

Interpreting Ritual as Performance and Theory Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania 2010 Distinguished Lecture

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ABSTRACT

The paper looks at specific rituals and their relationships with dance in Hawai`i, Tonga, Bulgaria, and India. These four short case studies explore the relationship between dance and ritual, in particular how dance is presented as representing the ritual past. I bring 'structured movement,' as one of ritual's distinguishing marks, to center stage to explore how ritual movement and dance are related.

Key words: Ritual, dance, Hawai`i, Tonga, Bulgaria, India.

INTRODUCTION

Invitation to address the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania (ASAO) offered the opportunity to look back at my ongoing research on ritual and its association with structured movement systems and dance.¹ I have re-researched my fieldwork that has taken me to four different parts of the world, and I present four short case studies (from Hawaii, Tonga, Bulgaria, and India) concluding with remarks on the study of ritual, this, a slippery concept that needs further research and updating. I am interested in the relationships between dance and ritual and especially in how dances are presented today and what they are said to represent from the ritual past.

Ritual has been of special interest to many anthropologists since the beginning of the discipline and many important insights have derived from research in Oceania. But, except for a few memorable studies, such as Alfred Gell among the Umeda in New Guinea (1985) and Andrée Grau among the Tiwi of Australia (2001), little research has focused on bodily movement as part of ritual structure. Yet, Maurice Bloch noted, 'I very much doubt that an event observed by an anthropologist which did not contain the three elements of [ritualized speech, singing, and dancing] would ever be described . . . as a ritual. In other words, these phenomena have been implicitly taken as the *distinguishing* marks of ritual' (1974:57). Here, I bring 'movement,' as one of ritual's distinguishing marks, to center stage to explore if and how ritual movement and dance are related. What ritual and dance often share is that they manipulate (i.e., handle with skill) human bodies in time and space resulting in *structured movement systems*. These are systems of knowledge that are socially and culturally constructed: Created by, known and agreed upon by a group of people, and primarily preserved in memory. Though transient, movement systems have structured content. They can be visual manifestations of social relations, the subjects of elaborate aesthetic systems, and may assist in understanding cultural values.

HAWAII

My interest in Hawaiian ritual arose from my study of Hawaiian dance, a structured movement system today called *hula*. I was particularly interested in *hula pahu*, a small group of dances

that are said to be the remnants of pre-Christian rituals, and I wrote a book on the subject of Hawaiian Drum Dances (Kaeppler 1993). My research, which I began in 1970s and continued through the 1990s, recorded and analyzed the *hula pahu* of the three main schools that still performed and taught these dances. Since my original research, only one of these schools is still alive and well and I will focus on performances of this school, now known as the Zuttermeister School under the direction of Kumu Hula (master teacher) Noenoelani Zuttermeister.

In performances by this school that include *hula pahu*, there is always a ritual beginning. Kumu Noenoelani opens with an *oli* (a specific kind of chant) that calls upon the gods to inspire and surround the performers with the energy of nature. The performers respond with a *mele kahea* asking permission to enter onto the performance space. They often use one which originated from the traditional epic of the volcano goddess Pele. Kumu Noenoelani answers and invites them to enter. Noenoelani uses the *pahu* drum which, according to Hawaiian tradition, was brought to Hawai'i from an ancient homeland known as Kahiki by La'amaikahiki, sometime around AD1250. These drums were sounded in outdoor temples called *heiau*, and they remain instruments of power and sacredness. The sound of the drum is called *kani* and the head of the drum is *waha* (mouth). Hawaiians believe that playing the drum was a way of communicating with their gods. The *pahu* is carved from a single tree trunk, usually from breadfruit or coconut, and the *waha* is typically covered by sharkskin or, today, with cowhide. It is lashed with coconut sennit fiber in which the maker's prayers were captured to remain with the *pahu* for its lifetime. The *pahu* is accompanied by a small knee drum, called *puniu* or *kilu*, made of a coconut shell base and covered with the skin of the *kala* or surgeonfish. The *pahu* is struck with the palm of the hand while the *kilu* is struck with a fiber beater called *ka*.

Three dances are usually performed in the *pahu* tradition:

1. *Kaulilua I Ke Anu O Waialeale* is one of the oldest dances to survive from rituals used on the *heiau* (outdoor temples). This was later brought into *hula* and perpetuated by a few practitioners whose roots can be traced back to the 19th century. The poetry has *kaona*, or hidden meaning, in which the cold and rain of Mt. Waialeale on the island of Kaua'i is a metaphor for fertility rituals of the god Lono;
2. *Aloha E Ke Kai O Kalalau* is also from Kaua'i and describes the *ahi lele*, or fire brands, which were thrown from Kamaile at the top of a steep cliff called Makana. The firebrands were tossed into the wind to be carried twirling far out to sea where Hawaiian chiefs watched in their canoes. This *hula* preserves a ritual based on fire chants associated with the god Kanaloa and inherited by King Kalākaua in the 19th century;
3. *Hanohano ka uka Pihanakalani* preserves a ritual that involves a sacred flute called *Kanikawi*; in the 19th century, this became a lei chant in honor of Queen Kapī olani.

Although these dances, and a few others, have been preserved in the present *hula* tradition, in old Hawai'i there were three contexts in which structured movement systems were performed. In order to understand ritual, I found it was necessary to sort out traditional Hawaiian conceptualizations regarding structured movement by going back to the basic performance of structured movements in traditional contexts, rather than simply analyzing present-day *hula*.

The three structured movement systems in old Hawai'i included, first, mourning ceremonies in which movements accompanied *kanikau* (lamentations). These movements were formulaic and involved locking the fingers of the hands and putting them behind the head, stretching hands and arms upwards with palms turned towards each other, and beating the breast. A second structured movement system, called *ha`a*, was used during sacred ceremonies on *heiau*. These movements appear to have been based on an asymmetrical processional in a bent-knee stance, performed in conjunction with a chanted text and *pahu*.

They were performed by image bearers and carriers of other sacred objects such as *kapu* sticks and sacred cords which were ‘tools’ of the *kahuna* (priests). Finally, a third structured movement system, *hula*, was used in formal (and informal) entertainment. Movements included a series of lower-body motifs performed symmetrically and a wide variety of hand/arm motifs that alluded to words of the text and were performed in conjunction with a variety of sound-producing instruments. Although the movement ‘products’ (i.e., the movement motifs performed simultaneously and sequentially) may have been somewhat similar in all these activities, the contexts in which they were performed differed. They were movement dimensions of separate activities, were terminologically differentiated, and the reason or intention for performance differed.

The first two contexts might be termed ‘ritual’ However, the Hawaiian language does not have a term that accurately translates our anthropological concept. In both the mourning ceremonies and in the *heiau* context, the specialized Hawaiian performers carried out what Roy Rappaport has described as ‘more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not encoded by the performers’ (1979:175). That is, these movements were handed down by ancestors and their function was to worship specific gods – primarily Lono, god of peace and agriculture, but also Kū, the god of war. Some structured movements dealt with the manipulation of sacred cords and tying/binding. There was a restricted set of movements that were performed in conjunction with specific texts. Structured movements did not transfer from one text to another nor change from performance to performance; that is, they were constricted or restricted orders. Essentially, they could not be re-choreographed, or re-ordered, but were reproduced and repeated each time they were performed (or at least that was the intention).

Performers were men and the primary audience was the gods who were concerned with the process – that is, that the act of performing was being carried out. Other audience members included the assembled congregation which watched the movement specialists, raising their arms at specific junctures, and who were reassured that the rituals of peace, agriculture, fertility, and sometimes preparations for war were being carried out on their behalf. They witnessed that the form or structure of the movements in a fixed relationship to one another was properly performed. The medium, i.e., the performance, was the message with an encoded metamessage.

The performance of *ha`a*, as this structured movement system was called, was necessary to the religious and political order of old Hawai`i. This was a social contract among chiefs, people, and the gods; a liturgical order that through its performance worshipped the gods who then looked favorably on the performers and the congregation and their requests. In the 21st century, the remnants of these rituals have today been incorporated into the formal hula category of *hula pahu*.

TONGA

My study of Tongan ritual derived from my being in Tonga during ceremonies associated with the death of Queen Salote Tupou III in 1965 and with the investiture of King Tupou IV in 1967 (as well as the subsequent investitures of several other chiefs, nobles, and the present King Tupou V in 2008). Although dances were performed at some of these events, Tongans do not conceptualize that dance derives from ritual even though some of the arm movements in kava (*Piper methysticum*) ceremonies are virtually the same as arm movements used in what they today would consider to be ‘dance.’ Again, to understand local meanings of dance, I found that it was necessary to sort out traditional Tongan conceptualizations regarding structured movement by going back to basic acts of performing structured movements in original contexts, rather than simply analyzing present-day dance style and technique.

One important structured movement tradition takes place during the mixing of kava. This was first described during the third voyage of Captain James Cook and illustrated by

expedition artist John Webber. Traditionally, kava root was chewed (by young people with good teeth) and placed into a wooden bowl before it was mixed with water and drunk by the assembled group during state ceremonies. As the gods gave kava to people, it was appropriate for people to offer it back to the gods. European disgust at ingesting something that someone else had previously chewed influenced this kava-drinking society to find a new way to prepare it – namely by crushing kava root with one stone upon another. At various times during the past two centuries, kava was thought to be similar to alcohol, then to be closer to a narcotic, but it is now generally considered a relaxant and soporific. It is essentially a ‘downer’ and encourages agreement rather than violence. It was thought to have sacred powers and to promote sociability. Its chemical properties vary according to how it is prepared and by how much water is used in its dilution. Kava mixing bowls are usually shallow to enable a mixer to knead macerated root and then further crush it in the bowl, after which the fluid is wrung with a fiber strainer to remove leftover fiber and bits of root.

All kava preparation movements are prescribed and ordered. Deviation is not allowed. Structured movement begins with displaying the empty kava bowl to the ceremonial attendants at the far side of the oval performing space. These *matāpule* continue to monitor the ritual preparatory movements and they will stop the ceremony if something is done incorrectly. Movements are precise and are performed in a prescribed order including how the kava root is squeezed with water, how the fiber strainer is manipulated, shaken, and then discarded. The kava is then squeezed into the cup with the fiber strainer and served and received with two hands. Even how a server stands when waiting to serve the kava cup is prescribed. Finally, the serving order as called out by the ritual leader also follows specific rules.

According to Tongan tradition, a high chief arrived unannounced at a small Tongan island in the midst of a famine. Lack of food to feed the chief led the couple living on the island to kill their leprous daughter, Kava`onau, bake her in an earth oven, and serve her to the chief. He refused to eat the girl and directed the couple to bury her instead. From her interred body grew the first kava plant (named after the daughter) and also the first sugarcane plant. A rat, eating the kava plant became disoriented (or drunk) and then ate the sugarcane plant and was refreshed. This sacrifice of Kava`onau and the plants that derived from her body embed Tongan values of social interaction and hierarchy including the importance of hospitality, the use of certain food and drink to acknowledge an individual's rank, and the elegance of preparation and presentation. Based on these values, kava preparation ceremony became institutionalized as an important ritual that expresses proper relationships among gods, chiefs, and people. At the center of this ritual is the kava bowl, considered today a ritual object.

Like Hawaiian, the Tongan language does not have a term that conveys the concept of ‘ritual.’ Although there are numerous events that could be described as ritual, these are simply part of the cycle of life such as funerals which entail wearing large ragged mats, or the importance of ceremonial (or ritual) attendants called *ha`atufunga*, who carry out much of their work in secret. Tongans revere these ceremonies as a central part of their tradition and an analysis of structured movements used in these important ceremonies led me to a larger exploration of kava ceremony in a contemporary perspective and its association with dance, especially as many Tongan dance movements reproduce those of kava mixing. Although kava ceremonies have been part of the anthropological literature for decades, the movements have been seldom mentioned (but see Kaeppler 1985)

To evoke Rappaport’s definition again, the kava mixers, servers, and drinkers carry out ‘more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances’ not originated by them. The ritual sequence was handed down by ancestors and today a kava ceremony generates and regenerates a covenant between chiefs and people. Performers are usually men who sit in a specified layout in a sacred performing space, and are served in a specific order depending on their place in the hierarchical order of chiefly lines. Participants also include the gods, who were traditionally concerned with the process, and humans to whom the ceremony is relevant. Again, the medium, i.e., the performance, is a message with an encoded metamessage.

Tongan performance of the kava ceremony is necessary to the political order which is a social contract among chiefs, people, and the gods. The chief (who descended from the gods) directed the old couple in an act that originated the kava plant. The supernatural origin of the plant requires that the drink made from it should not be used indiscriminately but should be used in the service of the chiefs and the gods in an elegant way. The chief gave kava to ordinary people who sanctify it with their labor and then give it back to the chiefs and the gods, forming a ritual covenant among them.

A Tongan kava ceremony is a socio-political, religious process performed in an outdoor sacred space. The audience comprises the (old) gods and a congregation of believers. The intention is to carry out the traditions that derived from the pre-Christian gods who will then look favorably on the performers and the congregation. The hierarchical structure of the society is encoded in the process. At the same time, this is socio-political theatre in which meaning is aesthetically encoded in the product and must be derived by a culturally knowledgeable audience that is engaged by the objects, words, and structured movements. For example, a kava ceremony in November 2006, called *pongipongi tapu*, installed King Siaosi Tupou V as the new King of Tonga (although his formal investiture did not take place until 2008), as well as the new Crown Prince Tupouto'a, and the latter's two sons as Ulukalala and Ata. Ritual kava ceremony is alive and well in Tonga.

Tongan rituals associated with death and funerals are also highly prescribed including funerary clothing based on the wearing of mats. How big and how ragged these mats are indicates the wearer's relationship to the deceased. The funeral directors (*ha'atufunga*) are borne on a pall with the coffin. They carry flywhisks which are incorporated into ritual movements. The men who carry the pall move together with structured walking motifs and six months later, at the end of the funeral rituals, women use the same ritual walking while carrying their presentations of barkcloth and mats (which have been ritually folded).

However, as I noted at the beginning of this section, the structure of Tongan ritual movement is not conceptually related to dance even though many hand and arm movements used in dance are similar to, and derived from, structured kava preparation. Kava and funerary rituals demand a prescribed ordering of movement while contemporary dance can be re-choreographed each time it is performed or even can be choreographed spontaneously (i.e., improvised). Tongan dance is entertainment, an event of honoring, or a political statement. It is not a ritual. In Tonga, there is no such thing as ritual dancing.

BULGARIA

To broaden our comparison of structured movement and dance and their relation to ritual, we might also look to two very different societies I had the chance recently to visit, in which ritual movement remains important (see Ilieva 2001 and Silverman 1983). In May 2005, I took part in a study group, concerned with ritual complexes, which visited Bulgaria. The ritual that we investigated is today associated with St. George's day. This is a calendrical ritual based on the coming of spring which supplicates rainfall for the crops. In Varvara, this takes place in a sacred space at the top of a nearby hill up which we walked 15,000 steps, along with church officials, several old women specialized in the structured movement aspects of the ritual, and many members of the community. The origin of the ritual is pre-Christian and goes back to a female goddess of the Bronze Age who was worshipped in parts of contemporary Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey.

The night before St. George's Day, during which the main ritual took place, sheep were brought to Varvara's Catholic Church to be blessed by the Priest before they were sacrificed and subsequently roasted at the top of the hill for a communal feast. Early in the morning of St. George's Day itself, women brought decorated bread to the church that they had baked during the night to be blessed by the Priest, also to be taken up the hill for the feast. In the church, the women sang old traditionally-pitched songs accompanied by clappers and the men

sang Christian songs. After the Priest blessed bread, water, sheep, and participants, all began the long trek up the steep hill. Wearing headbands of oak leaves, the procession was led by the Priest and officials who carried banners featuring St. George on a white horse, followed by a band, old women, and the rest of the community. Along the way, as the procession passed through the village, women showered the procession with handfuls of grain. After some hours of walking up the hill, the procession arrived at a ritual space where the bread previously had been transported and sheep were being barbecued. Music specially associated with the ritual along with other music was also played and enjoyed.

One of the main elements of the ritual was a performance of structured movement by the old women to bring rain. Several old women began their performance and right on cue it began to rain and continued raining for some time. Plates of food were distributed to everyone and all went into the tents to eat. These tents had been set up the previous day as 'everyone knew it would rain.'

This ritual performance (sometimes referred to as a *horo*) performed by the old women is distinguished from other Varvara music/dance in that the music, movement motifs, and songs are specific for St. George's Day. The important movement elements here included lower body movement motifs typical of Balkan dance, but with more emphasis on the left leg/foot than the right, this emphasizing the ritual concept of the left. The main movement motif is in four beats: Left foot cross in front of right foot, right foot to right side, left cross behind, right to right side. The women perform at the top of the hill, mid-way down the hill, and at the bottom of the hill. Also, along the way back down the hill to the starting point, the procession stopped at each crossroad so that the Priest could bless bread for those who were not able to climb the hill and take part at the sacred space.

Most of this seems straightforward in that during the ritual it 'always' rains and efficacy is preserved. However, the performance includes other elements for which people have no explanation and which are done 'because they are part of the ritual.' For example, much of the ritual is markedly associated with women. A newly married woman will bake bread during the night in a white clay pot wearing her wedding dress. Before St. George's Day, a newly married woman often wears her wedding jacket and headwear, but on St. George's Day her mother-in-law changes her headdress for a married-woman's kerchief. The women also make oak-leaf wreaths. In the past, women collected herbs and bathed in the dew before sunrise, then bathed in the river where this turns to the left, reflecting the motif that 'everything should be done to the left.' In some villages, women dance around the bread table three times followed by the Priest who also dances around the table three times. Men bring their first-born male lamb of the year with a candle on its horn to be blessed by the priest. The Priest sings to the lamb and takes the lighted candle and makes the sign of the cross with the candle fire on the forehead of the lamb. Several families take their lambs to a crossroad to form a 'border-crossing' for the Priest. A man should give salt to his lamb and have the lamb symbolically cross a border by walking over a belt while facing the east. After sacrificing the lamb, the man should dip his finger in the blood and put a spot on the foreheads of children. Then he should put the blood into a river, water, or earth.

But why do ritual supplicants in Varvara take part today? Essentially, besides being a ritual that must be performed to bring rain for the crops, St. George's Day has become an identity festival and a mechanism of renewal of what it means to be Bulgarian. Traditional structured movement, ritually performed, connotes present-day political identities.

INDIA

During the second week of February, 2009, I traveled with eight students and three faculty members of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, where I was teaching, to document the Yarlamma ritual in Karnataka. Much of this ritual has been banned by the government because of its association with prostitution. The ritual relates to a myth of a woman who was beheaded by

her son, told to do so by his father after his brothers had refused their father's request. The son who performed the deed was given one wish and he wished that his mother's head would be restored. It was, and it multiplied. Many temples have been dedicated to Yarlamma in various places in south India. Traditionally, the original ritual involved dedication of women as temple *devadasis*. Subsequently, eunuchs (as well as hermaphrodites and transvestites) also became part of the ritual to be likewise dedicated to Yarlamma.

Thousands of people are now devotees and thousands of others attend the festival each year (including police which seems remarkable for a banned ritual). Devotees come primarily from marginalized groups with their own sub-cultures who wish to preserve their own way of doing things, their own traditions. People arrive in decorated covered wagons (pulled by bullocks) and sleep in these during the ceremony. We saw hundreds of these carts, and many smaller scale rituals took place within the wider temple area. Some components of the main ritual no longer occur (or at least that is the official stance), for example a parade of unclothed women and the dedication of young girls who are chosen because of their knotted hair. But priests and instrumentalists continue to lead devotees to a pool where they bathe, and then to the temple which is entirely covered with yellow turmeric, red ochre, and vermilion thrown by those attending (and so were we). There, devotees petition the goddess for good health, fertility (especially for sons), and other hopes for the future. Many of the villagers who participated carried a figure of the goddess's head on their own heads, which is important for an association with Yarlamma. We also found a fair with booths selling a variety of goods from saris for the goddess figures, to vermilion, to CDs.

Important structured movement elements during the ritual included supplication by placing oneself flat on the ground, over and over, moving clockwise around the temple, and facing the temple where the goddess resides. The movements of the *devidasas* (male and female, *jokomas* and *jokopas*) that honored the goddess were simplified versions of traditional Indian dance genres including typical lower body motifs and also hand/arm movements with a distant relationship to Hindu *mudra* (ritual movements).

RITUAL CONCEPTS

The structured movement components observed in these four traditions call attention to anthropological approaches to ritual itself. When I first studied anthropology, there were no classes offered that focused on ritual. I recall instead only passing mention of ritual in classes such as History of Anthropological Theory where we were introduced to Durkheim and van Gennep, primarily in the contexts of religion and rites of passage respectively. Just what is ritual and does this remain a viable analytic concept? We commonly use terms such as 'ritual object,' 'ritual music,' 'ritual speech,' or 'ritual dancing' without much critical thought about their implications. Rituals are usually taken to be ancient and traditional and associated objects or performances are thus also thought to be traditional and ancient.

As noted earlier, Roy Rappaport defined ritual as 'the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not encoded by the performers' (1979:175). That is, these formal acts and utterances are learned/memorized (or read) from the teachings of ancestors and do not originate with the performer. Rappaport suggested that a ritual is 'a form or structure...[having] a number of features or characteristics in a more or less fixed relationship to one another' that can exist only in performance. The medium (i.e., the performance of structured movement) is part of the message; more precisely, it is a metamessage about whatever is encoded in the ritual. Similarly, Vilsoni Hereniko, a Rotuman anthropologist and performance artist, has noted the received rather than creative aspects of ritual performance:

traditional rituals and ceremonies...did not make sense to me ...[because] no one explained to me the reasons certain rituals had to be performed on special occasions,

or why these rituals had to follow a prescribed order...I did not feel it was appropriate to ask or probe into the reasons or meanings of these acts or actions. (2005:103)

And Valero Valeri, who wrote extensively on Hawaiian rituals, also observed that 'rituals are practices in which the participants do not believe themselves to be the authors of what they do, believing instead that their ritual significations are authorized and prescribed by a superior authority' (quoted in Kelly and Kaplan, 1990:139).

This emphasis on prescribed movement is evident in all of my four case studies, where participants felt that their ritual performances had come down to them from ancestors and had to be enacted in the prescribed manner else they would not be effective. Structured movement used in Hawaiian *hula pahu*, Tongan kava mixing and presentation, and the Bulgarian rain dance could not be changed but had to be performed the same way each time. In each case, the ritual encompassed a message that needed to be performed. Indeed, it was the process of performing that ensured fertility, cemented a social contract with the gods, or brought the rain. If structured movements were not performed as given, there would be a lack of offspring in nature and humans (as happened in 19th century Hawai'i). The social contract between chiefs, people, and the gods might not be renewed in Tonga. And rain for the crops might not come in Bulgaria. And for devotees of Yarlamma, if the ritual process was not performed, requests for sons, restoration of health, and the like would not be granted.

Rituals are similar to what Frits Staal in *Discovering the Vedas* (2009) characterized as Kautsa's fifth thesis. That is, rituals, like mantras, have no meaning. They are learned by heart through memorization rather than through less conscious learning like becoming skilled in a first language. In the four cases above, memorization played an important part and questions about the process were not asked. Even the indigenous scholar Hereniko felt he should not probe into the meanings of structured movement or other ritual components.

According to these theorists and my own research, ritual participants may not fully understand what they are doing, only that it is necessary to do it.² How, then, does ritual relate to the more inclusive category of performance and especially to theatre and even spectacle? One basic difference between ritual and theatre is that even though a dramatic script was written by someone else, the acts *are* encoded by the performers. Rather than the performance itself being the message, the message in theatre is *derived* from the performance. In theatre, performers do understand what they are doing and it is the product that is the message (not the process of performance itself). Although process and product are important in both ritual and theatre, in ritual the process is primary. In theater the product is primary.³

As a specialist in structured movement associated with music, dance, and poetry, I interrogate our conceptual link between music/dance/poetic speech and ritual. In spite of what Maurice Bloch (1974) has declared, perhaps these practices are not intrinsically related at all and it is our lack of indigenous knowledge and categorization that encourages us to relate them. Practitioners themselves may not be 'musicking' or 'dancing' (concepts derived from our own Western tradition) but rather 'ritually intoning and moving' (though using the same or different sound and movement systems).

I propose that there are three important elements in the comparative study of ritual: (1) What is the intention of the performance and the presenters?; (2) Efficacy, or does it work, at least often enough to continue doing it, and is the intention realized?; and (3) What knowledge do the viewers/beholders bring to a performance as this shapes how it will be decoded, as ritual, or as theatre, or as spectacle. In contrast, important elements for the analysis of structured movement are: (1) Is there an indigenous category that compares to the Western concept of dance and, if so, how does this fit with other structured movement systems in that society?; (2) How is dance learned in specific societies, for example, is it learned as a movement 'language' (rather than by memorization)?; (3) What is (are) the function(s) or intention(s) of this category of movement?; and (4), How is meaning derived from a performance, and are aesthetics an important element in choreography and performance?

My interest lies in understanding how meaning is derived from ritual (and dance and other structured movement), how the frame of an event must be understood in order to derive its meaning, how intention and cultural evaluation can be understood in terms of that event's frame, the necessity of understanding the activities that generate rituals, and how and by whom ritual and its efficacy are judged. But, as this is a work in progress, I intend to keep on researching ritual comparatively to discern if it is, in fact, a viable analytical category and why structured movement systems are important in its presentation and re-presentation.

NOTES

1. I thank ASAO for the invitation to present this lecture at its 2010 annual meeting in Old Town, Alexandria, Virginia in very snowy conditions.
2. Some ritual specialists would give more agency to performers themselves, but my analysis agrees with that of Valeri.
3. I have just published an article on how viewers decode ritual, theatre, and spectacle Kaepler (2010), I will not elaborate this here.

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