

Ancient China collides with newfangled America in this epic tale of opium smugglers, sea pirates, and dueling clipper ships. Brilliantly illuminating one of the least-understood areas of American history, best-selling author Eric Jay Dolin now traces our fraught relationship with China back to its roots: the unforgiving nineteenth-century seas that separated a brash, rising naval power from a battered ancient empire. It is a prescient fable for our time, one that surprisingly continues to shed light on our modern relationship with China. Indeed, the furious trade in furs, opium, and beche-de-mer--a rare sea cucumber delicacy--might have catalyzed Americas emerging economy, but it also sparked an ecological and human rights catastrophe of such epic proportions that the reverberations can still be felt today. Peopled with fascinating characters--from the Financier of the Revolution Robert Morris to the Chinese emperor Qianlong, who considered foreigners inferior beings--this page-turning saga of pirates and politicians, coolies and concubines becomes a must-read for any fan of Nathaniel Philbrick's Mayflower or Mark Kurlansky's Cod. Two maps, and 16 pages of color and 83 black-and-white illustrations.

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