

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

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**Historiography of science, ideologies and identities  
(culture, civilisation, communities)**

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*Legitimizing the present through mis-readings of the past: New historiographies of science in South Asia*

**Abstract** – One common factor rampant in South Asia, since the past few decades, is the over dependence of our political elite on the past. It happens in history and culture, most often, surprisingly it is fashionable in the readings of the history of science as well. There are some valid reasons to question orientalist/colonial reconstructions and interpretations, but imagining science and scientific theories which did not exist, stretches this engagement to ridiculous proportions. It had been quite common among some Islamic scholars to perceive something they call "Islamic science", with state support and legitimacy. However, we see a patently revivalist streak being promoted in India, patronised by the state, which emphasizes the need to rewrite history and particularly history of science. It is committed to unravel a new "nationalist" historiography of science which has been ignored by most of the liberal, Marxist and other schools of history writing all these years. I shall attempt to engage with both these trajectories and argue for a non-communitarian historiography of science.