



The Everlasting Empire: The Political Culture of Ancient China and Its Imperial Legacy

Yuri Pines

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Established in 221 BCE, the Chinese empire lasted for 2,132 years before being replaced by the Republic of China in 1912. During its two millennia, the empire endured internal wars, foreign incursions, alien occupations, and devastating rebellions--yet fundamental institutional, sociopolitical, and cultural features of the empire remained intact. *The Everlasting Empire* traces the roots of the Chinese empire's exceptional longevity and unparalleled political durability, and shows how lessons from the imperial past are relevant for China today.

Yuri Pines demonstrates that the empire survived and adjusted to a variety of domestic and external challenges through a peculiar combination of rigid ideological premises and their flexible implementation. The empire's major political actors and neighbors shared its fundamental ideological principles, such as unity under a single monarch--hence, even the empire's strongest domestic and foreign foes adopted the system of imperial rule. Yet details of this rule were constantly negotiated and adjusted. Pines shows how deep tensions between political actors including the emperor, the literati, local elites, and rebellious commoners actually enabled the empire's basic institutional framework to remain critically vital and adaptable to ever-changing sociopolitical circumstances. As contemporary China moves toward a new period of prosperity and power in the twenty-first century, Pines argues that the legacy of the empire may become an increasingly important force in shaping the nation's future trajectory.

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