

Preface

The main purpose of launching this journal is to offer source materials for historical research on the exact sciences in Antiquity and the Middle Ages. The idea for such a journal was first conceived by Ken Saito, our managing editor, sometime in 1997. When he asked for my cooperation, he already had a title in mind — SCIAMVS. As well as being the Latin for ‘Let us know’, one might interpret the word as an acronym for Sources in Classical, Indian, Arabic and Medieval European Sciences’, but more inclusive interpretations are also possible. For instance, we thought that S could stand for Studies and C for Commentaries. Likewise, if I is not differentiated from J, as is the case in Latin, it can also mean Japanese, while A might be interpreted as Asian, too. At first we played upon words in this way, but we never thought of changing the title ‘SCIAMVS’, because this is exactly the word by which we wanted to express our intension — we really ‘want to know’ man’s scientific activities in the past, using the sound evidence of history and philology. Whatever the interpretation may be, the area to be covered by our journal is the history of the exact sciences before A.D. 1600, although the limitation of time is not applied to Asian science.

No one would deny the importance of original sources in historical studies in general, and it is evident that the history of the exact sciences is not an exception. But it is not always easy to publish the sources in original languages and there are not many academic journals which accept articles of which the major part is editions and translations. Our priority lies in providing such materials, especially critical editions of unpublished manuscripts as well as their translation into modern languages together with commentaries and notes. We do not welcome speculative or undocumented discussion even if it is ‘stimulating and thought provoking’.

We also want to know what original sources are studied by whom and in which way. We therefore accept review articles of books and research papers.

Thanks to the recent progress in computer software for desktop publishing, we have acquired the skills of preparing camera-ready copy of articles, no matter which languages are involved, as long as the author presents a clean typescript according to our suggestion.

We can typeset non-Roman characters, mathematical formulas, and geometrical figures, which were costly and time-consuming when set by traditional printing processes. We intended to launch SCIAMVS before the end of 1999, since that was the centenary of the birth of Otto Neugebauer, a scholar who was very special for us and for our journal. Through his studies on mathematical and astronomical cuneiform texts and other sources in the history of the exact sciences, Neugebauer convinced us

of the importance of studying source materials. He was also one of the editors of the *Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte der Mathematik, Astronomie und Physik* which started in 1929. This periodical could be regarded as the immediate model for our journal since in it the priority was placed on the publication of the original sources. Not many issues of the *Quellen* were published, but all the articles contained in them are still indispensable today.

More than sixty years have past since the last volume of the *Quellen* was published. No other time in history has witnessed such rapid change on a global level. This change is mainly due to the progress in science and technology. It is therefore understandable that historians of science have become progressively more interested in the history of modern science and devoted less time to studying the original texts of pre-modern science. Yet the desirability for studying these earlier texts is no less strong. There are still numerous important primary sources waiting for decipherment, critical editions, translations, and commentaries by modern scholars. This fact is well illustrated by the six articles in the present volume.

Neugebauer once told me that there were very few journals of the history of science to which he wished to subscribe. It is my sincere hope that our journal be one of the few which he would have chosen, if he were alive.

We intend to keep publishing this journal as long as we can maintain a high level of contributions. The first volume was edited by the nine Japanese editors with the help of the five associate editors outside Japan. We are willing to reform the organization of the editorial committee so that our journal be truly international. Offers of help and suggestions are most welcome.

Kyoto
March, 2000
Michio Yano, Chief Editor