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Euclid's Phaenomena: A Translation and Study of a Hellenistic Treatise in Spherical Astronomy (History of Mathematics)

J. L. Berggren and R. S. D. Thomas

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Euclid's Phaenomena: A Translation and Study of a Hellenistic Treatise in Spherical Astronomy (History of Mathematics) J. L. Berggren and R. S. D. Thomas
The book contains a translation and study of Euclid's Phaenomena, a work which once formed part of the mathematical training of astronomers from Central Asia to Western Europe. Included is an introduction that sets Euclid's geometry of the celestial sphere, and its application to the astronomy of his day, into its historical context for readers not already familiar with it. So no knowledge of astronomy or advanced mathematics is necessary for an understanding of the work. The book shows mathematical astronomy shortly before the invention of trigonometry, which allowed the calculation of exact results and the subsequent composition of Ptolemy's Almagest. The Phaenomena itself begins with an introduction (possibly not by Euclid) followed by eighteen propositions set out in geometrical style about how arcs of the zodiacal circle move across the sky. The astronomical application is to the small arc of that circle occupied by the Sun, but the Sun is not mentioned. This work and the (roughly) contemporaneous treatises of Autolycus and Aristarchos form a corpus of the oldest extant works on mathematical astronomy. Together with Euclid's Optics one has the beginnings of the history of science as an application of mathematics. Copublished with the London Mathematical Society beginning with Volume 4.

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