

Seminar SAW - Exploring 19th and 20th centuries historiographies of mathematics in the ancient world, 2015-2016

April 15th, 2016

Historiography of Measurement units

Pierre Chaigneau (SAW Project, SPHERE Université Paris Diderot)

In the jungle of Mesopotamian metrologies: on Thureau-Dangin's first approach to cuneiform numbers and quantities

Abstract – This talk aims at studying a corpus of papers published by François Thureau-Dangin, mostly in the *Revue d'Assyriologie* during the first decades of the 20th century, in which the famous assyriologist undertakes to decipher and clarify the at the time widely unexplored jungle of metrologies of the ancient cuneiform Middle East. It is often stated that this task lead him to the study of cuneiform mathematics, an investigation that culminated with the publication of *Textes mathématiques babyloniens* in the year 1938. How numbers, quantities, and measuring units were treated in these papers? What were the views of our scholar regarding the cultural range of the reconstructed metrological systems? With such questions in mind, we may be able to reveal lines of influence of these researches on Thureau-Dangin's later work on history of mathematics.