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Comment](#)

Interactive comment on “Precipitation measurement intercomparison in the Qilian Mountains, Northeastern Tibetan Plateau” by R. Chen et al.

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“Precipitation measurements intercomparison in the Qilian Mountains, Northeastern Tibetan Plateau” by R. Chen et al. presents a 4-year data series from four different precipitation sensor configurations. The standard Chinese manual precipitation gauge CSPG in its original configuration was compared with the same gauge in a pit gauge configuration, inside a DFIR-shield (similar constructed as the WMO-recommended Double Fence Intercomparison Reference) and with a single Alter shield. Accumulation scatter plots, catch ratios for the whole time series as well as catch ratios per event are shown. Special attention is drawn to the comparability of the pit gauge configuration

[Full Screen / Esc](#)

[Printer-friendly Version](#)

[Interactive Discussion](#)

[Discussion Paper](#)



with the double fence configuration and the authors argue that the pit gauge could act as a reference of equal or better quality than the usual double fence reference.

The presented data set is indeed valuable as precipitation measurements with the possibility to compare to reference set ups are generally sparse. The wide use of the Chinese standard gauge CSPG in China justifies further tests of its performance and the evaluating of possible adjustment functions and their ability to improve standard precipitation measurements performed by this gauges is of interest. Furthermore, the evaluation of the pit gauge as a reference for sites with low annual snow cover and very limited blowing snow is valuable.

Within the WMO Solid Precipitation Intercomparison Experiment (SPICE) a number of precipitation gauges are currently tested, but additional studies on evaluations of those or other gauge configurations are very welcome as they will add to our knowledge about precipitation measurements. Thus, significant results of the presented study fit into the special issue “The World Meteorological Organization Solid Precipitation InterComparison Experiment (WMO-SPICE) and its applications” (AMTD/ESSDD/HESDD/TCD Inter-Journal SI)”.

However, the described analysis methods, the presented results and discussions in this manuscript are in a rather premature state and the drawn conclusions are partly speculative. I encourage the authors to perform further analyses on their data and to revise their manuscript substantially.

General comments:

Abstract: The abstract contains a lot of details and very little general information about the background and goals of the study. It is not written very clear and needs substantial improvement. The word calibration is not used correctly. As no absolute truth is known you are hardly able to calibrate your precipitation measurements, but rather correct or adjust them. I suggest replacing “calibration equation” with “adjustment equation” and “calibration” with “adjustment”.

[Full Screen / Esc](#)[Printer-friendly Version](#)[Interactive Discussion](#)[Discussion Paper](#)

You refer to two sets of adjustment equations for the CSPG by Goodison et al. (1998) and Yang et al. (1991, 1995) and state an uncertainty connected to these equations without applying the equations to your data or comparing them to your adjustment functions. Your results and the results from Yang et al (1991) are very similar (as presented in subsection 4.1), which can be also supported by the similar climatology of these sites and their relative proximity. It remains unclear why you see the need for developing new equations Comparison with other studies.

It is neither documented why your equations should be superior to the cited equations.

Instead of developing a new set of equations, it would be very valuable to thoroughly test and evaluate the existing equations with your dataset. And only in cases of obvious discrepancies you should start the effort of trying to improve the earlier suggested adjustments.

Your chapter “Data and methods” is combining information about the geography and climatology of the site, instrumentation and layout, measurement techniques, data corrections and the existing adjustment functions from other authors. I suggest dividing into several subsections with appropriate names.

The writing needs improvement. A complete language review of the manuscript needs to be performed by the author.

Be consequent with denominator and nominator when using catch ratios. It is common to apply the reference as denominator.

Specific comments:

Page 2203, line 9: Please check the height of the gauge, 30.5 m does not sound realistic

Page 2203, line 11, line 13, line 14: Use the right and original references and cite appropriately for the three WMO-reports.

[Full Screen / Esc](#)[Printer-friendly Version](#)[Interactive Discussion](#)[Discussion Paper](#)

Page 2203, line 16: No need to use three references for the fact that the DFIR was used as reference during the WMO solid precipitation intercomparison by Goodison et al., 1998. The citation of the report is enough

Page 2203, line 22 and line 28: Please add a reference for WMO-SPICE itself. Yang (2014) is related to the SPICE effort, but it cannot be used as “the” SPICE reference as Goodison et al. 1998 for the WMO solid precipitation intercomparison . A SPICE web-site (<http://www.wmo.int/pages/prog/www/IMOP/intercomparisons/SPICE/SPICE.html>) exists, which can be used as a citation for SPICE. On the site you also find published meeting reports with relevant information and other publications related to SPICE. CIMO has also announced WMO-SPICE as an official program in their report.

Page 2203, line 25: Please find a more suitable publication for the reference in SPICE on the website, for example a TECO presentation related to SPICE references.

Page 2204, line 2: You are writing that additional attention must be paid to systematic errors of gauge measuring precipitation. I could not find any further description of systematic errors in your manuscript which are not already mentioned in Goodison et al (1998).

Page 2205, line 3: state already here, that the 10 m wind speeds you are using are adjusted values from wind measurements at a different height.

Page 2206, lines 2-18: That section remains very unclear. Which of the corrections described are you applying? You cite concrete numbers for Pw (0.23 mm) and Pe (0.1-0.2mm, larger in summer). You describe Pe as very small although in the same order of magnitude as Pw, why? Are you adding Pt = 0.1 mm per day to compensate for trace events?

Page 2206, line9: do you mean that instead of calculating Pc, you can follow from equation 1, that PDFIR=K*Pg ? Please clarify.

Page 2206, equations 2,3,4: Are these equations developed for CSPG? If so, apply to

[Full Screen / Esc](#)[Printer-friendly Version](#)[Interactive Discussion](#)[Discussion Paper](#)

your data and discuss the results

Page 2207, line 4: I assume that the equations 5,6,7 are from Yang et al., (1991). It remains unclear why are you citing Ye et al (2007). It seems, the latter was applying these equations, rather than developing them. You should note that.

Page 2207, lines 17-21: How do you define a precipitation observation? From later in the manuscript I understood that you were applying 3 mm in case of rain and 1 mm in case of snow and mixed precipitation as some threshold. Are these criteria applied for the 578 and 253 observations?

Page 2208, line 6. I don't agree with your conclusion from Figure 2, that the Pit gauge is superior to the DFIR. Both, the visual check and the regression data suggest that they are about equal, as you have to consider instrument uncertainties and scatter due to the nature of the precipitation events. I also think it is exaggerated to talk about comparative studies (plural), when you are showing only one scatter plot as an indicator. Further, a more thorough analysis should also consider wind and other dependencies. Are they still comparable within their uncertainty for different wind/temperature/other conditions?

Page 2208 line 12: I don't understand the sentence starting with "close line relationships. . ."

Page 2208, line 14: ". . . , which means. . ." is a rather strong statement. Try the words "suggest" or "indicate" or show more sound evidence

Page 2208, line 18: The numbers are difficult to extract from Figures 4a and b. Please choose a different method to show these differences in a better way.

Page 2208, line 18: There is definitely scatter in figure 4a and b.

Page 2208, line 21/22: It is not possible to follow your arguments. Please check your explanations on Page 2209, lines 7-10. That is a much better way to express why you use the pit gauge as a reference instead of the DFIR.

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion

Discussion Paper



Page 2209, lines 23-24: Did you use these thresholds for the analysis in the previous section as well? If yes, that information needs to be stated earlier, see comment above.

Page 2210, equation 8: What results did you get for z_0 – do they seem reasonable? Was there a lot of scatter? How much did the wind speeds change with this correction? I also suggest to apply or develop any adjustment function with the gauge height wind speed. You can compare the results and evaluate if the wind speed adjustment is introducing additional uncertainty.

Page 2210, equations 10 and 11: Did you check for temperature dependency? That is a variable in the existing adjustment functions. You need to comment, why you don't use it. And as commented under general comments: it is good practice to compare the new and old adjustment functions in a quantitative way. Use calculated RMSE or other statistics to quantify the differences when applying the different set of equations.

Page 2210, line 16 and lines 19/20: In all three figures, only ONE value is shown with a wind speed higher than 4 m/s. In panels b and c, this value is determining the slope of the regression line. That is too little evidence to conclude any existing or non-existing wind dependency.

Page 2211, line 11. The catch ratio plots for Alter wind shield and Pit gauge and the calculated regression lines are rather similar, most likely due to the rather low wind speed interval shown. It remains unclear why the pit gauge can act as a reference, but the single Alter cannot.

Page 2212, lines 10-16: The cited results from Ren and Li (2007) are covering a large range, while your results are single numbers, which happen to be somewhere in the presented intervals from the other study. It would be more reasonable to pick sites which have a similar climate to what you experienced during your measurements and compare only those results to your findings.

Page 2212, line 20: There is no evidence in your paper, that the pit gauge was superior

[Full Screen / Esc](#)[Printer-friendly Version](#)[Interactive Discussion](#)[Discussion Paper](#)

to the DFIR in your study. There may be indications that it performed similar, but even that would need a more thorough analysis.

Table 1: Insufficient caption; explanations of elements are needed.

Figure 1: The layout in the upper right panel can hardly be realistic. The pictures indicate a rather short distance between the unshielded and single alter shield, far lower than the diameter of the DFIR. Please add distances in the layout and use a scaled illustration.

Figures 2-9: Insufficient captions. At least, it needs to be stated that you are showing accumulation and catch ratios (don't use abbreviation here), respectively.

Interactive comment on The Cryosphere Discuss., 9, 2201, 2015.

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