

# Facing royalty: the almugea, or proper face

*A minor dignity, easily confused with another, and worth more than its rank suggests.*

Among the dignities a planet can hold, the *almugea* is the least discussed and the most often misidentified. It is not one of the five essential dignities. It does not appear in the standard scoring table. And it is routinely confused with the face — a different thing entirely, which shares part of its name.

It repays the trouble of getting it right, because it describes something none of the other dignities does: a planet's standing in relation to the lights.

### What it is

A planet is in its almugea when it stands to one of the lights in the same relation as its own domicile stands to that light's domicile.

The definition is compact and needs unpacking. It rests on the arrangement the tradition calls the *thema mundi*, in which the Moon rules Cancer and the Sun rules Leo, and the remaining five planets are distributed outward from that pair in the order of their periods:

| PLANET  | NOCTURNAL DOMICILE | DISTANCE FROM CANCER | DIURNAL DOMICILE | DISTANCE FROM LEO |
|---------|--------------------|----------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Mercury | Gemini             | 1 sign before        | Virgo            | 1 sign after      |
| Venus   | Taurus             | 2 signs before       | Libra            | 2 signs after     |
| Mars    | Aries              | 3 signs before       | Scorpio          | 3 signs after     |
| Jupiter | Pisces             | 4 signs before       | Sagittarius      | 4 signs after     |
| Saturn  | Aquarius           | 5 signs before       | Capricorn        | 5 signs after     |

The rule follows directly. Venus is in almugea when she stands two signs before the Moon, or two signs after the Sun. Saturn, when he stands five signs before the Moon or five after the Sun. Mercury, at one sign either side.

The condition is one of sign, not of degree. A planet in the right sign relative to the light holds the dignity whatever the exact distance.

### Why it is not the face

The confusion is old and is partly the fault of the Latin. The almugea is called *facies propria* — proper face — and the fifth essential dignity is called *facies*, the face or decan. They are unrelated.

The face is a division of the sign: ten degrees, ruled in the Chaldean order, a fixed property of the zodiac. It has nothing to do with where the lights happen to be.

The almugea is a *relation*. It exists only between a planet and a light, and the same degree of the same sign may or may not carry it, depending on where the Sun and Moon stand that day.

The practical test: if you can determine it from an ephemeris position alone, it is the face. If you need to know where the lights are, it is the almugea.

### What it signifies

The medieval authors describe it as a planet being in its own place at court — in the position that properly belongs to it, in the presence of the king.

The image is precise and worth keeping. The almugea does not add strength in the way that domicile or exaltation does. It confers *standing*: the planet is where it has a right to be, and is therefore able to be heard.

Three consequences follow, and they are what make the dignity useful:

- **It concerns audience, not capacity.** A planet in almugea is listened to. Whether it has anything to deliver is a separate question, answered by its essential dignity.
- **It is relational.** The lights signify, among much else, those in authority. A planet correctly placed in relation to them describes a matter that has the right people's attention.
- **It survives affliction better than it survives exile.** A planet in almugea and in detriment is in the right place with nothing to offer — a courtier with the king's ear and no counsel.

### How to use it

The almugea is a minor testimony and should be weighed as one. It does not rescue a planet in poor essential condition, and it is not scored in the usual point system — which is one reason it fell out of use.

It earns its place in two situations.

### *When testimonies are evenly balanced*

The commonest use. Two candidates for almuten, or two significators of comparable strength, and nothing in the standard table separates them. The almugea is then a tiebreaker of exactly the right weight: small, specific, and not otherwise counted.

### *In questions of standing and favour*

Where the matter concerns position, patronage, or access to someone in authority — the tenth house, the eleventh, a superior, a grant — the almugea speaks directly to what is being asked. A signficator in almugea describes someone who is where they ought to be; one without it may be perfectly capable and simply not in the room.

### **A caution about minor dignities**

Every minor dignity carries the same risk, and it is worth stating plainly.

The tradition offers a great many small testimonies: almugea, hayz, the parts, the antiscia, the fixed stars, the lunar mansions. Each is defensible on its own. Taken together, they supply enough material to confirm any conclusion one has already reached.

The discipline is to decide *before* looking at the chart which testimonies will count, and then to abide by that. A dignity consulted only when the main significators fail to say what was expected is not evidence; it is a search.

Used with that restraint, the almugea is a genuine refinement of the tradition — and one of the few places where the older material still has something to say that modern practice has not absorbed.

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**On the sources.** The almugea appears in the Arabic tradition and passes into Latin through the translations of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; the name itself is an arabism. Bonatti treats it among the dignities; later English writers mention it and largely decline to use it. Where an author's text is ambiguous, it is usually because the Latin *facies* has been left to do double duty.

**On the arrangement.** The distribution of domiciles used above is the standard one and the basis of the whole rulership scheme, not an assumption particular to this dignity. Its symmetry — the lights at the centre, the planets outward by period — is what makes the almugea definable at all.

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Your Astral Life recalculates degree by degree the table this article sets the almugea apart from: domicile, exaltation, triplicity, term and face, with detriment and fall, and gives the almuten for a day chart and for a night chart. The almugea itself is not part of that count.

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