

EDITORIAL

Thematic issues are published in IJHS from time to time. They are sometimes specially planned, or accepted as an outcome of seminar presentations, after the papers are thoroughly revised and peer-reviewed as per norms. Cannons, Gun Powder, Artillery, Military Modernization and Technology in Medieval Period (2005), History and Characteristics of Wootz Steel in India and Abroad (2007), Science and Technology with special emphasis on Mathematics and Astronomy in Medieval India (2012) were published before as thematic issues, the first two were of course specially planned and the third was the outcome of a seminar presentation. These issues in general attracted large number of reputed scholars from India and Abroad. The papers in general had been of high quality and were highly appreciated. The Editorial Board had subsequently suggested that we should have thematic issues from time to time to cover interesting areas of history of science and technology.

The present thematic issue on 'Numerical Tables in Sanskrit Sources' is the outcome of a seminar organized by the Institut Méditerranéen de Recherches Avancées (IMÉRA), Marseilles, France on December 13-17, 2010. It contains analysis of ancient and medieval Sanskrit astronomical tables mainly dealing with linear and sidereal measures, mean longitudes of planets, sine tables of Jñānarāja and others, tables on Moon's motions & longitudes, computation of eclipses, tables of *tithis*, days in *pakṣas* and allied *saṛapakṣa* tables (Makaranda). These are all peer-reviewed and accepted for their high quality and research value.

In this context it will not be out of place to mention that a few surveys of manuscripts of Sanskrit astronomical tables were made by H. Poleman (1938), David Pingree (1968, 1973) and others.* Poleman's list goes to 248 items covering manuscripts from Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and a few from Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia

and Indonesia. Pingree's survey of manuscripts of American libraries mostly came from western and northern India where as his survey of English libraries constituted the manuscripts from Bengal, Benares, Kashmir and South India. The collections were originally done during the 19th century and the first quarter of the 20th century. Survey of Sanskrit tables in oriental libraries of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Benares, Madras and Kerala is still due and bound to expand our knowledge in the field.

As regards nature of tables, the collections are mostly classified into four groups, viz., longitude and latitude tables of planets; tables of *tithi*, *nakṣatra*, *yoga* and other calendrical elements; eclipse tables; and tables of shadow-lengths, right and oblique ascensions, longitudes of mid-heaven, lengths of daylight, equation of time, and similar such functions.

The tables in general furnish what information they carry, what prior information is necessary in order to find the new information and how the structures of the tables have been planned to appreciate the quantitative basis of the supplied information. No attempt has however been made to discover the methodology applied in the computation of the tabulated entries. Some unusual tables are also noticed which perhaps covered the local variation with new set of parameters. Our present task would be to unearth all these hidden methodologies and new parameters. The present issue has tried to bring forward the answer of some of such techniques and functions involved in the formulation of some of these tables.

We are indeed thankful to A. Keller and C. Montelle, the guest editors and other contributors to the Seminar for their co-operation which have made this venture quite meaningful referring to us a much heavier task to handle.

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* Poleman, H. A Census of Indic Manuscripts in the United States and Canada, *Amer. Oriental Soc.*, 12, New Haven, 1938; Pingree, D. Sanskrit Astronomical Tables in the United States, *Trans. Amer. Phil. Soc.*, N.S. 58.3, 1968; Sanskrit Astronomical Tables in England, Kuppaswami Sastri, Research Institute, Madras, 1973.