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THE ANCIENT PAGAN MYSTERIES AND THEIR CONNECTION WITH FREEMASONRY.

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Our Institution reaches back to the earliest ages, its outward form may have to some degree submitted to the influence of time, but its spirit has ever remained the same.

The Indians, the Persians, the Egyptians, the Syrians, the Greeks, the Romans, had their mysteries; and the temples where these mysteries were celebrated, presented a symbolic image of the Universe. Often the lofty roof of those temples, studded with stars like the firmament, was upheld by twelve columns representing the twelve months of the year. The frieze which crowned the pillars was called the "zoophire" or the Zodiac, and one of the twelve signs was placed over each pillar, frequently alternating with the Lyre of Apollo,—emblematic of the melody which, according to the ancients, produced the movement of the heavenly bodies, but which is inaudible to our imperfect organs. The body of this Lyre was formed from the skull and horns of the ox, an animal which, from having been employed in tilling the soil, became the emblem of that heavenly body which fructifies it, its seven strings alluding to the seven planets then known.

We find the same symbolic type in the temples of the Gauls and Scandinavians. The Edda relates that Gilte (a word which comes from the Teutonic word wolf), on approaching Asgard the domicile of the Gods, saw the roof of the lofty palace covered with golden stars or bucklers as far as the eye could reach, and arriving at its threshold found it guarded by a man employed in tossing seven small swords into the air at once and catching them as they fell. In hieroglyphic language, swords or daggers represented the rays of the heavenly bodies; those swords then figuratively related to the planetary system, and Asgard was consequently a representation of the Universe.

The cave of Mithras or the Sun God was another emblem of the world. The Initiates of Persia consecrated caves to the worship of this God. They divided them into compartments, and figured on them the order and disposition of the universe. It is from their example that the custom of celebrating mysteries in caves has been established, and this explains why Pythagoras and Plato called the world a cave, a cavern. In the ceremony of initiation among the disciples of Mithras, the candidate was required to ascend a ladder or flight of steps, and in so doing had to pass through seven doors, each representing one of the planets, through all of which, according to their doctrine, the disembodied spirits of men passed in succession, and having been gradually purified in their passage, at length arrived at the abode of the uncreated light, from whence they had originally been taken, to enter into bodies and inhabit the earth.

Freemasonry has analogous symbols, and there is ground even for believing that the word "Lodge" itself is derived from the Sanscrit "Loca" or "Logo," which signifies world; and considering the affinity that exists between the Sanscrit, and the Greek and Latin, from which our modern idioms are formed, such etymology does not appear forced. We also

inform our entered apprentices that the Lodge extends in length from the East to the West, in breadth from the North to the South, in depth from the surface to the centre, and in height from the earth to the highest heavens, and that the pillars on which it rests are Wisdom, Strength and Beauty, the chief attributes of the Creator.

India is probably the birth place of the ancient mysteries. The priests of that country, (called by the Greeks "Gymnosophists," because they clothed themselves very lightly), were from time immemorial renowned for their wisdom and vast knowledge; and crowds of people came from all countries to receive initiation at their hands.

From the first they appear to have surrounded their doctrine with allegories and symbols. Witness their idol with three heads and four arms on one body, their trinity composed of Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the preserver, and Siva the destroyer, a representation of that Eternal Being who upholds his work, while destroying and renewing portions of it without ceasing. Witness also the "Lingam Yoni," formed from the generative organs of both sexes. Bardasanes, as quoted by Pophyry, gives another of their emblems, a lofty statue, half male, half female, with the sun on the left breast and the moon on the right. Their priests were divided into three classes, "Oupavites," "Pratchinavites," and "Nivites," and communicated their knowledge only after long and painful trials. The course of study was not less than 37 years, their teachings were all oral, and that which was confided to the memory was never to be written; this mode of teaching was subsequently adopted by the Gaulic Druids and Scandinavian Drottes, who had undoubtedly an eastern origin.

It was a received opinion in India, that none could enjoy eternal blessedness without initiation.

After a sacrifice preceded by fasting and bathing in water, the candidate received a Word, which he was obliged to repeat, if possible, 100,000 times a day, but so secretly that even his lips must not be seen moving. A long course of study was then prescribed, and much of his time was spent in solitude and prayer.

ETHIOPIA.—From the Ganges, a portion of the Gymnosophists proceeded to Ethiopia, and established a college at Meroe, where, by their knowledge and influence, they controlled the affairs of the kingdom; and Hergamenos, contemporary with Ptolemy Philadelphus, to free himself from their influence, put many of them to death when assembled in their Temple, for the performance of their mysteries.

EGYPT.—The Egyptian priests no doubt sprung from the Ethiopian Colleges, they acknowledge that Osiris, their principal god, was an Ethiopian, and the most intimate relations were kept up between them and the Gymnosophists of Meroe; they met yearly to offer a conjoint sacrifice to Ammon, and to celebrate the sacred feast which the Greeks called "Heliotrapeze" or the table of the sun.

The Egyptian priests formed a class or caste, and transmitted the priesthood by hereditary right; they also took a prominent part in the government of the state. In the position they assumed they reduced the monarch to the attitude of a subject, they watched him during his life and constituted themselves into a tribunal at his death, citing his