



The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China

Mark C. Elliott

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In 1644, the Manchus, a relatively unknown people inhabiting China's rude northeastern frontier, overthrew the Ming, Asia's mightiest rulers, and established the Qing dynasty, which endured to 1912. From this event arises one of Chinese history's great conundrums: how did a barely literate alien people manage to remain in power for nearly 300 years over a highly cultured population that was vastly superior in number? This problem has fascinated scholars for almost a century, but until now no one has approached the question from the Manchu point of view. This book, the first in any language to be based mainly on Manchu documents, supplies a radically new perspective on the formative period of the modern Chinese nation. Drawing on recent critical notions of ethnicity, the author explores the evolution of the Eight Banners, a unique Manchu system of social and military organization that was instrumental in the conquest of the Ming.

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