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Nota di contenuto	Front matter -- Contents -- List of Illustrations -- Acknowledgments -- Permissions -- Conventions -- Introductory Remarks -- 1. Landmarks and Time-marks -- 2. Humans v. Elephants: The Three Thousand Years War -- 3. The Great Deforestation: An Overview -- 4. The Great Deforestation: Regions and Species -- 5. War and the Logic of Short-term Advantage -- 6. Water and the Costs of System Sustainability -- 7. Richness to Riches: The Story of Jiaxing -- 8. Chinese Colonialism: Guizhou and the Miao -- 9. The Riddle of Longevity: Why Zunhua? -- 10. Nature as Revelation -- 11. Science and Superfauna -- 12. Imperial Dogma and Personal Perspectives -- Concluding Remarks -- Notes -- Bibliography -- Index
Sommario/riassunto	This is the first environmental history of China during the three thousand years for which there are written records. It is also a treasure trove of literary, political, aesthetic, scientific, and religious sources, which allow the reader direct access to the views and feelings of the Chinese people toward their environment and their landscape. Elvin

chronicles the spread of the Chinese style of farming that eliminated the habitat of the elephants that populated the country alongside much of its original wildlife; the destruction of most of the forests; the impact of war on the environmental transformation of the landscape; and the re-engineering of the countryside through water-control systems, some of gigantic size. He documents the histories of three contrasting localities within China to show how ecological dynamics defined the lives of the inhabitants. And he shows that China in the eighteenth century, on the eve of the modern era, was probably more environmentally degraded than northwestern Europe around this time. Indispensable for its new perspective on long-term Chinese history and its explanation of the roots of China's present-day environmental crisis, this book opens a door into the Chinese past.

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