

Needham Research Institute Newsletter

李約瑟研究所通訊

New Series, No. 18

8 Sylvester Road
Cambridge CB3 9AF
UK

Newsletter edited by Susan Bennett



2021 Issue

Tel. 01223-311545
Fax 01223-362703
www.nri.cam.ac.uk

Commemoration of Benefactors H.T. and Rita Q. Huang

In recognition of Dr. Hsing Tsung Huang's long association with the Needham Research Institute, his remarkable contribution to the *SCC* project, and the generous benefaction received, the Management Committee and Trustees of the Institute decided to formally name Dr. Huang's former office in his honour. On 10th November 2021, a ceremony was organised at which the name plaque was unveiled by Professor Sir Geoffrey Lloyd, former Trustee and Chair of the Trust. Also present were Lady Lloyd, former Director Professor Christopher Cullen, Professor Roel Sterckx, Trustee and and Joseph Needham Professor at the University of Cambridge, Professor Jianjun Mei, Director and John Moffett, Librarian.

In his letter of appreciation to the Huang family, our Chairman Professor Martin Jones recorded the Institute's immense gratitude for the great generosity of H.T. and Rita Huang in providing valuable support in the form of their much appreciated legacy.



HT and Rita Huang dining with Joseph Needham

H.T.'s life-long friendship and support for Joseph Needham, beginning with his role as Dr. Needham's personal secretary at the Sino-British Science Cooperation office in war-torn China 1943-1944. This was followed by a PhD at Oxford in organic chemistry and a career in the USA, first in the food processing and pharmaceutical industries, and then as Programme Officer at the National Science Foundation. During this period, he and Dr. Needham never lost touch, and in 1984 he was invited to contribute to the *Science and Civilisation in China* project, providing a chapter for Volume 6, Part 1: *Botany* (1986), and writing the whole of Volume 6, Part 5: *Fermentation and Food Science* (2000), in addition to serving as NRI Deputy Director from 1990-1995.



John Moffett, Professor Sir Geoffrey Lloyd, Lady Lloyd, Professor Christopher Cullen, Professor Roel Sterckx, Professor Jianjun Mei

To further commemorate H.T. and Rita Huang, a double-flowering cherry tree has been planted in the grounds of the Institute, with a commemorative plaque. At the tree-planting ceremony, the Librarian spoke about



NEW FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITY

The Li Foundation Fellowship for scholars from the U.S.A

We are delighted to announce the establishment of a new Fellowship, granted by the Li Foundation to run concomitantly with their programme which supports scholars from East Asia to carry out research in Cambridge. This additional programme is designed to support one or two early-career scholars from the United States to visit Cambridge for a period of 6 or 12 months. The initial programme will run for three years from 2022 and we look forward to welcoming talented young scholars in the History of Science, Technology and Medicine in East Asia from the U.S. to Cambridge. See our website for details of the Fellowship opportunities that we offer.

Lloyd –Dan David Research Fellow

Arthur Harris joined the Needham Research Institute at the beginning of this academic year as Lloyd-Dan David Research Fellow, having completed a PhD in History and Philosophy of Science at Cambridge. Arthur is interested in ancient science, medicine, and mathematics, and also current philosophy of science. His doctoral research explored the Peripatetic *Mechanica* and he has published on debates concerning ‘new’ diseases in Hellenistic and Roman medicine. As Lloyd-Dan David Research Fellow, Arthur will be pursuing a comparative investigation of medicine in the Greco-Roman world and early China, starting with an exploration of notions of health.



Introducing our new Bursar Dr. Chris Jagger



Chris studied mathematics at King's College, Cambridge before taking up a research fellowship at Clare College, specialising in Graph Theory and Combinatorics. He re-trained as a chartered accountant at Deloitte and then spent over a decade designing and delivering training.

For the last three years he has held a variety of paid and volunteer posts, including being a trustee/advisor at the Museum of Cambridge and writing and delivering guided tours in Cambridge. He enjoys travelling the world and playing bridge in far flung places such as Wuhan. Other interests include Classical music, ballroom dancing (particularly the Latin American dances) and spending time with his young family.

Independent Schools Foundation (ISF) Research Fellow

Jingyi Jenny Zhao took up the ISF Research Fellowship in February 2021, having previously held the Lloyd-Dan David Research Fellowship at the NRI. Jenny's work concerns ancient Greek and early Chinese philosophy in comparative perspective. Her interests in particular lie in the emotions, moral psychology, and representation of children in philosophical texts. On her fellowship, she is responsible for supervising students of the Independent Schools Foundation (ISF) on their annual NRI programme. In 2021 11 students engaged in research projects on a wide range of topics relating to Chinese history. Due to Covid-19, sessions were held in an online format, as in the previous year.



Retirement of Brigadier T.K. Thompson

After serving as Bursar for almost 18 years, Tim Thompson retired from the Institute in June 2021. A party was held to bid him farewell, which was attended by Trustees, staff and scholars. Colleagues paid tribute to Tim's skilful management of the Institute's finances over many years, and expressed their gratitude for the contribution that he had made to the life of the Institute. In the photograph below Tim is wielding the croquet mallet which was presented to him along with other gifts by Trustees and colleagues. A dinner at Robinson College was planned.



Ho Peng Yoke Fellowship Fund

We are most grateful to the following scholars for their generous donations:

Dr. CHEN Shuanglin, Dr. ZHOU Liqun, Beijing Foreign Studies University, KONG Yuan, Capital Normal University, KONG Suxuan (daughter of Drs. ZHOU and KONG); TONG Yangyang, Northwest University; Professor Hilary Smith, University of Denver.

Workshop on Disability in Chinese Antiquity

On 19-21 April 2021, Dr. Avital Rom hosted an international workshop under the title 'Other Bodies: Disability and Bodily Impairment in Early and Medieval China'. This workshop was the first attempt at bringing together scholars to discuss the topic of disability in Chinese history, featured eight speakers and three moderators from ten academic institutions worldwide (including Cambridge, Harvard, McGill University and more). Over 200 people from over 100 academic institutions registered their interest in attending the workshop, and between 50-90 participants attended each of the five sessions. The workshop was organised with the aim of producing an edited volume under the same title. Avital subsequently submitted a proposal for the volume to Routledge and received a positive response and we are pleased to announce that the book will appear in the Needham Research Institute's Monograph Series.

Book launch: *Expanding Horizons in the History of Science* by Professor Sir Geoffrey Lloyd

A seminar and a lunch reception were held on 10th November 2021 to celebrate the publication of Professor Lloyd's latest book, *Expanding Horizons in the History of Science* (Cambridge University Press, 2021). This rich work utilises examples from earlier societies and indigenous groups to suggest ways in which non-western societies offer opportunities for us to revise many of our own preconceptions.



The seminar, convened by Jenny Zhao and Arthur Harris, took place in the KP Tin Hall at the NRI, with around 30 invited guests in attendance. Arthur gave an overview of the book and its arguments before inviting Prof. Lloyd to comment. A lively discussion ensued. Conversation continued into the lunch reception, which was held in the Richard Eden Suite at Clare Hall. Copies of the book were made available for purchase by the editor, Michael Sharp from Cambridge University Press. The event was attended by many of Prof. Lloyd's colleagues and friends from the fields of anthropology, Classics, and Chinese studies.

Workshop on Scientific Exchange and Cultural contact through the first millennium

On 8-9 October 2021, the NRI, Ancient India and Iran Trust and Cambridge University Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, jointly held a workshop 'China, India, and Iran: Scientific exchange and cultural contact through the first millennium CE'. This event, which took place with the support of the three organising partners and the sponsorship of the Glorison Network and the Tsz Shan Monastery in Hong Kong, was first proposed by Bill Mak in 2019 when he held the Ho Peng Yoke Fellowship at the NRI. Originally scheduled to take place in October 2020, the pandemic necessitated its postponement for a year and the workshop opened at the NRI on 8 October. The second day was hosted by the Ancient India and Iran Trust.



The event began with a keynote lecture by Professor Sam Lieu FBA: 'From Qin to Cathay – Names for China and the Chinese on the Silk Road'. Over the two days, fifteen speakers from Cambridge, Oxford, and SOAS, London covered a wide range of topics from religion and ancient codices to astronomy and the transmission of metallurgical recipes and aromatics across Eurasia. The cross-disciplinary, plurilingual, trans-cultural content and the collaborative organisation of the event contributed to its richness, offering new insights in terms of the interconnectivity of the three ancient, neighbouring cultures: China, India, and Iran. In addition to those who attended in person, nearly 100 online participants were able to take part.

Fellows and Visitors

Since the beginning of October 2021, the Institute has welcomed the following scholars: Dr. Bill Mak, Tsz Shan Monastery Buddhist Art Museum, former Ho Peng Yoke Fellow; Arthur Harris, Lloyd-Dan David Research Fellow, 2021-2023; Dr. Jingyi Jenny Zhao, ISF (HK) Fellow, 2021-2023; YU Jia, PhD student of HPS, University of Cambridge; Dr. Sally Church, Research Associate, Wolfson College, Wellcome Project; Associate Professor Hyungsub Choi, SYK Fellow, Seoul National University of Science and Technology; Dr. Yumi Suzuki, visiting scholar, University of Bern; Ms. Anna Strob, visiting scholar, University of Tübingen.

Wellcome Trust Project Grant

Work has continued throughout the year on our Wellcome Trust funded project “Science and Medicine in China from World War II to the Cultural Revolution: Sources from the Archives of Joseph and Dorothy Needham”. Despite delays caused by the pandemic, a final, large batch of scanning was completed by the Digital Content Unit. These include photographic prints given to Joseph Needham on his post-1949 visits to China, especially in 1952, maps, and 23 colour propaganda posters for the Patriotic Hygiene Movement also from 1952. All will be made available on the Cambridge Digital Library in the new year. Metadata work on both the photographs and other items also continues. Ros Grooms catalogued many objects in the collection, and then has spent recent months describing the nearly 1,400 glass lantern slides used by JN for lecturing on biochemistry and Chinese science; Sally Church has been transcribing and applying TEI mark-up to JN’s travel note-books for 1952 and 1958; while earlier in the year, I produced descriptions for all the 1952 photographs.

We have also been very fortunate to have had the help of several volunteers during the year. Sarah Stanton has been re-numbering the 1,200 wartime photos and re-housing them in archive sleeves and boxes; Francis Wakeman produced a detailed timeline for the 1958 visits based on JN’s notebooks; and a 4th-year undergraduate, Chen Zhiyu, sorted and described a suitcase full of biochemistry photographs and lantern slides dating from the 1920s-1940s.



Cao Tianqin and Xie Xide watching morris dancing in Thaxted, 1952

Work throughout the year has unearthed many fascinating items, my favourites being a small box of vials of penicillin sodium salt from China, with an expiration date of August 1945 - some of the earliest penicillin produced in China; Chinese scientists Cao Tianqin 曹天欽 (JN’s assistant in Chongqing 1944-46, and subsequently on the team that synthesized insulin in Shanghai) and Xie Xide 謝希德 (physicist and later Chancellor of Fudan University in Shanghai) watching a Morris dancing troupe from a window in Thaxted on 7th June 1952; and confirmation in a 1952 photo that the black portable typewriter we have is the very one used by JN to type the lengthy report for the International Commission on Bacteriological Warfare in China and Korea!



Vial of penicillin sodium salt made in Kunming, China, 1945

John Moffett

NRI Friday seminars

Seven seminars were held across the Lent and Easter terms 2020-21, organised and chaired by Jingyi Jenny Zhao and Avital Rom. Instead of the engine room, where the seminars normally take place against the beautiful backdrop of the NRI gardens, participants, including previous visiting fellows and associates of the NRI, attended virtually via Zoom from different corners of the world.

Three of the sessions focused on early China: Jianjun Mei (Director, NRI) presented his study of the bronze bells of the Western Zhou period recovered in Yichang, Hubei; Avital Rom set out to explore early Chinese perceptions of deafness in the physiological-medical, social, and philosophical contexts; Jenny Zhao examined the notion of humility in early Chinese thought in comparison with ancient Greek sources. Huiyi Wu’s (CNRS) talk was also comparative in nature, focusing on how the Chinese and the Spanish empires sought to know about their territories through the local gazetteers and the *relaciones geográficas*. Seminars led by Jia Yu (HPS, Cambridge) and Sally Church (NRI) concerned issues in translation and knowledge exchange. The former studied the impact of the compilation and reception of Benjamin Hobson’s *Bowu xinbian* (*A New Treatise of Broad Learning*), while the latter shared her personal reflections on a recent translation project: Rong Xinjiang’s *The Silk Road and Exchanges between East and West*. Guest speaker Robert. F. Campany (Vanderbilt University) focused on his recent work on dreams and self-cultivation in Medieval China.

We are delighted to have resumed in-person seminars at the NRI in Michaelmas 2021-22, which took place on a fortnightly basis. The first three sessions were given by members of the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies (FAMES), Cambridge. Ashton Ng led a text-reading seminar on Han Fei’s ideal polity, based on readings from the “Wudu” 五蠹 (The Five Vermin) chapter. Imre Galambos raised a series of questions on how the physical form of two inscribed wooden planchettes from Dunhuang reflects the contexts in which the manuscripts were used. Kelsey Granger surveyed a range of textual and material sources relating to the trend of lapdog-keeping in Tang-Song China. Finally, visiting scholar Anna Strob (Tübingen) presented on Alfonso Vagnone’s *Kongji gezhi* 空際格致 (Investigation into Phenomena in the Atmosphere, c. 1633), a Chinese adaption of the Coimbra commentaries on Aristotle’s natural philosophy. The talks were well attended; it was wonderful to enjoy discussions in the company of colleagues and friends within the NRI and across different departments.

Jenny Zhao