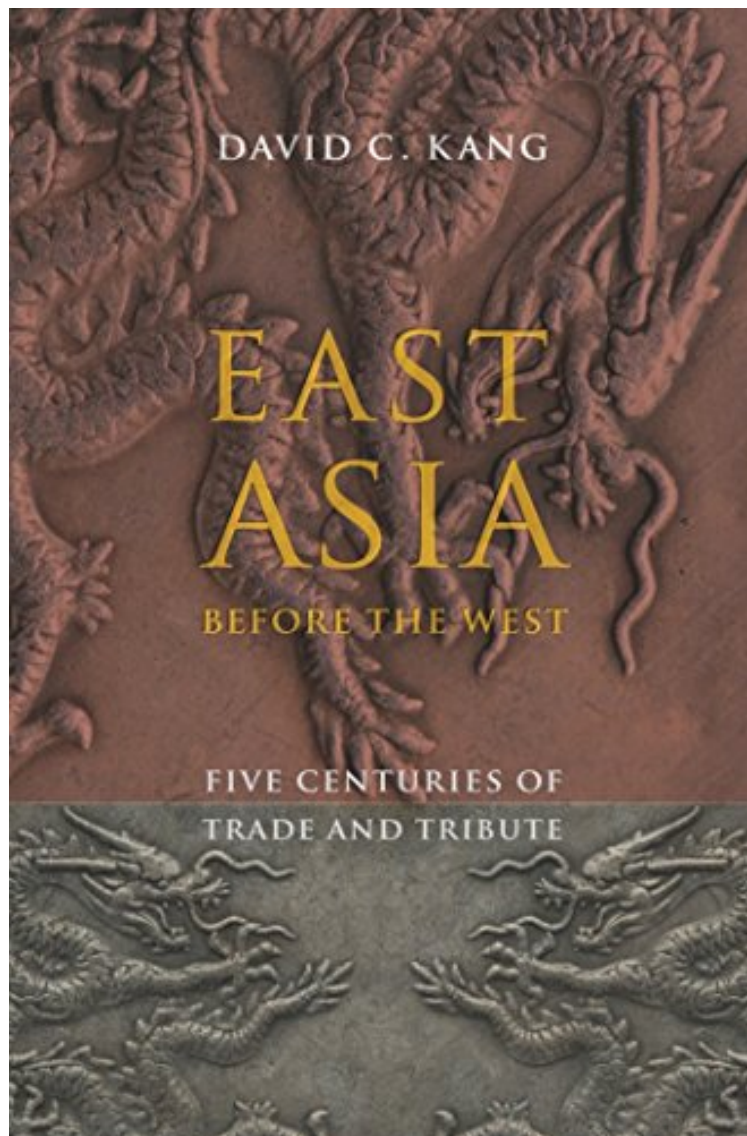


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## East Asia Before the West: Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute (Contemporary Asia in the World)

*David Kang, David C. Kang*

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**David Kang, David C. Kang : East Asia Before the West: Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute (Contemporary Asia in the World)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised East Asia Before the West: Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute (Contemporary Asia in the World):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. IntriguingBy Akhilesh PillalamarriThis is certainly an interesting and informative work. The thesis, which focuses on the historical tendency of an East Asia with a strong China to lean

towards hegemonic peace is interesting and worth serious consideration though the jury is out on how accurate it is. More than this, Kang is right to challenge the Eurocentric bias towards theories of International Relations, which is largely built on European/Western cases. The book is also interesting as history, especially the conceptualization and formation of states in East Asia, their trade patterns and the differences between states and the tribal/nomadic groups that bordered East Asia. I felt his explanation could have been stronger with regards to this last count and he could have given a more full description of these nomadic entities. The differences between the Ming and Qing could have been highlighted more. Finally, more attention could have been given to the states of Southeast Asia, their role in the East Asian system, and the nature of those states. All in all, this was a strong book nonetheless though it could have added a few things.

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating information but the writing could be better. By sequoiamv This is a subject matter I'm fascinated about, so he couldn't go wrong informing me of the historical facts. My only issue is with his writing style - he repeats himself over and over again. He'll write a sentence saying the same thing two or five paragraphs down the line, after which you just want to slap him and go, "you've already said that!". The writing can also get a little long-winded, but I suppose that's a common feature of books written by academics.

As an avid history buff, the story he tells is interesting. I only had a vague understanding of inter-Asian relationships of the past, so I can say I'm a little bit more educated about the matter now. He focuses primarily on the three sinicized societies (Korea, Vietnam and Japan) plus China itself, which helps make it succinct. It's also mainly about Chinese relations with the other three, which I suppose makes sense since East Asia back then pretty much revolved around it. He gets a little bit into the Korean-Japanese dynamic, though I would've liked more. More in-depth info on the interactions between the non-China three would've been nice, especially Vietnam's discourse with Japan and Korea.

All in all I would recommend it, and it's also comparatively short and makes for a quick read.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An outstanding narrative on 6 centuries of East Asian history ... By Nelson DerAn outstanding narrative on 6 centuries of East Asian history that Viet-Nam, China, Korea, and Japan fought only 2 wars among themselves. In comparison, the author mentioned numerous conflicts in Europe among the various states. Even in our American century (20th), we seen American blood spilled in the Philippines, WWII in the Pacific, Korea, and Viet-Nam.

From the founding of the Ming dynasty in 1368 to the start of the Opium Wars in 1841, China has engaged in only two large-scale conflicts with its principal neighbors: Korea, Vietnam, and Japan. These four territorial and centralized states have otherwise fostered peaceful and long-lasting relationships with one another, and as each has grown more powerful, the atmosphere around them has stabilized. Focusing on the role of the "tribute system" in maintaining stability in East Asia and in fostering diplomatic and commercial exchange, Kang contrasts this history against the example of Europe and East Asian states' skirmishes with nomadic peoples to the north and west. Although China has been the unquestioned hegemon in the region, with other political units considered second, the tributary order has entailed military, cultural, and economic dimensions that have afforded its participants immense latitude. Europe's "Westphalian" system, on the other hand, has pursued formal equality among states and has balanced power politics, leading to incessant interstate conflict. Scholars tend to view Europe's experience as universal, but Kang upends this tradition, emphasizing East Asia's formal hierarchy as an international system with its own history and character. This approach not only recasts our understanding of East Asian relations but also defines a model that applies to other hegemonies outside the European order.