

Om and Amen^{*}

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The aspects of the traditional complementarity between Hinduism and Islam which we have mentioned so far, and which can obviously be supplemented by others, may be summarised by the two characteristic corresponding forms of the sacramental and invocatory Word, the kinship of which we have already signalled above: the *Om* of the traditions related to India, and the *Amen* of the traditions of Semitic origin, envisaged more particularly in the Islamic case under its specific form of *Amīn*.¹ We

¹ See *L'Islam et la fonction...*, p. 149. Rapprochements between *Om* and *Amen* have been pointed out a long time ago, notably by the Orientalists of the nineteenth century. We have chosen the following remark from a note of the French translation of *Brahma-Karma—Rites sacrés des Brahmanes*, by A. Bourquin (Ernest Leroux, 1884), p. 11: "One may translate *Om* as *glory* or *amen*." But we will note incidentally that with the same translator, "glory" translates, again inaccurately, the term *namah* which actually means "homage" or "salutation"; for it is not possible to

find here a reflection of the traditional relationship between East and West in general, but before tackling this wider subject, it will be appropriate to indicate summarily the exact meaning of the two sacred words in their respective traditions.

The Hindu term—which therefore belongs to Buddhism as well—is, according to a definition in the Upanishads, “the syllable which expresses acquiescence, for one says *om!* to express assent.” (*Chandogya Upanishad* I, I, 8). Substantially and structurally speaking, *om* is also defined as being “sound itself, it is immortality, felicity itself”; “whoever that, knowing this, murmurs this word, penetrates this word

retain the same translation for both terms in cases when they are associated immediately in the same doxology: *Om! namah!* || In his *Die Religion des Veda* (1894), Oldenberg also spoke about “the syllable *Om* which is equivalent to our *amen*” (French tr. Victor Henri, Alcan, 1903, pp. 392–3).

which is sound, which is immortality, which is felicity” (*ibid.* I, IV, 4-5). Its importance as the symbol of the universal Word is well-known; and we recalled some of its doctrinal aspects earlier. *Om* is thus the mantra *par excellence* of Hindu spirituality.

But its technical and ritual use is extremely rich and complex. *Om* is the initial word of the fundamental liturgic chant which is called *udgītha*, and thereby it is supposed to contain in itself and to represent the *udgītha* in its entirety (cf. *ibid.* I, I, 1). It inaugurates the different recitations of the Rig-Vêda (cf. *ibid.* I, I, 9 and I, IV, 1), and it is also pronounced at the end of the recitation of a *rik* (verse or hymn), a *sāman* (liturgic chant), and a *yajus* (invocation). In certain writings such as the Upanishads, but not in all, *Om* appears in inaugurating doxologies that are associated with Hari, “the Lord”, one of the names of Vishnu, “*Om Hari!*” and in the doxolo-

gies finales: *Om! Shanti! Shanti! Shanti!* (Om! Peace! Peace! Peace!)² Finally, as a supreme word, *Om* is identified with the Supreme God.³

On the other hand, in the traditions of a Semitic origin, *Amen* is also used as an affirmative, or rather confirmative word, first of all in the Pentateuch where it has a character of major rigour, and in the official rites.⁴ In the Psalms it appears in the final doxolo-

² Cf. *Mânava-Dharma-Shâstra*, 11, 74: "Let him utter always the sacred monosyllable at the beginning and at the end of the study of the Sacred Scripture; any reading that is not preceded by the *Om* is effaced little by little, and any reading which is not followed by it does not leave any trace in the spirit!"

³ *Ibid.* II, 83: "The sacred monosyllable is the Supreme God."

⁴ Let us note that it initially appeared in the Mosaic institution of the law on jealousy, according to which the woman suspected of having committed adultery had to confirm the oath of the priest by uttering "*amen! amen!*" to exonerate herself (Numbers 5: 11–22); then in the rite of

gies.⁵ At the time of Hellenistic Judaism, before the rise of Christianity, *amen* had a liturgical use in the synagogues wherefrom it must have passed also to the Christian liturgies.

Thus this term was originally an adjective meaning “firm”, “sure”, and it later acquired an adverbial meaning: “firmly,” “surely”. Since it serves to confirm a preceding statement, it also constitutes a solemn vow and a commitment, therefore meaning: “it shall be so”, “may it be so,” which is expressed by *genoito* in Greek and by *fiat* or *ita sit* in Latin; but when its role is purely incantatory it is not translated and it

cursing set on the eve of the entry into Canaan in which all people participated: “And the people shall say: *Amen!*” (Deuteronomy 27: 15–26); here, it is uttered twelve times to confirm twelve curses, a number which among others corresponds to the tribes that had gathered for this rite.

⁵ “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.” (Psalms 41: 13). Cf. Ps. 72: 19; 89: 53; and 106: 48.

remains unchanged.

The confirmative role of *amen* is found in the New Testament; thus in Matthew 6: 13 where it occurs at the end of the text of the *Pater noster*, to which it remains attached in the practice of daily prayers; and also in the Apocalypse where, used in part in the doxologies of the Prologue, it is found in the transcendent liturgies in which it is uttered by the angels, the twenty-four old men, and the four animals carrying the Throne.⁶

However, the Gospels show us *amen* also in a completely new use and aspect with respect to the previous tradition, namely a purely affirmative and no longer confirmative meaning, and an *amen* that is placed at the beginning of periods and phrases uttered in the first person, and no longer at the end

⁶ Cf. Apoc. 7: 1-2; see also 5: 13-14 and 19: 4.

or in conclusion of an affirmation.⁷ Thus *amen* appears dozens of times in the words of Christ, notably in Matthew and John: *Amen dico vobis*, which is sometimes replaced by *Vere dico vobis* = “in truth, I say to you.”⁸ In this instance it constitutes a style proper to Jesus who could affirm himself as the source of the truth and take himself for witness. The role of *amen*

⁷ Actually an *amen* in an opening position is found at least once in the Old Testament, in Jeremiah 28:6, but the prophet does not speak in his personal name, for he says: “Amen! Thus spoke Jehovah!...”; yet, already in this case the initial *amen* does not come to confirm something, but on the contrary, to formulate an objection against the irregular prophethood of Hananiah, which therefore had to be deemed false afterwards.

⁸ It is not excluded that the use of the affirmative *Amen* is related to the language in which the Gospel texts or at least the words of Christ were originally formulated. In any case, a linguistic element is to be remembered here: while in Hebrew the word *amen* serves to confirm, in Syriac it serves to affirm.

in this case would therefore be a reflection of his identity with the Word. And it is significant that in this initial position and having this role of principal affirmation, *Amen* is seen as being in a situation that is comparable to that of *Om* at the beginning of the doctrinal Hindu texts. In these two cases we receive an initial enunciation through a direct and total symbol of the Word.

Moreover, in Christianity, *Amen* is also a name of the Word; in the Apocalypse of St. John (3:14) Christ is called “The *Amen*, the faithful and truthful Witness of the Principle of God’s creation.”⁹ How-

⁹ Regarding this last cosmogonic aspect of *Amen*, it is appropriate to recall what Anne-Catherine Emmerich relates from one of her visions on the Life of Jesus Christ: She saw Jesus during his trip to Mallep, in the island of Cyprus (an episode which is unknown in the Gospels), making a “long instruction on the word *Amen*,” and saying “admirable things” on the virtue of this word. “He called it the beginning and the end of all things. He seemed to say that

ever, this was connected to a certain Biblical tradition, for *Amen* had already been attested by the Prophets as a divine name: “That he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God Amen; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God Amen...” (Isaiah, 65: 16).¹⁰

In the Apocalypse, where titles that are given first

God had created the world with this word” (vol. II, p. 468, Paris: Téqui, 1952).

It is even possible to envisage in the esoteric tradition of Christianity a veritable mystery of the *Amen*: let us quote as an indication this invocation which represents a Coptic inscription of the Kellia of the lower Egypt desert: “O God! Give us the intelligence of the *Amen*.” (Cf. *Communication d'Antoine Guillaumont*, Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, Sessions of 1965, January-June).

¹⁰ In the Hebrew text we have *be-elohai Amen* for “by the God Amen.” The Vulgate reads: ...*benedicetur in Deo amen... jurabit in Deo amen*; which is also translated as “the God of Amen” (Jean Koenig, in *La Bible*, Paris: Gallimard) or “the God of Truth” (Crampon).

of all to the “Lord God” (such as “Alpha and Omega”, “First and Last”, “Principle and End”),¹¹ are applied to Jesus through an identifying transposition, one passage is particularly remarkable in the order of things under examination here. In the Prologue of this text, after an “*Etiam!* (Yes!) *Amen!*” which apparently confirms a perspective that will be announced in the final coming of Christ, there is a text which might be considered also as a commentary of this mysterious *Amen*, applicable in the theophanic order of the Mission as well as in the pure principial order: “I am the Alpha and the Omega (the beginning and the end), said Lord God, he who is, who was and who is to come, the Master of Everything!” (Apoc. Prol. 7–8).¹² Furthermore, these words are

¹¹ For “the Lord God” see: 7: 8 and 21: 6; for “Christ” see: 1, 17; 2: 8 and 22: 13.

¹² This relation between *Amen* and the words immediately following it is all the more acceptable since the original

found almost in identical form specifically with respect to *Om* in a capital text of the *Māndūkya Upanishad*, 1, 1: “*Hari Om!* (the Lord is *Om*). This syllable *Om* is everything! And here is the explanation: that which has been, that which shall be, all of this is the phoneme *Om!*” — Gaudapāda’s commentary on this passage says: “The syllable *Om* is the beginning, the middle, and the end of everything... It must be known that the syllable *Om* is the Master of all things.”¹³

After the preceding observations, we may say that the two sacred terms *Om* and *Amen* coincide both in their adverbial meaning (of affirmation or confirmation) and the corresponding ritual use, and in the

Greek text of the Apocalypse was continuous and did not show any division of phrases, neither by paragraph nor by punctuation.

¹³ Cf. *Māndūkya Upanishad* and *Kārikā de Gaudapāda*, ed. & tr. E. Lesimple (Paris: A. Maisonneuve, 1944).

meaning of the symbol of the universal Word and the name of the supreme Truth.



As for the Islamic tradition, it is of interest to first of all make certain precisions of a linguistic order. The Arabic word is written and read in many ways: three-lettered (*amn*), it is read *āmin* (present participle, “one who is in safety”); four-lettered (*amyn*), it can be read *amīn* or *āmīn* (adjective, “very sure”). There is also one—again four-lettered—form *ām-mīn* (in which the letter *mīm* is reinforced, hence the double letter in the transcription, which does not exist in the actual writing) to which we shall return later.

As for the institution of this term and its use in Islam, the Messenger of God, Muhammad—God grant him unitive grace and peace—has said: “The Angel Gabriel—peace be upon him!—related to me

the word *amīn* when I finished the recitation of the *Fātiḥa*, and he said that it is like the seal (*al-khatm*) on a writing.” The *Fātiḥa* is the opening Surah of the Book which must be recited in every *ṣalāt* (ritual prayer): the word *amīn* which concludes it is not part of the Surah; its pronunciation which is done either aloud or quietly is analogous to the *amen* after the dominical oration.

Another hadith says: “*Amīn* is the seal of the Lord of the Worlds on the language of his worshipping believers.”

Ibn ‘Abbās asked the Messenger of God about the meaning of *amīn*, and he replied that it is the: “Do!” (*if^ral*), which corresponds to a *fiat*. The commentators explain its meaning through the following words: “Our Lord, *do* as we ask Thee to!”

Finally, a saying of the Prophet concerning its recitation during the ritual prayer shows what the

is sacramental operation taking place during the *ṣalāt*: “When the imam (leader of the congregational prayer) utters (the last words of the *Fātiḥa*) ‘... Not the (path) of those who earn Thine anger nor of those who go astray’, say: *amīn!* for the angels also say: *amīn!* and the imam shall also say: *amīn!* Verily, if someone among you pronounces his *amīn* in accord with the *amīn* of the angels, the sins he had committed hitherto will be forgiven.”¹⁴

The *amīn* pronounced after the *Fātiḥa* with the re-

¹⁴ This accord must be understood first of all in the “intelligible” mode: harmony of purity and sanctity between the inner being and the superior spiritual powers; the accord in the “sensible” mode, in the domain of ordinary time, is conceivable only in relation to the descending angels that are condensed in the corporeal mode (*tajassud*) and are therefore found in the sensible realm of the ordinary humanity (Cf. Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, ch. 69, vol. I, p. 246 and ch. 73, quest. 100; vol. II, p. 101, edition of Dār al-Kutub al-‘Arabīyah al-Kubrā).

inforcement of the letter *mīm*: *āmmīn* gains a special meaning. It is then considered, morphologically speaking, as the plural present participle, with a flexion (the singular *āmm*, and the nominative plural *āmmūn*) of the verb *amma* = “to head to,” “to aim at.”¹⁵ With this meaning, since the *āmmīn* (analogous to *qāṣidūn* = “those heading to”) comes after the characteristic prayer of the *Fātiha*: “Guide us in the straight path, the path of those whom Thou hast favoured; not the (path) of those who earn Thine anger nor of those who go astray,” it means, according to Ibn ‘Arabī: “we go towards Thine response regarding what we have asked Thee” (*qaṣadnā ijābata-Ka fīmā da‘awnā-Ka fī-hi*).¹⁶

¹⁵ It is from this very same root that the word *imām* derives, which designates the leader of congregational prayer, that is, “he who stands in front of the others, who leads the prayer towards” the House of God.

¹⁶ Cf. *Futūḥāt*, ch. 73, q. 100, vol. II, p. 101, which from

The *Amīn* is also used to endorse the plea addressed to God with another one: “The petitioner and he who endorses his *amīn* are associated (to the recompense)” (hadith). It is also used to reinforce one’s own supplication: “When someone makes a supplication to God, let him support his supplication with *amīn!*” (hadith). The Prophet looked for a moment at a believer who was supplicating to God, and said: “Verily, he shall obtain a response if he seals his prayer with *amīn!*”

The teachings of the Prophets also instruct the following: “The prayer of someone for the benefit of his absent brother is accepted, and an angel standing close to his head utters: *Amīn!* And to you the same good!”

a lexical point of view refers to the verse 2 of Surah 5 of the Qur’an: “those heading to the sacred House” (*āmmīna ’l-Bayta ’l-Ḥarām*).

And finally, “At the Yemenite corner of the Kaaba, there is an angel who has been standing in that place ever since God created the Heavens and the Earth; when you walk beside it (during the ritual circumambulations), say: ‘Our Lord! Give unto us in the world that which is good and in the Hereafter that which is good, and guard us from the doom of Fire’ (Cf. Qur’an 2:201), for the angel will say: *Amīn! Amīn!*”

In all of this it can be seen clearly that the meaning of confirmation of the *amīn* is completed by the special idea of the affixed “seal” which implies the sense of the firm and executive conclusion. This idea of a “seal” is typically Islamic; it is like a reflection of the predominant concept of the Seal of the prophetic manifestation. But since the notion of a final prophetic and legislative synthesis with a view to a universal protection should be identified essentially with the primordial mandate conferred to Adam in the world

of man, it is significant in this regard that the *Amāna* or the respective Trust (Cf. Qur'an 33:72) carries a name coming from the same root as *amīn*. Faith itself, this mystery so characteristic of Islam, where it has much more profound dimensions and meaning than in any other tradition, due to the extent and importance of Revelation to be received and preserved in this way, is denoted by a word from the same root, *al-īmān*.

In addition, the Seal of Prophethood also carries the title of *al-Amīn*, the Firm, the Sure, the Faithful, the Sincere, and the Truthful, who said about himself: "As for myself, by God, I am *Amīn* in the heaven and *Amīn* on earth." And even long before he was invested with the prophetic message, the Meccans called him *al-Amīn*, as a sign of their great trust in him.¹⁷

¹⁷ This epithet is particularly mentioned in the following exceptional occasion: The Quraysh were rebuilding the

Kaaba. But when the time came for the Black Stone (which is “the Right of God on Earth”) had to be placed, the various tribes disputed bitterly, each claiming the honour of lifting it and fitting it in the external corner dedicated to it. A solution was proposed by one of the leaders: “Let us agree that the first person to enter the door of the Mosque will be the judge of the dispute.” The others agreed. Then, the first to enter was Muhammad, the future Prophet. When the Quraysh saw him they cried out, “It is the *Amīn*, the Trustworthy! We are pleased! It is Muhammad!” After Muhammad was informed about the dispute, he found the solution in placing the stone on a cloth which one representative from each tribe would carry from each edge; thus all of them lifted it at the height where it had to be placed, and then he took it and placed it with his own hand.

In this respect it is interesting to note a rather strange correspondence with a Masonic symbolism of a legendary nature which René Guénon dealt with in the April-May 1950 issue of *Études Traditionnelles*, when reviewing the *Speculative Mason* of October 1949 (a text which was published in *Études sur la Franc-Maçonnerie*, vol. II, pp. 178–180). Speaking of the fact that in most of the manuscripts of the *Old Charges*, the name of the architect of the Temple

It is in this same perspective that this qualifier is situated when it is applied to the Angel Gabriel himself as the “Faithful Spirit”, *al-Rūḥ al-Amīn* (cf. Qur’an 26: 193), who carries moreover in a more specific manner the title *Amīn al-Wahy*, “Custodian and Guarantor of the Revelation”.

of Solomon was not Hiram but “either Amon or some other form which seem to be nothing but a corruption,” he also noted that in Hebrew this word has precisely the meaning of artisan and architect and that one may wonder if a common noun has been taken for a proper noun, or if on the contrary this designation was given to the architects since it had the name of the builder of the Temple. “Be as it may,” adds Guénon “its root from which the word *amen* derives notably expresses in Hebrew as in Arabic the idea of firmness, constancy, faith, faithfulness, sincerity, truthfulness which agree very well with the character which the Masonic legend attributes to the Third Grand-Master.” In the data related in the biography of the Prophet one sees such a striking unity between the designation of *al-Amīn* and the role of the Master architect with respect to the primordial Temple of Mecca.

Finally the word *Amīn* is also a divine name; it does not appear in the ordinary lists of the divine Names, but it is found in initiatic invocations which are sometimes very enigmatic such as the *Dā'ira* (the circular enclosing) or the *Khātām* (the Seal)¹⁸ of Shaykh Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī. In the respective formulae, its regularly transmitted variant pronunciation is *Imīn*.

Keeping in mind the preceding observations, it seems probable that, due to this special meaning of the “seal” in its Islamic case, the *amen* of different Semitic or related traditions is eventually linked to an Egyptian origin, and more specifically to the divine name *imn*, usually transcribed “*Amon*”, but the exact vocalisation of which is ignored, although its significance as “hidden” and “mysterious” is recognised.¹⁹

¹⁸ This is a talisman which also carries the names *al-Ḥifẓ* (the Guard) and *al-Sayf* (the Sword). See Ibn ‘Ayyād’s *al-Mafākhir al-aliyya*.

¹⁹ This occurs in the sense of what René Guénon has

More precisely, this noun through its root is related to the “invisible world”; in Egyptian *imn-t* designates the “West” as the “place of the occultation of the Sun”, and Osiris, who corresponds to the “nocturnal Sun” was called *Hnty Imn-tt*, “Lord of the West.”²⁰

In any case, it is certain that in sacred history, at least as reflected in the Bible, *amen* appears only with the exodus of the Children of Israel from Egypt. It is also likely that it was part of the Egyptian leg-

already said: “As for the name of the Egyptian god *Amon*, even though its form is identical [to that of *amen*], it has a different meaning, namely ‘hidden’ or ‘mysterious’; it is nonetheless possible that, deep down, there are more relationships between these ideas than what appears at first sight” (*Études sur la Franc-Maçonnerie*, II, p. 179). One may note that it is the idea of the ‘seal’ or the ‘tablet’ which could establish such a relationship.

²⁰ This had been carried in an earlier era of traditional history of Egypt by Anubis, the god with the head of a dog, who was also considered the son of Osiris, or Ra, the diurnal aspect of the same ‘solar’ principle.”

acy which was then somehow vested in Moses and his people. However, this originally Egyptian word, upon its entry in another linguistic context (where the Semitic root *amn*, from which we get *emūnah*, faith—a notion so characteristic of the “religious” modality of tradition—was to exercise a manifest influence) and due to a new ritual use (part of an autonomous revealed legislation) was more or less veiled with respect to its original properties.²¹ How-

²¹ Some late but surely valid data as an indication attest that in the tradition of ancient Egypt this word had some nuances, to say the least, which do not appear in the Hebrew *amen*: Hecataeus of Abdera, a writer of the fourth century BC, referring to the term *amoun*, said, “The Egyptians use this word when they want to call each other, because it is a vocative term; and insofar as they believe that the chief of the gods is the same as the universe which is dark, hidden and unknown, they pray to him to become manifest and known to them by calling him *Amoun*” (quoted by Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris*, VIII).

ever, we must also take into account that its inclusion into a newly formulated tradition, such as the one provided by the Mosaic message, had to give rise to a prophetic adaptation properly speaking, which necessarily conferred certain new characteristics to it. An Islamic account can clarify this point of the traditional history of the sacred word *Amen*.

The Messenger of God has said that he had received the word *amīn* by a privileged revelation and that before him “only Aaron could have received it since, while Moses was invoking divine assistance (*kāna yad‘ū*), Aaron supported him with *amen* (*yu’amminu*).”²² At issue then is the *amen* with a “con-

²² The full text of one of the hadith related to this point is: “I have been granted three distinctions: I have been granted the prayer in rows, the salutation of Peace (*al-salām*) which is the greeting of the people of Paradise, and the *amīn* that has not been given to anyone of those before you, except that Allah granted it to Aaron, for when Moses invoked the

firmative”function, and not the amen with an “affirmative” one. We must also note that it is not just due to the fact that someone accompanies someone else with his *amen* that proves the privileged receiving referred to by the Prophet Muhammad, for in this case whoever knew the (liturgical or devotional) Judaeo-Christian tradition of the *amen*, and quoted the case of Aaron for this purpose, would have not expressed himself in a suspicious manner. The Prophet must have had in mind a reception through direct revelation, implying a knowledge and an operative power which could be received only in this manner.



If we now consider the literal structure of the two words, *Om* (*A W M*) and *Amen* (*A M N*), we will note that it is fundamentally the same term, originally constituted by the two elements *A* and *M*,

divine intervention, Aaron supported him with his *amīn*.”

which correspond to the extreme points of the vocal range, the first constituting its primordial manifestation and the second its final extinction.²³ The third element which intervenes in the constitution of each of the two words differs, and it also plays a differentiating role: in the first case, given that the *u* which intervenes in *Aum* means “elevation” (*utkarsha*), we have the Word in an ascending and reabsorbing function; in the other, due to the fact that the *n* which concludes the term *amn*—vocalised as *Amen* or *Amīn*—carries a meaning of envelopment and conservation,²⁴ we have the Word in a confirmat-

²³ In addition, one may also note that in Arabic the corresponding letters, the *alif* and the *mīm*, are respectively symbols of the principle and of death.

²⁴ See René Guénon, *Fundamental Symbols*, ch. XXV: “The Mysteries of the Letter Nūn”. One may also note that the *nūn* as a letter and as a desinential morpheme (the *tanwīn*) is the characteristic ending element of the verses of the Qur’an, which underlines the synthetic function of this last

ive and conclusive function. In his response to these remarks by ourselves, René Guénon told us the following, which remains interesting regardless of our own considerations: “With respect to *Aum* and *Amīn*, the relationship of which you speak is perhaps indicated in a certain manner by the fact that the *wāw* represents the union of two other terms, whereas the *nūn* represents their product” (Letter from February 28, 1949).

The third element of each of the terms we are dealing with could in effect be just a secondary and logically later modification of a single, originally two-lettered term. It could also be said that the geographic areas over which the traditions possessing one or the other of these two sacred three-lettered terms extended were situated in an East-West line,

revelation of the legislating Word in the traditional cycle of our world.

and rather meridional, at least as far as their origins are concerned. Furthermore, one of the original locations of the monosyllable *om*, in one of its recognisable variations, is the Asian South and the islands of the Pacific, where in certain places it is pronounced *ām*.²⁵ Finally, in what appears to be a kind of extreme emigration, it is found among the Araucanians of Chile, whose “Pacific” Origin is already recognised.



As for the Araucanians, we quote from a report by a Catholic priest (R. P. Emile Housse: *Une épopée indienne*. Plon, 1939), regarding the description (p. 106) of a ceremony which accompanies a propitiatory sacrifice officiated by a Machi woman (a type of “Female

²⁵ Such is its pronunciation in India even among people in the South who speak Tamil and Malayalam. It is the same among peoples of Oceania (New Guinea). One might even think that these were traces of the original biliteralism mentioned above.

Druid” says the author): “Pages and black knights dancing backwards, followed by the Female Druid, the head of the party which guides her, musicians with whistles and flutes, and groups of people. All dance in harmony, to the sound of instruments. At each of the verses sung by the Machi woman, all respond with a prolonged “*ō-ō-ō-om!*” exclamation! Thus did the procession go around the rustic altar twenty-four times.”

Let us now look at another ceremony during which the pronunciation of the aforementioned term is associated with symbolic elements that corroborate its identification with the Hindu *ōm*. It regards a preparatory rite of consecration of Machi; this rite includes the erection of a sacred ladder, the *réhué*: “When the master of ceremonies signals, flutes, cornets and drums gather the people who stand in a circle. At the foot of the altar, the Druids slaughter lambs offered

by the family, they chop off their right ear, they soak in the blood flowing from the wound and they raise it, at arm's length, with the right hand. Then they turn towards the East, as well as the principal Machi, who utters a prayer: "O Dominator and Father of men, (...) Grant us, for sowing, good weather and rain, so that we have enough to live on! Do not send us flood. That, by your will, we enjoy happiness! *O ō! O om! Ou Oum!*

"And in a great cry the multitude repeats this as if it were final. At this point, the priests give the ear lambs to the owner of each animal. The owner, in turn, makes a plea aloud. Then, he puts this ear on the altar next to the container where Druids shed the blood of the sacrifices. The animals are then skinned. The donor takes back the head and half the ripped body body, and the immolator the other half. As for the heart, it is suspended from one of the branches

of Canelo. In addition, the generous guests hang the chickens killed for the feast they offer.

“The music starts again, and supports a general round that precipitates the enthusiasm: people walk around the *rébue*, jumping and swaying; riders full of flanges make wide circles. All, without exception, shout out *ō-ō-ō-om!* endlessly.” (*Ibid*, p. 100).

Having had the opportunity to share with René Guénon this finding and to comment somewhat on the document, we received the following response: “What you say about the existence of the mantra *Aum* among the Araucanians is truly very interesting, and I had never heard of it; your remark about the offering of the ear and its relationship with the primordial sound seems quite justified; and it is certainly also very remarkable to find this mantra in an area where we certainly cannot say that it came from India.” (Letter dated January 21st, 1949).



To be quite clear about the meaning of these findings, we must add that, contrary to what one might think about the general notions of pre-Indian origins of the Hindu tradition, the word *om* is not of Nordic origin and it is not Indo-Iranian either. This linguistic fact which is so fundamental to the symbolism as well as the ritual and spiritual technique of Hinduism does not, in fact, appear in the early Vedic texts, especially those of the *Rig-Veda*, as it does not appear in the texts of the Mazdean tradition which on the other hand is recognised as having a common cradle with Hinduism before their incorporation into independent traditions. Other Vedic texts established subsequently, in their present form at least, do possess the sacred monosyllable, even allied with verses from the *Rig-Veda* (as in the case of the *gayatri*) but this shows that the respective texts were composed through a

combination with elements belonging to indigenous traditions of India.²⁶

²⁶ The doctrine of the Trimurti does not appear in the *Rig-Veda*, and one may think that the symbolic relation with the constituting elements of *Om* that this doctrine shows subjects it to an analogous historical explanation.