

INITIATION

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A Comparison of the Initiation Rites of the Religions of the Near East, Taken from the Book, Initiation, by Dr. C. J. Bleeker which was a Study Conference on Rites of Initiation held at Strasburg, Austria, September 17th to September 24th, 1964.

- i) The so-called 'rites de passage' which sometimes function as rites of initiation.
- ii) Rites of initiation in the strict sense of the word, i.e., rites introducing people into closed religious societies.
- iii) Initiation in the sense of introduction into the mysteries of religion.

I. Initiation rites to religions, societies, tribes or groups.

A. Baptism

Christians	Instructions
Gnostics	Death and Resurrection
Essenes	Purifying-Cleansing by water
Jewish	New being or person
	Member of society or church

B. Circumcision

Jewish--Covenant, between God and His people
Islamic (Moslems) expected--perhaps no religious meaning

C. Diksa

Hinduism--Learning of Mantra, purification to become member of class.

D. Initiation to Warrior Societies

Arabic	Obedience to	Receives sword
Persian	his Lord.	Special waist belt,
Turkish		girdle or apron
		Religious ceremony

E. Yamabushi

Shinto--Buddist of Japan

Fasting
Suffering
Physical exertion and control
Special instructions and words
Meditation--Gain knowledge of self

Initiation into Societies or Classes

1. Instruction--learning religious concepts or sayings
2. Fasting--Subjecting the physical, special positions of body
3. Initiation
 - a. Covenants
 - b. Becomes part of that society to observe beliefs
4. Meditation--contemplation
5. Competition of certain fetes to prove worthiness
6. Usually male, sometimes in certain groups females are admitted.

II. Secret, Mysterious Rites--"Rites de Passage"

- A. Limited knowledge, but exist in:
1. Egyptian
 2. Hinduism
 3. Buddhism
 4. Essenes
 5. Gnostics
 6. Bektashis
 7. Zoroastrians
- B. Special holy place where performed--special holy rooms
(Egyptian, Hindu, Bektashis, Buddhism)
- C. Washings of body, touching certain parts and giving special blessings
(Egyptian, Hindu, Bektashis) (Buddists?)
- D. Cleansing and absolving
(Egyptian, Hindu)
- E. Key words
(Egyptian, Hindu)

F. Dramatizations of creation--Tree of Life--special fruit
(Egyptian, Hindu, Zoroastrians)

G. Covenants
(Egyptians)

Conclusions

1. Secret rites, remained secret, not divulged, sacred, difficult to get them
2. Lack of interest--just beginning to be studied
3. Not understood even when explained--no basis for understanding.