

Needham Research Institute Newsletter

李約瑟研究所通訊

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The Sixth Joseph Needham Memorial Lecture Delivered by Professor Dame Jessica Rawson



This year's Needham Memorial Lecture, sponsored by the Jing Brand Co. Ltd., China, took place at the Riley Auditorium, Clare College on Friday, 3rd November. The lecture, which was delivered by Professor Dame Jessica Rawson of Oxford University, *'Finding China's Present in Its Past'* attracted a large audience. Professor Rawson began her lecture by highlighting China's unique geographical and climatic characteristics, before exploring the huge differences between ancient Chinese and Western civilizations from various aspects such as architecture, tomb styles, bronze casting, religious sacrifices, written characters, and artistic motifs. Professor Rawson went on to point out that large-scale manufacturing and mass production have been a key feature of Chinese civilization from ancient times to the present. Finally, she argued that cultural interactions with the outside world played a crucial role in shaping the developmental track of Chinese civilization. Questions from the audience followed. The lecture was hosted by Professor Roel Sterckx, Joseph Needham

Professor of Chinese History, Science and Civilization of the University of Cambridge and Fellow of Clare College, and was followed by a drinks reception and a dinner in honour of Professor Rawson.

The Curious Case of Needham's Last Honorary Degree . . .

Professor Alaric Searle, Academic Director of the ZMSBw Potsdam, delivered a talk at the NRI in November, under the title *'A Sinologist without Honour in his Own Country? The Politics of Honorary Awards made to Dr Joseph Needham, 1946-1994'*. During his research, whilst attempting to establish which universities had awarded Needham honorary degrees, Professor Searle had come across a single reference to a Doctor of Letters (D.Litt.) degree, *honoris causa*, awarded by the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. He could find no trace of this award in Needham's papers in the University of Cambridge Library, nor at the NRI. However, whilst on holiday in Sri Lanka this year, he decided to visit the University of Peradeniya in Kandy. He had assumed that the award had been made in the 1960s, but with the help of the Student Records Division he was finally able to locate, in a large ledger, the relevant entry for a much later date: the award had been made to Joseph Needham on 12 December 1986, *in absentia*. The Head of the Division, Mrs Chandima Rathnayake, kindly searched the university's files to see if the award had ever been sent. Much to his surprise, she re-appeared with the award itself, which had lain undisturbed in a filing cabinet for over 36 years! He promised to take it back to the UK and present it to the Institute, which he duly did following his talk. This almost forgotten award had finally found its way home and will be preserved along with many of Needham's other honorary awards in the Institute archive.



Retiring Trustee: Professor Liu Dun



We express our immense gratitude to Professor Liu Dun 刘钝, who retired as a Trustee of the NRI in June, having served since 2009. Previously Director of the Institute for the History of Natural Science, Chinese Academy of Sciences (1997-2005), Professor Liu is one of the leading

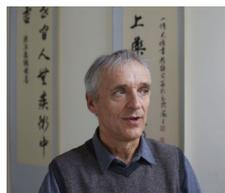
scholars of the history of science in China and we have been most grateful for his contribution and wise guidance over the years. Fortunately, he plans to visit us in 2024, so we shall continue to benefit from his presence at the Institute.

Visit from ISF Academy Hong Kong

For the first time since the pandemic, we were pleased to welcome a visit from ten students from the ISF Academy, Hong Kong, to the NRI over the period 27th June – 14th July 2023. The students were accompanied by Dr Malcolm Pritchard (Head of School), Ms Diana Ibarra (Director of Shuyuan) and other members of staff. Under the supervision of Dr Jenny Zhao, the students conducted research on their chosen topics on Chinese history and civilization, making full use of the NRI library facilities. They also assisted Dr Rosalind Grooms, the NRI archivist, with documenting postcards found among the Joseph Needham archives. In addition they enjoyed a tour of the University Library, a display of archival materials relating to Joseph Needham, and a number of lectures, including those by Profs. Martin Jones and Roel Sterckx. Their research projects were most impressive and they engaged enthusiastically with NRI staff and scholars over lunches and the final presentations.



Fifth Ma Kanwen Memorial Lecture



On 2nd June, Professor Volker Scheid (Left) from the Max Planck Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte, Berlin, gave the Fifth Ma Kanwen Memorial Lecture under the title “Healing the World with Words:

Fang Yizhi’s 方以智 (1611-1671) Pharmacologics and the Dawn of Science in 17th Century China.” Prof. Scheid’s fascinating talk delved into the ways in which Fang’s interest in medicine and healing can be seen as a thread that ties together the many apparently very different sides of Fang’s life and polymath interests.

Needham Conference, Hong Kong Director’s trip to mainland China



The Director and the Librarian made a trip to Hong Kong in March 2023. They first visited the Independent School Foundation on 20-21 March where they each gave a lecture. They then visited the Baptist University on 22 March to consolidate our cooperation relationship. At the invitation of Dr. Peter Lee, Chairman of the Joseph Needham Foundation for Science and Civilisation (JNFSC), they participated in the symposium entitled ‘*Needham’s Dialogical Vision: Understanding Science as a Multi-Civilizational Outcome*’, which was held at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology on 23-24 March (Above). They also attended the 13th Joseph Needham Memorial Lecture organized by JNFSC and held at the Hong Kong Palace Museum on 25 March.

After the trip to Hong Kong, the Director continued on to mainland China, visiting many universities and institutions, including Sun Yat-sen University, Shenzhen University, Guangxi University for Nationalities (Below), the Tsinghua Art Museum, the Sanxingdui Museum, Jingdezhen Ceramic University, the Shaanxi Institute of Archaeology and Archaeological Museum, the Museum of the First Emperor of Qin’s Mausoleum, Tsinghua University, Peking University, and University of Science and Technology Beijing. The Director also traveled to Daye, Hubei to visit the Jing Brand Company to discuss the resumption of our Jing Brand fellowship program for 2024-25 and a very positive result was achieved.

In September, the Director returned to mainland China and Hong Kong. He visited Shanghai, Zhenjiang, Taiyuan and Beijing to attend conferences and deliver lectures, including the Pujiang Innovation Forum and the International Symposium on Bronze Civilization in the Yellow River Region organized by the Shanxi Museum. He participated in the international symposium ‘*Sanxingdui and Bronze Age China*’ at the Hong Kong Palace Museum on 26th-28th September and delivered a lecture on early metallurgy in the world at the Jao Tsung-I Academy of Sinology, Baptist University on 29th September.

Dr Sally Church represented the NRI in September at The Seventh International Symposium on Ancient Chinese Books and Records on Science and Technology in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia, giving a paper on the *Longjiang Shipyard Treatise* of 1553.

'Body, Space and Spirit: The Sensorium in Chinese History'

On 22nd - 23rd June, Dr. Flavia Xi Fang (HPY Fellow) and Dr. Avital Rom (FAMES, former HPY Fellow) jointly organized the workshop "*Body, Space and Spirit: The Sensorium in Chinese History*" in the K. P. Tin Hall at the Institute. A host of scholars from the UK, Canada, the US, Hong Kong, Israel, France, and the Netherlands participated in the workshop. The event commenced with a panel on "The Sensorium in Early Chinese Texts", with three papers exploring the intricate relationship between the body and the senses in early Chinese thought. Then the discussion turned to the topic "Scents and Tastes in Medieval China". The final panel of the workshop focused on the "Late Imperial Sensorium".

'China and Global History' Workshop

On 16th October, the workshop '*China and Global History*' organized by Dr. Fan Xin (Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies) was held in the K. P. Tin Hall, NRI, attracting more than 30 scholars and students from across the University and elsewhere. Papers presented in the workshop covered a wide range of topics, such as British businesses in Shanghai in 1945-1953, Cold War science, the European glass mirror in eighteenth-century China, beyond centrism, the history of China and its relation to global history, and so on.

'China and Eurasia: Metallurgy and Society' Workshop

On 13th October, Professor Jianjun Mei, NRI Director and Professor Marcos Martinon-Torres, Director of Cambridge University McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research jointly organized the '*China and Eurasia: Metallurgy and Society*' workshop (pictured below). The event brought together scholars to present their latest research on metallurgy and society in ancient China and Eurasia. Nine invited speakers presented their papers, covering various interesting topics such as casting technology as seen in the Sanxingdui bronzes, the tent of the Marquis Yi of Zeng, Saka goldsmithing, steppe metallurgy, brass in Central Asia, lead bricks, the source of highly radiogenic lead, and the "horsepower" project. Professors Jessica Rawson and Chris Gosden travelled from Oxford for the occasion, which was also joined by bronze experts Professor Zhang Changping and Mr Guo Jianbo, Visiting Research Fellows at the NRI.

Professor Sir Geoffrey Lloyd's 90th Birthday Celebration



To celebrate Professor Geoffrey Lloyd's 90th birthday on 25th January 2023, the Institute organised a one-day workshop '*Comparative Explorations*'. Convened by Drs. Jingyi Jenny Zhao and Arthur Harris, it drew scholars from a wide range of disciplines and institutions. Five early career scholars made presentations on cross-cultural comparative topics related to Geoffrey's own research interests, each followed



by half an hour of lively discussion, with over 30 participants contributing to the stimulating discussions and exchanges. An evening reception followed, at which a cross-cultural themed cake inspired by the Acropolis and bearing the NRI seal was presented.



Library and Archives

With the re-opening of postal shipping from China this year books are flowing into the Library once again. 300 volumes have already arrived, and more orders are under preparation. We are also delighted to have received many donations, including substantial ones from Jessica Rawson (Chinese and Central Asian archaeology), Donald Wagner (metallurgy), Wan Jinhong 万金红 (environment), Chen Zhi 陳致 (sinology) and Li Haijing 李海静 (hydrology). Meanwhile, Library Assistant Qingbai Wan has been busy scouring the offprint collection for correspondence, which is copied, and the originals moved to the archive. Following the conclusion of the Wellcome Project, our Archivist, Dr. Grooms, has been taking a first run through the hundreds of files of mostly institutional archives dating from the late 1940s to the 1990s. A great deal of interesting material is emerging, including Joseph and Lu Gwei-Djen's Chinese book-buying receipts from the 1940s-1960s. Our thanks go to the JNFSC(HK) for their generous contribution towards supporting this work. Grateful thanks also go to several volunteers who have assisted us, including Ashley Fox-Wiltshire, Dorothy Tranah, Lucy Liu, Yu Jia, and, in particular, Sarah Stanton (pictured above), who has continued her labours sorting and listing the photographs of Lu Gwei-Djen.



Ho Peng Yoke Fellowship Fund We are delighted to record the generosity of former scholars, friends and supporters who over the past year have contributed to the Fellowship Fund established in the name of our former Director, Professor Ho Peng Yoke (1989-2002). Professor Huang Huang; Dr. Dong Qiaosheng; Grand Master Meng Kwong Loke; Peter Tanner; Deep Dive; Beifang International Education Group, HSBC Business School of Peking University. Donations may be made via the PayPal button on the NRI website.



Michaelmas Term Text-Reading Seminars

It has been another busy term here at the NRI with a rich and varied seminar programme. Roel Sterckx (Cambridge) opened the programme with a text-reading of the Ming Classic on Fish Farming. Verna Yu (Oxford/ SOAS) and Alaric Searle (ZMSBw Potsdam) presented on Xu Liangying and Joseph Needham, respectively. Lisa Raphals (UC Riverside) offered a talk on Chinese and Greek accounts of chance and randomness. The programme also featured visiting fellows Zhang Changping (Wuhan) on the sacrificial aspects of Sanxingdui, John Alekna (PKU) on the movement and meaning of science in 19th century China, and Li Xinsheng (Southeast University) on the development of maize in China.

Scholars working at the Institute this year

Since the beginning of June 2023, our community has been enriched by the presence of the following scholars:

Dr. Li Haijing, CSC scholar, Zhejiang University of Water Resources and Electric Power; Dr. Jose Canton-Alvarez, HPY Fellow, University of Lodz; Dr. Li Na, CSC scholar, Nanjing Forestry University; Professor Zhao Guozhuang, Jing Brand (Tianyoude) Fellow, Southwest University; Dr. Huang Huang, Li Foundation Fellow (East Asia), Anhui University; Dr. Flavia Xi Fang, HPY Fellow, FAMES, University of Cambridge; Dr. Erling Agoey, SYK Fellow, University of Oslo; Dr. Li Minghui, Jing Brand Fellow, Central China Normal University; Dr. Derek Kramer, Li Foundation Fellow (USA); Dr. Zou Guisen, SBFT Fellow, Guangxi University for Nationalities; Dr. Li Wanwan, visiting scholar, Xiamen University; Professor Zhang Changping, Jing Brand Fellow, Wuhan University; Dr. Huang Yijie, Jing Brand Fellow, HPS, University of Cambridge; Dr. Mao Dan, visiting scholar, Shanghai Jiaotong University; Dr. Li Xinsheng, Jing Brand (Tianyoude) Fellow, Southeast University; Professor Gao Yan, visiting scholar, University of Heidelberg; Wang Yao, visiting student, Tianjin University; Dr. Yu Jia, SYK Fellow, University of Cambridge; Dr. Zhou Chang, visiting scholar, Xi'an University of Post and Telecommunications; Dr. Hu Hao-hua, visiting scholar, China Academy of Art; Dr. John Alekna, Li Foundation Fellow (EA), Peking University; Mr. Guo Jianbo, Li Foundation Fellow (EA), Sichuan Institute for Archaeology and Cultural Heritage; Dr. Arthur Harris, Lloyd-Dan David Research Fellow; Dr. Jenny Jingyi Zhao, ISF (HK) Fellow; and Dr. Sally Church, Research Associate.

Professor Mark Elvin

As we were going to press, we were sad to learn the news of the death of long-term friend of the Institute, Professor Mark Elvin in Oxford. Professor Elvin contributed a fascinating introduction to *Science and Civilisation in China* Volume 7.2 General Conclusions. We express our sincere condolences to his family.