

St Petersburg

National Library

Ms Q.V. IX, no 2

De ordo ac positione stellarum in signis (excerpted from the Aachen compilation of 809-812 / *Libri computi*)

probably St Germain du Prés

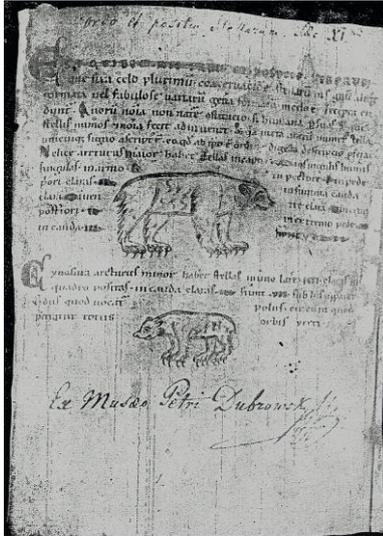
before 1100

text

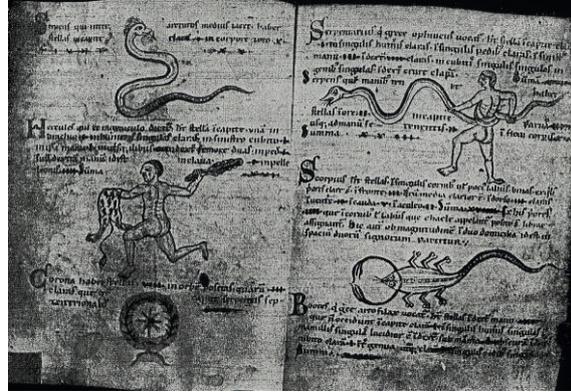
- ff. 1r- 7r *De ordo et positio stellarum* (= *De ordine ac positione stellarum in signis*, excerpted from the Aachen Compilation of 809-812 / *Libri computi*, a.k.a. the 'Compilation of 810 in 7 books')
- fol. 1r Est quidem hic ordo et posicio siderum que fixa celo plurimum ...
Helice arcturus maior habet stellas in capite vii., in singulis humeris singulas, in armo i, in pectore i, ... (cf. St Petersburg catalogue, p. 240)
- fol. 7r Anticanis habet stellas iii subter Geminos ceteria quarum una splendorem ceteris et ideo anticanis vocatur quot contraria sit cani. (cf. St Petersburg catalogue, p. 242)

illustrations

- ff. 1r- 7r 40 drawings of the constellations in brown ink with red highlights; the pictures were intended to be set between blocks of text, but often the text is wrapped around overly-large images; the order of the constellations is muddled slightly at beginning of text (see below); [no stars are marked](#)
- fol. 7r there is a picture of a monk [sitting on a square](#) backless seat with a footstool in front of him, hunched over and reading a book



fol. 1r



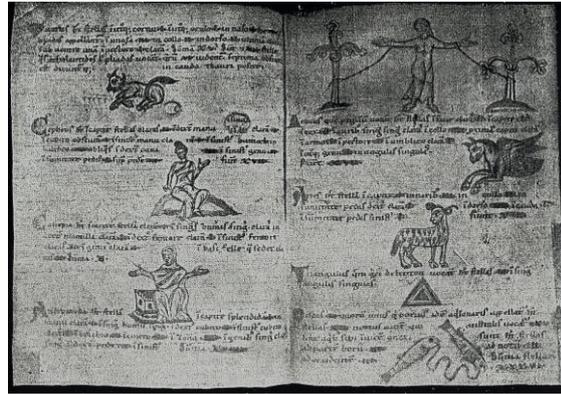
fol. 1v

fol. 2r



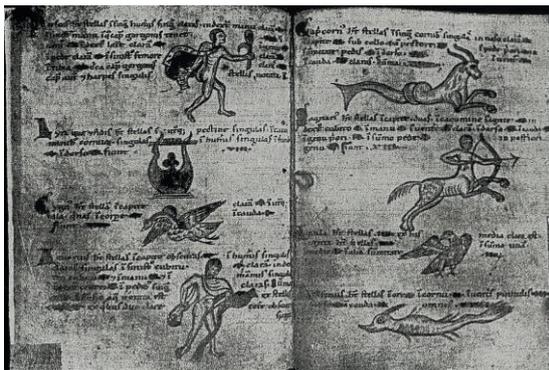
fol. 2v

fol. 3r



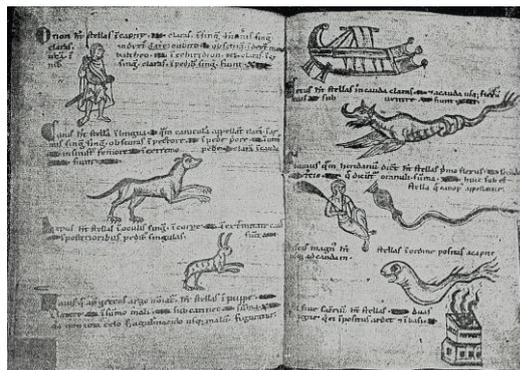
fol. 3v

fol. 4r



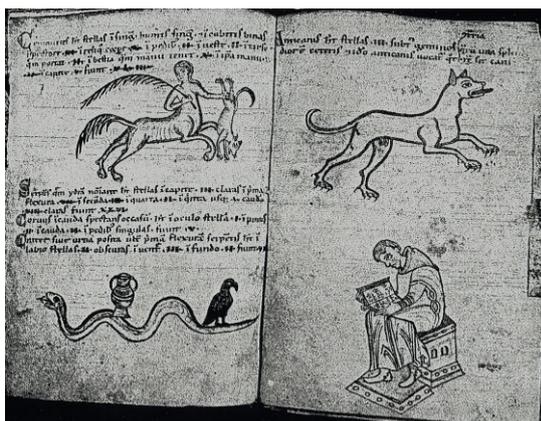
fol. 4v

fol. 5r



fol. 5v

fol. 6r



fol. 6v

fol. 7r

- fol. 1r **URSA MAIOR** is the larger bear and faces to the right, with a short tail and round ears and prominent claws
- URSA MINOR** is smaller and faces to the left in profile round ears and prominent claws
- fol. 1v **DRACO** is a snake placed vertically on the page in the shape of an 'L' and is facing towards the right; there are 5 bends in the body and a long tail that runs in a wavy, horizontal line; it has a comb on its head and an arrow-shaped tongue
- HERCULES** faces away from the viewer and looks as though he were running to the left, with both knees bent at 90° and his left knee leading; he holds the lion's skin over his outstretched left arm in front of him, on which the two hind feet and tail are visible; he holds a leafy club behind his head in his raised right hand
- CORONA BOREALIS** is depicted as a wreath with ribbons at the bottom and a star in the centre section
- fol. 2r **OPHIUCHUS** stands with his back to the viewer and walking to the left with his left leg leading; he is nude and has the **SERPENS** wrapped around his waist twice so that it is held nearly horizontally and its head faces away from him Serpens has a bird's head and breaths fire
- SCORPIO** is depicted separately as facing to the left with its larger claws (each with three 'toes') set into a circular shape in front of its pointed nose; it has three lines coming from its nose, a number of circlets running down its spine and tail and three bent legs each with two bulbous toe on either side; the long tapering tail is smooth
- fol. 2v **BOOTES** is depicted facing the viewer and lifting his left leg slightly; he is dressed in a short *tunica exomis* with his right shoulder bare; he holds his right arm outstretched at shoulder height and his palm is open and facing upward; his left hand holds a curved stick upraised; he turns his head to look towards his right hand

VIRGO stands facing the viewer; she is dressed in long toga with right shoulder and breast (?) exposed; she has no wings and holds a sheaf of wheat vertically at shoulder height in her right hand; she holds a pair of **SCALES** at her waist in her left hand

GEMINI face the viewer and are nude, save their long cloaks; each holds a spear in his outer hand and gestures to the other with his inner hand (the right Twin is walking away and seems to be making a dismissive gesture with his right hand as the left Twin holds out his left hand at his waist)

fol. 3r **CANCER** is a long oval crayfish with no legs, but large forearms, face to the left; the tail is like a lobster's, there are three prongs on the nose and the shell is decorated with triangles

LEO stands facing to the left with his tongue out; he has prominent claws and furry tufts on his body; his tail is held out horizontally, with a large tuft at the end

AURIGA stands riding in a boat-shaped *biga* to the right; he is dressed in a long tunic with a 'X' across the chest; he holds a stick with a three thongs raised behind him head in his upraised right hand; he holds the reins in his left hand and has two small beasts-animals on his right arm facing each other; the goat stands behind the cart, facing it, with his head lowered

fol. 3v **TAURUS** is depicted as a full bull, lying down to left with his tail between his hind legs and curving in a 'C'-shape behind him; his (♋) left foreleg is stretched in front of him and his right (♋) foreleg curled underneath his body; he has short, curled horns

CEPHEUS is seated on a hillock facing the viewer; he is dressed in a long tunic and wears a Phrygian cap on his head; he raises his left hand with the palm opened and the other arm is held down by his right side

CASSIOPEIA is seated on a boxy throne with no back, but two arched openings in the base; she is dressed in a long tunic and mantle and her head is covered; she holds her arms outstretched with the palms of her hand facing upwards

fol. 4r **ANDROMEDA** stands facing the viewer and is dressed in a long translucent dress with tight sleeves; her wrists are tied to two trees planted on small hillocks; she looks slightly to the left

PEGASUS is depicted as half a winged horse facing to the left with his forelegs extended in front of him; he has curled ears and his wings are unfurled above his back; the body ends after the belly

ARIES stands to right, without belt, and looks backwards over his shoulder; he has very curled horns, a long tail and tufted fleece

TRIANGULUS is a set of nested equilateral triangles.

PISCES are set at right angles to each other with the nose of the left fish nearly touching the tail of the right fish; their mouths are connected by squiggly line with

five bends; they face in the same direction (right) and both backs are upwards

fol. 4v **PERSEUS** is nude and faces away from the viewer, striding to to right with his left leg leading; his cloak floats behind him to the left and its edge is decorated with dots; he holds the Medusa's head by its hair in his left hand behind his buttocks; he has a very vegetal-looking *harpe* held out in front of him in his left hand

LYRA is bucephalid lyre with two long horns at either side and a trefoil shape in the middle

CYGNUS flies to the left, with a gracefully curved neck and his feet trailing behind; he right wings is raised so that it frames his head

AQUARIUS is nude and stands facing the viewer and slightly to the right with a cloak covering his left shoulder and coming around the back of his body so that he can grip its ends with his right hand; he holds an upturned, handle-less urn in his extended left hand from which water pours at an angle to a spot between his two feet.

fol. 5r **CAPRICORN** faces to the right with his front legs extended fully in front of him; he has long, slightly wavy horns and double corkscrew tail that ends in a triangle

SAGITTARIUS is depicted as a centaur that bounds to the right with his forefeet raised; he holds the bow in his left hand and pulls the string with his left; he has no other attributes or clothing

AQUILA stands leaning slightly to the right with his right wing outstretched behind him and his and his head turned in that direction; the left wing is folded in

DELPHINUS swims to the left and has a large smiling beak, prominent round eye and a tufted horn on his head; his body is long and lean and he has several sets of fins

fol. 5v **ORION** stands facing the viewer and is dressed in a short tunic with long, calf-length cloak, which covers his left side; he holds his right hand raised with his palm towards the viewer in front of his right shoulder and his left hand rests on the hilt of a sword that is held behind his body and reappears at the right side of his body.

CANIS MAIOR leaps to right, with its forepaws raised; it has a short snout, laid-back ears and a long slim tail

LEPUS leaps to right, with its ears erect and its forepaws raised

fol. 6r **ARGO (NAVIS)** is a ship with a three-pronged bow ay the bow with balls at the end of each prong;, there are two [steering](#) oars and a long square sail with the lines of rigging running to the aft deck; there are vertical lines on the hull and the stern ends in a curl and a ball (with no 'pennant).

CETUS is a classical sea-monster with an up-curved snout, pointed ears and a beard; it [swims to the left](#) with its wing-like flippers stretched in front; it has a triple corkscrew tail the ends in four lobes

ERIDANUS reclines to the far left of his stream and is dressed in a long toga and

a mantle, which exposes his right shoulder upon which he rests a long frond; the handle-less urn floats above and to the right of his body beside him, upside-down, with a stream flowing from it towards the right and away from the man

PISCIS AUSTRINUS looks like a tadpole with a furry tail, it has a round head; large round eye, gaping mouth and swims to the left.

ARA is a square, two storey structure with decorative squares in the bottom storey and three flames coming from top surface

fol. 6v **CENTAURUS** runs to right, with a feathery tail flowing behind him; he turns to look behind him; he holds a large palm frond in his right hand that also flows out behind him to the left; he holds a dog (**Lupus**) by its right hind leg in his left hand, with the dog's head downwards.

HYDRA is depicted as a snake with two humps facing to the left; it has a round head and sticks out its arrow-shaped tongue

CaRATER is two-handed and is sitting slightly above the first hump at its mid-body

CORVUS is parrot-like and stands on the end of Hydra's tail facing it

fol. 7r **CANIS MINOR** leaps towards the right; it has a square snout, pointed ears and it sticks its tongue out; it has a long slim, curled tail

notes

According to BORST (1995²), the illustrated star catalogue *De ordine* in this manuscript is an excerpt from the *Libri computi*, also known as the compilation in 7 books, originally created between 809-812 in Aachen.

The cycle of illustrations in this manuscripts has the few characteristics of the cycle *De ordine III*. These features can also be seen in Paris BN na 1614, although there are stylistic and iconographic differences. In the Paris manuscript, for example, one finds VIRGO with wings, CANCER as crab, ARIES not looking backwards, an image of the arrow in SAGITTARIUS.

Note that the text of St Petersburg is slightly different from the edited version in MAASS (1898) or dell'ERA (1974). The whole text is transcribed in the St. Petersburg catalogue.

bibliography

LES MANUSCRITS LATINS (St Petersburg) 1910, pp. 240-42, no. LXXXVIII: provenance Petrus Dubrovski (olim Sangerman?); end 11th century; catalogue has whole text

| [BORST 1995², p. 211, note 7.](#)

HAFFNER 1997, p. 176: says 'De ordine ac positione'.

| **contact**

| consulted: spring 1989