

The *Fardārāt* in Nativities

Steven Birchfield A.M.A. ©2005 previously called “The Firdar”
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From astrology’s beginnings, it is evident from virtually all sources (e.g. Persian, Greek, Hindu and Egyptian) that quantum-like divisions of time and space were given to the planets and signs. One could ask, since time is nothing more than a counting system, then why can we not use arc allotments or the years allotted to signs and planets to count time or vice versa? What could be more natural than to create some kind of scheme for relating them? Something like this sort of reasoning must have given rise to chronocrators and time lord systems, as we know them. Thus, in primary directions a degree of the celestial equator equates to a year; in profections a sign (30 degrees of longitude of the ecliptic) equates to a year, a month a day, or group of days. There are many such systems such as the Indian *Dasas*, or Valens chronocrators based on the ascensional times of the signs. There are the decennials found in Firmicus, and the “Ages of Man” found in Ptolemy to name just a few. In natal astrology the *fardārāt* are a certain number of years ruled by the planets in a certain order depending on the sect of the chart, i.e. whether the chart is a diurnal or nocturnal birth.

Chronocrators were of two kinds of time-lords, general and specific. General time-lords allotted a length of time, for example, based on the ascensional times of a sign or the planetary period ruled by a planet. The specific time-lords indicated an interval of time based on some specific arc measurement, whether of the ecliptic¹ or the celestial equator². All the *fardārāt* are of the first category, that of general chronocrator.

The earliest remaining account of the natal *fardārāt* is in two astrological compilations. The first is in the Latin translation of the “*Book of Aristotle*”³ and the other is a later compilation by Abū Sa‘id Manṣūr ibn ‘Ali Bundār al-Dāmaghānī called *Majmū‘ aqāwil al-ḥukamā‘ al-munajjimīn*.⁴ The source of the material on the *fardārāt* found in both of these compilations is al-Andarzaghar ibn Zādānfarrūkh who authored a text referred to as *kitāb al-mawālīd*, or “book of the nativities”.⁵

¹ E.g. profections that are 30° increments of the ecliptic.

² E.g. Directions of the ascendant through the bounds, which was the ascensional degrees of the bounds or terms. The Lord of the bound was the specific time-lord or distributor (*jārbakhtār*) of those years as specified by the number of degrees of the bound giving 1 year per ascensional degree.

³ Cf. Ben Dykes, *Persian Nativities Vol. I: Māshā‘allāh & Abū ‘Ali*. Hugo of Santalla translated the now lost Arabic text into Latin.

⁴ Written 1113 A.D. Cf. *Zādānfarrūkh al-Andarzaghar: On Anniversary Horoscopes* by Charles Burnett and Ahmed al-Hamdi, The Warburg Institute 1992

⁵ The *Book of Aristotle* was originally attributed to Māshā‘allāh by David Pingree. Ben Dykes no longer believes this to be true and that the text is most likely the Book of Nativities (*kitāb al-mawālīd*) by al-Andarzaghar! Ben discusses this in the Introductions to his translation of Theophilus and his recent translation of Sahl’s book On Nativities. Very briefly this belief is based largely on the

Unfortunately, there is little remaining written record of the astrology practiced by the middle Persian era (the Sasanian) but we find certain doctrines introduced in the Arabic era by astrologers with a foot in both schools of Hellenistic and Sasanian astrology. These astrologers were Māshā‘allāh, ‘Umar ibn al-Farrukhān al-Tabarī and of course Abu Ma’shār who came from Persia (Balh). E.S Kennedy in his book “*The Sasanian Astronomical Handbook*”, quotes Al Bīrūnī as saying that Māshā‘allāh and ‘Umar are “*half-way between the Persians and Abu Ma’shār*”.

It is supposedly in Abu Ma’shār’s book, “*The Thousands*” that all the *fardārāt*⁶ are discussed in much detail, concerning their origins and use. However, that text is no longer extant except in extracts in the writings of others. Abu Ma’shār mentions the *fardārāt* in his “*Great Introduction*”, however the specific use in nativities and guidelines for their use is most clearly presented in his work “*On the Revolutions of the Years of Nativities*” most likely drawn from al-Andarzaghar’s text as well.

It will be useful for us to examine this teaching as presented by Abu Ma’shār,⁷

1 Each of the seven planets, as well as the Head and the Tail, has a certain [number of] years, which are called “*fardārs*”: and every planet manages the native for the number of the years of its *fardār* at some time of his lifespan, and in that time it indicates something of good or evil.

2 The *fardār* of the Sun is 10 years, the *fardār* of Venus 8 years, the *fardār* of Mercury 13 years, the *fardār* of the Moon 9 years, the *fardār* of Saturn 11 years, the *fardār* of Jupiter 12 years, the *fardār* of Mars 7 years, the *fardār* of the Head 3 years, and the *fardār* of the Tail 2 years: the amount of all of that is 75 years, then it returns to the Sun..

3 Now as for nativities of the day, from when the native is first born one begins the distribution of the years of their *fardār* from the Sun, where [ever] he was in the celestial sphere: then after that are the years of Venus, then the years of Mercury, the Moon, and the years of Saturn, according to the succession of their spheres. 4 But as for nativities of the night, one begins the distribution of the years of the *fardār* with the Moon, then Saturn, Jupiter, [and] Mars, according to the first arrangement.⁸

4th section of Book of Aristotle being found in Sahl’s *On Nativities* and being attributed to al-Andarzaghar and secondly many sections of Sahl’s natal work quoting al-Andarzaghar and is found in the *Book of Aristotle*. And lastly, none of Sahl’s quotes from Māshā‘allāh are found in the *Book of Aristotle*.

⁶ There are in fact, four levels of *fardārīyāt* discussed in the “*Thousands*”: The mighty *fardār*, big *fardār*, middle *fardār*, and the small *fardār*. Those used in natal astrology are the small *fardār* but the order of time-lordship is different from the mundane small *fardār*. It is this order I discuss in this paper. The other *fardārāt* I will discuss in another paper on the use of the *fardār* in mundane astrology.

⁷ Book IV – “*On the Revolutions of the years of Nativities*” – by Abu Ma’shār, translated from the Arabic and annotated by Benjamin Dykes PhD and published by Cazimi Press ©2019

⁸ Ibid Chapter IV.1:1-8 (pp.364-365). This is almost a verbatim explanation that al-Qabīṣī obviously copied from Abu Ma’shār and that is passed on to Bonatti and becomes the source of much confusion. It is clear from the final paragraphs in this Book IV on the *fardārs* that the nodes are placed **last** in sequence in nocturnal nativities. This is what al-Qabīṣī did not report.

5 But when any of them manages the years of its fardār, it stands alone in [its] indication at first, for an amount of one-seventh of its years, then after that the rest of the planets partner in the indication of good or bad, also in the amount of one-seventh of it. 6 And so the beginning [of those sub-periods] will be from the planet which has the fardār, and the one which partners with it the first time is the planet which is below it in the celestial circle, and the one which partners with it the second time is the planet which is below that, in succession, until all of the planets partner with it in the years of its fardār, in this manner. 7 And each planet partners with the rest of the planets, because the years of each of them is derived from its shares in the twelve signs, and the twelve signs are their houses: so because of that, [each] will partner with [the other] in its management of those years. 8 But as for the Head and the Tail, they stand alone in the management of their years after the years of the seven planets run out and 70 years have been completed for the native, and they do not partner with the planets (nor do [the planets] partner with them), because they do not have houses.⁹

At the end of this Book IV in Chapter 7, Abu Ma'shār continues his instruction in their proper distributions by adding;

24 Now, the Head and Tail distribute for **diurnal nativities after the years of Mars**, and for **nocturnal nativities after the years of Mercury**: and it is when the native enters year 71—and he will begin in the distribution of the fardārs with the Head, then the Tail, whether the native was diurnal or nocturnal.¹⁰

We will find the exact same order in al-Dāmaghānī's quotation of al-Andarzaghar;

And the Head and the Tail are divisors for the diurnal nativities after the years of Mars, **and for the nocturnal nativities after the years of Mercury**, from the time that the native enters his 71st year. And it starts in the division of the fardār from the Head, and then follows the Tail, whether the nativity is diurnal or nocturnal.¹¹

When these techniques are introduced into Europe in the 13th century, they come via al-Qabīṣī's (Alchabitius) "*Introduction to Astrology*",¹² which was first translated into

⁹ The nodes thus have a somewhat special role. They have determinate time periods or firdar associated with them just like the planets. However, they cannot assume the management of the subdivisions of planetary firdar – that is, they cannot participate with the planets that govern the firdar; nor are their own periods subdivided and shared by the other planets. At the end of the series of upcoming delineations, the nodes are in fact appended at the end of the list of planets participating and distributing times in the firdar of Ares without separate chapter headings or special announcement, though without saying that they are distributing times within the firdar of Ares. So Abu Ma'shār here regards them as having a role like the participating planets, only they have no planet with which to participate; on the other hand, they are treated as if they could have governorship of a firdar like the planets, yet here he says that they have management for a period of time, which seems to be reserved for the role of the participating planets.

¹⁰ This last sentence tells us how to specify the firdar lords and their participating planets for a given natal chart, examining both the factors that bonify or corrupt them, as well as their house positions and rulerships in order to make the general firdar delineations more specific.

¹¹ *Zādānfarrūkh al-Andarzaghar: On Anniversary Horoscopes* by Charles Burnett and Ahmed al-Hamdi, The Warburg Institute 1992.

¹² Abu Ma'shār's treatment of the *fardār* in both his Abbreviation and his Great Introduction were limited to a summary of the years of each planets *fardār* and that is all.

Latin by two translators in medieval Spain in the 12th century. It is via these translations that Bonatti explains the *fardārāt* in his “*Liber Astronomiae*”. “*On the Revolutions of the Years of Nativities*” was not translated into Latin until later in the 15th century when it was translated from a Greek translation of the partial text.¹³ This is the most likely reason that Johannes Schoener got the order 100% correct. Bonatti, just quoting al-Qabīṣī gives an incomplete text.

Al-Qabīṣī’s text reads:

“[20] Pertaining to this is the governance of the *fardariya*. When the birth is by day, the Sun rules the governance of his *fardariya* from the beginning of his life for the amount of its *fardariya*, namely, 10 years. Then after it the planet which follows the Sun, namely Venus and the years of its *fardariya* which are 8. Then after Venus the planet which follows it, namely Mercury, and the years of its *fardariya* are 13 – and so on until the last of the planets. Then the Head <of the Dragon>, then the Tail, then you come back to the Sun.

When the birth is by night, begin the governance from the Moon. It governs the years of its *fardariya*, which are nine years. Likewise planet after planet, as we have described in the section on the Sun. When a planet governs the years of its *fardariya*, it makes its own its first seventh, namely, a seventh <part> of the years of its *fardariya*. Then in the second seventh the planet which follows it shares the governance with it. Then in the third seventh the planet which follows the second shares the governance with it, and so on until the planet which was before it among the seven planets shares with it in the last seventh of the years of its *fardariya*. For each one of them, when another planet is sharing, there is a judgement concerning the native.”¹⁴

The reason I am explaining this is there are two schools of thought that exist concerning the order of the nocturnal series of *fardārāt*. There exists some ambiguity in Bonatti’s explanation of the nocturnal order of the *fardārāt*. Bonatti, in paraphrasing al-Qabīṣī (& no doubt Abu Ma’shār’s brief summary in his *Greater Introduction*)¹⁵ explains the *fardārāt* in this fashion;

The ancient wise men considered certain years in nativities, which are not called major or middle or even minor,¹⁶ but they called them the years of the Firdaria, that is, disposed years. For each planet disposes its own part of the life of the native according to its part of the years of the Firdaria in this method.

¹³ The Greek manuscript was translated and published by Robert Schmidt in 1991 (Project Hindsight) and the Latin translation of the Greek was translated Published by Benjamin Dykes PhD in *Persian Nativities Volume III* in 2010.

¹⁴ Chapter 4:270-275 (pp.133-134) – *Al-Qabīṣī (Alchabitius): The Introduction to Astrology* -

¹⁵ This summary is found in Part VII chapter 8: (on the knowledge of the years of the *fardārs* of the planets and their greatest, great, middle, and small years.) -- *The Great Introduction to Astrology* by Abu Ma’shār, translated by Keiji Yamamoto & Charles Burnett, published by Brill 2019.

¹⁶ This is of course referring to the major, middle, and minor years associated to the planets. E.g., the major years of the Sun are 120 years, its middle years are 69,5 years, and its minor years are 19 years.

Whatever kind of nativity it is, the disposition of the years of the Firdaria begin from the luminary whose authority it is¹⁷ and that luminary disposes the life of the native according to the authority of its years of the Firdaria, however not without the participation of the other planets.

For if the nativity was diurnal, it will begin from the Sun, which is the diurnal luminary, which disposes the life of the native according to the quantity of the years of the Firdaria, which are 10, with the participation of all the other planets, but he himself will obtain the authority and especially in the first seventh part of those years.

Bonatti then gives the order of the disposition of the planets exactly as Abu Ma'shār does for the diurnal series of *fardārāt*. I will not repeat them.¹⁸ When it comes to the nocturnal series, Bonatti continues,

But if the nativity is nocturnal the disposition will begin from the Moon which is the nocturnal luminary and will be in all respects as was explained when it began from the Sun both regarding the participation of the planets with the Moon and regarding the succession of them in the order of the circle.

And all of the aforesaid signifiers or dispositions dispose accordingly as they are well disposed by increasing the good and by decreasing the evil.

And if they are evilly disposed by increasing evil and degreasing the good. And this is a laborious matter, although, it ought to be well observed because some astrologers, avoiding the labour, do not ever consider this [the Firdaria] in their judgments whence they fall into deception.¹⁹

I would direct the reader's attention particularly to these words by Bonatti,

"But if the nativity is nocturnal the disposition will begin from the Moon which is the nocturnal luminary and will be in all respects as was explained when it began from the Sun both regarding the participation of the planets with the Moon and regarding the succession of them in the order of the circle."

The ambiguity of this statement, and the same ambiguity is found in al-Qabīṣī's text, is that the nocturnal *fardārāt* could follow "in all respects" the order of the diurnal *fardārāt*. Although Bonatti qualifies that by saying "regarding the succession of them in the order of the circle", in which he is clearly referring to planetary succession of the Chaldean order. However, the vague ambiguity led some modern contemporary medieval astrologers, to place the Moon's nodes following Mars' *fardār* in the nocturnal series exactly as the order of the diurnal sequence. According to this

¹⁷ I.e., the luminary of the chart determined by whether the nativity is diurnal (daytime) or nocturnal (nighttime). The Sun rules nativities of the day and the Moon the night.

¹⁸ The diurnal series is in table 1 at the end of this paper. The nocturnal series as assumed from Bonatti is in table 2 and as taught by Abu Ma'shār is in table 3.

¹⁹ *Tractus de nativitatibus*, Chapter III – "Liber Astronomiae" – by Guido Bonatti, translated by Robert Zoller and published in "Tools and Techniques II" 3rd edition © Robert Zoller and New Library Limited 2003

understanding of Bonatti, one must put the nodes in the same place in both the diurnal and nocturnal series, i.e. after Mars' *fardār*.

Again, if all one possessed was Bonatti's text, along with al-Qabīṣī's text, it does raise many questions and much ambiguity as to just what the order is.

However, in "*On the Revolution of the Years of Nativities*", Abu Ma'shār does not limit his explanation to this brief and ambiguous statement. Instead, he clearly says,

"Now, the Head and Tail distribute for diurnal nativities after the years of Mars, and for nocturnal nativities after the years of Mercury: and it is when the native enters year 71—and he will begin in the distribution of the *fardārs* with the Head, then the Tail, whether the native was diurnal or nocturnal"

Whether Bonatti really meant that the nocturnal firdar should in all respects follow the diurnal except that they start from the Moon instead of the Sun, is in itself questionable. It is not in Abu Ma'shār. If Bonatti is erring here because there could exist some ambiguity in Abu Ma'shār's words, it can be forgiven him since he was not around when "*On the Revolutions of the Years of Nativities*" was translated after his death.

Those following this ambiguous understanding from Bonatti's words have found some justification since many nocturnal nativities have suffered things in this age from 42 years old that could easily be attributed to the South Nodal period. However, recent investigation also reveals other possible causes of this period which most relate to the "middle age crisis". Robert Zoller for example has suggested a relationship of this period to "the Critical Years" as explained in the "*Liber Hermetis*". Of course there is the fact that 42 is half of 84 (Uranus' cycle) and 3.5 Jupiter cycles. It is the seventh house Profection of the Ascendant and relates to the Saturn-Mars conjunction cycle and the nominal 2-year cycle of Mars oppositions.²⁰ Abu Ma'shār suggests that the harshness and trials of these years are the result of Mars assuming the natural rule of this period starting at 41. These are "the Ages of Man" where each planet had a natural signification to a certain number of years in the development of a native.

The point is, that while this ambiguity in Bonatti's text could be an "accidental" fortune and correct, it is most likely "not" since we have more counsel from the historical record and there are equally interesting indicators which can explain this period as well as or even better than the nodal period misplaced in the nocturnal series.

I stated in the first copy of this text in 2005 that when working with the *fardārāt*, it is perhaps wise not to cast anything in stone yet, but to examine both series of nocturnal *fardārāt*, maintain an open mind and test them both. Eight years later I can with much more assurance say that the historical record from which Abu Ma'shār has

²⁰ Robert suggested this new line of thinking in a personal email to me the 12th of January 2005.

established his teaching is clear on what order the moon's nodes have in both diurnal and nocturnal charts. There is no reason that the previous ambiguity should remain a topic. As I stated previously. we always need to approach these ancient predictive techniques, whether *fardārāt*, profections, primary directions, the Solar Return etc. with humility and leave ourselves open to the possibility that our understanding may at times be faulty or even lack full counsel on the subject. With new texts (historical records and practice), we are gaining more understanding and counsel.

Slowly we learn,

Steven Birchfield A.M.A.

Table 1:

The diurnal series of the <i>fardārāt</i>				
Period		Sub-Period	Fardār Years	End Age
○	-	○	10 Years	10
	-	♀		
	-	☽		
	-	☽		
	-	☿		
	-	☿		
	-	♂		
♀	-	♀	8 Years	18
	-	☽		
	-	☽		
	-	☽		
	-	☿		
	-	☿		
	-	♂		
☽	-	○	13 Years	31
	-	☽		
	-	☽		
	-	☿		
	-	☿		
	-	♂		
	-	○		
☽	-	♀	9 Years	40
	-	☽		
	-	☿		
	-	☿		
	-	♂		
	-	○		
	-	♀		
☿	-	☽	11 Years	51
	-	☿		
	-	☿		
	-	♂		
	-	○		
	-	☽		
	-	♀		
♂	-	☽		

♀	-	☽	12 Years	63	
	-	♂			
	-	○			
	-	☽			
	-	♀			
	-	♂			
	-	☽			
♂	-	♂	7 Years	70	
	-	○			
	-	☽			
	-	♀			
	-	♂			
	-	☽			
	-	♀			
Ω		3 Years	73		
Ω		2 Years	75		

Table 2:

The nocturnal *fardārāt* (assumed from Bonatti)

Period		Sub-Period	Years	End	
۞	—	۞	9 Years	9 Years	
	—	۞			
	—	۞			
	—	۞			
	—	۞			
	—	۞			
	—	۞			
۞	—	۞	11 Years	20 Years	
	—	۞			
	—	۞			
	—	۞			
	—	۞			
	—	۞			
	—	۞			
۞	—	۞	12 Years	32 Years	
	—	۞			
	—	۞			
	—	۞			
	—	۞			
	—	۞			
	—	۞			
۞	—	۞	7 Years	39 Years	
	—	۞			
	—	۞			
	—	۞			
	—	۞			
	—	۞			
	—	۞			
۞		3 Years	42		
۞		2 Years	44		
۞	—	۞	10 Years	54 Years	
	—	۞			
	—	۞			
	—	۞			

	—	ḥ		
	—	ȝ		
	—	σ		
♀	—	♀	8 Years	62 Years
	—	ȝ		
	—	ঃ		
	—	ং		
	—	ḥ		
	—	ȝ		
	—	σ		
	—	ঠ		
ঃ	—	ঃ	13 Years	75 Years
	—	ং		
	—	ঠ		
	—	ঁ		
	—	ঁ		
	—	ঁ		
	—	ঠ		

Table 3:

	—	♂		
♀	—	♀	8 Years	57 Years
	—	☽		
	—	☽		
	—	☽		
	—	☽		
	—	☽		
	—	☽		
♀	—	☽	13 Years	70 Years
	—	☽		
	—	☽		
	—	☽		
	—	☽		
	—	☽		
	—	☽		
Ω			3 Years	73
♂			2 Years	75