

Searching for the horoscope of Portugal

How a nation is dated, why the candidates disagree, and what a national chart can be asked to do.

Mundane astrology assigns charts to countries. Before any such chart can be read, someone has to decide when the country began — and that decision is historical, not astrological. It is also, in most cases, genuinely contested.

Portugal is a useful case precisely because its candidates are well documented and irreconcilable. What follows is less about one country than about the method the question forces on us.

The candidates

At least five moments have a serious claim, and each corresponds to a different idea of what founds a nation.

DATE	EVENT	WHAT IT WOULD MAKE THE CHART MEAN
1139	Afonso Henriques acclaimed king after Ourique	a nation founded by the assumption of sovereignty
1143	Treaty of Zamora; recognition by León	a nation founded by recognition from a neighbour
1179	Papal bull <i>Manifestis Probatum</i>	a nation founded by recognition from the supreme authority of the age
1640	Restoration of independence from Spain	a nation refounded after interruption
1910	Proclamation of the Republic	a state founded by its present constitutional form

These are not competing guesses at one true date. They are answers to different questions, and which one is right depends on what is being asked of the chart.

The methodological problem

Three difficulties compound one another, and they apply to every national chart, not only this one.

The times are rarely recorded

Medieval sources give dates and occasionally a canonical hour; they almost never give a clock time. Without a time there is no ascendant and no houses — which removes the part of the chart

that carries most of the judgement.

The standard recourse is rectification from known events. The standard danger follows immediately: a time adjusted until it fits the events one already knows will fit them, and will fit nothing that has not happened yet. A rectified national chart is a hypothesis, and it should be labelled as one every time it is used.

The calendar changes

Portugal adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1582, and earlier Portuguese documents are frequently dated by the Era of Caesar, thirty-eight years ahead of the Christian era. A date taken from a chronicle without checking which reckoning it uses can be out by decades. This is not a subtlety; it is the single most common error in historical chart work.

Nations are not born

The deeper problem. A person has a first breath; a country has a process. Acclamation, treaty, papal recognition and constitutional refoundation are all real events, and none of them is obviously *the* beginning. Choosing one is a historical argument that the astrologer has to make explicitly, because the chart cannot make it.

What can be done anyway

The problem is real and it is not paralysing. Three approaches remain available, and they answer different kinds of question.

Charts for events, not for nations

The most defensible. A battle, a treaty, a proclamation is a moment, and where the time is recorded it can be cast and read like any inception — lord of the ascendant for the matter, tenth for its standing, seventh for its opponents. The judgement then concerns that event and claims nothing about the country as such.

Ingress charts, which need no founding date

The Sun's entry into Aries, cast for the capital, gives a chart for the year for that place. It requires no decision about origins at all: the country is simply the place the chart is cast for.

This is the workhorse of practical mundane astrology, and its indifference to founding dates is a large part of why. See the quarterly ingresses for the subdivisions of the year.

Great conjunctions, for the long view

The Jupiter–Saturn conjunctions, recurring about every twenty years and shifting element roughly every two centuries, are the tradition's instrument for changes of epoch. They describe conditions over long spans and do not attach to a founding moment either.

If a national chart is used

Then four things should be stated alongside it, every time:

- **Which date, and why.** The historical argument, briefly — what conception of founding it rests on.
- **Where the time comes from.** Recorded, or rectified; and if rectified, from which events.
- **Which calendar the source used.**
- **What would count against it.** A chart that is never tested against events it did not predict is not being used as a chart.

A judgement published with those four lines is doing astrology. One that presents a rectified date as a fact, and reads history backwards into it, is doing something else — and the second is what has given mundane astrology most of its reputation.

The honest conclusion

There is no single horoscope of Portugal, and the search for one is better understood as a search for the right question.

For a particular event, cast that event. For a year, cast the ingress for Lisbon. For an epoch, look at the great conjunctions. For the country as an entity across eight centuries — the tradition does offer methods, and they rest on a choice of origin that has to be argued rather than assumed.

Saying so is not a retreat. It is the difference between a technique that can be wrong and one that cannot.

On the Era of Caesar. Portuguese documents commonly use it until the fifteenth century; it runs thirty-eight years ahead of the Christian era, so that Era 1177 is 1139 of our reckoning. Chronicles are also prone to ordinary error in dates, and a single source should not be relied on where a second is available.

On rectification. The traditional methods — the animodar among them — were designed for nativities with an approximate time, not for reconstructing a date from historical events. Applying them to a national chart is an extension of their use, and one that should be declared.