Preface

The papers contained in this volume were presented at 47th History Symposium of the International Academy of Astronautics (IAA) at the 64th International Astronautical Congress (IAC), held in Beijing, China, September 23–27, 2013. This event represented a historic opportunity for the first developing nation to have achieved comprehensive space capabilities to share its progress with the world space community. As part of the congress, I was privileged to join other participants in technical visits to the China Centre for Resources Satellite Data and Application (CRESDA) and the Shanghai Academy of Space-flight Technology (SAST).

IAC offers the premier international presentation of technical space research and development. No other event in the world offers this scope, depth of knowledge, or access to experts in the field. The fact that this event was hosted in China ensured strong representation by a wide range of Chinese specialists from top governmental and commercial organizations. While only one Chinese group presented on an IAA panel, this volume—in a final section devoted to history of Chinese contribution to astronautics—contains four chapters relating to challenges and opportunities (including one not taken) in Chinese space development. Clearly, there will be plenty to write about in the future on this important subject.

This volume also contains a wide range of chapters documenting contributions to international spaceflight in the traditional areas of memoirs and organizational histories, and scientific and technical histories. Together, these three categories form the organizing principles for this volume.

Back in 1967, when the first IAA Proceedings was being edited, China was in the throes of the Cultural Revolution and had yet to launch its first satellite. The founding father of China’s space development, Qian Xuesen (to whom this volume is dedicated), found himself in a difficult political position, even as his vital importance to the nation was recognized. Nearly half a century later, the IAC conference location itself—the China National Convention Center—symbolized a new era for China and its interaction with the world. IAC was just one of a half dozen major national and international conferences being held simultaneously on topics ranging from blood platelets to aviation. Were Qian Xuesen to have had the opportunity to attend, he would have found his vision for China well on the way to being fulfilled.

Dr. Andrew S. Erickson
Volume Editor
United States Naval War College
Newport, Rhode Island
Foreword

The 47th History Symposium of the International Academy of Astronautics (IAA) occurred in conjunction with the 64th International Astronautical Congress (IAC) in Beijing, China, during September 2013. As in previous volumes, the papers presented at the symposium are published here as individual chapters. Although some papers required more editing than others, the editing team has endeavored to remain faithful to each author’s original intent. Based on the publisher’s longstanding practice, our “guiding light” is to avoid overly correcting symposium papers already accepted for publication. Rather than striving for stylistic consistency across all chapters, the editors endeavor to leave chapters mostly as the individual authors originally wrote them, striving only to prevent anything embarrassing or obviously incorrect. We deem it acceptable for an author’s idiosyncrasies to come through in the final work, thereby reflecting worldwide differences in language and style.

The thirteen chapters in this volume literally take readers around the world, across a remarkable expanse of time. Altogether, they remind us of how people on nearly every continent have sought to become involved with rocketry and astronautics. We see how gifted visionaries, dedicated scientists, skillful engineers, and supportive political leaders, sometimes working alone but more often participating in creative organizations, have made space history.

As is customary in this series, the last part of the volume provides glimpses of space history in the country that hosted that year’s IAC—in this case, China. Only the third country that has developed a human-rated spacecraft to carry its citizens into Earth orbit, China stands today in the first rank of the world’s space powers. Building on a heritage of Long March space launch vehicles, the Chinese have near-term plans for their own space station, flights to the Moon, and onward to Mars. The volume you are holding furnishes excellent historical insights to how China’s space program evolved. Furthermore, it highlights how Chinese launch vehicles have sent innovative Chinese satellites into outer space.

After reading this volume from cover to cover, one cannot help but admire the inspiration and the determination that have characterized rocketry and astronautics, regardless of nationality, over so many years. Whether from China, Israel, Australia, Japan, Germany, Russia, Great Britain, or somewhere not represented herein, every citizen of the world ought to be proud of what humanity has achieved with regard to spaceflight. Together, all of us ought to shout in unison our advocacy for humankind’s continued progress upward and outward into the cosmos.

Dr. Rick W. Sturdevant
Series Editor
Air Force Space Command
Office of History
History of Rocketry and Astronautics

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Andrew S. Erickson, Volume Editor

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Contents

Foreword ........................................... vii
Preface ............................................. ix

PART I
Memoirs and Organizational Histories

Chapter 1. Heinz-Hermann Koelle and His Contributions to Space Development,
Charles A. Lundquist and Francis L. Williams .................. 3

Chapter 2. David Gordon Fearn: The Father of the European Ion Engine,
John Harlow and Mal Perera ................................ 15

Chapter 3. Vladimir Ivanovich Yazdovsky: Biomedical Researcher
Supporting Manned Spaceflight,
Alexander A. Medenkov ..................................... 33

Chapter 4. Entering the Sixtieth Year of Acta Astronautica,
Yi-Wei Chang, Jeng-Shing Chern, and Jean-Pierre Marec .... 49

PART II
Scientific and Technical Histories

Chapter 5. Spaceport Australia: Early Proposals for Equatorial Launch Facilities in Australia,
Kerrie Dougherty ....................................... 75

Frank H. Winter, Kerrie Dougherty and Philippe Cosyn ........ 95
Chapter 7. To Ride a Comet: Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of Israel’s Shavit Satellite Launch Vehicle,
          Tal Inbar ........................................ 123

Chapter 8. New Horizon: Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of Israel’s First Satellite, Ofek-1,
          Tal Inbar ........................................ 135

Chapter 9. The Japanese Rockoon Program for the IGY: Technology and Japanese Society,
          Shizuko Hamada-Poret ............................ 145

PART III
History of Chinese Contribution to Astronautics

Chapter 10. Intersection of the Careers of Rudolf Hermann and Qian Xuesen,
            Charles A. Lundquist and Shi Tsan Wu .......... 161

Chapter 11. A 1946 Proposal for a Chinese Rocket Program,
            Marsha Freeman .................................. 177

Chapter 12. The Development History of Chinese Launch Vehicles,
            Haipeng Chen, Bing Zhang, Xiaojun Wang, Guoai Li,
            Shuhui Zhang and Xudong Qin ..................... 193

Chapter 13. Six Decades of Chinese Space History: A Comparative History of Rocket and Satellite Development,
            Andrew S. Erickson ............................... 205

Index .................................................................. 265

AAS History Series ........................................... 269
Front Cover Illustration:

The cover photograph is of Dr. Qian Xuesen (Tsien Hsue-shen/钱学森) (1911–2009), to whom this volume is dedicated. It shows him in a classroom at the California Institute of Technology (Caltech), before he returned to China in 1955 to become the undisputed founding father of the nation’s space development (中国航天之父). All relevant publication permissions obtained from the Caltech Institute Image Archives.