

**Seminar SAW:  
Mathematical practices in the context of the astral sciences**

**Abstract**

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*Lodging Complaints: the Perplexities of the 28 Zodiacal xiu in Early Chinese Sources*

This talk surveys irreconcilable descriptions of the 28 *xiu* (lodges) presented in early sources and our modern attempts to reconcile and reconstruct from them a coherent picture of the ancient Chinese sky. Focusing specifically on the problem of the so-called “ancient” and “modern” systems (古度/今度), my aim is to critically reexamine the methods by which modern historians of astronomy determine such important facts as which stars are which, where lodges begin and end, and, even more importantly, to explain how it is that they all seem to disagree. I will, furthermore, discuss the limitations of a purely mathematical approach to this issue and suggest that we consider the idiosyncratic nature of our sources from the perspective of what we know about the production and transmission of technical knowledge in an early manuscript culture.