

How Orion's Ability to "Walk upon the Sea" Was Attributed to Jesus: The Astronomical Basis for Christ's Sea-Walk Miracle

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Abstract

Irreconcilable differences found in Jesus' "Sea-Walk" narrative imply that it was not based on eyewitness testimony, and therefore must have been founded on some other system of proof. The Christian Gospels confirm that the evangelists envisioned Jesus as the "Anointed-One" and "Son of God" whom had ascended into *ouranos*, "heaven," a word that also referred to the realm where the deified constellations existed. Circumstantial evidence indicates that the Gospel authors had two celestial forms of history authentication at their disposal. From Greece came the belief in *katasterismos*, i.e., that the constellations depicted tableaux of miraculous earthly events that had been transferred onto the stars. And from Mesopotamia came the belief that the constellations depicted divine, cuneiform "writing" which imparted inviolable truth through wordplay encrypted in each star-god's name or epithet. While learning the Greek language the evangelists had presumably encountered the pre-Christian, Classical myths which stated that Orion could "walk upon the sea." The article demonstrates that this supernatural feat was founded on astronomical knowledge: when plotted on a star map Orion depicts a deified Man whose outstretched legs convey the idea that he was "walking" upon a celestial "Sea" delineated by the eight, contiguous, aquatic constellations (Dolphin, Goatfish, Southern Fish, Water-pourer, Twin-Fishes, River, Sea Serpent, and Ship). Moreover, wordplay encrypted in the cuneiform titles of Orion yield "Son of God" and "Anointed-One,"— terms that accord precisely with the evangelists' conception of Jesus' identity. We argue that these semantic correlations inspired the evangelists to envision Orion as the embodiment of Jesus and ascribe the constellation's astronomically based sea-walking ability to the founder of Christianity. The article goes on to demonstrate that the setting of Jesus' Sea-Walk miracle corresponds with the celestial landscape surrounding Orion, and that wordplay encrypted in the cuneiform titles of Orion's stellar Sea-Walk tableau correspond with the common themes found in Jesus' Sea-Walk miracle as well as the stories' jarring incongruities.

Keywords: Orion, Jesus, celestial, mythology, katasterism, sea-walk, miracle, heavenly writing, punning, wordplay.

Introduction

Despite the fact that walking upon water is scientifically impossible, Christian mythology reports that Jesus walked upon the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 14:22-33; Mark 6:45-51; John 6:16-21; Luke omits the story). All versions share a common setting and theme, which begins with Jesus instructing his disciples to get into a boat and row to the other side of this inland sea while he retreats to a mountain to pray. Later that evening Jesus finds the apostles' ship foundering in a rough waters stirred by a fierce wind. He then defies natural law by walking upon the surface of the water towards the apostles' boat, presumably to keep it from sinking.

At this juncture the narrative's variations become irreconcilable. Matthew 14:29-31 reports that the disciple Peter climbed out of the boat and, for a short time, walked upon the waves towards Jesus before his wavering faith caused him to sink beneath the surface—a supernatural act in its own right but omitted by Mark and John (Fig. 1).

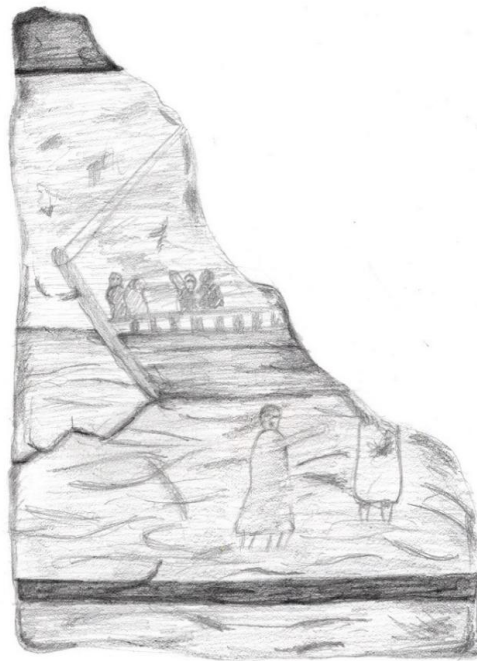


Figure 1. The scene depicts Peter (right) walking upon the sea towards Jesus as reported in Matthew's Gospel (sketch of baptismery painting from Dura-Europos, Syria, circa 240 AD, by Ashley McCurdy).

Equally remarkable are the words of Mark 6:48, which recount that Jesus "wanted to pass by" (*ēthelen parelthein*) the apostles' ship during his sea-walk as if unconcerned by their life-threatening circumstances! John 6:21 incorporates a second miracle to the "Sea-Walk" story, stating that the disciples' ship instantaneously teleported several miles to the other side of the lake the moment they tried to bring Jesus aboard (Madden, 1997, pp. 112-114; Heil, 1981, pp. 80-82; Brown R., 1966, p. 252, n. 21). And while these discrepancies alone elicit incredulity in a science-minded thinker, Matthew 14:25 and Mark 6:48 go on to list the time that Jesus walked on water, "the fourth watch of the night" (i.e., 3-6 AM), an extraneous detail that reads like a non sequitur.

How, then, did these three Gospel writers come to accept a common Sea-Walk miracle as an historical fact, yet incorporate inconsistencies so jarring they remain incompatible? The answer appears to have been "written" in the stars, in the form of two esoteric systems of fact verification circulating throughout Syria-Palestine in the first century AD.

Christian theologians concede that the Gospel authors were anonymous Hellenistic Jews who had never met Jesus and had no eyewitness testimony to draw upon (Coogan, 2010, p. 1744; Freedman, 1992, 3, pp. 919-920; 1992, 4, pp. 626-627; Mann, 1986, p. 76). Yet each shared the belief that Jesus was the deified "Son of God" (*ho huios tou theou*; *huios theou*) and *Christos*, "Anointed One," whom had ascended into *ouranos*, "heaven," – a word that also meant "sky, firmament" and referred to the realm where one finds the astral bodies (Liddell & Scott, 1997, pp. 895, 578).

As educated Jews fluent in Greek and living in a land that had been colonized by Greek-speaking peoples, the evangelists had surely been exposed to the latter's religious ideology and mythology (Freedman, 1992, II, 312-317; Safrai & Stern, 1974, 1, pp. 446-449; Townsend, 1971, pp. 139-163). One Hellenic tenet called *katasterismos*, or "placing among the stars," proclaimed the forty-eight ancient constellations as a sacred record of historic events that had occurred on earth—each star-figure engaging in one or more of the preternatural feats that made it, like Jesus, immortal (Cancik, Schneider, 2005: 7, 33-34; Condos, 1997: *passim*). Moreover, Greek celestial mythology written seven centuries before Jesus's birth attests that Orion possessed the ability to walk upon the sea. It will be shown that this supernatural power, which was reported as an historical fact, appears to have been derived from astronomical observation. When Orion is plotted on a star-map his outstretched legs depict him striding away from celestial land and onto the astral "Sea" delineated by the eight, contiguous aquatic constellations consisting of the Dolphin, Goatfish, Southern Fish, Water-pourer, Sea Serpent, River, Twin-Fishes, and Ship; an act accentuated by the fact that his front foot, demarcated by the star Rigel (β Orionis), is also the first star (λ Eridani) in the River constellation, Eridanus (Toomer, 1998, p. 384; Aratus, 1997, pp. 98-99, 316; Condos, 1997, p. 105).

Yet the Greek precept of *katasterismos* was not the only esoteric form of truth verification circulating throughout scholarly enclaves accessible to the evangelists. Originating from Mesopotamia was the astrological belief that the constellations depicted "heavenly writing" that divulged unassailable truth through the medium of wordplay encrypted in the star-gods' titles. Cuneiform literature confirms that Mesopotamian astrologers construed pun-based wisdom as a form of divine revelation, and recorded such findings in their religious mythologies as if they were historical facts.

Circumstantial evidence implies that the erudite authors of Jesus's Sea-Walk miracle were cognizant of the aforementioned Hellenic and Mesopotamian forms of history verification. Hence, when Matthew, Mark, and John inspected the place where Jesus had ascended, *ouranos*, "heaven, firmament," they saw Orion in the act of walking upon the celestial "Sea" depicted by the eight, adjacent watery constellations; with wordplay in one of the cuneiform titles for Orion imparting the phrase "Walking upon the Sea." Other puns in Orion's cuneiform title yielded "Son of God" and "Anointed-One" – terms that accorded precisely with the evangelists' conception of Jesus. We argue that these correlations compelled the Gospel authors to equate Orion with Jesus and ascribe the constellation's astronomically based "sea walking" ability to him as well. Moreover, it will be shown that the setting of Jesus's Sea-Walk miracle corresponds with the celestial landscape surrounding Orion; and that wordplays in Orion's stellar Sea-Walking tableau correlate with the common themes found in the Gospels' Sea-Walk narratives as well as their jolting inconsistencies. The conclusion contends that the evangelists' description of Jesus' Sea-Walk miracle was founded on Orion's Sea-Walking tableau, with puns in this tableau serving as the basis for story's thematic commonalities and incompatibilities.

Orion Strides upon the Celestial "Sea"

Seven-hundred years before the birth of Jesus the Greek astronomer-poet Hesiod wrote:

"Orion ... the son of Euryale, the daughter of Minos, and of Poseidon, and that there was given him as a gift the power of walking upon the waves as though upon land"

(Hesiod, 1977, pp. 70-71).

Interestingly, this claim appears in the *Astronomia*, "Astronomy," a text whose subject matter was astronomical in nature.

The Greek mythographer Apollodorus reiterated this claim around 50 BC, "Poseidon bestowed on him [Orion] the power of striding across the sea." (Apollodorus, 1967, pp. 30-31, brackets inserted). In 20 BC the Latin author Virgil stated, ". . . Orion, when cleaving a path he stalks on foot through the vast pools of mid-ocean, towers with his shoulders above the waves . . ." (Virgil, 2000, pp. 224-227). And decades before Jesus's supposed Sea-Walk miracle took place, the Roman astronomer-poet Gaius Julius Hyginus (64 BC-17 AD) wrote, "Orion ... He had the ability of running over the waves as if on land . . ." (Grant, 1960, p. 221).

How did Hesiod and later Greco-Roman astronomical writers come to the conclusion that Orion could walk upon the sea? The answer is intimated by Hesiod in the *Astronomia*. Shortly after proclaiming Orion's miraculous sea-walking ability, he goes on to explain how Orion wished to kill every animal that existed on the goddess *Gē*, "Earth." Enraged, the Earth-goddess sent up a giant scorpion to pursue Orion and sting him dead. Zeus placed both Orion and Scorpius in the sky as a testimony to this monumental chase scene: as Scorpius rises in the east Orion sets on the western horizon (Fig. 2); a celestial illusion that simulates the primordial chase undertaken by these two constellation-deities (Hesiod, 1977, pp. 70-73; c.f., Aratus, 1997: 118-121).



Figure 2. The simultaneous rising of Scorpius and setting of Orion inspired the supernatural story of his death, which was reported as an historical fact in Hesiod's *Astronomia*. Note that Scorpius is depicted in its pre-zodiacal form, i.e., its "claws" depicted by Libra (sketch by Ashely McCurdy).

This highlights a fundamental conviction held by Hellenic thinkers that was later adopted by the Romans: In Greek religious ideology the Scorpius-Orion tableau depicted a *katasterismos*, "placing among the stars," a phenomenon that explained how the constellations came to appear as deities in heaven. The phenomenon is summarized by H. Cancik and H. Schneider:

Katasterismos, or star legend. A type of legend explaining the genesis of constellations and asterisms by means of an aetiological myth, as a rule by a human or a god being placed in the heavens as a star or constellation. This stellification equals a deification (apotheosis).

(Cancik, Schneider, 2005, 7, pp. 33-34)

Pertinent here is that Hesiod accepted the supernatural, stellar "chase" scene portrayed by Scorpius-Orion as an event that had once taken place on earth *because* it was depicted in the heavenly realm of the constellations; the still-frame of Scorpius "chasing" Orion serving as the proof upon which this miracle was based.

Circumstantial evidence implies that Hesiod derived Orion's ability to "walk upon the sea" in a similar manner. To discern the astronomical basis for Orion's stellar "sea walking" power we must first recall that the aquatic constellations (Delphinus, Capricorn, Aquarius, Piscis Austrinus, Pisces, Cetus, Eridanus, and Argo) are not strewn randomly across the heavens. Instead they are concentrated in what appears to be an intentional, contiguous arrangement that conjures the idea of a stellar "Sea" in the stars (Rogers, 1998, II, 86-87; Aratus, 1997, pp. 98-99, 316; Condos, 1997, p. 105; Toomer, 1998, p. 384; Manilius, 1977, pp. 38-39; Boll, 1903, pp. 133-138) (Fig. 3). This astral "Sea" appears to be modeled after the Mesopotamian *Apsû* (Sumerian: ABZU), "Sentient Sea" (Halloran, 2006, p. 14), that comprised a portion of the Mesopotamian starry sphere and is mentioned in the cuneiform star atlas "MUL-APIN" (Hunger & Pingree, 1989, p. 37). Noteworthy is that the Greek and modern Water-pourer, Aquarius, appears to be a derivative of the Mesopotamian Water-deity, *Ea*, whom embodied the stars of Aquarius and inhabited these celestial waters (Hunger & Pingree, 1989, p. 35; Porada, 1987, pp. 279-291).

Moreover, Orion appears with legs outstretched—as if in the act of striding across the heavens in great haste (Fig. 3). Greek star atlases confirm that his front foot, delineated by the bright star Rigel, is simultaneously the first star in the River constellation, λ Eridani (Toomer, 1998, p. 384; Aratus, 1997, pp. 98-99, 316; Condos, 1997, p. 105) (Fig. 3).

Since Orion's death by giant Scorpion was founded on an astral still-frame, it seems plausible that the Hunter's ability to stride across the sea was also inspired by the recurring celestial image of him performing this miracle in the heavens as shown in Fig. 3.

Thus, in Hellenic thought the constellations portrayed a pictographic record of monumental historic events. One of these tableaux depicted Orion being chased by a giant Scorpion—an encounter that led to his death (Fig. 2). Another stellar tableau depicted Orion "walking upon the sea," a talent that was reported as factual history by Hesiod and later Greco-Roman mythographers (Fig. 3). Because the authors of Jesus's Sea-Walk were well-educated Hellenistic Jews fluent in Greek, it is likely that they became cognizant of Orion's astronomically based sea-walking talent before writing their Gospels, as pagan Greek mythological texts were taught to Jewish students in Greek schools of Syria-Palestine and Egypt at the time the Gospels were written in the late first century AD (Freedman, 1992, II, 314-317; Safrai & Stern, 1974, 1, pp. 446-449; Townsend, 1971, pp. 139-163). Arguably the best testimony to the evangelists'

awareness of Greek astronomical precepts is present in Acts of the Apostles 17:28, where the Christian saint, Paul, quotes directly from Aratus' circa 280 BC Greek astronomical poem *Phaenomena* (Fitzmyer, 1998, p. 611; Allen, 1963, p. 18). Since it is widely accepted that Acts was written by Luke, and Luke had composed the speeches of Paul (Brown R., 1977, p. 239), it was Luke himself who was quoting from *Phaenomena*.

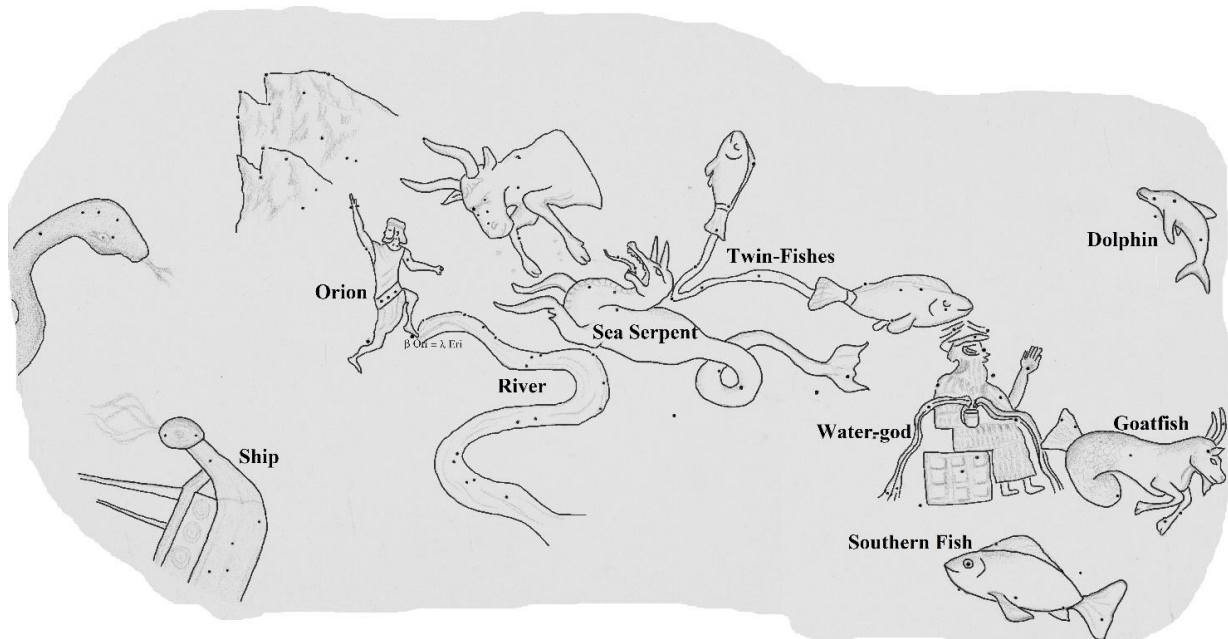


Figure 3. Orion appears to be stepping onto the stellar Sea delineated by the eight, contiguous aquatic constellations. This "sea-walk" is accentuated by the fact the Orion's front "foot" star, β Ori, simultaneously depicts the first star in the River constellation, λ Eri (sketch by Ashley McCurdy).

The Constellations: Sacred "Writing" that Imparted Unassailable Truth through Wordplay

M.J. Geller confirms that Mesopotamian astrological wisdom was indeed circulating throughout Syria at the time the Gospels were written (Geller, 1997, pp. 53-56). Thus, it seems plausible that the authors of Jesus's Sea-Walk miracle may have gained some familiarity with Mesopotamian astrological arcana in the course of their studies. The latter claim is substantiated by the fact that one of the "Sea-Walk" story's authors, Matthew, reports that *magoi* or "astrologer-priests," had traveled to Jerusalem to find the Christ-child, Jesus, because they had witnessed "his star at its rising" (Matthew 2:1-2). The high likelihood that Matthew's *magoi*/"astrologer-priests" were from Babylonia has been convincingly argued by respected scholars (Geller, 1997, pp. 60-64; Kingsley, 1995, pp. 198-201; Brown R., 1979, pp. 167-170; Kittel & Friedrich, 1967, IV, pp. 358-359; Albright & Mann, 1964, pp. 12, 26). Hence, although *magos* (plural: *magoi*) originally referred to a Persian priest skilled in the occult, by the first century AD Greek and Latin authors had conflated *magos* with the Babylonian *ummānu*, "scholar-magician," i.e., an "expert" proficient in the esoteric arts that included astrology (Brown D., 2000, pp. 33-36; Geller, 1997, p. 61; Kingsley, 1995, pp. 198-201).

And it is arcane Mesopotamian tenets relating to the celestial sky that may have compelled the anonymous authors of Matthew, Mark, and John's Gospels to ascribe Orion's astral-based ability to "walk upon the sea" to Jesus.

The first of these Mesopotamian astrological precepts is found in texts which state that the starry sky depicted *šīṭirti šamāmi*, *šīṭir šamê*, or *šīṭir burūmê*, "heavenly writing"—literally a

hallowed cuneiform text inscribed by the star-gods themselves (*CAD* 17/pt.3, p. 144; Rochberg, 2004, pp. 64, 163, 294, 299; Rochberg-Halton, 1988, p. 15 n. 54; von Soden, 1981, III, 1253, *šitru*, lexical section). This accords perfectly with the title of the Babylonian astrologer: *tupšarru*, "writer, scribe,"—an expert who read the sacred "writing" of the celestial sky for signs of future earthly events which could be avoided or exploited (Brown D., 2000, pp. 33-36; Rochberg, 2004, pp. 41, 45, 71, 219; *CAD* 19, pp. 152-153, *tupšarru*). The concept is summarized by Francesca Rochberg, "The metaphor may be interpreted to express the idea that a written message was encoded in the sky, and that the message was a form of communication from the gods (Rochberg-Halton, 1988, p. 15, n. 54).

Hence, Babylonian astrologers were adroit grammarians proficient at reading and writing in the highly complex cuneiform writing system; a task that included mastery of their spoken tongue, Akkadian, as well as proficiency in the reading and writing of Sumerian, which was the "dead" language of the southern Mesopotamian people from whom the Akkadian-speaking Babylonians adopted the cuneiform script. Babylonian astrologers' knowledge of Sumerian is visible in their study of the Sumerian-Akkadian "dictionaries," a point evinced by the list of texts edited by astrologers serving the Assyrian king, Esarhaddon (Lambert, 1976, pp. 313-318; Rochberg, 2004, p. 211). The circa 1800-1600 BC Sumerian-Akkadian "dictionaries" listed a Sumerian logogram beside its Akkadian meaning; a Sumerian logogram consisting of a cuneiform sign or sign grouping for a Sumerian word, which was then used to represent an Akkadian word with the equivalent meaning (Huehnergard, 1997, pp. 107-111). Pertinent to the current article is that these Sumerian-Akkadian dictionaries were an essential resource to the astrologer (Lambert, 1976, pp. 313-318; Rochberg, 2004, pp. 209-236). And Mesopotamian and Hellenic scholars were translating these Sumerian-Akkadian dictionaries into Greek in the late first century AD, a time contemporaneous with the writing of the Gospels (Geller, 1997, pp. 64-95; Sollberger, 1962, pp. 63-72).

The Sumerian-Akkadian dictionaries illustrate that the cuneiform writing system was predisposed to an astounding level of polysemy, i.e., multiple meanings on a word or phrase. The latter point exemplified in the Sumerian logogram MUL, which meant "star" in Sumerian and represented the Akkadian word *kakkabu*, "star" (*CAD* 8, p. 45, *kakkabu*). Yet MUL also functioned as the logogram for the Akkadian nouns *šitirtu*, "inscription" and *šitru*, "writing" (*CAD* 17, pt.3, p. 144, *šitirtu*, b; *CAD* 17, pt.3, 144, *šitru*), as well as the verb *nabāṭu*, "to shine brightly" (*CAD* 11, pt.1, p. 22, *nabāṭu*). MUL could also be read MULU, which represented the Akkadian word *mulmullu*, "arrow" (*CAD* 10, pt.2, 190-191, *mulmullu*). Therefore, polysemous readings of the cuneiform sign MUL could interject "star, inscription, writing, shining brightly, arrow" (Fig. 4, top).

Moreover, the potential for polysemy increased due to the vast number of homophones (e.g., *to*, *two*, *too*) found among the Sumerian logograms. The expansive number of homophones in cuneiform writing necessitated that modern linguists devise a transliteration system which allows researchers to distinguish which cuneiform sign appears on a tablet (Huehnergard, 1997, p. 70). This scholarly convention is exemplified in Fig. 4, which shows the different cuneiform signs that could be read "MUL." The sign most frequently read "MUL" does not have a subscript number; the second most frequent reading for the "MUL" sign is transliterated MUL₂; the third most frequent reading for "MUL" is transcribed MUL₃, and so forth. Furthermore, Mesopotamian astrologers utilized AB₂ as an esoteric form of "MUL," which modern scholars transcribe as MUL_x (Reiner, 1995, p. 5, n. 11). Crucial for non-specialist readers to remember is

that the subscript numbers and subscript *x* are a modern convention; a Mesopotamian astrologer would have read all of these signs as "MUL."

Therefore, polysemy enciphered in the Sumerian logograms read "MUL" could interject any or all of the following meanings through polysemy: "inscription, writing, shining-brightly, arrow, foundation, ornament, piercing, wasp, watercourse, distant-time, fruit, feeling-elated, field, cow" and "month." Remarkably, Fig. 4 lists only a portion of the possible meanings for "MUL."







	MUL = <i>šīrtum</i> , "inscription," <i>šīru</i> , "writing," <i>nabāṭu</i> , "to shine brightly" MULU = <i>mulmullu</i> , "arrow"
	MUL ₂ = <i>kakkabu</i> , "star" <i>nabāṭu</i> , "shine brightly" TE = <i>uššu</i> , "foundation," <i>simtu</i> , "ornament," <i>saḫālu</i> , "to pierce"
	MUL ₃ = <i>kuzāzu</i> , "wood wasp," SUR ₃ = <i>ḥarru</i> , <i>sūru</i> , "watercourse"
	MUL ₄ = <i>kakkabu</i> , "star," <i>nabāṭu</i> , "shine brightly" UL = <i>ṣātu</i> , "distant time," <i>inbu</i> , "fruit," <i>ḥabāṣu</i> , "to be elated"
	MUL ₅ = <i>kakkabu</i> , "star" IKU = <i>ikû</i> , "field"
	MUL _x = <i>kakkabu</i> , "star" AB ₂ = <i>arḫu</i> , "cow, month"

Figure 4. The six Sumerian logograms read "MUL" are shown in capital letters. The Akkadian words they represent are shown in italics (sketch by Ashely McCurdy).

The thousands of Sumerian logograms, their homophonous nature, their potential to be read in multiple ways, combined with Babylonian-Assyrian scholars' penchant to attribute multiple Akkadian words to a single logogram resulted in an enormous opportunity for wordplay to emerge in cuneiform writing (Hurowitz, 2000, p. 66, n. 9).

Moreover, cuneiform literature confirms that stars, planets, and constellations served as the embodiment of deities (Horowitz, 2011, pp. 3-4, 8-15; Gössmann, 1950, *passim*). The latter point is evinced by the fact that, in the earliest stages of cuneiform writing (circa 3000 BC), the Sumerian cuneiform sign meaning "god"—DINGIR—was depicted by the image of a star (Fig. 5).

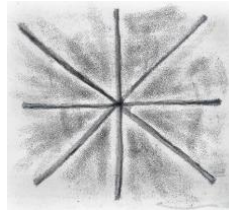


Figure 5. In the earliest stages of cuneiform writing (circa 3000 BC), the cuneiform sign DINGIR/"god," was depicted by a star (sketch by Ashely McCurdy).

And while wordplay is regarded as a form of humor or witticism in our modern era, cuneiform literature indicates that punning functioned as a form of numinous inspiration. S. Noegel offers a succinct summary of this phenomenon:

We tend to think of puns as a literary device—a sign of humor, rhetoric ... In antiquity, puns were not used in that way, because the conception of words was so different. Writing was considered of divine origin... Puns provided diviners with interpretative strategies... (Noegel in Joseph, 2002)

The "diviners" to whom Noegel refers were the *ummānus*—the "scholar-magicians" that included the astrologer. He then postulates the rationale behind this conception:

... Perhaps because the written word evolved from pictographs in Mesopotamia, words were considered the embodiment of the object or idea they represented. While we read the word "dog" and know that refers to a dog, ancient Mesopotamians would view the word "dog" as a dog in a concentrated form. As a result, individual words contained the power of essence, in this case the essence of a dog. *There was a whole envelope of information that came with every sign or part of a word* (Ibid., second italics added).

Noegel substantiates this assertion with cuneiform texts that refer to "hidden words"/*amāt niṣirti* as the "secrets of the gods"/*pirištu ša ilī* (Noegel, 2007, pp. 37-38, n. 128).

Significant here is the manner by which divine names were analyzed for concealed puns that might disclose some previously unknown aspect of a deity. A.R. George writes:

In ancient cuneiform scholarship the writing of a name can be adapted to impart information about the nature and function of its bearer...

... Babylonian scholars themselves were fond of the speculative interpretation of names in particular. *This was not a trivial pursuit but a means of revealing profound truth about the nature and function of deities and their attributes.*

(George, 2003, I, pp. 86-87, italics added)

The available evidence indicates that if a Mesopotamian astrologer discerned a synonym, homonym, homophone, or some other ambiguous meaning within a star-god's name or epithet, he was inclined to construe this concealed connotation as a divine revelation imparted from the gods (Livingstone, 1986, p. 1; Rochberg, 2004, pp. 209-236; Noegel, 2007, pp. 37-38, 70-76). The implication being that a veiled pun within a star-deity's name or epithet could expose an historical fact about the deity in question.

Nowhere is this concept better illustrated than in Babylonian creation myth, *Enuma Elish* tablet VII. There Mesopotamian magician-scholars decoded wordplay from the fifty epithets for the supreme Babylonian deity, Marduk, and then arranged these puns into coherent statements

that exposed facets of his identity and powers (Bottéro, 1977, pp. 5-28; Dalley, 1989, pp. 276-277, n. 47). Because the commentaries on puns given in *Enuma Elish* VII were an essential reference manual to Babylonian astrologers (Lambert, 1976, pp. 313-318; Rochberg, 2004, pp. 209-236), we will analyze one astronomical line to illustrate how this practice was employed.

Line 126 of *Enuma Elish* VII reads:

The god Crossing [is] his star which in the heavens they caused to appear.

(von Soden, 1942, pp. 16-17; Horowitz, 2011, pp. 114-115)

To comprehend this verse we must first know that the deity Marduk was embodied in the planet Jupiter, and that astronomical texts refer to Marduk-Jupiter by the Akkadian epithet, DINGIR *Nēbiru*, "the god Crossing,"—a title applied to this planet-god when he stood on the meridian and was therefore "Crossing" the midpoint of the sky (Hunger & Pingree, 1989, pp. 28-29; Gössmann, 1950, nos. 260, 311). Pun-seeking Babylonian magician-scholars envisioned this Akkadian sobriquet artificially—as if it was a Sumerian logogram, DINGIR NE₂-BI-RU (Bottéro, 1977, p. 20). They then combed through the cuneiform signs in search of wordplay that exposed some previously undiscovered aspect of this planet-god's powers. The ancient author(s) of this line was apparently familiar with the astronomical passage from the star atlas "MUL-APIN" which referred to Jupiter as *Nēbiru*/"Crossing," and described it as "the star of the god Marduk" (Hunger & Pingree, 1989, pp. 28-29). Thus the determinative DINGIR, "god," was equated with the Akkadian *kakkabu*, "star" (Bottéro, 1977, p. 12). DINGIR was also read AN, the logogram that represented *šamē*, "the skies," in Akkadian (Ibid.). Sumerian-Akkadian dictionaries imparted that BI represented the Akkadian word *sū*, "his" (Ibid.; Borger, 2004, p. 320, no. 358). Bottéro notes that by the first millennium BC the vowel in consonant-vowel signs such as RU had become multivalent, thus the RU sign in NE₂-BI-RU was also read RA, a nuance mentioned in the secret commentaries for this line (Bottéro, 1977, pp. 17-18); and RA represented *ša*, "which," and *ina*, "in," in Akkadian (CAD 17/pt.1, p. 1, *ša*, lexical section; CAD 7, pp. 141-142, *ina*, lexical section.). An additional commentary implies that an earlier epithet for Marduk given in line 9, TU-TU, could be read DU₂-DU₂, thereby forging a homophone with the composite logogram DU₆-DU, which meant *šūpū*, "to cause to appear, shine" in Akkadian (Bottéro, 1977, pp. 12, 16-17; CAD 1/pt. 2, p. 202, *apū*, 5); the latter verb was then conjugated into the third-person plural *ušāpū*, "they caused to appear," to suit the grammatical needs of the pun.

Therefore, polysemous readings embedded in the cuneiform signs used to write the epithet DINGIR *Nēbiru* yielded the puns: *kakkabu*/"star," *šu*/"his," *ša*/"which," *ina*/"in," *šamē*/"the skies," and *ušāpū*/"they-caused-to-shine" (Fig. 6). These wordplays were then arranged into a coherent statement that was construed as factual evidence elucidating the relationship between the deity Marduk and his aspect as Jupiter, as well as the historic manner in which this relationship had become manifested in the cosmos. This pun-based wisdom was then reported as factual history as verse 126 of *Enuma Elish* tablet seven:

DINGIR	NE ₂ -BI-RU	<i>kakkab-šu</i>	<i>ša ina</i>	<i>šamē</i>	<i>ušāpū</i>
"The God	Crossing [is]	his-star	which in	the skies	they-caused-to-appear."

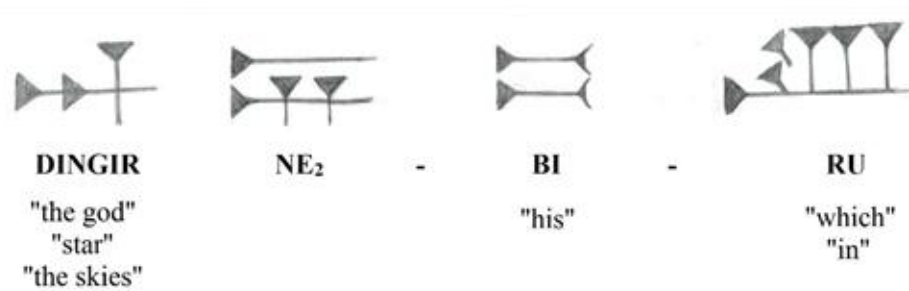


Figure 6. Each word from line 126 *Enuma Elish* tablet VII came from a pun enciphered in the name of the planet-god *Nēbiru*. The verb *uṣāpû*, "they caused to appear," came from wordplay on an epithet given in line 9 (sketch by Ashely McCurdy).

Noteworthy is that Babylonian astrologers utilized these wordplays as if they were unassailable truth which elucidated the relationship between Jupiter at culmination and the god Marduk, as well as the historic manner in which the deity Marduk came to be embodied in Jupiter. Furthermore, it cannot be overstated that the techniques used to produce line 126 (Fig. 6) were employed for each of the one-hundred-sixty-two verses from *Enuma Elish* tablet VII (Bottéro, 1977, pp. 5-28; Dalley, 1989, pp. 276-277, n. 47); and that this methodology and its accompanying terse commentaries functioned as a vade mecum for Babylonian astrologers (Lambert, 1976, pp. 313-318; Rochberg, 2004, pp. 209-236).

Another point crucial to our argument is that Mesopotamian astrologer-magicians sometimes served as historians. Unequivocal evidence for this is found in Berossus, a Babylonian astrologer who wrote the *Babyloniaca*, a history of Babylonia penned in the Greek language for a Greek audience in 281 BC (Burstein, 1978). Berossus' "history" of Babylonia includes vast amounts of religious mythology (Ibid., passim), thus, the Babylonian astrologer Berossus had authored a work of "history" that comprised the same genre of literature recorded by the Gospel writers, i.e., the category we today label "religious mythology."

We argue that the aforementioned data permits for the following deductions:

1. The Greek-speaking Matthew, Mark, and John were cognizant of the Hellenic precept which accepted the constellations as historic terrestrial events depicted in the constellations, and that this knowledge included the tableau of Orion "walking" upon the stellar Sea as shown in Fig. 3.
2. The three evangelists were familiar with Babylonian astrologers' conception of the constellations as divine, cuneiform "writing" that imparted factual wisdom through polysemy encrypted in each star-god's title or epithet.

We will now demonstrate that when the two, aforementioned systems of "truth verification" are employed as a cipher, it becomes possible to demonstrate a direct correlation between Orion's stellar Sea-Walking tableau (Fig. 3) and the common thematic elements in Christ's Sea-Walk miracle as well as the latter's staggering inconsistencies.

Orion: the "Son-of-God" and "Anointed-One" who "Walks upon the Sea"

In summarizing the current consensus of New Testament scholars, the *Oxford Annotated Bible* writes:

Neither the evangelists nor their first readers engaged in historical analysis. Their aim was to confirm Christian faith. Scholars generally agree that the

Gospels were written forty to sixty years after the death of Jesus. *They thus do not present eyewitness or contemporary accounts of Jesus' life and teachings.*

(Coogan, 2010, p. 1744; italics added)

The latter, italicized concept is substantiated by John 20:30-31 (brackets inserted):

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Anointed-One [*Christos*], the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

Hence, the anonymous author of the Gospel of John includes Jesus' Sea-Walk miracle as one of the "signs" that were reported so that early Christians would come to accept Jesus as the "Anointed-One" (i.e., *Christos*) and "Son of God" (i.e., *ho huios tou theou*; *huios theou*; Danker, 2000, 1025-1026; Freedman, 1992, I, pp. 914-921; 1992, IV, pp. 784-785; Kittel & Friedrich, 1972, VIII, pp. 334-397; 1964, IX, pp. 527-580).

Yet John 20:30-31 leaves an intriguing clue regarding the nature of Jesus' miracles, referring to them as *sēmeia*, "signs," the plural form of *sēmeion*. And although the Greek *sēmeion* indeed meant "sign, mark, omen"—it also had a more nuanced meaning: "a sign from the gods, an omen, especially of the constellations regarded as signs" (Liddell & Scott, 1997, p. 727).

The latter accords with the belief that, at the time the evangelists were writing, they believed that Jesus had ascended into *ouranos*/"heaven" (Luke 24:50-53; Mark 16:19; John 3:13, 6:62, 20:17; Acts 1:1-11; Freedman, 1992, I, pp. 472-474), a word that simultaneously referred to the "firmament, sky," i.e., the realm where one finds the constellations. It therefore seems logical to presume that the Gospels' authors had sought clues about Jesus' life in *ouranos*/"sky, heaven," — the abode of Jesus at the time of their writing.

Although cuneiform literature frequently equates Orion with DINGIR DUMUZI, the "Faithful-Son-deity," cuneiform texts confirm that Orion also went by the title DINGIR DAMU, "Son-god" (Livingstone, 1986, pp. 136-138). Furthermore, the cuneiform signs DINGIR, DA, and MU also functioned as logograms that represented the Akkadian *ša*, "of" (*CAD* 17/pt.1, p. 1, *ša*, lexical section). Thus, the words "Son, Of, God" were encrypted in the name DINGIR DAMU; which provides the cuneiform correlate to the evangelists' Greek epithet for Jesus, i.e., "Son of God" (Fig. 7).

Mesopotamian astronomical and ritual texts confirm that Orion embodied the god PAP-SUKAL, a name that can be accurately translated as "Foremost-Messenger," i.e., PAP = *ašaridu*/"foremost"; SUKAL = *sukkallu*/"vizier, messenger" (*CAD* 1/pt.2, p. 416, *ašaridu*, lexical section; *CAD* 15, p. 354, *sukkallu*; Halloran, 2006, pp. 214, 240). The 686 BC cuneiform star atlas "MUL-APIN" reads:

DIŠ MUL SIPA-ZI-AN-NA DINGIR PAP-SUKAL SUKAL DINGIR *Anim* u
INNIN

"The constellation Faithful-Shepherd-of-the-Heavens [is] the god PAPSUKAL,
the messenger of the god(s) *Anu* and *Ištar*."

(Hunger & Pingree, 1989, p. 31, brackets, parentheses inserted)

Here we find Orion listed under its common astronomical title, SIPAZIANNA/"Faithful-Shepherd-of-the-Heavens," a constellation that is defined as the embodiment of the god PAPSUKAL, who is in turn given the designation SUKAL/"Messenger" of the Sky-god, *Anu*,

and Ištar, the goddess embodied in Venus. This claim is also found on an astronomical-agricultural hemerology, which likewise defines Orion/SIPAZIANNA as the embodiment of PAPSUKAL, and whose role was to serve as the SUKAL/"Messenger" of the gods *Anu* and Ištar (Livingstone, 1986, p. 138). Thus, astronomical texts unequivocally label Orion as the embodiment of a deity whose title, PAPSUKAL/"Foremost-Messenger," embodies the logogram SUKAL within it; and astronomical tablets further define his role as a SUKAL, "Messenger, Vizier."



Figure 7. Cuneiform tablets confirm that Orion embodied the "Son-deity," DINGIR DAMU. Polysemy in this constellation-god's cuneiform title yields the words, "Son of God," one of the evangelists' most prolific epithets for Jesus (sketch by Ashley McCurdy).

In Fig. 4 we saw that a single Sumerian logogram was often assigned multiple Akkadian meanings. Case in point with SUKAL, which could also represent the logogram *Pašīšu*, a type of priest whose name literally meant, "Anointed-One" (CAD 12, p. 253, *pašīšu*; Civil, 1979, p. 358). The meaning of *Pašīšu* corresponds precisely with the Greek *Christos*, "Anointed-One," the epithet for Jesus (Freedman, 1992, I, pp. 914-923).

The highest ranking Mesopotamian *Pašīšu*/"Anointed-One" priests went by the Akkadian title *Gudapsû*, literally, "Anointed-One-of-the-*Apsû*." Recall that the *Apsû* (Sumerian ABZU) referred to the celestial Sea inhabited by the Mesopotamian Water-god, *Ea*, whom astronomical texts confirm as Aquarius (Hunger & Pingree, 1989, pp. 36-37; Kramer & Maier, 1989, *passim*; Speiser, 1964, p. 75). Hence, wordplay enciphered in one of Orion's cuneiform titles informed that he was associated with the *Apsû*, the astral Sea that Orion is treading upon whenever he appears in the sky. Additionally, Orion's identification as a *Gudapsû*-priest presumes some kind of ability to subdue or control this stellar Sea.

Hence, when the anonymous authors of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John sought to compile a record proving that Jesus was the *Christos*/"Anointed-One," they had no eyewitness testimony to draw from. However, the three evangelists did believe that Jesus had ascended into *ouranos*/"heaven,"—the place where one finds the constellations. Moreover, by referring to

Jesus' Sea-Walk miracle as a *sēmeion*/"constellation-sign," John 20:30-31 intimates that the constellations may have played a role in this scientifically impossible feat.

Because these three Gospel authors had been edified in Hellenic scholarship, they were surely aware that Greek intellectuals conceptualized the constellations as a pictographic record of preternatural events that had occurred on earth. And in Orion they found a deified Man in the act of taking his first step onto the celestial Sea formed by the eight, adjacent, aquatic constellations (Fig. 8). Moreover, one of the astronomical epithets for Orion, SUKAL, "Vizier, Messenger," also represented a revered type of priest whose title meant "Anointed-One,"—the cuneiform equivalent to the Greek *Christos*. The highest order of such priests assumed the designation, "Anointed-One-of-the-*Apsû*," implying they held sway over the *Apsû*, i.e., the stellar Sea that Orion was walking upon in Greek celestial mythology. In an era when celestial punning was construed as religious revelation, it seems likely that Matthew, Mark, and John would have conceptualized this as an epiphany imparting that Orion was the avatar of Jesus, and that this Greek constellation-deity's miraculous ability to "walk upon the sea" was a feat that should be ascribed to Jesus as well.

Therefore, we argue that the three evangelists initially attributed Orion's astronomical ability to "walk upon the sea" to Jesus because polysemy encoded in this constellation's title as DINGIR DAMU/"Son-god" also conveyed the meaning "Son of God"—the identity of Jesus in the minds of the evangelists (Fig. 7); while an alternate cuneiform epithet for Orion, SUKAL/"Anointed-One," interjected the same meaning as the Greek *Christos*, the evangelists' sobriquet for Jesus.

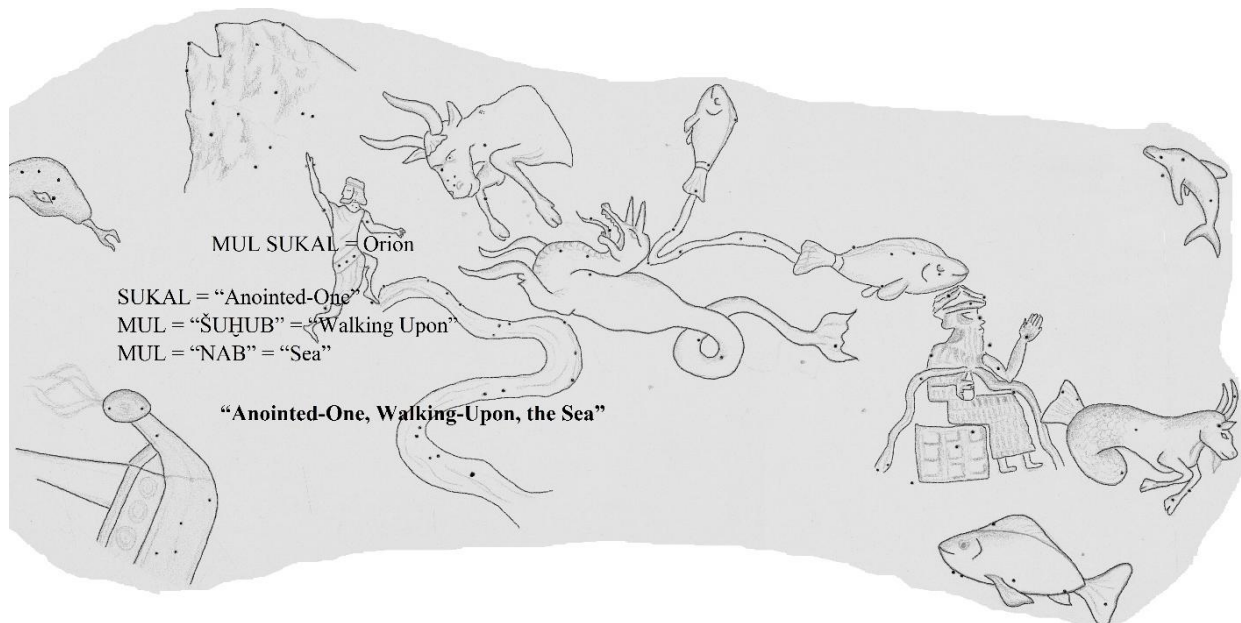


Figure 8. Orion's cuneiform epithet, MUL SUKAL, imparted SUKAL/"Anointed-One," ŠUHUB/"Walking-Upon," and NAB/"the Sea" (sketch by Ashely McCurdy).

The image of Orion-Jesus "walking upon" the astral Sea may have been reinforced through additional puns embedded in its cuneiform title. Because Orion was a constellation, the celestial determinative was affixed to the front of his title; the standard form being MUL, "star, constellation." (Borger, 2004, p. 302, no. 247). Interestingly, MUL was also read ŠUHUB₂ (Borger, 2004, p. 302, no. 247; *ePSD*: mul), the phonetic equivalent to the Sumerian ŠUHUB, which represented *kabāsu* in Akkadian: "purposely stepping upon something, striding, walking upon" (*CAD* 8, pp. 5-6, *kabāsu*, lexical section). MUL was also read NAB₂ (Borger, 2004, p.

506; Halloran 2016, personal communication), which phonated NAB, a Sumerian term for "Sea" (CAD 18, p. 150, *tâmtu*, lexical section; Halloran, 2006, p. 186). Thus, polysemy enciphered in the cuneiform descriptions of Orion, MUL SUKAL, also embodied the meanings: "the Anointed-One, Walking-Upon, the Sea" (Fig. 8); which defines the feat Orion-Jesus appears to be pictorially portraying in the heavens.

We will now see that the celestial landscape surrounding the Sea-Walker constellation, Orion, corresponds with the landscape of Jesus' Sea-Walk miracle.

The Celestial Setting of Jesus' "Sea-Walk" Miracle

The evangelists provide a consistent, nondescript setting for the Sea-Walk miracle. All versions state that Jesus went up on an *oros*, "mountain" (Matthew 14:23; Mark 6:46; John 6:15). In each account the disciples then head across the lake in a "boat" (*plōion*) at nightfall without Jesus. During the voyage the disciples' boat encounters a rough sea due to a "contrary" (Matthew 14:24, Mark 6:48) or "great" (John 6:18) wind which tacitly threatens to sink their ship. Jesus is then seen walking on surface of the water towards the disciples' boat. Hence, the story elements consist of a "mountain," a "boat," and a "sea-walking man." Each of these can be traced to a recurring tableau in the constellations.

We have repeatedly seen that the Sea-Walker is Orion, a constellation that was probably equated with Jesus because polysemous readings in two of his cuneiform titles rendered "Son of God" and "Anointed-One," – the cuneiform equivalent to two essential, Christian sobriquets for Jesus (Figs. 7, 8). Jesus-Orion is portrayed taking his first step onto the celestial "Sea" delineated by the eight aquatic constellations. Immediately northeast of Orion stood Gemini, called *Māšu*, or "Twins," in cuneiform (Gössmann, 1950, no. 265). These "Twins" were often conceptualized as a "Twin Mountain" in Mesopotamian star lore, evinced by the fact that Gilgamesh climbed them in tablet IX of *The Gilgamesh Epic* (George, 2003, I, pp. 492-493, 668-671). The astronomical identity of Gemini as the "Twin Mountain" constellation is underscored by the fact that passing them placed Gilgamesh on the "path of the Sun-god," KASKAL DINGIR UTU, which is also the term for the ecliptic, i.e., the path the sun traces through the zodiacal constellations that included Gemini (Ibid.; Reiner & Pingree, 1981, pp. 17-18, 42-43).

The prop in Jesus' sea-walk is the disciples' boat, which correlates with Argo, the Ship constellation stationed just southeast of Orion-Jesus. How the Argo may have come to be envisioned as the Boat full of "disciples" is found encrypted as wordplay in its Mesopotamian title.

The Argo appears to be the derivative of a Mesopotamian "Cargo Ship" or "Barge" written *Makurru* in Akkadian (McHugh, 2016, pp. 90-94; Hunger & Pingree, 1989, p. 39; CAD 10/pt.1, p. 141; Gössmann, 1950, no. 254; Salonen, 1939, pp. 12-19; *ePSD*: magur). Cuneiform astronomical texts confirm that this stellar Ship was a deity positioned in the "path of the god *Ea*," – which is the southern region of the night sky (Hunger & Pingree, 1989, pp. 35-39). Mythical texts also confirm its presence in the *Apsû*, or celestial "Sea" that Jesus-Orion is walking upon (Kramer & Maier, 1989, pp. 42-43). And in the popular Sumerian myth, *Gilgamesh and Agga*, the *Makurru* gets its prow chopped off (Kramer & Jacobsen, 1949, pp. 9, 12; Pritchard, 1969, pp. 47, 46 n. 20). Hence, in cuneiform literature the Mesopotamian *Makurru* is a divine Ship constellation stationed in the southern reaches of the night sky and has its bow torn off in a popular religious myth. It is hard to imagine a better correlation than the one between the *Makurru* and the Greek Argo, as the latter is also a defied Ship positioned in the

southern region of the night sky and is devoid of a prow (McHugh, 2016, pp. 90-94; Allen, 1963: 65; Aratus 1997: 311, 313; Condos 1997: 39-42; Toomer, 1998, p. 390, n. 111) (Fig. 9).

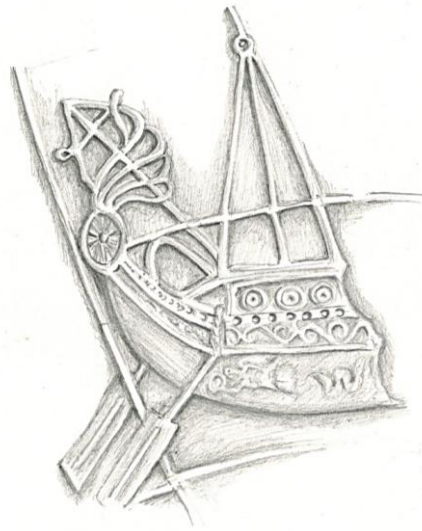


Figure 9. The bow-less Argo appears to have been derived from the Mesopotamian *Makurru* constellation. Note that west is left and east is right (Sketch of Argo on the second century Farnese star atlas by Ashley McCurdy).

If we can accept that the Mesopotamian *Makurru* was indeed adopted into the Hellenic sky as Argo, then puns encrypted in the *Makurru*-Argo's ancient Sumerian spelling implicate how the evangelists might have come to conceptualize it as the "Disciples' Boat." Matthew 14:22, Mark 6:45, John 6:16-17 verify that Jesus' disciples were aboard the boat during his Sea-Walk miracle. The English word "disciple" comes from the Greek *mathētēs*, "pupil, apprentice," or more literally, "one who engages in learning through instruction from another" (Danker, 2000, pp. 609-610).

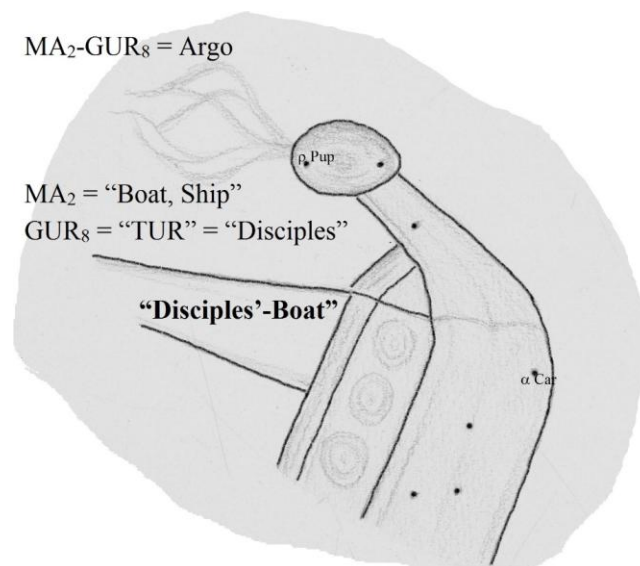


Figure 10. The cuneiform term for Argo, MA₂-GUR₈, phonates "MA₂-TUR," "Boat-(of-the)-Disciples" (sketch by Ashley McCurdy).

Its cuneiform correlate was embodied as a pun in the Sumerian cuneiform spelling for Argo: MA₂-GUR₈. The MA₂ portion of this title is the Sumerian word for "Boat" (Borger 2004, p. 295, no. 201); while the cuneiform sign GUR₈ was also read TUR₅ (Ibid. p. 62, no. 86), which forges

a homophone with TUR, the Sumerian term for a "scholarly apprentice," i.e., a "beginner" learning a specific craft, skill, or trade (Sollberger, 1966, pp. 112-113; CAD 16, p. 182, *ṣiḥru*).

TUR, therefore, imparts the equivalent to the Greek *mathētēs*/"disciple." Hence the cuneiform term for Argo can be read MA₂-TUR₅, which phonates MA₂-TUR, "Disciple-Boat." And since singular Sumerian nouns could assume the plural form (Edzard, 2003, pp. 31, 33), MA₂-TUR could yield, "Boat-(of-the)-Disciples," or "Disciples' Boat." We contend that this astral pun revealed the identity of the Argo to the three evangelists, apprising them that this stellar Ship represented the "Disciples' Boat" in the astral tableau of Jesus's sea-walk (Fig. 10).

Thus, Jesus' Sea-Walk miracle involves Jesus coming down from a mountain to walk on the sea near the apostles' ship. The exact correlate to this scene is found in a tableau formed by Orion, Gemini, and Argo. In it Jesus-Orion appears to be stepping away from the Mountain-Gemini to walk upon the stellar Sea in proximity to the Boat-Argo. This is shown in Fig. 11.

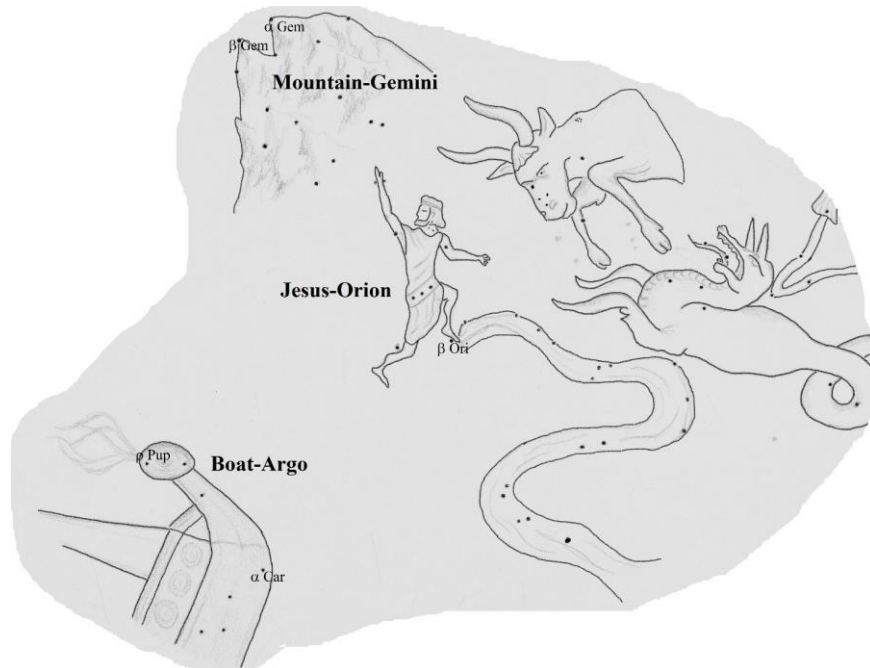


Figure 11. Jesus, in the guise of Orion, appears to be walking away from the Mountain-Gemini and taking his first step upon the astral Sea near the Boat-Argo (sketch by Ashley McCurdy).

We will now see that some common themes from Jesus' "Sea-Walk" narrative correspond with celestial puns positioned near Jesus-Orion.

Sea-Walk Themes Common to Matthew, Mark, and John

"went up, alone, on a mountain, to pray"

All evangelists use Greek terms indicating that Jesus "went up" (*anebē*) or "went away, departed" (*apēlthen*, *anechōrēsen*) to the mountain, and that he was *monos*, "alone" (Matthew 14:23; Mark 6:46; John 6:15). Matthew and Mark's Gospels specify the purpose for his retreat: "to pray" (*proseuxasthai*).

Positioned immediately northwest of Jesus-Orion was Taurus. One of the titles for the zodiacal Bull was *Elû* (CAD 1/pt.1: 377 *alû* B), a homonym with the verb that meant "to go up, to go away, to go into hiding,"—meanings that accord with Jesus' behavior in the "Sea-Walk" vignette (CAD 4, p. 114, *elû*). Moreover, the logogram for Taurus, GUD (Gössmann 1950, no. 75), phonetically imparted GUD₆, the logogram that meant *karābu* in Akkadian, "to pray" (CAD

8, pp. 192-193, *karābu*, lexical section). Just east of Jesus-Orion stood the "Horned-Serpent" constellation, Hydra, whose Sumerian name UŠUM, also served as the logogram for Akkadian *ēdiššu*, "alone" (CAD 2, p. 141 *bašmu*, lexical section; CAD 4, p. 33 *ēdiššu*, lexical section; *ePSD*: ušum). These astral puns correlate with Jesus' behavior leading up to his Sea-Walk: he "Went Up, Went Away" to the "Mountain" (Gemini), "Alone," "To Pray" (Fig. 12).

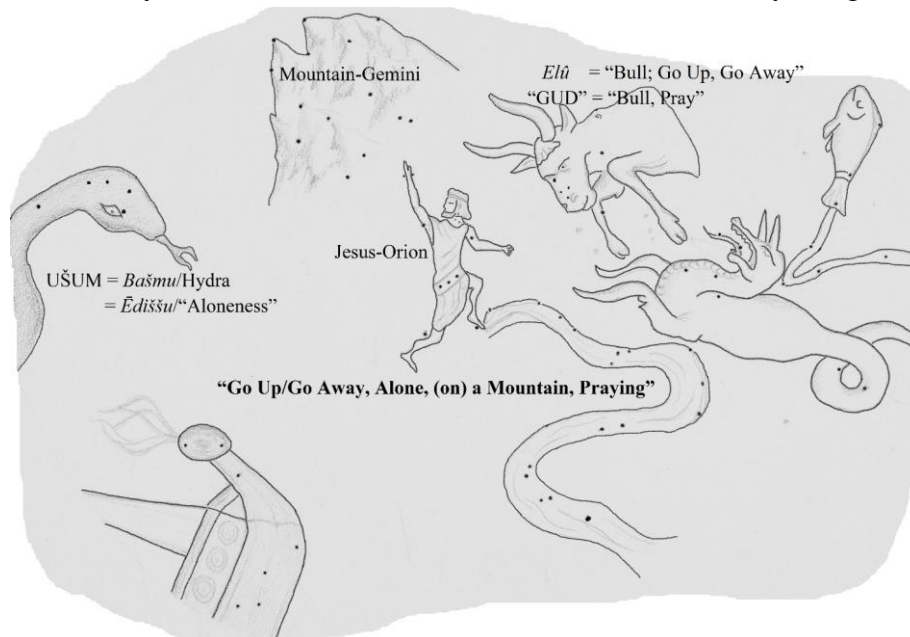


Figure 12. Celestial wordplays surrounding Jesus-Orion embodied the words "To Go Up, Aloneness, Mountain," and "to Pray." These terms correspond with Jesus' actions prior to the Sea-Walk miracle, i.e., he "went up alone on a mountain to pray" (sketch by Ashley McCurdy).

the "contrary" or "great wind"

Matthew, Mark, and John insist that the boat was floundering in rough seas due to the wind. Matthew 14:24 states, "For the wind was contrary," (*ēn gar enantios ho anemos*), i.e., the wind was blowing "against" the disciples' boat. Mark 6:48 writes similarly, "for the wind was against them," (*ēn gar ho anemos enantios autois*). While John 6:18 modifies his account to say that a "great wind" (*anemou megalou*) had churned up the sea. All of these descriptions correspond with puns in Argo, the star-figure that depicted the "Disciples'-Boat."

Argo's Sumerian cuneiform logogram was MA₂-GUR₈ (Hunger & Pingree, 1989, p. 39; CAD 10/pt.1, p. 141; Gössmann, 1950, no. 254; Salonen, 1939, pp. 12-19). By the first millennium BC, the signs GUR₈ and TU were written identically (Borger, 2004, p. 263, nos. 86, 88). TU could also be read ḪU₂ (*ePSD*: tu). Hence the Sumerian cuneiform spelling for Argo (MA₂-GUR₈) embodied the readings "TU" and "ḪU." The former yielded the phonetic equivalent to the logogram TU₁₅, "wind" (CAD 17/pt.2, p. 133 *šāru* A, lexical section; Bottéro, 1977, p. 7). While "ḪU" was an alternate reading for the logogram RI (Borger, 2004, p. 282, no. 142), which stood for *maḥāru*, "to face, confront," with one conjugation of this verb yielding *mithuru*, "opposing, moving against" (CAD 10/pt.1, 50-51). Meaning that the words "Opposing, Wind" were phonetically encoded in the Sumerian cuneiform spelling for Argo. Furthermore, GUR₈ forged a homophone with the Sumerian word GUR₄, "great" (Halloran, 2006, p. 93; CAD 14: 26-27 *rabû* 5), which corresponds with John's assertion that the rough seas were caused by a "great wind." Therefore, puns enciphered in the common cuneiform term for Argo yielded "Opposing,

Great, Wind," which correlate directly with the reasons the Gospel authors gave for the boat's perilous circumstance (Fig. 13).

"the fourth watch of the night"

Matthew 14:25 and Mark 6:48 give the time the miracle occurred, "the fourth watch of the night" (*tetartēn phulakēn tēs nuktos*). This fact also corresponds to puns enciphered in the stellar tableau of Jesus' sea-walk. In Hellenic thought the night was divided into four three-hour watches, the "fourth watch" therefore correlating with 3-6 AM (Albright & Mann, 1964, p. 181; Marcus, 1964, p. 423).



Figure 13. Puns in the cuneiform monikers for Taurus and Argo held the terms "Fourth Watch," "Opposing Wind," and "Great Wind." These terms reappear in Jesus' "Sea-Walk" narrative (sketch by Ashley McCurdy).

Astronomical evidence suggests that Greek astronomers adopted Taurus from Mesopotamia unaltered, thus the Greek and modern Taurus approximates its original Mesopotamian appearance. The logogram for Taurus, GU₄, "Bull," was also the logogram that represented the word *rabû*, "great, immense" (CAD 1/pt. 1: 364-365, *alpu*, lexical section; *ibid.* 14: 27, *rabû*, lexical section), which formed a homonym with a variant spelling for "fourth," *rabû* (CAD 14, p. 222, *rebû*).

The Akkadian word for the Bull's bright "Eye" star—Aldebaran—was written *Īnu* or *Ēnu*, the latter forging a homophone with the Sumerian EN-NU, "watch (of the night)" (CAD 10/pt.1, p. 333 *maššartu*; Halloran, 2006, p. 62). Hence, positioned in front of Orion was Taurus, whose title had the words "Fourth, Night-Watch" encrypted within it in the form of puns. This correlates with the time of the Sea-Walk miracle given by Matthew and Mark (Fig. 13).

"troubled" or "frightened" at the sight of a "ghost"

Upon seeing Jesus walking upon the surface of the sea, the apostles became "troubled" (*etarachthēsan*) according to Matthew 14:26 and Mark 6:50, with John 6:19 going so far as to say there were "frightened" (*ephobēthēsan*). Although John never mentions the reason for their

alarm, Matthew 14:26 and Mark 6:49 report that they had mistaken the Sea-Walking apparition for a "ghost" (*phantasma*). All of this correlates with astronomical puns encoded immediately northwest of Orion.

Stationed directly before Jesus-Orion was Taurus, a constellation whose cuneiform logogram, GUD/GU₄, stood for the Akkadian words *alpu*, "bull," and *eṭemmu*, "ghost" (CAD 1/pt.1, p. 364, *alpu*; CAD 4, p. 397, *eṭemmu*). Hence the word "Ghost" was positioned immediately before Jesus in the Sea-Walk tableau (Fig. 14). Above we saw that wordplay in Argo's cuneiform title, MA₂-GUR₈, embodied the reading "Disciples' Boat." GUR₈ also forged a homophone with GUR₁₅, the logogram more commonly read UR₄, "to fear, become agitated, panic-stricken" (CAD 1/pt.2, p. 236, *arāru* B; Halloran, 2006, p. 301). Thus, embedded in the cuneiform title for Argo was the verb "Fear, Become-Agitated"/UR₄, terms that correlate with the Apostles' response to seeing Jesus walking upon the sea in Matthew 14:26, Mark 6:49-50, and John 6:19 (Fig. 14).

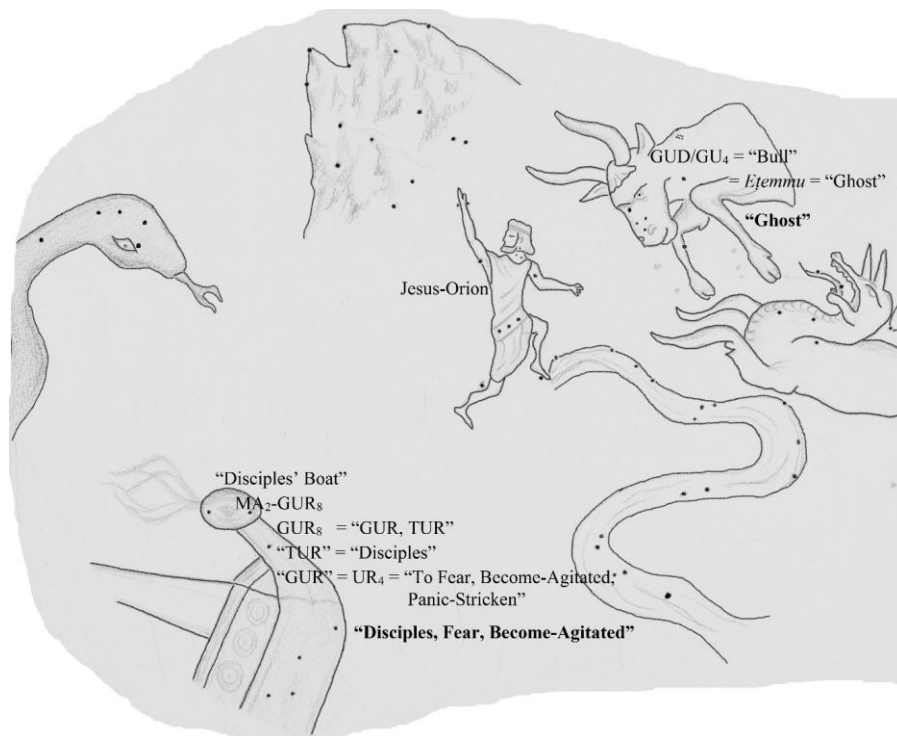


Figure 14. Puns encrypted in Orion and Taurus' cuneiform titles held the words "To Fear, Become-Troubled" and "Ghost," themes that reappear in Jesus' Sea-Walk miracle (sketch by Ashely McCurdy).

"He said, 'Have courage, I am. Do not be afraid'"

In "Sea-Walk" narratives of Matthew (14:27), Mark (6:50), and John (6:20), Jesus quelled the disciples' mistaken fear that he was a ghost when he "spoke"/*elalēsen* the following words:

Tharseite egō eimi; mē phobeisthe
 "Have courage, I am; do not be afraid."¹

These words can be found enciphered immediately northwest of the Sea-Walker constellation, Jesus-Orion.

We just saw that Taurus is positioned immediately northwest of Orion. Cuneiform astronomical-astrological tablets typically describe the Hyades asterism as the Bull's *Isu*,

¹ John 6:20 omits "have-courage"/*tharseite*.

"Jawbone" (*CAD* 7, p. 204, *isu*, lexical section). And the Sumerian-Akkadian dictionaries verify that ISSI was sometimes used as the logogram for "Jawbone" (*Ibid.*). Moreover, the Sumerian ISSI forges a direct homonym with the Akkadian G-stem preterit: *Issi*, "He-Said, He-Declared, He-Spoke" (Ungnad, 1993, pp. 25, 81; *CAD* 17/pt.2, 147, *šasû*).

One of the Akkadian names for Taurus was *Lû*, "Bull" (*CAD* 9, p. 227, *lû* A). Ancient Sumerian-Akkadian lexicons confirm that *Lû* was pronounced exactly like *LU*₂, the logogram that represented *ša*, "of" (*CAD* 17/pt.1, p. 1, *ša*, lexical section). Thus *Lû*/"Bull" embodied the meaning *ša*. And *ša* imparted the exact pronunciation for *ŠA*₃, "courage" (*CAD* 9, p. 164-165, *libbu*, 3, lexical section). In this way *Lû* embodied the word "courage."

Moreover, a possible way to write Taurus in cuneiform was *MUL*₂ *Lû*, "constellation Bull," which phonates *MUL*₂ *LU*₂. We just saw that *LU*₂ meant *ša*—with Sumerian-Akkadian dictionaries affirming that the *a* vowel was long and could therefore be normalized as *šâ* (*CAD* 17/pt.1, p. 1, *ša*, lexical section). Moreover, *MUL*₂ can be read *TI*₇ (*ePSD*: *mul*₂), meaning that polysemy encrypted in *MUL*₂ *Lû* could render *TI*₇-*šâ* or *tīšâ*, which is the second-person, plural form of "have" (Huehnergard, 1997, p. 282), i.e., the Akkadian equivalent to the Greek *Tharseite*/"Have." Hence the words "Have, Courage" were encoded as wordplay in the cuneiform names for Taurus (Fig. 15).

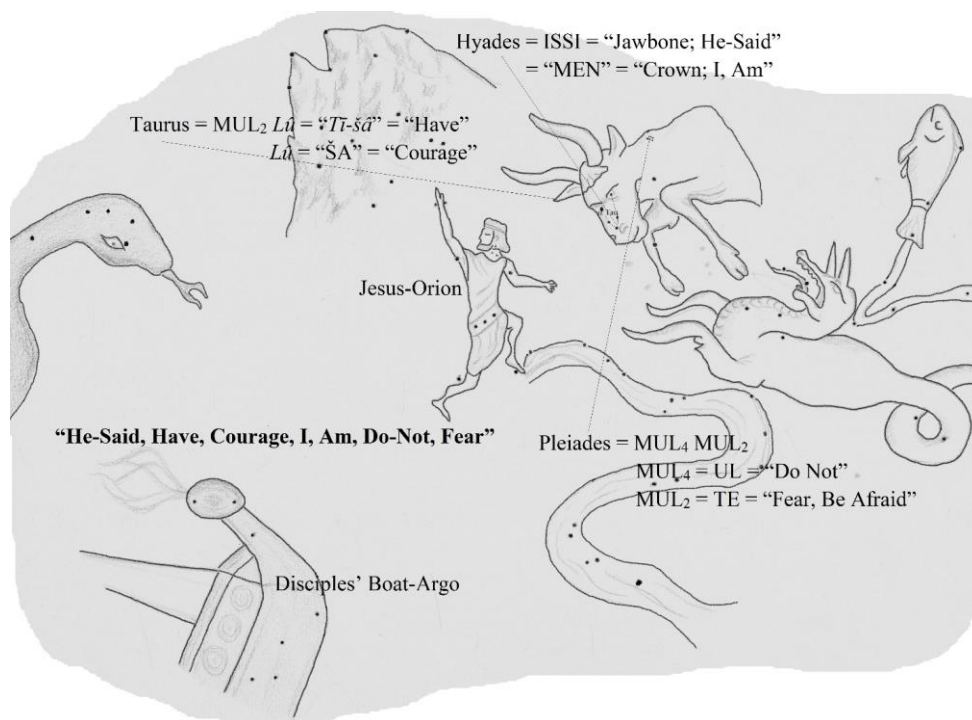


Figure 15. Jesus quells his Disciples fears when "He said, 'Have courage, I am; do not be afraid.'" These words were encrypted as puns in the cuneiform terms for Taurus and its asterisms (sketch by Ashley McCurdy).

Astronomical-astrological tablets confirm that the Hyades asterism also went by the name *Agû*, "Crown" (Hunger & Pingree, 1989, p. 30; Gössmann, 1950, no. 25). The Sumerian-Akkadian dictionaries verify that the Akkadian *Agû* was represented by the Sumerian logograms *MEN* and *MEN*₅ (*CAD* 1/pt.1, p. 153, *agû* A, lexical section). Both phonate *MEN*₂ and *MEN*₃, the Sumerian logograms for "I" (Halloran, 2006, p. 174; *CAD* 1/pt.2, p. 106, *anāku*, lexical section). Thus, "I"/*MEN*_{2,3} was phonetically embedded in the Hyades asterism. Yet the Hyades asterism's title as a *MEN* or *MEN*₅, "Crown," also phonates the Sumerian copula form of the verb "to be," i.e., *MEN*, "am" (Edzard, 2003, p. 82; Halloran, 2006, p. 172). Therefore,

wordplay enciphered immediately northwest of Orion possessed the cuneiform terms, "He-Said, I, Am"; which correlate with Jesus' utterance in the "Sea-Walk" stories.

Moreover, a common logographic spelling for the Pleiades was MUL₂ (Gössmann, 1950, no. 279). MUL₂'s alternate reading, TE, meant "to fear, be afraid" (CAD 12, p. 37, *palāhu*, lexical section). And since the Pleiades (MUL₂/TE) was a celestial body it had the celestial determinative affixed to its title; one form being MUL₄, a logogram that went by the sign name UL (Gössmann, 1950, no. 148). And the Sumerian UL formed a homonym with the Akkadian *ul*, "not, do not" (CAD 20, p. 65, *ul*).

Altogether, polysemy embedded in the cuneiform titles for Taurus and its asterisms yielded the puns: "He-Said, Have, Courage, I, Am, Do-Not, Be-Afraid." These words correspond with Jesus' utterance during his Sea-Walk.

"the wind ceased" when Jesus boarded the boat

Matthew and Mark give similar accounts of the Sea-Walk's conclusion:

And as-they-were-going-up into the boat ceased the wind (Matthew 14:32).

And he-went-up to them in the boat and died-down the wind (Mark 6:51).

The operant terms in these verses are variant conjugations of the verbs *anabainō*/"to-go-up" and *ekopasen*/"ceased, died-down," and the noun *anemos*/"wind." All three can be traced to puns enciphered in the cuneiform terms for Orion and Argo.

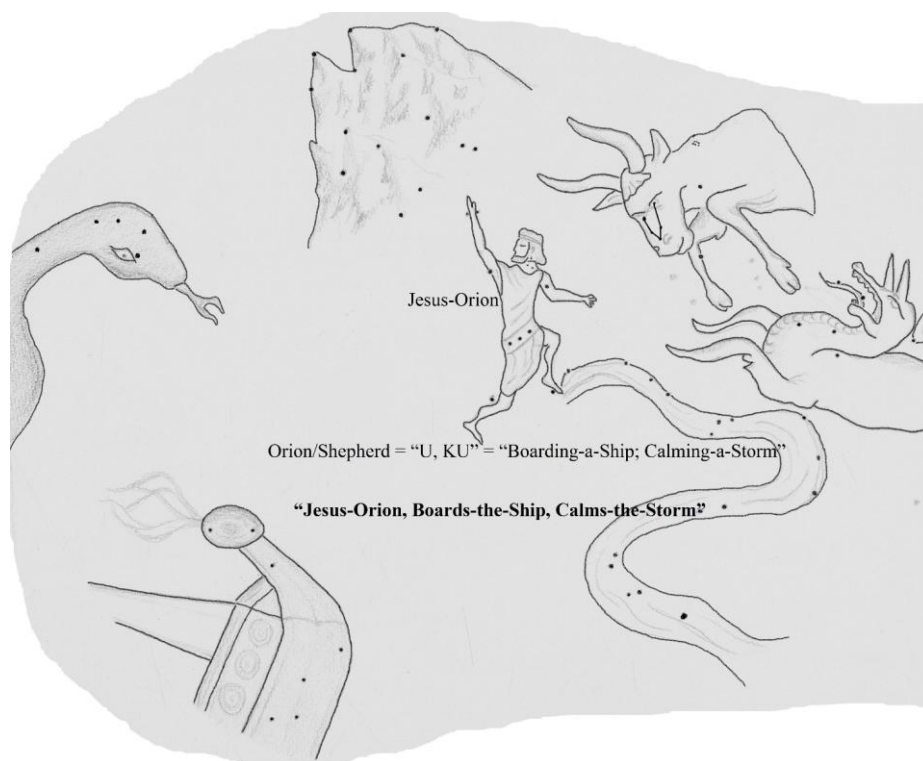


Figure 16. The terms "Boarding-a-Ship" and "Abating/Calming-a-Storm" were encrypted as polysemous readings for Orion's Mesopotamian identity as a "Shepherd"/*Rē'û* (sketch by Ashely McCurdy).

We will now see that celestial puns embedded in Orion and nearby constellation resolve the heretofore irreconcilable discrepancies in Jesus' Sea-Walk.

We saw above that the GUR₈ sign in the Sumerian cuneiform title for Argo (MA₂-GUR₈) was also read TU, which phonetically interjected TU₁₅, "wind."

The notion of "boarding a ship" was enciphered in Orion's title. We have seen that the common Mesopotamian term for Orion was SIPA/"Shepherd," a logogram that represented *Rē'û*/"Shepherd" in Akkadian (Borger, 2004, p. 335, no. 468). The Sumerian-Akkadian dictionaries confirm that "Shepherd"/*Rē'û* was represented by many logograms including U₅ and KU (CAD 14, p. 303, *Rē'û*, lexical section). U₅ also represented the Akkadian verb *raḳābu*, "to board a ship" (von Soden 1981, II, 944, *raḳābu*, lexical section). And by the first millennium BC the cuneiform signs KU and HUN were inscribed identically (Borger, 2004, pp. 425-426, nos. 808, 810); thus KU was also read HUN, a logogram for *nāḫu*, "to calm a storm, waves; to abate" (CAD 11/pt.1, pp. 143, *nāḫu* A, lexical section).

Hence, polysemous readings embedded in Orion's cuneiform title represented "Boarding-a-Ship" and "Abating/Calming-a-Storm"; puns that directly correlate with the manner in which the wind "ceased" as Jesus boarded the apostles' ship (Fig. 16).

Celestial Puns that Correspond with the Discrepancies in Jesus' Sea-Walking Miracle

Jesus "wanted to pass by" the Disciples' Boat

Christian theologians concede that one of the most baffling aspects of the Sea-Walk miracle is Mark's 6:48 claim that Jesus "wanted to go by them" (*ēthelen parelthein autous*). J. Marcus writes, "... Jesus' desire to pass his disciples on the sea is puzzling ... if Jesus' sea walk is motivated by his concerns for his disciples, as implied by 6:48 ... why does he attempt to pass them in 6:48?" (Marcus, 1964, p. 426). Two astronomical aspects of Orion-Jesus elucidate why this inconsistency may have been included.

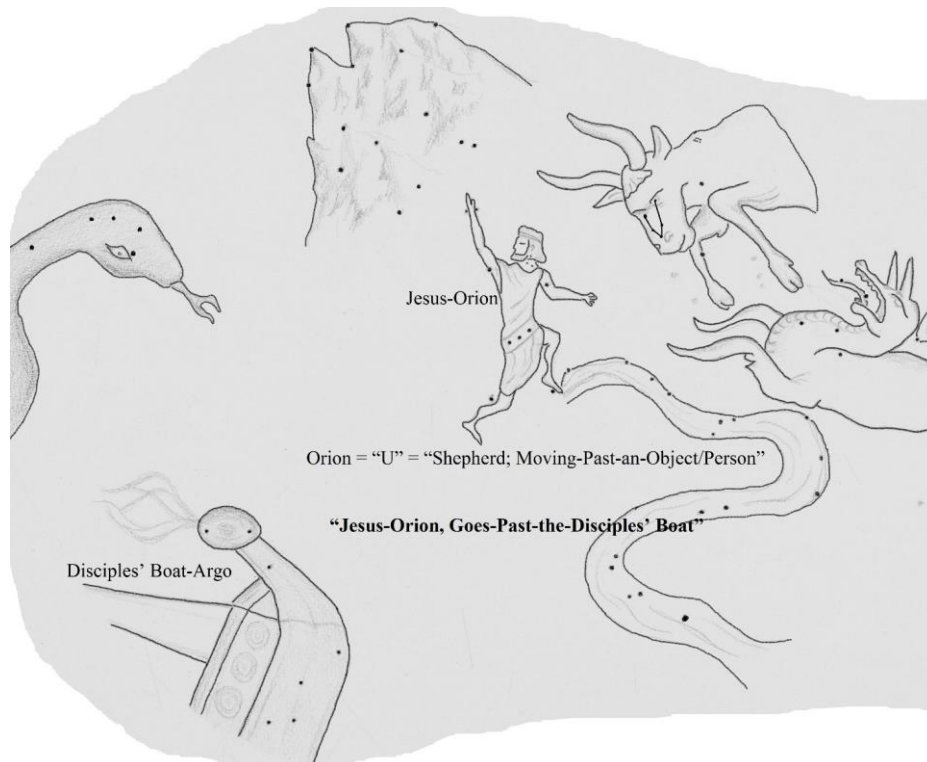


Figure 17. The verb "To Make to Pass By, Cause to Pass By" was phonetically encrypted in Orion's cuneiform title. This correlates with the irrational claim that Jesus "wanted to pass by" the disciples' boat in Mark 6:48 (sketch by Ashely McCurdy).

In Greek (and modern) astronomy Orion was depicted as a walking or running man with his head turned backward. This unusual delineation is emphasized in Egyptian celestial mythology,

which caused S.A.B. Mercer to write that Orion "was represented in the complete form of a man, in the act of running and looking backwards ..." (Mercer, 1949, p. 271).

The pictographic representation of Orion *walking upon the astral Sea* and *looking backwards* may have been reinforced through a fairly transparent astronomical pun. We have shown that Orion's Akkadian cuneiform title was *Rē'u* /"Shepherd," a term represented by numerous logograms including U₅. And U₅ formed a homophone with U, the logogram that meant *šūtuqu* in Akkadian, "to make pass by, to cause to pass by, to move past a person or another object" (CAD 4, p. 384 *etēqu* A, 4, 5, 6, lexical section). Hence, in Mesopotamia, Orion was an U₅/"Shepherd," a title that phonates U/"moving-past-an-object-or-person."

Thus, Jesus-Orion's head is turned as if looking back at Disciples' Boat (Argo) while walking upon the stellar Sea, conveying the idea that he has walked past them; and his logographic title as an U₅/"Shepherd" phonetically imparted U/"cause-to-pass-by." We contend that Mark was cognizant of the aforementioned astronomical pun, which accounts for his explanation of Jesus' behavior during the Sea-Walk: "he-intended to pass by them" (*ēthelen parelthein autous*) (Fig. 17).

Teleportation of the Disciples' Boat in John 6:21

An astral wordplay also provides an elegant explanation for John's claim that a second miracle took place after Jesus walked on water. A literal translation of the Greek reads:

They-wanted therefore to take him into the boat; and immediately came the boat at the land to which they-were-going.

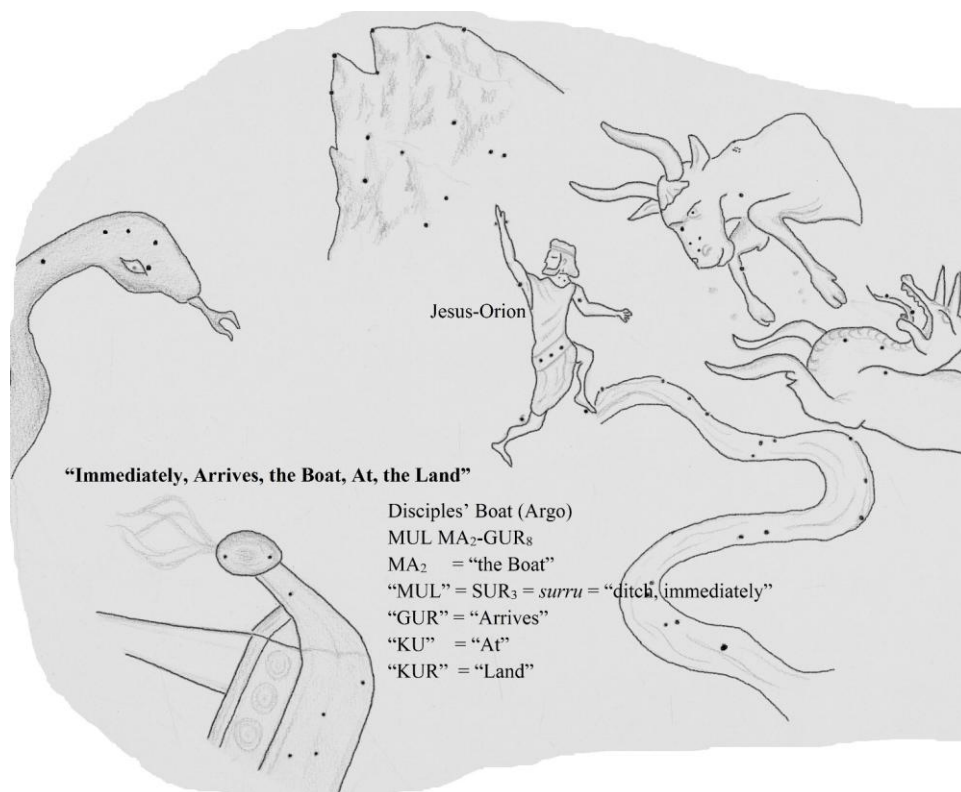


Figure 18. Polysemous readings encrypted in the cuneiform title for Argo rendered: "Immediately, the Boat, Arrives, At, the Land." These terms correspond to the instantaneous landing of the Disciples Ship in John 6:21 (sketch by Ashley McCurdy).

Since the Sea of Galilee is approximately seven miles wide, and John tells us that the apostles had rowed out three or four miles (Brown R., 1966, pp. 251-252), the disciples boat was

instantly teleported the remaining three or four miles! (Ibid. p. 252). This supernatural feat correlates with celestial puns encrypted in the cuneiform terms for the "Disciples'-Boat" (Argo).

A common logographic spelling for Argo was MUL MA₂-GUR₈. Recall that MA₂ meant "Boat," and at the time the Gospels were being written the signs GUR₈ and TU were written identically. TU represented the Akkadian verb *erēbu*, "to arrive" (CAD 4, p. 259, *erēbu*). GUR₈ was also read KUR₉ (Borger, 2004, p. 263, no. 88), which formed a homophone with KUR, "land" (Borger, 2004, p. 373, no. 578). By the first millennium BC the GUR₈ sign was also inscribed identically with KU₄ (Borger, 2004, p. 263, nos. 87, 88). Thus GUR₈/KU₄ formed a homophone with KU, "at" (CAD 7, p. 141, *ina*, lexical section).

Moreover, John's assertion that the boat's landing occurred "immediately"/*eutheōs* can also be found encrypted as a pun in the Argo's celestial determinative, MUL, which formed a homophone with MUL₃ (Fig. 4). MUL₃ was also read SUR₃, the logogram for *surru*, "ditch" (*ePSD*: sur₃; CAD 15, p. 415, *sūru* A, lexical section)—a homonym with *surru*, "immediately" (CAD 15, p. 410 *surri*, lexical section).

Thus, encoded in the Argo's cuneiform title were the words "Immediately, Arrives, the Boat, At, the Land"; terms that corresponds to the miraculous teleportation of the Disciples' Boat in John 6:21 (Fig. 18). We contend that this served as the source for the supernatural teleportation of the ship in John 6:21.

Peter Walks on Water Too

Matthew 14:29-31 maintains that Peter stepped out of the boat and walked upon the surface of the sea with Jesus for a short time until his faltering faith caused him to sink (Fig. 1).

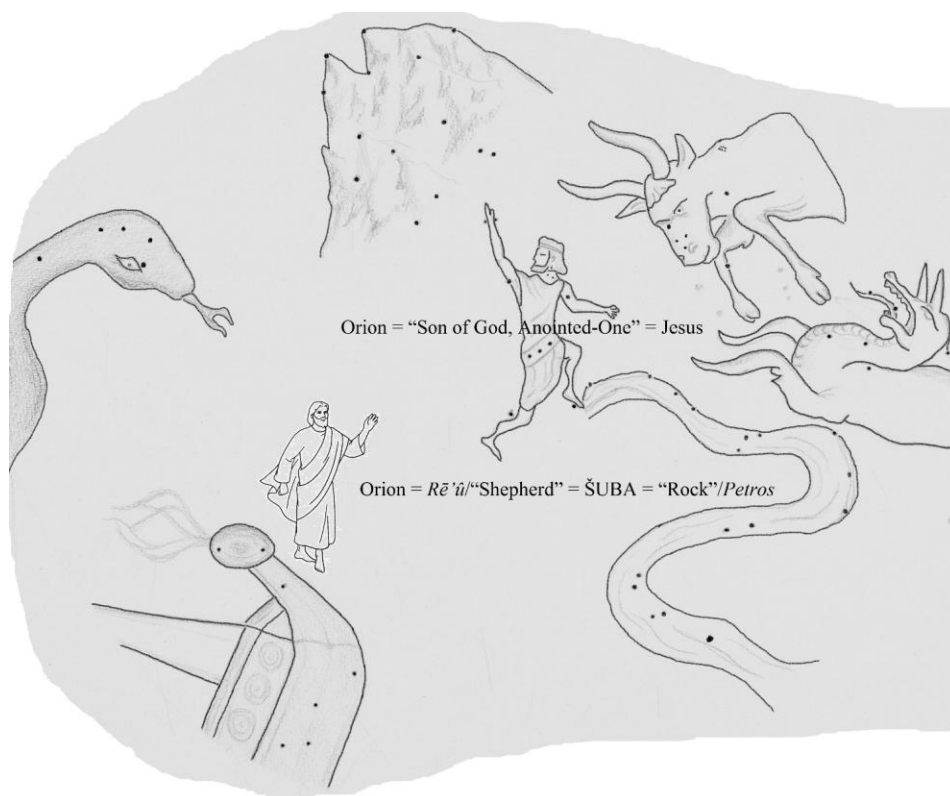


Figure 19. Peter's name, *Petros*/"Rock," was embodied as a logographic title for the Sea-Walker constellation, Orion. This imbued Peter/"Rock" with the same sea-walking ability that had been ascribed to Jesus (sketch by Ashley McCurdy).

Peter's celestial identity can be traced to Orion, the Sea-Walker constellation that also embodied Jesus.

"Peter"—*Petros* in Greek—meant "Rock, Stone," but more specifically referred to a portable sized "stone" or "rock" rather than the massive escarpment of "fixed rock" from which a *petros* had broken away from (Beekes, 2010, 2, p. 1182; Liddell & Scott, 1997, p. 636). We see the word "stone, rock" in Orion's Akkadian identity as a *Rē'û*/"Shepherd." Sumerian-Akkadian dictionaries confirm that an alternate logogram for *Rē'û*/"Shepherd" was ŠUBA, and that ŠUBA represented a valuable type of "stone, rock" (CAD 14, p. 303, *rē'û*, lexical sec.; *ePSD*: šuba; Borger, 2004, p. 440). Hence Orion was a "Shepherd," and one of its logograms also embodied the word "Stone, Rock," i.e., *Petros* in Greek. Hence the name Peter/"Rock" was also embedded in Orion's cuneiform title.

Thus, astronomical wordplays indicate that Orion embodied the words "Son of God, Anointed-One," and *Petros*/"Rock." We contend that this pun-based astronomical wisdom served as the impetus for Matthew to report that Peter had joined Jesus during the latter's sea-walk; supernatural knowledge he reported as fact in his Gospel (Fig. 19).

Discussion of Results and Conclusion

It is scientifically impossible to walk on water, and irreconcilable discrepancies in the Gospel accounts of Jesus' Sea-Walk miracle verify that it could not have been based on eyewitness testimony. Therefore, it must be assumed that some other form of truth verification was being utilized by the evangelists. John 20:30-31 intimates what this form of proof-verification might be, referring to Jesus' Sea-Walk as a "sign"/*sēmeion*, a term that could also mean, "a constellation serving as a sign." This accords with the evangelists' background knowledge. Matthew, Mark, and John had no eyewitness testimony at their disposal, yet each conceptualized Jesus as the "Son of God" and the *Christos*/"Anointed-One," who had ascended into and was inhabiting *ouranos*/"heaven, skies"—the same realm where one finds the constellations.

Because the evangelists were erudite Hellenistic Jews fluent in Greek they presumably had learned that each Greek constellation had undergone a *katasterismos*, "placing among the stars," and thus understood that in Hellenic intellectual thought the constellations portrayed a pictorial record of supernatural events that had once occurred on earth. One preternatural, pictographic scene depicted Orion "Sea-Walking," i.e., striding upon the astral Sea delineated by the eight, contiguous, aquatic constellations (Fig. 3); the Sea-Walking exploit accentuated by Orion's front "foot" star, Rigel, which is simultaneously the first star (λ Eri) in the River constellation that flows into the astral Sea.

Moreover, circulating throughout scholarly enclaves in Syria was the curriculum of the Mesopotamian astrologer, whose core tenets included the conviction that the constellations depicted sacred, cuneiform "writing" which imparted inviolable truth through the medium of wordplay encrypted in the star-gods' titles and epithets. Circumstantial evidence indicates that the Gospel authors had access to the aforementioned occult wisdom, the most convincing coming from Matthew's claim that Jesus' identity as the *Christos*/"Anointed-One" was portended by the rising of a certain star at his birth, which had been observed by Babylonian *magoi*/"astrologer-priests."

Cuneiform tablets identify Orion as DINGIR DAMU, "Son-deity," with polysemous readings for these cuneiform signs rendering "Son of God,"—one of the evangelists' main epithets for Jesus. Another polysemous pun encrypted in Orion's cuneiform title divulged that he was an elite type of priest, a *Pašīšu*/"Anointed-One," the cuneiform equivalent to Jesus' Greek epithet as

the *Christos*/"Anointed-One." Moreover, because the highest-ranking *Pašišu*/"Anointed-One" priests held the title *Gudapsû* ("Anointed-One-[of-the]-*Apsû*"), this epithet implied association with, and presumably some type of control over, the astral "Sea" known in Mesopotamia as the *Apsû*. We argue that these linguistic correlations compelled the evangelists to view Orion as the avatar of Jesus, and ascribe the constellation's astronomically based "Sea-Walking" to the founder of Christianity.

If the latter deduction is accurate, and Orion's "Sea-Walking" ability was attributed to Jesus, then we would expect the celestial landscape mentioned in the Gospel passages to mirror the astral landscape surrounding Orion, the main story elements consisting of a Sea-Walker, Mountain, and Boat. Once again we find a direct correlation between these key characters and props: the Sea-Walker corresponds with Orion-Jesus, the Mountain corresponds with Gemini, which was envisioned as a "Twin Mountain" constellation in Mesopotamia, and the Boat correlates with Argo, a constellation whose cuneiform title phonetically rendered "Disciples' Boat" (Fig. 11).

Moreover, puns encrypted in the constellations that comprise the stellar Sea-Walking tableau correspond with the common themes in this story. Namely, that Jesus "went-up a mountain to pray" (Fig. 12); that the disciples' boat was floundering due to a "contrary" or "strong wind" (Fig. 13); that Jesus-Orion "walked upon the sea" and that the apostles were "troubled, frightened" because they thought Jesus was a "ghost" (Figs. 8, 14); that Jesus "said, 'Have courage, I am; do not be afraid,'" to quell their fears (Fig. 15); that the "wind ceased" when he "boarded the boat" (Fig. 16); and that the Sea-Walk miracle took place during the "fourth watch of the night" (Fig. 13).

Astronomical puns encrypted in the Orion-Jesus Sea-Walking tableau also became the source for the discrepancies in Jesus' Sea-Walk miracle. Wordplay in the cuneiform title of the Sea-Walker constellation, Jesus-Orion, divulged the name "Rock"/*Petros*, and thus Orion's astronomical Sea-Walking ability was ascribed to Peter/"Rock" in the Gospel of Matthew, which accounts for Matthew's claim that Jesus and Peter walked across the sea together (Fig. 19). Another cuneiform term for Orion, U₅, phonated the verb U/"passing-by-an-object/person"—a wordplay that Mark incorporated into the story as Jesus' irrational behavior during the "Sea-Walk" (i.e., Jesus walked past the disciples' boat) (Fig. 17). And additional astronomical puns imparted that the disciples' boat "instantly landed at the land"—which John incorporated into the story as the miraculous three to four mile teleportation of the apostles' ship in verse 6:21 (Fig. 18).

From the aforementioned data the author concludes that Jesus' "Sea-Walk" narratives were derived from the stellar tableau of Orion striding upon the astral Sea. Puns enciphered in Orion's cuneiform title ("Son of God," "Anointed-One") informed the evangelists that he was the embodiment of Jesus; with additional wordplays divulging the common themes found in Christ's Sea-Walk miracle along with the stories' irresolvable differences.

In closing, the author would like to add that he has documented a direct correlation between practically every word from the Gospels' "Sea-Walk" narratives and puns enciphered in Orion's Sea-Walking tableau. However, such a lengthy exposition warrants an entire book and is therefore beyond the scope of this paper.

Acknowledgments

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