Shen Kua Encyclopedia Article

Shen Kua

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Shen Kua

1031-1095

Chinese polymath and astronomer who studied medicine, but became renown for his engineering ability. He became a court engineer, and eventually rose to be head of the powerful Finance Commission. However, due to factional politics he was impeached, and his political career faded. Little of his writing survives, but we know he wrote on many topics including music, astronomy, medicine, optics, magnetism, geography, painting, and tea. A keen mathematician, he applied mathematical principles to many areas, including imperial policy and military tactics.