

Preface

We have discussed ritual between us for a long time—Don often from his suspicions of the canonical understanding of ritual as representation, Galina through her studies of healing and therapeutic efficacy. Within the intellectual and ethnographic depths, so often murky with presumptions of authoritative comprehension, into which we dived in search of touchstones, made slippery by their overlong immersion in scholarship, we frequently felt that something crucial was missing from how ritual was and is formulated in scholarly discourse. Yet coming up to the surface—waves and wavelets, always in motion—we could plainly see the lack of attention given to the interior organization of ritual. No touchstones or structures, but a plenitude of dynamics. From this emerged the thought of ritual in its own right, in all its uncertainties and complexities. When Kingsley Garbett of *Social Analysis* suggested that we edit a volume on ritual, we recognized the opportunity to pursue these thoughts and invited colleagues to take up the challenge of ritual in its own right.

Our warm thanks to the contributors, who responded with creativity, flexibility, and good humor. Though we have made no formal dedication of the volume, we do offer it back to them, as a token of our appreciation of their efforts to navigate in uncharted waters. Our thanks, no less, to Kingsley, to Marion Berghahn and Vivian Berghahn for their unstinting encouragement and support, to Shawn Kendrick, a gem of an editor with an eagle's eye for grammar and the sensibilities of a muse, and to Collegium Budapest Institute for Advanced Study, where, during a few days of discussion, we raised our heads from the depths and breathed.

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