

# China



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To Western eyes, China is one of the most mysterious and intriguing of all civilizations. The legacy of its long dynastic rule, extending back more than 3,000 years, includes fascinating contributions to philosophy, religion, art, science, and mythology that continue to influence the modern world. China explores the ideas and achievements of this unique culture through a combination of authoritative, accessible scholarship and magnificent imagery. Drawing on the most recent discoveries and theories, the book presents China's history, society, and beliefs from the legends of prehistory to the end of imperial power in 1912. It investigates the key cultural, spiritual, and artistic traditions of this vast civilization and describes the country's major scientific and technological innovations, such as gunpowder, printing, and the compass. An investigation of trading routes, both by land and sea, challenges the conventional view of China as an isolated, insular civilization, stressing instead the impact of its sophisticated society upon the world. A final section discusses the continuing legacy of the imperial period through the turbulent years of the twentieth century up to the present day. A wealth of color photography and imaginative artwork, together with a lively and authoritative text, vividly evokes the pinnacles of Chinese civilization as well as the realities of everyday life, from life in the Imperial court to the most rural villages.

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