



The Man Who Loved China: The Fantastic Story of the Eccentric Scientist Who Unlocked the Mysteries of the Middle Kingdom (P.S.)

By Simon Winchester

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In sumptuous and illuminating detail, Simon Winchester, bestselling author of *The Professor and the Madman*, brings to life the extraordinary story of Joseph Needham—the brilliant Cambridge scientist, freethinking intellectual, and practicing nudist who unlocked the most closely held secrets of China, once the world's most technologically advanced country.

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- Sales Rank: #242321 in Books
- Brand: Winchester, Simon
- Published on: 2009-04-28
- Released on: 2009-04-28
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x .79" w x 5.31" l, .58 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 352 pages



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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Simon Winchester's reading, like his clear, concise, graceful writing, reflects his endless fascination with his subject—the British scientist Joseph Needham—and with his subject's subject: Chinese scientists' every invention and contribution to every field of science over five centuries (before the West began to think of such things as the printing press and gunpowder). Winchester reads rapidly, but his diction is so precise (yet never stuffy) that not a word is lost. The vocal warmth and charm mirror his endless awe of Needham's lifetime work on his multivolume magnum opus on Chinese scientific thought. Winchester's tone reveals his delight with Needham's love affairs, his unconventional marriage and relation to his lifelong inamorata who first inspired his love of Chinese language, people and thought. As with every book he's written and narrated, Winchester makes abstruse subjects available and fascinating for every reader and listener. *A Harper hardcover (Reviews, Mar. 10). (May)*

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

With *The Man Who Loved China*, Simon Winchester turns out another compelling, readable, and relevant tale. Any good storyteller will embellish his subject, and Winchester effortlessly keeps readers interested in Needham's adventures—even when they flag a bit. For the most part, though, Needham's life is one that relatively few readers will know—and one that Winchester brings to life with a passel of research and an ever-present sense of wonder for his unique subject. Despite some errors and repetition, the book is also a good starting point for any reader who seeks another path to understanding the roots of Chinese civilization.

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From [Booklist](#)

Needham (1900–95) was a Cambridge University don, left-wing enthusiast, and author of the multivolume, still-uncompleted *Science and Civilization in China*. Attributing this work with paradigm-shifting influence, Winchester's biography reveals a man of unquenchable energy and curiosity, which kept Needham's contemporaries constantly wondering what he would get up to next. The brilliant Needham precociously secured his academic future by his early twenties, but his specialty of biochemistry seemed only to compete with the myriad fascinations he adopted with adolescent glee and the innocence of a naïf. Steam engines, religion, folk dances, foreign languages, and female company jostled in Needham's boisterous mind, much of which is revealed through the diaries Needham kept all his life. One day in 1937, he recorded the arrival at his office, and soon in his bed, of Lu Gwei-djen, a Chinese biochemist. From this romance (tolerated by Mrs. Needham) a monumental book was born, conceived in the course of fantastic adventures to collect Chinese texts that Needham undertook as a British diplomat in World War II China. Sympathetic to the Communists, Needham's politics cast a pall over his career when he sanctioned Red allegations, almost certainly false, of American biological warfare during the Korean War. Reminiscent of Winchester's best-selling account of the OED (*The Professor and the Madman*, 1998), the capacious life of an academic comes alive in Winchester's skilled, insightful portrait. --Gilbert Taylor

Users Review

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Debra Richardson:

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