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Commentaries on numbers of ritual through different mathematical knowledges in seventh century China

Abstract – Numbers of ritual (Lishu 禮數) is a key part of ritual in ancient China. Some studies have been done on it based on ritual texts. On the other hand, Liu Hui 劉徽, who commented on the Nine Chapters on Mathematical Procedures (Jiuzhang suanshu 九章算術), understood this book as a derivative of the Rites of Zhou (Zhouli 周禮), and further as a part of Confucianism (Ruxue 儒學). This fact points to the relationship between ritual and mathematics in general. However, it is as yet unclear how scholars in the past understood this relationship in relation to numbers of ritual. On the basis of analyzing different commentaries on numbers of ritual respectively in a mathematical book, called Mathematical Procedures on Five Canons (Wujing suanshu 五經算術), and in Confucian canons, this talk aims at revealing different relationships between numbers of ritual and mathematical knowledges established by different scholars in seventh century China. Furthermore, the special role of numbers of ritual compared to other kind of numbers within the interdependence of ritual and mathematics will be discussed.