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A WIDER PERSPECTIVE ON STONE CIRCLES IN EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST

In *Cosmokrator Book 2* on *Geometry and Number* I give much attention to Keith Critchlow and Alexander Thom's interpretations of the stone circles of Britain dating between the fourth and early second millennia BC. The former often quotes Diodorus Siculus' account that in the ancient world the Hyperborean 'spherical temple' of Britain (more likely to refer to Stonehenge than to the Stenness complex in the Orkneys) was a place of pilgrimage for people as far afield as the East Mediterranean (the Mycenaeans crop up in this regard, due to the many Mycenaean-type daggers carved on the Stonehenge trilithons¹). People who study these monuments in Europe are often unaware that several areas in the Middle East also have Stone Age monuments, two of them definitely pre-dating our own erections.

This year's newsletter deals with the subject on the more learned level used in my *CANEA* research – if the footnotes are too much, simply read the main text and look at the pictures to pick up the main gist. In time we will deal with the subject more fully in *Cosmokrator Book 9* on *Ancient Astronomy*, still a few years away! It was in my recent work on *Catalogue D* of the *CANEA* project (see www.layish.co.uk level 3) that at one point I had to look into baetyl worship (seemingly imported to Crete from the Levant) and came to realise there *must* have been some kind of overall interchange between Europe and the Ancient Near East in astronomical megalithic building practice – for which a great deal of physical *and* documentary evidence has emerged in the latter area only comparatively recently. We can divide the history of stone circles and other megalithic monuments simplistically into three main blocks.

GÖBEKLI TEPE IN TURKEY'S ARMPIT - 6,000 YEARS OLDER THAN STONEHENGE

For brevity's sake, to give you a sense of this newly discovered site² <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/gobekli-tepe.html> please follow this link for the pictures: It is astonishing such a structure was within the scope of Man's building ability 9,600-8,200 BC so soon after the end of the last Ice Age, at a transitional stage when people were moving over from the hunter-gatherer way of life to farming - which involved both herding animals (gazelle, goat, sheep, boar and finally cattle) and growing cereals by developing seed-bearing grasses. The largest is stone circle C, with stone circles A,B and D adjoining it, and the latest report³ is that ground-penetrating radar has revealed many more buried stone circles on the surrounding Harran limestone plain - all quite close to each other. The four so far excavated appear to consist of a circle of twelve T-shaped monoliths inserted into a mud wall, with a further larger pair at the centre facing each other. Most are carved on their larger sides with totem animals such as vulture, fox, boar, lion, cranes and hundreds of snakes, while vestigial arms are carved down the narrow sides of many of them, suggesting they were intended as human figures, whether of ancestor-guardians or Gods we cannot tell.

The mystery is that these circles were buried in sand almost as soon as they had been built (this accounts for the startlingly mint condition of the carving on them): was it discovered they had been misaligned, and therefore useless as an astronomical instrument, or were they meant to be temporary festival sites (there was a huge amount of animal bone left behind, the result of extensive feasting - exactly parallel to the feasting bones at Stonehenge, suggesting a gathering of the clans for a period of excessive consumption was something to do with bringing a hefty workforce together to cope with the stone quarrying and erection of these places, such as still happens in certain 'backward' places in Indonesia to this day).

This is a one-off monument with nothing match its complexity for several millennia, though in fact there are other PPNA/B sites all over the ^CAmuq plain which have yielded small carvings in the same style, or smaller T-

¹ Keith Branigan 'Wessex and Mycenae: Some Evidence Reviewed' *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine* LXV 1970 89-107

² The excavation is led by Klaus Schmidt, a typical report from him being "'Zuerst kam der Tempel, dann die Stadt": Vorläufiger Bericht zu den Grabungen am Göbekli Tepe und am Gürcütepe 1995-1999' *Istanbul Mitteilungen* L 2000 5-41

³ A lecture given by Schmidt himself at the British Museum summarising the state of the site at the end of the 2013 season.

shaped monoliths - all pointing to the pioneering role of this particular area, in both farming and architecture. Its geographical position makes it plausible to understand it as the connective 'valve' between Europe and the Near East, and although it seems to be isolated so far back in time, Göbekli Tepe has certain features that crop up in the makeup and layout of other monuments in the Levant during the period of maximum proliferation six millennia later – these will be pointed out as we come to them. It certainly appears at first consideration that stone circle building expertise began in the Tenth Millennium on the geologically appropriate Harran limestone levels and that somehow, despite the gap in the physical evidence (which may be filled in coming decades), there must have been some kind of continuity orally.

NABTA PLAYA IN UPPER EGYPT

If you were to make the journey to Egypt (not so easy these days) and make your way down to the very south to Abu Simbel, 40 miles from there in the middle of the western desert at Nabta Playa, Wendorf and Schild



Fig. 1: Nabta Playa

discovered the cultic remains of the southern Neolithic ancestors of the Pharaohs dating back to 8,000-6000BC. On the flat, now arid sand of the desert they found 'a circle of small upright stone slabs only 4m/13ft in diameter', looking like 'a miniature version of Stonehenge'. These are the words of the then Keeper of Egyptian Antiquities at the British Museum, Vivian Davies, in his and Renée Friedman's joint book, simply entitled **EGYPT**. Interviewing Schild on-site (see picture above), Davies learned from him that the circle 'appears to have been made specifically to measure the arrival of the summer solstice', and that festival grounds nearby to celebrate the occasion 'also included a complex alignment of ten large standing stones and a series of thirty mounds crowned with huge stones...'. It was then called 'the earliest calendar in the world' – though now outdone for that honour by Göbekli. With Egypt's present political unrest, which for some reason has led to local people looting their own archaeological sites, we do not know now whether Nabta Playa's stones are still in place.

THE STANDING STONES OF PALESTINE, SYRIA AND JORDAN

Now we come to our immediate focus – the dolmens, stone circles and baetyls of the Holy Land of a similar period to Europe's megalithic monuments – which although first cropping up in the accounts of Victorian visitors (up to then totally ignored by local populations for hundreds of years) did not receive serious attention until the time of the British Mandate in Palestine when British archaeologists such as Petrie and Kenyon came to the area after Egypt had become problematic politically - and with others (including the French in Syria) began what turned out to be a century-long involvement in more recent neolithic sites. It was Kenyon who excavated Jericho, establishing the stratigraphic terminology for the Pre-Pottery Neolithic site of Jericho, used a century later by Schmidt for Göbekli Tepe!

Prior to the British Mandate, in the early 1900s R A Macalister under the auspices of the Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF) unearthed a striking line of ten standing stones at Gezer aligned precisely N-S. The only comparable contemporary example to the Gezer lines are the long lines of stones at Carnac in Brittany (and, interestingly,

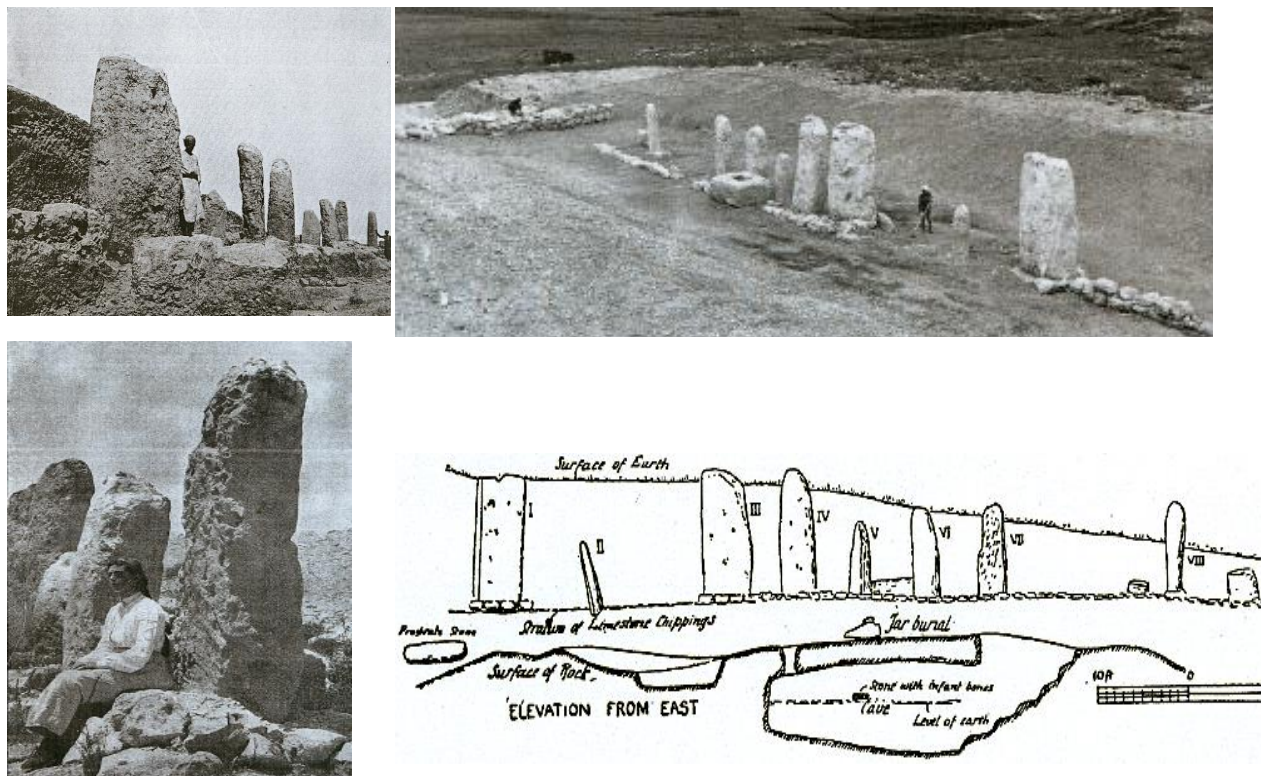


Fig. 2: The Great Alignment at Gezer (top left as photographed for MacAlister's frontispiece in Vol II of his *Excavation Report*⁴) with a bird's-eye view taken by his successor on the site decades later, William Dever⁵ (his fig.10). Below left, a close-up of stone no. VII with seated figure to give scale, and below right MacAlister's drawing of the N-S alignment from its east side (his figs 482 and 477).

preceded by the Nabta Playa Line in Egypt, just described. Over succeeding decades it emerged that it was in the western Levant where the use of standing stones was more prolific than in the eastern regions reaching into north Mesopotamia - by the end of the 2M the tradition had reached Karkemish, Tell Halaf and into the Diyala as far as Aššur⁶, which had its own set of 130 stones, carved with the figures of government officials (*limmu*) for the years they served, set in two parallel rows just inside the city wall (described by Graesser (see below) as 'apparently meant to serve as a "walk-in" calendar').

When the Mandate came to an end, MacAlister had to return to Britain and seek new work, teaching archaeology in Ireland, chalking up further Neolithic studies about the British monuments to his name, including a book on New Grange itself! The only other archaeologist after WWII who was interested in joining left hand to right was Claude Schaeffer, the life-long excavator of Ugarit, a coastal town in Syria attached to the ^CAmuq area. Opposite to MacAlister, in his early career he had excavated Neolithic sites in Europe but then found himself posted by the French to Ras Shamra/Ugarit, whose stratigraphy he discovered went down to Neolithic levels. In a hefty book⁷ he tried to make unravel the strands of the comparative stratigraphy of sites in both Europe and the Levant, but fellow archaeologists tended to leave it aside since most were specialists only on one side of the divide or the other.

⁴ R A S MacAlister *The Excavation of Gezer* (3 vols) London 1912

⁵ W G Dever et al. 'Further Excavations at Gezer 1967-71' *The Biblical Archaeologist* XXXIV-4, 94-132

⁶ The double rows of stelae were discovered by W Andrae - see his *Stelenreihen in Assur* Leipzig 1913. These were later assessed by (i) J V Canvy 'The Stelenreihen at Assur, Tell Halaf, and Maşşebot' *Iraq* XXXVIII 113-128, and (ii) J Reade 'The Historical Status of the Assur Stelae' in *Assyria and Beyond: Studies Presented to M T Larsen* 2004, 455-473

⁷ C. Schaeffer *Stratigraphie comparée et chronologie de l'Asie occidentale: 3^e et 2^e millénaires*, Oxford 1948

By 1950 these two men were the only two archaeologists we know of who in the first half of the 20C had made attempts to 'join up' megalithic knowledge east and west. We will here try to place some signposts.

THE FIRST SURVEYS OF MEGALITHIC MONUMENTS IN THE LEVANT

The American, James L Swauger, seems to have been the first to turn his attention to Neolithic stone monuments in the Levant, if only focusing on dolmens⁸ (stone chambers) which he assessed were erected c.7000-3000BC and, as in Europe, were probably originally covered by an earth mound. For us at least these provide that continuity between the PPN period of Göbekli and the 3-2M we will look at in detail. He states, 'There are *several thousand* individual dolmens ... usually found in clustered fields... [at] dozens of dolmen sites, some with as many as the more than two hundred structures that occur at Damiyeh or the perhaps one hundred at Meron, and some with as few as the six at Tell Umm el-Quttein' and goes on, 'In Palestine dolmens are found from the Syrian and Lebanon borders south to about the latitude of Kerak, from the Mediterranean foothills of the central mountain ridge of Palestine east to the desert' [see his map below]. He points out, 'One



Fig. 3: Dolmens mapped by Swauger stop near the parallel along the southern end of the Dead Sea

can say that dolmens are not found south of the Kerak area, ... an intriguing problem in itself' He could not map the ones in francophone Syria, but dolmens are there too and, with the less common single baetyls and other standing stone monuments we will look at shortly, seem more or less to tie in with those territories occupied in the 3/2M by the Amorites and then the 1M by the Canaanites (the difference between these two peoples is still not clear-cut, and probably means a change of name, rather than of a people, who are likely to have been the indigenous descendants of the very people in the ^CAmuq who initiated stone monuments there in the Pre-Pottery Neolithic period. We should bear in mind that Abraham moved to Harran from Ur and that the tradition of setting up stone monuments would have naturally blended thence into Jewish tradition.

Eight years after Swauger, Carl F Graesser⁹ turned to standing stones in monumental form not associated with tombs dating from 3,000 BC onwards, though again he had to leave out Syria (not within the orbit of British or American enquiry as greater Palestine still was), though he noted the use of stelai at Aššur – as well as in the

⁸ 'Dolmen Studies in Palestine' *The Biblical Archaeologist* XXIX-4 1966, 105-114

⁹ 'Standing Stones in Ancient Palestine' *The Biblical Archaeologists* XXXV-2 1972, 33-63

Phoenician colonies of North Africa and the Mediterranean islands that 'yielded a whole series of steles commemorating *mlk* sacrifices involving child sacrifice, two instances of which were found at Ugarit itself'. He categorised the shapes such slabs took - from large to very small - usually with curved tops, and found in the key Canaanite cities referred to in the Bible such as Gezer, Hazor, Schechem, Arad, Ta'anach, the Ophel Ridge at Jerusalem itself – and later at such places as Petra in the following millennium. He counts in the 'more than forty obeliskoid and slab *maššebot*, ranging in height from one foot to a rather impressive 11 feet' of 'the magnificent obelisk temple at Byblos' (c. 1800 BC), and discusses more rows of *maššebot* found at 'Gezer, Hazor¹⁰, Byblos and now near the copper mines at Timna', referring to Dever's later assessment of the Gezer stones (see **Fig. 2**) that 'Since they were intended to function as a unity of ten members, they [must have been] erected simultaneously' (c. 1600). He refers to Gezer's child burials nearby and that the 'socket-like block before the alignment may well have served as a blood altar for covenant sacrifices¹¹, ... as [did] the altar before the 12 *maššebot* of the Sinai covenant ceremony (**Exodus 24, 4-9**).... The dimensions of the socket fit perfectly an eleventh *maššeba* found by Macalister nearby'.

FINAL COMPLETION OF THE PICTURE FROM THE SYRIAN SIDE

Jumping three more decades on from Graesser's enquiry, thanks to the need to pursue my own research on the **Canon of Ancient Near-Eastern Art** in the context of the influence of baetyl worship on Crete, I came across a masterful and up-to-date survey by Jean-Marie Durand¹² of megalithic monuments in the region (most often a single standing stone), this time with the main emphasis on Syria. His survey, based on letters on clay tablets in the Mari Archive unearthed by the French¹³, is relevant for precisely the same period in time as highlighted by MacAlister and Graesser in particular – from the end of the 3M, all during the 2M and up to the start of the 1M – precisely when stone megalith building was at its height in both Europe and the Levant. Two end chapters in Durand's book by expert contributors¹⁴ provide a general overview of the importance of the raised monolith (in varied formats) for the Bedouin Amorite peoples in Arabia and the Levant, whilst a sourcebook of more recent examples used for comparison by Durand was Fahd's account of the continued use of such stones in the same region¹⁵ in the Pre-Islamic period (as well as cairns, featured, too, in some Old Testament incidents) showing to what extent even present day Islamic (as much as Habiru) ritual was, and still is, grounded in Stone Age practice.

Durand puts it in the foreword to his fascinating translation and interpretation of relevant correspondence in the Mari archive that he has come to the conclusion that 'il faudrait supposer que le rôle des bétyles était plus important dans l'Ouest [meaning the Levantine Near East] qu'on ne le soupçonne aujourd'hui'. In fact the Mari letters also reveal there to have been a measure of interchangeability between a standing stone or tree trunk, both intended to mark the precinct of God or Goddess or memorialise an important event. The practice is already well documented in Biblical references to the ^C*Asherah* which could mean a standing stone, but also either a live tree¹⁶ or wooden centrepiece involving considerable carpentry which we know from Biblical references were sometimes 'burned down' – and some Mari letters deal specifically with orders for the felling of appropriate trees (probably cedars) for such iconostases. The ^C*Asherah* - as either one or several pillars – would often be set up in the ritual 'high places' of ziggurat or mountain top, though in the case of the

¹⁰ 'Hazor ranks second only to Byblos in number of massebot produced and is unrivalled in the variety and significance of its stones: Altogether 40 have been found in at least 10 different loci, all from the Late Bronze Age', the most notable of which are the 10 massebot and statue 'found in the nich of the last phase of the shrine when it was rebuilt in the 13C', now carved with symbols such as praying hands and sun in the moon disc, of the type to be found in large numbers at Carthage.

¹¹ One or two monoliths at Göbekli had saucer-shaped depressions gouged into the stone floor at their foot, or were placed on altar-like plinths, Schmidt points out.

¹² Jean-Marie Durand *Le Culte des Pierres et les Monuments Commémoratifs en Syrie Amorite (Mémoires de N.A.B.U. 9/Florilegium Marianum VIII)* Paris 2005

¹³ For an excellent overview of Mari see Jean-Cl. Margueron *Mari: Métropole de l'Euphrate* 2004

¹⁴ Christophe Nicolle 'L'Identification des Vestiges Archéologiques de l'Aniconisme à l'Époque Amorrite' pp 177-89 and Lionel Marti 'Les Monuments Funéraires-Birûtu' pp 191-200. The former discusses in particular the baetyls inside the temple to Ištar at Tell Mohmamed Diyāb, one featuring cup-marks, the largest of which in **Catalogue C** I pick out as forming the outline of Ursa Major.

¹⁵ Taufiq Fahd *Le Panthéon de l'Arabie Centrale à la veille de l'Hégire* 1968

¹⁶ Archaeologists found traces within the Court of the Palms at Mari of the hole where a palm tree had been planted.

Sumerian Goddess Nin-Hur-Sag she was also associated with the mountain itself. One letter from Mari (A2945) reveals that certain trees were specially associated with Hadad the Storm God or his consort, the 'Lady of Nagar', and in others there are mentions of particular varieties of tree considered sacred that appear to have been long established from pre-Neolithic cultural norms, long before the quarrying of large stones was mastered.

The authorities on the subject tell us that in Syria the baetyl cult - important in particular to nomadic Bedouin, most specifically the Amorites of the Bensim'alite tribe - is attested from the 4M, for which there are also several well-known Biblical correspondences in later Hebrew practice in the region. We cannot make a full study of stone circles using twelve monoliths (which Yahweh in the Old Testament tells Moses should be raised to represent the Twelve Tribes¹⁷) since to complete our climb we will now make a jump sideways and leave dolmens, lines *and* circles of stones, in order to concentrate on key 2M Levantine temples using one baetyl, often rounded off in a cone at the top. This appears to have been the next development on from erecting full stone circles, where instead there was a blend between a Sumerian-style temple with chambers, and a courtyard with standing monolith - partly as the calendrical component used for alignment with to sky sightings but also understood as embodying the divine presence.

It is notable that from both documentary and physical evidence the Amorites (and later the pre-Islamic Arabs) were as particular as Neolithic Man in Europe about the type of stone to be quarried for baetyl use, and willing to transport pieces from far-flung quarries of specific geological makeup considered especially sacred to certain Gods or Goddesses (especially black basalt). It is no coincidence that key stone monuments of ancient Syria, Britain or France are located on, or very close to, riverine routes connecting quarry and temenos, which in Syria - as Durand points out - was the Euphrates and its tributaries. At Mari the same combination of rollers on land and rafts on rivers was used as at Stonehenge (all described in the palace correspondence written on the clay tablets of the Mari archive, in which even the job-titles of specialist stone-masons and carpenters undertaking the operation are given - a sensational complement to what has been deduced about the construction of Stonehenge from the geological nature of its megaliths and their engineering alone.

ZIMRILIM AND THE BAETYL OF ISHTAR

It is from the letters in the Mari archive (covering 30 years around 1800 BC) that for the first third of the second millennium a window suddenly opens onto the central importance of the raised stone, or baetyl, for the Bensim'alites once their new king, Zimrilim, took over Mari. His immediate predecessors - Akkadian Shamsi-Addu and his son Yasmah-Addu had had anthropomorphic statues made for every one of the planetary Gods and Goddesses (see letter A.3609) for monthly, or more frequent, celebration, but from the very first year of his reign Zimrilim was adamant the Amorite cult should be incorporated alongside the practices of Greater Mesopotamia so far upheld in Syria under what we might call 'foreign influence'. In a letter to his head administrator (A.652) he urges him at short notice to obtain in time for the ceremony the four baetyls, each 12 cubits high, needed to celebrate the imminent New Year Feast of Ištar/Venus. From what he says, evidently there was already a long-standing tradition of erecting baetyls to Dagan in the region and use of the same quarry to extract these further stones in honour of Ištar was advised, due to its recognised sacred nature (resting in part on the suitability of its stone). In later times the Nabateans named such a precinct of sacred stone a *masjid* (in modern-day Arabic the word for 'a place of worship').

Leaving aside the erection of upright monoliths that continued on into the 1M in the region - in what we now call 'The Holy Land' and at sites like Petra or Palmyra - as also those of pre-Islamic Arabia where actual examples are documented as standing for tribes, tribal leaders or individual Gods such as Dusares, al-^CUzza/Venus or (in the case of a pair of stones) Ba^Cal and his consort Ba^Calat (with circumambulation round

¹⁷ I do not agree with Graesser that 'The obvious paradigm for ... an understanding of the Gezer alignment is the 12-stone group at the Gilgal sanctuary (Joshua 4)...[which] marked the unity of the tribes of the Israelite confederation and commemorated their common historical experience, the crossing of the Jordan'. The line of 10+1 stones at Gezer, Nabta Playa and other sites suggests a different purpose to do with the intercalation of 11 days between lunar and solar calendars.

them attested in places such as Deir¹⁸, just outside Mari) from Durand's collection we here restrict ourselves to three early 2M instances of baetyl use around the time of Zimrilim where the strong documentary evidence put forward by him (*ibid.*) is backed up by the actual remains - at Mari and other sites - of baetyls set up within early 2M Syrian palace or temple precincts:

- ◇ A basalt baetyl was found by André Parrot in the courtyard of the Temple to Ištar, broken in two;

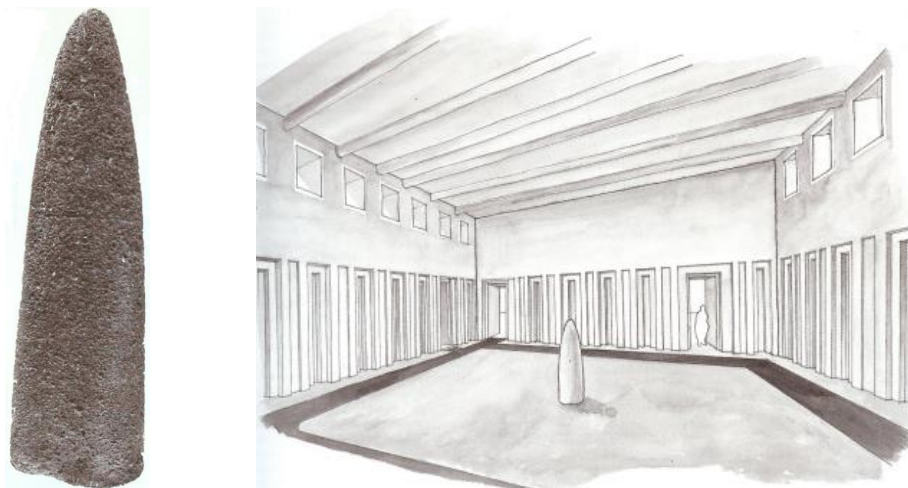


Fig. 4: Top half of the monolith in the Courtyard of the Temple to Ištar at Mari¹⁹, now in the Damascus Museum, with a reconstruction of its positioning - both reproduced in Margueron (*ibid.*) figs 252 and 231

- ◇ Ebla, like Mari, was a city contemporary to Mari, much closer to the Mediterranean, with open courtyards (copied in Crete) dedicated to religious rituals, including Ištar rites²⁰. References to baetyls found at Ebla (mentioned in its documents as *narū*, rather than *sikkanāt*) were brought together by A Archi²¹ - and summarised in Durand's survey as follows:

... les bétyles ont été retrouvés dans les temples d'Ébla des XVII^e-XVI^e siècles. Dans le temple N dans la cité basse, un monolithe de basalte a été trouvé s'appuyant contre deux dalles en pierre identiques dans le coin sud-ouest. Pendant le stade final d'utilisation du temple D, situé sur la pente ouest de l'acropole, deux bétyles avaient été érigés près du mur arrière de la cella, derrière une table d'offrandes.

and

*Dans les niveaux au dessus de l'hypogée G4, dans la partie nord du Palais G (c.f. les notes préliminaires dans P.Matthiae **CRAIB** 1995, 655-59) un monolithe de basalte (non publié) a été trouvé dans un contexte perturbé, érigé au milieu d'un cercle de pierres. Il se trouvait à 5m à l'ouest du mur occidental de l'hypogée, aligné avec le mur septentrional. Sa base reposait sur un niveau d'environ 1m au dessus du sommet préservé du mur nord de l'hypogée. Le monolithe a la forme d'un cône allongé, irrégulier; sa surface est polie.*

Ebla's life-long excavator, Paolo Matthiae, in a paper²² given at the same conference as Pinnock's (just cited above) gave fuller details of its comparatively recently discovered baetyls, again involving Ištar:

¹⁸ The word itself refers to the Semitic root *dwr* referring to circulation - the most common occurrence today being the ritual circumambulation of pilgrims round the Black Stone of the Goddess inset into the brick-built Cube/Ka'aba at Mecca (which itself replaces the former stone circle on the site).

¹⁹ A Parrot 'Excavations at Mari' *Syria* XXI 1954 156-7

²⁰ Frances Pinnock 'Open Cults and Temples in Syria and the Levant' *BAAL Hors Série VI* 2008 195-207

²¹ A Archi 'The Stele (NA-RÚ) in the Ebla Documents' in Jan Braun (ed.) *Written on Clay and Stone: Ancient Near Eastern Studies Presented to K Szarzynska* Warsaw 1998 15-24 - for further background see also his 'Fêtes de Printemps et d'Automne et Réintégration Rituelle d'Images de Culte dans L'Anatolie Hittite' *Ugarit-Forschungen V* 1973 7-27

²² Paolo Matthiae 'Temples and Queens at Ebla: Recent Discoveries in a Syrian Metropolis between Mesopotamia, Egypt and Levant' in *BAAL Hors Série VI* 2008 195-207, 117-139

The main role of the Eblaic Ishtar in the new royal ideology in the years immediately following 2000BC was certainly as dynastic goddess, patron and protecting the Old Syrian kings in Hammurabi of Babylon's age. This role is made clear in two original basalt votive monuments which probably stood in the square in front of Ishtar's Temple on the citadel: Ishtar's Stele discovered in 1986 and Ishtar's Obelisk, only partially recovered and reconstructed from two large fragments in 2007...

The stelae are carved with images referring to Ishtar: on the former she stands on a bull²³ and on the obelisk tantalisingly Matthiae refers to the remains of a bull-leaping scene²⁴, implying this was a gymnastic rite in Her honour, enacted as much in Syria as in Crete.

- ◇ Baetyl rituals are cited several times in the Émar and Ekallatum archives, in the former city several times in relation to the enthronement of a new high priestess²⁵, with the stone in this case specifically embodying the western Amorite Goddess Hébat (a variation on Ba^cal/Hadad's consort). Another ceremony there describes Dagan's anthropomorphic statue as taken through a gateway framed by two baetyls with his face veiled, then on the return journey from the temple 'on découvre la face de Dagan. Le chariot de Dagan passe entre les bétyles.... Sa face n'est plus couverte', writes Durand.

As Durand points out, even if we do not know precisely what form all other rituals might have taken in relation to such standing stones, the mentions of pouring oil and unguents over them, along with the sacrifice of a beast would have constituted the basic minimum while the many further examples described in the Bible provide variations. The Bible is a primary reference, of course, for documenting instances of the erection – in seamless continuity with the 2M tradition of the region – of what in Jewish parlance were called *maṣṣebot*, such as the one set up by Ahab to Ba^cal at Samaria (*II Kings III*, 2). The earliest mentions of this practice are given in *Genesis XXVIII*, 18 and *XXXV*, 14, describing the stone set up to Yahweh by Jacob at Bayt-El (Bethel – note the reference is still to the House of the God El/Saturn) as a commemorative monument (*humūsum*) to his dream in which God promises him, under his new name of Israel, that he will beget the tribes occupying the land. Generations later during the Exodus, these tribes are marked as a circle of twelve standing stones as partakers of the contract with God at the foot of Mount Sinai, from whose summit Moses receives the two stelae inscribed with the Ten Commandments, much as the 2M Hammurabi Code was inscribed on a large monolith – both therefore also *humūsum*. Even on a modern piece of Jewish temple furnishing, as below, the Syro-Mesopotamian heraldic arrangement of two lions either side of the Tablets of the Law is retained, still



Fig. 5: (left) East European bronze Torah shield (19C) Jewish Museum New York: compare the juxtaposition of stones and tree on the Roman coin of Ambrosius - from Marinatos²⁶ fig.7.1

²³ P Matthiae 'Les Dernières Découvertes d'Ébla en 1983-1986' *Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions & Belles-Lettres* 1987 Janvier-Mars 135-161 fig.9

²⁴ In a recent volume of *Aegypten und Levante* not yet available to me in the libraries at the time of writing.

²⁵ The text for the entire ritual is translated in Daniel E Fleming *The Installation of Baal's High Priestess at Emar: A Window on Ancient Syrian Religion* Atlanta 1992

²⁶ Nanno Marinatos *Minoan Kingship and the Solar Goddess* 2010

embedded in Jewish religious imagery as the effective format for an iconostasis (Divine self-projection) in aniconic mode. Either side is the pair of columns/baetyls holding up the Tent of the Holy Covenant and standing for the Male and Female poles of the aniconic Divine, originally used to framed 2M city gates or temples as raw, unworked monoliths – in more finished state framing the entrance to the Temple of Solomon as the pillars Joachim and Boaz, still redolent with the Stone Age resonances of the region. Yet the Law of Moses forbade the planting (or erection) of the ^cAsherah as such (whether sacred tree or sacred pillar) at the altar of Yahweh due to its pagan associations – in its double iconoclasm a contradiction of massive proportion.

With such archaeological and documentary evidence, Durand concluded there were four main functions served by standing stone monuments (the calendrical aspects are not considered at all, being a vast study in itself, and something I have tried to pursue further in both the **Cosmokrator** and **CANEA** projects).

CATEGORIES OF MEGALITHIC MONUMENT

Graesser (*ibid.*) had been the first to try to categorise the four main types of standing stone monument, which Durand built upon and refined. He cites the several Biblical references which helped in the early stages of research to give documentary pointers, but without the huge expansion of knowledge from the Mari archive Durand was now able to lay out in his own survey nearly 30 years later (he gives due recognition to the earlier work of his predecessors) we would not now be able to fill out the picture with such stunning factual detail. The terminology for each type as used in relevant Mari letters in some contexts is role specific, but at other times they are used more vaguely and interchangeably with each other. However, overall Durand and his two contributors (*ibid.*) distinguish between them as follows²⁷:

- ◇ the embodiment of the presence of a particular God or Goddess as a raw, unworked slab (*sikkānum*/Hebrew *maṣṣeboth*/English *megalith*) – in contrast to sculpted stelae with writing and images in the tradition of Greater Mesopotamia (*narūm*), the split in practice almost certainly marking the nomad –v- urban society divide;
- ◇ the commemoration of an event such as the giving of laws, the marking of an agreement reached or demarcation of a land boundary (*humūsum*), more usually a cairn of stones rather than a single monolith but in the latter case its erection is referred to as the *ramūm* rite (the celebration of a martial victory and ensuing delimitation of a geographical border in actual practice was as often marked by a monolith as by a cairn);
- ◇ the commemoration of ancestors²⁸ or a key person's death, either as tomb or cenotaph (*birūtum*) – this turns out to be the more restricted Akkadian term carried over to the *humūsum*;
- ◇ the marking of the New Moon's arrival (*kispum*), especially at the New Year, by the raising of a stone, most crucially, I think, when deciding on the inclusion of an intercalary month or not.

I trust that through this study after looking at Levantine practice we might gain further fruitful ideas about new ways of looking at European megalithic monuments– and vice versa. What was the relationship between these two vast areas, and who were the astronomer-architects, quarrymen and stone masons travelling between these countries, who surely at certain points must have exchanged expertise? These were the intellectuals of their time who understood how to tell the time by setting up stones in certain alignments to the sky, resulting in reverence for the powers of the great planets that became embodied in them as they moved across the stars. Given Britain at one time was regarded as a centre for this knowledge, and also the persistence of megalithic monument making in North Syria, I believe there was a two-way process that eludes us. If you have any points to make, send me your ideas and I will post them onto the end of this Newsletter.

Previous Newsletters follow below

²⁷ See also M. Dietrich et al. 'Sikkānum "Bétyle"' *UF* 21 1989 133-39

²⁸ See Johannes C de Moor 'Standing Stones and Ancestor Worship' *UF* 27 1995 1-20 and O Lorenz 'Stelen und Sohnespflicht im Totenkult Kanaans und Israels' *UF* 21 1989 243-6

COSMOKRATOR NEWSLETTER 2012 © Asia Haleem

*I give below the text for a short blog I did for my astrologer colleague on www.lanawooster.co.uk regarding the **2012 Transit of Venus**. There may be other items on her site that you would like to read, including my fuller blog on this momentous transit called 'Babylonians, Mexicans and the Total Count', also relevant for 2012!*

VENUS AND THE BEARS

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At the heart of ancient near eastern art 3000-500BC lies a visual language expressing the passing of cycles of time, actively used to keep abreast of the calendar in centuries long before clocks. Astronomer priests' main role was to measure time (*tempus/temple*) by direct observation of the planets against the backdrop of the stars. As we come up to the Transit of Venus - which will occur during the evening of 5 June up to the early hours of 6 June* – I would like to pinpoint one interesting aspect of Venus that appears on Mesopotamian seal designs during the Second Millennium which is intriguing because it links in to our own Glastonbury Zodiac in Somerset. Due to space constraints I can only give a brief summary of what I explain with full references in the *Lion and Prey Rear Attack Catalogue* at www.layish.co.uk - relying on the pictures to speak for themselves.

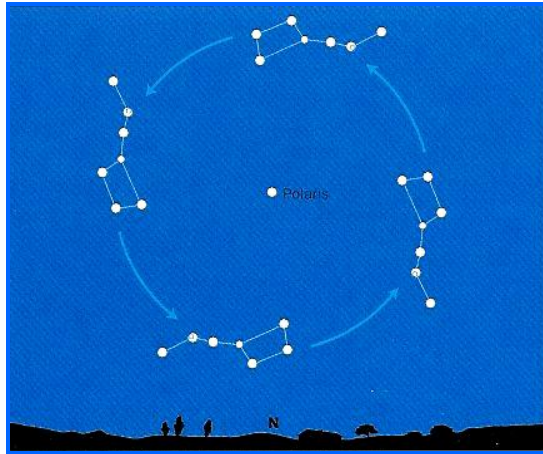
** See my earlier blog on this website about the 2012 Venus Transit in the Mexican calendar.*

In the seal impression below, Venus stepping up onto the back of a lioness holds a double lion-headed mace in her right hand, and in her left a dog-leg shaped weapon (*harpé*) which I believe deliberately refers to the outline of Ursa Major. Behind her, a king offers respects to the Sun, Shamash, rising over the back of a lion.



Miniature harpé (top) as held in the left hand of Ištar on a seal from Tell Asmar (bottom)

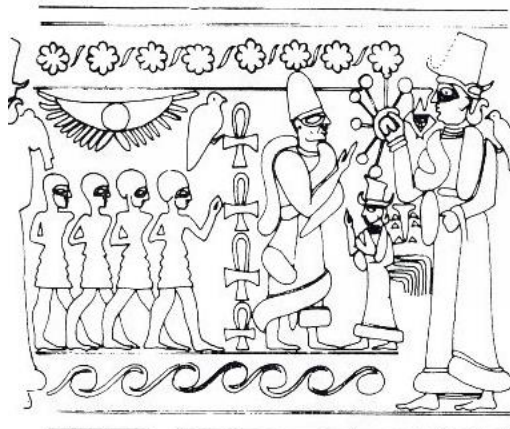
I see the scene as referring to Venus and Sun rising together - but what may the role of Ursa Major be?



Ursa Major's position on any one night gives the time of year and the sidereal time for that day

One answer is that it is possible to tell the time of year not only by the rising of the Sun against the Signs of the Zodiac, but at a higher level of the sky - as a double-check - by the degree of turn of Ursa Major from a fixed viewpoint at the same time (midnight) every day (this is a different matter from the 360° circuit Ursa Major makes every 24 hours - for at each round there is a slight slippage backwards).

We know that because 5 Venus cycles equal 8 Earth years (almost to the day), the Venus cycle was important for cross-checking New Year Day – hence for the Babylonians ranking with the Sun and Moon. When Archaic Greece adopted the eight-year cycle for their calendar they instituted athletic Games at key temple sites such as Delphi and Olympia as a reminder, and to celebrate it – later making them every four years to mark the half-way point also. But a cross-check to the cross-check was to notice the position of Ursa Major in the sky and the fact that Venus holds it downwards points to the time of year the Year Start would be measured from. There are Mesopotamian texts that specifically link Venus to the Sibitti (the Seven-star group which can refer not only to the Great Bear, but also to the Seven-day week which the Mesopotamians lived by (inherited by us)).



A Syrian king pays respects to Venus with dove on her shoulder and holding a seven-fold mace (one merges with the flower on the border)

Above is a drawing of a 2M seal from Alalakh, Syria, where Venus has a square hat. Apart from the Ankh signs referring to her, she holds in her upheld right hand a symbol of the Sibitti (Seven-Star) but she also has a pigeon or dove on her shoulder – a well-known symbol for Venus.

At this point we jump briefly to look at the main outline of the Glastonbury Zodiac (I have reversed the image to our more habitual Earth-view). It is said to date at least to the Second Millennium BC, if not to the late Third Millennium – and clues that it was inspired by Sumer come from the word Somerset itself, as well as other place-names – the River Parrot in the county is the name of the Euphrates for example. At the centre of this land zodiac is a bird - which we could call a dove - marking the Polar Centre.



Mary Caine's reworking of the Glastonbury Zodiac (1989), reversed (the addition in red of the head to the Aquarian Phoenix is mine)

Does the Dove here mark the position of Ursa Major – or Ursa Minor? Anyone ignorant of astronomy today still knows how to find the Pole by using the stars at the side of Ursa Major to run a line up to the tail of Ursa Minor at the Centre. Let us not get into the displacement of the Polar Centre over the millennia – the basic indicators of that fixed zone of the sky have since the Second Millennium been the Two Bears – and it is feasible that Venus's dog-leg weapon refers as much to Ursa Minor's seven stars.

I have a sense of several calendrical dovetails coinciding in the first week of June when not only is the Queen's Jubilee Bank Holiday of Tuesday 5 June marked by the Transit of Venus with an Olympic celebration in London following, but also a lunar eclipse the day before (4 June, reconciling lunar and solar years), accompanied by a cumulative gathering of nations in the Capital that starts with the performance of all Shakespeare's plays in different languages at the Globe Theatre (a circular building representing The World) and ends with the Games after a Grand Eight-Year cycle of Venus marked by rare Transits of Venus (2004 and 2012). I recommend you on June 5 at midnight you check the position of the Great Bear and then wait up for the end of the Transit of Venus at dawn on June 6 (via its reflection in a bucket of water) – and you should have lined up the benchmarks for the World to make a new beginning! I deal you *The World* Tarot card!

COSMOKRATOR NEWSLETTER 2011 © Asia Haleem

Even though I knew I would not be able to service it properly until I had left the day job, this website was put up five years ago to put its foundations in place and make the 3-D zodiac model available. I am now free to start a conversation with you through an occasional newsletter, and I look forward to your comments back to me on asia@cosmokrator.com.

I have had several offers from shops to include Cosmokrator in their stock, which I have resisted, since I would prefer knowledge about it to spread gradually by word of mouth. If you have liked the model, please tell your friends about it, or give one to them as a present!

I am pretty sure that those who have bought Cosmokrator (Cosmo for short) have constructed it, loved looking at it, but then not applied it to their lives. There are several hurdles, the first being to read the material on the website and understand *how* to use it - at a very basic level to start with, amongst friends – it couldn't be easier. Then every year there is a booklet which expands on its intellectual and practical potential along different disciplines – an ideal curriculum for children in junior school, repeatable at a raised level at both high school and then university – and finally it provides permanent keys to Life itself, for ever and ever.

The next barrier to overcome for those new to astrology is really to learn the symbols for the planets and signs. Become a child again and write a line of Venuses, a line of Jupiters, a line of Leos – and so on – so they start to become automatic and speak to you like any other alphabet. It is worth spending the time because they are used in the written material and not always spelt out as words! Perhaps the greatest barrier to using Cosmo is that those already well-versed in astrology will have stopped in their tracks fairly soon on realising that I have not followed the tradition where (other than the Sun ruling Leo and the Moon Cancer) one planet is the governing influence (the Ruler) of *two* signs, thus:

Mars traditionally rules not only Aries, but also Scorpio

Jupiter traditionally rules not only Sagittarius, but also Pisces

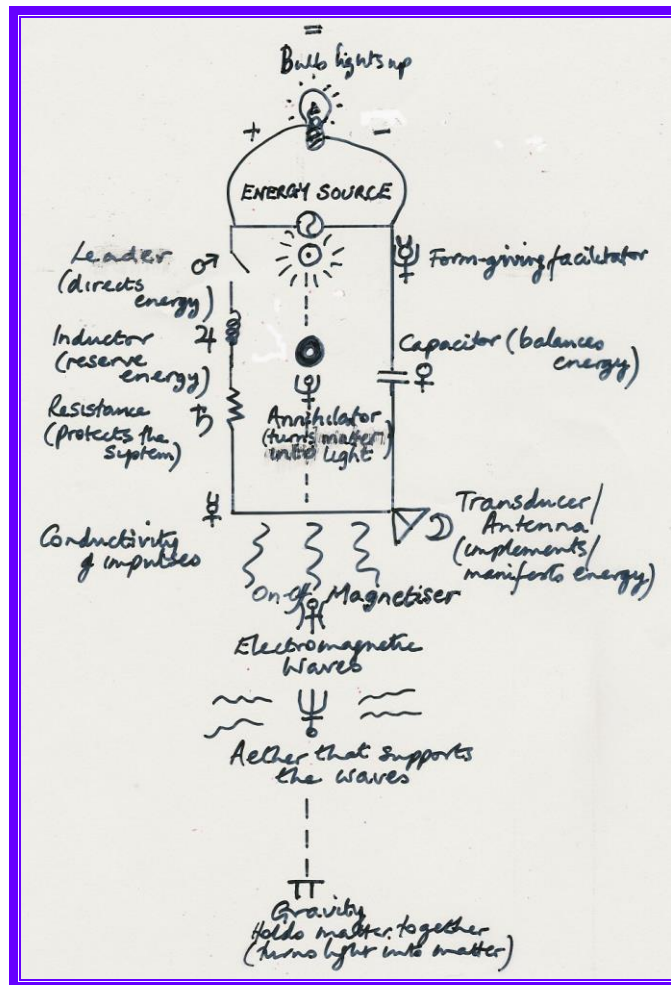
Venus traditionally rules not only Libra, but also Taurus

Saturn traditionally rules not only Capricorn, but also Aquarius

Mercury traditionally rules not only Gemini but also Virgo






























































Following implicit references in the well-known San Francisco astrologer Linda Goodman's work (to information learned from Charles Musès) though she did not actually take the step of upsetting the apple cart as I am doing - I have reinstated to their rightful places planets that went out of use in the Christian era, which saw the Death of the Gods. This means we now have a set of up-to-date concordances, chiming in perfectly with ancient world practice, where one planet rules one sign.

Charles Musès (one of Linda Goodman's advisers) once summed up for me the character of the planetary energies in relation to the Energy Circuit of the Universe, as below (where the bulb is Earth!). I found it helpful in understanding the nature of each planet: and I hope you will too.



PLANETARY INFLUENCES compared to electrical phenomena by Charles Musès

As we are on the brink of the Age of Aquarius I believe we should try now to put this system to use, since it is infinitely more subtle and accurate when it comes to interpreting horoscopes and events.

HYPSONA		PLANET	DOMICILE	
SIGN OF DEJECTION	SIGN AND DEGREE OF EXALTATION	TRADITIONAL RULING PLANET	ZODIAC SIGN	21 ST CENTURY RULING PLANET
   TAIL OF DRAGON          	 27°	VENUS ♀	TAURUS 	* PAN 
	 15°	MERCURY ♀	TAURUS 	
	 3°  3° HEAD OF DRAGON SIRIUS 	MOON ☾	GEMINI 	MERCURY ♀
	 19°	NORTH NODE ♏ SOUTH NODE ♎	CANCER 	MOON ☾
	 15°	MERCURY ♀	DRAGON OF THE LUNAR NODES  AS LUNAR * PATH CROSSES ECLIPTIC	ECLIPSE   * MOON (OR EARTH) STANDS IN THE WAY OF SUN'S LIGHT
	 27°	SUN ☉	LEO 	SUN ☉
	 28°	MERCURY ♀	VIRGO 	* VULCAN 
	 15°	VENUS ♀	VIRGO 	
	 21°	MARS ♂	LIBRA 	VENUS ♀
	 21°	JUPITER ♃	SCORPIO 	* PLUTO 
	 15°	SATURN ♄	SCORPIO 	
	 28°	SATURN ♄	SAGITTARIUS 	JUPITER ♃
	 27°	JUPITER ♃	CAPRICORN 	SATURN ♄
	 15°	JUPITER ♃	AQUARIUS 	* URANUS 
	 3°	MARS ♂	AQUARIUS 	
	 19°	JUPITER ♃	PISCES 	* NEPTUNE 
	 15°	MARS ♂	PISCES 	
	 27°	← POLAR AXIS →	ARIES 	MARS ♂
	SIRIUS  VP		POLAR CENTRE 	EARTH 

The PLANETARY GODS (middle column) against the signs they rule (right) and signs of their exaltation and dejection (left): alternative 21st century rulerships are given in the extreme right-hand column (I have hand-drawn some symbols for more recent planets not yet commonly used (see more on www.cosmokrator.com) * Learn also the symbol ♄ meaning 'conjunct with' and ♅ meaning 'in opposition to'

This information is summarised and contrasted in the table above, where the traditional planets are given in the central column and relate twice to sign rulerships, while the updated rulerships used on the Cosmokrator model are given in the two right-hand columns, which means:

- ♦ ***Mars rules Aries - but the true ruler of Scorpio is Pluto***
- ♦ ***Jupiter rules Sagittarius - but the true ruler of Pisces is Neptune***
- ♦ ***Venus rules Libra - but the true ruler of Taurus is Pan*** (on the outer edge of the Solar System, *standing also for the entire planetary system taken together as one body of influence*).
- ♦ ***Saturn rules Capricorn - but the true ruler of Aquarius is Uranus***
- ♦ ***Mercury rules Gemini - but the true ruler of Virgo is Vulcan*** (even closer to the Sun than Mercury, Vulcan the Shaman God is described with a hip out of joint, or disabled in other ways from being so close to the Sun, *standing for the executive power behind the Universe bringing a physically formed Creation into being*).

The Exaltation signs (*Hypsoma*) for the reintroduced planets have not yet been assigned – we need to see more case histories before we can be sure of astrological practice here, so only the traditional signs for the exaltation and dejection (the sign opposite their rulership, in which they behave worst) are given in the left-hand two columns - meaning there are gaps yet to be filled.

People new to astrology will find it easier to take it up than astrologers with traditional training - who will find it hard to reprogramme their minds. They probably will not have a problem about the reallocation of Pluto, Neptune and Uranus, but will drag their feet when it comes to Pan and Vulcan. Yet they ring so true. Pan is the surge of Life Energy within the entire world of Nature, so well embodied in the virile Bull, whilst Vulcan is the God of Making Things, rather than Thinking Things as Mercury does.

Releasing Pan in people's horoscopes points to those with an all-encompassing view of life – people who are not limited by family, race, religion or nationality (they are international citizens who serve Nature or support the world through farming). Releasing Vulcan in people's horoscopes validates all those people who have a bent not only towards DIY or home hobbies involving sewing or making models, but also craftsmen and women – and the millions who work in the large-scale manufacturing and building industries, earning their living by the things they make. World society absolutely rests on the efforts of those people with a strong Pan or Vulcan.