
In 1574, the crown endowed the College of Santo Antão (Saint Anthony’s) in Lisbon with a generous rent on the spice trade. The royal donation was made in perpetuity and was contingent on the creation of a public course of mathematics. Borrowing its name from John of Sacrobosco’s (c.1195–c.1256) elementary treatise of astronomy, this course came to be known as “Aula da Esfera” (Class on the sphere). Since there was no fixed schedule nor textbook, the teachers enjoyed considerable autonomy in the preparation of the lessons. The main restriction was linguistic. Because it was mostly attended by mariners, naval officers, and engineers, the course was always delivered in vernacular. It was taught between 1590 and 1759 by Portuguese and foreign Jesuits, including renowned mathematicians and astronomers from the Collegio Romano, such as Cristoph Grienberger (1561–1636), Giovanni Paolo Lembo (1561–1636), and Cristoforo Borri (1583–1632). The lessons were varied and were not confined to a single mathematical discipline. Significantly, conventional subjects such as cosmography, nautical astronomy, algebra, and geometry were taught alongside controversial ones such as astrology and chiromancy. Historians of science have known since the 1970s that the students’ notebooks of the “Aula da Esfera” included astrological material. The matter became widely known in the field of Jesuit studies with the publication of Henrique Leitão’s “Entering Dangerous Ground: Jesuits Teaching Astrology and Chiromancy in Lisbon” in 2006 (*The Jesuits II*: Cultures, Sciences and the Arts, 1540–1773, 371–89) Notwithstanding the abundance of articles on the “Aula da Esfera” published before and after this seminal paper, the astrological content of the manuscripts was yet to be studied.

Centered around the manuscripts that include astrology lessons, *Jesuit Astrology* fulfils a long-awaited desire and contributes to overcoming a considerable gap in the literature on both the Lisbon college and on the teaching and practice of astrology in the Society of Jesus more generally. The book is based on Luis Campos Ribeiro’s doctoral dissertation and is divided into four parts, namely: 1. Astrology in the Early Modern Era; 2. Jesuits and Astrology; 3. Jesuits Teaching Astrology; and 4. Jesuit Astrologers. *Jesuit Astrology* also comprises some valuable appendices, including the first English translation of the bull *Coeli et terrae* (1586) (533–47); a list of the teachers of the “Aula da Esfera” with astrological writings or connections to astrology (547–8); the table of contents of the students’ notebooks (549–86); João Delgado’s
(1553–1612) defense of astrology (1605) (592–5); and the prognostication on a comet by Luis Gonzaga (1647–1747) in 1702 (618–23).

With a profound knowledge of the technical aspects of a discipline that has been excluded from university curricula for a long time, Ribeiro was able to study the astrological content of the manuscripts of the “Aula da Esfera” with historical breadth, acumen, and precision (253–527). Besides showing that the Jesuits taught astrology in Santo Antão for more than a century and a half, Ribeiro reviews the authorship of an important manuscript (British Library, Egerton MS 2063) (267–81, 586–91) and challenges some widely accepted claims on the Jesuits’ stances towards astrology. To put the teaching and practice of astrology in Lisbon into context, Ribeiro provides a long, detailed, and original account of the history of astrology in the Catholic world in the early modern period (1–250). Notably, these chapters could have originated a separate monograph in their own right. Here, Ribeiro deals with topics such as the lawfulness of astrology in the Catholic world, the mathematization of the discipline, and the progressive marginalization in early modern Europe. These considerations are followed by a careful examination of Jesuit writings, including those penned by Christoph Clavius (1538–1612), Benito Pereira (1536–1610), Alessandro de Angelis (c.1559–1620), Antonio Possevino (1533–1611), Francisco Suárez (1548–1617), and Athanasius Kircher (1602–80). Contrary to the prevailing view, Ribeiro clearly shows that the opposition to astrology was far from unanimous, and that attitudes of acceptance, rejection, and indifference towards astrology co-existed. In the early modern period, some Jesuits were firmly against astrology, others favored it, and others still were ambiguous or erratic.

One of the most significant, and perhaps unintended, outcomes of Ribeiro’s account is the nuanced portrayal of Clavius’s stance on astrology (115–26). One of the arguments put forward to support Clavius’s anti-astrological bias was the hypothesis that the writings of de Angelis—one of Clavius’s preeminent students—reflected Clavius’s own views. However, Ribeiro points to the fact that João Delgado—also a former pupil of Clavius and the inaugural chair of the “Aula da Esfera”—supported and taught astrology in Lisbon. In addition, by comparing Clavius’s printed Commentary on the Sphere (1570) with two extant manuscripts (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Urb. Lat. MS 1303 and Urb. Lat. MS 1304), Ribeiro shows that Clavius subscribed to the doctrine of celestial influence as he wrote in ms 1303, that “there is no reason to deny that those superior bodies have the power to act on these inferior bodies. For they exercise their activities on these sublunary things” (118). Moreover, Clavius made it clear that his printed commentary would not include judicial astrology out of obedience to church teachings. This finding challenges the claim that...
Clavius was a staunch opponent of astrology and reaffirms the importance of the Catholic regulation in this period.

At first, the manuscript lessons of the “Aula da Esfera” were the sole focus of Ribeiro’s doctoral dissertation. However, the notebooks ended up being a point of departure from which he was able to write a wider account on the history and practice of astrology in Jesuit context from Europe to South America and East Asia. Jesuit Astrology is a tour de force and it is quite an achievement for a doctoral dissertation. Elegantly written, carefully argued, and supported by myriad manuscript and printed sources it is a landmark in the fields of Jesuit studies, science and religion, and early modern astrology. Hopefully, the book will spur a lively academic debate around a commonly neglected topic in the history of the Society of Jesus. Finally, Jesuit Astrology challenges the black-and-white accounts of Jesuit science and education and offers an alternative way to grasp the paradox of modernity in Jesuit history and historiography. The teaching and practice of science in the Society of Jesus was characterized by a long-lasting tension between tradition and modernity. In the case of astrology, this tension provided room for a diverse range of opinions and for the emergence and development of a sanctioned practice of a discipline that was consistently criticized and firmly regulated by the Catholic Church.

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Since the publication of Charles Boxer’s Christian Century in Japan (1951), or going further back, that of Bernhard Varen’s Descriptio regni Iaponiae (1649), many commentators and researchers have provided insights into the sixteenth- to seventeenth-century Catholic evangelization led by the then young Jesuit order in this distant part of the Far East. The remarkable rise and fall of the Japanese mission, marking both the climax and the onset of the decline of the Iberian-led Age of Exploration, warrant examination from diverse perspectives: religious/intellectual/“glocal” history, anthropology, international relations, cultural studies, even philology, and linguistics. Ucerler’s