

10. Some Strange Features of Ptolemy's *Almagest*. Preliminary Remarks

10.1. Latin and Greek editions

In conclusion, several remarks regarding the *Almagest* are in order. It is assumed that its first printed edition was published in 1515 in Latin (Greek being regarded as the language of the original). It was an awkward translation of the Arabic manuscripts. The edition of 1528 was based on the first, and subject to criticism. The first printed edition of the Greek text had been made in Basel in 1538, only five years before Copernicus' *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* appeared. A translation from the Arabic text of the year 827 was allegedly made in 1230 A.D. (whereas, according to H. Montignot, this was done in the 11th c.). J. Bode in his work on the *Almagest* asserted that it had been incorrect, judging from the comparison of the Latin text with the Arabic one ([13], V. 5, p. 194). We have no information regarding the translation and the edition of 1528 A.D.

In 1537, the Latin text was also published in Cologne. We could not find enough data concerning the history and fate of the earlier translations, except the Cologne edition of 1537 and the one from Basel of 1538 (a very remarkable fact), and also about how much and how precisely they differ from the widely accepted text of the *Almagest*, which we will discuss below (following N. A. Morozov), and which was based on the Cologne and Basel books. Controversy surrounds even the earlier Venetian edition, for which N. I. Idelson supplies 1528, whereas N. A. Morozov, referring to J. Bode, gives 1537 (*ibid.*). Therefore, we have concentrated our attention on the first Greek Basel edition and the Latin 1537 Cologne edition, on whose title page it printed in black and white that it is the first (!), due to which we should clarify how reliable the dating of the 1528 edition is.

Following the two editions of 1537 and 1538, others appeared in 1541, 1551, etc. [13], [122]. Their abundance shows that the *Almagest* edition was not regarded as outdated in the 16th c. in spite of its antiquity (as suggested today).

According to O. Neugebauer, there is no better way to convince oneself of the intrinsic consistency of ancient and medieval astronomy than to juxtapose the *Almagest* and Copernicus' *De revolutionibus*. Chapter after chapter, theorem after theorem, table after table, these works run parallel ([257⁺], p. 197).

One of the most important sections of the *Almagest* is a star catalogue said in the text to have been made under Antoninus Pius from the personal observations of the author. Its surprisingly good condition attracts our attention first of all; the repeated copying during more than one thousand years as suggested by traditional history did not impair it at all. Any editor knows how many errors even a very attentive copyist of large numerical material can make. The second particular is its exceptional precision; the star coordinates are given to the accuracy of 1/6 of