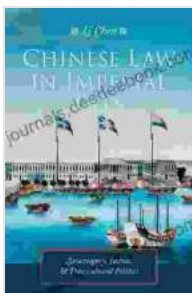


Chinese Law In Imperial Eyes: A Comprehensive Examination of the Legal System in Imperial China

The Chinese legal system has a long and rich history, dating back to the earliest days of Chinese civilization. During the imperial period, which spanned from 221 BCE to 1912 CE, the legal system underwent a number of significant changes and developments. This article will provide a comprehensive overview of the Chinese legal system during the imperial period, exploring its development, sources, principles, and enforcement mechanisms.



Chinese Law in Imperial Eyes: Sovereignty, Justice, and Transcultural Politics (Studies of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University) by Li Chen

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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Historical Development

The Chinese legal system began to take shape during the Shang dynasty (1600-1046 BCE). During this period, the legal system was based on a

combination of customary law and religious beliefs. The Zhou dynasty (1046-256 BCE) saw the development of a more centralized and bureaucratic legal system. This system was based on the principles of Confucianism and Legalism, which emphasized the importance of order, hierarchy, and punishment.

During the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE), the legal system underwent further development. The Han Code, compiled in 179 BCE, was the first comprehensive legal code in Chinese history. The Han Code established a system of punishments and rewards that was based on the principles of Confucianism and Legalism.

The Sui dynasty (581-618 CE) saw the development of a new legal code, the Sui Code. The Sui Code was based on the Han Code, but it also incorporated elements from other legal traditions. The Sui Code was the basis for the Tang Code, which was compiled in 624 CE. The Tang Code was one of the most comprehensive and influential legal codes in Chinese history. It established a system of punishments and rewards that was based on the principles of Confucianism and Legalism.

The Song dynasty (960-1279 CE) saw the development of a new school of legal thought, known as Neo-Confucianism. Neo-Confucianism emphasized the importance of human nature and the need for a just and humane legal system. The Song Code, compiled in 1192 CE, was based on the principles of Neo-Confucianism. The Song Code was one of the most humane and progressive legal codes in Chinese history.

The Yuan dynasty (1279-1368 CE) saw the development of a new legal code, the Yuan Code. The Yuan Code was based on the Tang Code, but it

also incorporated elements from Mongol law. The Yuan Code was a harsh and repressive legal code that reflected the Mongol emphasis on conquest and domination.

The Ming dynasty (1368-1644 CE) saw the development of a new legal code, the Ming Code. The Ming Code was based on the Yuan Code, but it also incorporated elements from Confucian and Taoist thought. The Ming Code was a comprehensive and well-organized legal code that established a system of punishments and rewards that was based on the principles of Confucianism and Legalism.

The Qing dynasty (1644-1912 CE) saw the development of a new legal code, the Qing Code. The Qing Code was based on the Ming Code, but it also incorporated elements from Manchu law. The Qing Code was a comprehensive and well-organized legal code that established a system of punishments and rewards that was based on the principles of Confucianism and Legalism.

Sources of Law

The sources of law in imperial China included the following:

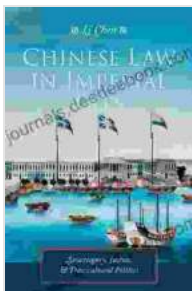
- **Statutes:** Statutes were the most important source of law in imperial China. Statutes were issued by the emperor and had the force of law throughout the empire.
- **Codes:** Codes were collections of statutes that were organized by subject matter. The most important codes in imperial China were the Han Code, the Sui Code, the Tang Code, the Song Code, the Yuan Code, the Ming Code, and the Qing Code.

- Ordinances: Ordinances were regulations that were issued by local officials. Ordinances had the force of law within the jurisdiction of the official who issued them.
- Regulations: Regulations were rules that were issued by government agencies. Regulations had the force of law within the jurisdiction of the agency that issued them.
- Edicts: Edicts were orders that were issued by the emperor. Edicts had the force of law throughout the empire.
- Customary law: Customary law was a body of unwritten law that was based on the customs and traditions of the people. Customary law was often used to supplement the written law.

Principles of Law

The principles of law in imperial China included the following:

- Confucianism: Confucianism was a philosophy that emphasized the importance of order, hierarchy, and



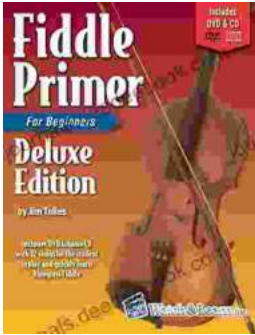
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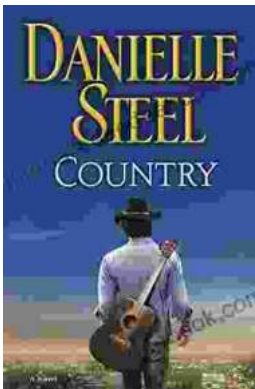
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