Theme C: A global history of mathematics

The role of mathematics in human history has been crucial to humanity's self-understanding and to the coherent accounting of human development in many parts of the world. It is in the interest of mathematics and pedagogy for this history to be told accurately and seriously, conveying the genuine value of mathematics as a human heritage. In particular, research in the history of mathematics and its dissemination should be objective and free from political agenda to the extent possible. Meanwhile, it must be acknowledged that there is widespread misunderstanding about this history among mathematicians and educators, much of it propagated by scholars working in a climate that promoted the interests of specific regions subject to the influence of specific cultural currents. The narrative that was constructed thereby has contributed to alienating the majority of humanity from a sense of ownership of the mathematical tradition, thereby hindering education, scientific development, and international collaboration.

The purpose of researching a global history of mathematics that accounts for the rich interactions between regions and continuity of endeavour will be to:

1. Produce a more accurate understanding of historical processes and contributions;
2. Re-examine the foundations of the history of mathematics from a point of view that takes into account realistic interactions and inter-regional influence;
3. Thereby reclaim the status of mathematics in all its manifestations as a common heritage that can serve the needs of all of humanity.

The activities of the theme will include:

- Research fellowships for historians and mathematicians engaging in collaborative research on an accurate history of the way people have engaged with mathematical ideas in all parts of the world;
- Hybrid courses or seminar series organised by groups of visiting researchers for discussing new developments and exchanging ideas;
- Schools or workshops whose purpose is to disseminate the results of the research to the global community of research mathematicians, historians, educators, and students.

The research fellowships will follow the pattern of the research-in-groups programme of the ICMS with far more flexibility for longer stays of up to 3 months. A strong emphasis of this project will be to foster collaboration and communication between mathematicians, historians, and educators.