

Theon of Alexandria (c. 335-405 A.D.) [father]
and Hypatia of Alexandria (c. 360-415 A.D.) [daughter]

(13)

Theon was a mathematician and astronomer who lived and worked in Alexandria. As an astronomer, he wrote commentaries on Ptolemy's Almagest, edited a collection of tables attributed to Ptolemy [the so-called "Handy Tables"], and predicted and observed solar and lunar eclipses in 364 A.D. He also wrote a work, now lost on the astrolabe, and another, also lost, on the star Sirius.

As a mathematician he wrote commentaries on Euclid's Data and Optics. He might have been the author of the Catoptrics, a work of uncertain authorship also sometimes attributed to Euclid. Most importantly, he prepared an edition of Euclid's Elements that was likely the basis of most versions of the Elements until the 1800's, when older Greek texts of the Elements were rediscovered.

Hypatia was Theon's daughter and collaborator, who studied philosophy, and perhaps other subjects, at the Academy in Athens. She was also trained, perhaps in Athens, perhaps in Alexandria, in mathematics and astronomy. She apparently edited her father's commentaries on Euclid's Elements and Ptolemy's Almagest, and wrote commentaries (all now lost) on Diophantus' Arithmetica and Apollonius' Conics, as well as an original work on astronomy, also lost.

As far as we know, neither Theon nor Hypatia made any original contribution to mathematics; indeed, as far as we know, no one did in our mathematical lineage outside of India until the 800s when the Islamic scholars began translating Greek and Indian mathematics into Arabic.

Hypatia, in particular, is mainly remembered as a neo-Platonist philosopher and for her murder by mob in Alexandria. She got caught in the power struggle between the pagan prefect who represented the Eastern Roman Empire and the local Christian bishop, who also aspired to secular power. Hypatia was identified with the prefect in the eyes of his opponents because she moved in some of the same social circles and was also a pagan.