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Although mainly a very detailed study of Napoleon’s relations to the sciences, this Habilitationsschrift comprises mathematics, too, in two different aspects. On the one hand, mathematical sciences (from artillery to astronomy) form a substantial part of the sciences with which Napoleon came into contact as pupil, as military officer, as consul, and as emperor. On the other, his name is connected with a few mathematical problems, and most probably every little detail that can be established in this respect has been collected in Chapter 6 (Anhang) of this meticulously documented book. This “Anhang” consists of four subsections: 6.1 on young Napoleon’s “Mémoire sur la manièréc de disposer les pièces des canons pour le jet des bombes”; 6.2 on a puzzling manuscript in which by means of Cavalieri’s principle the area of a cycloid is determined; 6.3 on the so-called problem of Napoleon–Mascheroni; and 6.4 on the “Satz von Napoleon”—still as mysterious as in 1981 when Historia Mathematica published my query “Wie kommt ‘Napoleons Satz’ zu seinem Namen?” (HM 8, 458–459). Such terms and theorems tend to be perpetuated in handbooks and dictionaries, unfounded as they may be. Perhaps, after looking at this book, some readers can provide a clue to these puzzling questions.

Concentrating on the mathematics, however, does grave injustice to this comprehensive and eminently readable account of Napoleon’s many-sided and changing relations to the sciences. Documented by nearly 1300 notes, the book follows Napoleon’s life and career. It exhibits in detail how the genuine interest young Buonaparte had in science more and more gave way to his political ambitions: Napoleon as member of the Institut National, as reformer of the leading scientific institutions, as the emperor who longed to be venerated as protector of the arts and the sciences.