

Please note new address:

18 Maid's Causeway,
Cambridge.

15 November 1954.

Dear M. Michel,

At last I am beginning to get straight in the new house and to find all my books and papers again. I should have written to you long ago, but I know you will understand how difficult it has been.

The purpose of this letter is to submit to you the pair of photos enclosed, showing a Roias astrolabe which has just come into our possession at the Whipple Museum. It has been lying around in private hands (some sort of brass 'thing') in Scotland for at least three generations. I have a feeling (quite unproveable) that it may be connected with the instruments now at St. Andrews brought there by Gregory -- the collection which has the Elias Allen mariner's astrolabe and all the Humphrey Cole items.

As you will see, the instrument follows de Roias' book carefully, being rather similar to Plate VI fig 22 of the Billmeier Catalogue. (or should I say, the Billmeier instrument in the 'Michel' Collection!) The only clue on our new toy (which lacks alidade and rule) is the flourish lines under the R of HORAE in four places -- but these look significant to me. Perhaps it is better if I give no more hints, but wait for your opinion as to maker. We should be most grateful. The instrument is in ordinary brass, ungilded. The only other piece of individual design is the tudor rose on the throne ?

Very best wishes,

Derek J. Price

18 november 54

Dear Dr. Price,

Well ! well ! well ! well! Is Price the perfect angler again ? Although you don't say so, I know that you think of Gemini. If the small curls strongly remind Gemini's work, and if the general outlook of the instrument certainly smells Gemini, there are a few details which would mean that, in this case, it is not Gemini's best astrolabe. Compare with the Brussels astrolabe, of which, I think, I gave you a photo, but of which I enclose two new reproductions. The divisions, the bracket, the hour-lines with the little transverse bars, all this is Gemini's style. But the letters are certainly not as finely engraved. This does not mean that the instrument was not made in Gemini's shop: you know as well as I do that the lettering was entrusted to a specialist, and there may have been two different workmen for this kind of work. There are slight differences in the digits too: f.i. I on the Brussels astrolabe, instead of I on yours. Anyhow, I would not hesitate to call this a Gemini.

Gemini's signature is generally very tiny, sometimes reduced to a simple II. Take your best magnifying glass and hunt for it.

The Tudor rose has probably little meaning. Gemini worked for many courtiers, and the Royal Mark meant only that the owner had something to do with the Court.

I am very glad to have the photos and thank you. Thomas Lambert alias Gemini was my countryman (I am born in Liège and he was born in a village where I was often as a boy). Although he must have been a very disreputable character, I have some sympathy for him.

Glad to read that you are now quite "at home" in your new house. I hope to come and see it some day. Meantimes I remain

yours jealously

H.Michel

18 Maid's Causeway,
Cambridge.

21 November 1954.

Dear M. Michel,

Of course you are quite right about the purpose of my fishing. As you say, our new De Roias astrolabe looks much like Gemini - but nevertheless I am much puzzled by the difference in the style of the numerals and because also the flourishes are so much more like Cole's cartouche on the map of the Holy Land (you will find it in Archaeologia Vol 76 (1926) in Gunther's article).

It looks to me to be somewhere halfway between Gemini and Cole or even some other person unknown from the workshop -- could it be young Whitwell or Kynvin? Unfortunately we do not have enough of their work to judge well enough.

But thank you for your comments and confirmation of our hopes.

All sincere best wishes ---

Jack J. Rice

PS. Josten sends me your remarks on Bos. This really is a puzzle in taking, linked with similar taking for Habermel (you will remember the things I brought to show you!) Ioannes might be a real man - but half 'his instruments' are not - there are 4 Bos astrolabes at least: - some of Josten (Private) Rooseboom Leiden Fake? - Whipple Mus. Quite different - Greenwich.

26 november 54

Dear Dr. Price,

In my mind, Cole and Gemini can not be separated, and I am persuaded that Cole was employed by Gemini up to the latter's death in 1562. Besides, I am very inclined to believe that Cole was of flemish origin. Although he calls himself "an English Man born in ye North" his family might have emigrated (as did Gemini's family) in the first decades of the XVIth cent. Cole is mentioned by G. Harvey about 1590 as "old Cole", and he himself writes, in 1578, "in this my olde age". He must thus have been born between 1510 and 1520. This was the time when many "heretics" left the Netherlands.

The name "Cole" was later taken by Cools, the nephew of Ortelius, whose cognomen was Ortelianus. He also emigrated to England, and I notice that his family was interested in medals, which would perhaps establish some relations with the money-sinker Humfrey.

That Cole takes especial care to call himself "an English Man" would possibly mean that he was no more a foreigner. We have so often seen the case presently, with the sons of foreigners and refugees.

As regards the engravings by Cole and Gemini, you know, of course, Arth. M. Hind: Engraving in England in the XVIth and XVIIth cent. Part I: The Tudor period, Cambridge, Univ. Press 1952. (Th. Geminus on p. 39-58. Humfray Cole on p. 79-80.) Perhaps you can meet Mr. Hind and ask his opinion.

Let me know if you find something more precise. I am very interested.

yours truly