

Last Eunuch Of China

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The Last Eunuch of China, Inside the World of the Eunuch, The Eunuchs in the Ming Dynasty, Eunuch and Emperor in the Great Age of Qing Rule, After Eunuchs, Hidden Power, Bandits, Eunuchs, and the Son of Heaven, When China Ruled the Seas, Celibate and Childless Men in Power, Celestial Women

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The history of Qing palace eunuchs is defined by a tension between the role eunuchs were meant to play and the life they intended to live. This study tells the story of how a complicated and much-maligned group of people struggled to insert a degree of agency into their lives. Rulers of the Qing dynasty were determined to ensure the eunuchs' subservience and to limit their influence by imposing a management style based upon strict rules, corporal punishment, and collective responsibility. Few eunuchs wielded significant political power or lived in a lavish style during the Qing dynasty. Emasculation and employment in the palace placed eunuchs at the center of the empire, yet also subjected them to servile status and marginalization by society. Seeking more control over their lives, eunuchs serving the Qing repeatedly tested the boundaries of subservience to the emperor and the imperial court. This portrait of eunuch society reveals that Qing palace eunuchs operated within two parallel realms, one revolving around the emperor and the court by day and another among the eunuchs themselves by night where they recreated the social bonds—through drinking, gambling, and opium smoking—denied them by their palace service. Far from being the ideal servants, eunuchs proved to be a constant source of anxiety and labor challenges for the Qing court. For a long time eunuchs have simply been cast as villains in Chinese history. Inside the World of the Eunuch goes beyond this misleadingly one-dimensional depiction to show how eunuchs actually lived during the Qing dynasty. "This book is a thorough and responsible account of eunuch life during the Qing dynasty, which takes us deep inside the Forbidden City and introduces the often underclass families who provided servants to the Qing monarchs." —R. Kent Guy, University of Washington "This is a unique study of Chinese eunuchs, in which Melissa Dale proves that they were a necessary and vital presence in the palace of the last dynasty in China. She explores all aspects of their life to the end of their existence, while avoiding the temptation to sensationalize them." —Keith McMahon, University of Kansas

This book is the first on Chinese eunuchs in English and presents a comprehensive picture of the role that they played in the Ming dynasty, 1368-1644. Extracted from a wide range of primary and secondary source material, the author provides significant and interesting information about court politics, espionage and internal security, military and foreign affairs, tax and tribute collection, the operation of imperial monopolies, judiciary review, the layout of the palace complex, the Grand Canal, and much more. The eunuchs are shown to be not just a minor adjunct to a government of civil servants and military officers, but a fully developed third branch of the Ming administration that participated in all of the most essential matters of the dynasty. The veil of condemnation and jealousy imposed on eunuchs by the compilers of official history is pulled away to reveal a richly textured tapestry. Eunuchs are portrayed in a balanced manner that gives due consideration to able and faithful service along with the inept, the lurid, and the iniquitous.

Eunuch and Emperor in the Great Age of Qing Rule offers a new interpretation of eunuchs and their connection to imperial rule in the first century and a half of the Qing dynasty (1644-1800). This period encompassed the reigns of three of China's most important emperors, men who were deeply affected by the great eunuch corruption of the fallen Ming dynasty. In this groundbreaking and deeply researched book, the author explores how Qing emperors sought to prevent a return of the harmful excesses of eunuchs and how eunuchs flourished in the face of the restrictions imposed upon them. We meet powerful eunuchs who faithfully served, and in some cases ultimately betrayed, their emperors. We also meet ordinary eunuchs whose lives, punctuated by dramas large and small, provide a fascinating perspective on the Qing palace world.

For much of Chinese history, the eunuch stood out as an exceptional figure at the margins of gender categories. Amid the disintegration of the Qing Empire, men and women in China began to understand their differences in the language of modern science. In *After Eunuchs*, Howard Chiang traces the genealogy of sexual knowledge from the demise of eunuchism to the emergence of transsexuality, showing the centrality of new epistemic structures to the formation of Chinese modernity. From anticastration discourses in the late Qing era to sex-reassignment surgeries in Taiwan in the 1950s and queer movements in the 1980s and 1990s, *After Eunuchs* explores the ways the introduction of Western biomedical sciences transformed normative meanings of gender, sexuality, and the body in China. Chiang investigates how competing definitions of sex

circulated in science, medicine, vernacular culture, and the periodical press, bringing to light a rich and vibrant discourse of sex change in the first half of the twentieth century. He focuses on the stories of gender and sexual minorities as well as a large supporting cast of doctors, scientists, philosophers, educators, reformers, journalists, and tabloid writers, as they debated the questions of political sovereignty, national belonging, cultural authenticity, scientific modernity, human difference, and the power and authority of truths about sex. Theoretically sophisticated and far-reaching, *After Eunuchs* is an innovative contribution to the history and philosophy of science and queer and Sinophone studies.

Portrays the history of the Imperial Chinese court, tracing the origins of the eunuchs during the Shang and Chou dynasties, their rise to power and influence, and eventual collapse of the system

To understand how this extraordinary meeting came about requires a consideration of the economy of violence during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Here, for the first time in any language, is a detailed look at the role of illicit violence during the Ming."

One hundred years before Columbus and his fellow Europeans began their voyages of discovery, fleets of giant junks commanded by the eunuch admiral Zheng He and filled with the empire's finest porcelains, lacquerware, and silk ventured to the world's "four corners." Seven epic expeditions brought China's treasure ships across the China Seas and Indian Ocean, from Japan to the spice island of Indonesia and the Malabar Coast of India, on to the rich ports of the Persian Gulf and down the East African coast, to China's "El Dorado," and perhaps even to Australia, three hundred years before Captain Cook's landing. It was a time of exploration and expansion, but it ended in a retrenchment so complete that less than a century later, it was a crime to go to sea in a multimasted ship. In *When China Ruled the Seas*, Louise Levathes takes a fascinating and unprecedented look at this dynamic period in China's enigmatic history, focusing on the country's rise as a naval power that briefly brought half the world under its nominal authority. Drawing on eyewitness accounts, official Ming histories, and African, Arab, and Indian sources, many translated for the first time, Levathes brings readers inside China's most illustrious scientific and technological era. She sheds new light on the historical and cultural context in which this great civilization thrived, as well as the perception of China by other contemporary cultures. Beautifully illustrated and engagingly written, *When China Ruled the Seas* is the fullest picture yet of the early Ming dynasty—the last flowering of Chinese culture before the Manchu invasion.

This book explores a striking common feature of pre-modern ruling systems on a global scale: the participation of childless and celibate men as integral parts of the elites. In bringing court eunuchs and bishops together, this collection shows that the integration of men who were normatively or physically excluded from biological fatherhood offered pre-modern dynasties the potential to use different reproduction patterns. The shared focus on ruling eunuchs and bishops also reveals that these men had a specific position at the intersection of four fields: power, social dynamics, sacredness and gender/masculinities. The thirteen chapters present case studies on clerics in Medieval Europe and court eunuchs in the Middle East, Byzantium, India and China. They analyze how these men in their different frameworks acted as politicians, participated in social networks, provided religious authority, and discuss their masculinities. Taken together, this collection sheds light on the political arena before the modern nation-state excluded these unmarried men from the circles of political power.

This volume completes McMahon's acclaimed history of imperial wives and royal polygamy in China. Avoiding the stereotype of empresses and imperial concubines as mere victims or playthings, this book considers them as full-fledged participants in palace life, whether as mothers, wives, or go-betweens in the emperor's relations with others.

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