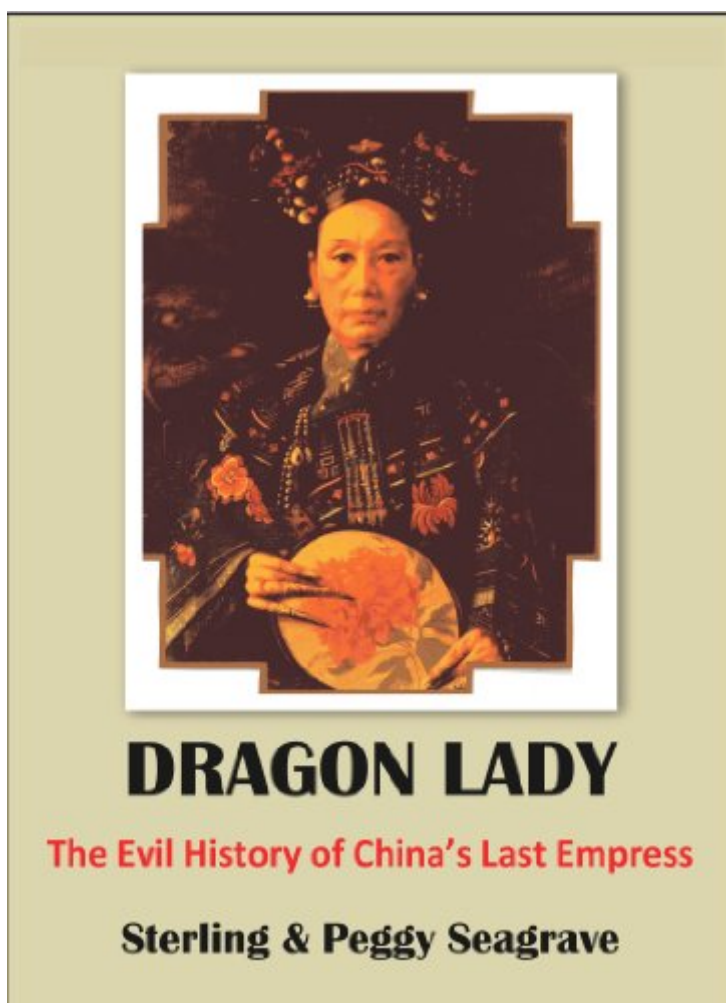


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DRAGON LADY The Evil History Of China's Last Empress (THE DYNASTY BOOKS)



Synopsis

In this epic account, drawing on overlooked and previously unpublished sources, the Seagraves destroy the long-held legend that demonized Dowager Empress Cixi [Tsu Hsi] as a murderous, sex-crazed monster, and present a startling and critical "flip-side" portrait. They provide overwhelming evidence that scholars were deceived by demented counterfeiter Sir Edmund Backhouse, and two lazy and unscrupulous journalists for The Times of London, whose lies, inflammatory articles, and books enflamed and defined world opinion, wreaking havoc on China with misguided policies, Western invasions, atrocities, looting and pillaging. The Seagraves have made a brilliant career of exploding sacred cows and correcting historical falsehoods, criminality and propaganda. What emerges is a true portrait of a lonely, semi-literate figurehead, manipulated by reactionary Manchu princes. Essential reading for anyone interested in China.

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Customer Reviews

A gripping read for anyone interested in China and Chinese history. It was recommended to me by my Chinese guide, when visiting the Forbidden City and it truly is all it promises to be: "A fine book...

full of glories and horrors... rich, dense and angry". I have enjoyed it tremendously; was fascinated by the very detailed intimate glimpse on political and court intrigues (which helped me better understand and appreciate my actual touring of China), and, most importantly, found it impartially written and most enlightening on what the most likely truth really was about the last Empress of China (who never was an empress but a formidable, ruthless, cunningly intelligent and farsighted progressive regent, coming from very humble origins yet cleverly and patiently rising to highest power, against all odds and foes- be them family, Chinese or foreigners! A woman ahead of her time, deeply woven in her mysterious culture and traditions, caring for herself as much as for her country and still willing to open up to a dangerous, treacherous West), contrarily to what western "official history" has conveniently recorded of the times and done to abjectly vilify this extraordinary ambitious woman, in order to mask the horrendous evils of opium and trade wars fuelled principally by British greed. A must read before, during and after visiting China!

A very easy to read book. A good correction of politically motivated bad reporting by British Reporters. A very good account of the Social life of Foreigners in China. A very good reporting of the Chinese thinking of action taken. The book will be better served the public if the history is written as it happened and put the 'wrong reporting' as sub-notes.

Throughout the years, I heard many things, which I came to believe, about Ci Xi (or Tzu Hsi) and none of them were kind. So, it was my surprise when I found this book which contradicted "common knowledge". The book presents an overall view of that particular historic period, going back and forth between the actions and reactions to the unfolding events of Ci Xi, George Morrison and Edmund Backhouse. The influence and positions of other figures such as Robert Hart, J.O.P. Bland, Li Hongzhang (or Li Hung-chang), ..., are also carefully detailed. The ideas of vilification of Ci Xi, and to some degree, of China, with the objective of promoting the standing of Western Powers, can be felt strongly throughout the book, especially in the coverage of the events regarding the Boxer Uprising. Interestingly enough, and in contrast to how Western Powers are depicted, Japan's imperialistic designs are only briefly mentioned in the book, if at all, and in some instances Japan is put in a much better light. Overall, the book carefully presents its ideas and its sources, followed by sensible reasoning when contrasting the different sides. The only flaw in the book was the usage of Wade-Giles for Chinese names and terms. Pinyin has been for many years now the most commonly used romanization standard for Mandarin. Regardless, the non-usage of Pinyin does not limit the reach of the book.

Our view of recent history as regards the far east is mainly based on accounts of the occupying imperial powers during the last few hundred years. This book gives a very thorough account of events of the time illustrating the good and bad on all sides. It illustrates the power of propaganda in influencing world opinion and the inappropriate decisions that can result. For me the book is well written combining the factual elements with the human stories that are so often overlooked.

Seagrave has made a brilliant career of exploding sacred cows and correcting historical falsehoods and lies, and exposing the criminality and propaganda upon which so much of "history" is built. In this epic account, drawing on overlooked and previously unpublished sources, Seagrave destroys longheld myths (that are still touted as "fact" by most western and Chinese scholars) and presents a startling and critical "flip side" reappraisal of the collapse of the Ching dynasty and the life of the eternally demonized Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi. The demented British propagandists, Edmund Backhouse and J.O.P. Bland, are finally exposed as liars and frauds whose blatant propaganda unfortunately helped define world opinion, and in turn agitated further western atrocities upon China and the Ching regime. Chinese operatives Kang Yu-Wei, and the legion of corrupt ultra-reactionary princes behind the throne (the true power in the late Ching), are also spared no quarter. Tzu Hsi herself is shown to be a somewhat ignorant hostage and figurehead, caught between Ironhat Manchu operatives wreaking havoc internally, and imperialist foreign powers intent on using all pretexts to carve open China and plunder it. More importantly, Seagrave provides evidence that virtually none of the hellish acts attributed to Tzu Hsi ever happened, and backs it up with convincing evidence. She was not the all-powerful and evil murderess and animal as depicted by scores of "world class" intellectuals and East Asian scholars (even Jonathan Spence) and generations of books and films glorifying Tzu Hsi's "reptilian evil". This, along with "Soong Dynasty", is an essential read for anyone who wants a startlingly clear view of late Ching-early Republic era China. Highest possible recommendation.

The facts presented are terrifically important. The writing style is questionable. There is much repetition, but this is a book for today.

Excellent book ! A little too detailed from time to time but the story flowed well.

I bought this book to back up historical events in the novel by Pearl Buck. Dragon Lady is very

thorough.

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