

The Troubled Empire China In The Yuan And Ming Dynasties History Of Imperial China

Just over a thousand years ago, the Song dynasty emerged as the most advanced civilization on earth. Within two centuries, China was home to nearly half of all humankind. In this concise history, we learn why the inventiveness of this era has been favorably compared with the European Renaissance, which in many ways the Song transformation surpassed. With the chaotic dissolution of the Tang dynasty, the old aristocratic families vanished. A new class of scholar-officials—products of a meritocratic examination system—took up the task of reshaping Chinese tradition by adapting the precepts of Confucianism to a rapidly changing world. Through fiscal reforms, these elites liberalized the economy, eased the tax burden, and put paper money into circulation. Their redesigned capitals buzzed with traders, while the education system offered advancement to talented men of modest means. Their rationalist approach led to inventions in printing, shipbuilding, weaving, ceramics manufacture, mining, and agriculture. With a realist's eye, they studied the natural world and applied their observations in art and science. And with the souls of diplomats, they chose peace over war with the aggressors on their borders. Yet persistent military threats from these nomadic tribes—which the Chinese scorned as their cultural inferiors—redefined China's understanding of its place in the world and solidified a sense of what it meant to be Chinese. The Age of Confucian Rule is an essential introduction to this transformative era. "A scholar should congratulate himself that he has been born in such a time" (Zhao Ruyu, 1194).

Four themes dominate this study of the late Mongol empire in Northeast Asia: the need for an all-inclusive regional perspective; pan-Asian integration under the Mongols; the tendency for individual and family interests to trump those of dynasty, country, or linguistic affiliation; and the need to see Korea as part of the wider Mongol empire.

When Chinese women bound their daughters' feet, many consequences ensued, some beyond the imagination of the binders and the bound. The most obvious of these consequences was to impress upon a small child's body and mind that girls differed from boys, thus reproducing gender hierarchy. What is not obvious is why Chinese society should have evolved such a radical method of gender-marking. Gendering is not simply preparation for reproduction, rather its primary significance lies in preparing children for their places in the division of labor of a particular political economy. Drawing on extensive fieldwork and interviews with almost 5,000 women, this book examines footbinding as Sichuan women remember it from the final years of the empire and the troubled times before the 1949 revolution. It focuses on two key questions: what motivated parents to maintain this custom, and how significant was girls' work in China's final pre-industrial century? In answering these questions, Hill Gates shows how footbinding was a form of labor discipline in the first half of the twentieth century in China, when it was a key institution in a now much-altered political economy. Countering the widely held views surrounding the sexual attractiveness of bound feet to Chinese men, footbinding as an ethnic boundary marker, its role in female hypergamy, and its connection to state imperatives, this book instead presents a compelling argument that footbinding was in fact a crucial means of disciplining of little girls to lives of early and unremitting labor. This vivid and fascinating study will be of huge interest to students and scholars working across a wide range of fields including Chinese history, oral history, anthropology and gender studies.

From the author of the award-winning *Vermeer's Hat*, a historical detective story decoding a long-forgotten link between seventeenth century Europe and China. Timothy Brook's award-winning *Vermeer's Hat* unfolded the early history of globalization, using Vermeer's paintings to show how objects like beaver hats and porcelain bowls began to circulate around the world.

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Now he plumbs the mystery of a single artifact that offers new insights into global connections centuries old. In 2009, an extraordinary map of China was discovered in Oxford's Bodleian Library—where it had first been deposited 350 years before, then stowed and forgotten for nearly a century. Neither historians of China nor cartography experts had ever seen anything like it. It was so odd that experts would have declared it a fake—yet records confirmed it had been delivered to Oxford in 1659. The “Selden Map,” as it is known, was a puzzle that needed solving. Brook, a historian of China, set out to explore the riddle. His investigation will lead readers around this elegant, enigmatic work of art, and from the heart of China, via the Southern Ocean, to the court of King James II. In the story of Selden's map, he reveals for us the surprising links between an English scholar and merchants half a world away, and offers novel insights into the power and meaning that a single map can hold. Brook delivers the same anecdote-rich narrative, intriguing characters, and unexpected historical connections that made Vermeer's Hat an instant classic.

After the collapse of the Han dynasty, China divided along a north-south line. Lewis traces the changes that underlay and resulted from this split in a period that saw China's geographic redefinition, more engagement with the outside world, significant changes to family life, literary and social developments, and the introduction of new religions.

In a brisk revisionist history, William Rowe challenges the standard narrative of Qing China as a decadent, inward-looking state that failed to keep pace with the modern West. This original, thought-provoking history of China's last empire is a must-read for understanding the challenges facing China today.

Creates a portrait of the world and culture of late imperial China by examining the lives of seven prominent officials and members of the Ming ruling class

The New York Times said of Ronald H. Spector's classic account of the American struggle against the Japanese in World War II, “No future book on the Pacific War will be written without paying due tribute to *Eagle Against the Sun*.” Now Spector has returned with a book that is even more revealing. In *The Ruins of Empire* chronicles the startling aftermath of this crucial twentieth-century conflict. With access to recently available firsthand accounts by Chinese, Japanese, British, and American witnesses and previously top secret U.S. intelligence records, Spector tells for the first time the fascinating story of the deadly confrontations that broke out—or merely continued—in Asia after peace was proclaimed at the end of World War II. Under occupation by the victorious Allies, this part of the world was plunged into new power struggles or back into old feuds that in some ways were worse than the war itself. In *The Ruins of Empire* also shows how the U.S. and Soviet governments, as they secretly vied for influence in liberated lands, were soon at odds. At the time of the peace declaration, international suspicions were still strong. Joseph Stalin warned that “crazy cutthroats” might disrupt the surrender ceremony in Tokyo Bay. Die-hard Japanese officers plotted to seize the emperor's palace to prevent an announcement of surrender, and clandestine relief forces were sent to rescue thousands of Allied POWs to prevent their being massacred. In *The Ruins of Empire* paints a vivid picture of the postwar intrigues and violence. In Manchuria, Russian “liberators” looted, raped, and killed innocent civilians, and a fratricidal rivalry continued between Chiang Kai-shek's regime and Mao's revolutionaries. Communist resistance forces in Malaya settled old scores and terrorized the indigenous population, while mujahideen holy warriors staged reprisals and terror killings against the Chinese—hundreds of innocent civilians were killed on both sides. In Indochina, a nativist political movement rose up to oppose the resumption of French colonial rule; one of the factions that struggled for supremacy was the Communist Viet Minh led by Ho Chi Minh. Korea became a powder keg with the Russians and Americans entangled in its north and south. And in Java, as the Indonesian novelist Idrus wrote, people brutalized by years of Japanese occupation “worshipped a new God in the form of bombs, submachine guns, and mortars.” Through

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impeccable research and provocative analysis, as well as compelling accounts of American, British, Indian, and Australian soldiers charged with overseeing the surrender and repatriation of millions of Japanese in the heart of dangerous territory, Spector casts new and startling light on this pivotal time—and sets the record straight about this contested and important period in history.

This volume explores the history of China between the Mongol reunification of China in 1279 under the Yuan dynasty and the Manchu invasion four centuries later, explaining how climate changes profoundly affected the empire during this period. The Mongol takeover in the 1270s changed the course of Chinese history. The Confucian empire, a millennium and a half in the making, was suddenly thrust under foreign occupation. What China had been before its reunification as the Yuan dynasty in 1279 was no longer what it would be in the future. Four centuries later, another wave of steppe invaders would replace the Ming dynasty with yet another foreign occupation.

Investigating the discovery of an extraordinary map of China in Oxford's Bodleian Library that was delivered in 1659 by Mr. Selden, the author travels halfway around the world to reveal unexpected historical connections that offer insight into the power and meaning a single map can hold.

This accessible collection examines twelve historic events in the international relations of East Asia.

"In the first half of the nineteenth century the Qing Empire faced a crisis. It was broadly perceived both inside and outside of government that the "prosperous age" of the eighteenth century was over. Bureaucratic corruption and malaise, population pressure and food shortages, ecological and infrastructural decay, domestic and frontier rebellion, adverse balances of trade, and, eventually, a previously inconceivable foreign threat from the West seemed to present hopelessly daunting challenges. This study uses the literati reformer Bao Shichen as a prism to understand contemporary perceptions of and proposed solutions to this general crisis. Though Bao only briefly and inconsequentially served in office himself, he was widely recognized as an expert on each of these matters, and his advice was regularly sought by reform-minded administrators. From examination of his thought on bureaucratic and fiscal restructuring, agricultural improvement, the grain tribute administration, the salt monopoly, monetary policy, and foreign relations, Bao emerges as a consistent advocate of the hard-nosed pursuit of material "profit," in the interests not only of the rural populace but also of the Chinese state and nation, anticipating the arguments of "self-strengthening" reformers later in the century."

A study of the first three decades of British rule in Hong Kong, focusing on the troubled and controversial process of establishing a British colony at Hong Kong and on the reception of British rule by people in the region.

China is one of the oldest states in the world. It achieved its approximate current borders with the Ascendancy of the Yuan dynasty in the 13th century, and despite the passing of one Imperial dynasty to the next, it has maintained them

for the eight centuries since. Even the European colonial powers at the height of their power could not move past coastal enclaves. Thus, China remained China through the Ming, the Qing, the Republic, the Occupation, and Communism. But, despite the desires of some of the most powerful people in the Great State through the ages, China has never been alone in the world. It has had to contend with invaders from the steppe and the challenges posed by foreign traders and imperialists. Indeed, its rulers for the majority of the last eight centuries have not been Chinese. Timothy Brook examines China's relationship with the world from the Yuan through to the present by following the stories of ordinary and extraordinary people navigating the spaces where China met and meets the world. Bureaucrats, horse traders, spiritual leaders, explorers, pirates, emperors, invaders, migrant workers, traitors, and visionaries: this is a history of China as no one has told it before.

Volume 9, Part 2 of The Cambridge History of China is the second of two volumes which together explore the political, social and economic developments of the Ch'ing Empire during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries prior to the arrival of Western military power. Across fifteen chapters, a team of leading historians explore how the eighteenth century's greatest contiguous empire in terms of geographical size, population, wealth, cultural production, political order and military domination peaked and then began to unravel. The book sheds new light on the changing systems deployed under the Ch'ing dynasty to govern its large, multi-ethnic Empire and surveys the dynasty's complex relations with neighbouring states and Europe. In this compelling and authoritative account of a significant era of early modern Chinese history, the volume illustrates the ever-changing nature of the Ch'ing Empire, and provides context for the unforeseeable challenges that the nineteenth century would bring.

China's Last Empire: The Great Quing William T. Rowe --

What does it mean for the future of the planet when one of the world's most durable authoritarian governance systems pursues "ecological civilization"? Despite its staggering pollution and colossal appetite for resources, China exemplifies a model of state-led environmentalism which concentrates decisive political, economic, and epistemic power under centralized leadership. On the face of it, China seems to embody hope for a radical new approach to environmental governance. In this thought-provoking book, Yifei Li and Judith Shapiro probe the concrete mechanisms of China's coercive environmentalism to show how 'going green' helps the state to further other agendas such as citizen surveillance and geopolitical influence. Through top-down initiatives, regulations, and campaigns to mitigate pollution and environmental degradation, the Chinese authorities also promote control over the behavior of individuals and enterprises, pacification of borderlands, and expansion of Chinese power and influence along the Belt and Road and even into the global commons. Given the limited time that remains to mitigate climate change and protect millions of species from extinction, we need to consider whether a green authoritarianism can show us the way. This book explores both its promises and risks.

Written by one of the foremost historians of Chinese institutions, this book focuses on

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China's civil service examination system in its final and most elaborate phase during the Ch'ing dynasty. All aspects of this labyrinthine system are explored: the types of questions, the style and form in which they were to be answered, the problem of cheating, and the psychological and financial burdens of the candidates, the rewards of the successful and the plight of those who failed. Drawing on a wide range of sources, including Chinese novels, short stories, and plays, this thought provoking and entertaining book brings to vivid life the testing structure that supplied China's government bureaucracy for almost fourteen hundred years. "Professor Miyazaki's informative work is concerned with a system. . . that was, in effect, . . . the basic institution of Chinese political life, the real pillar which supported the imperial monarchy, the effective vehicle for the aspirations and ambitions of the ruling class. Imperial China without the examination system for the past thousand years and more would have developed in an entirely different way and might not have endured as the continuing form of government over a huge empire."--Pacific Affairs "The most comprehensive narrative treatment in any language of [this] enduring achievement of Chinese civilization."--American Historical Review

When a young woman killed herself in the office she shared with her employer in 1920s Shanghai, the city reeled in shock. Xi Shangzhen became a symbol of the failures of the Chinese Republic as well as the broken promises of citizens' rights, gender equality, and financial prosperity that were betokened by liberal democracy and capitalism.

In 221 bc the First Emperor of Qin unified the lands that would become the heart of a Chinese empire. Though forged by conquest, this vast domain depended for its political survival on a fundamental reshaping of Chinese culture. With this informative book, we are present at the creation of an ancient imperial order whose major features would endure for two millennia. The Qin and Han constitute the "classical period" of Chinese history--a role played by the Greeks and Romans in the West. Mark Edward Lewis highlights the key challenges faced by the court officials and scholars who set about governing an empire of such scale and diversity of peoples. He traces the drastic measures taken to transcend, without eliminating, these regional differences: the invention of the emperor as the divine embodiment of the state; the establishment of a common script for communication and a state-sponsored canon for the propagation of Confucian ideals; the flourishing of the great families, whose domination of local society rested on wealth, landholding, and elaborate kinship structures; the demilitarization of the interior; and the impact of non-Chinese warrior-nomads in setting the boundaries of an emerging Chinese identity. The first of a six-volume series on the history of imperial China, *The Early Chinese Empires* illuminates many formative events in China's long history of imperialism--events whose residual influence can still be discerned today. One hundred years before Columbus and his fellow Europeans began their voyages of discovery, fleets of giant junks commanded by the eunuch admiral Zheng He and filled with the empire's finest porcelains, lacquerware, and silk ventured to the world's "four corners." Seven epic expeditions brought China's treasure ships across the China Seas and Indian Ocean, from Japan to the spice island of Indonesia and the Malabar Coast of India, on to the rich ports of the Persian Gulf and down the East African coast, to China's "El Dorado," and perhaps even to Australia, three hundred years before Captain Cook's landing. It was a time of exploration and expansion, but it ended in a

retrenchment so complete that less than a century later, it was a crime to go to sea in a multimasted ship. In *When China Ruled the Seas*, Louise Levathes takes a fascinating and unprecedented look at this dynamic period in China's enigmatic history, focusing on the country's rise as a naval power that briefly brought half the world under its nominal authority. Drawing on eyewitness accounts, official Ming histories, and African, Arab, and Indian sources, many translated for the first time, Levathes brings readers inside China's most illustrious scientific and technological era. She sheds new light on the historical and cultural context in which this great civilization thrived, as well as the perception of China by other contemporary cultures. Beautifully illustrated and engagingly written, *When China Ruled the Seas* is the fullest picture yet of the early Ming dynasty—the last flowering of Chinese culture before the Manchu invasion. One of Choice Reviews' Outstanding Academic Titles of 2018—an innovative look at how families in Ming dynasty China negotiated military and political obligations to the state.

Many have viewed the tribute system as China's tool for projecting its power and influence in East Asia, treating other actors as passive recipients of Chinese domination. *China's Hegemony* sheds new light on this system and shows that the international order of Asia's past was not as Sinocentric as conventional wisdom suggests. Instead, throughout the early modern period, Chinese hegemony was accepted, defied, and challenged by its East Asian neighbors at different times, depending on these leaders' strategies for legitimacy among their populations. This book demonstrates that Chinese hegemony and hierarchy were not just an outcome of China's military power or Confucian culture but were constructed while interacting with other, less powerful actors' domestic political needs, especially in conjunction with internal power struggles. Focusing on China-Korea-Japan dynamics of East Asian international politics during the Ming and High Qing periods, Ji-Young Lee draws on extensive research of East Asian language sources, including records written by Chinese and Korean tributary envoys. She offers fascinating and rich details of war and peace in Asian international relations, addressing questions such as: why Japan invaded Korea and fought a major war against the Sino-Korean coalition in the late sixteenth century; why Korea attempted to strike at the Ming empire militarily in the late fourteenth century; and how Japan created a miniature tributary order posing as the center of Asia in lieu of the Qing empire in the seventeenth century. By exploring these questions, Lee's in-depth study speaks directly to general international relations literature and concludes that hegemony in Asia was a domestic, as well as an international phenomenon with profound implications for the contemporary era. During the seventeenth century, Holland created the world's most dynamic colonial empire, outcompeting the British and capturing Spanish and Portuguese colonies. Yet, in the Sino-Dutch War--Europe's first war with China--the Dutch met their match in a colorful Chinese warlord named Koxinga. Part samurai, part pirate, he led his generals to victory over the Dutch and captured one of their largest and richest colonies--Taiwan. How did he do it? Examining the strengths and weaknesses of European and Chinese military techniques during the period, *Lost Colony* provides a balanced new perspective on long-held assumptions about Western power, Chinese might, and the nature of war. It has traditionally been asserted that Europeans of the era possessed more advanced science, technology, and political structures than their Eastern counterparts, but

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historians have recently contested this view, arguing that many parts of Asia developed on pace with Europe until 1800. While *Lost Colony* shows that the Dutch did indeed possess a technological edge thanks to the Renaissance fort and the broadside sailing ship, that edge was neutralized by the formidable Chinese military leadership. Thanks to a rich heritage of ancient war wisdom, Koxinga and his generals outfoxed the Dutch at every turn. Exploring a period when the military balance between Europe and China was closer than at any other point in modern history, *Lost Colony* reassesses an important chapter in world history and offers valuable and surprising lessons for contemporary times.

Opium Regimes draws on a range of research to show that the opium trade was not purely a British operation, but involved Chinese merchants and state agents, and Japanese imperial agents as well.

The Troubled Empire: China in the Yuan and Ming Dynasties Harvard University Press Documents the burgeoning Chinese presence in Africa to examine China's potentially world-changing role in reshaping Africa's culture and economy.

Combining rich documentation with rigorous analysis, *China's Last Imperial Frontier* illuminates the internal dynamics of regional power struggle and local resistance that shaped the empire's response to foreign imperialisms in Tibet. The book's extensive engagement with the issues of indigenous society, state capacities in frontier settings, interagency struggle, and regional power competition makes it indispensable reading for students of Sino-Tibetan relations and Qing history."

This book explains why the idea of the Indo-Pacific is so strategically important and concludes with a strategy designed to help the West engage with Chinese power in the region in such a way as to avoid conflict.

One of the most famous rulers in Chinese history, the Yongle emperor (r. 1402–24) gained renown for constructing Beijing's magnificent Forbidden City, directing ambitious naval expeditions, and creating the world's largest encyclopedia. What the *Emperor Built* is the first book-length study devoted to the architectural projects of a single Chinese emperor. Focusing on the imperial palaces in Beijing, a Daoist architectural complex on Mount Wudang, and a Buddhist temple on the Sino-Tibetan frontier, Aurelia Campbell demonstrates how the siting, design, and use of Yongle's palaces and temples helped cement his authority and legitimize his usurpation of power. Campbell offers insight into Yongle's sense of empire—from the far-flung locations in which he built, to the distant regions from which he extracted construction materials, and to the use of tens of thousands of craftsmen and other laborers. Through his constructions, Yongle connected himself to the divine, interacted with his subjects, and extended imperial influence across space and time. Spanning issues of architectural design and construction technologies, this deft analysis reveals remarkable advancements in timber-frame construction and implements an art-historical approach to examine patronage, audience, and reception, situating the buildings within their larger historical and religious contexts.

In this critical darling Vermeer's captivating and enigmatic paintings become windows that reveal how daily life and thought—from Delft to Beijing—were transformed in the 17th century, when the world first became global. A Vermeer painting shows a military officer in a Dutch sitting room, talking to a laughing girl. In another canvas, fruit spills from a blue-and-white porcelain bowl. Familiar images that captivate us with their beauty—but

as Timothy Brook shows us, these intimate pictures actually give us a remarkable view of an expanding world. The officer's dashing hat is made of beaver fur from North America, and it was beaver pelts from America that financed the voyages of explorers seeking routes to China-prized for the porcelains so often shown in Dutch paintings of this time, including Vermeer's. In this dazzling history, Timothy Brook uses Vermeer's works, and other contemporary images from Europe, Asia, and the Americas to trace the rapidly growing web of global trade, and the explosive, transforming, and sometimes destructive changes it wrought in the age when globalization really began. "China", Napoleon once remarked, "is a sleeping lion. Let her sleep, for when she wakes she will shake the world." In 2014, President Xi Jinping triumphantly declared the lion had awakened. Under his leadership, China is pursuing a dream to restore its historical position as the dominant power in Asia. From the Mekong River Basin to the Central Asian steppe, China is flexing its economic muscles for strategic ends. By setting up new regional financial institutions, Beijing is challenging the post-World War II order established under the watchful eye of Washington. And by funding and building roads, railways, ports and power lines-a New Silk Road across Eurasia and through the South China Sea and Indian Ocean-China aims to draw its neighbours ever tighter into its embrace. Combining a geopolitical overview with on-the-ground reportage from a dozen countries, China's Asian Dream offers a fresh perspective on the rise of China' and asks: what does it means for the future of Asia?

Yuan Shikai (1859–1916) has been both hailed as China's George Washington for his role in the country's transition from empire to republic and condemned as a counter-revolutionary. Yuan Shikai: A Reappraisal sheds new light on the controversial history of this talented administrator and modernizer who endeavoured to establish a new dynasty while serving as the first president of the republic, eventually declaring himself emperor. Drawing on untapped primary sources and recent scholarship, Patrick Fuliang Shan offers a lucid, comprehensive, and critical new interpretation of Yuan's part in shaping modern China.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, relations between China and the West were defined by the Qing dynasty's strict restrictions on foreign access and by the West's imperial ambitions. Cultural, political and economic interactions were often fraught, with suspicion and misunderstanding on both sides. Yet trade flourished and there were instances of cultural exchange and friendship, running counter to the official narrative. Tribute and Trade: China and Global Modernity explores encounters between China and the West during this period and beyond, into the early 20th century, through examples drawn from art, literature, science, politics, music, cooking, clothing and more. How did China and the West see each other, how did they influence each other, and what were the lasting legacies of this contact?

Once the darling of U.S. statesmen, corporate elites, and academics, the People's Republic of China has evolved into America's most challenging strategic competitor. Its future appears dystopian. This book tells the story of how China got to this place and analyzes where it will go next and what that will mean for the future of U.S. strategy. The Tang dynasty is often called China's "golden age," a period of commercial, religious, and cultural connections from Korea and Japan to the Persian Gulf, and a time of unsurpassed literary creativity. Mark Lewis captures a dynamic era in which the empire reached its greatest geographical extent under Chinese rule, painting and

ceramic arts flourished, women played a major role both as rulers and in the economy, and China produced its finest lyric poets in Wang Wei, Li Bo, and Du Fu.

The Ming dynasty was the last great Chinese dynasty before the Manchu conquest in 1644. During that time, China, not Europe, was the centre of the world. The author examines the changing landscape of life over the three centuries of Ming (1368-1644). As the twenty-first century dawns, China stands at a crossroads. The largest and most populous country on earth and currently the world's second biggest economy, China has recently reclaimed its historic place at the center of global affairs after decades of internal chaos and disastrous foreign relations. But even as China tentatively reengages with the outside world, the contradictions of its development risks pushing it back into an era of insularity and instability—a regression that, as China's recent history shows, would have serious implications for all other nations. In *Restless Empire*, award-winning historian Odd Arne Westad traces China's complex foreign affairs over the past 250 years, identifying the forces that will determine the country's path in the decades to come. Since the height of the Qing Empire in the eighteenth century, China's interactions—and confrontations—with foreign powers have caused its worldview to fluctuate wildly between extremes of dominance and subjugation, emulation and defiance. From the invasion of Burma in the 1760s to the Boxer Rebellion in the early 20th century to the 2001 standoff over a downed U.S. spy plane, many of these encounters have left Chinese with a lingering sense of humiliation and resentment, and inflamed their notions of justice, hierarchy, and Chinese centrality in world affairs. Recently, China's rising influence on the world stage has shown what the country stands to gain from international cooperation and openness. But as Westad shows, the nation's success will ultimately hinge on its ability to engage with potential international partners while simultaneously safeguarding its own strength and stability. An in-depth study by one of our most respected authorities on international relations and contemporary East Asian history, *Restless Empire* is essential reading for anyone wishing to understand the recent past and probable future of this dynamic and complex nation.

This engaging, deeply informed book provides the first concise history of one of China's most important eras. Leading scholar John W. Dardess offers a thematically organized political, social, and economic exploration of China from 1368 to 1644. He examines how the Ming dynasty was able to endure for 276 years, illuminating Ming foreign relations and border control, the lives and careers of its sixteen emperors, its system of governance and the kinds of people who served it, its great class of literati, and finally the mass outlawry that, in unhappy conjunction with the Manchu invasions from outside, ended the once-mighty dynasty in the mid-seventeenth century. The Ming witnessed the beginning of China's contact with the West, and its story will fascinate all readers interested in global as well as Asian history.

This book is a study of the social and cultural change in Ming China's lower Yangzi delta region from about 1500 to 1644. It takes three social groups—literati, scholarofficials and merchants—as the framework for discussing the political, socioeconomic and cultural forces that coalesced and reinforced one another to influence and facilitate the region's change. A still wider perspective reveals how the region's political ties with the state and commercial links with external markets impacted the region for better and for worse. The book also discusses the literati's

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reflection and discourse, which their participation in the change generated, on the issues of morality, money, politics and disorder. The reader, when brought into the richly textured social and cultural life of Ming China's heartland, will foster an appreciation of what it was like for the region and its people to live in an age of commercial and cultural vigor, which then descended into distress and despair. For scholars and for others conversant with Chinese history, and Ming history in particular, the extensive use of literati sources and the references to contemporary scholarship will be of interest.

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