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Egyptian Craft Guild Initiations

James L. Carroll

Initiation seems to have played an important role in Egyptian religion from the beginning of recorded history. Initiations are rites whereby the initiate is symbolically moved from one state of being into another or from one part of the temple into another, the passage involves various trials or tests of knowledge, the rites often deal with death and resurrection, various oaths are taken either of an ethical or of a sacramental nature, and the ceremony itself is usually secret. The initiation paradigm can be seen in the Egyptian funerary literature, the Daily Temple Liturgy, the initiations of the Egyptian priesthood, and the later Isis mystery cult initiations. All these ritual elements can also be seen in modern craft guild initiations, however it is unclear how early this paradigm became part of craft guild initiations. Although it can be shown that craft guilds existed in ancient Egypt from the earliest times, little direct evidence of their nature has remained. However, several elements from the earlier Egyptian initiations show evidence of having been influenced by guild initiations. This indicates that the guild traditions may have adopted the initiation paradigm at a very early stage. If this is the case, then it would have significant ramifications for the origins of modern guild initiations, and would indicate that they are connected to ancient traditions of initiation into the afterlife, and to ancient temple traditions.

EGYPT stands at an important point in human history. The Egyptian language is one of the two oldest written languages known to man, and is the language of the oldest substantial corpus of religious texts known to man (the Pyramid Texts).¹ But Egypt is not just about

JAMES L. CARROLL received a bachelor's degree in computer science with a minor in ancient Near Eastern history, and a master's degree in computer science from BYU. He is currently completing his doctorate in computer science, and he teaches ancient scripture part time. He plans to teach religion full time.

1. "These 'Pyramid Texts' represent the oldest substantial corpus of religious texts known to mankind" (Jan Assman, "Death and Initiation in the Funerary Religion of Ancient Egypt," in William Kelly Simpson, ed., *Religion and Philosophy in Ancient Egypt*, Yale Egyptological Seminar [New Haven, CT: Yale University Graduate School, 1989], 136).

age, it is about continuity. The Egyptian civilization displayed a remarkable continuity of form and idea for well over 3000 years. Their influence was profoundly felt by the Greeks, the Babylonians, the Hebrews, the Assyrians, and eventually by Rome and most of Europe.

The early Egyptians were a deeply religious people, almost to the point of obsession. They recognized that all things in this life are impermanent and subject to change; and not just to small change but to radical change, change towards chaos, disorder (*isfti*) and ultimately death. Their religious quest was to establish order (*m³t*) and permanence in eternity (*n^hh* or *dt*). The most significant symbol of disorder was death, and the most potent image of permanence was the permanence of self, namely, eternal life which was thus the primary goal of Egyptian religious expression.

But for an Egyptian, eternal life meant more than just existing forever, as we will show, it meant existing forever as a god. This meant doing what the gods do, eating what the gods eat, and being like the gods are. However, to accomplish this, one had to first know what the gods know and one had to be ritually and ethically pure or else one would defile the holy space where the gods dwell. Thus, the Egyptian goal of eternal life was necessarily conveyed by initiations in which the requisite purity and the necessary knowledge were given to the candidates. A thorough understanding of the Egyptian initiation rites is therefore necessary if to understand the religious thought of the ancient Egyptians, and the manner in which they sought eternal life.

In what follows, we will discuss the nature of initiation rituals in general and Egyptian initiations specifically. We will then overview late craft guild initiations, Egyptian funerary initiations, Egyptian temple initiations, Egyptian priestly initiations, and mystery initiations. We will also propose the existence of early craft guild initiations in Egypt which were of similar form to their later counterparts, and we will give several reasons for assuming the existence of such rituals.

Egyptian Initiations

We must begin by asking the question, what is an initiation? The term is difficult to define. Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines

initiation as “the rites, ceremonies, ordeals, or instructions with which one is made a member of a sect or society or is invested with a particular function or status . . . [or] the condition of being initiated into some experience or sphere of activity.”² But how can one determine whether a specific religious rite qualifies as an initiation? Since almost every religious ceremony changes someone’s standing in society in one way or another, it is very easy to define all rituals as “initiations.” Such a definition is so broad that the term loses all practical meaning. Should every ordination to office be considered an initiation because it is a “ceremony . . . with which one is . . . invested with a particular function or status”? We do not usually think of initiations in that manner; however, it is unclear how much the term should be limited.

I propose a set of characteristics that many Egyptian initiation rituals have in common: (1) the initiate is symbolically moved from one state of being into another or from one part of the temple into another, (2) the passage involves various trials or tests of knowledge, (3) a central myth is reenacted as part of the initiation in which the secret information needed to pass the tests of knowledge is usually transmitted, (4) the rites often deal with death and resurrection, (5) various oaths are taken, either of an ethical or of a sacramental nature, and (6) the ceremony itself is secret.

There are several Egyptian rites that have the above characteristics: the early Egyptian initiations into various craft guilds, the deceased Egyptian’s initiation into the afterlife as found in their funerary literature, the Egyptian daily temple liturgy, the Egyptian priestly initiations, and the late mystery cults. Perhaps such rites as coronation could also qualify although we will not extensively discuss them here.

Craft Initiations

There is ample evidence for the use of initiation rites in craft guilds throughout the world, especially during the Middle Ages when they

2. Philip Babcock Grove, ed., *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged* (Springfield, IL: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 1993), 1164 (an online version is also available at <http://www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary/>).

culminated in the European institution of Speculative Freemasonry.³ But there is also evidence that craft guild initiations existed long before the Middle Ages. Although we know that these early guilds also practiced some form of initiation, there is little evidence for the forms of their various initiations because of the secrecy that these guilds required. Therefore, in Egypt, there is very little contemporary evidence for the initiations of the ancient Egyptian craft guilds save that they existed.⁴ However, if the later evidence can be projected back in time, then we could reconstruct the general form of the ancient initiations from their later counterparts for which we have ample

3. For the rituals of Freemasonry see Malcolm C. Duncan, *Duncan's Masonic Ritual and Monitor* (New York: David McKay Inc., 1866). For a concise description of several of the various theories of the origins of Freemasonry see Albert Gallatin Mackey, *The History of Freemasonry, Its Legendary Origins* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1996). It should be pointed out that there are several theories for the origins of Freemasonry, and the idea that they simply evolved from the guild traditions is by no means the only possibility. It seems most likely that the rituals of Freemasonry were drawn from many sources. This work shows that one of their sources, namely trade guild initiations, had the potential for preserving ancient religious traditions that are related to the temple, and how one enters heaven. The trade guilds are by no means the only possible source for Freemasonry which could have incorporated authentic ancient temple traditions.

4. Of the ancient origins of the craft guilds Jan Assman writes of “a typical craftsman’s examination [which is] attested in the most varied ages and cultures and even found, until recently, in the guilds of modern Egypt” (Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 144). For another example see Henry F. Lutz, “The Alleged Robbers’ Guild in Ancient Egypt” *University of California Publications in Semitic Philology* 10.7 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1937): 231–42. He writes that it was the “habit of free artisans of the Ptolemaic Period of organizing themselves in private guilds of a distinctly religious character. The various cult-clubs of the guilds . . . celebrated the feast days of their gods, gave financial assistance to their needy members, and saw to it that, when he died, each member received the proper burial rites” (241). The question is, how early did these guild initiations take upon themselves the ritual forms of their later counterparts. It should be pointed out that the idea of the existence of a legal robber’s guild in ancient Egypt has not been universally accepted; however, the similarities between such a guild and Moses 5, and what we find in the Gadianton Robbers of the Book of Mormon should perhaps lead to a reevaluation of this hypothesis. Regardless of whether a robber’s guild existed, Lutz’s research makes it plain that trade guilds of many forms flourished in ancient Egypt.

evidence. We will first discuss the nature of the later guild initiations and then analyze the probability that the ancient guild initiations were similar in form.

The later craft and trade guilds were practical institutions. In order to insure that there was an artificially reduced supply with an increased demand and quality, the secrets of a profession were kept from outsiders.⁵ However, in order to insure that these secrets were passed on to the next generation, an apprentice system was instituted. A prospective tradesman would find a master craftsman to apprentice under. Eventually the apprentice would be made a journeyman, and finally after passing several tests of an ethical and a practical nature, the prospective tradesman would be made a master craftsman by his tutor. Membership in the guild was then conferred upon the candidate by an initiation. Such initiations often stressed rebirth, as the initiate was being reborn into his new role as a master craftsman.⁶

If someone who produced inferior work claimed to be a member of the guild, then the quality of the work done by the rest of the guild could be called into question. It was therefore important for the masters in the guild to be able to recognize others who were masters and point out imposters to the general public. To accomplish this, guild initiations developed a system whereby secret information was passed to the initiate so that those who claimed membership in the guild could be tested for this secret knowledge by the rest of the guild. In later times this secret knowledge usually consisted of secret names and mythological interpretations of the working tools of the trade, and sometimes even secret hand signals and handshakes. This secret set of information constituted what we will call the “modes of recognition.” The modes of recognition were transmitted by the presentation of a

5. For example, the Hippocratic Oath has instructions to teach the craft “to the sons of him who has instructed me and to pupils who have signed the covenant and have taken an oath according to the medical law, but no one else” (Ludwig Edelstein, *The Hippocratic Oath: Text, Translation, and Interpretation* [Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1943]).

6. This basic pattern can be seen in many medieval craft guilds. Perhaps the most famous of these medieval guilds is Freemasonry, in which all of the above elements can be clearly seen.

central myth or story in play form. As the story was told, the initiate learned the secret modes of recognition. Oaths were usually taken as part of the enactment of the central myth. Sometimes oaths were taken to not overcharge, or to produce substandard work, and sometimes to live by certain moral standards. The Hippocratic Oath taken anciently by medical doctors is a prime example of such an oath.⁷

Such a system is still found today in modern universities. The apprentice, journeyman and master degrees have been replaced with our undergraduate, master, and PhD degrees; tests, proposals and defenses have replaced the various guild trials; transcripts and accreditation procedures have replaced the modes of recognition; however, the graduation clothing and procession rituals have maintained their forms from the earlier initiation rites.⁸

Thus, the later university and guild initiations embody all of our six elements of an initiation: (1) the initiate is moved from his state as an apprentice to a new state of being, namely, he becomes a master craftsman, (2) tests of knowledge include the skills of the trade and various modes of recognition are conveyed to the initiate, (3) a central myth, which could often vary from guild to guild, is reenacted as part of the initiation, (4) rebirth is stressed as part of the new state to which the guild member has attained, (5) various oaths are taken, and (6) in order to protect the modes of recognition, the ceremony itself is secret.

Although all of these elements are present in modern craft guilds, most of these guilds cannot be organizationally traced back beyond the thirteenth century. These later guilds could easily have borrowed their initiations from earlier guild traditions, but without direct evidence this can be difficult to show. It is therefore unclear how soon these

7. Although many scholars dispute the exact authorship of the writings ascribed to the ancient physician Hippocrates, if the oath was written by him, it was written sometime between 460 and 380 B.C. For the content of the oath see Edelstein.

8. Hugh W. Nibley, "Leaders to Managers: The Fatal Shift." This speech was delivered at the BYU commencement ceremony on 19 August 1983, after Nibley had received an honorary Doctor of Letters degree; it was published as "Leaders to Managers: The Fatal Shift," in *Dialogue: Journal of Mormon Thought* 16.4 (Winter, 1983): 12–21.

elements became part of the earlier trade guilds of Egypt; however, we have no reason to doubt that they were introduced at an early date. If the ancient Egyptian guilds were similar in form to their later counterparts, then their initiations could be reconstructed from the later evidence. Of course any such reconstruction would, of necessity, be highly speculative. However, the numerous similarities between this reconstruction and the other earlier Egyptian forms of initiation make such a reconstruction possible, if not plausible. Further, this theory adds valuable insight into the other forms of Egyptian initiations, which otherwise would be difficult or even impossible to explain or understand.

Jan Assman has pointed out that several elements from the ancient Egyptian funerary texts can be most easily explained if they were influenced by earlier guild traditions.⁹ Therefore, those elements in the funerary traditions which were borrowed from the guild traditions must have existed in the trade guilds sometime before they appeared in the funerary literature. The elements of interest include the details of embalming, likely borrowed from an embalmers guild initiation; the details of passing the net, likely borrowed from a net maker's guild initiation; the details of constructing the boat, likely borrowed from a boat maker's guild initiation; and the negative confession, likely borrowed from a priest's guild initiation. Many of these details of passage involve oaths and what appear to be modes of recognition, complete with working tools borrowed from various craft guilds. Several of these elements appear in the funerary tradition at a very early date. If these funerary elements did indeed borrow extensively from a guild initiation, then this would place the origin of the guild initiation tradition as far back in history as the oldest substantial corpus of religious texts known to man.

We will now discuss these other forms of Egyptian initiation. We will evaluate their similarities in form and content to what we know of later guild initiations, and discuss the implications these similarities have to our theorized ancient Egyptian guild initiations.

9. Assman, "Death and Initiation."

Funerary Initiations

The earliest funerary texts are the Pyramid Texts,¹⁰ dating from the 5th dynasty; followed by the Coffin Texts, from the Middle Kingdom; followed by the Book of the Dead, in the New Kingdom; followed by such texts as the Book of Breathing Made by Isis, in the Late Period. The Pyramid Texts are primarily concerned with the birth and rebirth of the sun, and the deification of the king in the sky with the sun, while the other texts are more concerned with the death and rebirth of Osiris and the deification of others besides the king. This deification was made possible through mimicking the path that Osiris took to his deification. The main focus of all these texts is to move the initiate into the world of the gods, from the grave, through the horizon, and into heaven itself, teaching him to hear what the gods hear, eat what they eat, sit where they sit, and do as they do: “I hear the words of the gods, I do as they do, I rejoice as they rejoice over my ka, I live on [eat] what they live on.”¹¹ Thus the funerary rites of ancient Egypt are primarily initiatory in nature and can be seen as a sort of priestly initiation into the realm of the dead which has much in common with the craft guild initiations that we have discussed above.¹²

There are several parts to the funerary initiation. First, before the deceased can undertake his journey to immortality he must be clean physically, ritually, and spiritually. Therefore, rituals of purification are intimately associated with mummification and burial. Next, once the deceased is clean, he must journey across the sky into the afterlife. This passage involves various initiatory tests of knowledge that allow the deceased to pass various obstacles that would otherwise prevent his journey into the presence of the gods. Finally he is reborn and gains

10. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 136.

11. Book of the Dead, chapter 153A, in Raymond O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, ed. Carol Edwards (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1972), 149–52.

12. “Thirty years ago, in a fine study on the Egyptian background of the Magic Flute, Siegfried Morenz expressed the view that a central aspect of Ancient Egyptian burial ceremonies lay in a sort of priestly initiation to the realm of the dead” (Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 135).

eternal life with the gods.¹³ We will now discuss these elements from the funerary literature in greater detail, and discuss how they relate to guild initiations.

Mummification was the first step in the funerary initiations and the passage of the deceased into the realm of the dead. The embalming process is related to the topic of initiation in many ways. It not only preserved the corpse, but it transformed it into a new body,

one “filled with magic,” replacing its perishable substances by everlasting ones, resting in the mummy-cover as if it were a kind of magic garment. The Egyptian word for mummy, *sꜥh*, also means “nobility,” or “dignity” and denotes the elevated sphere of existence to which the deceased has been transferred and initiated in the course of the process of embalmment.¹⁴

The process of mummification was associated with the myth of the mummification of Osiris. Osiris was originally dismembered, and then reassembled in a mythic adaptation of the mummification process.

Embalment and mummification, in the light of the myth of Osiris, are equated with the restoration of life to the body, which had by no means to be ritually dismembered beforehand, since its lifelessness alone was mythically interpreted as dismemberment. Dismemberment is thus a symbol for the disintegration of a living entity and a mythical image for the condition of death itself.¹⁵

As part of the mummification process the body was washed, clothed, ritually purified, and prepared for its journey. During “the opening of the mouth” rites the various body parts of the mummy were

13. Taken together these tests and moral judgments represent the manner in which the deceased moves from this life into the next. “Within this ontic distance between the ‘here’ and ‘yonder,’ between visual and mythical reality, lies the initiatory and mystical character of the Egyptian funerary religion. The world of mythical reality stands for a certain knowledge, to which the deceased is initiated, for a cosmic sphere, to which he is transferred, and for a state of being, which he must attain” (Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 137).

14. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 139.

15. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 138.

cleansed and touched with a ritual implement in order to give them life. The pyramid texts record: “Teti has purified himself: May he take his pure seat in the sky! . . . Teti’s mouth has been parted, Teti’s nose has been opened, Teti’s ears are unstopped . . . Re will purify Teti, Re will guard Teti from all evil!”¹⁶ Thus, purity was essential to the deceased’s heavenly journey, and it is connected to the idea of life. In images where the deity or initiate was washed, the water was often drawn as ankh signs, the Egyptian hieroglyph for eternal life.

More than simple washing was necessary to create purity. “Purity, in the sense of deliverance from the burdens of earthly existence, may only be attained through knowledge. Purity and knowledge, these two concepts are closely interwoven; does not the deceased assert: ‘I know the names . . . I am pure?’”¹⁷ For this reason the deceased was buried with the various spells that provided the knowledge necessary for the deceased to attain a glorious state in the world of the dead. Thus purity is related to initiation and to the various modes of recognition from the guild initiations. Furthermore, these requirements of ritual purity needed to prepare the deceased to see the face of the god in heaven, have important parallels in the Egyptian temple liturgy, where the deceased must become ritually pure before seeing the statue of the deity in the temple, as will be discussed later.¹⁸

After the mummy was washed and purified, the deceased was prepared to pass the horizon and enter the heavenly realm.¹⁹ This passage was accomplished in various ways. The deceased may be lifted

16. Pyramid Texts, Utterance 407, in Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature, Vol. 1: The Old and Middle Kingdoms* (Los Angeles: Near Eastern Center, University of California, 1975), 43–44.

17. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 144.

18. This comparison between the ritual purity required to see the statue of the deity in the temple and the ethical purity required for one to see the actual face of the deity in heaven reminds one of Matthew 5:8: “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”

19. “The central theme and purpose of the Pyramid Texts is the resurrection of the dead king and his ascent to the sky. The principal stages of his dramatic conquest of eternal life are: the awakening in the tomb from the sleep of death; the ascent to the sky; and the admission to the company of immortal gods” (Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 30).

up to heaven by the hand of the god, for example in the Pyramid texts we read “[the] hand of Unas in the hand of Re! O Nut, take his [the deceased’s] hand! O Shu, lift him up!”²⁰ Alternatively, the dead may fly to the heavens, ride a boat, or pass several doors.

The deceased must pass several challenges on his journey to the heavens.

To reach this place “where *Ma’at* is,” this divine abode holding the promise of eternal life and god-like existence, the deceased must undergo a series of examinations: he must rouse the ferryman from his sleep and induce him to make the crossing, he must secure a ferryboat, avoid the catching-net stretched out between heaven and earth and convince the inhabitants of the heavenly world that he is one of them. The only way of successfully withstanding these examinations is through knowledge, for these take place in the form of interrogations.²¹

The world of the dead was a dangerous place, into which the initiate must “integrate himself by means of the spoken word: by appealing, conjuring, intimidating, beseeching, threatening, answering, etc.”²² Thus the dead passed the 2 ways, 7 gates, 21 portals 14 hills, 12 crypts, field of reeds, field of offerings, door keepers, heralds, councils, judges, ferries, catching net, etc., all by means of initiatory knowledge. “The deceased must not only know the names of all these entities and every detail concerning their nature, he must also have full command of the words needed to face each and every one of them.”²³ Although there were many tests of the deceased’s knowledge, we will focus on three in particular: the ferryman, the net, the various doors and gates, and finally the judgment of the deceased.

The heavens were thought of as a watery world through which the sun travels in a boat, therefore several of the barriers through which the deceased must pass involve water. The deceased must rouse a ferryman from sleep, and convince the ferryman to carry him across the waters.

20. Pyramid Texts, Utterance 253, Pyramid of Unas, in Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 33.

21. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 144.

22. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 144.

23. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 143.

This idea is very common in the later funerary texts, but also appears in the earliest versions.²⁴ Even in the early versions the connection between the funerary texts and the temple liturgy is evident since the ferryman is hailed by the ritualistic “awaken in peace” with which the gods were also greeted each morning by the priests performing the daily cult in the temples. To enlist the ferryman’s aid, the deceased must be able to answer several questions put to him by the ferryman. He must also assemble the boat through the recitation of secret names for the various parts of the boat. For example, the Book of the Dead chapter 99 reads, “Her [the boat’s] planks are the drops of moisture which are on the lips of Babai; her end-pieces are the hair which is under the tail of Seth’ her rubbing-pieces are the sweat which is on the ribs of Babai; . . .” etc.²⁵ This recitation is similar in form to what we would expect from a boatman’s craft initiation.

Another of the dangers that the initiate must pass on his way to heaven is a fisherman’s net²⁶ that can trap those who are unworthy of passing into heaven. In some of the versions this net is called a *ḥdt*. This word is also used for a barrier (most likely a sort of veil) that must be passed in the daily temple liturgy just before entrance to the innermost sanctuary, or most holy place. The deceased passes this trial as he did the ferryman, by means of his knowledge as tested by a complex interrogation. The interrogation involves secret names for various parts of the net. For example “I know the reel in it [the net]; it is the middle finger of Sokar. I know the guard-beam in it; it is the shank of Shesmu. I know the valve in it; it is the hand of Isis. . .” etc.²⁷

The deceased must also pass several gates: “Stand at the gates that bar the common people! The gatekeeper comes out to you, He grasps your hand, Takes you into heaven, to your father Geb. He rejoices at your coming, Gives you his hands, Kisses you, caresses you.”²⁸ The

24. For example see Pyramid Texts, Utterance 270, in Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 35.

25. Book of the Dead, chapter 99, in Faulkner, *Book of the Dead*, 91.

26. For example see Book of the Dead, Chapters 153A and 153B, in Faulkner, *Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, 149–52.

27. Book of the Dead, chapter 153A, in Faulkner, *Book of the Dead*, 149.

28. Pyramid Texts, Utterance 373, in Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 41.

gatekeepers are meant to ward off evil in the form of ignorance, impurity, and violence from the realm of the gods. This exclusion of evil insures the holiness of the dwelling place of the gods in heaven. The guardians are dangerous, and if answered incorrectly could cause harm to the initiate. They are often depicted holding knives or swords in order to protect the doorways.²⁹ The deceased wards off the threat of the guardians “by calling them by name, but also by knowing the names of the gates; he secures unhindered passage by showing proof of his purity.”³⁰ By answering these questions correctly the deceased proves himself to be a member of the community of the gods, eating what they eat and sitting where they sit, and is thus allowed entrance into heaven. Again, this secret information is reminiscent of the modes of recognition of a trade guild whereby a craftsman showed that he was a member of the guild’s community.

Upon the deceased’s entrance into heaven, the deceased is judged. In the later texts this takes the form of a negative confession where the initiate tells each gatekeeper that he has not committed various sins. In the Book of the Dead, there are two such negative confessions, the first is usually drawn before a representation of a sanctuary, while the second is usually drawn within the sanctuary, illustrating its connection to the temple rites. In the second confession secret names for the guardian deities are given, which the initiate must know just as he must know the names of the parts of the ferry, the net, and the doors. As we will discuss in greater detail later, such secret names for the deities (the working tools of a priest) may indicate that a priestly guild initiation is the source of the negative confession. After the negative confession, the

29. See Book of the Dead, chapter 144. For an illustration, see Faulkner, *Book of the Dead*, 134–35.

30. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 147. Medieval guilds also involved giving secret information to pass guarded doors. For example, the Egyptian guardians are reminiscent of the Masonic Tyler and his drawn sword. In Freemasonry this idea is connected with the Cherubim and flaming sword from Genesis 3:21. Sacred Space is often guarded space, according to the Revised Temple Typology element 1: “Sacred or Set Apart Space: The temple is built on separate, set-apart, sacral, or guarded space.” James L. Carroll, “A Revised Temple Typology,” *Hagion Temenos*, ed. Stephen Ricks, 2nd ed. (Provo, UT: BYU Press, 2005).

deceased is lead to a scale where his heart is weighed against a representation of truth. If the deceased passes this test, he is then admitted into the presence of the god.

The questions asked of the deceased before he can pass the ferryman, the net, or the gates have long puzzled Egyptologists. The chapters which deal with these tests of knowledge are full of references and statements that, taken by themselves, make very little sense. Our quotation from the chapter to pass the net is typical. What does it mean for the “reel” of the net to be the “middle finger of Sokar” or for the “guard beam” to be the “shank [leg bone] of Shesmu?”³¹ One plausible explanation for these various interrogations and their enigmatic answers is that they originated with various guild initiations. Assman writes,

It thus seems justified to consider whether a dramatic initiatory interrogation, rather than the mere philological need for commentary, underlies these spells. If we may generalize Bidoli’s informative remarks on the matter, it seems reasonable to assume that these spells originated in the initiation rites of various professions, such as: net-makers, bird-catchers, fishermen, carpenters, embalmers (with respect to the “deification of the limbs”) and priests.³²

Such an explanation would greatly simplify an otherwise mysterious subject. If Assman and Bidoli are correct, these secret names for the various parts of the net could represent a typical mythical usage of the various tools of the guild’s trade. The secret names would have been conveyed to the initiate in a dramatic portrayal of the guild’s central myth, in which the meaning of the names was given. Such secret names could then be used as a mode of recognition for the guild involved. The many connections between the various parts of the net or ferryboat and the body parts of different deities would likely be more understandable if we knew the secret myth that was recited during the initiations. Unfortunately these rituals were not preserved due to their secret nature. These earlier modes of recognition from the guilds could have

31. Book of the Dead, chapter 153A, in Faulkner, *Book of the Dead*, 149.

32. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 145.

been borrowed by the funerary literature, but without the secret central myth that would have explained them. Such a borrowing from the guild into the funerary liturgy is not surprising when one considers that in the funerary liturgy the deceased is attempting to find admittance to a sort of “guild of the gods,” by displaying his knowledge of the heavenly modes of recognition and his obedience to the moral requirements of such a guild (as shown in the negative confession and the requirements of purity which we will discuss in greater detail in the section on priestly guild initiations).

Once the deceased has access to the heavens, he can be reborn. The standard initiatory theme of resurrection can be seen in the Pyramid Texts, Utterance 403: “Teti will go in your midst, Teti will live on what you live!”³³ Thus, in Egyptian thinking, the deceased is not only reborn but reborn into a deified state becoming like the gods. However, the deceased has power to be reborn and to become like the gods because of his secret knowledge of the god’s food.

In Utterance 402 we read: “Teti is that Eye of Re, Conceived at night, born every day!”³⁴ In Mesopotamian theology the dead went to the ground and the ground was therefore the mother deity. In Egyptian theology the dead went to the heavens, and the heavens are therefore represented as the mother deity. The deceased must return to a mother deity because the dead must return to a type of the womb in order to be reborn. On one coffin the sky is depicted as saying to the deceased “I have spread myself over thee, I have born thee again as a god.”³⁵

The deceased, now reborn through the sky-goddess as a god himself, is subsequently breast-fed by divine nurses and elevated to the heavens. This ‘sacramental interpretation’ has its roots in a different set of rites than those surrounding the ‘laying of the deceased in the coffin,’ notably in the ‘burning of incense’ (the rising fumes being a symbol of the ascent to the heavens) and in libation (fluids being a symbol of divine milk).³⁶

33. Pyramid Texts, Utterance 403, in Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 42.

34. Pyramid Texts, Utterance 402, in Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 42.

35. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 140.

36. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 140–41.

Assman believes that the rites that involve the “nursing of the child-god” may have originated in the royal coronation ritual.³⁷ Thus these rituals of rebirth may have originated with rituals of kingship initiations.

If such an initiation truly existed and actually took the form of a “*naissance mystique*” (mystical birth) with subsequent nursing and elevation to the heavens, then, and only then, may we consider the initiation ceremony to be the source and the prototype of the corresponding funerary beliefs. In this case, the initiation ceremonies of living human beings could not possibly have originated from the rites surrounding the “passage to the next world.” It would, on the contrary, seem more logical, if the initiation rites of ‘this’ world had been transposed, together with their corresponding sacramental interpretations, into the next world.³⁸

Either way, this similarity of form clearly connects the guild like rites of kingship with the funerary traditions. A full exploration of the theme of coronation is beyond the scope of the current study,³⁹ but it is sufficient to point out that kingship can be thought of as a profession in its own right, and coronation as a sort of guild initiation.

In summary, the Egyptian funerary literature contained the knowledge that the deceased would need in order to pass the tests that he would face on his journey to the next life so that he might be reborn like the gods, doing as they did, and living where they lived. Many of these tests consisted of various examinations, and were initiatory in nature.⁴⁰ This initiation into the realm of the dead has many things in

37. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 141.

38. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 141–42.

39. See Stephen D. Ricks and John J. Sroka, “King, Coronation, and Temple: Enthronement Ceremonies in History,” in *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Provo, UT: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 236–71. Assman writes, “We can therefore hardly go wrong in assuming that the rites explained as the ‘nursing of the child-god’ originated in the royal coronation ritual” (Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 141).

40. These initiatory rites seem to have also been connected in some manner with the rise of Christianity. These rites were so similar to their later Christian counterparts that Assman writes that they “remind one of the Gnosis and must surely represent one of its roots” (Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 144).

common with our theorized Egyptian Guild initiations. For example, there is a primary myth around which the initiations are given (the course of the sun and stars for the Pyramid Texts and the resurrection of Osiris for the later texts). The passage of the initiate is determined by various tests of knowledge, which involve secret names and descriptions, clearly paralleling the craft modes of recognition. The funerary initiations involve requirements of purity, judgment, and expressions of innocence, which have some parallels in the craft oaths, and which may have originated in a type of priestly guild initiation which we will discuss further in the section on priestly initiations. Finally, the funerary initiations involved a ritual rebirth that may have had its origins in the initiation rites of kingship.

It is difficult to know whether the initial idea for “modes of recognition” originated with the trade guilds or with the funerary traditions. However, even if the funerary tradition is the older of the two, it seems clear that the details of the working tools of the net and ferry (and possibly even those of embalming and kingship) were borrowed from the guilds into the funerary tradition and not the other way around. This would indicate that the guild initiations contained modes of recognition much sooner than has previously been thought. But even if the above claim is disputed, the similarities between the later guild initiations and the earlier funerary traditions make it clear that there is an important connection between the two which needs to be explained. Further, the fact that the modes of recognition so familiar to the later guilds can be seen in such early religious texts, witnesses to the antiquity of the tradition and to its association with the themes of purity, entrance into heaven, priesthood, temple, resurrection, and kingship.

Temple Initiations

It can be shown that “the path of the deceased to Osiris corresponds to the path of the priest on his way to the innermost sanctuary of the god.”⁴¹ “The path of the priest [through the temple] is

41. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 149.

furthermore sacramentally explained as an ascent to the heavens. He 'opens the door-wings of the sky in Karnak' and 'sees the mysteries of the horizon.'⁴² "It therefore would not seem justified to accept the idea of an initiation for funerary religion . . . on the one hand, while categorically rejecting it for all other forms of Egyptian religion on the other."⁴³

In the daily temple rites at Karnack, the priest, dressed in ritual clothing, first lit a torch (which he associated with the eye of Horus), burnt incense (a type of purification ritual), then passed the great pylons which represented the horizon, and progressed to the inner sanctuary. During this passage to the inner sanctuary, the priest awakened the temple, bringing it and its deities to life in a ritual of similar form to the ritual of the opening of the mouth from the funerary literature. Before the doors of the most holy place, the priest passed a *ḥdt*. The meaning of this term is vague in the temple context, however, it is the same word used for the net in the funerary context, and may here be a type of net, cloth, or veil covering the doors of the sanctuary. After passing the *ḥdt*, the priest pulled back the bolt from the door to the holy of holies (which was described as removing the finger of Seth from the eye of Horus), opened the doors of the sanctuary (which were described as "heaven"), and saw the face of the god, which he then presented with offerings (which were also associated with the eye of Horus).

Thus the myth of Osiris, and the myth of the blinding of Horus by Seth and his eventual restoration, serve as a type of central myth that has been overlaid upon the rituals of the temple service. These rituals are clearly related to the funerary liturgy with its purifications, passing of the horizon, ascent to the sky, passing the net, opening the doors, and beholding of the face of the god. The rituals are also interesting from a Judeo-Christian perspective in that they are clearly similar to the path of the Hebrew high priest on the Day of Atonement.⁴⁴ This should not be surprising to us, given Abraham 1:26.

42. Assman, "Death and Initiation," 149.

43. Assman, "Death and Initiation," 149.

44. See Leviticus 16.

According to one idea, “the [earthly] initiation rites, and not vice versa, furnished the prototypes of Egyptian funerary religion: a view which has so far been treated with great reserve.”⁴⁵ This may be because we have so much information about the Egyptian funerary religion, and so little about their votive religious rites. However, there are several reasons to believe that the temple initiation rituals were the source for much of the funerary literature. There is enough evidence for this hypothesis that Assman writes that “the AKH-sphere [heavenly realm] is a world of ‘mythical’ values and realities which, in the course of the Old Kingdom, gradually overlaid an even more ancient world of tangible cultic objects and rituals.”⁴⁶ Thus, according to Assman, the funerary liturgy, with its transformation to the sphere of the deified dead (the AKH-sphere), was overlaid upon the older temple rites.

As is often the case, causation is more difficult to show than correlation, but which ever tradition preceded the other, the Egyptian rites of the dead and the Egyptian temple rites are clearly connected in some way. The temple rituals are also related to guild initiations since the temple workers were priests, who had undergone specific rituals of initiation into a sort of priestly guild in order to qualify them to officiate in the temples. In Egypt, priesthood was a priest craft, and was often the profession of the individuals involved, and thus the priesthood functioned essentially as a guild engaged in a common profession. Further, the daily temple service can be seen as the work of a guild of house servants taking care of the daily needs of the deities, washing, clothing, and providing them with food.

Priestly Initiations

There were several gradations or degrees to the Egyptian priesthood. For example, according to the Karnack liturgy, a *w^cb*, or general priest, can perform the rites that took place before the pylon, as the priest says at this point in the temple liturgy, “*ink w^cb iw=i w^cb=kwi*”

45. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 136.

46. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 137.

“I am a priest (*w^cb*) and I am pure”⁴⁷ indicating that only a pure priest could officiate in the rituals which he is then performing. However, when the priest enters the sanctuary proper, the priest declares “*ink ḥm-ntr in nsw wd wi r m33 ntr . . . ink bs ntr:w*” “I am a prophet of god (*ḥm-ntr*), it is the king who has commanded that I see god. . . . I am an initiate of the gods.”⁴⁸ This most likely indicates that a *ḥm-ntr* (a word that is consistently translated into Greek as “prophet” and which we have here translated “prophet of god”) was a higher degree of priest than a *w^cb*, and that a *ḥm-ntr* could also function in the lower office of a *w^cb*. This could also indicate that a *w^cb* could enter and perform the rites of the outer courts, while only a *ḥm-ntr* could perform the rites of the innermost sanctuary. It is unclear whether a *w^cb* was initiated into his office or whether he was made without an oath, but the above quote clearly shows that a *ḥm-ntr* was initiated. This initiation was most likely an initiation into his position as a priest or prophet, and not his daily service in the temple, although we have already shown that this could be seen as a type of initiation. The word *bs*, used for the term “initiate,” has both a knife and walking legs as its determinants. This could indicate both the covenantal and transitional nature of the priest’s initiations.⁴⁹

The Egyptian priesthood can be seen as a trade guild (or priest-craft) in its own right, with its own levels and degrees. Further, its initiations are clearly related to both the Egyptian funerary literature and the guild initiations already discussed. Temple worship was often seen as a type of profession or craft throughout the Ancient Near East, and even in Israel.⁵⁰ Therefore, it is not surprising that the Egyptian priestly initiations took the form of a craft initiation.

47. Translation from the Egyptian by the author, for the Egyptian see Alexandre Moret, *le Rituel du Culte Divin Journalier en Egypte*, ed. Ernest Leroux (Paris, 1902).

48. Translation by the author.

49. For a knife as part of a covenant process see Mark J. Morris, “Simile Curses in the Ancient Near East, Old Testament, and Book of Mormon,” in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2.1 (Spring 1993): 124–38.

50. For example, the book of Exodus compares the service that the Children of Israel performed as slave craft laborers for the Egyptians with the temple service that God freed them to perform, see Exodus 1:13,14; 3:12; 4:23; 10:8,9; 12:25; 27:19;

Several primary examples of priestly initiations have been found which allow us to reconstruct the basic form that they took. Unfortunately both of the major examples are from the later periods, but that does not mean that the rites did not exist in earlier periods. The first main text is a Greek papyrus from Oxyrhynchus. Unfortunately it is highly fragmentary but it is still possible to discern that sacrifices and washings were involved: “. . . is washed [. . .] they [. . . they will] not enter the temple [. . .] it is necessary to initiate the [. . .] in the beginning before him [. . .] they are required to swear [. . .] according to what the second priests [swear in the] presence of the proto[stolites] as a witness: . . .”⁵¹ what follows is very similar in form to the negative confession from the funerary literature. For example: “I will not eat [what is not law]ful for the priests; I will [n]ot cut [. . . any]thing neither will I c[om]mand another from whom [. . .]” is a representative sample.

The texts from the door jambs of the temple of Edfu are also significant. They too are similar in form to the Book of the Dead's negative confession. Because of this similarity, and their similarity to the Oxyrhynchus text, it is reasonable to surmise with Fairman that upon each door jamb of the Pronaos of the temple of Edfu “is an abbreviated Declaration of Innocence which he [the priest] presumably recited while entering.”⁵²

From the above it is clear that priestly initiations existed, and that they consisted of washings, clothings, and a series of oaths of similar form to those of the Negative Confession from the Book of the Dead chapter 125. Therefore the question is not whether such guild-like initiations existed for Egyptian priests, but how early such initiations were introduced. If these initiations were introduced at a sufficiently

and 31:10. Exodus 31:10 is especially enlightening as the clothes of the priest are called the clothes of service, and include a worker's apron (the ephod). In Hebrew this word for service comes from the same root as the word for work in general, and for the word for slave used to describe the condition of the Israelites in Egypt.

51. As quoted in John Gee, *The Requirements of Ritual Purity in Ancient Egypt* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 53–54.

52. Fairman, “Worship and Festivals in an Egyptian Temple,” in *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 37 (1954): 179, as cited in Gee, *Requirements of Ritual Purity*, 56.

early date, it becomes reasonable to hypothesize that the Book of the Dead chapter 125 originated from the priestly initiations and not vice versa. This hypothesis has been put forward by both Reinhold Merkelbach and Reinhard Grieshammer, however it has not found wide acceptance. Miriam Lichtheim has argued against this idea; theorizing that the Book of the Dead chapter 125 originated with tomb biographies. John Gee has effectively responded to Lichtheim's criticism of the Merkelbach/Grieshammer hypothesis.⁵³ Despite these questions about which came first, the similarities between the Book of the Dead 125, the tomb biographies, and the Greco-Roman era priestly initiations can not be denied. It is most likely that all three forms influenced each other in one way or another. For our purposes it is less important which form influenced which as it is to point out that all three are initiatory in character and are related.⁵⁴

The details of the priestly initiations are scarce because they were kept secret; however, the connection between the priestly initiations and the Book of the Dead chapter 125 allows us to hypothesize that the priestly initiations may have also involved secret names for deities such as those found in the Book of the Dead 125. Such a connection could explain the existence of two separate declarations of guiltlessness in Book of the Dead 125. The first could have come from the declaration of worthiness that may have been recited before the priest was actually initiated or admitted into the shrine. The second (usually drawn upon the interior of a shrine figure in the Book of the Dead) could have taken place within the temple itself as part of the actual initiation ritual. Thus the elements of the second declaration of innocence could have been drawn from the covenants taken by the priest upon his actual investiture into the priestly office. In this context it is significant that the secret names for the deities are found in the second declaration and not in the first, since they would represent the secret knowledge which would correspond to the modes of recognition of a craft guild,

53. See Gee, *Requirements of Ritual Purity*.

54. Gee's refutation shows that the tomb biographies often employ a negative confession in such contexts as worthiness for office, or for entrance into a happy afterlife, both themes of the priestly initiation and the funerary initiation.

which would not be given until the candidate was actually initiated into the guild. This hypothesis is further strengthened by the papyrus of Neferoubenef. In this copy of the Book of the Dead, Neferoubenef is shown about to enter a shrine, dressed in white robes. The second negative confession is then drawn upon the shrine, and when Neferoubenef exits the other side of the shrine, he is dressed as a priest with his head shaved as he approaches the judgment of the dead and the presence of the deity.⁵⁵

Thus, if Merkelbach, Grieshammer, and Gee are correct, Book of the Dead chapter 125 is a borrowing into funerary tradition of an initiation into the priest's office, which can be seen as a type of priestly guild. Whichever form borrowed from the other, the similarities show that the dead's entrance into the presence of god in the heavenly temple was determined by how well the deceased kept the covenants that he made during his priestly initiations in the earthly temple. Those initiations likely involved the candidate's introduction into the presence of the statue of the god in the earthly temple. Because these initiations consisted of washings, clothing, oaths, and secret names for the gods (the working tools of the priest's guild), these initiations took the same form as any other craft initiation, and that the Egyptian priesthood can be seen as a type of craft guild for priests into which the perspective priests were initiated.⁵⁶

Mystery Cult Initiations

The mystery cults of later antiquity were "initiation rituals of a voluntary, personal, and secret character that aimed at a change of mind through experience of the sacred."⁵⁷ Through the initiations the

55. Suzanne Ratié, *Le Papyrus De Neferoubenef* (Louvre III 93, 1968), plate 17.

56. From an LDS perspective the priesthood originated with Adam, and therefore if we went back far enough, the priesthood would predate the craft guilds, which could be seen as an imitation of the earlier priesthood. For the purposes of the present study however, it is sufficient to show that in Egypt the two were closely related.

57. Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 11.

candidates hoped to receive a closeness to the god/goddess that would allow them to receive favor in life, and a special place in death. We know very little about the mystery cults due to the extreme secrecy under which they operated.

Walter Burkert, one of the world's leading experts in Greek religion, believed that "the institution of mysteries cannot be traced to either Anatolia, Egypt, or Iran" but instead reflected a Greek model of Eleusis or Dionysus or both, which predated the arrival of Egyptian influences. Thus the mystery cults displayed a marked Greek influence, yet it must be remembered that *all* the Greek mystery cults also displayed a strong Egyptian influence.⁵⁸ The mystery cult of Isis is of particular interest, and there can be no doubt of the Egyptian influence in this case.

The mystery initiations in the Isis cult were not the central aspect of Isis worship, but were "one element in the much more complex canvas of cults of the Egyptian gods."⁵⁹ Unlike the other Greek mystery cults the Isis cult required the presence of a temple and many priests who "performed a daily service from morning to night, solemnly awakening the gods, clothing them, feeding them, and putting them to bed."⁶⁰ Although the details of the initiations are not clear, it should be born in mind that they took place within the context of the Egyptian daily temple rites which we have already shown were of an initiatory character, and were related to the Egyptian funerary and guild traditions.

58. Even Burkert, who argues that the initiations are of Greek origin is forced to admit a strong Egyptian influence on the rituals. For example: "this would suggest some Egyptian influence on Eleusinian cult or at least on Eleusinian mythology right at the beginning of the sixth century, in a context of practical 'healing magic'" (Burkert, *Mystery Cults*, 21). "Modern scholars agree that there were initiation rites for priests at various levels in Egypt, and there were secret rites in which only the higher priests were allowed to participate, but there were no mysteria of the Greek style, open to the public upon application. Yet in the eyes of the Greeks, who admired the aboriginal age of Egyptian civilization, Egypt appeared to be the very homeland and origin of mysteries as such; this is the teaching of both Herodotus and Hecataeus of Abdera" (40). "Isis, among her other civilizing activities, is seen as the founder of mysteries throughout the world" (41).

59. Burkert, *Mystery Cults*, 41.

60. Burkert, *Mystery Cults*, 39.

What little we do know of the Isis mystery initiations comes from “The Golden Ass” by Lucius Apuleius. Usually such rites revolved around some mythical story, and many of the mystery cults dealt with the suffering and rebirth of a deity. Although it is impossible to be sure, it seems likely that the Isis initiations revolved around the myth of Isis’s resurrection of Osiris. Such a connection does seem likely given Lucius Apuleius’ constant references to Osiris. We do know that the initiations involved “signs and tokens,” washings, purifications, the wearing of linen clothing, certain restrictions of diet, secret “charges,” a fast, and the presenting of the candidate “before the face of the goddess.” Then the candidate was brought into the most secret section of the temple. Unfortunately the description becomes very cryptic at this point and we are simply told that

I approached near unto Hell, even to the gates of Proserpina, and after that, I was ravished throughout all the Element, I returned to my proper place: About midnight I saw the Sun shine, I saw likewise the gods celestial and gods infernal, before whom I presented my self, and worshipped them: Behold now have I told thee, which although thou hast heard, yet it is necessar[y that] thou conceal it; this have I declared without offence, for the understanding of the profane.⁶¹

In other words, he has spoken in code, because that is all that the “profane” or uninitiated are allowed to hear. After these rites the initiate emerged from the temple clothed in ritual clothing and bearing a torch. He then attended a communal feast.

Of course, this description does no more than arouse our curiosity, as it was likely intended to do. Nevertheless, we can see several similarities between these rites and the other initiations already discussed. There are several ritual purifications, clothing in special garments, the lighting of a torch, the procession into the temple, the revelation of the deity within the temple, certain obligations of secrecy and conduct, and a ritual feast. Thus, there is a

61. Lucius Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, trans. P. G. Walsh; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

connection between these rites and both the funerary and liturgical initiations described above, and, therefore, with the guild initiations.

Conclusions

Initiations are rites whereby the initiate is symbolically moved from one state of being into another, or from one part of the temple into another; the passage involves various trials or tests of knowledge; a central myth is reenacted, which often deals with death and resurrection; various oaths are taken, either of an ethical or of a sacramental nature; and the rituals and modes of recognition are usually kept secret.

Initiation seems to have played an important role in Egyptian religion from the beginning of recorded history. The initiation paradigm can be seen in the funerary literature, the daily temple liturgy, the initiation of the Egyptian priesthood, the later Isis mystery initiations and the later craft guilds.

The Egyptian funerary religion records the initiation of the deceased into the presence of the god. First, the deceased was purified, mummified, washed, and ritually clothed and buried. Then the deceased began his journey to the sky. He moved from the tomb, past the horizon, and mounted to the sky where the deceased passed several tests of knowledge, which included a ferryman, a net, various doors, and, in later times, an ensemble of deities which constituted the negative confession. The deceased then faced judgment for his conduct on earth and then was introduced into the presence of the deity.

The rites that constituted the daily temple liturgy are surprisingly similar to those of the funerary cult. The priest was first washed, cleansed, and clothed in linen. The priest then lit a torch, passed the great pylons in the shape of the horizon, and passed into the sanctuary of the temple which was a representation of heaven. There the priest passed a net or veil, opened the doors of heaven, and beheld the face of the deity.

Before a "prophet" could serve in this capacity, he first had to be initiated. Such initiations likely involved washings, clothing in linen, and certain covenants which were similar in form to the negative

confession, so that a person was judged in death by how well he kept the covenants he made in life.

The Isis mystery initiations seem to have consisted of similar elements to the other initiations. They involved “signs” and “tokens,” the lighting of a torch, the wearing of linen clothes, certain moral obligations or covenants, the revelation of the deity within the temple, and a ritual feast. The connection of the mystery rites with Osiris also connects these rites with the Egyptian cult of the dead, and with the Egyptian hope for rebirth.

The initiations of the priests, the method of passing the ferryman, and the method for passing the net are similar in form to typical craft initiations that consisted of cross-examinations with predetermined questions and answers about secret names of the working tools and objects involved with the craft. Such references were attested in the most varied ages and cultures and even found, until very recently, in the guilds of modern Egypt. Thus we know the form of modern craft guilds, and we know that Egypt had craft guilds anciently, however there is no direct evidence of the form that the initiations of these early craft guilds took. However, given the presence of such references to secret information involving craftsman’s working tools in the early funerary literature of ancient Egypt, it seems likely that these elements were also present in the ancient trade guilds of Egypt. This assumption is by no means certain, but it deserves further consideration.

Thus, there is continuity between the various religious expressions found in ancient Egypt that revolves around the ideas of initiation into the afterlife, and into the presence of the deity through ritual mystery reenactments similar to those likely found in the initiations of the ancient craft guilds of Egypt. This illustrates the antiquity of the concepts found in the rites of medieval craft guilds, and of the initiation rites found in universities, fraternities, Freemasonry, and among the Latter-day Saints. This further indicates that such rituals were anciently connected with the temple, admittance into the afterlife, kingship, priesthood, and with becoming like the gods.

APPENDIX

Funerary and Temple Traditions Compared

	Funerary	Temple
Torch	X	X
Incense	X	X
Primary Myth	Osiris	Horus
Horizon	Horizon	Pylon
Heaven	Sky/Boatman	Water/Swamp
Awakening	Opening Mouth	Awaking Temple
Net/Veil	Net	Veil
Doors	X	X
See God	X	X

Egyptian Initiations Compared

	Guild	Funerary	Temple	Priestly	Mystery
Levels or Degrees	X	?	X	X	X*
Signs of Recognition	X	X	?	P**	X
Examinations	X	X	?	X	P
Secrecy	X	X	X	X	X
Washing	?	X	X	X	X
Clothing	P	X	X	X	X
Anointing	?	X	X	X	X
Censing	?	X	X	X	?
Torch Lighting	?	X	X	?	X
Horizon	?	X	X	?	?
Boat/Pass Water	P*	X	X	?	?
Net	P*	X	X	?	?
Doors	P*	X	X	?	?
Oaths	X	X	P	X	X
See God	?	X	X	X	X

KEY: X = yes, P = probable, ? = unknown, N = no

*In some mystery cults, but perhaps not in others. Levels or degrees can at least be seen at Eleusis and in the Mythraic initiations. Nets would have been included in the netmaker's guild just as boats would have been included in the boatmaker's guild. Modern guilds involve various tests required for passing the doors to enter the guild hall or lodge room. Such traditions could also have existed anciently.

**Here the secret names of the deities could have served as a mode of recognition.