

# The life history of wu ze tian flashcard



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Wu Zetian was born in Wenshui county of Shanxi province, in 624. Wu Shihuo, her father, was one of the greatest chancellors of the Tang Dynasty. At her tender age, Wu Zetian read a lot of books and managed to get a good education. When she was fourteen; she was selected to be a fifth grade concubine of the Tang Dynasty and was referred as Emperor Taizong's Cai Ren. The selection was out of her astonishing beauty as well as her high intellectual capacity. At that very time, Emperor Taizong's noticed Wu Zetian literal talents and offered her a position as an assistant secretary; this experience expounded her knowledge and initiated her capacity to learn state affairs. Her prowess attracted Prince Li Zhi who was later proclaimed Emperor Gaozong. Immediately after the death of Emperor Taizong, Wu Zetian was told to go to Ganye Temple in order to be a nun. At that very moment Empress Wang and her associate, concubine Xiao Shufei, were trying hard to catch the attention of the Emperor. Emperor Gaozong attraction to Wu Zetian made him recall her to the palace and she was named Zhao Yi, a name given to Tang concubines.

She was so ambitious, witty at one point, she killed her young daughter and accused Empress Wang of having committed the crime. She was successful in her plot as Emperor Gaozong toppled Empress Wang and made Wu Zetian the Empress. She immediately launched her political career as many of the state affairs were under her command. She was given the role because of Emperor Gaozong weak-mindedness. The management role she was given assisted her in removing obstacles in her political way. She removed a group of political enemies that were in her husband regime. She did this by establishing the secretive police that were responsible for eliminating

anyone who was not in accordance with her way of ruling; she ordered the killing of Empress Wang when she tried to oppose her sitting on the throne and assuming roles of her weak husband. This calculative move propelled her career to the sky rocket heights. When her husband Emperor Gaozong developed a crippling stroke, Empress Wu Zetian was almost in control of all state affairs while claiming that she was handling her husband's role lest the Empire came down. When Emperor Gaozong changed his name to Tian Huang, that is, the Emperor of Heaven, Empress Wu Zetian changed her title to Tian Hou, meaning the Empress of Heaven. This step of changing her name meant that she had almost similar powers to her husband and that she was ready to take the roles she was given as the Empress. The changing of name made her powerful and adorable by the empire at the expense of her husband. People of the empire referred them as “two gods” and this was of much importance to Wu Zetian political career.

When Emperor Gaozong died in 674, Empress Wu Zetian's plan was implanted that she successively proclaimed her two sons, Li Xian and Li Dan, as Emperor Zhongzong and Emperor Ruizong to manage the throne. Wu Zetian chose her youngest son, Emperor Ruizong, as the leader of the throne. She knew that Ruizong was much weaker than his eldest brother, therefore, with him as the Emperor, she would control the empire as she pleased. She was obviously the one ruling since she always told her youngest son what to do.

Its noted that Empress Wu Zetian chose her eldest son, Li Xian, to be Emperor Zhongzong and when she realized that her son was strong and much more independent, she went ahead to depose him from power and

immediately chose the youngest son, who was weak and very much dependent. Later, she later used him in ruling the throne.

In order to rule out the beliefs bestowed upon women on matters of ruling, she managed to gather scholars all over the empire, whom she used in writing biographies of accomplished women all over the world, so that the people could be convinced with her ruling the entire empire. She did this so in order to gain respect and adoration.

She went ahead to raise the place and position of women in the society with her never ending campaigns. In another instance, she promoted her mother's clan by awarding political posts to her relatives who were mostly women. She usually chose the ones by whom she could control and administer rulings through.

She ordered the shifting of her court away from the traditional male power and was always pioneering the foundation of a much newer dynasty. The reason for all these changes were justified by her informing her subjects that mothers were to be the most qualified people to rule because they already had much experience with ruling over their children. She also claimed that mothers were protectors and would, therefore, rule with much care and dignity.

&nbsp; In all this time, Empress Wu Zetian was proclaiming power whilst her son was the Emperor. She was witty enough to wait patiently till the time came for her to overthrow her youngest son. Analysts argue that she took time to prepare the way for her Dynasty by making sure that everything fell in the right place. Her dire support for reviving women made her a favorite

among her gender. She knew that she could get to women first meant that she could be in power without many atrocities from them since they formed majority of Chinese popularity during the regime.

The killing of Empress Wang was a clear indicator of how she felt about competition. Empress Wang had planned to overthrow the Empress Wu Zetian regime from power by claiming that she was the first wife of her last husband, therefore, she had the right to govern the empire. However, these claims did not impress Empress Wu Zetian who plotted the killing of Empress Wang.

In order to achieve her ambitions, she went ahead and appointed sadistic and cruel officials whom she used to search for those who resisted her leadership and killed them. There were those who were killed innocently. Wu Zetian did this to bury opposition that was slowly growing. The rule out of fear was the way forward for her.

#### The Life of Wu Zetian as the Empress

In 690, Empress Wu Zetian younger son, Emperor Ruizong, decided to get out of power. The reason was that he had become tired of his ever-demanding mother. This automatically made her the Empress of China.

The fact that she was ruthless and very malicious did not deter her from being adored by her people. She made sure that qualified, competent and effective individuals were the ones holding key government positions. She was always fair and just to the people she trusted completely and even went ahead to reward them with key government positions. She continued to find

favor with the subordinates due to her competence in running the Monarchy which reflected the prosperity in turn she brought to the entire empire. She tried so hard to leave a legacy during her regime and this dire need led to the fulfillment of her wish.

Emperor Wu Zetian took full control of the empire and this was the much awaited time for her to exercise her leadership duties. Since her inception as the Empress she had always hoped to have the empire under her own rule and the opportunity to do so arose finally. She was ready to lead her legacy.

She immediately replaced the aristocratic military men with scholars. She did this by reducing the size of the army. Her main reason for doing this was to find more favor from her subjects who were mostly peasants and had been under oppressive rule for a long time. She wanted to put an end to the use of excessive force by the military to the common citizen. The step to replace the military with the scholars depicted her real respect for the learned individuals. There was the need for scholars to run the government to bring success she had aspired for.

She also found favor from the peasants after lowering taxes that had always oppressed them. For a long time, peasants were required to pay substantive amount of taxes out of their small production, therefore, preventing them from raising the social ladder. Previous Emperors had always used this tool to downgrade the peasants but Wu Zetian's plans were always different. She knew that success came from everyone including the peasant farmers. They were allowed to hold onto the bigger portion of their produce unlike in the past where they were ordered to sell almost all of it.

Emperor Wu Zetian campaigned for catapulting the agricultural production in the entire empire. She wanted to attain a confident agricultural production level which could sustain the empire for a long time. She had the peasant farmers in mind in the sense that, she wanted them to view agriculture as a profitable business to engage in, and for the first time in China food independence was reached. In order to achieve this, Wu imposed measures that would reward administrative officials who practiced fair tax impositions to peasants and punished those officials who imposed many taxes to the mere peasants. She ordered constructions of irrigation schemes and encouraged the publication of farming textbooks which were used for educating the peasants on the better methods of production.

The public work was so much strengthened by appointing individuals with the same view as hers. She made sure that everybody completed government exams before appointment. Every position had its own kind of exam that was used to test the competence of participants. This methodology was perceived as advantageous since everybody had the same chance of getting a government position. For the first time in China, mere peasants got key positions in the government and this made people very happy. They could be part of the equitable divide of the empire's resources. The examination system was basically deployed so that nobody could be excluded from the government position because of the social class. Wu Zetian was so anxious to put competent people in power that she even decided to interview people personally and cut any element of corruption that could have arisen during the appointment. This practice led to the discovery of raw talents in the political sector. Examples of these raw talents

included the popular China Prime Ministers, Di Renjie and, Zhang Jianzhi among others.

In her tenure she tried to deploy very talented people in the Government. She went a notch higher and requested for people with competent skills and talent to volunteer their services to the empire. She encouraged them to participate in making China a better empire to live in.

As the Empress, Wu Zetian made sure that she created an unbreakable link between Emperor Taizong's Zhen Guan and the Emperor Xuanzong's Heyday of Kaiyuan. The link was interpreted to mean the need for dependence and co-relationship between the two empires. Wu Zetian was clever enough to seek the advice of other prospered Dynasties and went ahead to create ties that facilitated the continuity of her empire.

She did her best that China was considered to have experienced the most peaceful state. She had the power to deal with culprits and there was nothing that could stand in her way while she was trying so hard to administer doctrines, she thought, would work.

Wu Zetian's early background in education, made her treasure education as a tool which could be used to foresee the prosperity of an empire. She, therefore, took much of her time trying to uplift the educational system in the empire. She was always referred as a reformer of the educational systems in China. She established and up dated the " Keju Educational System" that had its roots with the Sui Dynasty (581-618).



This educational system was used to identify future talents. She made sure that the system allowed for everybody, regardless of his/her social status in the society, to gain knowledge and facilitate the growth of the dynasty.

To make sure that everybody had an equal access to education, she lowered the amount of fees for poor peasants so that their children could receive quality education just like their rich counterparts.

Additionally, Wu Zetian had much interest in military defense and foreign diplomacies. She depicted this passion for defense when she ordered the establishment of a military administration in the northwest area. This was established as a base to guard the re-opened the Silk Road that had been previously closed due to earlier interruptions from intruders.

In general, in Wu Zetian's regime, the influential centralized government was formed with a prosperous state economy and steady social level. She managed to convince her people that Buddhism was the state religion and went forward to establish and manage more Temples. She even ordered sculptures to be made all over the Empire. This added more pleasure to the common people.

Despite her accomplishments, it's noted that she was one of the cruel Emperors China has ever had. She ordered removal from the office, people who did not want to follow her rulings. She also foresaw the deaths of Dynasty founding fathers like: Zhangsun Wuji, Cheng Wuting and Yu Zhining.

The Death of Wu Zetian

At beginning of the year 705, Wu Zetian became so ill and was not able to exercise her duties well. However, this state could not make her abandon her role. It took so much pressure from Chancellors that she finally agreed to hand over power to her son, Li Xian. In November, the same year, she passed away at the age of 80. Her death was the end of a fifteen year Dynasty. She was buried with her husband, Emperor Gaozong, in Qian County of Shaanxi Province.

In conclusion, Wu Zetian is considered as a pioneer for the current economic stability China is enjoying hitherto. She was the only woman to have ever ruled China and she clearly depicts the strength and success, a woman could possess. She ruled China for fifteen years and was able to bring it to prosperity.