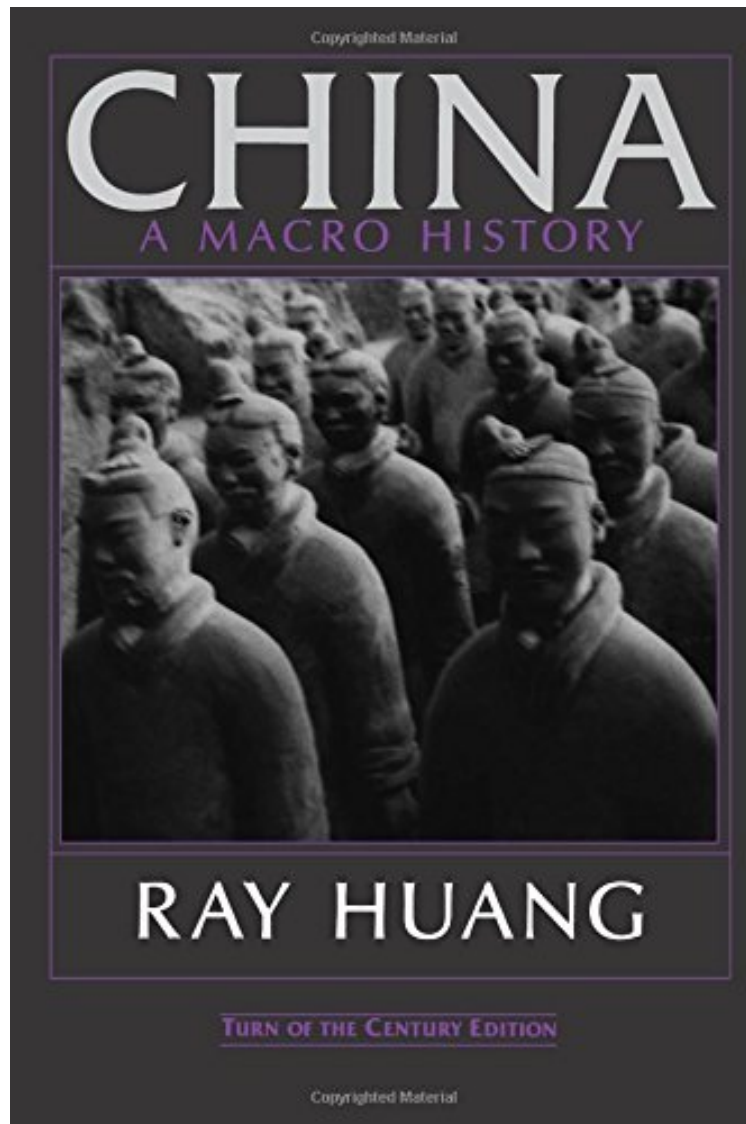


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China: A Macro History (An East Gate Book)

Ray Huang

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Ray Huang : China: A Macro History (An East Gate Book) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised China: A Macro History (An East Gate Book):

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Refreshing and enlighteningBy TintinThis is one of the most enlightening books I've read. Maybe only a person with Ray Huang's life experience, his mastery of both the eastern and western languages and culture can write a book so refreshing and so uncolored by party politics or ideological beliefs. Growing up in China, Huang spent 12 years serving in Chiang Kai-Shek's army; then trading guns for books, he earned his PhD in history in the US at the mature age of 46. He lived the rest of his life in the US, marrying a

stunning Caucasian woman and teaching history in a university. His fame came when he was 61 with the publication of "1587, a year of no significance", whose Chinese edition later became a best seller in China. Compared to "1587", this book is more ambitious but equally scholarly and insightful. This is not your typical history book. Instead of focusing on who what and when, it asks and answers the question of why. Huang found intrinsic laws in the seemingly random events of Chinese dynastic and modern history. Suddenly, all the things that happened become inevitable, history progresses in its own trajectory regardless of any individual's wishes. He convincingly explored the reasons why Confucius and Mencius philosophy dominated the Chinese society for two thousand years, the impetus to the rise and fall of the three Chinese empires and why capitalism never developed in China till the late 20's century. He urged us not to judge an event or figure by rigid moral standards, but by their effect on the overall (macro) progress of history. For example, instead of tossing labels of "good", "bad", "tyrannical" or "corrupt", he maintained Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong both re-shaped the structure of Chinese society and laid foundation for the amazing transition of China from a three-thousand-year-old agrarian society to a "numerically manageable" modern society in the last 20 years. Huang's book also makes me seriously consider for the first time the possibility that democracy is not a system that works anywhere and anytime. You don't have to agree with everything Huang wrote, but he definitely makes you think. On a side note, you will get the most out of this book if you already have a good knowledge of Chinese history, and have a chronological table of all the Chinese dynasties and emperors handy.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I really as good as some reviews claim

By Alan - UK Being an avid reader of History, I was really extremely disappointed by this book. The theme, Macro History, seemed laudable enough, and promised some insight regarding the historical development of the China we see today. Regardless of the academic merit of the book, on which I will not comment, I found the book to be extremely poorly written. It was inconsistent in terms of its coverage of "events", and left a considerable, but indispensable, background unexplained. For example, you get no introduction as to who or what the Legalists are or why they seem to be the alternative to Confucianism, for example. In places the developments are covered in detail, but as the lead up has been only presented in broad framework, you are left with little access to the importance of the detail. The whole thing needs a good edit from a strong editor, who is able to draw out the undoubted academic merit of the book, into something which is readable and informative. A small point, but irksome: I know the author is a non-English speaker, but has lived in the USA since the early 50s; however, in places the usage of terms and phraseology needs editing, as it seems terribly colloquial. For example, in one place the author tells you that the merchant used "fancy goods" to develop his friendship with the royal prince. Call me picky, but terms like this should have been weeded out in editing.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Highly recommend this book to anyone that wants to have an ...

By Shell Highly recommend this book to anyone that wants to have an overview of Chinese history. I like that it doesn't go into all the details of historical events (that will be very very long..), but rather makes you think 'how did this happen' and 'why it is the way it is'. It is a small and concise history book that's worth reading several times. I do recommend to only read this if you already have some basic idea of Chinese history in terms of major events and phases.

This short history of China includes a new preface, additional illustrations and a more reader-friendly format.

From Library Journal Several good histories of China for general readers have been published in recent years, e.g., Witold Rodzinski's *The Walled Kingdom* (Free Pr., 1984). Cotterell's book, however, is too amateurish to be among them. It alternates between convention and error and often condenses history in a confusing way. Huang's macro history, on the other hand, is most welcome. It builds a structure of novel interpretation and vivid anecdote on a solid base of original research and covers the whole sweep of Chinese history, making comparative references to Western history. Huang seeks to explain the present Chinese reforms as the culmination of a commercialization trend that has broken down the old peasant society and brought China into the mainstream of world history. It is debatable whether Imperial China was as stagnant as Huang says, and his theory of the breakup of traditional China bears a resemblance to old-fashioned modernization theory. Still, his book is a boldly opinionated, freshly written synthesis that will be read with pleasure and profit by all. Andrew J. Nathan, Columbia Univ. Copyright 1988 Reed Business Information, Inc.