

NATION AND ITS TERRITORY AS RITUALIZED SPACE:
EXAMINING THE CONCEPT OF THE SACRED AS A BOUNDARY MARKER IN FINLAND

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The semantic history of the term 'pyhä' (sacred) in Finnish language

The Finnish word '*pyhä*' denoting 'sacred' was adopted from proto-Germanic term *wīha- (> proto-Finnic *pūšä) as early as in the Bronze Age, i.e. from 1500 to 500 BCE.. The root for proto-Germanic *wīha- is *vik- (PIE *ueik-) denoting 'to separate'. The term '*pyhä*' was used in the vernacular as an adjective to mark off prominent and exceptional natural places such as lakes, rivers, rapids, ponds, larger hills, capes, bays and fells as outer borders which separated the wilderness areas (Fi. *eränkäyntialue*) of distinct population groups from each other.

There are more than 200 place names all over the Baltic Sea Culture Area where the term occurs in a compound word as an appellative designation for a place. The question is why these places were designated as *pyhä*, i.e. sacred? Should we understand the prehistoric term *pyhä* meaning something altogether different from what it does today? Did it, perhaps, have none of the religious connotation that it has in Christian parlance and in popular discourse in today's Finland? What the 'sanctity' of the places actually entailed?

According to my findings, the term was used only when all of the following conditions obtained:

- 1) The place was situated outside in an uninhabited area in the wilderness.
- 2) There were no previous names in this area. The attribute *pyhä* is first name to be given in the place. The place or the area designated by the term *pyhä* was newly occupied land; the first people ever in the area had just taken the land into their possession.
- 3) The place had a special function for the people whose territory it belonged to and who had the right to use its natural resources. A "*pyhä*-place" was used as boundary marking the limits of the occupied territory and of the right of exploitation.
- 4) The "*pyhä*-place" as a boundary point was chosen from among the topographically exceptional or anomalous places in the region, or from places where routes intersected. Since the term *pyhä* appeared in similar places all

over the geographical area where Finnish was spoken, it became an established term for marking places and boundaries in the landscape.

The adjective *pyhä* had a religious referent only to the extent as the category of 'religion' can be equated with the categories of 'the social' and 'the territorial'. According to methodologies of both Émile Durkheim and Arnold van Gennep, 'religion' as a category can be used in connection with popular traditions of hunting and agricultural societies in the meaning of its comparative use. It does not mean that religion actually has an autonomous ontological existence, but forms of cultural representation in local settings are theoretically conceptualized as such (see e.g. McCutcheon 1997, viii). According to this comparative methodology linguistic expressions in vernacular, oral narratives in folklore and other forms of cultural representation forming the nucleus of performances conceptualized as 'religious' are part and parcel of the overall social and spatial categories by which the members of ethnic communities comprehend and communicate the structures of meaning of their life-worlds. As Arnold van Gennep has emphasized spatial boundaries are not only legal and economic in nature, but also magico-religious. The boundaries marked by natural features such as rocks, trees, rivers and lakes or by natural objects such as stakes, portals or upright rocks are known by local people through collective tradition: as van Gennep writes, "the inhabitants and their neighbours know well within what territorial limits their rights and prerogatives extend" (van Gennep 1960, 15). The boundary points cannot be crossed or passed without the risk of supernatural dangers and sanctions. The boundary point is most often accompanied with interdictions, behavioural norms, rules of avoidance and prohibitions. Depending on the cultural value of situation when boundaries are crossed, socially prescribed rituals are considered as only proper ways to deal with the crossing (van Gennep 1960, 15-17).

For the population groups of prehistoric Finland, *pyhä* represented a boundary between two conceptual spheres of sociocultural processes, i.e. those taken place within the inside and outside of the inhabited territory and the human body. Such a categorization is a major cognitive element on which various population groups have traditionally based their symbolic cultural behaviour. The symbolism of the boundary crossing from the inside to the outside and from the outside to the inside have become manifest both in hunting and agricultural rituals, but also symbolically in so-called crisis rituals and in rites of passage.

The majority of the Finnish place-names beginning with *pyhä* are the product of the concepts guiding the categorization of space and the customary law

tradition by which groups of settlers sought either to separate themselves from one another and to mark off the territory claimed by them from the shared inner domain or the outer domain. In place-names *pyhä* signified the outer border of the inhabited area. As a temporal category *pyhä* was used to denote times that are, as it were, on the border and 'fall between' temporal categories. It thus became a basic term in the reckoning of time according to the lunar calendar. Among the Baltic Finns it was used to mark off times into periods by virtue of its meaning of prohibition and non-violation. *Pyhä* meant forbidden, something to be avoided, dangerous, so that the behavioural norms prescribed by society had to be observed during the time marked off as sacred. In addition to territorial and temporal borders, the notion of *pyhä* was used as an adjective to mark off an object, a phenomenon, a time, an animal or a person that was to be avoided and held as forbidden because of its dangerousness or impurity and to separate it from the sphere of everyday social life.

The sacred as an attribute to the Forest

The forest is the primal and original context for the sacred in Finland. While Germans use the expression "Urwald" to describe the significance of the forest, the Finns use the expression cradle (Fi. *kehto*). The forest has never been wilderness in the strict sense of the term in Finland, since from prehistoric times people have exploited its resources and left their marks on its terrain. The forest precedes the markers of sacrality such as temples and other sanctuaries, cemeteries and in modern times also libraries and museums as carriers of values and meanings according to which the making of national identities are assessed. The forest is no less enchanted domain of the divine than its architecturally, theologically and ethnologically constructed counterparts. The forest holds, but also reveals its secrecy in the silent language of its landscape, its trees, cliffs, rocks, holes and clefts, its fauna and its flora. The ways of reading their messages are stored in the collective memory of local communities. In hunting and peasant societies there used to be special persons who could master multiple vocabularies of various forms of forests and decipher their languages to non-specialist members of the community.

In Finnish folk tradition, the secret knowledge about forest life belonged to the sphere of activity of *tietäjäs*, i.e. people who know. The *tietäjä* was a ritual specialist who could master supernatural powers. He could ward off evil forces or keep illnesses at distance or he could prevent accidents. But at the same time

tietäjä had power to cause damage or revenge to his enemies. The *tietäjä* was not a shaman (Fi. *noita*) who could manipulate souls and with a ritual technique withdraw his soul from the body, i.e. fall into a trance. *Tietäjä* manipulated the forces of nature by incantation formulas. *Tietäjä* could lift power (Fi. *väki*) of natures from the earth, from the forest, from the lakes, from the air and from the wind. Shamanism was based on the idea that instead of one world, there were 'other worlds'. A strong-blooded *tietäjä* could, however, act like a shaman and transform his anthropocentric view of life into that of an animal in order to steer his way into the forest. Shamans and *tietäjäs* were mostly men and maintained the social order. Women, on the other hand, had their own ways of contributing to the secrecy of the forest. Due to their physiology and gender-specific roles, women had marginal position in society. In traditional agrarian Finnish society women were dependent on their husbands, but they could, however, take advantage of their marginal position and use their power both for positive and negative ends.

The forest and the notion of boundary

Evidence of multiple meanings of the forest in Finnish folk tradition can be obtained both from linguistic expressions and to a certain extent from archeological findings. In an attempt to understand the richness of forest discourses in Finnish folk tradition, it is first of all important to pay attention to the linguistic history of terms that belong to the same conceptual sphere as the forest. The Finnish word denoting forest, '*metsä*' is closely connected with words such as '*erä*', '*pyhä*' and '*hiisi*'. All of these words were used as attributes of places that were set apart from spaces where people lived. The notion of boundary, a border between this world and other world was an essential element in their meaning. The forest, '*metsä*' denoted originally an edge where the inhabited region ends, not the totality of space where trees are its dominant feature (Vilppula 1990, 287). The word '*erä*' was used to refer to the space beyond the *metsä*-edge. The word '*erä*' denotes part or portion that has been separated from the larger totality (see Taavitsainen 1987, 214-215; cf. engl. 'round'). '*Erä*' appears as a prefix in the compound word '*erämaa*' meaning wilderness. *Erämaa* was a specifically marked area of distinct population groups for subsistence activity (Fi. *eräntähtäalue*). *Pyhä*-places or alternatively by specific places set apart as '*eräpyhä*' were used to make the distinction between the interior and the exterior of *eräntähtäalue*. The sacredness of the *eräntähti-*

regions can be comprehended according to the notion of the boundary. Prehistoric hunter-cultivators employed the attribute the *metsä* (edge) as a boundary-line by which 'this world' of everyday social life was clearly demarcated from the 'other world' in the wilderness. The terms '*pyhä*' and '*eräpyhä*' were used to mark an outer-border of the *eränkäymti*-region. Both adjectives were used as an appellative designation for topographically anomalous places in the forest or in lakes along the pathways. (Anttonen 1992, 62; Anttonen 1996, 111-116; Anttonen 1999, 12-14). Elias Lönnrot was probably referring to slash and burn cultivation in the wilderness-regions in explaining the word *pyhä* in his Finnish-Swedish dictionary: "*on ruvennut koivua versomaan kun maa on ollut pyhässä*" (the ground has begun to push up birch after having been in the sacred). In other words, the ground has been marked off and burned for cultivation. For *eräpyhä* Lönnrot gave explanation 'particularly sacred place' (Lönnrot 1958, 292-293).

Finnish archeologists (Taavitsainen, Simola & Grönlund 1998, 235) have shown that in prehistoric hunting and fishing economies people had to move extensively in forest regions before they could capture prey such as wolf, brown bear, lynx and wolverine. Hunters did not consider the forest region hostile if the social conventions connected with the taboo norms were respected. These concerned particularly sacred places in lakes along the pathways and in forests for burn-cleared areas (Fi. *kaskimaa*; *huuhtakaski*) set apart for cultivation. Behavioral restrictions (*pyhä*-norms) concerned also burn-cleared plots under cultivation, since unharmed growth of crop was one of the most important social values. Slash-and-burn (Fi. *kaski*; *kaskeaminen*) demanded occupation of extensive forest regions, since slash-and-burn cultivation was for the short-term. The latest results of pollen analyses (Taavitsainen, Simola & Grönlund 1998, 239) also indicate that burn-cleared areas of different ages provided hunters with game. Hunting and cultivation in distant forest regions were not distinct subsistence strategies, but complementary. Fertile hilltops and slopes that were most suitable for the slash-and-burn, actually promoted hunting, especially trapping. Archeologists (Taavitsainen, Simola & Grönlund 1998, 240) have also assumed that *eränkävijä*-hunters also cultivated crops for brewing beer for the fur trade. Ritual drinking was an essential part of forest behavior in connection with *eränkäymti*. Beer was not only an intoxicating drink; it was a substance which conveyed symbolic meanings of local *erä*-cultivation communities. Beer promoted 'luck' (Fi. *onni*) which meant the growth of things with special social value.

The fourth important word that is closely connected with the forest is '*hiisi*'.

In Viking-Age peasant society people had used the term '*hiisi*' in a positive sense. *Hiisi* denoted both a 'cult place' and a 'burial ground'. *Hiisi*-places were usually wood-covered, stony hilltops that were located in the close vicinity of village dwellings. *Hiisi* was originally not a supernatural being, but a place set apart for ritual purposes. After the advent of Christianity in Finland in the 12th century, the word '*hiisi*' turned into a designation for the supernatural agent that ruled non-evangelized spaces, mainly forests, but also lakes. In Christian parlance the meaning of *hiisi* turned from an adjective into a noun denoting 'Hell'. (see Koski 1990, 427). *Hiisi* was adopted as a designation for an evil spirits originating from the place where the diseases and harmful things have their birth (Fi. *synty*), i.e. the place outside the authority of Christian God. The meaning of the exclamation "Go to *Hiisi*!" came to mean "Go to Hell". One could even argue that the most important tool for converting the late Viking Age population in the Western part of Finland to Christianity, was not only the Word of God, but also the axe.

Christianity became established in Finnish society by felling the trees at *hiisi*-sites and building churches on those sites. It was a common strategy to build churches on *hiisi*-sites and uproot pre-Christian habitual strain of thought from the people's minds. In Christian folklore, the dominant theme concerns *hiisi*-beings as giants and as collective, post-mortal beings who dwell in forests. These were called 'hiisi-inhabitants', *hiidenväki*. In legends *hiisi*-giants often co-operated with converted Christians in building churches with them. Especially the existence of big heaps of stones dominating the landscape came to be explained as stones by which *hiisi*-giants had thrown at each other. In pre-Christian popular thinking stones were important boundary markers of social spaces. (Koski 1990, 429).

The sacredness of the bear

The most important rituals concerning Finnish forest behaviour were bear hunting rituals. These rituals also included beer consumption. Inaugurating the Academy in Turku in 1640, bishop Isak Rothovius describes Finnish forest behaviour in connection with bear hunting: "It is said that having killed a bear, hunters hold a feast and drink from the skull of the bear and make a sound resembling its growling, in this way wishing to secure themselves successful hunting and rich quarries for the future". (Kuusi 1976, 252). In the healing and hunting incantations of Finnish-Karelian folk poetry anthology, *Suomen kansan*

vanhat runot (SKVR), the forest is being described as “the stony home of a grizzly” (*kontion kivikoti*), “the boulder bedroom of a bear” (*karhun rautakammari*), (see Ilomäki 1989, 82; 85).

The relationship between the forest and the bear is depicted in epic poems like a human marriage. The relationship is that of the bride and groom in the wedding ritual. The bear is the groom and the forest is the bride. Marriage between the partners is an ideal one; in moral terms, it is innocent and harmonious within the forest boundaries. No violation of rules take place between the spouses. In folk tradition the forest is depicted as “clean, God’s creation”. Its innocence is contrasted with the sinfulness and impurity of human life. In bear hunting rituals while the bear has been killed and brought into the village, the human community, especially the spokesman for the community in Karelian tradition, *patvaska*, places a woman in the role of the forest, because of her birth-giving capacity and physical cycles (see Tarkka 1998, 116). According to the Finnish folklorist Lotte Tarkka, woman is a symbolic mediator between nature and culture. The bear is defined as male and wedded to a woman for the sake of maintaining the ideal image of the innocence that should prevail in the forest and moreover, in the relationship between the human community and the forest.

Even though bears are a constant threat to the cattle, it was considered a sinful act to kill the sacred animal because of the mythic image by which the balance between the order of human community and that of the forest is kept in force. The wedding is a conciliation ritual drama by which the boundary-line between human community and the forest is being purified after the violation of the ideal norm. The state of innocence is being restored by the act of giving the bear his lost bride, i.e. the forest, its natural habitat. The ‘soul’ of the bear regains its former status after the skull has been taken back to the forest and set up on the twigs of a specific pine.

In everyday social life, luck was ensured by keeping women away from any contact with the bear. The world of the bear in the forest and the world of women in the village should remain separate. Even the name of the bear was taboo. It was not allowed to mention the bear’s name in the village. Only when the bear was killed, could the killer call it by its proper name. Lotte Tarkka has emphasized the significance of taboo norms and ritual procedures connected with the bear. She points out that an encounter of the feminine in the village and the feminine out in the forest should be controlled and protected by specific ritual means in order for people to be able to secure a harmonious and continuous contact between the village and the forest and for preventing the possible vio-

lent confrontation between these parties. (Tarkka 1998, 115)

The sacredness of the forest implies that there was not only dynamic tension between the human community and the forest in agrarian Finnish-Karelian society, but also that this dynamism is governed by gendered division of labour (Tarkka 1998, 93-94). Human community had clear gender divisions. Women's world was limited to the village, while the man's world embraced both the known social world and the unknown world beyond its borders. As men stepped into the forest, they left the world of women, children and cattle behind, but the paradox is that in their forest activities men were facing again the feminine. The forest is personified as female, although the King of the forest is *Tapio*, the spirit ruler of its wealth. Finnish hunting incantations depict the hunting ground as feminine territory into which hunters enter. The forest is addressed by feminine metaphors: "*the wealthy wives of nature*", "*Tapio's precise wife*", "*Tapio's daughter*". (Tarkka 1998)

The femininity of the forest and the femininity of the village are aspects of one and the same 'sacred' principle according to which the growth is produced within the interior of their boundaries. The forest should be bountiful for both for the animals and for the hunter. The forest without game animals is tantamount to women who cannot become pregnant. It was men's duty to ensure security of the community and see that woman's womb (*kohtu*) was kept safe. The wedding drama is needed between the bear and the woman, because human community cannot produce growth within the interior of community-boundaries. Interaction and co-operation across the borders is always needed with the owners of the forest nature, i.e. with its mythical beings.

Why did then the bear have such an important position as a mythical being in the interaction between human community and the forest? As a matter of fact, we should ask; why was the bear a sacred animal. The fact that the bear was the most powerful animal of the forest and its personification was not the sufficient to determine its exceptional position in folk taxonomy. The sacredness of the bear depended on its relation to the human community and the importance of the boundary-line which separated the village from the forest. In addition to these important aspects, the sacredness was due an anthropomorphic perception of the bear. The bear was seen as a human like being. The bear had a special taxonomical status in animal classification of traditional societies in arctic and sub-arctic cultures, because of its human like characteristics. The bear had no clear-cut boundaries according to which its position in the category of 'animal' was assigned; it was not totally human, but it was not totally animal either. The bear was an anomaly.

Traditional forms of forest knowledge and behaviour have today been replaced by religious, philosophical, ecological attitudes about the value of the forest. In Lutheran Finland the forest still holds its position as a special icon of the nation and its citizens inner character. 85 percent of the population are members of the Lutheran Church. In secularized and privatized postmodern Finnish society, the forest has, however, become an object for Christian retreat seminars for restoring the personal integrity by the methods of silence practice. The forest has become an icon of the individual. The forest is a mirror against which human beings can reflect the sacred dimensions of their individual lives. The forest is a means to approach God (see Bordessa 1991, 85). Since inwardness is characteristic of the Finnish socio-religious personality, the forest can still function as a sacred place also in the Lutheran religion. In the forest an individual has more mental and physical freedom than in the Church. The forest of the traditional Finnish society and the forest of modern Finland are not, however, the same. The modern forest has become designed to serve various ideologies, including religious - not only the Lutheran heritage, but also other ideologies such as nationalizing the landscape and designing the collective image of the forest through architecture. Architects have produced modern buildings where both the wood and the rock are their essential elements. They aim at large concrete structures where people could feel themselves equally at home as they once felt in the forest. (See Bordessa 1991, 88). Through the centuries the forest seems to have maintained its function as the second skin of the nation.

The sacredness of Finnishness

In the early 1800's there grew a national romantic movement in Finland that employed the notion of the sacred in connection with the concept of Finnishness. The young adherents of the National Romantic ideas in 1820's and early 1830's stressed the sanctity of the ancestral land and created a cultural program in order to arouse historical and mythological consciousness of the glorious past in the minds of the Finns. Since Finland had become a Grand Duchy of Russia in 1809, they emphasized the importance of setting the Finns apart both from the Swedes and from the Russians. When Helsinki had become the new capital in 1828, these men founded a society for the advancement of Finnish language and culture in 1831. The society became to be known as the Finnish Literature Society. The main task of the society was to write the history for the Finns by

organizing the collection of oral poetry and folk traditions in the rural areas of the Finnish speaking population in Karelia. The process led to the publication of the Kalevala by Elias Lönnrot in 1835.

But before the Kalevala had been published, the leading members of the society were puzzled by its public image. The chairman of the society in 1831, J. G. Linsén had first suggested that they should create a logo that depicts the culture hero Väinämöinen sitting on the steep boulder with his *kantele* on his knees together with animals that had gathered around him to listen his enchanting playing. Linsén suggested that the text in the logo should read: *Credite Posteris* which means: "those who come after us, have your faith in this". In 1834, before Elias Lönnrot published the first edition of Kalevala, Linsén came up with a new idea. Instead of Väinämöinen, the seal should depict five-string kantele, Väinämöinen's instrument that he had made out pike's jaws. Kantele could be placed on the clouds in the sky with Northern Star (Aurora Borealis) placed above it. The text that circles the picture should be read: *Pysy Suomessa Pyhä* meaning the advice or even the duty for every Finn 'to be concerned about the sacredness of Finland (see Anttonen 1993, 33-35).

The message of this symbol was that Finland should be treated with respect and dignity. Her cultural heritage must be respected, her language, people and territorial boundaries kept intact and not violated. Finland must be made a matter of heart for every Finn. In nationalistic rhetoric Finland was considered as sacred space as Israel is to Jews. It is the country of God that already the ancestors had set apart from other countries and sanctified by its own language, traditions and cultural heritage.

The sanctity of wars in Finland

One can see continuity in the various discourses concerning the term 'pyhä' in Finland. The norm of non-violation governing behavior in specific places and especially in regard to their boundaries have been expressed from the prehistoric times up to the 20th century by the term '*pyhä*'. In 1900's there are two major ethnopolitical episodes in connection of which the term 'pyhä' appears. The first episode burst out right after Finland had declared her independence on December 6, 1917. The episode was the Civil war. The country had been divided into two competing political camps whose ways of interpreting the political ideals were highly different even though both of them strived for gaining Finland a sanctified status among the nations. Members of the right-wing party

(labeled as 'whites') emphasized both the sacredness of the ancestral land and its traditions and the unrestricted freedom of private ownership of means of production. Members of the left-wing party (labeled as 'red') were committed to the sacred ideas of classless society lacking lines of demarcation between social groups and setting up a nation where equality of all people and common ownership of property were held as the supreme value in life. The right-wing party won the Civil War. When the second world war broke and the Winter War against Soviet Union was fought in 1939-1940, both of the Civil War parties transcended their differences and joined their forces in order to unite the nation in the name of the fatherland.

Winter War is a sacred episode in Finnish history. It is told in stories that form an event-pattern in the sense the historian of religions Ninian Smart has emphasized. The war united every man and woman defending the nation and made it as a whole in the moment that was considered one of life and death. The Winter War has become a myth that gives the Finland and its citizens strength in moments of weakness and despair. It offers a fixing point in time that can be looked back to and used as a source of power. The annual celebration of March 13, when the Winter War ended, is celebrated as a ritual by which the power and inner substance of Finnishness is renewed and enhanced by those who have internalized the myth and the heroism it represents. The victory over the Russians was not achieved as a result of greater manpower, but with feeling of unity and unanimity. Winter War celebrations and narrations follow the pattern which emphasize the Finnish strength (*sisu*), unity and heroism in front of more superior army than the Finns had. Marshall C.G. Mannerheim's formulation of the Winter War forms the canonized dogma of the significance of the war to Finnish identity. In his memoirs (Mannerheim 1953, 373) we can read:

"May coming generations not forget the dearly bought lessons of our defensive way. They can with pride look back on the Winter War and find courage and confidence in its glorious history. That an army so inferior in numbers and equipment should have inflicted such serious defeats on an overwhelmingly powerful enemy, and, while retreating, have over and over again repelled his attacks is something for which it is hard to find parallel in the history of war. But it is equally admirable that the Finnish people, face to face with an apparently hopeless situation, were able to resist a feeling of despair and, instead, to grow in devotion and greatness. Such a nation has earned the right to live".

The Winter War holds its sacred character in its significance for the Finns as sign of unity and unanimity by which independence and sovereignty of the nation was achieved. The heroic war opens up, according to Smart, an inter-

face through which the power of the object flows. It enhances Finnish substance in the minds of those who understand that they are not looking back on random individuals of the past, but individuals who were performatively bonded by their consciousness of the value what meant to be a Finn and what it meant to fight for Finland. (Smart 1983, 25).

Finnish nationalism can be comprehended as a form of religion. According to Ninian Smart a nation is a complex performative construct; it is sacramentally bonded. The nation is like an individual: its land is its body, its population is its mind, its mythic history is its biography, the flag, the monuments and the poetry of its tradition are its clothes. Like a person, a nation has a future. And like a person, it has a religion in its identity and in its various processes of sanctifications. As Smart has written, the nation is a daily sacrament. It is created every day again and again by language, culture and history, in a word - by myth.

The notion of nationhood as a religion contains that the ancestral land is considered as sacred space. This implies that the culture-specific images of man are territorially bounded. According to this image it is the geographical area where one is born and where his or her home and family ties lie that makes a difference and creates a special way of looking at the ancestral land. Smart writes: "To tell the story of how the ancestors settled the land and defended it, developed it and beautified it, is to express the charge the land has for the group" (Smart 1983, 21).

What Smart wants to say is that historiography is a sort of modern myth-making. History does not attach people only to their territory, but also to their fellow-citizens. Smart considers history as a charged narration with special meaning. People's stories of their glorious past, its gains and victories just as well its losses and sufferings, are arranged into patterns of event which they confer special meaning. It becomes a myth for them. Smart (1983, 19-20) writes: "The storytelling is the way the event-pattern is conveyed to us. But that 'conveying' is not just a question of the transfer of information: it is a performative act of celebrating the event-pattern; for the event-pattern is not just flat events, but ones charged with meaning. They include victories over oppression, heroic deeds, and so on. A myth thus may be considered simply as a charged story; in this sense, history is myth, for it is ...a story that has a charge for the people for whom it is the history."

People act performatively according to the mark they acknowledge as one of their defining characteristics. (Smart 1983, 17-18). Any act or an expression of

feelings may have a performative function as long as it conveys messages of marks and boundaries by which people express their identity as individuals and members of a society or an ethnic group. According to Ninian Smart man is a territorial animal. (Smart 1983, 21). Human beings tend to fix their cultural identities in some specific topos, either in physical reality or in utopian (non-topos) reality. It is an anthropological fact that the self-consciousness of human beings is inseparably connected with a territory or a place where they live more or less permanently or that they regard as their origin.

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