

## Conference Shaping the sciences of the ancient world

Text criticism, Critical editions and Translations of ancient and medieval  
scholarly texts (18th-20th centuries) - June 17—21, 2013

### What is at stake in editing and translating ancient texts? A Historical perspective

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*Rethinking the Ancient Mathematical Text: Ming-Qing Scholars' Critical Reflections  
on the Zhoubi suanjing*

**Abstract** - Since the arrival of the Jesuits in China, European science and religion were introduced into China. In order to promote the calendar reform and the spread of European science during the late Ming and early Qing, many Chinese scholars developed and expressed different attitudes towards Western learning. In the meantime, they used European science as a tool to interpret the ancient Chinese mathematical and astronomical text. As a case study, I will talk about how Ming-Qing scholars began to be interested in the text of *Zhoubi suanjing*. Firstly I will analyse Xu Guangqi (1562-1633) and his views towards *Zhoubi*. Then I will analyse why the Kangxi emperor (1654-1722) and Qing mathematician Mei Wending (1633-1721) were interested in the study and criticism of Chinese mathematical text, especially the *Zhoubi suanjing*. In addition I would like to talk about the influence of their studies in the mid-eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Finally I will talk about how Qing scholars made different commentaries of the *Zhoubi* text in the late nineteenth century.