# *"The portable universe"*
# *A build-your-self astrolabe workshop*

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> "Like a modern electronic computer, the astrolabe in the Middle Ages was a source of astonishment and amusement, of annoyance and incomprehension." (North 1974, p. 106).

Today, astrolabes ornament scientific and popular books on the history of science and illustrate in exhibitions pre-modern scholarship, especially in Islamicate societies. In motion pictures they indicate either the medieval scholar or the sorcerer, while in pre-modern figures, a person with an astrolabe denotes the astronomer or the astrologer. As decorative as these multi-functional instruments are, how are they used? And what can be done with them? After a brief introduction to the history and mathematics of this fascinating instrument, this workshop provides the opportunity to build a simple paper model of an astrolabe and subsequently learn to solve some simple tasks with it.

Selected Bibliography:

For learning more about the technical background:

First step: North, John D.: „The Astrolabe". Scientific American 230:1 (1974), 96-106.

In depth: Morrison, James E.: The astrolabe. Rehoboth, DE 2007.

For browsing through some examples:

King, David A.: In Synchrony with the Heavens. Studies in Astronomical Timekeeping and Instrumentation in Medieval Islamic Civilization. Volume Two: Instruments of Mass Calculation (Studies X-XVIII). Leiden 2005.

van Cleempoel, Koenraad (Hg.): Astrolabes at Greenwich: A Catalogue of the Astrolabes in the National Maritime Museum. Oxford, Greenwich 2006.

van Gent, R. H.: De Hemel in de Hand. Twee astrolaben van het Museum Boerhaave (The Portable Universe. Two Astrolabes of the Museum Boerhaave). Leiden 1994.

# "The Portable Universe"

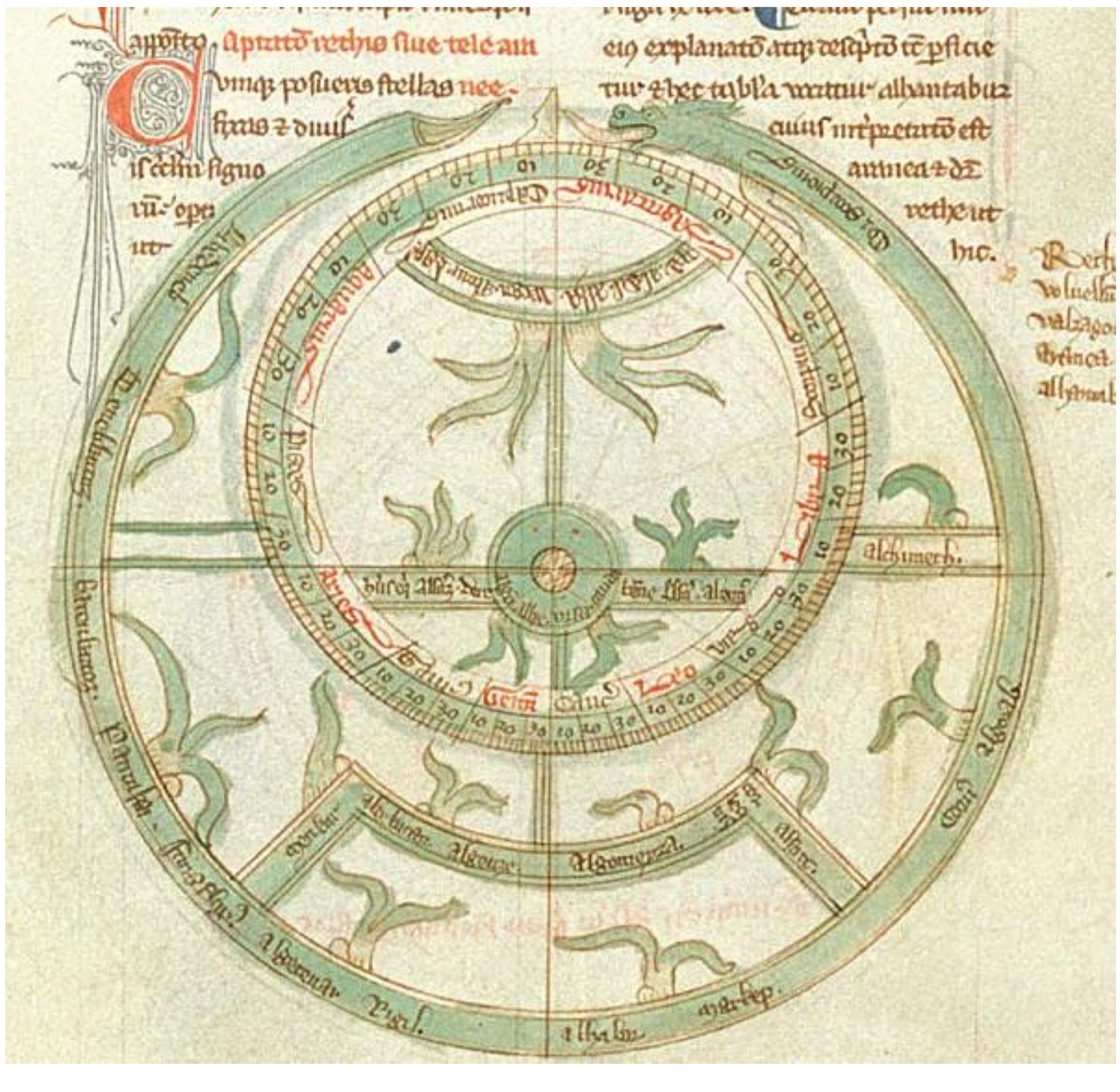
## *A build-your-self astrolabe workshop*

**<u>September 22, 2025</u>**

**Petra G. Schmidl** (Friedrich-Alexander Universität, Erlangen-Nürnberg, Germany)

**<u>Location:</u>**

**Radboud University, E.18.03**



-The workshop will be held between **13:00-17:00**

-**1 ECTS** may be obtained through **writing a short reflection paper** after the workshop

-**To attend**, please contact: **bruno.schalekamp@ru.nl**