



Santa Claus, Last of the Wild Men: The Origins and Evolution of Saint Nicholas, Spanning 50,000 Years

Phyllis Siefker

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Much of the modern-day vision of Santa Claus is owed to the Clement Moore poem “The Night Before Christmas.” His description of Saint Nicholas personified the “jolly old elf” known to millions of children throughout the world. However, far from being the offshoot of Saint Nicholas of Turkey, Santa Claus is the last of a longline of what scholars call Wild Men who were worshipped in ancient European fertility rites and came to America through Pennsylvania’s Germans. This pagan creature is described from prehistoric times through his various forms—Robin Hood, The Fool, Harlequin, Satan and Robin Goodfellow—into today’s carnival and Christmas scenes. In this thoroughly researched work, the origins of Santa Claus are found to stretch back over 50,000 years, jolting the foundation of Christian myths about the jolly old elf.

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