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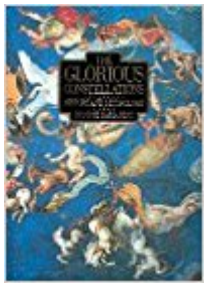
The Glorious Constellations: History And Mythology



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Synopsis

The Glorious Constellations traces the evolution of the constellations that we know today through various cultures--Sumerian, Egyptian, Phoenician, Assyrian, Greek, Hebrew--and augments their history with corresponding lore fron India, China, Australia, and the Americas. Includes a far-reaching, yet concise and easy-to-understand history of astronomy. 672 illustrations, 48 in full color.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It is hard to discern a pattern in Sesti’s scattered glimpses into classical cosmology, comparative religion and astronomy. The color reproductions of the astronomical allegory of the Villa Farnese fresco, and even some of the 600-plus black-and-white illustrations, shine gloriously here, but the text is a scrambled catalogue of Mediterranean mythology and random Oriental references. "To understand a civilization, one should observe how it measures the year: one should study its zodiac," the introduction declaims. In fact, Sesti’s overlays of Sumerian, Greek, Islamic, Roman and Egyptian zodiacs obscure the view in all directions. Chapters, organized by the names of familiar constellations, simply don’t rise to the challenge. Neither astrologer nor amateur astronomer will be satisfied by the early historical sections, which sound like cocktail party gossip about the gods. Only a medievalist with a specialty in cartography will find undistracted glory in this book. Sesti is an Italian fresco painter. Astronomy Book Club alternate. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This work could be best characterized as a history of the mythology of the constellations. The text begins with an abbreviated history of astronomy, mostly before the modern era. Next is a section devoted to the cosmographic painting on a ceiling at the Villa Farnese, Italy. Finally there is a chapter devoted to each constellation, summarizing the mythology of the Western world, Islam, and the Far Eastern nations. Each section contains numerous illustrations drawn from various identified sources. Deliberately, there is no attention given to the findings of modern science about the astronomical objects and formations mentioned. The work is nontechnical, accessible to the general public, and of greatest value for the art depicted therein.- Jack W. Weigel, Univ. of Michigan Lib., Ann ArborCopyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"It often happens that the mind of a person who is learning a new science, has to pass through all the phases which the science itself has exhibited in its historical evolution." (Stanislao Cannizzaro, Italian chemist, 1826 - 1910)."The Glorious Constellations" presents the science of Astronomy as it existed in its astrological phase in Medieval Europe, with snippets from ancient civilizations such as the Egyptian, Babylonian, and Chinese. This coffee-table-sized book (10" x 14" x 1.5") is beautifully illustrated with color reproductions of the astronomical allegory of the Villa Farnese fresco, along with more than 600 black-and-white illustrations that range from Sumerian star maps to engravings from Dante’s "Inferno."Modern astronomers may treat astrology with scorn, but the mere act of recognizing and mapping the constellations gave early civilizations a way to measure time--the slow progression of the sun through the zodiacal constellations--and space--the use of stars (most especially Polaris) as navigational guides.Each constellation is celebrated in pictures and text. Here is an excerpt from Sesti’s description of the constellation of Ara, the Altar:"The Altar built by the Cyclopes was eternalized by Zeus, who placed it as a constellation in the southern reaches of the sky, under the stars of Scorpio and at the beginning of the Milky Way, so that the Milky Way itself became the smoke of divine sacrifices."A detailed description of the mythological origins of the Altar, as originating in Greece is entwined with the Sumerian explanation for this same constellation. In ancient Egypt, the Altar represents a human figure with a dog’s head.This book isn’t meant to be read straight through, nor is it meant to be a technical manual. Dip in to "The Glorious Constellations" for an illuminated history of the mythology of the star patterns that guide and console us on our journey through time and space.

The Publisher’s Weekly editorial comment provided for The Glorious Constellations is a perfect

representation of the metaphor in the Sala del Mappamonda ceiling fresco. The editor presents a rational perspective derived from the "brilliant reflection" in a mirror of narcissistic perception. The images portrayed in the fresco of the constellations display the heavens toward the perspective of Phaeton falling from the raceway of Apollo on a "mirror guided chariot" as viewed from beyond the stars.Sesti provides incredible depth in the description of the spirits and emotions of the ancient constellations. After reviewing Sesti's descriptions, the reader is required to go back to the fresco and then interpret the way of Phaeton, which begins with the fall of Orion into the Abyss on the right and ends with Zeus riding the eagle above the lion in Olympus on the left.The fresco was clearly commissioned by someone who understood that narcissistic perspectives lead to the Fall of Man. Sesti's encyclopedia provides the reader with the means to interpret the most important message every learned along the raceway of the Chariot of the Sun, i.e., the zodiac. This path of salvation is the underlying message that has raised the consciousness of children to the awareness of the imperishale stars for thosands of years.Read the descriptions. Then look again at the fresco and see how time and history evolved into religion and culture. It will change your life. It will make you a heavenly host, too.

Great

excellent

This is a glorious book for both its visuals and its reference material. Filled with color plates from earlier centuries and black and white schematics of almost every constellation you can think of. I found this book inspiring as an artist, and extremely helpful in sourcing some of the many myths and naming devices for the stars. I was fascinated, as was my 9 year old nephew.

If you are interested in the high end fact regarding the constellations in the sky; then I refer you to H.R.Rey. Ther34 are also forced fits which you can explore your self. One very bad error is the "Ram." Rey clears this one up prior, to his emblematic end! Its real value is approximately $30!

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