



The Soong sisters

By Emily Hahn



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In the early twentieth century, few women in China were to prove so important to the rise of Chinese nationalism and liberation from tradition as the three extraordinary Soong Sisters: Eling, Chingling and Mayling. As told with wit and verve by Emily Hahn, a remarkable woman in her own right, the biography of the Soong Sisters tells the story of China through both world wars. It also chronicles the changes to Shanghai as they relate to a very eccentric family that had the courage to speak out against the ruling regime. Greatly influencing the history of modern China, they interacted with their government and military to protect the lives of those who could not be heard, and they appealed to the West to support China during the Japanese invasion.



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The Soong sisters By Emily Hahn Bibliography

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Editorial Review

About the Author

A revolutionary woman for her time and an enormously creative writer, Emily Hahn broke all of the rules of the 1920s, including by traveling the country dressed as a boy, working for the Red Cross in Belgium, being the concubine to a Shanghai poet, using opium, and having a child out of wedlock. Hahn kept on fighting against the stereotype of female docility that characterized the Victorian era and was an advocate for the environment until her death at age ninety-two.

Emily Hahn (1905–1997) was the author of fifty-two books, as well as one hundred eighty-one articles and short stories for the *New Yorker* from 1929 to 1996. She was a staff writer for the magazine for forty-seven years. She wrote novels, short stories, personal essays, reportage, poetry, history and biography, natural history and zoology, cookbooks, humor, travel, children's books, and four autobiographical narratives: *China to Me* (1944), a literary exploration of her trip to China; *Hong Kong Holiday* (1946); *England to Me* (1949); and *Kissing Cousins* (1958).

The fifth of six children, she was born in St. Louis, Missouri, and later became the first woman to earn a degree in mining engineering at the University of Wisconsin. She did graduate work at both Columbia and Oxford before leaving for Shanghai. She lived in China for eight years. Her wartime affair with Charles Boxer, Britain's chief spy in pre-World War II Hong Kong, evolved into a loving and unconventional marriage that lasted fifty-two years and produced two daughters. Emily Hahn's final published piece in the *New Yorker* appeared in 1996, shortly before her death.

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