

Seminar SAW : History of Mathematics, History of Economic and Financial practices

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Economic problems in cuneiform mathematical texts: an example of a list of problems on buying and selling (YBC 4698)

Abstract :

This paper attempts to provide a broad overview of Old Babylonian mathematical texts dealing with economics matters. A special attention is paid to the mathematical series text YBC 4698, which was badly edited and poorly understood. Some questions are raised about the relationship between mathematical practices and business practices: Are the vocabulary, the notations, the numerical data and the language the same in mathematical and economical texts? Are the situations described in mathematical texts (such as the prices) realistic? Are the calculations / methods to which YBC 4698 refers attested in some economical texts?