



HOROSCOPE

HOROSCOPE (Pahl. *zāyc*, modern Pers. *zāyca*, Ar. *zā'ēja/zā'rja*), the horoscopic diagram or theme which depicts the positions of the planets in the zodiacal signs and of the zodiacal signs relative to the local horizon at a given time. Horoscopic astrology in which such diagrams are the basis for predictions was developed in Hellenistic Egypt at the end of the second or beginning of the first century B.C.E. (Pingree, 1997, pp. 26-27). It is not known when this method of prediction was introduced into Iran; the earliest solid evidence we have is from the late third century C.E. Two horoscopic diagrams were inserted into the Pahlavi translation of Dorotheus of Sidon's Greek astrological poem (preserved for us primarily in an Arabic translation made by 'Omar ebn al-Farroḳān Ṭabari in about 800 C.E.), one of which can be dated to 20 October 281 (3.2, 19-44) and the other to 26 February 381 (3.1, 27-65).

In addition to Dorotheus's text others describing horoscopic astrology were available in Pahlavi, such as a version of Vettius Valens' *Anthologies* that was commented on by Bozorgmehr (Arabic: Bozorjmehr; see Pingree, 1989, and Burnett and Pingree, 1997), a work on the influence of the fixed stars attributed to Hermes (see Kunitzsch, 2001), and one on the decans attributed to Teucer (Nallino, pp. 356-62), versions of several Sanskrit works by Varahamihira and others (Pingree, 1963, pp. 253-54), a work attributed to Zaradust based on Greek and Sanskrit sources and preserved in an Arabic translation made by Sa'īd b. Ḳorāsānḳorra in about 750 (Pingree, 1989, pp. 234-35; Kunitzsch, 1993; and Pingree, 1997, pp. 44-45) and the frequently cited work of Zādānfarruḳ Andarzaḡar (Burnett and al-Hamdi, 1991-92), as



well as many others cited in Arabic sources (Pingree, 1997, pp. 49-50). This tradition of horoscopic astrology was carried on into Islamic times by such Iranian scholars as Nowbaḳt and his descendants, Mašā'llah, 'Omar ebn al-Farroḳān, Faḏl b. Sahl Saraḳsi, Yaḥyā b. Abi Maṣṣur, Aḥmad b. Moḥammad Saraḳsi, Ya'qub b. 'Ali Qašrāni, and Abu Ma'sar, writing in Arabic in the eighth and ninth centuries (Sezgin, *GAS VII*, pp. 100-151). The earliest original works in modern Persian are dateable to the eleventh century; their authors are Ebn Sina, Moḥammad b. Ayyub Ṭabari, and Biruni (Storey, pp.43-45).

The horoscopic diagram is usually a square or rectangle divided into twelve sections surrounding a central square. Each of the twelve sections represents an astrological place (Pahlavi: *gyāg*, Persian: *kāna*, Arabic: *makān/bayt*) of which the first, called the ascendant (Pahlavi: *mex ī gyānān*, Persian/Arabic: *ṭāle*), begins at the point where the ecliptic (Pahlavi: *dwāzdahān*, Persian: *čarḳ-e moqawwas*, Arabic: *falak al-boruj*) intersects the eastern horizon (Persian/Arabic: *mašreq*) at the moment for which the horoscope was cast; the cusps or boundaries of the places are determined by various rules of varying complexity (North, 1986) in a process called “the equalization of the places” (Persian: *taswiat-e kānahā*, Arabic: *taswiat al-boyut*). The cusps of places opposite to each other are always separated by 180°. The first (ascendant), the fourth, the seventh, and the tenth are called cardines (Pahlavi: *mex*, Persian/Arabic: *watad*); the second, fifth, eighth, and eleventh are called succedents (Pahlavi: *pas rasēn*, Arabic: *mā yali watad*); and the third, sixth, ninth, and twelfth are called cadents (Persian/Arabic: *saqt*). Each of the twelve places signifies one or several aspects of a native's life.

The twelve zodiacal signs (Persian/Arabic: *borj*), distributed evenly along the ecliptic, are Aries (Pahlavi: *Warrag*, Arabic: *Ḥamal*), Taurus (Pahlavi: *Gāv*, Arabic: *Ṭawr*), Gemini (Pahlavi: *Dō-pahikar*, Arabic: *Jawzā*), Cancer (Pahlavi: *Karzang*, Arabic: *Saraṭān*), Leo (Pahlavi: *Šagr*, Arabic: *Asad*), Virgo (Pahlavi: *Hošag*, Arabic: *Sonbola*), Libra (Pahlavi: *Tarāzūg*, Arabic: *Mizān*), Scorpio (Pahlavi: *Gazdum*, Arabic: *'Aqrab*), Sagittarius (Pahlavi: *Nēmasp*, Arabic: *Qaws*), Capricorn (Pahlavi: *Wahig*, Arabic: *Jady*), Aquarius (Pahlavi: *Dōl*, Arabic: *Dalw*), and Pisces (Pahlavi: *Māhīg*, Arabic: *Ḥut*). These zodiacal signs, whose boundaries normally fall within those of the astrological places in the horoscopic diagram, are the houses or domiciles (Pahlavi: *kadag*, Persian/Arabic: *bayt*) of the planets. Further, each is subdivided into various sections pertaining to the planets: into thirds or decans (Pahlavi: *dahig*, from δεκάνος, or *darigān*, from Sanskrit: *dreṣkāṇa*, Persian/Arabic: *wajh*), into



ninths (Sanskrit: *navāṃśa*, Pahlavi: *nō bahr*, Persian/Arabic: *noh-bahr*), and into twelfths (Pahlavi: *dwāzdah bahr*, Arabic: *eṭnā-‘ašariya*). In every zodiacal sign each of the five star-planets is lord of a given number of degrees, called a term (Persian/Arabic: *ḥadd*); in Iran the systems of Dorotheus and of Ptolemy were the primary ones in use. Also the twelve zodiacal signs are grouped into four triplicities (Pahlavi: *3-sdg*, Persian/Arabic: *motallata*), each characterized by one of the four elements: fire (Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius), earth (Taurus, Virgo, and Capricorn), air (Gemini, Libra, and Aquarius), and water (Cancer, Scorpio, and Pisces).

For some purposes the seven planets (Pahlavi: *abaxtar*, Persian/Arabic: *kawkab*): Saturn (Pahlavi: *Kewān*, Persian: *Kaywān*, Arabic: *Zohal*), Jupiter (Pahlavi: *Ohrmazd*, Persian: *Hormoz*, Arabic: *Mostari*), Mars (Pahlavi: *Wahrām*, Persian: *Bahrām*, Arabic: *Merrik*), the Sun (Pahlavi: *Mehr*, Persian: *Mehr*, Arabic: *Šams*), Venus (Pahlavi/Persian: *Anāhīd*, Arabic: *Zohra*), Mercury (Pahlavi/Persian: *Tir*, Arabic: *‘Oṭāred*), and the Moon (Pahlavi/Persian: *Māh*, Arabic: *Qamar*), were, following Indian practice, joined by the two nodes of the Moon, the ascending node (Pahlavi: *Gōzihr sar*, Arabic: *ra’s al-jawzahar*) and the descending node (Pahlavi: *Gōzihr dumb*, Arabic: *danab al-jawzahar*). Each of these nine “planets” has in one of the zodiacal signs a degree of exaltation (Pahlavi: *bālist* or *past*, Persian/Arabic: *šaraf*), and, directly opposite this, a degree of dejection (Pahlavi: *nišēb* or *marz*, Persian/ Arabic: *hobuṭ*). Finally, there are thirty fixed stars (Pahlavi: *awiyābānīg*, Arabic: *hidbāni*) that astrologers claim to exercise influence in a nativity.

All or (more usually) some of the above data as well as other information may be entered into a horoscopic diagram to form the basis of the astrologer’s predictions; those predictions are based on the interrelations to each other of these elements. The predictions may relate to an individual’s life (genethliological astrology), to individual or corporate initiatives (catarchic), to answering specific questions (interrogational), or to history (historical); each of these categories has several subdivisions. An example of how a Persian horoscopic diagram was set up and interpreted is provided by Elwell-Sutton (1977).



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