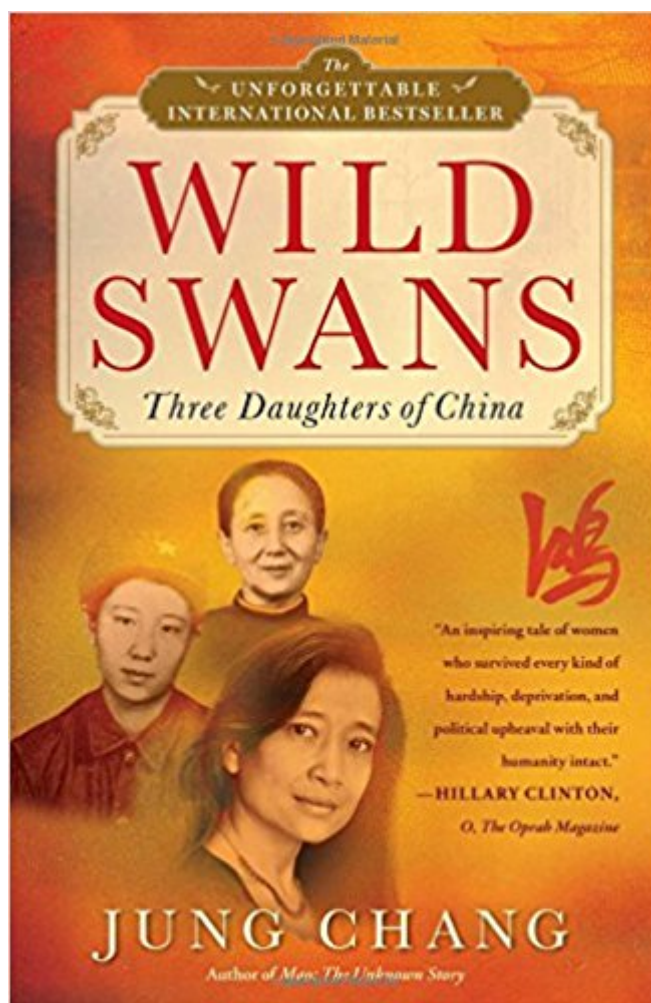


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# Wild Swans: Three Daughters Of China



## Synopsis

The story of three generations in twentieth-century China that blends the intimacy of memoir and the panoramic sweep of eyewitness history—•a bestselling classic in thirty languages with more than ten million copies sold around the world, now with a new introduction from the author. An engrossing record of Mao’s impact on China, an unusual window on the female experience in the modern world, and an inspiring tale of courage and love, Jung Chang describes the extraordinary lives and experiences of her family members: her grandmother, a warlord’s concubine; her mother’s struggles as a young idealistic Communist; and her parents’ experience as members of the Communist elite and their ordeal during the Cultural Revolution. Chang was a Red Guard briefly at the age of fourteen, then worked as a peasant, a barefoot doctor, a steelworker, and an electrician. As the story of each generation unfolds, Chang captures in gripping, moving—and ultimately uplifting—detail the cycles of violent drama visited on her own family and millions of others caught in the whirlwind of history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In *Wild Swans* Jung Chang recounts the evocative, unsettling, and insistently gripping story of how three generations of women in her family fared in the political maelstrom of China during the 20th century. Chang’s grandmother was a warlord’s concubine. Her gently raised mother struggled with hardships in the early days of Mao’s revolution and rose, like her husband, to a prominent position in the Communist Party before being denounced during the Cultural Revolution. Chang herself

marched, worked, and breathed for Mao until doubt crept in over the excesses of his policies and purges. Born just a few decades apart, their lives overlap with the end of the warlords' regime and overthrow of the Japanese occupation, violent struggles between the Kuomintang and the Communists to carve up China, and, most poignant for the author, the vicious cycle of purges orchestrated by Chairman Mao that discredited and crushed millions of people, including her parents. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Bursting with drama, heartbreak and horror, this extraordinary family portrait mirrors China's century of turbulence. Chang's grandmother, Yu-fang, had her feet bound at age two and in 1924 was sold as a concubine to Beijing's police chief. Yu-fang escaped slavery in a brothel by fleeing her "husband" with her infant daughter, Bao Qin, Chang's mother-to-be. Growing up during Japan's brutal occupation, free-spirited Bao Qin chose the man she would marry, a Communist Party official slavishly devoted to the revolution. In 1949, while he drove 1000 miles in a jeep to the southwestern province where they would do Mao's spadework, Bao Qin walked alongside the vehicle, sick and pregnant (she lost the child). Chang, born in 1952, saw her mother put into a detention camp in the Cultural Revolution and later "rehabilitated." Her father was denounced and publicly humiliated; his mind snapped, and he died a broken man in 1975. Working as a "barefoot doctor" with no training, Chang saw the oppressive, inhuman side of communism. She left China in 1978 and is now director of Chinese studies at London University. Her meticulous, transparent prose radiates an inner strength. Photos. BOMC alternate. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Riveting story of survival when ideology soured under Mao, killing millions of Chinese. Of world WWII slaughters, Hitler is often vilified, though Mao is not, literally starved countrymen to death as he devoured banquets. Jung's family history is raw, objective, and emotionally challenging to walk back through her family's suffering and losses, punishments, prison, self condemnation before a crowd of hundreds of hostile people. I didn't lay it down after reading a few pages. Her story is tragic though a moderately satisfying end. I recommend this as human interest, a story of survival at it's worst, to best. Ms Chang also authored Mao's biography, and last Empress of China. These last two books are insightful, especially how people survived Mao. Compelling family history.

The information in this book is eye opening. The story is mainly about the Mother of the writer and it gives you a first hand look for what the Chinese had to endure during the time of the great famine.

The conditions and mistreatment of the innocent was far worse than I could imagine. I enjoyed the historical part of the book and learning more of their culture. There were places the book seemed to drag but mostly it moved along at a nice pace.

An emotion evoking well written chronicle of life in China during the struggle between Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang and Mao Zedong and the Red Army and eventually life under Chairman Mao. Not a story about war but rather a portrayal of the daily struggle for survival, and the death of untold millions under the reforms imposed by the communist leaders. Sadly it also describes the naiveté of the masses besieged by endless brainwashing as the country's leadership took every advantage of the Chinese people's traditional upbringing. There is no glossing over of life in China in this story. No tales of glistening Palaces, or the glamorous life of triad bosses, no tea parties or celebrations of dynasties. The book would seem to be cut and dry but the story is told in the way of a memoir and involves the author's family, thus allowing the reader to become engrossed in the story. As China remains a somewhat unknown regarding individual life this provides an excellent peek into the unknown, and no surprise it is banned in China. Though only a minor mention, Kim Il-sung, the first President of North Korea makes an appearance, and we all have an idea of what life in that country is like. Perhaps Jung Chang has written this story as her first publication which makes it seem brutally honest. It is without doubt the best story this reader has experienced about life in China.

Spanning three generations of women in a single family, this is the inside story of their lives during during the 30 years of the Mao regime. This book opened my eyes to the realities of The Cultural Revolution. Strengths of this book included the writing, character development, first-person storytelling and details of life, thought, actions & reactions, experiences, etc. included. This was not a short or quick read...but it was interesting, involving and thought provoking. I lived these years and never knew...before, during or after. It's a book I am very glad I read.

I've read a few books about China's history, mostly of the academic, textbook variety. None of them taught Chinese history as effectively as this one. I highly recommend this book for anyone interested in history, politics or family memoirs.

Wild Swans was a fascinating book about three generations of women in China. I have been

interested in China since taking two courses in current Chinese politics while a student at college in 1970. This story starts with the horrors of living in China in the early decades of the 20th century, when a woman's place was almost that of a slave. It follows her daughter as she grows in the wars with the Kuomintang, fighting the Japanese during their rape of China. She sides with the victorious Communists as they defeat the Kuomintang, and is initially thrilled with their victory. Then, slowly, she sees the Communists cruelty as they become more interested in petty rivalries, and eventually a cult leadership, with the constant turmoil and civil wars. It is also a love story of family, struggling to survive in a war-torn country. I would have given this a 5-star rating, if it had followed through to today's China. Unfortunately, it ends in the late 1980's. It could use an update, and show how the average family in today's China is faring. From 1920-1975, however, this was a fascinating book.

Excellent book - interesting and well-written. It is shocking to realize that these things went on in China - not centuries ago but during my lifetime. What is even more shocking is that I did not realize it was even happening. This is an incredible book about some incredible people caught up in horrible political times. Even though the grandmother, mother and daughter all lived different lives under different regimes, their lives were dominated by party leaders. Those who see nothing but negatives in American society will have a different outlook once they read this book.

This is a non-fiction book that traces three generations of women in a Chinese family. It begins during the last dynasty, continues during the civil war, and then China under Mao. The atrocities that took place during all these times is horrific. The most important part is life under Mao. Mao has often been idealized as a liberator. However, his "reforms" were based on an ideology that was far removed from reality. His power to impose his will on the Chinese people is incredible. I recently visited China. One of my guides had read it illegally, before it was permitted in China. She said that she felt the book was an accurate portrayal of China. The book is a must read for anyone wanting to know about Mao or the nature of the Chinese.

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