

The River of Ocean

by

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1. The Encircling Ocean

Chris Boyles has stated that:

"To suggest, for example, that serpents *always* represent a celestial body such as a comet is demonstrably false. Certainly a serpent may *sometimes* symbolize a comet; but it was also used to represent the ocean (e.g. the serpent of Midgard), both in the way in which the ocean was thought to *encircle* the land and as an explanation of the eternal rippling motion of the waves, so similar to that of a snake. Similarly it was used to explain the ructions of the earth's surface during an earthquake: snakes live in holes in the ground so what could be more logical (to the primitive mind) than that the rippling motion of a great subterranean worm was causing the surface movement? Snakes can be purely phallic symbols on occasion; or merely symbolic of fear itself, as powerful unconscious glyphs associated with darkness and chaos."
[1]

This view, as Boyles informed his readers through his reference, is based on that of Carl Gustav Jung [2] who believed in a collective unconscious that acted as a font of knowledge deposited there in primeval times. As preached by him, this primitive knowledge affects us to this day, colouring our concept of life and dictating the actions wherewith to live it. Jung, however, did not consider cosmic catastrophism and one can only speculate what role this would have played in his thoughts had he been convinced of the historicity of such events. As Immanuel Velikovsky stated of Jung's and Freud's thoughts:

"In the light of these theories, we may well wonder to what extent the terrifying experiences of world catastrophes have become part of the human soul and how much, if any, of it can be traced in our beliefs, emotions, and behaviour as directed from the unconscious or subconscious strata of the mind." [3]

In his reply to Boyles, Derek Shelley-Pearce wrote that it was difficult to accept

"the uniformitarian premise that the serpent represented the ocean either in the sense that the ocean encircled the land or because of the "eternal rippling

motion of the waves". These ideas are modern sophisticated literary devices and should not be imputed to primitive forms of thought." [4]

True - but not quite. In as far as 'the eternal rippling motion of the waves', and, I might add, 'the ructions of the earth's surface during an earthquake', are concerned, Shelley-Pearce is quite correct. These *are* 'modern sophisticated literary devices'. Not so, however, in the case of the 'ocean encircling the land'. As Boyles himself noted in reply:

"In Norse mythology (i.e. that of a sea-oriented people) the great serpent of Midgard was practically synonymous with the encircling ocean." [5]

Again, and as we shall see, one can say "not quite". But at least Boyles had the right general idea. Of course, the fact that the Norsemen were a 'sea-oriented people' has absolutely nothing to do with it since the belief of an 'encircling ocean' was close to being universal. Even so, as I pointed out when I first entered this discussion, 'Boyles should also ask himself *what* "ocean" and *what* "land"... the ancients were referring to.' [6]

Whether Shelley-Pearce was inspired by my question, which was not asked in idleness, or not, he placed his finger on the truth when he next wrote:

"Boyles talks of the serpent of Midgard as being used as a metaphor for many phenomena and that it was 'practically synonymous with the encircling ocean...' and quite possibly 'occasionally used to symbolise a comet or comet-like body'. There is no denying that the metaphor developed, but this begs the question why. Metaphors had their roots in concrete experience, and the 'encircling ocean' would appear most inappropriate as the concrete experience that gave rise to the 'Midgard serpent'... *unless, of course, the encircling ocean ... associated with the Saturnian waters ... is intended.*" [7]

But what, then, were these Saturnian waters?

2. Jormungand

In *Worlds in Collision*, the serpent of Midgard is touched upon briefly. According to Velikovsky, the 'battle of Mars and Venus is presented, in the Icelandic epos, as a fight between the wolf Fenris and the serpent Midgard.' He gives a short description of this battle in which the 'bright snake gaping in the heaven above' clashes with 'the foaming wolf', during which the fire caused by the flaming encounter 'leaps high above heaven itself'. It is also written that 'the heaven is cloven', the 'hot stars down from the heaven are whirled', that 'the sun turns black', and 'earth sinks in the sea'. [8]

This sounds like a classic example of a celestial battle between forces of nature in which the heavenly bodies were directly involved. And in truth it is - albeit only part of a more extensive fray. Even so, a lot can be said *against* Velikovsky's interpretation of it.

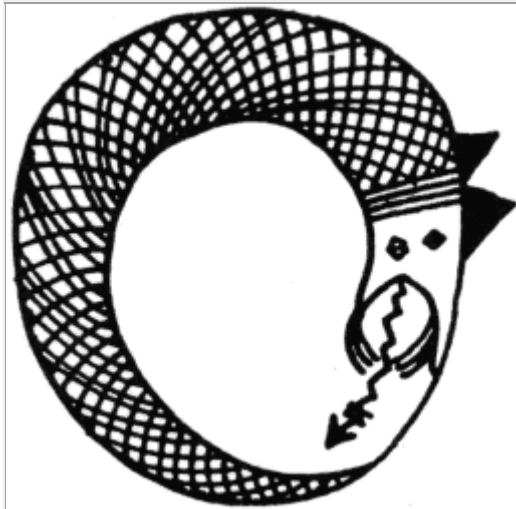
Not that it matters much but, for one thing, the serpent in question was not really *called* Midgard, as Velikovsky implies when he refers to him as 'the serpent Midgard'. He should rightly be called the serpent *of* Midgard; his name was Jormungand [9].

Much worse than that, as Bob Forrest pointed out [10], while there were various other protagonists involved in the fray [11], Fenris and Jormungand did *not* battle one another - *they fought on the same side against the gods*. How, then, could their involvement have represented Venus and Mars in near-collision? To be sure, all of the Icelandic deities took part in this prolonged drama. If these deities are to be interpreted as having being planetary, as indeed they must, we are left with a situation, very much like that of Homer's *Iliad* [12], in which *all* of the planets visible to the naked eye must have been involved. This is not what Velikovsky portrayed as having taken place during the catastrophes of the 8th and 7th centuries BC.

Furthermore, nothing is said in the original about 'the bright snake gaping in the heaven above'. The line in question, from the *Voluspa*, simply has Jormungand gaping 'to' heaven above [13]. This mistake probably stems from Velikovsky's carelessness. Velikovsky, it must be noted, copied his material in longhand and it is quite obvious that he often misread his own handwriting. This is evident not only from the above but also from another line in the *Voluspa* which he rendered as 'fierce grows the stream' [14] when, in fact, the original reads 'fierce grows the steam' [15].

Although the foregoing may seem like splitting hairs, the error in question is not exactly inconsequential. The restitution of 'to heaven above' in *lieu* of Velikovsky's '*in* the heaven above', tends to remove the fray from the sphere of heaven, as Forrest also correctly pointed out [16]. (The falling 'stars' and darkened 'sun' do not necessarily imply that the clash took place *among* them but only that 'sun' and 'stars' were affected by it. In a mythological sense, this is quite acceptable). Granted - the cosmic stage of this *gotterdammerung* can still be inferred through comparison with similar epics from other parts of the world, but that is beside the point.

What, then, *is* the truth about the serpent of Midgard? Of the encounter discussed above, I will say nothing further since this is a topic that is best reserved for a separate paper. What concerns us in this discussion is the *identity* of Jormungand. Who, or what, did this entity represent?



Circular serpent motif on the interior of a food basin from Sikyatki in the South-western United States. Reproduced from *The Saturn Myth* [26] with the kind permission of David N. Talbott



The water-enclosing serpent from the *Codex Cortesianus* (illustration: D. Cardona)

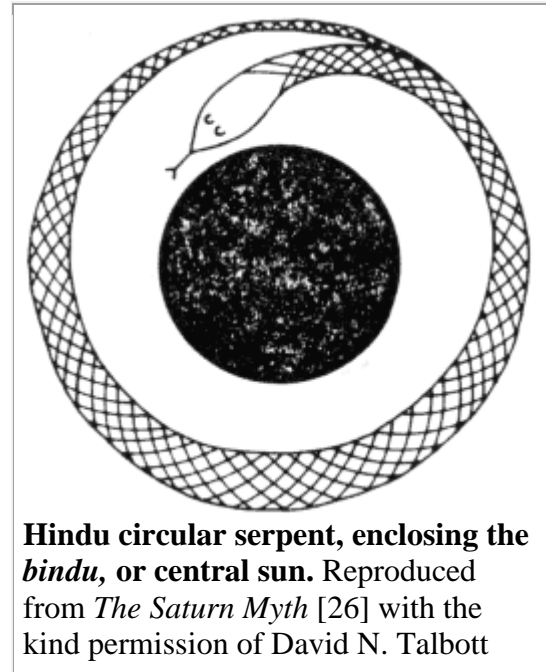
3. The Encircling Serpent

Jormungand was called the serpent of Midgard because he encircled Midgard. This came about when Odin, fearful of Jormungand's ever-growing stature flung, the serpent into the sea that surrounded Midgard [17]. There the serpent continued to grow until, like the sea itself, he completely circumscribed Midgard 'and was able to grasp his own tail' [18]. For that reason the serpent of Midgard also became known as the *Weltumspanner*, which means the 'Stretcher-round-the-World' [19].

The first thing we notice is that, *as far as this particular myth is concerned*, the serpent and the sea were different entities. Strictly speaking, one can say that there goes Boyles's assertion that 'the great serpent of Midgard was practically synonymous with the encircling ocean'.

Secondly, and in keeping with the above, I wish to draw attention to the fact that the sea, or ocean, surrounded Midgard *before* Jormungand did.

Thirdly, it must be noted that 'Midgard' is usually translated as 'earth' or 'the world' [20]. This, unfortunately, is a trait peculiar to mythologists who often ignore the fact that mythology speaks of more than one 'earth', as it does of more than one 'heaven', the names of which are often individually supplied even though just as often collectively glossed over by most translators.



Hindu circular serpent, enclosing the bindu, or central sun. Reproduced from *The Saturn Myth* [26] with the kind permission of David N. Talbott

And fourthly, it is of significance that Jormungand was flung into the sea by Odin who, in his origin, was the deity of the planet Saturn [21].

The motif of the encircling serpent, grasping, or biting, its own tail is not unique to the *Voluspa*. We meet with the same symbolism half way around the world in MesoAmerica. As Hartley Alexander stated, the Aztecs thought of the sea 'as a circumambient Great Serpent' [22]. Again, this is not *strictly* true since what the Aztecs portrayed, as in the *Codex Cortesianus*, was an ocean-encircling serpent (once mistaken for a *rain*-containing serpent [23]). In other words, very much as in the case of Jormungand, the Aztec serpent and the ocean were different entities, the one surrounding the other.

In view of Shelley-Pearce's statement that 'metaphors had their roots in concrete experience', one is led to ask: what is there in the ocean that inspires the image of a serpent encircling it with tail in mouth? Why should such a bizarre notion be commonly found in such widespread and such dissimilar societies? And why would it have persisted well into the Christian era?



The planet Saturn, 'encircled with a RING, formed of serpents,' a plate in Vol. VII of *Indian Antiquities* by Thomas Maurice (London, 1800). Illustration: D. Rohl]

The Gnostics were the great synthesisers of the Christian world when still in its infancy. They incorporated into the faith of their various sects whatever belief was still current in their day. Thus it is not unusual to discover in their writings an amalgamation of Christian and classical mythological motifs. In the *Pistis Sophia*, Jesus himself is made to state: 'The outer darkness is a great serpent, the tail of which is in its mouth' [24]. So, similarly, in *The Acts of Thomas* where a lowly snake miraculously speaks to the Apostle, uttering to him these words:

"I am son of him who girds the sphere about; and I am a kinsman of him who is outside the ocean, whose tail is set in his own mouth" [25]

Again we notice that ocean and serpent are spoken of as different, even though closely related, entities. A serpent 'who is outside the ocean' cannot be that ocean. This makes us think that A. J. Wensinck was trapped by the symbology, much as Alexander and Boyles were, when he presented the 'commonest image of the ocean' among the Hebrews and the Arabs to have been 'that of a serpent' [26].

It was (or should I say is?) no different with the Muslims who declare that when the Kaaba was founded, a 'glittering' serpent wound itself around it 'so that its tail approached its head' [27].

This last takes us a step closer to the truth. As I indicated in a recent paper, the Kaaba was erected as an earthly symbol of Saturn [28]. A serpent encircling the Kaaba would then signify one encircling Saturn. This immediately makes us think of the ring(s) encircling that planet. Was it the ring around the primeval Saturn that was viewed by ancient man as a circumscribing serpent?

Muslim legend also states that 'Allah surrounded [his throne] by a serpent ... this serpent wound itself around the throne' [29]. Have I not elsewhere intimated that 'the pre-Islamic Allah was also a form of Saturn' [30]? Thus a serpent encircling Allah, or his throne, would also be symbolic of one surrounding Saturn.

It seems, then, that we are on the right track and this becomes all the more evident when we consider the words of the Greek philosopher Epicurus. 'The All', he stated, 'was from the beginning like an egg, and the *pneuma* in serpent wise around the egg was then a tight band as a wreath or belt around the universe' [31].

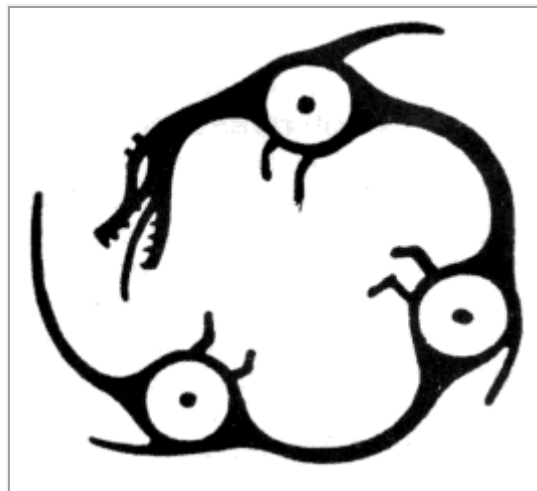
Let not the word 'universe' confuse the issue. By 'universe' is meant *kosmos* which, in Greek thought, denoted 'order' and 'harmony'. The Pythagoreans also believed that the serpent 'lies around the Cosmos' [32]. That the 'All' was universally believed to have once been contained in the Cosmic Egg I have also documented and there the conclusion was again reached that this Cosmic Egg was symbolic of Saturn [33]. Note that the *pneuma* was not only compared by Epicurus to a serpent but also to a band, a wreath, and a belt - all apt analogies of a ring around a planet.

I hope no-one will object to the fact that I have drawn upon my own work in these last three instances. That the Kaaba, Allah, and the Cosmic Egg all stood for Saturn is sufficiently demonstrated in the essays referenced above where additional evidence from other sources and other authorities is amply supplied. Besides, the reader should also ask himself: is it merely coincidence that the serpent was believed to have circumscribed these three dissimilar entities which, on independent evidence, have all been identified as symbolising Saturn?



The Cosmic Serpent encircles Hermopolis.

Reproduced from R. T. Rundle Clark: Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt,



Alaskan circular serpent, indicating close relationship to enclosed sun.

Reproduced from The Saturn Myth [26] with the kind permission of David N. Talbott]

(*Thames & Hudson, London, 1959*), p. 53. Clark notes that 'Hermopolis is here the original state of the world rather than the actual city in Middle Egypt.'

4. Among the Most Ancient of Symbols

How old is the lore of the encircling serpent?

Donald Mackenzie wrote that 'in Coptic literature the Apep serpent is a monster which lies in outer darkness encircling the world and clutching its tail between its jaws, like the Midgard serpent of Norse mythology.' [34] In a sequel paper I will explain in more detail how a serpentine band once seen encircling Saturn came to be said to have encircled the world. Meanwhile we note that Apep did his encircling 'in outer darkness' which accords well with the outer darkness of the blackened night sky when the serpent would have appeared at his brightest.

The Apep serpent, of course, derived from Egypt. So let us turn to the lore of that ancient land to see what else we can discover. In Egypt, Apep, or Apepi, was the great fiend and enemy of Ra. In a magical rite prescribed for the defeat of Apepi 'a man had to make the figure of a serpent with his tail in his mouth', stick a knife in its back and cast it upon the ground [35]. In *Worlds in Collision* it is insinuated that Apopi, the same as Apepi, symbolised the proto-planet Venus [36]. But what circumstance could have turned Venus, even in its cometary form, into the image of a *circular* serpent with its tail in its mouth? Besides, was not the encircling serpent also associated with the Saturnian deity in Egyptian symbolism?

There are three major Egyptian deities (among others) who, on independent evidence, have been identified as ancient personifications of Saturn: Atum, Ra, and Osiris [37]. Do we find the encircling serpent associated with any of these gods?

That Atum was associated with the circular serpent is well known. This serpent is made to announce: 'I bent right around, I was encircled in my coils' [38]. In one of the Coffin Texts, the god himself recalls the time when he was still 'in the midst of the serpent coil' [39]. The Pyramid Texts, through the inscription of which the deceased pharaoh aimed to attain unity with the god, state: 'The King lies down in your coil, the King sits in your circle' [40]. This, again, more than intimates that the encircling serpent was analogous to the god's circle or ring.

Likewise, as David Talbott indicated, Ra was lauded as the 'dweller in his fiery serpent' just as he was also deemed the 'dweller in the fiery circle' [41]. Here the 'fiery' aspect of the serpent is akin to the 'bright' or 'shining' nature of the snake in other myths. The analogy to a bright circle of light can hardly be escaped. To this corresponds the 'fiery circle' within which Ra was said to have dwelled. And does not the very glyph for Ra depict a dot surrounded by a serpent? Those who see Ra as symbolic of the Sun have this conundrum to explain. If the dot signified the solar orb, what then was the serpent surrounding it? If, on the other hand, it was the circular serpent that stood for the Sun, what significance did the central dot play?

As for Osiris, mythologists have long recognised that 'in him the circle of the serpent was completed' [42]. This god was lauded as he who was 'round as the circle that encircles Hauenaba' [43]. As M. Howie stated: 'Osiris was thus the serpent (dragon) that, lying in the ocean, encircled the world' [44]. Of course, Howie was as mistaken as other mythologists in identifying the encircled object as 'the world' when, in effect, the myths themselves signify nothing of the sort. Mackenzie also saw Osiris 'as the water-confining serpent' [45]. In later times, when Osiris was joined to Apis to create the fused deity known as Serapis, his image, as depicted on Egyptian tombs, was often encircled by serpents [46]. It can thus be seen that the encircling serpent is among the most ancient of symbols.

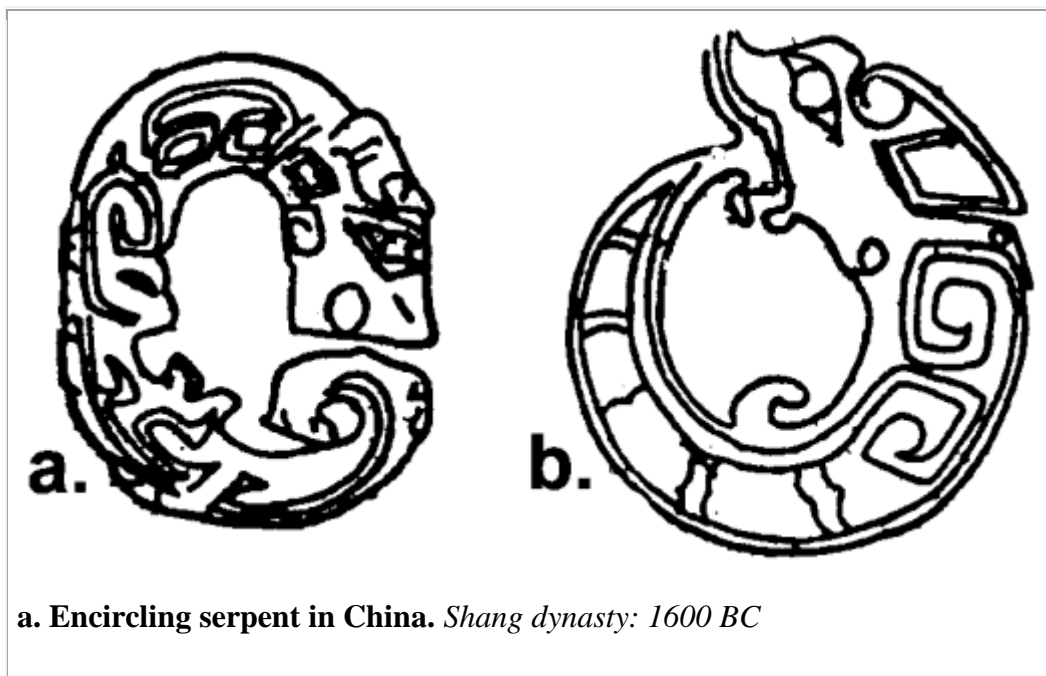
5. The Celestial Sea

If the encircling serpent is to be understood as the original ring or band that encircled the primeval Saturn, the ocean it surrounded must likewise have been celestial. More than that, it, also, must have been associated with Saturn in some way. What can we learn in this respect from ancient lore?

Actually, the belief in the one-time existence of a celestial sea runs the gamut from Oceania to Mesopotamia. In the 'Genealogies of the Gods' of Tahiti this celestial sea was the domain of a deity named Rua. Among other epithets, this god was known as Rua-of-the-ocean-in-the-sky [47].

Despite the objections that might be raised by etymologists, we shall note the similarity between the name of this Tahitian god, Rua, and that of the Egyptian Ra whom we have already seen identified as a personification of Saturn. That divine names fit a linguistic pattern outside the artificial constraints erected by etymologists is also indicated by the African names of a pair of primeval deities. A Creation myth from that continent states:

"At first there was no earth. There was Okun, the ocean, stretching over all things. Above the ocean was Olorun, the sky. Okun and Olorun contained all and possessed all things that there were." [48]



b. The encircling serpent, biting its own tail, prototype of the later dragon.
Shang dynasty: 1600 BC

In the names Okun and Olorun we recognise a philological root that is also contained in the names of their Greek counterparts, namely Okeanos (Oceanus or Ocean, of whom more below) and Ouranos (Uranus). In their containing 'all things that there were', we also recognise the same principle contained in the myths of the Cosmic Egg to which we paid but passing heed above. Of course, if Olorun was the equivalent of Uranus, he could not have been the sky. As I have indicated previously,

"etymologically, Uranus has been identified with the Indian god Varuna, whom the *Rig Veda* equates with Agni and thus, inadvertently, with Saturn" [49].

(The name Saturn here refers to the Saturnian configuration which included other planetary members. As a member of this configuration, Agni might *additionally* have stood for Mars which was 'embedded' in the configuration's polar column [50]). Complementary to this, the same *Rig Veda* informs us that Agni was the sea: 'He only [Agni] is the sea, holder of treasures' [51]. Likewise, Varuna was known as the lord of the waters [52], these being recognised as having been the waters of the sky [53]. Thus it is written:

"He [Varuna] is an ocean far removed, yet through the heaven to him ascends the worship which these realms possess" [54].

The celestial ocean is often mentioned in ancient Egyptian hymns and liturgies [55]. In Egypt, this celestial ocean was deified and called Nu, or Nun. That Nun was a celestial, as opposed to a terrestrial, ocean is evidenced by the word's hieroglyphic rendition which combines the glyphs for 'water' and 'heaven' [56]. It was from Nun that Atum, whom we have seen identified as Saturn, was said to have been born [57]. If these waters preceded the appearance, or formation, or coming to visibility of Atum/Saturn, they could not have symbolised the primeval ring around that planet as some catastrophist researchers have assumed. The ring, or band, which was later personified by the encircling serpent, was formed later.

In Assyro-Babylonian thought, the role of Nun was played by Apsu [58], whose name meant 'one who exists from the beginning'. This meaning is in keeping with our belief that the celestial sea existed before the formation of Saturn's primeval band. And, in fact, in the myths of 'beginning' (much too numerous to be enumerated here [59]) that can be garnered from one end of the world to the other, the celestial waters were said to have preceded Creation itself. In other words, the waters existed prior to the Saturnian configuration, with its rings, column, etc, that was created from the previously solitary Saturnian orb.

Back in 1978 I was guilty of presenting these waters as having been terrestrial - as having gathered at the Earth's north polar region in a colossal tide raised in gravitational response to Saturn's close, and stationary, proximity overhead [60]. Thus I mistakenly presented the Cosmic Egg as having hovered *above* these waters rather than having floated *on* them as the myths insisted. I have not quite abandoned the notion of a piled-up hydrosphere but it has become quite evident since then that the primeval ocean of which the myths so consistently speak was truly celestial.

As Shelley-Pearce so astutely reminded us, 'metaphors had their roots in concrete experience'. What, then, was the 'concrete experience' that gave rise to the belief in these celestial waters, this ocean, this sea? As Roger Ashton indicated in 1981, despite his recent change of mind [61], there must have been 'some celestial phenomenon resembling shimmering waters, possibly an auroral effect', surrounding the primeval solitary Saturnian orb in the darkness prior to its flare-up [62]. As he also elsewhere stated, 'part of that assemblage must have looked like waters, whose implicitly or explicitly celestial character has severally been noted' and that these 'waters evidently appeared in a distinct image or pattern' [63]. When the serpent encircled the sea, it was this shimmering phenomenon that the newly created Saturnian ring enclosed. Whether this 'shimmering', as per Ashton, was due to an auroral effect, a fine gaseous outflow, or a nimbus created by Earth's atmospheric filtering of Saturn's radiated light, is something that has yet to be ascertained. But that something of the sort existed there seems to be no doubt.

Apsu as the heavenly ocean

See cover photograph: stone tablet from Abu Habbah (BM 91000) depicting Nabuaplaiddin being presented to Shamash enthroned within his shrine. James B. Pritchard: *The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, 1969) comments:

"Within the shrine are the emblems of the crescent (Sin), sun-disc (Shamash), and the eight-pointed star (Ishtar), their identifications appearing in the inscription over the top of the shrine. Below the entire scene are wavy lines in which four stars are set, a representation of the heavenly ocean (apsu)."

6. Okeanos

Without wishing to confuse the issue, I must now absolve Boyles for having misrepresented the serpent of Midgard as being 'practically synonymous with the encircling ocean'. As we have seen, this misconception derived from others. Wensinck and Alexander, as was stated above, were trapped by the symbology; beyond that, their confusion owes part of its cause to language and centres around the very word 'ocean'.

In the Latin version of the *Apocalypse of Paul*, which is different from the Coptic work of the same name discovered in the Nag Hammadi Library [64], the Apostle Paul is taken on a tour of heaven by an angel. Paul is made to narrate the events and, at one point, he states the following:

"And I set out with the angel and he brought me towards the setting of the sun, and I saw the beginning of Heaven, founded on a great river of water, and I asked: "What is this river of water?" And he said to me: "This is the ocean which encircles the whole earth". [65]

We notice here that the 'ocean' is described as a 'river of water'. This, then, could not be the ocean as we know it. And in fact, elsewhere, the Apostle Paul is also made to state:

"And he [the angel] set me upon the river whose source springs up in the circle of heaven, and it is this river which encircleth the whole earth. And he says unto me: "This river is Ocean." " [66]

And there, in effect, we have it. Apart from the now obvious reference to the '*circle of heaven*', we learn that 'Ocean' was the *name* of the encircling river. It was *not* the sea. Whence came this idea?

We have not far to seek. In the *Theogony* it is told how Gaea and Uranus begot a son whom Hesiod described as 'deep-whirling Okeanos' [67]. Elsewhere in the epic poem Okeanos is described as a 'circling stream' [68], the stream itself being alluded to as that 'of famous Okeanos' [69]. According to Homer, it was this stream called Okeanos that girdled the world [70]. Robert Graves now tells us that 'Homer's myth is a version of the Pelasgian creation story' in which the role of Okeanos (also rendered Oceanus) was played by Ophion [71]. The Pelasgian Ophion, of course, was our old friend the encircling serpent, who was said to have coiled himself around the Cosmic, or Universal, Egg [72].

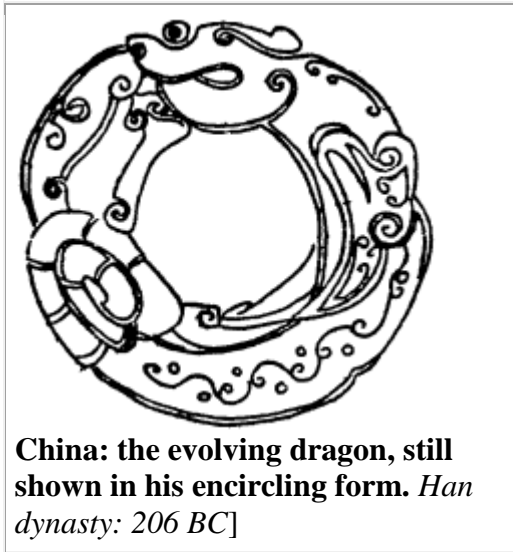
Here then we have the answer to the confusion mentioned above. Okeanos was the name of the stream that girdled what mythologists have termed 'the Earth' or 'the world'. This stream was equivalent to the encircling serpent. If the encircling serpent signified the ring around the primeval Saturnian orb, then so did this stream called Okeanos. What is ironic is that the very same issue of *SIS Workshop* that carried Boyles's response to Shelley-Pearce, and which contained the statement concerning the synonymy of the serpent of Midgard with the encircling ocean, already contained a decisive clue. Thus Hugh Crosthwaite wrote: 'One is tempted to speculate on what Oceanus (Akkadian '*uggina*', a circle) originally was' [73]. The answer is given in his own speculation: a circle - the ring around the planet Saturn.

The confusion was of course compounded by the rendering of Okeanos as Oceanus and even Ocean. Given that Okeanos was the origin of our English word 'ocean', mythologists have often been guilty of equating the Greek deity with the present terrestrial ocean. Thus the serpent of Midgard could be said to have been synonymous with the river *called* Ocean but not with the ocean of terrestrial realm.

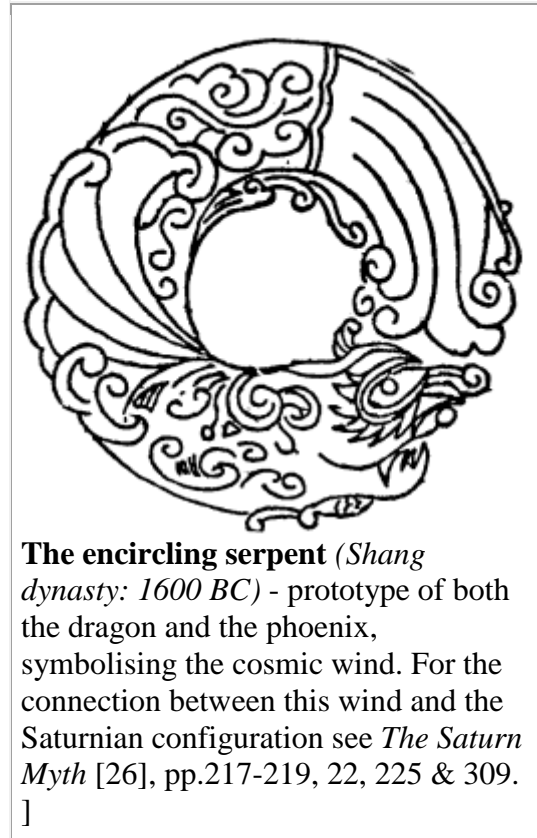
It should also be obvious from all this that Okeanos had nothing to do with the celestial sea called Nun or any of *his* equivalents. Saturn was said to have been born out of the celestial sea; on the other hand, it was *from* Saturn that Okeanos was created.

If not Nun, who, or what, denoted the river Okeanos in Egyptian myth? Among other Egyptian names, this entity was known as *shen*. In the Pyramid Texts the hieroglyph for *shen* is utilised to denote the 'Great Circle' or 'Ring' that served as the divine boundary in heaven; and yet it was also called the 'Surrounding Ocean' [74]. It was upon, or around, this circular stream or ocean in the sky that Ra, who was Saturn, was said to have sailed [75]. The same celestial circuit was also alluded to as 'the Circle of Bright Flame' [76]. And, to clinch the matter, it is elsewhere written that this very same path over which the god's bark sailed was the back of the serpent Apepi [77].

Needless to say, if the primordial Saturnian orb was stationary in the north celestial sphere as Talbott, Cochrane and I maintain, it could not have 'sailed' around anything. In truth it was the bark - i.e. the sunlit crescent of the Saturnian ring - that 'sailed' around once daily as the Earth turned.



China: the evolving dragon, still shown in his encircling form. Han dynasty: 206 BC]



The encircling serpent (Shang dynasty: 1600 BC) - prototype of both the dragon and the phoenix, symbolising the cosmic wind. For the connection between this wind and the Saturnian configuration see *The Saturn Myth* [26], pp.217-219, 22, 225 & 309.]

7. Venus and Velikovsky

In an earlier paper published in *SIS Workshop* I registered my doubt that the first appearance of Venus was ever recorded by anyone [78]. That was in 1983. Much research has been conducted since then and the picture is now clearer even if the Saturnian scenario has become somewhat more bizarre.

As it transpired, it was just a little later that same year when Ev Cochrane shared with me a re-discovery that constitutes one of the most brilliant insights concerning the history of Saturn's polar configuration. According to Cochrane, Venus was first seen plumb in the centre of the Saturnian orb [79]. David Talbott, who had previously believed Venus to have been positioned *behind* Saturn before it lowered itself [80], has welcomed this revelation [81]. In brief, this new, and tentative, unfolding of Saturnian history is as follows:

Saturn, Venus and Mars seem to have been strung out, in that order, on the same line, sharing a rotational axis above Earth's north polar sky, in what Frederic Jueneman has jocularly described as a planetary shish-kebab [82]. It was thus that, as seen from the Earth, the small Venerian disc occupied the dead centre of the Saturnian orb.



The Saturnian Configuration.

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China: the encircling serpent evolving into the phoenix, symbolising the cosmic wind, with the Saturnian urbild *in the centre*. Han dynasty: 206 BC

During one of many stupendous catastrophes which beset the Saturnian configuration, Venus was ejected from the common axis of rotation. As seen from terrestrial perspective, it commenced to circle around the centre while trailing an enormous cometary tail in an ever widening spiral behind it. As it widened its orbit, Venus was seen to move outside the Saturnian orb while it continued to circle its parent. According to Talbott, this was the moving image that gave rise to the belief in the serpent's banishment into the void outside. This would accord well with the flinging of Jormungand by Odin/Saturn into the 'shimmering' of the celestial sea surrounding Midgard. As Cochrane and Talbott developed the theme [83], the cometary tail of Venus continued to widen its spiral until it eventually 'congealed' into a toroid ring visually seen to enclose Saturn. (This 'torus-cloud' could not, however, have been suspended *above* Saturn as Talbott had earlier surmised [84]). Thus Jormungand was seen to grasp his own tail while enclosing the celestial sea within his coils. In similar analogy, Okeanos completed the circle of his flowing stream.

The answer to the question posed earlier now becomes clear: the serpent of Midgard *was* a cometary entity; this comet *was* Venus; it *was* synonymous with the encircling stream called Ocean (but not the ocean of the terrestrial realm); as it also was the primordial ring around the Saturnian orb.

Whether this scenario is valid in *all* its details is too early to tell. Personally, having grown cautious with the passing years, and not yet having had time to evaluate its various aspects, I can best recommend it for further study. And, in any case, at the time of writing, the finer details of this scheme are still waiting to be divulged.

If proven valid, the above view would mean that Velikovsky was not mistaken when he identified both the serpent of Midgard and Apopi as personifications of cometary Venus. Not

that Velikovsky had any inkling of the role Venus might have played in relation to the Saturnian configuration and, if the truth must be known, he was emphatic in repudiating the scenario that Talbott and I independently reconstructed. It is also noteworthy that, in all of *Worlds in Collision*, he did not offer one iota of evidence in support of the Venerian identification of these two entities. How, then, could he have turned out to be correct? In view of his entirely different theory concerning the genesis of the Venus-comet, one can only surmise that he hit these nails squarely on the head through nothing but intuition. Even so, as it is often said, intuition is the hallmark of great minds.

Over and above Cochrane's disclosure of the Venerian role in all this, it should be stressed that the encircling serpent and the encircling stream are not the only, and perhaps not the best, analogies of the primordial Saturnian band that the ancient observers of the phenomenon passed on to posterity. As evidence of what was once seen in the northern hemisphere of the sky, these analogies are but two of a multitudinous collection of recorded observations as transmitted by tradition. A case for the close proximity of Saturn with its encircling ring(s) can hardly be made from just the foregoing, but to enumerate all the available data on the subject is beyond the scope of a single paper *and comes close to being beyond the scope of a single volume*. Nor must it be assumed that the encircling serpent and the encircling stream were chosen as the subjects of this paper merely to show where Boyles went astray since that was farthest from my mind. It is only that the discussion his statements instigated have afforded me a chance to broach this fascinating subject - which I thought to share with the readers of this journal.

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