Some years ago Colin Renfrew attempted to sink the whole system in his much discussed "Archaeology and Language"; his chapter about Dumézil, however, revealed that he had read and understood little of his work (Renfrew 1987: 250–262).

Dumézil revitalized the study of Old Norse mythology and his method proved that the old myths were not novels made by Snorri's literary activities. The war between the Æsir and the Vanir was regarded as a reflex of a proto-Indo-European myth, where the reconciliation between the classes or "fonctions", as he preferred to call them, took place as an ideal and not as, some of his opponents still claim, as a historical event changed into a myth.

The Comparative Perspective

Bruce Lincoln used the comparative method in many of his works, which has broadened the view of Old Norse religion. His interpretation of the Indo-European creation myth, giving meaning to the name Ymir as a "twin" as well as the obscure Gods of the Land of the Dead,

Yima and Yama and their role in the primeval sacrifice (Lincoln 1975: 121–143).

Jan Puhvel and other followers had pointed out other parallels to the old Norse gods and their myths, using the comparative methods in the Indo-European field (Puhvel 1987: 290 f). Their approach to Old Norse religion as a part of the Indo-European family of language, no matter where this originally had its dawn, has brought new light on the old problem, though historians and philologists still cling to the Old Norse source per se, uninterested in the comparative perspectives, as they say.

The functions of Freyja

My own contribution to the field of Old Norse religion was an attempt to make the goddesses in the system visible. Little attention had been paid to them, as Dumézil and other scholars in the comparative field were not interested in goddesses as well as other scholars, who usually saw in her only a Nordic parallel to the Greek Aphrodite, lascivious and sensual.

It is true that Freyja, like the other gods of the Vanir is voluptuous by nature, yet she is comprised of many varying characteristics.

In many of her functions she was the counterpart of Odin, in her knowledge of sejd (witchcraft) and in selector of the dead on the battle field. In her aspect as protector of fertility and especially of love affairs, she fulfilled other functions. As Snorri puts it in *Heimskringla*, "Freyja had many (varying) temperaments" (Heimskringla 1951: ch. 10).

The only hypothesis that fitted with Freyja, in my opinion, was the tripartite system where she as the great goddess impersonated the three functions, the magico-religious, the warlike and the fertility. She is — to a higher degree — the parallel to the Vedic Sarasvati, the Iranian Anahita and the Roman Juno than to the Greek Aphrodite, though there exist similarities (Dumézil 1970, 300).

Still, one had to ask whether this tripartite appearance of the Great Goddess was a pattern exclusively for the Indo-European ones or if it could be found in other cultures. The Sumerian Inanna, called Ishtar in Akkadian, sometimes the daughter of the mood god Nanna, sometimes of Enlil, the god of the atmosphere or even of Enki, the earth god was the most conspicuous among the goddesses to compare with, as she divides her functions between love and war. These functions are connected with sacred kingship and a third aspect of Inanna is her appearance as the planet Venus, "Inanna of the Sunrise".

The differences between Inanna and the Indo-European goddesses are distinct, however. Her love-affair with Dumuzi — she has no male spouse permanently connected to her — even her relationship with Dumuzi is rather ambiguous, whereas Freyja, Juno and the other mentioned goddesses are usually linked with at least one male partner, sometimes three, each of them representing one of the functions of the tripartite system.

Furthermore, Inanna's lust for love corresponds with her lust for land and in this respect she constitutes the ideal goddess for any power-seeking king in the old Mesopotamian society. He consorts with her in a sacred marriage and she is said to stand by his side in battle. Such traces are not found in myths about the Indo-European goddesses, who were not exclusively connected with the kings but with the three different classes of society, priest-kings, warriors and producers.

The study of rites in Old Norse Religion

The fragments of Old Norse religion, based on the oral tradition, written down in the 12th and the 13th centuries, could be studied with other methods than those used by the philologists and historians. Especially in the cases of rites, where the research of anthropologists during the last decades has proved to be useful in the study of such rites as *rites de passage* and sacrifice.

Like other societies the Old Norse society had its rites of passage, considering baptism, initiation, wedding and funerals. In these we are able to discern the three stages of separation, liminality and aggregation, a pattern elaborated by Victor Turner (Turner 1975: 93–111). This model could also be used on a much discussed rite, called *ganga undir jarðarmen* in Icelandic and literally, "to walk under the adornment of the Earth". This ritual appears in several sagas with the meaning of cutting the grassy turf of the earth in two parallel cuts, which were then lifted and propped up by spears. The involved persons then walked under this tunnel

The purposes of the ritual are varied. In *Fostbrœdra saga* it is mentioned as the ritual of sworn brotherhood. The men who had passed the tunnel had to take revenge for each other and regarded each other as brothers. The best example is found in *Gisla saga Surssonar*, sometimes called the *locus classicus* of sworn brotherhood. Gisli and his brother prepared for the walk under *jarðarmen* together with their respective brothers-in-law. According to this text, the ritual was performed so that they walked in under the turfs, mixed

blood with each other and let their blood drip into the soil (Gisla saga 1943: ch. 6).

It may seem strange that these two brothers and their brothers-in-law were going to commit this act, since they were people already firmly joined to each other by both consanguinity and kinship. There must therefore be something more in this ritual, which in this case would have the purpose of uniting the four men. This is also evident in the context as the two brothers suspect that their brothers-in-law were plotting against them. The rite then was thought to become an instrument of keeping peace between them in the future. When they tried to perform the ritual, they could not co-operated in the single acts and they had to walk back to the entrance of the tunnel. This was one of the many omens that forebode the tragedy of Gisli and his brother and at the same time an excellent example of a ritual which failed.

The custom "to walk under *jarðarmen*" appears as an ordeal in *Laxdœla saga*, which released the accused from guilt and in *Vatnsdœla saga* the proud hero becomes humiliated but gains entrance to society instead of excommunication. The ritual survived in folklore with a fourth purpose: to heal sick children, who were drawn though a short tunnel in the earth.

This rite has earlier been interpreted as a returning to mother Earth and rebirth from her womb. In my opinion, this is an example of a *rite de passage*, distinguishing one kind of status from the other in a concrete and physical form. The rite seems to have had both a religious and a juridical purpose and the walk through the tunnel was an exchange of status as the old sagas tell us: from conflict to friendship, from guilt to innocence, from denunciation to acceptance and as in the late folklore from sickness to health.

Sacrifice is another case where the anthropological method is useful, when the discussion about the value of the sources had put a damper on the research. The recent studies about the meaning of sacrifice, especially in ancient Greece using anthropological and structural methods have extended the perspective, and this is something that also could be done in Old Norse religion.

Finally, the archaeologists are persistently presenting new finds that have to be interpreted. As mentioned earlier, Adam's description of the hanged victims in the grove of Uppsala has for a long while been regarded as unreliable and invented by himself, in order to show the rudeness and cruelty of the pagan Svear. In 1984 a find under the altar of Frösö revealed the remains of a sacrificial grove, where the victims seemed to have been hanged on the tree. Several animals had been sacrificed there, among them six young bears. No

human sacrifice was found, but the bears could have served as substitutes.

Conclusion

These examples of varying methods of overcoming source problems show that it is necessary to put new questions to the source material such as: What was the purpose of the sacrifice? Who sacrificed and who received it? Which sacrifices took place in calendar rites, in rites of passage or in crisis? And what are the areas of purification or avoidance in the sacrificial situation?

A combination of methods encompassing both the comparative and the linguistic aspect provides an opportunity to overcome the difficulties encountered by the students of Old Norse mythology, especially the problems with the sources. As we search for supporting structures in the myths and the mythical fragments, we do not need a hypercritical approach, discussing influences from sources coming from Medieval Europe as those sources are fruits of the same cultural heritage.

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LISA NYBERG

Aesthetic Manifestations in Religious Practice — a Basic Grammar

The purpose of this paper is to discuss some aspects on function in relation to aesthetic manifestations in religious practice. The main point of argument is that the relationship between the meaning of the aesthetic object and its subject can successfully be described by using the grammatical terminology of the pronoun. This creates a taxonomy with an open enough structure to allow interpretations from various fields of research to be compared on equal grounds on their merits as interpretations. The following discussion on the strengths and weaknesses of iconographic method of analysis versus function is accompanied by an example from the Christian context chosen on several merits, one being that the subject matter appears to have been clearly established. A neglected source is introduced and questions on interpretation, function and appropriate terminology are raised, all serving as an introductory discussion.

The aesthetic manifestation as such is keyed by its prime quality of visuality and its position in the religious community. It may consist of a punctual object like a mask, a painting, a sculpture or an object extended in time and space such as a ceremony, a dance or a ritual to mention a few. The subject is an agent such as a beholder or a participant. The term aesthetic manifestation as such is understood to be etic and serves here as a collective word without implications that these objects were initially valued primarily on their aesthetic qualities.

The fact that the function of the object is so closely related to its subject matter, contents and meaning has rightfully placed the methods of iconographic analysis in a pivotal role in the field of religious iconography. An iconographic analysis renders one interpretation. A reconsideration of the same material from another angle is likely to produce different conclusions than the first. The dialogue between iconographers thus tends to be focused on which one of the many suggested interpretations is the correct one.

Manifestations working and thriving within a religious context can rarely be narrowed down to having but one subject or agent. Taking a hypothetical painting as an example there is a commissioner, such as an individual, a religious governing body or a ruler clothing a political message in a religious disguise to mention but a few options. Following the commission the painting is generally circulated within the contemporary religious community in question and agents from within that community, as well as from outside, will be exposed to the contents of the painting. As time goes by the painting may be given other functions as the historical context alters and changes. Aesthetic manifestations in religious practice, as a whole, have proven to be of the surviving kind due to tradition, custom or valuable materials. With few exceptions, a discussion on function in religious icongraphy ought to involve a minimum of at least two different agents, each demanding a separate analysis.

This dilemma of the one interpretation against the many possible agents has been carefully considered by the author of this paper during work on a doctoral dissertation on the 18th century interior decorating of Lutheran churches in Sweden and Finland. An approach is suggested which provides the means whereby several different interpretations can be applied to the same object. The pronouns in grammar serve as indicators of a relationship that resembles that of the aesthetic object and its agents. The pronoun also has a confirming character. Both of these qualities are of interest to the issue of this paper.

In general terms the commissioner in the earlier example with the painting might suggests a personal relationship, but the painting can also mirror the commissioner, in one way or another, and thus it can be said to have a reflexive function. Possessive function suggests a strong tie of ownership between the subject matter and the commissioner and if the subject matter makes a strong statement it can have a demonstrative function. Many paintings with a similar motif that are found within the same cultural context and where additional sources are scant, are often labeled simply to be decorative. In a pronominal terminology this is equivalent to a relative function. Within each functional heading there can be as many interpretations as a critical reading of the source material gives credit to. Vital to the specific use of this terminology is the mindful selection of relevant criteria that constitute the various links of relation and the need to carefully identify the agents.

The long and fruitful quest for a wide variety of pragmatic methods in the field of history of religion clearly shows the possibility to formulate criteria and parameters that not only regard the religious

human being as a biological sum but also take into account the synergistic effects of the religious experience on and in the human being. Within the field of history of art the discussion on visual theory has purely been based on behavioristic foundations. The structural outline above resembles that of various models from another related field of research, communication theory. In order to widen and open up this abstract marketplace of interpretations the terminology of communication theory has here been abandoned in favor of the more neutral pronominal terminology with several advantages to the scholar seriously interested in function.

In 1934 Erwin Panofsky published the first proper case study wherein he used iconographic analysis in order to show that objects of art carried with them an intrinsic, deeper and sometimes hidden meaning (Panofsky 1934). Panofsky thereby inaugurated what may very well be one of the longest, most fervent and heated iconographic discussions concerning the contents and meaning of a painting within the Western tradition.

The painting he used is the same as will be considered here, a double-portrait painted 1434 by Jan van Eyck, the court painter of Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy. The panel-painting is believed to depict the Italian-Flemish fabric merchant, Giovanni Arnolfini, a resident of Bruges in Flanders. The Arnolfini's had arrived in Bruges in the 1420's and had rapidly risen to fame and fortune as the prime supplier of fabrics to the ducal palace. The Cenami family had a generation earlier established themselves as indispensable bankers, first in Paris and 1381 in Bruges, prosperously serving the king of France and the dukes of Burgundy.

The painting may very well qualify to be included within the framework of religious iconography on the grounds of its subject matter. In brief Panofsky stated that the subject matter is a marriage, probably a clandestine marriage, a marriage performed in secrecy. He stressed some particularities such as the location within a private home, the mirror reflecting the witnesses standing at the doorway in front of the couple, the splendor of fabrics displayed and the symbolic meaning of spiritual and secular items located in the room. There were several embezzlements in this early study, which have been duly pointed out and discussed over the past sixty years. All in all the scholars have proposed four different types of marriages and several types of betrothals. There were also questions raised as to the authenticity of the couple causing Peter Schabacker to interpret this as a morganatic marriage, a marriage wherein a noble or royal person marries a person of lower rank who is not entitled to take noble or royal titles, an interpretation soon questioned and abandoned

(Schabacker 1972). The question of the subject matter, whether a marriage or a betrothal, appears to have been finally settled in 1994 by the American art historian Edward Hall (Hall 1994). Through a very thorough analysis after the precepts of the Annales School, in an inverted micro-historical way, he firstly concentrates on the institution of marriage and of betrothal and secondly he investigates the implications suggested by the central gestures in the painting, the touching of hands and the uplifted right arm of the man. He concludes that there is nothing mysterious at all about this subject matter. It is a perfectly legal betrothal of the highest form, performed with a solemn oath, according to the practice in the Italian town Lucca, the hometown of the Arnolfini and the Cenami families. The touching of hands is a characteristic feature in this region in conjunction with a betrothal, the uplifted arm being the sign of the solemn oath. Minor differences are, according to Hall, credited to the couple assimilating local Flemish traditions. (Fig. 1)

Despite Edward Hall's outstanding interpretation and the time this panel painting has been discussed, it appears that every possible form of marriage and betrothal has been considered but the *unio mystica*. This is remarkable when the writings of the most influencial Flemish mystic of the time and region, Jan van Ruysbroeck, are taken into account. He was born in 1293 in Ruysbroeck close to Brussels. In 1304 Jan left the village and moved to Brussels, where he was ordained a priest 1317. During all his stay in the city he was closely connected to the church of St Gudula, today St Michael's, and it is while serving here around the 1330's in the capacity of a chaplain that he wrote his first treatises The Kingdom of Lovers, *Dat rike der ghelieven,* and The Spiritual Espousals, *Die cierheit der gheestelîker bruloch*. In 1343 Ruysbroeck and two of his colleagues left St Gudula in order to settle down in a solitary life in a place they called Groenendaal. The land was ducal property and given to the brethren by the duke. Because of ecclesiastical pressure in 1350 they took on the Rule of St Augustine with Jan serving as the first prior of the monastery. He died on 2 December 1381 and was canonized in 1909. The spiritual profile of Groenendaal monastery came to be totally dominated by Jan van Ruysbroeck's teachings until it was closed in the late 1700s. The literary works by Jan van Ruysbroeck are presently being published in a text critical edition *Opera Omnia*. Groenendaal Monastery is situated close to Brussels *en route* to Bruges on the border between Flanders and Brabant. From 1432 and onwards, when the monastery received personal and substantial financial support and protection by Philip the Good himself, the monastic life

flourished and four new houses were created evenly located in Flanders and Brabant (Verhelst 1976: 63).

Jan van Ruysbroeck was contemporary with mystics such as Meister Eckhart, Gregorius Palamas, John Tauler, Bridget of Sweden, Catharine of Siena and should not be confused with his namesake, the influential ducal architect, who was in the duke's service in the mid-1400s. The mystic Jan van Ruysbroeck wrote extensively in the vernacular and in the literary style of his day, used by Petrarch as well as Chaucer, called petrarchism. The main feature of the style was to describe and ascribe human and divine qualities to objects and phenomena of nature, mainly gems, precious metals and stones but also fire and ice. Ruysbroeck wrote on the mystic life and experience mainly for a monastic reader. However, his teachings were widely read, copied and spread already during his lifetime through a number of books and several letters.

Ruysbroeck distinctly differs from his contemporary fellow mystics in that the *unio mystica* is viewed not only as a going in but also as a going out of the mystic experience in order to bring the effects of that experience into everyday living, continuing and improving in going about the everyday business of work. The mystic experience is not a once in a lifetime event, but a continual progressive path of going in and going out. This very pragmatic view of *unio mystica* is dressed by Ruysbroeck in the most didactic language and prose. In his book The Seven Enclosures, *Vanden seven sloten*, he likens the three lives of the mystic experience, the active, inner and contemplative life, to the reading of three books. Active life is the first book which he describes as having brownish pages that are written on with blackish ink. Inner life, the second book, is a life in Christ with white pages and red letters, symbols of the purity and blood of Christ. In the third book, on the contemplative life, the colors are blue and green with writing in gold.

"Every evening as you come before your bed, you should read through three little books, if you have the opportunity, and should always carry them with you. The first little book is old, ugly and dirty, written in black ink. The second little book is white and lovely, written in red blood. The third is blue and green, written entirely in fine gold.

First of all, read through your old book, that is, your old life, which is sinful and imperfect both in yourself and in all mankind. To do this, enter into yourself and open the book of your conscience which shall be open and manifest to God and the whole world at God's judgment. And so, examine, test and judge yourself now so that you shall not be condemned then. You should look into and examine your conscience on how you have lived and on what you have committed: in words, actions, desires, reflections,

and thoughts; in disorder, in false fear and false hope, false joys and false sorrows; in instability and lack of self-mortification; in duplicity and hypocrisy; in disorderly action or omission; in following the senses outwardly and in consenting to sensuality within; in pleasure and comfort; in all things that are practiced unreasonably and contrary to charity; (anything) against the commandments, against the counsels, or against the most dear will of God. These things and the like are so numerous and so manifold that no one but God alone can know them. They stain, disfigure and dirty the face of the soul, for they are written with (black) ink, that is, with the lust of flesh and blood and with disordered earthly inclinations. You should be displeased with yourself in this regard, and, with the publican, fall prostrate before your heavenly Father and before his eternal mercy, and say with the prophet: "Lord, I have sinned. Have mercy on me, a poor sinner. Grant me the water of tears and genuine contrition in my heart, (water) in which I may wash my soul's face from my sins, before I rise up before your eyes. Lord, give me your grace and your favor with which I may adorn and beautify my face to please you. Lord, grant me willingness and zeal so that I may ceaselessly be renewed in your service and in your praise." If you wish to acquire this, remain lying on the ground, strike your breast, cry, call out and weep; do not raise your eyes but disdain, humble, and annihilate yourself, and remind Him of His mercy. Do not cease before He answers you and speaks true peace and genuine joy in your heart. Then He shall remove from you anxiety and fear, doubt and dread and everything in you displeasing to Him, and He shall give you faith, hope, and trust in Him for all things that you need in time and in eternity. Then you shall desire to live for Him and to be faithful (to Him) until your death. Herewith, lay down the old book.

Rise up, then, on your knees, with gratitude and with praise. From out of your memory, reach for the white book written in red letters, that is, the innocent life of our Lord Jesus Christ. His soul is innocent and plenitude of all grace, fiery red with burning love; His body is a glorious radiant white, brighter than the sun, all lacerated by lashes and bathed with His precious blood; those are the red letters which are signs and documents for us of His righteous love. The five large wounds, however, are capital letters with which begin the chapters in the book. Read these letters written on His venerable body with great compassion. The love which lives in His soul, however, you should recall with interior fervor. Shun and flee the false world, for He has opened His arms and wants to receive and embrace you. Make your dwelling in the caverns of His wounds as the dove does in the caverns of the rock. Place your mouth on His opened side; smell and savor the heavenly sweetness which flows from His heart. Consider how your champion and giant has fought for you even unto death, and has overcome your enemies; the death of your sins He has put to death by His death; he has paid your debt and purchased and acquired for you His Father's inheritance with His blood. He ascended before (you), opened the gates and prepared the place of eternal glory for you. Herein, you should rightly take delight and bear the love and passion of your dear Lord in your heart, so that He lives in you and you in Him; then the world shall be a cross and great

distress for you. You, however, should desire to die and to follow your beloved into His kingdom. Herewith, the white book is read through.

Then stand upright and lift your eyes to heaven. Open your mind to God and consider the third book which is blue and green, written with fine gold, whereby we understand an eternal heavenly life. For the heavenly life is bright, sky-blue, like the hyacinth stone. This brightness is threefold and in this brightness appears a green color, with which the brightness is adorned in manifold ways. The first heavenly brightness is sensible. With it, God has filled and illuminated the highest heaven, just as the whole world is filled and illuminated by the brightness of the sun. In this heaven, we shall, with Christ, the angels and saints, live and reign eternally, body and soul; and each body bright according to the nobility of its merits. The least bright is seven times brighter than the sun, impassible, swifter than thought, lighter than air, and subtler than sunshine. In the brightness of heaven and in the brightness of the glorious bodies, the green color is manifest, which is like the stone we call jasper. We shall see the greenness with our bodily eyes, that is, all the outward good works that were ever done or ever shall be done, unto the end of the world, in whatsoever manner it might be: in dying, in living, in martyrdom, in humility, in purity, in generosity, in charity, in fasting, in keeping vigil, in praying, in reading, in singing, in manifold penances and in all virtuous acts without number. See, this is the lovely green color which shall enrich the glorious bodies, to a greater or lesser degree, everyone according to his efforts, merits, and dignity. The second brightness of eternal life is spiritual. It fills and illuminates all intelligent eyes in heaven with knowledge and wisdom to recognize all inward virtue; and in this brightness a green hue displays itself like that of a stone they call smaragdus, that is, a green emerald beautiful and green and lovely to intelligent eyes beyond anything one might recall. By this, we understand enrichment, fruit, and all differentiation of virtue. This is the most beautiful and the loveliest hue of the kingdom of heaven. As we examine the virtues, together with their fruits, at closer range, and as we dig deeper, the lovelier and more beautiful they are to consider. This is how they are compared to the precious gem called smaragdus: the more one sculpts and digs into it, the more it delights the eye. Thus each saint is like the emerald, bright and green, beautiful, gracious and glorious, more or less, (each) according to his own nobility and merits. This is why God has manifested the glory of the kingdom of heaven to the saints in the green color of the precious emerald. The third heavenly brightness is divine, and is nothing other than the eternal wisdom and brightness which is God Himself. This brightness embraces and surpasses all created brightness. Compared with the bright wisdom of God, all creaturely knowledge in heaven and on earth is less than that of candlelight in the radiance of the sun, in the middle of summer. Therefore, all intelligences must yield to the incomprehensible brightness and truth that is God. In the divine brightness a green hue appears which is incomparable, for it is so gracious and glorious that all vision is lost in gazing at it and is blinded and loses all its judgment. Thus your third book is a heavenly life

with threefold brightness and greenness: the first sensible, the second spiritual, the third divine. And this book is entirely written in fine gold, for each loving inturning into God is a verse written in gold. The brightness of our book is genuine knowledge of God, of ourself, and of virtue. Manifold modes, differentiation and exercise of virtue make up the green hue of our book. But interior desire, loving adherence (to God) and divine union are eternal verses written in gold in our heavenly book. This is why, in Revelation, our Lord compares the heavenly life to the sapphire, or to the rainbow, for these two consist of many hues. The sapphire is yellow and red, purple and green, mixed with gold-dust. So also the rainbow is made up of many colors, just as the saints have manifold modes and differentiation of virtue, all mixed with gold-dust, that is, penetrated with love and united in God. And everyone who loves stands before God's presence with his book, bright, green, lovely and glorious. Therefore, lift up your heart above all the heavens and read these books. They are full of glory: outwardly in the senses because of their great actions; inwardly in the spirit because of their manifold modes and practice of virtues; and above all, they are lifted up in God in an enjoyment of love. If you are dead to yourself in Christ, and to all things, and risen with Him in a new eternal life, and seek and savor the things that are above and eternal. Watch over your seven enclosures and note well your three books, even though you may not completely finish reading or entirely look through the third book, for the glory is measureless and so bottomless that one cannot completely see through it. Thus it resembles the smaragdus which also cannot be seen through. Drink, savor and become inebriated; lean over in your stronghold, and rest and sleep in eternal peace." (Ruysbroeck 1981: 200–218)

This excerpt from the conclusion of Vanden seven sloten shows Ruysbroek's experienced knowledge of every minute detail of the *via mystica* and his agile ability to describe to the reader the various physical and mental techniques necessary in order to reach the ultimate mystic level. In lines 97–102 is also found a rare reference to one particular use of the, often very artistically fashioned, capital letters of, for example, an illuminated manuscripts. The study of one of these ornaments is likened to the considering of the wounds and sufferings of Christ and can, according to Ruysbroeck, serve as a preparatory vehicle in the mystic process.

The portrait is now to be reconsidered. A color analysis provides interesting information. What according to Ruysbroeck is part of the active life finds its correspondence in the framework of the room, the furniture, the overall brownish impression of the interior, the painter's signature on the wall and above all in the depiction of the male figure. Having stepped out of his shoes he stands at the center of attention in the room. His stockings are stained with dirt and he is

dressed in a brown mantle made of exquisite and costly fur. On his head he is wearing a large black hat. The Ruysbroeckian inner life finds a counterpart in the most expensive red fabrics dominating most of the interior of the room crowned by the centrally placed white head-covering of the lady. The third level of the mystic experience is visually conceivable first and foremost in the exclusive green overdress, lined at the edges with golden fur, that covers the blue underdress. Through the window to the left of the painting the blue sky is visible as well as the tree, with green leaves and red flowers. The impression of the couple is that of passiveness and inactivity. Their eyes don't meet, but appear to be directed elsewhere beyond the frame of the painting. But when looking in the mirror, where the backs of the couple are reflected, an opposite impression is obtained. The couple are active, almost on the verge of taking a step towards their visiting friends, as these enter the room through the open door. (Fig. 2) The characteristics of the teachings of Ruysbroeck, the going in and the going out of the mystic experience, and his detailed and didactic description of the different mystic levels, are all distinctly visible in the Arnolfini portrait.

One more detail deserves attention. Linda Seidel, another American art historian, has a very interesting interpretation of the area around the mirror. She refers to the praxis of the local notary as she interprets the mirror and adjacent items on the wall as visible signs of notary authenticity. In this case the signature on the wall by Jan van Eyck who, Seidel notes, had local as well as ducal notary license, indicates that the painting can be conceived as a pictorial form of a formal and binding contract with the duke as acting party. One of the things she also finds an explanation to in notary praxis is the lit candle. Seidel refers to the notary who would have a lit candle on the table as long as the contract was not fulfilled. Through the window can be seen the daylight, the barely visible tree outside that has leaves and some kind of either berries or flowers. It is apparently late spring or early summer. Seidel, in commenting on her sources writes: "Thus, there is no written text for which Jan's painting could serve as illustration" (Seidel 1993: 22). There is no reference to Jan van Ruysbroeck or Linda Seidel might have found the following, from lines 216 to 221, worth considering, *"Compared with the bright wisdom of God, all creaturely knowledge in heaven and on earth is less than that of candlelight in the radiance of the sun, in the middle of summer."* (Ruysbroeck 1981: 214)

Apart from the similarities between the painting and Ruysbroeck's text The Seven Enclosures, these may be purely accidental. There would at least have to be support in other paintings from the same

period. Jan van Eyck himself made several paintings that easily work within the framework of Ruysbroeck's schedule, mainly religious motives commissioned by a donor or the duke painted in the late 1430s. But a most conclusive and interesting picture is a small contemporary miniature made in Groenendaal monastery that strongly supports the hypothesis of a contemporary Ruysbroeck color coded iconography referring to his mystic teachings on *unio mystica.* (Fig. 3)

Inscribed within a brownish frame is depicted an outdoor event where two male persons, in monks' habits, are sitting. The landscape is somewhat rough with one large, twisted tree at the left and two smaller trees to the right of the painting. The background is to the upper 3/4ths covered with a red color field decorated with a diagonally checkered pattern. In each large rhombic intersection a four-petal flower is depicted. The two men are not idle in this green pasture, but busily engaged in scribal activities. The monk to the right is copying from a small writing tablet at his left that carries a green sheet of parchment, onto a large white sheet that he writes on with red ink. The monk to the left, sitting under the large tree, is writing on a larger writing tablet, onto which a green sheet of parchment is fastened. He is writing with letters of gold. His left hand is not only holding the handle of the writing tablet, but it is also taking a small white, flat object out of an incision in the flower-covered background. In front of the rhombus above the one with the cut, a white bird is seen coming towards the monk. The overlapping character of the compositional areas can be studied as the monk to the right is sitting partly on the brown frame, partly on the green grass, having his scribal desk placed entirely on the frame. The same process is visible also in the branches from two of the trees, that are poking out of the composition into the frame. Finally one more detail that must not be overlooked, the small stream of water flowing out from a well, depicted right at the center just above the bottom frame.

The active, inner and contemplative life are given distinct visibility in this miniature as well as the going in and the going out. The necessity of going out is underlined by the activity of the monks as well as by the choice of mode of representation of the scribal motif. This subject is generally depicted as an indoors not an outdoors event. The scribal activity of the right monk is placed as a bridge between active and contemplative life in very much the same way as could be observed in the Arnolfini portrait, where the male, representing active life, is bridging over to contemplative life, the lady in her green dress, by the touching of hands. This gesture, the touch, finds a counterpart in the Ruysbroeckian teaching on *unio mystica.* The actual point

when the mystic experiences the transition from the inner life into the contemplative life is the most important event in the mystic practice. That is according to Ruysbroeck described with the word *gerinen*, which translates into English with a word describing its effect, *touch*. The entrance into the contemplative life is felt like someone touching and there are several passages in Ruysbroeck's writings that could serve as an example. From The Seven Enclosures the following example has been chosen:

> "If you wish to exercise yourself in the fourth mode with more interior fervor, you shall experience, at the depths of your faculty of love, the touch of the Holy Spirit as a living fount, with veins of eternal sweetness welling up and flowing out. And in your faculty of understanding, you shall experience the gleaming irradiation of the eternal sun, our Lord Jesus Christ, with divine truth. And the heavenly Father shall strip your memory and bare (it) of images, and shall urge, draw, and invite you to his exalted unity. Look, there are three heavenly doors to His treasures, which God opens to the loving soul." (Ruysbroeck 1981: 182)

The Arnolfini portrait is generally assumed to have been commissioned by Arnolfini himself, a hypothesis strongly supported by Edward Hall. But Linda Seidel raises the poignant question about the role of the duke, Philip the Good. The duke appears, from a Ruysbroeckian perspective, to be far more involved in the making of this portrait and perhaps also in the other Jan van Eyck paintings that can be successfully interpreted according to Ruysbroeck's color code of the *via mystica*. The duke's interest in Groenendaal, his political ambition to expand and unify his territories, especially Flanders, and the fact that he had in 1432 taken upon him a financial obligation with regard to the care and keep of the monastery, become vital keys in the future discussion of this painting. One fact to be seriously considered is the personal financial difficulties that Philip the Good struggled with about 1434 and onwards. The Groenendaal monastery burnt down to the ground in 1435, but was according to the records rebuilt almost immediately with the financial support from the Dean of Bergen-op-Zooms, Willem Braen, the Dean of Antwerp, Anselmus Fabri, the Dean of Cambrai, Cornelis Proper and by Philip the Good (Verhelst 1976: 62). The question of who paid the duke's share in the swift rebuilding of Groenendaal Monastery may be closely linked to these paintings that carry such a strong attachment to the Ruysbroeckian color schedule existing at the monastery. A final word of caution is appropriate with regard to this apparent development of a specific Groenendaal color code within and without the monastery.

Ruysbroeck may not be the initial inventor of this order of the colors and what they should represent, that may have come from elsewhere. Too little is known and future research will undoubtedly have to focus on some of these processes.

To further the discussion of this portrait is beyond the aim and purpose of this paper. The example above has shown some of the strengths of the iconographic and iconologic analyses, but has also displayed some hazards. This painting can be given several functional attributions. If the Arnolfini and Cenami families contributed financially to the ducal projects at Groenendaal, before as well as after the great fire, under the pretext of some kind of mutual agreement not to be publicly spoken of too loud, the painting would to the duke be personally confirming, in that he did not have to give up his ambition on Groenendaal and demonstratively, this is how it was done. To Arnolfini there is also a personal confirmation, he did the right thing and the actual betrothal must not be forgotten. But there is also a reflexive confirmation in that the character of a truly good person is somehow understood, so well expressed by Ruysbroeck in lines 163–175, 190–198, 203–207 and 216–221, where the good acts, the enrichment and fruits are seen as outward manifestations of a virtuous life lived and the comparison with bright wisdom as contrasted to the bleak, single and only candle. If Arnolfini is the commissioner these last personal qualities would have indicated a possessive function and confirmation.

The discussion on the function of an aesthetic manifestation within a religious context will greatly benefit from referring the object not only to one subject and one only, but to as many as can be substantially supported in the critical reading of available sources. What is gained by the proposed functional terminology is advantageous. A discussion is hereby inaugurated that can use the results of, as seen above, several very different interpretations on their merits as qualified interpretations, as well as handling new and not previously considered sources, each one indispensable and each one contributing to further the understanding and the processes involved. This necessitates a neutral terminology, such as the grammatical terminology of the pronoun, as has been suggested in this paper.

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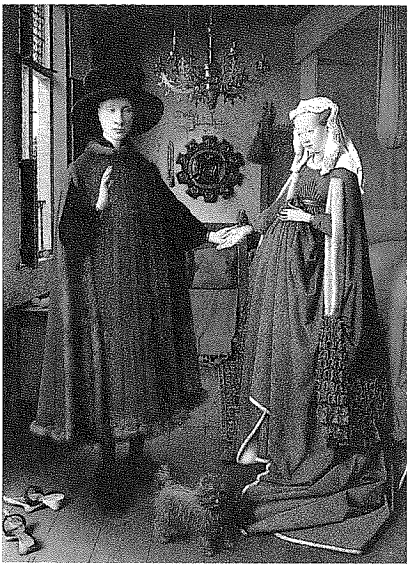

Figure 1. Jan van Eyck, 1434. The Arnolfini double-portrait. The National Gallery, London.

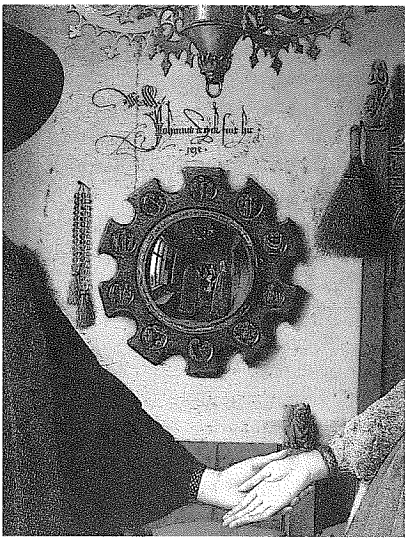

Figure 2. A detail of the mirror in the Arnolfini portrait. Jan van Eyck, 1434. The National Gallery, London.

Figure 3. Jan van Ruysbroeck, to the left, and a fellow scribe. Manuscript from Groenendaal Monastery, early 1400s. ms. Bruxelles, B.R.19295–97, fol.2 verso. Copyright Belgian Royal Library Albert Ier, Brussels.

PETRA PAKKANEN

Methodological Remarks on Studying Prehistoric Greek Religion*

This paper presents a methodological approach to the study of Greek religion of the period which lacks written documents, i.e. prehistory. The assumptions and interpretations of religion of that time have to be based on archaeological material. To me this is not, however, "methodology of religious archaeology" as announced in the preliminary information of this symposium, since the concept "religious archaeology" is methodologically extremely problematic and should not, in fact, be used at all.** In this paper I will firstly give reasons for this view, secondly look at some examples of archaeological interpretations, and finally give my own proposal for a method which can be used in studies of prehistoric religion in archaeology and comparative religion.

As I see it, the term "religious archaeology" implies that a person practicing such a scholarship is intentionally searching for cult places which bear multiple religious aspects or that the scholar is a confessional religious person. Perhaps a religious archaeologist would excavate only in explicitly religious sites. But there should **not** be religious archaeology *per definitionem* since such archaeology is very contradictory to all accepted methods of historical research. Here the intention and expectation to find evidence for cult is at stake. In fact, there has been a tendency to interpret different archaeological remains or places with certain cultural activity as representations of religion and scholars still expect to find 'an early cult place'. K. Fagerström (1988: 160) calls this tendency a "philhieratic attitude".

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** Dr. Arja Karivieri pointed out to me that there is Christian archaeology which includes archaeology of late antiquity, and it is taught in Rome at the Institute of Christian Archaeology (Istituto di Archeologia Christiana) according to the Roman Catholic doctrine. This might be called 'religious archaeology', though there are, of course, archaeologists working on the material from late antiquity without a confessional religious point of view.

This expectation is of course never stated but often implied, and as a hypothesis it may sometimes work. R. Merrifield correctly observes that the further back we go in time the more acceptable ritual behavior as an interpretation seems to become: nearly all types and forms of structures that are attributed to the Neolithic period and to Early to Middle Bronze Age have often been accepted by archaeologists as fulfilling possible ritual purposes (Merrifield 1987: 4–5). The period of my interest in this regard is the Geometric era, the centuries approximately between 900–700 BC, the beginning of which is considered a continuation of the mistakenly called 'Dark Age' of Greek history. The surviving buildings of the 'Dark Age' are few in number and often poorly preserved but their number is increasing because the period has been of interest to recent archaeological research. At the end of the 'Dark Age' the conventions of temple construction slowly emerged: From the middle of the eight century BC onwards the building activity increased in Greece, but only from the seventh century do we find truly monumental temple architecture which apparently began in north-east Peloponnese. The first known temple with a concept of monumentality is that of Hera on Samos from the first half of the eighth century, and in the seventh century we have monumental temples, like at Isthmia (Poseidon), Corinth (Apollo) and Tegea (Athena Alea) (Coulton 1988: 30–36; Fagerström 1988, 163; Lawrence and Tomlinson 1996: 61–65). The earlier examples, like Perachora (Hera Akraia) and Thermon (Apollo) from the ninth and eighth centuries were far from monumentality, and should not be called temples in the same sense as the later sacral buildings. Thus, the question is: How do we define religion and cultic activity on the basis of primary archaeological material from this period, and which are the methodological tools for this difficult task? By asking questions on the nature and definition of religion and culture scholars of religion have provided us with some methodological apparatus to approach religion of the past in general, but there are models developed by archaeologists as well. Critical combination of these methodological tools leads to the best possible result.

Archaeology studies the material culture of the past. History of religion studies the spiritual culture of the past. In the background the two have important theoretical and even philosophical speculations since they both deal with meanings (of things or practices) and with interpretation. The principle method of historical research should ideally be hypothetico-deductive implying necessary presumptions and models that prevail in contemporary traditions of research. D.L. Clarke (1972: 1–60, esp. p. 2) clarifies that models in archaeology are pieces of machinery that relate observations to theoretical ideas.

They are often partial representations which simplify the complex observations by the selective elimination of detail incidental to the purpose of the model. Observation of models implies also possible changes in paradigms in the Kuhnian sense (Kuhn 1970: esp. 77–85) because change, of course, presupposes prevailing tradition to be criticized. The process of interpreting material culture depends on the following facts: 1) signification is grounded in tradition; 2) signification is rooted in social relations and social structures; 3) signs will differ according to their degree of polysemy and the social context in which they are used; 4) signification in material culture is usually much simpler than in either spoken or written language (Tilley 1991: 95). Modern theoretical archaeology has achieved important results and raised essential questions on interpretation, but it often operates on a level far beyond material remains even without direct references to them. That is why my attempt is to bear in mind the key role of the objects themselves and combine their existence with speculations of meaning and interpretation. I am aware that there is often plurality of meanings of things and relations between them. In fact, it is often the relations that provide the meanings, not the things in themselves (Tilley 1991: 53). To be a bit provocative I point out that history itself is a mirror of speculations that leads up to and justifies how things are now. This explains why everywhere each generation finds it necessary to rewrite history to fit it to the changing value systems of the evolving present; history is simply a reverse transformation of what we now know to be the case (cf. Leach 1977: 167). In this light the prevailing trend to interpret different archaeological objects easily as religious ones can also be considered as paradigmatic. The behavioral conventions of a group of practitioners keep up the super (or supra) models. The group delineates, focuses upon and recognizes a limited subset of data and experimental achievements within their much wider disciplinary field. Within this field the community of scholars emphasizes certain solutions (Kuhn 1970: 84–85; Clarke 1972: 5). I have sometimes even felt that this to find the religion of our more remote past somehow reflects the ambiguous religious thoughts of today's scholars. There is perhaps a religiously oriented need to reduce and reflect a more or less lost religious sphere of life in the excavated material and scientific data which comment in a mute way on the past life of human beings. In the discussion of methodology at least some controlling models for interpretation are needed (see Clarke 1972: 5–7), and for the present problem such may be provided by the theoretical speculations of scholars of religion.

But let me now go into details, first theory, then practice. In archaeology the category of sacred must be empirically verifiable, tied down, based on the immediate experience of the object since archaeology is, and has always been, dominated by varieties of empiricism and questions of social meaning and significance of material representations of past life (Tilley 1991: 14; also Hodder 1982: 152–154; Barrett 1991: 6). If we talk about some 'laws' or 'general rules' in archaeology it should be noted that the laws which seem to be most properly characterized as those of archaeology are the regularities or empirical generalizations that relate various items of material culture to one another, or connect aspects of material culture with patterns of human behavior (Salmon 1982: 20).

Identification of religious objects in archaeology is reduced methodologically to observation of analogies. One of the most common issues of analogical reasoning is to infer similar functions, too, for archaeologically found items from observed similarities between these items and others whose functions are known from past's or today's practices. The principle which permits inference from similar form to similar function regardless of the case is very rude and must be rejected (and luckily, it is often is rejected by modern archaeologists). Instead, the relevance of an object and its context should be explained, and its role in analogies must be demonstrated. The arguments used to establish these claims have to be carefully evaluated. An archaeologist should ask whether analogies are required either for discovery of religious functions or for justifying their ascription to archaeological objects (Salmon 1982: 56–59). There are some drawbacks in analogical reasoning, since many items have no analogies and a single item may be analogous in different respects to several distinct things that do not have overlapping functions. Thus, a possible inference of analogies is limited (Salmon 1982: 31). It could be possible to accuse me of relativism and to ask what is the alternative for analogous reasoning in finding meanings. But I regard analogous reasoning as an evident tool towards definitions of prehistoric objects, a tool which has positive aspects if its problems are observed and accepted. This means that departing from analogous thinking we have to add a strong sensitivity to context which in turn may open a universe of possibilities completely different from the initial analogies. Analogies may then turn out to be keys for new and different interpretations of meanings of excavated objects (I specify this below, p. 211). In this sense relativism, not an absolute relativism, though, has a fair amount of advantages: the so called epistemic relativism holds that knowledge is rooted in particular time and culture, and that facts and objectivity are construed (Shanks and Hodder 1995: 19–22).

It is a task, then, to construct meanings based on material data and to try to see if there are some other interpretative possibilities than the traditionally accepted ones. This is creating meanings, in Gadamerian sense it is 'effective history' which involves: 1) an awareness of one's own hermeneutic situation and the socio-historical horizon in which it is imbedded, i.e. in my case the tradition of interpreting cult in archaeology, and 2) a dialogue between the interpreter and the interpreted materia (cf. Tilley 1991: 115–118). The hermeneutic task consists of bringing forward the tension between the past and the present, not to sublimate it. "Archaeological interpretation deals with the meanings of the past for the present, so it is perhaps better to think of *making sense*", to quote M. Shanks and I. Hodder (1995: 18).

Conventionally, in other than burial contexts, three different arguments based on archaeological material are used as evidence for the supposed existence of early cult activity.

Firstly, continuity of cult is searched for in places where we have evidence for the existence of a cult in later periods, usually known through ancient literature and other literary sources, such as inscriptions. "The well-known fact [is] that a new temple was usually as far as possible erected on the site of an earlier temple" writes B. Bergqvist (1967: 46). Continuation can be argued for, but it should never be taken for granted: historical development is often contingent (cf. Gero 1995: 176–177). For example, in K. Fagerström's (1988) corpus of some 70 Geometric buildings in Greece continuity is clearly the commonest argument used for the sanctity of a building (12 out of 28) and in B. Bergqvist's study (1967) on 19 archaic *temene* only 3 (Rhamnous, Thassos and Troizen) are 'new' temples not erected on Geometric or even earlier cult places (in the cases of Argos and Athens she argues for the continuity of a holy place on the preceding Mycenean *megaron*). But internal rules of social behavior of Geometric communities may have been different from those in later periods: the character of a sacred place could have changed from, or to, profane depending on other changes in social and environmental conditions (cf. Reynolds and Tanner 1983: 68). It is reasonable to ask why there is insistence on likeness outweighing differences, especially with respect to typology of early cult places (Gero 1995: 177). It is not unusual that once a 'fact' (like prehistoric cult places located at the sites where later temples stand) is arrived at, it is quickly freed from the circumstances and loses some of the historical reference to the social and contextual conditions (Jameson 1988: 164). Direct continuity in religious practice does not imply lack of change in that practice, and certainly cannot be taken as evidence of constancy of meaning. Continuation presupposes causal order which may be troublesome be-

cause there usually are multiple interacting causes in the development of religion, and that is why it is especially important to be aware of alternative hypotheses (Salmon 1982: 56). The religious systems of a given (prehistoric) period have to be interpreted primarily in the light of all the evidence available for that period, and not on the basis of subsequent belief systems, however well documented (Renfrew 1985: 3). The idea of mechanical continuity of cult should not be accepted without caution. Continuity is thus a model of interpretation which sometimes, but not always, may lead to better understanding of the past. F. de Polignac (1994: 8–9) writes: "...One should not see a Bronze Age sanctuary under every Geometric sanctuary: on the contrary, the same recent discoveries show that one must quit this game of balancing two opposed theses and instead try to discover how different forms of continuity and of rupture combine in the history of cults."

The second argument for the existence of early cult is votive, *anathema*, meaning a gift for a deity as an appeal for help or expression of thanksgiving or reverence. Votives make a site cult place. Thus, they are seen as minima criteria in archaeology for a cult place, and usually correctly so. But the problem is that no profound definition of a votive has been given, and the theme is rarely discussed in recent literature (except for e.g. P. Ucko, see below). The only monograph on Greek votive offerings is written by W.H.D. Rouse in 1902; his definition of votive clearly shows that the comprehension of a votive is all embracing and ambiguous. It reads: "Whatever is given of freewill to beings conceived as superhumans is to speak strictly of votive offering. The motive [for giving a votive] is simple, but not always the same" (Rouse 1902: 1; cf. the definition given by I. Malkin in the Oxford Classical Dictionary [Malkin 1996]). This leads to a situation where almost anything can be defined as a votive and thus used as justification of a cult. Ceramics, anthropomorphic and animal figurines, house models, bones, jewelry etc. count as votives. True, in *Anthologia Graeca* we can read of various different objects from pine cones to buildings given to deities as votives in Classical and Hellenistic times. But in the context where written sources are lacking, we should be extremely cautious in relying too much on 'votive evidence' of a cult.

"On what ground, for instance, is one pit with animal bones and a few artifacts, dismissed as domestic refuse, while another is seen as a ritual deposit with evidence of sacrifice? In which circumstances shall we regard small terracotta representations of animals and men as figurines intended as offerings to the deity, and when shall we view them as mere toys for the amusement of children?" asks C. Ren-

frew (1985: 2). In many cases various things that ought to be explained in more mundane ways are called religious. One criterion in favor of identifying an object as a votive dedication would be the discovery of quantities of the same class of non-domestic objects in one single area. Isolated items, even exceptionally valuable, like fine pottery or jewelry, pins and fibulae etc., could have equally been personal belongings (Mazarakis-Ainian 1997: 285–286).

Human and animal figurines are usually enigmatic. Especially female figurines are often interpreted as representations of deities, even mother goddesses, deified abstractions of nature and fertility. (Hole and Heizer 1969: 348; Alroth 1989: 15–64, 106–108 on the figurines representing deities.) But it is dangerous to derive agricultural fertility from female fertility since any assumption regarding the desirability of numerous children may be misleading, since desirability of female fertility in agricultural society as a given fact may well be a mistake in the case of certain prehistoric societies (Ucko 1962: 30). P. Ucko (1962: 38–54) discusses profoundly and critically the theme 'mother goddess' figurines which at the time was the first treatment in trying to break the tradition that regarded small Neolithic and Paleolithic female figurines one-sidedly as representations of fertility and natural power, as omnipotent religious expressions, the view which virtually had become accepted (see e.g. James 1957: 162–165, and about the tradition Finley 1990: 88–90). P. Ucko (1962: 47) suggests correctly other possibilities to interpret the function of certain female figurines: they might have been used 1) as dolls, made by or for children, 2) as teaching devices to instruct initiates to various ritual purposes, 3) as vehicles for sympathetic magic. This shows that the simple (mother) goddess hypothesis as the meaning of female figurines must be considered thoroughly, because contextual evidence may sometimes rule it out. An initial definition for religion must be given and it should be applicable to fertility cult which itself is very ambiguous and as a pragmatic cult most doubtful. At the Ashmolean museum in Oxford I was looking at the Cypriot (from Kition) terracotta statuettes which are dated to ca. 700–600 BC (Myres and Ohnefalsch-Richter 1899: cat. Nos. 5501–5569). They are medium sized, frontally standing human figures, either male or female playing a tambourine, harp, or carrying various objects like a bird, a calf, a flower, a dish of cakes or a bowl of wine. Two females carry an infant in their arms. These statuettes represent votaries, they do not show deities or indicate a deity as 'nursing mother' even if a female is shown with her baby. They might have been religious objects, but they are clearly not cult idols (Myres and Ohnefalsch-Richter 1899: 153). This opinion gets support from A. Pilali-Pa-

pasteriou's study on Cretan figurines; she states (1989: 97): "The main offerings in peak sanctuaries in Crete ca. 2000 BC were male and female figurines. Their size, gesture, dress and absence of other specific attributes strengthen the suggestion that they represent votaries and not cult idols". These objects could be counted as ideotechnic artifacts which have their primary functional context in the ideological component of the social system. Formal diversity in the structural complexity and functional classes of these items must generally be related to changes in the structures of the society, and hence the explanations must be sought in the local adaptive situation (cf. Binford 1962: 219–220).

The third argument for the existence of early cult lies in architectural remains. It is connected with the idea of continuity, but deserves a notion of its own. Excavated prehistoric buildings with orientation in relation to the later temples (usually Archaic or Classical) have often been seen as probable early cult places. These buildings are usually very modest, clay huts, small or medium sized stone or wooden structures, and often at least some of the objects that have turned up in them have been defined as votives. For example, in K. Fagerström's (1988) corpus which is collected from over 30 sites in Greece, 28 architectural structures from 24 sites have been considered to have been sacred ones. Fagerström correctly criticizes this in seven cases (Eleusis, Heroon of Akademos and oval structures in Athens, Tsikkalario, Xombourgo and Antissa) (Fagerström 1988: 21–97, esp.160–164). The same concerns the architectural structures found recently at Tegea in the Peloponnese underneath the Archaic and late Classical temples: modest Geometric buildings are defined as primitive temples, since their position, precisely underneath of two later temples, and the exact east-west orientation confirms that they are early links in a long architectural temple tradition (Østby 1994: 58–59).

As a model for these 'early temples' have been seen the small terracotta houses with sharply ridged roof found for example in Agrive Heraion close to Argos and Perachora, dated to ca. 750–700 BC. They are claimed to be temple models given as votives to Hera (on the models in general, see Payne et al. 1940: 42–52; Markman 1951: 259; Biers 1996: 113–114; Lawrence and Tomlinson 1996: 62). But why temples? The conventions of Greek temple architecture developed slowly at the end of the Geometric era (see p. 202 above), and it should be remembered that a traditional Greek temple was a building with cella, pronaos, columns and a large door turned usually towards the rising sun, constructed for a god but it was not, however, necessarily an edifice for ritual and cult (Roux 1984: 159). The clay

models show no more indications of the Doric order than any other primitive building (Coulton 1988: 38–39). Equally well the terracotta house models found in the sanctuaries of Hera could be models of ordinary houses, they are not necessarily temple models (Fagerström 1988: 155–157).

As a predecessor of the Greek temple is sometimes seen the *megaron*, a Mycenean type of great royal hall (on the *megaron* in general, see Dinsmoor 1985: 6–18; Lawrence and Tomlinson 1996: 44–55). Chieftain's dwellings are thus seen as early cult centers. W.B. Dinsmoor (1985: 8) writes: "An Aigaean king furthermore was a predecessor of the Greek god. ... The Greek temple, if not the linear descendant of the Mycenean palace, at least had an ancestry in common." But there is a problem: if a chieftain's dwelling was a temple or a cult place, was the chief a leader or a priest of a cult? Was he/she him/herself worshipped as a god? If his/her dwelling was a sacred place where ritual meals took place, was a cult, then, very elitist in character excluding common people? Was the leader of a community worshipped in Prehistoric Greece in these small houses at the same locations where the Olympian gods were worshipped later on? It is possible, like A. Mazarakis-Ainian suggests (1997: 378), that approximately from the late Helladic period until at least the middle of the eight century BC and in certain places even later the rulers presumably had competence in religious matters. But it should be remembered as well that the ruler's dwelling was not regarded as a cult building as such: there was no cult image in it and the character of "votives" may be interpreted in many ways (cf. Mazarakis-Ainian 1997: 378–379; see, with different tone, Mazarakis-Ainian 1988: 105–119). We must, however, remember that it is very hard to define 'a priest' in Greek religion even of the Archaic and Classical times. Ritual meal is not the only possibility for meals including animal meat if it took place in a house where the ruling elite gathered. We should remember that a large or perhaps a 'monumental' building found at a site did not necessarily serve as a temple. Why should cult places be permanent over the centuries if there is no exceptional natural phenomenon to differentiate it radically from the surroundings or if the finds do not clearly justify it? It is noteworthy that within architectural remains there are some other factors used as indicators for sacrality of a building besides those mentioned above, but all of them need to be looked at very critically: Apsidal end of the discovered Geometric building was sometimes regarded proof enough favoring the identification of the remains as sacral building (see e.g. Lamb 1931–32: 45). But apsidal form was equally common both in domestic and sacral architecture (Fagerström 1988: 77, 80). Instead, the total

absence of internal divisions and extreme elongation in relation to building's width are much better indicators of sacral functions (Mazarakis-Ainian 1997: 277) since they mark the difference from the ordinary. The following structures may serve as examples: the so called sanctuary of Apollo in Eretria from ca. 750 BC (Schefold 1972: 357–359), the so called 'Heraion' on Samos from the Late Geometric period (Buschor and Schleif 1933: 146–168; Fagerström 1988: 85–86, fig. 87; Mazarakis-Ainian 1997: fig. 387) and the so called temple of Artemis Orthia in Sparta from ca. 700 BC (Boardman 1963: 1–7; Fagerström 1988: 31–31, fig. 11; Mazarakis-Ainian 1997: fig. 276). The existence of hearth/s is seen as an indication of sacral function as well. But there is actually no need to impose a sacrificial function on something which is needed in every household (Fagerström 1988: 130–131, 162; Mazarakis-Ainian 1997: 280). Instead, the existence of an altar would be a better indicator of a cult. It must be remembered, however, that an altar as a necessary part of a temple also is a convention belonging especially to traditional Greek temples, and since we do not exactly know how cults functioned in the Geometric period, we should not always expect an altar. Moreover, benches are found frequently inside the remains of Geometric buildings and are often interpreted as serving cult purposes (votives laid on them, participants sitting on them etc.), but they could have been used for habitational purposes instead or along with the cultic ones (Mazarakis-Ainian 1997: 280–281; Fagerström 1988: 133–137). A building found under a later temple or a large building could equally well be seen simply as a meeting place for people, a place where the surrounding communities gathered, exchanged items, ran fairs, or a location for entertainment, an early 'restaurant', a big farm house, a storage building. Are all the important buildings always cult buildings? Those who say yes usually draw their conclusion from the general belief that prehistoric (thus primitive) societies were more occupied with religious activities than modern (thus civilized) ones (cf. Wasilewska 1994: 68–69).

After criticizing these conventions I have to make some methodological proposals for defining an early cult. They have to be based on the notion that material culture bears meanings and signs construct the system of understanding.

Sign systems have an inherent tendency to polysemy (sets of different meanings) and a condensation of meaning within an individual signifier. The same material sign may change its meaning across time and space depending mainly on context. There are different material significations. Signs do not occur in isolation but always in paradigmatic series and syntagmatic chains where their meanings

depend on similarities or differences from others and these series and chains cross-cut and inform each other (Comstock 1984: 310–314; Tilley 1991: 96). R. Jacobson (1958: 89) writes: "Paradigmatic series has its basis in a recognition of similarity whereas syntagmatic chain is one based on contiguity or a set of spatial relations." In the language of material culture we can distinguish a paradigmatic series as being made up by relations of affinity vertically and a syntagmatic chain as horizontal relations between different entities (Tilley 1991: 22). Syntagmatic connections are important since they stress the possibility of difference, they are based on contiguity rather than similarity, on metonymic rather than metaphoric connections. "Metaphorical relations between words give us verbal facility; metonymic connections add to our knowledge", writes W.R. Comstock (1984: 512). C. Tilley states that "meaning is not seen, it is production" (Tilley 1991: 14; also Barrett 1991: 2). With early cult the search for cult does not take us very far. Rather the very openness to other possibilities in interpretation must be carried along through the process since the greatest danger to truth is in the minds of excavators of a cult place (Alexander 1970: 181). Ideally, in addition to telling only what possibly happened, an archaeologist must relate also the activities which did not occur (Thomas 1974: 3; Barrett 1991: 2–3). The definition of religion emerges from openness, openness also to discover something non-religious. This means that for discovering religion there has to be an initial definition of it, and it must be open in character: it is a process of continuous interrogation rather than a definitive answer provided in advance of the empirical research that it initiates. It is a point of departure, not a conclusion. Definitions of religion are themselves the products of 'texts' (in the wide sense of the word) that have proceeded and initiated them (Comstock 1984: 310).

In the case of 'establishing' prehistoric religion in Greece we must have at least some initial minima criteria for religion. But these criteria are connected to each other by family resemblances, i.e. the same elements found in different entities: the members of the family are separate, but share a common element which bind them to the same family. There is necessarily not one characteristic that every member of the family must have (see Anttonen 1996: 22–23; Pakkanen 1996: 18–19; Pyysiäinen 1996: 11; with references to the Wittgensteinian principle of family resemblances in religion, see McDermott 1970: 390–395; Bianchi 1972: 25; Bianchi 1994: 119–120; Smart 1979: 26–28; Hicks 1989: 3–5.). I regard those criteria of prehistoric cult referred to above as insufficient: isolated objects seen as votives is too vague an argument, and continuity, which is connected to ar-

chitectural remains, is often hazardous. Instead, I would suggest that when researching a possible prehistoric cult place in Greece, the archaeologist (hopefully with the help of cultural scientists) would look for distinctive, unusual, out-of-every-day elements and objects to come closer to religion which is always something different from the ordinary, marked by borders whether symbolic (rituals) or concrete (physical structures) in nature to separate its sphere from the ordinary (*horos*-stones of later temene, for example, serve as such in a concrete way). Natural boundaries in the landscape, in Greece particularly water courses, always seem to have been important in defining the margins of sacred space (cf. Tilley 1996: 174). But in the nature many boundaries are ambiguous in the sense that they both connect and separate (Leach 1979: 33–35, 72; Pyysiäinen 1996: 21). Building of religious monuments, on the other hand, marks the ritual and mythological significance of a particular place. They stabilize cultural memory of a place by marking also resource of power (Tilley 1994: 204–205). Common vessels, pottery for every-day use, even isolated figurines do not necessarily serve as votives if they are found in a place which could have been an ordinary settlement. This means, of course, that a large area must be excavated in order to get a proper knowledge of the surroundings. (A possible alternative is to use non-destructive archaeological methods such as ground penetrating radar, as has been done often in recent projects.) A building with unusual plan and finds or a building underneath a later sanctuary may not be defined as a cult place without knowledge of the nature of surrounding buildings and finds from them. There must have been in the past some symbolic markers for dividing sacred from profane, but unfortunately they have often vanished during the millennia or they are so are different in nature that it is impossible for us to obtain their meaning any more. Spatial ordering is mapped in terms of space, and thus ritualization is connected with territorial distinction-making. Various habitation groups mark their boundaries when they form their own society in a certain place and developed their own social, economic and political modes to act (Anttonen 1996: 13). Religion and ritual are situated in relation to the social and ecological settings; it is not to be separated as a sphere of its own.

I have used above the word "establishing" prehistoric religion intentionally. All knowledge emerges from investigator's place within the tradition of understanding which itself is derived from the past and from which prejudices arise. What a subject regards as worth knowing is itself determined by research traditions (Barrett 1991: 4; Tilley 1991: 115–116). Jonathan Smith (1982: xi) writes:

> ...While there is a staggering amount of data, of phenomena, of human experiences and expressions that might be characterized by one culture or another, by one criterion or another, as religious – *there is no data for religion*. Religion is solely the creation of the scholar's study. It is created for the scholar's analytic purposes by his imaginative acts of comparison and generalization. Religion has no independent existence apart from academy.

The truth is that in archaeology interpretations are multivocal: different interpretations of the same field are possible, and their plurality is suited to differing purposes and desires since there is no definitive account of the past as it was (Shanks and Hodder 1995: 5). Whether man makes his gods or the gods make man, but in the case of prehistoric religion in Greece it is the scholars that make 'religion' since we do not *find* religion, we only choose to view something as religion (cf. Comstock 1984: 504; Pyysiäinen 1996: 11). Being aware of paradigms and prevailing conventions of interpretation is desirable and opens the possibility to change it, if needed.

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ANNE PUURONEN

Understanding Anorexia

An Hermeneutic Approach as an Methodological Alternative for the Field of Contemporary Anorexia Research

Introduction

Theories of anorexia nervosa have mainly been dominated by psychiatry and concentrate upon its physiological aspects, both in diagnosis and treatment (see f. e. Andersen, Morse, and Santmyer 1986; Phal et al. 1985; Sharp and Freeman 1993; Theander 1970). This has led to a search for organic causes behind anorectic conditions, instead of seeing it as molded and shaped both by the individual and the socio-cultural context. It can be said also, that as a result of the Cartesian split between body and mind, the dominant diagnosisation of anorexia has led to the inference that anorexia can be 'objectively' measured and cured. This "medicalisation" has been an impediment to a more complete conceptualisation of the experience of discipline and of the ascetic modes of action in anorexia. My intend is to approach anorexia as lived process. The focus is not in explaining what cause anorexia, but is centered on the contents of living experience as such. Thus, I propose a phenomenological approach to anorexia as a methodological alternative compared to the dominant medico-psychological approaches to anorexia of today.

I see that anorexia lies at the intersection between the biological and the social, making it an obvious topic for cultural investigation. My theoretical interest is to approach anorexia as a subject's meaningful way to make sense of her/his world[1]. With the help of a phenomenological-hermeneutic approach to anorexia, my intention is to

[1] The name of my unpublished Master thesis in English is: *"Eating is needless": Anorexia as subjective and cultural Experience* (Puuronen 1996). I interviewed four anorectic women for my work. When I argue something about anorexia or an anorectic experience in this article my views are based on these interviews.

show how the "member's perspective" is able to supplement the prevailing medico-psychological understanding of anorexia. The phenomenological approach to anorexia starts with subject lived experience. That is to say, that a phenomenological approach takes the experiences of the anorectic into account and is able to consider and situate them in the social, cultural and historical context in which they occur. Hermeneutically speaking anorexia is not so much an object, but it is about world orientation. Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological theory of embodiment in his book: *"The Phenomenology of Perception"* 1962 will be crucial in my analysis of anorexia. Before I take a brief look at the contemporary anorexia research and specify my research attitudes in relation to them, let me say few words about Merleau-Ponty's insights of the human embodiment.

Body or mind or the living body as self

Merleau-Ponty has developed a conception of human embodiment which attempted to overcome the duality between mind and body. For Merleau-Ponty the consciousness is embodied by itself. According to Merleau-Ponty it is not possible to talk about human perception without a theory "embodiment" as the "perspective" from which observation occurs. As he writes:

> The world cannot be possessed as an object, but rather, it is a natural setting of, and field for, all my thoughts and all my explicit perceptions. Without this direct and pre-scientific experience of the world, without this primary perception, all the symbols of science would be meaningless. Perception is essentially pre-reflective[2]; it does not belong to the same category as the syntheses represented by judgement, acts or predictions. At the same time, this perception is no mere physiological faculty, it is intrinsically active and intentional. To move one's body is to aim at

[2] Human intentionality, in Merleau-Ponty's sense, grows from a pre-reflective level. According to Reuter, "the sense of Merleau-Ponty's pre-reflective (or sometimes unreflective) resembles, to some extent, the psychoanalytic concept of the unconscious, but there are also important differences between those terms. The pre-reflective is not something "hidden in my unconscious" (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 381). We are aware of the pre-reflective, but this awareness is unreflected. Also, Merleau-Ponty's concept of pre-reflective does not have the connotations of unconscious instincts or drives, which are connected to the psychoanalytic concept of the unconscious". Reuter 1995: 3.

> things through it. This means that the body is intentional, and intentionality is not primarily mental directedness, but a directed bodily posture (Merleau-Ponty 1962: viii, x, xi, 102, 139).

Subjectivity (qua sentience) and materiality (qua sensible being) are two sides of the same flesh for Merleau-Ponty: two aspects of the body-subject. The concept of the body-subject by Merleau-Ponty offers a level, in which subjectivity and materiality are united. Merleau-Ponty understands embodied subjectivity to be a strictly institutional and historical order. His "subject" is always already situated and decentered in relation to a socio-historical world (Merleau-Ponty 1962; quoted in Crossley 1993: 4, 12). Further, according to Merleau-Ponty it is not possible to talk about human perception without a theory "embodiment" as the "perspective" from which observation occurs. In other words, our perception of everyday reality depends upon a "lived body". From this perspective, human beings can be seen to have a "dual nature": *"Leib"* and *"Körper"*. Leib refers to the animated living body and Körper refers to the objective, exterior body (Merleau-Ponty 1962; quoted in Bendelow and Williams 1996: 147).

Contemporary anorexia research and research attitudes

There are two main perspectives on anorexia from a medical point of view: bio-medical and psychological and both of these approaches are subdivided. These perspectives usually consider anorexia as a psychiatric, object-like disease of a teenager girl. The main interest of psychological approaches has been to find an organic cause behind anorexia. However, if some phenomenon is a result caused by some other phenomenon, from the phenomenological point of view it cannot be asked what is the cause of this phenomenon before the phenomenon itself is understood. The dominant medical diagnosisation of anorexia is concentrated mainly upon its purely physiological aspects. And it presupposes that anorexia can be 'objectively' measured and cured. Medical perspectives on anorexia are, however, also insufficient, mainly because biological and psychological explanations do not consider lived experiences in themselves. In relation to this the first research attitude is whether an anorectic subject and an attending physician have a real dialogue? Are treatment regimens of anorexia in hospitals able to reach and understand the real anorectic experience in itself? I will take a hospital treatment of anorectic patients as an example here. I will use a "thought experiment" on treat-

ment regimens of anorectic patients in hospitals as a way to make instantly clear what a phenomenological approach has to offer to dominant theories of anorexia. The focus here is in the concrete context — in the process of being anorectic — which gives discipline its meanings.

There is much research of anorexia also done from Cultural studies and Women's Studies points of views. Cultural studies and women's studies today have primarily approached anorexia on a discursive level. That is to say, that these perspectives have mainly been focused on the question of how cultural representations affect/are readable on the surface of the female body. The main statement of these approaches is that anorexia illustrates a protest against the representations of femininity in western culture. These perspectives on anorexia which start with representations are a very important analysis of anorexia, but which leave some pieces missing — namely the real experience itself. From a phenomenological point of view one has to concentrate first on the living anorectic experience in itself, and only when it is understood can it be compared to another cultural phenomenon. Thus the second research attitude is what is the anorectic experience in itself? How is anorexia understood as "subject-centered", but also discussed in terms of the broader cultural context at the same time? As mentioned above, anorexia research in cultural studies and women's studies today are only mainly dealing with the latter question, because of their primary textual approaches to anorexia. A phenomenological perspective by emphasizing the subject's lived experience can serve as an antidote in these approaches and as such it offers tools to do a cultural analysis of anorexia which starts from the individual's experiences rather than representations. It provides room for understanding also some of the empowering meanings attached to anorexia — meanings which go beyond the somewhat tired statements that anorectic girls are rebelling (against their mothers, femininity, etc.). Next I will turn to consider what a phenomenological approach to anorexia then has to offer to dominating theories of anorexia.

In this context, my aim is to consider the link between pollution and protection — that is, the anorectic protecting her/his body from polluting food. I have named this link an "axis of discipline", which first, has historical links, second, is continuous with the contemporary cultural climate and third, is subject-centered.

Self, self-control and controlled self

Approving the ambiguity of anorectic discipline

This section is focused on anorexia as a process in which one's living situation becomes one of discipline. Thus, I turn to consider how discipline is lived by an anorectic subject on the level of identity, which is not given from outside a person. In this context, I stress that it would be useful to see anorectic experience of discipline more as an ambiguous state of being — as a some kind of paradoxical identity (or self), in which an anorectic person perceives herself/himself as a master and a slave of discipline at the same time. The focus is on anorexia as a process in which one's life becomes a life of radical self-discipline. In this context, my aim is to consider the link between pollution and protection — that is, the anorectic protecting her/his body from polluting food. I have named this link an "axis of discipline". It has two dimensions, order and chaos. I will argue that there can be found both oppressing and empowering meanings in the process of being anorectic.

It is often noted by medical personnel and anorectic patients' parents that anorectics set themselves against the hospital treatment which has been given to them. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological theory of embodiment can be very useful when trying to understand the two-dimensional resistance carried out by an anorectic subject. When an anorectic person is admitted to hospital she/he is often in very critical state. Her/his weight is usually so low that her/his life is in danger. Often there are no other choices available than to limit and minimize all kind of exercise and moving of the anorectic patient. In extreme cases a nasal hose is placed. At the same time an anorectic person is resisting the treatment given to her/him. In this acute situation, though treatment regimens are against an anorectic's own will, they are ethically argued under the circumstances. Treatment regimens are morally imperative for the sake of an anorectic person's life. But after the acute treatment of an anorectic person, more consideration is needed. What is this phenomenon really? What then is the acute treatment of it? When it is noted that anorectic persons set themselves against the hospital treatment, it has to be asked what it means. What is the sense of resistance carried out by an anorectic subject? There are three point in example: control, self-control and controlled self.

First, the conception of control is considered in relation to the agency of an anorectic subject. On treatment regimens in hospitals an interest is focused mainly on how much an anorectic is eating and

how much her/his body-weight will rise during her/his treatment. At the same time, I will stress, these are the same things that anorexia is about. An anorectic controls her eating and observes her weight all the time. Moreover one's whole existence in anorexia is full of limitations, denying and determining. It is to be supposed that a treatment in this form using the same punishing elements that anorectic control is about, rather than sustaining a process against anorexia, will sustain one's anorectic ways of thinking and anorectic patterns of acting. In this particular stage there are two wills against each other and they both consider anorexia an anorectic body as an object. It should be noted that an anorectic person is not senseless, nor a passive object of treatment, but an acting subject. She/he is a subject, who acts, who communicates and uses and creates meanings.

The second matter is self-control. One of my interviews was a 28-year-old woman, Leena. She has had anorexia for ten years. We talked about the body and she said, that: *I am not aware of my body, I don't know what my body is like, I don't know my body.* If this process is considered from the point of Meleau-Ponty's theory of embodiment, it can be seen, that the question is about alienation of one's own body. An anorectic body has here become alien to an experiencing anorectic subject, because it has became a senseless object for her/him. This protected anorectic body is perceived as an object of control. Leena has lived with anorectic denying and controlling for many years. I argue that during this process this anorectic woman has lost her direct contact to her own body. The body here is not anymore the "living body", "phenomenological body", that Merleau-Ponty describes, but it has became as the object-body to be controlled. Using Merleau-Ponty's ideas about embodiment, it can be said that there is no more a direct experience of one's own body. A pre-reflective contact to one's own body — a real self, is replaced with controlling I, with self-control. The self-control becomes as an end in it self.

Thirdly, we have to face the paradox of anorexia. Leena continues: *The body is something which is not allowed to exist, sometimes I wonder whether even I myself exist either.* I consider first the first part of Leena's sentence. From the phenomenological point of view we have to ask who doesn't allow. It is to be noted that Leena uses the passive form when she describes her relation to her own body. In this context, the one is alienated of her own will and moreover an anorectic body becomes like an outer reality to an experiencing subject. This one's own will is experienced as exterior to oneself. As my other informant, 15-year-old Anna said: *It is as if there were some kind of voice, which is ordering me not to eat.* If one no longer experi-

ences that she/he is a controlling I, but still, there surely is someone who is controlling one, the question is, who then is this controlling I, but which is no longer experienced as me?

We shall return to Leena's sentence and concentrate especially on its last part, *...sometimes I wonder whether even I myself exist either."* What is this controlling I which is perceived as exterior and not me, but which at the same time is an anorectic person's self? The paradox of anorexia is that one's own will is experienced as exterior, my will is not my will. Is that what Leena means when she asked *Whether even I myself exist either?* This experience of not existing is that one has lost her/his direct contact, experience of her/his own living body, of herself/himself, in the world. I have named this dilemma an "ambiguous living situation". That is, anorexia is about denying and that denying has double meaning in the anorectic condition. I deny and I am denied. An anorectic subject is simultaneously both the one who punishes and is punished, is simultaneously both a master and a slave of her own discipline.

I see that this perspective on anorexia opens the possibility to consider self- discipline and self-control also from the point of view of asceticism. If we take an anorectic discipline as in the sense of Merleau-Ponty more a matter of being-in-the-world, a matter in which one's life becomes the life of radical discipline, we are able to understand, that as such, discipline reorganizes one's lived space and time, one's relations with others and with oneself. Yet, at the same time from the perspective of comparative religion, there opens a door to approach the anorectic "axis of discipline" on the hermeneutic level, in which anorectic discipline gives rise to the quest for meaning, understanding and interpretation. In the long run, it would be fruitful to consider anorexia more as a paradoxical identity which can be understood than as a disease with some cause. There should be more concentration on how control is perceived as me, as identity, which is not given from an outside a person, but which constitutes mostly passively by acting inside an anorectic system of giving meanings. Next I turn to my second research attitude, to a cultural analysis which starts with the subjects' lived experiences.

A cultural analysis which starts with a subject's lived experience

I think, that anorexia is able to illustrate and reflect more widely our relation to our bodies as modern-day and some of the central threats

of our western culture at the same time. One crucial aspect in anorexia is to perceive one's own body as object.

It has been stated, that especially on the level of the body the surrounding contemporary culture and the world are perceived increasingly more alien. Artificial human relations in the net, having sex in virtual reality and the daily "interaction" with vending, food, candy, coin etc. machines just cannot be without any effect on one's sense of one's own body. Recently there has been discussion about chemical "additives", such as astro-colors in food. At the moment issues like gene-manipulated food, hormone meat and BSE are under discussion in Finland and in other European countries. In front of news about, for example, AIDS, ebola-virus and environmental pollution one may often be alarmed about one's own body and health. As Susan Bordo writes in her book: *"Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western culture, and the Body,"* anorexia calls our attention to our modern fear of loss of control over our future (Bordo 1993: 139).

As mentioned above, one of my informants described her relation to her own body: *"I dont know my body."* Sociologist Chris Shilling writes that the question of what the body is, is a serious question of the present time also much largely — namely on the fields of science of medicine, gene-technology, plastic surgery and sports science. It is typical that we all are in confusion with our own bodies and the concept of the body nowadays (Shilling 1993: 3–4). I would like to add to this that through anorexia we are able to see perhaps even in too clear a way what is the end of a pursuit of full fitness and complete efficiency in our lives. It is somewhat paradoxical to perceive how the idealization of "healthful living" reaches perfection in anorexia.

Sociologist Morag MacSween considers the body as vehicle and environment in her book: *"Anorectic Bodies: A Feminist and Sociological Perspective on Anorexia nervosa."* She writes that the concept of the body is at the center of the "fitness boom" of the 1980s and 1990s and fitness boom has been taken up by capital, mass media and the state, and its market is expanding (MacSween 1993: 154). Sociologist Bryan S. Turner aptly calls this fitness boom of our times and its practices in his book*: "Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory"* "forms of secular asceticism" or "calculating hedonism" and argues also that anorexia is one of them (Turner 1984: 201, 205). For Turner the healthy body is, "the basis of the good life." As he states, "we become fit for consumption and have a positive duty to be fit" (Turner 1984: 172, 221).

Therefore, it would be fruitful to consider anorexia more in how it is on the continuum of our "healthy living", rather than as deviant or outside of it, anorexia and overweight belong to the same health-

discourse. It is important to notice that this process of "not taking anything inside" in anorexia is far from being only "psycho-biological regression" or a "flight back into psycho-biological childhood" of a teen-ager girl alone (see e.g. Crisp 1974), but it constitutes more in relation to the social world at present. I am not saying that it is wrong to choose to live healthy, or that there is information available on what is good and bad for health. I would like to stress the idea that anorexia is not so much about either health or sickness, but rather ambiguously or contradictory about these both at the same time. It is important to notice that anorexia and overweight belong to the same health-discourse. We should have more conversation about what the contents of our health-concept is, what we mean by it. At the moment, from the anorexia point of view it seems to me that the reverse side of being as the best example of our health culture — concern with bodily health — is a self-destructive project. What should we think about this?

It is interesting to see that there are many other cultural phenomena of the same type as anorexia. However, from the phenomenological perspective it would not be appropriate to seek direct sameness for these phenomena. That would only cloud the uniqueness of an anorectic experience. If we mention other cultural phenomena in which elements central to anorexia are also included, still, an anorectic experience would not be derived from them. It has to be understood first what an anorectic experience is in itself, and only after this it can be considered how it is comparable to other cultural phenomena. There are two particularly useful feminist theorists from this perspective, Marion Young and Kathy Davis, whose works I have found relevant here. Young is a phenomenologist who draws upon Merleau-Ponty and de Beauvoir. She describes bodily phenomena which are full of tensions, like pregnancy, ball throwing and breast feeding (Young 1990). Davis deals with discourses and practices of the female beauty system in the context of cosmetic surgery in her book *"Reshaping the Female Body, The Dilemma of Cosmetic Surgery"* 1995. As distinct from the contemporary feminist scholarship analysis of cosmetic surgery Davis is able to deal with both willingness and with criticism towards cosmetic surgery stated by those women who have decided to have cosmetic surgery (Davis 1995: 54–64). Although Young and Davis do not apply their theoretical conceptions to anorexia, I have found their analysis interesting to compare to this context. Many of the points these theorists make resonate with what I am saying/intend to say about anorexia.

Summary

Anorexia is often seen as a paradoxical state both among medical personnel and ordinary people. This paradoxical feature of anorexia is often regarded as an obstacle for understanding anorexia. What about a shift of perspective from which we approach anorexia? Instead of considering paradoxical sides of anorexia as an impediment there is the possibility to recognize them as the most peculiar condition of anorexia. If we consider the body of an anorectic person as an intersection in which the subject's relationship to social reality will be materialized and verified, we are able to see first how accurate a picture of the dual meanings, double bindings and paradoxical commitments of our present culture and its relation to a woman's body anorexia will draw up. Also, because the fact is that anorexia is a predominantly "women's" illness we have to take in account that the construction of subjectivity and in this context the construction of a lived anorectic experience of discipline, is not a gender-neutral process.

I think that anorexia is able to illustrate and reflect more widely our relation to our bodies as modern-day and some of the central threats of our western culture at the same time. It can be said for example, that one aspect in anorexia is to perceive one's own body as object. Anorexia requires us to consider the concept of the body of nowadays in a more problematic way. There can be raised for example an anorectic way to perceive one's own body as a separated, pure territory without polluting food or/and as a sacred private domain which has to be protected with extreme self-discipline regimes. From the cultural studies point of view, it can be stated that this surely is what anorexia is about, and as such it is not so far away from all of our personal fears towards global threats, like AIDS, BSE, and pollution — namely one's wish to dress within a protection-film under the circumstances of our times. These phenomena belong to the same cultural discourse/reality.

Finally, if we consider anorexia not so much as disease, which is an attack on one's body, but as an identity, I think we are also able to make a shift in seeing the experience of discipline not so much as an symptom of anorexia, but as a condition that one lives with. According to Merleau-Ponty, the body that is sensitive and in deep communion with its environment is not the biological object-body that science describes but is the "living body" or the "phenomenological body". The body is sentient, that is born together with a certain existential environment. It does not just passively receive sense-data but has a unique sensitivity to its environs (Bigwood 1991: 61, 62; Reuter 1995:

23). It can be said that one's living situation in anorexia becomes one of a discipline, becomes one of a denying.

The hermeneutic-phenomenological approach as a methodological starting-point requires that the focus be keep tightly on the experiences of anorectic persons. As methods I have chosen to use essays and interviews. These narratives given by anorectic persons should provide the very basis for my analysis. A phenomenological approach asks what anorexia is of itself. It is able to reduce a phenomenon to itself by putting brackets around all kind of explanations of the phenomenon in question. A phenomenological approach is able to provide concrete insights for those who deal with anorexia in a more practical way — namely physicians, therapists, family members and friends. With the help of a heremneutic-phenomenological approach for its part we are able to have a true dialogue with an anorectic person. What is anorexia in itself as lived reality? I ask this question of myself and my informants. I have presuppositions about anorexia and so does an anorectic person her/himself. The situation is the same when someone is tries to understand a foreign religion. What does this ritual means? In what way it is meaningful for a member of the religion/culture in question? Thus, my desire is to understand anorexia— which can be said is one's experienced world and from which the whole world is perceived — in relation to my own comprehension of world. Through dialogue we are able to have contact. The starting point is that what an anorectic person says has to be taken seriously. During the dialogue I have to ask many times what you meant by that, does it means this? Yes? No. Oh, I see, you meant it in that way! We try to find consensus, an informant and I — we are in a hermeneutic circle, which is never closed, but open for new discussions. Here I would like to end with Hans-Georg Gadamer's words:

> ...We must always look for the real meaning of an utterance... Speaking is not logical deduction; it is, in a way, overcoming the world, and it produces something one has to interpret by the context in the boldest sense. The context here is not only the words but the whole life context.
>
> The context, of course, is never given in its full extend. So interpretation seems to me very demanding, and, of course, a field of philosophical and philological activity. I know just one instance in which the interpretation of speech is not an additional supplemental moment, and in which we go to the essence of the matter themselves: that is dialogue. In dialogue we are really interpreting. Speaking then is interpreting itself. It is the function of the dialogue that in saying or stating something a challenging rela-

> tion with the other evolves, a response is provoked, and the response provides the interpretation of the other's interpretation. In this way we know (an old Platonic insight) that the real mode of givenness of speech starts with dialogue ... Gadamer 1984: 63

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CATHARINA RAUDVERE

Rooms of Their Own. Old Rituals in New Settings

Women between Sufism and Islamic Activism in Contemporary Istanbul

This paper will deal with how rituals, deeply rooted in local tradition, can be used to legitimize new forms of activism in complex modern societies. The empirical material comes from fieldwork in Istanbul, where I have studied a small Muslim women's group over a period of four years. The women have organized their activities in the form of a religious foundation, *vakıf*, offering regular prayer meetings and basic religious education to other women in the vicinity. The women's use of the term *vakıf* comprises both the formal organisation and the meeting place as such. The weekly performance of the repetitive and intense *zikir*-prayer constitutes the core of activities and the teachings of the leading women and their theology is clearly based on sufi, *tasavvuf*, thought. They identify themselves as the keepers of sufi traditions, but without any formal connection to any established order, *tarikat*. Many of the formal aspects of their religious life follow established patterns, but the social and cultural setting in the megacity of Istanbul is a novelty. From the conditions of modern urban life follows a wider complexity in individual intention and interpretation of the rituals.

There is a tendency in mainstream Turkish discourse to regard Muslim women as keepers of a "cultural heritage", instead of seeing them as actively and consciously challenging the definitions of — and points of access to — modernity. The impact of modern living conditions on individual women's lives, that at the first glance from a foreigner seem so "traditional", is very apparent. Today, there are sufficient numbers of well-educated women in Turkey to enable them to negotiate and claim a religious understanding of what modernity should entail. Rapid changes have precipitated the establishment of new discursive traditions in local religious life (Asad 1986).

In the milieu where I have conducted my study, an intricate interplay between what is given by "tradition" and the demands of modern society can be noted at several levels of action. In this essay, I would like to stress the way in which the consequences of the normative spatial separation between men and women is crucial in two ways in relation to the given theme of this conference. The normative separation has direct methodological impact on the conditions of how the fieldwork was planned and directed, as well as how it has affected the theoretical understanding of the construction and legitimacy of performed rituals. The focal point of this discussion will be the understanding of power.

The gendered nature of fieldwork

When encountering Muslim communities as a fieldworker, the relation between gender and access to data and space is apparent. It would simply be unthinkable for a man to conduct the fieldwork I have done. The rooms of the *vakıf* are open exclusively to women. Even when necessary for practical reasons, e.g to allow male workers to enter the premises to carry out maintenance, male presence causes considerable turbulence and the rooms in question are quickly cleared out—not only of women, but also of all their personal belongings. In a few minutes attempts are made to make the room "gender neutral". The women accept seeing, but not being seen.

But being a woman is certainly not a sufficient criterion when approaching a group like this. Nor is it meaningful to claim any essentialistic view of womanhood and expect "women's experiences" to be shared over cultural boundaries. On the contrary, the issue of differences has been at the core of many of our conversations. To me these moments have been some of the most valuable parts of the process of collecting data. In the midst of busy activities in the crowded *vakıf*, we have had some quiet time of reflections over the varying conditions of female human beings, inside and outside Turkey. At its best, this could be described as a critical dialogue. References to "faith" and statements like "only a Muslim can fully understand" became progressively more rare as the fieldwork proceeded. The activities of the group were never surrounded by any secrecy, and I have always been welcome to join the women, on mutually negotiated conditions.

Nevertheless, as a Scandinavian woman I still represent "the West": why do I pay interest in their rituals when I am not a Muslim? From the beginning, I have tried hard openly to declare my intentions with the study, never pretending to be a potential convert.

Instead of trying to become invisible and "melt in", I have attempted not to hide my purpose, and instead try to be what I in fact am: a temporary guest intending to write a book about the women. It can never be denied: they are the objects of my study. According to my view acceptance of this fact is not a hinderance to conducting qualitative interviews. Quite the opposite, this circumstance has developed a relaxed relation, based on interest in difference from both parts, in a study completely dependent on cooperation with the group. My fieldwork has been carried on during several long periods of participation, sharing everyday life as well as major events such as religious and national holidays, public fund-raising meetings, memorial days of the *vakıf* etc.

If, when experiencing the many dilemmas of fieldwork, one looks for advice in the anthropological debates of the last decade the waters are even deeper. With few exceptions, critique of the production of knowledge, rather than the art of fieldwork, has dominated the debate (Moore 1995, 1996). The postmodern emphasis has been on the problem of production of the text "at home", discussing position, location and representativity.

One of the most fruitful attempts to deal with issues of gender and anthropological representation is Lila Abu-Lughod's introduction to *Writing women's worlds* (1992), where she combines her insights in local knowledge with the theoretical understandings of the academia. She writes at length about the "set of theoretical concerns about the politics of representation" (1992: 7). Rather than turning it into a question of the anthropologist's self, Abu-Lughod approaches the problem as issues of ideology.

In an attempt to avoid petrified images and simplistic explanations, the dialogic nature of fieldwork has been stressed over and over again, as discussed some ten years ago by James Clifford: "Understood literally, participant observation is a paradoxical, misleading formula, but it may be taken seriously if reformulated in hermeneutic terms as a dialectic of experience and interpretation" (1988: 34). Initially this was a most needed discussion and critique of naive empiricism, but in some cases the outcome ended in a blind alley of self-reflexivity. However, longterm fieldwork in a more or less limited location is highly dependent on certain strategical events: through what person is the researcher introduced, what networks does the introducer belong to, his/her own loyalties and controversies? After the initial period of mutual interest, the premisses of the study are often shaken, in one way or the other, by incidents that illuminate constallations that were invisible to the fieldworker in the beginning. Although flustering, the process through which these re-

lations are revealed is often one of the keys to a deeper understanding of the field studied.

Fieldwork is as much a provoked situation as a provocative one. Power and power differences work reciprocally and two aspects of the dilemma will be emphasized here. The relationship between the fieldworker and the field itself is an ambiguous matter. Kirsten Hastrup has discussed how female anthropologists have not always been identified as "woman" among the local women, but instead have been categorized as a third gender, a new fieldwork identity, a category of its own. Many studies are witness of the pressures on the fieldworker to conform to local gender norms, and how female researchers are forced to submit to radical changes in dress and behaviour. This has never been the case for me in the present study[1]. I cover my head at the *vakıf* when the women pray and when we visit mosques together. In an urban environment such as Istanbul there is enough social space for an uncovered female academic to dwell among covered women. This freedom for me in a most islamistic mileiu is part of the same structural changes that have exposed new fora for religiously active women.

More crucial in relation to my work has been the discussion of power relations connected to the authority of ethnographic description, and the awareness of how knowledge is always situated—and thereby gendered (Haraway 1988). This, however, is accepted only with Henrietta Moore's warning ringing in my ear: "There is a particular danger in discussing situated knowledges: in acknowledging the importance of alterity and diffraction in their constitution and conceptualization, one slips too easily into an unthought dialectic of opposition which is the negativity of difference" (1996: 6). Power and unequal relations in a fieldwork are particularly overt when studying marginalized or poor people, and have been a great concern in anthropological debate. Solidarity work with a politically sensitive attitude has been an important part in the development of feminism as a political strategy as well as the academic construction of gender the-

[1] Nevertheless, during my preliminary fieldwork among members of an established sufi order I had experiences similar to Hastrup's (Hastrup 1992). Except for prayer, I was invited to stay in the men's part of the lodge but my interest in the activities of the women was not always appreciated. In these encounters I experienced that I was defined not only in a third gender, but also a third sex, since the rules of spatial separation were overturned. I was urged to take the most honourable seat during the dinners: next or close to the *şeih* himself in this entirely male room. Therefore my relation to the women upstairs was fragmentary and filtered from the beginning.

ory as an analytical tool. Feminists and gender-oriented researchers have attempted to develop more qualitative fieldwork along with experiments in "empowering methods" of representating their analyses (Wolf 1995: 25 f). Voicing has been one of the key-terms and seen as the bridge between political struggle and theorizing. "My wish to listen to others is not simply a kind of liberal impulse to listen to everyone. Rather, it is to contribute to a creation of a theory which is not blind to difference" Morwenna Griffiths writes in *Feminisms and the self* (1995: 32). In these emancipatory projects, the loyal attitude was for a long time frequent in feminist anthropology "for the [feminist] ethnographer that means being aware of domination in the society being described and in the relationship between the writer (and readers) and the people being written about" (Abu-Lughod 1993: 5). To some extent the answer to many of the critical questions raised, has been attempts to write from the inside, dangerously close to essentialism. Kirin Narayan, herself an "insider", has forcefully argued that neither inside nor outside can compensate the "quality of relations" and long term field studies (1993: 671). Furthermore she sensitively remarks that the very conviction of the existence of insiders and outsiders rests on the conception of "us" and "them" and the gap between. The post-structuralist critique has questioned simplifying political solutions, signifying a shift from a wish to change the world to a discussion of the construction of worlds where either-or is replaced by both-and.

The extensive focus on representation is likewise met by other forms of severe criticism. Karla Poewe writes: "Fieldwork assumes a metonymic structure, when it is experienced by the anthropologist as the actualization of the cultural schema or 'the world' of the other in the anthropologist's life and world view through a series of happenings" (1993: 193). She distinguishes between two types of ethnographies: experimental (focusing on language and text) and experiental (the anthropologist's self as a source) and expresses her fear of what will come out of the blurred metonymic link between observable reality and the analytical text.

Every fieldwork is a unique situation based on an interplay between closeness and distance. All of us who have been involved in fieldwork know that there are a number of problems relating to responsibility and respect. The problem goes in two directions: respect towards the people from whom we are learning and clarity towards the academic reader, as stressed by Lila Abu-Lughod in her intention to "write against culture" (1992: 6ff). Her position is a theoretical stand against cultural essentialism as well as against cultural relativism. By means of giving us individual women's full-length stories,

Abu-Lughod avoids generalizations by organizing them in categories known to the academic reader. Because of this way of telling, her book is neither a collection of short-stories nor a stereotype, but a thorough analysis of differences between women in a relatively small community. The living conditions are to a high extent shared, but the individual interpretations of the hardships of life differ.

Doing fieldwork on rituals draws us closer to some central questions about representation and positionality. Is it necessary to join a ritual to be able to give a full-fledged account and analysis of it? Is the only alternative being a cold-eyed observer who documents quantitative data through every possible technical medium?

Rituals and power

For the women of the *vakıf* keeping up the given gender roles, especially the covering of the female body, is the major icon of loyalty to the larger Muslim community. At the same time "decent cloths", *tesettür*, is a public demonstration of resistance against mainstream secular society. The rhetorical striving for modesty (*adep*) has developed as the foremost method of gaining legitimacy to form alternatives to conventional religious life. When encountering the women in Istanbul, I have been puzzled by the question: how do they accomplish the balance between the religious demands of modesty (with which they fully agree) and their desire to participate in public activities? I discovered early on during my visits to the group that the joint rituals played a crucial part. Not only inside the group, for the formation of identity and unity, but also externally: in negotiations with Muslim authorities and in the self-presentation of the group. The women favour the rules of restricted behaviour as well as they establish their own restrictions against outside involvement in their group.

There is a growing academic interest in rituals situated in more or less post-modern conditions. Much of the scholarly concern emanates from the experience of the limitations of texual hermeneutics when trying to understand religious practices in late modern societies.

Rituals can fulfill many vital functions within a community as they are communicative and important ways of transmitting tradition and local history. Oral traditions and recited written texts (like songs, prayers and legends) are integrated in the rituals of the *vakıf*. This kind of local knowledge is to a high extent embodied and activated through the physical expressions of rituals; "the constitutive power which is granted to ordinary language lies not in the language itself

but in the group which authorizes it and invests it with authority" (Bourdieu 1977: 21). Hereby rituals give people tools to interpret events and experiences. Rituals are also in many respects emotional and existential. Consequently, they are highly dependent on individual intention and the distinctive uses of symbols. David Kertzer states: "symbols provide the content of ritual /---/ Three properties of symbols are especially important; condensation of meaning, multivocality, and ambiguity" (1988: 11). Regular ritual activities evidently have social dimensions, and especially when studied in an urban setting it is obvious how they offer opportunities to establish networks in the "urban swirl" (Hannerz 1992).

In everyday language the word ritual is often associated with something distant from regular life, with an air of the extraordinary. This view contrasts with that of some anthropologists who tell us that most things we do regularly are rituals. It is not my intention here to solve the contradictions or offer a general definition of ritual, but I would like to point at the fact that there are several important issues to consider before using the term ritual as an analytical category. The criteria for definition and the ideological background and implications of these principles must be considered.

To begin with, the difference between regularized behaviour and ritualization is decisive. Both modes of action are important for the organization of everyday life as Catherine Bell writes: "cultural and situational forms of ritualization are strategies in the repertoire of any moderately socialized person, and one of the most basic of these strategies concerns the degree of ritualization used to distinguish or blur activities" (1992: 206). Although regular, habits do not create meaning by necessity as ritualization does. Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw have taken up Bell's term ritualization and discuss it further in terms of "a qualitative departure from normal intentional character of human action" (1994: 89). Expressions of ritual experience are many times surprisingly homogenous which makes it temptive to use universialistic explanations. It must be remembered that ritual actions are surrounded by given forms, tools and genres that constitute socially and culturally defined procedures, structured by prescription (Bell 1992; Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994).

Personally I am more attracted to broad understandings that do not exclude non-religious rituals. This is not only because my present fieldwork has political implications, but because of the more general problem: where to draw an absolute line if religious life is limited to the realm of the holy? I know from my own material that a specific ritual event, viewed in its full dimensions, is performed in a borderland between what must be considered religous, social as well as po-

litical. Therefore, I want to argue for avoiding transcendental criteria when defining ritual, as has been done by a number of scholars. However, this should not be read as if I deny that there are very important religious aspects of many ritual activities, but I do not think that they should not be used as criteria when outlining what rituals are. To me discussions of people's experiences and expressions of transcendental dimension belong to the results of the analysis, not to the alpha of the definition.

In his book *How societies remember* Paul Connerton uses a very broad definition of ritual, which I have found useful when analysing the rituals in my material. According to Connerton, a ritual is: "a rule-governed activity of a symbolic character, which draws the attention of the participants to objects of thought and feeling, which they hold to be of special significance" (1989: 44).

I would like especially to stress three advantages with Connerton's way of reasoning. First, this definition does not differentiate between various types of rituals, which minimizes the risk that the analysis stops at classification. Secondly, it does not emphasize any difference between religious, political or social rituals. Hereby, the durkheimian distinction between the sacred and the profane is in fact invalidated and more or less rendered meaningless. And when reviewing observations from performed rituals, I consider these aspects not as separate activities, but simultaneously existing qualities in lived lives. Finally, it must also be stressed that Connerton's definition in a most sound way questions the stable form/content distinction. What to the observer is form, ready for classification, is in many cases content to the performer: What is pure form and what is sole content in a *zikir*-ritual?

David Kertzer emphasises the political aspects even more when he provocatively writes in *Ritual, politics and power*: "What is important about rituals, then, is not that they deal with supernatural beings, but rather that they provide a powerful way in which people's social dependence can be expressed" and continues "Paradoxically, it is the very conservatism of ritual forms that can make ritual a potent force in political change" (1988: 9, 12). For the women in the Islamic movement claiming tradition is a forceful way of acting modern.

To return to Connerton's four criteria and apply them very briefly to the *zikir*-ritual performed by the women in Istanbul, it can be noted that their ceremony is certainly a rule-governed activity. It is regulated by tradition and has unchangeably forms of expression. Because of the spiritual hierarchies in the group, knowledge of the rules as well as acceptable innovations are transmitted from the prayer leader to disciples. The rules, however, must not be under-

stood as absolutely stable categories. To avoid solely synchronic analysis and not neglect changes between different ritual events and the influence of surrounding forces and dynamics, negotiations within the group must be stressed. History, in long and short perspective, influences the development of the ritual form. How the participants understand membership in the group is directly connected to how they relate themselves to sufi legendary history and contemporary social change.

Zikir-ceremonies are activities of a symbolic character. They involve an extensive use of symbols. Just to mention a few: Symbols are used to define the room appropriate for *zikir*-prayer, and mark it as a room appropriate for women to pray in. The clothes of the participating women during the ceremonies, all white, mark unity and purity. Some of the dresses are bought in Mecca, connecting their spiritual centre (spatially and ritually) with the absolute centre of the Muslim *Ümmit*. The strong symbolism is also used at a discursive level. The symbols used in songs sung, prayers and legends read, give the ceremony a distinct start and a distinct finale. In a manner of speaking, the symbols open and close the ritual room as well as marking different parts of the ceremony.

The joint bodily movements and the symbols draw, with Connerton's terminology, the attention of the participants to objects of thought and feeling. The repeated divine names and the songs with their suggestive rhythmical choruses evoke both knowledge and emotion. The rhythm is a collective framework under the strict controll of the prayer leader. Hymns, *ilahiler*, are sung to praise the *hoca* (preacher, teacher) of the group who passed away some years ago. His unselfish commitments, his humbleness and loyalty to Muslim values are emphasized as ideals for the members to follow. The hoca was never the leader of any distinct group and the *vakıf* was founded four years after his death. But the memory of him and notes from his sermons and conversations (*sohbetler*) are trusted within the group. References to the life and words of the well-known hoca give legitimacy to the *vakıf* in relation to the surrounding local Muslim community. Thereby, the symbols work as a unifying factor and reinforce the process of creating meaning within the group. Finally, there is the special significance established among the praying women. Participation creates loyalty with the group despite the variations in individual intention. It is within this field that new interpretations of traditions emerge. Among the well-educated young women of the *vakıf* there is capacity and knowledge enough to formulate interpretations, *içtihat*, solidly based in their own reading of the Quran and the hadiths.

The women stress individual experience and spiritual development as the objective of their *zikir*-ritual. At the same time, I have observed a delicate interplay between individual participants and the group as a collective. Early on in my fieldwork I intended to make an analysis of one unique performance, comparable to ethnographic biographies of individual persons, with great emphasis on the details of the particular moment. But instead of studying one specific performance, my strategy has been to view the observed rituals as a strain of events. I have aimed at exposing regularities and change over a longer period, as well as analysing how a sense of continuity is created within the group during this time—not to accomplish any "standardization" of the *zikir* prayer, but to discern the importance of variation in ritual practice and discursive changes.

Islamic rituals can of course be seen from many angles, but in this context I would like to stress the political aspects, i.e. women's actvism inside and outside their *vakf*. Political Islam is often reduced to a question of ideas and social mobilization, limited to discursive analyses. Nevertheless, attention could be drawn to the fact that there are ritual aspects of the appearance of Islam as a political factor, that could be designated the habitus of Islamism. A conflict between sufi groups and Islamism is sometimes emphasized in a way that is not relevant when discussing the situation in Turkey. Islamism in a broad sense is a critique of programmatic kemalist secularisation campaigns and the various groups share the conviction that a better society can be built on Islamic values, united by a vague, but stubborn anti-westernism. But the "return" to religion or the new visibility also include increasing activities in the sufi groups, often with a flavour of being a genuine form of Turkish Islam. The orders form, alongside of the Islamistic Refah Partisi, some of the most important networks for Islamic political work.

In Catherine Bell's discussion, power is a key concept for the understanding of rituals. When defining ritualization, she follows, in a critical manner, the distinctions made by Michel Foucault: "a strategy for the construction of certain types of power relationships effective within particular social organizations" and she continues by asking "Why and when is ritualization an appropriate and effective way of acting?" (Bell 1992: 197) A group such as the women's *vakf* has limited access to public fora, even in the local district. The only possibility was to act from a room of their own, constituted by their ritual activities. Well knowing "that it is ritual and sanctioned practice that is prior and creates 'Muslim space'" (Metcalf 1996: 3).

Gendered space

Space is made holy and exceptional through ritual. Space is never "empty", even in absense of tangible objects it is always full of meaning, and is defined simultaneously at many levels. The rooms of the *vakıf* in an ordinary flat are readable for every visitor and the interpretation is dependent on her/his relation to local knowledge. Ideologically, the members' stress on normative rules and practices of purity tell that the *vakıf* is proper, *helal*, and therefore a woman's place. At the social level the rooms signal that trustworthy keepers of *adep* and *tesettür* dwell here. The women of the *vakıf* only uncover in company with women they known and there is a strict control over who passes the threshold. *Helal* is marked in other ways too: special slippers are used in the bathroom, outdoor shoes are left on the straircase — even a visitor (secular or non-Muslim) unaccustomed to these practices can notice how the merging of inside/outside and pure/impure is thouroughly avoided. In unambiguously proper rooms the women move and act on quite other premisses than in public space. The *vakıf* constitutes an extended "domestic" space, an equivalent to the *haramlık*, women's quarters, of an *osmanlı* household. In the *vakıf* women are in charge of every aspect of life. Finally, at a sensory level the women's meeting-place is connected with sights and sounds (*kible* towards Mecca, calligraphy, songs, recitation from the Quran) that connote what is locally conceived as traditional values.

By giving this essay the title "Rooms of their own" it was my ambition to emphasize the intense work carried out in Muslim women's groups to claim spatial platforms for their engagement. Many pious groups in contemporary Istanbul are conscious of the problems acting as women in a male-dominated community. During the last decade new rooms for community work and local politics have opened up in a very concrete meaning. New forms of small scale organisations have appeared in most urban areas of Turkey. The development of far-reaching non-governmental organizations (NGO:s) is found in religious as well as political communities. Their common feature is mobilisation and formalisation of activism under limited state control (Göle 1996b; Toprak 1996). Although their direct political power is circumscribed, the NGO:s seek political and social influence in local politics and primarily direct their ambitions toward practical problems. A significant component of "Islam's new visibility" in Turkish society comes from the results of the energetic Islamic NGO:s. Most of these small organisations are constructed as foundations, *vakıflar*, which give them public recognition and a structured economy with

possibilities to accumulate capital for sizeable projects. The scale of the charity work is impressive and knowledge of local conditions has made it very effective. Needless to say in the wake of the neo-liberalism of the 80's the replacement of communal responsibilities in general have had political consequences in favour of Islamistic policy making.

When discussing transition and change in practice in the political life of Turkey, a comparison can be made with diasporic Muslim communities in Europe and North America. Barbara Metcalf has noted three characteristics that correspond to the struggle for a Muslim modernity in Turkey (1996: 7ff). First Metcalf mentions an apparent "objectification" which "entails self-examination, judging others and judging oneself". In their educational programmes the women in my study spend a considerable amount of time on quranic interpretations of recent events, local or global. There is also greater concern with Islamic practice and a new interest in normative discourse. Together with "health issues" expositions of moral conduct dominate "women's pages" in Islamic newspapers and magazines and women's TV-shows in the religous channels. Among Istanbul's Islamistic women this is expressed in their outdoor clothing. Most interestingly Metcalf points out that a more dispersed leadership seems to establish new possibilities for women to lead groups. In most cases the women who take the lead serve as icons of the many alternatives to live a religious life.

I have put rooms in the plural in the title, in an attempt to indicate variety and the opportunity of individual choices within the field of Muslim groups. In a more concrete meaning, the new condition prompts a struggle to find space for women's activities. In the contexts of my fieldwork, space is always gendered. It signifies meaning and signals distinct conditions of accessibility.

Generally, for Muslim men the public performace of religion is of utmost importance, i.e. going to a mosque or establishing another ritual space, *namazdergah*. Especially attending the Friday prayer is a public commitment, while women traditionally have carried out their religious duties at home. The mosque, the male public room par preference in the Muslim world, is challenged as women's groups are now asking officials for permission to use the mosques for meetings outside regular prayer hours (Lazreg 1994: 218 f). "Has practice also changed by the embrace of normative patterns — not only more practice but "correct" practice — at the cost of former local customary behavior?" Barbara Metcalf asks (1996: 9). In some Islamistic rhethoric the daily *namaz* is emphasized as the only correct form of prayer (i.e. with quranic authority) at the expense of *zikir* and other

additional forms of prayer. The latter is often reduced to "folk religion", *halk iman*, when not claimed to be superstitious, *batıl itikat*. Apparently the emic definitions of what a ritual is, or should be, are as complicated as the academic. There is an apparent conflict between institutional religious activism, blessed for ages by the secular state (Tapper & Tapper 1991), and the new hybrid forms of organisation, in many cases established by women. Due to the rapid development of local groups, it is not an easy task to discover the areas and arenas of women. Home is no longer the only proper place and the city is big. Many *vakıflar* and other forms of organizations run by women have bought flats and other kinds of meeting places: *helâl* rooms emerge under the strict control of women. The distinct separation between female and male space and between women's and men's social activities becomes the base for Islamic women's supportive projects. A new debate is slowly approaching relating to questions like: to what extent does the separation between the sexes work emancipatory, when is the limit reached where separation is only petrifying hierarchies? Given the conditions of contemporary Istanbul, only a few intellectual Islamistic women approach this complex problem in more general terms and in public debate.

The emphasis on sufi rituals has been very important to the group I am studying. Old rituals have high status in their local community, and are surrounded by rich oral traditions, which give legitimacy to the women's activities. Even in a relatively small district, different groups offer a variety of rituals in their programmes. *Zikir* is not only a pious choice, but also undoubtly part of what is conceived of as national cultural heritage. This link is important in the present political climate, with its strong alliances between religion and nationalism. Not only the Islamistic Refah Partisi mixes Islam and nationalism on their agenda. Several other rightist parties and organizations have taken up this winning concept. Mostly it is through short cut TV-news and pious pamphlets that information about the Muslim world reaches the *vakıf* of my study. Women's role in the Iranian parlamentary elections (May '97), charity work for Bosnia and the taliban of Afghanistan are present on the TV-screen and in sermon rhetoric in many cases serving as a correlate to the understanding of local traditions and circumstances.

The megacity and rapid urbanisation have given rise to new understandings of old rituals. In the contemporary complex society, more and more complicated social relations are established. The impact of globalisation on Islamic world culture is great. The knowledge of life in other Muslim countries is good and the traffic of influence works in both directions. The world of these women is certainly not simple.

The ritualisation of women's activities functions as a tool for empowerment, to gain legitimacy within the Muslim, male dominated community and its traditionalistic conventions, as well as it functions as resistance against mainstream secular society. In this respect, the women are forced into a two front battle. The Islamism that has been visible on the political arena in Turkey has hitherto not been of a radical kind, nevertheless the duties of women in the ideology of the Refah Partisi are not easily defined. No woman is seen in any leading position above local level. Turkish women in general have a very weak parlamentary position and, with few exceptions, Islamic women have fought their way outside the party system.

There are given normative rules in the holy scriptures for female behaviour, but these are not connected to urban life. Women must strech the limits within the given set of rules, *hudut*. The conceptions behind the construction of *helâl* space and how public and domestic space is gendered are formed by the historical utopia, expressed in the Quran and the hadiths. The ambiguous urban situation has created the possibilities for religious women to build up organisations through which they could involve themselves in local society. The rituals at their place make it a proper place to visit.

Individual women themselves experience that they are the battleground of very different modes of how to communicate resistance to secular society. With Werner Schiffauer's terminology there is a certain "Islamization of the self" with a recognizable change from clear-cut collective activities to an apparent emphasis on more complicated personal choices. Most of the members of the small local groups in the major Turkish cities do not participate in public debate in TV or newspapers. Still they are active agents. The "new discursive tradition" is created on local level (Asad 1986) based on symbols, legends, norms and other points of reference that are shared by a larger group of women. In the turbulent urban setting of a mega-city such as Istanbul, women's social and religious practices are constantly redefined (Göle 1996a). A young generation of women who have had access to the perhaps most important of all kemalistic reforms, education, are now willing to take the lead for a Muslim interpretation of modernity, based in local traditions and women's experiences.

With their *vakıf* the women of my study have acquired what Virginia Woolf claimed in her famous essay to be the necessities for female participation in public life: money and a room of their own.

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J. PETER SÖDERGÅRD

The Semiosis of Prayer and the Creation of Plausible Fictional Worlds

> There is a golden rule that cryptanalysts and code breakers rely on — namely, that every secret message can be deciphered, provided that it is a message.
>
> Umberto Eco, *Six Walks in Fictional Woods*

> I praise you. I call your name that is hidden within me: aô eeô êêêôôô iii ôôôô ooooôôô ôô uuuuuuôô ôôôô ôôôôô ôô ôôôôôôô ôô
>
> Nag Hammadi codex VI. 6.

1. Introducing a liminal and metaphorical landscape with forking paths

Prayers and incantations are one of the most common subforms of religious discourse for the creation, actualization and maintenance of plausible fictional worlds. In this article I will venture the thesis that the semiosis of prayer, having as I see it a liminal position and a transitional function, facilitates the creation not only of possible fictional worlds, but also of highly plausible ones, that is 'plausible' for the religionists. Prayers and incantations are subsequently liminal and transitional 'mechanisms' that may accomplish that a possible world is credited to be a most plausible one by an interpretive community of religionists.

The first community or group to be dealt with is made up of those consulting a ritual specialist in 'holy magic', as described in the Greek Magical Papyri (= PGM 1/127). The other interpretive community consists in those who heard the Hermetic tractates being read aloud in, we may presume; 'small, informal circles of the literate but not (usually) learned gathered round a holy teacher and given up to study, asceticism and pious fellowship' (Fowden 1993: 193).

Prayers and incantations are for both of these groups mechanisms of transition — well-trodden paths of communication — which not

only bridge the space between the literal and the oral, between transformative words and performed rituals,[1] but they even transcend human language and ordinary human communication, culminating in sounds and iconographical signs from *the Unlimited*; voces magicae, 'magical graffiti' or god-speaking silence. The gods' answers, the messages to the person praying or incantating, are in these cases signs with unlimited sense; open symbols[2] over-coded by their co-text to be expressions of an unlimited divine significance. However, the signifiers are often nonsensical for outsiders, but used by a religious interpretive community, nonsensical signifiers are deemed both to be iconic signs (in Pierce's terminology), and vehicles of unlimited signification and meaning. They are semiotic mechanisms, that through their inability to be fully decoded in a given human language,[3] creates the expectation — for the religionists— that these signifiers belong to the Unlimited, and that they therefore are signs bridging the liminal landscape set between the actual empirical world and what I have called the Unlimited.

In PGM 1/216–221 we have the invocation (E. N. O'Neil's transl. in Betz 1996: 8):

> Aye, lord, because I call upon your secret name which reaches from the firmament to the earth, ATHEZOPHOIM ZADEAGEOBEPHIATHEAA AMBRAMI ABRAAM THALCHILTHOE ELKOTHOOEE ACHTHONON SA ISAK CHOEIOURTHASIO IOSIA ICHEMEOOOO AOAEI, rescue me in an hour of need.

A god's secret name, a message coming from the heavenly or stellar firmament and reaching earth, is to be used as an invocation that guaranties the communication between the empirical and the Unlimited.[4] Parts of the *voces magicae* can be decoded and related to a

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[1] We may discern between prayer or incantation as a linear text manifestation, as an act or we may choose to analyze the subject/the content of it. See Gill 1987: 489.

[2] 'Symbol' is here indicating a sign partaking of the signified, having therefore a non-arbitrary relation to it. Symbol in this sense is the *iconic sign* in Peirce's terminology.

[3] In a *voces magicae* formula we may find Egyptian, Coptic, Greek, Jewish, Persian words etc, but a such a formula is not ordinarily a sentence that may be fully decoded, using the conventional syntax or semantics of these or other human languages.

[4] We may compare with the Greek vowels as signifying the hebdomad of astral rulers and perhaps used as a means to ascend (Keizer 1974: 41–43 and see the magical formula in the introduction of my article). But also the

specific signified content, *e. g.* the names ABRAAM and ISAK. But its main semiotic function is being an open symbol, an expression of unlimited and ambiguous divine significance. It partakes of what it signifies and can therefore be used as a means of communication between the actual and the Unlimited.

We may here compare with how Iamblichus (De Mysteriis VII. 4–5) defends and explains the use of 'barbarian names' (onomata barbara) and especially 'meaningless names' (asema onomata) in a Greek-speaking religious context. The barbarian names were revealed by the gods to the Assyrians and Egyptians in primordial time and are therefore, even if they are not quite understandable, to be preferred and used, instead of Greek novelties. The meaningless names — in all probability voces magicae or other sequences of vowels — are meaningless for us humans, living our lives dependent on the senses — because their real significance, their supersensible intelligibility, is only known by the gods. In *Corpus Hermeticum* (XVI. 2) we can read a comparable passage that repudiates that the Hermetic knowledge should be translated into Greek where it is stated 'We (sc. the Egyptian Hermetists) do not use arguments (sc. like the Greeks), but rather utterances filled with power'. I think that we have here, in the aforementioned passages, emic statements about iconic signs, which partake of the divine that is signified. Open symbols that can be used as a means of connecting the empirical with the Unlimited.[5]

The open symbol's signified can furthermore be as unlimited and ambiguous as it is mentally and imaginatively conceivable, which means that the set of possible fictional worlds that it may refer to is unlimited and maximally varied (Dolezel 1989: 231). But these worlds must belong to what I have labeled the class of *plausible worlds*. Fictional worlds that are made plausible by a religious interpretive community.

I will accordingly postulate a theoretical model consisting in an actual or empirical world and a possible — for the religionists — plausible world. The first one, the starting-point in my game whose rules you will soon recognize, is called 'The actual and empirical world' and the other-one, the goal to be gained or wellspring to be tapped by the religionists, is labeled 'The Unlimited'. But my demi-

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Neoplatonic theurgy is here of interest. Hans Lewy has remarked that *symbola*, *synthemata* and *voces mysticae*, viz. arreta onomata, are identical, because Proclus (*Tim.* I. 211. 1) uses them as synonyms (1978: 192).

[5] The glossolalia -praxis, codified in the New Testament, also belong to this category of signs.

urgical activities are even further complex, because betwixt and between these worlds is set a liminal landscape, designed by the 'team' van Gennep (1960) and Victor Turner (1969; 1981; 1985 a; 1985 b).

I will use this triadic model as a heuristic metaphor, whose copula is the liminal landscape. A landscape that has emic and etic paths, communicating or interpreting the divine communication; the transition from the actual and empirical to the Unlimited, and the answers from the Unlimited. A person praying or incantating performatively turns herself into a *liminal persona* who uses those emic paths that her culture has outlined.

Victor Turner has drawn up some characteristics of liminality as applied especially to ritual behaviour. It may be regarded as 'the "subjunctive mood" of culture, the mood of may-be, might-be, as-if, hypothesis, fantasy, conjecture, desire, depending on which of the trinity, cognition, affect, and connation, (thought, feeling, or intention) is situationally dominant (Turner 1985 b: 295)'. I find it useful to view prayer and incantation as a major discourse of liminality. A discourse or path that delineates a possible world, but that also has built-in semiotic mechanisms that transform mere possibility into socially shared plausibility, thus building up a most plausible world for the religionists, a world that is deemed to have more ontological stability than the empirical world.

The object of study is therefore the liminal, narratological, transitional and mental mechanisms that enable a person(-s) praying or incantating to 'vivify' a narrative and fictional world, so that it is furnished with such an aura of factuality that the inhabitants of this fictive world — gods or other metaphysical creatures — may 'answer' the religionist in various ways, including *voces magicae* or *mysticae.*[6] The possible and fictional world is in this case seen as a most plausible one. The bridging between these ontologically different worlds is accomplished by the actualization of a religious discourse and especially by the act of praying or incantating, since this subform of religious discourse is a prime exponent of religious semiosis.

The technical term semiosis denotes the signification process in general, and it is often used as a covering term for 'the process by which empirical subjects communicate, communication processes being made possible by the organization of signification systems' (Eco 1976: 316). Various religions or religious discourses are of

[6] This subject is going to have an in-depth analysis in my forthcoming dissertation *The Discourse of Hermes Trismegistos.* I here try to give a more limited analysis, using mainly Hermetic prayers as material.

course paramount examples of complex signification systems; a veritable plethora of crisscrossing similarities, dissimilarities and inversions, all of them making up a Wittgensteinian *family resemblance* that is multi-heterogenous and which lacks a common essence. But it is nevertheless a praxis that we dare to call religion.

And if religion is, as Bruce Lincoln states, 'that discourse whose defining characteristic is its desire to speak of things eternal and transcendent with an authority equally transcendent and eternal' (1996: 225), then prayers and incantations, take a central place in these signification systems, as a form of divinely-authorized human communication with postulated non-human, transcendent agents, agents that may reveal themselves for the religionists in our actual and empirical world, but who have their habitat in a plausible world that is fused to the actual.

2. To narrate a possible world and making it plausible through prayer and incantation

Prayers and incantations are, as I see it, narrative constructs that try to manipulate an empirical reader to become a model reader that 'identifies' with a role outlined in the narrative, and thereby also enacts the story, or comes to partake in the *historiola* of a magical papyrus. A model reader is therefore, if we are to follow Umberto Eco, 'a set of textual instructions' that outlines what sort of empirical reader that is anticipated, and how she (if a female person is intended) (PGM 8/1–63) should read and we may add, enact her part of the plot. The Greek magical papyri are even textual machines that are consciously encoded with an empty slot, a place for the *nomen nescio*, wherein one puts one's own name. If I therefore *eagerly* turn to 'Binding love spell of Astrapsoukos' (Preisendanz 1931: 8/1–63), I have already been somewhat compromised as empirical reader, but the outlines of the model reader has really begun to take shape. And, as in all effective communication, there is a lot of redundancy, and the title is not quite the whole story, because the spell is promoting commercial and other success ventures.[7] It begins with a threefold petition to be said to Hermes (E. N. O'Neil's transl. in Betz 1996: 145):

[7] Note that the spell and the ritual instruction is aimed at 'helping' a shopkeeper, and that the title is therefore somewhat odd.

> Come to me, lord Hermes, as fetuses do to the wombs of women. Come to me, lord Hermes, who collect the sustenance of gods and men; [come] to me, NN, lord Hermes, and give me favour, sustenance, victory, prosperity, elegance, beauty of face, strength of all men and women. Your name in heaven: LAMPHTHEN OUOTHI OUASTEN OUOTHI OAMENOTH ENTHOMOUCH.

A very precise model reader is outlined, and a role is offered up in a ritual sequence, that may also be analyzed as a narrative plot, or a script with a role to take over and to enact. And enacting the person incantating and ritually acting implies a dual role-situation, a plot or story,[8] that makes the model reader also to adopt the role of the god or metaphysical actant. An adopted role that restructures and gives a new meaning to the field of perception. The empirical world is thereafter searched for divine signs and replies emanating from this actant. To pray or to incantate is to anticipate 'answers' from the Unlimited, *viz.* to decode the *Umwelt* according to the adopted religious frame of reference.

It can be said that many etic paths are here going in the same direction: I think it is fairly obvious that Victor Turner's bush-road traversing the social drama, *viz.* incantation as crisis-management when 'crises arise in the daily flow of social interaction' (Turner 1985 b: 177–204) is coming to the fore. But also Umberto Eco's narratological semiotics, studying literary and fictive worlds and the cooperation of empirical and model readers, can here be made to merge with the Scandinavian tradition of social constructivist role-psychology. A line of interpretation that started with Hjalmar Sundén (1956; 1959; 1987) and that is now developing in contact with narrative psychology (see Holm and Belzen 1995).

The meeting-place is the narrative construction of reality and fiction functioning as a cultural activity for the creation, actualization and maintenance of a plausible fictional world for a given interpretive community.

Any culture has a set of possible fictional worlds. Some of these worlds are held to be fictional and false; just entertaining stories for pleasure, *viz.* a possible world that is paradoxically also impossible. Other discourses may paint up a possible fictional world that is deemed to be true in some way. If this possible world is held to be

[8] The narrative discourse is *how* something is narrated. The story or plot are concepts that answer the question of *what* — the subject and its narrative plotting in a sequence — that is told about.

true, ontologically focalized and privileged by a religious interpretive community, it is a plausible fictional world.[9]

We have here a powerful sociological factor; the interpretive community. It focalizes and privileges a plausible, or a set of plausible, religious worlds. In the Hellenistic syncretism, and especially in the interpretive community that consulted a crisis-manager, a ritualist, using and advising about the use of the Greek magical papyri, we meet a plausible fictional world that *inter alia* is made plausible by its extreme inter-textuality. It reverberates with echoes from many other plausible worlds. One may come from a Jewish tradition to the 'Binding love spell of Astrapsoukos', that take most of its material from the Egyptian religious discourse, and nevertheless find a *voces magicae*-formula beginning with the great names 'IAO SABAOTH ADONAIE' (PGM 8/61). The well-known is woven together with the unknown and the nonsensical but unlimitedly promising.

In Umberto Eco's semiotic world our spell would be called an *open text* that outlines a closed project for its model reader (1979: 9–10). And I have already been talking about *voces magicae* as an open symbol that is typical for these texts. The open text has a maze-like structure producing a rather ambiguous and redundant message that may be of use in many social and somatic crisis-situations. The text is often 'open' for implementation in various situations and it is forward-looking, but the model reader's project is strictly described in what he or she has to incantate and ritually enact. But also the appropriate state of mind may be stated.

The empirical reader (alias the magical client), troubled and driven by crises in his social drama, is manipulated to be a model reader and actor who follows the set of textual instructions given. He takes over the model reader's role and also thereby adopts a consciously encoded god-role.

It is also narratologically interesting, in some of the Greek magical papyri, that the person incantating does not only identify with a human role in the plot, and expects answers from the adopted god role as in the Abrahamitic religions, but the human role offered to the incantator is turned into being the god himself (see also PGM 4/2289, 5/249 for other identifications with Hermes/Thoth).

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[9] All narrative *qua* narrative is fictional, and nothing within a narrative is in principle sufficient to determine the fictionality or non-fictionality of the narrative's reference(-s). The ontological status of the narrative's denotata, the objects and processes in the extra-textual world that are referred to, is finally decided by an empirical reader or interpretive community.

This most Egyptian feature, which gives a direct link to an Egyptian ritual and 'magical' context (Podemann Sørensen 1984: 9–11), makes the incantator 'enter the narrative by identifying himself as a god. The effect is, therefore, a collapsing of boundaries between the human situation and the mythical dimension' (Frankfurter 1995: 469–470). The mythical dimension, *i. e.* the plausible world, is fused to the actual through this identification.

The 'Binding love spell of Astrapsoukos' clearly shows this mechanism (E. N. O'Neil's trans. in Betz 1996: 146):

> Hear me, Hermes, /.../ Preserve me always, through all eternity, from drugs and deceits, every slander and evil tongues, from every daimonic possession, from every hatred of both gods and men. Let them give me favor and victory and business and prosperity. For you are I, and I am you; your name is mine, and mine is yours. For I am your image (σὺ γὰρ ἐγὼ καὶ ἐγὼ σύ, τὸ σὸν ὄνομα ἐμὸν καὶ τὸ ἐμὸν σόν· ἐγὼ γάρ εἰμι τὸ εἴδωλόν σου) (PGM 8/37–38).

In the impressive monograph *Das Gebet* — a mine to dig carefully so not to be crushed by apologetics — Friedrich Heiler writes 'Diese "reziproke Identitätsformel" ist das höchste mystische Gebet. Erst wenn er dieses Gebet sprechen kann, hat er seinen Gott ganz gefunden, bleibt er eins mit ihm in Ewigkeit' (1923: 306–307). Heiler has noticed the formula's presence in our *philtrokatádesmos* and in some other texts (Iren. I. 7. 2; Epiphan. Haeres. 26. 3), but has placed it as the crown of mysticism. Also Betz, in a most admirable article 'The Delphic Maxim "Know yourself" in the Greek Magical Papyri', seems to follow this line of thought; 'Characteristic for the magical literature, it is the knowledge of the secret name that establishes the ground for the mystical union'(1990: 168). But is it possible to speak of 'mystical union' or 'the highest mystical prayer' in this context, a context that is replete with mundane longings, set in an Egyptian 'magical scene' with the knowing of *voces magicae* etc.?

I do not think so. It is perhaps better to respect the ritual context in the Greek magical papyri and label it a *ritually enacted union*, viz. a union that is thought to be accomplished through the transformative force of the incantated words. The function of this ritually enacted union in our text is interesting, because through it the plausible world is fused to the actual in the person incantating and ritually acting.

From a theoretical perspective, coming from possible worlds semantics as applied to fictional worlds, it has been noticed that:

'Often, objects belong to two different set of worlds and have different properties, functions and ontological weight in each of these./.../ Sacred being and objects, miraculous or prophetic grottos, holy mountains, places of worship, all these provide for the points of articulation at which two worlds meet in what could be called a series of ontological fusions' (Pavel 1989: 251). This may have a nostalgic ring for those of us that have wandered in Mircea Eliade's Arcadian landscape, without knowledge of the *Et in Arcadia ego* of theoretical and explanatory perspectives.

But, I do think that Eliade's observation used by Thomas Pavel, is still to the point. There are objects belonging to two different sets of worlds if we are following the line of thought of any interpretive community promoting plausible worlds.

The focalized point of fusion, with 'objects' belonging to both worlds, is in our text the *voces magicae*, the manufacturing of a magical figurine and perhaps most important; the ritually enacted union.

We have already acquainted Hermes' heavenly names in the threefold petition. The foreign names are also given in the spell 'PHARNATHAR BARACHEL CHTHA' (PGM 8/21). But also his true name 'OSERGARIACH NOMAPHI' (PGM 8/45) that is said to be inscribed on a sacred stele in his birthplace, Hermopolis. And knowing a name is to partake in an identity.

The merging of identities and role-plots is also made in a very concrete way, since the god is 'inscribed' in the life-story of the magical client in the following way: It is instructed that the client should make, of olive wood, a small dog-faced baboon — a form of Anubis that is identified with Hermes, because it shall wear his attribute, a winged helmet.[10] This syncretistic cult image shall on its back carry a box, and within it shall be put a papyrus inscribed with Hermes' name, here given as 'PHTHORON PHTHIONE THOYTH' (PGM 8/60). The magical client shall pray for what he is doing while fashioning this object, and also pray for what he wishes. It is then to be placed in the middle of his workshop and thereby being concretely 'inscribed' in his every day life-story.

The ritually enacted union between the magician and the god Hermes Trismegistos: 'For you are I, and I am you; your name is mine, and mine is yours. For I am your image' is a summoning up and concentration of the fusion of the actual and Unlimited world. A fusion that is strengthened and made even more thoroughgoing

[10] The Greek Hermes is of course amalgamated with Hermes Trismegistos *viz*. Thoth.

through the *voces magicae*. It is also implicated that as a consequence of the formula, having the same identity as the god, the god also shares in the human's destiny. If anything should happen to the person incantating, it could also happen to the great god, whose name is in this context given as 'ACHCHEMEN ESTROPH (PGM 8/40–41). He, the stronger, will — one may conclude — avert all threatening influences. The life story of the human and the god is made into one. The person incantating has knowledge of the god's names and is his image. The incantating person's name is the god's. It can perhaps be said that they mirror each other (see Betz 1990: 165–167). The weak and transient is strengthened through its association with the strong and unlimited.

It is a formula that has such importance and illocutionary force that it is repeated in what could be called 'magical redundancy', strengthening the message: 'I know you, Hermes, and you know me. I am you, and you are I. And so do everything for me, and may you turn to me with Good Fortune and Good Daimon, immediately, immediately; quickly, quickly' (E. N. O'Neil's trans. in Betz 1996: 146. See also Betz 1990: 164–168).

3. The Beholder's Share, Phase Shifting and a Summing Up

The famous art historian Sir Ernst Gombrich time and again stressed the importance and creative power of the beholder, the beholder's share, in the process of art-perception (1982: 154–244). Certain walls stained with damp, or stones of uneven colour were able to capture divine landscapes for Leonardo da Vinci. Clouds and the ink-blots of Rorschach were also filled in with 'meanings' and, as we now could say, with possible worlds. But mechanisms recognized in art perception can also be felt in religion.

The importance and power of the beholder's share is also paramount for those praying and incantating in the Greek magical papyri or being active in a small circle of Hermetists who are seeking to be deified. And the beholder's share is promoted by an interpretive community in the actual world. This actual and empirical world was and is always present, but when is art and when is religion?

My answer to the last question is: When an empirical reader, driven by social crisis or convention— manipulated by a religious discourse, and especially the semiosis of prayer and incantation — perceive the world around as a model reader, one who is outlined in incantations and prayers, and in the religious discourse at large.

And being a model reader in this kind of discourse implies that a possible world is transformed to a plausible. The plausible world may be identical with the actual in a strong fusion, in Pavel's terminology, so that every object in the actual world is decoded as also having a place in the plausible. This would equate a panentheistic world view, conjuring up a plausible world for the Hermetists as in the concluding hymn in *Corpus Hermeticum* V. 11 (Copenhaver 1992: 20):

> When shall I sing a hymn to you? One cannot detect in you time or season. For what shall I sing the hymn — for what you have made or what you have not made, for what you have made visible or what you have kept hidden? And wherefore shall I sing the hymn to you — for being something that is part of me, or has a special property, or is something apart? For you are whatever I am; you are whatever I make; you are whatever I say. You are everything, and there is nothing else; what is not, you are as well. You are all that has come to be; you are what has not come to be; you are the mind who understands (σὺ γὰρ εἶ ὃ (ε)ἄν ὦ, σὺ εἶ ὃ ἂν ποιῶ, σὺ εἶ ὃ ἂν λέγω. σὺ γὰρ πάντα εἶ καὶ ἄλλο οὐδὲν ἔστιν· ὃ μὴ ἔστι, σὺ εἶ. σὺ πᾶν τὸ γενόμενον, σὺ τὸ μὴ γενόμενον, νοῦς μέν, νοούμενος),[11] the father who makes his craftwork, the god who acts, and the good who makes all things.

Not only ontological and static qualities of the union between man and god are emphasized (the ousía aspect), but also processual and creative aspects (the génesis aspect); 'you are whatever I make; you are whatever I say'. A model reader is created that is designed to perceive both his acting and saying as the work of god.

We have here what Hjalmar Sundén called a phase shift. The world around, and even the person praying himself, can now be perceived as god, an eternal and omnipresent Thou who also merges with the 'I', now as the actual and empirical world (1959: 111). But a necessary condition for this phase shift is the learning and retention of a religious discourse. An empirical reader has to learn and to take over, in this case, the verbally transmitted role of being a model reader. A model reader which 'reads' the whole cosmos as having a message.

Walter Burkert has remarked, when analyzing divination, that

> The fundamental form of communication for humans is language; hence signs are appropriated and translated into the experience of language. The abundance of signs turn into a pleth-

[11] Nock and Festugière 1991: 65.

> ora of voices. A feeling of universal empathy may prevail, as if every being, everywhere, were telling a message — to those that who understand. Indistinct sounds tend to become speech for the charismatics. /.../ Speech presupposes speakers; signs seem to presuppose some great *signator*, a universal signifier who has established the meanings we are summoned to understand. Burkert 1996: 160–161.

If an empirical reader manages — driven by the social drama and trusting some interpretive community — to adopt the role of being a model reader, he or she may perceive the world as outlined by the religious discourse. Prayers and incantations are one of the most common subforms of this discourse, a subform that also has deep affinities with elementary human needs. They may be biological, psychological, social and ethical etc. In an article about the 'psychology of prayer' Thorvald Källstad lists the main motives for prayer as need, fear and thankfulness (1984: 107).

Prayer and incantation can perhaps be said to be 'mechanisms' that promise that lack will be liquidated and that there is an unlimited signator, a father, or some other metaphysical creature, standing behind and legitimizing the discourse. A way of communicating with the Unlimited that is privileged by an interpretive community that read the prayers aloud (Horst 1994: 1) and enacted the magical stage-scripts.

In sum: These highly overlapping categories function as one of the most common subforms of religious discourse for the creation, actualization and maintenance of plausible fictional worlds. They are liminal and transitional mechanisms that manipulate an empirical reader to phase-shift from an actual world to a plausible, by being inscribed in a possible and fictional world, thus creating a model reader, that perceives and acts according to the plausible world outlined by a given interpretive community, and that hears god talking in *voces magicae* and in god-speaking silence.

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KIRSTI SUOLINNA

Focusing on fieldwork

Edward Westermarck and Hilma Granqvist — before and after Bronislaw Malinowski

Introduction

The purpose of this essay is to look at the results of two Finnish fieldworkers, with the history of the social anthropological research as background. By Finnish norms Edward Westermarck's academic career was impressive, but his pupil Hilma Granqvist was obliged to work mostly outside the academic world (Widén 1989: 26–35; Willman 1997: 92–94). Both of them did their fieldwork in countries, where the Islamic religion had a strong influence. Westermarck worked in Morocco, and Granqvist in Palestine.

Westermarck belonged to the first professional generation of anthropologists, who did their own fieldwork. He had however already earlier earned fame through his dissertation on the history of marriage. The dissertation was published in England in 1891 under the title "The History of Human Marriage".

During his fieldwork Westermarck worked on another great undertaking, namely "The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas", which was published in two volumes in 1906–1908. With these works Westermarck placed himself at the top of the evolutionary school, which however already when the "Moral book" appeared came under heavy criticism by e.g. Emile Durkheim (1979: 40–51) in France.

When a British expedition in 1898 went to the Torres Straits, Westermarck travelled via Spain to Morocco, which was to be just a stopover on his way to more remote fields. However, Morocco was to be the object of Westermarck's studies for the rest of his life and career. Westermarck published his great works on Morocco as late as 1926 and 1930, but he had all the time published field results as minor writings, articles and popular books.

The major works on Morocco appeared late, especially in light of the great changes that took place in anthropology, when one in the beginning of the 1920's started to talk about the old and the new school. Westermarck remained faithful to the old school, but his pupil

Bronislaw Malinowski became a leader and symbol for the new school. Malinowski's great book about the Trobriand Islands "Argonauts of the Western Pacific", which was published in 1922, became a divider between the old and the new anthropology.

Hilma Granqvist started her fieldwork in 1925, at the junction between the new and the old school. She stressed that it was her own decision to do her study of a village based on a model from archaeological excavations. She attended Westermarck's seminar in London in 1929, and returned to London in 1938 in order to participate in a seminar conducted by Malinowski. She writes in the introduction to "Birth and Childhood among the Arabs." that some of the researchers that she had met earlier now used a completely new vocabulary, and thought in a new way. She herself also felt attracted by functionalism, i.e. the new school. She was attracted by the requirement that the different aspects of the social life should be studied in relation to each other (Granqvist 1947: 15)

In 1932 Granqvist defended her thesis "Marriage Conditions in a Palestinian Village", and extended this work with another volume in 1935. Granqvist published primarily in book format. After the Second World War three important works were published, "Birth and Childhood among the Arabs" (1947), "Child Problems among the Arabs" (1950) and "Muslim Death and Burial" (1965).

On the whole one can state that the paradigm shift between the old and the new school in anthropology weakened both Westermarck's and Granqvist's recognition. Without the advances of the new school their field results would have been much better received than what now was the case. Granqvist did get good reviews in international sociological journals (Biography of Finnish Sociology 1945–1959: 24–25, 36–37), but in her home country her work aroused only marginal interest and was forgotten. However, both Westermarck and Granqvist did pioneering work, and it is worth studying them again, as well as re-reading and re-evaluating their work.

Westermarck's fieldwork in Morocco.

When Westermarck arrived in Morocco in 1898 the fieldwork methods were poorly developed. As late as in 1926 Westermarck could limit the description of methods to a few pages by pointing out that the information about each tribe had been collected by local experts; neither Europeans nor members of other tribes had been used, when the habits of a certain tribe had been investigated (Westermarck 1926: 8–10). Westermarck's field reports only sporadically contained descriptions of his own experiences; this is especially true about the

works that Westermarck regarded as strictly scientific. His popular earlier articles and the book "Sex år i Marocko" (1918) as well as his memoirs (1927) are in fact the most satisfying for today's reader. It is in these writings Westermarck tells about the people he met and events he came across during his fieldwork. In "Sex år i Marocko" Westermarck (1918: 61–74, see also Suolinna 1994: 51–55) describes his key person Abdessalam El-Baqqali, who was to become Westermarck's friend and confidant. As the title tells, Westermarck performed fieldwork in intervals during about six years before World War I. The war interrupted his work, and Westermarck returned to Morocco only in 1923, when he started an intensive work period in order to complete his work there. At that time he did not any more in the true sense move around in the field doing research, but worked from his villa Tusculum in the outskirts of Tangier.

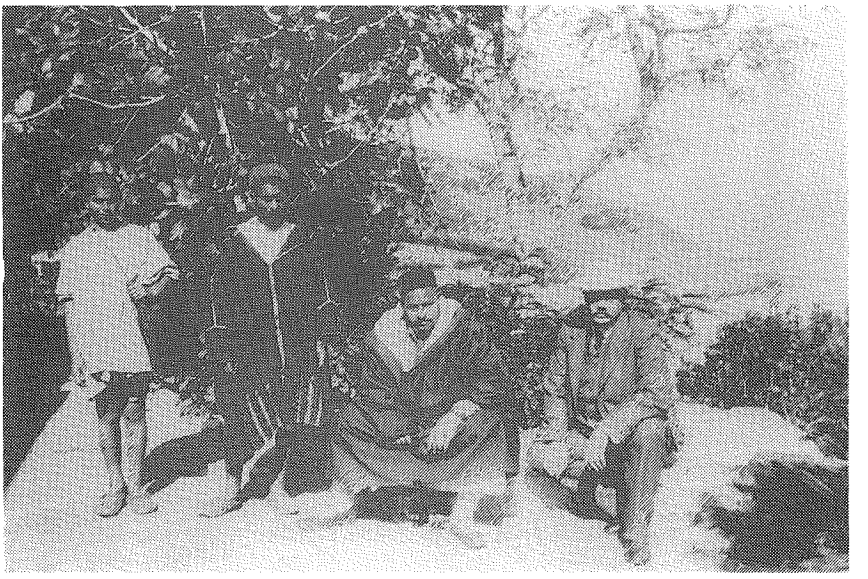
Hilma Granqvist's fieldwork in Palestine

Hilma Granqvist went to Palestine in 1925, and she worked in the field between 1925 and 1931 for a total of about three years. In the village Artas Granqvist was able to establish very good field conditions due to the fact that she received help from Louisa Baldensperger, an elderly lady, who was the daughter of a missionary, and had lived about 30 years in this village. In addition Granqvist was able to make use of two key persons, Hamdiya and Alya, who were two older persons in the village, and who were able to give much of their time to the investigator. Both of them were namely widows, who had for some time lived outside the village, and due to unhappy family circumstances they lived at the periphery of the society. This was especially true about Alya, who was almost blind and without relatives, and lived on alms. Hamdiya lived under the protection of her brothers and their families. Both key persons were good informants (Granqvist 1947:21–25).

The field methods underwent development also independently of Malinowski's work after the first generation had done its work. Thus Granqvist collected demographic statistical data about the families in Artas. She collected information on all marriages during a hundred-year period from 1830 to 1930. She kept a field diary and carefully down all the comments of her key persons on the various phenomena in the village (In some letters she stressed the independence of her use of new methods). In contrast to Westermarck, Granqvist studied mostly the life and thinking of women. Granqvist was able to take the reader into the centre of the events in a completely different way than Westermarck was able to.

Edward Westermarck Professor in Philosophy at the Åbo Akademi University (1918–1931) and Professor in Sociology at the London School of Economics and Political Sciences (1907–1930). Åbo Akademi University Library.

Young woman in Artas. Photo Hilma Granqvist. Åbo Akademi University Library.



Edward Westermarck in the field with co-workers in the 1900s. Åbo Akademi University Library.

Edward Westermarck with co-workers and servants in the 1920s. Åbo Akademi University Library.

Westermarck's view of the holy

Westermarck regarded the different tribes in Morocco as microsocieties, and he recorded their customs and habits. Due to his approach to problems he has very little to say about the economical and political conditions, and how these influenced the development of customs and ceremonies. He did however state that the Berber tribes of central Morocco, who had been unknown before, lacked a central leadership so that each family had to defend its rights, and had to act as a unit. He found out that the Bedouin tribes on the plains had low status, and were despised by the Berber tribes in the mountains.

Westermarck has a matter-of-fact, neutral tone that seldom is broken. Somewhat surprisingly his tone became emotionally involved only when he described what forms the conditional curse could take among these very Berber tribes of middle Morocco. More about this later.

Even though Westermarck did not treat and analyse his data in the same way as we would do today, he did obtain many results of interest. This is especially true about the rich description of the different common-man beliefs about holiness (*baraka*), the evil eye, jinn or evil spirits, and the conditional curse.

Westermarck has described in a separate book, "The Moorish Conception of Holiness (Baraka)" (1916), all the ways in which the belief in *baraka* could be expressed. He published the results presented in this book without changes ten years later in "Ritual and Belief in Morocco" (1926).

Holiness was one phenomenon that Westermarck came across everywhere in Morocco. His closest co-worker, Abdessalam El-Baqqali, belonged to a *shereef* family and was therefore regarded as a holy person. Westermarck was not allowed to visit his home, because El-Baqqali's holy grandfather was buried in the house (Westermarck 1926: 65).

The prophet Mohammed possessed more *baraka* than any other person, and his *baraka* was transferred to all male relatives that descended from the prophet's daughter Fatima. In Morocco there were numerous *shereef* families, both real ones and fake ones. The oldest *families of shereef* standing came from Mulai Idris, the first ruler of Morocco. The most eminent *shereef* family was however represented by the *shereef* of Wazzan, who had great authority over several tribes in Morocco. It was said that whilst the *shereef* of Wazzan could rule as a sultan, no sultan could rule without the support of the *shereef* of Wazzan (Westermarck 1926: 38).

A person, who had exceptionally much *baraka*, was called a saint. The graves of the saints were holy, and were visited by persons, who sought cure from various diseases and misfortunes. There were however restrictions. Some graves of saints could not be visited by Christians or Jews. Women were not allowed at some graves, some graves could not be visited by government employees or policemen etc. The saints could, Westermarck concludes, protect the tribes to which they belonged, and could also take revenge for the loss of its independence (Westermarck, 1926: 194).

The saints in Morocco consisted not only of men or women that lived or had lived, but also of individuals that had never existed (Westermarck 1926: 49). There were many holy places, such as hills, springs, caves and trees. By connecting them to a saint it was possible to explain the holiness of a place or natural object that had a deviating, rare or mystic appearance.

A saint that had really existed as a person could be found where a *gobba* had been built on top of the grave. The holy area around the grave could be large or small. The border was usually marked with stones or a fence. The *horm* of Mulai Idris in Fez consisted of houses, stores and a bathhouse. The storekeepers did not have to pay taxes, and even a murderer could take refuge there. To the *horm* of Sidi Heddi in the Bni Aros tribe belonged in addition to the grave also the near-by creek, and thus the fish in the creek was holy and catching it was not allowed (Westermarck 1926: 64).

After a very detailed description of the different manifestations of the *baraka* Westermarck reaches a surprising point of view. He said that a feeling of a miracle lies behind the fantasies of the *baraka*, and this feeling allows for *barakas* of many degrees. "There is not that impassable gulf between the holy and the profane which has been postulated by Durkheim. The Moors even assert that every person is possessed of *baraka,* although it is only in certain cases sufficiently strong to be taken notice of" (Westermarck 1926: 146–147). This point of view is surprising, in view of the fact that Westermarck all the time could make this distinction. Especially when he talked about the saints and their graves he noted the line between those, who could visit the holy place, and those who were excluded. The border between the holy and the profane could also be geographic (see also Anttonen 1996: 147–150).

Westermarck is obviously talking a completely different language than Durkheim. What separated them was what weight they gave the social versus the human-nature relationship. Durkheim emphasised the foundation of the religion in the social life, whereas Wes-

termarck considered that the practice of religion reflected the relationship between man and nature.

Westermarck and the evil eye

One of the most widespread ordinary beliefs is the belief in the evil eye. Westermarck (1926: 415) considers that the belief in the evil eye most likely has its origin both in the expressiveness and the mystic, secret character of the gaze.

The eye is an instrument, which transfers evil wishes and it is a source from which harmful energy is emitted, independently of the will. When a person envies another, the gaze reveals this.

As is the case with the *baraka*, the evil eye can be either inherited or acquired. Persons with deeply seated eyes and those whose eyebrows grow together were considered to have a dangerous gaze. In Morocco there were both those regions, where light eyes were considered dangerous (they were rare), and those, where dark eyes were considered dangerous (Westermarck 1926: 419).

In Morocco the beliefs in the evil eye were tied to demands on generosity and hospitality. If someone showed a great interest in another person's belongings, and wanted to buy them, the owner was expected to comply with these wishes. It could be a horse or a gun, i.e. quite valuable belongings. If the owner did not want to sell, this could lead to misfortunes, such is that the horse could get sick and die, or the gun could be stolen.

It was dangerous to eat in the presence of others without sharing the food. Also, when carrying foodstuff from the market, one should cover that with a cloth. Otherwise one had to give away some of the food to each person one met, especially if one met a woman.

Westermarck gave some extreme examples of what the evil eye could accomplish, but these are only stories. One story he was told was about a group of men that had gathered near the grazing lambs of one of the men. A man with the evil eye made a joke without any bad intentions. The following night all the lambs of the owner were dead. The owner, who also had an evil eye, looked for an opportunity to take revenge. He got his opportunity when the horse of the man, who had brought the misfortune, came close to him and he made a joke about the horse. That night the horse fell sick, and the following night the horse died (Westermarck 1926: 416).

An even more dramatic tale is about the man, who had so horrible eyes that he killed all of his children. In order to avoid further accidents he left his pregnant wife. After many years he however wanted

to see his son, who had been born while he was away. In spite of all care the eyes of the son and the father met, and they both fell dead to the ground (Westermarck 1926: 417).

After having recounted these tales, Westermarck remarked that the gaze of women, especially older ones, was even more feared than that of men. Here exists a parallel to the curse, which pronounced by women is even more dangerous than that of men. In festive occasions women were allowed to eat first, because otherwise they could harm the men by their gazes (Westermarck 1926: 420). This order was not always adhered to, as Westermarck himself describes a wedding, where the men ate first, then the boys and last the women (Westermarck 1918: 77–78).

People try to defend themselves against the evil eye by covering whatever could attract the evil eye. The bride is to be protected by a veil, and be transported to the home of the bridegroom in a box. The face of the bridegroom should be covered by a hood. Wearing disguise can also protect them both. The bride is protected both from being reached by the evil eye and from causing harm by her gaze.

In former times young and handsome men in Arabia would cover their face during festivities or at fairs, so that they would be protected against the evil eye. Since ancient times the Arabic women have covered their face with a veil, and the custom has spread widely in the Islamic world (according to the Koran women should wear veil). In Morocco the custom was adopted in the cities and among the "*djebalas*" (mountain people) in northern Morocco. The custom was not observed by the Arabic speaking tribes on the plains or among the Berbers in central Morocco, and neither among the "Shloh" in the great Atlas mountains, nor among the Rif-Berbers who treated women with great harshness (Westermarck, 1926: 424–427).

Westermarck interprets his results about the wearing of the veil so that it is not because of the jealousy of the man, but because of the fear for the evil eye. This point of view Westermarck (1926: 423) has borrowed from C. B. Klunzinger, who already in the 1870's had done research in Egypt. Westermarck presented his viewpoint in an article already in 1904 (Westermarck 1904: 412). He repeated his interpretation in the "Ritual and Belief" (1926). It may be appropriate to quote Westermarck (1926: 427) "There can be little doubt that the custom in question is not merely due to masculine jealousy, but serves the object of protecting the women from the evil eye". This interpretation is interesting as it seems rather superficial coming from a philosophically educated person, as of course Westermarck was. But earlier in the third edition of "The History of Human Marriage" (1921:537–538) Westermarck argued a bit more clearly. According to

him the custom of covering the body of married women may have originated as a safeguard against supernational dangers. Later this custom was required by modesty. Here Westermarck did not accept the jealousy explanation but saw it as an interpretation given by some other researchers. In view of the results from Morocco it is evident that the veil was not used everywhere, even if there otherwise was a strong segregation of gender, as among the Rif-Berbers. On the other hand Westermarck admits that envy is a feeling (why not then also jealousy) that lies behind the belief in the evil eye. The evil eye also gives people the possibility to explain accidents without taking personal responsibility for what has happened, as the forces are uncontrollable. Such explanations seem to be taken into use, when unexpected events such as sudden deaths occur (see also Evers Rosander 1991a: 159–191).

The life of women in Palestine as observed by Granqvist

Hilma Granqvist. studied the lives of women and children in the patriarchal Palestine, a society characterized by a strong segregation of gender. All her key persons were women. Granqvist was a pioneer in her choice of research subjects, and in her way of analysing her data she also shows great innovation.

The demographic analysis helped Granqvist to differentiate between ideal and actual conditions. Thus she noticed that marriages between cousins were considered desirable, but they were nevertheless quite rare. The size of the dowry on the other hand depended on factors such as if the marriage was between relatives, within the same clan or village, with someone, who had been previously married, or with an outsider. The statistical analysis showed a great deficit of women, a fact that the villagers themselves were aware of. Divorce was not as common as rumours led one to believe (men had much greater rights to dissolve the marriage). Granqvist reported these advances in her research reports (Granqvist 1950: 7). In comparison to Westermarck she is closer to Malinowski's ideal that one should not only pose questions to informants but also report observations. She always reported her own observations as well as the comments of the key persons to events. Thus she closely watched childbirth, marriage ceremonies, circumcision festivities and funerals as well as the every-day life in a small village.

According to Granqvist women were in many respects more conservative than men. In other words, they held to old pre-islamic traditions. For example they expressed sorrow in ways the Koran forbade

and went the morning after a burial to the grave and wailed. It happened that the men in the village drove them away (Granqvist 1947:153–154)

Childbirth in Artas took place in the presence of women, with the midwife in a central role. Granqvist tells about a difficult delivery, where the parturient woman and her mother to the end wanted to avoid calling in the midwife, in order to save on the costs. But the delivery was long and difficult and the midwife had to be called. She undertook to protect the parturient from the evil eye. In order to start the delivery a piece of sackcloth was ignited, and the parturient was to breathe the smoke. Granqvist (1947: 67) wrote:

"Then the women began to say that this was done against the evil eye. The whole time of her pregnancy Aliy il-Ali had been so well. But of course this had aroused the envy among her neighbours, and so her delivery was difficult. And they must give her smoke in order to destroy the influence of the evil eye." This quote does not reveal if the villagers themselves talked about envy, or if this was the interpretation of the investigator.

The sex of the child was then to be told to the father, who according to the custom was in the men's club. One of the women, who had been present at the delivery, was given the task of telling the father if it was a boy or a girl. The nature of the following celebrations depended on the sex of the child. Birth of boys into the village could be celebrated collectively (Granqvist 1947: 78–80). The boys were circumcised a few years later, and these festivities were compared to weddings (Granqvist 1947: 184–187). In discussing how the birth of the child was announced and celebrated Granqvist (1950:148) made the comment that we in Western countries also are familiar with the fact that the birth of a boy gives rise to a much bigger joy than that of a girl. Yet she often gives examples that show how hard life for a woman was in this society. She tells about a case, where the father vowed that a girl will never survive in his family, and so it happened. But this had later, when the sons were in marriage age, fatal consequences There was no daughter to be given in exchange for a bride for the sons. Through her marriage a daughter could gain a bride for her brother. A family thus needed both sons and daughters (Granqvist 1950: 140s–141). Having only daughters was considered to ruin the family, and bringing up daughters was considered a risky undertaking. The men in Artas lived in constant fear that a daughter would cause a scandal. A pre-marital relationship did not destroy only the honour of the daughter, but of the father and the whole family as well (Granqvist 1950: 139). Through her studies Granqvist is able to take us into the homes of the Artas-people. Her way of

documentation fulfils our modern criteria. She was able to show how common beliefs took form in real situations, and how real persons acted and reasoned.

When her dissertation about "Marriage Conditions" appeared, ten years had passed since Malinowski's book "Argonauts of the Western Pacific" was published. Even so she had been influenced by many different developments in anthropology. Malinowski was surely not the only one to renew and develop the fieldwork methods.

Granqvist's important theme, family life, excluded some other important themes, e.g. the political life. Nevertheless we can share her belief that it was the marriage issues that were central for the Artas inhabitants, and especially for women in this society characterized by segregation of gender.

Westermarck's and Granqvist's view of the consequences of segregation of the gender

Both Westermarck and Granqvist studied societies that were characterized by a strong segregation of the gender. Even though both scholars reflected on the role of women, they tried to take as neutral an approach as possible. Granqvist asked herself, if women did not develop a strong sense of solidarity, since they acted as a group in many situations (Granqvist 1935: 64).

Westermarck talks about the repression of women by Islam, about how proverbs reflected the society, where a man and a woman could not express any tender feelings toward each other if outsiders were present, and where women more than men were bearers of the evil eye and possessed by *jinn* (Westermarck 1930: 51–52). In 1911 Westermarck (1912: 28) gave a lecture, where he said: "In Morocco I was often astonished by the fear men had for their wives. They regarded the woman as a dangerous being, who in secret could force the men to almost anything. The woman knows a thousand ways of making the man her slave, of rekindling his love, when it is gone, of making him hate other women, whom he has fallen in love with".

In spite of Westermarck's honest opinion about the position of woman in Moroccan society, he himself in one respect got upset about the power of women. In mid-Morocco among the Ait Yusi Westermarck had as informant an older man, who three times had been forced to marry women, who had said a conditional curse. In order to keep his honour, the man was obliged to marry these women. A woman, who wanted to leave her husband, could by giving a condi-

tional curse, make another man marry her. She could announce this conditional curse by grasping the pole that supported the tent, or turn the handmill, as if she was grinding with it (Westermarck, 1914: 60). A man who was thus challenged had to marry the woman for the sake of his honour (Westermarck 1914: 63).

Westermarck (1927: 316, also 1918: 299–301) expressed his view on this with uncustomary emotion, and said: "The old man had many times in his life had the misfortune to be a victim for the most dreadful custom I ever have heard about". What is dreadful about this custom, compared to child marriage (in Palestine), or the ease with which a man can divorce his wife. It is doubtful that Westermarck would be horrified by the compensation the new husband had to pay the former husband of the woman (for the loss of labour). It is likely that Westermarck here was thinking in terms of Westerners' right to choose their own sexual partners. But such freedom of choice existed neither in Morocco nor in Palestine.

An re-evaluation

Later studies have in many instances verified the effects of the strict segregation of gender observed and commented by Granqvist and Westermarck. Among later studies I want to mention just two, those of Pierre Bourdieu and Eva Evers Rosander. Bourdieu did his fieldwork in the 1950s and 1960s in Kabylia, in northern Algeria (Bourdieu 1962:1–16 and Bourdieu 1965:191–241), and Evers Rosander hers in the 1970s and 1980s in Ceuta, the Spanish enclave bordering to Morocco (see Evers Rosander1991a and 1991b: 159–191). Bourdieu (1996:192) uses in a recent paper referring to Kabylia the concept of the "paradigmatic masculine cosmogony-in-action", which includes a strict segregation of gender as well as a worldview legitimating the male dominance. Bourdieu says that "Kabylia offers a living paradigmatic instantiation of a masculine cosmogony-in-action that is at once both exotic and familiar, because it lies behind our own European and Euro-American cultural tradition". Theoretically one can say for example that the male dominance in Morocco and the Middle East is maintained, when women are veiled or otherwise have made themselves invisible. In this respect it is not important to ask if veiling is to protect the women from the evil eye or from the man as a jealous creature.

Evers Rosander has described how the male dominance in Moroccan culture hinders women from developing solidarity among themselves, and how crisis in family life puts the burden on women. Belief

in the evil eye and evil spirits gives the parties in a crisis the opportunity to put the blame outside their own action and responsibility. At the same time the cultural explanations give women the role of being the experts on and the users of these same evil forces (Evers Rosander 1991a: 159–191). These examples indicate that the results of Granqvist and Westermarck are of interest for today´s researchers. Their writings give also clues to situations,where women did not surrender to the rules set by males. When women visited a new grave, they acted against the will of men in Artas and were brutally driven away. An Ait Yusi woman could divorce a man and oblige another to marry her by using a conditional curse. This is another important clue to breaches in the pattern of male dominance.

All in all both Westermarck and Granqvist made a strong contribution to research with the methods that were available to them. Prior to Malinowski doing his fieldwork Westermarck emphasized the importance of learning the local languages and of getting thoroughly acquainted with the environment, in which one did research. Granqvist independently took the initiative to report results of observations, and to give statistical information about the society, where she did her research. Both published a lot and our evaluation should not be blinded by differences in style or ways to record the results. Of course Granqvist as a representative of a younger generation is more modern and closer to our ideas of recording and reporting field results than Westermarck. Nevertheless, it iss advantageous for the modern reader that Westermarck wrote popular articles and books as these are more easy to approach than his strictly scientific publications. The criticism Westermarck received during his lifetime did not hinder his career, and his works were much translated, and he received many honorary awards. He had faithful followers in Finland. In Granqvist´s case we can be satisfied that her academic misfortunes did not hinder her from doing active research. She worked with great patience and her results have lasting importance. As far as I know, a biography on her is under preparation and, that it happens is not at all too early.

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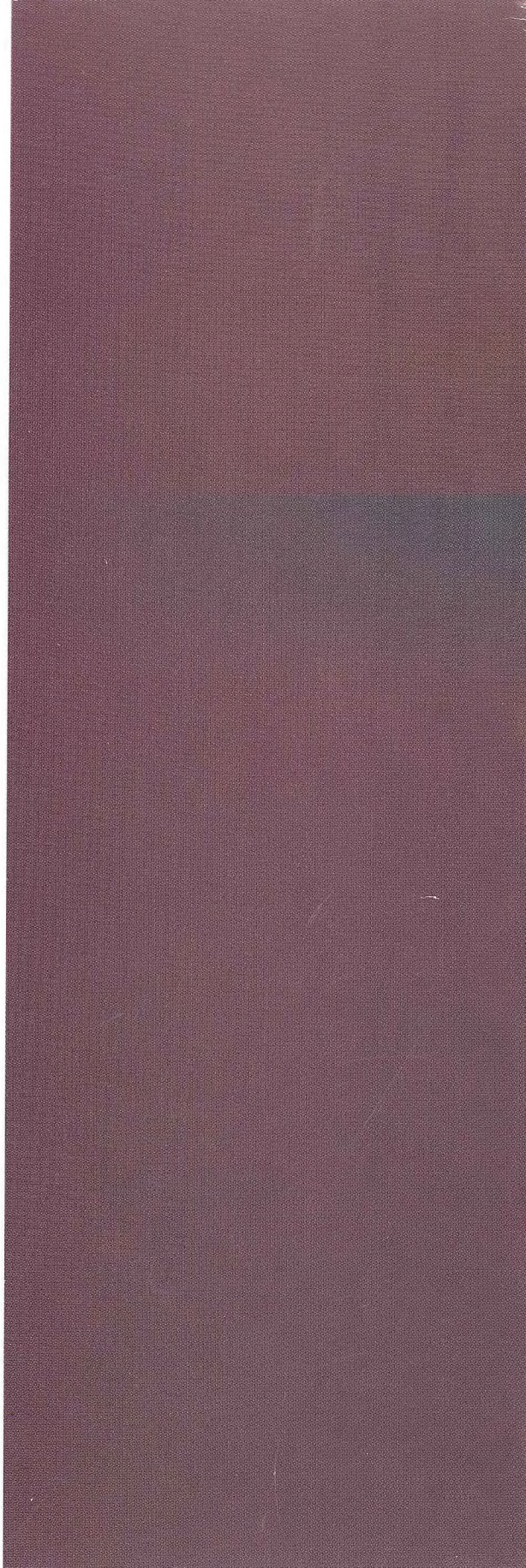

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