

Peter Frankopan. *The Earth Transformed: An Untold Story*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, April 18, 2023. 695 pp.

The Earth Transformed: An Untold Story by Peter Frankopan is a captivating journey through the lesser-known corridors of history that have played pivotal roles in shaping the world today. Building upon the success of his previous work, *The Silk Roads*, Frankopan once again demonstrates his mastery in unraveling the interconnectedness of cultures, civilizations, and events that have forged the intricate tapestry of human existence. In this book, Frankopan challenges Eurocentric perspectives by spotlighting Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, tracing the impact of trade, technology, and religion on global transformation. Given the increased interest in the environment and humanity's impact on the planet that we call home, Frankopan's book adds another layer to the story by showing that we are not merely living on Earth but are very much a part of it.

At its core, *The Earth Transformed* is a testament to the idea that history is not merely a linear progression of isolated events but rather an intricate web of influences, trade, migration, and adaptation. Frankopan's narrative approach is refreshingly dynamic, often defying conventional historical chronology to highlight the unexpected linkages between seemingly unrelated occurrences. The book explores how these interconnections have molded societies and transformed the Earth's physical and cultural landscapes.

One of the book's standout strengths is Frankopan's ability to spotlight lesser-known historical episodes with far-reaching implications. He weaves together stories of forgotten heroes, remarkable innovations, and unsung civilizations, offering readers a panoramic view of History beyond the conventional Eurocentric perspective. By shedding light on the contributions of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, Frankopan corrects historical imbalances and underscores the importance of global collaboration in shaping human destiny.

Frankopan's exploration of trade routes, technological advancements, and cultural exchanges is especially riveting. It shows how well-versed he is in not only the history of the world but its subtle intricacies. He delves deep into the cradle of innovation, the Silk Roads, uncovering how this network facilitated the exchange of goods, ideas, and philosophies. The author's meticulous research and vivid storytelling bring to life the bustling marketplaces, flourishing cities, and intellectual crossroads that characterized these routes.

Moreover, the book dissects the pivotal role of religion in shaping the world's history. Admittedly, at first glance, the book appears to be more focused on geography and climate change, but this is not the case. Frankopan examines how religious beliefs often intertwine with political power, trade dynamics, and cultural evolution. He presents an enlightening analysis of how the rise and spread of various faiths have influenced the Earth's physical and ideological transformation. Examining the complex interplay between religion and historical events challenges readers to reconsider common misconceptions and explore history from a fresh perspective.

Frankopan's prose is evocative and engaging, making historical facts feel like narratives rather than dry accounts. His vivid descriptions and attention to detail transport readers to

different eras and locations, enabling them to witness historical events firsthand. Whether describing the Abbasid Caliphate's opulence or the Black Death's dramatic impact, Frankopan's writing maintains a captivating allure that holds the readers' attention.

One of the book's few shortcomings is its ambitious scope. While Frankopan's intent to present a comprehensive history of the Earth's transformation is commendable, the sheer magnitude of the topic occasionally results in a lack of depth on certain subjects. When the topics range from "The First Cities and Trade Networks (c.3500–c.2500 BC)" to "On the Edge of Ecological Limits (c.1990–today)," one cannot help but feel like some aspects of history may feel rushed. This makes some chapters leave readers yearning for more in-depth analysis and exploration. For example, in chapter 12, Frankopan discusses the medieval warming period and mentions the Changbaishan eruption in around 940-50 AD but does not go into much further detail about it (p. 269). Now, we may consider these sorts of missed details as a drawback, which denies the reader further information on many of the events mentioned in the book. Still, this drawback is mitigated by the book's overarching mission to introduce readers to the multifaceted interactions that have shaped our world.

Another aspect that might pause readers is the book's intricate structure, which can sometimes be challenging to follow. Frankopan's penchant for shifting between different historical periods and regions can occasionally lead to confusion, requiring readers to reorient themselves within the narrative. For historians well established with several regions' histories, this can be much easier, but as Frankopan can sometimes go from London to Baghdad to Chang'an in a matter of pages, it does require a bit of prereading. However, for those who relish a more complex and interwoven approach to history, this structural complexity can be seen as an asset that encourages active engagement and critical thinking.

In *The Earth Transformed*, Peter Frankopan masterfully showcases the continuous dialogue between societies and the environment. By highlighting humanity's propensity to adapt and innovate in response to challenges, he underscores the resilience of cultures throughout history. This theme resonates particularly strongly in the context of contemporary global challenges, such as climate change and technological disruption. Frankopan's work implicitly urges readers to draw inspiration from the past as they grapple with the present and future uncertainties.

In conclusion, *The Earth Transformed: An Untold Story* is a thought-provoking and enlightening journey through the interconnected currents of history. Peter Frankopan's ability to synthesize complex information into a coherent narrative, his dedication to unearthing forgotten stories, and his commitment to a global perspective make this book a valuable addition to the realm of historical literature. While its expansive scope and intricate structure may challenge some readers, the rewards lie in understanding the world's evolution and the shared threads that bind humanity together across time and space. This book stands as a testament to the enduring power of history to inform and inspire, inviting readers to view the world with a newfound sense of wonder and interconnectedness.

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