

SAW Conference on Writing histories of ancient mathematics – Reflecting on past practices and opening the future, 18th-21st centuries

24-28 Octobre, 2016

organized by Karine Chemla, Agathe Keller, Christine Proust and the SAW group
Université Paris Diderot, Condorcet Building room 366A Klimt- 9:30 am to 5:30 pm

Uses of histories of mathematics

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The Use of Ancient Chinese Mathematical Texts in the New Schools established during the Late Qing Dynasty

Abstract – Mathematics was unprecedentedly appreciated by the Qing government, and mathematical education became an important component of scientific education after the rise of the Self-Strengthening Movement in the 1860s. At that time, in the context of a second phase of importation of knowledge coming from the West, modern mathematical knowledge including analytic geometry and calculus were introduced into China. Ancient Chinese mathematics was inferior in level by comparison with Western mathematics. However, although much Western mathematical knowledge that became known at that time in China was incorporated into mathematical courses in new schools, ancient Chinese mathematics was also included in these courses as well. In this paper, the author examines how ancient Chinese mathematical texts were used in the teaching of new schools and how the use of these texts was combined with the use of Western mathematics. At the same time, the author analyses the reasons why ancient Chinese mathematics was included in the teaching of new schools and what was the aim of teachers in using these texts. Furthermore, the author shows the close relations between the adoption of ancient Chinese mathematics in the teaching of new schools and the cultural circles' thought and educational system and teachers' level and other factors of the late Qing Dynasty, and establishes that westernization of mathematical education was an irresistible historical trend at that time.