

Los Angeles

J Paul Getty Museum

Astrological compilation with Alfonsine text and illustrations (*Libro de las estrellas fijas*)

Ms 83. MO. 136 (formerly Ludwig, XII, 7 and Kew, Cockerell Collection)

English (Oxford, Gloucester?)

1386-40

contents

The contents have been described by; SAXL/MEIER 1953 (when the ms was in the Cockerell Coll.); VON EUW/PLOTZEK 1982 (when it was in the Ludwig Coll.) and METZGER 2016.

- ff. 1r-6r *Imagines coeli*. The short texts as well as many images are derived from the *Libro de las estrellas fijas* of Alfonso the Wise. There is no connection with the Toledan tables (cf. VON EUW/PLOTZEK 1982, p. 176).
- ff. 6r-8r *Prognostica* (THORNDIKE/KIBRE 1963, col. 293, no. 6). Astrological weather forecasts, attributable to Robert Grosseteste.
- fol. 8r-11r ps.-Hippocrates, *De Prognosticatione egritudinum* (THORNDIKE/KIBRE 1963, col. 1379, no. 8), with an astrological note at the end.
- ff. 11v-35r A calendar with astronomical-computistic tables (see VON EUW/PLOTZEK 1982, p. 177).
- ff. 35v-38r Nicolaus de Lynn, *Tabulae et figurae eclipsium solis et lunae*. Tables for the years 1387-1462 (cf. THORNDIKE 1934, vol. 3, p. 523f.).

- ff. 38v-44r *Tabulae*. Tables and diagrams on the ascending degrees of the zodiac signs, the course of the Moon through the zodiac as well as the planets, the hour-rulers and the decans (see VON EUW/PLOTZEK 1982, p. 178).
- fol. 42r blank
- fol. 433v Tables dated 1367.
- ff. 44v-51r Nicolaus de Lynn, *Canones super Calendarium premissum* (THORNDIKE/KIBRE 1963, col. 1131, no. 14).
- ff. 51v-70r William Reade, *Tabulae mediorum motuum omnium planetarum* (THORNDIKE/KIBRE 1963, col. 863, no. 12). For 1340-1600. The expl. says: *Expliciunt tabule Reed* = William Reed or Reade was the Bishop of Chichester.
- ff. 70v-73v Guilielmus Anglicus, *De urina non visa* (THORNDIKE/KIBRE 1963, col. 906, no. 7).
- fol. 73v Horoscopic chart.
- fol. 74rv *Excerpta astrologica*. Probably excerpts from canons on planetary tables (see von EUW/PLOTZEK 1982, p. 180).
- ff. 75r-76r *De occultis* (THORNDIKE/KIBRE 1963, col. 600, no. 4 = Messahala, *De inventionibus*, cap. 7).
- ff. 76v-77r Two horoscopes (table and nativity chart).
- ff. 77v-79v *De imaginibus 12 signorum* (THORNDIKE/KIBRE 1963, col. 131, nn. 11-12).
- ff. 79v-80v *Tractatus medico-astrologici* (THORNDIKE/KIBRE 1963, col. 152, no. 4 and col. 445, no. 1)
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illustrations



fol. 1r



fol. 1v



fol. 2r



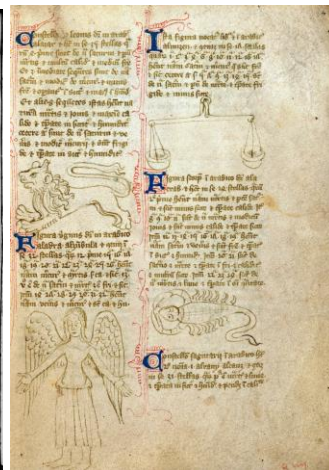
fol. 2v



fol. 3r



fol. 3v



fol. 4r



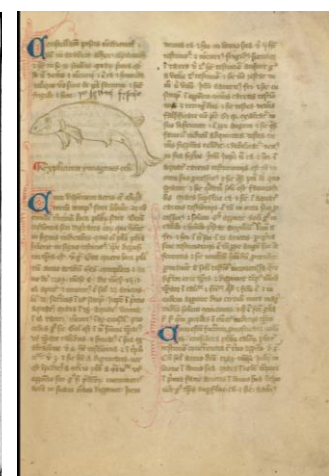
fol. 4v



fol. 5r



fol. 5v



fol. 6r



fol. 51v

- ff. 1r-6r Black pen drawings of 48 constellations. On ff. 1r-3r, the backgrounds have been painted red and the stars added. The stars on the two Bears are circles with asterisks set inside. The rest are open circles. The stars appear haphazardly in the rest of the figures. Many of the human figures have bare feet. In several cases, a later hand (15th c) has added notes on the names of the constellations in English or, sometimes, Latin. See, for example, 'the harpe' (lyre), 'the hen' (Cygnus), 'the berer of the dyvylly hed' (Perseus), 'the dolphyn' (Delphinus), 'the woman in cheaynes' (Andromeda), 'the whale' (Cetus), 'the second dogge' (Canis maior), 'the sowth fysche' (southern fish).
- fol. 1r URSA MINOR stands to the left, with a short tail and prominent claws. The stars are marked. The text is badly abraded, but can be read as: *Hec figura constellationis ursi minoris que vocatur [] dub alazgar.*
- URSA MAIOR is a slightly larger bear. She stands to the left and her mouth is open. She is marked by stars. The text is badly abraded, but can be read as: *Figura urse maioris [] voactur aldub [] -bar*
- fol. 1v DRACO is a long, lumpy snake that has 3 sets of curls in its body. It has a canine head, facing to the right, with its mouth open and a snake's tongue. The stars are marked as open circles. The text reads: *Figura serpentis []*.
- BOOTES appears to be half-kneeling/half-running to the left with his right leg leading. Both his arms are oversized and held out to his sides. He holds a club vertically in his left hand. He wears a short, belted tunic and is bearded. The text reads: *Constellatio ululantis sive vociferantis.*
- CEPHEUS strides to the left with his right hand raised and his left hand swings behind him. He wears a loose, belted tunic and is bearded. The stars are marked as open circles. The text reads: *Figura inflamati in Greco dicitur cayfeos et in arbico amulhathab.*
- CORONA BOREALIS is shaped like a torque with an open end. It is marked by 9 open circles. The text reads: *Figura corone septentrionalis figure sicut circulus.*

fol. 2r HERCULES kneels to the left on his right knee. He holds his right hand in front of him, and raises a sickle in his left hand. He has a large belt around his waist and is marked by open circles. The text reads: *Ista figura vocatur incurvatus super genu ... et vocatur saltator.*

LYRA is tortoise with a heart-shaped shell, viewed from above, facing to the right. It is marked by open circles. The text reads: ... *vocatur testudo et in arabico alasulyaca et in greco allora.* A later hand adds: *harpe.*

CYGNUS is a rooster that stands to the left with his wings extended and his head looking upwards. He is marked with open circles. The text reads: ... *vocatur gallina et in arabico altayr aldigeia.* A later hand adds: *the hen.*

CASSIOPEIA is seated on a wooden throne with an enclosing back with 4 turrets. She is dressed in a long robe and her arms are raised in a W-shape. She is marked by open circles. The text reads: *Figura mulieris sedentis super cathedram et dicitur in arabico deth alcorty.*

fol. 2v PERSEUS lunges to the right, but looks back to the left. He wears a short, belted tunic. He holds a monstrous horned head by its hair in his right hand and holds a sword vertically in his left. He is marked by open circles. The text reads: *figura deferentis caput algol hec est caput diaboli et dicitur in arabico barseus hamil raz algol.* A later hand adds: *the berer of the dyvylly hed.*

AURIGA walks to the left, holding a draped piece of fabric in each hand. He has a loose, belted tunic and a soft cap on his head. He is marked by open circles. The text reads: *Figura tenentis habenas.*

OPHIUCHUS stands to the left with his head slightly inclined. He holds a snakelike SERPENS in his upraised hands. The Snake has a canine head and turns back towards the man. It has 4 sets of coils in its body and the body runs between the man's legs. Its tail is also raised. There are no stars. The text reads: ... *vocatur venator serpentum.*

SAGITTA is an arrow, with its head towards the right. No stars are marked. The text reads: *figure sagitte dicitur in arabico alzehm.*

AQUILA is a raptor facing to the left with its wings open. It is marked with open circles. The text reads: *figura aquile in arabico vocatur alorab altayr.*

DELPHINUS is a spiny-backed fish, swimming to the right. It is marked with circles, but these may not be stars. The text reads: *... vocatur delphinus et dicitur in arabico aldalfini.* Note that a later hand adds: *the dolphin.*

fol. 3r

EQUULEUS is the front half of a horse that leaps to the right with its front legs extended. The cut-off is an oval and there are 4 open circles on its face. The text reads: *figura equi prioris et vocatur in arabico quitat alfaraz.* Note that a later hand adds a note in English: *fyrst hors.*

PEGASUS is the front half of a winged horse that leaps to the right with its front legs extended. It is marked with circles and the text reads: *Figura equi maioris et in arabico vocatur faraz alaum.* A later hand adds: *secund hors.*

ANDROMEDA stands facing the viewer, wearing a long robe and raising both her hands to that her elbows are bent. She walks to the left. She has chains around her waist and knees that are connected by a vertical chain. There is a smaller fish placed on her chest, facing to the left, and a larger fish between her feet, facing to the right. She is marked by open circle. The text reads: *... dicitur mulier cathenata et in arabico vocatur almara alunizelzela.* Note that a later hand adds: *the woman in cheaynes.*

TRIANGULUM is an equilateral triangle with 4 stars. The text reads: *ista figura sequens dicitur triangulus et in arabico almutalat.*

ARIES is a smooth-skinned ram, that jumps to the left, but looks back to the right. He has lumpy, curled horns and a long tail. He is marked with open circles and the text reads: *figura arietis dicitur in arabico alhamal.*

fol. 3v

TAURUS is a bull that runs to the left and turns his head to look at the viewer. He has short, curved horns. No stars are marked and the text reads: *figura tauri dicitur arabice altaur.*

GEMINI are two youths standing so that their inner legs cross and their forearms are interlocked. They make a square with their clasped hands. They wear short

jerkins, with belts at the hips. They are marked with open circles. The text reads: *Constellatio geminorum dicitur in arabico altathuyamayn alyanze.*

CANCER is a round-bodied crab, with its head towards the top. It has two large claws and 4 small, curled legs. It also has two antennae. There are no stars marked, and the text reads: *Constellatio cancri et dicitur in arabico alzaratau.*

fol. 4ra

LEO runs to the left and is quite stylized, with a raised, S-shaped tail. No stars are marked and the text reads: *Constellatio leonis dicitur in arabico alazar.*

VIRGO is young woman standing facing the viewer with her straight arms slightly raised to each side with her palms forward. She is winged and her hairs falls loosely. No stars are marked and the text reads: *figura virginis dicitur in arabico alzumbula.*

LIBRA is a pair of scales. No stars are marked and the text reads: *ista figura vocatur libra et in arabico almizen.*

SCORPIO has a paisley-shaped body faced to the right, with two semi-circular front arms, soft legs on each side and a long, thin tail. It has no stars and the label reads: *figura scorpionis in arabico dicitur alacrab.*

fol. 4v

SAGITTARIUS is a centaur galloping to the left, with a drawn bow. His human half wears a tight shirt, and he is bearded. No stars are marked and the text reads: *Constellatio sagittarii in arabico habet 2^o nomina id est alrany alcauz.*

CAPRICORN is a goat-fish, faced to the left, with his front legs bent slightly under him. He is bearded and has long, curved horns. The fish tail has a curl in it. No stars are marked and the text reads: *figura capricorni dicitur in arabico alhady.*

AQUARIUS stands slightly turned to the right, with both arms raised. He holds the handle of a jug in his left hand, with water pouring straight down. No stars are marked and the text reads: *constellation aquarii dicitur ydrodictus et in arabico dicitur celguibelmel et similiter vocatur aldasii (?)*.

fol. 5r

PISCES are two fish, faced in opposite directions, belly-to-belly, with a S-shaped stream running between their mouths. Stars are marked as open circles. The text reads: *figura sequens dicitur pisces et in arabico vocatur alhot.*

CETUS is a large scaly fish that swims to the right, with huge tusks. No stars are marked. The label reads: *Constellatio ceti dicitur in greco caytos, hoc est animal marinus.* Note that a later hand adds: *the whale.*

ORION is a young, beardless man, who walks to the left. He holds both his arms raised to the side. His leading right arm is covered by an overly long sleeve that falls in a tube shape to his feet. He holds a knobby club with a curled tip vertically in his left hand. He has a long sword at his waist. No stars are marked and the text reads: *constellatio Orionis dicitur in arabico aliabar alyauze, id est audax.*

ERIDANUS is a rectangle with wavy water lines set inside it. There are no stars marked and the label reads: *figura fluminis dicitur in arabico aluahe.*

LEPUS is a hare that leaps to the left. No stars are marked and the text reads: *constellatio leporem dicitur in arabico afaruab.*

CANIS MAIOR runs to the left. It has a snub nose and a curled tail. No stars are marked. The text reads: *ista figura dicitur canis maior et in arabico dicitur alqueb alacbar.* Note that a later hand adds: *the second dogge.*

CANIS MINOR is a sleeker dog with a pointed nose, leaping to the left. No stars are marked and the text reads: *Ista figura dicitur canis minor et in arabico alqueb alzgar.*

fol. 5v

NAVIS is half a ship, with what appears to be the bow (?) facing to the left with a figurehead of a dog's head (or is that *puppis?*). There are two oars at this side. The hull is clearly planked and there is a main mast with a sheet draped over the top like a tent and rigging ropes. There are no stars marked and the text reads: *Constellatio navis et dicitur in arabico alzafuis.*

HYDRA is a wormlike snake that slides to the left, there are two curls in its body. No stars are marked and the text reads: *constellatio ydre et vocatur in arabico alsuiath (?).*

CRATER is a two-handled vase. No stars are marked and the text reads: *figura vas id est cratere et dicitur urna et in arabico betya.*

CORVUS is a black bird that hops to the left, with his head and its wings raised. There are no stars marked and the text reads: *constellatio corvi et dicitur in arabico elgorab et corvus.*

CENTAURUS is a bearded centaur galloping to the right. His human half is nude and he is carrying a reed stalk in front of him, like a lance, in his right hand. In his left hand, he grasps the belly of a wolf (LUPUS), that faces towards him. There are no stars marked and the text reads: *... vocatur centaurus et dicitur in arabico hualzaba.*

ARA is a circular, profiled block altar, with a fire on the top. There are no stars marked and the text reads: *constellatio laris et in arabico dicitur fogar et est locus ignis.*

CORONA MERIDIONALIS is an ovate shield with its point towards the bottom. It is marked with 11 open circles. The text reads: *constellatio corone meridionalis et dicitur in arabico aliachil alianuby.*

fol. 6r PISCIS AUSTRINUS is a fish with a slightly curved body, facing to the left. There are no stars marked and the text reads: *Constellatio piscis meridionalis dicitur in arabico alhot alyanubi.* Note that a later hand adds: *the sowth fysche.*

fol. 51v A rota with a moveable dial

notes

21.3 x 15.2 mm, 80 folia, parchment

Euw and Plotzek (1982, p. 181) have shown that the contents of the ms can be associated with Merton College, Oxford and reflect the interests of a practicing astrologer. A dating to the years from 1386 onwards is based on the inclusion of new tables of the solar and lunar eclipses by Nicolaus de Lynn, which were created around 1386 and cover a period

from 1387 to 1462. The figures of the constellations show clothing characteristics of c. 1390.

Iconographically, the figures are closet to the tradition stemming from the court of Alfonso el Sabio (esp. *Libro de las estrellas fixas* - cf. Vat. lat. 8174, fol. 3v-4r, see LIPPINCOTT 985, p. 68). As such, are an important witness to this tradition having travelled to England, but probably via an intermediary form - cf. Bodley 614, Digby 83 and the so-called 'Nimrod manuscripts'. See also Nicolas Trevet's illustrations (such as Urb. lat. 355).

Initially in the possession of a member of Merton College, Oxford; later owners seem to include Radulphus Moulder (fol. 1ra) and Thomas Gloucester (fol. 49r). It was acquired on 28 October 1919 by Sydney Carlyle Cockerell (1867-1962) at Maggs Bros (see SAXL/MEIER III 1953); after the auction of the Cockerell manuscripts in 1957 to a Mrs. Schilling, then to Harrison D. Horblitt; later as part of the Ludwig collection in Cologne (EUW/PLOTZEK 1982); and then to the Getty Museum in Los Angeles.

bibliography

SAXL I 1915, p. 96f.

Sotheby's London, July 30, 1919, lot 217.

GUNTHER 1923, II, pp. 42 ff.

SAXL/MEIER III 1953, pp. 275-278.

Sotheby's, London, April 3, 1957, lot 11.

VON EUW/PLOTZEK 1982, III, pp. 176-182 (images of all constellations).

J. Paul Getty Museum Journal, XII, 1984, pp. 299-300. Acquisitions 1983.

LIPPINCOTT 1985, p. 68 and *passim*.

De HAMEL 1987, pp. 186-210.

ŚNIEŻYNSKA-STOLOT 1994, p. 65.

BLUME/HAFFNER/METZGER 2016, II, 1, pp. 71, 412-16 and II, 3, fig. 439.

The images are only partly digitised at:

<https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/109Q7N#full-artwork-details> with links to some of the other pages.