

NATIONAL KEY PLANNING PROJECT OF BOOK PUBLICATION DURING  
THE TWELFTH FIVE-YEAR PLAN PERIOD (2011-2015)



شنگجاش  
CHARMING XINJIANG

# THE DIVERSITY OF XINJIANG

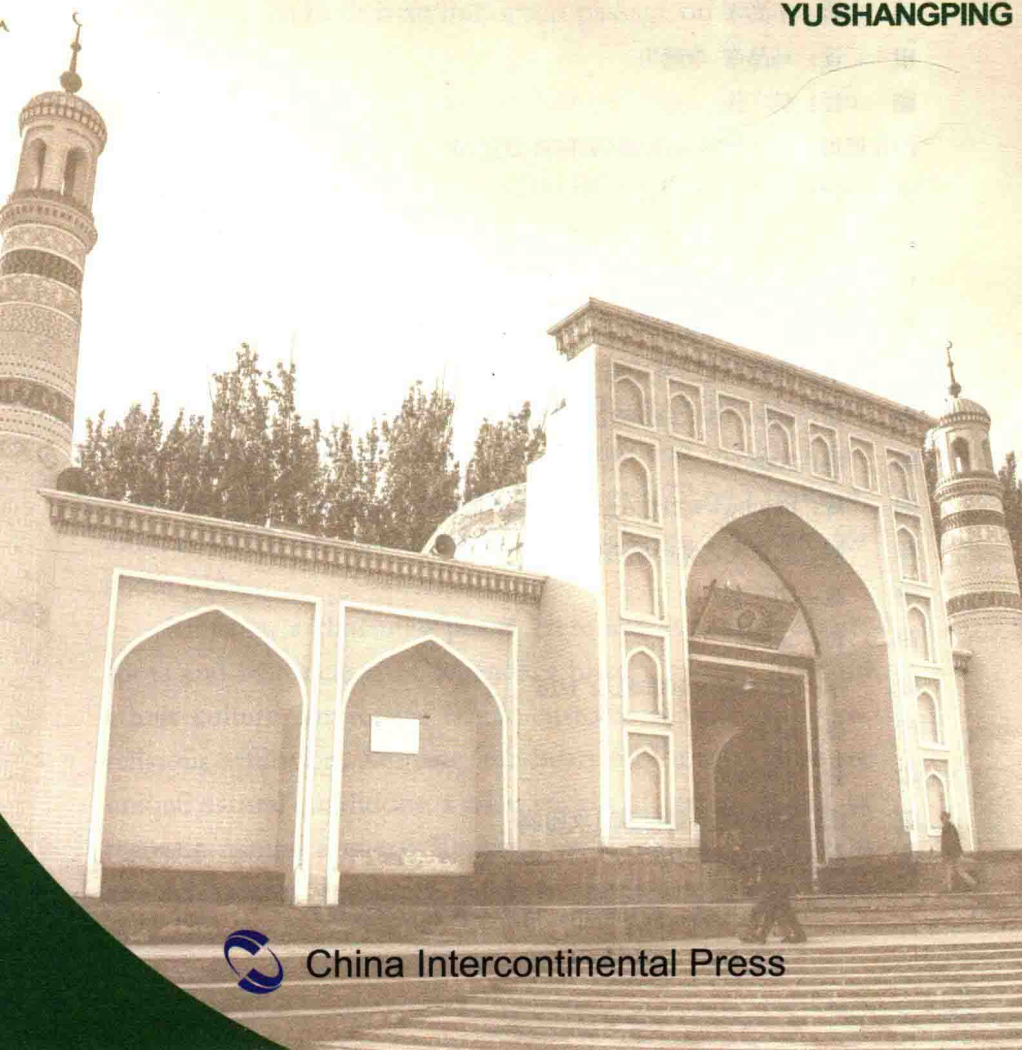
YU SHANGPING



China Intercontinental Press

# THE DIVERSITY OF XINJIANG

YU SHANGPING



China Intercontinental Press

## 图书在版编目 (CIP) 数据

多元新疆: 英文 / 于尚平编著; 吴伟译. — 北京: 五洲传播出版社, 2014. 8  
(魅力新疆)

ISBN 978-7-5085-2857-1

I. ①多… II. ①于… ②吴… III. ①宗教-介绍-新疆-英文 IV. ①B929.2

中国版本图书馆CIP数据核字(2014)第179088号

## 多元新疆 (英文)

---

编 著: 于尚平

审 读: 马品彦 李建生

翻 译: 吴 伟

图片提供: 新疆维吾尔自治区新闻办公室 于尚平 CFP

责任编辑: 宋博雅 张彩芸

封面设计: 丰饶文化传播有限责任公司

内文设计: 北京优品地带文化发展有限公司

出版发行: 五洲传播出版社

社 址: 北京市北三环中路31号生产力大楼B座7层

电 话: 0086-10-82007837 (发行部)

邮 编: 100088

网 址: <http://www.cicc.org.cn> <http://www.thatsbooks.com>

印 刷: 北京光之彩印刷有限公司

字 数: 80千字

图 数: 100幅

开 本: 710毫米×1000毫米 1/16

印 张: 12.75

印 数: 1—2000

版 次: 2014年8月第1版第1次印刷

定 价: 108.00元

(如有印刷、装订错误, 请寄本社发行部调换)



## Foreword

Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (hereinafter referred to as Xinjiang) is located in the Northwest of China with a borderline of more than 5,600 kilometers and an area of 1.6649 million square kilometers, which accounts for 1/6 of China's land area. Neighboring eight countries, Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kirghizstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, it is an important passage on ancient Silk Road.

With thousands of years of history, Xinjiang has been a multi-ethnic and multi-religious region since ancient times. Since the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC to 25 AD), Xinjiang has been an inseparable part of this unitary multi-ethnic country of China.

As one of the five autonomous regions in China, Xinjiang now has 55 ethnic compositions, including Uygur, Han, Kazak, Hui, Kirgiz, Mongolia, Tajik, Xibe, Manchu, Uzbek, Russian, Daur, Tatar, etc. By the end of 2013, the total population of Xinjiang was about 22.643 million, among which the ethnic minority population accounts for about 61%.

Xinjiang, a charming place! Here are numerous scenic spots and historical sites, legendary history stories, splendid ethnic culture, impressive ethnic customs as well as diverse religious affiliation. Xinjiang, the heart of Eurasia! Here are unique natural conditions, a wide variety of terrain as well as majestic natural scenery. Xinjiang, an abundant place! Here are rich mineral resources, herds of cattle and sheep, grain

and cotton all over fields as well as seasonal fragrance of melon and fruit...

We publish the “Charming Xinjiang” Series to make this ancient, vibrant and modern place known by more readers at home and abroad. The Series include ten volumes and introduce Xinjiang in terms of ten aspects respectively. We hope this series can take you on a tour of “Charming Xinjiang”.

August 2014

# CONTENTS

## ◇ The Mystical and Ancient Religious Beliefs / 1

The Mystical Primitive Religions in Xinjiang / 2

The Mysterious Shamanism in Xinjiang / 38

## ◇ The Multi syncretism of Foreign Religions / 47

Zoroastrianism – Setting a Precedent of the First Foreign Religion of Xinjiang / 48

Buddhism – Buddha's Light Shining on the Oasis Cities and States / 59

Taoism – The Only Religion Spread to Xinjiang from the Central Plains / 87

Manichaeism – Another Religion Introduced into Xinjiang from Ancient Persia / 100

Nestorianism – The Earliest Christian Denomination Introduced into China / 105

Islam – The Latest of the World's Three Major Religions Introduced into Xinjiang / 111

## ◇ The Religious Policy of Harmonious Coexistence / 125

The Contemporary Religious Status in Xinjiang / 126

Conscientiously Implement the Policy of Religious Freedom / 136

Strengthen the Management of Religious Affairs According to Law / 139

Adhere to the Principle of Independence and Self-Governance / 142

Actively Guide Religions to Adapt to Socialist Society / 142

## ◇ The Ancient Religious Places of Interest / 145

The World-Famous Buddha Caves and Temples / 147

The Time-Honored Mosques and Mazars / 159

## ◇ The Unique Religious Festivals / 181

Eid Al-Fitr / 182

Corban Festival / 185

Nowrūz Festival / 188

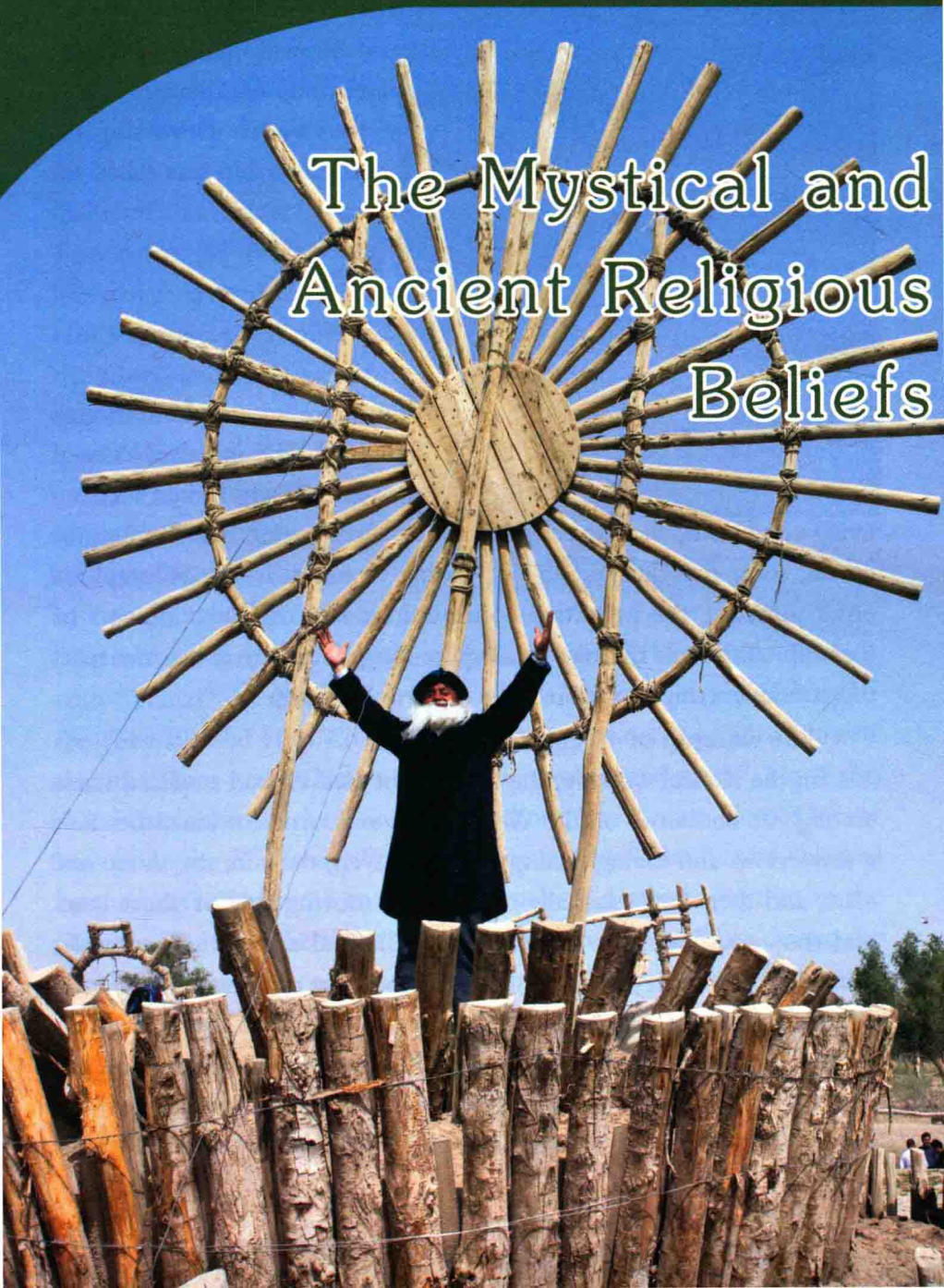
Woqıbei Festival / 191

Pilike Festival / 193

Christmas Day / 195

THE DIVERSITY  
OF XINJIANG

# The Mystical and Ancient Religious Beliefs





Before the introduction of the foreign religions, what enjoyed the enduring popularity in Xinjiang were primitive religions. A series of fantasies spontaneously appeared in the minds of primitive people living in Xinjiang, because they were scared of the “powerful” natural forces, and they were not able to fathom the ever-changing nature, the physiological and psychological phenomena of themselves. In order to obtain the favours from nature, they began to worship the nature through various forms, and this kind of worship was called the “primitive religion”.

## **The Mystical Primitive Religions in Xinjiang**

### **The Worship of Nature**

Nature worship was the most primitive religious phenomenon prevailing in the ancient ancestors of Xinjiang. The initial objects of worship were natural phenomena that were closely linked to their living conditions, such as celestial bodies, earth, water, fire, the sun, the moon, stars, thunder and so on. Owing to the different geographical environments, the primitive communities had different objects of worship. Although the history is quite long, there are still some relics of natural worship in various folk areas of Xinjiang.

#### **The worship of “Tengri”**

In the natural worship, the worship of heaven had a special status among the ancestors of the Western Regions. Ancient ancestors held a mysterious and loving feeling on the heaven, the sun, the moon and stars, and then they gradually realized the moving rule of those stars, and they could arrange hunting, nomadic and agricultural activities according to it; they believed that the location modification of stars presaged the weal and woe of the mortal world, thus the concept of worshipping the celestial stars appeared. So far some people still believe that one star on heaven represents one life of human being on the earth, if the star falls, the man will die. In folk poetry, the sweetheart

is often likened to a star, and in daily life, people also name the girls after the stars.

The name “Tengri” is derived from Turkic of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, showing that the Huns started worshipping the heaven long time before. The Book of Han once has documented that the Huns respected Tengri as the God, and they set up the altar to present their special worship. The Huns emirate is called “Chengli Gutu Chanyu”, “Chengli” is another Chinese translation of “Tengri”, “Gutu” means



The stars' wonder of “Hop on Venus” appeared in the heaven of Hami in Xinjiang

“the son”, referring to “the son of heaven”, which has similar meaning with “Tianzi” of the emperor in Central Plain. Modu called himself the “Sky Blessed Hun Chanyu”, and Chanyu Laoshang called himself the “the Huns great Chanyu born by the heaven and earth”. Huns also called themselves as the “God’s favored one”, who were blessed by the heaven. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, Modu was regarded that he was “blessed by the heaven” after he conquered Rouzhi and other countries in the Western Regions. The Huns Chanyu was ambushed in Mayi during the time of Emperor Wu of Han; he was able to escape by the information of a Censor of Han, Chanyu said, “It is the will of heaven that make me get help from the Censor.” And then he conferred the Censor as the “heavenly king”. (Hun Biography in the Book of Han)

According to Shiji, there were three gatherings a year among

the Huns, in addition to one in fall for inspecting the increasing or decreasing situation of population and the breeding situation of livestock, the other two were for worshipping the god, which always put the sacrificial offerings on the high platform. The Legend of Oghuz Khan recorded the worship way of setting a wooden pole of 43.7 feet, hanging chickens on the top and tying sheep below.

Turks worshiped the god very much, and they believed Tengri was the god of dominating everything, all the things of human beings including land, food, livestock, power, life, war, victory or defeat and even their wives and children were gifted by Tengri. Tengri was also often mentioned in The Legend of Oghuz Khan, such as “Tengri offers you the land”, “I fulfill my duty in front of Tengri”, “Tengri gives us the inspiration in the dream, we shall fulfill it” and so on. The first wife of Oghuz Khan floated down from the heaven with blue light when he was “praying to the Tengri”. This is how the beautiful legend goes: on one occasion, Oghuz was worshipping the heaven, it suddenly became dark around, and blue light fell from the sky, Oghuz went near, and he saw a girl sitting alone in the light, she looked very beautiful and there was a mole on the forehead, which was as bright as the live charcoal, and looked like the Pole Star, she was so beautiful that when she smiled the sky would also smile, and when she cried, the sky would also cry. Oghuz fell in love with her at the first sight. Later, he and the girl gave birth to three boys, who were named the Sun, the Moon and Stars. And on another day, Oghuz went out hunting; he found a tree in the Lake Country, and a girl sitting alone inside the tree cave. She looked so beautiful that her eyes were bluer than the sky, and her braid looked like the flowing water, and her teeth were like pearls, she was so gorgeous.

Oghuz then married her, and they also gave birth to three boys, who were named the Sky, Mountain, and Sea. This epic fully expressed the worship and praise of the Khan to Tengri. With the development of the faith to Tengri, the word “Tengri” was gradually used to refer to

all the noble gods. Ancient Turkic people thought that it was necessary to use a single word to name the most powerful god, and then the “Heaven Tengri” appeared, which meant the master of the universe. Until today, when the Uyghur encounter difficulties, they are still used to looking up to the heaven, and nagging “May Tengri bless”. In rural areas of Hami, when the spring farming starts, all Uyghur of the whole village or even the whole town would gather outside of the village where the treetop of the village cannot be seen for killing a few days, praying the Heaven blessing the production harvest, human and animal safety as well as no disease or disaster.

According to the other historical records, Ashide clan of Turkic tribes worship the Heaven God, and another Turkic tribe Ashinas worship the Sun God, the two tribes had been in intermarriage for generations. Later, the Turks unified the two worships into one, and they regarded the Sun as the appearance, and the heaven as the name, forming the custom of respecting the Heaven and worshipping the Sun. The Heaven God was omniscient and omnipotent and he always appeared as the protector of the Turks. When carrying the worship, people can only obtain the God’s blessing by kowtowing toward the east. Therefore, the Turks always chose the highlands to build their residences and cemeteries, and the high platform needed to be built artificially when holding worship on the open grassland.

Mongolians also have the custom of worshipping the heaven, and Heaven God Tengri is the most important object of worship. It is historically known that Mongolians “worship heaven most, and mention heaven when doing everything” (Records of Mongolia). In Mongolians’ belief, the Heaven God became the highest god of all gods, and later many gods were derived owing to their duties, such as Manihan Tengri for charging hunting, Jiyaqi Tengri for charging livestock, the hero Bareer Tengri for giving courage and strength to people, and the Bisiman Tengri for charging the wealth.



## **The Worship of the Sun and Moon**

The worship of the Sun, Moon and Stars played an important role in ancient ancestors of the Western Regions. There was worship of the Sun in many archaeological discoveries. In the Lop Nor (now in Yuli County of Xinjiang), the tombs of clan society had been discovered, the outstanding feature of which is that seven loops of wooden poles are set in an orderly manner on the surface, with other woods laying in a radial pattern, like a radiant Sun, showing the Lop people's worship of the Sun. There are also a large number of similar tombs in the eastern part of Altay, but the circles are piled with black stones, with only one inner layer and one outer layer. The similar phenomena have also been found in rock paintings, and the most interesting one is the colored cliff painting in Tangbale cave in Fuyun County of Altay, there are two concentric circles on the upper part, respectively representing the Sun and Moon, with the auspicious clouds around, and an oddly shaped human head on the lower part. The cave is towards the east. In addition to other contents with strong religious tone, and there are eight concentric circles of different sizes at different locations in the cave, which are related to the ancient people's worship of the Sun.

Xuanzang of Tang Dynasty recorded the similar custom in his Records of the Western Regions of the Great Tang. When he passed the Khabandha (Taxkorgan now) on the way back after the pilgrimage for Buddhist scriptures, he saw the local king with refined temperament called himself the "son of the Han and the Sun" to show his noble lineage. He also heard an interesting story in Khabandha, "Once there was a king named Polis who wanted to marry a princess of the emperor of Central Plains, the emperor granted it in order to improve the friendly relations with Persia. The accompany rank was obstructed when arriving at the Khabandha because of the turmoil. Three months later, the road ahead was clear; when the bridal procession decided to move on, a weird and tough thing happened—the princess was pregnant. The attendant told the truth after being inquired, "Please



Lop Nor people are performing a ceremony of “worship the sun” in the altar in Yuli of Xinjiang. One Lop Nor descendant is chanting congratulatory speech and throwing the Five Grains to pray for good weather for the crops.

do not worry, it is done by the God. At each noon, there must be a man riding a horse from the Sun to meet our princess.” The envoy was afraid that he would be killed when he went back, but apparently it was also inappropriate to move on, so they had to live there. They built the palace as well as a city, and regarded the princess as the king. Later, the princess gave birth to a boy, who was handsome and strong, and inherited his mother’s throne after he grew up, so his descendants called themselves the “sons of the Han and the Sun”, as his mother was the Han people, and his father was the Sun God. At present, there is still a castle ruins called “Kertz Kurgan” in Southern Taxkorgan, which means ‘the princess castle’. This story sounds fantastic even now.

Ancient Huns not only worshiped the Sun, but also worshiped the Moon and Stars. They believed that the Sun and the Moon represented brightness, and they often fought with the devils on behalf of the darkness. So whenever a solar eclipse or a lunar eclipse occurred, they thought the Sun and the Moon were under siege by the devils, and then they would beat drums and clang gongs, shout and wrangle to scare away the devils and save the Sun or the Moon. When the Huns Chanyu went out of the tent, he would worship the Sun in the morning, and worship the Moon in the evening. Military action was also subjected to the Moon and the Star, “Propose to fight when the Moon is full, and retreat when the Moon is in wane”. Their worship of the Sun and the Moon has been inherited even after proselytizing many times, and there is still a lot of retention now. So far, Uighur still try to avoid to spit or urine when facing the Sun or Moon, which is considered to be disrespectful to the Sun and the Moon, as well as a sin. Once there is the eclipse, people would bang pots and pans, do Dána, or chant sutras, praying for the resume of the Sun as soon as possible and so on. The Moon also played an important role in the minds of the ancient Uighur; they usually arranged their activities according to the waxes and wanes of the Moon, thus the concept of worship of the Moon





During the ceremony, Lop Nor people began to do a lion dance. The worship to the sun is a part of Lop Nor celebration, which aims to thank the Sun God to bless human and livestock prosperously and everything on earth peacefully.

appeared. According to the historical records, the Uighur ancestors had a custom of worshipping the Luna. The word “Moon” was widely used in personal names and place names because they liked and respected the Moon. Kazakh ancestors also had the custom of worshipping the Moon, whenever the Moon was rising, women would kneel down, and men would stand solemnly facing the Moon, with arms straight and palms inward, praying to the Moon, and the elder should pray blessing for the kids. Kazakh people believed that the tilt of the Crescent mouth was the omen of a bad year.

Ancient Saka and Qiang people were engaged in the worship of the Sun. The Sun-god enjoyed the highest position among the gods worshiped by the Saka people. The Greek historian Herodotus once Said, the Saka “only worship the Sun among all gods, what they sacrifice to the Sun are horses. The reason they do that because they believe that only the fastest horses on the earth may be worthy of Sun



God who is the fastest among all gods”. Wusun people revered the Sun as a God, and they would hold the activity of worshipping the Sun every year by killing horses. They also believed that the fire was the incarnation of the Sun on the earth, therefore, the worship of fire was the worship of the Sun.

Two pits of sacrificing horses have been found at Shanpulu tombs in Luopu County in Hotan, the horses lie straight on the side with the heads toward the east, the bodies were covered by reeds and twigs, and foreheads were inserted with white feathers. It is recorded that the king Guangde of Khotan listened to the shaman, and asked the envoy of Han to offer horses for sacrifice (History of the Later Han Dynasty - Ban Chao). Khotan was the area where the ancient Saka lived, and the activity of sacrificing horses to the Sun God was the religious custom of the local Saka. The ruins of pits of sacrificing horses and records of believing shamanism in Khotan also fully demonstrate that there was sacrificial ceremony of sacrificing horses to the Sun God among the Khotan Saka.

Stars were also worshiped by the ancestors of the Western Regions, which were considered as the representatives of the human lives, how many stars in the sky represented how many people on the ground. Whenever a shooting star fell, one person died on the earth. They called the hostile people as the “opponent star”. The Big Dipper and Venus, which was also called the Morning Star were considered to be the God Stars, and they enjoyed a special worship. The Big Dipper was regarded as “seven guards” guarding two Pegasus, seven Sirius or Tengu. Venus was regarded as the ormazd of guiding people at night. They also took stars as the kid of the Moon, when a star rose, people would say “the Moon had a baby”.

The worship of the Sun derived from the worship of bright, which was recorded in Chronicles of the Western Regions and Records of Xingjiang, describing in detail the etiquette of climbing on the high platform to meet the Sun when in the morning and see off it in the