THE RITES OF PASSAGE

By Arnold van Gennep

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Introduction by SOLON T. KIMBALL

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monoleine explanations of the development of civilization. Adolph Bastian had labored assiduously in gathering the materials that would give a firm base to the new discipline of anthropology. E. B. Tylor, in his new classic concept of "animism," had already struck a blow for the dialectic of science in its struggle with the prevailing supernaturalism, which had been inherited from medievalism. Auguste Comte had proclaimed the principles on which an objective science of society might be achieved. Interest in the objective analysis of religion and customs had reached a new height.

Systematic ethnographic studies of peoples from all portions of the globe had begun to make their appearance. Accounts frequently used for comparative analysis included descriptions of the native Australians, the Todas of India, the Masai of Africa, and numerous other tribal groups in America, Asia, and Africa. These detailed descriptions were a welcome addition to the earlier accounts provided by missionary, traveler, or colonial administrator.

Studies and theories of religious belief and ceremonialism were of particular interest to van Gennep. He was conversant with, although sometimes critical of, the writings of Andrew Lang, William Robertson Smith, Jane E. Harrison, Alfred E. Crawley, Henri Hubert, James G. Frazer, and many others; his main objections centered upon their classifications or interpretations and not upon the main current of intellectual and scientific inquiry in which they moved. There was agreement among them in their general abandonment of supernaturalism and in their desire to provide a rational explanation of religious behavior by tracing historical origins, making comparative analyses, or presenting functional interpretations. It was a period in which the creation of classificatory categories was a major concern of scientific thinking. Van Gennep also utilized taxonomic principles, but he was vehement in his protest against those who extracted from "context" data which supported their theses. He was insistent that ceremonies needed to be examined in their entirety and in the social setting in which they were found. In this he anticipated the soon-to-appear writings of the "functionalists," Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski.

The major source of van Gennep's inspiration, of course, came from the tradition of positivism—the insistence that general laws of social process should be derived from empirical observation rather than from metaphysical speculation. Henri Hubert, Marcel Mauss, and Emile Durkheim were his contemporaries, and were also numbered among those who found inspiration in Comte. Although labeled "sociologists," they showed little resemblance to their English and American colleagues, who were concerned with normative, evolutionary, or organic interpretations. The approach used by this group of French scholars places them in the tradition of what is today known as functional anthropology.

II The analysis of ceremonies accompanying an individual's "life crises" which van Gennep called rites de passage is usually considered to be his unique contribution. He pointed out that, when the activities associated with such ceremonies were examined in terms of their order and content, it was possible to distinguish three major phases: separation (séparation), transition (marge), and incorporation (agrégation). Considered as a whole, he labeled these the schéma of rites de passage. Passage might more appropriately have been translated as "transition," but in deference to van Gennep and general usage of the term "rites of passage," this form of the translation has been preserved. His term schéma has usually been translated as "pattern," although the flavor of his usage inclines one toward "dynamics" if such a term might be construed to include "process" and "structure."

The examination of any life-crisis ceremony will quickly establish the validity of the threefold classification of separation, transition, and incorporation. But van Gennep cautions us that these three subcategories are not developed to the
same extent by all peoples or in every set of ceremonies. “Rites of separation are prominent in funeral ceremonies, rites of incorporation at marriages. Transition rites may play an important part, for instance, in pregnancy, betrothal, and initiation; or they may be reduced to a minimum in adoption, in the delivery of a second child, in remarriage, or in the passage from the second to the third age group.”

Although concern with the prevalence and elaborateness of different rites is a necessary consideration in the examination of any society or in comparative analyses of several societies, there is the danger that such routine or mechanical operation may ignore the theoretical problems in which van Gennep was also engrossed. He was interested not alone in the “what” but also in the “how” and “why.” He does not devote the same degree of attention to these questions, however, as he does to those necessary to establish the universality and validity of the dynamics which he is examining. Oftentimes, he seems to leave such problems as unstated assumptions in his specific analyses.

It would seem wise to call attention to some of these principles so that the reader will be explicitly conscious of them and will thus gain a fuller understanding of this work. Van Gennep saw “regeneration” as a law of life and of the universe: the energy which is found in any system gradually becomes spent and must be renewed at intervals. For him, this regeneration is accomplished in the social world by the rites of passage given expression in the rites of death and rebirth. The full significance of this idea may be grasped, however, only when its relation to other concepts is seen. Van Gennep, with others, accepted the dichotomy of the sacred and the profane; in fact, this is a central concept for understanding the transitional stage in which an individual or group finds itself from time to time. The sacred is not an absolute value but one relative to the situation. The person who enters a status at variance with the one previously held becomes “sacred” to the others who remain in the profane state. It is this new condition which calls for rites eventually incorporating the individual into the group and returning him to the customary routines of life. These changes may be dangerous, and, at the least, they are upsetting to the life of the group and the individual. The transitional period is met with rites of passage which cushion the disturbance. In one sense all life is transition, with rhythmic periods of quiescence and heightened activity.

Van Gennep also applied his system to the analysis of the periodic changes associated with natural phenomena. Ceremonies which accompany and assure the changes of the year, season, or month are rites of passage: new year ceremonies would include rites of expulsion of winter and incorporation of spring—the one dies and the other is reborn. He also points out that seasonal changes interest men only insofar as they affect economic activities.

Two or three additional points deserve mention. Van Gennep makes a sharp distinction in the difference between religion and magic. The latter comprises the techniques—ceremonies, rites, services—which, when accompanied by metaphysical theory, constitutes religion. But van Gennep also links theory and practice in science in a comparable manner. This definition is more comprehensive and hence more useful than those advanced by either Durkheim or Malinowski.

Van Gennep was also insistent that puberty ceremonies were misnamed, since this type of rite occurred at ages which had no specific relation to the physical appearance of sexual maturity. He considered these rites to be primarily rites of separation from an asexual world, followed by rites of incorporation into a sexual world. His interpretation is at some variance with both popular belief and psychoanalytic theory.

When van Gennep summarized those aspects of his work which he believed important, he stated, “Our interest lies not in the particular rites but in their essential significance and their relative positions within ceremonial wholes, that
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is, their order.” He then added that the “underlying arrangement is always the same”; it is the pattern of the rites of passage. “The second fact to be pointed out—whose generality no one seems to have noticed previously—is the existence of transitional periods which sometimes acquire a certain autonomy.” His third point was the relationship between actual spatial passage and the change in social position, expressed in such ritualization of movements from one status to another as an “opening of the doors.”

These were major contributions in the epoch in which van Gennep wrote; they helped to clarify and to systematize existing data for the benefit of subsequent scholars. But there were additional penetrating insights which have direct relevance for some of our contemporary problems. For example, in his examination of ritual exchanges van Gennep anticipated Malinowski’s brilliant analysis of the function of “reciprocity.” His study of initiation ceremonies holds implications for learning theory that have yet to be explored. His analysis of rites of incorporation is valid for understanding the problems associated with the “alienated” and the “unclaimed” of modern societies. Finally, his basic thesis has direct relevance for theories of change.

III

The estimate of a man’s contribution to knowledge or theory is often based on the extent to which his ideas have become incorporated into the literature, or to which they have been attacked, defended, or further expanded. If we are to use this basis for our estimate of van Gennep, it seems wise to attempt an estimate of the evidence. The tradition of nonteoretical descriptive narrative has been deeply imbedded in anthropological field studies, which continue to report life-crisis ceremonies—a practice which had been established previous to the publication of Les rites de passage. Only Alfred M. Tozzer among American anthropologists has given an extended analysis of van Gennep’s theories (1925). Others who have examined life-crisis situations from a theoretical position have been much

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less interested in the analysis of the ceremonies and their patterns than in their relation to culture and personality. This emphasis is represented in monographs by Margaret Mead (1930), Gregory Bateson (1936), and Cora DuBois (1944). In addition, there has been a shift of anthropological interest away from religion and ceremonials since the days of the excellent studies produced by Washington Matthews, Alice C. Fletcher and Francis LaFlesche, Ruth Bunzel, and Elsie Clews Parsons, to name only a few American workers. Presumably, the same trend may be discovered among anthropologists of other nationalities.

An additional test of the impact made by van Gennep is to examine the literature dealing with primitive religion. With the exception of Paul Radin (Primitive Religion, 1937), not a single author refers to van Gennep or specifically analyzes rites de passage. Radin devotes a full chapter to the consideration of these ceremonies, but comparable material is significantly missing from Robert H. Lowie (Primitive Religion, 1924), Rafael Karsten (The Origins of Religion, 1935), Wilson D. Wallis (Religion in Primitive Society, 1939), and W. W. Howells (The Heathens, 1948). Father Wilhelm Schmidt (The Origin and Growth of Religion, 1931) refers to van Gennep’s interpretation of Australian concepts of mythical figures (Mythes et légendes d’Australie, 1906), but only for the purpose of quarrelling with him.

It would be naive to assume that the failure to include van Gennep’s contribution—or what might be an even more serious deficiency, the failure to give separate treatment to rites of passage—is any indication of the significance of theory and ritual in this area of religious and social life. Examination of the content of these works establishes that their authors were interested in quite other subjects, such as the aboriginal distribution of monotheism, the growth and spread of religious ideas, or topical aspects of religious behavior. This orientation was not one which interested van Gennep, and he took occasion to indicate the deficiencies of such approaches.
publisher has been a victim of the scholar and friend within him. I hope that, at least, he will not be a victim of the reader.

A. v. G.

Clamart
December, 1908

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Each larger society contains within it several distinctly separate social groupings. As we move from higher to lower levels of civilization, the differences among these groups become accentuated and their autonomy increases. In contrast, the only clearly marked social division remaining in modern society is that which distinguishes between the secular and the religious worlds—between the profane and the sacred. Since the time of the Renaissance the relations between these two realms have undergone all kinds of changes within nations and states. But it is a significant fact that, because of fundamental differences between them, secular and religious groups as a whole have remained separate throughout the countries of Europe. The nobility, the world of finance, the working classes, retain their identities without regard—in theory at least—for national boundaries.

In addition, all these groups break down into still smaller societies or subgroups. We find distinctions between the higher nobility and the landed gentry, between high finance and small moneylending, as well as among the various professions and trades. For a man to pass from group to group—for example, for a peasant to become an urban worker, or even for a mason's helper to rise to mason—he must fulfill certain conditions, all of which have one thing in common: their basis is purely economic or intellectual. On the other hand, for a layman to enter the priesthood or for a priest to be unfrocked calls for ceremonies, acts of a special kind, derived from a particular feeling and a particular frame of mind. So great is the incompatibility between the profane and the sacred worlds that a man cannot pass from one to the other without going through an intermediate stage.

1 To van Gennep, as to many writers of his time and ours, the term "modern" implies essentially the pattern of industrial society found in western Europe and the United States. All further notes by the translator appear in brackets; the author's original notes are without brackets.
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As we move downward on the scale of civilizations (taking the term "civilization" in the broadest sense), we cannot fail to note an ever-increasing domination of the secular by the sacred. We see that in the least advanced cultures the holy enters nearly every phase of a man's life. Being born, giving birth, and hunting, to cite but a few examples, are all acts whose major aspects fall within the sacred sphere. Social groups in such societies likewise have magico-religious foundations, and a passage from group to group takes on that special quality found in our rites of baptism and ordination.

At the simplest level of development, too, there are social groups that reach across boundaries. For example, a totem clan is recognized as a single intertribal unit among all the tribes of Australia, and its members look upon one another as brothers for the same reason as do Roman Catholic priests, no matter what country they live in. Bonds of caste, on the other hand, present a more complicated problem, for here differences based on occupational specialization are added to those founded on kinship. While modern societies reduce to a theoretical minimum the distinction between male and female, it plays a role of considerable importance among semicivilized peoples, who rigidly separate the sexes in the economic, the political, and, above all, the magico-religious sphere. The family, whether conceived on a broader or narrower basis than in our own culture, is likewise sharply defined among semicivilized peoples. Furthermore, while a tribe may or may not form part of a larger political unit, it is in all cases endowed with an individuality comparable in rigidity to the narrow parochialism of the ancient Greek city-states. To all the above-mentioned group distinctions, the semicivilized add still another—one for which our society has no real counterpart—a division into generation or age groups.1

The life of an individual in any society is a series of pas-

1 [Writing in Europe in 1908, van Gennep did not know the awareness of age distinctions characteristic of modern American society.]

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sages from one age to another and from one occupation to another. Wherever there are fine distinctions among age or occupational groups, progression from one group to the next is accompanied by special acts, like those which make up apprenticeship in our trades. Among semicivilized peoples such acts are enveloped in ceremonies, since to the semicivilized mind no act is entirely free of the sacred. In such societies every change in a person's life involves actions and reactions between sacred and profane—actions and reactions to be regulated and guarded so that society as a whole will suffer no discomfort or injury. Transitions from group to group and from one social situation to the next are looked on as implicit in the very fact of existence, so that a man's life comes to be made up of a succession of stages with similar ends and beginnings: birth, social puberty,1 marriage, fatherhood, advancement to a higher class, occupational specialization, and death. For every one of these events there are ceremonies whose essential purpose is to enable the individual to pass from one defined position to another which is equally well defined. Since the goal is the same, it follows of necessity that the ways of attaining it should be at least analogous, if not identical in detail (since in any case the individual involved has been modified by passing through several stages and traversing several boundaries).

Thus we encounter a wide degree of general similarity among ceremonies of birth, childhood, social puberty, betrothal, marriage, pregnancy, fatherhood, initiation into religious societies, and funerals. In this respect, man's life resembles nature, from which neither the individual nor the society stands independent. The universe itself is governed by a periodicity which has repercussions on human life, with stages and transitions, movements forward, and periods of relative inactivity. We should therefore include among ceremonies of human passage those rites occasioned by

1 [Van Gennep distinguishes between social and physiological puberty (see chap. vii).]
Celestial changes, such as the changeover from month to month (ceremonies of the full moon), from season to season (festivals related to solstices and equinoxes), and from year to year (New Year's Day). All these rites should, it seems to me, be grouped together, though all the details of the proposed scheme cannot be worked out as yet. The study of ritual has made great progress in recent years, but we are still far from knowing either the function or the manner of operation of every single rite, and we lack the knowledge necessary to construct a definitive classification of rites. The first step toward the development of such a classification was a separation of rites into two kinds, sympathetic and contagious.

Sympathetic rites—those based on belief in the reciprocal action of like on like, of opposite on opposite, of the container and the contained, of the part and the whole, of image and real object or real being, or word and deed—were first considered as such by Tylor. Later many of their varieties were studied in Great Britain by Lang, Clodd, Hartland, and several others; in France this work was done

1 I have purposely retained the term "sympathetic," although Frazer, Haddon, and others have accepted a division of sympathetic magic into contagious magic and homoeopathic magic. They are therefore obliged to create a special place for homoeopathic magic, and to homoeopathic they will have to add allelography or enanthrophathy, etc. (See my report on Frazer's Lectures on the Early History of the Kingship in "Revue de l'histoire des religions," III (1896), 396-401.) The classification made by Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, in "Essai d'une théorie générale de la magic," Annales sociologiques, VI (1903-4), 62 ff., 66 ff., is likewise too artificial: "abstract and impersonal images based on similarity, contiguity, and opposition" become "three aspects of the same idea"—which is that of the sacred and also that of mana, which in turn is "the genus of which the sacred is a species." 2 Edward Burnett Tylor, Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom (2 vols.; 1st ed.; London, 1871). 3 Andrew Lang, Myth, Ritual, and Religion (1st ed.; 2 vols.; London: Longmans, Green, 1891). French translation, 1 vol.; Paris, 1898); The Making of Religion (1st ed.; London: Longmans, Green, 1899, 2d ed.; 1900); Magic and Religion (London: Longmans, Green, 1901). 4 Edward Clodd, Tom, Tit, Tot: An Essay on Savage Philosophy in Folk-tale (London: Duckworth, 1898). 5 Edwin Sidney Hartland, The Science of Fairy Tales (London: W. Scott, 1891); The Legend of Perseus (Griffin Library Nos. 2, 3, 5; 3 vols.; London: D. Nutt, 1894-96), certain chapters.

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by Réville, Marillier, and several others; in Germany, by Liebrecht, Andree, Koch, Schultze, and others; in the Netherlands, by Tiele, Wilken, Krujft, and others; in Belgium by Monsieur De Cock; while in the United States they have been investigated by Brinton and several others. Oddly enough, however, none of the researchers who adhered to the animistic school developed a rigorous classification of the beliefs and the rites they outlined. Their writings are collections of parallels taken out of context and divorced from ritual sequences rather than attempts at systematization. Here their thinking undoubtedly shows the influence of Adolf Bastian. In his youth, Bastian had discovered the concept of Volkergedanken ("folk ideas"), and he adhered rigidly to this notion to the end of his long career. Bastian's influence lies at the very foundation of Taylor's Primitive Culture, which for about thirty years after its publication in 1871 provided the framework for all kinds of complementary research, particularly in Russia.

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On the other hand, Mannhardt's work led to a new orientation, although it remained unknown until Frazer demonstrated its fruitfulness. Together Mannhardt and Frazer created a school, to which Smith contributed a new line of approach—study of the holy, the sacred, the pure, and the impure. Among those who were to subscribe to this tradition were Hartland, Crawley, Cook, Harrison, and Jevons in England; Dieterich and Preuss in Germany; Reimach, Hubert, and Mauz in France; and Hoffmann-Krämer in Switzerland. Actually, the Bastian-Tylor school and that of Mannhardt, Frazer, Smith, and their successors were very closely related.

Contemporaneously, still another school was coming into

1 Wilhelm Mannhardt, Antike Wald und Feldkulte (2d ed.; Berlin, 1904); "Mythologische Forschungen aus dem Nachkamp," Quellen und Forschungen, Vol. LI (1887).
3 W. Robertson Smith, Lectures on the Religion of the Semites (A. & C. Black, 1889. New ed.; 1903); German translation by Stübe, Die Religion der Semiten (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1899). [While Van Gennep made use of the German translation of this work, the translator has drawn directly on the original (3d ed.; New York: Macmillan, 1917).]
4 Hartland, The Legend of Perseus, certain chapters, and numerous analyses in Folk-lore (London).
6 A. B. Cook, "The European Sky-God" (a series of articles), Folk-lore, Vol. XV, Nos. 3, 4; Vol. XVI, No. 3; Vol. XVII, Nos. 1-4; Vol. XVIII, No. 1 (1905-7); and articles in the Classical Review.
7 Jane E. Harrison, Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903).
9 Alfred Dietrich, Eine Mikralsiturgie (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903); Mutter Erde (Leipzig: Teubner, 1905); and other works.
10 Conrad Theodor Preuss, "Philhalleische Fruchtbarkeitäulämone als Träger des altmexikanischen Dramas: Ein Beitrag zur Urgeschichte des mнимischen Welt-

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being—the dynamic school. Maret in England and Hewitt in America had taken a stand in sharp opposition to the animistic theory. Both pointed out the weakness in the concept of animism previously glimpsed by Tiele (namely, polyzoism or polyzoïdatry) and put forward the dynamic theory. This theory was further elaborated by Preuss in Germany; by Farwell, Haddon, and Hartland in England; and by Hubert, Mauz, and van Gennep in France (among others); and today it continues to draw adherents.

This double stream of theory enables us to assert that in addition to sympathetic rites, and ritual with an animistic basis, there exist groups of dynamic rites (i.e., rites based on a concept of a power, such as mana, that is not personalized) as well as contagious rites. The rites in this last group are characterized by a belief that natural or acquired characteristics are material and transmissible (either through physical contact or over a distance). We should note that sympathetic rites are not necessarily animistic, nor contagious rites necessarily dynamic.

3 C. G. Tiele, "Religions," Encyclopaedia Britannica (9th ed.), and other works.
4 [The Oxford English Dictionary defines polyzoism as "the property in a complex organism, of being composed of minor and quasi-independent organisms (like Polyzoa)."]
8 Edwin Sidney Hartland, Address as President of Section H (Anthropology) of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Seventh-sixth Meeting, York, 1906. Published in Reports of Meetings (London: John Murray, 1907), LXXVI, 675-90.
9 Hubert and Mauz, "Erwacht einer theorie generale de la magie."
four classes are independent, although they have been grouped in pairs by the two schools studying magico-religious phenomena from different points of view.

Secondly, we can distinguish between rites which act directly and those which act indirectly. A direct rite, for example a curse or a spell, is designed to produce results immediately, without intervention by any outside agent. On the other hand, an indirect rite—be it vow, prayer, or religious service—is a kind of initial blow which sets into motion some autonomous or personified power, such as a demon, a group of jinn, or a deity, who intervenes on behalf of the performer of the rite. The effect of a direct rite is automatic; that of an indirect rite comes as a repercussion. An indirect rite is not necessarily animistic. To cite one example, when a central Australian aborigine rubs an arrow against a certain stone, he charges it with a magic power called arungquitla. Later, he will shoot this arrow in the direction of an enemy, and as the arrow falls the arungquitla will follow its course and strike down the enemy.\(^1\) The power is thus transmitted with the help of a carrier, and the rite is accordingly dynamic, contagious, and indirect.

Finally, we may also draw a distinction between positive rites (or volitions translated into action) and negative rites. The latter, now known as taboos, are prohibitions, commands “not to do” or “not to act.” Psychologically, they correspond to negative volitions, just as positive rites are the equivalents of positive volitions. In other words, taboos also translate a kind of will and are acts rather than negations of acts. But just as life is not made up of perennial inaction, so by itself a taboo does not make up a ceremony, let alone a magic spell.\(^2\) In this sense a taboo is not autono-

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1 See my Mythes et légendes d’Australie, p. lxxxvi.
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demon or spirit who personified the illness. To cite one concrete example, the rite of passage through or across something (which will be discussed later in greater detail) is open to several interpretations—one animistic and indirect, the other dynamic and direct. In the attempt to formulate an acceptable systematization of rites, general treatises prove of little help: their authors as a rule include only those elements of a ceremony which serve their purposes. Moreover, their classifications are usually based on external similarities rather than on the dynamics of the rite, and this is particularly true in the work of folklorists.

Most ceremonies of a given kind fall into the same category. Accordingly, most pregnancy rites are dynamic, contagious, direct, and negative, while most childbirth rites are animistic, sympathetic, indirect, and positive. But it is always just a matter of proportion; an animistic, positive ritual will include a counterpart of dynamic, and positive or animistic, contagious, and indirect rites. Limitations of space prevent me from indicating in each instance the proper category for every particular rite, but at least I should state that I have not interpreted the many rites analyzed here unilaterally.

Once a classification of ritual dynamics has been established, it becomes relatively easy to understand the basis of characteristic patterns in the order of ceremonies. Yet theoreticians have rarely attempted a classification of these ceremonial patterns. There are excellent works on one or another of their aspects, but only a few carry through a complete set of ceremonies in order from beginning to end, and still fewer are the studies of ceremonial patterns in relation to one another (cf. chap. x).

The present volume is intended to be such a study. I have tried to assemble here all the ceremonial patterns which accompany a passage from one situation to another or from one cosmic or social world to another. Because of the importance of these transitions, I think it legitimate to single out rites of passage as a special category, which under fur-

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ther analysis may be subdivided into rites of separation, transition rites, and rites of incorporation. These three subcategories are not developed to the same extent by all peoples or in every ceremonial pattern. Rites of separation are prominent in funerary ceremonies, rites of incorporation at marriages. Transition rites may play an important part, for instance, in pregnancy, betrothal, and initiation; or they may be reduced to a minimum in adoption, in the delivery of a second child, in remarriage, or in the passage from the second to the third age group. Thus, although a complete scheme of rites of passage theoretically includes preliminal rites (rites of separation), liminal rites (rites of transition), and postliminal rites (rites of incorporation), in specific instances these three types are not always equally important or equally elaborated.

Furthermore, in certain ceremonial patterns where the transitional period is sufficiently elaborated to constitute an independent state, the arrangement is reduplicated. A betrothal forms a liminal period between adolescence and marriage, but the passage from adolescence to betrothal itself involves a special series of rites of separation, a transition, and an incorporation into the betrothed condition; and the passage from the transitional period, which is betrothal, to marriage itself, is made through a series of rites of separation from the former, followed by rites consisting of transition, and rites of incorporation into marriage. The pattern of ceremonies comprising rites of pregnancy, delivery, and birth is equally involved. I am trying to group all these rites as clearly as possible, but since I am dealing with activities I do not expect to achieve as rigid a classification as the botanists have, for example.

It is by no means my contention that all rites of birth, initiation, marriage, and the like, are only rites of passage. For, in addition to their over-all goal—to insure a change of condition or a passage from one magico-religious or secular group to another—all these ceremonies have their individual purposes. Marriage ceremonies include fertility rites;
rites of passage

birth ceremonies include protection and divination rites; funeral, defensive rites; initiations, propitiatory rites; ordinations, rites of attachment to the deity. All these rites, which have specific effective aims, occur in juxtaposition and combination with rites of passage—and are sometimes so intimately entwined with them that it is impossible to distinguish whether a particular ritual is, for example, one of protection or of separation. This problem arises in relation to various forms of so-called purification ceremonies, which may simply lift a taboo and therefore remove the contaminating quality, or which may be clearly active rites, imparting the quality of purity.

In connection with this problem, I should like to consider briefly the pivoting of the sacred. Characteristically, the presence of the sacred (and the performance of appropriate rites) is variable. Sacredness as an attribute is not absolute; it is brought into play by the nature of particular situations. A man at home, in his tribe, lives in the secular realm; he moves into the realm of the sacred when he goes on a journey and finds himself a foreigner near a camp of strangers. A Brahman belongs to the sacred world by birth; but within that world there is a hierarchy of Brahman families some of whom are sacred in relation to others. Every woman, though congenitally impure, is sacred to all adult men; if she is pregnant, she also becomes sacred to all other women of the tribe except her close relatives; and these other women constitute in relation to her a profane world, which at that moment includes all children and adult men. Upon performing so-called purification rites, a woman who has just given birth re-enters society, but she takes her place only in appropriate segments of it—such as her sex and her family—and she remains sacred in relation to the initiated.

1 This pivoting was already well understood by Smith (see The Religion of the Semites, pp. 427-28 and discussion of “taboo”, pp. 152-53, 451-54, etc.). Compare the passage from sacred to profane, and vice versa, among the Tarahumara and the Huichol of Mexico as described by Karl Sofas Lumboltz, Unknown Mexico: A Record of Five Years’ Exploration among the Tribes of Western Sierra Madre (London: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1903), passim.
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1. THEORY (Religion)
   - Animism
     (dualistic, etc.; personal)
   - Totemism
   - Spiritism
   - Polydaemonism
   - Theism
     (with intermediate stages
   - Monistic; impersonal

2. TECHNIQUE (Magic)
   - Rites
     - Sympathetic
     - Contagious
     - Direct
     - Indirect
     - Positive
     - Negative
     (taboo)

II THE TERRITORIAL PASSAGE

Territorial passages can provide a framework for the discussion of rites of passage which follows. Except in the few countries where a passport is still in use, a person in these days may pass freely from one civilized region to another.\(^1\) The frontier, an imaginary line connecting milestones or stakes, is visible—in an exaggerated fashion—only on maps. But not so long ago the passage from one country to another, from one province to another within each country, and, still earlier, even from one manorial domain to another was accompanied by various formalities. These were largely political, legal, and economic, but some were of a magico-religious nature. For instance, Christians, Moslems, and Buddhists were forbidden to enter and stay in portions of the globe which did not adhere to their respective faiths.

It is this magico-religious aspect of crossing frontiers that interests us. To see it operating fully, we must seek out types of civilization in which the magico-religious encompassed what today is within the secular domain.

The territory occupied by a semicivilized tribe is usually defined only by natural features, but its inhabitants and their neighbors know quite well within what territorial limits their rights and prerogatives extend. The natural boundary might be a sacred rock, tree, river, or lake which cannot be crossed or passed without the risk of supernatural sanctions. Such natural boundaries are relatively rare, however. More often the boundary is marked by an object—a stake, portal, or upright rock (milestone or landmark)—whose installation at that particular spot has been accompanied by rites of consecration. Enforcement of the interdiction may be immediate, or it may be mediated by frontier

\[^1\] It should be remembered that van Gennep wrote in the first decade of the century.]