Stewart, Ian
Significant figures. The lives and work of great mathematicians. Translated from the English by Monika Niehaus and Bernd Schuh. (Größen der Mathematik. 25 Denker, die Geschichte schrieben.) (German) | Zbl 1406.01002

The author, born in 1945, is professor of mathematics and director of the Mathematics Awareness Centre at the University of Warwick. He is one of the most successful authors, his popular books on mathematics were and are a legend. The book under review is the translation into German of his work [Significant figures. The lives and work of great mathematicians. New York, NY: Basic Books (2017; Zbl 1387.01001)]. The author presents 25 biographies of mathematicians, but the book is much more than these biographies. It is a history of mathematics demonstrated by means of biographies. There is a noninterrupted line of mathematical thinking which goes back to the Babylonians. It is nearly a mythological process, how the new mathematics is developed. This development does not take place in a vacuum but it is made by human beings, pioneers, who make this way evident. They advance into new areas of thinking which before had been a terra incognita. Each biography contains some surprises, the book as a whole can only be highly recommended to all readers interested in the history of mathematics.

Reviewer: Karin Reich (Berlin)

MSC:
01-01 Introductory exposition (textbooks, tutorial papers, etc.) pertaining to history and biography
01A05 General histories, source books
01A70 Biographies, obituaries, personalia, bibliographies

Keywords:
biographies; history of mathematics

Biographic references:
Archimedes;
Liu Hui;
al-Khwārizmī;
Madhava of Sangamagrama;
Cardano, Gerolamo;
de Fermat, Pierre;
Newton, Isaac;
Euler, Leonhard;
Fourier, Joseph;
Gauss, Carl Friedrich;
Lobachevskiǐ, Nikolai Ivanovich;
Bolyai, János;
Galois, Évariste;
Lovelace, Ada;
Boole, George;
Riemann, Bernhard;
Cantor, Georg;
Kovalevskaya, Sof'ya;
Poincaré, Henri;
Hilbert, David;
Noether, Emmy;
Ramamujan, Srinivasa;
Gödel, Kurt;
Turing, Alan;
Mandelbrot, Benoît;
Thurston, William