

July 27, 1962

Dear Mr. Bennett:

Was happy to receive your letter. First, let me thank you for returning the Ingrid Lind book, and for enclosing the page with the symbols for the first side of the disk on it. You may want this for your own use, so am returning it to you.

In answer to your questions, first let me say that in the opening of my mss. I do NOT say how I arrived at my conclusions. I simply give the conclusions themselves. Since the material is unfamiliar to most people (the Cretan symbols to those who know nothing of that period, and the astrology to those who are unfamiliar with the subject) it seemed simplest to handle the material in this fashion. The opening of the mss. states my conclusions, and HOW I arrived at them is discussed in detail under the heading - "The ~~Phaistos~~ Phaistos Disk" - or - "The translation of the Disk".

Unfortunately, as I believe I wrote you before, my only other copy of the mss. is in California and I do not have it to hand to refer to, so I cannot give you pages to refer to in this letter, but I can give you the headings under which different material is handled.

I can certainly sympathize with your statement that "there is more astrology than I think I want beforehand". So let me say something on this and several other questions before I answer your specific questions concerning the symbols for Lee and so on. Perhaps because astrology has become so firmly equated with superstition and "Coney Island fortune telling" it is difficult for ~~most~~ most people to realize that it is a subject which requires study to understand its concepts. Phrased differently, one may take first year astrology just as one may take first year French or first year arithmetic. Mathematicians say that mathematics is a language of symbols, and astrology is such a language also. I can illustrate this quite readily: One of the early attempts to analyze the astrology of ancient civilizations is to be found in "The Babylonian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania", edited by H. V. Hilprecht, Philadelphia, 1907, published by the University of Pennsylvania, Volume IV. On page 103 there is some bafflement because Ea is represented in one illustration as the waterman pouring two streams (of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, I might add) from two urns, and in another illustration Ea is identified with the goatfish of Capricorn. Actually, there is no confusion here - the symbolism, or the symbolic language if you prefer, is quite clear. Ea was the overlord of the three signs or constellations that surrounded the winter solstice. Ea, with the urns as Aquarius, is Ea of the Taurean age, when Aquarius was the center of the winter solstice - or Ea as conceived of by the Sumerians and Akkadians, while Ea with the goatfish of Capricorn, was Ea of the following second Arian age, or Ea as conceived of by the Babylonians of the first empire. The symbolical language is absolutely unambiguous, if you have the key to reading it!

In the opening of the mss. I simply gave my conclusions, then I gave some background material, which it is necessary to understand and to accept provisionally in order to tackle the actual symbol by symbol translation of the disk. Perhaps I did not amplify this whole opening section enough, or give enough illustrations. I will have to re-read the mss. at such time as I have a copy to do so.



It was my feeling that, in order to understand the translation, not too much technical astrological knowledge was needed on the part of the reader. (Perhaps I was wrong in this.) But that it was necessary to give some of the historical development of the zodiac in the centuries preceding the writing of the disk. For example, a modern person with some knowledge of astrological concepts would not immediately identify the two Eas correctly, since he would not know that astrology-astronomy was used in early Mesopotamia to record precessional ages. Once he understood that, he could immediately distinguish between the two Eas.

You say you find in signs 1, 13, and 22, "nothing in common." I will amplify this, although I did to some extent at least handle this in my general introductory and background sections. The Mesopotamians loved to play variations on themes. I used the early Hebrew alphabet as an illustration of this type of thing. Also they looked for overlapping meanings, for double insights into truth to be found in the same material. Their love of "sacred puns" is illustrative of this. Georges Contenau in "Everyday Life in Assyria", Martindale Press (?), NYC, showed insight into this. As he explained it they broke words down into syllables, wrote syllables backwards as well as forwards. Each new arrangement produced a new truth, and all of the truths overlapped and gave greater meaning to the whole. As Contenau stated - to the modern mind this might seem like an arid exercise, but to the Babylonians (Assyrians, et al) it was much like the modern scientist examining things under a microscope. I would say that they were creating language, and words had to be studied from every angle to make language an intelligible means of communication and also a vehicle capable of supporting poetry, evoking images and needs and so on.

In any event, in the disk there is a similar variation of themes - each variation has a specific intention, and - when Lee is shown by slightly different symbols at different times it is intentional, and much thought and ingenuity went into the choice of the particular symbols.

You question my omission of 18A, and you are right to do so. I did take it into consideration, but - as I remember - did not write about it in the mss., but should have done so. In the whole central section of the first side of the disk there is a zodiac and a half, with six signs - ~~Quart~~ Aquarius through Cancer omitted. Then there is a bridge to the outer rim in 18A, and in the outer rim there is one entire zodiac. On the second side in the whole central section there is one ~~zodiac~~ entire zodiac and the six signs that were omitted on the first half are also included. Then there is a bridge to the outer rim and there is one entire zodiac in the outer rim. There is symmetry in this pattern. Someone called O. Weidner once studied the early Omen texts from the Assyrian libraries and found 17 signs of the zodiac, which he concluded must represent a proto-zodiac. Unfortunately this was published in a German journal and I do not read German. However, I wrote down as many symbols as I could find for the zodiac in Babylon, c. 1900 BC, and there were seventeen. But these were symbols - NOT signs. For example, Scorpio as the sign of sex was symbolized by copulating vipers, and as the sign of death and the effort to transcend death was symbolized by a bird. Aquarius was symbolized by the urn, representing the water that could be stored in jars at the time of the winter floods, and by the water man with the two life-giving streams which symbolized man in control of the chaos of the winter solstice, and also by the eagle of Altair in the constellation adjacent to Aquarius. Thus, there were only twelve signs, but more than one symbol could ~~and~~ adhere to any sign giving it psychological thickness. Death and the effort to transcend death, at the autumn equinox (in the Taurine age - both these interpretations date back to the Taurine age), and the near death of the Sun at the winter solstice and its triumphant rebirth symbolized in the eagle of Aquila.



I give Weidner here as an illustration, because occasionally Bible scholars tentatively identify certain texts as having possible astrological overtones, then they ~~xxx~~ shy away from any such conclusions, because O. Weidner has shown that there was only a prete-zodiac c. 800-700 B.C. Centenau found that the analogous type of thinking that was common in Mesopotamia and Western Asia was similar to the analogous thinking of astrology, but he too found that O. Weidner prohibited his following down on that line of thought.

The Assyrians stated that the Omen lists were quite ancient, and while scholars should not take that statement at face value, nevertheless, since I find such a highly developed zodiac before 2000 B.C. in Mesopotamia I can believe that they were telling the truth. Then, if one considers the symmetry and delicate grace of the vases and bowls created by the Sumerians - not to mention their other accomplishments in the arts of civilization - it seems impossible to believe that they could have created such a cumbersome and meaningless concept as a 17-sign zodiac. They did not. Rather they created a twelve-sign zodiac, which bulged at psychologically critical points with several symbols.

Have gone into this at some length because the pattern of both sides of the disk has an essential symmetry - there are three zodiacs in all,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  zodiacs on each side. 18-A, thus, must fulfill some different function. If you look at it on side A, you can see that, while it is enclosed by lines as are the other sections, it is nevertheless treated differently. On the left it forms a barrier to 18, or the last of the sections of the central section of the disk, at the top - and on the left at the bottom it forms a similar barrier to the final sign of the zodiac on the outer rim, and on the right it forms a barrier to the first sign of the zodiac on the outer rim. I would ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ assume that the two symbols it contains are solar ones, since this side of the disk is in honor of the planetary god of the Sun. 18-A divides the whole central section of the disk from the outer rim. The inner section may be the civilized world and the outer rim the edges of the world. I think that is the significance, although I am not sure. What is certain is that 18-A acts as a barrier, or a punctuation mark of some type. On side B the treatment of this same area is slightly different. Section ~~A~~ has no barrier to the passageway that would be 18-A if there were such a barrier. Nevertheless, the small animal head is slipping into that passageway and is probably a Moon symbol.

You are puzzled, too, by the meaning of "houses". Here, as I remember, I used four words more or less interchangeably and rather loosely - They are "houses, homes, signs, constellations". They are used in the following sense - Venus rules Taurus, and Taurus is the house, home, sign and/or constellation of Venus. ~~Either xxxxxxxx explaining xxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx~~ Probably I should explain that usage very clearly in a footnote, since "houses" in astrology may be used in a technical sense to describe certain areas of the ecliptic as they are at any moment in relation to the eastern and western horizons of a given locality and to the upper and lower meridians of the same locality.

In studying the disk I worked from a diagram that was reproduced in "Extinct" Languages" by Johannes Friedrich, Philosophical Library, New York, 1957. In the figures you sent me the central symbol for A-24 is placed at a different angle than it is in the diagram I worked from. Also it has a dot inserted in it, and the hand has been reconstructed. I do not know whether my diagram is in error, but - if it is - then that symbol could not possibly be a map of Africa as I tentatively suggested.



New for the actual interpretation of the disk. The first side is over-simplified and I think because it was to give clues that anyone of that time who had had three years of astrology-astronomy could follow. The outer rim I took to giving direct clues to the interpretation of the second side - as in the map of Africa to be found on A-24 and so on.

One variation that can be played on the zodiac is to break it down into three squares. The square beginning with Lee is Lee, Scorpio, Aquarius and Taurus. Since the Sun rules Lee, one may over-simplify this square by emphasizing solar symbols in all four signs - this is legitimate since these signs marked the four pivotal points in the annual journey of the Sun during the then fairly recent Taurean age. On A-1 one finds the Sun at ~~home~~ home in his own house-home-sign-constellation, and he is at home without his crested headdress. There is also the flower of the Sun, and a scepter that I have called the scepter with the floral emblem, which I believe is Egyptian (and will return to this later in this letter). These same symbols are repeated exactly at A-4 Scorpio, a very clear clue that the signs of the zodiac are being taken in order on this first side of the disk. At A-7 Aquarius three solar symbols are introduced - the snake, the bird, and the circle with the seven dots inside. These same three symbols are repeated at the next position in A-10 Taurus. At the next position A-13 Lee, they are repeated again, and the Sun appears again (this is his home) with his official crested headdress. A-13 is repeated at the next point in A-16 Scorpio.

This is over-simplification and I think done intentionally to give clear clues to the interpretation of the disk.

On the outer rim the symbols begin to change (because this is the outer, less civilized portion of the world? or in order to give clues to the interpretation of the more complicated second side of the disk? I think perhaps for both reasons). Nevertheless, one finds at A-19 Taurus, a repetition of the flower of the Sun, the bird, the circle and the head of the Sun itself making the clue not too difficult to follow. In ~~addition~~ addition, there is a scepter for the Sun. A-22 repeats the ~~xx~~ snake and the bird and a variation on a flower or plant of some sort. With ~~the~~ Scorpio and Aquarius the symbols change abruptly, for reasons which I tried to analyze in my mss.

I also discussed the fact that the different birds flew in different directions, which see in my mss.

Another variation that can be played on the zodiac is to divide it into ~~three~~ four equilateral ~~triangular~~ triangles (discussed in the mss). A third way is to pair signs that are opposite. I DO NOT REMEMBER IF I GAVE ENOUGH SPACE TO THIS IN THE MSS., so will explain that here, hoping that I am not repeating myself.

The opposite signs of the zodiac were considered as complementary pairs. Thus, Aries the first sign is ruled by Mars, the masculine principle, and is placed as a complementary opposite to Libra, ruled by Venus, the feminine principle. Venus of Taurus is then paired with Mars of Scorpio. The Sun and Moon, ~~both~~ considered as manifestations of the vital life force, as are paired with Saturn ~~and~~ in Capricorn and Aquarius, respectively. In Mesopotamia Saturn was ruler of the sea (and the winter floods and rains), and was also the ruler of death. This is the winter solstice where the Sun nearly dies but is miraculously reborn. Thus Sun-Moon in complementary balance with Saturn is the axis of character: the vital life force is chastened and restrained by the Saturn obstacles and hindrances with which it has to cope. The last complementary axis is that of Jupiter-Mercury, to be found in Sagittarius-Gemini and Pisces-Virgo. Here Jupiter is vision and Mercury the mind, Jupiter is religion and Mercury science. They are considered as complementary insights into truth.



In Babylon Mercury-Nebo was also the son of Jupiter-Marduk and his messenger, scribe and scholar.

Returning to Side-A of the disk, in A-5 Jupiter is introduced in Sagittarius with a flower symbol, a forked branch or slingshot or whatnot which is a Jupiterian symbol and a scepter. In Gemini A-11 Mercury runs through his own home with a scepter, and when he gets around to Sagittarius (appearing for the second time) at A-17 he runs with his scepter through his father's house. This, again, is an ever-simplification but one that any three-year student of astrology-astronomy at that time could have deciphered quite readily.

In similar fashion Cancer A-12 is the same as Capricorn A-18. I think that this constitutes a major clue to the fact that the disk has to do with Egypt (please see mss. for amplification of this). There is the boat at the summer solstice, Egyptian style, and again halfway around the zodiac at that critical turning point in that cross, and there is the scepter with the floral emblem which I believe must be of Egyptian origin. Since that scepter first appears in Leo, I think it must mean - "We are talking of Egypt" - or - "We are talking to Egypt".

The only place where a sign is repeated exactly (as I remember) is in A-3 and A-15 both for Libra (but note that Aries opposite it in A-9 contains ~~many~~ many of the same symbols). This must have been done intentionally, even though I am not able at this point to interpret the intention with any certainty. Since Memphis and the part of Egypt surrounding it was ruled by Libra according to the later Ptolemy (and according to my interpretation of the disk) the symbols used in A-3 and A-15 may point specifically to the city of Thebes. Could the first symbol, which I can't interpret be Egyptian? It is used in these two positions, and only these two positions on the disk.

Have gone along enough in this letter. It might be a good idea for me to give illustrations of the four fixed signs grouped together in the section of the mss. where I discuss the symbols to be found in them - this would be visually easier for the reader. Also, perhaps I should repeat pertinent passages of my general introductory and background material whenever I wish to employ any particular part of it in the section that deals with the actual translation of the disk. I would have to see the mss. again to be sure.
























In the meantime I hope this is of some help on some of the points that puzzled you. And please do write me again for any other questions. Certainly it is a help to me if I see that I have failed to give a full enough exposition of any of the astrological concepts involved, or have failed to make the mss. as clear and explicit as possible.

Sincerely,

Reuben A. Lewis



Center  
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2		1		13	
M		2		14	
2		3		15	
M		4		16	
2		5		17	
23		6		18	
2		7			
2		8			
2		9			
2		10			30
II		11			
2		12			

Rim  
↑

10 almost = 16  
11 = 17  
12 = 18  
} but different signs?

