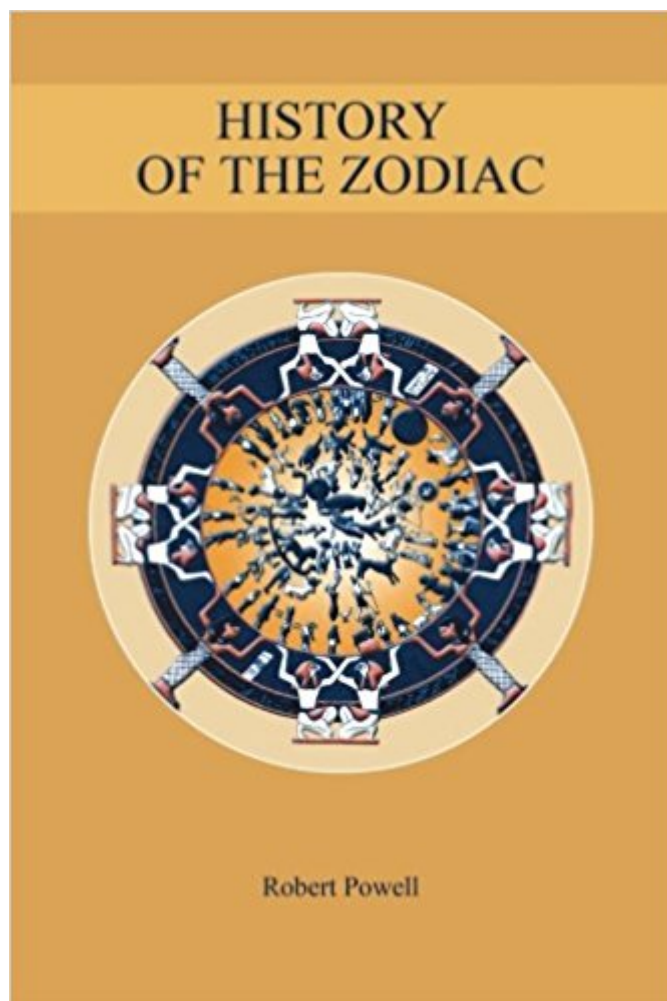


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History Of The Zodiac



Synopsis

The zodiac was first clearly defined by the Babylonians some 2500 years ago, but until recently the basis of this original definition remained unknown. This zodiac of the Babylonians, known as the sidereal zodiac because it is specified in direct relation to the stars (Latin *sideris*, *starry*), was used for centuries throughout the ancient world, all the way to India, and must be distinguished from the tropical zodiac in widespread use by astrologers in the West today, which was introduced only in the middle of the second century A.D. by the Greek astronomer Claudius Ptolemy. Such was Ptolemy's influence, however, that the tropical zodiac gained prominence and, except for its survival (in a variant form) in India, knowledge of the sidereal zodiac was lost. In this thrilling study of the history of the zodiac, first submitted in 2004 as his Ph.D. thesis, Robert Powell rescues the sidereal zodiac from the dusts of time, tracing it back to the Babylonians in the sixth/fifth centuries B.C. The implications of this discovery among them the restitution of the sidereal zodiac to its rightful place at the heart of astrology are immense, the key point being that the signs of the sidereal zodiac, each thirty degrees long, coincide closely with the twelve astronomical constellations of the same name, whereas the signs of the tropical zodiac, since they are defined in relation to the vernal point, now have no direct relationship to the corresponding zodiacal constellations, owing to the precession of the equinoxes. This revolutionary history of the zodiac includes chapters on the Egyptian decans and the Hindu nakshatras, showing how these sidereal divisions, which originated in Egypt and India, are related to the original Babylonian zodiac. It also sheds light on the controversy surrounding the zodiac question (tropical vs. sidereal), illuminating the history of the tropical zodiac showing that originally it was not a zodiac at all, but a calendar for describing the course of the seasons! This book, the fruit of thirty years of research, is intended not only for scholars but for general readers as well, and offers the clearest and most comprehensive study of the history of the zodiac yet published.

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Customer Reviews

I enjoyed getting a mainstream history of the zodiac laid out in this book. As an astrologer, it gave me a lot to chew on and think about. Although, looking further into Robert Powell's astrology books, it seems like he is a sidereal zodiac fundamentalist, so that should be kept in mind when reading his works. I think there is still a lot that we do not know about the zodiac and its application especially since we are finding out these days that everything did not come from the Babylonians and Greeks. I think there were ancient civilizations that were destroyed that contained more advanced astrology techniques and practices that we do not know about.

I got to know about plenty of new thing... about where all the Zodiac story comes from. It is a very deep scientific research. I recommend to everybody who is interested in the subject.

Very technical; a good working knowledge of astronomy would be helpful. Dense with information. Interesting historical perspective.

In 2015 this 2006 book is already out of date as to its fundamental premise. The book was originally a Ph.D. thesis which attempted to offer support for an original sidereal Babylonian zodiac. The author has allowed his personal agenda of a Babylonian zodiac that places Aldebaran and Antares at precisely 15 degrees of Taurus and Scorpio to overshadow honest research. Robert Powell even admits that there is no support from ancient tablets for this precise definition of the zodiac, and thus glosses over references (Kellerstrom, Manilius and others) that make the ancient sidereal zodiac a degree different from the Aldebaran-Antares premise. These other references support a sidereal zodiac which places Spica at 30 degrees of Virgo (zero degrees of Libra) rather than the 29 degrees of the Aldebaran zodiac. This may seem like a small difference if it weren't for the fact that the author constantly harps on the concept of the one-and-only Babylonian zodiac. I suspect that Robert Powell had some discussion of this precise zodiac with die-hard astrologers of the

Fagan-Bradley School. The Babylonians were not concerned with stars within zodiac signs, but only with their beginnings. In recent star lists of the 28 Normal stars, no longitudes are even given for Aldebaran and Antares. However, in the latest published list (John P. Britton, "Studies in Babylonian lunar theory: Part III: The introduction of the uniform zodiac", 2010) three stars are noted as beginnings of sidereal signs: zeta Taurus, beta Gemini and delta Capricorn. Two of these stars (beta Gemini, Pollux, and delta Capricorn, Deneb Algedi place Spica at 30 degrees of Virgo. This conforms to the Lahiri zodiac used today by Jyotish (Vedic) astrologers. Only zeta Taurus (AlHecka) places Aldebaran and Antares at 15 degrees of Taurus-Scorpio. So at best there is no real textual support for a precise Aldebaran-Antares zodiac. Powell believed that the sidereal zodiac never made its way to Arab astrologers (page 82), but his research in that area is sketchy as we now know that the chosen Horoscope for Baghdad was sidereal. Masha'allah (770-815 A.D.) used the sidereal zodiac, and in 556 A.D. the Arab world actually defined the later sidereal zodiac that made its way to India. (See the Swiss ephemeris web page, and Benjamin Dykes' Persian translations.) Later generations of Arab astrologers, however, did switch to the tropical zodiac. The more positive parts of the book are an interesting and generally accurate history of the early zodiac. For those who would like a list of stars in the sidereal rather than tropical zodiac, there is a complete appendix of Ptolemy's 1000+ stars in the Aldebaran-Antares sidereal zodiac. For the majority of astrologers who use the Lahiri ayanamsa it is an easy mental adjustment of about a degree (53 minutes) for the Lahiri star positions. I believe this is the only published list of stars in a sidereal zodiac. The list includes longitude, latitude, magnitude, star names and Ptolemy's notations of the stars ("the star on the tip of the tail," etc.) For astrologers who wish to use and research stars, this list is well worth the price of the book. But keep in mind that a precise Babylonian zodiac that placed Aldebaran and Antares at 15 degrees of Taurus and Scorpio must be seen as a modern intellectual construct rather than as actually existing in those ancient times. A minor complaint about this book is that the author tends to write in long and convoluted sentences with too many thoughts in a single sentence. So it's necessary to do some re-reading to grasp his thoughts. Another complaint is his constant reference to the "Babylonian sidereal zodiac" as if to set this (inaccurate) precise zodiac as historical fact.

Right from the preface of him noting David Pingree and colleagues as the basis for this work I was on my guard about any "conclusions" this book may have made about the transmission of knowledge in ancient times. It's important to recognize that both this book and its predecessors were hell bent on sourcing most things back to the Greeks, or in this case Babylon, whose

knowledge the Greeks took and dispersed to the rest of the world according to Powell's theories. However if one looks closely at the evidence presented by the likes of Pingree in his Yavanjataka translation, where he claims an Indian author "copied" a Greek text which brought astrology and astronomical math to India, it is absurd. In his own commentary, he shows how the VAST MAJORITY of the text has no source in any western text (or is greatly altered) and most of it is actually original to India yet is so hell bent on his own thesis and placing Greek culture on a pedestal that he completely ignores his own findings as do most other "academics" in this field, including Powell here who merely repeats Pingrees claims to back up his own thesis. However if he actually studied any of it properly he'd see that his thesis falls completely flat in light of a more unbiased look at the evidence. With this said, I would urge you with the same caution on these and many other things mentioned in this book, such as those pointed out by some other people on the reviews here. There is some nice technical and historical information here, which is why it gets two stars. However you need a strong background in any of this to be able to cut the wheat from the chaff and not just continue down the eurocentric academic road it presents. I think the book needs a retitle as well, perhaps they can call it "What White People think about the Zodiac". That would at least let you know what your getting into and to not take it so seriously with all the PhD credentials and 30 years of research clouding your views too much.

A great resource for those interested in discovering the roots of modern astronomy, and a must-read for any serious student of astrology - it will change your thinking.

great material to read and lots of good references

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