



CHAMA

Newsletter

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COMMISSION FOR THE HISTORY OF ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL ASTRONOMY
DIVISION OF HISTORY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
INTERNATIONAL UNION OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

Message from the President

In taking up the presidency of CHAMA for the term 2009-2013, I am conscious of the challenge, as well as the honor, involved in succeeding our founding President, Professor Ansari. The new executive, elected at last summer's congress in Budapest, is eager to build on the accomplishments of CHAMA's first eight years, and above all we wish to thank Professor Razaullah Ansari and Professor Anne Tihon, the past secretary, for the hard work they put into making a flourishing commission *ex nihilo*.

CHAMA's success as a professional organization for historians of early astronomy depends above all on two things: first, building an active membership that includes as many as possible of the historians researching in the field, in all parts of the world and at all stages in their careers; and secondly, providing the membership with easy and rapid means of communicating and keeping contact with their colleagues. Since we do not have a membership fee and receive only a small, though welcome, operating grant from the Division of History of Science and Technology (DHST) of IUHPS, the commission's effectiveness depends on the goodwill of its officers and members, some support from our officers' home institutions, and, increasingly, free resources available through the Internet. Until recently, our resources for professional communications consisted of the CHAMA website and the roughly semiannual newsletter. The website was previously maintained on the Université Catholique de Louvain server, but it became necessary last summer to find a new host. Our new site (at the URL <https://sites.google.com/site/chamaiuhps>) is still a bit bare-bones—some parts of the old site need to be updated before we repost them—but it is easy to update, and costs the Commission nothing. With the spread of access to email and the internet, we have had less and less need to print and mail copies of the newsletter, and our practice will now be to use the website as the primary means of distributing it.

CHAMA at last has an email listserv provided (again at no cost to us) by New York University. The list is for members only, and all members for whom we have valid email addresses receive and may submit messages. The listserv is intended for announcements (e.g. of conferences, publications, jobs, and fellowships) and simple queries; we ask members not to use the list for personal statements and polemics, for reporting or criticizing research, or for messages that are not directly relevant to the history of ancient and medieval astronomy. Members should ensure that we have their correct addresses and, especially, email addresses; changes of contact information should be sent to the secretary, Professor Josep Casulleras (jcasulleras@ub.edu).

We currently have close to a hundred members, but they still represent only a fraction, probably less than half, of the historians who work in our area. We urge members to recommend to colleagues that they apply for membership, using the form on our website, or to suggest to one of our officers people whom we might encourage to apply. Regular membership is open to historians who have a record of published research or comparable professional activity in the history of ancient or medieval astronomy. We are also introducing a new category of limited term (8 year) membership for doctoral students researching on ancient and medieval astronomy; we hope that many of these students will remain active in the field and become regular members.

Alexander Jones



Report from the Budapest meeting

The Commission's business meeting was held on July 29, 2009 during the 23rd International Congress of History of Science and Technology at the Budapest University of Technology and Economics. At this meeting a new executive was elected, including a new position that will be held automatically by the immediate past president of the Commission.

President: Alexander JONES, Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York University, alexander.jones@nyu.edu

Vice President: YANO Michio, Kyoto Sangyo University, yanom@cc.kyoto-su.ac.jp

Past President: S. M. Razaullah ANSARI, Aligarh Muslim University, raza.ansari@gmx.net

Secretary: Josep CASULLERAS, University of Barcelona, jcasulleras@ub.edu

Councillor: SHI Yunli, University of Science and Technology of China, ylshi@ustc.edu.cn

The term of office for the executive is four years, and the next elections for the executive will be at the international congress in 2013.

On behalf of CHAMA, S. M. Razaullah Ansari, Julio Samsó, and Anne Tihon organized a symposium, "Ancient and Medieval Astronomy with Special Emphasis on its Socio-cultural Context." The program of the symposium was as follows:

Session I: Ptolemy, his Writings, and their Transmission: Status of Present Research

Alexander Jones, *Babylonian and Greek Antecedents of Ptolemy's Tables*

Anne Tihon, *Ptolemy and his Time: An Unedited Astronomical Papyrus*

Raymond Mercier, *Introducing the Edition of the Handy Tables of Ptolemy*

Julio Samsó, *Ibn al-Raqqam's al-Zij al-Mustawfi*

José Bellver, *Ptolemaism in al-Andalus: Jabir b. Aflah and the Evolution of the Term Hay'a*

Montse Díaz-Fajardo, *Tasyir in the Islamic West: Ibn Abi-l-rijal and Alfonso X*

Ramasubramanian K. Sharma, *Jagannatha's Samrat-siddhanta: A Translation of Almagest into Sanskrit*

S.M. Razaullah Ansari, *The Indian Scholar Khayrullah Muhandis and His Persian Translation of Al-Tusi Recension of Almagest*

Session II: Contextual Oriental Studies

Michio Yano, *Buddhist Astronomy in its Cultural Context*

Sonja Brentjes, *Patronage of Astronomy and Astrology in Post-classical Islamic Societies*

Yunli Shi, *Knowledge Secrecy and the Chinese Assimilation of Islamic Astronomy in the 14th Century*

Xiaochun Sun, *The Impact of the Telescope on Astronomy and Society in China*

Sreeramula Rajeswara Sarma, *Yavana-yantra to Yantra-râja*

Sriram Subrahmanya Myyasandra, *Astronomy Part of the Kerala Work, Yuktibhasa (circa 1530 CE)*

Farid Ghassemloou, Fariba Sabet, *A Survey of Persian Zijes in Extant in Iran with Special Stress on their Use in Medieval Iranian Society*

S.M. Razaullah Ansari, *Final Remarks*

Many papers in other symposia and regular sessions concerned ancient and medieval astronomy, in particular in the symposia "The Nature and Aims of Prediction in Ancient Science" (organized by Francesca Rochberg), "Islamic Science in Context: Texts, Instruments, Locales, and Institutions, in Memory of Professor Edward S. Kennedy" (Jamil Ragep and Mercè Comes Maymó), "History of Numerical Tables: the Second Meeting on History of Exact Sciences Along the Silk Road" (Dominique Tournès and Anjing Qu), and "The Antikythera Mechanism and its Place in the History of Science, Technology and Ideas" (Yanis Bitsakis and Alexander Jones). Alexander Jones delivered a plenary lecture, "The Antikythera Mechanism: Its meaning for Greek astronomy." The full congress program is available at <http://www.conferences.hu/ichs09/>.

Alexander Jones



RECENT CONFERENCES

International Conference on Instruments and Astronomical Development in China, Commemorating the 730th Anniversary of Beijing Ancient Observatory of the Yuan, Beijing, China, November 7-8, 2009.

International Workshop, Venturing into Magnum Cathay: 17th Century Polish Jesuits in China: Michał Boym S.J. (1612–1659), Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki S.J. (1610–1656), and Andrzej Rudomina S.J. (1596–1633), 26 September – 1 October, 2009, Kraków, Poland. [Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki S.J. was responsible for the first systematic introduction of Copernican astronomy into China.]

Kyujanggak International Symposium of Korean Studies, August 27–28, 2009, The Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies, Seoul National University, Korea. [There was a panel titled "Astronomy and Mathematics in Late Choson Korea."]

Korean-Chinese Joint Workshop on Calendar System and Astronomical Instruments of King Sejong, Feb. 25, 2010, Konkuk University, Seoul, Korea.

Living the Lunar Calendar: Time, Text, and Tradition. January 30 – February 1, 2010, Bible Lands Museum, Jerusalem.

Shi Yunli, John Steele



FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

Ninth "Oxford" International Symposium on Archaeoastronomy. Archaeoastronomy and Ethnoastronomy: Building Bridges between Cultures. Lima, Peru, 5–9 January, 2011. The first announcement and call for papers can be found at <http://www.archaeoastronomy.org>.

Seventh International Conference on the Inspiration of Astronomical Phenomena (IHSAP VII). Bath, U.K., October 25–29, 2010. <http://www.insapvii.org>.

John Steele, S. M. Razaullah Ansari



RECENT DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS

Jean LEMPIRE, *Le Commentaire de Stéphane d'Alexandrie aux Tables Faciles de Ptolémée. Histoire du texte et édition critique, traduite et annotée.* Université Catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, 2010. (The edition will be published in the *Corpus des Astronomes Byzantins*, probably in 2011.)

Jacqueline FEKE, *Ptolemy in Philosophical Context: A Study of the Relationships Between Physics, Mathematics, and Theology*. University of Toronto, Toronto, 2009.
Anne Tihon, Alexander Jones



Recent publications

Alexander JONES, ed., *Ptolemy in Perspective: Use and Criticism of his Work from Antiquity to the Nineteenth Century*. Archimedes 23, New York, 2010.

Contents:

Anne TIHON, "An unpublished astronomical papyrus contemporary with Ptolemy."

Alexander JONES, "Ancient rejection and Adoption of Ptolemy's Frame of Reference for Longitudes."

Stephan HEILEN, "Ptolemy's doctrine of the Terms and its reception."

Florian MITTENHUBER, "The tradition of texts and maps in Ptolemy's Geography"

F. Jamil RAGEP, "Islamic reactions to Ptolemy's imprecisions."

H. Darrel RUTKIN, "The use and abuse of Ptolemy's Tetrabiblos in Renaissance and early modern Europe: two case studies (Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and Filippo Fantoni)."

N. M. SWERDLOW, "Tycho, Longomontanus, and Kepler on Ptolemy's solar observations and theory, precession of the equinoxes, and obliquity of the ecliptic."

John M. STEELE, "Dunthorne, Mayer, and Lalande on the secular acceleration of the moon."

SHI Yunli, "Reforming Astronomy and Compiling Imperial Science in the Post-Kangxi Era: the Social Dimension of the Yuzhi Lixiang kaocheng houbian." *East Asian Science, Technology and Medicine* 28, 2009, 47–73.

SHI Yunli, "The Yuzhi lixiang kaocheng houbian in Korea." In *The Jesuits, the Padroado and East Asian Science (1552-1773)*. History of mathematical sciences: Portugal and East Asia, III. Singapore, 2008. 205–227.

SHI Yunli, "Nikolaus Smogulecki and Xue Fengzuo's True Principles of the Pacing of the Heavens: Its Production, Publication, and Reception." *East Asian Science, Technology and Medicine* 27, 2008, 62–124.

Anne TIHON, "Les sciences exactes à Byzance," *Byzantion* 79, 2009, 380–434.

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE CENTRE, *Quarterly Review of World Heritage*, no. 54, 2009: special issue on Astronomy and World Heritage.

Anne Tihon, Shi Yunli, S. M. Razaullah Ansari, Alexander Jones



Forthcoming publications

Anne TIHON, *Ptolemaiou Procheiroi kanones. Les Tables Faciles de Ptolémée*, vol. 1a, tables A1-A2, Introduction et édition critique.

Raymond MERCIER, *Ptolemaiou Procheiroi kanones, Ptolemy's Handy Tables*, vol. 1b, tables A1-A2, Transcription and Commentary.



Activities of members

Prof. S. M. Razaullah ANSARI (Former Professor of Physics, Aligarh Muslim University) was invited by the Asiatic Society (Kolkata) to participate and to give a talk at the *National Seminar on International Year of Astronomy: Perspective and Challenges*, held in Kolkata during Nov.20-21, 2009. The Seminar was inaugurated by Prof. Yash Pal, Chancellor of JNU (New Delhi). It comprised talks by eight speakers on astronomy in India. Prof. Ansari 's talk was the only one dealing with history of astronomy in Medieval India. The topic of his talk was “Reception and Assimilation of Modern Astronomy by Persian-Knowing Scholars of Medieval India.” Prof. Razaullah Ansari was also invited as a guest speaker to Tehran (Iran) to present his specialized studies on sciences in Medieval India. The Terbiat Modares University in Tehran organised an *International Congress on History of Mathematics and Astronomy in Islamic Countries during Islamic Middle Ages* during Dec. 8-10, 2009. The topic of Prof. Ansari's talk was “The Mathematicians' Family of Ahmad Ma‘mar: Ataullah, Lutfullah, Khairullah and their Descendants.”



Obituaries

Dr. George ABRAHAM, retired Professor and Head of the Department of Mathematics at Madras Christian College, on May 29, 2009. A member of CHAMA, Prof. Abraham was the author of numerous papers and reviews in the history of ancient mathematical astronomy.

Alexander Jones

Mercè COMES MAYMÓ (8 May 1949 – 26 February 2010)

With great sadness, we report that our colleague Prof. Mercè Comes, President of the Commission on History of Science and Technology in Islamic Societies of the International Union of the History and Philosophy of Science, died suddenly from a heart attack on Friday, February 26. She belonged to this Commission since its foundation, and held the positions of Secretary (2001-2004), Vice President (2005-2009) and President (elected on August, 2009). She was also a member of the International Academy for the History of Sciences. She had a B.A. (1982) in Translation (Autonomous University of Barcelona), M.A. (1986) in Arabic Studies (University of Barcelona), and Ph.D. (1990, University of Barcelona), and worked as full Professor (“Profesora Titular”) at the University of Barcelona since 1993, where she held the positions of Academic Counselor for the Area of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Secretary and Director of the Department of Semitic Philology and Associate Dean of the Faculty of Philology, and belonged to several research and teaching teams.

Her publications cover the subjects of History of Arabic astronomy, geography and cartography, in addition to a number of translations in the field of Arabic literature.

This premature death is a great loss for the history of science and also an irreparable personal loss for those who knew her. She was a brilliant researcher, with a large list of valuable contributions in the field of the History of Arabic Science, highly committed to her work, always willing to assist in the organization of any scientific event, as well as a highly appreciated professor at the University of Barcelona.

We offer our condolences to her colleagues and family.

Josep Casulleras

Selected Bibliography of Mercè Comes:

« Al-Šūfī como fuente del libro de la 'Ochana espera' de Alfonso X ». *Ochava Espera y Astrofísica*. Instituto de Cooperación con el Mundo Árabe e Instituto Millás-Vallicrosa de Historia de la Ciencia Árabe. Barcelona, 1990, pp. 11-113.

« Deux échos andalous a Ibn al-Bannā' de Marrākush ». *Patrimoine Andalous dans la Culture Arabe et Espagnole*. Centre d'Études et de Recherches Économiques et Sociales. Université de Tunis. Tunis, 1991, pp. 81-94.

« À propos de l'influence d'al-Zarqālluh en Afrique du Nord: l'apogée solaire et l'obliquité de l'ecliptique dans le zīdj d'Ibn Ishāq ». *Actas del II Coloquio Hispano-Marroquí de Ciencias Históricas: Historia, Ciencia y Sociedad*. Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional- Instituto de Cooperación con el Mundo Árabe. Madrid, 1992, pp. 147-159.

« The 'Meridian of water' in the tables of Geographical Coordinates of al-Andalus and North-Africa ». *Journal for the History of the Arabic Science*. 10 (1992), 41-51.

« Un procedimiento para determinar la hora durante la noche en la Córdoba del siglo X ». *Revista del Instituto Egipcio de Estudios Islámicos (Madrid)* 26 (1993), 263-272.

« Al-Šūfī como fuente del libro de la 'Ochana espera' de Alfonso X ». *Ochava Espera y Astrofísica*. Instituto de Cooperación con el Mundo Árabe e Instituto Millás-Vallicrosa de Historia de la Ciencia Árabe. Barcelona, 1990, pp. 11-113.

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« The 'Meridian of water' in the tables of Geographical Coordinates of al-Andalus and North-Africa ». *Journal for the History of the Arabic Science*. 10 (1992), 41-51.

« Un procedimiento para determinar la hora durante la noche en la Córdoba del siglo X ». *Revista del Instituto Egipcio de Estudios Islámicos (Madrid)* 26 (1993), 263-272.