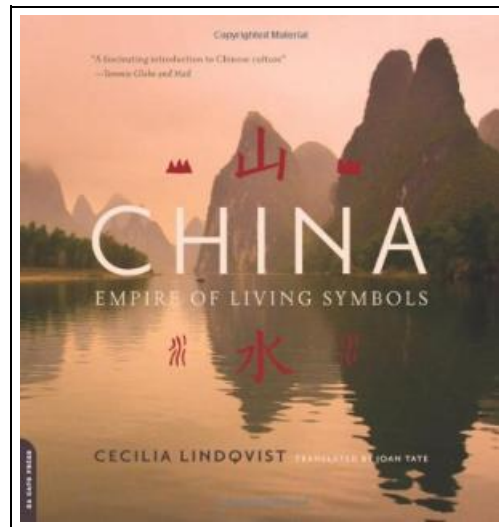


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CHINA: EMPIRE OF LIVING SYMBOLS



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DaCapo. 1 Paperback(s), 2008. soft. Book Condition: New. The pictorial origins of Chinese ideographs—the many thousands of seemingly abstract forms representing sounds and whole words—were all but forgotten until 1899, when a scholar went to an apothecary for some medicine made of "dragon bone." To his surprise, the bone which had not yet been ground into powder contained a number of ancient carved inscriptions, touching off an exploration of the 3000-year-old sources of the written characters still used in China today. This heavily illustrated, deeply researched book traces the evolution of these characters, and shows how their shapes and concepts have permeated all of Chinese thought, architecture, art, and culture. "A fascinating introduction to Chinese language and culture. Beautifully designed and illustrated with photographs, calligraphy and drawings." *London Review of Books* "Many of the 50,000 Chinese characters in use today can be traced back to ancient, inscribed oracle bones and bronzes. Drawing on archaeological finds of recent decades, [Cecilia] Lindqvist, a Swedish scholar who studied Chinese writing in Beijing, tells the fascinating stories behind the meaning and evolution of scores of Chinese characters. She notes that the original character for 'hand' may well have been a picture of a hand with five fingers; neolithic jars were prototypes for the character for 'wine'; the character for 'speak or word' has a basic meaning, 'large flute.' Other characters relate to everyday life (houses, carts, clothes) or to the countryside, plants and animals. A testament to the continuity of Chinese culture, this beautiful book is illustrated with ancient inscriptions, 18th-century woodcuts and photographs of contemporary life demonstrating how ideogrammatic images recur as archetypes through the centuries." *Publishers Weekly* 424.



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