



## The Colonial Legacy of European Mathematics in the Americas

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- LHUKW'LHUKW'ÁYTEN | UNCEDED COAST SALISH TERRITORIES (SFU)
- 20.03.2025
- MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
- THE LAPPAN-PHILLIPS-FITZGERALD MATHEMATICS EDUCATION COLLOQUIUM SERIES

# (Accidental) motivations I



Biblioteca Palafoxiana:  
The First Public Library in the Americas (1646)





## Motivations II

A material-political inquiry into the histories of measurement

- *Proportion, analogy, mixture: Unearthing mathematical measurement practices* (de Freitas & Sinclair, 2022)
- As with the Aztec **Quipu**, measurement begins in this relational engagement with the world, where what ‘matters’ is the specific co-relation between two or more material processes that occur alongside each other.



# Motivations III

EDITORIAL | 08 June 2022

## Science must overcome its racist legacy: *Nature's* guest editors speak

We are leading *Nature* on a journey to help decolonize research and forge a path towards restorative justice and reconciliation.

By [Melissa Nobles](#), [Chad Womack](#), [Ambroise Wonkam](#) & [Elizabeth Wathuti](#)



## The Washington Post

America's Newspaper

HOME | CULTURE

## Professor: Geometric white privilege developed by ancient

'On many levels, mathematics itself is a product of white privilege,' says Gutierrez

FIRST PEOPLES

PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING

Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.

Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).

Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions.

Learning involves generational roles and responsibilities.

Learning recognizes the role of indigenous knowledge.



Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story.

Learning involves patience and time.

Learning requires exploration of one's identity.

Learning involves recognizing that some knowledge is sacred and only shared with permission and/or in certain situations.

For First Peoples classroom resources visit: [www.fnesc.ca](http://www.fnesc.ca)



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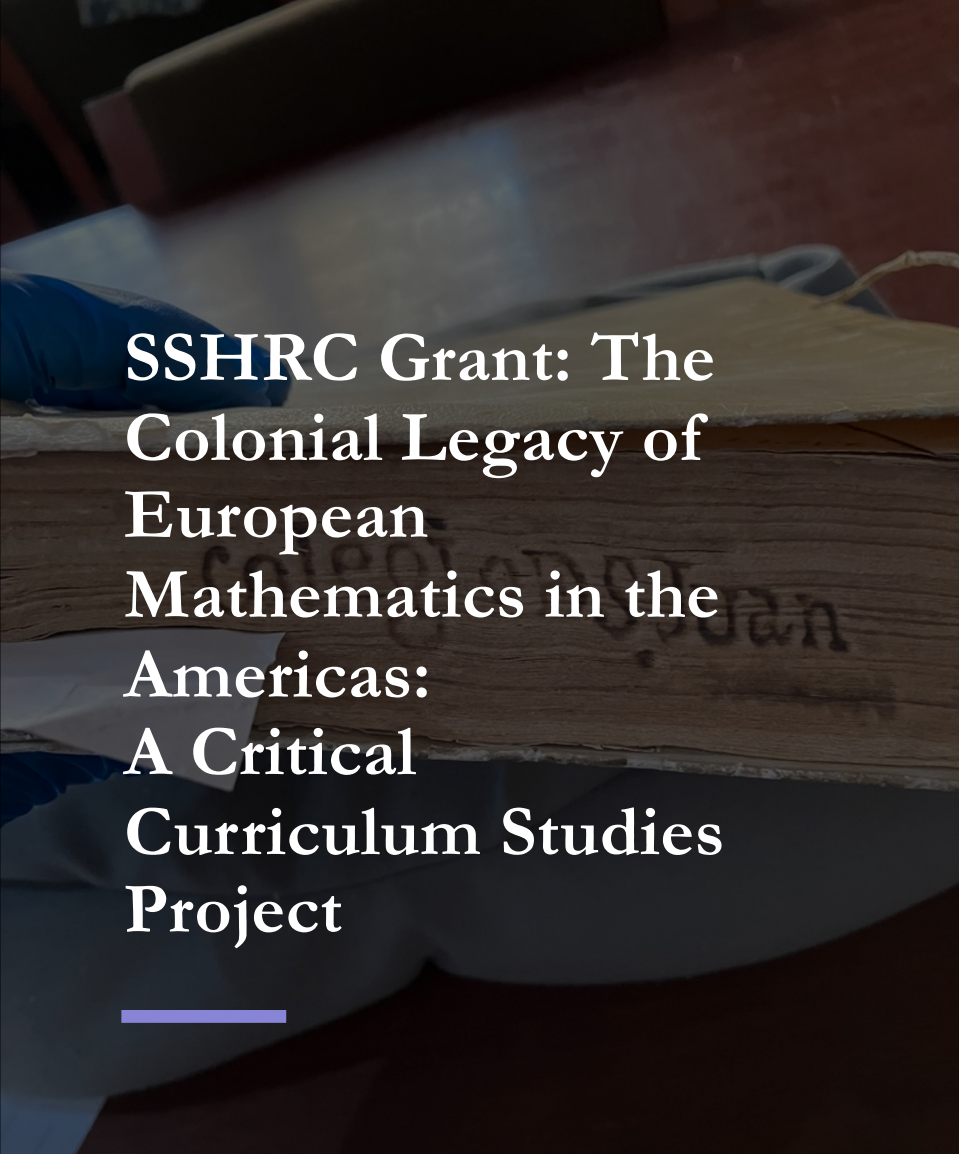
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Attempts to  
mathematics

2, 6:30am







# SSHRC Grant: The Colonial Legacy of European Mathematics in the Americas: A Critical Curriculum Studies Project

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- Which mathematical knowledge was included in the first books of 1646?
- How were the speculative and practical aspects of mathematics expressed?
- To what extent did the needs of science (astronomy, navigation, etc.) merge with the colonial conquest (governance, resource extraction) in mathematical applications?
- What kind of pedagogical form of address was used to frame the knowledge?
- How do the commentaries and books published by *Criollos* mathematicians (Diego Rodriques, Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, José Ignacio Bartolache, etc.) differ from their European contemporaries?

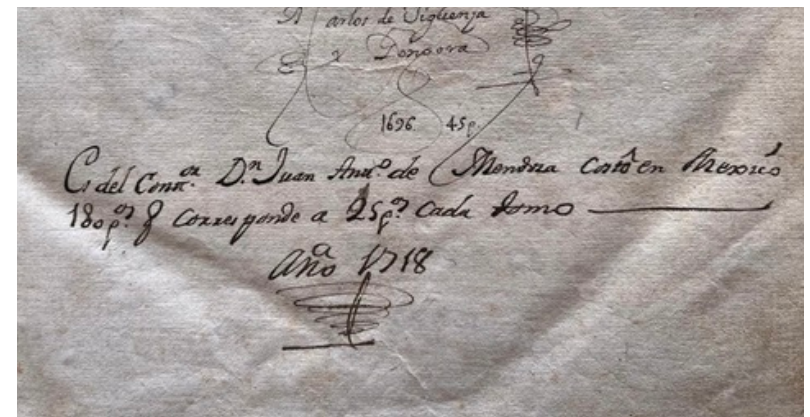
~170 books and manuscripts



# Methodological notes

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- Disrupt centre-to-periphery focused” and “passive receiver” scholarship (Gavroglu et al., 2008; Fuentes, 1992; Glissant, 1997)
  - Not always one-way: Binary numbers
  - Agential take-up of ideas and practices
- Disrupt 'big breakthrough' focus of history to attend to translation/transformation of 'minor' actors (Boucard & Morel, 2022)
- Annotations, firemarks, provenance
- Follow the baroque (Kircher, Caramuel, Sigüenza y Góngora, Sor Juana, etc.)





Baroque Puebla:  
Church of Santa María Tonantzintla





# Baroque....

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# in New Spain... in Science

- Deleuze (1993) *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*; the baroque as operative function, to fold, inside-and-outside; perspectivism, multiplicity of worlds, texture, infinite
- Glissant (1997) the baroque is characterized by a profusion of the real that is an antidote to the obsession of synthesis and unity that characterizes the “la pensée de l’Un”
- Irving Leonard (1959): the “whorls within whorls” of “persons, places and practices”
- Carlos Fuentes (1992): new Spain always and already a place of fusion, composite culture
- Elias Trabulse (1998): focus on the baroque period 1667–1690
- Bauer & Mazzotti (2009): baroque aesthetics of the works of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz
- Jens Høyrup (2019): Baroque Mindset and New Science: focus on Caramuel as “a major Baroque theoretician” (ambiguity, affect)
- Koen Vermeir (2013): the baroque as a style of thinking in Kircher (analogical between nature, man and machine)
- Ofer Gal & Raz Chen-Morris (2013): “forced paradox,” “distortion” “violent contrast,” and “reliance on sensual detail,” instrumentation, fable/artifice, passions, imagination as the mediating source for learning.

# Raz Chen-Morris' thesis on Baroque Science

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- The artifice of instrument displaces the sensory reliance of the human senses
- Physico-mathematical mixings
- Affirmation of fantasy and imaginary journeys as a way of coming to know the world
- Emphasis on the power of the imagination in learning
- Huygens (1629-1695) and Newton (1643-1727) are said to be the end of Baroque science
- The baroque science of Europe overlaps with the influx of books into the Palafoxiana and the beginning of Jesuit-educated criollo mathematicians





# Jesuit science

- Christopher Clavius (1538-1612) advocates for a shift in curriculum and argues for the key role that mathematics should play in the Jesuit curriculum in the colleges.
- Protestant texts also make their way to new Spain (sometimes avoiding the inquisition)
- The Jesuit network of scholars and colleges is the first “global” corporate network traversing key locations in the colonial world.
- In particular, Kircher’s (1602-1680) work spreads like wildfire across the Americas and onwards to Manila.
  - He conceives his work as a way of furthering the colonial process.
  - But he also seeks scholars who will send data back to him.
  - The poblanos first learn of Kircher’s texts “Celestial ecstatic journey” and others on magnetism by Jesuit scholars who are crossing Mexico on their way to Manila.



# (Math) education in Mexico

- Pre-Hispanic (before 1521)
  - Institutional education: the Calmécac (for children of nobility: to become priests, learning astronomy, mathematics, medicine) and the Telpochcalli (for children of commoners, to become warriors)
  - Higher education\*: calculate time, draw maps, isolate silver and other metals, botany, herbal medicine, etc.
- Colonial period (1521 to ~1810)
  - Schools opened in 1524 by Franciscans with primary aim to convert Indigenous peoples
  - First higher education school opened in 1535 (Latin, grammar, including Nahuatl, rhetoric, music, medicine, etc.); books begin arriving from Spain
  - Mathematics first formally taught in 1540 (Colegio in Michoacán)
  - First math book published in New Spain in 1556 by Juan Diez Freyle
- Jesuits (youngest order, began in 1540), arrive in New Spain 1572
  - Set up many schools, which were prized for their education
  - First Chair in math (University of Mexico) in 1637: Fray Diego Rodríguez
  - Expelled in 1767 (until 1813)

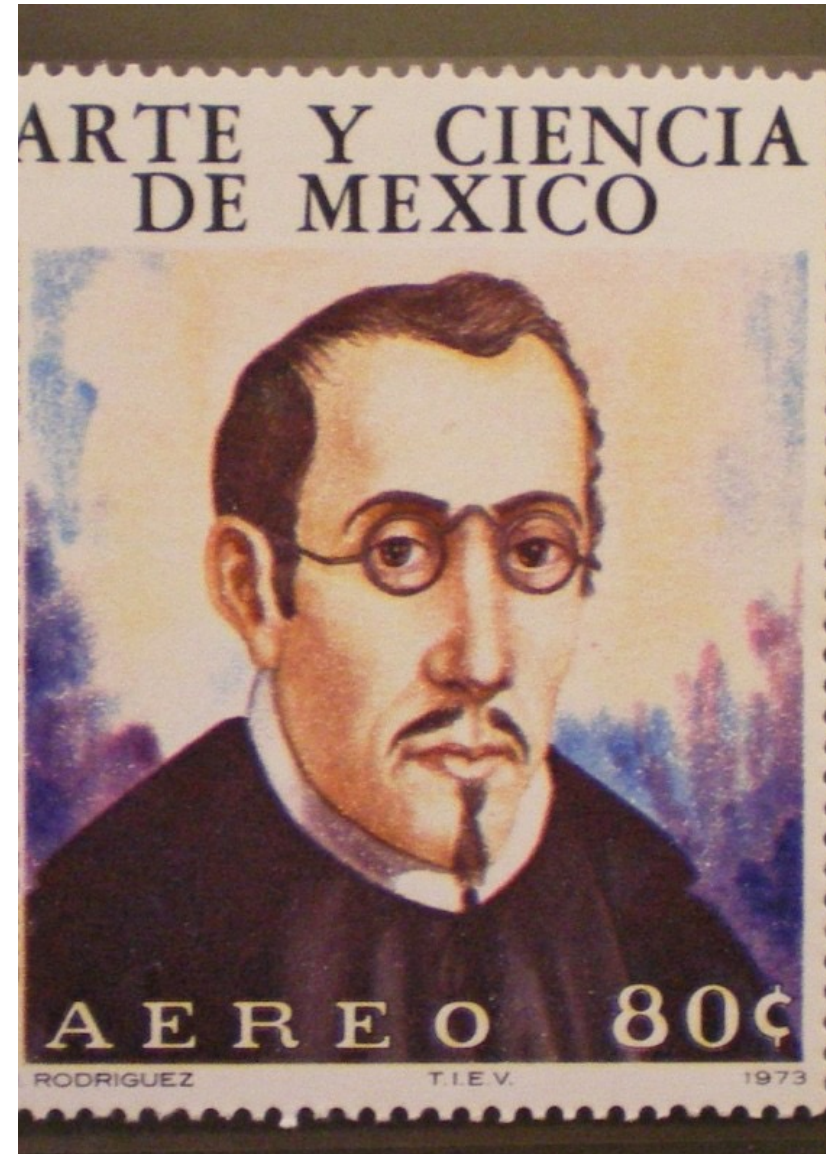




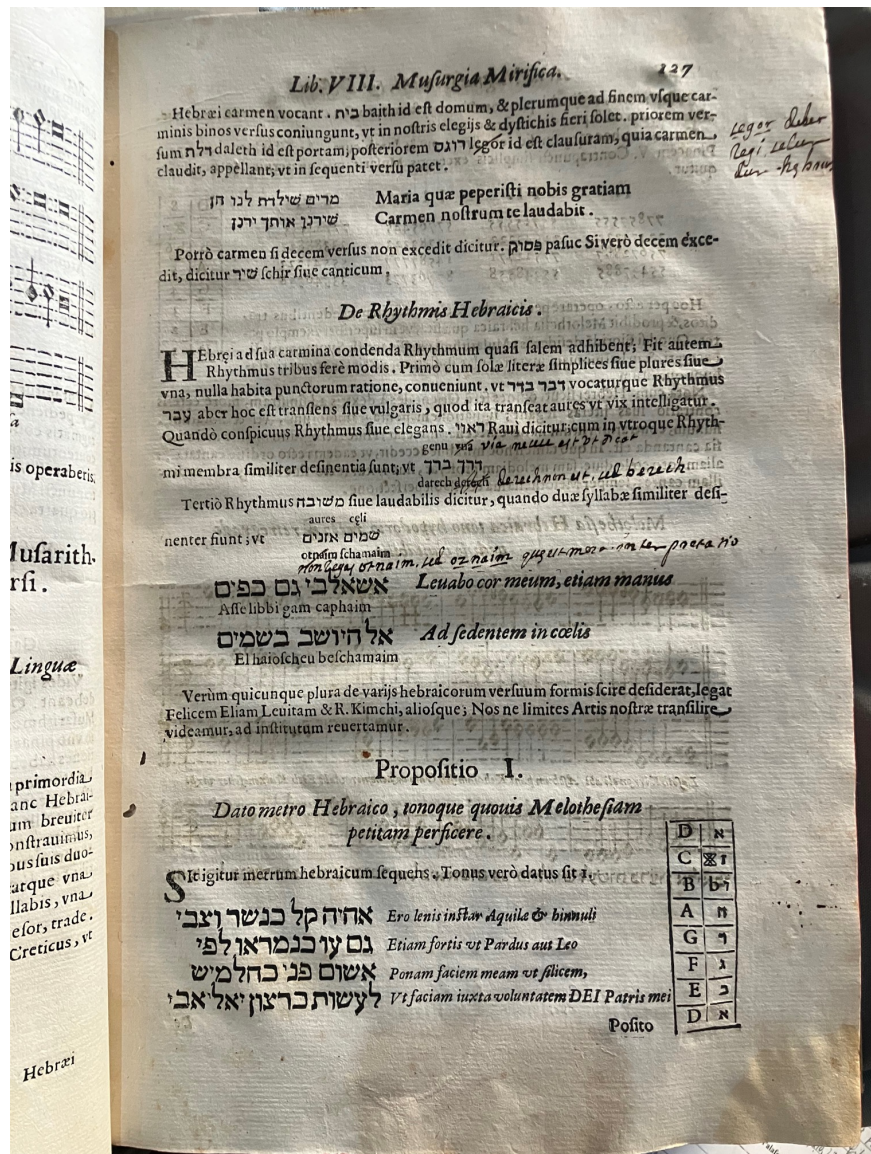
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## Focus 1: The Kircher fan club at the Palafoxiana

- Fray Diego Rodriguez (1596-1658), criollo
- Fray François Guillot (“Ximénez”) (1601-1686)
- Melchor Pérez de Soto (1606-1655)
- Alejandro Fabián (1624-??), criollo
- (Fray) Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora (1645-1700), criollo
- Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648-1695), mestiza
- Antonio de Alcala (16??-17??), criollo







## Organology (1650)

De new.

nature;

and Ancient

Organology,

and Modern

consonance





# Kirchner's Arca Musarithmica

- The book begins with a section on combinatorics (not present in other mathematics books of the time), though know from the 'Ramon Llulli school' (strong Arabic connections)
- Combinations and permutations are “in nature”, in its “infinite variety”
- It then explains how to use the Arca, which is a wooden box that contains ~ 100 cards

*Artae Magae Confoni, & Difoni*

4. Si vero 5. res mutare velis, pone numeros ordine naturali, ut sequuntur 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. deinde omnes ordine inter se multiplicas, &c. producentur 120. & toties res dico inter se commutari posse, ut in sequenti exemplo patet. Vbi quique vocalis eadem & viginti, ut has mutari posse ostendimus. Nam utique quilibet littera ex 5. viginti quater possit mutari, & reliqua inter se mutari, ut in sequenti exemplo patet.

Exemplum commutationis quinque rerum.

1	2	3	4	5
a	e	i	o	u
1	a	e	i	o
2	a	e	i	u
3	a	e	o	i
4	a	e	o	u
5	a	i	e	o
6	a	i	e	u
7	a	i	o	e
8	a	i	o	u
9	a	o	e	i
10	a	o	e	u
11	a	o	u	e
12	a	o	u	i
13	a	u	e	i
14	a	u	e	o
15	a	u	i	e
16	a	u	i	o
17	e	a	i	o
18	e	a	i	u
19	e	a	o	i
20	e	a	o	u
21	e	i	a	o
22	e	i	a	u
23	e	i	o	a
24	e	i	o	u
25	e	o	a	i
26	e	o	a	u
27	e	o	u	a
28	e	o	u	i
29	e	u	a	i
30	e	u	a	o
31	e	u	i	a
32	e	u	i	o
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36	i	a	o	u
37	i	e	a	o
38	i	e	a	u
39	i	e	o	a
40	i	e	o	u
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42	i	o	a	u
43	i	o	u	a
44	i	o	u	i
45	i	u	a	e
46	i	u	a	o
47	i	u	e	a
48	i	u	e	o
49	o	a	e	i
50	o	a	e	u
51	o	a	i	e
52	o	a	i	u
53	o	e	a	i
54	o	e	a	u
55	o	e	i	a
56	o	e	i	u
57	o	i	a	e
58	o	i	a	u
59	o	i	e	a
60	o	i	e	u
61	o	u	a	e
62	o	u	a	i
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112	u	o	i	e
113	u	e	a	i
114	u	e	a	o
115	u	e	i	a
116	u	e	i	o
117	u	i	a	e
118	u	i	a	o
119	u	i	e	a
120	u	i	e	o

Lib. VIII. De Musarum Mirifica.

TABULA I. Combinatoria.

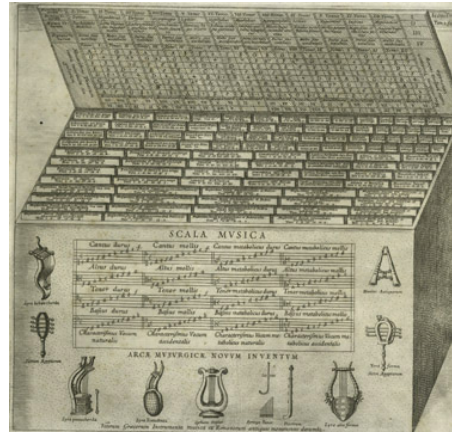
1	1
2	1 2
3	1 2 3
4	1 2 3 4
5	1 2 3 4 5
6	1 2 3 4 5 6
7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
9	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
10	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
11	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
12	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
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15	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15
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18	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18
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22	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22
23	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23
24	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24

Mutationes, & sic in infinitum.

Vide igitur quomodo numeris quibusvis ordine naturali positis, ex multiplicatione numerorum ordine inter eos facta producatur numerus mutandi ratiobus convenientis, toties inter se combinari possunt, 16380. vicibus 5 res 14319900817094400 vicibus. Quae vix credi possunt, nisi demonstratio nostrum convinceret intellectum.

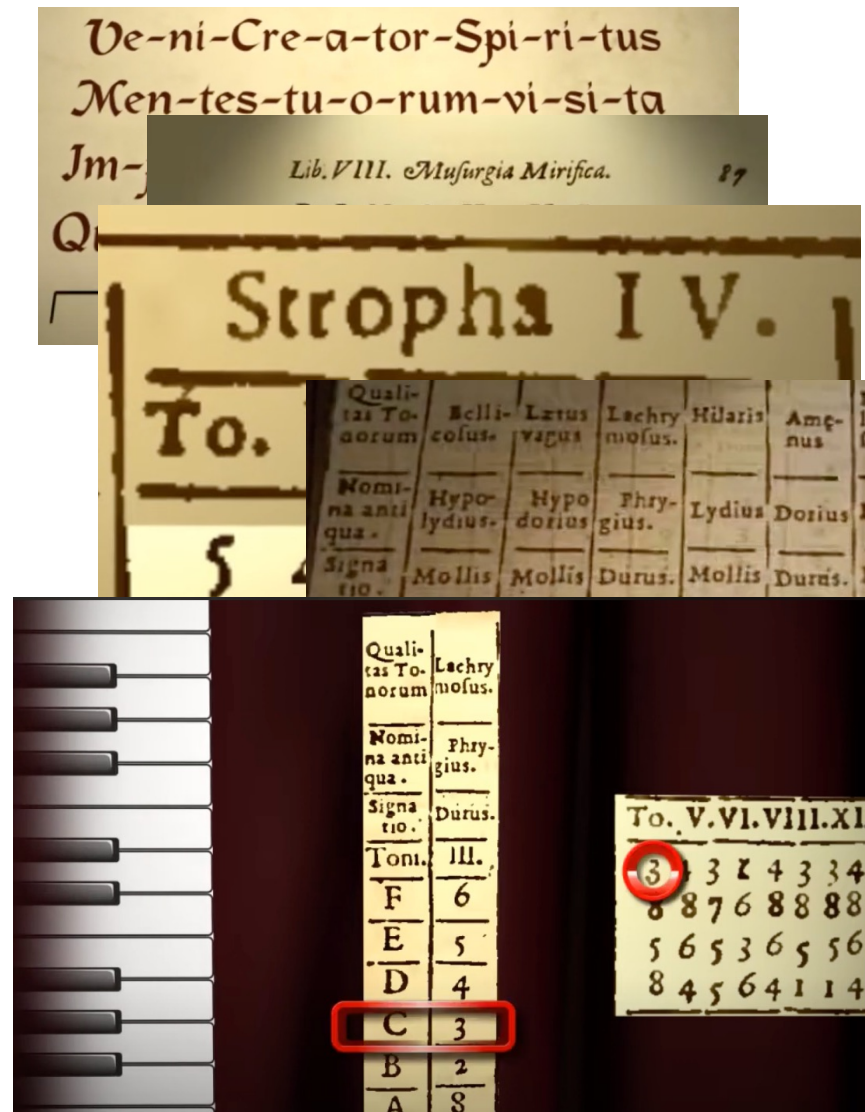
LEMMA II.

Quandocumque veres similes occurrant, vel quod idem est res eadem in combinandis lapidis ponuntur, Combinatio totius per unumquemque combinandi rerum finium in praecedenti tabula propositarum ducta, dabit nam



# Kirchner's Arca Musarithmica

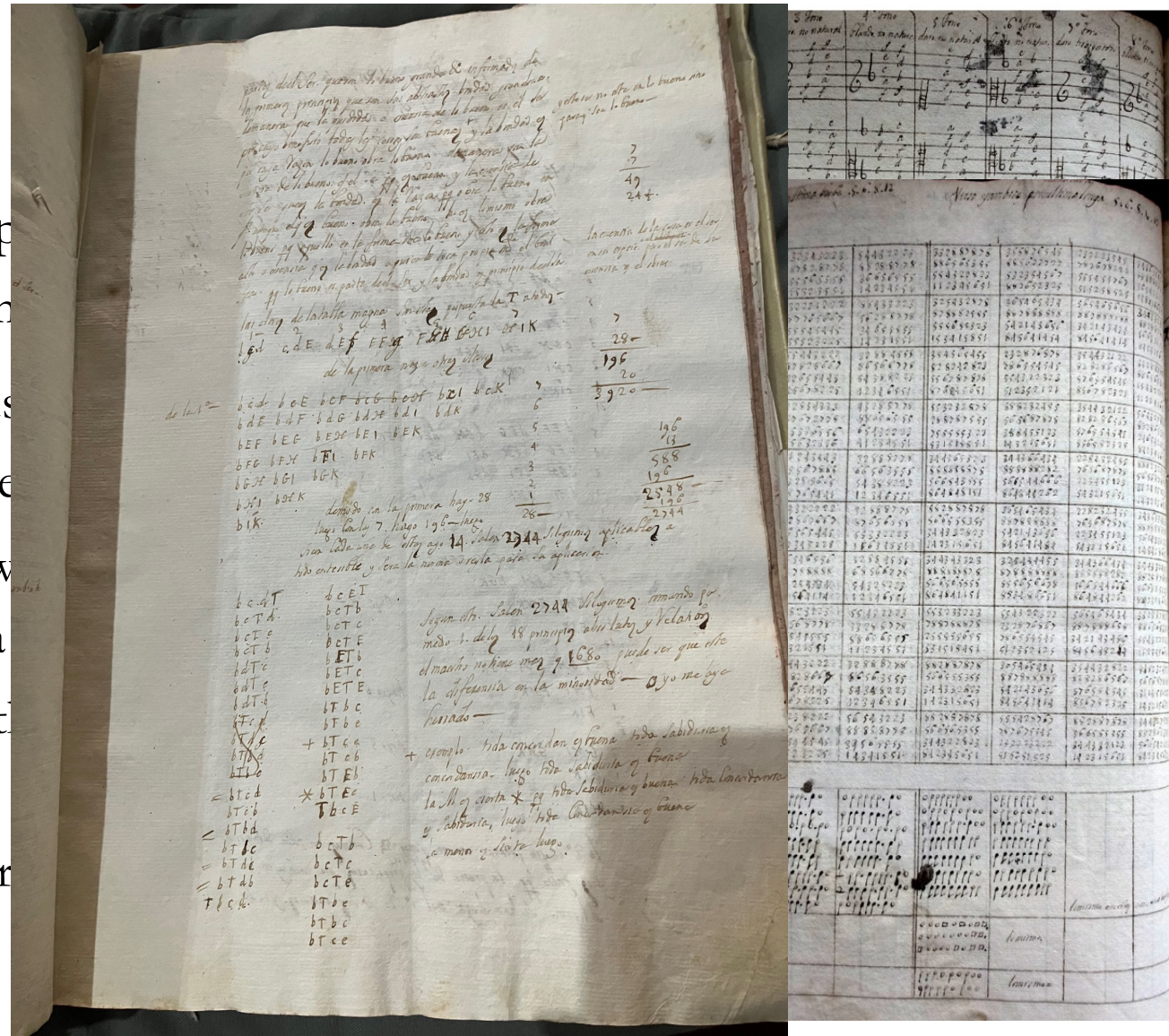
- Begin with text that will be put to music
- Choose style and instrument/voice
- Then choose the contrapunctus simplex (the sequence of 8 notes) on the Pinax
- Then choose one of 12 “moods” (bellicose, lachrymosus, etc.) and the key (minor or major).
- There is also the card for contrapunctus floris (the duration of each note)





# In the Palafoxiana...

- A manuscript containing p between 1690-1700 (Cash
- The Poblano (anonymous of Kircher's books and se
- Choosing the ones that w construction of the Arca
- Choosing only some of t to music)
- Copying only enough per
- It is not the only one!



# The anonymous Palafoxiana folio includes...

Topics	Folios	Heading	Description
<b>Accounting</b>			
Economics, law, cathedral administration	1-19	«Ordenança sacada del libro capitular numero quarto que esta en el Archivo del Cauildo de esta ciudad [...]»	Copy of Puebla (1537 regarding t
Surveying	27-61	«Agrimensura y arte de medir tierras en estas indias occidentales»	Measuring land i
Weights and measures (geometry)	72r, 74	«Medidas de las aguas como se practican en estos reynos computanto una bara castellana»	Calculating liqui
Cathedral tithes	104-134	«Gobierno que se tiene en la Yglesia de la Puebla de los Ang <sup>es</sup> en orden del estilo y distribucion de sus rentas eclesiásticas»	Official policies calculations of ti
Accounting	135-144, 149-154	«Diezmos de el ano de 1695», «Comienza 1695»	Tables of tithe re
	145-148	«Daue hecho el cuadrante de el año de 1700»	Tables of tithe re
Accounting, computation	211-259	«Algoritmologia de las cuentas de las Iglesias [...]»	Computational n
<b>Geometry</b>			
Compass/ruler	20-29	«Divicion de la línea Aritmetica»	Drawings and ca
Navigation, surveying	30-33	«Resolución de los problemas de geometria hasta oy no resuelto, con la Ynstitucion de los grados de longitud para la Nautica»	Calculation of lo
Euclidian geometry	34-45	«Toda la dificultad de la Geometria consista en el aumento o disminucion de los superficies»	Excerpt of geom of propositions, (copied from an
Compass/ruler	33, 46, 62-63	«Triceccion de el Angulo», «Lo que hace el quadrato de el circulo»	Trisecting the an diagrams and cal
Trigonometry	70, 72v, 75-78, 80-81	«Arte para inscribir en el circulo las figuras que hasta aqui llaman irregulares»	Notes and calcul theorem.
	83-102	«Triseccion deel Angulo»	More trisecting,
	155-157		Notes and calcul
<b>Engineering</b>			
Hydraulics, physics	64-68	«HYDROTECHNIA NOVA. Sive. Nova Machina, Artifitia quo Hydrotecnica [...]»	Kircheresque La hydraulic machi
<b>Architecture</b>			
Urban planning, surveying	79, 82		Floorplan of a h
Music			

Topics	Folios	Heading	Description
	158v		<i>Mensa tonogographica</i> ('church keys'); <i>Palimpsest phonotacticum</i> ('clefs, signatures').
	159r		<i>Syntagma 1, pinax 4-5.</i>
	159v		<i>Syntagma 1, pinax 6-7.</i>
	160r		<i>Syntagma 1, pinax 8 (part 1) and 1.</i>
	160v		<i>Syntagma 1, pinax 8 (part 2).</i>
	161r		<i>Syntagma 2, pinax 1.</i>
	162r		<i>Syntagma 2, pinax 4.</i>
<b>Law</b>			
Civil, canon law	165-171	«Canones», «Juris canonici», «De el Derecho civil / De el derecho canonico»	Laws and decrees.
Music	168r	Music tablature	On same page as Latin contents list of legal topics.
<b>Chronology</b>	173-197	«Cronología»	Year-by-year timeline tables and prose chronicles of world history from beginning, including Biblical patriarchs, kings, Near Eastern rulers, Roman emperors, popes.
<b>Chemistry</b>	198-203r, 204-207, 260-270	«Quimica»	Excerpts from treatise on chemistry or alchemy.
<b>Astrology</b>	203v	«Astrologia»	«Astrology» written three times in different hands like a cover sheet.
<b>Science</b>			
Universal knowledge, natural science, physiology	208-210		Foldout sheet with universal map of knowledge, including physiological, mental, and spiritual faculties, appetites, physical substances, etc.
<b>Theology</b>			
Doctrinal, systematic, mystical, devotional	271-341		Topics include mystical theology, the Incarnation, outline of theological categories, and <i>oración mental</i> ('mental prayer').



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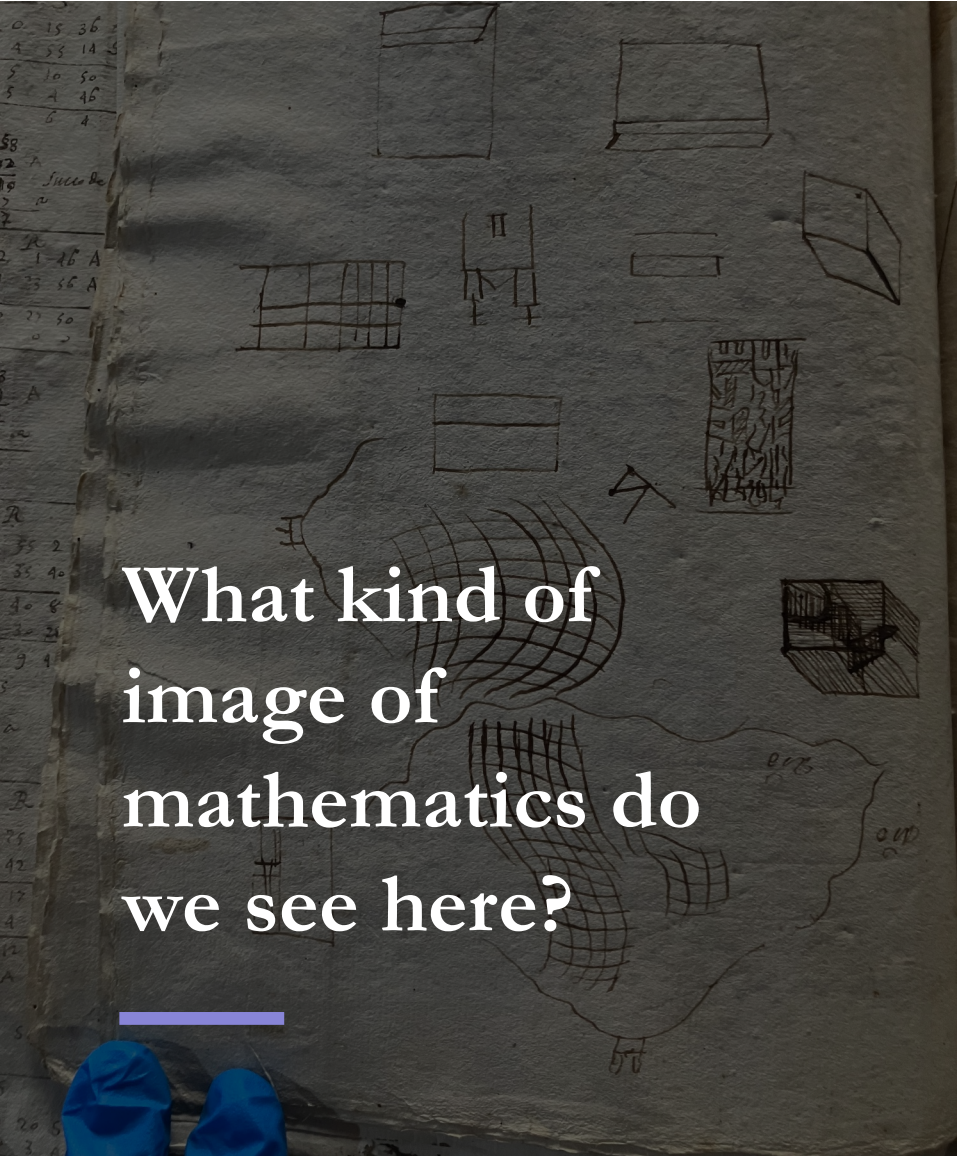
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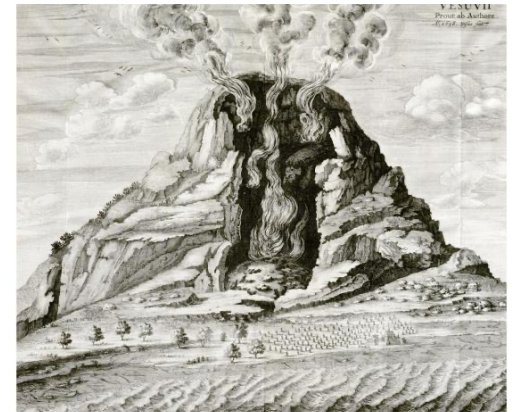
# What kind of image of mathematics do we see here?

- Not an intact subject, but diffuse through and with other knowledge
- Combinatorics as general method of discovery. A permutation of possible perspectives that captures the infinite/mixed fold of Deleuze's Baroque style.
- Proliferating calculations
- A way of thinking that involves Ancient ideas (Greek, Arabic, and associated Egyptian, Babylonian) *along with* new ideas/machines/words
- A desire to solve age-old challenges, impossible tasks, break with the perfect forms of the circle, like trisecting the angle, and squaring the circle.
- To explode classical forms into the textured world of diversity and multiplicity and creolization (Glissant). A *poetic* engagement with materiality.



# Mathematics in New Spain in the 17<sup>th</sup> century

- Turning to European texts, creating commentaries on compendia, where geometry and pyrotechnics are side-by-side topics, in a setting where instrumental engagement with nature (lenses, telescopes) links with the “magical realism” of 17<sup>th</sup> century Mexico (Fuentes).
- Combinatorics and permutations appeal to our Poblanos because they create a new kind of collectivity and folded fugal song, a way of merging voices from across locales and cultures, a perspectivism.



# Stepping back, cautiously

- The colonial legacy is complicated, involving multiple forces (religious, capitalist, political, scientific, artistic, etc.)
- From the Palafoxiana archive, it appears that:
  - The mathematics arriving in New Spain *predates* post-enlightenment views that construct Europe as the foundation
  - It arrives from multiple sources which themselves are recognized as multiply sourced (c.f. “Greek origins”)
  - It is itself a plural practices that engages both quantitative and qualitative, earthbound and instrument-rich
  - In other words, very different from the current curricula of North America.





## Additional themes

- The New World contribution to probability, through the situated, moral context of probabilism (Mayer, 2016).
- The comet debate between Sigüenza y Góngora and Kino
- The access to certain books that are banned in Europe, so that the Baroque-creole mathematician seems to move ahead of the Iberian colleagues
- Looking back: How Nahua knowledge was used/transformed in the original schools, including w.r.t. non-base-10 number systems
- Looking ahead: The prevalence of Spanish texts, especially José Mariano Vallejo, who brings new instrumental and ideological ideas to the Palafoxiana, which become increasingly pedagogical.



# Thank you!

- Acknowledgements to Elizabeth de Freitas (co-investigator), Carlos Hugo Zayas & Armando Solares Rojas (collaborators in Mexico) and Alan Pasos (SFU PhD student)
- Thanks to Maria, Miguel, Jose, and Dr. Matt Voigt for the invitation

