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Ruby Lal is professor of South Asian history at Emory University. She is the author of *Empress: The Astonishing Reign of Nur Jahan*, *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World*, and *Coming of Age in Nineteenth Century*

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Reign: The Astonishing Reign of Nur Jahan. By Ruby Lal. (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2018. Pp. 336. \$27.95.) This book is a welcome contribution to contemporary literature on Nur Jahan. The text is beautifully written, and Lal's narrative is a powerful

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rendering of the complexities of Nur
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Empress : The Astonishing Reign of
Nur Jahan by Ruby Lal ...
Ruby Lal is an acclaimed historian of
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History at Emory University. She is the
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The Queen of Queens or Maharani, the 17th wife of the Mughal Emperor Jahangir, was a feisty and dynamic woman. In Empress- The Astonishing Reign of Nur Jahan, author and feminist historian Ruby Lal brings to the limelight the many accomplishments of the Mughal

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Lal battles with several kinds of absences to reconstruct the life of Nur Jahan Padshah Begum. The first kind relates to the popular legends about her.

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counterparts in Europe and beyond. In 1611, thirty-four-year-old Nur Jahan, daughter of a Persian noble and widow of a subversive official, became the twentieth and most cherished wife of the Emperor Jahangir. While other wives were secluded behind walls, Nur ruled the

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vast Mughal Empire alongside her husband, and governed in his stead as his health failed and his attentions wandered from matters of state. An astute politician and devoted partner, Nur led troops into battle to free Jahangir when he was imprisoned by one of his own officers. She signed

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Bangladesh, and large chunks of Afghanistan. In 1611, Nur Jahan became the twentieth wife of Mughal emperor Jahangir--and while other royal wives were secluded behind walls, she wielded unprecedented power, strategizing with senior counselors, minting currency,

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Rajni addressing the public, shooting tigers, and designing clothing and architecture (her design influenced the Taj Mahal). Rescuing this dazzling figure from patriarchal and Orientalist clichés, acclaimed historian Ruby Lal gives new insight into the lives of women and girls in the Mughal

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When it came to hunting, she was a
master shot. As a dress designer, few

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Rajni Of Nur Jahan could compare. An ingenious architect, she innovated the use of marble in her parents' mausoleum on the banks of the Yamuna, which inspired her stepson's Taj Mahal. And she was both celebrated and reviled for her political acumen and diplomatic skill, which rivaled those

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the women and the girls during the Mughal Empire, even where scholars claim there are no sources. Nur's confident assertion of authority and talent is revelatory. In Empress, she finally receives her due in a deeply researched and evocative biography that awakens us to a fascinating

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Domestic life and the place of women in the Mughal court of the sixteenth century.

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experienced greater freedoms, playfulness, and creativity than their counterparts in the more restricted colonial world at the end of the century.

Nur Jahan was one of the most powerful and influential women in

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Indian history. Born on a caravan traveling from Teheran to India, she became the last (eighteenth) wife of the Mughal emperor Jahangir and effectively took control of the government as he bowed to the effects of alcohol and opium. Her reign (1611-1627) marked the

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highpoint of the Mughal empire, in the course of which she made great contributions to the arts, religion, and the nascent trade with Europe. An intriguing, elegantly written account of Nur Jahan's life and times, this book not only revises the legends that portray her as a power-hungry

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and malicious woman, but also investigates the paths to power available to women in Islam and Hinduism providing a fascinating picture of life inside the mahal (harem).

Dara Shukoh was the heir-apparent to

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the Mughal throne in 1659, when he was executed by his brother Aurangzeb. Today Dara is lionized in South Asia, while Aurangzeb, who presided over the beginnings of imperial disintegration, is scorned. Supriya Gandhi ' s nuanced biography asks whether the story

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really would have been different with
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Empress Dowager Cixi (1835–1908)
is the most important woman in
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decades and brought a medieval

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the ancient country attained virtually
all the attributes of a modern state:
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like “ death by a thousand cuts ” and

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Reign Of Nur Jahan. She put an end to foot-binding. She inaugurated women ' s liberation and embarked on the path to introduce parliamentary elections to China. Chang comprehensively overturns the conventional view of Cixi as a diehard conservative and cruel despot. Cixi reigned during

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Reign Of Nur Jahan Dowager 's conduct of domestic and foreign affairs, but also takes the reader into the depths of her splendid Summer Palace and the harem of Beijing ' s Forbidden City, where she lived surrounded by eunuchs—one of whom she fell in love, with tragic consequences. The world Chang

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Reign Of Nur Jahan describes here, in fascinating detail, seems almost unbelievable in its extraordinary mixture of the very old and the very new. Based on newly available, mostly Chinese, historical documents such as court records, official and private correspondence, diaries and eyewitness accounts, this

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Biography will revolutionize historical thinking about a crucial period in China ' s—and the world ' s—history. Packed with drama, fast paced and gripping, it is both a panoramic depiction of the birth of modern China and an intimate portrait of a woman: as the concubine to a

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monarch, as the absolute ruler of a
third of the world ' s population, and
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Such is the voice of Shan Sa's
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Empress Wu, one of China's most

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controversial figures, was its first and only female emperor, who emerged in the seventh century during the great Tang Dynasty and ushered in a golden age. Throughout history, her name has been defamed and her story distorted by those taking vengeance on a woman who dared to

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day. Writing with epic assurance, poetry, and vivid historic detail, Shan Sa plumbs the psychological and philosophical depths of what it means to be a striving mortal in a tumultuous, power-hungry world. Empress is a great literary feat and a revelation for the ages.

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The "fascinating . . . lively" story of the Russian slave girl Roxelana, who rose from concubine to become the only queen of the Ottoman empire (New York Times). In *Empress of the East*, historian Leslie Peirce tells the remarkable story of a Christian slave

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girl, Roxelana, who was abducted by
slave traders from her Ruthenian
homeland and brought to the harem
of Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent
in Istanbul. Suleyman became
besotted with her and foreswore all
other concubines. Then, in an
unprecedented step, he freed her and

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married her. The bold and canny Roxelana soon became a shrewd diplomat and philanthropist, who helped Suleyman keep pace with a changing world in which women, from Isabella of Hungary to Catherine de Medici, increasingly held the reins of power. Until now Roxelana has

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been seen as a seductress who brought ruin to the empire, but in Empress of the East, Peirce reveals the true history of an elusive figure who transformed the Ottoman harem into an institution of imperial rule.

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