

Dear Reader,

We are pleased to introduce the March 2021 issue of the *Journal of Academic History and Thought* to you. The month of March filled with the scent of spring has raised the hope that the intrusive pandemic restrictions will be lifted, and our lives will be fully ours again. It is difficult to say at the moment whether it will be possible at all to return to the old order. During the last year, many troubling developments have affected communities and individuals in brutal ways: the spread of the virus has resulted in quarantines, closed workplaces, unpaid leaves, lost jobs, missing family members and damaged health. The main lesson we have learned during this difficult process is that health, nature, the presence of loved ones, and freedom are probably more precious gifts to people than any material goods.

We have understood that our world is very small and interconnected; we have seen that the medicine of our age that is considered to be very advanced can also fall short in the struggle against a novel virus. Although the pandemic has affected everyone's life in tremendous and often saddening ways, the current situation has also brought us closer to each other. Thanks to the Internet and the availability of modern technology, the youth could continue receiving their education, while the adults rearranged their workspaces to be able to complete their tasks from home. Now people at all levels of society are accustomed to using the Internet and technology daily: think of HES codes and e-government portals. The global Web makes it very easy to access all kinds of information, find answers to practically any questions. Even those who in the past were used to visit concrete shopping centres now prefer to buy goods in virtual ones. The Internet provides us also with new books to read, new movies to watch and ways to stay in touch with those who are dear to us. Thanks to the pandemic, we have mastered our skills in making video calls, attended numerous lectures, conferences, and classes without leaving our houses. And although virtual meetings are less vivid and satisfying than those in person, these new online platforms have enabled us to share knowledge with each other and continue academic research.

However, we cannot help but also deal with the negative sides of the current situation. The fact that many libraries and archives remain closed causes academic studies to slow down. The need to work and study from home because of the quarantine has negatively affected our life-work balances and decreased social interactions.

Colleagues with children have to cope with new challenges, such as children's eating and sleeping disorders, excessive Internet use, physical constraints caused by the closure of schools and kindergartens. We all miss our freedom to engage in outdoor activities: instead of being able to go strolling, sporting, cycling and swimming to revitalise our bodies and organise our thoughts, we are increasingly confined to our screens. In essence, it is already clear that we will no longer be able to return to our old ways of life, instead being forced to think in terms like "before" and "after the pandemic". May we transition to this "post-pandemic" period quickly and safely and contemplate our lessons, gains and losses thoroughly.

When we mourn our losses we think of everyone who has left us in the past year. Our hearts are aching also for our dear colleagues Nevzat Gündag and Dilaver Azimli, who were part of the scientific committee of this Journal. This is a tremendous loss for the field and for all of us. We will forever cherish our memories of Nevzat Gündag and Dilaver Azimli.

Distinguished reader, this is an honor to me to introduce you to the new issue of the Journal that has brought together many insightful studies from different countries. In this respect, I would also like to thank our esteemed reviewers for their time and effort, as well as to congratulate our dear authors with successful publications. I would like to wish you happy time reading this Journal and hope to see many of you in the near beautiful future.

Prof. Dr. Alfina Sibgatullina

Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Oriental Studies. Moscow