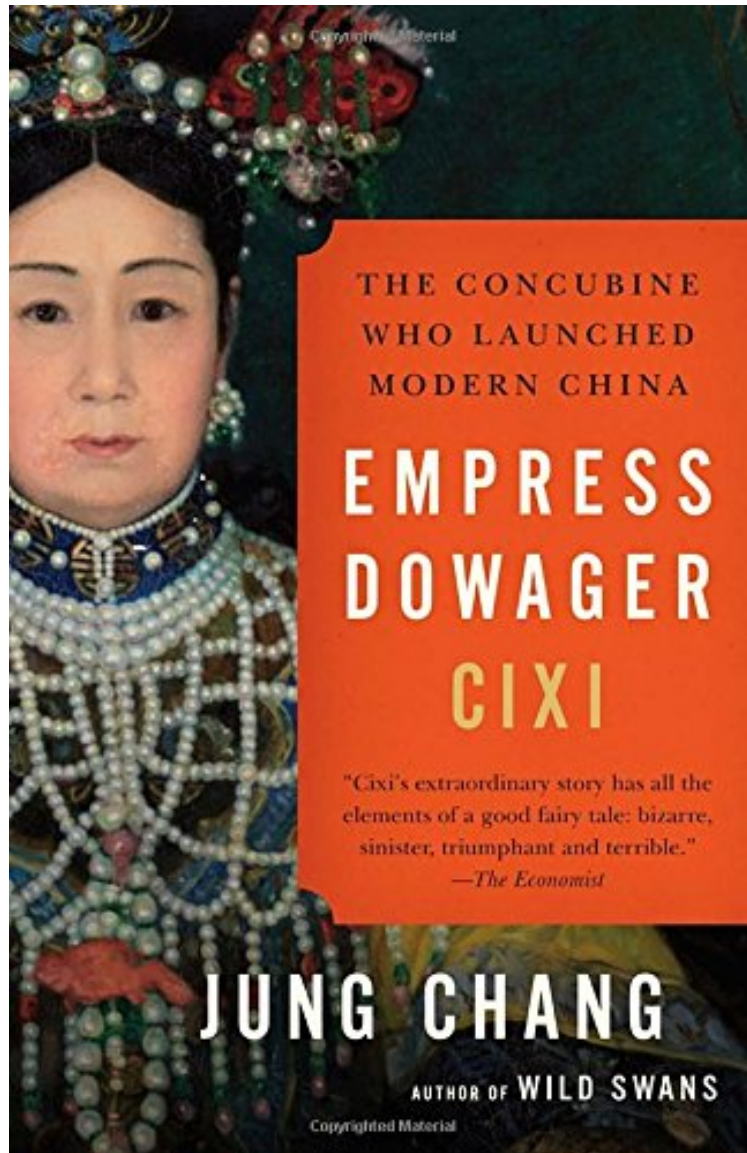


[Pdf free] Empress Dowager Cixi: The Concubine Who Launched Modern China

# Empress Dowager Cixi: The Concubine Who Launched Modern China

Jung Chang

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**Jung Chang : Empress Dowager Cixi: The Concubine Who Launched Modern China** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Empress Dowager Cixi: The Concubine Who Launched Modern China:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A different point of view  
By WingHang Wong  
I really enjoyed how this book presented this infamous empress from a different point of view. Like Cleopatra, although she's made her share of mistake, the reason history vilified her appears to do more with her gender than her actual impact in history. So many movies and TV shows that portray her focuses on her 'evilness' and completely negates all the good she's done for her country - especially given her limited power. On top of presenting a different view, this book is also well written. Some people may not appreciate the style, but it reads almost like a fiction, which made it more entertaining for me.  
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating Woman  
By Netadmin  
Impressive biography by Jung Chang. She covers the empress reign deftly, objectively. Great biography about China coming of age in 20th century. I read Ms Chang Wild Swans, her family's history before this, and it's fascinating, brief look back in history. Research is meticulous and Corroborated by stories written by other ex-court women during this reign.  
2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A fresh look at a fascinating figure  
By Pam K  
Years ago, I read "Imperial Woman" by Pearl S. Buck, a novelized version of the life of Tzu Hsi (as Cixi was known to Westerners at the time). Buck told the tale of a brilliant opportunist, a Manchu concubine who used sex, murder and mayhem to claw her way to the top of her society. It was a sensational and, I now realize, flawed account of this towering personality. Jung Chang has reached deep into both Chinese culture and newly-opened archives to set the record straight. As a writer, she is sympathetic, yet fair-minded in her analysis of Cixi, whose real story is as unlikely as a fairy tale. Here, a rather plain and insignificant 16 year old girl actually did become the ruler of the most populous country in the world, through sheer force of intelligence and personal charisma (and rather less sex and mayhem). Yet Cixi did embody the deep contradictions inherent in her world at once peace-loving and scholarly, yet capable of savage torture and gross inequity. She loved her country's medieval beauty even as she dragged it into the modern age. She proved herself capable of murder, but unlike the far bloodier Mao, Cixi was also capable of regretting it and recalibrating her path forward. She was a remarkable person by any measure, but most especially as a woman who drew her stunning power from within a deeply misogynistic culture. Well-illustrated and researched, "Empress Dowager Cixi," at its best, offers Western readers real insights into a deeply different culture...insights that still resonate today.

A New York Times Notable Book  
An NPR Best Book of the Year  
In 1852, at age sixteen, Cixi was chosen as one of Emperor Xianfeng's numerous concubines. When he died in 1861, their five-year-old son succeeded to the throne. Cixi at once launched a coup against her sons regents and placed herself as the true source of power governing through a silk screen that separated her from her male officials. Drawing on newly available sources, Jung Chang comprehensively overturns Cixi's reputation as a conservative despot. Cixi's extraordinary reign saw the birth of modern China. Under her, the ancient country attained industries, railways, electricity, and a military with up-to-date weaponry. She abolished foot-binding, inaugurated women's liberation, and embarked on a path to introduce voting rights. Packed with drama, this groundbreaking biography powerfully reforms our view of a crucial period in China's and the world's history.

From Publishers Weekly  
Her original first name was considered too inconsequential to enter in the court registry, yet she became the most powerful woman in 19th-century China. Born in 1835 to a prominent Manchu family, Cixi was chosen in 1852 by the young Chinese Emperor Xianfeng as one of his concubines. Literate, politically aware, and graceful rather than beautiful, Cixi was not Xianfeng's favorite, but she delivered his firstborn son in 1856. When the emperor died in 1861, he bequeathed his title to this son, with regents to oversee his reign. Cixi did not trust these men to competently rule China, so she conspired with Empress Zhen, her close friend and the deceased emperor's first wife, to orchestrate a coup. Memoirist Chang (Wild Swans) melds her deep knowledge of Chinese history with deft storytelling to unravel the empress dowager's behind-the-throne efforts to "Make China Strong" by developing international trade, building railroads and utilities, expanding education, and constructing a modern military. Cixi's actions and methods were at times controversial, and in 1898 she thwarted an assassination attempt sanctioned by Emperor Guangxu, her adopted son. Cixi's power only increased after this, and she finally exacted revenge on Guangxu just before her death in 1908. Illus.  
From Booklist  
Chang, author of the impeccable Wild Swans (2003), provides a revisionist biography of a controversial concubine who rose through the ranks to become a long-reigning, power-wielding dowager empress during the delicate era when China emerged from its isolationist cocoon to become a legitimate player on the international stage. As Cixi's power and influence grew she actually helped orchestrate the coup of 1861 that led directly to her own dominion as regent. She radically shifted official attitudes toward Western thoughts, ideas, trade, and technology. Ushering in a new era of openness, she not only brought medieval China into the modern age, but she also served double duty as a feminist champion and icon. When an author as thorough, gifted, and immersed in Chinese culture as Chang writes, both scholars and general readers take notice. --Margaret Flanagan  
Cixi's extraordinary story has all the elements of a good fairy tale: bizarre, sinister, triumphant and terrible. The Economist  
A truly authoritative account of Cixi's rule. Her story is both important and evocative. Orville Schell, The New York Times  
Book A fantastic Machiavellian tale. . . . Dives into a genuinely fascinating figure: a fierce imperial consort who ruled behind the thrones of two successive Chinese emperors and helped ease China into the

twentieth century. New York magazine Certain to become the standard by which all future biographies of the Dowager Empress are measured. The Daily Beast Jung Chang has written a pathbreaking and generally persuasive book. The New York of Books If there is one woman who mattered in the history of modern China, it is the empress dowager Cixi. . . . [Her] conventional image is queried in this detailed and beautifully narrated biography, which at long last restores the empress dowager to her rightful place. The Sunday Times (London) Sets out to rehabilitate the reputation of a woman who, [Chang] argues, helped modernize China. . . . While Chang acknowledges Cixi's missteps such as allowing the Boxers to fight against a Western invasion, which led to widespread slaughters she sees her as a woman whose energy, farsightedness, and ruthless pragmatism transformed a country. The New Yorker [An] authoritative and epic biography. The Toronto Star Well-researched and provocative. . . . Cixi deserves to be remembered and this book is to be welcomed for giving an important figure in Chinese history the prominence she deserves. . . . This spirited biography reminds us that a greater female presence might be a trigger for much-needed political change. New Statesman Fascinating. . . . Wonderfully illuminating. . . . Jung Chang's new book gives the infamous concubine Cixi her due. The Spectator This is a rich, dramatic story of rebellions, battles, plotting, rivalry, foreign invasion, punishment and forbidden love. . . . [Chang] uses new evidence and meticulous research to cast a spotlight on the amazing woman she regards as the mother of modern China. Daily Mail Corrects a longstanding misconception about a woman whose impact on China can't be overstated. It's a fascinating look at power, politics and the gender divide. BookPage A rich and fascinating book that never relaxes its hold on the reader despite the marshalling of a mass of complex historical details seen through the prism of Cixi. The New York Journal of Books