

# More Mythology

## In The Winter Sky . . .

### Orion

#### . . . In Egypt

Osiris, God of Light, ancient king of Egypt brought respect and prosperity upon the land. But his jealous brother Seth, God of Darkness, conspired to destroy him. He tricks Osiris into entering a specially made coffin disguised as a beautiful chest. When Osiris enters the coffin, Seth closes the lid and throws the coffin into the Nile River where it is carried down stream.

Isis finds the coffin and gives her husband, Osiris a proper burial. But the body is recovered and dismembered by Seth. With the help of Re, the Sun god, Isis painstakingly recovers the pieces and wraps the body in bandages like those of a mummy. Isis' breath enters the nostrils and Osiris' spirit rises to the sky for eternity as overseer of the spirit world and god of the dead. Just as Osiris' death is not eternal, so too will the spirit of human beings who live in a holy manner be reunited with the eternal universe.

#### . . . In India

The powerful god Prajapati (Betelgeuse) had 27 daughters. Each lived in a different mansion among the stars. Soma (the Moon) spends each night with a different one of Prajapati's daughters. Usually, Soma will move to a different mansion each night. At one time long ago Soma spent more time with the most beautiful of Prajapati's daughters, the red maiden Rohini (Aldebaran). When Prajapati found out about Soma's movements toward his daughter Rohini, he became enraged and cursed the Moon. Now we see the effect of that curse. Each lunar month Soma wastes away until only a sliver of his body remains.

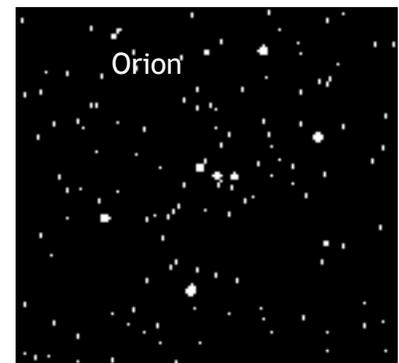
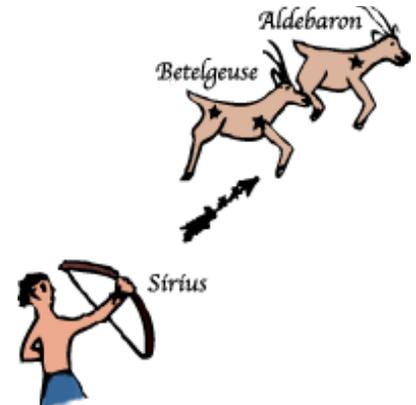
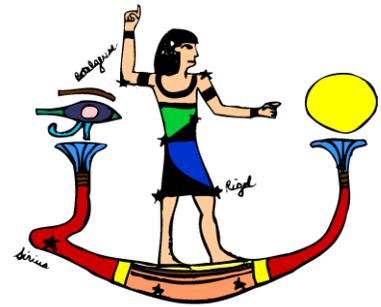
With Soma out of the way, Prajapati himself becomes enamored with Rohini, who is disguised as an antelope. Prajapati changes himself into a stag and begins to chase her. Rohini is saved by a hunter, Lubdhaka, known as the Deer Slayer (Sirius). Lubdhaka shoots a three jointed arrow which pins Prajapati helplessly to the sky for all eternity.

#### . . . In China

This is Tsan, the Supreme Commander. He was elected to lead the local farmers in battle against invaders who come down from the hills in winter to steal food reserves. Tsan is the symbol of a prudent and trustworthy leader, having qualities necessary for a military commander.

Tsan is also called the Market Place. In order to alleviate pressures from the nomadic hunters from the hills, taxes were lifted in the winter so they could more easily trade skins for the food they needed from the farmers instead of having to steal it to avoid starvation.

Here are some more constellation stories to add to your repertoire and to enhance your students' appreciation of the rich cultural diversity of skywatchers from all over the world.



**. . . In North America (Tewa)**

The people trusted Long Sash, a famous warrior, (Betelgeuse) to lead them in defense against their enemies. They begged him to take them to a safe place where they would be free from attack. Long Sash warned the people that the migration would be very difficult. Many hardships: sickness, thirst, hunger await them on the path to the new land. The people pleaded, "Lead us to a place of safety where we can live in peace."

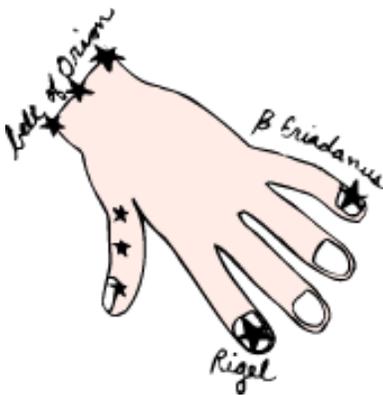


After many generations walking on the Endless Trail that stretches like a white band across the sky, the people began to quarrel and fight with each other. When blows were exchanged and wounds inflicted, Long Sash stopped them and warned, "You hurt yourselves worse than your enemies. You must decide if you will destroy yourselves or if you will follow me in peace and harmony with each other." This place where they stopped is marked by two bright stars (Castor and Pollux.) Known as the Place of Decision, people today pray to these stars for guidance in making the difficult decisions they confront during their lives.

Long Sash grew old and began to hear voices from the ancestors. He instructed the people to pray for help and guidance from the Above Persons, their fathers and mothers. To comfort the people he set his headdress down among a faint cluster of stars which can be seen today (in Cancer). Two young men help carry an old woman's load. These three stars (in Leo) remind the people to be helpful and thoughtful of each other. Thus they are called the Stars of Helpfulness. The whole story of the journey and the events which followed is still seen in the sky above and still told on the Earth below.

**. . . In North America (Lakota)**

The Hand belongs to the Chief Who Lost his Arm. The arm was stolen by Wakinyans, Thunder Beings, the ones who rob Mother Earth of her fertility in winter. Fallen Star is told by the chief's daughter that he must recover the arm before she will marry him. Using magic powers he gains along the way, Fallen Star traverses Earth and Sky and eventually recovers the arm and marries the chief's daughter. In so doing, Fallen Star symbolically restores fertility to the Earth and contributes to the continuation of the cycle of life.



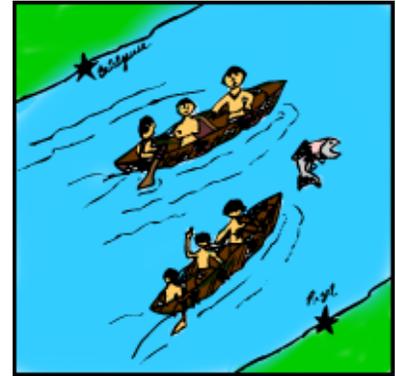
As Fallen Star, human beings play an important role in restoring fertility to the Earth and helping the cycle of life to continue. The descendants of the first people of the Great Plains enact a ceremony in which blood is shed as from the first of gods—Inyan, the Rock—in creating the Earth. When the Hand is seen in winter the people are assured that their sacrifice helped the creative forces in the universe to continue. Thus the coming of the next spring is ensured, and with it their own survival.

**. . . In North America (Columbia River)**

Cold Wind has no respect or honor. He is also very lazy, always waking too late to catch any salmon. So his habit is to steal from the home of Chinook Wind's old grandfather who always wakes early and works hard to catch many salmon as food for the people.

Hiding in his grandfather's home, Chinook Wind waits to trap the thief. But when Cold Wind arrives, he just laughs at the smaller boy. "You'll have to wrestle this fish from me if you think you can get it," he jeers. Thus the battle between Cold Wind and Chinook Wind begins.

We see two canoes racing for Old Grandfather's salmon. (The canoes are the "belt" and "sword" of Orion.) In one is Cold Wind and his brothers, in the other, Chinook Wind with his. Not just a race, this is a battle between forces of nature. As winter ends, the winds battle for control of the river valley. From the coast comes the warm Chinook wind, named for the people who live there. The Chinook wind wrestles the cold wind coming from the high plateau region to the east. The people can see the Chinook brothers are winning the race and thus are confident that warmth will prevail as spring defeats the cold winds of winter.



**What is commonly called Orion (The Giant) is also these things . . .**

**Among the Norse** it is Frigg's spinning wheel. Frigg is a goddess and knows of all things. She is also known as the goddess of fertility, destiny, love wisdom, independence, marriage, and children.

**To the native people of Greenland**, it is seal hunters who are lost at sea. The three stars of Orion's belt are also known as steps leading to the heavens.

## Pleiades

The Pleiades are among the most widely recognized star groups in the world through the ages. This cluster has been a significant part of traditional mythologies for thousands of years. It is also commonly known as the Seven Sisters.

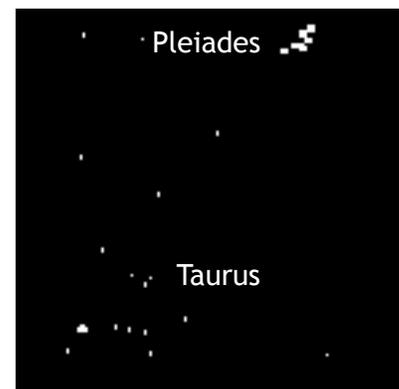
In many stories, they are women, sometimes goddesses or children, who leave the Earth and enter the sky world. In some cultures they are known as seeds and are associated with agriculture. In spring when they are last seen near the horizon after sunset, they signify the sowing of the seeds. Later in the year, when they are seen in the pre-dawn sky, it is time to harvest before the first frost. In this way they define a seasonal pattern, a helpful guide for agricultural societies worldwide.

### . . . *Among the Hindus*

They are known as six nurses who cater to the son of the god Shiva. The nurses are depicted as a flame in honor of Agni, the god of fire. In the fall when this flame is last seen at sunrise, a ceremony called the Feast of Lamps is held.

### . . . *The Celtic People*

. . . hold ceremonies to correspond with the first and last appearance of these stars in October and May, respectively. The ceremony in May, called Beltane, or May Day, is for purification and regeneration, a theme common to cultures worldwide, as the disappearance of these stars is so often associated with the coming of the new year. In October, however, when the Pleiades are first seen in the evening, the ceremony called Samhain is held. At this time spirits are said



to wander the Earth, seeking their old homes. Witches, goblins and fairies are said to roam freely on this night. Bonfires are lit, games played and parties held during this holiday which sets the precedent for the festival currently known as Halloween.

**. . . In China**

They are the Seven Sisters of Industry.

**. . . To the Lapps**

The stars keep warm an unfortunate servant cast into the freezing night by his master. Hence they are known by the name Fur in Frost.

**. . . The Finns of Lithuania**

This cluster is known as a sieve with holes in it.

**. . . Among Arabs**

It is a herd of camels.

**. . . In the Society Islands and Tonga**

They are the Little Eyes and help determine seasons of the year.

**. . . Native Australians**

. . . call them the Young Girls. The Young Girls are musicians who play for the Young Men seen in Orion's belt.

**. . . in Peru**

They are known as The Begetters. Respect is paid in reference to their role in designating the beginning of the new year's cycle with the creative forces of spring.

**. . . Among the Aztec and Maya**

Entire cities were constructed in which special alignments of buildings and roads marked the rising point of these stars.

**. . . The Maya**

. . . know them as the Four Hundred Boys who tried to kill Seven Macaw's son Zipacna (see also Mayan section in Big Dipper, p.46). Zipacna was a crocodilian monster who claimed to be a mover of mountains. The Four Hundred boys fail to kill Zipacna when they try to bury him with a lodge pole. While they celebrate their false victory by drinking alcoholic beverages to excess, The Earth mover knocks their house down on top of them and kills them. To avenge

their death, the hero twins trick Zipacna and leave him buried under a mountain. The stars making the Four Hundred Boys are also known as the seeds and help determine the seasons. They also show a rattlesnake's tail with the red star Aldebaran making the eye of the snake.

### **. . . Among the Inuit (Aleutian Islands)**

They are Men on a dog sled hunting a bear.

Stories including the Pleiades from Native North America abound and remind the people of the world's creation and teach proper manners and participation in society. In the following teachings, the nature of the parent/child and the husband/wife relationships are explored.

### **...From the Onandaga of the Six Nation Iroquois Confederacy (Great Lakes Region):**

The young ones were bored. Autumn was ending and with the approaching winter, people worked hard to prepare for survival. To pass the time while the others worked, the young ones danced by Beautiful Lake. All day long they danced to pass the time until, one day, an old man appeared with a warning. His hair shone like silver and he dressed all in white feathers. "You must stop your dancing or something terrible will happen," he instructed. The children did not want to hear this so they just kept on dancing. Several times they were warned to stop but never did heed the advice of the holy man.

Now the young ones wanted to dance all day long. But the dancing made them hungry so each went home this time to ask for some food to make it through the next day while dancing at Beautiful Lake. "You are just wasting your energy with foolishness," they were told. "Stay home to eat where you belong," and "I don't have time to tend to your foolish needs," they were told. And thus did the parents misunderstand the needs of those bored youths.

Of course that did not stop them. The young ones went out to the lake anyway. And they danced all day without any food to nourish them. After many hours passed they did not sit down. They kept on dancing until their heads were light from their hunger. Slowly they began to rise up into the sky as a result of their light headedness. "Do not look down. Something is happening!" one cried. As they passed over their family's homes the parents called out, "Please come down!" They held up all sorts of good food to entice the children home. But it was too late. When one looked down he became a shooting star. The parents cried when the rest turned into the stars called Oot-kwa-tah. Now the dancers are seen all winter long to remind everyone about their story. And when a meteor streaks down to Mother Earth, all are reminded of the unfortunate boy who looked down and fell.



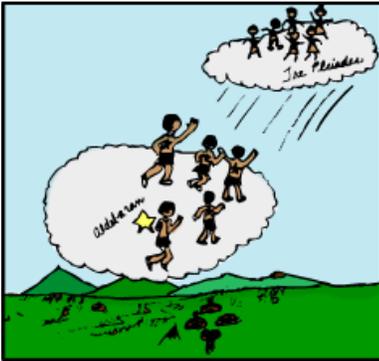
### . . . From the Monache of California's Great Central Valley

The first women to discover the wild onions really enjoyed the flavor. They couldn't stop eating them and brought bunches home to share. Their men came home from hunting, "Whew! What is that nasty odor?" they wondered. To their discomfort, the odor got stronger as they entered camp—and stronger as they discovered it was coming from their own homes. "Have some of this wonderful tasty new food," the women offered. But all the men could say was, "You stink!" and "Get out now! Sleep outside tonight."

The next day the men came back to camp without any game. The terrible odor of the onions was on their bodies. All the animals were frightened away so the men caught nothing. Now the men were crazy. "Get out for good. Sleep away from us or we will all starve!" they fumed. So the women walked far away to the East. There they said a prayer and threw out a magic rope which lifted them into the clouds. From there they were on their way to the sky world.

By now you can guess how lonely those men were. They must have really wanted their wives back because they followed them and lifted themselves into the sky with a prayer and magic rope of eagle down feathers. "Wait! Come back. We're sorry," they pleaded. But the women's response was only, "We've had enough of your insults. We don't want to come back to you now."

Now everyone can see the men chasing their lost wives across the sky all winter long. The stars known as the Hyades (which make the face of Taurus, the bull) are the men. The Pleiades are the women. Together they are a monument to the selfishness and shortsightedness of those men and women. With this we are reminded to make every effort to keep our sacred family unit in tact.



## Circumpolar Constellations . . .

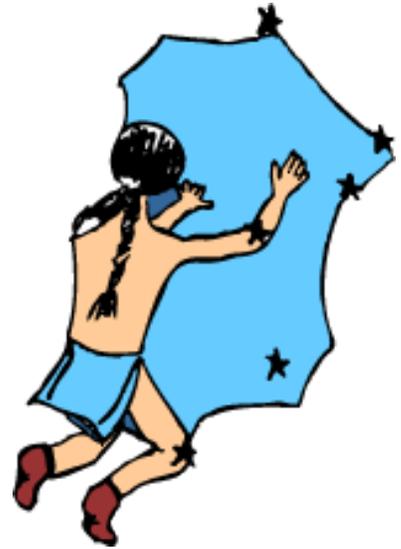
### Cassiopeia

What we call Cassiopeia (The Queen), is other things in many cultures . . .

#### . . . *To the Quileute tribe (North America)*

When his brothers do not return from a hunting trip, the youngest, Toskobuk, searches for them. At a fork in the river he finds their abandoned canoe and their tracks leading into the brush. Man of the Prairie appears from the bushes and approaches the young man. Toskobuk senses that this is the one who killed his brothers and is planning to trick him in the same manner. "I can see that you are a hunter," the Man of the Prairie begins, "Let me chase some elk down here while you hide." The boy consents, knowing that he can out-smart the trickster. "And why don't you let me trade my magic arrows with you," the giant man continues as he holds up several beautiful looking but deceptively weak arrows, "You will need these powerful arrows to shoot all the elk."

"I believe in the power of my own arrows. I made them with my own hands," the boy replies. The Man of the Prairie enters the brush but reappears as a giant elk with massive head and sharp antlers. He charges the boy just as he did when he killed the brothers. The boy shoots the tremendous monster four times with his own strong arrows, once for each of his four brothers. The elk falls, big as a mountain. When he skins the giant elk, Toskobuk realizes that it is too big to stretch on the prairie. So he heaves the giant elk skin into the sky. The stars we see are the places where he drove stakes through the skin in stretching it.



#### . . . *In the Middle East*

It is an arm and hand stained with Henna. Henna is a red dye that women use to protect their skin from the heat. Some call this the hand of Fatima, daughter of Mohammed, stained with blood. These stars are also known as a camel in the Middle East, a region highly dependent on the camel for transportation.

#### . . . *To the Marshall Islanders of the South Pacific Ocean*

It is the tail of a dolphin. Stars in Andromeda and Aries make the body and head of the dolphin.

#### . . . *In China*

These stars form the bridge over a moat. In ancient times, governors of outlying areas crossed the moat in order to enter the emperor's palace. The stars also show a chariot in which the king would ride to visit the emperor. The stars are named for Wang-liang and Tsaou-fou, two charioteers who were so strong, it is said they could pick up and overturn whole chariots, and easily tame wild horses.



### . . . *Among the Inuit*

It is steps cut in a heavenly snow bank. The steps link Earth to the Sky country.

### *The Big Dipper and the North Star . . .*

are among the most widely recognized star patterns in the northern hemisphere. The stories and pictures associated vary greatly among many cultures. Here are some more Big Dipper stories to add to your repertoire . . .

### . . . *The Maya*

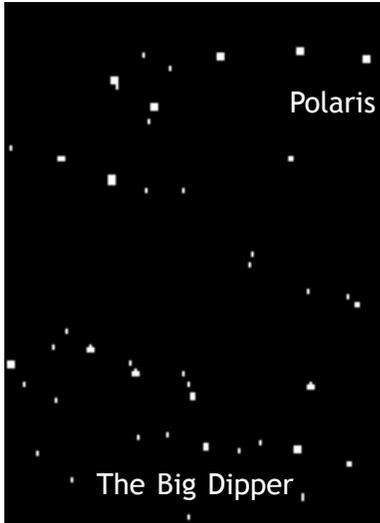
. . . know Seven Macaw as the one who believed himself to be a great god. With jewels in his eyes and for his teeth he pretended to rule the Sun and Moon. This was before there was a real Sun or Moon. In fact, it was not safe for the real Sun and Moon to exist alongside a false prophet such as this. So the hero twins Hunter and Jaguar-Deer wounded Seven Macaw with their blowguns and then, posing as healers, removed his jewels, robbing him of power. His descendants are the macaws of today, with broken, toothless jaws and white patches around their eyes. Seven Macaw and his wife Chimalmat are the Big and Little Dippers. The rising of Seven Macaw in October begins the dry season. His fall to Earth in July marks the great floods of the rainy season.

### . . . *In Scandinavia*

The Norse gods created the universe from grinding up the bodies of ancient enemies, a race of giants. Then they drove a spike into the center of the universe. The jewel on the end of the spike is known as the North Star today.

### . . . *To the Chinese*

Shang Ti, supreme ruler of Heaven and Earth, lives at the pole star. His two ministers of state help him organize the complex movements of Heaven and Earth. Shang Ti invited Tou Mu, a wise and virtuous woman with knowledge of many mysteries, and her family to live with him. Tou Mu is known to help sailors who are lost. She sits on a throne of lotus, holding the books of life and death in her 18 hands. If you pray to her, it is said she will prolong your life. The Big Dipper's movement is responsible for the seasons. Called the Balance of Jade, it is said to maintain balance between the seasons. Also called the Palace of Fates, it encompasses all of human destiny. The Big Dipper is also known as the Bushel of Measure due to its similarity to the container in which grain is weighed. Its importance is easily understood—the measure of grain is a measure of life.



### **. . . To the Arabs**

The pole star is a murderer who killed a great warrior who is now lying in a coffin. The coffin is formed by the cup of the dipper. The handle of the dipper makes the mourners who follow the coffin. In fact, all stars move in the funeral procession with the coffin. The murderer is forced to stand out as all the others circle around, safely keeping their distance and ostracizing him.

### **. . . Among the Navajo**

First Man and First Woman helped form the face of the Earth and Sky. Some stars were carefully placed by them, mirroring all the animals, mountains and everything on Mother Earth. Before they could finish, the impatient Coyote flipped the rest haphazardly into the night sky. That is why some stars are organized to make pictures while others are just random patterns. First Man and First Woman circle their home fire marked by the pole star. Known as Man and Woman Who Walk Around, their movements symbolize the work of all people in their daily lives. They serve to remind people of the law which requires that only one couple may live together in the same home.

### **. . . The Inuit**

. . . know the Big Dipper as a narwhal, a type of whale with a horn. The narwhal tells the time. The bright star Arcturus (found by following the curved handle of the dipper) is called Time Piece of Seal Netters. The North Star is directly overhead at such high latitudes so it is not useful for finding directions.

### **. . . The Hindu**

. . . call them the Seven Sons of Brahma. Their wives are the Pleiades and the pole star is the place of Dhruva, the Immovable One, who sits in meditation as the rest of the universe circles around him.

### **. . . In ancient Egypt**

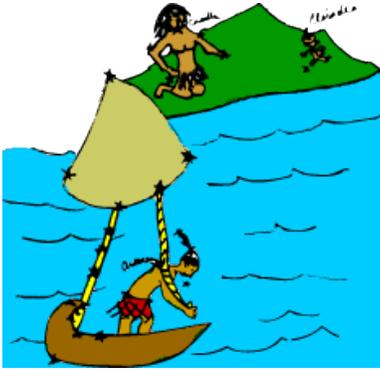
The Big Dipper was a bull named Meskhetiv and was associated with the god Seth. The handle of dipper makes the bull's front leg. The bull is tied to two posts of flint by a chain of gold. The goddess Isis is in the form of a hippopotamus guarding the bull. She holds the bull so it is unable to travel among the gods. The stars of Boötes help by holding the rope attached to the hind quarters of the bull. The Little Dipper is a falcon-headed god who is seen to be spearing the bull.



## In the Summer Sky . . .

### Scorpius

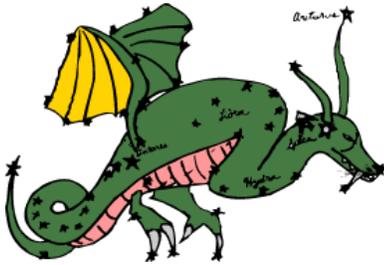
#### . . . *Marshall Islands (South Pacific)*



Ligadener (Capella) is the mother of all stars. All her sons race to an island to see who will be king of the stars. The bright star (Antares) is Dumur, her oldest son. She offered her help to all the sons, but only the youngest was willing to ride with his mother. Ligadener set up a sail in the canoe. With this new trick, she and her youngest son would easily win the race. But Dumur forced them to trade canoes and his mother and youngest brother jumped out into the water. What Dumur didn't know is that they had taken part of the mast away with them. In order to sail, Dumur was forced to tie the sail to his shoulders. That is why his back is so bent over.

Ligadener and the youngest son (the Pleiades) swam on to the island, winning the race. Dumur was so angry when he finally arrived that he wished never to see his brother again. That is why the Pleiades and Antares are never seen together in the sky.

#### . . . *China*

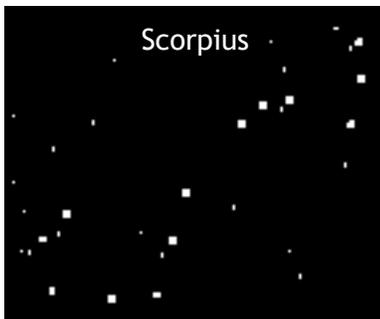


The stars which become visible in the spring are called The Blue Dragon of Spring. The dragon is associated with the productive forces in Nature, and the beginning of the humid season. The dragon's body includes many parts, each of which have special meanings of their own. The meaning correlates to people's activities during the events which occur in the spring. When, in spring, the Earth's fertility is restored, the appearance of the Blue Dragon coincides with the planting and cultivation of food and the ceremonies which accompany these activities.

The horn (Spica) appears, and the Blue Dragon has opened the earth for the new plants to grow. Sprouts push out from the earth as the horn pushes up from the horizon. The people similarly break through the earth in ploughing their fields. Appearance of the dragon's great horn (Arcturus) is the first sign to the people that spring has come. The neck (the tail of Hydra), signals the people's visit to wish the King a happy new year. Prisoners were freed, and animals released from their stables. These events correlate with release from hardships associated with winter: coldness, hunger, and threat from invasion.

Other parts of the dragon include chariots, horses, servants, and soldiers, all of which have a place in the ceremonies and events of the spring. The heart of the dragon (Antares) is the Sun. Its appearance is a signal to hold the important ceremony of the Renewal of the Fire.

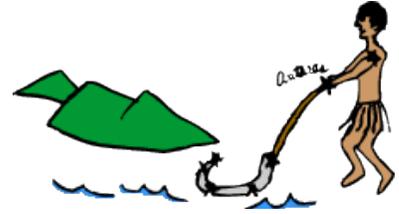
All the pieces of the Blue Dragon of Spring and their many meanings are tied together. As in other traditional societies, the stars depict the complex relationship between the events occurring in Nature and the intricacies of Chinese religion and culture. Understanding this relationship enables the people to align the events in their lives with those in the natural world. It is said that study of this relationship can give insight into the possible outcome of future events.



### . . . *New Zealand (Maori)*

Maui's fish hook is carved from a jawbone. The hook gets stuck so he pulls and pulls until finally a huge fish surfaces. The fish is an island with plants and people already living on it. Against Maui's warning not to harm the fish, the first people of the island begin to cut the fish up. After much hacking, the fish/ island is cut in two. The two pieces make what is commonly called the North and South islands of New Zealand today. The rugged shoreline of the islands still show the scars the first people made in ancient times.

Maui pulled the hook so forcefully that it shot right out of the water and stuck in the sky where it can still be seen. The stars that we sometimes called the Tail of the Scorpion are the ones that make up Maui's fish hook.



## Summer Triangle

### . . . *China*

Chih Nu is daughter to the Lord of the Universe and also Goddess of Weaving. She falls in love with her father's herdsman, Chien Niu. The lovers marry and live happily together. Their infatuation with each other eventually distracts them from their heavenly duties. The unattended oxen of heaven begin to wander throughout the sky and the loom upon which the fabric of the heavens is woven is left empty. After repeatedly warning them to attend their responsibilities, the King of Heaven must separate the lovers to opposite sides of the Heavenly River of Stars.

With help from the Birds of Heaven, the lovers are allowed to reunite each other for one day each summer. On this day, magpies from all over the world fly to the edge of the river and form a bridge with their wings. Tears of happiness fall as a light rain in the morning. By evening, it is said, the rain begins to downpour as tears of joy turn to tears of sorrow and the couple is forced to separate for yet another year.



### ...*Coer d'Alene People (North America)*

One evening, three young hunters find a magnificent snow goose resting at a peaceful lake. They discuss whether they should consider shooting the bird. One suggests that the goose will make an excellent trophy with which to return to their village. The others call the snow goose a holy bird and insist that it be protected. An argument ensues during which the bird opens its wings and rises up into the twilight sky. Before the others can stop him, the youngest hunter reaches for his bow and shoots the bird. With a cry, the snow goose flies straight down into the deep water of the lake. The boys search until dark for the goose but can not find a trace of it. When the stars appear, the boys see the goose reflected in the water of the lake. Looking up to the sky, the spirit of the snow goose can be seen reflected in the stars.



Three bright stars in the constellation known as

## Aquila the Eagle . . .

### . . . *To the Hindu*

the footsteps of Vishnu. The god Vishnu made three great strides in measuring the heavens. The three stars signify the rising, midday, and setting Sun.

### . . . *In China*

the Drum of the River. The drum lies at the edge of the Milky Way, known as the Celestial River (see story above under Summer Triangle.) High overhead at midnight in the winter, it marked the time when attacks from nomadic tribes were likely to occur. When an attack was imminent, sentinels warned the townspeople by sounding drums from the village entrance. Thus it is also known as the Celestial Drummers. Two bright stars below the drum make the drumstick.

