

*Manuscripts count? A subjective view of the Alfonsine Tradition with  
questions in the end*

*Copernicus and Astronomy: continuity, Reform and Dissemination*  
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## Introduction

### *Questions*

How can we grasp, on the manuscript level, the thickness of the Alfonsine astronomers intellectual practices? What kind of astronomy are they producing *and how*? How does this astronomy participate in the broader cultural and social life of the late mediaeval period in Europe?

### *Sources*

Escorial O II 10; Erfurt, CA, F. 377; BnF, lat. 7281 selected from many Ms that were surveyed in the context of the ALFA project

### *Approach*

Pointing to some details in the documents (e.g. '*marginalia*') contextualise them so as to show that they often challenge our analytical categories and indicate some significant historical trends

### *Outline*

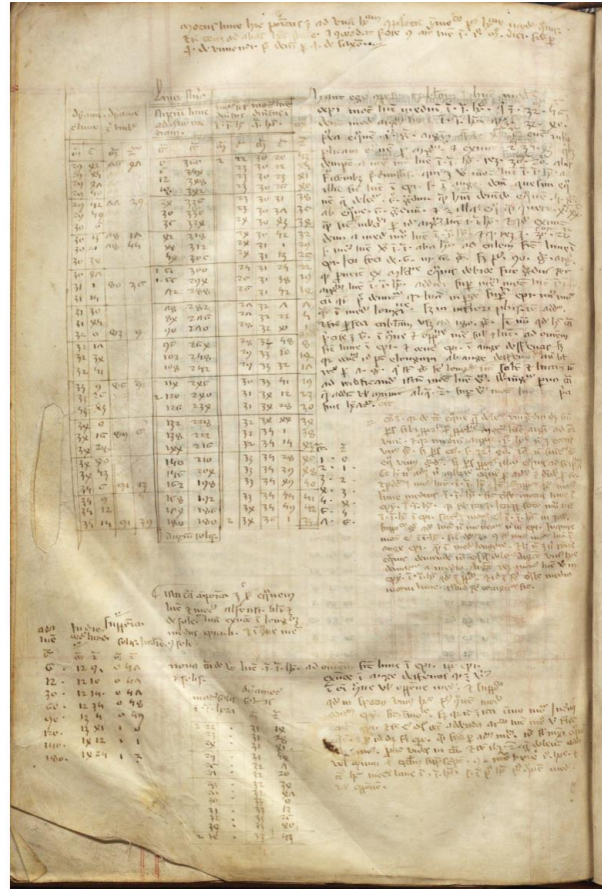
- The limit of the notion of 'table set' and astronomy as a discipline (Escorial O II 10)
- Expanding the notion of 'computation' and a 'procedural trend' in Alfonsine astronomy (Erfurt, CA, F. 377)
- Alfonsine astronomy as a 'narrative', Historiography of Alfonsine astronomy (BnF, lat. 7281)



## The limit of the notion of 'table set' and astronomy as a discipline (Escorial O II 10)



# The limit of the notion of 'table set' and astronomy as a discipline (Escorial O II 10)



## About the document

An example of the 'corpus astronomicum', late 13th early 14th c.

For more than 20 years belonged to John of Murs, many annotations and over kinds of intervention in the document

A group of 'tabular' additions by John of Murs on 204v and 217r analyses the possibility to uses velocities as a table argument in eclipse computations

## Food for thought

This is a limit case of the 'toolboxing' effect that is general in the Alfonsine tradition, the 'intellectual units' are the tables and individual procedures and they are primarily assembled in toolbox codices, not in abstract 'table set' which are often editorially fuzzy

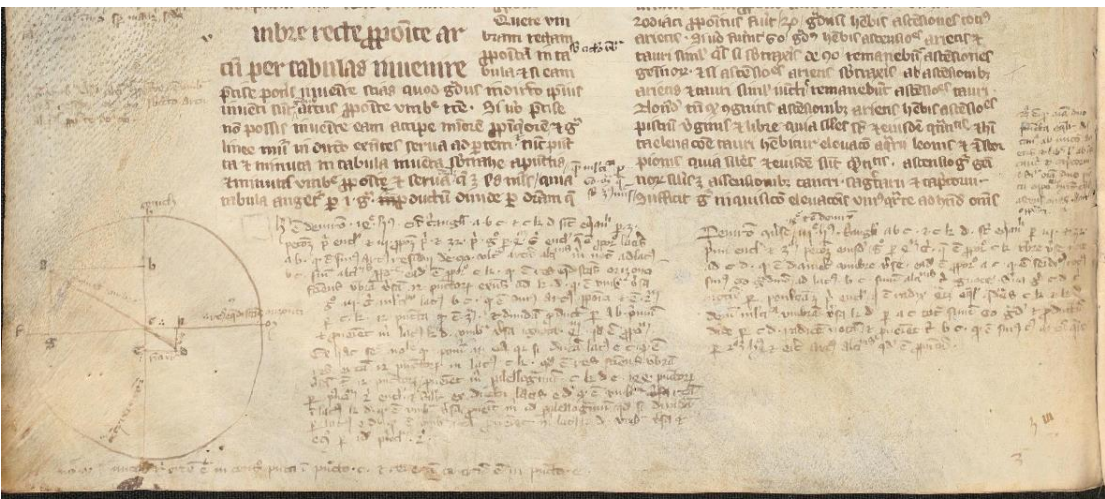
Astronomy as a discipline is practiced both inside and outside universities and, for its technically advanced parts, is generally not structured around authorities (*pace* Almagest) which are commented



## Expanding the notion of 'computation' and a 'procedural trend' in Alfonsine astronomy (Erfurt, CA, F. 377)



# Expanding the notion of 'computation' and a 'procedural trend' in Alfonsine astronomy (Erfurt, CA, F. 377)



Erfurt, CA F. 377, 23v

## About the document

The central part of the MS is copied by John of Saxony in the early 1320, while learning from his master John of Lignères in Paris.

Two series of comments by JoS on his master canons concerning shadows: first on 'geometrical' *demonstratio*, the second later in separate text 'computational' *probatio numeri*

## Food for thought

Different forms of astronomical computations, with or without links to geometrical rationales, some of which have apodictic properties (*per ultimam precisionem*)

Alfonsine astronomers focus on computation, trying to improve its efficiency and accuracy, adapting it to users with different levels of mathematical proficiency and background

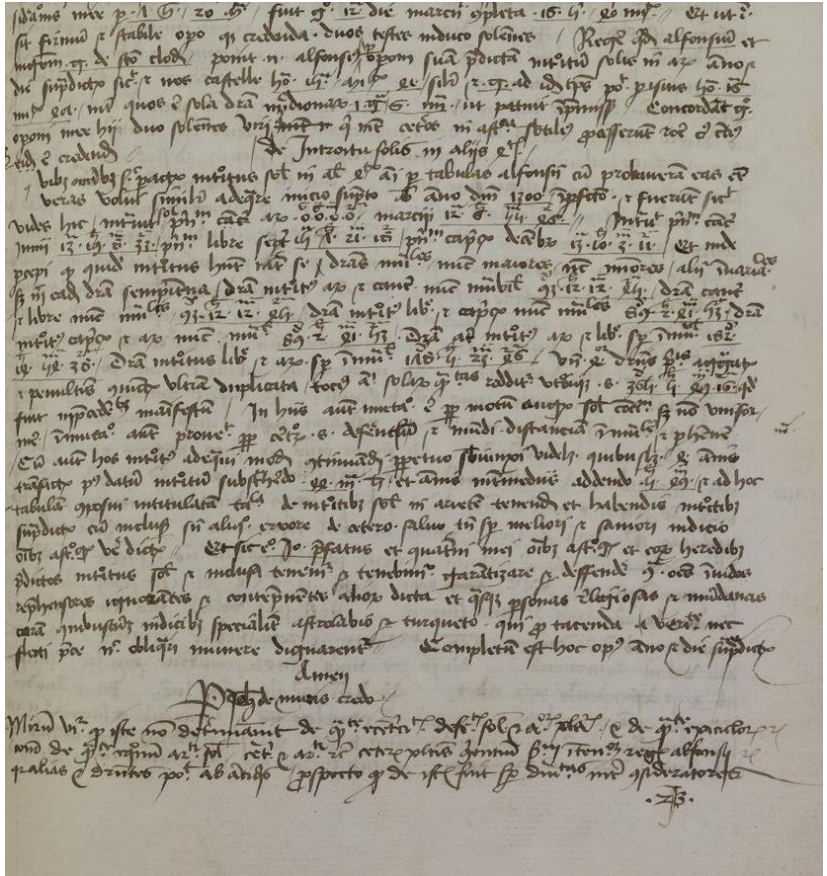


## Alfonsine astronomy as a 'narrative', stability and innovation (BnF, lat. 7281)





About the document



Mid 15th century collection of astronomical texts, copied in 'chronological' order, with different sorts of annotations.

One key point in this historical anthology is the emergence of Alfonsine astronomy in Paris (almost half of the corpus)

In the little explicit bellow, the copyist (Jo.B) attribute a text to John of Murs and point that John of Murs is not interested in the eccentricities and epicycle radius characteristics of Alfonsine Astronomy

Food for thought

There is a very early historiographical interest for Alfonsine astronomy, maybe because Alfonsine astronomy is also a 'narrative' from the start.

This 'narrative' element is instrumental in the growing exposition of astronomy (and astrology) first in court cultures and progressively (ephemerides, prognostications) to a more general audience



**Questions in the end**



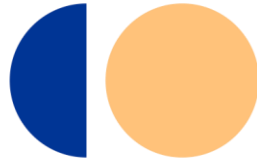
## Questions in the end

What kind of analytical tools can we construct to describe the particular modes of textual production that are witnessed in the sources, the ways authorial agentivity is distributed among collectives with different types of historical actors? Can digital tools be of any help here as they also disrupt the printing press related notions of works and authors?

Is it important that Alfonsine astronomers focused on procedures and computations for about two centuries instead of over types of astronomical research? What kind of potentialities this produce for 16th century astronomers?

If Alfonsine Astronomy is also a narrative, that is a particular way for astronomers to relate to the history of their discipline, is it true also for other astronomical cultures, and is it important to take this dimension into account when trying to understand how astronomers work?





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**Merci!**

**Dziękuję!**