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De ordine ac positione stellarum in signis (in the Aachen Compilation of 809-812 / *Libri computi*)

Murbach
c. 820

text

- ff. 54v-62v *De ordine ac positione stellarum* (in the Aachen Compilation of 809-812 / *Libri computi*, a.k.a. 'The Compilation of 810 in 7 books'); preceded by a computus, calendrical information and tables
- fol. 53v-54r (in black) LIB QUINTUS (in red) EXCERPTUM DE ASTROLOGIA
(in black) Duo sunt extremi vertices mundi quos appellant polos septentrionis et austri – effusionem urnae aquarii quia ad ipsum usque decurrit accipiens.
(*Excerptum de Astrologia Arati*, cf. Maass, 1898, pp. 309-12)
- fol. 54r (in red) IN SIGNIS DE ORDINE AC POSITIONE STELLARUM. (in black) Est quidem hic ordo & positio siderum quae fixa caelo – eo quo ab ipso est ordine digesta descriptio proferatur (cf. Maass, 1898, p. 312)
- fol. 54v Haelice arcturus maior habet stellas in capite vii. in singulis umeris singulas. in armo .i. in pectore .i. in pede priori claras duas. in summa cauda claram unam ... (cf. Maass, 1898, p. 312 and St P, p. 240)
- fol. 62v Anticanis habet stellas. iii.

Other texts in the manuscript include:

- ff. 63r-63v (in gold) DE POSITIONE ET CURSU VII PLANETARUM (in black) Inter caelum & terram certis discreta spatiis septem sidera pendent – luce ad easdem vices exit.
- ff. 63v-64r (in red) DE INTERVALLIS EARUM (in black) Intervalla eorum a terra multi indagare temptarunt. – quam diapason armoniam vocant.
- ff. 64v-65r (in black) DE ABSIDIBUS EARUM Tres autem quas supra solem diximus – ut sub iecta figura demonstrat.

faces away from the man to the left and does not lift its head.

SCORPIO is depicted on its own and is brown; it faces to the right with a teardrop-shaped body and two front claws held out in front of the nose; there are three small legs on either side and it has a segmented tail.

fol. 56r **BOOTES** stands facing the viewer, is bearded and dressed in a light blue *tunica exomis* that exposes his right shoulder and has been torn to shreds along the bottom hem; he leans on his curved, brown stick, the end of which which is held in his right hand with the curled part downwards; his left hand is raised with its palm open

VIRGO stands facing the viewer; she is dressed in a pink dress, with a light orange cape and boots. She has large pink wings that are outstretched and is holding the blackish-brown Spica vertically in her left hand in front of her; she has a pink diadem on her forehead against long dark brown hair.

fol. 56v **GEMINI** are standing facing the viewer; they are nude with long, light red cloaks. The left Twin holds a light red lyre in his left hand near his head and the Right Twin has a red-tipped spear held vertically in his right hand; the Twins look away from each other

CANCER has a grey, diamond-shaped body with large oval claws on the right side and four small legs coming from each side of its shell; there are two tan and brown Asses standing flanking a square manger to the right side

fol. 57r **LEO** is tan and brown and bounds to the left; his tongue is out and his tail is raised

AURIGA stands wearing a blue shirt, red mantle and blue and purple skirt in a red *biga*, which is curved in the front and has cross-hatching behind him; both wheels are visible; he drives to the right with two dark horses (brown and blue-white); he has a brown flail held above his head in his right hand and the two things float forwards; he holds the reins in his left hand; there are two small black beasts prancing and facing each other on his left arm and a small goat stands behind the chariot to the left facing towards it

fol. 57v **Andromeda** stands facing the viewer between two piles of light blue rocks to which her wrists are chained; she inclines her head to the right; she wears a long pink dress caught at the waist (with a vertical band running down the length of the skirt) and her arms are bare; she has red boots and a triangular, yellow diadem in her hair

Pegasus is depicted as half a pinkish horse with light blue open wings; he faces to to the right with his forelegs outstretched and he is cut-off in a curve just behind his belly

fol. 58r **TAURUS** is a dark grey full bull, lying down to the left with his right leg tucked under him and left leg extended; his tail is curled on his body

CEPHEUS stands facing the viewer wearing a in a very short, light blue shift with pink leggings and a shapeless pink cap on his head; both his hands are raised up above his head and he has an empty grey scabbard by his left side

CASSIOPEIA faces the viewer and is seated on a tan and brown boxy throne with

square base; there is no cushion; her arms are stretched out to the sides and her hands are open; she wears a blue shirt and skirt with a pink overdress

fol. 58v **ARIES** stands to the right with his head hung low and he has curled horns and a very long tail; his body is blue and has a lighter blue circle around his middle

TRIANGULUM is two nested equilateral pink triangles with brown borders

PISCES move in opposite directions (top to the right and bottom to the left) with both their backs upwards; they are tied by a line at their mouths; both fish are blue with pink gills, fins and mouths and the cord is grey

fol. 59r **PERSEUS** faces towards the viewer, is nude and strides to the right; he has a red Phrygian cap on his head; he holds the Medusa head in his left hand in front of him and holds a knife in his right hand, which seems to point to his own back

LYRA is a U-shaped yellow lyre with a pedestal base and with 5 brown strings

CYGNUS stands with his chest towards the viewer and with his wings outstretched to each side; his long snaky neck stretched is stretched in a C-shape out to right; the bird has a yellow body with darker tan on the wings and grey on its beak and feet

fol. 59v **AQUARIUS** is nude and stands slight to the right, while looking back to the left; his left leg is bent; he wears a red Phrygian cap and light blue cloak covers all of his left arm; he holds a handle-less tan urn upside-down in his right hand on his right side; the water pours downwards in a wavy stream vertically (origin of peculiar crescent shape?).

CAPRICORN is grey and faces to the left; he has long straight horns, a beard and small, pointed ears; he has dots running down his back and a corkscrew tail held upwards, ending in an acanthus shape

fol. 60r **SAGITTARUS** is a bearded, dark-brown satyr; he faces towards the viewer and rushes to the right; he holds the bow in his left hand and pulls the string with his right; his short tail flutters out behind him

AQUILA is tan and brown and faces towards the left, while looking back over his left wing to the right; he stands **SAGITTA**, with its point to the left

DELPHINUS is a classical dolphin that swims to the right; is has has a horn on his head and an acanthus tail; it is also tan and brown.

fol. 60v **ORION** stands facing the viewer, slightly to the right, dressed in short light blue tunic and calf-length red cloak; he either points to himself or is holding his cloak at the neck with his right hand and the left side of body covered by a cloak; in his left hand, he holds the end of a long sword, sheathed in a grey scabbard

CANIS MAIOR leaps to right and has a pointed nose, pointed ears and a long thin tail; it is grey with a heavy grey collar

fol. 61r **LEPUS** leaps to right, with its ears set flat against its head; it is tan

ARGO / NAVIS is a full tan-coloured ship with two steering oars at the stern and a red-orange mast with a billowing light blue sail and two red-orange streamers flying from it; the tri-prong bow is set to the right and there is a red hoop around its stern, which has an *aphlaston* marked by a red dot and two red streamers

CETUS is a classical sea-monster with a very long, curved snout, swimming to the left with front flippers, furry ears and trefoil, acanthus-shaped tail; it is blue and white with a grey back and with grey spots on his body; its ears, flippers, beard and the tip of his tail are red

fol. 61v **ERIDANUS** is a classical river god reclining with his right elbow on an yellow urn, from which water pours forth into a blue stream in which he sits; he has with blue-white hair and beard and wears a grey robe around his hips and a blue-green white mantle; he holds a reed in his left hand that also leans on his left shoulder

PISCIS AUSTRINUS (PISCUS MAGNUS) is a large fish, swimming to the left with its back on top; it is light blue with red gills

ARA is a square, tan altar with a red flame issuing from the top

fol. 62r **CENTAURUS** is reddish-brown all over walks to the right and raises his left foreleg; he holds **LUPUS** (dead yellow-tan rabbit) by its feet in front of him in his outstretched left hand in his right hand; he holds a double-headed red spear (shaped like a kayak paddle)

HYDRA is depicted as a light blue snake with a grey backbone and three humps, moving to the left

CRATER is placed on the first hump behind the head of Hydra and is 2-handled and coloured yellow on first bend

CORVUS faces backwards towards Hydra's tail on penultimate bend

fol. 62v There are also individual depictions of a grey **CORVUS** and a 2-handled, yellow **CRATER**

Canis Minor leaps to the right and has a pointed nose, pointed ears set back and a thin tail; it is tan

notes

According to BORST (1995²) this version of the *De ordine ac postione* is part of the *Libri computi* (ff. 5r-80v), otherwise known as the Compilation in 7 books, originally created between 809-812 in Aachen. Borst dates the manuscript to around 820, and locates it in Murbach. According to him, it is the best versions of the compilation. A second best version of this compilation in 7 parts is the manuscript from Monza.

MCGURK IV says that it is a twin with Vat lat 645 and that there is certainly a palace exemplar behind this manuscript.

The pictorial cycle in this manuscript has many of the defining characteristics of the cycle *De ordine* I. This cycle is also encountered in Berlin lat 130, Monza, Vat lat 645 and, to a lesser extent, in Vienna Ms 12600.

UTRECHT PSALTER 1996, pp. 198-99: provenance is that in the late 9th century, is owned by the Abbey of Prüm; it goes to Liège about 922 (possibly transferred by the then Abbot of Prüm, Bishop of Liège); in 1543 in Spanish Sicily (Franciscus Monachi, Minorite); connection to Metz on account of the calendar with feast day for 'Arnulfi confessoris (probably 7th century Bishop of Metz and patron saint of the Arnulf monastery); also stylistic connection to *Drogo Sacramentary*; suggests that it was a deluxe book, 'perhaps even ordered by Drogo'; to which additions were made up to date until at least 876.

bibliography

NEUSS 1940, pp. 37-64.

was certainly copied in Metz before passing to the Abbey at Prüm; (? see Borst)

NEUSS 1941, pp. 113-40.

KOEHLER 1960, pp. 100-01, 119-27 pls. 53-60

AACHEN 1965, no. 479.

McGURK IV, p. xv.

KING 1969, p. 46.

BOSCHEN 1972, pp. 13-26.

MÜTHERLICH/ GAEHDE 1977, no. XIII, pl. 27.

McGURK 1981, p. 321

LEBOURDELLÈS 1985, p. 100.

SÁNCHEZ MARIANO 1993.

BORST 1995², p. 163, note 97.

UTRECHT PSALTER 1996, pp. 198-99, pls. 12a and 12b.

HAFFNER 1997, p. 175.

says 'De ordine ac positione'.

BYVANCK 1949, p. 226 (no. 87).

from Metz and Prüm, written near Reims in the 9th century

DOMINQUEZ RODRIGUEZ , p. 20, illustrates fol. 57v.

contact

updated 2 Jan 05 (after consulting facsimile)