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# REVUE D'HISTOIRE DES MATHÉMATIQUES

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## EDITORIAL

*Backstage at Mathematical Publications* could be a title for this first issue of the current year 2009 of the *Revue d'histoire des mathématiques*.

In the last part of this issue we provide, thanks to the editorial work of Javier Docampo Rey, the first printed publication of a manuscript on commercial algebra in Castilian. This takes up the column *Textes et Documents*, whose last installment dates back to volume 7 (2001) of our *Revue* where we published, with Jacqueline Boniface, Kronecker's last lecture course. The allusions in the problems, particularly the recurring mention of the town of Acre, together with other indices, suggest connecting this Algebra treatise with the mediterranean commerce of the years 1390–1411. The Castilian of the manuscript betrays Catalan influences, and the treatment of fractions may contain traces of Arabic practices. Helped by the mathematical problems themselves and by Docampo Rey's commentary, the carefully spelled out model solutions in Castilian are easily accessible and an actual reading pleasure. The language conjures up memories of dreams:

*Lynda syn comparación, // claridad e luz de España // Plazer e consolación // Brios a cibdat extraña // En mi corazón se baña // En ver vestra maravilla, // Muy podorosa Sevilla // Guarnida d'alta compañia ... [Alfonso Álvarez de Villasandino (~1340–1425)]*

But this idyll cannot make us forget the waves of the plague, then still recent, nor the anti-Jewish violence which spread in 1391 from Seville to other important cities like Valencia, the only Iberian city mentioned in the manuscript.

*Cuán presto se va el plazer, // Cómo, después de acordado, // Da dolor // ... // Pues si vemos lo presente // Cómo en un punto s'es ido // E acabado, // Si juzgamos sabiamente, // Daremos lo non venido // Por pasado ... [Jorge Manrique (~1440–1479)]*

Our current knowledge of European commercial algebra texts from the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries already gives us an idea of the complicated interplay of various traditions, civilisations, and languages. In spite of the numerous blank spots in our knowledge of this historical field, it may actually be better known than the history of French intellectuals facing the brutal modern medievalism of the German occupation during World War II. In the first article of this issue, Michèle Audin contributes to this subject by studying different publication strategies that Jewish mathematicians adopted in response to the *statut des Juifs* enacted by the German authorities on October 3, 1940. Her principal source are the archives of the Paris *Académie*.

Since publishing is the basic means of production of a scientific researcher, the historiographical issues touched upon here are immediately relevant—even more so as Vichy and the occupation still appear as an *ever-present past* (as in the title of a 1994 book by Henry Rousseau and Eric Connan). The history of French book publishing under the occupation has been studied by Pascal Fouché (in two 1987 volumes); but this does not include the scientific journals. They have been studied in the humanities more than for the exact sciences; there is in particular the famous example of the *Annales d'histoire sociale* which were continued by Lucien Febvre alone, without the Jewish cofounder Marc Bloch, and against Bloch's wish, but including texts by Bloch under pseudonym. In 1942, Febvre changed their format from the journal to a book series called *Mélanges d'histoire sociale*, thereby profiting from censorship only after press. Georges Friedmann called this (in a letter to Febvre of 18 October 1942) “an ‘elegant solution’, as mathematicians would say...” But not all historians after the war have agreed—see the careful analysis by Peter Schöttler in the volume *Les intellectuels et l'occupation 1940–1944 — Collaborer, partir, résister* (A. Betz & St. Martens, eds.), Paris (Editions Autrement) 2004 ; pp. 243–261.

Michèle Audin's article is a important step on the way towards a comprehensive history of French science under German occupation.

And what about the backstage of d'Alembert's publications? The article by Guilbaud & Jouve in the middle of the present issue is one of the numerous results of the big collective effort around the edition of d'Alembert's *Collected Papers*, which has mobilized many historians of mathematics. The turning year of 1757, when d'Alembert switched from treatises to *opuscules*, has resulted for a long time in a biased reception of his works. Guilbaud & Jouve now reestablish the evolution of d'Alembert's ideas in the realm of applied subjects for which he uses partial differential equations. This renders d'Alembert's overall thinking more transparent. And the analysis of his latest works offers surprising insights, for instance about the way in which his notion of function developed—see the end of Guilbaud & Jouve's analysis. Their article closes with a systematic and chronological table of partial differential equations in d'Alembert's work; a useful tool for readers and researchers.

Norbert Schappacher