

RITUAL, PLAY AND BELIEF, IN EVOLUTION AND EARLY HUMAN SOCIETIES



The origins of religion and ritual in humans have been the focus of centuries of thought in archaeology, anthropology, theology, evolutionary psychology and more. Play and ritual have many aspects in common, and ritual is a key component of the early cult practices that underlie the religious systems of societies in all parts of the world. This book examines the formative cults and the roots of religious practice from the earliest times until the development of early religion in the Near East, China, Peru, Mesoamerica and beyond. Here, leading prehistorians, biologists and other specialists bring a fresh approach to the early practices that underlie the faiths and religions of the world. They demonstrate the profound role of play in ritual and belief systems and offer powerful new insights into the emergence of early societies.

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This volume is dedicated to the memory of
Sir Patrick Bateson FRS (1938–2017)

CONTENTS



<i>Notes on the Contributors</i>	page xi
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xiii
1 INTRODUCING <i>RITUAL, PLAY AND BELIEF, IN EVOLUTION AND EARLY HUMAN SOCIETIES</i> <i>Iain Morley</i>	I
2 INTRODUCTION: PLAY AS THE PRECURSOR OF RITUAL IN EARLY HUMAN SOCIETIES <i>Colin Renfrew</i>	9
PART I PLAY AND RITUAL: FORMS, FOUNDATIONS AND EVOLUTION IN ANIMALS AND HUMANS	
3 THE ORIGINS, EVOLUTION AND INTERCONNECTIONS OF PLAY AND RITUAL: SETTING THE STAGE <i>Gordon M. Burghardt</i>	23
4 PLAY AND CREATIVITY <i>Patrick Bateson</i>	40
5 PRETEND AND SOCIO-DRAMATIC PLAY IN EVOLUTIONARY AND DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE <i>Peter K. Smith</i>	53
6 PRETEND PLAY, COGNITION AND LIFE-HISTORY IN HUMAN EVOLUTION <i>Iain Morley</i>	66

7	FROM PLAY AND RITUALISATION TO RITUAL AND ITS ARTS: SOURCES OF UPPER PLEISTOCENE RITUAL PRACTICES IN LOWER MIDDLE PLEISTOCENE RITUALISED AND PLAY BEHAVIOURS IN ANCESTRAL HOMININS	87
	<i>Ellen Dissanayake</i>	
PART II PLAYING WITH BELIEF AND PERFORMANCE IN ANCIENT SOCIETIES		
8	MAYA SACRED PLAY: THE VIEW FROM EL PERÚ-WAKA'	101
	<i>David Freidel and Michelle Rich</i>	
9	COMMUNAL PERFORMANCE AND RITUAL PRACTICE IN THE ANCESTRAL PUEBLOAN ERA OF THE AMERICAN SOUTHWEST	116
	<i>Claire Halley</i>	
10	ARCHITECTURE AND IMAGERY IN THE EARLY NEOLITHIC OF SOUTH-WEST ASIA: FRAMING RITUALS, STABILISING MEANINGS	129
	<i>Trevor Watkins</i>	
11	DANCING WITH MASKS IN THE PROTO-HISTORIC NEAR EAST	143
	<i>Yosef Garfinkel</i>	
12	RITUAL, MIMESIS AND THE ANIMAL WORLD IN EARLY CHINA	170
	<i>Roel Sterckx</i>	
13	MANIPULATING THE BONES: EATING AND AUGURY IN THE MALTESE TEMPLES	187
	<i>Caroline Malone</i>	
PART III THE RITUAL IN THE GAME, THE GAME IN THE RITUAL		
14	PLAY, RITUAL AND TRANSFORMATION: SPORTS, ANIMALS AND MANHOOD IN EGYPTIAN AND AEGEAN ART	211
	<i>Lyvia Morgan</i>	

CONTENTS

ix

15	BULL GAMES IN MINOAN CRETE: SOCIAL AND SYMBOLIC DIMENSIONS	237
	<i>Nanno Marinatos</i>	
16	EPIC GAMES	250
	<i>Nigel Spivey</i>	
17	THE BALLGAME, BOXING AND RITUAL BLOOD SPORT IN ANCIENT MESOAMERICA	264
	<i>Karl Taube</i>	
18	RITUALS, GAMES AND LEARNING	302
	<i>Evangelos Kyriakidis</i>	
PART IV FROM PLAY TO FAITH? DISCUSSION		
19	PLAY AND RITUAL: SOME THOUGHTS FROM A MATERIAL-CULTURE PERSPECTIVE	311
	<i>Lambros Malafouris</i>	
20	BELIEVING IN PLAY AND RITUAL	316
	<i>Robin Osborne</i>	
21	THE PENTAGRAM OF PERFORMANCE: RITUAL, PLAY AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION	321
	<i>Iain Morley</i>	
	<i>Index</i>	333

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