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## Conceptualizing authorship in late imperial Chinese philology

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## Summary

### Conceptualizing Authorship in Late Imperial Chinese Philology

During the Qing dynasty (1644-1912) philology dominated the scholarly discourse in China. Scholars worked extensively on received texts dating from around 500 to 200 BCE and employed their sophisticated methodology to them in order to distinguish the authentic from the spurious. This dissertation is a study of the discussions scholars had on the topic and argues that two factors decisively shaped Chinese textual scholarship of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. First, the conceptual framework on which it rested posited only one author for each text; second, scholars considered the sages of antiquity infallible paragons of virtue. However, received texts were at odds with both assumptions. As a result of this tension, scholars argued that the textual records could not be trusted and, based on their concept of authorship, pointed to insertions of unauthorized contributors. This dissertation shows that the narrow concept of authorship was the most determining factor in their philological work, forcing them to view received texts in a different light and giving rise to the wide-spread concern over forgeries. Through a case study of the discussions about *Analects*, chapter 1 shows how the concept of authorship that scholars employed influenced the minutest details of their engagement with this text. Chapter 2 analyzes a theory of authorship that was meant to overcome the limitations of the narrow concept of authorship. Chapter 3 shows that the idealized author-biographies that scholars constructed closely reflect contemporary interpretations of the texts associated with an author. Chapter 4 explores theories of scholarship and scholarly disputes as attempts to address the challenges generated by the conceptual framework.