



The Horoscope of Ceionius Rufius Albinus

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In conclusion it may be said that the traditional interpretation of lines 9-11 of the Prytaneion decree by Schoell, Wade-Gery, and Jacoby has not been invalidated by Oliver and Ostwald. On the contrary, Jacoby's penetrating treatment of the problem of the exegetes has rendered it even more certain that the exegetes are the officials ordained by Apollo who are honored in the Prytaneion decree. Their existence during the fifth century is assured also without the evidence of this document.

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THE HOROSCOPE OF CEIONIUS RUFIVS ALBINVS.

In 1894 Theodor Mommsen suggested¹ that Ceionius Rufius Albinus was the person to whom the horoscope contained in the second book of the *Mathesis* of Firmicus Maternus referred. Circumstantial evidence led Mommsen to the conclusion that it was the *praefectus urbi* of the year 336/337 A. D. whose horoscope is discussed in detail by Firmicus. Mommsen did not, however, submit his thesis to the final test: whether or not the astronomical data agree with his hypothesis. It is the purpose of the present note to fill this gap. At the same time I wish to point out how easily problems of this type can be solved without going into a great many unnecessary details which are usually invoked in the dating of horoscopes by professional astronomers who are not familiar with the techniques of ancient astronomy and astrology, techniques which by their approximative character make quite meaningless the application of modern high precision tools.

Our horoscope contains as data only the zodiacal signs in which the seven planets and the Horoscopus, the rising point, are located. As starting-point we use the positions of Saturn and Jupiter in Virgo and Pisces respectively. I know of twelve Greek horoscopes with Saturn in Virgo, three of which show Jupiter in Virgo also. Their dates, A. D. 65, 124, and 125 respectively,² are too far away from the critical years around 300

¹ *Hermes*, XXIX, pp. 468-72 = *Gesammelte Schriften*, VII, pp. 446-50.

² These texts are Vettius Valens, II, 21; VII, 5; *P. Fouad* 6 respectively.

which alone are interesting for our problem. With *P. Harris* 53, however, we reach the year 245 A. D. but both planets are one sign farther ahead than required. The common period of Saturn and Jupiter is 59 years, thus the same situation will prevail in 304 A. D. Jupiter moves one sign per year; thus 303 will give the right sign for this planet and it can be hoped that Saturn is one sign back also. Thus 303 is our only chance before 336 A. D. Other possibilities are either 59 years earlier or later, and thus incompatible with Mommsen's hypothesis.

The first step consists in finding the approximate positions of Saturn and Jupiter in 303 A. D. We now have to consider the position of the sun in Pisces. This requires a date shortly before the vernal equinox. I choose 303 March 1 because the sun is then in the middle of Pisces (about Pisces 12). For this date one can find the mean longitudes of Saturn and Jupiter by two additions of triplets of numbers,³ and one more addition gives the required positions as Virgo 24 and Pisces 26 respectively. Thus 303 is possible. We repeat the same process for Mars and find Aquarius 5, again in agreement with the data of the text. Though the longitudes computed so far may be wrong by several degrees, March 303 is certainly a possible date.

Narrower limits are obtainable when we consider the longitude of the moon, which was located in Cancer. We again use mean motion in longitude alone and find by adding twice three numbers each⁴ that the moon was in the middle of Cancer either on February 15 or on March 14 of 303 A. D., i. e., either 13 days before or 13 days after our preliminary date, at which the sun was near Pisces 12. Because the sun moves about 1° per day the earlier date will barely lead to a position in Pisces whereas the second is still well inside this sign. Consequently we compute the longitudes of Venus and Mercury for the more plausible date, 303 March 14. We now use the tables quoted in note 3 to their full accuracy (requiring the addition of six numbers for each planet) and find for Mercury Aquarius 28, for Venus Taurus 11. The text gives Aquarius and Taurus respectively.

This result also tells us that we need not check the second

³ Denoted by a_1, a_2, a_3 in the *Genährte Tafeln für Sonne und Planeten* by P. V. Neugebauer, *Astronomische Nachrichten*, 248 (1932), cols. 161 ff.

⁴ Denoted by L_1, L_2, L_3 in the *Tafeln zur astronomischen Chronologie*, II, by P. V. Neugebauer (Leipzig, 1914).

possibility, February 15, because one month back Venus cannot have reached Taurus. Finally, change from March 1 to March 14 can only improve on the position of Mars and will not change appreciably the longitudes of Jupiter and Saturn. Thus A. D. 303 March 14 satisfies all requirements. Because we have placed the moon only approximately in the middle of Cancer one must consider not only March 14 but also March 13 or March 15 as equivalent dates. Knowing from Firmicus that Scorpio was rising while the sun was located at the end of Pisces, we see that the hour of birth must have been about 9 p. m. Computing the longitude of the moon for this hour of March 13 or March 15 shows that the moon was entering Cancer in the first case, leaving it in the second; consequently only 303 March 14 remains as the date of the birth.

We have thus removed the only serious possible argument against Mommsen's conclusions, namely that the age of the person in question might not fit the other data. We may now from the opposite point of view as well see in the perfect agreement of all external data with the data of the horoscope an explicit confirmation of the fact that horoscopes in ancient astrological literature were not artificially made up examples but constitute a valuable source both of historical and astronomical information.

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