

Conference

**Shaping the sciences of the ancient world:
Text criticism, critical editions and translations
of ancient and medieval scholarly texts (18th -20th centuries)**

Monday 17 – Friday 21 June 2013, Paris

Organised by the
ERC project SAW – *Mathematical Sciences in the Ancient World* ,
<http://sawerc.hypotheses.org/>

Call for papers

The SAW project invites proposals for papers on the conference topics. Please send your abstract (maximal length 2500 characters) in English or French to Karine Chemla, email chemla@univ-paris-diderot.fr , to arrive by Friday 30 November 2012.

Background

A growing number of historiographical approaches shed light on how critical editions and translations of scientific texts have been made, in the past. This has been famously the case concerning ancient Greek mathematics (through the works of Knorr, Vitrac, Netz, and Saito among others¹). These works have underlined how assumptions on what a mathematical text should be, and what its diagrams should look like, gave shape to geometrical classical works of Greek Antiquity. Much still needs to be uncovered in the history of science. More generally, the history of philologies has been the object of a renewed interest.² In this context, the ERC project SAW is organizing a conference whose aim is to gain critical awareness vis-à-vis critical editions and translations that are often the main source materials for historians of science.

Because the SAW project is not restricted to European sources, the conference will deal not only with these sources, but also with scholarly documents produced anywhere on

1 W. R. Knorr. "The Wrong Text of Euclid: On Heiberg's Text and its Alternatives." *Centaurus*, 38:208–276, 1994. K. Chemla. "Commentaires, Editions et autres Textes Seconds: Quel Enjeu pour l'Histoire des Mathématiques? Réflexions inspirées par la note de Reviel Netz." *Revue d'Histoire des Mathématiques*, 5:127–148, 1999. K. Saito. "A Preliminary Study in the Critical Assessment of Diagrams in Greek Mathematical Works." *SCIAMVS* 7:81-144, 2006. R. Netz. "The Texture of Archimedes' Arguments: Through Heiberg's Veil." In *The History of Mathematical Proof in Ancient Traditions*, ed. Karine Chemla (Cambridge University Press, 2012). K. Saito and N. Sidoli. "Diagrams and Arguments in Ancient Greek Mathematics: Lessons Drawn from Comparisons of the Manuscript Diagrams with those in Modern Critical Editions." In *Ibid.* B. Vitrac. "The Euclidean Ideal of Proof in The *Elements* and Philological Uncertainties of Heiberg's edition of the text." In *Ibid.*

2 Such as those reflected upon in the "Antiquities and their Entangled Histories Project", http://www.colbud.hu/mult_ant/thirdpage.htm, but also the "Zukunftphilologie" project, <http://www.forum-transregionale-studien.de/en/zukunftphilologie/profile.html> among others.

the planet. It further intends, in the wake of Said and Pollock³, to reflect on the kind of critical editions that were produced outside of Europe. As a whole, the texts considered were produced in scholarly milieus that had different ideas of what an author or a text is, and how a text should be read, etc. We aim at understanding how such features were taken into account in past critical editions and translations of these texts worldwide. More generally, the ways critical editions and translations were elaborated and how they shaped specific representations of these texts need to be documented as well. This research will lead us to raise new questions about ways critical editions (and translations) could be made in the present day.

Thus, the aim of this workshop is to look at specific case studies within these historiographical trends. The questions raised are numerous.

— What were the contexts in which, and reasons for which, editions of scientific texts, for instance Chinese, Mesopotamian, or Indian sources, were carried out from the 18th or 19th century onwards? What texts were chosen to be critically edited?

— What were the intentions of those who decided to work on source materials of the past to make the documents to which they bore witness available for others? Did they want to restore an “original” text? Did they aim at restoring an archetype?

— On which textual basis did the editors operate? Were editors looking at original documents or relying on copies or photographs? Did editors rely on a single document? Or did they, on the contrary, involve several documents? In case they did, which use did they make of these various documents? How did they, for instance, take into account the possible diversity of the time periods, geographical places and social milieus in which these documents were produced? How did editors take into account the specific history of the documents on which they relied and the way in which these documents came down to us? What were the methods used? How was transliteration carried out and used, if at all? Did people work in teams or alone?

— Which parts and features of their sources did authors of critical editions take into account? Which parts and features did they disregard? For instance, how did they deal with measuring units and measured quantities? How did they treat the visual aspects of the ancient texts? How have editors shaped their critical editions? For instance, how have they shaped critical apparatus, if any? How did they deal with mistakes in the sources or so-called missing information? How did they treat damaged portions of the documents?

— When and how did they add elements to the texts they were editing? How were the divides between editing “originals”, translating texts, and sometimes publishing both together elaborated?

The above questions aim at exploring the various meanings and practices that text criticism and critical editions have had over the last two centuries with respect to scientific sources of the past. In order to deal with these questions, contributors to the conference may contrast different critical editions of the same work or text criticism of comparable sources. Contributors may also compare different translations of one text or contrast these translations with critical editions.

3 E. Said. “The Return to Philology.” in *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (Columbia University Press, 2004), 57-84. S. Pollock. “Future Philology? The Fate of a Soft Science in a Hard World.” *Critical Inquiry*, 35:931–961, 2009.

Once a critical edition and/or a translation was published, another set of issues can be addressed: How much did the way critical editions were crafted in the past influence the reception of texts? How much and in which ways has it molded today's scholarship and historiography? How does this critical reflection on philological procedures and their impact affect present-day philological projects?