

Call for Applications: 3 years PhD position in the history of late medieval astronomy in Europe

ALFA is an ERC funded project (2017-2022, 60 month, Consolidator grant 2016 agreement 723085, PI Matthieu Husson) dedicated to the study of Alfonsine astronomy which flourished in Europe from the second half of the 13th century to the middle of the 16th century.

Relying on approaches from the history of astronomy, history of mathematics, and history of manuscript cultures to study astronomical tables, instruments, theoretical and mathematical texts, *ALFA*'s main objectives are to:

- Retrace the development of the corpus of Alfonsine texts from its origin in the second half of the 13th century to the end of the 15th century by following, on the manuscript level, the milieus producing and using these codices;
- Analyse Alfonsine astronomers' practices, their relations to mathematics, to the natural world, to proofs and justification, and their intellectual and social contexts and audiences;
- Build a meaningful narrative showing how astronomers in different milieus with diverse practices shaped, also from Arabic and Hebrew materials, an original scientific scene in Europe.

ALFA works in a deeply collective manner. Around Matthieu Husson (PI, CNRS-SYRTE Observatoire de Paris PSL), José Chabás (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona) and Richard Kremer (Dartmouth College, USA) constitute the project advisory board. A local team of 3 post-docs, 3 PhD students and a digital humanities IT expert, based at the Paris observatory, will work with a team of international collaborators comprised of 10 specialists of the history of late medieval astronomy in Europe. Finally a team of external experts from neighbouring fields will consult with *ALFA* in order to enrich its methodological and theoretical dimensions and to help design the digital tools.

ALFA invites **application for a 3 year doctoral position** expected to start, if the position is filled, on **October 1, 2018** or as soon as possible thereafter (CNRS-contract, according to CNRS policy 1758 Euros gross per month). This position will be hosted at the Observatoire de Paris (ED 127) inside the history of astronomy team of the SYRTE Laboratory (dir. Michela Malpangotto, UMR 8630). The PhD will be co-directed by Matthieu Husson and Christian Bracco (SYRTE Observatoire de Paris PSL).

The successful candidate will work as part of the local team and will spend most of his/her working time on his/her research project in the context of this collective, international project. The candidate is expected to participate in the publications of the project and will be encouraged to take part in the scientific activities relevant to his research (workshops and seminars). He or she will have also dedicated research funds especially for travel to relevant European libraries.

In line with *ALFA*'s objectives this PhD project should enhance our understanding of the formation and development of Alfonsine astronomy. Different approaches are possible to achieve this aim. They rely on a range of competences and we thus encourage candidates with different skills and training background to apply. These potential approaches include by order of priority for this call:

1. Candidates with a strong background in Latin and a fair knowledge of codicology and palaeography might choose to edit key works of Alfonsine astronomy (like the various Canons written on the Alfonsine or related tables or texts on planetary theory [theorica]). Such a research



would make new texts available and enhance our understanding of the perceptions of Alfonsine astronomy held by late medieval actors.

2. Candidates with a more scientific background could choose to analyse and edit other kinds of documents in the Alfonsine corpus such as texts on instruments or specific sets of tables. These types of research would bring new sources into discussion and would enhance our understanding of the mathematical and astronomical practices of the actors.
3. Candidates with a background in medieval history could analyse and study from a range of potential sources specific milieus or individuals that fostered Alfonsine astronomy or were particularly relevant for its development. Such research would produce new sources and contribute to an understanding of the social and intellectual contexts in which Alfonsine astronomy was embedded.

To qualify for the position, candidates are required to have completed their Master's degree in either sciences, history of sciences or medieval history. During the PhD it will be possible for the successful candidate to enhance her/his training according to his/her needs in Latin philology, codicology, palaeography, history of astronomy and history of mathematics. Acquired competences in these domains will be appreciated. A good control of spoken and written English is also important in order to be able to interact fruitfully with the international team of the project and to participate in its publications.

Applications should be sent no later than May 31, 2018 to Matthieu Husson (matthieu.husson@obspm.fr). They shall include: a short CV (2 p. max), contact information for two possible external referees (name, institution, email contact), a written sample of academic work (e.g. Master thesis and/or a recent paper), and a short letter of application (2 p. max). In the latter, the candidate should position him or herself with respect to the above briefly described potential topics for the PhD and/or should present an original topic that he or she could study within the context of ALFA's general objectives.

Review of applications will start on June 1, 2018 and the **result will be published on June 30, 2018**.

For further information you are warmly encouraged to contact Matthieu Husson (matthieu.husson@obspm.fr).

