

Conference Shaping the sciences of the ancient world

Text criticism, Critical editions and Translations of ancient and medieval
scholarly texts (18th-20th centuries) - June 17—21, 2013

A historical approach to philology

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Babylonian astronomy - editing and interpreting an ancient science

Abstract - Ever since the rediscovery of Babylonian astronomy in the 19th century, the task of translating, editing and interpreting these tablets has been carried out by a very small group of specialists, usually with a firm background in the natural sciences.

In this paper I explore their editions in order to reconstruct the underlying methods for translating, representing, editing and interpreting Babylonian astronomical tablets. I will then assess how these methods may differ from those in other branches of Assyriology, and how they may have been informed by assumptions about the nature of Babylonian astronomy.