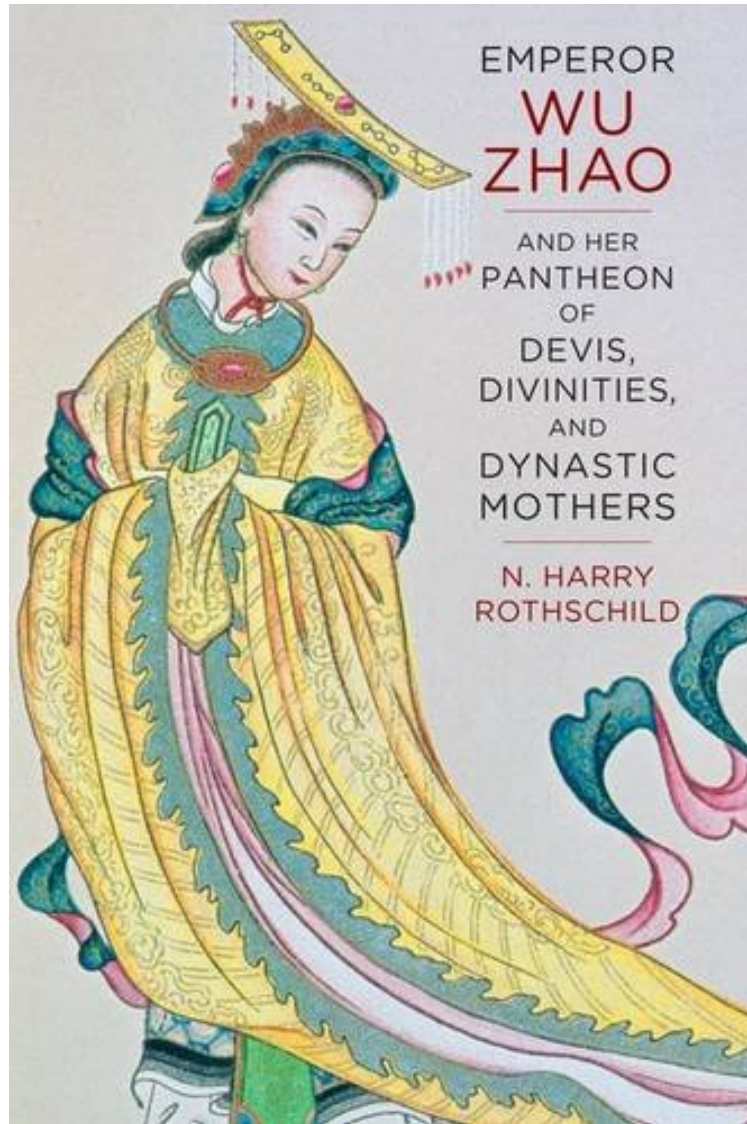


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Emperor Wu Zhao and Her Pantheon of Devis, Divinities, and Dynastic Mothers (The Sheng Yen Series in Chinese Buddhist Studies)

N. Harry Rothschild

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N. Harry Rothschild : Emperor Wu Zhao and Her Pantheon of Devis, Divinities, and Dynastic Mothers (The Sheng Yen Series in Chinese Buddhist Studies) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be

worth my time, and all praised Emperor Wu Zhao and Her Pantheon of Devis, Divinities, and Dynastic Mothers (The Sheng Yen Series in Chinese Buddhist Studies):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Xinrui H.great5 of 7 people found the following review helpful. An Interesting ReadBy LauraleeWu Zhao became Chinas first and only empress. She rose from obscurity to become the emperor much to the shock of the country. It was evident that she was a political genius because she not only rose to the throne but also had a stable reign. One of the ways that she used her political acumen was through religion. She created a pantheon of female deities, and used them to help legitimize her reign. The author then divides the book into three faiths- Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. In each chapter, he writes about the specific deity and how she uses them to her advantage. While I was hoping to learn more about the life of Wu, I did find this book to be particularly interesting. I liked learning about these female goddesses, and I could see how they personally attracted Wu when she was empress and how she later used them as Emperor. I also liked as Zhao represented herself as these goddesses by having her as model for the goddess in the Buddhist temples. I also like how she also used poetry to help accomplish her goal.Overall, this book was about how Wu used religion to rise to the throne. This book is not really comprehensive, and it for scholars who know more about the history, politics, and religion of the Tang era, and the emperor Wu. Still it was interesting in how the myths of the goddesses helped Wu rise to the throne when the idea of a woman ascending the throne held much opposition. This book only covers a small part of how Wu rose to power and how she stabilized her reign, and it is a small glimpse of the complexities of the religion in the reign. This was great introduction into the three faiths that I really do not know a thing about until I read this. It is obvious that the author loves the Chinese emperor, and that he is fascinated by how she accomplished this daunting task. I think that is one of the reasons why he decided to study her further. However, this book left me wanting to know more about the life of Wu Zhao. This book is for those that have a deep knowledge in religion, history, and politics for I believe this was more for academic scholars and not for the general reader.(Note: I read an ARC copy of this book in courtesy of Netgalley.)1 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy wsflemingdazzling intellectual detective work, written with lucid wit and grace

Wu Zhao (624-705), better known as Wu Zetian or Empress Wu, is the only woman to have ruled China as emperor over the course of its 5,000-year history. How did she in a predominantly patriarchal and androcentric society ascend the dragon throne? Exploring a mystery that has confounded scholars for centuries, this multifaceted history suggests that China's rich pantheon of female divinities and eminent women played an integral part in the construction of Wu Zhao's sovereignty. Wu Zhao deftly deployed language, symbol, and ideology to harness the cultural resonance, maternal force, divine energy, and historical weight of Buddhist deities, Confucian exemplars, Daoist immortals, and mythic goddesses, establishing legitimacy within and beyond the confines of Confucian ideology. Tapping into powerful subterranean reservoirs of female power, Wu Zhao built a pantheon of female divinities carefully calibrated to meet her needs at court. Her pageant was promoted in scripted rhetoric, reinforced through poetry, celebrated in theatrical productions, and inscribed on steles. Rendered with deft political acumen and aesthetic flair, these affiliations significantly enhanced Wu Zhao's authority and cast her as the human vessel through which the pantheon's divine energy flowed. Her strategy is a model of political brilliance and proof that medieval Chinese women enjoyed a more complex social status than previously known.

This is a fascinating study of the only female emperor in the whole of Chinese history. By delving deeply into the religious underpinnings of Wu Zetian's power in a way that not even the most dedicated approach to her utilization of Buddhist scriptures and doctrines alone could manage, this investigation illuminates the unique quality of Wu Zetian's reign far more effectively than previous studies. Emperor Wu Zhao and Her Pantheon of Devis, Divinities, and Dynastic Mothers is a solid piece of well-documented scholarship, yet it is vibrant and entertaining throughout. (Victor H. Mair, University of Pennsylvania)Wu Zhao is one of world history's most fascinating figures and the most powerful woman in China's long past. N. Harry Rothschild sheds new light on the ideological underpinnings of Wu Zhao's rise to power and unprecedented female dynasty. The Buddhist prophecies justifying her rule are well known, but Rothschild uncovers a more complex story that includes wise mothers and potent goddesses drawn from the Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist traditions. In lively prose, Rothschild reveals an ever-evolving pantheon of female paragons that Wu Zhao deployed strategically before and after claiming the throne. (Jonathan Karam Skaff, author of Sui-Tang China and Its Turko-Mongol Neighbors)With painstaking research, unerring insights, rich prose, and a sense of humor, Rothschild lavishly illustrates the political genius of Wu Zhao, China's only female emperor. Indicating her keen political instincts and expansive knowledge of China's cultural traditions, Rothschild adeptly delineates how, over the span of her fifty-year rule, Wu Zhao selectively made use of different goddesses and heroines to match the specific circumstances of her career's twists and turns. (Keith N. Knapp, The Citadel, The Military College of South Carolina)This book is a tour de force of textual analysis and historical detective work that leaves previous sensationalistic accounts of Wu Zhao's rise to power in the dust. (Suzanne Cahill, University of California, San

Diego)Exhaustively researched... (Tricycle)What an original and remarkable story N. Harry Rothschild tells of ancestors, power, and leadership. How a woman in an ancient, male-dominated culture employed art and poetry, history and mythology, and ritual and violence to create an ancestral line that consolidated her own gender-bending authority; the story of how Empress Wu invented herself as China's sole female ruler, the Emperor Wu Zhao. (Doris Kearns Goodwin, author of *The Bully Pulpit: Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and the Golden Age of Journalism*)A lively and captivating narrative that is sure to please both specialist and student alike.... Rothschild deserves tremendous applause. (Studies in Chinese Religions)Highly revealing... The amount of material that has been drawn upon to achieve this result is impressive. (International Journal of Asian Studies)[An] informative and entertaining excursion into the religio-political machinations of perhaps the most (in)famous woman in Chinese history. (Religious Studies)A delightful journey through the many faces of Chinese spirituality and morality. (Parabola)About the AuthorN. Harry Rothschild is professor of Asian history at the University of North Florida. He specializes in Tang history and the study of women and gender in China and East Asia. He is also the author of *Wu Zhao, China's Only Female Emperor*.