

## Editorial

The news of wholesale looting from the museums of the capital city of the region which was the centre of a great civilisation twice in history — once in the second millennium BCE and again around the end of the first millennium — although it could easily have been prevented given the military strength of the occupying forces, has shown once again that the countries in the world commanding the most powerful armies, are not always those most respectful to human civilisation, for which museums afford the material representation. In this act of sabotage, not a negligible part of the cultural heritage of Mesopotamia has been lost, and can never be recovered.

It is not our purpose here to identify and accuse those responsible. After all, we must admit the sad reality that we are no better than the people in late antiquity who let the Alexandrian Mouseion perish. In spite of all this, the fact that we still have innumerable source materials available for publication in our journal demonstrates that there have existed many people — most of them now anonymous — who endeavoured to hand down the achievements of mankind to posterity, in the face of natural disasters and human indifference and neglect. What is lacking is not the sources and cultural goods, but rather modern scholars who have the skills and motivation to continue the work of their anonymous predecessors. We thus would like to commend and encourage the efforts of the contributors to *SCIAMVS*, whom we regard as continuing an age-old and uninterrupted tradition of human civilisation.

Since *SCIAMVS* is an annual journal, we intended to publish it regularly in the first half of the year, and actually the first and the second volumes were published in March and May, respectively. The third volume, being somewhat behind schedule, appeared in August. Now this fourth volume is ready to be published in November. At this rate of publication one might suspect that the fifth volume would be delayed even further, resulting in a blank year, but hopefully this will not be the case. In fact, while putting the fourth volume into its final shape, we have already started editing the fifth, which should be published next May.

One of the reasons for this delay was that we did not like to sacrifice the quality of this periodical by adhering rigidly to a regular timetable. We received most of the contributions early in this year, and put them in the hands of referees for their judgment. All the referees showed their concern for keeping up the high standard of this journal by reading the papers very carefully and sending us detailed and carefully-considered reports, containing several suggestions for improvement. We

sent a summary of the reports to the authors, who, in most cases, appreciated the suggestions of the referees. When the author had differed in his opinions, however, the editors had to work as moderators. Thus we sometimes had to exchange several rounds of e-mails, faxes and air mails until both sides came to an agreement. The delay of this volume, therefore, was the result of the cooperation of those who wanted to ensure the high quality of this journal.

As evidence of the better publicity of this journal, a considerable number of scholars offered to contribute articles. Since, however, as we wrote in the preface of the first volume, our main purpose is to provide source materials for the history of the exact sciences, we had to reject some of these offers, because, in spite of their obvious merit, they did not meet this requirement. We feel that there are a sufficient number of academic journals for the history of science to accommodate papers which are not so closely concerned with providing source materials.

We are happy that this volume contains an article on the history of Chinese science for the first time. Since China has an ancient tradition of paper making and print technology, most of the important source materials are already available in printed form. One might argue, therefore, that there is no need to provide new editions of Chinese texts. But, following the principle that we are publishing source materials, in whatever form they first appeared, printed Chinese texts can also be accommodated. Thus we welcome the paper by Raymond Mercier, and we would like to have more contributions in the field of the history of East Asian science.

Since the journal does not generate an income, we have to keep the costs as low as possible. In order to do this without compromising quality and appearance, we prepare the camera-ready copy ourselves. We find that the L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X software program produces the best results, especially with the macro programs prepared by Toshiaki Kahino, who helped us with the first volumes. Contributors, therefore, can assist us by sending T<sub>E</sub>X files. However, in view of the increasing popularity of the Windows-related softwares, we also accept papers prepared by some standard softwares, like MsWord. In such cases we may ask for the cooperation of the author so that the resulting pages are not very different from those which are prepared by the editors.

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