

“Legends from Around the World” Presented at LIPS 2012 by Karrie Berglund

Sun Stories

Japanese (shinto)

Amaterasu was the Sun goddess of the oldest Japanese religion called Shinto. When her brother Susanowo treated her badly, she hid in the cave of heaven and closed the entrance with an enormous stone. This made the world dark, and evil spirits came out of their hiding places.

In despair, a conference of the gods decided to trick Amaterasu into coming out by having a party near the cave. They put a big mirror in front of the cave and beautiful jewels on a tree. Uzume, the goddess of laughter, began a dance accompanied by loud music.

Hearing the music and laughter, Amaterasu was so curious that she took a look outside to find out what was going on. She was so fascinated by her own brilliant reflection in the mirror that she came out of the cave. Finally, the light covered and colored the world.

Inuit

Malina is the Sun goddess of the Inuit people who live in Greenland. The word "Inuit" means "people."

Malina and her brother, the Moon god Anningan, lived together. They got into a terrible fight and Malina spread dirty, black grease all over her brother's face. In fear, she ran as far as she could into the sky and became the Sun. Anningan chased after her and became the Moon.

Anningan often forgets to eat, so he gets thinner as the days go by. Every month, the Moon disappears for three days while Anningan eats. He then returns to chase his sister once again.

This eternal chase makes the Sun alternate in the sky with the Moon.

Snoqualmie—Native American tribe from Washington state (Legend from: <http://www.wvu.edu/depts/skywise/legends.html>)

Long ago, Snoqualm (Man in the Moon), had a spider make him a rope out of cedar bark and stretch it from the sky to the Earth. One day Fox and Blue Jay found the rope and climbed up to where the rope was fixed to the underside of the sky. Blue Jay pecked a hole in the sky and they climbed through to the sky world. Blue Jay flew to a tree while Fox changed himself into Beaver and swam in a lake. Snoqualm had set a trap in the lake which caught Beaver. Snoqualm skinned him and threw the body in the corner of the smokehouse.

That night when Snoqualm was asleep Beaver got up and put his skin back on. He looked around. He took a few of the trees, and Snoqualm's daylight making tools, some fire, and the Sun which was hidden in Snoqualm's house. He changed back into Fox then he found the hole that Blue Jay had made and took the things to Earth. He planted the trees, made daylight, gave the fire to the people, and put the Sun in its place. When Snoqualm awoke he was very angry. He found the tracks that led to the hole. He started down but the rope broke and he fell to the Earth in a heap where he became a mountain.

One can see the face of Snoqualm on one of the rocky cliffs. Today the mountain is called Mount Si and it is near the cities of Snoqualmie and North Bend in Washington State.

Moon Stories

Ancient Egyptian

At the beginning of the month, a new moon was born. For the first half of the month, it grew and grew and grew, until it was full. When it was full, the big pig who lived in the sky could no longer resist eating the moon, so he ate and ate and ate it until it was gone, and a new moon had to be born.

Maidu, a Northern-Central Valley tribe of California (Source: http://www.firstpeople.us/FP-HTML-Legends/Rock_House_Why_The_Sun_Follows_The_Moon-Maidu.html)

Father Sun and Mother Moon lived inside the huge hollow rocks of Rock House. Their light did not shine from the sky, so the People and the Animals lived in darkness.

Now Coyote, who was always playing tricks, thought it would be great fun to dump some fleas on Father Sun and Mother Moon. So he began to gather the fleas and place them in bags. On his way to Rock House he met Rabbit. When Coyote bragged about his bags of fleas, Rabbit would not believe him. They began to argue. Between them, Rabbit and Coyote began to tug on one of the bags. As Rabbit yanked it from Coyote's grasp, the bag opened and the fleas spilled out on the ground. And to this day, Rabbit and Coyote are always scratching fleas.

Rabbit liked Coyote's idea of taking the fleas to Rock House. So together they trudged up the peak to Rock House carrying the bags of fleas. As they walked they tried to think of a plan to get the fleas inside of Rock House.

Along the path they found Gopher digging a hole. They decided to include Gopher in their trick. Gopher could dig a hole down through the soil to Rock House. When they reached the top of the peak, Gopher began to dig quietly so Father Sun and Mother Moon would not be alarmed. As soon as Gopher backed out of the hole, Coyote and Rabbit shook the bags of fleas down the opening. Then they plugged up the hole and ran away feeling very pleased with themselves.

The fleas soon covered Father Sun and Mother Moon. When Mother Moon could no longer stand the fleas, she flew out of Rock House and began to circle the Earth. Father Sun followed Mother Moon out of Rock House. They raced around the Earth trying to get rid of those fleas.

That is why, to this day, the Sun follows the Moon across the sky.

Maori (Source: http://www.windows.ucar.edu/tour/link=/mythology/rona_moon.html)

Rona was the daughter of the sea god Tanqaroa. She was the Tide Controller. One night she was carrying a bucket with stream water back home to her children, when the path became dark. The Moon slipped behind the clouds making it impossible to see anything. As Rona was walking, she hit her foot against a root that was sticking out of the ground. She was so upset that she couldn't see the root, she made some unkind remarks about the Moon.

The Moon heard her remarks and put a curse on the Maori people. The Moon grabbed Rona and her water bucket. Many people today see a woman with a bucket in the Moon. It is said that when Rona upsets her bucket, it rains. This Maori story symbolizes the influence of the Moon on the rain and on the waters of the Earth, and especially on the tides.

Milky Way Stories

Incan (Source: <http://www.mythencyclopedia.com/Ho-iv/Inca-Mythology.html>)

Illapu, the god of weather who gave the rain, had an important place in a culture that depended on agriculture. The Incas saw the Milky Way, the band of stars that arc across the sky, as a heavenly river. Illapu's sister stored the river's water in a jug until it was needed on the earth. When Illapu struck the jug with a bolt of lightning from his slingshot, making the sound of thunder, he broke the jug and released the rain.

Estonian (Source: Beyond the Blue Horizon, Dr. E.C. Krupp)

An eligible maiden named Lindu was [...] in charge of the birds and responsible for their successful travels in spring and fall. She was also pretty. Everybody wanted to marry her. Everybody tried to court her. One time the North Star pulled up to her house in a fancy carriage drawn by six brown horses. He brought her ten different presents, but she wasn't particularly attracted to him because he was boring. "You always stay in one place," she said.

Moon [...] arrived in a sparkling silver coach pulled by ten silver horses and loaded down with twenty gifts. He, too, was rejected. If the North Star were too constant, Moon was too inconstant. And even though he couldn't keep a straight face from one day to the next, he ran around in the same circle month after month.

Lindu also wanted no part of Sun. He showed up in a golden phaeton powered by twenty tawny-red horses, and he had thirty surprises for Lindu. But she said he was just like the Moon, stuck in the same old rut.

Then Lindu's heart was struck by love. Northern Lights drove up in a diamond carriage, and he had a thousand white horses to pull it. When Lindu opened the door to welcome him, he brought an entire coachload of gifts into her townhouse. She was delighted with his presents and with him. He never did the same thing twice. He came and went as he pleased and wore very stylish and extravagant clothes for his public appearances. Lindu pledged her love and promised to marry him. Northern Lights was delighted but had to be back home in the far north by midnight. He asked her to plan the wedding, for he would soon return.

Northern Lights never did come back. Lindu waited anxiously for him throughout the winter and right through spring and summer. By fall her heart was broken. She sat by the river in her bridal dress, dropping her tears on the ground and oblivious to the birds that depended on her. Finally her father, Uko, realized something had to be done for his daughter and for the birds. He directed the winds to sweep her into the sky, where she lives today. She still wears that long white veil that never got to the wedding. It flutters from one side of the sky to the other as the Milky Way, and in it, Lindu, directs the seasonal flights of all of the birds once more. In the middle of the night she waves to Northern Lights, and he sometimes manages a brief visit with her in winter, when the Milky Way is off toward the north in the early evening.

Various Constellation Stories

Hindu, Big Dipper:

According to the epic Mahabharata, composed in about 500 B.C., the stars of the Big Dipper were the seven sages called Rishis. These seven sages are said to be those who made the Sun rise and shine. They were happily married to seven sisters named Krttika. They originally all lived together in the northern sky.

But one day, the god of fire, Agni, emerged from the flames of an offering performed by the seven Rishis and fell in love with the seven Krttika. Trying to forget his hopeless love for the Krttika, Agni wandered in the forest where he met Svaha. To conquer Agni's love, Svaha disguised herself as six of the seven Krttika. Svaha could mimic only six of the Krttika because the seventh sister Arundhati was too devoted to her husband to be imitated.

After a while, Svaha gave birth to a child that she named Skanda. With his birth, rumors began to spread that six of the Rishis' wives were his mother. Six of the Rishis divorced their wives. Arundhati was the only one that remained with her husband as the star Alcor. The other six Krttika went away to become the Pleiades.

Lakota, the Hand:

The hand represents the arm of a great Lakota chief. The gods wanted to punish the Lakota's chief for his selfishness and made the Thunder People rip out his arm. The chief's daughter offered to marry anyone who would recover her father's arm.

Fallen Star, a young warrior whose father was a star and whose mother was human, returned the arm and married the daughter. The return of the arm to the chief symbolizes harmony between the gods and the people with the help of the younger generation.

Inuit, Orion's belt (from http://www.onthinice.ca/teachers/inuit_const/inuit_const_real_life.htm):

ULLAKTUT TOLD BY NOAH PIUGAATTUK

In the legend they are known as *Ullaktut* (the runners). There are three stars, slanted upwards and evenly separated. They are most visible. Directly in front of these stars is a big star with many smaller stars around it. The big star is called *Nanurjuk* (the polar bear); ...the smaller stars are known as the *Qimmiit* (the dogs).

The three runners-the *Ullaktut*-came across a polar bear at night and are known to have climbed up to the sky; that is the legend. They are quite visible. They are used for navigational purposes because they are easy to identify. The *Ullaktut* legend has it that there were three runners...actually there were four of them. They were out hunting and, during the night, they came upon a polar bear. As they were chasing the bear, one of the runners got really hot and took off his mitts. As he ran he dropped his mitts. After a while, this runner noticed he didn't have his mitts, so he went back for them and that is how he returned to Earth. He was the fourth person. Had he continued after the bear he would have been the fourth star. He was thus the only one of the runners that made it back to camp. That is the legend of the *Ullaktut* stars.