



Women Shall Not Rule: Imperial Wives and Concubines in China from Han to Liao

Keith McMahon

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Chinese emperors guaranteed male successors by taking multiple wives, in some cases hundreds and even thousands. *Women Shall Not Rule* offers a fascinating history of imperial wives and concubines, especially in light of the greatest challenges to polygamous harmony—rivalry between women and their attempts to engage in politics. Besides ambitious empresses and concubines, these vivid stories of the imperial polygamous family are also populated with prolific emperors, wanton women, libertine men, cunning eunuchs, and bizarre cases of intrigue and scandal among rival wives.

Keith McMahon, a leading expert on the history of gender in China, draws upon decades of research to describe the values and ideals of imperial polygamy and the ways in which it worked and did not work in real life. His rich sources are both historical and fictional, including poetic accounts and sensational stories told in pornographic detail. Displaying rare historical breadth, his lively and fascinating study will be invaluable as a comprehensive and authoritative resource for all readers interested in the domestic life of royal palaces across the world.

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