

Mythology of the constellation Ophiuchus

OPHIUCHUS, The Serpent Holder, is associated with Aesculapius, the noted healer of Greek legend. His mother Coronis was courted by the god Apollo and she eventually became pregnant. However, this did not stop her from being for a mere mortal, Ischys by name. The god had left a white crow to keep watch on Coronis and, when it reported her infidelity, Apollo was so furious that it had not immediately pecked out Ischys's eyes that he cursed the bird and turned it black. When Artemis, Apollo's huntress sister, heard of the behaviour of Coronis, she shot a quiverful of arrows into her. Apollo saved his unborn son, named him Aesculapius, and took him to Chiron, the kind and extremely wise centaur, who taught him the art of medicine. The youth mastered the art completely, so much so that Hades, King of the Underworld, feeling threatened should Aesculapius be able to raise the dead, complained to Zeus. The great god regrettably decided that Aesculapius must die, and struck him with a thunderbolt, thereafter placing him among the stars. To this day, Aesculapius and the serpent are associated with healing, and all physicians take the Hippocratic oath (Hippocrates supposedly being a descendant of Aesculapius).

1. Ras Alhague (alpha) 2.2 sapphire means-Head of serpent charmer
2. Kelb Ariai (beta) 3.3 yellow means-Heart of the Shepherd
3. Muliphen (gamma) 4.3 none



Mythology of the constellation Serpens

SERPENS, The Serpent, and Ophiuchus, The Serpent Holder, originally formed one constellation. The Serpent appears to be cut in two by Ophiuchus, with SERPENS CAPUT, The Head, to the west, and SERPENS CAUDA, The Tail, to the east. Always related to the healer Aesculapius, a serpent's venom can cure as well as kill, and the shedding of its skin is representative of the renewal of life, two factors which strengthen this association.

1. Cor Serpentis (alpha) 3 pale yellow means "Neck of the snake"
2. Chow (beta) 3 pale blue named only by the Chinese, it was named after one of their imperial dynasties.

Mythology of the constellation Corona Borealis

CORONA BOREALIS represents the crown or wreath worn by Ariadne, daughter of King Minos of Crete. Her story is connected to that of the Minotaur - a creature half-man, half-bull, who dwelt on the island at the centre of a labyrinth with no known escape route. Periodically, seven young men and seven girls were sent from Athens to be offered up to the Minotaur. One year, Theseus, heir to the throne of Athens, who had already proved himself a hero, volunteered to be one of the seven men in order that he might kill the Minotaur and thus prevent any further sacrifices. On his arrival in Crete he met the beautiful Ariadne and told her of his plan. She fell in love with Theseus and agreed to help him by lending him her magic ball of golden twine, which would enable him to find his way back out of the labyrinth. Her one condition was that he should then take her back to Athens with him as his wife. Accordingly, Theseus killed the Minotaur and, by following the unravelled ball of twine, managed to find his way out of the labyrinth. Here the story varies, with one account suggesting that Theseus deserted Ariadne on the island of Naxos, where she died of a broken heart, and that her wedding wreath was placed in the heavens by Dionysius. Another explanation suggests that it is the golden twine which is represented by CORONA BOREALIS.

1. Alphecca (alpha) 2.4 brilliant white means "bright one of the dish"

Mythology of the constellation Coma Berenices

The constellation COMA BERENICES represents the beautiful hair of Queen Berenice of Egypt. She was so concerned for the safety of her husband Ptolemy III when he went off to war, that she vowed to cut off her glorious long hair as a sacrifice to Venus, should he be spared. When he eventually returned safely home, she kept her promise, and Zeus placed her beautiful hair in the heavens to shine among the stars.

Mythology of the constellation Canes Venatici

Since the 17th-century charts of Hevelius (the Polish astronomer Johannes Hevelke) CANES VENATICI, The Hunting Dogs, has been considered to represent two hounds held on a leash by Bootes. The northerly dog (the one closer to Bootes) is named Asterion, meaning Starry, the southerly (the one closer to Ursa Major) Chara, as Dear to the heart of her master.

1. Cor Caroli (alpha) 3.2 flushed white originally named Asterion was the 12th of Flamsteed's list of the Hounds, stands alone, marking Chara's collar, but the name Cor Caroli comes from England and is named for King Charles as it was said that the star had shone special brilliancy on the eve of the king's return to London on the 29th of May, 1660.
2. Chara (beta) 4.3 the 8th of Flamsteed's list of the Hounds

