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*The Crying Dead: A Kaleidoscopic Description of Naassene Initiation*

ABSTRACT

Hippolytus of Rome has left us with a confusing and tangled account of a group of Gnostics he calls the Naassenes or serpent worshippers. His account contains excerpts and paraphrases from a commentary on two of their hymns addressed to Attis, the young god celebrated in the mysteries of the Great Mother, Cybele (Hipp., *Ref.* 5.6.3-11.1). The hymns are reproduced by Hippolytus as well. The commentary is called by scholars the *Naassene Sermon*. Network Criticism allows us to untangle the web of information preserved by Hippolytus, distinguishing and mapping the personal cognitive networks of the architect of the commentary, the prime users of the commentary, and the extended user Hippolytus. By simulating the network of the architect of the commentary and running it against known domains of knowledge and socio-cultural matrices, it is possible to identify the domain and matrix fits of the *Naassene Sermon*. It is also possible to identify emergent structures within the domain of knowledge and the socio-cultural matrix that the Naassenes have created for themselves. It is an emergent domain and an emergent matrix that is centered on initiatory practices involving three main mysteries: one katabatic (descent to hell) and two anabatic (ascent through celestial spheres; ascent through supramundane world).