The Eucharist and Fusatsu: A Comparative Study of Ritual and Application of Divine Reflexivity Theory

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Ritual has been an integral part of human life since antiquity, and its significance and influence on humanity cannot be overstated. While religious ritual was often dismissed by modern scholarship as a mere social phenomenon with no inherent power in itself, in postmodernity, it appears that the benefits of ritual performance has been rediscovered anew. A relative increase in the number of chaplain referrals for ritual related services in recent years, for example, may be one of various reactions to this rediscovery of the power of ritual in healthcare. Why can ritual be so empowering? How do its participants perceive the specific mechanics of ritual as efficacious and thus become influenced by it?

To address such questions, there have also been numerous theories formulated by prominent scholars of multiple disciplines, attempting to explain “ritual” in its own right and in relation to the practitioners and their objects of worship. While Western scholarship in general has traditionally tended to adopt the etic intelligibility in their investigatory work concerning ritual and other anthropological studies, the postmodern approaches to the study of ritual appear to be increasingly interdisciplinary and sympathetic to the emic perspectives, treating respective religious beliefs as valid theories rather than mere superstitious speculations. One theorist who exemplifies this postmodern sensibility and intelligibility is the recipient of the 2010 American Academy of Religion Book Award, Kimberly C. Patton.

In this paper, I will employ Patton’s descriptive comparative approach and her innovative theoretical framework of “divine reflexivity” to elucidate certain aspects of ritual, particularly in relation to empowerment. By “empowerment” and “healing” in this paper, I refer to the quality of experience induced by the ritual performance that is conducive to restoring the sense of wellbeing and wholeness. With this meaning in mind, I will investigate the ritual practices endemic to two seemingly unrelated belief systems that have been historically categorized as the mainstream and influential Western and East Asian religions. Specifically, I will focus on the Eucharist of Catholicism as an example of a cardinal sacramental ritual that belongs to the religion of the West, and the Fusatsu (or atonement) of Japanese Zen Buddhism as that of the East. In addition to the inquiry stated earlier concerning the empowering qualities of ritual, my aim is to answer another question: How does Patton’s theoretical framework help explain the experiences of the divine and its empowerment by the practitioners?

My answer and central claim, then, is this: the Eucharist and the Fusatsu are “empowering” because they are performed to affect not only the practitioners but also the “originators” (i.e., deities) of these rituals, so that the deities are also participating in the acts, making the sacrificial offerings, and receiving the benefits. In other words,

within the enactment of the specifically prescribed actions in ritual, the empowerment is generated and gained by both the practitioners and their deities, and the transformative power is shared mutually.

To support this view, I primarily focus on the comparative study of the emic perspectives of the ritual practices, emulating Patton’s methodology. However, some etic understanding of the psychological effects of ritual is not precluded from the study, as I observe the human penchant for deification of legends and the power of “belief” in the perception of efficacy. To explain, I will first provide a brief general overview of Patton’s theory and approach, along with two other eminent theories I will employ in this paper.

The overview will be followed by a discussion of the Catholic ritual of the Eucharist as a form of atonement, offering a brief historical review and analysis of the related sacred text vis-à-vis some Catholic commentary on the ritual. The next discussion will treat Sôtô Zen Buddhist’s ritual of atonement called Fusatsu with a brief textual examination of the Sūtra of Brahma’s Net and also the vows as the integral part of the ritual. The purpose of the textual presentation is to show that the autosacrificial aspect of the present form of Fusatsu originated with the bodhisattvas and perpetuated by their aspirants as they seek to unite with the deities. I will then conclude by summarizing how the self-referential deities originate, participate, receive, and activate empowerment through the enactment of ritual in the two very different faith traditions.

Theoretical Framework - Performance Theory:

As noted earlier, there have been various theories concerning religion and ritual in Western scholarship. One of the most distinguished twentieth-century anthropologists who specialized in the studies of ritual is Roy Rappaport. He is frequently cited in countless works by notable postmodern scholars. According to Rappaport’s “performative” theory, the performers of ritual - such as Catholic and Buddhist priests - are not only serving as the conduits of the trans-historical traditions and the communicators of the authority and power for their practitioners but also as their own transformative agents. Rappaport asserts: “At the heart of ritual… is the relationship of performers to their own performances of invariant sequences of acts and utterances which they did not encode.” The soteriological schemata, then, are intricately tied to the priests’ ritual performance, effectuating the transformative power for both the worshippers and the priests themselves. I thus refer to Rappaport’s theory in several places of this paper, as I underscore the significance of the “performance” itself in ritual in the perceived efficacy.

This crucial role of performance in ritual is also underscored by another distinguished contemporary scholar, Jonathan Z. Smith. Smith posits that it is essentially the “activity” of ritual that generates the “sacredness” of place. In addition to the importance of activity, however, Smith gives primacy to the significance of “place” in understanding ritual. He explains that ritual is a “controlled

30 Smith, To Take Place, as summarized in my review of the book, submitted to Professor Joshua Capitanio, University of the West, February 2014.
environment” into which meaning and efficacy are imbued by human agents. While there is no meaning inherently in any specific place to be sacred, in the hierarchical structure and temporal realities created through ritual, the sacred space is generated or replicated, and the perception of efficacy, meaning and order, and empowerment are gained.

**Theoretical Framework - Divine Reflexivity:**

While the influences of such scholars as Rappaport and Smith are undeniable, their theories seem to present some proclivity for etic perspectives to maintain objectivity. Postmodern scholarship, however, seems to show another trajectory in research methods. As a paragon of postmodern scholarship, for example, Kimberly Patton utilizes her knowledge of the vast range of theories by eminent scholars who preceded her, including Rappaport, Smith, as well as Durkheim, Eliade, Feuerbach, and many other giants in the history of religious studies. While sensibly challenging some of the traditional approaches and theories, she successfully adopts an interdisciplinary approach to advance her own “divine reflexivity” framework and its paradoxical depictions both uniquely and ubiquitously present in the structures of world religion.

According to Patton’s theoretical schemata, the concepts or images of gods are not merely some projections of human desires and fears that are simply expressed in sacrificial and other cultic rituals. She thus rejects the projectionist theories of religion which posit that gods are modeled after their humans, and the humans assume the lower positions than their gods to whom they offer prayers and sacrifices. Adopting and further building on the “theomorphic” theory of Mircea Eliade, she then develops her argument that gods are at once the originators, participants, and recipients of the religious worship and rituals celebrated by their human practitioners. She concludes the section of the book where she propounds her theory as follows:

> The gods do not merely receive veneration or sacrifice; they perform ritual and thus ratify it, conferring upon it ultimacy… The ritual, whether in the form of pious observance or sacrificial gift, is returned to the gods who began the process and from whom religion is born. Religion is thus best understood as purely reflexive; it is created and self-referentially enacted by the divine for its own sake.

Ritual, then, can be viewed as a process and a function of religion, all of which the deity itself has originated and substantiated for its own sake. Furthermore, she asserts that this image of reflexive and self-referential deity is both culturally particular and phenomenologically universal, and thus applicable to various rituals of other religious traditions.

In support of this main thesis, Patton describes the manifestation, functionality, and understanding of the phenomenon of the self-referential deity from the perspective of the “insiders” of the religion. By employing a descriptive comparative approach, she attempts to illumine the subtle theological and reflexive implications of the religious rituals and practices depicted. She thus develops a new phenomenological

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31 Smith, *To Take Place*, 2.
category, which she terms the “divine reflexivity,” defining the term as “the ritual performance by a deity of an action known as belonging to the sphere of that deity’s human cultic worship.” 35 While developing this theory, she also bridges the fields of theology, phenomenology, iconology, and religious history whose boundaries are often demarcated in hope for some objectivity.

In this ambitious endeavor, Patton grounds her arguments with in-depth analyses of primary and secondary sources, in the manner that is highly technical but clear and cogent. In my admiration of her scholarship, I will attempt to emulate her approach in my much shorter analysis of Catholic and Japanese Buddhist rituals below, in the hope that it may serve as a corollary to a much larger project in the future. I will also refer to Rappaport and Smith as well, as their theories may further illumine the analysis of these rituals as liturgical activity in the place made sacred by remembrance.

Eucharist as the Catholic Ritual of “Atonement”

In her analysis of Judeo-Christian portrayal of “God” as a father sacrificing his own son, Patton skillfully applies her “divine reflexivity” framework to examine the phenomenon of “autosacrifice” of God which God performs for the sole purpose of atoning for the sin of God’s own creation.36 Using the “divine reflexivity” apparatus, she compares the story of the crucifixion with the aqedah narrative in which Abraham willingly offers his son, Isaac, for sacrifice, while treating them as metaphoric equals.37 She then observes how this self-referential God is simultaneously depicted as the “judge, executioner, and chief mourner” of the cosmic drama.38 I would also add to her observation that Jesus as the “Son” and the second person of the Godhead was also a willing “autosacrifice” that the “Father” and the first person of the Godhead provided as a sacrificial lamb to atone for the sin of humanity. The self-reflexive God, then, is not only the “judge, executioner, and chief mourner” but also a willing self-sacrifice, ready to pour out God’s own “libation” of holy blood to sanctify humanity in order to reestablish human connection with God-self.

This ultimate atoning act of a self-reflexive deity was, at least in the mind of Christians, unequivocally demonstrated in the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, who was later called the Christ (or Messiah), exactly according to prophecy. Christians also believe that Jesus knew precisely what kind of death he was about to experience and hence, the night before the crucifixion, instituted the sacramental ritual of the Eucharist and commanded his disciples to remember, imitate, and repeat.38 The account of this event is believed to have been recorded in the New Testament, which is the primary holy text for Christians.

36 Patton, Religion of the Gods, 244.
37 Patton, Religion of the Gods, 244-47. The aqedah narrative appears in the Book of Genesis 22: 2-14 in the Tanakh (i.e., the Hebrew Bible), where Abraham demonstrates his absolute trust and obedience in God, believing that even if he kills his son, God will be able to bring the son back to life. Before Abraham can complete his willful act of obedience, however, God intervenes and provides a lamb for Abraham to sacrifice in lieu of Isaac. Hence, Abraham names the place, “The LORD will provide” (י ראֶֽה יהו ה֖ YHWH yire) (Gen. 22: 8, 14). With the premise that the obedience of Abraham and Isaac and the provision of the lamb together constitute a type of Christ foreshadowed in the Hebrew scripture, Christians believe that Jesus the God-Man became that willing “autosacrifice.” 13 Patton, Religion of the Gods, 247.
38 The term Eucharist comes from the Greek word εὐκαριστεῖν (eükaristein) to render, “to give thanks.” The term has been mostly adopted and used by Catholics, as Protestants normally refer to the ritual as “the Lord’s Supper,” while calling the actual Passover supper that Jesus partook as “the Last Supper.”
Autosacrifice and Deification of Christ:

There are only minor textual variations between the synoptic gospels for this account of the Last Supper (i.e., the Eucharist) and a significant difference in the fourth gospel (i.e., that of John). The message that the narratives seek to convey, however, appears to be consistent in that Jesus takes common elements of human consumption and transforms them into a powerful symbol of his sacrificial and atoning death to which he willingly offers himself. Below is an account recorded in Matthew, the first gospel of the New Testament:

26 Ἐσθιόντων δὲ αὐτῶν λαβὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἄρτον καὶ εὐλογήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ δόθησαν τοῖς μαθηταῖς ἐπεν· Λάβετε φάγετε, τούτο ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου.
27 καὶ λαβὼν ποτήριον καὶ εὐχαριστήσας ἔδοκεν αὐτοῖς λέγων· Πίετε ἐξ αὐτοῦ πάντες,
28 τούτῳ γάρ ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης τὸ περὶ πολλῶν ἐκχυννόμενον εἰς ἥφεσιν ἀμαρτιῶν.

26 And while they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and when he had blessed [God for it], he broke it into pieces, and giving them to his disciples he said:

“Take, eat; this is my body.”
27 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying: “All of you drink of it; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for all for the forgiveness of sins.”

In this passage, Jesus does not allude to his deity by making himself equal to God; rather, he gives thanks to God for food in verse 26 (eὐλογήσας – “having blessed”) and drink in verse 27 (εὐχαριστήσας – “having given thanks”) as customary for the Jews at Passover. However, the point that is underscored is that he himself chooses to break up the bread (signifying his body) “into pieces” and pour out the wine (signifying his blood) “for all for forgiveness of sins” perὶ πολλῶν… ἥφεσιν ἀμαρτιῶν (peri pollôn…haphesin hamartiôn) in verse 28. While all three synoptic gospels follow this format, only the non-synoptic gospel of John written at a much later date departs from it and focuses instead on the deity of Christ and his role as the sacrificial Lamb. Thus deification of Christ, which gives the perceived transformative power to the elements, appears to have occurred much after Jesus was crucified.

41 Translation of the passage of Matthew 26: 26-28 by Hagner, Matthew, 770.
42 For the purpose of the current inquiry, the examination of the gospel of John would be out of the scope of the paper. However, it seemed appropriate to point out that the deity of Christ was not emphasized until much later when churches were well established. Incidentally, the gospel of John was written last (sometime around 70 to 90 C.E.), several decades after the crucifixion of Christ took place. The textual structure and rendering from the synoptic gospels were also adopted later by the Apostle Paul who wrote letters to the churches, sometime between 50 to 65 C.E., which comprise nearly half of the New Testament. For the dating of the gospels and Paul’s letters to the Corinthians, I have referenced Raymond Brown, An Introduction to the New Testament, by (New York : Doubleday, 1997), 127, 172, 334, and 512.
Remembrance and the Sacred “Place” of the Lord’s Table:

There is another element in the Eucharist “ritual” formula familiar to Christians of both Catholic and Protestant traditions but is missing from the accounts in the first two gospels. The missing element is the verse where Jesus commands his disciples to “do this in remembrance of me” (τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν (touto poieiste tein emein anamnesin) which appears in the first letter to the Corinthians, written by the Apostle Paul:

23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread;
24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.”
25 In the same way [he took] the cup also after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink [it], in remembrance of Me.” 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.44

The command, “Do this remembrance of me,” also appears once after the breaking of bread in the gospel of Luke, who was reputedly a Greek physician converted by the Apostle Paul, neither of whom knew Jesus in person when he was alive.

Despite the fact that Paul was a later convert who did not attend the supper, the above passage in Paul’s letter, instead of what appears in the gospels, has been adopted verbatim by the Catholic and the mainline Protestant churches as the formulaic “words of institution” in liturgy. 45 The reason for the churches to choose this passage over the ones in the gospel may be partly due to the word choices that seemed more conducive to liturgy. 23 It may be, however, more to do with the theological influence that Paul had on church doctrine and code of conduct. 46 Whatever the reason may be, the fact is that the command to “do this in remembrance” included in the words of institution does not appear in the gospels written earlier by the disciples who purportedly were present at the time.

By adopting Paul’s epistle version, however, the church members have been able to not only memorialize but also immortalize the presence of their beloved teacher-savior while also obeying his command to perpetuate his act of sacrifice “until He comes” in the eschaton. The “last supper” of Jesus, then, has become the “the Lord’s Supper” wherein Jesus’ action is emulated and mediated by clergy performing the ritual. The very act of obedience of the church in turn empowers the deified Christ who asked his disciples to “do this in remembrance” of him, as well as the clergy performing the ritual and the church members observing and receiving the elements supposedly infused with Christ’s power. Thus, in the act of “remembrance” and “memorialization,” the ritual is imbued with efficacy, and the ritual place in the form

41 I Cor. 11: 24b and 25b, and also in Luke 22: 19b, in SBL Greek New Testament.
42 I Cor. 11: 23-26, New American Standard Bible (NASB). The words in brackets [ ] were added by the translators of NASB.
43 Hagner, Matthew, 771. 22 Hagner, Matthew, 771.
44 While Paul was a later convert who never directly spent time with Jesus, his theology which was promulgated through his prolific writing of letters to the churches comprised almost half of the New Testament and has remained influential since the beginning of church history.
of “the Lord’s Supper” (i.e., Eucharist) is made sacrosanct, allowing a subtle interplay of divine reflexivity and human reciprocity to emerge.

This significance of “remembrance” of the practitioners in generation of a sacred space is also discussed eruditely by Jonathan Z. Smith in *To Take Place*. In treating the sacred text of the Tjilpa tradition of Northern Australian aborigines, Smith contends with Eliade’s interpretation that emphasizes “the myth behind the ritual” theory and the “sacred axis” of ancestral worship as the center of the community. 47 He offers instead an alternative understanding that the point of connection between the ancestors and the worshipers is a “place” which is only sanctified and effectuated primarily by the “recollection” of the worshippers. 48 He thus asserts that the specificity and the sacredness of the “place” of worship is defined and realized by the enactment of “remembrance” in ritual. Moreover, he maintains that ritual is not a response to or an expression of the “Sacred” but a mechanism by which “the ordinary is made sacred.” 26

**Transubstantiation:**

In the ritual of the Eucharist, however, at least according to the emic perspectives of the Catholic tradition, it is very much a response to the Sacred (i.e., deity) as well as an expression of the Sacred, who is believed to have not only originated it but continues to participate in and receive the offerings in the repeated reenactment of the “last supper.” The ordinary gathering of people around the “table” of the Lord (i.e., the “place” of Eucharist) is made sacrosanct by the prayers of the officiate and the participants, which are considered to be the words of “thanksgiving” because of the “remembrance” of the believers of the words of Jesus giving thanks in addition to giving thanks for his salvific sacrifice. 49 In the trans-temporal and metaphysical ritual of the Eucharist, then, the deified Christ is believed to be truly present in the common elements sanctified by the prayers of the officiate. This mystical transformation of the substance is called “transubstantiation.” 50 Thus, the divine reflexivity may be evident in in this emic perspective, that the deity who originated the ritual is both invoked and consumed by the participants according to the very words of the deity, who in turn empowers and is perpetuated by the participants through the acts of obedience in their perceived transformed reality. 51

A Catholic scholar, Joseph Martos, explains that within the emic perspectives is the key to understand how the Eucharist or any sacramental ritual in any religion works. 52 In other words, concurring with Eliade, he posits that it is in the descriptions of the lived experience of the practitioners that give legitimacy and “life” to the myth

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49 Bell, *Ritual*, 213. Bell notes that at the time of Justin the Martyr of the second century, the Eucharistic prayers (or the “words of institution”) were much more than the words of “remembrance” but understood as the words of “thanksgiving.” I posit that the Christian understanding of the liturgy continues to encompass the second century Christian understanding, hence the continued use of the word “Eucharist” as the name of the ritual.
51 The “emic perspective” to which I refer here and elsewhere in this section concerning the Eucharist comes from my own experience as an ordained Protestant minister celebrating the Lord’s Supper in the congregational setting as a pastor and in the health care setting as a chaplain, serving both the Protestant and Catholic constituents. The emic perspectives here are thus my own as well as those whom I have served. As for the Eucharist in Catholicism specifically, I have also worked with and consulted various Catholic priests over the years, whose perspectives are incorporated in the discussion in the current section of the paper.
that gives birth to ritual, which in turn serves as “the door to the Sacred.” Ritual, then, is the threshold that leads to the transcendent, and the Eucharist is the door and the invitation to transformation and new “human reality” in light of what the deity has done and is doing. Like Eliade, Martos asserts that this feature of ritual as “the door” is common to all religions, and each religious meaning is uniquely found in the personal encounter with the Sacred. In particular to the Catholics, however, the transformative and empowering quality of the experience of the Eucharist is enhanced by the sense of “actuality” of the sacredness.

This notion of “actuality” is where the major difference lies between the Catholics and the Protestants in their views of Eucharist. That is, the former holds firmly to the belief of the “actual” substantive change of elements (i.e., the bread and the wine) to the body and the blood of Christ, referred to as the “transubstantiation,” while the latter does not. Hence, for the Catholics, the Eucharist ritual invokes not only the presence of Jesus Christ but also his sacrifice. In other words, every time a Catholic priest enacts the “Last Supper” and utters the “words of institution” (i.e., liturgy), the Spirit of Christ actually shows up and overpowers the priest who then becomes the medium by which the common elements are transubstantiated into the actual body and blood of Christ.

**Looking through the Theoretical Lens:**

The efficacy of ritual, then, is very much dependent on the actions and beliefs of the ordained and qualified priest. Rappaport emphasizes: “The notion of efficacy of divine beings...might well be founded upon the performativeness and meta-performativeness of language as expressed in ritual.” Elaborating on Rappaport’s point, Sharf observes: “Indeed, ritual authority and efficacy are tied to the priest’s skill in effacing his own agency so that he can serve as a conduit for the hoary tradition that speaks through him.” Thus, Rappaport’s performative theory is applicable here, in that the sacred meaning and efficacy are not only communicated to the participants through the performance of the priest but also to the performing priests themselves by the Sacred (i.e., the deified Christ) through the very actions of the atoning ritual.

In addition to Rappaport’s theory, the transubstantiation tenet can also be explained by Patton’s divine reflexivity framework. As stated earlier, in the Catholic Eucharist, Christ is invoked so that the elements can actually become his body and blood to be consumed by his followers. This essentially means that his sacrifice is actualized every time the Eucharist is celebrated, wherein the worshippers give thanks to their deity for being their sacrifice again and again. Thus in Catholic mass, Christ is not only the object of worship but also an active central participant in the ritual of the Eucharist as the atoning sacrifice whose body is literally broken and blood shed for all “for the forgiveness of sins.” Hence, the Christian deity is at once the originator, participant, and recipient of the ritual offering, wherein his believers are empowered and transformed by his sacrifice, which in turn empowers the deity through the transformed lives of his followers.

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53 Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, 16.
54 Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, 148-150.
55 Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, 20.
The notion that ritual is first and foremost “activity” that is communicated both to the performers and the observers can easily be witnessed in the Eucharist. So can Smith’s assertion that the spatial and temporal “place” of the Eucharist is made sacred by the act of remembrance by the practitioners. I have shown above, however, that the relatively new theory of “divine reflexivity” can most adeptly elucidate the emic perspectives of the sacrosanct ritual. What then about rituals belonging to other entirely different belief systems such as Buddhism? Can the divine reflexivity also help explain the perceived efficacy and the mechanism of empowerment and healing in a Buddhist ritual, and if so how? To this question, I turn in the following section.

Some readers may reasonably object the use of “divine reflexivity” by contending that Buddhists do not “worship” God or gods in the sense that “the Peoples of the Book” do.\textsuperscript{59} However, the role that the transcendent figures play in Buddhist ritual seems surprisingly analogous to that which is seen in the Eucharist. I thus propose that the divine reflexivity framework is readily viable in one Japanese Buddhist tradition due to, at least in part, a general human penchant for deification of great teachers and legends.

\textbf{Sōtō Zen Buddhist Rituals of “Atonement” – 布薩 Fusatsu (Upoṣadha)}

While there is a vast array of traditions within East Asian Buddhism, I will focus on the Sōtō tradition of Japanese Zen Buddhism as one of the most popular and influential sects in Japan. In Sōtō Zen, there is obviously no precise equivalent of the Catholic concept of the Eucharist in the sense of expiation of the inherent and committed “sins” through the mediation of deity. There is, however, a bimonthly ritual that provides a sacred space (or \textit{sīmā}, “a specified boundary”) in which the sangha seeks to purify itself by confessing its past misdeeds and renewing the vows.\textsuperscript{60} It is called 布薩 Fusatsu in Japanese whose Chinese characters (漢字 kanji) represent a transliteration of a Sanskrit term \textit{upoṣadha}.\textsuperscript{61}

\textbf{Significance of the Bodhisattvas:}

As the characters are transliteration, there is no intrinsic meaning in the term. However, the choice of the characters can be interpreted as significant in light of Dōgen’s later teaching. That is, the character for \textit{fu} (布) signifies “spreading,” and the one for \textit{satsu} (薩) points to the bodhisattvas, rendering the meaning of “spreading the bodhisatta vows and merits.”\textsuperscript{62} This imagery of “spreading the cloth” is meaningful in both \textit{Jukai} (ordination) and \textit{Fusatsu} (in which the \textit{Jukai} vows are renewed), as it also appears in the \textit{Kāṣāya-gāthā} (or 搭袈裟偈 takkesa ge) quoted by Dōgen and repeated by his followers in Sōtō Zen ritual after every zezen (meditation):

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\textsuperscript{59} Patton, \textit{Religion of the Gods}, 239–47. The quotation is from the title of Part II of Patton’s book, describing the religious followers of the “monotheistic” religions of the Middle East, such as the Jews, Christians, and Islam, whose faith and cardinal doctrines are predicated on their respective revelatory texts.


\textsuperscript{62} In Japanese, the word 布 also means “cloth.” In the compound with 薌, then, it can portray the image of “spreading the cloth [of] the bodhisatta.” The “pseudo-etymology” of the term 布薩 noted here, however, is not an accurate description of what the term actually means in a historical sense. It should be viewed only as a commentarial interpretation of the term based on my personal knowledge of Chinese/Japanese writing, which is supported by the definitions provided by \textit{MDBG Chinese-English Dictionary online}: http://www.mdbg.net/chindict/chindict.php?page=worddict&wdrst=1&wdqb=%E5%B8%83%E8%96%A9 (accessed March 16, 2014).
How wonderful this deliverance robe! Like a formless field of merits It expounds the Tathāgata’s teaching, and saves all sentient beings.63 大哉解脱服。無相福田衣。（daisai getappuku，musō fukudene）被奉如來教。廣度諸衆生。42（hibu nyōraikyō，kūdo shoshujō）64

Hence in Fusatsu, the participants are taking on the role of the bodhisattva in “spreading the robe of liberation” and renewing the vows to save, and hence atone for, all sentient beings. Taizan Maezumi Roshi, who established the Los Angeles Zen Center in 1967, also explained that Fusatsu is a kind of “face-to-face atonement,” wherein reciting all the names of the Buddhas, the participants seek to “be one” with the Buddhas and the bodhisattvas.65 Thus in Sōtō Zen, the practitioners gather at new and full moon days to repent of all past evil actions and recite the vows, or 戒本 kaihon, while seeking to emulate and be in union with the bodhisattvas by invoking them along with the Buddhas (i.e., the seven Buddhas).45

These transcendent figures are not “worshipped” in the same sense of the word as in the Judeo-Christian or Islamic tradition; however, they are invoked, thereby brought to the present space and time to unite with the practitioners through the performance of the liturgical order. Here, I underscore the unification of the practitioners with the deified or transcendent beings and the community through the atoning ritual, which I find analogous to the way the Catholic priest and Christian believers are united with Christ in the Eucharist. Before I go on to drawing comparisons and applying theories to elucidate the practice of Fusatsu, however, a brief historical survey may be helpful.

**Historical overview:**

This practice of repentance and purification was endorsed and promulgated by Dōgen who popularized Sōtō Zen teachings in Japan in the early thirteenth century, although he does not specifically refer to the bimonthly ritual named Fusatsu in his extant writings.66 Its provenance, however, may be traced many centuries prior to the arrival of Buddhism in Japan. It is generally accepted by scholars that a similar or a primordial form of the ritual originated in the Vedic period, when the term uposadha referred to “a state of fasting or abstinence… prior to a soma sacrifice,” and the practice

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64 Translation by SeesaaWiki Tsura tsura higurashi wiki (Sōtō shū kan ren yōgo shū) つらつら日暮らし wiki (曹洞宗関連用語集) http://seesaawiki.jp/w/turatura/d%ce%b4%e5%be%b7%b6%ba%e0%e0%df (accessed March 22, 2014).


was eventually adopted by other religious practitioners in India, including the followers of the Buddha.\textsuperscript{67}

According to the Indian Vinaya, then, the sangha gathered bimonthly to recite the *prātimokṣa* (戒本 kaihon), a list of precepts received by the individual monastics at the time of ordination.\textsuperscript{68} When the ritual was adopted by Ch’an Buddhism in China, where Dōgen trained, it came to be associated with the *Four Part Vinaya* which contained 250 monastic precepts.\textsuperscript{69} By the time it was transmitted to China, the ritual had evolved to incorporate the bodhisattva precepts (菩薩戒 bosatsu kai) taken from the *Sūtra of Brahma’s Net*, which Dōgen knew very well from his earlier training in China and advocated “for the purpose of making repentances” prior to ordination and during *Fusatsu*.\textsuperscript{70} Thus, the ritual content significantly originated in China, along with the *Sūtra of Brahma’s Net* and the Sōtō Zen tradition that Dōgen propagated in Japan.

**Autosacrifice of the Bodhisattvas:**

The *Sūtra of Brahma’s Net* is an English rendering of the title of an influential text 梵網経 (J. Bonmōkyō, c. Fànwǎng jīng). It is an indigenous work that appeared in China sometime between 440 and 480 C.E and became the primary text used in China and subsequently one of the most influential texts in Japan for ordination to the bodhisattva precepts.\textsuperscript{71} Its primary purpose seems to have been not only to justify self-immolation practices but also to require them in demonstration of one’s dedication to the Buddhas and identification with the bodhisattvas, as the following passage from the text indicates:

> If one does not set fire to the body, the arm or the finger as an offering to the Buddhas, one is not renunciant bodhisattva. Moreover, one should sacrifice the feet, hands and flesh of the body as offerings to hungry tigers, wolves, and lions and to all hungry ghosts.\textsuperscript{72,73}

53 若不煑身臂指供養諸佛非出家菩薩。乃至餓虎子一切餓鬼。狼師應捨身肉手足而供養之

Thus, to be ordained into the bodhisattva precepts as an aspiring “renunciant bodhisattva” or “monastic bodhisattva” (出家菩薩 J. shukke bosatsu, c. chūjìā púsà), a novice was required to self-immolate, usually burning and leaving marks on one’s head or arms by means of “moxibustion” or the practice of burning moxa, as an offering (供養 J. kuyō, c. gòng yāng) to the Buddhas. The text here may indicate the divinely

\textsuperscript{67} Buswell, *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 944–45. The term *upōsaddha* is referred to as *Fusatsu* in Japanese Zen. Also, as σῶμα soma in Greek means “body,” a “soma sacrifice” probably refers to a sacrifice of a body or parts of a body.

\textsuperscript{68} Foulk, “Just Sitting?” in *Dōgen*, 83. The ritual to receive the ten precepts is called 愛戒 *Jukai* in Japanese, which appears in a section of the *Rules of Purity for Chan Monasteries* which Dōgen quotes in his writing (*Bendōwa*). In Sōtō Zen today, the ritual is also performed for lay individuals joining the sangha as Buddhists.

\textsuperscript{69} Foulk, “Just Sitting!” in *Dōgen*, 83.

\textsuperscript{70} Foulk, “Just Sitting!” in *Dōgen*, 83-84.


\textsuperscript{72} T.24.1484.1006a, quoted by Benn, “Where Text Meets Flesh,” *History of Religions*, 299.

ordained prototype in the sense that the practice of self-sacrificial acts originated with the bodhisattvas.

Moxibustion and other various forms of self mortification were an important part of ritual practices for monks in Edo Japan. Some of the extreme practices included burning off a finger as an offering to the Buddha and copying sūtras by cutting and using one’s own blood, all of which was not only to emulate the self-sacrificing bodhisattvas but also to “form karmic bonds between eminent monks and their followers.” The monks were thus seeking to “connect” with the spirits of their patriarchs in the lineage as well as to the bodhisattvas and the Buddhas who hear the invocations, participate in ritual, receive offerings, and offer back merits and empower the practitioners.

While such extreme forms of self-immolation have been long abandoned since the Meiji period in Japan, the spirit of dedication and sacrifice continues to live on in Jukai (ordination), Fusatsu (bimonthly confession and purification), and other monthly observances at Zen monasteries in Japan, including feeding the hungry ghosts and offering for spirits for dedication of merits. These monthly services, as well as funeral and memorial services for lay parishioners (檀家 danka), involve the same or similar activities of confession, repentance, and rededication to the bodhisattva precepts. The interconnectedness with the spirit world (神 kami), the patriarchs, the Buddhas and the bodhisattvas is thus maintained.

The reason I highlight the interconnectedness of the deities and the autosacrificial aspects of the bodhisattva ideal, precepts, and practice here is to underscore the selfreferential nature of their vows whose primary purpose is to eradicate the evil karmas of their aspirants and save them. The Buddhas and bodhisattvas are thus deified supernormal beings who can transcend time and space to unite with the practitioners who follow the precepts through ritual act. The union not only benefits the practitioners for its salvific value but also the bodhisattvas who have vowed to save them. The bodhisattvas, therefore, gladly unite with the aspirants to autosacrifice in each occasion of the ritual for the benefit of all. The self-reflexive dimension of Buddhist transcendent figures resembles the selfsacrificing Christ who has been deified and invoked at the Eucharist. The major difference is that Christ claims to be the co-creator deity of the entire universe who alone holds the key to salvation, whereas none of the bodhisattvas makes such audacious claims. Despite this and other differences in the soteriological schemes, however, the self-reflexive nature of the bodhisattva vows and ritual performance of these beings united with the practitioners, like Christ in the Eucharist, demonstrate the divine reflexivity at work.

Textual Reference:
The association, and hence the significance, of the bodhisattvas with their selfsacrificing activities comes from the Jataka tale and various Mahāyāna literature, including the Diamond Sūtra, the Lotus Sūtra, The Perfection of Wisdom in 8000 Lines (Prajñā Pāramitā Sūtra), as well as the Sūtra of Brahma’s Net. These texts contain the essential elements of the bodhisattva path, portraying the bodhisattvas that the East Asian Buddhist monks have come to not only aspire to and emulate but to invoke for their power. The portrayal of “the cosmic self-offering of Bhaiṣajyarāja” in the Lotus Sūtra, for example, is believed to have inspired the Zen cremation ritual which
appropriated the phrase “fiery self-immolation” from the text.74 The cremation ritual eventually incorporated mummification of the eminent monks to be preserved as śarīra (relics), which was venerated and ascribed power.75 Hence, as with the Tjilpa tradition (Smith) and with the Eucharist, in Zen, too, the sacral reality was generated or replicated in the controlled environment by means of the relics, and the interconnections with the patriarchs and the bodhisattvas were invoked and reactivated through ritual activity.

Furthermore, referencing these influential Mahāyāna texts, the Korean and Japanese Zen practitioners eventually came to identify the bodhisattvas as the ideal embodiment of compassion to which anyone can aspire, to awaken for the benefit of all sentient beings.76 For this reason, in almost every ceremony, including Fusatsu, the Four Vows 四弘誓願文 (shigu seigan mon) of the bodhisattvas are recited:77

Sentient beings are numberless, I vow to save them all,
Defilements are inexhaustible, I vow to cut them off,
Dharma gates are limitless, I vow to learn them all,
The Buddha’s way is unsurpassable, I vow to accomplish it.

衆生無辺誓願度。(Shujō muhen sei gan do)
煩悩無尽誓願。(bon-nō mujin sei gan dan)
法門無量誓願学。(hō mon muryō sei gan gaku)
仏道無上誓願成。(butsu dō mujō sei gan jō)78

The self-giving and self-reflexive element of the bodhisattva ideal is thus underscored in Fusatsu as with other ceremonies involving purificatory precepts and vows.

In addition to the “earthly bodhisattvas” to whom anyone can aspire, the concept of “transcendent bodhisattvas” has been developed to distinguish the ones that have realized Buddhahood but continue to be reborn because of the vows they have made to save all sentient beings.79 The Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (観音 kannon) is one such “transcendent” bodhisattva who is most frequently invoked in various ways in Zen. For example, in most of the ceremonies conducted in Zen, including Fusatsu, either the Heart Sūtra in which Avalokiteśvara is mentioned is recited, or his name is invoked (as one of the seven Buddhas), or both.

The reason I discuss Avalokiteśvara here is to highlight the self-reflexive aspect of this being. Like Christ, he is believed to be compassion personified and deified, having the ability to be omnipresent and omniscient with a thousand eyes and hands to see the suffering, hear the cry, and respond to all who call compassionately.80

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75 Adamek, “Imagining the Portrait of a Chan Master,” Chan Buddhism, 55.
76 Batchelor, The path of compassion, 5.
77 Jukai Seminar Workbook, printed by Hazy Moon Zen Center, (Los Angeles, California, Summer 2008): 30.
78 Batchelor, The path of compassion, 5. Quoted by Batchelor but the translation is not referenced.
79 Shōrin Temple 少林寺 (Okayama Prefecture, Japan) website, under 住職の話 and 四弘誓願文: http://www.shorinzenji.com/%E4%BD%8F%E8%81%B7%E3%81%AE%E8%A9%B1%E5%9B%9B%E5%BC%98%E8%AA%93%E9%A1%98%E6%96%87/ (accessed March 18, 2014).
80 Batchelor, The path of compassion, 5.
Each time he is invoked in *Fusatsu* and other Zen ceremonies, like Christ, he comes to take on the suffering of the practitioners praying to him and seeking to unite with him. He can then fulfill his vows to save them. Thus, this is another instance where the self-reflexive transcendent being and the practitioners mutually benefit from the ritual performance.

**Union with the Deities:**

Hence, the invocation of and interaction with the bodhisattvas, the Buddhas, and the patriarchs through ritual is an integral part of Japanese Buddhism, including the Sōtō Zen tradition. Additionally, as one of the important elements of mainline Chinese Buddhist monasticism that were adopted in Japan, local deities play a crucial role in the concept and activity of ritual.\(^1\) Since the Heian period, Shinto gods (重迹 *suijaku*) have been considered the “manifestations of the absolute and eternal Buddha” (本地 *honji*) and are invoked along with the bodhisattvas and the Buddhas as the “protectors.”\(^2\) Along with *Fusatsu*, then, several rituals involving local deities are conducted on a bimonthly basis throughout Zen temples in Japan to provide the sacred space and time for the union and empowerment.\(^3\) The Buddhas and bodhisattvas are, therefore, on the equal ground with the local deities, and together they are ascribed veneration and power to empower, protect, and transform the ritual participants.

Thus, *Fusatsu* provides a sacred space and a temporal reality where the relationship of interconnectedness, reflexivity, and reciprocity with the Buddhas, the bodhisattvas, the patriarchs, and the local deities is celebrated and maintained. The interconnectedness with and the reflexivity of the divine may be possible in *Fusatsu*, as the intention of the participants is to “become one” with the Buddhas and the deities invoked through the recitation of their names and the sūtras.\(^4\) Being one, then, the participants are the Buddhas, the bodhisattvas, and the gods offering their vows and making atonement. Thus, in the act of bowing which constitutes the major part of the ritual, for example, they are bowing to the seven Buddhas and bodhisattvas, to the gods, to each other, and also to themselves as the enacting bodhisattvas.

Furthermore, Taigen Dan Leighton observes that the Zen tradition considers “that the heart of spiritual activity and praxis is the enactment of buddha awareness and physical presence,” as “Buddhahood is a physical transformation as much as a mental transcendence.”\(^5\) In other words, through the specific invocations, recitations, and actions prescribed in the ritual, the monastics share the sacred reality and transmit transformative power not only to the participants in the ritual but also to themselves, as well as to the Buddhas, the bodhisattvas, and the local gods (重迹 *suijaku*) who are invoked. Additionally, as Paula K. R. Arai asserts in her essay regarding women in Zen ritual, by engaging in the specified motions with their bodies, the participants

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\(^3\) Welter, “Buddhist Rituals for Protecting the Country in Medieval Japan,” 124.

\(^4\) Maezumi Roshi, “Atonement,” in *Jukai Seminar Workbook*: 31. Maezumi Roshi’s former students at Hazy Moon Zen Center, one of whom is William Nyogen Yeo Roshi, attested to this “intention” toward the union by referring to the *Fusatsu* ceremony as “at-one-ment” during the interview before the ceremony on February 13, 2014, as well as during the dharma talk on February 15, 2014.

“activate the empowering and healing awareness of interrelatedness.” 86 Thus here, too, Patton’s divine reflexivity and Rappaport’s performative theories together seem helpful in explaining the emic perspective of empowerment capitulated and activated through the specific prescribed action and space in Zen rituals.87

**Summary of Analysis and Conclusion**

I began this paper with an observation of potency about the ritual in effecting empowerment and healing in the minds of the participants. The general recognition of the power of religious ritual is especially evident in the healthcare setting with a recent increase in chaplain referrals and requests for ritual performance, as a statistical report indicates.88 In this paper, I have endeavored to answer the question of such ritual power and efficacy from emic perspectives. In doing so, I have posited that the relatively new theory of “divine reflexivity,” as a postmodern theory *par excellence*, is most helpful, along with other projectionist theories, in unpacking the issue of ritual empowerment. With the appropriation of the divine reflexivity framework, then, I have asserted as my central thesis that the secret of power behind ritual lies, at least in part, in the emic sensibility and intelligibility that the ritual itself has been originated and effected by the deities themselves, who actively participate, receive, and offer benefits in the space and time specified as sacred through ritual. In brief, the objects of worship and the worshippers are both benefactors of ritual albeit in varied ways.

Thus, the deities are not mere “projections” of human needs or images, and neither is ritual simply a function of social mores or hierarchical structure. However, due to an inherent human proclivity to deify the objects of veneration, some elements of projections are inevitable in the dimensions of ritual. Yet, the very intention and act of deification may in fact empower the “living” objects of worship so as to increase their potency in return. Hence, the psychological hermeneutics can still work well within the divine reflexivity framework, and the emic intelligibility is as viable a theory as the etic one, and they can complement one another.

In asserting the above, my intention is not to generalize or claim a universal theory that encompasses all religious rituals. Rather, by pointing out the ubiquity of certain phenomena or dimensions in ritual, I attempt to highlight the potency in the particularity of rituals in different traditions. In other words, the specificity of ritual endemic to a particular tradition does not negate the ubiquity of the observed phenomena in ritual but rather complements it. Emulating Patton’s descriptive-comparative approach that she utilized in theorizing the self-referential deity has allowed me to achieve this seemingly paradoxical aim.

As the subjects of the descriptive comparison, I have chosen the rituals that are believed to offer “atonement” in two entirely different traditions that belong to different cultures. Specifically, I have examined the Eucharist in Catholicism and the *Fusatsu* in Sōtō Zen Buddhism to see how the chosen theories may help uncover some of the mysteries of empowerment in these particular rituals from the practitioners’ point of view.

After reviewing the general content of the theories very briefly, I have attempted to apply them first in my investigation of the Eucharist as celebrated in the


Catholic mass. Here, I have utilized the observation that Patton has already made in her book concerning the “autosacrifice” of a self-referential God, who is invoked, celebrated, sacrificed, and embodied through the enactment of a priest. In other words, the deity (i.e., Jesus who is deified and referred to as the Christ or the Savior) is sacrificed each time the Eucharist is celebrated with his body broken and his blood shed for the “forgiveness of sins” of all the participants present — including the priest.

The temporal and spatial reality of sacredness is thus demarcated and activated by the priest’s performance communicating the efficacy to all including himself and the deity (according to the theories of J.Z. Smith and Rappaport). The sacral demarcation and activation occur first through the actions and utterances that signify “remembrance” within the hierarchical structure already set up by virtue of the ritual “place” and liturgical settings (Smith). Then through the performance of the priest and the observance—or faith—of the practitioners, the deity is invoked, its transformative power is infused, and all parties involved are empowered (Rappaport).

The “parties” benefited include the self-reflexive deity — that is, the deified Christ in this case as he is believed to be “alive” after his resurrection and is invoked (Patton). Being invoked, he is believed to “overcome” the priest and the elements on the altar of the Eucharist, re-sacrificed at the altar, and then consumed by the priest and the participants. By consuming the “transubstantiated” elements, then, the priest and the recipients are united with Christ, essentially becoming his hands and feet to not only heal and transform themselves but also extend forgiveness and healing to others.

Next, I addressed the ceremony of Fusatsu as particularly celebrated by the Sōtō Zen Buddhists in Japan. I first noted that it is not a precise equivalent of the Eucharist but presents a similar dimension of “atonement” in terms of purification through renewing and fulfilling vows. The renewals and fulfillment of the vows are effected through the actions and utterances that enable the union of the priests and the participants with the Buddhas, the bodhisattvas, and the local gods (kami) in the calendrical liturgy and demarcation of the sacred space (Rappaport and Smith). The Buddhas and the bodhisattvas invoked are deified through ritual, able to unite with the practitioners in spirit, while the local deities are also considered the “eternal Buddhas” in the heavenly realms that participate in the ritual.

In considering the role of the deified Buddhas and bodhisattvas as they are invoked, I also underscored the significance of their interconnectedness with the practitioners along with that of the patriarchs in Sōtō Zen. The relics of the mummified eminent monks, for example, are revered as potent entities that help generate or enhance the sacredness of the “place,” that is, the specified environment for ritual (Smith). These eminent monks are considered not only as the great teachers of the past but also as the bodhisattvas of the present, who can still inspire and impart power to the participants to atone for their past misdeeds and thus fulfill the vows.

Concerning the vows of the bodhisattvas, I examined some texts to highlight the self-referential and reciprocal relationships observable in Fusatsu (Patton). The practice of autosacrifice also originated with the bodhisattvas. For example, the bodhisattva vows to save all sentient beings are renewed and reactivated every time the bodhisattvas are invoked and their vows recited. The soteriological schemata expressed in the vows extend not only to the living participants in the ritual but also to the bodhisattvas who are believed to have sacrificed themselves as offerings and have vowed to help all beings before attaining Buddhahood. By becoming “one” with them,
then, the participants are essentially becoming the bodhisattvas renewing the vows and benefiting from their purification. The self-referential deity is thus portrayed here.

The analysis presented in this paper is only in the nascent form and thus incomplete. The relatively new theory of divine reflexivity posited by Patton appears to be a helpful, hermeneutical tool for an understanding of the empowering aspects of ritual in not only the ceremonies in the religions she has observed but also in East Asian Buddhism. There are rituals in other traditions that remain uninvestigated and are inviting my curiosity. Through such investigations, I hope to understand the empowering features of ritual in the belief systems to which many people subscribe, so as to perhaps inform chaplains how to better assist their constituents in healing and renewal.
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