

Seminar SAW : Mathematical practices in the context of the Astral Sciences

Abstract :

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Arithmetical methods applied to the daily motions of celestial bodies in Babylonian astronomy

From the late second millennium on, Babylonian texts on astronomy use sequences of numbers with a constant difference to describe variation in celestial phenomena. Early examples are the length of day and night and the times of appearance or disappearance of the moon. In mathematical astronomical tables of the second half of the first millennium BC, this mathematical tool is applied to the phenomena of the planets with a high degree of sophistication. We shall discuss the length of daylight and the movements of sun and moon in these computations.