

## 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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*How Did Chinese Medicine Become Chinese? Re-thinking the conception of culture in understanding Chinese medicine*

**Abstract** – This paper begins with a counter-intuitive phenomenon: in 1929, when the practitioners of Chinese medicine started their long-lasting endeavor to create a systematic national entity of Chinese medicine, they at the same time voted to reject calling themselves Chinese medicine (zhongyi). This historic decision runs against the conventional wisdom that these advocates adopted the strategy of associating Chinese medicine with “Chinese culture” and conversely got used by the governments as a tool for creating a “Chinese identity.” Departing from this historic juncture, this paper is devoted to understanding how they envisioned a new “Chinese medicine” in the 1930s and through which processes, and for what purposes, it was later renamed as Chinese medicine in the Communist period? In addition, this paper draws on and recasts the history narrated in my recent book into a historiographical reflection on why the emergence of a new Chinese medicine that was self-consciously “neither donkey nor horse” (roughly “neither Western nor Chinese” but much more) is so invisible in both the historical and the public understanding of Chinese medicine. For what political functions, moreover, this new medicine has been submerged under the image of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). Conversely, once we see it as such, how this new understanding might help us to re-think a series of important questions with which Chinese medicine has been associated since early twentieth century: the notion of China’s modernity, the Chineseness of Chinese medicine, the exclusion of Chinese medicine from the mainstream historiography of modern medicine, and the related recent debate around the question if Tu Youyou’s award of the Nobel Prize counts as a vindication of Chinese medicine.