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My dear Professor Price

I have been most interested in your last paper in Centaurus, about the portable sundials in Antiquity. Here is Price again, establishing for us a list of little known (and many unknown) instruments which will prove very useful. Many thanks and my compliments for your perspicacity.

I too had noticed that on antique sundials, the hour lines are generally not numbered. What can we conclude from this systematic omission? Were the hours numbered from 1 to 12 from sun-rise to sun-set? Or was it sufficient to tell the time by "so many hours before noon - or after noon"?

On page 252, you say that "the astrolabe was already developed by about the time of Ptolemy". Undoubtedly, Ptolemy knew the problems which the stereographic projection enabled to solve, and was able to trace the hour-lines on such a projection of the sphere. But I could not consider that he knew the astrolabe as we know it, i.e. as a complete instrument with a rete, plates, etc, and besides portable. There is often a very long way between a geometric theorem and its application to an instrument.

The mistake in the engraving of the hour-lines on the Vienna dial is similar to many other errors: e.g. nearly all the Habermel's astrolabes, which make a confusion between ascensio recta and longitudes; or even the splendid Royal Globe of Sweden, on which you find two Arabias, two Red Seas, etc. carefully engraved and enamelled!

With my hope that you shall soon discover the Lake Strymon's astrolabe, and my best wishes for a happy New Year.

yours friendly

H.Michel