

SAW Seminar History of Science, History of text

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Abstraction in ancient Chinese mathematical writings and parts of texts

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The ancient commentators on *The Nine Chapters on Mathematical Procedures* explicitly refer to an expectation that for some procedures, the Classical work of the Han dynasty (probably Eastern Han) the formulation should be in abstract terms. Interpretation of this statement suggests that by this expectation they refer to a textual phenomenon that regularly distinguishes in the text of *The Nine Chapters* between different parts. These parts include: procedures, placed at the beginning of chapters, from which the mathematical knowledge in the chapter somehow derives, and procedures solving the same problems and placed after the statement of each of them. The presentation explored the phenomenon from a textual viewpoint in *The Nine Chapters*. Further, it suggested that whereas some manuscripts recently excavated clearly manifested the same textual phenomenon, others seemed not to reflect a similar interest in abstraction, defined in these terms.