



The Stone of Heaven: The Secret History of Imperial Green Jade

Adrian Levy, Cathy Scott-Clark

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Diamonds, sapphires and rubies are commonly thought to be the world's most valuable gemstones but there is another that is even more precious. It is Imperial Green Jade, or jadeite. The stone's prestige derives from its intense beauty and extraordinary scarcity. Almost all of the world's jadeite comes from one place: a valley in the shadow of the Himalayas, buried deep in the bedrock of the most remote mining area in the world. Since its discovery nearly 2,000 years ago, Imperial Green Jade has been worshipped, ingested and traded. Inspired by legends of a gemstone 'that glowed as if lit by a hidden flame', armies have waged wars to seize its source, First Ladies have flaunted it and Hollywood stars have spent fortunes on pieces stolen from the tombs of Chinese Emperors. Royal collectors believed it could make them immortal. Warlords ground it into powder and drunk it as an elixir. Revolutionaries exploited it to fund coups and finance wars. For European explorers, it was legendary. Those who returned from Burma in the fifteenth century came with stories of a kingdom built entirely from the green stone - a place they called the 'Lost Valley of Capelan'. Today foreigners are barred from the place in northern Burma known as 'Jadeland', where thousands of soldiers guard the dictatorship's treasures. In order to be the first Europeans ever to get there, Adrian Levy and Cathy Scott-Clark had to persuade Rangoon's generals to escort them. This book reveals how they did so and in its final chapters takes the reader on a terrifying journey to the 'Lost Valley of Capelan'. What they discovered was jadeite's biggest secret: a human disaster of biblical proportions. The Stone of Heaven brilliantly combines original historical research, travelogue and investigative journalism to relate for the first time this hidden history. It is the story of a gem that changed the lives of all who owned it and shaped the destiny of nations that sought to control its source.



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