

The Tomb as Communicative Space in Early Judaism and Christianity

Part of REECR:

A Nordic project on Ritual and the Emergence of Early Christian Religion: A Socio-Cognitive Analysis

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Goals

- To investigate the tomb as a place of communication in an early Jewish and Christian context, focusing on funerary inscriptions and graffiti as well as funerary rites and practices

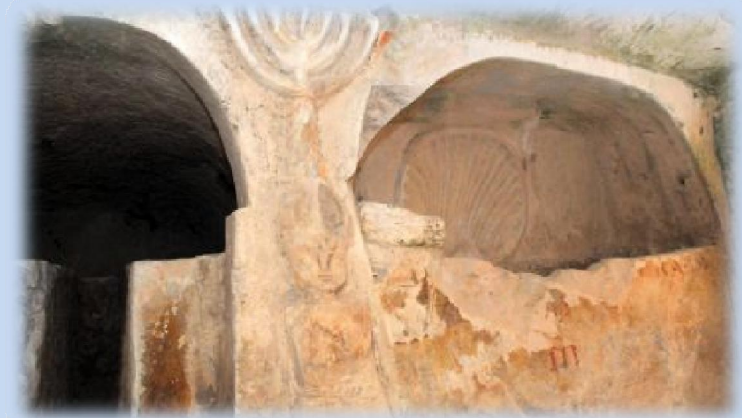


RITUAL AND EARLY CHRISTIAN RELIGION

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Goals

- To illuminate and contextualize the ritual, social and symbolic role of the dead in the world of the early Christians



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Goals

- To describe strategies of ritual innovation and continuation using early Christian funerary practices as a case-study



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Method – A CSR Perspective

- The ‘Action Perspective’

-> a focus on rituals as actions

e.g.

Lawson and McCauley 1990

Barrett and Lawson 2001

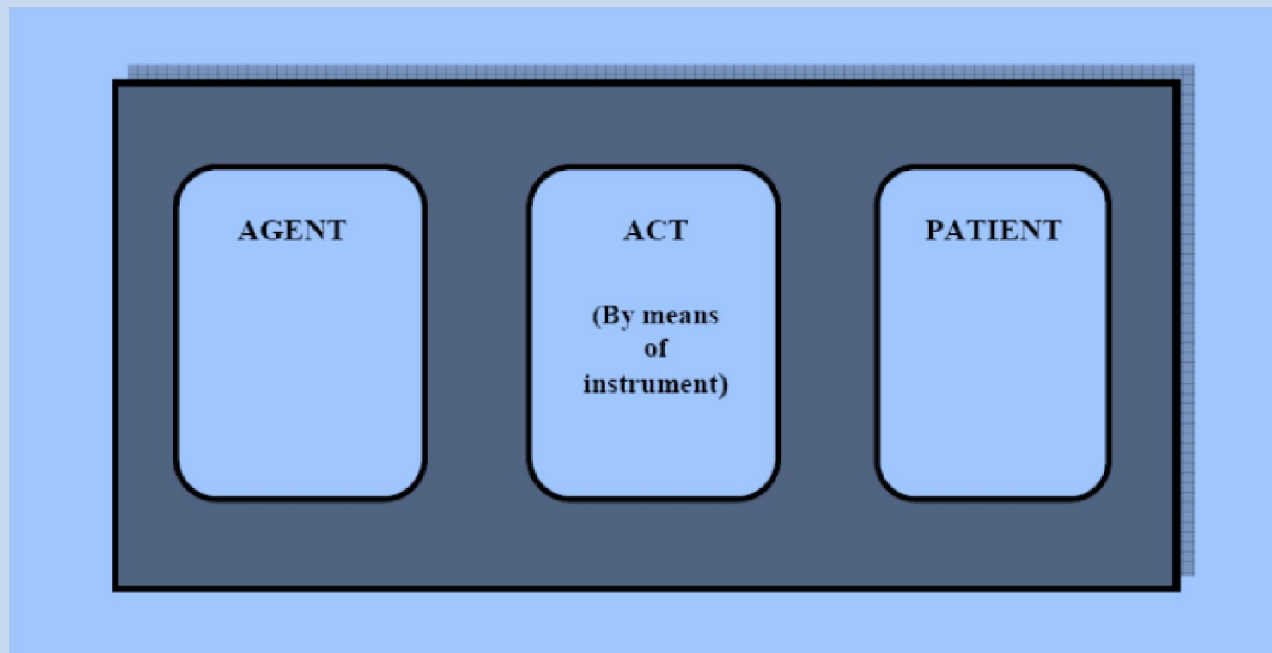
McCauley and Lawson 2007

The 'Action Perspective'

- Ritual actions mirror social actions
- One important difference:
the receiver (or sender) of the action is a so called 'counterintuitive being,' such as a deity, a demon or a deceased family member

The 'Action Perspective'

The Action Representation System



McCauley and Lawson 2007, p. 227

The 'Action Perspective'

Example:

Oil lamps as grave goods

A gift/gesture/service for the deceased

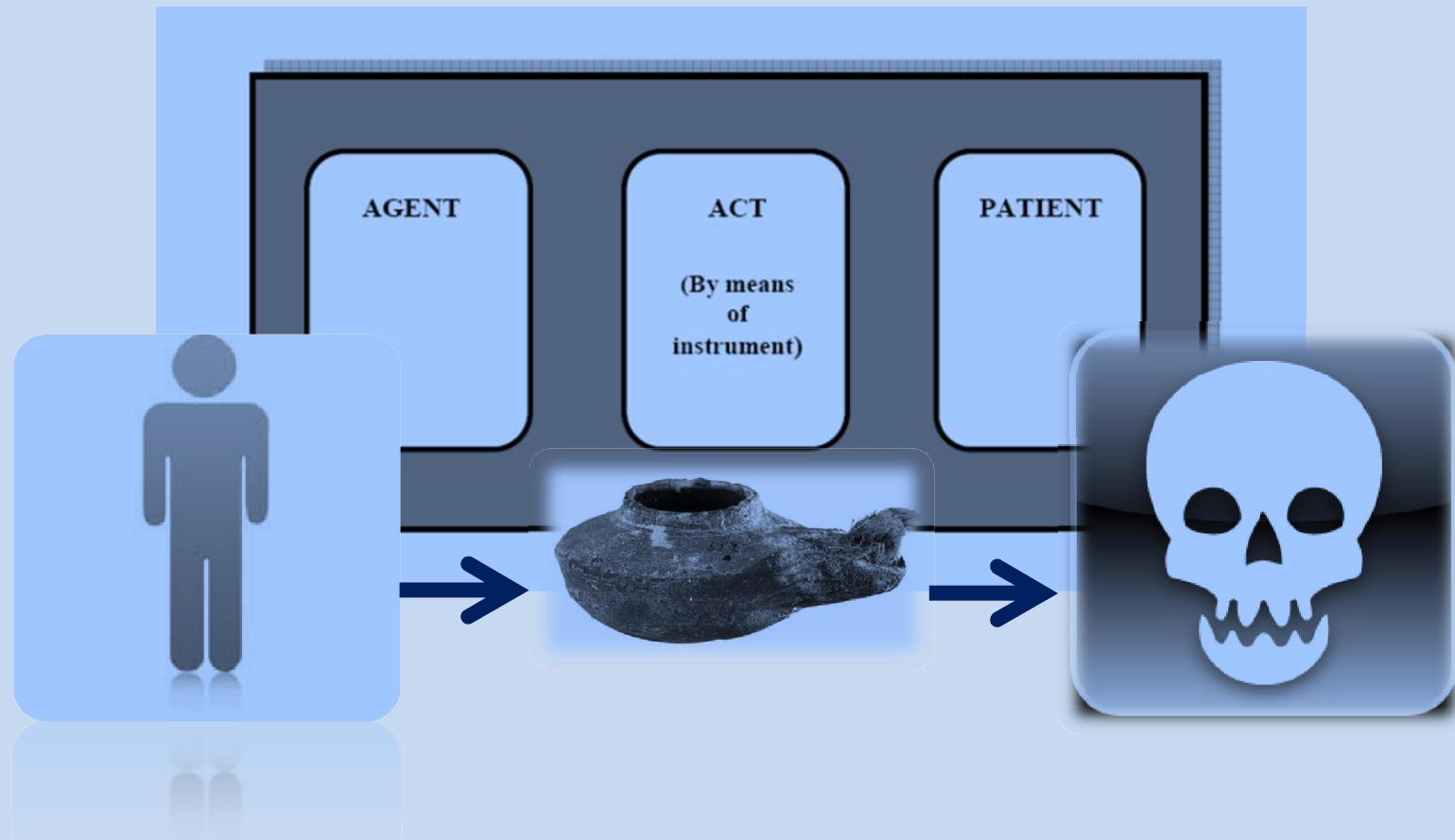


Niche for an oil lamp, Tomb of the Kings, Jerusalem, 1st century AD



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The 'Action Perspective' A 'Special Patient Ritual'



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Important Basic Assumptions#1

- The social spheres connected with certain archaeological contexts such as ‘funerary,’ ‘cultic,’ and ‘domestic’ are to a very large extent overlapping
- A funerary context is more socially significant than what is generally assumed

Important Basic Assumptions#2

- The 'social existence' of the corpse
(Hockey and Draper 2005)
- The agency of the deceased in the social world
(Hallam et al. 1999; Sørensen 2009; Sørensen 2011)
- The dead are significant actors in the world of the living
- The tomb becomes an important locus for social interaction – both between the living and the living and the dead

Important Basic Assumptions#3

- Materiality and Commemoration

Transition from Mythic Culture to Theoretic Culture

-> biological memory storage -> external symbolic memory storage

(Merlin Donald 2001)



Important Basic Assumptions#3

- Objects => 'Material indices'

Cf. Peirce's sign theory:

Index: a sign that refers to the object it denotes by being really affected by that object

Remembrance happens in a dialogue between person and object (Andrew Jones 2007)

Important Basic Assumptions#3

Materiality is very important because

1) Agents are often perceived as being tied to physical places and/or objects (cf. the 'Action Perspective')

2) Material objects are crucial to the process of commemoration

Example: Interacting with the Dead



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Outline of the Work

- Selection of case studies on the basis of a survey of the relevant archaeological and epigraphic material
- Survey of literary sources
- Analysis of the case studies + integrating literary sources
- Analysis of the case studies + applying ritual theory

Thank You



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