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## *Foreword*

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The Royal Asiatic Society was founded in March 1823. The practice of holding meetings at which papers were given and discussed commenced the following month in April of that year. Throughout the first decade of the Society's existence, these orally delivered papers were later printed and distributed in substantial quarto volumes entitled 'Transactions'.

Publication of the Journal itself began in 1834. Its purpose was to provide a quicker and more regular vehicle for the publication of research and, unlike the 'Transactions', it printed material that had not, necessarily, been presented at the Society's meetings. Monthly meetings with a lecture still form an important part of the Society's activities. Lecturers use this occasion in a variety of ways. Some deliver interesting and relaxed overviews of their specialist subjects, while others may supplement existing knowledge with newly gathered detail. Many, however, present new analyses using the meeting as a forum for discussion.

This issue of the journal is unusual. It assumes the role that the 'Transactions' played in the early days of the Society. It comprises the transcripts of five lectures, all given as memorials to late scholars of note or on receipt of an RAS award, and it also includes a discursive paper by the erudite scholar J. Duncan M. Derrett.

SARAH ANSARI  
*Editor*