

Kyoto Group of the History of Chinese Science

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Rivalling the celebrated project of Joseph Needham's *Science and civilisation in China*, the Kyoto group of the history of Chinese science, organized by Kiyosi Yabuuti, has recently completed a series work of their long-time collaboration.

The pre-history of this group goes back to the pre-War period, when Chūryō Nōda and Yabuuti, as regular staff members of the calendrical science section of the Institute of Oriental Culture at Kyoto, engaged in research into the history of Chinese astronomy and calendrical science with the cooperation of sinologist colleagues in the Institute. In 1948, the Institute became affiliated with the University of Kyoto and changed its title to Jinbun Kagaku Kenkyūsho (Research Institute of Humanistic Sciences) and the calendrical science section was converted into a research professorship in the history of science, the function of which was to organize a team research in the history of Chinese science and technology. The post was held by Yabuuti, and under his chairmanship, assisted by Mitsukuni Yoshida, approximately fifteen members, who lived in Kyoto and its vicinity, were invited to join from outside of the Institute. Most of the senior members had teaching or research experience in pre-War China. Since then, with minor changes and recruitment of junior members, this group has been maintained more than twenty years through weekly seminars in which group examination of classical texts has been the main feature.

They started with the reading of *T'ien-kung k'ai-wu* (The exploitation of the works of Nature, Ming encyclopedia of technology), analyzing the text from many angles according to specialities of each member. The research results were published in 1953 under the title *Tenkō kaibutsu no kenkyū* (Studies on the *T'ien-kung k'ai-wu*).

Parallel to the textual study, they made frequent group tours to the workshops of traditional technology still extant in Kyoto and nearby areas. On the basis of these observations at the site, research monographs were produced on traditional technology and industry, such as ceramics, textile and brewery.

Since 1953, the research group decided on investigating Chinese science and technology to follow chronological order since the pre-Han time. Whereas Needham's project attempts to survey vertically throughout history each department of science and technology volume by volume, the Kyoto group used a horizontal arrangement in four volumes. Each volume concentrates on certain periods in Chinese history, and consists of articles written by specialists of the group in each

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