

the strength of our great kingdom, that the rising of the Dog Star marks the beginning of our civil calendar every year.

HERU: And your point is?

MA-AHT: Ignore him, Sutimes, he's caught up in the dog days of summer . . .

SUTIMES: . . . Quite literally . . .

MA-AHT: . . . but this is profound. Tell me, are you implying that there are indeed regular cycles of motion to everything in the heavens above?

SUTIMES: Almost. And although the daily motions are subsumed by seasonal motions—which, in fact, are

observed to repeat with some regularity over the years—there *is* some discrepancy. For instance, I recently visited the great temple and scientific complex around Saqqara, built by the great astronomer-architect Imhotep himself, 72 years ago. To my surprise, all the markings used to track various cycles, such as the rising and setting of key stars, and yearly phenomena such as the equinoxes and solstices, were off by exactly one degree!

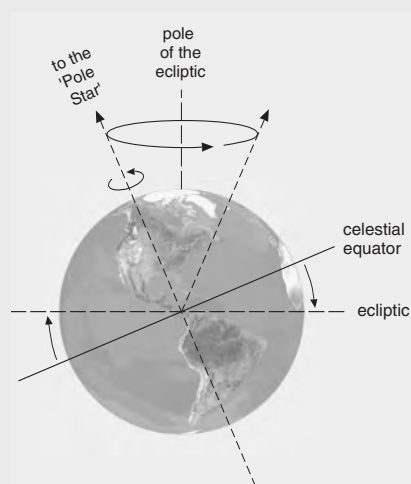
MA-AHT: I'm not quite sure what that means.

SUTIMES: Well, I doubt the great Imhotep could make such a simple mistake as that. Which leads me to believe that the whole image of the sky, with its cycles and all, is in fact moving within a greater cycle which, to complete one rotation at a rate of one degree every 72 years, would take at least . . .

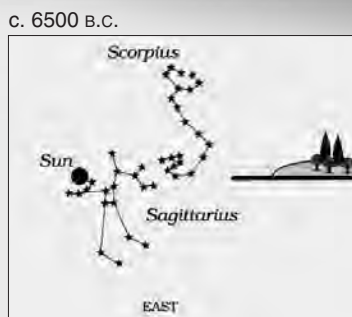
MA-AHT: . . . 25,920 years to come back around, given

The 'Precession Of the Equinoxes'

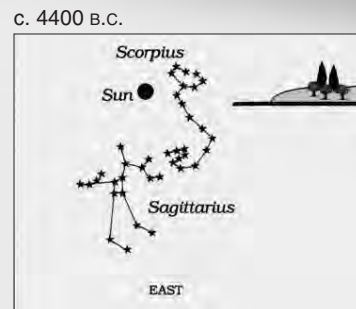
The "precession of the equinoxes" is an observed effect caused by the slow, top-like wobble of the north-south axis of the Earth over a period of 25,900 years. Hence, the "North Star"—which is, by definition, the star to which the axis points—shifts over that period. Today it is Polaris, but during Egypt's



Earth's axis of rotation itself rotates around the "pole of the ecliptic."



Shift in the heliacal constellation, 6500 B.C. (Sagittarius) to 4400 B.C. (Scorpius).



Old Kingdom it was Alpha Draconis. This shifting celestial geometry (1° every 72 years) results in another important change in observations: The constellation of the Zodiac which rises just before the sun on the vernal equinox, which is called the heliacal constellation, also changes slowly over time, as if the band of the Zodiac were sliding backwards against the fixed annual position of the equinoctial sun. This effect is known as the "precession of the equinoxes."

The 12 constellations of the Zodiac are the ones which follow the

same path as the sun along the ecliptic, and Egyptian mythology and religion are filled with images of them. The dominance of a particular image, such as the scorpion, the bull, or the ram, often corresponds to the historical period in which it was the heliacal constellation. For example, the death of Osiris, which Freemasons and Synarchists make a great mystical to-do over, can be seen simply as the disappearance of the constellation Orion from the sky on the vernal equinox, which occurred around 6700 B.C.

—Susan Kokinda