

Seminar SAW : History of Science, History of Text

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Tablette, section, ligne : découpages des textes dans les mathématiques cunéiformes

Abstract :

The goal of this session is to examine the segmentations of texts as made by the ancient actors. In this presentation, I consider some mathematical texts written in Mesopotamia during the Old Babylonian period, that is, the beginning of the second millennium BCE. My starting point is the vocabulary used by the authors of mathematical texts in relation to textual and material segmentation of texts. Indeed, the name of the segments of text appears in colophons of some mathematical texts, where these segments are counted. I argue that naming and counting segments of texts has a special meaning, which is to be grasped. This meaning may be related both with the organization of the texts, and with their possible use. I'll examine first physical aspects of segmentation, second textual aspects.