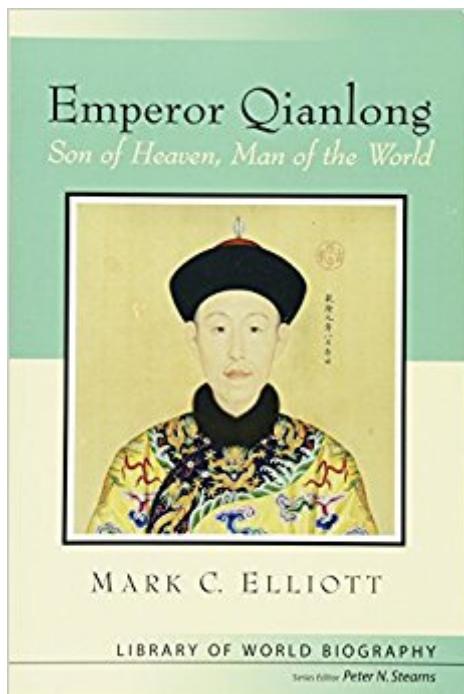


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Emperor Qianlong: Son Of Heaven, Man Of The World



Synopsis

This new entry in the Longman Library of World Biography series offers an intimate and provocative account of the Manchu emperor Qianlong (1711-1799), one of the world's great empire-builders, who helped build the foundation of the modern Chinese nation. During the 64 years of Qianlong's rule, China's population more than doubled, its territory increased by one-third, its cities flourished, and its manufactures — tea, silk, porcelain — were principal items of international commerce. Based on original Chinese and Manchu-language sources, and drawing on the latest scholarship, this is the biography of the man who, in presiding over imperial China's last golden epoch, created the geographic and demographic framework of modern China. This accessible account describes the personal struggles and public drama surrounding one of the major political figures of the early modern age, with special consideration given to the emperor's efforts to rise above ethnic divisions and to encompass the political and religious traditions of Han Chinese, Mongols, Tibetans, Turks, and other peoples of his realm. In addition to becoming familiar with one of the most remarkable figures in world history, readers will find that learning about Emperor Qianlong will add greatly to their appreciation of China's place in the world of the eighteenth century and will deepen their understanding of China's place in the world today.

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Customer Reviews

Wall Street Journal review - June 19, 2009

This new entry in the Longman Library of World Biography series offers an intimate and provocative account of the Manchu emperor Qianlong (1711-1799), one of the world's great empire-builders, who helped build the foundation of the modern Chinese nation. During the 64 years of Qianlong's rule, China's population more than doubled, its territory increased by one-third, its cities flourished, and its manufactures - tea, silk, porcelain - were principal items of international commerce. Based on original Chinese and Manchu-language sources, and drawing on the latest scholarship, this is the biography of the man who, in presiding over imperial China's last golden epoch, created the geographic and demographic framework of modern China. This accessible account describes the personal struggles and public drama surrounding one of the major political figures of the early modern age, with special consideration given to the emperor's efforts to rise above ethnic divisions and to encompass the political and religious traditions of Han Chinese, Mongols, Tibetans, Turks, and other peoples of his realm. In addition to becoming familiar with one of the most remarkable figures in world history, readers will find that learning about Emperor Qianlong will add greatly to their appreciation of China's place in the world of the eighteenth century and will deepen their understanding of China's place in the world today.

This book is at best a good introduction to the Qianlong emperor's reign. Whole books have been written about several aspects of the reign. The author himself mentions Perdue's book on the Qing conquest of central Asia (which I've bought but not had time to read). Alan Peyrifitte has written The Immobile Empire about the MacCartney mission (which I did read and heartily recommend). This book includes many paintings by Catiglione who's another topic in his own right. So, as I said, it's at best a good introduction to the period. But it does do that very well and even includes very topical information. By far the most moving aspect of the book was the portrayal of the emperor's personal life, such as his lifelong grief over the death of his first wife, or his doting on his last daughter. It shows yet again that these people were indeed people with loves and losses of their own.

This biography of the QianLong Emperor of the Ching Dynasty includes both personal and political information of this very long and important reign. Well written and dramatic description reveal a political social system running at its best to produce a rich, cultivated society providing satisfactory outlets for the energy of most of its peoples. Managing this diverse structure took constant effort and clear judgements which the Qianlong Emperor provided most of the time. The traditional authoritarian Chinese outlook and the fear that different ideas and methods would prove upsetting to

a rather smoothly running society inhibited decision making so that the seeds of possible long term disruption were present. But those problems the emperor left to the future.

This book by Mark Elliot is excellent as it offers an unbiased panorama of the world in which the Qianlong emperor lived. It sets the emperor's thoughts and behavior into the context of this panorama. What I find especially notable is the fact that Mark Elliott doesn't fall into the eurocentristic trap as so many other sinologists do. His language is clear and direct and is thus also easily understandable for non-sinologists.

A great resource on both the Qing Dynasty and a lesser-known but fascinating political figure in Chinese history. The book was well-organized, read with ease and occasional humor, and had a helpful summary and index of important terms. All in all a great text for reference or casual reading.

I Enjoyed my class because of this excellently written book.

Book about a Chinese emperor who was not Chinese. A good look at how Qing rulers attempted to maintain their Manchu identity while embracing the Chinese ideology.

A very good book, fleshed out with loads of interesting detail and broad context which helps to put things in perspective, especially against major events in western history. I also like the fact that it is well organized, so it can serve as a quick reference book as well as a relaxing and engaging read. Not a mean feat for what some may consider to be a dry subject.

This is a useful, concise book on the great Qianlong emperor. To some extent a summary of what is now a considerable secondary literature on Qianlong and the Qing Empire, this book provides a very nice perspective on the Qing achievement and the crucial role of the Emperor. This is also a nicely produced book. Elliott is a good writer and there are some good illustrations, particularly the series of images of Qianlong, some of them produced by the talented Jesuit artist Castiglione. Qianlong's long reign encompasses the peak of the Qing state and an initial period of decline. While focused on Qianlong, Elliott discusses important aspects of Qing history; the nature and role of Manchu bannermen, the complex nature of legitimacy on the Qing court; the polyethnic nature of the Empire, the Emperor's relationship to the bureaucracy, the expansion of the Qing state, what might be called foreign policy - though this is somewhat anachronistic, and the challenges faced by the Imperial

Court towards the end of the 18th century. Elliott also gives a good sense of Qianlong's personality and commitment to rule. One of a series of very competent Qing rulers, Qianlong was an intelligent and conscientious monarch who succeeded in fulfilling many of the aspects of his roles as Confucian emperor and Manchu khan. Elliott also shows how the final couple of decades of Qianlong's rule reveal his personal weaknesses and some intrinsic limitations of the Qing state. Stressed by major population growth and ecological limitations, and a deliberate policy of limiting taxation and the size of the bureaucracy, the Qing state experienced a series of major problems in the final decades of Qianlong's life. In this setting, Qianlong's misjudgements and declining ability to manage the top of the imperial bureaucracy considerably magnified the problems of the Qing state.

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