



SUPERIORE. CONFERENZE

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Aula Ferigutti
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via Gemona 92, Udine

The Little known History of Ancient and Medieval Mathematics

Burra G. Sidharth

Burra G. Sidharth è direttore del B.M. Birla Centre di Hyderabad (India). Ha una lunga collaborazione in corso con l'Università di Udine. È autore di numerose pubblicazioni in fisica e in fisica matematica, ma si occupa anche di storia dell'astronomia indiana antica, e in particolare dell'interpretazione astronomica dei testi vedici.

The origins of Mathematics are lost in the deep past. However they are related to astronomy, a study of which subject was forced upon man after the ice-ages thawed and agriculture was developed: People needed a form of a calendar and clock to regulate this new activity which marked a departure from the hunter-gatherer lifestyle. This is recorded in the Vedas, the oldest extant Indo-European text. Soon the astronomical computations reached an amazing degree of accuracy before the Sumerians. From here it evolved into geometry, both in India and Egypt though for different motivations. From this point, the study got bifurcated in the ancient Indian traditions and the Greek traditions. From the Indian branch, mathematics reached the Arabs and thence to Europe. But independently the Portuguese missionaries learnt advanced Indian concepts like convergence of Infinite series which laid the foundation for Newton and Leibniz, though these concepts had been developed in India at least sixhundred years earlier. There are many twists and turns in this long history which will be touched upon in this talk.



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DI UDINE**

**SCUOLA
SUPERIORE**

via Gemona 92, Udine
tel. 0432 249630/2/4
info.scuolasuperiore@uniud.it
www.scuolasuperiore.uniud.it