VENUS & THE CUBE IN ARABIAN COSMOLOGY

P. James ClarkArabian Astrology, Canopus, Iran, IslamIslam5 Comments

Folio from an Aja’ib al-makhluqat wa- ghara’ib al-mawjudat (Wonders of creation and marvels of creatures and strange things existing) by al-Qazvini (d.1283); verso: Venus; recto: Sphere of the Sun Creator: Author: Muhammad al-Qazvini

When we read the works of astrologers from other times and cultures we tend to feel we have a lot in common with them. For example, it is natural to assume that Venus must have much the same qualities and associations in our cultural tradition as she does in others Some accommodations are made, but we don’t expect radical departures. The fact is that Venus is multifaceted, one might even say protean, in Arabian cosmology. Venus is also closely related to the Moon, in ways we may not expect.

It is well known by Traditional Astrologers, particularly those working in Mundane astrology, that Islam is under the governance of Venus. This is an ancient association which has been transmitted to us by both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars.

What is not be so commonly known is that the importance of Venus preceded the inception of Islam by thousands of years in the Middle East. Ptolemy divided the four directions by triplicity.

The one that would cover the Middle East and Central Asia, including what is now Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan is made up of “Taurus, Virgo and Capricornus in southeastern, and again is governed primarily by Venus on account of the south wind, but conjointly by Saturn because of the east wind. ” (Tetrabiblos II 3)

The addition of Saturn is an important element here. So is the fact the exaltation of the Moon is Taurus and Venus the dispositor of Taurus

The tradition of worshipping Venus was widespread in ancient Arabia, where 360 gods and goddesses were adored. The Kaa’ba contained 360 idols which were eventually destroyed by Muhammad. Venus’s special day of the week is Friday and the form of this goddess is a cube, which is the sacred form for Arabs.

Platonic Solids

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This doesn’t correspond with the Platonic Solids, as understood by Kepler, but the source appears to be an Ancient Middle Eastern one, long preceding Plato or Pythagoras.

“Plato argued that each of the elements could be thought of as being composed of the first four solids – the tetrahedron was fire, the cube was earth, the octahedron was air, and the dodecahedron was water. The final solid, the icosahedron, was applied to the “heavenly sphere” upon which rested all of the stars and planets.” (Isaac M. McPhee. Platonic Solids) In other words, the solids primarily relate to elements rather than planets.

Historical evidence shows that in the late third millennium BC, worshipping mother goddesses was common in Iran, India, Central Asia, Mesopotamia, Syria, North Africa, and Europe

One of the first things that caught my eye on seeing footage of the Haj many years ago, was the participants circumambulating the Kaaba in an anticlockwise direction. This is highly unusual and in most traditions considered very harmful.

Counter Clockwise Circumambulation of the Kaaba

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The act of moving counter-clockwise is said to provoke or upset the natural course of the world – it went against the natural order From this comes havoc, destruction, and in general negative and unfortunate things to occur. Although we find this knowledge in the oldest Pagan sources, the clockwise movement came as a natural element to Christianity, perhaps because of its association with Solar Cults, including Zoroastrianism.

directions

In The Great Triad, Rene Guénon demonstrates two points of possible orientations. (i.e. Polar in Fig 13 and Solar in figure 14) “The first direction is one of the stars turning about the Pole when one looks North” the second is oriented to the Sun when looking South (50,51) The second is by far the most common.

All other visible planets in our Solar System rotate in a counter-clockwise motion. Certainly, it would be impossible to view the direction of the orbit of Venus even with telescopes because of the planet’s extremely dense atmosphere.

Her rotation is virtually stationary, with her day being longer than her year. She takes 243 days to turn once on her axis and almost 225 days to travel once around the Sun in orbit

Mohammed\_Splits\_the\_Moon

Mohammed\_Splits\_the\_Moon Anonymous 16th-century watercolour from a Falnama, a Persian book of prophecy. Muhammad is the veiled figure on the right.

There is no specific Qu’ranic reference to the best of my knowledge which would require this counterclockwise movement. However, Muhammad advised on many issues, ranging from how to cut one’s beard to making adoption unlawful. In virtually every case, he is concerned about doing everything in the opposite way to “the Pagans.”

It has also been suggested that moving in anticlockwise direction goes against time and revives the Sunnah of the prophet Ibrahim and of course, Muhammad.

The Kaaba’s keystone is a meteorite set in what looks like female genitalia. The meteorite is essentially round, so there is no structural reason for this choice of setting. This harks back to pre-Islamic times as does Ramadan and much else. The participants at the Haj are ideally to kiss the meteorite and if that isn’t possible, they are to point at it each time they circumambulate the Kaaba.

The Kaaba was home to 360 idols. Different families would worship different idols. For Muhammad’s family it was Allah. His father was named Abdulalla which means Slave of Allah. Of course it’s no coincidence that the number of idols is the number of degrees in the zodiac

This meant that Mecca’s income came largely from pilgrims visiting and worshiping the idols while spending money on the process . This was an early source of conflict between Muhammad and the Meccans.

The site of the Kaaba itself is celestially aligned. : ” the structure holding the black stone is offset from the Cardinal Directions so that one wall is to the line connecting the Winter Solstice sunset to the Summer Solstice sunrise. The other side of the building faces towards the horizon and the rising of Canopus ” (Penprase. Power of Stars. p.209) This sets the direction of prayer for Muslims worldwide.

“The southwest orientation, dissimilar to other recorded temples in southwest Arabia, conforms to the Babylonian ancestral practice of an axis diagonal to the cardinal points. The raised platform style of the building seems derived, probably indirectly, from Babylon” (Natan 33)

The goddess Nahid, for example, is “alternately the wife, the sister or the mother of god. However, when she is the wife and mother of god, her symbol is the moon, and when she represents the goddess of love and music, the planet Venus.” (Mohammad Sadeq Nazmi Afshar. Nahid, Mother of Gods 2013) In effect, the Arabs took the Moon-god Sin, a male god of war. Over time, Venus replaced the Moon, while absorbing his qualities.

An Armenian myth says: “the devil knew that if the god had intercourse with his mother, the sun would be born, and if with his sister, the moon would be born.” (ibid)

Muhammad is said to have literally split the Moon as a sign that he was a true prophet. I now wonder if the message isn’t also that the Moon-god is giving way to another. Today, the vast majority of Muslim nations use the Crescent, with or without Venus. But this association only came with the Ottoman Turks

However, Islam subscribes to a Lunar Calendar. The Lunar cycle is 28 days and so very naturally associated with the menstrual cycle.

The goddess in her various names and guises is ubiquitous. Venus and Inanna are both what are known as dying and resurrecting deities: this death and rebirth myth is a product of simple observational astronomy. This is true in all cultures of observation and they are remarkably similar in their interpretations. Vedic astrologers Hart De Fouw and Robert E. Svoboda write of Venus:

“Sukr, [Venus] which has a 584-day cycle of visibility, appears as both the Morning Star and the Evening Star. In between these periods of visibility, each of which lasts about 263 days, come 2 periods of invisibility, during which Sukr is conjunct with Surya. When Sukr, as the Evening Star, moves toward its solar conjunction, it ‘sets’ in the sky — it appears lower and lower each night until that fateful night when it fails to appear at all, swallowed up by Surya, who may be identified here with Lord Shiva. Both Surya and Shiva represent the Universal Soul.”( Light on Life: An Introduction to the Astrology of India p.6)

Details may differ, but the core myth is always there. The amount of interaction between India, Persia and the Arabs may not have been massive, but is very well documented

In his twenty-year study, Dr. Rafat Amari writes: “we know that the term “Allah,” as the god of the moon, was derived from the Thamud god of the moon. His name was Hilal, or Hlal, which means “crescent.” Later, the name “Hilal” became Hilah, as we see in many inscriptions which were found in Arabia. In the Thamud inscriptions, he is found as H-ilah, Ha-ilah and H-alah. We see the same development for “Hilah,” the moon deity in Yemen, where Almaqah is called “Halal,’ or “Hilal, the Crescent.

Safaitic tribes were nomads wandering in many parts of Arabia, especially in the north. The god of the moon was found in their inscriptions as “H-lah.” in the Safaitic inscriptions, the letter “H” pronounced as “Ha” is the definite article, “the.” It corresponds to the Arabic, “Al.”16 This led the Arabians to call him “Al-lah.” The big Star Athtar – Venus – Replaces the Moon for the Title of “Allah”” (The ‘Trinity’ in Islam p. 8)

sabians-or-star-worshippers-iraq

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This is intriguing, but I’m not convinced it’s perfectly true on all counts. Neither can I be absolutely certain of his intent. Apologists abound, as is the case with much of the studies on this subject. However, his contention that the Sabians did have a Moon-god and that Islam practices the same style and number of daily prayers, prostration, fasting for 30 days in observance of the Moon (Ramadan) and wear long white robes is well documented. Sabians are mentioned by name in the Qu’ran as a group that was on a righteous path and should have no fears. ( see Sūrat l-Baqarah 2:62 – 7 Quran. Trans M.A.S. Abdel Haleem – Oxford)

Sabians were known “as “Star Worshippers.” Both Jewish and Islamic sources claim that Abraham was himself a star worshiper, and there is a mutual story told that after contemplating the setting of Sun and the Moon, he came to the conclusion that there must be one God.” ( Kemal Menemencioglu @ <http://www.hermetics.org/Sabians_of_Harran.html> )

Black Rock form Paphos - Temple of\_Aphrodite

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The ancient Sumerian Moon God, Sin was male and this association was carried over to the pre-Islamic cultures in the Middle East . Arabs, particularly insofar as he was a god of war. One of the names of Venus is Lucifer, which we usually consider as masculine.

You will notice that Arab and Muslim representations of Venus do not always have feminine characteristics. The attributes are primarily love, music and finery. But the procreative and fertility attributes of, say Ishtar or Aphrodite, are still given to Venus. If she is the replacement for Sin, presumably she would also have war as an attribute

Although Ptolemy was looking at the Middle East and Central Asia when assigning Venus as the significator, the eventual Arab influence on the entire region is staggering. At the most basic level, Arabic is considered the only fully legitimate language of the Qu’ran, in spite of the fact that it pre-dates Classical Arabic and was more likely written down in Syrio Aramaic.

Ptolemy couldn’t possibly have anticipated just how accurate his association would become. Some will consider this a dilemma, but it doesn’t need to be. I think this knowledge is crucial, particularly in Mundane astrology. It is most helpful though to consider the meaningful differences between the Western Classical and Arabian Venus, not least because of the association with the Moon.