Clerks and Craftsmen in China and the West: Lectures and Addresses on the History of Science and Technology

by Joseph Needham, Ling Wang, Gwei-Djen, Lu Peng Yoke Ho


Joseph Needham, a biochemist, historian, and sinologist, is known for his scientific research and writing on the history of Chinese science. He was a member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Chinese Academy of Engineering. Needham's work on the history of Chinese science and technology has been widely influential, and his collaboration with Ling Wang and Gwei-Djen Lu on "Clerks and Craftsmen in China and the West" is a testament to his interdisciplinary approach.

The book covers a wide range of topics, from the history of Chinese science and technology to the impact of Western ideas on Chinese society. It is a valuable resource for scholars interested in the history of science and technology in China, as well as those interested in the history of science in general.

The year 1970 was a significant one for Needham, as it marked the publication of "Science and Civilisation in China" (Volume 1: Mathematics and Science), the first volume of his monumental work on the history of Chinese science. "Clerks and Craftsmen in China and the West" is a complementary volume, providing a detailed and comprehensive account of the interactions between Chinese and Western cultures in the realm of science and technology.

Needham's work is characterized by its interdisciplinary approach, drawing on fields such as history, biology, chemistry, and philosophy to create a holistic understanding of the development of scientific thought in China. His books are not only works of scholarship but also profound reflections on the role of science and technology in human culture and society.

The book is divided into several parts, each focusing on different aspects of Chinese science and technology. These include the history of Chinese medicine and alchemy, the development of Chinese mathematics and astronomy, and the impact of Western science on China.

"Clerks and Craftsmen in China and the West" is not only an important work in the field of science and technology but also a valuable resource for those interested in the history of Chinese culture and society. Needham's insights into the interplay between science and society are particularly relevant in today's world, where the impact of technology on society is a crucial concern.

In conclusion, "Clerks and Craftsmen in China and the West" is a must-read for anyone interested in the history of science and technology, particularly in the context of China. Needham's scholarship is not only informative but also thought-provoking, offering a new perspective on the development of science and technology in the East and West.