



## Early China: A Social and Cultural History (New Approaches to Asian History)

*By Li Feng*

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### **Early China: A Social and Cultural History (New Approaches to Asian History)** By Li Feng

'Early China' refers to the period from the beginning of human history in China to the end of the Han Dynasty in AD 220. The roots of modern Chinese society and culture are all to be found in this formative period of Chinese civilization. Li Feng's new critical interpretation draws on the most recent scholarship and archaeological discoveries from the past thirty years. This fluent and engaging overview of early Chinese civilization explores key topics including the origins of the written language, the rise of the state, the Shang and Zhou religions, bureaucracy, law and governance, the evolving nature of war, the creation of empire, the changing image of art, and the philosophical search for social order. Beautifully illustrated with a wide range of new images, this book is essential reading for all those wanting to know more about the foundations of Chinese history and civilization.

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#### **Review**

"Li Feng has delivered a highly competent and accessible account of the social, political, and institutional history of early China. The text incorporates the most current state of scholarship in a rapidly developing field and deserves particular praise for its expert inclusion of archaeological evidence. The book will be welcomed by non-specialists and specialists alike."

Roel Sterckx, University of Cambridge

"As Professor Li acknowledges, it is daring for a single scholar to attempt a coherent account of the history of early China over the truly longue durée. The task demands a staggering command of the textual sources and archaeology of two millennia, before one even contemplates the writing of a synthetic account of a vast sweep of social and cultural history. The simple fact is that there is no historian writing in English who can match Professor Li's magisterial command and historical insight, and this account is sorely needed. Early China is a great achievement!"

David Pankenier, Lehigh University

"An extremely useful overview. It provides undergraduates in particular with a comprehensive, competently written and digestible one-volume introduction to the study of early China, while also offering scholars in the field a sense of where early China studies as a whole are heading at the present moment."

Oliver Weingarten, Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies

#### **About the Author**

Li Feng is Professor of Early Chinese History and Archaeology at Columbia University. Both a historian and an archaeologist, his research interests extend from bronze inscriptions and Western Zhou history to broader issues such as the nature of early states, bureaucracy, comparative literacy, cross-region cultural relations and theories of social development. He is also an active archaeologist with extensive fieldwork experience in China and Japan. Li's published English books include *Landscape and Power in Early China: The Crisis and Fall of the Western Zhou, 1045-771 BC* (2006), *Bureaucracy and the State in Early China: Governing the Western Zhou* (2008) and *Writing and Literacy in Early China: Studies from the Columbia Early China Seminar* (co-editor, 2011).

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