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The Spider's Web. Goddesses of Light and Loom: Examining the Evidence for the Indo-European Origin of Two Ancient Chinese Deities

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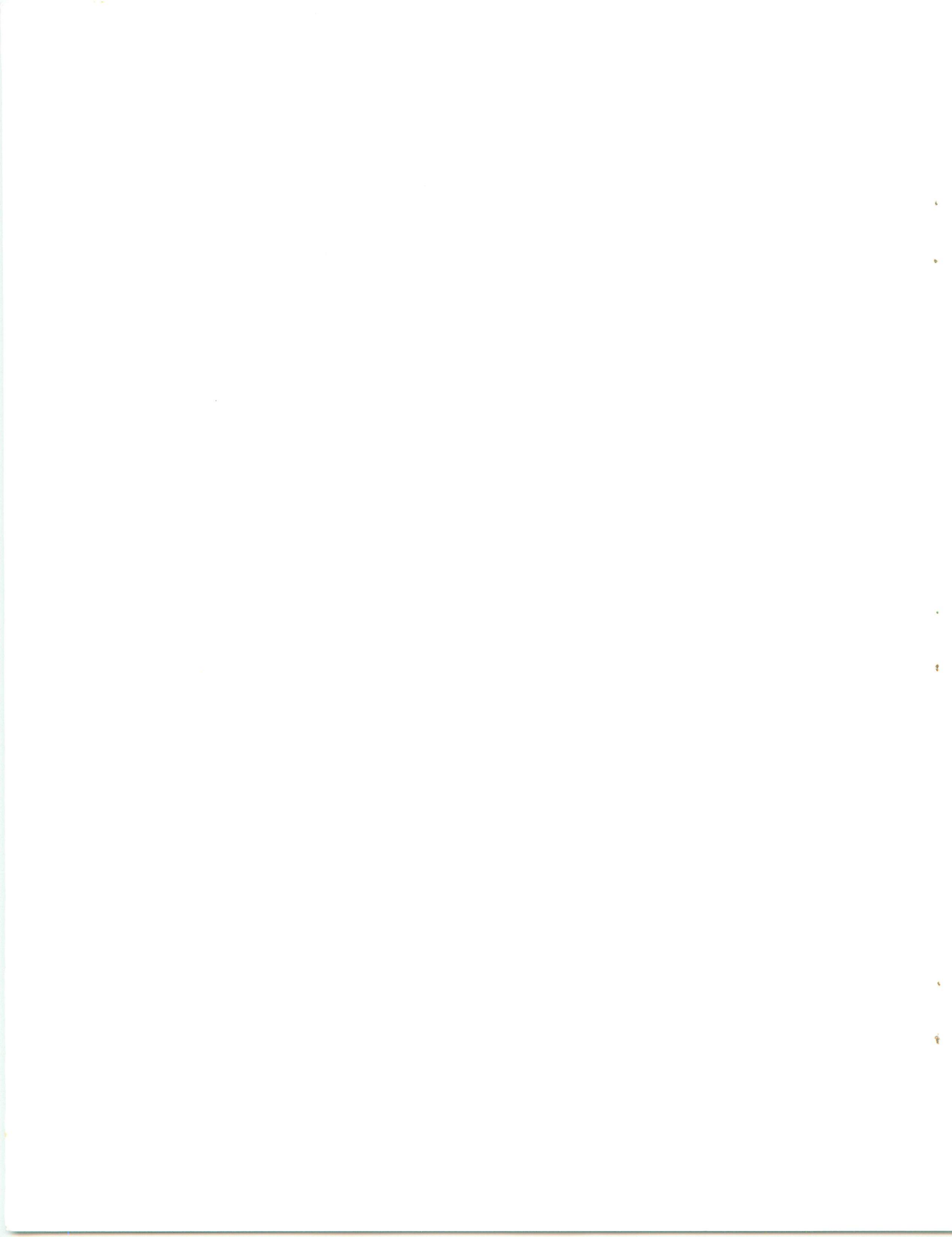
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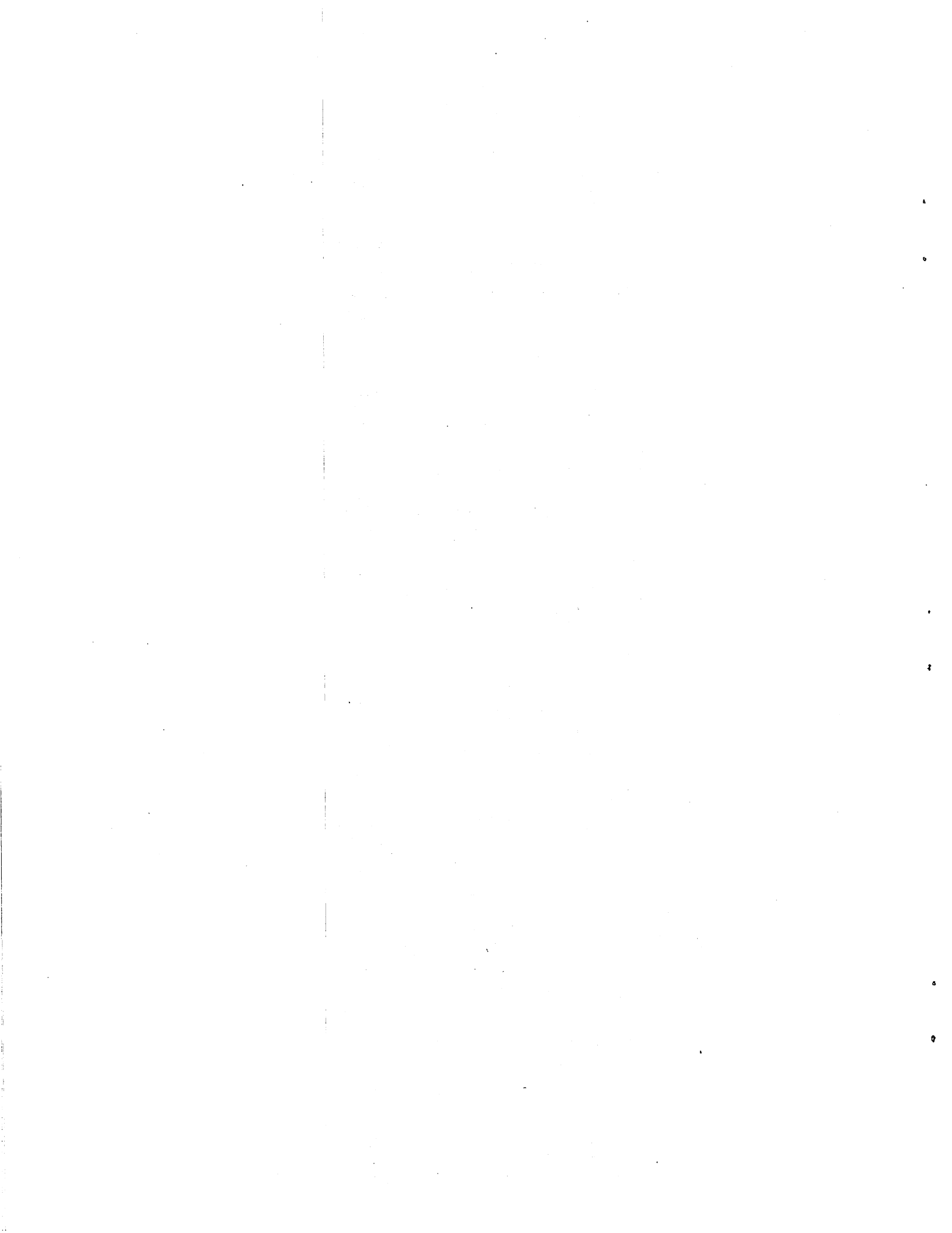
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Justine T. Snow, "The Spider's Web: Evidence for the Indo-European Origin of Two Ancient Chinese Deities," *Sino-Platonic Papers*, 118 (June, 2002)

THE SPIDER'S WEB

Goddesses of Light and Loom: Examining the Evidence for the Indo-European Origin of Two Ancient Chinese Deities

Justine T. Snow

Dedicated to Professor Victor Mair, for his undaunted courage

OVERVIEW

Scholars have long viewed the art of spinning and weaving and their relationship to spiders as the exclusive property of the lunar goddess.

Yet, during the course of a search for knowledge about the Chinese weaving goddess, Chih Nü, it became apparent that goddesses of the sun and dawn were also weavers and spinners and that the concept of the "solar spider"¹ was lacking in recognition. Not only does the beauty of weaving and spinning in Indo-European solar mythology deserve to be celebrated, it merits closer examination, especially in cultures along the "Pre"-Silk Road, for the following reason. In China the Goddess of Weaving and a now extinct female solar charioteer have counterparts in the *R̥gveda* and Homer, yet no attention has been directed to this curiosity. Therefore, this paper is presented in the hope that it will serve to stimulate a more thorough and scholarly investigation into the origin of Chih Nü and Hsi-Ho.

"There seems to have been a great deal more travel and communication in the ancient world than modern scholarship sometimes wishes to believe possible." John Major

"To know the myths is to learn the secret of the origin of things."
Mircea Eliade

PART 1. CHIH NÜ

The indissoluble love between a weaving-maid and a herdsman has been the subject of countless poems and mythic tales in Chinese, Korean, and Japanese literature. In China, the first written account of a weaver woman in the sky appears about 2,700 years ago at approximately 600-800 B.C. Although the myth evolved over centuries and there are now several variations of the theme, the basic and beloved story which you will read below was generally known in China by the time of the Han Dynasty (202 B.C.-220 A.D.).² The beauty of this ancient myth, with its theme of a love so strong it endures for eternity, lent itself to being borrowed throughout the Orient in successive centuries:

Once upon a time in the stars above China the father of a talented, industrious young weaving girl married his daughter to the celestial Oxherd on the opposite shore of the Milky Way³, which in China is called Sky River, The River of Stars, or The River of Heaven. He soon regretted having done so however, because his lovely daughter fell hopelessly in love and no longer wished to ply the shuttle but only to play in her lover's arms, forsaking her duties and abandoning her loom. The herdsman likewise, so perfectly pleased with his bride, left his oxen or cattle to wander where they ought not to go. Angered by the disrespect implied in such delinquency, the weaving girl's father separated the couple for eternity and no amount of pleading could sway his heartless decision. The punishment seemed worse than death and the young bride's anguish became so pitiful that her father eventually softened to his favorite daughter's ceaseless tears, the harsh sentence being amended to include a meeting between the lovers just one night each year on the seventh night of the seventh moon (in China this night is known as *Ch'i-hsi* and in Japan it is called *Tanabata*). As the River of Stars could not be forded, a bridge of magpies was commanded to the heavens by the girl's father to span the distance, thus enabling her to cross over on their backs, to the Herdsman's bank. On this night Herdsman and Weaver-girl are together at last and the people below on earth can only imagine the intensity and tenderness of their love for each other.^{3a}

The Chinese name "Chih Nü" may be translated as "Weaver-girl", but she is also called the Weaving Lady (or Maid), Spinning Maiden, Weaving or Spinning Damsel, Girl of the Han River, and The Goddess of Weavers. Her husband Ch'ien Niu has been called Herdsman, Herd-boy, Oxherd, Ox-leader, Cowherd, and even Cowboy.

In Gertrude Jobes' *Dictionary of Mythology, Folklore and Symbols*, Chih Nü is described as the

Chinese Spinning or Weaving maid.... An astral deity, she is the star Vega in the constellation Lyra, patroness of marriage, typifying the unending longing of love. She is the dawn maiden, comparable to Aurora, and she weaves together or harmonizes the forces of night and day.⁴

There are dozens of sources in Western languages which refer to Chih Nü, yet only Jobes mentions "dawn maiden" in describing her. Within the three volumes of Jobes' dictionary, she is mentioned several times in this context. For example, under "DAWN" Chih Nü is listed among the two pages full of dawn goddesses from world mythology. Following a description of the Roman dawn goddess Aurora she writes "parallels Chinese Chih Nu...." Under "WEAVER DAMSEL" Jobes has written:

Accord of nature, fate spinner. Dawn maid who harmonizes the forces of night and day, or goddess who harmonizes the universe. Arachne, Athena, Aurora, Chih-Nu, Emer, Eos, Orihime, Penelope.⁵

On what basis had Jobes concluded Chih Nü was a dawn maiden? Perhaps she was referring in part to the previously published book by E. T. C. Werner, *Dictionary of Chinese Mythology*, wherein Chih Nü is described as "the daughter of the Sun-god"⁶. Oddly and of significance to our investigation, in Chinese mythology no "Sun-god" exists, yet there is evidence for an ancient Sun-goddess! What became of the weaving maid's Sun-god father (if indeed he ever was her father) remains a mystery. Another reference to her elusive parentage can be found in a Japanese version of the Chinese myth in *Green Willow and Other Japanese Fairy Tales*, wherein Weaving Maid is described as "daughter of a Deity of Light"⁷.

Unaware of any additional textual evidence to corroborate Jobes' and Professor Werner's statements, I was intrigued as to their sources, and felt compelled to investigate the possibility that Chih Nü, as the above authors had suggested, might have been a dawn or sun

maiden. This investigation revealed that the Chinese Weaver-girl does in fact share important attributes with other weaving, dawn, and sun goddesses: fate, spiders, marriage, the number seven, a reluctance to leave their lover's bed, punishment for neglect of duty, and—most significantly—the designation "Daughter of Heaven" shared with a dawn maiden even older than the Greek and Roman: the Indian goddess Ushas (or Uṣas) of the *R̥gveda* (c. 1500 B.C.), whose name is cognate with both Eōs and Aurōra. All three stem from the Indo-European word for dawn **h₂éusōs*, which comes from the Proto-Indo-European term **h₂eues-*, meaning 'to shine'.⁸

About Chih Nü Sinologist Edward H. Schafer writes:

...Consider her many names, some of them, while common enough, almost restricted to poetry. The least charming of these names is one of the oldest—as old perhaps as "Weaving Maid" (Chih nü) itself. It is "Grandchild (or Granddaughter) of Heaven" (T'ien [nü] sun), an epithet that occurs in early Han times....⁹

The reference to Chih Nü as "Granddaughter of Heaven" is recorded in scroll 27, the astronomical chapter of the *Shih chi* (Records of the Scribe), an important historical work by the imperial historian Ssu-ma Ch'ien (Sima Qian) completed c. 90 B.C. Additionally, an early commentator, Hsü Kuang (352-425 A.D.), states that there is a significant textual variant which, instead of saying "Chih-nü is the Granddaughter of Heaven," says "**Chih-nü is [a/the] name of the daughter of heaven**" (*chih-nü t'ien-nü ming yeh*) [emphasis author's]. Ssu-ma Chen (720 A.D.), in his *Suo-yin* [Searching out the Hidden] commentary to the *Shih chi*, cites a text called the *Ching-chou chan* [Divinations of Ching-chou] (date unknown), which states that "**Another name for Chih-nü is Daughter of Heaven**" (*T'ien-nü*).¹⁰ Considering the fact that Chih Nü (Weaver-girl) is a/the or another name for the "Daughter of Heaven," it is intriguing to apply Miriam R. Dexter's Indo-European research to her appellation:

In three of the IE stocks, Baltic, Greek, and Indo-Iranian, the existence of a PIE 'goddess of the dawn' is given additional linguistic support in that she is designated the 'daughter of heaven.' This can be seen in the correspondence of Lith *diēvo duktė*, Grk θυγάτηρ Διός, and OInd *duhitā diváh* which all derive from a PIE **dhug(ha)tēr diuós* 'daughter of heaven'.¹¹

Based on her name alone, the evidence is compelling that this goddess was adopted from another culture's mythology, and this is further strengthened by the additional similarities she shares with Indo-European weaving/dawn goddesses. In addition, Chih Nü's appearance in stellar mythology is not without mystery. According to Cambridge Sinologist Anne Birrell:

Unlike other stellar myths... no myth exists to explain whether Weaver Maid and Draught Ox [later Herdsman] were metamorphosed into stars from suprahuman or human form, or whether the movement and pattern of the stars to which their names became attached inspired their stellar personifications.¹²

RELUCTANCE AND PUNISHMENT OF THE INDO-EUROPEAN DAWN/SUN GODDESSES, REMINISCENT OF CHIH NÜ'S MYTH

The idea of a weaving girl, enjoying the bed and company of her herdsman husband with such abandon as to forgo her celestial duties (and ultimately being punished for it), certainly parallels the "theme of the reluctant dawn [which] is found throughout Indo-European dawn mythology".¹³ Chih Nü's neglect of duty and her eternal faithfulness in love is especially similar to the story of "Eōs, the Greek goddess of the dawn, [who] shares mythology with Aurōra, having the immortal, ever-aging Tīt̄hōnus as lover; Eōs, as Aurōra and other dawn goddesses, is 'reluctant' to leave her bed."¹⁴

Dexter describes the Baltic (Latvian) Auseklis "who like other goddesses of the dawn, was 'reluctant' in the sense that she did not always rise in the morning. In Latvian folksongs, there were various explanations for her absence: she was said to be locked up in a golden chamber, or in Germany sewing velvet skirts."¹⁵ Her Lithuanian cognate was the dawn maiden Aushrinė who was another "daughter of heaven."¹⁶ Interestingly, both Aushrinė and Ušas kindled the fire for the sun.¹⁷

We shall see later that Ušas was also a weaver and, as with the Chinese weaving goddess, she was punished severely for neglecting her "weaving" duties. For example, in the *Rgveda*, the tardy dawn goddess Ušas suffered an attack on her chariot which was crushed by Indra as a warning to her, lest she forsake her morning duty again. In *RV* 79.9, her devoted supplicant expresses concern for her welfare and beseeches, "Shine forth, O daughter of the heavens, do not delay the task, lest the sun should burn you with his ray like a hostile thief."¹⁸

SOLAR SPINNERS AND WEAVERS

Among other solar goddesses whose attributes included spindle and loom there is the Nordic Sól, "the personification of the sun",¹⁹ sometimes called "bright maid of Heaven" or "bright bride of heaven", whose two horses Arvak (early dawn) and Alsid (scorching heat) drew the sun's chariot across the sky.²⁰ In Homer's *Odyssey* the solar horses who pulled the dawn chariot for Eōs were (almost identically), "Daybright" and "Firebright". Interestingly, Sól's father's name, "Mundifare, is sometimes translated as "spinner of the world."²¹

About Sól, (Sun) Patricia Monaghan writes

'Mistress Sun,' the ancient Scandinavians used to sing,
'sits on a bare stone and spins on her golden distaff for
the hour before the sun rises.'²²

Karl Kerényi prefaces his translation of the same song about the Nordic Sun Goddess in his brilliant essay from *Goddesses of Sun and Moon* with:

In that strangely mythological cultural field of the north where the Latvian songs to the sun and the runes of the mytho-logical epic *Kalevala* were kept alive, spinning and weaving were the characteristic activities of the Sun Goddess's large kinship group.²³

The lovely Finnish sun-maiden named Päivätär, in the *Kalevala*, is the daughter of the (female) sun Päivä who weaves shimmering cloths of gold and silver on the edge of a rainbow (as opposed to the edge of the Milky Way, where Chih Nü weaves).

Similarly, in ancient northern European (Baltic) folk songs and mythology, there is Saules Māte, "Mother Sun," and her daughter Saules meita, "Daughter of the Sun." While it cannot always be determined in her poetry and songs if it is mother or daughter who is being referred to, Saule "is visualized as she spins silken threads in the foliage of an apple tree,"²⁴ and the shuttle of her loom was made of gold.²⁵ Sheena McGrath writes that "She [Saule] also rules all things feminine, including weaving, spinning..." and that "She spins gold, silver and bronze, and dresses in dazzling silk clothing embroidered in silver and gold."²⁶ As stated earlier, the Chinese Weaving goddess Chih Nü was patroness of marriage, and the song below implies Saule had a similar role:

She seems to have a connection with marriage generally,
as in the following song (Jouet, 1989):

Saule was weaving her crown
Seated in the sun,
Weave, Saule, give me one,
I must go to the house of the suitor.²⁷

Saule resembles Sól, Eōs, and Uṣas because "she rides across the sky in a carriage drawn by yellow horses... [and especially Helios when she] rides nightly in a golden boat."²⁸

The now extinct Chinese sun goddess Hsi-ho, also called "The Woman" (whom we will examine in Part 2 of this article), also rides in a horse-drawn chariot across the sky. In this Baltic folk song Saule resembles Usas who, as we will see below, was thought to change the color of the sky by spreading her weaving out across it, "Do you know why in the evening our sky is turning red? Saule hangs her silken garment in the winds near her bed."²⁹

Another daughter of the sun who wove lived on the magical island of Aea in the *Odyssey*. She was the "fair-tressed" goddess Circe. With celestial voice she passed the days in her palace singing at the loom and the pattern which she wove was observed to be a great web, shining, beautiful, and glorious.³⁰ This mischievous daughter of Helios (the Sun), was apparently content to reign on the island of dawn while leaving the laborious chariot duties to her paternal aunt Eōs but, as McGrath points out, "A fragment of Hesiod (1966: verse 390) says that she [Circe] rode with the sun in his chariot (Goodison, 1989)."³¹ McGrath surmises that Circe's shining fabrics might be sunbeams which she makes for her father and that "Her location suggests that she was a goddess of morning."³²

One of the most endearing goddesses of all time and certainly the most frequently mentioned and beloved goddess in the *R̥gveda* is the dawn goddess Uṣas, the "daughter of heaven". Her chariot was drawn by seven horses or oxen and, when she wove the morning light, the colors of the sunrise each morning were, metaphorically, the fibers being worked on her sky loom as in hymn 1.92.6 which reads, "...Growing bright, Uṣas is making her webs."³³ This is interpreted by Sanskritist Professor Walter Maurer to mean, "the garment of color that Uṣas 'weaves' each day"³⁴ and then (as in *RV*1.92. stanzas 2 and 5) "spreads across the sky."³⁵

Very importantly, Uṣas and Chih Nū share a connection to the number 7 which, as we shall see, is the number of "moves" Chih Nū makes in a day, and, while there is no consensus among experts as to why the Chinese weaver girl makes her 7 moves, the number 7 was commonly (almost exclusively) used in solar mythology in both ancient India and Greece.

THE ORIGIN OF WEAVING/SPINNING GODDESSES

In her exactingly detailed book, *The Language of The Goddess*, the late world-renowned archaeologist and prehistorian, Maria Gimbutas, provides ample evidence—through spindle whorls and loom weight decorations—for a decidedly European origin to the “patroness of spinning and weaving,” which can be traced as far back in time as the Early Neolithic (7th millennium B.C.) in Europe. In her invaluable chapter titled “Giver of Crafts: Associations with Spinning, Weaving, Metallurgy, and Musical Instruments,” she writes:

The relation between the Bird Goddess and the art of spinning is evidenced by the chevron and the chevron combined with meander found on Neolithic and Copper Age spindle whorls. (FIGURE 104) [Transylvania; 5200-5000 B.C.].... Many spindle whorls of the 6th and 5th millennia B.C. bear inscriptions including V's, M's, and zig-zags; these may be dedications to the patroness of spinning. [FIGURE 105, Thessaly; 5000-4500 B.C.]³⁶

The link between weaving and the Goddess is evidenced by the appearance of her signs and features on loom-weights. (FIGURE 106) [Romania and Hungary, 5000-4500 B.C.].... One of the earliest specimens, dated to 5800-5600 B.C., is from Bulgaria.... Further linking the Neolithic Goddess with weaving are numerous wall paintings of textiles at Çatal Hüyük [A Neolithic stratified settlement tell at Konya Plain, in Turkey].... Mellaart, the site's excavator, believes that this Goddess, like Athena afterwards, was already regarded as the patroness of weaving (Mellaart 1963: 82).³⁷

This “Old European” goddess of spinning and weaving is further evidenced by votive offerings in the form of inscribed spindle-whorls which “are known from many Vinča [14 km. East of Belgrade] and East Balkan sites, spindles having been among the votive offerings in Chalcolithic Old Europe [c. 5500-3500 B.C.E.] as they were in later periods.”³⁸ About these offerings she writes, “Man had to persuade the divinity he worshiped to be propitious to him.... The maker's name, the name of the goddess, or a sort of contract or promise, was sometimes inscribed on a figurine, plaque, spindle-whorl or miniature vessel.”³⁹

Based on Marija Gimbutas' seminal work on Neolithic through Chalcolithic Old

Europe, one can deduce that through cultural contact with neighboring Greece⁴⁰ and the importance of cloth and weaving to that society, the Goddess Athena's legendary textile expertise may have been inspired by the Old European goddess of spinning and weaving. This is certainly true of Neith, the Goddess of Weaving in Egypt, whom Miriam Robbins Dexter describes as an "historic descendant" of the Neolithic European goddess.⁴¹ It should be noted here that much research has been done lately regarding Egypt and its role in history as a center for commerce and trade in ancient times. Clearly, Goddess borrowing, supplantation, and metamorphosing were taking place in Egypt and in every other major center of convergency. Not only were the myths and deities blending, but the cultures and people as well. Barry Kemp writes in his article "Why Empires Rise" that "So successful did the assimilation of foreigners prove to be that, from the end of the New Kingdom onwards, one has to consider carefully the question of Egyptian ethnicity and what it means by the term 'ancient Egyptians.'"⁴² At first Neith existed for several millennia as a warrior goddess and protector and it was not until the seventh century B.C. "In the Saite Period, when trade in wool was important, [that] she became a patroness of the domestic arts, her arrow attribute being taken as a weaver's shuttle."⁴³

Later her attribute became a weaver's shuttle, an ideogram of her name, which she sometimes wears on her head as a distinguishing emblem. When, with the advent of the Sais dynasty [middle seventh century B.C., the 26th dynasty], her preponderance was established, she played a part in many cosmogonic myths. She was made a sky-goddess.... She was the great weaver who wove the world with her shuttle as a woman weaves cloth.⁴⁴

In the beginning of time, it was said, Neith took up the shuttle, strung the sky on her loom, and wove the world. Then she wove nets and from the primordial waters pulled up living creatures, including men and women.⁴⁵

Neith holds in one hand the ankh (the symbol of life) which symbolizes "the sun's gift of life to the world"⁴⁶ and "Occasionally she was represented as the great cow mother who bore Ra daily."⁴⁷ This is reminiscent of Uṣas, the weaver of dawn in the *R̥gveda*, who was similarly said to be the mother of both cows and the sun.

Also of interest is that Athena's epithet Phallas, "the Maiden," is likewise an epithet of Neith "Net Sher-t."⁴⁸ Miriam Robbins Dexter, in her indispensable source book titled *Whence the Goddesses*, equates Neith with Athena and Artemis and states that she "bears

similarities in both mythology and iconography to Greek female figures."⁴⁹ *The New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology* concurs saying, "Neith, indeed, appears in a double role: as a warrior-goddess and as a woman skilled in the domestic arts. This is why she was identified with Athene, who also played this double role."⁵⁰ Neith and Athena further have in common their connection to the spider. In Egyptian mythology the spider is an attribute of the goddess Neith as weaver of the world. In Greek mythology it is associated with Athene.⁵¹

THE SOLAR SPIDER

Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant have written that "Spider symbolism as a whole forms part of the Indo-European cultural heritage...."⁵² The Sanskrit word for spider, *ūrnavābhi*, is derived from the word *vabh-*, to weave, and may be literally translated as "wool-weaver."⁵³ Additionally, from the Indo-European root word *webh* "to weave" is derived Old English *web*, which means "woven fabric." This gives "Modern English WEB, now most often used to mean a spider's web, but still also used by weavers in the original technical sense."⁵⁴

About the "solar spider", various authors have observed that the spider's web symbolically represents the rays of the sun⁵⁵ and, "Because it produces the fibers of its web from itself, just as the sun produces its rays, it is also a sun symbol...."⁵⁶ It has also been said that "In general the spider represents the sun, or a Great Mother as weaver of destiny. A spider controls its web from the center just as the sun generates rays from its fiery center."⁵⁷ "The spider at the centre of its web...can be...the sun surrounded by its rays, radiating in all directions...."⁵⁸ Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy, the brilliant art historian and mythographer (among many other things), often mentions the metaphysical concept in the *sūtrātman* doctrine of the "solar spider" who spins his web of seven rays.⁵⁹ About these rays Coomaraswamy writes, "In weaving, the warp threads are the 'rays' of the Intelligible Sun (in many primitive looms they still proceed from a single point)...."⁶⁰

The spider is thought of as industrious and capable, the epitome of self-generating creative power. It is also, however, a symbol of fate, being therefore invoked or alluded to in mythology in many tales involving "Cloth, thread, loom, spindle and distaff, whatever is used in spinning and weaving, all these are so many symbols of futurity. They are used to denote all that rules or intervenes in our fate."⁶¹ In his *Historiae Naturalis* (c. A.D. 77) Pliny the Elder observed that "presages and prognostications were made from their manner of weaving their webs,"⁶² a belief also practiced centuries later in China, as we shall see below.

CHIH NÜ THE SPIDER

In his *Pacing the Void*, Edward Schafer cites many passages from classical Chinese texts, several of them being of particular interest, as they depict the popular notion that Chih Nü the goddess of weaving could incarnate in spider form. Schafer explains that on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month

it was customary for girls and young women to contend in tests of their skills in the bosom of their family, especially in fancy needlework, applied to colorful and elegant patterns. There were also technical contests in such difficult feats as needle-threading. The goddess herself could normally be expected to be present in the shape of a house spider, and if she wove a web over a gourd it was a lucky portent indeed. On these happy domestic occasions, the young men vied in the composition of literary pieces on appropriate themes. As the girls' contest was called "Begging for Skill" (*ch'i ch'iao*), presumably from the goddess, so that of the boys was styled "Composing Texts on Begging for Skill" (*t'i ch'iao wen*)—a natural interweaving of text, texture, and textile, as all participants were fully aware.⁶³

The T'ang era "Text on Begging for Skill" cited below, by Liu Tsung-yüan (773-819 A.D.) illustrates how people's perception of the goddess changed over time. In one of the famous poems from *The Nineteen Old Poems* of the first or second centuries A.D., Chih Nü was portrayed simply as a woman to be pitied, whose uncontainable tears of longing stream down her face, and whose "pattern's never finished".⁶⁴ Yet in the T'ang era (although still pitied) she took on a more powerful persona, that of a goddess whose loom and skills could rival even Homer's divine Athena, the Greek patroness of spinners and weavers:

Heaven's grandchild,
Monopolist of skill in the Sky;
She interweaves Template with Armillary—
Warp and woof of starry chronograms,
Capable of forming patterned figures
In fretted brocades for God's body.⁶⁵

Commenting on this text in *Pacing the Void*, Schafer writes:

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This is truly cosmic weaving with the archaic astronomical instruments (Template and Armillary) functioning as weaver's reed and shuttle, producing a fabric patterned in the geometric figures that correspond to the numinous asterisms. In effect Weaver Maid weaves the sky patterns (*t'ien wen*) that have such a powerful influence on the destiny of men and nations, while the activities of the mortal young ladies on Seventh Evening is a pallid imitation of her gigantic task.⁶⁶

In this portion of the retelling of a "Seventh Night" (seventh night of the seventh moon) party at the winter palace of Li Lung-chi, a spider, the weaving goddess incarnate, was used for divination, yet was simultaneously the diviner herself. About the women at the party the author observes:

Each of them also caught a spider in a little lidded box; in the morning they opened it and looked to see whether the spider's web was loose or tight-woven, as a token of the extent of their skill. If it was tight they said their skills were numerous. If it was loose they said their skills were few. Most common people do the like.⁶⁷

In one poet's imagination it is the morsels found in spiders' webs which Chih Nü offers to the birds as recompense for their extraordinary labor that allows her to ford the River of Heaven (the Milky Way) one night each year. Written by Li Shang-yin in the mid-ninth century, the two lines below are from a poem entitled "The Evening of the Seventh in the Year 851":

How could she not intend to pay back the magpies?
All she needs to do is seek the exquisite threads from the spiders.⁶⁸

WEAVERS OF GREECE

Three of the women in Homer's *Odyssey* (8th Century B.C.) are relevant to the investigation of Chih Nü's origin: Circe the daughter of the sun god Helios whom we discussed earlier, the goddess Athena, patron of weavers and spinners, and Penelope who bears an uncanny resemblance to Chih Nü, in that both Penelope and Chih Nü are known for their constant weaving which is never finished and their faithfulness to and longing for their

far-away husbands.

ATHENA, SPIDERS, STONES, AND OTHER SIMILARITIES

Athena the Greek Goddess of Weaving also shares in common with Chih Nü an association with the spider which comes from the classic tale of a contest of skill related in the Roman poet Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In this dramatic piece of mythopoetry the supposed origin of spiders is explained. After the most famous battle of the looms in history (who could resist such exciting narrative as "No more delay: each to her corner gone, they set their looms, and stretch the warp-threads on"?), Arachne the young and talented daughter of a wool dyer is transformed into a spider by the enraged and affronted goddess of weaving:

Gone at the touch are hair and ears and nose;
A tiny head on tiny body shows;
Long feelers at the sides for legs are spread;
The rest is belly, whence she spins her thread;
And as a spider, with her ancient skill,
Arachne plies her tireless weaving still.⁶⁹

More interesting still is that, curiously, Athena also shares with Chih Nü and Chih Nü's Japanese counterpart (who was brought from China to Japan in 749-759 A.D. and re-named Tanabata tsu me)⁷⁰ the mysterious phenomenon of fallen rocks from heaven.

The oldest representations of Athene were the palladia. Originally palladia were stones which were said to have fallen from the sky and to which protective power was attributed. Later these stones were replaced by statues in wood (xoana) which had the same celestial origin.⁷¹

For instance, a report made to The Asiatic Society of Japan as late as 1882 entitled "On Two Japanese Meteorites" relates how two heavenly rocks which fell in 1744 had been returned to the ancestors of the family who found them following the closure of the temple of Shokujo (Tanabata tsu me), which is the Japanese name for the Chinese weaving goddess. The stones

...used formerly to be among the offerings made in the temple... on her festival, the 7th day of the 7th month. There is mention of them having fallen on this day in the year, but they were connected with her worship by the belief that they

had fallen from the shores of the Silver River, Heavenly River or Milky Way, after they had been used by her as weights with which to steady her loom.⁷²

This belief in heavenly loom stones surely arrived in Japan with Chih Nü's myth during the T'ang dynasty. In these lines from a T'ang era (600-900 A.D.) poem by the Chinese poet Po Chü-i entitled "I Ask the Stone that Props my Zither", an identical belief is expressed that the "fallen star stone" (*yün shih*) in the poet's possession once propped the loom of the daughter of heaven. "Doubtless you fell out of space.... But propping a loom surely does not equal propping a zither. I carried you away and wiped you off..."⁷³

Other similarities between Athena and Chih Nü include a connection to oxen. It was said that Athena taught man how to attach oxen to the yolk and that she also protected oxen, so it is perhaps ironic that oxen which had never been yoked were consequently sacrificed to her.⁷⁴

Not only were Athena and Chih Nü instructresses in the art of weaving and prayed to by women hoping for divine intervention in acquiring their skills, but both goddesses were also tasked with providing clothes for the gods. As Elizabeth Barber points out in *Women's Work, The First 20,000 Years: Women, Cloth, and Society in Early Times*, "Wherever divine weaving was to be done, ancient Greek storytellers looked to Athena."⁷⁵

Mircea Eliade discusses the Greek goddess in his *A History of Religious Ideas*, reminding us that (like the other weavers already remarked on: Uşas, Chih Nü and Arachne) "Athena is the only Olympian who has no mother. The Homeric Hymn to Athena (lines 4-5) briefly recalls that Zeus bore her from his own head..."⁷⁶ Additionally Eliade views Hesiod's oft-quoted version from *Theogony* of the "conception" (wherein Metis, while pregnant with Athena, is swallowed by Zeus) as "a late addition" and adds "...the original myth would simply have described the appearance of Athena on the summit of Mount Olympus."⁷⁷ Regarding the embellished version in *Theogony* Eliade writes that "Homer does not allude to this myth... but he calls Athena 'the daughter of the powerful father' (*obrimopatēr*)."⁷⁸ Athena has several things in common with both Uşas and Chih Nü: their weaving, the number 7, oxen, fallen stones from heaven, and the fact that they are motherless. Additionally, Athena and Uşas share the fact that both their fathers were sky gods. Aside from being linguistically cognate, Zeus, his roman counterpart Jūpiter, and Dyaus (the father of Uşas), all stem from the Indo-European Sky god **dieus phater* 'sky father'.⁷⁹ About Zeus (and Jūpiter) the *Encyclopedia of Indo-European Culture* states:

Justine T. Snow, "The Spider's Web: Evidence for the Indo-European Origin of Two Ancient Chinese Deities," *Sino-Platonic Papers*, 118 (June, 2002)

They were both clearly sky gods... who have also accrued the roles of weather deities, e.g., thunder, lightning, rain....⁸⁰

Some such belief perhaps influenced Gertrude Jobs in writing her multiple descriptions of Athena as a "Dawn Maid". Jobs characterizes the birth of Athena—from the head of her father—in this way: "The virgin dawn sprang from the sky's forehead..."⁸¹ Jobs also offers as explanation for the morning bird, the cock, being sacred to this Greek goddess: "the first of her duties was to arouse men from slumber..."⁸² and in one remarkable statement she asserts:

She [Athena] is also spoken of as the daughter of Hephaestus, Poseidon, and the Titan Pallas. As the daughter of Hephaestus she became the mistress of Prometheus and the mother of the sun god Phoebus Apollo, who usually is said to be the son of Leto, night, rather than Athena, dawn. Another legend makes her the mother of Lychnus, who reappears elsewhere as Phaethon, son of Helios.⁸³

Additionally, Athena shares the number 7 in common with Chih Nü. In *The Mystery of Numbers* Annemarie Schimmel notes that in the fifth century B.C. Philolaus wrote that the number seven is "comparable to the goddess Athena..."⁸⁴

In ancient Greece, 7 had an important place through its connection with Apollo and Athena.... Since 7 is a prime number, neither producing nor produced... it [7] seemed especially fitting for Athena, the virgin who sprang from the head of Zeus.⁸⁵

PENELOPE OF ITHACA

In the *Odyssey*, Penelope (like Chih Nü) typifies the devoted and faithful wife, separated indefinitely from her beloved husband Odysseus, yet always waiting, and while she is waiting, constantly weaving. Also like Chih Nü, in the "Ta Tung" ode of the *Poetry Classic (Shih Ching)* and in the "19 Old Poems" poem below, Penelope's weaving is never completed. For example, in these translations from excerpts of a Chinese poem dated roughly to 140-190 A.D.,⁸⁶ Chih Nü is described as,

bright bright, the Lady of the River of Heaven
clack clack, plying the shuttle of her loom,

all day long—but the pattern's never finished....⁸⁷

White, white girl of River Han,
Click, clack ply her loom's shuttle.
All day long she never ends her pattern....⁸⁸

Brightly shines the Lady of the Han River...
Click, click go the wheels of her spinning-loom.
At the end of the day she has not finished her task....⁸⁹

Similarly we find Penelope in 800 B.C. weaving endlessly by day, yet in faithfulness to her absent husband, never completing her textile

She set up a great loom in her palace, and set to weaving a web of threads long and fine.... Thereafter in the daytime she would weave at her great loom, but in the night she would have torches set by, and undo it.... and we found her in the act of undoing her glorious weaving.⁹⁰

Chih Nü shares so much in common with these weaving women of the *Odyssey* she appears to be an amalgamation of Athena the goddess of weaving and Penelope, the epitome of faithfulness through separation. Attesting to Penelope's loyalty and revealing her heartfelt sensitivity to the loss of her husband even after twenty years is this passage in Book 19, wherein she describes a dream to Odysseus about her cherished pet geese. Symbolically representing eternal devotion—as geese are known to mate for life—when in her dream the geese are killed she says "I wept in my dream till all my maids gathered round me, so piteously was I grieving...."⁹¹ When the long awaited reunion of husband and wife finally came, both dawn and the goddess of weaving played a part in it:

so welcome was her husband to her as she looked upon him,
and she could not let go from the embrace of her white arms.
Now Dawn of the rosy fingers would have dawned on their weeping,
had not the gray-eyed goddess Athene planned it otherwise.
She held the long night back at the outward edge,
she detained Dawn of the golden throne by the ocean,
and would not let her harness her fast-footed horses who bring the daylight to people:
Lamos and Phaethon, the Dawn's horses,
who carry her.⁹²

FINLAND'S KALEVA(LA) LAND OF WEAVERS & HERDSMEN

In the Finnish/Baltic Finnic epic poems contained in *The Kalevala*, Päivätär is the "Sun's fair daughter" who sits on a rainbow's edge weaving scintillating garments of gold with her constant companion Kuntar the moon maiden, whose cloth is silver. Their relationship recalls the Vedic Uṣas and her sister Ratri (the starry night) who "move incessantly one after the other along the same path..."⁹³ Invariably when Päivätär is mentioned it is with shuttle and spindle and (like the other weaving goddesses mentioned) she is often called upon when special weaving or spinning is required. In different translations because of her weaving skills she is called "Päivätär, maid accomplished", "Sunmaid, skillful damsel", or "Sun Spirit, competent maid."

She appears to be a manifestation of Kankahator, the "Fabric Spirit" or "Goddess of Weaving" who is only vaguely mentioned in one line out of 22,795 in the *Kalevala*, which declares "None can weave save Kankahator."⁹⁴ By this the hero Väinämöinen must be implying: none can weave without the grace of Kankahator, or, that one must actually be a fabric spirit in order to weave as shown in the translation of the same line by Magoun, "Weaving [is] the work of Fabric Spirits."⁹⁵ We can then suppose that Päivätär herself is a "Fabric Spirit." Kankahator is described in Elias Lönnrot's *The Kalevala, or Poems of the Kalevala District* as:

Fabric Spirit, personification of the art of weaving, based on kangas (gen. Kankahan) 'cloth' with the feminine suffix-tar....⁹⁶

W. F. Kirby says that "—tar is the usual feminine suffix in Finnish, and is generally to be understood to mean 'daughter of—'."⁹⁷

An explanation for the etymology of Kankahatar's name, if not also her appearance into Finnish mythology, is given below:

The name of the goddess Kankahatar derives from the noun *kangas* : stem *kankaha-* (modern Finnish *kankaa-*) 'woven material, textile'. This is a Germanic loanword with an age of no more than 2,000 years on the Finnic side.... The borrowing suggests that certain types of textiles were introduced to the Finnic part of the Baltic region by early Germans.⁹⁸

In the *Kalevala*, Päivä the sun is Päivätär's mother. Her gender being feminine, this daughter of the sun may provide evidence for meaningful contacts between the Indo-European and Finno-Ugric cultures. In his *The Home of the Indo-Europeans*, Harold H. Bender points out that Finno-Ugrians and Indo-Europeans "must very early have come in contact, as is shown by prehistoric borrowings on the part of the former."⁹⁹

As Miriam Robbins Dexter has written in her article "Dawn-Maid and Sun Maid: Celestial Goddesses among the Proto-Indo-Europeans,"

...in northern Indo-European mythologies, ...the deity of the sun, has feminine gender.... Thus, in Baltic, Slavic, Germanic and Celtic one finds female sun deities."¹⁰⁰

Päivätär also has in common a tradition Dexter describes in the same article, that is, "in Indo-European myth, the child of the sun is clearly female."¹⁰¹

The Finnish sun-maid is endearing and resembles the Chinese Weaver-girl with her constant weaving. In Rune 41 of the *Kalevala*, however, Päivätär becomes so enraptured by the intoxicating melody coming from the harp or *kantele* which Väinämöinen the hero (who as a boy was a herdsman) is playing that she drops her shuttle and cloth for a time to appreciate the heavenly tune. Every living thing—animal and mythological—has gathered, swum, or flown to hear the irresistibly joyous music. The flocking birds, the eagle, and swan bringing to mind the bridge of birds that fill the heavens on Seventh Night, and the Herdboy star Altair (the eagle), the Weaver-girl star Vega (the eagle), and Deneb (in Cygnus, the swan) which together form the Summer Triangle¹⁰²:

Winged birds of air whirled and fluttered down to marvel at the wonder. Eagle in her eyrie left her fledglings in the nest... swans fluttered from snowy marshes.... Hundreds, thousands of birds fluttered in the air and flocked to the shoulders of the father of joy, old Väinämöinen.¹⁰³

And the birds of air assembled,
Those upon two wings that raise them,
And with all their speed came flying,
All in wonder and rejoicing.
High in air there soared the eagle,
Came the swans from snow-wreathed marshes,
All the twittering birds assembled,
Singing-birds flocked round by hundreds,

And in thousands they assembled,¹⁰⁴

Reminiscent of the Weaver-girl Herd-boy myth, flocking birds in the Finnish heavens actually became their River of Heaven or the Milky Way which the Finns call:

...the pretty **Linnunrata**, the Birds' Way, as the winged spirits flit thither to the free and happy land, or because the united bird-songs once were turned into a cloud of snow-white dovelets still seen overhead.¹⁰⁵

Unlike the weaver Athena whose dignified station in the Greek Pantheon called for restraint and poise, Päivätär was a playful girl and distractible, a skillful sun-maiden who "wove daylight"¹⁰⁶ in pure joy while sitting on rainbows and little red clouds. Chih Nü was no less skillful, but viewed her weaving as that which separated her from her one true joy in life (her herdsman). The image of Chih Nü in later Chinese poetry is that of a competent weaver who was at first too much in love to ply her shuttle and then so filled with longing for Ch'ien Niu that her work is never finished. She is on tiptoe at the River of Stars, hoping for a glimpse of him or back at her loom, going through the motions (like Penelope), but never really making any progress. Päivätär too shares that quality of the charming, yet preoccupied, girl who is easily taken to heart because she, like Chih Nü, represents a goddess whose humanity is endearing. To illustrate this, in the same Rune quoted above, #41, just after the birds come flocking, Sun Spirit (and her weaving friend Moon Spirit) are so taken by the beautiful melody that they forget their weaving entirely, actually dropping their shuttles and combs:

That Moon Spirit, lovely virgin, Sun Spirit; competent maid,
were holding their weaver's battens, lifting up their heddles,
weaving cloth of gold, thumping off cloth of silver
on the edge of a red cloud, on the side of a long rainbow.
When indeed they got to hear the sound of that charming
instrument, the batten now escaped from their grasp,
the shuttle slipped from their hands, the gold threads broke,
the silver heddles sounded softly.¹⁰⁷

E'en the daughters of Creation,
Of the air the charming maidens,
Gathered to rejoice and wonder,
To the kantele to listen....

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There were Kuutar, slender damsel;
Päivätär, that maid accomplished;
Casting with their hands the shuttle,
Drawing threads that they were weaving,
As they wove the golden fabric,
And they wove the threads of silver,
High upon the red cloud-borders,
On the borders of the rainbow.
But when they began to listen
To the notes of charming music,
From their hands they let the comb fall,
Cast from out their hands the shuttle,
And the golden bands were broken,
And the silver shaft was broken.¹⁰⁸

Päivätär's resemblances to other Dawn and Sun Maidens remind us that mythology was being shared and passed between all cultures along the Silk Road, regardless of the fact that people were separated by race, religion, language, customs, and geography. Or as the author of *Kalevala Mythology*, Juha Pentikäinen wonders "...What portion of ancient motifs found in the Finnish runes is native to the Finns and how much has been borrowed from neighboring peoples.... Of course, tradition does not migrate without contacts between peoples. Trade and cultural exchange has been a significant aspect of those bonds which Finno-Urgic cultures have had with other peoples.... Of particular interest in this regard is the influence of the ancient Central Asian herding peoples on Finno-Urgic cultures."^{108a}

The most significant ancient cultural route extending from Europe to the Far East was the Silk Road. It led from the Mediterranean via the Black and Caspian seas and through the cantons of China to the shores of the Pacific. Numerous myths found in the *Kalevala* were also told along this route.¹⁰⁹

Pentikäinen goes into greater detail in his chapter on "Ancient Cultural Contacts Along the Silk Road."

Herodotus (485-425 B.C.), among others, told of a Silk Road which began at the mouth of the River Don and extended through the territories of numerous peoples, including the Sarmatians and the Scythians. An even earlier source exists

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in the form of a book written by Aristeeas in the decade 630 B.C. At approximately 1000 B.C., a herding culture, well suited to arid conditions, developed along the Silk Road. This area then became inhabited by numerous high cultures, including the Scythians (800-300 B.C.), whose territory extended from Lake Baikal to the Volga River.... These migrations had a significant influence on Europe. As a result of trade along the Silk Road, numerous cultural innovations from the peoples of the steppes became known in Europe, including trousers.¹¹⁰

Citing recent Scythian burial finds in the Volga, Oka, and Kama river regions, "where it has been hypothesized that Finno-Ugric peoples also lived during the final millennium B.C.", Pentikäinen advances the idea that, "Based on this evidence, it has been conjectured that, from the sixth to the second centuries B.C., the Finno-Ugric peoples moving about the areas surrounding the tributaries of the Volga River had extensive contacts with cultures of the steppes and Silk Road."¹¹¹

At the same time that Elias Lönnrott was endeavoring to piece together the runes or ancient oral poems/songs for their preservation into written form (which came to be known as the *Kalevala*), previously untranslated Indian texts were only just becoming available for study. Lönnrott was startled by the similarity he discovered between the Finnic and Vedic cosmogony, especially the idea of the cosmic egg creation myth. In this myth, the "Daughter of Nature" comes down from her celestial dwelling place to float upon the sea for seven centuries.¹¹² As mentioned earlier, this aspect of seven as the sacred number in Finno-Ugric cosmogony is shared with Iranian mythology. Giorgio de Santillana and Hertha von Dechend, the authors of *Hamlet's Mill; An essay on myth & the frame of time*, have drawn parallels between characters in the *Kalevala*, and Iranian and Chinese divinities. Where the present author sees something of winsome Päivätär in Chih Nü, they find the *Kalevala*'s hero smith "Ilmarinen" in the "Iranian God of Time, Zurvan akarana."¹¹³ In fact, comparative mythologist Joseph Campbell asserts in his *Oriental Mythology* that (speaking of the period c. 500 B.C.-c. 500 A.D.)

Both overland and by sea, the ways between Rome, Persia, India, and China were opened in this period to an ever-increasing commerce, and to such a degree that nowhere in the hemisphere was there any longer the possibility of a local mythological development in isolation. The exchange of ideas was multifarious. And yet, there was in each domain a

local force (which I have termed the style or signature) that worked as a transforming factor on every import...¹¹⁴

UṢAS, VEDIC GODDESS OF THE DAWN

In India, a land not relatively far from China and certainly within traveling distance in approximately 1000 B.C., beautiful verses were being sung about the lovely Dawn Goddess, Uṣas. As she (dawn) rose, she (metaphorically) would spread out her colorful textile (the many shades of colored light which make up the sunrise). Delightful and glowing with happiness she grows ever brighter as she dutifully (and sometimes reluctantly) weaves her webs of light. In *R̥gveda* 1.92.5-6 "...the daughter of the sky sets up her many-colored light.... Radiant Dawn spreads her webs."¹¹⁵ This has also been translated as "...the daughter of heaven has spread her splendid luster.... Growing bright, Uṣas is making her webs."¹¹⁶

Occasionally, Uṣas was spoken of in triplicate dawn form.¹¹⁷ Sanskritist Walter Maurer gives an explanation for this, "Incidentally, in the translation the plural 'Dawns' is used wherever the name of the goddess of the dawn occurs in the plural in the original, elsewhere her name Uṣas is employed, as the Vedic word ill lends itself to pluralization in English."¹¹⁸

*RV*1.92.2 refers to Uṣas in her plural dawn form and has been translated by A. A. MacDonell as "The ruddy dawns weave their web (of light) as of old."¹¹⁹ Maurer translates the same line *RV*1.92.2 more pleasingly as "The dawns have made their webs as of yore: ruddy, they have spread a gleaming luster."¹²⁰ About his translation Maurer has written

'The Dawns have made their webs as of yore': by 'webs' is intended to be meant, as also in stanza 6, the garment of color that Uṣas 'weaves' each day and spreads across the sky.¹²¹

Maurer discusses the confusion which has led to the differing interpretations of the above line and ends by explaining his decision to translate the Vedic word in question as web: "The meaning 'web' suggested here is, however, founded on the assumption that the Vedic word is formed from a different root-element, meaning 'weave.'"¹²² Sanskritist Ludo Roucher concurs, and I am grateful for his pointing out what *Grossmann's Vedic Dictionary* says about the operative *vayunni* in *RV*1.92.2:

"mit *kr* ein Werk, Gewebe machen, meist bildlich von Licht."

The German may be translated roughly as "when used with the verb *kr*, it means to make a fabric, mostly metaphorically of light." I find it important to make this point about Uṣas being a weaver of light, because unfortunately very little has ever been written about or made of the fact. I gratefully acknowledge Professor Mair's kind assistance in originally referring me to the above references *RV* 1.92.2 and 1.92.6 for Usas as a "weaver of light." This little-known but important aspect of her function has suffered neglect (possibly from mistranslation) and so has remained practically unknown. Indeed, all encyclopedic dictionaries of Gods and Goddesses fail to mention her "sky weaving," therefore the translations and glosses on Uṣas by such scholars as Maurer, O'Flaherty, A. A. MacDonell, and ^{Ludo} Rocher are extremely valuable.

Another interesting parallel between Uṣas and a kindred, yet far-flung goddess, is that both she and Circe (the daughter of the sun) were described as singing as they wove:

The dawns have spread their webs in the ancient way;
The tawny ones have set forth the glowing light.
They sing like women busy at their tasks.¹²³

singing most beautifully as she worked at her loom,
making a web so fine, so soft, and of such dazzling
colors as no one but a goddess could weave.¹²⁴

In the *Gathas of Zarathushtra* and in the *Rgveda*, it is the singer of hymns who was metaphorically the weaver of hymns. For example, from the Vedas, "Sever not my thread while weaving a hymn (*RV*. ii. 28.5)."¹²⁵ In Sanskrit, "√*va-* (*vi-*) is often used in the sense of 'singing', lit. 'weaving (a hymn)'...."¹²⁶ In both the *Gathas of Zarathushtra* and in the *Rgveda*, verbs derived from the root *vā* are used in the special sense of "to weave a hymn."¹²⁷ The perception of singing as weaving is also equally deeply embedded in the Greek tradition.

...[W]eaving was closely linked in the Greek mind to singing....
...[T]his link led naturally to the Greek lyric poets' use of metaphors derived from the art of weaving to describe their own art as a "web of song."¹²⁸

One last interesting similarity between Chih Nü and Usas is found in a lengthy, esoteric, early seventh-century poem depicting the wonders of the Milky Way written by Hsieh Yen, titled "Ming Ho fu" (Rhapsody on the Luminous Ho).¹²⁹ In the poem there are

a few lines in which the Chinese weaving goddess Chih Nü appears, yet oddly, she is described as "Made up with rosy dawn-light, dimpled with stars."¹³⁰ In the same poem her description "with every sort of bangle and shining bauble" resembles Uṣas in *Rgveda* 1.92.4 where, "Like a dancing girl, she puts on bright ornaments." Alfred Hillebrandt writes:

The fact that Usas is compared to a dancer and that RV X.29.2 speaks of her dance was taken as a justification by L. Von Schroeder to recall the "dancing places of Eos" and, in view of the close connection between sun and dawn, to connect this with the dances of the sun on Easter Day in Germanic and Slavonic mythology....¹³¹

The previously mentioned Baltic sun goddess Saule also was thought of as dancing in "golden slippers on a silver mountain."¹³² Hillebrandt further points out that "Uṣas or *usrá* has been compared to the Germanic *austrō*, *ostaraeostre*, the Germanic goddesses of light and spring."¹³³

THE NUMBER 7 IN INDO-EUROPEAN SOLAR MYTHOLOGY

Uṣas, as stated earlier, rode in a chariot pulled by seven horses, or oxen¹³⁴ and so shares the number 7 in common with Chih Nü, Hsi-ho (the Chinese female solar charioteer to be discussed later), Athena and Circe, the daughter of the sun.

In *The Mystery of Numbers*, Annemarie Schimmel writes, "In fact, along with the 3, 7 is the most important number in the Vedas", this being in direct contrast with China where the number 7 holds very little significance beyond the cult of the dead.¹³⁵ In addition to Uṣas's seven oxen or horses, the sun god Surya's chariot had seven horses and in *Rgveda* V.4I.3 there is the "...seven-wheeled chariot that measures out the region."¹³⁶ There is also the Vedic seven-rayed sun, whose "'seventh ray' passes through the Sun"¹³⁷:

...as Mahidhara expresses it, 'the seventh ray is the solar orb itself.' It is by this 'best ray,' the 'one foot' of the Sun, that the 'heart' of each and every separated essence is directly connected with the Sun....¹³⁸

Schimmel explains that "It [7] is especially connected with Agni, the god of fire, who has 7 wives, mothers or sisters as well as 7 flames, beams, or tongues, and songs devoted to him are seven fold."¹³⁹ Other examples of the number 7 in the *Rgveda* include "7 stars and 7

streams of heavenly soma...7 parts of the world, 7 seasons, and 7 fortresses in heaven; the ocean has 7 depths and one speaks of 7 concentric continents."¹⁴⁰

The importance of the number 7 in Greek solar mythology rivaled that of the Vedas. The sun god Helios, brother to Eōs (dawn) and also Circe's father, had seven sons called the Heliades, seven herds of oxen (tended by his/the daughters of the sun), and seven flocks of ewes. The number in ancient Greece was sacred to the solar gods as seen above with Helios and therefore the festival of Apollo (like Chih Nü's) was held on the seventh day of the seventh month. "Singing swans circled around the island of Delos 7 times before Leto gave birth to the radiant Apollo, and the birth itself took place on the seventh (or ninth) day."¹⁴¹ Apollo was also said to have been carried in the womb just seven months. The lyre which was Apollo's signatory, and which gave its name to the constellation wherein Chih Nü resides, (Lyra) had seven strings.¹⁴² Apollo the Sun-god, shepherd, and "god of prophecy," was half-brother to Athena through their father Zeus and, as already shown for Athena, was associated with the number 7.

REVISIONIST MYTHOLOGY

Chih Nü's true origin—along with her original mythological function—eludes us today in part due to what the late comparative mythologist Joseph Campbell described as "a Confucian forest of pencils" (see below) and in large part due to the fact that she makes her appearance in Chinese literature in the form of a poem, yet just briefly mentioned. Many centuries before that appearance however, perhaps as many as a thousand years before it, in the Shang period (c. 1600-c. 1028 B.C.), a time of cultural exchange had begun, about which Campbell wrote:

Thus, in the now fairly well documented royal-tomb art of the Shang period, an interplay is to be recognized between a cultural tide stemming from the West, rooted in the bronze age and carried both by an early wave of neolithic potters (Yangshao, Lungshan) and by a later, chariot-driving warrior folk with evident Homeric-Aryan affinities....¹⁴³

In his chapter titled "Chinese Mythology", Campbell strongly asserts that tragically, due to historicization, we may never recover the nucleus of what is commonly held to be "Chinese Mythology." The first mention of Weaver-girl precedes the below described period of "text doctoring" on which he elaborates and could possibly account for the fact that it was many centuries after the writing of the *Shih Ching* ode (c. 840-620 B.C.)—where she is mentioned just once—before her emergence in Han dynasty texts (202 B.C.-220 A.D.),

at which point she is associated with the bright star Vega.

Actually, it is amazing how little we know of the writings of the Chinese before the period of Confucius (551-478 B.C.). And what to some will perhaps be still more amazing is the fact that from the period of Confucius onward there was such a doctoring of texts that even the most learned scholarship, whether of Europe, Japan, or China, has been at a loss, up to now, to reconstruct with assurance even the work of Confucius himself—not to mention whatever wisdom, mythic, philosophic, or other, may have gone before. Consequently, all of the myths (or rather, as we now have them, moralizing anecdotes) of the Chinese golden age have to be recognized as the productions rather of a Confucian forest of pencils than of any "good earth" or "forest primeval." And if gems or jades are to be found among them from the actual mythologies of Yangshao, Lungshan, Shang, or even Chou (anything earlier, that is to say, than Shih Huang Ti's burning of the books, 213 B.C.), we have to realize that they have been lifted from their primitive, and remounted carefully in a late, highly sophisticated setting, like an old Egyptian scarab mounted as a ring for some fine lady's hand.¹⁴⁴

Sinologist John S. Major echoes Campbell's frustration with trifling court editors:

No early coherent account of Chinese myths exists: even the Han texts are very confusing and incomplete, and accounts of myths in genuine Chou texts (Karlgren's "free" texts) are extremely fragmentary; moreover all of the written accounts extant have been passed many times through the filters of Confucian orthodoxy.¹⁴⁵

The Ch'in dynasty book burning and the Han dynasty's institution of a state-approved editing of the ancient texts for political control caused the demise or metamorphosis of many ancient deities and, as Edward Schafer has written, "With the fall of the Chou Dynasty...[c. 300 B.C.] the identity of many of the early gods disappeared..."¹⁴⁶ Take, for example, the remarkably talented Chinese Creator Goddess Nü Kua (or Nü Wa), mentioned in the *Questions of Heaven* (c. 300 B.C.), who was credited with creating mankind, then rescuing

Justine T. Snow, "The Spider's Web: Evidence for the Indo-European Origin of Two Ancient Chinese Deities," *Sino-Platonic Papers*, 118 (June, 2002)

humanity by repairing a tear in the sky. After the revisionist Han period this heroine was demoted and her worship was discouraged by the ruling class:

After Han times, Nü Kua faded away to become a mere fairy tale being, neglected by the upper classes and ignored in the state religion.¹⁴⁷

In John Major's article "Myth, Cosmology, and the Origins of Chinese Science" which was inspired by the research of deSantillana and von Dechend (the authors of *Hamlet's Mill*) Major points out that:

There seems to have been a great deal more travel and communication in the ancient world than modern scholarship sometimes wishes to believe possible.¹⁴⁸

His article begins by reminding us of the fragmentary state of ancient Chinese mythology and therefore the difficulties presented to Sinologists in reconstructing it. His description brings to mind the frustrating experience of trying to complete a puzzle, only to discover so many of its pieces missing, or damaged beyond repair. Undaunted, let us venture straightaway to assess the known and the unknown.

ODE # 203, SHIH CHING

The oldest known textual reference to Chih Nü is in Ode # 203 (Ta Tung) in the *Shih Ching* or *Poetry Classic* (c. 800-600 B.C.):

The *Shih Ching* (the *Classic of Odes*, *Book of Songs*, or *Poetry Classic*) is the most ancient anthology of Chinese poetry. The 305 poems—more properly, songs, since they were lyrics accompanied by tunes now lost—date approximately from the late Western Chou to the middle of the Spring and Autumn period (c. 840-620 B.C.E.), although they appear to have undergone substantial editing and regularization in the following centuries. They are divided into four parts.... Of these, the oldest are the Greater and Lesser Ya....¹⁴⁹

In this initial reference (found in the earliest portions of the *Shih Ching*, the Lesser Ya), we find Weaver-girl in the sky attempting to weave and her Herd-boy (who is not

mentioned here directly by name) has apparently wandered off in search of a yoke for his oxen, or he is—as some Sinologists suspect—not yet romantically linked to the Weaver-girl in myth, and the poet is simply addressing the Ox-star, one of the 24 lunar mansions.

In the sky there is Han River;
It looks down and is so bright.
And at an angle is the Weaver Maid;
All day long she makes but seven moves;
Though she makes seven moves
She does not finish her pattern.
Dazzling is the Draught Ox,
But he is not yoked to a carriage.¹⁵⁰

Anne Birrell makes these observations about the poem:

The primary intent of the reference to the stars in the poem from the *Classic* is to illustrate the themes of negative capability, failure, and uselessness. For although the weaver weaves, she never finishes her cloth, and although the ox is a powerful draught animal, it is not yoked to a carriage.

But the two stars are not linked in the poem although the later tradition makes them lovers and then mates.¹⁵¹

Prior to this ode there is no mention in any other Chinese text of the Weaver Maid who "all day long... makes but seven moves." Because the origin of her myth remains unknown, we can only speculate as to why the Weaver-girl simply emerges at this point for the first time, performing a task that apparently should be, but is not, resulting in a *po chang* ("fine/beautiful/variegated/ornamented cloth or textile").¹⁵²

It is clear from the carefully worded lines that she is a known entity who spends her **days** making the same movement exactly seven times. If we allow ourselves an open-minded reading of this passage, without the commentary of scholars who remarked upon it several hundred, a thousand, even well over two thousand years later, it has to be admitted that in these lines this weaver in the sky is performing a diurnal task, which is repeated seven times within one day.

We know the *Shih Ching* ode was possibly 400-600 years old before the earliest Han commentators even offered their remarks/glosses on it. Considering the passage of time, it is

understandable that they were not able to agree on the meaning of a key term in the Ta Tung ode which is crucial to its interpretation. The term is *hsiang* (pronounced "sheang") which is used in conjunction with the number seven and the only consensus among commentators is that it denotes some type of motion. One has to admire the candid admission by the great Sung period Neo-Confucian scholar, Chu Hsi (1130-1200), when even he said that he did not understand the meaning of the word *hsiang*.¹⁵³

There is nothing else written about Weaver-girl's myth before the Han, and what was written in the *Shih Ching* ode was but a few perplexing lines describing Weaver-girl's inability to complete her pattern or weaving. The rest of the ode is otherwise understandable, but—as will be shown—The Weaver-girl lines have caused two thousand years' worth of trouble and confusion in their interpretation. In Arthur Waley's translation of the same Ta Tung ode, he interprets the third through sixth lines quite differently from Birrell, providing Chih Nü with a stool and, seemingly, a practical explanation for the seven moves she makes:

By it sits the Weaving Lady astride her stool,
Seven times a day she rolls up her sleeves.
But though seven times she rolls her sleeves
She never makes wrap or skirt.
Bright shines that Draught Ox,
But can't be used for yoking to a cart.¹⁵⁴

About the interpretation of "7 *hsiang*" as translated by Arthur Waley ("Seven times a day she rolls up her sleeves"), Professor Mair has written:

The fundamental signification of *hsiang* is often rendered as "take off the outer/upper garment for the purpose of engaging in agricultural toil (especially plowing)." There is a cognate word that is pronounced the same and means "hold/roll up one's sleeve (to engage in work)." As a matter of fact, "take off the outer/upper garment for the purpose of engaging in agricultural toil (especially plowing)" is an old and persistent misreading of the earliest attempt to explain the graph by Hsü Shen in the year 100 C.E. All that Hsü said was this: "To plow by opening up the covering (layer of soil) is called *hsiang*." This is actually a quotation from an earlier work entitled *Han ling* [Instructions of the Han]. For the last four centuries this has almost universally been mistakenly understood to mean "plow by taking off one's upper garment". Some such definition surely must have been in the

back of Waley's mind when he translated the line in question.¹⁵⁵

The difficulties of translating ancient Chinese are apparent after comparing the available English translations of this poem, which were done by recognized authorities in Sinology who were all working from the same text.¹⁵⁶ Each translator of this ode has interpreted three key lines very differently. I was especially curious about Arthur Waley's translation, because it put Weaver-girl on a stool. Dr. Mair's commentary on Arthur Waley's translation of the line "By it sits the Weaving Lady astride her stool" provides an indication of the confusing task presented by ancient Chinese graphs:

I can't think of any justification whatsoever for Waley's "...sits the Weaving Lady astride her stool."... Legge's poetic "triple beam", his more sober "three stars together", [Bernhard] Karlgren's "(slanting =) triangular", and Birrell's "at an angle" are all basically derived from the early Mao (Han Dynasty) commentary to the *Shih Ching* which says that the problematic character, *ch'i*, means "angular", while the T'ang dynasty subcommentary of K'ung Ying-ta (574-648) goes one step beyond that and implies that the "angular" quality is actually "triangular" because of the three stars in the Weaver-girl constellation.... I have a very different interpretation of this line. It's actually so natural and reasonable that it's surprising the other scholars haven't hit upon it yet.... The character which is causing so much trouble is *ch'i*. It quite literally means "stand on tiptoe (in expectation)." Its extended meanings are "lean forward" or even "fly." It's probable that Mao and K'ung took the motion of "lean (forward)", interpreted that as "slanting", and then just let their imaginations run away with them. The part of the character on the left, its "radical", means "foot" (the part on the right is its phonophore), so we can be pretty confident that it originally had something to do with the feet ("tiptoe"). Furthermore, there are other places in the *Shih Ching* where it does have the meaning of "stand on tiptoe (and look forward expectantly)." Therefore, I would translate the line in question literally—word for word—as

Tiptoe that weaver girl

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ch'i pi chih nü

and more liberally as "leaning forward that weaver girl", "waiting expectantly that weaver girl", or "standing on tiptoes that weaver girl" or "the weaver girl leans forward expectantly", etc.¹⁵⁷

The Chinese statesman and general Lu Chi (261-303 A.D.), in an imitation of the *Nineteen Old Poems*, also imagined Weaver-girl to be on tiptoe, and would have been familiar with the weaver girl portion of the *Shih Ching* and the original meaning of *ch'i pi chih nü* therein. Lu Chi's poem captures the essence of Chih Nü's breaking heart and her eternal longing for her loved one:

River without a bridge

Bright, bright Han of the sky sparkles.
Radiant, radiant glitter her steps in the sky.
Herdboy turns northwest,
Weaver looks back southeast
How silky her dainty face!
Her waving arms sway like white threads.

She hates that River without a bridge,
Mourns this year drawing to its close.
She stands on tiptoe, despairs of wedded bliss.
Bright he shines, but cannot ford the River,
She cranes her neck, stares at its great flow.
Twin streams of tears like soaking dew.¹⁵⁸

James Legge's interpretation of the *Shih Ching* ode in his *The Chinese Classics* is quite different from the others. He determined that the seven moves were solely to do with astral procession and not the physical motion of the weaving girl's shuttle through the loom (much less the rolling of her sleeves).

Book V. Ode IX. THE SHE KING

5

There is the milky way in heaven,
Which looks down on us in light;

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And the three stars together are the Weaving Sisters,
Passing in a day through seven stages [of the sky].

6

Although they go through their seven stages,
They complete no bright work for us.
Brilliant shine the Draught Oxen,
But they do not serve to draw our carts.¹⁵⁹

Not only has the weaving maid multiplied, but the oxen as well! This notion of triplicate weaving sisters and multiple oxen is shared by Ezra Pound in his *Shih-Ching: The Classic Anthology Defined by Confucius*, wherein his interpretation is

Trine Damsels* weave to the seventh house at even with
seven ply for us no cloth nor sign. That eye-full of led oxen
in the sky draws not our farm carts here terrestrially.¹⁶⁰

Pound's asterisk is footnoted with "Vega and the other two stars of the triangle". When we compare Waley's "By it sits the Weaving Lady astride her stool", to James Legge's "And the three stars together are the Weaving Sisters", or Pound's (above), then compare them all to Mair's "Tiptoe that weaver girl," it becomes hard to imagine that they are all translations of the same line! Legge's explanation for the seven moves which his three "Weaving Sisters" made is:

The stars seem to go round the circumference of the heavens,
divided into 12 spaces, in a day and night. They would
accomplish 6 of those in a day, but as their motion is rather in
advance of that of the sun, they have entered into the 7th
space by the time he is up with them again.¹⁶¹

It is difficult to believe that the ancient author of such simple lines in a poem could have ever intended them to be interpreted in so complex a manner as Legge has described. In a much less complicated manner, this author also believes that Chih Nü passed through the sky—but not as the star Vega, and not even at night. An explanation for this shall follow shortly.

The next translation comes from the eminent Swedish Sinologist Bernhard Karlgren's *The Book Of Odes; Kuo Feng and Siao Ya*. Like Legge, Karlgren interprets the weaving lady's seven moves as astral procession, yet gives a lively and lengthy discourse in his "Glosses on the Siao Ya Odes", detailing what he perceives to be the misinterpretations

or faulty translations done by other famous Sinologists (both Oriental and Occidental) of this difficult Ode. He actually gets quite forceful in his discussion of their work and says such things as:

This dreadful nonsense, which is in no way reconcilable with the wording of the text, has been accepted by [so and so].... That is very unsatisfactory.... A desperate attempt to get out of the difficulty.... A much too bold emendation.¹⁶²

One can just see this brilliant scholar ensconced in his 1944 study, pouring over everybody's *Shih Ching* translations and getting so worked up. I found his passion for the purest translation endearing. This was Karlgren's considered version:

In the heavens there is the (celestial) Han (the Milky Way),
it looks down and is bright (f);
(slanting=) triangular is the Weaving Lady (g),
during one day (-and-night) she is seven times removed
(i. e. From one «mansion» to another in the firmament).
Although she is seven times removed,
she does not achieve any interwoven pattern (h);
brilliant is the Draught Ox (i),
but one does not yoke it to any carriage;

(f) But does nothing else—so are the brilliant but useless officers.

(g) α in Vega and ϵ , ζ in Lyra.

(h) Though she passes through the whole firmament, like the shuttle with the woof through the warp, she makes no useful stuff for our use—equally useless are the fine men at court.

(i) Certain stars in the Capricorn¹⁶³

Karlgren has mistakenly cited Capricorn in place of Altair in Aquila. Karlgren's translation of 7 hsiang as "seven times removed", together with his accompanying footnote describing Weaver-girl as passing through the entire firmament "like the shuttle through the warp", is suggestive, the latter bringing to mind the Vedic dawn goddess, Uṣas, weaving the light of dawn. It would have been comforting to settle on Karlgren's so carefully thought out translation and put the controversial 7 hsiang to rest, but I remained unconvinced and still curious about this only clue to the Weaver-girl's activity (and perhaps identity).

According to the varying interpretations of translators cited in this article, the word *hsiang* could have meant "seven moves" (Birrell), "seven stages" (Legge), "seven times removed" (Karlgren), "seventh house" and "seven ply" (Ezra Pound), or even "seven times she rolls her sleeves" (Waley). About it Victor Mair has written:

The (mis)interpretation of this difficult pair of lines depends almost entirely upon how we understand the word *hsiang*. From the earliest recorded commentaries on this ode, there has been a bewildering variety of opinion concerning the meaning of *hsiang*.... **The famous early commentator Cheng Hsüan (127-200 CE) asserts that *hsiang* means "mount" (as to ride a chariot), hence Weaver Girl supposedly shifts her position seven times from morning to evening.... Other early meanings of *hsiang* are "(re)turn; strip off; achieve; rise upwards (as a flood); to rear (of horses); rise above; raise; carry through; achieve; remove; assist/facilitate (a task); to yoke; etc."**¹⁶⁴

That the above definitions of the word *hsiang* do not make sense in the *Shih Ching* ode in reference to a mere weaving girl is true, but then "Weaver-girl" was not truly a name but more the description of a duty which the goddess performed, one which kept the Daughter of Heaven apart from her true love. It should be pointed out that in this "Ta Tung" ode Chih Nü is not defined as a star, although later commentators assumed that she was, no doubt because there are identifiable stars mentioned in the lines which succeed hers. Most importantly it should be remembered that the Weaver-girl is doing something "all day long", and not "all night long" as would be befitting a star in the night sky. Note that Karlgren injects the parenthetical comment "(-and-night)" into his translation of the line "during one day (-and-night) she is seven times removed," not because any nocturnal movement is implied by the poet himself (quite the opposite), but to make the poem sensible to his readership, and possibly himself. Why, Karlgren had to wonder, was the "Weaver-girl star" moving about in the diurnal sky? Why in fact had the poet not written "all night long she is seven times removed" or "passing in a night through seven stages"? Without a doubt the expression used here in the ode, *chung-jih*, literally means "all day long" or "the whole day long."

With no surviving myth to explain Weaver-girl's origin, and given her similarities with Indo-European goddesses who wove and shared her name, "Daughter of Heaven," and the importance of the number seven in Indo-European mythology, it is not unreasonable to consider that her myth may have been an imported one.

PART 2. HSI-HO, SOLAR CHARIOTEER

There is only one solar deity in ancient Chinese mythology (surprisingly she is female) and her description mirrors the Indo-European female solar charioteers such as Eōs, Ušas, Sól and Saule, horse-drawn chariot and all. Incredibly, she too makes seven moves through the diurnal sky. Even more incredibly they seem to mirror Karlgren's depiction of Chih Nü being "removed" seven times a day from mansion to mansion. Or Legge's "passing in a day through seven stages". This Sun-goddess was eventually effaced; even her name "Hsi-ho" was taken from her and transferred to the two "oldest sons of two families assigned to calculate the celestial motion of the sun."¹⁶⁵

Edward Schafer remarks on her demise:

'Its [the sun's] charioteer is called Hsi-ho.' (This almost forgotten charioteer, a Chinese Phaethon, struck down and split in twain by the arrows of ancient Confucian euhemerizers, survives in respectable texts transmogrified into a pair of ancient astronomers, Hsi and Ho.)¹⁶⁶

Hsi-ho (pronounced She-huh), as described in *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*¹⁶⁷ was regarded as the "mother of the ten suns, who looks after them following their day's journey through the sky...."¹⁶⁸ In *Chinese Symbolism And Art Motifs*, it says "...the Sun is the offspring of a female named Hsi Ho...."¹⁶⁹ In her role of mother of the suns/sun, she resembles Neith, the great Egyptian goddess of weaving who gave birth to the Sun-god RA, and, the Norse goddess Sól who, according to the Eddas, would someday give birth to a daughter, a Sun-goddess that would light the sky after Ragnarok, the final battle of good and evil. The Finnish sun Päivä bore the sun-maiden and weaver Päivätär. And finally, about the light-weaving charioteer of the Vedas, A. A. MacDonell wrote, "as preceding the sun in time she [Ušas] is occasionally thought of as his mother" and she "arrives with a bright child."¹⁷⁰

In the *Heavenly Questions* (c. 300 B.C.E.), Hsi-ho is the "solar charioteer" who rises,¹⁷¹ which reminds one of several of the definitions for *hsiang*, from the weaver girl Ode (# 203), i.e. "rise above"; "rise upwards"; "mount/drive (as on a chariot)"; "assist/facilitate (a task)" and "to yoke" which we have already discussed.

Among the many solar riddles posed in the *Heavenly Questions* is this one, "What

opens and brings light?",¹⁷² which can be answered in the *Rgveda* by the dawn maiden Usas when "She opens the gates of heaven" and "She opens the doors of darkness...." The same duty was reserved for the Greek dawn Eōs, "whose rosy fingers opened the gates of heaven to the chariot of the Sun."¹⁷³ There is also the Slavic "goddess of the morning-dawn, Zarya Utrennyaya [who] opened the gates of the heavens when the sun rose...."¹⁷⁴ In this heavenly question, no doubt, the answer lies with Hsi-ho.

Like the Indo-European dawn and sun goddesses, Hsi-ho rode in a horse-drawn chariot. Although some texts describe the horses as dragons¹⁷⁵ because of the ancient Chinese practice of referring to horses as "dragon-steeds", "dragons", and "dragon-horses".¹⁷⁶ The "System of the Heavens" chapter in the *Huai-nan Tzu* (c. 139 B.C.) details the sun's journey in the solar chariot, which includes "resting-places"¹⁷⁷ along the way:

when it reaches Sad Springs, then it stops the Woman
and it rests the horses; this is called Suspended Chariot.¹⁷⁸

Anne Birrell explains the use of the term "the Woman"¹⁷⁹ in the above text:

In this edition of *Huai-nan Tzu*, the charioteer of the sun is called "the Woman" (*ch'i nu*). In a citation of this passage in a much later text, *Sources for Beginning Scholarly Studies*, compiled by Hsu Chien (A.D. 659-729), the words *the Woman* are replaced by the name Hsi-Ho.¹⁸⁰

Commenting on his *Huai-nan Tzu* translation in *Heaven and Earth in Early Han Thought*, Sinologist John Major writes that the sun, the solar chariot, and its charioteer Hsi-ho are believed to have made seven stops, or rested seven times. According to the *Huai-nan Tzu*, beginning its journey at the extreme eastern edge of the world "the sun is described as passing through fifteen stages, from the Pool of Xian [Hsien] to the Vale of Obscurity, including 'seven resting-places'...."¹⁸¹ Reading this picturesque passage from the *Huai-nan Tzu*, one can see that there are seven logical resting places which are the six stages of daylight mentioned plus "Suspended Chariot". They are in order: "Dawn Light", Emergent Brightness", "Dawn Brilliance", "Exact Center", "Suspended Chariot", "Yellow Dusk", and "Definite Dusk".¹⁸²

With Hsi-ho's legend in mind, and the above translations of the "Ta Tung" ode and accompanying glosses and footnotes in hand, I should like to venture an alternate translation of the problematic Weaver-girl lines using Ezra Pound's especially charming opening, in

place of the well known standard and Victor Mair's refreshing translation of *ch'i pi chih nü* in the second line:

A river of stars is lit across the heaven,
Tip toe [*i.e., leaning/flying forward*] is that weaver girl;
[*a logical epithet for Hsi-ho as a weaver of light*]
The whole day she mounts the chariot seven times—
Although she seven times mounts up,
[*after each "resting place"*]
She does not complete the interwoven pattern.
[*The colorful sunrise and sunset is like a woman displaying her beautiful textile of light but it dissipates, therefore the pattern of light which she weaves will always remain unfinished.*] ¹⁸³

A logical explanation for the name "Daughter of Heaven" being allotted to Chih Nü would be that her myth entered China in the Bronze Age, from a culture familiar with weaving. As pointed out in the opening pages of this article, "Daughter of Heaven" is the Indo-European designation for dawn maidens from India to Europe and Greece. Based on this linguistic evidence and similarities in her mythology, Chih Nü may have been an adopted weaving goddess from an Indo-European culture and, based on the similarities Hsi-ho shares with other chariot-riding dawn and sun goddesses in Indo-European mythology, she also may have been adopted. Another idea is that they were mother and daughter, the Sun Goddess and her dawn-maiden daughter, based on the Indo-European formula already discussed. Or, perhaps originally, before revision, they were one and the same goddess, similar to Uṣas, both a solar charioteer and a sky weaver. Based on Chih Nü's name "Daughter of Heaven," the seven daily moves she shares with Hsi-ho, and her celestial weaving, we should consider the possibility that "Weaver-girl" was merely another name for Hsi-ho. ¹⁸⁴

There is much confusion in ancient Chinese texts and commentaries concerning the "meaning" of the name Hsi-ho. The ancient pronunciation perhaps sounding something like *hyagwa* or *hyagos* (Old Sinitic reconstruction **xia-g'wâ* or *xia-gojs*.) ¹⁸⁵ The possibility that Hsi-ho is a translation of a foreign name would explain the confusion. Perhaps it could even be the transcription of a name that is cognate with Uṣas, Eōs, and other related names (see PIE 'goddess of dawn,' **h₂éusōs*. ¹⁸⁶ I hope that someone in the field will be sufficiently intrigued by this question to look into Hsi-ho's name even further.

CONCLUSION

When this author first began researching Chih Nü, I was struck by an uncanny resemblance between the much later versions of Herd-boy and Weaver-girl's myth and the swan-maiden and selkie myths in Teutonic and Celtic mythology.¹⁸⁷ The Germans, Norse, and Anglo-Saxons believed in swan-maidens described as

Maidens in swans' plumage who could fly through the air... These strange and gracious creatures delighted in haunting the lakes and pools of lonely forests. They could, when it pleased them to do so, cast their plumage aside and appear in human form. But if a man succeeded in stealing their plumage they could never escape from him and were forced to obey his will.... [Both] Valkyries and swan-maidens could become the mistresses and wives of men.¹⁸⁸

The swan-maiden aspect added to the story of Weaver-girl and Herd-boy's introduction now has several variations; in all of them, the Oxherd is orphaned at a young age and is not yet living among the stars, but here on earth. Finding some land, he toils in solitude until one day—like the poor miller in *Puss-in-Boots*—he is astonished to find that his sole possession (an ox) can speak. The ox proceeds to give the herd-boy advice on finding a wife:

"Not far away from here there is a clear pool shaded by trees and plants. Go there tomorrow and wait for the Heavenly Maidens to come and bathe in the pool. Whilst they are bathing, steal one of the girls' clothes, so that she will not be able to fly up to heaven. Then she will be your wife." The herd boy did as the ox said and waited beside the clear pool. Soon a crowd of beautiful Heavenly Maidens came down from the sky, shed their bright clothes like plumages and left them on the bank before stepping into the water. The herd boy waited and, as they came out of the water again, he sprang from his hiding place and seized one of the piles of clothes. The girls were startled and, snatching their clothes, they flew off into the sky. Only one was left.... When the Heavenly Maiden and the herd boy were married, she told him that she was the weaving girl from Heaven. She was indeed the Goddess of Weaving....¹⁸⁹

In *Origins of Chinese Festivals*, the story is repeated with Cowherd's bull advising him to hide the clothes of one of the heavenly maidens bathing in the forest lake. In this version Weaver-girl informs Cowherd, "I'm the granddaughter of the Heavenly Mother.... The clouds in the sky are my handiwork." This story can also be found in *Mooncakes and Hungry Ghosts; Festivals of China*, and *The Seventh Sister*, where in both versions she is one of seven sisters, all "Heavenly Maidens".

In Celtic tradition, shape-shifting beauties and the number 7 go hand in hand, whether they take the form of selkies, swans, or deer. In Irish legend, Fionn Mac Cumhall saves a beautiful maiden from the spell which has changed her into a deer. Forced to leave the maiden to do battle, Fionn returns in seven days to find her gone, then learns she has returned to deer form. Fionn loves her so deeply that for seven years he searches all Ireland trying to find her.¹⁹⁰ Additionally, an island in Scotland was believed "inhabited by seven huge deer-goddesses who lived there with their herds."¹⁹¹ Mara Freeman's article "Enchanted Beasts and Faerie Women; Celtic Symbols of the Soul", tells the original version of the Scottish legend of the selkie women:

In the original story from the Hebrides, a fisherman of the McCodrum clan discovered seven naked girls dancing on the shore, while on a nearby boulder lay seven seal-skins. He knew they must be selkie, who are seals in the sea, but human girls on land. He crept up and stole one of the skins, preventing one of the girls from resuming her seal-shape, and forced her to be his wife. She had two children by him....¹⁹²

In the selkie story the woman finds her skin and returns to her original form and kind. Weaver-girl must also return to her sky home and, like the selkie, has two children with her mortal husband (Oxherd). In most of these late Weaver-girl versions, with the help of the ox or a magic feather, Herdsman and the children are eventually reunited with her in the stars and allowed the once-a-year visit on the seventh night of the seventh moon.

In a Welsh tale called "The Shepherd of Myddvai", one of three lake-maiden sisters becomes the wife of a shepherd. Included in her dowry are two oxen, which follow her back to the lake still yoked to the plow, leaving behind them deep furrows in the soil when the lake-maiden, like the selkie, leaves her earthly husband and children to return to her people. In the notes from *Celtic Fairy Tales*, the book in which the preceding story can be found (originally published in 1892), it is mentioned that:

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The Swan-Maiden type of story is widespread through the Old World... [and that parallel themes include] ...the bride-capture of the Swan-Maiden... the recognition of the bride... [and the] disappearance of the Swan-Maiden, with her return as Guardian Spirit to her descendants.¹⁹³

All of the above themes can be found today in China in the late addition swan-**maiden** versions of Weaver-girl and Herd-boy's myth. Two additional parallel themes shared by China and the West include the Swan-Maiden and her earthly husband having two or more children, and the number of maidens being most commonly seven, but also three, or nine. Freeman writes that "Faerie women of Celtic myth often appear as swans" and so it was believed that "If seven swans, or a multiple of seven, came your way, it was a sure sign of the coming of seven years of peace and plenty."¹⁹⁴ Clearly, in Celtic mythology, the Swan-maiden is connected with the number seven.

Could the importance of the number seven in Indo-European mythology, and the already discussed lack of significance of that number in Chinese culture and mythology at the time of her appearance, be the key to discovering the enigmatic origin of the Chinese weaving goddess turned Swan/Lake-maiden? It must be at least conceded that the contacts made along the Pre-Silk Road and the Silk Road contributed to the later Swan-maiden versions of the Weaver-girl myth.¹⁹⁵

Could the remarkable archaeological finds of the past few years regarding the transportation capabilities of Bronze Age man (i.e., the vast and imponderable distances we now know they traveled by foot, horse, cart, chariot, and ship)¹⁹⁶ be responsible for the similarities between Chih Nü and Hsi-ho's Indo-European counterparts? Certainly the total lack of a sun-worshipping mythology/history in China must be factored into any unbiased discussion of this matter.

Because Hsi-ho, a female solar deity who did not fit into China's newly revised male-centric pantheon, was relieved of duty and discarded almost as quickly as she had arrived, I have come to see her erasure as the rejection of a borrowed, sun-worshipping and chariot-riding myth, by a culture in a frenzy of literary revisionism. Indeed, could not the solar charioteer have been viewed totemistically by these same "euhemerizers" as an intolerable reminder that their sovereignty was increasingly eroding? The very chariot (a borrowed technology) she rode in was an item to be accumulated and assimilated, but the sun goddess who held the reins was only briefly tolerated. Quoting Edward Schafer again:

This almost forgotten charioteer, a Chinese Phaethon, struck

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down and split in twain by the arrows of ancient Confucian euhemerizers, survives in respectable texts transmogrified into a pair of ancient [male] astronomers, Hsi and Ho.¹⁹⁷

Edward Shafer described this process as "the increasing domination of masculinity in the elite social doctrine."¹⁹⁸ The loss of one's livelihood is bad enough, but your gender? When one adds this to the fact that all but one of her sons (the ten suns who took turns in her chariot and whom she bathed daily) were murdered, shot down by the legendary archer Yi, a hero in China, one may conclude that they certainly spared her nothing.

Would not a weaving and herding culture be the most likely source of transmission for the legend of Weaving-girl and Herdsman's undying love? How easy to envision a group of young women inventing just such a story to pass the long day, weaving and spinning and daydreaming of their men, off with the herds?

Professor David W. Anthony, the noted authority on ancient bit wear and the evolution of horseback riding from prehistory on, writes about the importation of technology into China through the Eurasian Steppe cultures between 2000-1700 B.C. in "The Opening of the Eurasian Steppe at 2000 BCE," notably that at that time:

...the steppe bridge was open, and significant transcontinental exchanges began to occur. Some of the earliest involved wagon technology, chariot technology, bronze metallurgy and weapon types, and fabrics. Exchange was multi-directional.... Western-style fabrics, importantly diagonal twills, were carried *from* the west into Xinjiang (Mair 1995:31). Wagon and chariot technology... seem to have been carried from the steppes east of the Ural Mountains eastward and southward into Xinjiang and China (Linduff 1994; Huber 1995; Chen and Hiebert 1995).¹⁹⁹

Anthony also writes that "domesticated cattle and sheep were introduced into the Eurasian steppes through the Caucasus Mountains, southeastern Europe, and Iran."²⁰⁰

In his forthcoming article "The Horse in Late Prehistoric China: Wrestling Culture and Control from the 'Barbarians,'" Mair writes that the coming of the domesticated horse to China did not occur until towards the end of the second millennium B.C. In the same article he demonstrates through Old Sinitic reconstructions and selected Indo-European comparisons that the Sinitic word for horse (*mǎ*) is derived from the IE root **márkos* which

was used specifically by the Celtic and Germanic branches, and no other, in forming their words for horse.²⁰¹

Because the domesticated horse and the chariot were introduced to China by non-Chinese people, it is logical to assume that some of the stories, legends, and myths of the gods and goddesses who used them (i.e., Hsi-ho) might also have been imparted at that time. This author believes that the myth of the female solar charioteer was borrowed by China from another culture, and urges interested scholars to verify this theory.

Due to the hands-on detective work and dedicated scholarship of Professor Elizabeth Wayland Barber, Dr. Irene Good, and others, we also now know that the advanced wool weaving technology introduced to China came from the west. In her latest and very important book, *The Mummies of Ürümchi*, Barber provides evidence for this and details her first-hand experience in China examining the intricate and highly advanced weaving techniques of the perfectly preserved textiles found in Western China, still attached to their makers, now mummies, who were once a tall, Caucasoid people residing in that region from two to four thousand years ago. As with horses and chariots of the sun (an Indo-European motif), myths featuring Daughters of Heaven, and Daughters of the Sun who wove, most certainly would have been introduced to China by way of the ancient travelers, horsemen, and herdsmen from other lands, whose women were accomplished in the use of amazingly sophisticated looms, and possessed weaving techniques some one thousand years ahead of what was current in China.

I had wanted to conclude this article by discussing the transformative effect Alexander the Great's campaign (in approximately 330 B.C.) had on the cultures and countries he and his men came into contact with (and often conquered, leaving behind Greek colonies). Truly, the campaign provided the singular most prime opportunity for the diffusion of mythology from multiple and diverse cultures in human history. Imagine, if you would, simply being a common soldier, much less the campaign's historian for 10 or 11 years, as you passed through such wondrous places as ancient Troy, Anatolia, Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Bactria (almost to China's border!) and India. How many travelers in their lifetime at that stage in history could claim to have experienced more than these men? Surely it was an adventure unrivaled and worthy of our reflection in this matter.

What I discovered, however, was that Professor Barber had done the campaign such justice in her before-mentioned mummies book²⁰² that I need say no more on it than what I have written here, except perhaps to highlight an interesting fact she mentions which is that, in the Balkans, Alexander received "among others, a warily friendly embassy of Celts."²⁰³ This could help to account for some of the Baltic/Germanic/Celtic influences (shape-shifting for instance) to be found from there to China. And, as for the Greek influence on the

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mythology of the lands surrounding China, Barber notes that "Although he never reached the Tarim Basin, the trail of Hellenic culture that he left, especially in Bactria and the upper Indus Valley, had considerable effect on the Tarim cultures of the next millennium."²⁰⁴

PARTING THOUGHTS

The star dust swiftly dissipated for me when I had finally uncovered the bare-bones beginning of Weaver-girl and Herdboy's love story: a handful of lines in a confusing old poem with, as Anne Birell pointed out earlier, no existing myth in Chinese literature to explain Weaver-girl's beginnings.²⁰⁵ I felt quite cheated on discovering this because I love the beauty and creativity of the stories and especially the moving and expressive poetry which grew up around that "handful of lines." Lines such as these from a poem called "The Weaving Wife", by Hsiao Yen, more than make up for the original disappointment, however:

The Loaded Shuttle lies still on cold nights...
My lover is ten thousand leagues far,
With whom to share my woven stuff?
I wish I could once turn light back
To brighten this sorrow and pain.
If your desire for me is not forgotten,
My heart will endure to the end of time.²⁰⁶

And these also by the same poet from "Seventh Night":

Long ago I was sad how hard it was to cross,
Now I'm wounded how soon it is passed.²⁰⁷

Chang Shuai (457-527 A.D.) wrote "Pining", which sums up Weaver-girl's and Herdboy's relationship in a word:

I'll always love you
However long we're parted.
Where is my love? Under distant skies pining.
My heavy heart does not know where to look for you...
Constantly longing for you I cannot sleep,
I sit and stare at Sky River's motion.²⁰⁸

Herdboy's and Weaver-girl's enduring love, with its theme of separation and longing, became the catalyst for thousands of poems throughout the centuries, written by commoners

and the privileged alike. It was not unusual in China for husbands and wives to be separated from each other for months, sometimes years at a time, depending on a man's vocation. Therefore the myth came to symbolize the plight of so many in China for centuries, and was so widely known that it was often alluded to in letters sent to far-away loved ones, where just a word or two in reference to it was sufficient to convey the sender's longing, heartache, and faithfulness.²⁰⁹

The myth could even represent the separation of two true loves due to one's passing away, the other left behind pining desperately to be re-united. The most celebrated woman poet in all China, Li Ch'ing-chao—known for the depth of feeling her poetry evoked (1084-1155 A.D.)—suffered inconsolable loss at the death of her beloved husband after military turmoil forced their tragic parting. She took the myth to heart and composed a moving tribute to the star lovers titled "The Seventh Day of the Seventh Lunar Month", a few lines from which read:

On this night magpies form a star bridge to span the Milky Way, Where Cowboy and Weaving Maid keep their yearly tryst. Endless must be their murmurings of love and regret After long separation!²¹⁰

LAST WORD

The search for Weaver-girl's origin has lead me on an Alexandrian-like adventure, as I traveled the ancient Pre-Silk Road, from culture to culture, B.C. to A.D., through endless volumes of mythology and history books for the last five years. The question I went searching for:

Is there evidence to support Gertrude Jobes' and E. T. C. Werner's positions that the Chinese Weaving goddess was a dawn maiden/daughter of the sun?

I believe has been answered in this article. The answer is yes, the evidence supplied here does support their statements. This being the case, I hope that scholars will investigate this matter still further and bring to public attention the evidence presented here.

It is reasonable to look for weaver-girl's originator in a goddess of close proximity who pre-dated Chih Nü by several hundred years or more, the dawn goddess Uşas, who wove the morning light. That Uşas has counterparts along the Pre-Silk Road in Indo-European cultures as far away from India as Greece is proof of her endearing charisma, and recent archaeological discoveries have shown unmistakably that mobility was not the

obstacle we had once assumed. Finding the ancient, obscure and practically unknown female solar charioteer Hsi-ho along the journey only confirmed this author's conviction that there was indeed a "Pre"-Silk Road and that a cross-cultural exchange of ideas, of beliefs, and of knowledge occurred along its length. What today we know as mythology for ancient man was spirituality or religion. Because nomadic peoples from different cultures shared their most sacred and heartfelt beliefs with each other, perhaps around a fire under the stars, we owe them our gratitude; for the gift of passion, rich imagery and imagination to be found in the mythology handed down to us through the millennia.

AUTHOR'S REFLECTION

Five years ago, after a week of star-gazing—attempting to locate the constellations of Vega and Aquila (Weaver-girl and Herdboy respectively) with stellar maps and a compass—I was thrilled to finally find them. Chih Nü and her Ox-Herd were suddenly more endearing to me, no longer just words on a page; they had substance and form and they outshone all others in the summer sky. To think that they had been gazing longingly at each other from the banks of that fitfully sparkling River of Stars for over two thousand years! As I pondered the beauty of the story which is clearly about indefatigable true love, I was overwhelmed with gratitude that I had ever heard of the myth at all. That very night, just days before the seventh night of the seventh moon I watched a shooting star sail straight across the Milky Way and imagined that the enthusiastic Weaver-girl could not stand to wait another day, and simply leapt to the other side.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Color Frontispiece is titled "The Star Lovers" by Warwick Goble, after *Green Willow And Other Japanese Fairy Tales*, p. 42.

Black and white picture of a Han stone carving depicting the Weaver-girl constellation next to the sun with a crow inside, can be found in Kistemaker and Sun, *The Chinese sky during the Han*, p. 149, and Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, vol.3, plate XXVI.

NOTES

1. Lipsey, ed., *Coomaraswamy*, Vol. II, *Metaphysics*, pp. 350-351.
2. Birrell, *Chinese Mythology*, p. 166.
3. "The celestial river, counterpart of the Milky Way in the West. It is also called Starry River, Long River, Long Han, Sky River, or River of Heaven. It was believed that the Yellow River on earth flowed from the Han River in the sky." Mair, ed. *The Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature*, p. 458.
- 3a. Author's rendition of the Weaver-girl/Oxherd myth.
4. Jobes, *Dictionary of Mythology, Folklore and Symbols*, p. 323.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 1671.
6. Werner, *A Dictionary of Chinese Mythology*, pp. 73-74.
7. James, *Green Willow and other Japanese Fairy Tales*, p. 65.
8. Mallory & Adams, *Encyclopedia of Indo-European Culture*, p. 148.
9. Edward H. Schafer, *Pacing the Void*, p. 143.
10. Emphasis author's.
11. Mallory & Adams, *Encyclopedia of Indo-European Culture*, p. 149.
12. Birrell, *Chinese Mythology*, pp. 165-166.
13. Dexter, in Mallory & Adams, *Encyclopedia of Indo-European Culture*, p. 148.
14. Dexter, *ibid.*, p. 149.
15. Mallory & Adams, *Encyclopedia of Indo-European Culture*, p. 149.
16. Dexter, *Whence the Goddesses*, p. 38.
17. See Dexter on Aushriné, *Whence the Goddesses*, pp. 38-39. Also see A. A. MacDonell

on Uṣas in *Vedic Mythology*, p. 48, i.e., "Uṣas causes Agni to be kindled."

18. Hillebrandt, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 30.

19. Simek, *Dictionary Of Northern Mythology*, p. 297.

20. For more information on the significance of the Trundholm chariot and its bird-chariot equivalent found in Dupljaja, Yugoslavia, see Gelling and Davidson's, *The Chariot of the Sun: And Other Rites and Symbols of the Northern Bronze Age*, pp. 119-123.

21. McGrath, *The Sun Goddess* (quoting J. McCrickard), p. 16. See Scheid and Sevenbro, *The Craft of Zeus: Myths of Weaving and Fabric*, for an example of Athena's father Zeus as a capable weaver.

22. Monaghan, *The Book of Goddesses & Heroines*, pp. 326-327.

23. Karl Kerényi, *Goddesses of Sun and Moon*, p. 12.

24. Motz, *The Faces of the Goddess*, p. 74.

25. *Ibid.*

26. McGrath, *The Sun Goddess*, p. 32.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

28. Motz, *The Faces of the Goddess*, pp. 73-74.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

30. *Odyssey*, Book X.

31. McGrath, *The Sun Goddess*, p. 91.

32. *Ibid.*

33. Maurer, *Pinnacles of India's Past*, p. 164.

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 164-166.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 166.
36. Marija Gimbutas, *The Language of The Goddess*, p. 67.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
38. Marija Gimbutas, *The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe*, pp. 85-86.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
40. For more on the possible cultural contact between Greece and Central Europe, with emphasis on the swan-chariot and the Trundholm horse-chariot of the sun, see: *The Chariot of the Sun: And Other Rites and Symbols of the Northern Bronze Age*, by Gelling and Davidson.
41. Dexter, *Whence the Goddess: A Source Book*, p. 5.
42. Kemp, "Why Empires Rise," p. 128.
43. Ions, *Egyptian Mythology*, p. 103.
44. *Larousse*, p. 37.
45. Monaghan, *The Book of Goddesses & Heroines*, p. 251.
46. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 8, p. 54., and A. Mercatante, *The Facts On File Encyclopedia of World Mythology and Legend*, p. 473.
47. Ions, *Egyptian Mythology*, p. 103.
48. Budge, *An Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary*, vol. 1, p. 399.
49. Dexter, *Whence the Goddesses*, p. 25.
50. *Larousse*, p. 37.
51. Mercatante, *The Facts On File Encyclopedia of World Mythology and Legend*, p. 598.
52. Chevalier and Gheerbrant, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, p. 904.

53. Taraporevala, *The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra*, p. 61.
54. Davies, *roots*, pp. 190-191.
55. Jobes, *Dictionary of Mythology, Folklore and Symbols*, p. 1483.
56. Becker, *The Continuum Encyclopedia of Symbols*, p. 277.
57. Bruce-Mitford, *The Illustrated Book of Signs & Symbols*, p. 57.
58. Cooper, *An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols*, p. 156.
59. Lipsey, ed., *Coomaraswamy*, vol. 1, pp. 510 & 531, and vol. 2, pp. 350-351. Also see Coomaraswamy, "Angel and Titan: An Essay in Vedic Ontology," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, LV (1935), 373-419. and Coomaraswamy, "The Iconography of Dürer's 'Knots' and Leonardo's 'Concatenation,'" *Art Quarterly*, VII (1944), 109-28.
60. Lipsey, ed., *Coomaraswamy*, vol. 2, p. 415.
61. Chevalier & Gheerbrant, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, p. 1093.
62. Hazlitt, *Faiths & Folklore of the British Isles*, p. 559.
63. Shafer, *Pacing the Void*, pp. 146-147.
64. See Burton Watson's *The Columbia Book of Chinese Poetry*, p. 100 and Arthur Waley's translation in *Translations from the Chinese*, p. 43.
65. Shafer, *Pacing the Void*, p. 147.
66. *Ibid.* Note: Coomaraswamy notes that "the macrocosmic warp and woof, thought of as a veil or garment (*vavri*, *vastra*) comparable to the tissues woven on human looms" is a concept found in ancient Indian symbolism and iconography. Lipsey, ed., *Coomaraswamy*, vol. 1. p. 82.
67. *Ibid.*
68. Trans. Victor Mair, March, 1998, Personal correspondence.
69. *Metamorphoses*, Book VI, lines 1-147, trans. Watts 1980, 116-121.

70. "The legend of the annual meeting of the star of the Cowherd and the star of the Spinning Maiden over the Milky Way was brought to Japan during the reign of the Empress Koken (749-759 C.E) and utilized to found the festival of Tanabata, celebrated on the seventh evening of the seventh moon—whence the name Tanabata, which means seventh evening." *Larousse*, p. 422.

71. *Ibid*, p. 107.

72. Divers, "On Two Japanese Meteorites," pp. 199-200.

73. Schafer, *Pacing The Void*, pp. 104-105.

74. *The Odyssey*, Book 3.

75. Barber, *Women's Work*, p. 239.

76. Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas*, p. 281.

77. *Ibid*.

78. *Ibid*.

79. Mallory & Adams, *Encyclopedia of Indo-European Culture*, p. 231.

80. *Ibid*.

81. Jobs, *Dictionary of Mythology, Folklore and Symbols*, p. 150.

82. *Ibid.*, p. 151.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 150.

84. Schimmel, *The Mystery of Numbers*, p. 139.

85. *Ibid.*, pp. 137 & 139.

86. See Marsha Wagner's commentary on the *Ku-shih shih-chiu shou* (Nineteen Old Poems), pp. 489-491 in *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*.

87. Watson, *The Columbia Book of Chinese Poetry*, p. 100.
88. Birrell, *New Songs from a Jade Terrace*, p. 40.
89. Waley, *Translations from the Chinese*, p. 43.
90. Lattimore, *The Odyssey of Homer*, Book II, lines 94-95 & 104-105.
91. Butler, trans., *The Odyssey*, p. 294.
92. Lattimore, *The Odyssey Of Homer*, Book XXIII, 239-246, p. 341.
93. Hillebrandt, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 31.
94. Kirby, *Kalevala: The Land of Heros*, vol. 1, p. 311.
95. Magoun, trans., *The Kalevala, or Poems of the Kalevala District*, p. 180.
96. Lönnrot, trans. *The Kalevala, or Poems of the Kalevala District* p. 389.
97. Kirby, *Kalevala: The Land of Heros*, p. 319. Note: It is interesting that the suffix —tar means "daughter of" in both Finnish and ancient Semitic. Ishtar's name breaks down into "Light (Ish) + daughter of (tar)" which is so similar to Päivätär's: Sun (Päivä) + daughter of (tär). See: Jobes, *Dictionary of Mythology, Folklore and Symbols*, pp. 844-845.
98. I am grateful to Professor Juha Janhunen at the University of Helsinki for this valuable information. From Victor Mair's personal communication, 12/16/97.
99. Bender, *The Home of the Indo-Europeans*, p. 56.
100. Dexter, "Dawn-Maid and Sun Maid: Celestial Goddesses among the Proto-Indo-Europeans", pp. 242-24.
101. *Ibid.*, p. 240.
102. Berman "The Great Summer Triangle," p. 45.
103. Johnson, trans., *Kalevala*, p. 222.
104. Kirby, trans., *Kalevala*, p. 163.

105. Allen, *Star Names*, p. 479.
106. Monaghan, *The Book of Goddesses & Heroines*, p. 270.
107. Magoun, trans., *The Kalevala, or Poems from the Kalevala District*, p. 277.
108. Kirby, trans., *Kalevala: The Land of the Heros*, Runo #41, vol. 2, pp. 163-164.
- 108a. Juha Pentikäinen, *Kalevala Mythology*, p. 91.
109. *Ibid.*, p. 89.
110. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
111. *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92.
112. *Larousse*, p. 304.
113. Santillana & von Dechend, *Hamlet's Mill*, p. 129.
114. Campbell, *Oriental Mythology*, p. 288.
115. O'Flaherty, *The Rig Veda: An Anthology*, p. 180.
116. Maurer, *Pinnacles of India's Past: Selections from the Rgveda*, p. 164.
117. In his *Vedic Mythology*, Alfred Hillebrandt writes, "Uṣas is referred to in the singular at some places and at others in the plural. Among these some are of special interest where reference is made to three dawns. According to Bergaigne, they are probably 'three forms of Dawn, corresponding to the three worlds,' and according to Hopkins, they are 'the three dawn-lights, white, red and yellow.'" Hillebrandt, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 25.
118. Maurer, *Pinnacles of India's Past: Selections from the Rgveda*, p. 166.
119. Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 47.
120. Maurer, *Pinnacles of India's Past: Selections from the Rgveda*, p. 164.
121. *Ibid.*, p. 166.

122. Maurer, *Pinnacles of India's Past: Selections from the Rgveda*, p. 166.
123. O'Flaherty, trans., *The Rig Veda*, p. 179.
124. Butler, trans., *The Odyssey*, p. 238.
125. I. Taraporewala, *The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra*, p. 61.
126. *Ibid.*
127. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
128. Snyder, "The Web of Song" p. 193. Also see Scheid & Svenbro, *The Craft of Zeus: Myths of Weaving and Fabric*.
129. Hsieh Yen's poem is translated by Edward Schafer in *Pacing the Void*, pp. 260-262.
130. In Hsieh Yen's poem, side by side are found two ways to cross the River of Heaven, "[Then by] Measuring dragon cart for easy sweep, [Or] Framing magpie bridge for zig-zag link." The former is a description of a celestial chariot, the latter being Weaver-girl's usual means of spanning the Silver Stream. Schafer, *Pacing the Void*, pp. 260-262.
131. Hillebrandt, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 24.
132. Motz, *The Faces of the Goddess*, p. 74.
133. Hillebrandt, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 24.
134. Liebert, *Iconographic Dictionary of the Indian Religions*, p. 312.
135. See Chapter 7, "The Pillars of Wisdom" in Annemarie Schimmel's *The Mystery of Numbers*, pp. 127-155.
136. Lipsey, ed., *Coomaraswamy*, vol. 1, p. 417.
137. *Ibid.*, pp. 420-421.
138. *Ibid.*, p. 421.
139. Schimmel, *The Mystery of Numbers*, p. 150.

140. *Ibid.*

141. Schimmel, *The Mystery of Numbers*, p. 139.

142. See Jane McIntosh Snyder's informative article "The Web of Song: Weaving Imagery in Homer and the Lyric poets", which describes the "mechanical parallels between the weaver's loom and the poet's lyre."

143. Campbell, *Oriental Mythology*, p. 399.

144. *Ibid.*, pp. 379-380.

145. Major, "Myth, Cosmology, and the Origins of Chinese Science", p. 2.

146. Schafer, *Ancient China*, p. 59.

147. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

148. Major, "Myth, Cosmology, and the Origins of Chinese Science", p. 4. To put this statement into perspective, H. G. Rawlinson has written "...we have direct evidence of early trade by sea between the Phoenicians of the Levant and western India as early as 975 B.C. ...and with merchandise there invariably comes an exchange, not only of *motifs* in pottery, jewelry, and woven materials, but of language and ideas." Rawlinson, "Early Contacts between India and Europe," p. 425.

149. Mair, ed., *Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature*, p. 149.

150. *Shih ching*, 203, *SPPY* 13.7a-b; Birrell, trans. *Chinese Mythology*, pp. 166-167.

151. Birrell, *Chinese Mythology*, pp. 165-166.

152. Victor Mair's translation of *po chang* is taken from his unpublished "Ta Tung Notes", personal correspondence, 2/1998.

153. This comment by Chu Hsi came from personal communication with Victor Mair, 2/1998.

154. Waley, *The Book of Songs*, p. 319.

155. Victor Mair, unpublished commentary on the "Ta Tung", personal communication, 2/1998. I am profoundly grateful to Dr. Mair, Professor of Classical Chinese & Chinese Literature at the University of Pennsylvania (an acknowledged authority on the translation of ancient Chinese graphs) for allowing me to use his unpublished translations and commentary on the Weaver-girl, Draft Ox portion of the "Ta Tung" ode.

156. For a detailed analysis of just how difficult Chinese poetry can be to translate, read *Nineteen Ways of Looking at Wang Wei; How a Chinese Poem Is Translated*. Also see "Part IV. Sinological Usages and Principles of Translation" in the Afterward to Victor H. Mair's *Tao Te Ching*.

157. The unpublished translation of *ch'i pi chih nü* as "Tiptoe that weaver girl", and accompanying unpublished commentary by Victor H. Mair are from his unpublished "Ta Tung Notes", personal correspondence, 8/1997 and used with permission.

158. Translated by Anne Birrell, *New Songs*, p. 89.

159. James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, pp. 355-356.

160. Pound, trans. *Shih-Ching: The Classic Anthology Defined by Confucius* p. 119. Interestingly, Ezra Pound chose to interpret the Chinese Character for Draught Ox as "led oxen", which would seem to imply that Herd-Boy was leading them. Victor Mair's translation of the same line in question is: "Bright/Brilliant that Draft Ox, [but can] not be used for yoking to a cart." Mair asserts "*ch'ien-niu* (Draft Ox) in the *Shih Ching* can not be a human being because the line in which this term appears talks about being yoked to a cart." Mair, unpublished "Ta Tung Notes", Personal correspondence, 2/1998.

161. Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, p. 355.

162. Karlgren, "Glosses on the Siao Ya Odes," p. 123.

163. Karlgren, "The Book of Odes: Kuo Feng and Siao Ya," p. 243. Also Karlgren, *The Book of Odes: Chinese Text, Transcription And Translation*, p. 155.

164. Mair, unpublished "Ta Tung Notes", personal correspondence, 2/1998, used with permission. Emphasis author's.

165. Birrell, *Chinese Mythology*, p. 301. Incidentally, the seven sons of the Greek Sun-god Helios (the Helides) were all astrologers, and "were the first to divide the day into hours". Kravitz, *Who's Who in Greek and Roman Mythology*, p. 114.

166. Schafer, *Pacing the Void*, p. 167.

167. Anne Birrell dates the *Classic* at "late Chou-Han, third century B.C.-first century A.D. and writes that "This is an anonymous work of mixed authorship and dating, compiled in the late Chou and the Han periods from earlier source material." Birrell, *Chinese Mythology*, p. 37 & 277.

168. Birrell, *Chinese Mythology*, p. 124.

169. Williams, *Chinese Symbolism And Art Motifs*, p. 378.

170. MacDonell, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 48.

171. Mair, *The Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature*, p. 376.

172. *Ibid.*, p. 374.

173. Grimal, *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, p. 146.

174. Dexter, *Whence the Goddesses*, p. 65.

175. See, for instance, Williams, *Chinese Symbolism and Art Motifs*, p. 378: "There is a legend to the effect that the chariot of the Sun is harnessed to six dragons driven by the Goddess Hsi Ho."

176. For more on this subject see Edward Schafer's "Domestic Animals," Ch. 3 in *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand*.

177. Major, *Heaven and Earth in Early Han Thought*, p. 104.

178. *Huai-nan Tzu*, SPPY, 3.1b, trans. Victor Mair, personal communication, 4/1998.

179. Uṣas is similarly referred to as "the woman" in book four of the *Rgveda* which says of Indra "...you destroyed the woman, daughter of heaven..." (*RVIV.30.8*). For translations see Dexter, "Dawn-Maid and Sun-Maid: Celestial Goddesses among the Proto-Europeans," p. 235 and Wilson, *Rig-Veda Sanhita: A Collection of Ancient Hindu Hymns of the Rig-Veda*, p. 178.

180. Birrell, *Chinese Mythology*, p. 38.

181. Major, *Heaven & Earth in Early Han Thought*, p. 104.
182. Translations by John Major, *Heaven and Earth in Early Han Thought*, p. 102. The number 7 also denoted the stages of the ecliptic, the sun's journey across the heavens, and, "the number seven is associated with the astronomical phenomenon of the transit of the Sun through the zenith." Chevalier & Gheerbrant, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, pp. 864-865.
183. Author's personal interpretation of Ode 23 ("Ta Tung") in the *Shih Ching*.
184. See Kistemaker and Sun's *The Chinese Sky During the Han*, p. 149, Figure 7.1, (see also the black-and-white illustration at the beginning of this paper) which shows a stone-relief from the Eastern Han dynasty (25 B.C.-220 A.D.). The relief depicts Chih Nü in the sky among the stars at work on her celestial loom adjacent to the sun (within which a large black bird [which we will assume is a crow] flies). The explanation for this odd combination of two separate myths (a solar myth and a star myth) is given in the book as: "When the sun approached the constellation Zhinü, it was mid-winter, the beginning of the year on the calendar of the Zhou." This author finds the explanation to be unconvincing.
185. Old Sinitic for Hsi-ho provided by Prof. Victor H. Mair, personal correspondence, 1999.
186. Mallory & Adams, *Encyclopedia of Indo-European Culture*, pp. 148-149.
187. See for instance, Freeman, "Enchanted Beasts and Faerie Women; Celtic symbols of the soul," and "Teutonic Mythology" in *New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology*.
188. *Larousse*, "Teutonic Mythology", pp. 279-278.
189. Tao Tao Sanders, *Dragons Gods & Spirits from Chinese Mythology*, p. 44.
190. Freeman, "Enchanted Beasts and Faerie Women; Celtic Symbols of the Soul," pp. 27-28.
191. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
192. *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.
193. Joseph Jacobs, ed. *Celtic Fairy Tales*, pp. 57-60 & 248-249.

194. Freeman, "Enchanted Beasts and Faerie Women; Celtic Symbols of the Soul." pp. 30-31.

195. For further reference on the importance of Celtic shape shifting or "fith-fath" traditions with two examples from Britain and Ireland, see "Shapeshifting," Chapter Six, pp.146-184, *The Encyclopaedia of Celtic Wisdom*. The authors say that "...shapeshifting is particularly prevalent in the stories of the Scots and British." They also provide many examples of the importance of the number 7 in Celtic mythology.

196. For examples see Mallory & Mair, *The Tarim Mummies: Ancient China and the Mystery of the Earliest Peoples from the West*; Barber, *The Mummies of Ürumchi*; Mair, "Die Sprachamöbe: An Archeolinguistic Parable," Mair, ed. "A Collection of Papers on The Mummified Remains Found in the Tarim Basin"; and especially Mair, "Prehistoric Caucasoid Corpses of the Tarim Basin"; Mallory, *In Search of the Indo-Europeans*; Bower, "Indo-European pursuits: scientific paths diverge in the quest for ancient Eurasians"; Rawlinson, "Early Contacts between India and Europe"; Anthony & Vinogradov, "The Birth of the Chariot"; D'Alviella, *The Migration of Symbols*; Scott, *The Book of Silk*, Ch. 2. "Central Asia and the Silk Road" and Ch. 4. "The Ancient World, Egypt and Byzantium".

197. Schafer, *Pacing the Void*, p. 167.

198. Schafer, *The Divine Woman: Dragon Ladies and Rain Maidens in T'ang Literature*, p. 29.

199. David Anthony, "The Opening of the Eurasian Steppe at 2000 BCE," pp. 94-95.

200. *Ibid.*, p. 95.

201. Mair, "The Horse in Late Prehistoric China: Wrestling Culture and Control from the 'Barbarians'".

202. Barber, *The Mummies of Ürumchi*, pp. 205-207.

203. *Ibid.*, p. 205.

204. *Ibid.*, p. 206.

205. Birrell, *Chinese Mythology*, pp. 165-167.

206. Birrell, *New Songs from a Jade Terrace*, p. 186.

207. *Ibid.*

208. *Ibid.*, pg. 253.

209. See Anne Birrell's *New Songs from a Jade Terrace*, for much more Weaver-girl/Herdboy poetry.

210. Li Ch'ing-chao's poem "The Seventh Day of the Seventh Lunar Month" is translated by Jiaosheng Wang in "The Complete Ci-poems of Li Qingzhao: A New English Translation." *Sino-Platonic Papers*, 13 (October, 1989), p. 47.

APPENDIX

THE SUN-GODDESS AMATERASU, JAPAN'S GODDESS OF WEAVING

The Japanese sun-goddess/weaving goddess comes to us very late (circa. 500 A.D.)¹ compared to the more ancient Chinese, Indian, and Greek mythologies and therefore she was not included in the main body of the text. However, because Amaterasu is a "shining" example of a sun-goddess who weaves, she deserves our attention. It is not yet clear from which influence her persona was gathered but it is most likely that the horse-riding nomads from Central Asia who conquered Japan and Korea played a part in it.² It has been suggested that, in all likelihood, she came to Japan with (or that the formulation of the sun-goddess was inspired by) Iranians,³ or Iranian-influenced peoples. That Iranian elements entered Japan during the formative period of its culture is evident from burial and sword types, weaving technologies, linguistic features, religious practices (sun worship), popular customs, and other traits. While the investigation of these matters is beyond the scope of this paper, C. Scott Littleton's excellent article "Were Some of the Xinjiang Mummies 'Epi-Scythians'? An Excursus in Trans-Eurasian Folklore and Mythology", discusses these issues.⁴

Her name, Amaterasu, means "Heaven Shining," she was also called "Oho-hirume-no-muchi" (Great Sun Goddess)⁵ and she seems to have been every bit a cross between the Greek culture bearer/patroness of weavers, Athena, and that supremely powerful Hittite Sun goddess of Arinna/Arinna (sometimes called Arinna or Hebat). Amaterasu became the most important female deity in the Shinto Pantheon and the most beloved. Like Athena she was a strong female leader/ruler who bore weapons when necessary to defend her place, and also like Athena gave instruction to women in the weaving of cloth (and sericulture).⁶

The Japanese sun-goddess also shares in common with Athena a tree which is sacred to her, Amaterasu's being the sakaki tree, Athena's the olive. Amaterasu gifted her people with rice while Athena gave her's the olive and its oil. Both are recorded to have had children while remaining virgins. Amaterasu was the favorite daughter of the creator God Izanagi, Athena was also her father Zeus's favorite. Both goddesses were born by androgenesis, one from her father's eye the other from her father's head.⁷ In heaven Amaterasu (as with Chih Nü and Athena) was obliged to make the clothes of the gods which she accomplished in her weaving room, a duty that she shared with her earthly devotees, the Shinto priestesses who "were employed in weaving garments before the great ceremonies."⁸ The Hittite Sun-goddess also had her earthly "high-priestess," the Hittite queen herself,⁹ and, exactly like Amaterasu and her Storm-god brother, the Hittite Sun-goddess was considered the equal of, if not slightly more powerful than her husband the Storm-god. Considering her late appearance, Amaterasu's mythology may have been influenced by the mythology of a goddess such as Athena, the Hittite sun goddess, or even by the nearer Usas.¹⁰

Patricia Monaghan has pointed out the similarity in one of the pivotal themes shared by Finland's *Kalevala* and Japan's *Kojiki* (records of ancient matters). In the well known Japanese myth, the Sun-goddess becomes outraged by her brother's offensive behavior after he tears a hole in the roof of her weaving room, tossing in a flayed, piebald horse, causing one of the weaving women (sometimes said to have been the dawn-maiden Waka-Hiru-Me) to prick herself with the shuttle and die. "The goddess Amaterasu was terrified and hid in a rocky cave of Heaven, blocking the entrance with a boulder. The world was plunged into darkness."¹¹ In *The Book of Goddesses and Heroines*, Monaghan writes "One of the epic events of the *Kalevala* is the freeing of the captive sun from a dark cave where the witch Louhi had hidden her. As in the Japanese myth of Amaterasu, a mirror image of the sun was first forged from metal..."¹² This ersatz sun was crafted by the hero-smith Ilmarinen. In the Japanese version, "They call upon the services of the one-eyed god of smiths, Ama-Tsu-Mara, to help them fashion the 'perfect divine mirror'."¹³ The image of her own radiant beauty reflected in the mirror (coupled with the uproarious laughter of the gods caused by an old hag deity's erotic dance) so stunned the Sun-goddess she was able to be drawn out of the cave.

There are also Greek parallels to this myth. In the *Odyssey*, the Greek sun-god Helios, when outraged by the murder of his oxen, threatened to hide himself away in the underworld of Hades. In another Greek myth which is strikingly similar to Amaterasu's emerging from her cave, Helios actually does retreat to a cave upon the abduction of Persephone by Demeter, only to be lured out by Persephone's laughter during the comically erotic dance of the hag Baubo.¹⁴

In these Finnish and Japanese mythic themes, we may note concerns that were central to the expanding Indo-European peoples: weaving, sun symbolism, metallurgy, and mirrors which were objects of great reverence found in abundance in Europoid grave sites and settlement sites dating 1350-1000 B.C. in Central Asia. These mirrors were often found in conjunction with snaffle bits and spindle whorls¹⁵ and, as an expert in her field has recently written, the Andronovo culture "helps to solve the problem of genesis of mirrors in China."¹⁶

In contrast, there is no clear evidence that these elements were vital to the forefathers of the Finns and the Japanese before Indo-European culture-bearers are likely to have impinged upon them.¹⁷

The birth of Amaterasu from her father's left eye has caused more than one scholar to ponder her origin because in Chinese mythology the sun is also born from the creator deity P'an-ku's left eye. P'an-ku's myth in China is attested to approximately the third century B.C. The myth of P'an-ku has further parallels in Vedic mythology in the creation myth of Puruṣa (c. 1300 B.C.E.), from whose eye the sun was also born. Many contemporary scholars have examined these parallel myths and determined that the Chinese P'an-ku was in all likelihood borrowed from its Vedic predecessor.¹⁸

It is highly probable that the Chinese legend of Pan-ku, whose left eye became the sun and his right eye the moon, was grafted onto an ancient tradition by the authors of the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki*.¹⁹

The only reservation to this statement is that the parallels between the P'an-ku and Japanese myths mentioned may be due not to the latter borrowing from the former, but because both derived from an Indo-European source. These same sacred Japanese texts (above) are the original sources for the myths surrounding Amaterasu.²⁰

One final observation worth mentioning is the similarity between the genealogical legend of Izanagi (Amaterasu's father) and Izanami (his wife/sister) who, after seven generations of gods were the last couple, and the Iranian creation myth of the first human couple Mashya and Mashyoi who give birth to the original seven couples. The number seven is likewise shared with Babylonian cosmogony when "...after the flood Ea decided to create seven men and seven women,"²¹ and additionally in Finnish cosmogony the sacred number 7 appears in the account of Luonnotar, the goddess who floated in the sea for seven centuries before co-creating heaven and earth.²² Clearly we find the number seven deeply embedded in solar mythology, connected with weaving goddesses and also in myths explaining the origin of human life.

APPENDIX NOTES

A1. Olson, *The Book of the Goddess Past and Present*, p. 182.

A2. Egami, "The Formation of the People and the Origin of the State of Japan" and *The Horserider State: An approach to Japan's Antiquity*; Ledyard, "Gallop along with the Horseriders: Looking for the Founders of Japan"; and Littleton, "The Indo-European Strain in Japanese Mythology: A Review of some Recent Research."

A3. Littleton writes "As I have indicated, the specific Indo-European-speaking community most likely to have had an influence on Japan was an as yet undocumented contingent of Alans.... The Alans, or Oss, as they are sometimes called (e.g., the Ossets), were the easternmost of the North Iranian-speaking steppe nomads." "The Indo-European Strain in Japanese Mythology: A Review of Some Recent Research," p. 169. Littleton further states that the evidence "...clearly suggests that those who compiled the earliest Japanese religious texts were in fair measure constrained by the same tripartite ideology that manifests itself in the *Rig Veda*, the Icelandic *Eddas*, and other ancient Indo-European documents." *Ibid.*, p. 170.

A4. In "The Significance of Amaterasu in Japanese Religious History," Kyoko Motomochi Nakamura writes that, because of her close relation to water, "In this connection Amaterasu is compared with Sarasvatī, Anāhitā, or the Scythian goddess as to her genealogy and function" (pp. 177-178). In this same respect, Athena is connected with the morning dew as is Eos, and Chih Nū's tears sprinkle down to the earth as rain.

A5. Olson, *The Book of the Goddess Past and Present*, p. 177.

A6. In some later additions to her mythology, Amaterasu has a younger sister, the dawn maiden Waka-Hiru-me ("Young Sun Maiden"), who is also a weaver.

A7. All of these observations were made by this author prior to reading an informative article by Kazuo Matsumura titled "Alone among Women: A Comparative Mythic Analysis of the Development of Amaterasu Theology" in which all of the preceding statements were also made, however, I wanted to give credit for these observations to Kazuo Matsumura and am grateful to have my own observations substantiated.

A8. *Larousse*, p. 408. Up until approximately 400 B.C. there was no weaving in Japan (*Discover*, 6/98), therefore no Goddess of Weaving would have existed before that time.

A9. Garstang, "The Sun-Goddess of Arenna", p. 110.

A10. The stories of the Greek Gods and Goddesses were taken north, south, east and west, through the agency of migration, incursions, travelers, and merchants, thereby becoming interfused with the indigenous myths of other countries. As for a possible venue of transmission into China, Korea, and Japan, the incursions and battles of Alexander III "The Great" (between 334-323 B.C.) took him and his army of 30,000-40,000 men to the very borders of China, and through such far-flung destinations and cultural conjunctions as Ferghana, Sogdiana, Bactria, India, Afghanistan, Iran, Babylon, Egypt, Syria, Tyre and Troy. Athena's mythology could have continued eastward from that point in time.

A11. *Larousse*, p. 409.

A12. Monaghan, *The Book of Goddesses and Heroines*, p. 270.

A13. Jordan, *Myths of the World*, p. 20.

A14. Carolyn Edwards, *Sun Stories*, "Baubo's Dance," pp 38-42.

A15. Mei & Shell, "Copper and Bronze Metallurgy in Late Prehistoric Xinjiang," *The Bronze Age and Early Iron Age Peoples of Eastern Central Asia*, pp. 586-588.

A16. Kuzmina, "Cultural Connections of the Tarim Basin People and Pastoralists of the Asian Steppes in the Bronze Age," *The Bronze Age and Early Iron Age Peoples of Eastern Central Asia*, pp. 73-80.

A17. See C.S. Littleton's excellent article "The Indo-European Strain in Japanese Mythology" to learn how Epi-Scythians, through interaction, left perceptible traces in Japan's mythology and folklore. For more on the influences involved in the shaping of Japanese mythology, see Jared Diamond, "Japanese Roots," *Discover* (June, 1998): 86-94 and Scott Littleton, "Were Some of the Xinjiang Mummies 'Epi-Scythians'? An Excursus in Trans-Eurasian Folklore and Mythology." For the Iranian influence on Chinese mythology see Sir J. C. Coyajee's excellent work *Cults & Legends of Ancient Iran & China*, esp. Chapter 1. "Some Shahnameh Legends and Their Chinese Parallels" pointing out that the Saka race dominated Central Asia for centuries and "made a broad and deep mark on the great empires of China, Persia and India...." He writes, "...there is a close parallelism between the Saka legends preserved for us in the Shahnameh and a number of Chinese legends...." (p. 1) "It is not only in the case of Shahnameh legends that we discover Chinese parallels. The Kereshasnameh, which is supposed to narrate the exploits of one of Rustam's ancestors and forms therefore a part of the saga of the Saka race, also displays

such analogues. Thus, in that work we find Kereshap going on a long voyage and discovering a great many curious races of men—headless people, people with long arms and legs, people with elephantine ears, etc. Almost all these races meet with their parallels in the old Chinese work entitled the *Shan Hai Ching* or 'Hill and River Classics.' In the latter work too we have the same species and varieties of giants, headless people, armless people, long-armed and long-legged people, the one-eyed people, etc." (p. 23) "Laufer has shown in his study of the Diamond that the Chinese folk-lore was very susceptible to the foreign influence and that there were times when a stream of foreign folk-lore poured into the valleys of China. Indeed, he has emphasized the fact that Chinese culture and beliefs were the result of the contributions of numerous tribes among whom the Saka race would naturally be prominent by its importance and influence...." Again, "both the Emperor of China and his restless vassal Kings at different times formed marriage alliances with nomad princes and such intercourse would favor the exchange of ideas and legends." (p. 2) "....I would suggest that the chief period during which such influence was exercised was during the Chou dynasty which ruled China from 1249 B.C. to 1122 B.C. and which very likely was partly or wholly of Scythic origin." (p. 42)

A18. See for example Birrell, *Chinese Mythology*; Mair, "Canine Conundrums: Eurasian Dog Ancestor Myths in Historical and Ethnic Perspective"; Frederick Mote, *Intellectual Foundations of China*; John Major, "Myth, Cosmology, and the Origins of Chinese Science"; and Bruce Lincoln, *Myth, Cosmos, and Society: Indo-European Themes of Creation and Destruction*. Mair proposes a possible pre-Vedic, Indo-European origin for the cosmic sacrificial man in his above-mentioned article, pp. 14-16, based on additional I-E parallel myths such as the Scandinavian Ymir and the above-mentioned research of Bruce Lincoln. He also suggests that "it is remotely conceivable that the name P'an-ku (approximate Han period pronunciation **ban-kah*) constitutes a distant phonological transformation of the name Puruṣa or some cognate thereof." (p. 16)

A19. Larrouse, pp. 407-408. Regarding the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki*, "They were compiled in the late seventh and early eighth century.... In the process of compilation, myths and legends were collected from all tribes and correlated into a mythological history...." Motomochi, "The Significance of Amaterasu in Japanese Religious History" (p. 177). Kazuo Matsumura has written, "The work of comparing mythic elements from *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki* (*Nihongi*) with mythic traditions of countries close to Japan and analyzing the distribution of similar mythic elements has long been undertaken by students of Japanese ethnography. The results of work by Takagi Toshio, Matsumoto Nobuhiro, Oka Masao, Matsumura Takeo, Numazawa Kiichi, Mishina Shōei, Matsumae Takeshi, Ōbayashi Taryōtō Seiji, and Yoshida Atsuhiko have made it abundantly clear that the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* did not occur in isolation, but were products of the collation of mythic elements shared throughout the surrounding geographical region." "Alone among Women": A

Justine T. Snow, "The Spider's Web: Evidence for the Indo-European Origin of Two Ancient Chinese Deities," *Sino-Platonic Papers*, 118 (June, 2002)

Comparative Mythic Analysis of the Development of Amaterasu Theology," p. 1.

A20. Sinologist Anne Birrell sees similarities in the Chinese Sun-goddess Hsi-ho and Amaterasu, although she does not offer further explanation. Birrell, *Chinese Mythology*, p. 125.

A21. Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas*, p. 63.

A22. *Larousse*, p. 304.

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