DRESSING UP:
ROLE-PLAYING IN THE EGYPTIAN *WPT R*
RITUAL AND A CONTEXTUALIZED VIEW
OF THE BIBLICAL PRIESTHOOD

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Abstract

Dress and the act of dressing-up find expression in earliest antiquity in both simple and complex forms. In ritual contexts dress is best labeled as costume, which informs roles played within the ritual. The study here is interested in ritual texts of the ancient Near East and examines the costume of the *sm* priest in the Egyptian *wpt r* ritual and the rituals related to the costume of the biblical priesthood, namely those in Exod 28–29, 40, Lev 6, 8, 16, and Ezek 42 and 44. Both Egyptian and biblical rituals demonstrate necessary costuming for the efficacy of ritual participation. The costume symbolically and temporarily transformed the wearer for the purpose of playing a role. The wearers, then, embodied an identity other than their own, believing themselves capable of playing the roles necessary for the ritual. For the *sm* priest in the Egyptian *wpt r* ritual, the *ba* transformed the *sm* to *ba*, such that the *sm* then embodied a physical strength beyond his own and the divine roles of the gods Horus and Thoth. For the biblical priests, their costumes, which were crafted of the same materials as the house for the presence of the Israelite deity Yahweh and labeled "holy to Yahweh," קדש ליהוה, were the conduit by which they were transformed and embodied the divine.

Dans l'antiquité la plus ancienne, les vêtements et le fait de s'habiller peuvent être l'objet d'expressions simples ou complexes. Dans des contextes rituels, les vêtements peuvent être catalogués comme un costume, qui explique les rôles joués dans le rituel. Cette étude s'intéresse aux textes rituels du Proche-Orient Ancien et examine les habits du prêtre sm dans le rituel égyptien *wpt r* et les rituels liés aux habits du sacerdoce biblique, à savoir ceux en Ex 28–29, Lév 6 ; 8 ; 16 et Éz 42 et 44. Tant les rituels égyptiens que bibliques manifestent la nécessité du vêtement pour assurer l'efficacité de la participation rituelle. Le costume transforme celui qui le porte symboliquement et temporairement, et lui permet de jouer un rôle. Les porteurs incarnent alors une identité différente de la leur, et se considèrent capables de jouer les rôles nécessaires au rituel. Pour le prêtre *sm* dans le rituel égyptien *wpt r*, le *ba* transforme le *sm* en *ba*, de sorte que le *sm* incarne alors une force physique supérieure à la sienne et les rôles divins des dieux Horus et Thot. Pour les prêtres bibliques, les vêtement, fabriqués dans les mêmes matériaux que la maison qui contient la présence de la déité israélite Yahvé et estampillés « saint pour Yahvé » קדש ליהוה, représentaient le moyen par lequel ils étaient transformés et incarnaient le divin.

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Introduction

Dressing-up is an activity of supplementing the exterior body. The act includes not only the dress itself, "an assemblage of modifications of the body and/or supplements to the body" (Roach-Higgins and Eicher 1992, 3), but also the practices and meanings surrounding it. It is a mode of communication that establishes identity, in some scenarios preempting discourse. Its function may be multifaceted and complex, communicating particularities to an audience, whether intended or not, and informing the wearer himself/herself. In this manner, dress may both connect and separate the wearer from others.[1]

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[1] Peirson-Smith 2013; Quick 2021, 16.

This article is interested in a specific type of dress and dressing-up, namely costume and costuming. Following Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins and Joanne Eicher, costume is a type of dress that is "out-of-everyday" social roles or activities (1992, 3). It identifies dress that is specific to a situation beyond the usual, one that is reserved for activities such as rituals. Costumes in these scenarios temporarily and symbolically transform and obscure the identity of the wearer, enabling the wearer "to represent their ordinary self in a new guise through role-play" (Peirson-Smith 2013, 79). Gregory Stone notes: "Playing the role of the other requires that the player dress out of the role or roles that are acknowledged to be his own. Costume therefore is 'a kind of magical instrument'" (1995, 31). With the costume on, an individual embodies a different identity, and with the costume off, the ordinary self is resumed. The role the individual plays while wearing the costume is informed by the costume itself. The costume, then, is the conduit by which the individual embodies a different identity for the purpose of role-playing.

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The focus of this article is on the costuming of the *sm* priest in the Egyptian *wpt r* ("opening of the mouth") ritual and the Aaronide priesthood in the Hebrew Bible. The *sm* priest participates in an essential change of costume from the *qni* to the *ba* during the *wpt r* ritual. Wearing the *ba* communicates a particular complex role that the priest plays during the *wpt r* ritual. While the costume functions as an outward symbol to identify the *sm*'s role, the *ba* also functions to temporarily transform the ordinary self of the *sm* priest as an embodied other. A similar transformation of identity may be seen in the descriptions of the costuming of the Aaronide priesthood in the biblical texts. There, the specialized dress is necessary for the rituals of servicing the Israelite deity Yahweh. With their costumes, the priests are symbolically transformed and embody the divine.

The transformation of identity via costuming in the scenarios of the Egyptian *wpt r* ritual and the biblical texts pertaining to the priestly dress inform a rich understanding of dress as costume in the rituals of the ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible. Laura Quick notes that "the intersection of material culture [dress] and embodiment are essential to understanding the social and cultural world [that] shaped the Hebrew

Bible" (2021, 2). To this end, the Egyptian *wpt r* ritual will be addressed below in order to contextualize the *ba* costume of the *sm* priest and understand the costume's transformative function for the ritual and for the priest himself. Next, the biblical texts that describe the costuming of the Aaronide priesthood will be addressed. Attention will focus on the specifications of the costume, the role that the priests play while wearing the costume, and the symbolic and transformative function of the costume as it relates to the priests' embodiment.

The Egyptian *wpt r* Ritual

The Egyptian *wpt r* ritual is attested as early as the Fourth Dynasty (ca. 2600 BCE) and makes an appearance as late as the Roman period (first century CE).[2] It is associated with a large body of ritual texts known variously as *wpt r irt* ("opening of the mouth and eyes") and *irt wpt rn twt n* ("performing the opening of the mouth in the workshop of the statue of PN"),[3] the latter likely being the full name of the ritual, as it ends with a personal name. The ritual also has activities in common with the daily cult rituals, namely the awakening, washing, feeding, dressing, and anointing of a god in the form of a statue. Daily cult rituals were employed in the temple and performed after the *wpt r* ritual.[4] Their function was to preserve and maintain an already installed deity. Some repetition of elements of the *wpt r* ritual may also be found in the Pyramid Texts. The replicated elements include portions of the purifi-

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[2] The earliest textual reference to the Egyptian ritual occurs in the tomb of Metjen, an official during the Fourth Dynasty. Late references include the tomb of Petamonope (Saitic), Papyrus Cairo 36803 (Late Ptolemaic – Early Roman), and the Papyrus of the "Hathor" Sais (Roman). On these later texts, see Bjerke 1965; Schulman 1984; Lorton 1999. The origins of the *wpt r* ritual are addressed in Roth 1992.

[3] Budge 1909; Otto 1960; Goyon 1972.

[4] For an explanation on the relationship between the *wpt r* ritual and daily cult rituals, see Hundley 2013, 169, 199. David Lorton (1999, 150) develops a strong relationship and overlap between the *wpt r* ritual and the daily cult rituals.

cations and adornments of the statue and the use of various implements to open the statue's faculties.[5]

In the Old Kingdom, the ritual seems to have focused on the mouth specifically, *wpt r*, as shown by its title in that period. During the Middle Kingdom, the ritual wanes but does not drop out completely with some meager allusions in the Coffin Texts.[6] It is in New Kingdom Egypt that the concept of opening the eye was added, *wpt r irt*, and it is during this time that the ritual is ubiquitous in its attestations on royal and private tomb walls, temple walls, in papyri, on coffins, bark, ostraca, and stelae. Of particular importance is the *wpt r* inscription found on the tomb of Rekhmire during the Eighteenth Dynasty (ca. 1400 BCE).[7] The tomb attests some seventy-five episodes of the "opening of the mouth" ritual, including lustrations, censings, libations, and other religious acts. The Rekhmire scenes are particularly informative for understanding the complete ritual as well as one can and for placing the *wpt r* ritual within the larger framework of statuary rituals.

Writing primarily on Theban tombs, Eberhard Otto in his *Das Ägyptische Mundöffnungsritual* sought to create a synthesis of the attested *wpt r* rituals in order to understand the various scenes and acts that comprise its depiction.[8] His notable compilation of texts and illustrations is based on more than eighty extant tombs and remains the academic standard for discussion and study of the *wpt r* ritual (1960 2:173–83). For the purposes of this article, Otto's work provides an essential framework with which to understand the costuming of the *sm* priest. The various stages of the *wpt r* ritual are as follows.

The *wpt r* ritual took place in a workshop until the very moment when the statue was relocated to its shrine. Following initial purifications of the statue, the *sm* priest, after being awakened, was brought before the statue. The *sm* presented the foreleg and heart of a slaughtered bull to the statue and then touched the statue's mouth with various implements.

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[5] Baly 1930; Lorton 1999, 131, 149–52, 168.
[6] Buck 1935–2006; Bjerke 1965, 201–16.
[7] Davies 1935; Davies 1943; Otto 1960.
[8] Davies and Gardiner 1915–1933; Otto 1960.

The statue itself was then clothed with various garments,[9] anointed, given scepters, fumigations, and presented with an elaborate offering. Following the ritual removal of footprints,[10] the statue was then moved from the workshop and installed in its shrine. The intended result of the *wpt r* was to quicken or enliven the statue as a god. Its upkeep would have required daily cult rituals.

While not the sole participant in the ritual, the primary actor was the *sm* priest.[11] During the ritual, the priest puts on and takes off the *qni* garment[12] and in its stead dons the skin of a leopard, *ba*.[13] The change in costume is dependent on the various scenes of the ritual and the role being played by the *sm* priest. The first costume, the *qni*, is worn after the *sm* priest awakes. The sleeping *sm* otherwise wears a full-bodied and striped costume. The *qni* itself resembles a bib. It is small. Its material is uncertain, though the stripes are not unlike those on the *sm*'s sleeping apparel. The more peculiar costume that the *sm* priest wears

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[9] The statue was otherwise nude. On this related topic, see Oppenheim 1949; Matsushima 1993. For a discussion as this topic pertains to the Hebrew Bible, see Ammann 2019; LeMon and Purcell 2019.

[10] Tomb illustrations depict the priest leaving the workshop walking backward and sweeping away the traces of his footprints as he went with the *hdn* plant. The related Mesopotamian *mīs pî* ("opening of the mouth") ritual texts describe a similar disassociation of the fashioner with the completed statue. See Blackman 1924; Baly 1930. Blackman and Baly both conclude that the Mesopotamians borrowed the ritual from Egypt. Lorton (1999, 147 n. 37) disagrees. See also Nelson 1949.

[11] *ÄW* 2, 2195–96; *WÄS* 4.119; *CDME*, 225. The *sm* priest was under the direction of the *ẖry-ḥbt*, or "ritualist," throughout the ritual. See "*ẖry-ꜥ*," *ÄW* 2, 1997; "*ẖry-ḥbt*," *CDME*, 204; Gardiner 1947, 39.

[12] *ÄW* 2, 2524; *CDME*, 279; Sethe 2018, 211.

[13] The *ba* is worn in various Egyptian contexts (Otto 1960, 2:72–73; Lorton 1999, 159–62). For rendering "leopard," see Castel's (2002) convincing work on identification. *Contra* "panther" in *ÄW* 2, 775–79; Wb. 1:410–16; *CDME*, 77. Incidentally, a metathesis of the radicals, *ba* to *ab*, denotes "to brand" but may also take the form *aby* meaning "panther." The literary play informs Otto's rendering of "panther" (Otto 1960, 2:72; "*ꜣb*," *WÄS* 1.6; "*ꜣby*," *WÄS* 1.7).

is the *ba*, a skin of a leopard.[14] Leopard skins were imported from Nubia or Punt (Houlihan 1996, 93, 199). The skins were given as gifts to the temple, primarily for priestly use, and seen as a sign of power. In the New Kingdom, leopard skins are included in processions where Nubians present gifts (Castel 2002, 22). Interestingly, Egyptians made imitations of the skin, such as the fake skin adorned with gold stars and silver paws found in the tomb of Tutankhamun. Other leopard images and symbols are found as coverings on seats of folding chairs used by kings and on carvings on sarcophagi lids (Castel 2002, 21, 23). During the Late Period (ca. 500 BCE), the god Bes is frequently depicted wearing a leopard skin (Castel 2002, 24). The skin was a coveted Egyptian symbol that was associated with the temple, priests, and power.

The correlation between the terms "leopard" and "power" is underscored by a pun originating with the term *ba* itself. While *ba* refers to the leopard-skin costume of priest, the term frequently translates to "power" in other contexts.[15] The intended double meaning is confirmed by illustrations that depict the *sm*'s exceptional prowess by having him carry a slaughtered bull over his shoulders while he approaches the statue. Michael Hundley notes: "Punning plays an especially significant role as a meaningful way of making connections between words and the objects they refer to and in some ways embody" (2013, 8).[16] In this sense, it is while wearing the *ba* that the *sm* demonstrates *ba*. The activity of wearing an animal skin to transmit power is widely documented in many cultures, mainly in Africa, from ancient to present times (Castel 2002, 21 n. 12): "Through sympathetic magic … the use of big felines spotted skins may transmit to its owner a series of the inherent qualities

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[14] At no point throughout the ritual is the *sm* not wearing one of the special articles of clothing. The clothing change is described in scenes 11, 19–21, and 40 (Otto 1960, 2:60, 71–72, 100).

[15] Punning is at work throughout the ritual. In the immediate scenes, there is a pun between *irt* ("eye") and *iri* ("to make, do"), as well as *ḫpš* ("foreleg") and *ḫpš* ("physical strength"). The literary device "was regarded as a highly serious and controlled use of language" (Assmann 2001, 87). Other examples of punning in the ritual may be found in Lorton 1999, 158–59, 161, 163 n. 61, 164, 170–73. His work relies on the scholarship of Helck 1967 and Goyon 1972.

[16] See also Helck 1967, 33–36.

of the animal: strength" (Castel 2002, 20). Likewise, the *sm* priest embodies the power of the costume he wears. As such, he is symbolically and temporarily transformed in order to play his role in the *wpt r* ritual.

The priest's role, however, extends beyond physical strength. While wearing the *ba* costume, the *sm* is identified with the god Horus, deity of kingship and sky and son of Osiris (van Voss 1999, 426–27). From the utterances he makes, the *sm* priest's eye is identified with the eye of Horus, so that the priest's eye becomes Horus' eye. The priest also assumes the role of the god Thoth, cosmic deity of magic and wisdom (Vos 1999, 861–64), and the utterances "I am Horus" and "I am Thoth" are both explicated by the divine determinative preceding the priest's title. While role-playing as Thoth, the priest states: "I have provided myself with your magical powers. I know the knowledge that is in you. I have taken possession of your strength, and of your cunning in handicraft, and of the utterances of your mouth" (Otto 1960, 2:149–50). Here, the priest's embodiment via the *ba* costume extends beyond mere physical power to the divine. The costumed *sm* priest is transformed to play his roles as the gods Horus and Thoth in the *wpt r* ritual. There is a brief transfer of the *ba* costume to the so-called "loving son," but the *sm* priest otherwise wears the *ba* throughout the rest of the ritual.

Following Stone's suggestion mentioned above, the *ba* costume indeed is "a kind of magical instrument." With the costume, the *sm* priest embodies a physical strength that is not his own and assumes the roles of the gods Horus and Thoth. The *sm*'s ordinary self is transformed into new identities for the purpose of role-play. Consider that specialized dress—dress that inherently means something (e.g., *ba* = "power") and when worn even has the capacity to make the individual look like someone or something else—allows the individual to feel like whatever or whomever it is they are wearing. Stated differently, a good costume makes the wearer feel as though they are not wearing a costume at all but are in fact what or whom the costume represents. The wearer embodies the costume. Their ordinary self is set aside, and a new costumed identity is assumed for the sake of a new role. In an older study on animal skins in Egyptian contexts, Alexandre Moret concludes that the skins were donned specifically for the purpose of investing the wearer with

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the powers of the animal.[17] For the *sm* priest, the *ba* costume was the conduit through which the priest identified himself as being capable of carrying out the ritual. In costume with the *ba*, the priest conceived that he indeed was *ba*. For the *sm*, this conviction included the strength of a leopard and the gumption to role-play as the deities Horus and Thoth, stating "I am Horus," "I am Thoth." Notably, not just anyone could enter the sacred space of a deity, whether participating in the quickening of its statue or tending to it via the daily cult rituals. This is confirmed by the ritual removal of the footprints, as though there was never a participant at all. The costuming of the *sm* priest, subsequently, is essential for the efficacy of the ritual.

Biblical Texts

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The rituals associated with the costuming of the biblical priests are found in Exod 28–29; 40; Lev 6; 8; 16; Num 8; and Ezek 42; 44. The descriptions are embedded in the narratives of the biblical cults. The institution of the Aaronide priesthood and its associated clothing is described in Exod 28–29 amid instructions for building the Tabernacle (chapters 24–31), the abode of Yahweh's presence. The descriptions include not only the blueprints for a divine dwelling but also elaborate descriptions of the designated participants intended to service the deity along with their specialized garb. In Exod 28, instructions are given for the fabrication of the priestly costume for Aaron and his sons, and then in chapter 29, the ritual associated with how to go about wearing the costume and what the priests are to do while wearing it is described. The actual making of the costume is described in chapter 39. Additional, brief directions for priestly dress are found in Lev 6 and 16. And the execution of the directions can be found, at least in part, in Lev 8. There, Moses leads and directs the ritual of costuming Aaron and his sons as priests. Special priestly dress is also mentioned briefly in Ezek

[17] Moret has compiled several references to animal skins as clothing in various Egyptian religious contexts. See Moret 1903, 43–47, 74–76, 222–25.

42 and 44.[18] The Zadokite priests of Ezekiel are given explicit directions regarding when to put on the special costume and when to take it off.

The biblical texts are strikingly elaborate when it comes to the descriptions of the priestly costume and the rituals involved: extant literature from the ancient Near East pales in comparison to the lengthy descriptions in the Hebrew Bible. The creation of the costume is remarkable. Exceptional individuals are tasked for manufacturing the priestly dress. Said artisans are those "wise of heart," חכמי־לב, whom Yahweh "filled with the spirit of wisdom," רוח חכמה (Exod 28:3). The supremely skilled craftsmen Bezalel and Oholiab also take responsibility for the worked garments (31:10). The extraordinary abilities of the Tabernacle craftsmen are highlighted by the compilation of skills with which they are endowed, namely "wisdom," חכמה, "understanding," תבונה, and "knowledge," דעת (Erickson 2011). Not only do the biblical accounts provide thorough explanations of the priestly costume but also of the preparatory rituals pertaining to it. Both the Aaronide priests and their costumes are "consecrated" (ומלאת יד־אהרן ויד־בניו, Exod 29:9) prior to servicing Yahweh.[19] And with their costumes on, the priests are "sprinkled with blood from the altar" (מן הדם אשר על המזבח) and with "anointing oil" (ומשמן המשחה, Exod 29:21).[20] By virtue of this sprinkling, the

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[18] I am here leaving out the descriptions of garb in Num 8, since the Levitical priests there do not service the deity but the Aaronide priesthood. Regarding the former's subservient role to the latter, see Erickson forthcoming.

[19] The expression "fill the hand of Aaron and the hand of his sons" indicates the consecration and ordination of the priests. The phrase occurs throughout the biblical narratives with a similar meaning: Exod 28:41; 29:29; 33; 35; 32:29; Lev 4:5; 8:33; 16:32; 21:10; Num 3:3; Judg 17:5; 12; 1 Kgs 13:33; 2 Chr 13:9; 29:31. For discussion on the expression, see "*mālē*," *TDOT* 8:297–308. The phrase is also known in Mari texts, *mullû qātam/qatē*, denoting a divine commissioning or transfer of authority from a god to a human. See "*malû*," *CAD* M, part 1, 187.

[20] Blood gestures and rituals are attested throughout the ancient Near East. Meaning and interpretation vary wildly and depend on immediate context and efficacy. For some helpful background, see Feder 2001; Abusch 2003; Gilder 2004, 78–81, 96–104. The use of blood and oil together, as noted above, is more unusual. See, however, Daniel Fleming's (1998) comparison with texts from Emar describing elements in the *zukru* festival.

Aaronide priests and their costumes are deemed "holy," קדש. The deity's "glory," כבוד, finalizes the "consecration" (קדש) of the clad priests (Exod 29:43), and by virtue of it the ritual participants and their costumes are prepared "to service" Yahweh (לכהן־לי, 29:44).

The costume itself includes the "breast piece," חשן, "ephod," אפוד, "robe," מעיל, "woven tunic," וכתנת תשבץ, "turban," מצנפת, and "sash," אבנט, (Exod 28:4) and also the "plate," ציץ, and "undergarment," מכנסי־בד (Exod 28:36; 42) (Houtman 1993–2000). The materials prescribed for the manufacturing of the costume, namely "gold," זהב, "blue," תכלת, "purple," ארגמן, "scarlet material," תולעת השני, and "fine linen," שש, are those also used for the coverings of Yahweh's dwelling.[21] This is a key correlation that equates the priestly costume with the divine:[22] the covering of the place where Yahweh's presence dwells is made of the same material as the apparel that covers the priests. In this manner, the costumed priests are equated with the "costume" of Yahweh's presence and are thus symbolically and temporarily transformed to embody the divine. With the costume, the priests' ordinary self is guised and a new role that embodies the divine is assumed.

The priestly costume is also labeled for interpretation. The engraving on the "plate of pure gold," ציץ זהב טהור, deems the priests as holy to Yahweh: "Engrave on it [the plate of pure gold] a seal, holy to Yahweh," ופתחת עליו פתוחי חום קדש ליהוה (Exod 28:36). The costume is other-wise described as "holy clothes," בגדי־קדש, from the beginning of the

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[21] The materials are listed throughout the Tabernacle building instructions in Exodus. Notably, the fabrication of the deity's dwelling and the priestly costumes are not independent narratives. Rather, the entire artistic process is shared (Haran 1985; Rooke 2009, 11–37; MacDonald 2015, 441–42).

[22] William Propp states: "By clothing Aaron in the same fabric that tents over the divine Presence, by dressing him in a golden Ephod with possible idolatrous overtones, the Priestly Writer created an implicit equation between priest and God" (2006, 525–26). See also Propp's discussion on divine dress (2006, 456–74, 522–32). He equates the sumptuous garments adorned with divine images in the ancient Near East with the ritualized priestly garb in Exodus. He then speculates that the priest, "the holiest of all humans," may have been perceived by some as a quasi-god (2006, 525). Jung Hoon Kim (2004) too describes the priestly dress as "symbolically divinized."

descriptions in chapter 28. The relationship between the costume, as holy, and Yahweh cannot be understated. Yahweh *is* holy: "I, Yahweh your god, am holy," קדוש אני יהוה אלהיכם (Lev 11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:26; 21:8). The deity embodies holiness, and by virtue of their costumes the priests too embody holiness. The transformed identity of the priests, then, is doubly marked as divine. The material of the costume is equated with the material of the very presence of Yahweh, and its label of "holy to Yahweh," directly identifies the priests with the identity of Yahweh. The costume transforms the priests as the god Yahweh for their roles in the rituals related to serving Yahweh. As mentioned above, not just anyone could approach the deity. Quick notes: "Regular man cannot attend to the divine abode, but dressed correctly, [the priest] is not a regular man" (2021, 113). Here, the right costume is essential for the efficacy of the ritual.

The specialness of the costume is further confirmed by indications of when the priests are to wear it, namely while in sacred space "before/in the presence of Yahweh," לפני יהוה, and while serving the deity. Once the priests leave Yahweh's presence, they are to take off their "holy clothes," בגדי־קדש, and put on "other garments," בגדים אחרים (Ezek 42:14; 44:19). They are to leave their holy costume in holy space until such time that said costume is again required. The action underscores the temporary aspect of the role being played. While wearing the costume, the priests embody the divine and role-play accordingly. Their ordinary self resumes once the costume is removed.

The priestly costume invoked an equation with the divine and as such reframed the wearers' self-identity as divine. It provided the conduit by which the priests identified themselves as being capable of their role. The costume, then, allowed the priests to role-play themselves into the very thing they wore.

Summary

Costume and costuming inform the roles played by ritual participants. The ordinary self is guised upon wearing a costume, and the wearers are symbolically and temporarily transformed to embody a new identity.

Both the *sm* priest in the Egyptian *wpt r* ritual and the Aaronide priests in the Hebrew Bible are transformed while wearing costumes that are particular to their respective contexts. Both embody new roles with the costume. With the *ba* costume, the *sm* priest embodied the physical strength of a leopard and the gods Horus and Thoth. The biblical priests, similarly, embodied the deity Yahweh. Their costume is doubly marked by the material of the costume and the label on the costume, קדש ליהוה ("holy to Yahweh"). The *sm* and biblical priests were transformed from their ordinary selves to divine embodiments while wearing the costume. The costumes, then, were essential for the efficacy of the rituals they participated in, and they were the means by which the *sm* and biblical priests identified themselves as divine. They embodied the very essence of their costume for the purpose of role-play.

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