

HIEA 164/264: LATE IMPERIAL CHINESE CULTURE AND SOCIETY:

THE MING DYNASTY (1368-1644)

M 1-3:50

HSS 3086

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The Ming dynasty coincides with what is called “early modern” Europe, encompassing the Renaissance, the age of discovery, the Reformation, and the beginnings of the Enlightenment. For a long time, the Ming was seen mainly as the reverse of a changing, dynamic, outward-looking Europe. It was seen as the high point of Chinese autocracy, an inward-looking age of intellectual and technological stagnation. But recently, scholars have complicated this vision of the Ming. We will read engaging scholarship on the period, in conjunction with primary sources the author used, so that we can think about how historians come up with questions and how they answer them. Class work includes discussion, weekly e-posts, and a final essay exploring a primary source of your choice (in translation).

Readings: (Most are in the campus bookstore; one* I will sell you directly.)

The readings are also on reserve in the library, except for the coursepack, but I recommend that you purchase them, because you will need to bring them into class.

Coursepack available from University Readers.

Sarah Schneewind, *A Tale of Two Melons: Emperor and Subject in Ming China*

Shih-shan Henry Tsai, *Perpetual Happiness: The Ming Emperor Yongle*

David Robinson, *Bandits, Eunuchs and the Son of Heaven*

*Kenneth Hammond, guest editor, *Ming Studies* 53: Special issue on Wang Shizhen

Craig Clunas, *Empire of Great Brightness*, U of Hawaii, Honolulu, 2007

Gordon Harvey, *Writing with Sources: A Guide for Students*

Optional: Ming section of F. W. Mote, *Imperial China, 900-1800*

Requirements:

- Attendance and active, informed class participation, 30%.
- Weekly e-post (one paragraph) after class discussion, by 10 pm Tuesday, 20%
- Final paper, 15 – 20 pages, and assignments leading up to it, 50%
- Check WebCT frequently.
- Let me know *immediately* about any problems with the readings, attendance, etc.

Discussion:

Read the assignment with care, take notes, and bring the reading and notes to class. Your notes will vary depending on the reading. As a general guideline, for primary sources you should note the meaning of the source and the questions it raises line by line: read the primary sources intensively. For secondary sources your notes should include 1. the main points the author is making 2. how the author uses primary sources and 3. questions

the readings raise for you and points of particular interest to you. You can also note connections from one reading to the next. Bring written preliminary answers to these questions to class; but I will not collect them unless it seems necessary.

E-posts:

The postings follow up on class discussion. Post one paragraph on what you learned from discussion, what questions were not answered, further thoughts you have on topics discussed, etc. Post on time (I will read the posts all together on Wednesday mornings) and show that you have thought further about it our discussion of the reading, especially in connection with earlier class material. If another student has already said what you wanted to say, respond to or extend his or her comment. If you post early, join in again at the end to read what everyone else said.

WebCT:

WebCT will have the discussion on it, but also a list of primary sources to choose among (or you can find others), and sometimes I will post additional guides to the week's reading or other materials. Check in frequently, and certainly before you start doing the week's reading. Class announcements will be posted here too.

Final paper:

Select (in consultation with me) a primary source or two from the Ming period, in translation. You will do an intensive reading of your text, getting as much as possible out of it, and will research in reference and secondary materials the specific questions that the source raises (who are the people involved, what are the events referred to, etc.) in order to contextualize and explicate the text. There will be lead-up assignments and you will meet with me. More details will be on WebCT. We may discuss the papers in class, each person saying a bit about his or hers, at some point.

**** The syllabus is subject to change.****

Course Schedule:

Always bring the week's readings to class, and the previous week's if related.

Week One (Jan. 5): Introduction

Zhu Yuanzhang, "In Praise of Auspicious Melons" (handout)

Week Two (Jan. 12): A Story, and an Overview of Ming Society

Sarah Schneewind, *A Tale of Two Melons: Emperor and Subject in Ming China*

Patricia Ebrey, *China: A Social, Cultural, and Political History*, pp. 158-190 (coursepack)

Optional: Mote, chapters 21-22

We will meet in the Geisel library.

→ Consider what primary source you might be interested in, via list and library.

Week Three (Jan 19): University Holiday.

Choose your primary source. You may read ahead in Mote, but not in the other books.

Week Four (Jan. 26): The Yongle Reign – Primary Sources
Zhu Yuanzhang, “The August Ming Ancestral Instruction” (coursepack)
Empress Xu, “Instructions for the Inner Quarters” (coursepack)
→ You should have selected your primary source for the final essay by now.

Week Five (Feb 2): The Yongle Reign – Secondary Source
Shih-shan Henry Tsai, *Perpetual Happiness: The Ming Emperor Yongle*
Optional: Mote, chapters 23-24
→ One paragraph description of final paper primary sources due.

Week Six (Feb 9): Mid-Ming Banditry and Rebellion – Primary Source
“A Record of Example to Those Who Follow” (coursepack)
Gordon Harvey, *Writing With Sources*

Week Seven (Feb 16): Mid-Ming Banditry and Rebellion – Secondary Source
David Robinson, *Bandits, Eunuchs and the Son of Heaven*
Yang Jisheng, “Final Instructions” (coursepack)
Optional: Mote, chapter 25
→ Outline or preparatory material for final paper due.

Week Eight (Feb. 23): Four Views of Wang Shizhen
Ming Studies 53, first 3 articles
Ann Waltner, “T’an-yang-tzu and Wang Shih-chen: Visionary and Bureaucrat in the Late Ming,” *Late Imperial China* 8.1 (1987): 105-133 (coursepack)
Optional: Mote, chapters 26-28

Week Nine (March 2): Nature and the Supernatural
Feng Menglong, ed., “Ren the Filial Son Becomes a God,” (coursepack)
Mark Elvin, “Science and Superfauna,” (coursepack)
Additional materials on filial piety (4 p. handout)
Optional: Mote, chapters 29-30
Bring Clunas, *Empire of Great Brightness* to class.
→ Rough draft of final paper due.

Week Ten (March 9): Material Culture
Craig Clunas, *Empire of Great Brightness*

→ Final paper due March 19th. Hand in your paragraph, rough draft, etc. with the final version.