

Seminar SAW
**Exploring 19th and 20th centuries historiographies of mathematics in
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**Historiography of ancient mathematics and astral sciences
in India before its professionalization**

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Counting on Power: George Peacock, the History of Arithmetic and the Late Georgian British Colonial State.

Abstract - In this paper, I will explore Cambridge mathematician George Peacock's history of arithmetic in terms of particular ways of classifying, mapping, and displaying knowledge that also served as justifications for the nineteenth-century British colonial state. As Peacock began his work on his history of arithmetic in the 1820s, Cambridge University was becoming an example of what Bruno Latour has called a center of calculation; a central node in an information network in which various kinds of reports, maps, and objects were collected and translated into a regime of scientific knowledge. East India Company officers such as Henry Thomas Colebrooke provided important resources that Peacock would use to construct a world history of arithmetic that situated counting practices from a variety of times and places around the world into a progressive history culminating in European symbolic algebra. By describing how and why Cambridge became a center for the exchange of knowledge collected from around the world, I will begin investigating the close association between Peacock's imaginings about the history and power of algebra and the imaginings of British colonial state power in India. I will also say something about how Peacock's historically informed philosophy of algebra shaped the theoretical practices of a second generation of British mathematicians such as Augustus De Morgan.