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ABSTRACT

This paper traces the history of the dance as a religious expression. Dance rituals identifying with a deity predate written history and have persisted in all cultures up to modern times. Individual and group ecstasy induced by dancing enacted man's relationship to God as well as interpreting God to people of widely different cultural backgrounds. The ancient pagan rite of dancing as a religious expression was so deeply ingrained in the human need for vivid and enthusiastic experience that it was carried into the very early Christian church. Gradually, as church organization and authority grew, it became formalized and at length repressed. While spontaneous dancing remains a part of ritualized religion in primitive cultures, with the exception of a few minor cults it is no longer a feature of western religions. Recently, however, interest in the dance incorporated into liturgical worship has revived. It presently takes the form of structured religious interpretation by professional dancers. (JD)

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DANCE: A CATALYST OF RELIGION

By

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Foreword

The history of the dance is the history of the people. No other aspect of our heritage is more intricately interwoven into our social systems, our customs, our beliefs. The student of dance history is often overwhelmed with the abundance and variety of material to be found among the library shelves. Each country, each culture, each era, each religion, each form of the dance, and each dancer provide new and unique avenues to be explored.

The paper presented here is the result of an effort to compile some information on religion and dance, one small aspect of the total realm of dance history. For those who are familiar with the topic, it will provide an overview; for those who are not, perhaps it will serve as an introduction and ignite a spark to know more. The topic is, indeed, complex and of great magnitude, for it must be realized that for thousands of years dance was an indispensable element in the religious rituals of man.

The paper is divided into three parts: (1) the dance as an agent of 'ekstasis' which deals with the extreme manifestations of man's desire for union with the gods through the dance, (2) Church repression of the religious dance which attempts to shed light on the circumstances prompting efforts to ban the dance, and (3) the revival of interest in the religious dance which relates the attempts of various individuals to bring the dance back into religion.

DANCE: A CATALYST OF RELIGION

Dance: An Agent of 'Ekstasis'

Introduction

To the current generation of civilized peoples, dance has become almost completely a matter of pastime, enjoyment, and entertainment. It is therefore difficult for us to realize its very serious aspect among men in past ages and among the primitive cultures of today.

History tells us that dance in its origin was sacred and that perhaps man had his first worshipping experience through the sacred dance. The beginnings of religion and dance alike lie hidden in the unrecorded, immemorial life of paleolithic or neolithic man, and it has been stated that no one can say which was first for they were not two but one (Vogt, 1948); and for thousands of years the two remained united. It was not until the Middle Ages that man was denied the privilege of dancing in honor of his chosen divinity.

The religious dance has revealed many faces throughout its history; it has served many purposes and taken many forms. Among the most fascinating and potent of these is the dance that induces the extreme ecstatic state in the performer.

Ecstasy, as defined for this paper, refers to an "abnormal state of consciousness in which the reaction of the

mind to external stimuli is either inhibited or altered in character (Inge, 1924, p. 175)." In the more restricted sense it is almost equivalent to trance, but any self-induced excitement may be referred to as a kind of ecstasy.

In all cultures throughout history, human beings have possessed an innate tendency and desire to pursue some means of exalting the consciousness above the mundane level of daily existence and experience. The satisfaction which is sought through this heightening of the consciousness may be of a sensuous, an intellectual, or an aesthetic nature.

The methods used to produce this state of mental rapture are numerous. The drinking of Kava by the Polynesians, the inhalation of tobacco smoke by the North American Indians, the use of hashish by approximately 200 million Asiatics and Africans, the use of opium by the Chinese, and of LSD and other drugs by people all over the world are some of the means used to alter the state of consciousness and to produce pleasurable sensations. Other and different methods of liberating the mind include fasting, flagellation, hypnotism, and dancing. The latter is considered by many to be one of the most potent of all. Crawley expressed this view as follows:

The powerful neuro-muscular and emotional influence, leading to autointoxication, is the key both to the popularity of dancing in itself and to its employment for special purposes, such as the production of cerebral excitement, vertigo, and various epileptoid results. . . (Crawley, 1926, p. 359).

When ecstasy is associated with religion, the state of dissociation is explained by assuming that the soul has established communication with spiritual beings. The soul goes out of the body to the land of the spirits or the spirit takes possession of the soul. This was the literal and primitive meaning of the Greek ekstasis.

In ekstasis the soul is liberated from the cramping prison of the body; it communes with the god and develops powers of which, in the ordinary life of everyday, thwarted by the body, it knew nothing. Being now a spirit holding communion with the spirits it is able to free itself from Time and see what only the spiritual eye beholds--things separated from it in time and space (Rohde, 1925, p. 260).

In every part of the world there are people who regard this ecstatic exaltation as the only true religious act that renders man capable of communication with the spirits. These people base their religious performances principally upon those means that have proved most capable of inducing this ecstasy. The means most commonly adopted by such people is "a violently excited dance (Rohde, 1925, p. 261)." Sometimes great groups of people attain this state of religious exaltation. The cult of Dionysos, through the "virtiginous whirl of the dance" became possessed by the god (Rohde, 1925, p. 259). The dancing dervishes of the Orient whirl around in their violent dances until the stage of excitement and exaltation are reached. The Shakers of New England dance themselves into trances and God speaks through their mouths. The most fascinating of all are the dance manias which broke out in Europe especially during the Black Death of the fourteenth

century. The people were driven by an uncontrollable impulse to dance and bystanders were irresistibly drawn into their midst. As the malady spread by contagion, great numbers of dancers made their way to various churches where they performed before special saints.

More often, however, this ecstatic state is attained by special individuals--shamans, magicians, and priests. These people whose souls come into contact with the spirit world are to be found all over the globe.

The impulse to union with god through ekstasis and therefore through the dance has a long and involved history. It is as complicated as man's religious experiences, from the animism and dynamism of primitive people, to the gods of India, Egypt, and Greece, and finally to the God of Christianity.

Primitive man

Even though cave drawings and other artifacts have enlightened our understanding of primitive man, a great deal of the knowledge that we have regarding his way of life is derived from studies of existing retarded peoples. Based chiefly on these studies, two answers have been offered in explanation of his religion. The first is animism which has been briefly defined as "the belief in spiritual beings (Hoebel, 1949, p. 405)." It is the belief that ascribes conscious life or spirits to all natural objects and elements (Ackerman, 1950). These activating forces can be benevolent

or malevolent, powerful for good or for evil. The second answer offered is dynamism which is best described in terms of mana of Melanesia:

Mana is a force altogether distinct from physical power which acts in all kinds of ways for good and evil and which it is of the greatest advantage to possess and control. It shows itself in physical force or any kind of power or excellence which man possesses (Radin, 1937, p. 44).

The original meaning of mana is thought to be "that which is within one (Brinton, 1897, p. 63)." Thus the magic of the shaman, the skill of the craftsman, the success of the warrior is attributed to the personal possession or control of mana. It has also been stated that mana can be manifest in things such as an unusual stone, a song that has been successful in healing the sick, or "a war club that smashes more than a normal quota of skulls (Hoebel, 1949, p. 409)." Brinton states that underlying all religious thought is the assumption "that conscious volition is the ultimate source of all Force (Brinton, 1897, p. 47)." And it is through the ecstasy of the dance that primitive man invokes the supernatural, his spirits, to act according to his will, to attract them, to drive them away. Sachs states:

The dance becomes a sacrificial rite, a charm, a prayer and a prophetic vision. It summons and dispels the forces of nature, heals the sick, links the dead to the chain of their descendants; it assures sustenance, luck in the chase, victory in battle; it blesses the fields and the tribe. It is creator, preserver, steward, and guardian (Sachs, 1963, p. 4).

Sachs (1963), in classifying dances according to their movements, discusses dances out of harmony with the body and

dances in harmony with the body. The former produces the extreme ecstatic state. They are described as convulsive and jerky; the dancers are said to reach a high state of nervous excitement and "sweat streams over their bodies (Sachs, 1963, p. 18)." Eventually they become exhausted, sometimes lose consciousness or "roll on the ground in wild ecstasy (Sachs, 1963, p. 19). In this state, the dancers transcend the human and the physical, are sometimes rendered capable of feats not known by ordinary men and sometimes injure themselves without showing any signs of physical pain (Oesterly, 1963). In instances in which the dancer loses consciousness it is believed that a spirit has entered the body and is using it for divine purposes. Such dances are repeatedly performed by the Wayeye in Unyamwezi, the Chukchi of northeastern Asia, on the Solomon Islands, on the Marshall and Gilbert Islands, and in Bali (Sachs, 1963).

While dances out of harmony with the body are characterized by a mortification of the flesh, dances in harmony with the body are characterized "by an exaltation of it, by a release from gravity, by a motion upwards (Sachs, 1963, p. 25)." These dances, too are accompanied by exhilaration and ecstasy. They are of two types, expanded and closed. The movements of the expanded dances include the stronger motor movements of leaping, stamping, lunging, hopping, and all of those movements which deny gravity. The closed dance movements are swinging, swaying, and suspension. These are usually calm and composed yet are capable of inducing the ecstatic state.

The examples of primitive man's ecstatic dance which are cited in this paper are by no means a complete review of this method of attaining a state of dissociation. However, an attempt has been made to cite the characteristics of the people in this state and to describe various situations in which the state is achieved.

Dances which are characterized as being out of harmony with the body and which produce the extreme ecstatic state are particularly characteristic of the shaman cultures. In fact, shamanism has been defined by Eliade (1964, p. 4) as "technique of ecstasy." This magico-religious phenomenon has had its most complete manifestation in North and Central Asia where the life of society centers on the shaman.

People who, by heredity, by special calling, or by instruction, become shamans specialize in a trance in which the soul leaves the body and journeys to the world of the spirits (Eliade, 1964). Attempts have been made to equate shamanism with mental disorders, and numerous instances can be cited in which candidates for shamanship are characterized by nervous instability, epilepsy, vertigo, and other illnesses. However, other instances show that the shaman is not abnormal or neurotic. Eliade (1964) states that the shamans show proof of more than normal nervous constitutions. In justifying this belief, he refers to their great degree of concentration, their sustainment of exhausting efforts, and their control of ecstatic movements. He referred specifically to

an old Yakut shaman whose dance performance surpassed that of a neophyte in energy and strength of gesture and who "gashed himself with a knife, swallowed sticks, ate burning coals (Eliade, 1964, p. 29)." The shamans of the Reindeer Tungus of Manchuria dance ecstatically in a crowded area but never touch anyone, and, in a trance, the Kazak Kirgiz *baqca* "flings himself in all directions with his eyes shut, nevertheless finds all the objects he needs (Eliade, 1964, p.30)."

It was reported that the Vedda shaman is able to coordinate his movements and to perform them in the proper sequence but has only a general idea of what he is doing and acts without complete volitional consciousness. (Fallaize, 1934).

The shamans themselves said that both at the beginning and at the end of their performance they were seized with vertigo and nausea. One said that he heard booming noises in his ears when the spirit left him. (Fallaize, 1934, p. 123)

The Ibos of Nigeria lose consciousness of their surroundings in the dance. "One stands before them and they give no sign of recognition; one speaks, but there is no response other than a fixed stare (Basten, 1966, p. 133)."

In Africa, where the belief in sorcerers is common, it is thought that sorcerers can only be recognized by people in a trance (Gorer, 1949). The people, usually women, who reveal the sorcerers are known as *m'Deup* among the Walof. The women dance with no predetermined movements but use extravagant gestures, grimaces, roll on the ground and eat earth. As they dance themselves into a trance, they can no

longer hear or see ordinary people, and if they are not stopped they may continue dancing for several days. When the crisis is reached, they fall to the ground and prophesy and name the sorcerers. It was stated that denial is useless since it is the spirit who has spoken through the m'Deup.

The shaman of the Chukchee tribe of Siberia invokes his guardian spirit to take him to the heavens where he might communicate with the gods concerning the future of his people (Shklovsky, 1960). Under the influence of continuous chanting and beating of the drum, he falls into a trance. This is an indication that his spirit has left the body and has gone to the mountain tops to speak to the gods. Eventually he arises from the trance and begins a frenzied dance. As hysteria becomes more acute, his eyes become bloodshot and foam flies from his lips. The dancer then becomes still and silent, cups one hand to his ear and receives the message of the spirit.

A sacrificial feast of the Altaians concludes with the shaman visiting the heavens of their god, Bai-Yulgen. By dancing himself into a state of ecstatic frenzy the god is invoked to reveal his will and to give instruction concerning sacrifices and observances of the tribe (Hambly, 1927).

In Assam the "god's woman" who participates in the worship of the snake goddess Manase often dances herself into a trance during which the goddess speaks through her (Neog, 1963). Her performance begins by drinking the blood of a dove whom she has strangled. This is followed by a dance that begins

with slow circular movements but whose tempo increases into rapid spins with a whirling of the head until she falls into a trance and thus becomes possessed by the spirit.

The Melanaus of Borneo attribute disease and sickness to possession by an evil spirit. These spirits are expelled by elaborate exorcism rites described by Hose (1966). The patient is placed in a sealed cone of shavings and is whirled around until she is in a state of frenzy. The medicine-women are then whirled around until they faint. Upon recovering, they begin a hysterical and uncontrolled dance, the "giddiness" of which was comparable to drunkenness. It is through this mad frenzy of the dance that the evil spirits are summoned to take possession of the medicine-women. The rites are held nightly until a spirit sufficiently strong to deal with the case arrives. When this occurs, the medicine woman who is possessed eats the offerings which have been prepared, and the spirit in her then calls out the evil spirit from the patient.

The devil-dancers of South India and Ceylon also enter into relations with the evil spirits who are responsible for illnesses by becoming possessed by them (Fallaise, 1924). The diviner of the Mulauli dances himself into a state of possession in which he is able to communicate directly with the spirits (Reynolds, 1963). Among the Bu Thonga tribe of Portuguese East Africa evil spirits or influences are located through a dancing ceremony (Junod, 1912). The diviner dances

himself into a state of ecstasy and rushes madly through the village until the hiding place of the evil spirit is found. This tribe also has exorcism rites in which music and verse are used to persuade the evil spirit to leave the body of the patient (Hambly, 1927). After much ceremony, the patient begins to dance wildly, throwing himself upon the onlookers and through fire. Finally he becomes calm which is an indication that he is no longer possessed by the spirit.

Cruickshank (1966) has stated that one of the chief qualifications of the novice Fetishman on the Gold Coast of Africa is great endurance and skill in dancing.

They excite themselves by this exercise into a perfect frenzy, until the Fetish takes possession of them, when they lose all accountability, and toss themselves about wildly, trembling all over, and staggering like a drunken man. In frightful convulsions, with eyes rolling, mouth foaming and every indication of total unconsciousness of all around them, they perfectly confirm. . . that they are no longer self-possessed but are under the influence of the Fetish, who guides them whithersoever he will. . . (Cruickshank, 1966, p. 143).

The primary element of the Vedda rituals is the ecstatic dance in which the shaman or even all of the dancers become possessed by the spirits invoked. The aim of their dance is attainment of success of the tribe by propitiating the spirits of the recently dead and those spirits who are specifically concerned with hunting and vegetation (Fallaise, 1924). The ceremony takes place around the offering to the particular spirit. The shaman's dance increases in speed as he utters invocations summoning the spirits.

Eventually he becomes possessed, goes into a trance or collapses.

The arrow dance of the Veddas is performed to increase the supply of game. The males of the tribe encircle an arrow and sing an invocation to the spirit while they beat time by slapping their flanks with open hands.

The movements of the dancers are jerky and spasmodic...At last a state of extreme nervous excitement is attained, and the sweat pours off the dancers. Louder and louder they beat on their stomachs until all fall on their backs completely exhausted, but uttering howls from time to time and trembling convulsively (Hambly, 1927, p. 221).

The shaman sometimes participates in this dance. When he becomes possessed by the spirits, he indicates where the tribe might be successful in finding game.

Brown (1907) reported that the Maoris often perform war dances before battle. These are characterized by wild movements, contortions of facial features, and terrifying energy and music.

The Maoris often turned their faces into close imitation of their demon-like carved images. But the thrust out tongue, the wild rolling eyes standing out of the head, the fierce grimaces, and the quivering hands and fingers, with the accompaniment of deepdrawn cries and the stamp of the foot, had all the advantages of living movement to add to the terrifying effect. It is difficult to efface the deep impression that its massive energy and furious, almost epileptic passion makes on the mind when produced by hundreds. It surpassed in fury anything that Kava or any other drug or fermented liquor could have given to the harmonious movements of a mass of warriors (Brown, 1927, p. 205).

From Malay it is reported that tribes of men perform war dances that begin slowly and soberly but grow into a wild

revel until the dancers become possessed by the Spirit of Dancing (Skeat, 1966). These ecstatic war dances are also performed by the Loudina tribe of Africa (Gorer, 1949). Hambly (1927) states that warring African tribes listen to the arousing speeches of their chiefs and witch doctors but it is on the prolonged and frenzied dance that they most depend. The mad realism of the war dance is also found in Fiji and in Sierra Leone (Hambly, 1927).

Self-mutilation sometimes accompanies these ecstatic dances. Such was observed in a fertility dance in the village of Lasa in Africa (Gorer, 1949). A young man reportedly danced himself into an ecstatic state and stuck feathers and thorns in his arm with no outward evidence of pain. Another man ate dirt and was "continually being sick and swallowing his own vomit (Gorer, 1949, p. 125)." All the while an old man danced ecstatically, doing "the most surprising things with his most private parts... (Gorer, 1949, p. 125)." Exposure of the sex organs is a motif of many of the initiation and fertility dances. In these mimetic, erotic, and ecstatic rites, the performers have no inhibitions concerning sex display. Their realism is said to sometimes arouse disgust of those who observe them (Hambly, 1927). This is attributed to the fact that modern man is not familiar with the primitives unfettered attitude toward sex. "For to the primitives it is not a matter of sensation and pleasure, but of life and unity with nature (Sachs, 1963, p. 93)."

Among the most well known people who dance themselves into a state of dissociation are the Balinese. It has been stated that all their dances produce a "trance-consciousness (deZoete, 1939, p. 67)." The kris-dancers who, in a state of possession, attack themselves with the kris are probably the most famous. In this state they violently contort their bodies and dance with wild frenzy. They often possess extraordinary strength and are apparently capable of cutting themselves without bleeding (deZoete, 1939). In Bali the trance is referred to as "keracohan" which means "to be entered" by a spirit or demon. The people who achieve this state "shudder and make strange sounds...are evidently unconscious of their surroundings, though not in such a way as to prevent them from orienting themselves in space...(deZoete, 1939, p. 69)."

In Haiti there is a belief in many spirits referred to as loa who are invited to participate in the Haitian rituals (Bourguignon, 1968). The spirits are enticed to attend by dancing, singing, and drumming. The dancers, during the course of the ritual, may become possessed by one or many spirits and go into a trance. The beginning and ending phases of the trance may be characterized by a temporary loss of balance and coordination, and during the trance there is a partial loss of sensory perception and a modification of self-concept. It was stated that:

...the principle function of the possession dance rituals is to experience the tangible reality of the spirits, to reaffirm and strengthen a living religion, to perceive in his own body a concrete manifestation of the supernatural world (Bourguignon, 1968, p. 32).

The above statements might also be considered applicable to the ghost dance religion of the North American Indians; for in the trance state, the Indian experienced the reality of a "happy hunting ground" which gave him hope and courage at a time when he was struggling and defeated.

The ghost dance religious movement broke out among the American Indian tribes during the nineteenth century. The most popular of these revivals occurred in the 1890's after the prophet, Wovoka, was carried to another world through trance (Machioro, 1930). Wovoka was told by God to return to the earth and to teach his people the ways of honesty and love in order that they might live blissfully in heaven after death. Wovoka was then taught a dance which, when performed by his people, would bring them happiness.

In the dance, all members of the group would join hands and move slowly from east to west (Bourguignon, 1968). Some would go into a trance and have visions of life after death, receive messages from God, and visit with their dead friends. The Indians believed that the dancers actually died at every dance and that in their temporary death they were warmly received into the happy hunting ground (Machioro, 1930).

The primary theme of this religion was the belief that for all Indians there would come a time when they would all live together in a land that was free from sickness, death, and the evils of the earth. The liturgy and theology varied from tribe to tribe, but the dance taught to Wovoka was retained in all tribes as the main element of their rituals.

Ancient Egypt

Oesterly (1923) is of the opinion that the ecstatic dance was unknown to ancient Egyptians since it is not evidenced on the inscriptions or in Egyptian texts. Yet a brief review of the religious life of these people would indicate that the ecstatic dance was known to them and was performed by them on certain occasions.

The Egyptologist makes no attempt to account for all the peculiarities of the Egyptian religion in one classification, and it is usually discussed in the realm of animism, polytheism, and anthropomorphism. According to animism, all unusual, strange and incomprehensible things in nature were the abodes of the Egyptians worshipped gods (Mercer, 1950). From a modern point of view, the gods were anthropomorphic. They possessed human characteristics and were mortal. For example, Re grew old and Osiris was slain. Orion hunted and ate other gods. They were not "hear all and see all" gods but had to investigate in order to be informed and were obliged to use human beings in the accomplishment of their works. A deity was an enlarged human being, physically, mentally, and morally.

Polytheism rightly indicates that there was no limit to their process of personification and deification: stones, springs, rivers, plants, trees, hills, mountains, cities, deserts, living creatures of all kinds and even abstract ideas (Mercer, 1950).

Among the greatest Egyptian deities were those manifested by natural phenomena. The sky was the goddess Nut; the earth was the god Geb, the sun Re, the Nile was Hapi (Mercer, 1950). Perhaps the most renowned of the gods was Osiris who was considered the god-king, thus part god and part human. He was god of fertility and also god of the dead, of resurrection, of the funerary cult and judge and king of the underworld. Each god has his own calendar of days on which feasts and festivals were held in his honor. It is in these festivals that there is found an indication of the dance being used to produce the state of dissociation.

Among the most famous of these festivals were the Osiris festivals at Abydons. According to legend, Osiris was a good and wise ruler. His brother, Set, became jealous of his popularity, killed him, and cut his body into fourteen parts. Isis, the sister-wife of Osiris, found the parts, reassembled them and enabled the god's resurrection. At the festivals, the death and ensuing resurrection of Osiris were depicted in a Passion Play in which symbolism, mystery, music, singing, and joyous dancing were used "to stimulate the deepest religious emotions and fan the flames of ecstatic joy (Mercer, 1950, pp. 376-377)."

Spence (1915) stated that three types of dances were performed at these festivals. The Dance of Lamentation was performed in imitation of the sorrow of Isis; an armed dance by the men had as its purpose the protection of the god from further destruction; and a fertility dance by both sexes sought to transfer strength and vitality to the risen god. The movements used in these dances varied from slow, rhythmic movements to those of "abandoned ecstasy (Spence, 1915, p. 96)."

We are told that the aristocratic Egyptian did not indulge in the amusement of the dance either in private assemblies or in public, but that they were familiar with the ecstasy of its power is evidenced by the following statement.

Fearing lest it (the dance) corrupt the manner of a people naturally lively and fond of gaiety...the Egyptians forbade those of the higher classes to learn it...

They dreaded the excitement from such an occupation, the excess of which ruffled and discomposed the mind (Wilkinson, 1878, p. 503).

The aristocratic Egyptian therefore sought professional dancers to provide their entertainment and were thus able to sanction "all the diversion of which it was supposed capable, without compromising their dignity" (Wilkinson, 1878, p. 503).

In contrast to the class of aristocracy, the peasants were avid dancers and are thought to have performed fertility rites which included harvest and rain dances (Sachs, 1963). Wilkinson (1878, p. 501) stated that "the taste" of the

dances depended upon the rank of the people performing them and that the dance in the temples differed from that of the "uncouth peasantry". He indicated that the latter preferred a lively style and danced with a great spirit that was more in the manner of the Europeans than of Eastern people.

Perhaps the ancient Egyptians were not familiar with the extreme ecstatic states in which the dancers went into trances, prophesied, injured themselves with knives or fire, lost consciousness, but it seems feasible that they were familiar with the ability of the dance to alter the state of consciousness.

China

The religious system of China has been defined by DeGroot (1910) as animistic. He states that animism was the religion in the dawn of her history, and it remains as the principal part of her religion today.

This religion has as its basis an animated universe. The regulating power of the universe is called Tao or Order of the World. Thus Taoism is the framework of Chinese religion. Tao is composed of two souls, the Yang and the Yin. The Yang represents light, warmth, production, and life, and the Yin is darkness, cold, death, and the earth (DeGroot, 1910). The Yang and the Yin are divided into good and evil spirits, called shen and kwei, respectively. All that is good in the world is attributed to shen, and all that is bad is caused by

kwei. These two classifications of the spirits are engaged in a perpetual struggle with each other.

The purpose of the Chinese worship is to induce their gods to protect them against the evil spirits or to "muzzle the kwei" and to stimulate the operation of the shen (DeGroot, 1910, p. 931). These processes involve a highly developed system of magic in which exorcism plays the greatest part.

Exorcising processions are mentioned in Chinese texts from the time of Confucius, and the myths which account for them would indicate that they were prevalent even before that time. These processions, called *no*, were sanctioned by the state and had as their objective the averting of disease (DeGroot, 1910). Great numbers of people, particularly boys around the ages of eleven to fifteen years, donned devil masks and the masks of gods and spirits, wore brightly colored embroidered coats and dresses, and armed themselves with spears and banners. Thusly dressed they would parade through the streets and houses and expel the demons with their noise making. The male and female "wu" dancing to drums and cymbals would become possessed by a divinity who would speak through their mouths.

Although the "no" ceased to be a ritual of the State after the Tang dynasty, the people of China still have these processions. They take place particularly during the hot season of the summer months when the people are plagued by cholera demons.

The Processions are organized by the parish temples. In some parts of the country the temple god gives orders for the details of the procession through a possessed medium who is ordered to carry his image in the procession (DeGroot, 1910). These processions of the people are elaborate and colorful. Hundreds participate in them, and all carry some object to divert the evil spirits--lanterns, brightly colored banners, smoking incense sticks, trumpets, whips, rattans, laths, gongs, and fans are but a few of those mentioned (DeGroot, 1910, p. 981-982). During the course of the procession, a temple god descends into the "wu."

The specialist of Wu-ism, who act as seers, soothsayers and exorcist by the power of spirits which possess them, have been observed...engaged in processions which are organized in times of epidemic stripped to the waist, dancing in a frantic or delirious state, covering themselves with blood by means of swords and prick-balls, or with thick needles thrust through their tongues, or being seated or stretched on nail-points and rows of sword-edges. On such occasions, they stick daggers into their arms and cheeks and have been seen carrying heavy pewter lamps, fastened by hooks thrust through their arms. By frightening and intimidating the specters by so great a display of divine power, these men support and complete the work of the 'sai kong,' who move in the same processions (DeGroot, 1910, p. 1269).

The sai kong are youths who have shen or divinity in them. They are by nature frail, nervous, and hysterical and are therefore susceptible to the ecstatic state. Especially at religious festivals these young men begin "to hop, dance and waddle with wild or drowsy looks and nervous gestures of arms and hands (DeGroot, 1910, p. 1270)." These acts are an indication that the god or spirit is entering the youths and that they will soon have intercourse with it.

These sai kong also participate in healing rites in which they become possessed by a shen and are able to locate the kwei or demon causing the illness. The possession is induced by "much strange dancing" during which there are many self-inflicted wounds (DeGroot, 1910, p. 1278). Upon location of the demon, the possessed brandish their swords while giving wild chase to it. Eventually the demon surrenders and relates through the medium what sacrifices are necessary for his voluntary exit from the patient.

The legendary history and folklore of the Chinese have abundant references to people who exteriorized their souls or who journeyed in spirit (Eliade, 1964). The first man to be accredited with this "magical flight" was Emperor Shun (in Chinese chronology, 2258-2208). Eliade (1963, p. 449) states:

...a perfect sovereign must have the powers of a 'magician.' 'Ecstasy' was no less necessary to the founder of a state than his political virtues, for this magical ability was equivalent to an authority, a jurisdiction over nature...The step of Yu the Great, Shun's successor, does not differ from the dances that induce trance in sorcerers...The ecstatic dance forms part of the procedures for acquiring a power of command over men and nature.

Thus the dance as an agent of "ekstasis" has a long history among the Chinese. From the emperors to the wu and the sai kong, the dance was the medium by which man either "flew to heaven" or became possessed by the shen.

India

But while in primitive periods, the dance was a means to bring into oneself the spirits of nature. . . in classical art it is ordered into a conscious effort to raise man through the insinuations of all the most delicate movements into becoming part of the creator, preserver and final hope of man (Devi, 1963, p. 2).

It might be said that all of the classical dances of India, the Bharata Natyam, the Kathak, the Kathakali, the Manipuri, as well as other less famed styles, have as the final aim the transformation of men into gods. The dances are based deeply on religion and have as their theme the contents of the Vedas, Puranas, Mahabharate, Ramayana and other sacred books (Devi, 1963). The dances portray the lives of the gods and goddesses and thus their philosophical teachings. It is through this portrayal that the dancers seek to transcend the physical and to become one with the deity. The body is transformed and forgotten and humanity becomes divine.

The Jewish and early Christian prophets

In I Samuel, 10:5, it is stated:

. . .and it shall come to pass, when thou are come thither to the city, that thou shall meet a company of prophets coming down from the high places with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall prophesy.

Oesterly (1923, p. 108) states that, even though no mention is made here of the dance, the presence of the various musical instruments would indicate that a ritual dance was taking place. Also, the prophets were prophesying and this indicates possession by the deity. Since dance was the most

prevalent method of attaining union with the deity, it may be assumed that it was the method employed by the prophets.

In I Samuel, 10:6 it is stated that "...the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man." Oesterly (1923) interprets this as meaning that Saul would join the ecstatic dance of the prophets. In verses eleven and twelve, the people who knew Saul voiced surprise at his connection with them which indicates that the prophets were of a peculiar character or that their actions were not of the ordinary. This statement is supported in part by I Samuel, 19:24.

And he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Wherefore they say, Is Saul also among the prophets.

Other verses in the Bible which might indicate the ecstatic dance are I Kings, 18:26 and 28. The statements are directed toward the prophets of Baal who had unsuccessfully been summoning Baal from morning until noon.

But there was no voice...And they leaped upon the altar that was made (18:26). And they cried aloud and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them (18:28).

Oesterly suggests that this was a limping dance performed in "mournful supplication."

In II Samuel, 6:14, we are told that "David danced before the ark with all his might." That his dance was characterized by self-abandonment or dissociation is made apparent by the statement that he shamelessly uncovered himself (II Samuel, 6:20).

Greece

The origin of the State religion of Greece was in nature worship. Natural elements and phenomena were transformed into divine beings which demanded and received the allegiance of the God-fearing Greeks. The Olympian Gods were largely anthropomorphic, conceived in the image of man, had families, friends, enemies, and possessed the same passions as human beings. The followers of the State religion were born into it and as a rule worshipped the gods of their choosing. The favors of the gods were obtained by rather simple ritual acts and sacrifices performed by small family groups rather than by communal services (Mylonas, 1950).

Besides the State religion to which every Greek belonged automatically, there were certain religions known as mystery religions (Mylonas, 1950). These differed in many details from the official religion of the State. Membership was personal and voluntary rather than automatic. To obtain membership, people had to be willing to undergo specified purifications and initiations and pledge not to reveal the secrets of the rituals. The mystery religions were made up of symbolic rites whose aim was to provoke in the initiate a mystic experience which led him to regeneration and redemption, union with God.

The Dionysian rites

The Dionysiac religion is thought to have originated in Thrace (Macchioro, 1930). This is supported by the lack of

reference to Dionysos in the Homeric poems and to the vast differences in the worship of Dionysos and the Greeks's worship of their gods as related by Homer (Rohde, 1925).

The rites of the Thracian cult were orgiastic in character. Rohde's (1925, p. 257) account is as follows:

The festival was held on mountain tops in the darkness of night amid the flickering and uncertain light of torches. The loud and troubled sound of music was heard; the clash of bronze cymbals; the dull thunderous roar of kettledrums; and through them all penetrated the maddening unison of the deep-toned flute...Excited by this wild music the chorus of worshippers dance with shrill crying and jubilation. We hear nothing of singing: the violence of the dance left no breath for song. These dances were something very different from the measured movement of the dance-step in which Homer's Greeks advanced and turned about in the Paian. It was in frantic, whirling, headlong eddies and dance-circles that these inspired companies danced over the mountain slopes. They were mostly women who whirled round in these circular dances till the point of exhaustion was reached; they were strangely dressed; they wore basarai, long flowing garments, as it seems, stiched together out of fox-skins; over these were doeskins and they even had horns fixed to their heads. Their hair was allowed to float in the wind; they carried snakes sacred to Sabazios in their hands and brandished daggers...In this fashion they raged wildly until every sense was wrought to the highest pitch of excitement, and in the sacred frenzy they fell upon the beast selected as their victim and tore their captured prey limb from limb. Then with their teeth they seized the bleeding flesh and devoured it raw.

The objective of these festivals was to intentionally induce a mystic experience through excessive stimulation of the senses; through the violent and delirious dance, the music, and the blazing lights, the worshippers became possessed by the divinity and entered into direct communication with the spirit. This power was accessible to only those in ekstasis, in mad religious frenzy in which "they live and have their being in the god (Rohde, 1925, p. 259)."

This ecstatic worship of the Thracian cult bore no resemblance to the Greek religion during the period of the Homeric poems and was probably considered by the Greeks as being savage and barbaric. Yet the Greeks recognized that in this type of enthusiastic religion there was an element that "appealed to the common nature of mankind" and gradually, though it had to overcome many obstacles, the cult of Dionysos triumphantly spread over both mainland and islands of Greece (Rohde, 1925, p. 260). Here the god became Hellenized and humanized. He was considered the god of life and death, of vegetation, of fertility, and during a later period, god of wine (Mylonas, 1950, p. 174). Although undergoing Greek refinement, the ekstasis of the Thracian cult was not lost. In addition to the cheerful daylight festivals of Dionysos in Athens, there remained the old ecstatic rites in which men and women danced over the mountains "in nocturnal revelry" (Rohde, 1925, p. 285). The drinking of human blood, the eating of raw flesh, and all the signs of outward frenzy and possession came to be regarded as the Hellenic form of the worship of Dionysos.

Orphic Mysteries

Orphism made its appearance in the Greek world around 600 B.C. (Adam, 1923). According to the Orphic myth, Zagreus, who was the son of Zeus and Persephone, was slain by the Titans who tore his body to pieces and devoured him (Macchiore, 1930). Athena rescued his heart which was then swallowed by

Zeus. Zagreus was reborn as Dionysos, child of Zeus and Semile. The Titans were destroyed by the lightning of Zeus, and the human race evolved from their ashes. Thus is derived the dualistic conception of body and soul. Because of the murder committed by the Titans, the Orphics believed that man inherits an original sin from which the divine soul must be freed. Although this could be accomplished only by death, it could be experienced temporarily through participation in the mysteries which "delivers the soul from its bodily prison and brings it in touch with divine essence. (Macchioro, 1930, p. 101)."

Rohde (1925) states that the Orphics adopted the Dionysiac forms of worship and indicates that Orphic rituals were ecstatic and enthusiastic although some of the more barbaric acts were eliminated.

The great step that Orpheus took was that, while he kept the old Bacchic faith that man might become god, he altered the conception of what god was, and he sought to obtain that godhead by wholly different means. The grace he sought was not physical intoxication, but spiritual ecstasy; the means he adopted not drunkenness but abstinence and rites of purification (Rohde, 1925, pp. 14-15).

There is no doubt that the dance was the means employed to attain the spiritual ecstasy to which Rohde referred. Macchioro (1930) states that the ancient traditions and writers always connected the dance with the mysteries and the Orphics themselves believed that the mystery dances were invented by Orpheus. He further states that "the mystery was nothing but a magic dance" in which the initiates reproduced

the deeds of the god and by this means became part of the god (Macchioro, 1930, p. 92).

Rome

In comparison with the Greeks, the Romans seemed to have had fewer ecstatic religious experiences. This may be attributed to the distrust of religious emotion by the Roman authorities and the regulation of religion by Roman laws and customs.

Oesterly (1923) is of the opinion that, while the ecstatic experience among the Greeks was to bring about union with the gods, among the Romans it was a matter of sacrificing their blood to the goddess of fertility for the purpose of securing abundant harvests. Oesterly is referring to the festivals held in honor of Attis and Cybele who were of Phrygian origin and who became divinities of Rome around 204 B.C.

Cybele, considered the Mother of the Gods, was the Asiatic goddess of fertility. Some consider her to be the virgin mother of Attis while others say that she was his lover (Frazer, 1919). Two accounts are also given concerning the death of Attis. One is that he was killed by a boar, and the other is that "he unmanned himself under a pine tree and bled to death (Frazer, 1919, p. 264)." This self-mutilation accounts for the castration of his priests upon entering the service of the goddess.

The main festival of Cybele and Attis was celebrated in March. The third day of this festival was known as the Day of Blood; the Archigallas or high-priest stabbed his arms and presented his blood as an offering to the divinities as did other members of the clergy.

Stirred by the wild barbaric music of clashing cymbals, rumbling drums, droning horns, and screaming flutes, the inferior clergy whirled about in the dance with wagging heads and streaming hair, until, rapt in a frenzy of excitement, and insensible to pain, they gashed their bodies with potsherds or slashed them with knives in order to bespatter the altar and the sacred tree with their flowing blood (Frazer, 1919, p. 268).

This alien religion gradually increased its popularity in the Roman world and was incorporated into the established religion of Rome by Emperor Claudius. Its powerful and rapturous excitation of the emotions must have been very appealing to the Romans since the festivals survived until the fourth century of this era (Oesterly, 1923).

Another goddess whom the Romans worshipped in ecstatic rites was Atargatis. These rites were much like those of Cybele and Attis in that "men danced themselves into a frenzy and then lacerated and mutilated themselves unsparingly (Willoughby, 1929, p. 140)."

Dance Epidemics of the Middle Ages

The most complete record of the ecstatic dance as performed for religious purposes in the Middle Ages was found in Backman's (1952) Religious Dances in the Christian Church and in Popular Medicine. The reader is referred to this source

for clarification and a more extensive coverage of the material presented here.

According to Backman (1952) the first dance epidemic occurred in the seventh century at a festival of St. Peter in Germany, and the second occurred at the beginning of the eighth century. Then came the Miracle Dance of 1051, the Welsh Dance of 1200, the Great Hallejubah of Italy in 1233, and the Children's Dance from Erfurt to Arnstadt in 1237. With the exception of the latter, dances occurred in the churchyards during the festivals of various saints or other services. The obstreperousness of the dancers disturbed the services, and they were admonished by Church authorities to stop their dancing. When these commands were ignored and the dances were performed with even greater enthusiasm, the dancers were punished by being forced to continue to dance with no rest until the bishop removed the penalty. Perhaps the important factors here are that the dancers were either unwilling or unable to cease their dancing and that the dances were performed in the churchyards. It could be that the dances were performed in order to regain health, or more specifically, to cast out demons who were in possession of the dancers' souls. The Miracle Dance took place at the church of St. Magnus the Martyr who was thought to have been particularly endowed with the power to cast out devils, and this could be the reason the dancers chose this churchyard.

In 1349, the Black Death swept over Europe, laying waste

to vast areas of land and leaving hundreds of persons dying in its path. It was during this century, too, that religious dances on the premises of the church became frequent occurrences, and the dance epidemics reached an intensity that rendered the ecclesiastical councils helpless in their opposition of them. Faced with the plague, wars, floods, and death, masses of frantic people joined the 'danse macabre.'

Backman (1952) reported that the first of the fourteenth century epidemics is thought to have occurred in 1349 in a small village on the border of Bohemia. Some seemingly insane women began dancing and shouting before the image of Virgin Mary. These women danced their way to Torgau and Wittenberg and many bystanders joined them in their madness.

The year 1374 is the time given for the beginnings of the great dance epidemics (Backman, 1952). Great numbers of people throughout Europe sang and danced in the churches, churchyards, through the streets, before the images of particular saints, and across the countrysides. In an account of one of the larger epidemics, Backman (1952) stated that groups of men and women came to Aachen from various parts of Germany. From Aachen, their travels took them as far as France. For months they danced from one town to another and from churchyard to churchyard. The epidemic was referred to as a widespread illness which caused curious feelings in the body.

. . .people began to dance and rage, and they stood two against one, and they danced in one place half a day, and during the dance they fell down on the ground and let their bellies be stamped on. They believed that thereby they would be cured. And they ran from one place to another, and from one church to the next (Backman, 1952, p. 203).

The dancers were described as being possessed by devils, half-naked, wearing wreaths on their heads, and free of all modesty. Reportedly there were several thousand of the dancers in Liege during the months of September and October. Backman (1952, p. 194) stated that "...choreomaniacs streamed in every day and many sound and health, persons were suddenly smitten by the demons, joining their right hand with the choreomaniacs."

Backman (1952) makes reference to the St. John's Dance which reached epidemic proportions in 1374. He spoke of how the dancers fled from their homes, how they fell to the ground and foamed at the mouth and got up again and danced themselves to death, and how, while dancing, they seized churches and churchyards.

There is evidence that these outbursts of dance mania occurred as late as the seventeenth century (Backman, 1952). It appears that the dancers were often taken to chapels of St. Vitus to be cured. There they were given small crosses and red shoes which had crosses drawn on them in consecrated oil and which had been sprinkled with holy water in the name of St. Vitus. This reportedly helped many of the dancers, and it is for this reason that the dance was called the St. Vitus dance.

That there are no records of dance epidemics during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries may be due to the fact that those people who were victims of the old dance disease joined the annual dance processions of the epileptics and those who suffered from various other diseases. These processions include the procession of the hopping saints at Echternach and the procession in Charleroi, Belgium which are still held today (Bourguignon, 1968).

Modern Sects

Men of God

In Russia there exists a sect who refer to themselves as "Men of God" or "Khlysty." This sect consider themselves the only true worshippers of God (Grass, 1924). An essential element of their secret services is the dance which is employed to induce the performers to attain the ecstatic state or fall into a trance during which they prophesy the fate of their sect and its individual members. They consider the services of the Orthodox Church useless since it eliminates the dance, the only proper means for bringing down the Spirit from Heaven.

The services of the "Men of God" are described by Fulop-Miller (1939) in his biography of Rasputin who was allegedly a member of the sect. The mystical rites take place in a crude, dimly lit peasant hut. The singing of hymns which ex-

presses the Khlysty's longing for "the advent of the kingdom of Heaven, for God's becoming man, and for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit" begins the service (Fulop-Miller, 1939, p. 30). As the singing becomes more jubilant and ecstatic the peasants remove their clothes and don white shirts which signify the resurrection of Christ. It is their belief that this exchange gives them special powers.

As the singing continues to become more passionate they begin to dance, either singly or collectively, a peasant round dance which, by mystical transformation, becomes the dance of the disciples around Christ. The form of the dance changes. They skip and run throughout the room with arms up-
raised calling on the Holy Ghost.

When ecstasy reaches a certain height, the people of God feel above their heads the beat of the wings of the Holy Ghost, and the great transformation is fulfilled in which everything earthly becomes heavenly. . . . In frenzied rapture breaks from the people of God the cry: "The Holy Ghost is among us," and they repeat this cry until their tongues are paralyzed and a blissful numbness gradually overpowers their movements. (Fulop-Miller, 1939, p. 31)

After an emotional and jubilant discourse from the leader the dancing starts again. It becomes wild and unrestrained.

The voices, the stamping of feet, and the rustling of the garments mingle in a single confused noise; faces and voices are blurred, shirts billowed out by the whirling are like rotating pillars, and the floor is wet with the sweat of the dancers. Suddenly, amid the mad, ever faster gyrations, the sectarians bare their bodies to the waist. . . and step up to the prophet who flagellates them with a staff . . . (Fulop-Miller, 1939, p. 31).

The wild dance commences again and in their passion the

clothes are discarded. Some are seized with convulsions and fall to the floor in a trance while other "in sinful encounter...roll on the ground and copulate, regardless of age and relationship (Fulop-Miller, 1939, p. 31)."

Only in this mad intoxication of the senses are earthly consciousness and self-will completely extinguished, for in the 'sinful encounter' the earthly ego has no more influence, but only the will of the invisible spirit (Fulop-Miller, 1939, p. 32).

In the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics (Grass, 1924) a different account of the "Men of God" is given. There it was stated that men and women practice complete sexual abstinence and that they live together as brothers and sisters. Sexual intercourse, which constituted the original trespass of Adam and Eve, is looked upon as a sin. Childbirth, too, is regarded as sinful and children are called "little sins".

Perhaps this discrepancy is not as profound as it appears to be. The "Men of God" believe in rebirth through sin for only through sin can man attain "holy passionlessness." It is conceivable, then, that while some of the people of this sect have attained the "true inner life" through the sinful encounter, others are still seeking true submission and humility by this means.

The Shakers

This religious sect is said to have its origin in France around the year 1685 (Melcher, 1941). Their emotional outbursts and their prophesying of the coming of God raised the opposition of the French government whose attempts to restrain

them involved persecution, torture, and death. Some of them made their way to England where Ann Lee became their leader in 1758. It was stated that all of the Shakers were fanatics and that some were mystics, but Ann Lee was "practical in her fanaticism and her mysticism" (Melcher, 1941, p. 9).

Her observation of man led her to the conclusion that sex was the major cause of his sinfulness. "And since sex was responsible for so much that was bad, it must be bad in itself (Melcher, 1941, p. 9)." The four principles of Shakerism became celibacy, confession of sins, community of goods, and withdrawal from the world.

Under Ann's leadership and as a result of her visions, preachings, and promises the Shakers grew in number and in strength of purpose. With their emotionalism, shaking, and dancing, they became to be considered a threat to the community. Homes were broken and friendships were ended as people flocked to the Shakers and their life of abstinence. Also, people fear what they do not understand and some believed that the ecstatic rites of Shakerism were inspired by the devil rather than God (Melcher, 1941). As a result, the Shakers were again persecuted and cruelly abused, and in 1774 they came to America and eventually made their first settlement in Niskaguna, New York. Later, Shaker communities were established in Busro, Indiana, in New Lebanon, New York, as well as various settlements in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, and Kentucky.

The Shakers developed a mode of worship that was entirely Shaker and of which music and dance formed a major part. Their earlier services, around the 1780's, were characterized by emotional hysteria and complete abandonment (Melcher, 1941). The ultimate goal of these services was a direct communication with the spirit world (Sears, 1916).

Typical of the numerous descriptions of their services is the following:

. . . every one acts for himself, and almost every one different from the other: one will stand with his arms extended, acting over odd postures, which they call signs; another will be dancing, and sometimes hopping on one leg about the floor; another will fall to turning round, so swift, that if it be a woman, her clothes will be so filled with the wind, as though they were kept out by a hoop; another will be prostrate on the floor; another will be talking with somebody; and some sitting by, smoking their pipes; some groaning most dismally; some trembling extremely; others acting as though all their nerves were convulsed; others swinging their arms, with all vigor, as though they were turning a wheel (Sears, 1916, p. 28).

The Shakers believed that they were "led by the power" into their shaking and dancing performances during which they became "possessed by the spirit and came under the influence of heavenly directives (Andrews, 1953, p.142)." When people attained this state of ecstasy they were said to be the recipient of a gift which enabled them to talk in tongues and prophesy. One such person was described as appearing unconscious of her surroundings and shaking violently. "Her limbs became rigid, her face took on an ashen hue, her lips moved, and she began to speak in a clear distinct voice. . . (Sears, p. 207)."

In 1842 a divine message was received by the Shakers. They were told to establish a "holy place of worship" on a hilltop (Sears, 1916, p. 209). In Harvard the selected site was called The Holy Hill of Zion.

The Shakers held all day meetings on Holy Hill, and here the worship in the dance was especially intricate and ecstatic. Round and round the fountain they would whirl in rhythmic motion, swaying in unison, marching, singing, hour after hour; and here the 'instruments' would hold converse with the departed spirits; the apostles, the prophets of old, the famous dead of all nations. . .all these disembodied spirits held converse with the worshippers through the mediums and clairvoyants (Sears, 1916, p. 210).

In his attempt to explain the unexplainable element in the Shaker dance, Melcher (1941, p. 223) conceded that "it had to be felt, not understood; it stimulated the nerves rather than the thought centers."

At one time in their history, the Shakers extended invitations to the public to attend their services. This was done primarily to obtain converts. This resulted in services that were akin to dramatic productions. During the week rehearsals were held and the participants were admonished to restrain themselves (Melcher, 1941). Thus the old abandonment which so characterized the earlier services was channeled into formalized processions and marches. Eventually it was realized that this formalism contained little that would interest and excite the observers, and the doors were closed to the public. The services resumed the early fervor.

The Shaker membership reached its zenith between 1840

and 1860 when there were about six thousand of them. After this time membership began to decline. The reasons for the decline were persecution and abuse from the outsiders, a loss of original zeal, and lastly, celibacy to which the logical successor is sterility.

It is Melcher's opinion that this religion which was "conceived in the ecstasy of emotional exaltation" will soon become extinct (Melcher, 1941, p. 2).

Whirling dervish dancers .

This sect of dancers was once prominent in Turkey, the Middle East, and India, but their performances have now been banned by most of these countries (Bhattacharya, 1965).

They are legally performed only once a year.

Pictures of the dervishes show outstretched arms with the palms held upward and long full robes billowing out from the waist. Sachs (1963), who observed the dervish dance in Cairo, stated that the old monks whirled in circles for half an hour, apparently without becoming dizzy. Bhattacharya (1965) also observed the dervishes and stated that they approach the trance state.

Church Repression of the Religious Dance

Introduction

The Christian Church was not hesitant in condemning the dance of the pagans even though it introduced into its own rituals the spiritual dance which was one of the elements considered essential for Church survival. However, as the leaders of the Christian movement became more indoctrinated with the teachings of St. Paul, attempts were made to completely ban all forms of dance within and without the Church. Typical of the attitudes toward dance in the Middle Ages is a statement of St. Augustine: "It is preferable to till the soil and to dig ditches on the day of the Lord than to dance a choric Reiger (Sorrell, 1967, p. 36)."

The early Christian Church

Christianity was introduced into the Greco-Roman world at a time when the mystery religions were flourishing. The old, impersonal state religion no longer served man's needs. Religion was becoming more personal and more emotional, and it was to the mystery group of religions that man had turned for fulfillment of his personal desires and for fresh emotional experiences (Willoughby, 1929). The rites of these religions offered man the ecstatic experience of union with the deity, redemption, salvation, a happy immortality. Their ceremonies were secretive, dramatic, and mystical. Those of Dionysos, Orpheus, Attis, and Cybele were discussed earlier and may be considered the more barbaric of the religions. However, all

of the religions, including those of Eleusis, Isis, and Mithra, were highly dramatic with baptism (with water or blood), the partaking of consecrated foods (raw or cooked), the mystical marriages to the deity, and dramas which revealed the life, death, and ensuing resurrection of the god.

Dance played no small part in the mystery religions. In the cults of Dionysos, Attis and Cybele it was of a wild and frantic nature. In other cults it was more serene but nevertheless indispensable. It is no wonder, then, that the dance was attacked by the Church Fathers.

However, it was not only the dances of the mystery religions that brought Church opposition. It was the dance in general, be it secular or religious. The people had many lesser gods to whom they paid tribute and propitiated with their dances. Among these were Mars, who was generally considered the Roman god of war (Fairbanks, 1907), and Saturn who was the Roman god of sowing (Oesterly, 1923). These two gods had dancing-priests called the Salii. The sacred processions of the Salii in honor of Mars took place in March and October and lasted for as long as three weeks.

Headed by trumpeters and dressed in full battle apparel they marched through the city; at all the altars and temples they halted, and solemnly danced the war dance in three measures. . .singing at the same time (Oesterly, 1923, p. 150).

Frazer (1919) states that the Salii also danced to invoke Saturn.

As the Romans sowed the corn both in spring and autumn, and as down to the present time in Europe superstitious rustics are wont to dance and leap high in spring for the purpose of making the crops grow high, we may conjecture that the leaps and dances performed by the Salii, the priests of the old Italian god of vegetation, were similarly supposed to quicken the growth of the corn by homeopathic or imitative magic (Frazer, 1919, p. 132).

The Salii were not only to be found in Rome. It is known that similar groups of the dancing-priests existed in many cities of ancient Italy. And the "superstitious rustics" to which Frazer referred were to be found all over the country, dancing for their gods in the pursuit of health, fertility, protection, and abundance. It was common practice for the Church-Fathers to refer to the pagan gods as demons and to condemn "this evil, this lascivious madness in man called the dance which is the devil's business (Sorrell, 1967, p. 36)."

The methods with which Christianity chose to contend with the existing religions and the dance were (1) syncretism and (2) violent opposition.

In the first century after Christ, becoming a member of the Christian Church was a relatively simple matter. Membership was available to those who would express the belief that Jesus was sent by God, that he died for the sins of man, and that he would return to the earth to judge the living and the dead. As a result of this, the converts entered the Church with little or no real knowledge of its doctrines, and more importantly, without relinquishing their belief in their old gods and their faith in their old rituals (Guignebert, 1927).

To these people, a religion without rituals was no religion at all. Thus the Church, in order to retain the converts, soon began to include in its services some of the simple elements of the pagan rituals. Eventually these became more profound and mysterious as the elements of Orphism and diverse Oriental religions were added.

Since dance had long been an integral element of the religious rituals, it is not surprising that it was incorporated into Christian worship services. Backman (1952) cited evidence that, in the second century, children's choruses played musical instruments, sang, and danced as a part of the services. There was also evidence that dancing occurred at the end of prayer and in connection with baptism.

In a speech of Clement of Alexandria (150-216) which was directed to the pagans, there is indication that the ritualism of the Mysteries had penetrated Christianity.

I will show you the Word and the mysteries of the Word and describe them for you as an image of your own fate. This is the mountain beloved of God. On it rejoice God's daughters, the most beautiful lambs, which reveal the reverent festivals of the Word to the accompaniment of constantly repeated choral dancing. By righteousness man may take part in them. . . Whilst torches are borne before me I perceive the heavens and God. I am led into the service of God. . . Thou, also, if thou wishest, mayest let thyself be led. Then shalt thou dance in a ring, together with the angels. . . (Backman, 1952, p. 26).

These words leave room for little doubt that dancing occurred when the mysteries of the Church were revealed to the novitiates. In the induction ceremonies they must perform a ring dance around the altar with the angels. The idea of

dancing angels was very prominent in the early Church. The dead were said to dance with the angels around God, and the heavenly dance of earth was an imitation of the ring-dance of the angels (Backman, 1952).

Early in the fourth century dances sanctioned by the Church were performed at the burial site of the martyr Polyeuctes. This is the first indication of the dance performed in honor of the dead (Backman, 1952). It should be noted that this was at a time when the State looked upon Christianity as a species of anarchy and was seeking total destruction of the new religion. This attempt was particularly manifest in the second half of the second century (Guignebert, 1927). The Christians were charged with breach of the common law, practicing an illicit religion, refusal to comply with military regulation, avoiding the duties of public life, and participation in secret societies. When the Christians refused to swear by the genius of the emperor they were accused of high treason and were persecuted. One of the main effects of the persecutions was that it prompted the Christians to gather in great numbers at the graves of the martyrs where they held services and danced in their honor (Backman, 1952). The people thought the dead martyrs had the power to heal the sick and to cast out devils.

That the martyrs were looked upon as the possessors of magical powers is perhaps best explained and understood when related to the practices of the Church in the fourth and

fifth centuries. As previously implied, Christian dogmatics had gradually absorbed the essentials of pagan beliefs. The resemblance of the initiation rites of the Mystery religions to the baptism and eucharist of the Christian Church provides an excellent example of the great extent to which this occurred. This as well as other adopted practices contributed to the growth of the number converted to the Christian faith.

The Church discovered that its strongest resistance was to be found in the country people who were bound to their ancient customs and to their numerous and highly specialized local deities. The method with which the Church chose to deal with these people was one of substitution. Saints exchanged places with the divinities upon whom they were so dependent and from whom they beseeched and demanded those things deemed necessary for daily existence. At the beginning of the fifth century, entire villages and even districts were converted in a single attempt by the Churchmen. As a result, the country folk were baptised en masse although they knew practically nothing of Christianity and had relinquished none of their pagan beliefs (Guignebert, 1927).

The saints, then, were the successors of the old gods of the pagans, and it is therefore not surprising that the cult of the saints began to multiply. It was stated that the saints were not always highly exalted but always practical and good for everyday use (Guignebert, 1927). They were implored to heal the sick, and to perform all kinds of useful

miracles. Their relics accompanied men in war and were carried in long processions as a protection against epidemics. The relics alone have been said to cure blindness, exorcise devils, cure tremors and convulsions, and even bring the dead back to life (Backman, 1952). The dance at the grave of the martyrs, then, could be said to have been performed for the very same reasons as the dance before the old gods. It could also be possible that this cult of the saints represented the pagan's idea of anthropomorphism and polytheism, and thus other elements of the earlier religions permeated Christianity.

The intense and spontaneous faith of the pagans posed numerous problems for the leaders of the Church and often caused the theologians a great deal of embarrassment. As early as the middle of the fourth century it was necessary to frequently admonish the people and remind them that the Church dance was a blessed dance that was to be performed in a manner characteristic of the angels. Against this type of dance there was no opposition. Epiphanius (315-403), Bishop of Salamis in Cyprus, Ambrose (340-397), Bishop of Milan, and St. John Chrysostom all condemned the wilder dances but defended the Church dance when it was performed in a virtuous manner and in the fear of God (Backman, 1952).

However, the pagans were not inclined to relinquish their old ways, and their enthusiasm for their dance often caused them to disregard the admonishments of the Church. Typical

of the descriptions of their dancing is the one of Basileios (344-407) who described the celebration of the Resurrection as follows:

Casting aside the yoke of service under Christ and the veil of virtue from their heads, despising God and His angels, they (the women) shamelessly attract the attention of every man. With unkempt hair, clothed in bodices and hopping about, they dance with lustful eyes and loud laughter; as if seized by a kind of frenzy they excite the lusts of the youths. They execute ring-dances in the churches of the Martyrs and transform the Holy places into the scene of their lewdness. With harlot's songs they pollute the air and sully the degraded earth with their feet in shameful postures (Backman, 1952, p. 25).

Approximately a hundred years later, Caesarius (470-542) declared that dances before the churches of the saints were a relic of paganism and that people should refrain from these. He stated:

There are especially unfortunate and miserable people who do not fear or blush to execute dances and hop before the churches of the saints, and although they come to church as Christians, they return as heathens... (Backman, 1952, p.35).

St Augustine (354-430) seems to have advocated the complete abolishment of the Church dance. There is no doubt that he severely condemned the pagan dance customs that had invaded Christianity, and even though he did not entirely condemn the spiritual dance, it is evident that he did not entirely approve. In speaking of the celebrations at the graves of the martyrs, he stated that the people should "...rejoice because the martyrs have passed from the world of suffering to the fields of rest; but they have not achieved this by

dancing... (Backman, 1952, p. 34)." Augustine's conversion to Christianity came after what was termed by him as a sinful life filled with lust. This was followed by his association with Manichaeism, a religion based on denial of physical pleasures. It is evident that he never entirely rid himself of its doctrines.

Those early Church leaders who did defend the dance in the Church often referred to Biblical passages such as Luke 7:32, "We have piped unto you and ye have not dance," and Ezekiel 6:11, ". . .smite with thine hand, and stamp with thy foot. . .," and David's dance before the Ark. Reference is also made to the words of Jesus on the evening before his crucifixion when he commanded the Disciples to dance around him. These are some of the reasons that the early Christian Church Fathers could not bring themselves to entirely abandon the dances.

The Middle Ages

The dance came under more severe condemnation with the beginning of the sixth century and from this time on prohibitions of the dance multiplied. There are several factors which may have contributed to the cause of these prohibitions and to the necessity of their longevity.

The early Christians were taught to live with the expectation of the return of Christ to earth, with the conviction that all human existence might come to an end at any moment. When this expectation was not realized, man turned

to more earthly goals. This resulted in a renewed manifestation of his needs as a man which had heretofore been distinct from his duties as a Christian. The ensuing lapse into the seeking of satisfaction of bodily needs and desires caused the leaders of the Church to intensify their convictions that "sin has its primal seat in the flesh" and that asceticism is the way to purification from earthly desires (Geer, 1924, p. 142). Thus the world-rejecting aspects of Christianity were underscored, and a strong and sometimes fanatical distrust of the body was encouraged.

The writings of the Church authorities on the dance during the medieval period are indicative of their dualistic ideas. Those who danced were considered as possessed by the demons, accused of being immodest, and of exciting the lusts of youth. It was stated that some people joined the dance epidemics in order that they might lead a loose life and because of "hot natures" (Backman, 1952, p. 205). Church authorities in Cologne wrote that more than a hundred unmarried women became pregnant during the period of the dance epidemic. Thus, the dance was thought to contribute to the abnormal intensification and to the fulfillment of the sensuous in man.

Backman (1952) gives specific references to written proscriptions against the dance. These are particularly directed toward the church yard dances at the festivals of the saints and those performed at the graves of the martyrs. Numerous proscriptions mention devilish songs and loud laughter and the music of drums which often accompanied the dance for the dead.

The dancers were threatened with excommunication and a common confessional question was "Have you danced and hopped, as the Devil taught the pagans to do? (Backman, 1952, p. 156)."

That the threats and warnings of the Church failed to make an impression upon the people is evidenced by the increasing number of proscriptions that were issued. These were most numerous between 1100 and 1500.

This was a period of great contrasts. On one hand, there was the group of royalty with all their splendor and gaiety and rules of courtly etiquette; and on the other, there was the mass of people who lived in passionate horror and despair (Munro and Sontag, 1928). The terrors of war and pestilence, the burden of heavy taxes, and the visible decline of the Church resulted in periods of disorder and unrest. Then came the Black Death which rendered man entirely helpless. Some took refuge in sensual pleasures, others became fanatically religious and sought salvation through extreme penances. Some joined the Order of the Flagellants; some withdrew from society and others danced.

Even after the Black Death had taken its toll and the immediate disorder had passed, the European people continued to suffer the aftermath.

Emotional and moral instability, violent swings between religious idealism and brutal realism were typical of the age. People thronged to revivals; they multiplied their devotions; they meditated on the sorrows of Mary and the sufferings of Christ until their hearts were filled with unbearable anguish. Yet these same people flocked joyously to executions and tore each other to pieces during the frequent civil wars (Munro and Sontag, 1928, p. 448).

In such an environment, it is no wonder that the people became obsessed with the idea of death and gathered at the graveyards to perform their "danse macabre" despite the warnings of the Church.

In addition to the proscriptions against the spontaneous dance of the people, some of the dances which were sanctioned by the Church and which were performed by the people of the Church, (bishops, priests, choir boys, and nuns) were also prohibited. Among the most famous of these was the Festival of Fools or Feast of Fools.

The earliest records of this festival appeared in the twelfth century, but it is generally agreed that it is much older than the records indicate (Swain, 1932). It was said to have been held somewhere between St. Nicholas' Day which was December 6, or the day of Circumcision (January 1), or on Epiphany (January 6).

This was the festival of the subdeacons of the Church. It seems that these men would elect their own bishop or pope who resided as King of Fools and who assumed the role of the higher clergy for the duration of the feast (Welsford, 1934). With this transference of authority to themselves, the subdeacons commenced a period of celebration. They are said to have appeared at the divine service in masks or women's clothes performing ring-dances, singing indecent songs, and playing dice. They leaped and jumped in church without shame, ate coarse bread at the altar, and finally drove through town

in shabby carts to witness indecent plays at the theaters where they spoke and gestured indecently. (Swain, 1932). They also made use of their freedom to play the role of the fool by criticizing those in authority.

It is thought that the Feast of Fools, with its emphasis on "temporary misrule and tolerated folly" enhanced the Medieval idea of the fool as a critic of society in general (Welsford, 1934, p. 202). It is interesting that canonical authority in 906 forbade any churchman to keep a domestic fool and that secular festivals in which the fool took part were also under attack by the Church (Swain, 1932).

Pope Innocent III issued a decree forbidding the festival in 1207. The Church of Paris followed suit in 1212. These proscriptions continued on through the Middle Ages but with little success. Backman (1952) stated that the last Festival of Fools was held in the Cathedral of Troyes in 1595 but that it continued in the churchyards until as late as 1614.

The Children's Festival, sometimes referred to as the Festival of the Choristers, was usually celebrated on Innocent's Day, December 28 (Backman, 1952). As in the Feast of Fools, the children elected a child bishop who conducted the mass with the aid of the choir boys who sang hymns and danced. This festival occurred as early as the twelfth century and perhaps earlier. It was most popular in France, Germany, and England. According to one report, the choir boys of Strasbury, upon completion of mass, led a noisy procession

through town, forced their way into various churches and monasteries, and performed numerous pranks which were looked upon with disfavor by the Church leaders. This led to an English statute which required that the boys be taken back to their quarters by the priests after the services. Eventually this festival became prohibited altogether.

Another dance sanctioned by the Church in which the clergy performed was the Bergerette (Backman, 1952). This dance was performed in Besançon as early as the thirteenth century and continued until its prohibition in 1662. It was performed on the first day of Easter and was included in the Resurrection Festival in which the people danced to celebrate the power of life over death.

The choristers of the Seville Cathedral also danced at certain Church festivals from the fifteenth century until recent times (Backman, 1952). Their dance is said to have resembled a minuet and was observed with deep reverence by the members of the congregation. It was prohibited by Archbishop Palafox in the seventeenth century but the prohibition was not enforced because of the insistence of the people that it be continued.

Various other Church dances as well as dance processions continued to be performed throughout the Middle Ages in European countries. The dances of the clergy were eventually unable to withstand the repression by the authorities, but the dance of the people endured until the Reformation (Backman, 1952). Now only the barest remnants remain as in the

procession at Echternach, the dance of the Coptic Christian Church, and those of the churches in Spain.

The Revival of Interest in Religious Dance

Introduction

The dance, once ecstatic, powerful, and indispensable, is rarely witnessed in the religions of modern man. The Shakers have forsaken their dance, replacing the old ecstasy with formal marching and bowing. The whirling dervishes are allowed to perform only on special occasions. The Holy Rollers have abandoned their old-time dancing and shouting, and the Puritans, who once danced to give thanks to God, have turned from this form of worship. Even the missionaries to the remote jungles of Africa are striving to convert the primitives to Christianity, and their attempts include banishing their dance along with their gods (Glenesk, 1960).

When the dance is performed on the premises of the Church, or for any religious purpose, the participants are more apt to be special groups including high school and university dance students and professional dancers. Rarely are attempts made to engage the people, the congregation. Exceptions to this do exist, however, and we sometimes hear of a religious sect who incorporates dance into their services. Two such examples include the Sufi sect who now occupies the historical Shaker site in New Lebanon (Fiess, 1975) and the Hare Krishna sect which is gaining popularity in the South Florida area. Still, one feels that something is missing in their dance, and that something, viewed in the light of dance history, must be that only fragments of the

ecstatic element, the becoming one with God through the dance, remains.

In the discussion which follows, reference is made to the people who have demonstrated an interest in the religious dance and the means employed to bring the dance back to religion.

Leaders of the Religious Dance Movement

Late in 1960, the Department of Worship and the Arts of the National Council of Churches sponsored a consultation on the dance. This meeting was held in the Riverside Church in New York City and was attended by individuals who are making an effort to reinstate dance into the churches of America. That it was the first meeting of its kind in the history of the Christian Church is a small indication of the relatively recent renewal of the interest in dance as a religious art.

Ruth St. Dennis, long considered a pioneer of the religious dance movement, was a speaker at the conference and was perhaps the primary instigator of the meeting, for in 1931 she presented her "The Masque of Mary" in the Riverside Church. Her work with the Rhythmic Choir, her dream of "The Cathedral of the Future," and her many religious dances did not proceed unnoticed by the churches. She was the founder of the Society of Spiritual Arts which, in 1947, became the Church of the Divine Dance located in Hollywood (Fisk, 1950). A branch of this Church was established in Phoenix, Arizona

and both incorporated the dance into its services in the forms of rhythmic choirs and religious dramas.

Ted Shawn might also be considered a pioneer in the religious dance. In 1917, he presented the first Church dance in this country. It was performed in the Interdenominational Church of San Francisco and later in numerous cities throughout America (Fisk, 1950). Among his choreographic works are "The Dreams of Job," "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring," "Whirling Dervish," and "Dance that Heals."

Erika Thimey, a student of Wigman, also made contributions to incorporating dance into religious services (Fisk, 1950). She worked with rhythmic choirs in Chicago as early as 1932 and later in New York, Boston, and Washington, D.C. She used in her work the interpretations of prayers and Biblical passages.

It might be said that that there are more dancers who have been concerned with the religious dance than there are those who have not. Alwin Nicolais' "Spectrum," Martha Graham's "Acrobats of God," and Balanchine's "The Figure in the Carpet" can be used as examples here. Lil Leandre has also taken a special interest in the religious dance.

Walter Sorrell (1960, p. 22) suggested that it must be difficult for the professional dancers "to return to that grand simplicity" that is so necessary for the Church dance.

The dancer would have to leave all his ambitions, his egocentric mania outside the church door to find this new simplicity and through it to a new exaltation. . . . In any other area the artist has the right to fail. But in front of the altar such a failure would not only strike a strident note or insult your aesthetic and artistic feelings, moreover, it would throw you back into cold reality. As I see it, the great danger in today's creation of the sacred dance is that, more often than not, something phoney may be used to heighten something holy (Sorrell, 1960, p. 23).

A similar view was expressed by Jean Miller (1960) when she stated that she had seen dance in the church that was not worship, and she had seen dance in the theatre that was worship but it wasn't called worship. Walter Terry (1960) voiced some of the same concerns. He stated that many modern dances are based on religious themes, but their home is the stage and not in the house of worship.

Another approach to the religious dance is the use of rhythmic choirs. The earliest experiments with rhythmic movements in churches were made by William Norman Guthrie, an Episcopalian minister in New York City between 1919 and 1938 (Fisk, 1950). The performances were then referred to as "Eurythmic Rituals" and both professional dancers and members of the congregation took part. Other pioneers were Erika Thimey who was mentioned earlier and Margaret Fisk Taylor, author of The Art of the Rhythmic Choir. The initial leadership and work of these people contributed greatly to more recent efforts on the part of numerous churches to bring dance into its rituals on special occasions such as Easter, Christmas, festivals, and dedications.

The extent of the present interest in the Rhythmic Choir is indicated by the formation of the Sacred Dance Guild. The Guild is composed of dance choir directors who are dedicated to religious dance. Regional workshops are held in which interested persons may receive assistance in the formation and direction of such groups (Wolbus, 1960).

Rose Lichner (1958) who has done considerable work in this area has suggested that a small group of trained dancers be used and that modern dance rather than ballet be the medium. Some themes that Lichner has used are those based upon the Psalms, the story of Job, and the Tower of Babel. Her "Noah Ballet" and "Naggadah" have evidently been warmly received. It is her opinion that the purpose of the dance in the church is to extend and magnify. It should never detract from nor diminish the regular service.

Most people are never exposed to the results of the noble efforts of those individuals mentioned above, and few are aware of the link between dance and religion. A statement by the Reverend William Glenesk summarizes the current attitudes of our society toward dance and its place in religious thought.

For centuries, Christianity has closed its eyes to the art of dance. Though we are aware that King David "danced before the Lord with all his might," or the call of the psalms to "praise God with the cymbals and the dance," or the ecstatic Hebrew dances of the Hassidim to this day, or the Day of Pentecost when a Holy Spirit swept the assembly off their standing feet, Christianity carries on as if the dance had nothing to do with God.

The trend of our time is away from the visible and active toward the verbal and passive, not only in religion, but throughout the social context in which we live. Most of us know neither calm nor storm, neither the extravagance of an authentic action, nor what it is to be truly still (Glenesk, 1960).

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