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In the Shadow of the Mongol Empire

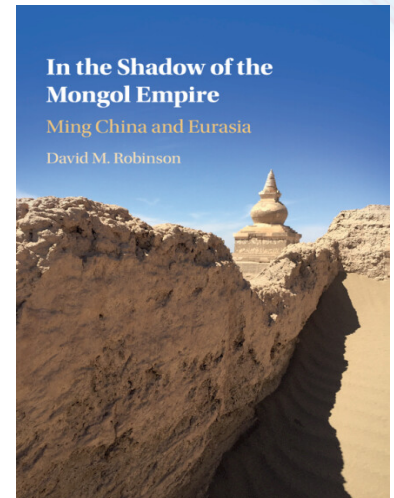
Ming China and Eurasia

David M. Robinson

Colgate University, New York

During the thirteenth century, the Mongols created the greatest empire in human history. Genghis Khan and his successors brought death and destruction to Eurasia. They obliterated infrastructure, devastated cities, and exterminated peoples. They also created courts in China, Persia, and southern Russia, famed throughout the world as centers of wealth, learning, power, religion, and lavish spectacle. The great Mongol houses established standards by which future rulers in Eurasia would measure themselves for centuries. In this ambitious study, David M. Robinson traces how in the late fourteenth century the newly established Ming dynasty (1368–1644) in China crafted a narrative of the fallen Mongol empire. To shape the perceptions and actions of audiences at home and abroad, the Ming court tailored its narrative of the Mongols to prove that it was the rightful successor to the Mongol empire. This is a story of how politicians exploit historical memory for their own gain.

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'By concentrating on the ambivalence and uncertainty with which the early Ming viewed their mighty Mongol predecessors, David M. Robinson provides a new and richly-nuanced history which moves well beyond centuries-old stereotypes. This is a major contribution to the history of Eurasia, the implications of which should change our view of imperial China's place in the world.'

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