



Article published on May 1st 2012 | [Entertainment](#)

Despite being a predominantly male dominated society since the ancient times, there were quite a few Chinese women, who left a deep mark on the country's history. One such female was Empress Wu Zetian, who successfully ruled China during one of its most peaceful and culturally diverse eras. Even though most people consider Wu Zetian to be a ruthless ruler, who would go to any extent to not only gain more power but also to sustain it, there are others, who feel that she acted exactly in the same manner as any male emperor in her place would have done.

Chinese people in general believe that during the reign of the Tang dynasty, Chinese women enjoyed a relatively greater freedom in all aspects of their lives. It was time when women, irrespective of still being considered inferior to men, were not forced to lead submissive lives or even bind their feet. Rather they played a significant role in the cultural and political development of China. Many believe this to be one of the major reasons behind the immense success achieved by Wu during her reign, which is considered to be amongst the most glorious periods of Tang era. In fact, Wu Zetian was actively involved in improving the position of women within the society, even if she did so only to show her resentment against the anti-female Confucian beliefs.

While she was in power, Wu Zetian sought the services of scholars to write the biographies of famous Chinese women. She even shifted her court away from its traditional position of male dominance and tried to raise a new dynasty. According to her, an ideal ruler treated her subjects in the same manner as a mother treats her children. She started the practice of establishing a government run by scholars rather than military men. To this end she made it necessary for people competing for government positions to take exams and reducing the size of the army and replacing aristocratic military men with learned men.

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Article Keywords:

Dating Chinese Women, Chinese Women, Chinese Women Dating, Chinese Women Sites, China Women, Date China Women, Dating China Women