



People and the Sky: Our Ancestors and the Cosmos

Anthony Aveni

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From the Neolithic era to the Aztecs, the story of how our ancestors engaged with the heavens.

Few of us can accurately identify the stars and constellations, the phases of the moon, or the hour and position of sunrise, but our forebears had an intimate relationship with the heavens. *People and the Sky* explores how ancient hunters, farmers, sailors, rulers, and storytellers were all once cosmically connected.

Anthony Aveni reveals how !Kung and Mursi hunter-gatherers depended on signals in the sky for their survival and sustenance; how master Polynesian sailors navigated a seemingly limitless watery world by star bearings; how social cohesion in cultures as diverse as the Pawnee and the Inca was mirrored in celestial imagery; and how the cosmic connection between the arrangement of Aztec and Chinese cities and the constellations served as an expression of political authority.

Through most of human history, people found meaning in the dance of the cosmic denizens. Today, many aspects of this intimate contact between daily life and what happens in the sky have disappeared. Did our ancestors have an understanding of the cosmos that we ourselves lack? How and why did it all happen? Aveni addresses these questions and more in this engaging and erudite book. 67 illustrations, 9 in color.

"If you've ever wondered how the Maya calculated their calendar or exactly what it was that those Babylonian astronomers were doing on top of their towers, this is the book for you."—James Trefil, author of *Why Science?* and *The Nature of Science*

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