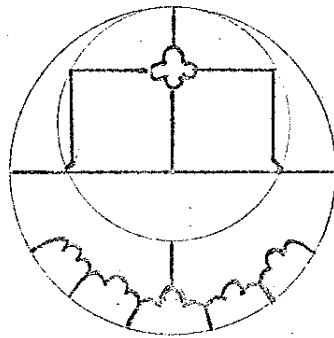


## MEDIEVAL ASTROLABE CLASSIFICATION BY RETE DESIGN

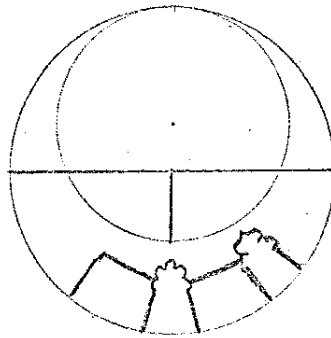
This memorandum deals with the results of an exercise in establishing families of astrolabes just by looking at the general design of the strapwork of the rete. The resulting classification is thus only suggestive, in nomenclature, and of what might emerge from a more complete effort. The examples have all been taken from Gunther's Astrolabes of the World (Vol. II, Oxford, 1932), and are referred to by the numbers which Gunther has assigned. Schematic drawings of the retes are presented, along with comments on dates and origin from Price's International Checklist of Astrolabes (1955). Three major categories, further divided into subcategories, have emerged:

### I. Gothic

#### A. Gothic Arch

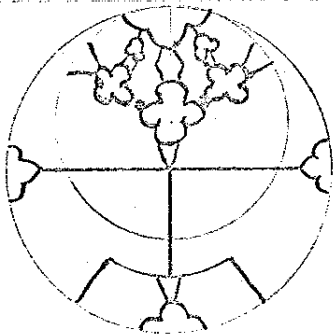


G.A. 162, c.1360  
Hispano-Moorish, Gothic + quatrefoil

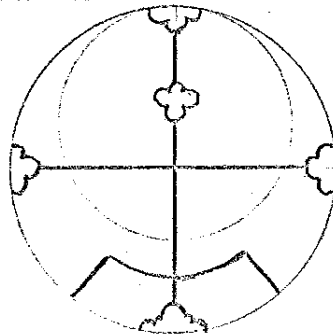


G.A. 191, c.1260  
Hispano-Moorish Gothic

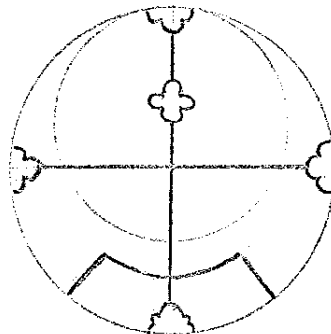
#### B. Trefoil-Quatrefoil Gothic



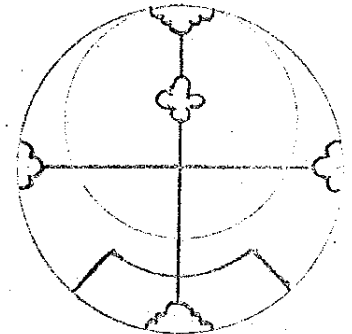
G.A. 290, c. 1295  
Trefoil Gothic,  
English (Sloane)



G.A. 293, c.1325  
Trefoil Gothic,  
Tsevi Herz (owner)



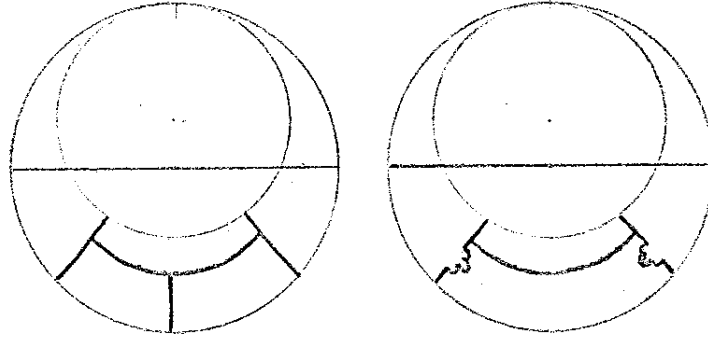
G.A. 294, c.1320  
Trefoil Gothic,  
rete only



G.A. 295, c.1360  
Trefoil Gothic  
+ quatrefoil

II. Indicator-Line

A. Indicator-Line, Simple

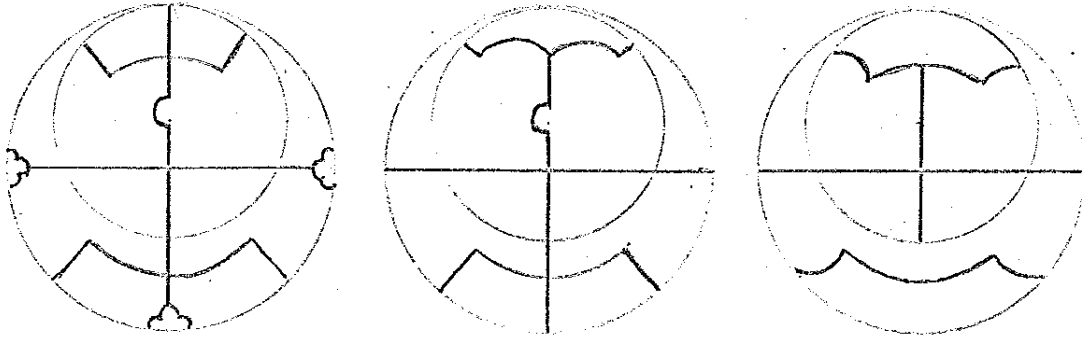


G.A. 166, c.1260  
Moorish Gothic, reengr. c.1400

G.A. 300, c.1260  
Moorish Gothic

In addition to the basic ecliptic and capricorn circles, these two retes contain only an east-west line and an arc of the equator with supports; G.A. 300 exhibits some Trefoil Gothic decoration.

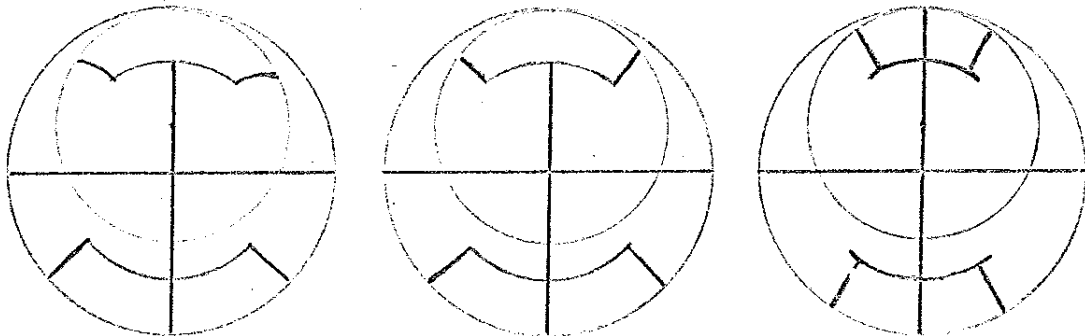
B. Indicator-Line, Full



G.A. 163, c.1450  
Debased Trefoil Gothic; Jeh Charla

G.A. 168, c.1360  
Debased Y Gothic

G.A. 186, c.1475  
Late Gothic, re-engr.?



G.A. 192, c.1440  
Late Gothic

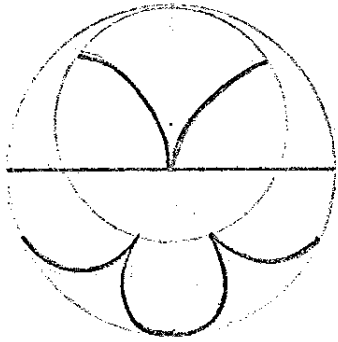
G.A. 193, c.1425  
Late Gothic

G.A. 247, c.1430  
Hispano-Moorish Gothic

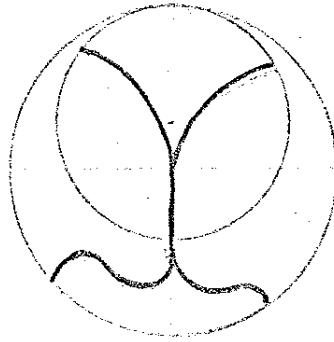
Here we find both an upper and a lower portion of the equator, as well as meridian and east-west lines. G.A. 163 is reminiscent of the Trefoil-Quarterfoil Gothic category, while G.A. 168 has a "Y" form (see category III below) in place of the upper arc of the equator. In this schematic representation, G.A. 192 is identical to an astrolabe of Jean Fusoris presented by Poulle in *Un Constructeur D'Instruments Astronomiques au XV Siècle Jean Fusoris* (Paris, 1963).

III. "Y" Form

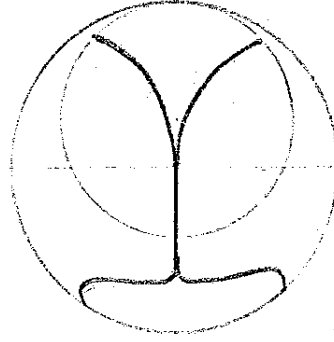
A. Low "Y"



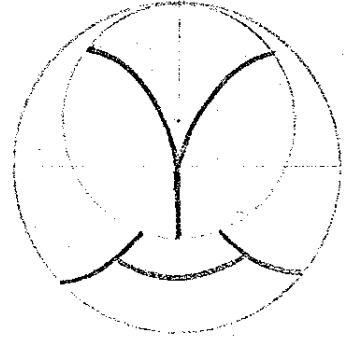
G.A. 249, 1491  
h.b.= Hans Bamman



G.A. 299, c.1360  
Y Gothic, English



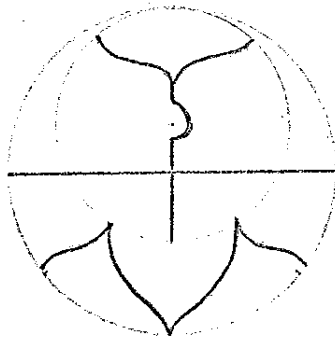
(manuscript)



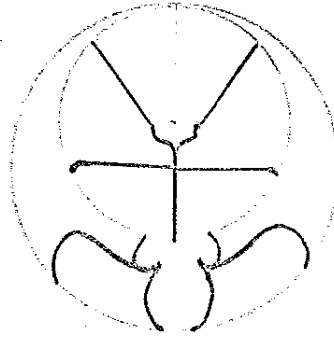
G.A. 304, c.1450  
Y Gothic, Quod  
Parnel(?)

Here the two arms of the Y proceed upward from the center.

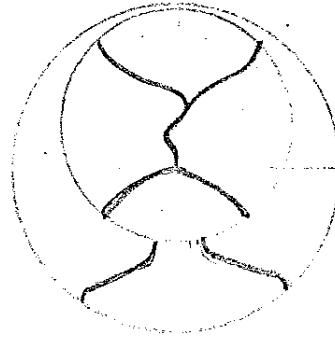
B. High "Y"



G.A. 173, c.1500  
Y Gothic? but  
possibly c.1570



G.A. 296, c.1350  
Y Gothic, Oxford



G.A. 297, 1350  
Y Gothic; Ecuatorium  
dorsum, Oxford

Here a meridian line goes part-way up from the center, and then divides into the two arms of the Y.

In conclusion, it might be noted that this classification scheme has some correspondence to the information taken from Price's checklist. For example, the progression from simple to full in the indicator-line category appears to correspond to a progression in time.

This work was done in a seminar under the direction of Professor Derek J. Price at Yale University.

Daniel Siegel  
October, 1968