

# Prof. Dr. Dominique Raynaud (Univ. Grenoble - Alpes)

## Is there such a thing as the Snellius- Descartes law of refraction?

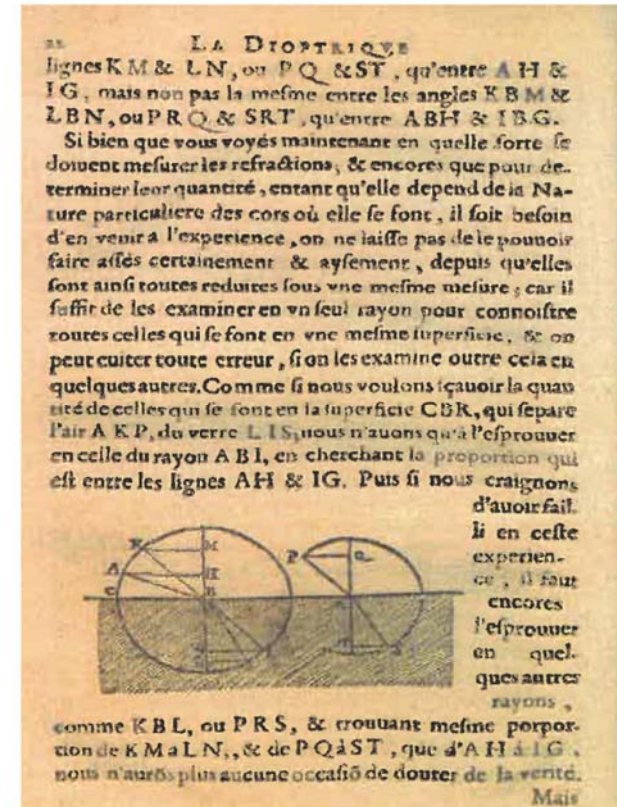
If we examine the status of the law of refraction in the texts of Ibn Sahl, Harriot, Snel and Descartes, we find that none of these authors knew the law of refraction as it is taught today. The differences concern the nature of the relationship linking the angle of incidence and the angle of refraction, the role conferred to this relationship in optical texts, and even its recognition as a physical law. In these circumstances, the question of who discovered the law of refraction - Descartes, Snel, Harriot or Ibn Sahl? - makes little sense. I argue that such questions are plagued by ethno-nationalist agendas that have nothing to do with objective historical knowledge. Insensitive to the siren sang, we need to start by clarifying our knowledge of this relationship. This is a fundamental prerequisite for asking more general questions about the law of refraction in optics.



Historisches Institut,  
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Quelle: René Descartes: La Dioptrique (Paris 1637), S. 21

# Dialogo

Dienstag, 25. Juni 2024  
17:00 Uhr, Hörsaal 57.02,  
Pfaffenwaldring 57, Vaihingen