Editor’s Note

The present issue of East Asian Science, Technology, and Medicine is the first published with the new, enlarged, editorial team. Starting on 1 January 2022, He Bian (Princeton University, history of Chinese medicine), Ryuji Hiraoka (University of Kyoto, history of Japanese cosmology), Jung Lee (Ewha Woman’s University, Seoul, history of colonial science in Japan and Korea), and Daniel Patrick Morgan (CNRS, Paris, history of exact sciences in early and medieval China), have joined Christopher Cullen (Needham Research Institute, Cambridge, UK) as Associate Editors, putting their valuable expertise, as well as their enthusiasm, at the service of the journal.

This issue opens with Kin Sum Li’s study of the Daguang Era Treatise on Tea (Daguan chalun 大觀茶論) attributed to the emperor Song Huizong (r. 1100–1126), a text which articulated a form of imperial orthodoxy on how to prepare and taste tea. By conducting experiments, Li proposes a reconstruction of the tea-making procedure described in the work. He links the elite practice of making and tasting tea to the technologies of the Northern Song, including ceramics and the growing of tea, especially in Fujian, and draws a rich and complex picture of the economic, material and cultural conditions that underlie the Treatise on Tea.

Florence Bretelle-Establet’s contribution applies the recently developed ‘object biography’ approach to the study of medical books produced in the South and South-West of China during the Qing period. Examining the writing of texts reveals a twofold diversity: that of the social status of their authors, and that of the aims they set themselves in writing. The author then turns to the long and hazardous process that turned a minority of medical texts into printed books: patronage and funding were both needed for this to be achieved. Thirdly, she examines the traces left on extant copies of printed books by their readers; some of their annotations were integrated into further editions of some of the books. The development of digital humanities should make it possible to further systematize the study of the material and social life of medical books that she has undertaken, and to extend it to books produced in other regions of China.

Finally, Xavier Paulès sheds light on the official agencies in charge of treating opium smokers in Guangzhou from the first Opium War to the first year of the People’s Republic of China. Relying on the local press and on the archival
materials left by these agencies, he shows that the role of these agencies in opium suppression varied, and that they were mostly a tool for long term, progressive suppression of addiction. Moreover, he argues that detoxification places were gradually medicalized, with a shift from the use of remedies that had hitherto prevailed in China to therapies that originated in Western medicine.

These three articles are followed by three book reviews.

*Catherine Jami*
CNRS, Centre for Studies on China, Korea and Japan, Paris, France
catherine.jami@ehess.fr