



The Great Wall: China Against the World, 1000 BC - AD 2000

Julia Lovell

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Legendarily 2,200 years old and 4,300 miles long, the Great Wall of China seems to make an overwhelmingly confident physical statement about the country it spans: about China's age-old sense of itself being an advanced civilization anxious to draw a clear line between itself and the "barbarians" at its borders. But behind the wall's intimidating exterior—and the myths that have built up around it—is a complex history that has both defined and undermined China. Author Julia Lovell has written a new and important history of the Great Wall that guides the reader through the conquests and cataclysms of the Chinese empire, from the second millennium BC to the present day.

In recent years, the Wall has become an ever more potent symbol of Chinese nationalism, of a determination to resist foreign domination. But how successful was the Wall in reality, and what was its real purpose? Was it a precursor, albeit on a huge scale, of the Berlin Wall—a barrier designed to keep its population in as much as undesirables out? Lovell looks behind the modern mythology of the Great Wall, uncovering a three-thousand-year history far more fragmented and less illustrious than its crowds of visitors imagine today. The story of the Wall winds through that of the Chinese state and the frontier policy that defined it, through the lives of the millions of individuals who supported, criticized, built, and attacked it.

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