

Retrospect and prospect: History of Science and Technology in China *by Liang Li |*

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Pre-modern Chinese scientists and engineers achieved a lot in natural sciences, technology, medicine and so on. In the past one hundred years, the eastern and western scholars have carried out much research on the history of science and technology in China from different perspectives, laying a solid foundation for further research. Joseph Needham (1900-1995), Zhu Kezhen (1890-1974) and Yabuuchi Kiyoshi (1906-2000) were monumental contributors to shaping the history of Chinese science and technology as a special discipline. They had different concerns and implemented distinct research methods and approaches. Needham paid attention to Chinese inventions and their cross-cultural dissemination from comparative perspective. With assistance of such scholars as Li Yan, Zhu focused on Chinese achievements, and realized the professionalization and institutionalization of research on the history of science and technology in China. In comparison, Yabuuchi Kiyoshi paid more attention to mathematical science and put it in the center of the history of science. Instead of looking at science and technology as products in a particular nation or civilization, the global history of knowledge is gaining popularity in later generations of historians. Especially, historians in early modern science, recent science and technology have inclined to discuss science in global contexts. More attention is paid to concern the trans-regional interrelations and dissemination of knowledge. In addition, new methods and perspectives have been developed or adopted to study the history of Chinese science and technology in recent years. In this symposium, we hope to review the predecessors' contributions and methodologies, which intersperse with topics on astronomy, arithmetic, agriculture, medicine, and various technologies. We prefer to retrospect and prospect the history of Chinese science and technology by investigating questions such as:

- What are the approaches to the study of history of Chinese science and technology in the global history of knowledge?
- How do new textual and archaeological discoveries, new methodologies allow historical actors to promote the study of history of science and technology in China?

As noted by a famous Chinese historian Zhu Weizheng (1936-2012), Chinese history is like a building. Chinese scholars sitting inside the building can see the detail of it, but their vision

is limited to the interior of the building. On the contrary, foreign scholars outside the building sometimes cannot access the details clear enough, but they can provide different perspectives from the outside. We hope that Chinese and non-Chinese scholars will gather in this symposium to retrospect the research on the history of science and technology in China. The symposium can offer participants a chance to see both inside and outside, and make us benefit each other in the field of history of science and technology.