Introduction

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I. Rites of passage: definitions

Traditional societies possess a number of rituals that anthropologists call "rites of passage". These rituals provide a framework for changes in the state of an individual or group of persons. The term "state", according to Victor Turner,[1] refers among others to social status and age group. Each change in state accompanied by a rite of passage constitutes a radical and in theory irreversible transformation.[2] The latter thus supposes a linear conception of time[3] reflecting biological time, unlike rites of return, which imply a cyclical ritual procedure.[4] The rite of passage is often symbolized – or materialized – by the individual's actual movement from one place to another. However, a ritual crossing is not always the sign of a rite of passage: certain rites of return have a similar *mise en scène* without entailing irreversibility.[5]

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[1] TURNER 1969, 94.

[2] HARTH 2006, 30, believes – rightly, in our opinion – that in reality, a rite of passage does not transform a person, but accompanies and stages his symbolic transformation, which is a slow, gradual process. This explains why the rite of passage is but a condensed dramatization of this process.

[3] A discourse of cyclicity is sometimes affixed to this linear concept. See below § III.2.

[4] On rites of return, see CRAPANZANO 1981. Sometimes there is an ambiguity between certain rites of return and rites of passage, an ambiguity due to symbolic systems, even issues they may have in common.

[5] Alice Mouton (MOUTON 2008, 14-15) proposed to call these rituals "pseudo-rites of passage" since they appear to reproduce their form. These "pseudo-rites of passage", which most often have a purifying and/or therapeutic function, often include the crossing of a makeshift gate of branches by the person or persons concerned: see the contribution of Mouton in this volume.

According to Arnold Van Gennep, who invented the concept in 1909, rites of passage are characterized above all by their form and consist of three phases:

1) a phase called preliminary, or of separation, during which the main person or persons concerned by the passage are separated from the community in symbolic[6] or material ways;

2) a liminal or marginal phase during which the person or persons are in a state of latency known as "liminality". Persons in liminality no longer belong to their original social group but do not yet belong to the group they are destined for;

3) a phase of incorporation (or aggregation) called post-liminal, in which the person or persons are again part of the community, but integrated into a new social group.

According to Van Gennep, these rituals occur in three main contexts:

1) at key moments in the individual's life – what anglophone anthropology named "life-crises". The most important are birth, puberty or adolescence, marriage, maternity or paternity, and death;

2) at times of social passages: a change of social status (the enthronement of a king, the liberation of an individual, etc.);

3) at times of religious passages (access to priesthood, to secret societies, initiation of diviners or other individuals).

Rites of passage are thus at the crossroads between the religious sphere and the social structure of a human community. Although in ancient societies they always carried a religious significance,[7] they had a clear social dimension as well, since they gave the person undergoing the passage a new social status and reinforced the cohesion of the

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[6] Symbolism, the basic language of ritual, depends on the geographic and cultural context in which it intervenes. It can be found in ritual discourses as well as in certain acts. On the other side of the spectrum, pragmatism is also present: some ritual gestures originate directly from everyday life.

[7] "Secular rites", to use the expression of RIVIÈRE 1995, are not expected for antique societies.

group by bringing the generations together.[8] As Sophie Lalanne remarks, "ritualization is moreover the form best suited to the transformation of the individual and the modification of his place and status in the family and the whole of society."[9] The emotional aspect of a rite of passage is also to be taken into account.[10] The anxiety of the individual in a liminal state is partly eased by the gradual progression in time of the ritual or by its discourse of cyclicity. As Nicole Belmont remarks, "sudden changes and discontinuities in human life do not naturally provide a marginal stage. Thus it is necessary to create one – which explains the use of ritual, whose function is to give more time to the crossing, to broaden the threshold between separation and aggregation."[11]

Although Van Gennep has been criticized for certain elements in his methodology, in particular the encyclopedic accumulation of a wide range of testimonies, several elements of his theoretical model are useful: first of all "his simple, heuristic design, easily applicable to concrete facts."[12] Although the three-part pattern of rites of passage may seem a truism to some (but as Max Gluckman points out, "every important truth seems obvious once stated"),[13] if applied loosely, as Van Gennep recommended, it makes it possible to order ritual sequences according to a person's different phases of development. As Meyer Fortes emphasized,[14] one of the key notions arising from the

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[8] GOGUEL D'ALLONDANS 2002, 11: "It is above all passages which seem to be individual that enable the collectivity to endure." (translated from French). The system of exchanges established during rites of passage cannot be summed up by the sole notion of collaboration; in addition to the latter is that of interpersonal obligations: DAVIES 1994, 8-9.

[9] LALANNE 2006, 276. Translated from French.

[10] HERTZ 1907, 130, ROHEIM 1942, SEGALEN 1976, 10 and BELMONT 1986, 13-15 (with the earlier bibliography). See also below §III.2.4.

[11] BELMONT 1986, 17. Translated from French.

[12] BELMONT 1974, 71. Translated from French.

[13] GLUCKMAN 1962, 9.

[14] FORTES 1962, 54-55.

pattern of rites of passage is the eminently social character attributed to the different phases of development. Furthermore, the notion of liminality, brought to light by Van Gennep and then taken up, especially by Victor Turner[15] and Mary Douglas,[16] is a fundamental concept in the history of anthropology, and numerous ethnological and sociological studies have been devoted to it.[17] Finally, Van Gennep's theory has the advantage of pointing out the interface between physiology (an individual's physical development), religious fact (symbolic significance of this development) and social structure (movement of a person from one group to another). It shows that social life revolves around a series of individual movements and passages, as opposed to the relative stability of the social structure of which each individual is part. Rites of passage are a dynamic procedure[18] which dramatizes these movements and confirms them in the eyes of all.

Two theoretical models still in favor today developed from the initial "rites of passage" concept: on the one hand "transition rites" and on the other, "rites of institution". The expression "transition rites" tends to be preferred by some anthropologists over "rites of passage" because of the emphasis it places on the notion of liminality.[19] The expression "rites of institution" introduced by Pierre Bourdieu[20] emphasizes the social repercussions of rites of passage: the fulfillment of these rites depends mainly on whether the person or persons involved are accepted by the community eventually receiving them. Thus for the individual, a rite of passage also means that he or she will confront the authorities of the community, personified, for

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[15] TURNER 1969.

[16] DOUGLAS 1966.

[17] Concerning ethnology, see in particular GOGUEL D'ALLONDANS 1994. For sociology, see for example the works of BOURDIEU 1986, LEMAIRE 1995 or HÉRAULT 2005.

[18] On the dynamic character of rites of passage, see in particular EVANS 1996, 1121.

[19] BIANCHI (ed.) 1984.

[20] BOURDIEU 1986.

example, by its elders.[21] Moreover, it implies the institution of a lasting division between persons who have already crossed the threshold or are in the process of doing so, and those who will never cross it. For Bourdieu, "rites of institution" justify the existence of arbitrary divisions in the social order, such as gender divisions. He remarks: "By solemnly marking the crossing of a line that establishes a fundamental division in the social order, they draw the observer's attention to the passage (whence the expression rite of passage), whereas what is important is the line."[22] Initiation rituals are a perfect illustration of this division: they often mark one of the most important changes of state in an individual's life – the passage from the status of child to adult, decisive for the construction of gender and of social and psychic identity.[23] For this reason, ethnologists today often consider initiation rituals the archetype of rites of passage.[24]

II. Individual rites of passage in the Ancient Near East and its surroundings: State of the art

The Ancient Near East is subdivided into several cultural areas: Anatolia, Syria, Mesopotamia and the Levant, to which we will add here Egypt. Despite their different civilizations, there are many links between these geographical zones: cultural relations between Anatolia and Syria are attested by texts since 3000 BC, as well as between Egypt and Mesopotamia and many others. The Ancient Near East was the scene of brilliant civilizations and intense economic, diplomatic, religious and overall cultural exchanges among these various entities. Our work focuses on this vast geographical zone, with however a few incursions into the Graeco-Roman world, over a period extending from the third millennium BC to the first centuries AD.

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[21] An idea already developed by VIZEDOM 1976, 45.

[22] BOURDIEU 1986, 207. Translated from French.

[23] For the distinction between "status" and "identity" see in particular DAVIES 1994, 7-8.

[24] CALAME 2003, 137.

Although individual rites of passage are broadly attested in epigraphic and archaeological Ancient Near Eastern sources (birth rituals, initiation, enthronement, ordination, death), an in-depth analysis of them remains to be done.[25] Some studies however have touched on the subject in more or less detail. In the field of Assyriology, the Acts of the XXVIth *Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale*[26] contain several articles on different aspects of death in the Ancient Near East. A study by Akio Tsukimoto[27] examines the rituals linked to the cult of the dead in the Syro-Mesopotamian world, and another by Marten Stol[28] consists of Mesopotamian texts mentioning the phenomenon of birth. This latter work is based on a very varied corpus consisting of medical, literary, ritual, and other documents. In these three studies, the anthropological concept of rite of passage is not used as a model for the analysis of cuneiform sources. There is also the work edited by Nicola Laneri,[29] which brings together several studies on death as a generator of social links (particularly through commemoration of the dead) and the recent research of Jean-Marie Husser, one of the only Orientalists of the cuneiform world to propose a theoretical analysis of a mythological text from Ugarit using the rites of passage model.[30] Another notable exception is Piotr Michalowski's study of the myth of Adapa, which he approaches using this same model.[31]

In the field of hittitology, Gary Beckman[32] studies Hittite texts describing birth rituals, but only alludes briefly to the rite of passage concept, and the work of Alexei

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[25] JOHNSTON (ed.) 2004, 438-451 is the one exception, as she gives a short synthesis on rites of passage in the Ancient Mediterranean in which she brings together the Graeco-Roman and Near Eastern worlds.

[26] ALSTER (ed.) 1980.

[27] TSUKIMOTO 1985.

[28] STOL 2000.

[29] LANERI (ed.) 2007.

[30] HUSSER 2007 and 2008.

[31] MICHALOWSKI 1980.

[32] BECKMAN 1983.

Kassian, Andrej Korolev and Andrej Sidel'tsev[33] is limited to a re-edition of texts describing Hittite royal funerals, adding no commentary on their content. On the other hand, Theo van den Hout's synthesis of those rituals deserves mention,[34] as it introduces new elements of discussion on the passage of the deceased king and its link with the Hittite socio-political structure. Furthermore, although the expression "rite of passage" appears here and there in the hittitological bibliography,[35] the theoretical model implied was not exploited as such until just recently. It is only beginning to be so, as can be seen notably by Alice Mouton's monograph[36] dealing with the birth rituals of Kizzuwatna, or the present work.

Both philological and archaeological studies related to the cuneiform Near East have focused on the two passages that are best documented, birth and death. Other rites of passage have remained more in the shadows, mainly due to less explicit sources. There are exceptions however, such as Ada Taggar-Cohen's study on the installation ritual of the priests and priestesses of Emar and Hittite Anatolia,[37] and the analysis by Samuel Greengus of the Old Babylonian marriage ritual.[38] But there too, priority was not given to the anthropological viewpoint. Overall, we can say that an anthropological reading grid has only rarely and superficially been applied to Ancient Near Eastern sources.[39]

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[33] KASSIAN *et al.* 2002.

[34] BREMMER, VAN DEN HOUT and PETERS (eds.) 1994.

[35] See MOUTON 2008, 13-15.

[36] MOUTON 2008.

[37] TAGGAR-COHEN 2002.

[38] GREENGUS 1966: The author reconstitutes a part of this ritual from an administrative text. Though he mentions separation rites, he does not appropriate the Van Gennep rite of passage model. MATTHEWS 2003 is an overall synthesis of the best documented aspects (legal and economic data) of the life of ancient Near Eastern families.

[39] Some Ancient Near Eastern archaeologists are aware of this gap and have recently begun to fill it in. We can mention the research of T. Insoll on the archaeology of the ritual (see, for example,

In Egyptology, rites of passage have so far interested few researchers. Only Jan Assmann's monograph[40] constitutes a detailed anthropological study on death in ancient Egypt. The author shows how the passage of death is symbolized by a change in place, in particular the crossing of the Nile. The question of the rite of passage of the deceased had however been briefly examined earlier by Harco Willems.[41] Concerning principal aspects of childhood, Erika Feucht's book[42] is a philological study with short and not very analytical descriptions, as is the case with Rosalind and Jac Janssen's two books,[43] aimed at a non specialized public. The same can be said about Gay Robins' book on women in ancient Egypt.[44] An exception is the article by Jana Loose,[45] a short analysis much inspired by anthropology in its study of the liminality of the pregnant woman and the unborn child. The author describes the mythological passages that make reference to the phenomenon of birth and the magical incantations aimed at limiting the dangers that threaten the future mother and her fetus. Other research now being done in the field of Egyptology is just as promising, such as Sabine Huebner's study of female circumcision in Graeco-Roman Egypt.[46]

Thus, the Ancient Near East has been neglected in the study of ancient rites of passage, the Graeco-Roman world their sole witness.[47] In that field, we can mention in particular the works edited by Mark Padilla, David Dodd and Christopher Faraone, Jean-

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INSOLL (ed.) 2011), or studies on the concept of "Household Archaeology": see, among others, PARKER AND FOSTER (eds) 2012.

[40] ASSMANN 2003.

[41] WILLEMS 1995, 381.

[42] FEUCHT 1995.

[43] JANSSEN AND JANSSEN 1990 and 1996.

[44] ROBINS 1993.

[45] LOOSE 1993.

[46] HUEBNER 2009.

[47] The Malibu congress entitled "Rites of Passage of the Life Cycle in Antiquity" (2007) is an illustration of this: http:/www.getty.edu/visit/events/rites_schedule.pdf.

Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, or the study by Sophie Lalanne.[48] Moreover, researchers in Classics are among the pioneers in the field of anthropology of the ancient world. For this reason, we hope to initiate a dialogue between Orientalists and researchers in Classics. Bringing the Near East area into a discussion of ancient rites of passage will make the concepts and practices inherent to this part of the world better known. Moreover, the interdisciplinarity advocated in this volume – between Philology, Archaeology, the History of Religions and Anthropology – hopes to be innovative in the fields of Egyptology and Cuneiform Studies. Combining work methods is one way to broaden our perception of the different aspects of rites of passage.

III. A few key aspects of rites of passage in the Ancient Near East and its surroundings

In this section, we hope to shed light on some fundamental characteristics of rites of passage in the Ancient Near East and its surroundings, the corpus of which (archaeological as well as philological) reflects almost exclusively the social elite. Sources give us little information about the rest of the population. However, it is quite probable that royal rites of passage were only a magnified version of those of the rest of the community, and that both originated in the same symbolisms and traditions.

III.I. Individuals in their social context
III.1.1. Individual rites of passage and their impact

Even if the rites of passage considered here are called "individual", in the sense that they play a role in the construction of identity, these rituals never imply solely the person directly concerned. For example, in the case of birth rituals, both the yet unborn child and the mother undergo a transformation expressed by two parallel rites of passage (Laribi-

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[48] Padilla (ed.) 1999; Dodd and Faraone (eds) 2003; Lalanne 2006; Vernant and Vidal-Naquet 2009.

Glaudel). Where initiation rites are concerned, most often young people undergo them as a group, thus forming a *communitas*[49] (Boehringer, Calame, Glassner). Along the same lines, marriage – and the installation of priestesses, which is similar in several ways (Huber Vulliet, Masetti-Rouault) – involves more than the couple being wed since it also concerns their respective families (Yoffee). Finally, death is also a matter involving not only the one who dies, but the next of kin and above all the heir (Donnat and Moreno García, Katz). Thus an individual rite of passage has meaning only when set in the context of a social structure: an individual's change of state or status requires validation by others – it does not exist on its own but is a product of social recognition.

Besides its multiple horizontal repercussions (within a family and a community), the rite of passage can have vertical repercussions. This is particularly the case where the rite concerns the sovereign, who represents not only the entire population of which he is the head, but the gods as well (Gilan and Mouton). This verticality justifies the possible insertion of a royal or princely rite of passage in a calendar festival: an upheaval suffered by a sovereign causes or is comparable to a cosmic event (Bidmead).

An asymmetrical system also appears in numerous rites of passage. Experts (midwives, priests, etc.: see Dasen) direct the ritual process thanks to their knowledge, which gives them a certain amount of power over the participants, and, similarly, the "initiators" clearly impose a relation of domination over the initiated (Calame).

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[49] Concerning the notion of *communitas*, see below §IV.1.

III.1.2. Physical changes and the hierarchization of individual rites of passage

The symbolic transformation of the individual is often, if not always represented by physical change. Be it a matter of dressing differently (Bidmead, Gilan and Mouton, in particular) or more radically, of modifying one's appearance by shaving a beard or changing a coiffure (Lefèvre-Novaro and Rutherford), even by mutilation (Eyre), each essential stage in the construction of identity is marked visually. This marking reflects the "transformation", the metamorphosis of the status of the person or persons concerned, which is expected during a rite of passage. It is also possible to imagine that in a given human community, the more fundamental the passage is believed to be, the more radical the physical change. For example, it may not be by chance that the symbolic "making" of a Hittite sovereign was associated with a flogging rite (Görke and Mouton), whereas marriage and the installation of priestesses involved only a change of dress (Huber Vulliet).

Parallel to the possible hierarchization of physical changes, we feel that a similar phenomenon is apparent in the rites of passage themselves. In other words, certain key moments of one's existence may be considered more decisive than others in an individual's development. An example of this would be the contrast between the ritually well structured initiation rites often described in ancient texts and the less important rites of passage that mark the different moments of childhood (Dasen). We know moreover that in some societies, each entry into a new "age group"[50] – a not necessarily rigid ensemble – is accompanied by a rite of passage varying in length and importance according to the emphasis placed on one stage of life or another. The importance of a rite of passage depends on the role the community gives it in the construction of an individual's identity, in other words, in the "making of the human".[51]

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[50] BERNARDI 1984.

[51] Expression borrowed from CALAME AND KILANI 1999 (French "fabrication de l'humain").

III.2. Temporality and spatiality of rites of passage

III.2.1. Ritualized changes of place

Rites of passage are marked by changes in place and time. The two dimensions are indissociable, in the sense that they represent two facets of the same reality. In other words, a change of place often symbolizes a progression in time. Often, the passage is materialized by a door both linking and separating the two places, be they city gates, doors to houses or rooms of houses, to temples or even windows (Mobley). Moving from one pole to another often takes the form of a procession (Huber Vulliet and Masetti-Rouault), the latter symbolizing better than any other the passing of time[52] and thus the progression of the ritual.

III.2.2. Cyclicity

The material passage from one place to another may be an enactment of the linear time of the biological and social being (the passage from point A to point B with no possible return – in such a case the "door" between the two points is often actually destroyed so as to make the irreversibility of the passage tangible), as well as of the cyclical time of the person's natural and cultural environment (the passage from point A to point B with a return to point A in a new state). However, a ritual discourse of cyclicity does not transform these rites of passage into rites of return: if the individual returns to point A, he is not the same as before.[53] The pattern traced by this ritual movement is more of a spiral than a circle[54] and its main function is to ease the person's anguish by denying the

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[52] CAMPI 1986, 131.

[53] *Contra* CRAPANZANO 1981.

[54] *Pace* GOGUEL D'ALLONDANS 2002, 39: "They [rites of passage] enact cyclical and circular conceptions of space and time, life and death, continuity and discontinuity. Churchings and funerals are thus, each of them, only a loop in the spiral of existence." (translated from French).

linearity of his existence and thus the unavoidability of death. As Nicole Belmont emphasizes,[55] it is only a question of enacting the "ideal passage", the one that allows you to believe in a return. Moreover, the discourse of cyclicity often involves a mirror effect within a rite of passage: the incorporation phase echoes the separation phase (Bidmead). This mirroring is also transposed from one rite of passage to another: for example, an installation rite can recall a marriage (Masetti-Rouault), and notions of symbolic birth and death are also frequent (Arnette, Greco and Mouton and §IV.2 below). This is all the more true as some rites of passage follow on and complement each other, as is the case for the death of a sovereign where the royal funerary ritual in a way extends into the installation rite of his successor (Gilan and Mouton). On a lesser scale, this pattern is also found in other socio-economic spheres: with priests and priestesses (Masetti-Rouault) or within one and the same family (Donnat and Moreno García). Finally, the discourse of cyclicity can be expressed by the insertion of an individual rite of passage in a calendar festival (van den Hoven). In the words of Belmont, "human life is inserted in a natural periodicity",[56] that of the world.

This model shows analogies with that of the pendulum preferred by LEACH 1961, 133-134. On this subject, see also MOUTON in press.

[55] BELMONT 1990, 230.

[56] BELMONT 1990, 229. Translated from French.

III.2.3. Liminal spaces and times

Cyclical time thus reflects natural time – that of the calendar festivals, and it is mainly this cyclical aspect that creates a link between these festivals and rites of passage.[57] Liminal time is also apparent in communal celebrations.[58] During these festivals, which may be the occasion for manifestations of the supernatural,[59] the community is set apart from social time. In any case, the incorporation phase of individual rites of passage always ends with a festive event meant to strengthen the cohesion of the group. Besides liminal times, which most often characterize the phase of aggregation, individual rites of passage are often marked by liminal spaces. These spaces generally materialize the transitional phase. Faced with liminal spaces, the individual adopts one of two possible attitudes: seclusion or ritual crossing. Seclusion in a liminal space emphasizes the time necessary for the individual's transformation. On the other hand, crossing a liminal space – which might then be quite small – is meant to provoke a temporal progression in the ritual process and thus focuses on the conclusion of the rite of passage. These two attitudes are not contradictory, they only imply two different focal points. Seclusion, for example, is practiced in the context of birth rituals (Laribi-Glaudel), whereas ritual crossing is also found in "pseudo-rites of passage" (Mouton).

III.2.4. Theatralization and food consumption

Theatralization seems to be a recurrent aspect of rites of passage.[60] Whether it be a matter of simple spatial arrangements or more complex "scenarios", each rite of passage – and more generally, each rite – is enacted. As examples, we can mention the initiations of

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[57] BELL 1997, 102.

[58] TURNER (ed.) 1982.

[59] PENTIKÄINEN 1986, 10.

[60] As shown by TURNER 1969.

Greek adolescents, consisting of choral songs, parades and dances (Calame), or the *akītu* festival (Bidmead). And if there is theatre, there is a public. The fact that rites of passage are theatralized implies that they also function as entertainment, if only for one of their phases.[61] A ritual *mise en scène* takes on very varied forms, depending on the importance of the event and on the context. Theatralization is an integral part of ritual language and confers a fixed aspect on it. A rite of passage will *a priori* always be carried out according to the same operative mode within a given community, which reflects the discourse of cyclicity described above. One example of theatralization in the context of a rite of passage is in the practice of lamentation after a death. Whether "professional" mourners are used or not, public, dramatized expression of grief is a recurrent element in funerary rituals (Katz, Arnette, Patrier and Sachet) and highlights the emotional impact – real or not – of death.[62]

Another category of theatralization is based on movements in space. Among the latter, processions are particularly important, because they represent a ritual process set in time, emphasizing the long way to go. Thus, as seclusion gives temporal dimension to the liminality of an individual, procession associates spatial movement with the length of ritual, even if it concerns a public event. In the case of a member of the Babylonian high clergy, several ritualized movements made in the direction of the temple theatralize the progressive incorporation of the person into his new group (Huber Vulliet).

In its own way, food also participates in the enactment of rites of passages. Besides the feasts often associated with aggregation phases (Bidmead), food is a marker of discrimination or cohesion[63] not only within a same human community but also among the living, the dead and the gods (Masetti-Rouault; Arnette, Patrier and Sachet).

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[61] NORBECK 1983, 1045 even indicates: "One of the primary functions of rites of passage that is often overlooked by interpreters, perhaps because it appears so obvious, is the role of the rites in providing entertainment."

[62] METCALF AND HUNTINGTON 1991[2], 43-44.

[63] GOGUEL D'ALLONDANS 2002, 74: "Using the traditional categorization of A. van Gennep, it is very interesting to show how food and behaviors related to it are precise symbolic markers."

III.3. Impurity and liminality

The concept of liminality issues directly from the analytic terminology of social anthropology. For this reason, it is not found as such in ancient sources. The notion of impurity, however, comes very close to it in a troubling way in the Ancient Near Eastern context (Mouton and §IV.3 below). In this cultural area, impurity is felt as an alienation: the gods desert the individual who has been defiled. Notions of separation and marginalization are therefore inherent in the notion of impurity.[64] In the Ancient Near East, the liminal state is "treated" by purification, as is attested in numerous cases. In the context of funerary rituals, Mesopotamian literary texts attest, for example, the need to purify the deceased (Katz). Moreover, Egyptian (Eyre) and Anatolian[65] birth rituals advise the purification of the new mother before her reintegration into society. Installation rituals, which are social rites of passage, also involve one or several purifications.[66] During the New Year *akītu* festival, the Babylonian king undergoes a rite of passage during which he must purify himself (Bidmead). Among the purification gestures often found in the context of rites of passage, several have dual significance. The shaving of the head, for example, both purifies and serves as a visual marking, whereas anointing the head, at least in Hittite Anatolia, implies the two distinct notions of purification and consecration (Gilan and Mouton). The presence of ritual experts in purification during rites of passage such a birth (Laribi-Glaudel) is another clue to the equivalence of liminality and impurity.

(translated from French). As the author reminds us (GOGUEL D'ALLONDANS 2002, 75), the importance we attach to what is eaten during rites of passage is due in particular to the link which is often clearly made between food and sex.

[64] KITZ 2007, 619-620: "Many texts demonstrate the same connection between curse, divine anger, a skin condition, and social exclusion."

[65] MOUTON 2008.

[66] This notion is found in NORBECK 1983, 1045, for example.

IV. Structure of the volume

The main purpose of this volume is to define how an individual in the Ancient Mediterranean Basin experienced the various rites of passage he confronted. Our research revolves around three main axes:

1) "Becoming someone: The social dimension of rites of passage", where we examine the interface between the religious sphere and the socio-political structure;

2) "Real life, symbolic life: Ritualized life and death in rites of passage", or how each threshold crossed by an individual is perceived as a new beginning;

3) "Liminality and impurity: The dangers of transformation", where we try to define the complex relation between notions of purity/impurity and rites of passage.

IV.1. Becoming someone: The social dimension of rites of passage

The "making of the human" is a long and difficult process. Installation rituals, among which enthronement and ordination rituals, initiation rituals and other social rites of passage theatralize this process – sometimes painfully. This section focuses more closely on the social, if not political dimension of rites of passage. It also deals with certain "status passages" or "installation rites", rites of passage focusing on a change of status. On that subject, it should be said that in ancient societies, the majority of these rites are considered as irreversible as those related to biological development, which distinguishes them from the installation rites of industrialized societies.[67] Moreover, Victor Turner[68] showed how, in certain contexts, persons who found themselves at the same time in a state of liminality grouped together in *communitas*, in this way creating an anti-structure, a more egalitarian society where they would have their place. Thus, sometimes there is a

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[67] Concerning the reversibility of certain installation rites in societies called modern, see for example GLASER AND STRAUSS 1971, 4.

[68] TURNER 1969.

political significance behind the rite of passage, especially when it stages a rite of reversal, such as a carnival. Such rites often temporarily upset the political order – the masters becoming the slaves and vice versa. For this reason, Max Gluckman[69] has proposed to call such events "rituals of rebellion".

In the first contribution to this section, Fabienne Huber Vulliet studies two Sumerian administrative texts from the Ur III period related to the installation ritual of members of the high clergy. It is particularly striking to note that Sumerian already uses the verb "engage, install" to designate this installation ritual. These texts also show the importance placed on procession, which articulates the various stages of this rite of passage. We also note the presence of the healing deity in the context of the purification of the individual in liminal state.

Regarding the installation rituals of the priestesses of Emar, Maria Grazia Masetti-Rouault shows how these rituals were conceived as marriages between the priestesses and the god they were about to serve. This social and religious rite of passage also commemorated the death of the priestess "replaced" by the young girl newly "married" to the god. The author stresses the political aspect of the ceremony: through this alliance between the new priestess and the poliad god, the entire city placed itself under the protection of that deity. The priestess' definitive departure from her home symbolized the completion of the rite of passage; she was then covered with a wedding veil. As for Mesopotamian literary texts, they show that sexual relations can be part of the construction of a person's identity.

The marriage process of the Old Babylonian era is reconstructed by Norman Yoffee from administrative and legal documents. The installation of the *nadītu* priestesses can also be studied in this context, since the ceremony associated with it again symbolized the marriage of these women with the god they were about to serve. Divorce was also a rite of passage, since it caused an irreversible change in status and state due to the breaking up of a couple and at the same time, a household. One of the symbolic gestures at the heart of that ritual consisted in cutting the edge of the woman's piece of clothing where

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[69] GLUCKMAN 1963.

the dowry had been placed. Another determining element was the spoken word, with its undeniable performative character: each member of the couple solemnly declared "you are no longer my husband/wife", the type of declaration found in terminations of adoption ("you are no longer my father…"). These words enabled the transformation to be anchored in reality. In the end of his contribution, Yoffee studies Old Babylonian adoption rites, which included anointment of the head. These rites often took on the double meaning of adoption and liberation, since slaves were often adopted, and thus transformed into free persons.

Robert Hawley, Alice Mouton and Carole Roche return to the modalities of the social rite of passage represented by the liberation of an individual, on the basis of legal and literary texts from the Syro-Anatolian world and relying principally on lexicographical analysis. Several symbolic gestures are directly associated with this rite. The Hittite world associates this change in status with the planting of a specific kind of tree, whereas in Ugarit, liberation is linked to the notion of purification.

Amir Gilan and Alice Mouton examine another type of installation rite, the enthronement of the Hittite Great King. They show that texts give little information on this rite of passage. Moreover, the priestly function of the Great King seems more honorific than real and related to his investiture as sovereign of the Hittite kingdom. The anointment, associated with both enthronement and the ordination of priests, could symbolize the change in status of the Great King, even if it does not belong exclusively to these two ritual contexts. The new sovereign's power is legitimized, among other things, by his discreet presence at the funeral of his predecessor. However, the symbolic gesture of seating himself on the throne seemed to represent the climax of the Great King's enthronement ceremony.

Calendar celebrations have many formal similarities with social rites of passage. They indeed have a political nature, since the sovereign is the focus of their ceremonial. Susanne Görke and Alice Mouton begin by trying to determine the role of the main cultic festivals in the consolidation of Hittite royal ideology, then to show the interface, in the ancient Anatolian world, between rites of passage and calendar festivals, the latter above all the product of the socio-political organization of the kingdom. Görke notes that some

ritual gestures performed during seasonal festivals might take part in the legitimation of the Hittite sovereign's rule. This is mainly the case of an incubation rite in all likelihood aimed at reaffirming the power of the Great King. Mouton examines "enthronement festivals" documented in Hittite texts and defines some of their particularities. In the end, very few ritual elements can be attributed to royal investiture or reaffirmation of royalty. A flogging rite might be one of these few elements.

In the same vein, the individual rite of passage that the king undergoes during the great Babylonian New Year's festival called *akītu* and studied by Julye Bidmead reveals the rules of purity observed on that occasion. These rules concern not only the sovereign, but all participants in the ceremony as well. Likewise, the liminal phase of the sovereign, who is humiliated and temporarily deprived of the insignia of power, a phase which recalls initiation rites, also symbolizes that experienced by the entire human community. This rite is moreover comparable to the one that Marduk, patron deity of the city of Babylon traversed, and in so doing reaffirmed his hegemony and that of his human representative, the king. This ceremony also enters into the category of "political rituals" as defined by Catherine Bell,[70] because of the central role played in human society – if not in the world order – by the king and the god of the city, to whom he is compared.

Carina van den Hoven then studies another "political ritual", the enthronement of the falcon in Ptolemaic Egypt, in which a live falcon is substituted for the king and crowned in his place. The purpose of this rite is to renew the legitimacy of the sovereign, while celebrating his relation to the god Horus. This ceremony takes place every year at the beginning of the sowing period, just after the Khoiak festival that commemorates the death of Osiris and of the preceding sovereign. Thus, the deceased king is symbolized by Osiris and his successor by Horus, the son of Osiris. The most unusual element of this multi-layered rite of passage (royal, divine, seasonal) is that the king, though directly concerned by this ceremony, is physically absent and only represented by the falcon. According to van den Hoven, this can be explained by the political situation at the time: the king being head of a vast kingdom, he would not deign to attend this local ceremony.

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[70] BELL 1997, 128-135.

Finally, Sylvie Donnat and Juan Carlos Moreno García try to determine the role ancient Egyptian society attributed to the dead – this time not on the royal level, but within the family or in a regional context. They show that even after having accomplished his last rite of passage, the deceased person was not completely left outside the world of the living. He was called upon from time to time to manage current affairs, especially patrimonial problems. Texts and archaeological sources reveal that the dead and the cult that surrounds them are at the center of social cohesion and even play a role in the structuring of the living community. Thus "the question of the role of the dead is also that of the role of the living".[71] Through this analysis, Moreno García also questions the dialogue that can be established between personal devotion and state religion.

IV.2. Real life, symbolic life: Ritualized life and death in rites of passage

Death seen as a new birth is a fact observed in many civilizations. The expression itself "life cycle rites/rituals", found here and there in anthropological literature referring to life crisis rituals, is revelatory of this vision of things. But there is more to the link between birth and death. The rituals that accompany these two events are often reversed, as if one were in answer to the other. Thus a birth can be seen as a symbolic death, like an initiation, and inversely, a death is often assimilated to a rebirth. When studying the sequences of rites of passage containing the concept of symbolic life and death, our aim has been to underscore common features, as well as the particularities of these different ritual sequences. To better understand the concept of ritualized life or death, we shall also observe how the two primary rites of passage, birth and death, are carried out. In that context, it is particularly interesting to try to situate the deceased in a seemingly binary world order, the Other World[72] on the one hand, and that of Man on the other. In other words, is the deceased still considered a human, or on the contrary, does he become the equivalent of the gods?

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[71] BAUDRY 2006, 198. Translated from French.

[72] We call "Other World" the world of the gods, spirits and demons.

The first contribution to this section, proposed by Sophie Laribi-Glaudel, explores Mesopotamian texts dealing with the birth passage, a dual passage as it is traversed both by the child to be born and its mother. In particular, she shows that Mesopotamian incantations often compare the newborn child to a little animal, that is to say, a being that has not yet acquired its humanity. The mother is commonly assimilated to the cow, sometimes even to the cow of Sîn after the myth of that name, most likely a literary motif characteristic of the Ancient Near East, including Egypt.

Véronique Dasen's contribution then deals mainly with the status of the child in early life as seen in texts and archaeological data of the Roman period. This particularly delicate episode in human existence, for it goes hand in hand with the fragility of the infant, is punctuated by rites of passage. One of the key moments seems to be the appearance of the first teeth, a stage that leads to weaning, another important moment in the infant's growth. Dasen thus underlines the close link between the child's physiological development and the rites of passage accompanying it.

In his panorama of the different categories of individual rites of passage in ancient Egypt, Christopher Eyre mentions the possible existence of circumcision of male adolescents. This would constitute the principal rite of passage for young men, marking their entry into adulthood, whereas the same for young women would be marriage. The author also insists on the fact that an Egyptian funerary ritual was as much a rite of passage for the deceased, enabling him to become an ancestor, as for his heir, who then became the new master of the household. Finally, he stresses the predominance of ritual performance over dogma: more than the discourse itself, it is thanks to the efficiency of the ritual act that the hoped-for transformation is accomplished.

Through the analysis of death, the second primordial rite of passage, Alice Mouton, Marie-Lys Arnette and Christian Greco seek to describe the modalities of life in the Netherworld in ancient Egypt and Anatolia and more specifically, the cyclical character of human existence. The Hittites incinerate the body of the Great King once his soul has been transferred into a sacrificial victim. After a short stay in the underworld among ordinary dead, in all likelihood the Hittite Great King is judged and then, if all goes well, authorized to join the heavenly gods. That is what Hittite texts call his "divine destiny".

This privilege reserved for the Great King and members of his nuclear family would explain that only they are certain to be incinerated, whereas others would perhaps be buried. Hittite texts also say that it is the mother who is responsible for guiding her deceased child in the underworld. In ancient Egypt, the deceased is assimilated to a newborn child carried in the womb of one or several divine mothers before being reborn in the Beyond, as Arnette shows. Among other things, it is striking to note the connection thus made between the purification of the deceased's faults after his judgment and the cutting of his umbilical cord as a divine newborn. Greco insists on the association of the dead pharaoh with the sun, which he accompanies daily on its round. The sources he analyzes attribute a cosmological dimension to the death and rebirth of the sovereign. One of the common denominators between the Sun god and the dead King is the divine mother Nut, the goddess identified with the heavens, who engenders them both. This relationship emphasizes the cyclical aspect of their existence.

By means of three different case studies, Julie Patrier, Marie-Lys Arnette and Isabelle Sachet then seek to define the modalities of the deceased's survival, this time through the relationship between food and funerary rituals, which can be of a diverse nature: the deposit of offerings for the deceased, commemoration feasts, etc. The authors focus on foods deposited at the time of the funeral. Patrier examines the Yanarlar cemetery in Central Anatolia, where tombs revealed ceramic recipients that must have contained solid or liquid nourishment intended to accompany the deceased in his journey to the Netherworld – this being at least one of the hypotheses that can be formulated. Arnette presents the foods found in the Egyptian tomb of Khâ, among which breads of different shapes. She shows that each food was chosen not only for its nutritive value but also for its symbolic power. Thus, the foods offered to a deceased Egyptian would be both an idealized representation of those of the living and an imitation of the foods of the gods. Indeed, Egyptian texts state that the deceased is destined to become the table companion of the deities. Finally, Sachet studies a collective Nabataean tomb in Petra where some of the ceramic pots contain what seem to be the remains of solid and liquid food deposits. The analysis of archaeo-botanical remains in the tomb itself has shown a deposit of grains and dried fruits essentially.

As to the fate of the individual after death, Dina Katz questions Sumerian literary texts and shows that an individual's *post mortem* destiny meant the transformation of his spirit into a "wind" (Sumerian im), then into a ghost (Sumerian gidim), that is, a deceased ancestor. This two-stage process is mentioned in several literary texts illustrating the difficulties inherent in it. The "wind" state is characteristic of the liminal phase, in that the deceased is no longer human, but not yet a ghost. It is then that he is the most vulnerable. The lamentations of his family ensure him, on a symbolic level, of his passage into the Netherworld; the same is true for the making of his funerary effigy. It is thanks to the latter that the deceased remains with the living, even if his spirit abides with his ancestral group.

IV.3. Liminality and impurity: The dangers of transformation

Whether it be a passage related to a key moment of existence or an installation ritual, rites of passage are recognizable above all by their transitional phase, also named liminal. The liminal state is dangerous because the person who is passing through it is placed on the fringe of society. It involves the imposition of taboos meant to protect the person in the liminal state as much as the members of the community to which he belongs. The fundamental work of Mary Douglas[73] showed the danger represented by a human being belonging to no category recognized by the community of Man. Transition made him into a hybrid feared by his fellow creatures. One of the main functions of the rituals accompanying an individual's death is to ensure the success of this passage, as well as its irreversible nature. Among other things, funerary rituals must help "convince" the deceased to remain in his new domain, never to return among the living, who fear him. Stillborn infants and the recently deceased have in common the fact of being in a liminal state which is dangerous for them and for their close relatives. In the world of the Ancient Near East, the danger of liminality is most often in the form of impurity, a central concept in the religious thought of this part of the ancient world.

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[73] DOUGLAS 1966.

Alice Mouton proposes the equivalence (emic) impurity = (etic) liminality for Hittite Anatolia. She observes two main levels of impurity, the most serious one threatening the individual's life and requiring a special purification rite. This rite consists of passing through a symbolic space – possibly a makeshift gate of branches or another *limen* –, a crossing that repeats the imagery of rites of passage.

Daniela Lefèvre-Novaro and Ian Rutherford examine various archaeological and textual testimonies of rites of passage in the Greek and Aegean world. Some Minoan sanctuaries, isolated from everything, contained numerous votive offerings attesting to initiation practices for young adults. Such places were an ideal liminal space, radically separating adolescents – whose figured representations are characterized by hermaphroditism and a particular haircut – from the rest of the community. The initiation of female adolescents appears to be associated with the symbol of the crocus and the shaving of the head, which deprives them of an important attribute of their femininity. Classical sources and myths in particular attest to the close links between impurity and liminality in the Greek world. These myths, which are actually archetypes of rites of passage of adolescents and adults enacted during ceremonies, underline the necessity of purifying persons in a state of liminality in order for them to be able to reintegrate the society of Man. Some of these ceremonies being communal, the connection between individual rites of passage, purification and collective rites of passage comes naturally, like the passage to the New Year. This is also noticeable when a new temple or colony is being founded, a communal rite of passage often resulting from a murder.

Claude Calame adapts the theoretical model of the collective "tribal initiation rites" and the age groups system to the religious ceremonies of Pre-Classical Greece in which adolescents performed together, singing in chorus and dancing. These ceremonies made frequent allusions to pederastic practices, which went hand in hand with the education of adolescents from aristocratic families. The author gives special attention to a melic poem by Alcman in which female Spartian chorists express their amorous desire for their chorus leader of the same sex, a desire which is apparently considered the mark of the transformation of these adolescent chorists into adults.

Sandra Boehringer also evokes the problem of adolescents in ancient Greece and their entry into the age of adulthood and sexuality, a decisive stage in the construction of an individual's identity. To do so, she takes another look at the "initiatic homosexuality" defended by numerous authors. To her mind, this expression does not concord with the realities of the times, in which, for example, a distinction was made between male pederasty, homophilia and homosexuality. Moreover, the erotic choral songs performed in a ritual and community context can be understood as rites of passage both for the chorists and for the public. In the texts she evokes, we notice the abduction motif found in other traditional societies during separation rites in conjunction with marriage in particular,[74] and which in this context is applied to the pederastic relation characteristic of the Greek elite.

Jean-Jacques Glassner studies a Sumerian hymn addressed to the goddess Inanna, which seems to be associated with an initiation ceremony of young adolescents. This text recalls the Greek initiatic choral songs studied by Boehringer and Calame. Indeed, the hymn appears to allude to the entry of young men into sexual life, the objects evoked symbolizing both sexes (the spindle for the woman, the weapon for the man). The author also contemplates the possibility that it was an occasion on which young men were initiated to a secret. The hymn alludes to violence and describes persons who are well known in other respects and supposedly in charge of the ceremony.

Finally, Gregory Mobley returns to the characteristics of the liminal hero, the superhero described in numerous tales, among which *The Epic of Gilgameš*. The liminal character of these individuals manifests itself particularly in their great difficulty, if not in the impossibility of their returning home – meaning back to normality – after their adventures. They remain prisoners of that marginal state. The author also shows that through their ordeals, which are as many rites of passage, these heroes seek to transcend death itself. The liminal hero must therefore take on an almost monstrous form, since he is called upon to reestablish the order of things, which implies being endowed with extraordinary qualities. A recurrent motif is that of the woman as an agent of passage: she

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[74] VAN GENNEP 1909, 176-182.

guides the hero in his transformation, which supposes her knowledge of the changes to come and their repercussions.

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