The 12th Conference on the History of Science: Science, Technology and Medicine in Cross-cultural History

Date: 25th - 27th March 2021

Venue: National Tsing Hua University

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As one of the most important aspects of the history of civilization, the studies on the history of science, technology and medicine draw more and more attention of scholars. The research on the history of science extends gradually from the studies of the progress of science, technology, medical knowledge and skills towards discussions of the interaction between government, society, and the social structures in which the scientific knowledge, technical skills and medical expertise are preserved and transmitted.

The excavations conducted in certain sites in Central Asia since the late 19th century unveiled evidence of exchanges of scientific knowledge as well as technical and medical expertise among the inhabitants of the Eurasian continent that started as early as several thousand years ago. These exchanges were often related to migration processes as well as to bartering, or even plundering of individuals and goods during wars. The scientific knowledge involved was referred to by some scholars as "proto-science", to distinguishing it from modern science and technology. Regarding the history of transmission of science and technology, the active exchanges between the West and China that started by the Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) is one of the topics most often explored by modern scholars. The interest of the late Ming dynasty (1368-1644) and early Qing dynasty (1644-1911) elites in European sciences and technology, and, in particular, in cartography, built the path leading Ricci to approach Chinese *literati* that in turn resulted in the introduction of Western sciences into China. Reciprocally, Chinese knowledge and skills were transmitted to Europe through the same channel, i.e., reports of Jesuit scholars working in China. At the end of the 17th century, following the sending of the "King's mathematicians" by the French King Louis XIV, the cultural and scientific exchanges between China and Europe reached its apogee, that one can call the "golden age" of Sino-European exchanges. In the 19th century the signing of multiples trade treaties by Manchu court with Western countries, in particular, Great Britain, United States, and France, among others, reinforced the exchanges in numerous fields and resulted in even more active introduction of Western sciences, technology and medicine to China. The defeats of China in a series of wars waged during the second half of the 19th century, especially the wars against Russia and Japan, increased the dependence of China on Western sciences.

The exchanges of scientific knowledge as well as technological and medical skills had started much earlier than the second half of the second millennium. One can argue that they existed among multiple cultures uninterruptedly for several thousand years. Under these circumstances, one can wonder how it would be possible to identify a given scientific tradition as "Chinese", or "European", or "East Asian", or "Islamic", as they are often referred to by historians? In other words, one can claim that the question of cultural "identity" of scientific traditions remains one of the main concerns of historians. Furthermore, one can be interested in questions concerning the way in which the foreign sciences had been accepted and assimilated by local scholars, that is, in the ways in which these sciences were "localized". While the missionaries and travelling monks often played a role of "brokers" in the circulation of science and technology at early stages, some historians noticed the importance of merchants, translators, soldiers, and diplomats in the exchanges. The objects of trade may as well have been providing information, and, above all, books have been rightly considered the main vehicle of transmission of knowledge and attracted attentions of a great number of historians who focused on books that were written, translated, read and understood for the purpose of transmission of scientific, technological and medical expertise.

While the books were rightly considered "knowledge containers" and drew attention of historians, it appears that the role that the educational systems played in the traditional societies for formation and transmission of scientific knowledge as well as technological and medical expertise was sometimes underestimated. This explains why in the recent years a growing number of scholars paid special attention to the role and functions of the educational institutions in the formation and transmission of scientific knowledge and of technical and medical expertise.

The main scope of the announced conference thus resides in the history of development and the evolution of science, technology and medicine in the context of the contacts and sometimes collisions of different cultures; the organizers are interested in exploration of the cases involving various regions, peoples, countries, as well as various fields of science and technology, considered in their interaction with states, societies and various social structures, and studied in large political, economical and cultural contexts. Discussions of newly found materials (texts, objects, images) and studies done from new perspective would be helpful for conceiving more refined and diversified methodological approaches, that eventually could lead to new and interesting results in the studies of the history of science, technology, and medicine.

Scholars working on the history of science, technology and medicine are invited to present the results of their studies on the topics related to the theme of the conference. Please send a title, an abstract of your paper (not exceeding 300 words) and a brief version of your CV (no more than 250 words) to 2019CHSAS@gmail.com by

November 30, 2020. The results of your application will be announced by December 31, 2020.