

Seminar SAW
History of Science, History of Text, 2011-2016

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**Working on ancient mathematical sources:
Textual environment and historiographic operations**

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Editing a Zij at the turn of the 20th century : the case of Carlo Alfonso Nallino (1872-1938)

Abstract – Nallino's edition of al-Battani's *Sabi zij* was elaborated over ten years between 1899 and 1909. It consists of three volumes: volume I presents a Latin translation of the text; a transcription and emendation of the tables are found in the second volume, whereas volume III gives an edition of the Arabic text. Nallino worked mainly from a single manuscript (Escorial ms. Arabe 908) which is up to now the only known complete manuscript of the work. He was associated to the famous Italian astronomer Giovanni Schiaparelli (1835-1910) for his technical work on the tables.

We will begin by a short presentation of these two scholars and the kind of interest they had in ancient sciences. This will give us the context in which the project of Nallino's edition was formed, the types of motives and purposes it had. From this it will be possible to analyse the way Nallino and Schiaparelli worked with the tables in the Escorial manuscript, their treatment of scribal and computational errors, in order to assess how their methodological means relates to their project. We are in a favourable situation to do this because half of volume I and II of Nallino's edition is taken up by his own comments on the documents and the way he worked with it. Moreover in 2008 Benno van Dalen and Fritz S. Pedersen published a technical survey of Nallino's edition from which we will depend as well.