

Chapter One: Constellations

I: Ursa Major; and II: Ursa Minor

a) Usually, these are called *Carul Mare* (the Great Chariot) and *Carul Mic* (the Little Chariot). The four stars which form the trapeziums in each are called *Roatele Carului* (the Chariot Wheels), and the remaining three are *Proțapul* (the Shaft), or *Tânjala Carului* (the Slow Chariot Shaft), or *Oiștea* (the Axle). In other instances, they are called *Ursul Mare* (the Great Bear) and *Ursul Mic* (the Little Bear), the trapeziums being *Trupul Ursului* (the Bear's Body), and the three separate stars *Coada Ursului* (the Bear's Tail). The Little Chariot is also called *Plușorul* (the Tiny Plough) or *Grapa* (the Harrow).

The peasants have grasped the important idea that the two Chariots are always to the North, and many of them use these as a direction guide at night.

b) Polaris is sometimes called *Împăratul* (the Emperor), and at other times *Candela Cerului* (the Sky's Votive Light), because it is a comparatively immobile star with little diurnal movement, and it is the most luminous star in that part of the sky.

Polaris is also sometimes called *Stâlpul* (the Pillar) or *Steajărul de la Arie* (the Stake from a Horse-Threshing Area), which means the peasants have the understanding of Polaris' fixity, thinking that the sky revolves around this star, like the horses around the stake while threshing.

c) Other peasants called Polaris *Steaua Ciobanului* (the Shepherd's Star), because it is a guide for shepherds in the night. However, the Shepherd's Star is also a name given to the planet Venus when it is *Luceafărul de Seară* (the Evening Star), as is also found in France.

d) In the Great Chariot, near the second star in the Shaft, there is a small star called Alcor or Saidac in astronomy. *Saidac* is an Arabic word which means "trial", because it was used by the Arabs to determine the clarity of the atmosphere. The Romanian peasants call this star *Cărașul* (the Carter), who drives the oxen of the Chariot; other peasants call it *Cățelusa* (the Little Bitch), which accompanies the Chariot, and she sometimes has the name *Paloșchița* (which is a Slavic name that simply means "Little Bitch"). However, many of the peasants also see *Cățelusa* as the star near the Chariot Wheel, where the Shaft begins [which may be Alioth (ε Ursæ Majoris) or more likely the faint star near it (78 Ursæ Majoris)].

Sometimes *Cărașul* is called *Ucișă-l Toaca* (He Who Will Be Killed By The Bell-Board) or *Ucișă-l Crucea* (He Who Will Be Killed By The Cross) - who is the Devil - driving the oxen of the Chariot. Later, after we have looked at all the peasant constellations, we will find out more about this name in the Romanian Sky Myth.

Finally, the Carter can be called *Văcarul Mic* (the Little Herdsman), who drives *Șapte Boi* (the Seven Oxen), which are the seven stars of this constellation.

e) Usually, the Chariots are formed from the four Wheels and the Shaft; but some of the peasants imagine the four Wheels as the Chariot's body, and the next two stars are the Oxen of the Chariot. Polaris, the last star in the Little Chariot remains as the Sky's Votive Light or the Pillar, as we saw earlier, while the final star of the Great Chariot becomes *Ursul* (the Bear) or *Lupul* (the Wolf). The oxen of the Great Chariot are afraid of whichever one he is, and try to run away from him. We will see how in the Romanian Sky Myth.

f) There is a beautiful legend about the Big Chariot, which runs as follows: *A man called Pepelea had a wager with God that he could push the Great Chariot as far as the Milky Way. However, when Pepelea pushed the Great Chariot, God moved the Milky Way, and thus Pepelea lost the bet. For what can a man do against God?*

This myth epitomizes the rotation of the Chariot and the Milky Way around the celestial Pole, as if the sky was a single piece.

Another myth explains the same thing and also accounts for why the Chariot has its shaft awry: *The Great Chariot, which has four wheels and three pair of oxen* (every star of the Shaft is here imagined as a couple of oxen), *climbed up a hill. At the top, God said to the Carter, "Up hill, up hill with God's help". But the Carter answered*

him, "With or without God, I am at the top". Then God, in order to humble the man, made the oxen go backwards, damaging a wheel. Ever since, the Chariot has always rounded the Pole backwards.

g) Very important evidence for the Romano-Dacian origins of the Romanian star patterns is found in the way the peasants explain the use of these Chariots. They say that the Emperor Trajan put in the Great Chariot the slaves from Dacia that he had conquered, to carry them to Rome, and he set their chiefs in the Little Chariot. Paloșchița is then Trajan's bitch.

However, other peasants said that Yahweh from the Bible, transported his treasures in the Great Chariot and then buried them. Afterwards, he climbed up into the sky in the Little Chariot.

h) The Romanian people also call the constellations Auriga and Perseus chariots. Auriga is *Carul lui Dumnezeu* (God's Chariot), because at the world's end, Jesus Christ will transport all the righteous men to Heaven in this Chariot. Perseus is *Carul Dracului* (the Devil's Chariot), because after Christ's Judgement, He will send all the sinful men to Hell in this second Chariot. "Heaven and Hell are in the sky", the peasants say.

i) Obviously, the Great Chariot must be one of the first constellations imagined by man, because it is always visible in the same part of the sky, and its stars are luminous. The poet Virgil thinks in his "Georgics" that the first constellations developed would be the Great Chariot (which he calls Lycaon's Bear), the Pleiades and the Hyades.

In describing the appearance of Achilles' shield, Homer speaks of the Pleiades, Hyades, Orion and the Bear or Chariot, which latter is the only one that does not bathe in the Ocean, that is, it does not set.

Additionally, Canis Major with the star Sirius, Taurus with the star Aldebaran, and Boötes with the star Arcturus, must be of this same early date.

In all probability, the name "Chariot" predates the term "Ursa Major", as being the most popular one with all peoples at all times, and tales were invented to try to explain the name of the Great Bear that only appeared later.

In mythology, Ursa Major is the nymph Callisto, Lycaon's daughter, King of Arcadia, and Ursa Minor is her dog, called *Cynosure* by the Phoenicians, which means "the dog's tail". Here is the relevant myth: *The sky god Zeus, having Hera (Juno) as his wife, but loving many other women too, seduced Callisto, who became Arcas' mother. Her protectress, the goddess Artemis (Diana) banished Callisto for this sin; but Zeus honoured Callisto and Arcas, lifting them up into the sky. Callisto took her dog as a companion, but the jealous goddess Hera transformed Callisto and her dog into two bears, and Arcas became Boötes.*

In his "Metamorphoses", the poet Ovid considered that Zeus transformed Callisto into a bear on Earth, trying to hide the truth from Hera. One day, Arcas was out hunting, and thought his mother was really a bear. He tried to kill her, but Zeus appeared in time to save her, and set them both in the sky, where Arcas became *Arctophylax*, that is, the guardian of the bear. Then Hera, observing the stars that comprised Ursa Major and Ursa Minor, asked the sea gods to always leave them in the sky, and never to let them sink into the Ocean.

Later, the seven stars of Ursa Major were looked on as seven oxen grazing the sky's fields. Thus, this constellation became *Septem Triones* for the Romans, and its guardian became the bear-watchman, *Boötes*.

Ursa Minor seems to be a constellation developed after the Great Chariot. In the 6th century B.C., Thales called it "the Little Bear", and some three centuries after Thales, Aratus observed that the Little Bear was also called the Little Chariot because of its resemblance to the Great Bear.

In other legends, the Little Bear was seen as Arcas, transformed into a bear, like his mother.

There is no constellation more universal than Ursa Major, because no other can have impressed the early observers so much.

The ancient Greeks called Ursa Major *Helice*, because of its turning around the Pole, to which it was nearer some 3000-4000 years ago. Some 4000 years ago [actually c.3000 B.C.], the Pole Star was the star α Draconis, far closer to Ursa Major than Polaris is now. Later, it became called Ursa, perhaps because the bear was the sole animal known by the ancients in the polar regions.

The Gauls called it "Wild Boar", the French knew it as "David's Chariot" or "the Pan", and the last western bards from the Middle Ages sang of it as "Arthur's Chariot". The Egyptians called it "Hippopotamus" (Horus-Apollo).

Atanase Kircher, the famous German Jesuit mathematician, physicist, orientalist and philologist (1602-1680), called the trapezium of four stars "Lazarus' Coffin", and the three others "Mary, Martha and Magdalena". This name must have had an oriental influence, because the Arabs also called these stars "the Coffin and the Family Which Follows After It". Schiller, wanting to Christianize the sky, called it "Saint Peter's Boat". The Chinese called it *Pih-Tou*, a kind of measuring instrument for wheat, like a half bushel, or an old cup, the four trapezium stars being the half bushel or cup, and the three others "the Handle", but later they called it *Ti-Tshe*, that is "the Sovereign's Chariot".

From "Bear", "Arctos" in Greek, and from "Septem Triones", the Northern Pole was called *Arctic*, or *Septentrional*, which means Ursa Major was considered the chief constellation of this circumpolar region from early times.

Ursa Minor was also called "the Phoenician Bear", because the Phoenicians were the first to remark its fixity in the northern sky, and used it as a guide on the sea, a fact which assured their supremacy over the Mediterranean trade routes for 1000 years. Around 3000 years ago, the Polar Star was the *vita* star of Ursa Minor, the guide for the Phoenicians. This star was called Kochab later, from the Arabic name *Kochab-al-Shemali*, that is, "the Northern Star".

The Chinese impression was that Polaris was a star that dominated the sky; thus they called it "The Great Sovereign of the Sky", just as the Romanians called it "The Emperor". The other stars of Ursa Minor were given names based on the Chinese Imperial Court - the Sovereign Star, the Imperial Prince, etc. - and we saw earlier that Ursa Minor was their Sovereign's Chariot.

Finally, I observe that the star Alcor was considered by the Latins to be the Carter too, like the Romanians, but imagined as a child. Afterwards it became "the Colt", who always stays near his mother.

III: The Dragon

This is normally called *Balaurul* (the Dragon, or Golden Serpent) but it is not seen as a darting snake; it is considered to be more like the *Zmeu* from the popular ballads. Its two trapeziums are called *Încolăcitura* or *Colacul* (the Coil or the Twist), in its middle, and *Capul Balaurului* (the Balaur's Head) at one end.

The *Zmeu* from the ballads is a being from "other space", *taramul celalalt*, another dimension. He is a kind of man, but unlike others. He has skin like a snake's hide, and he has a very long tail, giving him much the appearance of a serpent. He can fly in the air and is sometimes nicknamed "the Flying Being". When he wishes, the *Zmeu* can take off his hide, especially when he is alone with his wife, normally an earthly girl.

Credulous to stupid, the *zmei* are hoaxed by waggish men in many tales, but they are famous for their inconceivable strength, which makes them invincible and dreadful. Only the brave *Feți-Frumoși* (Beautiful Boys) are able to fight with, and even defeat, them, but the combat is very difficult, and they often have to receive wonderful assistance, such as the raven who sprinkled one *Făt-Frumos* with water. Enervated and refreshed by this, the hero finally felled the *Zmeu*.

Here is a tale about the constellation *Balaurul* from the Mănăstirea Bistrița village in the Neamț County of Romania: *The Dragon is called Balaurul. When the great rains and storms are unleashed, the Balaur revives and gambols among the clouds. When the clouds are thin, the Balaur can fall to the Earth. In olden times, a Balaur fell on a place called Balaur Hill, and he lay there for a long time, slowly rotting away. His length and thickness were very great, his skeleton was gigantic, and one of his ribs was two royal palms [approximately 55 cm] in breadth.*

In astronomy, the Dragon from this constellation is the mythological serpent, the guardian of the golden apple tree in the Garden of the Hesperides. This monster was killed by Heracles, and the two were placed in the sky, Heracles being imagined with his right knee on the Earth and his left foot on the Dragon's head, but this explanation seems only to have been thought up later.

For the ancient Greeks, Apollo was frequently mixed up with Heracles, both of them being solar gods, Apollo generally representing the sunbeams, and Heracles the beams of the rising sun, so Heracles was practically a variant of Apollo. In mythology, Apollo killed the terrible dragon Python with his arrows, and

at Apollo's birth, his father Zeus, the sky god, adorned him with a golden crown, gave him a lyre and a chariot drawn by swans, and sent him to Delphi near the Castalian Fountain, the fountain of poetry and prophecy, to herald the oracles. Considering that Apollo was later replaced by Heracles, this myth would account for the appearance in the sky of the constellations Hercules, Draco, Sagitta, Lyra, Corona, the Chariot, Cygnus and the Fountain [α or γ Cygni] (though this may also have been an early name for Pegasus), which are some of the constellations around the Pole. In the same region are also the two Ursæ, and Boötes, constellations connected to another son of Zeus, Arcas, as we saw earlier under Ursa Major and Ursa Minor. As we shall discover later, the constellation Delphinus can be connected to Apollo too, while the constellations of Aquila and Auriga (with the star Capella) are linked directly to Zeus, so all of this region near the pole would have been the celestial territory of the sky's god. I have not yet mentioned Perseus (another son of Zeus) and the constellations Perseus, Andromeda, Cepheus, Cassiopeia and Pegasus, all of them connected with Andromeda's myth, because it seems these constellations were created later, when Apollo was already mixed up with Heracles.

It is true that I have not seen these things written anywhere, but it seems to me that they appear written in the sky!

IV: Hercules

Generally, the Romanians call this constellation *Omul* (the Man), and in the people's imagination he is a lofty hero, a *Făt-Frumos* (Beautiful Boy), who was the Hercules of Roman myths, as we will see in the Romanian Sky Myth, in which the Man fights with the Devil, and worsts him.

The mythological aspects of Hercules I discussed when I described the constellation Draco.

V: Lyra

This is called *Ciobanul cu Oile* (the Shepherd with His Sheep), the star Vega being the Shepherd, and the four stars which seem to follow him, forming a quadrilateral, being the Sheep. A popular expression is: *In the days of Lent or Advent, the people can eat cheese only after the Shepherd's rising*. "The Shepherd is seen in the sky until sunrise", say the peasants. The star Vega is also called *Luceafărul cel Mare de Miezul Noptii* (the Great Star of Midnight), or *Luceafărul cel Frumos* (the Beautiful Star), or *Regina Stelelor* (the Stars' Queen), because the stars have their leader, just like people on Earth. This is like the Lord's Prayer; "as in the heavens above, so on the earth below".

The name Lyra in astronomy may be due to its form. The quadrilateral formed from the four stars can be imagined as a musical instrument, like the lyre, guitar or harp, with the star Vega being the fingerboard or neck of the instrument. The reason for this constellation being in the sky we saw in the earlier description of Draco, although it is also considered as Orpheus' lyre in mythology. The constellation Lyra was called the Turtle in the past, because ancient lyres were made from the shells of turtles. It is possible that its name came to be thus because of the form of the constellation, the star Vega imagined as the head of the Turtle, and the four stars its four feet.

Later, this lyre was perceived as a diving eagle, the name Vega deriving from the Arabic *Waki*, which means "The Swooping Eagle", in order to distinguish this constellation from that of *Al-Nasr Al-Tair*, that is "The Flying Eagle", which determined the name of the star Altair in the constellation Aquila.

VI: Cygnus

This star pattern is usually called *Crucea* (the Cross), or *Crucea Mare* (the Great Cross), or *Crucea Miezului Noptii* (the Midnight Cross).

In the popular imagination, this is the Cross on which Jesus Christ was crucified. Thus when the peasants see it in the night sky, they cross themselves, saying that Christ showed Himself to them.

Other peasants call it *Fata Mare cu Cobilița* (the Great Maiden with a Yoke), or *Coromâsla* (the Girl), both Girls being imagined with their heads pointing towards Polaris.

Finally, other peasants see in this constellation only *Cobilița Ciobanului* (the Shepherd's Yoke), because "it rises and sets at the same time as the Shepherd" [Vega]. The star in the middle of the Cross, called Sadir in astronomy, is named by the peasants *Fântâna* (the Fountain), or *Fântâna din Răscruci* (the Fountain of the Crossroads), and the Shepherd's Yoke is propped up by it. Sometimes the peasants use this same name for the star Deneb [α Cygni], because it is brighter.

The origin of the name for Cygnus as the Swan is not very clear. It may possibly be inspired by the brighter, white part of the Milky Way where Cygnus is, or the Swan may be the metamorphosis Zeus used to conquer Leda.

I gave my ideas concerning this constellation when I related the myth of Apollo's birth, under the constellation Draco.

Before finishing with the constellation of Cygnus, I must remark that the Romanian peasants see another Cross in the astronomical constellation Delphinus; another Great Maiden with a Yoke, *Fata de Împărat* (the Emperor's Daughter), formed by three stars from the constellation Aquila; and another Great Maiden, without a yoke, *Fata Mare din Horă* (the Great Maiden from the Hora). This Maiden from the Hora is the star γ in the constellation Corona Borealis, which constellation is called *Hora* (the Ring Dance) by the peasants.

VII: Delphinus

As I just mentioned under Cygnus, this is also called a Cross, *Crucea Mică* (the Little Cross). The Arabs too called it *Al-Salib*, which means "the Cross".

However, its astronomical appearance is disputed. In its most important symbolic form, it is Apollo disguised as a dolphin attacking a ship which was carrying Cretans from Knossos, whom he afterwards made Priests in his Pythian sanctuary at Delphi.

So, this constellation's aspect can be equally imagined as a Fish or Dolphin or as a Cross, "the hand cross made by the priests" [as in a blessing], as a Romanian peasant described it to me.

VIII: Aquila

Aquila is called *Vulturul* (the Eagle) or *Vulturul Domnului* (God's Eagle). More generally, the peasants form a constellation from the star Altair and the two brighter stars to either side of it, which they call *Fata de Împărat cu Cobilița* (the Emperor's Daughter with a Yoke), where Altair is the girl and the other two stars are the Hooks of the Yoke, that support the pails in which the Emperor's Daughter carries water in order to refresh the souls of the sinful dead who are in Hell.

The ancients called this constellation "the Eagle" because of the two stars which lie laterally to either side of the star Altair, stars which very readily lead to imagining they are two wings that carry Altair aloft. This was Zeus' Eagle, but it has become God's Eagle in Romania.

I have already told of the origins of Altair's name, in the description of the constellation Lyra.

IX: Cepheus

This is known as *Coasa* (the Scythe). The line between the stars α and γ forms *Coporâia* or *Coporâșca*, that is *Coada Coasei* (the Scythe's Tail). The star *vita* alone is *Mânerul Coporâii* (the Tail Handle - of the Scythe); the stars μ , ζ and δ form *Fierul Coasei* (the Scythe's Iron Blade).

X: Perseus

Perseus is called *Căpățâna* (the Skull) or, as I said under the description of the Ursæ, *Carul Dracului* (the Devil's Chariot).

Some peasants call it *Barda* (the Axe). Here, the line between the stars α (the brightest star in Perseus) and *vita* (called Algol astronomically) forms *Coada Bardei* (the Axe's Tail), while α on its own is *Muchia Bardei* (the Axe's Edge). The part oriented towards Cassiopeia is *Gura Bardei* (the Axe's Tongue). A further alternative name for Perseus is *Toporul* (the Little Axe).

Algol is the astronomical name for the star which represents Medusa's Head, deriving from the Arabic *Al-ghul*, which means the Monster or the Devil, and on many star-charts, Perseus is called the Devil's-Head Bearer. This remembrance of Medusa's Head is also found in the Romanian peasants' names of the Skull or the Devil's Chariot.

XI: Cassiopeia

This constellation is named *Scaunul lui Dumnezeu* (God's Chair). Its six principal stars produce the image of a chair. In astronomical mythology, Cassiopeia sits on a chair or a throne, although her husband Cepheus stands. Another peasant name for it is *Mănăstirea* (the Monastery), because, of course, a monastery is also God's Seat or Chair.

XII: Andromeda

Andromeda is *Jgheabul Puțului* (the Drain of the Well), the Well itself being the astronomical constellation of Pegasus, discussed next.

XIII: Pegasus

Considering only the four stars which form the Great Square of Pegasus, this is called *Toaca* (the Bell Board), which was imagined as a bell-board hung beside the nearby Monastery (Cassiopeia).

However, Pegasus and Andromeda together are called *Puțul cu Jgheab* (the Well with a Drain), the four stars of Pegasus' Square being the corners of the Well's edges, with Andromeda as the Drain.

It is possible that this name is a memory of *Hippocrene*, which means the Horse's Spring, a spring that appeared from a rock on Mount Helicon, after the winged horse Pegasus had struck it with his hoof. It may be the Pyrenean spring, from which Pegasus drank, or just the Castalian spring.

Pegasus is also called *Gavădul Mic* (the Little Horse-Stud), *Gavădul Mare* (the Great Horse-Stud) being the constellation Leo, although Leo is more commonly known as *Calul* (the Horse) by the Romanian people.

Curiously, in the Chinese celestial sphere, this region is called *T'ien-Kiu*, that is, the Celestial Stable, because these stars were in conjunction with the Sun in springtime, when the stables were cleaned in China. This concept was probably the same for the Greeks, with Pegasus superposed later in order to complete Andromeda's myth. This idea was later assimilated by the Romans, and ultimately the Romanians, as a stud.

The myth about the constellations Cepheus, Perseus, Cassiopeia, Andromeda and Pegasus is as follows: *Cassiopeia, Cepheus' wife (Cepheus was Ethiopia's king), although she was black, considered herself more beautiful than the Nereids, the white nymphs of the sea. They felt offended by the crazy pretensions of Cassiopeia, and asked Poseidon (Neptune) to revenge them. Submissively, Poseidon flooded the country, and sent to it a terrible marine monster, which ate the people and their herds. The Oracle of Ammon announced the way to deliverance: Andromeda must be sacrificed as prey for the monster. So, Cepheus chained his daughter to a stone near the sea, but Perseus, who was passing, fell in love with the beautiful maiden, and tried to save her. Riding Pegasus, Perseus showed Medusa's head to the monster, which died immediately. To remember these events, all these characters were placed in the sky, including Pegasus and Medusa's head (the star Algol).*

XIV: Auriga

Usually, this is called *Vizitiul* (the Charioteer), or *Trăsura* (the Carriage), or *Surugiul* (the Coachman), while the star Capella is *Capra* (the She-Goat), and the three stars near the She-Goat are *Iezii Caprei* (the She-Goat's Kids), which is also their astronomical name, the Kids.

However, the three Kid-stars are also considered a distinct constellation, called *Sfredelul Mic* or *Burghiul* (the Little Auger) or *Sfredelul Pământului* (the Earth's Auger).

Other names for the whole constellation of Auriga are *Tarcul* (the Goat Fold), or *Carul lui Dumnezeu* (God's Chariot), as I said above under the two Ursæ.

The ancient Greeks saw in the constellation Auriga Erichthonius, the king of Athens, who invented the concept of harnessing horses to a chariot. In the "Almagest" of Claudius Ptolemæus, this constellation is

called *Heniochus*, which simply means "Charioteer". The Charioteer was pictured from early times with a horse-whip and reins in his hands, which gave birth to the Latin name of *Tenens Habenas* (the Rein-Holder). He carried the She-Goat and her recently-born Kids on his left arm. The She-Goat is Amaltheia, who suckled Zeus.

It is difficult to say what associated the Charioteer with the She-Goat.

The Romanian people see three Kids, one in every star, but astronomical depictions show the two close stars as on the hips of two Kids, and the third star is on the head of the Kid on the right.

XV: Boötes

Boötes is called *Văcarul* (the Herdsman). I discussed his origins under the Ursæ earlier.

XVI: Corona Borealis

This is normally called *Hora* (the Ring Dance), as I already said under the constellation Cygnus. The star Gemma [α Coronæ Borealis] is the *Fata Mare din Horă* (the Great Maiden in the Ring Dance), and the two smallest stars from the Ring [probably δ and ι Coronæ Borealis] are called *Lăutarii* (the Singers).

In other cases, Corona Borealis is known as *Casa cu Ograda* (the House with a Courtyard), Gemma being the House, and the remaining stars from the circle being the Courtyard. A further name is *Coliba* or *Cociorva* (the Hut).

The myth concerning this constellation is: *Ariadne, King Minos' daughter, having been abandoned by Theseus on the sea-shore, was comforted there by Dionysus (Bacchus), who married her, offering her a wonderful crown. This crown, or only its precious stones, was later placed in the sky.* The Chinese call Corona the Shell with Pearls; curiously the Romans called Gemma "the Pearl" too, that is, the pearl of the crown.

XVII: Ophiuchus and Serpens

An early name for this star-pattern was *Șarpele* (the Serpent), in which is seen the snake that tempted Eve. This snake is the Devil, *Dracul* in Romanian, whose name's origin is from the Greek *drakon*, that is "serpent", a word which became *draco* for the Latin speakers, and ultimately *dracul* with the Romanians. More generally, the constellation is called *Calea Rătăciților* (the Road of the Lost Men), a very apt name because it meanders in all directions. Onto this Road, the sinful people will stray, afraid of the second coming of Christ and His judgement.

XVIII: Pisces

This constellation is *Peștii* (the Fishes), or *Crapii* (the Carp), but in either case, it represents the two fishes used by Christ to feed the five thousand.

In astronomical mythology, they are the fish disguises used by Venus (Aphrodite) and Cupid (Eros) to escape from Typhon's attack, or the two dolphins which carried Amphitrite to Poseidon (Neptune), to become his wife.

XIX: Aries

Aries is called *Berbecul* (the Ram), but the peasants see only his "cornel trees" [horns].

The Romans called Aries *Jupiter-Ammon*, and the Greeks *Chrysomallus*, the ram who possessed the golden fleece, who was sacrificed to Zeus and then transported into the night sky. Aries is also the *Apollo Corneus* of the Dorians, and which in their expeditions went in the vanguard, just as a ram would lead a flock, or as the celestial Ram went before the other Zodiacal constellations. This latter idea seems to be the better one, knowing that the Ram was not one of the first constellations to be imagined in the sky. Aries was seen to contain the vernal equinox, and so preceded the rest of the Zodiacal constellations, like a ram before a flock.

XX: Taurus; XXI: The Pleiades; and XXII: The Hyades

a) The people call this *Taurul* (the Bull), or *Gonitorul* (the Running Bull), referring to the stellar triangle which seems to form the face, or the head, of a bull.

The star Aldebaran is considered a major star by the peasants, and they call it *Lucașfărul Porcesc* (the Bright Star of the Pig), or *Porcarul* (the Swineherd), because when it rises, the swine wake and grunt, signalling that day is approaching. It is also called *Deșteptătorul* (the Alarm Clock), because at its rising, the cockerels begin crowing at the day's start. Thus the peasants think that Aldebaran was put especially into the sky as a herald; the workers must wake, the ghosts must return to their graves, and the evil spirits must disappear from the earth when it appears.

b) The Pleiades are formed into a separate constellation by the people, called *Cloșca cu Pui* (the Hatching Hen with Her Chicks), or *Găina* (the Hen).

The Hatching Hen is the most important constellation for the peasants, and they always know where to look for it. In the winter months, the Hatching Hen is their night clock, and they measure time before day-break by this constellation's height in the sky. The name derives from the physical shape of the Pleiades, because the Hatching Hen walks first, followed by Her Chicks.

There are some special peasant beliefs about the Hatching Hen. He who sees it rising on Great Sunday [the first Sunday after Easter] will have good luck. He who sees it rising every day before Saint Peter's Day [June 29] will always be on-time for all events. When the Hatching Hen appears in the sky at Dagiagea [June 24, Saint John the Baptist's Day], she has the power to make the maize grow.

Sometimes the Pleiades are called "the Stars of the Shepherd".

c) The Hyades also form a distinct constellation for the people, called *Vierii* (the Boars), *Porcii* (the Swine), or *Scroafa cu Purcei* (the Sow with Her Piglets).

The Romans too called the Hyades *Suculae* (Little Pigs), in accordance with the Greek *Siades*.

d) The Pleiades are very attractive, and were considered an important group from the earliest times. Camille Flammarion wrote of them in his observational sky treasury "Les Etoiles" as follows:

Before the solar year was known, the first people regulated their calendar from the stars. The year began with the Pleiades' rising at dawn in the springtime, and the winter began with their rising at twilight in the autumn; the year was divided into two parts, and their appearance in November was saluted with a holiday to the dead, which is still kept today. The ancient Egyptians called November Athor-Aye, the Pleiades' Month, or Athor, and it was the same with the Chaldeans and the Jews. A similar division of the year was made by the Polynesians: one half of their year was called "Matarii i nia", Pleiades Up, and the second half "Matarii i raro", Pleiades Down.

*The Australian aborigines identically celebrate in November "Mormodilek", or "the Pleiades". The same habit is found in Mexico and Peru. The great pyramid at Gizeh is oriented to the four cardinal points (it probably served as an observatory) and has two interior galleries, the first directed to the north (to the Polar Star of four thousand years ago, α Draconis), the second pointing to the south at the Pleiades' highest elevation, which decided the year's beginning. For the ancient Greeks, Hesiod said agricultural works followed the Pleiades' appearance, while for the ancient Latins, they were called *Vergiliæ*, the Spring Stars.*

The vernal equinoctial colure, which passes near the star α Andromedæ today, passed through the Pleiades four thousand years ago.

The Chinese Astronomical Annals retain an observation of this star cluster, made in 2357 B.C., as showing the vernal equinox.

In 570 B.C., Anaximander fixed their setting time at dawn, 29 days after the autumnal equinox. Some 3000 years ago, the navigators awaited the moment of the Pleiades' rising in springtime before embarking upon their sea journeys, and the etymologists have decided that the name of the Pleiades derives from "plein" = navigator.

It is more probable that it derives simply from "pleias" = a crowd, however.

I continue to observe that today only six stars are seen well in the Pleiades. The ancients counted seven, and Ovid said that the seventh star ran away during the time of the Trojan Wars. However, those with strong eyesight can distinguish 10, or even 14, stars. In reality, there are more than 1000.

The French peasants also call this ball of stars the Hatching Hen with Her Chicks, like the Romanians, but they have another name for them too, "the Bunch of Grapes". Nine centuries ago, the Arabs called them *Al-sama ma banat'hi*, the Celestial Hatching Hen with Her Chicks. The star Aldebaran also gets its name from the Arabic *Al-debaran*, That Which Follows Closely, because it follows the Pleiades. Sometimes the Romans called it *Palilicium*, because the feast of Pales (the Palilia) was celebrated after this star's rising. The Arabs also called it the Eye of the Bull, and the Jews, the Eye of God.

The constellation Taurus played an important role in the ancient mythologies. To the Egyptians, it was the ox Apis; to the ancient Greeks, and especially the Cretans, it was the god Asterios, which symbolized Zeus as the bull abducting Europe. For the Romans, it was visualised as the same.

This constellation must be the oldest in the Zodiac. The others were created gradually, depending on their brightness and importance. In fact Cammille Flammarion considered that observational astronomy appeared when the vernal equinoctial colure coincided with the star Aldebaran, in almost 3000 B.C. Later, the individual Zodiacal constellations were re-united into a single, theoretically-standardized belt of the sky, which was divided into twelve parts or signs, each of which was traversed by the Sun, month-by-month during the year.

The order for the moulding of these Zodiacal constellations seems to be: Taurus, Gemini, Leo, Virgo, Scorpius, Sagittarius, Pisces, Cancer, Aries, Capricornus, Aquarius and Libra.

XXIII: Gemini

This large constellation is reduced to just the two principal stars by the peasants, called Castor and Pollux in astronomy. The Romanian peasants know them as *Frații* (the Brothers), or *Gemenii* (the Twin Brothers); although for them, they are not Castor and Pollux, but Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome.

Pollux is also called *Comoara* (the Treasure Chest), or *Comoara lui Iov* (Yahweh's Treasure Chest), and there is a myth about this treasure, which will be related when I come on to discuss the Great Auger in Orion below.

The ancient peoples called Gemini the *Dioscuri*, that is Zeus' sons. Sometimes they were known as Castor and Pollux, but at others they were Apollo and Hercules. The Dioscuri cult was spread throughout the whole of Greece and Italy. Castor and Pollux were the sons of Zeus, who had metamorphosed into a swan to lie with their mother Leda, and the twin brothers were born from the same egg. The glowing Aurora was born from another of Leda's eggs. Castor and Pollux were the gods who presided over hospitality and who quietened storms. Curiously, the Austral Tasmanian race consider Castor and Pollux as Two Negroes, the inventors of fire.

XXIV: Cancer

This is called *Racul* (the Crayfish), and it has the following myth: *When Christ was crucified, his torturers wanted to thrust four spikes into His body, two in His palms, a third through both His feet together, and a fourth, longer, one through His navel. But the Crayfish stole the longest spike, and took it far away, walking backwards. From that time, the Saviour blessed the Crayfish to be eaten on all the days of the year without restrictions. In order to keep alive the memory of its action, the Saviour decided that the Crayfish should walk backwards forever, and set it in the sky.*

In astronomical mythology, the Crayfish was sent by Hera to bite Heracles when he fought with the Hydra, but the Crayfish was killed by Heracles, and placed in the sky by Hera.

XXV: Leo

Leo is rarely called *Leul* (the Lion). Instead, it is usually known as *Calul* (the Horse). It is also named *Gavădul Mare* (the Great Horse-Stud); *Gavădul Mic* (the Little Horse-Stud) is Pegasus, as I said earlier.

In mythology, Leo seems to be the apotheosis of the lion killed by Heracles in the Nemean Forest. In the Middle Ages, it was the Lion of Judah's tribe, or Daniel's lion from the den.

The star Regulus was known to the Greeks as *Basilicus*, that is the Little King, because men born under this star's influence were considered to have a royal origin. The Arabs called Regulus *Al-maliki*, which means "the Royal Star". Copernicus latinized the "Little King" as *Regulus*, which is also called the Lion's Heart.

XXVI: *Virgo*

The people call it *Fecioara* (the Virgin), who represents the Virgin Mary, the Saviour's Mother. The star Spica, being very white, indicates the Maiden's spotlessly clean heart.

The ancient Greeks called this constellation *Parthenos* (Athene), after their eternal virgin goddess. For the Romans, she was Minerva, goddess of wisdom. The Romanian people retain the idea of a wise maiden in their attribution to the Virgin Mary. The myth of Arachne also remained in the Romanian people's memory in this manner: the peasants think that if someone kills a spider, God's Mother forgives him nine sins, because the spider was cursed by God's Mother as praising itself for spinning better than Her. Before this happened, the spider was a beautiful girl, and as a punishment, she was transformed into this revolting creature.

For the Romans, Virgo became in poetry Ceres, the goddess of corn sowing. She is also seen as Themis, the goddess of justice, because she has the balance of justice, that is the constellation Libra, at her feet. Alternatively, she is Astrea, daughter of Zeus and Themis, who was disgusted by men's crimes, and who went back into the heavens at the end of the Golden Age. In other cases, she is Diana from Ephesus; Isis from Egypt; Atargatis or Fortuna; Minerva or Athene; Erigone, Icarus' daughter; or Virgil's Sybil, who, carrying a branch in her hand, came down to Hades, which is beneath the northern hemisphere.

I must observe here that the changed positions of Spica and Regulus were what led Hipparchus to discover precession.

XXVII: *Libra*

This constellation is *Balanța* (the Balance), or *Cântarul* (the Scales), and Christ will weigh the facts of people's lives in them at His final judgement.

Mythologically, this balance is, as I commented under Virgo above, that of the goddess Themis, sometimes together with Astrea.

Some authors say that Libra was introduced into the Zodiac in Octavian Augustus' time, but it is known to have existed with the Egyptians three centuries before Augustus. Virgil attributes to it an origin that considers it as making the days and nights equal (at the equinox). Sometimes it is called the Roman balance, not because it was a Roman weighing instrument, but from the Arabic *rommana*, which means "weight".

Three centuries before Christ, Manetho wrote that the Scorpion's Claws had been changed into a Balance, so this constellation must be older than Manetho.

XXVIII: *Scorpius*

The peasants call this constellation *Scorpia*, that is, a female Scorpion. She has "an eye of blood and long claws"; we will see why in the Romanian sky myth.

Obviously, the Scorpion was set into the sky by a people from hotter climates, where this creature is well-known, and from where the constellation climbs much further above the horizon. However, although the Romanian peasants did not know exactly what the scorpion was, they knew it was a fierce, wild creature, with darting claws, dry and lacking in blood. Certainly, this animal greatly impressed our Roman ancestors, remaining strongly in the Romanians' memory. "Thin and bad like a scorpia", say the Romanians about a dreadful woman.

In mythology, Scorpius represents the creature that stung Orion when he followed Artemis.

Its principal star is Antares, which name means "rival to the planet Mars"; for the Greeks, Ares is the name of this same planet, the reddest body in the sky, so Antares and Mars vie with one another through their colours.

XXIX: Sagittarius

This is called *Arcașul* (the Archer), who is a Roman warrior in popular Romanian belief.

The ancient Egyptian and Greek traditions tell of a kind of monster, half man, half horse, with the body, feet and tail of a horse, and the hands, neck and head of a man. These creatures were called centaurs, and were believed to be very strong, and very good archers. One of them, called Cheiron, was a physician and a teacher to the gods. He was considered the inventor of the heavenly sphere, that is, the first representation of the sky on a globe for studying cosmography. The ancients seriously believed these monsters existed: the naturalist Pliny said that in his time, a centaur preserved in honey was exhibited in Rome. These things indicate that in those times there existed many speculative beliefs too.

These monsters could not have existed, because it would have been impossible for a whole race to disappear without trace. Thus we have a legend about centaurs, which was probably born when man began to ride horses. The first horsemen hunters, seen galloping and following game, using arrows and spears, would obviously have impressed those who had not yet developed the idea of horse-riding, and made them think the horsemen were unique beings.

In old depictions, the archer of this constellation is represented as a centaur with a bent, strung bow, whose arrow is aimed at the Scorpion. This centaur is thought to be Cheiron; for instance, Arago called Sagittarius the Archer, or Cheiron. Another variant holds that this archer is not a centaur, but Crotus, a famous hunter who lived on Mount Helicon, near the Muses.

XXX: Capricornus

Capricornus is known as *Tapul* (the He-Goat), or *Cornul Caprei* (the Horn of the She-Goat). A popular belief is that when lightning appears from the Horn of the She-Goat, then rain is sure to follow.

The astronomical constellation is portrayed as a mythological monster, half he-goat, half fish, with the head and feet of a he-goat, and the rest of his body and tail that of a fish.

He represents the form that Pan metamorphosed into, when he leapt into the waters of the Nile to escape from the giant Typhon.

XXXI: Aquarius

This is *Vărsătorul* (He Who Pours Out the Water).

Astronomically, this constellation represents Ganymede. In Homer's tradition, the gods hoisted Ganymede into the sky, and transported him to Olympus, to delight the eyes of the gods, and cheer their hearts, because of his beauty. He became the cup-bearer who poured nectar for Zeus and the other gods. In other traditions, Zeus disguised himself as an eagle, and abducted the beautiful Ganymede from the fields of Troy, and placed him in the sky. This explains why the constellation Aquila is above and near Aquarius.

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In concluding here the series of the Zodiacal constellations, I observe that the people call these constellations *Zodii Signs*, imagining that they are beings with the appearance suggested by their own names. Every man has a destiny depending upon the Sign under which he was born.

To complete the history of these constellations, I shall quote from "Les Etoiles" by Camille Flammarion:

An interesting astronomical point is that of the Zodiac's antiquity...

Concerning the antiquity of the Zodiac, several authors have considered it to be formed 15,000-20,000 years ago. In directly studying the sky and its history, however, we saw that the Zodiacal zone was imagined after the creation of the constellations, and the constellations had varied successive origin times. Firstly, the Moon's road was observed, and this circumference of the sky was divided into 28 parts, each representing the Moon's house on every night of the month. Afterwards, it was recognised that the planets walk along the same belt of sky, and the Sun, in his apparent

yearly travels, follows the same road... Thus it was possible to create a zone measuring 15 degrees in breadth among the pre-existent constellations that the Sun's way, or the ecliptic, traverses.

...we saw that the Pleiades played the principal role in the first calendar's creation. Since then, many thousands of years have passed since the Zodiac's route was traced by the courses of the Moon and planets; but it is not more than 3000 years since our actual Zodiac was established...

Let us note that Aldebaran in Taurus, Antares in the Scorpion, Regulus in Leo and Fomalhaut in Piscis Austrinus are almost at right-angles to one another, and divide the sky into four equal parts. These four stars, bright and remarkable, sometimes called royal stars, were venerated by the Persians around 2500 B.C. as the sky's four guardians. Then, Aldebaran, or the Bull's Eye, was at the vernal equinox as the guardian of the east; Antares, or the Scorpion's Heart, was at the autumnal equinox and was the guardian of the west; Regulus, the Lion's Heart, was at a little distance from the summer solstice point; Fomalhaut was at a short distance from the winter solstice point. These last two indicated south and north for the Persians. No doubt Chou-king, China's historical recorder, spoke of these stars when he reported that the Emperor Yao in 2357 B.C. ordered the astronomers Hi and Ho to observe the star Niao of spring, the star Ho of summer, the star Hiu of autumn, and the star Mao of winter, verifying at the same time the Sun's shadow.

XXXII, XXXIII, XXXIV and XXXV: Orion

This is a constellation to which the peasants accorded great importance, but the stars composing it are grouped differently to what we find in astronomy.

The three stars from Orion's Belt are called by the peasants *Tresfetițele*, which means the Three Saints, Vasile, Grigore and Ioan, or *Cei Trei Crai* (the Three Kings), or *Craii de la Răsărit* (the Kings from the East), who are the three wise men who came bringing gifts to Christ, or the three kings Saul, David and Solomon. They are also called *Toiege* (the Staffs), or *Cingătoarea Regelui* (the King's Belt), names which remind us of Aaron's Staff and Orion's Belt respectively, which are other astronomical variants.

Tresfetițele plus the stars Rigel, Saiph and Bellatrix form the constellation *Rarița* (the Little Plough), or *Rarițele* (the Little Ploughs), which announces the end of the night for the peasants: "Wake you up, for Rarițele has risen!" is an expression used before the maize harvest.

Other peasants reduce the whole Little Plough to just Tresfetițele, or name it *Plugul* (the Plough) or *Grebla* (the Rake).

Between Rigel and Tresfetițele, there is an arc of seven stars. These stars form *Secera* (the Sickle).

Tresfetițele and the star Betelgeuse form the constellation *Sfredelul Mare*, sometimes *Spițelnicul* or *Spițelnicul Mare* (the Great Auger), which has as its point the star Betelgeuse, while Tresfetițele forms its handle. The Great Auger is directed with its point towards the Treasure Chest, that is the star Pollux in Gemini. Here is what the peasants from Neamț and Buzău counties think of it: *At the world's end, the Great Auger will approach the Treasure Chest, and pierce it. Then, all the money of the Treasure will pour out upon the Earth, but in exchange, all the water will disappear. Suffering from thirst, the people will run to the gold and silver fallen from the Treasure Chest, thinking it is water, but they will be disappointed. Then the Antichrist (or Anti Hârs, or Anti Hârț) will appear, offering a cask of water and a chariot filled with bread for those who will submit to him. But those who trust him, drink his water and eat his bread will become even more filled with thirst and hunger. Those who refuse, and keep their belief in God, will prefer to die. Then Christ will appear to them, offering them a piece of wafer and a glass of wine, which will quench their hunger and thirst. This will be the Time of the Afterlife, and Christ will begin the Judgement of the Afterlife, or the Last Judgement.*

It is curious how sometimes fantasy is in accordance with science.

Obviously, the peasants knew thirst many times, especially while working in the fields in summer under the Sun's scorching heat, and realized how terrible would be water's absence from the Earth. However, the leap from this, to the belief that in the future the Earth will be deprived of water is really something! Science proves that the Earth as it ages has less and less water, not because the water really disappears, but because as it percolates through the Earth's crust, water hydrates the subterranean rocks, and becomes part of their composition. This is a natural process on every planet, and we have a living example in the planet Mars, the Earth's smaller and older neighbour, which cooled faster than our planet.

Another example is the Moon, which, although younger than the Earth, aged more rapidly because of its smaller dimensions. Here, however, opinions are divided, and there are certainly other causes for producing an absence of liquid water on a planet. In any eventuality, the people before science arrived foresaw this aspect through their fantasy.

In a work from Ursați, in Neamț County, there is another myth: *The peasants tell the following about the constellations of the Great Auger and the Great Chariot. In olden times, a man searched for Yahweh's Treasure Chest in the sky, and, discovering it, thrust the Auger into it; both Auger and Treasure Chest are seen today near the Slaves' Road [the Milky Way]. Then he returned home, to collect his Ox-Chariot to carry the Treasure in. But in the future, when the man returns to put the Treasure in his Chariot, then the world will change. God will drain all the waters from the Earth, and down will come a rain of silver money. The people, discovering money and not water, will burden themselves with the coins. But Saint Peter will appear in their path with a basket of wafers and a glass of water, and will offer them to the people who were not so greedy for money, but will offer nothing to those who were too greedy. The first group will be satiated forever, but the second will remain thirsty and hungry.*

The constellation Orion has always occasioned many legends.

Orion was imagined as a giant with golden armour and a bright sword, very strong, and walking with great strides on his celestial way. With his Great Dog (the constellation Canis Major) by him, he follows the other stars, especially the Pleiades. In the summer time, when he rises at daybreak together with Aurora, he was considered to be Aurora's lover.

The sailors considered him to be a son of Poseidon (Neptune), the sea god. When they saw the bright constellation Orion appearing or disappearing over the horizon, they said that the giant was stepping from one isle to another, making his way with his head in the sky and his feet in the sea.

Being invisible for part of the year, this aspect of the constellation Orion gave birth to the legends which tell of his death by Artemis' arrows, or because of the Scorpion, forced to sting him by this same Artemis.

The name of the star Betelgeuse is derived from the Arabic *Ibt-al-jauzah* (the Giant's Shoulder), and is also found as the variants Btaljause or Betelgeux. The star Rigel's name derives from the Arabic *Rijl-al-jauzah* (the Giant's Foot). *Bellatrix* has a Latin name, which means Warrior-Woman. In astrology, *Bellatrix* is the star of women orators.

XXXVI: Canis Major; and XXXVII: Canis Minor

They are called *Câinele* (the Dog) or *Dulăul* (the Mastiff), and *Cățelul* (the Little Dog) respectively. The star Sirius, the most brilliant star in the sky, in Canis Major, is called by the peasants *Zorilă* (Of the Daybreak) or *Luceafărul din Zori* (the Great Dawn Star), because when it rises at dawn and the other stars all disappear, it seems to struggle against the dawn, until full daylight arrives. Sometimes the planet Venus is also called *Zorilă*, but usually the Romanian people accord to this planet only the names *Luceafărul de Seară* (the Evening Star) and *Luceafărul de Dimineață* (the Morning Star). However, as I said before under the Ursæ, the Evening Star is also called the Shepherd's Star. The real situation is that the star Sirius appears at dawn in August, in the midst of the peasants' agricultural works.

Other peasants call Canis Minor a second Little Auger (like that in Auriga), where the star Procyon is the handle, and the constellation's second-brightest star [β Canis Minoris] is the point.

The line of Orion's belt passes south-east through Sirius and north-west through the star Aldebaran, and this makes the peasants believe that these two are *Luceferii Zorilor* (the Dawn's Great Stars), mixing them up.

The importance of the constellation Canis Major, most especially the star Sirius, makes me again resort to Camille Flammarion's "Les Etoiles":

The name of this star derives from the Greek "Seir", which essentially means "too bright", and was once applied to the Sun. Thus the adjective "seirios" became an epithet for an ardent, bright star.

The Greek word "Seir" comes from the Sanskrit "Svar", which also means "too bright".

In Sanskrit, the Sun was called Surya.

From Svar, too bright, was derived Seir, and then Sirius.

From Varuna, vault or canopy, came the name Uranos, sky, which became Uranus.

From Dyaus, luminous air, was derived Theos, the great being, and then Zeus, Deus and Dieu.

From Zeus and Pater were derived Jupiter, etc....

3285 years BC, and a century and a half before the building of Kheops' pyramid, Sirius regulated the Egyptians' calendar: its rising just before the Sun coincided with the summer solstice, and the flooding of the River Nile began with the first day of the month of Pachon (the Month of the Floods). This bright star was called Sothis (from the verb "to beam") by the Egyptians. Its role was to announce the rising tide of the River Nile, and it was epitomized as a harbinger Dog.

Homer and Hesiod saw Sirius like their ancestors from Egypt, Chaldea, Asia and China. Hesiod recommended harvesting the vines when Orion and Sirius culminated.

Sirius' appearance was at the same time the signal for the start of the great heat. Thus the name of the Dog, "Canis", and the name of the Dog Star, "Stella Canicula", became synonymous with the great heat of summer, and we see the Latin poets Virgil and Horatius recommending keeping a distance from the towns, and changing residence to the rural areas, during the days of scorching heat.

There is here a strange metamorphosis of ideas and words. The great heat does not derive from the idea of warmth, but from the concept of the dog (Latin: "canis", "caninus", "canicula"; in English: "the dog days"); the name "arctic region" does not mean cold at all, but the region of the bear. Septentrion is not so-called because it shows the direction of north, but because it recalls the seven oxen of the northern constellation....

For the most part, the ancient authors epitomized in Sirius the whole constellation of Canis Major, but today this name applies only to the one star.

This Big Dog is, as we saw earlier, the giant Orion's dog.

Concerning the Little Dog, we observe that the name of the star *Procyon* means "before the Dog", because the Egyptians very carefully awaited the rising of Sirius, the Dog. Procyon appeared before Sirius, heralding it. Finally, it became named the Little Dog, while Sirius remained the Great Dog.

XXXVIII: Cetus

Cetus is called *Chitul* (the Whale), and for the peasants, it is the monster which held Jonah in its belly for three days. They do not know exactly what Chitul is; they think it is just a big fish. In the Biblical legend of Jonah too, we see this confusion of the whale with a great fish, while the Whale from the astronomical constellation is not just a whale, but a marine monster, because the ancients did not know the whale, which lives far away in the northern polar seas. In the Middle Ages, this constellation was also called the marine monster and the sea fish.

XXXIX: Columba

This is known as *Porumbița* (the Turtle Dove), and the peasants think she is the turtle dove from Noah's Ark, who came back with the olive branch in her beak, after the Flood. It is remarkable that Columba is one of the newest constellations, but uniquely was also the same for the Romanian peasants. In the scientific literature, we find that this constellation was first imagined by the Portuguese navigators of the 15th and 16th centuries; it probably came to us through trade; or perhaps this constellation is not so new as we think!

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In finishing the constellations, I observe that the peasants also have other constellations. For instance, *Corbul* (the Raven) is probably the astronomical *Corvus*, which the peasants think was also Noah's, like the Turtle Dove, but which did not return to the Ark. *Lupăria* or *Haita de Lupi* (the Wolf-Pack) is probably *Leo Minor*, the Little Lion.

There could indeed be many more, because, although I made every effort to obtain the most precise information, I cannot be sure that I did not make errors. As an example, a notice from Botoșani in Moldavia,

Northern Romania, states that the astronomical constellation Sagitta, *Săgeata* (the Arrow) in Romanian, is called *Rază* (the Beam), but this is not confirmed by information from other Romanian regions.

The nature of the work is made, for nobody can say the last word was said.

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We have thus found that the Romanian people formed the following constellations:

I - The constellation Carul Mare (the Great Chariot), with the star Cărăușul (the Carter) or Uciță-I Toaca (He Who Will Be Killed By The Bell Board) or Uciță-I Crucea (He Who Will Be Killed By The Cross), the bitch Paloșchița, Ursul (the Bear) and Lupul (the Wolf). This constellation is also called Ursul Mare (the Great Bear) and Șapte Boi (the Seven Oxen), with the star Văcarul Mic (the Little Herdsman).

II - The constellation Carul Mic (the Little Chariot), or Ursul Mic (the Little Bear), or Plugușorul (the Tiny Plough), or Grapa (the Harrow), with the star Stâlpul (the Pillar), or Candela Cerului (the Sky's Votive Light), or Împăratul (the Emperor), or Steaua Ciobanului (the Shepherd's Star).

III - The constellation Balaurul or Zmeul (the Dragon).

IV - The constellation Omul (the Man).

V - The constellation Ciobanul cu Oile (the Shepherd with His Sheep), with the star Ciobanul (the Shepherd), which is also called Luceafărul cel Mare de Miezul Noptii (the Great Star of Midnight), or Luceafărul cel Frumos (the Beautiful Star), or Regina Stelelor (the Stars' Queen).

VI - The constellation Crucea Mare (the Great Cross), or Crucea Miezului Noptii (the Midnight Cross), or Fata Mare cu Cobilița (the Great Maiden with a Yoke), or Cobilița Ciobanului (the Shepherd's Yoke), with the star Fântâna din Răscruci (the Fountain of the Crossroads).

VII - The constellation Crucea Mică (the Little Cross).

VIII - The constellation Vulturul (the Eagle), or Vulturul Domnului (God's Eagle), or Fata de Împărat cu Cobilița (the Emperor's Daughter with a Yoke).

IX - The constellation Coasa (the Scythe).

X - The constellation Căpățâna (the Skull), or Carul Dracului (the Devil's Chariot), or Barda (the Axe), or Toporul (the Little Axe).

XI - The constellation Scaunul lui Dumnezeu (God's Chair), or Mănăstirea (the Monastery).

XII - The constellation Jgheabul Puțului (the Drain of the Well).

XIII - The constellation Puțul (the Well), or Gavădul Mic (the Little Horse-Stud). The Drain and the Well together are Puțul cu Jgheab (the Well with a Drain).

XIV - The constellation Vizitiul (the Charioteer), or Trăsura (the Carriage), or Surugiul (the Coachman), or Carul lui Dumnezeu (God's Chariot), or Tarcul (the Goat-Fold), with the star Capra (the She-Goat), and the three stars Iezii Caprei (the She-Goat's Kids). These three stars are also considered a distinct constellation, called Burghiul (the Little Auger), or Sfredelul Pământului (the Earth's Auger).

XV - The constellation Văcarul (the Herdsman).

XVI - The constellation Hora (the Ring Dance), with the star Fata Mare din Horă (the Great Maiden in the Ring Dance), and the two stars Lăutarii (the Singers). Other names are Casa cu Ogradă (the House with a Courtyard), or Coliba or Cociorva (the Hut).

XVII - The constellation Șarpele (the Serpent), or Calea Rătăciților (the Road of the Lost Men).

XVIII - The constellation Peștii (the Fishes), or Crapii (the Carp).

XIX - The constellation Berbecul (the Ram).

XX - The constellation Taurul (the Bull), or Gonitorul (the Running Bull), with Luceafărul Porcesc (the Bright Star of the Pig), or Porcarul (the Swineherd).

XXI - The constellation Cloșca cu Pui (the Hatching Hen with Her Chicks), or Găina (the Hen).

XXII - The constellation Vierii (the Boars), Porcii (the Swine), or Scroafa cu Purcei (the Sow with Her Piglets).

XXIII - The constellation Frații (the Brothers), or Gemenii (the Twin Brothers), or Romulus and Remus, with the star Comoara (the Treasure Chest), or Comoara lui Iov (Yahweh's Treasure Chest).

XXIV - The constellation Racul (the Crayfish).

XXV - The constellation Calul (the Horse), or Leul (the Lion), or Gavădul Mare (the Great Horse-Stud).

XXVI - The constellation Fecioara (the Virgin).

XXVII - The constellation Balanța (the Balance), or Cântarul (the Scales).

XXVIII - The constellation Scorpia (the Scorpion), with the star Ochiul Scorpiei (the Scorpion's Eye).

XXIX - The constellation Arcașul (the Archer).

XXX - The constellation Tapul (the He-Goat), or Cornul Caprei (the Horn of the She-Goat).

XXXI - The constellation Vărsătorul (He Who Pours Out the Water).

XXXII - The constellation Tresfețițele (the Three Saints), or Trei Crai (the Three Kings), or Trei Crai de la Răsărit (the Three Kings from the East), or Toiege (the Staffs), or Cingătoarea Regelui (the King's Belt).

XXXIII - The constellation Rarița (the Little Plough), or Plugul (the Plough), or Grebla (the Rake).

XXXIV - The constellation Secera (the Sickle).

XXXV - The constellation Sfredelul Mare (the Great Auger).

XXXVI - The constellation Câinele Mare (the Great Dog), or Dulăul (the Mastiff), with the brilliant star Zorilă (Of the Daybreak).

XXXVII - The constellation Cățelul (the Little Dog).

XXXVIII - The constellation Chitul (the Whale).

XXXIX - The constellation Porumbița (the Turtle Dove).

These groups of constellations are almost identical with the Classical sky, which can be explained through the Roman origin of the Romanians. Many star-patterns even retain their Classical names, but on becoming Christianised, the Romanians did not continue to use all the old Pagan constellation names, or if they did, they were given Christian explanations, as, for example, in the case of the Virgin. Sometimes, the Classical heroes were replaced with Romanian ones, such as Hercules, who became Omul (the Man), or the figures were replaced with generic ones, keeping only the names of birds and animals, or ordinary titles like Charioteer and Herdsman.

Religious aspects were essential in this evolution. The Romans had many gods who formed another, superior, world to the human one, but like humans, their gods were very sinful. Roman mythology was wonderfully represented by poets, painters and artists.

However, the Romanians, abandoning the old mythology because they had discovered a new religion, with an ideal morality and a sublime simplicity centred around God, Christ and Mary, regenerated their flights of fantasy, enlightened by the sweeter, purer, milder sun of Christianity.

It is a well-known fact that in the legions of Trajan's army, with which he conquered Dacia [now modern Romania; Trajan's conquest of Dacia was completed in AD 106], there were very many Christians, so the Romanian peoples' origins are connected with the beginnings of Christianity here. Only in Dacia were Christianity's adepts able to more freely practice their religion, as they were vigorously persecuted throughout all the other provinces of the Roman Empire.

For Trajan's Christian soldiers and colonists, this new homeland was especially precious, and their gratitude to Trajan, because he had conquered the country, was all the greater. Trajan became like a father-figure for them, and they created those legends concerning Trajan and Dochia, and Făt Frumos, in which it is seen that they compared this Emperor with the Sun. In fact, mythology is only a legend to explain the whole universe's origin, imagined by our ancestors, based on their observations of all the phenomena around them. Contact between the Mediterranean and local myths created transformed myths, sometimes with confusions and controversies between them. Obviously, mythology is a difficult, vast science, which must be carefully linked with history and philology.

Just like other peoples, the Romanians put their myths into the sky, composed from memories of their Roman origins (the two Chariots of Trajan, Romulus and Remus, the Roman Archer, etc.), elements of their new religion, and Pagan names from old Dacia. They filled-up the remaining gaps with agricultural items and people, which explains why they see in the sky things like the Cross, Monastery, Plough, Bell Board, Scythe, Sickle, etc.

This agricultural apotheosis is not surprising, agriculture being the Romanian peasant's life. The later Romanians too were a people who very much honoured agriculture, but they could not put it in the sky, because their sky was full of myths borrowed from ancient Greece, and the Greeks were not farmers, because of their difficult soils. Instead, the Greeks were very good sailors, and their mythology refers to the sea, the clouds and the winds. Thus, the Greeks did not forget their sea, and the Romanians, original creators of a part of the sky's myths, did not forget their agriculture.

Finally, I observe that the majority of the constellations imagined by the Romanian peasants look like the objects they are supposed to be, a rare thing in astronomy.

Romanian Sky Myth

After the world's creation, the Sky and the Earth were very close together. But man was indifferent, and did not understand this divine generosity (God's counsel being good under any conditions). Man's indifference was so pronounced that one day a woman threw a child's stained nappy into the sky - although fortunately, it did not actually touch the sky. God became very upset at this, and removed himself and the Sky far away from the Earth, so that we now say of something, "It is far away, like the sky".

The woman was the culprit, for the woman has "a long dress and a short mind" or is only "good to make trouble". But the Man suffered because of God's absence, and so he decided to journey to the Sky, looking for the Creator.

He knew the road would be difficult and long, so the Man took with him his Great Chariot with four oxen, his Small Chariot, his Votive Light from the wall, the Great Cross of the Church, the Fountain of the Crossroads, his Axe, his Great Auger, his Small Auger, his Sickle, his Scythe, his Great Plough, his Small Plough, his Mastiff from the sheepfold, his Little Dog from the courtyard, the Hatching Hen with her Chicks, the Sow with her Piglets, the Shepherd, the Herdsman, the Charioteer and Hora the Ring Dance from the village. Because he wanted to appear before God like a good Christian, he took with him the most necessary human beings and things, to provide him with cheery company and help in times of trouble. He also took seeds and wheat to till and sow in the sky's fields for his future food.

Then he set off, and he travelled for a long time, but in the middle of the Sky's road, "He Who Will Be Killed By The Cross", the Devil, stopped him.

"Where are you going?", asked the Devil.

"None of your business", replied the Man.

"Who are you looking for?", queried the Devil.

"Leave me alone!", shouted the Man.

"You are a petulant fellow!", retorted the Devil.

"That's not true! You are a scoundrel and an evil one!", was the Man's response.

Then the Devil, furious, pulled out from his bag the Dragon, the Violent Serpent, the Great Bear, the Damned Scorpion, the Angry Horse and the Skull, and threw them around the Man to scare him.

But the brave Man began to fight with the Devil, and their battle created a great storm beneath the Sky, called by us on Earth "the rabid wind".

In the meantime, the strong Mastiff and the Little Dog attacked the Horse, so the Horse ran far away. The Shepherd struck the Dragon Balaurul with a yoke. The Herdsman banished the Serpent with the Ring Dance. The Charioteer crushed the Skull with the Axe. With the battle going so badly, the worried Scorpion, which had tried to seize the Man with her claws, burst in a moment, and blood gushed from her eye. Only the oxen of the Great Chariot ran off, when the frightened Great Bear became rigid with terror.

Now, we see these events in the sky. In the midst of all these creatures, people and things, the victorious Man appears large and grandiose, while the Devil is very small and huddled.

God made the Man to be king in the Sky, as on Earth. Even the Devil recognises the Man as his master!

But the Man still has a long way to go to reach God. He trusts in God's help when he asks Him something with a pure soul.

We know too the Man's road. It can be seen on clear nights without the Moon. Its name is the Milky Way. It became white because in the battle the Shepherd accidentally overturned the milk pails when he struck the Dragon with the yoke, and the milk poured out all along the Man's path.

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I do not dare to comment upon this legend, as it seems to me quite perfect.

Calea Lactee: The Milky Way

In the Sky Myth, we saw an explanation for this whitish band that divides the sky into two parts by its middle, and that it is seen well and completely only on the clearest of nights, without the Moon. Its appearance fills one's heart with a kind of superior respect, a kind of majestic feeling, similar to that experienced by a believer entering into a grandiose temple.

This majestic feeling was remarked upon by the Romanian people, who initially saw in the Milky Way the Emperor Trajan. Thus they called this whitish band *Troian*, or *Troianul Cerului* (the Trajan of the Sky; terrestrially, *troian* was the name for snow-drifts), or *Calea lui Traian* (Trajan's Way), or *Drumul Robilor* (the Slaves' Road), imagined as the way used by Trajan for his journey to Dacia, and for transporting the Dacian prisoners back to Rome, once they had been placed in the two Chariots.

Those who only call this band the Slaves' Road have the following explanations about it:

a) The Slaves' Road was marked on the sky by God to commemorate the numerous slaves captured by the Emperor Trajan in his wars with Dacia.

b) In ancient times, the indigenous populace was transported as slaves into a remote Empire, which lay to the south and west (obviously, this is the Roman Empire). When they escaped, they did not know the way to return to their country, so God indicated their direction on the sky.

c) Trajan transported the captured Dacians to Rome, but they escaped, and ran back along *Troian*, travelling only at night.

However, these versions of the Slaves' Road were altered with time, and later became:

a) A sign to be followed by escaped slaves generally.

b) A sign for the conquerors, to transport away the enslaved people.

c) A road for all the people when they reach the sky, because all are slaves on Earth.

d) A road for those slaves who escaped from the eastern Pagan territories. For instance, on this road were said to have come back the Romanians from Moldavia, escaping from the Tartars. The Tartars' headquarters were in the Crimean Peninsula. Sometimes the Tartars were called *Căpcăuni* [a type of dog-headed monster-men]. A similar situation occurred for the Wallachian Romanians, escaping from the Turks, who came from the south. Thus, using this road, the escaped Romanians were able to return to their own country. It is said the Slaves' Road will disappear when slavery dies on Earth.

e) The Slaves' Road is the way to be used by the people when they go to their Final Judgement, because all men are God's slaves.

f) Using this road, the souls of the dead ascend to Heaven.

In Greco-Latin mythology too, the Milky Way was the road to the palace of Zeus (Jove), used by heroes to enter the sky. The houses of the principal gods were situated to its right and left.

Egyptian poetry greets in the Milky Way the ethereal road leading to the house of the gods. As Cammille Flammarion says: *Even now, the Christians think they discovered in it the road of souls to the mysterious regions of eternity.*

Concerning the name of the Milky Way, the Romanian peasants have other legends (similar to that where the milk poured out from the Shepherd's pails in the Sky Myth). I remember one of them told to me by my mother, in which the Milky Way was the milk poured from a mother's breast as she searched for her son in the sky, after he had been abducted by an Eagle. This legend is like that from Greek mythology, in which Hera, by Athene's counsel, gave her milk to the infant Heracles, after she had discovered him in a field where his mother Alcmena had left him, when she fled in fright at Hera's coming. The young Heracles

sucked very intensely, causing so much milk to gush forth from Hera's breast that it formed into this Way in the sky, in which the stars are the drops of the goddess' milk.

Another Romanian legend: *Once, a man stole some wheat straw from another man, and carried it off in a chariot. He was caught and brought to judgement, but he committed perjury, saying he was not guilty, although the victim had followed the traces of straw all the way to the thief's house. But God, to indicate which man lied, and to teach everybody forever that it is a great sin to swear falsely, put in the sky the appearance of the chariot, and the road which the straw had fallen out onto.*

The last names for the Milky Way here are *Crângul Cerului* (the Sky's Grove) and *Drumul Orbilor* (the Road of the Blind), but the second one is derived from a phonetical confusion with *Drumul Robilor* (the Slaves' Road).

