

Perpetual Happiness



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The reign of Emperor Yongle, or 'Perpetual Happiness' - which began with civil war and a bloody coup, and saw the construction of the Forbidden City, completion of the Grand Canal, and consolidation of the imperial bureaucracy - was one of the most dramatic and significant in Chinese history. In 1368 Yongle's father, the Buddhist monk Zhu Yuanzhang, led the rebels who reclaimed China from the Mongol-ruled Yuan dynasty and reigned for 30 years as Emperor Hongwu, establishing the Ming dynasty. But Yongle (Zhu Di, 1360-1424) did not directly succeed his father; the throne first passed briefly to Yongle's nephew, Emperor Jianwen, whom Yongle drove from the palace (and possibly murdered) in 1402. The strong, centralised, autocratic government set up by his father and developed by Yongle - which concentrated power in the emperor, his eunuch assistants, and the scholar-advisors of the Grand Secretariat - lasted for more than two centuries. Yongle moved China's capital from Nanjing to Beijing in 1421, where he constructed the magnificent Forbidden City, in which twenty-three successive emperors would reside. He rebuilt the Grand Canal, directly linking the new capital to the fertile Yangzi Delta and facilitating grain shipments for Beijing's burgeoning population. He relentlessly pursued expansion of China's territory into Mongolia, Manchuria, and Vietnam, and sent the admiral Zheng He on six voyages - each employing more than sixty vessels - to Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean, establishing contact with places as distant as Hormuz in the Persian Gulf and Somalia in Africa. As an expression of his wish to emulate the sage-kings of Chinese antiquity, Yongle sponsored numerous literary projects, the most ambitious of which was "The Grand Encyclopaedia of Yongle" (Yongle dadian), a compendium of 11,095 volumes on all fields of knowledge. Beginning with an hour-by-hour account of one day in Yongle's court, Shih-shan Henry Tsai presents the multiple dimensions of Yongle's life in fascinating detail. Tsai examines the role of birth, education, and tradition in moulding the emperor's personality and values, and paints a rich portrait of a man characterised by stark contrasts. Synthesising primary and secondary source materials, he has crafted a colourful biography that enhances our understanding of imperial China in general and the early Ming dynasty in particular. "Perpetual Happiness" will captivate all who enjoy historical biography, and will be of interest to specialists in history and Asian studies. Shih-shan Henry Tsai is professor of history and director of Asian studies at the University of Arkansas. He is the author of four books, including "Eunuchs in the Ming Dynasty".

作者介绍:

蔡石山 (Tsai

Shih-Shan, Henry), 1940年生于台湾嘉义, 美国俄勒冈大学历史学博士, 现任台湾交通大学讲座教授。曾分别执教台湾大学、美国加州大学洛杉矶分校和柏克莱分校; 曾任美国阿肯色大学历史系教授兼亚洲研究中心主任, 为享誉国际的历史学者。1996年至1998年获沃尔顿基金 (Walton Family Grant) 以从事中国明代史研究工作。

中文著作有: 《西洋史学史》、《一个宦官的传奇经历: 郑和的一生》、《明代的女人》等; 英文著作有: The Eunuchs in the Ming Dynasty, China and the Overseas Chinese in the United States (1868-1911), The Chinese Experience in America, The Chinese in Arkansas等, 并以Perpetual Happiness: the Ming Emperor Yongle (《永乐大帝》) 获2001年亚太地区桐山奖 (Kiriya Pacific Rim Award)。

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标签

评论

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书评

前几天我对这本书评价有失偏颇，于是今天重写了这个评论

老实说，作者写的还是条理分明的。

燕王朱棣，我还是比较习惯称他为燕王，实话说他太幸运了，幸运的有点造化弄人的感觉。

燕王有个好父亲，有个好母亲，教导他成人，以至于他在成年后每每想起母亲的教导，都觉得受益匪浅...

“别做微不足道的事情，它们无法激起人们的热情”这句话大概是永乐的人生信念。这位皇帝的性格和后世的皇帝都不像，因为明清其他皇帝的政策取向几乎都是内向的，但永乐有太强的扩张性：漠北亲征，迁都北京，敕令远航，甚至暴虐的性格都是这种个性的反映。还有一事也让人印象...

先前看了黄仁宇的《万历十五年》，再看了这本《永乐大帝》。感觉研究明史的人怎么这么多。

第一章作者关于宫廷描述居多，看的有些不耐烦。后面几章就好多了。感觉和老黄的风格差不多，只是注释较少，没有老黄的严谨。

谈谈对永乐的个人看法。在高中历史中只读过：“明朝中国是...

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