

institutions at Delft and Wageningen. Significantly, unlike the practice in North America, "student" is not a legitimate "occupation" to be used when filling out official forms. In the Netherlands, students are classified as "zonder beroep", i.e. occupationless. To use Victor Turner's terminology, the status of student is one of the "betwixt and between" (Turner 1967:92-111) statuses of Dutch society. It is certainly liminal, and some would say marginal, to the mainstream of the Dutch social and occupational prestige structure. In short, the status of student is a temporary or transitional one that is occupied on the way to becoming something else. At present, the ritual implications of becoming a student are minimal. In the past, however, becoming a student almost always involved becoming a member of the corps (a fraternity-like organization). During the "groentijd" (initiation period) the newcomer was humiliated in a number of ways. Among these was the removal of all of the newcomer's hair. In Leiden, first-year student corps members were prohibited from participating in October the Third celebrations because they were "unworthy". Instead, they went to The Hague to do battle with first-year students from Delft. It is interesting to note that this almost ritual battle is recalled with resentment by residents of The Hague, who had to board up their shop windows and could not count on police support to deal with the students who were, so to speak, outside the law. Today, however, becoming a student is a much tamer affair. One ceases to be a student upon completion of the second of the four rites of passage, i.e. the "doctoraal".

In addition to the polar global categories of professor and student there is a system of written honorific titles associated with various positions in Dutch society. These titles are primarily used as prefixes in formal correspondence. Thus, a professor is entitled to be addressed by the term "hooggeleerde" (highly learned) or "professor". This is a reserved title and it is thus inappropriate to follow North American usage, which allows "professor" to be used for any university teacher. One rank below this is doctor, i.e. Ph.D. Here the honorific is "weledelzeergeleerde" (honourable very learned). In most lists the next lower honorific prefix is "weledelgeleerde" (honourable learned). This may be used for people who are entitled to be called "doctorandus", i.e. those who have completed their "doctoraal" degrees. This honorific may also be used for "apothekers" (pharmacists) and "artsen" (physicians). According to most lists the next lower titles are for individuals with law or engineering degrees. Here the title is "weledelgestreng" (honourable severe). However, unlike other prefixes, this one may be used by a wide variety of individuals. The following is a partial list: "advocaat" (lawyer), "consul", "vice-consul", "lid gemeenteraad" (municipal council member), "notaris" (notary), "ontvanger der belasting" (receiver of taxes) and "ridder" (knight). It should be noted that there is a parallel system for the use of honorific titles applying to individuals with degrees and/or positions within the sacred domain.

To an outsider this system suggests a cultural fascination with minute gradations of rank. Perhaps what is most significant from the point of view of the study of academic rites of passage and the status of student, is that there is no honorific title for a student, even after completion of the first degree, i.e. the "candidaats". My suggestion to a group of Dutch students that pre-"candidaats" students (i.e. undergraduates) should be called "zeerongeleerde" (very unlearned) while post-"candidaats" students should be called "ongeleerde" (unlearned), was greeted with disdain. It obviously wasn't a joking matter. Curiously, this supports Turner's contention that liminality is associated with *communitas*. Thus the liminal status of student should remain as unstructured as possible.

### Leiden Rites of Passage

Though the granting of academic degrees is governed by central government regulations (Kuipers, 1973), Dutch universities are relatively free to have their own ceremonies for awarding these degrees. Indeed, even within a university there is substantial room for variation between faculties. The following descriptive material applies primarily to the Faculties of Social Sciences and Letters at the University of Leiden. Most of the data was collected between 1971 and 1978, i.e. after the changes brought in in 1968 but before the most recent series of changes in the Dutch academic system. Because the academic units in these faculties tend to be smaller than in other faculties, the rituals at all levels can be more individualized. The choice of faculties also means that only the granting of purely academic degrees was observed, and not professional degrees such as law.

Though Dutch law recognizes only three levels of academic degrees from a ceremonial perspective, there are four rituals that may be called academic rites of passage at Leiden University. The first of these is called the "candidaats". Though this is the normal term, it is actually a contraction of the more official "candidaatsexamen". This usually occurs after three or four years at university and the degree awarded is roughly equivalent to the North American Bachelor's degree. The second rite of passage is called the "doctoraal", a contraction for "doctoraalexamen". The "doctoraal" degree is at least equivalent to the North American Master's degree and is in many cases actually higher. Though both of these rituals are officially examinations, most involve little more than a review of the student's academic record. Occasionally, however, there is a genuine examination that may last for over an hour. The choice between examination and ceremony depends more on the attitudes of the faculty members than the merits of a student's case. The third ceremony is the "promotie" (literally promotion). This combines the thesis defence and the awarding of the degree. The fourth and final rite of passage is called the "oratie" (literally oration). This is the

ceremonial inauguration and inaugural address of a full professor. The terms used to label the rites of passage suggest that there is a division between the lower two and the upper two in that the lower two are called "examen" (examinations) while the upper two are not. This is in spite of the fact that the most rigorous examination usually occurs at the "promotie".

I will not present detailed descriptions of each of the ceremonies or rituals in idealized form. Instead, I will focus on a number of key aspects of the rituals that serve to differentiate them from each other. Among these are the setting, dress rules, the nature of the ordeal, the reception, and later events.

### Leiden Rites of Passage: The Spatial Dimension

At the University of Leiden the traditional place to hold academic rites of passage is the "academiegebouw" (Academy Building), which is the oldest university building. On the second floor there are a number of "Faculteitskamers" (Faculty Chambers). These rooms, one for each faculty, are used for "candidaats" and "doctoraal" examinations. As one comes up the central staircase, the "Faculteitskamer" for the Social Sciences is immediately to the left. Indeed, when using the central staircase the approach to any of the Faculty Chambers involves turning left at the top of the stairs. To the right there is only one room: the "Senaatskamer" or Senate Chamber. This is where the "promotie" takes place and the "oratie" begins. For the most part, the Faculty Chambers are modestly but formally furnished. The Senate Chamber is furnished in the same style but is dominated by portraits of previous Vice-Chancellors of the University, suggesting to the neophyte that he is in the presence of the "elders", past and present. The inaugural address proper is held in the "Grote Aula" (Large Auditorium) on the first floor, which may also be used, in exceptional circumstances, for thesis defenses.

Between the Senate Chamber and the nearest Faculty Chamber is the so-called "zweetkamertje", which was immortalized by Hildebrand in *Camera Obscura*. This "sweating room" is where the candidate for the various examinations waits with some of his friends and guests. Compared to the rich formality of the other rooms, this one is barrenly furnished. In contrast to the elegant portraits of the Senate Chamber, the walls are dominated by the signatures, poems and cartoons of "all who have endured before". If there is any liminality and "communitas" associated with the four academic rites of passage, it is embodied in this room. The room itself is liminal and marginal. The signatures on the wall provide a sense of "communitas" with the past and with others who have endured these examinations. Though the room may be used by anyone receiving degrees (including honorary degrees), it seems to be used most by those receiving "candidaats" and "doctoraal" degrees.

### Leiden Rites of Passage: Dress Codes

The dress codes associated with the various degrees follow a pattern similar to that of the spatial dimension. The normal dress for the "candidaats" and the "doctoraal" degrees is about the same: everyday clothing, differentiated at most by being a little newer, a little cleaner, or a little more freshly pressed than usual. In the seventies this meant that the dress was, in most cases, acutely informal. The three or four members of the examining committee are equivalently dressed, i.e. in essentially everyday clothing. If there was a tendency to "dress up", it was more evident among the members of the examining committee than among the candidates.

For the "promotie" the candidate was expected to wear white tie and tails, and so were the two ritual assistants, student friends chosen by the candidate, called "paranymphs". The members of the examining committee were for the most part full professors and wore full academic regalia. This academic dress is associated with being a full professor at the University of Leiden. Thus the professors are almost all dressed the same. In addition to the long black gown or toga, they wear a distinctive Leiden cap. In no case is an academic hood worn. Though such hoods exist, at least in theory, it is considered bad form to wear one to a ceremony at Leiden University. The subfusc clothing is supposed to be somber, preferably a suit with a plain black tie. The black tie has become the symbol of proper attire. Thus, a professor with a proper tie but inappropriate shoes will not attract comment from his colleagues, but a black tie with even a minute design will attract gossip. The "oratie" involves extending the dress a step further. In this case the new professor is expected to wear white tie and tails as subfusc clothing in addition to the academic regalia. The other professors attending the "oratie" are dressed as at the "promotie".

### Leiden Rites of Passage: The "Ordeal"

All four of the rites of passage involve, at least nominally, some test or ordeal. For both the "candidaats" and the "doctoraal" this ordeal is an examination. During the seventies this examination was generally replaced by a review of the student's record with the student in the Faculty Chamber. In most cases the review lasted from ten to fifteen minutes. In only one case, in the Faculty of Letters, did I hear of a genuine oral examination for the "doctoraal" degree. This examination lasted for over an hour. The normal procedure for the ordeal is to have the candidate enter the Faculty Chamber alone and have his case reviewed with a committee of three to five persons. After the review the candidate is dismissed and

returns to the "zweetkamertje" or its vicinity. Then, after a suitable length of time, usually five or ten minutes, the candidate, accompanied by "het gevolg" (literally the following, i.e. the friends and guests), returns to the Faculty Chamber to hear a small speech by a member of the committee. In the ritual statement accompanying the awarding of the degree there is a key phrase that varies according to the quality of the student's performance. Each phrase has an exact numerical equivalent, and thus a numerical grade is assigned to the student in front of his friends and family. However, though the existence of the system is well-known, there is some uncertainty among students about which numbers go with which phrases. Thus, though a numerical value is assigned and publicly announced, it is sufficiently obscure to prevent embarrassment. The primary difference between "candidaats" and "doctoraal" examinations is that with the "candidaats" there is often a doubling up so that the speeches and the awarding of diploma occurs in groups of two, having been preceded by two separate "examinations".

In the case of the "promotie", the ordeal is the formal public defense of the thesis and accompanying "stellingen" (propositions). The guests are there by invitation of the "paranymphs". Due to the limited space in the Senate Chamber, only about seventy people can be invited. Given the importance of the situation, discretion and choice are limited. The Academic Statutes in effect during the seventies required that in addition to the thesis the candidate must submit at least six propositions not based on the thesis. Thus the defense, which fills an academic hour (i.e. 45 minutes), involves answering questions posed by a committee of professors and others chaired by the "Rector Magnificus" (Vice-Chancellor) of the university. Each examiner begins his question with the phrase "mijnheer de candidaat" (mister candidate). The answer by the "promovendus" begins the phrase "hooggeachte opponent" (esteemed opponent). Though the thesis has been approved by a committee before the "promotie" takes place, the examination is a very real ordeal and the questions on thesis and propositions are to be answered in all seriousness. Further, it is considered to be bad form for professors to ask too many questions based on the propositions. No one can remember anyone failing a "promotie", or even having the thesis sent back for corrections or revisions. After 45 minutes have elapsed the "pedel" (university beadle) enters the Senate Chamber and says "Hora est". At this point the examination stops, often in mid-sentence. The professors retire for a number of minutes to deliberate on the case. One of my more irreverent informants pointed out that during the 1974 World Cup the professors spent most of their time discussing the progress of the Dutch national team. After a suitable amount of time has elapsed, the "Rector Magnificus" asks the "promotor" (thesis supervisor) if he has a recommendation. To this ritual question the thesis supervisor replies with the required ritual answer. With this the committee returns to the Senate Chamber and the degree is awarded. A number of ritual and personal speeches are made by the committee to the candidate.

Especially important is the final speech given by the thesis supervisor. Upon its completion, the degree is handed over and the candidate leaves the Chamber followed by his "paranymphs", who are in turn followed by the members of the committee.

In the "oratie" the "ordeal" is a formal inaugural lecture in the "Grote Aula" (Large Auditorium). This is preceded by a small ceremony in the Senate Chamber where the new professor is officially welcomed into the university. In fact, the ceremony occurs sometime after the professor has assumed his duties. The guests in the Large Auditorium are there by invitation. Though many are there by personal invitation of the initiate, students and others may attend by general open invitation. The "rede" (formal lecture), which is read from a fixed text, is available in printed form after the ceremony is over. The lecture itself contains a number of ritual elements that are independent of the content. These elements occur at the beginning and end of the lecture. At the very beginning of the lecture the speaker greets the people present by naming them in a ranked list. A typical list would be as follows:

"Mijne Heren Curatoren,  
Mijnheer de Rector Magnificus,  
Dames en Heren Professoren, Lectoren, Docenten en  
Leden van de Wetenschappelijke Staf,  
Dames en Heren Studenten en voorts Gij allen, die door  
Uw aanwezigheid van Uw belangstelling blij wilt  
geven,"

"Gentlemen, The Members of the Board of Governors,  
Mister Vice-Chancellor,  
Ladies and Gentlemen Professors, Readers, Lecturers,  
and Members of the Scientific Staff,  
Ladies and Gentlemen Students and those who by your  
presence give evidence of your interest"

This is followed by the phrase "zeer gewaardeerde toehoorders" (very esteemed listeners). At the end there are a number of ritual thanking acts in which the new professor thanks people associated with his appointment, his associates, his personal friends and students. Usually this begins with thanking the Queen for the appointment and proceeds in rank order towards the students who are usually thanked last. The very last words of the lecture are always "Ik heb gezegd" (I have spoken). The "oratie" isn't legally required of a new professor, but if the ordeal is not gone through, in the words of one new professor "je hoort er niet bij" (you don't belong).

### Leiden Rites of Passage: The Receptions

After the ordeal, in every rite of passage, there is a reception given by the person for his guests. For the two lower degrees this always occurs at a designated student pub. All the receptions that I went to involved the same student bar, which was a few meters away from the main gate of the Academy Building. In every case, those in attendance are the guests of the recipient and it is inappropriate to offer to buy a drink for the new graduate. The only difference between "doctoraal" and "candidaats" that I was able to observe, was the fact that more people usually attend a "doctoraal" than a "candidaats" ceremony. For both the "promotie" and the "oratie" the individual has permission to use one of the large reception rooms on the ground floor of the Academy Building. There is a receiving line made up of the initiate and his family. In the case of the "promotie" the guests include the examining committee in their academic gowns and all those who observed the thesis defense. In the case of the "oratie", the guests include all of the individuals who have heard the lecture, including the professors in full academic regalia. There are two primary differences between the "oratie" and the "promotie" receptions. The first is the number of people involved. Because of the size of the Senate Chamber the number of people attending a "promotie" reception is unlikely to be more than 85 or 90. On the other hand, the number attending an "oratie" very often runs to several hundred. Secondly, because there is often another "promotie" occurring while a "promotie" reception is taking place, the room has to be vacated in time for the following reception. This imposes a time limit. The "oratie" reception is limited only by reasonableness and the desire of the serving staff to go home.

### Leiden Rites of Passage: Final Obligations

The final obligations of the initiates are usually met by some sort of social occasion. In the case of the "candidaats" this may be an informal party held at some convenient time after the awarding of the degree. Since the awarding of the "doctoraal" degree often represents the conclusion of one's university career, the party is frequently a farewell party as well. As far as I could tell, there were no ritual dimensions to either of these parties.

For the "promotie" there is a dinner in the evening after the defense. The level of formality is highly variable. However, when tradition is observed there are a number of important ritual dimensions that serve to differentiate this dinner party from others of a similar nature. Though all of the guests are well dressed, the "paranymphs" and "jonge doctor" (the young doctor) are expected to wear white tie and tails. However, the black vest that is worn in the

afternoon is replaced by a white one. According to tradition the guests are supposed to collaborate on the preparation of a surprise cake that is served at the dinner. This cake has to be decorated or in some way related to the topic of the thesis. And there are rules associated with the inevitable speech making at such an occasion. The "paranymphs" are each required to make a speech, one of which is satirical, praising and mocking the initiate's academic and scientific achievements, and the other is serious, praising the personal qualities of the candidate. These are followed by a speech by the "promotor" (thesis supervisor). Finally, there is the reply by the "jonge doctor".

In many cases there is a similar dinner following the "oratie". However, there is a gap in my ethnographic data at this point and I am not sure if there are any ritual rules that are unique to this sort of dinner.

### Preliminary Analysis

It is clear from the description that there is a fundamental partition between the two lower rites of passage and the two higher ones. The two groups are different with respect to the spatial location of the ceremony itself and with respect to the location of the reception afterwards. They are also different with respect to the degree of symbolic elaboration involved with the dress codes. In both cases the higher ones are more elaborate. Indeed, the higher one goes the more symbolically elaborated the rite of passage becomes. This is in marked contrast to North America, where, if there is any variation among degrees, symbolic importance decreases as one moves up the scale. It is interesting to note that with respect to Turner's notions of liminality it is only after one has left the liminal status of student that the ceremonies become truly elaborate. Thus, in the socially more liminal situation there is less symbolic elaboration of the ceremonies, while in the socially more central (i.e. less liminal) there is greater elaboration.

Though rites of passage are primarily concerned with individuals and individual rank, they usually have a strong social component. This social component can be seen as the representation of the collectivity in a ritual focused on an individual. In the academic rites of passage at Leiden the presence of this social component varies from one rite of passage to the next. In particular, one can see that the representation of the collectivity in a given rite of passage increases as the rank change involved becomes higher. In the first instance, at an extremely empirical level, one notices that the number of people in attendance at the main part of the ritual is much higher for an "oratie" than for a "candidaatsexamen". Indeed, there is a continuum from "candidaats" to "oratie" with increasing participation at each step along the way. The increasing

representation of the collectivity is also seen in the fact that as one goes up the scale of rank there is also an increase in symbolic elaboration. From an anthropological point of view this is not at all surprising. However, when one compares the Dutch ritual with North American academic rites of passage one notes that they are opposites of each other. In North America, at the ritual level, there is much less differentiation between degrees than there is in the Netherlands. And most strikingly, the Bachelor's degree in North America is much more socially significant in a ritual sense than the "candidaats" is. Furthermore, the North American graduation involving the formal awarding of the doctor's degree, is successfully avoided by many academics. In Leiden it is impossible to obtain the degree without attending the ceremony. The thesis defense in North America tends to be short on ritual but in direct contrast to the Leiden example, is an examination of substance, i.e. theses are rejected upon occasion and sent back for revision.

These observations invite speculation about the role and significance of rank in Dutch society and culture. This is a difficult matter. As Goudsblom pointed out in 1967, "Today rank and class are unpopular subjects in the Netherlands" (1967:61). My own experience, both as a casual observer and as a systematic researcher, is that if anything the subjects have become even less popular today. For example, the word "klasse" has become unfashionable and inappropriate in some circles. Thus, instead of saying "arbeidersklasse" the appropriate expression is "arbeidersmilieu". And the key phrase is "niet minder maar wel anders" (not less but certainly different). On the other hand, one notes that at Leiden there is a return to the old values (Vermeulen 1984). Fully elaborate "promoties" are enjoying a renaissance. As these rituals indicate, in spite of the sanctions against displays of rank, the Dutch continue to be fascinated by its minute and subtle gradations.

#### REFERENCES CITED

Gennep, Arnold van. 1909. *Les Rites de Passage*. Paris: Librairie Critique Emile Nourry.

----- 1913. Review of *Les Formes Elémentaires de la Vie Religieuse*. *Mercure de France*. Vol. 101: 389-91.

----- 1960. *Rites of Passage*, translated by Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Goudsblom, Johan. 1967. *Dutch Society*. New York: Random House.

Kuipers, P. A. H. I. 1973. *Wetgeving wetenschappelijk onderwijs*. Zwolle: W. E. J. Tjeenk Willink.

Turner, Victor. 1967. *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

----- 1969. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Vermeulen, Frank. 1984. "Hora est. De revival van de ongeschreven regels". *Mare* 25 October 1984.

Zumwalt, Rosemary. 1982. "Arnold van Gennep: The Hermit of Bourg-la-Reine". *American Anthropologist* Vol. 84: 229-313.