



Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China

By Craig Clunas

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This outstanding and original book, presented here with a new preface, examines the history of material culture in early modern China. Craig Clunas analyzes “superfluous things”—the paintings, calligraphy, bronzes, ceramics, carved jade, and other objects owned by the elites of Ming China—and describes contemporary attitudes to them. He informs his discussions with reference to both socio-cultural theory and current debates on eighteenth-century England concerning luxury, conspicuous consumption, and the growth of the consumer society.

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"One of those rare books whose every chapter makes you think, often about features of Chinese society that we have too long taken for granted....Inspiring, even entertaining."

Bold and insightful.... Clunas establishes the importance of material consumption as an index of much larger historical processes. Students of early modern Europe as well as China will find [his] arguments both pertinent and compelling.-- "*American Historical Review*"

The sense of completeness that characterizes Clunas' writing has something to do with the self-assured patter of his prose, with its intense and unwavering focus on the subject before him. But it has more to do with his reach, his willingness to cross the disciplinary boundaries of his field.... An eye-opening pleasure to read.-- "*Ming Studies*"

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About the Author

Craig Clunas is Percival David Chair of Chinese Art at SOAS, London, and the author of *Superfluous Things*, *Fruitful Sites: Garden Culture in Ming Dynasty China*, *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China*, and *Art in China*.

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