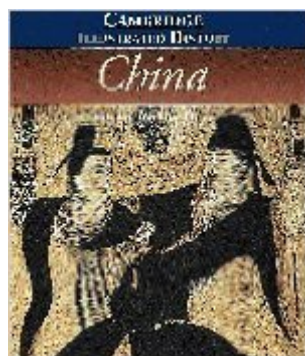


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# The Cambridge Illustrated History Of China



## Synopsis

An engaging and fully illustrated account of more than 8000 years of Chinese civilization - from prehistoric times through to the modern communist state. Includes leading Chinese historians, poets, novelists, dramatists, philosophical and religious ideas, art forms and outside influences.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

With more than a billion people and 5,000 years of history, it's not surprising that most books on the History of China cover a brief period in excruciating depth. Patricia Ebrey's book is a deliciously self-aware overview, that delivers just what it promises: It covers all the issues and the illustrations are carefully chosen to amplify the text (not just a bunch of photos bound in the middle of the book). The book is beautifully printed--in China, of course! Ebrey gets across the important point that we look to China and want a simple, linear summary, when China is complex and decidedly non-linear. (The Cultural Revolution as much happened to Mao as it was caused by him, for example). Moreover, she explains how our Western world view needs to see certain things (we always want the good guys to win in the end--perhaps they won't). This book would be great for a student at any level from High School library on to college. It could be used as a text and I'm also recommending it to US business people working with China. It's a wonderful introduction to the culture. The only quibble is that the Anglo pronunciation of pinyin isn't explained with a reference (for example, Qing Dynasty is pronounced "Ching" but you can't find that here). The pricing is very attractive too.

This is one of the best books on general history of China I have come across in a long time. With much of academia still using outdated works by Fairbank and Hucker, Patricia Ebrey finally does justice to the tremendous progress the field of sinology has made over the past twenty years by bringing it within reach of the casual reader. This, along with Jacques Gernet's *A History of Chinese Civilization* and Ray Huang's *China: A Macro History*, are the three indispensable textbooks for any new student to Chinese history.

Ebrey succeeds in condensing the history of China into a compact and very readable book. It was probably one of the most enjoyable readings I had for a history class. The photographs are gorgeous, and the author really tried to balance social and culture trends with the political events. However, the book falls short when it comes to content. The 600-year period between the fall of Han and the founding of Sui was described in about 3 pages. The enormously important Warring States Period had barely 5 pages of coverage. The depth of content - well, let's just say this is laughable by college standards. Of course, it is impossible to cover over 3000 years of history in this compact book. However, when some of the most influential periods in Chinese history are reduced to bare footnote, perhaps it indicates that the author has been over zealous in trimming her materials. That being said, this is still a good introduction. If you are clueless about Chinese history, this book serves as a great start. If you know anything more than the fundamentals, however, look elsewhere for information.

This is a truly helpful and stimulating introduction to Chinese History, an ideal companion volume to more structured, non-illustrated histories: clear, highly explanatory maps; excellent choice of images and visual documents that bring to life China's bygone ages. Although the book focusses on broad historical trends across China's pre-dynastic and imperial ages up to modern times, it also offers boxes that deal with iconic figures of their times and with cultural issues that defined each historic period. I use this book as one of my sources to teach a Chinese Cultural History course and it has never let me down. Its only weakness lies in the dearth of parallel text translations: unfortunately a very common feature of books dealing with Chinese culture, history, literature etc. written in the English language. Offering access to the original in Chinese can be a bonus, as some of the poems or documents quoted in English are not always to be found easily in Chinese over the net or elsewhere. Still, a wonderful Chinese History book, highly recommended.

My Professor used this text and I find that it is easy to understand and read. One of the features of

this book is that at the end of every chapter, the author would include her opinions and at the same time, she will relay what happened in Europe or U.S. at that particular time. For instance, in 1700-1800, China was ruled by the last empire- the Manchu and it was also during this time that the Americans gained independence. To me, it's always nice to know what happened during a particular period in the opposite side of the world. I would strongly recommend this book for anyone who wants to know more about the Chinese history as it's very easy to follow.

Ebrey's "Cambridge Illustrated History of China" is a great textbook for the student or reader desiring only to get a basic overview of Chinese history. The book is exceptionally smooth reading and enjoyable, yet it is not exactly suited for students with an existing knowledge of China. The book is greatly complimented by Roberts' "A Concise History of China" which discusses more material into greater fact-packed detail, but not as smooth or enjoyable to read alone.

I'm a Chinese living in China. Because of politicized history accounts in China after 1949 I have little interest in official history books in Chinese. But I like this book very much; for me it provides a totally new perspective on the evolution of our culture, peoples and economy etc. The rich pictures in the book make reading easier and more interesting.

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