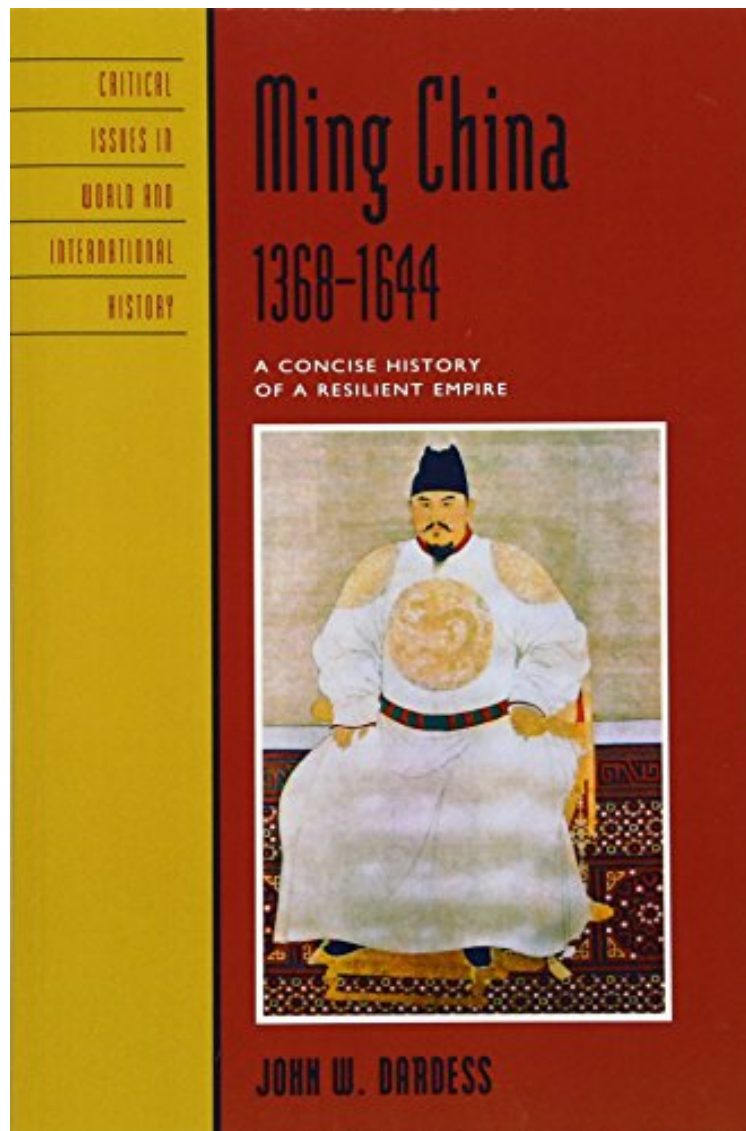


(Free) Ming China, 1368-1644: A Concise History of a Resilient Empire (Critical Issues in World and International History)

Ming China, 1368-1644: A Concise History of a Resilient Empire (Critical Issues in World and International History)

John W. Dardess

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John W. Dardess : Ming China, 1368-1644: A Concise History of a Resilient Empire (Critical Issues in World and International History) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Ming China, 1368-1644: A Concise History of a Resilient Empire (Critical Issues in World and International History):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Concise history is an accurate description. By Diane J. Rothery This gave me a better idea of who was who during the Ming era. It lays out the major players and identifies them, and it's a good starting tool for someone who knows nothing about China or the Ming era. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Not bad. I'd give it five stars except that I ... By Christian Cole Not bad. I'd give it five stars except that I think it could have delved into a broader treatment of society and Confucian values than it did. Otherwise, extremely insightful treatment of a period I have seen a lot of inferior work on. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Awkwardly organized, but a wealth of information. By Doc Peterson The Ming were a complex dynasty, difficult to write concisely about. Proudly ethnocentric, they sought to undo the policies of the Mongolian Yuan dynasty and "Sinicize" China after its conquest by its northern neighbors. Politically they began voyages of exploration generations before the Portuguese and Spanish; ironically the seeds of its economic destruction were planted by European silver, the result of their colonization of the New World. Intellectually, the Ming witnessed an explosion of literacy the likes of which China had not witnessed since the Tang Dynasty 400 years earlier. In spite of its accomplishments, the Ming only lasted 257 years - although many of its institutions would be continued by the Qing, begging the question why were the Ming ultimately unsuccessful? Dardess, professor emeritus from the University of Kansas, explores this question through five lenses, each increasingly smaller in scope: the frontiers (examining Ming foreign policy), emperors (providing a brief synopsis of the 16 Ming rulers), governance (specifically at the provincial level), literati (those among the educated classes who for whatever reason were either not admitted into the civil service, as well as anecdotes from the lower echelons of the government), and outlaws. The deductive organization of the book was a bit odd, having only a rudimentary understanding of the Ming. While taken as a whole, the direction and purpose eventually becomes clear (Dardess shows the interconnectedness of Ming policy from a macro-level to the micro, thereby highlighting both strengths as well as flaws), it required patience and trust to get there. I much would have preferred a more chronological approach in organization. In discussing the Ming, Dardess brings a wealth of information: in discussing governance, the literati and outlaws his history is rife with anecdotal examples from everyday Chinese to illustrate larger concepts - the competitiveness of the civil service, the role literacy played in the variety of writing that is such a part of Ming intellectual life (in terms of prose and poetry), the influence of Buddhism on both the civil service and the scholarly class - as in any good history, it gave a face to the time period. In answering the question, why were the Ming ultimately unsuccessful, Dardess is clear to point out that there was no singular cause - in fact, the final Ming emperors (Tianqi and Chongzhen) were capable and earnest rulers. Rather, Dardess argues, it was a perfect storm of large-scale internal rebellions, outside threats (from pirates on the East China sea as well as from the Manchurian Qing who would succeed them), ecological disasters and economic crises. The system of governance the Ming had in place was sound - the Qing largely maintained it in their ruling of China - the mechanisms, however, were ill-suited to face the scope and scale of challenges presented in the mid-17th century. Dardess' history is an excellent one - while organizationally a bit clunky, the details, writing and information are excellent and the narrative is easy to read. Recommended for anyone interested in a fascinating period in Chinese history.

This engaging, deeply informed book provides the first concise history of one of China's most important eras. Leading scholar John W. Dardess offers a thematically organized political, social, and economic exploration of China from 1368 to 1644. He examines how the Ming dynasty was able to endure for 276 years, illuminating Ming foreign relations and border control, the lives and careers of its sixteen emperors, its system of governance and the kinds of people who served it, its great class of literati, and finally the mass outlawry that, in unhappy conjunction with the Manchu invasions from outside, ended the once-mighty dynasty in the mid-seventeenth century. The Ming dynasty witnessed the beginning of China's contact with the West, and its story will fascinate all readers interested in global as well as Asian history.

Dardess's achievement is that he has condensed the whole story into a neat book under 150 pages long. . . . Dardess's focus on why the Ming dynasty endured, as opposed to why it failed, is both refreshing and necessary. . . . Ming China will inspire the student and challenge the specialist and is thus a very positive contribution. (Journal of Asian Studies) In this deft, elegant overview of the Ming Dynasty, Dardess (Univ. of Kansas), one of the most eminent living scholars of the period, effortlessly compresses over two and a half centuries of history into a mere 148 pages of text, including notes for further reading. Five chapters cover the Ming empire from its frontiers to its center, and from the apex of power down to the level of bandits and outlaws. Dardess argues that the dynasty was a powerful and enduring polity whose culture was shaped by the chronic steppe threat on its northern border and the efforts of the literati at the center of society to adapt to changing economic and political realities. . . . The single best introduction to the Ming Dynasty available. An excellent starting point for those interested in the period. Summing Up: Highly recommended. All levels/libraries. (CHOICE) An entirely original and fresh recounting of Ming history. The genius of the work is in its innovative organization, which economically structures the story into five lively chapters that build logically one upon the other to move vertically down the strata of Ming society while developing a chronological narrative within each chapter. This much-needed book will appeal both to general readers and to students of Chinese history and

culture. (Edward L. Farmer, University of Minnesota)About the AuthorJohn W. Dardess is professor emeritus of history at the University of Kansas.