In Memoriam

Chen Meidong, Professor Emeritus and former director of the Institute for the History of Natural Science of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (IHNS/CAS), passed away on 30 December 2008, in Beijing. Chen was a prolific historian of Chinese astronomy and made substantial contributions to the reconstruction of the logarithms used in making traditional Chinese calendars.

Chen Meidong was born on 19 February 1942 in Lianjiang, a county in China's coastal province, Fujian. Admitted to the College of Geodesy and Geomatics in Wuhan (now part of Wuhan University) in 1959, he studied astro-geodetic surveying. After graduating in 1964, he joined the research unit on the history of natural science, created in Beijing in 1957. Later this expanded to the IHNS/CAS in 1978, where Chen was admitted as a graduate student to study history of astronomy under the supervision of Ye Qisun (also known as Chi-sun Yeh), a Harvard-trained physicist who wrote his dissertation in 1923 under the guidance of the Nobel Laureate in Physics Percy W. Bridgman. After returning to China, Ye became a pioneer in physics and an ardent advocate for research on the history of science in China. With Ye, Chen systematically studied the history of science, especially the history of Chinese astronomy.

Completing his graduate work in 1967, Chen was immediately employed in the same research unit, where he served until retirement in 2002. His career as a historian of Chinese astronomy, however, did not begin until the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976. In the 1980s, Chen devoted himself to reconstructing logarithms employed in designing some of the major Chinese calendars from the seventh to the fourteenth centuries. In 1995, Chen published a book entitled *Guli Xintan (New Investigations on the Old Chinese Calendars,* Liaoning Education Press), which discusses in detail how different mathematical methods were used in various calculations of the calendars, as well as their relationships to other methods. The book also estimates the precision of data recorded in the calendars by using contemporary Western methods. In the book, Chen presents a series of logarithms used in calendar making, until then unknown to scholars. Chen's work represents a major advance, improving on *Research on the Chinese Calendars Compiled during the Sui and Tang Dynasties* by the Japanese historian of Chinese science Yabuuti Kiyosi (1906-2000) in 1944.

Besides his own research, Chen actively promoted research on the history of Chinese science. When Joseph Needham's on-going, gigantic project, "Science and Civilisation in China," received wide attention in the early 1970s, Chinese historians of science began to think seriously about writing a history of Chinese science and technology on a scale even larger than Needham's. Chen was one of a group of historians who made such a proposal to the Chinese Academy of Sciences in 1975. As Vice President of the Chinese Society of the History of Science and Technology and in his capacity as Director of the IHNS (1988-1992), he contributed substantially to the proposal eventually approved by the Academy in 1992. Over the next 16 years, Chen oversaw the publication of the collection: *Zhongguo Kexue Jishu Shi* (History of Chinese Science and Technology, 30 volumes, published by Science Press in Beijing). Chen himself contributed the volume on astronomy (published in 2003). The set represents interpretations by Chinese scholars of the development of science and technology in China and, together with Needham's *Science and Civilisation in China*, will be long studied.

Chen published some 120 papers and book chapters, and authored or co-authored 20 books. The importance of his work has been recognized both at home and abroad. He was made a member of the Division of History of Science and Technology of the International Union of the History and Philosophy of Science in 1990, and was elected Vice President of the International Society for History of East Asian Science,

Technology, and Medicine, also in 1990.

Chen was diagnosed with colon cancer in 2005. By the end of 2007 the cancer spread to his lungs, lymphatic system, and eventually to his bone marrow. During this painful time, he wrapped up his life-long project, correlating the texts in the sections on calendars in the Twenty-Four Histories of China from legendary times down to the Ming dynasty (-1644 C.E.). He saw his last book, *Lidai Lüli Zhi Jiaoding* (*Correlations on the Annals Music of Calendars of All Dynasties*), through publication. The book was released in January, 2009.

–by Xu Yibao, Borough of Manhattan Community College, The City University of New York. The author is grateful to Joseph Dauben for his comments on an early draft of this obituary and to Xu Fengxian, Chen Meidong's former Ph.D. student, for providing Chen's portrait.

Allen G. Debus

One of the pioneers in the history of chemistry, Allen Debus died quietly at his home from cardiac arrest on 6 March. He was 82. Appointed in 1970 as the first director of the Morris Fishbein Center for the History of Science at the University of Chicago, Debus took a scientific route to the history of science. He majored in chemistry at Northwestern University and during his time at Abbott Laboratories, while monitoring lengthy experiments, he read the history of chemistry and decided to pursue history of science as a profession. He studied under I.B. Cohen at Harvard and went on to write or edit more than 20 books. His scholarship earned him the Sarton Medal in 1994. A quiet and authoritative voice, Debus helped the career of countless students and scholars. An eloge on Professor Debus will appear in *Isis*. (Adapted from the *Chicago Tribune*)

A. Rupert and Marie Boas Hall

It is with sadness that the History of Science Society says goodbye to two of its most prolific and pioneering members through the deaths of A. Rupert Hall on 5 February and Marie Boas Hall on 23 February.

Marie Boas was born in New England in 1919. In 1936 she went to Radcliffe College where she studied chemistry, graduating AB in 1940. In 1944, she took a post in the Radiation Laboratory at MIT, where she assisted Henry Guerlac in writing the history of the laboratory and of the operational use of radar during World War II. She wrote her Ph.D. dissertation at Cornell under Guerlac's supervision, which she completed in 1949. She was the first recipient of the History of Science Society's Pfizer Award in 1958 for her work, *Robert Boyle and Seventeenth-Century Chemistry*.

Alfred Rupert Hall was born near Stoke-on-Trent in England in 1920. He joined the Army in 1941 and served in the Middle East, North Africa, and Italy. After the war he returned to Cambridge, obtaining his degree in history in 1946. His book *The Scientific Revolution* (1954) established the use of that term to denote the changes in investigations of the natural world that took place between about 1450 and 1750.

They met during a trip of Marie's to England in 1951 to do research in the Boyle papers at the Royal Society. They were married in 1959. Subsequently they moved together to Indiana University in 1961 and then, in 1963, to Imperial College, London, where they both remained until they retired in 1980. Both Halls stayed active and productive throughout their retirement, jointly winning the History of Science Society's Sarton Medal for lifetime scholarly achievement.

Xi Zezong

Xi Zezong, an outstanding historian of science, astronomer and academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and former director of the Institute for the History of Natural Sciences, passed away of a brain

hemorrhage on 27 December 2008. He was 82.

Xi Zezong was born in 1927 in Yuanqu County, Shanxi. In 1951, he graduated from Zhongshan University's Department of Astronomy and later participated in the establishment of the Research Office of the History of Natural Sciences, the predecessor of the Institute, where he served as director from 1983 to 1988. In 1991, he was selected as an academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. He was a member of the International Academy of the History of Science and the International Eurasian Academy of Sciences. He also acted as President of the Chinese Society for the History of Science and Technology and a member of the Steering Committee of the National Program for the Compilation of Ancient Books. He was also principal investigator for the Ministry of Science and Technology's "95" program on the chronology of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties and vice director of the editorial committee of the Great Compendium of Chinese Culture led by the General Administration of Press and Publication.

In 1955, Xi Zezong published *A New Catalogue of Ancient Novae*. In cooperation with associates in 1965 he also published *Ancient Novae Records of China, Korea and Japan and its Significance for Radio Astronomy*, which proved influential for historical research on the mechanism of star evolution and nova-supernova burst. In the 1970s, Professor Xi finished a critical philological study on the silk manuscript "Five Planets' Divination from the Han." He later systematically studied star charts, astrological texts, and star poetry in the Dunhuang manuscripts. In 1981, he published *Gan De and His Discovery of Jupiter's Satellite, Two Thousand Years before Galileo*. Based on experimental observations, he demonstrated that it is possible that Gan De from the Warring States Period (403 BC - 221 BC), observed Jupiter's third moon with the naked eye.

A founder and leader of the field of Chinese history of science, Xi Zezong also helped establish the Institute for the History of Natural Science. As Director of the Institute, he devoted himself to promoting research on the history of science and technology, the training of future generations of scholars, and international academic exchange. In 1983, he became the first doctoral supervisor in the field of the history of Chinese astronomy. He also greatly supported the establishment of history-of-science departments at Shanghai Jiaotong University and the University of Science and Technology of China. In his last years he led a research project on the "Compilation of the Astronomy and Calendar Section of the History of the Qing Dynasty."

Under his editorship, *The History of Science and Technology in China · Scientific Thought* won second place in the third Guo Moruo Award for Chinese History in 2007. In the same year, the Nomination Committee for Small Celestial Bodies of the International Astronomical Union named a small planet after Xi Zezong, honoring the significant contributions he made in research on astronomical history.