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In Manchuria: A Village Called Wasteland and the Transformation of Rural China

Michael Meyer

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In the tradition of *In Patagonia* and *Great Plains*, Michael Meyer's *In Manchuria* is a scintillating combination of memoir, contemporary reporting, and historical research, presenting a unique profile of China's legendary northeast territory. For three years, Meyer rented a home in the rice-farming community of Wasteland, hometown to his wife's family, and their personal saga mirrors the tremendous change most of rural China is undergoing, in the form of a privately held rice company that has built new roads, introduced organic farming, and constructed high-rise apartments into which farmers can move in exchange for their land rights. Once a commune, Wasteland is now a company town, a phenomenon happening across China that Meyer documents for the first time; indeed, not since Pearl Buck wrote *The Good Earth* has anyone brought rural China to life as Meyer has here.

Amplifying the story of family and Wasteland, Meyer takes us on a journey across Manchuria's past, a history that explains much about contemporary China-from the fall of the last emperor to Japanese occupation and Communist victory. Through vivid local characters, Meyer illuminates the remnants of the imperial Willow Palisade, Russian and Japanese colonial cities and railways, and the POW camp into which a young American sergeant parachuted to free survivors of the Bataan Death March. *In Manchuria* is a rich and original chronicle of contemporary China and its people.

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