

Call for applications for a full-time doctoral or post-doctoral scholarship

Mathematical practices in the context of astral sciences in ancient China

European Research Council (ERC) Advanced Research project

“Mathematical Sciences in the Ancient World (SAW): New Theoretical Approaches to the Sources and Socio-Political Issues of the Present Day”

Karine Chemla (Principal Investigator)
Agathe Keller & Christine Proust (Co-directors)

The European Research Council Project “Mathematical Sciences in the Ancient World (SAW)” is calling for applications for a full-time doctoral or post-doctoral scholarship, rewarding the most relevant topic with respect to its objectives.

General aims of the project. The SAW project is dedicated to sources that have come down to us from the ancient world and attest to mathematical activities, specifically, though not exclusively, to sources produced in **Mesopotamia, China, and the Indian sub-continent**. The ambition of SAW is to develop **new theoretical approaches to the history of ancient mathematics** in order to highlight a motley of practices within what at the present day too often are presented as homogeneous wholes, as shown by the frequent use of terms such as “Mesopotamian mathematics”, “Chinese mathematics”, and “Indian mathematics”. To this end, SAW intends to concentrate systematically on the sources produced in relation to two core sectors of activity in the ancient world: the practice of the astral sciences and the administrations in charge of managerial and financial matters. One of the goals of the project is to shape methods that ground our approach to ancient sources in the critical awareness that a history of mathematical practices as well as a material and social history of the archives, libraries, and collections of sources provide. SAW also intends to carry out a reflection on the history of historiography of mathematics. The main focus of SAW in that direction will be on the key general operations which are at play in the making of the historiography of ancient sciences, such as the shaping of critical editions.

Description of the topic attached to the present scholarship. The primary aim of this doctoral/post-doctoral scholarship will be to do research on mathematical practices and bodies of knowledge shaped in relation to the study of heavenly bodies in ancient China. Preferably the topic will deal with a time period chosen between the time of the Warring States and the Tang dynasty. Historians of mathematics in China have long argued in favour of the thesis that the development of mathematics in China has been stimulated in an essential way by the need to solve problems practitioners of astral sciences faced. We hope that the research carried out by the recipient of the scholarship will help us understand the specificity of the bodies of mathematical knowledge developed to deal with celestial phenomena, or, more generally, developed by milieus working in the astral sciences in ancient China, in contrast to mathematical knowledge more specifically linked to the tasks required by the economic management of the State. One could also choose to identify distinct mathematical practices in the context of distinct activities linked to astral sciences. To capture these contrasts, one could for instance focus either on the way in which the quantities used were shaped, the operations organized or on the practices of computation. Such research should allow us to assess the relevance of the classical thesis

mentioned above and to achieve a better understanding of the history of mathematical activities in ancient China. Applicants are expected to mention specific sources on the basis of which they intend to begin their research and the way in which they intend to deal with issues addressed by the SAW project.

Applicants for the doctoral scholarship must hold an MA degree or equivalent in history, history of science, sinology or mathematics. **Applicants for the post-doctoral scholarship** must have obtained a PhD degree in one of these disciplines before the beginning of the scholarship. It is strongly recommended that applicants possess relevant knowledge in mathematics and philology (Chinese). If they don't, they should be able to demonstrate their ability to acquire such knowledge rather quickly. They must be fluent in English. Researchers of all nationalities are welcome to apply.

Applications should include the following:

- a full CV (including a list of publications where appropriate);
- an outline (2 pages maximum) of the research project showing clearly its relevance for SAW objectives;
- one or more recent samples of academic writings (publications, master or PhD thesis);
- a copy of the most recent diploma;
- transcripts of the master degree and, for applicants for the post-doctoral scholarship, the transcript of the PhD thesis defence;
- name and email address of two referees who could assess the application.

The **deadline** for applications is: **June 21, 2013** (for the position to be taken up as of September 1, 2013 or as early as possible thereafter). Short-listed candidates will be informed at the beginning of July 2013 and phone or Skype interviews are expected to take place during the first week of July 2013.

The scholarship is granted for one year. Pending positive evaluation, the doctoral scholarship is renewable for two additional years and the post-doctoral scholarship is renewable for one additional year. The monthly stipend amounts to about 1400 euros for the doctoral scholarship and to about 2000 euros for the post-doctoral scholarship (amounts to be updated at the contract signing). It includes social security benefits and retirement provisions. In the case of a doctoral scholarship, the recipient, under the supervision of Karine Chemla, will have to achieve a degree of the academic institution the SAW project is affiliated to. He/she will need to complete all requirements of this institution graduate school.

Applications should be sent to the SAW Project Director **Karine Chemla** by **email only**: chemla@univ-paris-diderot.fr. It is recommended to request an email acknowledgement of receipt.

Information on the SAW project is available online at <http://www.sphere.univ-paris-diderot.fr/?-ERC-Project-SAW-&lang=en>

For any questions on the scholarship please contact **Karine Chemla** (chemla@univ-paris-diderot.fr).