

## Grace in China

### *An American Woman Beyond the Great Wall, 1934–1974*

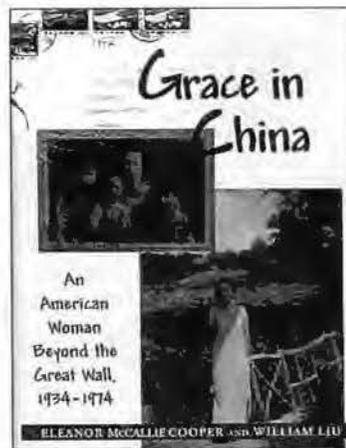
By Eleanor McCallie Cooper and William Liu

MONTGOMERY: BLACK BELT PRESS, 1999  
400 PAGES

Individuals who place themselves in uncommon circumstances provide the stuff from which compelling stories are created. These stories can provide a window through which to view monumental events in world history and international relations. Just such a story, filled with humor, heartbreak, and drama, *Grace in China: An American Woman Beyond the Great Wall, 1934–1974*, offers a look into the history of twentieth-century Chinese history and U.S.-China relations. The authors provide an engrossing account of the life of a woman who traveled to China and spent more than forty years of her life there, not for ideology or religion, but because of her love for an individual man. That love sustained them in early years as they confronted cross-cultural prejudices and then as they struggled to survive, along with their three children, through long years of war in China. It traces her decision to remain in China after the death of her husband in 1954, until her eventual return to the United States in 1974. As a foreigner living in China through tumultuous years of social transformation, Grace Divine Liu contributed unique perspectives on that history. This book should be appealing for secondary and undergraduate students and will be useful to educators in the social studies and history.

The authors, Grace's son William Liu and cousin Eleanor McCallie Cooper, draw extensively upon Grace's own words, taken from letters, articles, and memoirs she wrote. They augment these sources with interviews of Grace, her children, fellow workers in China, and family and friends in the United States. Ample reproductions of photographs and material artifacts enliven the tale and provide an added resource for students of this era in history. The authors use varying fonts to differentiate between sections of the text taken from Divine's letters, her memoirs, and their own narrative. While a bit mechanical, that presentation invites readers to evaluate primary sources, to consider how historical narratives are constructed, and to observe the influence of time and nostalgia on Grace's accounts of the past.

Grace Divine captures our interest as she moves from her birthplace in Chattanooga, Tennessee, to seek her fortunes as an opera performer in New York City. We are engaged in her story as she challenges cultural norms and prejudices by marrying Liu Fu-chi, a Chinese hydrologist with a degree from Cornell University, in 1932. Liu returns to China to begin engineering work; Grace and their eighteen-month-old daughter join him in



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1934. The authors provide a brief overview of major historic events in China prior to Grace's arrival and effectively set the stage for the dramatic events that beset the nation. We follow Grace as she confronts her preconceptions about China, share the humor of her sometimes-awkward experiences in negotiating social customs, and despair for her family as they confront uncommon obstacles in war-torn China.

The narrative slows down a bit as it moves back to recount her family history and U.S. Civil War roots, but happily, it picks up again as the authors return to Grace's experiences in China. As co-author Eleanor McCallie Cooper notes in her foreword, the book not only takes the reader "'inside' a world rarely glimpsed by foreigners," it also provides passage "beyond our usual assumptions, stereotypes, ideologies, and knowledge." Through Grace's eyes we see the daily challenges of life during the Japanese occupation of Tientsin and gain insight into the suffering wrought by war on the lives of common men, women, and children.

Her perspectives on the civil war between the Chinese Communists and Nationalists, and her assessment of the early years of Communist rule offer a provocative counterpoint to popular press descriptions of that time. Thus, the book invites discussion of the power of the press to represent others. Expressing her frustration at Japanese or Nationalist control of the press, Grace later challenged American press accounts of events in China through letters to the editor and magazine articles. Her bold proclamations in letters home eventually alienated her brothers, and she lost contact with most of her family during the 1950s. Similarly, her reflections on the Korean War differ from other American narratives on that war. Her writing poses important questions and challenges us to examine multiple perspectives of events during the Cold War. Teachers might encourage their students to compare her accounts of the war with recent news stories about previously unacknowledged aspects of the Korean War.

After the death of her husband, she moved from the protected environment of the Western community into a Chinese neighborhood. There, she made strong connections with Chinese people in

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ways she had not previously ventured. Sharing housing with several other families, struggling to develop her rudimentary language skills, she felt herself a part of the New China. In the fall of 1957 she joined the English faculty at Nankai University where she challenged tradition by introducing new teaching methods. During the years that followed, she experienced effects of the Great Leap Forward and the rampant famine that ensued. In the midst of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, Grace faced charges of being an American spy involved in anti-Maoist espionage. Her son, who also became a target of those attacks, provides a moving account. This story of a family separated by terror, afraid to contact one another, offers a view of personal agony and chaos that ensued in the wake of that cultural upheaval.

The events of international diplomacy during the early 1970s form the backdrop for a transition in the private world of an individual. Grace Liu returned to the United States in 1974 to be reunited with surviving family members. She experienced reverse-culture shock and discovered that many people did not want to hear things that disrupted their preconceptions. Readers of this book, however, will find much worthy of reflection in her encounters with a changed America. Grace Divine Liu died in April 1979, surrounded by her three children. Chinese officials recognized her contributions to friendship between nations in a ceremony of eulogy in the Hall of Revolutionary Martyrs in Beijing.

This book and the life it evokes augment the collective story of non-official ambassadors between nations. Adding a personal dimension to the history of U.S.-China relations during the twentieth century, it provides a useful complement to more academic accounts of this exchange. *Grace in China* belongs among biographical and autobiographical writing about other American women who lived in and wrote about China, such as Milly Bennett, Agnes Smedley, Anna Louise Strong, and Helen Snow. The book can be well used as supplementary reading in courses or units focusing on U.S.-China relations, twentieth-century Chinese history, World War II, and the Korean War. It also invites discussion of functions of the press, and biography or memoir as historical narrative. ■

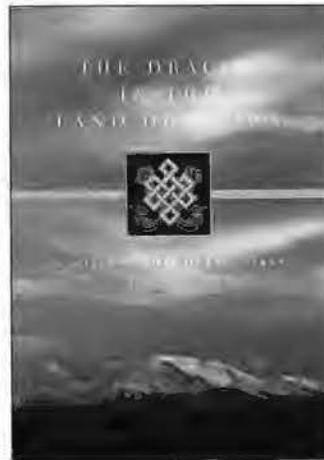
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## The Dragon in the Land of Snows

### *A History of Modern Tibet Since 1947*

By Tsering Shakya

NEW YORK: COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1999  
XXIX, 448 PAGES, 12 PHOTOS, 7 MAPS, ANNOTATED,  
APPENDICES, BIBLIOGRAPHY, INDEX



**T**sering Shakya's book is a breath of fresh air, which deliberately avoids the polemics that so frequently pervade scholarship on Sino-Tibetan relations. In fact, he states that his goal is to offer some correction to both Chinese and Tibetan historical renditions that have contributed to a "denial of history," a process which necessarily entails a negation of responsibility." He succeeds in this task by present-

ing a picture of Tibetans that is not timeless nor characterized by a uniformity of interests; by documenting periods of Tibetan cooperation with and co-optation by the Chinese; by explaining the multifaceted nature of contemporary Tibetan revolts and demonstrations; by illustrating ways in which the constantly shifting international scene has imposed obstacles to and opened up opportunities for Tibetans to voice their grievances; and by revealing Communist Chinese assumptions and strategies that have served to undermine their nation-building project.

Shakya does not depict Tibet as a sleepy, mystical, harmonious kingdom on the eve of the Chinese invasion. In fact, he argues that in the 1920s, the thirteenth Dalai Lama made a deliberate decision not to join the League of Nations because he didn't want his country overrun by foreigners. Of course, the majority of Tibetans, peasants and herders, were illiterate, but a handful of educated and highly positioned Tibetans were aware of and interested in global developments. Moreover, there were monastic and regional divisions such as those between Lhasa, the Panchen Rimpoche and eastern Tibet or between peasants and aristocratic and government elites that the Chinese later exploited to their advantage.

Secondly, Shakya argues that against the backdrop of Chinese militarism and coercion, some Tibetans have endorsed