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Celestial Narratives and Sacred Cosmologies: Astronomy in Australian Aboriginal Traditions and Islamic Belief

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Abstract

By comparing religious beliefs of Muslims and the Aborigines of Australia, this paper aims to understand the differences and similarities regarding death, astronomical sightings and the concept of the afterlife. By discovering the foundation of Islam and Aboriginal beliefs, the research will showcase a variety of similarities in legends, myths and origins of the creation story. Exploring the "Dreaming" and the different tribal understandings of it, along with its history and the exclusivity of it, this paper aims to contrast it with Islamic core beliefs and the equivalent stories of the deities and the ancestral plane to the statements that have been given in the Quran and the Hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad.

By using the holy scripture of the Quran and the words of the Prophet, along with the various and numerous stories of the aboriginal Australians this research will be investigating the narrations of different tales of astronomical sightings such as falling starts, meteor showers, constellations, the rotation and revolution of the sun and moon as well. This will also include the right method to a funeral procession and the protocols that are considered when burying a member of the respective communities.

Keywords: Death, afterlife, astronomy, hadiths, Quran, myths, legends, constellation

Introduction

The element that connects both the religions in this paper is interconnectedness. This aspect of interconnectedness is witnessed during the moments of death and life. In this research has the basic understanding of Islamic methodologies to understand life and its connection to the world, through nature, space and undoubtedly the concept and act of death.

Interconnectedness and the connection to nature and community remains the core of Australian Aboriginal beliefs. The aim of this research paper is to be able to inform the public of the Interconnectedness in both of the religions using the legends that are to be the foundation for the belief, in relation to superstition, the meaning of death and the omens that are based on the astronomical changes, occurrences and sightings. It is to understand where the legends of the nation's come from and how the communities that deal with death and the omens that surround them are based on astronomical sightings and occurrences. Using the Quran, the Islamic scripture, as a guideline along with the prophet's narrations, the Hadiths, this paper will be looking into death and the myths that revolve around the afterlife as well as the astronomical sightings and occurrences that can be considered as omens.

In context of this research, Islamic philosophy provides a foundation to understanding why astronomical occurrences, bodies and sightings can play a pivotal role in Islamic beliefs.

It is to be mentioned that with the growing interest in aboriginal beliefs, and the already existing research, analysis and in-depth examination in the field of Islam theology and astronomy, the connection between both the beliefs is comparatively sparse. This study seeks to find and create a bridge between the traditions but examining the rituals, oral traditions and analysing the methods of how religions observe celestial phenomena regarding topics such as death, morality and identity.

Literature Review

Astronomy plays a massive role in the creation of tales and myths that various religions have taken inspiration from. Religions have their respective connotations and hidden meanings when witnessing the astronomical world. The Greek world has taken the majority of its history, beliefs and even their Deities from the celestial bodies. The Hindu world has a separate scripture dedicated to the timekeeping of the world and the existence of the Gods in the heavens.

The aborigines of Australia base their entire foundation of their beliefs on the creation of the world and structure either through deities who created the world and look over the earth from the skies. The concept of the Dreaming is vast and folds into multiple versions and editions, yet the common factor in all the variations are the sightings of the stars and the galaxy. In contrast, islamic beliefs denote that stars are indeed the creation of Allah yet hold no specific meaning to external deities or hold any influence that will create an impact. However, there are various stories given in the Holy scripture of the Quran where Allah talks about the scientific discoveries of the planetary revolution.

Researchers such as Dean Colin, Ray P. Noris and Vicki Grieves have all denoted the omens and emotions surrounding cosmic and astronomical occurrences in relation to Australia Aborigines. The numerous journals, articles and books written with meteor sightings, falling stars and constellations all depict the ominousness and fear around these incidents. The natives of the country believe that the sighting of a meteor is a warning to the upcoming death, ailment or plague that is to befall the community. Each tribe holds the traditions and tales that have been passed down generations as a sign of the deceased finding their way back to the community and their place in the stars so they may carry on their legacy.

Contemporary scholarships on aboriginal astronomy demonstrates broad agreement that indigenous Australian astronomical knowledge constitutes a sophisticated and systematic body of knowledge rather than a collection of isolated myths. Norris and Hatcher argue that astronomical observations informed navigation, seasonal calendars, ceremonial life and oral traditions, while Grieves further situates this knowledge within an indigenous philosophy of interconnectedness, where country ancestors, celestial bodies and human communities exist in an unified cosmological framework. Although each aboriginal nation possesses distinct traditions and interpretations of the night sky, these scholars collectively emphasise that astronomy functioned as a practical, spiritual and social system that shaped everyday life.

On the other hand, muslims have noted that the astronomical sightings are purely planetary body moving in the orbit that it was created for by Allah, yet this a very authentic Hadith narrated by the prophet (PBUH) of the reasoning behind the falling of the stars. By not only using the Hadith and the holy scripture, Classical tafsir, which is the in-depth analysis and interpretation of the Quran along with the Hadith to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how the scholars of the medieval times observed and made theories of the celestial bodies and their significance according to the theological references. The majority of scholars and tafsirs refer to the suns, stars, and the heavens not only as signs of the God's

power, wisdom, sovereignty, but also a reminder of how Allah's power and the impeccable balance of the universe.

While tafsir is the interpretation of the holy scripture and the words of the Prophet, Islamic philosophy is the connecting of reason and revelation, trying to understand how the structure of universe intertwines with the material world and the spiritual world. Scholars such as Ibn Sina and Al-Farabi who argued about the intentions of studying the natural world. The former suggested that the cosmic world and the natural world, were a means of understanding the creator, the vast magnitude of his power and his wisdom along with his sovereignty, in contrast to the latter who suggests that celestial bodies prove that they are in accordance to a purposeful universe.

In relation to death, not a single individual is spared from the clutches of death, the Islamic community and the Australia Aborigines hold the concept of community close to heart and have protocols that are to be followed during the demise. Various authors have stressed the notion of community and supporting the bereaved family during a hard phase in their life. Although it is to be mentioned, the idea of the afterlife is not present in the scriptures of the aboriginal texts that have been mentioned in previous. The Quran explicitly narrates the coming of the afterlife and the incidents that will happen once the body has been buried and prayed for.

The gap between the scripture of the Quran and the texts regarding the Aboriginal Beliefs with the notion of afterlife with regards to the astronomical omens are addressed and compared with to find the common ground between both religions. The articles address the already given myths surrounding the negative ideas and folktales along with the warnings.

Foundations of the Beliefs

E. K. Grant uses the concept of spirituality that derives its motivation from the holistic appreciation for the earth, universe, the creations; humans, animals, plants, landforms and celestial bodies. The knowledge encompassing these topics allow the aboriginals to understand the compelling need to maintain a healthy relationship and appearance as these are the elements that have been decoded in their legends and their myths as they are passed down through generations. The ancestors or the deities of the Dreaming (Stanner 2003:58) provide multiple ways to identify or rather characterize the Dreaming into a comprehensible chunk. "The Dreaming is many things in one. Among them, a kind of narrative of things that once happened; a kind of charter of things that still happen; and a kind of logos or principle of order transcending everything significant for Aboriginal man."

The word Dreaming or the concept had been coined by Francis Gillen in 1896, where the notion of the dreaming had been considered to be a substantial variation and that is understood by different Australian Aboriginal groups. The dreaming approach to some of the aborigines is of the representations of the past, the present and the future interwoven into each other yet working in a parallel reality. (Goddard)

Aboriginal astronomy has been shown to date back to the second century and having evidence to show that aboriginal Australians were very astute astronomers having to associate social complex and religious economy with the night sky. The word "Meteor" is also known as a "fireball" as they are scientific rocks that are hurling through space and creating disruption when entering the earth's atmosphere. As aforementioned the connectedness between the universal, its creatures and the space that it lives in between, the cosmic and terrestrial plane became integral and inseparable components of the aborigines. They came to the conclusion that the celestial occurrences and sightings that were witnessed had to be the

result of an event that had taken place on earth. These rare events are being passed down through oral traditions, pictorial art and then preserved as its being given to the next generations.

Islam creates a distinctive separation between the creator and creature, that Allah is isolated from his creation and is above all of the things that are under his rule, unlike in the multiple different sects of aboriginal beliefs where The Dreaming is ambiguous. In regard to understanding Allah, there are common misconceptions and confusion with terms such as “He”, “His”, and “Him”. It must be noted that there are not any human-like qualities when attributing Allah. Islam aside from the physical obligations of the declaration of submission, the daily prayers, fasting, giving alms and pilgrimage, has six beliefs of the unseen, these articles are to be understood despite having no physical evidence to hold and witness, the prophets that predated this world are still acknowledged and believed in. The angels that are holy and revered are believed in with complete faith just as one Muslim believes in Allah. These areas of the unseen are covered and yet remain a very integral aspect of one’s life. This can be seen as a common factor between the two beliefs, which is understanding the unseen and the stories of the Dreaming. Islam is the way of life according to many scholars and sheikhs of the Arab world, where life is treasured but it is also a means of test.

Islamic cosmology is derived from the Quran and further interpreted by the Hadith and the tafsirs, where the heavens, the stars, the sun and so on, are not only physical entities but also signs of divine decree and power. Consequently, celestial observation occupies a significant place within both the theological and practical dimensions of Islamic life.

This comparative research between the religions and the concepts that surround the talks of death, the afterlife and the superstition around it as well, will enable the understanding of the signs and elements of both the religions. By collecting the information and analyzing the basis and the foundation of the two religions it creates an informative analysis of the afterlife, death and the omens that surround it.

According to the aboriginal Australians and William Edward Hanley Stanner, they have no gods that are unjust or just to the world, to moderate and rule. Rather they have ancestral spirits, the flora and fauna or celestial bodies. According to “The Australian Aboriginal Dreamtime” Colin Dean makes a clear distinction between the religious concepts that are contrasting by using the conventional rules that are present in all the other religions.

“There is no prayer or priesthood in Aboriginal society. There is no sharp distinction between the sacred and the secular, since the spirit world and human world interpenetrate. All aspects of the Aboriginal environment are affected by the power of the spirits. The very land itself is a kind of 'church'; it is a kind of theophany where the land contains the essence of the Ancestors and is the work of the Ancestors.” (Dean 2)

Dean, furthermore, proposes another definition to the “Dreaming” or “The Dreamtime” according to him, “The Dreamtime” can be associated with a group of deities that brought the concept of time, definitions and structure into existence. Yet Dean’s definition goes on to provide more definitions as every tribe has different meaning to the concept of “The Dreaming”, to some it holds a group of spirits, to some it represents an ancestral plane that had time intertwining with each other, the past, present and the future are present all at the same time. The cosmogenesis of the Australian Aboriginal beliefs is that of the differences between the communities and their definitions yet their origins and understanding that the core beliefs of each tribe have a common focal point. This plane holds no limit and does not progress linearly and provides the foundation for life and the structures that define the world.

It has been recorded that the understanding of the finer workings and understandings of the "Dreamtime" requires a certain status and only the inner circles of the community were allowed to be divulged into the ideas as it is reserved and set for those who have attained the required maturity level. The leaking of information of the "Dreaming" or obtaining the special knowledge, through breaking laws of the tribe result in the execution of the individual, as the obtaining and the initiating of the information goes through a process of ritual, a protective measure taken to ensure the safety of the understanding of the universe.

As one of the variations of "The Dreaming" the Tiwi of Melville and Bathurst choose to explain the word through three phases. The creation of the dead earth, silence, and emptiness. This phase contained no creatures of living and remained an empty and barren land which was stumbled upon by an old lady that carried her children along with her, she is to be known as Mudungkala. As she trailed through her journey, she created the islands and declared the emergence of vegetation and animals. Colin Dean explains further in detail regarding phase two and three with the children becoming the creators of the plane and establishing the rules and laws that are to be followed by the mythical people of the land. (Dean 29)

In addition to the numerous definitions and origin stories of the "Dreaming", Arnhem land deals with two creation legends. The western tribe believe the story of the ancestral women whereas the eastern section believes in the Wawilak sisters and the Djanggawul sisters. This community of the north do not refer to a specific name or time for this transformation period is a generalized suffix that has been found to give the similar connotation and meaning when translated. The north-west people of Gunwinggu make no accounts of the creations of the heavens and earth and rather record it as already existing or the pre-existing world as mentioned in the aborigines' group of Tiwi. The common factor in most of the myths revolving around "The Dreaming" refer to the lady of Waramurungdju and that she had traveled a great distance along with her children that she raised, however the stories of the lady and her life with the infants, who later become deities of spirits are altered in all the variations that have been recorded. It was noted that they hadn't resided amongst the residents of the land but provided them with the rituals and discoveries of plants. Residing in the north-eastern parts of Arnhem land, "Dreamtime" was known as the primordial period, and the sisters Djanggwul sisters were considered as the creators of the land and the myths revolving around them were made to be preserved and passed down. (Dean 31)

Astronomical Aspect

The most prominent factor that can be seen in all the mythologies surrounding the "Dreaming" or "The Dreamtime" is of the ancestors residing in the sky, the starry night and the celestial beings ensured that their presences can be felt through the distance set by the deities. Each of the legends that mention the spirits had been recorded to have set laws, rules and regulations that are to be followed for a life of fulfillment and success. The emergence of Aboriginal astronomy began in the mid 1800s and continued into the contemporary world of today, yet the majority of the tales consist of the myths and characters that are represented in stories of the creation of the ancestral plane. For instance, the creation of the myth revolving around the seven sisters that make up a constellation in the constellation of Taurus after being hounded by Orion. This very story has multiple versions around the world, the most common being the Greek myth of Orion chasing the daughters of Titan Atlas and the nymph Pleione, the Australian Aborigines version include various names and number of characters yet allows revolve around a group of girls or sisters who are being chased across the land by a man or in certain cases by a group of men with malicious intent. The tale always ends with the sisters being turned into stars and placed in the sky

followed by their pursuer, which serves as a reminder of survival and the kinship that is held by the sisters. (Wroth)

On a different occasion, the Orion constellation known in the European constellation can be referred to as "Djulpan" in one of the languages of the aborigines. The formation of the stars can be through the result of three brothers breaking a sacred taboo, eating a king-fish which had been the symbol or the totem of the Sun, thus enraging the Sun and resulting in being blown into the sky. Eventually the celestial being resorted to blowing the brothers into the formation of the belt in the sky.(Norris and Hamacher 11)

The influence that astronomy has in Aboriginal beliefs can be witnessed through the numerous stories and tales revolving around Planetary beings, in most Aboriginal culture the Sun is concerned to be a female, whereas the Moon is known to be the male. Giving physical attributes to the Sun and Moon, the aboriginal people create stories that can explain the rotation and revolution of the earth whilst providing an emotional connection that emphasizes relatability and comparison (Norris and Hamacher).

Using a linguistics perspective, the Arabic language has assigned genders to the words the Sun, "SHAMS" or "الَ شمْس" and the Moon, "QAMAR" or "الْقمَرَ", the similarities can been seen as the word " الَشمْس" is written and identified with a feminine connotation whereas the word "QAMAR" is mentioned with a masculine connotation. This linguistic point is confirmed with evidence in the Quran; however, it is to be noted that the assigning of gendered terms is purely through a grammatical and linguistic perspective. The words are gendered by the verb that follows it, this can only be seen through the Arabic language as the English translation refers to the object as "it", whereas in Arabic it can be referred to as a female or male pronoun. The word "SHAMS" is gendered female with the following verb "بَازِغَةٌ", "BAZIGHATANN" which refers to rising, whilst the word "QAMAR" is paired with "بَازِغًا" or "BAZHIGAN" but the lack of the last letter the "ت", "TH" that is the standardized symbol of femininity. These words can be found in chapter six, Al An'am, verses 76-77, where prophet Abraham looks up to the sky looking for a sign of god, something other than the statues in his town, he searches for the sun and then realizes it disappears after the setting of the sun. Then he looks up to the moon and witnesses the moon disappear when the sun rises. (Quran 6:76-77)

The scientific explanation of the sun can be seen from an Islamic perspective as it has been recorded in the Quran in various chapters. The Quran not only talks about how the earth is the planet that moves in orbit, but Allah also mentions how the Sun sets at two different locations when a revolution is completed. Surah Anbiya, chapter number twenty-one, this chapter in the Quran and verse number twenty-two talks about the creation of planetary alignment and how they remain in orbit, and that they all move in a specified manner. There is a specific purpose as to why they have been created in a particular manner. "And it is He who created the night and the day and the Sun and the moon; all in an orbit are swimming." (Surah Anbiya 21:33)

In addition to the previously mentioned verse, Allah further goes on to reaffirm the creation and the reason for this creation in a different section of the Quran. And Allah says in surah Zumar (39:5) "He hath created the heavens and the Earth with truth. He maketh night to succeed day, and He maketh day to succeed night, and He constraineth the Sun and the moon to give service, each running on for an appointed term. Is not He the Mighty, the Forgiver?"

In addition to the planetary movement, both beliefs have respective ideas and traditions that have been passed down by oral recitation, drawings or writings regarding the the waning and waxing of the moon. According to the aborigines, and the various tribes of the Australian aborigines the different changes of the moon are due to the fact that the moon is a man who had been married to the sun, yet the moon was

considered to be a fat and lazy man. Thus having wives who are disgusted and angry with him, they begin to cut down parts of him until there is none left, and he is left to hide for three days, which scientifically is known as the new moon, until he dies and is reborn, living his life and growing back into the fat lazy man and the cycle repeats. (Hamacher and Norris 4). In the context of alignments the topic of eclipses arose and their tales began taking place as an explanation as to what was the reasoning. In the Yolngu community, it is believed that the woman, the sun, chases the man, the moon, around space until they briefly consummate the relationship and then the moon flees the sun. This brief moment is considered to be the solar eclipse. In the same community the lunar phases are connected to the tides of the water, they suggest that the moon is filled up with water, that is the full moon, when the tides are high, as in during dusk, and as the tide drops the moon empties out which represents the crescent. This showcases the intensity at which the people of the aborigines observed the moon and recorded its changes and phases but also creating the connection between the tides and the moon.

However in Islamic belief, the moon and the sun merely represent the power of Allah, serving a more practical purpose. It is to be noted that unlike the aboriginal traditions which rely on oral traditions, Islam relies on the Quran, the hadiths and the tafsirs, where mentions of Islamic cosmology is constantly repeated, such in Surah Yunus.

“He is the One Who made the sun a radiant source and the moon a reflected light, with precisely ordained phases, so that you may know the number of years and calculation of time. Allah did not create all this except for a purpose. He makes the signs clear for people of knowledge.“ (Quran 10:5)

Similar to the Australian aborigines who use the stars and moons for hunting, time keeping and assigning dates and calendars, the Muslims rely on the moon and its phase for the lunar calendar explain that the waxing and waning of the Moon were intentionally created to regulate the Islamic lunar calendar, enabling Muslims to determine the beginning of Ramadan, the celebration of Eid, the pilgrimage to Mecca, and numerous other aspects of religious life. Consequently, lunar observation became both an act of scientific inquiry and a form of religious devotion, illustrating the close relationship between astronomy and worship within Islamic civilisation.

The central point of this paper is to analyze how both the religion's view death under the lights of astronomy or rather the concepts around astronomical sightings in relation to religion. The aborigines have the notion that events relating to comets and meteors are events that cause fear and apprehension as they result in deaths, misfortune, and malevolent events. According to the Tiwi tribes meteors were seen as spirits that raced across the sky searching for ailing and dying individuals, in contrast the Ooldea tribes viewed meteors as a sign of the devil that is coming in search of them, the other variation in the south of Australian is the sighting of meteors as a warning of an epidemic disease that is nearing.(Norris and Hamacher)

On the other hand, Islamic stories record that meteor sightings or a falling star was of no indication of anything superstitious, as the time before Islam, the Arab nations were ruled by paganism and bind ignorance due to the superstitions created by the former generation. The Prophet Muhammad teaches his companions of the falling stars, when the topic behind the reasoning of the dying of a star or a meteor falling through space. One argued that a great man had been born while the other said that someone died. Instead the Prophet calmly addresses the crowd and tells them of the reasoning, that when Allah in the heavens, decides of a command, the jinns attempt to hear what is being relayed to the angels, so that they may spread misinformed information, thus the angels attack the jinns with meteors which result in the jinns falling from heaven. The plural form of heavens is used in this context as it has been recorded in the

Quran that there are seven heavens that Allah created, and Allah resides on the highest heaven. (Sahih Muslim 26 No. 5538)

There may not be any other stories in relation to Islamic tales regarding meteors being spirits or association to omens that are either malevolent or benevolent, however the Aborigines hold multiple variations to the meteor sightings and the stories behind them. To tribes such as the Wunambal, Euahlayi they had the idea that a falling meteor is the falling of a "blackfella", the terms used by aboriginal or indigenous Australians when referring to indigenous people. (Hamacher and Norris 91). Whereas in other regions the sighting of a meteor with a crash was the indication that a man of medicine had passed away. In very specific cases, a meteor can also symbolize the agricultural growth of one's fields. The Yerrunthully people had the belief that when one of their people died, they had climbed the rope on the sky, which was dropped down once they reached their destination, thus the falling of the rope is the meteor falling and hitting the ground.

Other stories narrate the transformation of the deceased body into a celestial body, and the result was the creation or the falling of a star or meteor. Although some aborigines believed this only applied for those who left an impact on the community through medicine and knowledge. There are numerous stories around the sighting of the meteors where one tribe can conclude the meteor had been an individual who had died far from his people and managed to find his home once again through the astronomical plane. The examples of the benevolence of spirits as meteors are plenty just as the examples of meteors as malevolent spirits. As previously mentioned, the word "Meteor" is also known as a "fireball" as they are scientifically known as rocks that are hurling through space and creating disruption when entering the earth's atmosphere. To the aborigines they hold concepts of evil spirits and magic that are malicious. As previously mentioned, certain tribes consider meteors to be spirits that hunt the sick and dying, and the people of the Northern Territory believe the evil serpent beings are sent to hunt the members of their tribe. These vile creatures with ill intent have been recorded orally from various tribes, and the stories align with the common feature being the fiery eyes, or the "eye thing" that is chasing the infants, the elderly and the sick individuals of the community. (Hamacher and Norris 91)

Death Factor

Due to the number of stories circling around the notion of meteors being the warning of sickness and death the aborigines had found rituals to counter the ailment of the oncoming disaster. These rituals involved chanting and chanting while pointing a stick or bone in the direction of the person that is suffering, certain rituals had ways of understanding whether the ritual was success through dreams, uneasy feelings or even the demise of the individual due to deteriorated health, however the appearing of a meteorite after the ritual and the ceremony was conducted would indicate that the ritual was a success.

In accordance with sickness, the medicine man and the tribes have multiple methods to eradicate sickness from an individual's body. Each tribe differs from each other, however the shared interpretations that meteors hold, is this perception that of the illness leaving the individual's body and returning to its place of origin as it could have been the result of a malevolent spirit.

Death is universal, it is inevitable and death does not discriminate when choosing who remains in this world or not. It is irrevocable and just, regardless of the situation, seen in Australian Aboriginal beliefs death can be seen as the returning to the ancestral plane, or in Islamic beliefs it is the confirmation that Muslims will return to their creator, and there has been plenty of evidence to ensure the undeniable. Both the beliefs, Islam and Aboriginal beliefs, have certain ideologies revolving around the concept of death and have traditions and rituals that are to be followed by the respective society.

In the traditions of the indigenous people of Australia when the death of a member of the tribe occurs, there are certain protocols that are to be followed. A government issued document has been used as evidence and source of information as it gives a basic understanding of the rituals and traditions that are to be followed. The death of a member starts with the mourning period known as the" Sorry Business", this is the period of time where the entire community, family, relatives and friends provide support and grieve at the loss of the member of the society. The society during the "Sorry business" prepares and conducts the communal activities, the burial, the rituals and the ceremonies that are to be held. The "Sorry Business" period requires the family to remove the pictures and videos of the deceased, no longer speak the individual's name as this will allow the spirit to be let go. The customs or traditions regarding death and funeral traditions differ from tribe to tribe as some require individual specifications and practices that will honor the dead and ensure a safe passage to "The Dreaming". Certain tribes have the practice of cremating while others choose to bury them.

With the burial of an individual there are few requirements that are to be followed, it can be noted that there are certain tasks that are being followed by the Australian Aborigines that are also noticeable in Islamic funeral procession rights. As mentioned in the document, the body is to be washed by the kin or family, and then placed ochre body pain once they've been dressed, the deceased body is to be wrapped either in a burial cloak or the possum-skin cloak before placing the body in the coffin as prayers and blessings are performed. There is a custom when placing the body in the grave, ensuring that the head faces the north this also must be done during the specified time in the morning or when daylight is evident. This is a must in the burial; the delaying of the process can cause the body to be unsettled and entangled in the planes of limbo.

With relation to the death in an Islamic household, death or the Arabic term "Mwat" or "ٱلمَو ت" is referred to the separation of the soul from the body. It has been said that when a person is on his death bed that the Angel of death comes to him no matter where he is, and it is only the one who is to pass away that can see, hear and speak to the Angel. The evidence to the proof of existence can be seen in variation narrations by the companies of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH), where it can be heard that the person dying is calling out to a being that cannot be seen by anyone else and then the individual's soul is taken. (Mabrouk 5-6)

There are two mannerisms as to how a soul is taken from a body, the one who is righteous and the ones who have sinned and wronged in his life. The removal of a soul of one who has lived a righteous life is a peaceful, painless and easy removal and has been described as flowing "like a drop of water from a cup" it is then taken to the heaven shrouded in musk. Whereas the soul of those who have committed evil and wrong, the removal will be of pain and hardship, as it would be removed with difficulty.

Death comes in 4 ways, according to Thomas Paul Schirrmacher, being at one's own hand labeling it as suicide, the second at the hand of someone else through means of accidents, murder and such, the following comes at self-sacrifice or martyrdom and finally a natural peaceful death. (Bahadur 174). With every deceased individual there are rituals that are to be followed after the passing away of someone and Islam has been provided a set of strict methods on what is to be done with the dead and their burial. As soon as the person passes it is customary to close the eyes of the dead and cover the body with a clean sheet as they begin preparations for the washing of the body. The community gathers to grieve and support the family is going through the loss and mourning with the relatives as given in the narrations; weeping is allowed yet wailing and self-infliction is discouraged. The body is then washed or given a "ghousl" in odd numbers, where the water can be perfumed and then covered with a clean, white sheet. Finally, once the

body is prepared and ready for the burial, a prayer is initiated for the deceased, family or not are allowed to participate; the prayer is immediately given once the body is shrouded. As aforementioned, just like the aborigines, a specific timing for the burial is also established here, before sunset or after sunrise and as soon as possible without delaying the funeral.

The funeral rights are held by the living, and it is experienced in day-to-day life, whereas the life beyond death is something that is beyond understanding, however the Quran holds the answers to Muslims regarding the situation that occurs in the grave. The Prophet Muhammad has mentioned that after the deceased has been buried, two angels come to question the dead and collect the answers. The three main questions are asked, "Who is your lord?", "What is your religion?" And "Who is your prophet?" A Muslim's reply is of "Allah", "Islam" and "Muhammad (PBUH). The individual is then asked about his actions on earth and if he is to be righteous then glimpses of heaven is shown to him, however if he isnt able to answer the questions and has sinned during his time on earth then the gates of hell are shown and he shall beg to be returned to his life so that he may repent and correct himself. (Tirmidhi: Jana'iz 1071)

Conclusion

The contrast between Islamic cosmology and Australian aboriginal cosmology is rather large and drastic yet it also shows the similarities between each other and how each community uses astronomy as a means of living life. Despite emerging from different historical contexts and having ideologies that lay on both ends of the spectrum, culturally and spiritually, their usage of astronomy as a framework showcase the parallel of each religion. Australian Aborigines belief is a culmination of various tribes, and their definition of how the world came into existence, either through the deities of "The Dreaming" or the ancestral plane where time is intertwined. The religions are starkly different with their foundations and the original stories of the creation of mankind, animals, galaxies, heaven and hell. Whereas Muslims believe in the power of Allah, the creations, Afterlife, the life after death and the judgement that is to be held by Allah. The concept of interconnectedness is prominent when witnessing a member of the tribe going through an ailment or a death, the community gathers around the grieving family to stand beside them. The unity amongst individuals can be witnessed with sickness, funeral processions and even the legends or the myths revolving around the "Dreamtime".

This comparative analysis demonstrates the celestial phenomena as both a physical representation of power, magnititue and sovereignty and a symbolic representation of roles that the astronomical bodies hold in respective religions along with their methods of preserving and passing down of the oral traditions, dances, rituals and drawings. Aboriginal communities preserve observations of the Sun, Moon, stars, eclipses, lunar phases, tides, and seasonal cycles through oral traditions that simultaneously transmit ecological knowledge, spiritual teachings, and social responsibilities across generations. Islamic tradition likewise regards the heavens as signs (*āyāt*) of divine wisdom, with the movements of the Sun and Moon regulating religious observances such as prayer, the Islamic calendar, Ramadan, and the pilgrimage to Mecca. It is to be understood that both religions use astronomical observations as a foundation for organizing time, collecting knowledge, understanding the purpose of life and also as a means of finding a mean to the celestial phenomena.

This paper has managed to find the most contrasting feature of both religions lies in the concept of death and the life after death or the lack of an afterlife in both the communities. Muslims require to believe in the concept of a life after death, the resurrection and the judgement which leads to the afterlife. Aboriginal Australian traditions, while varying considerably between nations, generally conceive of death through

continuing relationships with ancestral beings, Country, and the Dreaming rather than through a universal doctrine of final judgement. Rather than identifying similarities for their own sake, this study has sought to demonstrate that meaningful comparison between distinct religious traditions can illuminate both difference and shared human experience. The findings suggest that, despite their contrasting cosmologies, Aboriginal Australian traditions and Islam each recognise the heavens as a source of knowledge, guidance, and reflection. Celestial phenomena become means through which communities express their understanding of creation, reinforce social and moral values, honour the ancestors, regulate religious life, and contemplate humanity's relationship with the sacred. In this sense, astronomy emerges not only as a scientific observation of the natural world but also as a cultural and spiritual language through which societies articulate their deepest understandings of existence.

By bringing Indigenous Australian cosmological traditions into dialogue with Islamic thought, this research contributes to the growing field of comparative religion by demonstrating that the study of astronomy can provide a productive framework for examining diverse religious worldviews. It further highlights the importance of approaching Indigenous knowledge systems as sophisticated intellectual traditions rather than reducing them to mythology or folklore. Future research may extend this comparative approach by examining additional Indigenous cosmologies or exploring how contemporary scientific understandings continue to interact with traditional religious interpretations of the heavens. Ultimately, this study argues that while the heavens may be interpreted through different theological lenses, they remain a universal point of connection through which humanity has continually sought meaning, order, and an understanding of its place within the wider universe.

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