

Editorial

‘As Hilbert once expressed it, the importance of a scientific work can be measured by the number of previous publications it makes superfluous to read’, wrote Otto Neugebauer in his *Exact Sciences in Antiquity* (page 145 in the Dover edition), referring to the *Almagest*. Hilbert and Neugebauer share a very suggestive view about the measurement of scientific achievements. Their view applies to the field of natural science today, in a different manner: a huge number of papers and articles are being made superfluous every day by the appearance of new papers, which again will become outdated very soon. With the revolutionary progress of information technology which opened a new category of e-journals, the factor of time has become extremely short, and the authors of papers compete, as it were, by seconds, in order to claim priority. It is understandable, therefore, that readers of scientific works need some ready-made evaluation, measured by quantity. This is the reason why we admit, with some reservation, the important role of *Science Citation Index*.

Let us turn our eyes to history. The *Almagest* itself was driven away by Copernicus and Kepler, but, for historians of astronomy, it is still a bible to read. In fact, I learned ancient astronomy from Ptolemy. The value of scientific works and that of historical documents are quite different. The *Almagest* was the book on science for about 1400 years, but the same book is now the object of historical studies. We must be careful to observe the difference. We do not want the same criterion of measurement be extended to the history of science, a field of humanities.

It is, of course, a pleasure for me to find an article from SCIAMVS quoted or referred to in academic journals or books. The more volumes I published, the more chances I have had to find this pleasure. But our main concern is how and by whom the articles of SCIAMVS are used. Some articles in our journal might attract an immediate attention, but some will not find any serious reader for a long time. Some articles, I hope, will still be read even a century from now.

To repeat the purpose of SCIAMVS, we wished the primary sources provided in this journal serve as the sound base for the historical research of scientific activities in the ancient and medieval world. Most of the source materials collected in our journal have not been printed before in any form. This is the case with the three source texts in the present volume. Bowen’s article on Simplicius’s Commentary on *De Caelo*, which is a continuation of his first article published in Volume 4, does not contain a new source, but it offers a new English translation of this important text.

We know that sometimes evaluation with quantification is necessary, but we refuse to let our journal be judged by the standard of natural science. An evaluation of a journal implies that of the articles contained in it, and this puts the editors in an intolerable position.

Michio Yano
Kyoto
December 7, 2008