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Autore	Bray Francesca
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Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and index.
Nota di contenuto	section 1. Material foundations of the moral order -- section 2. Gynotechnics : crafting womanly virtues -- section 3. Androtechnics : the writing-brush, the plough and the nature of technical knowledge.
Sommario/riassunto	<P>What can the history of technology contribute to our understanding of late imperial China? Most stories about technology in pre-modern China follow a well-worn plot: in about 1400 after an early ferment of creativity that made it the most technologically sophisticated civilisation in the world, China entered an era of technical lethargy and decline. But how are we to reconcile this tale, which portrays China in the Ming and Qing dynasties as a dying giant that had outgrown its own strength, with the wealth of counterevidence affirming that the country remained rich, vigorous and powerful at