

## 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, with a focus of China, and the Indian subcontinent: The beginnings of professionalization**

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*Between Evidential Scholarship and New Humanism: Li Yan and Qian Baocong as Historians of Chinese Mathematics*

**Abstract** - Chinese mathematics became an object of scholarly study in China between 1915 and 1920. The establishment of history of mathematics as a professional academic discipline in USA, Europe and Japan played a crucial role in the acceptance of history of mathematics as a “scientific” pursuit; but there was also a contingent factor of the simultaneous emergence of two strongly determined figures, Li Yan (1892-1963) and Qian Baocong (1892-1974), who took it as their lifetime duty to investigate Chinese mathematical tradition and write its reliable history from a Chinese perspective. This talk will introduce the main intellectual traditions motivating their historiographic writing, including traditional evidential scholarship (*kaozheng*), essentialist visions of national culture from Japan, comparative histories of world mathematics from USA, the May Fourth “doubting of antiquity” (*yi gu*) and George Sarton’s take on the “New Humanism”. I will show the reflection of these ideas in the choice of topics and actual style of writing produced by these two major historians.