**Ceremony**

**1605** [BACON](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-b.html#bacon) *Adv. Learn.* II. xi. §3 That Ceremonies, Characters, and Charmes doe worke, not by any Tacite or Sacramentall contract with euill spirits, but [etc.]

The word seems to have entered the English language in the 1380s from French, ultimately from Latin *caerimonia*, meaning sacredness, an exhibition of reverence, or a religious rite. In his essay *Of Ceremonies and Respects* (1597) commends ceremonies as instrumental in advancing the respect paid to great men, although must be used only moderately. ‘Men’s behaviour should be like their apparel, not to strait or point device, but free for exercise or motion’ (Bacon 1865 212).

**2. Reformation**

In the ‘Lollard’ translation of the Vulgate (1382), now known as ‘Wycliffe’s Bible’ but probably written by several hands, we read ‘That Abraham..wolde holde my seremonyes and lawis.’ For ‘*Abraham … caerimonias legesque servaverit’* (Genesis 26.5). It is significant that the word ‘ceremonies’ is eschewed by the translators of the Geneva Bible of 1560: they substitute ‘statutes’ for the Latin word. Similarly when 1382 translates ‘*caerimonias iustaque iudicia’* (Deut. 4.8) as ‘ceremonies and righteous dooms’, Geneva offers ‘ordinances and laws’. We might deduce that medieval ceremonies incorporated the patterns of a just order, whereas Reformation distrust of the visible symbols had led the translators back to the revealed truths that lay behind church rituals.

**3. Sacred object**s

**Britannica**: Ceremonial and ritualistic objects as indicators or bearers of the sacred or holy

Liturgical and ceremonial objects can also indicate or lead to the sacred or holy. Not only holy pictures and symbols (e.g., the cross in Christianity or the mirror in Japanese Shintō) but also lights, candles, lamps, vessels for holy materials, liturgical books, holy writings, vestments, and sacred ornaments are indicators of the sacred or holy. **Liturgical vestments and masks are intended to transform the wearer, to remove him from the realm of the this-worldly, and to adapt him to the sphere of the sacred or holy**; they help him to come into contact with the divine—for example, by obscuring his sexual characteristics. The vestments may be covered with symbols, such as those worn by Arctic shamans (medicine men with psychic transformation abilities). They are signs of the function of the wearer and his relationships to the sacred or holy and to the profane world. Such vestments are frequently derived from those of rulers or from ceremonial court dress; e.g., Japanese Shintō and Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christianity. They are supposed to create a fitting atmosphere of solemnity and dignity. In Western Christianity, the liturgical vestments have a very specific symbolism: the alb (a tunic) symbolizes purity of heart; the stole, the raiment of immortality; and the chasuble (an outer eucharistic, or holy communion, vestment), the yoke of Christ. The liturgical vestments of the Eastern Christian churches have a similar symbolism. The ritual headdress and the crown express the sacred dignity of the wearer. The vestments of the various religious orders (Oriental and Occidental) express the holiness of the members of the community, their nearness to the sacred or holy, and the significance of religious life for them. In the reception ritual of Jainism and Buddhism, the monastic vestments are put on as a sign of an entrance in a new state of life. This ritual in Jainism resembles that of a wedding ceremony. The taking over of the monastic garb is an essential part of becoming a sādhu. The monks of the Jainistic Śvetāmbara sect wear five objects (e.g., shells) as symbols of the five monastic virtues. In early Christianity the white baptismal vestment was a symbol of rebirth, new life, and innocence.

Other relations between the symbol and the sacred

The sacred or holy as represented or manifested in the symbol has, generally speaking, a sanctifying function (elevating one to a closer relationship to the sacred or holy) and an exorcising function (decreasing or eliminating those aspects that hinder one's relationship to the sacred or holy). Remembrance (anamnēsis) and imitation (mimēsis) are the analogous and associative means of representing the reality and indestructibility of the sacred or holy and its power, which defends, protects from injury, bans evil, and guarantees salvation. Symbolic signs and pictures (e.g., masks; sex, animal, or plant symbols, such as the skulls or horns of animals) are placed on houses and sacred places to make present the saving and sanctifying power of the sacred or holy.

[ME. *cerymonye*, *sery-*, prob. a. OF. *cerymonie*, *serimonie*, ? *cerimoine*, ad. L. ***cærimnia*** sacredness, sanctity; awe, reverence; exhibition of reverence or veneration, religious rite, ceremony: for conjectures as to derivation of which see the Lat. Dicts. and Skeat. The ME. forms in *-moyne* prob. represent Anglo-Fr. variants: cf. the F. ending *-moin* from L. *-mnium*, and pairs like *glorie*, *gloire*, etc., and see [-MONY](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/cgi/crossref?query_type=word&queryword=ceremony&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&search_id=0iqO-82ugTu-6370&result_place=1&xrefword=-mony). In med.L. often spelt *cere-*; since 16th c. this spelling has been established in Fr. and Eng.]

**1.** An outward rite or observance, religious or held sacred; the performance of some solemn act according to prescribed form; a solemnity.

***c*1380** [WYCLIF](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-w3.html#wyclif) *Sel. Wks.* III. 431 And cerimonyes of ye olde lawe, betere an es, ben tauht to be left bi lore of Poul. **1382** **BIBLE *Gen.* xxvi. 5 That Abraham..wolde holde my seremonyes and lawis. *Deut.* iv. 8 Ceremoyns and rytwis domis. 1447** [**O. BOKENHAM**](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-b3.html#o-bokenham) ***Seyntys* (1835) 11 It was doon in ful solemne wyse And** with many a cerymonye. ***c*1535** [G. DU WES](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-d2.html#g-du-wes) *Introd. Fr.* in *Palsgr.* 1067 The ceremonyes of the Masse. **1549** *Compl. Scot.* Ded. 7 Ensens to mak the seremons of his sacrefeis. **1590** [SHAKES.](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-s2.html#shakes) *Mids. N.* V. i. 55 Some Satire..Not sorting with a nuptiall ceremonie. **1611** BIBLE *Numb.* ix. 3 According to all the ceremonies thereof shall ye keepe it. **1641** [‘SMECTYMNUUS’](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-s3.html#smectymnuus) *Vind. Answ.* §13. 163 It is ordinarily said, No Ceremony, no Bishop. **1710** *Answ. Sacheverell's Serm.* 7 Old antiquated Ceremonies. **1770** [LANGHORNE](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-l.html#langhorne) *Plutarch* (1879) I. 161/2 The vestals remained a considerable time at Cære..and hence those rites were called *Ceremonies*. **1856** [EMERSON](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-e.html#emerson) *Eng. Traits* Wks. (Bohn) II. 49 They repeated the ceremonies of the eleventh century in the coronation of the present Queen.

**b.** *disparagingly*. A rite or observance regarded as merely formal or external; an empty form. Sometimes regarded as symbolic or typical.

***a*1533** [FIRTH](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-f.html#firth) *Purgatory* II. Wks. (1573) 38 Shal we become Jewes and go backe to the shadow and ceremonie, sith we haue the body and signification whiche is Christ? **1621** [BURTON](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-b4.html#burton) *Anat. Mel.* II. iii. II. (1676) 197/1 It is *non ens*, a meer flash, a ceremony, a toy, a thing of nought. **1631** [J. BURGES](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-b4.html#j-burges) *Answ. Rejoined* 29 A Ceremony is an outward action designed or purposely observed and done in reference to some other thing to the substance whereof it doth not belong. **1693** *Col. Rec. Penn.* I. 420 There is no obligation to use the seal. It is onlie a Ceremonie. **1841** [THIRLWALL](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-t.html#thirlwall) *Greece* (1844) VIII. lxii. 141 The custom had probably been long a mere ceremony.

**c.** *loosely*. Applied to a thing done in a formal or ceremonious way; a stately formality.

**1802** [M. EDGEWORTH](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-e.html#m-edgeworth) *Moral T.* (1816) I. i. 5 Thank God, the ceremony of dinner is over.

**2.** A formal act or observance, expressive of deference or respect to superiors in rank, or established by custom in social intercourse; a usage of courtesy, politeness, or civility.

***c*1386** [CHAUCER](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-c2.html#chaucer) *Sqr.'s T.* 507 This god of loue..Doeth so hise cerymonyes and obeisances. **1528** [MORE](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-m4.html#more) *Heresyes* I. Wks. 107/2 Without any strayning of curtesie, whereof the serimonyes in disputacion marreth much of the matter. **1597-8** [BACON](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-b.html#bacon) *Ess. Cerem. & Resp.* (Arb.) 26/1 Ceremonies..be not to bee omitted to straungers and strange natures. **1778** [F. BURNEY](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-d.html#f-burney) *Evelina* vii, I seldom use the ceremony of waiting for answers.

**3.** (without *a* or *pl.*) Formal observances or usages collectively, or as an order of things:    **a.** in reference to matters of religion or state: Performance of rites, ceremonial observance.

**1759** [ROBERTSON](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-r2.html#robertson) *Hist. Scot.* I. IV. 266 Intrusted with matters of mere ceremony alone. **1771** *Junius Lett.* lv. 273 A true and hearty christian, in substance, not in ceremony. **1836** [HOR. SMITH](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-s3.html#hor-smith) *Tin Trump.* (1876) 76 Ceremony..all that is considered necessary by many in religion and friendship. **1856** [EMERSON](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-e.html#emerson) *Eng. Traits* xiii. Wks. (Bohn) II. 97 The national temperament deeply enjoys the unbroken order and tradition of its church; the liturgy, ceremony, architecture.

**b.** Precise observance of conventional forms of deference or respect; formality, ceremoniousness. ***without ceremony***: off-hand, unceremoniously. ***to stand upon ceremony***: to insist upon the punctilious observances of formalities or refuse to go on without them. (Cf. Shakespeare's use in 5.)

**1603** [JAS. I.](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-j.html#jas-i) in Ellis *Orig. Lett.* Ser. I. 243 III. 78 Not with that ceremonie as towardis straingeris. **1605** [SHAKES.](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-s2.html#shakes) *Macb.* III. iv. 36 The sawce to meate is Ceremony. **1709** [STEELE](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-s4.html#steele) *Tatler* No. 21 8 Without further Ceremony, I will go on to relate a singular Adventure. **1798** [JANE AUSTEN](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-a2.html#jane-austen) *Northang. Abb.* viii, I never stand upon ceremony with such people. **1833** [H. MARTINEAU](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-m2.html#h-martineau) *Loom & Lugg.* II. vi. 113 Without ceremony the two young ladies ran out of the room. **1866** [G. MACDONALD](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-m.html#g-macdonald) *Ann. Q. Neighb.* xxv. (1878) 436, I was shown with much ceremony..into the presence of two ladies.

**c.** Ceremonious respect or regard.

**1607** [TOPSELL](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-t2.html#topsell) *Four-f. Beasts* 264 The Romans had the Equestrial Statues in great reverence and ceremony. **1675** tr. *Machiavelli's Wks.* (1675) 255 Oliveretto having paid his ceremony fell in with the rest.

**d.** Ceremonial display, pomp, state. *arch.*

**1599** [SHAKES.](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-s2.html#shakes) *Hen. V*, IV. i. 256 What haue Kings, that Priuates haue not too, Saue ceremonie. **1710** *Lond. Gaz.* No. 4742/2 He was brought in Ceremony from the Princess-Royal's Apartment. **1859** [TENNYSON](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-t.html#tennyson) *Enid* 297 His dress a suit of fray'd magnificence, Once fit for feasts of ceremony.

**4.** *concr.* An external accessory or symbolical ‘attribute’ of worship, state, or pomp. *Obs.*

**1581** [SIDNEY](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-s2.html#sidney) *Apol. Poetrie* (Arb.) 47 Æneas..carrying away his religious ceremonies. **1601** [SHAKES.](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-s2.html#shakes) *Jul. C.* I. i. 70 Disrobe the Images If you do finde them deckt with Ceremonies. **1603** *Meas. for M.* II. ii. 59. **1605** *Journ. Earl Nottingh.* in *Harl. Misc.* (Malh.) II. 553 Dukes of especial name bearing divers ceremonies..as the Salera or salt borne by one, the taper of wax by another, the chrism by another. **1709** [STRYPE](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-s5.html#strype) *Ann. Ref.* xliv. 454 The ceremonies of cap and surplice.

**5.** A portent, omen: (drawn from the performance of some rite). *Obs.*

**1601** [SHAKES.](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-s2.html#shakes) *Jul. C.* II. i. 197 He is Superstitious growne of late, Quite from the maine Opinion he held once, Of Fantasie, of Dreames, and Ceremonies. *Ibid.* II. ii. 13, I neuer stood on Ceremonies, Yet now they fright me.

**6.** ***master of the ceremonies***: the person who superintends the ceremonies observed in a place of state or on some public occasion.

**1662** [GERBIER](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-g.html#gerbier) *Princ.* (1665) Ded., My place of Master of the Ceremonies, which the King confirmed unto me during my life. **1748** [SMOLLETT](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-s3.html#smollett) *Rod. Rand.* lv, Mr. Nash..commonly attends in this place..as master of the ceremonies. **1798** [JANE AUSTEN](http://dictionary.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/help/bib/oed2-a2.html#jane-austen) *Northang. Abb.* I. iii, The master of the ceremonies introduced to her a very gentlemanlike young man as a partner. **1888** *Court Guide*, H. M. Household, Master of Ceremonies. General Sir F. Seymour.

**7.** *Comb.*, as ***ceremony-monger***.

**1681** in *Roxb. Bal.* (1886) VI. 3 A Ceremony-Monger, who rails at Dissenters, And damns Non-Conformists in the Pulpit he enters. **1710** *Answ. Sacheverell's Serm.* 6 The rigid Ceremony-mongers did hate the Religious part of the Nation.