

In sum, do not believe Goldin and Sabbatini's translation compares well with the translations of other early Han texts. The text edition they provide is faulty, the translation they offer does not demonstrate a consistent command of the basic structures of literary Chinese, they do not make the requisite study of the meanings of the words they translate, and the notes they serve do not impart the information its readers need in order to understand the text.

JENS ØSTERGAARD PETERSEN

DOI: 10.29708/JCS.CUHK.202201_(74).0013

Independent Scholar

Kao Gong Ji: The World's Oldest Encyclopaedia of Technologies. Translated and commented by Guan Zengjian and Konrad Herrmann. *Technology and Change in History*, 17. Leiden: Brill, 2020. Pp. Xvi + 222. €25.00/\$25.00.

The *Kao gong ji* 考工記 is actually a piece of writing less than ten pages long, but full of technical detail. The translators date it as roughly 475 B.C.E., which is a couple of hundred years earlier than the best current understanding of its date. It appears to be roughly contemporary with what we know about the Greek Archimedes (287–212 B.C.E.). This book contains a complete text (in simplified characters) and translations into Chinese modern vernacular, English, and German, as well as detailed commentaries in English only. The translators provide a ten-page introduction to pertinent history for those reading about China for the first time.

The *Kao gong ji* is no longer complete; six of the twenty-eight chapters, mainly on the manufacture of clothing, are lost. The remaining parts have to do with bronze casting, producing aristocratic war chariots and carriages, tanning leather, making colours and dyeing, polishing jade, making stone chimes, making weapons, producing ceramics, and constructing capital cities. Excavation of artefacts shows that the specifications in the book cover only part of their range. Nevertheless, their rich detail on the procedures of one state make it possible to reproduce carriages, arms, and other artefacts today.

The illustrations and commentaries make up nearly half of the book. They discuss archeological finds, technical and other modern studies in Chinese and other languages, and diagrams that clarify the text.

As usual in Brill publications, there is no stylistic editing. The English version (based, perhaps, on the vernacular Chinese version by Wenren Jun 聞人軍)

makes this most obvious.¹ Although clearly not by native speakers, the English is understandable throughout. The non-technical parts are often paraphrased. For instance, the book begins with: 國有六職，百工與居一焉。或坐而論道，或作而行之。² The translators give: “The country has six classes, one of which is called the hundred artificers. While some discuss politics sitting quietly, others try hard to enforce it” (p. 20). It might be translated more literally, “In a state there are six occupations, of which the hundred artificers are one. Some sit and discuss the Way (*dao*); some originate [methods] to carry it out.”

One of the few faults of this volume is the very miscellaneous collection of portraits of philosophers and political figures in the Introduction, Chinese in origin but mostly taken from modern German books. There is no reason to believe they actually resemble the people that the book claims to portray.

This is a useful book, well produced and generally reliable for its discussions of technology.

DOI: 10.29708/JCS.CUHK.202201_(74).0014

NATHAN SIVIN
University of Pennsylvania

¹ Wenren Jun, *Kao gong ji yizhu* 考工記譯注, rev. ed. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2008).

² Ibid., pp. 3–4: 一國之內有六種職事，百工是其中之一。有的安坐議論政事；有的努力執行政務。