

Nicolaus Copernicus and Rome. A survey of the sources

Friday, 29 September 2023 14:00 (30 minutes)

It belongs to the frequently repeated topoi of the Copernicus biographies that Nicolaus Copernicus left his place of study in Bologna in the Holy Year 1500, traveled to Rome and spent some time there. In Rome he held lectures as a “professor of mathematics” and enjoyed public attention. This was reported for the first time by his only disciple Georg Joachim Rheticus (1514-1574) in his *Narratio prima* about the six books of Copernicus (Danzig 1540).

The church historian Giuseppe Maria Carafa (1717-1786) dealt with this stay in more detail in his work *De Professoribus Gymnasii Romani Liber Secundus* (Rome 1751).

However, the only real verification of Copernicus’ residence in Rome is an entry Copernicus made in an almanac by Regiomontanus about his observation of the lunar eclipse of November 6, 1500 in Rome. Regardless of astronomical affairs, the Warmia cathedral chapter and thus also the canon Copernicus maintained close relationships with the Roman Curia, which are handed down through letters, files and notarial instruments. The numerous entries that Copernicus made in his copy of Pliny the Elder’s *Naturalis historia* are largely unknown. They testify his subtle knowledge of chronology and Roman history. The paper describes and comments on the various sources and subjects them to a critical appraisal.

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Session Classification: Copernicus in Rome