Roger of Hereford’s 
*Liber de arte astronomomice iudicandi*: England’s first astrology textbook?

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Roger of Hereford appears to have been a member of the Bishop of Hereford’s household in the late 12th century, where he taught at the school at Hereford Cathedral. He wrote on the subject of “computus”, the technique needed to calculate when Easter would fall each year, and which involved understanding the lunar cycles used in the Jewish calendar. This had been a contentious issue since the early days of Christianity, and was an obvious topic for a churchman to study. He also wrote a text on astrology in the form of an astrology manual or textbook. The techniques described in it are of Arabic origin, and he wrote it at a time when many scientific, medical and astrological texts were being translated from Arabic into Latin. Roger states that these techniques are available in many places, but that he is compiling them into a single volume: his *Liber de arte astronomomice iudicandi*.

Why Arabic? Astrology had Hellenistic roots and had been widely taught in the Roman Empire until the emperor Justinian banned its teaching in 529, when scholars of astrology were invited to the court of Khosrow II in Persia. After the rise of Islam in the 7th century, astrological knowledge from the Roman Empire, Persia and India was disseminated across the Islamic world including centres of Islamic learning in Spain, such as Cordoba and Toledo. Toledo was captured by the Christians in 1085, making Arabic texts available to Christian scholars, and resulting in the 12th century “translation movement”, of which Roger seems to have been part.

**METHODOLOGY**

- Transcribing and translating the available manuscripts
- Identifying the Arabic provenance of each technique
- Identifying unique ideas and techniques in Roger’s work
- Roger’s library: assessing works available to him
- Looking at the context of the medieval curriculum
- Identifying the transmission of Roger’s work subsequently

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- What was the attitude of the Church towards astrology?
- Why was astrology an important topic to teach in a school?
- Were Roger’s sources Latin translations, or did he read Arabic?
- Did Roger study in Toledo (as Hereford Cathedral maintains)?
- Did Roger innovate, or just use existing material?
- Did Roger help to develop a unique English astrology?