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Autore	Hucker Charles O
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Sommario/riassunto	In the latter half of the fourteenth century, at one end of the Eurasian continent, the stage was not yet set for the emergence of modern nation-states. At the other end, the Chinese drove out their Mongol overlords, inaugurated a new native dynasty called Ming (1368-1644), and reasserted the mastery of their national destiny. It was a dramatic era of change, the full significance of which can only be perceived retrospectively. With the establishment of the Ming dynasty, a major historical tension rose into prominence between more absolutist and less absolutist modes of rulership. This produced a distinctive style of rule that modern students have come to call Ming despotism. It proved a capriciously absolutist pattern for Chinese government into our own time.