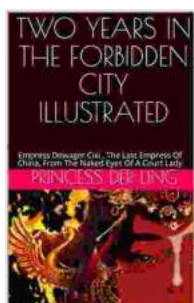


# Empress Dowager Cixi: The Last Empress of China through the Eyes of a Court Lady



## TWO YEARS IN THE FORBIDDEN CITY ILLUSTRATED: Empress Dowager Cixi , The Last Empress Of China, From The Naked Eyes Of A Court Lady by Curtis Wilkie

★★★★☆ 4 out of 5

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## Empress Dowager Cixi, circa 1900

Empress Dowager Cixi was the last empress of China. She ruled from 1861 to 1908, during a time of great turmoil and change in China. Cixi was a controversial figure, and her reign was marked by both progress and setbacks.

Cixi was born into a Manchu family in 1835. She was selected to be a concubine of the Xianfeng Emperor in 1851, and she quickly rose through the ranks. In 1861, she became empress dowager after the death of the Xianfeng Emperor. Cixi's son, the Tongzhi Emperor, was only five years old at the time, so she ruled as regent.

Cixi was a strong and intelligent woman. She was also ruthless and ambitious. She was determined to maintain her power, and she used every means at her disposal to do so. Cixi was a patron of the arts, and she collected a large number of paintings, sculptures, and other works of art. She was also a supporter of Western technology and industry.

Cixi's reign was a time of great change in China. The country was facing increasing pressure from foreign powers, and Cixi was determined to resist this pressure. She led China into the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, which was a failed attempt to drive the foreigners out of China. The Boxer Rebellion resulted in the deaths of thousands of Chinese people, and it also led to further foreign intervention in China.

Cixi died in 1908, at the age of 72. She was succeeded by her nephew, the Xuantong Emperor. The Xuantong Emperor was only two years old at the time, and Cixi's death marked the end of the Qing dynasty.

## **Cixi through the Eyes of a Court Lady**

Lulu Wang was a court lady who served Empress Dowager Cixi for many years. She wrote a memoir of her time serving the empress dowager, which provides a unique glimpse into Cixi's personal life.

Wang describes Cixi as a complex and contradictory figure. She was intelligent and strong-willed, but she was also vain and ruthless. Cixi was determined to maintain her power, and she used every means at her disposal to do so. She was also a patron of the arts, and she collected a large number of paintings, sculptures, and other works of art.

Wang also describes Cixi's personal life. The empress dowager was a devoted mother to her son, the Tongzhi Emperor. She was also a loyal friend, and she often rewarded those who served her well. However, Cixi could also be cruel and unforgiving. She was known to have had several of her enemies tortured and executed.

Wang's memoir provides a valuable insight into the life of Empress Dowager Cixi. It is a fascinating and complex portrait of a woman who played a major role in Chinese history.

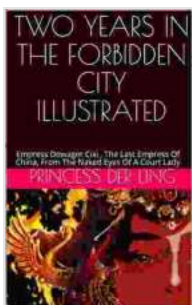
## **Legacy**

Empress Dowager Cixi was a controversial figure, but she was also a powerful and influential ruler. She was the last empress of China, and her reign marked the end of the Qing dynasty. Cixi's legacy is complex and

multifaceted, and she continues to be a subject of debate among historians.

Some historians view Cixi as a progressive ruler who was determined to modernize China. They point to her support of Western technology and industry, as well as her efforts to strengthen China's military. Other historians view Cixi as a conservative ruler who was resistant to change. They point to her suppression of the Boxer Rebellion, as well as her opposition to constitutional reform.

Despite the debate over her legacy, there is no doubt that Empress Dowager Cixi was a significant figure in Chinese history. She was a strong and intelligent woman who ruled China for nearly 50 years. Her reign was a time of great change and turmoil, but she also left a lasting legacy on China.



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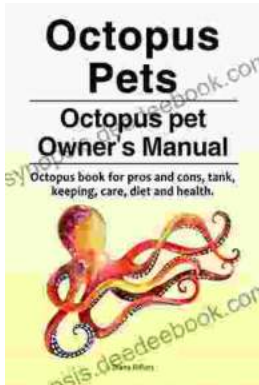
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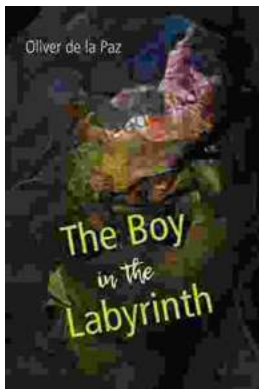
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