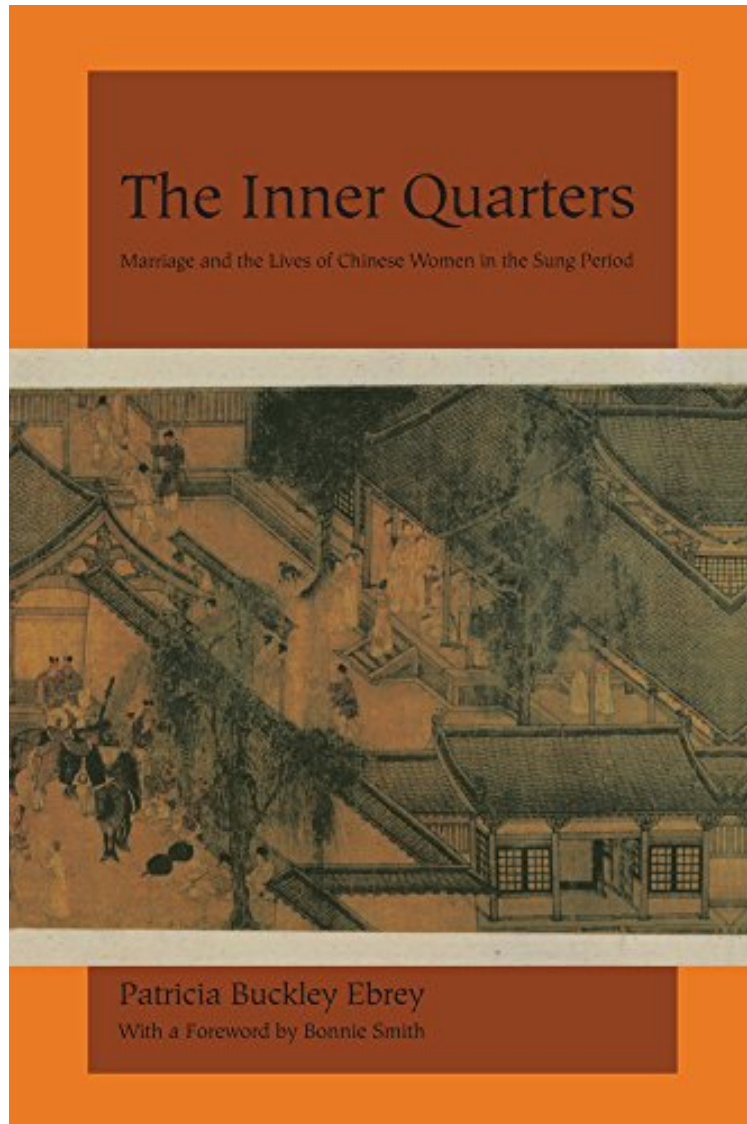


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The Inner Quarters: Marriage and the Lives of Chinese Women in the Sung Period

Patricia Buckley Ebrey

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Patricia Buckley Ebrey : The Inner Quarters: Marriage and the Lives of Chinese Women in the Sung Period before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Inner Quarters: Marriage and the Lives of Chinese Women in the Sung Period:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Three Stars By Fu Wen Guan Not quite up to expectations. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Tarek Moustafa excellent 24 of 25 people found the following

review helpful. ComprehensiveBy CustomerThis book presents a comprehensive portrait of the lives of women in Sung China (960-1279 AD). The author explores such topics as marriage, dowries, rites and celebrations, women's work, husband-wife relations, motherhood, widowhood, concubines, and match-making. Because of the need to rely on written materials for much of the information, and because literacy was restricted mainly to the educated and upper classes, the book naturally contains many more details about the lives of rich women than of the poor. Nevertheless, Ebrey was still able to distill some information about peasant women and families as well. The book will appeal to anyone interested in women's studies, Chinese history, or Asian area studies.

The Sung Dynasty (960-1279) was a paradoxical era for Chinese women. This was a time when footbinding spread, and Confucian scholars began to insist that it was better for a widow to starve than to remarry. Yet there were also improvements in women's status in marriage and property rights. In this thoroughly original work, one of the most respected scholars of premodern China brings to life what it was like to be a woman in Sung times, from having a marriage arranged, serving parents-in-law, rearing children, and coping with concubines, to deciding what to do if widowed. Focusing on marriage, Patricia Buckley Ebrey views family life from the perspective of women. She argues that the ideas, attitudes, and practices that constituted marriage shaped women's lives, providing the context in which they could interpret the opportunities open to them, negotiate their relationships with others, and accommodate or resist those around them. Ebrey questions whether women's situations actually deteriorated in the Sung, linking their experiences to widespread social, political, economic, and cultural changes of this period. She draws from advice books, biographies, government documents, and medical treatises to show that although the family continued to be patrilineal and patriarchal, women found ways to exert their power and authority. No other book explores the history of women in pre-twentieth-century China with such energy and depth.

From the Inside Flap"Opening up questions about women's lives, about gender, about why we read history at all and how we write it, Patricia Buckley Ebrey has made *The Inner Quarters* a place we need to enter."from the Foreword