

THE HOROSCOPE OF LICINIUS SUR?

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HEPHAESTION OF THEBES includes in his *Apotelesmatica* (in a chapter entitled *Περὶ τύχης ἀξιωματικῆς*) three horoscopes from the collection which Antigonus of Nicaea had made in the late second or the third century (*Apotelesmatica* 2.18.22–66). Although the full text of Hephaestion was edited only very recently by D. Pingree (Leipzig: Teubner, 1973), the three horoscopes were published in 1902 from an epitome of his work (*CCAG* 8.2.82–86),¹ and translated (though not in full) with astronomical commentary by O. Neugebauer and H. B. van Hoesen in their collection of ancient Greek horoscopes (nos. L 76, L 40, L 113, IV).² The original publication readily identified the first and the third, which belong to a Roman emperor who was born on 24 January 76 and died in his sixty-third year, and to a noble youth, born on 6 April 113, who “thinking he was already emperor” died at about the age of twenty-five (*περὶ κε' ἔτος*) with an elderly relative (respectively, Hephaestion, *Apotelesmatica* 2.18.22–52; 62–66).³ The allusions to Hadrian and Pedanius Fuscus would be clear even without the additional details which Antigonus’ discussion also discloses, and the latter identification has extremely serious implications for the dynastic history of Hadrian’s reign.⁴

The second horoscope has proved more problematical (*Apotelesmatica* 2.18.54–61). It belongs to a man who was born on 5 April 40, was a

¹C. E. Ruelle, *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum* 8.2 (Brussels 1902) 82–86—now re-edited by D. Pingree, in the second volume of his edition of Hephaestion (Leipzig: Teubner, 1974), as *Epitoma* 4.26.12–56.

²O. Neugebauer and H. B. van Hoesen, *Greek Horoscopes* (*Mem Amer Philos Soc* 48 [Philadelphia 1959]) 79–80; 90–91; 108–109. The literary horoscopes in the volume include some which are pertinent to emperors other than Hadrian: Nos. L 37 and 68 clearly belong to Nero, but the date of death is wrongly given as 11 June 68 instead of 9 June 68, presumably because a Greek astrologer misinterpreted “*a.d. V Id. Iun.*”; No. L 401 might be Marcian; No. L 419 is Valentinian III (Vettius Valens, ed. W. Kroll [Berlin 1908], *Additamenta vetusta* p. 365. 29: *Οὐαλεντινιανοῦ βασιλέως*); No. L 428 could conceivably be either Zeno or Anastasius. Nos. L 401 and L 428 (it may be noted) derive from Rhetorius, who is elsewhere stated to have collected emperors’ horoscopes (*CCAG* 8.3.111 cf. 8.4.221; 224).

³*CCAG* 8.2.82; 85 n. 1. Antigonus’ version of the horoscope of Hadrian had already been edited by Cumont and W. Kroll from another manuscript, *CCAG* 6.67–71.

⁴For the fullest discussion so far published, see F. H. Cramer, *Astrology in Roman Law and Politics* (*Mem Amer Philos Soc* 37 [Philadelphia 1954]) 165 ff.; 175 ff.; 268. His translations from the Greek are not entirely reliable, and his treatment unfortunately failed to alert historians of the period to the true significance of the horoscope.

prominent public figure, wielded authority, punished many, and was very rich (56: *ἔσται προφανὴς ἐκ προφανῶν, ἐξουσιαστικὸς καὶ πολλοὺς κολάζων, πολυχρήματος*).⁵ He habitually practised homosexuality and had a distaste for women (57: *πρὸς δὲ τὰς θηλείας μίξεις ἀνεπίστροφος τυγχάνει καὶ ῥυπαρὸς πρὸς τὰς ἀρρενικάς*), and he gave generously to his *patria* (59: *καὶ τῇ πατρίδι πολλὰ ἀναθήματα καὶ δωρεὰς παρέχοντα*). The combination of data tells heavily against the two identifications so far canvassed, *viz.*, Julius Servianus, cos. III 134, and Hadrian's father, P. Aelius Hadrianus Afer.⁶ Servianus, the grandfather of Pedanius Fuscus, was forced to commit suicide at the end of Hadrian's reign: since his age is then stated as ninety (Dio 69.17.1; *HA, Hadr.* 15.8; 23.8; 25.8), and the date should be the early months of 138,⁷ his date of birth can hardly be 5 April 40. Hadrian's father died in 85 at the age of forty (*HA, Hadr.* 1.4; *PFayum* 19): hence he was born ca 45 (not in 40), and never attained the position of prominence which the possessor of the horoscope enjoyed. On the other hand, there are obvious similarities to L. Licinius Sura, cos. III 107, whose wealth and homosexuality were notorious (Dio 68.15.3; Arr. *Epict. Diss.* 3.17.4), and whose generosity to his native region stands on epigraphic record (*CIL* 2.4282: near Tarraco).⁸ Moreover, Sura would suit the context perfectly—Hadrian's friend and patron (*HA, Hadr.* 2.10; 3.10) preceding his first intended heir.⁹

Most reconstructions of the career of Licinius Sura have relied on an acephalous inscription found on the Mons Caelius at Rome (*ILS* 1022), and have dated his first consulate (which was suffect) to 97 or thereabouts.¹⁰ If these reconstructions are well-founded, then it would follow

⁵Neugebauer and van Hoesen translate *προφανὴς ἐκ προφανῶν* as "very distinguished, of very distinguished (ancestors)." It might be better to take the phrase to signify merely "extremely famous;" cf. 65: *ἐκ μεγίστου γένους καὶ περιφανοῦς*.

⁶Cramer (above, n. 4) 162 f.; 177; Neugebauer and van Hoesen (above n. 2) 80. For the full evidence about the two men, *PIR*² J 631; A 185.

⁷Neugebauer and van Hoesen (above, n. 2) 109: "Our result shows that the age given in the horoscope requires the year 137/138 as the date of execution." This clear statement about the date of Fuscus' death, and hence of Servianus', has gone virtually unheeded.

⁸Neugebauer and van Hoesen state that "the relationship between the rising and the culminating degree in no. L 40 as well as in no. L 76 agrees exactly with the geographical latitude of southern Spain" (*ibid.* 80). Professor G. J. Toomer advises me that the indication of the place of birth is not reliable enough to exclude a man born in northern Spain as the possessor of the horoscope. Hadrian (it may be relevant to note) was in fact born in Rome (cf. *HA, Hadr.* 1.3).

⁹I owe this conception of Fuscus entirely to an unpublished paper by Mr E. J. Champlin (written in October 1974), which convincingly identifies the young Fuscus as the honorand of *ἸϞΑΙ*, Beiblatt 49 (1968–71) 31–32 no. 7 = *AE* 1972.578 (Ephesus).

¹⁰B. Borghesi, *Œuvres complètes* 5 (Paris 1869) 32 ff.; H. Dessau, *ad loc.*; E. Groag,

that Sura was born considerably later than the possessor of the horoscope. But doubts have already been expressed, even on the evidence normally employed. R. Syme questioned the attribution of the inscription, proposing Q. Sosius Senecio, cos. ord. 99, 107, as an alternative.¹¹ The hypothesis was taken up and developed by C. P. Jones, who dated Sura's first consulate to "93, conceivably 86 or earlier," and subsequently avowed a preference for the earlier of the two possibilities (all the consuls are known for 87 to 92).¹² His conclusions should (I believe) be accepted. Although R. Syme and W. Eck have argued that newly discovered evidence restores the balance of probabilities in favour of 97,¹³ there remains the passage of Martial, written ca 90, which Jones adduced as implying an earlier date:

*has, inquam, nugas, quibus aurem advertere totam
non aspernantur procures urbisque forique,
quas et perpetui dignantur scrinia Sili
et repetit totiens facundo Regulus ore,
quique videt propius magni certamina Circi
laudat Aventinae vicinus Sura Dianae,
ipse etiam tanto dominus sub pondere rerum
non dedignatur bis terque revolvere Caesar* (Epig. 6.64.8-15)

The company among whom Sura appears is surely too elevated for a man of about thirty-five who had not yet been consul—Silius Italicus, cos. ord. 68, the powerful M. Aquilius Regulus, and the emperor himself.¹⁴

Let it be proposed, therefore, that Sura is the subject of the horoscope and that he was born on 5 April 40 precisely. If that is so, his first consulate should fall close to the end of the reign of Vespasian, for he will be an exact coeval of Cn. Julius Agricola (born 13 June 40). In addition, Sura's role in 97 becomes more comprehensible. It is reported that Trajan seized power with Sura's encouragement (*Epit. de Caes.* 13.6:

RE 13 (1926) 472 ff.; A. Degraffi, *Fasti consolari* (Rome 1952) 29; G. Alföldy, *Die Legionslegaten der römischen Rheinarmee* (Bonn 1967) 16 ff.; W. Eck, *Senatoren von Vespasian bis Hadrian* (Munich 1970) 144, 150; *PIR*² L 253.

¹¹R. Syme, *JRS* 47 (1957) 134 = *Ten Studies in Tacitus* (Oxford 1970) 116; *Tacitus* (Oxford 1958) 641, 646.

¹²C. P. Jones, "Sura and Senecio," *JRS* 60 (1970) 98-104; *Gnomon* 45 (1973) 690.

¹³R. Syme, *Akten des VI Internationalen Kongresses für griechische und lateinische Epigraphik München 1972* (Munich 1973) 439; W. Eck, *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2.1 (Berlin/New York 1974) 165 f. The two items of evidence in question are new fragments of the *Fasti Ostienses* (on whose relevance to Sura, see also F. Zevi, *Listy filologické* 96 [1973] 135 ff.), and the inscription published by M. Speidel, "The Captor of Decebalus. A New Inscription from Philippi," *JRS* 60 (1970) 142-153.

¹⁴For the consulate of Regulus, which is nowhere directly attested, see R. Syme, *JRS* 43 (1953) 161.

ob honorem Surae, cuius studio imperium arripuerat). Sura will have been active in Rome, as an elder statesman whose age (if not his morals) precluded him from aspiring to the imperial throne.¹⁵

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¹⁵I have incurred large debts in the composition of this brief note. Mr E. J. Champlin first drew my attention to the three neglected horoscopes, Professor C. P. Jones provided detailed comment on the preliminary draft, and Professor G. J. Toomer both gave me advice on astronomical points and directed me to the recent edition of Hephaestion: to all three I am deeply grateful.