

Conference “Mistakes and the study of manuscripts” 2016

May 2nd, 2016

Readers’ practices with mistakes

Eleonora Sammarchi (CNRS, Université Paris Diderot)

Mistakes and « false mistakes » in arabic manuscripts on algebra : a case study

Abstract – Algebraic treatises often include long collections of problems, that tend to be repetitive from the point of view of the lexicon and of the contents. Although the reader would be tempted to skim them, these collections are the ideal field for finding mistakes. These can be mistakes of calculation due to the author, copyist misunderstanding of the text or, sometimes, false mistakes, i.e. variances that seem to be errors but that are, in fact, corrections made by the author on his reference sources. We will present examples of these three categories of mistakes taken from a 13th century Arabic treatise on algebra and its reference texts.