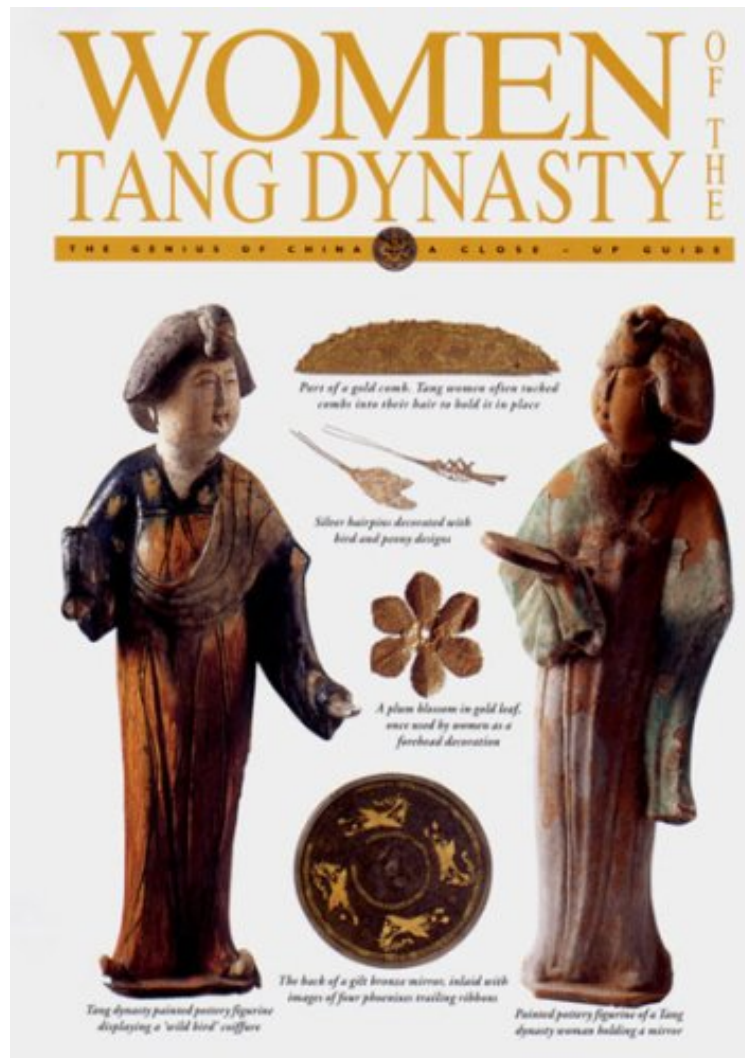


## Women of the Tang Dynasty

May Holdsworth

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**May Holdsworth : Women of the Tang Dynasty** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Women of the Tang Dynasty:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. What is the intended audience? By Customer This book is 32 pages long. If you are looking for scholarly information about the daily life of women in the Tang Dynasty, this book is not for you. The summary on the back says: "Women in Tang society enjoyed experimenting with ways to enhance their appearance and charms. They not only enthusiastically adopted the clothing styles of foreigners who thronged the capital city of Chang'an, but were also some of the earliest cross-dressers in history." I was interested in that kind of information, but the text of the book does not mention "clothing styles of foreigners" or "cross-dressers" AT ALL. The

summary continues: "Through a close-up look at the pottery figurines excavated from tombs and gold and silver objects that survived, a picture emerges of a remarkably open society in which women were able to take an active part in social life and to flaunt their femininity." The text of the book devotes pp 18-32 to a discussion of gold and silver objects that rarely references women at all. Names of historical figures are dropped into the middle of the text without any context. The only women discussed are concubines and wives in the royal palace. The images of the pottery figurines are clear and lovely, I'll give you that, but I'm sure you could find just as lovely images (and many more of them) online. NO citations. I have no way to follow up on even the paltry suggested historical information given, most of which seems to be pulled from myths and hearsay. A few poems were used to support some claims of beauty fads, which is the most positive historical element of the text. I'm going to do what I can to research the suggestion of cross-dressing or the adoption of foreign fashions, as well as the cosmetic trends of painting the forehead, moth eyebrows, and beauty patches. Those are the bits of information I could glean, and I still don't know anything about them. This is not a children's book (the text is not directed to young readers at all), it is not an introduction book (it doesn't offer any ideas for further reading), and it is not a scholarly book (it doesn't say much beyond the hearsay level of information). Also it doesn't say what the summary on the back says it will say! I'm not sure what its intended audience is. So I don't know anyone I would recommend it to. Don't buy it.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Two Reasons to Buy this Very Affordable Book  
By Charles M. Marsteller  
There are two simple reasons to buy this very affordable book. First, the Tang Dynasty and particularly in the early Tang Dynasty, history records as an era of advancement for women at a time and place when this was not part of the culture or the times. Second, the terra cotta, clay sculpture of the Tang Dynasty seems to reflect the new cultural respect for women. Tang sculpture of women is historically very special. It was one of the break-thru eras in art: similar to, say, the Terra Cotta Warriors of the Qin Dynasty, or Sharaku's famous portraiture of actors, or the sculpture of the human form by the Greeks (ie. Kouros) or by Michaelangelo in the Renaissance. It is also recent enough so we can still see the intentions of the artists as regards paint colors at the time when such paint chemistries were being invented. Anyway, the book is well worth the price which is amazingly affordable.

4 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Excellent reference material  
By A Customer  
This is a small book, but it's packed with great photos of figurines from the period. The text is straightforward and well written.

The Close-Up series is the first of its kind to give you a concise introduction to individual aspects of China and its people. Each topic is presented by experts in their fields who write with brevity and clarity for the intelligent reader. Women in Tang society enjoyed experimenting with ways to enhance their charms. Not only enthusiastically adopting fashion styles of foreigners who thronged the capital of Chang'an, they were also some of the earliest cross-dressers in history. Through a close-up look at excavated pottery figures and surviving gold and silver objects, a picture emerges of a remarkable open society in which women took an active part.

About the Author  
May Holdsworth was born in Shanghai and has been writing about China for 20 years. Among her books is *The Forbidden City*, an account of the imperial palace in Beijing.