

In this paper, I will attempt to illustrate on two examples that *in the basis of Durkheim's piacular rites lies obligation rather than individual emotion*, and that while this obligation stems from different expectations depending on the group, it ultimately ties back to Durkheim's notion of religion.

Firstly, it is important to understand the role piacular rites play in the life of the collective – despite being conducted under conditions of uncertainty or sadness (Durkheim, p. 393), piacular rites bring about the same collective effervescence as more joyful celebrations; Durkheim argues that piacular rites serve to mobilize all the energy in the society to combat a misfortune (Durkheim, pp. 410-411). These rites, arguably, aren't a result of the spontaneous individual emotion, but rather a product of obligation before the collective. To illustrate this point, consider the condoling ceremonies as a part of ritual practices brought to China by Jesuits, which are by themselves a piacular rite. These condoling practices, as adapted by Chinese Christians, discriminate between different groups within the collective (Standaert, p. 144) – Christians are not allowed to perform non-Christian rituals when condoling non-Christians, and vice versa. Following the establishment of these practices, the collective *expects* individuals to follow them. This transforms the act of condoling into an obligation to follow the expectation, and it is a vivid example of social duty. Durkheim views social duty as obligation that is sanctioned by social penalties (Durkheim, p. 401), which links back to his view of religion as a *system* of beliefs and practices; like the aforementioned condoling practices, its aim is to normalize certain behavior and outlaw the other. In this case, following those practices is independent of one's emotion – it is merely a matter of maintaining duty and order.

A different example, one of the death rituals in West Africa, presents Durkheim's view of social obligation in a different light; not as mere duty, but a sign of respect. As an example of piacular rite, conversations with the deceased at the cemeteries illustrate one's attachment to the society through a bond with the dead, wherein the latter proclaim that “death is upon everyone” (Henretta). This in turn strengthens the bond with the living by putting more value into the days left before their imminent demise. The dead are sacred; they are mourned and respected, yet both these feelings are, ultimately, duties imposed by the collective – by requiring one to abide by these rites, society forces them to accept it in their hearts (Durkheim, p. 403). Nonetheless, the sentiment of duty behind this rite stems from respect for the deceased, something everyone in the society can empathize with. According to Durkheim, the source of such obligation is ‘mythical’ in origin – fear to anger the dead, where in the *respect* is born. In recent times, however, there have been fewer visitors to the cemeteries (Henretta), which might indicate that the backbone of the aforementioned rite was, in fact, a social duty, that naturally vanished as the system of practices, which it was established under, changed.

To conclude, the notion of ‘obligation’ in piacular rites ultimately links back to social order. Durkheim claims that society as a whole cannot be reduced to an individual level, and it is this fact that sets up certain expectations for the members of that society; ‘obligation’, as discussed, can be a result of respect for that expectation or a social duty, and it is independent from individuals' emotional states (Durkheim, p. 401)