



Madame Chiang Kai-shek and Miss Emma Mills: China's First Lady and Her American Friend

Thomas A. DeLong

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Mayling Soong came to America at the age of 10. Her father, Charlie Soong, a practicing Christian who had spent time in America, was convinced that China's youth would need progressive, Western educations before returning to their homeland to take their places as leaders in the fields of government, education and engineering. The youngest of three daughters, Mayling followed her older siblings to the United States in search of a Western education, eventually entering Wellesley in 1913 at age 16. Here she made numerous friends including classmate Emma DeLong Mills. This lifelong friendship lasted through Mayling's 1927 marriage to General Chiang Kai-shek and his subsequent rise to power. After the undeclared Sino-Japanese war broke out Emma began a series of letters detailing the political climate in the isolationist United States, providing Mayling with invaluable insight into American attitudes regarding China and her Asian neighbors.

Beginning with the early days of their friendship in America, the volume describes the identity struggle both women faced following their 1917 graduation from Wellesley. Following Emma's visit to China (and somewhat unwilling return to New York), the friendship continued through their correspondence. Emma's role in the newly organized American Bureau of Medical Aid to China is discussed as are Madame Chiang Kai-shek's international fund-raising efforts on behalf of Chinese war relief. While military and political history is not the focus of the work, it is portrayed as it impacts the friendship, which is the subject of this book.

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