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J.G. de Boer, Secretary of the Dutch Archaeological and Historical Society, c/o Van den
Berghlaan 285, 2132 AH Hoofddorp, The Netherlands

Back issues: single issues from the current and previous numbers are available from the
Dutch Archaeological and Historical Society at the current single issue price:

TALANTA numbers 1 (1969) - 14/15 (1982/1983), sold out
number 16/17 (1984/1985), available
number 18/19 (1986/1987), available
number 20/21 (1988/1989), available
number 22/23 (1990/1991), available
number 24/25 (1992/1993), available
number 26/27 (1994/1995), available
number 28/29 (1996/1997), available

TAVANTA

PROCEEDINGS OF THE
DUTCH ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
VOLUMES XXVIII-XXIX/ 1996-1997

Editors:

J.P. STRONK and M.D. de WEERD

BLACK ATHENA: **TEN YEARS AFTER**

Edited by:

Wim M.J. van BINSBERGEN

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ISBN: 90-72067-07-X

ISSN: 0165-2486

PREFACE

This volume of TALANTA is a remarkable one, not only because of its contents but also because it is the first under the responsibility of a new team of editors. Due to personal circumstances Fred C. Woudhuizen had to request the Board of the Dutch Archaeological and Historical Society to be discharged from his duties as editor; the Board have, with regret, accepted his resignation. Everyone who has followed the vicissitudes of the Society and of TALANTA knows that the amount of work Woudhuizen has put into both undertakings can hardly be overestimated. The Board wish to express their gratitude to Woudhuizen for his splendid contribution over the years and hope that, in the future, he will be able to make a similar contribution once more.

The Board of the Dutch Archaeological and Historical Society have appointed as TALANTA's new editor Dr Maarten D. de Weerd, an archaeologist currently holding an appointment at the Institute for Pre- and Protohistorical Archaeology (IPP) of Amsterdam University. Together with Jan P. Stronk, Maarten de Weerd will hold prime responsibility for the contents of the journal.

It occasionally happens that the publication of a scientific work starts an almost world-wide debate among scholars representing a variety of disciplines. The publication by Martin Bernal of *Black Athena: The Afro-asiatic roots of classical civilization*, vol. I: London/New Brunswick 1987, vol. II: London/New Brunswick 1991, has been such an occasion.

Though perhaps less conspicuously, with a substantial time lag, and rather less vehemently, than in Great Britain and the United States of America, the debate on *Black Athena* has also extended to the Netherlands. In 1996, on June 28th, the *African Studies Centre*, Leiden — our national research institution for the study of Africa's past and present — held a one-day conference on controversies originating from Bernal's provocative points of view. The list of speakers included Martin Bernal himself.

Since one of TALANTA's main interests has been the archaeology and ancient history of the countries bordering on the Mediterranean, it was only natural that we gladly accepted Professor Wim van Binsbergen's

offer to publish, in a thoroughly revised and edited form, the papers of this conference in TALANTA. Van Binsbergen has put in a tremendous amount of work organising the conference, and subsequently soliciting, meticulously editing, and producing the material for this volume. He has thus created a collection which articulates both the strengths and the weaknesses of Bernal's thesis, of the methods by which Bernal has sought to substantiate it, and of the criticism which has been directed at *Black Athena* since 1987.

We thought fit to concede our editorial prerogatives to Wim van Binsbergen, and to invite him to be guest editor of this special issue, whose contents and form make a fascinating, well-balanced, and timely book — a testimony, among other things, to the relevance of archaeology in the modern world. These features justified a departure from the usual format of TALANTA: the extensive table of contents, and the detailed general index as prepared by its editor's efforts.

Our own intervention, for this volume, consisted in the kind of general supervision one exercises as a series editor. Not only the guest editor but also the excellent pieces as supplied by the contributors ensured that this task was both pleasurable and rewarding. It is with confidence that we recommend this volume of TALANTA to the readership.

October 1997

Jan P. Stronk
Maarten D. de Weerd

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