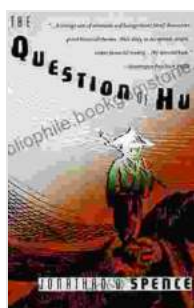


The Question of Hu: Jonathan Spence's Historiographical Masterpiece

Jonathan Spence's "The Question of Hu" is a seminal work of Chinese historiography that has profoundly shaped our understanding of modern China. Published in 1974, the book examines the life and significance of Hu Shih, one of China's most influential intellectuals of the 20th century. Through a meticulous analysis of archival materials, oral history interviews, and close readings of Hu's writings, Spence paints a vivid portrait of a complex and multifaceted figure.

Key Themes

"The Question of Hu" explores several key themes that have become central to the study of 20th-century China. These include:



The Question of Hu by Jonathan D. Spence

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 565 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 209 pages



1. **The role of intellectuals in Chinese society:** Spence argues that Hu Shih played a pivotal role in shaping Chinese intellectual discourse during a time of great social and political upheaval.

2. **The tension between tradition and modernity:** Hu Shih was a strong advocate for the modernization of China, but he was also deeply rooted in Chinese tradition. Spence explores how Hu navigated this tension throughout his life.
3. **The importance of biography:** Spence believes that the study of individual lives can provide valuable insights into the larger forces that shape history. "The Question of Hu" is a testament to the power of biography as a historical tool.

Historiographical Methods

In writing "The Question of Hu," Spence employed a range of innovative historiographical methods that have become standard practice in the field today. These include:

- **Oral history:** Spence conducted extensive interviews with Hu Shih's family, friends, and colleagues. These interviews provided him with a wealth of firsthand information that would not have been available from written sources alone.
- **Archival research:** Spence spent years researching Hu Shih's personal papers and public archives. This research allowed him to reconstruct the events of Hu's life in unprecedented detail.
- **Close reading:** Spence carefully analyzed Hu Shih's writings, including his essays, speeches, and letters. This analysis provided him with insights into Hu's intellectual development and his role in shaping Chinese history.

Impact and Legacy

"The Question of Hu" has had a profound impact on the study of Chinese history and historiography. It has been praised for its groundbreaking methodology, its vivid characterization of Hu Shih, and its insightful analysis of the complexities of modern China. The book has also sparked a renewed interest in the role of intellectuals in society and the importance of biography in historical research.

Jonathan Spence was one of the most influential historians of his generation, and "The Question of Hu" is considered one of his most important works. The book has helped to shape our understanding of modern China and continues to be a valuable resource for students and scholars alike.



“"The Question of Hu" is a masterpiece of historiography. Spence's meticulous research, innovative methods, and vivid writing have created a work that is both scholarly and accessible. The book is essential reading for anyone interested in Chinese history, the role of intellectuals in society, or the art of biography.

- John Fitzgerald, author of "Awakening China: Politics, Culture, and Class in the Nationalist Revolution"”

The Question of Hu by Jonathan D. Spence

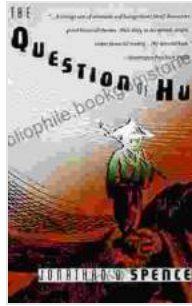
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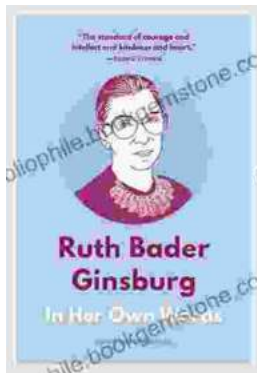
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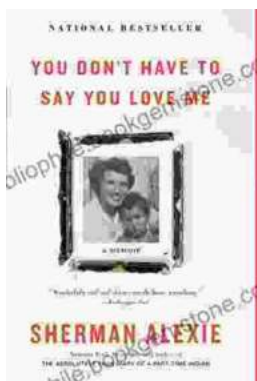
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