



Empress Dowager Cixi: The Concubine Who Launched Modern China

Jung Chang

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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 son's 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.

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