

Séminaire/Seminar

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## Management of Grains, Measuring Units and the Imperial Policy of the Qin and the Han

Karine Chemla (ERC Project SAW & SPHERE)

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Ma Biao (Yamaguchi University)

The earliest extant mathematical books from China contain a lot of problems and data about grains. They also betray proximity to imperial bureaucracy in this respect. Indeed, these texts quote administrative regulations about grains. For instance, the *Book on mathematical procedures* 算數書, found in a tomb sealed *ca.* 186 BCE, quotes the “regulations on granaries” from the *Qin statutes in eighteen domains*, known thanks to slips excavated at Shuihudi.<sup>1</sup> They deal with official vessels used to measure grains. They cast light on statements from, and practices evidenced by, official histories and administrative documents. The talk addressed one of the questions that are at the center of the project SAW: Which information about the concrete management of grains can we derive from mathematical writings in relation to administrative documents? Which data can we find in these writings about continuities and changes in the management of grains during the Han dynasty? In particular, how can we account for the fact that in a later mathematical text, namely, *The Nine Chapters*, probably completed in the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, there was a change in the form in which the data about grain equivalences were given, by comparison with the “regulations on granaries.” In the talk, we gathered the various types of statement that mathematical writings contain about grains and offered several elements of decodings for the “regulations on granaries” and the related text in *The Nine Chapters*. From this perspective, we could offer several hypotheses about the management of grain in the Qin and Han dynasties.

### Bibliography

PENG Hao 彭浩 (2001) *Zhangjiashan hanjian «Suanshushu» zhushi* 張家山漢簡《算數書》注釋 (*Commentary on the Book of mathematical procedures, a writing on bamboo strips dating from the Han and discovered at Zhangjiashan*). Beijing: Science Press (Kexue chubanshe).

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1 PENG Hao 彭浩 2001: 4-5