



# A History of East Asia: From the Origins of Civilization to the Twenty-First Century

By Charles Holcombe

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Charles Holcombe begins his extraordinarily ambitious book by asking the question "What is East Asia?" In the modern age, many of the features that made the region - now defined as including China, Japan, and Korea - distinct have been submerged by the effects of revolution, politics, or globalization. Yet, as an ancient civilization, the region had both an historical and cultural coherence. It shared, for example, a Confucian heritage, some common approaches to Buddhism, a writing system that is deeply imbued with ideas and meaning, and many political and institutional traditions. This shared past and the interconnections among three distinct, yet related societies are at the heart of this book, which traces the story of East Asia from the dawn of history to the early twenty-first century. Charles Holcombe is an experienced and sure-footed guide who encapsulates, in a fast-moving and colorful narrative, the vicissitudes and glories of one of the greatest civilizations on earth.

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"For general readers and interested students alike, this book will be a delight. Holcombe has a good eye and ear for what is historically important, and his coherent narrative thread connects the chapters of his book like the beads of a necklace" - David Curtis Wright, Department of History, University of Calgary

"Holcombe's book is going to be a very important text for undergraduates and general readers looking for a fresh approach to East Asian history. He takes the reader through all the requisite periods and places, yet does so in ways which bring out new insights and connections. Holcombe engages with important themes in current scholarship and shows how they are really relevant to better understanding the complex and diverse history of this critical region. His approach to synchronous developments across China, Korea and Japan, and the ways in which the historical narratives of these countries interact with each other, make this a most useful and enlightening book." - Ken Hammond, Professor of East Asian History, New Mexico State University

"Treading a line between the emerging field of transnational history and a more traditional regional history, Holcombe has written a valuable and impressive guide to the histories of East Asia. The historical and regional scope, reaching from the ancient past to the ultra-modern present, is unprecedented in a volume of this size. Students of East Asia and of international history will find this book essential reading." - Chris Goto-Jones, Professor and Director of the Modern East Asia Research Centre, Leiden University

#### **About the Author**

Charles Holcombe is Professor of History at the University of Northern Iowa. His publications include *The Genesis of East Asia, 221 B.C.-A.D. 907* (2001) and *In the Shadow of the Han: Literati Thought and Society at the Start of the Southern Dynasties* (1994).

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