

41. COMMISSION DE L'HISTOIRE DE L'ASTRONOMIE

Report of Meeting, 17 August 1961

PRESIDENT: P. G. Kulikovsky.

SECRETARY: J. Ashbrook.

There were present 30 members and guests.

Business meeting

The agenda for the business session was:

1. Additions to the Draft Report.
2. Discussion of the Draft Report, and Resolutions.
3. Membership of the Commission.

1. Additions to the Draft Report

The President communicated the titles of the following works, published after the preparation of the *Draft Report*:

Alexandre Koyré. *La révolution astronomique* [Copernic, Kepler, Borelli] Paris, Hermann, 1961, p. 525.

A. Pannekoek. *A History of Astronomy*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1961, p. 506.

Simon Stevin. *Principal Works* Vol. III, *Astronomy, and Navigation*, Amsterdam, 1961, p. 632.

Historico-astronomical Investigations, Vol. VII, Moscow, 1961, p. 420.

P. Kutitzsch. *Untersuchungen zur Sternnomenklatur der Araber*, 1961, p. 125.

A. Beer & others. "An 8th Century Meridian Line: I-HSING's chain of Gnomons and the Pre-history of the Metric System" in *Vistas in Astronomy*, Vol. IV, 1961.

The President noted the omission from the bibliography of two articles by C. H. Smiley on the astronomy of the Mayas: "The Antiquity and Precision of Mayan Astronomy" (*J.R.A.S. Can.*, 54, 222-226, 1960); "A New Correlation of the Mayan and Christian Calendars" (*Nature*, 188, 215-216, 1960).

On this subject the President reported that the decipherment of Mayan texts by means of electronic data processing equipment has been performed at the Novosibirsk branch of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences.

2. Resolutions

After discussion of the *Draft Report* and of its propositions, Commission 41 adopts the following *resolutions*:

1. The Commission expresses its desire that the National Committees of Astronomy in countries adhering to the IAU organize wherever possible Commissions on the History of Astronomy, in order to co-ordinate the efforts of scientists in allied fields.

2. The Commission expresses the hope that the extension of its membership to include Presidents of future national commissions on the history of astronomy, as designated by their

National Committees, will be approved by the Executive Committee of the IAU in the few cases when such persons are not members of the IAU.

3. The Commission desires to undertake the preparation and publication of an annual bibliography of studies in the history of astronomy, and its distribution to members of Commission 41, to national commissions, to National Committees, to observatories and interested scientists.

(The President expressed the hope that the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences will have the kindness to publish this bibliography for the next three years).

4. The Commission desires to promote the exchange of information by publishing and distributing, under IAU auspices, an *Information Circular*, of which several issues would appear each year. (The President expressed the hope that the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences will similarly have the kindness to publish the *Circulars* during the next three years).

5. The Commission accepted all the recommendations made on pages 462-463 of the *Draft Report*, (see Vol. XIA), except the first, which was approved in principle but deferred to a later time.

Two additional suggestions were accepted.

(a) The desirability of encouraging individual observatories to compile or bring up to date their histories (D. Alter),

(b) The expression of encouragement to Dr T. Przytkowski (Jedrzejow, Poland) to complete and publish an illustrated description of his unique collection of sundials, other gnomonic instruments and books, started by his ancestor in 1738 (P. Kulikovsky).

3. Membership

J. Ashbrook (U.S.A.) was named as Vice-President of Commission 41. The Organizing Committee, in addition to the President and Vice-President *ex officio*, contains the following members: H. Dingle (U.K.), A. V. Douglas (Canada), H. Michel (Belgium), K. Yabuuti (Japan), E. Zinner (Germany).

The list of members of Commission 41 for the next three years is given in Part 6.

Scientific meeting

The agenda for the scientific session was:

1. Astronomical texts in Tibet (W. E. Petri).
2. Jan Hevelius (1611-1686) (E. Rybka).
3. Mikhail Lomonosov (1711-1765) (P. G. Kulikovsky).

1. In collaboration with the Professor of Indology in Munich University (Professor Dr H. Hoffmann) W. E. Petri studies Tibetan and Sanskrit texts relevant to the history of astronomy. Their main interest is focussed on the *Kālacakvalaghūtantra*, a Buddhist work of about 1000 A.D.

It is hoped that further discussion will throw some light on the missing links between Greek and Hindu astronomy. A scrutiny of Tibetan xylographs and manuscripts preserved in the U.S.S.R. is highly desirable.

2. E. Rybka reported that the correspondence of Jan Hevelius preserved in the Bibliothèque National, Paris, has been investigated by T. Przytkowski and the results are expected to be soon published, partly in the *History of Astronomy in Poland*, which may be available in 1963. On 24 April 1961 there was celebrated at Gdańsk in Poland the 350th anniversary of Hevelius'

birth. He drew attention to P. G. Kulikovsky's article on the activity of J. Hevelius in Vol. VII of *Historico-Astronomical Investigations* pp. 257-288, Moscow, 1961.

3. On the occasion of the forthcoming 250th anniversary of the birth of M. Lomonosov, P. G. Kulikovsky reported on his researches into the astronomical works of this great Russian scientist. Among others he mentioned that Lomonosov invented an oblique reflecting telescope prior to W. Herschel and from his observations of the 1761 transit of Venus he correctly deduced the existence of a Cytherean atmosphere. Kulikovsky's new book about Lomonosov's astronomical work will be published in Moscow in September, 1961.

The President expresses his gratitude to all persons present at this session and especially to Mrs S. D. Gossner (U.S.A.) for her kind assistance with translation from French to English and *vice-versa*.