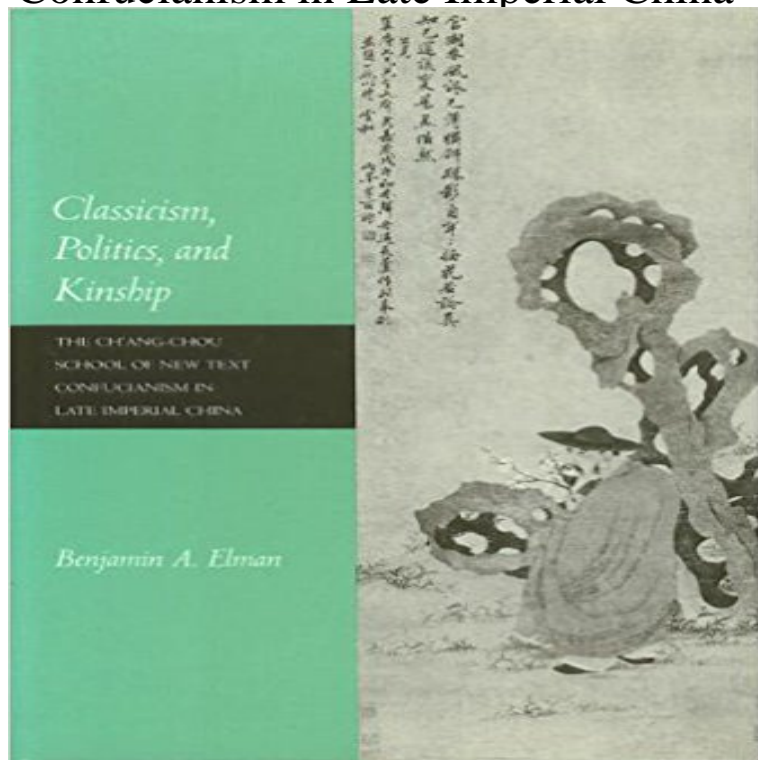


Classicism, Politics, and Kinship: The Chang-chou School of New Text Confucianism in Late Imperial China



Scholars have generally agreed that the story of New Text Confucianism in late imperial China centers on Kang Yu-wei and the late nineteenth-century political reforms he took credit for after fleeing China in 1898. In this important new book, Benjamin Elman explores the roots of New Text ideas and shows that Confucians first dissented from the orthodox *raison detre* of the imperial state over three hundred years earlier, during the transition from the late Ming to early Ching dynasties. New Text scholars, although not revolutionary, stood for new forms of belief, and they challenged the authenticity of classical sources upon which much orthodox political discourse had been based. Their notions of historical change proved to be important stepping stones toward an influential New Text vision of social and political transformation that climaxed in the 1898 reform movement. Elman examines the conflicting New Text versus Old Text portraits of Confucius in order to gain a more precise grasp of classical studies in imperial China as the ideological source for the constitutionality of the Confucian imperium. Central to his argument is the discovery that kinship organizations in pre-modern China played an important role in fostering schools of learning such as the Chang-chou New Text school. Accordingly, this study affords us a unique perspective on how gentry sought to impose their agenda on the state in an effort to weather the great changes occurring during the Ming and Ching dynasties.

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