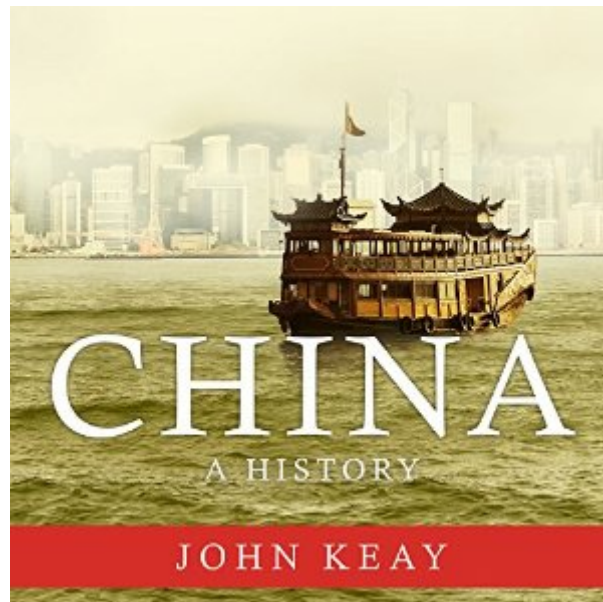


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# China: A History



## Synopsis

Many nations define themselves in terms of territory or people; China defines itself in terms of history. Taking into account the country's unrivaled, voluminous tradition of history writing, John Keay has composed a vital and illuminating overview of the nation's complex and vivid past. Keay's authoritative history examines 5,000 years in China, from the time of the Three Dynasties through Chairman Mao and the current economic transformation of the country. Crisp, judicious, and engaging, China is the classic single-volume history for anyone seeking to understand the present and future of this immensely powerful nation.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Firstly, the author should be commended for even attempting to condense such a vast and complex subject as the history of China into a single volume. On the whole, it is an accessible account which will give an introductory understanding of many parts of China's history. However, the book gives the impression that the supporting research was done in a great hurry, and contains errors, inconsistencies, and a number of sensational conclusions, some of which are not supported by sufficient evidence. It was therefore little wonder to me when I learned that the author is, in fact, a journalist and not a historian. It seems as though the author has attempted to make some attention-grabbing statements in a clumsy attempt to turn Chinese history on its head. I will give just three examples of the kind of sloppiness that I have referred to. 1) One theory, which is entirely undeveloped apart from a small amount of hypothesising on the part of the author, is that the Great Wall did not prevent northern tribes from entering China and was never designed for this purpose. In stating this, the author appears unaware of the extraordinary career and accomplishments of Qi

Ji Guang, perhaps China's greatest military leader of the Ming (or any other) period. He built, and successfully defended the Great Wall against all comers.

D.K. Whitsell Temple University Japan B.A. East Asian Studies UM Asia I've spent more than my fair share of time pouring over texts on China for both academic and professional purposes in the East Asian studies field. I understand that an attempt to condense the vast intricacies of Chinese history and culture into a comprehensive book is no easy task, and many of us are still waiting for the day a hallmark, standard text will come to light that leaves no questions to the reader. But from the moment I cracked open this book, which was bought more or less as one more supplementary text to add to my collection on history, I was completely lost. An author cannot hold the hand of a reader, but when we're talking about thousands of years of history, there needs to be a standard breakdown of individual periods on a timeline. What I found just perusing the first chapter was nothing more than a few significant names and dates here and there, followed by offhand tangents on completely unrelated subject matter. The first chapter alone attempts to cram three dynasties, archaeological findings, writing systems, family structures, and more, all within only 25 pages. With as much jumping around as this book does, I would be impressed if a reader who had finished the first few chapters of the book would even be able to list the first five major dynasties in order, and maybe a few facts that actually distinguish each dynasty from the next. The author likes to use catchy quip titles to chapters, such as "Rites to Writing," "Within and Beyond," and "Caving In," but these chapter headings mean nothing to a reader who is not familiar with a broken down timeline of Chinese history.

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