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Review Article

An Analysis of the Horoscope Illustration Prepared for the Timurid Sultan Iskandar: Birth of Iskandar

Timurlu Şehzadesi İskender Sultan İçin Hazırlanan Burç Haritası Minyatürü Üzerine Bir İnceleme: İskender'in Doğumu

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Abstract

Due to the great interest of Iskandar Sultan (Timur's grandson) in illustrating books, especially astronomical ones, relatively many works have been remained since his time. One of them is the book of *Birth of Iskandar* (Kitab-i Viladat-i Iskandar) written in 813 A.H [A.D 1410] and was presented to him.

This book, which is now held at the Wellcome Institute in London, consists of three parts: The first part deals with the astrological calculations of the moment of the king's birth and the extraction of his horoscope, which ends with a two-page painting. The second part includes the prophecy of the coming years until a few decades after his birth, and the third part explains Sultan's horoscope. The drawing is in fact an illustrated summary of the first and third parts of the book. The symbol of the twelve constellations and the position of the planets in these constellations at the time of Iskandar Sultan's Birth are related to the first part and the inscriptions written in the sectors of the circles in the middle of the image are related to the third part of the book. Moreover, the large outer circle includes Iskandar's horoscope based on the latitude of each zodiac sign at the moment of his birth. The present article has presented an overview of the illustrated symbols and investigated the details of astrology as well as the inscriptions in the image.

Öz

Timur'un torunu İskender Sultan Timuri (İskender Mirza) astronomiyle ilgili kitaplara büyük ilgi duymuştur. Bu ilgi sayesinde döneminden günümüze çok sayıda eser ulaşmıştır. Bunlardan biri H 813 [M 1410] yılında yazılarak kendisine sunulan *İskender'in Doğumu* (Kitâb-ı Velâdet-i İskender) adlı eserdir. Günümüzde Londra'daki Wellcome Enstitüsü'nde bulunan bu eser üç bölümden oluşmaktadır. İlk bölüm hükümdarın doğum anındaki astrolojik hesaplamaları ve burç haritasının çıkarılmasını ele almakta olup iki sayfalık bir resimle sonlanmaktadır. İkinci bölüm doğumundan sonraki yılların kehanetlerini içermektedir. Üçüncü bölüm ise Sultan'ın burç haritasını açıklamaktadır. Kitaptaki görsel aslında birinci ve üçüncü bölümlerin resimli bir özetidir. On iki burç sembolleri ve İskender Sultan'ın doğum anındaki gezegenlerin bu burçlardaki konumları birinci bölüme atıfta bulunurken görselin ortasındaki dairenin dilimlerine yazılmış yazılar kitabın üçüncü bölümüyle ilişkilidir. Ayrıca büyük dış daire, İskender'in doğum anındaki burçların enlemlerine dayalı burç haritasını içermektedir. Bu makale *İskender'in Doğumu* adlı eserde resmedilen sembolere genel bir bakış sunarak astrolojik detayları ve görseldeki yazıtları incelemiştir.

Keywords

Astrology · Horoscope · Timurid era · manuscript · Iskandar Sultan


Anahtar Kelimeler

Astroloji · Burç Haritası · Timurlu Dönemi · yazma eser · İskender Mirz



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Genişletilmiş Özet

Timurlu hanedanı özellikle resim alanında İslam sanatının gelişiminde önemli bir dönem olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Bu dönemde sanat İran'da zirveye ulaşmış ve önemli ilerlemeler kaydedilmiştir. Timur ve haleflerinin sanata ilgisi olağanüstü eserlerin ortaya çıkmasını sağlamış ve bu eserlerin birçoğu günümüzde dünyaca ünlü müzelerde yer almaktadır. Timurlu sultanları Kur'an süslemesi ile bilimsel, edebî, astrolojik, tarihî ve şiirsel metinlerin resimlenmesine büyük ilgi göstermiş ve himaye temelli rekabetlere girişmiştir. Bu seçkin sanat hamileri arasında Timur'un torunu İskender Mirza (1384-1415) yalnızca kitap süslemesine olan bağlılığıyla değil aynı zamanda astronomi bilgisine duyduğu büyük ilgiyle de öne çıkmıştır. Bu ilginin babasının Semerkant'taki gözlemevinde geçirdiği zaman sırasında geliştiği düşünülmektedir. Akademik tartışmalar onun İsmailî inancının göksel mekanikler ve kehanete duyduğu ilgiyi daha da artırmış olabileceğini öne sürmektedir. On yıllık kısa saltanatına rağmen İskender Sultan'ın himayesinde birçok el yazması üretilmiş ve süslenmiştir. Bu el yazmalarından biri olan ve H 813 [M 1411] yılında Mahmud bin Yahya bin el-Hasan bin Muhammed el-Kâşî (İmad el-Müneccim olarak da bilinir) tarafından kaleme alınarak sultana sunulan *İskender'in Doğumu* adlı eser günümüzde Londra'daki Wellcome Koleksiyonu'nda bulunmaktadır. Kitabın ana konusu sultanın doğumundan birkaç yıl sonrasına kadar hayatının astrolojik analizini astronomik kavramlar ve hassas gözlemsel hesaplamalar temelinde ele almaktadır.

El yazmasının içinde Timurlu Şiraz üslubunda hazırlanmış bir minyatür yer almakta olup bu minyatür sultanın doğum anındaki göksel düzenin görsel bir tasviri olan doğum haritasını içermektedir. Kompozisyon iki dikdörtgen çerçeve tarafından çevrelenen iç içe geçmiş daireler hâlinde düzenlenmiştir. Her bir daire on iki eşit parçaya titizlikle bölünmüş olup burçları temsil ederken astronomik notasyonlar ile gezegenler ve takımyıldızların sembolik tasvirleriyle süslenmiştir. En içteki altı daire zarif Nesih yazısıyla siyah ve kırmızı mürekkeple işlenmiş astrolojik ilkelerin metinsel açıklamalarını içermektedir. Yedinci daire on iki burç takımyıldızını betimlerken bir sonraki daire sultanın doğumu sırasında burçlardaki konumlarına göre yerleştirilmiş yedi göksel gezgin olan gezegenleri sunmaktadır. Yılın on iki ayına karşılık gelen burç sembolleri sırasıyla Koç (Nisan "koç") Boğa (Mayıs "boğa") İkizler (Haziran "ikizler") Yengeç (Temmuz "yengeç") Aslan (Ağustos "aslan") Başak (Eylül "başak") Terazi (Ekim "terazi") Akrep (Kasım "akrep") Yay (Aralık "yay") Oğlak (Ocak "keçi") Kova (Şubat "su taşıyıcı") ve Balık (Mart "iki balık") olarak belirtilmiştir. Astronomide bu on iki ayın her biri, bir burç işareti olarak adlandırılmaktadır. En dıştaki daire sultanın doğumu sırasında her bir burç işaretinin kesin göksel derecelerini belirlemekte ve kaderine ilişkin yazılı kehanetler sunmaktadır. Minyatürün dört köşesinde muhteşem giysiler içinde taçlarla süslenmiş dört asil melek yer almakta ve değerli armağanlar sunmaktadır. Çevreleyen dikdörtgen çerçeveler açık kapıları anımsatarak göksel sırları ve sultanın yıldız falını ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Bu sembolik kapılar ayrıntılı süslemeler, yazılar ve sultanın uğurlu kaderini ve gök cisimlerinin onun kaderine bağlılığını öven şiirsel bir beyitle bezenmiştir.

Minyatürün arka planı lacivert renkte olup zarif Çin bulutları ve parlayan altın yıldızlarla süslenmiştir. Lapis lazuli mavisi ilahi ihtişamı çağrıştıran altın onun gücünü simgelemektedir. Bu sanatsal kompozisyon o dönemin dünyayı evrenin sabit merkezi olarak kabul eden ve tüm gök cisimlerinin onun etrafında döndüğünü varsayan jeosantrik kozmoloji anlayışını yansıtmaktadır. Bu kozmolojide dokuz katmanlı göksel kürenin olduğu kabul edilmiştir: Yedi gezegene (Ay, Merkür, Venüs, Güneş, Mars, Jüpiter ve Satürn) ayrılmış küreler; sabit yıldızları barındıran sekizinci küre (takımyıldızlar) ve en dıştaki yalnızca en kutsal olanların erişebildiği dokuzuncu küre. Bu sistemde Güneş gezegenler arasında sınıflandırılmaktadır.

Minyatür, bütün ve parçayı ifade eden iki kavram içermektedir ve dünyadaki büyük mimarının temsilini (bütün) ve İskender Sultan'ın astrolojisinin özel detaylarını (parça) sunmasıyla yazarın niyetini ifade etmektedir. Dört koruyucu melek, dokuz katmanlı göksel hiyerarşi ve gezegenler ile takımyıldızların temsilleri birlikte varlığın tamamını yansıtmaktadır. Aynı zamanda minyatüre eşlik eden astrolojik yazılar, gezegen yerleşimleri ve sultanın doğum haritası, bireysel kaderin inceliklerine inmekte ve tek bir dünya sakininin kaderini öngörmektedir.

Minyatürde yedi gezegen, belirli ikonografiyle betimlenmiştir: Güneş, bir hale ile oturan muazzam bir figür (Boğa burcunda); Ay, benzer şekilde ancak daha küçük bir figür (İkizler burcunda); Jüpiter, bir usturlap tutan bilge bir kişi (İkizler burcunda); Satürn, kırmızı pantolon giymiş yaşlı, esmer tenli bir figür (İkizler burcunda); Venüs, bir ud çalan zarif bir kadın (Balık burcunda); Merkür, bir kitap rafını ve mürekkep şişesini işaret eden bir akademisyen (İkizler burcunda); Mars, sağ elinde kılıç, sol elinde kesilmiş bir kafa tutan, kırmızı kıyafetli bir savaşçıdır (Akrep burcunda). Astrolojik ilkeler doğrultusunda her gezegen, farklı insan özelliklerini somutlaştırmakta ve bu özelliklerin gücü ya da zayıflığı, gezegenin zodyaktaki konumuna göre belirlenmektedir. Bu gezegen etkilerinin etkileşimi, bir bireyin şansını

şekillendirmekte, eylemlerin uğurlu ya da uğursuz olacağını belirlemektedir. Bu inanç sistemi, dünyevi kaderlerin gezegenlerin takımıyıldızlar içindeki döngüsüyle iç içe geçtiğini öne sürmektedir.

Minyatürde İskender Sultan'ın doğduğu anda gezegenlerin konumları, on iki kulede sembolik birer insan formunda betimlenmiştir. Astroloji göksel dereceleri belirlemek ve gezegenlerin içindeki konumlarını tespit etmek için astronomik tablolar (Zij) kullanarak bir kişinin hayatının doğum haritasını ve kehanetini öngörmeyi ya da bir şeyi yapabilme yetisini belirlemeyi sağlamaktadır. Tablonun altı merkezî dairesi, kırmızı ve siyah mürekkeple yazılmış olan bu astrolojik tabloların detaylı açıklamalarını içermektedir. Bu daireler yılın on iki ayını yansıtacak şekilde on iki bölüme daha ayrılmıştır. İlk bakışta gözden kaçabilecek bir detay ise İskender Sultan'ın doğum haritasının dış daireye ince bir şekilde dâhil edilmiş olmasıdır. Bu daire sultanın doğum anında on iki burçtaki göksel konum derecelerini gösterdiği gibi her burç için astrolojik tanımlamaları da içermektedir. O dönemin doğum haritaları genellikle gezegen konumlarını ve astrolojik anlamlarını detaylandıran semboller şeklinde sunulurken bu özel doğum haritası, ek astronomik verilerle desteklenen görsel bir temsile dönüşmüştür. Minyatürün görsel ve metinsel öğeleri arasındaki etkileşimin çözülmesi bu iki parçanın birbirini tamamlamasıyla mümkündür. Böylece görseldeki derin anlamlar açığa çıkarılmaktadır.

Bu çalışmanın amaçlarından ilki iç dairelerdeki yazıların astrolojik kavramlarını gözden geçirmek; ikincisi ise dış dairede ve minyatürün görsel unsurlarında sunulan bilgilere dayalı olarak sultanın doğum haritasını ve astrolojik profilini yeniden inşa etmektir. Bu amaçla İslamiyet sonrası Orta Çağ İnan kültürü çerçevesinde resmin içindeki astronomik kavramlar ve semboller incelenmiş ve yorulanmıştır. Doğum haritası bölümünde *İskender'in Doğumu* adlı eseri son bölümünden alınan bilgiler yer almaktadır. Bulgular minyatürün anlam katmanlarıyla dolu benzersiz bir görsel ve metinsel doğum haritası olarak işlev gördüğünü doğrulamaktadır. Bu minyatür dönemin astronomik dünya görüşünü yansıtmaktadır. Parlak, tamamlayıcı renkler, zarif Şiraz tarzı ve tezhip ile minyatür resminin uyumlu birlikteliği dönemin sanatsal ustalığını sergilemektedir. Görsel açıdan etkileyici olmakla birlikte minyatür derin sınırlar barındırmakta, bu sınırların çözülmesi ise sanatçının niyetini ortaya çıkarmaktadır.

Gezegensel ikonografi yalnızca gezegenlerin özelliklerine göndermede bulunmakla kalmayarak aynı zamanda sultanın doğum haritasının yeniden inşa edilmesine yönelik önemli ipuçları barındırmaktadır. Gezegenlerin zodyak içindeki görece konumları gözlemlendiğinde, astrolojik haritanın evleri doldurulabilmektedir. Güç, sanatsal duyarlılık ve savaşçılık yeteneğini simgeleyen Güneş, Venüs ve Mars daha belirgin bir şekilde tasvir edilerek İskender Sultan'ın kişiliğinin temel yönlerini yansıtmaktadır. Bilgelik ve akademik başarıyı temsil eden Jüpiter ve Merkür, taşsız olarak betimlenmiştir. Tarım ve yeraltı dünyasıyla ilişkilendirilen Satürn, esmer tenli bir yaşlı olarak görünmektedir. Ay, Güneş ile benzer bir duruş sergileyerek güneşli kralın altına yerleşerek yansıyan bir güç olarak vücut bulmaktadır. Gezegen figürleri ve meleklerin başındaki taşlar sultanın yüksek statüsünü ve rütbesine duyulan saygıyı simgelemektedir. Meleklerin sunduğu mücevherler ve taş bu temayı daha da pekiştirerek taş gücü, mücevherler ise zenginliği sembolize etmektedir. Kompozisyon göksel ve meleksele varlıkların sultana hizmette birleştiğini, onun zafer ve refahını sağlamak için hizalandığını ima etmektedir.

Dokuz daire, göksel küreleri; merkezî daire evrenin kalbi olan Dünya'yı temsil etmektedir. Eşmerkezli daireler yineleme, simetri, uyum ve hareket duyguları çağrıştırarak Dünya'dan en yüksek göksel alana (Empyrean/Empireum) doğru yükselen hareketi vermektedir. Ayrıca evrenin döngüsel ve sonsuz doğasını da aktarmaktadır. Resmin dairesel formatı, herhangi bir açıdan gözleme davet etmektedir. Tezhip ile minyatür resmin uyumu etkileyici olmakla birlikte olumsuz alanları zarif bir şekilde doldurarak resmin genel etkisini ve anlamını güçlendirmektedir.

Bu çalışma "İskender'in Doğumu"nu eşsiz bir doğum haritası olarak değerlendirmek için tanımlayıcı-analitik bir metodoloji kullanmaktadır. Çalışmada minyatür resim, tezhip ve hat sanatının dikkat çekici bir birleşimi olan bu eserin incelenmesi hedeflenmiştir. Bulgular resmin yalnızca *İskender'in Doğumu* kitabının dönemin astronomik inançlarını yansımasıyla beraber büyüleyici ve gizemli bir sanat eseri olarak işlev gördüğünü doğrulamaktadır. Sembolik dil, canlı renkler, dinamik tasarım ve simetrik kompozisyon, eserin görsel çekiciliğine katkıda bulunmaktadır. Minyatürde sultanın statüsüne ve rütbesine duyulan saygı açıkça görülmektedir.

Bu araştırma astrolojik sembollerinin çözümlenmesi, zodyak içindeki gezegen konumlarının korelasyonunun ve barındırdığı anlamların analiz edilmesinin İskender Sultan'ın doğum haritasının yeniden inşa edilmesinde ve dolayısıyla astrolojik metinlerin ve doğum haritalarının anlaşılmasında önemini göstermektedir. Pek çok eski metin semboller ve şifreli mesajlarla dolu olup çözülmeyi bekleyen bir gizem olarak kalmaktadır. Bu tür eserler üzerinde yapılan çalışmalar o dönemin kültürel, bilimsel, dinî ve ritüelistik inançlarına dair içgörüler sunarken astrolojik yorumların ve doğum haritası oluşturma süreçlerinin kökenlerinin takip edilmesini mümkün kılmaktadır. İskender Sultan'ın görsel doğum haritası oldukça karmaşıktır ve çok sayıda astrolojik kavram ve detay içermektedir. Bu

karmaşıklık Sultan'ın astrolojik ilkelere olan aşinalığını ve belki de bu sanat eserinin yaratılmasına doğrudan katkısını gösterebilir. İskender'in doğum haritası minyatür resim, tezhip, felsefe, astronomi ve kehanetin kesişim noktalarını temsil eden çok yönlü bir yapıdadır.

Önceki çalışmalarda "İskender'in Doğumu" tablosu incelenmiş olsa da metinsel bileşenler ve astrolojik sembolizmin analizi üzerinde durulmamıştır. Mevcut akademik çalışmalar görsel yönler üzerine yoğunlaşmış ve metinsel ile sembolik öğeler arasındaki etkileşimi göz ardı etmiştir. Bu araştırma resmin görsel ve metinsel boyutlarını birlikte ele alarak önceki çalışmalardan farklılaşmaktadır. Çalışma el yazmasındaki Zic tablolarını (astronomi cetvelleri) ve son bölümünde bulunan kehanetleri esas alarak sultanın doğum haritasını daha hassas bir şekilde yeniden inşa etmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Introduction

Prophecy and astrology have always been of interest among people and kings since the past. Astronomers have predicted the ascendant of people and the state of affairs based on the evidence of celestial bodies and astronomical calculations. Astronomers' astronomical calculations were mostly included in tables called *zij*. The predictor would draw a horoscope chart or birth horoscopes using the exact time and place of a person's birth, which were utilized to know the location of the planets in the ecliptic, as well as *zij* tables¹. Many horoscopes have been remained from ancient times, but illustrations of these horoscopes are rarely found. One of the illustration horoscopes of the 9th century A.H/15th century A.D is a 2-page painting that was drawn in the book named "*Birth of Iskandar*" regarding the fate of Sultan Iskandar Timuri (grandson of Timur) and was presented to him. The painting is noteworthy since in addition to having the symbols of the planets as well as the zodiac, it has astronomical texts including basic definitions and Iskandar's horoscope. This painting is an illustrated horoscope showing the image of the sky at the moment of the Sultan's birth at the first glance.

1. Astrology

In the Islamic era, there were different definitions and categories used to describe the field of astronomy. Hakim Farabi says in the book of *Ihsa al-Uloom*: What is known as astrology includes two sciences: First, astrology refers to future events and many things that exist now and many past events. Astrology is the ability and power through which a person can be aware of the events that will happen in the future. Second, didactic astrology (= mathematics) has been included as a part of sciences and teachings (= mathematics)². In Arabic, astrology was called "Elm Ahkam Nujumi", which can be translated as "the science of judging stars." The relationship between astrology and astronomy was very close, since astrology was considered to be a branch of astronomy³. According to Webster, astrology is "forecasting the supposed effect of stars upon human affairs and foretelling terrestrial events by their positions and aspects."⁴ But what is the meaning of *zij* and horoscope? "A *zij* consists essentially of numerical tables that enable the practicing astronomer, or astrologer, to solve all the standard problems of his profession, such as measuring time and computing planetary and stellar positions, appearance, and eclipses"⁵. *Zij*'s knowledge may be stable and contractual, or it may vary, but horoscope is unique for each person. Birth horoscope is the practice of constructing and

¹ Horoscope is a chart to show the position of the sun, moon, planets, and some crucial stars in the zodiac at a particular time such as birth and prophecy of events based on the rules of astrology. Farid Ghassemilou, "A Supplement to Research in the *Zijah* of the Islamic Period," *Journal of History of Science* 1 (2003), 54.

² Abu Nasr Muhammad al-Farabi. *Ehsa al-Uloom*. trans. Hossein Khadiv Jam (Tehran: Scientific and Cultural Publishing Company, 2010), 84.

³ Stefano Carboni, *Following the Stars: Figures of the Zodiac in Islamic Art* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997), 3.

⁴ Carboni, *Following the Stars: Figures of the Zodiac in Islamic Art*, 3.

⁵ Edward S. Kennedy, "A Survey of Islamic Astronomical Tables," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, New Series* 46/2 (1956), 123-177.

interpreting an astrological chart cast for the moment of the birth of an individual in order to ascertain specific information about the person's life [or] natal chart⁶, Genethliology⁷. The defining point of the chart is the Ascendant point, known to the Greeks as the *Horoscopes*, whose name is dedicated to the whole birth chart sometimes⁸. Therefore, using Zij tables and performing mathematical calculations related to the person's place of birth, the position of the planets at the time of birth, and the constellation that was rising from the east at that time, it becomes possible to prepare the horoscope or the fate of the child.

2. Iskandar Sultan's Horoscope

In the 9th century A.H, the art of painting reached its peak as the Timurid dynasty came into play in Iran. Iskandar Sultan, the grandson of Timur, was one of the art-loving and wise princes of Timur. Despite his short reign of about ten years, many books were painted during his reign. One of the masterpieces presented to the prince was his astrology book written by Al-Kashi⁹ (Imad al-Munjam) in 813 A.H / 1410 A.D in Shiraz. This 84-page book is now kept in the library of the Wellcome Institute in London¹⁰.

The main theme of the book is astrology and predicting Sultan's fate based on the time and place of his birth using zij tables and performing mathematical calculations. The first part of the book includes basic astronomical concepts and calculations and observations related to the location of the planets in the ecliptic at the moment of Sultan's birth, which ends with a two-page drawing (**Figure 1**). The second part deals with astrological calculations and the prediction of his future events until his 40 years, and in the third part, the author explains the rulings of the Sultan's horoscope with the help of the first part. The two-page drawing of the book is a pictorial summary of its contents, which depicts the position of the sky at the moment of his birth. According to the book, the date of birth is the 3rd of Rabi al-Awwal in 813 A.H / 15 JULY 1410 A.D. The painting of *Birth of Iskandar* book could be investigated from few points of view:



Figure 1: The Painting of the book of *Birth of Iskandar*

Source: Wellcome MS Persian 474, Wellcome Library, <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/ua87equq>,

⁶ Ahmet Tunç Şen and Cornell H. Fleischer, "Books on Astrology, Astronomical Tables, and Almanacs in the Lajaibrary Inventory of Bayezid II," *Treasures of Knowledge: An Inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library (1502/3-1503/4)*, eds. Gülru Necipoğlu, Cemal Kafadar and Cornell H. Fleischer (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 767-821.

⁷ Chris Brennan, "Introduction to Hellenistic Astrology," Course Part 3: Basic Techniques and Concepts in Hellenistic Astrology, 1. www.chrisbrennanastrologer.com.

⁸ Tamsyn Barton, *Ancient Astrology* (London: Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2003), 93.

⁹ Mahmud bin Yahya bin Hassan Al-Kashi, *The Birth of Iskandar* (813 A.H/1410 A.D).

¹⁰ WMS Persian 474 -<https://wellcomecollection.org>

3. Exploring the Painting in Terms of Form and Style

Having looked at the picture, we can see a circular drawing that is surrounded by two rectangles on both sides. The painting has been depicted in a background of azure blue, with Chinese clouds and golden stars existing in all parts of the picture. There are six concentric circles in the middle of the image, each has been divided into 12 parts (the number of months of the year) containing mysterious writings in black and red. The concentric circles associate the concept to repetition and movement. Symmetry, proportion, balance and repetition in painting, all are in the form of circles. The central circle is the focal point of the shape and has a special importance since the repetition of other circles begins from this point. After this part, the symbol of 12 signs has been provided in separate circles circularly, and the symbol of seven planets related to these signs has been painted on the rest part of that sign. Then, there is the outer circle with twelve written sections in each part. Figure 2 shows the structure of the painting including the central point, the concentric circles and 12 circles of signs. In the four corners of the painting, there are four crowned angels offering gifts. Angels and planets are depicted as humans with Mongolian faces, and except one of them, all have luxurious clothes. Out of 12 constellation symbols, only four signs contain the symbols of planets showing the position of planets in Ecliptic at the moment of Sultan's birth. Since the sector related to the other eight signs should not remain empty, beautiful gilt designs have been used in gold and red colors in the same azure field. These gildings are in perfect harmony with Chinese clouds and light stars so that they seem to be part of the background. The combination of painting and gilding in this painting shows the peak of both arts in Timurid period.



Figure 2: *The Painting of Birth of Iskandar*

Source: Wellcome MS Persian 474, Wellcome Library, <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/ua87e9uq>

4. Investigating the Painting from a Conceptual Point of View

Depicting the position of seven planets in 12 constellations, the background of the starry night sky and the location of the Capricorn sign above the painting all show signs of the sky status at the time of the sultan's birth. However, the overall structure of the painting is based on the geo-centered idea. In this belief, the idea was that earth is a fixed body and is the center of the universe and all the seven planets revolve in seven skies (Spheres) above the earth are moving, and the stars are in the eighth Sphere. Carboni writes in his book: "Islamic astrologers conceived of the universe as a series of concentric circles with the earth at the

center”¹¹. These planets are the Moon (*al-qamar*), Mercury (*utarid*), Venus (*al-zuhara*), the Sun (*al-shams*), Mars (*al-mirrikh*), Jupiter (*al-mushtari*), and Saturn (*zahal*). According to “al-Qazvini”, outside the eighth Sphere, there is another one, called the Greatest Sphere (*al-falak al-azam*), which regulates the orbits of all the others and is the place where the angels and the “Throne of God” are situated¹². (Figure 3) Iskandar's birth painting, also follows the 9 heavens structure, and the circle in the middle of the painting is a symbol of the earth, and the angels at four corners of the picture seem to be in the ninth sky offering gifts to the prince. On both sides of the design of the circle, there are two gilding rectangles consisting of two lines of poetry; it is as if these rectangles are like doors that have been pulled aside so that the painting could be revealed.

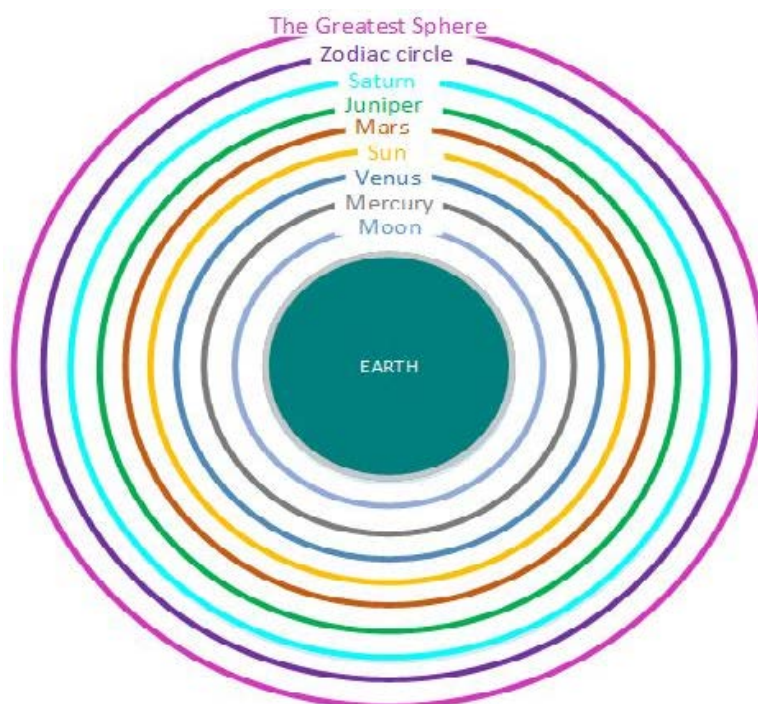


Figure 3: The Nine Heavens
Source: Prepared by the author

5. Exploring the Painting in Terms of Astrological Symbols

The twelve zodiac symbols for each month of the year are: Aries (April, “the ram”), Taurus (May, “the bull”), Gemini (June, “the twins”), Cancer (July, “the crab”), Leo (August, “Lion”), Virgo (September, “Spike”), Libra (October, “Libra”), Scorpio (November, “Scorpion”), Sagittarius (December, “Sagittarius”), Capricorn (January, “Goat”), Aquarius (February, “Water Bearer”) and Pisces (March, “Two Fish”). But what makes the fate of humans unique or provides the possibility of predicting events and conditions, is the rotation of 7 planets in the ecliptic. Considering the location of these planets in the signs at the moment of a person's birth, astrologers used to predict the events of a person's life. These 7 planets had human symbols and based on their characteristics, that were placed in each sign, they would cause good luck or bad luck. The symbols of planets in astrology are defined as:

¹¹ Carboni, *Following the Stars: Figures of the Zodiac in Islamic Art*, 3.

¹² Carboni, *Following the Stars: Figures of the Zodiac in Islamic Art*, 3-4.

- **Sun:** In fact, it is a star, but in the past, it was considered a planet. Regarding the symbols, sometimes it is considered as a circle of light rays without/ with a body and sometimes it is shown as a human sitting on the ground and holding a ring around his head. The sun stands for the power of kings.
- **Moon:** It is shown in the form of a person sitting on the ground and holding a ring around her head. The moon is the symbol of the ministers and the followers of the king.
- **Jupiter:** It is usually shown in the form of a man of experience and wise, who is looking at an open book. Here, he is depicted as someone holding an astrolabe.
- **Saturn:** It is usually in the form of a bearded old man with dark skin, half naked with a red shorts having a pickaxe; this is a symbol of agriculture or the king under the land and animals. The mouse hanging from his hand points to this issue.
- **Venus:** It in the shape of a woman playing the lute as a symbol of luxury and love.
- **Mercury:** It is depicted in the form of a person who is writing something, and here it refers to the inkwell.
- **Mars:** It is the planet associated with war and violence due to its red color; it is a warrior in military uniform, usually having a sword in his right hand and a severed head in his left.

The seven planets in this painting are viewed as follows: Sun in Taurus, Venus in Pisces, Mercury, Moon, Jupiter and Saturn in Gemini and Mars in Scorpio showing the position of the planets in the 12 signs at the moment of Sultan's birth. These planets seem to be the servants of Iskandar Sultan and each of them serves him a service: The sun offers him the power of the kingdom, the moon presents him the power of ministers and those around him, Saturn renders the power of agriculture and development, Mercury proposes the power of thinking and writing, Jupiter provides the power of wisdom and justice, Mars offers the power of war and Venus presents the power of love and happiness. But the characteristics of these planets become stronger or weaker according to the sign in which they are located. The interpretation of this intensity and weakness is according to the astronomical rules that are written in the circles in the middle of the image. Among these symbols, the sun, Mars and Venus are designed bigger than the others. Perhaps this issue shows the importance of power, war and luxury for the Sultan. The luxurious clothes and the crown in the symbol of the planets and angels are a sign of the highness of the Sultan. Also, the clothes and headscarves of the two symbols of Mercury and Jupiter show the glory of their knowledge and wisdom. Many paintings, articles and books have been written regarding astrological signs, but its written section has not been investigated. This article sought to uncover the secrets of this part and also extract and summarize the horoscope of Iskandar.

6. Investigating the Painting in Terms of Textual Content

The text had been written in a clear and well developed naskh manner, which was undoubtedly the work of an accomplished calligrapher, according to the colophon al-Kashi himself¹³. Its writing style was related to the 8th-century A.H (Figure 4).

¹³ Fateme Keshavarz, "The Horoscope of Iskandar Sultan," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 2 (1984), 198.





Figure 4: The Written Part of the Painting of Birth of Iskandar

Source: Wellcome MS Persian 474, Wellcome Library, <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/ua87e9uq>

According to the astrology rules, each planet has characteristics that according to its placement in the 12 zodiac signs, those features may be strong or weak. These strengths and weaknesses are the same as a person's horoscope referring to good or bad luck or the rightness or wrongness of doing something. The highest part of the circles` writing includes term and decan concepts. **Table 1** has provided the explanations of each of the writings to better understand astrological concepts and reveal more of the secrets of this painting.

Table 1: The part related to the term and decan in each sign, given in the upper row of the painting`s writings which has been extracted by the author.

Decan	Term	Sign	Decan	Term	Sign
Juniper	Venus	Libra	7	Saturn	Aries
Sun	Juniper	Scorpio	8	Moon	Taurus
Moon	Juniper	Sagittarius	9	Mars	Gemini
Juniper	Mercury	Capricorns	10	Juniper	Cancer
Venus	Mercury	Aquarius	11	Moon	Leo
Juniper	Juniper	Pisces	12	Venus	Virgo

6.1. Term (Limit, Lat. Fine)¹⁴

There were normally five terms distributed unequally within each zodiac sign¹⁵. These result from a subdivision of each of the zodiac into five unequal parts, each of which is governed by one of the five planets (taking no account of the Sun and the Moon)¹⁶. The planets' affinities are distributed somewhat irregularly among the degrees; however, each signs another method based originally on rising times. The effect of the terms: when a planet is in a foreign sign, it is in its own term, has the same power as it would have if it were

¹⁴ Willy Hartner, "The Mercury Horoscope of Marcantonio Michel of Venice: A Study in the History of Renaissance Astrology and Astronomy," *Vistas in Astronomy* 1 (1955), 99.

¹⁵ Barton, *Ancient Astrology*, 97.

¹⁶ Hartner, "The Mercury Horoscope of Marcantonio Michel of Venice: A Study in the History of Renaissance Astrology and Astronomy," 99.

¹⁷ Glen M. Cooper, "C8: Hellenistic Greek Science, Astrology the Science of Signs in the Heavens," *Oxford Handbook of Science and Medicine in the Classical World*, eds. Paul T. Keyser and John Scarborough (London: Oxford University Press, 2018), 402.



in its own sign¹⁷. The numbers given in this table along with the names of the planets are the limits of the planets based on the calculations of the Egyptians, which were used by astrologers.

That is, for example, in the Gemini sign, the term of the Mercury is from zero to six degrees, and the term of the Jupiter is from six to twelve degrees, and from twelve to seventeen degrees belongs to the Venus, etc. According to the horizontal degrees of each of the towers at the moment of Iskandar Sultan's birth, which has been presented in Table 10 of the article, the planet corresponding to the range of that degree (according to the information in the drawing) has been highlighted in the following table (**Table 2**). For example, the degree of Aries is 27:6, so according to the degree of each planet in this sign, its limit is placed in Term 5 or the Saturn. Or, in Leo, whose degree is 6:12, since the degree is greater than 6, Term is located at the term of Venus. Of course, there is an exception in the Cancer for which we do not know the reason.

Table 2: According to its degree or celestial latitude, the terms of each sign are related to each sign in Iskandar's birth moment

Source: Biruni, *Al-Tafhim Lavail Sanayeh Al-Tanjim*, 410-411 and Hartner, "The Mercury Horoscope of Marc Antonio Michel of Venice: A Study in the History of Renaissance Astrology and Astronomy," 99.

Term5	Term4	Term3	Term2	Term1	Sign
Saturn 5	Mars 5	Mercury 8	Venus 6	Juniper 6	Aries
Mars 3	Saturn 5	Juniper 8	Mercury 6	Venus 8	Taurus
Saturn 6	Mars 7	Venus 5	Juniper 6	Mercury 6	Gemini
Saturn 4	Juniper 7	Mercury 6	Venus 6	Mars 7	Cancer
Mars 6	Mercury 6	Saturn 7	Venus 5	Juniper 6	Leo
Saturn 2	Mars 7	Juniper 4	Venus 10	Mercury 7	Virgo
Mars 2	Venus 7	Juniper 7	Mercury 8	Saturn 6	Libra
Saturn 6	Juniper 5	Mercury 8	Venus 4	Mars 7	Scorpio
Mars 4	Saturn 5	Mercury 4	Venus 5	Juniper 12	Sagittarius
Mars 4	Saturn 4	Venus 8	Juniper 7	Mercury 7	Capricorns
Saturn 5	Mars 5	Juniper 7	Venus 6	Mercury 7	Aquarius
Saturn 2	Mars 9	Mercury 3	Juniper 4	Venus 12	Pisces

6.2. Decan (Lat. Face)¹⁸

Astrologists have divided each sign to 3 equal parts of 10 degrees and have appointed each part to a planet (**Table 3**). The astrological decans are 10° segments of the Signs¹⁹. Each of the decans is governed by one of the planets-this time including the Sun and the Moon²⁰. According to al-Tafhim book²¹, astrologers began from Aries and assigned the first part to the Lord of this sign (Mars), the second part to Sun (the heaven under Mars), the third part to Venus (the heaven under Sun), and so on until to Pisces, descending sequence planets from Mars to Moon and then from Saturn to Moon and the same way (**Figure 2**). The highlighted Decan in each sign was according to the painting writings (**Table 3**). According to sign's degree the decan could be determined; for example, in Taurus, the degree was 19:20 (according to **Table 10**), so it's decan was placed in the second part or the moon.

¹⁸ Hartner, "The Mercury Horoscope of Marc Antonio Michel of Venice: A Study in the History of Renaissance Astrology and Astronomy," 99.

¹⁹ Cooper, "C8: Hellenistic Greek Science, Astrology the Science of Signs in the Heavens," 403.

²⁰ Hartner, "The Mercury Horoscope of Marc Antonio Michel of Venice: A Study in the History of Renaissance Astrology and Astronomy," 100.

²¹ Abu Rihan Mohammad Ibn Ahmad al-Biruni. *Al-Tafhim Lavail Sanayeh Al-Tanjim*, trans. Jalaluddin Homayi (Tehran: Homa Publishing, 1988), 403.



However, in three signs of Aries, Cancer and Leo, the author (Al-Kashi) did not act according to **Table 3** and considered the planet Saturn for Aries, the planet Jupiter for Cancer, and the planet Moon for Leo. The second part was devoted to the house of the planets in the zodiac.

Table 3: *The Decans of each sign according to its degree or celestial latitude related to each sign in Iskandar's birth moment.*

Source: Author adapted from Biruni, *Al-Tafhim Lavail Sanayeh Al-Tanjim*, 409; Hartner, "The Mercury Horoscope of Marcantonio Michel of Venice: A Study in the History of Renaissance Astrology and Astronomy," 100 and Barton, *Ancient Astrology*, 97.

Decan 3	Decan 2	Decan 1	Sign		Decan 3	Decan 2	Decan 1	Sign	
Juniper	Saturn	Moon	Libra	7	Venus	Sun	Mars	Aries	1
Venus	Sun	Mars	Scorpio	8	Saturn	Moon	Mercury	Taurus	2
Saturn	Moon	Mercury	Sagittarius	9	Sun	Mars	Juniper	Gemini	3
Sun	Mars	Juniper	Capricorn	10	Moon	Mercury	Venus	Cancer	4
Moon	Mercury	Venus	Aquarius	11	Mars	Juniper	Saturn	Leo	5
Mars	Juniper	Saturn	Pisces	12	Mercury	Venus	Sun	Virgo	6

6.3. The Domicilia, House (Latin, Domicilium; Arabic, Bait)²²

In this system, a distribution of seven planets on the twelve zodiacal signs can be sought, which is asymmetrical. The circle of the zodiac has been cut into halves by a diameter running from the beginning of Leo (i.e., the boundary between Cancer and Leo) to the beginning of Aquarius (i.e., the boundary between Capricorn and Aquarius). Each planet governs two signs, one during the day and one at night, with the exception of the Sun and the Moon, each of whom governs one sign only²³. Leo was assigned to the Sun and Cancer was assigned to the Moon. The five signs forward from Leo were then assigned to the five non-luminaries regarding their distance from the earth (nearest to farthest), and the five signs backward from Cancer were in the same order. Non-luminaries thus had both day-time houses (Virgo forward to Capricorn) and night-time houses (Gemini backward to Aquarius)²⁴. Each Sign had a special affinity for a specific planet²⁵. When a planet was found within its own Sign, its power was enhanced²⁶. Below, we have brought this topic from the books of Biruni and Hanter in Figure 5.

²² Willy Hartner, "The Pseudo Planetary Nodes of the Moon's Orbit in Hindu and Islamic Iconographies," *Ars Islamica* 5/2 (1938), 116.

²³ Hartner, "The Mercury Horoscope of Marc Antonio Michel of Venice: A Study in the History of Renaissance Astrology and Astronomy," 95.

²⁴ Roger Beck, *A Brief History of Ancient Astrology* (USA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2007), 85.

²⁵ Cooper, "C8: Hellenistic Greek Science, Astrology the Science of Signs in the Heavens," 402.

²⁶ Cooper, "C8: Hellenistic Greek Science, Astrology the Science of Signs in the Heavens," 402.



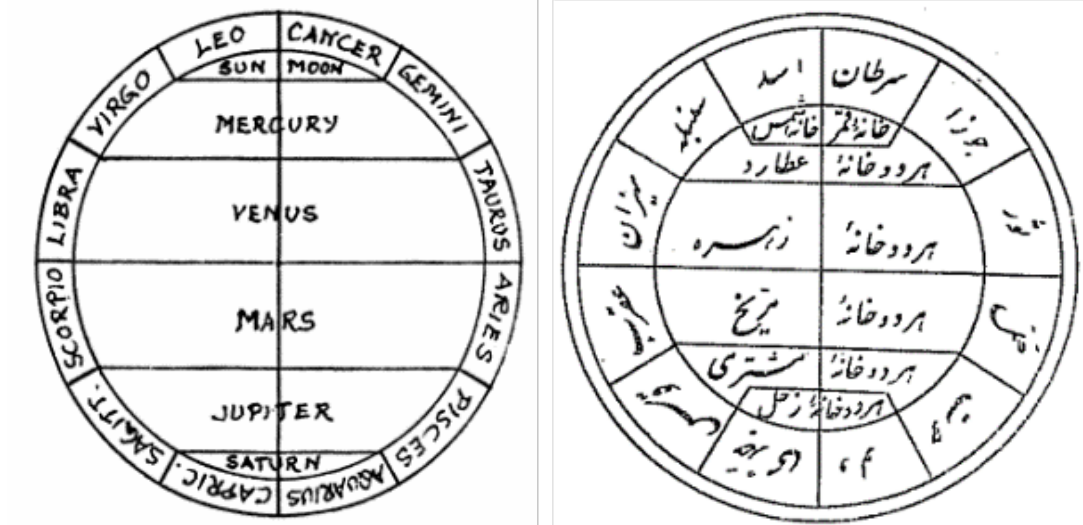


Figure 5: The House of Planets

Source: Left figure: Hartner, "The Pseudo Planetary Nodes of the Moon's Orbit in Hindu and Islamic Iconographies," 116; Right figure: Biruni, *Al-Tafhim Lavail Sanayeh Al-Tanjim*, 396.

The next part deals with the lords of triplicity. The astrologers have divided the zodiac into four groups, or four triangles and each three signs were assigned to one element (fire, earth, air and water) and each triangle was governed by one planet as the lord of day, one as the lord of night and one as the companion. This division was written based on the concepts of *Al-Tafhim* book, page 399, as Table 4.

Table 4: The division of the months of the year according to the four elements: fire, earth, air, water.

Source: Author adapted from Biruni, *Al-Tafhim Lavail Sanayeh Al-Tanjim*, 399

Signs	Elements	Lord of Day	Lord of Night	Companion
1 Aries, Leo, Sagittarius	Fire (dry)	Sun	Juniper	Saturn
2 Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn	Earth (cold)	Venus	Moon	Mars
3 Gemini, Libra, Aquarius	Air (hot)	Saturn	Mercury	Juniper
4 Cancer, Scorpius, Pisces	Water (wet)	Venus	Mars	Moon

According to the convention, astrologers wrote the last letter of the planet's names in their tables and calculations to make it easier to write or codify it. For example, "مشتری شمس زحل" Jupiter, Sun, Saturn were considered as "ی س ل". Because Iskandar Sultan's birth was at night, the lords of the night considered each sign a two-page table and were included in the lord of triplicity section.

6.4. The Exaltations (Latin, Exaltation; Arabic, Sharaf)²⁷

The next line was related to exaltation's system: "While House symmetry has been based on a vertical axis, the exaltation system is symmetrical with a point that is zodiac and earth center". Each planet has one sign in which is "exalted"; exerting his maximum action and a sign that is diametrically opposite, in which he is "depressed" or "dejected", where his influence is the least²⁸. The domicilia is arranged symmetrically in relation to an Axis as the main diameter, whereas the exaltations and dejections are arranged in relation to a point as the center of the zodiacal circle²⁹. In order not to create contradictions in prophecies, when using the two systems of exaltation and house, the astrologers decided to consider certain degrees of the

²⁷ Hartner, "The Pseudo Planetary Nodes of the Moon's Orbit in Hindu and Islamic Iconographies," 117.

²⁸ Hartner, "The Mercury Horoscope of Marc Antonio Michel of Venice: A Study in the History of Renaissance Astrology and Astronomy," 95.

²⁹ Hartner, "The Pseudo Planetary Nodes of the Moon's Orbit in Hindu and Islamic Iconographies Author," 119.



zodiac as the place of honor and descent of planets instead of the whole constellation. Each planet has a specific degree of exaltation and depression where that planet is thought to be the strongest or weakest³⁰. The greatest good fortunes are indicated when a planet is near its own exaltation (hupsōma)³¹, and the opposite is shown when near its dejection (tapeinōma)³². In the horoscope book of Iskandar’s birth, the parts of exaltation related to these seven planets are mentioned in 7 signs, and the word “empty”, “خالی” has been used for the rest of the signs (Table 5).

Table 5: *The exaltations of planets in certain degrees of seven signs Author adapted from Biruni, Al-Tafhim Lavail Sanayeh Al-Tanjim, 398; Hartner, "The Mercury Horoscope of Marcantonio Michel of Venice: A Study in the History of Renaissance Astrology and Astronomy," 95 and Hartner, "The Pseudo Planetary Nodes of the Moon's Orbit in Hindu and Islamic Iconographies, 117*

Planets	Exaltation	Dejection
The Sun	Aries 19°	Libra 19°
The Moon	Taurus 3°	Scorpio 3°
Saturn	Libra 21°	Aries 21°
Juniper	Cancer 15°	Capricorn 15°
Mars	Capricorn 28°	Cancer 28°
Venus	Pisces 27°	Virgo 27°
Mercury	Virgo 15°	Pisces 15°

6.5. Darijan

According to Al-Tafhim³³, in this part, like Decans, each sign was divided into three pieces of ten degrees that was governed by one planet. But the difference by decan is that the first section of each sign was assigned to its own lord, and the second and third parts were assigned to the lords of the signs in the same triplicity. For example, in Aries, the first part was assigned to Mars, the second to Sun (the lord of Leo) and the third to Juniper (the lord of Sagittarius). Table 6 shows the Darijan of planets based on the information provided in Al-Tafhim book. But in the month of Pisces, Saturn has been mentioned, which is not according to Table 6. Also, here according to Table 10, Darijan of each sign has been assigned corresponding to its sign degree.

Table 6: *The Darijan of planets according to its degree or celestial latitude related to each sign in Birth of Iskandar moment.*

Source: Author adapted from Biruni, Al-Tafhim Lavail Sanayeh Al-Tanjim, 405.

3	2	1	Signs	3	2	1	Signs		
Mercury	Saturn	Venus	Libra	7	Juniper	Sun	Mars	Aries	1
Moon	Juniper	Mars	Scorpio	8	Saturn	Mercury	Venus	Taurus	2
Sun	Mars	Juniper	Sagittarius	9	Saturn	Venus	Mercury	Gemini	3
Mercury	Venus	Saturn	Capricorns	10	Juniper	Mars	Moon	Cancer	4
Venus	Mercury	Saturn	Aquarius	11	Mars	Juniper	Sun	Leo	5
Mars	Moon	Juniper	Pisces	12	Venus	Saturn	Mercury	Virgo	6

³⁰ Brennan, "Introduction to Hellenistic Astrology," 35.

³¹ Cooper, "C8: Hellenistic Greek Science, Astrology the Science of Signs in the Heavens," 403.

³² Cooper, "C8: Hellenistic Greek Science, Astrology the Science of Signs in the Heavens," 403.

³³ Biruni, *Al-Tafhim Lavail Sanayeh Al-Tanjim*, 405.



6.6. Master

To determine the Master of each sign, Islamic astrologers used following methods. When a planet has the most dominance in a sign, it is named Master. Note that the lord of the house is not the Master of it all the time. There were first determining criteria, and for each criterion, some scores had been assigned. Then by adding the scores, they obtained the Master: **1.** The lord of sign had 5 score, **2.** The exaltation had 4 score, **3.** The term of the sign (in the birth time) had 3 score, **4.** The first and second lords of triplicity (at day and night) had 2 score, **5.** The companion of triplicity and the lord of decan had 1 score. In the painting of five signs that planes didn't have exaltation, the lord of sign was the Master (Gemini, Leo, Scorpio, Sagittarius, and Aquarius). But in Virgo, Libra, Pisces, Aries, Taurus and Capricorn, the Master was determined with calculation. Cancer does not follow above rule. **Table 7** shows the Houses, the exaltation and the master of each planet according to the painting.

Table 7: *The Houses, the Exaltation, the Master of planets in one table for easy comparison*
 Source: Author adapted from the painting of Birth of Iskandar

Sign	House	Exaltation	Master	Sign	House	Exaltation	Master
Aries	Mars	Sun	Sun	Libra	Venus	Saturn	Venus
Taurus	Venus	Moon	Moon	Scorpio	Mars	empty	Mars
Gemini	Mercury	empty	Mercury	Sagittarius	Juniper	tail	Juniper
Cancer	Moon	Juniper	Mars	Capricorn	Saturn	Mars	Mars
Leo	Sun	empty	Sun	Aquarius	Saturn	empty	Saturn
Virgo	Mercury	Mercury	Mercury	Pisces	Juniper	Venus	Juniper

7. The Circle of Iskandar's Horoscope

After examining the circles in the middle of the Figure, it was time for exploring the last circle, which was between the symbols of planets and angels. This circle contained the horoscope of Iskandar Sultan. Each of the 12 signs of the year have had characteristics that could determine a person's fate and personality traits based on the placement of a person's horoscope in that sign. In short, 12 critical issues of human destiny (such as health, wife and children, wealth and property, travel, sadness, and happiness, etc.) have been placed in these 12 signs. But the placement of these subjects (houses) in the zodiac differs for each person. The sign -strictly, the degree of the sign-seems to be rising in the east at the time of birth. The rising sign or degree is known as the ascendant; the Greek term known as horoscopes (literally "hour-watcher"), the word which gives us English "horoscope"³⁴. The original function and purpose of the ascendant was that it was used to "mark" or designate the zodiacal sign that was rising over the eastern horizon at birth, and this sign then became the first "house" or "place"³⁵. In some documents, instead of considering the rising constellation, they believed the sun's position in the constellation. Of course, in calculating the "first house" or horoscope house, in addition to the rising constellation, the coordinates of the birth location were also essential. This house was significant in a person's destiny because it could affect the rest of the house. According to the book's text (**Figure 6**), Iskandar Sultan's horoscope was placed in Capricorn, considering the place of birth and the particular astronomical calculations of that era. After determining the horoscope sign, the next 11 houses were arranged counterclockwise. So far, the horoscope or layout of the fate of a person's life can be achieved. Considering that the first house was placed in Capricorn in Iskandar Sultan's horoscope,

³⁴ Beck, *A Brief History of Ancient Astrology*, 27.

³⁵ Brennan, "Introduction to Hellenistic Astrology," 42.



according to the contents given in the book of Al-Tafhim³⁶ and with the current written language, the houses related to each sign were placed respectively. **Figure 6** shows the types of charts used for horoscopes. The numbers indicate the number of houses in Zij (**Table 8**).

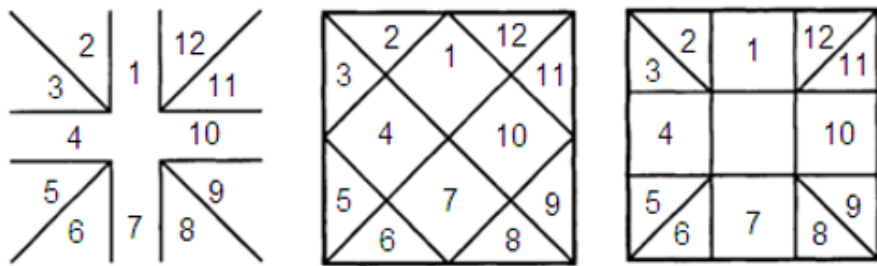


Figure 6: Types of Diagrams in Manuscripts
Source: Barton, *Ancient Astrology*, 94.

Table 8: A horoscope table with 12 house and their characteristics.³⁷

Source: Prepared by the author

2: Wealth and Subsistence	1: Life and Body	12: sadness, separation
3: Brothers and Sisters		11: hope and desire
4: parents, property, housing		10: happiness and prosperity
5: children, weddings, love	7: spouse, partners, enemies	9: knowledge, religion, travel
6: diseases, slaves and servants		8: death, anxiety, sadness

After naming and knowing the houses of a *zij*, some general definitions had been discussed, which were used in the interpretation of the Sultan's horoscope.

7.1. The Power of Houses

The first, fourth, seventh and tenth houses had the most power. In astrology, they were called “vatad”, and according to Brennan's article³⁸, they have been called angular places (more active or energetic places). The second, fifth, eighth and eleventh houses had medium strength. In astrology, they were called “mayel al-vatad”, and according to Chris Brennan's article³⁹, they have been called succedent places) more middling in relation to their period. The third, sixth, ninth and twelfth houses had lower power and were called “zayl al-vatad”, and according to the article of Chris Brennan⁴⁰, they were called “cadent places” (less active, thus less supportive).

7.2. Lots

Lot (SAHM) is a definition in horoscope with whose help and the sign in which it is placed, astrologers can predict many things. The subject of lot is vital in prediction because an astrologer must first calculate the position of the lot related to that subject in terms of degree, sign and house and then check its position with other planets. They are points of significance on the zodiac determined by various formulas from the

³⁶ Al-Biruni, *Al-Tafhim Lavail Sanayeh Al-Tanjim*, 429-430.

³⁷ Note that the houses of 1, 4, 7, and 10 are more important.

³⁸ Brennan, “Introduction to Hellenistic Astrology,” 48.

³⁹ Brennan, “Introduction to Hellenistic Astrology,” 48.

⁴⁰ Brennan, “Introduction to Hellenistic Astrology,” 48.



positions of the horoscopes and the planets, especially the Sun and the Moon⁴¹. Multiple lots have been mentioned in the handbooks: Fortune, Daimon, Eros, Necessity, and Basis, among others⁴². The most important is the Lot of Fortune's⁴³ position in the lot of fortune, which is determined by adding the elongation of the Moon from the Sun to the longitude of the horoscopes⁴⁴. In other words, the minus between the degree of the location of sun and moon, and the degree of the horoscope can calculate the position of lot in the fortune. With the mathematical calculations of that time and depending on the degrees of the planets and also the degree of the horoscope, the author assigned each lot to a sign (Figure 7, Table 9).

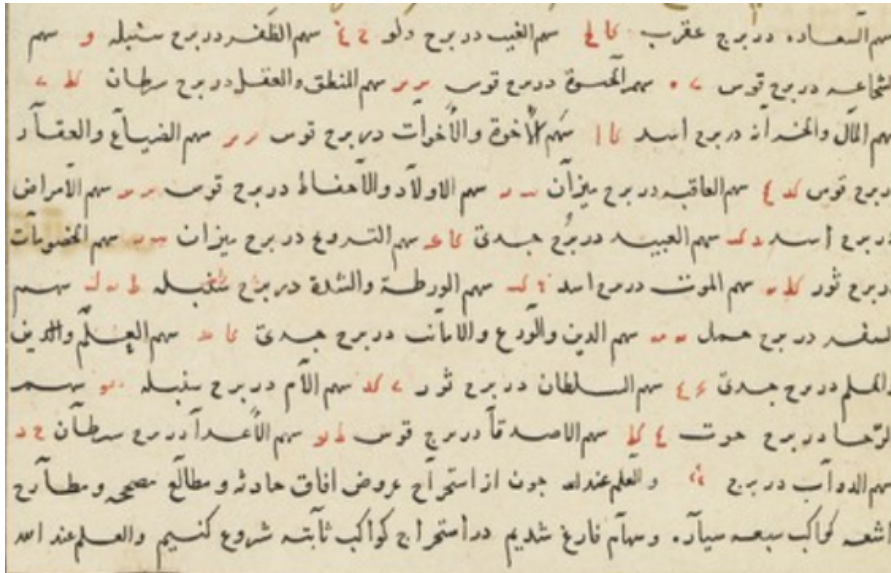


Figure 7: The Lots

Source: Al-Kashi, The Birth of Iskandar, 15

Table 9: Table of lots according to Figure 6

Source: Author adapted from Al-Kashi, The Birth of Iskandar, 15

Signs	Lots
Aries	lot of trips
Taurus	lot of hostilities, lot of kings
Gemini	-
Cancer	lot of wisdom and logic, lot of enmity
Leo	lot of wealth, lot of diseases, lot of death
Virgo	lot of victories, lot of abyss and hardship, lot of pain
Libra	lot of consequence, lot of marriage
Scorpio	lot of fortune
Sagittarius	lots of courage, life, after life, brothers, estate, children, friends, beasts
Capricorn	lot of slaves, lot of honesty, lot of science, lot of religion and patience
Aquarius	lot of coverters
Pisces	lot of wishes

⁴¹ Beck, *A Brief History of Ancient Astrology*, 89.

⁴² Cooper, "C8: Hellenistic Greek Science, Astrology the Science of Signs in the Heavens," 401.

⁴³ Barton, *Ancient Astrology*, 99.

⁴⁴ Beck, *A Brief History of Ancient Astrology*, 90.

7.3. Aspects

Planets can affect each other in their positions. A set of angular distances between planets, known as their aspects, also modify their influence⁴⁵. In contrast, they may be 180 degrees apart. Square (or quartile) is a place where planets are 90 degrees apart. Trine refers to 120 degrees, and sextile refers to 60 degrees (Figure 8).

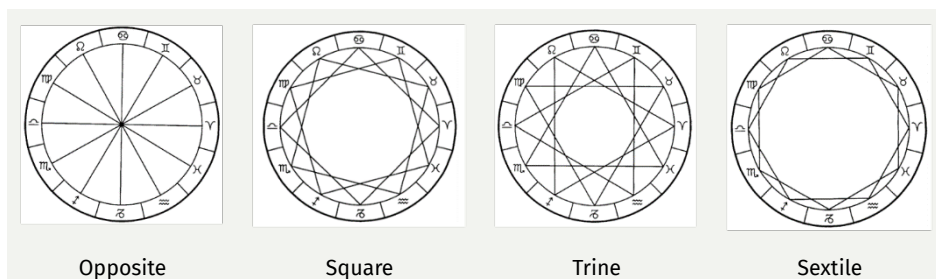


Figure 8: The Aspects of Planets (Barton, Ancient Astrology, 100).

7.4. Celestial Latitude of Each Sign

By the side of the explanations related to the 12 houses in the big out circle, some letters have been written in red, which means the degree of location of each sign at the time of Iskandar Sultan's birth. By these letters and considering the page 36 of *Iskandar's Birth* book, we have the positions of the signs in a complete form, which means; first, the number of the sign and then its degrees and minutes of latitude⁴⁶ of each sign have been denoted by the Abjad⁴⁷ letters (Table 10).

Table 10: The horoscope of Sultan Iskandar according to the information of external circle in painting (the horoscope houses and the degree of each sign)

Source: Prepared by the author

Aquarius:(10:6 :12) ی؛ و بب	Horoscope Capricorns:(9؛ 0 ، 18) ط؛ 0 یح	Sagittarius:(8 ؛ 10 ؛ 14) ح ؛ بید
Pisces:(11 ؛ 15 ؛ 44) یا؛ په مد		Scorpio:(7 ؛ 19:20) ز ؛ بطک
Aries:(؛ 27 ؛ 6) کز و ؛		Libra :(6 ؛ 27 ؛ 6) و ؛ کز و
Taurus: (1 ؛ 19:20) ا ؛ یطک	Cancer:(3؛ 0 ، 18) ج ؛ 0 یح	Virgo: (5 ؛ 15 ؛ 44) ه ؛ په مد
Gemini:ب(2 ؛ 10 ؛ 14) ؛ بید		Leo:(4 ؛ 6 ؛ 12) د ؛ و بب

Astrologers indicate Aries with astrological zero (°), [In the outer circle of horoscope house], Taurus to Aquarius from 1(ا) to 10(ی) and Pisces with letters (یا). We don't know why the degrees of the horoscope's house and cancer's house in the table are not the same on page 36 and the outer circle of the picture [In painting is:(17. 35) یز له and in page 36 is: 0 (0 . 18) یح].

Kadkhoda and Hilaj are two astrological concepts, so that according to the “book of birth of Iskandar” page 33, Hilaj and Kadkhoda in horoscope are the reason for longevity and health. But Hilaj is a Greek word for body and Kadkhoda is used for soul. If Hilaj has several Kodkhodas, it is a proof of Hillaj's power. Hillaj

⁴⁵ Barton, *Ancient Astrology*, 99.

⁴⁶ Celestial latitude: The angular distance of the celestial equator (along the circle passing through the poles of the celestial equator) and the celestial objection the celestial sphere by degree and minutes. See Al-Kashi, *The Birth of Iskandar*, 9.

⁴⁷ Abjad: Abjad is an alphanumeric code for the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet. The word Abjad is based on pasting these numerical letters in a particular order: abjad, hūz, haṭī, kalamn, sa'afṣ, qarashṭ, thakhdh, ḍazgh. The number considered for each letter is as follows: By using the abjad alphabet, a number obtain for every word; for example, Ali (ع ل ی) is calculated as so: 110 = 10ی + 30ل + 70ع(www.islamquest.net).



includes five things: moon, sun, the lot of fortune⁴⁸, joze⁴⁹- part of society and degree of horoscope sign (book of birth of Iskandar, page 33).

But Kadkhoda is a planet that dominates Hilaj's position, meaning that he was the Lord of house, where exaltation or decan was⁵⁰. In this horoscope, the sun is in Taurus and Venus is its Kadkhoda; the Lot of Fortune is in scorpion and Venus is its Kadkhoda, and joze is in Taurus, and again Venus is its Kadkhoda. So, there are three Hilaj and one Kodkhoda⁵¹.

However, the method of finding Hilaj is that in the birthday, if the sun be in the house of horoscope, or one of the tenth, eleventh, seventh or ninth houses, and the sun would be Hilaj. Otherwise, we would look at the moon, if it is in one of these five houses or in one of the third, fourth or fifth houses, the Hilaj would be moon. But in the birthnight, we use the same method as above, except that we first look at the moon and then at the sun. Since Iskandar Sultan was born at night, we look first at the moon and then at the sun. Because the moon does not have the above conditions, the sun is in the fifth house, so the sun is Hilaj, and Venus (the god of Taurus), is Kadkhoda. If the Lot of Fortune is in center or in clination of the center, it is the Hilaj. If not, see the joze of society, if it is in vatad or mayelalvatad, it is the Hilaj. Here, the Lot of Fortune is in Scorpion (mayelalvatad), then it is Hillaj, and Venus is Kadkhoda⁵², and so the joze is in the Taurus (mayelalvatad), so it is Hilaj and Venus is Kadkhoda. To interpret each house of Iskandar's horoscope, the author (Al-Kashi) has expressed his evidence and impressions from page 136 onwards of the book, which has been briefly described below.

8. Iskandar's Horoscope Houses

Horoscope house (First House): According to the Lord of the house, the Master and the lord of Triplicity, this house implies the strong spiritual and physical perfection of the sultan. Also, the owner of the horoscope is happy and prosperous because Kadkhoda and Hillaj are strong and victorious. Since the exaltation of the horoscope house (Mars) is the observer of the horoscope house from the sextile, it indicates Monarchy and tactful and glory, and since Mars is the observer of the horoscope house from the house of wishes (eleventh house), it means that he is a zealous, political, and awe-inspiring king. The degree of the Ain al-Rami star (أين رامى), (4, 10°: 6'), near the degree of the horoscope (أين رامى) (0; 10°: 18'), indicates that sometimes great dangers occur, but because of the sextile of Mars and its retrograde, no much misfortune happens.

Saturn (Lord of the Capricorns or Horoscope house) is located in Gemini's sign, so Mercury is the Master of Gemini sign and also it is in Gemini with Jupiter. Therefore, any thought and strategy that the Sultan has for his enemies, is good and consulting with ministers and the elderly is better than consulting with younger people. It would be better if he works with his own thoughts, because Mercury (the planet of thought and absorber of the sciences of great wisdom), is in the same house with Jupiter. Since Saturn, the owner of the horoscope sign, is with the moon, it means that disobedient people will obey and serve the Sultan, enemies are suppressed, and friends are victorious. Mars is opposite to the Sun thus, anger dominates the mood of the Sultan. Because Mercury and the moon both are in Gemini, and Mercury is the Master, according to Koshyar Hakim: "If Mercury be in its place and the Moon be the master, the person would have many virtues

⁴⁸ Calculate Lot of fortune: in calculating the position of Lot of Fortune attention that the sign number is also included in the calculation. For example, if on birthday time the sun is in 12° 17' of the cancer sign, the number of it calculates from the zero point of arias. That means 3 full months and 12° 17', then the number of sign is 3. It also applies to the location of the moon and horoscope.

⁴⁹ Joze (part) of society: when the sun and the moon are in the same sign called society and the same degree called joze of society.

⁵⁰ Al-Biruni, *Al-Tafhim Lavail Sanayeh Al-Tanjim*, 520.

⁵¹ Al-Kashi, *Birth of Iskandar*, 33.

⁵² Because the degree of the Lot of Fortune in scorpion is "15" or 21° so it's decan is Venus.



and would hide secrets.”⁵³ It shows the Sultan's foresight and prediction of events before they happen; he ignores anyone's thoughts, hides his secrets with his thoughts, and gets quickly angry but forgives easily. As Saturn is in the direct motion, Mars is in the direct station⁵⁴ too, and the Sun is near Musamam al-Soraya⁵⁵, so the Sultan should avoid things that endanger his sight and hearing. Venus is in the Pisces sign (its exaltation house), so the king loves scents and fragrances. Being Mercury with Jupiter is the reason why he is very skilled in recognizing the taste of food and quickly notices it with a slight change. He is successful in all matters, God willing.

Second house: This house belongs to the livelihood and friends. Because the Lot of fortune is in Scorpio and the Lot of wealth is in Leo, this is a proof of the abundance of wealth and many possessions, and the king is extravagant in forgiveness. Lot of fortune in Leo, the presence of Jupiter and Mercury together and the dominance of Mercury over Saturn's location (in Gemini) are reasons for prosperity and happiness. As Abu Maasher Balkhi mentioned: “If the lord of the Lot of fortune be in the Lot of fortune and be located in the eleventh sign, the born in dividual would be rich”⁵⁶, and since the Master is strong in the second degree, there would be many servants, brothers, and followers⁵⁷.

Third house: This house belongs to brothers, relatives, friends, and short trips. Mars is retrograde and Mercury is near retro gradation, indicating that the brothers and relatives are jealous of the position of the Sultan and trick him. The wise Doronius narrated that: “if the Lord of the third house [Jupiter, Pisces] be in the sixth house [Gemini], his brothers would be hostile to him, seek his sin and want corruption.”⁵⁸ But since Jupiter is in cadent places (toward deficiency), they would not lead anywhere, and since this house has sublimity action and movement, happiness and luxury would be present.

Fourth house: This house is the house of estates, provinces, authority, fate, and father. The lot of estate in the horoscope means that he is diligent in the livelihood affairs of the country and provinces. He restores buildings and ruins. His good name remains for many years after him. He does most of the deeds in the latter half of his life. Since Sun is the master, he occupies many properties and provinces, and mostly he is in prosperity, and the end of his affairs is happiness and good.

Fifth house: This house belongs to children and happiness. The term is Jupiter, the decan is the Moon, and the lot of children is in Sagittarius, meaning that the king's happiness increases due to children. Since the house's lord is Venus and is exalted in Pisces, he has always peace of mind.

Sixth house: This house is the house of servants and valets and disease. The term, decan, lords of triplicity is the master of this sign also the lot of slave in Capricorn, the lot of illness in Cancer, the presence of the Moon and Saturn in this house, are the reasons for the health of the soul. A little disease is caused by a lot of blood, phlegm, stomach weakness and indigestion. Because Mercury is with Jupiter, the disease can be cured with a little treatment. The lot of slave in the horoscope house, the Moon and Saturn in the sixth house are the proof of servants and their services. Some are traitors, especially rich old men, butas Saturnis in this house (Lord of horoscope's house), this means that the king would be informed about their actions with wisdom and knowledge, and they would be regretful.

⁵³ Al-Kashi, *Birth of Iskandar*, 36.

⁵⁴ The planets have 4 motions (expect Moon and Sun): 1. Stationed Direct (Fixed in the sky, turning direct) 2. Direct Motion (Normal, forward motion. The Sun and Moon always in this motion) 3. Stationed Retrograde (Fixed in the sky, turning retrograde) 4. Retrograde Motion (Moving backwards in the sky). "Motion," Astrograph, <https://www.astrograph.com/learning-astrology/motion.php>

⁵⁵ Here the author (al kashi) said that the Sun's location is near Musamam al-Soraya star. According to pages 36 and 38 of Birth of Iskandar book the degree of the Sun is (٥ ب ا) that means it is in Taurus: 2°:31' and degree of the star is (٥ ب ب) means Taurus: 2°:36'

⁵⁶ Abu Ma'shar al-Balkhi. *Ahkam al-Mawalid*. (3th A.H). Rewritten by Hasan Razavi. Parliament Library of Iran, No. 6420, 35.

⁵⁷ Here the lot of fortune is in Scorpio, eleventh sign, and the lord of this sign is Mars that is exist in it.

⁵⁸ Al-Kashi, *Birth of Iskandar*, 36.



Seventh house: This house belongs to spouses, partners and opposites. The lot of marriage in Libra, the lot of opposites in Gemini⁵⁹, and the domination of Mercury on the moon's position in Gemini means the king would get many wives, and is revelry. As Abu Maasher said: "The moon is in the house of Mercury (Gemini), which means that the born individual is wise and has many wives and is voluptuous"⁶⁰. Since the lot of hostilities is in Gemini⁶¹, there is much opposition and enmity with Jupiter and Mercury. They seem like one direction, but they are in trouble. Because some intentions belong to this house, the purposes and contents would be destined for the best.

Eighth house: This house is the house of fear and misfortune, death and inheritance. According to the term, decan and master of this house and also the lot of fear⁶² in Libra, makes him be faraway from disasters most of the time and any problem is easily solved. If boredom happens, it is from the associates and relatives. It is from relatives and friends. The lot of wealth and lot of victories⁶³ in this house is the proof that the king would receive a good inheritance and wealth.

Ninth house: This house comprises knowledge, religion, traveling to distant places and wisdom. From the term, decan, the lord of the triplicity and the master, it can be seen that he knows the acquisition of high ranks and the ritual of royalty well, he likes to talk with wise people, he is an orator and clever and understands the lie quickly. Because Mercury is in Gemini (the Master of sign), which means discovery and invention by the king, he is not fooled by the words of flatterers. The lot of trip in Aries and the sextile between this sign and Gemini, in which Saturn (the lord of the horoscope house), Jupiter and Mercury are located, shows that great things and great happiness happen during the journey, adding wealth, prestige, royalty and fame. The lot of covert in Aquarius in the second house means he tends to give charity. And his obedience and worship would make his wishes come true, and his dreams would be interpreted.

Tenth house: This house belongs to the position, rank, job and action. From this house, the kingship and command and control over the provinces are inferred. The lot of king in the eleventh house is trine with the exaltations house of Venus (Pisces), and enmity house (twelfth house) is square with Pisces, meaning that the enemy's country is conquered, and the king spends most of his time in the monarchy and successfully, and the fame of his reign would be spread to most lands. As Abu Mashaar said: "Jupiter in the house of Mercury (Gemini) means hero or who is in charge of the affairs of the army dominates the lands"⁶⁴. Mars in Scorpion (own house) is opposite to the Sun's position and retrograde is the reason for haste and lots of anger in some things. The disturbance in the kingdom and the existence of more problems, postponements and delays in the king's affairs may be due to anger and untimely actions attributed to Mars. Because Venus is in exaltation degree⁶⁵ in its position in Pisces, he is always diligent in ornaments, luxury and kingly things.

Eleventh house: This house belongs to hope, friends and treasury. The attributes have indicated many sincere friends and the arrival of happiness from them. Because the owner of house (Mars) is retrograde, it means that opposition will appear from these friends, but it will be destroyed. The lot of fortune in this house proves that Sultan gets whatever he wants. The lot of friends in the twelfth house (Sagittarius), in opposition to Saturn, is the reason why the old and those associated with Saturn are outwardly friends with

⁵⁹ According to pages 36 and 21, lot of opposites is not in any sign.

⁶⁰ Al-Balkhi, *Ahkam al-Mawalid*, 35.

⁶¹ According to pages 36 and 21, lot of hostilities is in Taurus.

⁶² According to pages 36 and 21, lot of fear is not in any sign.

⁶³ According to pages 36 and 21, lot of victories is in Virgo.

⁶⁴ Al-Balkhi, *Ahkam al-Mawalid*, 35.

⁶⁵ According to pages 36 the degree of Venus is (ا ك و ع). In abjad letters it means 27° 10' and the exaltation of Venus is in 27° of Pisces.



the king and their unfaithful behavior. Mars is opposite to the Sun, meaning that any friend who leaves the road of unity will be defeated.

Twelfth house: This house belongs to enemies, grief and separation. The term, decan, lord of triplicity, the Master (Jupiter), lot of enmity in Cancer, the presence of Jupiter in the sixth house of the horoscope and the associations of this house indicate that enemies continually flatter and conceal an enmity, and most enemies are the clan of Jupiter and Saturn. They are relatives, brothers, and older people. It is stated in *Al-Mawalid* book that “If God of the third house [Jupiter] be in the sixth house [Gemini], the person would be harmed by friends and acquaintances”⁶⁶. The lot of enmity is in Cancer and Jupiter is fallen from the horoscope in the sixth house⁶⁷. This means the Sultan is victorious over the enemies, and the enemy is repressed, miserable and finally obedient. Mars in the tenth house means that many precious things steeds seizing by the king. A verse of poetry has been written on both sides of the panel in the style of the Shiraz school:

شرط انجم با تو خدمت رسم کرد و ز چاکری	ای همایون طالعت را سعد اکبر مشتری
The meaning of the verse is:	
You whose horoscope is blisshed with great fortune	all the planets serve for you.

Jupiter is called “great fortune” in astrology. Here the poet considers Iskandar’s horoscope is in companion with Jupiter, and all the planets are in his service. **Figure 9** shows a summary of Iskandar Sultan's horoscope.

⁶⁶ Al-Balkhi, *Ahkam al-Mawalid*, 40.

⁶⁷ The second, sixth, eighth and twelfth houses of a horoscope are called fallen, which is a sign of the house's weakness.

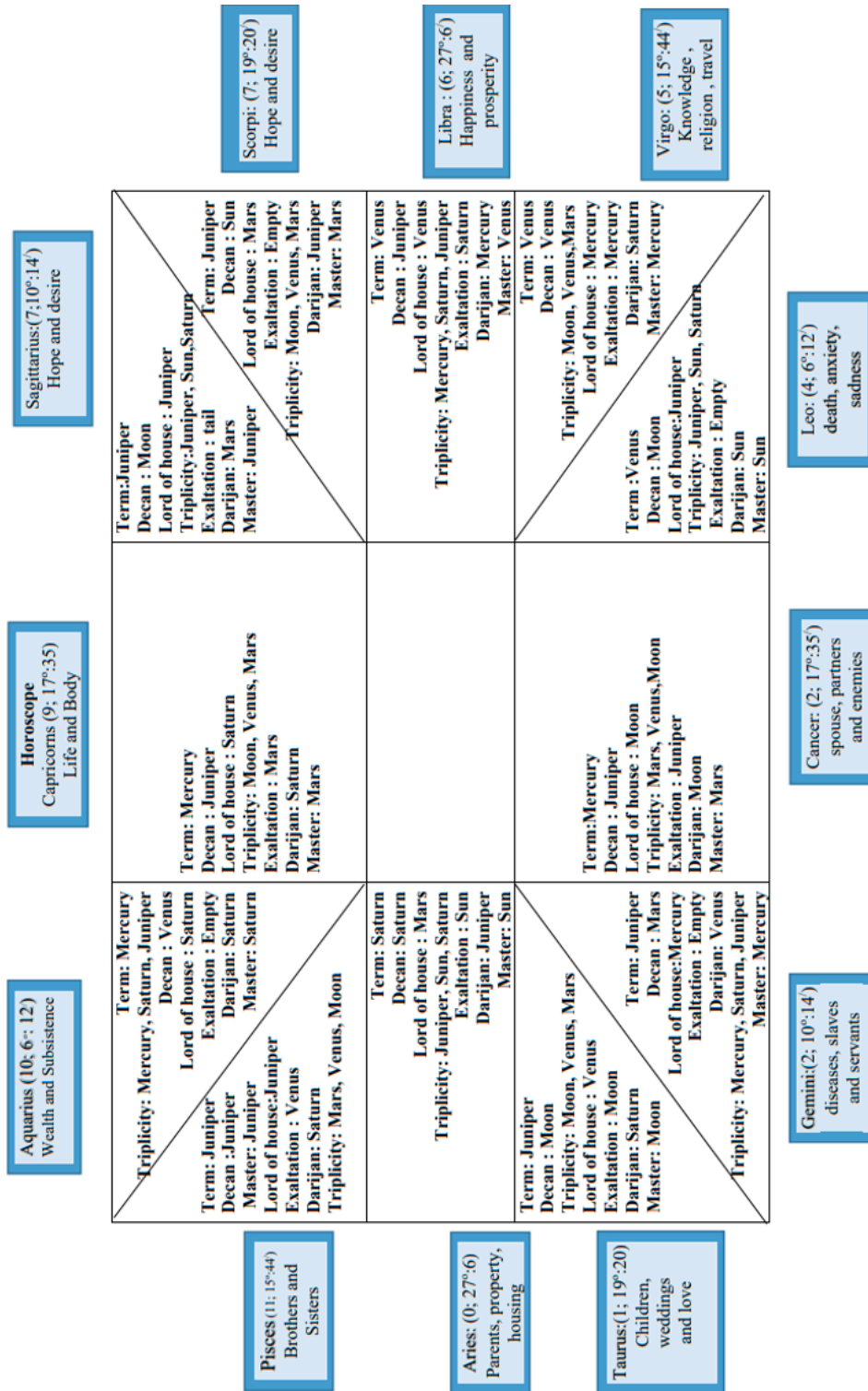


Figure 9: Summary of Iskandar Sultan's horoscope

Source: Prepared by the author





Conclusion

The painting of “*Birth of Iskandar*” book is one of the rarest illustration horoscopes. At the first glance, the viewer faces a circular image of an azure blue background, decorated with Chinese style clouds and golden stars as well as gilded images. The painting consists of several concentric circles; six inner circles are divided into 12 equal sectors and contain writings in black and red colors. Then the symbols of 12 constellations are depicted in discrete circles and then the symbols of the planets relocated in each of these constellations drawn in a circle. The last circle contains the cryptic writings of the Sultan's horoscope, which is located under the symbols of four crowned angels. In general, the painting shows the illustration of the sky and the celestial position of the planets at the moment of Iskandar Sultan's birth; but the main structure of the painting is based on geocentric thinking at has been divided into nine heavens, which are layered on top of each other like an onion. The circular image of Iskandar also consists of 9 circles as if depicting the 9 heavens that are protected by 4 angels. The style of painting is Timurid style, and the faces are Mongolian. The used gildings have typical designs in that period. The simultaneous use of symbols of zodiac signs and planets, along with the writings of astrology, made the painting to be studied from two perspectives. The research in Iskandar Sultan's horoscope from the cultural, social, historical, artistic point of view, as well as the study of painting symbols, has been investigated in many articles and books. However, the study of the astronomical text of the painting, which is a brief summary of the contents of the book, has not been investigated so far. The author of the book used mathematical calculations as well as the position of the planets in the 12 zodiac signs to write horoscopes and interpret the rules of Iskandar's horoscope in this way, and he used the contents and quotations of the books and astrological rules common in his time. These rulings were based on basic definitions such as limit term, face, lord of triangles, honor and God's house, etc., which were explained in the article. Also, by deciphering the circle of Sultan's horoscope in the painting, Sultan's horoscope table has been extracted and drawn. With a brief look at this table, one can better understand the interpretation of the astrological rulings of the book. In the prepared horoscope table, the written content of the painting, horoscope and houses related to the horoscope and the lots of each tower were provided.



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