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RE-ENCHANTING RITUALS
IN EUROPE

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RE-ENCHANTING RITUALS
IN EUROPE



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SERIES EDITORS' PREFACE

In Illo Tempore: The Festive Re-creation of Community and the Re-enchantment of Culture in Europe Today

*Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern**

TAKING A DEPARTURE POINT FROM THE THEORIZING OF MAX WEBER, Alessandro Testa charts a course of exploration taking as one of its chief objects the negation of Weber's thesis of the 'disenchantment' of cultural practices in Europe. Through three field investigations in different countries, he raises a dazzling array of ethnographic accounts that bear on a multitude of issues in the analysis of cultural trends and themes observable in customs associated with reversals of order and calendrical rituals belonging to rural traditions.

A central theme throughout the book is the renewed interest in Europe in ritual practices, reversing phases of rejection and concomitant 'disenchantment' stemming from the historical spread of industrial economies, out-migration from countryside areas into towns, the displacement of people through conflict, and the resulting overall commodification of social relations. These festivals can be interpreted as efforts to reassert communal relations and identities in face of the anomie attendant on such massive changes in Europe from the nineteenth century onward. Ritual practices come saliently to the fore as means for the reassertion of identity, along with heritage and tradition. Dr. Testa draws attention to the massive work of Sir James Frazer on popular rituals of the past, such as carnivals in which magical fertility was sought along with subversion of order and its reinstatement. Frazer saw these rituals as derived from pagan pre-Christian times and continuing to exist as 'survivals,' while having their roots in the past. Frazer's observations were taken up as models for revivals of ritual practices, resulting

in what Dr. Testa calls 'popular Frazerism,' giving an intriguing twist to the history of the 'reception' of Frazer's work in ethnology. Frazer drew freely on the writings of folklorists, which he worked into the holistic tapestry of his ideas. Dr. Testa remodels historical processes that Frazer saw as survivals, in terms of ritualization and traditionalization. Rituals are invented, reinvented, go out of fashion, and are brought back via mythopoetic bricolage.

Dr. Testa inserts here a gently critical, even-handed review of the whole concept of 'folklore' and its latter-day replacement with the expression 'intangible cultural heritage' in the classifications of UNESCO, remarking that such heritage invariably includes a material and thus tangible or sensory dimension.

When Dr. Testa moves to his own empirical studies, he shows that the festivals involved are not just products of age-old practices but have been considerably shaped by the influence of local scholars acting as enthusiasts and cultural consultants. He also shows that these festivals are influenced by differing macro-historical factors, thus also setting them into time, while the practitioners themselves claim them as being timeless and ancient. Perhaps we could add here the point that these events are all 'performances,' dramas with narrative effect. This point further reminds us that calendrical rituals are indeed based on natural cycles in the world, as Frazer supposed. And here is where the concept of fertility comes back in, with room of course for micro-variation. The background presence of the Catholic Church and its customary sequences of sacred calendrical rites has also to be kept in mind.

At an extreme end of performance and performativity, festivals make themselves, playing on the idea of 'tradition' itself that permeates European culture and has outlived attempts to modify, twist, or deny it by governing entities. Rituals exhibit tenacity, resilience, and flexibility in the face of hostile regimes, incorporating touristic regimens and making their own worlds of imagination.

The achievements of this book are manifold, as Dr. Testa touches on and assesses a myriad of themes in the analysis of ritual and uses these to illuminate and pervade his ethnographic studies. Dr. Testa takes readers through old theories and new, in remarkably in-depth expositions of both theory and description.

The phrase *In Illo Tempore*, in Mircea Eliade's formulation, captures the idea of enchantment central to Dr. Testa's vision and the world of heritage stories. Dr. Testa's book takes us on that journey of stories, as we have also

done in our long years of work on ritual, producing publications such as our 2021 book *Heritage* and our 2021 co-edited collection of essays. Throughout our work we cite, as Dr. Testa does, the importance of changing politics in shaping ritual practices.

July 2023

Angkemam House, Scotland Branch
AJS and PJS, The Stratherns

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- Strathern, Andrew and Pamela J. Stewart. 2021. *Heritage: Tradition and Contestation*. Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press.

* Pamela J. Stewart (Strathern) and Andrew J. Strathern are a wife-and-husband research team who are based in the department of Anthropology, University of Pittsburgh and codirect the Cromie Burn Research Unit. They are frequently invited international lecturers and have worked with a number of museums to assist them with their collections. Stewart and Strathern have published over 50 books, over 80 prefaces to influential books, over 200 articles, book chapters, and essays on their research in the Pacific (mainly Papua New Guinea, primarily the Mount Hagen, Duna, and Wiru areas) and the South-West Pacific region, (e.g., Samoa, Cook Islands, and Fiji); Asia (mainly Taiwan, and also mainland China, inner Mongolia, and Japan); Europe (primarily Scotland, Ireland, Germany, and the European Union countries in general); and New Zealand and Australia. One of their strengths is that, unlike some others working in Mount Hagen among the Hagen people, they learned the language, Melpa, and used it to understand the lives of the local people.

Their most recent co-authored books include *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumors, and Gossip* (Cambridge University Press, 2004); *Kinship in Action: Self and Group* (Prentice Hall, 2011); *Peace-Making and the Imagination: Papua New Guinea Perspectives* (University of Queensland Press with Penguin Australia, 2011); *Ritual: Key Concepts in Religion* (Bloomsbury Academic Publications, 2014); *Working in the Field: Anthropological Experiences Across the World* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); *Breaking the Frames: Anthropological Conundrums* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); *Sacred Revenge in Oceania* (Cambridge University Press, 2019); *Story of the Kuk UNESCO World Heritage Prehistoric Site and The Melpa, Western Highlands Province, Papua New Guinea: Pride in Place* (Angkemam Publishing House, 2018); *Sustainability, Conservation, and Creativity: Ethnographic Learning from Small-Scale Practices* (Routledge Publishing, 2019); *Language and Culture in Dialogue* (Bloomsbury Academic Publishing, 2019); and *Heritage: Tradition and Contestation* (Carolina Academic Press, 2021). Their recent co-edited books include *The Research Companion to Anthropology* (Routledge Publishing, 2016, originally published in 2015); *Exchange and Sacrifice* (Carolina Academic Press, 2008); *Religious and Ritual Change: Cosmologies and Histories* (Carolina Academic Press, 2009, and also published in an updated and revised Chinese version in Taipei by Linking Publishing in 2010); *Dealing with Disasters—Perspectives from Eco-Cosmologies* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021, with Riboli, Diana and Davide Torri); and *The Palgrave Handbook of Anthropological Ritual Studies* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

Stewart and Strathern's current research includes the topics of eco-cosmological landscapes; ritual studies; political peacemaking; comparative anthropological studies of disasters and climatic change; language, culture, and cognitive science; and Scottish and Irish studies. They are inter/multi-disciplinary scholars. For many years they served as associate editor and general editor (respectively) for the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania Book Series and they are co-series editors for the Anthropology and Cultural History in Asia and the Indo-Pacific Book Series. They also currently serve as co-editors of four book series: Ritual Studies, Medical Anthropology, European Anthropology, and Disaster Anthropology. Their webpages, listing publications and other scholarly activities, are: <http://www.pitt.edu/~strather/> and <http://www.StewartStrathern.pitt.edu/>. We are writing this Preface while in Scotland on study leave. We were in Papua New Guinea working early in 2020 before the global Covid-19 pandemic.

NOTE ON THE TEXTS FORMING THIS BOOK, AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THIS BOOK IS DIVIDED INTO TWO MAJOR PARTS (IN ADDITION TO THE editors' Preface, this Note, the Introduction, and the Conclusions). The first part is shorter, mostly historiographical, and theoretical, whereas the second part is longer, empirical, and based more on ethnographic material, although substantial theorisation is not lacking in the second part.

The book is essentially an enhanced and augmented collection of essays. Some of the articles and chapters were published in a number of journals and volumes and make up approximately two thirds of the book contents, whereas the remaining third was not published previously. The already published texts have, however, been partly and sometimes significantly rewritten, and also expanded, refreshed, and reorganised, in order to be presentable in one publication and, more importantly, to produce an intellectual and scholarly added value that makes the reading of this book more fulfilling and more worthwhile than the reading of the texts individually.

Most of the Introduction is new, with the opinion piece "Doing Research on Festivals: Cui Bono?" (Testa 2019c) forming a couple of pages of it.

Chapter 2, "Rethinking the Festival and Public Rituality", and its two subsections are largely a rewriting of the article "Rethinking the Festival: Power and Politics" (Testa 2014d), which is the text that has been transformed the most from its original version. In this chapter there are also a few lines borrowed from my previous monograph, *Rituality and Social (Dis)Order* (Testa 2020a).

Chapter 3, “Rituality, Ritualisation, and a Theory of Symbolic Hierarchy”, takes a few paragraphs from the chapter “Reconfiguring Tradition(s) in Europe” (Isnart, Testa 2020b), a few lines from *Rituality and Social (Dis) Order* (Testa 2020a), and a few pages from the translation of a section of my second book, *Il carnevale dell'uomo-animale. Le dimensioni storiche e socio-culturali di una festa appenninica* (Testa 2014a); however, the larger part of this chapter is original.

The article “From Folklore to Intangible Cultural Heritage. Observations about a Problematic Filiation”. (Testa 2016a) forms the majority of Chapter 4, but with a few rather significant adjustments, especially in the footnotes.

Chapter 5 is an extract from and expansion of a section of “‘Fertility’ and the Carnival 1: Symbolic Effectiveness, Emic Beliefs, and the Re-Enchantment of Europe” (Testa 2017a).

Chapter 6, “Ethnographic Case Studies of Re-enchantment and Popular Frazerism”, and its several subsections are a fusion and a rather substantial rewriting of two articles, which are “‘Fertility’ and the Carnival 1: Symbolic Effectiveness, Emic Beliefs, and the Re-Enchantment of Europe” (Testa 2017a) and “‘Fertility’ and the Carnival 2: Popular Frazerism and the Reconfiguration of Tradition in Europe Today” (Testa 2017b). These articles were somewhat artificially separated for editorial reasons when they were published, whereas they had initially been conceived and written (between 2016 and 2017) as one study. This republication does justice to the initial idea. A few lines here have also been borrowed from “Re-thinking the Concept of Re-enchantment in Central-Eastern Europe” (Testa forthcoming-b).

“The Politics of Culture and Identity in European Public Rituals”, Chapter 7, is an almost exact reproduction of “Events that Want to Become Heritage: Vernacularisation of ICH and the Politics of Culture and Identity in European Public Rituals” (Testa 2019a).

Chapter 8, “Ritualisation, (Re-)traditionalisation, and Mythopoiesis”, is a readaptation of much of the article “Intertwining Processes of Reconfiguring Tradition: Three European Case Studies” (Testa 2020c), with the addition of several original paragraphs.

Finally, the last chapter, “Conclusions”, was previously unpublished, apart from a few paragraphs extracted from the above-mentioned article “Intertwining Processes of Reconfiguring Tradition” (Testa 2020c) and a few others from “The Anthropology of Cultural Heritage in Europe” (Testa 2021).

Most of the original footnotes from all the published texts have been reworked, and new illustrations have been added.



I would like to thank the reviewers, editors, and publishers that reviewed and worked on the previous versions of the above-mentioned texts, thus making their publication—and by synecdoche this book—possible. I would also like to thank the proofreader Jonny Riches, the copy editor Janice Cross, the publisher Carolina Academic Press, and the series editors Andrew Strathern and Pamela Stewart for accepting it in the *European Anthropology* series.

The general list of people (colleagues, family, friends) I should thank for supporting me or helping to make this book and its chapters come into being has been increasing exponentially in the last few years. The list has become difficult to handle, and I would most definitely forget someone, which would be intolerable; therefore, unlike what I did in my previous books, this time I will content myself with a more frugal “thank you very much—you know who you are”.



Between 2010, the first year of my doctoral studies and the beginning of the research that would later materialise in the texts forming this book, and 2022, when it was worked out in its present form, I was not only carrying out research, conducting fieldwork, and working at universities, but also and especially *living* in Italy, France, Estonia, Germany, Spain, Austria, and the Czech Republic. This has enriched me and, I hope, my scholarship enormously, or rather incommensurably; the significance of these life experiences could never be overestimated. The European breadth promised in the title is not only a cultural, geopolitical, and methodological mark of my research, but also an existential one.



The first lines of this book, or rather of what would later become this book, were written in Paris, France, in 2010, and presented a few weeks later in Italy at a conference (Testa 2010a). The first published article contained herein was written in Tallinn, Estonia, in 2012, and published two

years later while I was a visiting fellow at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle/Saale, Germany, in 2014 (Testa 2014d). Many other things happened in the following years, some of which are transposed, in one way or another, in this book, which was eventually put together and finalised in Prague, Czech Republic, and Isernia, Italy, during the second half of 2022.