

The **Ancient World-Wide System**

**Star Myths of the World, Volume One
Second Edition**



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THE
ANCIENT
WORLD-WIDE
SYSTEM:

STAR MYTHS
OF THE
WORLD

VOLUME ONE

SECOND
EDITION

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Introduction to the Second Edition

This updated edition of *Star Myths of the World, Volume One*, the original edition of which was first published in 2015, revisits some of the myths explored in the first edition with the expanded perspective of having now explored hundreds more Star Myths in great detail, including the wealth of myth left to us from the culture broadly referred to as "ancient Greece" (examined in *Star Myths of the World, Volume Two*), the sacred stories collected in what we commonly call the Old and New Testaments of the Bible (examined in *Star Myths of the World, Volume Three*), and the Norse myths (examined in *Star Myths of the World, Volume Four*), as well as the collection of myths examined more thematically (or by "oicotype") in *Astrotheology for Life*.

With the benefit of this added perspective, some of the analysis contained in the first edition of *Volume One*, dealing with a broad range of myths from the cultures of Australia, Africa, the Americas, the Pacific, ancient Egypt, ancient Mesopotamia, ancient India, China and Japan, can be expanded upon and (in some cases) corrected or emended, with the goal of providing the best possible introduction to a series purporting to help readers explore the incredible treasure bequeathed to the various cultures of humanity in the ancient myths, and to begin to understand the worldwide celestial language with which these ancient myths are speaking and through which they convey their profound message to us.

Some additional myths will be examined, in addition to most of those contained in the original edition of *Volume One*.

For better clarity, as well as to help keep the price of this volume as affordable as possible, illustrations and star-charts will be grayscale instead of full-color, and star-charts will use a newer

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"inverted" color-scheme, in which the dark background of the night sky will appear light, and the stars and Milky Way will be dark. Constellations will be outlined with dark gray lines, rather than in the various colors used in the first edition.

The physical dimensions of the book will also be changed, to a smaller form, in order to reduce cost (the same dimensions are also used in *Star Myths of the World, Volume Four: Norse Mythology*, as well as in my two previous books, *Astrotheology for Life* and *Ancient Myths, Ancient Wisdom*).

Perhaps the biggest change from the first edition will be the elimination of the "two-part" format used in the first edition, which will enable a deeper look at more myths more deeply, because the two-part format necessarily expands the book's length.

The two-part format was designed to enable the reader to be presented with the myth in the first half of the book and then turn to the second half of the book to read the celestial interpretation of the same story, thus allowing the reader to try to determine the celestial interpretation himself or herself. The drawback of that format is that it thus requires each chapter to be "doubled," so to speak, with one part in the first half of the book and the other in the second half, thus increasing the amount of text devoted to each story (since some aspects of each myth are necessarily described twice), as well as disrupting the "flow" of the reader's journey through the myths to some degree. Therefore, in this volume, the two "halves" will be combined, and each aspect of the myths will be explored with discussion of its celestial foundations and possible spiritual meaning in the same chapter.

The purpose of the "doubled" format was to teach the reader to learn to spot the clues in the stories that point to the distinctive

characteristics of the various constellations in the night sky. Those wishing to see these myths in the "two-part" format instead can still consult the first edition of *Star Myths of the World, Volume One*, as well as *Star Myths of the World, Volume Two* and *Volume Three*, which also use that "doubled" format.

Despite these changes, however, the core message of this second edition does not change from that of the first. The world's myths are based on the stars and heavenly cycles, and they are speaking an esoteric and allegorical language. This fact, which by now should be indisputable based on the overwhelming volume of evidence, argues that the ancient stories are not based on terrestrial history, characters, or events. They are not about external persons living thousands of years ago, or events external to our lives which happened to someone else in lands now buried under the sands of time. The ancient myths are based on the stars because the myths are describing an infinite realm – the realm of spirit, the realm of the gods – and the things they are describing apply directly to our own lives. The sacred stories, as Alvin Boyd Kuhn once explained, are about us – and they are not grasped in their "full force and applicability" unless and until each man and woman encountering those myths discerns *himself* or *herself* to be, as Kuhn puts it, the *central figure* in them!"

Thus, contrary to the message repeated by the literalizers of ancient myth for the past seventeen centuries, the message of the world's ancient wisdom is *not* that we must seek for answers and for completion, redemption, rescue and salvation from a source outside of ourselves.

To assert this truth, as Alvin Boyd Kuhn argues in a different text (his encyclopedic and definitive work, *Lost Light*, published in 1940), is not to deny the existence of an Absolute and Ultimate

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Eternal – far from it. Indeed, the ancients did not deny the reality of the Eternal, but they "had the discretion to leave it alone!"² The ancient wisdom points us towards the accessibility of divinity "with a god dwelling immediately within the human breast"³ and the myths demonstrate time after time (in stories such as the episodes in the *Odyssey*, for example) that the gods work out their will through our own actions and efforts.

Because of this fact, the gods are always available to us, at any moment – a fact which is demonstrated in the myths of ancient India, where the gods and goddesses appear in an instant when they are called upon . . . and the same is true in the Norse myths (for example), where the god Thor also appears the moment that his name is called.

We see a similar dynamic at work in the fifth "book" (or chapter) of the *Odyssey*, when an exhausted Odysseus is trying to make landfall on a rocky and forbidding shoreline, after spending three days cast adrift in the open sea, during his escape from Ogygia. The poem describes the man's thoughts, as he almost begins to panic, despairing of safely landing where the great waves are crashing against jagged rock-faces of the cliffs, while also fearing that if he does not make it to shore he will be swept back out to the fish-infested deep, perhaps to encounter one of the monsters with which, he imagines, the waters are undoubtedly teeming.⁴

In the midst of this despair, the goddess Athena inspires the hapless castaway, and he redoubles his efforts, making his way to a point where a wide river empties out into the ocean, creating a spot free of rocks where he can make it to shore – but only after, perceiving the river's god, he prays for and receives a favorable current, and is able to swim to safety with the last reserves of strength left in him.⁵

In this significant episode, we see that the gods stand ready to help, and that their help is very real and decisive – but that it is, in effect, synergistic with the actions and resolve of the one who calls upon them. We have within us what we already need – including the access to the divine realm of the gods, through our own inner connection to the Infinite, if we learn how to avail ourselves of it.

Odysseus, as we see in the above episode and as we learn throughout his other adventures in the *Odyssey*, exemplifies the man or woman attuned to the voice and presence of the gods at all times, who are always present and available if we cultivate such awareness. The deleterious impact of centuries of insistence on the literalization of ancient scriptures (particularly of the Bible), and the literalist tendency towards externalizing their message (because, almost by definition, if the ancient stories are describing literal, terrestrial history, then they are describing things *external* to ourselves) has been the loss of contact with divinity where it *could* be accessed (within), by instead turning our gaze outward.

As Alvin Boyd Kuhn puts it, the understanding that we have access to the gods right where we are at any given moment implies no disrespect to the Eternal: on the contrary, "the real heresy and apostasy is to miss deity where it is to be had in the blind effort to seek it where it is not available."⁶ In the path laid out for us in the ancient wisdom bequeathed to humanity in the myths of the world, "No reaching after the moon of the Absolute diverted conscious purpose from actual touch with the god who stood at one's elbow."⁷

This approach to the ancient wisdom resembles the ancient Buddhist teaching of the "Lion's Gaze," related in writings attributed to the 11th century Tibetan yogi Milarepa.⁸ He observes that while a dog will chase a stick one throws, over and

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over, always focusing on the stick, you can only throw a stick at a lion one time, because the lion will not focus on the stick: he will turn and face the thrower of the stick, and chase him instead!⁹

The meaning, as elucidated by researcher of ancient wisdom Richard Cassaro in a 2015 article on "The Lion's Gaze," is that like the lion we should not waste our effort chasing after that which is external (exemplified by the dog chasing after a stick) but rather that we should turn our attention to the heart of the issue, which is to be found *within ourselves* and not in any external distraction.¹⁰

In doing so, we ourselves can begin to manifest the characteristics associated with the lion: majesty and dignity and focus – all attributes which cannot be obtained by chasing after "sticks" of external achievement or external "religion," even if we dutifully retrieve thousands of such sticks which are thrown for us.

This is a very powerful teaching indeed, and one which encapsulates the message of the world's ancient wisdom. The answers we seek, and the resources to deal with the issues we face, are already present within us – and we do not need to chase after external sticks, like a dog would do. The gods are real, and available to us in time of need – and our connection to them is internal. We are already equipped with what we need to avail ourselves of their assistance – but, like Odysseus upon the waves, we often forget this truth, and indeed begin to panic and despair and even sink down beneath the billows (Peter exemplifies the same lesson, in the "walking on water" episode described in Matthew 14: 24 - 32).

The ancient myths stand ready to remind us, and to correct our perspective, and to turn our "Lion's Gaze" towards the divine

where it is available, to our great blessing as we make our way through this incarnate life.

It is my hope that by learning to hear the myths in the language that they are actually speaking, you will be able to hear their profound message in an entirely new way, and that you will be able to converse with them and hear their incredible wisdom, which is as fresh today as it was so many thousands of years ago.

Paso Robles, California
August 5th, 2018



Envisioning the Constellations

The constellations of the night sky can be an endless source of pleasure for those who have the opportunity to go out and see them in person. Additionally, becoming familiar with the constellations, and being able to envision their outlines, is in fact essential to perceiving the connection between the myths and the stars.

The best way to get to know the constellations is to devote a little time each night, observing how the actors on the great stage of the heavens change throughout the year due to the motion of the earth along its annual cycle around the sun.

It is also ideal if you can find a way to take a walk along a round-trip pattern that will enable you to have views of all the different parts of the sky, and all the different horizons in the four different directions of north, east, south and west, as you go along. If you can take that same round-trip walk each night (or early morning), at roughly the same time, for an entire year, you can gain a tremendous level of familiarity with the constellations of our night sky.

However, most of the constellations themselves do not simply “jump out” at the unpracticed viewer – and without a guide to the constellations it will be next to impossible to “pick them out” just based on a vague awareness that you are supposed to be looking for a Lion or a Crab or a set of Twins somewhere.

Therefore, a good understanding of the shape and major characteristics of each constellation is an absolute must – and it is here that we run into some complications, because the methodologies for outlining the constellations that have been published in print and even on the internet or in planetariums

over the years (and indeed over the centuries) are often terribly lacking.

In fact, they are often so poor that it makes one wonder whether someone designed them to deliberately mask the important characteristics of the constellations, rather than to reveal those characteristics and to help people to see the constellations for themselves.

There is an exception to this lack of good literature on constellation identification, however: the star books of H. A. Rey (1898 - 1997), who is perhaps best known as the author and illustrator, along with his wife Margret Rey (1906 - 1996), of the *Curious George* series of storybooks.

H. A. Rey himself also lamented the prevailing systems used to depict the constellations, and in their place he presented his own system: one which would, in his words, “remedy the situation” with a method that would seek to illustrate the constellations, as he says:

in a new, graphic way, as shapes which suggest what the names imply: it shows the group of stars known as the Great Bear, in the shape of a bear; the Whale in the shape of a whale; the Eagle as an eagle, and so on. These shapes are easy to remember, and once you remember them you can retrace them in the sky.¹²

For anyone who wishes to have the glories of our night sky and the celestial realm come to life, Rey’s book *The Stars: A New Way to See Them* is an absolute must.

Not only does H. A. Rey’s system enable us to remember the shapes of the constellations and find those constellations in the heavens, but it also has another tremendous advantage, and one

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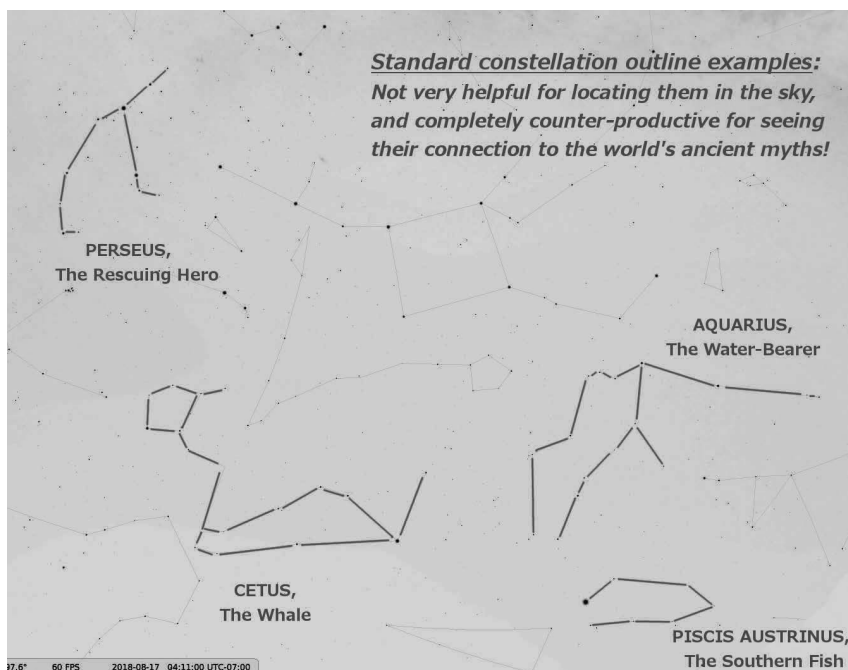
which to my knowledge neither Rey himself nor anyone else has ever attributed to it: his system of outlining the constellations enables us to perceive the significant characteristics of each heavenly character, characteristics which appear to have been known to whoever imparted to the human race the collective treasure of ancient knowledge which we know of as *the myths, scriptures, and sacred traditions* whose origins are lost in the mists of earliest human history.

The characteristics which belong to each particular constellation will surface again and again in myths and sacred stories, whether those myths belong to the cultures who lived in the islands of Japan or in the fjords and mountains and forests of Scandinavia, whether those myths were recorded on fired clay tablets from the cultures of ancient Mesopotamia or inscribed upon the walls of some of the earliest Egyptian pyramids or whether they are still preserved and passed down in oral tradition among cultures who have retained their heritage right up to the present day (or until recent decades or centuries), in the Pacific islands or among the Native American nations and tribes.

In other words, across the entire vast surface of our planet, and across all the millennia of known human history from the most ancient to the most recent, the myths embody and bring to life these constellations, and they do so with specific references to details and characteristics intrinsic to those constellations – *details and characteristics that are evident when using the outlining system as published by H. A. Rey.*

If this assertion seems strange or unbelievable to you now, I think that by the end of this volume, you will have seen enough evidence to convince you many times over that this nearly unbelievable situation is indeed the case [indeed, if during the first several chapters you are skeptical, please push on, because by the time we reach Egypt and Mesopotamia, the evidence becomes simply undeniable].

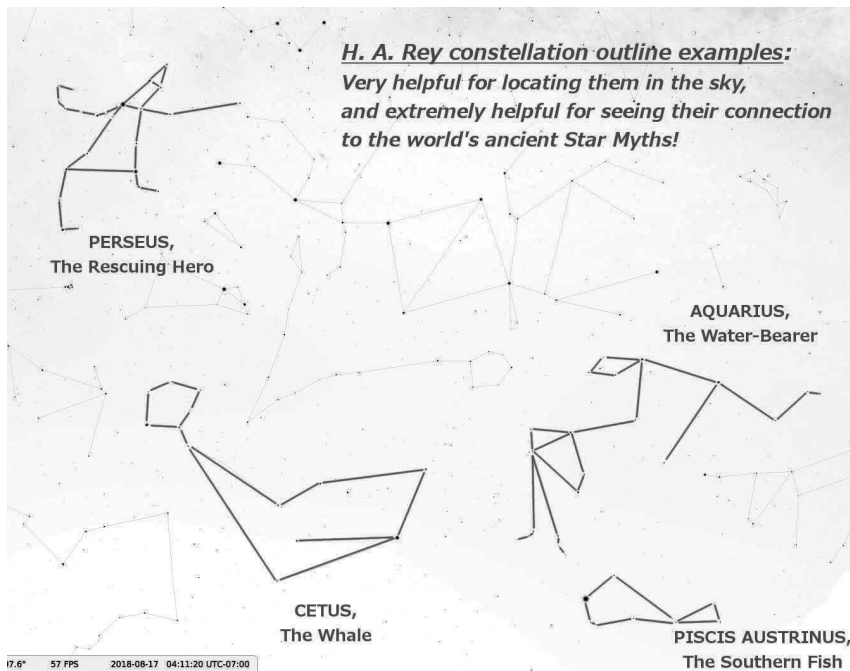
Below we see an example of one section of the night sky, with selected constellations outlined according to one common outlining system which is still in use to this very day. In fact, this is the default outlining system which pops up when you use the excellent open-source planetarium app, Stellarium, which was used for creating all the star-charts in this series. The outlines are similar to you will find on popular websites such as Wikipedia when looking up a constellation, as well as in many mobile apps offered as tools for helping you to find the constellations in the night sky:



Note that none of these rather abstract outlines are easy to remember, and none of them give even the slightest suggestion of what the actual constellation is supposed to envision. Looking at these outlines, one would wonder what exactly the ancients were thinking when they designated such star-groupings as a Whale, or a Fish, or a Hero, or a Water-Bearer!

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Below, in contrast, is a star-chart showing the exact same stars depicted on the previous page. This time, the same selected constellations are outlined using the system published in 1952 by H. A. Rey in his book *The Stars: A New Way to See Them*. Now the underlying character envisioned by the constellation is completely clear! Not only that, but specific features and aspects of the outline and of the figure in the sky can be matched to specific descriptions in the ancient stories and texts containing the world's Star Myths:



Note that the benighted outlines offered up on the previous page would give you no hint of the fact that the constellation Perseus, for example, wears a pointed hat and carries a hook-shaped sword, both of which are important features which appear in ancient myth and ancient artwork surrounding characters based on this constellation (including, but by no means limited to, the mythical character named Perseus in the Greek myth of that name).

They would give you no hint of the fact that Aquarius plays the role of a "headlong runner" in many ancient myths, most explicitly in both of the famous ancient pre-classical epics of Greece, the Iliad and the Odyssey, due to the "pitechd forward" outline of the constellation which resembles a person running at full tilt.

And the uninspired "modern" outlines would give you no way of envisioning the constellation of Cetus as a mighty whale, whose mouth was also sometimes envisioned as having a "tusk" reaching up to the star that serves as the "eye" of the whale, thus giving rise to myths which also envision Cetus as a great boar, a role the constellation can be shown to play in myths from ancient Greece but also from the ancient Norse (as will be examined in later volumes in this series).

Amazingly, the myths of cultures literally around the world can be shown to be using *this same system* of envisioning the constellations as the foundation for an inspired language of esoteric metaphor. The evidence which points to this conclusion is voluminous and compelling – and, I would argue, decisive. Each of the books in this series contains hundreds of pages and together they examine hundreds of characters and episodes from cultures as far removed as the northern regions of Scandinavia and the tropical islands of the Pacific – and yet the examples presented in this series only barely scratch the surface of the myths that could be explored which point towards this worldwide celestial connection.

Of course, such a discovery, if true, would seem to have tremendous ramifications for our understanding of the nature and purpose of these sacred myths of humanity – and indeed for our understanding of human history itself. We will briefly address some of those ramifications in a final concluding chapter at the

end, as well as at various points throughout the analysis of the myths which follows in the pages of this and the other volumes.

First and foremost, it is important to state at the outset that I believe that these myths and stories are sacred: that they treat matters which are “set apart” from that which is mundane, material, or related to the common physical exigencies of existence. They treat matters related to spirit, to the invisible realm, to the infinite realm, and to all that lifts us beyond the merely material aspects of our existence.

There are some who would seize upon the explanation of the allegorical and celestial nature of these sacred texts and traditions in order to try to denigrate their sacred nature – to exclaim, “See! Nothing more than nature-worship, or encoded descriptions of the natural world and seasonal cycles! So there really *is* nothing but the material universe after all! I knew it all along!”

Those who would seize upon the celestial nature of the sacred texts in order to deny our essentially spiritual nature, and to deny the existence of a spiritual realm which interpenetrates and permeates every single aspect of our seemingly material universe, and which is in fact the source and origin for everything we see that is finite and manifest in the material realm, have completely missed the point of the Star Myths, and reached the completely opposite conclusion from what the myths were actually intending to convey through their system of celestial metaphor.

The Star Myths, as will be discussed during some of the analyses which follow, and again in depth in the subsequent volumes, were in fact using the celestial realm and the heavenly cycles as metaphors to help explain and convey knowledge of the existence and importance of the spiritual and invisible realm. We cannot see the invisible realm (using our ordinary senses, at least), and so

they used the most majestic possible aspects of the material realm as their chosen visual aids to help convey to us what it is all about. They selected the most awe-inspiring canvas available to us in the physical universe in order to paint their stories conveying to us the reality of the infinite realm – and of our inherent connection to it.

I believe that these Star Myths were exquisitely crafted to convey profound truths which are absolutely essential to human life and to the human experience. This is not to say that one cannot learn those truths if one does not learn them through the myths: there are many other disciplines and paths which have been given to humanity or which have been discovered or developed through the millennia to put us in touch with the same vital knowledge – but I believe that these myths were in fact given in order to convey sacred and essential knowledge.

Thus I do not believe that perceiving their celestial and allegorical nature takes away from their sacred purpose: on the contrary, I believe that this perception of their celestial and allegorical nature is the best way for us to learn what they were intended to teach us.

Conversely, failing to understand them as powerful metaphors or allegories which point towards spiritual matters can cause us to miss their true meaning. By this I mean failing to understand their metaphorical nature by reading them as describing literal-historical figures, and beginning our interpretation from that understanding.

A helpful analogy (and one I often use) would be the “teaching aids” that Mr. Miyagi employs in order to teach Daniel-san the “ungraspable” or “invisible” truths of his karate system in the popular 1984 movie, *Karate Kid*. If we were to mistakenly

conclude that Mr. Miyagi was actually teaching Daniel-san how to wax cars or paint fences, we would miss the point entirely, because those motions were about something else altogether.

In just the same way, these stories are not about literal or historical figures, and to focus on them as though they are is analogous to focusing on the motions “wax the car” or “paint the fence” as if their primary purpose were waxing more cars and painting more fences.

Nor, however, are these stories really about the constellations and stars, the sun and moon and planets. Those too are actually metaphors for the real layer of meaning that lies behind even those glorious celestial bodies, and towards which the ancient myths and sacred stories are trying to point our understanding.

Second, I believe that whenever possible it is best to use the original texts or very direct, literal translations of the texts, if the myth being examined was committed to writing. Often, details and clues were deliberately included in the myths, but later translators have “paraphrased them away” because they did not know the celestial meaning of the detail that they decided to re-word in their translation.

The scriptures which found their way into the collections that we today call the Old and New Testaments of the Bible will be examined in *Star Myths of the World, Volume Three (Star Myths of the Bible)*, but there are many examples where older translations (such as the so-called King James version) preserve the celestial details (as confusing as those details may be for someone who tries to read the text as if it were describing a literal-historical person or event) but where newer translations (such as the New International Version) have tried to “helpfully”

provide a better translation – and in doing so the “modern” version obscures the celestial detail altogether.

One fairly obvious example is the use of the term “unicorn,” which is found in the King James translations (for instance in Psalms 22, 29 and 92, and in Numbers 23: 22) but which modern translators found completely unacceptable and thus decided on their own that the original text must have been referring to some terrestrial species of animal, which they then substitute in their “translation,” subverting the intention of the original text.

The original term would alert a Star Myth investigator that he or she should be looking for a constellation that has an outline that might feature a protruding feature or features that could be allegorized as the horn or horns of a unicorn – but if the “translators” substitute some other animal in their zeal to re-write the texts into “literal-historical records,” the celestial allegory will become impossible to decipher.

In this particular case of the unicorn, for instance, the NIV translators have substituted “wild ox,” which relieves them of having to deal with any “mythical creatures,” but which might then send the Star Myth investigator off in the wrong direction – looking at the constellation Taurus, for example, when in fact the original text was hinting at a different constellation found in a different part of the sky altogether (most likely Sagittarius).

Third, it is important to note that my diagrams are attempts to place on a flat page of paper a planetarium-style representation of the great “dome of the heavens” (it’s not really a “dome,” of course, but it resembles one to an observer on earth), and thus the shape of the constellations will occasionally have some distortion and differences in size and shape from one image to another, depending on where that constellation is in the sky. If closer to

the horizon, for instance, the planetarium app that I have used for the star images will make the constellation look larger, because it is trying to give the impression to the viewer that the constellation is following an arcing path across the sky in the same way that constellations actually travel to an observer outside.

The result is some variation in some of the images in this book, but once you become familiar with the constellations themselves and their outlines and relative locations, and once you begin to spend some time looking at them outside (if possible), these differences will not throw you off at all and you will begin to understand why the planetarium makes them look that way.

Also, I occasionally will *outline* the shape of the constellation slightly differently (and in some cases, very differently) from one section of the book to another. These differences are usually relatively minor, but when they are significant, it is because the constellation has another very different role that it can sometimes play in Star Myths around the world, and because it will be important to know two ways of looking at it (the most important example of this phenomenon is probably the constellation Hercules). Again, once you become more familiar with the constellations (and especially with finding them outside, if you are able to go out to see them for yourself) then these differences will no longer pose any difficulty for you – but it does take some time to get familiar with the constellations.

Finally, it should be noted that almost all of the descriptions of the constellations, and almost all of the Star Myth analysis discussions, take what can be termed a “northern-hemisphere-centric” approach; that is, they describe the constellations and star motions as they appear to an observer in the northern hemisphere.

Strangely enough, this approach appears to be fairly universal in its scope, even for sacred myths and traditions coming from cultures found in the southern hemisphere, such as Australia, much of Africa, South America, and many of the islands of the Pacific. There are a few myths from southern latitudes in which the southern-hemisphere orientation of the sky may play a role, and when this is the case it is noted in the discussion of the myth during the Star Myth analysis portion, but for the most part the same system appears to operate around the globe with very little variation.

There could be many reasons for this somewhat surprising feature of the system, but in reality the fact is that the constellations and the heavenly cycles operate pretty much the same way no matter where on planet earth you are located: it is only their relative orientation in terms of “up” and “down,” and the horizon along which the ecliptic path and zodiac band appears to travel more closely (the southern horizon for observers in the northern latitudes, and the northern horizon for observers in the southern latitudes) that changes dramatically from one hemisphere to the other.

Otherwise, the observation of the night sky is the same all over, and the descriptions of the constellations given in the discussions of the Star Myths which follow should make sense no matter where on the planet you happen to reside, with some minor mental adjustments necessary for those in southern latitudes when translating a description into something they can go out and locate in their own night sky.

Star Myths of Ancient Egypt

We have now in our survey of world Star Myths traveled across great geographical distances, exploring myths from cultures found on the continents of Australia and Africa and the Americas. On this journey, we have embarked across the Pacific Ocean, examining some of the many myths surrounding the figure of Maui, whose exploits are recounted from the Hawaiian Islands to the Society Islands (Tahiti and Borabora and Raiatea) to the Tuamotus and on to Aotearoa (New Zealand), up through Micronesia as far as the Carolines, and even through parts of Melanesia. We have continued even beyond those islands to the Malay Peninsula and examined a myth of the Menri people, on the land that borders the Andaman Sea and the northern reaches of the Indian Ocean.

In all of these investigations, we have found evidence that the ancient myths of all of these disparate cultures bear evidence of belonging to a great worldwide system, speaking a common celestial language, in which the figures and episodes of the myths can be traced to specific constellations in the night sky: constellations which are often imbued with similar characteristics, personalities, and powers, and constellations whose esoteric meaning and message appear to share many commonalities even in cultures separated by vast distances -- even separated by half the distance around the globe.

Now, having traversed great gulfs of ocean and mountain ranges and jungles, we will turn our journey of exploration in a new direction, and travel back across enormous gulfs of time, back to the earliest civilizations known to conventional history, exploring the myths of ancient Egypt, and ancient Mesopotamia, of ancient

India, and ancient China. We will seek to determine whether it can be said that the myths of these ancient cultures were also based on celestial metaphor, and if they appear to have been using the same system that we have found to be in operation in the myths of Australia and Africa and the Americas and Oceania – and which, as explored in detail in subsequent volumes of this series, we can show to have formed the foundation of the myths of ancient Greece, and the myths of the Norse, and the stories found in the scriptures that we call the Bible, stretching from Genesis all the way to the book of the Revelation of John.

We will first travel back to the awe-inspiring civilization of ancient Egypt, one of the oldest civilizations known to us today, whose art and architecture, even after the impact of thousands of years, can still take one's breath away.

And yet, despite the wealth of artwork and architecture to survive the ravages of the passing millennia, much of the mythology of ancient Egypt remains at least partially shrouded in mystery.

Writing in 1819, three years before Champollion's breakthrough with the Rosetta Stone began to unlock the writing system of the Egyptian hieroglyphs which had been forgotten since antiquity, James Cowles Prichard (1786 - 1848) points out that although the accounts of the ancient Greek and Roman writers (and also some Egyptian writers, from the later Ptolemaic period) discussing the gods and goddesses of Egypt have survived, even "Hecataeus and Herodotus, who travelled in Egypt during the period when its native hierarchy still flourished, saw only the outward form of its mythology, or have studiously concealed their knowledge of its recondite sense."¹³²

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For example, Prichard notes that Herodotus describes the Egyptians as having had three successive series of gods, the oldest set of which were eight in number, but he only mentions two of them by name (whom he equates to the Greek deities Pan and Latona), followed by two sets of deities numbering twelve each, which he (in common with virtually every other ancient author) saw as having direct correspondences to the gods and goddesses of Greece.¹³³

One can only imagine the excitement that gripped the world (and in particular the scholarly world) during the years following the discovery by a Napoleonic officer in 1799 of the fragment of an ancient stele which has come to be called Rosetta Stone, containing an identical proclamation written in Greek, Demotic, and classic ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics. Now at last, it was hoped, the ability to read hieroglyphics would be resurrected after so many centuries, and the mysterious texts which adorned so many ancient monuments would at last give up their secrets!

After some years of work, the young genius Jean-François Champollion (1790 - 1832), whose efforts to decipher Egyptian hieroglyphics began in 1820, produced a breakthrough in 1822, when he realized that the hieroglyphs themselves could function both as logographs (somewhat akin to Chinese characters) and as phonetic symbols (like our western alphabet), an insight which had eluded others on the same quest. Over the next several years, Champollion and other scholars made great advances in their ability to read ancient Egyptian texts.

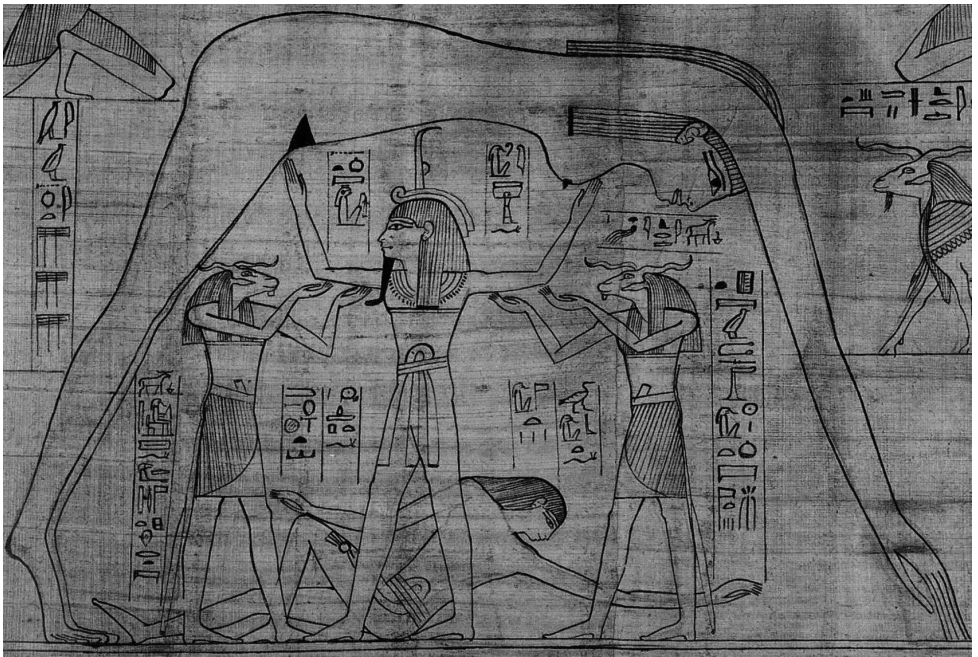
As Geraldine Harris Pinch of the Faculty of Oriental Studies at the University of Oxford explains, those hoping to find in the hieroglyphs some comprehensive text that would explain the

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to become one, reversing the movement toward diversity. If creation was to continue, another separation was necessary.¹⁴⁵

This embrace of earth and sky also threatened to crush out any space where life could exist, and thus to remedy the situation, their father Shu separated Geb (the earth) and Nut (the sky). Geraldine Pinch notes that this act of separation is described in Spell 76 of the Coffin Texts, and depicted in many artistic representations from ancient Egypt, "first portrayed in detail on coffins and funerary papyri at the end of the New Kingdom."¹⁴⁶

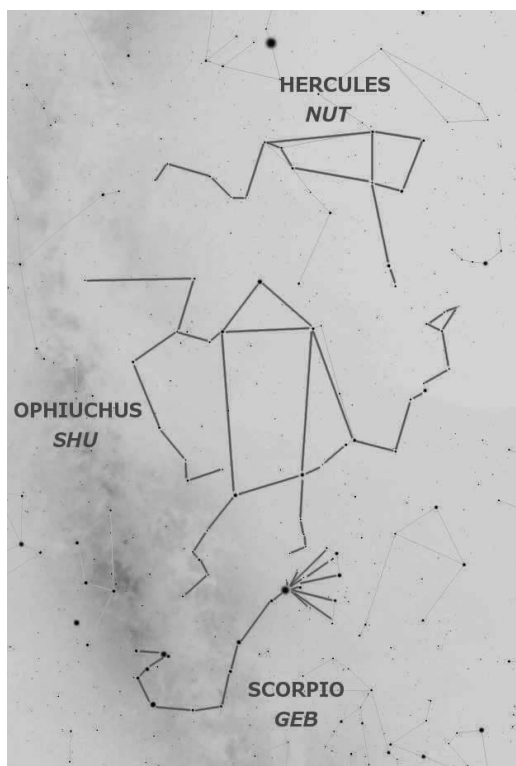
One such representation is shown below:



Here we see the god Shu, with his upraised arms, separating the sky goddess Nut (above) and the earth god Geb (below, reclining semi-supine, stretching one hand forward). Professor Pinch explains that, "Shu created a space between earth and sky in which creatures could breathe the air that gives life."¹⁴⁷

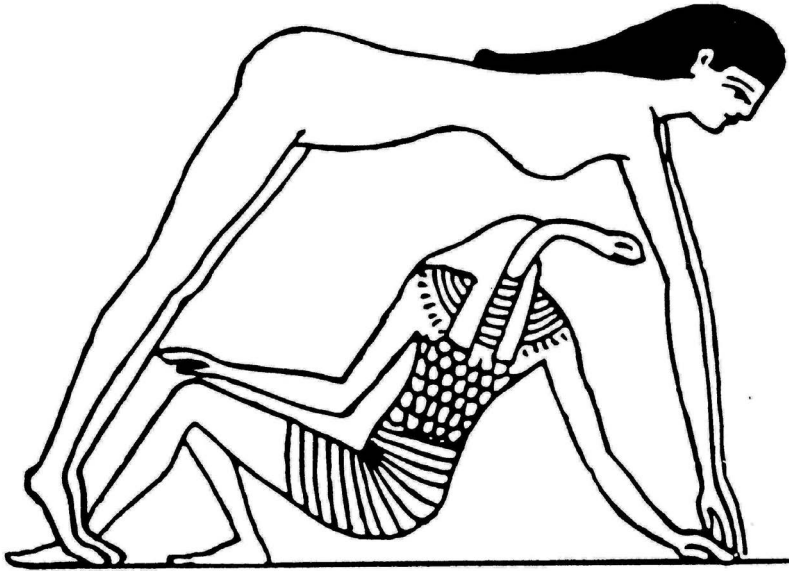
Because we have already analyzed some evidence which suggests that Shu with his upraised arms is associated with the constellation Ophiuchus, the celestial correspondences in this famous scene from ancient Egyptian myth almost leap out at us.

In the above scene, the constellation Hercules is now the sky goddess, Nut. If we simply do not imagine lines connecting the stars of the "forward leg" of the outline of Hercules, the outline which remains will be seen to resemble the posture of Nut very satisfactorily. Note that it is not at all uncommon for the same constellation to play a male figure in one episode of myth and a female figure in another episode -- or even within the same episode. We have already mentioned that the constellation Hercules almost certainly plays the role of the Gorgon sisters of Medusa in Greek myth (who are, of course, female entities).



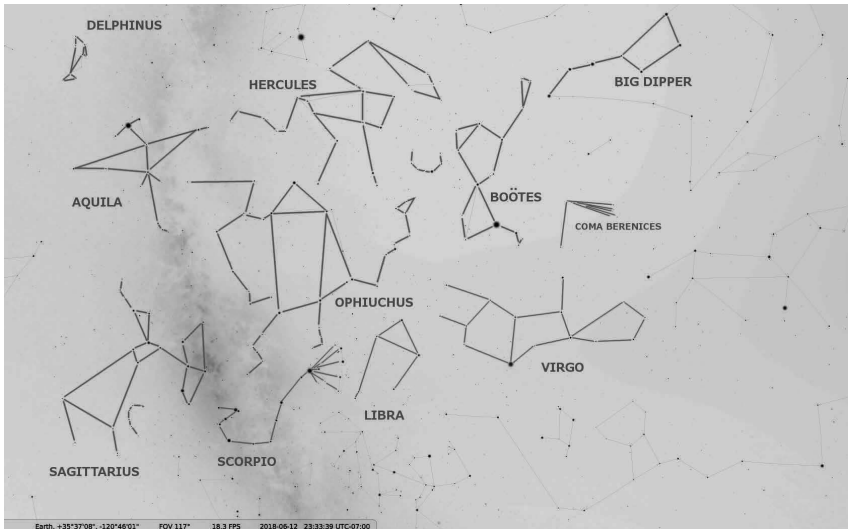
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Note that the sprawled-out body posture in which Geb is invariably portrayed by the ancient artists indicates an association with the constellation Scorpio: the body-angle of the god of earth and of the outline of the constellation in the sky are nearly identical. Additionally, we know that Geb was sometimes described as the father of serpents, and that he was also sometimes depicted with a serpent-head. These attributes, in conjunction with the clear celestial correspondences seen in the recurring artistic depictions of Shu separating Nut and Geb, should confirm the association of the earth god with the constellation Scorpio.



The drawing above is found in *Gods of the Egyptians* (1904), by E. A. Wallis Budge (1857 - 1934). Although it omits Shu (associated with Ophiuchus), it is quite evident from the outlines that Nut is associated with Hercules and that Geb (shown this time with serpent head) is associated with the constellation Scorpio.

and in that instance Boötes is envisioned as "facing" towards the left (the frog-head is looking to the left). In most other cases, however, Boötes is envisioned as looking towards the right (in the direction of the "pipe" in his mouth, that is). Thus, it could be argued that the constellation Boötes is "double-faced" or "double-facing" – the constellation can be envisioned as having a face that looks left, and another that looks right as we face the constellation in the sky. Note that if Umisu is associated with Boötes, then this cylinder-seal contains deities associated with Ophiuchus, Virgo, and Boötes – three constellations which are indeed near one another in the heavens.



Additionally, as can be seen from the star-chart above, there are reasons to associate Kronos and his flint sickle with the outline of Ophiuchus (although I have previously argued that Kronos might be associated with Orion). Note that the "eastern serpent-half" (on the left side of the central body of Ophiuchus, in the star-chart above) could be seen as resembling a large scythe or sickle – the very implement with which Kronos is said to have castrated his father the sky-god. Note too that the figure of Hercules is seen

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directly above this sickle-wielding outline of Ophiuchus, with legs spread apart just above the sickle itself!

If Kronos is indeed associated with Ophiuchus (particularly in his act of emasculating his father and taking over the throne of heaven), then not only would this association help explain the recurring pattern in Greek myth of a god who arises from below (Ophiuchus) to castrate and take over rulership from a god who held it previously (Hercules), but it would also provide additional support for an association between Enki (or Ea) and Ophiuchus. We have already noted that Ea / Enki as *the god who is bold enough to stand up against Apsu* forms a rather direct parallel with Kronos / Saturn in the Greek and Roman myth (Kronos being the only Titan willing to stand up against Ouranos).

The illustration of a different ancient Sumerian cylinder-seal shown below helps confirm our suspicion that Enki is in fact associated with the constellation Ophiuchus. This seal depicts Enki aiding the mortal Ziusudra, who passes through the Flood and eventually gains immortality. Enki is on the left, and is depicted as a figure with a man-like torso above the coils of a serpent:



In this ancient cylinder-seal artwork, Ziusudra has an extremely long arm, extended. Enki appears to be handing something to

him (some say it is a tablet of some sort, although it also resembles the depictions we've seen in other artwork of *a sun-disc with rays emanating outwards from a central point*).

This depiction of Enki as an entity with human-like torso above a twisting serpent should look familiar: we have previously shown an ancient depiction of Zeus slaying Typhon in which Typhon is depicted in a nearly-identical fashion (see pages 164 and 268 for some discussion, as well as the image below which we've seen on both of those pages):



As we've already argued, the posture of Zeus cannot indicate any constellation other than Hercules, while Typhon most likely represents a figure combining aspects of Ophiuchus (the human torso above) and Scorpio (the serpents below), since Ophiuchus is directly above and very close to Scorpio, while Hercules is directly above Ophiuchus. The similarity of iconography between the ancient Sumerian cylinder-seal and the ancient Greek pottery artwork should conclusively demonstrate that Enki is closely associated with Ophiuchus.

Returning to the Sumerian seal on the preceding page, note that the object Enki is offering to Ziusudra is in the correct position celestially to be either a tablet (the small circlet that forms the

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"serpent's head" on one side of Ophiuchus plays a tablet in other myths we will examine in later volumes) or a solar disc (we have seen that the solar disc depicted above Ophiuchus-figures in other ancient artwork is frequently "offset" slightly and depicted above the *arm* or *hand*, rather than being depicted directly above the *head* of an Ophiuchus-figure: see for example the ancient artwork shown on pages 293, 294 and 297).

The depiction of Ziusudra with an (extremely) extended arm probably indicates an association with the constellation Virgo, at least in this artistic representation. In any case, based on this cylinder-seal depiction of Enki we can confirm our suspicion of an association between Enki (Ea) and Ophiuchus.

Just as Kronos, who usurped the place of his own father, and will eventually be overthrown by his son Zeus (who successfully leads the Olympian gods in a cataclysmic battle against Kronos and the Titans), Ea (Enki) will also be supplanted by his own son, Marduk. And, just as Zeus can be positively identified with the constellation Hercules (for reasons discussed at length in the next volume of this series), Marduk can also be positively identified with the same constellation – adding yet another layer of resonance between the Enuma Elish account and the counterpart in ancient Greece.

Unlike Zeus, who led a violent assault on the Titans, Marduk replaces Ea as the ruler of heaven by striking a deal – although the deal involves battling Tiamat and her followers, which does parallel the exploits of Zeus and his battle against the Titans.

The gods call on Marduk (who is the son of Ea and Ea's consort, the goddess Damki or Damkina) after first Ea and then Ea's father Anu (acting under the advice of Anshar, the father of Anu and the grandfather of Ea) approach Tiamat individually to try to

Star Myths of Ancient India

Although it has been said many times already in this volume, and will be said many times again throughout this series, that our examination of the myths of any culture must necessarily be somewhat cursory, and that an entire multi-volume series examining celestial metaphor and esoteric meaning could be written exploring the myths of any single culture, this sentiment is perhaps more true of the myths of ancient India than of almost any other body of myth on our planet, so voluminous and variegated are the deities and episodes which fill the ancient scriptures and stories belonging to the heritage of the cultures of this region of the world.

The corpus of Sanskrit scripture of ancient India is believed to begin with the Vedas, of which the Rig Veda is acknowledged to be the oldest. The Rig Veda alone consists of 1,028 hymns, each averaging 10 verses long, traditionally totalling 10,800 *Panktis* (metrical counts of forty syllables) which thus are said to contain 432,000 syllables (both 108 and 432 being precessional numbers which appear again and again in ancient myth, as noted by the authors of *Hamlet's Mill*).³³⁷

Together with the other three Vedas (the Sama Veda, the Yajur Veda, and the Atharva Veda), these texts contain over 20,000 verses. The Rig Veda is thought to date to as early as 1200 BC, although some scholars assign an even earlier date.³³⁸ In addition to the Vedas, the ancient texts of India also include the Upanishads (traditionally 108 in number),³³⁹ as well as the great ancient Sanskrit epics of Mahabharata and Ramayana. Professor Wendy Doniger of the University of Chicago, a leading scholar of ancient Sanskrit textual traditions and of the mythologies of

ancient India, notes that "the *Mahabharata*, the great Epic of India" is "a compendium of over 100,000 verses (ten times as long as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* combined)."³⁴⁰ It should be noted that the number of verses in the canonical scriptures of the standard Bible (some of these verses being much shorter than the verses of the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, or the Sanskrit texts) is 31,102 of which 23,145 verses are in the Old Testament and 7,957 verses are in the New Testament.

Yet another corpus of ancient texts are the Brahmanas, lengthy Sanskrit commentaries upon the Vedic material, and thought to have been composed beginning around 900 BC.³⁴¹

In addition to all these voluminous ancient Sanskrit texts, Professor Doniger explains that, "By far the most extensive sources of Hindu mythology, however, are the eighteen 'great' Purānas and the numerous 'minor' Purānas, veritable encyclopedias of Indian thought."³⁴² Of the vastness of the Puranas in comparison to the other ancient Sanskrit literature, Cornelia Dimmitt and J. A. B. van Buitenen write in the preface to their 1977 selection of the Puranas:

While tradition ascribes to the *Mahābhārata* a *lakh* of couplets, or one hundred thousand, to the Purānas it assigns a *crore*, or ten million.³⁴³

Truly, then, we are faced with a wealth of ancient Sanskrit source material on the identity and exploits of the gods and supernatural beings within the cosmology of ancient India, perhaps surpassing in volume all other mythical literature. It will of course be impossible to even scratch the surface of such an extensive corpus – volumes upon volumes could be filled with exploration of the Mahabharata alone, without even touching the Vedas or Puranas or other surviving ancient Sanskrit spiritual texts.

For the purposes of this volume, however, and for the purposes of establishing the thesis of this volume and wider series, it is not necessary to provide an exhaustive examination of any single body of ancient myth (from any single culture), but rather to provide enough evidence to establish beyond reasonable doubt that the myths within any given culture's corpus of myth ancient system can indeed be shown to stand upon the same foundation of celestial metaphor whose outline we have detected underneath the myths of so many other sacred traditions around our planet.

That the myths of ancient India support such a conclusion can be demonstrated beyond any doubt. We will begin by examining some of the most well-known individual gods and goddesses who are addressed in the Rig Veda (or in some cases introduced in other ancient texts), before discussing some of the central characters and most well-known episodes described in the massive epic of the Mahabharata.

The gods and goddesses found in the ancient Vedas continue to be worshiped today, in a stream which is more or less unbroken stretching back millennia, although there have of course been transformations and permutations through the centuries as "Vedic ritual tradition" evolved or developed into "the devotional system of Hinduism."³⁴⁴ A discussion of this evolution is outside the scope of this volume: we will draw on textual evidence from the earliest Vedas to the more recent Puranas as we focus upon the indications that the myths of ancient India are built upon the same system of celestial metaphor found around the world, despite their distinctive atmosphere and flavor.

We will begin with an examination of the three gods who form a trinity known as the Trimurtri: the gods Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.

The celestial identity of the god Vishnu is discussed in *Star Myths of the World, Volume Four: Norse Mythology*, in conjunction with the prophetic description of Ragnarok. In that fourth volume in this series, a quotation from French philologist and mythographer Georges Dumézil (1898 - 1986) is cited, from an article published in 1965, in which Dumézil argues for a possible "identity and common function" of the god Vishnu of ancient India and the god Vidar of Norse mythology (or Vidarr, as Dumézil's article spells the name).³⁴⁵

Dumézil makes this argument based on the fact that both Vishnu and Vidar intervene at a moment of cosmic crisis, in order to restore the world – and that both do so by means of "steps" (Vidar by using his great shoe to split apart the jaws of Fenris Wolf, and Vishnu when, in his avatar as Vamana, he takes three steps to measure the entire world, his third step ending upon the head of king Mahabali). We will return to the story of Vamana presently, when discussing the concept of avatars. For now, it is enough to mention that *Star Myths of the World, Volume Four* presents some arguments for identifying Lord Vishnu with the constellation Ophiuchus (although some of his avatars may not).

Some of the supporting evidence given in Volume Four for an association between Vishnu and Ophiuchus include:

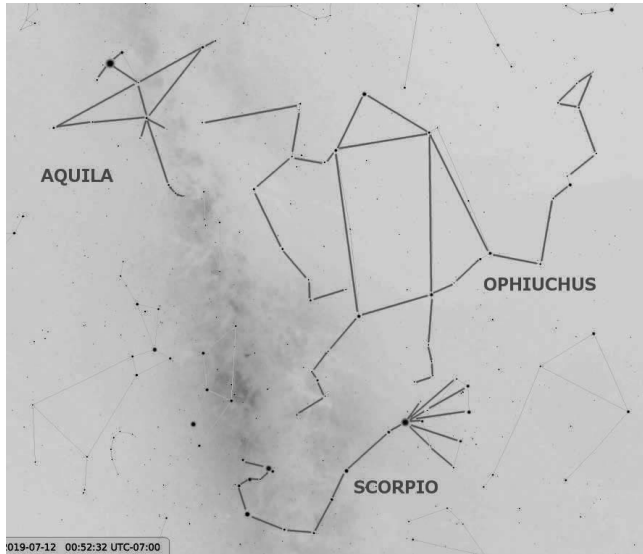
- The fact that Vishnu often stands atop a many-headed serpent (as Ophiuchus stands atop Scorpio)
- The fact that Vishnu is often depicted holding a conch shell and / or small lotus flower (the western serpent-head)
- The fact that Vishnu is sometimes accompanied by the eagle Garuda, King of Birds (and Aquila is adjacent to Ophiuchus in the heavens).

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Below is an image of the god Vishnu, carved out of the sandstone in the famous Badami caves, in northern Karnataka, dating back to about the sixth century AD. The god is depicted seated upon the cosmic serpent Shesha (also known as Vasuki), whose multiple cobra-heads arch over the seated form of Vishnu like a canopy:



Below is the region of the sky containing Ophiuchus, showing the position of that constellation directly above the form of Scorpio:

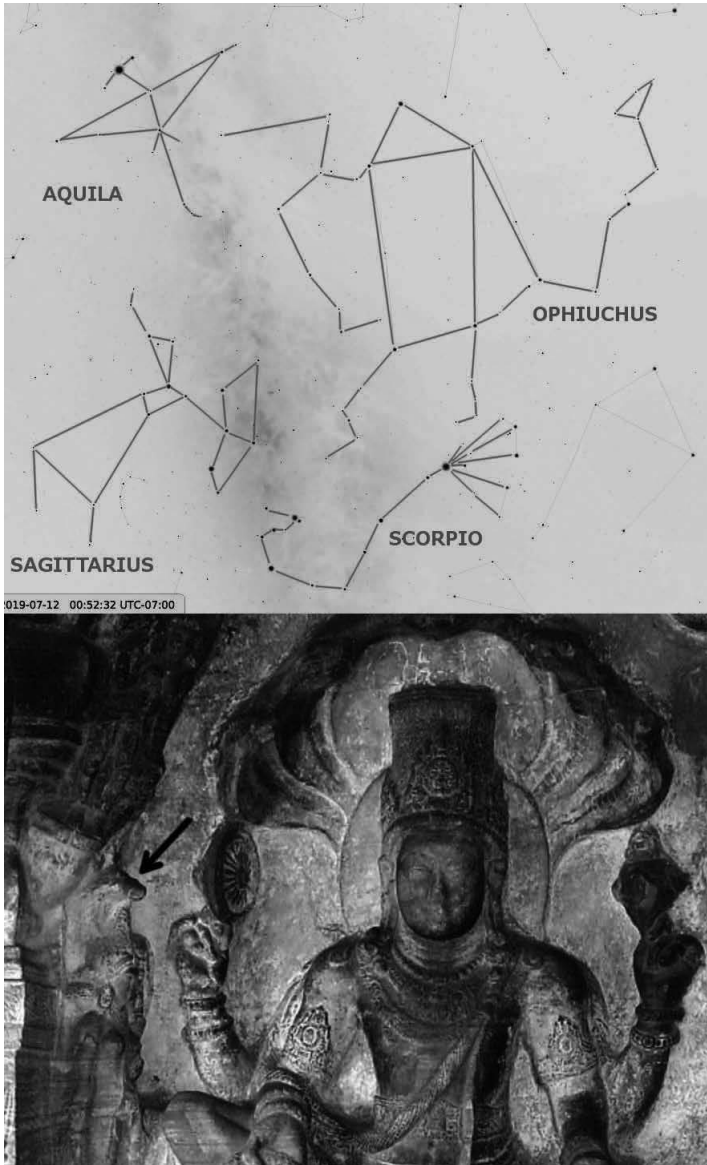


The form of Scorpio in the heavens is actually much larger and more impressive when seen in person than is implied by the star-chart when seen on paper – truly an impressive and dazzling constellation, and appropriate for depicting the many-headed Nagaraja Shesha, king of all serpents, upon whom Vishnu sometimes sits or reclines in divine repose. Shesha is also referred to by the name *Ananta*, signifying "endless." This indicates that Shesha may be not just Scorpio and its multiple heads, but also whose body *continues* into the Milky Way and is thus identified with the Milky Way as well (as an extension of the sinuous form of Scorpio). The Milky Way forms a great *endless* ring in the sky, associated with a great serpent in many myth-systems.

In the carving from the Badami temple caves, we can just make out the form of the great King of Birds, Garuda the Eagle, located on the left side as we face the image of the god (on the

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god's right side), about adjacent to the upper of his two arms on that side



In the image at left, I have added an arrow pointing to what is likely the head of the great eagle, Garuda. Note that the artist has envisioned this eagle as being located in the correct position to

correspond to the constellation Aquila in the sky – Aquila being located adjacent to the "upper hand" of Ophiuchus on the left side of the constellation as we face the star-chart above.

Indeed, the artist responsible for the image of Vishnu from the Badami caves has depicted Garuda the great eagle just above an image of a goddess, likely Vishnu's consort the goddess Lakshmi (difficult to see in this image, but she is standing facing towards the god just beneath the eagle indicated by the arrow here). Note that this location beneath the eagle would likely indicate that this goddess-wife of Vishnu is associated with the constellation Sagittarius in the heavens, located immediately below Aquila as shown in the star-chart above – a constellation often associated with important goddesses in ancient myth around the world.

Below is a more recent painting from the nineteenth century depicting Vishnu and Lakshmi and Shesha:



In this position of repose upon the great serpent, Vishnu is sometimes described as dreaming the universe into existence (in

mentioned earlier on pages 234 - 235 of this volume, and as discussed in more detail in later volumes as well. The dwarf Brokk who fashions the hammer of Thor in Norse myth can also be identified with Hercules, as mentioned on page 101 of this volume and as discussed in more detail in Volume Four of this series. And, in the myths of ancient India, it is very evident that the dwarf avatar of Vishnu, Vamana, is likewise associated with the constellation Hercules.

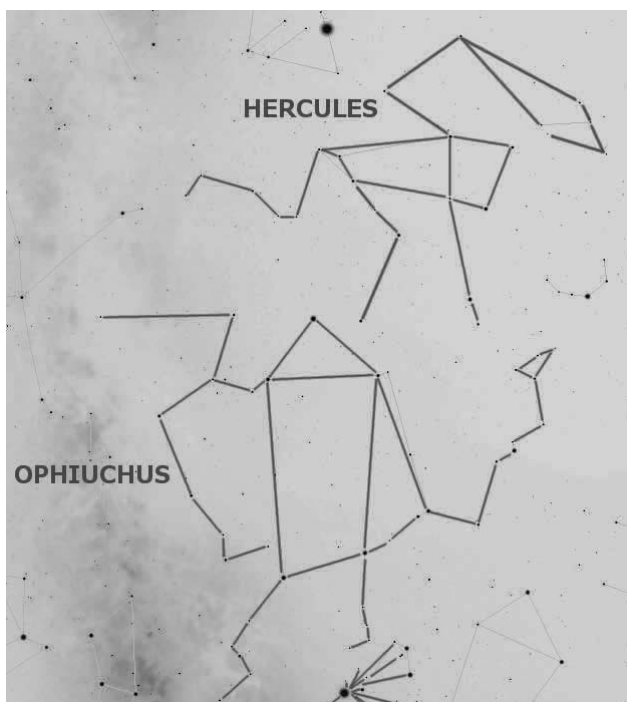
Below is a depiction of Vamana taking his third step and landing upon the head of Mahabali:



It should be self-evident to the reader at this point in the book that this iconography evokes the constellation Hercules in the sky.

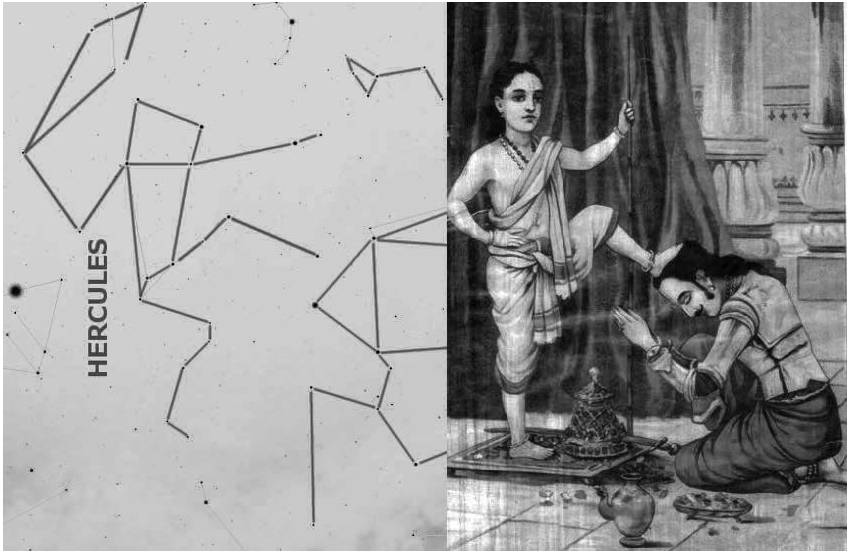
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Note in the preceding illustration that Vamana is brandishing a long club or sword in the arm that is upraised behind his own head, in very much the same way that the outline of Hercules brandishes a great club or sword in the heavens. Another arm, in front of Vamana's face, holds a small disc (perhaps a shield or buckler), likely indicative of the Northern Crown in front of the downward-reaching arm of the constellation Hercules. Most notable of all, of course, is the placement of Vamana's feet, which are evocative of the long stride the constellation Hercules appears to be taking -- and the fact that Hercules appears to be "stepping on the head" of the constellation Ophiuchus with his lead foot:



The above star-chart makes abundantly clear that Vamana is associated with Hercules, and king Mahabali is associated with the form of Ophiuchus. Note that if in our minds we rotate the constellation Hercules 90° counterclockwise and imagine the rear

leg of Hercules being "planted" squarely on the floor, his forward leg would be stepping very high indeed! This is just how Vamana is portrayed in artwork:



Clearly, in his avatar as Vamana, Vishnu is associated with the nearby constellation of Hercules.

Note that the banishing of a benevolent figure, often a ruler who presides over a lost Golden Age, to the netherworld for a period of time (but with a promised return) is an extraordinarily important and widespread myth-pattern or oicotype. The authors of *Hamlet's Mill* spend a great deal of time tracing out this myth-pattern around the globe, pointing out that we find it in the story of the Titan Kronos (banished to the underwater cave of Ogygia by Zeus), and in the myth of Saturn, and of Jamshtyd, and of Osiris, and of Prometheus, and of King Arthur, and of many others.⁴⁰⁷

Based on the above analysis of the myth of Vamana and Bali, we can see that in at least one important example of this oicotype, the benevolent king who is banished can clearly be associated with

Star Myths of Ancient Japan: the Kojiki

At this point in our tour of the ancient myths, we have circled the globe. We have examined myths from Australia, and proceeded to explore myths from nearly every inhabited continent, as well as from the islands which stretch across the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean. We now conclude with an examination of a few of the myths of ancient Japan (a land which in the people's own language is called 日本 *Nihon*, "Sun's Origin").

In his 1960 book *Shinto: the Kami Way*, eminent Shinto scholar Dr. Sokyō Ono (1904 - 1990), a professor at Kokugakuin University of Tokyo and a lecturer in the Association of Shinto Shrines – described by Hideo Kishimoto (1903 - 1964) as "one who has devoted his entire professional life to the study of this faith" – writes:

Shinto, the indigenous faith of the Japanese people, is relatively unknown among the religions of the world. Many people are familiar with the torii, the typical gateway to Shinto shrines, and some have a vague impression of the unique ornamentation which adorns many shrine roofs. Yet to all but a few, the shrines to which the torii leads and the Shinto faith which its symbolisms are very much an enigma.⁵¹⁵

A preface to the same work, by co-author William Parsons Woodard (1896 - 1973), founder of the International Institute for the Study of Religions, declares:

[. . .] except for the student who has the interest, ability, and almost inexhaustible resources in time for his investigation, Shinto remains practically a closed book.

Actually there are very few people, Japanese or foreign, who understand Shinto thoroughly and are able to explain it in

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detail. These scholars, including the author of this booklet, are the first to admit that there are many things which cannot be clearly explained because in some areas there is still no certain knowledge.⁵¹⁶

And yet, although it displays its own distinctive character, stemming from the ancient indigenous culture of the islands of Japan (or Nihon), and although it is in the words of Professor Sokyo Ono in the same book "as indigenous as the people that brought the Japanese nation into existence and ushered in its new civilization,"⁵¹⁷ yet there are within the most ancient surviving records describing the lives and genealogies of the *kami* of this indigenous tradition unmistakable indications of connection to the same ancient system we have found in all the other ancient sacred traditions we have examined on our trip around the globe.

The word *Shinto* 神道 signifies "spirit path" or "spirit way" and in Japanese these two characters are pronounced *kami no michi* and mean "the Kami Way," the word *kami* being a Japanese word worthy of closer examination. In his 1972 book entitled *The Allied Occupation of Japan 1945 - 1952 and Japanese Religions*, the same William P. Woodard discusses the *kami* within the tradition of Shinto:

Shinto is the cluster of the beliefs and customs of the Japanese people centering in the *kami*, a term which designates spiritual entities, forces or qualities that are believed to exist everywhere, in man and in nature. Usually without gender and often without anything akin to personality, the *kami* are believed to infuse the universe, and life for the devout Shintoist is lived in harmony with and in gratitude to them. In its traditional usage in Shinto the word *kami* (singular or plural) may be translated deity(ies),

spirit(s), god(s), or divine (e.g., *kamikaze*: divine wind), but it should never be translated God. In the interest of clarity it is better to leave it untranslated.⁵¹⁸

Of the practice of integrating one's life with the reality of the spirit world and the kami, Professor Ono in his book *Shinto: the Kami Way* writes:

In its personal aspects "Shinto" implies faith in the kami, usages practiced in accordance with the mind of the kami, and spiritual life attained through the worship of and in communion with the kami. To those who worship kami, "Shinto" is a collective noun denoting all faiths. It is an all-inclusive term embracing the various faiths which are comprehended in the kami-idea.⁵¹⁹

The oldest surviving text describing the origin of the kami was completed in the year commonly called AD 712. This text is known as the 古事記 *Ko Ji Ki* (or, more commonly, *Kojiki*), which literally means "Old Matters Record" or, as it is usually rendered, "A Record of Ancient Matters." That it preserves knowledge which had been passed down for centuries prior to the composition of the text we have today is evident from the fact that in its original preface, the author expresses concern that certain accounts are being altered or emended and that thus there is a danger of knowledge being lost or forgotten.

As Professor Ono goes on to explain regarding the *Kojiki*:

Shinto itself does not possess sacred scriptures, such as are found in many other religions, – a fact which is a significant indication of the character of the Shinto faith itself. Nevertheless, there are certain ancient records that are regarded as authoritative and provide its historical as well as its spiritual basis.

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The earliest of these were compiled by Imperial order and contain the mythology and early history of the Japanese people. The *Kojiki* ("Record of Ancient Matters") is the oldest extant Japanese historical record. Its date is 712 of the Christian era. It provides an account of events down to the year 628. Though written in Chinese ideographs the style is ancient, pure Japanese and through it we can know something of the style of the earlier oral transmission from generation to generation. Consequently it is especially valued.⁵²⁰

For our brief examination of just a few of the sacred traditions regarding the kami of Nihon, we will rely primarily on the myths contained in the *Kojiki*.

I will be the first to admit that the account provided by the *Kojiki* does not lend itself to easy examination for Star Myth content. Often little or no details are provided about many of the kami who are mentioned, beyond their names. When activities and episodes *are* related, the details are sometimes so sparse that confident identification with specific constellations is difficult or impossible.

Nevertheless, within this record of ancient matters we are occasionally provided with a glimpse – and at times even a clear vista – which confirms beyond doubt that the ancient understanding of the kami expresses itself using the same language that we have found the world's other Star Myths to be speaking: such episodes provide all the evidence we need to state with confidence that the ancient indigenous tradition of Nihon belongs to the same world-wide system which we have found to be operating in all the other cultures we have examined thus far.

One of these episodes, the story of Amaterasu and her retreat to the cave, is extremely well-known and indeed foundational to the history of Japan, in that the emperors and empresses were thought to be descendants of Amaterasu. Let's now turn to the ancient text in order to identify some clear connections in this story as related in the Kojiki to specific (and now-familiar) constellations, as well as connections regarding a few other important kami described in the Kojiki.

The opening descriptions of the first kami at the start of the Kojiki are quite terse, but even here we catch occasional glimpses which seem to resonate with myths we have examined already in this volume. Here is the poem's beginning, from the 1882 translation by Basil Hall Chamberlain (1850 - 1935), who was a professor of Japanese at Tokyo Imperial University, a translation which has some drawbacks but is yet valuable for being very literal to the text and honest in its explanation of difficult spots:

The names of the Deities [kami] that were born in the Plain of High Heaven [Takama-no-hara] when the Heaven and Earth began were the Deity Master-of-the-August-Centre-of-Heaven, next the High-August-Producing-Wondrous-Deity, next the Divine-Producing-Wondrous-Deity. These three Deities [kami] were all Deities born alone, and hid their persons. The names of the Deities [kami] that were born next from a thing that sprouted up like unto a reed-shoot when the earth, young and like unto a floating oil, drifted about medusa-like, were the Pleasant-Reed-Shoot-Prince-Elder Deity, next the Heavenly-Eternally-Standing-Deity. These two Deities [kami] were likewise born alone, and hid their persons.⁵²¹

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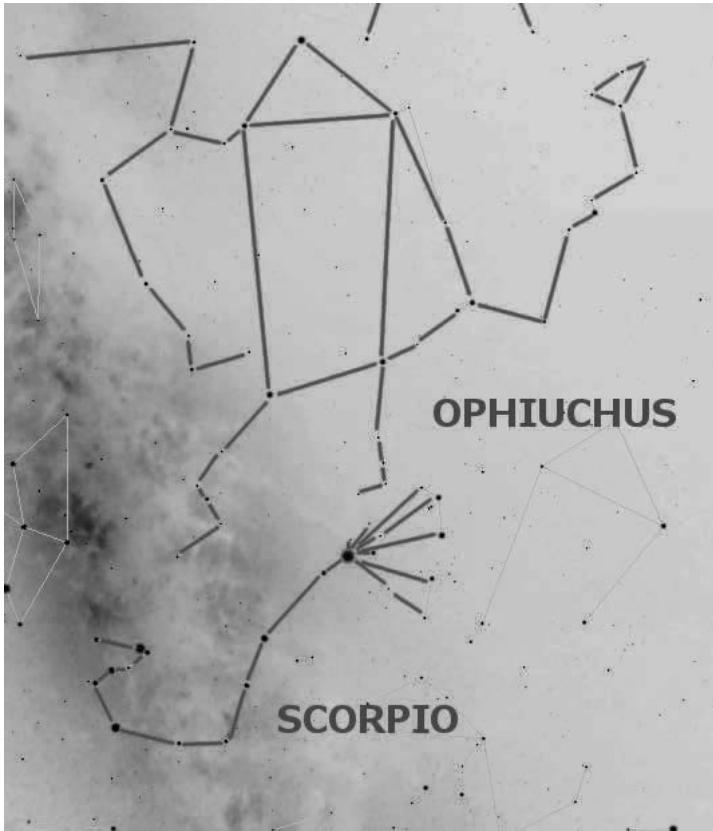
The more recent 2014 translation by Professor Gustav Heldt of the University of Virginia renders the names of these original kami in a less unwieldy fashion as follows (in the same order as given above): "Master Mighty Center of Heaven," "the spirit Lofty Growth," "the spirit Sacred Growth," "Fine Budding Reed Lad," and "Ever-Standing Heaven."⁵²²

Additionally, the 2014 translation by Professor Heldt describes the young land as "floating like tallow on water" (as opposed to being "like unto a floating oil," in the 1882 translation by Chamberlain), and as "drifting like a jellyfish" rather than "drifted about medusa-like" (although note that "medusa" is actually a term for jellyfish, and is undoubtedly what Chamberlain is indicating when he says "medusa").⁵²³

Note that, despite the paucity of detail supplied in the original text, we can still surmise (if we had to guess) which constellations might correspond to deities who are described as "Mighty Center of Heaven" (or "August Center of Heaven"), or as "Heavenly Eternally Standing Deity." If I had to guess, although there is by no means enough textual detail provided for a confident analysis, I would propose that a *Center-of-Heaven* kami would probably correspond to the constellation Hercules in whirling form, and that an *Eternally-Standing* kami who holds up the heavens would correspond to the constellation Ophiuchus, in much the same way that we saw the Egyptian god Shu holding up the heavens in the discussion on pages 261 - 262 of this volume.

Similarly, the description of the earth drifting about like a jellyfish or a medusa, and something sprouting up "like unto a reed-shoot" evokes earlier discussions of babies cast adrift amongst the reeds or bulrushes, often in baskets which are also made of reeds. We have seen that these "baskets of reeds" (or, in the case of the

basket in which baby Moses is cast adrift, baskets specifically described as an "ark") are often associated with the constellation Ophiuchus above Scorpio, with Scorpio presumably looking like a bunch of reeds. Indeed, a "thing which sprouted up like unto a reed-shoot" is probably a reference to the constellation Scorpio, which (when envisioned in its "multiple-heads" form) resembles a sprouting ear of wheat or barley.



Recall as well that, in addition to the infant Moses and the baby Sargon and the infant Karna who were set adrift *in baskets* in a river, we must also add to this myth-pattern the baby Maui, who was cast into the sea-foam by his parents (apparently *sans* basket). Do you remember that when his parents abandoned Maui at the shore, he was wrapped up by *jellyfish* for protection?

Chapter Twenty-one

If we had to guess what constellation or region of the night sky is being referenced in these opening verses of the Kojiki which mention a "sprouting reed" and a "floating jellyfish," I would unhesitatingly point to the region of the constellation Scorpio, based on what we know from our examinations thus far.

The text of the Kojiki then goes on to introduce two more individual kami, followed by a group of five pairs of kami (these five pairs all brothers and sisters). In this group of five pairs of brother-and-sister kami, the last pair introduced is a very important pair of spirits named 伊邪那岐 *Izanagi* and his sister 伊邪那美命 *Izanami*, translated by Basil Hall Chamberlain as "the Deity the Male-Who-Invites" (Izanagi) and "the Deity the Female-Who-Invites" (Izanami).⁵²⁴ Professor Heldt in his recent translation calls them the spirits "He Who Beckoned" and his sister spirit "She Who Beckoned."⁵²⁵

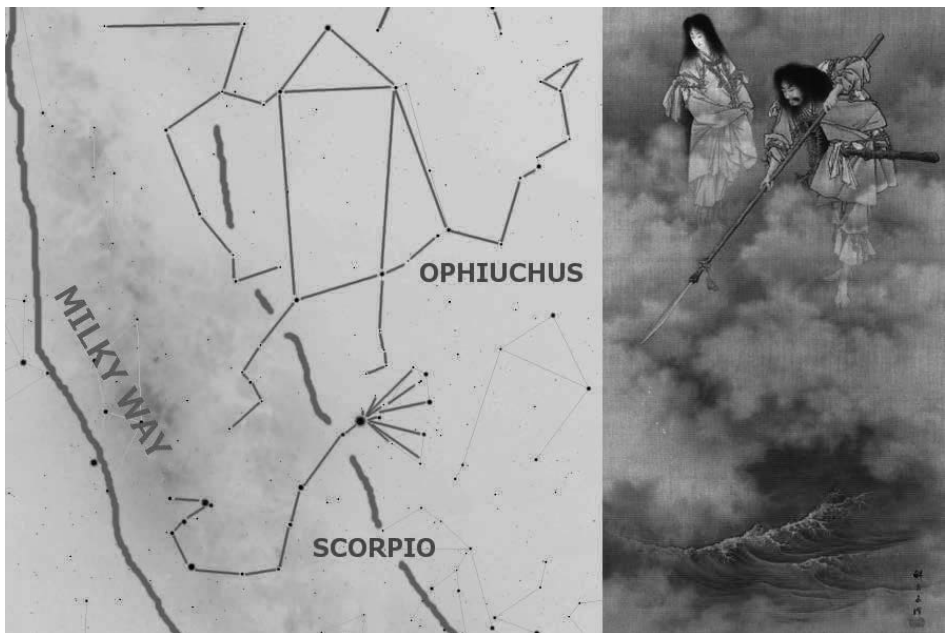
The assembled heavenly kami command Izanagi and Izanami to "make, consolidate, and give birth to this drifting land." In order to enable the pair to do this, the other kami give to Izanagi and Izanami a "heavenly jeweled spear."⁵²⁶

So the two Deities, standing upon the Floating Bridge of Heaven, pushed down the jeweled spear and stirred with it, whereupon, when they had stirred the brine till it went curdle-curdle, and drew [the spear] up, the brine that dripped down from the end of the spear was piled up and became an island. This is the Island of Onogoro.⁵²⁷

We can already detect important clues regarding the identity of Izanagi and Izanami in this passage regarding the creation of the islands and the firming up of lands which previously only drifted. First, as we have already argued and as we will see supported by abundant evidence in Volume Two of the series, the use of the

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specific weapon of a *spear* or halberd-like weapon is very often a characteristic of the constellation Ophiuchus. Second, the description of the two kami "standing upon the Floating Bridge of Heaven" may be an additional indication of the constellation Ophiuchus, which can clearly be seen to have one foot in (or upon) the Milky Way band: standing, as it were, upon the Floating Bridge of Heaven (if that bridge corresponds to the Milky Way, as I believe to be quite likely). Note that the guardian Heimdall who stands upon the Rainbow Bridge of Asgard is argued in Volume Four to correspond to the constellation Ophiuchus as well:



In the above star-chart, the outline of the Milky Way band has been added for ease of identification. Can you see why Izanagi and Izanami are described as "standing on the bridge" and how they might be envisioned as "stirring the brine" with their spear in order to make it go "curdle curdle"?

Chapter Twenty-one

The rendering by Basil Hall Chamberlain of the curdling process as "curdle curdle" is explained in one of his footnotes; he says:

It is not easy to find in English a word which will aptly render the original Japanese onomatopoeia *koworokoworo*. The meaning may also be "till it made a curdling sound."⁵²⁸

The Milky Way almost certainly plays the role of the brine which is curdled, in addition to being the floating bridge of heaven. It is not unusual for a heavenly feature to play two roles in a single myth (just as some movies feature the same actor playing multiple roles, sometimes of characters who look very different from one another), and the myths in the Kojiki seem to be particularly prone to using the same heavenly figure to play multiple characters in a single episode.

If one looks at the actual Milky Way, particularly in the region of its brightest and widest part (adjacent to Ophiuchus and between Sagittarius and Scorpio, where Ophiuchus can be envisioned as stirring with a spear), the metaphor of curdling can be seen to be aptly appropriate: the Milky Way is blotchy and clumpy in this region, and marked by dark patches here and there.

Note too that this episode in the Kojiki in which Izanagi and Izanami churn the briny deep resonates strongly with the episode examined in the previous chapter on the Star Myths of ancient India, in which the assembled forces of the heavenly realm churn the great Ocean of Milk, using Mount Mandara as the churning stick and the serpent Vasuki as the twirling rope (see for instance page 581 of this volume). We noted when discussing that episode that the metaphor almost certainly involves the constellation Ophiuchus in that case as well.

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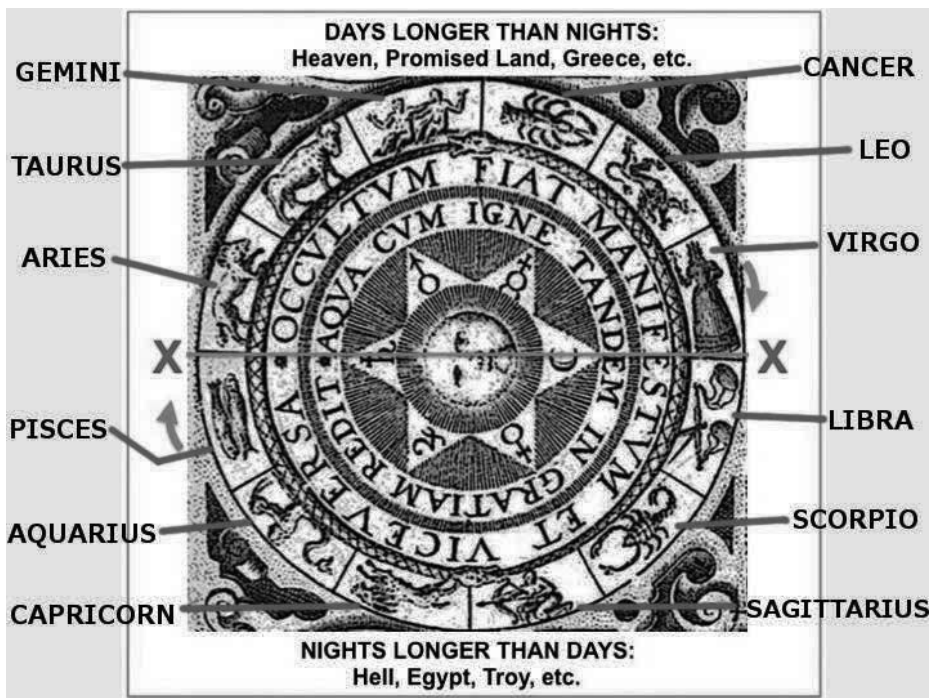
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