



# The MYTHOLOGY of VENUS

ANCIENT CALENDARS  
AND ARCHAEOASTRONOMY

Edited by Helen Benigni

With a foreword by Morgan Llywelyn



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# Foreword

Morgan Llywelyn

Life is a school. There are few limits to what a human being with an open mind may learn. An open mind allows one to cross borders and transcend limitations. Such interdisciplinary studies challenge the flexibility — the range — of the human intellect. In this groundbreaking work the authors challenge us to look beyond the galaxy of our prejudices to a universe of possibilities.

We are flesh and spirit. Both are necessary to the whole. Separating the human body from its animating force leaves but a handful of minerals unable to reform into a sentient being. Modern science, far-reaching and complex as it is, cannot create a flesh and blood human brain with its unique individuality and awesome potential for creativity. That brain and that potential define us. We are no closer to understanding how and why than we were when we first stood on our hind legs and walked out of Africa.

Science asks us to accept only that which conforms to current mathematics or can be experienced through our five senses. Yet dogs recognize thousands of scents we cannot even smell. The common housefly sees a vast range of colours far beyond the human spectrum. They and the creatures like them inhabit a world invisible to us. Does it exist? Simple logic tells us it must.

Faith has been described as the evidence of things unseen. In an attempt to reify the non-corporeal, the world's leading religions have used priests, or prophets, or scriptures, or images, or even architecture. None of these explain the deeply ingrained human need to *worship*. It appears to be genetically implanted in our species, no matter the race or colour. We may worship at the shrine of Christ or Buddha; Elvis Presley or Marilyn Monroe. But in every generation, we worship. The need to direct our spiritual passion towards a receptive force is as powerful as our need to breathe.

This book examines some related aspects of the human need to worship. From the work of highly respected scholars in different fields it is possible to gain an overview of a unifying ancient symbol which is more than the sum of its parts. Since prehistory, mankind has recognized and responded to the sacral element in the female. No single image is sufficient to embody something which transcends time and space. The Morrigan, Celtic goddess of war, is Aphrodite, Greek goddess of love. Her terrible, tender face in a hundred different guises peers out at us from our collective memory. Embodiment of the life force, hers is the name men cry aloud in their death throes.

She is The Goddess.

Morgan Llywelyn 2011

# Preface

Before being introduced to the wealth of details and facts that lead to the overwhelming question of whether the archetype of the Goddess of Venus began in the Paleolithic cave art and ritual buried deep in the consciousness of our humanity, I would ask the reader to examine the motives put before this writer to inspire me to the task of this meticulous research project. What would make me pursue the project with an aim toward careful proof that such an archetype might be traced to the beginnings of religious and sacred thought and still influence us today? The answer is two-fold in nature. Primarily, I sought to prove, with the facts before me, such as those symbols engraved in the stone monuments of the distant past, that in the study of an archetype of a goddess of such magnitude, I would discover an enduring feminine presence embracing cultures over eons of time. In a world where the study of the archetype of the Goddess of Venus has been pushed aside as a representative of sexual pleasure and entertainment alone, the underlying importance of a female deity responsible for the resurrection and renewal of life has been understated if not buried in time. The feminine archetype of the Goddess of Venus as a symbol of resurrection and a belief in the afterlife is an essential element of the human psyche. Therefore, the full potential and powerful influence of the Goddess of Venus may be realized within the scope of this study which attempts to bring her characteristics, images, and symbols to life. This, in itself, is worth proving the fact that in our consciousness, humanity needs this female symbol for renewal both in a cultural and spiritual sense.

Second, I would put forward the idea that the study was conducted as proof that we are indeed the sum total of our ancestors. As Joseph Campbell has stated in volume after volume of intensive study of the archetypes of all cultures, the need to identify with the past and continue a mythology of our

culture is also an inherent need in the human psyche. In order to accomplish this tremendous endeavor, we must study where we have been to continue the process of the evolution of human thought. At a time when several cultures have recognized the beginning of a cycle ripe for cultural change which is logically based on the world around us and the cycles of precession in the night sky that may very well communicate the need for change on some unconscious level, it is time to consider which myths are most abiding and which myths we have cast aside in the past that should be resurrected into a new, vital mythology. Entering the archetype of a goddess, such as the one associated with the planet of Venus, is one necessary part of resurrecting those images of the feminine that have been misunderstood or omitted in the patriarchal cultures that dominate the world today. However, the larger task before us is to re-create an entire mythology based, not only on the resurrection of the Goddess of Venus, but of a re-vamping of human thought conscious of the balance of the life force itself with a respect not only of a feminine and masculine balance, but one which contains a balance with the forces of Nature and the Earth itself.

To this end, we gather our thoughts around the ancient calendars of the Mesoamerican, the Greek and the Celtic cultures that introduce us to the startling date of the Winter Solstice of 2012 which might be one of the largest cycles of precession measured by humanity. Whether this precessional cycle is based on astronomy and/or religious speculation, the fact remains that we have accumulated an amazing amount of energy and human thought on such an avenue for possible change. It speaks of the need for change on a level of global consciousness never before presented to us as a species. Might we not pay some attention to the need for incorporating change into our mythologies which are expressions of the way we interpret and act upon the world around us? After having been involved in a decade of the study of the cycles of precession on ancient calendars, I would hope that the presentation of the archetype of the Goddess of Venus would be an inspiration for that change, for surely, it is the culmination of that study. The true balance of the observations of the celestial bodies that guide us through our own mythological life cycles are composed of three guiding forces: the sun, the moon, and Venus. It is this trinity of celestial bodies observable to the naked eye for both the ancients and ourselves that makes a calendar which keeps time for humanity thus directing us to be in tune with the larger cycles of our lives. And it is the cycles of Venus that complete that calendar.

*The Mythology of Venus: Ancient Calendars and Archaeoastronomy* is the third and final text in a series of studies that reveal the underlying myths of the cycles of precession. The first study, *The Myth of the Year: Returning to the Origin of the Druid Calendar* (University Press of America, 2003), demonstrates how the ancients based their myths on four seasonal groupings of constellations that follow the yearly cycles of the sun and the moon. For

the ancient Celts and Greeks that involved keeping time by the night sky as it followed the agricultural cycles of the Earth. The goddesses and gods of the Earth, such as Demeter and Dionysus, lead the people through myths that keep humanity in tune with the movements of the celestial bodies. The second study, *The Goddess and the Bull: A Study in Minoan-Mycenaean Mythology* (University Press of America, 2007), focuses on the cycles of the moon beyond the year. Here, the five, nineteen, fifty-six, and other successive precessional cycles of the moon have been unearthed in the Bronze Age culture of the Minoan-Mycenaean peoples as well as the Celts to form a body of religious ritual and belief whose central figure is The Goddess and Her consort, The Bull. This archetype forms the basis of understanding the concept of sacrifice at the center of many mythologies that follow this ancient example. Finally, we have come to the cycles of Venus which must be intertwined with the precessional cycles of the sun and the moon to form a trinity as the basis of many belief systems of ancient cultures. Venus emerges as the Goddess of Resurrection and Renewal who gracefully moves through the celestial patterns climbing the heights of the night sky as she rises from the sea in her own cycle that transgresses the yearly cycle flowing in and out of the consciousness of both lunar and solar energy.

In the first chapter of *The Mythology of Venus* entitled “The Emergence of the Goddess,” I identify the archetype of the Goddess of Venus in the Paleolithic cave art, sculpture, and ancient monuments in its earliest stages. Venus appears to be part of what Carl Gustave Jung and Erich Neumann call the transformative character of the primordial archetype where her image is seen as a regenerative force for change connected to the celestial order. Joseph Campbell and Marija Gimbutas also note the emergence of the transformative form of the archetype as time-factored and identified with cyclical time in the cosmos, respectively. Lascaux Cave and Pierre Plates on the Locmariaquer peninsula in France use symbols such as sacred water, water birds, reclining nudes, and the columns of life to delineate the patterns of the planet Venus in its cycles as Morning and Evening Star. The fluidity and beauty of these patterns in the night sky represent a feminine force for conception from the maternal waters as well as the regenerative force of life itself. Like the caves in France, such as Lascaux and Chauvet, the Neolithic mounds of Newgrange at the Brú na Bóinne in Ireland and the Neolithic temples, such as Ħaġar Qim and Ħal-Saflieni in Malta, also embody the concept of Venus as Regeneratrix in both the construction of their sacred spaces and in symbolic language carved on the temples. The sacred waters, reclining nudes, triangle signs, and the figure of a goddess climbing The World Tree are dominant representations in the cycles of Venus reflected in the temples’ orientation to the planet’s journey in the night sky. The most intricate patterns of the cycle of Venus are seen in the notations of astronomy

on the kerbstones of Newgrange carved by the ancient astronomers of Ireland.

The cosmology of the sacred feminine represented by the Goddess of Venus develops in the Minoan-Mycenaean culture of the Mediterranean in what is later depicted as a goddess with arms raised in a posture of adoration of the heavens which is represented in the Greek alphabet as “psi.” This goddess embodies the concept of spiritual enlightenment through awareness of the celestial and as a model for transformation is identified with many of the same symbols of renewal such as sacred water, water birds, the columns of life or The World Tree and beautiful reclining nudes. A *kouros*, or young male companion, is depicted in the frescoes and sculpture of the Minoan-Mycenaean culture as a companion that the Goddess of Venus must retrieve from the Underworld in her journey through the night sky. Lustral basins, pillar crypts, myrtle trees, doves and other iconography of the Goddess of Venus are seen in the expansive cult centers of Knossos and Mycenae where the goddess’ temples are aligned to the planet’s cycles. In a chapter entitled “The Epiphany of the Goddess,” I identify these images as precursors to the figure of Aphrodite in Greek mythology. An easy transference of the Goddess of Venus as Aphrodite and her lover as Adonis in Greek mythology follows with the explanation of the myths that trace the many faces of Aphrodite as Morning and Evening Star. Her identification with the powers of creation, her birth from the sea, and her journey to eternally re-unite with her lover corresponds with the cycles of the planet Venus. Likewise, Aphrodite’s temples in Greece, such as those located on the Acrocorinth and the Acropolis, are aligned to Venus’ journey in the heavens. Many festivals on the Attic Calendar, including the Adonia, the Skiraphoria, and the Aphrodisia, recreate the myths of the Goddess of Venus using rituals and symbolic art to enact the journey of the goddess and planet.

The cultural importance of the Goddess of Venus is broadened by Miriam Robbins Dexter’s chapter that cites the images, myths, symbols and art associated with the goddess in Indo-European cultures. In a chapter entitled “Love Goddesses of the Early Historic Age,” Dexter identifies female figures associated with love goddesses in the Paleolithic and Neolithic Eras to include figures with apotropaic features, or those goddesses who protect the worshippers in the temple or cave, as well as figures associated with musical instruments, dance, and sacred displays of genitalia. According to Dexter, “the female body was considered sacred and propitious, and the nudedancer was thus able to effect the magic needed for the group” as a shamanic figure. Indus Valley figures as well as figures from Anatolia are identified with the love goddess as Venus by waterbirds and snakes as part of their iconography of symbols that represent the life continuum and regeneration. Dexter cites the early historic goddesses that repeat these iconographic features such as Inanna in ancient Sumer. As Inanna and Ishtar among the Akkadians and