

A PUBLIC LECTURE

NEEDHAM'S INTELLECTUAL HERITAGE AND ITS VALUE IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD



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ABSTRACT

Dr. Joseph Needham, a British biochemist, was dispatched by the British government to visit China during the Anti-Japanese War period and founded the "Sino-British Scientific Cooperation Bureau" in Chongqing. During this endeavor, he became very interested in the question of why modern science did not happen in China, and determined to seek the answers to it. In 1948, Dr. Needham began to write the book "Science and Civilization in China" in Cambridge, England. From then on, he completely turned to the research and writing of the history of science and technology in ancient China, which remained unchanged until his death in 1995. "Science and Civilization in China" has become one of the academic works with most profound and far-reaching influence in the 20th century. It not only reveals China's great contribution to the development of human civilization in history, but also shows the various connections and differences among the developments of civilizations in the East and the West. The intellectual heritage left by Joseph Needham is extremely rich, unique and inspirational. In recent years, many scholars have re-examined it from multiple perspectives, revealing its deep relevance to contemporary scholarship. This lecture consists of three parts: first, a brief introduction of Joseph Needham and his monumental treatise "Science and Civilization in China", followed by a review of recent academic research results on the topic of "A Second Look at Joseph Needham", and finally a discussion of Needham's intellectual heritage and its value and significance in the contemporary world.

BIOGRAPHY

Professor Jianjun Mei, Director of the Needham Research Institute, Cambridge; Director of Research at the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, Fellow of Churchill College, University of Cambridge. In 1984 he graduated from Beijing University of Iron and Steel Technology, majoring in physical chemistry in metallurgy; in 1987 he graduated from University of Science and Technology Beijing, majoring in the history of science and technology; in 1988 he received a master degree in science from the University of Science and Technology of China; in 2000 he earned his Ph.D. in archeology from the University of Cambridge, UK. From 2000 to 2004 he successively engaged in research work at the McDonald Institute for Archeological Research at the University of Cambridge, the Tokyo National Museum of Japan, the Tokyo National Institute of Cultural Properties, and the Needham Research Institute in Cambridge. From 2004 to 2013 he was a professor and Director of the Institute of Historical Metallurgy and Materials, University of Science and Technology Beijing. Since 2014 he has served as Director of the Needham Research Institute in Cambridge, UK, and a guest professor of the University of Science and Technology Beijing. His current research focuses on the history of metallurgy in China, archaeology of science and technology, and the history of scientific and cultural exchanges between China and the West. He has published more than 120 academic works in both Chinese and English.

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