



## THE ROLE OF ISIS IN THE FORMATION OF SCIENTIFIC JOURNALS AND THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE

**Abdurahimov Javlonbek Bahodirjon o'g'li**

Fergana State University

Department of World History

07.00.02 - Specialty in History of Science and Technology

Basic doctoral student

[abdurahimovjavlonbek11@gmail.com](mailto:abdurahimovjavlonbek11@gmail.com) +998901503112

### Abstract

This article describes one of the journals considered very important for the "history of science", the journal "Isis". It describes the history of the founding of the journal, who founded it, who contributed to this process, what articles are published in it, the scientific method of the journal and the selected directions. The purpose of the study is to reveal the role of the journal "Isis" in the formation of the history of science and how it influenced the scientific process in the history of science. The results of the study, by revealing the above issue, once again show that journals that have long been considered important in the history of science are an important source among society and scientists.

**Key words:** George Sarton, Isis, Osiris, History of Science, May Sarton, source, university, philosophy, library, scientific activity.

**Introduction.** The journal Isis, founded in Ghent in 1912 by George Sarton, served as an important platform for the study and coordination of the history of scholarly research. The journal was first published in March 1913 and promoted a new, interdisciplinary approach to historical research. This article examines the theoretical foundations, historical context, significance, and main issues of analysis of the journal Isis .

When Sarton founded Isis, he realized that the scientific research of his time was not coordinated, that scientific research was scattered and uncoordinated. The need for a single platform to unify the history, interpretations, and historical periods of science arose. The journal further clarified its purpose by seeking to unite all fields of science. Sarton saw Isis as a progressive and forward-looking platform among existing scientific journals . He emphasized the need to create his own new interdisciplinary approach and apply methods based on historical context. The journal Isis was founded in 1912 by George Sarton and is considered the first professional scientific publication in the history of science<sup>1</sup>.

**Literature review.** As an important step for the new science, Sarton founded the international quarterly journal Isis in Ghent in 1912, the first issue of which was published in March 1913.

<sup>1</sup> Aydin E. George Sarton and the Foundations of the History of Science . Istanbul: Istanbul University Press, 2011. – 119 p.



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This journal was progressive and was the first periodical intended to coordinate historical research in all scientific fields.

The names given by Sarton for the publications, The first is Isis, the spouse of Osiris and mother of Horus, the goddess of fertility, the progenitor of the gods and the world, in whose mysteries the Greco-Romans felt that they had found the meaning of the universe. In the 6th volume of this periodical, the editor briefly explains his choice of name: "I chose it ten years ago, he writes, it was short, because if these names had not been predetermined, I would have chosen Minerva, Athena, Hermes or Clio. The title of the commentary should be as short as possible, if necessary, I should have explained it at length. It seems to me that it evokes the period of human civilization, which is the most impressive of its beginnings"<sup>2</sup>.

**Research methodology.** The article attempts to reveal the essence of the main goal set for the research, using methods such as the principle of historicity, comparative analysis, systematization, classification, and problematic-chronological.

**Analysis and results.** The title was actually used by a number of different periodicals during the 19th century, mostly for those interested in science. The earliest, Isis von Ocken, was devoted to natural history, comparative anatomy, and physiology. About forty volumes were published between 1817 and 1848. The first issue opened with a depiction of the Egyptian goddess Isis<sup>3</sup>, her husband Osiris, and their child Anubis. In 1832, a suffragist and rationalist weekly called The Isis began to appear in London<sup>4</sup>. In 1839, the first issue of the literary journal Isis appeared at Oxford University, a copy of which, Falconer Madan's, is now at Yale<sup>5</sup>. Between 1834 and 1876, at least two natural science periodicals called Isis and three natural science societies called Isis published transactions in Germany. The most famous of the societies was the one in Dresden, which celebrated its centennial in 1934<sup>6</sup>.

The first two volumes of Sarton's Isis were written in French and published by the Sainte-Catherine Press in Bruges, Belgium. Pierre Verbeke kindly provided a photograph of the press, which is shown standing upright. Volume 2 was halted during World War I, when the Germans invaded Belgium, commandeered the Sarton household, and temporarily cut off all their income. Burying all their manuscripts in a garden, they fled in a peasant's cart to Holland, from there to England, and finally to America in 1915. After the war, in September 1919, Volume 2 of Isis was completed, and printing is still ongoing in Belgium. With Volume 3, the language switches to English. The section entitled "Chronique et Correspondence" is replaced by the section devoted to "Analyses" which becomes "Comments". From volume 6 onwards, Isis was the official organ of the Society for the History of Science, founded in 1924, largely through the efforts of David Eugene Smith and George Sarton. In 1940, the Society assumed financial responsibility for Isis, until which time its recurring deficits had been met by Dr. Sarton from his inheritance.

<sup>2</sup> Isis, vol. 6 (1924, p. 39.)

<sup>3</sup> Isis von Oken, oder Encyclonrdische Zeitschrif t fur Naturgeschichte, vergleichende Anatomie und Physiologie (Jena, later Leipzig, 1817-1848; 41 vols.)

<sup>4</sup>The Isis, a London. Weekly Publication, edited by the Lady of the Rotunda [E, S. CrrileJ (London: David France, Feb. 11, 1032-1038 ).

<sup>5</sup> The Isis (title-page feeling; Jan. 1839).

<sup>6</sup>Naturwissenschaftliche Gesellschaft Isis, Sitzungsberichto und Abhandlungen (Dresden, 1862- ). An association at Meissen with a similar name celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 1395, and one at Bautzen its fiftieth anniversary in 1896.



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By this time, however, there was another literary "food" to be had. Isis had accumulated so much unpublished material that in 1936 a supplementary series was founded specifically to publish the many years' worth of contributions. For this, the mythological husband of Isis gave the name<sup>7</sup>. Dr. Alexander Pogo served as the managing editor of Isis and Osiris for many years. To be an annual, also fell on hard times. In a letter to the editor at the end of 1941, he wrote: "Osiris still exists, but in a deep sleep. Two volumes (VIII and IX) were being printed in Bruges during the German occupation. I had planned a volume X, dedicated to Charles and Dorothea Singer. Before the war I had financed Isis and my Osiris had almost nothing left. But eventually Osiris was resurrected. Volume 10 has been released and Volume 11 has already been announced."

This year has been completed with the publication of Horus. Of particular interest to the Armed Forces Medical Library is Section 20, "Journals and Series on the History ( and Philosophy) of Science". Notes for these were given to Dr. Claudius F. Mayer, editor of the Army Medical Library Index-Catalog, and Dr. Sarton writes (p. 195):

"Dr. Mayer was kind enough to review them. ... Since his efforts doubled the list, it is fair to consider him a co-author"<sup>8</sup>.

On June 2, 1911, George Sarton married the lady to whom he dedicated his first novel. Her full name was Eleanor Mabel Elwes, they established themselves in a country house near Ghent, where their daughter Eleanor May Sarton was born on 3 May 1912. She publishes under the short name May Sarton , with the full initials EMS not different from her mother's. The 1946 Festschrift, shown in the third instance, <sup>9</sup>opens with "Biographical information about George Sarton", signed "EMS", probably Eleanor Mabel Sarton. It ends with a poem written in honour of May Sarton's father .

In 1912, George Sarton also prepared the first issue of the journal Isis, a history of science. Although it was not published until March 1913 , he sent it to the printer in 1912 and often referred to his birth year as 1912. Shortly afterwards, in 1931, he dedicated a book: "To my dearest friend E.M.S., mother of those strange twins, May and Isis"<sup>10</sup>. The dedication appears unchanged in the 1937 edition of the same book . In 1939, May Sarton, who was then her own author, dedicated the book to one of Georgeton and Mabel's parents: twins<sup>11</sup>. From all this, it can be concluded that the disproportional twinning of her daughter, May and Isis, had been mentioned in the Sarton household for many years. Given the strong devotion to Isis, it seemed advisable to examine the word order in this early dedication. It is reassuring to be informed that he wrote "May and Isis" rather than "Isis and May".

<sup>7</sup> Osiris: Studies on the History and Philosophy of Science, and on the History of Learning and Culture, edited by George Sarton with the help of Alexander Pogo (Bruges-<sup>\*</sup> Inprinerie Saint e-Catherine, 1936).

<sup>8</sup> Horus, a Guide to the History of Science (Waltham, Mass.: Chronica Botanica Conprny, 1952; XVII and 316 pages), p. 195.

<sup>9</sup> Studies and Essays in the History of Science and Learning, Offered in Homage to George Sarton on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday, 31 August 1944, edited by MF Ashley Montague (New York: Henry Schunian, 1946; XIV and 597 pages).

<sup>10</sup>The History of Science and the Hew Punmish (New York: Henry Holt, 1931) This contains the Colver Lectures of 1930.

<sup>11</sup>May Sarton, The Single Hound (Boston 1 Fought on Kiffln , .. 1939; 241 pages).



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Sarton himself served as editor of *Isis* for an incredible four decades, from 1913 until his retirement in 1952. His long-term work has provided a consistent editorial vision for an evolving field.

The founding of *Isis* was Sarton's strategic move to create a central intellectual hub for the definition and legitimization of the new interdisciplinary field. As the first periodical designed to coordinate the results of scholarly research across disciplines, *Isis* demonstrated its unique and unifying role. Sarton's decision to found *Isis* has been described as "bold", born of a "single-minded and selfless opportunity" and a deep conviction in its mission<sup>12</sup>. It demonstrates Sarton's understanding that the emerging academic discipline could not thrive without its own publishing platform. *Isis* served as more than just a collection of articles, a central forum for scholarly output, a visible repository, and a mechanism for establishing common standards and a collective identity for historians of science. This communication actively creating the infrastructure of the history of science from a collection of scattered interests recognized as having "cognitive identity" and "professional identity" was crucial for its transformation into an academic discipline.

Reflecting Sarton's internationalist views, *Isis* initially accepted articles in the four major European languages: English, French, German, and Italian. However, in the 1920s, the journal switched to publishing exclusively in English. The journal's publication was interrupted by World War I (1914–1919) and World War II (1940 and 1945), which demonstrated the vulnerability of academic endeavors to global conflicts.

**Conclusion.** Sarton's choice of the name "*Isis*" is said to have been "unconscious", influenced by his interest in Egyptology. He later had to explain the meaning of the name to avoid widespread misunderstandings, such as Freemasonry, Theosophy, or Egyptology studies alone. These aspects reflect Sarton's internationalist views and the difficulties of creating a global academic platform. The journal's initial multilingualism reflects Sarton's belief in the universal nature of knowledge and his desire to promote the history of science internationally. The switch to English was probably due to the need to reach a wider audience and establish a common language in the field. The interruptions during the war demonstrate the extent to which academic activity was affected by geopolitical changes.

The journal *Isis* has played a significant role in the study and coordination of science, giving a new impetus to the history of science. Its main goal is to unify scientific research and help to consider historical scientific work from a new perspective. The role of Sarton and the history of the journal *Isis* show how the study of science has developed from social and scientific aspects. The journal continues to serve as an impetus for rapid development in the field of scientific activity and dissemination and will not lose its importance in the future.

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