

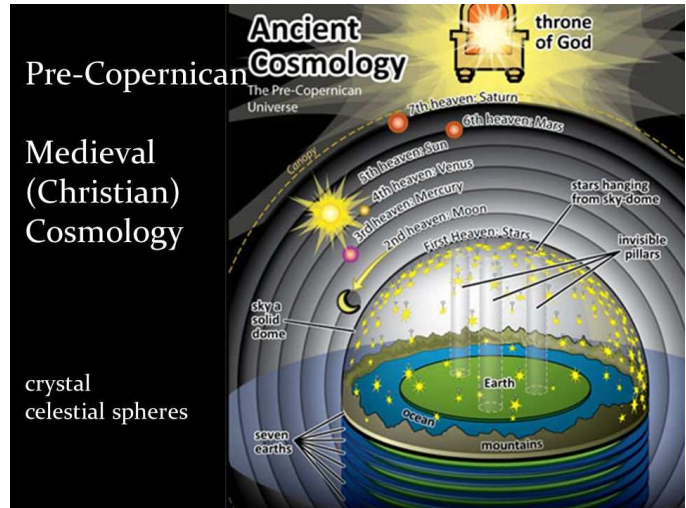
The Theory of Global Moon Sighting and Flat-Earth

Muslims generally believe that the Quran is the words of Allah (the creator of the universe) and the laws of nature (i.e. scientific laws) are also the laws of Allah. Therefore, it is not possible for the words of Allah to contradict the laws of Allah. If it appears to do so, then it must be a misinterpretation of the Quran or a misunderstanding of the science (i.e. laws of the universe).

History of Flat-Earth Theory

Many centuries ago people of the world used to think that the earth was flat and the sun and the moon simply orbited around the flat earth, giving the effect of sunrise/sunset and moonrise/moonset to an earth-bound observer in the same way a person sitting on a fast train thinks he is sitting stationary while all the landscape (trees, houses, roads etc) are running away from him, whereas the reality is the opposite!

The Christian faith (revealed over 600 years before Islam), also embraced the same flat-earth concept as a core part of their religion (pre-Copernican). They believed the earth was flat with four corners (Revelation 7:1) and the sun and the moon rotated around it, as illustrated in the Ancient Cosmology diagram (and anyone opposing such beliefs was accused of heresy as was the case with the Italian scientist, Galileo in 1633 AD). The Ancient Hebrew Concept of the Universe was also similar to that of Christianity.



History of Global Sighting Theory

From the above flat-earth diagram, the sun and the moon could be seen from anywhere on the earth with an *equal possibility* of a sighting. This also seems to be the concept of global moon sighting theory, such that any sighting claim from anywhere in the whole world can be accepted by everyone else, regardless of how far east or west. The Quran does **not** mention the earth is flat, but some early Muslim jurists have mentioned the theory of global moon sighting as a valid option, perhaps biased by the beliefs of the early Jews and the Christians, as they lacked the verification tools available to contemporary Muslims scholars!

The Earth can be proven to be a Sphere

If the earth was flat then when the sun rises from the east, the entire world will suddenly become bright with daylight and when the sun sets in the west, the entire world will suddenly become night at the same time. In reality, this is not the case as sunrise happens gradually from the east to the west. This fact is also understood from the following verses of the Quran.



"Seest thou not that Allah merges Night into Day and he merges Day into Night?" [Quran 31:29]

The merging (يُولِجُ) here means that the night slowly and gradually changes to daylight and vice versa. This phenomenon can only take place if the earth is a sphere.

The following verse also implies the spherical shape of the earth:

"He makes the Night overlap the Day, and the Day overlap the Night." [Quran 39:5]

The Arabic word used (Kawwara/ يُكْوِّرُ) "to overlap" or "to coil", like the way a turban is wound around the head. The overlapping or coiling of the day and night can only take place if the earth is spherical as can be seen at the time of a lunar eclipse when the round shadow of the earth falls on the full moon.

Spherical Earth and Global Sighting is a Contradiction

The concept of global moon sighting only holds true if there is an equal possibility of sighting the moon from anywhere on the earth, which was believed possible many centuries ago before the advent of modern communication systems. However, as already explained, the earth is a sphere and not flat; and hence it is not possible to practice global moon sighting on a spherical earth due to the time-zone differences.

The suggestion to accept the earth as a sphere and still consider the theory of global moon sighting is a contradiction and hence all Muslims are advised to refrain from promoting such types of contradictions.

Moon Sighting from the East

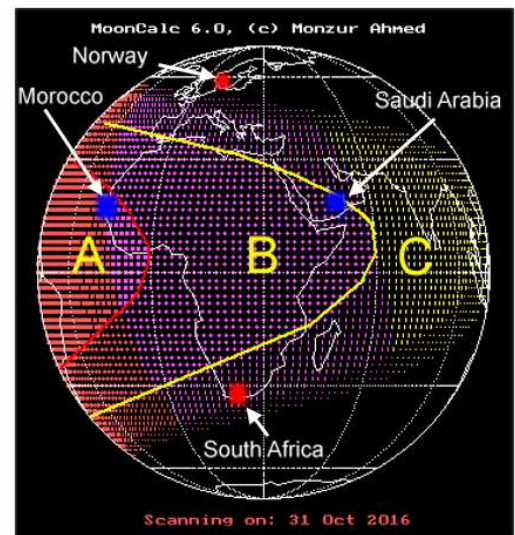
Many moon sighting observers and Muslim jurists are aware of the fact that if there is a valid sighting in the East, then it must be sighted in the West, but not the other way around, since moon sets in the East before it sets in the West. This is because, in the first night of the crescent moon (Hilal), the moon closely follows behind the sun on the western horizon. This point is also mentioned by Shaykh Ibn Taimyyah (RA):

"If there is a Hilal sighting in the East, then it must be sighted in the West (but not the other way around)"
(Majmua Fatawa, vol.13/p.62)

However, it should be pointed out that if the moon is reliably sighted in the East, then it will certainly be sighted in the West on the same *latitudinal* line, which is **not** too far North or South from that initial sighting position.

For example, if the first day's Hilal was reliably sighted in Saudi Arabia then it will most certainly be sighted in Morocco, since Morocco is within the same (or similar) latitudinal line to Saudi Arabia, towards the West.

However, it may **not** be sighted at all in Norway or in South Africa, as it is too far North to Norway or too far South to South Africa. This fact can be easily understood with the help of crescent moon visibility maps on ICOUK websites, e.g. for Safar 1438 AH (31 October 2016).



Following North/South is a concept of Global Moon Sighting

Since the advent of Islam from the 7th century, Muslims have always followed local moon sighting in practice and the theory of global moon sighting was only confined to the opinions of few scholars, starting from the 19th century (and not from any Imams of four Madhabs). Having realised the concept of global moon sighting does not make any sense on a spherical earth, more recent Muslim scholars have revised that theory to "sighting from the East" of a *longitudinal* line, such as North America (or the UK) following news from South Africa. This is a false global moon sighting concept because South Africa is clearly not on the same latitudinal line as North America (and neither is the UK), so such a logical contradiction must be avoided.

Summary/Conclusion

This article has attempted to clarify that the concept of global moon sighting is based on the assumption that the earth is flat and hence the moon could be sighted from anywhere on the earth with an equal possibility at any one time. This is not possible on a spherical earth due to time-zone differences and changes of seasons. Therefore, the theory of global moon sighting is an invalid opinion and must be rejected at all costs to avoid contradictions with the widely-accepted understanding of the Quran and Science.

The revised criteria of following moon sighting from the East is only valid if it is on the same (or similar) latitudinal line (e.g. Saudi Arabia and Morocco) and not with large North-South variations (e.g. North America to South Africa). This also means that it is totally illogical for the UK to follow South Africa under the concept of global moon sighting, which can be proven to be wrong from both the Quran and Science.