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## Introduction

J. G. PERISTIANY and JULIAN PITT-RIVERS

This is a collection of essays by authors of different nationality and discipline on a theme that preoccupied us already in the 1960s. It is the continuation, in much the same form, of an earlier collection, but it concentrates upon an aspect of the subject we think we had somewhat neglected before: the relation between honor and the sacred.

The previous book, *Honor and Shame* (Peristiany 1965),<sup>1</sup> was the first attempt to examine the concept of honor in anthropology and it was also, subsidiarily, a preface to the anthropology of the Mediterranean. The book was composed of essays written mostly after, but all as a result of, a conference held at Burg Wartenstein by the Wenner-Gren Foundation in 1959, and as such it was one of two publications, the other being entitled *Mediterranean Countrymen* (Pitt-Rivers 1961). This last, the earlier to appear in print, was concerned mainly with the diversities of the culture of Mediterranean rural communities and with their various ways of adapting themselves to their common problem of belonging to a centralized state and a “Great Tradition,” a problem that, with the exception of Robert Redfield, had largely been shirked by anthropologists of previous generations. The second, *Honor and Shame*, sought to define a field in which we had discovered at the conference a certain basic cultural unity.

Looking at honor again in the 1980s enables us to see it in a rather different light, not only because the authors of *Honor and Grace* include new (and younger) scholars, but because those of the first book have found more to say about the subject. These essays were, with two exceptions, written specially for it and were presented, in embryo, in Julian Pitt-Rivers’ seminar at the Sorbonne (and their bibliographies have not been revised). Those of Bourdieu and Leroy Ladurie were written at the same time, but independently, and were discussed in the seminar. They have already appeared in the original French (Bourdieu 1986; Leroy Ladurie 1983).

In the years since the publication of *Honor and Shame* anthropology, also,

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has somewhat changed; it has become much more concerned with symbolism and religion. Hence it appears today that in concentrating upon a social explanation of honor most of us – Campbell was the exception – had been to some extent blind to its intimate connection with the realm of the sacred which was mentioned, then, only as a residual aspect invoked to explain how it was attached to the authority of the State, the Church or the religious leaders. This time, the main orientation is provided by that aspect of honor which faces the spiritual world, the ineffable and the problem of individual and collective destiny.

This change in perspective is due not merely to a change in fashion in anthropology, but to the impossibility of making a complete analysis of honor without examining its ties with ritual and religion. The ties with ritual are obvious, for rites establish consensus as to “how things are” and thus they fix legitimacy. Hence ritual is the guarantor of the social order, conveying honor, not only in the formal distribution of dignities on ceremonial occasions, but also in the sense of making manifest the honorable status of the actors, whether in the rites of salutation, as Firth (1936) made clear, of hospitality, or of passage. The latter, as Bourdieu points out in this volume, are frequently concerned with distinguishing between those who pass the entrance exam to one of the “Grandes Ecoles” and thus receive honor, and those who do not. (Appropriately, an examination is something that, in English, you “pass” or “fail”.) But the tie with religion is less evident, for it goes much deeper than the polemics between the nobility and the Church which occupied our attention in the previous book.<sup>2</sup> It is concerned with the notion of grace, both in its religious context and in its daily usage. Hence the title of the book.

It is above all its relation to the ultimate source of the sacred within each individual that brings honor into the religious sphere. It is in this sense that a person’s honor is said to be sacred, something more precious to him than even his life, of which it was traditionally viewed as the epitome. “Rather death than dishonor!” was the ideal expression of this sentiment, whether on the battlefield or in the boudoir.

One is perhaps chary of talking loosely about “the sacred” today, for the notion has been overworked since the days of Durkheim, yet we nevertheless require a word to denote the fact that there is a realm of mental behavior where the extraordinary is opposed to the ordinary and where accepted truths are placed beyond question by a conviction, impervious to reasoning because it lies deeper than consciousness; it commands an attachment that springs from the bottom of the self, refusing the logic of everyday conduct. This is where the sentiment of honor arises, and whether or not this realm is claimed by a particular religion as part of its domain and placed under the aegis of its divinity, it clearly borders on the territory of religion and it is in this sense that we can speak of an aspect of honor related to the sacred.

In addition, the paradoxes of honor, seldom recognized by people save when it is a matter of making a fool of someone by playing on the different implications of the word, endow it with a mystery that places it out of bounds to practical reasoning. The Church has always claimed to annex it to doctrinal issues by making it equivalent to “moral conscience” but it clearly is not that in the view of most laymen. Common parlance allies honor to the sacred at large rather than to formal religion, and the rituals that commit it imply as much. The fact that, in English, honor should be expressed in a number of contexts by the notion of grace – to receive grace is to be honored and “disgraced” is simply the synonym of dishonor – carries the same implication, and it is not much different in any romance language. Consequently honor has a kind of congenital relationship with grace which challenges our previous view of it as primordially a matter of social structure.

But we are concerned with more than verbal equivalences. Therefore the fact that on the far side of the Mediterranean we find another concept, not by any means identical with grace, yet of the same order – *baraka* – encourages us to search on a more general level for the logic of that complex of notions that connects status, power, and authority on the one hand with good fortune, legitimacy, and sanctity on the other.<sup>3</sup> For that reason we have also included the Basque concept of *indarra* among the notions examined, for it is synonymous with neither grace nor *baraka*, presenting a rather different conceptual configuration, yet belonging to the same general category of concepts that hold a society together morally.

The sacredness of power is an old theme in political science. If these studies can bring anything new to the subject, it is because they provide concrete examples analyzed within an anthropological framework which combines the deep-seated premises of the culture in question with the social organization of the society.

Casting a momentary glance at the history of the concept of honor, we can see that the word had very little currency in anthropology prior to the 1960s. Mauss mentioned it in passing and even saw the similarity between honor and the *mana* of Polynesia, but otherwise it was rarely invoked in the literature of the discipline, either because honor was too sacred a notion to be credited to peoples who did not belong to Western civilization, because honor was thought to be specifically an element of Western culture not translatable into another language,<sup>4</sup> or because nobody but Mauss had perceived the resemblances between the honor of Maori chiefs or Kwakiutl potlatchers and that of Western men of honor, who had not yet at that time been recognized as a valid object of anthropological study.

In fact the first analyses of honor dating from that epoch opened up new problems: it was evident that honor as a concept was part and parcel of the culture of Mediterranean societies, whether Christian or Islamic, but it was also

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evident that it was related at the level of behavior to other aspects of those societies, to the values attached to the sexes, the so-called endogamy or the institution of patronage, etc., over and above the simple matter of insult and retaliation which provided the pretexts for validating claims to precedence or for inflicting humiliation by denying them, the common currency of "affairs of honor." In each of these different institutions a different aspect of honor is brought to the fore and the word can equally refer, in English, to a judge, the acceptance of an invitation, female sexual purity, or the crediting of a cheque, so that one might wonder what they have in common at all save the word and why they use the same word to denote such different matters.

These different aspects did not all fit together like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle composing a whole picture (in what senses are cultures wholes?). Rather they represented not only the variety of social personalities present in a given society but also the varied and conflicting interests of rival groups: lineages, clans, classes, or guilds which gave precedence in their definition of honor to the aspects which favored their social promotion. Warring interpretations of honor contended through their champions to impose themselves upon the popular consensus of each community or kingdom, simply ignoring the contentions of others, for honor is too intimate a sentiment to submit to definition: it must be felt, it cannot be analyzed except by the anthropologist. It is therefore an error to regard honor as a single constant concept rather than a conceptual field within which people find the means to express their self-esteem or their esteem for others.

Moreover our analyses implied a different kind of relationship between concepts, which are a part of culture, and the social reality which could be observed from outside, a relationship which might be seen to depart from the simplistic notion, favored previously by many, that concepts were, so to speak, precipitated by social relations (see Gellner 1973). This was clear from the moment when we perceived a possible social function to be accorded to paradoxes and ambiguities: culture was no longer a set of rules of conduct followed blindly which supported the organization of society, but a structure of conflicting premises within which the struggle for dominance took place. The relationship between culture and society was no longer concordant but dialectic. The achievement of honor was not then simply a refraction or demonstration of the reality of power or precedence, as Thomas Hobbes (*Leviathan*, chapter 10) thought, but also a means of achieving or maintaining them through the control of the definition of honor. The Church and the nobility had disputed this for centuries and not only in Spain: honor owed to God versus honor owed to arms and their courageous use.<sup>5</sup>

And each class possessed its own honor and evaluated itself and others in those terms, down to the statutorily infamous who had none and whose views were not recorded (unless the picaresque novels are to be taken as evidence).

But the different classes were not only credited with different degrees of attachment to honor of one sort or another, they entertained different conceptions of it. (The essay by Caro Baroja deals specifically with this question.) Hence the power of rank versus the power of cash and the convertibility of one into the other was a favorite theme of the social critics of an earlier century, and sometimes events listened to the critics and imposed change. To give but one example, the Puritan revolution in England saw the most spectacular redefinition of honor there has ever been. Rank was discounted, virtue promoted, financial honesty revered, any form of flamboyance frowned on. The theatres were closed. But the Commonwealth did not last; the Restoration returned, if not entirely, to the earlier concept, as criteria of honor, rank, ostentation, dominance, and *joie de vivre* replaced probity, piety, purity, and sobriety, and the ideal of social equality went out of the window. The theatres reopened and for a decade offered almost no joke other than the indignity of deceived husbands whose misfortune had been unmentionable for a generation.

The paradox that honor is at the same time a matter of moral conscience and a sentiment on the one hand, and on the other, a fact of repute and precedence, whether attained by virtue of birth, power, wealth, sanctity, prestige, guile, force, or simony (or, to take another paradox, that those whose honor is greatest feel least obliged to defend it), implied that honor could not merely be reduced and treated as an epiphenomenon of some other factor, but obeyed a logic of its own which could dispel the paradoxes. The ultimate justification of this book is as an attempt to elucidate this logic through the chosen examples of the essays it contains.

A comment on the reception of the previous book may perhaps help to clarify the issues faced in this one, for it was not always understood in the sense which we intended. There was, inevitably, a reaction in defense of a previous and simpler view of the relationship between culture and society; material reductionist arguments were put forward to show that honor was no more than a manifestation of the distribution of power or wealth. It was suggested that the value attached to the sexual purity of women as the basis of their honor could be explained by their role in the process of production or reproduction, or the principle of patriliney, etc. Thus the paradoxes were evacuated, unresolved, by the simple procedure of treating them as subsidiary or fortuitous.

*Honor and Shame* bore the subtitle "The Values of Mediterranean Society." *Honor and Grace* is no longer concerned specifically with the Mediterranean, for it contains only one essay on the Islamic world and deals with the northern half of medieval France (and England), and also with the Basques, who can hardly be described as Mediterraneans. Yet it is a continuation of the first volume in that it is centered on the same part of the world and concerned with the same theme, of which it attempts to develop an aspect inadequately treated in *Honor and Shame*. But the fact that the subtitle of the book mentioned

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“Mediterranean Society” (deliberately avoiding the word “culture”) nevertheless led sometimes to the misunderstanding that we were proposing to establish the Mediterranean as a “culture area.” This was not the case. This methodological concept did sterling service in organizing the early ethnography of the North American Indians, but its value is much less when applied to a functioning society about which much more is known, for it becomes arbitrary and depends upon the aspect of culture which is given preference in determining the “area.” Are the Serbs part of a Mediterranean culture area? In many ways, yes! But from the point of view of kinship, not at all, for until quite recent times their clans were exogamic (see Pitt-Rivers 1983: Introduction; 1986). The Sahara and the Alps set limits to the north and south, because people are very noticeably different on the far side, but where does it stop if you go east? In fact we were as much interested in the differences of culture as in the similarities among the peoples surrounding the Mediterranean.

Our aim in treating the Mediterranean as a whole was epistemological only and we never attempted to define it geographically. Thus when mention is made of “the Mediterranean concept of honor” we recognize that it indicates a tendency to associate masculine honor with female sexual purity only rather vaguely, for there are areas near the Mediterranean where this connection is not made at all, for example certain areas of northern Spain or the Mزاب or Ouled Naïl of Algeria, and that in any case there is considerable variation within what is loosely termed so.

Another misunderstanding arose from the conclusion, reached by some readers, that the use of the word “shame” in the title implied that we considered the culture of the Mediterranean was a “shame culture” rather than a “guilt culture,” a distinction that had been launched originally by Margaret Mead, but that had convinced us of its utility no more than it had Alfred Kroeber (1900: 612ff.). We might perhaps have done better to entitle the book “Honor and Infamy” rather than *Honor and Shame* in order to guard against this misapprehension, but this would have impoverished the theme since, unlike honor, infamy refers uniquely to reputation and not to sentiments. While admitting all the interest that a study of the psychology of shame may have, especially in relation to the physiology of blushing and other psycho-physiological phenomena, we were content to limit ourselves strictly to the field of social anthropology and confine our investigations to the role of the concepts of honor and shame in ordering society rather than confront the ill-defined problems of the personality of Mediterranean peoples. It appeared to us that the distinction had been lifted from the popular moral philosophy of the anglophone countries and applied in fields where its relevance was dubious, for the sentiment of shame appears to be universal and guilt is simply internalized shame, so that though the degree of internalization of the sanctions varies, no culture can be unequivocally called one or the other. In addition, the subject which tends to be



internalized varies: Western Europe from one period to another internalized its sexual shame in different degrees; the Protestant ethic, in addition, internalized financial shame. The Trobrianders feel it on neither of these counts, but many primitive peoples feel guilt with regard to the violation of taboos which Europeans regard as morally neutral. To fear the punishment of the ancestors might or might not be interpreted as feeling guilt. Strathern raises the question, "Why is shame on the skin?" (in Blacking 1977) and concludes that the natives of Mount Hagen, New Guinea, feel both guilt and shame and that the same association between shame and skin is present in Italy, Spain, or Greece: to have *cara dura* in Spanish is to be insensitive to the sanction of shame (it is not far from the notion of a thick skin in English). Yet susceptibility to shame does not entail either the presence or the absence of guilt. The opposition then is a false one as far as cultures are concerned, however useful it may be in the discussion of individual personalities within our own society. But there is a more serious difficulty: one feels guilt in relation to those to whom one is committed. No gypsy ever felt guilt in the face of a *gadje*, but this does not mean that he is necessarily incapable of such an emotion in relation to his own kinsman, that is to say, towards a person with whom he shares a moral bond and common values. Gypsies, of course, feel no such bond with those who are not of their race. But even to distinguish between guilt and shame as between an abstract moral sentiment and an attitude towards specific persons encounters difficulties: for one can feel guilt in relation to a person and theologians have written of "religious shame."

Finally the attempt to distinguish between guilt and shame cultures faces a last problem: there is no single attitude towards sin and culpability in any one Mediterranean society. In keeping with its definition of honor the Church expected a sentiment of guilt to be aroused by recognition of dishonorable conduct and offered forgiveness through confession, while the nobility tended to defend itself from being put to shame by drawing a sword. Conceptually intermediate between the two, the peasantry strove, rather than for individual supremacy, to maintain the ethic of equality within the community, to avoid being excluded as inferior. As Peristiany put it (in the Introduction to *Honor and Shame*, p. 14), "This is a society without clearly defined spheres of competence in which each male individual constantly asserts his basic equality with all others. The Greek Cypriot Highlander is not antagonistic but agonistic."

Nevertheless we can see, in this example, that the dispute between the two "estates," noble and religious, was not simply a question of the interests of either, but derived from a difference of moral conscience and of values in their approach to the dual nature of the notion of honor: the Church related the sentiment of honor to a conscience free from guilt; true honor was only in the eyes of God; the subjective aspect was the essential, for this lay within the

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jurisprudence of the Church which controlled only the sanctions deriving from religion. But the nobility, the wielders of military power in origin and subsequently the class entitled by their rank and material possessions to exercise sanctions, had a more worldly conception of honor, for they were concerned to maintain the pecking order (Pitt-Rivers 1977: 3) and defend themselves from humiliation, to avoid shame. Those who exemplified guilt culture were then by implication supporters of the definition of honor which derived it from virtue, those of shame culture took a view somewhat closer to that of Hobbes and interpreted it as above all a matter of precedence. Guilt related to the lack of virtue, shame to the loss of precedence or face. In fact both approaches appear to be necessary, and in a sense complementary, since the function of the concept of honor is precisely, despite the frailty of the logic involved, to equate them and establish thereby the dialectic between (in Pitt-Rivers' words) "the world as it ought to be and the world as it is." But the idea of reifying the distinction between guilt and shame and attaching it specifically to one culture or another removed the possibility of understanding either, since the first essential step in such an endeavor is to examine the terms of their coexistence within a single culture. The Church and the nobility were thus, in this sense, as necessary to the society as a whole as the brahmin and the Kshatriya were to Indian society, even though the relation between them was quite different. This relationship, at the same time one of opposition and interdependence, and their ultimate reunion in the figure of the monarch is illustrated in the fact that the two came together at the apex of the medieval kingdom in the coronation rite in which the king was crowned and inducted simultaneously as knight and as bishop, chief of the temporal order as of the spiritual order, arbiter of honor, his decisions validated by his grace.<sup>6</sup>

This book is, as we have said, about power, success, legitimacy, purity, and sanctity. The opening essay by Catherine Lafages provides a clear, explicit model for such connections. Just as our earlier analysis explained the notion of honor as both a moral and a social matter, and showed how the two aspects were related, so the royal rituals of succession bring the notions of honor and grace together. Without Divine Grace the monarch would have no right to rule and were he not legitimate Divine Grace would surely not descend to defend him – he must be *Red Dei Gratia* or he is a tyrant doomed to a bad end – and the performance of these rites makes the passage of grace patent, hence the importance of respecting every ritual detail and above all, in medieval France, of getting crowned at Reims and anointed with heaven-sent oil. Only Napoleon did not bother to go there for his coronation, for he was crowned not king but emperor, and in any case the whole thing was a muddle, in terms of ritual, from the traditionalist viewpoint: the Pope was there, but he did not perform the rite, for the emperor took the crown out of his hands and placed it on his own head



himself, thereby demonstrating in the view of legitimists that he was not a ruler by divine consent but a usurper.<sup>7</sup>

From his own angle this ritual innovation demonstrated that he was a self-made ruler depending not on Divine Grace but on his personal charisma and his soldiers' loyalty. He was not aspiring to be king of France but emperor of the French.

According to the traditional rite, temporal power and spiritual authority are combined, each lending support to the other. The grace of God is necessary for the exercise of legitimate rule and its "gratuity" ensures that the king can do no wrong, since grace implies the right to be arbitrary, free of obligations of a contractual nature; it places him above the law of which he is the defender as it applies to others. The sword, necessary to enable the king to defend the faith, is sanctioned by grace. The ritual represents symbolically the politico-religious theory: the knight, whose privilege (and function) is violence is assured of the legitimacy of his rule to impose peace by the grace which he received as bishop, and since grace is also pardon he receives, in advance as it were, forgiveness for the use he may make of his sword. As Lafages sees it, not only must he be prepared to shed blood in order to defend the divine order upon earth, he sheds it symbolically by the very fact of succeeding to the kingship.

To defeat in a game is to "eliminate," symbolically to kill; replacement is also killing and at the same time incorporating, hence in many African kingdoms the new king is said to have "eaten" his predecessor. Freud has shown how successors feel quite unjustifiable guilt for the death of their parents and the symbolic aspect of rites is often closer to the unconscious than to the conscious. In the symbolism of the coronation the new king is always in this sense a "King of the Wood," murderer of his predecessor, and, qua individual monarch, destined to be destroyed by his successor. Kantorowicz's analysis of the "king's two bodies," the one mortal and individual, the other collective, representing the deathless kingship, showed how this doctrine provided the means of surmounting the contradiction between the mortality of the living monarch and the survival of that other body, the immortal one, existing materially only in effigy in the mortuary ritual.

Lafages shows how the double persona of the king, consecrated as both knight and bishop, with temporal and spiritual power, is able to unite in his person the two aspects of the kingship, the mortal (and individual) and the eternal (and institutional), represented by the two bodies – until the day when death separates them and the individual must be replaced. But since he is also immortal, invulnerable to natural death, he can only be replaced by murder, like the King of the Wood, or like those smothered kings of Africa who cannot be allowed to die a natural death lest the kingdom perish with them. But it is only the mortal king who is slain, the immortal one lives on in the physical person of his successor, a fresh mortal who has incorporated the deceased ruler.

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Hence the necessity for that instantaneous transition represented in the proclamation: "The King is dead, long live the King."

It is not necessary to accept literally Frazer's ideas on the murder of the divine king, nor Freud's on the universal wish to destroy one's father, in order to see that these symbolical manipulations maintain the continuity of the kingship over time as a single person. Moreover, Lafages' interpretation of the symbolism looks much less arbitrary when we come to Jamous' study of the *baraka* (which is heavenly peace as well as the assurance of health, success, progeniture, etc.) of the new sultan, religious leader as well as temporal ruler, "Commander of the Faithful" (Waterbury 1970). The new sultan's *baraka* must be literally assured, as well as demonstrated, by the shedding of blood. By virtue of the ancient anthropological principle of the ambivalence of power – "he who can kill can cure and vice versa" – to prove your power to make peace you must first make war. The ritual solution of an insurmountable contradiction between the mortality of the incumbent and the immortality of his function echoes the paradox of honor, which is at the same time a matter of the facts of power and also of moral conscience, of what is and also of what ought to be. They are, as it were, "forced into assimilation," their incompatibility placed in parentheses, just as the facts of power and the religious ideal were exonerated of their contradiction by being encapsulated in the same word, "honor," rendered thus indistinguishable, for the greater glory of God and the greater confusion of poor mortal scholars.

Louis XIV, whom we encounter in the next essay, Leroy Ladurie's, is a very different kind of monarch. Though he was crowned at Reims and anointed with the oil of the holy phial, his sacrality has a different feel to it. He is sacred by his birth rather than by his coronation, for in the meantime certain things have changed: the State has come into existence and the rule of succession has become more strict than it was in the days of those medieval kings who divided up their possessions at their death between their sons and, corresponding to this change, the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings has been formulated – and even before Louis' birth it has already cost his "cousin" Charles I, across the Channel, his head. The Fronde and the wars of religion have all but undone the kingdom of France when Louis is still a child and, if the menace remains of the return to anarchy if ever his legitimacy were placed in doubt, the State's authority has finished by imposing itself; it is centered now upon the person of the king. This is strikingly visible in the elaboration of ritual surrounding his physical person: dressing it or undressing it, or rather redressing it, for bed, ceremonies almost as complicated as a coronation, and designated by the words which describe the rising and setting of the sun: *lever* and *coucher*. It also lies at the basis of his concern for the advancement of his bastards, the fruit of his loins, which so deeply offended Saint-Simon. It is not that royal bastards were without social and political importance in earlier times but Louis XIV's are