

THE AFRICAN WATER CALENDAR

DR MATHOLE MOTSHEKGA

**Founder of Kara Heritage Institute and Chief Whip of the Majority Party,
Parliament of the Republic of South Africa**

The earliest calendars in the world were found on the African continent. This was not surprising because Africa was the 'Cradle of Humanity'. The African calendars were based on star or celestial maps containing solar arks known as zodiacs. The celestial maps show that the universe is a living organism consisting of parts that are inter-connected, inter-related and inter-dependent. The earth and humanity are parts of this living organism.

In African thought a calendar was not an arbitrary organisation of the days of the year but a record of the spiritual and physical order and administration of the affairs of the universe. Therefore in order to understand the origins and application of the African Water Calendar, one requires a sound knowledge of the spiritual and material structure of the universe.

The spiritual roots of the African Water Calendar

In African spiritual cosmology the primal being called 'The One' (the ptah) manifested itself as the Ennead or the Trinity of Trinities ($3 \times 3 = 9$) made up the decade ($1 + 9 = 10$). Principles which manifested themselves as the creative energy (Amani) of the gods in the form of a universal virgin mother known as The Great Pool (Dzivaguru) or House of Light (Hathara).

Thus water symbolized by the universal virgin mother became the primal substance of being. This contained the sacred fire (or light) as the creative agent that transformed the primal waters or chaos into the souls and physical bodies of all things that came into being.

The arcane (arkana) principle born of the Great Pool manifested itself as the triune principle of the unity that underlies all existence.

These principles were Leo (Mwanamu Tapa), Virgo (Musasi/Masase), Libra (Mutapa) who are reputedly known as Osiris, Isis and Horus. These three gods are represented by the three stars of the Orion (Urhana) Belt known as Luonde or Makolobeng (i.e. Mountains of the Three Wild Pigs). This spiritual trinity was symbolised by the central star (Saba) or Spiritual Sun (Kara), known in popular language as the Bull of Heaven, which projected itself into the four quarters of heaven, which represents the four elements of water (manu), fire (aakhut), earth (rastau) and air (amenti). The Bull itself represented the ether (made up of the mind, soul and light body) from which the four elements emanated).

The Bull of Heaven was surrounded by Seven Cows of Heaven represented by the seven pleiades or circumpolar stars orbiting the central star (saba) or spiritual sun (kara). The Bull and Seven Cows of Heaven or The Spiritual Sun and seven pleiades or circumpolar stars

made up four pairs of female and male principles constituting the chaos or waters of origins from which the diverse parts of the universe(s) including the earth and humanity originated.

The three stars of the Orion (urhana) Belt represented three primal hills which came out of the chaos or watery abyss. This means that water and fire were the primary substances of being. In summary:

- * The Godhead manifested itself as the chaos or watery abyss conceived as the Mother of All.
- * The Sacred Fire (Kara or Charaoh) or Divine Light was the offspring of the Waters of Origins.
- * The Sound or Voice (Ham or Cham) of Light as the Word of God (Hamptah or Champtah).

The Spiritual Sun (Charaoh) or Word of God (Hamptah or Champtah) unfolded itself into the four quarters of the universe which, in turn, unfolded themselves into the Twelve Houses of the Solar Ark called the Zodiac. The Bull of Heaven or Spiritual Sun (Kara) was linked to the Zodiac by the Seven Cows of Heaven represented by the seven pleiades or circumpolar (Menrah or Khelemela) stars.

The Zodiac, in turn, was linked to the earth and humanity by the seven outer planets (the Kabiri). The seven pleiades or circumpolar stars and the seven outer planets (The Kabiri) made up the Ladder of Creation consisting of fourteen rungs or steps which leads to the Bull of Heaven or Spiritual Sun that is called God. This confirms that the different parts of universe, including the earth and humanity are interconnected, inter-dependent and integrated parts of one whole or living organism.

The appreciation of water as the source of life and the inculcation deepening and entrenching of the culture of water and environmental conservation and protection cannot happen outside space and time. The African Water Calender in Africa was therefore indispensable to water and environmental conservation and preservation.

Time and space

The greatest contribution of the African Renaissance to humanity will be the restoration of spirituality to mitigate the crass materialism that threatens to devour humanity. The African Cultural Renaissance Campaign of the African Union (the "AU") should first and foremost reawaken humanity to the fact that human development has both spiritual and material aspects and that therefore the individual should live in both the spiritual and material world at the same time. The individual must achieve harmony between his spiritual and physical aspects and harmony between himself, herself, nature and God. This requires human regeneration as a prerequisite for the Regeneration of Africa.

The twelve houses of the Zodiac form the boundary between the spiritual and the material world. The building blocks of the spiritual world are mind, soul and body (of light) while the buiding blocks of the maerial world are the four elements of water, fire, earth and air. Thus all reality or existence was made up of five elements of ether, water, fire, earth and air. Since the ether is a triune element it means there are seven building blocks of all reality consisting

of mind, soul, body, water, fire, earth and air. This means that all reality including the earth and humanity are made of the same substance and have, therefore, the same intrinsic value called Ubuntu. There is therefore no spiritual or scientific basis for human, gender and other forms of inequalities.

In the spiritual world the Spiritual Sun (Kara) and the seven pleiades or circumpolar (Khelemela) stars are used to measure time. In the material world the Zodiac and the Ladder of Creation are used to measure time. For these purposes the Zodiac was structured as follows.

Structure of the Zodiac

Each of the twelve houses of the Zodiac was divided into three groups of 10 stars called the decans. There are therefore 30 (3 x 10) stars in each of the 12 houses of the Zodiac. These are therefore 360 (12 x 30) stars and 36 decans in all 12 houses of the Zodiac. The Zodiac was used to measure the cosmic, solar and lunar years.

The cosmic year

The sun takes 72 years to traverse one of the 30 stars in each of the 12 houses of the Zodiac, thus the sun (Ra) takes 2 160 (30 x 72) years to traverse one of the 12 houses of the Zodiac and 25,920 (2 160 x 12) to traverse all 12 houses of the Zodiac. This period of 25,920 years was called the cosmic or great year.

The solar and lunar years

The moon (ma/maia) and the sun (Ra) take three weeks of 10 days each to traverse the three groups of 10 stars. Thus the moon (ma/maia) and the sun (Ra) takes a month of 30 (3 x 10) days to traverse each of the 12 houses of the Zodiac. Thus it takes the two luminaries 360 (12 x 30) days to traverse all twelve houses of the Zodiac. At the completion of their cycles these two luminaries unite and become an androgyne being which reproduces the five elements of ether, water, fire, earth and air on each successive day, bringing the total number of the lunar and solar years to 365 (360 + 5) days.

The union (Mara or Maria) of the moon (ma or maia) and the sun (Ra) was known as the Sky Goddess (Koremukuru, i.e. one among the clouds). This Sky Goddess was the Rain Maker who was (and still is) worshipped throughout Africa. In southern Africa the shrine of this goddess were found in Meroe in the Sudan (heartland of Ancient Ethiopia), great Zimbabwe and Matomboni in Matebeleland (formerly Guruhusekwa) in south west Zimbabwe, Maphungubwe, Lwandali (Kheedeulu) and Maulwe in Bolovedu (the Land of Offerings) of Mudjadji, the Rain Queen of Africa. This means that South Africa and Africa are the only remaining places on the globe which still worship the Rain or Water Goddess.

Water and the lunar year

It was shown above that the God of Light (Kara), the earth and humanity are linked together by fourteen rungs or Steps of the Ladder of Creation. The earth and humanity draw their energy from the God of Light through the moon and the fourteen light or spiritual beings which govern the fourteen rungs or Steps of the Ladder of Creation. To put it otherwise, these spiritual or light beings are messengers of the God of Light (Ramasedi) who carry the

energy of this Most High (Modimo) God to the earth and humanity on each of the 14 days of the Waxing moon.

On the 15th day of the lunar month the moon is full and the gate between heaven and earth is open. On this day the Most High (Modimo or Mwari We Denga) issues a creative Word known as Mbekara or Mbire, popularly known as Thau Thau – Harama (Greek Thoth – Hermes). This Mind or Word of God was symbolised by the baboon (Soko) and was therefore known as Soko Mbekara or Soko Mbire.

From the 16th to the 30th of the lunar month, the 15 lunar gods return to the God of Light to draw fresh energy. Thus a lunar month has 30 (15 + 15) days and a lunar year of 360 days. The union (Mara or Maria) of the moon (Ma or Maia) and the sun (Ra) at the completion of their cycles reproduce the five elements of spirit ether, water, fire, earth and air, on every successive day, bringing the lunar year to 365 (360 + 5) days.

Water and the solar year

At the end of April the three stars of the Orion (Urhana) Belt disappears for three months and reappears towards the end of June. These stars are also Celestial Wild Pigs (Nedemba or Makolobeng). The reappearance of these stars announces the rising of the Celestial River, in the region of the Milky Way; and the Nile River, its earthly counterpart. The source of the Nile is located at the Mountains of the Moon (Tamera or Kumara) in Punt or Afura (Hebrew Ophir), root of the name Afuraka (Greek Africa). Punt (or Afura) is the Cradle of Humanity particularly the Khemites or Hamites including the Zendj (or Bantu), Ancient Ethiopians and Egyptians. This means that founders of the Ancient Ethiopian and Egyptian civilisations were indigenous African peoples.

The Ancient Egyptians located the rise of the Nile to the Ethiopian Highlands and the First Cataract or the Tropic of Cancer. More specifically, they located this to a cave in Bigo where they painted a vulture and two serpents attending to the Water Goddess Aquarius (Kanuba) pouring out water from a jug on the floor, like one pouring libation to the gods. This Water Goddess was surrounded by seven pleiades or circumpolar (Khelemela) stars, announcing that the ploughing time had arrived.

To inculcate, deepen and entrench the culture of water and environmental conservation and protection ancient Africans (or Khemites), developed certain solar and lunar festivals.

The solar festivals

The earth and humanity draw their energy from the Bull of Heaven and 14 Light or Spiritual Beings through the Agency of the Moon. From its dawn the moon travels and traverses the 14 rungs or Steps of the Ladder of Creation which are governed by these spiritual or light beings. To put it otherwise these beings are messengers of the Bull of Heaven or God of Light which carries the energy of the Most High (Modimo) to the earth and humanity on each of the 14 days of the waxing moon.

On the 15th day of the lunar month the moon is full and the gate between heaven and earth is open. On this day the Most High (Mwari We Denga) issues her creative word, ThauThau-Harama (Greek: Thoth-Hermes) also known as Mbekara or Mbire. This mind or word of the Sun (Ra) or spiritual Sun (Kara) was on the Tropic of Capricorn (Anuba) the Sun (Ra) spends

5/6 days performing a round solar dance (Khekhapa). These days also represent the birthdays of the gods who correspond to the Five elements of ether (Mundu\Kabachat). The birthdays of these gods were celebrated as First Fruits celebrations. Thus the water, feasts of Lights and First Fruits are interconnected and interrelated.

From the Tropic of Capricorn the sun (Ra) travels for three months before reaching the equator (Aptu/Atpu) again on the 21 – 22 March. This period was called the Autumn Equinox. The period means the death of the sun in the southern hemisphere and its rebirth in the northern hemisphere on March 23. The death of the Sun (Ra) on March 21 – 22 marks the beginning of the harvest (Faro) period in the southern hemisphere which is celebrated as Easter holiday.

The Sun (Ra) travels for three months to reach the Tropic of Cancer and complete a solar cycle of 365 days. This period represents the solar year. Thus the solar cycle and solar festivals were used to honour the celestial gods particularly the water goddesses such as Virgo (Isis), Aquarius (Kanuba), Saba, Kore etc.

The lunar festivals

The lunar year was divided into three seasons of four months each. These seasons known as the ploughing, harvest and initiation seasons are dealt with below.

* **The ploughing period** (September to December).

The First season of the lunar year starts with the appearance of the seven pleiades or circumpolar (khelemela) stars in September. The ploughing period was named after the seven pleiades or circumpolar (Khelemela) stars. Thus this period was called khelemo, selemo, Isilemo, shirimo, chirimo, kilimia, etc.

The celebration of the African new year in September creates a platform for creating awareness about the African heritage and indigenous knowledge systems – including archeo-astronomy, spiritual, cultural and agricultural festivals and particularly the African Water Calendar.

Throughout October month indigenous African people held rain-making ceremonies to thank god and gods, including royal ancestors, for the rain and fertility of the soil. During October ploughing also takes place.

In November the seeds sown in September and October germinate and grow. Thus in November nature is reborn, the environment must be protected, the cutting of trees and killing of female animals is prohibited. Thus November was and should remain an environmental conservation and protection month.

The new moon in December enjoins communities to begin preparations for First Fruits celebrations, which started during the full moon in December. These celebrations reach their peak during the Summer Solstice (21 – 25/6) when the Sun (Ra) remains stationary on the Tropic of Capricorn and performs a solar dance. December 25, in particular, was regarded as the birthday of Lion Gods (e.g. Osiris or Mwanamutapa), Horus or Mutapa and Ra Harakhte or Xpakhte (Greek Xpictoc) pronounced Christos. The ploughin time was also called Akhte (Greek Eichton,

popularly known as Aton or Aten. This god is symbolised by the piscean symbol IHIS.

* **The harvest period** (January to April)

The second season of the lunar year starts in January and ends in April. The lion gods (Bondoro/Bontoro) born on December 25 remain in seclusion for 12 days before its public appearance described by the birth of the Light Child (Hahu or Ihy), child of the virgin mother (Kore). This festival was celebrated on January 6. It started with a Night Virgil on January 5. The celebration involved trumpet music and dance.

The water calendar and human development

In many conferences on water, environment and sustainable development, the indigenous African cultural heritage and knowledge systems are left out of account. The scientific or materialist concepts used in these conferences and resulting literature do not make sense to indigenous people because they do not speak to both the spiritual and material aspects of water and the environment.

Instead these materialist approaches are seen as producing development projects which damage the ecosystems, sacred springs and forests. These eurocentric approaches have also rooted out African spirituality and the worship of the Water Goddess who was (and still is) central to water and environmental conservation and protection.

The continued celebration of water festivals by Balobedu of Mudjadji the Rain Queen and Other communities in southern Africa and the rediscovery of the Maphungubwe heritage site which was the first rain making shrine in southern Africa, provides a framework for the revival of the African Water Calendar and its use as a tool to raise the awareness of indigenous African communities whose culture of water and environmental conservation and protection is fast diminishing because of the dominant materialist world-view that undermines the African spiritual traditions.

The launch of the Maphungubwe Heritage Route that links the water heritage shrines of Balobedu of Mudjadji, Lake Fundudzi, Maphungubwe, Mamagwa in Botswana, Matomboni in Zimbabwe etc. provides an integrated rain belt and chain of festivals which could be institutionalised and supported by government to advance water and environmental conservation and protection. This is the only tool that can get traditional communities to buy into new policies and programmes.

The current arbitrary dedication of months as transport, environment etc. months is not consistent with natural cycles. In view of the fact that food insecurity, climate change, decline of agriculture are the greatest threat to human survival, it is proposed that the African Water Calendar and Maphungubwe Heritage Route and particularly, the related solar and lunar festivals should be adopted and institutionalised to address the aforementioned challenges.

This should be coupled with the farming co-operative movement that President Jacob Zuma repeatedly called for. The slogan “*let’s return to the fields*” asibuyeleni a masimune must be

translated into a national imperative and developmental goal. The achievement of this remains the only route to enable Africans to feed, dress and heal themselves.

General conclusions

Since the Water Goddess, Mohale, Mwalinkulunkulu or Mwari We Denga was (and still is) worshipped in southern Africa and Africa and African religion has also been recognised as one of the major world religions there is a conducive climate for the revival of the African Water Calendar as a tool for the African Cultural Renaissance and in particular, the Maphungubwe Heritage which is consubstantial with that of Meroe and Napata in the Sudan (heartland of Ancient Ethiopia), Great Zimbabwe, Yemen (Ya-Amun).
