



OPHIOLATREIA
Rites and Mysteries
of Serpent Worship

Hargrave Jennings

Ophiolatreia

Rites and mysteries of serpent worship

Author: Hargrave Jennings

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contactvamzzz@gmail.com

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Ophiolatrea

An account of the rites and mysteries connected with the origin, rise and development of serpent worship in various parts of the world, enriched with interesting traditions, and a full description of the celebrated serpent mounds & temples, the whole forming an exposition of one of the phases of phallic, or sex worship.

– Hargrave Jennings
London, 1889

CHAPTER I

Ophiolatrea an extraordinary subject — Of mysterious origin — Of universal prevalence — The serpent a common symbol in mythology — Serpent-worship natural but irrational — Bacchic orgies — Olympias, mother of Alexander, and the Serpent emblem — Thermutis, the Sacred Serpent — Asps — Saturn and his children — Sacrifices at altar of Saturn — Abaddon — Ritual of Zoroaster — Theology of Ophion — The Cuthites — The Othiogeneis — The Ophiomans — Greek Traditions — Cecrops — Various Serpent worshippers.

OPHIOLATREIA, the worship of the serpent, next to the adoration of the phallus, is one of the most remarkable, and, at first sight, unaccountable forms of religion the world has ever known. Until the true source from whence it sprang can be reached and understood, its nature will remain as mysterious as its universality, for what man could see in an object so repulsive and forbidding in its habits as this reptile, to render worship to, is one of the most difficult of problems to find a solution to. There is hardly a country of the ancient world, however, where it cannot be traced, pervading every known system of mythology, and leaving proofs of its existence and extent in the shape of monuments, temples, and earthworks of the most elaborate and curious character. Babylon, Persia, Hindostan, Ceylon, China, Japan, Burmah, Java, Arabia, Syria, Asia Minor, Egypt, Ethiopia, Greece, Italy, Northern and Western Europe, Mexico, Peru, America—all yield abundant testimony to the same effect, and point to the common origin of Pagan systems wherever found. Whether

the worship was the result of fear or respect is a question that naturally enough presents itself, and in seeking to answer it we shall be confronted with the fact that in some places, as Egypt, the symbol was that of a good demon, while in India, Scandinavia, and Mexico, it was that of an evil one. It has been remarked that in the warmer regions of the globe, where this creature is the most formidable enemy which man can encounter, the serpent should be considered the mythological attendant of an evil being is not surprising, but that in the frozen or temperate regions of the earth, where he dwindles into the insignificances of a reptile without power to create alarm, he should be regarded in the same appalling character, is a fact which cannot be accounted for by natural causes. Uniformity of tradition can alone satisfactorily explain uniformity of superstition, where local circumstances are so discordant.

“The serpent is the symbol which most generally enters into the mythology of the world. It may in different countries admit among its fellow-satellites of Satan the most venomous or the most terrible of the animals in each country, but it preserves its own constancy, as the only invariable object of superstitious terror throughout the habitable world. ‘Wherever the Devil reigned,’ remarks Stillingfleet, ‘the serpent was held in some peculiar veneration.’ The universality of this singular and irrational, yet natural, superstition it is now proposed to show. Irrational, for there is nothing in common between deity and a reptile, to suggest the notion of Serpent-worship; and natural, because, allowing the truth of the events in Paradise, every probability is in favour of such a superstition springing up.” (Deane.)

It may seem extraordinary that the worship of the serpent should ever have been introduced into the world, and it must appear still more remarkable that it should almost universally have prevailed. As mankind are said to have been ruined through the influence of this being, we could little expect that it would, of all other objects, have been adopted as the most sacred and salutary symbol, and rendered the chief object of adoration. Yet so we find it to have been, for in most of the ancient rites there is some allusion to it. In the orgies of Bacchus, the persons who took part in the ceremonies used to carry serpents in their hands, and with horrid screams call upon “Eva, Eva.” They were often crowned with serpents while still making the same frantic exclamation. One part of the mysterious rites of Jupiter Sabazius was to let a snake slip down the bosom of the person to be initiated, which was taken out below. These ceremonies, and this symbolic worship, are said to have begun among the Magi, who were the sons of Chus, and by them they were propagated in various parts. Epiphanius thinks that the invocation “Eva, Eva,” related to the great mother of mankind, who was deceived by the serpent, and Clemens of Alexandria is of the same opinion. Others, however, think that Eva was the same as Eph, Epha, Opha, which the Greeks rendered Ophis, and by it denoted a serpent. Clemens acknowledges that the term Eva, properly aspirated, had such a signification.

Olympias, the mother of Alexander, was very fond of these orgies, in which the serpent was introduced. Plutarch mentions that rites of this sort were practised by the Edonian women near Mount Hæmus in Thrace, and carried on to a degree of madness. Olym-

Serpent worship and occult sex

Ophiolatreia - Rites and Mysteries of Serpent Worship is one of the most substantial and complete books written on this subject. It was published anonymously in London in 1889 by the Freemason and Rosicrucian Hargrave Jennings. In several voluminous works, Jennings developed the theory that the origin of all religion is to be sought in phallic worship of the Sun and fire, which he properly called “phallism.” Ophiolatreia is just one of its expressions. Unlike many modern authors, for whom the word “phallic” implies the penis, Jennings used the word “phallic” in its non-gendered sense, meaning “relating to the sexual organs”.

Hargrave Jennings was a rival of Blavatsky and friend of the American sex magician and occult writer Paschal Beverly Randolph and both authors had a major influence on the twentieth century pioneers of sex magic.

This collectors item describes the rites and mysteries connected with the origin of ophiolatreia and its rise and development in many parts of the world. The relation between snake worship, raw creation force and sexual energy includes Jennings analyses of Bacchic orgies and rites related to Saturn, Zoroaster, Abaddon, Dionysus and Osiris.

