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Mariavites and the Occult**A Search for the Truth**

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The subject explored in this text is one of numerous “subplots” included in my dissertation, titled “Aleister Crowley’s Influence on the Magical Societies of the 20th-Century Poland,” where a net of interconnections between the Polish occult and the idea, creation, and activity of a great personage of contemporary magic, A. Crowley, is revealed. The issue touched upon in the further part of the text, however, being merely a “splinter,” is extremely interesting due to its uncovering of a bond between commonly unknown strictly Polish Catholic schism and the world esoterism.

The Mariavite movement, being thoroughly a Polish denomination formed on the basis of revelations experienced by Feliksa Maria Franciszka Kozłowska (1862–1921), has been suspected of having connections with Martinist orders and the Gnostic Church since the beginning of its existence. However, evidently Crowley’s very own ideas and thoughts were unknown to Mariavites. Supposedly, the only issue shared by both parties that could have result-

ed in closer relations is the mentioned Gnosticism, most probably introduced into Mariavitism by Jan Maria Michał Kowalski or his successors.

Mariavites (from Latin *Mariae vita* – the life of Mary) initiated their activity on August 2nd, 1893, when Kozłowska, referred to by her followers as “Mateczka” or Blessed Maria Franciszka,¹ experienced a series of religious visions.² Their essence was based on the idea that the sinful world may be saved only by spreading the reverence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist and by imitating the life of the Mother of God.³ According to the revelation, the contemporary times are described as “the last days.”⁴ If the evil reigning in the world is not defeated, the world will be punished.⁵ Originally the word “Mariavite” referred solely to nuns and priests,⁶ participating in the new congregation brought into being by *Mateczka* and functioning on the basis of her visions. Several years later, this term began to include also the secular followers of the movement. In a short time the congregation consisted of tens of priests (in the initial phase the overall number of members and supporters amounted to approximately a hundred), among whom the most contributing were J. M. M. Kowalski,⁷ Kazimierz Maria Jan Przyjemski, and Roman Maria Jakub Próchniewski. Some of the clergymen participating in the organisation were graduates of the Ecclesiastical Academy of St. Petersburg (M. Dominik

1 Maria and Franciszka are Feliksa Kozłowska’s religious names. The term *Mateczka* is not unusual, as it was commonly used as a reference to the mother superior in Poland. The corresponding appellation in France was “Petite Mère” and in English speaking countries “Little Mother.” The term “blessed” came into use after Kozłowska’s death in 1921 (in a letter from T. Mames; author’s collection).

2 The first revelation took place exactly on August 2nd, 1893, with following visions occurring repeatedly until 1918 (Mames 2009: 20).

3 It is frequently said that revelations obliged the faithful to practice the cult of the Virgin Mary. As Konrad Rudnicki had observed, this common belief is incorrect, since the matter was not concerning the obligation of such a cult but the imitation of the way of life.

4 “The last days” are defined by Mariavites as “the approaching of the end of the cultural era and the beginning of the new one; an end of a certain evolutionary era” (in a letter from Rudnicki; author’s collection).

5 Revelations put an emphasis on the clergymen’s morality, whose ungodly life is seen as the major reason for the depavation of the world. Therefore, the renovation ought to begin from “the source,” that is the Holy See in Rome (Mames 2009: 21).

6 Mariavite congregations were obliged to live according to rules of Saint Francis of Assisi.

7 J. M. M. Kowalski (1871–1942), as every Mariavite priest or nun, had two religious names: the name of his patron saint and Mary’s name. Thus, his full name was Jan Maria Michał Kowalski (Karas 2001: 113).

Skolimowski studied at the Gregorian University in Rome). The propagated issues concerned primarily the need for renewal of priesthood morality and the significance of churchmen's remaining in poverty, as well as the regular participation in the Holy Communion and imitation of the secret life of the Holy Virgin Mary (see: St. Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort, the idea of Marian slavery, Marian spirituality of Honorat Koźmiński).

The Mariavite priests were honoured by both clergymen and the faithful for their devoutness, religiousness, and, additionally, for their perfect preparation for preaching. For that reason Mariavite friars were frequently invited to parishes for retreats. Nevertheless, their attitude toward the clergy and especially severe criticism of the clergymen's behaviour could not have gone unnoticed.

Soon the "traditional" clergy turned against the Mariavite organisation, which in the initial phase of its activity, that is until 1897 (or 1898) was a secret society.⁸ The beginning of the division between the Mariavites and the church hierarchy is strongly connected with the unveiling of Kozłowska's visions to the public during a mass, when prelate K. Weloński described her as "an insult to the priests in Płock." The newly created Mariavite movement found opponents in the bishops of Warsaw, Płock, and Lublin, as Mariavitism developed most rapidly in the area of their dioceses. Apart from the criticism of the clergy, the reason for repression is said to have been lying largely in the cult of Mateczka, popularised mainly by priest Kowalski. However, the first hostility of bishops was not provoked by the matter of the mentioned cult, as its beginnings had not been observed until 1906. Thus, the true cause of the birth of this antagonism remains unclear. Since bishops undisputedly refused to legalise the Mariavite Congregation,⁹ a letter of appeal was submitted to the Vatican. Still, the attitude of the superior of the congregation, priest Kowalski, and the propagation of Mateczka's revelations remained unacceptable to the Holy See. In 1904, the Congregation of the Holy Office dissolved the Mariavite Congregation, officially declaring Mateczka's visions as delusions. Later in 1906 she was expelled along with Kowalski by Pope Pius X and their supporters were given 30 days to desert the cursed.¹⁰

8 Pasek(1991: 44). Rudnicki Konrad (theologian of the church Mariavite) emphasizes that the conspiratorial activity of the Mariavites existed until its exposure to the authorities of the Russian Empire, initiated by one of the bishops in 1905.

9 Mariavite priests began to apply for legalisation of the congregation. In 1902, a petition was submitted to the diocesan authorities and to the Vatican (Mames 2009: 24).

10 In the history of the church it was the first case of making a

After the specified time, the excommunication encompassed every priest, nun, and follower of the congregation. In response to such decision, Mariavites refused obedience to the bishops and founded the Catholic Mariavite Church. Although the further history of this church seems really absorbing, it shall not be discussed in this article, as being insignificant for this research, contrary to the moves undertaken by Kowalski.

In 1909, three Mariavite priests, J. M. M. Kowalski, R. M. J. Próchniewski, and Leon Maria Andrzej Gołębiowski, arrived at the Utrecht Congress.¹¹ After a month, the bishops of the Jansenist Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands, headed by Archbishop Gerard Gul, there could ordain Kowalski as a bishop. As a result of receiving succession from the line mentioned, several years later the church was united with the Old Catholic Union of Utrecht and renamed as the Old Catholic Mariavite Church. On September 4th, 1910, in Łowicz the priests Próchniewski and Gołębiowski were consecrated and Archbishop Kowalski, commonly referred to as "the commander,"¹² became the leader of the church.

Mateczka died in 1921. At the moment of her death, the archbishop inaugurates far-reaching reforms in the church, namely the abolition of celibacy, sanctified water and oil, fasting, compulsory confession. The Sacrament of Communion was introduced in two differing forms for the faithful: a Communion for children directly after the christening, an ordination of women, and a folk priesthood (introduced in 1935 after the schism in the church), which enabled the laity of both sexes to celebrate Mass and to administer other sacraments. The doctrinal changes initiated after the division were the most radical. In this matter the archbishop

woman a *vitandus* excommunicate. The first woman to be a *toleratus* excommunicate was Elisabeth I. Tudor.

11 "When the dogma of the papal infallibility, declared during the First Vatican Council, met with opposition of the vast majority of Catholics, national churches began to form in isolation from papal state. Soon they have created the Union of Utrecht, obtaining apostolic succession from the Dutch Church. The apostolic succession of the two independent Polish Churches, the National and the Mariavite (as well as many other Old Catholic Churches in Central and Eastern Europe) also derives from the aforementioned source. As some of the bishops consecrated in such way aspired to create in a short time solid religious organisations of complex hierarchy, they consecrated many new bishops often without any requirements. Thus, the apostolic succession 'leaked,' overtaken by various esoteric organisations and connected Gnostic churches" (Prinke 2008: 79).

12 Podgórski (1998: 45). The term "commander" emerged not earlier than in the 20th century, in connection with the formation of the Messianistic idea (in a letter from Mames; author's collection). Kowalski was also called "the Slavic Pope" (Terlikowski 2005).

deserted Christianity,¹³ creating an essentially Gnostic doctrine, close to the Russian sect of Khlysts, particularly by considering not only the Son of God incarnated in a human body, but also God the Father, and the Holy Spirit.

Mary was regarded as the embodiment of God the Father and Mateczka Kozłowska as the Holy Spirit and, what is more, as the spouse of Christ. Letters written by Mateczka and Kowalski were considered of the same rank as the Holy Bible. As views so different from Christianity were unacceptable for Utrecht, the Old Catholic Mariavite Church was excluded from the Union of Utrecht (Rumpul 1999).

The inducted doctrinal changes could not remain disregarded, especially by the Christian critics of this organisation. Mariavites were accused of Satanism, depravation,¹⁴ and forming close structures of anti-church character. Witold Sawicki¹⁵ wrote about the Mariavite Church: “The Mariavite sect is a classic example. Created at the beginning of the 20th century by a group of priests led by Jan Maria

Kowalski, it has a character of a Gnostic organization, rotten from the inside, whose depravation, as well as Kowalski’s condemnation for moral offences during the interwar period is commonly known. However, the fact that this group has been a subordinate to the lodge of French Martinists through the ‘Powszechny Kościół Gnostyczny’ [Common Gnostic Church] remains unknown to the most people. Even less known is the fact, that Kowalski was a Satanist and an apprentice of a famous French Satanist apostate priest archbishop Bulan from Lyons (Le Satan, Edition Carmelitaines, Paris)” (Sawicki 2005: 102).

Comments in the press supported Sawicki’s opinion stating that “... Martinists are operating through the so-called Gnostic Church, which was founded by aforesaid Papus (pseudonym of Gerard Encausse; see fn. 34) and functions mainly in France, Italy, and Germany; this peculiar sect has Mariavite-based connections in Poland – Czyński, Ph.D. titled himself ‘the Legate of the Gnostic Church’” (Askold 1937: 8). As can be seen, the association between Mariavitism and the Martinist Order is visible in several sources.

Examining this subject, I have spoken with Lech Emfazy Stefański, one of the first Martinist Order researchers in Poland, who decidedly claims, that Czesław Czyński¹⁶ instructed Kowalski in his Gnostic activity (Kurt Rudolph perceives Gnosticism as a clearly dualistic religion, especially in its anti-cosmic and anti-somatic form). A highly intriguing note by Ciechowski (whose writings about Czyński were both of objective and derisive character, since they have known each other personally) reflects on the discussed relation of these two organisations (1932: 5–8): “It must be stressed, that before we have met, Czyński did not use these pompous titles, as he did later: grand master of *the Mariavite Order* [emphasised; author’s note], chairman of the general chapter of the order of the Cross and the Rose, patriarch of the Gnostic Church, etc.” Nevertheless, the author could have been wrong; the contemporary press associated everything with Mariavites due to the continuing “witch hunt.”

Thus, I have written a letter to Bishop Maria Beatrix Szulgowicz, currently leading the Catholic Mariavite Church in Felicjanów, which after the

13 Mames (2009: 203–236) explains this proceeding differently, claiming that the new vision of Kowalski’s church was based on St. Augustine’s idea contained in his work “The City of God” and in Sir Thomas More’s “Utopia.” The resemblance to the thought of Sir Thomas More is particularly visible in the idea of an affluent society living in harmony with nature and soul.

14 The Mariavite superior, Archbishop Kowalski, initiated marriages between Mariavite nuns and priests, which caused a great resentment in the press and provoked allegations of depravation of underage protégés from the monastery in Płock. A series of scandalous so-called “Mariavite trials” took place in the 1920s. Kowalski has been summoned to court repeatedly, mainly on charges of committing “lewd acts” on underage protégés in the monastery in Płock. He was also accused of introducing and employing the “law of the first night” (Pasek 1991: 54). During the “Płock trial” (September–October 1928) three nuns and three underage girls participated as prosecutors. The trial was found so exciting, that even foreign correspondents arrived at Płock (Podgórski 1998: 58). “The spreading rumours concerning Mariavites resulted in ‘the Mariavite trial’ (officially: the trial of archbishop Kowalski), during which Kowalski was sentenced despite a dissenting opinion of one of the judges, and false testimony were proved to a number of witnesses. Other witnesses revoked their statements themselves. As a result, the Ministry of Justice has not carried out the sentence for several years and the archbishop was imprisoned with a delay. Besides, the explanation of the verdict acquitted the archbishop of most of the accusations, apart from the charge of spreading the scandal (marriages between the clergy and nuns, writing about sex in church publications). Someone took the effort to ‘loose’ records of the trial, just in case. It is impossible to reach the truth today, yet the rumour has it: Mariavites are immoral” (in a letter from Rudnicki; author’s collection).

15 Witold Sawicki (1904–1973) was a *doctor habilitatus* and lecturer at the University of Warsaw since 1933, worked also as a teacher at Jagiellonian University. He was a Catholic critic and a Freemasonry researcher.

16 Czesław Czyński *alias* Punar Bhava (1958–1932), founder of the Polish Martinist Order, an apprentice, and a friend of Papus. He is an O. T. O. member and a legate of the Gnostic Church. For more information on his tempestuous life, see Łagosz (2006). – In 1911 in Saint Petersburg, Czyński published his book titled “Mateczka Kozłowska” (Little Mother Kozłowska). Unfortunately, the book remains unavailable. It might clarify Martinists’ position on this subject.

schism¹⁷ in Mariavitism in 1935 became a direct successor of Kowalski. In reply for a question regarding the existence of any oral or written traces concerning the relationship between Czyński and Kowalski, Szulgowicz informs, that "... there is no record of Czesław Czyński or of a Martinist Order, neither in our archives nor in old publications. As far as I know, the Mariavite circles were not familiar with the term 'Martinist Order', as no written evidence of such order or its relation to Czyński is to be found. Archbishop J. M. M. Kowalski based his works and opinions most of all on the writings of the Church Fathers, letters of Polish supporters of Messianism and Bards, and on the Revelations and teachings of Saint (only in Mariavite Church – Z. Ł.) Maria Franciszka Kozłowska, as one may conclude from his works, correspondence and other preserved papers, as well as from oral testimonies; it is highly unlikely that he had any contact with the occult" (in a letter from Szulgowicz; author's collection).

When asked a similar question, Konrad Rudnicki, a theologian and a priest of the Old Catholic Mariavite Church, remarks, "Saint Maria Franciszka and the future archbishop J. M. M. Kowalski have gone to France once, accompanied by a sizeable group of Mariavite clergy. The journey led them from Płock to Lourdes and then to Rome; neither Kozłowska nor Kowalski had a chance to speak with Papus. Till the end of their days, they both considered Gnostics as heretics. Indeed, some of the Mariavite clergymen toyed with esoterism privately, yet only that of a Christian character. This concerns the 1930s (after Mateczka's death) and subsequent years. Bishop Wacław Maria Bartłomiej Przysiecki gathered an impressive collection of anthroposophical works. The author of this letter is a member of the Polish Anthroposophical Society; neither of the facts above is connected with the Gnostic Church or O. T. O.,^[18] as they have absolutely nothing in

common" (in a letter from Rudnicki; author's collection).

Therefore, adapting a hypothesis that either Czyński or the French Martinists indeed influenced Mariavites (which has not been confirmed as yet, due to the lack of sufficient evidence) and taking into consideration that Crowley did write "The Gnostic Mass", a very interesting net of connections and relationships emerges. The texts quoted above clearly indicate various suggestions and traces of the Martinist-Mariavites bond.

One of the few exhaustive and comprehensive works on the subject of Mariavites, "Mariawityzm w Polsce" (Mariavitism in Poland) by Mazur consists of several substantial pieces of information regarding especially reforms introduced by Archbishop Kowalski. Still, despite the insightful analysis, Mazur did not observe any relation between esoterism and the Mariavite Church (except for Catholic publications aiming at defamation of Mariavites¹⁹), whatsoever.²⁰ The lately published "Mysteria Mysticum. Szkice z duchowości i historii Mariawitów"

from the edge of Gnosticism, though not being classified as a Gnostic system (Prokopiuk 2001–2002). Rudnicki reasonably states, "given a fact, that 'friends of our friends' one may claim Steiner had connections with O. T. O. Yet no concept neither from O. T. O. nor from any similar organisation has been adopted to the first Anthroposophical Society or to the society created after the Christmas Congress. To have a contact, even indirect, does not mean to accept it. I have had a very close contact (being beaten) with the Gestapo while staying in their custody. I have talked with them, yes, but I do not plead guilty of collaborating with the Gestapo or accepting Nazi ideology" (in a letter from Rudnicki; author's collection).

19 In the formerly quoted work by Sawicki (2004: 17) a following entry can be found: "Maria Zauska ... basing on Masonic sources proves Mariavites to be bonded with Martinist lodges suspected of professing Satanism on the basis of documented evidence." According to the author, the mentioned article was published in *Słowo Powszechnie* (1948/343: 620) and in *Ateum Kapłańskie* (1958: no numbering).

20 Presented below is a letter received from Orest Jatryka, a member of the Gnostic order Ordo Templi Orientis Antiqua & La Couleuvre Noire: "The matter you mention of is highly intriguing. I would like to learn more about it myself. Several years ago we [members of the Gnostic Church] went for a 'business trip' to Felicjanów, where the late Mariavite Archbishop Rafael welcomed us warmly, calling us 'brothers.' In my opinion, an informal connection between Mariavites and the Gnostic Church might have existed; both organisations owe their lines of apostolic succession (in case of Mariavites practically the only one) to the Union of Utrecht. What is more, a branch of the Mariavite Church functions resiliently in France, where gnosis is deeply rooted, evidently. And indeed, Kowalski's ideas come straight from the futuristic esoteric Christianity practiced by esotericists of those times and more liberal churches established by the *episcopi vagantes*. Yet, I do not have any information uncovering such connections that might serve as an appropriate source in scientific research" (letter; author's collection).

17 At that time, Mariavitism has divided into a majority faction, that is the Old Catholic Mariavite Church (based in Płock) and a minority faction, that is the Catholic Mariavite Church (based in Felicjanów near Bodzanów, close to Płock). The second faction sustained the trend represented by Archbishop Kowalski, whereas the first one resulted from the emergence of a domestic opposition led by Bishop F. M. Feldman (1885–1971) (Karas 2001: 114). Felicjanów is an Myszko-Małoszewo estate (500 ha) near Płock, bought in 1910, later named "Felicjanów" in memory of Felicja Kozłowska (Podgórski 1998: 41).

18 It is, however, highly disputable, as the creator of anthroposophy, Rudolf Steiner, was a member of an O. T. O. fraction, the Memphis-Misraim. According to J. Prokopiuk, Steiner was inspired by Goethe's thoughts and, having gained the Gnostic experience of meeting Christ, devoted himself to theosophy and the Memphis-Misraim. Anthroposophy then derives

(Mames 2009), despite being the newest research on the congregation's activity, does not provide any information on the bond with the occult.²¹

On the other hand, some of the facts quoted in this article may raise doubts about the validity of formulating unequivocal opinions on this matter. "Changes introduced by Archbishop Kowalski entirely reshaped the character of 'Dzieło Wielkiego Miłosierdzia' [Kozłowska's Revelations: The Work of Great Mercy], making it a distinct genre, as, apparently, it became the archbishop's own version of Kozłowska's teachings, considering that her visions contained none of his radical reforms *expressis verbis*" (Mazur 2005: 100). Thus, a question about the originality of these changes arises.²² As difficult as the uncovering of the historical truth is at present, one should notice at least a few contributions that could verify the previous assumption:

- Mariavites preferred vegetarianism;
- their magazine for youth was published in two versions, separately for the boys and for the girls, and titled *Templariusz* and *Templariuszka* respectively (a masculine and a feminine gender of word "Templar" – translator's note). Identically named organisations for youth were also founded;²³
- marriages between nuns and priests were introduced and Kowalski himself was sentenced to two years and eight months of imprisonment for maintaining sexual intercourses with nuns and his protégés (a moral offence). As Mazur states, Kowalski had access to all of his protégés and was taking advantage of it eagerly;

21 Mames mentions only of the clues indicating connections between anti-Christianity and Mariavitism, reminding about identifying Mariavites with Vintras, an occultist who in France founded an organisation named the "Work of Mercy." The name is evidently similar to the title of Kozłowska's revelations, "Dzieło Wielkiego Miłosierdzia" [The Work of Great Mercy]. Apart from this convergence, no other connection occurs. Yet, to some Catholic writers that is enough to suspect the Mariavite Church of satanic conspiracy, e.g., Cristiani (1995) – (Mames 2009: 100).

22 An interesting information (including names) concerning a connection between Mariavites and the Huszno's Polish National Orthodox Church was published in *Gazeta Polska (Sakta Satanistów 1930: 3)*: "Czyński and his apprentices were maintaining a direct contact with Andrzej Huszno's sect, the so-called National Catholic Church in Dąbrowa Górnicza and esoteric organizations in Upper Silesia, with a contribution of certain Wojciechowski." Wojciechowski, a Silesian and a highly initiated Martinist, was one of the editors, alongside Czyński, of "Encyklopedia Okultystyczna" (This book never appeared in print – Z. Ł.).

23 It was an idea of Bishop Filip Feldman who worked on the history of the Templars privately. In 1933, a Mariavite Youth Association "Templariusze" (Knights Templar) was created.

- an ordination of women to priesthood and bishopric, which is an evident parallel to Gnostic teachings;²⁴
- the Mariavite organisation was characterized by wholehearted anticlericalism, which might connect it with Martinism;
- in his schools, Kowalski organised Esperanto courses²⁵ (even a mass in Esperanto was celebrated after the Second World War), this language commonly regarded as mason most probably derived from the Volapuk language. Czyński,²⁶ an expert in Volapuk, was its propagator and an author of some Volapuk course books.

On the website of O. T. O. A.²⁷ one may read in the "history section," "it might be added that the MSS. of Randolph's work was also used by a group of Polish female bishops, the Mariavite Church, who assisted their male counterparts, until sup-

24 "The most substantial features of gnosis can be found effortlessly in Gnostic writings and printings, regardless of their different origin. The first of such features is the very term 'gnosis,' deriving from Greek and meaning 'knowledge' and 'cognition,' which indeed became the principal motto of this religious vision" (Rudolph 1995: 55 f.). On the other hand, the Anglican Church does allow ordination of women, yet this fact has nothing in common with Gnosticism.

25 "It is difficult to specify the reason for such deep interest of the Mariavite clergy in Esperanto. Undoubtedly, a person who greatly contributed to popularization of this language among Mariavites was priest Adam Gabriel Furmanik, who mastered Esperanto at the age of 18 in 1888, merely a year after the first publications of the Esperanto course book by Ludwik Zamenhof. As a young boy, Furmanik became a member of the Global Esperanto Association and its local delegate. As a priest, he organised a circle of the Polish Esperanto Association in his parish in Leszno, near Warsaw, remaining an extremely active Esperantist until his death ... Undoubtedly, Mariavites have found in Zamenhof's idea numerous elements of their own social programme, regarded as a path leading to common peace and fraternity" (Tempczyk 2005: 53). Despite his ideas being drawn from the Masonic constitution, Zamenhof himself was not a freemason; even though, he was posthumously honoured with a title of "honorary mason."

26 An interesting information from Czyński's letter to the Secretary of the Council reads as follows: "We are adapting volumes of Martinist ideology into German, Polish, and Esperanto. Soon, an Esperanto translation of our booklet 'Porządek Martynistów' [The Martinist Directives] will be printed" (Czyński 1910). A peculiar statement, considering the small number of people speaking Esperanto at that time.

27 "Ordo Templi Orientis Antiqua is a Gnostic-magical initiation order founded in 1921 in Haiti by the Gnostic patriarch and voodoo high-priest Lucien-Francois Jean-Maine. The O. T. O. A. tradition comes from the Gnostic voodoo, as practiced in secret societies, where a synthesis was developed of European Gnostic-hermetic currents, being the heritage of the ancient Western tradition of initiation, with the Haitian metaphysics" (excerpt quoted after the website of the order; data from 2009, current website does not exist).

pressed by the Roman Catholics. Recently, Randolph's 'Fraternitas Lucis Hermetica' in France is headed by a Mariavite Gnostic Bishop, Msgr. Robert Bonnet. Also, it might be noted that Randolph's sexual magic in MSS. was translated into French and published by none other than that Polish high-priestess Maria de Nagłowska, before 1931. Finally, it should be noted that Maria de Nagłowska studied Voodoo with the pupils of Lucien-Francois Jean-Maine between 1921 and 1930" (<http://otoa-lcn.org/pl_historialcn.php> [Data from 2009, current website does not exist]).

Randolph influenced greatly the history of the modern occult and Crowley himself. However, the text above is not documented and Bishop Robert Bonnet died in 1986. As commonly known, magical orders²⁸ are skilful in falsifying their lineage, thus information given on the mentioned website must not be trusted in any way. However, the included data on this site are nothing else than a copy of a text written by König, a widely recognised esoterism researcher.

In fact, Maria Nagłowska (1883–1936) was not a Polish, as she was born in Saint Petersburg as daughter of the governor of Kazan. According to the legend, as a young girl Nagłowska encountered Grigori Rasputin and at the age of twelve she became an orphan. Already having a tempestuous past, she met Julius Evola (1898–1974), with whom she later had a romance. Interested in high sex magic, she found her ideal in a concept of women's chastity dedicated to a higher power (in this case, to Satan). Numerous apprentices were studying the system she created, of which one hanged himself in 1936, most possibly by accident, during a higher degree ritual of smothering. Nagłowska translated Randolph's "Magia Sexualis" into French, incorporating many thoughts and accents of her own (Hakl 2006). When in 1930 she began to openly popularise the satanic cult in Paris, the Press was more amused than disgusted, and some newspapers described her form of Satanism as an intriguing "religious experiment" (Hane-graff 2006: 1036). In her works and journals she marked the importance of meeting a Catholic friar in the church of Notre-Dame, whom she referred to as her master. According to rumours at that time, the mentioned friar was most probably a Mariavite, yet neither any name of Nagłowska's teacher is given nor any evidence of his membership in the Mariavite Church, yet evidently Nagłowska did not participate in this organisation and the title of high priestess applied solely to her system of sex magic.

28 There is absolutely no evidence that they existed before the 1970s (see König 1994; 2011).

Taking the facts above into consideration, Rudnicki claims "among the fourteen women ordained as bishops by the Mariavites, none dealt with the occult. Esoterism was an absorbing issue to Bishop Przysiecki (who, despite not being a member of any anthroposophical organisation, was involved in anthroposophy), Feldman, Kowalski, and Próchniewski. The latter was interested in esoterism in the sense, that 'he wanted to learn more about it,' though he treated reluctantly even Christian esoterism. The first two of the bishops mentioned above had connections with the Freemasonry (cooperating with the Mariavite mission in the U.S.A.), in which they both differentiated Christian and non-Christian trends. Neither of them disregarded the existence of atheistic, satanic, and mefistofelic tendencies in distrusted Masonry, and their interest in any occult organisation, including black, was meant for to exposing such groups" (in a letter of Rudnicki; author's collection).

Perhaps, attributing the occult to Mariavites resulted from the apostolic succession provided to some esotericists by the Mariavite Church. Carlos Adhemar, an occultist and a bishop of other organisations (including the Gnostic Church), was ordained as bishop by Robert Bonnet. However, it was solely one of many "gateways" used by occultists to gain episcopal sacraments. The other one, definitely more significant, was also opened by a Mariavite. On May 24th, 1953, Bishop Helmut Norbert Maria Paulus Maas consecrated Maur Maria Efrema Fusi for Mariavite bishop in Italy, where the succession line of the majority of present occultists derives from. The reason why Mariavite bishops were consecrating occultists is known only to some extent, especially since Adhemar was a Gnostic bishop before receiving ordination from Mariavites, and his links were commonly known. Rudnicki emphasises, that the interest individual superiors of the Mariavite Church paid to the occult was noticeable, and further elaborates on the reason for Kowalski's doctrinal changes, recommending "... articles depicting this personage, published in the magazine *Praca nad sobą*, volumes: 25, 13; 25, 22; 28, 20, as well as articles from volumes 55 and 56 (in press)." According to Rudnicki, "Maas was a rightful Mariavite bishop, who consecrated the bishops M. Rafael and M. Norbert; having employed later some 'weird' moves, became suspended in the Catholic Mariavite Church (it is the highest penalty for a clergyman, as Mariavites know no excommunication). Why an esotericist would not be allowed to receive Holy Orders, is beyond my understanding, especially as the line of Christian esoterism, which begins from Saint Paul and continues through Dionysius the Areopa-

gite, still exists. Only several Christian denominations condemn mysticism, esoterism, and Gnosis of all kinds (yet, mysticism should not be confused with mystification and gnosis with Gnosticism^[29])” (in a letter from Rudnicki; author’s collection).

This view is shared to a certain extent by Mames, asking, “Are Mariavites, excommunicated by the Pope, regarded by the Mother Church as Roman Catholics? If so, do they represent the Roman Catholic Church? Certainly not. They are heterodox in the eyes of the Roman Catholicism, representing only themselves. *Per analogiam* Bishop Bonnet, from whom both Plock and Felicjanów distance themselves, represents himself and not the Mariavite Church. Besides, Bonnet was consecrated, as far as I know, by Archbishop Jean Marie Prevost, who received his Holy Orders from Bishop Paul Marie Marc Fâtome. The formation of organisations described as Mariavite, uninfluenced by Plock and Felicjanów, begins with Archbishop Prevost. There have been no pro-ecumenical proceedings employed by the heterodox party concerning Polish Mariavite organisations. The Catholic Mariavite Church in France, Morocco, or Argentine, as well as various Gnostic Churches strive to prove that they have received apostolic succession from rightful communities. A bishop calling himself ‘a Mariavite’ is not necessarily a Mariavite in the Plock or Felicjanów meaning, as the fundamental question is: does he know and accept Mateczka’s visions? Without visions there is no Mariavitism. In other words, I believe the succession gained is mere a means of manipulative nature. The consecrator’s doctrine has no significance, as only the very fact of being consecrated values. Note that it is an application of the *ex opere operandi*, perceived by Mariavites and Old Catholics as erroneous to great extent. Mariavites themselves definitely distance themselves from those who claim their Mariavite origin, while not being united with Plock or Felicjanów, thus creating a certain kind of ‘excommunication.’ The fact that some bishops have rejected the Mariavite doc-

trine does not make Mariavites share their views. Likewise, one could attempt to place an equal sign between Lutheranism and Mariavitism, claiming insignificance of the fact, that Luther proclaimed his thesis long before the Council of Trident, and Mariavites – after the First Vatican Council” (in a letter from Mames; author’s collection).

An interview with Philippe Pissier (a French poet, a member of the French fraction of O. T. O. and a bishop of the Apostolic Gnostic Church), published in the magazine *Wiedza Tajemna*, provides further interesting insights into the subject of the existence of the Apostolic Gnostic Church in Poland: “I have not heard anything about the Apostolic Gnostic Church having connections in Poland. However, a branch of the original Gnostic Church, the so-called Galician Catholic Church, did. In 1909, the Archbishop of Utrecht, Master Gul, consecrated in the Saint Gertrude’s Cathedral a Mariavite, Michał Kowalski, for Chief Archbishop of Felicjanów. Many years ago, in 1938 Kowalski ordained master Marc Fâtome as Mariavite bishop of Nantes” (*Seks, Polityka i Okultyzm* 1999: 51).

Rafał Prinke considers Bishop H. N. Maas (1918–1992) the key figure of the Mariavite succession, stating that “having consecrated many bishops, Maas converted to Mormonism, however, soon he became excluded. Yet, he was the one who consecrated Wojciechowski, as otherwise after the schism Felicjanów would have lost the apostolic succession. On the other hand, Maas is told to have also consecrated Dieter Heikaus (Set-Horus) of Ordo Saturni, the leader of the Gnostic Catholic Church in Germany and, additionally, a history and religion teacher in high school. The information was given by König, although it is questionable, as König might have told that after Maas died. I have once written to the German Mariavites asking for the list of all bishops consecrated by Maas, but they replied that no such information shall be given” (in a letter from Prinke; author’s collection).

Therefore, it should be emphasised that no irrefutable written evidences of Martinist or Gnostic influence on the Mariavitism exist,³⁰ or that I have not

29 There are two fundamental concepts of the term “Gnosis.” According to the first, “Gnosis” is a religious-philosophical trend emphasising “cognition” as the most certain way to salvation. In the early Christian times this tendency has shaped many sects called altogether as Gnosticism. The second concept considers every religion-focused trend appealing to “cognition” as the most certain soteriological way, independently of the time of emergence. In such wider concept various phenomena of para-religious character may be regarded as Gnostic, e.g., magic, shamanism, alchemy, some religious systems of the Far East (Taoism, Hinduism), Judaic, Christian, and Islamic mysticism, initiatory circle of the Holy Grail, Knights Templar, Rosicrucian groups, theosophy, anthroposophy, the occult, etc. (Hoffman to appear).

30 In reply for a question concerning links between Mariavites and Martinists, a researcher in this field, Pasek, states, “dear Sir, having familiarised myself with the text you have sent me, I warn you against putting forward a hypothesis concerning Mariavites-Martinists relationship on the basis of reforms introduced by Bishop Kowalski. Yet, there is nothing more certain. Accusations of Satanism in the press at that time were a mere attempt to discredit the organisation in the eyes of society, and the violation of morality seems to me too poor an ‘evidence’ of the inconclusive force of persuasion. Thus, I recommend caution in putting forward thesis of this sort. You do not possess any inevitable written proof, and traces

managed to reach to them.³¹ The nature of eventual inspirations concerning the relation between Czyński and Kowalski, which could have resulted in radical changes in the organisation (the introduction of sexual motives), remains a supposition.³²

Thus emerges a new, vastly elusive and subtle kind of guideline, a “lineage” associated with the sex sphere: Crowley – Czyński – Kowalski. Far apart from the autocratic manner of governing the church,³³ aforementioned “lewd acts” performed allegedly by Kowalski and the “law of the first night” come into existence in the Mariavite circles. The aforementioned trial records indeed were intentionally lost, however, Kowalski himself was to claim to be “not entirely innocent,” and other sources (related to Kowalski’s tradition) refer to him as “The

Sword of Sensuality” (Pasek 1991: 55). It had to be a matter of great importance and difficulty that led to the schism in 1935 (s. fn. 17). Such divisions caused by sex (more specifically: sex magic) occurred also in O. T. O. (on account of A. Crowley) and the Martinist Order in Poland (because of Czyński). Possibly, Crowley’s role and his influence on various circles in the first decades of the 20th century, though not necessarily direct in their character, were more consequential than it is widely believed. His ideas, especially those concerned with sex magic, presumably understood in a more simplified or even primitive way (as a greater sexual freedom) gained great popularity, spreading in a manner typical of weeds.

As for other possible relations between Mariavism and Martinism, the Gnostic Church seems to be the only sphere shared by all of these organisations.³⁴ In April 1913, the Highest Council of the

are definitely not enough, as even traces are doubtful” (in a letter from Pasek; author’s collection). A Catholic esoterism researcher, the priest A. Zwoliński, writes in a similar tone, “unfortunately, no certain information on the bond between Mariavites and the Gnostic Church is in my possession. Any accusations of esoteric connections and relationships with Masonry may be exaggerated or situated solely on facts concerning individuals, and not the doctrine. It is important not to exaggerate in interpreting these details” (in a letter from Zwoliński; author’s collection). I have been hesitating for a long time whether to incorporate this fragment in the article. A need of further discussion (if such will take place) with people researching this subject prevailed.

31 I had access to, e.g., the article “Masoni i mariawityzm” (Masons and Mariavitism) by M. Nitecki in the *Gazeta Warszawska Poranna* (September 19th, 1927). The title does not suggest much, and apart from the statement: “in consideration of powerful protection Mariavites received from the Polish Masonry” there is nothing more. There are neither names nor unquestionable evidence of actual existence of connections as suggested in the title. Likewise, the article “Afera satanistów zatacza coraz szersze kręgi” – “Mariawici a Martyniści” (Satanic Affair Spreading further – Mariavites and Martinists) provides no more than a trace: “Finally, it should be mentioned that Martinists had connections with Mariavites, a sect told to celebrate the ‘black mass’ behind the high altar in their church in Płock” (*Afera satanistów zatacza coraz szersze kręgi* 1930r.).

32 As an expert in Polish esoterism of those times, Wotowski (1928: 15) states, “the theory of gnosticism is worth more attention, as one who comprehends it would perfectly understand origins of all secret sects and their organisations. As shown below, Martinism is nothing more than an extension of gnosticism; among sects deriving from the Catholic Church, Mariavitism is the most congenial contemporarily, its dogmas being modified sometimes according to Kozłowska’s teachings, sometimes according to ‘pope’ Kowalski’s.”

33 In 2009, a Hieroglyphic Gnostic Congregation (Ecclesia Gnostica Hieroglyphica) was created. On the website <<http://gnosisaeterna.org/?act=page&id=167>> [data from 2009] in a text concerning apostolic succession, the origin of the bishops’ line begins with J. M. M. Kowalski. Prinke remarks, “it is a line of Michael Bertiaux (poorly oriented author incorrectly forms the feminine gender of the name ‘Utrecht’), from which only Willmott-Newman had occultist ‘connections’” (in a letter from Prinke; author’s collection).

34 “The Catholic Church of the ancient and Gnostic rite (commonly referred to as the Gnostic Church or the Neo-Gnostic Church), a continuation of a medieval sect of Albigenses, created (or, as it claims, unified) in 1890 in France, had numerous personal relations with the new Martinist movement. The impeller and creator of the depicted organisation, Jules Doinel, titling himself the Gnostic patriarch Valentine II, was a member of the Council of the Great Orient de France and an archivist of the Loire department. The Gnostic Church accepted the dogma of emanation (conflicting with the Catholic dogma of God the Creator of the World) and the dogma of salvation through science (conflicting with the dogma of salvation through faith). In 1893 a synod of the Gnostic Church was established along with numerous bishoprics and its hierarchy was arranged” (Hass 1982: 413f.).

Jules Doinel (1842–1903) was a Mason and a spiritualist. In 1888 he had a vision of the “aeon of Jesus” who appointed him founder of the Gnostic Church. In 1890 Doinel became the patriarch of the Gnostic Church in France (L’Église Gnostique de France), taking the name of Tau Valentine II. One of the first bishops to be consecrated in the Gnostic Church was Gerard Encausse. In 1890 Doinel became a member of the Martinist Order. There were three levels of membership in the church: the High Priesthood consisting of pairs of male bishops and female “sofias” responsible for administration; the Lower Priesthood consisting of deacons and nuns responsible for the daily activity of the church; and the third level consisting of the faithful. In 1895 Doinel experienced a crisis of faith that led him to resigning from his Church and to reconverting to Catholicism. Eventually, he returned again to the Gnostic Church, restoring his title of bishop in 1900 and resigning from the leadership. Jean Bricaud, consecrated in 1901, is yet another significant person of this organisation, playing substantial role in reforming the Gnostic Church of France into a more modern rite of the Universal Gnostic Church (Église Gnostique Universelle), established in 1907. Four years later it was officially acknowledged as the Church of the Martinist Order. In 1926 one of Doinel’s successors in the Gnostic Church of France recognized Bricaud’s Universal Gnostic Church. Both aforementioned gnostic churches are strongly bonded with O. T. O. Encausse and Reuss exchanged licences in 1908; as a result, Papus obtained the right to create the High Council of the Memphis-Misraim Rite in France and Reuss gained the

Common Gnostic Church High Synod made Czyński a legate in Russia and Poland.³⁵ “The Common Gnostic Church of Doinel and Fabre des Esarts gave rise, in some measure inadvertently, to the Catholic Gnostic Church affiliated with O. T. O. (Ordo Templi Orientis), that is the Order of the Temple of the East, or the Order of Oriental Templars. An occultist and an entrepreneur Theodor Reuss, a former leader of O. T. O. visited patriarchs in Paris in order to provide them with Masonic degrees of initiation, according to his right. In return, Parisian Gnostics appointed Reuss a patriarch, enabling this dubious person to establish later the Catholic Gnostic Church, connected with Aleister Crowley” (Cavendish 1992: 82).

The Mariavite Church was accused of all kinds of evil, as well as of relations with Masonry and esoterism, as presented, *inter alia*, in the popular text below, taken from Chelmiński’s book (1936: 135), “the direct character of relations between Mariavites and Masonry is clearly stated by the Masonic writer Vincenzo Soro ‘La Chiesa del Paracletto’ (‘Church of the Holy Spirit’), Todi (Italy), 1922, 367.” Unfortunately, a more detailed description of these relations is nowhere to be found, although the sentence above appears in five books. An excerpt of a certain text is worth quoting here: “Vincenzo Soro, a Martinist and a neo-Gnostic, claims in his book ‘La Chie-

right to establish a branch of the Universal Gnostic Church in Germany (Die Gnostische Katholische Kirche), later incorporated into O. T. O. In 1913 A. Crowley wrote the rite of a ‘gnostic mass,’ whereas the previous name ‘Die Gnostische Katholische Kirche’ was replaced by ‘Gnostica Ecclesia Catholica’” (Hill 2009: 72f.). Wotowski (1930: 19) depicts the situation in the Polish branch of the Universal Gnostic Church, functioning mainly in Warsaw, “despite Warsaw having both a Gnostic chapel and a Gnostic bishop, the sect is declining and has no perspective for further development. The tradition that has lasted ages recently lacks followers.”

35 “Par décision du Suprême Conseil de l’Ordre Martiniste et du Suprême Conseil de l’Église Gnostique Universelle, en date du 25 avril 1913, le T. III. F. Punar Bhava (Czyński Czesław), 33.90.96.VII Souverain Délégué Général de l’O. M. en Russie, Grand Post Master, Grand Délégué Général du Rite Espagnol en Russie, a été nommé LEGAT de l’Église Gnostique Universelle en Russie, auprès de tous les Rites Mariavites et Ordres Initiatiques affiliés qu’il représente” (*Mysteria* 1913: 191). It is worth explaining that numbers visible beside Czyński’s name stand for degrees of initiation, as described in detail by Prinke in his article “Doktor Punar Bhava i polscy sataniści” (1986: 39), “of all known to me, the oldest document of the Polish Martinists is dated back to 1920 was signed by Jean Bricaud II, the leader of the Order at that time, L. C. de Burzynski, the secretary for Polish affairs, and Punar Bhava. The latter has placed beside his signature following symbols of initiation: 33° – the highest degree of the Scottish Rite freemasonry, 90° – the highest degree of the Misraim rite, 96° – the highest degree of the Memphis rite, VII° – one of the higher degrees of O. T. O.”

sa del Paracletto. Studi sul gnosticismo’ (1922), that J. M. M. Kowalski, the archbishop primate of the Free Polish Church (of the Mariavite Rite) joined his sect with the ‘Common Gnostic Church’ under the ‘gnostic patriarch’ John II [<http://hamburgpol.w.interia.pl/mariawityzm1.htm>] (05. 12. 2012)]. John II, that is Jean Bricaud, a friend of Papus and his successor, who personally consecrated him to the Gnostic Church, received (most probably) an authentic succession from the Syriac Church and became a ‘pope’”. The text above is quoted according to the website due to inaccessibility of such publication. However, it appeared in 1922 before any doctrinal reform in the Mariavite Church has been introduced. No connection with Kowalski results from this fact.

Lately, I have encountered a highly intriguing text composed by a historian of the Institute of National Remembrance, investigating the anti-Masonic and anti-esoteric activity of the Security Service in the People’s Republic of Poland (Służba Bezpieczeństwa). Despite dealing with a yet different period (the 1960s), it provides a highly absorbing clue: “in order to attract a more significant number of members or supporters, in September 1958 and August 1959 Znamierowski³⁶ visited the Mariavite Bishop Waclaw (Maria) Bartłomiej Przysiecki in Płock, where, as he expressed, he had made acquaintance with a group of very interesting people. On September 17th, 1958 in Warsaw, a meeting with some of the most prominent occultists-esotericists took place, namely with Jabłoński, Zawada, Jasiowicz, Gimbutt, and an unknown person referred to by the aforementioned as “a gentleman from the Ministry” (Kaczmarek 2004: 213). Interesting is, that an esotericist was searching for connections (esoteric connections, must be presumed) in the high authorities of the Mariavite Church, which is confirmed by a member of the “Służba Bezpieczeństwa” intelligence. What is even more interesting, one of the participants at the later meeting was Eugeniusz Jasiewicz, a direct apprentice of Martinist Czyński.

It ought to be emphasised once more that in this article the subject of the bond between Mariavites and Martinists or Gnosticism is a mere attempt to reveal and explain that problem, occurring every now and then in various publications. Undoubtedly, some traces indicate certain connotations between the high notables of the Mariavite Church, including Kowalski himself, and esoterism. After all, Rud-

36 Jerzy Znamierowski (1895–1992), a Polish esotericist, theosophist, and an anthroposophist; member of Le Droit Humain Lodge and of the Polish Theosophical Society.

nicki states, that the interest in esoterism (even in the black) among bishops was intended to unveil its threats. I admit to have never read an article written by, e.g., Kowalski, in which he would depict the baleful influence of esoterism, yet this proves nothing.

A vital fact is, that Mateczka Kozłowska's revelations clearly define Mariavites' attitude to Masons: "Then the Lord explained to me, that He established the Congregation against Masonry, and against them the Congregation should fight" (2002: 29 f.). Evidently, Mariavites at least ought to avoid any relations with Masonic organisations, but in fact, they do not. Rudnicki describes the Mariavites' position on this issue in his article "Masoneria a Mariawityzm" (2007), where an information on Masons' attempts to infiltrate the Mariavite Congregation is revealed.³⁷ Rudnicki himself received several offers to join Masonry, as well as one of the Masons, fascinated by the beauty of Mariavite rites, attempted to become a priest of this organisation (his name was Jerzy Znamierowski – author's note). Yet, as Rudnicki (2007) rationally and insightfully remarks, "if we aimed to destroy Masonry, we would not only be ungrateful [with respect to the aid Mariavites received from the American Masonry – author's note], but also guilty of damaging those who brought, bring today and will bring in the future a credit to the brotherhood of nations and religions."

Admittedly, the Mariavite mission in the U.S.A. did collaborate with the local Masonry, as well as some of the "secret societies" were consecrated (already excluded from the Mariavite Church). Still, there is no direct evidence of the Mariavite theological doctrine being under influence of esoterism, Gnosis or Martinism, as the very fact of a contact existing between the higher clergy and certain organisations propagating Hermeticism or Gnosis does not determine any definite verdict. On the other hand, it is very unlikely that repeatedly occurring contacts between Mariavites and one of the Gnostic Churches are thoroughly imaginary.

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Zwei Neuerscheinungen zur existenzialistischen Religionsethnologie Ernesto de Martinos

Ein Rezensionenartikel

Ulrich van Loyen

I

Welche Ressourcen haben wir, wenn jeglicher kulturell vermittelter Sinn ausfällt? So könnte man die Grundfrage des 1908 in Neapel geborenen und 1965 in Rom gestorbenen Ethnologen, Kulturphilosophen und Religionshistorikers Ernesto de Martino umschreiben. Bereits während des Zweiten Weltkrieges stellte er *die Frage*, die in Deutschland zur "Stunde Null" herangezogen werden sollte, um in vielerlei Weise, also durchaus beredt, unbeantwortet zu bleiben – und die aktuell geblieben ist bis auf den heutigen Tag.

Der Umstand, dass Ernesto de Martino trotz randständiger Themen in einer randständigen Wissenschaftskultur bis heute zu Debatten anregt, muss mit jener Leidenschaft zusammenhängen, die in der Frage nach den Bedingungen der Möglichkeit von Zivilisation steckt, aber auch mit dem Versprechen, dass, hat man diese Bedingungen einmal aufgedeckt, Geschichte neu "gemacht" werden könne. Wobei, auch dies gehört zu den "de-martinianischen" Themen, das Auffinden dieser kulturellen Bedingungen eben keinesfalls vor dem Hintergrund einer Tabula rasa stattfindet, sondern einen je eigenen, kulturspezifischen Zugriff auf die, wenn man so möchte, transzendente Geschichte der eigenen Kultur markiert. In diesem Sinn ist es unmöglich, diese Transzendentalien einer rubrizierenden Ordnung einzuverleiben: am Anfang einer Zivilisation steht nichts Distinktes wie "Religion" oder "Recht" oder auch nur der "Krieg" als "Vater aller Dinge", am Anfang steht aber immerhin etwas Heroisches, nämlich die Fähigkeit, einen Unterschied zu machen zwischen sich und der Außenwelt, d. h. die Krise zu überwinden, die in der Vernichtung von Gegenwart und Gegenwärtigkeit besteht. "La crisi della presenza" nannte Ernesto de Martino ein heuristisches Konzept, das er vor allem als "Armchair Anthropologist" des zirkumpolaren Schamanismus entwickelte, bevor er es in der Nachkriegszeit anhand seiner Exkursionen in das Innere der italienischen Halbinsel operationalisierte (mit den drei größeren Studien: "Morte e pianto rituale", 1958; "Sud