

Astrological Iconography of Planetary Deities in Tang China: Near Eastern and Indian Icons in Chinese Buddhism*

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Abstract

This study examines the planetary icons found in East Asian art, arguing that they should be divided into three sets: Indian, zoomorphic and Iranian-Mesopotamian. It is demonstrated that the Indian icons are earlier representations of the *navagraha* directly from India. The latter two are identified as coming from an Iranian source. The Iranian-Mesopotamian icons are further discussed in relation to parallels found in the *Picatrix*, the Latin translation of an Arabic manual of astral magic. The roles of these icons within the magical traditions of Buddhism and Daoism are identified. It is proven that such astral magic was also imported from Near Eastern sources. The evolution of the icons of Rāhu, Ketu, Yuebei 月孛 and Ziqi 紫氣, i.e., the set of four pseudo-planets 四餘 in East Asian astrology is also discussed. It is argued that it was most likely Sogdian Nestorian Christians who transmitted the Iranian icons into China.

Keywords:

Tang Dynasty, planets, astrology, navagraha, Iran, Tejaprabha

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唐代中國星曜神祇的占星術圖像 ——中國佛教中的近東與印度圖像

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摘要

本文研究東亞藝術中的行星（星曜）圖像，主張應將其劃分為三種類型：印度風格、動物風格和伊美風格。本文證明印度式圖像即為早期直接從印度傳入的九曜（*navagraha*），而另兩種則可確定是源自伊朗。在對伊美圖像進一步討論的過程中，將會涉及到一部拉丁文本 *Picatrix* 中的相似記錄，此拉丁文本是譯自一部阿拉伯文占星術手冊。此外，本文確認這些圖像在佛教和道教法術傳統中所扮演的角色，以及證實此類占星術也是引進自近東文獻。本文亦討論東亞占星中的四餘，即羅睺、計都、月孛和紫氣等圖像的演進。而最有可能將伊朗圖像引入中國的，應非粟特景教徒莫屬。

關鍵詞：

唐朝、星曜、占星術、九曜、伊朗、熾盛光佛

Introduction

An intriguing painting from Dunhuang, entitled “Tejaprabhā Buddha and the Five Planets” 熾盛光佛并五星圖 and painted by Zhang Huaixing 張淮興 (d.u.) in year 4 of reign era Qianning 乾寧 (897),¹ depicts five human figures with associated animals surrounding a luminous Tejaprabhā Buddha. These figures, which are indicated as the five visible planets, are also described and depicted in Buddhist texts dealing with astral magic. The origins and function of these icons have prompted investigations by scholars. Some suggest an Indian origin,² while others speculate that these icons are products of a Chinese imagination.³ The latter theory is immediately problematic because very similar iconography is found in Islamic art.⁴

So, are we to conclude that these icons are of an Indian origin? When we look to the Indian representations of the planets found within the original **Garbhadhātu-maṇḍala* 胎藏界曼荼羅 from Esoteric Buddhism in China, we find a very different set of icons from that found in the Tejaprabhā painting from Dunhuang. The aim of this paper is to prove that the icons seen in the Dunhuang painting, as well as in Chinese texts dealing with astral magic, are actually Iranian in origin. I will propose in this study that there are basically three sets of representations of the planetary deities in Chinese Buddhism: “Indian,” “zoomorphic,” and “Iranian-Mesopotamian.” I will furthermore discuss the function of these icons within Buddhist ritual, proving that the planets were believed to be sentient deities that strongly influence human fate. These planetary deities represent elements of Mesopotamian

¹ Stein no. Ch.liv.007, British Museum 1919,0101,0.31.

² Lilla Russell-Smith is correct in suggesting that anthropomorphic representations of the planets “became popular only after the arrival of Buddhism.” However, the icons she studied are not of Indian origin. Russell-Smith, “Stars and Planets in Chinese and Central Asian Buddhist Art from the Ninth to the Fifteenth Centuries,” 99. See also Birnbaum, “Introduction to the Study of T’ang Buddhist Astrology,” 5–19.

³ Takeda, in his study on the “star maṇḍalas” 星曼荼羅 of medieval Japan, also examined these icons from China and concluded that this iconography was a unique innovation in China. Takeda Kazuaki 武田和昭, *Hoshi mandara no kenkyū* 星曼荼羅の研究, 191.

⁴ In Islamic astrological art, Jupiter is a judge or sage, Venus is a female musician, Mercury is depicted as a young male scribe writing on a scroll, Mars is an armed fighter, and Saturn is often a scantily clothed old man with a pickax. There are, however, variations on these representations. See Carboni, *Following the Stars*, 6. See plate 13 below.

beliefs that were absorbed into Chinese Buddhism, mostly through the practice of foreign astrology.

During the Tang dynasty, there was considerable translation and production of literature dealing with occidental astrology from Indian, Iranian, and Hellenistic traditions. Here, “occidental astrology” refers to traditions of astrology from west of China that have their origins in Mesopotamia and/or India.⁵ This stands in contrast to China’s own native practices of astrology that initially emerged independent of occidental influences.⁶

The most notable texts dealing with occidental astrology in China from the Tang period include the *Xiuyao jing* 宿曜經 (T 1299; **Nakṣatra-graha-sūtra*), *Qiyao rangzai jue* 七曜攘災決 (T 1308; *Secrets of Seven-Planet Apotropaism*),⁷ *Duli yusi jing* 都利聿斯經 (**Dorotheus*),⁸ and the *Lingtai jing* 靈臺經 (DZ 288; *Scripture of the Spiritual Terrace*).⁹

The first two are Buddhist astrological manuals. Although monastic regulations technically forbid monks from professionally practicing astrology and calendrical science, such prohibitions never arrested Chinese Buddhist

⁵ The history of astrology in Asia is quite complex. Indian astrology, for example, initially emerged free of Mesopotamian influences, but later in the early CE it absorbed Hellenistic astrology, which itself was comprised of Egyptian, Greek and Mesopotamian influences. “Occidental astrology,” therefore, is used to distinguish these traditions from the native Chinese system. I prefer this term to “Western astrology,” which generally refers to the European tradition that developed throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

⁶ For a recent comprehensive study of native Chinese astrology, see Pankenier, *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China*.

⁷ The *Xiuyao jing* and *Qiyao rangzai jue* deal with primarily Indian and Iranian astrology, lacking advanced features of Hellenistic astrology. See Yano Michio 矢野道雄, *Mikkyō senseijutsu* 密教占星術. I discuss the latter in Jeffrey Kotyk, “Iranian Elements in Late-Tang Buddhist Astrology,” *Asia Major* 30, no. 1 (2017): 25–58.

⁸ According to Mak, the *Duli yusi jing*, which is extant in fragments and as a versified version, was a translation of an astrological treatise of Dorotheus of Sidon (c. 75), who was an eminent Hellenistic astrologer. See Mak, “*Yusi Jing*,” 105–69. My research of other hitherto unidentified fragments, which I will publish in the future, confirms Mak’s thesis.

⁹ A fragmentary manual of horoscopic astrology included in the Daoist canon. It draws on material from the *Duli yusi jing* and likely dates to the mid-ninth century. For some relevant remarks see Kotyk, “Kanjikien no bungaku ni okeru saihō-senseijutsu no yōso: tōzai bunka kōryū ni okeru Bukkyō no yakuwari” 漢字圏の文学における西方占星術の要素, 107–108.

interest in astrology.¹⁰ It is within this context of popular interest in foreign astrology that we must understand the evolution of astrological iconography in China.

Tejaprabhā Buddha

We should first discuss the emergence of Tejaprabhā Buddha 熾盛光佛, the *Tathāgata* in the Dunhuang painting.¹¹ Although this deity possesses a Sanskrit name, there is no extant evidence of him being worshipped in India. In East Asian art, Tejaprabhā is generally depicted alongside astral deities, in particular the planets depicted in anthropomorphic forms.

As to the origins of the Tejaprabhā cult in China, one key work is the *Da sheng miaojixiang pusa shuo chuzai jiaoling falun* 大聖妙吉祥菩薩說除災教令法輪 (T 966; *Disaster Eliminating Edifying Dharma-Wheel as Taught by the Great and Holy Excellent Auspicious Bodhisattva*). Its alternate title is *Chishengguang foding* 熾盛光佛頂 (**Tejaprabhā-buddhōṣṇīṣa*). The colophon states that this text was extracted from a certain *Wenshu dajihui jing* 文殊大集會經 (*Sūtra of Mañjuśrī's Great Gathering*), which has not been identified. Details from the colophon indicate that it was translated in 796.¹² Although this text appears to be a translation of a manual describing a *maṇḍala* and set of mantras, an anomalous feature is that it mentions texts that had been earlier translated into Chinese. It states, “The *Tathāgata* has already explained [such matters] in sūtras such as the *Sūryagarbha-parivarta* and *Candragarbha-parivarta* in the *Mahāsamnipata-sūtra*.”¹³ It also states, “It is finest to write the name in Sanskrit if possible. If one does not understand

¹⁰ For a relevant study see Kotyk, “Can Monks Practice Astrology?” 497–511.

¹¹ Academic literature renders *chishengguang* 熾盛光 as *tejaprabhā*, but it is uncertain from where this Sanskrit rendering is derived. For attested Sanskrit terms see Hirakawa Akira, *Buddhist Chinese-Sanskrit Dictionary*, 797.

¹² T 966, 19: 342b12–13. The colophon does not indicate the translator, but an editorial note in the *Taishō* text states that appended written remarks (*okugaki* 奧書) provide the following details: “Translated by the Indian monk from Mahānālanda Saṃghārāma in Central India, Tripiṭaka Master Śīlabhadra, at the Xingyuan-fu, with monk Huilin as scribe, in year 12 of Zhenyuan [796].” 中天竺國，大那爛陀寺，梵僧尸羅跋陀羅三藏，於興元府譯，筆受僧慧琳，于時貞元十二年。

¹³ 如來於《方等大集》，《日藏》、《月藏》等經，早已宣說。T 966, 19: 342c11–12.

Sanskrit letters, it is also possible for the titles to follow the local script.”¹⁴ This suggests that the extant version of the work was modified in China, or perhaps that it was even composed in China.¹⁵ The principal figure one is to draw in the *maṇḍala* is the **Tejaprabhā-buddhōṣṇīṣa* 熾盛光佛頂. This is not strictly one of the thirty-two marks of a buddha, since the accompanying description mentions that “the many pores of the body emit great light.”¹⁶ From this terse Chinese, the reader might understand that the **Tejaprabhā-buddhōṣṇīṣa* is to be depicted as a fully represented *Tathāgata*, rather than as just the *uṣṇīṣa*. In addition to various bodhisattva and deity figures, astrological figures such as the *navagraha* and zodiac signs are also to be painted. The ritual for which the painting is produced is to be carried out when astronomically anomalous events occur.¹⁷

The translation date of 796 is significant because this was a period when horoscopic astrology was first introduced into China.¹⁸ This appears to be the point in time from which the *Tejaprabhā* cult emerged in China.¹⁹ The

14 若能梵書其名，最爲上妙。若不識梵字者，隨方文字題之亦通。 T 966, 19: 343a21–23.

15 My present reading would suggest that an original text was translated from Sanskrit into Chinese, and then modified slightly. When listing the *navagraha*, it translates Rāhu and Ketu as “eclipse deity” 蝕神 and “comet” 彗星 respectively (T 966, 19: 343c7), which is an Indian definition, in contrast to later developments seen in China, in which Ketu is defined as the tail of Rāhu (see below). It therefore seems likely that the text was written by an Indian.

16 畫熾盛光佛頂，身諸毛孔放大光明。 T 966, 19: 343a26.

17 “If the nation [experiences] a solar or lunar eclipse, or the five planets fall out of order, their forms and colors becoming strange, or if ominous comets infringe upon the natal *nakṣatras* of the ruler or important people, or if the Sun and Moon harm one’s natal zodiac sign, then the apotropaic *homa* of this teaching should be performed.” 若有國界日月薄蝕，或五星失度形色變異，或妖星彗孛陵押王者貴人命宿，或日月虧損於本命宮中，此時應用此教息災護摩。 T 966, 19: 342c13–16.

18 For example, the *Duli yusi jing* was translated around this period. The *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 has the following account in its catalog of texts: “*Duli yusi jing*. 2 fascicles. In the Zhenyuan period [785–805] the *duli* diviner Li Miqian transmitted it from Western India. There was someone [named] Qu Gong who translated the text.” 《都利聿斯經》二卷，貞元中，都利術士李彌乾傳自西天竺，有璩公者譯其文。 *Xin Tang shu*, Zhonghua shuju edn., fasc. 59, vol. 5, 1548.

19 Sørensen, however, states that *Tejaprabhā* was worshipped by Amoghavajra at an earlier time. He cites the *Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳 (T 2061; *Song Dynasty Biographies of High Monks*). He states that “the Ācārya was called

Tejaprabhā ritual includes a *dhāraṇī* to be recited when facing astrologically unfavorable circumstances, which is why the cult likely also played a role in facilitating interest in other astral deities. This role of Tejaprabhā, I argue, points to a fear of astral deities, which itself was a result of widespread belief in astrology among Buddhists.²⁰

Descriptions and Depictions of Planetary Deities

There are basically three sets of representations of the planets as deities in Chinese Buddhism. These will be labelled as “Indian,” “zoomorphic,” and “Iranian-Mesopotamian.” These sets will be discussed separately, followed by a discussion of the evolution of the four “hidden planets.”

Table 1: Chinese Buddhist texts with planetary iconography.

Chinese Title	Canon	Title Translation
<i>Qiyao rangzai jue</i> 七曜攘災決 ²¹	T 1308	<i>Secrets of Seven-Planet Apotropaism</i>

upon by the Chinese emperor to worship Tejaprabhā and the astral gods on Mt. Wutai 五台山 in order to dispel the evil omen caused by a comet.” Sørensen, “Astrology and the Worship of Planets in Esoteric Buddhism of the Tang,” 240. However, the text in question does not mention Tejaprabhā or astral gods: “In the summer of year 5 [770] there was an imperial order. Amoghavajra was asked to go to Mt. Wutai to cultivate merit. At that time a comet had appeared. The comet subsequently vanished as the rites were announced as finished.” 五年夏有詔，請空往五臺山修功德，于時彗星出焉。法事告終，星亦隨沒。T 2061, 50: 713a17–19. The translation of the *Chishengguang dawei de xiao zai jixiang tuoluoni jing* 熾盛光大威德消災吉祥陀羅尼經 (T 963; *Great Venerable Disaster Eliminating Auspicious Dhāraṇī Sūtra of Tejaprabhā*) is attributed to Amoghavajra 不空 (705–774), but as Liao Yang points out, it does not appear in Tang-era catalogs. See Liao Yang 廖暘, “Chishengguang Fo zaikao” 熾盛光佛再考, 329.

²⁰ The Tejaprabhā cult was, it seems, unique to China before spreading elsewhere, such as Japan, Korea and Tangut Xixia. Despite a possible Indian connection stemming from Śīlabhadra, Tejaprabhā is unknown in Indian sources, marking this deity as a uniquely East Asian figure.

²¹ Compiled sometime between 806 when its ephemeris for Rāhu commences and 865 when Shūei 宗叡 brought it to Japan. It appears in his catalog of items brought back from China: 七曜攘災決一卷. See *Shin shosha shōrai hōmon tō mokuroku* 新書寫請來法門等目錄 (T 2174A, 55: 1111b21). A handwritten

<i>Fantian huoluo jiuyao</i> 梵天火羅九曜 ²²	T 1311	* <i>Brahmadeva-hora-navagraha</i>
<i>Dari jing shu</i> 大日經疏 ²³	T 1796	Commentary on the <i>Mahāvairocana-sūtra</i>
<i>Fantian qiayao jing</i> 梵天七曜經		* <i>Brahmadeva-saptagraha-sūtra</i>
<i>Huatu</i> 畫圖		“Painting”
<i>Taizō zuzō</i> 胎藏圖象 ²⁴	TZ vol. 2, 191–328	<i>Icons of the Garbhadhātu</i>
<i>Taizō kuzuyō</i> 胎藏舊圖樣 ²⁵	TZ vol. 2, 477–566	<i>Old Icons of the Garbhadhātu</i>
<i>Kuyō hiryaku</i> 九曜秘曆 ²⁶	TZ vol. 7 769–773	<i>Secret Calendar of the Navagraha</i>

manuscript of this text is in the Shimoura Collection 下浦文庫 (13–471), Tōkyō University of Science 東京理科學。

- 22 The Taishō version is missing some lines quoted in the aforementioned *Gyōrin shō*, and the images for the Sun and Moon are reversed. The first reference to the text in Japan is from between 890–953. See Takeda Kazuaki 武田和昭, “Tō-ji hōbodai-in kyūzō hoshi mandara to zanketsu ni tsuite” 東寺宝菩提院舊藏星曼荼羅圖殘闕について, 12. Although attributed to Yixing 一行 (683–727), the colophon indicates a composition date around 874.
- 23 The revised recension of this commentary is X 438. The original version was compiled by Yixing sometime before his death in 727.
- 24 This document depicts the deities of the **Garbhadhātu-maṇḍala* 胎藏界曼荼羅. These icons are based on those brought to Japan from China by Enchin 圓珍 (814–891), who copied them in 855 in Chang’an at Qinglong-si 青龍寺. It is said these icons were first drawn by Śubhakarasiṃha 善無畏 (637–735), the Indian translator of the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra* (*Dari jing* 大日經; T 848). The TZ copy is from 1194.
- 25 Also a collection of icons from the **Garbhadhātu-maṇḍala* brought to Japan by Enchin. The original document is lost, but a copy from 1193 in the Mutō 武藤 collection is reproduced in the TZ. These icons are thought to be those of the tradition of Vajrabodhi 金剛智 (671–741) and Amoghavajra 不空 (705–774).
- 26 This illuminated work in one fascicle is comprised of text detailing the astrological features of each day of the seven-day week, plus accompanying mantras for each planet, and illustrations of the planetary deities. The material is drawn from Tang-era Buddhist texts. The manuscript copied by Sōkan 僧觀 in year 2 of Tenji 天治 (1125) was based on an earlier copy from year 3 of Tennyō 天慶 (940), thus it was composed sometime before 940 (see New York Metropolitan Museum of Art #1975.268.4). It is uncertain whether it was produced in China or Japan. The anthropomorphic depictions wear Chinese attire; thus, the depictions are of an East Asian imagination, and not based on an

The Japanese *Gyōrin shō* 行林抄 (T 2409; *Summary of the Forest of Practices*), a compendium of Buddhist lore and rituals by the Hieizan 比叡山 monk Jōnen 靜然 in 1154, cites several Chinese Buddhist texts that describe the iconography of the planetary deities. This is especially valuable since two of the cited texts are not found in any extant canon. The *Fantian qiyao jing* 梵天七曜經 [**Brahmadeva-saptagraha-sūtra*] was purportedly a translation of an “Indian text.” It is referred to in the *Gyōrin shō* as “the Indian edition” (梵本云), but as we will see below, its icons are Iranian-Mesopotamian. The *Huatu* 畫圖, or “painting,” appears to be text describing painted figures. We might add to Jōnen’s list three other relevant texts from Mantrayāna (see table 1).

Indian Planetary Deities

The Indian set includes the earliest known representations of the *navagraha* in China. These icons are Indian in origin. They are depicted in the *Taizō zuzō* and *Taizō kuzuyō*. The planets are all depicted in anthropomorphic male forms, in contrast to the later sets which include female forms. In the *Taizō zuzō*, the Sun, identified as Āditya, rides in a seven-horse chariot, and the Moon, identified as Candra, rides in a chariot pulled by seven geese (see plates 1 & 2). The twenty-seven *nakṣatras* and twelve zodiac signs are also depicted.²⁷

These icons were transmitted via the system of Buddhist practice based on the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra* translated in 724, which is comprised of the *sūtra*,

earlier visual representation from the West. For relevant studies see Nakano Sangen 中野玄三, “Kanchiin shozō *Kuyō hireki ni tsuite*” 觀智院所藏九曜秘曆について, 13–24. Manabe Shunshō 真鍋俊照, “Karazu no zuzō to seiritsu” 火羅圖の圖像と成立, 324–29.

²⁷ The *nakṣatras* are autochthonous constellations along the ecliptic which function as “lunar stations” through which the Moon transits over the course of around twenty-eight days. The zodiac signs were originally a Mesopotamian concept that was transmitted to the Hellenistic world. The signs were transmitted to India via the transmission of Hellenistic astrology in the early centuries of the first millennium. See Gansten, “Astrology and Astronomy (Jyotiṣa),” 281–94. The commentary to the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra* clearly understands both of these as astral deities: “South of the west gate, place the lunar deity opposite the solar deity. He rides in a chariot [pulled by] white geese. To his left and right are the deities of the twenty-seven *nakṣatras* and twelve [zodiac] palaces.” 西門之南，與日天相對應置月天，乘白鵝車。於其左右，置廿七宿、十二宮神等 (T 1796, 39: 634c12–13). The deification of the zodiac signs was an Indian, not Hellenistic, development.

the commentary and the visual *maṇḍala*. Although minor deities on the outskirts of the *maṇḍala*, the planetary deities within this system are still conceived of as sentient deities from whom spiritual blessings may be gained, in particular through the recitation of their respective mantras.²⁸ This represents the first systematic example of Buddhist astral magic in China. This Indian system, however, did not become an independent system like the later Iranian tradition, to be discussed shortly.

One peculiar feature of this set of *navagraha* icons is the inclusion of Kampa, the deity of earthquakes, as one of the *grahas*. It is unclear why he is designated as a *graha*, a term normally reserved for the planets, though we might speculate it was to fill in all eight directions. The commentary states the following:

日天眷屬布諸執曜：盍伽在西，輸伽在東，勃陀在南，勿落薩鉢底在北，沒備沒遮在東南，羅睺在西南，劔婆在西北，計都在東北。

Place the planets as the retainers of the solar deity: Aṅgāraka [Mars] in the west, Śukra [Venus] in the east, Budha [Mercury] in the south, Bṛhaspati [Jupiter] in the north, Śanaiścara²⁹ [Saturn] in the southeast, Rāhu in the southwest, Kampa in the northwest, and Ketu in the northeast.³⁰

In later developments in China, however, Kampa, the earthquake deity (in Chinese also known as *zhendong shen* 震動神) plays no role, and therefore was not a significant deity, despite his association here with the *navagraha*.

28 The commentary states, “Furthermore, such *graha* are a gateway to virtuous friends within the *maṇḍala*. Those worthies [of the *maṇḍala*] can create the means for empowerment [*adhiṣṭhāna*] in accord with worldly activities. As the *ācārya* skillfully selects an auspicious time, it will naturally align with their [the deities’] mantras and root vows, producing empowerment, and freedom from obstacles.” 復次如是執曜，即是漫荼羅中一種善知識門。彼諸本尊，即能順世間事業而作加持方便。以阿闍梨善擇吉祥時故，與彼真言本誓法爾相關，為作加持，得離諸障也 (T 1796, 39: 618b9–13).

29 Read *mei* 沒 as *she* 設.

30 T 1796, 39: 634b20–23.

Zoomorphic Planetary Deities

The “zoomorphic” set is a less well-known group of planetary deities comprised of figures depicted, with one exception, as animals or including animalistic features. These are described in the first fascicle of the *Qiyao rangzai jue* and depicted in the illuminated *Kuyō hiryaku*. This set of deities includes a few icons strongly suggestive of an Egyptian origin. The existence of Egyptian icons in East Asian astrological art would not necessarily be surprising in light of the presence of Egyptian asterisms (the decans³¹ and horas) in the Sanskrit *Yavanajātaka*,³² which was studied by David Pingree.³³

The most prominent figure of this set suggesting an Egyptian origin is the solar deity (see plate 1). The *Qiyao rangzai jue* describes the deity as possessing “a form like a man, but a head like a lion and a human body. Wearing a heavenly garment. The hand is holding a jeweled vase black in color.”³⁴ Such a solar deity has no apparent parallel in Chinese or Indian iconographies. One Chinese symbol for the Sun is the three-legged crow 三足烏.³⁵ The Indian solar deity Sūrya is represented in a purely anthropomorphic form. The solar deity in Vedic literature rides in a chariot drawn by horses.³⁶

A lion-headed deity associated with the Sun does, however, exist in Egyptian mythology: Sekhmet, known as the Eye of Ra (Ra the Sun god). The eye of the creator could be identified with the Sun disc.³⁷ Even if this is not Sekhmet specifically, there are many examples of lion-headed figures among the figures personifying stars, decans, planets, and so on, depicted on the

31 Decans are thirty-six Egyptian constellations that were eventually merged with the twelve zodiac signs.

32 The *Yavanajātaka* is a Sanskrit manual of Hellenistic astrology. See his study and translation: Pingree, *The Yavanajātaka of Sphujidhvaja*. Pingree dated it to 269–270, but Bill M. Mak contests this based on new manuscript evidence. He suggests it “is dated sometime after 22 CE and could be as late as the early seventh century ...” Mak, “The Transmission of Greek Astral Science Into India Reconsidered,” 17.

33 Pingree, “The Indian Iconography of the Decans and Horas,” 223–54.

34 形如人而似獅子頭人身，著天衣，手持寶瓶而黑色。T 1308, 21: 426c11–12.

35 For instance, Wang Chong 王充 (27–97) in the *Shuori* 說日 chapter of the *Lunheng* 論衡: “The Ru say, ‘In the Sun there is a three-legged crow. In the Moon there is a rabbit and toad.’” 儒者曰：「日中有三足烏，月中有兔、蟾蜍。」 (cited from <http://ctext.org/lunheng/>).

36 Witzel, “Vedic Gods (Indra, Agni, Rudra, Varuṇa, etc.).”

37 Pinch, *Handbook of Egyptian Mythology*, 128–31.

ceiling of the Temple of Hathor at Dendera in Egypt (Greco-Roman period). The Sun god Ra is also depicted with a lion's head and sun disc at Dendera (plate 9). In Hellenistic astrology, which itself is a product of Alexandrian culture, the Sun is the ruler of Leo. It was in this late period in Ancient Egyptian history that Hellenistic astrology was produced, a tradition which spread to Iran and India. It would therefore be plausible that a related icon such as this could have been transmitted via texts dealing with astrology. We know that astrology was extensively studied in Sasanian Iran (224–650), and that Sasanian rulers hosted Greek, or Greco-Syrian, and Indian scholars within their realm.³⁸ This middle culture between Alexandria and China was an intermediary of astrological knowledge, so it is quite plausible to suggest that Iranian sources could have also transmitted some originally Egyptian astrological icons.

Venus (plate 6) in this zoomorphic set is described as possessing “a form like a heavenly lady, holding a seal in her hand, and riding a white fowl.”³⁹ According to Neugebauer and Parker, Venus was earlier depicted as a heron, but later other representations developed.⁴⁰ Mercury (plate 4) is described as possessing “a form like a black snake, having four legs and eating a crab.”⁴¹ As with the lion-headed figure above, there are also many examples of serpents personifying decans and so forth on the astronomical ceiling at Dendera, including some with human limbs (see plate 9). According to Parker, Mercury was identified with animal-headed Seth.⁴² Seth was also sometimes identified with the chaos serpent Apophis.⁴³ However, the closest example to Mercury portrayed as a serpent is found in the “Athribis Zodiac A,” in which Mercury is depicted as a “falcon with serpent tail and head of Seth.”⁴⁴ This is admittedly speculation, but the parallels are noteworthy, and given the lion-headed Sun deity above, it seems plausible to suggest an Egyptian origin for this icon.

³⁸ Pingree, *From Astral Omens to Astrology From Babylon to Bīkāner*, 39.

³⁹ 形如天女，手持印，騎白鷄。T 1308, 21: 427b4–5. In the visual representations, her right hand is seemingly displaying a *mudrā* rather than holding a seal.

⁴⁰ Neugebauer and Parker, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts III*, 180–81. See also Parker, “Ancient Egyptian Astronomy,” 60.

⁴¹ 形如黑蛇，有四足而食蟹。T 1308, 21: 427b14.

⁴² Parker, “Ancient Egyptian Astronomy,” 59–61.

⁴³ Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*, 198.

⁴⁴ Neugebauer and Parker, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts III*, 180.

The lunar deity is described as possessing “a form like a heavenly lady wearing a blue garment holding a jeweled sword.”⁴⁵ This description is too vague to suggest any identifications, though it should be noted that the Indian lunar deity Candra is always male. Mars is described as possessing “a form like an elephant, black in color, crying out to the sky.”⁴⁶ Jupiter is described as possessing “a form like a man; a man’s body and dragon’s head, wearing a heavenly garment. The color changes according to the four seasons.”⁴⁷ Again, the origin of these representations is unknown. Finally, the icon of Saturn is described as possessing “a form like a Brahmin, riding a black ox.”⁴⁸ This is identical to what is found among the Iranian-Mesopotamian icons and will be discussed in detail below.

The *Qiyao rangzai jue* states that these images are to be drawn, carried and destroyed through various means (fire, water or being discarded down a well) as a way of escaping undesirable events brought on by the planets. The fact that Jupiter, Venus and the Moon are treated as malefic planets in this fashion is strongly suggestive of an Iranian context. In Hellenistic astrology, these three planets are always regarded as benefic, in contrast to Saturn and Mars, which are always malefic. Iranian astral lore, however, came to regard all the planets as demonic and dangerous.⁴⁹ Furthermore, the practice of drawing figures on paper as a means of warding off various evils is attested in Persia and Zoroastrianism.⁵⁰ These points all indicate an immediate Iranian source for these zoomorphic icons, though their earlier development clearly drew on earlier traditions.

45 形如天女，著青天衣，持寶劍。T 1308, 21: 426c20–21.

46 形如象，黑色，向天大呼。T 1308, 21: 427a11–12.

47 形如人，人身龍頭，著天衣，隨四季色。T 1308, 21: 426c29–427a1.

48 形如婆羅門，騎黑沙牛。T 1308, 21: 427a22.

49 “The planets, when referred to as demons, were called *abāxtar* ‘retrograde’ or *nē axtar* ‘non-star,’ but they were sometimes also called *gēg* ‘robbers, bandits’ in opposition to the stars, the ‘givers’ (*bagān*) par excellence.” See Panaino, “Cosmologies and Astrology,” 253–54.

50 Zoroastrianism had a magical practice of *nērangs* (incantations or charms) that were connected to the invocation of stars and planets. See Panaino, “Two Zoroastrian *Nērangs* and the Invocation of the Stars and the Planets,” 196–218. Al-Bīrūnī (973–c.1052), a Muslim author on astronomy and astrology, reports on a Persian practice of writing on papers to ward off scorpion stings on specific days, which were then attached to doors in the evening, although he notes this was not originally a Persian custom. See Al-Bīrūnī, *The Book of Instruction in the Elements of the Art of Astrology*, 182.

Although these “zoomorphic” icons were known within Chinese Mantrayāna in the ninth century, they never became widespread.

Iranian-Mesopotamian Planetary Deities

This “Iranian-Mesopotamian” set of icons under discussion here excludes the Sun and the Moon. This set was utilized by both Buddhists and Daoists, becoming the mainstream representations of the planetary deities in East Asia.

These icons were introduced through a Sogdian intermediary. In Tang Buddhist texts, the planets can be referred to using their native Chinese names, but from at least the mid-eighth century, when Amoghavajra compiled his astrology manual—the *Xiuyao jing*⁵¹—they were also known by their Sogdian⁵² names in Chinese transliteration.⁵³ However, the *Xiuyao jing* does not discuss any iconography or magic. These Sogdian names are found in other Chinese texts, such as the Daoist *Chengxing lingtai biyao jing* 秤星靈臺秘要經 (DZ 289; *Scripture of the Secret Essentials of the Compass Spiritual Terrace*), a fragmentary manual of apotropaic rites designed to negate harmful planetary influences, which was written within a few decades after 894–898 (the Qianning 乾寧 era).⁵⁴ These Sogdian names are transcriptions of the names of planets in Middle Persian.⁵⁵ The planets in Iran

51 The first version of the *Xiuyao jing* was compiled with the assistance of Shi Yao 史瑤 and completed in 759. It was said to be problematic for Chinese readership and subsequently revised with the aid of Yang Jingfeng 楊景風 in 764. See Yano Michio, *Mikkyō senseijutsu*, 226–64

52 The Sogdians were prominent caravan merchants in Central Asia from the fifth to the eighth or ninth century. They were also a prominent ethnic community in Tang China. They spoke an Eastern Iranian language. For a comprehensive study see Vaissière, *Sogdian Traders*.

53 See Yano Michio, *Mikkyō senseijutsu*, 110. Although Sogdians were active in China earlier than this period, there is no evidence of their vocabulary for the planetary names being used by Han Chinese.

54 Kalinowski, “*Chengxing lingtai biyao jing*” 秤星靈臺秘要經, 337–38. *Chengxing* 秤星 (“scale & star”) here seems to refer to a *dingpan-xing* 定盤星, which is a flat circular or square plate on which marks of graduation are indicated (*xing* 星), i.e., a compass. *Chengxing* therefore likely refers to a plate representing the ecliptic or equator with the degrees marked. As a metaphor, the term refers to a standard for something. See *Foguang dacidian* 佛光大辭典, 3184.

55 Nicholas Sims-Williams of SOAS pointed this out to me.

were named after major deities in the Zoroastrian pantheon, a custom which was originally Mesopotamian, and one that also spread to Greek and Latin speaking cultures. The renaming of the planets in Iran after Mesopotamian equivalents dates back to the Achaemenid era.⁵⁶ The correspondences are given in table 2. The concept of deities presiding over the planets does have a Chinese precedent, though this is entirely different from the present iconography in question.⁵⁷

Table 2: Planetary Deities—Correspondences⁵⁸

Planet	Greek	Akkadian	Middle Persian	Sogdian	Sogdian (Chinese) ⁵⁹
Mars	Ares	Nergal	Wahrām	Unxān	雲漢
Mercury	Hermes	Nabû	Tīr	Tīr	啞
Jupiter	Zeus	Marduk	Ohrmazd	Urmazt	溫沒斯
Venus	Aphrodite	Ištar	Anāhīd	Nāxid	那頡
Saturn	Kronos	Kajamānu	Kēwān	Kēwān	鷄暖

This set of icons and its associated magical rituals share a number of parallels with the *Ghāyat al-Hakīm* (*The Aim of the Sage*), a medieval Arabic manual of astral magic.⁶⁰ This work also relies to some extent on Iranian lore, even

⁵⁶ Gnoli, “BABYLONIA ii.”

⁵⁷ The *Wuxing dayi* 五行大義 (*Great Meaning of the Five Elements*) by Xiao Ji 蕭吉 (c. 530–610), a compendium of native Chinese metaphysics dating to the Sui dynasty (581–618), states that the planets are the respective children of the Five Heavenly Emperors 五天帝. These figures and their features (such as Saturn as a female ruler presiding over the planets) are completely different from the occidental traditions. For text and translation see Nakamura Shōhachi 中村璋八 and Shimizu Hiroko 清水浩子, *Gogyō taigi* 五行大義, 41–47. The planets as children of the Five Heavenly Emperors is also described in the Buddhist *Qiyao rangzai jue*: T 1308, 21: 426c6–427b17.

⁵⁸ Table adapted from Panaino, “Cosmologies and Astrology,” 253.

⁵⁹ These transliterations are taken from the *Qiyao rangzai jue* (T 1308). The characters used to transliterate the names vary in other texts.

⁶⁰ Pingree suggests a composition in Spain sometime in the mid-eleventh century. He notes that “the unknown compiler of the *Ghāyat* had available for his use in Spain in the middle of the eleventh century much of the Arabic literature on the esoteric sciences that had been produced in Syria and Mesopotamia, but nothing that had been written after the year 1000.” Pingree, “Some of the Sources of the *Ghāyat al-Hakīm*,” 2.

citing the names of the planets in Persian.⁶¹ The *Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm* was translated into Spanish, albeit with some issues of mistranslation, between 1256 and 1258 at the court of Alfonso the Wise (1221–1284), and sometime shortly thereafter a Latin translation of the Spanish was produced.⁶² The parallels between the *Picatrix* and the Chinese material at hand, which will be documented below, not only provide further proof that these icons originated in the Near East, but also demonstrate that the associated practice of astral magic that we find in China also has its origins in the Near East or, more specifically, the general region of Syria. This further demonstrates that the Chinese Buddhist practice of astral magic was effectively an extension of global interest in such things.

Iranian-Mesopotamian Mars

Mars (see plate 3) in the second fascicle of the *Qiyao rangzai jue* is described as a deity “of a red mineral color, wearing a donkey hat of a furious red color, and a leopard skin skirt. Four arms: one hand holds a bow, one hand holds an arrow, and one hand holds a blade.”⁶³ The *Fantian huoluo jiuyao* states, “The figure of the deity is like that of the heterodox, wearing a donkey hat atop the head with his four hands holding weapons and blades.”⁶⁴ The **Brahmadevasaptagraha-sūtra* states that “the figure is like that of a strong young man. His face is angry. He wears a leopard skin garment. His right hand holds a blade. His left hand [displays] wrathful five fingers [*mudrā?*]. His hair and beard are kempt. His body is red in color. He wears atop the head a gold headpiece. The image of Mars.”⁶⁵

61 Panaino notes their names appear in corrupted Arabic spelling: Kēwān, Hurmuz, Bahrām, Mihr, Anāhīd, Tīr, Māh. In Latin they read as Kayhven, Harmiz, Baharam, Maher, Anyhyt, Tyr, Mehe. See Panaino, “Cosmologies and Astrology,” 254.

62 Pingree, “Between the *Ghāya* and *Picatrix* I: The Spanish Version,” 27–56. For the Latin edition see Pingree, *Picatrix: The Latin Version of the Ghāyat Al-Ḥakīm*.

63 作銅牙赤色貌，帶嗔色驢冠，著豹皮裙，四臂：一手執弓，一手執箭，一手執刀。T 1308, 21: 449a24–26.

64 神形如外道，首戴驢冠，四手兵器刀刀。T 1311, 21: 460c26–27.

65 形如少壯丈夫，面目嗔怒，著豹皮衣裝，右手抱刀，左手忿怒五指，鬚髮豎麗，其身赤色，首戴金兜印。火星之像也。T 2409, 76: 464c06–09.

As noted above, the Sogdian Unxān 雲漢 (also rendered 虛漢) is Wahrām in Middle Persian, which corresponds to the Mesopotamian Nergal, the war god.⁶⁶ The armaments described here unsurprisingly reflect the original Mesopotamian conception of a war god. The associations with a donkey and the color red are also found in the aforementioned Daoist *Chengxing lingtai biyao jing*. In the section in which this information is provided, a text entitled *Navagraha-sūtra 九執經 is cited, which appears to be a source text upon which Buddhists also drew.⁶⁷ The following apotropaic ritual is prescribed against Mars:

使赤油麻七粒，赤稻五粒，赤小豆三粒，赤驢尾七莖，赤銅屑少許，以緋袋子盛，緋線子繫在臂上，大吉。又若畫其形供養，吉。又轉《度人經》及《消災經》，及帶緋頭鬚朱砂，即於雲漢日爲之。《寶命經》云：「乘赤馬，著赤衣，在身須七處刺出血，又刺出赤驢血。當火見日爲災時，造八角壇，於四面四角頭，各著四方箭，箭上繫四方色。續時，己身上血並赤驢血，與檀末相調，瀝於壇上。上又以赤油麻油燈五方，五盞燈樹皆須赤。前來所用，袋用緋索子，繫在臂上，帶頭鬚吉。」又《九執經》云：「取隨年五果、木柴，隨年甘草兩數，并前功德焚之。在臂上帶赤銅釧，南壇下置水一甕，午上立竿懸赤旛，埋赤炭六斤。」

It is greatly auspicious to fill a crimson bag with seven pellets of red sesame, five pellets of red rice, three pellets of red little beans, seven red donkey tails, and a small amount of red copper bits, and then attach it to one's arm with a crimson string. It is also auspicious to paint its [Mars'] image and make offerings. Also, on days of Unxān [Tuesdays], recite the *Liberating Men Scripture* and *Eliminating Calamities Scripture*,⁶⁸ and wear crimson plus cinnabar [coloring] in one's hair and beard. The *Jeweled Fate Scripture*⁶⁹ states, "Ride a red horse, and wear red clothing. On the body one must pierce seven places and extract blood. Also, pierce and extract the blood from a red donkey.

⁶⁶ Leick, *A Dictionary of Ancient Near Eastern Mythology*, 127–128.

⁶⁷ The *navagraha* are originally an Indian concept, but they, along with the *nakṣatras*, were also adopted into Iranian astrology. Much of the "Indian astrology" in Chinese is actually from Iranian sources.

⁶⁸ This is perhaps referring to the *Taishang Laojunshuo xiaozai jing* 太上老君說消災經 (DZ 631), which is of unknown authorship. The text is said to halt calamities if recited. See Hu Fuchen 胡孚琛, *Zhonghua Daojiao dacidian* 中華道教大辭典, 286.

⁶⁹ The identity of this text is uncertain.

When there is a calamity on a day when Mars appears, build an octagonal altar. Attach arrows [pointing to] the four directions at the four corners on four sides. Atop the arrows attach the colors of the four directions. At 20:00,⁷⁰ blend together one's own blood and the blood of the red donkey with powdered sandalwood incense, and drip it atop the altar. Also, place oil lamps of red sesame oil at the five directions. The five lamp supports all must be red. As employed earlier, it is auspicious to [prepare] a bag, using crimson string to attach it to the arm while wearing [red cinnabar coloring] in one's hair and beard." Also, the **Navagraha Sūtra* states, "Together with the earlier practices, take throughout the year the five fruits [peaches, pears, apricots, chestnuts and jujubes],⁷¹ firewood and two bundles of sweet grass,⁷² and burn them. Attach to the arm a red copper bracelet. Under the southern altar place one jar of water. Raise a red banner in the southern direction. Bury six catties of red charcoal."⁷³

Mars is associated with Tuesday in the seven-day week. This association between Mars and the color red is present in both Chinese and foreign sources, which is likely due to its visible appearance in the sky. In the *Picatrix*, Mars is associated with red (*rubeum*) metals (i.e., red bronze or copper) and red sandalwood (*sandalum rubeum*).⁷⁴ Similar substances are found in the above passage. The *Qiyao rangzai jue*, clearly drawing on the same foreign sources as the Daoist text, gives "purple sandalwood incense" (紫檀香) for Mars.⁷⁵ As to the donkey, Gideon Bohak explains that "the extensive use of donkey parts in aggressive magic (since the donkey was associated with Seth-Typhon) are all Egyptian in origin, and their pervasiveness in the Greek Magical Papyri certainly could be used as evidence for a strong Egyptian influence on their magical rituals."⁷⁶ This likely indicates an association between Seth (a god of war) and the planet Mars here.

⁷⁰ Reading *xu shi* 續時 as *xu shi* 戌時, as the former is likely a scribal error.

⁷¹ These fruits are all reddish in color.

⁷² This likely refers to licorice plant.

⁷³ DZ, vol. 5, 30b1–14.

⁷⁴ Greer and Warnock, *The Picatrix*, 134–35. For Latin see Pingree, *Picatrix*, 92–93.

⁷⁵ T 1308, 21: 449a29.

⁷⁶ See Bohak, "The Diffusion of the Greco-Egyptian Magical Tradition in Late Antiquity," 365.

Although the *Qiyao rangzai jue* describes the icon of Mars, and prescribes flavors and types of incense for Tuesdays, it does not describe any of the blood magic that we find in the Daoist description of the ritual. Extracting blood from an animal might have been considered unethical for a Buddhist, whereas within Daoism this was perhaps less ethically problematic.

Iranian-Mesopotamian Mercury

Mercury (see plate 4) in the *Qiyao rangzai jue* is described as “a lady wearing a blue garment and monkey hat with a scroll held in hand.”⁷⁷ The *Fantian huoluo jiuyao* states, “The deity’s form is that of a lady. Atop her head she wears a monkey hat. In her hand she holds a paper and brush.”⁷⁸ Similarly, the *Huatu* “Painting” states, “In the right hand holding a brush. In the left hand holding paper. Standing with both hands spread apart.”⁷⁹

Sogdian Tīr 𐰽𐰺 corresponds to the Mesopotamian Nabû, the god of scribes and writing.⁸⁰ As Panaino notes, “The god of the planet Mercury, Tīriya in western Iran, a protector of the scribes, as in the parallel cases of Thoth-Mercury in Egypt and Nabû-Mercury in Babylon, probably was associated with Tištrya, but after the (later) demonization of the planets he became a demon.”⁸¹ The correspondence here with the Egyptian Thoth is highly significant and actually explains the “monkey hat.” As my colleague, Joseph P. Elacqua, pointed out to me, one of the animals closely associated with Thoth is the baboon. Thoth was a god of scribes and “according to one hymn to Thoth, the eye of the baboon watched out for scribes who abused their skill by applying it to illicit self-gain.”⁸² It is clear that the Chinese icon is a union of Iranian, Egyptian and Hellenistic features, but its female gender is anomalous. This female representation is perhaps related to the fact that in astrology Mercury is regarded as both male and female.⁸³

77 水：其神女人，著青衣，帶獲冠，手執文卷。T 1308, 21: 449a18. Reading *huo guan* 獲冠 as *yuan guan* 猿冠。

78 其神狀婦人，頭首戴猿冠，手持紙筆。T 1311, 21: 460a25–26.

79 右手執筆，左手執紙，開左右手立。T 2409, 76: 464c21.

80 Leick, *A Dictionary of Ancient Near Eastern Mythology*, 123–24. Yu Xin points out the Iranian precedent behind this icon of Mercury. “Personal Fate and the Planets,” 186.

81 Panaino, “TIŠTRYA.”

82 Hart, *The Routledge Dictionary of Egyptian Gods and Goddesses*, 158.

83 Reiner, *Astral Magic in Babylonia*, 6.

The **Brahmadeva-saptagraha-sūtra* describes Mercury as possessing “a form like a student-child wearing a blue garment and riding a blue piebald horse. He is adorned in heavenly garments and precious stones. The image of Mercury.”⁸⁴ This representation as a “student-child” (學生兒童子) seems to point to the association between Mercury and the sciences. Mercury in the *Picatrix* is associated with “blue and mixed colors” (*et ex coloribus blavium et misculum*), and rulership over the sciences.⁸⁵ The horse here possibly alludes to Tištrya’s form as a horse in some stories of Avestan mythology.⁸⁶

Iranian-Mesopotamian Jupiter

The Sogdian Urmazt 溫沒斯 is the Middle Persian Ohrmazd, which corresponds to the Mesopotamian Marduk, the principal deity of Babylon. Jupiter in the *Qiyao rangzai jue* is described as “a deity like an elderly man, wearing a blue garment and a swine hat with a dignified appearance.”⁸⁷ Similarly, the *Fantian huoluo jiuyao* describes him as possessing “the form of the deity is like that of a minister. He wears a blue garment and a boar hat. In his hand(s) he holds flowers and fruits.”⁸⁸ The **Brahmadeva-saptagraha-sūtra* states, “His form is like that of a chief lord, wearing formal attire and cap, while riding a black pig. His face is noble like state ministers or the lords of the right.”⁸⁹ The *Huatu* “Painting” states, “Both hands parallel at the chest. Standing holding a cup full of flowers.”⁹⁰ (See plate 5 below.) The ritual against Jupiter (禳木法) in the *Chengxing lingtai biyao jing* also mentions swine, but the predominant color is white.

取白豬毛七莖，以白袋盛，繫左臂上。忌食豬肉，不得殺生命。
又以白銀一兩，鑄作真形，供養看經。不得入神廟及吊死問病。
供養一切道人，吉。

84 形如學生兒童子，著青衣，乘青聰馬，天衣珠寶裝飾。水星之像也。T 2409, 76: 464c17–18. Reading *cong ma* 聰馬 as *cong ma* 驄馬。

85 Greer and Warnock, *The Picatrix*, 136. Pingree, *Picatrix*, 94.

86 Panaino, “TIŠTRYA.”

87 木：其神如老人，著青衣，帶豬冠，容貌儼然。T 1308, 21: 449a12.

88 其神形如卿相，著青衣，戴亥冠，手執華菓。T 1311, 21: 461c6–7.

89 形如長君子，著禮衣，帶冠冕，乘一黑豬。面目仁者，如令之判史，右之諸侯也。T 2409, 76: 464c25–27.

90 胸間左右手相並，捧盛花一坏立。T 2409, 76: 465a02. Reading *huai* 坏 as *bei* 杯。

Fill a white bag with seven bundles of hair from a white boar, and tie it to one's left arm. It is taboo to eat pork. One must not take life. Also, cast a true image with one tael of white silver. Make offerings and read scriptures. One must not enter temples, ritually mourn the dead, or visit the ill. It is auspicious to make offerings to all Daoists.⁹¹

Vettius Valens (2nd cent. CE), a Hellenistic astrologer, gives “grey verging on white” for Jupiter.⁹² In the *Picatrix*, Jupiter is associated with white clothes (*pannis albos*), emerald (*smaragdum*), white and yellow stones (*lapides albos et croceos*), and crystal (*cristallum*). The association with white substances is also found in the *Qiyao rangzai jue*, in which one is to wear pearls and silver (宜帶珠玉銀), and sit atop white felt (坐白氈) as a means of alleviating influences caused by Jupiter. This text also associates “fragrant and delicious fruits, and fresh ginger (香美菓子生薑)” with Jupiter.⁹³ In the *Picatrix*, Jupiter is similarly associated with a sweet flavor (*et ex saporibus dulcia*).⁹⁴

As to the swine image, I am unable to identify its source. The taboo against pork constitutes a means of avoiding the animal associated with the planet. In the *Picatrix*, the animals associated with Jupiter are “all animals that are beautiful and valued for their appearance, those which are sacrificed, and all inoffensive, clean, and precious animals.”⁹⁵ It does not list pigs among these. From an Islamic perspective, any sort of swine would be considered unclean especially in a dietary context,⁹⁶ but in older cultures such as Zoroastrianism this was not the case.⁹⁷ In the Chinese above, it seems that the proscription against killing, which in this context likely refers to

91 DZ, vol. 5, 30c11–15.

92 Valens, *Anthologies*, 1.

93 T 1308, 21: 449a14–17.

94 Greer and Warnock, *The Picatrix*, 134. Pingree, *Picatrix*, 92. T 1308, 21: 449a16. Elsewhere in the text Jupiter is specifically associated with sweetness: 木愛香羔. Here *gao* 羔 is an error for *gan* 甘. T 1308, 21: 428a1.

95 Greer and Warnock, *The Picatrix*, 134. The Latin reads, “et ex animalibus omnia animalia formosa et in eorum formis posita, ex quibus sacrificia fieri solebant, et omnia animalia non offendencia, limpida et nitida ...” Pingree, *Picatrix*, 92.

96 Foltz, *Animals in Islamic Tradition and Muslim Cultures*, 25, 131.

97 Foltz states with respect to pigs in Zoroastrianism that “[t]he status of the pig is unclear; in the *Nērangestān* section of the Avesta, pigs are among the animals listed for sacrifice, while some later texts proscribe this, perhaps reflecting the encroaching influence of Semitic cultures.” See Foltz, “Zoroastrian Attitudes toward Animals,” 374.

animal sacrifice, is the opposite of a normal activity associated with Jupiter. Jupiter is associated with Thursday, an auspicious day, so presumably sacrifices are best carried out under the influence of this planet. In other words, normally animal sacrifices were associated with Jupiter, but in this apotropaic ritual, one is to avoid such things to ward off undesirable influences. The Buddhist version repeats the injunction against killing and the consumption of pork.⁹⁸ This proscription would have been agreeable in a Chinese Buddhist context, but, in actuality, refraining from killing in this context was originally unrelated to compassion or vegetarianism.

Iranian-Mesopotamian Venus

Venus (plate 6) in this set is similar to the aforementioned “zoomorphic” icon. The *Qiyao rangzai jue* states, “The deity is a lady wearing a yellow garment and fowl hat on her head, with a *pipa* being played in her hands.”⁹⁹ Similarly, the *Fantian huoluo jiuyao* describes her as possessing “a form is like that of a lady. Atop the head she wears a fowl hat. White silk garment. Plucking strings.”¹⁰⁰ Also the *Huatu* “Painting” states, “Left hand holding the head of a *pipa* and right hand plucking strings.”¹⁰¹

Sogdian Nāxid 那頡 corresponds to Ištar, a Mesopotamian goddess of war, but also of procreation and sex, being helpful and spreading happiness and joy.¹⁰² The *Picatrix* associates Venus with “playing instruments that are good to listen to” (*et pulsare instrumenta boni auditus*), “making stringed instruments” (*cordas instrumentorum facere*), as well the colors “sky blue and gold tending a little to green” (*colorem celestinum et colorem auri declinantem aliquantulum ad viridem*).¹⁰³ As a way of avoiding her influence, the *Qiyao rangzai jue* prescribes wearing “yellow clothing, and treasures such as gold and jade,” while avoiding communication with ladyfolk for the possibility of disasters arising from jealousy and speech.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁸ T 1308, 21: 449a14–15.

⁹⁹ 金：其神是女人，著黃衣，頭戴鷄冠，手彈琵琶。T 1308, 21: 449a3.

¹⁰⁰ 形如女人，頭戴首冠，白練衣，彈絃。T 1311, 21: 460b19–20. Read *shou* 首 as *you* 酉.

¹⁰¹ 左手執琵琶頭，右手禪弦。T 2409, 76: 465a10. Read *chan* 禪 as *tan* 彈.

¹⁰² Leick, *A Dictionary of Ancient Near Eastern Mythology*, 96–97.

¹⁰³ Greer and Warnock, *The Picatrix*, 135–36. Pingree, *Picatrix*, 93–94.

¹⁰⁴ T 1308, 21: 449a7–8.

The **Brahmadeva-saptagraha-sūtra* states that her “form is like that of a lady wearing a variegated garment with a slight smiling expression. She rides a white lion. The image of Venus.”¹⁰⁵ The lion mount is significant because Iṣṭar is often pictured with a lion in Mesopotamia.¹⁰⁶ In light of this, the other associated animal (the fowl) is likely of a non-Mesopotamian origin.

Iranian-Mesopotamian Saturn

The descriptions of Saturn (see plates 7 & 8), including that of the “zoomorphic” set above, are all quite similar. The *Qiyao rangzai jue* states, “The deity is like a Brahmin, black in color. On his head he wears an ox hat. One hand grasps a cane, while one hand points forward. His back seems slightly bent.”¹⁰⁷ The *Fantian huoluo jiuyao* states he possesses “a form like a Brahmin. Ox cap on the head. His hand holding a monk’s staff.”¹⁰⁸ The *Huatu* “Painting” states, “His right hand holding a staff and his left hand extended outward. He drives and rides an ox.”¹⁰⁹ Finally, the **Brahmadeva-saptagraha-sūtra* states, “A form like an old Brahmin master. In his hand he holds a monk’s staff. He wears a black *kāṣāya* and rides a black ox. His robe is decorated with gold and silver. The image of Saturn.”¹¹⁰

The iconographical integrity of Saturn across all these texts is curious. We also find this specific icon in India in later centuries, such as in the *Lagnacandrikā*, a Hindu astrological work composed by Kāśinātha in the first half of the sixteenth century in northern India.¹¹¹ The lack of iconographical variance seems to indicate a widespread interest in this planetary deity

¹⁰⁵ 形如婦人，裝以綵衣，面目似笑，乘一白師子。金星之像也。T 2409, 76: 465a05–06.

¹⁰⁶ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. “Ishtar,” accessed January 3, 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/topic/Ishtar-Mesopotamian-goddess>.

¹⁰⁷ 土：其神似婆羅門，色黑，頭帶牛冠，一手柱杖，一手指前，微似曲腰。T 1308, 21: 449b1–2.

¹⁰⁸ 其形如波羅門，牛冠首，手持錫杖。T 1311, 21: 460a1–2.

¹⁰⁹ 右手執錫杖，左手立臂申，掌執乘牛。T 2409, 76: 465a19–20.

¹¹⁰ 形如老波羅門師，手執錫杖，著黑袈裟，乘一黑牛，衣以金銀裝束。土星之像也。T 2409, 76: 465a13–15.

¹¹¹ See appended plate 5b in Pingree, “Indian Planetary Images and the Tradition of Astral Magic.” As to the bull in the *Lagnacandrikā*, as Pingree notes, this is neither the white-humped bull Nandī, the mount or *vāhana* of Śiva, nor the buffalo of Yama. *Ibid.*, 13.

specifically, perhaps due to the status of Saturn as the supreme malefic planet, and thus the most powerful.

This figure is none other than the Greek god Kronos.¹¹² As James Evans has explored, there was a Greco-Egyptian tradition of magical stones, in which images of deities were engraved on specific types of stones. One engraving of Kronos (i.e., Saturn) shows him as a hunched over man, reaping wheat with the sickle which he used to castrate his father Ouranos (see plate 8).¹¹³ The descriptions and depictions of the deity Saturn in the Chinese sources possess many of the same features, though having gone through some transformations. The monk's staff is perhaps a misunderstanding of the original sickle. In the *Picatrix* the "image of Saturn is the image of a black man, wrapped in a green cloak, with the head of a dog and holding a sickle in his hand."¹¹⁴

A longer apotropaic ritual against him is found with minor variations in the *Qiyao rangzai jue*, *Chengxing lingtai biyao jing* and the *Kuyō hiryaku*. Here the deity is named as Kēwān 鷄緩. One is to wear black clothing, offer black sesame oil, and burn Persian incense (*anxi xiang* 安悉香) to please Saturn. His image is to be made from "plow iron."¹¹⁵ Saturn in non-Chinese astral magical literature is universally associated with black or a very dark color such as "burned wool" (*lana combusta*), as in the *Picatrix*.¹¹⁶ This is different from Chinese lore, in which Saturn is associated with the color yellow.¹¹⁷ The *Picatrix* similarly associates black clothing with Saturn (*omnes pannos nigros*).¹¹⁸ Furthermore, "plow iron" is likely connected to the association between Kronos and agriculture. The *Picatrix* states that Saturn rules over "those that work with the earth, plowing, digging, extracting minerals, ..." and among metals he rules over "lead, iron and all metals that

¹¹² The cult of Kronos flourished in Alexandria throughout antiquity, the heartland of astrology. See Bremmer, *Greek Religion and Culture*, 83.

¹¹³ Evans, "The Astrologer's Apparatus," 17–18.

¹¹⁴ Greer and Warnock, *The Picatrix*, 140. "Et forma Saturni est forma hominis nigri, mantello viridi involuti et caput canosum habentis et in eius manu falcem tenentis." Pingree, *Picatrix*, 97.

¹¹⁵ T 1308, 21: 449b2–12 & DZ, vol. 5, 30c2–10.

¹¹⁶ Greer and Warnock, *The Picatrix*, 140. Pingree, *Picatrix*, 97.

¹¹⁷ Saturn is associated with the Yellow Emperor 黃帝. See also T 1308, 21: 427a15.

¹¹⁸ Pingree, *Picatrix*, 91.

are black and smell bad.”¹¹⁹ The prescribed “Persian incense” is identified by Cullen and Lo as styrax benzoin.¹²⁰ Styrax is also the prescribed incense for Saturn given in a Greco-Egyptian papyrus (PGM XIII. 17–22): “the proper incense of Kronos is styrax, for it is heavy and fragrant.”¹²¹ This is also in the *Picatrix*, which prescribes “strong cassia and storax” (*fortiter cassiam et storacem*).¹²²

As to the bull in this icon, Parker’s study notes that throughout Egyptian history, Saturn was always known as “Horus bull of the sky” or “Horus the bull.”¹²³ In late-period texts he is often depicted as a bull-headed god.¹²⁴ In light of the above connections to the Greco-Egyptian tradition, and the monkey of Mercury being likely connected to the baboon of Thoth, I would propose that Saturn’s bull here is Horus the Bull as a representation of Saturn.¹²⁵ Again, we have a Greco-Egyptian icon that was transmitted through an Iranian intermediary into China.

The cult of Saturn seems to have been especially influential within Chinese Mantrayāna based on the fact that the figure of Saturn in the Japanese *Genzu mandara* 現圖曼荼羅 version of the **Garbhadhātu-maṇḍala* is of the Iranian-Mesopotamian type (see plate 8).¹²⁶ This version of the *maṇḍala* is to likely be traced back to Huiguo 惠果 (746–806), who was the teacher of Kūkai 空海 (774–835) in Chang’an. In other words, this is not the original *maṇḍala* that Śubhakarasiṃha prescribed in the 720s, but rather a form that

119 Greer and Warnock, *The Picatrix*, 133. The Latin reads, “et ex magisteriis laborare terram, arare, fodere, extrahere mineras ... et ex metallis plumbum, ferrum et omnia nigra et fetida.” Pingree, *Picatrix*, 91.

120 See appendix 1 in Cullen and Lo, *Medieval Chinese Medicine*.

121 Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, 172.

122 Greer and Warnock, *The Picatrix*, 134. Pingree, *Picatrix*, 91.

123 Parker, “Ancient Egyptian Astronomy,” 60.

124 Neugebauer and Parker, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts III*, 178–79.

125 One complicating factor in this hypothesis is that “in Egypt Kronos had been identified with Geb, the Egyptian god of the earth.” See Bremmer, *Greek Religion and Culture*, 83.

126 Somekawa’s encyclopedia of the *Genzu mandara* icons also depicts this icon of Saturn, though he does not note its non-Indian origin. The other planetary icons mostly appear to be of the Indian type, although the hand gestures of the Venus icon seemingly appear to play an instrument, but without any instrument actually depicted, which possibly indicates influence from the Iranian-Mesopotamian icon. See Somekawa Eisuke 染川英輔, *Mandara zuten* 曼荼羅圖典, 211, 237.

developed in later decades.¹²⁷ Further evidence of the influence of foreign astrology in this form of the *maṇḍala* is suggested by the name “White Ram” (*baiyang gong* 白羊宮) for the zodiac sign Aries.¹²⁸

Hellenistic Precedents

We should also note here that the practice of worshipping planetary deities, as seen above, can be traced even earlier back to the Hellenistic tradition of magic. There are similarities between the colors of the deities described above and the stones used to represent the planetary deities in the Greco-Egyptian tradition of astrology. As Evans’ study explains, astrologers in Alexandria represented the planets using specific types of stones on a “horoscope board.”¹²⁹ A Greek papyrus (PGM CX 1–12) text, translated by Betz, lists the prescribed stones as follows:

Make the Sun gold, the Moon silver, Kronos [Saturn] of obsidian, Ares [Mars] of yellow-green onyx,¹³⁰ Aphrodite [Venus] of lapis-lazuli streaked with gold, Hermes [Mercury] of turquoise; make Zeus [Jupiter] of a [dark blue] stone, but underneath of crystal.¹³¹

The colors of the stones for Saturn, Mars, Mercury and possibly Jupiter correspond to the prescribed colors of the icons above. Similar color assignments are also found in Indian literature, specifically the *Yavanajātaka*, which Pingree notes were “fairly standard in Greek astrology: the Sun with coppery red, the Moon with silver, Mars with red, Mercury with green, Jupiter with yellow, Venus with white, and Saturn with black.”¹³²

¹²⁷ See Nakano Gishō 中野義照, “Genzu Taizō mandara saigai-in no kōsō” 現圖胎藏マントラ最外院の構想, 6.

¹²⁸ It can be inferred that the term “white ram” 白羊宮 for Aries is derived from the *Duli yusi jing* (translated between 785–805) as it appears in the *Xitian yusi jing* 西天聿斯經, a versified version of the *Duli yusi jing*, but not in earlier extant materials. See Wan Minying 萬民英, *Xingxue dacheng* 星學大成 (fasc. 7), 436. In the *Taizō zuzō* and *Taizō kuzuyō* (TZ, vol. 2, 284 & 559), Aries is *yang gong* 羊宮 (the Ram). See also Somekawa, *Mandara zuten*, 183.

¹²⁹ Evans, “The Astrologer’s Apparatus,” 1–44.

¹³⁰ Evans gives “reddish onyx” for Ares. See Evans, “The Astrologer’s Apparatus,” 4.

¹³¹ Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, 312.

¹³² Pingree, “Indian Planetary Images,” 3.

Rāhu and Ketu

The evolution of the icons of Rāhu and Ketu within Chinese Buddhism were also transformed under Iranian influences. The commentary on the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra* (produced between 724–727) states, “Rāhu is the nodal eclipse deity. Ketu is directly translated as ‘banner.’ The banner star is a comet.”¹³³ In other documents, such as in the *Taizō zuzō*, Rāhu and Ketu are depicted in their original Indian forms. Rāhu is a disembodied head with two hands with which to grasp the Sun and Moon, while Ketu seemingly bursts out of a cloud of smoke (see plate 10). There is a parallel in Śaivite literature: in the *Śivadharmasāstra*, a text of Śaivism which Peter Bisschop dates to the 6th or 7th century, Ketu is said to be “shaped like smoke” (*dhūmākāro*) and “appearing like smoke from straw” (*palāladhūmasaṃkāso*). He is positioned in the northeast.¹³⁴ In the *Qiyao rangzai jue* from the ninth century, however, Rāhu and Ketu are respectively designated as the head and tail of an eclipse deity (蝕神頭, 蝕神尾).¹³⁵ This appears to be an Iranian concept, as there exists a parallel in the ninth-century Pahlavi *Bundahišn*, which is primarily a cosmography based on Zoroastrian scriptures.¹³⁶ In the *Kuyō hiryaku*, Ketu is clearly indicated by name and depicted seated atop a dragon.¹³⁷ In the *Fantian huoluo jiyao*, Rāhu and Ketu are both depicted with serpents. These transitions in forms reflects the shift from Indian to Iranian sources of astrology in the late Tang.

The *Chengxing lingtai biyao jing* also includes a ritual against the hidden planets, which in this case refers to Rāhu and Ketu. This ritual is not included in the *Qiyao rangzai jue*, though in light of the foregoing discussion, Buddhist authors were likely aware of it. Although it does not specifically name Rāhu and Ketu, it can be inferred that this ritual is directed against them.

經云：「以屠宰煞鐵打作釧，如蛇形以口銜尾，帶左臂上，著緋衣，忌夜食及黑處行。取高岡上土一斗，置床下，別取黃土一斗煮熟，送餵長生鵝鴨食之，大吉。」

¹³³ 羅睺是交會食神。計都正翻為旗，旗星謂彗星也。T 1796, 39: 618a15–16.

¹³⁴ See Peter Bisschop, *Śivadharmasāstra* (forthcoming). The *Mahāvairocana-sūtra* commentary also positions Ketu in the northeast (計都在東北). See T 1796, 39: 634b22–23. See Ketu in plate 10 below and *Taizō kuzuyō* (TZ, vol. 2, 556).

¹³⁵ T 1308, 21: 442b3 & 446b1.

¹³⁶ MacKenzie, “Zoroastrian Astrology in the Bundahišn,” 515.

¹³⁷ In this document, however, Rāhu is depicted seated atop a bull.

The scripture states, “Craft a bracelet from the iron of a butcher, like a snake with its mouth swallowing the tail. Wear it on the left arm. Wear crimson garments. It is taboo to eat at night, and travel to black places. It is greatly auspicious to take one peck of soil from a high ridge and place it beneath [one’s] bed, while separately taking one peck of yellow soil and boiling it, before feeding it to long-lived waterfowl.”¹³⁸

The image of a snake is alluding to Rāhu and Ketu, conceived of as the head and tail of a serpent or dragon. One name for Rāhu in two Chinese Buddhist sources is “yellow banner” 黃幡.¹³⁹ However, this is likely a mistake as one earlier meaning of *ketu* is “banner.” “Rāhu” does not possess this meaning. In the *Śivadharmaśāstra*, Rāhu is described as “like black collyrium” (*nīlāñjananibhaḥ*).¹⁴⁰ This of course indicates an ultimately Indian origin for anything related to Rāhu and Ketu, but in the case of this astral magic in Chinese, its source is actually Iranian.

Yuebei and Ziqi

Yuebei 月孛 (“lunar comet”)¹⁴¹ and Ziqi 紫氣 / 紫炁 (“purple mist”) are, like Rāhu and Ketu, treated as planets, although in reality they are not physical astronomical bodies. Together with the *navagraha*, they comprise the “eleven planets.” Song Lian 宋濂 (1310–1381) writes that “early in the Zhenyuan reign era [785–805] of the Tang, Li Biqian first calculated ephemerides for the eleven planets.”¹⁴² The *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (*New Book of Tang*), compiled by Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 and Song Qi 宋祁, records that Li Miqian—this same “Li Biqian”—transmitted the *Duli yusi jing* (**Dorotheus*) also in the Zhenyuan period from “Western India.”¹⁴³ Based on

¹³⁸ DZ, vol. 5, 30c11–15.

¹³⁹ T 1308, 21: 442b3 and T 1311, 21: 459b27.

¹⁴⁰ Peter Bisschop, *Śivadharmaśāstra* (forthcoming).

¹⁴¹ *Bei* 孛 originally meant comet.

¹⁴² 唐貞元初，李弼乾始推十一星行歷。Ren Jiyu 任繼愈, *Zhonghua chuanshi wenxuan Ming wen heng* 中華傳世文選明文衡, 151.

¹⁴³ 貞元中，都利術士李彌乾傳自西天竺。Xin Tang shu, *Zhonghua shuju* edn., fasc. 59, vol. 5, 1548. Other ethnically Persian men in this period used the surname Li in China, such as the court astronomer Li Su 李素 (743–817). Persia in this period was under the control of the Arab Abbasid Caliphate. This leads me to think that Li Miqian did not want to identify as an Arab. If, in fact,

the surname Li 李, and the fact that the *Duli yusi jing* was a translation of Dorotheus, we can infer that this man was ethnically Iranian, rather than Indian. Dorotheus' work is known to have been translated into Middle Persian, but not Sanskrit.¹⁴⁴ "Western India" here therefore likely refers to the Persian or Sogdian cultural sphere. The mathematical parameters for these two planets provided by Liu Dingzhi 劉定之 (1409–1469) in his notes on astronomy show that Yuebei is the lunar apogee. Ziqi is a moving point used to keep track of intercalary months. These appear to be Western rather than Chinese parameters.¹⁴⁵ A later work by Xing Yunlu 邢雲路 (fl. 1580) also associates these two planets, plus Rāhu and Ketu, with an *Astronomical Scripture of the Western Regions* (西域星經).¹⁴⁶ In light of this, although the Chinese terms *yuebei* and *ziqi* do, in fact, appear in earlier Chinese literature (but without the same astronomical meanings), we might also look to icons associated with these two planets to further establish their foreign origins.

First, with respect to chronology, Yuebei and Ziqi appear in Daoist and secular literature from the late ninth century, in particular in some writings of

he really was from Western India, then we have evidence of a practitioner of Hellenistic astrology active in India in the late eighth century.

- 144 Dorotheus' work was first translated into Pahlavī (Middle Persian) from Greek under the Sassanians between 222–267, and later expanded between 531–578. Around the year 800, this recension was translated into Arabic. Pingree, "Classical and Byzantine Astrology in Sassanian Persia," 229.
- 145 The lunar apogee is the point on the Moon's elliptical orbit that is farthest from the earth. The perigee is the point closest to the earth. Liu Dingzhi states, "The *bei* is produced from the Moon. There are constants for the velocity of the Moon's movement. The slowest point is the *bei*, which is why it is called the lunar *bei*. The *bei* has 7 rotations in a 62 year period." 孛生于月，月之行遲速有常度，最遲之處即孛也，故謂之月孛，孛六十二年而七周天。62 ÷ 7 = 8.85 years, i.e., the lunar apsidal precession. He also states, "The *qi* is produced from intercalation. In 28 years there are ten intercalary months, and the *qi* moves around the ecliptic once." 炁生於閏，二十八年十閏，而炁行一周天。For Chinese text see Ren Jiyu, *Zhonghua chuanshi wenxuan Ming wen heng*, 557. As I pointed out in an earlier study, Ziqi's parameters seem to work best with a 360 degree ecliptic (the Western system), rather than the Chinese system of 365.25 degrees. See Kotyk, "Kanjiken no bungaku ni okeru saihō-senseijutsu no yōso," 107.
- 146 This could also be read as "Astronomical Scriptures of the Western Regions," i.e., as a genre of such texts on foreign astronomy. Xing Yunlu 邢雲路, *Gujin lü likao* 古今律歷考, 327b7. Elsewhere it is stated that Li Chunfeng 李淳風 (602–670) first calculated *yuebei* (681b13). Xing Yunlu, however, conflates the lunar apogee with comets (682a10–13).

the Daoist master Du Guangting 杜光庭 (850–933).¹⁴⁷ Although these two planets do not appear to have been astrologically or iconographically significant within Buddhism during the Tang dynasty, they became popular in the Song period. As Liao Yang points out, Tejaprabhā came to be depicted with them during the Northern Song period.¹⁴⁸

Yuebei in the *Kuyōtō zuzō* 九曜等圖像 (*Navagraha Images*),¹⁴⁹ and in specimens from Tangut Khara Koto,¹⁵⁰ is depicted as either a man or woman carrying a sword and a severed head (in the *Kuyōtō zuzō* representation, the head is placed within a pan). This mostly corresponds to the description of Yuebei found in the *Yuanhuang Yuebei mifa* 元皇月孛祕法 (*Secret Practice of the Primordial Lord Yuebei*), which is included in the *Daofa huiyuan* 道法會元 collection (fasc. 215).¹⁵¹

姓朱，諱光，天人相，披髮裸體，黑雲掩臍，紅履鞋，左手提早
 魁頭，右手杖劍，騎玉龍，變相青面獠牙，緋衣，杖劍，駕熊。
 Surnamed Zhu [Vermillion] with the honorific title of Guang
 [Luminous]. In the form of a celestial human, their hair is let down
 over their naked body. Their mass of black hair covers the navel. Red
 sandals. Their left hand holds the head of a drought demon. Their right
 hand holds a blade. They ride a jade dragon. In their modified form,
 [they display] a blue face with long fangs, a crimson garment and
 blade, while driving a bear.¹⁵²

Such imagery as this is more likely to stem from an Indian or Near Eastern tradition than a native Chinese imagination, especially when we consider that this “planet” was said to have been introduced into China by a foreigner.

¹⁴⁷ For some discussion of this see Niu Weixing 鈕衛星, “Tang-Song zhi ji Daojiao shiyi yaoxingshen chongbai de qiyuan he liuxing” 唐宋之際道教十一曜星神崇拜的起源和流行, 89–95.

¹⁴⁸ See Liao Yang 廖暘, “Chishengguang Fo goutu zhong xingyao de yanbian” 熾盛光佛構圖中星曜的演變, 72–74.

¹⁴⁹ TZ vol. 7, 739–748. A collection of line drawings of astral deities kept at Tō-ji 東寺 in Kyōto (see plate 11). Produced in year 2 of Japanese reign era Chōkan 長寬 (1164).

¹⁵⁰ The State Hermitage Museum of St. Petersburg. Item# XX-2424, XX-2450 & XX-2454.

¹⁵¹ Unknown compiler. Dates approximately to the late Yuan, early Ming (14th century). See Hu Fuchen, *Zhonghua Daojiao dacidian*, 416–17.

¹⁵² DZ, vol. 30, 335c.

Other descriptions of Yuebei, however, associate this deity with the native Chinese astral deity of Taiyi 太一, and moreover describe the icon in an entirely Chinese fashion.¹⁵³ This points to the sinicization of this figure, which suggests that the icon of Yuebei as a naked wielder of a sword is the earlier icon. In the Ming period novel *Yang Jiajiang yanyi* 楊家將演義 (*Drama of Yang Jiajiang*) by Xiong Damu 熊大木 (c.1506–1578), Yuebei, curiously identified with Xixia 西夏國 (the Tangut kingdom) is described as having a “naked red body” (赤身裸體) and “holding in her hand a skeleton” (手執骷髏骨).¹⁵⁴ In the Chinese imagination, this icon was perhaps associated with Xixia. At least one specimen from Khara-Khoto depicts Yuebei in a form close to this.¹⁵⁵

A strong case can be made that this is a form of the Iranian Āl or Semitic Lilith, a demon common throughout the Near East, associated with illness, and the deaths of mothers and infants. The name Āl “apparently derives from Iranian *āl* ‘red.’” A related figure in the Jewish tradition is Lilith, a demon thought to kill children.¹⁵⁶ As James A. Montgomery explains, “The genus appears in the Babylonian incantations, as masculine and feminine, *lilu* and *lilit*, along with an *ardat lili*.”¹⁵⁷ With respect to the depiction of the deity he notes, “Nakedness and disheveled hair are standing descriptions of the Lilith, witch, etc.”¹⁵⁸ The nudity of Yuebei seems to be associated with sexuality, since, according to Xing Yunlu, Chinese astrologers “call this [Yuebei] the

¹⁵³ See *Dongyuan ji* 洞淵集 by Zhang Quanzi 長筌子 (fl. early 13th cent.). DZ, vol. 23, 849b. As Liao Yang points out, the eleven planetary deities here are largely identical in description apart from the colors of their hats. Liao Yang, “Chushengguang Fo goutu zhong xingyao de yanbian,” 76.

¹⁵⁴ Xiong Damu 熊大木, *Yang Jiajiang yanyi* 楊家將演義, 174.

¹⁵⁵ Item #XX-2424 at the State Hermitage Museum shows Yuebei with a normal skin tone. Her red garment is beneath exposed breasts. Her long hair is draped down the back. She appears to be holding a sword.

¹⁵⁶ A. Šāmlū, “Āl,” *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2011, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/al-folkloric-being-that-personifies-puterperal-fever>.

¹⁵⁷ In the Buddhist *Qiyao rangzai jue*, Ketu is uniquely the lunar apogee, a fact pointed out by Yano Michio, rather than the descending node of the Moon (*Mikkyō senseijutsu*, 186). Another name given in this text is *yue bo li* 月勃力 (T 1308, 21: 446b1–2). We might suspect that the *li* is an approximate transcription of a name similar to “Lilith” or “Āl.” Alternatively, I have speculated that this is perhaps a rough transliteration of *apógeion* (apogee). See Kotyk, “Kanjiken no bungaku ni okeru saihō-senseijutsu no yōso,” 107.

¹⁵⁸ Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 74, 158.

place [in the horoscope] where sexual energy manifests.”¹⁵⁹ In medieval Jewish mysticism, Lilith’s mount is the Tanin’iver, the “blind serpent.”¹⁶⁰ In the *Zohar* (1:19b), the medieval classic of the Kabbalah, Lilith is said to seek out infants and kill them “when the Moon is on the wane, as the light diminishes.”¹⁶¹ Although the Chinese Daoist text in question does not mention children, one of the magical practices described therein requires an ill person to cough on an inscribed letter.¹⁶² It would therefore seem that Yuebei is associated with both the Moon and disease. These points all indicate that this icon can be traced back to a figure very close to the Iranian Āl or Semitic Lilith. If this Yuebei is indeed Lilith or a closely related deity, then it also very likely means that the astrological lore associated with the lunar apogee in Chinese translation is also of a foreign origin.¹⁶³

Ziqi is depicted as male in courtly Chinese attire (see plate 11). I have not found any descriptions of his icon that would be suggestive of foreign influences. The *Shangqing shiyi dayao dengyi* 上清十一大曜燈儀 (*High and Pure Lamp Ceremony of the Eleven Great Planets*), which dates to the Yuan or early Ming period,¹⁶⁴ simply describes Ziqi in courtly Chinese attire with a solemn expression.¹⁶⁵ However, based on the fact that many of the icons surveyed above are Iranian in origin, and that the historical record states Ziqi was introduced from abroad, we can assume that Ziqi also likely included an icon when it was introduced.

Source of the Iranian Icons

In light of the above findings, we are left with the question of who transmitted these icons and their associated lore into China. Although no definite answer can be provided based on available evidence, in all likelihood it was Nestorian (i.e., East Syriac) Christians who not only carried out the necessary translation

¹⁵⁹ 星家謂之淫氣孛之所在。See Xing Yunlu, *Gujin lü likao*, 682a11–12.

¹⁶⁰ Dennis, *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Myth, Magic and Mysticism*, 154. See also Dan, *The Early Kabbalah*, 180.

¹⁶¹ Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 2, 540–41. See also Matt, *The Zohar*, vol. 1, 148–49.

¹⁶² DZ, vol. 30, 336a.

¹⁶³ In modern Western astrology, the lunar apogee is also called Lilith, but I am uncertain from where and when this association arose.

¹⁶⁴ Hu Fuchen, *Zhonghua Daojiao dacidian*, 309.

¹⁶⁵ DZ, vol. 3, 564b.

work, but also could have realistically acted as a conduit between the Levant and China.¹⁶⁶

The primary reason to suspect Christian involvement in this respect is their interest in translating Hellenistic astrology into Chinese, which has been investigated by Mak.¹⁶⁷ We also know that a certain Nestorian clergyman named Adam 景淨 (d.u.), who composed the inscription of the Nestorian stele of 781 (*Daqin Jingjiao liuxing Zhongguo beisong* 大秦景教流行中國碑頌; T 2144),¹⁶⁸ interacted with Buddhists, and even translated Buddhist literature.¹⁶⁹ The *Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu* 貞元新定釋教目錄 (T 2157; *Zhenyan Revised Catalog of Buddhist Scriptures*) by Yuanzhao 圓照 (d.u.), compiled in the year 800, provides the following account:

請譯佛經。乃與大秦寺波斯僧景淨，依胡本《六波羅蜜經》，譯成七卷。時爲般若不閑胡語，復未解唐言。景淨不識梵文，復未明釋教。雖稱傳譯未獲半珠，……察其所譯理昧詞疎。且夫釋氏伽藍，大秦僧寺，居止既別，行法全乖。景淨應傳彌尸訶教，沙門釋子弘闡佛經，欲使教法區分，人無濫涉。

They requested that he [Prajñā] translate Buddhist scriptures. Together with the Persian monk Adam of Daqin-si,¹⁷⁰ he translated the *[*Mahāyāna-naya-]ṣaṭ-pāramitā-sūtra* in seven fascicles based on a Sogdian edition. At the time Prajñā did not understand Sogdian or Chinese, while Adam understood neither Sanskrit nor Buddhism. Although they were said to have translated it, they had yet to obtain the half-pearls [i.e., convey the correct meaning]. ... Upon investigating what had been translated, the reasoning was found to be unclear and the vocabulary off. The Buddhist monastery and Daqin

¹⁶⁶ Syriac Christianity had a significant presence across Central Asia. For a relevant survey see Hunter, “Syriac Christianity in Central Asia,” 362–68.

¹⁶⁷ Mak concludes that “the Greek astral science exemplified by the *Yusi jing*” was imported into China by the East-Syrian (i.e., Nestorian) Christians. Mak, “*Yusi Jing*,” 130. See also Mak, “Astral Science of the East Syriac Christians,” 87–92.

¹⁶⁸ T 2144, 54: 1289a5.

¹⁶⁹ For further discussion of interactions between Buddhism and Nestorianism, see Chen Huaiyu, “The Encounter of Nestorian Christianity with Tantric Buddhism in Medieval China,” 195–213.

¹⁷⁰ Daqin 大秦 in this period refers to the Levant. The 781 stele reads, “The angel [Gabriel] proclaimed good tidings. The Virgin [Mary] gave birth to the Sage [Jesus] in Daqin. The luminous asterism indicated a portent. The Persians witnessed the brilliance and came to pay tribute.” 神天宣慶，室女誕聖於大秦；景宿告祥，波斯觀耀以來貢。T 2144, 54: 1289a19–20.

monastery were to keep their residences separate, and their practices entirely apart. Adam should transmit the teachings of the Messiah [Christ], while Buddhists shall propagate Buddhist scriptures, so as to keep the doctrines separate, and the communities from excessive intermingling.¹⁷¹

In light of the period in which Adam was active, and his proficiency in Sogdian and Chinese, as well as his interest in esoteric non-Christian subjects, we might speculate that it was Adam himself who first translated astral magic into Chinese. Adam in another Nestorian source is said to have translated thirty texts.¹⁷² Even if the translator was not Adam, we know that Sogdian Christian clergymen were active in Luoyang. We can imagine that some of these men would have possessed the linguistic competency to translate astral magic.¹⁷³ One might suspect that Zoroastrians could also have had a role to play, but they did not translate their literature into Chinese, and there is no evidence of their involvement in astrology in China.¹⁷⁴

Implications

The discussion above brings to light new evidence that must be considered in the dating of astrological artwork in China. One key specimen in this respect is the “Painting of the Deities Forms of the Five Planets and Twenty-Eight

¹⁷¹ T 2157, 55: 892a7–15.

¹⁷² This remark about Adam is found in the colophon of the *Zunjing* 尊經, i.e., the *Dptychs* in one fascicle. This is an anonymous work from the early tenth century. It provides the names of saints such as David, Hosea, Peter, and Paul. It lists several presently non-extant Biblical texts in Chinese translation including the Books of Moses 牟世法王經, Zechariah 刪河律經, Epistles of Saint Paul 寶路法王經 and Revelations 啟真經. The Nestorians in China clearly had access to a number of texts from the Near East. See *Jingjiao sanwei mengdu zan* 景教三威蒙度讚; T 2143, 54: 1288c23–24. For details on the text see Foley, *Biblical Translation in Chinese and Greek*, 7–8.

¹⁷³ A Christian stele was erected in 814 in Luoyang 洛陽. It was unearthed in 2006. This stele demonstrates that in the early ninth century a Nestorian church was present in Luoyang and that Sogdian clergymen served there. See Moribe Yutaka 森部豊, “An Introduction to the Luoyang Nestorian Stone Pillar and Their Value as Historical Resources” 中國洛陽新出景教經幢の紹介と史料的價值, 351–57.

¹⁷⁴ For a recent survey of Zoroastrianism in East Asia, see Aoki Takeshi, “Zoroastrianism in the Far East,” 147–56.

Lunar Stations” 五星二十八宿神形圖, presently in the possession of the Osaka City Museum of Fine Arts 大阪市立美術館 (plate 12). In this painting, we see Jupiter as an animal-faced man in a white robe riding a boar, Mars as a six-armed donkey-faced man riding a red donkey with multiple weapons in his hands, Saturn as a bearded Indian man of a dark complexion riding a black bull, Venus as a female figure in a yellow robe riding a phoenix with a phoenix cap, and Mercury as a scribe in a bluish-green robe wearing a monkey hat. These icons are of the Iranian-Mesopotamian type. The text running alongside the icons also explains apotropaic rituals against the planets in the same manner as we saw in our earlier discussion of the Iranian-Mesopotamian icons. For the sacrifice to Mars, for instance, one will use bloody meat, a copper vessel for the wine, red silks, weapons and drums when sacrificing the victim.¹⁷⁵ The offerings to the other planets also follow the Iranian model.

One problem, however, is that this painting, which was originally owned by the Song court, is attributed to Liang Lingzan 梁令瓚 (fl. 727), a colleague of the astronomer monk Yixing during the 720s. Later this painting was attributed to the earlier painter Zhang Sengyou 張僧繇 (fl. 502–519).¹⁷⁶ If either of these men were the actual artist behind this piece, we would have evidence of Iranian icons in China in the sixth or early eighth century, but this is highly problematic for a number of reasons. First, there is no corresponding literary evidence within Buddhist or Daoist literature to support the thesis that these icons were known in China during these periods. This piece is only mentioned from the Song dynasty. Liang Lingzan, even if he had been familiar with foreign astrological icons, most certainly would have known the Indian icons introduced by Śubhakarasiṃha, under whom Yixing worked. Finally, we must bear in mind that there was a trend in the late Tang of attributing astrological works to Yixing, who died in 727,¹⁷⁷ so it seems that astrological

¹⁷⁵ 熒惑星神食火。祭用血肉，酒器用赤銅，幣用赤，殺牲啜血祭，具戰器鼓舞，然後祭之。忌哭泣，善事熒惑。嬌暴公子。熒惑廟可致軍門。 See Jin Weinuo 金維諾, *Zhongguo meishu quanji huihua-bian 2: Sui-Tang Wudai huihua* 中國美術全集繪畫編 2：隋唐五代繪畫, 50.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 12–13.

¹⁷⁷ The most obvious example of this is the *Qiyao xingchen bie xingfa* 七曜星辰別行法 (T 1309; *Special Practices for the Seven Planets and Stars*), which is attributed to Yixing. However, the text includes a story in which Yixing summons down the spirits of the twenty-eight lunar stations in order to inquire about the malefic spirits that terrorize and possess people according to an astrological schedule. This is clearly complete fiction.

art, such as this piece in question, could similarly be attributed to a credible past figure such as Yixing's colleague.¹⁷⁸

The Daoist *Taishang sanshiliu bu zun jing* 太上三十六部尊經 (*Scripture of the Supreme Thirty-Six Venerables*; DZ 8), which is presently dated to the end of the Northern and Southern dynasties 南北朝 (420–589)¹⁷⁹ also incorporates elements of the Iranian-Mesopotamian icons:

木德星君，兔頭、豬身、虎尾；火德星君，馬身、蛇尾；金德星君，猴頭、雞身；水德星君，黑猿捧筆墨硯；土德星君，羊角、龍頭、犬耳、牛身；羅喉星君，羊角、犬爪、牛尾、龍身；計都星君，龜；月孛星君，蛇。

The stellar lord of Jupiter possesses a rabbit's head, a pig's body and a tiger's tail. The stellar lord of Mars possesses a horse's body and a snake's tail. The stellar lord of Venus possesses a monkey's head and the body of a hen. The stellar lord of Mercury is a black ape holding a brush and ink stone. The stellar lord of Saturn possesses a ram's horns, a dragon's head, a dog's ears and the body of an ox. The stellar lord Rāhu possesses a ram's horns, a dog's paws, the tail of an ox and the body of a dragon. The stellar lord Ketu is a tortoise. The stellar lord Yuebei is a snake.¹⁸⁰

Based on the evidence presented in this study, these icons would date to the early ninth century at the earliest. This also further demonstrates the influence of these foreign icons within Daoism. Astrological iconography described or depicted in other Daoist texts might also give additional clues to composition dates of Chinese works.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the icons representing planetary deities in Chinese Buddhism can be divided into three separate sets: "Indian," "zoomorphic," and "Iranian-Mesopotamian." The Indian set is mostly found within *maṇḍalas*. The zoomorphic set does not appear to have been influential. The Iranian-Mesopotamian set, which emerges around the year 800, was the

¹⁷⁸ The representations of the lunar stations in this painting are another topic that requires a separate investigation.

¹⁷⁹ Hu Fuchen, *Zhonghua Daojiao dacidian*, 330.

¹⁸⁰ DZ, vol. 1, 591b.

most influential, and became the most widely used set in East Asia. The Iranian influences are also apparent in the evolution of the icons of Rāhu and Ketu. I have argued that Yuebei is related to the Near Eastern figure of Lilith. Similarly, I would infer that Ziqi was also introduced from abroad.¹⁸¹

The Indian set was used within Mantrayāna, albeit possessing only a minor function. The Iranian-Mesopotamian set, however, was transmitted alongside a type of Iranian astral magic, which itself draws on an earlier Greco-Egyptian tradition. This type of magic was adopted by both Buddhists and Daoists, most likely in response to fears of unfavorable astrological prognostications, and a desire to magically evade unwanted fates. The rituals cited above clearly indicate that Chinese Buddhists believed that the planetary deities were, in fact, sentient. Offerings and ceremonies were employed as a means of quelling their influences. Another apotropaic method in this respect, which is reflected in the artistic record, was the worship of Tejaprabhā Buddha. In light of how all the planets are regarded as baneful, we should probably regard depictions of the planetary deities in the presence of Tejaprabhā as tamed and controlled figures, rather than as benevolent attendants before a buddha.

One implication of these findings is that scholars may have overlooked other elements within Chinese Buddhism and Daoism that, in actuality, have their origins in the Near East, rather than India. It is possible that other icons that emerged in the Tang period—be they Buddhist or Daoist—might also have their origins in Persia or even further west. We might also consider if ritual magic in China was also significantly influenced by Iranian traditions. Other related topics that require further investigation include the twelve zodiac signs in Chinese Buddhist art and literature, as well as the various representations of the twenty-eight lunar stations or *nakṣatras*. The role of Christians around the year 800 in transmitting various knowledges is only beginning to be appreciated, and I anticipate that investigation of possible Near Eastern influences in various areas, such as Chinese medicine, would also likely prove fruitful.

¹⁸¹ I disagree with Mak, who claims that Yuebei and Ziqi are “Chinese pseudoplanets.” Mak, “*Yusi Jing*,” 109. The various Chinese accounts of their origins, Yuebei’s iconography, and their respective astronomical parameters all indicate that they were introduced from abroad. Further research into Iranian astrology might produce additional evidence.

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Plate 1: Sun

Left: *Kuyō hiryaku*. Right: *Fantian huoluo jiuyao*. Bottom left: *Kuyō hiryaku*. All *Kuyō hiryaku* images courtesy of ARC Collection, Ritsumeikan University. Genpō 賢寶 (1333–1398) manuscript. Bottom right: *Taizō zuzō*.



Plate 2: Moon

Left: *Kuyō hiryaku*. Right: *Fantian huoluo jiuyao*. Bottom left: *Kuyō hiryaku*. Bottom right: *Taizō zuzō*.



Plate 3: Mars

Top left: *Kuyō hiryaku*. Top right: *Fantian huoluo jiuyao*. Bottom left: *Kuyō hiryaku*. Bottom right: Stein Ch.liv.007.¹⁸²



¹⁸² All cropped images from Stein Ch.liv.007 are © Trustees of the British Museum.

Plate 4: Mercury

Top left: *Kuyō hiryaku*. Top right: *Fantian huoluo jiuyao*. Bottom left: *Kuyō hiryaku*. Bottom right: Stein Ch.liv.007.



Plate 5: Jupiter

Top left: *Kuyō hiryaku*. Top right: *Fantian huoluo jiuyao*. Bottom left: *Kuyō hiryaku*. Bottom right: Stein Ch.liv.007.



Plate 6: Venus

Top left: *Kuyō hiryaku*. Top right: *Fantian huoluo jiuyao*. Bottom left: *Kuyō hiryaku*. Bottom right: Stein Ch.liv.007



Plate 7: Saturn 1/2

Top left: *Kuyō hiryaku*. Top right: *Fantian huoluo jiuyao*. Bottom left: *Kuyō hiryaku*. Bottom right: Stein Ch.liv.007.



Plate 8: Saturn 2/2

Top: Kronos as reaper. Haematite. Département des Monnaies, Médailles et Antiques, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. From Evans, "The Astrologer's Apparatus," 17. Photograph and right to reproduce courtesy of James Evans. Bottom left: Saturn 土曜 in *Genzu mandara* (TZ, vol. 1, 789). Bottom right: Śanaīscara 鎮星 in *Taizō zuzō* (TZ, vol. 2, 278).



Plate 9

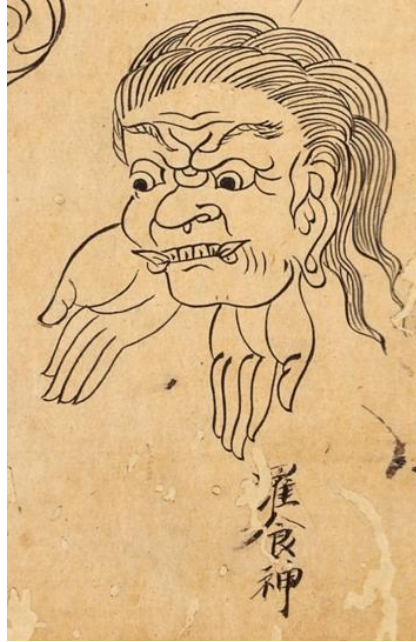
Top: Dendera ceiling. Bottom: Dendera ceiling (Ra the Sun god second from left).¹⁸³ Photos by Paul Smit (© Paul Smit). Photos used with permission.



¹⁸³ See plate 41 (figures S 19a–17) in Neugebauer and Parker, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts III. Decans, Planets, Constellations and Zodiacs* (Plates). The bottom image is not included in the plates. I must offer my thanks to Mick Palarczyk for pointing out Ra in the bottom image (lion-headed figure).

Plate 10: Rāhu and Ketu

Top left and right: Rāhu and Ketu (TZ, vol. 2, 279) in *Taizō zuzō*.¹⁸⁴ Bottom left: Rāhu in *Fantian huoluo jiuyao*. Bottom right: Ketu in *Kuyō hiryaku*.



¹⁸⁴ Here *zao* 譟 is a scribal error for *jidu* 計都. Compare with the figure (labelled “comet” 彗) beside Rāhu in *Taizō kuzuyō* (TZ, vol. 2, 556)

Plate 11: Yuebei and Ziqi

Left: Yuebei. Right: Ziqi.¹⁸⁵



¹⁸⁵ TZ vol. 7, 742 & 747.

Plate 12: “Five Planets and Twenty-Eight Lunar Stations” 五星二十八宿神形圖
Wikimedia Commons. Public Domain. Top: Saturn (left) & Jupiter (right).
Middle: Venus. Bottom: Mercury (left) & Mars (right).

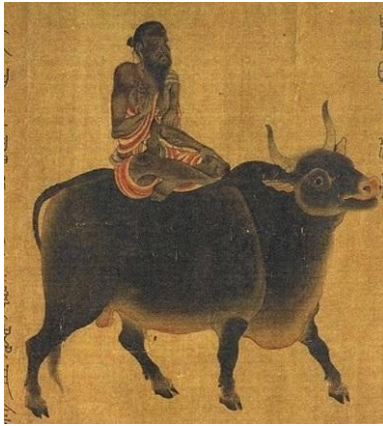


Plate 13: Islamic Icons

Planets of the *'Aja'ib al-makhlūqat (Wonders of Creation)*.

These are from an illustrated Turkish version of the *'Aja'ib al-makhlūqat (Wonders of Creation)*, the first systematic treatise on Islamic cosmography by Zakariya al-Qazwini (1203–1283), produced in 1717 by Muhammad ibn Muhammad Shakir Ruzmah-'i Nathani.¹⁸⁶ Looking at these images clockwise, Jupiter is a stately man holding a document, Mars is a warrior carrying a severed head, Venus plays a lute, Saturn is a man of a dark complexion with seven arms holding various items, and Mercury holds parchment over his knee. Walters manuscript W.659. Images from the Walters Art Museum. Creative Commons License.



¹⁸⁶ See Scott B. Noegel and Brannon M. Wheeler, *The A to Z of Prophets in Islam and Judaism* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 271.