

ASSOCIATIONS OF SNAKE WITH LIFE AND ITS ORIGINS

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Summary

Snake and serpent are symbols of the earthly life, the zoomorphic manifestations of the chthonic vitality. Formation of such concept of snake could be influenced by real physical features of these reptilians, such as their ability of periodical renewal by sloughing off the exuviae, their exceptional prolificacy and vitality. Associations of snake with phenomenon of life are manifold and polysemantic. The snake is regarded both as a giver and fosterer of life and as its destroyer. In human consciousness, it gets incorporated into the mysterious sphere of the origins of life as one of the possible factors facilitating explanation of these origins. Here, the functions of serpent, or the grass-snake (Lit. *žaltys*), as the exciter of the male sexuality, ensuring the ability of insemination, and therefore, the continuity of life, get especially prominent. Thus, it is possible to note closer associations of the serpent with the masculine sphere and the male role in the beginning of life, whereas the snake is closely related to the feminine world and the creative role of females as the birth givers and bringers of the new life into the world. The snake acts as mediator between the closely related worlds of humans and earth, passing onto humans a considerable share of its own powers together with its potential of the earthly vitality.