



The International Forum

Suggested Resources for China and East Asia

There are many books written about China and East Asia. The following have proven to be some of our favorites.

HISTORY OF CHINA AND EAST ASIA

1421- The Year China Discovered America, By Gavin Menzies, William Morrow (2003).

At the beginning of the Ming Dynasty in China, Emperor Zhu Di , having defeated the Mongols, set out to build the infrastructure and ‘global’ capabilities of his new state. He moved the capital to Beijing and built the Forbidden City as the Emperor’s capital. He rebuilt and extended the Grand Canal, linking Beijing with southern China in a transportation system that remains today. But perhaps his most ambitious effort was the building of vast navies, in the shipyards of Nanjing that would explore and colonize the world. This book is about how these explorations to East Asia, Australia, South America, the Antarctic, Africa and America, and the Chinese settlements that resulted. However, when the great Chinese fleets returned home to China, their emperor was dead, the Forbidden City destroyed by fire and the new Emperor firmly committed to a period of austerity. The fleets were destroyed along with ‘all evidence’ and citizens of China were forbidden to travel abroad. China turned inward and remained on this course for the next five hundred and fifty years. What messages does this have for today? Could America, stretched beyond its limits financially as it battles what it sees as threats to world order, turn inward as China did? Even after space exploration and a man on the moon and the amazing technological progress of its time – is this possible? Will China rise again to be the “Middle Kingdom”? Gavin Menzies is a retired Submarine Commander in the British Royal Navy. His career experience brought him to many of the shores that the Chinese explored. His research network around the world is building a fascinating story with new evidence every day that supports what the Chinese were doing in 1421. ISBN: 006054094X (paperback) ISBN: 0060537639 (hardcover)

1688 A Global History, John E. Willis, Jr., W. W. Norton & Company, New York and London, (2001). The author has merged cultural anthropology and history to reflect through the prism of a single year the shape of the world poised on the edge of modernity. It touches on events in Africa, the New World, China, Japan, Australia and eastern and western Europe. We go from the world of the Kangxi emperor in China to that of an African Muslim slave in the New World. It is a vivid picture of life in 1688, filled with terrifying violence, frightening diseases and religious and political persecution, but also with comfortingly familiar human

kindness, familial affections and the scientific and intellectual achievements of Leibniz, Locke and Newton, among others. ISBN# 0-393-04744-X

China A New History, John King Fairbank, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press (1994). Written by a former Professor of History and director of the East Asian Research Center at Harvard University this book sets out to cover the entire span of China's history from the Paleolithic cultures .to the Tiananmen massacre of 1989". ISBN# 0674116712

Collision of Two Civilizations,(The): The British Expedition to China 1792-4, Alain Peyrefitte, Harvill, An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers (1993). The story in fascinating detail of the attempt by the British, led by Lord Macartney in 1793, to open the Chinese Empire to Western trade. ISBN# 0002726777

Dragon Pearl, Growing Up Among China's Elite, Sirin Phathanothai, Simon & Schuster (1994). Born into one of Thailand's prominent political families, the author was sent as a young girl to live and be brought up in China under the direct auspices of Premier Zhou Enlai as his ward. She survived the Cultural Revolution by joining the People's Liberation Army and went on to play a role in China's opening to the West. ISBN# 0671712152

East Asia at The Center, *Fourth Thousand Years of Engagement with the World*, Warren I. Cohen, Columbia University Press, (2001). From the prehistoric formation of political units in East Asia a mature international system arose that was centered on the Chinese Han and Tang dynasties, though Central Asia, Japan, Korea, and Southeast Asia each rejected or even dominated China at times. This system was successively disrupted by the Mongols, the coming of Islam, the capitalist maritime world system, and the Japanese empire's disastrous attempt to take up the mantle of imperialism from the colonialists. The Cold War and the resurgence of East Asian economic power led to the challenge of the new century. ISBN# 0231101090

Gate of Heavenly Peace (The), *The Chinese and Their Revolution 1895-1980*, Jonathan D. Spence, Penguin Books, (1981). In this highly original approach the author shows us the Chinese revolution through the eyes of its most articulate participants - the writers, historians, philosophers and insurrectionists who shaped and were shaped by the turbulent events of this century. ISBN# 0140062793

Life & Death in Shanghai, Nien Cheng, Harper Collins, paperback (1986). One of the first books to be published in the West about the Cultural Revolution, the author who is the widow of a former Kuomintang diplomat and oil company executive gives a powerful and inspiring account of her harrowing experiences. ISBN# 014010870 or # 0394555481 (hard cover)

Nathaniel's Nutmeg, *The True and Incredible Adventures of the Spice Trader Who Changed the Course of History*, Giles Melton, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, New York (1999). Would you believe that nutmeg formed the basis of one of the most bitter international conflicts of the 17th century, and was also intimately connected to New York City's rise to global preeminence? The book deals with the competition between England and Holland for possession of the spice-producing islands of Southeast Asia throughout the 17th century. At the center of the action lies Nathaniel Courthope, a trusty lieutenant of the East India Company, who took and held the tiny nutmeg-producing island of Run in the face of overwhelming Dutch opposition for more than five years, before being treacherously murdered in 1620. To avenge his death, and the loss of the island, the British took the Dutch North American colony at Manhattan. ISBN# 0-374-21936-2

Private Life of Chairman Mao (The), Dr. Li Zhisui, Random House (1994). An intimate account, the most revealing book ever published on Mao, written by his personal physician of twenty-two years. ISBN# 0679400354

Soong Dynasty (The), Sterling Seagrove, Harper & Row, New York, (1985). The first full behind-the-scenes account of the amazing Soong family, whose wealth and power dominated China and American policy toward Asia in the 20th century. ISBN# 0060153083 (hard cover)

Two Koreas, (The), Don Oberdorfer, Basic Books, (1997). A narrative history of the conflict between the two Koreas--and the involvement of the outside world--placing the political tension within a historical context, looking at the democratic South and the communist North through the lens of the past twenty-five years. ISBN# 0-465-08792

When China Ruled the Seas: The Treasure Fleet of the Dragon Throne, 1405-1433, Louise Levathes, Oxford University Press, New York & Oxford, (1994). The story of seven epic voyages made by unique junk armadas during the reign of the Chinese emperor Zhu Di. These "treasure ships" under the command of the eunuch admiral Zheng He traded in porcelain, silk, lacquerware and fine-art objects; they sailed from Korea and Japan throughout the Malay archipelago and India to East Africa, and possibly as far away as Australia. Levathes argues that China could have employed its navy--with some 3000 vessels, the largest in history until the present century--to establish a great colonial empire 100 years before the age of European exploration and expansion; instead, the Chinese abruptly dismantled their navy. Levathes describes the political showdown that led to this perverse turn of events, revolving around a clash between the powerful eunuch class and Confucian scholar-officials. ISBN# 0-19-511207-5

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

Being Chinese, *Voices from the Diaspora*, Wei Djao, University of Arizona Press, (2003). The author explores the nature of the overseas Chinese population and its selective adherence to shared “Chinese values” through the personal stories of twenty two different people’s lives around the world. For centuries, people of Chinese ancestry have traveled and lived all over the world from the U.S., Canada, Cuba, Zimbabwe, Peru to Southeast Asia etc. What makes someone Chinese? Is it merely physical characteristics or does it run deeper to include shared aspirations, values, goals and behavior? The author was born in China and now lives in the U.S. This book is an account of her journey around the world to tell the story of China’s Diaspora.

A Million Truths, *A Decade in China*, Linda Jakobson, M. Evans and Company, Inc., New York, (1998). Linda Jakobson describes the changes that have been taking place in China over the last decade. The descriptions are a result of personal interviews with Chinese of all ages and ranks during Jakobson’s time living in China as a Finnish foreign correspondent. This book can be read cover to cover or by selected chapters, as each chapter is a self contained account of a different theme including: ideas and beliefs, the life of the peasant woman, the world of the work unit, red youth, the role of journalism, what is taught to children etc. ISBN#0-87131-873-3

Chinese (The), David Bonavia, Penguin (1989). A classic book on Chinese culture and society. An exploration of Chinese contemporary society city and country, concept of face, population, youth, rustification, Eastern medicine, cadres, schools, law, posters & the democratic movement, language & literature, consumerism & marriage, Red Guards, etc. ISBN# 0140223940

Daily Life in China on the Eve of the Mongol Invasion, Jacques Gernet, Stanford University Press (1952). A valuable study on society as it was 700 years ago (1250-1276) during the Southern Sung dynasty when the city of Hangzhou was at its peak city, housing, clothing, cooking, life cycle, leisure hours a picture of how lively and brilliant it was on the very eve of its destruction. ISBN# 0804707200

Red China Blues, Jan Wong, Doubleday/Anchor Books (1996). The author, a Canadian of Chinese descent, writes a memoir of the years she spent in China (1972 - 1978) as a Beijing University student and starry-eyed Maoist; her subsequent disillusionment with the realities of communism and her return in the 80's as the Beijing correspondent for the *Toronto Globe & Mail*. ISBN# 0385476795

River at the Center of the World (The): *A Journey up the Yangtze, and back in Chinese Time*,

by Simon Winchester, Penguin Books, London, UK, 1996. The mighty Yangtze splits China in two, between the wheat growing North and the rice growing South: Almost 500 million people live and work along its banks. The author chronicles his 3,700 mile journey from Shanghai to Tibet past the magnificent Three Gorges, through jungles, grasslands, high plains, polluted industrial landscapes and ice-covered mountain ranges. You may read this book from cover to cover, but you can also read the chapters you choose as each is a self contained account of a different place or theme along the Yangtze. ISBN 0-140-24912-5

Spirit of Chinese Politics (The), *New Edition*, Lucian W. Pye, Harvard University Press (1992). A deep psychological analysis of Chinese political culture manifested in traditional, Republican and Communist periods. The author scans several possible paths of future development and discusses the great gap that persists between the worlds of the political leadership and of society at large in post-Tiananmen China. ISBN# 067483240X

Riding the Iron Rooster by Train Through China, Paul Theroux, Penguin Books (1989). The author's account of travels in old and new China a portrait of how China looked and felt to a foreigner in the 1980's. While this book is now over 20 years old and China has changed significantly in that time, it is true to Theroux's style with an in-depth account of his impressions of the people and the culture he met along the way. ISBN# 0140112952

A Thousand Pieces of Gold: A memoir of China's Past Through its Proverbs, by Adeline Yen Mah, Harper Collins, London, 2002. Many Chinese proverbs are based on historical events and the greatest number originates from the period of history, the third century BC, when the first emperor of China reigned. He united China, built the Great Wall and created the magnificent terracotta army. This narrative combines the history of that time in China, with the proverbs that originated then and relates them to contemporary time. A book that can be read by chapters, it provides insight into Chinese culture and values. Most importantly it provides a mirror on ourselves, our moral decisions and the value conflicts that we deal with even today. ISBN: 0-00-712450-3

Wild Swans Three Daughters of China, Jung Chang, Flamingo: An imprint of Harper Collins, paperback (1992). Jung Chang recounts the evocative, unsettling, and insistently gripping story of how three generations of women in her family fared in the political maelstrom of China during the 20th century. Chang's grandmother was a warlord's concubine. Her gently raised mother struggled with hardships in the early days of Mao's revolution and rose, like her husband, to a prominent position in the Communist Party before being denounced during the Cultural Revolution. Chang herself marched, worked, and breathed for Mao until doubt crept in over the excesses of his policies and purges. Born just a few decades apart, their lives overlap with the end of the warlords' regime and overthrow of the Japanese occupation, violent

struggles between the Kuomintang and the Communists to carve up China, and, most poignant for the author, the vicious cycle of purges orchestrated by Chairman Mao that discredited and crushed millions of people, including her parents. This book is a wonderful window into the lives and roles of women in the last century. ISBN# 0385425473

BUSINESS AND ECONOMY

Chinese Firms Between Hierarchy and Market, *The Contract Management Responsibility System in China*, Derong Chen, St. Martin's Press (1995). The author, a guest at the International Forum and Chinese Encounters, has done considerable research on the establishment of market oriented enterprises in China and their relationship to government and the well established state owned enterprises. ISBN# 0333613856

Tomorrow's Gold: Asia's age of Discovery, Marc Faber, CLSA Books, Hong Kong, (2000). Marc Faber seeks to uncover the outperforming asset classes of the future. This book examines how old investor trends developed and assess how new patterns might emerge. ISBN#962-86067-2-7

TIBET

Struggle for Modern Tibet (The), *The Autobiography of Tashi Tsering*, Melvyn Goldstein, William Siebensschuh and Tashi Tsering, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York and London, England (1997), This is the autobiography of a Tibetan educator and former political prisoner. Born in 1929 in a Tibetan village, Tsering became part of the Dalai Lama's personal dance troupe at 13 years. After studying in the US he returned to Tibet in 1964 convinced that Tibet could become a modernized society based on socialist, egalitarian principles through cooperation with the Chinese. He was jailed as a political prisoner in 1967. Subsequently, released from prison he has become an educator and raises funds to build schools in Tibet. ISBN# 1-56324-950-2

FICTION

Dragon Seed, Pearl Buck, A fictional story of a Chinese family in a rural town. It depicts family values of the people as they cope with diversity.

Dream Traders (The), E.V. Thompson, Pan Books Ltd. (1983). A novel about the opium war, Taiping Rebellion, Hong Kong, Canton and Nanjing.

Good Earth (The), Pearl S. Buck, Mandarin Paperbacks (1994). Pulitzer Prize winning novel which tells the story of the farmer Wang Lung and his constant struggles to keep his family alive, through famine and destitution, flood and pestilence. ISBN# 0671510126

House of Memory (The) A Novel on Shanghai, Nicholas Clifford, Ballantine Books, Division of Random House, Inc. (1994) ISBN# 0345381491

Three Daughters of Madame Liang, Pearl S. Buck, Moyer Bell Limited (1991). The story of a woman's life during Communist austerity and her children's emotional and patriotic conflicts once they are sent to America. ISBN# 1559210400

Suggested Chinese Films

The following films may help you to better understand China's culture and the behavior of its people.

Black Cannon Incident, *directed by Liu Zifeng*

China: The Wild East, *distributed by Turner Home Entertainment*

Farewell My Concubine, *directed by Chen Kaige*

Good Morning Beijing, *directed by Zheng Nuanxia*

Kundun, *directed by Martin Scorsese*

Last Emperor (The), *directed by Bernardo Bertolucci*

Old Well, *directed by Wu Tianming*

Raise the Red Lantern, *directed by Chang Yimou*

Red Firecracker, Green Firecracker, *directed by He Ping*

Shanghai Fever, *directed by Li Guoli*

The Story of Qui Jui, *directed by Chang Yimou*

Women from the Lake of Scented Souls, *directed by Xie Tan*