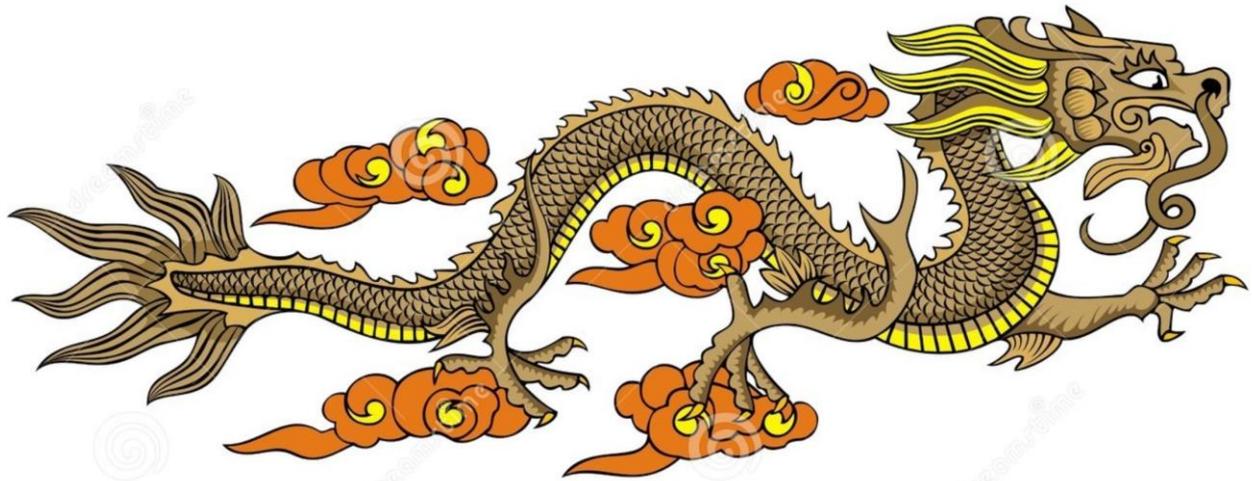


THE SYMBOLISM OF THE DRAGON



Chinese flying dragon (courtesy of dreamstime.com Ensiferrum 7071168)

THE PRIMORDIAL SEVEN, THE FIRST SEVEN BREATHS OF THE DRAGON OF WISDOM, PRODUCE IN THEIR TURN FROM THEIR HOLY CIRCUMGYRATING BREATHS THE FIERY WHIRLWIND.

The Stanzas of Dzyan

Out of the whirlwind spoke the voice that ignites, that sounds like no voice ever heard. It is, instead, a flame that swirls down out of yawning darkness and scorches the flanks of the trembling world. Amongst the clouds gathered in storm, its fiery curves are sometimes glimpsed and the scraping of its taloned feet echo up the blackened caverns leading to the bowels of the earth. These are aspects of its voice . . . extensions of its flaming breath. They shine like glittering scales spiralling through the atmosphere. They project forth in the wake of that thunderous tone which issues from the depths of the very source of sound, from the primordial throat which opens out to another world. Thus it is that dragons float at the edge of the universe and near the apertures leading to unknown but frightening realms. Their fiery breath resounds and their reptilian form expands and contracts into myriad shapes described in thousands of stories the world over. But their exact nature remains a mystery and, despite their legendary reputation, for many persons they have never existed.

It has been held that the dragon, "while sacred and to be worshipped, has within himself something still more of the divine nature of which it is better to remain in ignorance". Something double-edged is suggested here, and the question of the existence of the dragon deepens to become one of how to approach the Divine without being incinerated by its lower emanations. This question is further complicated by the widespread notion that the dragon represents the animal adversary who is the primordial enemy, the symbolic figure of a monstrous involvement with the things of the earth-earthy and of the devil himself. The killing of the dragon has come to signify for many the victory of light over that darkness which may be seen as man's own evil nature. Examples of the dragon as enemy are so numerous in European traditions that it is difficult to avoid the impression

of there having been intense and, perhaps, even deliberate diffusion of the idea in the area for a long time. The dragon of *The Faerie Queen*¹ infested Ludd's dominion and made every heath in England resound with shrieks on May Day eve, while that of St. Samson lay hidden in a cavern in Wales, destroying two districts with its venom before the Christian hero threw it into the sea. Other dragon slayers of Christendom are St. Philip, St. Martha, St. Florent, St. Cado, St. Mandet, St. Paul, St. Remain, St. Keyne, St. Michael, St. George, St. Margaret and St. Clement, to name a few. Indeed, the ranks that join the famous St. George are full and their exploits spanned vast areas from the Middle East to the North Sea.

The enemy was sometimes found elsewhere, such as the dread Aghasura sent by Kansa to devour Krishna and his followers.² Aghasura looked like a mountain with an open cave for a mouth, but he lived in a land where 'dragon' and naga were names given to wise and holy men. That 'dragon' need not designate only what is evil is suggested in the etymology of the word, which comes from the Greek δράκων, meaning a dragon, a huge serpent or python. This word is closely related to the verb διρομασι, which means 'to see clearly' and which explains why the dragon, though so often feared, was in the oldest traditions associated with prophecy and wisdom and made the guardian of temples. In fact, the dragon is a multi-levelled symbol related to the highest level of spirituality, the intermediary planes of phenomenal life and the lower inferior and telluric forces. It was enthroned and almost deified by the Manchu Chinese, Phoenicians and Saxons, who saw the dragon as a grand intermediary between heaven and earth. The common winged dragon which combines the elements of bird and serpent, spirit and matter, is well exemplified by Quetzalcoatl, who brought all that is beneficent to the Nahuatl people of Mexico. The Chinese perceived a link between it as the Upper Waters and the earth and said that "the Earth joins up with the Dragon" when it rained.

Universal Symbols of Humanity - The Dragon, extracts from *Hermes* magazine

THE ORIGIN OF THE SATANIC MYTH & THE SECRET OF THE DRAGON

Let us then fathom this creation of the Patristic fancy still deeper, and find its prototype with the Pagans. The origin of the new *Satanic* myth is easy to trace. The tradition of the Dragon and the Sun is echoed in every part of the world, both in its civilized and semi-savage regions. It took rise in the whisperings about secret initiations among the profane, and was established universally through the once universal heliolatrous religion. There was a time when the four parts of the world were covered with the temples sacred to the Sun and the Dragon; but the cult is now preserved mostly in China and the Buddhist countries, "Bel and the Dragon being uniformly coupled together, and the priest of the Ophite religion as uniformly assuming the name of his God" (*Archaeology*, Vol. xxv., p. 220, London). In the religions of the past, it is in Egypt we have to seek for its Western origin. The Ophites adopted their rites from Hermes Trismegistus, and heliolatrous worship crossed over with its Sun-gods into the land of the Pharaohs from India. In the gods of Stonehenge we recognise the divinities of Delphi and Babylon, and in those of the latter the devas of the Vedic nations. Bel and the Dragon, Apollo and Python, Krishna and Kaliya, Osiris and Typhon are all one under many names — the latest of which are Michael and the Red Dragon, and St. George and his Dragon. As

¹ *The Faerie Queene* is a romantic English epic poem by Edmund Spenser from 1590-1596. It is one of the longest poems in the English language; on a literal level, the poem follows several knights as a means to examine different virtues, and though the text is primarily an allegorical work, it can be read on several levels of allegory. Spenser states the entire epic poem is Allegorical and its aim was to "*fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline.*"
from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Bonwick

² Krishna defeated the demon, representing cruelty & violence, by entering its mouth and by expanding himself, choked it.

Michael is “one as God,” or his “Double,” for terrestrial purposes, and is one of the Elohim, the fighting angel, he is thus simply a permutation of Jehovah. Whatever the Cosmic or astronomical event that first gave rise to the allegory of the “War of Heaven,” its earthly origin has to be sought in the temples of Initiation and archaic crypts. The following are the proofs: —

We find (*a*) the priests assuming the name of the gods they served; (*b*) the “Dragons” held throughout all antiquity as the symbols of Immortality and Wisdom, of secret Knowledge and of Eternity; and (*c*) the hierophants of Egypt, of Babylon, and India, styling themselves generally the “Sons of the Dragon” and “Serpents”; thus the teachings of the Secret Doctrine are thereby corroborated.

There were numerous catacombs in Egypt and Chaldea, some of them of a very vast extent. The most renowned of them were the subterranean crypts of Thebes and Memphis. The former, beginning on the western side of the Nile, extended towards the Lybian desert, and were known as the *Serpent’s* catacombs, or passages. It was there that were performed the sacred mysteries of the *kuklos anagkes*, the “Unavoidable Cycle,” more generally known as “the circle of necessity”; the inexorable doom imposed upon every soul after the bodily death, and when it has been judged in the Amenthian region.

In de Bourbourg’s book, *Votan*, the Mexican demi-god, in narrating his expedition, describes a subterranean passage which ran underground, and terminated at the root of the heavens, adding that this passage was a snake’s hole, “un agujero de colubra”; and that he was admitted to it because he was himself “a son of the snakes,” or a serpent. (“Die Phoinizier,” 70.)

This is, indeed, very suggestive; for his description of the *snake’s hole* is that of the ancient Egyptian crypt, as above mentioned. The hierophants, moreover, of Egypt, as of Babylon, generally styled themselves the “Sons of the Serpent-god,” or “Sons of the Dragon,” during the mysteries.

“The Assyrian priest bore always the name of his god,” says Movers. The Druids of the Celto-Britannic regions also called themselves snakes. “I am a Serpent, I am a Druid,” they exclaimed. The Egyptian Karnak is twin brother to the Carnac of Bretagne, the latter Carnac meaning the serpent’s mount. The Dracontia once covered the surface of the globe, and these temples were sacred to the Dragon, only because it was the symbol of the sun, which, in its turn, was the symbol of the highest god — the Phoenician Elon or Elion, whom Abraham recognised as El Elion.*

Besides the surname of serpents, they were called the “builders,” the “architects”; for the immense grandeur of their temples and monuments was such that even now the pulverised remains of them “frighten the mathematical calculations of our modern engineers,” says Taliesin.†

De Bourbourg hints that the chiefs of the name of *Votan*, the *Quetzco-Cohuatl*, or Serpent deity of the Mexicans, are the descendants of Ham and Canaan. “I am Hivim,” they say. “Being a Hivim, I am of the great race of the Dragon (snake). I am a snake myself, for I am a Hivim.” (“Cartas,” 51; “*Isis Unveiled*,” Vol. I., 553, *et seq.*)

Furthermore, the “War in Heaven” is shown, in one of its significations, to have meant and referred to those terrible struggles in store for the candidate for adeptship, between himself and his (by magic) personified human passions, when the *inner* enlightened man had to either slay them or fail. In the former case he became the “Dragon-Slayer,” as having happily overcome all the temptations; and a “Son of the Serpent” and a Serpent himself, having cast off his old skin and being born in a *new* body, becoming a Son of Wisdom and Immortality in Eternity. (See Part II. on the Satanic Myth.)

Seth, the reputed forefather of Israel, is only a Jewish travesty of Hermes, the God of Wisdom, called also Thoth, Tat, Seth, Set, and Satan. He is also Typhon — the same as Apophis, the Dragon slain by Horus; for Typhon was also called Set. He is simply the *dark side* of Osiris, his brother, as Angra Mainyu is the black shadow of Ahura-Mazda. Terrestrially, all these allegories were connected with the trials of adeptship and initiation. Astronomically, they referred to the Solar and

Lunar eclipses, the mythical explanations of which we find to this day in India and Ceylon, where any one can study the allegorical narratives and traditions which have remained unchanged for many thousands of years.

* See Sanchoniathon in "Eusebius," Pr. Ev. 36; Genesis xiv.

† "Society of Antiquaries of London," vol. xxv. p. 220.

Secret Doctrine 2:378-380

THE THEFT OF RAHU

Rahu, mythologically is a *Daitya* — a giant, a Demi-god, the lower part of whose body ended in a Dragon or Serpent's tail. During the churning of the Ocean, when the gods produced *amrita* — the water of Immortality — he stole some of it, and drinking, became immortal. The Sun and Moon, who had detected him in his theft, denounced him to Vishnu, who placed him in the stellar spheres, the upper portion of his body representing the Dragon's head and the lower (Ketu) the Dragon's tail; the two being the ascending and descending nodes. Since then, Rahu wreaks his vengeance on the Sun and Moon by occasionally swallowing them. But this fable had another mystic meaning, since *Rahu*, the Dragon's head, played a prominent part in the mysteries of the Sun's (*Vikarttana's*) initiation, when the candidate and the Dragon had a supreme fight.

The caves of the Rishis, the abodes of Tiresias and the Greek seers, were modelled on those of the *Nagas* — the Hindu *King-Snakes*, who dwelled in cavities of the rocks under the ground. From *Sesha*, the thousand-headed Serpent, on which Vishnu rests, down to Python, the dragon *serpent oracle*, all point to the secret meaning of the myth. In India we find the fact mentioned in the earliest Puranas. The children of Surasa are the "mighty Dragons." The *Vayu* Purana replacing "Surasa" (of *Vishnu* Purana) by *Danayas* or *Danavas* — the descendants of Danu by the sage Kasyapa — and those *Danavas* being the giants (or Titans) who warred against the gods, they are thus shown identical with the "Dragons" and "Serpents" of Wisdom.

By simply comparing the Sun-gods of every country, one may find their allegories agreeing perfectly with one another; and the more the allegorical symbol is occult the more its corresponding symbol in other systems agrees with it. Thus, if from three systems widely differing from each other in appearance — the old Aryan, the ancient Greek, and the modern Christian schemes — we select several Sun-gods and dragons at random, these will be found copied from each other.

Let us take Agni the fire-god, Indra the firmament, and Karttikeya from the Hindus; the Greek Apollo; and *Mikael*, the "Angel of the Sun," the first of the AEons, called by the Gnostics "the saviour" — and proceed in order.

(1) Agni — the fire-god — is called in the Rig-Veda Vaiswanara. Now Vaiswanara is a *Danava* — a giant-demon,* whose daughters Puloma and Kalaka are the mothers of numberless *Danavas* (30 millions)...

* He is thus named and included in the list of the *Danavas* in *Vayu Purana*; the Commentator of *Bhagavata Purana* calls him a son of Danu, but the name means also "Spirit of Humanity."

Secret Doctrine 2:381

DEFINITIONS FROM THE THEOSOPHICAL GLOSSARY

Nâga (*Sk.*). Literally “Serpent”. The name in the Indian Pantheon of the Serpent or Dragon Spirits, and of the inhabitants of Pâtâla, hell. But as Pâtâla means the *antipodes*, and was the name given to America by the ancients, who knew and visited that continent before Europe had ever heard of it, the term is probably akin to the Mexican Nagals the (now) sorcerers and medicine men. The Nagas are the Burmese *Nats*, serpent-gods, or “dragon demons”. In Esotericism, however, and as already stated, this is a nick-name for the “wise men” or adepts in China and Tibet, the “Dragons.” are regarded as the titular deities of the world, and of various spots on the earth, and the word is explained as meaning adepts, yogis, and narjols. The term has simply reference to their great knowledge and wisdom. This is also proven in the ancient Sûtras and Buddha’s biographies. The Nâga is ever a wise man, endowed with extraordinary magic powers, in South and Central America as in India, in Chaldea as also in ancient Egypt. In China the “worship” of the Nâgas was widespread, and it has become still more pronounced since Nâgarjuna (the “great Nâga”, the “great adept” literally), the fourteenth Buddhist patriarch, visited China. The “Nâgas” are regarded by the Celestials as “the tutelary Spirits or gods of the five regions or the four points of the compass and the centre, as the guardians of the five lakes and four oceans” (Eitel). This, traced to its origin and translated esoterically, means that the five continents and their five root-races had always been under the guardianship of “terrestrial deities”, i.e., Wise Adepts. The tradition that Nâgas washed Gautama Buddha at his birth, protected him and guarded the relics of his body when dead, points again to the Nâgas being only wise men, Arhats, and no monsters or Dragons. This is also corroborated by the innumerable stories of the conversion of Nâgas to Buddhism. The Nâga of a lake in a forest near Râjagriha and many other “Dragons” were thus converted by Buddha to the good Law.

Nâgarâjas (*Sk.*). The usual name given to all the supposed “guardian Spirits” of lakes and rivers, meaning literally “Dragon Kings”. All of these are shown in the Buddhist chronicles as having been converted to the Buddhist monastic life: *i.e.*, becoming Arhats from the Yogis that they were before.

Ophis (*Gr.*). The same as Chnuphis or *Kneph*, the *Logos*; the good serpent or Agathodæmon.

Ophiomorphos (*Gr.*). The same, but in its material aspect, as the Ophis-Christos. With the Gnostics the Serpent represented “Wisdom in Eternity.”

Ophis-Christos (*Gr.*). The serpent Christ of the Gnostics.

Ophiozenes (*Gr.*). The name of the Cypriote charmers of venomous serpents and other reptiles and animals.

Ophites (*Gr.*). A Gnostic Fraternity in Egypt, and one of the earliest sects of Gnosticism, or *Gnosis* (Wisdom, Knowledge), known as the “Brotherhood of the Serpent”. It flourished early in the second century, and while holding some of the principles of Valentinus had its own occult rites and symbology. A living serpent, representing the Christos-principle (i.e., the divine reincarnating Monad, not Jesus the man), was displayed in their mysteries and revered as a symbol of wisdom, Sophia, the type of the all-good and all-wise. The Gnostics were not a Christian sect, in the common acceptation of this term, as the *Christos* of pre-Christian thought and the *Gnosis* was *not* the “god-man” Christ, but the divine EGO, made one with Buddhi. Their Christos was the “Eternal Initiate”, the Pilgrim, typified by hundreds of Ophidian symbols for several thousands of years before the “Christian” era, so-called. One can see it on the “Belzoni tomb” from Egypt, *as a winged serpent with three heads* (Atma-Buddhi-Manas), and *four* human legs, typifying its androgynous character; on the walls of the descent to the sepulchral chambers of Rameses V, it is found as a snake with

vulture's wings—the vulture and hawk being solar symbols. “The heavens are scribbled over with interminable snakes writes Herschel of the Egyptian chart of stars. “The *Meissi* (Messiah?) meaning the *Sacred Word*, was a good serpent”, writes Bonwick³ in his *Egyptian Belief*. “This serpent of goodness, with its head crowned, was mounted upon a cross and formed a sacred standard of Egypt.” The Jews *borrowed* it in their “brazen serpent of Moses”. It is to this “Healer” and “Saviour”, therefore, that the Ophites referred, and not to Jesus or his words, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so it behoves the Son of Man to be lifted up”—when explaining the meaning of their *ophis*. Tertullian, whether wittingly or unwittingly, mixed up the two. The four-winged serpent is the god Chnuphis. The good serpent bore the cross of life around its neck, or suspended from its mouth. The winged serpents become the Seraphim (Seraph, *Saraph*) of the Jews. In the 87th chapter of the *Ritual* (the Book of the Dead) the human soul transformed into *Bata*, the omniscient serpents says:—“ I am the serpent Ba-ta, of long years, Soul of the Soul, laid out and born daily; I am the Soul that descends on the earth”, i.e., the Ego.

Dracontia (*Gr.*). Temples dedicated to the Dragon, the emblem of the Sun, the symbol of Deity, of Life and Wisdom. The Egyptian Karnac, the Carnac in Brittany, and Stonehenge are Dracontia well known to all.

Drakôn (*Gr.*) or Dragon. Now considered a “mythical” monster, perpetuated in the West only on seals, &c., as a heraldic griffin, and the Devil slain by St. George &c. In fact an extinct antediluvian monster in Babylonian antiquities it is referred to as the “scaly one” and connected on many gems with Tiamat the sea. “The Dragon of the Sea” is repeatedly mentioned. In Egypt, it is the star of the Dragon (then the North Pole Star), the origin of the connection of almost all the gods with the Dragon. Bel and the Dragon, Apollo and Python, Osiris and Typhon, Sigur and Fafnir, and finally St. George and the Dragon, are the same. They were all solar gods, and wherever we find the Sun there also is the Dragon, the symbol of Wisdom—Thoth-Hermes. The Hierophants of Egypt and of Babylon styled themselves “Sons of the Serpent-God” and “Sons of the Dragon”. “I am a Serpent, I am a Druid”, said the Druid of the Celto-Britannic regions, for the Serpent and the Dragon were both types of Wisdom, Immortality and Rebirth. As the serpent casts its old skin only to reappear in a new one, so does the immortal Ego cast off one personality but to assume another.



In Chinese culture dragons are powerful and benevolent symbols, seen as lucky and good, in contrast to some of the fire-breathing dragons in Western stories. They also represented the bloodline of Chinese royalty. <https://netart.us>

³ James Bonwick (1817 – 1906) was born Lingfield, Surrey, England, the eldest son of a poor carpenter. He was educated at the Borough Road School, Southwark, and at 17 years of age began teaching at a school at Hemel Hempstead and similar positions followed at Bexley and Liverpool. In April 1840 he married Esther Ann Beddow, the daughter of a Baptist clergyman, and in the following year obtained a position at the Normal School, Hobart, Tasmania. His writings included *Egyptian Belief and Modern Thought* (1878), and *Irish Druids and Old Irish Religions* (1894).