

DYNAMICS IN THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS 7



Discourses of Purity in  
Transcultural Perspective  
(300–1600)

EDITED BY

*Matthias Bley, Nikolas Jaspert and Stefan Köck*

BRILL

## Discourses of Purity in Transcultural Perspective (300–1600)

# Dynamics in the History of Religions

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Cover illustration: Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary washing clothes, a medieval image combining aspects of material and spiritual purity. The image is based on John Mandeville, *Itinerarium* (1st book, 42nd Chapter), German translation by Otto von Diemeringen, Strassburg: Johann Prüss, 1488.

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## Preface

The papers in this volume were presented at two workshops held at the Ruhr-University Bochum on the 10th / 11th of June and the 1st / 2nd of July 2010 on behalf of the Käte Hamburger Kolleg “Dynamiken der Religionsgeschichte zwischen Asien und Europa”. Within this interdisciplinary research consortium, the notion of purity received considerable attention over several years: From 2008 to 2010, it was the subject of an own “Focus-Group” dedicated to analysing this concept’s varying functions within the religious field. A number of projects situated within different epochs, cultural spheres and societal contexts focused on contact zones and contact situations between adherents of different creeds, analysing the role that ideas of pollution, impurity and purity played therein. A fine result of these labours centring on an earlier era has already been published: *Purity and the Forming of Religious Traditions in the Ancient Mediterranean World and Ancient Judaism*, ed. by Christian Frelve and Christophe Nihan (*Dynamics in the History of Religions* 3), Leiden 2012. The present book can well be seen as its complementary sequel. The editors sincerely hope that a third volume dedicated to the modern period will follow in the not too distant future.

We would like to express our thanks to the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the Fritz Thyssen Foundation for their generous funding, to the Ruhr-University Bochum for its unfailing assistance and to the publishers for their patience and support. Our greatest debt is to the authors for having participated in the workshops and having shared their insights. We are also very grateful to the many people who assisted us along the way: the many fellows of the consortium “Dynamics in the history of religion between Asia and Europe” for fruitful discussions, Karen Finney-Kellerhoff for the language editing, Alexandra Cuffel (Bochum) for a final revision of the text, and Marion Steinicke (Käte-Hamburger Kolleg, Bochum) for her help throughout. This volume has profited immensely from the suggestions and corrections we received from our reviewers, John Tolan (Nantes) and Boudewijn Walraven (Leiden), we greatly appreciate their competence and interest in the project. To all of you: Very many thanks indeed!





# An Introduction to Discourses of Purity in Transcultural Perspective

*Nikolas Jaspert*

## 1 The Present and Past of a Demarcational Device

Purity might seem a much studied category due to the impact of Mary Douglas's seminal monograph on *Purity and Danger* in 1966 and subsequent research, particularly in Old Testament Studies.<sup>1</sup> This category may perhaps even be overrated as a result of the 19th and 20th century predominance in studies of Christianity, Judaism and Islam over the history of other religious traditions, making it an ultimately eurocentric category that is at best of historical interest, as notions of purity, impurity and pollution seem to have lost their relevance to societies of the 21st century. However, it is not difficult to name instances during recent years, both in Europe and in Asia, in which the notion has been shown to be very much alive and effective.

In November 2007, the Italian right-wing politician and secretary of the Lega Nord, Roberto Calderoli called for a “Maiale-day contra la moschea”—a “pig-day against the mosque”: He urged sympathizers to lead pigs to the prospective building sites of mosques or Islamic cultural centres in order to impede the latter's construction: Pigs defecating there—so Calderoli's desire and expectation—would contaminate space and thus render it unusable for Muslims.<sup>2</sup> This strategy, a functionalization of concepts of material and cultic purity for political ends, has been imitated with some success in subsequent years. A track of severed pigs' heads dumped in mosques, Islamic community centers and, moreover, in front of Jewish restaurants leads from Gothenburg to Nottingham, from Chemnitz to Berlin and Prague;<sup>3</sup> in recent times the borders

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1 Douglas, *Purity and Danger*; Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*; Milgrom, *Leviticus*; Maccoby, *Ritual and morality*; Klawans, *Impurity and sin*; Id., *Purity, sacrifice, and the temple*; *Perspectives on purity and purification in the Bible*, ed. Schwarz et al. and now the contributions and references in: *Purity and the Forming of Religious Tradition*, ed. Frevel and Nihan. This introduction has profited greatly from discussions in the focus-group “purity” of the Käte Hamburger Kolleg “Dynamics in the History of Religion between Asia and Europe” and most particularly from talks with Matthias Bley and Alexandra Cuffel.

2 [www.corriere.it/Primo\\_Piano/Politica/2007/09\\_Settembre/13/calderoli\\_maiale\\_day.shtml](http://www.corriere.it/Primo_Piano/Politica/2007/09_Settembre/13/calderoli_maiale_day.shtml)

3 [www.vol.at/aufgehaengter-schweinekopf-an-prager-moschee-gefunden/news-20090319-0444\\_1740](http://www.vol.at/aufgehaengter-schweinekopf-an-prager-moschee-gefunden/news-20090319-0444_1740); [www.mitteldeutsche-kirchenzeitungen.de/2012/03/12/weit-entfernt-von-normal](http://www.mitteldeutsche-kirchenzeitungen.de/2012/03/12/weit-entfernt-von-normal)

of Europe have been crossed, as similar events in Australia and the USA show.<sup>4</sup> The example of the “strategia del maiale”—the pig strategy—demonstrates that even today, notions of ritual or physical purity will be adapted and functionalized, and even at the beginning of the 21st century alleged cultural alienation will be presented by interested parties as a binary relationship between purity and pollution.

In Asia, related phenomena can also be named. The Muslim attackers of hotels and public buildings in Mumbai in November 2008 justified their actions by referring to prior defilement of a venerated cultic site in the northern Indian city of Ayodhya, which is claimed by Hindus and Muslims alike.<sup>5</sup> For as devout Hindus stress, the Babri mosque was built in 1528 on the space that was formerly home to a Vishnu Temple. Allegations of supposed acts of pollution of this area have been voiced by both sides since the 19th century and have led to much bloodshed on the Indian subcontinent, of which the attacks in 2008 are only a more recent instance. Some Hindus charge that the construction of the mosque was accompanied by systematic desecration, because Muslims had supposedly buried cult statues from the Hindu temple under the floor of the mosque, so that every visitor would trample them underfoot. Some Muslims in turn consider that setting up idols inside a place of prayer was aggressive pollution in the first instance, and even more so the armed attack committed by certain Hindu fundamentalists in 1992, to which Muslims responded with similar acts of violence.

As these examples show, purity and pollution can serve as a means to rally groups, thus functioning as an instrument to achieve integration and cohesion—one applied by Christian, Muslim and Hindu fanatics alike.<sup>6</sup> But, evidently, this binomial can also serve as a demarcation device, as a tool to draw boundaries and exclude the other. Purity, impurity and pollution can therefore function as important creators of alterity, developing their full potency in contact zones and contact situations between societies or religious traditions. However, the semantic cluster purity-impurity-pollution not only has great impact on the field of inter-religious relations, but also within the intra-religious field due to its capacity to organize groups or even entire societies. Varying degrees of ascribed purity can serve as a classificatory device in order

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itat/; [www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/moskeplats-i-goteborg-skandad-igen\\_2166653.svd](http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/moskeplats-i-goteborg-skandad-igen_2166653.svd); [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-nottinghamshire-14793880](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-nottinghamshire-14793880).

4 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16854036>; <http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/mosque-protest-turns-ugly/story-e6freoof-1226174049519>.

5 Brass, *The production of Hindu-Muslim violence*; Hiro, *Apocalyptic realism*, 170–195.

6 On a comparative level cf. Mullin, “Purity and Pollution”; Moore, *Moral purity and persecution*.

to construct social difference, as many examples—from the elevation of cultic experts to the denigration of supposedly impure sections of a population—show. Demarcation, integration and classification therefore appear to be the prime functions that alleged purity, impurity or pollution exercise.

All this has been convincingly demonstrated by Mary Douglas and others, particularly in research on the Old Testament, ancient and late antique Judaism. But even in such a core area of purity research as the Ancient Orient, much remains to be studied and uncovered, and recent publications impressively demonstrate the insights that comparative research can provide.<sup>7</sup> Other ages, on the contrary, have been studied far more seldom from such a comparative perspective. Research on the period known in Europe as the Middle Ages, that is the time span from around 300 to 1600 of the Common Era, has so far been less prone to take up the stimulus developed in other disciplines—despite the fact that examples of the utilization of purity in medieval societies as an instrument to demarcate, integrate or classify groups are in no way rare. Some examples from my own field—Latin European History—might suffice to illustrate this point.

In the Mediterranean area, inter-religious relations between Islam, Judaism and Christianity were heavily marked by these categories, and just as in the case of Ayodhya, purity and violence could easily conflate. Mediaeval Christians seldom ascribed material uncleanness to Islam, but rather imputed defilement on the part of Muslims—with great success, as the case of crusading propaganda shows.<sup>8</sup> Here too, the rallying of co-religionists and the discrimination of the other went hand-in-hand. Not only the sermons with which Christians were urged to go on crusade, but also the participants' letters and more importantly chroniclers' reports on the events picked up and glaringly developed images of "pagan" defilement.<sup>9</sup> Muslims were fully aware of such propaganda as Bahā'al-Dīn ibn Shaddād's report from the end of the 12th century shows, according to which Christians rallied support for military expeditions by using pictures of horses defecating and urinating on the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.<sup>10</sup> Contemporary Muslim sources in turn made use of the same imagery by insinuating that revered Islamic places of worship had

7 *Purity and the Forming of Religious Traditions*, ed. Frevel/Nihan.

8 The seminal article on the subject was produced in 1993: Cole, "The Theme of Religious Pollution"; also see id., "Christians, Muslims"; Schein, *Gateway to the Heavenly City*, 23–27; 162–165 and now: Angenendt, "Reinheit und Unreinheit".

9 Bull, "Views of Muslims and of Jerusalem in miracle stories"; Trembl, "Kreuzzug und heiliger Krieg"; cf. the articles by C. McEvitt and L. Di Giacinto in this volume.

10 Ibn-Šaddad, *The rare and excellent history of Saladin*, 125.

been defiled by feces or by images of pigs.<sup>11</sup> A systematic, comparative analysis, however, shows that such targeted contamination of sacred space, be it fictitious or real, was neither the dominant element of medieval Christian discourse nor that of comparable polemics on the part of Muslims. Rather, it was the idea that places of worship had been ritually defiled and desecrated by the mere presence of the Other. Such pollution of sacred space severed the spatial nexus between God and Man, it called for acts of ablution such as the ritual cleansing of churches or mosques after their reconquest, which is well attested in Iberian sources of the Middle Ages.<sup>12</sup>

The demarcational effects of purity in the Medieval Mediterranean were in no way restricted to the wider field of crusading. To provide but four examples: The evident importance of material purity for Islamic cult and society showed marked effects in interreligious border-zones such as mediaeval Iberia. In these regions, Christian monarchs of the 11th century are said to have ordered Christian bathing houses to be closed down, as a sophisticated level of hygiene and cleanliness smacked of Islam and supposedly debilitated their warriors' fighting morale.<sup>13</sup> In contrast, in Sunni Islam, Maliki juridical scholars engaged in intensive debates about the question whether "unbelievers" were substantively, intrinsically, that is, ritually impure or only secondarily impure due to their allegedly erroneous habits or eating customs, a differentiation which also affected the forms of ablution or lustration required after having had contact with such "unbelievers".<sup>14</sup> These questions became particularly relevant when communal boundaries were blurred due to acculturation, interfaith marriage or conversion, such as in ninth-century al-Andalus. Similar issues were raised by Christians concerning physical contact with Jews as the Levitical doctrine entered the teaching of the Church, and rabbis of the 13th century adapted older rulings to contemporary situations, raising the question whether restrictions should be imposed on Christian wet nurses after they had received communion.<sup>15</sup> And finally, scholars of the 15th century such as Angelo di Castro and Giovanni da Capistrano debated the question to what extent their

11 Hillenbrand, *The crusades: Islamic perspectives*, 284–302.

12 Martín Rodríguez, "La monarquía leonesa", 683; Harris, "Mosque to church conversions"; Remensnyder, "The colonization of sacred architecture"; Buresi, "Les conversions d'églises et de mosques"; Echevarría, "La transformación del espacio islámico"; Barceló, "La spurcicia paganorum".

13 Martín Rodríguez, "La monarquía leonesa", 557 (Crónica Latina de los Reyes de Castilla). On the general context see Powers, "Frontier Municipal Baths".

14 Katz, *Body of text*, 157–164; Safran, "Rules of purity and confessional boundaries"; Wensinck, "The origin of the Muslim laws".

15 Katz, *Exclusiveness and tolerance*, 24–27; Stow, *Jewish dogs*, 132–152.

co-religionists were allowed to consume meat that had been ritually slaughtered and then sold by Jews to Christians. Angelo di Castro claimed that as Jews, not Christians, discriminated certain foods, prohibitions to eat “Jewish meat” should in fact be shunned as they represented a form of *judaizare*, of “judaising”.<sup>16</sup> To sum up: Such demarcational discourses of purity not only drew boundaries between communal groups, they also changed the face of religious traditions. These examples also show how important it is not only to study the category of purity from a functional perspective, but also to observe its development over time in reaction to competing concepts and understandings.

Does this also apply to Asia in the period chosen here, i.e. from 300 to 1600 of the Common Era? And what of the different religious traditions prevalent within Central, Southern and Eastern Asia during certain periods? In the medieval Mediterranean, material purity did not acquire the same position in Christianity as it did in Islam and Judaism, while moral and ethical purity seem to have been of greater importance on a comparative level. Which differences have to be named in the case of Asian traditions? Differentiated comparative studies of the varying functions of purity, impurity and pollution in Daoist, Confucian, Hindu, and Buddhist thought and life do not abound, even less so research into the correlation between these traditions.<sup>17</sup> This rather unsatisfying situation has been an important reason for deciding to edit a collection of essays that hopefully will facilitate comparative work in the future.

## 2 Conceptual Frameworks

Scientific analysis of such interreligious transfer processes is the main area of scholarly activity of the Käte Hamburger Kolleg “Dynamics in the history of religion between Asia and Europe”, a transdisciplinary research centre established at Ruhr University Bochum in 2007, funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and dedicated to the comparative study of religious traditions of the past and present. Discourses on purity that developed both in Asia and in Europe in premodern times have been one of its focal fields of analysis from 2007 to 2010. A recently published volume on “Purity and the Forming of Religious Traditions in the Ancient Mediterranean World and Ancient Judaism”<sup>18</sup> is the first fruit of this line of research, the present

16 Stow, *Jewish dogs*, 153–157.

17 Though some headway is recently being made: *Un/Reinheit: Konzepte und Praktiken im Kulturvergleich*, ed. by Malinar; *Reinheit*, ed. by Burschel and Marx.

18 *Purity and the Forming of Religious Traditions*, ed. Frevel/Nihan.

proceedings are the second. The spectrum of possible subjects and questions this field poses is so vast that the workshops' organisers considered it helpful to provide a questionnaire as a means of establishing a common ground and facilitating debate. The following set of questions was therefore provided to all authors in the hope of providing a starting point for all contributors and a basis for further topics

1. Did the category pure / impure serve as a classificatory device in order to demarcate individuals or groups? Here, one needs to differentiate between its function as a means of integration or disintegration within one social or religious entity on the one hand and as an instrument to demarcate religious groups or neighboring societies on the other. We therefore need to analyse both intra-religious social distinction and the xenofication of other religious traditions.
2. Did purity, impurity, pollution and purification play a specific role for the expansion of religious traditions, i.e. for the phase after their consolidation? Here, the specific relation between purity and violence plays an important role.
3. What is the relation between the attributive usage of the binomial pure / impure in order to describe the Other and the self-attribution of purity (or impurity)?
4. Can approval (or rejection) of purity, the concrete usage of the category or changes in its use over time be ascribed to contact with other groups or creeds?
5. Which terms were applied to describe the pure or impure, and which semantic fields or subfields were created? This issue of the semantics of purity not only attempts to broaden our terminological spectrum, but it also critically asks if other, more or less related notions might not have had a stronger impact on inter-religious contact and transfer than purity and its derivatives.
6. Can one determine authoritative texts on purity, impurity, pollution or purification? This question is important in order to not only study the social but also the intellectual history of our subject; it calls for diachronic differentiation, because some texts might have been adapted over time.
7. Can one observe intellectual or theological reflections on the importance of purity—that is: can one distinguish “discourses” of purity? This issue centers on processes of transfer and includes phenomena such as translations of relevant texts.
8. Can one observe relationships between the pure / impure and a transcendental / otherworldly sphere? Connections established between

holiness and purity, purity and divinity are of prime importance to this question.

9. Is the concept of purity used to describe forms of inner-worldly transcendence (purity of the soul, purity of thought etc.)?
10. What is the spatial dimension of the category pure / impure? Such spatial connotations might take on different hues such as the construction of pure spaces and areas (“pure lands”) or a correlation between “center and purity”—“periphery and the less pure”—“extra-periphery and the impure”.

Naturally, the questionnaire was no more than a proposal and not intended to be worked off point by point; but it has proven to be a useful tool which the authors have applied as they saw appropriate. Many of these questions are geared at identifying religions’ “relational quality” and their “contact-dimension”, i.e. processes of religious transfer and interreligious contact. This facet of religions is of prime interest to the Käte Hamburger Kolleg in general and the volume’s editors in particular.<sup>19</sup> Interaction between different religious traditions could take the form of borrowings on the institutional level of lore and organisation and or it could occur within social contexts such as relations between groups or individuals of different belief systems and cultures. This volume is indebted to the latter, social understanding of the “contact dimension”.

Apart from the questionnaire, the six sections into which the papers have been grouped provide a framework for this volume. Such classifications are often problematic, and indeed several articles might well have been positioned in a different section. But despite such shortcomings, the editors thought it preferable to choose a systematic order as opposed to a geographical or chronological one, as it lays emphasis on the contrived and fictitious nature purity might acquire and the varying ways to which it has been put to use. Indeed, one of the weaknesses of historical research in this field is a certain lack of differentiation, an unwillingness to subdivide the field. Identifying and naming concepts of purity admittedly might convey the erroneous impression of absolutely clear-cut divisions, but it also serves as an analytical tool which will hopefully facilitate understanding the wide range of interpretations and actions that derive from differing understandings of purity. Six classifiers have been singled out to provide the structural framework of this collection of essays: material—textual—genealogical—ethical and moral—spiritual and

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19 On the consortium’s aims see *Dynamics in the history of religions*, ed. by Krech and Steinicke, particularly the general thoughts and succinct summary: Krech and Steinicke, “Dynamics in the History of Religions”.



intellectual—and finally cultic and ritual aspects of purity. A brief overview of these sections and the articles included in them might provide a hint at what the reader may expect and indicate correlations between the essays in this volume.

### 2.1 *Material Purity*

Miriam Czock concentrates on our notion's intra-religious dimension: by analysing the church building in early mediaeval Christian Europe—a space exclusively attached to material purity according to several recent studies. However, her close reading not only of authoritative theoretical texts, but also of hitherto seldom studied liturgical sources such as documents referring to church consecrations and rites of reconciliation produces surprising results: Contrary to the view upheld by authorities in the field, ethical concepts of purity predominated in these interpretations of sacred space. Because the church building was seen as the gathering point of the community, the *ecclesia*, it was expected to maintain a high degree of ethical purity. Integration, not demarcation was the primary effect of such an understanding of purity. This interpretation of the church building was however the product of historical developments that reached their climax in the 8th and 9th centuries. While not directly relating to the contact dimension of the purity-paradigm, Czock's paper provides important stimuli for analyzing issues such as the similarities and differences between *synagoga* and *ecclesia* as culturally attributed sacred and pure spaces.

Hermann-Josef Röllicke's paper is divided into three parts, the first of which deals with *qing-tang* (lit. "pure talk"), a purifying discourse among a reform group of Chinese literati of the 4th century B.C.E. This strand within a refined cultural elite propagated purity as a means of demarcating oneself from wider sections of society. Withdrawal from the material world—especially from political discourse and power—was stressed as a means of remaining undefiled in a metaphorical sense of the word. In a second step, Röllicke presents a wide overview of core words and notions related to purity, arguing that contemporary language was pervaded by this semantic cluster, and not by purity alone. The article's third section is dedicated to purity in the material and mundane world of rites and inner exercise. Here the intricate relationship between the impure mundane and the pure otherworldly sphere becomes particularly apparent, as even ritual purifications ultimately aimed at preparing the path to revelation. Material purity, Röllicke claims, cannot in fact be analyzed independently from other forms of purity to which it is inextricably tied.

Without a doubt, the main focus of Ephraim Shoham Steiner's article on medieval Ashkenazi Jewry is purity's contact dimension. He not only presents

an overview highlighting the maintenance of rites and buildings marked by traditional purity codes (the Nidda laws etc.) in a diasporic environment, but also shows how the self-attribution of purity and the imputation of impurity was functionalized by Jewish scholars in Christian-Jewish polemics as a means of furthering one's own position and demarcating Judaism from Christianity. Judaism was explicitly termed a "purer religion" than Christianity, due inter alia to its greater age. Both material and moral purity were integrated in the discussion, for example, via the argument that Christian newborns showed a reddish complexion in comparison to Jewish infants due to the fact that they had been polluted by menstrual blood because Christians did not strictly adhere to rules of purity. Ethnic differences were thus tied to notions of ritual purity (similar to Asian cases mentioned by Licia Di Giacinto and Paolo Santangelo), and strictness in the field of purity codes functioned as a cohesive element in order to maintain a group's religious identity within an ultimately hostile environment. Material purity was not only defended in order to propagate one's own religion's superiority, but also as a counter-narrative against accusations of Jewish carnality. In passing, Professor Shoham Steiner also offers telling examples of purity attributed to sacred texts which parallel other cases presented by Stefan Leder and Aziz al-Azmeh, and finally draws our attention to intra-religious purity discourses such as those between Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews.

## 2.2 *Ethical and Moral Purity*

Paolo Santangelo explains how notions of purity found their way from the physical to the symbolic and finally to the moral context in late imperial China. While Confucian theory dealt mainly with topics of harmony and disharmony, literary texts from the 12th to 18th centuries reveal several usages of the purity category in Chinese Neo-Confucianism. Here, the degree of purity of cosmic psycho-physical energy was used to explain or to justify social, intra-religious hierarchy. Professor Santangelo rigorously works his way through the above mentioned questionnaire, showing the multiple fields in which the semantic cluster appears. Among others he points out a continuous use of words from the field pure-impure in contexts such as sexuality or "horror of death", less so in the field of religion *stricto sensu*. In Chinese culture the importance of purity as a means of demarcation was secondary to other categories such as the degree of sinicization. Another valuable characteristic of the article is that it urges us to consider the typology of sources we use. Just as Miriam Czock's analysis of hitherto neglected genres (acts of church consecrations) brought prior studies based on penitential texts into perspective, Professor Santangelo's article expands our knowledge by its extensive use of literary sources over philosophical ones.

Hans-Werner Goetz analyzes the treatment of the Biblical-Jewish purity regulations by early medieval Christian authorities. Interestingly, one can observe a modification of the literal, material understanding of the Old Testament regulations toward an allegorical interpretation, according to which impure animals, for example, were understood as similes for incorrect actions. The backdrop of this novel understanding of purity rules seems to have been the wish to demarcate Christianity from other religions, particularly from Judaism. Professor Goetz underpins his findings with an analysis of a ninth-century work, *De institutione laicali* by Jonas of Orleans. The allegorical and the ethical reading of the Old Testament in the 6th to 8th centuries, that he—similarly to Miriam Czock—discerns, persisted into the High Middle Ages. Professor Goetz, too, wrestles with the issue of lexicography, his approach being to quantify and analyze the usage of two relevant items, *munditia* and *immunditia* with the help of digitalized collections of medieval texts. In the final analysis based on the questionnaire, purity and impurity are deemed important, but not primary categories within Christian thought. No cohesive, no authoritative treatise on purity was written in the Christian Middle Ages, although the notion seems to have percolated into many areas of society.

### 2.3 *Purity of Spirit and Thought*

Licia Di Giacinto's years of fruitful collaboration within the Käte Hamburger Kolleg are the basis for her balanced reflections on the methodological and terminological problems associated with comparative research in general and research on purity in particular. Similar to Hermann-Josef Röllicke, the paper centres on Daoism; however, the utilization of different genres of sources produces a complementary perspective. Di Giacinto, too, questions the translation of the term *qing* as purity, underlining in contrast its proximity to the notion of clarity in the early stages of Daoism. Her paper is particularly useful because it underlines the importance of diachronic research, for it clearly shows that purity did become an important criterion in Daoist thought, but only from the 6th century onwards. The formerly predominant binomial auspicious / inauspicious was complemented, though never replaced, by that of purity / impurity. Material and inner purity were functionalized in varying ways within Chinese soteriology and society, not least as a means of demarcating Daoism from Buddhism. Such shifts can thus effectively be ascribed to contact with other creeds. In the final analysis, the paper's findings are ambiguous. On the one hand, it shows the varying importance of the notion of purity for Daoism by establishing a change in attitude and identifying the category's growing relevance. At the same time, however, purity is dismissed as a key term to analyze

Daoistic traditions independently from time and space, as others such as “auspiciousness” were comparatively more influential.

Elisabeth Hollender concentrates on a concrete region, the Iberian Peninsula in the 10th to 12th centuries of the Common Era, and more importantly on one type of source material or literary genre, that is, Jewish religious and secular poetry. This focus proves to be highly productive, as poetry is the only genre in which Iberian Jews maintained Hebrew as their exclusive means of expression, whereas in all other genres, Judeo-Arabic became established as their form of written communication. Textual purity was therefore used as an ultimately elitist instrument geared at maintaining religious cohesion and demarcating one religious community from the other. This approach was also maintained when Jews left Islamic al-Andalus and immigrated to Christian territories. Therefore, adherence to rules of linguistic poetic purity became a form of “dwelling”, a sort of diasporic remembrance of one’s lost homeland.<sup>20</sup> In some measure then, al-Andalus thus became a “pure land” of Sephardic Judaism. Professor Hollender explicitly carves out the contact dimension inherent in her subject by suggesting that the Jewish notion of textual purity was indeed a reaction to the concept of Quranic purity developed in Islam, a notion not confined to the religious sphere, but extended to secular poetry as well, as a number of texts celebrating wine and love illustrate.

#### 2.4 *Purity of Cult*

Pollution and violence is the main theme of Matthias Bley’s study of the way in which pagan Viking attacks were depicted and interpreted in 9th and 10th century Christian Europe. A wide array of different texts—historiographic, hagiographic and liturgical sources as well as diplomatic and archeological material—bear witness to the impact these raids had upon contemporaries. A series of texts from the 830s onwards (referring to raids on Nantes, Tours etc.) show that even though notions of pollution and defilement were far from limited to the field of Pagan-Christian strife, the eminent and novel threat of Viking aggression demanded explanations and countermeasures which extended beyond the military field, because pollution or defilement of sanctuaries by hands deemed profane threatened cultic purity. Masses celebrated in order to reconcile desecrated churches (studied from a different perspective in Miriam Czock’s contribution) illustrate that three notions of purity—material, cultic and also ethical purity—were simultaneously considered endangered, for only due to the fact that Christians’ hearts were stained by sin were the churches believed to have been violated by “unbelievers”. Thus, even though

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20 Cf. Tweed, “On moving across”; Id., *Crossing and dwelling*.

Viking-induced defilement mainly affected the cultic purity of a sanctuary, such acts were intimately associated with Christian sinfulness and thus with ethical impurity.

Purity's spatial dimension is central to Stefan Köck. Inter alia, his article illustrates the importance of historical analysis by focusing on two issues: the development of Japanese mountain shrines, as exemplified by the Kumano sanctuary on the Kii peninsula in central Japan, and the changing position of religious authorities vis-à-vis women's supposed pollution of sacred sites. Notions of material and moral purity developed by autochthonous *kami* cults and by Buddhism merged during the Heian period (9th to 12th centuries), particularly in mountain shrines which became centres of ascetism. They were believed to cleanse the faithful both due to the toils pilgrims undertook to reach them and due to their inherent sacredness. Kumano might be seen as an interesting case of religious translocation, as notions of Buddhist pure land thought were transferred onto it. Simultaneously, women were gradually excluded from sanctuaries, possibly due to the influence of Confucian thought. Taboos against women in general and menstruating women in particular did not however go unchallenged, as a discourse on female impurity emerged in the course of the 12th and 13th centuries. Finally, not only were the bodily remains of women permitted access to the shrine, but the general position vis-à-vis female impurity became less misogynous.

In her analysis of laws on ritual purity in medieval Jewish Ashkenaz, Hanna Liss like Ephraim Shoham Steiner lays particular emphasis on Rabbinic Nidda laws, normative texts that prescribe women's obligations during menstruation, and on sacred space, as in Jewish lore, too, the sanctuary imperatively requires the status of purity. In the course of the 2nd to 8th centuries, Halakhic commandments transferred rules that had been traditionally restricted to the sanctuary to the domestic sphere. Because the Temple had been lost, Jewish homes to a certain extent became its replacement. In the 11th and 12th centuries, Jewish German pietists in Speyer, Mayence and Worms extended this concept to the social sphere by stipulating penitential rites after contact with non-Jews; they also underlined the importance of priestly purity out of fear that ritual impurity might render prayers ineffective. This development is linked to experiences of persecuted Jewish communities during the early Crusades, but might also reflect similar anxieties within Christian society concerning the validity of sacraments administered by polluted priests.<sup>21</sup>

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21 Laudage, *Priesterbild und Reformpapsttum*; Remensnyder, "Pollution, Purity, and Peace"; *Medieval purity and piety*, ed. by Frassetto.

### 2.5 *Concepts of Textual Purity*

Stefan Leder examines notions of purity related both to the most authoritative Islamic text, the Qu'rān, which is generally described in terms of purity due to its direct emanation from God, and to Islamic religious texts in general. Although care for the material integrity and the preservation of holy books is an important concern which can trigger violent reactions to assumed or actual desecrations, the moral conduct and dignity of those reading and transmitting them is an equally important (albeit often overlooked) issue, as this paper shows. By stipulating that only the pure may touch the Qu'rān, textual purity served as an effective hierarchical marker within Islamic societies. More importantly, its correct—pure—recitation was and is considered of utmost importance. Works such as the 10th century (C.E.) “Manners of those who bear the Qu'rān in their memory” illustrate how important the ethical conduct of those reading and reciting so pure a text was deemed. The Prophet's transmission of God's very words is the reason for such high esteem. The authority of the *Hadith* in turn relied heavily on its unaltered—first oral and then written—transmission over time, a form of genealogical purity which is safeguarded by the transmitters' moral qualities. Here, Stefan Leder's paper enters a fruitful dialogue with Aziz al-Azmeh's thoughts.

### 2.6 *Concepts of Genealogical Purity*

By analysing 14th century accounts of Christian martyrdom, mostly at the hands of Muslims, Christopher MacEvitt presents two telling instances of religious demarcation acquired by means of painfully obtained purity. When Christian hopes of conquering Muslim-held territories diminished due to a series of military setbacks, the quest for martyrdom gained importance and won adherents within the Franciscan order. Conversion was not the primary aim of these brethren, but rather the re-establishment of order by clearly marking boundaries between Christians and Muslims or even between Latin Christians and those coreligionists considered too lenient toward Islam. Such ways of creating inter and intra-religious distinctions have an eminently spatial dimension, because martyrdom was sought at the Christian-Muslim frontiers. At the same time, tales of Franciscan martyrs produced in circles sympathetic to spiritualistic ideals convey a different picture—that of model brethren who follow traditions laid down by the order's founding generation as opposed to later developments considered deviant. Here, emulation of authoritative figures might be understood as a form of genealogical purity claimed by a conflicting faction within a monastic order.

In his study on debates on purity within the monastic world of Theravāda Buddhism between the 5th and 14th centuries, Sven Bretfeld also centres on the

utilization of institutional purity within intra-religious debates. His analysis of three groups of texts—the *Visuddhimagga* by the great exegete Buddhaghosa (5th century C.E.), two normative texts (*Katikāvatas*) of the 12th and 13th centuries and a 14th century history of Buddhism—illustrates the inherent tension between two forms of religious practice, a more ascetic one associated with eremitic life in the forest and with meditation versus a more scholarly one associated with urban society. Buddhaghosa's propagation of purity as a form of inner-worldly transcendence calls to mind Hermann-Josef Röllicke's findings on Daoism, and similar to Christopher MacEvitt, Professor Bretfeld can also discern the usage of purity discourses to demarcate rivalling groups within one societal field. Here too, religious reform was justified by propagating a return to purity. Forcefully backed by the Sri Lankan rulers, the *Katikāvatas* prescribed a number of pre-requisites for proper monastic life, among them genealogical purity of birth. The article convincingly demonstrates the social consequences discourses of religious purity within monasticism could have in pre-modern societies.

Aziz Al-Azmeh is interested in the way genealogical purity contributed to the emergence and maintenance of demarcations between religious traditions. He first positions this question within a wider framework of antagonistic ideologies and then focuses on classical Islam, more precisely on authors from eastern regions of the Sunnite caliphate during the second half of the 9th and the 10th centuries, a period in which defining features of Islam were laid down by religious scholars patronised by the Abbasid state. His focus is not so much on the social consequences that such demarcations heralded, but rather their creation and their most prominent features as opposed to Christianity and Judaism, with which Islam shares certain registers of purity. Genealogical purity was constructed in several fashions: in the form of historical purity as in the case of the Caliphs' claim to biological filiation, i.e. direct descent from Mohammed, and in the form of "genealogies of knowledge": traditions such as the *Hadith*, prophetic biography, poetry, history and other more or less authoritative corpora created notions of Islam's pure origins. Most importantly, the Qur'an acquired the status of an absolutely stable, unalterable text, thus representing a benchmark of foundational, pure time, which served as a moment to which later periods and instances could be correlated.

### 3 Perspectives and Risks

Without meaning to provide an extensive summary within an introductory survey, it might nevertheless be appropriate in view of future research to draw

together some strands of this collection and suggest some of the points which it has raised. For certain recurrent issues, aspects and cautionary remarks can indeed be extracted from the papers presented in this volume. First, they illustrate that purity was a category of differing relevance to several religious traditions. Undoubtedly, in Islam, Judaism and Christianity it was of major importance, more so than in Asian religions, at least as far as its demarcational functions are concerned. Here again a differentiation between Daoism, Buddhism and other belief systems is imperative. As some articles in this collection show, at least in the case of Daoism, purity merits attention as a hitherto unjustly neglected demarcational factor within Asian belief systems. It remains to be analyzed in detail, to what extent Confucian, Daoistic and Buddhist visions of purity were the result of mutual interaction. That being said, purity cannot claim the status of *the* key term for comparative analysis of religion on a global level. Several texts illustrate that although it is without a doubt a notable classificatory device, its relevance might well be surpassed by others in certain instances or religions: “correctness” for example is a more significant notion when dealing with holy texts in Islam and Daoism, as Stefan Leder and Hermann-Josef Röllicke respectively demonstrate; the binary opposition “auspicious / inauspicious” emphasized by Licia Di Giacinto is another case in point.

Similarly, many articles attest the importance of a lexical analysis of terms and their translations. The impact of Mary Douglas’s work might have had the detrimental effect of inducing researchers to sense purity where in fact other notions are actually referred to; this is particularly true of Asian languages, as several of the following contributions forcefully call to mind. And semantic subfields related to the category of purity might well differ between the respective religious traditions. Two further cautionary insights are driven home by this collection: Several papers underline that historical analyses of the concept of purity are imperative, as it is important not only to determine shifts over time, but also to observe if such changes can be explained through contact or contention with other religious traditions. The articles collected here show once again that religions were and are anything but immobile and unalterable, for purity is here proven to be an effective analytical device that reveals how religions change. Furthermore, several papers have by-passed the anthropological view on purity that Mary Douglas established, by following other disciplinary approaches instead. Such a shift of perspective is an enriching form of picking up the impulses provided by an authoritative model and applying it to new fields and objects of research. And a last cautionary remark: Our interpretations are more strongly marked by the types, the genres of sources we use, than is oftentimes acknowledged. This might appear to be a truism, but it



cannot be emphasized strongly enough and is therefore quite rightfully underlined by several of our authors.

The reader will have to judge which insights comparative analysis of the purity-impurity divide in premodern Asia and Europe yields, but clearly its influence, not least within the field of interreligious contact, was far from negligible. Without a doubt, purity was indeed widely utilized as a return to order, and in this respect Mary Douglas's findings are corroborated more than once. At the same time, the degree of its rigidity also had an impact on individuals' readiness to change from one religion to the other. The laxity or severity of religious rules of purity is a criterion that has hitherto not been analyzed sufficiently when studying processes of conversion. Islam, for example, presented itself as a "religion of ease" in comparison to neighbouring religious traditions as far as certain rules of purity were concerned.<sup>22</sup> Throughout this collection of articles, the demarcational function of purity becomes absolutely evident: The category drew boundaries between Jews and Christians (Ephraim Shoham Steiner, Hans-Werner Goetz), Daoists and Buddhists (Licia Di Giacinto), pagans and Christians (Matthias Bley), Muslims and Jews (Elizabeth Hollender); but it also created hierarchical demarcations within societies (Hermann-Josef Röllicke, Licia Di Giacinto, Sven Bretfeld and Stefan Leder) or even within institutions (Christopher MacEvitt and Sven Bretfeld). The gender dimension of purity is another case in point, as women's menses and urine in particular were generally deemed impure—not only in Abrahamic religions (cf. the articles by Ephraim Shoham Steiner, Hanna Liss, Aziz al-Azmeh and Hans-Werner Goetz), but also in Daoism and Buddhism (as Paolo Santangelo and Stefan Köck indicate).<sup>23</sup> The articles also show how important it is to take other semantic subfields of the purity-impurity divide into consideration: blood and death, water and clarity / light and further binomials offer comparative transcultural insights.

To close, a final thought on the heuristic potential of dealing with purity, one that pertains to our own modes of action as researchers and academics: The purity and pollution of academic disciplines. Interdisciplinary research can only function if all involved are ready to accept or even integrate methodologies and concepts alien to their own respective disciplines. Such processes of adaptation can be seen as enriching, as this collection of essays

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22 This was one of the main points in Ze'ev Maghen's paper on the sexuality of the prophet Muhammad, which unfortunately could not be presented for publication in this volume; cf. Maghen, *Virtues of the flesh*.

23 Cf. Braun, "Zum Begriff der Reinheit"; Wohlrab-Sahr and Rosenstock, "Religion—soziale Ordnung—Geschlechterordnung"; Cuffel, *Gendering disgust in medieval religious polemic*.

convincingly demonstrates, but they can also be understood as a danger, as a form of deviation or even contamination. This dichotomy holds true for any field of integrated research, but perhaps particularly for one centered on religious studies. The still unfulfilled quest for the nature of religion is in itself an objective strongly, if only implicitly, imbued with notions of purity, impurity and pollution. Regardless of whether one refers to the inner core of religion as its “Wesen”, nature or “inner logic”, such concepts transport notions of purity which might well be deemed threatened by contamination through contact with other methodologies, perspectives and disciplines. Social, material, historical and other approaches to religious studies stem from particular disciplines with methodologies and questions of their own and consequently might be perceived as polluting elements that distract our attention from dealing with the essence of religion itself, that is to say, spirituality, semantics of religion or transcendence. Here and now, just as then and there, the alleged purity of religion can integrate, demarcate and classify. The subject dealt with in this volume is thus relevant not only to the level of object language, i.e. the historical discourses studied, but also to the meta-language of our own activities as scholars. Therefore, reflecting on the usage and functionalization of purity concepts over space and time might convey new insights for those of us who participate in interdisciplinary integrated research, insights that directly concern our activities as academics in the 21st century. Not the least gain a supposedly old and overrated category can provide.

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**SECTION 1**

*Material Purity*





# Early Medieval Churches as Cultic Space between Material and Ethical Purity

*Miriam Czock*

The very first sentence in Regino of Prüm's *Libri duo de synodalibus causis*, a collection of canons from the beginning of the 10th century, states:

First it should be inquired in which saint's honour the basilica is consecrated, and by whom it was consecrated. After this one should look around the church itself, if its roof and vault are in good conditions, and that there are no pigeons or other birds nesting, because of their impure excrements or their commotion.<sup>1</sup>

Regino's words may be viewed as a fine example of early medieval emphasis on the material purity of the cultic sphere. In due course we will however see the superficiality of this observation as the present article tries to re-evaluate the significance of the categories of ethical and material purity in early medieval religion.

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1 Reginonis Prumiensis *Libri duo de synodalibus causis*, I 1, p. 24 *Inprimis inquirendum est, in cuius sancti honore consecrata sit basilica, vel a quo fuerit consecrata. Post haec ipsa ecclesia circumspiciatur, si bene sit cooperta atque camerata, et ne ibi columbae vel aliae aves nidificent propter immunditiam stercoris sive importunitatis inquietudinem?* On Regino's collection see Hartmann, *Kirche und Kirchenrecht*, 149–160.



Regino himself stands at the end of a crucial phase in an age of religious and theological innovation: the so-called Carolingian Reform.<sup>2</sup> The excerpt above derives from a handbook for bishops visiting their dioceses and relies heavily on the ideas of the reform, as Regino collated amongst other material an abundance of sources produced in the heyday of reform.<sup>3</sup> The Carolingian Reform is a topic very much under scholarly scrutiny. Although research has gone far towards disentangling questions surrounding it, there is ongoing discussion about its nature. It is commonly acknowledged to be characterised by a royal and ecclesiastical program that emerged from the middle of the 8th century, zealously aspiring to create a truly Christian society. One prominent feature of the reform was a whole body of royal and ecclesiastical legislation bearing witness to the effort made to implement correct Christian behavior. Another characteristic of the reform was a growing ritualization of cult to which many liturgical texts attest,<sup>4</sup> as well as deepened theological thought expressed in a plethora of exegetical tracts.<sup>5</sup> Just how important it is to understand the Carolingian Reform is underlined by the now recognized fact that it played a crucial role in establishing models and traditions of Christian religiosity and impinged heavily on the next age of reform in the twelfth century.<sup>6</sup>

According to scholarship in this field, one key aspect of the religious shift brought about mainly, though by no means exclusively, by the Carolingian Reform is a new conceptualization of the relationship of ethical and material purity; its theology and cult allegedly emphasized the idea of material purity.<sup>7</sup>

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2 There are myriad studies on the Carolingian Reform. For an introduction and further reading see Giles Brown, "The Carolingian Renaissance"; Depreux, "Ambitions et limites"; McKitterick, *The Frankish Church*.

3 For Regino's reliance on Carolingian material see Hartmann, *Kirche und Kirchenrecht*, 152–154. Regino's approach to his sources is outlined by Schmitz, "Ansegis und Regino"; Ubl, "Doppelmoral im karolingischen Kirchenrecht?".

4 For the liturgical texts in the early middle ages see *Medieval Liturgy*, ed. Vogel, Storey, Krogh Rasmussen and Brooks-Leonard, 61–247. On the reform of liturgy in Carolingian times see Hen, *The Royal Patronage of Liturgy*.

5 For an introduction to the subject of exegetical texts see Contreni, "Carolingian Biblical Culture"; Matter, "Exegesis and Christian Education". Commentators were interested not only in biblical exegesis but also in the exegesis of the liturgy. For an excellent study on exegesis in regard to the building of the church see Iogna-Prat, "Lieu de culte".

6 Hartmann, *Kirche und Kirchenrecht*, esp. 1–3.

7 Although some developments are quite unique to the reform, some can be traced back to pre-reform times. A good example are the penitentials in which Lutterbach, *Sexualität im Mittelalter* detected the priority of material over ethical purity. For a short critique of his argument see Kottje, "Intentions- oder Tathaftung?".

The issue was promoted especially by the seminal works of Arnold Angenendt, who elaborated an innovative model for the evolution of Christian religion.<sup>8</sup> The evolution of the sacralization of persons, spaces and cultic objects as well as a ritualization of religiosity itself were identified by him as unique features of the cult in the early Middle Ages. Moreover, he considered these features to indicate an archaizing tendency of Carolingian religiosity that stood in contrast to early Christian times. Stressing the ritualistic orientation of early medieval religion, he characterized worship in the early Middle Ages as relying on the importance of external performance rather than spiritual attachment.<sup>9</sup> In this line of argument, early medieval religion favoured ritual expression over inner reflection to appease God.<sup>10</sup>

Although this new paradigm has been widely embraced by historians,<sup>11</sup> it remains by no means unchallenged. General criticism has been levelled at the depiction of early medieval religion as archaizing by Mayke de Jong. As she has shifted the focus away from looking at early medieval Christianity as a bridge between the then and now, she has called on us to rethink it not as a degenerated version of ancient religiosity or contemporary 'real' Christianity, but as a development in its own right.<sup>12</sup> Rob Meens has proposed that rather than accentuating the importance of ritualistic behaviour over inner conviction we should look at the tension between the two.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the assertion that material purity was indeed central to early medieval religion was called into question. One outspoken critic on the questions of materiality and cultic

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8 Angenendt, *Geschichte der Religiosität*, for a full discussion of the model see especially pp. 1–30. He also voiced these ideas in many articles. See, for example, id., "Die Liturgie und die Organisation"; id., "Mit reinen Händen"; id., "Der Taufritus im frühen Mittelalter"; id., "Das Offertorium"; id., Braucks, Busch, Lentjes and Lutterbach, "Gezählte Frömmigkeit"; id., *Liturgik und Historik*.

9 Because the issue is fundamental to his work, countless examples may be found. For a good summary see his assessment of early medieval liturgy: Angenendt, *Geschichte der Religiosität*, 351–359, 378–387; id., *Liturgik und Historik*, 110–124, 131–140.

10 While stressing the material dimension of purity in religious life of the early Middle Ages, Arnold Angenendt nevertheless does not deny that there were also ethical requirements for cultic conduct, see for example Angenendt, "Libelli bene correcti", 135.

11 Lutterbach, "Intentions- oder Tathaftung?"; id., *Sexualität im Mittelalter*; id., "Die mittelalterlichen Bußbücher".

12 De Jong, "Rethinking Early Medieval Christianity", 267–268.

13 Meens, "A Relict of Superstition". In another article he established the significance of the literal interpretation of the biblical concept of purity, see id., "Questioning Ritual Purity".

performance is Nikolas Staubach in his works on Carolingian Reform.<sup>14</sup> In his articles he concludes that the Carolingian Reform did not have an archaizing tendency but was rather a continuation of patristic traditions, and mystic in its nature. He notes that conceptions and ideas of Christian ritual expressed in Carolingian times were always framed by allegorical explanations, which underlined the spiritual meaning of cultic performances. Staubach therefore argues that cultic objects did not have an essential, magical virtue, but were symbols of a moral obligation.<sup>15</sup>

On balance, the most fundamental divergence between Angenendt's and Staubach's studies rests in their different approach to the sources. While Angenendt's reading relies predominantly on the implications of stated rules in normative texts, Staubach's understanding is shaped mainly by exegetical texts and pastoral elements of normative texts. In other words, it is the particular viewpoint of the sources that conditions their interpretation. Therefore, the present article shall reassess the subject by looking at sources which all draw on different aspects of ritual performance and materiality of early medieval cult: law, liturgy and exegesis. While these sources stem from a common horizon of belief, they obviously operate on different reflective levels, since they aspire to clearly distinct goals. Analyzing them individually may help us broaden our perspective and clarify the nature of the cultic sphere in the early Middle Ages. Interpreting every type of source in its own right will make us sensitive to the fact that although there might be certain shared values and perceptions, the position on material and ethical purity is a shifting one.

Because of the enormous complexity of the issue, the present analysis is limited to the church building as a case study. Given the fact that to examine early medieval religious innovations in their entirety would be a project too wide in scope, focusing on the church building seems an ideal example. The Carolingian period is a decisive turning point in the definition of Christian holy space.<sup>16</sup> While the sanctity of the church was not acknowledged during patristic times,<sup>17</sup> by around 800 the holy character of the church was established by an elaborate rite of church consecration.<sup>18</sup> Indeed church consecration is a phenomenon that initiated something not inherent in Christendom: a limited,

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14 Staubach, "Aspekte der karolingischen Pastoralreform", 48–52; id., "Signa utilia", especially p. 42 note 105; id., "'Cultus divinus'"; Palazzo, "Art, Liturgy".

15 Staubach, "Signa utilia", 39.

16 Neuheuser, "Mundum consecrare".

17 Markus, "How on Earth"; Jäggi, "Die Kirche als heiliger Raum"; de Blaauw, "Die Kirchweihe".

18 Benz, "Zur Geschichte der Kirchweihe"; Repsher, *The Rite of Church Dedication*, 17–39; Forneck, *Die Feier der Dedicatio ecclesiae*, 1–43; Méhu, "Historiae et imagines".

locatable holy space.<sup>19</sup> Little wonder, therefore, that it is one of the developments in which Angenendt detected the materialization of the sacred.<sup>20</sup> The implementation of a ritual to consecrate the space of worship is testimony to a breach with patristic tradition and indicates a change of discourse, yet it is in no way certain that this represented a turn to material purity.

The church building is a particular theme of the eighth and ninth century, one that is prominent in a variety of sources, each reflecting specific ideas about purity. The category of purity resonated not only in the ritual that consecrated the place, but in all further thinking about the church building as the material object elemental to cultic performance.<sup>21</sup> Hence the requirements of dealing with the church building as a holy space seem to be a good starting point to reveal any implications of material or ethical purity associated with cult.

With this in mind, we may return to the already cited opening passage of Regino's *Libri duo de synodalibus causis*. His collection starts with a questionnaire for the bishop visiting his diocese, in which he urges the bishop to look around the churches to ensure that the roofs and vaults are in good condition, and that there are no birds nesting, because of the impurity of their excrement or the unsuitability of their commotion.<sup>22</sup> Further down the checklist, Regino wants the bishop to investigate if hay, crops and suchlike are kept in the church,<sup>23</sup> if the atrium of the church is fenced to fend off pollution<sup>24</sup> or if the priest celebrates mass in houses outside of church.<sup>25</sup> Again the second book of the collection begins with a questionnaire which is designed to help the bishop interview the laity. The bishop is to ask the laity whether anyone dares to sing in an unseemly manner causing chant and laughter around the church<sup>26</sup>

19 Neuheuser, "Mundum consecrare".

20 An argument made in Angenendt, *Das Frühmittelalter*, 343 "[...] so begann sich der altchristliche Spiritualismus auch im Kirchenbau zu verdinglichen; [...]." See also Angenendt, *Geschichte der Religiosität*, 432–436.

21 An overview is provided by Michel Lauwers, "De l'Église primitive"; Iogna-Prat, "Lieu de culte"; id., *La maison dieu*.

22 Reginonis Prumiensis, *Libri duo de synodalibus causis*, I, c. 1, p. 24.

23 Reginonis Prumiensis, *Libri duo de synodalibus causis*, I, c. 3, p. 24: 3. *Si foenum, annona aut tale aliquid in ecclesia mittatur?*

24 Reginonis Prumiensis, *Libri duo de synodalibus causis*, I, c. 16, p. 26: 16. *Considerandum etiam, si atrium ecclesiae sit sepe munitum, ne aliqua immunditia polluatur.*

25 Reginonis Prumiensis, *Libri duo de synodalibus causis*, I, c. 22, p. 28: 22. *Si per domos extra ecclesiam missas cantet?*

26 Reginonis Prumiensis, *Libri duo de synodalibus causis*, II, c. 87, p. 250: 87. *Si cantica turpia et risum moventia aliquis circa ecclesiam cantare praesumit?*

or if anybody tells stories in church rather than listening to mass.<sup>27</sup> Regino's questionnaires provide a framework that very much relies on the paradigm of physical purity as a prerequisite for performance of the cult. Hence, it is the realm of physical filth in which cult cannot be performed. Significantly, pollution seems to be something that is not only physical in a tangible sense but pertains as well to other sensory impressions, as acts and sounds seem to be equally impure.

To stop here would mean to miss the point: the inevitable brevity of the questionnaire, shaped by the need to provide a short checklist for the visiting bishop, barely spells out the plain basic stipulations of the cultic requirements and does not provide reasons for them. Whereas the first part of both book one and two of Regino's *Libri duo de synodalibus causis* is compiled to provide a simple checklist, the second part of each book provides the reader with the agenda on which this was based. While the questionnaire provides us with a short overview, the concerns surrounding the issues exhibited in it were much more complex. We are given more general views of the problem in other sections of Regino's work which supplement the questionnaire with the regulations in which it is rooted. Regulations applying to the church building are scattered throughout his work. They range from reproaching priests for selling wine in the church<sup>28</sup> to the required punishment for murder in the church.<sup>29</sup> Ultimately they incorporate many of the prescriptions produced in Carolingian times. Most tellingly for our question is a prohibition of as yet unidentified provenance in which the concerns for the church building as a cultic space are summed up nicely.

Meanwhile it may not be easily accepted, what the Lord says: My house is a house of prayer (Matth. 21,13). Namely inasmuch as the house of God is called a house of prayer, it has to be what it is called and nothing should be negotiated there or stowed away. Where namely the body of the Lord is consecrated, where with no doubt the Angels are present, where the relics of the saints are venerated, nothing dishonourable should appear that offends the eyes of those who go to prayer, nothing should be seen there that pertains to temporary profit, on the contrary everything should

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27 Reginonis Prumiensis, *Libri duo de synodalibus causis*, II, c. 88, p. 250: 88. *Si aliquis in ecclesiam intrans fabulis vacare consuevit, et non diligenter auscultat divina eloquia [ . . . ]?*

28 Reginonis Prumiensis, *Libri duo de synodalibus causis*, I, c. 58, p. 64.

29 Reginonis Prumiensis, *Libri duo de synodalibus causis*, II, c. 31, p. 264.

be holy, everything should be pure and only pertain to the ecclesiastical ministry.<sup>30</sup>

In this manner Regino expresses his anxieties about potential threats to the holy space, stressing the fact that the church building is the place of worship. Being a place of contact with the divine, the church building has to be pure to be consonant with the ecclesiastical ministry. Significantly Regino does not speak of the spiritual qualities pertaining to the categories of purity or holiness, but rather stresses that nothing has to be seen in church that could offend the eyes of those who came to pray there. As in Regino's questionnaire, the dangers invoked are tangible, for it is the visible misdeed that is identified as unsuitable for worship. Consequently the deed, independent of the inner attitude of the offender, dishonours the cult. Regino's sentiment centres on the sensory dimension of the offence. This coincides with the overall sensory quality of early medieval cult and the importance of calling upon the senses for access to the divine.<sup>31</sup>

But does it really indicate that early medieval cult essentially focused on formal ritual in a way not to be found in early Christianity? It would be a misconception to cast Regino's prescription as an argument not in line with the New Testament and consequently as an expression of a ritualistic understanding of religion. Regino himself leads us to another conclusion, since he chose Matthew 21,13 as a heading for the prohibition.<sup>32</sup> Reading the instruction in the light of this heading, a more nuanced picture emerges. The caption refers to the gospel of Matthew and stems from an episode in which Jesus purified the temple. The purification of the temple came to pass as Jesus went into the temple overturning the tables of the moneychangers and the seats on which doves were sold, expelling all those who sold or bought anything there.<sup>33</sup> Regino's

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30 Reginonis Prumiensis, *Libri duo de synodalibus causis*, I, c. 59, p. 66: *Interea non est leviter accipiendum, quod Dominus dicit: Domus mea domus orationis est. Si enim domus Dei orationis domus vocatur, hoc debet esse, quod dicitur, nec ibi aliud debet geri aut recondi. Ubi enim corpus Domini consecratur, ubi angelorum praesentia non dubitatur adesse, ubi sanctorum reliquiae reconditae venerantur, ne quid inhonestum appareat, quod oculos ad orationem venientium offendat, ne quid ibi videatur, quod ad lucrum temporale pertineat, sed omnia sancta, omnia munda et tantummodo ad ecclesiasticum ministerium pertinentia.*

31 Palazzo, "Art, Liturgy"; Appelby, "Sight and Church Reform".

32 References to Matthew 21,13 are frequently found in Carolingian normative sources pertaining to the church building. The most prominent example is to be found in the *Admonitio generalis* c. 71 (MGH Capitularia regum francorum I, p. 59); similar Theodulf von Orléans, *Erstes Kapitular* I, c. X (MGH Capitula Episcoporum I, p. 110).

33 Matt. 21, 12–13.

prohibition directly follows its New Testament example. Consequently, the citation does not demonstrate a leaning toward material purity per se, but suggests that the people in the early Middle Ages not only read the bible in an allegorical way, but also had a literal take on the bible. This particular method of adapting biblical exemplars is of decisive importance for the evolution of Christianity in the early Middle Ages.<sup>34</sup> So, rather than focusing on the ritualistic nature of early medieval religion as a product of a society lacking in refined theological thought, one has to take into account theological trends toward a literal reading of the bible. Moreover Staubach suggested that Angenendt's favoured perception of the New Testament as nonritualistic is an overstatement. While the New Testament greatly contributed to the spiritualization of religion, it is crucial to recognize that it was not only the Old Testament with its attention to ritual that had a bearing on the issue of ritual, but also the New Testament.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, the ritualistic streak of early medieval religion cannot have been a fundamental break with early Christian ideas.<sup>36</sup>

So far we have looked at what was seen to cause impurity and why norms relating to the church building were coined, but in order to understand the relevance and the quality of purity (material or ethical), we have to take into account its conceptualization. Here again, Regino provides few but valuable insights. By stressing that in order to be consonant with the ecclesiastical ministry everything in the church has to be holy and pure, pureness becomes a quality necessary for cultic conduct. Additionally Regino dissociates holiness and purity. Although he establishes a link between the two, the text does not explain how they are linked or whether they are material or spiritual qualities. To gain more clarity on the concept of purity, one has to turn to liturgical sources for church consecration, from which a much richer picture emerges.

Indeed the possibility of separating purity from holiness is also reflected in the ideas voiced in the ritual used to consecrate the church,<sup>37</sup> as in the following prayer:

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34 Meens, "Questioning Ritual Purity"; Hartmann, "Die karolingische Reform".

35 On the question of ritual purity as part of a tendency to model religious conduct on biblical example see Meens, "Questioning Ritual Purity"; Savigni, "Purità rituale".

36 Staubach, "Signa utilia", 42 note 105.

37 There is a variety of early medieval dedication *ordines*. For the various rites see Benz, "Zur Geschichte der Kirchweihe"; Forneck, *Die Feier der Dedicatio ecclesiae*, 1–43. The rite studied here is included in the Romano-Germanic pontifical. Although only compiled around 950–962, the Romano-Germanic pontifical relied heavily on Frankish liturgical tradition. It is normally used as a representative of the rite of early medieval church dedication. For the whole rite see RGP XL = *Ordo ad benedicendam ecclesiam (ordo XL)*, in

Oh blessed and sacred Trinity, you who purify everything, you who clean everything and adorn everything. (...) Oh God, holy of holy ones, (...) deign to purify, to bless and to consecrate by the perpetual richness of your sanctification this church (...).<sup>38</sup>

The supplicant begs God to enact the purification of the church, but at the same time asks for it to be blessed and consecrated. Clearly holiness encompasses purity but is not limited to it, as for example grace is another concomitant of holiness.<sup>39</sup> Here purity is a divine characteristic. Though church consecration ritual seems to be devoted to purity, the ideas voiced in the various prayers accompanying the ritual acts rarely mention purity. Yet it is a pervasive theme in the exorcism taking place.<sup>40</sup> The purification that God works, invoked by prayer, draws on material objects like water, wine and salt. The church itself becomes an object of purification through these purified substances, which were sprinkled at the altar, in the church and on its outer walls.<sup>41</sup> The prayer said in the ritual performance while mixing salt, water and ash evokes purity and impurity as correlated to transcendent entities:

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*Le Pontifical Romano-Germanique*, ed. Vogel and Elze, I: 124–173. For a survey of the text's history see Vogel, Storey, Krogh Rasmussen and Brooks-Leonard, *Medieval Liturgy*, 230–247. It is argued by Repsher, *The Rite of Church Dedication*, 33–39 that the *ordo XL* from the Romano-Germanic pontifical can be dated to the mid-ninth century. This dating depends upon a consideration of parallels between the *ordo XL* and the tract *Quid significant duodecim candelae*, which is a detailed commentary on the rite of church dedication. It may be that Repsher's argument will prevail, but the issue undoubtedly needs further consideration, since *Quid significant duodecimo candelae* comments on a much shorter version than *ordo XL*. On this subject see Hen, "Review of Repsher: Church Dedication". For a description of and commentary on the church dedication ritual as described in RGP XL see Iogna-Prat, *La maison Dieu*, 265–280; Repsher, *The Rite of Church Dedication*, 41–66.

38 RGP XL 48, p. 143: *O beata et sancta trinitas, quae omnia purificas, omnia mundas, et omnia exornas. [...] O sancte sanctorum Deus, [...] hanc ecclesiam [...] purificare, benedicere, consecrareque perpetua sanctificationis tuae ubertate digneris*. Translation is based on Repsher, *The Rite of Church Dedication*, 150.

39 This idea is frequently expressed throughout the rite. See for example RGP XL 41, p. 140.

40 On exorcism see Bartsch, *Die Sachbeschwörungen*; Rivard, *Blessing the World*. For a discussion of the origin of holy water: Schneider, "Aqua benedicta".

41 RGP XL 12, p. 131; RGP XL 15, p. 132; RGP XL 18 p. 133; RGP XL 42, 43, 44, 45, all p. 141; RPG XL 50, p. 144.



[...] so that wherever it is sprinkled, through the invocation of your holy name, every invasion of the unclean spirit may be expelled and the terror of the venomous serpent may be driven far away (...).<sup>42</sup>

This is also exemplified by a prayer blessing water mixed with wine which quite aptly fits into this idea of correspondence:

[...] the water mixed with wine, that he [God] repell the darkness from it, that he exude the light, that he grant no power to the savage adversary, but that it be exclusively the house of God so that the enemy may have no opportunity of doing harm in it.<sup>43</sup>

Some of the prayers said on the occasion of the church consecration thus beseech God to purify the church from all unseen evils and to take his seat there rendering the church sacred. The prayers also voice the idea that at the same time as God takes up his abode in the church and adorns it with his grace, the devil is driven out of the church and with him all uncleanness. The prayers are a clear indication of the belief that things are weighted with a meaning beyond their mere physical presence: the transcendent is able to break into the material world. The prayers articulate clearly the underlying idea of the ritual: transcendent sources are able to infuse the created world. Accordingly, the church consecration envisages purity and impurity as qualities denoting cosmological order. The exorcism's theme all along was that the church building would never again be touched by uncleanness or be beleaguered by any demonic creatures.

It is easily deduced from the need to prohibit certain behaviour in church that this was a pious hope that would not be fulfilled. Transgressions were not only dealt with by the church by imposing rules but also by developing a liturgical rite: the ritual of reconciliation of a church.<sup>44</sup> This liturgy unfurls the whole scope and mechanics of purity and pollution. It reveals an even broader

42 RGP XL 38, p. 140: [...] *ut ubicumque fuerit aspersa per invocationem sancti tui nominis omnis infectatio inmundi spiritus abigatur terrorque venenosi serpentis procul pellatur* [...]. The translation is based on Repsher, *The Rite of Church Dedication*, 148.

43 RGP XL 40, p. 141: [...] *aquae cum vino mixtae, ut tenebras ab eo repellat et lumen infundat, nullam seiventi adversario tribuat potestatem, sed propria sit domus Dei, ut nullam in ea inimicus habeat licentiam nocendi*. The translation is based on Repsher, *The Rite of Church Dedication*, 148.

44 For the whole ritual see RGP L = *Reconciliatio violatae aeclesiae (ordo L)*, in *Le Pontifical Romano-Germanique*, ed. Vogel and Elze, I: 182–185. For a detailed treatment of the reconciliation of the Church see Rivard, *Blessing the world*.

framework of the ideas connected to purity. The liturgical rite is in essence a corrective response to God's displeasure, triggered by a transgression. Enacting the rite clearly points to the presumption of material purity, yet the prayers characterize the pollution as spiritual, when they put forward the plea for purification thus:

What negligence pollutes, or wrath commits, or drunkenness goads or lust perverts, you [meaning God] sustain by clement patience, [...] and your altar that is polluted by the fraud of the poisoning enemy, purify by pouring in the heavenly grace.<sup>45</sup>

Although according to the heading, the ritual should be used in the reconciliation of an altar at which a murder was perpetrated, murder is never mentioned in the ritual, nor does it invoke any physical impact of the deeds mentioned. Although the contamination might have had a physical impression, its physicality is of no relevance to the ritual. Unlike Regino's normative approaches to transgressions, the rite of reconciliation never refers to the visibility of the action. The material is hardly central to pollution in liturgical prayer; rather it is the spiritual that defiles, manifest in the personification of all rupturing behaviour. In the prayer the author does not envisage visible behaviour or physical stains as polluting forces, but considers the state of mind to be the polluting factor. In fact some of the behaviour Regino cites in his various rules can be subsumed under the ideas addressed in the prayer. The nesting birds and the storing of hay mentioned by Regino could be associated with negligence,<sup>46</sup> the decree on murder in the church which he included in his book could be read as relating to wrath,<sup>47</sup> and his opposition of wine bars in churches to drunkenness.<sup>48</sup> Thus, ideas expressed in the ritual may also have shaped the normative descriptions, which had to work on a different level altogether, as setting a norm has to determine clearly what constitutes a contaminating action.

Parallel to the spiritual scope, the prayers assert a cosmological dimension of contamination already enunciated in the consecration of the church, which refers to a plethora of ideas, all related to purity and impurity:

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45 RGP L 7, pp. 183–84: [...] *si quid aut negligentia polluit, aut ira committit, aut stimulat ebrietas, aut libido subvertit, clementi patientia sustines, [...] et altare tuum, quod infectantis est inimici fraude pollutum, per infusionem gratiae celestis purifices* [...].

46 Reginonis Prumiensis, *Libri duo de synodalibus causis*, I, c. 3, p. 24; I 1, p. 24.

47 Reginonis Prumiensis, *Libri duo de synodalibus causis*, II, c. 31, p. 264.

48 Reginonis Prumiensis, *Libri duo de synodalibus causis*, I, c. 58, p. 64.

Let us humbly implore, most beloved brothers, God, the pardoner of sins, God, the cleanser of filth, God, who by the splendour of his advent purified the world of original sin, that he as steadfast defender may assist us against the deceptions of the raging devil, that if something in this place is found defiled and corrupted with common infections by his poisonous shrewdness it may be purged by the mercy of heaven [...].<sup>49</sup>

Instead of viewing pollution as having a tangible material dimension, the author of the prayer declares it to be a manifestation of Satan's contamination of the place. As in the consecration ritual, the binary principles of pure and impure become equated with the cosmological powers of God and Satan. As purity emanates from God, so impurity originates from Satan. But in the prayers said to reconcile the church another layer of this intricate matter of purity is revealed: the capacity of humankind. Misbehaviour was an expression of the wrong cast of mind. It was deeply troublesome, because it opened a gap for Satan, who should have been cast out of church for good by the initial ritual of consecration. The main danger entailed in contaminating the church evidently is inviting Satan to a place where he should not be. Indeed, other sources stress the idea that the church should be dedicated only to the communication between humans and God.<sup>50</sup> To maintain the crucial bond with God, it was critical that illicit forces did not creep in and corrupt what had been purified by God. Although the reconciliation of a church does not place corruption within the tangible, purity and impurity appear as irrefutable proof of the equally invisible cosmological forces. The ritual imagines purity and impurity as symbols of divine and demonic power operating in the world; hence it imagines the cosmic struggle to encompass the material world.

The text goes still further by depicting the incarnation of Christ as the moment in which the physical world was purged of sin, thus linking the whole theme of purity and impurity to the advent of Christ. This adds another dimension to the text: it clearly refers to the scheme of salvation history. In this perspective impurity is equated with sin, which again leads humanity

49 RGP L 6, p. 183: *Deum indultorem criminum, Deum sordium mundatorem, Deum qui concretum peccatis originalibus mundum adventus sui nitore purificavit, fratres karissimi, suppliciter deprecemur, ut contra diaboli furentis insidias fortis nobis propugnator assistat, ut si quid eius virosa calliditate cotidianis infectationibus maculatum in isto loco invenitur atque corruptum, efficiatur caelesti miseratione purgatum [...]*. The translation is based on Rivard, *Blessing the world*, 117.

50 Reginonis Prumiensis, *Libri duo de synodalibus causis*, I, c. 59, p. 66. See for another example Theodulf von Orléans, *Erstes Kapitular*, c. x (MGH Capitula Episcoporum I, p. 110).

into a condition from which they had been delivered through the coming of Christ. By combining soteriologic references and an allegorical reading, the act of pollution is imagined as being part of the tie which humankind had with the cosmological forces of good and evil. Parallel to being a divine characteristic, purity is visualized as the soul's state of perfection. Pollution, on the other hand, followed if someone gave in to the lure of Satan. Purity and impurity are therefore understood as ethical categories. If we can understand pollution as a phenomenon of sin, then the idea of affinity between material and spiritual purity is at its core.

There is another issue related to the conception of purity and its incorporation in the theological framework elaborated so far: sin is not conceived as a personal misdeed. Rather, it caused a stain on the whole church congregation.<sup>51</sup> Thus, the rite was not named a re-consecration of the church but reconciliation, which in itself classifies the ritual not as an attempt to sanctify but speaks of its appeasing quality. The ritual of reconciliation tries to heal not so much a material impression but the rift between humankind and God. The disturbance of the balance between man and God could only be restored by prayer, and that is precisely what was enacted in the ritual.<sup>52</sup> The prayers of reconciliation show that techniques of allegorical exegesis converged to create a powerful discourse on purity. The rite of reconciliation effectively blurred the lines between the material world, spiritual reconciliation and transcendent forces.

While normative and liturgical conventions concerning the church building developed from the middle of the eighth century and were firmly in place around 800, exegesis evolved mainly in the first half of the ninth century.<sup>53</sup> In exegesis, the already existing dense network of related meanings and ideas was finally incorporated in an abstract theological framework. Where normative sources leaned towards material purity and liturgy developed a complex construction of interrelated ideas on purity, exegetical sources usually state quite decisively that the place of cult had virtually no material importance.<sup>54</sup> No wonder that some took to highlighting the fact that the place of cult itself has no salvific power. This position is outlined, for example, by Walahfrid Strabo

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51 This becomes obvious in a reconciliatory prayer in which the congregation beseeches God that he may gracefully accept it as innocent. See RGP L 7, p. 184.

52 For the subject of prayer see RGP L 7, p. 184.

53 On the increase of exegetical works see Contreni, "Carolingian Biblical Culture", 7–10.

54 For this notion see Iogna-Prat, "Lieu de culte"; Iogna-Prat, *La maison Dieu*, 284–308; Lauwers, "De l'Église primitive".

in his book on the history of the liturgy.<sup>55</sup> In his assessments dealing with the place of cult he stresses the necessity of inner spirituality over the outer appearance of things. Instructively he writes under the heading *Who profits from the liturgy and who does not*:

Now surely we should know that the cult of temples and of holy office are accepted by God the Creator of all men, if the hearts of men—for whose sake he permits or commands these rituals to be presented to him—are worthy of God's habitation. For in vain do they polish wood and stones who do not put their morals in order; in vain they do collect gifts and money who do not appease inwardly the eye of divine perceptions. (. . .) Indeed, holy places do not benefit those who abandon sanctity, just as wild places are not harmful to those who are protected by the Lord's grace.<sup>56</sup>

Walahfrid Strabo thus maintained that holy places were potentially beneficial, but he also concluded that it was not the virtue of place that had a beneficial effect. To him it was ultimately the hearts of men which played a decisive role in the success of the ritual. He clearly thought that rituals were an effective way to evoke a response from divine power. But he notably suggests that it is not a specific ritual in a specific space which God graced, but rather that grace was elicited by the ethical disposition of those who performed the ritual.

### Conclusion

The present short sketch was a proposal to re-think Angenendt's idea of medieval religion as a formulaic as well as ritualistic one and Staubach's refutation of this interpretation in favour of a more spiritual interpretation. On the basis

55 For Walahfrid Strabo's idea of the church building as site of Christian worship see Iogna-Prat, "Lieu de culte", 236–240; Iogna-Prat, *La maison Dieu*, 301–308.

56 Walahfrid Strabo's *Libellus de exordiis*, ed. and transl. Harting-Correa, c. 13, p. 90: *Quibus prosit divinus cultus et quibus non. 13. Sciendum sane ita demum templorum et officiorum sacrorum Deo universorum creatori cultus esse acceptos, si hominum pectora, quorum causa haec sibi exhiberi permittit vel iubet, ipsius inhabitatione fuerint digna. In vanum enim lingua et lapides poliunt, qui mores non componunt; frustra dona et pecunias comportant, qui interius divinae subtilitatis oculum non placant. Neque vero sacra loca illis posunt, qui sanctitatem proiciunt, sicut nec loca horrida obsunt his, qui Domini gratia proteguntur.* Translation based on Alice L. Harting-Correa's. See Walahfrid Strabo's *Libellus de exordiis*, c. 13, p. 91.

of a wide range of sources, it was found that each source had its own perspectives and concerns. Far from conveying a monolithic idea of purity, different messages about the concept of purity and impurity and their relevance to the cult were proposed. Indeed, purity was conceived in the early Middle Ages in a rich and multifaceted way. The normative material focused on behaviour perceived as impure. Its prescriptive nature often did not allow it to elaborate the finer theological points, although it is to be suspected that did heavily rest on the latter. The liturgical source aimed at the reconciliation of a church on the other hand highlighted the fact that even if pure and impure were observable external categories, they always pertained to a wider theological and spiritual framework. Walahfrid's explanations of the liturgy contain a clear-cut refutation of the relevance of material cult. He stressed the importance of ethical purity to underpin the notion that it was not material purity but rather ethical purity that was of central importance to the cult. Hence, one has to be very wary of reading one type of source material as encompassing all religious ideas. To gain a sharper insight into the significance and the dynamics of the conception of material and ethical purity, it is critical to emphasize that without contextualizing the material and collating it with the theological thought, the picture becomes distorted. Even when looking at a single genre of sources, all facets of religious ideas may become apparent; they are not limited to a single aspect. So where we began with material purity, we have ended with a tableau in which physical purity as the exterior, visible expression of sin was deeply intertwined with spiritual purity. There is no denying the fundamental role of material purity in early medieval piety, but as material purity impinged on the ideas of ethical purity, it was a state full of spiritual meaning.

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## Some Brief Notes on Purity in Chinese Daoism

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First, the focus of consideration in this volume is not purity or purification, but “discourses of purity.” Although it is purity that is under scrutiny, we are thus committed not to decide on a systematic pre-distinction on our own account beforehand, but to consider discourses, meanings, and notional frameworks of purity that already exist in the various epochs of certain cultures.

Second, we have been directed to search for discourses “of purity” and not “on purity.” Did the organizers of this symposium intend some kind of purity to be speaking itself when a discourse develops? A “discourse of purity” is itself a “pure discourse”, while a “discourse on purity” only takes purity in whatever sense as its theme or topic without suggesting that those who are speaking are themselves pure in the very sense of purity under their discussion.

The wording of the topic presented to us thus immediately suggests a primary question, namely, whether it will be necessary for those conducting certain discourses among each other to be themselves in some way pure, or to have purified themselves in order to be able to or to be allowed to engage in the discourse, or whether the discourse itself is the matter through which purification of the discourses may take place or purity impersonate in the discourses. In any of these cases participants need to have affirmed a common measure of what they think will purify them, because what they do is subjected to one and the same commonality between them as an integrated circle of speakers and listeners. So, for us, we cannot avoid examination of our consciences as to the sense in which our academic discourse accords itself to measures of purity of its own. If no such thing exists, then we are guilty of having claimed a right and privilege for ourselves without asking others or apologizing to them for talking about kinds of purity without feeling any necessity to be purified ourselves in their sense and without hoping to become collectively or individually purified by advancing our academic discussion.

In China, an eminent strand of thought, poetry and prose of just such character emerged when certain literary, poetic, and philosophical circles engaged in highly cultivated talk called *qingtan* 清談, “pure conversation,” during the period of the Three Kingdoms (Wei, 220–265; Wu, 222–280; Shu, 221–264). *Qingtan* does not mean “discourses on purity,” but “pure” or “purifying

discourses,” or, if you like, “discourses of purity.” It was some kind of purity itself that reigned when they talked and listened to each other.

*Qingtán* in its foremost meaning is to be understood as a “discussion of the pure” in the sense of a “discussion led by the pure.” As Robert Hendricks has put it, “the root meaning is ‘a discussion by the pure,’ ‘the pure’ being men who kept themselves undefiled by staying out of political affairs.”<sup>1</sup> “Political” is probably not an adequate term to decipher what it was that would—in their minds—have defiled these men. Their agenda was to keep away from all affairs of power and from engagement in government and subjugation, from ministerial office, administration, and the military sphere, because all of this would unavoidably besmirch their purity or integrity. It is ironic that several of the *qingtan* adepts nevertheless and against their own rules joined military coalitions, or occupied powerful administrative positions, or, after having been defeated in debate crushed their adversaries for some other reason by imposing the death penalty on them and having them executed at a young age. Reaching an age well over a hundred years should have been one of the natural results of their life-long exercise of purification. This was, for instance, the case with Zhong Hui 鍾會 who had his famous adversary Xi Kang executed at the age of 39. Xi Kang was one of the most brilliant Chinese poets and is still highly esteemed for his work up to this day.

Since what these circles “discussed” was primarily their renewed reading and study of the books *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, at the same time turning their backs on the inferior teachings of Kongzi [Confucius], it is the teaching of these two canons that is also the general measure of “purity” in the “discussion of the pure.” And it is, by extension, also the way, the style, and the rhetorical character of exegesis of these books that made their exegetical discussions “pure.” It is an often witty, lofty, anarchical, free-roaming, playful and delightful way of deliberation, argument, and counter-argument, in which different parties or a host and his guests engaged, often regaled with fine wine or tea and the playing of music, especially the zither *qin*. As Hendricks writes, “men of these times are known for their wild, unrestrained, unseemly behaviour, what the Chinese call *fan li-fa* 反禮法, ‘anti-ritual and law.’”<sup>2</sup> The stylistic type of *qingtan* required the presentation of a marked-out thesis, a refutation of it and a well-conducted rebuttal of the opponent. As Hendricks also remarks, Chinese historiographers have often criticized these gatherings and their intellectual tendencies because they had willfully “turned their backs on their responsibility to society,”<sup>3</sup> which

1 Hendricks, *Philosophy and Argumentation*, 3.

2 Hendricks, *Philosophy and Argumentation*, 6.

3 Hendricks, *Philosophy and Argumentation*, 4.

means that those historiographers took it for granted that such a responsibility simply existed without further discussion—a hard-headed assertion, which in a *qingtan* gathering could have become the topic of a thesis, its refutation and rebuttal. Especially the teachings of the *Zhuangzi* could have been used here in the course of the argument. The *qingtan* strand of thought and argument produced a new kind of “tract,” or “essay,” for which names like those of Xi Kang and Zhong Hui, Xiang Xiu, Zhang Miao, Ruan Kan 阮侃, Ruan Ji 阮藉 (210–263) and Shan Tao 山濤 (205–283) stand foremost among many. The famous “Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove” (*zhulin qixian* 竹林七賢: Xi Kang, Ruan Ji, Shan Tao, Xiang Xiu 向秀, Wang Rong 王戎, Ruan Xian 阮咸, and Liu Ling 劉伶) were all dyed-in-the-wool “pure talk” adherents.

According to the insight that *what* these circles discussed is also *what*—to them—purity was all about, it is possible to detect the range of that purity along the core words in the theses of their essays—I choose those of Xi Kang here for the sake of example: nourishment and preservation of life, the freedom from grief and joy of music—which, incidentally, indicates how very important music is for purification—, self-interest dispelled, unfolding the virtues of wisdom and courage, delight in learning, and independence of the comforts of a fortunate dwelling place or house. The catalogue of essays by Xi Kang reads very much like a programmatic array of purity in the sense of 3rd century *qingtan*. By living one’s life along these tracks, original purity cannot so much be artificially reached but from innate heritage be preserved and developed by reasoning and witty debate.

Xi Kang’s essayistic work can therefore indeed be seen as the discourse of a person striving for a preliminary purification of himself and others by way of discoursing on these very topics. This means that the devoted effort to discourse on things developing purity is itself also an action of purification of oneself and others. A discourse on what constitutes purity thereby itself becomes one of the core matters of purification. The way of discussion that emerged in this epochal air is the “material” medium of purification of those who were engaging in it.

While, to my knowledge, no *qingtan* essay survives that makes discourse as a purifying act in itself the topic of a discourse, a presentation of the inclusion and exclusion question has been implanted in certain discussions. An anecdote in the *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 (*A New Account of Tales of the World*) may serve as an example, which I shall not explain further here:

When Chung Hui once paid a visit to Hsi K’ang, Hsi K’ang refused to show him the proper welcoming respects and continued to work at his forge. Chung Hui, rightly offended, went to leave, at which point Hsi K’ang

asked, 'What did you hear that made you come, and what have you seen that makes you leave?' To which Chung Hui replied, 'It's because of what I heard that I came and because of what I've seen that I'm leaving.'<sup>4</sup>

It is this same Zhong Hui who later, by virtue of his office, had Xi Kang imprisoned and executed for alleged collaboration with a person who had, in an act of rude denunciation, been accused of "unfilial conduct," namely for having beaten his own mother. That person was executed together with Xi Kang. Seen from the angle that such stories were possible, we might easily wonder whether that accusation and execution did in fact purify filial relations in the world or whether the pure person who had enforced execution of a fellow pure person in the most unjust way was not himself a glorious example of an insidious character whose plots and intrigues Xi Kang should have better had on his accounts.

*Qingtan* circles did not have *their own regulations* or *statutes*, and no such thing as a *vow* or *initiation* existed, as might have been expected, binding them to what they subsumed under the measure of "purity." Although they had a close affinity to the formation of early priestly and revelational Daoism, their purity had no clear sacred, liturgical, or ritual character.

In the same tradition that led to organized forms of Daoism in the 2nd and 3rd centuries and that also helped foster *qingtan*, there is, already in the 4th century B.C., a scholarly current with "purity discourses" at its centre under the title of *neiyè* 内業, "inner exercise," *xinshu* 心術, "arts of the heart," or *boxin* 白心, "whitening the heart." Tracts under these titles can still be found in a large anthology of scholarly material, namely in the book *Guanzi* 管子, which must have been a canonical curriculum at the Jixia academy of the state of Qi in north-east China. During the Western Han these "arts" were counted among the Huang Lao teachings, the "teachings of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi." Among these tracts is one called "Shui di 水地," "Watering the Earth," which in my opinion belongs, together with "Neiye," to the oldest strata of this textual faction. We find here the roots of the idea that *jing* 精, "the most refined," or "*jingqi* 精氣," "the most refined vital breath," which later becomes most prominent in Daoism, is at work in a self-regulatory way when it is observed that muddied and differently coloured rivers, which are also responsible for the ethnic characters of peoples living on their shores, and rivers that carry with them the germs of certain diseases, are eventually washed out and cleared at their

4 Translated by Mather, *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü*, 393; see Hendricks, *Philosophy and Argumentation*, 3 f., n. 1.

mouths, or when those waters flow into the sea, they are soaked up into heaven and rain down again, transformed, clean and purified. A similar thing happens in the physical body of a ruler of men, who is therefore requested by these tracts to exercise his inner *jing*, or *jingqi*, in order to make sure, for the welfare of his people, that he and his own bodily self reigns. His capacity to reign is analogous to the passage of the rivers and streams that water the earth. Governance is seen here as an act of cleansing, just as water and rain are elemental passage-makers of purification for the welfare of the spirit, character, and health of the people of a certain country. Water runs through the soils that have the character of spirits and demons and carry the homelands of spirits and demons, just as blood runs through the arteries and veins. The peoples' own lives are parts of the larger body of those particular waters and earth that form the ethnic idiosyncrasies of each people and their common characteristics, and those bodies will either fall ill or be in a healthy state according to the knowledge about the purifying power of the "heart," which is not only the centre of the body, but also the ruler and "shepherd" of a community of living beings.

Let me now take one step beyond such discourses of purity in early times and ponder for a moment on a substratum of these that is present in the simple fact that the ancient Chinese language and its vocabularies itself is already rich with hundreds, if not thousands of "discourses of purity," that subcutaneously provides and supplies more specified discourses with its own linguistic waters. First, we need to acknowledge that the semantic fields of what is called "purity" in English, "Reinheit" in German, *qing* 清 and its nominal extensions in Chinese, are highly ambiguous and in no way homogeneous in the concert of world languages. For instance, the Chinese word *qingjing* 清静 is tightly interwoven with meanings relating to silence; also to clearness, brightness, lucidity, and transparency; and finally to correctness, accuracy, and compensation. It is strongly cleansing and purifying to keep silent and listen, to refrain from action of any kind as often as possible (acting, by the way, is generally among those things that are regarded as filthy and foul in both Daoist and Buddhist transmissions), to spend time in the woods, mountains, or wilderness, or in the case of the ruler: to be entirely unrecognizable among the masses and among one's peers. As this is already present in the most basic sense of the word *qingjing*, silence, at the ground of listening, is inherently conducive to purification. In this basic sense, not even any means or medium is requested by which to purify or cleanse, as are water or fire or a broom (sometimes called the *jingjun* 净君 in literary Chinese, "the cleaning lord"); it is just the unmediated intensification of an exercise of extinction to the benefit of a shrewd, sharp, awakened and yet entirely distressed, modest, soft, and peaceful vigilance.

There is also the word *qīngjìng* 清淨, basically meaning purity by way of seclusion”, where the second character is not written with the sound-marker “*qīng* 青,” but either with the radical designating water or that designating ice and things frozen; also, by metaphorical extension, of loneliness and staying alone; and finally the net state of things.

Another candidate to be translated in the realm of “purity” is the transitive verb *jìng* 淨. What is it that can be cleaned or cleansed in the sense of that verb? There are, just to name a few:

- a) the mouth (to be rinsed especially when preparing for uttering worship),
- b) the hands,
- c) the body (which sometimes means, especially in the case of males, an act of sexual chastity, a habit of unembarrassedness, or one of destitution);
- d) a piece of soil (making of it a monastic space to convene monks or nuns),
- e) a marked region (making of it a ritual area) or,
- f) a city (e.g., making of it a place where a Buddha stays)!

The word *qīng* 清 is most often used as an adjective or an adverb, qualifying something that is semantically already near to what this qualifier itself means. Examples are

- g) a certain seculum, a “world” (*shì* 世) or period of time (*shí* 時),
- h) tuned sounds of voices singing together, antiphonically, or in counter chanting, making for the *clearness* of the tones,
- i) voices of amateurs singing, meaning to not yet master and fill the big volumes of space, singing in a modest, restrained way, or quietly,
- j) sober and respectable persons of rank, ennobling them and giving them an appearance of honesty, or officials for being spotlessly incorrupt,
- k) a gaze afar (*qīngwàng* 清望), said of those of nobility who are looked up to either as being “clearly and lucidly” risen above or with a “pure,” i.e. *humble* eye, capable of serving and of being a servant, even as a slave;
- l) the morning (meaning the very early morning, dawn),
- m) the night (making it still),
- n) a woman (showing that she is handsome),
- o) the heart—in interpretation of which much has to be said, which I avoid doing here,
- p) “plucking” (*bá* 拔), as of string instruments, i.e. refining rhythm and style in the writing and performance of literature,
- q) light; at the Qingming festival the grave rite shines pure light in such a sense so that through it the spirits of the dead are in communion;



- r) the moon;
- s) the *qi* 氣, also often simply meant to be the air, providing sceneries of strong colour and deeply washed-out contours of wide landscapes, and also providing a healthy, pervious, and permeable state of the body and mind;
- t) water, in the sense of something being unadulterated, as for instance goods for trade or consumption;
- u) oil (as e.g. used in the kitchen or nowadays in engines), saying that no sediments, grains, granulate, or sabuline swim in it and so does not destroy the organism, but lubricates it well; and also wine, meaning that it is of superior (and excellent) quality;
- v) soup, meaning that it is not fattened or thickened, but just water-based;
- w) truth: to this day Chinese muslims still use the word *qingzhen* for Allah, “The Pure True One”, as did the jews in China, e.g. when they founded their synagogue at the Song capital of Kaifeng and called it Qingzhensi, the “Temple of the Pure True One.”

I shall stop citing examples here and just point to the fact that a quick perusal of a good dictionary of literary Chinese containing source indexes for each of its entries would provide us with an extremely wide range of subterranean discourses of purity, “subterranean” in the sense that they nourish more specific and more stratified discourses than, for example, those in the *xinshu*, *neiye*, or *qingtan* atmospheres, in the same way as they do in highly ritualized and specialized forms of Daoism and Buddhism. I would therefore like to conclude my remarks with some brief and, of course, rather incomplete considerations on Daoist purification rituals. Please keep in mind that what I call a “ritual” is always a *text*, a *book*, and therefore carries traces of discourse, while a “rite” is the way in which the ritual is correctly performed by a priest.

Even a first and superficial glance makes it clear that purifying, purification and actions or things that are considered pure play a decisive role in virtually all Chinese religions. The most influential tradition of the teaching of the Buddha, having the strongest impact on all strands of East Asian Buddhism, already carries the title *jìngtǔ fójiao* 净土佛教, “Pure Land Buddhism,” itself. And one of the strongest, most impressive, and original forms of Chinese Daoism is known under the title *shàngqīng* 上清 Daoism, “Daoism of Supreme Purity.” It had its origin in revelations given to a certain Yang Xi 楊羲 and Xu Mi 許謐 on the hill of Máoshān 茅山 in Southern China between 367 and 370. I should like to stress that all purity discourses in the Maoshan tradition have their innermost *telos* in acts of revelation. The purport of all ritual purification here lies in its revelational character. It prepares and it stimulates a revelation, and it has

its substance, sense, and meaning therein. I should like to uphold this thesis, although it is true that in later epochs of its history its visional character may have been widely sublimated and become less obvious or even absent in ritual frameworks.

Washing something off does away with something. But at the same time, it does away with something in order to open up access to something lying hidden and secret in the blinding power and in the shackles of everyday filth and defilement, access that only becomes possible through that act of dismantling, discharging, or removing (as is, for instance, the case with the Tathāgataharba doctrine of Sui and Tang dynasty Buddhism in China). The intrinsic nature of purification would, according to this thesis, not be a simple removal or exclusion, and the salient point is certainly not that it is primarily a social event. Rather, it would be in the fact that it opens up and develops healing from all kinds of suffering and disease that may (from case to case) also have their origins in certain societal preconditions. Mythical and visionary voyages of adepts are revelations in rites that often cannot be seen or heard by the assembled public, although that revelation opening up during the rite heals them all, both the living and the dead.

It has been made my task here to talk about “physical” or “material” purity in China between 300 and 1600. It has been extremely difficult for me to keep in line with such a preconception as “material” or “physical,” since I am of the opinion that there is no discourse of purity in China being pursued along such terms. Nevertheless, the famous researcher of Daoism, Isabelle Robinet, endeavoured to describe something like this when she explained an exercise of inner time regulation of visualizations according to the gauge of the outer circuit of stellar constellations in a rite that a Daoist adept conducts on the basis of the canon *Huangqi yangjing jing* 黃氣陽精經 (*The Canon of the Yellow Breath and the yang Semen*). She writes:

There is an outer, physical, and historical world which is measured by the course of the seasons and is marked by the ‘eight times’ (*pa-chieh* 八節). There is also a symbolic world, or world of the active imagination, wherein the four poles become animated and the astral bodies pass by them at each of their stations. There is finally the adept’s inner, or microcosmic, world which accompanies the stars on their circuit and is both symbolic and material in nature.<sup>5</sup>

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5 Robinet, *Taoist Meditation*, 198.

Two notions given in the title of our symposium also appear in this Europeanizing explanation, namely “physical” and “material,” while the third, “symbolic,” is missing. In the “symbolic” world, or world of the active imagination, the four poles become animated and the astral bodies pass them by at each of their stations. By “physical” Robinet means an “outer world” that is measured by the seasons and marked out by eight nodes of time. As Robinet understands it, the “physical” world is at the same time the “historical” world, because it is subjected to “outer time” and, together with it, is macrocosmically “great-worldly.”

In Robinet’s explanation “material” is the exact opposite of this. The “physical” world is not the “material” one, and the “material” one can explicitly not be called “physical.” A “material” world only exists in the inner body of the adept. It accompanies the “physical”, i.e. the “immaterial” one that is ruled by the stars, the constellations and the nodes of the great cosmos.

Precisely in this, in the texture of the accompaniment of the “physical” great-world by the “material” micro-world of the body, purification has to take place and is necessary. That accompaniment would fail and the vision of the inner world of the Daoist body would be wrecked if the adept were to remain unpurified in this exercise. To put it more precisely, purification is one of the progressive episodes of vision, i.e., purification is not only a prerogative in the inner world of the person who is doing the exercise, it is at the same time a measure of the great-world that is contained in the circuits of the stars and their constellations. In order to let purification happen “materially,” it has to happen as an accompaniment of a purification that is already there “physically.” That it is already there “physically,” means that it happens in the sky and on earth even if no adept or priest was present to conduct such an exercise. The trait of the seasons that is created by three kinds of heavenly luminaries, namely the sun, the moon, and the stars, is already in itself a phenomenon of purification that would also happen if man did not exist. This is what Robinet calls “physical.” It would only become “material” when an adept allows it to accomplish its task in the inner world of his body, which means that he has to execute something according to a ritual means, namely a scripture prescribing the correct sequence of priestly actions.

Besides that, there is mediation between the two. From it we learn in which way the accompaniment happens. It happens by way of “active imagination,” or “visualization,” Chin.: *guān* 觀.

What is called “active imagination” here is in my opinion nothing other than what we know from the ancient Greek tradition as “myth,” which is the “action” of a rite. The myth, or the action that is made acutely present by the rite, is in some of its most basic elements already present in certain texts of the early

Han, like the *Huainanzi* 淮南子, the *Shanhaijing* 山海經 (*The Canon of Hills and Seas*), the *Shiji* 史記 (*The Records of the Court-Scribe*), to name just a few. The mother of the ten suns and the mother of the moon wash their children in the pond of the rising sun. In spring the sun purifies the *hún* 魂 breaths or clouds in the “Golden Gate,” and in summer it immerses its rays in the “Court of Fluid Fire.” When the moon passes across the “Eastern Well,” it acts in the very same way. And the adept also acts bodily in this way. He or she “accompanies,” as Robinet puts it, the events of purification of the suns and the moon on his own flesh and bones. He or she bathes in both locations, the “Golden Gate” and the “Court of Fluid Fire.” To do this, he uses water that has been consecrated by exposing it to the rays of the sun and the moon. In this way, it is the sun and the moon itself that wash and purify his body. There are two means of purification here: water and fire, and both have their place in the rite.

The “material” of purification does not consist in the fact that the adept spills water over his head, because if this was true he would also have to enter a burning fire, which would only kill him. Instead, it consists in his visualization of those locations and their water and fire. Red fire puts him in flames in his vision, as says a long list of rituals (like the *Sulingjing* 素靈經 [*The Canon of the Plain Spirit*], the *Dengzhen yinjue* 登真陰訣 [*Secret Instructions for the Ascent as a zhenren*], the *Wushang biyao* 無上必要 [*The Essence of the Supreme Secrets*], and the *Duren jing dafa* 度人經大法 [*The Great Ritual for the Canon of Saving Men*]). While visualizing, the adept would uninterruptedly do callings and invocations, at times using a murmuring and soft voice that is not directed towards human ears, using formula that are transmitted in his rituals (= ritual texts), sometimes in the form of talismanic sounds that do not transport anything semantically and are not understandable to a human being. The visualizing act also goes together with chanting and singing, the whole complex is of high musical intensity. That part of the rite that is open, institutionalized, and accessible to human sight corresponds to Robinet’s “physical world,” that so far can also be recognized as a social one, while the *action* of purification on the body and on the inside of the adept realizes *purification* itself. So, just by doing something in a rite, the adept cleans and purifies something in the public, sensual, social, institutional, historical, and governmental sphere—and vice versa: the public, sensual, social, institutional, historical, and governmental sphere is nothing else here but a ritualized world, which means that it is mythical, because it is a kind of action being made acutely present by a rite and being a form of “active visualization.” We need to understand that this discourse does not operate with any idea of technical or mechanical cause-and-effect, just as if a rite was a determining cause of purification as an effect of it to the benefit of the whole of society. Instead, it operates with what Robinet

has called “accompaniment” and what the book *Huainanzi* in China itself has called *gǎnyīng* 感應, “excitement and correspondence,” or “answer”.

Every exercise of purification starts by instituting a field or space for the rite, the *dàochǎng* 道場, the “place on the way,” by inhalations and exhalations and circles of controlled breathing, following scripturally transmitted rules. Already during the inhalations and exhalations preparing for the visualizations the rite is filled with incantations and the playing of music. Music is just as important as the opening up of the inner imagination sphere. In the *Qingyao zishu* 青要紫書 (*The Purple Scripture of the Blue Essence*) there is a variant of actions by which such a rite starts:

Proceed by making ablutions, by observing a strict fast, and by washing all ritual garments. At dawn enter the [meditation] chamber and with pure water (into which one has put) the talisman *Nei-kuan k'ai-ming* (a charm for ‘opening to the light and interior vision’; a drawing of it follows the text), turn toward the East, wash the eyes and rinse both the mouth and belly so that the inside and outside are both pure. Neither the mouth nor the belly should keep any remains of nourishment or strong foods; and the eyes should not have any traces of visions nor the body any impure remains.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Schipper-Index, *fasc.* 1026–27, here *fasc.* 1026, part 1, page 4a; Robinet, *Taoist Meditation*, 39.

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# An Almost Tangible Presence: Some Thoughts on Material Purity among Medieval European Jews

*Ephraim Shoham-Steiner*

## 1 Introduction

Material purity and bodily purity were considered prime imperatives in ancient Israelite culture. As early as the biblical teachings in the book of Leviticus we hear of the central importance of material purity to the priestly cult as well as some aspects of material purity that had to be maintained by the larger body of the Hebrew populace. The belief in the immanent presence of the almighty within the Israelite camp in the tabernacle sanctuary and later in the Jerusalem shrine translated into an elaborate set of rules, regulations and dicta that were probably enforced and practiced during the First Temple period (1000–586 B.C.E.) and certainly so in the Second Temple period (500 B.C.E.–70 C.E.). Textual as well as archaeological evidence, especially from the fourth century B.C.E. and well into the first century C.E. confirm the importance of material purity in this culture.<sup>1</sup>

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1 I will not survey in this short article the very elaborate legacy of the concepts of purity and impurity in the Jewish tradition. For some introductory notes on the earlier concepts of ritual purity in biblical and rabbinic Judaism see H. Liss, “Patterns of Intensification” in this volume. It is my feeling that Prof. Liss’s article and my own complement one another and read together may provide a nuanced and deeper picture of the notions of material purity in medieval Ashkenaz. On the evolution of the Levitical concepts from the biblical period to the second temple period see Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*. To date the best survey on these matters of material purity is Vered Noam’s recent book in Hebrew: Noam, *From Qumran to the Rabbinic Revolution*. Some of the arguments made in the book may be found in: Noam, “Ritual Impurity”. Earlier works on material purity in Jewish heritage that are worth mentioning here are: Alon, “The Bounds of the Laws”. In this article Alon argued the expansion of material purity from the realm of the Jerusalem temple to the public arena. On this matter and its reflection in the gospels see Furstenberg, “Defilement Penetrating the Body”. As for the wide spread implementation of the material purity laws see Sanders, *Jewish Law*. One of the chapters in the book is dedicated to “Did the Pharisees eat their ordinary food in Purity”. See also the works of Joseph M. Baumgarten on material purity in the writings from Qumran: Baumgarten, “The Essene Avoidance of Oil”; Baumgarten, “The Pharisaic-Sadducean Controversies”; Baumgarten, “The Use of ‘*mei nidda*’”. On the different concepts of purity

The priestly cultic elite were noticeably the social strata most concerned with these matters. The abundance of *Mikvaot* (Jewish ritual baths) as well as stone vessels and food utensils all found in the 1970's excavations in Jerusalem's 'western hill' (underneath the contemporary *Jewish Quarter* in Jerusalem's Old City) serves as material proof of this statement. Unlike ceramic utensils that, according to biblical and rabbinic purity laws, "receive" impurity but due to the nature of the material they are made of cannot be cleansed from it and should thus be broken, stone vessels can be reused after a quick wash and rinse in the purifying water of a ritual bath or a natural spring.<sup>2</sup>

The laws of ritual and material purity transcended priestly circles. As findings from Qumran corroborated by textual evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls indicate, material purity loomed large over the practices of the sect that resided in the Judean desert. It was also in larger circles of the adherents of the rabbinic concepts of Judaism that material purity was a very powerful concept. For example, the manipulation of scrolls containing references to holy scripture as well as breaking bread together were two subjects in early rabbinic culture that were governed by strict observance of material purity laws resembling those of the priestly cult.

The preoccupation with material purity did however suffer a severe blow in the aftermath of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 A.D. The subsequent 'fall from grace' of the priestly cult saw a gradual disappearance of this agenda. Rabbinic circles maintained certain aspects of these cultic rituals, but by and large many of the material purity requirements gradually disappeared. With the absence of the temple many of these rites and practices along with the justification for material and bodily purity were cast into the realm of theory.

Post-destruction Jewish rabbinical culture, from the second century on, was left to wrestle with what at times seemed to have become an almost textual burden, namely the need to read, interpret and contemporaneously contextualize a relatively large body of sacred Jewish texts that discussed material

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and impurity and the socio-anthropological role of the language of purity in Jewish second temple discourse see Klawans, *Purity and Sin*. Matters of purity have a great impact on the cradle of the Christian faith and practice. On this topic see Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*. I wish to thank my friend Dr. Yair Furstenberg for referring me to the relevant bibliography on this vast and important issue.

- 2 This Jerusalem neighbourhood known as the 'upper city' was primarily inhabited by priests of the highest social and economic echelons of late second temple period society. Their dwellings were excavated by the late Nachman Avigad between 1969–1982 and the final report was published recently see: Geva, *Jewish Quarter excavations*.



purity, which in effect had lost most of its actual relevance. One realm that retained its ritual importance was that of female physical purity and the observation of the laws of *Nidda*. In this realm purity and impurity were closely associated with the fear of contamination by natural as well as supernatural disease, illness and danger. As anthropologist Mary Douglas has shown, bodily fluids in general and menstruating woman in particular were thought in many cultures to harbour danger. Women were therefore exposed to a series of regulations distancing them from the community while they were menstruating and a series of ceremonial rites were designed for their reintegration.<sup>3</sup> These rituals related to the monthly menstruation cycle, childbirth and the post-partum period. Reintegration into communal life once this 'polluting danger' had passed depended on the proper execution of the purifying rites. In the observance of these laws European and non-European Jewries differed little; the purity laws were apparently enforced by and large in most Jewish communities in the *oikoumene*.<sup>4</sup>

## 2 The Strict Observance of the Laws of Nidda

By the high Middle Ages, Europe already had a significant body of Jewish inhabitants. Scholars like Yedidya Dinari and Israel Ta-Shma, and more recently Jeffrey Woolf and Elisheva Baumgarten, have studied the various aspects and the discourse of material purity in this cultural realm. All have correctly pointed out that unlike Jewish culture under Islam, which in most cases preferred the more spiritualized Babylonian Jewish attitude to material purity, European Jewish culture did not 'drop the ball' on these matters altogether and preferred to cling to the more ardent Palestinian tradition.<sup>5</sup> In an article published in

3 Douglas, *Purity and Danger* and see also her article "Sacred Contagion". On Douglas's concepts of purity in the bible see: Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*.

4 On *Nidda* laws and their observance after other purity laws became redundant see Biale, "Nidda: Laws of the Menstruant". See also the important volume on Jewish female purity laws and practices: Wasserfall, *Women and Water*. On the anthropological significance of the menstrual laws and the concept of *nidda* see Eilberg-Schwartz, "Menstrual Blood" in *The Savage in Judaism*, 177–194. On the debate over female menstrual material purity in late antiquity and the Jewish Christian dialogue see Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity*. A good summary of many of these works may be found in Meacham, "Female Purity (Nidda). Annotated Bibliography".

5 Dinari, "Impurity Customs"; Ta-Shma, "On Some Franco German Nidda Practices"; Koren, "The Menstruant". Koren's discussion focuses, as does her recent book, mainly on the menstruant woman in later medieval Jewish culture and in Castilian Kabala. See also: id., *Forsaken*.

1993 the late Israel Ta-Shma argued that from a rather early stage the European Ashkenazi culture had not only fervently preserved and adhered to the laws of material purity, especially in the realm of menstrual Talmudic laws, but had also added extra safeguard techniques based on ancient Palestinian customs from the second half of the first millennium. This intensification especially with regard to the laws of menstrual purity, known in Hebrew as the laws of *Nidda*, is probably the best manifestation of this pre-occupation with material purity.

Judging by the extent of written material on these aspects of purity and the physical evidence from the medieval European Jewish communities, the laws of menstrual purity were observed and considered of high importance. It is only in the medieval European Jewish realm that we find the acceptance of an entire pseudo-Talmudic tractate known as *Berayta de Nidda*. This text was considered an authoritative and valid text in medieval European Jewish circles and was used as a source for daily conduct. Compiled in early medieval Palestine, it gained popularity and was copied and quoted by medieval European Jews as part of their customs system in the early stages of their settlement north of the Alps. *Baraita de Nidda*, studied recently by Evyatar Marienberg, exemplifies the Palestinian Jewish preoccupation with material purity well into the post-destruction era. It represents a harsher and more rigid observance of material purity laws and it was highly influential on medieval European Jewish behaviour.<sup>6</sup> It is only much later, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, that we find first attempts to critique and curb the notions put forth in this text. Interestingly, as a reaction to the restrictive attempts, a counter measure was employed by pietistic theological and social circles in an attempt to relentlessly defend the strict observance of the meta-legal set of customs. It may well be that by this time the adherence to these customs had become so intrinsic and distinctive to the Ashkenazi practice that it had transformed from a regular custom to a marker of regional identity, even beyond its role as a hallmark of religious adherence. This may also have to do with the extreme reverence Ashkenazi legal culture assigned to the role of a commonly practiced custom (in Hebrew *minhag*).<sup>7</sup>

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6 Marienberg, *Nidda*. In his book Marienberg examines several subjects that are mentioned in the *Baraita de Nidda*, as well as other sources, in an attempt to understand the reception and the development of these ideas in the Jewish Ashkenazi world, from medieval times and, in certain cases, until the present day. Jewish sources are compared with the contemporaneous Christian sources discussing the theological reasons given by Jewish and Christian authors in their attempt to explain the existence of menstruation as well as the justifications put forth for abstention from sexual relations during menstruation.

7 On this issue see Soloveitchik, "On Yishaq (Erik) Zimer Olam ke-Minhago Noheg".

The extra emphasis on material purity laws found in the earlier sources, although at times critiqued by some circles as an extreme pietistic streak, didn't prevent Jewish communities all over Europe from practicing laws of menstrual purity. For the purpose of adhering to these laws communal authorities invested in building and maintaining special ritual baths known as *Mikve* (*Mikvaot* pl.). In Germany quite a number of medieval ritual baths have survived. The medieval *Mikvaot* in Speyer, Worms, Offenburg, Friedberg, Andernach, Limburg, Cologne and the most recent discovery at Erfurt (2007) are all fine examples of Jewish communal institutions testifying to such adherence to the practices of ritual material purity. *Mikvaot* have also survived in other realms of the greater Ashkenazi pale, in southern Europe, as far east as Vienna, as north west as England (London and Bristol), and as far south as the *Mikve* found in 1989 on the island of Ortigia in Syracuse, Sicily.<sup>8</sup>

The observance of this aspect of material purity, namely the laws of *nidda*, had off course its "public" aspect when a woman went to ritually bathe in a ritual bath but it was also practiced in the private realm of the home. In an attempt to regulate behaviour in this private realm in accordance with the laws of material purity and in an effort to preserve the sense of collective sanctity, medieval rabbis tended to associate in their writing on these matters observance of the law with the birth of healthy children. They threaten that deliberate negligence or outright disobedience of these laws even in the private realm of the home, away from the watchful eyes of others may cause possible disease or disability if the law was disobeyed. In his thirteenth century popular halakhic compendium *Or Zaruah* the author Rabbi Isaac ben Moshe of Vienna stated that a couple who disregarded the menstrual purity laws and engaged in sexual relations during the days the woman bleeds would conceive a leprous child. This idea was not his own innovation for it appears in earlier Jewish sources like the eighth century homiletic collection *Midrash Tanhuma*, however reiterating and rearticulating this notion in a 13th century halakhic legal compendium is telling.<sup>9</sup> European Christian writers were well aware of

8 On the Cologne *mikva* excavated in Germany see Seiler, "Das Judenbad". A more recent work: Schütte, "Die Juden in Köln". On the *mikve* known as "Jacob's well" in Bristol see Emanuel and Ponsford, "Jacob's Well". On another view of Jacob's well see Hillaby and Sermon, "Jacob's Well". On the Syracuse *mikva* see Mazzamuto, "Il 'miqwè' di casa Bianca" and Cassuto, "Il 'Miqweh' di Casa Bianca a Siracusa".

9 Yizhak ben Moshe of Vienna, *Or Zaruah*, The Laws of Nidda § 340 (p. 45:4) and *Midrash Tanhuma*, Leviticus Parasht Mezorah § 3 (p. 44). The notion that sexual relations during menstruation may eventually lead to the birth of an unhealthy child is also found in medieval

the Jewish preoccupation with matters of material purity, as Irwen Resnik and Sarit Shalev-Eini have correctly pointed out.

Another aspect of how powerfully material purity associated with the observance of the laws regarding menstruation resonated for European Jews is manifested in the matter of synagogue sanctity. Medieval European Jewish sources discuss admitting woman during their monthly period of menstruating and the ritually impure period of seven additional days (*Shivah nequiyim*) into the sacred space of the synagogue. The first legal authority to discuss this matter was Rabbi Shlomo ben Isaac (*Rashi*, 1040–1105). *Rashi* addressed the popular female custom of abstaining from attending the synagogue during menstruation due to impurity. He expressed his objection to the reasoning provided by the woman, yet preferred not to rebuke it altogether. While *Rashi* praised the piety of Jewish women, he maintained that it was a meta-halakhic manifestation of popular piety and not the legal prerequisite. The reason behind female abstention from entering the synagogue precinct was the Ashkenazi premise that envisioned the local synagogues as a temple of diminished sanctity (in Hebrew '*miqdash Me'at*'). As such it was concluded that many of the halakhic dicta regarding the temple should be juxtaposed upon the local synagogue. Jeffrey Woolf has convincingly shown that *Rashi* as well as later Ashkenazi legal authors that followed him, like the 12th century Eliezer ben Nathan of Mainz, the 13th century Eliezer Ben Yoel Ha'levi of Bonn and Cologne as well as Rabbi Isaac ben Moses '*Or Zarua*' of Erfurt and Vienna had stipulated that the custom was indeed a meta-legal practice based on *mos maiorum* (*minhag*) but not a legally binding requirement. Eliezer ben Yoel Ha'levi writes that the custom originates from a female sense of meta-halakhic piety. In his discussion he suggests it to be an embellishment (in Hebrew: *silsul*). Using this ambivalent term he may have meant it positively as an adornment and beautification of the standard legal requirement or pejoratively as a tasteless overdoing and exaggeration. Nevertheless it seems that by discussing the custom and not discrediting it altogether, the male authors had framed, firmly entrenched and ostensibly validated the custom and preserved it. In contemporaneous Christian sources we find a similar notion that apparently emerged from within female circles regarding attending church during menstruation. This may suggest that the avoidance of the sacred space during menstruation

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Christian sources. See Schultz, *Knowledge of Childhood*, 74. In the high middle ages and the early modern period the birth of monstrous beings was also commonly attributed to sexual relations with a menstruating woman see: Niccoli, "Menstruum Quasi Monstruum" and more recently: Nohnberg, "This Disfigured People".

was more a common feature of medieval European popular female piety than an intrinsic Jewish custom.<sup>10</sup>

### 3 Safeguarding the Purity of Scripture

Much of our discussion so far has been dedicated to one aspect of material purity, namely menstrual purity, but this was by no means the sole aspect of material purity observed by medieval European Jews. In the famous *Book of the Pious* (*Sefer Hasidim*), attributed to Rabbi Judah the Pious of Regensburg (1160?–1217) as co-author and compiler, there are a number of entries discussing material purity especially with regard to Jewish sacred texts. In the first section of the book, known also as *The Book of the Fear of God* (*Sefer Ha'yirah*) incorporated by Judah into *The Book of the Pious* but most probably authored by his father, Rabbi Samuel ben Kalonymus of Speyer, we find a concern about the contamination of sacred texts by bodily fluids like semen: “He who honors the *Holy One Blessed be He* and his commandments, the *Holy one Blessed be He* honors him! It is therefore not permitted to put *Sefarim* (holy codices) on a bed one has slept on for there is inevitably semen in the bed.” (SH Parma § 7). The reason for this dictum is that the words and teaching of God (materialized in the codices) are pure and therefore may not be exposed to impure matter like semen residue on the bed sheets or covers. This logic also prompted the author to demand that individuals learning scripture refrain from even thinking about their studies and other heavenly matters when in a state of impurity, during a visit to the toilet or while engaged in sexual intercourse. The dictum dates back to Talmudic times although, when carefully analysing the Talmudic source, it becomes apparent that it does not stipulate explicitly that one should not put a scroll or codex containing scripture on a bed, indeed evidence is rather to the contrary. Thus, such a demand in a late 12th century compilation testifies to its religious-cultural importance at least within pietistic circles in this period. An exemplum story from the same *Sefer Hasidim* reveals that these matters were of a major concern among Jewish pietists in medieval Germany. The story, that appears in § 640 of the Parma MS of *Sefer Hasidim*, serves as a point of departure to an inter-textual meta-halakhic deliberation worthy of our attention.

The story tells of two individuals who are emptying a large box containing scripture codices. One of the men chose to put a pile of books on a bed that,

10 Wood, “Doctors Dilemma”; Elliott, *Fallen Bodies*, 1–5. This may also explain the dual nature of the male response among Jewish writers ever mindful of what could be seen as external influence on the one hand and popular female piety on the other.

“a woman and man had lain in” while the other put the books on the ground. This serves as a literary device for the opening of what seems at first glance to be a halakhic dialogue but which in truth is a meta-halakhic discussion. The man who had put the books on the bed turned to his friend and reprimanded him for putting the books on the ground. He asked him to explain why he chose to treat the books disrespectfully by doing so. It should be noted that according to Talmudic law putting books on the ground not only signified disrespect for their elevated sanctity but was thought to cause physical damage to the books. The interlocutor answered that it was his friend and not he himself who was “desecrating scripture” for he was in effect compromising the books’ purity by “putting the books on a bed where a man and a woman had intercourse, while the ground is pure”. He went on to explain that he indeed should have put cloth on the ground to prevent the books from touching it but happened to have none.<sup>11</sup> To this his partner answered by posing a legal question. “But we know that a man is permitted to recite the *Shema* on his bed even if he has his wife there in bed with him, and furthermore we know (from the Talmud) that the words of Torah are not susceptible to impurity”.<sup>12</sup> To this the friend replies that though this assertion is true it applies only prior to intercourse. However, after coitus he should refrain from reciting the *Shema* due to the remains of semen on his body or on the bed sheet. The friend also makes the distinction between the non-corporal recited words of scripture and the tangible physical manifestation of scripture in the form of codices. Uttering words may be allowed in the presence of a source of impurity “for the words of the Lord are like fire”<sup>13</sup> and therefore indeed are not susceptible to impurity, but this does not apply to physical texts and certainly not to putting a sacred book on something that is defiled by semen and that has not been washed. His concluding statement is: “God forbid!”

This story represents an attempt by pietists like Rabbi Judah to instil a meta-halakhic sense of material purity in people or to retain the meta-halakhic

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11 It seems this statement was an answer to the claim that the books may be damaged by being put directly on the ground.

12 The reference in this sentence is to the biblical passage beginning with the words “Hear O Israel” (*Shema Yisrael*). This selection of verses from Deuteronomy 6 was incorporated into the Jewish prayer book and also recited for protection against the demonic perils of night (after turning in at night) known as “the Recital of *Shema* on the Bed” (*queriat Shema al ha'mita*). Indeed the Talmud rules that reciting the *Shema* in bed is counter-intuitively permissible, even in a state of nakedness usually seen as unfit for the recital of prayers or verses from scripture, and even in the presence of a naked female.

13 “Is not My word like fire? saith the LORD” (Jer. 23:29). This verse suggests that the recital of the words of the Lord may have an intrinsic purifying effect like that of a scorching fire.

adherence to the unique Franco-German system of purity customs in defence of what pietists felt was a growing tendency to lax or a disregard these customs. This shift from the pious material purity attitude toward a purity law system of a more spiritualized and less concrete form was present in other realms of Jewish law at the turn of the 12th century. Exemplified by the last proof text introduced in this exchange it may well be a result of the more rationalistic attitudes adopted by a growing number of Jews adhering to a different view regarding material purity, a view typical of the prevalent northern French *Tosafists* in the later decades of the 12th and early 13th century.<sup>14</sup>

#### 4 Non-Jews and Religious Polemics

In as much as the preoccupation with purity might have been on the decline or at least was gradually becoming restricted to pietistic circles, this was not the case when the discourse of material purity was aimed toward individuals and artefacts outside Jewish circles.<sup>15</sup> Not only were these considered by medieval European Jews to be materially impure, but within the textual realm of Jewish polemics against Christians Jews defended Jewish material purity laws vehemently. Furthermore, Jews perceived themselves as holding the moral high ground and being purer and thus much more spiritual than their Christian neighbours. This may have come from an ethno-centric feeling of superiority not unlike many ethno-centric narratives, but it may also have derived from a Jewish counter-narrative to the Christian accusation of the Jews' carnality, lustfulness and sexual depravity. In the neo-platonic and thus medieval mind-set, spiritual loftiness accounted for purity, while the more physical and tangible denoted a more substantive lower form. One of the avenues through which the 'discourse of purity' infiltrated the realm of the Jewish anti-Christian polemic was the discussion about appearance and beauty.

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14 On the innate tension between the German based Ashkenazi Pietists and the northern French students of the *Tosafists* (lit. masters of addenda) see Ta-Shma, "The problem of Torah study" (Hebrew); Soloveitchik, "Three Themes in Sefer Hasidim". On the difference between old and new styles of learning that may also be roughly attributed to the old German schools and the new French schools see: Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*, 180–193, 278–330.

15 These notions of the impurity of members of the non-Jewish 'out group' were of course not introduced in the medieval period but much earlier. On the debate over this issue with regard to second Temple and Talmudic Jewish culture see: Alon, "Levitical Uncleaness of Gentiles". Christine Hayes wrestled with Alon's assertions in her book: Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities*.

Medieval Jews were ever mindful of their neighbours' tendency to emphasize that their appearance was markedly different from their surroundings. Jews were depicted in both medieval art and rhetoric as alien, being dark-skinned as opposed to the fair-skinned and blond gentiles. Oddly enough, when Jews commented on these descriptions they, at times, accepted the claim, yet by using the rhetoric of material purity they turned it on its head. One fine example of this can be found in the thirteenth century polemical manual *The Book of 'Nizzahon Vetus'*.<sup>16</sup> The second section of the book contains a general critique of the Gospels and an attack on common Christian beliefs and customs alongside some of the author's insights on pressing contemporary polemical matters from the Jewish Franco-German sphere. It is in this section that the author chose to write the following:

*The Heretics [= Christians] ask: Why are most Gentiles fair-skinned and handsome while most Jews are dark and ugly? Answer them that this is similar to a fruit; when it begins to grow it is white but when it ripens it becomes black, as is the case with sloes and plums. On the other hand any fruit which is red at the beginning becomes lighter as it ripens as is the case with apples and apricots. This then is testimony that the Jews are pure of menstrual blood so that there is no initial redness. Gentiles however are not careful about menstruation thus there is redness at the outset and so the fruit that comes out (i.e. the children) are light. (Berger NV § 238 p. 224)*

The Jewish anonymous polemist first supplies a 'natural' explanation for the Jewish dark skin—it is testimony to the fact that the Jews resemble riper fruit. But apparently uneasy or only partially satisfied with the 'natural' explanation, the polemist supplies the reader with another justification for the Jewish appearance. Rather than repudiating the Christian allegation that the Jews are ugly and dark, the author embraces the claim and uses it as proof of the fact that the observance of material purity and the laws of *nidda* is the reason

16 Nizzahon is the Hebrew word for both polemics and victory. This anonymous 13th century Jewish anti-Christian tractate has survived in just one manuscript in the University Library of Strassburg and was printed for the first time by Johann Christoph Wagenseil (1633–1705), a German historian and Hebraist, in his book *Tela Ignea Satanae* (= *The Fiery Arrows of the Devil*) at Altdorf in 1681 [= Wagenseil, *Tela Ignea Satanae*]. The book accumulated, compiled and rephrased classical Jewish polemical statements. Its structure, following the order of the Hebrew bible and focusing on the verses that form the core of contention in the Jewish-Christian controversy, made it a handy manual for Jews confronted with Christian polemics. The quote here is from David Berger's edition of the NV: Berger, *Jewish-Christian Debate*.



why Jews are purer and thus rightful. A similar articulation appears in another polemical manual by the thirteenth century northern French polemist Joseph ben Nathan Official, who countered comparable accusations with similar rationalizations: “We are from white pure semen that is why our faces are black but you [= the Christians] are from red semen from menstruant woman and that is why you have a reddish and yellowish complexion.”<sup>17</sup> Joseph Official is indeed admitting to the difference in the Jewish complexion, but at the same time he strikes a blow at his Christian interlocutors. By picking up on the red colour, usually associated with vitality, Joseph uses a double-edged literary blade: he associates the red with the blood of menstruation (possibly alluding also to the Jewish claim that Jesus was the son of a menstruant—*ben ha'nidda*), while indicating that Christian woman did not observe the strict laws of *nidda*. As if that were not enough, he invokes the reddish color commonly associated in Jewish parlance with Edom (in Hebrew literally meaning ‘reddish’ and also the name of the biblical Esau’s son). Within Jewish circles this term was used to refer to Rome, the holy Roman Empire and the Christian Church. By associating the red color with Christians as well as with Edom, Official was also inferring that the Christians are the offspring of the un-chosen son of Isaac, Esau and his son Edom.

Following this perception and the juxtaposition of the impurity of gentiles with the accusation that gentile sexual conduct displays a measure of disregard for menstruation, it may not come as a surprise that Ashkenazi Jews employed a rigorous purification rite not only on the few gentile converts from Christianity to Judaism but also on the probably larger group of Jewish apostates who had converted to Christianity and returned to Judaism.<sup>18</sup> This rite was implemented regardless of the circumstances of conversion, underscoring the notion that intimate exposure to a non-Jewish society, even if the conversion had been coerced, rendered a person impure and in need of purification.<sup>19</sup>

This is not the end of the trail. According to the Talmud, any Jew living outside of the land of Israel was considered impure to a certain extent and the social surroundings were also thought of along those lines. The direct quotidian contact between Jews and the non-Jewish population was thought to be of a contaminating nature to a certain measure and a cause of impurity. Having

17 Joseph bar Nathan Official, *Sefer Yosef ha-Mekaneh*, 95 § 104.

18 On this phenomena and the possible misinterpretation of its actual size see: Malkiel, “Jews and Apostates”; Malkiel, *Reconstructing Ashkenaz*, 114–147.

19 Elazar ben Judah of Worms, *Sefer Ha'Rokeah*, Hilchot Teshuva § 24, Lequet Yosher part 2, p. 59 § 2; Kanarfogel, “Returning to the Jewish Community”. See also Goodich, *Other Middle Ages*, 39–51.

said this, in medieval European society Jews and non-Jews lived in extreme physical proximity within the very dense medieval European urban setting. Contact between Jews and non-Jews in public as well as private space was not only inevitable, it was a constant rather than a variable in the everyday life of most Jews. Thus many of the Jewish notions on these matters were projected on intimate sexual contact with non-Jews and on non-Jewish foods and drink.<sup>20</sup> In these matters there was no uniformity and, having said the above, we should also consider the other voices on this subject. I will quote only one rather recent finding in an attempt to illustrate the two sides of the debate. In his recent book on the lost halakhic works of the twelfth and thirteenth century Jewish masters, Simcha Emmanuel includes a quote that survived from an otherwise lost halakhic compendium written by the late twelfth century Rabbi Simcha of Speyer. The question addressed in the text is the ritual discussed earlier and common among Franco-German Jews in this period to enforce a Jewish baptism on those Jews who had either been forced to convert or had converted of their own will and had decided to return to Judaism. These practices, a form of 'reverse baptism', were performed in an attempt to literally 'wash away' the ritual efficacy of the Christian baptism. In some extreme cases the forehead of the repentant was scrubbed with sand till it bled in order to physically undo the sign of the cross marked on that very spot using holy water and oil during baptism and ashes during the rites of Ash Wednesday. Simcha of Speyer affirms the need for this rite, yet he wrestles with the popular reasoning for this practice, one that was common in his days, and saw the immersion in the waters of the *mikve* differently than he did:

All those who repent and return (to Judaism) need to be immersed as we have seen in the Tractate *Avot De'Rabbi Natan*, the story about a girl that was captured among the gentiles. After she was redeemed from their hands they (the sages) had her ritually immerse herself for all those days she has been among the gentiles when she had eaten their food and drunk their drink, and now they have immersed her so that she will purify herself. And I interpret that she should be immersed to purify herself from the transgression (*Averah*), for the food and drink of the gentiles do not foul the body and pollute it more than any other evil deed or action.<sup>21</sup>

20 On sexual contact between Jews and non-Jews in medieval Europe see: Müller, "Sexual Relationships".

21 This fragment of the lost book: *Seder Olam* attributed to Rabbi Simcha of Speyer is still in manuscript form. See Emanuel, *Fragments of the Tablets*, 160 n. 26 referring to *Vatican*

This source is telling. It shows us that many Jews in Simcha's time thought that the reason the people who repented and returned to Judaism were compelled to purify themselves by immersion in the water of a *mikva* and be purified was their exposure to and intake of impure food and drink in non-Jewish surroundings. The popular belief Simcha is rebuking is that during their stay on the 'other side' of the denominational divide their bodies had been polluted from the inside by non-Jewish food and drink. Simcha for his part sees this as a superfluous issue to the act of conversion. Rather, it was the overall lengthy exposure to the presence of gentiles and their practices and participation in their world he deemed to be an *Averah*—a transgression. In Simcha's view this is what contaminated the lapsed Jew. With this he takes the entire matter from the realm of material purity to that of a spiritual holistic and immaterial understanding of what the terms purity and impurity denote, at least with respect to gentiles, their beliefs and practices. His contemporaries, whose ideas he dismissed, are the ones who saw impurity as very material—symbolized in the text by exposure to the gentiles' food and drink. These are referred to in the text as *Giulei Goyim*—a halakhic term that describes the residue of non-Jewish cooking in a vessel used later by Jews invoking a very tangible yet much more limited sense of impurity.

## 5 Impurity of the Dead—*tumat ha'met*

One aspect of material purity has so far not been discussed in our brief account, and that is the impurity associated with the dead—*tumat ha'met*—and the laws of material purity related to this aspect in medieval Western Europe. It seems logical that this form of impurity, a central feature of the intensive Jewish preoccupation with matters of material purity during the second temple period, would be observed at least on the same level as the laws of *nidda*. In the rabbinic system of thought the dead and the impurity of the dead were considered the most powerful source of impurity and the prime cause of impurity (*avi avot ha' tum'ah*—lit. 'the forefather of all impurity'). Within the rabbinic system of belief the dead, unlike any other form of impurity, had the ability to contaminate closed spaces—and not just by tangency. It was believed that everyone under the same roof as a deceased or the bodily remains, e.g. bone, of the dead would be contaminated. This form of impurity is called the *impurity of the tent* from Num. 19:14—*tum'at ohel*. Rabbinic sources speak of the dead

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*City, Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, cod. Ebr. 183 fol. 186. Similar notions may be found in Yizhak ben Moses of Vienna's Or-Zaruah, vol. 1 § 112.*

as possibly contaminating objects that were exposed either by special proximity at close quarters or by tangency, rendering them impure on a secondary level—the same as actual body fluids. After the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E. the sages ruled that this form of impurity was ever present, given the absence of the means and the ability to perform the sacred rites of purification in the temple articulated in Num. 19. Thus “at this time we are all considered impure with the impurity of the dead”—*bazman hazeh kulanu tme’ei metim*. This last sentence appears in the writings of several Ashkenazi masters.

The earliest source that formulated this notion was the aforementioned eleventh century savant Rabbi Shlomo ben Isaac (*Rashi*) in one of his halakhic legal responsa where he exclaimed:

For since the day that the purifying waters of the red heifer (*mei khatat*) ceased to exist we are all deemed impure with the impurity of the dead and we have no means by which to purify ourselves until the awaited arrival of He who we all long for to ‘sprinkle clean water upon’ us, to purify us.<sup>22</sup> Shlomo ben Yizhak, of blessed memory.<sup>23</sup>

This opinion was restated verbatim by Rashi’s disciple Rabbi Simcha of Vitri in his *Mahazor Vitri* (§499) and by the thirteenth century Viennese Rabbi Isaac ben Moses in his *Or Zaruah* (Vol. 1, responsa section § 751). By contrast, it is sentences like these that contributed to sealing the fate of the observance of any code of law regarding the impurity of the dead. With the innate inability to avoid the situation, let alone cleanse oneself of it, the entire matter was almost negated altogether. As part of an ongoing effort to explore the discourse of purity in Ashkenazi sources, Jeffrey Woolf has recently searched for references to the impurity of the dead, only to come up with the rather amazing conclusion that Franco-German Jewry hardly discussed the matter at all.<sup>24</sup> In fact, evidence points in the opposite direction. Cemetery prayer was common in Europe during the high Middle Ages, as discussed by Elliot Horowitz.<sup>25</sup> In a later period not only do we find that the resting place of the dead—the local

22 Rashi here is employing a pun. The Hebrew text reads: *mikvah Yisrael* which can mean both the *mikve* (ritual bath) of Israel or the one Israel longs for, namely God himself, savior of Israel as is suggested from the biblical reference in Ezekiel 36:25: “Therefore say unto the house of Israel: Thus saith the Lord GOD . . . and I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your uncleanness’s, and from all your idols”.

23 Elfenbein, *Teshuvot Rashi*, § 187 (Hebrew).

24 Woolf, “Medieval models of Purity and Sanctity”; *ibid.*, “‘Qehillah qedosha’”.

25 Horowitz, “Speaking to the Dead”.

cemetery—was not deemed impure, but rather we find evidence that the leading masters of Jewish legal codification strongly advocate prayer at the cemetery by the graves of the deceased righteous:

[...] the cemetery is the resting place of the righteous. Therefore it is a holy and ritually pure place and prayer is most acceptable on holy soil. [However], those who prostrate themselves on the tombs of the righteous and pray should not focus on the dead person's body lying there but should rather beseech God, blessed be He, for mercy based on the spiritual merits of the righteous dead who lie in the earth, may their souls be bound in the bond of life.<sup>26</sup>

Indeed, the already diminished role of the impurity of the dead, the Jewish awareness of the powerful advocacy of the cult of Christian saints in medieval Europe and the Jewish need to balance its appeal with an inner Jewish answer all contributed to turning prayer at the cemetery from a potential cause of impurity into a religiously desirable practice. It seems that the weight of this argument combined with the role of the forefathers of the community and their place of rest in Jewish communal memory as well as the demands of antiquity that served both as a local anchor and as a polemical claim caused the dead to be removed from impurity altogether in medieval Europe. In his recently published book Nils Roemer discusses this matter with regard to the Jewish community in Worms, where the local Jewish cemetery which was later named *Heiliger Sand* (the holy sand) became the focal point of Jewish claims of autochthonism and pilgrimage and the site for finding proof for polemical discourse.<sup>27</sup> Local legend has the Worms Jewish community *in situ* in the first century, substantiating the myth with knowledge of local gravestones that date back to the first century.<sup>28</sup> Other Jewish communities did not have a similarly long history. The Jewish cemetery and the Jewish dignitaries buried in it were

26 *Jacob ben Moshe Halevi Moelin (Maharil), Sefer Maharil-Minhagim (The Book of Maharil: The Customs)*, 270. Note the nuanced subtle remark in *Maharil's* ruling that one who prays at a cemetery and beseeches the Lord there must ensure that he or she direct the prayers and efforts directly at God and not err by considering the righteous dead buried there, to be the mediators between them and the divine. Rather, the person praying should reflect and contemplate on the righteous deeds and merit of the dead and harness those aspects into the prayer.

27 Roemer, *German City, Jewish Memory*, 12–31.

28 Similar claims were made in other Jewish communities like that of Mainz. See: *Jacob ben Moshe Halevi Mulin (Maharil), Sefer Maharil-Minhagim*, miscellaneous section (*likutim*) § 49.

thought to be the most powerful place of reference for Jewish antiquity in the northern European region. These reasons all undermined any attempt at referring to the dead as impure.

## 6 Conclusion

In his concluding remark on the laws of ritual bathing and ritual baths (*hilchot Mikvaot*) the illustrious twelfth century Jewish sage Moses Maimonides writes:

It is clear to all that the impurities and the purities are decrees of scripture and they do not fall under the category of those matters that humans may act upon exercising their own discretion. Thus they belong to the laws known as *khok* [= laws that have no rational reasoning but should rather be obeyed even if not fully comprehended]. The same is true for immersion after being ritually impure. For the impurity is not analogous to filth from mortar, excrement or other forms of dirt that need to be rinsed with water. They are rather scriptural decrees that have nothing to do with the intentions of the heart or the human understanding of the mind.<sup>29</sup>

From this short extract, written contemporaneously to many of the sources discussed above, it is clear that the notions of purity that governed the lives and minds of medieval European Jews in the high middle ages were markedly different from those of Maimonides. For European Jews impurity was nearly tangible. Although not visible, its presence was almost material enough to actually be felt and it was treated by scholars and lay people alike as realistic, closely resembling the way we today think of bacteria, viruses or radioactive contamination. Thus the laws governing material purity expressed these notions and this attitude is probably the one Maimonides seeks to repudiate.

It is almost impossible to explore the entire range of issues related to material purity and concepts of impurity in the medieval European Jewish culture. In this short article I have attempted to survey some of the main features of medieval European Jewish attitudes to these matters and to explore the inner-European Jewish discourse on it. Given the historical and theological importance of material purity in Jewish life during antiquity and late antiquity,

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<sup>29</sup> Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, the Laws of *Mikvaot*, 11; 12 (the translation is my own). I wish to thank Prof. Yair Lorberbaum of the Bar-Ilan University Law School for discussing this matter with me and aiding me in purifying my own thoughts on this matter.

especially before the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 C.E., as well as the position early Christian theology took on this matter, it is interesting to see how Jewish tradition in medieval Europe negotiated with its own cultural legacy and historical tradition. This inner Jewish discussion was constantly aware of the immediate Christian surrounding as well as an ever changing reality. Some aspects of material purity have survived and were entrenched over almost a millennium after one of the prime causes of their existence, the powerful temple-related matters of material purity, had receded into the realm of memory. Jewish tradition had devised innovative ways by which elements of this elaborate system became hallmark attributions of communal self-identity while others were contested or their observance faded into memory. These modes of revitalization and reinvention on the one hand and departure and neglect on the other are but one aspect of the many avenues by which medieval Jewish authors and cultural agents met the challenges of medieval European Jewish existence, the notions of the surrounding culture and its implications on the intricacies of Jewish heritage.

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**SECTION 2**

*Ethical and Moral Purity*





# From ‘Clean’ to ‘Pure’ in Everyday Life in Late Imperial China: A Preliminary Enquiry<sup>1</sup>

Paolo Santangelo

La crainte de l'impur et les rites de purification sont à l'arrière-plan de tous nos sentiments et de tous nos comportements relatifs à la faute.<sup>2</sup>

The reflection on ‘purity’ is extremely fascinating for the comparative history of both ideas and mentality. When we move the scope of analysis from our own culture to other civilizations, we must resort to a comparative approach. Thus, this theme becomes very complex as it involves not only the combination of different philosophical and religious traditions, but also the resort, at the same time, to the conceptual tools of a certain culture, while carrying our own notions from our specific cultural background. It is clear that an exhaustive enquiry would require both a long-term lexical study that should clarify the notion from the comparative perspective, and an examination of a large amount of philosophical and religious sources.<sup>3</sup> I limit myself to a very

- 1 I am grateful to the organizers of this research program, and in particular to Professor Heiner Roetz, for this opportunity of discussing such an important topic for the imagery and the history of ideas of humanity. The improvement of my essay is indebted to the patient work of the anonymous reviewers.
- 2 “Dread of the impure and rites of purification are in the background of all our feelings and all our behavior relating to fault.” (Ricoeur, *La symbolique du mal*, 31; *The Symbolism of Evil*, 25). Ricoeur’s essay is a basic reflection on morality and internalised sanctions in the West.
- 3 Among the terms related to this topic, *gānjìng* 乾淨, and *qīng* 清, “clean”, “pure”, are the most relevant. Their antonyms, “filthy” and “obscene”, thus “abominable” in various meanings and levels, are *huì* 穢, and its compounds, such as *wūhuì* 污穢. The *Zhongwen dacidian* 中文大词典 (*Great Dictionary of Chinese*) gives the following definition: *wūhuì* 污穢, *bùqīngjié* 不清潔. Also in the semantic field of “unclean”, *zāng* 髒, *áo zāo* 塵糟, *wòchuò* 齷齪. (Cf. Yuan Mei 袁枚. *Zibuyu* 子不語 [What the Master would not discuss] [henceforward ZBY], 17:324, Bi Yan Jian Gui 碧眼見鬼), and *lāzhā* 拉閘 / *lāzá* 拉雜, *lādā* 喇嗒, (Feng Menglong 馮夢龍, *Shan’ge* 山歌 [The Mountain Songs] [henceforward *Shan’ge*], 5:139). *Lāta* 邇/拉邇, i.e. “rubbish” (*lājī* 垃圾), “sloppy”, “filthy”, occur more or less frequently (*Shan’ge*, 9:202. Feng Menglong 馮夢龍, *Gujin xiaoshuo* 古今小說 [Ancient and Modern Tales] [henceforward *GJS*], 15). The use of *āngzang* 骯髒 in *fēngchén āngzang* 風塵骯髒, “the world of corruption and immorality” or “the filth of this world” (Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹, *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢

preliminary reflection, by analysing a small number of cases from sources mainly from the 16th to the 18th centuries, starting with words that mean “cleanness” and “uncleanness”.

In order to understand the value and concept of ‘pure’, it is necessary to compare its interrelation with its antonyms, and to examine the opposite notions clean-dirty. It is evident that, by analogy with other cultures, the basic concepts of clean/pure and dirty/impure in Chinese civilization pertain to an evaluation on the physical level which is extended to the symbolic and moral levels. My aim is to verify this basic analogy, and to reveal the specific use of such notions in everyday life as well as some of their applications to linguistic, religious, and philosophical realities. In other words, I shall try to demonstrate the extent to which the specificity of Chinese culture is reflected in such universal categories.

The impulse to distinguish the clean from the unclean responds to a basic visceral feeling, the horror and repulsion that are typically associated with things perceived as repugnant, inedible, or infectious: waste products such as excrement, secretions from the human body, and decomposing flesh.<sup>4</sup>

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[The Dream of the Red Chamber] [henceforward *HLM*], 5) is interesting. It also refers to the polluting body of a woman during menstruation: “Otherwise why men of dignity would tremble with fear in face of a dirty female body?” 胡乃骯髒之身，不寒而慄？(Pu Songling 蒲松齡, *Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋志異 [Strange Tales from the Leisure Studio] [henceforward *LZZY*], 6:731, Ma Jie Pu 馬介甫). Other terms can be synonyms, such as *wū* 污, which can be rendered “dirty; filthy; foul, corrupt, defile, smear” according to the context. In its physical meaning, see the following sentence in the *Rulin waishi*: the guest had soiled the floor of the studio with his muddy shoes, thus “the host loathed him for his filthiness and carelessness” 主人厭他醜髒，自己走了進去，拿出一雙鞋來 (Wu Jingzi 吳敬梓, *Rulin waishi* 儒林外史 [The Literati’s Unofficial History] [henceforward *RLWS*], 55). *Wū* is also used for “to rape”, as in this case of necrophilia in *Zibuyu*: “After the burial, he tracked down the grave and dug up the coffin. When he opened the lid he found the body beneath to be still in perfect condition—it was almost as if she were still alive. He then removed her underclothes and had sex with the corpse. After the rape he filled his pockets with all the jewelry and pearls in the coffin and made off down the road.” 伺其攢殯之處，往發掘之。開棺，婦色如生，乃剝其下衣，又與淫汗。汗畢，取其珠翠首飾藏裏滿懷，將奔上路。 *ZBY*, 17:318, Lei Zhu Wang San 雷誅王三. Moreover, *lèi* 累 can be used to mean “moistened”, “polluted”, like *zhān* 沾 and *wū* 污: “If a summer shirt becomes dirty, I can wash it thoroughly.” 汗衫累子塵糟拚得洗。 (*Shange*, 1:24A); “But please do not move your hands and feet about, or we will get all dirty with my oil.” 只沒要動手動腳累得滑泥泥。 (*Shange*, 5:116); “You will always make my whole body drip with sweat even if the weather is cold.” 冷天光也要喫你累得汗淋身。 (*Shange*, 6:150).

4 In *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, Charles Darwin wrote that disgust refers to something revolting (Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*

Moreover, these basic ideas seem to be universally extended to the symbolic level. The concepts of 'foul' and 'filth' are contrasted with the 'uncontaminated', thus "something inspiring disgust", the "obscene", the "inauspicious", and even "ill-omened".

In Chinese writings the most common antonyms are *qīng* and *zhuó* 清濁, both in the physical and moral meaning: The term *zhuó* 濁 can be rendered as "muddy" for water, "dirty" for air, and *qīng* 清, for "clean" and "pure" (water, air, etc.). Their meanings were extended beyond the physical level. In an old Chinese poem quoted by Shen Fu 沈復 (1763–1810?), it is said: "When [water] is clean, I will wash my hatbands, when it is muddy I will wash my feet" (清斯濯纓, 濁斯濯足).<sup>5</sup> Another example of this contrast is offered by the famous novel of *Honglou meng*: "You introduce this dirty thing to pollute this territory of pure and incontaminate maidens" 引這濁物來污染這清淨女兒之境 (HLM, 5:87). The two characters *qīng* and *zhuó* here are contrasted in symbolic language. And in *Liaozhai zhiyi*, the same contrast is expressed by Pu Songling 蒲松齡 (1640–1715): "Who is pure keeps his own purity, while who is dreggy keeps his own foulness." 清者自清, 濁者自濁.<sup>6</sup>

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(1872), 257–262). According to Kristeva, the 'abject' refers to the human reaction, such as horror or vomiting, to a threatened breakdown in meaning caused by the loss of the distinction between subject and object or between self and other. The classical examples are the corpse which traumatically reminds us of our own materiality, the open wound, or feces. Kristeva, *Pouvoirs de l'horreur*, 11, 128.

- 5 Shen Fu 沈復, *Fusheng liuji* 浮生六記 [The Floating Life], 1:4. The passage comes from Mencius, *Lilou*, shang 離婁上: "There was a boy who was singing: 'When the water of the Canglang is clean, I will wash my hatbands; when the water of the Canglang is muddy, I wash my feet.' Confucius said: 'Listen to this song, my disciples. When clean, then he will wash his hatbands; and when muddy, he will wash his feet. This different use comes from the water on itself. A man must first despise himself, and then others will despise him. A family must first destroy itself, and then others will destroy it. A State must first destroy itself, and then others will destroy it. As the *Taijia* states, 'When Heaven sends disasters, it is still possible to resist to them. When we cause the disasters by ourselves, it is not possible to survive any more.'" 有孺子歌曰: '滄浪之水清兮, 可以濯我纓; 滄浪之水濁兮, 可以濯我足。'孔子曰: '小子聽之! 清斯濯纓, 濁斯濯足矣, 自取之也。'夫人必自侮, 然後人侮之; 家必自毀, 而後人毀之; 國必自伐, 而後人伐之。《太甲》曰: '天作孽, 猶可違; 自作孽, 不可活。'此之謂也。

6 LZZY, 11:1450, Huang Ying 黃英.



1 The Lexicon<sup>7</sup>

The dyad clean-dirty is expressed in Chinese by other synonyms and antonyms. Among the terms used in everyday life, that contrast cleanliness (滌) to soilure *huì* (穢), we can read: “There are no dirty pots and cups, because [the owner of the tea house] washes them very often” 器以時滌，無穢器。<sup>8</sup> An ascetic sense of purity is certainly of Buddhist origin, as we find in several literary sources:<sup>9</sup> “spotlessly clean”, “untainted with evil thoughts or bad habits” *xiānchén/hóngchén/yīchén bùrǎn/ bùrǎn hóngchén xiēzǐhuì* 纖塵不染，紅塵不染，一塵不染，不染紅塵些子穢。<sup>10</sup> Of evident Buddhist influence is also the contrast between purity and corruption of the world, with the comparison between pure jade 白玉<sup>11</sup> and mud 泥:

到頭來，依舊是風塵骯髒違心願；好一似，無暇白玉遭泥陷...

In the end, you will still be corrupted in the worldly dust against your wishes; just like a piece of spotless white jade which suffers the fate of falling into the mire!<sup>12</sup>

‘Making pure’ and ‘cleaning’, *xǐshēnqīng* 洗身清, can even refer to a person’s social image, to a person’s ‘face’ standing in the community and to the social control of sexual behaviour. This is easily understandable in a community

7 For more details, see my article “An attempt at a history of mentality in late imperial China”, 386–424.

8 *TAMY*, 8:48, Luxiong 露兄.

9 They can be found for instance in *Xiyouji* 西遊記 (henceforward *XY*), *Fusheng liuji*, *HLM*, the *Saryan* (i.e. Feng Menglong’s three collections: *Gujin xiaoshuo* 古今小說; *Jingshi tongyan* 警世通言 [Common Words for Warning the World] [henceforward *JSTY*]; *Xingshi hengyan* 醒世恆言).

10 In the variant 六塵不染, see *LZZY*, 7:1012, Jin Heshang 金和尚. Cf. also 一塵全不染 in *XY* 1. But Li Zhi 李贄 (1527–1602) observes that “there is neither *impurity* in passions, nor *purity* in emptiness, by resorting to Buddhist formulas, which express the identity of pure and filthy, asceticism and sexuality, emptiness and phenomena: “Talking of colours and beauties is not filthy as well as talking of emptiness is not pure” *shuose feigou, shuokong feijing* 說色非垢，說空非淨。(*Fenshu* 焚書, *Xinjing tigang* 心經提綱, 3:100.)

11 Jade is used as a metaphor for both beauty and purity. For instance: “If ladies would be all pure as jade, the heroines who died for their honour would not be so worthy” 香闺若使都如玉，烈女应知不值钱 (Tianhua zhuren 天花主人, *Yunxianhua* 雲仙笑, in *Zhongguo huaben daxi* 中国话本大系, 3:40, cit. in Gao Xiang 高翔, “Xin chuantong de xingqi—Wan Ming guannian bianqian yu shenghuo fangshi” 新傳統的興起——晚明觀念變遷與生活方式, 26).

12 *HLM* 5:90.

where public image is fundamental in social and personal relations and 'saving face' is a basic social factor. We find evidence of this in the following popular song, collected by Feng Menglong:

○又[瞞人]  
 人人說我與你有私情，  
 尋場相罵洗身清，  
 你便拔出子拳頭只說打，  
 我便手指子吳山罵洞庭。

Also [Deception]

Since everyone says you and I secretly love each other.  
 We must find the chance to insult each other and wash our bodies clean.  
 You raise your fist and say you will beat me.  
 I will curse Dongting Island, while pointing at Mount Wu.<sup>13</sup>

Besides physical disgust, associated with material uncleanness, thus, moral disgust metaphorically extends this repulsion to what is considered morally impure. If we examine *huì* 穢, "filthy", its compounds and most typical synonyms, we can discover the spectrum of various basic meanings and logical associations: the filth of spoiled food and excrement (穢物) becomes an allegory for moral debasement and defilement (淫穢)—especially sexual taboos and transgressions or profanation of the sacrality of human remains—and its social effects are reflected in lack of respect (髒)<sup>14</sup> and a sense of inferiority (形穢).<sup>15</sup>

13 *Shan'ge* 1:27A.

14 *Zāng* 髒 'dirty, filthy', is used in this meaning and is associated to pollution and desecralization: "Showing the contempt of Jia Zheng toward his son Baoyu, 'Don't contaminate this floor with dirt by standing here, and don't contaminate this door of mine by leaning against it!'" 仔細站髒了我這地，靠髒了我這門! (*HLM* 9:154). In the *Honglou meng* we have two clear examples where 污穢 and 穢 are used respectively for "slander" and "despise": "make up stories to slander people" 所以編出來污穢人家 (*HLM* 54); "to consider oneself so respectful as Buddha and despise others looking them as filthy as manure" 愛自己尊若菩薩，窺他人穢如糞土, (*HLM* 79). See also the following combination that associates disrespect with sully: "He was full with rage, and went far to abuse you, humiliating you by beating, pulling and spitting at you." 彼必大怒，乃至詬罵。屈辱捶擊，拖拽穢唾。(齊饒州女 in Feng Menglon 馮夢龍, *Qingshi leilue* 情史類略 [Anatomy of Love] [henceforward *Qingshi*], 8:208); "Don't humiliate yourself!" 無自穢也。( *Qingshi*, 12:322, Lu Erjiu 盧二舅).

15 When the lack of respect is perceived subjectively, and 'dirty' is attributed to oneself, "the subject feels shameful about himself" (只覺自慚形穢, 〇) Li Ruzhen 李汝珍, *Jinghuayuan* 鏡花緣 [The Destiny of the Flowers on the Mirror]. Taipei: Sanmin shuju,

I have analysed the occurrences of *hui* 穢, alone or in compounds, and singled out some significant examples in *Zibuyu* 子不語 [henceforward *ZBY*],<sup>16</sup> *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢 [henceforward *HLM*],<sup>17</sup> *Jin Ping Mei* 金瓶梅,<sup>18</sup> *Rulin waishi* 儒林外史,<sup>19</sup> *Fusheng liuji* 浮生六記 [henceforward *FS*],<sup>20</sup> *Tao'an mengyi* 陶庵夢憶 [henceforward *TAMY*],<sup>21</sup> some chapters of Pu Songling's collection of short stories *Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋誌異 [henceforward *LZZY*],<sup>22</sup> some of Feng Menglong's 馮夢龍 works,<sup>23</sup> especially his "Popular songs", *Shan'ge* 山歌,<sup>24</sup> and *Qingshi leilue* 情史類略 [henceforward *Qingshi*].<sup>25</sup>

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1979. (First published 1828): 19). "In fact, he felt himself intolerably filthy." 果覺自形污穢不堪。 *HLM* 5. See also 116). Sometimes, the sense of inadequacy is strengthened by the reflexive verb *zicán* 自慚, 'feeling ashamed', and furthermore the idea of pollution may be associated with the notion of poor and dirty ('thatched cottage' *máowū* 茅屋 and and the 'kitchen coal' *zào méi* 竈煤). Other examples: "Ashamed of his physical inferiority, Lian wished to sleep under the bed". 生自慚形穢, 願在下床。 (*LZZY*, 2: 257–258, Qiao-Niang 巧娘); "Zhao was dreadfully ashamed of his poverty-stricken state, and afraid that his dirty room would spoil the young lady's beautiful dress;" 某自慚形穢, 又慮茅屋竈煤, 玷染華裳。 (*LZZY*, 12:1647, Chu Sui Liang 褚遂良).
- 16 *Zibuyu* 子不語, "What the Master would not discuss" (also "New Strange Events", *Xin Qixie* 新齊諧) is a collection of tales by Yuan Mei 袁枚 (1716–1798), composed of 710 short stories, and divided into 24 chapters.
- 17 The text of the *Honglou meng* that is utilized here is the electronic text kindly provided by the Publisher Zhonghua shuju, thanks to the help of Prof. Guo Yingde. (Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹, *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢 [The Dream of the Red Chamber]).
- 18 For the *Jinpingmei* 金瓶梅 [±1600], here the critical ed. *Xinke xiuxiang piping* 新刻繡像批評, Chongzhen ed. 崇禎本, has been used.
- 19 The analysis was based on the Shanghai edition 1999. Cf. also Slupsky, "Three Levels of Composition of the *Rulin Waishi*", 5–53; Rolston / Lin (trs.), "The Wo-hsien ts'ao-t'ang Commentary on the Ju-lin wai-shih", 244–294; Huang, "Stylization and Invention: The Burden of Self-Expression in The Scholars", 89–112; Wei, *Rulin waishi and Cultural Transformation in Late Imperial China*; Wu, *Chronique indiscrete des mandarins*.
- 20 *Fusheng liuji* 浮生六記 [1809].
- 21 See also Li, "The Late Ming Courtesan: Invention of Cultural Ideal", 46–73.
- 22 See also Kao, "Projection, Displacement, Introjection: The Strangeness of *Liaozhai zhiyi*", 199–229; Zeitlin, Judith T., *Historian of the Strange: Pu Songling and the Chinese Classical Tale*; Chiang, *Collecting the Self: Body and Identity in Strange Tale Collections of Late Imperial China*.
- 23 The most frequently consulted collections of short stories are *gjsx*, *Xingshi hengyan* 醒世恒言 [henceforward *xshy*], and *JSTY*.
- 24 See also Feng 馮, *Feng Menglong min'geji sanzong zhujie, xia* 馮夢龍民歌集三種注解 (下). See also the annotated and commented edition by Ōki Yasushi 大木康 (Ōki 大木, *Fū Bōryū 'sanka' no kenkyū* 馮夢龍『山歌』の研究), with a Japanese translation, and Santangelo / Ōki, *Shan'ge, the Mountain Songs*'.
- 25 *Qingshi* 1986.

We can start with several expressions which denote these impure and dirty things (醜賸, 穢物, 腐臭之物, 糞, 哇). Dirt can be clothes, rooms, bodies. Thus *huì* can just be rendered 'dirty', 'rubbish' (穢泥, 蕪穢, 汗穢). In the former example, on the pretended fear of dirtying his clothes, the thief says:

忍汗我肩上衫乎?

1) "I'm sure you don't have the heart to dirty my shirt, do you?"<sup>26</sup>

穢泥亂墜, 塗巫面如鬼。

2) Dirty mud splashed and stained the sorceress' face like a ghost.<sup>27</sup>

An analysis of the term *gānjìng* 乾淨 in the erotic novel, Jin Ping Mei 金瓶梅, which was usually described as a 'dirty book' 穢書, shows that in most occurrences (75%) it retains the basic physical sense of clean-filthy in its positive and negative use respectively.<sup>28</sup> Other examples deal with hygiene and diet: "do not eat dirty things" [like pigs do] 不食穢物.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, in one passage it is suggested that gluttony may cause the growth of dirty parasites (穢蟲):

因食物過多, 致身體堅重, 腹中穢蟲叢起, 易生痰滯。

As we eat too much, our bodies become heavy and clustered dirty parasites grow in our stomach. We are so easily choked by phlegm.<sup>30</sup>

26 ZBY, 23:462, Stealing Boots 偷靴.

27 LZZY, 4:561, Hu Si Xiang Gong 胡四相公.

28 For instance: "The old woman Wang puts the room in order, and waits for the visitors" 王婆收拾房內乾淨 (Ch. 3), "Wipe the table and make it clean." 抹得桌子乾淨 (Ch. 3); "To put in order and clean the 'Hibiscus Pavilion' in the back yard" 收拾打掃後花園芙蓉亭乾淨 (Ch. 10). The meaning may be extended, both literally and symbolically, to "sweeping away" and "getting rid of" ("destroy evidence by fire" 火燒得乾淨; "eats up everything, with nothing left" 吃的裏外乾淨). Not very far removed is the logical connection between 'making clean', 'removing dirt', and 'putting everything in order', 'prepare completely', 'clean and order', 'sweep away', 'get rid of', in the literal and symbolic extension.

29 ZBY, 6:104, Pig Monk Is Zheng Man 豬道人即鄭鄭.

30 ZBY, 16:309, The Immortal Who Could Be Folded Up 折疊仙.

This example evidences the existence of Purificatory practices in Daoist ascetic practices:<sup>31</sup> a hermit's self-discipline and diet is pursued in the effort to purify the body from all things dirty, to eliminate dirty parasites growing in the stomach, to purify the intestines, to reduce all aliments until only pure water, or just air, is absorbed.<sup>32</sup> Here we can see a clear contrast between the two concepts of purity and pollution (*qīng* 清, *dàngdí* 蕩滌 > *huì* 穢, *hún* 渾).

Alimentary expressions are rather common as food can be easily spoiled and sullied. Even more frequent are occurrences where filth is associated with human or animal excrement and fluids (大小便, 大穢, 糞穢, 溲, 液). In some sentences (*ZBY*, 19:356, Zhou Shifu 周世福; *ZBY*, 23:474, Fan Xi Jiu Tan 翻洗酒壇; *LZZY*, 2:131, Jin Shicheng 金世成; *LZZY*, 1:73, San Sheng 三生; *FS* 1), the evaluation of excrement as dirty is unambiguous: excrement is a filthy thing 大小便, 汙穢, urinating is dirty and polluting 溲, 穢. In the following two passages, the former describes how discharge of excreta through the wound of Zhou Shifu rendered his body dirty and made him feel shame, and the latter tells the remonstrance for a jar's pollution:

山西石樓縣周世福、周世祿兄弟相鬥，刀戳兄腹，腸出二寸。後日久，肚上創平複如口，能翕張，腸拖於外，以錫碗覆之，束以帶，大小便皆從此處出。如此三載餘方死。死之日，有鬼

31 It would be worthwhile to examine the relation between the notion of purity and cleanliness, on the one hand, and key concepts of ancient Daoism, expressed by terms like *xu* 虛 (emptiness), *jìng* 靜 (calmness) or *míng* 明 (clarity), on the other.

32 "Life originally comes out of void and vacancy. However, as we overindulge in eating, our bodies become heavy, *dirty parasites* grow up in our stomach. We are so easily choked by phlegm. A person who wants to learn the Dao must first *clear* his mouth and *purify* his intestines. Without food, all the parasites inside the stomach will starve to death, and one will be *purified*. Water is the inborn vitality. At the beginning of the universe, water was the first to appear, before the five elements. So drinking water is the secret to becoming immortal. However, the *water from the towns and cities is dirty and polluted and drinking such water will harm your spirit*, so one must fetch the *purest water* in the mountain and swallow it slowly, so that a gurgling sound is produced in your throat. Then finally one spoon of water is enough for a day and a night. You live like this for one hundred and twenty years, and finally your body will gradually become so *light and clean* that you do not even need water. You can only feed on air and move by riding the winds." 人生本自虛空而來，因食物過多，致身體堅重，腹中穢蟲叢起，易生痰滯。學道者先清其口，再清其腸。餓死諸蟲以蕩滌之，水為先天第一真氣。天地開闢時，未有五行先有水，故飲水為修仙要訣。但城市水渾，有累靈府，必取山中至清之水，徐徐而吞，使喉中喀喀有響，然後甘味才出。一勺水，可度一晝夜。如是一百二十年，身漸輕清，並水可闢，便服氣禦風而行矣。(ZBY 16, The Immortal Who Could Be Folded Up 折疊仙).

附家人身詈其弟云：“汝殺我，乃前生數定也，但早了數年，使我受多少汗穢。”

Brothers Zhou Shifu and Zhou Shilu of Shilou County of Shanxi once fought with each other. Zhou Shilu pierced through his brother's stomach with a knife and his gut flowed out in two cun's length. Later, as time went by, the wound on Zhou Shifu's stomach coalesced like a mouth that could close and open. His gut hung out of his body and he used a tin bowl to cover it. He also bound it with a belt and his excreta all discharged from there. It went on like this for three years and Zhou Shifu died at last. The day when he was dying, a ghost attached itself to a family member of Zhou and cursed the brother, saying: "It is a predestined fate that you would kill me, but it was several years earlier than expected. Thus you made me suffer from such a lot of dirty things." (*ZBY*, 19:356, Zhou Shifu 周世福).

一日，溲於酒壇，嫂大怒罵之。徐曰：“洗之何妨？”  
“嫂曰：“穢在壇裏，如何可洗？”

One day, Xu urinated in the wine jar. Enraged, his sister-in-law abused him. Xu said: "It is not a big deal since you can wash it." His sister-in-law said: "You peed in it and how can it be washed clean again?" (*ZBY*, 23:474, Washing the Jar of Wine With its Base Turned Inside Out 翻洗酒壇).

The dog is the exception that confirms the rule among human beings, as it is said to "have no stomach and thus it is not aware of the foulness of excrement": "the dog has no stomach and thus eats excrement, and is not aware of its foulness." 狗無胃而食糞，以其不知臭穢 (*FS* 1). Yet, the natural repulsion towards excrement is clearly illustrated in the character who is reincarnated as a dog but who still retains some human habits and tastes: "When he grew older, seeing excretion he still knew it dirty; yet smelling it he felt it was tasty. However, he was resolute not to eat such things." 稍長，見便液，亦知穢；然嗅之而香，但立念不食耳。(*LZZY*, 1:73, San Sheng 三生). Another negative example is the description of a crazy man, where dejections 遺穢 are mentioned as the opposite of clean things 不潔: "He seemed to be demented, eating dirty things and regarding it as delicious. When dogs and sheep left their egested matter behind, he would bend over and eat it". 類顛，啖不潔以爲美。犬羊遺穢於前，輒伏啖之。(*LZZY*, 2:131, Jin Shi Cheng 金世成). Different is the case of the 'crazy monk', who can even eat excrement, as his abnormal behaviour has the value of a gongan (koan) or other shocking

practice in the illumination process: “He was considered ‘to become Buddha in this life’. It is really a kind of extreme style that he [the monk] could eat excrement!” 謂爲‘今世成佛’。品至啖穢，極矣。(LZZY, 2:131, Jin Shi Cheng 金世成).

In “Remembrances of Tao’an’s dreams” (*Tao’an mengyi*, 3:13, 南鎮祈夢) excrement 穢矢 is associated with bad omens,<sup>33</sup> and in *Liaozhai zhiyi* (6:788, Hu Da Gu 胡大姑; and 4:585, Jiu Kuang 酒狂) throwing faeces and rubbish (投之芻穢, 糞穢) into the spring or into the bowl is an blatant act of revenge and contempt.<sup>34</sup> In the *Xiyouji* 西遊記 (ch. 69), faeces are associated with phlegm (穢污痰涎), when describing the curative abilities of the Monkey.

The olfactory function is particularly sensitive in alarming to the presence of dirty and impure things, and several stereotyped expressions (臭穢狼籍不可聞; 竟不可近; 臭穢可憎; 臭穢不可近) have been created to emphasize this phenomenon. The novelist Li Yu (1610–1680) is a very sensitive and refined writer, and he insists on the importance of good and bad smells in various passages. He advises women to wash their bodies with scented soap and to rinse their mouth with fragrant tea, 用香皂浴身, 香茶沁口. Talking on the miraculous effects of the use of soap (皂之為物, 亦有一種神奇) with its delicate scent, he mentions its property of wiping away the filth (未有不與垢穢並除), cleaning the dirty and keeping the fragrance 去穢而存香. Li says that if the woman’s body is polluted by any occasional filth or by foul odour, once she rubs her body with soap, all impurities are dashed away, 人身偶染穢物, 或偶沾穢氣, 用此一擦, 則去盡無遺. In his reflections on the environment, he writes about “foul air” and recommends “[keeping the room

33 “If he was not a person of foresight, how would he gain an official position after dreaming of a coffin and gain wealth after dreaming excrement? While in the state of trance, was it endowed by God?” 非其先知先覺, 何以將得位夢棺器, 得財夢穢矢, 正在恍惚之交, 儼若神明之賜? (*TAMY*, 3:13, Nanzhen qimeng 南鎮祈夢).

34 “The fox didn’t haunt others much but concentrated on Yue’s daughter-in-law. Her shoes, stockings, hairpins and earrings were always found on the way and every time she had dinner, dead rats or excrement would be seen in her bowl.” 猶不甚崇他人。而專崇其子婦: 履穢簪珥, 往往棄道上; 每食, 輒於粥碗中埋死鼠或糞穢。(LZZY, 6:788, Hu Da Gu 胡大姑). See also: “Those incompetent servants went to the small temple to borrow cooking utensils, [...] If they didn’t get wine and meat, they would immediately shake their fists and beat the monks. The monks suffered greatly from this, but they could not work out a way to get rid themselves of this suffering, so they put the blame on Xi Spring, and threw the feces of animals into the spring.” 臧獲到庵借炊, [...] 無酒肉, 輒揮老拳。僧苦之。無計脫此苦, 乃罪泉, 投之芻穢。(TAMY, 3:15, Yanghe quan 陽和泉).

clean] without nasty smell”, 穢氣罔聞 [...]”<sup>35</sup> This physical filth is perceived by sensory organs, especially by smell (腐臭之物). Thus, what is obscene and repellent, such as dejecta and rotten food or organic materials or dead animals 死貓死狗諸穢物, is often associated with a bad smell and stink 臭氣, 臭穢 that assaults the sensory organ, while pure fragrance springs from the body of a chaste girl 異香:<sup>36</sup>

忽有異香從秀姑所臥處起，直達街巷，行路者皆愕眙相視。嚴虎知之，取死貓死狗諸穢物羅置李門外，以亂其氣，而其香愈盛。

1) Suddenly a strange fragrance came out of Xiugu's bedroom and rushed directly towards the streets and lanes. The passersby all felt astonished and stood there staring at each other. Yan Hu knew that strange phenomenon and he put some dirty things such as dead cats and dogs outside Li's house to confound that odour. However, the fragrance grew even stronger.<sup>37</sup>

口香即獼糞，頓覺臭穢

2) The fragrance in the mouth changed into otter's excrement, and immediately he felt its foulness.<sup>38</sup>

35 Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji* 4 閒情偶寄之四 [Casual Expressions of Idle Feelings] Jushi bu 《居室部》, in: *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集 [Collected Works by Li Yu], vol. 3, 164. See also on the bad smell of the book that is so nasty that one holds his nose and that poisons people 未有不廢卷掩鼻，而怪穢氣熏人者也。(《Xianqing ouji》1 《閒情偶寄》之一、*Ciqu bu* 詞曲部: in 李漁全集, vol. 3: 27). In another passage, Li Yu concludes his criticism of footbinding, stating that unbound feet are natural and make walking easy, not only nice to look at but with no foul smell. Binding feet, on the contrary, is a forced and artificial practice, and thus it is the cause of bad smell. 直而正者，非止美觀便走，亦少穢氣。大約穢氣之生，皆勉強造作之所致也。And again Li Yu explains that bound feet cannot be clean and their bad smell troubles others, people are disturbed and hold their nose and knit their brows. 因腳小而致穢，令人掩鼻攢眉，此累之在人者也。(“Casual Expressions of Idle Feelings”, 3, Shengrong bu 《聲容部》: *shouzu* 手足, in *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, vol. 3: 113–14).

36 Smell, thus, is the most direct physical sign that distinguishes purity from the filthy: the holiness of an old lady is expressed in the sandalwood perfume that radiates from her corpse, even after her death: “The sandalwood smell wafted round her as she sat up cross-legged and passed away. After she was dead, the sandalwood smell lingered for over three days and nights till it faded away” 旃檀之氣自空繚繞，端坐跏趺而逝。逝後，香三晝夜始散。(ZBY, 21:410, The Bodhisattva in Reply to a Prayer 菩薩答拜).

37 ZBY, 15:289, Two Stories of Fragrant Corpses 尸香二則.

38 *Qingshi* 21:718, Tayao 獼妖.



見屋宇錯雜，穢臭熏人。

3) Then Wang saw a lot of jumbled houses, which sent out a rotten stench so that none could bear to smell it.<sup>39</sup>

Thus, living human beings can be distinguished from ghosts by their smell: Those who do not have the smell of foul air are human beings 嗅之無穢氣者，人類也。(ZBY 5, Fu Duan Huwei 斧斷狐尾), while those belonging to the netherworld emanate a cold and unbearable stench.<sup>40</sup> Obviously, the horrible / repulsive smell of decomposition is associated with the idea of death. For instance, the foul air of the dead is so strong that it penetrates the viscera of people [when the corpse is burned, although its aspect was bright as if the person was alive] (一棺中女子，面色如生，其類有泚。亟投諸火，穢氣入人臟腑，竟不可近。)<sup>41</sup> Often stench is also associated with sickness and ulcers. Pollution is usually perceived as being indicative of infections and similar diseases (*Qingshi*, 2:40, Zhang Furen 張夫人; *Qingshi*, 16:471, Xingyang Zheng sheng 滎陽鄭生; *GJXS* 13; *LZZY*, 2:211, Xia Nü 俠女).

There are fewer examples relating to the sense of sight. They, too, are used to warn against the potential danger to health or simply to express the perception of an offence to one's aesthetic sense.<sup>42</sup>

39 *LZZY*, 12: 1685, Jin Se 錦瑟 484. Chapter 67 and the following chapter 68 of *xyj* insist on the foul air (污穢之氣，臭氣難聞，侮著鼻子，聞得那般惡穢，洗污穢之胡同，上逍遙之道路) and the analogy with the toilet (淘毛廁哩). See other examples in *Qingshi*, 11:312, Xin jian jinshi 心堅金石.

40 Bad smell associated with dirt occurs in a number of other passages “Then they saw there was a broom fastened under the buffalo's abdomen which couldn't be untied. It sent out such a strong fishy smell that they were unable to get close.” 腥穢腹下有敝帚緊系不解，腥穢難近 (*ZBY*, 2: 42, Water Ghost Broom 水鬼帚); “they found a thousand pieces of catkins in the wood: They were black or white and when people tried to touch them, they found they were evil-smelling and dirty”. 林莽間綿絮千餘片，或青或白，觸手腥穢，*ZBY*, 16:306, Driving Away the Horseshoe Crab 驅蠶. And on the corruption of death: “the corpse turned malodorous and dirty” 其臭穢 *ZBY*, 21:400, A Magistrate of Jiangdu 江都某令. Furthermore, in another story it is reported that “Every kind of ghost has a kind of smell. The ghosts who died in water smell like mutton. The ghosts who died on the shore smell like the ashes of paper.” 鬼有氣息：水死之鬼羊臊氣，岸死之鬼紙灰氣。(ZBY, 9:169, Water Ghosts Afraid of the Word ‘Clamour’ 水鬼畏囂字). The smell of ashes is not related to the dead, but rather to the practice of burning papers when one wanted to communicate with the other world.

41 *Qingshi* 20:668, 情鬼 [攢瘞之鬼], 某樞密使女.

42 See for instance “Then he thought that he was in shabby clothes, pustular and purulent, in a very dirty aspect, so that he had no face to enter the village. So, hesitatingly, he

## 2 Eros and Thanatos

By extension, these terms concerning purity and filth are metaphorically used in a wide spectrum of meanings, from defilement and immoral behaviour to desecration, intrusion of privacy or pollution through taboos or sexual debasement. As in many other cultures, some aspects of purity in Chinese civilization are associated with sexual abstinence; the notion of 'obscene' often has sexual connotations, and it still retains the meanings 'inauspicious', 'ill-omened', 'profanity', concerning anything that is taboo.<sup>43</sup> Obscene refers to any kind of adultery and debauchery or lustful actions unmentionable lustful actions (奸騙, 百般淫穢, 更不堪言。 *Jinghuayuan* ch. 12), which involve *sāngūliùpó* 三姑六婆, women whose professions are either dishonest or disreputable. Dirty and obscene (*huì*) refers to everything that is connected with sexual practices, the lustful behaviour (穢行) of a nun and the 'dirty towel' 穢巾 related to sexual experiences.<sup>44</sup>

Sexual transgressions are also represented as 'pollution' and 'corruption', by the verbs *rǎn* 染, and *wú* 汙. In a song collected by Feng Menglong, *rǎn* can be rendered "to commit adultery", and the God of Flowers in the Peony Pavilion uses *wú* talking about the sexual encounter of Liu Mengmei and Du Liniang.<sup>45</sup> Obscene also refer to desires (穢念), dreams and affairs (*huàxiè* 穢褻).<sup>46</sup> *Jiānhuì* 奸穢 can be rendered 'debauchery' as it is often related to

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approached his county by and by." 又念敗絮膿穢, 無顏入里門, 尚越趨近邑間。 *LZZY*, 3:432, Pian Pian 翩翩).

43 We find similar nuances in some Chinese terms, such as *huì* 穢, *wū* 汙, *zāng* 髒, *chòu* 臭, and *xīng* 腥.

44 *Qingshi*, 5:146–47, Yan Shifan 嚴世蕃; *LZZY*, 9: 1243, Nong Fu 農婦.

45 "Ah, my flower terrace palace is sullied by lust." 呀, 淫邪展汙了花台殿。 Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖, *Mudanting* 牡丹亭 (The Peony Pavilion), 10. See also the following passage from *Shan'ge*: "The husband of the older sister forces his sister-in-law to commit adultery with him. The whole bed is covered with chaff [wives] as if someone has been sieving rice by the pillow. She says to him: As there is no way to dye over black with another colour, so I am not allowed to commit adultery with you. But you have brazen dough-like face, like a dumpling which is not steamed well because of its thick skin". 姐夫強橫了要偷阿姨, 好像箇枕頭邊篩米滿床糶, 阿姨道姐夫呀, 皂色上還覆教我無染處, 餛飩弗熟你再有介一副厚麵皮。 *Shan'ge*, 4:107B.

46 1) "At night they chatted garrulously, asking questions and answering each other, and their conversations dealt with all the sordid details about the neighbourhood affairs." 夜間絮絮叨叨, 你問我答, 凡街坊穢褻之談, 無所不至。這婆子或時裝醉作風起來, 到說起 (*GJXS* 1).

2) "Being honest one's whole life, and without any evil desires." 僕一生坦直, 胸無穢念。 (*FS* 3).

adultery and moral transgressions, as in “indulging in immoral and abominable behaviour” 恣行奸穢 (北齊武成皇后胡氏 *Qingshi*, 17:507), or “Polluted by adultery, his or her flesh would not be eaten even by jackals and tigers” (人非獸而實獸，奸穢淫腥，肉不食於豺虎。).<sup>47</sup>

There are several episodes in the *Honglou meng*, where love is identified with lust. In fact in the most famous novel we can single out very contradictory attitudes toward love and sexuality, from the erotic dream of Baoyu which turns into a nightmare to the enhancement of his “obsessive passionate nature” (*chiqing* 癡情) and the new concept of “lust of intent” (*yiyin* 意淫).<sup>48</sup> This contradiction is evident also if we compare the Disenchantment Fairy’s warnings in Chapter 5 and Keqing criticism of the confusion about the meaning of love that humans create in order to justify their improper behaviour: “Human beings (mis)take all lustful desires for love, and thus justify their immoral practices by calling themselves passionate romantics, without caring of their important consequences. They don’t know the meaning of the term ‘love’” (把那淫欲之事當作“情”字).<sup>49</sup> This Puritanic attitude goes beyond the carnal lechery of the “fools addicted to wanton lust of the skin” (*pifu lanyin zhi chunwu* 皮膚濫淫之蠢物). Nevertheless, frequent are the expressions for ‘impure, corrupt and dirty’ (髒, 淫穢汗臭, 髒臭, 腥臭): both the ‘dirty thing’ (髒東西) and obscenities (淫穢污臭) are all related to sexual experiences or references;<sup>50</sup> then the expression ‘filthy Tang and stinking Han’ is quoted (髒唐臭漢),<sup>51</sup> and here, too, “dirty and stinking” (*zāngchòu* 髒臭) pertain to amorous

47 *LZZY*, 1:50, Quan Jian 犬奸.

48 That *qing* 情 implies *yin* 淫, or that “love” always contains “lust” is not surprising in the light of modern studies after Freud. However we witness here in the context of the seventeenth-century Chinese novel the use of a term traditionally fraught with negative connotations, namely *yin* 淫, “lust” or “sexual indulgence”, that in combination with *yi* 意, “intent” and “imagery”, attains new meaning and importance. This term is used by Disenchantment Fairy while making the distinction between the vulgarity of the vulgar debauched, and the “lust of intent”, manifested exclusively in narcissistic and passion-stricken beings like Baoyu.

49 *HLM*, 120:1725.

50 See for instance: “Worse, there is one more kind of erotic and romantic literature, which, being full of obscenities and dirt, easily ruins youth.” 更有一種風月筆墨，其淫穢污臭，最易壞人子弟。(*HLM* 1:3).

51 “Since ancient times, even the Han and Tang dynasties were called ‘filthy Tang and stinking Han’, to say nothing of families like ours! Which household has not its own share of amorous affairs?” 從古至今，連漢朝和唐朝，人還說‘髒唐臭漢’，何況咱們這宗人家！誰家沒風流事？(*HLM*, 63:966).

affairs. Finally 'rancid', 'stinking' (*xīngde chiude* 腥的臭的, *xīngchòu* 腥臭), and 'dirty and stinking' (*zāngchòu* 穢臭) refer to profligate companions.<sup>52</sup>

It is interesting to note that one of the categories of 'love' in Feng Menglong's *Qingshi* is *qinghui* 情穢, which we can literally render "abominable in love", "perversion", thus in association with the idea of 'abnormal' and 'perversion' (反常, 情穢).<sup>53</sup> It is dealt with in chapter 17 which includes 37 items divided in four sections (*gōngyè* 宮掖 'palace apartments'; *qīlǐ* 戚裏 'imperial relatives by marriage'; *qíyín* 奇淫 'abnormal sex, perversion'; *zá yín* 雜淫 'various perversions'). Its meaning therefore ranges from 'indulgent licentiousness' to 'odd obscenities' (奇淫). In his comment Feng Menglong warns those who indulge in abnormal lustful behaviour that they will necessarily encounter unexpected disaster (夫有奇淫者必有奇禍。 *Qingshi*, 17:536). Furthermore, in two comments of chapter 21 on 'monsters in love', 情妖, he distinguishes the category of *qinghui* 情穢 from that of 'monsters' by expressly mentioning the Empress Wu: She was a bewitching fox, and yet she was abnormal (武為媚狐，人之反常).<sup>54</sup> In fact:

武墨婦而帝，老而淫，亦人妖也，已人情穢類矣。吁，墨之雄略，百倍男子，乃至求僅為妖而不可得！夫妖猶未穢也乎！

Wu Zhao was a woman, but became Emperor, and when she grew old, she still indulged in lustful behaviour. Although we can consider her as monster, she has already been included among the 'perverted'. Alas! Her ambitious schemes were a hundred times greater than those of men. So she cannot be considered just a monster: to be a monster is not as bad as to be 'perverted'!<sup>55</sup>

This signifies that 'perversion' (穢) is not only abnormal behaviour in the sexual field, but implies a social dimension as it refers to conduct which goes

52 For instance, "All day long, slyly engaged in extramarital sex and adulterous actions, dragging frowsy and filthy people indiscriminately into your rooms?" 成日家偷雞摸狗，腥的臭的，都拉了你屋裏去。(HLM, 44:662). However the pure-impure dyad is also used in an aesthetic and not-moralistic meaning, as in: "I feel clean and clear at the sight of girls, but men appear to me dirty and stinking". 我見了女兒便清爽，見了男子便覺濁臭逼人。(HLM 2:29).

53 See also the second Preface to *Qingshi*, where we read that the "chapters on 'perversion' and 'vulnerability' suffocate the reader's lust" 「穢」「累」以窒其淫。( *Qingshi*, Xu 序, p. IV).

54 *Qingshi* 21:755.

55 *Qingshi* 21:695. See also Li, *Chinese Love Stories from Ch'ing-shi*, 115, 135.

against what is 'normal' or 'proper': for a woman to become Emperor, like a man, and for an old woman to act like a young man was too much!

The case of pollution by blood is puzzling. Blood is always regarded as something dirty, and has a special position in imagery, as it is an outflow from the human body similar as in menstruation, which is polluting par excellence, and because it is generally related to violent death it is itself contaminated and filthy, e.g., "bringing some dirty blood" 拿些穢血來 (*Jingshi tongyan*, 28). In fact, menses blood<sup>56</sup> is called "dirty blood", and pregnant women and women's urine are extremely polluting—but we should question if this is more related to the outflow from the human body or rather to gender. A specific taboo is associated with a woman's outflows and pregnancy,<sup>57</sup> a woman's urine and menses are regarded as dirty and polluting. A woman's body<sup>58</sup> and outflow are often attributed with a desacralizing and polluting magic. The thunder god is particularly prone to pollution and weakening by female contact, (Stealing the Thunder God's Awl 偷雷錐, *ZBY* 8; Thunder God Being Cheated 雷公被給, 2).<sup>59</sup> If a god or a ghost is stained by them, he will lose his power. Thus, in the tale "Lei Gong Bei Wu",<sup>60</sup> urine seems to have such a strong polluting power that it can even affect gods: We see how even the powerful god of thunder, who is so quick to punish sinners, seems almost paralysed after being polluted by an old woman and needs a Daoist purification ceremony in order to be able to fly back to heaven.

Not always are these human humours and outflows polluting. On the contrary, the generative power of male sexual love is often stressed in the literary works of the cult of *qing* 情, starting from the *Mudanting* which combines

56 On *huixue* 穢血, menstrual blood, see: "The wife then pressed her hand on her stomach at once and her menstrual blood sprayed out." 即以手按其婦腹下，穢血噴之。(ZBY, 18:334, Madam Mountain 山娘娘).

57 "I, with my pure body, was polluted by the foul air of the lying-in woman." 我以童真之身污產婦穢氣 (ZBY, 6: 17 Shen's Wife 沈姓妻). On the polluting effects of childbirth, see Furth, "Concepts of Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Infancy in Ch'ing Dynasty China," 7–35.

58 On the need to wash the placenta to avoid impurity and stupidity of the offspring, we read: "If I wash the placenta ten times, it will give birth to handsome and noble children; if I wash it two or three times, the child will be of average quality, and if the placenta hasn't been washed, the children will be stupid and dirty." 洗十次者，兒生清秀而貴；洗兩三次者，中常之人；不洗者，昏愚穢濁之人。(ZBY 5, Dried Human Placenta 洗紫河車).

59 Cf. analogously *LZZY*, 6:814, The Thunder God 雷公: "The god of thunder appeared, and the woman was so frightened that she threw the chamber pot at him, and all the waste adhered to him." 大駭，急以器中便溺傾注之。雷公沾穢。

60 *ZBY*, 23:455, The Thunder God Becomes Polluted 雷公被汗。

the creative force of passions with the resurrection of Du Liniang through her physical union with Liu Mengmei. This in fact seems to mirror the well-established legend of the fox-spirits, who look for union with males in order to become immortals. In a story of *Liaozhai zhiyi*, not only is the semen but also the blood of the young man necessary for the resurrection of a ghost:

She answered: "Because of your long love, I have gained the vital energy of living people, and moreover I have been eating cooked food everyday, now my white bones suddenly seem to come alive. But I still need some semen and blood of a living man to relive." Yang laughed: "It's you who did not allow it. Have I ever deliberately begrudged it you?" The girl said: "After making love, you will be sick for some twenty days, but you can be cured by medicine." So they enjoyed the pleasures of love.

Afterwards, she put on her clothes and got up, saying: "I still need a drop of fresh blood. Will you endure the pain for the sake of loving me?" Yang took a sharp knife and slit his arm and the blood flowed out. The girl lay on bed and the blood dropped down into her navel. Then the girl got up and said: "I won't come any more. But you should remember, after a hundred days, when you see a blue bird singing on the top of the tree in front of my grave, you should open the grave as quickly as possible."<sup>61</sup>

Here, the bodily fluids are not impure or polluting, but rather, they are miraculous life-giving medicine. However these outflows are from a male and not a female, and they are the expression of the love and generosity of the protagonist.<sup>62</sup>

"The filthy body of the woman", *āngzang zhi shēn* 骯髒之身, is one of the most explicit misogynistic manifestations:

豈果脂粉之氣，不勢而威？胡乃骯髒之身，不寒而慄？

Doesn't the wife who has the smell of cosmetics have an invisibly awesome power? Otherwise why would men of dignity tremble with fear in the face of a woman's body?<sup>63</sup>

61 LZZY, 03: 0336, Lian Suo 連瑣.

62 Cf. Zeitlin, *The Phantom Heroine*, 28–42.

63 LZZY, 6:731, Ma Jie Pu 馬介甫.

It is not surprising that magic and sexuality are interrelated with good and evil. Yuan Mei talks of “the obscene stories concerning Wu Zetian” 武后淫穢事, and her incestuous sex relations (*wū* 汙 “defile, polluted”).<sup>64</sup> As a man of his time, Yuan Mei also reflects on the fears and taboos pertaining to sexual matters in many of his tales. Although he relates such episodes and portents with an ironic smile, in fact he was in fact reporting stories that were in circulation at the time and that might surprise or excite the readers. In some cases he uses the term *hui* 穢, “filthy” and *wū* 汙[污] “to defile, polluted”, reflecting the common attitude toward sexual taboos and transgressions, even if such episodes are probably recounted in an ironic vein.

Also in Buddhist scriptures and commentaries a specific impurity is attributed to women, whose “five impurities”, *wulou* 五漏 (contrasted with the “seven treasures” 七寶) are attributed to female vices and sins, such as jealousy, vanity, deceit, and sexual desire.

*Yinhui* 淫穢, obscenities, and *huiwū* 穢污, profanation, pollution, are also used in *Qingshi* for two cases of profanation of corpses through acts of necrophilia (淫屍): these episodes occurred in the Han period, and were perpetrated by robbers or rebels who opened the tombs to take the jewelry and performed obscene acts with the well preserved corpse (*Qingshi*, 17:535, Yin shi 淫屍). The adultery of a woman with a dog is mentioned by Pu Songling as the extreme of profligacy, a contamination, rather than perversion as bestiality:

人非獸而實獸，奸穢淫腥，肉不食於豺虎。

Human beings are not beasts, but can really become beasts. Polluted by such horrible adultery, his or her flesh would not be eaten even by jackals and tigers.<sup>65</sup>

As we mentioned, Yuan Mei talks of the “obscenity” of many sexual affairs and incestuous relations: obscene are “the stories concerning Wu Zetian” 武后淫穢事, dirty words pronounced while having sexual intercourse” 交媾穢語,<sup>66</sup> and punishments are deserved for lust:

64 See *ZBY*, 23:460, The Tool of Love 風流具.

65 *LZZY*, 1:50, Quan Jian 犬奸.

66 “A bride of the Sun family of Linping County was haunted by a ghost and she claimed she was ‘Madam Mountain’. She liked to paint her face and wear colourful clothes. She also hugged her husband in the daytime and said some obscene words which might be said in the course of making love”. 臨平孫姓者新婦為魅所憑，自稱“山娘娘”，喜敷粉著艷衣，白日抱其夫作交媾穢語。(ZBY, 18:334, Madam Mountain 山娘娘).

律載：雞奸者照以穢物入人口例，決杖一百

According to the law, the sodomite must have dirt put into his mouth and be flogged one hundred times.<sup>67</sup>

Another page on the concept of pure-impure and the related sense of horror can be found in the grotesque image of the sexed bodies and the sinister presentation of sexual transgression and sexual taboos. Some repulsive scenes convey a feeling of anxiety and terror to the reader rather than a joyful and innocent image of sex. Sexual taboos and transgressions, like a woman's body and outflows,—as it has been mentioned—are often attributed with a desacralizing and polluting magic.

Pollution by death can be active or passive: it can come about either through profanation of a corpse or a skeleton, or contamination through contact with human or animal remains. A case of contamination, by touching the body of a dead monster, is presented in the *Xiyouji*:

那呆子不嫌穢汗，一把揪住尾子，拖拖扯扯。

That idiot Bajie did not worry about getting dirty, and just grabbed the corpse of the monster by its tail, and dragged it.<sup>68</sup>

Death itself is a source of pollution: the breath of ghosts and monsters is terribly foul and icy, like a corpse. Here too death is the source of 'desecration', or of 'contamination', especially when it is the consequence of violence. In some of Yuan Mei's stories a recurrent theme is the presence of ghosts in places which had been battlefields centuries before, and where the memory of blood and suffering seems unforgettable even for the heedless traveler. In another story, edited by Feng Menglong, it is said that "contaminating the sky with the foulness of the murderous atmosphere [for excessive killing] is against the heavenly Way that loves life" 殺氣穢空，殊非天道好生之意。<sup>69</sup>

In Chinese literary sources many calamities are related to damage of or disrespect to graves. This infelicitously suggests that violation of human remains is a part of Chinese death culture. Thus, this phenomenon may take the form of desacralization of the sacrality of human remains, but also the consequent pollution by something impure, such as what is related with the underworld or

67 ZBY 6, Scholar Cheng of Changshu 常熟程生.

68 XYJ 79.

69 GJS 13.



with female outflows. From the ritual point of view, it is sufficient to unluckily and involuntarily move a tomb stone or damage an urn.<sup>70</sup> Particularly dangerous is disrespect or even any unintended damage to skeletons, corpses or human bones. This provokes the angry reactions of the earthly souls, the remaining energy of which is attached to the poor rests and bones.<sup>71</sup>

Besides the dangers coming from the sexual sphere, then, another source of pollution derives from the contact with death. If we consider the everyday life and the syncretistic world of beliefs, the concepts of purity and dirt become more and more complex. Especially in literary works we find multifarious facets, especially in the symbolic and fantastic imagery. Moreover sorcery, demonic magic, and black arts (妖符邪術) are considered in many cultures illegal or almost illegal practices, on the border between life and death, salvation and danger. But the 'demonic other' is inside everyone. The dual soul discourse—the coexistence of the good heavenly soul and the evil earthly soul (魂善而魄惡)—expresses the dark and dangerous potentiality in every being, evidenced by the contamination of death. At the end of a tale about two friends who meet after the death of one of them, in the moment of the farewell of the dead friend, his progressive transformation into a terrifying and horrible corpse shows the total change of personality. The author explains this phenomenon as follows:

人之魂善而魄惡，人之魂靈而魄愚。其始來也，一靈不泯，魄附魂以行；其既去也，心事既畢，魂一散而魄滯。魂在，則其人也；魂去，則非其人也。世之移屍走影，皆魄為之，惟有道之人為能制魄。

The heavenly soul of man is virtuous, while his earthly soul is evil. The former is intelligent, while the latter is obtuse. When the dead first came, his intelligence was still intact, so the earthly soul could be attached to the heavenly soul and move [together]; when the body left, its worries had been removed, so the heavenly soul dispersed and the earthly soul was at a standstill. As long as the heavenly soul stayed, he kept his human personality; but when it left, he lost his human personality. The moving-corpse and shadow-walking in the world are all done by earthly souls, and only men of the Way can control their earthly souls.<sup>72</sup>

70 See for instance *Suanming xiansheng gui* 算命先生鬼, *ZBY* 2.

71 On trampling on a grave (踐踏汗穢, 穢雜), cf. *ZBY*, 4: 70, Mr. Ye's Wife 葉生妻; *ZBY*, 23:466, The Private Secretary from the Raozhou Prefecture Office 饒州府幕友.

72 *ZBY* 1, Scholars of Nanchang 南昌士人.

The fear of contamination by dead people is mentioned in another description of the consequences of eating ghosts' food, in the story "Ghosts' market", where the warm noodles and rice bought at the night market (of ghosts) are ultimately transformed into repulsive animals. The market looked like any night market, and in the shops one could see "the food was cooked and the noodles, rice and steaming food were all piping hot" (肆中食物正熟，面飯蒸食，其氣上騰). As the main character felt hungry, he bought some food that he quickly ate with appetite. But some hours later,

頓覺胸次不快。俯而嘔之，蠕蠕然在地跳躍。諦視之，乃蝦蟆也，蚯蚓蟠結甚多，心甚惡之，然亦無他患。又數歲乃卒。

He suddenly felt uncomfortable in his body. He bent down and vomited, and then he found that what he had vomited was jumping and squirming on the ground. He fixed his eyes on it, and found it was a toad entangled with many earthworms. He felt very disgusted, but there was nothing else wrong. Several years later, he died.<sup>73</sup>

Vomiting is the most immediate and visceral expression of disgust, and it is the body's defence to expel something noxious. Even if Yuan Mei's words lead us to doubt that his death—as it happened several years later—was related to that night and that it may have only been a nightmare, still the memory of this disgusting metamorphosis of the food reminds us of the obscenity of death.

And again the world of living beings and the world of death are contrasted in the *Qingshi*. *Xiéhuì* 邪穢 is the dark and malignant side of the world, which is related to death, evil and ghosts.

人乃至盛之純陽，鬼乃幽陰之邪穢。今子與幽陰之魅同處而不知，邪穢之物共宿而不悟，一日真元泄盡，災眚來臨。

Human beings belong to the luxuriant pure yang, while ghosts belong to the foulness and evil of the dark yin. Now, you live together with the demons and monsters of the netherworld and do not know, you lodge in the same place with dirty and evil things and do not realize it. One day, when your vital spirit is exhausted, disasters will arrive.<sup>74</sup>

73 ZBY 23:473, Ghost Market 鬼市.

74 *Qingshi* 20:669–670, Fu Li Qing 符麗卿.

### 3 Ideological Background

Some elements that are essential to understanding the concept of pure-impure come from philosophical elaboration.<sup>75</sup> The main intellectual and ideological trend in the last millennium of the Chinese empire is so-called Neo-Confucianism, a broad current of thought which started during the Song dynasty and lasted until the end of the empire.

The Neo-Confucian mundane perspective, in its moderate search for the Middle Way, it seems did not need the categories of pure-impure in its elaborations. For the Confucians one of the main questions concerns the concept of “order-disorder”, “harmony-disharmony” in society, rather than “sin” and “pollution”. In “Reflections on Things at Hand” (*Jinsilu* 近思錄) we read “the good government must be ready to embrace the uncultivated and the *unclean*.” (治之之道，必有包含荒穢之量).<sup>76</sup> However Neo-Confucianism was a synthesis of various doctrines, a broad stream with various currents. From the material I have examined and from the perspective I followed, I have noticed the prevalence of an individual discourse on moral perfection in the category pure/impure. However, this dichotomy obviously also has implications in the social and political fields. In the Zhedong 浙東 school at the beginning of the Ming era (1368–1644), certain Puritanic concerns played a part in setting the ideological basis of the new dynasty, contributing to the formation of the autocratic political system of Late Imperial China.<sup>77</sup> The advisers of the first Ming Emperor, who emphasised the danger of evil in the world, attributed major power to the political authorities in order to maintain order in society.<sup>78</sup> Song Lian 宋濂 (1310–1381), Liu Ji 劉基 (1311–1375), and Wang Wei 王禕 (1323–1374), were advisers to the first Ming Emperor. Wang Wei expresses the feeling of pervasive evil, impending both on individual and society:

75 For a more complete frame of the ideological background, we should take into account other doctrines which were widespread among the Chinese population. I have not dealt with religious sources, but some common concepts of purity and pollution related to Buddhism and Daoism appear in the literary material that I examined.

76 Italics mine. Cf. Chan Wing-tsit, *Reflections on Things at Hand*. 206. *Jinsilu* is an anthology of Neo-Confucianism compiled in the 12th century.

77 Cf. Dardess, *Confucianism and Autocracy*.

78 See for example the passage in *Longmenzi, ning Dao ji* 龍門子，凝道記, in Song Lian 宋濂, *Song Wenxiangong quanji* 宋文憲公全集 [Collected Works by Song Lian 宋濂], 52:10b, where the predominance of evil over man is acknowledged (for instance: “Few are good people, while many are evil men” 善人少而惡人多).

人生而性善者也。溺於利欲與之俱化而不自知悲矣。。。眾君子之中，一小人容焉，鮮有不敗其成者。蠹蟻仆柱梁，蚊虻走牛羊。小人雖寡，為害蓋甚鉅也。故國家之務去小人也。如農夫之除稂莠。稂莠雖微，不得不除者也。

Man is born with his innate good nature. However, indulging in profit and desire, he changes completely, without being aware of it and complaining it. [...] If a mean man is tolerated within a group of gentlemen, he will not seldom spoil their accomplishments. Pillars and beams collapse because of small worms and termites, while cattle and sheeps are driven by tiny horseflies. Even a few bad individuals do great harm. Therefore the duty of the state is to eliminate worthless persons, as a peasant uproots weeds, however small they are they must be uprooted!<sup>79</sup>

From the theoretical point of view a kind of metaphysicization of the contrast purity-impurity can be found in the Neo-Confucian elaborations, and concerns the different degrees of purity or turbidity of the cosmic energy, *qi* (氣). The term *zhuó* 濁 is frequently used in the philosophical discourse as a metaphor for the psychophysical energy (*qi*) when it is turbid. Essays by Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) and other Neo-Confucian thinkers resort to this dichotomy to interpret the differentiation of beings in the universe and to trace the cause of evil in the world.<sup>80</sup> Therefore, it is worth going back to the metaphysical concept which is at the basis of Neo-Confucian theory, as well as to its social and moral doctrine.

Zhang Zai 張載 (1020–1077) was probably the first to develop an organic view attributing the potential of evil to energy. He also contributed to the formulation of the concept of “psychophysical nature” (*qizhi zhi xing* 氣質之性), i.e. “the nature of energy and of the natural dispositions”, as opposed to the pure universal or heavenly Nature ascribed to Mencian theory. Tied up with the acceptance of Mencius’s theory of the original goodness of human nature and the relationship between the innate goodness and the widespread practice of evil, is the Neo-Confucian use of the term *qizhi* 氣質, which can be translated as “energy and natural disposition”, “actual personal character”, or

79 Cf. Wang Wei 王禕, “Words from a Wine Cup” (*Zhici* 卮辭), 13b; italics mine. Cf. also Dardess *Confucianism and Autocracy*, 150–151.

80 I discussed this matter in my *Il “peccato” in Cina. Bene e male nel neoconfucianesimo dalla metà del XIV alla metà del XIX secolo* and *Emozioni e desideri in Cina. La riflessione neoconfuciana dalla metà del XIV alla metà del XIX secolo*.

“psychophysical nature”. In speaking of dualism, what is principally intended is the dyad *qi-li* 氣理, energy-principle. The principle, the Way (*dao* 道) and what there is above the forms (*xing er shang* 形而上) constitutes the world of moral perfection, of universality, of the natural and ethical order. Energy, concrete objects and what lies below or within the forms constitute the world of amorality, of creativity, of instability. Heavenly nature is moral, good and pure, while psychophysical nature corresponds more or less to each individual’s real personality and can be good or bad. Like all beings, man is formed by the condensation of energy and by its polarization in yin and yang, cloudy and clear, and it is here that the differences between the various beings originate. Zhang Zai set up this concept of *qizhi* in opposition to that of the “nature of heaven and earth” (*tian di zhi xing* 天地之性): original and pure nature, i.e. the moral nature of Mencius.<sup>81</sup> The occurrence of evil derives solely from the movement of *qi* which is distributed in various forms: it is from these forms that opposites arise and opposition leads to conflict and discrimination, which may give rise to deviations from equilibrium and from the original emptiness. If man is to return to the principle, he must modify psychophysical nature, i.e. his own actual character. The transformation of this second nature (*bianhua qizhi* 變化氣質) through study and the perfecting of one’s moral being is the way to regain original nature and eliminate all distinction between self and the rest of the universe.<sup>82</sup> Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032–1085) also went on to compare human nature to water: it is always originally pure and can become cloudy only later, or “the source is good but the rivulets may become polluted” (*yu an shan er liu e* 原善而流惡),<sup>83</sup> i.e. nature “is originally good but may become bad”.

It was within this context that Zhu Xi tackled the problem of the origin of evil, seeking to give a definitive answer to the questions that had arisen in the period of Mencius. He answered the question as to why negative phenomena

81 Cf. “Collected Works by Zhang Zai” (*Zhang Zai ji* 張載集, *Qizhi* 氣質), 265–270. Further studies are needed on the differences between the monistic schools and Daoist monism. With regard to the Daoist critique of the Cheng-Zhu school’s distinction of two natures, Robinet observes: “The Taoists [Daoists] insist on the fact that the distinction elaborated by the Neo-Confucians between the <nature of energy-matter> and <cosmic nature> is neither ultimate nor fundamental. [...] These two natures are but one.” Cf. Isabelle Robinet, “La notion de *hsing* dans le taoïsme et son rapport avec celle du confucianisme”, 195.

82 According to Zhang Zai, only destiny, life and death do not regard the moral sphere and cannot be changed by man. Cf. Chan Wing-tsit, “The Neo-Confucian Solution of the Problem of Evil”, 780–783.

83 Cf. *Yishu*, 1, cited in: Mizoguchi Yūzō 溝口雄三, “Mōshi jigi soshō no rekishiteki kōsatsu” 孟子字義疏證の歴史的考察 [Historical Exam of Mencius’ Exegesis by Dai Zhen], 157.

were more frequent than positive by asserting that the cause was to be sought in their random formation at the moment of the condensation of the energy constituting all things, their birth being by chance (*ouran* 偶然) and independent of the will of the principle.<sup>84</sup> Any change in energy during the process of formation (from limpid to cloudy, from light to dark, from partial to impartial, from hot to cold or from sweet to sour) brought about by the incessant interaction of the two poles of yin and yang—affects the nature of the beings involved. Zhu Xi thus regarded the process of the differentiation of energy and the random nature of birth as determining the differences in the manifestation of the principle and as the origin of evil and of imperfections. He again asserted, on the model of the principle-energy dyad, the presence of what is practically a second type of nature, “psychophysical nature” (*qizhi zhi xing*), determining man’s imperfections and his impulses to deviate from goodness. This psychophysical nature performs functions analogous to those of the temperamentum in *De Natura Hominis* by Nemesius of Emesa (4th century), who draws a distinction between temperament and soul and derives vice and passion from the former.<sup>85</sup> Zhu Xi admits that the two types of nature cannot be separated in the way that principle and energy are, and that the second type can be permeated by the first through the influence of knowledge. However, he then goes on to reaffirm the essential difference in character between the two. Echoing the Daoist definition that likens superior nature to a divine ray, *lingguang* 靈光,<sup>86</sup> he uses another image: “it is like speaking of a ray. In order to reflect a ray you need first of all a mirror or some water. The ray corresponds to (original) nature and the mirror or (calm) water to psychophysical nature. If there is no mirror or water, the ray itself is dispersed.”<sup>87</sup> He thus reconfirms the conclusion that while the principle is necessarily good, energy can be either good or bad.

Wang Yangming (Wang Shouren 王守仁, 1472–1529) asserted the unity of human nature, which he identifies with the mind-heart and with the principle. The whole process of human moral experience can be summarised into the following sequence: mind corrupted by selfish desires (impurities like copper or lead) ⇒ loses the moral mind’s correctness ⇒ human mind ⇒ rectification of

84 Cf. Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類, 4:79–81; 55:1307.

85 Nemesius writes that according to the bilious excess or humidity and heat of temperament, man is naturally inclined to anger, fear or lust. Cit. in Ciavolella, *La “malattia d’amore” dall’Antichità al Medioevo*, 36.

86 Cf. Robinet “La notion de *hsing* (...),” 188.

87 Cf. *Zhuzi yulei*, 4:65; Graham, *Studies in Chinese Philosophy*, 412–435.

human mind ⇒ moral mind ⇒ identified with the heaven principle (purity and perfection like pure gold) = mind.<sup>88</sup>

Lü Kun 呂坤 (1536–1618) takes up the mythical language of the traditional doctrine of cosmic energy and the Neo-Confucian theory of twofold nature to distinguish the following categories in terms of quality of energy: a) saints and sages among men, precious mushrooms and trees among plants, the unicorn, the phoenix, the turtle and the dragon among animals (pure, harmonious energy and perfect nature); b) criminals among men, brambles among plants, and wild beasts among animals (very cloudy energy); c) mediocre and stupid men, various common kinds of plants and animals (impure, disorderly energy).<sup>89</sup>

From the above short notes we gain an idea of the role of purity in the economy of the universe. An excellent example of literary reception of Neo-Confucian concepts is provided by a passage from the “Dream of the Red Chamber” (*Hongloumeng* 紅樓夢), where Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹 (1715?–1763)

88 Cf. Kuroda 黒田, *Shina shinri shisōshi* 支那心理思想史, 392. The following passages may clarify Wang’s position: “In learning to become sage, the student needs only to get rid of selfish human desires and preserve the heavenly principle, which is like refining gold and achieving perfection in quality. [...] The reason the sage has become a sage is that his mind has become completely identified with the heavenly principle and is no longer mixed with any impurity of selfish human desires. It is comparable to pure gold, which attains its purity because its golden quality is perfect and is no longer mixed with copper or lead. A man must have reached the state of being completely identified with the heavenly principle before he becomes a sage, and gold must be perfect in quality before it becomes pure. However the abilities of sages differ in degree, just as the several pieces of gold quantitatively differ in weight. [...] However, to be pure gold depends not on quantity but on perfection in quality, and to be a sage depends not on ability or effort but on being completely identified with the heavenly principle. Therefore, even an ordinary person, if he is willing to learn so as to enable his mind to become completely identified with the heavenly principle, can also become a sage, in the same way that although a one ounce piece, when compared with a 10,000 ounce piece, is very different in quantity, it is not deficient in perfection in quality. This is why it is said that every man can become Yao and Shun. [...] There is only one mind. Before it is mixed with selfish human desires, it is called the moral mind, and after it is mixed with human desires contrary to its natural state, it is called the human mind. When the human mind is rectified, it is called the moral mind and when the moral mind loses its correctness, it is called the human mind.” (*Chuanxilu, Yangming quanshu*, respectively 1:21a, 1:20b–21a, 1:5b Translation by Chan, *Instructions for Practical Living*, 16–17, 60–61, with minor changes.)

89 Cf. *Quwei zhai wenji* 去偽齋文集, 6, cit. in: Jiang Guozhu 姜國柱 / Zhu Kuiju 朱葵菊, *Zhongguo lishi shang de renxing lun* 中國歷史上的人性論 [On human nature in Chinese history], 284.

distinguishes between pure and splendid energy, the endowment of honest men, and evil, perverse energy, the curse of the wicked. The author does not confine himself to simply contrasting the two energies but embarks upon a far-ranging exposition enabling him to explain the causes of differences in men's character.

Influences of the Neo-Confucian perspective are also evident in fiction. In the *Xiyoubu* 西遊補, chapter 16, we read:

天地初開，清者歸於上，濁者歸於下；有一種半清半濁歸於中，是為人類。

At the beginning of the universe, the clear essence moved upwards, while the impure essence moved downwards. And what was half pure and half impure belongs to the middle part, and this is the human genre.

In fact, the purity and impurity of the energy of which man is made up, could explain destiny, morality and personality, social position, gender roles, etc. This hierarchy of status also reflected moral standing in which the principle was given priority over desire and which feared the subversive potential of the passions.<sup>90</sup> Thus the high position of the literati, the lower condition of women, the inferiority of merchants and artisans, could find a moral and 'metaphysical' explanation in the degree of purity of the cosmic psychophysical energy that composes one's 'concrete' nature. The latter, as we know, was conceived of in a hierarchic fashion, according to the purity of the energy with which each being was endowed. According to this moral and social hierarchy animals, for example, were placed above plants and minerals; men, superior to all other beings, were subdivided into literati, peasants, etc. and woman was in any case viewed as being inferior to the male, and was thus necessarily attributed with a more turbid energy. Zhu Xi was merely recording the prevailing opinion concerning woman's inferior intellectual and moral condition, when he pointed out the limits the passions impose even when human virtue is present, and

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90 For example, in the already mentioned "Reflections on Things at Hand" we read: "Between man and woman there is a difference in value and between husband and wife an order of priority. This is a constant principle. If you follow the passions, you give free vent to desire, and are conditioned by pleasure. Man, as he is at the mercy of his desires, will lose his strength of character and woman, by yielding to pleasure, will be forgetful of her subordinate position. Therefore misfortune will reign and there will be no advantage".



compared this female weakness with the inadequacy of the impetuous rage of a man of low social standing.<sup>91</sup>

It was in the new atmosphere of the ‘cult of *qing*’, at the end of the Ming, that the answer of the poet Xie Ximeng 謝希孟, a disciple of the famous Neo-Confucian thinker Lu Xiangshan 陸象山 (1139–1193), to his master, was rediscovered and reappraised:

天地間靈淑之氣只鍾於女子而非男人。

The marvellous and clear energy of the universe is always concentrated in the woman and not in man.<sup>92</sup>

This statement smacked of sacrilege and subversion, because it referred to the Neo-Confucian cosmological conception but overturned its universal order. On several occasions in his works, Feng Menglong cited Xie’s proposition, with slight variations, although he was not the only one, and the rediscovery of this quotation and the rise of the new anti-rigourist and non-conformist trends of the late Ming period, made it proverbial also in the following dynasty.<sup>93</sup> For different reasons, Xie Ximeng may also be associated with the two major writers

91 In answer to a disciple who asked him if the excessive fear displayed by women in facing a number of situations was due to the partiality of their psychophysical substance (*qi pian* 氣偏), Zhu Xi replied that their human nature flowed solely from the feelings of love (*furen zhi ren zhi liu cong ai shang qu* 婦人之仁只流從愛上去). In another passage, he compared the uncontrollable love of a woman’s humaneness (*furen zhi ren zhi buneng ren qi ai* 婦人之仁是不能忍其愛) with the impetuous rage characterizing the courage of a man of low social standing. Cf. *Zhuzi yulei* 4:57; 45:1164–65. See also the passage in which Zhu Xi concedes that women can understand the mind—because it is easy to understand—but denies that they can understand the conception of *Mencius* (*ibid.*, 59:1403–4).

92 Cf. *Qingshi* 5:154.

93 *Qingshi*, 4:132; 5:154; *XSHY* 11:226. The “paradoxical” answer given by Xie Ximeng was however contained in an edifying story that concluded with the hero’s ultimate conversion. According to this story, despite his master’s repeated reprimands for his relations with a courtesan, Xie seems to have made the latter a present of a small house significantly named the Pavilion of the Mandarin Ducks—symbol of lifelong couple’s affection in Chinese tradition, accompanying the gift with a poem as dedication. Xie replied to the request of his master, whose moral rigour had not diminished his interest in literary compositions, with the phrase quoted above, which evidently represented the text of the dedication. The story then tells of the silence of the indignant master, the disciple’s final enlightenment and his abandonment of the courtesan. However, the proposition that is constantly referred to is that of the “*marvellous and splendid energy of the universe concentrated in the woman*”. Compare with the theme of the gift from Governor Zhang in the “Pavilion of the Swallows” to the courtesan Guan Panpan in Song and Yuan theatre

of the Qing dynasty: Cao Xueqin and Pu Songling. While the former on several occasions compares the purity of young girls to that of water, in contrast to the impurity of men's nature, the latter shows a strong inclination to attribute to many heroines in his works a supernatural power, or at least a more than ordinary power.<sup>94</sup>

Challenges to the absolute contrast of the two terms of the dyad pure-impure can be found in some unorthodox writings in the late Ming period. They can be traced back to the Buddhist image of the lotus flower that is unsoiled by the mud from which it springs (蓮花出污泥而不染). The lotus flower is the symbolic image of the holy and pure personality, and however it grows from the dirty mud (出泥蓮花 and 青泥蓮花, lit: "lotus flowers in dark mud")—and in poetry has become a metaphor for female beauty.<sup>95</sup> Among the writers of the Taizhou 泰州 movement, Mei Dingzuo 梅鼎祚 (1549–1615), played on this contrast of filth and purity, clod of filthy mud (泥摸) and pure lotus (蓮花), and paradoxically mixed the opposing terms, extolling the talent and virtues of the courtesans.<sup>96</sup>

#### 4 Final Notes

From a brief survey of various examples directly or indirectly related to the notions of pure-impure, I found a continuum in the use of certain words, and some affinities and interrelations, keeping in mind both the semantic contents

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and in Ming narrative (cf. Lévy, *Inventaire analytique et critique du conte chinois en langue vulgaire*, 402–404).

- 94 For Xie Ximeng's concept and the theme of the pure essence of women, see my essay "The Myth of Love—passion in Late Imperial China", 131–195.
- 95 See for instance Yang Pu 楊樸, *Meiren huanmeng de zhihuan bianxing: 'hetang yuese' de jingshen fenxi* 美人幻夢的置換變形:《荷塘月色》的精神分析 [Transformation and Replacement of the 'Dreaming about Beautiful Woman': Psychoanalysis of the 'Moonlight Over the Lotus Pond'].
- 96 See Zheng Peikai 鄭培凱, "Chuwuni er buran—Mei Dingzuo lun changji de cai yu de" 出污泥而不染——梅鼎祚 (1549–1615) 論娼妓的才與德 [From Mud and Yet Pure—Mei Dingzuo (1549–1615) On Talent and Virtue of a Prostitute], 51–72. See also on the courtesan culture, Sufeng Xu, 青泥蓮花 *Lotus Flowers Rising from the Dark Mud: Late Ming Courtesans and Their Poetry*. *Zhuó* occurs also in derogatory expressions in appellations, such as "dirty thing", "idiot", "blockhead" 濁東西, 濁蠢, 濁蠢才, 濁物, (see for instance in *Jingpingmei*, and *HML*) or in berating a rumour-monger "foul mouths and filthy tongues" 濁口臭舌 (*HLM*, 2). Thus it may refer to the limited intelligence or integrity of a person rather than to purity and cleanliness (for instance *zhuórén* 濁人 muddle-headed person) (*HLM*, 66:1006).

and the Chinese terms. It is possible to trace a logical process starting from pure water, or from physical pollution through excrement, filth and spoiled food, to more abstract and symbolic levels, which extend the meaning of specific terms or compounds to sexual morality, to the sacrality or desecration of a place or a body, to an aesthetic appreciation, to the evaluation of a person, and thus to his / her image in society.

In order to understand the meaning and functions of the concept of 'purity' it was necessary to examine the basic antonyms, 'pure' and 'impure', such as *qīng* 清 and *zhuó* 濁, 'cleaning' *dí* 滌 and 'soilure' *huì* 穢, or 'polluted' *wūrǎn* 污染, 'clean' *gānjìng* 乾淨, and 'unclean' or 'filthy' *huì* 穢, *zāng* 髒. Generally speaking, we can deduce that the notions of pure-impure are very common in the everyday life of every society, even if their conceptualization involves highly elaborated interpretations of reality and moral doctrines. In China too they appear very frequently and cover different fields, from their physical to the symbolic, aesthetic and ritual meanings, provided Ricoeur's words—quoted at the beginning of this article—may appear excessive. The perception of pure is, however, different from other cultures, and peculiarities are often related to a different concept of the 'holy' and religious approach. Respect and disrespect concern mainly the interrelation with the ghost, the spirit or the god, rather than a behaviour or a pact stipulated with the divinity. It would be outside the scope of this essay to discuss the different approach to the religious phenomenon in Chinese civilization. Nonetheless, we can observe some 'symptoms' of such differences in the perception of the dichotomies pure-impure and clean-dirty. The notion of 'desecration' that is often involved, implies the idea of 'holy' and 'sacred', which does not altogether correspond to the western equivalents. Even the concepts of material and physical purity are influenced by the above attitudes. Sexual abstention is commended not on the basis of the spirit-matter dichotomy, but rather on the basis of gender roles: longevity and self-perfection for males, and chastity for females; men were concerned about striving for longevity—through sexual techniques and above all through efforts to keep their semen. From the examination of the expressions which include a notion of pollution or filth, we discover a dark side of sexual representation. It seems that the sexual sphere is not considered as natural and acceptable as in Gaozi's famous line "Appetite for food and desire for sex are part of human nature" (食色性也). How can a community reject as poisonous and polluting something acceptable? And if sexuality, like alimentation—provided moderate—is natural, acceptable and corresponding to human nature, it would not carry any sense of uncleanness.<sup>97</sup>

97 What I mean here is that the idea of 'unclean' and disgusting reveals a deep refusal, a visceral difficulty to accept a phenomenon as 'natural'. Even death and sickness may be

On the contrary Eberhard noted the sense of uncleanness of body functions and sex, as well as several sexual taboos, and Hsü stated that “sex is considered unclean, and women carry the burden of this uncleanness”.<sup>98</sup> The complexity of these interactions makes generalizations difficult, and Yuan Mei’s perception as it appears in *Zibuyu*—frequent expressions associate sexuality with the presence of impurity, disgusting and polluting—is exemplary. The ambiguity of his position, at least from our contemporary perspective, is evident in his support of sexual liberty on the one hand, and in the dark and fearful aspects of sexuality, which emerge in his stories on the other.

Also in Chinese culture a sense of impurity seems to be driven by the horror of death and the fear of being overwhelmed by the passion of love. Behind the concepts singled out in the course of the survey it is possible to trace the most important aspects of human life, death and [sexual] love. Other topics may also be associated to pollution and impurity, for example, insanity, which denotes what is different, abnormal, strange, socially subversive. Chinese culture shares with other civilizations some taboos concerning the dual poles of eros and thanatos. In Chinese civilization, too—even if an Apollinean approach to dealing with this awareness prevails—the final realities of birth and death are perceived as pollution, that have to be controlled. In some tales the fear of contamination by dead people is manifested in the consequences of eating ghosts’ food, the story “Ghosts’ market”, where the warm noodles and rice are transformed into repulsive animals. In Chinese culture the dichotomy between spiritual and physical love is not as important as in the West, and the discrimination against sensual love appears in forms that are often different from some western ancient and medieval

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considered ‘natural’ because the experience teaches us that all men face health problems and finally end their life, but in fact very few of them can accept and understand these common phenomena without the help of consolatory theories and the resort to the sacred.

98 Hsü, *Under the Ancestors’ Shadow*, 61–73, 147–54, 209, 241–42. See Eberhard, *Guilt and Sin in Traditional China*, 64–65, 81. Some other examples have been singled out in the important essay by Wu Pei-yi, who examined moral and philosophical texts. Several literary works address the relation between the obscene and sexual desire: *Chan zhen houshi* associates illicit love with filth and stench (1:6 and 55:429–31. See McMahon, “Two Late Ming Vernacular Novels: *Chan Zhen yishi* and *Chan Zhen houshi*”). *Liaozhai zhiyi*, associates sexual relations with the “extreme turpitude” [of man and woman living together], *tianxia zhi zhihui* 天下之至穢 (LZZY, 11:1540, Le Zhong 樂仲), or with “vulgarity”, *sudao* 俗道 (LZZY, 9:1270, Princess Yun Luo 雲蘿公主).

traditions.<sup>99</sup> Much of Chinese puritanism seems to be linked to hygiene and social concerns while European debated free will and original and actual sin, framed in the concept of sin and *gratia*.

The traditional concepts of impurity, danger of woman and sexual morality are much in evidence in the traditional sources, and we can easily find such concepts associated with ‘visceral’ reactions, such as the sense of “obscurity”, “disgust”, or “repulsion” for something which is symbolically felt to be “dirty and filthy”. Especially those literary sources that go beyond the conscious representation of reality, like fiction on strange and unusual phenomena and on relations between the spirits and men, offer interesting insights into the inner world. Here taboo and ‘visceral’ feelings are more overt than elsewhere.

Terms like *hui* 穢 and compounds cover a range of meanings that share the basic sense of refusal and repulsion, in physical, moral and allegoric spheres. Thus, this short survey can contribute to explaining how, from the clean–dirty dyad, which is used in everyday life for physical matters and reflects the concern about hygiene and infections, these notions are symbolically extended to cope with the subconscious and the metaphysical spheres, the horror of death and the fear of being overwhelmed by passion, the mysteries which are behind them, and to sublimate such fears into something transcending the red dust of our limited existence.<sup>100</sup>

The pure–impure categories also have a social and political role in Chinese culture. The purity of cosmic energy is an element of justification of social hierarchy and discrimination, but it is not the basis for demarcation from neighboring societies or for “xenofication”. Demarcation from other socio-political entities is based entirely on a culturalistic concept, in which discrimination is based on the acculturation or acceptance of the Great Civilization rather than on purity. Discrimination of ‘Barbarians’, for example, was based on the following stereotypes, where the idea of cleanliness does not seem to play a fundamental role. Concerning original cultural environment and habitat, barbarians are those people with coarse laws and institutions (法制之疏略),

99 Cf. for example Flacelière, *L'Amour en Grèce*, 222; Vegetti, *L'etica degli antichi*, 6–9, 73–106, 130–138, for the antiquity. Impulses, which were strongly mistrusted by the Ancients, did not fare much better in Christian anthropology, as it can be seen in the debate from the Augustine's analysis of sinful willing till Peter Lombard's disciples took over Gregory the Great's pessimistic interpretation. On the Medieval debate and the concept of emotions, desire and love, there is a huge literature. I mention only Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy*; Boquet & Nagy, eds., *Le Sujet des émotions au Moyen Age*; Baladier, *Eros au Moyen Age, désir et delectatio morosa*; Reddy, *The Making of Romantic Love Longing and Sexuality in Europe, South Asia, and Japan, 900–1200 CE*.

100 Red dust is a Buddhist term which indicates the illusory existence.

their shelter, clothing and food are rude (粗獷), and they spend their life in deserts (沙日月). Their appearance is very strange (像貌奇古), quite different from the Chinese in terms of aspect and language (言貌殊異): beaked nose, coarse skin, and stubby hair (個鼻凹兒蹺, 臉皮兒包, 毛梢兒甍), and they smell of mutton (腥膻). Their food is different from that of the cultured Chinese, as it reflects sheep husbandry rather than an intensive agricultural economy: they use mutton and make wine from horse milk (燒羊肉, 馬乳酒). With regard to their temper and nature, they are presented as violent (駭悍之氣), foolish (痴), coarse and aggressive (粗莽好鬥), no different from birds and beasts (蹲夷踞肆, 與鳥獸無別). As to their dispositions and behaviour they are disloyal, quick-tempered and bellicose (無信, 易動難安), crouching rudely and wantonly (蹲夷踞肆), ready to poison the 'heavenly atmosphere' (錯亂天氣) and they insult good people (汗辱善人); they are cruel and violent (有餘者, 猛悍也), their wisdom and skill is not sufficient (其不足者, 智巧也), they envy the Chinese who enjoy a land of rich brocade (南人偏占錦乾坤), and they hope to occupy the Central Plain (望中原做了黃沙片地). Their life lacks social relations and hierarchy, and they disregard any refined rite and dress distinctions (無人倫上下之等也。無衣冠禮文之美也).<sup>101</sup> However, the concepts of clean and dirt, although not directly mentioned in all these discriminatory stereotypes, cannot be considered extraneous: poisoning and polluting the heavenly atmosphere, the coarseness of their institutions, unpleasant personal aspect and clothes, their stink, their similarity to beasts, all show a kind of uncleanness towards the Chinese; moreover this cultural gap depends on the fact that self-cultivation, which produces a civilized society, is supposed to clear the "mirror of the mind-heart".<sup>102</sup>

Among the materials of the examined period, a rich source of information that greatly benefited my research on the concepts of clean-unclean is the collection of 'Gothic' tales by Yuan Mei. The underworld or the world of darkness is always behind the world of mortals, and human beings are easily infected (rǎn 染) by it, catching some disease, being polluted, becoming possessed by spirits (wéisui 為祟, zuòsui 作祟, yǎnsui 魘祟, mí 迷, jù 據, píng 憑, mèi 媚, gǔhuò 蠱惑, xiāngchán 相纏), or getting special powers. The 'demonic other' is inside everyone, and the dual soul discourse—the coexistence of the good heavenly soul and the evil earthly soul (魂善而魄惡)—expresses the dark and dangerous potentiality in every being, evidenced by the contamination of death. It seems that death is a kind of universal epidemic that easily infects living beings. Particularly dangerous is the disrespect or, worse, the desecra-

101 Cf. Santangelo, *Materials for an Anatomy of Personality in Late Imperial China*, 195–211.

102 I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer for his suggestion concerning the idea of mirror.

tion of the skeleton, corpse or bones of a human being (傷骨, 掘骨暴棺), that provokes the angry reactions of ghosts.<sup>103</sup> Only magicians, like Daoist monks, using Daoist spells and Buddhist sutras, are able to cope with and compete with such underground forces, and exorcise demons (解禳, 禳解).<sup>104</sup> In fact sorcery and demonic magic or black arts (妖符邪術) were themselves usually considered cross-border between life and death, legitimate and illegal, safe and dangerous, pure and impure. Also in Chinese civilization, we find ceremonial acts employed in an attempt to reestablish lost purity in relation to the 'sacred' and the social and cultural realm. Desecration and profanation are the violation of something considered sacred, such as a religious place or a corpse. It may also relate to the sacrality of temples and religious places, as in: "This is the place of Buddha, and may not be contaminated by you" (這裏是佛地, 不可污穢).<sup>105</sup> A well known practice concerned self-purification techniques, which can be considered halfway between purification ceremonial acts and self-perfection training, and which derived from Daoist discipline. Thus the notion of 'purity' involves every field of the behaviour and imagery in Chinese culture, like in many other civilisations, as it probably corresponds to the basic primordial fear for poison and infections. Although it is related to death and sexuality, and manifested in the everyday hygiene as well as in the ambiguous sphere of the sacred, however the way it is perceived reflects the specific characters of Chinese culture in its mature developments, the specific concept of religion and of the perceptions of man-god relation, moral responsibility and sin, and the culturalistic basis of the political community.

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### *Abbreviations*

- FS* Fusheng liuji 浮生六記 (Floating Life)  
*GJXS* Gujin xiaoshuo 古今小說 (Yushi mingyan 喻世明言) (Ancient and Modern Tales)  
*HLM* Honglou meng 紅樓夢 (The Dream of the Red Chamber)  
*JSTY* Jingshi tongyan 警世通言 (Common Words for Warning the World)  
*LZZY* Liaozhai zhiyi 聊齋誌異 (Strange Tales from the Leisure Studio)  
*Qingshi* Qingshi leilie 情史類略 (Anatomy of Love)

103 See for instance *ZBY*, 18:339, The Daoists Have the Skills to Put Skeletons Back Together 道家有全骨法.

104 See for instance *ZBY*, 16:309, The Immortal Who Could Be Folded Up 折疊仙.

105 *JSTY* 13.

- RLWS Rulin waishi 儒林外史 (The Literati Unofficial History)  
 TAMY Tao'an mengyi 陶庵夢憶 (Remembrances of Zhang Dai's Dreams)  
 XSHY Xingshi hengyan 醒世恒言 (Common Words for Waking the World)  
 ZBY Zibuyu 子不語 (What the Master Would not Discuss)

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# Discourses on Purity in Western Christianity in the Early and High Middle Ages

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## 1 Introduction

To write about discourses on purity in Western Christianity in the Middle Ages within the scope and objectives of this volume raises at least two almost insurmountable problems. The first results from the state of research. As far as I see, research on the Christian Middle Ages has not yet reached the stage that would allow me to simply provide a summarizing survey. Consequently, my analysis had to draw more or less directly on the sources, which, in a brief paper, can only be done on the basis of some examples. I shall restrict my remarks to the earlier Middle Ages with which I am more familiar. The second problem, however, is of really existential significance and refers to the state of sources: Christianity does not know specific commandments on ritual purity and, consequently, it hardly knows any coherent discourses on purity, as we find them in the Old Testament or in the Koran. Naturally, though, Christians do have (a lot of) ethical regulations and admonitions. Therefore, this paper has been rightly integrated into the section on “Ethical purity”, although the different aspects are certainly overlapping. In what follows, I shall try to conduct three ‘test drillings’ to approach the question. In a first section, I shall examine how Christian exegetes interpreted those extensive purity regulations which we find in the Old Testament, particularly in the last three books of the Pentateuch, above all in Leviticus, but also in Numbers and Deuteronomy. In a second section I shall inquire into the ideas of purity as expressed in one ethical treatise of the ninth century addressed to lay people, the *De institutione laicali* of Bishop Jonas of Orléans. In a third and last section I shall inquire more generally into those medieval concepts which are linked with the terms *munditia* and *immunditia*.

A preliminary quantitative observation may already prove revealing: terminologically, purity and impurity both play a similarly important role. In the medieval parts of the *Patrologia latina* of Migne (volume 70–217) we find 2390 occurrences of *munditia* and 2461 examples of *immunditia*. The frequency of occurrence of the two terms is, therefore, almost even. A chronological grading demonstrates an overall increase of instances in the twelfth century, but

TABLE 5.1 Occurrences of *munditia* and *immunditia* in Migne, *Patrol. lat.*, vol. 70–217

	PL 70–100	PL 101–130	PL 131–160	PL 161–190	PL 191–217	Sum PL 70–217
<i>munditia</i>	366	335	377	673	639	2390
<i>immunditia</i>	340	729	344	552	496	2461

also a prevalence of the term impurity in the ninth century and since then an increasing predominance of purity.

These examples, however, are spread over a large number of different sources (and distributed quite differently among the individual authors). As far as I see, there is neither a treatise nor are there even chapters with titles such as *De munditia* or *De immunditia*.<sup>1</sup>

In comparison with the quantitative importance of this phenomenon in the Middle Ages research on the subject is nothing like as extensive. A review of relevant articles in encyclopaedias on theology and divinity may already be significant: all the articles on purity skip the Middle Ages (or at least the earlier Middle Ages).<sup>2</sup> The few books or articles on this theme<sup>3</sup>—although I cannot exclude that something important has escaped my bibliographical search—nearly always concentrate on the continued effect of the purity regulations of the Old Testament and their re-interpretation in the New Testament, sometimes extended by the purity of holiness (as in the important collection of articles by Porthuis and Schwarz)<sup>4</sup> or by the purity of virginity and chastity (as in the Ph.D. thesis of Annette Höing on Hildegard of Bingen),<sup>5</sup> and, consequently, of clerical celibacy (as in the collection of articles edited by Michael Frassetto).<sup>6</sup>

1 We find only a few chapters entitled *De munditia cordis*.

2 The most extensive article is that on “Purété et impurété” by Henninger, Meeks, Seux and Cazelles (*L’histoire des religions*), Cazelles (Old Testament) as well as Cothenet (New Testament). Among the more recent encyclopedical articles may be mentioned: Légasse and Dupuy, “Purété—Purification”; Maier, Podella, Goldenberg, Dietzfelbinger and Hartmann, “Reinheit”; Bendlin, “Reinheit/Unreinheit”; Neubacher, Seidl, Deines, Backhaus, Römlert and Langer, “Reinheit, kultische”; Stausberg, Cancik, Seidl, Kollmann, Schneider-Ludorff, Wandrey and Börner-Klein, “Reinigung”. The numerous short papers in *Guilt or Pollution and Rites of Purification* likewise skip the Christian Middle Ages.

3 General, but without articles on the Middle Ages: “Reinheit”, ed. von Braun [et al.].

4 *Purity and Holiness*, ed. Porthuis and Schwartz.

5 Höing, *Gott, der ganz Reine*.

6 *Medieval Purity and Piety*, ed. Frassetto.

In his monumental volume on ‘History of religiousness in the Middle Ages’ the theologian and medievalist Arnold Angenendt likewise touches briefly upon the aspect of purity in his chapter on marriage<sup>7</sup> and devotes a few pages to a separate passage on “pollution”,<sup>8</sup> and an article by the same author deals with purity in Christian cult.<sup>9</sup> Angenendt, who recently has regarded the twelfth century as a crucial turning point in Christianity from a primary to a secondary religion,<sup>10</sup> discovers a continuation of the ancient purity regulations with regard to sexual impurity (ejaculation, menstruation, and pregnancy). Penitentials and synods, thus also Hubertus Lutterbach in his book on sexuality in the Middle Ages, linked those sexual misdemeanours (consequently regarded as sin) with ritual impurity.<sup>11</sup> Equally, the diatetic prohibitions in early medieval penitentials fell back on the Old Testament.<sup>12</sup> The more moderate position of Gregory the Great, thus again Angenendt, could not prevail until the twelfth century; sexual contamination was perceived rather as ritual impurity that had to be atoned for, as also was contact with carcasses, certain kinds of food or bloodshed: In the Middle Ages, pollution once again prevented participation in religious cult (so that, for example, in this case going to church or taking Holy Communion were denied)<sup>13</sup> and it seemed to have been applied to women even more rigidly.<sup>14</sup> The “archaic concepts of purity in the Middle Ages”, Angenendt writes, meant that, as in Jewry or in Greek and Roman Antiquity, pollution made a person unfit to attend religious cult<sup>15</sup> and obstructed

7 Angenendt, *Geschichte der Religiosität*, 280–284, on sexual desire and contamination.

8 Angenendt, *Geschichte der Religiosität*, 404–411.

9 Angenendt, “‘Mit reinen Händen’”.

10 Angenendt, “Kirche als Träger der Kontinuität”.

11 Lutterbach, *Sexualität im Mittelalter*, for example 70ff (on sexual contamination in penitentials). Cf. *ibid.*, 144, on contamination by adultery and fornication, *ibid.*, 160: Bishops often gave expression to the fact of how much they considered homosexual actions to be contaminating.

12 Cf. Lutterbach, “Speisegesetzgebung”. Medieval authors did not use the whole spectrum of the Old Testament, but referred only to those prohibitions connected with blood, suffocation and carrion. For diatetic prescriptions cf. also Meens, “Pollution in the early middle ages”, who confirms Mary Douglas’s ‘concept of pollution’ by an analysis of penitentials.

13 Thus Angenendt, *Geschichte der Religiosität*, 305f. For the evidence in monastic rules (for example: forgoing Communion after pollution) cf. *Idem.*, “Mit reinen Händen”, 303.

14 Angenendt, “Mit reinen Händen”, 305. The prevalence of the idea of female impurity is emphasized by Demyttenaere, “The Cleric, Women and the Stain”, to whom Angenendt refers. Concerning the—very different—attitudes of Gregory the Great and Theodor of Canterbury and the long after-effect of female impurity in penitentials cf. Meens, “‘A Relic of Superstition’”.

15 Thus Angenendt, “Mit reinen Händen”, 301ff.

liturgy.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Lutterbach talks of a “re-archaisation of the horizon of thought and comprehension” after the fall of the Roman Empire.<sup>17</sup> “The Early Middle Ages,” Angenendt concludes, “no doubt an epoch of strong ‘archaic’ character, was therefore inclined to adopt the ritual demands of purity, and their effect continued throughout the whole Middle Ages.”<sup>18</sup> The evidence seems to be overwhelming (and seems to justify the characterization of the Early Middle Ages as an ‘archaic’ period, although I personally do not like this term because it emphasizes development and conceals the specific character of the period).

Nevertheless, things might have been more complicated. On the one hand, the medieval discourses on purity can also be considered as a struggle between different positions, as Rob Meens suggests.<sup>19</sup> The impact of impurity on religious cult, then, represents only one tendency. On the other hand, it has to be asked what ‘impurity’ means. The emphasis has been laid on sexual impurity, but this is not, or only to a small degree, a continuation or re-adoption of the impurity regulations of the Old Testament. Obviously, we can recognize an altered comprehension rather than continuity. Moreover, we have to ask whether it is really impurity as such, or whether it is rather sin that prevents participation in cult. For example, this is the case in some of the anecdotes in Notker the Stammerer’s *Gesta Karoli Magni* on unchaste bishops or clerics.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps the early medieval penitentials (which give no clear explanations on purity) could also bear a re-evaluation. Instead, by focusing on the category of ethical and religious purity, I shall lay the focus on a different aspect to analyze the specific early medieval comprehension of purity and impurity. The early medieval exegesis of the Old Testament may offer some first important insights into the question whether and how the Christian concept of purity changed in comparison with the Bible.

## 2 The Christian Exegesis of the Biblical-Jewish Purity Regulations in the Early Middle Ages

The last three books of the Pentateuch, particularly the third, Leviticus, contain extensive purity regulations which relate to mainly four areas perceived

16 Angenendt, *Geschichte der Religiosität*, 408.

17 Lutterbach, “Speisegesetzgebung”, 37.

18 Angenendt, “Mit reinen Händen”, 316.

19 Cf. Meens, “Questioning Ritual Purity”.

20 Cf. Notker Balbulus, *Gesta Karoli Magni imperatoris* 1, 21 (ed. Haefele, pp. 27–31); *ibid.*, 1, 25, p. 33f.



as unclean: first, the consumption of impure animals (that is, those which do not have cloven hooves or which do not ruminates);<sup>21</sup> second, dealings with lepers; third, contact with corpses, and (only) fourth, attitudes towards sexuality. All this is dealt with in minute detail, distinguished, brought before the priest, judged by him and imposed with fixed periods of impurity and with rituals of purification (by washing and sacrifices of atonement). It is not necessary to go into details here.<sup>22</sup> Actually, the Old Testament continued to be valid in Christian times,<sup>23</sup> but it was open to interpretation, particularly with regard to prefigurations of Christ and Christianity. In fact, biblical exegesis has to be regarded as the core of medieval theology. If we consider some early medieval commentaries on the Pentateuch—and here I concentrate on the Visigothic archbishop and scholar Isidore of Sevilla, the Anglo-Saxon monk and scholar Bede the Venerable and the East Frankish monk, archbishop and scholar Hrabanus Maurus<sup>24</sup>—, it becomes evident that, apparently in contrast to liturgy, purity regulations were not taken literally by theologians, but were interpreted allegorically throughout.<sup>25</sup> In the present context, the problem cannot be analyzed systematically, but only illustrated and defined by a few examples.

In Leviticus, thus Isidore, God allowed some animals to be eaten, as being pure, and forbade the eating of others, as being impure: “But first of all,” he writes, “we should know that everything which God has made is pure.”<sup>26</sup> By this

21 Cf. Mary Douglas, “Impurity of Land Animals”, 33–45.

22 A terminological inquiry into the biblical concepts of purity is offered by Paschen, *Rein und Unrein*; concerning impurity (leprosy, impure animals, genital impurity, impurity of death, impurity by idolatry) and concerning ritual impurity in the Pentateuch cf. *ibid.*, 45–83. Concerning Jewish purity regulations cf. Neusner, *The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism*.

23 For the impact and inheritance of the biblical regulations cf. *Purity and Holiness*, ed. Poorthuis and Schwartz.

24 For the context of their exegesis cf. Leonardi, “Aspects of Old Testament Interpretation”.

25 The Gospels display quite clearly different positions of Early Christianity: recognition of the Jewish regulations in Luke, surmounting them in Mark and Matthew. Cf. Tomson, “Jewish Purity Laws”; Koet, “Purity and Impurity”. Concerning the interpretation of the purity regulations of Leviticus in Early Christianity (Origines, Theodoret), which are only seemingly marginal, but interpreted very differently, cf. Rouwhorst, “Leviticus 12–15”.

26 Isidore of Sevilla, *Mysticorum expositionis sacramentorum seu Quaestiones in Vetustissimo Testamento. Expositiones in Leviticum* 9, 1 (PL 83:325b): *Nunc autem de discretione ciborum subiiciendum est, ubi lex de mundis et immundis loquens, quaedam animalia ad esum, quasi munda, concessit; quaedam vero interdixit, quasi non munda. Primum enim sciendum est, quidquid a Deo creatum est, mundum esse, in ipsa institutionis auctoritate purgatum, et non esse culpandum, ne in Creatorem culpa revocetur*. Accordingly, Hrabanus Maurus, *Enarrationes super Deuteronomium* 2, 6 (PL 108:882d).

fundamental idea of the original purity of the whole creation the distinctions are already relativized. More extensively than Isidore, Bede the Venerable, in his commentaries on Pentateuch, tackles these passages on (forbidden) contact with an impure animal in a different manner: "Look, how inappropriate is the comprehension of Jews who consider this according to the wording. But how can it do harm to touch a deceased animal or a corpse? [...] The Apostle says 'It is good for man not to touch a woman.' This is an impure act. [...] For his heart touches the vice of concupiscence, and his soul is impure."<sup>27</sup> Thus Bede gives the whole passage an allegorical sense and a moral sexual interpretation. For him, the haemorrhage (*fluxus sanguinis*), which makes impure, refers to those "who do not know how to impose any measure on their words, but by talking too much cannot escape sin."<sup>28</sup>

The third author I want to deal with here is Hrabanus Maurus, who, living and writing in the ninth century, provides us with the most extensive exegesis (the commentary on Leviticus 11–14 alone fills sixty columns in Migne's edition). However, Hrabanus has long been regarded more as a compiler and collector of vast materials than an original mind, although more recent studies have shown his independent dealings with tradition.<sup>29</sup> Accordingly, we may assume that Hrabanus believes in what he borrows from others and that this reflects his own thought. The commentary on Leviticus is extracted from a certain Hesychius<sup>30</sup> and from the commentary of Origenes in the Latin translation made by Rufinus. Hrabanus interprets the purity regulations

27 Bede, *In Pentateuchon. In Leviticum* 5 (PL 91:338cd): *Sequitur: 'Anima quae tetigerit aliquid immundum', et reliqua. Vide quam inconveniens sit Iudaeorum intelligentia, quae haec iuxta litteram servat. Quid enim immunditiae contrahit qui contigerit animal mortuum aut corpus animi defuncti? Quid si prophetae, si patriarchae, quid autem si Elisaei corpus mortuum suscitatur? Apostolus autem dicit, 'Bonum est homini mulierem non tangere'. Hic actus immundus est. 'Si quis enim viderit mulierem ad concupiscendam illam, iam maechatus est illam in corde suo.' Tetigit ergo cor illius vitium concupiscentiae, et immunda est anima illius. Bede modifies his source, Rufinus' Latin translation of Origenes, *In Leviticum homiliae. Homilia* 3, 3 (ed. Baehrens, p. 303).*

28 Bede, *In Pentateuchon. In Leviticum* 15 (PL 91:350a): *Qui fluxum sanguinis patitur, immundus est. Per quem significatur ille qui nescit modum verbis imponere, sed per multiloquium non potest effugere peccatum.*

29 The independence of the compiling working method of Hrabanus Maurus has meanwhile been repeatedly elaborated. Cf., for example, Brunhölzl, "Zur geistigen Bedeutung"; Schipper, "Rabanus Maurus"; Burrows, "Holy Information"; Clausi, "'Rerum naturae'". Detailed information on the exegesis of Hrabanus Maurus and his sources can be found in: Cantelli Berarducci, *Hrabani Mauri Opera exegetica*.

30 The Latin commentary on Leviticus is edited in PG 93:787–1180. The author of this commentary seems to be falsely identified as Hesychius of Jerusalem, an exegete of the fifth

concerning sacrifices (with Origenes) literally, but only in order to conclude: “This is the wish of the law on the rites of sacrifice of bodies. According to our understanding, however, under the holy flesh we can often conceive the divine words.”<sup>31</sup>

Allegorically, as a first possibility, the purity regulations were transferred to the history of salvation. Thus Isidore applies the two weeks’ impurity of a pregnant woman to the “mysteries of the concealed secret”, that is, to the seven days of earthly times: it is not until the eighth day of the future that we obtain purity.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, Bede interprets the seven day’s impurity of women after giving birth: Man cannot be pure in the seven days of the earthly ages, but only on the eighth day of future eternity. Thus, he who will be granted resurrection, will be internally purified.<sup>33</sup> Hrabanus Maurus gives this passage another turn by not only looking ahead but also looking back: The fact that women after giving birth remain impure for seven days (Lev 12,2–5), is actually caused by the progenitor of the child (namely Adam) and recalls the Fall by which Adam stained

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century. It may have been written by a later author named Hesychius; cf. Bautz, “Hesychius von Jerusalem”; Faulhaber, “Hesychius of Jerusalem”.

- 31 Hrabanus Maurus, *Expositiones in Leviticum* 2, 7, concerning Lev 7 (PL 108:315bc): *Et haec quidem voluntas est legis de ritu sacrificiorum corporalium sancientis; secundum nostrae vero expositionis ordinem ubi carnes sanctae, verba intelliguntur esse divina.* Hrabanus follows Rufinus’ Latin translation of Origenes, *In Leviticum homiliae. Homilia* 5, 10 (ed. Baehrens, p. 351).
- 32 Isidore of Sevilla, *Expositiones in Leviticum* 10, 1f (PL 83:327b): 1. *Sequitur quaestio de immunditia partus et contagione leprae. Ait enim: ‘Mulierem quae concepit semen, et peperit masculum, septem diebus esse immundam, octavo purificari.’ 2. Quae autem feminam peperit, bis septem diebus in immunditia scribitur permanere. In talibus ergo quaedam mysteria latentis arcani non est dubium contineri. Septimana enim huius praesentis vitae tempus videri potest, quia in septimana dierum consummatus est mundus. In quo donec sumus in carne positi, ad liquidum puri esse non possumus, nisi octava venerit dies, quod est futuri saeculi tempus.* Isidore (ibid., 10, 3) considers as “pure” also *ille qui viriliter egit* against sins; otherwise *effeminatus permanserit in actibus suis*.
- 33 Bede, *In Pentateuchon. In Leviticum* 12 (PL 91:346ab): *Sequitur mandatum de immunditia partus, in quo non otiose dictum est. ‘Quod mulier quae concepto semine parit masculum, immunda dicitur; quia ad distinctionem illius dicitur’ quae non ex semine concepit Filium Iesum Christum. Hanc non gravant legis onera; ac per hoc non est superfluum, sed mysticum, quod ait, ‘Concepto semine. Quod’ autem ‘si masculum peperit, septem diebus immunda erit, et septimo die purificabitur’; hoc significat quod quandiu sumus in hoc tempore, quod septem diebus volvitur, ad liquidum puri esse non possumus, donec octava venerit dies, quod est futuri saeculi tempus, in quo circumcidi iubetur masculus. [...] Purgata namque intus, carnem et resurrectionem suscipiet, is qui masculum et viriliter egit, nihil in se femineum aut molle habens.*

all our lives and forfeited eternal salvation for all earthly times.<sup>34</sup> After that, Hrabanus, too, repeats the reference to the future: It is only in the Next World that people will be pure again.<sup>35</sup> Man, Hrabanus teaches similarly in another instance, is thus stained by Adam's sin; accordingly, his semen and his whole body, from which such semen flows, is stained.<sup>36</sup> The fact that touching dead bodies contaminates (Num 19,11ff) refers to the injustice of man.<sup>37</sup>

This leads to a second strand of interpretation: morality. Allegorically, the animals which should not be consumed refer to ethics:

For these animals" Isidore explains, "really represent human manners, actions and wishes, according to which they become pure or impure. [. . .] By this, he (God) actually does not distinguish animals, but human morals. For in the last analysis, those people are clean who ruminant, that is,

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- 34 Hrabanus Maurus, *Expositiones in Leviticum* 3, 5 (PL 108:367cd), after Hesychius, *Commentarius in Leviticum* 3 (PG 93:923ab): *Hanc septem diebus esse immundam dicit. Et hoc quamobrem? Videlicet quia sator immundus est, ut pote haeres Adam, qui per transgressionem immundus factus est, atque ita Evae mixtus, omne genus humanum fecit immundum. Aperte autem hoc in sacra Scriptura legitur, quod postquam exiit de paradiso, mulierem suam Adam cognovit, atque ita deduci coepit humanum genus. Septem autem dies ideo mulierem esse praecepit immundam, quia Adam, per cuius semen suscepit immunditiam cum genere, vitam quoque nostram polluit; vel septem dierum numerus significat, per quem tempora revolvuntur, propter quod etiam eius requies, septima dies est, id est, intelligibile speratur sabbatum. Quomodo autem nostram polluit vitam? Inducens ei maledictionem et transferens ad miseriam eam quam sortiti fueramus ab initio beatitudinem.*
- 35 Hrabanus Maurus, *Expositiones in Leviticum* 3, 5 (PL 108:368a), following Hesychius, *Commentarius in Leviticum* 3 (PG 93:923c): *Tunc quippe non solum non peccaturi, sed nec comesturi, aut bibituri, aut nupturi sumus: erimus autem procul dubio, sicut ait Dominus, ex corruptibilibus, incorruptibiles, sicut angeli, et mundi modis omnibus ex immundis efficitur.*
- 36 Hrabanus Maurus, *Expositiones in Leviticum* 5, 1 (PL 108:408f), concerning Lev 15, 16.19, following Hesychius. *Commentarius in Leviticum* 5 (PG 93:975a): *Quia autem sordidus effectus per inobedientiam Adam, sordidum esse etiam semen suum fecit, necessarie et corpus sordidum est, ex quo semen tale procedit.*
- 37 Hrabanus Maurus, *Enarrationes in librum Numerorum* 2, 24 (PL 108:708b), following Augustine, *Locutiones in Heptateuchum IV: Quaestiones in Numeros*, quaestio 33, 10 (ed. Fraipont, p. 258f): *Qui tetigerit, inquit, mortuum, omnis anima hominis immunda erit septem diebus. Hic purificabitur die tertio et die septimo, et immundus erit. Et hic nihil aliud intelligendum video, nisi contactum mortui esse hominis iniquitatem. Septem vero dierum immunditiam propter animam et corpus dictum puto: animam in ternario, corpus in quaternario.*

who constantly have the divine commandments like food in their mouth.<sup>38</sup>

Bede similarly is concerned with cult and morals. For him, too, the impure animals are impure morals:

Now we have to consider that the law forbids the consumption of some animals as being impure. But God's concern does certainly not refer to animals. Rather they are used to describe human morals, which of them are pure and which are impure.<sup>39</sup>

The untainted ruminants, as with Isidore, are those who always have the divine commandments in their mouths; and those who have cloven hooves have both Testaments and can distinguish the literal from the spiritual interpretation. The Holy Ghost, Bede writes elsewhere, determines three kinds of impurity: The "Holy Meal" (*carnes sanctae*) must not be touched by impurity; he who consumes it must not be impure; he who is pure, however, must not touch impure things. While this might refer to the Holy Communion, Bede makes it clear rightaway that, again, he is thinking of the "divine words" (*verba divina*) and freedom from sins.<sup>40</sup> Impurity means those loose, weakling morals (*leves mores et effeminatos*). Hrabanus equates the prohibition of consuming impure

38 Isidore, *Expositiones in Leviticum* 9, 3 (PL 83:325c): *Nam in animalibus mores pinguntur humani, et actus, et voluntates, ex quibus ipsi fiunt mundi vel immundi. Haec itaque munda esse dicit. Omne, inquit, 'quod habet divisam unguam, et ruminat, in pecoribus comedetis'. Quod cum diceret, non pecora, sed mores hominum discernibat. Denique hi homines mundi sunt qui ruminant, qui in ore semper portant, quasi cibum, divina praecepta.* The laws, thus Isidore (*ibid.*, 9, 2, col. 325bc), should lead the Israelites back to the old customs which they had lost during Egyptian captivity: *Ergo, ut homines emendantur, pecora culpata sunt.*

39 Bede, *In Pentateuchon. In Leviticum* 11 (PL 91:345b): *Nunc de eo quod lex quaedam animalia ad esum quasi immunda non concessit, quaedam inter diem, videndum est. Non enim de animalibus cura est Deo. Per haec igitur mores pinguntur humani, et quibus ipsi sunt mundi et immundi.*

40 Bede, *In Pentateuchon. In Leviticum* 7 (PL 91:343d): *Nullam aliam ad auctoritatem assumamus, nisi divinam Scripturam. Sed quidquid utrumque Testamentum non discernat, Spiritus sancti igni reservandum est. Triplicem immunditiam ponit: Una, 'ne carnes sanctae ab aliqua immunditia tangantur'; alia, 'Ne is qui edit immundus sit'; tertia, 'Ne is qui comedit et mundus est contingat aliquam immunditiam'. Carnes sanctas, id est, verba divina tangit aliqua immunditia, cum malae haereses sanae doctrinae immiscentur. 'Qui autem comedit debet esse mundus'. Non enim est pulchra laus Dei in ore peccatoris. Cum autem fuerit mundus, restat ut non tangat immunditiam, ut non inquinetur alienis peccatis.*

animals with “the impurity of unbelief” (*immunitia infidelitatis*), the consumption of impure food or contact with dead animals to the deeds of heathens, and he assigns impure acts and contact with impure things to intercourse with wicked people<sup>41</sup> and sinners.<sup>42</sup> Although touching dead animals contaminates, they cannot be impure by nature. Consequently, that which kills makes impure, and this is fraud, robbery, double-dealing or mockery.<sup>43</sup> The impure reptiles (of Lev 11,41ff) characterize people who align themselves to the earth (the secular) and revel in dirty deeds.<sup>44</sup> The contamination by impure corpses and food does not refer to impure bodies, but to that which occurs to souls as a result of bad behaviour.<sup>45</sup>

A third line of explanation of the same subject is the reference to different religions. Thus Isidore, Bede and Hrabanus Maurus apply the two criteria of pure animals, cloven hooves and rumination, to the two testaments: One (the

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- 41 Hrabanus Maurus, *Expositiones in Leviticum* 2, 7 (PL 108:315cd), concerning Lev 7: *Ideo ergo praecipit legislator ne manducentur huiuscemodi carnes quibus immunditia infidelitatis alicuius adiungitur. [...] Secundum immunditiae genus est, ne ipse qui carnes edit immundus sit, et immunditia eius in ipso sit, quod hoc modo intelligi potest verbi gratia, si sit aliquis naturae florentis et ardentis ingenii, non continuo aptus videbitur ad suscipienda verbi Dei mysteria; sed quaeritur etiam hoc, ut prius a profanis actibus et immundis operibus separetur, et ita demum eruditionis capax fiat, si prius capax fuerit sanctitatis. Tertia est immunditiae species qua is qui mundus est aliquid contingit immundum, et non tam suo peccato quam aliena contagione polluitur, ut puta si quis societur amicitiiis et consortio hominis lividi, vel iracundi, vel adulteri, et ipse quidem propriis actibus non inferatur sceleribus eius. Until sanctitatis the passage follows literally Rufinus' Latin translation of Origenes, *Homiliae in Leviticum* 5, 10 (ed. Baehrens, p. 352).*
- 42 Hrabanus Maurus, *Expositiones in Leviticum* 3, 3 (PL 108:365c), concerning Lev 11, 39, after Hesychius, *Commentarius in Leviticum* 3 (PG 93:919c): *Quemadmodum peccatores permanentes in peccatis abominandi sunt.*
- 43 Hrabanus Maurus, *Expositiones in Leviticum* 3, 2 (PL 108:362ab), after Hesychius, *Commentarius in Leviticum* 3 (PG 93:915d): *'Omnis qui tetigerit morticina eorum, immundus erit usque ad vesperam'. Bene ergo probat intentionem legislatoris ipsa littera. Si enim immunda natura essent, ea quae nunc dicta sunt animalia, oportebat immundum esse, et qui ea viventia tangeret. Nunc autem qui tetigerit morticina eorum, ipse solus immundus est. Morticina eorum sunt praedictae actiones, id est, dolus, furtum, duplicitas sive ironia, et circa alia occupatio, nec non circa terrena festinatio, ex qua mentis caecantur oculi.*
- 44 Hrabanus Maurus, *Expositiones in Leviticum* 3, 4 (PL 108:365f), vaguely following Hesychius, *Commentarius in Leviticum* 3 (PG 93:919d): *'Quae reptant' ergo 'super terram'; hi sunt qui terrena sapiunt, et qui lutulentis pascuntur actionibus.*
- 45 Hrabanus Maurus, *Expositiones in Leviticum* 3, 4 (PL 108:366cd), literally after Hesychius: *Deinde ostendit pollutionem quam odio habet non esse de mortuis corporibus aut cibis, immundis corporibus, sicut quidam putant factis, sed eam quae animabus ex actionibus malis evenit.*

Old Testament) is obtained by the Jews who consequently ruminate the words of the law, but they lack cloven hooves because they do not acknowledge the New Testament. Therefore they are impure.<sup>46</sup> In contrast, heretics have cloven hooves, namely the two testaments, believing in God the Father *and* the Son, but “they do not ruminate the doctrine of truth in their mouth”; so they are equally impure.<sup>47</sup> “Therefore,” Bede adds, “this has to be understood about human beings, and not about animals, in order to perceive how we ‘consume’ the pure people and reject the impure ones.”<sup>48</sup>

Bede likewise interprets leprosy as the false doctrine of heretics. “Consequently,” he writes, “with good reason lepers are comprehended as heretics because they stain the purity of the Church by various errors.”<sup>49</sup> Whoever devotes himself to heretical doctrines, is infected by leprosy all over the body and stains his whole life.<sup>50</sup> Hrabanus Maurus, too, associates leprosy, if people are only partly diseased, with Jews who obtain but transgress the law and are

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- 46 Isidore, *Expositiones in Leviticum* 9, 4 (PL 83:325cd), again following Novatianus: *Hi et unguam findunt, quia duo Testamenta legis et Evangeliorum credentes, firmo gressu innocentiae iustitiaeque incedunt. Item Iudaei ruminant quidem verba legis, sed unguam non findunt: hoc est, quod nec duo Testamenta recipiunt, nec in Patrem Filiumque fidei suae gressus statuunt. Propterea immundi habentur.* Accordingly Hrabanus Maurus, *Expositiones in Leviticum* 3, 1 (PL 108:352cd) and id., *Enarrationes super Deuteronomium* 2, 6 (PL 108:883a), literally excerpted from Isidore.
- 47 Isidore, *Expositiones in Leviticum* 9, 5 (PL 83:325f): *Denique hi homines mundi sunt qui ruminant, qui in ore semper portant, quasi cibum, divina praecepta. Hi et unguam findunt, quia duo Testamenta legis et Evangeliorum credentes, firmo gressu innocentiae iustitiaeque incedunt. Item Iudaei ruminant quidem verba legis, sed unguam non findunt: hoc est, quod nec duo Testamenta recipiunt, nec in Patrem Filiumque fidei suae gressus statuunt. Propterea immundi habentur. Haeretici quoque licet unguam findant, in Patrem, et Filium credentes, et duo Testamenta recipientes, sed quia doctrinam veritatis in ore non ruminant, nihilominus et ipsi immundi sunt.* Literally again Hrabanus Maurus, *Enarrationes super Deuteronomium* 22, 6 (PL 108:883a). Very similar also Bede, *In Pentateuchon. In Leviticum* 11 (PL 91:345bc).
- 48 Bede, *In Pentateuchon. In Leviticum* 11 (PL 91:345c): *Haec cum de hominibus, non de pecoribus intelligendum sit, et videndum est quomodo mundos homines manducamus, immundos autem refutamus.*
- 49 Bede, *In Pentateuchon. In Leviticum* 13 (PL 91:346d): *Lepra doctrina falsa est: unde leprosi non immerito haeretici intelliguntur, eo quod Ecclesiae puritatem variis erroribus maculant.*
- 50 Bede, *In Pentateuchon. In Leviticum* 13 (PL 91:347a): *In toto corpore lepram portat qui variis doctrinis haeticorum deditus, omnem vitam suam maculat.* The “lepers in linen gowns” are people with corrupt manners, the “lepers in woollen gowns” would not be corrected because of their flattery. Bede, *Explanatio in Deuteronomium* 14 (PL 91:386bc), equally interprets the impure birds in Deuteronomium as heretics.

banished by the priest as being impure; if the entire body is infested, however, leprosy denotes heathens who transgress the whole law to which, however, they are not at all subject.<sup>51</sup> In another instance, Hrabanus applies—differently, but nevertheless comparably—the *lepra in capite* to Jews, Arians, Manicheans, Donatists, Nestorians (and further eight named heresies),<sup>52</sup> the *lepra in carne* to the Luciferians, the *lepra in cicatrice ustionis* to Manicheans etc., the *lepra in veste linea*, however, to *perversitas morum*.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, the haemorrhage of women is equated with paganism and the (impure) pagan belief (*errorem idololatriae*);<sup>54</sup> although every sin is an impurity of the heart, this is true of idolatry in particular.<sup>55</sup> “Whoever stains himself by diabolical deception, idolatry and enormous sins,” thus Hrabanus extends this opinion in his commentary on ‘Numbers’, “is impure in his soul.”<sup>56</sup> The priest who (according to Num 19,8ff) consigns the cow to the fire, again symbolizes the Jewish people who are impure until the evening because they remain unbelievers until the end of time and will not be converted and thus purified until then.<sup>57</sup>

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- 51 Hrabanus Maurus, *Expositiones in Leviticum* 4, 1 (PL 108:372cd), following Hesychius, *Commentarius in Leviticum* 4 (PG 93:930ab): *Ostendit sermo ex parte quidem leprosum, Iudaeum populum, ut pote in parte transgressorem legis, propter quod eum sacerdos ut immundum expellit; toto autem corpore leprosum, gentilem, qui totam transgreditur legem, veruntamen mundum eum sacerdos iudicat, ut qui videlicet legis iugo subiectus non fuit.*
- 52 Hrabanus Maurus, *Expositiones in Leviticum* 4, 4 (PL 108:386bc), following Isidore, *In Leviticum* 11 (PL 83:328a).
- 53 Hrabanus Maurus, *Expositiones in Leviticum* 4, 5 (PL 108:390d), following Pseudo-Bede, *Commentarii in Pentateuchum. In Leviticum* 13 (PL 91:347f): *Lepra in veste linea significare potest perversitatem morum in mente amare.*
- 54 Hrabanus Maurus, *Expositiones in Leviticum* 5, 2 (PL 108:411c), concerning Lev 15, 25f, following Hesychius, *Commentarius in Leviticum* 5 (PG 93:978d).
- 55 Hrabanus Maurus, *Expositiones in Leviticum* 5, 2 (PL 108:412c), following Hesychius, *Commentarius in Leviticum* 5 (PG 93:980d): *Quamvis omne peccatum immunditia sit animae, maxime tamen idololatriae, et quae ad eam pertinent.*
- 56 Hrabanus Maurus, *Enarrationes in librum Numerorum* 2, 2 (PL 108:644b): *Immundus est in anima qui diabolica illusionem, per idolorum culturam, et peccatorum enormitatem, pollutur.* Hrabanus may follow Isidore, *Expositiones in Numeros* 12 (PL 83:342c), although not literally.
- 57 Hrabanus Maurus, *Enarrationes in librum Numerorum* 2, 24 (PL 108:705f): *Et sacerdos iste, vel qui vaccam igni tradit, id est Iudaicus populus, immundus est usque ad vesperam, quia usque ad finem mundi infidelis remanet. Sed lotis vestibus suis et corpore suo, ad vespereum castra ingreditur, quia fine mundi veniente, mundatis infidelitatis suae operibus, etiam Iudaicus populus ad cognitionem conditoris sui revertitur.* Follows literally Paterius, *Expositio utriusque testamenti* 4, 13 (PL 79:768c).



In contrast, for Isidore, all those are pure who spread the doctrine of Christ and preach his passion to the peoples and win them for God.<sup>58</sup> Thus, within the Church, Isidore and Bede refer impurity to human sins, outside they apply impurity to non-Christians and purity to the dissemination of faith. Consequently, for Hrabanus it is faith which is pure, while the washing of clothes symbolizes baptism or penance.<sup>59</sup> Faith (symbolized by hyssop, a plant) purifies from sins,<sup>60</sup> as does the water of baptism.<sup>61</sup> Further, he who is without sins is pure (that is, Christ);<sup>62</sup> he, however, who consciously sins, is impure (if not consciously he would deserve pardon).<sup>63</sup>

The message is clear. If we sum up our observations from these 'test drillings', we can obviously conclude that the purity regulations from the Old Testament were hardly conceived literally by early medieval exegetes.

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- 58 Isidore, *Expositiones in Numeros* 24, 3 (PL 83:349c), concerning Num 19, 9f, according to which those who collect the dispersed ashes are impure until evening: *Et sicut is qui colligit cinerem aspersionis mundus est, sic et omnes mundi sunt qui passionem Christi praedicaverunt gentibus, et in toto orbe terrarum doctrinam eius asperserunt, populosque Domino collegerunt. Lignum autem et hyssopum crucem putamus et baptismum.* Similarly, Bede, *Explanatio in Numeros* 19 (PL 91:367c), also interprets the instructions about corpses in the biblical book of "Numbers": *Sicut autem immundus est qui colligit cinerem aspersionis, sic omnes mundi sunt qui Christi passionem in omnibus gentibus praedicaverunt, et doctrinam illius asperserunt* ("Like he who gathers the dispersed ashes is impure, so all those who preach the passion of Christ among the peoples and spread his doctrine are pure").
- 59 Hrabanus Maurus, *Expositiones in Leviticum* 4, 1 (PL 108:377a), following Hesychius, *Commentarius in Leviticum* 4 (PG 93:935d): *Ille autem simpliciore eam denuntiat brevemque, aqua diluens vestimenta, baptismatis videlicet sive poenitentiae.*
- 60 Hrabanus Maurus, *Enarrationes in librum Numerorum* 2, 24 (PL 108:705c), following literally Paterius, *Expositio utriusque testamenti* 4, 13 (PL 79:768b): *Per hyssopum vero, quae etiam calore suo stomachi immunditiam purgat, significatur fides, quae in imis adversa aequanimiter tolerat, ut quod ex antea actis peccatis contractum fuerat, mundet.*
- 61 Hrabanus Maurus, *Enarrationes in librum Numerorum* 2, 24 (PL 108:708d), following Paterius, *Expositio utriusque testamenti* (PL 79:736): *Proinde qui sacramento baptismi recte abluitur, quod illa aspersionis aqua figurabat, mundatur, et spiritaliter, id est invisibiliter in carne et in anima, ut sit mundus et corpore et spiritu.*
- 62 Hrabanus Maurus, *Expositiones in Leviticum* 4, 6 (PL 108:392a), following Hesychius, *Commentarius in Leviticum* 4 (PG 93:952b): *Habuit enim haec Christus, divinitatem scilicet et humanitatem, quia munda Christi etiam humanitas et vivens est. Munda quidem, ut pote quae proprium peccatum non habuit.*
- 63 Hrabanus Maurus, *Expositiones in Leviticum* 4, 8 (PL 108:404a), following Hesychius, *Commentarius in Leviticum* 4 (PG 93:966c): *Omnibus autem his subdidit, 'ut possit sciri quo tempore mundum quid vel immundum sit', ostendens quia tunc delinquens immundus est, quando sciens peccaverit, quando autem ignorans, veniam propter ignorantiam meretur.*

TABLE 5.2 *Early medieval interpretations of biblical purity regulations.*

	Religions	History of salvation	Ethics
Impurity	Jews, heretics, pagans	<i>saeculum</i>	Sin/sexuality Contact with sinners
Purity	(Christians) Christian faith	Eternity	Faith/Being without sin

The authors deliberately apply impurity (and its opposite, purity) to three areas: first, the field of other religions, that is, Jews and heretics (and for Hrabanus also heathens); second, the sphere of the history of salvation, impurity symbolizing life on earth (*saeculum*), purity, in contrast, meaning eternity; third, and foremost, they transfer the idea to the sphere of ethics and morals by comprehending impurity as sin (in general or sexuality in particular), which is contrasted with being without sin or with faith. According to Hrabanus, contact with sinners equally contaminates. Ritual impurity, however, (the sphere of cult), seems to be completely integrated into this ethical interpretation.

I will skip the next centuries, which barely produced new commentaries on these biblical books, and compare the above interpretations with two authors of the early twelfth century, namely Bruno of Asti and Rupert of Deutz,<sup>64</sup> where we still find the same arguments albeit somehow transformed, refined or enlarged. For Bruno, the dead animal, which contaminates on contact, again symbolizes the heretic or the excommunicated Christian with whom contact is prohibited because otherwise this would mean committing a sin (and remaining sinful until the night, i.e. until atonement).<sup>65</sup> Impurity by male

64 Less revealing in our context is Hugh of St. Viktor, *Adnotationes elucidatoriae in Pentateuchon* 5 (PL 175:77ff), concerning Lev., who is concerned with a literal exegesis and who deals primarily with touching something that is impure. The same is true of Peter Comestor, *Historia scholastica. Historia libri Levitici* 17ff (PL 198:1204ff)—a critical edition exists only for the commentary on Genesis (CCCM 191. Turnhout: Brepols, 2005).

65 Bruno of Asti, *Expositio in Leviticum* 11 (PL 164:418c), concerning Lev 11, 39: *Moritur autem animal mundum, quando Christianus aliquis pro suis facinoribus excommunicatur, vel propter haeresim ab Ecclesia separatur. Qui ergo cum eo participaverit, vel eius mortalem, sive mortuam doctrinam susceperit, tandiu immundus erit, donec suscepta poenitentia satisfecerit. Hoc est enim usque ad vesperum. Vesper enim finis est peccati.*

seminal flow equally signifies the heretic whose disgraceful doctrine is disseminated in many ears as impure seed.<sup>66</sup> For Bruno to be pure means: being without sin or being innocent.<sup>67</sup> Rupert, within the context of his principal work *De trinitate et operibus eius*, presents commentaries on the individual biblical books, including the Pentateuch. Three things, he comments on Lev 11,31, are forbidden: to eat, to touch and to carry away impure things, which means: to do evil, to consent to doing evil, or to tolerate evil from necessity.<sup>68</sup> Remaining impure until sunset, however, means to have hope through the death of him who in death took upon himself the sins of the world.<sup>69</sup> Rupert thus again combines an ethical with a salvational interpretation. For the woman the period of expiation is rightly twice as long, he argues, because in the beginning (that is, the Fall) she was nearer to sin; she stained Adam (and not vice versa).<sup>70</sup> Only he who sincerely feels compassion does not recoil from leprosy,<sup>71</sup>

66 Bruno of Asti, *Expositio in Leviticum* 15 (PL 164:435ab): *Nam vir iste haereticus est, cuius turpis doctrina, per eum in multorum auribus seminata, quasi immundum semen, tendit ad generandum plurimos in eadem haeresi.* Where the corrected digital version of the Patrologia Latina (Database) has *auribus*, the older printed version has *ruribus*.

67 Cf. Bruno of Asti, *Expositio in Leviticum* 13 (PL 164:424b): *Si enim pristina aegritudine, et solita insania homo iterum occupetur, leprosus quidem est; sed quia non discernit, etsi peccet, mundus tamen et sine peccato est.* Ibid., col. 424d: *et quodammodo conquiescens, non iam sicut prius clare resonat, neque crescit, homo mundus et innocens iudicetur.*

68 Rupert von Deutz, *De trinitate et operibus eius* 15. In *Leviticum* 2, 13 (ed. Haacke, p. 869): *Tria sunt quae prohibentur, scilicet comedere, tangere atque portare quidpiam immundum, quae et hoc differunt, quod agere malum, consentire malo et ad horam pro necessitate sustinere malum.*

69 Rupert von Deutz, *De trinitate et operibus eius* 15. In *Leviticum* 2, 13 (ed. Haacke, p. 869): *'Et immundus erit usque ad occasum solis' id est in morte eius sperabit, qui occumbendo in mortem tulit peccata mundi.*

70 Rupert von Deutz, *De trinitate et operibus eius* 15. In *Leviticum* 2, 16 (ed. Haacke, p. 873), concerning Lev 12, 1–4: *In littera manifesta non praetereundum ex partu feminam parentis maiorem esse poenam infirmitatis uel immunditiae quam ex profusione masculi. Et recte tam scripta quam naturalis lex feminam plus quam masculum in hac ratione grauat, quia uidelicet in accessu peccati, per quod mors intrauit in hunc mundum, reptili illi uasculo diaboli, unde uenenum immunditiae nostrae principium ille sibilauit, propter femina stetit quam uir. Nam non per uirum mulier, sed per mulierem uir mendacio diaboli pollutus est. Recte igitur in femina et fluxus a natura et ex lege purificationis duplicata est mora. Veruntamen in remedio gratiae purificantis nulla est distantia.*

71 Rupert von Deutz, *De trinitate et operibus eius* 15. In *Leviticum* 2, 17 (ed. Haacke, p. 874), concerning Lev 13, 1f: *Ita plane non idcirco de lepra uitanda Deus legem dat, quod ipse corporum infirmitates abhorreat, sed quia sensus hominis quamlibet sapientis, sensus, inquam, exterior, id est uisus uel tactus, huiusmodi plagam paene naturaliter exhorrescit, nisi quem uera misericordia uel caritas non ficta ad compatiendum uel commiserescendum erudiuit.*

which, again, is interpreted as heresy.<sup>72</sup> The woollen and linen dress signifies a rougher or finer exegesis, which, however, in the case of heretics is always incorrect.<sup>73</sup> For Rupert, purification necessarily means returning to the church.<sup>74</sup> In sum, it seems that both authors have moved even further away from a literal understanding in favour of an ethical interpretation, thus continuing the tendency of the early medieval authors with different, and new, arguments. This apart, Rupert expressly declares (as does Peter Comestor later on)<sup>75</sup> that a menstruating woman should not be denied access to the Church because the natural discharge must not be interpreted as a sign of guilt.<sup>76</sup> By this he clearly signifies that his concern is sin and atonement and, therefore, ethical and not physical purity.

### 3 Purity Discourses in Jonas of Orléans

A second approach is devoted to a particular work, which, with its moral intentions and accusations, no doubt comes nearer to reality than the exegetical discussions, although it is still a normative source. Bishop Jonas of Orléans, who was also responsible for the regulations concerning the church reform in

72 Rupert von Deutz, *De trinitate et operibus eius* 15. In *Leviticum* 2, 18 (ed. Haacke, p. 875f), concerning Lev 13, 2; *ibid.*, 2, 24, p. 883, concerning Lev 14, 1–7: *leprosum, id est haereticum*.

73 Rupert von Deutz, *De trinitate et operibus eius* 15. In *Leviticum* 2, 23 (ed. Haacke, p. 882), concerning Lev 13, 47ff: *Vestis lanea siue linea aut certa pellicea, uestis, inquam, quaelibet leprosa peruersa est haeretici scriptura arte texta uel consuta siue grossiori ut lanea, siue subtiliori eloquio ut linea, siue de Platone ceterisque philosophis aut legistis Deo mortuis sumpta ut uestis pellicea, de mortuis utique animalibus contracta. Itaque si maculam habuerit albam uel rufam, id est si quidpiam discrepauerit ab uniuersitate scripturarum siue humili siue grandiloquo sermone, lepra scilicet haeretica perfidia reputabitur ab eo qui legerit uel audierit ostendeturque sacerdoti, uiro uidelicet uerum scripturarum sensum atque iudicium habenti, cui qui non ostenderit tamquam pro consensu damnabilis erit.*

74 Rupert von Deutz, *De trinitate et operibus eius* 15. In *Leviticum* 2, 24 (ed. Haacke, p. 883): *Vidimus intelleximus qualiter eiciat leprosum, id est haereticum, eo quod leprosus sit. Nunc uideamus qualiter mundet, id est reconciliet illum, ubi mundatus, ubi in catholica fide fuerit correctus, hoc enim est mundare mundatum, scilicet reconciliare correctum.*

75 Peter Comestor, *Historia scholastica. Historia in Leviticum* 21 (PL 198:1208cd): *Morbidae enim immunditiae pro peccato etiam solent accidere, et ideo pro eis et pro peccato salutare offerebatur, quod non pro menstruo, quia naturale est.*

76 Rupert of Deutz. *De trinitate et operibus eius* 15. In *Leviticum* 2, 29 (ed. Haacke, p. 892): *Etenim ecclesiastica recte censet auctoritas, quia mulier dum consuetudinem menstruum patitur prohiberi ecclesiam ingredi non debet, quia ei naturae superfluitas in culpam non ualet reputari et per hoc quod inuita patitur, iustum non est ut ingressu ecclesiae priuetur.*

the synods of Paris from 825 and 829, with his treatise *De institutione laicali*, written before 828 and addressed to Count Matfrid of Orléans, composed a 'mirror of the laity'. Book 1 provides theological instruction on baptism, prayer and sins, book 2 a kind of 'mirror of matrimony' (or a 'doctrine of matrimonial morals'), book 3 deals with virtues and vices. The treatise does not provide a coherent discourse on purity. Nevertheless, Jonas refers to purity regulations several times in all three books, using terms like *munditia* and *immunditia*. These references are worth considering more closely.

With baptism, thus Jonas informs the count at the very beginning, referring to the Church Father Jerome, man throws off the "stained dress" (that is the "previous man") (as, inversely, a dirty wedding dress contaminates marriage).<sup>77</sup> Only the Christian faith, consummated ritually by baptism, makes pure. Consequently, the return to the church (thus also Jonas interprets contamination by leprosy) purifies and "restores the colour of the former faith and the power of healing", which had been lost in the Fall, whereas vice contaminates.<sup>78</sup> Faith and virtues, therefore, again seen in a religious and ethical interpretation, are indicators of purity. Accordingly, sin pollutes. The whore, for example, is an "impure woman" (*immunda mulier*).<sup>79</sup> Impurity, however, includes, as

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77 Jonas of Orléans, *De institutione laicali* 1, 2 (PL 106:127c), referring to Jerome, *Commentarii in Evangelium Matthaei ad Eusebium* 3 (ed. Hurst and Adriaen, p. 201f): *Dicit autem beatus Hieronymus in commentariis: 'Si quis igitur in tempore iudicii inventus fuerit sub nomine Christiano non habere vestimentum nuptiale, hoc est vestem supercoelestis hominis; sed vestem pollutam, id est veteris hominis exuvias; hic statim corripitur et dicitur ei: "Amice, quomodo huc intrasti?" [Mt 22, 12]. Amicum vocat quod invitatus est ad nuptias: arguit impudentiae, quod veste sordida munditias polluerit nuptiales.'*

78 Jonas of Orléans, *De institutione laicali* 1, 3 (PL 106:128cd): *Altera vero, quae praedictae contagionis lepra commaculata fuerit, nisi hac primum per Christi gratiam caruerit, et ad unitatem Ecclesiae redierit, mundari et pristinae fidei colorem, sanitatisque vigorem recuperare non poterit. Quia ergo constat quod propter peccatum primi hominis flammeus ille gladius, cuius obice ianua paradisi hominibus claudebatur, in sacrosancto baptismatis fonte extinctus est, et eadem ianua credentibus patefacta, oportet ut cuncti fideles pactionis et sponsionis, quam cum Deo [in baptisate] fecerunt, sint semper memores: caveantque ne quibuslibet vitiorum sordibus se maculantes, non solum eundem sibi reaccendant ignem, verum etiam immundum spiritum a se tempore baptismatis expulsum, cum septenario daemonum sibi numero addito, ad se redire faciant, fiantque illis, ut Dominus ait, 'novissima peiora prioribus' [Mt 12, 4].*

79 Cf. Jonas of Orléans, *De institutione laicali* 1, 15 (PL 106:152ab): *Peccare non erubuisti, et confiteri erubescis? Dicit in hac vita, ut in illo requiem habeas. [. . .] Et quid dicam de meretrice et immunda muliere?*

Jonas explicitly emphasizes, impure thoughts<sup>80</sup> to which man is incited by the devil.<sup>81</sup> Therefore, they have to be banned with God's assistance.<sup>82</sup>

In his treatise on matrimony in the second book the Augustinian idea that sexual intercourse has to serve procreation and not lust, becomes apparent.<sup>83</sup> Significantly, this would otherwise not only be addiction to pleasure (*luxuria*), but also impurity (*immunditia*).<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless: if sexual intercourse is considered as impure only if it is not meant to procreate offspring,<sup>85</sup> Jonas, once again, is not concerned with physical, but with mental and ethical purity (referring to the soul). This might be different with the interdiction of sexual intercourse during menstruation,<sup>86</sup> but even here Jonas comments that "the purity of good deeds" leads to the celestial society; the married couple, therefore, should avoid impurities which would impede them in pursuing that aim.<sup>87</sup>

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- 80 Jonas of Orléans, *De institutione laicali* 1, 17 (*De cogitationibus immundis cavendis*) (PL 106:154cd): *Sicut sunt plerique qui in turpiloquiis, et scurrilitatibus, conviciisque, atque otiosis sermonibus vacando, ita existunt quamplures, qui dum vanis et immundis cogitationibus delectantur, se minime deliquisse credant. Illa quippe non solum dicentibus, verum etiam aures libenter accommodantibus peccati maculam ingerunt. Porro cogitationes immundae plerumque ad prava pertrahunt [...] Et sicut volutabra sues palustria, columbae limpida solent frequentare fluentia, ita cogitationes impuram mentem immundae perturbant, castam spiritales sanctificant.*
- 81 Jonas of Orléans, *De institutione laicali* 1, 17 (PL 106:155a): *Non ergo diabolus auctor, sed incentor est immundarum cogitationum.*
- 82 Jonas of Orléans, *De institutione laicali* 1, 17 (PL 106:155c): *Oportet itaque ut omnes a suis cordibus noxias cogitationes, veluti muscas immundas, divina opera suffragante, propulsent: ut enim quis a veste sua, si quidpiam sordium in eam ceciderit, protinus id abiicit, ita nihilominus cogitationes immundas a corde suo abiicere debet.*
- 83 Jonas of Orléans, *De institutione laicali* 2, 6 (PL 106:179c): *Quod cum uxoribus carnis commistio, gratia fieri debeat prolis, non voluptatis* (literally a year later: *Episcoporum ad Hludowicum imperatorem relatio*, a. 829, No. 196 (ed. Boretius and Krause, p. 45f).
- 84 Cf. Jonas of Orléans, *De institutione laicali* 2, 6 (PL 106:179cd): *Liberis scilicet dandam operam, et rursus continentiae. Item idem in expositione Epistolae ad Galatas, immunditiam et luxuriam tractans, ita dicit: 'Sequitur enim immunditiam comes luxuria'.*
- 85 Thus again Jonas of Orléans, *De institutione laicali* 2, 6 (PL 106:179d): *Notandum quod coitus cum uxore, nisi causa prolis fiat, immunditia et luxuria ab Apostolo nominetur.*
- 86 Jonas of Orléans, *De institutione laicali* 2, 10 (PL 106:186a): *Quod tempore menstruo omnino ab uxoribus sit abstinendum.*
- 87 Jonas of Orléans, *De institutione laicali* 2, 10 (PL 106:186a): *Cum dignitas humanae conditionis post primi parentis lapsum propter Christi gratiam meruerit, ut per munditiam bonorum operum ad societatem valeat pervenire supernorum civium, cavendum summopere coniugatis est, ne quibuslibet immunditiis mancipando, eorum consortio se quodammodo indignos faciant: quoniam sicut ad eorum societatem per munditiam pervenitur, ita ab ea per immunditiam receditur.*

Jonas here seizes on the commandments of Leviticus about the seven days' impurity of the woman (and everyone who comes into contact with her).<sup>88</sup> His emphasis on the fact that by the grace of Christ the faithful people would be free from the weight of laws that were imposed on the Israelites because of their unbelief, because Christians interpret the law spiritually (*spiritualiter*), is significant. Nevertheless, he adds, some people observed these rules "for the sake of their honour and their physical purity" and in many provinces pregnant and menstruating women were denied access to churches, which, according to Gregory the Great, was quite decent and also appropriate to the spiritual interpretation.<sup>89</sup> Jonas thus does not distinguish too sharply between physical and ritual impurity and its ethical interpretation, but he clearly puts much more weight on the latter.

In the mirror of virtues of the third book, Jonas once again emphasizes that physical washing would remain completely useless without internal purification.<sup>90</sup> Thus the ancient purity regulations are not completely blanked out, but they recede into the shade in comparison with ethical purity and they remain completely ineffective without it. True purity without sins will not be possible until the eternal life, affected by God, the 'purger' (*mundator suus*

88 Jonas of Orléans, *De institutione laicali* 2, 10 (PL 106:186f), following Jerome, *Commentarii in Hiezechielem prophetam* 6 (ed. Glorie, p. 235).

89 Jonas of Orléans, *De institutione laicali* 2, 11 (PL 106:187f), referring to Gregory the Great, *Registrum epistolarium* 12, 12: *Post quot dies partus mulier ecclesiam ingredi, et post quantum temporis in carnis copulationem cum viro suo coniungi; et quod vir coniugi suae permistus, non nisi primo aqua lotus ecclesiam debeat intrare. Quoniam populus fidelis ab oneribus legis, quibus adhuc propter incredulitatem suam Iudaicus deprimitur populus, per gratiam Christi sit immunis, quoniam spiritualis est, et spiritualiter legem intelligit et diiudicat, sunt tamen quaedam quae mos Christianus salvo mystico intellectu, ob honestatem munditiamque corporis, iuxta legem hactenus servat. Sicut est de mulieribus parturientibus ab ingressu templi se cohibentibus, similiter et de his quae menstruum fluxumque sanguinis patiuntur, apud plerasque provincias propter immunditiam carnis ab aedibus se nihilominus basilicae arcentibus. Et licet haec, ut beatus papa Gregorius docet, spiritualiter sint intelligenda, non est tamen indecens, nec inhonestum, nec spirituali intellectui contrarium, si iuxta praeceptorum Christianorum usum ad litteram, propter id quod praemissum est, observentur.*

90 Jonas of Orléans, *De institutione laicali* 3, 10 (PL 106:252ab), the latter part following Augustine, *Enchiridion de fide, spe et caritate* 20, 76 (ed. Evans, p. 91): *Quod autem nemo eadem opera misericordiae aliis, si sibi crudelis est, digne exhibere possit, Dominus docet in Evangelio; qui cum increpasset Phariseos, quod forinsecus se lavabant, intus autem rapina et iniquitate pleni erant, admonens quadam eleemosyna, quam sibi homo debet primitus dare, interiora mundari: 'Verumtamen, inquit, quod superest, date eleemosynam, et ecce omnia munda sunt vobis' (Lc 11, 41).*

*Deus*), because it is only then that man will no longer be able to commit sins.<sup>91</sup> In spite of the different genre, all this seems very similar to the commentaries on the Pentateuch.

#### 4 Munditia—Immunditia: Concepts of Ethical Purity?

In this last section I should like to briefly verify and extend these observations by asking, from a terminological perspective, in which contexts other authors of the ninth and twelfth centuries use concepts of purity and impurity (*munditia* and *immunditia*), and focusing on the question whether these are used to transport ideas of ethical purity. When for the liturgian Amalar of Metz, for example, the white cambric dresses of the choristers together with their physical purity symbolize chastity, this means that chastity creates purity.<sup>92</sup> Chastity, says Alcuin in his mirror of virtues, banishes impurity; we should devote our members to God and not to fornication.<sup>93</sup> Unnatural physical contagion displeases God and is the dwelling place of the devil.<sup>94</sup> Physical pollution, however, is clearly understood here once again as sexual misdemeanour; thus, in

91 Jonas of Orléans, *De institutione laicali* 3, 20 (PL 106:278a): *Ibi ita patebunt singulorum singulis mentes, sicut corporalibus oculis subiacent facies corporales; quia humanorum peccatorum tanta ibi erit et tam perfecta munditia, ut habeant unde mundatori suo Deo gratias agant, non unde offensi aliquibus sordibus erubescant; quia ibi nulla peccata nec peccatores erunt, et qui ibi fuerint, iam peccare non poterunt. Nec latebit iam perfecte beatos aliquid secretorum, qui, quod est longe praestantius, ipsum visuri sunt mundis cordibus Deum.* The passage is borrowed literally (not from Prosper of Aquitaine, as Jonas himself claims, but) from Julianus Pomerius, *De vita contemplativa* 1, 4, 1 (PL 59:421f), from the paragraph *De resurrectione*. Cf. also Pseudo-Augustine, *De diligendo Deo* 18 (PL 40:863).

92 Amalar of Metz, *De ecclesiasticis officiis* 3, 4 (PL 105:1108a), following Gregory the Great, *Regula pastoralis* 2, 3 (PL 77:30a), or Gregory the Great, *Registrum epistolarum* 1, ep. 24 (ed. Norberg, p. 25): *Et in alio loco eiusdem: Quid per byssum, nisi candens decore munditiae corporalis castitas designatur?*

93 Alcuin, *De virtutibus et vitiis* 18 (De castitate) (PL 101:626c), following Augustine [?], *Sermones de diversis*. Sermo 291 (PL 39:2296): *Castitas angelica est vita. Castitas cum humilitate, Spiritus sancti merebitur habitationem, quem expellit immunditia libidinum, dicente Scriptura: 'Corpus peccatis subditum Spiritus sanctus effugiet'* (Sap 1, 5). *Membra nostra Deo debent esse dicata, non fornicationi.* Following him, Hrabanus Maurus, *Homilia* 47 (De castitate et munditia) (PL 110:87b).

94 Alcuin, *De virtutibus et vitiis* 18 (De castitate) (PL 101:626c): *Ubi immunditia est corporis, ibi habitatio diabolici spiritus; qui maxime gaudet in inquinazione carnis nostrae. Omnes immunditiae Deo displicent, et maxime quae non sunt naturales.*



the following, also Alcuin talks of whores and all kinds of desire.<sup>95</sup> Following Ambrose, Hrabanus Maurus also juxtaposes fornication and impurity;<sup>96</sup> following Saint Paul, he counts impurity among the “deeds of the flesh” (*opera carnis*)—after fornication and before craving for pleasure (*luxuria*), idolatry (*idolorum servitus*), magic (*veneficia*), enmities (*inimicitiae*), contentions (*contentiones*), jealousy (*aemulatio*), anger (*irae*), discords (*dissensiones*), schisms (*sectae*), envies (*invidiae*), murder (*homicidia*), alcoholism (*ebrietates*), revelries (*comessationes*) and vices of that kind<sup>97</sup>—and he puts impurity above all

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- 95 Alcuin, *De virtutibus et vitiis* 18 (De castitate) (PL 101:626f): *Hoc siquidem non solum de meretricum immunditia dixit, sed etiam de omni carnis concupiscentia, quae sollicitat animam suis consentire desideriiis.*
- 96 Hrabanus Maurus, *Enarrationes in epistolas b. Pauli* 18, 5 (PL 112:446a): *Fornicatio autem et omnis immunditia, aut avaritia, nec nominetur in vobis, sicut decet sanctos.* [...] *id est fornicationem et avaritiam, adiungens fornicationi immunditiam; alterius generis libidinem immunditiae avaritiam sociavit.* Hrabanus follows Ambrosiaster, *In epistolam b. Pauli ad Ephesios* 5, v. 3 (ed. Vogels, p. 111). Later on, Herveus of Bourges. *In epistolam ad Ephesios* 5 (PL 181:1258c), also emphasizes fornication, impurity and avarice as vices that have to be avoided: *Deum imitari studete. Sed fornicatio et immunditia et avaritia sic prorsus reiiciantur a vobis, ut neque vel nominentur in vobis, id est nomen alicuius horum vitiorum non sit in aliquo ex vobis, scilicet nemo saltem solo verbo dicat quemquam vestrum esse talem.* In this sense, Herveus conceives fornication as being directed towards women and impurity as unnatural (ibid., col. 1258d): *Immunditia autem vocatur omnis incontinentia ad libidinem pertinens, quoquo modo fiat. Fornicatio igitur quantum ad mulieres, hic accipitur; immunditia vero, quantum ad hoc quod fit contra naturam, sive in se, sive in alium.* Different from his contemporaries Herveus considers impurity and fornication as a physical, avarice as a mental symptom (ibid., col. 1259a): *Per hoc quod posuit disiunctivam coniunctionem inter immunditiam et avaritiam, quod quidem non fecerat inter immunditiam et fornicationem, voluit significare alterius generis esse fornicationem et immunditiam, et alterius avaritiam, quia illae sunt corporis, ista vero animae.*
- 97 Hrabanus Maurus, *Enarrationes in epistolas b. Pauli* 16, 5 (PL 112:353b), concerning Gal 5, 19ff: *Manifesta autem sunt opera carnis, quae sunt fornicatio, immunditia, luxuria, idolorum servitus, veneficia, inimicitiae, contentiones, aemulationes, irae, rixae, dissensiones, sectae, invidiae, homicidia, ebrietates, comessationes, et his similia, quae praedico vobis sicut praedixi, quoniam qui talia agunt, regnum Dei non consequuntur.* [...] with Augustine (ibid., col. 353c): *In operibus carnis namque, quae manifesta esse diximus eaque commemorata damnavit, non illa tantum invenimus quae ad voluptatem pertinent carnis, sicuti est, fornicatio, immunditia, luxuria, ebrietates, comessationes: verum etiam illa quibus animi vitia demonstrantur, a voluptate carnis aliena.* Hrabanus follows to a large extent Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 14, 2 (ed. Dombart and Kalb, p. 415f). The Paulinian vices are equally quoted by Burchard of Worms, *Decretum* 2, 65 (PL 140:637d), after the synod of Châlons.

on a level with craving for pleasure.<sup>98</sup> All those who are subject to these vices, are in his eyes definitely not the heirs of Christ.<sup>99</sup>

Another motif points in the same direction. All religious acts of penitence, such as fasting, praying or keeping vigil and other physical purities, according to Amalar, remain ineffective without purity of the heart.<sup>100</sup> It is the purity of body *and* mind, thus Josephus in his *Historia translationis corporum sancti Ragnoberti et Zenonis*, which leads to the vision of God: "Therefore love the purity of body *and* soul; only a pure house can retain a pure God."<sup>101</sup> The purity of body and soul is also emphasized (and distinguished) by Haymo of Auxerre.<sup>102</sup> Hincmar of Reims talks of the purity of speech (or sermon) as warrant for the purity of the heart and the effectiveness of good deeds. Impure thoughts, however, distract the impure mind, just as pure thoughts sanctify

98 Cf. Hrabanus Maurus, *Enarrationes in epistolas b. Pauli* 16, 5 (PL 112:354cd), following Jerome, *Commentarii in iv epistolas Paulinas. Epistolam ad Galatas* 3 (PL 26:443cd): *Secundum opus carnis immunditia nuncupatur, et eam comes luxuria sequitur. [...] sic in hoc loco caeteras extraordinarias voluptates, ipsarum quoque opera nuptiarum, si non verecunde et cum honestate, quasi sub oculis Dei fiant, ut tantum liberis serviatur, immunditiam et luxuriam nominavit.*

99 Ibid., col. 447 A, following Ambrosiaster, *In epistolam b. Pauli ad Ephesios* 5, v. 5 (ed. Vogels, p. 112): *Hoc enim scitote, quod omnis fornicator, aut immundus, aut avarus, quod est idololatria, non habet haereditatem in regno Christi et Dei.*

100 Amalar of Metz, *De ecclesiasticis officiis* 3, 4 (PL 105:1108ab): *Ex nobis ipsis possumus addiscere aliud esse ieiunium, orationes et vigiliis, et aliud munditiam carnis. Multi enim ieiunant, et orant, ac vigilant, et quod gravius est, delinquant per carnis appetitum. Unde et Hieronymus in tractatu Epistolae ad Ephesios: Quanti enim diligunt Dominum, parati exsilia, parati martyria, parati inopiam et omnia pro eo contumeliarum genera sustinere, et nihilominus carnis passione superantur!*, from Jerome, *Commentarii in epistolam ad Ephesios* 3 (PL 26:589f).

101 Josephus sacerdos, *Historia translationis corporum ss. Ragnoberti et Zenonis* 6 (PL 106:897a): *Sic est semper consuetudo sanctorum ut, munditiam mentis et corporis quaerentes, mundum Deum videre merentur. Procul dubio quisquis Deum videre contendit, munditiam mentis ac corporis nitorem quaerere studeat, quia nullis ab aliis cernitur Deus, nisi mundis corde, sicut ipse dicit: 'Beati mundo corde, quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt' (Mt 5, 8), et alibi quidam: 'Qui cupis esse bonus et vitam quaeris honestam, / Dilige munditiam corporis atque animae / Munda domus mundum Dominum retinere valebit. / Nam talis semper hospitis hospes eris.*

102 Haymo of Auxerre. *Expositio in Pauli epistolas. In epistolam ad Hebraeos* 9 (PL 117:882b), following Primasius Hadrumatinus, *Commentaria in epistolas s. Pauli. Ad Hebraeos* 9 (PL 68:741c): *Postea vero immutata sunt a Christo in melius, quia dum carnaliter observabantur, munditiam corporis adimplebant; dum vero spiritaliter coeperunt observari, munditiam animae pariter coeperunt operari.*

it.<sup>103</sup> Purity will never arise from impurity, Gregory the Great had stated much earlier and had therefore warned about physical temptations as well as about impure thoughts.<sup>104</sup> Similarly, Remigius of Auxerre contrasts moral impurity, that is, fornication, gluttony and drunkenness, with a virtuous purity which transforms fornication into self-control, gluttony into abstinence, and drunkenness into sobriety.<sup>105</sup>

In the High Middle Ages, on the one hand, the purity of body and heart continue to be regarded as working together; on the other hand, the purity of the heart (or soul) and the impurity of the body (or flesh) are frequently contrasted. Thus Fulbert of Chartres again emphasizes that the example of the pure Virgin Mary requires the purity of both body *and* heart.<sup>106</sup> According

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- 103 Hinkmar of Reims. *De cavendis vitiis et virtutibus exercendis* 2, 7 (ed. Nachtmann, p. 219), following Bede, *Homilia* 1, 19 (PL 94:105c): *Cordis quoque nobis munditiam et boni operis efficaciam praestet. Multum autem iuvat orationis puritatem, si in omni loco vel tempore nos ab actibus temperemus illicitis, si semper ab otiosis sermocinationibus auditum pariter castigemus et linguam, si in lege Domini ambulare et testimonia eius adsuescamus toto corde scrutari. [...] 'Et sicut volutabra' porci, 'columbae' autem 'palustria' et 'limpida solent frequentare fluentia, ita cogitationes inmundae impuram mentem perturbant; et 'spiritalis' cogitationes 'castam' mentem 'sanctificant'. [...] Custodito denique corde et mundato a fluxu luxuriae corpore, necesse est, ut bona opera subsequantur. Cf. similarly Jonas of Orléans (n. 80 above).*
- 104 Gregory the Great. *Moralia in Iob* 3, 11, 52, 70 (ed. Adriaens, p. 626f): *Is qui per se solus est mundus mundare praevallet immunda. Homo enim in corruptibili carne uiuens habet temptationum immunditias impressas in semetipso quia nimirum eas traxit ab origine. Ipsa quippe propter delectationem carnis eius conceptio immunditia est. Vnde et psalmista ait: 'ecce enim in iniquitatibus conceptus sum et in delictis peperit me mater mea.' Hinc est ergo quod plerumque temptatur et nolens. Hinc est quod immunda quaedam in mente patitur; quamuis ex iudicio reluctetur, quia conceptus de immunditia dum ad munditiam tendit, hoc conatur uincere quod est. Quisquis autem occultae temptationis motus atque immunditiam cogitationis euicerit, nequaquam sibi suam munditiam tribuat quia de immundo conceptum semine nullus facere mundum potest, nisi is qui mundus per semetipsum solus est.*
- 105 Remigius of Auxerre, *Homilia* 3 (PL 131:881bc): *Potest et hoc intelligi de unoquoque viro humili et superbo; moraliter enim quicumque immunditia, et fornicatione, et voracitate, et ebrietate detinetur « vallis » est; ille vero qui in superbia, et iactantia, et vana gloria consistit, « mons et collis » est. Sed homines adiuti gratia Dei cum transeunt de immunditia ad munditiam, de fornicatione ad continentiam, de voracitate ad abstinentiam, de ebrietate ad sobrietatem, valles implentur.*
- 106 Fulbert of Chartres, *Sermones ad populum. Sermo* 3 ('De purificatione beatae Mariae') (PL 141:320ab): *deposcat nobis ab ipso munditiam cordis et corporis, lumen scientiae, fervorem fidei et charitatis, quatenus suae gratiae dono accensi, per Spiritum sanctum illuminati, purificatis mentibus in templo sancto gloriae suae valeamus apparere, per eundem Dominum nostrum Iesum Christum.*

to Anselm of Canterbury, the purity of the heart was the precondition of the vision of God (and demanded the dissipation of carnal lust, contempt of the world, forbearance of sins and a pure will).<sup>107</sup> For Geoffrey of Admont, it was a precondition for real discernment.<sup>108</sup> For Hugh of Saint Victor the purity of the priest is symbolized by his white garment.<sup>109</sup> The purity of the priest (thus Ivo of Chartres) does not derive from himself (“by nature”), but from persistent effort;<sup>110</sup> purity of the heart arises from purity of the body (which,

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107 Anselm of Canterbury (?), *De pace et concordia* 3 (PL 158:1019b): *Quod qui mundum habuerit, Deum videre poterit; qui vero mundum non habuerit, sine dubio Deum videre nullo modo poterit. Necessesse est ergo ut puritatem cordis habeat quisquis Deum habitatorem in se habere desiderat: quem nullus habere quibit, nisi cor suum a terrena cupiditate evacuaverit, et amore Christi calere studuerit. In quantum enim quis mundum dilexerit, in tantum ab amore coelesti vacuus erit. Et tanto magis Christum quisque deserit, quanto magis peccando a iustitia Dei recedit. Ibid., col. 1019f: Et quidem non convertuntur amor Dei et iniquitas. Qui ergo Domini habitaculum effici voluerit, cordis munditiam teneat, carnalia desideria procul repellat. Cf., ibid., col. 1020ab: Voluntas ergo nostra sit munda, ut vocetur et sit Dei sponsa, nullius immunditiae corrumpatur macula, ne efficiatur adultera. Quandiu voluntati Dei consentit, est munda et sponsa; quando vero a voluntate eius dissentit, corrumpitur, maculatur, fornicatur. Solet contingere nonnunquam ut aliquis dum munditiae cordis voluerit studere, immundos et execrabiles cogitatus saepe habeat, quos quia nimium audit semetipsum eo quod tale quid sibi in mentem venit, graviter reprehendit, iudicat et condemnat; ibid., col. 1020c: Sic qui cordis munditiam habere contendit, vanos et infructuosos sive immundos cogitatus despiciat, cor suum avertat, omnem impugnantiam illam quam intus patitur pro nihilo ducat, non reiteret pensando quod cogitavit.*

108 Geoffrey of Admont, *Homiliae in diversos scripturae locos. Homilia 2* (PL 174:1067a): *Intellectus autem non acquiritur nisi per veram munditiam cordis, quia lumen cordis est perfecta munditia mentis, per quam ad intellectum pertingitur.* Numerous further instances confirm the idea of purity of the heart; cf., for example, Richard of St. Viktor, *De gratia contemplationis* 3, 3 (PL 196:112f); *Nam sine operculo non potest internam munditiam conservare. Stude ergo, iuxta divinum documentum, facere propitiatorium, et quale sapientiae arcam decet, accipe operculum. Philosophe immunde, si vis habere sapientiae arcam intrinsecus mundam, si conservare cupis cordis munditiam, ascende ad hunc quantum contemplationis gradum, qui designatur per areae propitiatorium;* Petrus Cantor, *Verbum abbreviatum* II, 20 (109): *De munditia cordis* (ed. Boutry, p. 670–673).

109 Hugh of St. Viktor, *De sacramentis Christianae fidei* 2, 3, II (PL 176:427b; ed. Berndt, p. 351); ibid. 2, 4, 2f (PL 176:433f; ed. Berndt, p. 362). Very similar Isidore of Sevilla, *De ecclesiasticis officiis* 2, 8 (ed. Lawson, p. 68).

110 Ivo of Chartres, *De ecclesiasticis sacramentis et officiis. Sermo 3* (PL 162:521ab): *Significat autem perfectam carnis munditiam, secundum illud quod in Apocalypsi legitur: ‘Byssus sunt iustificationes sanctorum’ (Apoc 19). Hanc munditiam caro sacerdotis ex se non habet, sicut nec linum ex se est candidum: sed, sicut dictum est, multis castigationibus et ablutionibus redditur candidum, ut aptum fiat indumentis pontificum. Forma est sacerdotalis munditiae,*

consequently, is again conceived as ethical purity for which human beings themselves are responsible).<sup>111</sup> External purity, thus Geoffrey of Admont, which can be achieved by severe penitence, is nothing compared to the internal purity of the heart.<sup>112</sup> For Anselm of Laon it is the latter which corresponds to the image of God, and that means: the cognizance of God.<sup>113</sup> According to Peter Comestor, purity is an indispensable counterpart of wisdom (impurity a counterpart of ignorance).<sup>114</sup> Philip of Harvenot, finally, believes that purity

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- ut, secundum Apostolum, sacerdotes carnem suam castigant, et in servitatem redigant* (1Kor 9, 27): *et praeunte gratia, habeant per industriam quod non potuerunt habere per naturam.*
- 111 Ivo of Chartres, *De ecclesiasticis sacramentis et officiis. Sermo 3* (PL 162:522ab): *Rectus quippe ordo est, ut primum studeamus munditiae carnis, per quam veniamus ad munditiam cordis, quae nos provehat ad intellectum divinitatis.* Similarly Geoffrey of Admont, *Homiliae in diversos scripturae locos. Homilia 15* (PL 174:1126a): *et quidquid ei peccati et maculae inerat, digne abluit atque diluit, sicque iuxta mysticum sequentium verborum intellectum a munditia corporis ad munditiam cordis Deo auxiliante homo proficit.*
- 112 *Ibid.*, col. 1126ab: *Sic profecto exterior munditia, quae ex frigore, id est rigore poenitentiae nascitur, bona quidem est, sed tamen frigida quodammodo est in comparatione munditiae interioris, quae per 'lanam mundam' exprimitur, quia munda mundi cordis cogitationes calefaciunt hominem, atque succendunt ad affectum divini amoris.*
- 113 Anselm of Laon, *Enarrationes in Evangelium Mathei 5* (PL 162:1287f), the first sentence following vaguely Paschasius Radbertus, *Expositio in Matthaum 3* (ed. Paulus, p. 292): *Munditia cordis sexto loco ponitur, quia sexto die homo conditus est ad imaginem Dei. Haec enim munditia est imago Dei, qua clare Deum omnibus perturbationibus, et omni caligine vitiorum remotis, videmus; quoniam illi dicuntur mundi corde, qui, exutis omnibus nebulis saecularium rerum, intuitum mentis in solo Deo contemplando figunt. [...] Unde postulatur; 'Adveniat regnum tuum in nobis,' id est, ut in nobis per munditiam cordis regnes. Haec munditia cordis descendit ex spiritu intellectus. Nihil enim aliud est imago Dei quam intelligere Deum.*
- 114 Peter Comestor, *Sermo 39* (PL 198:1814ab): *Est enim duplex ruditas, mentis scilicet, et corporis. Ruditas mentis est ignorantia, ruditas corporis est immunditia. Vestrum itaque est habere utrumque, sapientiam et munditiam. Sicut enim dictum est vobis: 'Estote prudentes' (Mt 10, 16): ita dictum est: 'Mundamini, qui fertis vasa Domini' (Is 52, 11). Sicut dictum est vobis: 'Vos estis sal terrae' (Mt 5, 13) propter sapientiam: ita dictum est vobis: 'Vos estis lux mundi' propter munditiam, 'ut luceant opera vestra munda coram hominibus' (Mt 5, 14–16). De sapientia vestra scriptum est: 'Laba sacerdotis custodiunt sapientiam, et legem requirunt ex ore eius, Angelus enim Domini exercituum est' (Mal 2, 7). De munditia vero scriptum est: 'Expiabit autem immundum homo mundus' (modified after Num 19, 18f). *Nec sufficit sacerdoti una sine altera uti, nec sufficit ad ambulandum pes unus sine altero. Sapientia sacerdotis sine munditia est tanquam uva quae detumit in acinum; sicut ignis, qui evanuit in fumum. Munditia vero sine sapientia est tanquam lucerna sine lumine, cibus sine sale.**

arises from faith; perfect faith, however, accrues from virtue.<sup>115</sup> Perfect purity is represented by Christ himself.<sup>116</sup>

What seems to be an amalgamation of various quotations, turns out to reflect a coherent concept of purity. Internal purity and, again, salvational thinking, remain the centre of attention in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Man, thus Aelred of Rievaulx in a sermon on the festivity of the Purification of Saint Mary, had been banished from paradise because vices and sins had polluted human nature.<sup>117</sup> For him, the regulation that a woman will not be purified until the eighth day refers to the resurrection of Christ and the redemption from sins.<sup>118</sup> Aelred teaches a threefold manifestation of impurity: natural (by birth), deliberate, and resulting from human frailty.<sup>119</sup> Thus, in the High Middle Ages, the discourse on purity still maintains an exclusively ethical and religious dimension while carnal and spiritual purity are referred one to the other.

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- 115 Philip of Harvengt, *De institutione clericorum* 5, 18 (PL 203:886ab): *cum cedente primatu fidei totum hominem sola charitas occupabit, et eam quam fides operata est munditiam, manens et permanens eadem charitas consummabit. Fides enim munditiam operatur, sicut Petrus in apostolorum Actibus protestatur: 'Fide, inquit, mundans corda eorum' (Act 15, 9). Et Paulus ad Titum: 'Omnia munda mundis: coinquinatis autem et infidelibus nihil mundum' (Tit 1, 15). Mundos dicit eos quorum intimam fides non ficta conscientiam permundavit, sicut e converso coinquinatos, quos infidelitas inquinavit. Perfectio igitur fidei munditiae operatur virtutem, munditia vero gratam obedientiae senectutem, cum profectus obediens sic aestuat desiderio puritatis, ut frigescat et marceat ad agenda vel amanda carnalis opera voluptatis. Cf. Petrus Cantor. *Verbum abbreviatum* II, 20 (109) (ed. Boutry, p. 671): In the "trinity" of faith, hope and love, faith makes the beginning and arises from purity whereas love follows in the end (*Munditiam igitur cordis fides inchoat, spes et charitas eam consummant*).*
- 116 Philip of Harvengt, *De institutione clericorum* 25 (PL 203:894): *et in hac obedientia serenam munditiam custodire, Deique visionem vitae munditia praevēnere. Ideo et ipse intacta voluit nasci de Virgine, neque sibi immundum ex ipsa contraxit origine; ut cum munditiam, conceptus et natus, naturaliter obtineret, processu vitae huius in eadem credibiliter permaneret. Mundus autem ad munditiam suos voluit exhortari, non quod in hac munditia possent ei nascendo coaequare; sed adiuti gratia niterentur eum pro viribus imitari, et lima et labore tandem ei pro suo modulo conformari.*
- 117 Aelred of Rievaulx. *Sermones de tempore et de sanctis 4: In purificatione s. Mariae* (PL 195:235c): *Mihi videtur quod mulier ista significat humanam naturam, quae immunda per vitia et peccata proiecta est de paradiso.*
- 118 Aelred of Rievaulx. *Sermones de tempore et de sanctis 4: In purificatione s. Mariae* (PL 195:236a): *Die octavo mulier suscipit mundationem, et humana natura in fide resurrectionis Christi suscipit remissionem peccatorum.*
- 119 Aelred of Rievaulx. *Sermones de tempore et de sanctis 4: In purificatione s. Mariae* (PL 195:236b): *Multa genera sunt immunditiarum. Quaedam immunditia venit ex natura, alia venit ex voluntate, alia venit ex infirmitate.*

## 5 Conclusion

In this article I have concentrated on the terms *munditia* and *immunditia* as being most widespread, although other terms, such as *puritas*, also gain some importance. However, as far as I see it, they have the same implications. Summarizing my remarks and at the same time trying to reply to at least some of the central questions for the workshop on which this volume is based, we can conclude, then, that the conceptions of purity in the Earlier Middle Ages clearly present a crucial aspect of religious attitudes. However, whether they gain such substantial acceptance, for example, in Hildegard of Bingen, that they provide “the key to her theological thinking”, as Höing writes,<sup>120</sup> may be questioned, and perhaps we should not overestimate their (religious) relevance. Brief discourses on purity are dispersed over numerous texts, but hardly as comprehensive treatises. Likewise, there is no indication that purity and impurity play a specific role in the expansion of religious traditions, or only in so far as purity is concerned with religion and provides a moral model of religious life. Concerning space, we may assume that there was a conception of pure places (for example, the churches), but there is no explicit discourse on this topic in the sources that have been analyzed here, and ‘sacred’ would probably be the term that was more appropriate and more frequently used. And there are definitely no ‘pure lands’ or ‘pure centres’ as contrasted to an impure periphery. Equally, purity and impurity do *not* simply characterize oneself (the Christians) and the others. Although there *were* categories to demarcate individuals or religious groups, such as heretics or Jews, they are restricted to allegorical interpretation concerning religion. Furthermore, impurity demarcated sinners (who were not really a group) within the Church.

While Mary Douglas has underlined the danger of impurity as a social category, for medieval theologians this was above all a religious danger: of losing salvation by moral imperfection.<sup>121</sup> Penitentials and canons, according to the genre, may (on occasion) have regarded certain indications in the Old Testament of physical impurity as a disqualifying factor as far as ritual purity is concerned (as Angenendt and others have shown, asserting that the old concepts of purity continued to be present in the Early Middle Ages)—and it was not my intention to deny that—, and virginal (but also matrimonial) and clerical chastity may have been comprehended in terms of (an ideal) purity; Annette Höing devotes a long passage to pollution by sexual offences in Hildegard of

<sup>120</sup> Höing, *Gott, der ganz Reine*, 464.

<sup>121</sup> Cf., Moore, “Property, Marriage, and the Eleventh-Century Revolution”, 202: “the danger of purity lay in the impossibility of dispensing with it”.

Bingen.<sup>122</sup> Nevertheless, medieval discourses on purity unanimously point in a different direction: a literal understanding of the purity regulations of the Old Testament remained only vaguely existent or was even denied, although their ritual consequences (for example, concerning access to mass) shine through from time to time. Far more important, however, were concepts of an ethical purity (and, in fact, the discourses on chastity were integrated here),<sup>123</sup> considered at the same time as religious purity signifying salvation: It was above all sin that was (and made) impure (and thus had to be avoided). In contrast, veritable purity was a characteristic feature of God and Eternity. Impurity thus was an earthly factor and a feature of human beings in the state of sin. Accordingly, the concept of purity *does* imply a transcendental sphere as far as purity is applied to the sphere of God, of holiness, and of the other world, and it *does* describe forms of inner-worldly transcendence (purity of the soul, of thought etc.), which by the way already signifies features of a 'secondary religion' in the Early Middle Ages. In my opinion, every other interpretation falls short of acknowledging these ethical concepts.

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122 Höing, *Gott, der ganz Reine*, 258–341.

123 The existence of a moral instead of a literal interpretation as early as in Merovingian times (self-pollution by renunciation of God) is also supported by De Nie, "Contagium".



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**SECTION 3**

*Purity of Spirit and Thought*







## Purity between Semantics and History: Notes on Daoist Soteriology and Interreligious Encounters in Early Medieval China

*Licia Di Giacinto\**

Purity is an important subject in the scholarly agenda of the Bochum-based Käte Hamburger consortium for the study of “Dynamics in the History of Religions between Asia and Europe.” Meetings and workshops have explored how far the semantics of purity and pollution may serve as an analytical instrument to approach religions from a comparative perspective and to identify and map encounters between religious communities. Initially, I was sceptical about the feasibility of finding sufficient material in medieval Daoist texts to answer these questions. Over time, this scepticism has considerably decreased although I would still plead for some caution in generalizing. Essentially three points are made below. First, since the theme “purity” is a relatively unexplored subject in sinology, lexical analysis is a *conditio sine qua non* for the understanding of this notion. Indeed, the risk of taking into account very problematic Chinese terms when it comes to “pure” or “impure” is high. Second, the focus on the theme “purity of mind” (if understood as a terrain of interreligious encounters) is fairly problematic in medieval religions. The binomial *xi xin* 洗心, “washing the mind”, appears in Daoist, Confucian, and Buddhist texts. While unveiling the exchange of vocabulary, these explicit lexical parallels do not bring to light the overlapping of religious notions or practices. In addition, the image of a dirty heart does not appear to have worked as a major device for marking interreligious boundaries. Third, when dealing with purity notions in medieval Daoism, an approach from the historical perspective is mandatory since Daoism was by no means a monolithic religious entity. The Chinese Middle Age (220–618) was the epoch in which Daoism emerged diachronically and synchronically from and against multiform religious and mystical imageries that worked with different (and at times problematic) frames of reference when it came to purity-related themes. It is certain, however, that the emphasis on notions of purity grew through

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the centuries, either when understanding “purity” as a soteriological theme or when considering its function as a terrain for interreligious encounters. In other words, as has been observed by Frevel and Nihan in *Purity in Ancient Judaism and the Ancient Mediterranean World and the Forming of Religious Traditions*, purity as an analytical device unveils the meanderings in the formation of a religion, both with regard to the elaboration of a soteriological discourse and with regard to the construction of interreligious boundaries.

## 1 Introduction

Purity is certainly an important field of research in comparative religion. The notion began to develop its heuristic potential in the late nineteenth century when the Old Testament scholar and pioneer of comparative religion William Robertson Smith (1846–1894) used the Polynesian word taboo to designate systems of constraints and restrictions “enforced by dread of supernatural penalties.” As Robertson Smith noticed, taboos were to be found in many cultures and the purity rules of the Old Testament were but a form of them.<sup>1</sup> *The Golden Bough* by James George Frazer (1854–1941) firmly established the notion within the broad academic world. Frazer’s emphasis on purity as an analytical device to approach both ancient Israel and the realm of the Maoris in Australia greatly contributed to popularizing the notion of taboo so that pollution and purity finally came to be the meeting point of ethnology, anthropology, history of religion, sociology, and psychoanalysis.<sup>2</sup> Almost a century later, in her seminal work *Purity and Danger*, the British anthropologist Mary Douglas noted again that the “understanding of rules of purity is a sound entry to comparative religion. The Pauline antithesis of blood and water, nature and grace, freedom and necessity, or the Old Testament idea of Godhead can be illuminated by Polynesian or Central African treatment of closely related themes.”<sup>3</sup>

Although Douglas’s work on purity is very well known, it is perhaps of some use to mention a few points once again. First, she argued that holiness and impurity are to be seen as antonyms, with holiness/purity being a metaphor for order and pollution representing disorder.<sup>4</sup> Strictly speaking, dirt has to be

1 Smith, *The Religion of the Semites, Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, 152. On the origin of the word “taboo” within religious studies, see Krech, *Wissenschaft und Religion*, 137–139.

2 Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 176–177. For a survey on the interdisciplinary work on taboos, see Krech, *Wissenschaft und Religion*, 138–143.

3 Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 7.

4 Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 44, 51–71.

seen as “matter out of place,” the infringement of an ordered system of beliefs and symbols. To understand the dichotomy pure/impure in terms of order/disorder implies the existence of a reference system on the basis of which a given thing or a given act is deemed to be pure/well-ordered or impure/disordered. Focusing on Judaism, Douglas illustrated this point through the dietary rules of the *Leviticus*: Animals that contravened the order of the zoological taxonomy of the *Genesis*—beasts with the wings of the heavenly realm and the four feet of the earthly sphere—were labeled as impure.<sup>5</sup> Second, some years after the publication of her *Purity and Danger*, in responding to criticism advanced by Shifra Strizower in the columns of the London newspaper *The Jewish Chronicle*, Douglas elaborated on her definition of pollution as disorder of a given system of beliefs and finally agreed with Strizower on the point that purity rules also served to set the Jews apart from other populations.<sup>6</sup> Recently, this “demarcational function” of purity notions, to use the term introduced by Frevel and Nihan in the volume on purity discourses in the ancient Mediterranean world, has been increasingly and convincingly emphasized.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, this appears to be a key point of the whole issue. The Old Testament prohibited “the Children of Israel” from defiling themselves with the polluting sexual practices attributed to foreigners; medieval Christians were concerned with the pollution of the pagans: “The Holy Sepulchre had fallen into their dirty hands and was ‘polluted by the concourse of the Gentiles’; the Holy Land had been occupied by ‘unclean races’; the holy places were ‘polluted with their filthiness’ and defiled with ‘their uncleanness’; Holy Jerusalem had been ‘reduced to the pollution of paganism.’ The conclusion was obvious: The places of Christ’s birth, life, death, and resurrection had to be cleansed.”<sup>8</sup>

Although purity as an analytical device has a long scholarly history in different disciplines, sinology is undoubtedly an exception since not many articles have been published on the subject so far.<sup>9</sup> As for medieval Daoism, the labels of two major Daoist lineages—Taiqing 太清 and Shangqing 上清—contain the character *qing* 清, a term that has been translated with “pure” since the time

5 Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 11–14.

6 Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 44–45.

7 See the introduction in Frevel and Nihan, *Purity in Ancient Judaism and the Ancient Mediterranean World*.

8 See Moore, *Moral Purity and Persecution in History*, 9–11; Mastnak, *Crusading Peace*, 127.

9 With regard to early China, see Berger, “Purity and Pollution in Han Art;” Yates, Robin, “Purity and Pollution in Early China.” With regard to late imperial China, see Messner, Angelika C., “Reinheit als Ermöglichungs- und Einübungsdiskurs von Neuordnung und Transgression im chinesischen historischen Kontext.”

of James Legge (1815–1897).<sup>10</sup> Today, the translation of *qing* oscillates between “clarity” and “purity.”<sup>11</sup> Given the very complex development of Daoism in the medieval centuries, the scholarly debate obviously focuses on the history of the religion and the analysis of texts. However, the interest in lexical (and comparative) issues is growing. With regard to purity-related themes, besides the studies about the Retreat (*zhai* 齋) rituals that are often connected with purification ceremonies, Schipper explicitly focuses on the demarcational function of the cleanliness vocabulary.<sup>12</sup>

With regard to early China, Robin Yates explains the lack of concern for the problematization of the purity vocabulary by pointing at the unwillingness on the part of scholars to deal with the “sacred,” a reluctance rooted in the conviction that the Warring States period (456–221 BC) “saw the development of a secular ideology and a secular society.”<sup>13</sup> Religion certainly is not a major theme of discussion in the field of Early China studies.<sup>14</sup> I wonder, however, whether the notion of purity is the key to solving this issue. All in all, the scant scholarly interest is easier to understand if one takes into account the difficulty of generalizing. As Yates demonstrates, and as Roetz has shown in his talks at the Käte Hamburger consortium, the semantics of purity definitely appear in some foundational texts of Chinese culture, from the *Xunzi* 荀子 through the *Mengzi* 孟子 to the *Zhuangzi* 莊子. At the same time, however, other sources neglect this vocabulary.

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- 10 F.i., Legge translates: “Po-î among the sages was the pure one” (伯夷聖之清者也). See Legge, *The Chinese Classics: Vol. II, The Works of Mencius*, 371; *Mengzi* 孟子, “Wan zhang 萬章 B,” 2740.
- 11 Michel Strickmann and Isabelle Robinet (1932–2000) translated *qing* with purity. See, for instance, Strickmann, “The Mao Shan Revelations: Taoism and the Aristocracy;” Robinet, *Taoist Meditation*. Stephen Bokenkamp and Fabrizio Pregadio prefer the rendering “clarity.” See Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*; Pregadio, *Great Clarity*.
- 12 Schipper, “Purity and Strangers.” For the ritual aspects, see, for instance, Lagerwey, *Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History*; Bokenkamp, “The Purification Ritual of the Luminous Perfected.”
- 13 Yates, “Purity and Pollution in Early China,” 479.
- 14 For a survey of early China religions, see the classical studies by Michael Loewe; Poo, *In Search of Personal Welfare*; DeWoskin, *Doctors, Diviners, and Magicians of Ancient China*; Von Glahn, *The Sinister Way*; Harper, *Early Chinese Medical Literature: The Mawangdui Medical Manuscripts*; “Communication by Design: Two Silk Manuscripts of Diagrams (*Tu*) from Mawangdui Tomb Three.”

## 2 Purity between Semantics and History

### 2.1 *The Semantics of Purity*

The first point of this paper is that lexical issues play a key role in comparative work. The dichotomy pure/impure is nothing but a way to render linguistically “relational binomials” such as right/wrong, good/bad, ordered/disordered, allowed/prohibited. Fairly obviously, ancient China had an enormous pool of lexical variants to articulate such notions and one would need reliable criteria to identify those terms which are structurally comparable with “pure.” All in all, Douglas’s understanding of impurity as an infringement of an ordered system of beliefs is often too generic for a sinologist since he or she is obliged to focus first on terms that, while playing a role in Indian religions, have never been a major subject on the scholarly agenda of students of Judaism or Christianity: The axis auspicious/inauspicious is a case in point.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, the “auspiciousness vocabulary” was the language of taboos in early China. The Shuihudi 睡虎地 daybook (or hemerological book, *rishu* 日書, 3rd century BC) A mentions the term “clean” (*jie* 潔) only once and twice the term *wu* 污, dirty. On the contrary, there are more than 100 occurrences of “auspicious” (*ji* 吉).<sup>16</sup> Even when admitting that the reference vocabulary used in this paper is fairly circumscribed, one has a trend here that brings to light the relative marginality of purity themes and the relevance of the notion of auspiciousness. Consider also Wang Chong 王充 (27–97) who once described some major religious restrictions of his time: a visit of a mutilated convict to a tumulus; to build an annex on the west side of a house; to have contact with a woman who has just given birth; to bring up a child born in the first or fifth month of the lunisolar year. In all these cases, we have religious restrictions that match Douglas’s insight that taboos are infringements of ordered systems of beliefs: The annex on the west of a house challenged the injunctions of early geomancy; the birth time of a baby involved complex chronomantic calculations; a mutilated convict had dissipated the inheritance of his parents, namely a complete body. Finally, several taboos in many parts of the world concern newborn babies. For instance, Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury (668–690) required that women underwent “40 days of purgation after the birth of a child.”<sup>17</sup> In China, however, all this is framed in the axis auspicious/inauspicious.

15 For the axis auspicious/inauspicious in Indian religions, see Carman and Appfel-Marglin, eds., *Purity and Auspiciousness in Indian Society*; Carman, *Majesty and Meekness*.

16 For *jie* and *wu*, see *Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian* 睡虎地秦墓竹簡, 204, 205, 212.

17 *Lun heng* 論衡, “Si hui 四諱,” 975–976. See also Forke, *Lun-hêng*, 432–433; Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 75.

As will be mentioned below, both Robertson Smith and Douglas would argue that the difference between the dietary rules of the Old Testament and the Chinese taboos lies in the degree of refinement. This approach, while being worthy of some reflections with regard to purity-related historical issues, is not very effective when a philologist is called upon to identify the terms that can be connected with “pure.” What a sinologist needs are rather semantic frames that list and analyse terms that can be hypothetically linked to purity notions.

The frame of reference for this paper (table below) relies on the idea of order as an all-encompassing concept and locates purity at the level of a metaphoric rendering of a specific kind of order (mode “indetermination”). Since pre-modern China had different ways of articulating the idea of this undetermined order, it is up to the historical evidence to tell us which metaphoric field is worthy of analysis and, with regard to Daoism, historical evidence says that one must deal with two subfields of the “water” metaphoric realm.

	Modes of Order	Metaphors		Daoism and purity: Historical evidence
Order	Mode predetermination: Axis auspicious/ inauspicious			
	Mode indetermination: Axis right/wrong	Water	Cleanliness	Water
			Clarity	
		Textiles		

There are two ways to figure out the semantics of order in pre-modern China. The first is the already mentioned axis auspicious/inauspicious, a reference frame that implies the idea of the predetermined order of the cosmos, undoubtedly a “well-ordered pattern” that prearranges fields and directions of human actions:<sup>18</sup> It is up to the working of the cosmos to establish whether a given day is auspicious or inauspicious for travelling, marrying, undertaking

18 For the description of early worldviews in terms of ordered patterns, see Granet, *La pensée chinoise*, 201; Needham and Wang, *Science and Civilisation in China, vol. II, History of Scientific Thought*, 281, 287.

affairs. All this is nicely exemplified in the excavated manuscripts known as daybooks.<sup>19</sup> Below is an excerpt translated and quoted by Poo with regard to days called *jie* 結:

Unsuccessful in doing things. If one makes sacrifice, it will not be auspicious. If a son is born, he shall have no younger brother; if he should have one, he (the younger brother) will certainly die. If one allows someone to stay in his house, this person will certainly forcefully occupy the house of the owner.<sup>20</sup>

There is little space for individual choice in the realm of auspiciousness. Infringements of the cosmic order simply derive from a lack of mantic knowledge for all a human being can do is gain divinatory access to his future and pattern his life on the prescriptions of the cosmos by welcoming auspiciousness, avoiding inauspiciousness (i.e. taboos), or learning how to avert dangers and perils by different ritual practices such as talismans and spells. Basically, we have here that “religious system of personal welfare and access to mantic knowledge” well described by Poo.<sup>21</sup>

The second mode of order in China moves in a completely different semantic realm since one of the most important Chinese renderings of this notion is *zheng* 正. The difference between the field of auspiciousness and the realm of *zheng* is very easy to trace on the linguistic level. The vocabulary of auspiciousness is hardly used as a transitive verb: Apart from possible metaphoric uses, people could not make something auspicious as auspiciousness was pre-set. Things are very different with *zheng*. *Zheng* could act as a “true” verb, hence the connotation “to correct”: Early kings ordered the punishment system (先王之正刑); people had to order/correct their own heart-mind (正其心); in the early mystical tradition of the “Inward Training” (*neiye* 內業), *zheng* as a verb means to “square up” and refers to the “squared posture during sitting meditation.”<sup>22</sup> Infringements of the order could be termed in different ways. Early texts help to identify the antonyms of *zheng*. One has certainly *luan* 亂, basically disorder, but also *xie* 邪 or *yin* 淫. *Xie* is “deviation”, something that

19 Poo, *In Search of Personal Welfare*, 69–92; for the mantic aspects, see Kalinowski, “Les traités du Shuihudi et l’hémérologie chinois à la fin des Royaumes Combattantes.”

20 Poo, *In Search of Personal Welfare*, 70.

21 Poo, *In Search of Personal Welfare*, 43.

22 *Shangshu* 尚書, “Wu yi 無逸,” 222; *Liji* 禮記, “Daxue 大學,” 1673. For the meaning of *zheng* within the early mystical tradition, see Roth, *Original Tao*, 4.



must be corrected (*zheng*); *yin*, “excessive” or even “lascivious” is mentioned as the antonym of *zheng* in a Han 漢 (206 BC–220 AD) text.<sup>23</sup>

There is hardly place for purity in the realm of auspiciousness. Early students of Indian religions tended to equate the binomials auspiciousness/inauspiciousness and purity/impurity but, as early as the seventies, they have been increasingly concerned with the demarcation line between the field of auspiciousness and that of purity. For it appears that “pure” and “auspicious” “in their Indian usage are by no means synonyms.” While converging in the idea of “sacred,” they pertain to different realms of religious language and reflect discrepant realms of religious experience.<sup>24</sup> The Devadāsīs, the female servants of the deities at Orissa temples, are called “auspicious women,” yet they are also deemed to be impure and therefore they are not allowed to enter the temple.<sup>25</sup> In addition, purity presupposes the possibility of purifying something and to “purify something” implies the use of transitive verbs. As mentioned above, the vocabulary of auspiciousness is hardly used in this way.

There is definitely too much place for purity on the level of *zheng* since terms such as *zheng*, *xie*, *yin* are far too generic when dealing with purity notions. In addition, purity, as it is used in the scholarly world, implies the metaphor of cleanliness, and the metaphoric substratum of *zheng* or *yin* is unclear. The generalization of these terms was already at a very advanced stage by the first century AD, when Xu Shen 許慎 (ca. 58–147 AD) compiled the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 [*Explaining Simple Graphemes and Analyzing Compounds*]. *Zheng* was simply glossed with “right” (*shi* 是); *yin* still entailed a metaphoric meaning (water overflow) but according to Xu Shen the term implied a conflict with specific “principles” (*li* 理).<sup>26</sup> Thus, it is necessary to proceed further in the

23 For *luan* as antonym of *zheng*, see *Taipingjing* 太平經, *juan* 92, 375. As the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 states, punishments serve to correct deviations (刑以正邪). See *Zuozhuan* 左傳, “Yin gong 隱公” 11, 1868. For the meaning of *zheng*, see *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字, 69b. For the use of *yin* and *zheng* as antonyms, Cai Yong 蔡邕 (133–192) once said that a superior man shares with friends teaching and learning activities; a correct man, however, does not cultivate excessive friendship (正人無有淫朋). See the commentary in *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書, *juan* 43, 1474.

24 Carman, *Majesty and Meekness*, 90.

25 See the paper by Frédérique Apffel-Marglin in Carman and Apffel-Marglin, eds., *Purity and Auspiciousness in Indian Society*, 4.

26 For the meaning of *zheng* and *yin*, see *Shuowen jiezi*, 69b, 551a. The *Shuowen* defines *yin* by saying that “to oppose *yin* means to conform to principles” (侵淫隨理也). The text also adds that *yin* refers to a long-lasting rain, hence the idea of overflow. In this regard, Yates writes that “the idea of overflow seems common to the concepts of purity and pollution in different cultures.” See Yates, “Purity and Pollution in Early China,” 495. Yet, the dietary

frame of reference proposed above and identify the metaphors with which pre-modern China rendered the idea of order.

Frevel and Nihan argue that the semantic fields orbiting around the purity notions are often not comparable.<sup>27</sup> In China, one finds both comparable (the metaphor of water) and less comparable metaphoric fields: textiles. With regard to the latter, *chun* 純, one of the standard terms connected to purity in Modern Chinese, alludes to the perfection of silk, a raw material without flaw. In itself the term connotes the idea of uniformity and, therefore, it was often used to describe colours in expressions such as “*chun* red” or “*chun* yellow.”<sup>28</sup> A further term connected to the metaphoric field of textiles is *za* 雜, also written as 襍, literally polychromatic.<sup>29</sup>

The metaphoric realm of “water” encompasses two subfields, the first dealing with cleanliness and the second touching upon the idea of light. An important equivalent of dirt in pre-modern China is *gou* 垢, basically something that can be washed away (*xi* 洗 or *zhuo* 濯).<sup>30</sup> The antonym of *gou* is *jing* 滯, also written as 淨, and means something not dirty (*gou*) and not filthy (*hui* 穢). A very important synonym of *jing* is *jie* 潔 and that of “filthy” *wu* 污 or “dirty.”<sup>31</sup> Turning to the second subfield, one finally encounters *qing*, a term that touches upon the idea of light and entails the notion of refinement. The ideal state of water was thought to be limpidity. Waters with earthly sediments or waters that could not freely flow were not *qing*: They were mixed (*za*) or even turbid (*zhuo* 濁).<sup>32</sup>

To choose among the terms proposed above the sound equivalents of purity notions is quite an awkward task mainly because it is objectively difficult to guarantee that the analysis of each single term will produce useful results for the comparative work. A possible solution to avoid this *cul de sac* is simply to

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rules of the *Leviticus* analyzed by Mary Douglas concern true clashes with the zoological taxonomy of the *Genesis* rather than the idea of exaggeration with respect to a given standard.

27 See the introduction of Frevel and Nihan, eds., *Purity in Ancient Judaism and the Ancient Mediterranean World*.

28 See, for instance, *Hanshu* 漢書, *juan* 66, 2881; *juan* 99A, 4096.

29 See *Shuowen jiezi*, 395b.

30 *Hanfeizi* 韓非子, “Da ti 大體,” 512; *Baopuzi waipian* 抱樸子外篇 [Ge Hong 葛洪 (283–363)], *juan* 4, 56.

31 See *Shuowen jiezi*, 45a; *juan* 11A, 551a. Yates, Robin, “Purity and Pollution in Early China,” 479.

32 For the description of waters as *qing*, see *Zhuangzi*, *juan* 4, “Ke yi 刻意,” 133; *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, *juan* 1, “Mengchun ji 孟春紀,” 24. For the idea of refinement, see *Shuowen jiezi*, 550a; see also Roberts, *Dao De Jing*, 123.

rely on early historical evidence, and early historical evidence says that when working with purity in Daoism one must look primarily at the metaphor of water. The manuscript found together with the *Laozi* 老子 in the Warring States tomb of Guodian 郭店—the *Taiyi shengshui* 太一生水—narrates a cosmogony in which water is the starting point of the universe; in the *Zhuangzi*, the path through which a mystic nurtures his spirit (*yang shen* 養神) is compared to water;<sup>33</sup> in the *Xiang'er* 想爾, the Way (*dao* 道)—the “matrix” of the Daoist world or that path which spontaneously runs through the meanders of cosmic time and permeates all things of the universe—is explicitly compared to water.<sup>34</sup>

## 2.2 Purity and History

Mary Douglas never argued that purity rules play a key role in every religion in the world, present and past. On the contrary, with regard to the Bantu, she wrote: “Their religion is not concerned with their correct orientation within elaborate cosmic categories nor with acts of transgression, nor rules of purity; it is concerned with joy.”<sup>35</sup> Such an assumption inevitably provokes many questions and a historian will inevitably wonder about the mechanisms that trigger or inhibit the development of purity discourses within given religious realms. The case of Chinese taboos shows, at least, that purity rules must have emerged at a certain point in time under certain circumstances. If the restrictions of the early daybooks (third/second century BC) and the prohibitions listed by Wang Chong (first century AD) were framed in the axis auspiciousness/inauspiciousness, the sixth-century encyclopaedia *Wushang biyao* 無上祕要 [*The Essence of the Supreme Secrets*] was already using the vocabulary of cleanliness to articulate religious restrictions.<sup>36</sup>

The problems linked to the genesis of purity rules are never thematized in *Purity and Danger* and the distinction between a taboo and a religious restriction framed in the language of cleanliness is often unclear. All in all, it is fairly unsurprising that one of the main criticisms leveled at this seminal book pertains to the staticity of purity ideas treated here.<sup>37</sup> Even the applications of

33 Allan, Sarah, “The Great One, Water, and the *Laozi*,” *Zhuangzi*, *juan* 4, “Ke yi 刻意,” 133.

34 *Laozi Xiang'er zhu* 老子想爾注, 10. For the definition of the Way as “matrix,” see the entry on the notion of *dao* by Russel Kirkland in Pregadio, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, 309.

35 Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 15.

36 *Wushang biyao*, *juan* 99, 9b. For the translation of the titles of the Daoist texts, I follow Schipper and Verellen, eds. *The Taoist Canon*.

37 See the introduction in Frelve and Nihan, eds., *Purity in Ancient Judaism and the Ancient Mediterranean World*.

Douglas's paradigm suffer here and there from ahistoricity. Yates, for instance, is undoubtedly right in emphasizing that ancient China resembled to a certain extent the world of modern Hindus, a world in which the good/bad dichotomy is phrased in terms of pure/impure and auspicious/inauspicious.<sup>38</sup> However, the mixing of the two order-axes may also derive from the diachronic overlapping of different religious imageries: trends such as the everyday religion of the daybooks in which purity notions do not play any role and strains that developed purity discourses.

Mary Douglas returned to the subject of "history" in the closing words of a paper published a few years after *Purity and Danger*:

As to the question of the rational or irrational character of rules of uncleanness, Robertson Smith is shown to have been partly right. Pollution beliefs certainly derive from rational activity, from the process of classifying and ordering experience. They are, however, not produced by strictly rational or even conscious processes but rather as a spontaneous by-product of these processes.<sup>39</sup>

Douglas appears to refer here to Robertson Smith's insight about purity rules as a refined form of generic religious restrictions.<sup>40</sup> This approach is both useful and problematic for a sinologist. It is helpful because one can understand what Wang Chong was doing exactly when he commented on taboos:

三曰諱婦人乳子，以為不吉。將舉吉事，入山林，遠行度川澤者，皆不與之交通。[...] 實說諱忌產子、乳犬者，欲使人常自潔清，不欲使人被污辱也。夫自潔清則意精，意精則行清，行清而貞廉之節立矣。

The third prohibition concerns a woman who has born a child. This is considered "not auspicious." All those who are about to undertake affairs [that need] auspiciousness, [such as] to enter the mountains or to go far away and traverse streams and lakes will not have contact with her. [...] To tell the truth, those who taboo new-born babies or puppies want to induce men to regularly cleanse themselves. They do not want men to get dirty. Indeed, people who cleanse themselves will have straight intentions, and

38 Yates, Robin, "Purity and Pollution in Early China," 486–492.

39 Douglas, *Implicit Meaning*, 114.

40 Smith, *The Religion of the Semites, Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, 152–154.

when intentions are straight, behaviour is limpid and when behaviour is limpid, the knots of honesty are finally established.<sup>41</sup>

Like a pre-modern student of habits and customs, Wang Chong tries here to make some sense out of the taboos concerning babies by explaining the real intentions of the supporters of the restriction: hygiene. As a second step, Wang Chong extrapolates the hygienic rules towards a more refined discourse with human intentions and behavior framed in the metaphor of cleanliness. This shift from the axis auspicious/inauspicious to the image of cleanliness certainly implies that the framing of a religious restriction in the language of purity can also derive from a (rational) cogitation on given habits, just like Mary Douglas would put it. Yet, it is not easy to reconstruct how far the phrasing of religious restrictions in terms of purity/impurity should be seen as a result of “rational and conscious processes.” For it is difficult to see what exactly these processes are. It is therefore convenient to leave aside terms such as rationality and consciousness and rely on the recent remarks by Frevel and Nihan. In their volume on purity notions in the ancient Mediterranean realm, purity stands out as an indicator that unveils the rise of a major religious lore, a tradition that gradually crystallizes from the synchronic and diachronic overlapping of many discrepant trends and strains. The point here is not to search for clear-cut religious monolithic traditions (as Mary Douglas would have done) but rather for those strains that were to play a role in the already formed religion, in this case, obviously, Daoism. The point I am trying to make is that Wang Chong’s reframing of taboos in the language of cleanliness is a signal that indicates the gradual rise of Daoism. This statement obviously requires proofs. Is it really possible to speak in the first century AD of cultural strains that were to merge into medieval Daoism? And what did Wang Chong and his cleanliness rules have in common with this imagery?

The answer to the first question is Huanglao 黃老 thought. Whatever this term meant in the last centuries BC,<sup>42</sup> the first century Huanglao imagery certainly embodied a layer dealing with inner cultivation since the practitioners dealt with techniques that were supposed to nurture the basic nature of man (*yang xing* 養性).<sup>43</sup> Basically, they were the Eastern Han (25–220 AD) receivers of the early mystical and meditative tradition, that lore called “Inward

41 *Lun heng*, *juan* 23, “Si hui 四諱,” 975–976. For the translation, see also Forke, *Lun-hêng*, 432–433.

42 For the problems connected to the early Huanglao lore, see, for instance, Nylan and Csikszentmihalyi, “Constructing Lineages and Inventing Traditions.”

43 *Hou Hanshu*, *juan* 1B, 85.

Training” by Harold Roth. This “Inward Training” saw the human being as a mixture of body and vital essence (*jing* 精). The vital essence—the materialization of the Way in men—was supposed to leak away over time mainly because of human passions: emotions (*qing* 情) and desires (*yu* 欲). The target of the human being was to eliminate these detrimental urges and put the heart-mind at rest (*xinjing* 心靜) in order to reach one’s numinous being (*shen* 神), that “foundational layer of mystical awareness that lies within human beings.”<sup>44</sup> This framework, changes notwithstanding, was very much alive in the first century AD and was to become an important paradigm within medieval Daoism.

Eastern Han Huanglao practitioners strove for a life free from human desires, and they took care of their vital essence and spirit (愛精神). Purity notions must have played a role in this framework since the chronicles connect Huanglao to the ideas of clarity and quiescence.<sup>45</sup> In addition, the *Xiang'er* gives a fairly explicit statement. The Way resembles Water and just like it can be affected by unclean things (垢辱不潔之物).<sup>46</sup>

Wang Chong mentions the Huanglao practice of “nurturing nature” under the rubric “Daoism” (*daojia* 道家). Wang Chong understands Daoism as a label for those who strove for immortality and “nurtured nature” by means of different techniques. He himself certainly did not believe in immortality.<sup>47</sup> Yet, he must have been a practitioner of given meditative practices since, besides writing a book about “nurturing nature,” the term “nurture the *qi*” (*yang qi* 養氣), the energetic raw fabric that was thought to compose men and all things in the universe, appears in his autobiography.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, according to the chronicles, he “reduced and controlled passions and desires, nourished the spirit, and restrained the self” (裁節嗜欲，頤神自守).<sup>49</sup> All this suggests that Wang Chong was in touch with the Huanglao realm described in the historical sources, and the reframing of taboos in cleanliness vocabulary may be a consequence of this aspect of his intellectual background.

44 *Guanzi* 管子, *juan* 49, “Nei ye 內業,” 776; for the definition of *shen* as the “foundational layer of mystical awareness that lies within human beings,” see Roth, *Original Tao*, 43.

45 *Hou Hanshu*, *juan* 21, 753; *juan* 32, 1325; *juan* 1, 85.

46 *Laozi Xiang'er zhu* 老子想爾注, 10.

47 *Lun heng*, *juan* 7, “Dao xu 道虛,” 336–338.

48 *Lun heng*, *juan* 30, “Zi ji 自紀,” 1027.

49 *Hou Hanshu*, *juan* 49, 1630.

### 3 Purity Themes in Medieval Daoism

#### 3.1 Purity and Daoist Soteriology

When turning to the analysis of the ways in which the terms belonging to the metaphoric realm “water” are used in medieval Daoist texts, let me briefly focus on the role of purity vocabulary within medieval soteriology. The starting point must necessarily be *qing* since this is undoubtedly one of the main Daoist keywords. Mary Douglas’s insight about purity as a metaphor for holiness applies well to this term since the notions of “clarity/purity” and “quiescence” play a very important role in given layers of Daoist soteriology. For instance, *qing* was a label for paradises. In the eyes of the early medieval adept Ge Hong 葛洪 (283–343), the paradise of the Great Clarity (*taiqing*) was “a pure space where the saintly man wanders unrestrained.”<sup>50</sup> In the *Subtle Spell for Correcting the Heart* (正心微祝) of the Daoist Shangqing lineage, the Supreme Clarity was a paradise of immortals where one was to live forever together with the sun and the moon (長與日月).<sup>51</sup>

Besides designating outer paradises, *qing* also plays a key role in the description of the path that led the medieval adept to free himself from the constraints of human life. Indeed, although it is difficult to speak of a monolithic soteriological discourse in medieval Daoism, it is certain that the theme “human body” played a key role in many lineages. Either when conceived as a sacred landscape or described as the domicile of spirits and gods, or presented as the setting of the Inner Alchemy (*neidan* 內丹) processes, the body was the means through which an adept was to overcome the constraints of human life and achieve transcendence.<sup>52</sup> The body—often seen as repository of the *qi*, the vital essence, and the spirit<sup>53</sup>—was both an instrument and an impediment to reaching this goal.

50 Pregadio, ed., *Great Clarity*, 38.

51 *Zhen’gao*, *juan* 10, 20b–21a.

52 For the Daoist views of the human body, see Schipper, *Le corps taoïste*; Despeux, “Le corps, champ spatio-temporel, souche d’identité;” Robinet, “Taoïsme et mystique.”

53 The conceptualization of key-terms such as *qi*, *jing*, and *shen* varies greatly within the Daoist lineages. For instance, for an overview about the terms *jing* and *qi* within the *Huangtingjing* 黃庭經 lore, see Robinet, *Taoist Meditation*, 85–88. See also Pregadio, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, 562–565.



FIGURE 6.1 A Daoist adept with his qi, vital essence, and spirit. Xingming guizhi 性命圭旨.

The body was an impediment to reaching transcendence because life in the mundane world was thought to cause a gradual but constant deterioration of the vital essence, an impoverishment that was to lead ultimately to physical death. It was an instrument because the Daoist adept strove to stop the depletion of his essences and achieve transcendence by means of different physical and meditative techniques. The aim of these techniques was to refine and calm the inborn energetic substances: They had to be clear and still (*qingjing* 清靜) so that the adept could finally join the Way in its unity (*yi* 一).<sup>54</sup> Therefore, the notion of *qing* was basically synonymous with salvation (in a Daoist sense).

54 See, for instance, *Yangxing yanming lu* 養性延命錄, dz 838, *juan* A, 9a. For a survey of Daoist meditative techniques and the ways in which human substances were refined through them, see Robinet, *Taoist Meditation*. See also Andersen, *The Method of Holding the Three Ones*.



The cleanliness vocabulary, too, plays a role in medieval Daoism. The cleanliness metaphor was even used as a device for identifying Daoism in the broader religious landscape. The Buddhist Zong Bing 宗炳 (375–443) connected the devotees of Laozi to the methods for “washing the heart-mind” (*xi xin* 洗心); later, the compiler of the bibliography of the Tang 唐 (618–906) imperial library, described Daoism by also mentioning purification ceremonies to be carried on during the ritual of initiation.<sup>55</sup> Finally, the cleanliness vocabulary often appears in the texts.

One day, it is hoped, we will have a detailed map of the ways in which the cleanliness lexicon is used in medieval sources. For the time being, it should be noticed that the vocabulary of dirtiness unveils an infringement of Daoist rules. The medieval encyclopaedia *Wushang biyao* contains fairly detailed lists of sins (*zui* 罪) and one of these was the pollution of the rules of the Way (穢濁道法). Consider also the *Jiuzhen zhongjing* 九真中經 [*Central Scripture of the Nine True Ones*]. The text prohibits the diffusion of the scriptures and states than an infringement of this rule “pollutes the truth of the Way” (穢道真).<sup>56</sup> Hygienic rules, too, play an important role, particularly in the ritual realm. The believer was required to wear clean clothes (淨潔衣服) and to pay attention to personal hygiene; Shangqing adepts were supposed to “wash away dust and dirt” (沐浴塵埃); personal hygiene was an important part of the early Lingbao 靈寶 ordination rites that required practitioners to “Cleanse the body and uphold the precepts,” Heavenly Masters adepts took (or were supposed to take) baths before burning incense in the Quiescence halls.<sup>57</sup> These kinds of hygienic rules should not be understood in terms of that kind of medical materialism described by Mary Douglas, since Yates is right in agreeing with the historian Jean-Pierre Vernant on the point that “physical cleanliness affects more than simply the body.”<sup>58</sup> This, obviously, applies particularly well to medieval Daoism, a religion that put the human physique, in itself a sacred microcosm, at the centre of its soteriological discourse. From the viewpoint of Shangqing adepts, the disregard of bathing (*myu* 沐浴) rules implies the growth of inner turbidity and filthiness (*zhuohui* 濁穢) and, finally, perdition (*ziwang* 自亡).<sup>59</sup>

55 *Hongmingji* 弘明集, T.2102: 52.9c; *Suishu* 隋書, *juan* 35, 1092.

56 *Shangqing taishang dijun jiuzhen zhongjing* 上清太上帝君九真中經, *DZ* 1376, *juan* B, 2b.

57 *Wushang biyao*, *DZ* 1138, *juan* 43, 2a; *Zhen'gao*, *DZ* 1016, *juan* 10, 11b; *Taishang dongxuan lingbao zhihui zuigen shangpin dajie jing* 太上洞玄靈寶智慧罪根上品大戒經, *DZ* 457, *juan* A, 3a; for the translation see Kohn, Livia, “Supplement to *Cosmos and Community*,” 69. See also the *Zhengyi fawen Tianshi jiaojie kejing* 正一法文天師教戒科經, *DZ* 789, 8b.

58 Yates, “Purity and Pollution in Early China,” 484.

59 *Zhen'gao*, *DZ* 1016, *juan* 10, 7b.

The Heavenly Master Kou Qianzhi 寇謙之 (365–448) stated that a refinement of the body and the cleansing of the self will put the adept on the same level as the Way (清身潔己與道同功).<sup>60</sup> Finally, the *Wushang biyao* states:

夫建志內學養神求仙者常當數沐浴致靈炁玉女降不沐浴者故三宮穢污

Those who are committed to esoteric learning, the nurturing of the spirit, and the quest for immortality shall often take baths so that the Jade Woman of the Numinous *qi* can descend at last. If people do not bathe, the three [inner] palaces will be polluted.<sup>61</sup>

Thus, hygienic rules were seen as a precondition for getting closer to the gods and preserve the cleanliness of the inner meanders of the sacred body.

These brief notes on the role of purity notions in the soteriological discourse show the relevance of the subject in medieval Daoism. What this theme reveals about the evolution of Daoism through the centuries still has to be examined. With regard to the early technical-religious lore or, more precisely, the culture of the “men of recipes” (*fangshi* 方士),<sup>62</sup> the *Taishang laojun zhongjing* 太上老君中經 [*The Most High Lord Lao’s Book of the Center*] simply does not use the purity vocabulary, although we have here a description of the gods of the human body.<sup>63</sup> When one turns to the early Daoist lore, Yates was right in arguing that an analysis of purity cannot but deal first with a very strong sinological analytical pattern, namely the assessment that the Warring States period saw the rise of an “organismic cosmology”, a bipolar worldview—*yin* and *yang*, man and woman, light and darkness—in which each aspect involved and presupposed its antonym. As Yates writes, “In such an interpretation there can be no place for the concepts of purity and pollution, because the latter imply a radical distinction between the sacred and profane or secular worlds.”<sup>64</sup>

60 *Laojun yinsong jiejing* 老君音誦誡經, *DZ* 785, 17b.

61 *Wushang biyao*, *DZ* 1138, *juan* 66, 2a.

62 As Donald Harper has pointed out, the term *fangshi* in Early China “covered a range of specialists in natural philosophy and occult knowledge.” See Harper, *Early Chinese Medical Literature*, 51–52.

63 For the *Taishang Laojun zhongjing*, see *DZ* 1168. The link between this text and the *fangshi* culture is easy to establish since we might have here a very early source, when Daoism was not yet fully developed. For the dating, see Schipper and Verellen, eds. *The Taoist Canon*, 94–95.

64 Yates, “Purity and Pollution in Early China,” 479.

Yates's remarks on the *yin/yang* cosmology are very fascinating, especially for those who are tired of reading about that never-changing harmonic worldview with reality oscillating between *yin* and *yang*, the positive and the negative, the good and the bad. Unfortunately, to prove Yates's hypothesis is a life-long enterprise since the job of questioning and historicizing Chinese cosmologies is still very much a work in progress.<sup>65</sup> With regard to early Daoism, to prove Yates's hypothesis could shed light on the reasons why early sources such as the *Zhuangzi* or the *Huainanzi* 淮南子 (to my great surprise) appear to use the cleanliness vocabulary in a very conventional way: The clean is good, dirt is bad.<sup>66</sup> In addition, one has Wang Chong and the Eastern Han Huanglao lore. At the same time, one is more or less obliged to work with the hypothesis that these texts moved in a bipolar framework. When one follows this line of reasoning, purity and pollution lose their strong dichotomous character and both become features of the Way, hence the *Zhuangzi* statement that the Way is hidden everywhere, even in urine and excrement. In addition, *qing* and *zhuo*—the limpid and the turbid—were seen as qualities of the cosmic *qi*. As the *Laozi zhigui* 老子指歸 [*The Essential Meaning of the Laozi*], a text usually dated to the Han, says: "The limpid makes Heaven, the turbid makes the Earth, the *yang* makes the male and the *yin* makes the female (清者為天，濁者為地，陽者為男，陰者為女)."<sup>67</sup> The *Laozi zhigui* also gives two lists of terms, the first pertaining to the realm of life and the second to the sphere of death: among others, void (*xu* 虛) and full (*shi* 實), not-being (*wu* 無) and being (*you* 有); clear/pure (*qing*) and turbid (*zhuo*); quiet (*jing* 靜) and shaking (*rao* 擾).<sup>68</sup> In the sixth century AD, Daoists were aware of the problems connected to the bipolar worldview. Whatever the role of *yin/yang* on the cosmological level, the encyclopaedia *Wushang biyao* clearly chooses between the good and the bad since it re-proposes the list of 13 terms of the *Laozi zhigui* with an important difference: The text mentions only the catalogue of positive terms and completely ignores the list of their negative antonyms.<sup>69</sup>

65 For a few historicizing works, see Roetz, *Mensch und Natur im alten China*; Henderson, *The Development and Decline of Chinese Cosmology*; Wang Aihe, *Cosmology and Political Culture in Early China*; Farmer, Henderson, and Witzel, Michael, "Neurobiology, Layered texts, and Correlative Cosmologies"; Puett, *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-Divinization in Early China*.

66 The *Huainanzi* recommends expelling the filthy (*chu hui* 除穢). See *Huainanzi* 淮南子, *juan* 7, "Jing shen xun 精神訓," 238.

67 *Laozi zhigui* 老子指歸, *juan* 1, "上德不德," 3. See also *Huainanzi* 淮南子, *juan* 3, "Tianwen xun 天文訓," 79; Yates, "Purity and Pollution in Early China," 527.

68 *Laozi zhigui* 老子指歸, *juan* 3, "Chu sheng ru si 出生入死," 43.

69 *Wushang biyao*, *DZ* 1138, *juan* 65, 6a–6b.

### 3.2 *Purity and Interreligious Contact*

The work of the Käte Hamburger Kolleg shows the importance of two dimensions of interreligious contact. The first pertains to the contents of a given lore and focuses on thematic borrowings; the second emphasizes the social dimension of contact and deals with forms of explicit interaction such as demarcational strategies and the overt construction of the category “the other.” As to the first of these, in the *Encyclopedia of Daoism*, Miura Kunio hypothesizes that the use of the binomial *qingjing* written as 清淨 (clarity and cleanliness) instead of 清靜 (clarity and quiescence) may hide a thematic borrowing from Buddhism.<sup>70</sup> While certainly worth testing, this line of reasoning is also fairly risky. With regard to interreligious contact, the use of Buddhist terminology in Daoist texts or Daoist vocabulary in Buddhist sources may well show that medieval believers were indeed familiar with the lexicon of given religious realms. There is little evidence to suggest that this linguistic contact hides an exchange of ideas or practices. The image of a cleansed heart is a case in point here.

As already mentioned, pre-medieval Daoists emphasized the idea of a life free from emotions and passions, hence the notion of quiescence. In the *Xiang'er*, the concept of quiescence had already acquired a very strong physiological connotation with the emotions located within the five human organs, the heart-mind among others.<sup>71</sup> In the fourth century, the *Laozi Heshang gong zhangju* 老子河上公章句 [*The Laozi in Sections and Sentences by Heshang gong*] emphasizes again the need to empty the five organs of emotions and desires (除情去欲，使五藏空虛) and defines the man who has achieved the Way as the one whose inner realms are clear and quiescent, hence the metaphor of a cleansed heart-mind.<sup>72</sup> In the following decades and centuries, the binomial “washing the mind” (*xi xin* 洗心) was to achieve success within Daoist circles and, as already mentioned, it even became one of the markers of Daoism in the broader religious landscape.

70 Pregadio, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, 799–800.

71 As the text says, “When one’s emotions are unmoved and one’s joy and anger do not issue forth, the five viscera are in harmony and mutually productive” (情性不動，喜怒不發，五藏皆和同相生). *Laozi Xiang'er zhu*, 7; for the translation see Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 81.

72 *Laozi zhuzi suoyin* 老子逐字索, 10.5: 42; 11.1C: 44; 72.4C: 149. See also *Zhen'gao*, *juan* 2, 3b; *juan* 9, 11a. For the dating of the *Heshang gong*, see Pregadio, *The Encyclopedia of Daoism*, 619–620.

### 洗心退藏圖

反其背不獲其身

聖人以此洗心退藏於密

行其庭不見其人

一條直路少人尋  
尋到山根始入門  
坐定更知行炁主  
真人之息自深深

道乃天地心  
愚痴不解尋  
破衣要縫補  
須用水磨針

紅紅白水中蓮  
出污泥中色轉鮮  
莖直鶴空蓬又實  
脩行妙理恰如然

聖人以此齋戒神明其德

不是玄門消息深  
高山流水少知音  
若能尋着來時路  
赤子依然混沌心

時時泥濘常教玉  
樹氣回根  
日日栽培不使金  
花精脫帶



FIGURE 6.2 *The diagram of washing the mind according to the late imperial inner alchemy (neidan 內丹) lore. Xingming guizhi 性命圭旨.*

The idea of a clean mind or heart is obviously not a feature peculiar to Daoism. In the Egyptian story of Sinuhe, a quiet heart was said to be clean; Psalm 51:10 says: "Create in me a pure heart, O God;" Augustine listed seven stages for the cultivation of the soul: The sixth was the cleansing of the mind; in Islam, it was recommended to "wash the heart with the water of regret."<sup>73</sup> With regard to China, the binomial *xi xin* not only occurs in Daoist sources but also in Buddhist texts and even in the received *Xici* 繫辭 [*Appended Phrases*], a doc-

73 For the story of Sinuhe, see Gardiner, *Notes on the story of Sinuhe*, 57. With regard to Augustine, see Holmes, *Building the Christian Academy*, 29. Chittick, *In Search of the Lost Heart*, 36.

ument included in the Confucian (*ru* 儒) classic *Yi* 易 [*The Changes*]. These lexical parallels attest to a situation of interreligious contact on the linguistic level. Yet, one needs further evidence that proves the Daoist origin of such a vocabulary. Not much can be said with regard to Daoism and Confucianism, at least for the time being. It is certain that the expression “washing the mind” did not belong to the original *Xici*. It was rather an Eastern Han or early medieval interpolation by the Confucian scholar Han Kangbo 韓康伯 (?–ca. 385), a proponent of the *xuanxue* 玄學 [Dark Learning] metaphysics of early medieval Confucian classicists.<sup>74</sup> One can even assume a *trait d'union* between scholarly teachings and early medieval Daoist doctrines. For instance, the thinker He Yan 何晏 (190–249)—traditionally regarded as the initiator of the *xuanxue*—once maintained that the sage (*shengren* 聖人) does not have feelings.<sup>75</sup> This stance is explainable only by taking into account early medieval Daoist doctrines like those exemplified in the *Xiang'er*.<sup>76</sup> All in all, however, it is difficult to prove that *xi xin* was a loan from the Daoist vocabulary since this binomial is not attested in the Daoist texts up to He Yan's time.

When turning to Buddhism, things become more complicated. On the one hand, the binomial *xi xin* was apparently a kind of identification marker of Daoism and, at least in the case of Zong Bing, Buddhists may have been aware

74 *Zhouyi* 周易, “Xici 繫辭,” 81. The Han stone classics (*shijing* 石經) have *xian xin* 先心 with *xian* being perhaps a mistake for *xi*, to wash. See Lian Shaoming 連劭名, “Mawangdui boshu Xici yanjiu 馬王堆帛書系辭研究,” 18. The Mawangdui 馬王堆 edition has *shi xin* 佚心. See again Lian Shaoming, 18; Wang Baoxuan 王葆琰, “Xici boshu ben yu tongxingben de guanxi ji qi xuepai wenti 系辭帛書本與通行本的關係及其學派問題,” 49. Lian Shaoming argues that even the character *shi* 佚 in the Mawangdui edition must be read as *xi* and he uses the early mystic tradition as proof. As mentioned before, there is indeed a connection between the early lore and the early medieval theory of “washing the mind.” Yet, the fact that the character *xi* (with its metaphoric substratum) does not appear in the excavated copy is simply an incontrovertible fact. In other words, we have here an Eastern Han or medieval interpolation of the classical document.

75 See *Sanguo zhi* 三國志, *juan* 28, 795. See also *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語, *juan* 4, 68. On this point, see also Tang Yongtong 湯用彤, *Tang Yongtong quanji* 湯用彤全集, 117–186. For an analysis of the thought of the most famous *xuanxue* scholar—Wang Bi 王弼 (226–249)—see Wagner, *The Craft of the Chinese Commentator*. For the somewhat problematic association between He Yan and *xuanxue* thought, see Makeham, *Transmitters and Creators: Chinese Commentators and Commentaries on the Analects*, 23–47.

76 Tang Yongtong uses Western Han theories about human nature in order to explain He Yan's stance. See Tang Yongtong 湯用彤, *Tang Yongtong quanji* 湯用彤全集, vol. 4, 69–71. Yet, the famous Han philosopher Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179–104 BC) never maintained that the sage was a man without feelings or passions. See *Lun heng*, *juan* 13, “Ben xing 本性,” 139.

of this.<sup>77</sup> On the other hand, a number of early translations mention the binomial *xi xin*. Accordingly, the hypothesis that at least some of the documents that arrived in China in the early medieval era contained the expression “washing the mind” or something similar, cannot be safely ruled out.<sup>78</sup> In two cases, however, there is clear evidence of an interreligious exchange of terminology. The first example concerns Chi Shao 郗超 (336–377), also known as Chi Jiabin 郗嘉賓, and his *Feng fayao* 奉法要 [*The Obedience to the Essentials of the Dharma*]. Chi Shao was certainly very well aware of Daoist terminology since he came from a family of Daoists.<sup>79</sup> The second example is to be found in the introductory remarks to the translation of the *Yogacārabhūmi* by the monk Buddhahadra (359–429). In this case, too, there are fairly explicit signs of an interreligious contact since the monk also mentioned further key terms usually connected to Daoism, namely the notion of non-action (*wu wei* 無為).<sup>80</sup>

The presence of the binomial “washing the mind” in two Buddhist texts written by authors who were certainly aware of the Daoist meaning of this idiom poses the question in how far this lexical borrowing unveils forms of interreligious contact that go beyond words. One can safely rule out thematic borrowings since there is nothing in the texts to suggest that purity notions served as a vehicle to absorb Daoist teachings or practices. The form of contact that one finds here pertains mostly to the social sphere. Early medieval Buddhists were simply trying to promote their own work and faith by means of Daoist terminology. When Chi Shao wrote “wash the mind and meditate on the Way” (洗心念道), he was trying to sell his explanations of the basic prescriptions for a Buddhist. With regard to Buddhahadra, things are more complex since we have here a translation made at an imperial court and early medieval imperial courts used a sort of rhetoric—the so-called “clear discussions” (*qingtan* 清談)—that was deeply influenced by *xuanxue* philosophy.<sup>81</sup> Accordingly, Buddhahadra was trying to sell his sutra by using the rhetoric in use at the court:

77 *Hongmingji* 弘明集, T.2102: 52.9c.

78 See, for instance, the *Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā* (*Da zhuang yan lun jing* 大莊嚴論經): T.201: 4.299b.

79 *Hongmingji* 弘明集, T.2102: 52.86b. According to the chronicles, Chi Yin 郗愔, the father of Chi Jiabin revered the lineage of the Heavenly Masters (奉天師道). See *Jinshu* 晉書, *juan* 77, 2030. See also Gao Wenqiang 高文強, “Jin Song zhi ji Foxue shehuihua yuanyin chutan 晉宋之際佛學社會化原因初探,” 86.

80 *Damo duoluo chan jing* 達摩多羅禪經, T.618: 15.301a.

81 On the *qingtan*, see Chan, *Two Visions of the Way*, 25–28.

無思無為。而無不為是故洗心靜亂者以之研慮。

Do not think, do not act and there will be nothing that will not be done. Therefore the one who washes the mind and pacifies the turmoil shall use it (i.e. this sutra) in order to examine cogitations.<sup>82</sup>

“Interreligious contact” does not only mean the overlapping of ideas and practices. It also refers to interreligious demarcational strategies. As mentioned above, purity notions appear to have been fairly relevant in providing groups and traditions with a suitable language for marking interreligious boundaries. When focusing on Daoism, as in the case of the soteriological discourse, the historical approach is mandatory since the ways in which the Daoists used the vocabulary of purity and cleanliness in its demarcational function changed quite significantly over time, at least when considering the relationship between the adepts of the Way and the devotees of the Buddha. Three points are particularly important. First, the image of a “dirt mind” does not appear to have served as an interreligious demarcational device in medieval Daoism. Second, in the early medieval era, the purity vocabulary was used as a means of demarcation in order to create the boundaries of Daoism with respect to contiguous religious realms. The Buddhists play no role here. Third, when focusing on the Buddhido-daoist interplay, the demarcational function of purity emerges under the Tang when religious rivalry is often tantamount to ethnical enmity: the Chinese versus the foreigner.

The principal antagonists of the early medieval Daoists were not Buddhists or Confucians but rather people moving in a sphere that sinology used to call “popular religion”. Since this label, especially if taken in its sociological dimension, raises more problems than it can actually solve, I prefer to rely here on the much more neutral term “everyday religion” and bring into play an analytical label that stems from Early China studies: the men of recipes.<sup>83</sup>

When Daoism began to take shape in the first centuries AD, the *fangshi* with their recipes certainly did not die out. In all probability, loose circles of occultists, taboo makers, and supporters of given bodily techniques continued to exist

82 *Damo duoluo chan jing* 達摩多羅禪經, T.618: 15.301a.76.

83 For a fascinating evaluation of popular religion in terms of a peculiar cultural system, see Seiwert, *Popular Religious Movements and Heterodox Sects in Chinese History*. To use “popular religion” in Seiwert’s frame would basically require a precise understanding of the cultural system “Daoism” and the cultural system “popular religion.” Obviously, this is an extremely demanding task, hence my decision to avoid the term “popular religion” altogether.



alongside Daoism. From the perspective of external (and often biased) observers, it was difficult to distinguish the *fangshi* realm from the rising Daoist field, hence the somewhat scarce presence of the term *fangshi* in medieval historical sources. Under the Tang, when Daoism had already reached a certain social and religious maturity, observers begin to distinguish and we find mention of both “Daoists” and *fangshi* in the historical sources.<sup>84</sup>

The relationship between Daoism and *fangshi* culture is extremely complex and an exhaustive treatment of this issue extends well beyond the parameters of the present paper. A few observations are, however, mandatory. On the one hand, Daoism can by no means be reduced to recipes and everyday religion and even the cursory reader of the extreme complex cosmologies and meditative practices will be aware of that. On the other hand, Daoism and *fangshi* culture were undoubtedly two contiguous religious realms. At least to a certain extent, the devotee of the Way and the man of recipes drew from a common pool of symbols and practices, that everyday religion of “personal welfare” nicely described by Poo: cult of immortals, taboos, spells, talismans, bodily techniques. Thus, demarcation in medieval Daoism meant primarily to mark the boundary with respect to this contiguous heterogeneous world. For it is certain that medieval Daoists were at times fully aware of the particularity of their creed, hence the vehement attacks against practitioners of everyday religion.<sup>85</sup> The metaphor of water plays a role here. For instance, the *Wushang biyao* speaks of filthy “immortality” notions and turbid “trueness” (穢仙濁真) when mentioning practitioners that worked with sexual techniques.<sup>86</sup>

When turning to the Buddho-daoist interplay, there seems to be no early medieval document that labels the devotees of the Buddha as dirty or impure. The early extant remarks about the famous *hua hu* 化胡 story—Laozi went to the West and converted the Barbarians—simply do not use the purity vocabulary.<sup>87</sup> Apparently, this lexicon develops under the Tang. For instance, in the text analyzed by Schipper, Buddhists are accused of making altars “out

84 Medieval chronicles rarely use the term *fangshi*. The *Weishu*, for instance, mentions it only four times. See *Weishu* 魏書, *juan* 32, 759; *juan* 35, 822; *juan* 114, 3054. It occurs more frequently in the *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 (more than 20 occurrences) and *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 (51). See, for instance, *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書, *juan* 2, 33; *juan* 3, 61; *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書, *juan* 76, 3475; *juan* 77, 3509.

85 See, for instance, Stein, “Religious Taoism and Popular Religion from the Second to Seventh Centuries,” in Seidel and Welch, *Facets of Taoism: Essays in Chinese Religion*, 53–81.

86 *Wushang biyao*, DZ 1138, *juan* 42, 9b. See also 5b.

87 For the *hua hu* controversy, see Zürcher, Erik, *The Buddhist Conquest of China*, 288–320. See also Schipper, “Purity and Strangers,” 70–72.



FIGURE 6.3 *The Queen Mother of the west. Eastern Han Stone engraving. Today in the Xuzhou 徐州 museum. PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR*

of excrement and filth.”<sup>88</sup> Even when focusing on Buddhism as a “foreign religion,” it is extremely difficult to generalize. On the one hand, the *Santian neijie jing* 三天內解經 [*Explanations of the Essentials of the Three Heavens*] at least defines the *qi* of China as uniform and correct (*chunzheng* 純正).<sup>89</sup> On the other hand, Daoism inherited from the past a certain romantic vision of the outskirts of China. One of the most powerful Han deities, the Queen Mother of the West, was located in the West (Fig. 6.3).

In addition, a very interesting text of an uncertain dating, the *Taiqing jinye shendan jing* 太清金液神丹經 [*Book of the Divine Elixir (Made from) Liquid Gold, from the (Canon of) the Greatest Purity*] vividly brings to light the interest of the Daoists in exotic regions. For instance, Daqin 大秦, the extreme West, is the birthplace of the “Great Religion” (*da dao* 大道), whatever this is supposed to mean. The people of the geographic area called Shihanguo 師漢國 are described as “clear and clean” (*qing jie* 清潔).<sup>90</sup> In the medieval era,

88 See Schipper, Kristofer, “Purity and Strangers.”

89 *Santian neijie jing*, DZ 1205, juan 8, 80a.

90 *Taiqing jinye shendan jing* 太清金液神丹經, DZ 880, juan C, 9b; 11a. For dating issues, see Schipper and Verellen, eds. *The Taoist Canon*, 104–105.

this fascination with the exotic did not die out, as Schipper has clearly shown. However, things appear to change over time and, once again under the Tang, the purity vocabulary seems to be used also to mark the boundaries between China and the world.<sup>91</sup>

The short remarks above suggest that the analysis of purity notions in the field of interreligious contacts needs a historical perspective. With regard to Daoism, this essentially means that the religion blossomed during the medieval period, hence the growing institutionalization of communities, the development of an increasingly systematized ritual, the construction of a pantheon, the elaboration of intricate cosmologies and cosmogonies, and the rise of complex meditative techniques. Under the Tang, the boundaries between Daoism and everyday religion were certainly much clearer than in the previous centuries, hence the resurrection of the term *fangshi* in the historical sources. If one also considers the political rise of Daoism at the court, it is not surprising that the demarcational effort is reinforced even with regard to Buddhism.<sup>92</sup> Obviously, this approach does not resolve the issue of “Buddho-Daoist demarcation” before the Tang. A reflection on this point, however, would necessarily imply moving the focus from “purity” to the more general theme of “demarcation.”

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91 See Schipper, “Purity and Strangers.”

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## Purity of Language: A Short-lived Concept in Medieval Hebrew Poetry

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Medieval Judaism inherited the languages of earlier periods of Judaism, namely Hebrew and Aramaic, as languages of the Bible and rabbinic literature, while also having learned and adapted the languages of its neighbouring cultures, including Arabic, Persian, a diversity of romance languages, Greek *koine*, and Middle High German. Vernacular languages that were adopted into medieval Jewish cultures were written in the Hebrew alphabet, but their grammar and vocabulary generally remained unchanged. A concept like ‘purity of language’ seems out of place amid such linguistic plurality, even if we look at the transmission of ‘holy texts’, i.e. the Bible and the Talmud. While the Bible is predominantly written in Hebrew, it contains Aramaic passages. The later biblical texts clearly indicate an awareness that Aramaic was not only the official language of the Persian empire—which ruled over the province Yehud from the sixth to the late fourth centuries B.C.E.—but that it was also spreading as the *lingua franca* among Jewish communities throughout Persia. The Babylonian Talmud comprises two components: the Mishna, which was authored in a special idiom of post-biblical Hebrew, probably a linguistic style that is specific to this literature, in the rabbinic academies of Israel in the second to third centuries C.E.; and, the Gemara, which was composed in the rabbinic academies on the banks of the Euphrates during the third to (at least) the sixth centuries C.E., primarily in Aramaic but also in Hebrew, with constant references to both the Mishna and the Bible.

For most of Jewish history, purity of language was simply not in circulation as a concept. The only exception arose in a community that was outstanding for its investment in language: Jewish poets, most of whom were also grammarians and lexicographers, living under Muslim rule in Andalusia. This notion became a topic of discussion in the tenth to twelfth centuries, during the Umayyad caliphate and the *taifa* kingdoms, when Hebrew poetry enjoyed what Delitzsch has termed its “Golden Age”.<sup>1</sup> This took place in an Arabic-speaking Muslim milieu which not only promoted the idea of *i’jāz al-qur’ān*

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1 Delitzsch, *Zur Geschichte der jüdischen Poesie*, 44.

(the inimitability of the *Quran* as a divinely revealed text, including the superiority of its language), but also *'arabiyya* (the supremacy of Arabic language, culture and religion).

Although medieval Judaism considered the Hebrew Bible to be a revealed and, by definition, holy text, this view in no way contradicted the fact that subsequent Jewish literatures were composed in different dialects and languages. Few Jewish communities had yet developed a special admiration for biblical Hebrew, the notion that its language was divine, or the idea that purity of language should or would influence Jewish textual production.<sup>2</sup> Greek and Latin loan words were freely absorbed into rabbinic writings,<sup>3</sup> Hebrew and Aramaic were regularly mixed in texts from the geonic period, and many medieval authors used the language of their surroundings to explain difficult passages in the Bible. This liberal use of contemporaneous vernacular languages is most notably documented in the Old French found in the writings by Salomon b. Isaac (best known by his name acronym, Rashi), the most prominent Northern French scholar of the eleventh century, who wrote commentaries on the Bible and Talmud.<sup>4</sup> Bilingual glossaries, several of which have been transmitted in manuscripts, further attest to this linguistic reality.<sup>5</sup> In her studies of Near Eastern Jewish communities, the late Rina Drory described a “basic diglossic pattern in the Jewish linguistic system” in which Hebrew formed a common foundation, beside which Aramaic and Arabic (respectively) existed as languages “acquired through many years of coexistence”.<sup>6</sup> Each of these languages had its place in the Jewish literary world, and texts employed different registers of Hebrew and other languages according to content and convention.

The singular exception to ‘peaceful coexistence’ as a linguistic norm is represented by the decision of Hebrew poets in seventh-century Byzantine Palestine to adjust Greek loan words into Hebrew-sounding forms. The best studied example is the transformation of the Greek term *taksis* into the Hebrew word *tekes*; though other Greek vocabulary also entered Hebrew after similar treatment.<sup>7</sup> This pattern may be attributed to the Hebrew poets’ thorough

2 In recent years work has been done on Karaite study of the Bible and its language and on Rabbanite culture in Muslim countries that indicates special regard for biblical language, but no texts have yet been identified that explicitly instruct Jews to model their own writing on the language of the Bible. Cf. Maman, “Karaite Hebrew”.

3 Cf. Krauss, *Griechische und lateinische Lehnwörter im Talmud*.

4 These were first analyzed by Arène Darmesteter: Darmesteter, *Les Glosses Françaises de Raschi*; id. and Blondheim, *Les Glosses Françaises dans les Commentaires Talmudiques*.

5 Cf. on this literature Banitt, “Une vue d’ensemble”.

6 Drory, *Models and contacts*, 159.

7 Cf. van Bekkum, “Language and Theme in the Piyyut”.

dislike of their Greek-speaking Byzantine rulers, as attested more directly in other contexts, rather than to an assertion of purity of language, as expressed by Hebrew adaptations to distinguish lexical items from their original Greek forms. It is important to emphasize the limited scope of this trend, given that the poets in such cases often used foreign words, albeit in Hebraicised versions, which also facilitated the creation of rhymes. The absence of ideological motivation is underscored by subsequent generations of poets who use both *taksis* and *tekes* without qualification.

By the tenth century, Arabic had become the daily language of oral as well as written communication for Jews in the Arabic-speaking world. The ability to read and write in fluent and eloquent Arabic was a precondition to being considered an educated and cultured Jew in Muslim Spain. In this context, most Jewish literary composition was transferred either partially or completely into the Arabic linguistic realm,<sup>8</sup> although many Jewish authors wrote their Arabic texts in Hebrew letters, creating the basis of what is known today as Judeo-Arabic.<sup>9</sup> Curiously, poetry is the one genre that continued to be composed in Hebrew, although it is conceivable that Jewish poets also wrote Arabic poetry that was not preserved in the Jewish literary tradition. Various motivations have been offered to explain the exceptional continuance of Hebrew as the language of poetry, such as the desire for immortality among Jewish authors who recognized that Hebrew texts were more likely to survive in future generations,<sup>10</sup> the influence of *piyyut* (Jewish liturgical poetry), whose liturgical *Sitz im Leben* was predominantly linked to Hebrew language, and the resistance to adopting the quranic models associated with Islam.<sup>11</sup> Starting with Nehemia Almony's work in the early 1980s, an explanation that is founded on the experience of inter-cultural contact has been proposed, asserting that writing poetry in Hebrew was part of a wider polemical resistance to *'arabiyya* as a societal value.<sup>12</sup> Alternatively, Rina Drory argued against an earlier position that Jews composed their poetry in Hebrew as a necessary outcome of their allegedly unsophisticated command of Arabic;

8 On this process cf. Drory, *Models and contacts*, 165–68.

9 Joshua Blau, *The Emergence and Linguistic Background of Judaeo-Arabic*.

10 Cf. Simhoni, “רבי שלמה אבן גבירול”, 146. This theory offers an explanation for the scarcity of known transmissions of early manuscripts in Judeo-languages such as Yiddish, in the early 20th century. The intensified research on the manuscripts preserved in the Cairo Geniza yielded a plethora of Judeo-Arabic texts for further study.

11 Cf. Halkin, “Medieval Jewish Attitude toward Hebrew”, 234.

12 First presented in Almony, “השתקפות המרד בערביה בספרותנו בימי הביניים”; id., “תחיית המקרא בימי הביניים כמלחמה בערביה”. For further bibliography cf. Alfonso, *Islamic Culture*, 123–124, note 6.

rather, she posited a functional division assigned to each language—Arabic for standard communication, Hebrew for beauty.<sup>13</sup> Both the resistance to *'arabiyya* and the separation of roles that links Hebrew to aesthetic expression provide plausible explanations for why Hebrew poetry is the only medieval Jewish literature for which purity of language became a topic of discussion, since each reason depends on purity to accomplish its aim. The position of poetry as the unique stronghold of pure Hebrew usage in a wide array of Jewish literature composed in mixed languages (mainly Hebrew and Aramaic but also the 'Judeo-languages') might offer a practical reason for poetic composition as the unique locus for considering purity of language.

Although this discourse focused on poetry, it took place within another arena of Hebrew intellectual activity, namely grammatical studies, that were usually composed by the very scholars whom we also know as poets. While it is difficult to reconstruct the precise origins of these debates, the identities of their first participants and their arguments have been recorded. The first Hebrew scholar to pose an argument for the purity of Hebrew, at least implicitly, was Menahem b. Jacob Ibn Saruq (ca. 920–970). Menahem was secretary to Hasday Ibn Shaprut (ca. 915–970), an important courtier at the Umayyad court of Abd ar-Rahman III in Cordoba; Hasday himself was known as a scholar and as a patron of poets and scholars. Ibn Shaprut commissioned a “work on the Hebrew language” from Menahem Ibn Saruq. That first Hebrew work of grammar and lexicography, composed by Menahem and dedicated to his patron, is known as the *Mahberet*.<sup>14</sup> This work was preceded by several studies on Hebrew grammar and lexicography that had been written in Arabic, all of which made liberal use of comparisons between Hebrew and other Semitic languages, with Arabic among them. In contrast to these earlier models, Menahem Ibn Saruq did not include any comparisons with or explanations from Arabic, Aramaic or any other language in his *Mahberet*. He explains his reasoning quite candidly:

Inasmuch as God made wonders with all breathing creatures, but particularly with humans, by giving them excellence in language, He also made greater wonders with the people of His choice than with the rest of peoples and communities on the earth. Inasmuch as He made man more admirable [by giving him] language, He also made the Holy language more admirable than the language of all other peoples and nations. Before the capacity of thinking and speaking had been given to the

13 Cf. Drory, “‘Words beautifully put’”; id., “Literary Contacts”; id., *Models and contacts*, 169–177.

14 A critical edition was published as Mēnaḥem ben Saruq. *Mahberet* (ed. Sáenz-Badillos).

inhabitants of the world, God chose this language, engraved it [on the Tablets] (Exodus 32:16), and spoke in it the day of His appearance in the Horeb.<sup>15</sup>

While Hebrew is not divine in origin, for the faculty of speech was “given by God to all people”, it was chosen by God just as Israel was. Not only does the holy language need no explanations by way of comparative tongues, its superior status requires exact and faithful treatment of the language as transmitted in the Bible. This argument bears some resemblance to the position presented by *ijāz al-qurʿān* and echoes its polemical undertones. Esperanza Alfonso has argued that Menahem creates an identity for the Hebrew language and, by extension, the notion of Jewish community, using language to delineate a distinction between Jews and others.<sup>16</sup> While he does not articulate his position on the basis of purity *per se*, he is interested in demarcation by means of language, which is conceptually related to utilizing purity to draw boundaries.

In addition to financing the grammatical work of Menahem Ibn Saruq, Hasday Ibn Shaprut was also the patron of another poet-linguist who had come to Cordoba from Baghdad, where he had studied with the famous scholar Saadya Gaon, namely Dunash Iben Labrat (ca. 920–990). By the time that Menahem Ibn Saruq published the *Mahberet*, the North African-born Dunash had already achieved notoriety for having introduced Arabic quantitative meter into hitherto unmetred Hebrew poetry. This was a major enterprise, since quantitative meter in Arabic depends on vowels and syllables of differing lengths. Given that Hebrew has no parallel to the distribution of long and short vowels that typify Arabic, Dunash’s construction of rules for long and short syllables in Hebrew depended on seemingly artificial differentiations that did not necessarily mirror either contemporaneous pronunciation or understandings of Hebrew grammar. The application of Dunash’s rules also meant—at least for the first generation of poets to employ quantitative meter in Hebrew poetry—changing biblical forms or vowel lengths, in order to extend or shorten syllables in various positions, tailoring words to fit the meter. Later generations of Hebrew poets used the quantitative meter with greater elegance and fewer deviations from Biblical forms.

When Menahem’s *Mahberet* was published, Dunash ben Labrat harshly criticized it, not only for its grammatical and lexicographical errors, but also for

15 Mēnaḥem ben Saruq, *Mahberet*, 1\*. Translation quoted from Alfonso, *Islamic Culture*, 11.

16 Alfonso, *Islamic Culture*, 11.

its denial of Hebrew's comparative relationship to other languages.<sup>17</sup> Dunash claimed that the *Mahberet*

[...] could represent a serious threat for simple people, since, instead of exposing the meanings of the holy language in an appropriate way, it destroyed its foundations, and at the same time it endangered not a few basic theological principles of Judaism.<sup>18</sup>

As in the case above, language does not represent purity in this argument; rather, it comes to signify religious identity in Judaism. Only if the holy language is used appropriately and if its meanings are correctly understood, will the teachings of Judaism endure.<sup>19</sup>

Like Menahem, Dunash composed his *Teshuvot* (responsa) in Hebrew and dedicated them to Hasday Ibn Shaprut. In his introductory poem, Dunash mentions Menahem, "He clearly examined the words with *pataḥ* and *qameṣ*, returning the spirit to bodies and corpses" and he concludes, "He tore apart the sacred language, accumulating error upon error".<sup>20</sup> *Pataḥ* and *qameṣ* are the names of two Hebrew vowels that indicate the sound 'a' in differing lengths, although both are considered long vowels in the context of quantitative meter. Thus Dunash acknowledges the importance of correct vocalization in accordance with the rules that were codified by the Masoretes for the biblical text; an issue over which Menahem had harshly criticized Dunash's treatment of Hebrew when using quantitative meter. The poem depicts images of life in terms of body and spirit, crediting Menahem's (attempted) restoration of the Hebrew language, which was deficient when treated as merely a body. The closing critique in Dunash's poem is harsh indeed; rather than choosing ritual purity as his metaphor—a status that, according to Jewish tradition, can be lost through defilement but regained through suitable action—Dunash depicts Menahem's efforts as causing irreparable damage, "he tore apart". In both instances, Dunash attributes an inherent temporality to language which

17 Dunash's critique and subsequent works by his students were published by Zvi Filipowski, ed., ספר תשובות דונש בן לברט. עם הכרעות רבינו תם, a new edition was published by Sáenz-Badillos, *Těšubot de Dunaš ben Labrat*.

18 As translated in Sáenz-Badillos, "Menahem and Dunaš", 178.

19 Cf. Sáenz-Badillos, "Early Hebraists in Spain", 99, who assumes that Dunash is also referring to the differentiation between traditional rabbinic belief and sectarian deviation.

20 *Těšubot de Dunaš ben Labrat*, 4\* (ed. Sáenz-Badillos), translation quoted from Alfonso, *Islamic Culture*, 12, who analyses Dunash's analogy, comparing the Hebrew language to a nation.

can be countered by repetition, use and analytical attention that promise vibrance but leave it vulnerable to irreversible harm.

Dunash ben Labrat expresses his view of Hebrew as a holy language less explicitly than Menahem does, but if we assume that he followed his teacher Saadya on this point, as he did on many others, Dunash's position would likely be to place Hebrew as the first human language, which preceded the dispersion of the tongues, as the language in which angels and heavenly creatures sing and venerate God, and as God's selected holy language "from old".<sup>21</sup> This view can be seen as parallel to Menahem's stance, at least insofar as it distances itself from the Arabic 'revelationist' theory of language. For both of these poet-scholars, the faculty of language was a divine gift, but each specific language was created and developed by humans themselves. Whereas Menahem argues for a holiness derived from God's choice of Hebrew which conveys upon it a unique and therefore incomparable status, according to Dunash the holiness of Hebrew remains uncompromised even when it is compared to similar languages, especially Arabic and Aramaic.

The debate between Menahem and Dunash over Hebrew poetry, and—in its next phase—between the students of Menahem and the students of Dunash<sup>22</sup> is relevant for the question of the purity of the Hebrew language, because it occurred in a context where Hebrew was primarily the language of poetic composition. Thus Dunash's application of the Arabic quantitative meter to Hebrew poetry influenced some arguments in the debate and the question of linguistic and grammatical comparison was intertwined with the introduction of Arabic literary elements into Hebrew poetic expression. While neither side contests that Hebrew is the holy language, they differ over the extent to which human language can achieve perfection and purity under given circumstances. Menahem's students identify exile as the reason for the assumed imperfection and impurity of contemporary Hebrew:

And if we had not been exiled from our land, and if our language was to be found entire in our hands as in earlier days when we dwelled in our tranquil habitations, then we would find all the grammar of our language and all its forms and we would know its meter and understand its boundaries, for the language of every people has meter and grammar.<sup>23</sup>

21 Sáenz-Badillos, "Menahem and Dunaš", 185.

22 Cf. the edition by Filipowski, *תשובות דונש בן לברט* and Benavente Robles, *Tesbot de los discípulos de Menahem*.

23 Translation quoted from Roth, "Jewish Reactions", 69.



Since each language is thought to have its own meter and grammar, Menahem's followers interpret the act of subjecting Hebrew to Arabic meter not only as disregarding the superior status of Hebrew as the sacred language (as proven by God's initial choice of Hebrew as his language), but also as exposing Hebrew's original purity to external pollutants.<sup>24</sup> This description of the tension between completeness and loss also brings to mind the peril of permanent impurity, since the loss of a limb renders a person ritually unfit. This spatial metaphor of perfection can thus easily be related to the concept of purity.

The attempts by Menahem Ibn Saruq and his students to prevent the introduction of quantitative meter into Hebrew poetry failed since, by the end of the tenth century, Andalusian Hebrew secular poetry employed quantitative meter without exception and it had also been introduced into the realm of liturgical poetry. Nevertheless, critical responses to *'arabiyya*—the reverence for the language of the Bible as holy language and the assignment of beauty as a function of Hebrew—continued to influence discourse on both poetic language and the language of poetry.

Modern research refers to Dunash's linguist method as 'purist', since he advocated the exclusive use of the biblical stratum of Hebrew for use in poetry, as far as grammar and vocabulary were concerned.<sup>25</sup> On this point he deviated from his predecessors, not only the classical poets of liturgical poetry (*piyyut*) in Byzantine Palestine, but also his teacher Saadya Gaon in Baghdad and his rival Menahem. As with quantitative meter, this purist method became part of the literary scene in Jewish Andalusia.

Andalusian Jewish poets began to compose their works in biblical Hebrew as far as possible, returning as it were to a layer of language that had been left fallow during the preceding centuries. By activating biblical Hebrew, the poets also distanced themselves and their poetry from later strata of Hebrew, like those that characterized rabbinic literature and earlier Hebrew poetry (see below). The return to biblical Hebrew, which was considered to be the sole accurate form of Hebrew, was a signature of linguistic innovation by Andalusian poets. The medieval terms that describe this layer of Hebrew include: clarity, precision, beauty and holiness (or divine origin).<sup>26</sup> Significantly, these poets did not restrict themselves to biblical vocabulary, but they also quoted, alluded to and wove biblical idioms and whole verses into their own compositions, as

24 Or as phrased by Ross Brann: "Menahem's followers decreed that Hebraicized Arabic prosody corrupts Hebrew." Cf. Brann, "The Hebrew Bible and Andalusian Hebrew Poetry", 107.

25 Cf. Tobi, "The Secular Hebrew Poet", 34.

26 On the later discussion of this term cf. Zwiep, "Medieval Interpretations".

special stylistic ornaments.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless the poetic texts were linguistically homogenous, since the poets' predilection for biblical vocabulary and their quotations from and allusions to biblical verses and phrases drew from the same linguistic strata. Familiarity with the Bible was needed if readers and listeners were to identify biblical phrases and the meaning of their placement in this genre; the poets' aim in writing was that anyone who was well-versed in the Hebrew Bible would recognize passages and appreciate how artfully they had been integrated to yield new, surprising and sometimes humorous meanings.<sup>28</sup>

Andalusian Hebrew poets agreed that the Bible would provide the lexical basis of their work. Their point of contention centred on whether it was permissible to use forms that were not attested to in the Bible but could be constructed using the growing knowledge of Hebrew grammar, which was derived from analysing biblical language. If the only admissible forms were those attested in the Bible, as some poets suggested, this would severely restrict the content and style of Hebrew poetic expression, especially in consideration of the potential variations that Hebrew morphology could produce but that would be placed off limits if linguistic purity were adhered to strictly. Yet the group of writers that wished to impose such restrictions was not small and they persisted in their fight for quite a while. Eventually the more lenient approach prevailed and lacunae in the paradigms could be filled using adaptations based on biblical forms. In order to accommodate the quantitative meter, poets eventually also chose to deviate from biblical syntax.

The debate between Menahem and Dunash has been interpreted in various ways. Esperanza Alfonso has read it as part of her analysis of Jewish texts about 'we' and 'others', i.e. evidence of Jewish identity as defined when lines are drawn between Judaism and 'the other'. This is a persuasive approach, in discussions of purity it may be added that the use of language in order to separate 'we' from 'others' ascribes a quality to language that—despite the variety of terms used, "purity" (*tohara*), "holiness" (*qedusha*), and "clarity" (*tsahut*)—relates to purity as the core notion. What is most amazing in this context is the limited realm in which the concept was employed: although Menahem wrote

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27 For a discussion of the different ways biblical language could be used as ornaments in Andalusian Hebrew poetry, cf. Brann, "The Hebrew Bible and Andalusian Hebrew Poetry", 112–117. Brann writes that "this expectation [of calculated poetic effects of biblical allusions] elevated the usage of biblical diction to a principle of art and required not a learned familiarity with the text, but a studied intimacy relying on complete recall" (112).

28 On the importance of the Bible as a positive element of identification for Andalusian poets and their audiences cf. Brann, "The Hebrew Bible and Andalusian Hebrew Poetry".

his *Mahberet* in Hebrew, each and every poet-scholar involved in this debate, irrespective of whether he wrote his compositions in Hebrew or Arabic, was a fluent speaker and writer in both languages. Irrespective its unique role in sacred texts, Hebrew was in no way regarded as a substitute for Arabic in most fields of intellectual or literary activity. The realm of Hebrew was understood as liturgy, liturgical poetry and secular poetry; thus, as the domain in which Hebrew expression thrived, Hebrew poetry provided the forum for debating how to preserve and enhance Hebrew's purity.

Two further examples will demonstrate how Jewish poets used Hebrew as a means of contrasting their religious and cultural identification *vis-à-vis* the Muslim-Arabic and the Christian 'other'. Especially when it came to delimiting the boundaries of Christianity, 'purity' was a topic in Andalusian Jewish discourse; Muslim adherence to many practices that define ritual purity in everyday life (like ritual slaughter and circumcision) and Muslim perceptions of Christians as 'impure' seem to have influenced Jewish considerations of Muslims and Christians alike. This conceptual reality invites an historical leap from the 10th to the 12th century C.E., when changes in the Muslim governance of Andalusia sent Jews fleeing northward, to Christian-ruled regions of Spain. Since Hebrew poets continued to consider Andalusia their cultural home, this period of transition saw a revival of the debate about the use of biblical language in Hebrew poetry. The two major writers whose lives and oeuvres are most pertinent both left Spain involuntarily: Moses Ibn Ezra (ca. 1055–1138), who composed one of the most important medieval treatises on Hebrew poetry, and Abraham Ibn Ezra (ca. 1092–1167), who travelled through Italy, France and England and attempted to spread the Andalusian style of Hebrew poetry there, as well as composing Bible commentaries, poetry and treatises on the Hebrew language.

Moses Ibn Ezra is probably the Andalusian Jewish poet par excellence: he stayed in his beloved Granada even after the Almoravides conquered the city in 1089 C.E., pressuring Jews to accept Islam or leave. He fled to Christian Spain quite late and bemoaned his exile ever after. He composed liturgical and secular poems, using quantitative meter in both and employing literary genres well known from Arabic poetry in his secular poetry. Throughout his poetic writings, elegant biblical Hebrew is the language of expression, to the virtual exclusion of non-biblical vocabulary or forms—in accordance with the rules of linguistic purity—and the remainder of his writings are in Arabic, including his treatise on poetics. Being fully aware of the Arabic reverence for the quranic language, his adoption of a biblical style was the best suited counter to this challenge, especially since the Bible was at least as poetic and as diverse as the Quran, but could claim authority on the basis of its seniority and

its accuracy as documented in the *masora* (concise marginal notes in manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible that note textual details, including statistics, on how frequently particular forms are employed in the Bible). In the concluding chapter of his treatise on poetics, *Kitāb al-Muḥāḍara wa-al-Mudhākara* (composed circa 1135), Moses Ibn Ezra used both Hebrew and Arabic to illustrate the rhetorical figures that he presented, but he referred primarily to the Bible, with the intention of impressing potential Arab readers who might appreciate the aesthetic rules of biblical Hebrew. Also in his description of the secular Hebrew poets from Andalusia, he praises their return to biblical Hebrew and to the beauty of their language. He ascribes this to their descent from the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who “were more learned in the eloquence of the language.”<sup>29</sup> Genealogical purity was an important factor for many Jewish scholars of the Middle Ages, and Moses Ibn Ezra combined it with the quest for unalloyed Hebrew, at least in the poetic realm.

The position of Abraham Ibn Ezra is even more unequivocal: in his commentary on Qohelet 5:1, he levelled sharp criticism against the liturgical poetry of El’azar birabbi Qallir (an influential poet who had worked in Byzantine Israel during the early seventh century). He chose to anchor his criticism in a verse that describes the language of prayer and reflects the Andalusian aesthetic that he seeks to convey: *For the Lord is in the heavens and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few*. Apparently Abraham Ibn Ezra encountered Qallir’s poetry during his visit to Rome in 1140 C.E., and he was shocked by this liturgical poet’s figurative use of Hebrew. One example from the studies of Josef Yahalom illustrates the standards of linguistic purity held by Abraham Ibn Ezra: Qallir opened a composition for the *musaf* (additional) service on Yom Kippur with the words *שושן עמק אוימה* *Shushan emeq uyyema*—“The lily of the valley made fearful”. *שושן* *shushan*, the word used for “lily” is a masculine form that is not attested in the Bible, but its meaning can easily be reconstructed from the biblically attested feminine form, *שושנה*, *shoshana*. But Qallir used *shushan* here as a symbol for ‘the community of Israel’, which is regularly referred to in classical liturgical Hebrew poetry with metaphors as that express endearment. Following the norm that nations are personified as feminine, Qallir used a feminine predicate with the masculine noun *shushan*, clearly violating grammatical rules. In pure biblical language, this would not be possible, but Qallir based his composition on a Midrash (Bible exegesis from Late Antiquity), so this grammatical variance was reasonable from his vantage point. Abraham Ibn Ezra, being versed in Hebrew poetry that adhered to pure biblical language, found this style of language unacceptable.

29 משה אבן עזרא: ספר העיונים והדיונים על השירה העברית (ed. Halkin), 55.

For him, words signified, foremost, reality, and a lily served a specific function—in the palace garden which represented the finest of Spanish garden culture. For this reason, the Spanish critic expresses amazement: “What can one mean by ‘lily’ when describing it as ‘fearful’? Can a flower feel fear? One can modify (the word) flower only by words like ‘plucked’ or ‘fresh’ [...]” And indeed, in his own sacred poetry, the lily is usually introduced in this manner.<sup>30</sup>

That is to say Ibn Ezra knew and chose the female form *shoshana*, befitting the tenderness of the flower and attested in biblical Hebrew, and when comparing Israel to a lily, Israel speaks: “we will bloom like the lily”, and God, her keeper, promises to water her regularly. Purity then for Abraham Ibn Ezra related not only to formal correctness and restriction to biblically attested usage—although his grammatical works show that this was an important concept for him—but also to the inner logic of biblical terms as perceived by Andalusian culture. While he himself preferred the Hebrew term *tsahot* (clarity), as in his treatise *Sefer Tsahot*, he named another of his grammatical treatises *Safa Berura* (clear language), the concept that he cherished could aptly be described as “purity of language” insofar as he was a proponent of clear, biblical Hebrew, which he employed it in his own poetry.

### Conclusion

The discourse on the purity of Hebrew language that occupied Jewish Andalusian poets from the tenth to twelfth century offers a window on a portion of the questions regarding purity of language as a concept and as a functional influence as well as its function that mark the beginning of this volume. The categories ‘pure’ and ‘holy’, when employed in the context of Hebrew language and Andalusian Hebrew poetry, serve to distinguish Judaism from other religions, in response to the dominant surrounding Arab culture, which expressed impurity through its own self-concept, *‘arabiyya*, and its own associated suspicions of Christianity. Elsewhere it has been argued that language usage can be informed by a desire to exclude non-Jewish readership, e.g. in the case of the *Zohar*, the most important book of Kabbala. This was written during the 13th century in Christian Spain in a unique version of Aramaic, which may have been the language of choice since, at that time, there was a sufficient high level of Hebrew literacy among Christians to render most Hebrew texts accessible to them and open to their critique and derision. Furthermore, the argument for purity of language might be of relevance for the *zoharic* Aramaic,

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30 Yahalom, “The Poetics of Spanish Piyyut”, 4.

since unlike Hebrew, Aramaic had not been sullied by Christians.<sup>31</sup> It is quite possible that Andalusian Judaism shaped its view of Christianity as impure as a result of the Muslim position. However, it must also be factored into these considerations that—although Christianity did not have a significant presence in medieval Andalusia—by this time, Judaism had a long history of opposition to Christianity and identification of Christianity with gentiles, who had been declared impure in Antiquity, and hardly needed Islamic instruction to form this notion. On the other hand, the concept of *ijāz al-qurʾān*, although it is not formulated in terms of purity, probably influenced the development of the concept that Hebrew poetry should be composed exclusively of biblical language.

The categories of ‘pure’ and ‘holy/sacred’ cannot be neatly separated in this discourse. Biblical Hebrew can be argued to be the only pure and therefore legitimate source for Hebrew poetry if holiness is attributed to the Bible. But pure Hebrew—inspired by the holy text—can be the language of secular texts and its use can become an aesthetic norm even beyond the realm of the sacred.<sup>32</sup>

The relative brevity of this discourse—even if we extend it to encompass arguments about the *Zohar*, not more than 300 years—in the scope of 3000 years of biblical language would be ample reason for the lack of authoritative texts on this subject. The history of Iberian Judaism further explains the scant evidence of this debate: expulsion from Andalusia under the Almoravids and Almohads, and the consequent loss of Arabic as a first or second language, which was compounded by the expulsion from Christian Spain in 1492, and the dispersal and further loss of many of its intellectual traditions. Andalusian poet-scholars continued to assert a level of intellectual authority: Moses Ibn Ezra’s treatise on poetry may have exerted significant influence for a certain time, and Abraham Ibn Ezra was credited for having ‘converted’ Italian Hebrew poetry to Andalusian aesthetic ideals when he travelled through Italy, including the value of pure biblical Hebrew. Nonetheless, their influence was

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31 I would like to thank Ephraim Shoham for reminding me that Daniel Abrams has raised this possibility on several occasions; also cf. Liebes, “Hebrew and Aramaic”. With regard to purity as a reason for choosing to use one language over another, it is interesting to see that Mopsik, “Late Judeo-Aramaic”, 26, argues that mystical texts were composed in Aramaic since “Aramaic remained untouched by any philosophical contamination”.

32 The additional attribute ‘modest’ or ‘clean’ (Hebrew: *naqi*) was claimed as a reason for the holiness of Hebrew by Mose b. Maimon in the twelfth century. This definition of ‘holy language’ was challenged by later authors, among them Mose b. Nahman in Christian Spain, cf. Zwiep, “Medieval Interpretations”, 208–209.

limited<sup>33</sup> and no authoritative works on the purity of Hebrew were composed during the Middle Ages.

Through the concept of 'holiness', discourse on the purity of Hebrew language in medieval Hebrew poetry relates to the transcendent sphere: Hebrew is the language chosen by God, and humanity should not knowingly defile what God has used, with the pure means and results associated with divinity.

With regard to spatial dimensions and metaphors, Rina Drory has argued that the Karaite decision against the use of Aramaic was a means of demarcation, since Aramaic was seen as a defining feature of Rabbanite traditions. It is interesting to note that this linguistic distinction resulted in a call—albeit an unsuccessful one—to use only Hebrew in writing and even in the spoken language.<sup>34</sup> In view of this model, one might claim that the fact that the whole discussion of Hebrew purity focussed on its use in poetry might indirectly define the position of Hebrew poetry within the culture of Andalusian Judaism. Yet, the argument that—because Hebrew ought to be pure—poetry stood at the center of Jewish culture, whereas philosophy, commentaries, sciences and all the other fields that were expressed in Arabic, which did not fall under laws of purity, would be banished to the periphery or even pushed beyond the borders of Jewish cultures, remains unconvincing. But if we focus on the realm of Hebrew poetry, the quest for purity of language, even in secular poetry, might be an indication that secular poetry was regarded as being no less central to Andalusian Judaism than liturgical poetry, for which the adherence to biblical rules might have been argued on the basis of its sacred function.

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33 Moses Ibn Ezra's treatise could only be read by Jews who knew Arabic, limiting its audience. Abraham Ibn Ezra may have been the first to bring Andalusian poetry to Italy, but the style was used widely only a century after his travels through Italy, cf. Lehnardt, *Liturgical Poetry in Italy*.

34 Drory, *Models and contacts*, 162–64.

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**SECTION 4**  
*Purity of Cult*





# *Domum immundam a perversis violata mundavit.* Viking Defilement in Early Medieval Francia

Matthias Bley

## 1 Introduction

A tale grows in the telling. While this is a matter of common knowledge for historical narratives in general, it particularly applies to accounts of the early medieval Viking inroads which occurred throughout Western Europe from the late eighth century onwards.<sup>1</sup> The respective development comprised patterns of intensification and extension alike: On the one hand, certain elements of older, for their part more or less accurate descriptions of Viking atrocities perpetrated in cities, churches and monasteries may have been stressed or dramatized; on the other hand, analogous incidents were frequently invented where no contemporary tradition of pillage and plundering existed, for example, to explain gaps and blank spaces within the written records.<sup>2</sup>

It was their (often blatant) unreliability that caused Albert d'Haenens—himself a doyen of twentieth-century Viking research—to widely discard the scientific value of most non-contemporary accounts, sparing only those texts which, for example, quoted coeval sources otherwise lost today.<sup>3</sup> One

1 For an outline of twentieth-century research regarding the Vikings' impact on Western Europe, its trends and tendencies, see the surveys by d'Haenens, "Les invasions normandes dans l'empire Franc", esp. 235–241; Wallace-Hadrill, "The Vikings in Francia"; Wormald, "Viking studies"; Foot, "Violence against Christians?"; id., "Confronting Violence"; Nelson, "England and the Continent II". A recent re-evaluation of the attacks' tangible consequences has been given by Morden, *Material Damage*.

2 This was underlined for instance by Dumville, "Images of the Viking"; Coupland, "The Vikings on the Continent", esp. 189–194, 202; Trumbore Jones, "Pitying the Desolation", esp. 101; id., *Noble Lord, Good Shepherd*, esp. 147ff. For British material see e.g. Foot, "Violence against Christians". On the question of Viking cruelty in general cf. Baraz, *Medieval Cruelty*, 64ff.; concerning an 'exodus of holy bodies' due to impending raids see Lifshitz, "The migration of Neustrian relics"; Geary, *Furta Sacra*, 84f. and DeSelm, *Unwilling Pilgrimage*.

3 D'Haenens, *Les invasions normandes*, 20, 162; id., "Les invasions normandes dans l'empire Franc", esp. 248ff. and id., "Les invasions normandes. Une thématique narrative et historiographique". Cf. Löwe, "Geschichtsschreibung der ausgehenden Karolingerzeit", esp. 18ff.

of his cases in point was the eleventh-century *Sermo de tumulatione sanctorum Quintini, Victorici, Cassiani*,<sup>4</sup> originating from the Vermandois monastery of Saint-Quentin in northern France. This particular sermon combined elements of hagiographic narrative and Scripture with excerpts taken from historiographic sources, notably the early tenth-century *Annals of Saint-Vaast* and another congeneric text, most likely an annalistic work composed at the monastery of Saint-Quentin.<sup>5</sup>

To begin with, a short outline of the *Sermo*'s structure and composition: In its first part, the text provides a summary of Quintinus' and Cassianus' deeds, their martyrdom during the Diocletian persecution and finally their early ninth-century *elevatio*. Following a short intermission, the narrative then addresses the actual *causa festivitatis*: To commemorate the return of Quintinus' and Cassianus' relics—Victoricus' remains were still to appear in the first place—from their shelter at Laon in the first half of the tenth century.

Their holy bodies are said to have been relocated to the more easily defensible city of Laon in light of imminent Viking attacks during the early 880s. The inroads themselves are depicted by the long-established motif of God castigating mortal sinfulness and disobedience by means of barbarian

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and for challenging artificial boundaries Hofman, "Profil der lateinischen Historiographie", esp. 839.

- 4 Partially edited by Holder-Egger as *Ex sermone in Tumulatione ss. Quintini, Victorici, Cassiani*, for the whole text see *Acta ss.*, Oct. 13, pp. 816–819. The anonymous composer seems to have relied heavily on the ninth-century *Miracula S. Quintini*. Due to linguistic and stylistic reasons, Holder-Egger, 265 assumed it to stem from the eleventh century, cf. Wattenbach, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen*, 5: 544f.; Glansdorff, "L'évêque de Metz" and d'Haenens, *Les invasions Normandes*, 48, 181, 225. The earliest manuscript is Saint Quentin, Musée 1, today in the Bibliothèque Municipale of Saint-Quentin. It dates from the second half of the eleventh century, cf. Cahn, "Images de la Vie de Saint Quentin".
- 5 A detailed introduction to current sermon-studies is given by Kienzle, *The sermon and Muessig*, "Sermon, preacher and society". Although respective research has intensified over the last decades, no overall survey of hagiographic sermons or of references to historiography in these texts has been published. For the much-debated relationship between hagiography in general, its sub-genres and historiography in particular see e.g. de Gaiffier, "Hagiographie et historiographie"; Lotter, "Methodisches zur Gewinnung historischer Erkenntnisse"; Sigal, "Histoire et hagiographie"; Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*; Fouracre, "Merovingian Historiography and Merovingian Hagiography"; Head, *Hagiography and the Cult of Saints*; Lifshitz, "Hagiographical Texts"; Lewis, "History, Historiography and Re-writing the Past"; Röcklein, "Gewebe der Schriften" and recently the contributions in Corradini, Diesenberger and Niederkorn-Bruck (eds.), *Zwischen Niederschrift und Wiederschrift*.

carnage.<sup>6</sup> In this very context, the narrative provides an exposition of what allegedly happened on the basis of written evidence. Therefore—to make the meaning of the sermon more come across more clearly—the unknown composer turns to annalistic records, citing a number of events datable to the last quarter of the ninth century.<sup>7</sup>

According to d'Haenens, those supporting passages would have been the sole relevant parts of the Saint-Quentin sermon and it is they which have attracted at least some interest in research as well. But that approach falls short of the textual composition. Actually, the *Sermo* comprises a twofold reference to written records, with the annalistic passages following merely in second place. A first call to literal proof is announced a few lines before, phrased as *cogor scriptis depromere rem veritatis*.<sup>8</sup> Here the author refers to Scriptural evidence as such. From the local case of Saint-Quentin the *Sermo* thus turns to portraying the situation of Christianity as a whole; Church and World alike are said to

6 As was observed for instance by Coupland, "The Rod of God's Wrath", this idea can be traced back essentially to Orosius' *Historiae adversum paganos*; cf. the remarks in Goetz, *Gott und die Welt* 1, 1, esp. 133–152; d'Haenens, *Les Invasions normandes*, esp. 83ff., 144ff.; Godden, "Apocalypse and Invasion"; Foot, "The Making of *Angelycynn*", 37f. and id., "Violence against Christians?" 8f. Corresponding passages were collected by Zettel, *Das Bild der Normannen*, 190ff., 206ff., 217f. For a case in point see the records of the synod held at Meaux/Paris 845/846, partially translated by Coupland, "The Rod of God's Wrath", 537: *Wherefore, because obedience did not follow God's commands, as was necessary, the Lord sent "from the north", from which, according to the prophet, "evil shall break forth", apostles befitting our merits, namely those cruel and most savage persecutors of Christianity, the Northmen, who, coming as far as Paris, showed what God commanded*. Compare also the capitulary composed at a synod which probably convened in the area between Metz and Aachen in August 846, ed. Hartmann, *Die Konzilien der karolingischen Teilreiche*, No. 12, p. 135, cap. 2: *Nulli dubium est, quod peccatis nostris atque flagitiis merentibus tantum malum in ecclesia Christi contigerit, ut et ipsa Romana ecclesia, quæ capud est christianitatis, infidelium manibus traderetur et per omnes fines regni nostri fratrumque nostrorum paganorum populus prevaleret*. The relics of Saint-Quentin are not covered by Lifshitz, "The migration of Neustrian relics". For the relation between human sinfulness and godly chastisement see also Kroll and Bachrach, "Sin and Etiology" as well as Ganz, "Einhardus Peccator".

7 *Ex sermone in Tumulatione*, ed. Holder-Egger, 271, l. 21f.: *Hic autem, ut lucidor sit sermonis sensus et intelligatur manifestius, ex annali chronica inserenda sunt pauca*. For the use of historical evidence within hagiographic narratives, particularly pertaining to accounts of *translationes*, see Voss, "Berührungen von Hagiographie und Historiographie"; Röckelein, "Gewebe der Schriften", 6f.; Van Uytfanghe, "Die Vita im Spannungsfeld", esp. 202f.; Heinzelmann, "Hagiographischer und historischer Diskurs" and id., *Translationsberichte*, 65f.

8 *Ex sermone in Tumulatione*, ed. Holder-Egger, 271, l. 12.

have dwelled in a state of severe distress.<sup>9</sup> To confirm this overall picture, the unknown composer drew, while slightly modifying the original wording, on passages from Psalms 78 (“The heathen have come into your inheritance; they have defiled the temples of the saints; they have turned the realm into ignoble desolation”) and 59 (“You have rejected us, God, and burst upon us; you have been angry”), which relate to imminent disaster on the one hand and hope for God’s mercy on the other.<sup>10</sup>

Prima facie, these findings would seem to strengthen a conventional interpretation: A local issue is scaled up to a broader scope and hence, in agreement with customary approaches to hagiography, aligned within a framework of biblical typology. The desolation wrought by Viking raiders in ninth-century Francia is equated with the destruction of biblical Jerusalem, for medieval authors mostly saw psalm 78 as referring to the Seleucid attacks during the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the subsequent revolt of the Maccabean brothers. At large this resembles what Sarah Foot, in view of twelfth-century English sources, deemed typical for those accounts, which particularly shaped a later perception of the Viking incursions:

The raiders are termed pagans, polluters of holy places; motivated apparently by anti-Christian sentiment their violence seems to be directed largely against the persons and property of the servants of Christ.<sup>11</sup>

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9 *Ex sermone in Tumulatione*, ed. Holder-Egger, 271, l. 13–20: *Christianorum invalescente noxa, paganorum nequiter frendente audacia, multa sanctorum corpora a sepulcris eiciuntur, ecclesiae innumerabiles incenduntur, utriusque sexus homines passim iugulantur, omnis iustitia graviter conculcatur, lex et veritas nimium annihilantur, bestiarum incursu multi lacerantur, famis inopia plurimi moriuntur. Re etenim veridica, ut sanctus loquitur psalmista, venerunt gentes in hereditatem Dei, polluerunt templa sanctorum, posuerunt omne regnum in desolationis obprobrium; [et alibi]: Deus, reppulisti nos et destruxisti nos; iratus es [...].*

10 Cf. Green, “The ‘Ludwigslied’”, 282. For biblical allusions and typology as a means to explain contemporary events cf. Leclercq, “L’Ecriture sainte”; Lehmann, “Einfluß der Bibel”; Charity, *Events and their afterlife*, 99f.; Parker, *Aesthetics of Antichrist*, esp. 49ff.; Janes, “The world and its past”. Medieval use of psalms is studied for instance by Riché, “Le Psautier”; Schreiner, “Psalmen in Liturgie, Frömmigkeit und Alltag” and by the contributors to van Deusen (ed.), *Place of the Psalms*, esp. McKinnon, “Book of Psalms” and Wiley, “The maledictory psalms”. On typological thought patterns cf. de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale*, 1; Ohly, *Zur Bedeutungsforschung*; Wells, “Ohly and Exegetical Tradition”; Paxson, “Theory of Biblical Typology”; Whitman, *Interpretation*, 41ff.

11 Foot, “Violence against Christians”, 3; cf. Wallace-Hadrill, “The Vikings in Francia”.

Even more so, especially psalm 78—*Deus venerunt gentes*—was to become of paramount importance in the crusading era, as has been outlined for instance by Penny Cole and Amnon Linder.<sup>12</sup> Hence, at a first glance, the Saint-Quentin *Sermo de tumulatione sanctorum Quintini, Victorici, Cassiani* appears to be firmly embedded within and to derive from an eleventh-century context. It might seem to be a rather negligible text—at least according to Albert d’Haenens—if not for the aforementioned references to the lost annals of Saint-Quentin.

In this paper I want to suggest a somewhat different interpretation, thus to relate the notion of pagans—here: the Vikings—as polluters of churches or holy places in general to certain eighth- and ninth-century phenomena. These might have left a conspicuous mark on the Saint-Quentin *Sermo de tumulatione* as well. However, it is not my intention to label concepts of cultic pollution and defilement of holy space as something genuinely medieval or even an invention of the Latin Middle Ages. Quite the opposite would be true,<sup>13</sup> respective ideas can be and have been accounted for, amongst others, throughout the ancient world, in biblical Near and Middle East or in the subject matters of ethnology and cultural anthropology. Rather, this paper focuses on the emergence of a particular perception of pagan-caused defilement and strategies to cope with it on a more limited scale.

## 2 The Viking Attacks on Nantes and Tours

In the following, I shall act on a suggestion given by d’Haenens, it is to consider the impact and repercussions of the Viking attacks in a specific locality

12 Cole, *The preaching of the crusades*; id., “Religious Pollution”; id., “Christians, Muslims, and ‘Liberation’”; Linder, “The destruction of Jerusalem Sunday”; id., “The liturgy of the liberation of Jerusalem”; id., “Psalm 78 (79) in Liturgical Commemoration”; cf. Jaspert, “Die Wahrnehmung der Muslime” and recently Völkl, *Muslimen—Märtyrer—Militia Christi*, 203ff.

13 With no claim to completeness see for Greece e.g. Bendlin, “Purity and Pollution”; Parker, *Miasma*; Bradley, “Pollution, Greece and Rome”; with regard to Rome Clark, *The Idea of Pollution*; Brown, *The cult of Saints*, 4–6; Baudy, *Römische Umgangsriten*; Wright, “Sin, Pollution, and Purification: Introduction”; Simón, “Ritual Participation and Collective Identity”; Lennon, “Pollution and Ritual Impurity”; Cancik, “Reinheit, Enthaltensamkeit, Mischung”; Bradley, “Purification, Rome”; Lennon, “Pollution, Religion and Society”; with a view to the Middle and Near East van der Toorn, “Pureté rituelle”; Rostad, *Human Transgression—Divine Retribution* and Sallaberger, “Körperliche Reinheit und soziale Grenzen”.



or at least in a certain region.<sup>14</sup> Ensuing from his study of the incursions into Western Francia and especially Belgium, d'Haenens assumed that the assaults usually inflicted little substantial damage, since Viking raiding parties lacked the means and time necessary to destroy stone-built structures.<sup>15</sup> Then again, even solid buildings, like for instance the more important churches and monasteries, were vulnerable to arson, since their internal structures and notably the trusses were made of wood. Such attacks were unlikely to destroy a church completely; rather the damage could be repaired in short order.<sup>16</sup> With this in mind, d'Haenens expounded how the most far-reaching outcome of a Viking attack would not have been physical or visible in nature but psychic, a “choc mental”, which probably led to the event being exaggerated with the passage of time.<sup>17</sup>

### 2.1 *The Attack on Nantes in 843*

According to Daniel DeSelm's 2009 dissertation, Viking activity in the border region of Brittany and Carolingian Neustria, especially the Basse-Loire and the counties of Nantes and Rennes, increased from about 830.<sup>18</sup> It was at roughly the same time that the Breton *princeps* Nominoë began to act as *dux* or *missus in Britannia* on behalf of the emperor Louis the Pious,<sup>19</sup> thus once again exerting direct Breton control in a region which had belonged to the Carolingian sphere of influence for the better part of a century. Whereas the decade up to 840 which saw the first uprisings of Louis the Pious' sons against their father was still relatively calm from a Breton perspective, this changed rather drastically in the following years.<sup>20</sup> Since 841 Charles the Bald and his brother Lothar competed directly and violently for the loyalties of the Neustrian aristocracy as part of their controversy over their fathers' inheritance. Both appeared painfully aware of the extent to which Breton support would increase their prospects in that regard.<sup>21</sup> Nominoë on the other hand used the time of Frankish civil war to significantly expand his own domain.<sup>22</sup> When Viking raiders started

14 D'Haenens, *Les invasions Normandes*, 151ff.

15 D'Haenens, *Les invasions Normandes*, 152.

16 D'Haenens, *Les invasions Normandes*, 153. He referred to Dorestad, which was attacked four times between 834 and 837 and as often again up to 863. Cf. Vogel, *Die Normannen*, 68f.

17 D'Haenens, *Les invasions Normandes*, 154f., 162.

18 Davies, *Small Worlds*, 22

19 DeSelm, *Unwilling Pilgrimage*, 89.

20 Chédeville and Guillotel, *La Bretagne des saints et des rois*, 249.

21 Smith, *Province and Empire*, 92.

22 DeSelm, *Unwilling Pilgrimage*, 73.

to push up the Loire, they thus capitalized on increasing disorder, a lapse of Frankish suzerainty coupled with growing but not yet solid Breton control.<sup>23</sup>

Although negotiations between Louis the Pious' sons were well under way in spring 843, Lothar and his supporters continued to harass Charles the Bald's designated domain in Western Francia. Probably as a consequence of this, Lambert II, a son of the count of Nantes in the days of Louis the Pious, defected from Charles and attempted to displace Rainald of Herbauges, the latter's appointee to the countship.<sup>24</sup> Both Lambert and Nominoë had acted on Charles' behalf during the initial stages of the conflict, but since their faithfulness remained unrewarded, their loyalty appears to have faltered.<sup>25</sup> What contemporary sources tell us about the occurrences in early summer 843 renders a detailed reconstruction effectively impossible. It is obvious that count Rainald of Herbauges was killed while he fought a two-sided battle, first against a Breton army under Nominoë's son Erispoë and then against a second contingent led by Lambert II. Presumably Rainald had learned of an illness which temporarily incapacitated Nominoë and therefore chosen to attack the latter's troops at Messac, but in the end he was defeated when Lambert's reinforcements arrived. Opinions on whether Nantes itself was conquered in the aftermath of the fighting are divided: Neil Price believed that Lambert had allied himself with a band of Vikings in order to overcome local fortifications, Simon Coupland assumed that he had conquered Nantes without further support, Daniel DeSelm supposed it had been Nominoë who at least tried to do so, and finally, if one were to follow Julia Smith, both Nominoë and Lambert would have failed to take the town walls.<sup>26</sup> Whichever is correct, it appears widely accepted that the defensive capabilities of Nantes were seriously degraded even before the town was finally assaulted by a Viking force on 24 June 843, the feast day of John the Baptist.<sup>27</sup>

According to Simon Coupland, this first Viking sack of Nantes "made a deep impression on contemporaries, as is evident from the many different sources

23 DeSelm, *Unwilling Pilgrimage*, 78f., 89; Davies, *Small Worlds*, 22.

24 Cf. Chédeville and Guillotel, *La Bretagne des saints et des rois*, 261. On Rainald see Hogan, "The Rainaldi of Angers" and Krah, *Die Entstehung der "potestas regia"*, 243.

25 Krah, *Die Entstehung der "potestas regia"*, 242f. Cf. the *Chronicle of Nantes* c. 4, ed. Merlet, 9ff. According to Smith, *Province and Empire*, 9, Nominoë was never to resume his former support for Charles the Bald, instead he acted as a partisan of Lothar, in conjunction with Lambert and Pippin II of Aquitaine.

26 Price, *The Vikings in Brittany*, 23; Coupland, "The Vikings on the Continent", 192; DeSelm, *Unwilling Pilgrimage*, 89 and Smith, *Province and Empire*, 94.

27 Cf. Cassard, "Avant les Normands", 97f.

which refer to the raid".<sup>28</sup> Basically, the latter can be divided into two groups: First, there are a number of short notes within longer accounts, above all the *Annals of Saint-Bertin*, those of *Angoulême*, the *Chronicle of Saint-Wandrille*, the *Miracles of St. Benedict* and those of *St. Philibert*. By way of contrast, two more extensive descriptions of the 843 raid can be found on the final pages of a tenth-century manuscript from Angers, which was probably drafted at the nearby monastery of Saint-Serge.<sup>29</sup> The first of these fragments (F<sup>1</sup>) was seized upon by the anonymous composer of the eleventh-century *Chronicle of Nantes* who incorporated it almost verbatim into the chronicle's sixth chapter.<sup>30</sup> Among others, David Dumville assumed this account to stem from a contemporary or near-contemporary Nantes chronicle today otherwise lost. Whilst F<sup>1</sup> depicted the Viking assault as a bloody and deeply shocking event, including the murder of Bishop Gunhard and part of his flock in the cathedral's precincts, these elements were expanded even further in the framing narrative of the Nantes *Chronicle*:

The mid-eleventh-century chronicler of the history of Nantes [...] warmed to this theme, however, and greatly expanded the ninth-century record to insist on the cruelty and greed of these *Normanni* [...].<sup>31</sup>

The inhabitants of Nantes probably received at least some kind of short-term warning about approaching Vikings by monks who fled upstream to the supposed safety of the town's Gallo-Roman ramparts. Whether or not these fortifications had already been damaged during the preceding fighting, they were apparently unable to stop the attackers. As soon as the townspeople saw Vikings bursting into the municipal area, they, to quote Simon Coupland, "raced for the cathedral, perhaps because they hoped to be spared within the sanctuary of its precincts, but more likely because it represented the strongest building".<sup>32</sup> But the raiders did not respect the cathedral's sanctity, nor were they deterred by its walls. Allegedly the Vikings killed many of the occupants while others were

28 Coupland, "Vikings on the Continent", 191.

29 Angers, Bibliothèque publique, ms. 817 (olim 733), fol. 135<sup>r</sup>–136<sup>v</sup>.

30 *Chronicle of Nantes*, c. 6, ed. Merlet, 14–17. For an overall assessment see Coupland, "Vikings on the Continent", 191ff. and Smith, *Province and Empire*, 94, no. 27: "The Chronicle of Nantes is [...] late eleventh-century at the earliest [...] compiled as a piece of invective and polemic against the Bretons." He believed F<sup>1</sup> to have been composed late in Charles the Bald's reign.

31 Dumville, "Images of the Viking", 255f.

32 Coupland, "Vikings on the Continent", 193.

abducted for ransom or slavery. Within the eleventh-century account of the *Chronicle* this violent intrusion into the innermost sanctuary of Nantes' main church amounted to an overall dramatic climax: Bishop Gunhard, the words of the *Sursum corda* still on his lips, was allegedly put to the sword at the height of mass, while his martyrdom reverberated in the slaughter of the parishioners.<sup>33</sup>

Whereas Coupland does not challenge the general outline of these events, he rejects the idea of placing Gunhard's murder at the culminating point of the festal mass.<sup>34</sup> To him, this would seem like a later addition, although it was already known to the anonymous composer of the early tenth-century *Miracula Martini abbatis Vertavensis*.<sup>35</sup> What is more, rumors of Gunhard's spectacular murder were obviously circulating as early as the mid-ninth century: Regino of Prüm mentions a party of Vikings killing the bishop of Nantes *as he was celebrating baptism*, but he dated this incident erroneously to the Easter Eve of 853.<sup>36</sup>

While the *Chronicle of Nantes* is hardly ambiguous in its portrayal of the events in June 843, it focusses on the Viking's cruelty—they spilling the blood of mothers, clerics and other innocents—not on pollution or defilement in a literal sense.<sup>37</sup> In fact, Daniel Baraz referred to this text as a prime example of the perpetration of violence against holy people or places as being an attribute of the pagan 'other'.<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, the polluting capability of bloodshed, especially in the precincts of a church, was a widespread notion already in the early Middle Ages.<sup>39</sup> This is where the second text from Angers ms. 817, F<sup>2</sup>, comes in. Introduced as *item in aliis annalibus de captivitate Nanneticae*

33 Coupland, "Vikings on the Continent", 193.

34 Coupland, "Vikings on the Continent", 193.

35 *Miracula Martini abbatis Vertavensis* c. 8, ed. Krusch, 573.

36 Regino of Prüm, *Chronicon* ad a. 853, ed. Kurze, 76. According to Coupland, "Vikings on the Continent", 193, he confused the attack of 843 with another Viking raid in June 853 which is mentioned for instance in the *Annales Engolismenses*. In the latter case there is no reference to the murder of a bishop; cf. Krah, *Die Entstehung der "potestas regia"*, 244.

37 *Chronicle of Nantes* c. 6, ed. Merlet, 17: *Quis, proh dolor! Illius diei dolorem explicare, quis explicando a lacrimis valeat temperare, quando mortuarum matrum cruorem pro lacte suggentes pendebant ad ubera nati, quando sanctorum sanguine, hostili mucrone fuso, templi pavimenta madent, altaria sacra innocentium cruore oblita fluunt.*

38 Baraz, *Medieval Cruelty*, 62.

39 See for instance Thiery, *Polluting the Sacred*, 48, 51f. With a view to the violation of churches cf. Gulzynski, *Desecration*.

*civitatum repertum est ita*, the origin of F<sup>2</sup> is hitherto unknown. According to Lot and Halphen it is, like F<sup>1</sup>, a fragment copied from an “annale nantaise contemporaine”.<sup>40</sup> Especially its exhaustive dating passage, which almost equals the narrative in length, seems to preserve or imitate the structure of an entry in an Easter table.<sup>41</sup>

Although F<sup>1</sup> and F<sup>2</sup> both refer to the Viking attack of 843, there are decisive differences. F<sup>1</sup> is above all a description of the respective events and their backgrounds, the fighting between Rainald, Lambert II and Nominoë, the inroad itself, the murder of Gunhard etc., but in F<sup>2</sup> this whole issue is summarized in a section amounting to no more than a quarter of the text’s overall length:

The town of Nantes was taken by the Normans, who are most cruel pagans. There the holy temple was violated, and bishop Gunhard—along with countless people from both sexes—cut down by the sword. All others were bound and led into captivity [...].<sup>42</sup>

In addition to that, F<sup>2</sup> provides a rather detailed account of what happened in the aftermath of the Viking raid:

There they remained for ten days, until they were redeemed through God’s help and protection. Then they returned to the desolate town, drenched in tears, and cleansed the defiled church, which had been violated by the wicked. Thus cleansed it was deemed impure for another three months. Eventually, in the year given above, in the seventh month, on the thirtieth day, the temple which had been violated was consecrated

40 Lot and Halphen, *Le règne de Charles le Chauve*, 79, no. 3.

41 Angers, Bibliothèque publique, ms. 817 (olim 733), fol. 136<sup>r</sup>, ed. Lot and Halphen, *Le règne de Charles le Chauve*, 79f., no. 3: *Anno post incarnationem domini nostri Iesu Christi DCCC XLIII., quo fuerunt kalendae ianuariae, II. feria, luna XVI., indictio VI., epactae XVII., concurrentes VI., terminus paschalis XIII., kal. mai luna XIII., initium quadragesime v. idus martias, rogationes v. kal. iunii, mense quarto, XXIII die [m] mensis, que est VIII. kal. iulii, in nativitate beati Iohannis baptiste, luna X., nona hora diei in die dominico, anno IIII. post obitum Hludowici serenissimi imperatoris, sub Lamberto duce [...].*

42 Angers, Bibliothèque publique, ms. 817 (olim 733), fol. 136<sup>r</sup>, ed. Lot and Halphen, *Le règne de Charles le Chauve*, 79f., no. 3: [...] *capta est a Normannis paganis seuissimis civitas Nannetis. In qua uiolatum est templum sanctum et Gunhardus summus sacerdos cum innumerabili ex untroque sex [u ab ex] cercitu trucidatus more fuit gladii. Ceteri uincti omnes fuerunt ducti captiui [...].*

by Susanno, bishop of Vannes. This consecration was implemented on September 30.<sup>43</sup>

Thus F<sup>2</sup> can be divided into two quite separate sections: the first describes the Viking-caused violation of Nantes cathedral, *violatum est templum sanctum*, coupled with the murder of bishop Gunhard and a number of townspeople attending worship; the second part of the account depicts the cleansing of the polluted church. It is only in this second section that the state of the cathedral is pinpointed. The city lay desolate, its temple defiled due to violation, and therefore the latter was to be cleansed. But F<sup>2</sup> differentiates two states of impurity as well: A first, which is removed by unspecified means—probably by simply dragging out the victim's bodies, washing off the blood and repairing whatever structural damage there was—and a second, which continued for three months after the physical cleansing had been completed. In fact, this purported uncleanness persisted until the cathedral was consecrated anew by Susanno, bishop of Vannes, in September 843. Thus, on the basis of F<sup>2</sup>, one can truly evaluate the nature of Viking defilement: Physical and cultic impurity went hand in hand.

In much greater detail than the sources considered before, F<sup>2</sup> presents a notion of pollution and defilement which is related to the Viking attacks. While F<sup>1</sup> might seem to be hagiographic in nature, this hardly applies to F<sup>2</sup>. It could be tagged as political in the first place, since F<sup>2</sup> shows bishop Susanno of Vannes—who otherwise bolstered the metropolitan interests of Tours as well—as being responsible for the reconsecration of Nantes cathedral in a time of growing Breton independence. Yet this would be a fairly subtle approach. Having said that, F<sup>2</sup> shows the features of a historical narrative very much in line with d'Haenens' assumptions: The record of limited physical destruction, an unknown death toll and, most important, the 'psychic' impact of a Viking attack. It does anything but depict the *most vicious Normans* in bright colours, nevertheless, the latter are not presented as instruments of God's wrath, something which Lesley Morden, for instance, thought was typical of such accounts:

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43 Angers, Bibliothèque publique, ms. 817 (olim 733), fol. 136<sup>r</sup>, ed. Lot and Halphen, *Le règne de Charles le Chauve*, 79f., no. 3: [...] *in qua dies fuerunt x. unde diuino protegente adminiculo fuere redempti. Venientibus autem illis ad desolatam ciuitatem cum mango fletu et domum immundam que fuerat a peruersis uiolata mundauit. Sicque mundatam per III. menses quasi immundam esse dixerunt. Denique anno suprascripto, in mense septimo, xxx. die mensis, a Susanno Uenetensi episcopo templum quod uiolatum fuerat consecratum est. Que consecratio acta est II. kal. octobris.*

The writers of annals and other documentary sources of the period clearly represent the attacks by the Northmen as a visitation of evil upon them by an angry God. There was a purpose, chiefly theological, at the centre of the annalists' accounts.<sup>44</sup>

In F<sup>2</sup>, a respective dimension seems to be decidedly absent. This might be explained in view of its early date: It was the first Viking attack on Nantes and, as Morden pointed out, the idea of the Vikings as “the scourge of God’s wrath”, sent “to punish the Carolingians for their sinfulness” was not present from the outset, but had to grow when the raids became more frequent.<sup>45</sup> Be this as it may, at least in the case of F<sup>2</sup> it is obviously the notion of pollution and defilement which outdates any further attributions.

## 2.2 *The Attacks on Tours*

The Vikings returned to Nantes exactly ten years after their first assault in 843. This time they would not leave the area for the better part of a century.<sup>46</sup> Already in October 852 a fleet led by Godfrid, probably a son of the former Danish king Harald ‘Klak’, had advanced up the river Seine, but was stopped by a joint Frankish army at *Augustudunas* (supposedly Les Damps near Pont-de-l’Arche).<sup>47</sup> While Godfrid made peace with Charles the Bald in winter 852/853, a significant number of his followers seem to have rejected the Franks’ conditions or were excluded from the negotiations from the outset. According to the contemporary *Annals of St-Bertin*, it was in July 853 that those remaining Vikings *left the Seine and went to the Loire where they sacked the town of Nantes and the Monastery of St-Florent and its neighbourhood*.<sup>48</sup> On the island of *Betia* (Beaulieu) they established a permanent encampment.<sup>49</sup> In late autumn of the same year a Viking army, which had already sacked the monastery St-Florent-le-Veil about 50 kilometers from Nantes, moved further upstream and started raiding the Touraine area. As the *Annals of Saint-Bertin* put this:

44 Morden, *How much Material Damage did the Northmen actually do*, 65.

45 Morden, *How much Material Damage did the Northmen actually do*, 42.

46 Cassard, “Avant les Normands”, 98.

47 Coupland, “From poachers to gamekeepers”; Price, “The Vikings in Brittany”, 26/344.

48 *Annales Bertiniani* ad a. 853, ed. Waitz, 42: *Dani mense Iulio, relicta Sequana, Ligerim adeuntes, Namnetum urbem et monasterium Sancti Florentii ac vicina loca populantur*. The translation is based on Nelson, *Annals of St-Bertin*, 76.

49 Durville, “Les épées Normandes de l’Île de Bièce”; Cassard, “Avant les Normands”, 98.

On the 8th of November 853, Danish pirates from Nantes heading further inland brazenly attacked the town of Tours and burned it, along with the church of St-Martin, and other neighbouring places. But because the attack had been known about beforehand with complete certainty, the body of St Martin had already been taken away to the monastery of Cormery and the treasures of his church to the civitas of Orléans.<sup>50</sup>

The general outline of this Viking attack is confirmed by other sources, for instance a capitulary issued by Charles the Bald at Tours in late August 854.<sup>51</sup> Also according to the *Annals of Fulda*, in 853 *Northmen came up the Loire to plunder the city of Tours in Gaul and set fire to the church of St Martin the Confessor among other buildings, meeting no resistance.*<sup>52</sup> The *Annals of Angoulême* refer to attacks on Luçon in May, another on St-Florent-le-Veil and Nantes in June and a third on Tours; all of these places are said to have been burnt during the Viking assaults.<sup>53</sup> Especially concerning their extent, the previously cited sources draw a fairly consistent picture of the Viking attacks. Hence, for a long time, the reliability of these accounts remained basically unquestioned.<sup>54</sup> Still in 1961 Pierre Gasnault argued that the abbey of Saint-Martin, which had

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- 50 *Annales Bertiniani* ad a. 853, ed. Waitz, 43: *Item pyratae Danorum a Namnetibus superiora petentes, mense Novembri, 6. videlicet Idus, urbem Turonum inpune adeunt atque incendunt cum ecclesia sancti Martini et ceteris adiacentibus locis. Sed quia evidenti certitudine hoc praescitum fuerat, corpus beati Martini ad Cormaricum, monasterium eius ecclesiae, [et inde] ad civitatem Aurelianorum transportatum est.* Translation Nelson, *Annals of St-Bertin*, 77.
- 51 *Recueil des Actes de Charles II le Chauve*, ed. Tessier, 441, No. 167: *Addidit etiam jam dictus grex, id quod omnium plangit memoria, qualiter saevissimi atque crudelissimi Turonis supervenerint Normanni et lamentabili excidio concremaverint cum ceteris omnibus monasterium praefati sancti.* Cf. Morden, *How much Material Damage did the Northmen actually do*, 48.
- 52 *Annales Fuldenses* ad a. 853, ed. Kurze, 43: *Nordmanni per Ligurem fluvium venientes Turonum Galliae civitatem praedantur et inter alias aedes ecclesiam quoque sancti Martini confessoris nemine resistente succedunt.* The translation given above is based on Reuter, *Annals of Fulda*, 34f.
- 53 *Annales Engolismenses* ad a. 853, ed. Pertz, 486: *Lucionnus mense maio a Normannis succenditur. Et mense iunio sancti Florentii monasterium et Nannetis civitas, Turonis quoque, similiter exuruntur.*
- 54 Mabille, "Les invasions normandes", I: 172f. Cf. Gasnault, "Le tombeau de saint Martin", 54: "La situation de l'abbaye de Saint-Martin [...] n'avait jamais été aussi florissante que dans cette première moitié du IX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Elle fut brutalement bouleversée par les invasions normandes."



allegedly flourished during the first half of the ninth century, “fut brutalement bouleversée par les invasions normandes.”<sup>55</sup>

A few remarks on the topography of Tours might be helpful at this point. Between the fourth and eleventh centuries, ‘Tours’ was by no means a monolithic town; rather it comprised two distinct areas of settlement: on the one hand the gallo-roman town as such, which was fortified and included the cathedral of Saint-Maurice; on the other hand, about a kilometer to the west, the post-roman monastery with the basilica of Saint-Martin.<sup>56</sup> Especially the latter and the growing market in its vicinity would have lain vulnerable to Viking attacks, since both were effectively unfortified. Construction of the so-called *castrum Sancti Martini*, which enclosed the monastic complex, the basilica of Saint-Martin and parts of the market town, began no sooner than 903 and was completed as late as 918/9.<sup>57</sup>

Despite substantial consistency in the written records, twentieth-century excavations at Tours have created a different impression: According to Henri Galinié, “it seems that the effects of the raids have been much less disastrous than what medieval chroniclers would lead us to suppose”.<sup>58</sup> Excavations in the vicinity of Saint-Martin and inside the early medieval town walls have revealed neither traces of extensive fire damage from the mid-ninth century nor evidence of any large-scale blazes throughout the Viking period. In fact, early medieval Tours seems to have largely escaped conflagration.<sup>59</sup> While archeological features and textual sources will hardly coincide completely in any given case, these particular findings call for a healthy dose of wariness with regard to the scale of Viking-caused destruction at Tours.<sup>60</sup>

Also with a view to the half-century following the Viking raid in 853, evidence for severe damage to the fortified town of Tours as well as Saint-

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55 Gasnault, “Le tombeau de Saint Martin”, 54.

56 Galinié, “Archéologie et Topographie Historique”, 33.

57 Galinié, “Archéologie et Topographie Historique”, 47f.; Lelong, “L’enceinte du « *castrum sancti Martini* »”.

58 Galinié, “Archéologie et Topographie Historique”, 44; cf. id. et al., “Fouilles archéologiques sur le site de Saint-Pierre-le-Puellier 1969–74”; id. “Fouilles archéologiques de Tours 1978–1979”; id., “Fouilles archéologiques de Tours 1981”; id., “Fouilles archéologiques de Tours 1982”.

59 Noizet, “Le chanoines”; Morden, *How much Damage*, 209. For the town cf. Galinié, “Archéologie et Topographie Historique”, 49: “Si dans le bourg de Saint-Martin, les incursions normandes n’ont pas altéré la dynamique du développement [. . .], elles semblent avoir eu des conséquences différentes dans la cité.”

60 Noizet, “Le chanoines”. Archeological evidence for contemporary conflagrations has for instance been found at Rouen, cf. Le Maho, “Les fouilles de la cathédrale de Rouen”.

Martin with its surroundings remains sparse at best. In 856 Vikings advanced upstream through the Loire valley as far as Orléans and in the following year they reached Blois, but Tours seems to have been spared (or ransomed) for the written sources do not mention any renewed attacks.<sup>61</sup> Five years later, Charles the Bald, facing a coalition of Bretons and Vikings in the West, granted Saint-Martin an estate at Léré in the Berry, which was explicitly designated as refuge in case of Viking assaults, while in January 869 the canons received Marsat in the Auvergne for the same purpose.<sup>62</sup> Although there is undeniable evidence for the presence of St. Martin's relics at these safeholds, corresponding attacks on Tours are difficult to pinpoint. In 871 at the very latest the relics had returned to Saint-Martin, only to be removed to Chablis in the Tonnerrois some time before 876.<sup>63</sup> Later in the same year St. Martin's remains were finally brought back to Tours, where they were kept inside the town walls on several occasions, especially during the Viking siege of 903 and probably until the *castrum Sancti Martini* was completed in May 919.<sup>64</sup>

Subsequent to the Viking attack on Nantes in 843 it took—if one is to believe the account of Angers ms. 317—no more than a couple of months to restore the defiled cathedral to a state which made a renewed consecration possible. Therefore, the outcome of the initial raid can hardly have been devastating, at least as far as physical structures are concerned. Accordingly, our sources refer to this as “capture” and not as outright destruction, pillage or arson. As could be seen above, this is decidedly different for the attack on Tours ten years later. But in this instance, too, the textual evidence points towards a quick recovery: In mid-854, less than a year after the raid, St. Martin's relics had returned to their resting place in the basilica while Charles the Bald was able to take up his quarters and issue charters inside the town walls.

Although the damage might well have appeared catastrophic to the canons of Saint-Martin—the more so if we assume that they had fled Tours and thus depended on hearsay—it was probably overstated.<sup>65</sup> The same might be assumed for the events in January 869, when Charles the Bald granted an

61 Gasnault, “Le tombeau de Saint Martin”, 56. At least in a charter from June 857, *Textes relatifs aux institutions*, ed. Thévin, no. 89, p. 120, St. Martin seems unaffected.

62 Both charters were edited by Tessier, *Recueil des actes de Charles le Chauve*, II, for 862 no. 239 and for 869 no. 319.

63 Gasnault, “Le tombeau de Saint Martin”, 56. For 871 see a charter edited by Poupardin, *Recueil des actes*, no. 15. For Chablis, which had been given to the canons by Charles the Bald in 867, cf. two charters in Tessier, *Recueil des actes de Charles le Chauve*, II, no. 437, 438.

64 Gasnault, “Le tombeau de Saint Martin”, 64; Mabile, “Les invasions normandes”, I: 192f.

65 DeSelm, *Unwilling Pilgrimage*, 155.

estate at Léré as shelter for the relics. We do not know for sure whether they were relocated at all on that occasion, but since the relics were able to return to the basilica of Saint-Martin no later than 871, the devastations caused by any Viking attacks in the meantime can only have been limited.

For the alleged conflagration of Saint-Martin in 903 there are a couple of independent sources, such as for instance marginal notes in a tenth-century manuscript from Tours<sup>66</sup> or Odo of Cluny's *Sermo de combustione basilicae beati Martini*.<sup>67</sup> An extensive restoration or reconstruction of Saint-Martin during the first quarter of the tenth century is also suggested in a privilege issued by pope Sergius III in May 908.<sup>68</sup> In this case, too, archeological excavations have been unable to provide any evidence which would have strengthened the impression of large-scale destruction as conveyed within the written sources. If repair work at Saint-Martin and construction on the *castrum Sancti Martini* had begun in 904—this was proposed by Mabile and Gasnault—the basilica and the adjacent monastery would nonetheless have lain abandoned for no less than half year. On this understanding, even limited damage, probably coupled with abuse and negative weather effects could have entailed a lot of reconstruction work as would be consistent with contemporary accounts. Besides that, any damage caused in 903 was limited to the extramural areas in the first place, since the town walls are reported to have held back the attackers.

### 3 Viking Attacks on Tours from a Liturgical Perspective

Hitherto, the impact of the Viking incursions to Western Francia has mainly been assessed from either the perspective of narrative and diplomatic sources or from the archeological record or from a combination of both. As could be seen by the example of Tours, the respective findings were sometimes highly inconsistent. Yet there might be another, thus far largely neglected approach, ensuing from the “links” which, according to Michael McCormick, “bind the

66 Bibliothèque de Tours ms.106, edited in *Catalogue général des manuscrits* 37, 1, ed. Collon, 68f. See the accounts of miracles effected by St Martin in the defense of Tours, *Supplément aux chroniques de Touraine*, ed. Salmon, 1–13, esp. 8–11.

67 DeSelm, *Unwilling Pilgrimage*, 212. For the sermon's attribution to Odo, cf. Farmer, *Communities of Saint-Martin*, 313ff.

68 *Pancarte noire* no. 137, ed. Mabile, “Les invasions Normandes”, no. XI, p. 449: *Proinde [...] sancta Mater Romana Ecclesia [...] per missos [...] lugubre desolationis compererit detrimendum, scilicet quomodo praedictus locus destructionis triste malum a Normannorum perfida gente pertulerit [...]*.

transcription of a liturgical document to a unique historical situation”.<sup>69</sup> With regard to Tours, for instance, a late ninth-century sacramentary (Tu2; Paris, B.N., n.a.l. ms. 1589) indicates a reverberation of the Viking inroads in contemporary liturgical texts.<sup>70</sup> Origin and composition of this particular manuscript have been studied by Jean Deshusses. He identified Tu2 as the augmented copy of an older sacramentary (Alcuin<sub>1</sub>) compiled on behalf of Alcuin of York shortly after the latter became abbot of Saint-Martin in 796. Once a revised sacramentary (Alcuin<sub>2</sub>) had been completed in about 800, Alcuin<sub>1</sub> was transferred to the local cathedral of Saint-Maurice, where the manuscript itself or an intermediary copy was later consulted by the composer of Tu2. Although the details of its compilation remain unknown, Deshusses’ analysis accounts for extensive modifications in Tu2—inserted masses taken from the so-called eighth-century Gelasian Sacramentary as well as from the supplement to the *Sacramentarium Gregorianum Hadrianum* presumably composed by Benedict of Aniane—if compared to either Alcuin<sub>1</sub> or Alcuin<sub>2</sub>.<sup>71</sup> While the main body of Tu2’s masses derived from older liturgical collections, it comprised a couple of otherwise unaccounted for pieces as well, for example a *Mass for imminent barbarian persecution* which explicitly refers to current Viking-caused calamities.<sup>72</sup>

According to McCormick, this mass would belong to a series of special wartime *Masses against the pagans*, which spread from the second half of the ninth century onwards. Since the respective pieces were often inserted on fly leaves or into blank spaces of existing manuscripts, they seem to indicate a contemporary “liturgical response to the depredations of the Northmen and Saracens”.<sup>73</sup> In the case of Tu2, the *Mass for imminent barbarian persecution* was part of the sacramentary’s original draft; hence it was probably composed before the last quarter of the ninth century. Considering the extent to which Tours was exposed to Viking activity from 853 onwards, a corresponding *present calamity*

69 McCormick, “A New Ninth-Century Witness”, 76.

70 See Deshusses, “Les anciens Sacramentaires de Tours”, 281; id., “Le sacramentaire grégorien pré-hadriannique”; cf. Barré and id., “A la recherche du missel d’Alcuin.

71 Deshusses, “Les anciens Sacramentaires de Tours”, 301.

72 Deshusses (ed.), *Le sacramentaire grégorien*, II: 165, no. 161/2572: [...] *quaesumus domine intende placatus, hanc quoque oblationem pro nostra afflictione tibi fidissime oblatam benignissime suscipe, quatinus de nord-mannica praesenti calamitate mereamur liberari citissime, atque deinceps in tuis praeceptis te miserante deuotissime persistere.*

73 McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 351; id. “Liturgie et guerre”, 222; id., “A New Ninth-Century Witness”, 70f. Erdmann, “Der Heidenkrieg”, 132f., assumed that the bulk of those *Missae contra paganos* spread from the tenth century onwards; Tellenbach, *Römischer und christlicher Reichsgedanke*, 37f. thought them to be ‘rare’ for the ninth century.

could be easily imagined on more than one occasion. If in addition Tuz's *Mass for imminent barbarian persecution* was truly unique (an assumption, which of course will be nearly impossible to validate) everything would suggest that it was composed during the third quarter of the ninth century.

Tuz comprises yet another congeneric mass, a *Missa pro paganis*, which also appears in a second Touraine sacramentary (Tui), an amended late ninth-century copy of the aforementioned Alcuin.<sup>74</sup> Unlike Tuz's *Mass for imminent barbarian persecution*, the *Missa pro paganis* complies with the prayers of a *Missa contra infestatione paganorum* contained in the Sacramentary of Senlis (Paris, B. Ste Geneviève 111, compiled presumably at Saint-Denis c. 880), and a similar piece in a North Italian sacramentary (Vat. Lat. 377) from the second half of the ninth century.<sup>75</sup> Neither of these texts features any references that would parallel those in Tuz's *Mass for imminent barbarian persecution*.

The Sacramentary of Angoulême (Paris, B.N., ms. lat. 816), probably composed for the Frankish court in Aquitaine around 800 and a major witness for the so-called eighth-century Gelasian Sacramentary, comprised a *Missa pro rege in die belli contra paganos*, which McCormick believed to have been intended for war against the Saracens or Basques.<sup>76</sup> While earlier prayers for military success had been circulating during the Merovingian reign and probably ever since Late Antiquity,<sup>77</sup> it is only in the Carolingian period that context and conditions of their composition can be traced. At that stage, they left the sphere of monasteries or cathedrals and were performed by and for the army in military action.<sup>78</sup> A ceremony held at the outset of hostilities is known for instance from the *Mass on the departure of the troops for those who are going to battle* in the late eighth-century sacramentary of Gellone (Paris, B.N., ms. lat. 12048). According to McCormick, this votive mass "is full of references to the army's imminent victory over the 'infidel barbarians'".<sup>79</sup> It is also the sacramentary of Gellone which proves the relevance of notions of impurity and defilement in this very context. Whilst the collect of its *Mass ubi gens contra gente<m> consurgit* refers to the conventional idea of God allowing heathens to trouble Christianity due to its inherent sinfulness, this idea is related to pagan-caused defilement in the masses' secret:

74 Deshusses, *Le sacramentaire grégorien*, II: 56. The text of Alcuin is today divided into two manuscripts, the *Missa pro paganis* is kept at Tours, Bibl. Munic. 184.

75 McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 351.

76 McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 348; Cagin (ed.), *Sacramentaire gélasien d'Angoulême*, 2307ff.

77 McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 346f.

78 McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 347.

79 McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 347.

As a prayer to God, [...] we plead for you to look at your people, trampled down, and to protect those out of compassion, so that they won't be defiled by the unbelievers [...].<sup>80</sup>

In the case of the *Missa ubi gens contra gente<m> consurgit*, the polluting effect is not confined to sacred places like churches or monasteries; rather it appears to threaten the community of believers as a whole. A similar idea is expressed for instance in Paschasius Radbertus' commentary on Jeremiah's *Lamentationes* in which he refers to the second Viking raid on Paris in 856:<sup>81</sup>

Who would ever believe, I ask you, that such a jumble of brigands would dare to undertake such a thing. Who would suppose that a kingdom so glorious, so strong, so broad, so populous, and so secure could be humiliated, sullied by such a people?<sup>82</sup>

According to Paschasius, the pagan-caused defilement is contingent on the ethical impurity of his fellow Christians, "the sins of the people and the crimes of the priests and princes".<sup>83</sup> In this case it is the topic of the commentary—Jeremiah bemoaning the destruction of Jerusalem—which allows for an association to be made with notions of cultic purity. This particular attribution is even more evident in an antiphon *In time of war*, contained within the antiphonals of Compiègne (c. 860–880) and Senlis (ninth century):

80 Tellenbach, *Römischer und christlicher Reichsgedanke*, 70f.: *Recensisti offerentium nominibus, deum indulgentiæ deprecamur, ut respici ad populum suum conculcatum et edolente protegas eos, ne ab impiis contaminentur; et miseratur in omnem afflictionem eorum [h] ac caris nostris uinculis corporabilibus liberatus in pace sanctorum recipiant, ut locum penalem et Geenne ignem flammamque Tartari in regionem uiuentium eadant.*

81 Lot, "La grande invasion Normande", 722.

82 Paschasius Radbertus, *Expositio in Lamentationes Ieremiae* 4, ed. Migne, 1220: *Quis unquam, quaeso, crederet quod latrones promiscuae gentis unquam talia auderent? Vel quis aestimare potuisset quod tam gloriosum regnum, tamque munitum et latissimum, tam populosum et firmissimum, talium hominum humiliari vel foedari sordibus deberet?* The translation is taken from DeSelm, *Unwilling Pilgrimage*, 160f.

83 Paschasius Radbertus, *Expositio in Lamentationes Ieremiae* 4, ed. Migne, 1220: [...] *propter peccata populi haec omnia contigerunt et propter iniquitates sacerdotum et principum, hinc inde tanta crebescunt mala; quia perverterunt longe jam dictum in medio nostrum, ut ita dicam, iudicia iustorum et sanguis sanguinem tetigit, quo cuncti polluti, jam suis cuncta repleverunt dolis et fraudibus.*

Calling upon the Lord, we cry out  
 that He turn (His) attention to His abused and suffering people,  
 and protect (His) Church, lest it be defiled by the ungodly,  
 but may He have pity on His unfortunate city, alleluia.<sup>84</sup>

Unlike in these examples, the *Mass for imminent barbarian persecution* known from the Tours sacramentary Tu2 does not allude to pollution or defilement at all. Instead, it simply mentions a present *calamitas Nortmannica*, without providing further references. But Tu2 comprises yet another pertinent liturgical piece, a *Missa in reconciliatione ecclesiae*, which is absent from any of the earlier Frankish liturgical compilations; also the appendant prayers seem to have no immediate precursors. An almost identical *Missa in reconciliatione ecclesiae* appears in a contemporary mixed pontifical from Beauvais (Leiden, University Library, Cod. Bibl. Publ. Lat. 111:2).<sup>85</sup> Later this particular reconciliation mass was included into a large number of liturgical manuscripts and it was still part of the mid-twentieth century *Missale Romanum*. While there are no direct models, certain older liturgical texts appear thematically related to the *Missa in reconciliatione ecclesiae* of Tu2, for instance, two prayers rubricated *Reconciliatio altaris ubi homicidium perpetratur* in the Gellone Sacramentary (Paris, B.N., ms. lat. 12048, c.790–800).<sup>86</sup> Miriam Czock referred to these in her paper and their characteristic *formulae* have already been examined by Roger Reynolds.<sup>87</sup>

The first of these [. . .], entitled ‘*Deus indultorem*’, dwells on the treachery of the devil, the corruption of the place, and the need for restoration. The second, ‘*Deus cuius bonitas*’, speaks of the reasons for the violation: negligence, violence, drunkenness or obscenity. Celestial grace is asked for to rid the place and the altar of the infection of the devil. Finally, restoration is asked for in terms of pure simplicity, luster of innocence, and glory.<sup>88</sup>

84 *Invocantes dominum exclamemus / ut respiciat populum suum conculcatum et dolentem / et protegat templum ne ab impiis contaminetur / sed misereatur nimis afflictę civitati sue alle [luia].* Text and translation are provided in *Early Medieval Chants III*, ed. Borders, xlvi.

85 Rasmussen, *Les Pontificaux du Haut Moyen Âge*, 136ff.

86 *Liber sacramentorum Gellonensis*, ed. Dumas and Deshusses.

87 *Gellone Sacramentary*, ed. Dumas, I: 351–352, no. 2398 and no. 2399.

88 Reynolds, “Rites of Separation and Reconciliation”, 430.

An interesting alternate version of this *Reconciliatio altaris* is preserved in a mixed pontifical-sacramentary (Paris, B.N., ms. lat. 17333) which was probably compiled for Hugh the Great, bishop of Nevers, in the first half of the eleventh century.<sup>89</sup> While arrangement and text of the prayers are identical to the older *Reconciliatio altaris*, the title differs significantly: *Reconciliatio basilicae vel domus pollutae aut homicidio aut a paganis fracti*, the *Reconciliation of a basilica or church polluted by homicide or depredated by pagans*.<sup>90</sup> Already Augustin-Joseph Crosnier assumed that the eleventh-century Nevers sacramentary derived from a ninth-century manuscript and hence suggested a connection between this reconciliation mass and the depredations caused by marauding Vikings or Saracens in the upper Loire valley. In this particular situation, a connection seems to have been established between pagan depredations and the notion of defilement as it was already evoked within the prayers of the Gellone *Reconciliatio altaris*.

Compared to the *Reconciliatio basilicae* [...] *a paganis fracti* from the Nevers sacramentary, the *Missa in reconciliatione ecclesiae* of Tu2 went a decisive step further. The text of this reconciliation mass has been studied by Roger Reynolds in a paper on "Rites of Separation and Reconciliation in the Early Middle Ages". He found it for example in the late tenth-/early eleventh-century Claudius Pontifical 1 (London, British Library, ms. Cotton Claudius A. iii)<sup>91</sup> and in the mid-tenth century Egbert Pontifical (Paris, B.N., ms. lat. 10575), which, according to H. M. J. Banting, "seems to have drawn on a source from Northern France and Normandy in particular, adding material found in Anglo-Saxon England".<sup>92</sup> Reynold's assumption that the reconciliation mass was of insular origin can neither be refuted nor affirmed, since we lack the models on which the Egbert Pontifical and Claudius 1 were originally compiled. On the basis of manuscript evidence, however, both Tu2 and the Beauvais pontifical predate any of the respective insular manuscripts by a margin of at least half a century. It would also seem unlikely that this reconciliation mass was part of the original sacramentary composed on behalf of Alcuin at Tours, since it was not included in Tu1 which stemmed from the revised and nearly contemporary Alcuin2.

89 *Sacramentarium ad usum ecclesiae Nivernensis*, ed. Crosnier, 48f.

90 Crosnier, *Études sur la liturgie nivernaise*, 77.

91 *The Claudius Pontificals*, ed. Turner, 65f. Cf. Reynolds, "Rites of Separation and Reconciliation", 430f.; a detailed description of the manuscript is given by Dumville, "Liturgical Books", 78f.

92 Banting, *Two Anglo-Saxon Pontificals*, xxxvi. It was dated to c. 1000 by Dumville, "On the Dating", 51; cf. id., "Liturgical Books", 85f. and Orchard, *The Leofric Missal* 11: 262.



A detailed survey and partial translation of the prayers forming the *Missa in reconciliatione ecclesiae* has been provided by Derek A. Rivard, who analyzed a largely identical text pertaining to a ritual “Concerning the Reconciliation of a Church and a Cemetery” from the late thirteenth-century pontifical of William Durandus.<sup>93</sup> I shall draw on Rivard’s interpretation, while trying to realign it to a ninth-century perspective. The *Missa in reconciliatione ecclesiae* in Tuz comprises three prayers. To begin with, the collect:

God, who said ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer’, may you deign to sanctify and cleanse this house contaminated with the filth of unbelievers so that you may listen to mercifully and kindly receive the prayers and offerings of all entreating you in this place.<sup>94</sup>

This first prayer strives to re-open the channels of communication between God and the human sphere. These are said to have been ‘blocked’ due to pagan contamination.<sup>95</sup> Only if God is willing to once again sanctify and cleanse the place in question, prayers and offerings delivered there might regain their effectiveness. The second prayer, the secret or super oblata, reads:

We ask, Lord, may this gift purify this place from the uncleanness of the pagans as well as turn our requests (in prayer) acceptable to you again, here and everywhere.<sup>96</sup>

Completion of the offertory establishes a transformation from the prevailing, pagan-caused uncleanness to a renewed state of purity, which would make prayers effective once again. Interestingly enough, this last request is by no means limited to the place that is to be cleansed. The post-communion prayer brings about a direct connection between the stains of the unbelievers (*barbarorum inquinamentis*) and once more individual Christian sinfulness:<sup>97</sup>

93 Rivard, *Blessing the World*, 126ff.

94 *Le Sacramentaire grégorien*, ed. Deshusses, III: 212, no. 4179: *Deus qui dixisti domus mea domus orationis uocabitur, domum istam gentium spurcitiis contaminatam mundare et sanctificare digneris, ut omnium preces et uota hoc in loco ad te clamantium clementer exaudias et benigne perficias.*

95 Rivard, *Blessing the World*, 126 simply refers to an unspecified “disorder of pollution”, which prevented the reception of prayers offered in a certain place.

96 *Le Sacramentaire grégorien*, ed. Deshusses, III: 212, no. 4180: *Haec hostia quaesumus domine, et locum istum ab immunditiis nationum expurget, et supplicationes nostras hic et ubique tibi reddat acceptas.*

97 Rivard, *Blessing the World*, 128.

We pray to you God, so that this temple, cleansed of all the stains of the unbelieving may remain sanctified by your blessing, and our hearts may be alienated from all the dirt of vices and always devoted to you.<sup>98</sup>

If one considers the reconciliation as a circular movement, this prayer closes the remaining gaps: It reconstitutes a proper relationship between the divine and the people that had been interrupted due to the polluted state of both, the human heart, which was stained by sin and the precincts of the church violated by unbelievers.<sup>99</sup>

According to Reynolds, this *Missa in reconciliatione ecclesiae* would originally have referred to Christian wrongdoings and not pagan desecration. While he described its recurring theme as “purification from the filthiness caused by barbarian deeds”, for him ‘barbarian deeds’ did not mean the actions of Vikings or non-Christians in general.<sup>100</sup> Rather, Reynolds took ‘barbarian’ as a moral evaluation of the perpetrators, who might well have been Christian. With regard to early medieval rituals of excommunication he had already shown how violators of churches and church property were routinely termed *ethnici*, *gentiles* or *pagani*, “so that one member of Christ’s body will not injure the others”.<sup>101</sup> On the other hand, this choice of words matches the way Viking raiders were addressed in a lot of contemporary sources and also in the previously cited *Missae pro paganis*. Already Gerd Tellenbach pointed at a general equation of barbarians and pagans in early medieval writings: “The pagans are called *pagani*, *gentes* or *barbarae nationes*.”<sup>102</sup> In this regard, it is especially striking that later medieval authors apparently had problems similar to those which troubled Reynolds: For instance the early eleventh-century Lanalet pontifical (Rouen, Bibl. Munic., ms. A. 27 [cat. 368]) comprises the text of a *Missa in reconciliatione ecclesiae* which originally conformed with Tuz until it was

98 *Le Sacramentaire grégorien*, ed. Deshusses, III: 212, no. 4181: *Percipientes domine munera salutis aeternae te supplices exoramus, ut templum hoc a barbarorum inquinamentis emundatum, tua benedictione maneat sanctificatum, et pectora nostra ab omni sorde uitiorum alienata tibi que deuota semper existant.*

99 Rivard, *Blessing the World*, 128.

100 Reynolds, “Rites of Separation and Reconciliation”, 431.

101 Reynolds, “Rites of Separation and Reconciliation”, 412, 426. For instance an allocution in the collection of excommunication rites in Regino of Prüm’s *Libri duo de synodali-bus causis* II, c. 412, ed. Wasserscheben, 370, reads: *Quodsi has tres admonitiones et pias correptiones contemnit et satisfacere despicit, post haec sit tibi, inquit, sicut ethnicus, id est gentilis atque paganus, ut non iam pro Christiano, sed pro pagano habeatur* [. . .]. Similar in this regard is c. 414, p. 373f.

102 Tellenbach, *Römischer und christlicher Reichsgedanke*, 36f.

interpolated during the twelfth or thirteenth centuries.<sup>103</sup> Significant expressions like *nationum* were at that time provided with additions like *vel iniquorum*, thus specifying misbehaving Christians. Similarly, in the eleventh-century Benedictional of Archbishop Robert (Rouen, Bibl. munic., ms. 369 [Y.7]), the collect was changed as well: *domum istam gentium uel bachantium spurcitiis contaminatam*.<sup>104</sup>

Consequently Reynolds' interpretation of the *Missa in reconciliatione ecclesiae* might well apply to an alternate and probably later reception of this liturgical piece. Yet its initial composition—even if we are to assume the mass to be of insular origin—seems to have answered needs arising from the ninth-century Viking raids. Although their impact is now assumed to have been less severe (at least in the case of Tours) than was believed for a long time, the topographical situation—a rather small fortified retreat and an important number of churches and monasteries outside the town's protective walls—would have induced a specific threat scenario. If we are to conclude that Viking attacks under certain conditions would have entailed plundered churches to be seen as polluted or defiled, as should have become clear in the first part of this paper, the need for a specific reconciliation mass appears to be self-evident. This is very much in line with the dating of Tuz: The manuscript was compiled during the late ninth century; in the process, the compiler included well known material from older liturgical manuscripts as well as pieces that were new or belonged to a first and foremost local tradition. Hence, the *Missa in reconciliatione ecclesiae* might well have served the needs of a local community in the immediate aftermath of the Viking attack in 853, or it could have satisfied the demands of later bishops, who would have had to re-enable services at extramural churches and monasteries in the aftermath of subsequent inroads. Similar notions were transferred into other sources as well: For instance a letter from Alphonse III of Asturias, allegedly written to the canons of Saint-Martin in 906, establishes a connection between the construction of fortifications at Tours and the safeguarding against defilement.<sup>105</sup> Building the *castrum Sancti Martini* is hence presented as a saintly mandated measure to protect the Basilica of Saint-Martin, against cultic defilement allegedly caused

103 *A Pontifical Formerly in Use at St German's Cornwall*, ed. Doble. On the dating see Dumville, "Liturgical Books", 86f.; Gneuss, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, 72, no. 395; Nelson and Pfaff, "Pontificals and Benedictionals", 94.

104 *The Benedictional of Archbishop Robert*, ed. Wilson, 112.

105 *Unde confidimus in merito et interventu sancti Martini, qui vobis domum suam spiravit munire et instaurare, ut ultra non conculcet eam superbus, nec contaminet pollutus*. The most recent edition of this piece is provided by Henriët, "La lettre d'Alphonse III", 162ff., who comments exhaustively on the question of the letter's (partial) authenticity as well.

by unspecified *superbi* and *polluti*. While these are clearly open categories—one is reminded of the way the *Missa in reconciliatione ecclesiae* from Tuz was used in later times—there is no reason to assume that the Vikings would not have been subsumed under the respective rubrics.<sup>106</sup>

What is more, the *Missa in reconciliatione ecclesiae* contained in the Beauvais pontifical also suggests a connection with the ninth-century Viking incursions: Beauvais, situated at the confluence of the Thérain and Avelon rivers, was raided for the first time in 851 and it suffered several attacks over the course of the ninth century.<sup>107</sup> According to Niels Krogh Rasmussen, the manuscript of the Beauvais pontifical “comprises a rather large number of different hands”.<sup>108</sup> These different hands were examined by Bernhard Bischoff, who commented on them in a private letter, which is quoted at length by Krogh Rasmussen. The reconciliation mass is to be found at fol. 34<sup>v</sup> of the Leiden manuscript. According to Bernhard Bischoff, this particular section is written in a hand from Arras and should be dated to the third or fourth quarter of the ninth century.<sup>109</sup> The presence of a hand from Arras in a manuscript which was probably compiled at Beauvais might be ascribed to more than just a single scribe working far from home. In December 880 the monks of the monastery of Saint-Vaast in Arras fled to Beauvais in light of an imminent Viking attack and carried with them their relics as well as books and ornaments from the abbey church. According to the near-contemporary *Sermo de relatione corporis beati Vedasti*,<sup>110</sup> they were to remain at Beauvais until 893. Fols. 11 to 34 of the Leiden manuscript might well have been written by one of these monks who found shelter in Picardie—or they could have been part of the writings that were carried to Beauvais in 880. At both places, Arras and Beauvais, there would have been ample need for a reconciliation mass in the late ninth century, probably even more so at Arras, since the town—like Tours—remained unfortified until the thirteenth century.

106 Although the connection would seem to be fitting, it is necessary to keep in mind that what we have got (if this part of the letter is authentic at all) is just the answer, which was directed to the canons of Saint-Martin by Alphonse 111 of Asturias. Therefore it is impossible to decide whether—and in what words—this particular point was already raised within the original letter sent from Tours to Sisnando of Iria-Compostela.

107 *Chronicon Fontanellense* ad a. 851, ed. Pertz, 303; *Annales Bertiniani* ad. a. 851, ed. Waitz, 41; Ermentarius, *Praefatio* 2, ed. Poupardain, 61; Flodoard, *Historia Remensis ecclesiae* 111: 18, ed. Heller and Waitz, 509. Cf. Lifshitz, *The Norman Conquest of Pious Neustria*, 133f.; DeSelm, *Unwilling Pilgrimage*, 152f., 165, 199; Morden, *How much Damage*, 98, 108; Lot, “La grande invasion normande”, 721, cf. the obituary from Beauvais cited *ibid.*, 741f.

108 Krogh Rasmussen, *Les pontificaux*, 137.

109 A personal letter from Bischof is quoted by Krogh Rasmussen, *Les pontificaux*, 137.

110 *Sermo de relatione corporis beati Vedasti*, ed. Holder-Egger, 402.

#### 4 Conclusion

In early medieval sources the outcome of Viking attacks on towns, churches and monasteries was frequently expressed in terms of pollution and defilement. This does not contradict current tendencies to scrutinize the scale of Viking depredations, since defilement is by no means tantamount to overall destruction: The example of the Viking attack on Nantes in 843 shows how notions of pagan-caused pollution can be traced back for instance to bloodshed under certain conditions. If therefore later accounts, for instance the eleventh-century *Sermo de tumulatione sanctorum Quintini, Victorici, Cassiani*, referred to suchlike events by similar means, this should not be treated as a mere invention from the very outset. On the other hand, later medieval authors might well have equated defilement and destruction for a specific location, even if older accounts had not done so in the first place. Of course, also contemporary accounts referring to Viking or—in a more general sense—pagan defilement, should not be taken at face value. But these texts enable us to assess the importance and dissemination of the underlying notions. They also point to larger explanatory models: Viking-caused defilement affected the cultic purity of a sanctuary, but the defiling attacks themselves were nearly always believed to have been brought about by Christian sinfulness and thus ethical impurity.<sup>111</sup>

It was already stated in the beginning of this paper that notions of pollution and defilement were not an invention of the late eighth or ninth century. The same applies to the perception of real or alleged pagans as polluters and defilers. In an insular context Gildas' sixth-century sermon *De excidio Britanniae* referred to the fighting between pagan Saxons and Britons in mid or late fifth century with direct allusions to the pollution-laden psalms 73 and 78.<sup>112</sup> And

111 See for instance Coupland, "The Rod of God's Wrath", 535ff.; Foot, "Violence against Christians?", 8ff.

112 Gildas, *De Excidio et conquestu Britanniae* 24, ed. Mommsen, 39: *Confovebatur [...] de mari usque ad mare ignis orientali sacrilegorum manu exaggeratus [...]. In hoc ergo impetu Assyrio olim in Iudaeam comparando, completur quoque in nobis secundum historiam, quod propheta deplorans ait: 'Incenderunt igni sanctuarium tuum; in terra polluerunt tabernaculum nominis tui. Et iterum: 'Deus, venerunt gentes in hereditatem tuam; coinquinaverunt templum sanctum tuum', et cetera. On Gildas and his works see e.g. Gildas, *New Approaches*, ed. Lapidge and Dumville; Kerlouégan, *Le De Exidio*; O'Sullivan, *The De Excidio*; Wood, "The End of Roman Britain"; Plassmann, *Origo gentis*, 36ff.; compare as well Higham, *English Conquest* and id., "Saxon Conquests".*

even earlier, in 410, when the Visigoths sacked Rome, St. Jeome associated this with the defilement of Jerusalem in the days of the Maccabees.<sup>113</sup>

Especially the reconciliation mass contained in Tu2, the ninth-century sacramentary from the cathedral of Tours, and the account of the renewed consecration of Nantes cathedral after the Viking attack in 843 should have made it clear that attributions of pollution and defilement were by no means simple metaphors, at least if they are considered from a medieval point of view. In a defiled church, prayers were deemed ineffective and mass could not be celebrated, since the sanctuary's function as an intermediary between God and Man was disturbed. Hence, even if the fabric of that church building was still mostly intact, it was nonetheless of limited avail—at least until a reconciliation or reconsecration could be effected.<sup>114</sup>

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113 Jerome, *ep.* 127, ed. Hilberg, 154f.: *terribilis de occidente rumor adfertur obsideri Romam* [...]. *Capitur urbs, quae totum cepit orbem* [...]. *'Nocte Moab capta est, nocte cecidit murus eius. Deus, venerunt gentes in hereditatem tuam, polluerunt templum sanctum tuum* [...]. *'Quis cladem illius noctis, quis funera fando explicet aut posit lacrimis auquare dolorem?* For Hieronymus' reaction towards the fall of Rome see Zwierlein, "Der Fall Roms"; Feichtinger, "Glaube versus Aberglaube"; Heinzberger, "Heidnische und christliche Reaktionen"; Rebenich, "Christian Asceticism".

114 This article is partially based on the preliminary results of the author's Ph.D. thesis (Heidelberg 2015).

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# Washing Away the Dirt of the World of Desire—On Origins and Developments of Notions of Ritual Purity in Japanese Mountain Religions

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## 1 Introduction

When in the year 1090 the abdicated sovereign Shirakawa (1053–1129) resolved to go on a pilgrimage to Kumano, the austerities started even before he and his party set off. Entry into the Kumano shrine, situated in the mountainous area of the Kii peninsula in central Japan, was subject to restrictions: The abdicated sovereign had to adhere to strict rules even in preparation for the journey. The beginning of a pilgrimage to Kumano was marked by a prescribed rite called *Kumano shōjin*, which usually comprised a week-long period of retreat during which the pilgrim had to live secluded from the mundane. *Shōjin* (skt. *vīrya*), originally a Buddhist term, meant to exert oneself in order to achieve spiritual awakening. In Japan this came to be understood as restricting one's speech, physical activities and diet for a fixed amount of time. By doing so, the body should be cleansed and the adept should rid himself of impurities, a necessary prerequisite to entering a mountain sanctuary like Kumano.<sup>1</sup>

Several religious specialists were involved in ensuring that the rites were carried out correctly. The first and the final day of the seclusion period were fixed by a master of the calendrical arts, an *onmyō-ji*. During this preparatory period the abdicated emperor Shirakawa remained in a hall, called *Kumano shōjin ya*, hall for the Kumano austerities, which was separated by *shimenawa*, ropes designating sacred areas in *kami* cults, folding screens etc. During this phase of preparation he underwent purifications and washings which were administered by a *sendatsu*, a Shugendō mountain ascetic from the Kumano shrine, who acted as a guide and accompanied the emperor to Kumano. Also, each day both Buddhist services and services for *kami*, autochthonous deities, had to be held. Additional purification rites during this time of preparation had to be conducted by an *onmyō-ji* and these continued *en route* to Kumano under the guidance of the *sendatsu*. Immediately after concluding the *Kumano*

1 Suzuki, *Nyonin kinsei*, 204. Moerman, *Localizing Paradise*, 123.

*shōjin* period the abdicated emperor had to leave for Kumano regardless of circumstances.

Even this brief glance at the purification rites connected to the Kumano pilgrimage suggests that an examination of mountain worship in Japan promises to be fertile ground for the discussion of ritual purity. Upon a closer look the above sketch already presents elements from various religious traditions, which combined to make up the purification rituals connected with this pilgrimage. Rather than being a fixed set of rites from one distinct religious tradition, one encounters various elements from different sources, Japanese as well as continental ones. Even the term *Kumano shōjin* may be regarded as an example of this kind of combinatory logic. Kumano was the name of a place of worship for autochthonous *kami* that already appears in the legends of the *Nihongi* (Chronicles of Japan) from 720. While the place is connected to native Japanese mythology, the second element, *shōjin*, a translation of the sanskrit term *vīrya*, is obviously a term of Indian origin that entered Japan with Buddhism. In Buddhist doctrine *shōjin/vīrya* is one of the six *parāmitā*, the virtues which have to be perfected in order to achieve awakening.<sup>2</sup> Although this combination of two elements from originally different religious traditions may on the first sight appear to be accidental or contradictory, it points to peculiar developments in the religious field in Japan, which had a profound influence on the notions of ritual purity and the lives of the people affected by these.

Using the services of an *onmyō-ji*, a *yin-yang* master, to determine the auspicious dates for the pilgrimage points towards another practice which was common in official Japanese state ceremonies and rites from early on, probably as early as the 7th century. Already in China *yin-yang* elements had been incorporated into the practices of esoteric Buddhism and in Japan they partially influenced *kami* rites. Practices like these also became prominent elements in the rites of mountain ascetics in Japan.<sup>3</sup>

Of the four different traditions, whose elements are to be found in the *Kumano shōjin* rite, autochthonous *kami* cults, Buddhism, *Yin-yang* teachings and Shugendō mountain asceticism, two can be distinguished as major forces of influence. Their teachings contained notions of impurity connected to the human being which had to be removed by rites of purification.

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2 The six *parāmitā* consist of the following: 1. *dāna/fuse* almsgiving, 2. *śīla/jikai* keeping the precepts, 3. *kṣānti/ninniku* perseverance, 4. *vīrya/shōjin* assiduity, 5. *dhyāna/zenjō* meditative absorption, 6. *prajñā/chie* wisdom.

3 Teeuwen / Rambelli, "Introduction: combinatory religion and the *honji suijaku* paradigm in pre-modern Japan" 24.

## 2 Autochthonous and Continental Notions of Purity and Impurity

One of these traditions are *kami* cults, in which notions of pollution and purification feature prominently in ritual context. Terms like *tsumi* and *kegare* (pollution) and *harae* and *misogi* (purification) describe a dichotomy between pure and impure which had an influence on religious rites on a basic level. The term *kegare* originally meant cultic pollution caused by physical contact either with something dead or with blood. *Tsumi* on the other hand appears in the mid-seventh century as a legal concept. It was used to describe guilt that had to be atoned by some kind of compensation. To get rid of *kegare* one had to undergo a cultic cleansing called *misogi*, cleansing or purifying oneself with water, which was done by e.g. pouring water over one's body, standing under a waterfall, bathing in a stream or lake or immersing oneself in the sea. Seawater was considered to be especially efficacious, and if it was not available salt could serve as a substitute. The compensation for *tsumi* was called *harae* and was also a legal concept, the atonement of guilt by compensation. But *harae* also had a second meaning: it denoted a kind of exorcism, the driving out of something evil or demonic. From the 8th century onward an official state ceremony called *ōharae* was practiced once a year to eliminate all *tsumi* in the realm. Scholars like learned Buddhist monks or educated members of the court nobility soon regarded this as a means of getting rid of both *tsumi* and *kegare*. In this way *harae* assumed a new character in the 8th century and was gradually assimilated into the concept of *misogi*.<sup>4</sup>

Both terms and the concepts they designated merged completely during the Heian period (9th–12th century). Autochthonous cults, too, came under the influence of Buddhism and, as a consequence, the killing of living beings or the taking of meat was increasingly shunned. At the same time a concept of the possibility to get rid of guilt by wiping it away through certain ceremonies was created in Japan. Thus, for example, pollution could be transferred to paper-dolls or to sticks by breathing on them, by rubbing the doll or stick over one's body or by having a priest swing a *haraigushi*, a "cleansing staff", above one's head. By analogy, it seemed possible to get rid of *tsumi* as though it was a kind of material pollution. In this way *misogi* and *harae* merged completely and both terms came to imply the mechanical removal of pollution, regardless of the designation *tsumi* or *kegare*. The meaning of *tsumi* underwent changes, too. Originally designating guilt in the widest sense, it came to be understood

4 Naumann, *Einheimische Religion Japans* 1, 69, 169. Naumann, *Einheimische Religion Japans* 2, 215.

as sin, through the influence of the Buddhist concepts.<sup>5</sup> However, rather than being removed by repentance, it was regarded as something that could be washed away or cleansed like *kegare*, pollution.<sup>6</sup>

In Japan Buddhist influences on notions of ritual purity stem on the one hand from Mahāyāna thinking. A basic premise in Mahāyāna Buddhism postulates the originally pure nature of the mind. In Japanese Buddhist *hongaku* (original enlightenment) thinking this originally pure mind was assumed to exist in sentient beings and should be made to appear by adhering to Buddhist rules and practices, thereby achieving Buddhahood. The world of sentient beings, however, was understood to be one of the realms of the world of desire (jap. *yokkai*, skt. *kāmadhātu*). Beings living in this world were thought to be driven by desires, thereby staining the originally pure nature of the mind.

These ideas were one source of influence which informed Japanese notions of ritual purity from the Buddhist side. Another paradigm of major influence was the idea that ten realms or stages of beings (jap. *jukkai*) existed, in which rebirth could take place. In Japan this was initially a belief of the Tendai school. Sentient beings, it was thought, had to pass through these realms in order to achieve awakening. Beginning with the lowest one, the realm of hell, and culminating in the tenth stage, that of the Buddhas, the realm of human beings was situated right in the centre of this hierarchical order.<sup>7</sup> Rebirth in one of the realms should occur in relation to the quality of the deeds and actions of a sentient being during its lifetime. By acting morally, merits could be accumulated which would lead to rebirth in a higher realm. Immoral deeds however would be followed by rebirth in one of the lower realms. Actually in Japan the assumption that human beings were inclined to commit karmically unwholesome deeds (jap. *zaiaku*) was widely recognized from the 11th century onwards and the individual was obliged to achieve the pure mind of a Buddha by different means. In *Shugendō* the *jukkai* paradigm formed the basis of specific ascetic practices, which were meant to assist the adept in reaching this goal.

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5 Sin in a Buddhist sense may be understood as an involvement in passions or as being held in bondage to the world. Rather than being a kind of rebellion against the will of a god, as in the Christian sense of the term, it designates a kind of imperfection in the person of the Buddhist adept. Being cleansed from these sins may therefore serve as a means for the adept in his quest to achieve buddhahood. Bloom, "The Sense of Sin and Guilt", 144–145.

6 Naumann, *Einheimische Religion Japans* 1, 171. Naumann, *Einheimische Religion Japans* 2, 215–216.

7 Kasahara, *A History of Japanese Religion*, 326. The ten different realms comprised that of various Buddhist hells, of hungry ghosts, of beasts, of *asuras*, of humans, of heavenly beings, of *śrāvakas*, of pratyekabuddhas, of bodhisattvas and of Buddhas.

The paradigm of the ten realms was moreover combined with the Buddhist notion of the *five obstructions*, which over time resulted in Japan in misogynic attitudes towards women and had profound implications for the possibility of women to worship at mountain sanctuaries and a number of other sanctuaries. According to the Buddhist *jukkai* paradigm ten different ranks or positions of beings (skt. *sutana*) were distinguished in a hierarchical order in the circle of rebirth. When however the term *sutana* was translated into Chinese, the translation *obstruction* or *obstacle* instead of *rank* or *position* was used in most cases. This understanding was transmitted to Japan where in time it led to misogynic phenomena. Also in the Lotus-Sūtra, one of the most influential scriptures for Buddhism in East Asia, a lore is explicated on the basis of the doctrine of the five obstructions, which postulates the impossibility of women to reach one of the five types of superior beings. This implied that women were unable to reach Buddhahood, because according to the Lotus-Sūtra birth as a male was a necessary prerequisite to rising above the rank of a human being.<sup>8</sup>

Prior to the 8th century the concept of the five obstructions seems to have been insignificant in Japan. It gained wider influence from the 9th century onward, when it slowly spread from clerical circles into larger segments of society.<sup>9</sup> From the 11th century onwards these obstructions became generally accepted in Japan as characterising the condition of females and thereby promoted the belief that Buddhahood or birth in a Buddhist pure land was impossible for women.<sup>10</sup>

How contemporaries developed perspectives which would allow for the salvation of women despite these restricting paradigms will be discussed in the second half of this paper, because the interpretation and manipulation of notions of ritual purity and impurity are of central importance in these respects. However, before that the general development and amalgamation of the different concepts of purity shall be outlined in regard to rites of mountain pilgrimage and asceticism in Japan.

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8 Nagata, "Transitions in Attitudes towards Women" 279–280. Ōsumi, "Foreword" xxviii. Although the Lotus-Sūtra proceeds to indicate that it would be possible for women to be reborn as a man and achieve Buddhahood in an instant, this thought did not gain prominence in Japanese Buddhist circles before the late 12th century, when a specific discourse on the salvation of women took place. See below, this article.

9 Suzuki, *Nyonin kinsei*, 159.

10 Ōsumi "Foreword": xxvii.

### 3 The Emergence of Mountain Asceticism and the Development of a Shared Concept of Ritual Purity

Scriptural sources from the 8th century mention various individuals who went into the mountains to undertake austerities. These early ascetics went by different names but the most usual was *yamabushi* (mountain dweller). Their practices included fasting, seclusion, meditation, recitation of sutras and spells as well as sitting under waterfalls, to mention but a few.<sup>11</sup> All of this however bore the character of individual practice and was not undertaken in a structured organized form.

A major step in establishing mountains as places of religious practice and worship was the founding of Buddhist temple precincts in mountainous areas, beginning with the opening of Hieizan by the monk Saichō (767–820), founder of the Tendai school, and of Kōyasan by Kūkai (774–835), founder of the Shingon school in the early 9th century. When more monasteries were established in mountainous areas, these remote places gained wider acceptance as sites of worship and for ascetic practices. An organized structure of various local cults developed in the 11th century, centering around mountains that had often been regarded as sanctuaries since pre-Buddhist times.<sup>12</sup> Mountains increasingly came to be regarded as dwelling places of kami, Buddhas and bodhisattvas that were to be used by male ascetics for the practice of austerities.<sup>13</sup> These served two ends: on the one hand the ascetic attempted to achieve Buddhahood in his very body, on the other hand he hoped to attain thaumaturgical abilities which he was obliged to put to use for the benefit of the people.<sup>14</sup> The thaumaturgical aspects were understood to stem largely from *kami* cults and lesser known sources. Esoteric Buddhism of the Shingon and Tendai schools added elements like whole sequences of rites, efficacious spells and aspects of Buddhist ethics and cosmology. Clearly, e.g. the doctrine of *achieving Buddhahood in this very body* advocated in Shugendō is originally one of the key concepts of Shingon Buddhism. Protagonists of Shugendō however claimed that ascetic practices in the mountains would be the most effective path to achieving this goal.<sup>15</sup> One way to observe the process of amalgamation of elements from *kami* cults and Buddhism in mountain

11 Swanson, "Shugendo and the Yoshino-Kumano Pilgrimage" 55–84. 56.

12 Iwahara, "Sangaku bukkyō" 70–74.

13 Ushiyama, "Shohyō to shōkai: Suzuki Masataka cho *Nyonin kinsei*" 103a.

14 Averbuch, *The Gods Come Dancing*, 17.

15 Swanson, "Shugendo and the Yoshino-Kumano Pilgrimage" 56. Averbuch, *The Gods Come Dancing*, 19–20.

asceticism are different versions of the legends dealing with the deeds of En no Ozunu, the semi-legendary founder of Shugendō mountain asceticism.

The necessity to stipulate a founding figure for Shugendō arose in the 13th century, undoubtedly under Buddhist influence. An archetypical figure to serve this end was found in the semi-legendary En no Ozunu, who first appears in the chronicle *Shoku Nihongi* (Continued Chronicles of Japan, ca. 760–797). According to an entry dated 24th day of 5th month of 699 we learn of En, who was banned to Izu peninsula on charges of having misused his thaumaturgical powers. The entry reads:

Ozunu skillfully ruled demons and had them carry water and collect firewood. If they did not follow his orders, he instantly bound them by a spell.<sup>16</sup>

This early account already points to the thaumaturgical element, which a couple of centuries later was to become a factor of central importance for adepts of Shugendō. Water and firewood here are mentioned not in a cultic context but rather as elements crucial for an agrarian society that depended on water to grow plants and on wood for building material, for making fires etc. The account of the *Shoku Nihongi* presents En as a rather dubious character who misused his abilities and was consequently punished.

But this understanding changed decisively during the following century. When En appears in the *Nihon ryōiki*, compiled in the first half of the 9th century (822), he is presented as an exemplary thaumaturge.

With the clear sparkling water of a spring he washed away the dirt of the world of desire (*kāmadhātu*). He practiced the dharani rite of Kujakumyōō and acquired extraordinary and miraculous abilities.<sup>17</sup>

Obviously the interpretation of En no Ozunu presented here is strongly influenced by Buddhist thought. One may even claim that this short passage presents, albeit in rudimentary fashion, the sequence of a Buddhist cultic practice that may be divided into three steps. First the adept cleanses himself by an act of washing, a practice of *misogi*. *Misogi*, as has been pointed out, was originally an act of washing off impurities acquired through physical contact. Here it is presented in a metaphorical sense and combined with Buddhist concepts. The physical act of washing oneself with clear water leads to a cleansing in

16 *Shoku Nihongi*, 17.

17 *Nihon ryōiki*, 134.

the ethical or moral sense. According to the Buddhist concept of *kāmadhātu*, three major desires were to be distinguished, those for food (*shokuyoku*), lewdness (*inyoku*) and sleep (*suimin*). In the above quote these desires are regarded as “dirt”, defilements to be washed away by the physical act of *misogi*, of cleansing with water. In a Buddhist sense, purification of these desires would require the application of Buddhist mental discipline like practice and insight. Purification in the given example is achieved by first merging the Buddhist concept of desires with the autochthonous concept of *kegare*, of becoming stained through physical contact with something impure. Once these two concepts were merged, it became possible to deal with them either way. In other words, by no longer distinguishing between the different concepts, the remedy for removing impurities, regardless of origin, had become the same.

Purification by *misogi* appears as a requirement for the next step, the practice of a rite incorporating a dharani, a formula, directed to the Buddhist being Kujaku-myōō, actually a female one (*Mahāmāyūrī-vidyārājñī*), generally depicted as sitting on a peacock. The connection to En was obvious for the reader or the listener of the story, for it says that En, among other things, was seeking the ability to fly. According to the legend he succeeded and ultimately acquired thaumaturgical abilities.

This positive view of En no Ozunu also points to the reinterpretation and change which the image of mountains underwent through the influence of Buddhism and the establishment of mountain sanctuaries. In the Japanese chronicles *Kojiki* (712) and *Nihongi* (720) mountainous areas are still seen as a kind of mythical landscape connected with death. This realm served as a dwelling place for the dead, where the souls of the deceased went up to the mountain tops, becoming *kami* after a phase of purification. Kumano was actually one of the places mentioned as the “other world after death”.<sup>18</sup>

According to this ancient cosmology the world was animated by myriads of *kami* and spirits with whom the yamabushi could communicate. Ascetics like En no Ozunu, who entered the mountains in pre-Buddhist and early Buddhist times to practice austerity, wanted to achieve an exchange with the soul of the *kami*. This exchange was seen as a decisive factor because through it the ascetic would acquire the thaumaturgical abilities which he sought. The practice sites were on the mountain peaks, the dwelling places of the souls of the deceased and the *kami*, where it would be easiest to achieve this kind of union and exchange.<sup>19</sup>

18 Moerman *Localizing Paradise*, 124, 62. Suzuki, “Shugendō no kyōgi” 207 a–b.

19 Averbuch, *The Gods came Dancing*, 20. Suzuki “Shugendō no kyōgi” 204 a–b.



This idea of achieving union with the *kami* was reinterpreted due to Buddhist influence. In esoteric Buddhism the concept of *achieving Buddhahood in this very body* by reaching union with the Buddha Mahāvairocana was stressed and over the course of time these two concepts were combined. Not only did mountain peaks come to be regarded as places where the souls of the deceased acquired a pure state through prayer and austerities and took their place among the *kami* and buddhas. At the same time, the ascetic should be able to attain Buddhahood in the mountains by achieving union with Mahāvairocana.<sup>20</sup> In this way the mountains became *dōjō*, lit. “places where awakening was to be gained”, for the adepts of Shugendō.<sup>21</sup> One of these places was the Kumano area.

#### 4 Ritual Purity in the Kumano Pilgrimage

According to legend En no Ozunu is also assumed to have opened the mountainous area of the Kii peninsula, where the three shrines of Kumano (*Kumano sanzán*) are situated. These three sanctuaries had originally been independent shrines, but since the 11th century they had come to be regarded as a unity. Kumano gained much prominence through the *yamabushi*, the Shugendō mountain ascetics affiliated with it, and actually became one of their major sanctuaries. Pilgrimages by emperors to Kumano started in the 9th century and became *en vogue* for both rulers and court nobility from the 11th century onward. Often the royal pilgrims traveled with a large entourage of over 1,000 people. Even when the warrior class (*bushi*) came to power in the late 12th century, Kumano was able to retain its popularity and remained one of the most visited pilgrimage sites.<sup>22</sup>

During the 10th century Kumano came to be identified with Sukhāvātī, the pure land of Buddha Amitābha,<sup>23</sup> due to the *honji-suijaku* paradigm, meaning *original ground and local appearance*. This paradigm was a general characteristic of the relationship between *kami* cults and Buddhism, for starting as early as the 8th century, Buddhist clerics in Japan had developed a theory that allowed for the integration of local *kami* cults into Buddhist teachings. Autochthonous *kami* were accordingly claimed to be local appearances of Buddhist beings,

20 Suzuki, “Shugendō no kyōgi” 204–207.

21 Averbuch, *The Gods Come Dancing*, 46–47.

22 Naumann, *Einheimische Religion Japans 1*, 232–235.

23 Miyake, *Ōmine shugendō no kenkyū*, 270.

making for the steady spread and predominance of Buddhism by merging beings that had originally been quite different.

Analogies between Buddhist beings and *kami* can be found in increasing measure in documents from the 12th century onwards, but without much consistency regarding which Buddhist being was assumed to be *honji* for which *kami*. However, based on the *honji-suijaku* paradigm the *kami* worshipped at the main shrine (*hongo*) of Kumano was a Buddhist being in disguise. To quote a compendium of rites and doctrines from 1318, the *Keiran shūyōshū*:

The third prince, this is the avatar from Kumano, [he] actually is the trace [*suijaku*] of Tathāgata Amitābha.<sup>24</sup>

The term “prince” (*ōji*) is generally used in the *honji-suijaku* paradigm to designate a manifestation that is related to a certain being, which is its original ground.<sup>25</sup> In this sense the avatar from Kumano is regarded as a kind of descendant of the Buddha Amitābha. Due to the *honji-suijaku* paradigm the pilgrim, by praying to the *kami* of the Kumano shrine, actually worshipped its original ground, the lord of Sukhāvātī, Buddha Amitābha. As indicated above, Kumano and the surrounding mountains consequently came to be identified with Sukhāvātī, the pure land of bliss, and thus a Buddhist sacred landscape was created in the mountainous areas of the Kii peninsula.

Medieval sources clearly state this understanding of Kumano in regard to the shrine’s pilgrimage route. In the *Keiranshūyōshū* it is said that:

Because the shrine of [the avatar] Kumano gongen is the pure land in Japan, even one pilgrimage secures a future rebirth there [in Sukhāvātī]. Moreover, because the pilgrimage route symbolizes the pure land of nine levels, worship at the [hall] Shōjōden is the way to the highest grade of the highest rank of rebirth.<sup>26</sup>

Obviously, pilgrimage here is not to be regarded as equal to rebirth in the pure land itself. The concept of nine levels of rebirth in the pure land is taken from the sutra *Kan-muryōju-kyō* (skt. *Amitāyurdhyāna-Sūtra*), a central scripture of pure land teachings in Japan. The path of the pilgrim is therefore of metaphorical character on the whole for it allows him to experience a passage through

24 T. 76.2410.625a19–20, *Keiran shūyōshū*.

25 Mitsuhashi, “Hachiōji” 586d.

26 T. 76.2410.520b, *Keiran shūyōshū*.

the nine levels of rebirth which were thought to occur after death as a journey through a local Japanese landscape.<sup>27</sup>

Only a small number of documents on early *Shugendō* rites are known today. For the most part, these are rather like notes for remembering central points of a doctrine or rite. The specific details always had to be imparted orally, for in general no explanation regarding the nature of doctrines or the proper mode of performing a rite was written down.<sup>28</sup> A brief manual with instructions on how to conduct the preliminary rites of the *Kumano shōjin* is extant in the *Shozan engi* [Histories of Various Sanctuaries], which was compiled in the late 12th century. This manual, written in concise language and requiring specialized knowledge for interpretation, is an example of such documents. It was obviously intended to be explained by a *sendatsu*, and its prescriptions for the *shōjin* practice read as follows:

Item. First, when starting the *shōjin* [austerities], recite the syllable “[h]un” two rounds and venerate the four directions. After having recited the syllable “[h]un” refrain from empty talk. The bodhisattva is Vajrapāṇi. Next, having put on a pure garment, one should recite the mantrās of purifying the three activities, the *kōmyō*-mantra [enlightenment mantra] [and] the mantra of Ususama. [This] purifies the self and the other. After veneration of the four directions, venerate the direction of the honourable Mt. Kumano. It should be made mandatory to depart on the way on the 7th day of *shōjin*.<sup>29</sup>

When performing *kami* rites it was compulsory for the officiant to purify his body and practice a number of austerities before entering the sacred site to summon down a deity. The state of a pure body and mind was regarded as a prerequisite for achieving exchange with the *kami*. Actions of purification therefore were among the most important elements in *kami* rites and were unalterable for the success of the rite.<sup>30</sup> The *Kumano shōjin* sequence is an example of the importance of purifying actions in *Shugendō* rites, strongly characterized by Buddhist elements.

The syllable *un* in esoteric Buddhism is the seed-syllable of several wrathful beings, the kings of esoteric knowledge (jap. *myōō*, skt. *vidyārāja*). These beings in general are assumed to possess powers to ward off evil. By reciting

27 Moerman *Localizing Paradise*, 132.

28 Blacker, “Initiation” 101, 103.

29 *Shozan engi*, 104.

30 Grapard, “Flying Mountains” 197–198.

the syllable, the pilgrim attempted to harness these powers to drive away evil and impure influences and beings. He then had to venerate the four directions, in other words to inform all beings about his quest in order to elicit their approval and assistance. In all probability the remark about the bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi meant that the adept should identify with him, which is a common element in the sequence of an esoteric Buddhist rite. Vajrapāṇi, better known as Vajrasattva, appears in Buddhist lineages as a bodhisattva who received the esoteric teachings directly from the Buddha Mahāvairocana. Vajrapāṇi therefore is attributed with possessing all the qualities the pilgrim wishes to acquire.<sup>31</sup> After having put on clean clothes, a physical act of purification, he is advised to recite the mantrās of purifying the three activities, i.e. speech, physical and mental activities. The following recitation of the Enlightenment mantra was thought to bring about innumerable benefits and to destroy all sins and transgressions and also, when recited during the process of dying, to bring about rebirth in Sukhāvātī, the pure land of Buddha Amitābha.<sup>32</sup> Last in the sequence is the mantra of Uchchushma (jap. Ususama-myōō), one of the above-mentioned kings of esoteric knowledge. He is considered to possess the power to burn up all impurities, *kegare*. For this reason one of his secret names is “the unmovable one who collects all impurities”.<sup>33</sup> The explanation which follows shows that the recitation was thought to serve two purposes: the pilgrim undertook purification of himself and others simultaneously.

All in all, this short rite appears to be well constructed. The pilgrim’s practices first serve to purify his own three activities. He then identifies with a being that is assumed to possess knowledge about achieving Buddhahood. Next he recites a mantra which in medieval Japan gained great prominence as a remedy against almost everything regarded as evil, and finally he called on the most powerful being for assistance in his undertaking to cleanse himself and others of impurities. After that, the next step of the pilgrimage had to be taken.

Regardless of circumstances it was mandatory for the pilgrim and his party to leave for pilgrimage at the prescribed date and time at the end of the *Kumano shōjin*. As already mentioned, the pilgrim had to follow a fixed route, usually taking him from Yoshino to the pure land of Amitābha symbolized by the Kumano shrine. Already purified by the *Kumano shōjin* retreat, it was

31 Regarding the etymology and soteriological implications of the name Vajrapāṇi cf. Köck, *Das Juhō-yōjin-shū*, 100.

32 Sawa, *Mikkyō jiten*, 190b–191a, s.v. “Kōmyō-shingon”.

33 Sawa, *Mikkyō jiten*, 40, s.v. “Ususama-myōō”.

nevertheless necessary for the pilgrim to elevate his level of purity at several stations *en route* through rites of *misogi* and *harae*, thereby traveling a symbolic path through the various levels of existence. This path of purification was signified by a number of landmarks, the first being the Iwata river. The character of the river as a symbol of purification was well known in the Middle Ages, as the following quote from the medieval epos *Heike monogatari* confirms. In book 10 Taira Koremori (1158?–1184?), one of the central characters, sets out on a pilgrimage to Kumano. When he is resting by the banks of Iwata river, the reader is told:

Being consoled he remembered that it is said: “Those who cross that river even once will be cleansed of evil karma, defilements and beginningless bad deeds.”<sup>34</sup>

Here again the theme of *misogi* appears in connection with Buddhist elements, as the river’s waters are considered to wash away the bad karma of the pilgrim. According to another interpretation the pilgrim died an initiatory death by crossing this river.<sup>35</sup> A different explanation states that the avatar Kumano gongen had created a pure land for all living beings. By participating in the pilgrimage the pilgrim should create a karmic cord with the avatar. Just as the pilgrim was pulled across the river by a rope, so he would be pulled into the pure land.<sup>36</sup>

The passage through the mountains to Kumano which followed had the overall meaning of purifying the soul (*kokoro*) of the adept and allowing him to leave behind illusions, thereby leading to awakening. In the *yamabushi*’s understanding a self-centered mind was regarded as the most serious obstacle to achieving Buddhahood. The adept should purify and leave behind this self-centered mind; thereafter the original pure mind should emerge.<sup>37</sup> The *sendatsu*, the *yamabushi* guide leading the pilgrim, would explain the meaning of the austerities the adept had to practice. Being a guide also in the spiritual sense, he instructed the adept in fasting, purification and the presentation of offerings. Different kinds of austerities were undertaken by individual pilgrims who entered the mountains in the company of *yamabushi* and participated in the rites of *jukkai shugyō*, the passage through the ten

34 *Heike monogatari*, 277–278.

35 Moerman, *Localizing Paradise*, 132.

36 Moerman, *Localizing Paradise*, 125–127.

37 Suzuki, “Shugendō no kyōgi” 205b–210a *passim*. Naumann, *Einheimische Religion Japans* 2, 165.

realms of existence. These rites comprised activities considered to be characteristic for each realm of existence, such as, e.g. abstinence from grain at the second stage, that of the realm of the hungry ghosts or wrestling matches, corresponding to the realm of the warriors, the fourth stage. Its aim was to elevate the purity of the adept through the continuous passage through the realms of existence, culminating in symbolically achieving Buddhahood at the tenth and last stage.<sup>38</sup>

Before entering the precinct of the shrine the adept had to wade through the river Otonashigawa, whose water was regarded as having purifying and life-prolonging properties. As the *sendatsu* Jitsui, who led a party of pilgrims to Kumano in 1427, explained the lustrations and wading through the river would “wash away the dirt of bad karma and the passions”.<sup>39</sup> Cleansed once more, the pilgrim then passed the gate Hosshinmon (Gate of the awakening of the desire to realize awakening) that marked the outermost entrance to the grounds of the shrine. Hosshinmon was the first of four gates in the grounds of the *hongu* which symbolized the four stages of development of a Buddha. Passing through the Hosshinmon also marked an initiatory death of the pilgrim, and his entering of the shrine was understood as rebirth in Sukhāvati. The pilgrim exchanged his walking staff for a new one, a symbol that he had entered the pure land, wherein he had been transformed into a Buddha.<sup>40</sup> The pilgrimage and the austerities connected with it were thus seen in *Shugendō* as a means by which the Buddhist teaching of surpassing birth and death should be experienced in concrete ways and by which the adept should be able to achieve awakening.<sup>41</sup>

## 5 Ritual Purity and the Factor of Gender: Exclusion of Women from Mountain Sanctuaries

The example of the Kumano pilgrimage is rather unusual in regard to a major factor of ritual purity in Japanese mountain religions. Moerman quotes a female voice from the Heian period in this respect:

38 Blacker, “Initiation” 96–111 *passim*. Blacker’s article still offers the most concise and historically accurate analysis of the yamabushi’s *jukkai shugyō* practices in premodern times, being based completely on premodern documents, despite their scarcity.

39 Moerman, *Localizing Paradise*, 125–126.

40 Moerman, *Localizing Paradise*, 132–134.

41 Suzuki, “Shugendō no kyōgi” 209a.

To Kumano one may go even with an impure body, all other shrines must be informed of this state.<sup>42</sup>

One peculiar characteristic which has to be considered when reflecting on purity in regard to mountain worship is the gender factor. Kumano, as the quote shows, was an exception in that women were allowed to undertake the pilgrimage and to enter the shrine. There were other mountain sanctuaries which women were allowed to enter freely, such as, e.g. Mount Hiko in Kyūshū or places like Mount Fuji, which women were allowed to climb in certain years. Some places were partially open to women, as in the case of the three mountains in the province of Dewa, where women could enter Mount Haguro.<sup>43</sup> But all in all, these were exceptions. Starting as early as the late 6th century, with the establishment of temples like the Asuka-dera and the Buddhist order, a process began whereby women gradually came to be excluded from sanctuaries. Initially, this was done to maintain Buddhist monastic discipline, especially to guard against sexual misconduct on the part of clerics.<sup>44</sup> The *Yōrō code* from 718 defined quite clearly the legal situation regarding women entering and staying in Buddhist temples. According to the passage *Sōniryō* (*Regulations for Monks and Nuns*) monks were not allowed to enter and stay in convents of Buddhist nuns and vice versa. The only exception to be made was in case of illness. Also, monks were not allowed to house women for more than one night and nuns were prohibited from housing men for more than one night. From the beginning of regulated Buddhist clerical life in Japan women were excluded from monasteries and men were excluded from convents. Obviously, these regulations existed in the beginning side by side. It was by no means a Japanese peculiarity but rather the usual custom in East Asian Buddhism.<sup>45</sup> According to the *Sōniryō* there is no legal basis for the exclusion of women from sanctuaries on grounds of gender discrimination or arguments of impurity.

Therefore, the exclusion of women not only from the grounds of monasteries but in the case of mountain sanctuaries from larger areas on reasons of impurity must have other causes. On one hand, the influence of Confucian

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42 Moerman, *Localizing Paradise*, 196. Another example may be the Kumano pilgrimage of the female poet Izumi Shikibu (ca. 957–1041). According to legend on her arrival she received an oracle from the avatar of Kumano stating that her visit to the shrine would cause no pollution although she just had her menstrual period (Moerman, *Localizing Paradise*, 194–196).

43 Moerman, *Localizing Paradise*, 196.

44 Ushiyama, "Historical Development of Exclusion of Women" 49–50.

45 Ushiyama, "Nyonin kinsei" 78–79.

thought on Buddhism led, from the middle of the 8th century, to social and gender-related inequalities between men and women. The teaching of the *three obligations* of women was a basic element shared by Confucian and Buddhist teachings in this respect. Accordingly, women during their lifetime were subordinate first to their father in their natal home, later to their husband in marriage and in old age to their sons.<sup>46</sup> One effect of the dissemination of these ideas was the exclusion of nuns and women from religious ceremonies of national significance. Over time this also led to a rapid decline in the number of convents and nuns from the 10th century onwards. Until then convents and monasteries as well as nuns and monks had been more or less equal in status. This situation lasted until the second half of the Middle Ages when convents again came to be founded in greater numbers.<sup>47</sup> In the meantime gender-related inequality pervaded, decisively shaped by notions regarding purity and pollution that had been developed among the Japanese nobility from the 9th century onward.

In ancient *kami* cults it seems there had been a understanding of gender equality in regard to ritual practice, and in Buddhism an understanding of equality between monks and nuns had also existed throughout most of the 8th century.<sup>48</sup> The change towards gender inequality was a slow process, which started in the 8th and lasted throughout the 9th century. In regard to ritual notions, pollution through blood was obviously one element in this process of change. The fact that blood was regarded as polluting seems to have been a foreign influence, mediated to Japan through Chinese or Korean traditions. Originally in Japan all ritual pollution through birth or menstruation was regarded as only temporary and removeable. Menstruation actually was seen as a positive necessity for the development of new life.<sup>49</sup> Also birth in itself was not polluting but a positive event, the visit of a "birth deity" (*ubugami*).<sup>50</sup> In taboos which were connected to the birth process, the danger of the process itself is reflected and the taboos therefore were more concerned with death. Initially then, the events of birth and death in themselves were not regarded as polluting.<sup>51</sup>

However, in the late 7th and early 8th century formulations of taboos against meat-eating, illness, death etc. can be found in the *Jingi-ryō*, the *Regulations*

46 Nagata, "Transitions in Attitudes towards Women" 279.

47 Ushiyama, "Buddhist Convents" 132, 148 and Ushiyama, "Nyonin kinsei" 79.

48 Suzuki, *Nyonin kinsei*, 168. Groner, *Ryōgen*, 256.

49 Groner *Ryōgen*, 256

50 Suzuki, *Nyonin kinsei*, 193.

51 Suzuki, *Nyonin kinsei*, 197.



regarding kami rites. A century later the *Kōnin-shiki* (Statutes of the Kōnin period, 820) sets out taboos on pollution caused by childbirth, and the *Jōgan-shiki* (Statutes of the Jōgan period, 871) includes taboos against menstruating women.<sup>52</sup> Through the development of the *honji-suijaku* paradigm and the syncretism between *kami* cults and Buddhism, rules about pollution also came to be implemented in Buddhist temples, and notions of pollution and impurity were thereby spread all over the country.<sup>53</sup> But even in the 8th century temporary pollution was no reason to permanently deny Buddhist nuns attendance at Buddhist rites. This way of thinking only gained momentum over time, and from the 11th century onward it came to be a central argument for women's permanent inferiority.<sup>54</sup> In the late 7th and early 8th centuries the notions of a connection between women and pollution were only adopted by male members of the Buddhist clergy who had to live a celibate life. Based on notions of pollution by blood they began, in the late 8th and early 9th century, to demarcate restricted areas in order to exclude this kind of pollution. In all probability this was done to keep the temple grounds and buildings sacrosanct for Buddhist beings.<sup>55</sup>

However, even this view concerning a connection between blood pollution and women did not go unchallenged. According to Hōnen (1133–1212), who is regarded as the founder of the Buddhist “School of the Pure Land” (*Jōdo-shū*), the Buddhist scriptures contain neither a taboo against partaking in rites during menstruation nor a taboo surrounding childbirth. Therefore, Hōnen concluded, in these cases no pollution taboo could be deduced from Buddhist lore.<sup>56</sup>

Among the nobility notions of ritual purity and pollution spread increasingly after the 9th century and were disseminated from the capital to the provinces. One effect of this thinking was that the connection between women and *kegare*, pollution, impurity, which was acquired and possessed through contact with blood and death, became stronger. Women came to be increasingly regarded as permanently impure because of menstruation and contact with blood during childbirth. The idea of the possibility of contracting these impurities through contact became increasingly strong during the 9th–12th centuries. In combination with the already existing practice of excluding women from Buddhist sanctuaries, this fostered a mysogynic attitude. Women

52 Katsuura, “Women and Views of Pollution” 27.

53 Ushiyama, “Historical Development of Exclusion of Women” 54.

54 Groner, *Ryōnen*, 257.

55 Katsuura, “Women and Views of Pollution” 37, 30.

56 Suzuki, *Nyōnin kinsei*, 200.

of the aristocracy had by and large accepted and internalized these views in the 10th or early 11th century at the latest.<sup>57</sup>

This ban on women entering certain temples and mountain sanctuaries like Mount Hiei or Mount Kōya was substantiated by the argument of the impure and polluting state of women, which, from the 11th century, came to be regarded as inherent. Women were accordingly seen as sources of pollution and obstacles to the Buddhist practice of men.<sup>58</sup> This line of argumentation was strengthened further by the fact that on places like Mount Kōya and Mount Hiei official rites for the welfare and protection of the state were practiced. The monks responsible for carrying out these rites had to live a celibate life to uphold their state of purity, thereby enhancing the efficacy of the rites.<sup>59</sup>

The importance that was given to this point actually reflects in the Buddhist monks' way of living at the time: From the 10/11th century onwards an increasing number of temples are to be found where monks raised families of their own. Sexual activity was a matter of course for these clerics, and this was a blatant violation of the monastic vows, obviously. In a way the establishment of places where there was strict adherence to the vows was also a reaction to this development. Seen against this background, concern about failure to adhere to monastic discipline, which would seriously affect the state itself, was a major reason for excluding women from sanctuaries. Buddhist and *Shugendō* mountain sanctuaries were among the foremost of these, and they were particularly strict in enforcing the ban on women.<sup>60</sup>

Simultaneous with this development of closing mountain sanctuaries to members of the laity, and especially to women, there emerged the notion of mountains and temples being Buddhist Pure Lands in the here and now. The

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57 Ushiyama, "Nyonin kinsei" 75–76, 78. Ushiyama, "Historical Development of Exclusion of Women" 40. Katsuura, "Women and Views of Pollution" 37. It is however important to stress, as Ushiyama in his article "Historical Development of Exclusion of Women" has pointed out, that the terms *nyonin kekkai* ([precinct] restricted for women) and *nyonin kinzei* (also *kinsei*, [(precinct) banned for women]) only appeared in documents since the late medieval and early premodern ages. Prior to that only *kekkai* (restriction) and *kinzei* (ban) are to be found. *Nyonin kekkai* and *nyonin kinzei* as used in current scholarly discourse are terms that denote a concept which has been projected backwards into history (cf. Ushiyama "Historical Development of Exclusion of Women" 46–47). Strictly speaking, the historical appearance of the terms and the current scholarly usage seem to indicate two separate phenomena. The author of this article therefore follows Ushiyama's example and puts the terms in quotation marks, whenever the scholarly concept is meant.

58 Nishiguchi, "Bones" 422–423.

59 Groner, *Ryōgen*, 263.

60 Ushiyama, "Nyonin kinsei' sairon" 7b, 3b.

founder of a temple or mountain sanctuary designated a certain sacred space, which marked an area as pure in the spiritual sense.<sup>61</sup> In the case of Mount Kōya, e.g. a precinct of seven *ri* existed around the mountain, which was forbidden to women; it was called *shichiri kekkai*, “restricted precinct of seven *ri*”.<sup>62</sup> Initially the term *shichiri kekkai* meant a rite of purification which was practiced to exclude all evil influences from an area of seven *ri* around Mount Kōya. However, from the 11th century the understanding of the term *kekkai* changed and its usage became synonymous with “*nyonin kekkai*”, a “precinct, which was restricted for women”.<sup>63</sup>

This understanding became more pronounced through the establishment of *Shugendō* from the 11th century onward. As already mentioned, for adherents of *Shugendō* mountains were pure realms and their practice grounds. Mountain ascetics reinforced the idea that mountains were places of purity and dwelling places of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. But because these places were primarily regarded as practice grounds for male ascetics, prohibitions against women entering them even increased in number as the notion of female impurity became more widespread.<sup>64</sup> One characteristic of the concept of pollution was that pollution could also be brought to pure sites by male adepts who, e.g. had broken their vows. Such behaviour was considered to be a form of pollution that adhered to the adept and could, e.g. be caused by the adept coming into contact with an impure woman.<sup>65</sup>

To protect male adepts and pilgrims from this danger of pollution severe restrictions had to be observed in regard to entering certain mountain sanctuaries. The example of the Kumano pilgrimage already showed that strict purification rites had to be performed before and during the pilgrimage. The temple Kinbusen-ji on Mount Yoshino was another place banned to women, as a scripture of 954 prescribes. But the same scripture also puts forward rules that men were obliged to observe before entering the temple. According to these, men had to observe strict abstinence from alcohol, meat and sexual activity during a period of three months before entering Kinbusen-ji.<sup>66</sup> So men, too, though

61 Nishiguchi, “Bones” 435.

62 According to the Taihō code (701/2) and the Yōrō code (718), one *ri* was equivalent to 540 meters. However, a document from 708 gives a length of approximately 650 meters. (Mizuno, “*ri*” 514–515). Accordingly, seven *ri* may have been a distance of about four kilometers.

63 Matisoff, “Barred from Paradise?” 495, endnote 3.

64 Ushiyama, “Shohyō to shōkai: Suzuki Masataka cho *Nyonin kinsei*” 103a.

65 Katsuura, “Women and Views of Pollution” 32.

66 Ushiyama, “*Nyonin kinsei*” 76.

not regarded as inherently polluting, had to adhere to prescribed rules to avoid polluting the sanctuary. In other words, men had to cleanse themselves from impurities during three months of abstinence as a prerequisite to entering the temple.

All these restrictions were meant to exclude pollution from sacred sites as well as to make adepts uphold the precepts. In this way the purity of the site as a place for the descent of *kami* or Buddhist beings and simultaneously the pure conduct of the male adepts were to be secured. A state of purity was a necessary prerequisite for active participation in rites of any kind, even for entry into a sacred site or into specific areas marked as taboo.<sup>67</sup> Also the places for ritual austerities had to be kept clean and unpolluted, regardless of whether they were associated with *kami* cults or with Buddhism, because it was assumed that deities abhorred pollution and would refrain from visiting polluted places. Impurities therefore had to be kept out of these sites and adepts should be clean in body and mind.<sup>68</sup> Although *kami* cults originally only required the temporary exclusion of women from sacred sites, in actual practice it proved easier to exclude them completely.<sup>69</sup>

The spread of “*nyonin kekkaï*” (exclusion of women) prohibitions coincided with the beginning of pilgrimages to mountain sanctuaries by members of the Japanese nobility as well as the development and establishment of ascetic practices in nature and of *Shugendō* itself.<sup>70</sup> The “natural” environment of the mountains came to be regarded generally as a space of purity in contrast to villages and towns which were seen as being corrupt, a notion that was disseminated by the ruling nobility and by clerics. This strengthening of the idea of mountains as pure places and as sanctuaries led to an increase in the number of regulations and prohibitions on women, which spread from the 11th to the 12th century and eventually became fixed. Along with the notion of women being intrinsically and permanently impure, the understanding gained ground that the pure character of mountains had to be protected from pollution in order to make it easier for the male ascetic to make contact with Buddhas and *kami* in the ritual space. All in all, it was *Shugendō* which advocated and stressed these views, as the mountains were the places in which adherents primarily practiced.<sup>71</sup>

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67 Naumann, *Einheimische Religion Japans* 2, 215.

68 Katsuura, “Women and Views of Pollution” 28.

69 Katsuura, “Women and Views of Pollution” 33.

70 Suzuki, *Nyonin kinsei*, 204, 136.

71 Suzuki, *Nyonin kinsei*, 131–133, 143.

As a result, women were to a large extent prohibited from entering mountain sanctuaries and certain temples on arguments of purity from the 11th century onwards at the latest. Because impurity was deemed to be an inherent characteristic of women they were not allowed to enter even after the menopause or when not menstruating.<sup>72</sup> However, although they were prohibited from these places during their lifetime, there were astonishing developments in regard to the cult of relics.

## 6 Relic Worship, Ritual Purity and the Discourse on the Salvation of Women

Mountains like Kōya-san and Hiei-zan were places which housed large graveyards. At Hiei-zan the remains of the deceased came to be buried from the middle of the 11th century onwards. In the case of Mount Kōya the area around the temple Oku-no-in, the burial place of Kūkai, the founder of the Shingon school, became a burial ground after the second half of the 12th century. This development coincided with the custom of the nobility to erect *bodaisho*, family temples at mountain sanctuaries, where monks had to practice rites for the salvation of deceased family members.<sup>73</sup> At Kōya-san the impure remains of the dead were buried in the pure earth directly adjacent to the mausoleum from the early 13th century onward. Kūkai, it was assumed, had undertaken a vow to perform rites on a daily basis for the relics of those who were buried on Mount Kōya. The dead should thereby become purified and would enter Kūkai's earthly pure land, which was situated on Mount Kōya.<sup>74</sup>

The custom of burying the remains of women and men, especially members of the laity, at holy places like Mount Kōya demonstrates a change in the meaning of pure and impure in regard to bones and ashes. Although corpses in general were regarded as sources of pollution, the idea emerged during the Heian period that physical remains became purified after a certain time of mourning. Bones in general were not regarded as polluting when they no longer contained liquid or when they had become white. After a corpse had been cremated there was a danger of pollution for seven days if pieces of bones remained. If parts of the backbone remained joined this phase lasted for 30 days. When it had passed, bones and ashes were considered to be pure,

72 Groner, *Ryōgen*, 264.

73 Ruppert, *Jewel in the Ashes*, 221.

74 Nishiguchi, "Bones" 428–429.

and therefore the danger of contaminating or polluting mountain sanctuaries ceased to exist.<sup>75</sup>

This thinking had a profound influence on the exclusion of women from mountain sanctuaries. Although they were deemed to be intrinsically polluted and therefore denied access to these places, when they had died and the prescribed period of mourning had passed, their ashes were allowed to be buried on the mountains. But this is not all, as the case of the death of Fujiwara no Tadamasā's mother illustrates. Tadamasā had the ashes of his mother placed in a statue representing the Buddha Mahāvairocana, the principal Buddha in esoteric Buddhism. On Kōya-san he had a temple build in memory of his mother, the temple Henjō-in. When the temple was completed in 1158, he had the statue of Mahāvairocana, which contained the ashes of his mother, erected as principal image of the Henjō-in.<sup>76</sup>

This is just one example where the relics of a woman were enshrined in temples. It illustrates the point that ashes and relics were treated very differently from the body of a living woman. Whereas women were regarded as sources of pollution and banned from most mountain sanctuaries during life, after the physical form had been lost the situation changed completely. No longer were they obstacles to the religious practise of men; in the context of relic worship they could even become the focal point. In the above case of Tadamasā's mother, her ashes and relics came to be revered in conjunction with the Buddha Mahāvairocana, posing no threat of pollution whatsoever.

Relics of women were clearly positioned beyond the borders of gender and the dialectic of pure and impure. Ashes and relics were no longer regarded as being female. Therefore, the presence of women in mountain sanctuaries was no longer an issue. Or, as it was argued in the case of the relics of the deceased Kōkamon-in, which were buried on Mount Hiei in 1181, by having died and being cremated she was no longer a woman. Kujō Kanezane (1149–1207), one of the leading politicians of the time, had the temple Daijō-in built as a *bodaisho* for Kōkamon-in on Mount Hiei. In an address composed for a rite of offerings in 1194 he strongly refers to the paradigm of transformation from female to male, as put forward in the Lotus-Sūtra. Through the accumulation of merit during her lifetime she would have attained a stage of perfection like the daughter of the dragon king described in the Lotus-Sūtra and would have been transformed into a man. Therefore, Kanezane pleads, she should now be born in the western paradise, the Pure Land of Amitābha.

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75 Nishiguchi, "Bones" 433.

76 Nishiguchi, "Bones" 423.

Seen in this light the burial of relics on Mount Hiei did not pose any problem at all.<sup>77</sup>

Obviously, with the loss of the physical form the characteristics that applied to it also vanished. The ashes and relics were no longer regarded in terms of gender. The former state of being a woman with all the implications regarding notions of purity and impurity no longer applied. Accordingly, the relics of women no longer posed any danger of pollution. What was denied to women during their lifetime, entry into mountain sanctuaries or partaking in certain rites, lost its relevance. Where the physical body had been impure, the relics were pure and could even become the principal objects of worship in rites of relic cults.

But even the notion that women were permanent sources of pollution, thereby rendering rituals ineffective or polluting holy places was—at least in part—subject to change during the Middle Ages. As already mentioned, Hōnen pointed out that the Buddhist scriptures contained no arguments for the exclusion of women from rituals on grounds of menstruation and childbirth, the main types of blood pollution. Hōnen advocated his views in the early medieval age and was one of several Buddhist protagonists who, from the 13th century onwards, started to present notions in favor of the salvation of women. Dōgen (1200–1253), the founder of the Sōtō school of Zen Buddhism, argued, based on his observations in Chinese monasteries, that men and women did not differ in regard to listening to the Buddhist teachings and in aspiring to enlightenment. The Japanese practice of excluding women from mountain sanctuaries he called risible.<sup>78</sup>

Buddhist convents, which had virtually vanished from the 9th century onwards, started to reappear in the 12th century. This development was instigated by monks like Eizon (1201–1290) of the Shingon-ritsu school, who founded over 20 convents all over Japan. He allowed women to take monastic vows and even administered the highest initiations to buddhist nuns. Notions of pollution or purity were not a hindrance in his view. All these activities took place in the context of a discourse on the salvation of women (*nyonin kyūsai*). The notion of the inherent impurity of women was the main argument that had led in the Heian period to the conviction that women were unable to reach the higher states of rebirth, including that of a Buddha. Eizon's claim that by practicing austerities women could overcome this restriction, was one of several

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77 Nishiguchi, "Bones" 425. Ruppert, *Jewel in the Ashes*, 221–222.

78 Harada, "Nuns and Convents" 63.

arguments put forward in favor of a view that propagated the achievement of Buddhahood to be possible even for women.<sup>79</sup>

Of the convents founded in the 13th century, several are known to have risen to the official status of prayer temples for national welfare and were independent monasteries. The nuns living in these temples had to perform rites on behalf of the Kamakura bakufu (government of the warrior nobility). From the second half of the Kamakura period (1185–1333) several convents of the Ritsu school are known to have performed rites for the welfare of the nation. During the Muromachi period (1336–1573) a few of these convents became officially designated temples of the Muromachi bakufu and the imperial house. Several imperial decrees from the 14th century are extant which required certain convents to pray for the welfare of the imperial house.<sup>80</sup> These examples clearly show that the obsession with impurity as a characteristic of the female state ceased at least in certain Buddhist circles when the court nobility was no longer the principal defining source of culture in the 13th century. Ritual impurity was no longer associated with the female gender as such. In this respect the Middle Ages show a change in attitude: Women as Buddhist nuns, who were formerly banned from rites and sanctuaries, were now considered to be ritual specialists, fit to practice rites for the welfare of the nation, one of the most important topics of the premodern Japanese state.

## 7 Concluding Remarks

Ritual purity in *Shugendō* mountain religion and Japanese religions in general was a complex phenomenon and subject to change due to numerous influences.

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79 Matsuo, *Kamakura shinbukkyō no tanjō*, 134–139. Another phenomenon to be mentioned in this context are the proselytizing activities of the Kumano nuns (*Kumano bikuni*) in the late medieval and early premodern times. Their preaching centered around the *Bowl of Blood Sūtra* (*Ketsubon-kyō*) that originated in China and became widely known in Japan from the 15th century onwards. According to the work, women were destined to be reborn in a Buddhist hell due to polluting the world e.g. by menstrual blood. Kumano nuns preached that salvation of women from this hell was nevertheless possible because of the intervention of the bodhisattva Nyoirin Kannon (cf. Ruch, “Woman to Woman” 566–577; Moerman, *Localizing Paradise*, 221–231).

80 Ushiyama, “Buddhist Convents” 142–143. A concise overview of the development of Buddhist convents from the ancient to the premodern period (6th–17th century) can be found in Harada *Nuns and Convents in Medieval Japan*. Besides the above mentioned Ritsu school, convents were affiliated mainly with the Zen and Jōdo schools. The most comprehensive case study in a western language until now is Meeks, *Hokkeji*.



The major sources for notions of ritual purity were *kami* cults and Buddhism. These elements became combined in a process which started in the 8th and lasted through the 9th century due to general combinatory trends in the course of development of the syncretic *honji suijaku* paradigm. Notions from Buddhist doctrine, which were originally understood as moral stains resulting from the Buddhist paradigm of the *world of desire*, were—due to autochthonous Japanese influences—regarded as purifiable by washings or ablutions like some sort of material stain. On the other hand the understanding of autochthonous notions of pollution by blood and death, which was formerly seen as temporal, became permanent. These developments can be clearly seen in the religious system of *Shugendō*. Continuity of notions of purity and purification regarding moral and personal sins could be found in written sources from the 9th to the 15th century relating, e.g. to the Kumano pilgrimage.

The combination of Buddhist and autochthonous elements and their influence on gender was a gradual process. The Buddhist gender separation was due to the rules of discipline of the Buddhist order, which were also laid down in the legal codes from the early 8th century. When the order of Buddhist nuns assumed a marginal position in the 9th century, and simultaneously due to the combinatory logic of the *honji-suijaku* paradigm, notions of purity from various traditions merged, these new concepts of ritual purity became a social reality in the Heian period. Especially for women this resulted in restrictions. Due to the idea of women being inherently polluted, the ability of women to achieve Buddhahood was negated and women were excluded from mountain sanctuaries on grounds of pollution and ritual purity. Whereas originally monks and nuns had been prohibited from entering temples of the opposite gender based on monastic rules, arguments of pollution were now used increasingly to legitimize this ban. Especially in *Shugendō* this development could be observed. The examples of Kumano and several other mountain sanctuaries which women could enter freely were exceptions to the rule.

In the late Heian period, however, we find various examples for the start of a discourse on the possibility of women achieving Buddhahood. In this discourse notions of female pollution were dealt with in such a way as to find new interpretations that would allow women to acquire Buddhahood despite the prevailing notions of ritual pollution and purity. The distinction between the genders was based on the physical level. This distinction ceased to exist after death and cremation of the body. Ashes were regarded as being pure and could even be enshrined in the principal images of worship in mountain sanctuaries such as Mount Kōya or Mount Hiei.

Various arguments were put forward on how achievement of Buddhahood should be possible despite women's inherent state of impurity. Buddhahood for

women should be achievable after death by the merits they had accumulated during their lifetime. Other early 13th century clerics argued that there should be no gender distinction in regard to achieving Buddhahood. Adherence to and practice of the Buddhist teachings should be the only element necessary for either gender to be able to achieve Buddhahood. This discourse in the 12th and 13th century was one of the reasons for the revival of the Buddhist order of nuns in the middle ages, and especially in the Ritsu, Zen and Jōdo schools convents were founded anew. The former notions of ritual purity which denied women access to mountain sanctuaries and attendance at rituals, now seemed to be of minor relevance, as a number of convents are known to have been officially ordered to perform rites for the protection and welfare of the state. However, the exclusion of women from several mountain sanctuaries continued, and especially in *Shugendō* the arguments of ritual pollution of women were still used to justify this.

Some general notions of purity, which were not gender-specific, continued throughout the Middle Ages, as the example of the Kumano pilgrimage showed. Obviously the notions of ritual purity and pollution in regard to gender had reached their peak in the Heian period. Their decline was also attributable to social change, namely to the rise of the warrior class in the late 12th century. Continuity of the notions of ritual purity can be observed in the exclusion of women from mountain sanctuaries, whereas in connection with the discourse on the salvation of women these notions were at times considered rather marginal.

Following the general establishment of notions of ritual purity under the influence of the *honji suijaku* paradigm, changes could be observed especially in views regarding the ritual purity of women and the topic of achieving Buddhahood. Different views in this regard can be found throughout the Middle Ages and promise to be a fruitful field of study in terms of both developments in religious doctrine and social and political changes, which as factors of influence should on no account be neglected.

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# Patterns of Intensification of the Laws on Ritual Purity in Medieval Jewish Ashkenaz

*Hanna Liss*

## 1 Introduction

Ritual purity is an important, if not *the* most important issue in Jewish lore and law. The concept of ritual purity is, in particular, linked to the notion of holiness, especially to the question of how the idea of the Holy faced with, or even surrounded by, the Common can be upheld. One of the most significant features linked to the concept of the ‘Holy Nation’ is the unconditional and categorical halakhic (legal) requirement to avoid any defilement of the individual by the different types of ritual impurity. In the section on unclean animals (Lev. 11), the Bible expresses a ban on eating these animals, but more importantly gives details on the prohibition of *touching* certain animals or carcasses, and on purification rites for those persons and objects that come into contact with unclean or dead animals. The subsequent sections (Lev. 12–15) deal with impurity after childbirth and a variety of skin diseases and skin eruptions (*zāra’at*), probably certain types of scale disease,<sup>1</sup> and their ritual purification, followed by a detailed description of ritual impurity caused by genital discharges (pathological as well as non-pathological) and their ritual purification. Finally, the Book of Numbers describes a purification ritual to be carried out after contamination through contact with a human corpse.<sup>2</sup>

With regard to the impurity caused by genital discharges it is important to note that no other kinds of bodily discharges like sweat, tears, spittle, urine, blood from wounds, nosebleeds, etc. are dealt with at all: Within the system of ritual purity all these seem to be neutral. The section on bodily discharges focuses only on those related to the *male and female reproductive organs*. Four categories of genital discharges are already introduced in the Bible in Lev. 15:1. The *niddah* (the menstruant), 2. the *zava* (a woman who oozes), 3. the *ba’al*

1 Compare Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 774–776 and 816–826; for the view of *zāra’at* as a latent and persistent disease compare Kiuchi, “Skin Disease”, 505–514.

2 Compare Liss, “Ritual Purity”, 329–335.

*qeri* (a man experiencing seminal emission), and 4. the *zav* (a man who oozes, i.e. a man suffering from gonorrhoea).

Those who are not familiar with Jewish tradition might get the impression that we are dealing with texts portraying “a culture that is besotted with defilement” (Mary Douglas).<sup>3</sup> This is by no means the case. In the following, we shall first (and in due brevity) present the concept of ritual purity in the Hebrew Bible and the later and at times very sophisticated Rabbinic discussions in Mishnah and Talmud. The main part of this paper will focus on the Jewish Middle Ages, in particular on the Jewish communities in Germany (in the Rhineland, i.e., Speyer, Mayence, and Worms).

The laws on ritual purity (Lev. 11–15) are embedded in the narrative of Israel’s stay at Mount Sinai that describes the manufacture and erection of the sanctuary (the ‘Tabernacle’) in the desert, as an important means for God to be able to dwell among the Israelites. The Biblical text relates the concept of ritual purity to boundaries and spatial areas: holy vs. common; pure vs. impure (‘clean vs. unclean’; *tāhōr* and *tāmē* in Hebrew).

The sections on ritual purity describe in detail the different spatial areas (holy, clean, impure, etc.), the different persons (anointed priests, ordinary priests, laymen) and objects, and one can see that the focal point is the distinction between the different areas (inside/outside). Behind this spatial concept lies the idea that the meeting between Israel and her God can take place only by means of priestly mediation in the cult, its spatial area being the tabernacle and Israel’s camp around it. The sanctuary requires the status of purity. Note that impurity is contagious and could be contracted by touching a person or object. The same holds true for the Holy. In transferring their state, the Holy and the impure are dynamic, whereas the pure is static. This means that every area—the Holy as well as the impure—, both representing a certain space, tend to extend its spatial dimension, which is not allowed: both areas have to be kept separate, blocked by the neutral contact point in order to prevent an encounter which would necessarily lead to a clash. I have to explain this here, because later on we will see that in the 11th and 12th centuries the leading halakhic authorities in some cases declared menstruants to be defiling and dangerous and discussed whether a women may or may not enter a synagogue.

Both conditions, purity and impurity, are related *only to the sanctuary* and *do not describe a physical condition as such*, nor do they describe an illness or contagion in the regular sense of the word or in respect to moral behaviour (we will see that this would become an important aspect in the Middle Ages). It is the reason why later, in the Mishnah (third century C.E.), the rabbis not only

3 Douglas, “Poetic Structure of Leviticus”, 239.

declared that the laws on *zāra'at*/scale disease do not apply to non-Jews, but also that a (Jewish) bridegroom during the wedding week, as well as people gathered for the pilgrim festivals, might not undergo the procedure of priestly examination. It is the sanctuary that requires the status of purity.<sup>4</sup>

As to the most private issues, such as the emission of semen or menstrual bleeding, that are not under any control except that of the impure person him or herself, the *sanctuary intrudes into man's actual life*, since defilement causing impurity gains its relevance only with reference to the sacred space.

Rabbinic exegesis developed a sophisticated discourse on the laws on ritual purity, however, which concentrated almost exclusively on the material aspects of these laws. One order of the mishnah is dedicated solely to the issue of *tohar*. Concerning e.g., the laws on menstrual purity (called status of *niddah*), the rabbis fixed the rule of sexual separation of a woman from her spouse in such a way that it commenced 12 hours before the expected bleeding, and, as a corollary, they described a painstaking system of self-examination by the woman, such as checking vaginally with a cloth. The times she must check herself are morning and sunset, and when she goes to have intercourse with her husband. Priestly women [must check themselves] when they eat *terumah* [i.e., the priest's portion].<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, the rabbis discussed in great detail the clarification of the different colors of impure uterine blood, as well as even the size of the bloodstain, which shows that menstrual impurity was not considered shameful or embarrassing, compare mNid 2:6.7:

Five (types of blood/-colors) are impure in a woman: the red, the black, the (color of) saffron, the (color of) muddy water, and the (color of) diluted wine. The school of Shammai says: also the (color of) the water of fenugreek, and the (color of) the juice of roasted meat. The school of Hillel declares (the latter) to be pure. With regard to the yellow (color) Aqavia ben Mahalalel declares it to be impure, and the Sages declare it to be pure. Which one is the red (color)? Like a blood of a wound (...)

In the Babylonian Talmud we find the bizarre story of the rabbi who identified 60 kinds of blood by smelling it (compare bNid 20b).<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, the rabbis stipulated a time period of another seven days following the overt cessation of menstrual bleeding, in which the woman had to

4 See Liss, "Ritual Purity", 343/347.

5 See Meacham, "Abbreviated History", 28–32.

6 Compare Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity*, 103–127; idem, "Yalta's Ruse", 64.



examine herself to make sure that no further menstrual flow would occur. This time-period is called ‘the 7 clean days’ or ‘the days of whitening’, since women are already free of blood, and thereby ‘whitened’.<sup>7</sup> A woman’s *niddah* status, therefore, endures during the time-period from the beginning of menstruation until the end of the ‘clean days’, i.e. approx. 12–13 days, depending on how long the menstrual flow lasted. During the whole period in which a woman is considered a *niddah*, any physical contact or intimacy between her and her husband is strictly prohibited, and women were suspended from a number of domestic chores, e.g. serving their husbands, cooking, pouring water from any vessel etc. According to Rabbinic Law (and contrary to the Biblical prescription), a woman has to immerse herself in the ritual bath (miqweh; hebr. *miqvah*),<sup>8</sup> and it is only after a woman’s immersion in the miqweh that her *niddah* status is abrogated.

To sum up: What we find in early Rabbinic literature from the second century to the period between the sixth and eighth centuries is a creative reconstruction of the temple system without a temple. The Jewish home had become *the* replacement of the temple, making the house and the household not a sacred, but at least a ritual space. The ‘holy’ way of life and the priestly ideal, i.e. preserving the notion of a holy people, was tightly bound to women and their responsibility. The laws concerning the menstruant, as well as the regulations for the *zav*, had thus become an ideological, more than a physical, concept, a means to shape the identity of a group ‘under the divine decree’, or, as Leslie Cook once stated: “Ritual in the Bible and Mishnah is directed toward reconstructing the religious and social environment in the aftermath of catastrophe, and women are incorporated as equal partners in that endeavor.”<sup>9</sup>

However, since the dichotomy clean/unclean (pure/impure) is restricted to the physical-technical aspect, rabbinic discourse remains in the *profane area* of daily life, meaning that in the Hebrew Bible as well as in the rabbinic period the laws on ritual purity have not yet gained any further meaning beyond their strict application in daily life.

7 This expression had led already in the early Middle Ages to the custom of wearing at least one white garment.

8 A ritually approved miqweh consists of at least 268.5 liters (= 40 Se’a in rabbinic measurements) of natural water (spring water or rainwater). Rabbinic halakha has developed a number of prescriptions as to the question of how ordinary water can be added without infringing the fundamental halakhic order of a ritually approved immersion in natural water. In Germany, the oldest archaeological testimonies of miqwa’ot are the miqweh at Speyer (first mentioned in 1126), and Friedberg/Hessen (ca. 1260). The assumed water temperature was approx. 8 degrees Celsius (= 46 Fahrenheit). Nowadays, miqwa’ot are heated systems.

9 Cook, “Women’s Rituals of Purification”, 43.

## 2 Ritual Purity in Medieval Ashkenaz

The Jews in the Middle Ages not only developed and differentiated the theoretical discourse on ritual performance further, they also intensified and tightened the halakhic commandments. They fasted two days (on Yom Kippur) instead of the obligatory one day, they extended the period of abstinence of the husbands from their wives, and they took upon themselves the obligation to remain like this for a certain period after having become impure (this is an aspect utterly foreign to rabbinic exegesis).

The theological-ideological concept of the so-called *ḥaside ashkenaz* (translated usually as “German Pietists,” who were mainly located at Speyer, Mayence, and Worms) broadened the concept of ritual purity and applied it to social and spiritual aspects as well. This newly emerging elite in the 11th and 12th centuries not only kept the biblical and rabbinic laws meticulously (i.e. the laws on menstrual purity, dietary laws, etc.), but also and for the first time connected ritual purity (*tohora*) with a person’s mental state and social organization. The *ḥasid* ‘the pious’ renders himself as *tsaddiq* ‘the righteous,’ *naqi* ‘the pure,’ or *qadosh* ‘the saint (sometimes with reference to ‘the martyr’). He (the *ḥasid* is male!) undergoes elaborate rituals that mark the separation of the *ḥasid* from the non-*ḥasid*.<sup>10</sup> The development from being a non-*ḥasid* to being a *ḥasid* symbolizes a kind of a transition (*causa transitionis*) or ‘ritual death,’<sup>11</sup> sometimes referred to explicitly in the Ashkenazy sources.<sup>12</sup> Only the *ḥasid* knows the will of the creator (*retson ha-bore’*), and his close relationship with God (closer than that of ordinary Jewish people) results in an intensification of discourse as well as strict compliance with the laws of purity and the penitential rites.

In addition, the *ḥaside ashkenaz* integrated the idea of sin and sinfulness into the concept of ritual purity, which had never been an issue in the Rabbinic discourse on ritual purity. Forbidden sexual relations, meals with a non-*ḥasid* (even worse: with a non-Jew) would cause the *ḥasid* to revert to the unclean status of a non-*ḥasid* who, in the terminology of the *ḥaside ashkenaz*, was also rendered a *pasul* (‘the ritually unfit’) or *tame’* (‘unclean / impure’). Such sins had to be atoned for by penitential rites such as sitting in icy water for hours or in an anthill. Forbidden social contacts become a central feature in this ideology; penitential innovation becomes “a set of dramatic, ritualized stages”<sup>13</sup> and

10 Marcus, *Piety and Society*, 78 [referring to van Gennep, *Rites of Passage*, 11].

11 Eliade, *Rites and Symbols*, xii.

12 Marcus, *Piety and Society*, 77.

13 Marcus, *Piety and Society*, 37.

therefore part of ritual purification. Daily actions and ritual avoidance developed into a ritual, a standardized action. 'Profane' acts/actions were framed against 'sacred' actions.

As a corollary, the German Pietists displayed a new concept of space, in relation to both the individual in time and space and to collective entities. Since rites to gain or regain purity were designed to enable the individual to come closer to God, it goes without saying that the *ḥaside ashkenaz*, as the movement of purity, started defining (or better: redefining) sacred spaces, areas, objects, in which the holy could become present. The *Beit Midrash*, the place to learn, to talk, to pray, i.e. to recite a fixed set of liturgical texts and formulas, becomes the *miqdash me'at*, the 'small temple', with far-reaching consequences for a person's state of ritual purity and behaviour.<sup>14</sup> It is no coincidence that by this time the monumental *miqwa'ot* had been built in Speyer, Mayence, Worms, Cologne, and Friedberg (Hesse). One has to guard against polluting a Sacred space/holy space in order not to desecrate the Holy Name. In accordance with the idea of the biblical concept of holiness with its notion of dynamics as regards the Holy and the impure, this concept of extending spatial areas was taken up by the German Pietists, and, therefore, the most important task for the *ḥasid* (as it was for the biblical priest) was to prevent each of these areas from extending its spatial dimension into that of the other, compare e.g.:

There was a copyist [copying (holy?) books], and once [it happened] that ink oozed on his finger. Said his father to him: Whenever you go to the lavatory wash [the ink from your hands] since it is not admissible that the ink on your finger gets into contact with any part [of your body] that is defiled.<sup>15</sup>

In this case, the father insists on the separation of the holy and the impure areas: The ink on the copyist's finger (from the sacred area) should not leave this separated space and should not be carried into an impure space so that both spaces should not clash with each other. Until today, when a kosher Torah Scroll is copied, not even the scribe is allowed to touch the parchment with his bare hands due to its sanctity, and when writing a Torah Scroll, the scribe puts a prayer shawl (*tallit*) under his hands, directly beneath the line he

14 Ta-Shma, "Synagogal Sanctity", 351–364 (hebr.).

15 *Sefer Ḥasidim* #1758 (MS Parma 3280 H; edited in *Princeton University Sefer Hasidim Database* [https://etc.princeton.edu/sefer\\_hasidim/index.php](https://etc.princeton.edu/sefer_hasidim/index.php)).

is actually writing (and it remains in the room as long as the scribe is writing the scroll).

This concept has consequences for the categories of genital discharges, the *niddah* (the menstruant), the *zava* (a woman who oozes), the *baal qeri* (a man experiencing seminal emission), and the *zav* (a man who oozes, i.e. a man suffering from gonorrhoea). What had been a mere theoretical discourse in the rabbinic era had suddenly become an actual halakhic case.

With regard to the menstruants, the *ḥaside ashkenaz* adopted the so-called *Baraita de-Nidda*,<sup>16</sup> a treatise on the menstruant, written approximately in the seventh century C.E. in the Land of Israel that has haunted Jewish men's (and unfortunately even Jewish women's) minds from the Early Middle Ages, and in certain Jewish circles continues to do so even today.<sup>17</sup> In some respects, the *Baraita* marks the painful beginning of the discrimination of Jewish women in synagogue and private ritual: The dust dispersed by a menstruant's feet causes pollution in passers-by. Her saliva, breath, even her speech cause impurity in others. Foods and any vessels or utensils touched by a menstruant change into the status of impurity, and when she gazes upon a mirror, red spots will appear. Moreover, the gaze of a menstruating woman causes a certain odium, just as a viper supposedly kills with its gaze.<sup>18</sup>

Rabbi Eleazar ben Yehuda of Worms (d. 1230) mentions in his *Sefer ha-Roqeah* halakhic regulations that are obviously based on the *Baraita de-Niddah*: A woman who is careful about her status as a *niddah* may not cook for her husband, nor bake, nor sift flour, nor lay out the bedding, nor pour water from any vessel to an earthenware vessel, for she is impure and renders others impure. Not surprisingly, the German rabbis explicitly forbid a menstruant to enter the synagogue, to touch a holy book, or to pray, to respond to a blessing with 'Amen,' so as not to pollute the Holy Name by pronouncing it,<sup>19</sup> or rendering the synagogue 'as the small temple' impure.

The famous Bible and Talmud Commentator R. Shelomo Yizchaqi (Rashi d. 1105) had rejected this "ritual demonization" of women in his *Sefer ha-Pardes* (collected early twelfth century) with the following statement:

16 Printed in Horowitz, *Uralte Tosefta's*.

17 Compare Marienberg, "La « Baraita de Niddah »", 245–247.

18 Compare also Nahmanides' commentary on Lev 18:19 (*Ramban/Nachmanides Commentary*, 255–56).

19 Compare esp. Cohen, "Purity", 82–100; Woolf, "Medieval Models", 263–280.

And there are women who avoid entering the synagogue while they are menstruating, and they also avoid touching a Hebrew book and this is a needless stringency, which they need not observe. For why should they act this way? If it is because they think that the sanctity of the synagogue is the same as that of the Holy Temple, then even after immersion: why may she enter? [...] And if (the synagogue's sanctity) is not the same as the Holy Temple: let them enter! What is more, we are all impure and nevertheless enter it. From this we may derive that the synagogue is not the same as the Holy Temple and the menstruant may enter it. However, the synagogue is still a place of [moral; H. L.] purity to them, and therefore they act in a proper and praiseworthy manner.<sup>20</sup>

Rashi argued that the synagogue's sanctity was not the same as that of the former Temple, and that the purity system had lapsed anyway, since the purification offerings could no longer be made.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, Rashi insists on the fact that, in his time, men could be called to read from the Torah, notwithstanding their own ritual status as a *baal qeri* or even a *zav*.

In *Sefer ha Orah*, as in many other halakhic compilations, the medieval rabbis insisted that the laws for a man experiencing seminal emission did not apply in their day and had no implications for his participation in prayer and Torah reading.

In contrast, the main treatise of the *haside ashkenaz*, the so-called *Sefer Hasidim*, 'The Book of the Pious,' dedicates lots of arguments to the question of how one should behave when in the status of a *baal qeri*, a *zav*, or simply each time excretory functions are used. Compare, for instance, the following examples:

Whoever had sexual relations [with his wife], even though he withdrew from her and did not complete sexual intercourse, and therefore had no effusion of semen, even, if he did not touch his nakedness or touched her nakedness with his hands, if he wants to touch a [holy] book or goes to pray or to learn [Torah] he should wash his hands in pure water [...].<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> *Sefer ha-Pardes*, 3; see also *Sefer ha-Orah*, 6.

<sup>21</sup> Compare also Cohen, "Purity and Piety", 103–115.

<sup>22</sup> *Sefer Hasidim* #1609 (MS Parma 3280 H; edited in *Princeton University Sefer Hasidim Database* [https://etc.princeton.edu/sefer\\_hasidim/index.php](https://etc.princeton.edu/sefer_hasidim/index.php)).

The fear that ritual impurity might cause a prayer to be ineffective, is grounded in the idea that man faces God's revelation in the synagogue directly and in the same way Israel had seen God's glory on Mount Sinai.

The Torah had always been considered to be God's revelation, and rabbinic exegesis had already developed the notion that the Torah comprises the Divine name, which led to the identification of the Torah and the divine Glory (*kavod*). However, the German mystics set up an existential relationship between God and the Torah Scroll, which, thus, assumes an icon-like significance. The notion that the Torah and thus the Torah Scroll was the manifestation or embodiment of the Divine Glory led to the above-mentioned far-reaching implications for the conduct of the religious community during the synagogal service and its customs, in particular the laws on ritual purity.<sup>23</sup>

With regard to the historical-dynamic discourse in religious studies we might say that the sacralisation of the synagogue conveys a re-contextualization of later halakha into the priestly context. This pattern, i.e., the revitalization of priestly purification and atonement, becomes most important in the Jews' darkest time, the time of the crusades. Let us conclude with a few important aspects of ritual purity and to consider the ways in which the halakha, the laws on ritual purity, were used and adopted, in order to devise a relationship between the ritual practice of the individual and events that befall the community. The question arises whether the Hebrew sources on ritual purity (especially the writings of the *ḥaside ashkenaz*) support in one way or the other an interpretation according to which powerlessness or a feeling of powerlessness was a key stimulus for the tightening of the laws and rites dealing with ritual purity. My assumption is that among the German Jews, especially the generation of the first to third crusades in the 11th and 12th centuries, the religious elite held the view that ritual activities of the individual (men and women) could have an impact on the community during the course of disastrous events that kept people in a passive, suffering state. Our focus, thus, turns to the question of ritual agency, particularly with regard to the laws of ritual purity and/or priestly rituals. Compare here the *piyyutim* (religious poetry) written after 1096 by Ephraim of Bonn which describes the collective mass homicides in the city of Mayence in the paradigm of sacrificology: Women killing their children were literally transformed into priests who sacrificed their holy gifts (*qodoshim* in Hebrew) as burnt offerings (*olot*).<sup>24</sup>

23 Compare Liss, "Offenbarung Gottes", 271–292; idem, "Offenbarung und Weitergabe", 25–50.

24 Compare Goldschmidt, *Machazor le-Yom ha-Kippurim* 538, lines 11–22; compare also Marcus, "History", 365–388; idem, "From Politics to Martyrdom", 40–52; Mintz, *Hurban*,



FIGURE 10.1 *Ms Hamburg hebr. 37, fol. 79v.*

Furthermore, in *Ms Hamburg Cod. hebr. 37* (a prayer book) we find the text that relates the story of Chanah and her seven sons killed by Antiochus (also using sacrificial terminology), and two illustrations (Figure 10.1): the upper one shows the persecution situation, the lower one, clearly to be seen, is a man

94–97 introduced the term “Mikdash (sanctuary) paradigm.” On the liturgical *piyyuṭim* see also *Hymnen und Gebete von Ephraim von Bonn*.

waiting for his wife to return from the Miqvah that God had let arise in miraculous manner.<sup>25</sup> This composition, both the illustrations and the text, suggests that the laws on ritual purity were ideologically linked to the notion of the persecuted Jewish community. Shall we assume the focus on ritual purity and its intensification to be a correlative and an echo to collective danger and persecution, meaning that a political victim gains or regains autonomy and dignity as a 'doer' to control the state of affairs in one way or the other. Given that, the concept of ritual purity represents one of the transgenerational trauma reactions functioning as kind of a compensation. Having power over one's body becomes a paradigm for controlling one's status and conditions. This question, which could also be extended, e.g. with regard to the grounds of contemporary fundamentalist movements, requires further investigation.

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<sup>25</sup> MS Hamburg hebr. 37, fol. 79v.



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**SECTION 5**

*Concepts of Textual Purity*





# Religious Texts and the Islamic Purity Regime

*Stefan Leder*

## 1 Introduction

Protecting the written corpus (*muṣḥaf*) of the Qurʾān, complete or in fragment, against dirt and inappropriate handling in more general terms can be a matter of great concern for Muslims. Careful preservation of copies which went out of use, give witness to this attitude in history. Recently, in a context of presumed Western disrespect of Islam, cases of assumed desecration of the Qurʾān repeatedly triggered violent reaction.

It can be argued on one hand, that the solid relationship between concepts of purity in Islam and the Qurʾān constitutes a dogmatic basis on which such attitude is firmly grounded. On the other hand, the relation between purity practices and rules of moral conduct, and rules of preserving and honouring religious texts more particularly, needs to be considered. In this light, the substantial and symbolic dimensions of the religious scripture and purity rules relating to them are relativised. Instead, the qualification, moral conduct and dignity of those who memorize, read, and transmit the religious texts are most relevant for the preservation of the texts' elevated status. This aspect seems to be of particular importance present in the purity discourse and in purity practices related to religious texts. It relates to the wider meaning of purity practices, as they do not only regulate transition from everyday life to ritual worship and thus signal transition from one mode of behaviour to another, and do not only create demarcation separating the purified from those who are not. They are also practices which help the pious to connect to the transcendent represented as a life beyond ontological conditions. Proper treatment of religious texts therefore means much more than keeping them protected against pollution. A main concern of the purity discourse is the proper way in which the religious text is transmitted and recited, and thus is kept alive and carried on.

The particular relationship between purity concepts and the Qurʾān resides in the fact that purity-related practices, as they are set forth in Islamic law, are conspicuously grounded in the qurʾānic text.<sup>1</sup> Another dimension is that

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1 Lowry, "Ritual Purity", 500.

purity as a distinct quality is attributed to the Qurʾān itself. In this context, the Qurʾānic text refers to itself as “written records (*ṣuḥuf*) held greatly in honour, exalted, purified (*muṭahhara*)”,<sup>2</sup> and refers to the “Messenger from Allāh who recites purified (*muṭahhara*) written records (*ṣuḥuf* = al-Qurʾān).”<sup>3</sup> In the larger context of the Qurʾān, the state of being purified is presented as being conferred by God,<sup>4</sup> and it also appears to be correlated to the delivery of religious duties.<sup>5</sup> Purity stands in opposition to unbelief and adhering practices. Subsequent to a passage addressing the wives of the Prophet with a list of prescriptions concerning moral conduct and religious obligations, it is said of the family of the Prophet,<sup>6</sup> that “God wants to remove from you pollution (from impious deeds),<sup>7</sup> O members of the family, and to purify you with thorough purification.”<sup>8</sup>

Impurity is not simply confined to the physical domain which can be cleansed. Moreover, purity rituals serve as moral categories which help pious Muslims to build a moral world and to distinguish true from false, belief from disbelief. For instance, disbelief is classified as impure. One of the most explicit passages in this context labels non-monotheists as unclean (*najas*), and they are forbidden to approach the sacred Mosque in Mekka (*al-masjid al-ḥarām*).<sup>9</sup>

Historically this verse belongs to the period after the Medinian Muslims’ victory over the large rival pagan sanctuaries of Northern Arabia and their people, the Quraysh of Mekka and the Thaḳīf of Ṭāʾif. It expresses the vision of imperial Islam in a primary state: The legal distinction between those belonging to the community of believers and others which was later elaborated is already apparent here. As the uncleanness of the disbeliever can only be purified through adopting Islam, impurity is not a temporary status, but, unless Islam is adopted, a property. This assessment, the interpretation of which was the object of a long dispute among the experts of Islamic law,<sup>10</sup> stipulated an opposition between impurity and the sacred space of the Mosque and therefore postulated boundaries and spatial delimitations, which stood in direct relation to the religious orientation of a person. The term *ḥarām* which can be

2 Qurʾān 80:13–14.

3 Qurʾān 98:2.

4 Upon Mary (Maryam), Qurʾān 3:42: *wa-ṭahharaki wa-ṣṭafāki ʾalā nisāʾi l-ʾālamīna*.

5 Such as alms giving, see Qurʾān 9:103 (“Take *ṣadaqah* (alms) from their assets to purify them (*tuṭahhiruhum*) and to cleanse them (*tuzakkīhim*) thereby”).

6 Ahl al-Bayt is commonly understood as referring to the family of the Prophet.

7 *Rijs*.

8 Qurʾān 33:33.

9 Qurʾān 9:28.

10 Janina Safran, “Rules of Purity”.

seen as parallel to the Hebrew *kedushah* in this aspect, signifies here a segregated space and combines notions of holy and forbidden.<sup>11</sup>

## 2 Purity and Impurity

Impurity thus includes two aspects: pollution occurring as a result of a certain act, and from not abiding by the right confession. Both aspects here stand in opposition to the elevated position of the Qurʾān which is kept aloof from any contact with it. An often quoted verse commonly understood as alluding to the heavenly book from which the revelation originates, stipulates a demarcation between impure and pure: “This is indeed a recitation (Qurʾān) most honourable, in a book well guarded,<sup>12</sup> which shall not touch, but those who are purified.”<sup>13</sup> Some of the wording of this verse reappears in a number of compendia of the Prophet’s teachings referring to a letter sent by the Prophet to the people of Yemen. Here they are turned into a directive: “Only the purified is allowed to touch it.”<sup>14</sup> The rules resulting from this instruction are mainly understood as signifying the banning of the unclean or not ritually cleansed Muslim from dealing with the material corpus of the Qurʾān.<sup>15</sup>

The tradition has not won general recognition as an approved saying of the Prophet even among early authorities, and it restricts the signification of the qurʾānic verse in as far as it is understood to concern ritual purity. In the qurʾānic verse, the purity results from the text’s existence in the heavenly sphere, remote from the ontological conditions of humankind; in the prophetic tradition, the material corpus of the Qurʾān is to be protected against the harm of pollution. Even if this is concordant with the general context of ritual purity, it is rather marginal in the wider context of the concept and practices of purity.

Ritual purity, *ṭahāra*, to which these passages relate, is an elementary ingredient of Islamic faith. Rules concerning the practices of purification normally

11 Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts*, 237.

12 *Kitāb maknūn* or hidden writing. Qurʾān 56:77–79.

13 *Lā yamassuhu illā l-muṭahharūna*, 56:79. This is often understood as referring to angels.

14 *Lā yamassu l-Qurʾān illā ṭāhirun*, see for example in Ibn Balbān al-Fārisī, al-Amīr ‘Alā’ al-Dīn, *al-Iḥsān fī taqrīb Ṣaḥīh Ibn Ḥibbān*, ed. Shuʿayb al-Arnāʾūt, vol. 14, no. 6559, p. 504; for further references see the notes of the editor.

15 Al-Ājurri, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusain, *Akhlāq ahl al-qurʾān*, ed. al-Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Amr bin ‘Abd al-Laṭīf, 145; al-Nawawī, Abū Zakariyyā, *al-Tibyān fī ādāb al-Qurʾān*, ed. Muḥammad al-Ḥajjār, 184.



constitute the opening chapters of the compendia of Islamic law based upon the Prophet's teachings. The Islamic purity regime intersects with the Islamic legal system in many aspects. Dietary laws, for instance, regard the distinction between allowed and forbidden; interaction between the sexes is regulated by matrimonial law, by rules regarding correct behaviour in all aspects including sexual contact, and by the rules of ritual ablution, which may be understood as undoing the pollution caused by activity of the organs of reproduction.

### 3 Purity and Legal Islam

Main aspects of the Islamic purity regime therefore are an integral part of the legal system of Islam. Practicing purity rules demands a high degree of self-control and awareness, but does not need much of technical provisions, and therefore is accessible to all under all circumstances. As these rules are very detailed and in some aspects exposed to disagreement, distinct purity practices divide the adherents of different schools. Although our discussion here focuses primarily on the scriptural basis of purity rules related to religious texts, one should keep in mind that, just as Islamic law in general, the formation of the Islamic purity regime emerges from a creative interplay of established practice and textual authority.<sup>16</sup> Purity practices in our context underline moral conduct and the practices of piety, thus tying individual purification of the pious to the modes of representing the transcendental dimension of the religious text in his life.

Concern with physical impurity is not very prominent in the Qur'an. Cleansing rituals, in spite of all the detailed steps, should not be understood therefore as being designed to remove polluting substances or undo polluting acts. Instead it has been suggested that they aim at restoring the loss of control and to secure through ritual the contact with the transcendental.<sup>17</sup> Principal explications of purity rules in the Qur'an appear in a context referring to the covenant between God and the believers,<sup>18</sup> and thus refer to the obligations of obedience and to God's bountiful benevolence. The Islamic purity regime can be seen as being informed by the belief in the eternal life in a purified and uncorrupted realm which mirrors life in this world;<sup>19</sup> in this light, purity prac-

16 Rippin, "Review of Marion Holmes Katz, 'Body of Text'", 119.

17 Reinhart, "Impurity/No Danger", 19f.

18 Marion Holmes Katz, *Body of Text*, 32–39.

19 *Ibid.*, 204.

tices are rather a pre-emption and a preparation of a state that transcends the boundaries of this world.

#### 4 Purity and Text

Purity appears as a critical category in the context of protecting and preserving the exceptional status of the religious text. This applies principally to two main groups of religious texts. The Qur'ān, the collection of what God sent down to his Prophet, is the word of God, not of human authorship. The Qur'ān emanates from God's benevolence and generosity. Its preservation in written and oral form requires a number of skills. In addition, people who perform its transmission are asked to represent the exceptional status of the text by purifying their modes of life. The collection of the teachings of the Prophet is imbued by God's guidance and inspiration, recorded by his disciples, and further on preserved, interpreted and construed by generation after generation of experts. The key issue for this text corpus is not purity, but correctness (*ṣiḥḥa*), a term related to truth.

As the religious text owes its exceptional status to God's benevolent revelation and guidance, its elevated position is effective in those who serve it: Those, who preserve the religious text, disseminate and maintain its validity, are also those who share its authority and are supposed to represent its norms and values. An interactive relationship exists therefore between the status of the religious text and its transmission which secures its presence in a dignified manner. The latter in turn is related to notions which can be seen as being contextually related to purity. Connected with ethical precepts and pious practices, the extended concepts of purity are employed to support and maintain scriptural authority. They are deeply rooted in the Islamic belief system and constitute a medium for the establishment of a discourse, the keenest expression of which may be described as being puritan in that it advocates segregation, conscientious piety and scriptural authority.

#### 5 Purity, Ethical Conduct, and Memorization

In the Qur'ān, the notion of purity is at times connected to what is considered to be ethical conduct. It is more pure (*azkā*) not to stare at people (presumably at women), and always to cover the private parts,<sup>20</sup> or to talk to the

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<sup>20</sup> Qur'ān 24:30.

wives of the Prophet while separated from them by a curtain (*aṭhar*).<sup>21</sup> As the recommendations do not express precise stipulations, but suggest certain valued practices, the qur'ānic notion of purity opens onto concepts of ethics and piety. This dialogic relation between ethical conduct and purity becomes most visible when it is applied to the experts of scriptural Islam, responsible for the performance of the qur'ānic reading and the maintenance of the teaching of the Prophet.

The most authoritative mode of transmitting the text according to Muslim traditions of learning is the memorization and then the proper recitation of the memorized Qur'ān. In addition memorization and recitation of the Qur'ān signify, whether performed in private or a public setting, devotion to the Qur'ān.

Other manners of qur'ānic presence in public and private life concern the limited liturgical use of the Qur'ān, and its extra liturgical use related to its assumed protective powers. According to most authorities, copies of the Qur'ān must not be touched by a person who is in a state of ritual impurity. This prohibition does not extend to the compendia of *hadīth* (the teachings of the Prophet).<sup>22</sup> But pollution only affects the material substance. The words of the Qur'ān preserve their divine origin and may be read out regardless of the ritual status of the reader.<sup>23</sup> Whereas the rules of ritual purity regard the material substance only, dealing with the Qur'ān demands particular moral qualities. According to a saying attributed to the Prophet or one his disciples, the one who bears all of the Qur'ān in memory

carries an enormous affair, as the (entire) prophethood is packed between his shoulder blades, except that the Qur'ān was not revealed to him. The bearer of the Qur'ān must not mix with ordinary people, not get excited when they are excited, nor ignore what they ignore, because the Qur'ān is inside of him.<sup>24</sup>

The Prophet himself carried a mark between his shoulder blades, as the Islamic narrative on his life reports.<sup>25</sup> The expression therefore refers symbolically to the representation of prophethood, and signifies metaphorically the carrying of the Qur'ān in man's bosom.

21 Qur'ān 33:33.

22 As note 16.

23 Al-Ājurrī, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusain, *Akhlāq ahl al-qur'ān*, ed. al-Shaykh Muḥammad 'Amr bin 'Abd al-Laṭīf, 145.

24 Ibid. 56; *Udriyat al-nubuwwa bayna katfayhi*.

25 As referred to in note 16.

## 6 Qur'ān Recitation and the Wider Context of Purity Concepts

Reciting the Qur'ān from memory imparts authority and requires a particular ethical conduct. The reciter needs to meet a number of qualities which guarantee that the performance does not turn into what is considered an undignified act and consequently void of significance.

A book from the middle of the 10th century, titled "Manners of those who bear the Qur'ān in their memory"<sup>26</sup> and dedicated to the ethical conduct desirable for people dealing with the Qur'ān, is one of our earliest and most thorough documents treating this issue. The author, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusain al-Ājurri, a Sunni religious scholar from Baghdad, who spent the last thirty years of his life in Mekka where he died in 970 C.E., propagated the ideal values of a religious scholar, who should be detached from interests in material and immaterial worldly gains. Disinterest in such gains was not regarded as an individual act, but as the application of a principle protecting the individual against the influence and mechanisms of mundane worlds. This ideal is particularly significant to the recitation of the Qur'ān, because apart from the many technical requirements of correct recitation, and the knowledge required to understand the canonized readings, public recitation must also involve the correct behaviour and attitude.

Depicting the negative image of the reciter alienated from the tenets of his profession, the author criticises mundane recitation performances, offers a glance on established practices and illustrates his concern for maintaining the religious texts. The author engages in chastisement of scholars using knowledge as a means to gain material and immaterial benefits. This chapter is the most articulate text in this respect to my knowledge, dating from a relatively early period. It does not, however, represent a lonely or eccentric position, but is in accordance with the ideals of Sunni Islamic piety. His lengthy satirical portrait addresses the superficial performance of Qur'ān readers who cling to the letter of the Qur'ān, ignorant of its content, oblivious to its true message:

Who performs the reading of the Qur'ān for worldly interest and for mundane people [...] turns the Qur'ān into a commodity. If he teaches the rich man, he is sweet with him, as he desires his wealth [...], and if he has a particularly beautiful voice, he performs readings for the rulers, and performs the prayer with them applying the liturgical reading of the Qur'ān, always out of avidity for what they possess. [...] He gives no thought [...] to the admonition given in the Qur'ān, [...] instead,

26 Al-Ājurri, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusain, *Akhlāq al-'ulamā'*.

he is absorbed by what recognition he receives from God's creatures and thereby forgets about God's discontent with him [...]. God is all the more furious as he shows outwardly the signs of piety by reciting the Qur'ān, but inside lost any notion of his obligations towards God [...] and all this for love of prominence and worldly interest. He is seduced by the popular admiration for his memorisation of the Qur'ān, and that people point out to him with their fingers. [...] In this manner he becomes himself a temptation to anyone who is charmed by his art, since common people will imitate his neglect of appropriate behaviour [...].<sup>27</sup>

The list of positive duties highlights the necessary degree of identification between Qur'ānic messages and the transmitter's intellectual and emotional concern. As a container of the Qur'ān, he is supposed to consider and represent it. It is expected that after recitation he should question himself whether all what God has assigned upon the people dealing with the Qur'ān was applied. If he comes to the conclusion not to have paid sufficient attention to it, he is supposed to ask for God's forgiveness and ask Him to assist the reciter in transforming from the present condition into the mindset required for proper recitation. Only then, the benediction for those who learn, consider, and transmit the Qur'ān unfolds. The reader applying this rule will benefit from reading the Qur'ān, and receives the blessings of the Qur'ān, so that everything he loves, of this world and the hereafter, will turn to him.<sup>28</sup>

The reciter's intellectual attentiveness must ideally be accompanied by his emotional involvement. His reaction to the dangers and prospects of being exposed to God's judgement, as explained in the Qur'ān, should serve as an indication of proper recitation. Appropriate recitation is simultaneously the proof for the proper behaviour of the reciter based upon piety in accordance to the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān itself articulates the idea that recitation reaches out to the emotion of the listeners as a means to make them receptive to the message of the Qur'ān. In this vein, it is mentioned<sup>29</sup> that the skins of those who fear their Lord should shiver from it (*taqsha'iru 'anhu*), and subsequently their skin and their heart soften to the remembrance of Allah.<sup>30</sup> Reciting the Qur'ān therefore means to abandon oneself to grievance, to weep or almost weep, to fill one's heart with humbleness and to ponder about God's warnings

27 Ibid., 87–89.

28 Ibid., 154.

29 Qur'ān 39:23.

30 Al-Ājurri, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusain, *Akhlāq al-'ulamā'*, 167.

and promises. Descriptions of such behaviour are topoi in prosopographical literature dealing with the life of the pious and religious scholars. Tears are not considered to be a polluting bodily liquid, to the contrary: they give evidence of an adequate religious performance.

The emphasis assigned to moral qualities implies an attitude that gives preference to quality over quantity, and this principle also applies to the rule that the recitation is the proper basis of transmission of the Qurʾān. Therefore, the author recommends confining the study of the Qurʾān to some parts rather than reading much of it without pondering on its content. This recommendation is supported by the Qurʾān as well as by the example of the great masters, and is a standard principle of the literature about learning and teaching the Qurʾān.<sup>31</sup>

In sum, the transmission of the Qurʾān is based both upon the technical rules of recitation (which we did not focus on here) *and* the religious soundness of the reciter whose duties are not merely confined to preserving and reproducing, but perhaps most importantly also imply representing the Prophet's transmission of the word of God. The Islamic purity regime, beyond its formulaic aspects, is intrinsically related to this concept.

## 7 Religious Scholarship, Text Reproduction and the Rules of Piety

According to al-Ājurī's teaching, pious devoutness (*taqwā*), practiced in private and public, as well as scrupulous avoidance of all foreseeable and unforeseeable illicit implications and consequences, with respect to food, drink or habitat, is a compelling need for the pious.<sup>32</sup> This discipline, called *waraʿ*, which means to pay attention to all implications of one's doings, as they may result in becoming involved in some way or other in illicit activities, refers to the authority of the conscience, rather than to any legal rules. It is the intuition of the pious, acquired by the insight nourished through pious practice, which enables him to distinguish between what is acceptable and what is not.<sup>33</sup>

31 Ibid., 169; Gade, "Recitation of the Qurʾān", 378.

32 Al-Ājurī, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusain, *Akhḫāq ahl al-qurʾān*, ed. al-Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAmr bin ʿAbd al-Laṭīf, 77.

33 *Waraʿ*, and the practices which relate to it, also function as a social code, distinguishing those who apply rigorously the tradition of *sunna* with all its implications in their daily lives as a conscientious pious exercise, in contrast to those who subscribe to more pragmatic and law oriented vision of the *sunna*.

Such scrupulous avoidance of deviance from pious devotion is related to the rules of preservation and reproduction of religious texts. Al-Ājurri himself illustrated this when he introduced to the great tradition of scholarship a text which was authored ca 70 years before, at Baghdad, but had remained in the shadow of a marginal tradition. The text deals with teachings and practices concerning the necessary distance which scholars have to keep under all circumstance from representatives of worldly power, because the truly pious believed such powers to be unjust, corrupt, and at best void of sincere piety. This strand of thought was presented as having been practiced by early masters before the emergence of the law schools. Al-Ājurri's transmission of this text, as it is documented by notes preserved in a later manuscript, applied the technical rules—oral tradition of a written text—of transmission and fulfilled in an exemplary manner its moral and technical requirements.<sup>34</sup>

The corpus of the teachings of the Prophet is considered to have been transmitted originally by his companions whose status of eminence (*najīb*) is mainly defined by their loyal companionship to the event of prophethood,<sup>35</sup> and the corpus is based upon the idea, and practice, of a subsequent transmission from generation to generation. The authenticity of the reports is established by looking into the qualities of those who transmitted these texts through time. A main aspect of evaluating the text is to scrutinize the trustworthiness of the transmitters. This practice had already developed during the eighth century into a discipline of ḥadīth sciences. For instance, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, author of one of the comprehensive compendia in this field, established the qualifications necessary for proper transmitters and listed the main criteria: Impartiality, competence (*thabat fi*), blamelessness with respect to self-control (*amīn fi nafsihi*), knowledge in all aspects of religion, application of the discipline of *wara*,<sup>36</sup> and devoutness (*taqwā*).<sup>37</sup> The combination of practical and intellectual requirements for the position of a transmitter parallels that of the reciter mentioned above.

The transmission of ḥadīth, Islamic Tradition, gives much emphasis to the oral testimony. The written documents containing sayings of the Prophet and his companions, are regularly certified, and thus rendered authoritative for further transmission, by being read out to a person who then qualifies to ascertain

34 Leder, "Understanding a text through its transmission".

35 Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa-l-ta'dīl*, vol. 1, 3.

36 As explained in note 33 above.

37 Ibid. vol. 1, 5.

its correctness on the ground of his previously acquired authority. The set up of such readings is regulated by a number of rules and is rigorously documented on the margins of the text copies noting the names of all participants, as well as the date and the location of the event. The authority for the transmission of a given text is acquired by a preferably notified or documented participation at such a reading. In this manner, an uninterrupted chain of transmitters have connected the present act of transmission, whereby the first one ideally guarantees the authenticity of the text.

The importance of transmissions, and the complex parallelism between written and oral transmission is reflected in the copies of the manuscripts. They are as much a testimony of a certain wording, as they are depositories of its documented oral transmission. Of course an element of practicality is not missed here either. Regulated transmission serves to preserve an original wording, and linking the text to a well-known scholar with established authority in the field enhances the symbolic and formal meaning of the text. In fact this aspect is dialogic. The text derives its authority from the truthful transmitters certifying its correctness, and the scholars of course gain authority by transmitting the text.

An additional aspect of practices of transmission is the attempt of bridging the time gap which separates the receiver of the text from the time of the Prophet, since generations may lay between the two events. Transmitters whose testimonies may bridge over many decades are therefore preferred. Therefore, it became established practice to acquire authority to transmit a text at a very young age possibly even before the faculties of reason were developed. The validity of this procedure is based upon the assumption of a blameless conduct of the long-lived transmitter, and it is thus much more related to the concept of purity than to any any other related notion such as shortening the time span connecting to the prophet.

The technical aspects of transmission were widely applied for many sorts of texts, until modernity, and independent of their religious status. For *ḥadīth*, the exercises of purity have been of crucial importance. Textual authority and purity are therefore closely interconnected.

Insight into this correlation throws light on the importance of ritual practices designed to preserve the foundational religious text. From this point of view it becomes clear that the truth (*ḥaqīqatuhu*) of the text is not primarily its diegetic value, or its veracity with respect to the event which it refers to. The value of a religious text, instead, is that it has been transmitted properly. This is why our compendia of Islamic tradition preserve so many, in fact many thousand, variant accounts.



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**SECTION 6**

*Concepts of Genealogical Purity*





# Sons of Damnation: Franciscans, Muslims, and Christian Purity

*Christopher MacEvitt*

## 1 Introduction

Was God a Muslim? Some Christians wondered whether that was the best explanation for the string of Muslim victories over Christians in the late thirteenth century. Riccoldo da Montecroce, a Dominican missionary living in Baghdad in 1292 complained in a letter addressed to God, “if it pleases you that Mahomet reigns, let us know, so we can venerate him too.”<sup>1</sup> While this complaint was in part satirical, it reflected anxiety about the twin failures of crusade and mission in the late thirteenth century. Latin Christendom had, in the previous century, sought to unify Christendom internally and to expand it overseas, believing that large numbers of infidels, particularly Muslims, were on the verge of conversion, if only they might have the opportunity to hear the word of God freely and be able to convert without punishment. But crusade after crusade ended in defeat and disaster, and few Muslims seemed willing to convert, even when given the chance.

Stories of martyrdom provided Christians with a different narrative within which to interpret the dynamics between Christians and Muslims. Beginning in the 1320s, the stories of Franciscan friars who died in Islamic lands began to appear in collections and to be frescoed on church walls.<sup>2</sup> Some martyrdoms were marked by a distinctive language of demarcation and separation, while others understood martyrdom to be a transformative act that overcame boundaries and distinctions. Separation and demarcation are often significant markers of purity concerns, yet the martyrdoms eschewed any language that explicitly evoked purity or pollution. Nevertheless, the notion of purity helps explain the distinctive character of the martyrdoms and their appeal in the fourteenth century.

1 Riccoldo de Monte Croce, “*Epistolae V commentatorie de perditione Acconis 1291*”, esp. 271.

2 For frescoes, see for example Burke, “The ‘Martyrdom of the Franciscans’”; Chabloz, “*Les Cinq Martiri francescani del Marocco*”.

## 2 Impure Islam

Latin Christians had long explicitly used the language of purity and pollution to describe Muslims and Islam. The ninth-century *Istoria de Mahomet* recounted that the body of the prophet was left unburied for three days following his death on the expectation of resurrection, only to rot and be eaten by dogs;<sup>3</sup> in the twelfth century, Embrico of Mainz suggested that it was pigs that consumed his corpse.<sup>4</sup> These stories and many like them were intended to arouse the Christian reader's disgust. Islamic law and doctrine were also portrayed as grotesque. Peter of Cluny spoke of Muhammad as "vomiting forth all of the excrement of the old heresies."<sup>5</sup> Heresy was one of the most common ways to categorize Islam, and heretics were commonly considered polluting, both individually and metaphorically.

Not only were the prophet and the origins of Islam tainted with associations with lust, excrement, and rot, but particularly in the context of the crusades, Muslims were depicted as defiling Christians and Christian holy places with their filth.<sup>6</sup> Many of the accounts of the First Crusade depicted Muslims deliberately desecrating churches and other holy places; Robert the Monk claimed that they poured circumcision blood into baptismal fonts and over altars.<sup>7</sup> Baudri of Dol spoke of the "pollution" of the Lord's Temple by the Muslims, and Orderic Vitalis praised the massacre that followed the crusader conquest of Jerusalem, "because they had polluted the Temple of the Lord and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and because they had taken and shamefully defiled the Temple of Solomon and other churches for their own illicit uses."<sup>8</sup> By the time of the Second Crusade, the language of filth and pollution had become a standard part of the rhetoric of crusade propaganda against Islam.

Missionary rhetoric from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries also evoked themes of purity and pollution, suggesting that Islam was a religion that seduced its believers through lust: multiple marriages on earth and sexual pleasure in paradise. Furthermore, it was a religion inspired by the devil; Muslims were thus associated with demonic possession, which in Christian

3 Wolf, "The Earliest Latin Lives of Muhammad", 97.

4 Embricon de Mayence, *Vie de Mahomet*, 88–90.

5 Cited in Tolan, *Saracens*, 158.

6 Cole, "O God, the Heathen Have Come".

7 Robert the Monk, "Historia Iherosolimitana", esp. 727.

8 Cited in Cole, "O God, the Heathen Have Come", 101.

discourse was usually linked, like heresy, with vomit, excrement, and other disgusting bodily substances. For both missions and crusades, the language of purity and pollution allowed for, even demanded, action. Churches must be purified, reconsecrated, and protected; demons must be expelled, and a pure way of life taught and followed.

### 3 The Triumph of Islam

Thirteenth-century Latin Christendom directed enormous resources towards crusades against Muslims. At least four major crusades were launched against Islamic powers: the Fourth Crusade (1202–04), which was intended to attack Egypt but conquered Constantinople instead, the Fifth Crusade (1217–1221), which did attack Egypt unsuccessfully, the Seventh Crusade (1248–52), a second attack on Egypt, and the Eighth Crusade, Louis's last crusade to Tunis (1270), as well as a number of smaller campaigns. None of them succeeded militarily against their Muslim enemies. Alongside enthusiasm for crusading, and often linked to it, was the hope that the conversion of large numbers of Muslims to Christianity was imminent.<sup>9</sup> A number of different sources fed this expectation. One source was the writings of Joachim of Fiore, an abbot and Biblical exegete in southern Italy whose interpretation of providential history suggested that the Jews, pagans, and Muslims would soon convert as the world entered a new "era of the Spirit". In the crisis that would mark transition from one *status* to another, Christendom would come under attack. Victory would only come, not through force of arms, but through the spiritual triumph of successful preaching particularly led by new 'spiritual men' who would be leaders of a revitalized Church. The emergence of the two mendicant orders, the Dominicans and the Franciscans, who took as their principal task preaching the Word of God and by the 1240s were sometimes identified as the *viri spirituales* of Joachite prophecy, further raised hopes that a new age was about to begin.<sup>10</sup> Louis IX's crusade to Egypt in 1248 inspired one poet to proclaim that

9 Kedar, *Crusade and Mission*; see also Bird, "Crusade and Conversion".

10 Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*, 29–58; for the conversion of Jews specifically, see Lerner, *The Feast of Saint Abraham*. See also Kedar, *Crusade and Mission*, 154–155; Daniel, *The Franciscan Concept of Mission*, 14–22. As discussed below, Franciscan commitment to mission to infidels was encoded in the rule of the Order, and in the example of their founder. The Dominicans, in contrast, had only a general vocation for "preaching and the salvation of souls", which could of course include infidels and Jews, but did not

the king “will be able to conquer Romania easily, baptize the sultan of Turkey, and thereby free the world”.<sup>11</sup> Raymond of Penyafort, the Dominican master-general (1238–40), wrote to his successor, John of Wildeshausen (1241–1252) concerning the conversion of Muslims that “at the time of the present writing the gate is now open to nearly inestimable fruits, provided the harvesters do not abandon their task; and even now many of them, especially in Murcia, have been converted to the faith both secretly and openly”.<sup>12</sup> Louis’s crusade to Tunis in 1270 was in part motivated by the hope of converting the sultan and the city’s population to Christianity.<sup>13</sup>

By the middle of the thirteenth century, the ‘dream’ of the rapid conversion of Muslims was beginning to fade.<sup>14</sup> Humbert of Romans, the master-general of the Dominican Order (1254–63), was unusual in placing conversion of Muslims at the forefront of his order’s mission when he first began his generalate.<sup>15</sup> By the time he wrote his *Opus tripartitum* for the Council of Lyons (1274), he was far more pessimistic about the possibility of conversion. He noted that Muslims did not in fact seem at all interested in converting to Christianity; rather, conversion generally went in the other direction.<sup>16</sup> Crusading and missionizing, however, continued to appeal to western Europeans, and expeditions of both sorts were often planned and sometimes even carried out. Even in the later thirteenth century, there were those who believed passionately that the total collapse of Islam, religiously and politically, could happen at any moment. William of Tripoli, a Dominican preacher in the Latin East writing around 1271, envisioned in a treatise on Islam, the *Notitia de Machometo*, that after a victory over the Franks, the Muslims themselves would be wiped out by the Christians. This victory would mark the end of the “age of the Saracens”, a

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explicitly name them. At the time of Dominic’s canonization, some believed that he had the desire to preach to either pagans or Muslims, but was never able to act upon it. See Vose, *Dominicans, Muslims and Jews*, 34–38.

11 Bédier, *Les Chansons de croisade*, 253; translated in Kedar, *Crusade and Mission*, 161.

12 Quoted in Vose, *Dominicans, Muslims and Jews*, 138.

13 Muslims used his eagerness to convert them to stage a surprise attack on the French camp. Lower, “Conversion and St. Louis’s Last Crusade”. Robin Vose agrees with Lower’s argument that conversion was the primary motivation for the crusade, though he suggests that Lower falls prey to the ‘maximalist’ interpretation that sees Dominicans as extensively engaged in missionary activities. Vose, *Dominicans, Muslims and Jews*, 231, n. 31. Kedar also sees conversion as an important part of the motivation for the diversion to Tunis, *Crusade and Mission*, 167–168.

14 Burns, “Christian-Islamic Confrontation”.

15 Vose, *Dominicans, Muslims and Jews*, 44.

16 Kedar, *Crusade and Mission*, 155.

third of all Muslims would become Christian, and the remainder would die in the battle or subsequently in the desert.<sup>17</sup>

His work inspired a successor, often identified with William himself, who wrote a treatise on Islamic history, the *De Statu Sarracenorum*, which described the religion in surprisingly positive terms. Like William, however, he indicated that it was doomed to extinction soon. Although he also repeated William's prediction about the extirpation of Muslims at Christian hands militarily, he emphasized how willingly Muslims were to become Christian even in his own day; he boasted that he himself had converted over a thousand.<sup>18</sup>

The Mamluk conquest of Acre in 1291 destroyed many of these hopes; Riccoldo da Montecroce, cited above, wrote angry letters to God after the city's conquest and destruction, bitterly noting that neither the saints Francis or Dominic, nor Louis IX of France and all the crusading warriors had been able to destroy "the beast," as he called Islam.<sup>19</sup> Likewise, Thadeus of Naples, writing just months after the city's conquest, mourned that Palestine under Islamic rule had become a cruel stepmother to her Christian offspring.<sup>20</sup>

Both the *Notitia de Machometo* of William of Tripoli and the *De statu Sarracenorum* of his follower were read and copied in fourteenth-century Europe; four manuscripts of the *Notitia* survive from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and ten manuscripts of the *De statu* from the same time. Christians in the fourteenth century thus had a number of different texts to consult on Islam; the earlier accounts that defamed Muhammad and Islam or suggested that Muslims were idolaters were still read, but in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries they had been supplemented by a number of accounts that made clear that Muslims were monotheists, and often suggested that in one way or another Muslims were part of a divine plan, and that their defeat and conversion would come only at a vital moment in the unfolding of God's plan for the world. They were not simply God's means of punishing errant Christians, but a far more significant group, like the Jews in their apocalyptic significance. Muslims had become like sin itself: impure and corrupting, yet inescapably a part of the fallen temporal world.

17 Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia de Machometo*, 260.

18 [pseudo]-Wilhelm von Tripolis, *De Statu Sarracenorum*, extermination of Muslims, p. 330; baptized 1000, p. 370.

19 Riccoldo de Monte Croce, "Epistolae V commentatorie de perditione Acconis 1291", 258–296.

20 Magister Thadeus, "Ystoria de desolatione et conculcatione civitatis Acconensis", 157.



#### 4 Franciscans and Islam

The Franciscans were the first Christian group to make the conversion of Muslims a significant part of their mission. Francis and his followers passionately believed in the transformation of the world. Following the example of the apostles, the friars sought to revitalize a weary and corrupt Christian world and bring salvation to those yet unconverted. Both the first rule of the Order, the *Regula non bullata* (1221) and the second, permanent one, the *Regula bullata* (1223), contained chapters devoted to missions among “Saracens and other unbelievers”.<sup>21</sup> Francis himself attempted to preach to the Muslims on three separate occasions, and before his death in 1226, friars had been sent out to al-Andalus and the Maghreb to convert Muslims.

Some of those first missionaries also became martyrs, beginning a long tradition that extended into the early modern period, and even into the present. Despite the importance placed on martyrs in the Christian tradition, Franciscan martyrs were largely ignored in the thirteenth century. The five friars who died in Morocco in 1220 were the first martyrs; according to the hagiographer of Anthony of Padua (1232), the story of the martyrs inspired the saint to become a Franciscan.<sup>22</sup> Cecilia da Spello, a sister in Clare of Assisi’s abbey, testified at her canonization in 1255 that Clare herself desired to go to Morocco, inspired by the martyrs.<sup>23</sup> However, no account of their suffering and deaths survives from before the 1320s, despite their seeming popularity.<sup>24</sup> The same is true of others; no full account of any Franciscan martyrdom survives from before 1320s.<sup>25</sup> The stories of martyrdom appealed to Franciscan audiences in the first decades of the fourteenth century in a way they did not in the thir-

21 “Regula non bullata”, ed. Esser, 268; “Regula bullata”, *ibid.*, 237–238.

22 *Sancti Antonii de Padua: Vitae duae quarum altera hucusque inedita*, 29–30. Anthony himself desired to travel to Saracen lands and to be martyred, but as with Francis, God had other plans. For more on the Moroccan martyrs, see Hellant-Donat, “La perception des premiers martyrs franciscains”; Ryan, “Missionary Saints of the High Middle Ages”.

23 Lazzeri, “Il processo di canonizzazione”, 465. These martyrs could also be the seven who died in Ceuta in 1227, but as the martyrs of 1220 were in general better known, Clare was more likely inspired by them.

24 The account in the British Library manuscript Cotton Nero A IX is the earliest example I have found, probably written sometime between 1324 and 1335.

25 The earliest detailed narratives recounting Franciscan martyrdom curiously come from the most recent deaths: the deaths of four Franciscan martyrs in India in 1321 were recorded in letters just months after. In contrast, the Franciscans who died in Morocco in 1220 did not receive a full account of their suffering (that has survived) until more than one hundred years after their deaths.

teenth century. The stories helped Franciscans reformulate their understanding of two troublesome topics: the place that Islam occupied in the world, and the division within the Franciscan Order over issues of poverty.

Martyrdoms are stories that order the world. Primarily expressions of minority or suppressed communities, martyrdoms reveal the proper order of the cosmos that is veiled in ordinary times by oppressive and unjust powers, whether worldly or otherwise. The death of the martyr makes clear that the powerless community is in fact beloved of God, and that the tyrants of this world are God's enemies. Reactions of observers and participants in the martyrdom reveal the relationship of the community to the world; are observers impressed by the martyrs and drawn to follow them? Or is the glory of the martyrs apparent only to those who are already believers? Martyrdom could thus function as a discourse on purity. Death cleanses the martyr of the filth of sin, and the martyr exchanges the coarse physical body of blood and guts for a new spiritual existence in heaven, where no impurity can again besmirch. In the Christian tradition, martyrdom could also cleanse the community of sin; the glory of the martyr inspired others to martyrdom, miracles converted onlookers from the filth of paganism, and the intimacy of the martyrs with God purified those in the community who sinfully had offered sacrifice to the pagan gods.<sup>26</sup>

## 5 Boundaries and Belonging: Orderly Martyrs

We might expect that the Franciscan accounts of the fourteenth century would follow this traditional pattern, and depict the friars' deaths as a purifying victory over Muslim pollution. This, however, was not usually the case. The majority of fourteenth-century martyr accounts featured few miracles, that is, divine demonstrations of power on the martyrs' behalf, caused no Muslims to convert, and gave no evidence of Christian victory, with the exception of the personal salvation of the individual friars.<sup>27</sup>

The majority of Franciscan stories instead followed a distinct narrative of their own that presented the reader with an intermingled Christian and Muslim world, but emphasized the need to separate them, and provided a means to do so. This agenda, while apparent in some of the earliest martyr accounts, grew more pronounced as the fourteenth century continued. The largest repository of martyr accounts was the *Chronica xxiv generalium ministrorum ordinis*

<sup>26</sup> See Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*; Grig, *Making Martyrs*.

<sup>27</sup> MacEvitt, "Martyrs and Muslims".

*minorum* (c. 1369), and it was there the desire to separate Christians from non-Christians was the strongest. The *Chronica* was probably written by the provincial minister of Aquitaine, Arnaud de Sarrant, and thus represented the perspective of at least some of the institutional leaders of the Order.<sup>28</sup>

The friars died the way that teenagers travel, only in groups. While the martyrs at times spoke of preaching and conversion, in deed as well as in word they focused overwhelmingly on achieving martyrdom.<sup>29</sup> In conversation with Urraca, queen of Portugal, the five Franciscans on their way to Morocco in 1220 told her, “we will die for the faith of Christ soon”,<sup>30</sup> while the three Franciscans killed in Armenia in 1314 similarly “were spurred on by passion for martyrdom”.<sup>31</sup> The friars chose a prominent location in a Muslim-ruled city, often the mosque, and there preached that salvation was only possible through Jesus Christ, denouncing the lies of the prophet Muhammad and his ‘demonic faith’. The insults to the prophet and Islam angered those listening, and the brothers most often were expelled, imprisoned or flogged as a result. When they persisted in their preaching and their insults, the authorities sentenced them to death, most commonly by beheading.

The conundrum that the martyr stories struggled with was not the *existence* of Islam. Muslims filled important, even necessary, roles in the accounts. The friars preached to the Muslims, the Muslims ignored their words, and then persecuted the friars for condemning Muhammad and Islam, enabling the Franciscans to demonstrate their absolute fidelity to the path of Christ by dying. No account recorded any Muslim converts, and few described any miracles. The local Christians, on the other hand, were problematic. In the language of Mary Douglas, local Christians within the world of Islam were “out of place”.<sup>32</sup> The mingling of Christians and Muslims in the cities of the Mediterranean was a subject of great concern; as Robin Vose has recently argued, Franciscans and Dominicans invested far more effort in separating Christians from Muslims and Jews in Christian-ruled cities than in trying to convert non-Christians there or elsewhere.<sup>33</sup> The martyrs associated with local

28 For more on the *Chronica*, see Dolso, *La Chronica xxiv Generalium*.

29 For a discussion of Franciscan motivation in missions, particularly to Central Asia, see Ryan, “Conversion or the Crown of Martyrdom”; id., “Conversion vs. Baptism?”.

30 *Chronica xxiv generalium ordinis minorum*, 3:16.

31 *Chronica xxiv generalium*, 412. The desire for martyrdom is of course a well-worn hagiographic trope, going back to at least Athanasios’s *Life of St. Anthony*. This trope, however, usually is used when the saint is *not* a martyr, like Anthony, and of course, Francis. What is distinctive about the Franciscan martyrs is that they both desire and achieve martyrdom.

32 Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 44.

33 Vose, *Dominicans, Muslims and Jews*, passim.

Christians when they first arrived in a Muslim city, but in the course of the narrative, the martyrs were separated from their local hosts, both physically and in character. The martyrs bravely faced their persecutors, while local Christians fled. The bodies of the martyrs returned to Christian lands (and generally only performed miracles there),<sup>34</sup> while local Christians remained in infidel lands. The narratives thus by the end judged that the indigenous Christians did not belong to the world of the martyrs; they were by nature, if not by faith, Saracen.

Furthermore, the accounts preserved in the *Chronica* had the opportunity to describe successful conversions, but refused to exploit them. Both the account of the martyrs of Morocco (1220) and of the martyrs of Armenia (1314) featured Muslims who intervened on behalf of the martyrs; in the latter account, the Muslim even died as a result of his defense of the friars.<sup>35</sup> In traditional martyrology, this would have been interpreted as a baptism by blood; the willingness of the Muslim to die for the martyrs was evidence of his Christian belief and of the power of the martyrs to inspire him, and his death would have ensured his salvation. However, the Franciscan accounts gave neither an explanation for why the Muslims aided the martyrs, nor any hint that they desired to be Christians or that they earned salvation through their suffering.

The account of two friars martyred in Muslim-ruled Valencia in 1231 in a similar manner went out of its way to disavow the possibility of conversion. The traditional conventions of martyrology would dictate that the tyrant who killed pious Christians should either convert, moved by the faith of the martyrs, or die a suitably painful and disgusting death; leprosy and explosive diarrhea were particularly favored. Abu Zayd, on the other hand, survived for six years following the martyrs' deaths, and then converted to Christianity—

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34 One of the few miracles that did appear in the martyrdom accounts was performed by the martyrs of Morocco in 1220. The Franciscans accompanied the Muslim army of Marrakesh who, under the command of a Portuguese *Infante*, were on a mission to punish Muslims rebelling against the caliph's authority. The army had run out of water, and the friars miraculously created a spring from which all the soldiers could fill their jugs. The paradox here is striking; the martyrs miraculously bolstered the military power of the infidel ruler who would shortly execute them, and who was himself a prime target of crusades launched in Spain. The account even emphasized that the miraculous spring that had saved the caliph's army dried up once the soldiers had drunk their fill; not even the land itself retained the impression of the friars' miraculous powers. (*Chronica xxiv generalium*, 18.) Nor of course did any of the soldiers convert as a result of being saved by the martyrs. See MacEvitt, "Martyrs and Muslims".

35 For the martyrs of 1220, see *Chronica xxiv generalium*, 18; for the martyrs of 1314, see London, British Library, Cotton Nero A IX 98r; Golubovich, *Biblioteca bio-bibliographica*, vol. II, 68; *Chronica xxiv generalium*, 415.

according to the *Chronica*, a capitulation to the Aragonese army rather than a belated acknowledgement of the power of the martyrs.<sup>36</sup> Although he was subsequently buried in the Franciscan convent in Valencia, and two of his granddaughters became Franciscan nuns, the *Chronica* made no connection between the Franciscan martyrs and Abu Zayd's Christianity.<sup>37</sup>

The martyrs were not the only Franciscans who journeyed to Muslim lands in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Other friars travelled and resided throughout North Africa, the Middle East, and beyond, serving as chaplains to enslaved Latin Christians, preaching to local Christian communities, and carrying diplomatic messages to infidel rulers. These Franciscans, however, did not get commemorated in the *Chronica*, or in other Franciscan accounts, though some could claim even success in missionizing. By choosing the stories of martyrs over the stories of missionaries, the author of the *Chronica* was tidying up the world. Christians living in Islamic lands did not share in the glory of the martyrs, nor were they appropriate audiences for Franciscan preaching and missionary work.<sup>38</sup>

The stories of the Franciscan martyrs abjured the explicit language of purity and pollution that earlier polemic against Islam employed; the Franciscans did not want to evoke language that suggested that the pollution of Islam could be cleansed. Even though this new discourse deliberately did not evoke pollution, it was grounded in a discourse of purity. Mary Douglas argued that "ideas about separating, purifying, demarcating, and punishing transgression have as their main function to impose system on an inherently untidy experience".<sup>39</sup> For Franciscans and other fourteenth-century Christians, their experience with Islam was untidy indeed; Muslim military victories over Christians and Muslim conquests of 'Christian' territories like Jerusalem were experienced as the intrusion of foreign polluting presences into the body politic of

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36 *Chronica xxiv generalium*, 187; Amorós Payá, "Los santos mártires franciscanos". For more on Abu Zayd, see Burns, "Almohad Prince and Mudejar Convert".

37 Abu Zayd took as his Christian name Vincent, the early Christian martyr of Valencia, not the name of either of the martyrs he himself produced. Burns, "Daughter of Abu Zayd".

38 For the most part, the chronicler also avoided mentioning martyrdoms that occurred in Mamluk lands. He did not mention, for example, the martyrdom of the custos James and the friar Jeremias with seven other friars in Mamluk Syria in 1269 (Golubovich, *Biblioteca bio-bibliographica*, II, 61). Likewise, friar Marco and his sixteen companions were ignored when they were martyred in Damascus in 1365 in the aftermath of King Peter of Cyprus's capture of Mamluk Alexandria in 1365 (Golubovich, *Biblioteca bio-bibliographica*, p. 62).

39 Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 5.

Christendom. Speaking of the Israelites and Biblical notions of purity, Mary Douglas noted that “the threatened boundaries of their body politic would be well mirrored in their care for the integrity, unity and purity of the physical body”.<sup>40</sup> Franciscans and other medieval Christians did react as Douglas here suggested; in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, they expressed greater anxiety about physical and sexual contact between Christians and non-Christians, encouraging non-Christians to live in separate areas of towns, and repeatedly linking non-Christians to notions of contagion. This emphasis on separation and the impossibility of crossing these boundaries paved the way for the later fifteenth-century emergence of the notion of *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood), which conceived of religious identities as biologically and genealogically determined, so that ‘Jewishness’ could not be removed even by the waters of holy baptism.<sup>41</sup> The martyrdom accounts, however, did not express their purity anxiety in terms of bodily pollution; instead, martyrdom itself was the purificatory gesture, a sacrifice to restore boundaries and balance.<sup>42</sup> The rejection of Christian residents in Islamic lands, the refusal to acknowledge or discuss conversion within the narrative, the rejection of missionary movements in related chronicles and narratives, and the sacrificial nature of martyrdom itself all reinforced and restored the perforated and tattered boundaries of Christendom.

## 6 Christian Impurity

Not all Franciscan martyrdom accounts, however, sought to separate Christians from Muslims. A few stayed true to the older tradition that saw martyrdom offering the possibility of conversion and transformation in the Muslim world. These accounts showed little concern for issues of purity in the interaction of Christians and Muslims, but underpinning their openness to transformation and conversion of the Muslim world was a belief in a great chasm within Christendom. The martyrs of India, who died in 1321, were among the most popular of martyrdom accounts in the fourteenth century. A Dominican missionary named Jordan Catala de Sévérac had been their companion on their journey to India, and his letter to his colleagues in Tabriz just a few months

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40 Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 153.

41 The scholarship on *limpieza* is vast. For some recent scholarship, see: David Nirenberg, “Mass Conversion and Genealogical Mentalities.”

42 See Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 207–220 for the significance of self-sacrifice.

after their deaths gave the first, brief, account of their martyrdom.<sup>43</sup> Odorico da Pordenone, a Franciscan missionary in India and China, gave the fullest account of their story just a few years later, and preserved the martyrs' relics.<sup>44</sup> Both accounts quickly began to circulate in Europe; the Franciscan friar Elemosina, writing in Assisi around 1335, copied both accounts.<sup>45</sup> Arnaud de Sarrant included them in his chronicle, mentioning both Jordan and Odorico, directly quoting from both in the appendix appended to many manuscripts.

The friars had been on their way to the city of Quilon (modern Kollam) on the southern tip of India, but the boat on which they embarked instead took them to Tana, about midway up the west coast of India near the modern city of Mumbai (Bombay). There they found housing with a group of Nestorian Christians,<sup>46</sup> and were caught up in a domestic squabble. When one of the men of the household severely beat his wife, she complained to the Muslim authorities.<sup>47</sup> The wife called three of the friars (Tommaso di Tolentino, Jacopo di Padua, and Demetrios, usually identified as an Armenian and a lay brother) to court as witnesses, and their appearance there distracted the *qadi* (the Muslim judge) from the judicial case of domestic violence into an interrogation of the friars' religious beliefs.<sup>48</sup> The three friars eventually offended the *qadi* with their views on Islam, and the Muslims among the audience demanded their death. The first attempt at execution was to place the friars in the sun, which according to Odorico, was inevitably fatal, "for the heat is so great that if one shall stand in the sun for the space of a single mass he will die

43 Gadrat, *Jordan Catala de Sévérac*, annexe I, 309–311.

44 The relics of the martyrs also undergo a curious journey quite different than those of other Franciscan martyrs. The Franciscan friar Odorico took them from tombs in which local Christians had buried them (Odorico noted that the custom of the country is to leave them exposed outside, a reference to Parsi customs), and carried the bones with him to Zeitoun in China, where he deposited them in the Franciscan convent there. The skull of Tommaso di Tolentino eventually made it back to his home city in the Marche of Ancona, where it can still be seen today. Although the bones did not remain in Tana, they did remain in a missionary context (at least at first). They also performed miracles in non-Christian lands, unlike the relics of other Franciscan martyrs.

45 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, ms. Latin 5006, 181v–182v, 183r–185r.

46 Odorico is the only one to identify them as such, in some manuscripts. Paris, BN, Lat. 5006 184r; see also the edition by van den Wyngaert, *Sinica Franciscana*, I: 424.

47 Tana was probably part of the Turkish sultanate of Delhi at the time. Henry Yule argued that the Emperor "Daldili" mentioned in the manuscripts is a mistaken transcription of "del Dili," or "of Delhi." Yule, *Cathay*, II: 115, n. 1.

48 That the Nestorian couple would have brought that case of domestic disturbance before a Muslim judge seems a suspicious detail.

outright”.<sup>49</sup> They miraculously survived this ordeal, and far more impressively, managed to survive the next attempt to kill them: immolation in a large fire kindled in the city’s center. The ruler of the city found this miraculous survival sufficiently convincing to order the release of the friars, but the *qadi* argued that to do so would be to undermine Islam, and so the ruler allowed the *qadi* to have the three secretly executed.

At first glance, the story seems to conform to the Franciscan pattern already discussed: the denunciation of Muhammad, followed by a trial, then death. But it diverged in significant ways. Unlike other Franciscans, these friars did not seek martyrdom, nor did they gratuitously insult Islam. Even when asked by the *qadi*, “What do you say about Machomet?” they replied diplomatically, “we have proved to you by arguments and instances that Christ, who was true God and true man, delivered our law to the world, and since him Machomet has come and delivered a law which is contrary to it. If you are wise, then you know what ought to be believed about him”.<sup>50</sup> The *qadi* was not satisfied by this reply and again demanded an answer. It was only at this point that the leader of the friars, Tommaso di Tolentino, gave the answer that would lead to their deaths; he admitted that they believed Muhammad to be a son of the devil and damned to eternal punishment. Odorico, himself a missionary, made clear that the friars attempted to avoid insulting Muhammad without being dishonest, and came before the authority of the *qadi* through no effort of their own. At each point in the narration, their actions were the opposite of their brethren in other Franciscan accounts.

The preservation of the three friars in the midst of the great fire stoked for them in the main plaza of the city was, in comparison with other martyr accounts, a striking intervention by God. This miracle, of course, replicated the miracle of the three Hebrew youths cast into the fire in the Book of Daniel (Dan. 3: 20–26). And like Nebuchadnezzar in that story, the leader of the city saw the miracle as evidence of the goodness of the friars and the value of their religious beliefs. The miraculous nature of their survival was also recognized by the city populace, who proclaimed, “it is a sin to offend them [the future martyrs], because they are saints and dear to God”. The ruler of Tana told the

49 *Sinica Franciscana*, 1: 427; translation from Yule, *Cathay*, 120.

50 *Sinica Franciscana*, 1: 426–427; translation from Yule, *Cathay*, 119. Revealingly, the account of the martyrdom recorded in the body of the *Chronica* left out this part of the story, and simply has the friars launching directly into an attack on Muhammad as the son of the devil. *Chronica xxiv generalium*, 475. The appendix, on the other hand, gave an extended version of the dispute, including a version of this quote, *Chronica xxiv generalium*, 599–600.



friars that “your religion is good and holy and true”. Likewise, the citizens “were standing about in a state of awe and astonishment”, saying, “we have seen from these men, things so great and marvelous, that we know not what law we ought to follow and keep”.<sup>51</sup> Although the friars did not have the opportunity to baptize anyone, the people and ruler recognized the martyrs as saints and proclaimed their faith to be true; at the same time the Dominican Jordan was engaged in a successful preaching campaign in the area around Tana.<sup>52</sup> The accounts of the martyrs of Tana, in contrast to other Franciscan martyr narratives, offered the possibility that infidels might see divine truth, and that they may even become faithful Christians.

Odorico composed his account of his Asian travels in 1330, when he had returned to Europe. The account of the martyrs was a part of the larger narrative of the wonders he had seen, and joined accounts like that of Marco Polo introducing the marvels of China and India to Latin Christian readers. Yet it is the story of the martyrs that gained attention the soonest; in 1335 the Franciscan Elemosina incorporated Odorico’s account of the martyrs into his own world chronicle.<sup>53</sup> Odorico’s account was thus composed and was circulating at the same time as the accounts of earlier martyrs, such as those of Morocco (1220) and Armenia (1314). Why was Odorico’s story so different from the other Franciscan martyr accounts? Much of the difference arose from the allegiance that Odorico and the martyrs themselves may have shared to a rigorist interpretation of the Franciscan rule and to the Last Testament of Francis—that is, they were spiritual Franciscans.

The leader of the Tana martyrs, Tommaso di Tolentino, was imprisoned in 1274 for placing fidelity to the Franciscan rule over obedience to the leaders of the Order and even to the pope.<sup>54</sup> In 1290, he was released and spent the remainder of his life between missionary work in the Middle East and Western

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51 Paris, BN, Lat. 5006, 184r–184v; *Sinica Franciscana*, 1: 429–430; *Chronica xxiv generalium*, 475, 602. Odorico was vague about the religious identity of the population of the city. In his longer *Descriptio orientaliū*, which contained his account of the martyrs, Odorico described the “people” of the region as idolaters who worshipped fire, snakes, and trees, but explained that the Saracens ruled the land. In the text of the martyrdom, he mentioned only the Nestorians with whom the martyrs dwelled, the Muslims who participated in the debate, and the citizens of the city, who were only once identified as “idolaters and all the others.” *Sinica Franciscana*, 1: 423, 430.

52 Gadrat, *Jordan Catala de Sévérac*, 310.

53 Two autographs of his chronicle survive: Paris, BN, Lat. 5006 and Assisi, 341. For more on Elemosina, see v. d. Brincken, “‘Oriens Christianus’”; Fossier, “Le chroniques de Fra Paolo da Gualdo”.

54 Burr, *Spiritual Franciscans*, 44.

Europe.<sup>55</sup> We know less about the other martyrs, but their willingness to be his companions suggests at least some sympathy for the spiritual movement. Such close association with someone already punished for disobedience would not be a connection taken on lightly, particularly in the 1310s and 20s; in 1318 four friars had been burned at the stake in Marseilles for refusing to submit to the Order's conception of poverty.<sup>56</sup>

Odorico's allegiance to the spiritual movement, however, is less evident. Giordano Brunettin argues that Odorico was indeed sympathetic to spiritual ideals, and suggests that he can be linked to refuges in Friuli for those fleeing persecution, and that the reason Odorico spent so much of his religious life overseas was in part because he feared arrest and persecution for his spiritual allegiances, just as Tommaso became a missionary in Armenia following his incarceration.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, this argument is largely speculative, and little evidence can be marshaled to tie Odorico convincingly to the spirituals.<sup>58</sup> Nor, however, can this suggestion be disproved.

Tommaso and his companions, unsurprisingly, did not leave behind any texts by which we might judge what they believed about their missions, martyrdom, or the Order. However, Tommaso had engaged in missionary work with Angelo Clareno (c. 1247–1337), and Angelo's letters and history preserve some sense of how Tommaso and his colleagues may have thought about their endeavors. Angelo and Tommaso became associates early on; they had been imprisoned together in Italy in 1274, and when released by the sympathetic new minister-general Raymond Geoffroi in 1290, were sent together on a missionary trip to Armenian Cilicia. After Angelo returned to Italy and took refuge in the Benedictine abbey in Subiaco, he wrote a chronicle of the tribulations of the spiritual movement (c. 1330), and argued that from the beginning of the order, two communities existed; one devoted to poverty and the Franciscan rule as laid down by Francis (the spirituals), and the other devoted to worldly power and advancement (the so-called conventuals).

In the prologue to his history, Angelo recounted that Francis had predicted that "many will enter the religion who will begin to live not for Christ but for themselves and who will follow carnal prudence more than obedience to the faith and to the Rule". In contrast, "there will be some brothers who will be innocent and who will walk faithfully, but they will be afflicted and oppressed

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55 Ryan, "Preaching Christianity", 360.

56 For more on the four friars and those who venerated them as martyrs, see Burnham, *Beguine Heretics of Languedoc*.

57 Brunettin, "Odorico da Pordenone".

58 Tilatti, "Oderico da Pordenone", 330.

by grief and weariness caused by their remembrance of the earlier good state and of how things have become different".<sup>59</sup> One group would have success in the world of money, advancement, and power, and the other, fewer in number, "will be preceded by gifts and blessings of overwhelming grace from the Lord, and will ascend to the heights of supreme perfection".<sup>60</sup> For spiritual Franciscans, this division was not just a distinction of morality; it was also one of purity. Nor were they alone in this perspective; it was commonplace in the medieval world, and even in the modern. Money was dirty; coins corrupted. Holy men in Christian hagiography avoid touching money with the same avidity that they avoided physical contact with women; it held an equal power to corrupt. The margins of manuscripts in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries sometimes featured apes and monkeys, beastly versions of humans, defecating coins into golden bowls; Freud himself commented on the link between money and excrement.<sup>61</sup>

Angelo saw this pattern of oppression played out not in the early history of the Order, but even in his own life, and thus in Tommaso's as well. When both Angelo and Tommaso were sent to Armenian Cilicia in 1290, Angelo wrote that the Armenians welcomed them there (and indeed King Het'um II later became a Franciscan).<sup>62</sup> But their work there was cut short, not by Armenian resistance to their message, but by the harassment of conventual Franciscans in nearby Syria, who forced them to leave, a part of the 'Fifth Tribulation' suffered by the spirituals.<sup>63</sup>

Angelo saw Franciscan history as the struggle between the pure, who remained true to Christ's (through Francis) teaching of poverty, and those who persecuted them, corrupted by the things of this world. Missionary work and the desire for martyrdom served as a vital pivot in his history; Angelo ended

59 Angelo Clareno, *Liber Chronicarum*, 126–128; translation in *History of the Seven Tribulations*, transl. Burr and Daniel, 14.

60 *Liber Chronicarum*, 132; transl. in *History of the Seven Tribulations*, 16. This was again reinforced in the vision Francis had of the angel with the head of gold, chest of silver, stomach of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of clay that represented the decline of the Order. *Liber Chronicarum*, 148–152; *History of the Seven Tribulations*, 22–24.

61 Freud, *Dreams in Folklore*, 37.

62 The date when Het'um took the Franciscan habit and the name John is not clear; Angus Stewart suggests some time after 1294, Stewart, *The Armenian Kingdom and the Mamluks*, 98–99.

63 *Liber Chronicarum*, 546–554; trans. in *History of the Seven Tribulations*, 153–155. Angelo first leveled this charge in the letter he wrote to Pope John XXII around 1317. Angelo Clareno, *Angeli Clareni Opera*, book I, *Epistole*, 242–243. See also Von Auw's discussion in *Angelo Clareno et les spirituels italiens*, 23–34.

his prologue with Francis preaching to the Ayyubid sultan al-Malik al-Kāmil in Egypt. The First Tribulation began at this time:

[...] while the shepherd Francis was away in Egypt, a greedy wolf attempted to plunder and disperse his flock, and the gate was opened to him by those ministers who ought to have opposed his scoffing and who more than others were supposed to guard against his snares.<sup>64</sup>

Angelo depicted Francis' preaching in Egypt as similar to his own in Armenian Cilicia, and as Odorico depicted the effect of the martyrs in Tana: the people of distant lands recognized the authentic piety of the Franciscans. Had Francis been able to continue his preaching in Egypt, Angelo implied, he would have been able to build on his apparent conversion of the sultan and taken him up on his offer to remain in Egypt, presumably to convert its population.<sup>65</sup> Although we cannot be certain to what extent Tommaso and Odorico shared Angelo's vision of Franciscan history, it seemed for the spirituals that the division between pure and impure was not between Christians and Muslims (or infidels), but a division within Christendom itself, most evident within the Franciscan order.

Where the conventual Franciscan narrative sought to emphasize the difference between Christian and infidel worlds, the spirituals saw little such difference. The true enemy of the faithful friar was not the Muslim or pagan overseas, to whom the friars came bearing the salvific word of God, but the perfidious Franciscans at home who had so twisted the teachings of Jesus and Francis, the words of gospel and rule, that true fidelity was often impossible within Christendom. Spiritual Franciscans had no need to travel to *partes infidelium* to achieve martyrdom; it was available at home, as the execution of the four friars in Marseilles in 1318 showed with terrifying clarity. Angelo made this connection clear in his chronicle: when another Franciscan opposed the imprisonment of Tommaso di Tolentino in Italy, the protesting Franciscan was punished with "Saracen-like cruelty", "detained in accordance with that law that so resembled a Mahometan law".<sup>66</sup> If Riccoldo da Montecroce feared that God had become a Muslim, Angelo knew that the leaders of the Franciscan order had certainly done so.

The division of the world into good and bad Christians also served as an alternative response to the challenge that a victorious Islam presented to

64 *Liber Chronicarum*, 168; trans. in *History of the Seven Tribulations*, 31.

65 Tolan, *The Saint and the Sultan*, 147–161.

66 *Liber Chronicarum*, 540, trans. in *History of the Seven Tribulations*, 151.

Christendom. Spiritual Franciscans could entertain the hope of the transformation of the Muslim world because it was evident to them why Christians had not succeeded in its transformation before—Christians corrupted by wealth and the world had made it impossible. Had Francis not been forced to return to Italy from Egypt, Angelo Clareno implied, this whole vexing issue of conversion, crusade, and transformation might well have been avoided, for the saint would have succeeded in converting the sultan and a large number of his subjects. Conventual Franciscans, on the other hand, were left with only being able to explain the failure of crusade and mission on a large scale by portraying Islam as untransformable. Martyrdom by its grammar of death was a story that cannot be surpassed; its appeal to fourteenth-century (primarily conventual) Franciscans was that it expressed Christian superiority over Islam in ways that made Muslim response irrelevant, and clearly separated pure Christians from the unclean Muslim world. Martyrdom guaranteed success, but at the price of accepting Islam as a permanent presence in the material world.

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# Purifying the Pure: The *Visuddhimagga*, Forest-Dwellers and the Dynamics of Individual and Collective Prestige in Theravāda Buddhism

*Sven Bretfeld*

## 1 Introduction

In Buddhist semantic systems concepts that can be translated as “purity” have many candidates and fields of semantic and pragmatic application. In Sanskrit and related Indian languages the relevant terms are derived mainly from the verbal roots *śudh* and *śuc*, both meaning “to become clean or pure” and “to cleanse, to purify” in their causative forms. Numerous nominal forms—with or without a modifying prefix—can be found in Buddhist literature, some of which denote special meanings, others vary from having generic and technical meanings. Of these nominal derivatives the Pāli term *visuddhi* has made a unique career as a soteriological term in so-called Theravāda Buddhism. The commentator Buddhaghosa used this term as a key concept in his famous *Visuddhimagga*, the “Path to Purity,” which presents the disciplinary and mental training leading to liberation as a series of gradually achieved stages of purity. Apart from soteriology purity plays a key role in the highly disputed question of the condition of the Sāsana, i. e. the institutions of Buddhist religion. In this discourse the metaphor of purity provides a central epistemology for the evaluation of religious culture as the potentially unstable basis of social welfare. The criteria for the purity of the Sāsana include most prominently the question whether the Saṅgha, the collective of monks and nuns, is firmly established in monastic discipline, lineage affiliation and adherence to an authentic textual transmission. The notion of a naturally progressing decadence of the Sāsana has been instrumental in this discourse. By extension, canonization,<sup>1</sup> orthopraxy and orthodoxy were shaped by the question of who represents the authority of the pure Sāsana.

In this article I will examine some of the social dynamics resulting from the concept of purity. I will argue that both semantic fields—soteriological and institutional purity—have far-reaching social consequences due to their mutual entanglement. The production and distribution of religious prestige is an

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Collins, “Idea of the Pāli Canon.”

important result deriving from this “knowledge regime”. Purity in both semantic fields is a concern that encodes social distinction and leads to political action. In this respect it is vital that purity as a value-system is not a binary category but a scale. A person, group or institution is not either pure or impure. Hence, purifying or polluting activity can improve or corrupt the degree of purity.

## 2 Purity of Mind

Achieving purity of mind is an ancient expression for the goal of the path revealed by the Buddha. Applying the metaphor of cleansing to describe the effect of ascetic practice seems to have been common in the East-Indian Śramaṇa movement around the time of Siddhārtha Gautama. One group of this ascetic movement, the Jains, imagined the soul (*jīva*) to be polluted by the dirt of Karma or by the deeds collected through countless former rebirths. This filth (*kleśa*) burdens the soul and ties it to the lower realms of rebirth. But the *kleśa* can be removed by burning it through harsh ascetic practices which allows the soul to ascend to higher states of rebirth and, in the end, to Nirvāna which is located at the peak of the world.

Buddhists borrowed this term but interpreted the *kleśas* more psychologically as “polluting” mental factors that shaped the processes of consciousness. They can be removed by a mental training which culminates in a form of supernatural knowledge. The notion of pollution and purity of mind was preserved as a central metaphor in Buddhist soteriological terminology. Utmost purity is ascribed to Arhats and especially to the Buddha himself. Many attributes and epithets of the Buddha associate him with purity, which not only qualifies his moral conduct and mental constitution but also his physical appearance, since he was “born in the world, grew up in the world, dwelt—having overcome the world—undefiled by the world.”<sup>2</sup> The more these concepts advanced toward the interpretation of the Buddha’s nature as supernatural, the more his physical appearance comes to be imagined as an “embodiment” of purity.<sup>3</sup> It may

<sup>2</sup> SN III, 140.

<sup>3</sup> Illustrative of the different ideas about the Buddha’s physical purity virulent among the early Buddhist communities is a notion refuted in the *Kathāvatthu*. It is ascribed to the Andhaka and Uttarapāṭha schools by the commentary: *Buddhassa Bhagavato uccārapassāvo atīvīya aññe gandhajāte adhigarihātīti* “Even the excrement and urine of the Buddha, the Exalted One, excelled all other well-smelling (things).” This is refuted by the author of the *Kathāvatthu* with hardly hidden irony: *Bhagavā gandhabhojīti? . . . Nanu Bhagavā odanakummāsaṃ bhūñjatīti? . . . Atthi keci Buddhassa Bhagavato uccārapassāvaṃ nahāyanti vilimpenti uccārenti peḷāya patisāmenti karaṇḍāya nikkhipenti āpaṇe pasārenti, tena ca gandhena gandhakaraṇīyaṃ karontīti?* “Did the Exalted One feed on perfumes? . . . Is it not that

be added that the standard Tibetan translation of the Sanskrit term *buddha* is *sañs-rgyas*, which means “the exceedingly pure one”—here the pristine meaning of the term Buddha, “the Awakened One,” is replaced by a term highlighting the master’s purity.

In his *Visuddhimagga*, the famous 5th century commentator Buddhaghosa gives an extensive systematic description of the path to Nirvāna structured as the gradual achievement of seven kinds or stages of purification (*visuddhi-sata*), and Nirvāna itself is purity in the ultimate sense.<sup>4</sup> This is unusual. Although purification ranks as an important concept to describe the effects of ideal monastic practice, it is rare that the complete way to final Nirvāna is presented homogeneously under this metaphor. In the Tipiṭaka (the canonical collection of the Buddha’s word) the seven stages of purification occur only as a minor concept in two dialogues (*sutta*) of the Sutta-Piṭaka. In one of them, the *Rathavinītasutta* (MN I, 145–151), the scheme of the seven purifications is characterized as an incomplete layout of the path, because the final goal of practice was not purification or purity of whatever kind. Rather, according to this text, the seven purifications must be regarded as a series of vehicles that have to be mounted one after another in order to reach the final destination, which is complete Nirvāna without remainder (*anupādāna-parinibbāna*). The scheme according to Buddhaghosa is as follows:

	purification	category of training	practice
1	purification of discipline	discipline ( <i>sīla</i> )	monk’s life in perfect accordance with the Vinaya rules
2	purification of mind	absorption ( <i>samādhi</i> )	meditative training of the pacification type ( <i>samatha</i> )
3	purification of view	wisdom ( <i>paññā</i> )	meditative training of the insight type ( <i>vipassanā</i> )
4	purification of eradication of doubt	"	"

he fed on rice-gruel? . . . (Furthermore), if your point was true, would not people have used the Buddha’s excrement and urine for bathing, for anointing, wouldn’t they have collected it and arranged it in boxes or put it in baskets to offer it in the markets? Wouldn’t they have produced perfumes with it?” (Kv, 563).

4 Vism(W), 4: *Tattha “visuddhi” ti sabbamalaviharitaṃ accantaparisuddhaṃ nibbānaṃ veditabbaṃ*. “Here, ‘purity’ has to be understood as Nirvāna, which is free from all stains and utterly purified.”

	purification	category of training	practice
5	purification of knowledge view concerning path and non-path	"	"
6	purification of proceeding knowledge view	"	"
7	purification of knowledge view	"	"

The *Rathavinātasutta* itself neither refers to the three categories of training (*sikkhā*) nor does it include information on the concrete practices that lead to the seven purifications. However, the commentary on this Sutta, which is also attributed to Buddhaghosa, refers to the *Visuddhimagga* for a detailed explication of the seven purifications.<sup>5</sup> So at least from the time of the Pāli commentaries (5th cent.) and for Buddhaghosa's school, the standard exegesis of the purification of the *Rathavinātasutta* seems to have followed the pattern of the above table.<sup>6</sup>

In the second canonical reference, the *Dasottarasutta* (DN III, 288), the scheme was extended to nine purifications through the addition of the "purification of wisdom" (*paññāvisuddhi*) and the "purification of liberation" (*vimuttivisuddhi*).<sup>7</sup> Obviously this addition provides what is lacking in the seven-fold list. Wisdom (*paññā*)—well known from several contexts as representing the highest form of knowledge—and liberation (*vimutti*) consummate the series and render the stages of purification as a complete structure of the path to the final goal. It is, however, interesting that Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga*, although it intends to be a full description of the path, is based

5 MN-a(ChS), I 257: ... *paṭipāṭiyā satta visuddhiyo pucchi, tasmaṃ vitthāarakathā Visuddhimagge vuttā.*

6 On the one hand, the assignment of the purifications to the categories of training and practices appears quite consistent, so I think it is entirely possible that this assignment originated in pre-Buddhaghosa exegesis. On the other hand, we have to keep in mind that the tripartite scheme of *sīla-samādhi-paññā* is quite common pattern in Theravāda exegesis (see its role in the interpretation of the eightfold path). So we are dealing with the application of a strong conceptual means of homogenizing the contents of the Tipiṭaka.

7 The same nine-fold scheme is attested in the parallel Sanskrit *Daśottarasūtra* from Turfan. Schlingloff, *Dogmatische Begriffsreihen*.

on the seven-fold scheme, instead of using the complete list of nine. Therefore, Buddhaghosa dealt with the achievement of the ultimate goal under the heading of the seventh purification (knowledge view) which contradicts the scope of the purifications as defined in the *Rathavinītasutta*.

What does all that mean? First of all, the sequence of the seven purifications does not apply to every person who might be called a Buddhist. Unlike the well-known eightfold path, the seven purifications do not include instructions that can be easily applied to lay-people. Already in the *Rathavinītasutta* the purifications are associated exclusively with the *brahmacariya*, a celibate way of life. In the *Visuddhimagga*, too, the purifications start with the disciplinary training of monks.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the seven purifications are intended as a to-do list (or rather: a to-gain list) for somebody who has entered the life of a monk (or nun).<sup>9</sup> As we will see, this exclusivity increases dramatically when it comes to the second and higher purifications.

Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* gives long descriptions of what a person has to fulfill in order to achieve the seven purifications. The larger part of the purification scheme, namely the second to seventh purifications, are technical terms for certain meditative<sup>10</sup> attainments. Each of them defines the goal of a specific phase of mental training. Though it is not explicitly stated in the *Visuddhimagga*, the logic seems to imply that the purifications might be lost if the meditator interrupts his training, dies or fails to maintain his discipline. If this happens, the respective stage must be attained again. The first purification—in theory—is pursued by everybody who takes up the vows of a monk. Buddhaghosa talks about the “cleanness” and the “muddiness” (*saṅkilesa*) of discipline.<sup>11</sup> The discipline is muddy if it is “broken” by violations of the monastic rules (*pāṭimokkha*), in as far as these violations are motivated by greed, anger, pride, sexual lust etc. Transgressions not connected to these motives, for example, a mistake out of carelessness (*pamādadosa*), must be expiated by disciplinary measures (*paṭikkamma*) but they do not *break* discipline. Consequently, the “cleanness of discipline” consists of more than the non-violation of the monastic rules: it is the physical non-transgression of the disciplinary rules

8 Lay-people could have been included, as they are persons who are defined by their vow to practice the initial stages of *sīla*, but this is beyond the scope of the *Visuddhimagga* and does not occur in the *Rathavinītasutta* or its commentary.

9 Buddhaghosa uses only the male gender in most of his book.

10 I will use the term meditation specifically as a translation for *bhāvanā* as this word is used in the *Visuddhimagga*.

11 “Cleanness” (*vohāra*) is not the same term as purification (*visuddhi*) (*Vism(W)*, 41–43).

but also the mental control over certain emotions and feelings.<sup>12</sup> According to Buddhaghosa this is the result of training. The “cleanness of discipline” comes about through contemplation of the boon of discipline (*śīlasampattiyā ānisaṃsadassana*) and the bane of its lack (*śīlavipattiyā ādinavadassana*). Thus it seems that Buddhaghosa considers not every person who strictly observes the rules as having reached the “purification of discipline.” Rather, his explanation points to the understanding of this term as a stabilized attitude that does not *consist in* but *result from* a monastic conduct of life. It is an attitude in which one “is disinclined toward undisciplined (action) and inclined to the attainment of discipline.”<sup>13</sup>

That the purification of discipline is considered a mental attitude rather than physical behavior becomes clearer when we turn to its function for the next stages of purification. While the attainment of the purification of discipline has little to do with meditation, the other six purifications are the product of meditative effort (*bhāvanā*). The purification of discipline is regarded by Buddhaghosa as the base of meditative development, because without pure discipline the mind is agitated by remorse and the necessary mental stability cannot be attained. The “naturalized” discipline associated with the first purification, however, is said to lead smoothly over to the meditative absorption of mind (*samādhi*).<sup>14</sup> It is significant that Buddhaghosa uses a special term for those people aiming for the higher purifications. These are not ordinary monastics but a special type of monk called *yogāvacara* or *yogī*, “people who practice Yoga.” We will see later that this type of monk belonged to a rather rare species, often distinct in appearance and spatially separated from “ordinary” monks.

The topics associated with the attainment of the second purification, the purification of mind, account for one-half of the *Visuddhimagga*, 301 out of 614 pages in a modern printed edition. The term purification of mind might be misleading for a reader unacquainted with the technical terminology of Buddhist soteriology. According to Theravāda doctrine *cittavisuddhi* is not a permanent transformation of mind, but a highly transitory state in which the mind is temporarily “cleansed” from certain mental constraints (*nīvaraṇa*), namely sensual desire (*kāmacchanda*), malevolence (*vyāpāda*), fatigue and dullness (*thīna-middha*), agitation and perturbation (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), and doubt (*vicikicchā*). This state of mind arises when a certain level of mental concentration is reached and continues for some time after

12 Vism(W), 43.

13 Vism(W), 47: *śīlavipattito ubbijjivā śīlasampattinīnaṃ mānaṣaṃ hoti*.

14 Vism(W), 43.



“indefatigably protected like the embryo of a king”<sup>17</sup> instead of overhastily attempting to proceed towards deeper levels of Samādhi. When the purification of mind is attained, the Yogī develops a mental force called samatha, “pacification”. In Samādhi the mind is pacified by the temporary absence of the above-mentioned constraints (*nīvaraṇa*). With this purified and invigorated mind the meditator turns to different meditation subjects which, as he imbues them with the achieved mental calmness and clarity, give rise to Wisdom (*paññā*). The gradual development of Wisdom is what the rest of the seven purifications is about. Absorption, thus, can be compared to a purifying bath. The mind is temporarily cleansed from certain constraints and empowered through “pacification.” It can, now, turn to the permeation of truth, the actual aim of the practice. While abiding in a Samādhi state, such knowledge cannot be produced, since the single-pointedness of the mind (*cittakaggatā*), which is constitutive for Samādhi, does not allow for inspection and analysis. Therefore, the Yogī has to arise from Samādhi and turn his attention toward the nature of body and mind. This can be done by retrospectively investigating the Samādhi state he has just experienced. Others can take the material elements (earth, fire, water, air) or the production of consciousness through sense perception and thinking as objects of investigation. This gives rise to a second mental force (next to samatha), namely “insight” (*vipassanā*). When insight grows, the chosen subject appears to the meditator “as it really is” and he gains a “vision according to its true nature” (*yāthāva-dassana*). The attainment of this vision is the purification of view (*ditṭhi-visuddhi*).

The further growth of insight leads to the fourth to the seventh purifications. At each stage the Yogī better understands things “according to their true nature”. The fifth stage implies the overcoming of a crisis. Here, the still imperfectly developed powers of insight start to give rise to bright visions (*obhāsa*), intense pleasant feelings and mental powers. This stage can be erroneously interpreted as the final goal. But in reality the attainment of Nirvāna is still far away. After the Yogī has understood that these phenomena are nothing but by-products of insight, he has reached the fifth purification. The sixth stage consists of the attainment of a large fund of knowledge (*ñāṇa*). Up to this point all progress might be lost again. This changes when the Yogī reaches the seventh purification. The purification of the knowledge view (*ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*) is identical to the experience of the “supermundane path” (*lokuttara-magga*). This is a technical term that must not be confused with the path-metaphor used in other contexts. The “supermundane path” is a brief moment of realization that transforms the Yogī from an “ordinary being”

17 Vism(W), 103: *taṃ nimittaṃ appamattena cakkavattigabbho viya rakkhitabbaṃ.*



(*puthujana*) to a “realized person” (*ariyapuggala*) or a “saint.” This is still not the end, because there are four stages of being a “realized person.” If the Yogī succeeds in reaching the fourth stage of sainthood within this very life, he will never be reborn again and has attained Nirvāna. If not, he still has up to seven lifetimes remaining.

### 3 The Visuddhimagga: A Manual for Yogīs?

According to his introduction, Buddhaghosa wrote his *Visuddhimagga* for Yogīs who strive for purity but have not yet been able to find it.<sup>18</sup> In the epilogue he again mentions purity-desiring Yogīs as the target readers of the book.<sup>19</sup> Hence, the *Visuddhimagga* locates itself in the social context of monastics conducting a meditative lifestyle. But is it meant as a guideline for practice and in what sense? Compared to other Hīnayāna meditation manuals like the so-called *Yogāvacara’s Manual* or the (supposedly Indian) *Yogalehrbuch from Qizil*,<sup>20</sup> the *Visuddhimagga* is distinguished by its treatment of advanced topics of Buddhist scholarly discourse. In this respect it is closer to the *Bhāvanākrama* (“Stages of Meditation”) composed by Kamalaśīla in 8th century Tibet. Especially the last third of the *Visuddhimagga*—the part on Wisdom (or the third to seventh purifications)—could well be used as an introduction into the complexities of Abhidhamma teachings.<sup>21</sup> A purely practical manual that explains meditation techniques to meditators could have worked with less Abhidhamma terminology and less amalgamation between practical instruction and canonical exegesis. This can be seen in the *Vimuttimagga*, the direct predecessor and model of the *Visuddhimagga*,<sup>22</sup> which is also a comprehensive and scholarly treatment of the same topic but manages with far fewer specialized references.

18 Vism(W), 4.

19 Vism(W), 4.

20 Schlingloff, *Ein buddhistisches Yogalehrbuch*.

21 As Frauwallner, “Abhidharma-Studien IV,” 130 found out, this part of the *Visuddhimagga* was in fact based on the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, an Abhidhamma text that did not find its way to the Abhidhamma-Piṭaka probably due to the late date of its composition (ca. 2nd cent. C.E.) but that was included in the Khuddaka-Nikāya.

22 There is a discussion about the original language, place of origin and school affiliation of the *Vimuttimagga*. Even the—in my opinion obvious—direct genealogical relationship between the *Vimuttimagga* and the *Visuddhimagga* was doubted by some scholars. For this discussion see Skilling, “Vimuttimagga and Abhayagiri,” Crosby, “History versus Modern Myth,” and Analayo, “Treatise on the Path to Liberation.”

Apparently, it was not Buddhaghosa's intention to provide mere technical advice to meditators (or meditation teachers)<sup>23</sup> or to accurately describe the meditative scenery of his time. I will argue in the following that the *Visuddhimagga* can rather be regarded as an attempt to resolve the tension between two different types of monks—a minority of meditating hermits and a more “priestly” and scholarly oriented majority—that had developed distinct social features. We find the distinction between these two types of monks throughout history from an early time. The denominations and stereotypes connected with both types have changed over time, but the demarcation lines became increasingly visible and resulted in a formal and organizational separation by the 13th century.

Already in the 5th century Buddhaghosa mentions “rag-wearers” (*paṃsukūlika*) and “forest-dwellers” (*araññavāsins*). In the *Visuddhimagga* he describes the practice of wearing only rags picked up from graveyards or from other people's rubbish and sewn together and the practice of living at a distance from villages and towns. These practices appear in a list of 13 austerities (*dhutaṅga*) that a monk can opt for as a tour-de-force to purify his discipline. The *Visuddhimagga* also shows evidence that these groups were especially associated with meditation and that some tensions existed between these ascetics and “ordinary” monks.<sup>24</sup>

23 I can see no evidence that the *Visuddhimagga* was written as “meta-guidance,” i. e. a manual exclusively for meditation teachers about how to instruct pupils. This kind of semi-esoteric manual is known from other meditation instructions, for example, the *Wu men chan jing* 五門禪經 “Sūtra on the Five Gates of Meditation” (\*Pañcadhyānadvārasūtra), a meditation manual possibly from Kashmir preserved in Chinese translation (T. 619), which presents its topics by portraying rapport sessions between teacher and pupil. Sometimes this book gives information which is important for the teacher but need not to be known by the pupil (cf. Bretfeld, “Visuelle Repräsentation,” 192–197). Similarly some modern Vipassanā teachers like Mahasi Sayadaw, while basing their methods and teachings on high-level Abhidhamma scholarship, regard too much knowledge on advanced doctrinal matters on the part of the pupils as a potential obstacle to their progress.

24 In the description of dwelling-places unsuitable for meditators, Buddhaghosa mentions monasteries where antagonistic or contentious monks (*visabhāgaveribhikkhū*) live. In depicting such monks, Buddhaghosa writes: “When they are quarreling and the (meditator) requests them: ‘Sirs, could you stop that’ they reject/dismiss him saying: ‘Since the day that rag-wearer has come here, we are in trouble.’” (*Vism(W)*, 98: *ye kalaham karontā mā bhante evaṃ karonthā ti variyamānā etassa paṃsukūlikassa āgatakā lato paṭṭhāya natṭhā ’mhā ti vattāro bhavanti.*) The use of the word “rag-wearer” (*paṃsukūlika*) as a designation (here with possibly disrespectful undertones) for a monk following a meditative lifestyle, hints at a common association between meditation and asceticism as early as the *Visuddhimagga*.

The way in which the *Visuddhimagga* treats the topic of meditation indicates that it was not usual for monks to pursue rigorous training in advanced meditation (*bhāvanā*) when the text was written. Buddhaghosa's lengthy recommendations of ideal and inapt abodes for monks pursuing the second purification makes clear that for Yogīs remote dwelling-places well away from villages and towns were preferable. Carrithers<sup>25</sup> states that the Saṃgha of Sri Lanka consisted chiefly of "village priests, preachers, and scholars, the literary and cultural elite of a nation." His conclusion is, hence, that "a monk who went to the forest to follow the path of purification renounced not the household life, but the life of a cultural specialist in society." This means that a meditating monk is, in a way, a double renouncer: He (1) forgoes the household life and he also renounces (2) the relatively comfortable—and in some cases rather luxurious—lifestyle of an "ordinary" monk. The *Visuddhimagga* indicates that "double renouncers" not only had extraordinary prestige but that they were also regarded as a threat to the monastic establishment. It seems that already Buddhaghosa encountered the cliché that the ascetic, meditator type of monk acted as a notorious admonisher trying to impose his norms on his fellow brethren.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, this cliché turns out to be a prelude to concrete pressure and royal religio-political measures especially from the 12th century onwards. Conceptually this demarcation is reflected in the distinction between "village-dwelling" (*gāmaṃvāsī*) and "forest-dwelling" (*araññāvāsī*) monks. Also in the modern age the esteem for "double renouncers"—especially those trying to bring reforms to the structures of the Saṃgha—varies between high prestige and strong emotional pressure and disdain from their more conservative or hierarchically minded fellow brethren. This is particularly so since the modern ascetic movement is chiefly supported by poor people and the lower castes.<sup>27</sup>

So, was Buddhaghosa writing exclusively for small groups of forest-dwelling monks? This is possible. However, we have to take into account that the stages and techniques of meditation, though maybe not widely practiced, will nevertheless have been a major topic of Buddhist scholarship. The text participates in the high-level scholarly discourse of Buddhist epistemology and dogmatics and approaches the lifestyle of a meditating recluse from that field of knowledge. A meditator, though (as an ideal-type) not a professional scholar, should firmly root his practice in the profound knowledge of the

25 Carrithers, *The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka*, 59 f.

26 See above, n. 24.

27 See Carrithers, "The Modern Ascetics of Lanka." For the emotional and social pressure a "double renouncer" may have to face while still living in a village monastery or even an urban monastic university like the Vidyodaya Piriveṇa, see the biography of Asmaṅḍalē Ratnapāla related by Carrithers, *The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka*, 147–162.

Tipiṭaka and its approved exegesis as taught in the monastic centers.<sup>28</sup> From this perspective the *Visuddhimagga* is less a description of the practices of meditation circles in Buddhaghosa's social environment—and much less a narration of personal experience<sup>29</sup>—than a regulative instrument for these groups. The *Visuddhimagga* is a *prescription* that rhetorically anticipates what will happen when meditators advance in their practice and how this is to be interpreted according to scriptural authority. When Buddhaghosa says that he wrote the text “based on the method of exegesis as taught by the inhabitants of the Mahāvihāra” in order to benefit “meditators striving for purity but unable to find it,”<sup>30</sup> this can be read as a diplomatic way of saying that meditative exercises which are not controlled by a valid tradition of exegesis will go astray and finally fail. It is not hard to imagine that such words were directed toward meditation groups that had deviated too far from what was taught in the monastic centers or that might have even challenged the authority of scholarly discourse.<sup>31</sup>

On the other hand, the *Visuddhimagga* was also widely used in scholarly contexts. Although Ehara's statement that “no scholar of Buddhism whether of *Theravāda* or of *Mahāyāna* is unacquainted with [the *Visuddhimagga*],”<sup>32</sup> is surely much overexaggerated, there can be no doubt that the text together with Buddhaghosa's commentaries on the Suttapiṭaka has shaped Mahāvihāra-Theravāda doctrine like no other piece of literature. Clearly, its influence was not restricted to small yogic groups within the Saṃgha which Buddhaghosa addresses in his book. He himself refers to the *Visuddhimagga* several times in his own commentaries on the Nikāyas of the Suttapiṭaka, so he intertwined his meditation manual with his broader exegetical works. This indicates that he had a broader readership in mind, even with the *Visuddhimagga*.<sup>33</sup> The

28 Since the Pāli commentaries had yet to be written at the time the *Visuddhimagga* was composed, Buddhaghosa had the ancient Sinhalese commentaries in mind as they were transmitted by the Mahāvihāra lineage of Anurādhapura (cf. Vism(W), 613).

29 Cf. Sharf, “Experience,” 99.

30 Vism(W), 4: *suddhikāmā pi yogino tesam pāmujjakaraṇaṃ suvisuddhavinicchayaṃ Mahāvihāravāsīnaṃ desanānāyanissitaṃ Visuddhimaggaṃ bhāsissaṃ*.

31 In this respect the *Visuddhimagga* can again be compared to the *Bhāvanākrama*. Kamalaśīla is said to have composed this work just after the debate of bSam-yaś as an authoritative layout for valid religious practice based on Mahāyāna scholarship as taught in the Indian monastic university of Nālandā in order to oppose the Chan meditation practices that had been introduced to Tibet from China.

32 Ehara, *The Path of Freedom*, XLIII.

33 The *Cūlavamsa* even has it that Buddhaghosa was entrusted with the writing of the *Visuddhimagga* by the Saṃgha of the Mahāvihāra. After he had finished his work an assembly of monks “versed in the thoughts of the Enlightened One” (*sambuddhamatakovidam*)

*Visuddhimagga* was appealing to scholars in several ways. First, the text was seen as an abbreviated exposition of the Piṭakas—a full-fledged systematic presentation of the teaching. Second, Buddhaghosa presents these contents as items within a plot structure designing an ideal-typed monastic biography which ends with the achievement of the final goal. I think this style had its own normative effects on monastic self-imagination, self-reflection and the fashioning of monastic subjects. Unlike works like the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, *Atthasāliṇī* or *Abhidhammattha-saṅgaha*, which follow a “systematic” style in a more strict sense, the structure of the *Visuddhimagga* endows even advanced Abhidhamma topics with a narrative closure. The narrative sequence (re)encodes (almost) every aspect of a normative monastic conduct of life as well as the subtle concepts discussed by exegetes and Abhidhamma specialists as steps, episodes or options which draw their meaning from their being a prerequisite for the next higher step within the consecutive path-structure. There is no dry, bloodless scholarship, it is all important as a practical means toward the final goal. Moreover, the *Visuddhimagga*—by means of narrative closure—demonstrates how and *that* it all works. Thus, the *promise* of liberation is inscribed into all the topics mentioned in the text, from bodily hygiene to the concept of the 121 kinds of consciousness.

#### 4 Individual and Institutional Purity as Contested Criteria

Above we have asked why Buddhaghosa chose the less known and incomplete concept of the seven purifications as the basis of his book. This is one of the most striking innovations Buddhaghosa develops in his *Visuddhimagga* in contrast to his direct predecessor Upatissa. While the latter presents his meditation manual in greater conformity with canonical terminology as the “Path to Liberation”—*Vimuttimagga*—Buddhaghosa speaks about purification and purity as the path and the goal of religious endeavor. I do not want to estimate the degree of intentionality in Buddhaghosa’s “choice” of using purity instead of liberation as a key concept. But I think the homogeneous structure achieved through this change contributes to the success of the text. It condenses the intellectual and practical endeavours of monasticism to a single principle: the pursuit of individual purity. This resonates with the broader discourse which associates the institutional purity of the Saṃgha with collective social welfare. With the conceptual polarization of pure and impure (1) monastic discipline,

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came together under the Bodhi Tree of the Mahāvihāra to evaluate the book and approved it with great enthusiasm (Cūlv(ed), 37.235–237).

(2) soteriology and (3) social welfare are thinkable as mutually related constituents of a single value continuum. Buddhaghosa is surely not the inventor of this epistemology. But it is a normative statement that is both its product and reinforcement.

Purity is an individual and a collective concern. Religious and worldly welfare of individuals, society and the kingdom is ritually ensured by interacting with the Saṃgha on various occasions and levels. The mere beholding of monks might empower an army at war.<sup>34</sup> Listening to monks reciting a powerful religious text brings protection to the audience. Revering and feeding the Saṃgha, bestowing buildings, lands, villages etc., giving children as novices—these are meritorious acts that bestow religious power potential (*puñña*) on the donor. This works only—or most effectively—if the receiver of the donation is as pure as possible. On the institutional level the power of the Saṃgha results from an unbroken ordination lineage which connects each of its members through time and space to the Buddha himself. This gives the Saṃgha as a collective and its members as individual actors the power to serve as an “unsurpassed field of merit” (*anuttara puññakkhetta*)—a worthy object of veneration which generates and distributes religious merit. The fertility of this “field of merit” stands and falls with the purity of the Saṃgha. As can be expected, this purity was disputed at almost any given point in history. The historiographical literature relates the history of Buddhism as a story about the decay and revival of the Saṃgha. Especially when laments about the decline of monastic discipline consolidated a general doubt about the validity of the ordination lineage, the continued existence of the Sāsana became altogether uncertain. In these situations the call for a Saṃgha purification was raised. However, we must bear in mind that the diagnosis of decay within the Saṃgha was always a partisan point of view. History was written by the victors—in this case by those who identify themselves as the legal successors of a purified Saṃgha. In the course of history thousands of monks were expelled from the community by purification acts who will not have regarded themselves as impure, nor were they probably perceived as such by their immediate pupils, colleagues and lay-devotees.

The canonical monastic code—the Vinaya—as the constitution of the Saṃgha and benchmark of its institutional purity is in many ways relative. First, especially on the level of face-to-face relationships the codes and patterns of behaviour expected from a monk are informed by various conventions not expressed in and sometimes rivaling the Vinaya. The ascription of purity may be based on etiquette, aesthetic demeanour and shared affection rather

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34 Mhv(ed), 25.3.

than on strict adherence to Vinaya rules.<sup>35</sup> Second, the application of the Vinaya was hardly ever comprehensive. Blackburn<sup>36</sup> distinguishes between a formal canon, which is an ultimate but rather virtual frame of reference, and a practical canon which defines the standards actually learned and used. Third, even as a formal canon the Vinaya proved not to be as stable as one might expect. Indeed, the Vinaya is the legal constitution of the Saṃgha and is the ultimate reference where legal issues are at stake. However, there is not one Saṃgha. The Saṃgha was split into multiple lineages (*nikāya*) constituted by their own version of the Vinaya. In fact, as a juridically constituted institution the Saṃgha widely escapes centralized organization, and the Vinaya proves a rather unreliable instrument for ensuring its unity, since, notwithstanding its “canonical” status, the Vinaya can be altered if a critical number of “renegade” monks wishes to do so.<sup>37</sup> On Sri Lankan soil this happened at least three times.

In this situation of polyphony and intra-religious plurality, voices emerged claiming that the Saṃgha of Sri Lanka had become impure and deserved to be purified. In the following two sections I will describe one of these voices. It became predominant from the 12th century and initiated a major re-organization of the Sri Lankan Saṃgha. This voice arose from within the fraction of “double renouncers” which had apparently transformed into a social movement during the 7th or 8th century.

## 5 Rag Wearers and Forest Dwellers

The first time we hear of “double renouncers” appearing as an individual group is the report of a dispute between “preachers” (*dharmakathika*) and “rag wearers” (*paṃsukūlika*) which is found in the commentary to the Aṅguttara-Nikāya ascribed to Buddhaghosa (5th century). The dispute among these fractions was centered on the question whether meditation practice or scholarship was the

35 Cf. Carrithers, *The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka* and Samuels, *Attracting the Heart*.

36 Blackburn, “Looking for the *Vinaya*.”

37 The story of the first case of *saṃghabheda*, community splitting, in Sri Lanka is a good example for this problem. During the time of king Vaṭṭagāmaṇī (1st cent. B.C.E.) a monk was expelled from the order of monks because of an accusation he didn't accept. He and 500 of his pupils left the ritual boundary (*sīmā*)—and thus the space of the legal dominion—of the community which expelled him, settled in a different place and founded an autonomous Saṃgha. In the long run this new community established itself as a separate lineage (*nikāya*) that rivaled the former until the 12th century.

root of Buddhist culture (*sāsanassa mūlaṃ*). The conflict was decided in favour of the preachers: scholarship (*pariyatti*) was more important than meditative practice (*paṭipatti*), because as long as the Suttas and the Vinaya are recited and studied, there is light in the world, without them, there is darkness.<sup>38</sup> After relating the story, the author of the commentary adds: “Even if there be a hundred or a thousand bhikkhus practising vipassanā (meditation), there will be no realization of the Noble path if there is no learning.” In other commentaries (likewise ascribed to Buddhaghosa) similar arguments are given: “There may or may not be realization (*paṭivedha*) and practice (*paṭipatti*), learning is enough for the perpetuation of the Sāsana. The wise one, having heard the Tripiṭaka, will fulfill even both . . . Therefore, the Sāsana (religion) is stabilized when learning endures.”<sup>39</sup> It is easy to imagine that this is the spirit in which the *Visuddhimagga* was written: meditation is good as long as it is based on proper knowledge of the scriptures.

The juxtaposition of practice and scholarship is often evoked in the history of Theravāda even today. Mostly it denotes two types of monks within the Saṃgha. The most prominent distinction in this context is the concept of the two duties or “burdens.” These are associated with two different lifestyles for which a monk can opt. The “burden of the book” (*ganthadhura*) is carried by village-dwelling monks (*gāmaṅgāsī*)—which here means monks separated from but integrated into common social life—while the “burden of meditative insight” (*vipassanādhura*) is carried by monks living in the forest (*ārañṇāvāsī*). Forest dwelling, practicing austerities and doing meditation are features which still distinguish this type of monk from literary specialists today.<sup>40</sup> Although these groups were often part of the lineages and administrative units of the great monasteries, they seem to have lived in separate buildings, caves and groves well away from the crowded monastic centres. The north western outskirts of the Abhayagiri monastery in Anurādhapura seem to be an example of such an arrangement. About 10 minutes’ walk from the central cult complex and residential quarters are rocks and caves that seem to have been used by hermits even before the monastery proper was founded in the 1st century B.C.E. An inscription testifies that in the 2nd century C.E. a “meditation hall” (*padhānaghara*) was built on a central spot of this area. Probably the monks

38 AN-a(ChS), 139: *Yāva tiṭṭhanti suttantā, vinayo yāva dīpati; tāva dakkhanti ālokaṃ, sūriye abbhutṭhite yathā. Suttantesu asantesu, pamutṭhe vinayamhi ca; tamo bhavissati loke, sūriye atthaṅgate yathā.*

39 Both passages are cited according to Rahula, *History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, 158–159.

40 Cf. Carrithers, *The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka*, 61.



who inhabited the place in this and later times were rag wearers who belonged to the Abhayagiri lineage but who were spatially separated from their fellow brethren in the more densely populated and busy central sections of the monastery. Up to the 9th century they seem to have used the same refectory as the other Abhayagiri monks, before king Sena I (846–866) erected a separate kitchen for them and arranged for a permanent food supply.<sup>41</sup> Eventually, the rag wearers separated fully from the Abhayagiri administration and founded an autonomous host (*gaṇa*) of their own in 872 C.E.<sup>42</sup>

Epigraphic and literary evidence suggests that rag wearers were spread all over the country, though their individual communities seem to have been small. Probably each of the three Sri Lankan monastic lineages had groups of rag wearers, more or less loosely attached to the administration, social and cultic life of the regular monasteries. Historiography and inscriptions indicate that they formed a distinct body to which donations could be given and suggest that they were extremely popular. Royal support of these groups is documented from the 7th to 9th century in the *Mahāvamsa*.<sup>43</sup> Apart from the usual equipment for monks, donations to the rag wearers included large monastic complexes. It is possible that the so-called “meditation monasteries”, a special type of monastic building with unique architectural features found in forest areas usually on the slopes or tops of mountains, were associated with the rag wearers and forest dwellers.<sup>44</sup> Other donations included groves, fine clothing, and a regular supply of exquisite food; servants and workmen are mentioned as royal donations to the rag wearers. These are quite usual donations to monastics groups, but with regard to the acetic nimbus of the rag wearers such items are quite unexpected.<sup>45</sup> According to the *Cūlavamsa* even the mothers of rag wearing monks were honoured with material rewards by king Sena Ilaṅga.<sup>46</sup>

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41 Cūlv(ed), 50.76.

42 Cūlv(ed), 51.52.

43 See Rahula, *History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, 195–197 and Geiger, *Culture of Ceylon*, 202–203 and Gunawardana, *Robe and Plough*, 41 for references.

44 These have been studied by Wijesuriya, *Buddhist Meditation Monasteries*. However, it is unclear if all monasteries classified as Meditation Monasteries were inhabited by rag wearers and/or forest dwellers or, vice versa, if rag wearers were confined to these special buildings cf. Gunawardana, *Robe and Plough*, 44, see also Wijesuriya, *Buddhist Meditation Monasteries*, 3–6.

45 However, as Geiger, *Culture of Ceylon*, 202 notes, villages are never mentioned as having been donated to rag wearers.

46 Cūlv(ed), 52.27.

As Sundberg<sup>47</sup> suggests, the rag wearers of the Abhayagiri-Nikāya might have had considerable influence extending as far as Java. That their popularity had finally challenged their status as ideal representatives of ascetic poverty was stated in secondary literature,<sup>48</sup> but I know of no historical testimony that treats luxurious gifts to the ascetic groups as improper.

When references to the rag wearers become scarce from the 10th century onwards, the forest dwellers appear in the sources as the (new?) representatives of ascetic ideals. The relationship between the two groups is not very clear at the moment, but they are probably different developments from the same movement/but they probably evolved out of the same movement. The forest dwellers' way of life seems to have resembled that of the rag wearers, and donations to them were equally lavish. However, we have no evidence that all Sri Lankan monastic lineages had their groups of forest dwellers. We hear only of those attached to the Mahāvihāra-Nikāya.<sup>49</sup>

It is an interesting characteristic of the discourse in the large monasteries where most of the Pāli commentaries were written that the "burden of meditative insight" is generally regarded as less important by the commentators and is sometimes attributed to the less gifted persons within the Saṃgha.<sup>50</sup> However, this appears to contradict the prestige that forest dwellers and rag-wearers enjoyed among the nobility and the common laity. It is entirely possible that due to their alternative lifestyle these groups were perceived as a more authentic expression of ritual purity and a powerful source of soteriological gain. As Gunawardana<sup>51</sup> puts it:

The devotion of the Āraññika monks to the austere life in the forest sharply contrasted with the ease and comfort of the life of the residents of the large monasteries at the capital. It is even possible that the growth and the popularity of the Āraññika sect reflects a reaction to this change in the way of life of the Buddhist monk. To the lay population the Āraññika monk represented the closest approximation to the ideals of religious life.

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47 Sundberg, "The Wilderness Monks."

48 For example, Gunawardana, *Robe and Plough*, 43 sees irony at work when monks who gained their fame from wearing rags, were presented with fine garments under Aggabodhi V.

49 Gunawardana, *Robe and Plough*, 45–46.

50 Examples see Rahula, *History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, 160–161.

51 Gunawardana, *Robe and Plough*, 316.

## 6 Forest Dwellers as Custodians of Institutional Purity

In the 12th century after an extended period of warfare between Sri Lanka and South India one group of forest dwellers established a lasting alliance with the Sinhalese Buddhist kings and, backed by royal force, managed to impose their vision of normative monastic purity on the rest of the Saṃgha. These were the forest dwellers of Udumbaragiri. They belonged to the Mahāvihāra lineage of the Sri Lankan Saṃgha and, thus, represented not only the claim to ascetic ideals and meditative effort,<sup>52</sup> but also the “conservative” faction of the Saṃgha who neglected Mahāyāna practices and denied the authenticity of any text apart from the Pāli Tipiṭaka claiming to be Buddha’s Word (i. e. Mahāyāna Sūtras and Tantras). The residents of Udumbaragiri were also known for their scholarship. Hence, the strict distinction between the “burden of the book” and the “burden of meditative insight” does not apply to this group (if it ever did elsewhere).

During the 12th and 13th century the forest dwellers of Udumbaragiri initiated a number of so-called “Saṃgha purifications.” This is a social act of combined force shared between a faction of the monastic order and royal authority in order to purge the Saṃgha from unworthy members. As explained above, the question how a monk should display purity was a matter of dispute and polyphony. Even a single community had only limited possibilities to disrobe “ill-behaved” monks on the mere basis of the Vinaya. There is only one way to exclude large numbers of monks permanently from the order: to trim down the Saṃgha to those members whose purity was officially verified by a purification act enforced by royal power (such an act is sometimes called “Sāsana reform” in the secondary literature). The *Nikāyasamgrahaya*, a Sinhalese work on the history of Buddhism composed by Jayabāhu Dharmakīrti between 1371 and 1396 C.E., describes no less than six Saṃgha purifications in the period between the reign of king Parākramabāhu I (1153–1186) and the author’s own lifetime. All of them were initiated by forest-dwelling groups, especially by the group of Udumbaragiri.

The *Nikāyasamgrahaya* incorporates the purifications in a plot narrating the continuous moral decline of the Saṃgha and its rescue. For Dharmakīrti, decline and pollution began with the emergence of the autonomous monastic lineages (*nikāya*) which separated from the old Mahāvihāra in the 1st century B.C.E. and in the 4th century C.E. respectively. Before Parākramabāhu the other two lineages, the Abhayagiri-Nikāya and the Jetavana-Nikāya, chal-

52 Udumbaragiri is mentioned in the *Rasavāhini* as a place where meditation was practiced and Arhants were produced Ras(S), 182–184.

lenged the authority of the (in the author's opinion) only true inheritor of the Teaching founded by the Buddha, namely the Mahāvihāra-Nikāya, to which the author himself belonged. The rival Nikāyas were not only ritually impure because they had altered the Vinaya, but they also continuously polluted the Sāsana by accepting wrong teachings and faked Buddha Words introduced by heretics from India. According to the *Nikāyasamgrahaya* this unpleasant situation was redressed when Parākramabāhu I authorized the elder Kāśyapa from the Udumbaragiri forest dwellers to execute a country-wide Saṃgha purification followed by a unification of the lineages. During this act all members of the Abhayagiri- and Jetavana-Nikāya were removed from the Saṃgha. Some were disrobed permanently, some were re-ordained to the lineage of the Mahāvihāra.<sup>53</sup> The ongoing tension within the Saṃgha that led to one purification after the other is no longer constructed between the lines of rival Nikāyas. Rather, from now on the *Nikāyasamgrahaya* draws a demarcation line between the two distinct lifestyles (*ubhaya vāsaya*) of the village dwellers and the forest dwellers. The latter seem to have continued their role as a "Saṃgha police." Whenever they saw disturbance and laxity arising within the Saṃgha, they called for the king and convinced him that the time for a new Saṃgha purification had come. It must be noted, however, that at least since king Parākramabāhu II (1236–1271) the purifications were organized and carried out by an executive committee (*kāraka-saṃgha*) consisting of representatives of both village-dwelling and forest-dwelling monasteries. This committee was headed by a Mahāsvāmī or Saṃgharāja ("head of the Saṃgha") who always belonged to a forest-dwelling monastery.

Together with the recurring decline of the Saṃgha, Dharmakīrti reports the ongoing warfare, invasions and rebellions that the Sri Lankan society had experienced during this period, thereby implying a logical connection between the lack of monastic discipline and the political violence suffered by society.<sup>54</sup>

53 For a completely different reconstruction of the purification/unification of the Saṃgha under Parākramabāhu see Gunawardana, *Robe and Plough*, 313–337 together with Bechert's very critical reply in Bechert, "The Nikāya-s."

54 Modern historians usually interpret the decay of monastic morals as an effect of the social instability of this period (e.g. Gunawardana, *Robe and Plough*, 313, Panabokke, *History of the Buddhist Monastic Order*, 172). The *Nikāyasamgrahaya*, however, leaves the causal relationship to the reader's judgment. The opposite, though not explicitly indicated, is also possible: political instability might have been a (karmic) consequence of a polluted Saṃgha. A third variant, which I deem historically the most likely, is that the frequent purifications were not so much due to a particularly rapid decay of the Saṃgha during this period, but rather to the desire of the politically challenged kings of the time to legitimize their authority by acting as strong-willed benefactors of the Sāsana.

The theme of the decline and rescue of the Sāsana became the prevailing master-narrative of this period. It is the story of elite “hardliners” within the Saṃgha criticizing deviance and change as contributing to the decay of Buddhism. This topos was always present in the earlier texts of the Mahāvihāra-Nikāya (as it was in other Buddhist traditions in India and elsewhere).<sup>55</sup> Now, in the wake of the purifications and unification of the Saṃgha the narrative of decline—or rather, the story of protecting the Sāsana from decline—was transformed into a legitimation for both secular rulers and clerical hierarchs to resort to state power in order to establish centralized control of the Saṃgha and to homogenize monastic life. A constitutive instrument for doing this were the so-called Katikāvatas. These are legislative texts issued by the kings since Parākrāmabāhu I after the execution of a Saṃgha purification. The Katikāvatas formulate rules for the Saṃgha organization and virtually regulate every aspect of a monk’s life. Repeated transgressions were ultimately penalized with expulsion. As dispositives of the discourse on institutional purity, Katikāvatas served as instruments for the enforcement of the canon-based vision of purity shared by the emerging clerical elites and the king in his role as foremost secular protector of the Sāsana. Though “guided” by a central authority, every single monk was declared responsible for the purity and stability of the Sāsana.<sup>56</sup>

As a matter of fact, the measures did not actually prove successful. This can be inferred from the large number of additional Katikāvatas issued during the next two centuries. After the first Katikāvata issued by king Parākrāmabāhu I, there followed one by Nissaṅkamalla (1187–1196), two by Vijayabāhu III (1220–1224), one by Parākrāmabāhu II (1236–1270) and one by Parākrāmabāhu VI (1412–1467). Each of these texts was issued after a Saṃgha purification. Of these texts only the so-called *Mahā-Parākrāmabāhu-Katikāvata* by Parākrāmabāhu I

55 Cf. Nattier, *Once Upon a Future Time*.

56 This notion is clearly expressed in the Mahā-Parākrāmabāhu-Katikāvata in a quotation of *Samantapāsādikā*, 1232: “Pabbajentā sodhetvā pabbājetha sodhetvā upasampādettha sodhetva nissayaṃ dettha eko’ pi hi kulaputto pabbajjaṅ ca upasampadaṅ ca labhitvā sa[ka]lam ’pi Sāsanaṃ patitthāpeti” yū bāvin pīriksā pāviji kaṭa-yutu pīriksā upasampatti kaṭa-yutu pīriksā nisa dīyā-yutu. “As it is stated, ‘when admitting (persons) into the Order admit (them) after examination, ordain (them) after examination, vouchsafe Nissaya after examination, for when even one son of a householder receives admission into the Order he is instrumental in the establishment of even the entire Buddha-sāsana.’ Therefore, admission into the Order should be granted after examination, Upasampadā (i. e. Higher Ordination) should be granted after examination. Nissaya should be granted after examination.” (MPK(ed), 27, the Pāli quotation is taken from *Samantapāsādikā*, 1232).

and the *Darṇbadeṇi-Katikāvata* by Parākramabāhu II have been transmitted completely.<sup>57</sup> I will confine the following description to these two.

The *Katikāvatas* have the same structure and resemble each other in wording to a high degree. Their structure follows a tripartite model: They start with (1) a short history of the founding and decay of the Sāsana. The decay began with the fragmentation of the Saṃgha under Vattaḡāmaṇi and continued for 1254 years until Parākramabāhu established unity again. This historical introduction encodes (2) the actual rules—the main part—as measures of a continued struggle for purity in succession of Parākramabāhu. The (3) end of the texts formulates the penalties for transgressing the rules. In modern language it is a “Three Strikes Model”: A monk who repeatedly fails is punished three times according to the penalties prescribed for his offence in the Vinaya; if he continues to violate the rules, he is first suspended, then expelled from the order without sympathy.<sup>58</sup> High-ranking abbots could also be punished.

The rules laid down in the *Katikāvatas* may give us a hint on how the ruling monastic elites, the kings and possibly a part of the rest of society, perceived the Saṃgha of their time—what exactly its “impurity” consisted of. Most rules cover the warranty of proper education, the fulfillment of monastic duties and the regulation of personal property. But also body-practices like the correct time for sleeping and the cleaning of the teeth in the morning and the manner in which a monk has to react to a joke are prescribed—a monk should not laugh loudly, but merely give a smile to display his amusement.<sup>59</sup> The lack of education seems to have been a major issue. To ensure at least a minimum of monastic learning, the *Katikāvatas* specify that a number of predefined texts must be mastered by every candidate before he is admitted to ordination.<sup>60</sup> The ability to read and write is a prerequisite even for becoming a candidate.<sup>61</sup> Admission to the novice ordination (*pabbajjā*) and higher ordination (*upasampadā*) are granted only after a one-year period of intense

57 Additionally, there are three later *Katikāvatas* from the Kandy period which do not fall within the scope of this study. On these see Ratnapala, *The Katikāvatas*.

58 Or “without respect for his reputation”? The expression is: *un kerehi no-bāndi*, literally “without being attached to him” (MPK(ed), 30). The corresponding formulation in DK(ed), 99 is more poetically enciphered: “the co-residents should act in such a manner that serves the welfare of both worlds which would finally lead to the Nirvāṇa.” In this latter formulation the expulsion of a repeat offender is presented as a service for the secular and religious welfare of society.

59 MPK(ed), 20.

60 On the role and functions of predefined collections of texts for the training of young monks see also Blackburn, “Looking for the *Vinaya*.”

61 DK(ed), 13.

training under a personal teacher, who among other things helps the trainee to rehearse and understand the texts. After this period an examination must be passed before ordination is granted.

The strong influence of the forest dwellers on the formulation of the *Katikāvatas* is felt by the importance given to the “burden of meditative insight.” As mentioned above, the period after the unification is characterized much more by the distinction between village dwellers and forest dwellers than before. Formerly scholarship and learning, i. e. the “burden of books”, was typically associated with village dwellers and meditative practice with forest dwellers. Now the *Katikāvatas* prescribed both activities for both types of lifestyle. Especially during the one-year periods of preparation for novice and higher ordination, the candidates had to be trained in both “burdens” in order to be granted admission. A novice preparing for higher ordination also had to perform at least three of the 13 ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*) defined in the *Visuddhimagga* for some time.<sup>62</sup>

It is a well known fact that the Saṃgha was a major factor in the country’s economy already in the Anurādhapura period.<sup>63</sup> Ownership of land as the personal property of individual monks—in opposition to collective property of communities—is known at least since the 10th century. The *Katikāvatas* do not forbid the possession of male and female servants, cattle, land and fields as personal property of a monk. The *Daṃbadeṇi-Katikāvata*, however, prescribes that a monk should consult a “well-disciplined, wise and scrupulous” brother, only afterward he should accept such donations in the manner told by this wise man.<sup>64</sup>

The *Daṃbadeṇi-Katikāvata* defines more preconditions for admission than the *Mahā-Parākramabāhu-Katikāvata*. According to the former, admission to novice ordination required the candidate to be at least 12 years old if he wished to become a village dweller, and 13 years if he sought admission to a forest-dwelling community. It is of special interest that the *Daṃbadeṇi-Katikāvata* determines that the purity of the candidate’s birth had to be investigated. This suggests that the restriction of access to higher castes, known from the Kandy period, actually started much earlier in the *Daṃbadeṇiya* period.<sup>65</sup> In this period, therefore, the purity of the Saṃgha was not only a matter of behavior of the ordained but was also related to the “civil” social hierarchy. Top positions

62 DK(ed), 20.

63 This has been extensively studied in Gunawardana, *Robe and Plough* as well as by Schopen, *Buddhist Monks and Business Matters* for Indian Buddhist societies.

64 DK(ed), 68.

65 On this matter see also Panabokke, *History of the Buddhist Monastic Order*, 199–200.

within the Saṃgha hierarchy were restricted to noble families: Only legitimate offshoots of the two families Gaṇavāsi and Saṃgamu could be appointed head of one of the eight Āyatanas (“bases, chief-sections”), the administrative corporate bodies under which all monasteries of the country were subsumed.<sup>66</sup> Since the executive committee (*kāraḥasamgha*) representing the Saṃgha was made up at least partly of the heads of the Āyatanas, an enormous monastic power was held by these families.<sup>67</sup>

Centralized control of the Saṃgha was obviously a major objective of the Katikāvatas. Since the *Daṃbadeṇi-Katikāvata* the Saṃgha was structured as a coherent organization of hierarchical bodies and representatives, whereby the top positions had to be approved by the king. Only monks appointed by the Saṃgha were allowed to grant novice initiation and, as explained above, only after the abilities, health, knowledge and family descent of the candidate had been examined. Higher ordination had to be approved by the king. Not every monk was permitted to preach, but only those whose competence as preachers (*dhammakathika*) had been officially approved.<sup>68</sup>

An interesting topic is the prohibition of activities in fields that were not considered appropriate for a monk. These include the reading and writing of poetry,<sup>69</sup> the teaching of secular topics,<sup>70</sup> the performance of exorcist rituals<sup>71</sup> and the casting of horoscopes (as well as other forms of divination).<sup>72</sup> Since in the subsequent Kottē and Kandy periods a mass of poetry was composed by monks—including erotic poems—this prohibition at least proved to be not very feasible. One may suppose this holds true for other prohibitions too.

## 7 Conclusion

We have investigated two semantic fields in which the metaphors of purity as a state and purification as an activity leading to this state have been applied. Cultural value systems are deeply permeated by this metaphor. It

66 DK(ed), 35. On these families see Ratnapala, *The Katikāvatas*, 206. The latter is not known as a family designation, it might be a collective term for families in close association to the Saṃgha (*saṃgamu=saṃgha-gāma*).

67 On the organization and administrative structure of the Saṃgha in the Daṃbadeṇiya period see Panabokke, *History of the Buddhist Monastic Order*, 172–190.

68 DK(ed), 48.

69 DK(ed), 50.

70 DK(ed), 89, see Ratnapala, *The Katikāvatas*, 266 for the interpretation of this passage.

71 DK(ed), 90.

72 DK(ed), 95.



is, therefore, understandable that one of the greatest authors of Theravāda Buddhist exegesis made purity the cardinal point of his comprehensive presentation of practice and theory of the Buddha's teaching. For Buddhaghosa, purity is what Buddhism is all about. In his *Visuddhimagga*, "Path to Purity" or "Path of Purification," he treats purity as an individual concern. The subject of this text is the single Yogī who purifies himself by bodily discipline and mental training. According to Buddhaghosa this endeavour has to be based on a profound understanding of the ultimate meaning inherent in the textual transmission and expatiated by state-of-the-art exegesis of his time and school. With his accent on both scholarship and practice, he highlights the mutual relatedness of the two fields of monastic activity that had apparently already begun to drift apart and to manifest distinct social structures and stereotypes during his time.

Purity of the Sāsana (Buddhism), on the other hand, is a collective concern. The welfare of society in worldly and otherworldly matters relies on the power conveyed by an intact Sāsana, especially on a disciplinary pure monastic tradition. Individual monastics participate via initiation in the institutional prestige inherent in the Saṃgha ("monastic community"). Individual and institutional prestige intermingles in a variety of ways and on different social levels. The modern Sri Lankan saying: "We bow to the robe, not to the monk," rationalizes a common religious practice as a radical separation of the two categories: The monk in question is revered as a representative of the Sāsana (institutional prestige symbolized by his dress), although as a person he might have no or might even have a bad reputation. In the case of the forest dwellers we have investigated a more complex dynamic between individual and institutional purity. In a culture where the Saṃgha was visible in nearly every village as established communities provided ritual service and—especially in towns—in the form of centers of religious (and secular) learning, the prestige of ascetic hermits was ambivalent. Uneducated eccentrics for some, they were credited by others with extraordinary religious meritoriousness. The nimbus of ardent aspiration for personal purity gave them the reputation of embodying those religious ideals known from narrations of the Buddha's personal disciples and portrayed in texts like the *Visuddhimagga*. From the 8th century we discern a transfer of this personal prestige again to the collective level when ascetics appear as institutionalized communities that were supported with valuable donations. The symbolic capital of these communities was enforced by their rhetorical and organizational dissociation from "village-dwelling monks." The forest-dwelling communities might or might not have spent more time meditating than village dwellers, in the public perception they have occupied this aspect of monastic life as their genuine

domain. Hence, persons regarded as advanced and realized meditators, were more likely to be found among their numbers than among village dwellers. The entanglement of individual and institutional prestige highlighted their exceptional status within the Saṃgha.

Based on their reputation as the “purest among the pure” a new monastic elite arose from within these groups in the 12th century and realigned the entire monastic culture of Sri Lanka in the role of custodians of purity.

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# Registers of Genealogical Purity in Classical Islam

*Aziz al-Azmeh*

All registers of genealogical purity, no matter how ethereal, stand or fall by an organismic analogy with the purity of blood, and are constructed by the complementary operations of affirming integrity and excising impurity. As a consequence, the definition of genealogical purity, and we are speaking of an historical process performing a continuous *aggiornamento*, needs to take place in terms of the identification of an abiding core or origin, depending on perspective, continuously followed by the complementary socio-political processes of certification and maintenance. In moments of crisis, certification and maintenance, and the recasting of the core or origin, are officiated under the title of renewal or of restoration.

The following pages will take up, in broad strokes and in a preliminary way, this constellation of issues with regard to classical Islam, which will be more precisely identified below. For the moment, two points need to be noted. It will be argued that the notion of genealogical purity in its various domains of concrete historical application is analytically reducible to one overarching function: subtending operations of identification and exclusion. Moreover, it needs to be stated at the outset that, as the main purpose of this essay is conceptual, the social practices of delimitation and exclusion, for all their importance, will not be discussed on this occasion, and will need to be the subjects of more concrete historical studies. The perspective guiding the following reflections overall is that genealogical purity is ultimately *the result* of the exercise of *practical reason*; the *logos* governing the identification and exclusion of the *mythos* of purity are conjugated by the *metis* of practical reason, the point at which history makes its cunning entry into the work of the *logos*.

## 1 Preliminary Clarifications

I do not propose to delve conceptually into notions of purity and impurity, to draw analogies between the dyads pure/impure and sacred/profane, matters and analogies on which there have been very deliberative considerations, and on which there is a vast literature. My aim is rather more modest. I shall seek to use an analogy from a field other than that usually considered in this regard,

as a template for a preliminary sketch of materials pertaining to classical Islam (henceforth: CI), and it is in this context that I shall reflect explicitly upon the concepts of genealogy and purity.

The template proposed is one that I deem appropriate for the declared purposes of the overall concept of the theme to which this essay is a contribution, with its emphasis on approaches that have a bearing upon the production and maintenance of demarcations, and the creation of cohesion within groups that seek to maintain the boundaries thus produced. The overall contemporary concerns that gave rise to this conference are well exemplified by invoking “La lega con un maiale contro la moschea”, eloquent testimony to the emblematic representation of difference and cohesion, including also testimony to the displacement of social conflicts and their transfiguration into the symbolic: porcine odour at the future location of a mosque in effect figuring not only as a malodorous mark of opposition, but also as a form of symbolic violence no less real than sequestration or elimination.

Body fluids (and somatic products) are of course especially eloquent markers of purity; Brahminical, Jewish and, less elaborately, Muslim regimes of alimentary and other prohibition are most revealing cases in point, and much has been written about them, not least by Mary Douglas whose name was evoked by the editors of this volume. The purity of the nation instantiated as purity of blood, its gradations and boundaries clearly marked—National Socialism and Zionism are unadulterated examples<sup>1</sup>—similarly instantiates purity in each individual body. The nation imaged as blood may well be organised in terms of regulations and medical procedures of social hygiene.

The Brahminical caste system, based on a hierarchy of purity/impurity, works by a variety of instantiations, including touch by sight or by sheer presence, and the avoidance thereof; by regimes of residential and professional segregation, a regime of names, a classification of deities and votive communities, and the wearing of special apparel acting as a mark of honour or stigma of separation. It needs to be borne in mind, though, that this caste system, albeit comprehensive, is neither the cause of distinctions of caste, nor entirely consistent, but it is rather one in which relations of power and authority overlay the conceptual hierarchy of purity, evident not least in the disturbances this produced in the relationship between kings and priests.<sup>2</sup>

Dissonance between ideology, used in this instance (and in this instance only) in the sense employed by Dumézil, and its various instantiations, is by no means abnormal to social practice, without it producing cognitive dissonance.

1 Sand, *Invention of the Jewish People*.

2 Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus*, 44f., 213.

This is much like the efficacy of ritual, and indeed of magic, belief in which is unaffected by the lack of success, and this is a point that need to be kept in mind in the following discussion.<sup>3</sup>

This said, what I should like to highlight particularly is the correlative fact that this imaging of blood stands in a fundamental way as a *pure emblem* and an *emblem of purity* of and for the nation, the tribe, or the caste, quite apart from what propositional, mythical or other enunciations are made to extend this emblematisation discursively. The matter of emblematisation takes me to the analogy I said I would draw, and it is an analogy drawn from a certain perspective on ideology. This is a perspective which lays less emphasis on the propositional or narrative content of ideology, on *Weltanschauung* and its cognates, on the classical conception of ideology as proposed by Marx, Mannheim, and Scheler, with its emphasis on mechanisms of distortion and abstraction, or alternatively, on displacement and sublimation. It is a perspective that lays stress on condensation, if we wish to use psychoanalytical vocabulary, or otherwise on emblematisation, should one be more inclined towards semiotics.

Thus ideology as understood here for the purpose of drawing the analogy I propose is one whose mode of operation is the calling up of one or more signals, what Althusser called “interpellation”, without these necessarily entailing, or being accompanied by, acts of enunciation. These signals can be either verbal (Judaean-Christian roots, the Internationale, the Marseillaise, Sieg-Heil, *Allahu Akbar*) or visual (the pig we met above, the colour of skin, the *hijab* and other vestimentary codes, the swastika, a bulldog, the Tricolore, Stars and Stripes, an image of Marianne, Vercingetorix, Herrmann the Cherusker, SPQR, the cross). In both cases, the verbal and the visual, there is much room for semantic intention, expression and expansion in a variety of directions not necessarily coherent or consistent.<sup>4</sup>

What is crucial to this argument is that all these emblems serve as marks of recognition and delimitation without needing to speak,<sup>5</sup> and that they act gesturally. When such emblems of recognition, inclusion and exclusion are marshalled in major social and political struggles, they crystallise collectivities and crowds, in dramatised display (Nuremberg rallies, most elaborately), in riots and revolution. These are products of mass-psychological phenomena most relevant to the work of emblems, phenomena best observed by conservative adversaries of mass movements such as Gustave Le Bon and Manuel Ortega

3 Sørensen, “Efficacy”.

4 Lotman, *Universe of the Mind*, 101, 104; Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics*, 292f.; Barthes, *Mythologies*, 109ff., 117f.

5 See Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy*, 16off.

y Gasset, by Olympians such as Cannetti, and by hopeful revolutionaries like Georges Sorel speaking of the necessity of myth for revolution (in this case the myth—emblem—of the general strike).

The variety of directions emblematic interpellations might take semantically and propositionally reflect the internal complexity of the collectivity they draw in, in the processes of common recognition and of demarcating identity and difference, each of these directions being in its turn emblematically encoded in such a way as to constitute internal identities and differences, whereby a “community of signs” between antagonistic or otherwise incoherent groups becomes the arena for their struggles and contestations,<sup>6</sup> including struggles over the definitive interpretation, or semantic expansion, of the signs. In all cases, such emblems, visual or verbal, function irreducibly once they have become hegemonic and defining, acting as tautological grounds for a system of recognition and repetition.<sup>7</sup> Like the sacred and the profane, they act as “un véritable donnée immédiate de la conscience”.<sup>8</sup>

In the reclamation of origins, genealogies perform the very same ideological operation of recognition and interpellation just described—it will be clear that I will be using the term “genealogy” throughout as a mode of representing filiation with certain formal properties, and not as a hermeneutic of romantic revelation of origins in the manner now quite common. Genealogies are classifiers, like the verbal and visual emblems exemplified in what has just been said, deliberately indicating origins along the axis of time. Real or fictitious, often contentious and frequently adjusted, genealogies operate very much like the markers of caste discussed above. They are at once cognitive and practical, marking relations and positions in times of need, when officially deployed, and genealogies are always formal and highly stylised, and indeed often theatrical and psychodramatic; genealogies as representations operate ritually:<sup>9</sup> as rituals of recognition and affirmation, of inclusion and exclusion, which, in moments of conflict, double as emblems of mobilisation, in much the same way that the torches, swastikas, and invocations at the Nuremberg rallies operated.

But unlike sanguine classifications referred to, genealogies operate through a diachronic representation of identity; all the while the two are comparable in that they constitute individual subjects that merge with a collective subject, differentiating the *Ich* from the *Nicht-Ich* only insofar as the one acts as a

6 Voloshinov [M. Bakhtin], *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, 10, 23.

7 One might recall the notion of ‘cultural arbitrary’ here, on an analogy with the arbitrary nature of the linguistic sign: Bourdieu and Passeron, *Reproduction*, §§ 1ff.

8 Caillois, *L’Homme et le sacré*, 18.

9 Bourdieu, *Esquisse d’une théorie de la pratique*, 78ff.



synecdoche for the other, the one figuring as the personification of the other. As concrete classifiers, individuals thus constituted in this interchange can be converted to the abstract classifiers, a convertibility between the individual and the collective that is mutual.<sup>10</sup> Unlike sanguine and other classifications, it has been suggested, genealogies proffer a diachronic representation. But it must be remembered that it is in the essence of genealogy as distinct from history to posit a seamlessness that renders time irrelevant: genealogy is timelessness of origin in diachronic form, *mythos* discursively presented as historicising *logos*.

It is precisely at this point that we might locate the nexus between the silent emblematic symbol and genealogy. The figuring, verbal or visual, of origin, of the integrity of its transmission to the present, of the boundaries thus erected between a cohesive interior and the chaos or fastness that lies beyond, this figuring that is set by controlling metic instances under a variety of changing circumstances, takes on the discursive form, most elementarily of tabulation, more elaborately of a typological history which is itself, in a determinate sense, a diachronic tabulation. It is thus that an emblem is given a discursive form in terms of genealogy. This applies to *Heilsgeschichte*, the setting out of a temporal sequence of repetitions and dissonances attentive to time only insofar as time is taken for a formal ordering principle.<sup>11</sup> It also applies to registers of typological continuity constitutive of such discourses as those on the Uniqueness of Europe, Judaeo-Christian traditions, or Muslim traditions. The fundamental act here is one of naming: Europe, Islam, the West, Confucianism, and so forth, semantically expanded in terms of the temporal sequence of substantive termini such as rationality, *sharī'a*-mindedness, a Promethean Spirit, and so on. This is the nominalism of the genealogist; the historian proceeds differently.

Genealogical purity indicates purity of origin, the evenness of continuity, a recursivity in which origin and present are in immediate contiguity. Consequently, historical discourses on genealogical continuity are typological in form, registers of types, figures, re-enactments, and realisations. Any irregularity or heterogeneity that might be discerned on this even surface is classified as impurity which, when origin is expanded in historical discourse, is identified as heteronomous, allopathic, contaminating, subversive or virulent. It is such that modern, romantic and vitalist theories of society and nationality connect with much earlier, genealogical-naturalistic tropes of origin.<sup>12</sup> Examples of this are legion and very familiar: Burke, Action Française, NSDAP,

10 Cf. Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, ch. 5, 135–160 on such mutual convertibilities.

11 Al-Azmeh, *The Times of History*, ch. 5, 139–164.

12 Cf. Schlanger, *Les métaphores*; Böckenförde, "Organ", 519–622.

and various subaltern or late nationalisms which stress culture, such as the RSS in India, some currents of Arab Nationalism, Slavophilism, Serbian nationalism. Postmodern reclamations of voice, culture and authenticity, Islamic, Hindu, or European, are immediately recognisable.<sup>13</sup>

## 2 Classical Islam

Clearly, given the points made above, it would be paradoxical for me to speak of CI as an historical phenomenon, which is complete, closed, relentlessly coherent, and easily recognisable. The assumption that it is indeed so is all too often made, explicitly or implicitly, generally in terms of notions of civilisation or culture conceptually inflected by romantic notions of history, of *Sonderwege*, and their analogues, no less than in what is termed “civilizational analysis”.<sup>14</sup>

Yet certain assumptions of closure need to be made for analytical purposes, in order to delimit the field of investigation to be followed and constitute the object of deliberation; *logos* itself needs a measure of *metis* in order to become properly operative, and in order to offer a generative model of tradition as the one offered in the following pages. An assumption of ritual closure upon impeccable beginnings and origins expressed in terms of genealogy needs to be made, this constituting the dramaturgical repertoire for ritual self-representation: rituals of recognition and affirmation, punctilious as all ritual must be in order to act as ritual. The transmission of traditions is a logocratic ritual which, with repetition, or on the assumption of repetition, extinguishes historical time in favour of a time that is mythical and perennial. This assumption will thus be made at second hand: CI as conceived here will be taken for a system which presumes closure upon beginnings, and of impeccable purity and integrity of transmission, analogous to the transmission of blue blood.

A second assumption will be made, also at second hand, that the genealogical emblems of purity were clearly recognisable to those who sought them. Introducing the notion of a “cultural arbitrary” implies *ab initio* completion and closure, the institution and self-perpetuation of a group of discourses, identified by genres and key words, become hegemonic and incontestable, indeed obvious and self-evident.

Two more points need to be raised as the topic of investigation is delimited. CI is of course much too broad a designation to be serviceable for proper historical consideration. Parameters of space, time, and instances of social

13 Al-Azmeh, *The Times of History*, ch. 1, 3–38; id., *Islams and Modernities*, 17–39.

14 Al-Azmeh, *The Times of History*, ch. 2, 39–64.

formation and of social action need to be identified as a rough guide to delimit the material used. I do not have the space to argue this point in any detail, and will assert that the temporal parameter (that will be considered) will be marked by a *terminus ad quo* of ca. A.D. 900, and that the bearer (*Träger*) of discourses on genealogical purity was an emerging sodality of religious scholars, internally differentiated and complex, patronised by the Abbasid state.

This was a time which saw the emergent crystallisation of a number of discursive formations and genres which were later to be considered defining features of CI. This period, following the maturation of the Abbasid Caliphate and its political and courtly traditions, saw the crystallisation of the main components of the Muslim canon, the seven canonical readings of the Qurʾān by Ibn Mujāhid (d. 936),<sup>15</sup> under state patronage, preceded by some decades by the beginning of the canonisation of Muḥammadan traditions at the hands of al-Bukhārī (d. 870) and Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 875) especially.<sup>16</sup> This was also a period that saw the emergence of the third component of the Muslim canon, namely, *ijmāʿ*, consensus,<sup>17</sup> a notion in intention and consequence not unlike Gratian's later *concordia discordantium canonum*; whereas the latter was guaranteed from error by the Holy Spirit,<sup>18</sup> the former's inerrancy is guaranteed by the inerrancy of the *umma*. Further, the related emergence of technical and other means for connection with origins, and the correlative formation of legal schools using the material indicated above, can be considered to be a coeval phenomenon.<sup>19</sup> In all these contexts, but also in the context of historical writing, Muslim origins could be guarded and genealogies certified, as we shall see. As for the spatial parameters, they will be taken as the Baghdad-Khorasan (and further east, to Transoxiana) axis, along which these discursive formations were developed and, in a broad sense, canonised in the context of an imperial culture.

It is clear from the foregoing that the material substance of CI as conceived here will consist of texts, not of social practices. Material used will be confined to Sunnite Islam in its central movement. The use of the descriptive term 'classical' is not vicarious: there are in all histories a number of classics to which an axiological value specified as timelessness is allocated, making them criteria of evaluation and models of repetition. The purpose of representations of

15 Melchert, "Ibn Mujāhid".

16 On its redactions and the subsequent acceptance and contestation of the canonisation process, see Brown, *The Canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim*.

17 See especially Mansour, *L'Autorité*; Calder, "Ikhtilāf and Ijmāʿ in Shāfiʿī's Risāla".

18 Schlüsser, *Der Primat der Heiligen Schrift*, 11f.

19 Wheeler, *Applying the Canon in Islam*.

genealogical purity is to police the integrity of the canon of classics, a complex social and political process of which only the internal mechanisms will be considered. The extent to which, and the ways in which this genealogical modelling of self-representation is reflected in social practices is a complex matter which varies with time, place, milieu, and innumerable other variables.

Logocratic rituals will therefore be the main topic of investigation, and these will be considered for the purpose of disengaging their constitutive structural features insofar as they constitute registers of genealogical purity in terms of the discussion above. Each of these features is a vast topic on its own, and each lends itself to a variety of other treatments, including treatments of social constituency and its boundaries, patronage and social and geographical networks, contestations, internal histories, and developments and differentiations on a considerable scale. In all cases, and quite apart from routine general reclamation and exclamation, these registers of genealogical purity are deployed with particular elaborations and specific indications at times of crisis and conflict which require particularly energetic delimitation of boundaries of purity and impurity, of inside and outside, of the constituent parts of what in current usage is termed 'identity' and the constituent parts of those lying beyond the limits thus set.

In the histories of Muslims, there have been a number of defining moments for this: first, the early elimination from the fold of heresies, or, rather, theological and doctrinal options that had been rejected as Muslim doctrine was being formulated: messianic groups called *ghulāt* (eighth century), and anthropomorphic and dualistic conceptions of divinity as well connected to Manichaeism, Bardaisanism and other religions,<sup>20</sup> groups which had been implicated in a number of eschatological, antinomian and, indeed, seditious activities. This led to the emergence and ultimately the crystallisation of a set of increasingly consistent oecumenical positions implicated in the transition from Paleo-Islam to Islam properly so called, the theological (and social) struggles between theological schools in the tenth and eleventh centuries, the doctrinal (and social) struggles between Sunnism and Shiism (most saliently, in the classical period, in the tenth and eleventh centuries), the polemics against philosophy and other 'foreign' learning (eleventh century), and the conflict between pietistic and secular, courtly culture (from the ninth century).

In periods of systemic upheaval, perhaps most saliently in Syria and Egypt towards the end of the Crusades, this reaffirmation of purity was, not unnaturally, called *tajdīd*, renewal, or *iṣlāh*, reform—this is most dramatically

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20 On both van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 1, §§ 2.1.3ff, vol. 4, § 5.0.4 and Tucker, *Mahdis and Millenarians*.

exemplified by the figure of Ibn Taimiyya (d. 1328), polemicising formidably against Shiism, philosophy, mysticism, and Christianity in the setting both of intensive sunnification and affirmation of the primacy of the Muslim priesthood. This bears very close comparison with the Protestant Reformation and with the more conservative trends in Muslim Reform in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It might be mentioned here that it is at such moments that the more radical fringes of communities standing for purity set themselves up as communities of Saints. ‘Textual communities’,<sup>21</sup> then seek to inscribe the text upon bodily and other daily disciplines, by regulating the details of daily life integrally in terms of textual paradigms that recreate points of origin; the terms integralism and fundamentalism are used for this phenomenon, which is unthinkable before the era of print and of literacy which endows a text with a distinctive sense. Thus one might interpret certain Hasidic and Haredic communities, the Anabaptists of Munster and their analogues in Europe and North America, and some radical Islamists today.

### 3 Muslim Registers of Genealogical Purity

If we are to consider the term “Islam” as the primary emblem of what I have described as CI, the semantic expansion of this name in terms of genealogical discourses that assure the integrity of connection with origins, and hence the purity of the present, will be the main focus. It is clear that a name is not a natural symbol corresponding to some substance or functional adequation or correspondence. Its recognition requires functions of relating it to a *signified*, itself the result of social practice, by means of identification, participation, or causation.<sup>22</sup> There is no possible blanket description of this regime of integrity; it is multi-directional and multivalent, socially and otherwise. The span of its generic expressions, that is, its expression in terms of literary genres and their associated social constituencies, is very broad.

Moreover, there is no common vocabulary that signifies purity using terms cognate with ‘purity’ except in matters of Islamic ritual, *tahāra*,<sup>23</sup> although it does belong to the broader sweep, with universal salience, of contrastive classification: pure/impure, sacred/profane, right/left, black/white, and so forth. These Muslim institutes of purity regulation designate a regime of physical

21 For the concept, and one of its historical manifestations (the Lollards), Stock, *Implications of Literacy*, ch. II.I.

22 Cf. Castoriadis, *Imaginary Institution of Society*, 118, 120f., 127f.

23 See the comments of Reinhart, “Impurity/No Danger”.

purity, involving a variety of ablutions necessary for the performance of cultic practices (prayer and pilgrimage). They also involve ablutions following sexual intercourse, certain restrictions imposed by the menstrual state, and abstention from the ingestion of impure substances—blood and pork meat, shell-fish (for the Shi'a), and wild ass. Other markers of purity have little ritual consequence, notably circumcision, but its absence is considered in social practice to be a mark of impurity.<sup>24</sup> If, in the context of the present discussion, a genealogical confirmation were to be required, one would need to point to the Muslim legend of Abraham as the one who had inaugurated this register of cleanliness: circumcision, the paring of nails, and the removal of body hair, over and above Abraham having been identified as the origin of Muslim pilgrimage rites.

But axiomatic in all Muslim registers of genealogical purity are two primary matters, calendrical integrity defining an historical epoch that might appropriately be termed 'Islamic oecumenism', and the manifestation of this oecumenism in the form of fidelity to a named authority. Calendrical integrity specifies a beginning, setting out ca. 14 July, 622 and subsequently reckoning in lunar years as the beginning of an era defined in terms of the political implantation of Muḥammadan prophecy. This establishes the figure of Muḥammad as a culture hero, understood as an aetiological figure normally construed according to a set of narrative patterns,<sup>25</sup> a hero who, though not eponymous in that Islam did not call itself Muḥammadanism, is an exemplary character marking the ultimate point of reference for everything that might be designated as pure, and who founded an order significant enough for it to be marked by an epochal calendar. Whatever came before is consigned to two modes of identification: *jāhiliyya*, the term ordinarily employed for pre-Muḥammadan Arabian times, a period out of time and anterior to qualitative time, used by extension to designate various forms of godlessness. Coeval were previous divine revelations, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic and Christian, which together form the second mode of chronological identification.

From very early on, previous revelations, and particularly those in scriptural form, were regarded as instances of a divine intervention in the correction of the world, an intervention which devolves to the serial transmission to prophets of a primeval religion, each point in the series re-enacting a primeval beginning, mythologically construed together as Adamic and as inscribed

24 See the anti-Christian epistle of al-Jāhiz (d. 867), translation in Finkel, "The Risala of al-Jahiz".

25 Lord Raglan, "The Hero", 138, 139ff.; Dundes, "The Hero Pattern", 180ff.; Thraede, Art. "Erfinder", 1241 and *passim*.

on the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*) located at the right-hand side of God's Throne, or by His foot-stool. This primeval religion, variously named, is one which, in the normal pattern of monotheistic *Heilsgeschichte*, is sent down to men and women by heavenly Apostles whose time is dictated by the earthly rhythm of godless recidivism inherent in humans. Each is, moreover, sent at a time appointed by the readiness of humans to accept it—a redaction of the motif of divine accommodation or even of divine pedagogy, developed famously by Augustine, and well expressed in the Pauline periodisation of divine missions in terms of periods *ante legem*, *sub lege*, and *sub gratia*.

There is a certain cumulateness implied by this schema, and it is unsurprising that we should find in the new beginning inaugurated by Muḥammad a divine revelation, which at once certifies previous revelations and transcends them by perfecting them definitively. A new epoch re-enacts previous epochs, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic and Christian, turning them into anterior and therefore imperfect moments, of the fuller revelation called Islam. In this context, one may well speak of this particular register of purity as being bivalent, comprising two layers of purity partaking of the primeval, the Islamic being the fuller recapitulation of the beginning, the otherwise monotheistic revelations still smarting from textual and other corruptions and alterations (*tahrīf*) of, and emendations upon the original messages sent by God to Moses and Jesus.<sup>26</sup>

The division between Muslims and other monotheists is therefore a relative one, both parties partaking with different degrees of involvement in a primeval register whose full accomplishment is Islamic, requiring not a full disengagement but only a register of distinctiveness. To this needs to be adjoined another basic division between Muslims and others, that elaborated in medieval Arabic ethnology, in which gradations of civilisation are bounded by barbarism. These betoken various departures from the temperance that characterises the Muslims and those inhabiting the Muslim oecumene and the regions where they dwell, departures underwritten by a variety of signs of impurity: dirt, blackness of skin, and a variety of other indices which make barbarity border on the limits of humanity, that which lies beyond these borders being marked by monstrosity and hybridity.<sup>27</sup>

It must be stressed that there was little by way of the reclamation of ethnic Arab purity of stock in this context: this matter had a certain salience for the ruling military Arab caste in the Paleo-Muslim seventh century, and a salience

26 The fullest study to date is al-Sharfi, *Al-Fikr al-Islāmi, passim*; perhaps the most systematic classical statement is that of Ibn Taimiyya, *A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity*.

27 Al-Azmeh, "Barbarians in Arab Eyes".

in the defence of the Arab past by state secretaries jockeying for position in the early Abbasid administration with secretaries of Persian origin during the time of the so-called *shu'ūbiyya* dispute. But it was not an abiding and persistent motif.

However, as we come to the internal Muslim register specifically, we need to address issues arising once calendrical purity, signalling a specific beginning, is assured. Already mentioned was a particular historical manifestation of authority, which will be discussed presently. Yet correlative with it is another, one leading in a variety of different directions to the assurance of purity, namely the integrity of Tradition, including scriptural tradition, assuring cognitive purity and its correlate of right conduct.

### 3.1 *Historical Purity*

The particular form of authority indicated above is a form of order prevailing, actually or virtually, in the Muslim oecumene. The discursive register here is expressed in two forms of discourse, historical and political. These register two types of filiation with the foundational act of Muḥammad, a token of purity if ever there was any.

This oecumenical order was ruled by a caliphal House related to Muḥammad by blood, signalling a genealogical purity of stock expressed in a physical medium that was continuously reaffirmed, despite unabated contention by other legitimist parties. The Caliphate was also related to the Prophet by the divine mission he, and the Caliphs, carried forward: the Caliphs were serial successors, across an even space of time, of Muḥammad the Prophet, but also serial representatives of the cosmocratic deity Himself in running the proper order of things in the world. These genealogical connections were performed by means of three concepts: *ahl al-bayt*, participants in Muḥammad's bloodline as members of his family, *Khalīfat rasūl Allāh* (successors of God's Apostle), and *Khalīfat Allāh* (successor of God), by direct divine commission.

These discourses were iterated and reiterated in works of history and political craft no less than in a primary form of political declamation under the Abbasids (and the Umayyads before them), namely, panegyric poetry.<sup>28</sup> This assured continuity with origins, physical, prophetic as well as divine, served to confine the dynastic legitimism of the Caliphate, instantiating the major emblem which is Islam, against a variety of contenders: 'Alid contenders, aristocrats within and seditious actors at the fringes, and the counter-Caliphate of the Fatimids in Africa and Egypt, later, in the late tenth century and early

28 Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*; al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, 73ff.; id., *The Times of History*, 284ff.



eleventh centuries, in Syria as well, claimed in Baghdad for themselves for a brief period (1058–59) by the actions of the self-appointed Fatimid vassal, the condottiere al-Basāsīrī. Both parties, the Abbasids and the Fatimids, unleashed against each other a strident arsenal of genealogical and doxological polemics,<sup>29</sup> and the crystallisation of Sunnism and Shi'ism was intimately connected with these disputes.

As suggested, the integrity of succession to Muḥammad was laid out in considerable detail in historical works, chronicles, annals, and a variety of other genres. The genealogical purity of the ruling stock guaranteed the integrity of the oecumenical order, the continuous salvation-historical replay of Muḥammadan origins in the form of a continuous *dawla*, a state institution, identified as Abbasid, ruling after the ruin of another dynasty, the Umayyad, construed as an aberrant post-Muḥammadan interregnum in the usual manner of discourses on historical purity, authenticity and integrity, and subjected to a consistent *damnatio memoriae*.

### 3.2 *Genealogies of Knowledge*

The instantiation, deployment and semantic expansion of the Islamic emblem was not confined to the certification of an oecumenical order guaranteed and sustained by the office of the Caliphate, itself expanded discursively in historical narratives. The grand narrative of historical continuity with recursive origins, emblematic of purity, was also transposed to a textual continuity, one which is commonly taken as characteristic of Islam. And the presumption of this textual continuity itself had a grand narrative, seen historiographically to underpin and, consequently, genealogically to certify the integrity of same oecumenical order elaborated in descriptions of the Caliphal office and its grand dynastic narrative. We must always, however, bear in mind the caveat that registers of genealogical continuity and purity were not the only ones deployed in any of the schemes indicated, although they are the ones of salience to this particular discussion.

Overall, the generic name to be given to this particular register of genealogical purity is Tradition, by which I do not mean only the traditional material contained in Muḥammadan *logia* and *exempla* called *ḥadīth*, but rather a broader body of material lodged in the intersecting genres of *ḥadīth*, prophetic biography (*sīra*), genealogy, exegesis, lexicography, poetry, history (*akhbār* generically, later *tārīkh* in its various forms and subdivisions) and, not least, in the text of the Qur'ān, a text with potential doxographic value, but also with documentary value of use in all the genres mentioned above. 'Tradition', in

29 Mamour, *Polemics on the Origin of the Fatimid Caliphs*.

other words, is used here as an historical category, indicating in the specific context under discussion what medieval Arabic and Muslim scholarship designated as *manqūl*, knowledge transmitted textually and historically as distinct from knowledge arrived at by various rational means: demonstration, inference, innate ideas, and so forth.

The generic distinctiveness of these genres started to crystallize around the beginning of the period of relevance to this discussion. More important, they had a crucial aspect in common, namely, that their mode of transmission was seen to be the guarantor of their authenticity, which was, in turn, seen to guarantee their veracity. In this way, cognitive purity, however mitigated and controverted, was set out as the means of establishing a textual and narrative connection with the purity of origins, a connection that takes the form of a genealogy of knowledge which guarantees a narrative base making available material that can then be semantically and conceptually expanded on the presumption of fidelity to origins.

Central to this regime of fidelity—albeit not exclusively so—is the stability of the Qur’ānic text. This was a text regarded as having been integrally and authentically transmitted, small textual variations apart, from God through the Prophet. The guarantor of both the stability and integrity of its transmission, of canonicity, in other words, is an agent at once socio-political and magical: this is the consensus of Muslims (there is at least one alternative Qur’ān, called *al-Munfarid*, used by Druze divines) which acquires magical force as it is designated as infallible, although it is interesting to note that the description of this consensus as magical was at a further remove than Gratian’s *concordia* that has already been mentioned, the latter being guaranteed by the direct action of the Holy Spirit.

Similar criteria apply to other material transmitted and emanating from genealogical origins. The integrity of transmission here is not complete. Unlike the Qur’ān, texts transmitted in other literary genres were liable to contestation as to their genealogical consistency and integrity, contestations being based on the assessment of transmitters and the process of transmission: it is this contestation that lies at the base of charges of alteration, *tahrīf*, of the Old and New Testaments, and Ibn Taimiyya makes a very systematic case for comparing both Testaments of the Bible in this respect, not to the Qur’ān, but to the *sīra* and *ḥadīth*, on the grounds that their composition was late and the early history of their transmission uncertain, including the thesis, altogether common in classical Muslim Bible criticism, that part of the Pentateuch was composed by Ezra ha-Sofer, Ezra the Scribe.<sup>30</sup>

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30 On this theme overall Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds*.

Nevertheless, a stable textual base, underwritten by an overall (but inevitably incomplete) consensus, made possible the construction of a grand narrative of Muslim historical beginnings and of Muslim doxology. Once stabilised, in the period under consideration, this base was then the subject of hermeneutical inquiries in a variety of genres and for a variety of purposes, in varying directions that spawned different registers of genealogical purity. Each of these was allied to social and political forces at play, in such a way that it might be said that hermeneutics was deployed as a genealogical mode of inquiry seeking to certify the authenticity and integrity of transmission such that the interpretation would sustain the varying and sometimes contradictory claims to genealogical purity.

This applied to the nexus of exegesis and theology (Muslim theology was much concerned with the topic of Divine Attributes and the metaphysical or mythological status of the Qurʾān), and to the nexus between exegesis, history broadly considered, and *ḥadīth* with jurisprudence. In both theology and jurisprudence, the stable textual base, consisting of *uṣūl*, *archai*, was interpretatively nudged in the direction of positions held—positions emanating from philosophical notions in the case of theology, and from positive legislation in the case of jurisprudence—so as to result in appropriate theses and judgments, then become subject to institutional maintenance and authorization, frequently producing social and political conflicts that, on occasion, became protracted and violent.<sup>31</sup> Philosophical theses thus came to acquire the status of unadulterated meanings lodged in the original register.<sup>32</sup> Positive legislation was transposed by jurisprudence into the register of origins by a variety of deontic procedures, such that a positive judgment might be construed, as it was by al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), as (*idhʿān*), “compliance” to the requirements of origin,<sup>33</sup> seamlessly fitting in along the space of time, here a mode of what was elsewhere called, in a discussion of this specific matter, a “chronophagous discourse”.<sup>34</sup>

31 For instance, and most especially: Laoust, “Le Hanbalisme sous le Califat”; id., “Le Hanbalisme sous les Mamlouks Bahrides”; Bulliett, *The Patricians of Nishapur*; Jadʿān, *al-Miḥna*; van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 111, 456ff.

32 Cf. overall van Ess, “The Logical Structure of Islamic Theology”.

33 al-Ghazālī, *Miḥakk an-naẓar fiʾl-mantiq*, 33.

34 Al-Azmeh, *The Times of History*, ch. 3.

#### 4 Conclusion

This brings us back to the beginning of the discussion: genealogical purity rests upon the structure of genealogical time which, ingesting or otherwise abandoning the time of history, lodges the present in that moment of the past considered foundational or otherwise primeval, along a line of re-enactments, repetitions, instantiations, in appearance more topographical than linear. This is a time perhaps best described by St. Augustine. Commenting on the Gospel of James (1:17), “for with him [God], there is no variation or shadow of any moment”, Augustine offered the following description of God’s perception of time (Augustine, 11:21):

It is not that there is any difference in God’s knowledge according as it is produced by things not yet in existence, by things now or by things that are no more. Unlike us, He does not look ahead to the future, see the present before him, and look back to the past. Rather he sees events in another way, far and profoundly different from any experience that is familiar to our minds. For he does not variably turn his attention from one thing to another [...]. Hence all events in time, events that will be and are not yet and those that are now, being present, and those that have passed and are no more, all of them are apprehended by him in a motionless and everlasting present moment [...]. Nor does it make any difference whether he looks at them from present, past or future, since his knowledge, unlike ours, of the three kinds of time, present, past and future does not change as time changes [...]. Neither does [God’s] attention stray from one subject to another [...] for he knows events in time without any temporal acts of knowing of his own.

Schelling offered an amplified modern redaction of the same conception in his conception of mythical time:<sup>35</sup>

Absolutely prehistoric time [...] [is] time which is indivisible by nature and absolutely identical, which therefore, whatever duration may be imputed to it, can only be regarded as a moment, i.e. as time in which the end is like the beginning and the beginning like the end, a kind of eternity, because it is itself not a sequence of time but only One Time, which

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35 *Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie*, in Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, vol. 2, 106; id., *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, vol. 2, 131.

is not in itself an objective time, i.e. a sequence of times, but only becomes time (that is, the past) relative to the time which follows it / [die] schlechthin vorgeschichtliche Zeit [...] [ist] ihrer Natur nach unteilbare, absolut identische Zeit, die daher, welche Dauer man ihr zuschreibe, doch nur als Moment zu betrachten ist, d.h. als Zeit, in der das Ende wie der Anfang und der Anfang wie das Ende ist, eine Art von Ewigkeit, weil sie selbst nicht eine Folge von Zeiten, sondern nur Eine Zeit ist, die nicht in sich eine wirkliche Zeit, d.h. eine Folge von Zeiten ist, sondern nur relativ gegen die ihr folgende zur Zeit (nämlich zur Vergangenheit) wird.

With this evocation of myth, one might conclude by saying that, as the cycle of mythical time is closed when set by the *logos* of Tradition, so also is the metic cycle closed by which mythical elements are emblemized as origins come to act as the leading thread in the process of ideological interpellation under the signature of Islam, and, of course, of analogous historical phenomena which we have come to call cultures or civilizations.

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