

Workshop
Cultures of Computation and Quantification
January – March 2013

Abstract

Features of quantities and computation in ancient China (Place-value number system; abstract numbers and their relation to questions of units, unit prizes, and equivalences), prepared by Karine Chemla; plus, if needed, a continuation of the 29 January session, prepared by Zhu Yiwen

The session will focus on division and related operations. Its aim is to assess whether a series of clues related to this operation in various documents from ancient China discussing computations can help us identify various cultures of computation in ancient China. In particular, we will address the issue of whether we can capture hints of an emergence of a place-value decimal system. We will also examine the management of operands having measuring units and the part devoted to abstract numbers. Lastly, we shall analyze the part played by the problem of computing unit prizes and its articulation to other types of problems.