

RENODNOZ

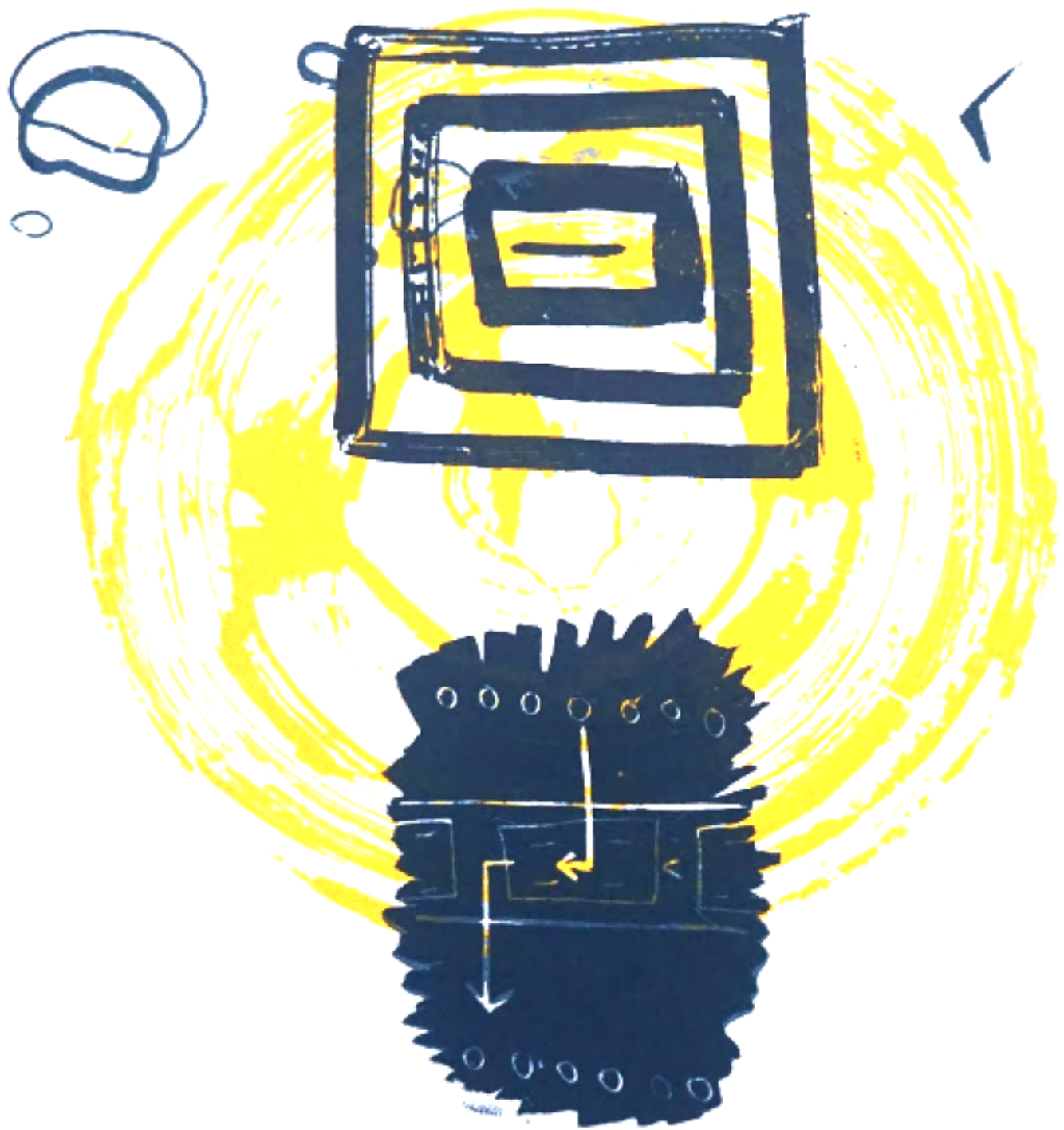




Figure 1. Still from Anthony Asquith's *Underground* (1928)

We have looked out and seen the other, with a romantic vision of alterity we create magic and ritual. However, with a twist of perspective and a polished mirror we can see ourselves as the tribesmen of the West and we can locate magic and ritual in the most mundane of our practices.

The Renodnol have a historical, political and mythological informed and individualised sense of self. After describing the Renodnol cultural context I use ethnographic fieldnotes to describe the Renodnol's Masked Movement Ritual. Having lived amongst the natives for some time, I consider how the ritual challenges the Renodnol sense of self and we shall see how superstition and sacred practice govern the daily activity.

To understand the sacred practice I use Arnold Van Gennep's sophisticated three stage model of ritual structure and Victor Turner's description of liminality and communitas to understand social collectivity during the ritual process. I demonstrate how participants' sense of self changes throughout the ritual and I briefly consider the role of Polk-a' masks for the religious ceremony. Through the demonstration of the Renodnols' spectacular daily practices I show how an analysis of the Renodnol Tribe can significantly contribute to Anthropological¹ inquiry.

¹ The academic discipline of Anthropology seeks to understand human culture and mankind: 'From the Greek anthropos ("human") and logia ("study"), seeks to understand mankind.(Online: *About Anthropology - University at Albany-SUNY*, 2019)

Historical and Political Structure

First discovered in 1863, the small Renodnol territory covers 402 Km² and it has a moderate population of 4630². The land is situated on the South East Coast between the Fenn-a-Flats to its North and home of the Sex-yi Sus to the South. Despite having neighbours, the Renodnol refuse to recognise civilisation outside of their lands.

The diversity of the Renodnol people impresses me, never before have I seen such a rich variety of languages used in such a small area. The Renodnol Tribesman live in close quarters, in densely populated neighbourhoods and small segmented territories. Despite their living arrangements, the Renodnol rarely extend friendly gestures to one another and this behaviour may be due to lingual differences however I believe it has routes in the society's historico-cultural individualism³. The Renodnol's sense of self is fundamentally distinct, separate and other from the world; their sense of self is highly individualistic. Whilst theorists dispute the origins of modern individualism; for an overview see: Carrithers, Collins and Lukes, (1985) they agree that three main components define the individualist ideology: '(i) the subordination of the goals of the collectivities to individual goals, (ii) a sense of independence, and (iii) lack of concern for others.' (Hui and Triandis, 1986). The individualist seeks self interest, self knowledge and prioritizes individual privacy. With these three characteristics I frame the Renodnol's traditional sense of self.

When speaking of *The Renodnol* as individualists, I speak generally about members of the Renondnol Tribe. I have spent much time with the natives so that with confidence I recognise their individualistic behaviour patterns interpersonally and on a larger scale.

² The number of Renodnol is abstracted from various data information of passenger commutes on the ritual vessels: There are '5 million passenger journeys per day. With 543 trains moving around the Capital.' (5million / 18 (Number of hours the tube runs on a weekday))/60 (minutes in an hour)= 4,630 passenger journeys in a minute on the tube(Rounded up). This final number is not mathematically accurate, rather it is an abstraction to get a smaller population of people that live amongst the Renodnol tribe for the purpose of this exploration. (Online: Matters, 2019)

³ Individualism refers to a particular historico-cultural conceptualization of the person or self, indicating notions of the ultimate value and dignity of the human individual, his or her moral and intellectual autonomy, rationality and self-knowledge ... the right to privacy and self-development (Online: *Individualism (Anthropology)*, 2019)

On a larger scale, Renodnols express their sense of individualism politically, economically and socially as they divorce themselves from outsiders. Renodnol and its surrounding islands have had a fairly stable political climate with oppositional communities existing under a single unified political system since 1973. However, in 2016 when the Renodnol saw a slow collapse in the country's political leadership; the Renodnol announced that the rest of the country was unfit to have an opinion; having no political or economic sense. Following the crumble of political leadership, the Renodnol refused all trade, travel and personal relationships with non-members of the Renodnol clan; declaring their lands as separate and independent. Internally, group fissions⁴ have also occurred with increasing hostility between groups expressed through open warfare. Political and social unrest has seen an increase of distrust in relationships on the macro and micro levels of the Renodnol society, it can be cited that political and economic factors that encourage contemporary individualist mentalities are to blame for causing this dissonance.

Renodnol's political expression of its individualistic beliefs paired with its verbal expressions support a sense of cultural individualism. The Renodnol believe that their land is the most important place on the planet. Informants state: 'there is nothing of value outside of Renodnol territory'. And another claimed: 'I wanted to live somewhere, be someone and do something, nothing exists outside the land of the Renodnol' (Taken from fieldnotes, January 2019). The Renodnol value their territory as being the most important place on the planet, it is: 'the center of the universe' (Fieldnotes, 2019). The Renodnol claim to live in the world's cultural capital (*Culture of Renodnol*, 2019). Sentiments expressed mirror Renodnols' elevated sense of self and indicate their cultural individualist mentalities.

In addition to historically and political driven individualised conceptions of the self, Renodnol mythology can also be considered.

⁴ Thanks goes to E. E. Evans-Pritchard who gives a description of political systems and their processes of: segmentation, Fusion, Fission. Segmentation describes different political groups, fusion describes groups coming together, fission details groups dividing, (Evans-Pritchard, 1940)

Mythology

In conversations with the native, they excitedly share their creation myths:

Lord Logicio, son of the Enlightened Man, came to to the Renodnol whilst he slept. In his dreams; The Lord gave the Renodnols a mirror so that he could look upon himself and see all truth revealed in full light: his own handsome nature; so bright, beautiful and powerful. In that moment he became struck by his own being, slapped by his very own thought: 'I think therefore I am'⁵ he uttered in confirmation of his own greatness. With greatness he proclaimed purpose on earth:

The Enlightened one would spend a thousand years freeing and transforming all beast from animality to humanity, teaching them how to walk and talk. In his time, he gave out gifts; medicines created with logic and reason, to the rest of the world. The gifts saved the Others from thousands of years of pain, suffering, error and shame. By carving Others into himself he relinquished them from insufferable jealousy and rage.

The Renodnol believe Lord Logicio gave them the power and thus a right to rule. It is thanks to these myths that we start to receive an accurate and consummate picture of the Renodnol man himself.

The Renodnol's perspective, having been informed by this historical, political and mythological context went forth into the world readily engaging in and imposing a hierarchical relationship upon it. They saw themselves as incontestably superior and thus acted accordingly. The Renodnol's notion of self is that of being a centralised subject: a unified, singular, transcendent and individualistic being. Indeed, it is easy

⁵ Descartes, Rene. (1637) originally wrote 'Cogito ergo sum'. His writing has influenced the development of Western reasoning, science and is the foundations and making of Renodnol culture. (Descartes: 'I Think Therefore I Am' | Chapter 7: Knowledge and Learning | New Learning | New Learning, 2019)

to observe the Renodnol's highly individualised⁶ sense of self and with this context I move to observe the Renodnol's daily ritual practice.

⁶ The Renodnol Myth is repeated as a way of reflecting upon the 17th and 18th centuries' Enlightenment period: an ideology that celebrated 'reason' and rationality in opposition to the 'irrational': magic and ceremony. The enlightenment's ideology legitimised colonial encounters in the name of liberty and science lands were conquered and native men were taught the ways of civilisation as they were 'freed' of superstition and magical thinking. However, this exploration of the Renodnol ritual shows the hypocrisies and contradictions of the Renodnol as they too are subject to superstition.

Ritual

In *The Rites of Passage* (1908) Van Gennep describes the three phases of ritual: First, the Preliminary phase: one of separation and metaphorical death as you leave normal society behind and participants enter the ritual ground. The second 'liminal' stage where prolonged ritual activity occurs: where liminality refers to the 'inbetween' status of: process, objects and things: it is neither one nor the other, it is the middle part of the process or it is at the transitional point. I speak of the liminal stage of ritual (middle section of ritual) and the liminal participants or entities (people participating in ritual whose identity is not what it was prior to ritual, nor is it yet what it will be after the ritual) liminality in general has an ambiguous quality. Finally, the postliminal stage: reincorporation of the participant to society. The model serves as a useful structure for understanding the rituals sequence of events. I propose that: As the Renodnol passes through these stages of ritual, the participants identity transitions from being an individual to being part of a collective. The ritual process challenges the Renodnol's individualism as they become part of a collective and submissive to authority, additionally with an increasing sense of vulnerability their individualistic sense of self becomes disturbed. They use masks to protect themselves from dangerous external forces and to hold on to their precious sense of individuality.

Masked Movement Ritual

(Fieldnotes)

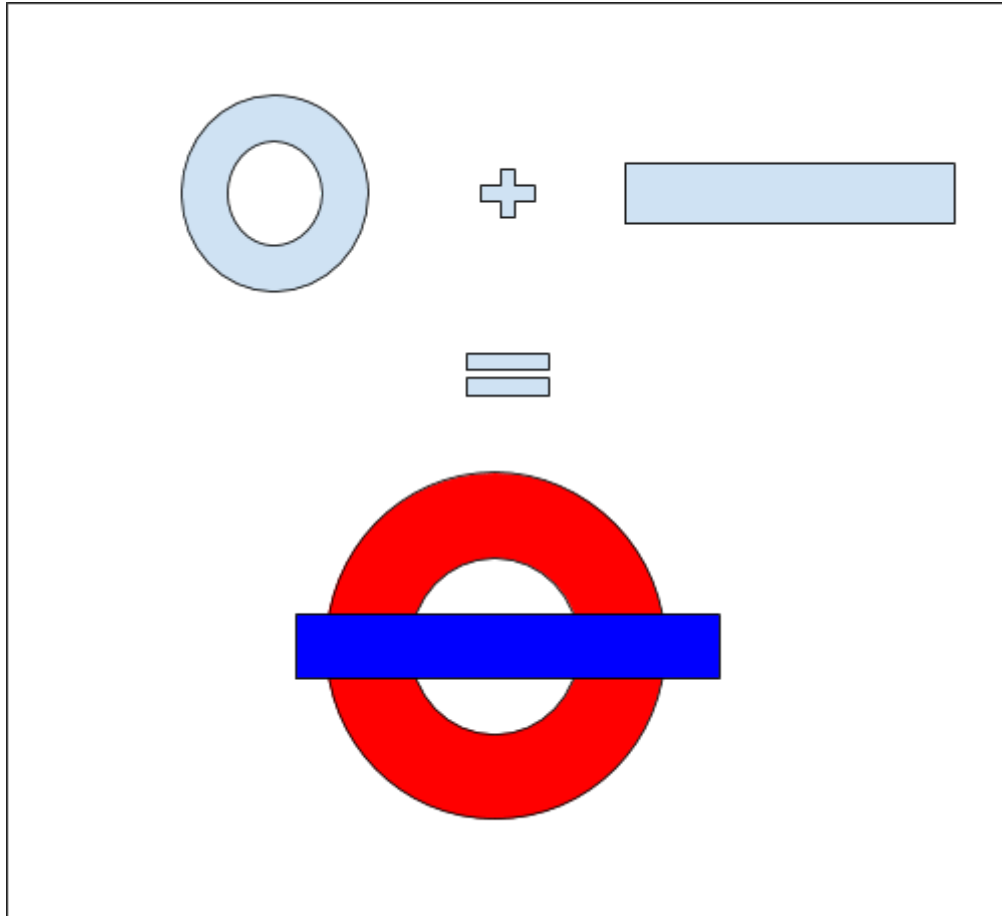


Figure 2: Geometric symbols found at the ritual site

Preliminal phase:

The Renodnol participate in a Morning Masked Movement Ritual 5-7 days a week. The Renodnol perform the MMR between 6.30 am and 9.30 am. Despite busy pathways, the participants leave their houses and walk independently for 2- 20 minutes (they walk in silence and only come within close contact at the very boundaries of the ceremonial space). Geometrical symbols (Figure 2) markate the entrances and exits to the ritual site. Upon entering, the Renodnol fix on their ceremonial masks. These hyper-realistic masks resemble their own faces. Next, the Renodnol pull out a magic item that resembles a salt-water bivalve molluscs; it is a

key like object, which they place onto a lock. Whilst placing the key, the tribesman honour the gods by giving substantial monetary gifts. If successful⁷, the ceremonial gates flick open and the Renodnol hurries through, entering the ritual space. Onsite, Renodnol behaviour adapts: physical space between participants reduces and they walk and stand much closer together.

In preliminary phases of ritual, the Renodnol are physically separated from normal society and they become part of a *communitas* under the rule of ritual authority. Turner defines *communitas* as a: 'community, or even communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders' (1995, 96). He describes how participants: 'behavior is normally passive or humble; they must obey their instructors implicitly, and accept arbitrary punishment without complaint.' (1995:95) Participation within a community and submitting to rules of a greater authority challenges a sense of individualism.

Physical space and legal rules bind the Renodnol into a *communitas* and the process disturbs the Renodnol's individualism. Rules of the MMR that bind the *communitas* can be found in a 40 page published document called: 'Conditions of Carriage'⁸, written by the ritual Elders. In the document Elders state: when entering the site; 'you (The Renodnol) enter into a legal agreement with Us (the unseen Elder)' (pp 2, 2019). The document's text stipulates the binding rules of the ritual and as the participants uphold the rules, they support the Elders authority and they omit their own superiority. By following rules: the Renodnol transition from independence to docility and subordination. The rules and their obedience demonstrate how the Renodnol transitions from prioritising their own goals and independence to submitting to sacred authority as they accept their place amongst a collective whole.

⁷ Sometimes Renodnol's keys do not work, in which case they have to walk to alter on the external walls of the ritual site and give prayers and gifts to holy men in exchange for a working key

⁸ The document is called: 'Renodnol Conditions of Carriage - Bus and Underground Services' and can be found here: <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/tfl-conditions-of-carriage.pdf>

Renodnol ASSEMBLY

The Future Tube Priorities Investigative Committee

Mind the gap – between what **Renodnol** want
and what **Renodnol** get
January 2003



Figure 3: Front page of the Renodnol Assembly Report on Ritual Priorities

As part of a group, the Renodnol's individual goals match the needs and goals of the authority and the collective: According to the Renodnol Assembly report, data found that individual and collective goals are as follows:

High Vessel⁹ frequencies

Reduce vessel delays

High levels of safety and security within the ritual site ¹⁰

To ensure these shared goals are met the Renodnol submit to the rules of the Elder Us; their behaviour adapts to ensure societal goals are met. Despite Renodnol cultural conception of the self as an individual we see how the ritual process starts to erode individual goals, as ultimately goals within the ritual are shared amongst all participants.

As well as sharing goals, liminal entities lose a sense of individuality as activity becomes uniform and indistinguishable from others. All Renodnol enter the space and perform the same actions: put on their masks, use their key, descend stairs and so on. Uniform action in the repetitive daily practice undermines the participants sense of individuality, throwing the Renodnol into existential turmoil.

Existential turmoil expresses itself symptomatically, with Renodnol reporting increasing levels of stress and anxiety throughout the ritual process. The Renodnol embody their own experiences yet with melancholy they recognise their anonymous role within a structure: the repetitive, cyclical nature of the ritual diminishes the uniqueness of their individual experience. On the other hand, some Renodnol report feelings of comfort and relief from the ritual process as they enjoy being released from the pressures of choice: however, this sentiment also indicates the dissolution of individualism. The Renodnol and elders expect uniform activity within the ritual context and they perceive independent or selfish behaviour as a threat.

From fear of threatening behaviour MMR's elders actively look out for irregular and non-conformist behaviours. Ritual Elders encourage the Renodnol to: 'Report any suspicious behaviour to a committee elder'. Fear and suspicion aroused by individualistic behaviour requires action and investigation.

Suspicion and fear indicate the political and economic tension mentioned earlier; Discomfort and fear feeds superstitious and magical thinking about the underworld ceremonial ground. The ritualistic space challenges and threatens the Renodnol

⁹ Participants commonly call vessels 'tubes' - perhaps for their tubular shape.

¹⁰ Assembly report found at: (*The Future Tube Priorities Investigative Committee: Mind the gap ñ between what Renodnols want and what Renodnols get January 2003, 2003*)

notions of sense of self as powerful, strong and independent as they experience higher levels of vulnerability and insecurity.

Liminal Phase:

Tribesman enter the underworld: a hot, humid and highly polluted environment; a manifestation of hell on earth.

After passing through the gates, the tribesman start their descent of up to 58.5 meters, via large staircases and moving platforms into the ground. Many informants I speak to describe the underground as 'hell'-referencing various cultural and religious stories; they qualify their descriptions with: 'it's hot and polluted down here'¹¹. In addition to the climate many Renodnol reference the maze's disorientating environment. Despite the Renodnols' regular attendance in the space, the Renodnol uses signs and maps to navigate the series of connecting tunnels and stairs.

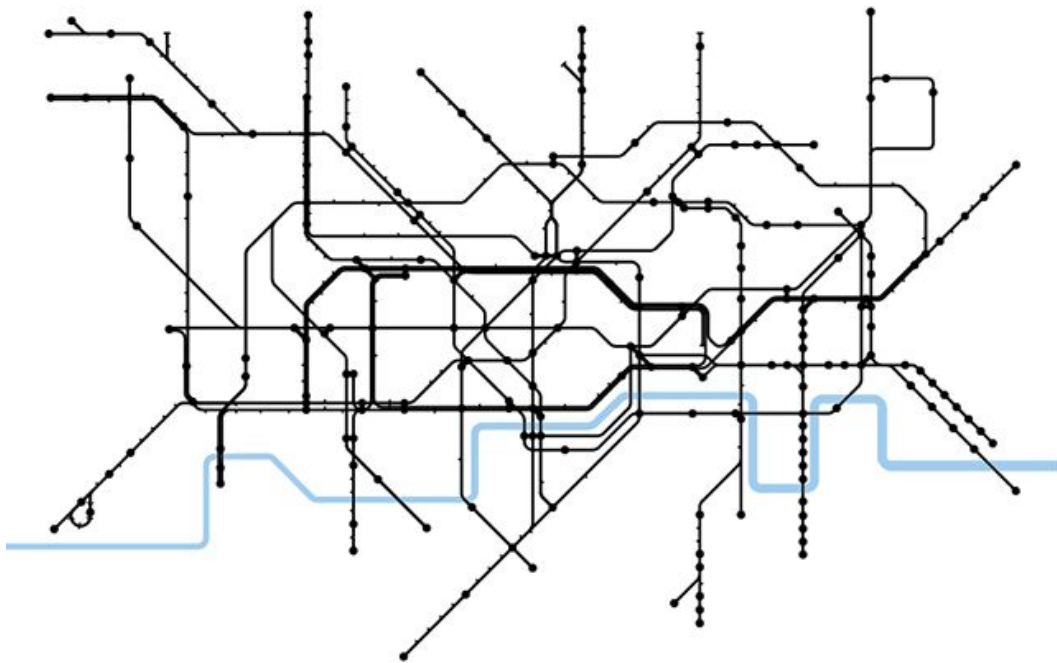


Figure 4: Shows a diagram of the Ceremonial complex

Spatially, the complex system of the underground confuses, disorientates and induces anxiety in the Renodnol, they rely on maps, signs and other people to guide their way through. Disorientation and confusion leads participants to feel out of control and scared, made to feel vulnerable by their surroundings. These emotional responses, induced by anxiety cause the Renodnol's to experience a decreased

¹¹ Tests recorded an average of 492 micrograms (of particulate matter-pollution) per cubic metre ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) of air on the station's platforms, compared with an annual average of 16 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ from a roadside monitoring site. (*Air quality on Tube '30 times worse than congested roads above'*, 2019)

sense of the powerful and enlightened selves they recognise themselves to be, they instead feel vulnerable and susceptible to superstitious thinking.

Following paths the participants make their way to long narrow platforms (3 meters wide, 134 meters long). Large holes run along the edge of the platforms and enter into tunnels approximately 3.5 meters in diameter. The participants are regularly reminded of the danger of the holes: 'mind the gap' the elders of the ritual chant. Whilst it is impossible to predict the fate of someone who falls into the gap, historical data suggests that the participant will die a bloody and gruesome death. It has been reported that Renodnol in trance like states throw themselves into the gaps- the Renodnol believe that these people are possessed by dark spirits. When asked about the gaps, The Renodnol report feelings of unease and discomfort; one male informant says: 'in the underworld: down here, spirits possess you, you do things to hurt yourself and others and you are very weak against demons who attack'. In conversation, the Renodnol suggest that in the Underground, only a thin boundary separates life from death.

The ritual challenges the Renodnol's powerful notion of the self as the liminal environment highlights human fragility and vulnerability. Indeed one informant wrote; 'We go underground to die, but also to be reborn, to emerge from the womb of the earth we dread the underground, and yet it is our first refuge in times of danger; it conceals priceless treasures, alongside toxic waste.' (Willl Hunt, 2019, 27)

In addition to informant statements, historical documents indicate that the underground is both a protective site and dangerously liminal space. Drawings and photographs found in sacred temples depict the underworld's precarious environment and the effect it has on its dwellers:



Figure 5: Image found in Temple Tate, by Henry Moore OM, CH, Tube Shelter Perspective 1941



Figure 6: Archival photograph of a crater outside at the underground site, shortly demonic spirits attacked, underground station on the 11th January 1941.

Figure 5 shows a drawing found in the Tate Temple. Uncanny mounds of ghost like figures are shown cramming into lines along the tunnels. Without physical distinction, the generalised masses indicate the Renodnol's existence as a bundle or collective rather than individuals. The erasure of personal identity indicates the shared state of the mass. The figures appear like ghosts, teetering on the edge of the after life, under the control and power of forces greater and outside of themselves. Depicting the shared experience, or communitas, the pictures illustrate the underground, its claustrophobic nature and how it both offers protection at a dangerous time, whilst also indicating the precarious line between life and death.

Betwix and between life and death the Renodnol move like Zombies throughout the underground tunnels day in day out:

The platforms quickly become crowded with upwards of 300 people. They wait for great moving capsules to appear from the tunnels into the gaps in front of them. 8 moving vessels fill the length of the platform. The participants push into the carriage. In busy times the vessel seats 252 people and a further 1196 participants stand inside. Moments later, the doors to the capsule close and it starts to move with speed into dark tunnels. Lights inside the capsules stay on. The Renodnol share the space within the capsule. During 6.30- 9.30 am they may be forced to stand so closely that body contact is made with all participants in the vicinity. During the length of the second phase of the ritual the Renodnol adhere to a strict social code: the participants avoid eye contact. When I deliberately make eye contact, the Renodnol look quickly away: displaying signs of discomfort (looking around the space, flickering eyes, shuffling movements, rising body temperatures displayed through the reddening of face and flaring nostrils beneath the masks surface). The natives do not exchange words despite proximity, faces are turned away from one another, arms cross over bodies protectively.

As the ceremonial space limits physical space between participants, personal boundaries decrease and participants negotiate their individuality and distance from one another through protective and defensive body communication.

Social code stipulates that the face masks must be worn at all times: the Renodnol fear those that break social code and forget to use their masks. Whilst the Natives are very vague about this point it would seem that the mask offers the native some sort of protection during the ritual process. The native appear guarded and vigilant.

Their hyper-realistic Polka-a' masks straddle the boundary between the animate and inanimate face. The uncanny expressions on the Polka-a' masks disturb the Renodnol

sense of self as the Renodnol question the distinction between what is real and unreal: the masks's realistic likeness dance between dead stillness and a flicker of movement.

The Polk-a' face mask, also known as a Polk-a' Face, maintains particular interpersonal boundaries as the lack of movement deflect interpersonal interactions. The hyper-realist mask has an ambiguous nature: on one level the visual symbol represents the collective unit as it is worn by all participants thus like a uniform it erodes individual identities. Yet the hyper-realistic quality of the mask alludes to the wearers distinction and physical individuality.

The mask is neutral¹² and it carries little or no expression. The Polk-a' masks act like the silicone masks studied by cognitive researchers who studied hyper-realistic masks worn by high-profile criminals, researchers report: 'emotional expressions such as smiles and frowns generally appear muted, and subtle expressions are often lost altogether.' And 'The overall facial impression, at least in extended interactions, is one of blunted animacy' (Sanders et al, 2017, 10). The blunted and muted nature of the mask tip them into the 'uncanny¹³ valley' phenomenon whereby the masks' disturb and repulse the Renodnol's sense of self.

The disturbance caused through the Uncanny phenomenon can be explained through cognitive behavioural research: Dr Nicola Ray, from Manchester Metropolitan University explains: 'Your brain's face-processing network will scrutinise a mask for movement and swiftly detect a lack of life...However, the body wearing the mask moves like a live human, giving your brain the confusing and unsettling impression that you're looking at a moving dead person.' (Dr Ray, 2019) In addition to the unsettling effects of a still face mimicking characteristics of death; still faces disturb sense of self as our own experience is not validated by external sources.

The distressing effect on the unmoving mask can be seen from cognitive behaviour experiments. In 1975, Edward Tronick first presented the "Still Face Experiment" at

¹² Neutral Masks, were first used by Jacques Lecoque at The Theatre du Vieux Columbier to train actors. Unlike the Lecoq masks, The face masks worn by the Renodnol are hyper realistic and resemble those worn by Poker players, hence their name Polk-a' Mask.

¹³ Cultural idol, Mike Kelley developed an understanding of the Uncanny. In sacred papers he writes on the uncanny's disturbing effects: people are confused as to: "whether an apparently animate being is really alive; or conversely, whether a lifeless object might not in fact be animate.". This disturbing feature of the uncanny masks rings particularly true when we recognise the rituals site of rich history of death on the underground and when we consider informants dear of spirits, ghosts, possession and demonic attack.

the Society for Research in Child Development. The experiment shows the distress caused when a mother does not respond or mirror her child; The child first tries to capture the mothers attention and then proceeds to scream and then it tries to get away from the mother who still has an unmoving expression. This is one of the most 'replicated findings in developmental psychology.' (Fulwiler, 2019) The experiment shows the necessity of sharing microexpressions for building up trust and empathy starting from a young age. The experiment demonstrates that humans do not experience a sense of the bounded self from birth but they depend on others to validate their experiences and this continues into adult life.

Shared microexpressions give feedback to perceiver. The perceivers experiences are validated as they see their microexpressions being mirrored by the other. According to research, shared microexpressions indicate to perceivers that others are 'safe' to interact with (Schneider, Hemple and Lynch 2013). As the Renodnol's microexpressions become muted from the Polk-a' mask communication between ritual participants is lost. Lack of communication and unmirrored microexpressions signal to others a level of deception that call onto perceivers to avoid and distrust the Other. As Renodnol wear the mask during the ritual unsettling signs of distrust and deception unnerve them as the masks unsettle and disturb the perceiver.

One interpretation of the role of the Polk-a' mask could be: the uncanny and muted quality of the mask affords the wearer to take part in the ritual relatively undetected as the mask mutes expression and individuality. By this means, the mask acts as a supernatural protection for the wearer.

Opposingly, the mask alienates the wearer from other participants; perhaps the Renodnol use the mask as a tool to avoid and protect themselves from interpersonal interactions if interpersonal interactions are a perceived threat of their own individuality. By wearing a mask the Renodnol protect themselves from the communitas and their sense of the individual is restored.

Whilst a sense of individuality may be restored and protected, research suggests that the masks may also have negative side effects. Researchers suggest that: 'masking inner feelings and inhibited/disingenuous expression- has been found to be associated with social isolation, poor interpersonal functioning, and treatment-resistant internalizing problems (Schneider, Hemple and Lynch 2013). These negative side-effects of isolation and poor interpersonal functioning reflect the way in which the Renodnol relate to one another outside of the ritual context. Indeed, I begin to wonder if their poor interpersonal skills, highly developed individualistic sense of self and fear of the other may be due to the Polk-a' mask and the harsh conditions of the ritual environment. If my hunch is correct, perhaps a future intervention may be appropriate.

Post-Liminal Phase.

The Vessel pulls to a stop.

After their allotted time (there seems to be no pattern to the amount of time each participant spends on the vessel, however the same participant often repeats their time each day) the participant gets off of the vessel, which is in a new location to when they embarked. The Renodnol continue their journey through the labyrinth or they follow signs to an exit. When exiting, the Renodnol ascend stairs towards the surface of the earth after having spent a considerable chunk of time (usually about 25-45 minutes) underground in ritual activity. The participant exits through the ceremonial gates by taking their magical item and placing it on or in the lock and walking out through the swinging gates. Once outside, the Renodnol may remove their mask.

In this post-liminal stage of the ritual we see the Renodnol pass through the ritual gates once more. Once outside the gates, participants are no longer directed by signs nor are they subject to the rituals elders. The Neophytes take up their rights as individuals and resume a normal safe distance from one another whilst walking and in non-ritual activity. Whilst outside of the ritual, the Renodnol are not required to wear their Polk-a' masks, many choose to keep them on as personal boundaries may have been affected by the ritual activity and they prefer the level of protection that the mask provides. Indeed, it would seem that the Polk-'a Face Mask serves to protect and disguise individuals from unwanted external contact by others. Further investigation into why it is the Renodnol believe that they need the Polk-a' Mask as a protective tool would be a fascinating point of research and perhaps it would enhance our understanding of humanity as a whole.

Conclusion

In the liminal stage of ritual we see how the Mask Movement Ritual of the Renodnol tribe challenges individualist notions of the self as neophytes give up their individual status and take on status as a collective bounded and governed by rules. As part of a group, we see how the ritual leads to the uniformity of action and submission of the participants to the social code.

Participants abide by the social code, ensuring the safety of others during the ritual process. However, there are times when participants do act out of social norm; If a singular person is under threat by another or by an incident, it is likely that it will affect the whole *communitas* as the underground is a shared, public space. The space itself is a dangerous and confusing environment.

The environment hosts many challenges to the individualist sense of self; it's polluting environment, disturbing gaps, it's labyrinth that causes confusion and disorientation and the limited amount of space in the ceremonial ground and on the vessels that force participants to be close to one another. These challenges cause high levels of discomfort on a physical and psychological scale as the concept of the individualist, enlightened self comes under conflict when one recognises the self as vulnerable, weak and a uniform entity part of a collective. Tensions becomes exacerbated when interpersonal relations between participants neither support the conception of the individual self nor do the participants have their emotional and psychological needs met as each participants personal experience goes invalidated. The use of the Polk-a' mask simultaneously protect the participants creating safe distances between neophyte's whilst the uncanny objects have isolating and disturbing psychological effects.

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