

Is it all about proofs? Reflections on the multiple reasonings in Sanskrit mathematical texts

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This paper would like to reflect on the history and historiography of mathematical proofs, focussing on the kind of reasonings that can be found in Sanskrit mathematical sources.

This presentation would first like to explore the complex ways in which all sorts of historians of mathematics have dealt with explanations found in mathematical commentaries from South Asia. Indeed, from the 19th century onwards, these reasonings were of interest to some mathematicians, but historians of mathematics, on the other hand, when they did not dismiss or ignore them altogether, have tried to understand these reasonings by bringing them back to what might have been familiar mathematical explanations to them. I will describe some of these processes underlining how this has brought out what has now become a very political, nationalist and homogenizing notion of proof as found in Sanskrit mathematical texts. As an answer, we will examine together how many different ways of reasonings seem to have been used in Sanskrit mathematical texts, some of which may belong to a history of travelling reasonings.