

## Seminar SAW - Exploring 19th and 20th centuries historiographies of mathematics in the ancient world, 2015-2016

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### Historiography of ancient mathematics and astral sciences in China before its professionalization

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*When Cultural History Meets Mathematics: wasan and Yoshio Mikami*

**Abstract** – This My paper discusses the Japanese mathematician and historian of *wasan* (Japanese mathematics), Yoshio Mikami (1875-1950). Internationally known by the 1920s as the first person to introduce *wasan* to the English-speaking world and the first Japanese member of the International Society for history of Science, Mikami was nonetheless marginalized in the Japanese academia. What is fascinating about Mikami is his innovative adoption of the newly emerging genre of the cultural history to the historical study of *wasan*. While innovative and even subversive of the established academia, Mikami's approach essentialized the Japanese culture at the sacrifice of class and gender differences and political contexts and eventually facilitated the fascist discourse. My paper explores historiographical issues Mikami's approach raises for us, the issues associated with seeing a non-Western mathematics as part of the "indigenous culture."