



Tree of Pearls, Queen of Egypt (Middle East Literature in Translation)

Jurji Zaydan

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Shajar al-Durr, known as Tree of Pearls, was one of the most famous Arab queens and the only woman in the medieval Arab world to rule in her own name. Her narrative is one element of a much larger story of the unsettled political climate of thirteenth-century Egypt. In this eponymous novel, Zaydan charts the fall of the Ayyubid Dynasty and the rise of the Mamluke Dynasty through the adventures of Tree of Pearls and Rukn al-Din Baybars, a young Mamluke commander who eventually triumphs as the ruler of Egypt. War, political intrigue, murder, and a female ruler who was born a slave combine for an irresistible story, while Zaydan's keen observations on royal politics and subverted gender roles offer readers a richly detailed glimpse of the cultural milieu of the time.

Tree of Pearls, originally published in 1914, is the last in a famous series of historical novels written by Zaydan, an accomplished historian whose books continue to be read widely in the Arab world today. Selim's fluid translation introduces an English audience to one of the Arab world's influential writers.

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