

THE INITIATORY PROCESS IN ANCIENT EGYPT

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Preface

Just what is initiation? A distinction must be made between its procedure, that is, its functional operation, and its *purpose*. This purpose is a state or condition of *preparation*. The preparation consists of a series of tests and trials of the initiate to determine worthiness of elevation to a higher religious or social status. This preparation is likewise a form of instruction—a teaching, usually in symbolic form—of a specialized knowledge.

The functional aspect of initiation is its ritualistic structure. The importance of the testing of the initiate is impressed upon the individual in a *dramatic* form. In other words, the purpose and what is expected of the initiate are enacted. This form of initiation has an emotional impact upon the individual, which a dialectical or rhetorical discourse alone would not have.

The dramatic incidents of the initiation are intended to play upon the whole emotional gamut of the individual. They may arouse, for example, fear, anxiety, momentary depression, and ultimately, pleasure to the extent of ecstasy.

True esoteric initiation, as performed today by orders of a mystical, metaphysical,

and philosophical nature, incorporates those fundamentals of initiation, which can be traced to initiations conducted in ancient Egypt, Rome, Greece, and certain sects in the Middle Ages.

Induction into the ancient mystery schools was always in a form of initiation. The gnosis, the special knowledge that was to be imparted to the candidate, was considered to be of a sacred nature. It was thought that the knowledge was of divine origin revealed through oracles and priests or priestesses. Thus initiation in its ancient character was a synchronism of religion, metaphysics, and what we may term moral philosophy.

The subject matter of the initiation revolved about mysteries common to the average person of that time—mysteries, however, that still challenge the reason, intelligence, and the imagination of modern persons. These were the origin of the universe; of humanity; of the nature of birth and death; of the manifestations of natural phenomena; and life after this one. The knowledge imparted to the initiate verbally and by symbolism, and also by the enactment of ritualistic roles, was meant to enlighten the initiate with regard to these mysteries.

Since the knowledge was sacrosanct, it was not to be defiled by revealing it to the uninitiated, unprepared, and unqualified individual. Consequently, solemn oaths were exacted from the candidates to never divulge what was experienced during the initiation.

Much is heard of the fact that such initiations were performed thousands of years ago in Egypt. However, because of their sacred vows, substantially little has descended to us today as authentic material indicative of the true rites of such initiations. The

Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum, under the direction of the Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC, a worldwide cultural, educational, and initiatic organization, is proud to present this translation from hieroglyphic texts relating such a traditional initiation.

This presentation has been made possible through the excellent research and ardent labors of the noted Egyptologist, Dr. Max Guilmo, to whom we extend our profound thanks.

—*Ralph M. Lewis*

Part 1: Phases Of Existence

Verily, I am the one who dwells in the Light;

(Yes), I am a Soul that came into being

Born from the body of the god!

(Yes), I am a falcon that dwells in the Light,

That finds its power through its (own) light

And through its (own) radiance!

(O Osiris!)

Lord of Manifestations,

Great and Majestic,

Here I have come!

(Coffin Texts)

It is not sufficient to let ourselves be swept away by the tides of existence. The stream of life is often fraught with danger that we must successfully overcome. To fail means that we are condemned to be just caricatures of human beings.

The human journey begins as soon as the child receives a name at birth. The bestowing of the name marks the advent of a new existence. Ancient people believed that the one who had no name was not truly born.

The first main obstacle—the advent of puberty—is accompanied by physical as well as psychological metamorphoses of such a nature that a new being seems to emerge from the protective shell of childhood.

Marriage also heralds a new phase of existence. Does not the life of the couple require the creating of a subtle and permanent harmony between bodies and souls—a mutual metamorphosis?

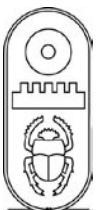
As for the slow process of aging, this also presents new problems. Faculties become impaired. From then on life demands less room. In order for it to subsist without a feeling of despair, it must have wisdom. Finally death comes. We must face it without fear and, without regret, give life up.

Thus birth, puberty, marriage, aging, and death depict unavoidable trials. Whether we face them happily or despairingly, whether we celebrate them or let them go unnoticed, they map the path of human life. With each test overcome, a new phase of existence begins. At the end of each season of life, the outline of a new being emerges.

It is true that today humanity has too much of a tendency to not celebrate the various stages of life we must go through. We no longer feel with the same acuity how much we change with each trial we overcome. Little by little, we become unconscious of our metamorphoses. By smoothing out the path of our lives, by removing all obstacles from our itineraries, we deny truth; we lie to ourselves. Lost in a fallacious fog of the soul, we fall out of step with the indispensable vital cadence. Today, the distressing questions concerning the meaning of life stem mostly from the loss of this existential rhythm.

Quite the contrary, ancient peoples and civilizations felt strongly how important it was to celebrate each phase of life. However, their “transitional rites” were not only “feasts” to commemorate the accession to a new stage of existence. By performing them, the whole community induced a victorious entry into a new phase of life through a series of power-generating acts. To enter (Latin: *in + ire*) a new stage of life, with the help of the community and through the power of ritual, meant to become initiated.

There exist—a most important fact—initiations into death. Death, the great transition, is the ultimate initiation. All peoples in the world demand that the neophyte undergo the trial of death and experience its pangs in order to be reborn.



The Mysteries

Such is the purpose of these secret doctrines and practices called Mysteries, which were common to the Mediterranean world, especially ancient Greece, Rome, and Egypt.

Ritual was introduced to change the quality of the novice's soul, to raise one's consciousness to a superhuman level, and to make an eternal being out of each soul personality. Thus the rituals of Adonis or Tammuz in the Near East, of Osiris in Egypt, of Orpheus in the Greek Islands, of Dionysus in Hellas—all depict death and resurrection so that one may symbolically experience a superhuman state and eternal life.

Psychologically, these practices resulted in a true victory over our human fear of death. Through initiatory death, they were absolutely convinced that we would be spared the pangs of death, which is our common human experience. In fact, they had been saved because they had been initiated.

The Site of Abydos

We must first go to Abydos in order to meet the initiates of ancient Egypt. A most holy city, Abydos, situated between Asyut and Thebes, sheltered one of the oldest necropolises in history. There lay the first kings (starting 3200 BCE). A constant religious piety added to it cemeteries of every period, along the Libyan cliff, despite the fall of empires. It is no wonder, then, that nine-tenths of the funerary steles of the Middle Kingdom (2052 BCE–1778 BCE) exhibited in the museums of Europe come from Abydos!

How can we explain this three-millennium entanglement of necropolises and this prodigious depository of documents? The fact is that the city was twice venerable. Originally the last resting place of the early pharaohs, it became, at the beginning of the second millennium, the guardian of the head of Osiris the Savior, who led human beings to immortality.

The most precious part of the divine body dismembered by Seth, the God of Evil,

lay in this holy place of Egypt, sheltered in a shrine surmounted by two feathers. The Holy Sepulcher was built at the south of the city, in a place called Peker. At the north stood the great sanctuary of Osiris, erected at the dawn of history—beginning with the First Dynasty—remodeled, destroyed, and rebuilt several times; all that is left of it today is an outline, hardly visible, on the site of its successive ages.

And yet, together with the Holy Sepulcher, this temple was the crucible of the Osirian faith. The inestimable relic—the head of Osiris—conferred upon it an unequalled aura of holy power.

Has the mind of the masses changed so much? Paris has protected its unknown hero in its triumphal arch. Moscow has preserved the remains of Lenin. It seems that each city draws its strength from the legacies of its great dead. Was not Osiris, whose resurrection promised eternal life to every pious human, the greatest of them all?

So Egypt wished to die in Abydos. To die near the god, to rest in the peace emanating from the Holy Sepulcher, to experience the miracle of resurrection in its shadow was the dream of an entire people, from century to century.

Alas, there is nothing left of Abydos today except ruins and a single bastion: the sanctuary of Seti I and the strange edifice adjacent to it called the *Osireion*.

Part 2: The Osireion Of Abydos

This structure is undoubtedly the most mysterious in the Valley of the Nile. Its construction began during the reign of Seti I (Nineteenth Dynasty, 1300 BCE) and was entirely underground when originally built. It comprises a long dark corridor leading into a hall filled with water. From the center of this basin rises a rectangular esplanade, a kind of island surrounded by heavy pillars of pink granite, to which two staircases lead.

What can be the purpose of this extraordinary architectural complex? Would it be a cenotaph of Seti I, whose name is inscribed

in the entrance corridor and in the central hall? It is possible, as the walls of the corridor are covered with funerary inscriptions, such as in the tombs of the Valley of the Kings; in addition, a spacious empty room, reminiscent of the ones in the pyramids of Sakkara and laid out on the east side of the Osireion, conjures up images of a huge sarcophagus.

Nevertheless, three or four centuries after its construction, this edifice was looked upon as a place dedicated to the worship of Osiris. Many are the archeological clues that seem to support this hypothesis. First, the esplanade rising out of the water-filled central hall and provided with two staircases was undoubtedly thought to be the primordial mount itself where death was vanquished at the dawn of time. There, according to tradition, Osiris lay in his sepulcher. Second, the two cavities hewn in the pavement of the esplanade undoubtedly had the purpose of housing the sarcophagus of the god and the holy shrine containing his viscera—perhaps his head. Finally, circular pits, unearthed around the central hall and still filled with fertile soil, used to shelter verdant trees, symbols of the eternity of Osiris resuscitated.

We can now see the purpose of the Osireion: Seti I wanted sacred rites to be performed in Abydos in order to ensure his immortality near Osiris and, at the same time,



Central Hall, Osireion of Abydos

to perpetuate the worship of the great god. Therefore, the royal cenotaph was an Osirian tomb as well.

The Osireion: A Replica of the Sanctuary of Osiris in Abydos

We must not confuse this sanctuary with the main sanctuary north of Abydos, whose ruins are still scattered in the place known as Kom el Sultan.



Sarcophagus No. 67, Saite Period. Unpublished. Archeological Museum, Marseille.

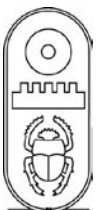
Rare are the documents that mention this illustrious site. However, the few descriptions of it, which they provide, shall soon reveal a surprising fact. There is, in the Museum of Archeology in Marseille, a sarcophagus that has depicted upon it a rounded knoll crowned with four trees guarded by two ram-headed gods.

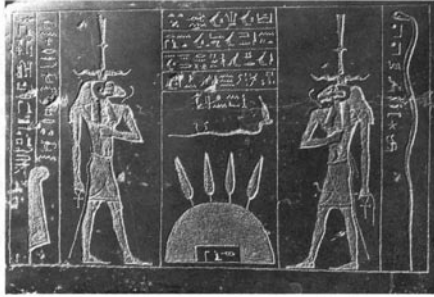
Without any doubt, Osiris lies under this knoll. His name is inscribed there, and the beginning of the inscription above the picture reads clearly:

*This is the knoll that hides
Within (the Body) decayed;
It is the holy Place
Of Osiris who dwells in the West.*

The knoll and the four trees therefore allude to the famous sepulcher of Osiris. But right away, the esplanade of the Osireion comes to mind—symbolizing also the primordial mound and lifting above the waters the sarcophagus of the god—as well as the trees of eternal regeneration which framed the central hall.

Would the Osireion of Seti I be an imitation of the large ruined temple of Abydos? If ever confirmed, such a fact would be of decisive importance, because all initiatory progression in the famous lost sanctuary could, in such a case, be conceived as well in the architectural complex of the still-standing Osireion. Thus the latter would preserve intact the exact reproduction of the decor





Details of Sarcophagus No. 67, Marseille. Unpublished.

where the most secret practices of the pharaonic era took place—making it unique in ancient Egypt and even in the history of ancient civilizations.

We can now conclude that:

1. On the sacred domain of Abydos, the great temple of Osiris is completely destroyed. However, several documents (for instance, the *Papyrus of Ani*, plate 10, or the *Papyrus Greenfield*, plate 108, in the British Museum) preserve its main characteristics: Under a mound surrounded by trees was a basin filled with water where pillars supporting the roof of the sanctuary stood; and from the center of this basin emerged a terrace with two staircases on which lay the mummy of Osiris.

2. This description, no matter how brief it may be, immediately arouses a comparison with the Osireion built by Seti I—which seems to be an exact replica of the lost temple. We can still find today the basin, the pillars, the esplanade with its double staircase, the two cavities arranged to house the sarcophagus and the shrine containing the viscera, and, finally, the pits where verdant trees used to frame the whole sanctuary buried underneath the sand. All these archeological data point to the fact that Seti I intended to reproduce the architectural complex of the great temple of Osiris in Abydos.

3. Hence the conclusion that since the Osireion seems to be a copy of the destroyed temple, all the details of the texts pertaining

to this temple can be transferred, without risking too much error, to the architectural complex of the still-standing Osireion of Seti.

Part 3: Initiations In Abydos

First of all, we must know whether or not secret initiations were conducted in Egypt, especially in Abydos. In this regard, an ancient text dating back to ca. 2000 BCE, quite unknown up to now, seems to give an affirmative answer:

To follow the god to his abode,

In his tomb

Anubis sanctifies the hidden mystery of Osiris

(In) the sacred Valley of the “Master of Life” (Osiris).

(It is) the mysterious initiation

Of the Master of Abydos!

What could be plainer? The god Anubis, the jackal of the necropolises, participated in the unfolding of a “mysterious initiation,” conducted by Osiris, the master of Abydos. Therefore, it is toward this holy place that one must walk in order to conceive—with the help of Egyptian texts of various dates and sources—how the initiatory process unfolded at the time of the pharaohs.

The Great Journey—Anubis, the Conductor

Anubis welcomes the postulant at the threshold of the sacred domain. He is a “dreadful-looking god,” relates the Roman author Apuleius after the initiation he went through in the second century CE, “a god that serves as a messenger between the world above and the infernal world below, with a face half black and half gold, his head held high, and proudly stretching his dog’s neck.”

He is above all the Mystery. A hieroglyphic sign shows him lying on a large chest. This chest conceals the viscera of Osiris. The texts refer to it as “the mysterious coffin,” for behind its walls, at the dawn of history, a prodigious event occurred: the rebirth of Osiris—and eventually of all the dead—owing to the power of the rites that Anubis created.



Mask of Anubis used for rituals

If, from the tomb of Tutankhamen, a striking black jackal has emerged—lying on a chest containing the viscera of the king—it is assuredly to immortalize the vigil of the god who discovered rebirth and to drive away those who have no knowledge of these secrets:

*Secret, secret chest; hidden, hidden (chest),
That one does not know, that one does
not know,
Never, never!*

Therefore, it is not death that this coffin conceals. In fact, Anubis depicts resurrection. This jackal whose head (according to Apuleius) appears half black and half gold (the colors of death and rebirth) is, to the initiate, the god of hope.

It is with hope that we must see him come to the threshold of the necropolises. To all the dead and to all candidates for initiatory death, Anubis bestows the very breath of life which the Hereafter exhales:

I am the Jackal of Jackals,

so Anubis proclaims in the Book of the Dead,

*I am the luminous Air
Which carries away the breaths
Before the Venerable Ones,
Up to the confines of the Heavens,
Up to the ends of the Earth!*

At this moment, Anubis assumes his full role: He becomes “Conductor”—such as Hermes in Greece—and “Opener of paths.”

Darkness and Doors

To every initiate, the progression toward illumination has the same prelude: the long crossing, under the guidance of Anubis, of the sacred domain. Then the solemn entrance into the sanctuary, which in this case has become the temple of initiation, follows:

*Entrance into the temple
Of Osiris in Djedu (=Busiris),*

can be read in the *Coffin Texts*, which afterward maintain an animated dialogue, an excerpt of which follows:

Guardian:

*Who is the one who enters
Inside the sanctuary
Of Osiris in Djedu? . . .
Who approaches this Soul? . . .
Whence does he come, the one
Who ascends toward this Soul
That a high knoll conceals?
—Secret thing
That we know not!*

Postulant:

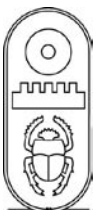
*Open to me!
Verily, I am someone worthy of esteem,
I am someone who (knows) how to keep
a secret,
I am a servant in the temple of Osiris! . . .
Open to me!
I am a (human) who knows
Its magical formula,
I was initiated into these (secret things),
And did not repeat (them)
To the uninitiated.*

At the door of the temple, the candidate is addressed and the intention is unveiled: this mortal being wants to “ascend” toward the Holy of Holies, center of spirituality where the Osirian Soul radiates; the candidate wants to approach the sacred knoll under which the God Savior lies. And here comes the answer of the traveler, voiced in a peremptory tone:

*Let the doors be opened to me!
I have not repeated what cannot be known.
I am someone who (knows) how to keep
a secret.*

Then the doors open. However, the initiatory itinerary shall adapt itself to the plan of each sanctuary. For example, in Busiris the candidate crosses the entire temple before reaching the Holy of Holies; in Abydos, one goes directly underground toward the aquatic hall where the tomb is immersed.

Important variations in the texts result from this, and the Book of the Dead tries to reconcile them:



*For me, the gates of the Heavens
(= the door of the sanctuary)
Have opened wide;
For me, the gates of the Earth
Have opened wide;
For me, the bolts of the (god) Geb
Have been unlocked.*

How can one not remember the Osireion of Abydos? In Abydos, a subterranean passage of approximately 100 meters in length was conceived by a people careful, in its architecture, to accustom the soul to forget the illusions of the world. To forget one's temptations, to go down into this Earth, meant the same as to regain the energy that life had used up.

Is Earth not the welcoming matrix where the tree takes root to prepare its fruit? Is she not the mysterious Mother who wears on her body rocks and plants, beasts and humans? Every living thing draws life from her, and every thing returns to her at the time of death. In the maternal entrails, all being lies dormant, waiting to be reborn. When people die, they also return to this matrix, similar to the embryo, and there prepare for rebirth.

All humanity has felt—and still experiences—the creative power, the inexpressible mystery of Earth, our Mother. First the initiates know that to go down inside her body, to lose oneself in her darkness, is to regain life. The long psychic night of the initiatory process is a return to the sources. It is there that humans shall bathe themselves and emerge, “awakened,” in illumination!

The Book of the Dead proclaims the miracle thus: “Thy face is open in the abode of Darkness!”

Nevertheless, before opening one's eyes to the Great Light, one must travel a dark land where nothing alludes to earthly existence. Before we may acquire higher knowledge, humans—whether dead or alive, during the initiation or after death—must first forget Earth and its illusions.

But here we ask for that which we wished for while we were alive: We want to eat and

to drink; to love and to breathe. Fools! In the Hereafter—or during the initiatory process, which reflects its essence—we shall not receive our ration of beer nor our love desires. Nevertheless, we shall be given a matchless treasure: peace of Heart and the almighty power of Mind.

The dramatic entrance of Humanity into the Mystery is considered, in the Book of the Dead, as one of the most striking documents of universal literature. To the Creator of the World, Atum, the trembling creature says the following words:

The Initiate:

O Atum, (tell me)

Why (then) have I traveled to the desert?

The fact is that there is no water, there is no breeze.

(This land) is deep, deep,

Dark, dark,

Without limits nor frontiers!

The God:

There, thou shalt live with thy heart at peace.

The Initiate:

But one cannot, over there, Satisfy love!

The God:

(It is there that) I have placed

The powers of Mind

Instead of water, breeze,

And pleasure of love;

And peace (of) mind

Instead of bread and beer

The Initiate:

And what will be (my) lifespan?

The God:

*Thou shalt live for millions and millions
(of years);*

(Thy life) shall last for millions (of years)!

So much bliss after the solitary journey! To successfully complete this passage, especially for the initiate, was the main thing; for at the end of the road—in the Hereafter or in the initiatory temple—God shall await his creature:

Thou standest at the portals

That keep the crowd away;

*The one in charge of the threshold
Comes out (and walks) toward thee.
He grabs thy hand;
He takes thee toward Heaven
Close to Geb, the Father!
(This God) exults
When thou approachest;
His hand, he gives (it) to thee;
He gives thee a kiss,
He takes thee in his arms.
At the head of the Souls
He assigns a place to thee.*

In this excerpt from the Pyramid Texts, the deceased king, resuscitated in Heaven, obtains from the god the sublime rendezvous. However, in initiatory rituals, it will be on Earth, in the darkness of the Holy of Holies, that the human, “justified,” during a theatrical appearance, shall see God face to face.

Part 4: Justification or Preparation for the Holy Night

What did all the details of this extraordinary holy game consist of exactly? Before entering the Hall of Judgment, the candidate undergoes a “preparation.” Apuleius again expresses his thoughts freely on the subject.

A master of “inspired mien . . . with a truly superhuman expression,” first reads sacred writings which are pulled out from a hiding-place, at the end of the sanctuary.

The reader “instructs the initiate in the preparation necessary for the initiation.” Was the future initiate required to keep secret what is about to be learned? To accept henceforth to live according to Ma’at (Truth-Justice)? To engage the Self at once, without remission, in the eternal life?

“Remember,” Isis says, “and keep forever engraved deep in thy heart the fact that thy whole career, till the

end of thy life, down to thy last breath, is pledged to me.”

Consequently, a promise was exacted. The obligation was probably taken inside the sanctuary, perhaps in the hypostyle. In its austere shadows and with no one within hearing, the candidate thus prepared the inner Self for the great “Mysteries of the Holy Night.”

Here the candidate, taken by the hand of a guide, is led into the last room, to the very end of the night. Let us imagine at that time the sacred emotion of the candidate! The famous Hall of Judgment—which the funerary papyri locate in the Hereafter—had its replica on Earth: the place of initiatory trial. It is the mysterious Holy of Holies. There the weighing of the souls shall take place. There, a balance, the Scale of Justice, stands.

*On this day when the mistakes are counted
In front of the universal Master.*

Does not Paheri, one initiate among so many others, recall the prestigious event in his biography:

*I was called, placed on the Scale;
I left (the Room),
Weighed, faultless, and saved.*

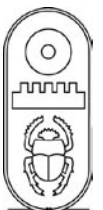
Next to the implacable flail of Justice, venerable masters are waiting. These persons, masked in this case, have become the gods of Judgment. Here are Thoth, the ibis; Anubis, the jackal; Horus, the falcon. The light of the torches carves fierce features on their faces;

like fleeting images of a fantastic dream, their profiles move on the walls, animated by the fire flickering in cups. The candidate remains motionless on the threshold.

“In the middle of the night,” Apuleius says mysteriously, “I have seen the Sun shine with sparkling radiance. I have approached the gods . . . and I have seen them face to face!”



Priest reading before a candidate; tomb of Kom-el-Choufaga (Alexandria)



These gods are demanding. Each one of them is now going to ask questions. Chapter 125 of the Book of the Dead seems to have kept a dramatic memory from the examination. First, the gods speak to the Guardian of the Threshold:

“Have him come!” they command.

Then, speaking to the candidate:

Who art thou?

What is thy name?

Which way didst thou go?

And over there, what didst thou see?

The visitor gives his name. He states what he has seen. Then the gods speak in chorus:

*Do come and cross this threshold for
the Hall of Ma’at!*

The candidate moves forward. However, one’s eyes remain fascinated by a holy and white form.

What are those faces covered with ibis or jackal masks, compared to the radiant human face of the messenger of hope? Behind the scale, here he is, Osiris—wrapped tightly in his immaculate shroud, holding the scepter and the flail.

The candidate bows. He salutes the Savior:

Osiris! I have come here to see thy perfection,

And my two hands (are raised),

Glorifying thy true name!

Thoth, the omniscient ibis, then invites him to proceed:

Come nearer To whom shall I announce thee?

The visitor, in mighty voice:

Announce (my coming)

To the (god whose dwelling

Has a) roof of flames,

Walls of live serpents,

And a floor (like) a river!

This god is Osiris! He bows his head as a sign of acquiescence. Led by Horus, the falcon, the candidate advances amid

the moving flashes in the Hall of Ma’at. Before the throne of Light, the candidate proclaims complete innocence:

Greetings to thee, great god,

Who is master of Ma’at! . . .

I know thee,

(Yes), I know thy name,

And I know the name(s)

Of the forty-two gods

Who are (there), with thee . . .

I did no wrong

Toward humanity . . .

I did no evil . . .

I am pure, I am pure,

I am pure, I am pure!



Sacred Lake, Karnak.

Paheri, Prince of El Kab in the Eighteenth Dynasty, in his biography states that he was “examined” and found “faultless” and finally “saved.”

The scale carries, on one of its dishes, a symbol of the Soul—the soul of the candidate laden with all its actions—and on the other, a feather, the counterweight of Justice, the majestic symbol of Ma’at!

Then the god Thoth records the weighing. It is in consonance with Ma’at; in truth, this soul is all filled with Ma’at!

The scale has spoken, and Osiris proclaims:

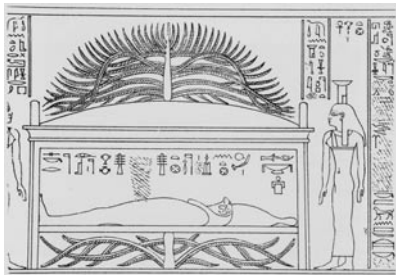
I grant thee (the title of) “Just,” “Triumphant.”

In Ma’at (the Truth), thou art initiated!

(Papyrus T32, Leiden)

It is the decisive moment when the human blends with Ma’at. Here the initiate becomes the incarnation of Ma’at.

If Egypt was great—and still remains so—it is because it guided the first steps of Humanity toward a greater light. Everyone can, through appropriate behavior, identify with Ma’at, the harmony of the world. Everyone can become a part of Ma’at and attain glorification in its eternity.



Osiris being resuscitated under the Holy Tree; Dendera.

*I have entered into Ma'at
(The Harmony of the World),
(Yes), I carry Ma'at,
I am master of Ma'at!*

(Coffin Texts, 4, 330)

Regeneration

After the candidate had proved worthy, a bath washed away all memory of human status. A spiritualization through rituals followed spiritual promotion. By entering the holy water of the original sea and then coming out of it, just as a new Sun on the first day of creation, the human being was reborn without past, without sin, with the eternity of a star:

*Here we are ready to live again, . . .
we read in a solar hymn,
. . . we have entered
The primordial Sea.
It has restored vigor
To the one who begins (his) youth anew.
(Let the old man) take off his clothes.
(Then) another one puts them on!*

Numerous are the basins in Egypt which adjoin the temples. It is there that the rites of lustration were conferred upon the masters, and initiations were probably performed there also.

The necropolis of Abydos still shelters such a basin concealed in the strange construction of the Osireion. But here is the important thing: To reach the tomb of Osiris on the aquatic esplanade, the visitor first had to

step down into the holy water in order for sins to be washed away. No other site still standing in ancient Egypt seems better arranged for initiations.

Now let us imagine the splendor of this hall when the roof was still on, as the heavy architraves testify. The water in the basin glistens under the fleeting glimmers of the lamps and torches. Masked officiating ecclesiasts surround the initiate. Clothes are relinquished—the impure clothes that cloaked the old person. The initiate slowly steps down into the original sea and is enveloped in holy water. As a mother, she welcomes him. Like a setting Sun, the candidate goes down into the abyss and then emerges from it as a Sun, resuscitated.

Having become Osiris—through justification—and likened to Ra (the Sun)—through regeneration—the initiate climbs the twelve steps of the Osireion leading to the august esplanade. Among the heavy pillars protecting the dead God, the candidate receives new clothes: white linen veils.

Part 5: The Illumination

The initiate awaits the manifestation from the Holy One, submitting the Self, and waits. This waiting period is very important, for the longer and the more submissive it is, the more striking the revelation of the Holy Thing will appear when the time comes. In the initiatory process, the epiphany is an apotheosis, a godlike state. It is through it that the heavy door of the subconscious opens up:

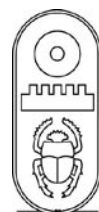
*The brightness of the Light
Has fallen upon my steps!*

Such is the cry of deliverance which the *Coffin Texts* conceal.

Upon the dark esplanade, the gold catafalques of Osiris the Savior sparkle with tawny reflections that become alive under the torches. Just



Deceased wearing the crown in his left hand, and led by Anubis; Louvre, Paris.



remember the cry of admiration that was uttered when those of Tutankhamen were discovered!

The doors of the sepulcher will soon open up; then, the divine sarcophagus and its holy relics will appear.

Robed in white linen, the candidate still awaits. All that has been learned about Osiris—his suffering, his death, and the resurrection he has promised to humanity—all that the mind has piously conceived, shall suddenly be revealed in the Light. Then a shock will result from the confrontation, a blow to the soul that will seal the pact between human and god. A new being shall enlighten the world.

Thick bushes surround the Osirian tomb. They stand as verdant witnesses to the god's resurrection. They embrace the body. They give their strength:

The living plant grows green!

an inscription proclaims;

When it becomes green the earth becomes green also!

See, Osiris repeats his youth!

In this high place of worship, on this island of Ma'at (Cosmic Order and Truth), the god asserts his youth; he resuscitates. The foliage bears witness to his resurrection.

Around the candidate, the priestly officers move about, preparing the opening of the



Stela of the priest Oun-Neferi; British Museum, No. 808, limestone. Unpublished. The priest, having reached the top of the stairs, opens the naos housing the Osirian shrine.

holy sepulcher. Their names cast a magic spell; a few are known, such as Guardian of the Gates, Pure Archivist, Master of the Throne (Papyrus T32, Leiden).

The ritual of the apparition of Osiris, the Savior, was undoubtedly quite long. Did it include dialogues similar to those that were exchanged in front of the Scale of Ma'at? A few invocations, scattered throughout the texts, lead us to believe so:

Osiris!

Hail to thee!

(thou who are lying) under (thy) secret shelter,

Thou whose heart has stopped!

(Coffin Texts, 7, 111)

These appeals—and many others—remind one of bits of lost scenarios.

And then the solemn voice of the god resounds in the temple:

Let him advance toward me . . .

Let him see my wounds!

(Coffin Texts, 1, 142)

To see the wounds of the Savior, the wounds of Osiris through whom humanity is saved! To the religious soul, no other apparition can equal that of the great god, resuscitated!

The heavy bolts of the catafalques burst forth from their ties. The golden doors half-open amidst the green foliage:

For thee the doors of the Horizon

Of the Next World open up!

(Papyrus T32, Leiden)

Behold the god! Behold, at the bottom of the sacred coffin, Osiris being reborn through the power of the ritual! His head is crowned, his body is peaceful, and his shroud immaculate. His whole countenance is majestic.



Incense Offering Burner. From the collection of the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum.

*The postulant whispers:
Great God,
I am thine offspring
Contemplating thy Mystery.*

(Book of the Dead, 44)

“To contemplate the ‘Mystery’” is to participate in it, and it is also to resuscitate as Osiris. It is to become an Osiris. It is a crucial moment and the flashing zenith of a human life! An initiate is born. Holiness infuses the person. To Holiness, the human is bound.



Replica of the Osirian Sepulcher. Isis (the bird) is being fecundated by Osiris. (Cairo)

*Thou seest the funerary chamber,
(The god) in his pristine form,
(Yes), Osiris in his shroud,
In the place of embalming.
Thou seest the glorified Body,
Lying on its funerary bed,
(Yes), the noble Mummy
On its couch exposed!*

(Papyrus T32 Leiden)

An officiating master, no doubt, has just chanted in a sing-song voice the sacred words above. Through sublime vision, human and God are henceforth united. There now the mutation of humanity—real and inexpressible—is realized. It is the mystical union that, after Egypt, so many centuries shall attempt to describe without ever being able to give to the language the incomparable radiance of a soul’s dawning.

The initiate, following the tracks of Osiris, is bound to the god Osiris. Through initiation, the initiate has already experienced

death and resurrection. The initiate’s eyes are already being filled with divine light—the eternal Light of the Savior. The initiate is also a Luminous One; the initiate is Illuminated:

*Verily, I am the one who dwells in the Light.
(Yes), I am a Soul that came into being
Born from the body of the god!
I am one of these gods and one of these souls
That dwell in the Light . . .
(Yes), I am a falcon that dwells in the Light,
That finds its power through its (own) light
And through its (own) radiance!
To the far ends of Heaven I travel back
and forth,
And there is no one to oppose me . . .
(O Osiris!)
Lord of Manifestations,
Great and majestic,
Here I have come!
And the Hereafter for me has opened up;
The paths in Heaven, (the paths) on Earth,
For me have been opened,
And there is no one to oppose me!*

The great Falcon takes wing. Its dark silhouette nobly delineates itself before the solar disc. The initiate must not linger in an illusory world. It is mandatory to tear oneself away from its forms. Toward the Light, the candidate ascends to become real. No one will stop the flight of the great Falcon. The human being has given up an old cloak by crossing the Threshold of Illumination.

One day, all of humanity, following the initiatory path, shall imitate the flight of the Bird of Light. At this final stage, Humanity shall be “realized.” Thus, according to the Divine Will, the mysterious goal of the human adventure shall be attained. All shall be fulfilled.

*(O Osiris)
Lord of Manifestations,
Great and majestic,
Here I have come!”*

