

Report of Meetings, 20 and 21 November 1985

PRESIDENT: O. Pedersen

SECRETARY: J.A. Eddy

I. BUSINESS SECTION

The members paid a silent tribute to the memory of colleagues who had died since the last General Assembly, viz. Jean Filliozat, Eric Forbes, François Link, Derek J. de Solla Price, and Edward Rosen, whose names were read by the President.

The following were elected members of the Organising Committee for the period 1985-1988:

Eddy, Dr. John A. (Boulder): President
North, Prof. John D. (Groningen): Vice President
Débarbat, Dr. Suzanne (Paris)
Eelsalu, Prof. Heino (Tartu)
Xi Zezong, Prof. (Beijing)
Pedersen, Prof. Olaf (Aarhus): Past President

Commission 41 has now 102 ordinary members who are listed elsewhere in this volume. During the meeting the following 44 historians of astronomy were elected consultant members for 1985-1988: A. Aaboe, W.B. Ashworth, A. Aveni, J.A. Bennett, V. Bialas, R. Billard, P. Bulgakov, L.E. Doggett, A.I. Ereemeeva, B.R. Goldstein, A.A. Gorstein, P. Galluzzi, N.S. Hetherington, E.S. Kennedy, D. King, J.A. Klimishin, H.G. Körber, H. Labat, J.E. Lankford, N.B. Lavrova, F.R. Maddison, Y. Maeyama, R. Mercier, N.I. Nevskaja, A. Rodrigues, B.A. Rosenfeld, G. Rosinska, G. Saliba, J. Samsó, A. Segonds, A.R. Serban, R.W. Smith, Z. Sokolovskaya, G.J. Toomer, G.L'E. Turner, B.L. van der Waerden, A. Van Helden, J. Vernet, D.W. Waters, S.R. Weart, S. Weng, R.S. Westman, D.T. Whiteside, M. Yano.

The following resolution was proposed by the Swedish National Committee of the IAU:

Commission 41 notes with great satisfaction that an action has been initiated in Sweden and Denmark, aiming at an improvement of the state of the remains of Tycho Brahe's observatories on the island of Hven. This site is of unique importance in the history of astronomy: here modern practical astronomy was born, and the long series of observations made here by Tycho and his assistants provided the material from which the laws of planetary motions were derived by Kepler and Newton. The Commission urges the relevant authorities to make every possible effort to ascertain that the ruins are being preserved and the site as a whole kept in a state worthy of its glorious past.

It was unanimously adopted and passed on to the final session of the General Assembly where it was carried by acclamation.

Reports on recent activity in the history of astronomy in Canada and France had been received from Prof. Kennedy and Dr. Débarbat respectively.

At the meeting Dr. Débarbat reported on a proposal for an international symposium to be held in Paris in 1887 to commemorate the centenary of the Carte du Ciel. Both Commission 41 and the International Union of the History and Philosophy of Science will be involved in the planning of this meeting together with the Observatoire de Paris.

The President drew attention to the many important publications which have appeared during 1982-85 as a testimony to the increasing interest in the history of astronomy on a scholarly basis. Only a few major works can be mentioned here, such as Vol. 4 A of the General History of Astronomy, edited by O. Gingerich (Cambridge 1985), the new English translation of the Almagest by G.J. Toomer (London 1984), and N. Swerdlow and O. Neugebauer: Mathematical Astronomy in Copernicus's De Revolutionibus 1-2 (New York 1984), as well as two volumes of collected articles, Astronomy and History by O. Neugebauer (New York 1983) and Studies in the Islamic Exact Sciences by E.S. Kennedy (Beirut 1983). A Source Book of Indian Astronomy, edited by B.V. Subbarayappa and K.V. Sarma (Bombay 1985) had been published on the occasion of the General Assembly.

II. SCIENTIFIC SESSIONS

The meetings of the Commission comprised three scientific sessions which were attended by about 20 members and a similar number of other astronomers or historians of astronomy. Since several members had chosen to present their recent work to the IAU Colloquium 91 on "The History of Oriental Astronomy" which was held in New Delhi on 13-16 November just before the General Assembly, the number of papers read to the Commission was not as large as usual. Nevertheless, they covered a great variety of subject matters. A major paper on "Modern Astronomy in Medieval India - Persian Sources" by S.M.R. Ansari described the penetration of "Western" astronomy into India in the 18th century and later; in the absence of the author it was read by one of his colleagues and is already available as a separate publication. P. Kunitzsch spoke of "Star Tables in Medieval Astronomy" and R. Mercier about "Mean Motions in the Tole-dan Tables". In both these papers the interconnections between the astronomy of different cultural areas were exposed by means of new source material. More recent topics were dealt with by George Wilkins who painted a vivid portrait of "Simon Newcomb - born 1835", and by K. Lang who spoke of the "Highlights of Solar System Astronomy in the 20th Century". Among a number of brief communications was a paper by Maria Firneis on "Newly Discovered Instruments of the Viennese School" and a survey of "Astronomy at Strassbourg" by K. Fischer, followed by a presentation of "Recent Evidence Pertaining to Compasses Employed in 19th-Century Surveying in Canada" by J.E. Kennedy and an artistic exposition of "Sundrawing Ancient and Modern" by J. Saad-Cook.