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Sun Kwok

Our Place in the Universe

Understanding Fundamental Astronomy from Ancient Discoveries

- A fascinating account of how ancient observers laid the foundation for our understanding of astronomy
- Includes many pictures of the sky and easy-to-understand drawings that illustrate the motions of the Sun, Moon, and planets
- Uses modern computer visualisation to help understand the geometrical facts of celestial mechanics
- Written by a gifted teacher, author, and world-renowned professional astronomer
- Based on a course designed for the course core programme of the University of Hong Kong (HKU)

If you have ever wanted to understand the basic principles of astronomy and celestial movements, you should read this book. Using pictures of the sky observed from different places on Earth, as well as drawings of ancient astronomical methods and tools, Prof. Sun Kwok tells this story in an entertaining and fascinating way. Since the beginning of human civilization, people have wondered about the structure of the cosmos and our place in the Universe. More than 2,000 years ago, our ancestors knew that the seasons were unequal, the Earth was an unattached object floating in space, and stars existed that they could not see. From celestial observations, they concluded that the Earth was round. Using simple tools and mathematics, ancient astronomers accurately determined the sizes of the Earth and Moon, the distance to the Moon, and the lengths of the months and year. With a clever device called the armillary sphere, Greek astronomers could predict the times of sunrise and sunset on any day of the year, at any place on Earth. They developed sophisticated mathematical models to forecast Mars' motions hundreds of years into the future. Find out how ancient observers achieved these remarkable feats. With minimal use of mathematics, this book retraces the footsteps of our ancestors, explains their intellectual journeys in simple terms, and explores the philosophical implications of these discoveries.

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