

A Banquet Attended by the Seven Sages Greece

The Seven Sages

Introduction

Evolutionary impulse manifests in a sevenfold manner in Nature and in Man: seven cosmic forces unfold seven planets; seven hierarchies of beings beget seven types of humans. Beings who have been men, out of deep compassion and the spirit of sacrifice for their fellows, incarnate to impress the imperishable center in each man's heart with the supreme and sublime fact that he, too, can, through purity and knowledge, reach the Divine status. In collectivity but One Being, such compassionate Beings constituted the Lodge of Mahatmas, to form the nursery for future human adepts on this, our earth, and from this Tree of Wisdom, the Ever-Living-Human-Banyan, sprang in due season the branches known as Kapila, Hermes, Enoch, Orpheus, etc., etc. In its constitution the Lodge is sevenfold.

In one of the obscure Sanskrit documents we come across the original of the common Theosophical expression the Great Lodge — Maha-Shala, the Great House, translated in central and western India as the Great School. It is not a place but a collectivity of Beings, whose self-conscious intelligence transcends human comprehension.

In that House are lodged seven types of Men, Pure Rays of Light, each but an issue of the Seven Sacred Planets called the Seven Lords — Rishis by the Brahamanas, Sages by the Greeks, Seven Gods by the Egyptians and Apkallu by the Sumerians. Of these Translucent Men it is said that they can no longer err. They appear on earth but at the origin of every new human race and at the junction or close of the two ends of the small and great cycle, and are known as Avatars or Incarnations. Their stay among mortals is exactly the time required, and no more, to impress upon the plastic minds of child-humanity the eternal verities which they embody in their own being,

such impress remaining vivid though latent in mankind as “innate ideas.” Here is the true source of the very common belief in revelation, which is not of books read or hymns heard, but of Truths impressed in the Heart of Men. This is done so as to ensure the eternal truths from being utterly lost or forgotten by the forthcoming generations.



As a result of this Spiritual Mission, some souls, however few in number, make the supreme effort to follow the noble example set by the Great Sacrifice. In every cycle and race, souls have striven to express in thought, word and deed, that impress made within their hearts. The successes among such strivers become the Adepts and Initiates; they continue the example set, incarnate among men to instruct and inspire, and do for their younger brethren what was done for themselves.

In the course of the spiritual and intellec-

tual evolution of humanity, these Master-Souls taught in parables and in symbols the Primeval Truths. Thus arose myths and sacred dramas, which in course of time degenerated into dogmas and religions. At the very dawn of intellectual humanity were laid the foundation-stones of all the faiths and creeds, of every fame and church built from first to last; and those allegorical foundations still survive. Universal myths, personifications of Powers divine and cosmic, primary and secondary, and historical personages of all the now-existing as well as of extinct religions, are to be found in the Seven Chief Deities and Their correlations. These Seven in Their spiritual collectivity constitute a Supreme Unity, to which can never be offered profane worship. That Supreme Unity casts its radiance on earth and is the Lodge of Mahatmas.

There is a principle in our complex being dormant in most men; it is the Impress referred to above. It is the real awakener of the human mind and soul. Here we will read about five groups of men commonly referred to as the Seven Sages or the Seven Fathers of civilization. It is a concept that the author recently came upon, and was intrigued by the nature of seven great men, known through their culture as great leaders, not by their might, but for their wisdom and knowledge. Each group became great teachers of men and kings. I am certain there are more ‘Seven Sages’ in other cultures than these, but they are lost to us now.

The Egyptian Seven Sages

Some scholars believe that the texts referring to Seshu Hor on the walls of the Temple of Horus at Edfu, forty miles north of Aswan, refer to an advanced people who entered Khemit in prehistoric times and brought knowledge and civilization. R. A. Schwaller de Lubicz agrees with Wallis Budge in translating the term Seshu Hor to mean “follow-

ers of Horus” and he does interpret it as a record of prehistoric rulers. Everyone from Atlanteans to extraterrestrials have been believed to be the progenitors of the Egyptian civilization. However, the ancient tradition has a more down-to-earth interpretation. The people came into full consciousness by themselves, according to preordained cosmic cycles. Hor (or Horus) was the realized human male. Prior to the concept of kingship in Egypt, Hor was used as the term for the male who had achieved a flowering of the senses, a degree of enlightenment. This “flowering” was significant at that time because the society was organized matrilineally, with the female choosing the male who would be her consort. It can be reasonably assumed that the realized male would have been the most desirable mate, and that this played a significant part in the advancement of the Egyptian civilization.

According to the remarkable Edfu Building Texts, these Seven Sages and other gods came originally from an island, ‘the Homeland of the Primeval Ones’, said to have been destroyed suddenly in a great flood during which the majority of its ‘divine inhabitants’ were drowned. Arriving in Egypt, those few who survived became ‘the Builder Gods, who fashioned in the primeval time, the Lords of Light...the Ghosts, the Ancestors...who raised the seed for gods and men...

Temple of Edfu Texts

The Temple of Edfu in its present form was erected over a two hundred-year period between 237 BC and 57 BC, but incorporates parts of much

earlier structures dating back to the Pyramid Age (for example, portions of the inner and outer western enclosure wall). Moreover, like all major temples, it was built “on hallowed ground” and there attaches to it a recollection of vast antiquity and momentous antecedents.

Regarding amount and content, the inscriptions that cover the walls of the Temple of Edfu are among the most important sources on Ptolemaic Egypt. They offer a wealth of information, mainly about religion, but also about political

temples and sacred places were to be created’. And it was they who initiated construction work at the Great Primeval Mound. This work, in which Thoth also participated, involved the setting out and erection of the original ‘mythical’ temple of the ‘First Time’. Also constructed under the direction of the ‘Seven Sages’ was an edifice specified as hwt-ntr, ‘the mansion of the god’: “Speedy of construction”, men called it by name. The sanctuary is within it, “Great Seat” by name, and all its chapels are according to the norm.’

The Edfu Building Texts speak of the “Homeland of the Primeval Ones”—an island, the location of which is never specified—that was destroyed by an “enemy,” described as a “serpent,” “the Great Leaping One.” The “serpent’s” assault caused a flood that inundated this “primeval world of the gods,” killing the majority of its “divine” inhabitants. A few of them, however, escaped the disaster and fled the scene in boats to wander the earth. Their purpose in so doing was to identify suitable sites where they might set in motion a

The Edfu Temple



history, administration and other topics. Since some of the Edfu inscriptions transmit ideas that come from the eldest epochs of pharaonic history, they are often consulted as an aid in understanding older sources. Thus, religious concepts of pharaonic Egypt cannot be properly understood without interpreting the texts of Edfu. As a whole, the Edfu inscriptions can be taken as a compendium of Egyptian religious thought.

The ‘Sages’ referred to in the Edfu Building Texts were seven in number. Their special role was as ‘the only divine beings who knew how the

sacred design to bring about: the resurrection of the former world of the gods ... The re-creation of a destroyed world. (Magicians of the Gods)

The existence of such a college of initiates is signaled clearly in the Edfu texts which speak of the long-term mission of: the Builder Gods, who fashioned in the primeval time, the Lords of the Light ... the Ghosts, the Ancestors ... who raised the seed for gods and men ... the Senior Ones who came into being at the beginning, who illumined this land when they came forth unitedly. The Edfu texts do not claim that these beings

were immortal. After their deaths, we are told, the next generation “came to their graves to perform the funerary rights on their behalf” and then took their places. In this way, through an unbroken chain of initiation and transmission of knowledge, the “Builder Gods,” the “Sages,” the “Ghosts,” the “Lords of the Light,” the “Shining Ones” described in the Edfu texts were able to renew themselves constantly, like the mythical phoenix—thus passing down to the future traditions and wisdoms stemming from a previous epoch of the earth.

The father of Horus and the husband of Isis, the goddess of magic, Osiris was, according to tradition, a great king of primordial times, who offered the gifts of civilization to those who were willing to receive them. After weaning the indigenous peoples of Egypt: from their miserable and barbarous manners, he taught them how to till the earth, and how to sow and reap crops, he formulated a code of laws for them, and made them worship the gods and perform service to them. He then left Egypt and traveled over the rest of the world teaching the various nations to do what

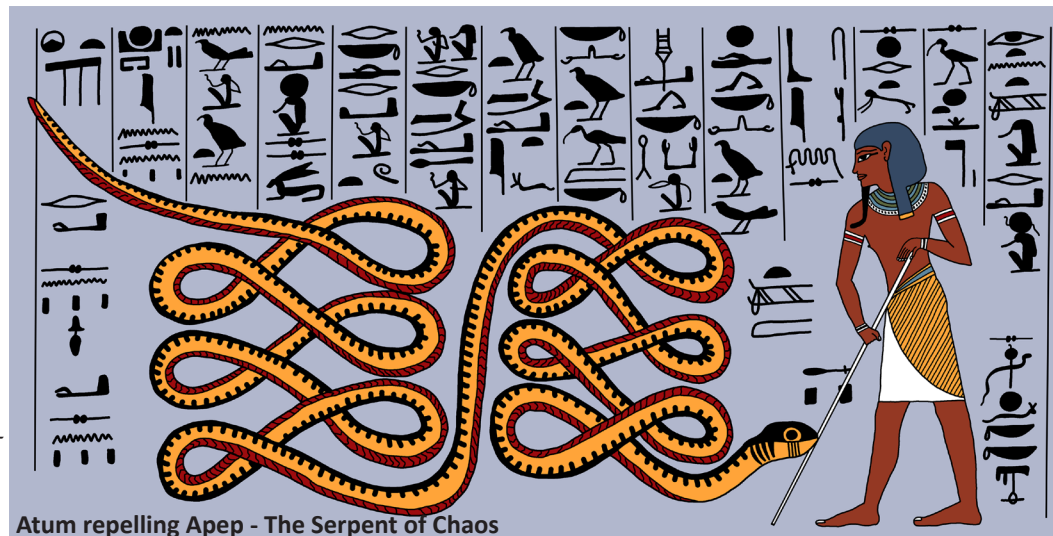
his own subjects were doing. He forced no man to carry out his instructions, but by means of gentle persuasion and an appeal to their reason, he succeeded in inducing them to practice what he preached. (*Magicians of the Gods*)

Gods or Mortal Men?

It was not believed that these remarkable beings were immortal. On the contrary, after they had completed their tasks they died and their children took their places and performed funerary rites on their behalf. In this way, just like

the ‘Followers of Horus’, the generations of the ‘Builder Gods’, or ‘Sages’, or ‘Ghosts’ or ‘Lords of Light’ described in the Edfu Texts could constantly renew themselves - thus passing down to the future traditions and wisdoms stemming from a previous epoch of the earth. Indeed, the similarities between the ‘Senior Ones’ of Edfu and the Shehu Hor of Heliopolitan tradition are so marked it is hard to escape the conclusion that both epithets, and the numerous others that exist, are all descriptions of the same shadowy brotherhood.

This impression is strengthened by the



constant references in the Edfu Texts to the ‘wisdom of the Sages’ (wisdom being one of the defining characteristics of the ‘Followers of Horus’) and the repeated emphasis that their special gift was knowledge - including, but not limited to, the knowledge of architecture. Likewise it is noteworthy that the Sages are said to have specified the plans and designs that were to be used for all future temples - a role frequently accorded in other contexts to the ‘Followers of Horus’.

This in turn coincides with what we know of the Sages of Edfu and the ‘Followers of Horus’, both of whom, as we have seen, may be identified

with a single and originally Heliopolitan ‘brotherhood’ of temple-makers whose function was to prepare and initiate the generations of the Horus-Kings in order to bring about the ‘resurrection’ of what was remembered as ‘the former world of the gods’.

The Serpent of Destruction

Now let’s look at the relevant passages from the Edfu Building Texts where a snake called the nhp-wer, the “Great Leaping One,” is described as “the chief enemy of the god.” It is his “assault”

that causes the Homeland of the Primeval Ones to be swallowed up by the sea, but first the feet of the deity of the island—the Ka, here explicitly described as the “Earth God”—are “pierced, and the domain was split.” This, as commented upon: is a clear picture of a disaster ... It destroyed the sacred land with the result that its divine inhabitants died. This interpretation accords with other parts of the first Edfu record which allude to the death of the “Company” [a group of divine beings] and to the dark-

ness that covered the primeval island. ...that the cataclysm had so utterly devastated the primeval island that no amount of reclamation could restore it to its former glory. The only solution for the survivors, therefore, was to attempt to re-create it elsewhere in regions that had not been as badly affected by the catastrophe. The result saw the beginning of a great project of which the world we live in today is the result.

What the Edfu texts say is: that the gods left the original pāy-lands ... They ... sailed to another part of the primeval world ... [and] journeyed through the ... lands of the primeval age ...

In any place in which they settled they founded new sacred domains. (Magicians of the Gods)

The Edfu texts make allusion to the “wandering,” of the “company of gods” who initiated the civilizing project. Their leader was the Falcon Horus, after whom the temple at Edfu was much later dedicated, but present, also, was Thoth, the god of wisdom. Accompanying Horus and Thoth were the Shebtiw, a group of deities charged with a specific responsibility for “creation,” the “Builder Gods” who accomplished “the actual work of building,” and the “Seven Sages.” This is a matter of interest. Seven Sages of the Edfu texts are described as primeval magicians who were capable of assuming “the form of falcons” and of “resembling falcons.” (Magicians of the Gods)

The Seven Sages of the Edfu texts (who are not mentioned elsewhere in Ancient Egyptian inscriptions) were the magicians among the gods. They were seers who could foretell the future, and they could “endue with power the substances of the earth”—a process of creation “by the word of the creators” that “has no equivalent.” They were, in addition, believed to have the ability “to magnify things,” and thus to provide magical protections over things. On this point, the best description able to make of what is an “unusually obscure” text, is that “the protection was constituted by means of symbols (pictographs) or perhaps knowing the true name of things. The magical power of protecting was conferred by a giving of names.”

The Legend of Zep Tepi

According to the ancient Egyptians, Zep Tepi had been an age when gods had ruled in their country, bringing the gift of civilization. The Egypt-

tians believed that there had been intermediaries between gods and men whom they called the Urshu, which translates as the Watchers. (Uriel's Machine) The texts speak of the sanctuary of the historical temple at Edfu as the god's ‘genuine Great Seat of the First Occasion’ and refer again and again to ancient books and writings which apparently were used to guide the construction of the temple; These documents, it seems, had been



Horus, Osiris and Isis - The Holy Triad of Egypt

handed down from the legendary epoch known to the ancient Egyptians as the ‘First Occasion’ (also referred to as the ‘First Time’ - ‘Zep Tepi’ - the ‘early primeval age’, the ‘time of Osiris’, the ‘time of Horus’, etc.). It was an epoch, very far away in the past, in which a group of divine beings known sometimes as ‘the Seven Sages’ and sometimes as ‘the builder gods’ were believed to have settled in Egypt and to have established ‘sacred mounds’ at various points along the Nile. These mounds were to serve as the foundations, and to define the orientation, of temples to be built in the future.

More specifically, and the Edfu Texts are very clear on this, it was intended that the development of these sites should bring about nothing less than ‘the resurrection of the former world of the gods - a world that had been utterly destroyed.

We are told that this lost domain, the ‘Homeland of the Primeval Ones’, was ‘an island which, in part, was covered with reeds and stood in darkness in the midst of the primeval water...’

We are told that ‘the creation of the world began on this island, and that it was here that ‘the earliest mansions of the gods were founded.’ At a certain point during the primeval age, however, this blessed ‘former world’ was overwhelmed, suddenly and totally, by a great flood, the majority of its ‘divine inhabitants’ were drowned and the ‘mansions of the gods were inundated’. (Heaven's Mirror)

The Sage Osiris

Osiris helped to wean them ‘from their miserable and barbarous manners’ by providing them with a code of laws and inaugurating the cult of the gods in Egypt. When he had set everything in order, he handed over the control of the kingdom to Isis, quit Egypt for many

years, and roamed about the world with the sole intention, Diodorus Siculus was told, of visiting all the inhabited earth and teaching the race of men how to cultivate the vine and sow wheat and barley; for he supposed that if he made men give up their savagery and adopt a gentle manner of life he would receive immortal honors because of the magnitude of his benefactions...

Osiris traveled first to Ethiopia, where he taught tillage and husbandry to the primitive hunter-gatherers he encountered. He also undertook a number of large-scale engineering and hydrau-

lics works: 'He built canals, with flood gates and regulators...he raised the river banks and took precautions to prevent the Nile from overflowing... Later he made his way to Arabia and thence to India, where he established many cities. 'Many of his wise counsels were imparted to his listeners in hymns and songs, which were sung to the accompaniment of instruments of music.' (*Fingerprints of the Gods*)

...the myths always speak of a company of civilizers: Viracocha has his 'companions', as have both Quetzalcoatl and Osiris. Sometimes there are fierce internal conflicts within these groups...the civilizer is eventually plotted against and either driven out or killed. Although he was murdered by Set soon after the completion of his worldwide mission to make men 'give up their savagery', he won eternal life through his resurrection in the constellation of Orion as the all-powerful god of the dead. Thereafter, judging souls and providing an immortal example of responsible and benevolent kingship, he dominated the religion (and the culture) of Ancient Egypt for the entire span of its known history. ... Osiris wore a variety of different and elaborate crowns...Of particular interest was the Atef crown. Incorporating the uraeus, the royal serpent symbol (which in Mexico was a rattlesnake but in Egypt was a hooded cobra poised to strike), the central core of this strange contraption was recognizable as an example of the hedjet, the white skittle-shaped war helmet of upper Egypt (again known only from reliefs). Rearing up on either side of this core were what seemed to be two thin leaves of metal, and at the front was an attached device, consisting of two wavy blades, which scholars normally describe as a pair of rams' horns. (*Fingerprints of the Gods*)

The Sage Thoth

Throughout the entire 3,000 or more

years of the dynastic period, he was continuously revered for certain very specific qualities that he was said to possess and for his supposed contributions to human welfare. He was, for example, credited with being the inventor of drawing, of hieroglyphic writing and of all the sciences - specifically architecture, arithmetic, surveying, geometry,



The Ibis Headed God Thoth

astronomy, medicine and surgery. He was also seen as the most powerful of sorcerers, endowed with nothing less than complete knowledge and wisdom. He was exalted as the author of the great and terrible book of magic that was regarded by the priests at Hermopolis as the source of their understanding of the occult. Moreover whole chapters of the famous Book of the Dead were attributed to him, as well as almost the entire corpus of closely guarded sacred literature. He was

believed, in short, to possess a virtual monopoly on esoteric learning and was therefore called 'the mysterious' and 'the unknown'. The ancient Egyptians were quite convinced that their first rulers were gods. Not surprisingly, Thoth was one of these divine kings: his reign on earth - during which he passed on to mankind his greatest and most beneficial inventions - was said to have lasted 3,226 years.

According to the pervasive and influential teachings of the priestly guild established at the sacred city of Hermopolis in Upper Egypt, Thoth was the universal demiurge who created the world through the sound of his voice alone, bringing it into being with the utterance of a single word of power. Regarded by the Egyptians as a deity who understood the mysteries of 'all that is hidden under the heavenly vault', Thoth was also believed to have had the ability to bestow wisdom on certain specially selected individuals. It was said that he had inscribed the rudiments of his secret knowledge on 36,535 scrolls and then hidden these scrolls about the earth intending that they should be sought for by future generations but found 'only by the worthy' - who were to use their discoveries for the benefit of mankind." Later identified by the Greeks with their own god Hermes, Thoth in fact stood at the very center of an enormous body of Egyptian traditions stretching back into the most distant and impenetrable past.

Sumerian Accounts

In ancient Mesopotamian myth, it was believed that the gods created humankind to cultivate the soil and make sure that the gods - by means of sacrifice - would receive their meals. However, the first people did not really understand how to perform the tasks they were supposed to perform, and therefore, the gods sent the Apkallu, the seven sages, as teachers. These creatures came to

the human world from the sea.

The Apkallu (Akkadian) and Abgal (Sumerian) are terms found in cuneiform inscriptions that in general mean either “wise” or “sage”. The term “Apkallu” is Akkadian, it is thought to derive from the Sumerian Abgal. They served as priests of Enki and as advisors or sages to the earliest kings of Sumer before the flood.

In several contexts the Apkallu are seven demi-gods, sometimes described as part man and part fish, part bird or other animals, are associated with human wisdom; these creatures are often referred to in scholarly literature as the Seven Sages. Sometimes the sages are associated with a specific primeval king. After the deluge (see Epic of Gilgamesh), further sages and kings are listed. Post-deluge, the sages are considered human, and in some texts are distinguished by being referred to as Ummanu (ummānù), not Apkallu.

The terms Apkallu (as well as Abgal) is also used as an epithet for kings and gods as a mark of wisdom or knowledge. A further use of the term Apkallu is when referring to figurines used in apotropaic rituals; these figurines include fish-man hybrids representing the seven sages, but also include bird-headed and other figures.

In a later work by Berossus describing Babylonia, the Apkallu appear again, also described as fish-men who are sent by the gods to impart knowledge to people. In Berossus, the first one, Oannes (a variant of Uanna), is said to have taught people the creation myth the Enuma Elis.

The term Apkallu has multiple uses, but usually refers to some form of wisdom; translations of the term generally equate to English language uses of the terms “the wise”, “sage” or “expert”. The term also refers to the “seven sages”, especially the sage Adapa, and also to apotropaic figures, which are often figurines of the ‘seven sages’ themselves.

The Seven Sages in Name and Attributes:

A collation of the names and “titles” of these seven sages in order can be given as...

Uannedugga - “who was endowed with comprehensive intelligence”

Enmedugga - “who was allotted a good fate”

Enmegalamma - “who was born in a house”

Ennebulugga - “who grew up on pasture land”,

An-Enlilda - “the conjurer of the city of Eridu”,

Utuabzu - “who ascended to heaven”.



Depiction of an Oannes (Half man and Half Fish)

Uanna (Oannes) or Adapa - “who finished the plans for heaven and earth” The first of these legendary fish-man sages is known as Oan/Oannes (Sumerian) or Uanna/U-An (Akkadian); on a few cuneiform inscriptions this first sage has “adapa” appended to his name. However, it is difficult to believe that the half-man half-fish “Adapa” is the same as the fisherman of the Adapa myth, the son of the god Ea. A potential solution was given by W. G. Lambert evidences that “adapa” was also used as an appellative meaning “wise”.

Kvanvig 2011 considers the case for Adapa being one of or a name of one of the Apkallu. They note that while some texts contain plays on words between the terms “adapa” and “uan” and posit that “adapa” may be an epithet, though in the Adapa myth itself it is likely a proper name. In terms of the name of the first Apkallu they consider that both terms “adapa” (“wise”) and “ummanu” (“craftsman”) together form the whole proper name. Additionally, they note closer similarities between the 7th Apkallu Utuabzu, who is said to have ascended to heaven (in the Bit Meseri), and the myth of Adapa who also visited heaven. Both Adapa and the Apkallu have legends that place them halfway between the world of men and gods; but additionally just as Oannes in the Greek version passes all the knowledge of civilization to people, so Adapa is described as having been “[made] perfect with broad understanding to reveal the plans of the land.” However, despite some clear parallels between Adapa stories and both the first and last Apkallu, Kvanvig finally notes that the name used for the first Apkallu is given as Uan.

Uruk List of Kings and Sages

These Sages are found in the “Uruk List of Kings and Sages” (165 BC) discovered in 1959/60 in the Seleucid era temple of Anu in Bit Res; The text consisted of list of seven kings and their associated sages, followed by a note on the ‘Deluge’ (see [Gilgamesh flood myth](#)), followed by eight more king/sage pairs.

A tentative translation reads:

During the reign of Ayalu, the king, [Adapa]† was sage.

During the reign of Alalgar, the king, Uanduga was sage.

During the reign of Ameluana, the king, Enmeduga was sage.

During the reign of Amegalana, the king, Enmegalama was sage.

During the reign of Enneusumgalana, the king, Ennebuluga was sage.

During the reign of Dumuzi, the shepherd, the king, Anenlida was sage.

During the reign of Enmeduranki, the king, Utu-abzu was sage.

After the flood, during the reign of Enmerkar, the king, Nungalpirigal was sage, whom Istar brought down from heaven to Eana. He made the bronze lyre [...] according to the technique of Ninagal. [...] The lyre was placed before Anu [...], the dwelling of (his) personal god.

During the reign of Gilgamesh, the king, Sin-le-qi-unnini was scholar.

During the reign of Ib-bi-Sin, the king, Kab-ti-ili-Marduk was scholar.

During the reign of Isbi-Erra, the king, Sidu, a.k.a. Enlil-ibni, was scholar.

During the reign of Abi-esuh, the king, Gimil-Gula and Taqis-Gula were the scholars.

During the reign of [...], the king, Esagil-kin-apli was scholar.

During the reign of Adad-apla-iddina, the king, Esagil-kin-ubba was scholar.

During the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, the king, Esagil-kin-ubba was scholar.

During the reign of Esarhaddon, the king, Aba-Enlil-dari was scholar, whom the Arameans call Ahiqar.

† Note the root for this word is the same (Iu4-4+60) as that for the following sage Uanduga (Iu4-4+60-du10-ga) i.e. the translation to Adapa is interpretive, not literally 'phonetic' (Lenzi 2008, pp. 140–143)

Lenzi notes that the list is clearly intended to be taken in chronological order. It is an attempt to connect real (historic) kings directly to mythological (divine) kingship and also does the same

connecting those real king's sages (ummanu) with the demi-godly mythic seven sages (apkallu).

Though the list is taken to be chronological, the texts do not portray the Sages (nor the kings) as genealogically related to each other or their kings. There is some similarity between the sages' and kings' names in the list, but not enough to draw any solid conclusions.

The Bit Meseri

A list (similar to the Uruk list) of the seven sages followed by four human sages is also given in an incantation the tablet series of Bit Meseri. The ritual involved hanging or placing statues of the sages on the walls of a house. A translation of the cuneiform was given by Borger:

U-Anna, who accomplishes the plans of heaven and earth,

U-Anne-dugga, who is endowed with comprehensive understanding,

Enmedugga, for whom a good destiny has been decreed,

Enmegalamma, who was born in a house,

Ennebulugga, who grew up in pasture land,

An-Enlida, the conjurer of the city of Eridu,

Utuabzu, who ascended to heaven,

the pure puradu-fishes, the puradu-fishes of the sea, the seven of them,

the seven sages, who have originated in the river, who control the plans of heaven and earth.

Nungalpiriggaldim, the wise (King) of Enmerkar, who had the goddess Innin/Ishtar descend from heaven into the sanctuary,

Piriggalnungal, who was born in Kish, who angered the god Ishkur/Adad in heaven, so that he allowed neither rain nor growth in the land for three years,

Piriggallabzu, who was born in Adab/Utab, who hung his seal on a "goat-fish"† and thereby angered the god Enki/Ea in the fresh water Sea, so that a fuller struck him dead with his own seal,

fourth Lu-Nanna, who was two-thirds a sage, who drove a dragon out of the temple E-Nin-kiagnunna, the Innin/Ishtar Temple of (King) Schulgi, (altogether) four Sages of human descent, whom Enki/Ea, the Lord, endowed with comprehensive understanding.

† Goatfish (the Capricorn symbol) was the sacred animal of Enki/Ea. This incantation was translated to English in Hess & Tsumura 1994, pp. 230–231, original German translation Borger 1974, p. 186

Epic of Erra (God of War & Plague)

In the epic that is given the modern title Erra, the writer Kabti-ilani-Marduk, a descendant, he says, of Dabibi, presents himself in a colophon following the text as simply the transcriber of a visionary dream in which Erra himself revealed the text.

The poem opens with an invocation. The god Erra is sleeping fitfully with his consort (identified with Mamitum and not with the mother goddess Mami) but is roused by his advisor Išum and the Seven (Sibitti or Sebeti), who are the sons of heaven and earth—"champions without peer" is the repeated formula—and are each assigned a destructive destiny by Anu. Machinist and Sasson (1983) call them "personified weapons". The Sibitti call on Erra to lead the destruction of mankind. Išum tries to mollify Erra's wakened violence, to no avail. Foreign peoples invade Babylonia, but are struck down by plague. Even Marduk, the patron of Babylon, relinquishes his throne to Erra for a time. Tablets II and III are occupied with a debate between Erra and Išum. Erra goes to battle in Babylon, Sippar, Uruk, Dur-Kurigalzu and Dur. The world is turned upside down: righteous and unrighteous are killed alike. Erra orders Išum to complete the work by defeating Babylon's enemies. Then the god withdraws to his own seat in Emeslam with the terrifying Seven, and mankind is saved. A propitiatory prayer ends the work.

The poem must have been central to Babylonian culture: at least thirty-six copies have been recovered from five first-millennium sites—Assur, Babylon, Nineveh, Sultantepe and Ur—more, even, as the assyriologist and historian of religions Luigi Giovanni Cagni points out, than have been recovered of the Epic of Gilgamesh.

The text appears to some readers to be a myth of historic turmoil in Mesopotamia, though scholars disagree as to the historic events that inspired the poem: the poet exclaims (tablet IV:3) “You changed out of your divinity and made yourself like a man.”

The Erra text soon assumed magical functions. Parts of the text were inscribed on amulets employed for exorcism and as a prophylactic against the plague. The Seven are known from a range of Akkadian incantation texts: their demonic names vary, but their number, seven, is invariable.

The five tablets containing the Erra story were first published in 1956, with an improved text, based on additional finds, appearing in 1969. Perhaps 70% of the poem has been recovered. Walter Burkert noted the consonance of the purely mythic seven led by Erra with the Seven against Thebes, widely assumed by Hellenists to have had a historical basis.

Berossus' Babyloniaca

Berossus wrote a history of Babylon in around 281 BC, during the Greek period of overlordship. According to his own account, he was a Chaldean priest of Bel (Marduk). His *Babyloniaca* was written in Greek, probably for the Seleucid court of Antiochus I. His work gives a description of the wise men, their names, and their associated kings. Berossus' original book is now lost, but parts have survived via the abridgment and copying of historians including Alexander Polyhistor, Josephus, Abydenus, and Eusebius. Mayer Burstein

suggests that Berossus' work was partly metaphorical, intended to convey wisdoms concerning the development of man—a nuance lost or un-commented on by later copyists.

What remains of Berossus' account via Apollodorus begins with a description on Babylonia, followed by the appearance of a learned fish-man creature named Oannes.

Truncated account:

This is the history which Berossus has transmitted to us. He tells us that the first king was Alorus of Babylon, a Chaldaean; he reigned ten sari: and afterwards Alaparus, and Amelon who came from Pantibiblon: then Ammenon the Chaldaean, in whose time appeared the Musarus Oannes the Annedotus from the Erythraean sea. (But Alexander Polyhistor anticipating the event, has said that he appeared in the first year; but Apollodorus says that it was after forty sari; Abydenus, however, makes the second Annedotus appear after twenty-six sari.) Then succeeded Megalarus from the city of Pantibiblon; and he reigned eighteen sari: and after him Daonus the shepherd from Pantibiblon reigned ten sari; in his time (he says) appeared again from the Erythraean sea a fourth Annedotus, having the same form with those above, the shape of a fish blended with that of a man. Then reigned Euedoreschus from Pantibiblon, for the term of eighteen sari; in his days there appeared another personage from the Erythraean sea like the former, having the same complicated form between a fish and a man, whose name was Odacon. (All these, says Apollodorus, related particularly and circumstantially whatever Oannes had informed them of: concerning these Abydenus has made no mention.) Then reigned Amempsinus, a Chaldaean from Laranchae; and he being the eighth in order reigned ten sari. Then reigned Otiartes,

a Chaldaean, from Laranchae; and he reigned eight sari. And upon the death of Otiartes, his son Xisuthrus reigned eighteen sari: in his time happened the great deluge. So that the sum of all the kings is ten; and the term which they collectively reigned an hundred and twenty sari.

Berossus via Abydenus recorded in Eusebius and Syncellus (translated from the Greek).

Truncated account via Alexander Polyhistor:

[Background of Berossus, followed by an introduction to the accounts of Babylon, and a geographical description of it]
In the first year there made its appearance, from a part of the Erythraean sea which bordered upon Babylonia, an animal endowed with reason, who was called Oannes. (According to the account of Apollodorus) the whole body of the animal was like that of a fish; and had under a fish's head another head, and also feet below, similar to those of a man, subjoined to the fish's tail. His voice too, and language, was articulate and human; and a representation of him is preserved even to this day.

This Being in the day-time used to converse with men; but took no food at that season; and he gave them an insight into letters and sciences, and every kind of art. He taught them to construct houses, to found temples, to compile laws, and explained to them the principles of geometrical knowledge. He made them distinguish the seeds of the earth, and shewed them how to collect fruits; in short, he instructed them in every thing which could tend to soften manners and humanize mankind. From that time, so universal were his instructions, nothing has been added material by way of improvement. When the sun set, it was the custom of this Being to plunge again into the sea, and abide

all night in the deep; for he was amphibious.

After this there appeared other animals like Oannes, of which Berossus promises to give an account when he comes to the history of the kings.

Moreover Oannes wrote concerning the generation of mankind; of their different ways of life, and of their civil polity; and the following is the purport of what he said:

[follows a truncated account of what is essentially the Enuma Elis]

Commentary on Berossus

All accounts give ten kings, followed by a deluge. In summary, Berossus' Babylonian history recounts ten kings before a deluge (followed by the reigns of later kings), with a record or myth of primitive man receiving civilized knowledge via the Oannes; in also contains a paraphrasing of the myth the Enuma Elis, which was said to have been recounted by the Oannes. Though Berossus' history contains obvious historical errors, parts of it have convincing matches with ancient cuneiform texts, suggest he was recreating accounts known from ancient Mesopotamian texts. Mayer Burstein considers that the text was not well written in a "Greek style", but was essentially a transliteration of Mesopotamian myths into Greek. Helpfully for future historians, Berossus does not seem to have altered the myths or narratives to suit a Greek audience.

In terms of his relevance to the Apkallu: his lists match fairly well with the Uruk King/Apkallu list, though there are differences and variations. Oannes is paired with the king Alorus, and by comparison can be considered equivalent to Adapa [Uanna]. Matches between Berossus and the kings and apkallu in the Uruk King List have been proposed.

Other References

Various other cuneiform texts have references to these seven sages. There are texts that associates a set of seven sages with the city Kuar-Eridu or Eridu, while in the Epic of Gilgamesh there is a reference to seven counselors as founders of Uruk. Another list of seven sages used in a ritual differs from the description and names give in the Bit meseri text.

Several of named Apkulla are listed on inscriptions as authors, notably Lu-Nanna is recorded as author of the Myth of Etana.



A Winged man, an eagle headed man and a fish man are common Apkallu images.

Depictions of the Sages in Art

Representations of 'apkallu' were used in apotropaic rituals; in addition to fish-headed ones (similar to descriptions of the seven sages), other human-animal hybrids were used as 'apkallu' in this context (generally bird-headed humans). Apkallu reliefs appear prominently in Neo-Assyrian palaces, notably the constructions of Ashurnasirpal II of the 9th century BC. They appear in one of three forms, bird-headed, human-headed or dressed in fish-skin cloaks. They have also been found on reliefs from the reign of Sennacherib. The form taken of a man covered with the 'pelt' of a fish is first seen the Kassite period, continuing is used to the period of Persian Babylonia – the

form was popular during the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods. Note how the images commonly carry a purse like bag and what is described as a pine cone. They are often seen attending a tree like device commonly called the "tree of life", but the function of the pine cone and the tree like structure are only speculated at.

Building Stories

The Seven Sages have enlarged it for you from the south to the uplands [north].

-(Temple hymn) The house of Asarluhi at Kuar-Eridu; line 193.

The seven sages were also associated with the founding of the seven cities of Eridu, Ur, Nippur, Kullab, Kesh, Lagash, and Shuruppak; and in the Epic of Gilgamesh (Gilg. I 9; XI 305) they are credited with laying the foundations of Uruk.

Speculation from Scholars

The spread of the 'seven sage' legend westwards during the 1st and 2nd millennia has been speculated to have led to the creation of the tale of the Nephilim (Genesis 6:1-4) as recounted in the Old Testament, and may have an echo in the text of the Book of Proverbs (Prov 9:1): "Wisdom built her house. She set out its seven pillars." The story of Enoch ("seventh from Adam") and his ascension to heaven has also been proposed to be a variant or influenced by the seventh Apkallu Utuabzu who is also said to have ascended to heaven in the Bit Meseri.

The Seven Sages of Greece

The idea that there had once been seven extraordinary wise people was probably introduced in the west from Babylon, where the seven Apkallu were believed to have lived before the Great Flood. The first Greek to refer to a similar, yet less

mythological tradition is the Athenian philosopher Plato (427-347 BCE), who mentions seven names of wise people that “were lovers and emulators and disciples of the culture of the Spartans”:

In Plato’s eyes, the Seven Sages were renowned wise men of seventh and sixth century Greece. The earliest list of the Seven Sages, in Plato’s *Protagoras* (circa 387 BCE), includes Thales, Pittacus, Bias, Solon, Cleobolus, Myson, and Chilon.

Many of the maxims that appear at the Oracle Temple at Delphi are attributed to the Seven Sages, including *Meden Agan* (“Nothing In Excess”) and *Gnothi Sauton* (“Know Thyself”). The sages were known for wisdom in its most general sense, encompassing everything from poetry and politics to predicting eclipses. Knowledge of their actual activities, sayings, and ideas is not extensive and it is often difficult to distinguish factual from fictional portraits.

A compilation of 147 maxims, inscribed at Delphi, was preserved by the fifth century AD scholar Stobaeus as “Sayings of the Seven Sages,” but “the actual authorship of these sayings on the Delphian temple is uncertain. Most likely they were popular proverbs, which tended later to be attributed to particular sages.”

The Sages Themselves

This list below are the agreed upon names in modern times, but there was not a complete consensus historically speaking.

The historian Ephorus of Cyme replaced Myson with Anacharsis, a legendary Scythian sage mentioned in the *Histories of Herodotus of*

Halicarnassus (4.76-78). A generation after Plato, Demetrius of Phalerum, a pupil of Aristotle of Stagira, was not too happy with Myson either, so he replaced him with Periander, the tyrant of Corinth. And this was only the beginning. Four names

Seven Sages that does not include Pythagorus, Plato, Orpheus, Asclepius and perhaps Dionysus is probably not along the same mythical level as the Sumerian or Egyptian versions of the Seven Sages. Its obvious that the list is contrived.



A Mosaic Tile of the Grecian Seven

have become canonical (Thales, Pittacus, Bias, Solon), but there were many candidates for the remaining three positions. Most other writers substitute Periander for Myson. Thales, Bias, Solon, and Pittacus are common to all lists; sometimes Anacharsis, Pherecydes, Epimenides, and Pisistratus appear. What is presented here is the present agreed upon list.

This author feels that any Greek list of the

Bias of Priene - Little is known about Bias of Priene, who was born circa 570 BCE. He is credited with several poems, songs, and wise sayings and was active in his city, giving speeches concerning legal cases and political decisions. His counsel as an advocate was unparalleled in legal arguments. He was praised by Heraclitus, who called him better than the others who claimed wisdom, perhaps for his saying that the majority of men were bad. It is claimed that he took in and educated Messinian slave women and treated them as his own daughter until they became old enough to return them to their homeland and to their own fathers.

Chilon of Sparta - A Spartan ephor in 556 BCE who contributed to increasing his city’s power and influence, Chilon had a reputation for wisdom, but few details concerning him have survived. He is credited with the maxim “You should not desire the impossible.” Chilon was a Spartan politician, to whom the militarization of Spartan society was attributed.

Cleobolus of Rhodes - “Moderation is the chief good.” He governed as tyrant of Lindos, in the Greek island of Rhodes, circa 600 BCE. The son of Euagoras, Cleobolus of Rhodes flourished circa 600 b.c.e. and wrote many poems and songs. Cleobulus is also said to have studied philosophy in Egypt. He is also credited with several well-

known maxims. His daughter, Cleoboline, wrote hexameter verses. Little is known of his life.

Periander of Corinth - The son of Cypselus, Periander (died 588 b.c.e.) succeeded his father as tyrant of Corinth. He erected a temple to Apollo and other public buildings. Despite being described as having killed his wife, he was respected as a diplomat and patron of the arts. During both his reign and that of his father, Corinth founded several important colonies and was a leader in the production of fine pottery. During his rule, Corinth knew a golden age of unprecedented stability. He was known saying "Forethought in all things."

Pittacus of Mitylene - Living around 640 to 568 b.c.e., Pittacus was a renowned soldier and commander who ruled as elected dictator of Mitylene for ten years, during which he reformed the laws of the city. He tried to reduce the power of the nobility and was able to govern with the support of the popular classes, whom he favored. As an example, Pittacus instituted a law stating that crimes committed in drunkenness should be punished twofold, that was directed predominately against the aristocrats, who were more often guilty of drunk and violent behavior. As such, it was greatly appreciated by the common people. Several wise sayings are attributed to him such as "You should know which opportunities to choose."

Solon of Athens - An Athenian aristocrat, Solon lived circa 638-558 b.c.e. and wrote elegiac and iambic poetry on political and moral subjects. He was first elected archon in Athens around 594 and was responsible for many democratic reforms of the Athenian constitution. He introduced measures to prohibit debtors from being sold into slavery, reformed coinage, and extended citizenship to immigrant craftsmen. Perhaps his most significant

reform was to make voting eligibility depend on wealth (with four different property classes having different levels of eligibility for various offices) rather than on birth, thus breaking the political monopoly of the aristocrats. He is credited with saying "Nothing in excess," and being the originator of the Atlantis myth as attributed to him by Plato.

Thales of Miletus - (c. 624 BC – c. 546 BC)
The actual details of Thales's life and work are so mingled with later accretions that it is difficult to separate truth from fiction. Many, most notably Aristotle, regard him as the first philosopher in the Greek tradition, and he is otherwise historically recognized as the first individual in Western civilization known to have entertained and engaged in scientific philosophy. He supposedly gave wise advice on political and other matters and predicted a solar eclipse. His primary interests were astronomy and geometry. Aristotle claims that Thales believed that all other substances (including living creatures) somehow derived from transformations of water. His advice, "To bring surety brings ruin," was engraved on the front facade of the Oracle of Apollo in Delphi.

Fathers of Invention

In some versions on the stories of these seven sages, they have inventions attributed to their names, but little historical evidence of this could be found, other than the original works of philosophy, ethics, poetry and contributions in politics.

The Seven Sages of China

The Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove (also known as the Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove), were a group of Chinese scholars, writers, and musicians of the third century CE. Although

the various individuals all existed, their interconnection is not entirely certain. Several of the seven were linked with the Qingtan school of Daoism as it existed in the state of Cao Wei.

The Seven Sages found their lives to be in danger when the avowedly "Confucian" Jin dynasty of the Sima clan came to power. Among other things, some of the seven wrote poems criticizing the court and the administration, and wrote Daoist-influenced literature. Not all seven sages had similar views. Some of the seven tried to negotiate their way through the difficult political positions by self-consciously adopting the roles of alcohol-fueled pranksters and eccentrics avoiding government control, yet some ended up joining the Jin dynasty.

Their retreat was typical of the Daoist-oriented qingtan ("pure conversation") movement that advocated freedom of individual expression and hedonistic escape from the corrupt court politics of the short-lived Wei dynasty (AD 220–265/266, Three Kingdoms period).

However much they may or may not have personally engaged in "witty conversation or debates", they became the subjects of it themselves in the *A New Account of the Tales of the World*.

The group of friends gathered in a bamboo grove near the country estate of the writer and alchemist Ji Kang in Shanyang (in the south of present-day Henan province). Ji's independent thinking and scorn for court custom led to his execution by the state, which was strongly protested by his several thousand followers; his execution testifies to the very real dangers that forced the Sages' retirement from palace life.

The tensions that caused the forced retirement of the Seven Sages are revealed in their writings and those of other hermetic poets of the time. Their poems and essays frequently center on the impossibility of palace life for the scholar

(with criticisms of the court sometimes necessarily veiled in allegory) and the pleasures and hardships of country life. The retirement of the Seven Sages served as a model for that of later Chinese writers living in troubled times.

The Seven Sages in Life

Unlike the Greek accounts of the seven sages, which seem very contrived, these sages were all contemporaries and enjoyed each others friendship and intellect. However, their time together was not just an intellectual exercise, they openly enjoyed alcohol and “cold-medicine” which included psycho-active drugs. Indeed, this seems to have been a beatnik commune movement centuries before it was ever conceived of in the west. However, the lofty goals of the Sumerian Sages are largely missing, as the Chinese Sages were more concerned with exploring human ethics and refuting social norms of the time.

Ji Kang - (223–262), sometimes referred to as Xi Kang, was a Chinese writer, poet, Taoist philosopher, musician and alchemist. Ji Kang is noted as an author and was also a famous composer and guqin-player. He was described as a handsome and tall man.

As a thinker, Ji Kang wrote on longevity, music theory, politics and ethics. Among his works were *Yangsheng Lun* (Essay on Nourishing

Life), *Shengwu Aile Lun* (Discourse on sounds [as] lacking sorrow or joy, i.e. On the Absence of Sentiments in Music), *Qin Fu* (A Composition on the Qin), and *Shisi Lun* (Discourse on Individuality). As a musician, Ji Kang composed a number of solo pieces.

Ji Kang was highly critical of Confucianism and challenged many social conventions of his time, provoking scandal and suspicion. He married

one last melody on the guqin, a swan song forever lost.

Ji Kang wrote *Guangling San*, a composition for the Guqin recounting the assassination of a king of Han. It was said to be inspired by a spirit visitation, and was widely acclaimed. He was also believed to have become a xian (Taoist immortal) through transcendence practices by mainstream Taoism.



Watercolor Painting of the Bamboo Grove Seven Sages

Cao Cao's grand daughter (or great-grand daughter according to some). Ji Kang assumed a post under the Cao Wei state, but official work bored him. When the regent Sima Zhao came to power, he offered Ji Kang a civil position, but Ji Kang insolently rejected it. When one of Ji Kang's friends was imprisoned on false charges, Ji Kang testified in his defense, but both were sent to jail. With the urging of his court, Sima Zhao sentenced Ji Kang to death. Three thousand scholars petitioned for his pardon, but his enemies were implacable. Before his execution, Ji Kang is said to have played

Ruan Ji - (210-263) Most prominent among the Seven Sages was the free-thinking, eccentric, and highly skilled poet Ruan Ji.

Born into a prominent family, Ruan Ji was faced with the choice of silent acceptance of the corrupt political maneuverings of the Wei dynasty court or severe punishment. He found a solution that enabled him to escape both hypocrisy and harm. In a successful effort to avoid commitment to a marriage alliance that he considered dangerous and distasteful, the poet purposely remained drunk for 60 days.

When he felt the need to speak out against the ruling class, he did so through poems and essays heavily veiled in allegory. Finally, he retired to a life of pleasure and poetry in the countryside, far from the pressures of the palace.

Ji's poems and essays, in which he intermingled serious thoughts and humorous descriptions of his own eccentricities, are famous for their Daoist advocacy of transcending morality and institutions to follow nature. He believed that all distinctions between rich and poor, weak and powerful, and right and wrong should be eliminat-

ed. To that end, he scandalized Confucians of his day, who believed that the elite should not engage in manual labor, by becoming an accomplished metalworker and busying himself with alchemical studies. But his iconoclasm, as well as his potentially subversive doctrines, proved his undoing; he offended one of the Imperial princes by his lack of ceremony and was denounced to the emperor as a seditious influence. He was condemned to death, and it is said that more than 3,000 of his disciples offered to take his place in paying the supreme penalty. But Ji calmly played his lute as he awaited execution.

Despite Ruan Ji's clever tricks at court and his hedonism, his poetry is melancholy and pessimistic and has been praised for its profound view of a troubled time. His best-known collection is *Yonghuaishi* (Songs of My Heart).

Liu Ling - (born 221 and died 300 CE) was a Chinese poet and scholar. Little information survives about his family background, though he is described in historical sources as short and unattractive, with a dissipated appearance.

Popularly regarded as an eccentric, he was notorious for his love of alcohol. The earliest depictions of him, on tombs in Nanjing, show him drinking wine from a gourd, and his most famous work is a poem titled "In Praise of the Virtue of Wine". Liu Ling also enjoyed riding in a deer-drawn carriage, jug of grain wine in hand, like some kind of bad Santa.

An oft-quoted folk tale about Liu Ling claims that he was followed at all times by a servant bearing a bottle of wine and a shovel, who was equally prepared to offer him wine at a moment's notice or bury him if he fell over dead. Another cites his practice of commonly walking around his home in the nude, explaining to surprised visitors that he considered the entire universe his home and his rooms his clothing, and

then inquiring as to why they had just entered his pants. "I see the earth and skies as my home, and this room as my pants. What are you, gentlemen, doing in my pants?"

Ruan Xian - (265-316) was a Chinese scholar who lived in the Six Dynasties period. He was a skilled player of the Chinese lute, an old version of pipa which has been called ruan after his name since the Tang dynasty. His achievement in music reached such high as to be described as "divine understanding" in the Book of *Jin*. Ruan Xian had a slave who gave birth to his son, Ruan Fu. Ruan Xian was known for his natural and simple behavior and his honest and upright speech. He completely disregarded Confucian rules of social conduct.

Xiang Xiu - (228 -281) is famed for his commentary about the *Zhuangzi*, an ancient Daoist text. After Ji Kang's execution, Xiang reinterpreted some of his controversial statements. This allowed him to avoid being charged with treason and get executed like his benefactor Ji. However, he was forced to accept several posts in the capital.

Xiang believed that the only way for a person to align himself with nature was through kindness and joy for color, beauty, and taste. He saw no difference between "great" and "small" men, stating such classifications to be artificial creations of man. He wanted humans to be unrestricted in their behavior and feelings. However, unlike some of his peers, Xiang never completely disregarded the Confucian rules of conduct and admitted that observing them is useful in certain social circumstances.

Wang Rong - (234–305), nickname A Rong was a Chinese military general, poet, and politician of the Western Jin dynasty.

As a military general, he participated

in the conquest of the Jin dynasty's rival state, Eastern Wu in 280. During the campaign, he led his troops as far as to that of Wuchang (present day Ezhou, Hubei). Following this, Wang Rong's army merged with Wang Jun's and they advanced towards the Wu capital. Out of all the members of the Seven Sages, Wang Rong was said to be the wealthiest and has stories of greedy behavior attributed to him.

Though he saw Confucianism and Daoism as aiming for the same thing, Wang believed that the teachings of Confucius placed too much importance on the method of instruction, while Daoists preferred to follow the path of nature.

Shan Tao or **Shin Dao** (205 –283), was also a Taoist philosopher who shared the love of alcohol like other members of the Seven Sages group. While young, Shan was known to be magnanimous. He had a dislike for crowds. Shan also was an official of Cao Wei and Western Jin. The older and more responsible Shan Tao bounced back and forth between the Bamboo Grove and officialdom to pursue career ambitions. Ji Kang detested Shan Tao's overly pragmatic behavior, since Shan Tao was the one who united the Sages as refugees of the system.

Knowing the end was near, Ji Kang implored Shan Tao to watch over his children, a request that Shan Tao honored. Historians recount their relationship as a prime example of "harmony with disagreements between gentlemen."

The Chinese Sages in Oriental Art

References to the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove are abundant in Chinese and Japanese art and literature. The Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove have inspired not only generations of poets, but also painters and other artists. The earliest extant visual representations of the group date to the fifth century CE. Over time the theme gained

popularity in Chinese painting and decorative arts, particularly from the late Ming (1368–1644) through the Qing dynasty (1644–1911). In Japan, the motif of the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove was known as early as the ninth century. It was widely represented in Japanese art from the sixteenth century to the Edo period (1615–1868).

The Seven Rishis of India

The Saptarishi (from Sanskrit: meaning “seven sages”) are the seven Rishis in ancient India, who are extolled at many places in the Vedas and other Hindu literature. The Vedic Samhitas never enumerate these Rishis by name, though later Vedic texts such as the Brahmanas and Upanisads do so. They are regarded in the Vedas as the patriarchs of the Vedic religion.

In post-Vedic texts, different lists appear; some of these Rishis were recognized as the ‘mind-born sons’ (manasputra) of Brahma, the representation of the Supreme Being as Creator. Other representations are Mahesh or Shiva as the Destroyer and Vishnu as the Preserver. Since these Seven Rishis were also among the primary eight rishis, who were considered to be the ancestors of the Gotras of Brahmins, the birth of these rishis was mythicized, mixing their possible mortal births into divine avatars of great Hindu gods.

Called “the scientists of Hinduism,” the rishis of ancient India were the scribes of the Vedas. They developed the spiritual science of Hinduism, *Sanatana Dharma*, as their way of ensuring the constant renewal and progress of India’s spiritual tradition and culture. Sanatana Dharma permeates every aspect of Hindu culture, from religion to the arts to the sciences. Woven within its Vedic texts lie interpretations of all the essential concepts of quantum physics and other modern scientific discoveries.

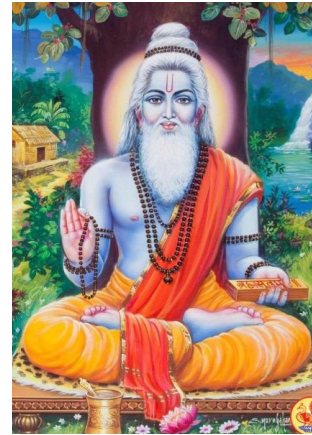
The Seven Rishis in Life & Deeds

The earliest list of the Seven Rishis is given by *Jaiminiya Brahmana 2.218-221*:

1. Agastya
2. Atri
3. Bhardwaja
4. Gautam
5. Jamadagni
6. Vashistha
7. Vishvamitra

And as per the *Brihadaranyaka Upanisad 2.2.6* has a slightly different list: Gautama and Bharadvaja, Vishvamitra and Jamadagni, Vashistha and Kashyapa and Atri, Bhrigu. The late Gopatha Brahmana 1.2.8 has Vashistha, Vishvamitra, Jamadagni, Gautama, Bharadvaja, Gungu, Agastya, Bhrigu and Kashyapa. So this list does not have a consensus over time, similar to the Greek and Sumerian lists.

Agastya - A revered Vedic sage of Hinduism who is regarded as a noted recluse and an influential scholar in diverse languages of the Indian subcontinent. He and his wife Lopamudra are the celebrated authors of hymns 1.165 to 1.191 in the Sanskrit text *Rigveda* and other Vedic literature.



Agastya is traditionally attributed to be the author of many Sanskrit texts such as the *Agastya Gita* found in *Varaha Purana*, *Agastya Samhita* found embedded in *Skanda Purana*, and the *Dvaiddha-Nirnaya Tantra* text. He is also referred to as Mana, Kalasaja, Kumbhaja, Kumbhayoni and Maitravaruni after his mythical origins.

He is revered as one of the Tamil Siddhar in the Shaivism tradition, who invented an early grammar of the Tamil language, Agattiya. Agastya is mentioned in all the four Vedas of Hinduism, and is a character in the Brahmanas, Aranyakas, Upanishads, epics, and many Puranas.

In the Ramayana, Agastya and Lopamudra are described as living in Dandaka forest, on the southern slopes of Vindhya mountains. Rama praises Agastya as the one who can do what gods find impossible. He is described by Rama as the sage who asked Vindhya mountains to lower themselves so that Sun, Moon and living beings could easily pass over it.

Bharadvaja - He is one of the greatest sages in Vedic times and also a descendant of sage Angirasa. His father is Devarsi Brihaspati. Sage Bharadvaja is the author of *Ayurveda*. He is the father of Guru Dronacharya and his ashrama still exists in Allahabad. He was also a master of advanced military arts, including the Devastras. His wife is Suseela with whom he had a daughter named Devavarnini and son Garga.



According to some of the Puranas, Bharadvaja was found on banks of river Ganga and adopted by king Bharata. He had an unquenchable thirst for knowledge of Vedas and in addition meditated for Indra, Lord Shiva and Parvathi for more Vedic Knowledge.

He was a renowned scholar, economist, and physician. His contributions to ancient Indian literature, specifically the Puranas and Rig Veda, provide significant insight into ancient Indian society. He and his family of students are considered the authors of the sixth book of the Rigveda.

Bharadvaja was the father of the teacher

(Guru) Dronacharya, a main character in the Mahabharata and instructor to Pandava and Kaurava princes. He was the grandfather of Ashwatthama, a legendary warrior in Mahabharata. Both Dronacharya and Ashwatthama fought in different battles of Mahabharata alongside the Kauravas. Bharadwaja is also mentioned in Charaka Samhita, an authoritative ancient Indian medical text.

Vishwamitra - Usually, one cannot rise to the level of a Brahmarishi through merit alone, since the order was created divinely and is appointed by Lord Brahma. However, Vishwamitra rose to the position of a Brahmarishi through his own merit alone.



His epic tussle with Vasistha for the position of the greatest sage of all time makes a very interesting story. He was not a Brahmana by birth, but a Kshatriya (warrior). Having fought, lost, and then pardoned by the Sage Vasista made a deep impression on the King. He realized that the power obtained by penances was greater than mere physical might. He renounced his kingdom and began his quest to become a greater sage than Vasishtha. He took on the name Vishwamitra.

After many trials and undergoing many austerities for thousands of years, Vishwamitra at

last obtained the title of Brahmarishi from Brahma and Vasishtha himself.

He is credited as the author of most of Mandala 3 of the Rigveda, including Gayatri Mantra. The Puranas mention that only 24 Rishis since antiquity have understood the whole meaning of—and thus wielded the whole power of—Gayatri Mantra. Vishwamitra is supposed to be the first, and Yajnavalkya the last.

The story of Vishwamitra is narrated in the Valmiki Ramayana. Vishwamitra was a king in ancient India, also called Kaushik and belonged to Amavasu Dynasty. He was a valiant warrior and the great-grandson of a great king named Kusha. Valmiki Ramayana, prose 51 of Bala Kanda, starts with the story of Vishwamitra:

There was a king named Kusha (not to be confused with Kusha, son of Rama), a mindson (manasputra) of Brahma and Kusha's son was the powerful and verily righteous Kushanabha. One who is highly renowned by the name Gaadhi was the son of Kushanabha and Gaadhi's son is this great-saint of great resplendence, Vishwamitra. Vishwamitra ruled the earth and this great-resplendent king ruled the kingdom for many thousands of years.

Vasishtha - Vasishtha is one of the oldest and most revered Vedic rishis. He is credited as the chief author of Mandala 7 of the Rigveda. Vasishtha and his family are mentioned in Rigvedic verse 10.167.4, other Rigvedic mandalas and in many Vedic texts. His ideas have been influential and he was called the first sage of the Vedanta school of Hindu philosophy by Adi Shankara.

The *Yoga Vasishtha*, *Vasishtha Samhita*, as well as some versions of the *Agni Purana* and *Vishnu Purana* are attributed to him. He is the subject of many legends, such as him being in possession of the divine cow Kamadhenu and Nandini her child, who could grant anything to

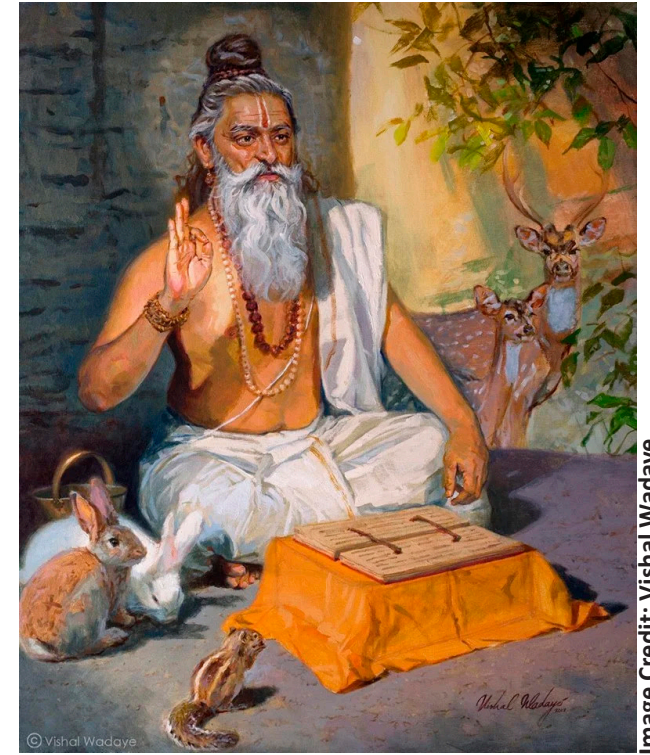


Image Credit: Vishal Wadave

their owners. He is famous in Hindu legends for his legendary conflicts with sage Vishwamitra. In the *Ramayana*, he was the family priest of the Raghu dynasty and teacher of Lord Rama and his brothers.

In the *Rigvedic hymn 7.33.9*, Vashishtha is described as a scholar who moved across the Indus river to establish his school. He was married to Arundhati, and therefore he was also called Arundhati Nath, meaning the husband of Arundhati. Vashishtha is believed to have lived on the banks of Ganga in modern-day Uttarakhand. Later, this region is believed in the Indian tradition to be the abode of sage Vyasa along with Pandavas, the five brothers of Mahabharata. He is typically described in ancient and medieval Hindu texts as a sage with long flowing hairs that are neatly tied into a bun that is coiled with a tuft to the right, a beard, a handlebar mustache and a tilak on his

forehead.

Vashishtha is the author of the Seventh book of the Rigveda, one of its “family books” and among the oldest layer of hymns in the Vedic scriptures of Hinduism. The hymns composed by Vashishtha are dedicated to Agni, Indra and other gods. These have an embedded message of transcending “all thoughts of bigotry”, suggesting a realistic approach of mutual “coordination and harmony” between two rival religious ideas by abandoning disputed ideas from each and finding the complementary spiritual core in both. These hymns declare two gods, Indra and Varuna, as equally great. In another hymn, particularly the Rigvedic verse 7.83.9, Vashishtha teaches that the Vedic gods Indra and Varuna are complementary and equally important because one vanquishes the evil by the defeat of enemies in battles, while other sustains the good during peace through socio-ethical laws. The Seventh mandala of the Rigveda by Vashishtha is a metaphorical treatise. Vashishtha reappears as a character in Hindu texts, through its history, that explore conciliation between conflicting or opposing ideologies.

According to Ellison Findly – a professor of Religion, Vashishtha hymns in the Rigveda encourage truthfulness, devotion, optimism, family life, sharing one’s prosperity with other members of society, among other cultural values.

In Buddhist Pali canonical texts such as Digha Nikaya, Tevijja Sutta describes a discussion between the Buddha and Vedic scholars of his time. The Buddha names ten Rishis, calls them “early sages” and makers of ancient verses that have been collected and chanted in his era, and among those ten Rishis is Vasettha (the Pali spelling of Vashishtha).

Lord Rama once explains his disenchantment with worldly things and expresses sadness at the miserable life as a worldly man to King Dasaratha after returning from a pilgrimage of

holy places. Then the Sage Vasishtha starts answering the questions posed by Lord Rama. This is the context and content of the scripture called “Yoga Vasistha”.

Gautama -

Gautama Rishi belongs to the lineage of Angiras. His sons were Vamadeva, Nodhas, Shatananda and were one of the earliest writers on Law. He also authored the Gautama Dharma Sutra and The Rig & Sama Vedic mantras. His wife was Ahalya, who was the daughter of Lord Brahma. At the appropriate time, the Lord announced that whosoever goes around the Earth first shall win Ahalya’s hand. Gautama Rishi went around the divine cow thus fulfilling the condition.

Gautama Rishi was a person without ego. When the people of the land suffered a drought, the Maharishi set out to meditate upon Lord Varuna. Pleased with his single-mindedness, Lord Varuna appeared. The Rishi asked Varuna for rain. Lord Varuna explained “The Law demands that there should not be rain in the place for this period of time. I cannot go against the Law since all five forces are governed by Lord Shiva. Ask me anything else.” Maharishi immediately requested for an incessant supply of water in the reservoir. Thus Gautama Rishi saved many people.

Gautama Maharishi, also known as Vamadeva Gautama is also mentioned in Jainism and Buddhism. Gautama is prominently mentioned in the Ramayana and is known for cursing his wife Ahalya, after she had an relationship with Indra.

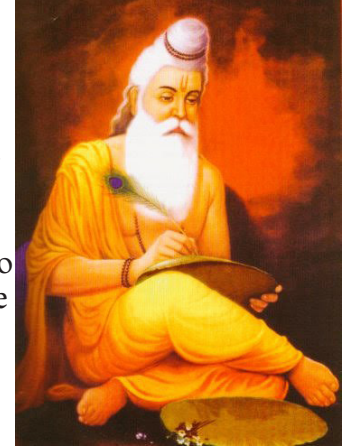


Another important story related to Gautama is about the creation of river Godavari, which is also known as Gautami.

Atri - As per divine account, he is the last among the seven Saptharishis and is believed to have originated from the tongue of Brahma. The wife of Atri was Anasuya, who is considered one of the seven female pativratas. When instructed by divine voice to do penance, Atri readily agreed and did severe penance. Pleased by his devotion and prayers, the Hindu trinity, namely, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva appeared before him and offered him boons. He sought all the three to be born to him. Another version of the legend states that Anasuya, by the powers of her chastity, rescued the three gods and in return, they were born as children to her. Brahma was born to her as Chandra, Vishnu as Dattatreya and Shiva in some part as Durvasa.

The mention about Atri is found in various scriptures, with the notable being in Rig Veda. He is also associated with various ages, the notable being in Treta Yuga during Ramayana, when he and Anasuya advised Rama and his wife Sita. The pair is also attributed to bringing river Ganga down to earth, the mention of which is found in Shiva Purana.

He is the seer of the fifth Mandala (Book 5) of the Rigveda. Atri had many sons and disciples who have also contributed in the compilation of the Rig Veda and other Vedic texts. Mandala 5 comprises 87 hymns, mainly to Agni and Indra, but also to the Visvedevas (“all the gods”), the



Maruts, the twin-deity Mitra-Varuna and the Asvins. Two hymns each are dedicated to Ushas (the dawn) and to Savitr. Most hymns in this book are attributed to the Atri clan composers, called the Atreyas. These hymns of Rigveda was composed in the northern region of the Indian subcontinent, most likely between c. 3500–3000 BCE.

The Atri hymns of the Rigveda are significant for their melodic structure as well as for featuring spiritual ideas in the form of riddles. These hymns include lexical, syntactic, morphological and verb play utilizing the flexibility of the Sanskrit language. The hymn 5.44 of the Rigveda in Atri Mandala is considered by scholars such as Geldner to be the most difficult riddle hymn in all of the Rigveda. The verses are also known for their elegant presentation of natural phenomenon through metaphors, such as poetically presenting dawn as a cheerful woman in hymn 5.80. While the fifth mandala is attributed to Atri and his associates, sage Atri is mentioned or credited with numerous other verses of the Rigveda in other Mandalas, such as 10.137.4.

His wife, Anasuya is known for chastity. One day Trimurti decided to test and arrives at her home as Brahmins. They ask her to serve food while naked. She agrees and converts them into children. Surprised with the power of her chastity, the trinity of gods requests to give their original form and hence she becomes their mother. Anasuya gave birth to Lord Dattatreya as an avatar of Trinity – Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva.

Kashyapa - He is one of the most popular ancient Rishi and Saptarishi. He is the son of Rishi Marichi and grandson of Brahma. He was the father of Devas, Asuras, Nagas, garudas, Vamana, Agni, Adityas, Daityas, Aryaman, Mitra, Pusan, Varuna, and all Humanity. He is the progenitor, Prajapati. He was an author of Kashyapa Samhitha which is a classical reference book in the

field of Ayurvedic Paediatrics, Gynecology, and Obstetrics.

He is considered to be author of many hymns and verses of the Rigveda (1500-1200 BCE). He and his family of students are, for example, the author of the second verse of 10.137, and numerous hymns in the eighth and ninth mandala of the Rigveda. He is mentioned in verse 2.2.4 of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, along with Atri,



Vashistha, Vishvamitra, Jamadagni, Bharadwaja and Gotama. Kashyapa is also mentioned as the earliest rishi in colophon verse 6.5.3 of Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, one of the oldest Upanishadic scriptures of Hinduism.

Kashyapa is mentioned in other Vedas and numerous other Vedic texts. For example, in one of several cosmology related hymns of Atharvaveda (~1000 BCE), Kashyapa is mentioned in the allegory-filled Book XIX:

*Undisturbed am I, undisturbed is my soul,
undisturbed mine eye, undisturbed mine ear,*

*undisturbed is mine in-breathing, undisturbed
mine out-breathing,
undisturbed my diffusive breath, undisturbed
the whole of me.*

*Thereafter rose Desire in the beginning, Desire
the primal seed and germ of Spirit,
O Kama dwelling with the lofty Kama, give
growth of riches to the sacrificer, (...) Prolific,
thousand eyed, and undecaying, a horse with seven reins
Time bears us onward, Sages inspired with holy knowledge
mount him, his chariot wheels are all the worlds of creatures.*

*Kala [Time] created yonder heaven, and Kala made these realms of earth,
By Kala, stirred to motion, both what is and what shall be, expand, (...) Kala created living things and first of all Prajapati,
From Kala self-made Kasyapa, from Kala Holy Fire was born.*

Jamadagni - He is the father of Parashurama, the sixth incarnation of Vishnu. He was a descendant of the sage Bhrigu, one of the Prajapatis (precreative powers) created by Brahma, the God of Creation. Jamadagni had five children with wife Renuka, the youngest of whom was Parashurama, an avatar of Lord Vishnu. Jamadagni was well versed in the scriptures and weaponry without formal instruction.



Jamadagni was born to Richaka and Satyavati, daughter of Kshatriyariya king Gaadhi. Growing up he studied hard and achieved schol-

arship on the Veda. He acquired the science of weapons without any formal instruction. His father, Richika had guided him through this education. The *Aushanasa Dhanurveda* which is now lost, is about a conversation between Jamadagni and Ushanas or Shukracharya on the exercises of warfare. Rishi Jamdagni went to King Prasenjit, of the solar dynasty or Suryavansha, and asked for his daughter Renuka's hand in marriage. Subsequently, they (Jamdagni and Renuka Mata) were married, and the couple had five sons Vasu, Viswa Vasu, Brihudyanu, Brutwakanwa and Bhadrarama, later known as Parshurama.

Fantastic Stories of Jamadagni

According to the Mahabharat, Jamadagni once became annoyed with the sun god Surya for making too much heat. The warrior-sage shot several arrows into the sky, terrifying Surya. Surya then appeared before the rishi as a Brahmin and gave him two inventions that helped mankind deal with his heat - sandals and an umbrella.

Renuka was his devoted wife. So powerful was her chastity, that she used to fetch water from the river in a pot made of unbaked clay every day, held together only by the power of her devotion to Jamadagni.

One day while at the river, a group of Gandharvas passed by in the sky above in a chariot. Filled with desire for only a moment, the unbaked pot that she was carrying dissolved into the river. Afraid to go back to her husband, she waited at the river bank.

Meanwhile, Jamadagni noticed that his wife had not yet returned from the river. Through his yogic powers, he divined all that had taken place and was filled with rage. Jamadagni called his eldest son, told him what had happened, and asked him to execute his mother. Horror-strick-

en, his son refused to perform this deed. He then asked all of his sons, and as they refused, he turned them one by one to stone. Finally, only his youngest son, Parashurama, was left. Ever-obedient and righteous, Parashurama went to behead his mother. Renuka was then hiding with a fisherman and his wife. To complete the deed, Parashurama killed the brave fisherman who went to fight him. After that, he beheaded the wife and



Parashurama Enacts His Revenge Upon 21 Generations of Kshatriya

then Renuka.

Pleased, Jamadagni offered two boons to Parashurama. Parashurama asked that his mother be restored to life and his brothers to be turned from stone back to flesh. Impressed by his son's devotion and affection, Jamadagni granted the boons. His brothers were reformed from stone without having the memory of experiencing death as an additional wish of Parashurama. With the holy water, Parashurama bound the head of the fisherman back to the fisherman's body. Excited at seeing how it had succeeded, he bound the women's heads to their bodies. After they were resurrected, he had noticed that he had switched

the bodies. Now both women were unchaste as the fact that their body or head would have had to be unchaste for the other to be chaste. Jamdagni then blessed them to be called goddesses. Thus we know her as Renuka Devi, and her sidekick, the fisherman's wife. The purpose of this trial was to demonstrate the dharma ("rightful duty") of a son towards his father.

Jamadagni was later visited by the Haihaya king Kartavirya Arjuna (who was said to have thousand arms/hands), who he served a feast using a divine cow called Kamdhenu. Wanting the Divine Cow "Kamdhenu" for himself, the king offered wealth to Jamadagni which he refused. Then the king forcefully took the Kamdhenu with him asking Jamadagni to take it back if possible, but by the means of war, which Jamadagni was not willing to do.

Knowing this fact and enraged, Parashurama (Jamadagni's son) killed the king, and retrieved the sacred cow by killing all of the army of the king Kartavirya Arjuna by himself alone. Later, three sons of the king killed Jamdagni because he was the father of Parashurama who had killed their father.

They felt they had the proper revenge under the law of an eye-for-an-eye. They first stabbed Jamdagni twenty-one times and then sliced his head.

Again enraged, Parashurama killed all three brothers and retrieved the head of his father for cremation, and ultimately enacted a genocide on the kshatriya caste throughout the world for the next twenty-one generations since his mother beat her chest twenty-one times resembling a low-born in mourning after his father was stabbed by the miscreants.

Stories of the Seven Rishis

Hindu and Buddhist culture is rich with many

stories of the Seven Rishis. Outside of the Vedic religious texts, these seven men are venerated to the level of the Founding Fathers, Santa Claus, Merlin, Jesus Christ and Thomas Edison—all rolled together in each of the divine individuals.



Manu, the Rishis & the Flood

According to Matsyapurana, the first person on this Earth is Manu. He, in the mythology of India, is the first man of this age, and the legendary author of an important Sanskrit law code, the Manu-smriti (Laws of Manu). The name is cognate with the Indo-European “man” and also has an etymological connection with the Sanskrit verb man-, “to think.” Manu appears in the Vedas, the sacred literature of Hinduism, as the performer of the first sacrifice. He is also known as the first king, and most rulers of medieval India traced their genealogy back to him, either through his son (the solar line) or his daughter (the lunar line).

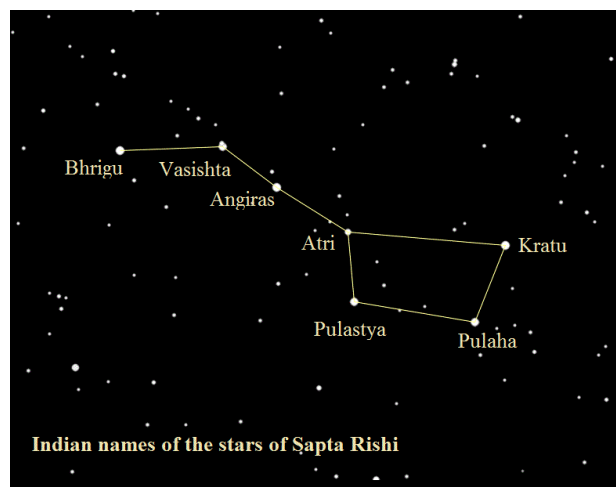
In some versions of the story, Manu, his family and the seven sages (Saptarishis) along with the four Vedas are saved by a great horned fish (an avatar of Lord Vishnu) from the great flood. This is the end of all the life forms but not the entire Universe. Later on, Vishnu made Manu as the ruler of this age of man.

Since the Saptarishis are divine born directly from Brahma, they had the required knowl-

edge to teach Manu the processes of transition (pralaya). They are naturally the most evolved ‘light beings’ in the creation and the guardians of the divine laws which he used to write the law codes for all men to live by.

In the Mahabharata (“Great Epic of the Bharata Dynasty”), the fish is identified with the god Brahma, while in the Puranas (“Ancient Lore”) it is Matsya, the fish incarnation of Lord Vishnu.

In the story of the great flood, Manu combines the characteristics of the Hebrew Bible figures of Noah, who preserved life from extinction in a great flood, and Adam, the first man.



In Astrology

In ancient Indian astronomy, the stars of the Big Dipper (part of the constellation of Ursa Major) is called Saptarishi, with the seven stars representing seven rishis, namely “Vashistha”, “Bhrgu”, “Pulastya”, “Pulaha”, “Atri”, “Angiras” and “Kratu”. There is another star slightly visible within it, known as “Arundhati”. Arundhati and Vashishtha are a married couple.

Tibetan Shambhala

In Tibetan Buddhism, Shambhala (Tibetan: bde byung, pron. ‘De-jung’) meaning “Source of happiness,” is a mythical kingdom or hidden place somewhere beyond the snow peaks of the Himalayas. The kingdom is mentioned in various ancient texts, including the Kalachakra Tantra. The Bön scriptures also speak of a closely-related land called ‘Olmolungring’.

Shambhala is said to be the land of a thousand names. It has been called the Forbidden Land, the Land of White Waters, Land of Radiant Spirits, Land of Living Fire, Land of the Living Gods and Land of Wonders. The Hindus call it Aryavārtha (‘The Land of the Worthy Ones’); the Chinese know it as Hsi Tien, the Western Paradise of Hsi Wang Mu; and to the Russian Old Believers, it is known as Belovoyde. But throughout Asia, it is best known by its Sanskrit name, Shambhala, Shamballa, or Shangri-la. The legend of Shambhala is said to date back thousands of years, and reference to the mythical land can be found in various ancient texts.

Ancient Zhang Zhung texts identify Shambhala with the Sutlej Valley in Punjab or Himachal Pradesh, India. Mongolians identify Shambhala with certain valleys of southern Siberia. In Altai folklore, Mount Belukha is believed to be the gateway to Shambhala. Modern Buddhist scholars seem to conclude that Shambhala is located in the higher reaches of the Himalayas in what is now called the Dhauladhar Mountains around McLeodganj. Some legends say that the entrance to Shambhala is hidden inside a remote, abandoned monastery in Tibet, and guarded by beings known as the Shambhala Guardians. Shambhala is believed to be a society where all the inhabitants are enlightened, actually a Buddhist “Pure Land,” centered by a capital city called Kalapa.

For some, the fact that Shambhala has

never been found has a very simple explanation – many believe that Shambhala lies on the very edge of physical reality, as a bridge connecting this world to one beyond it.

The Eight Dharma Kings of the Sublime Realm of Shambhala were able to skillfully introduce their realm to the Kalachakra (Wheel of Time) teachings. Their effort went much more beyond only alleviating biased differences like races, conflicting religious approaches, classes etc. They helped propagate and make the Kalachakra teachings in such a way, that their realm started to transform into a pure Bodhisattva (enlightened) realm, happy and peaceful, where spiritual practice flourishes. Differently from worldly kings which are focused on protecting and expanding their territories, the Dharma Kings are Kings of the Dharma, Bodhisattva beings who manifest as great leaders out of their compassion and wisdom. Suchandra is the Dharma King who directly requested the Kalachakra Teachings to the Buddha Shakyamuni and afterwards brought these teachings to Shambhala.

While many disregard Shambhala as the fanciful subject of myth and legend, for others, a belief in Shambhala stirs an inner yearning to one day find this Utopian kingdom.

The author includes this brief introduction to Shambhala because of the stories of how it is rules and structured. In terms of the ruling structure of Shambhala, it is divided into seven districts. Each district is ruled by one of the Bodhisattva's (enlightened ones) and in turn, the eight Bodhisattva rules the other seven. The myth, in many stories, holds the same structure and ideas behind the ancient stories of the Vedic Saptarishi and many of the characteristics of the Egyptian Sage stories, and maintains the spirit of the Sumerian Sages. A group of seven semi-divine beings will hold the sacred knowledge and bring it to man.

Conclusions

There is something notable about the context in which the texts describe three groups of the Sages. This context is marked by a preponderance of 'Flood' imagery in which the 'primeval waters' (out of which the Great Primeval Mound emerged) are depicted as gradually receding. We are reminded of Noah's mountain-top on which the Ark settled after the Biblical Deluge, and of the 'Seven Sages' (Apkallu, Egyptian or the Vedic) of ancient tradition who were said to have 'lived before the Flood' and to have built the walls of the sacred city. Likewise is it an accident that in Indian tradition 'Seven Sages' (Rishis) are remembered to have survived the Flood, their purpose being to preserve and pass down to future generations the wisdom of the antediluvian world? In all cases the Sages appear as the enlightened survivors of a cataclysm that wiped the earth clean, who then set about making a fresh start at the dawn of a new age - which, in ancient Egypt, was referred to as the 'First Time'.

As Reymond confirms in her masterly study of the Edfu Texts: the first era known by our principal sources was a period which started from what existed in the past. The general tone of the record seems to convey the view that an ancient world, after having been constituted, was destroyed, and as a dead world it came to be the basis of a new period of creation which at first was the re-creation and resurrection of what once had existed in the past. This works perfectly with the Vedic concepts as well.

From Reymond:

"As for the seven gods, earlier I encountered references to them in literature. Besides the nations you've named, such knowledge was among ancient Egyptians, Indians, etc., though some mention seven and others mention eight supreme gods who supervise people. As I under-

stand, the source of information is Shambhala. So, the truth should be somewhere near?"

"In principle, it is. Seven Bodhisattvas rule Shambhala itself. The eighth one is God who rules everything, including the Bodhisattvas. The fact that these seven are often mentioned is due to their relevant activities. When a human being evolves spiritually (either within one life or more often through recurrent incarnations) he or she eventually gets, as Buddhists say, on the last step to becoming Buddha. Figuratively speaking, he or she graduates from the earthly life university and tries to defend his or her "diploma" in order to have the right to get to a higher level. At that, the seven Bodhisattvas represent the "certifying commission"."

According to the eminent Egyptologist Sir E. A. Wallis Budge: 'The similarity between the two ... gods is too close to be accidental ... It would be wrong to say that the Egyptians borrowed from the Sumerians or the Sumerians from the Egyptians, but it may be submitted that the literati of both peoples borrowed their theological systems from some common but exceedingly ancient source.' (*The Sign and the Seal*)

What we do know about the Seven Sages of India, Egypt and Sumeria is that they are superhuman, a semi-divine creation of a Supreme god, who in turn, puts them in charge of the spiritual and intellectual education of mankind. They have a direct line to hidden knowledge that they must teach us.

This concept would mean there is, by implication, a human element involved which needs a super-physical energy to survive the extreme reaches of time for which the sages supposedly lived. The first Apkallu is Oannes/Adapa whose city is Eridu, Sumeria's first city. He would be the eldest and by Sumerian reckoning about 450,000 years old (as they put it) and out living all human

antediluvian kings who, according to the Sumerian Kings List, already had extraordinarily long lives. The Apkallu, the Rishis and the Egyptian Sages were teachers with a spiritual message of knowledge that brought the arts of civilization to mankind and because of their antiquity have an unfathomable wisdom. The giving of the arts of civilization was not something that just happened, it was part of the plan which qualifies as angelic: Uanna/Adapa was the one “who finished the plans for heaven and earth.” (*The Etiological Myth of the “Seven Sages”, R Borger*).

The myths always speak of a company of civilizers across many cultures: Viracocha has his ‘companions’, as in both Quetzalcoatl and Osiris, Brahma and Enki. Sometimes there are fierce internal conflicts within these groups...the civilizer is eventually plotted against and either driven out or killed. In the Egyptian story of Osiris, he was murdered by Set soon after the completion of his worldwide mission to make men ‘give up their savagery’, he won eternal life through his resurrection in the constellation of Orion as the all-powerful god of the dead. Thereafter, judging souls and providing an immortal example of responsible and benevolent kingship. The Apkallu helped the kings of man accomplish the same feat by teaching them to be good leaders and kings, and the Rishis of India wrote the religious texts that still serve as the foundations of religions to this day.

The main themes of the stories, the scaffolding that holds them up is nearly identical across three ancient cultures, leading one to speculate if it’s just a Jungian dream, or if there is perhaps something more to the myths that point back, as Plato did in his Atlantean story, to a distance culture. A great society of intelligent people who existed before the last floods as the ice-age glaciers subsided and the world changed to look more like what it does today.

It’s uncertain if we will ever have the tools to deduce that some ancient culture was destroyed and its survivors set out to teach others about how to build cities and temples. And to decide upon laws and to become farmers and herdsmen, but I hope that we will have a complete picture one day of the 150,000 years that we, as a species, have set foot upon the land.

Gods of the Sages

Egyptian Sages: In the myths are expressly written these five names of the Egyptian Gods, Atum, Osiris, Isis, Horus and perhaps as the antagonist, Set. See the Egyptian Gods section for further information.

Sumerian Sages: The god who is repeatedly mentioned as the god who created the Seven Sages or who they “were servants” to is Enki, Primordial God of waters. In some ways, this explains the fish costumes and allusion to them being part fish and part man.

They were the seven sages created by the Sumerian god Enki (Akkadian: Ea), sent from Dilmun (Some believe Dilmun is the Garden of Eden). The Apkallu were first referred to in the Erra Epic by Marduk who asked: “*Where are the Seven Sages of the Abzu, the pure puradu fish, who just as their lord Enki, have been endowed with sublime wisdom?*”

Vedic Rishi: The god who expressly created the great Seven Rishi, bestowing upon them their great and divine powers and long lives is Brahma. In many writings they are referred to as directly creating them from his divine being. While many other gods and avatars of great Hindu gods are mentioned as being involved with the Rishi’s stories, it is very clear that he created them.

The Greek Seven Sages: Being that the Greek list is completely contrived or hand picked by various Greek philosophers and surmised by various historians, the author finds no justifiable reason to extol on it further.



The Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove: The Chinese list of Sages or society rebels all seemed to be greatly interested in Taoist philosophy and spent little time delving into which gods that felt represented them best. They were scholars, writers and musicians. If anything, from their writings and lifestyles, they seemed to relish ‘Living with Nature’ and living simply as the highest principle to be worshiped.