

In memoriam
David Edwin Pingree
(2 Jan 1933 – 11 Nov 2005)

David Pingree, University Professor and Professor of the History of Mathematics and of Classics at Brown University, died in Providence, RI, at the Miriam Hospital, on Friday, 11 November 2005. He was born in New Haven, CT, son of the late Daniel and Elizabeth (Maconi) Pingree, and lived in Providence since 1971.

In 1958 he went to India to study Sanskrit. Upon his return in 1960, he became a member of the Society of Fellows at Harvard where he learned Arabic and started to accumulate lists of relevant manuscripts on the exact sciences in Sanskrit. He received his Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1960. After working for several years at Harvard and at the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago, he came to the Department of the History of Mathematics at Brown in 1971 as the successor to Otto Neugebauer, who founded the Department. He served as the Department's Chair since 1986, and later as its sole regular faculty member, supervising approximately ten doctoral students in History of Mathematics and in Classics at Brown and other institutions; he had planned to retire at the end of the 2005/2006 academic year.

David Pingree's published work includes more than thirty monographs and well over a hundred book chapters and articles, on subjects relating to the exact sciences (notably mathematics and astronomy), astrology, and magic, in ancient Mesopotamia, classical Greece and Byzantium, Latin Europe, South Asia, the Islamic world, and several of the cultures that linked them, such as Sasanian Iran. He based this work on sources mainly in Akkadian, Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, Arabic, and Hebrew; and collaborated with eminent scholars in many fields such as Otto Neugebauer, Edward S. Kennedy, Charles Burnett, Erica Reiner, and Hermann Hunger, to name but a few. In the study of the exact sciences in India he excelled above all others, and the same can be said for astrology in ancient and medieval times in various cultural settings. He was devoted to his students and generous in spending time to help others on an extraordinary range of topics; indeed, he was regularly consulted by colleagues who greatly benefited from his vast erudition. In effect, he was at the center of

an ‘invisible college’ of scholars who worked in many different disciplines. No one else in the recent past has combined his level of academic skills with such a breadth of interests and such an amazing productivity of scholarly books and articles, all of the highest quality.

In addition, David Pingree served at various times on the editorial boards of several periodicals and publication series in the field, such as *Historia Mathematica*, *Journal for the History of Astronomy*, *Journal for History of Arabic Science*, and *Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science*. His numerous academic honors include the Guggenheim and MacArthur Fellowships, and election to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the International Academy of the History of Science, and the American Philosophical Society; in 1992 he received an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Humane Letters from the University of Chicago. He was a member of the Institute for Advanced Study and was the co-founder of the Association of Members of the Institute for Advanced Study. He also established the American Committee for South Asian Manuscripts in 1994 with the goal of cataloguing all the Arabic, Persian, and Indian manuscripts in North America and elsewhere. In 2004 a Festschrift was published with contributions by many of his colleagues, entitled *Studies in the History of the Exact Sciences in Honour of David Pingree*.

His pioneering research is fundamental to the cross-cultural study of the nature, intellectual context, and transmission of science in the pre-modern world. David Pingree will be sorely missed by all who knew him and all who read his work.¹

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¹ Some of this information came from an obituary that appeared in *The Providence Journal*, 16 November 2005.