

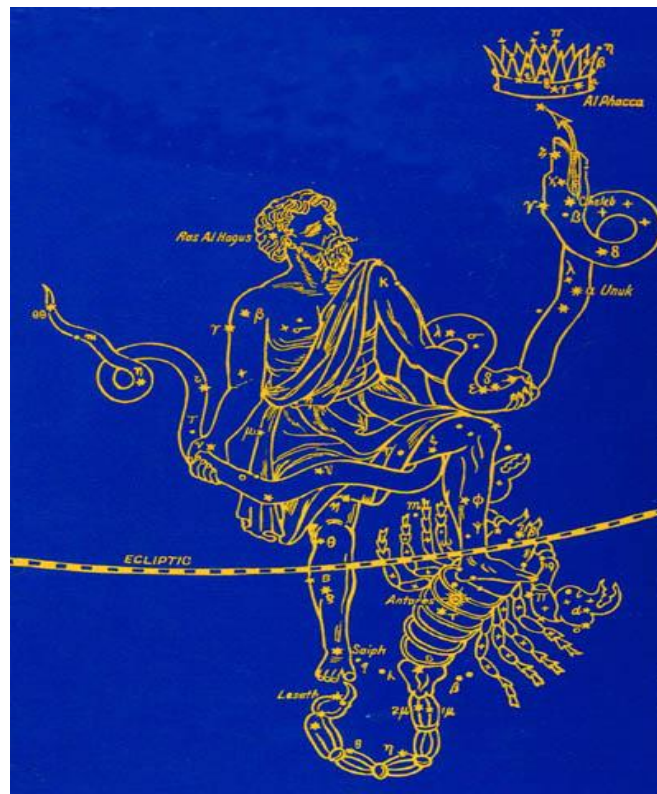
Advent Zodiac Scorpion - Serpent Holder - Crown



From November 23rd to December 18th, most of Advent, the Sun is passing through the constellation of Scorpion. However, this is not entirely correct. Though Scorpio stretches along the ecliptic plane (the path of the Sun), its stinger tail curves well below the ecliptic. Another constellation stands behind the passing Sun from November 30th to December 18th when the Sun enters Sagittarius, the Archer. This is the constellation of Ophiucus, which is from the Greek for “the man who holds the serpent”. This has raised questions in astrological traditions as to whether this constellation should be considered the 13th of the 12 zodiac archetypes. In this article I will offer some thoughts of what I consider to be a triad of constellations that carry the complete Scorpio imagination in our times. This triad takes into account not only Ophiucus as part of the Scorpio imagination, making it an elaboration of the spiritual nexus of the logos of Scorpio, but also the constellation of the Crown or Corona above the serpent’s head.

In the image above are the star imaginations from mythology around Scorpio. You can see the red line of the Sun’s path passing through the upper part of Scorpion and then through the lower legs of Ophiucus who has Scorpion under his feet. The ecliptic path continues on then through Archer and Capricorn. But if we expand the view of Ophiucus, we see that his head and the head of Hercules, the great Hero, are together, inverted to each other. Both wrestled with serpent/dragons. Both were ultimately unable to overcome the realm of Pluto, the realm of Death. The association between these two and the struggles of the human being to overcome the dragon/serpent/scorpion forces are a mighty imagination for this season of the year. Yet the third element of the Crown seems significant. The Serpent’s head reaches up

to the Crown, Corona Borealis. Let's explore this imagination from the Greek mythological images and add new imaginations for our time since the deed of Christ for the Earth and the stars.



Scorpio, as I have written about at other times, has for long ages been associated with darkness and death, with the kingdom of Hades ruled by Pluto the Lord of the underworld. Of the twelve it is perhaps the most malevolent. This is partly due to its place in the cycle of the year when the Sun is entering the time of greatest darkness and cold in the northern hemisphere. (A further contemplation could be undertaken on Scorpio for the southern hemisphere where it is fully visible high above in their summer sky.) There are many myths from various cultures associating the scorpion with death and darkness. The Egyptians mourned the death of Osiris when the Sun entered Scorpio and saw it as the time of the reign of Set. The Mayans called Scorpio the sign of the death god. The Greeks and Romans have many stories of the realm of Pluto, of his power and of those who attempted to overcome his realm but were unable ultimately to achieve victory. Willi Sucher, in his book *Isis Sophia II*, develops the evolutionary trajectory given by Rudolf Steiner in *Occult Science*, bringing it into relation to the various constellations. Here he presents the lower zodiac especially in relation to the Ancient Moon evolution and connects the constellation of Scorpio to the time during Ancient Moon described as the rebellion of Lucifer. It is this rebellion that is the origins of what during Earth evolution brings the "Fall" as described in the book of Genesis: the premature interference of Lucifer awakening self-consciousness in the astral body and the desire element inherent in egotism. We have here the association of Scorpio with the Fall and all the consequences associated with this in our descending evolution towards individual freedom which requires separation from the divine and the experience of the sting of death. Yet Rudolf Steiner also connects Scorpio with the Spirit Self, the transformed fallen astral nature through the work of the I am.

Ophiucus is standing on Scorpio, as seen above, he is depicted with one foot on Scorpio's heart, Antares, and the other on the stinger. In Babylonian times this constellation was thought to be associated with Marduk (Michael figure) and his conquest of the dragon Tiamat. Yet little is known

about Ophiucus. There is no mythological character named Ophiucus, but the Greeks connected it with Aesculapius, the great physician, the human/god of healing. Aesculapius was a son of Apollo and a mortal woman who was raised and taught by Apollo, who then handed him over to the wise Centaur Chiron, who taught him the mysteries of botany and medicines. From a serpent, Aesculapius learned how to resurrect the dead Orion who was killed by a scorpion sting, but Pluto was angered that his realm of death would be threatened. He complained to Jupiter who agreed that death must be the inevitability of man and not to be trifled with, so he struck Aesculapius dead, but placed him in the stars as a memorial to the healing work he had achieved for humanity. So, again we have the inability of the hero, the god/man, to overcome the power of the realm of death and its ruler.

Corona Borealis also has Greek mythological origins. It is the crown of Ariadne, which was the crown of Dionysus who married her and gave it to her as a gift to prove to her he was a god, not a mortal. Ariadne, the daughter of the King of Thebes, fell in love with Theseus, and gave him the knowledge (a sword and a spool of thread) by which to overcome the terrible Minotaur who lived in the labyrinth. By unspooling the thread, Theseus was able to navigate the labyrinth, kill the monster Minotaur with the sword and find his way out again. Again, we have layers of imagery in this myth connected to the developing thinking of the Greek to overcome the monsters of the unconscious realm in the will. The labyrinth of confusing pathways could be navigated and the monster defeated. The thinking brain could be harnessed to enter and master the unconscious forces. In building this imagination, we can consider that this Crown was the crown of Dionysus, gifted to Ariadne. Dionysus for the Greeks was associated with Osiris and with Apollo. He is the god who was born on December 25th, who was annually ritually buried and rose from the dead. His story prefigures in the mythology of the Greeks, the earthly physical reality of the birth, death and resurrection of Christ.

As with all cosmic imaginations and star mythologies, there are layers upon layers of meaning. But if we take this triad together, Scorpio, Ophiucus, Crown, perhaps we can see their unity in a kind of threefold way. Scorpio, the sting of death; of separation from the divine; the kingdom of Hades and Pluto, is depicted with Ophiucus standing upon him. Ophiucus is he who holds or wrestles with the serpent in his hands around his torso. The serpent is in the middle region of the body of Ophiucus. The head of the serpent rises up towards the Crown and in some images open mouthed and wanting to devour the crown but held in check by Ophiucus. In other images, as the one above, the serpent and Ophiucus are looking up to the Crown. The serpent is a long-standing image in humanity's evolution in knowing. We meet the serpent in Eden who offers all knowledge. Moses was told by God to make an image of a serpent and put in on a pole to be used for healing. Egyptian Pharaoh's wore serpents in their headdress. The serpent on the staff is the long-held image of the doctor/healer, the staff of Aesculapius. So, the serpent is deeply associated with knowledge, even wisdom, but a wisdom of the earthly in relation to the divine.

Can we perhaps see in these three star pictures one whole imagination of the full "word" of Scorpio as the picture of the struggle to overcome the forces of death and separation from the divine and to reclaim the Crown of Dionysus/Ariadne? In my own contemplation of these images I was struck by a correlation to another zodiac constellation which stands before Scorpio and Libra in the cycle of the year. Each year if one follows the Sun as a story of our human evolution of consciousness and our relation to the cosmos, the trinity of constellations of autumn to winter are a powerful picture. The Sun passes at equinox through the stars of the Virgin and progresses into Libra and then into Scorpio for Advent up to about Solstice/Christmas. I have written before about this trinity in relation to Sophia/Michael/Dragon.

Perhaps in the Scorpio triad of Advent we can find a correlation with threefold nature of Virgo. Let us think now of the cosmic imagination of Virgo/Sophia as the Queen of Heaven with the crown of stars, wrapped with the Sun in her middle where is also to be born the Child, and the Moon, the lower astral

nature, under her feet. In the heavens she stands as the image of Divine Isis/Sophia, Pure Cosmic Wisdom, who is to give birth to the Spirit Child and is defended from the great dragon by Michael. This is a mighty cosmic imagination. Perhaps at Advent as we descend into our “all too human” nature, we can perhaps consider a human version of Sophia, who is Mary, the pure virginal soul. In the stars, we proceed in the cycle of the Sun’s journey, from Virgo into the stars of Libra during autumn, the threshold guarded by Michael defending and protecting the Divine Wisdom from the dragon, Scorpio, below. Yet as the verse by Steiner offers, for human beings, Lucifer has slain Isis/Sophia, and carried her off into our space consciousness, the consciousness of external sensory realities. We live in the earthly realm of the slain Isis. The Sun progresses during Advent into the stars of Scorpio, calling on us to prepare the soul, through travail and purification of the lower nature, to become a “Mary” soul giving birth to the spirit child in us. With with Scorpio, we have the stars of Ophiucus, and above the Serpent’s head in Ophiucus is the Crown, Corona Borealis. Perhaps we can find in these three constellations a starry image of the earthly human struggle related to the cosmic image of the Divine Virgo/Sophia. In Scorpio is the fallen astral nature, like the Moon under Virgo’s feet, under the feet of Ophiucus, the healing god/human, who wrestles with the Serpent in the middle with his hands and through mastery can attain the Crown of the true human, akin to the divine Crown of stars above the head of Sophia. Yet perhaps the image for this Crown above the wrestling Ophiucus, the human struggling, is now not the Crown of Dionysus, gifted to Ariadne. Perhaps since the deed of Christ the new Crown is the Crown of Thorns. For the Greeks, Pluto could not be overcome. Death was their fate. Hercules failed. Aesculapius was condemned for attempting to resurrect the dead. Even Zeus hearing Demeter’s plea, could not force Pluto to release Persephone from Hades. With the deed of Christ, in His death and resurrection, the victory was fully accomplished by Him who wore the Crown of Thorns.

In *Theosophy and Rosicrucianism*, GA 100, Rudolf Steiner describes what the pupil was told who, on the Christian path, reached the stage of the Crowning of Thorns:

Now you must develop a feeling that you do not only withstand every form of pain coming towards you, but that you remain upright and steady, even when the holiest within you is cast down into the dust. You must remain so strong, that everyone can tell you, This is worth nothing. But even though people trample on you, you must know its worth, and you must be able to withstand a whole world.

As we now live in this time when the Sun is passing through Scorpio/Ophiucus/Crown, we can hold the picture of this Scorpio triad, as a kind of three in one, as a picture of our human becoming, in which, as is spoken in the Christian Community Advent epistle, “God’s becoming is veiled.” We can know the overcoming of death and separation through Christ in us. As the apostle Paul writes: “O death, where is thy sting? Where is thy victory?” Scorpion can become no longer the sting of death, nor the Eagle of a past consciousness, but can become the Dove of the Holy Spirit in us.

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