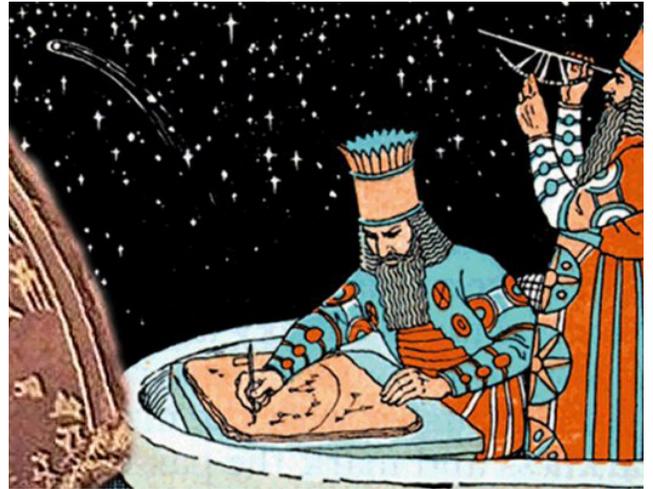


ANCIENT GREEK ASTRONOMY

The ancient Greeks excelled in many areas, one of which was astronomy. However, despite popular belief that they were the founders of ancient astronomy, their advancements can be partially credited to the work of others. Specifically, the ancient Greeks expanded upon work by the Babylonians, Zoroastrians, and Egyptians. Knowledge from these cultures was transmitted to the Greeks via the conquests of Alexander the Great, as well as through various trade routes. As such, ancient Greek astronomy was likely also influenced by the Indians and the Chinese.



Ancient Babylonian astronomers
Observing the night skies and making charts

ALTHOUGH THEY WEREN'T THE FOUNDERS OF ASTRONOMY, THE GREEKS CERTAINLY TOOK THE FIELD TO NEW PLACES. THEY TRANSFORMED IT FROM A MERELY OBSERVATIONAL SCIENCE TO ONE OF THEORY AND STUDY. PREVIOUSLY, ASTRONOMERS HAD STUDIED THE STARS FOR PURPOSES OF TIME KEEPING AND AGRICULTURE. THEY OBSERVED WHAT WAS HAPPENING BUT DID LITTLE INQUIRY INTO WHY IT WAS OCCURRING, ASIDE FROM GENERAL ATTRIBUTIONS TO GODS AND SUPERSTITION. THE GREEKS TOOK THIS IDEA OF DEITIES AND ADDED SCIENTIFIC THEORIES ABOUT THE UNIVERSE TO IT.



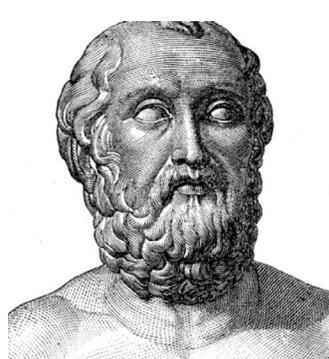
ANAXIMANDER

He was the first to propose a cosmological model, believed the Earth hung in space, and also applied depth to models.



PYTHAGORAS

He theorized that the Earth was a sphere, and also discovered that the morning star and the evening star were both the planet Venus.



PLATO

He believed that the universe could be explained by reason, and that the stars, sun, and moon rotated within crystalline spheres.

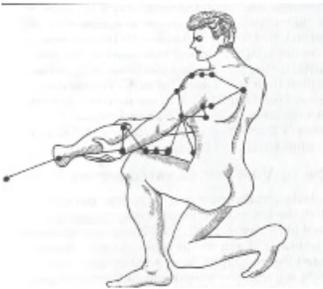


PTOLEMY

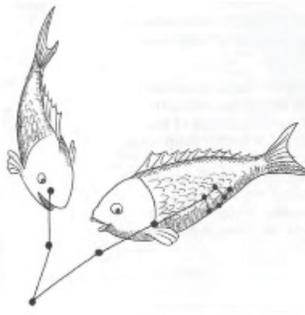
He proposed epicycles, in which the sun, moon, and planets orbited the Earth, but also rotated in smaller cycles within this larger one.

As mentioned earlier, the Greeks still incorporated mythology into their astronomy, despite their addition of scientific theory. In the stars, the Greeks saw many of the characters in their myths represented in the form of constellations, or katasterismoι. Many of these star myths come from the ancient poems of Hesiod, Pherecydes, Pseudo-Eratosthenes, Aratus, and Hyginus. Perhaps the most well-known of these constellations are the zodiac or the zodiakos, which means “circle of little animals” in Greek. The zodiac is made up of twelve signs, each with a constellation. Each of these constellations has a story attached to it.

Aquarius



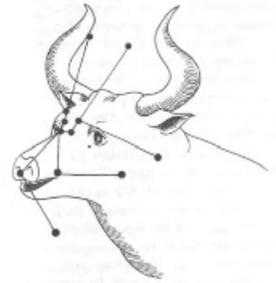
Pisces



Aries



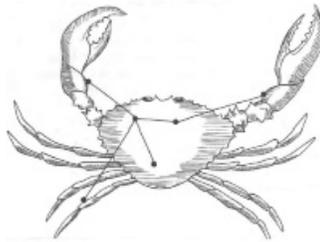
Taurus



Gemini



Cancer



Leo



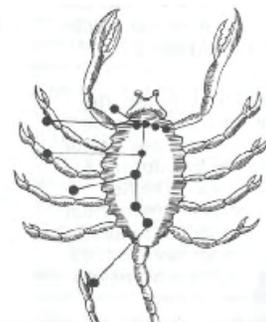
Virgo



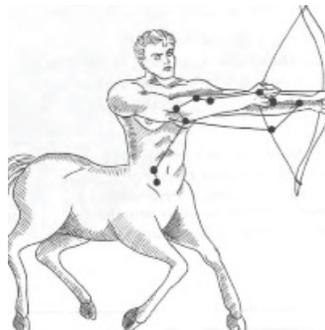
Libra



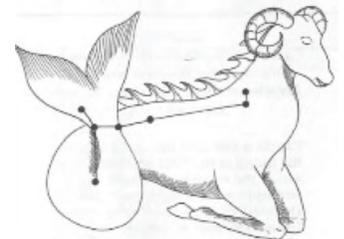
Scorpio



Sagittarius



Capricorn



ZODIAC MYTHS

Aquarius: Ganymedes, a handsome Trojan prince who was brought to Zeus by an eagle. He served as cup-bearer of the Gods. He is portrayed as the god of homosexual love, and resides in this constellation.

Pisces: The Ichthyas are Syrian river fish known for saving Aphrodite and Eros from the monster Typhoeus. They also assisted in Aphrodite's birth from sea foam, and reside in this constellation.

Aries: Crius Chrysomallus was a golden-fleeced, flying ram who rescued Phrixus and Helle from being sacrificed to the gods. His fleece was also the goal of Jason and the Argonauts' quest. The ram was placed in the heavens as the constellation Aries.

Taurus: The Cretan Bull was sent from the ocean by Poseidon. Hercules was sent to fetch this bull as one of his Twelve Labors. The gods placed this bull in the stars as the constellation Taurus.

Gemini: The Dioscuri were twin mortal princes born to Queen Leda by Zeus and King Tyndareus. The twins were placed in the sky as the constellation Gemini, and spend their time split between the heaven and the underworld, which is why they are only visible for six months of the year.

Cancer: Carcinus was a massive crab that helped the Hydra in its battle with Hercules. Hercules crushed the crab beneath his foot, but Hera rewarded it by placing it in the sky as the constellation Cancer.

Leo: The Nemean Lion had a hide invincible to weapons. Hercules was sent to kill it, which he did by wrestling. He skinned it to make a lion skin cape, which he wore often. Hera placed the lion in the sky as the constellation Leo.

Virgo: Astraea was a virgin-goddess of justice who dwelt with mankind on Earth during the Golden Age. When the lawlessness of the Bronze Age ensued, Zeus put her in the skies as the constellation Virgo.

Libra: Libra is the only zodiac constellation that represents an object rather than a character. Libra is a set of scales used by Greek goddess of justice, Astraea, who became the constellation Virgo.

Scorpio: Scorpius was a giant scorpion sent by Gaia to kill Orion after he threatened to kill all the animals of the world. Both Scorpius and Orion were put in the sky as constellations, but are never seen at the same time.

Sagittarius: Chiron was the oldest son of the Titan Kronos and a half-brother of Zeus. He was accidentally wounded by Hercules in a battle, and his wound poisoned by Hydra-venom caused him horrible pain. He relinquished his immortality and was placed by Zeus in the sky as the constellation Sagittarius.

Capricorn: Aegipan was a goat-legged Panes. As he fled from the monster Typhoeus, he assumed the form of a fish-tailed goat. As a reward for his service to Zeus throughout his life, he was placed among the stars as the constellation Capricorn.