

New Approaches to the Scientific Study of Religion 13

Series Editors: Lluís Oviedo · Konrad Szocik

Daniel Burgos

Rituals and Music in Europe

An ethnological study through data
analytics

 Springer

New Approaches to the Scientific Study of Religion

Volume 13

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Daniel Burgos

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An ethnological study through data analytics

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ISSN 2367-3494 ISSN 2367-3508 (electronic)
New Approaches to the Scientific Study of Religion
ISBN 978-3-031-54430-9 ISBN 978-3-031-54431-6 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-54431-6>

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*To my wife, Rocío, who cultivates music in our lives and is always open to new sounds.
To my son, David, whom I share the passion for music with. He is developing a personal style and a way of expression through it.*

Abstract

This research explores modern European religious and non-religious rituals and their main features by focusing on music as a key element required for the full expression of beliefs. It specifically examines the relationship between religious, non-religious, pagan, cultural, celebratory, and traditional rituals, and studies the extent to which they overlap, replace, or feed religious or pseudo-religious beliefs to create alternative beliefs (individual or collective) that systematically ignore any religion. The study further analyses the relationship between daily habits, holidays, sports, politics, culture, and other pagan rituals as forms that represent social feelings by identifying, enjoying, or impersonating emotions; and transversally, it explores how music facilitates and fosters those emotions. This work then investigates how rituals coexist and mutually influence each other through a representation of religious and non-religious rituals, and how music plays a central role in that phenomenology.

Ceremonies and rituals provide structures for celebration, connection, and social relationships, and they guide the expression of feelings and beliefs. From chanting, to choirs, to individual singing, rituals are empowered by music, which enhances the level of communication. This analysis examines rituals in selected European countries where cultural diversities will help to identify behaviours and social patterns in which music plays a key role. The investigation seeks common features in diverse rituals—from sport to religion, from politics to family ceremonies, and to personal daily habits—and it correlates music with beliefs. This work later retrieves, analyses, and categorises musical expressions as an initial step in the construction of a reference model that provides a common framework for understanding and analysing those rituals. This model extracts commonalities from the various musical expressions to produce a shared background model that is used to thoroughly analyse other expressions defining personal and social patterns, with model rituals and the music involved, based on qualitative and quantitative data analytics. The author argues that music is a key part of various types of rituals (e.g., rites of passage), and that music supports and enriches the meaning of the ritual, to ultimately strengthen the bond of communication with the individual and the group.

Acknowledgements

I thank Prof. Lluís Oviedo, who supported a large deal of this research and gave me the opportunity for this publication, along with Springer.

I play piano and guitar since I was little. I also compose and study music for a long time now. And all that started drawing a keyboard on a piece paper and playing the notes in my head, since my family could not afford to buy a real one, at first. I sneaked in places with pianos, pipe organs, and anything with keys to steal moments and explore to discover the music in me. Many people offered me complicity, lending instruments, scores, and rooms to rehearse. I thank all those places and people who supported me when there was nothing in return to expect but learning and comradeship. They meant a significant role in my music education, and therefore, in my development as a person.

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Chapter 1

Introduction to This Book



1.1 Context of Rituals and Music in Europe

A ritual is the prototype of a structured script, of a scripted action (McCauley and Lawson 1999). Likewise, a script is a cognitive representation of a stereotypical and predetermined sequence that defines a known situation (Schank and Abelson 1975). The script must subsequently be executed frequently and consistently in order to become a tradition (Staal 1979). The instance of each implementation, however—that is, the act of representing the script every time—does not constitute the ritual, but rather an experience of its implementation. Thus, the ritual is not constituted in the collection of these individual experiences but in the generic structure of the knowledge they define (McCauley and Lawson 1999). This sequence of actions generally lacks a specific meaning, although one is given by the social functions and the outside references accompanying it. In other words, the meaning is external to the script and applied to syntax and is not semantically intrinsic to the structure (Staal 1996). Furthermore, not every element of the ritual must have meaning, as established by Eliade (1998), but the whole structure must (Strenski 1991). Even so, each element incorporates meaning or not according to the person implementing it (Eliade 1957).

The rituals, in turn, can be interpreted by the observer or by each person beyond their commonly accepted significance. For instance, rituals can address aspects of the human condition, serve as a way participants can express emotions, and portray various aspects of culture. The structure of actions associated with rituals, devoid of meaning in itself, combines the socially or externally applied meaning with the meaning each individual attributes to it (Winch 1964). This over-application of meanings can lead to an alteration of the chain of communication from its origin to the observer's interpretation, probably magnified by the imprecise nature of non-verbal communication suggested per person and implementation, transforming the conceptual meaning into a series of unrelated expressions or attitudes (Lawson

1976). Likewise, rituals survive the course of time because the people implementing them finds some type of feeling in them: fulfilment, satisfaction, duty, solace, companionship, security, etc. (Staal 1991).

Following the classification defined by Lawson and McCauley (Lawson and McCauley 1993), rituals are divided into two general types: those in which a god is involved as a special agent and those in which that god is involved as a special victim or through some special instrument. This classification follows the Principle of Superhuman Agent as a complement to the Principle of Superhuman Proximity: the more directly a superhuman agent is involved, the more important the ritual. Both principles defend the idea of required knowledge to implement and understand the ritual, as with any other mundane or mainstream action (Malley and Barrett 2003).

The objective of this work was to conduct a thorough study of the European, Western modern (i.e., Anglo-Saxon and Germanic) religious and non-religious phenomenology and their music, in the form of rituals, as a required key element for the full expression of the beliefs (Howard 1992; Wuthnow 2003). The author also analysed, as collateral input and as an increasing part of the European population, the influence of other cultures, such as Latin American, African and Asian. The study also looked into their coexistence and mutual influence through a representation of religious and non-religious rituals, and how music plays a central role in that phenomenology (De Carvalho 1984; Larco 1997; Barz 2003; Waugh 2005). It especially focused on the relationship between daily habits, holidays, sport, politics, cultural, and other pagan rituals, as forms of representation of a social feeling, focused on identifying, enjoying or impersonating a feeling, and how music facilitates and fosters that feeling (MacDonald et al. 2012). Also, in how these rituals are overlapping, replace or feed religious or pseudo-religious beliefs, to create alternative beliefs (own or collective) that systematically ignore any religion, but that are defined by similar structures of popular authorship and music support (St John 2006; Till 2010a, b).

1.2 What Are the Objectives of This Book

The author defines the following key research objectives:

1. To identify and analyse selected rituals from Europe
2. To explore and categorise common patterns in design, identification, execution and expression of these rituals, including music's contribution
3. To design a generic model that will be described through the music accompanying the rituals
4. To apply the model to analyse other case studies of rituals and music, including those focused on daily habits
5. To draw patterns, influences and similarities between the studied rituals and related music in the context of the design framework, so that a generic abstraction process can be obtained.

1.3 What Hypothesis and Questions Are Raised by This Research

The research is based on a hypothesis of similarity between religious and non-religious (secular) rituals regarding form, content, meaning and, above all, structure. The study sought to prove that rituals perform a specific function within a concrete context, with specific actors and a defined structure, and that the whole framework or model is largely applicable to each ritual independent of creed, orientation or social environment, whether religious, political, sports, family or any other type.

Research questions satisfying this hypothesis are:

- RQ-1. Do rituals fulfil a similar function independent of the social environment in which they are performed?
- RQ-2. Do religious and secular rituals maintain the same or a similar structure in different implementation times or contexts?
- RQ-3. Is it possible to develop a pattern of ritual identity, in the form of a generic framework that allows the assessment of an event's or celebration's degree of affinity with the definition of the common elements of a ritual?
- RQ-4. Do rituals and music have a more significant relationship where music supports, enriches, and fosters the meaning of the ritual?

1.4 What Methodology and Methods Are Used

1.4.1 *Basics to Understand the Theoretical Framework*

The research analysed the various ways in which musical activity contributes to ritual, including an approach that adapts to social and cultural evolution, and that uses the music as an instrument for that very definition (Whyte 1946; Clark 2006; Johnson and Joyce 2022). It also explored the harmonisation between rituals and the religious realisation, along with the representation and the vehicle of the definition that the author considers very appropriate taking into account the current social environment, which tends to be inspired by multiple sources and persons (individual or collective). Ritual is, without a doubt, an aspect to be considered in the face of the symbolic aspects of any religion, given that rituals incorporate the individual as the main character of its own expression. This individual, different when alone and in groups, is an active contributor to the scenario (e.g., the ritual) and not just a simple user of inherited models (Jackson 1968; Bourke and Francis 2000). The individual participating in the ritual within a group would have different behaviour when compared to their behaviour as an individual. This is based on the interdependence in group systems theory that carries the assumption that members of a group are interdependent and have different behaviour because of group thinking and peer pressure (Spencer 2006).

This project analysed the patterns of design and the typology of various religious rituals, as well as certain rituals not religious but symbolic, with the aim of finding common patterns, and how music strengthens these expressions and patterns, becoming an outstanding element of the structure and the process (Leonard 1987; Spencer 1991). These patterns will define common features of rituals and their accompanying music, depending on its type, to achieve similar objectives, regardless of their origin, intent, or significance.

Finally, this book looked for inherent features and music elements of religious rituals shown in other sites of ritual, like family rituals, sports, politics, social protocols, and so on. In doing so, the author has tried to find cross-pollination between the various rituals: positive interaction (e.g., approach, popularization, translation) and negative interaction (e.g., demystification, trivialization, impersonation) (Everett 2012; Smith 2014).

1.4.2 Research Design and Data Sources

The author used primary and secondary data sources. As primary ones, the author conducted 51 interviews and collected 127 questionnaires with experts and-or practitioners in the field. These 178-combined-sample of interviews and questionnaires provided a first-hand input to the study, and the basis for constructing the model. As secondary ones, the author used two sources: a systematic literature review from significant production in the field (e.g., 557 sources), and 34 case studies that provides proof for the application and testing of the model by end-users.

The use of personal, in-depth interviews become a crucial way to retrieve the information that the interviewee may know but may not be aware of. Since the depth of feedback in one answer is so different from, and complementary to, between self-filled questionnaires by a respondents and 1-to-1 interviews, the author aimed at getting the best from both sampling techniques. These four types of sources (literature review, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and case studies) were the basis for the research, and they complemented one another.

1.4.3 Methods Used to Collect and Analyse Data

This methodology used a number of methods to collect and analyse data (Burgos 2021). All these methods are largely described later on the book while they are applied to field and desk work:

MT-01. Desk/Literature Review: This method provides a justified review and a comprehensive understanding of the state-of-the-art of every step of this book, delivered through periodic publications (Taylor 2005). Thanks to a thorough desk and literature review, the author puts the work in context and shapes the