



Tales of Ancient Worlds

The Worshipping of Animal Gods



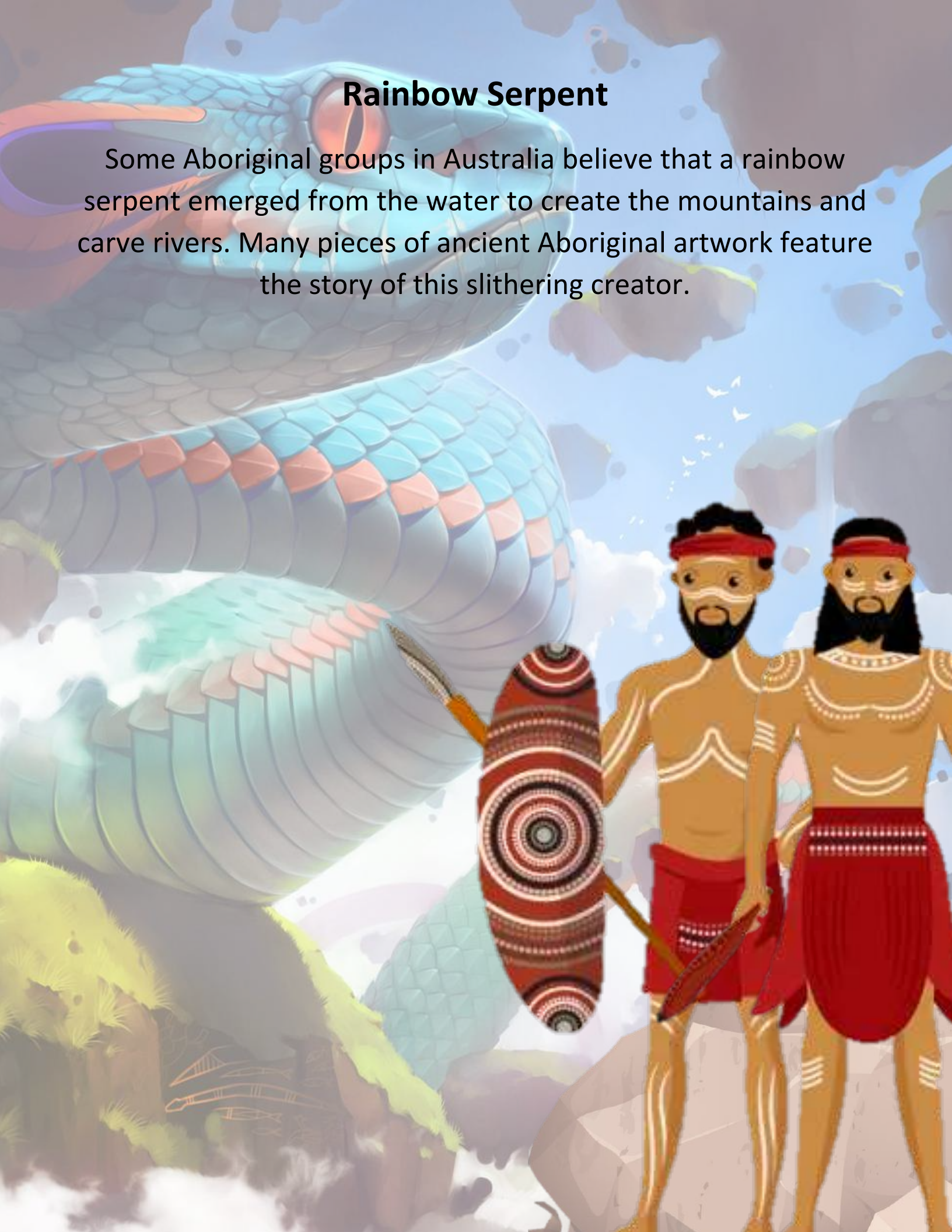
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Some animals are fast, some can fly, some are strong and some are kind of creepy – it's fair to say the animal kingdom is full of wonders. With so many incredible creatures around it's no surprise that animal gods and spirits feature prominently in both ancient and modern beliefs.



Rainbow Serpent

Some Aboriginal groups in Australia believe that a rainbow serpent emerged from the water to create the mountains and carve rivers. Many pieces of ancient Aboriginal artwork feature the story of this slithering creator.



Sobek

Sobek was the Egyptian god of death and burial. At the temple in Fayum a crocodile was kept as the representative of the god and was even mummified when it died!



Naga

In Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, the half-human, half-cobra Naga live in an underground kingdom. It is said they only bite the truly evil or those that are destined to die young.



Shark God

Ebisu is one of Japan's seven fortunate gods. He is often depicted carrying a rod, or as a whale shark. Ebisu protects fisherman and brings in huge catches of fish.



Dragons

In both Europe and Asia, ancient legends tell of fearsome dragons. In Europe, they can fly and breathe fire. In Asia, they don't have wings and are associated with water and good luck.



Minotaur

The Minotaur was a mythical creature from ancient Greece with the body of a man and the head of a bull. He lived in the centre of a dizzying labyrinth and was fed children!



Ravens

Odin is a powerful god in Norse mythology. He has two ravens, Huginn and Munnin, who fly around the world bringing him information. If you ever think a raven is following you, watch out, it could be one of Odin's spies!

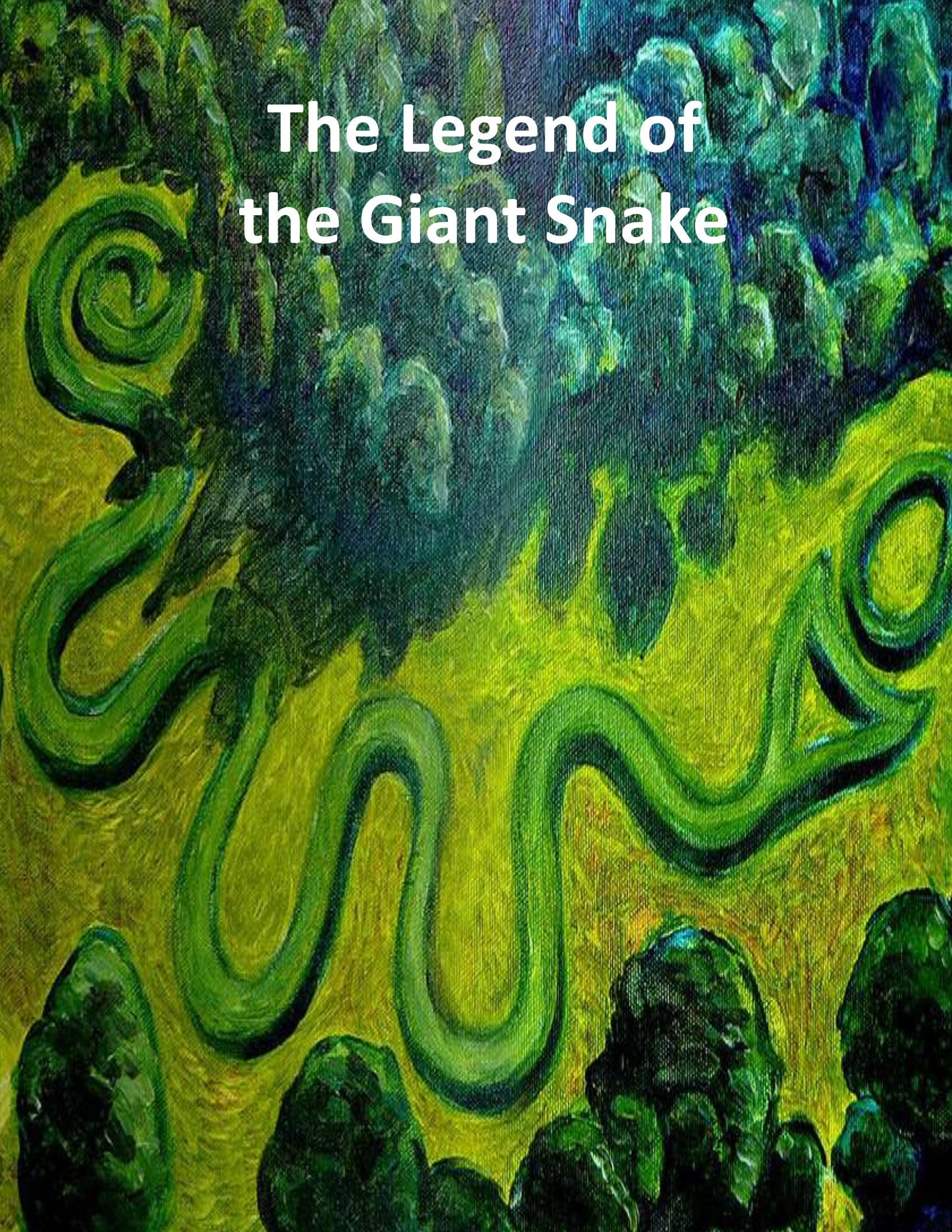


Ganesh

Ganesh is an elephant-headed god in Hinduism. He is known to remove obstacles. People often pray to him before they begin anything new, just to make sure things go smoothly.



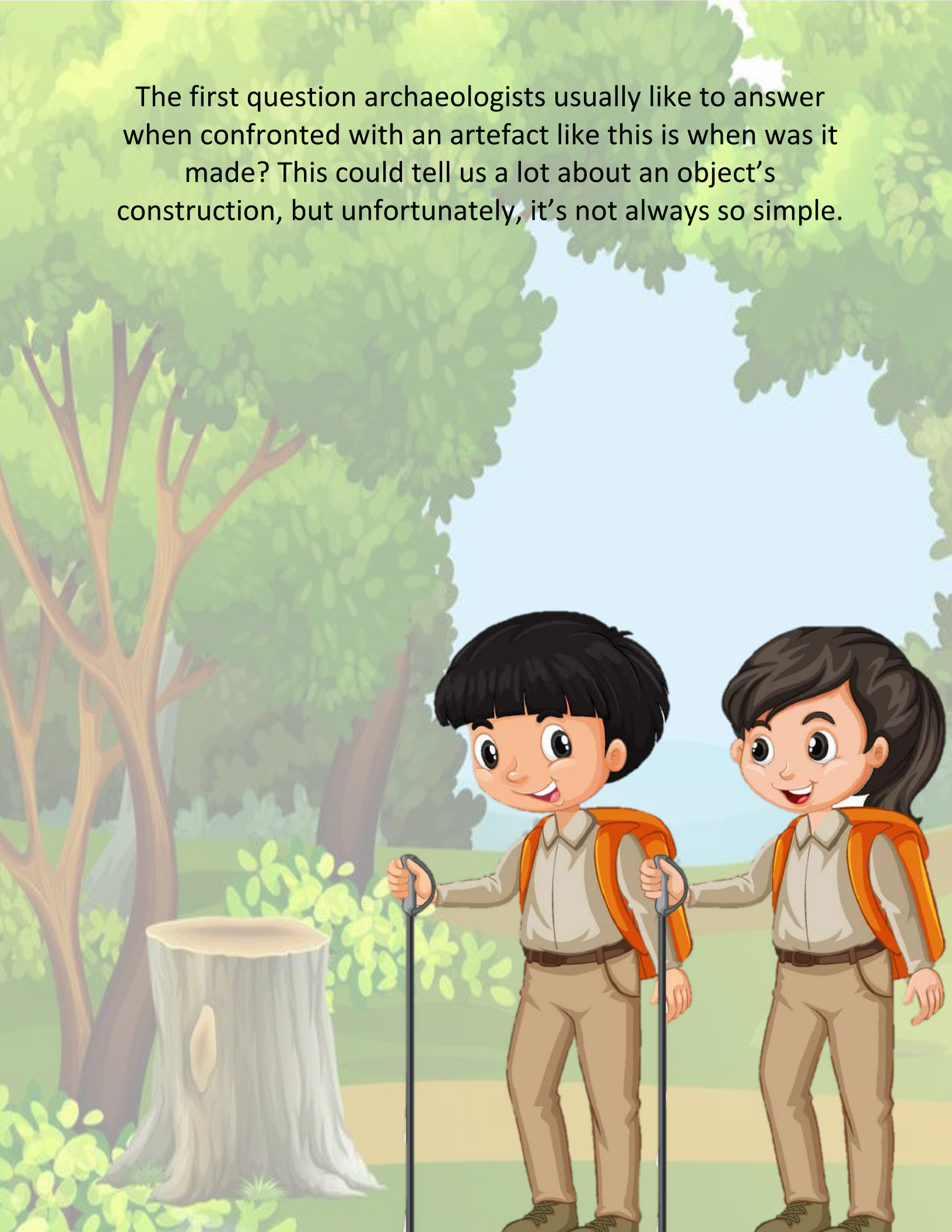
The Legend of the Giant Snake



In amongst the fields and woods of Ohio, sits one of North America's most mysterious ancient monuments. It's something you can't find anywhere else in the entire world – a snake 400 m (1300 ft) long.



The first question archaeologists usually like to answer when confronted with an artefact like this is when was it made? This could tell us a lot about an object's construction, but unfortunately, it's not always so simple.



Two different teams excavated portions of Serpent Mound and came back with two different results. One team found that it was built around the year 1070 CE, and so must have been built by the Fort Ancient culture.



How can we explain this? How can people a thousand years apart have built the same monument? There are two possible explanations.





#1

The first is that one of the teams was wrong, which happens all the time in archaeology. It's not easy to reconstruct the past.



#2

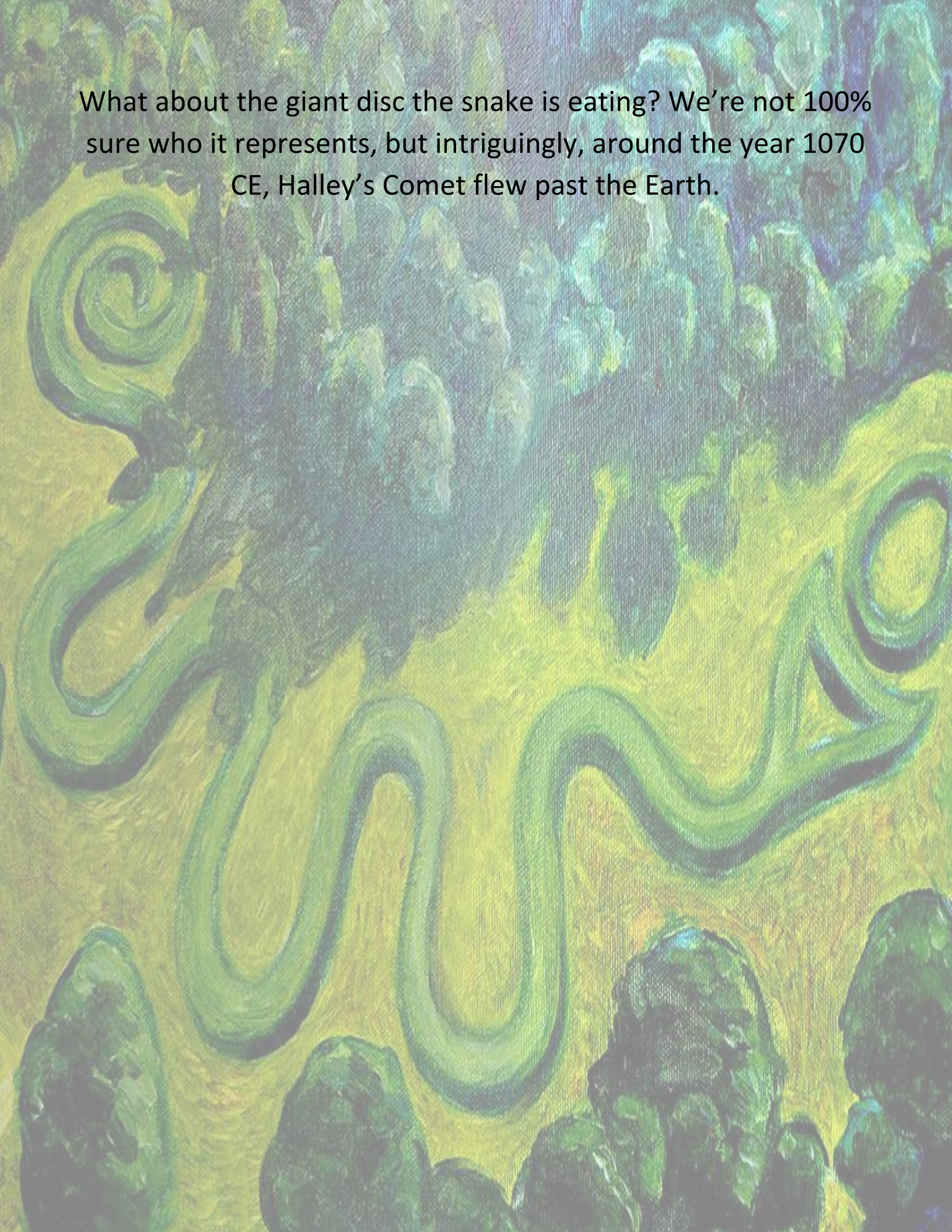
The second explanation is that the giant serpent was first built in 300 BCE, but then repaired or added or added to in 1070 CE.

Why build a giant snake in the first place (other than the fact that it is very cool?) it could have been some sort of calendar.

The head aligns with the Sun at the summer solstice – the longest day in the year – and the tail with the winter solstice. As we saw in the Neolithic period, working out the correct time of year was extremely important for ancient farmers.



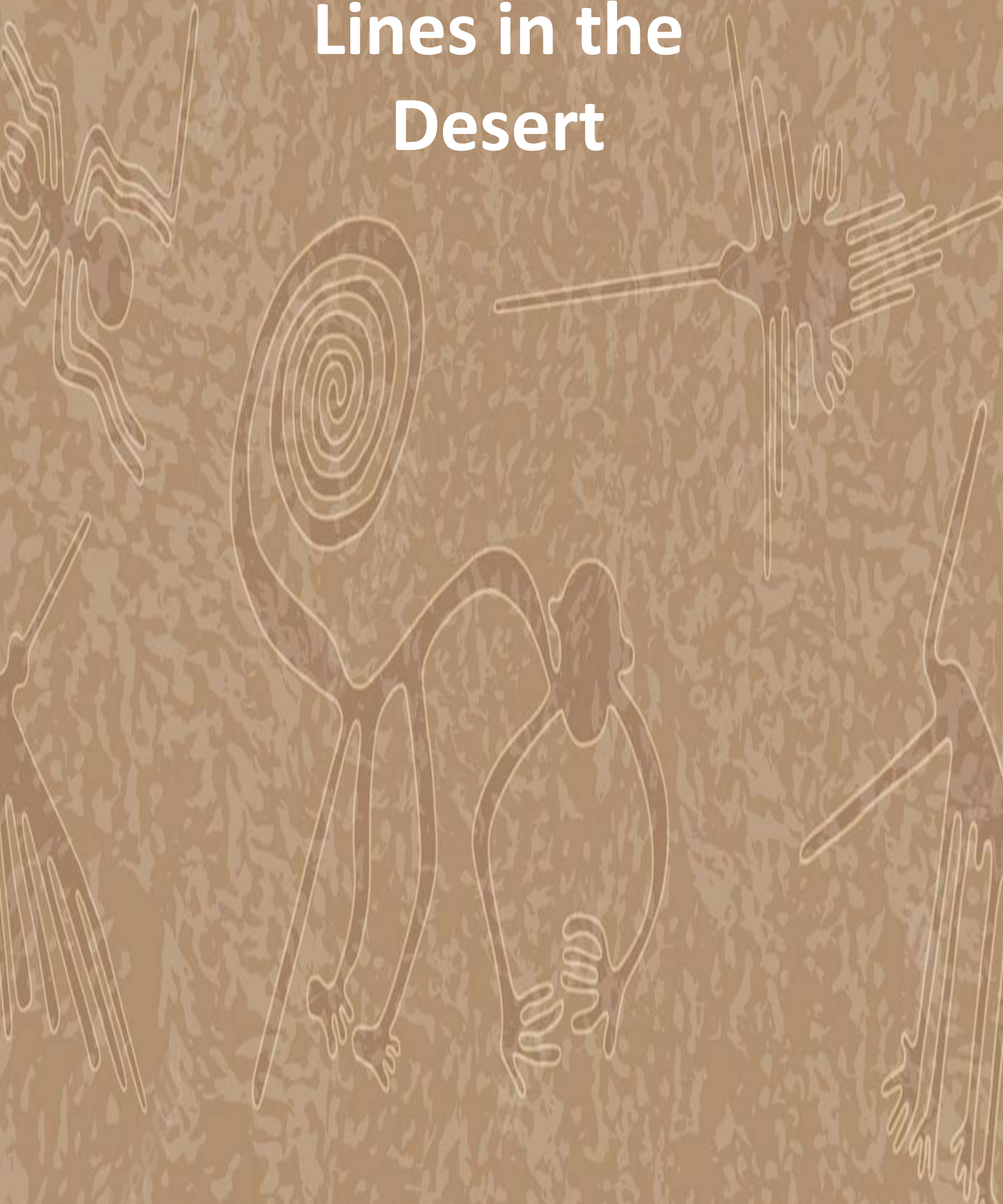
What about the giant disc the snake is eating? We're not 100% sure who it represents, but intriguingly, around the year 1070 CE, Halley's Comet flew past the Earth.



Perhaps during the repair work, these ancient architects chose to add a representation of the mysterious light that was shooting across their night sky. How cool is that?



Lines in the Desert



If ever you find yourself over the deserts of southern Peru, you might notice something strange out of the window. Hummingbirds, monkeys, spiders – a vast assortment of wild animals scratched into the desert rocks below.





And they're HUGE. The hummingbird you're looking at right now is almost 100 m (330 ft) long! All of these magnificent creatures were created by the Nazca, a desert people that lived in southern Peru about 2000 years ago.

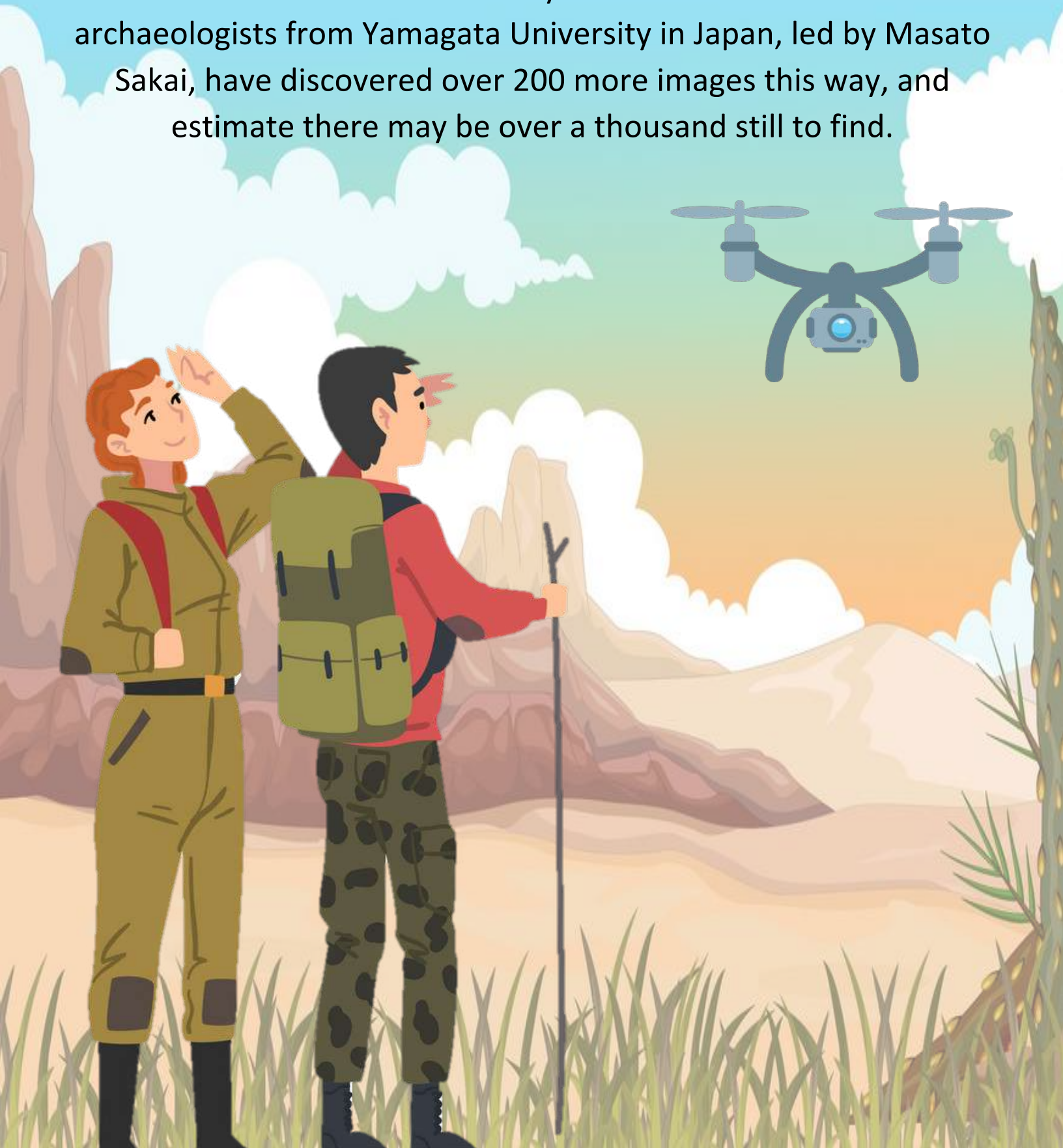
The Nazca were incredible engineers. By building sophisticated wells, called puquios, they were able to turn their dry and dusty home into an abundant garden to support their families. The Nazca didn't just use their engineering skills for agriculture though, they also created these gigantic images across the desert. In terms of construction, the Nazca Lines are very simple.



Rocks and earth were moved to one side to create these big images – they're only about 10-15 cm (4 – 6 in) deep. The Nazca couldn't fly up into the air to see their masterpiece as they made the, they had to create all of these images just by measuring their position. It would have been really hard! What were the lines for? We're not sure.



Thanks to modern technology though, archaeologists and their drones can fly like hummingbirds across Peru's southern desert to find out more about the mysterious lines. A team of archaeologists from Yamagata University in Japan, led by Masato Sakai, have discovered over 200 more images this way, and estimate there may be over a thousand still to find.



As the lines are so subtle, computers and drones are able to find them much more easily than the human eye. One recent discovery wouldn't be out of place in a cartoon; a figure wearing some kind of hat and wielding a bat. Who they were, we can only imagine!





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