The value of Eratosthenes’ calculation of the circumference of the Earth is presented as 250,000 stades by Cleomedes and John Philoponus, and as 252,000 stades by a variety of other authors, such as Geminus, Heron of Alexandria, Strabo, Theon of Smyrna, Galen, Vitruvius, Pliny, and Martianus Capella. This discrepancy has given rise to a substantial literature that attempts to explain the reasons for it on various grounds, none of which can be confirmed.

The authors suggest a new explanation, which is based on the fact that Eratosthenes is said, by a number of ancient sources, to have also presented in his *On the measurement of the Earth* distances of the Sun and the Moon. On this reading, the value of 250,000 was reached by assuming that the Sun lies infinitely far from the Earth, and thus its rays, reaching different locations on the surface of the Earth, are parallel, whereas the value 252,000 was reached by assuming that the Earth-Sun distance is finite. While the sources are in agreement regarding the Earth-Moon distance found by Eratosthenes, there are several values attributed to the Earth-Sun distance in the ancient literature. Using one of them, namely the one found in Stobaeus’s version (Eclogae 1.26) of 4,080,000 stades, one reaches precisely the value of 252,000 stades for the circumference of the Earth.

Reviewer: Victor V. Pambuccian (Phoenix)

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