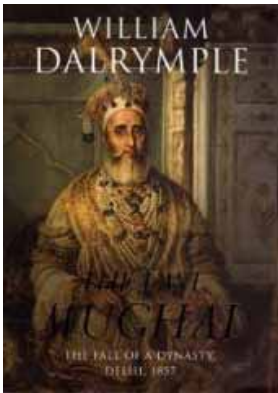


## BOOKS THAT BECKON

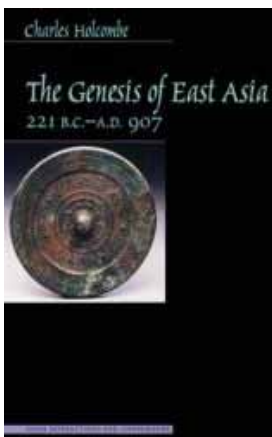
We are proud to introduce this new section to the *ASIANetwork Exchange*, whereby we solicit the opinions of renowned Asian Studies scholars who have been associated with the Network, and invite them to comment upon recent books of note that have made a lasting impression. The eclectic nature of this list is representative of the diversity of interests among members of the ASIANetwork, and it is our hope that in future issues, even more regions and disciplines will be covered.

Dalrymple, William, *White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth-Century India*, New York, Penguin Press, 2004.



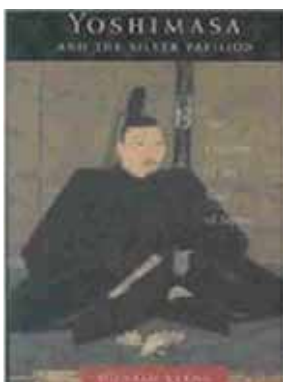
Dalrymple, William, *The Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty: Delhi, 1857*, New York, Knopf Press, 2007.

**Barbara Metcalf, University of Michigan:** Two great recent reads in the India field are by William Dalrymple, *White Mughals* and *The Last Mughal: The Eclipse of a Dynasty, Delhi 1857*. These are big, absorbing books by a master writer who bases his work on substantial scholarship. He finds an angle in each that links the past to the present. In the first, he focuses on a somewhat romanticized 18th and early 19th century world of Englishmen in India who became part of the local elite culture, not least in their marriages and liaisons with local women. Dalrymple imagines a world beyond any “clash of civilization,” of cultural and racial fluidity. In the second book, he evokes cultural pluralism again, this time in the context of a great Muslim dynasty. His nostalgia in this case is focused on a time before the expression of British racism on the one side and what he takes to be Muslim “fundamentalism” on the other that ensues in the wake of the cataclysmic 1857 revolt. Although written for a popular audience, these are serious books that raise big, stimulating questions.



Holcombe, Charles, *The Genesis of East Asia, 221 BC – AD 907*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 2001.

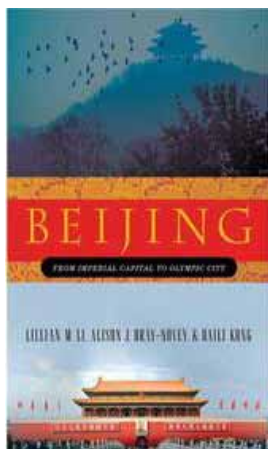
**Roberta Martin, Columbia University:** I would highly recommend Charles Holcombe’s *The Genesis of East Asia, 221 BC – AD 907* published by the University of Hawaii in conjunction with AAS. Although the title suggests this is ancient history, it could not be more pertinent to an understanding of “East Asia” today. Holcombe provides new perspectives on the history and evolution of China, as well as on the histories of Vietnam, Korea, and Japan. Since many AN members may teach an introduction to Asian history and/or provide the Asian expertise for a course in world history, they would find much in Holcombe to interest their students. I highly recommend it.



Keene, Donald, *Yoshimasa and the Silver Pavilion: The Creation of the Soul of Japan*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2003.

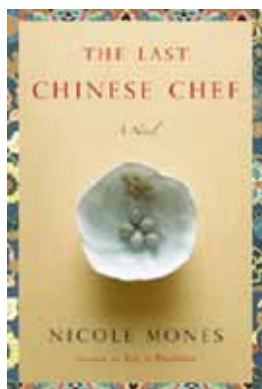
Keene, Donald, *Frog in the Well: Portraits of Japan by Watanabe Kazan, 1793-1841*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2006.

**Lucien Ellington, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga:** I really enjoyed two of Donald Keene’s more recent works on Japan: *Yoshimasa and the Silver Pavilion: The Creation of the Soul of Japan* and *Frog in the Well: Portraits of Japan by Watanabe Kazan: 1793-1841*. I thought both were really readable cultural histories that helped me better understand two interesting people and learn more about the historical eras in which they lived.



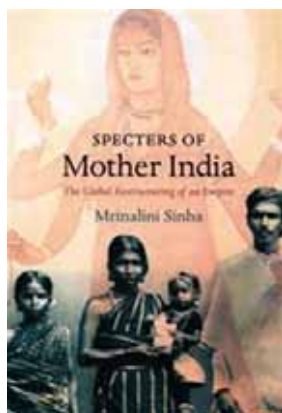
Li, Lillian M., Alison Dray-Novey, and Haili Kong, *Beijing: From Imperial Capital to Olympic City*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

**Suzanne Barnett, University of Puget Sound:** This is a very intelligent entrée to the city through time and up to the present. It is decidedly *not* a trendy book for tourists, even as it provides a way for thoughtful tourists and others to understand the city in its heritage and its parts. The authors have been on site and have had this book in play for many years, capturing the experiences of *hutong* and more whenever they could. Take one look at the bibliography to get an immediate sense of the depth of this book, even as it remains very accessibly written and presented. It could be a good starting place for a student doing independent research for a senior thesis or summer project.



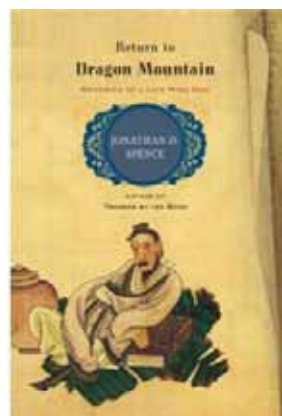
Mones, Nicole, *The Last Chinese Chef*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 2007.

**Suzanne Barnett, University of Puget Sound:** This book provides food for thought about Chinese cuisine (and also makes one hungry for a Chinese meal in a great restaurant in Beijing or elsewhere) while wafting through a plot with two parts that seem to make some sense. Mones, author of *Lost in Translation*, is not a China expert but is an accomplished food writer (*Gourmet* magazine and other outlets) with lots of experience in China and with Chinese food. Her construction of a 1925 book by a famous chef in the Beijing Imperial style is both plausible and inspiring. I imagine that a student who might pursue as research use for Chinese cuisine in a senior thesis could find lots of sources in literature, philosophy, religion, and could in fact do empirical research in local (or distant) Chinese restaurants, too. The plot line of *Last Chinese Chef* might seem a bit implausible to such a student, even as the descriptions of planning, cooking, and dining might intellectually energize both the student and her or his thesis advisor.



Sinha, Mrinalini, *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2006.

**Barbara Metcalf, University of Michigan:** To add an India/South Asia contribution, I enthusiastically recommend Mrinalini Sinha's book, *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire*. It is a fascinating window into imperial politics in the interwar period through the story of the production and reception of a screed against Indian/Hindu culture in relation to women, written by an American, Katherine Mayo. For those concerned with American politics today, a book like this is in part a reminder of America's past as a sometimes brutal colonial power, something we tend to forget, discussed here in relation to the interaction between U.S. policies in this period in the Philippines and Britain's policies in India.



Spence, Jonathan D., *Return to Dragon Mountain: Memories of a Late Ming Man*, New York, Viking Adult, 2007.

**Richard Smith, Rice University:** I recommend Jonathan Spence's most recent book, *Return to Dragon Mountain: Memories of a Late Ming Man*, because almost anything Jonathan writes is interesting and provocative. And this is one of his best books yet, displaying with particular effect Spence's astonishing eye for detail and his justly celebrated prose style. *Return to Dragon Mountain* focuses on the life and times of the famous Chinese historian and essayist Zhang Dai (1597-1689); in so doing it illuminates a particularly fascinating and important period in late imperial Chinese history.