# Song Ailing and China's Revolutionary Elite

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The importance of the Song clan's eldest sibling, Song Ailing 宋藹齡, for the modern history of China lies with her crucial role as confidential secretary for the Tong Meng Hui 同盟會 and Sun Yat Sen between 1909-1914, a critical

period in Sun's revolutionary career. In subsequent decades she held a position at the heart of the KMT Chongqing government as matriarch of the Song Clan and wife of H.H. Kung (Kong Xiangxi 孔祥熙). Her husband's positions as Vice-Premier and Premier of the Executive Yuan, Minister of Finance and the Chairman of the Central Bank of China required confronting both an expansionist Japan and a collapsing world economy. But, her historic role in China's revolutionary networks has been obscured by many historians and journalists, while her specific history is often inaccurately merged with that of her next sibling, Song Qingling 宋庆 龄. The confusion in secondary literature is deeply implanted and severely distorts the historical record. Correcting the errors requires a thorough review of the secondary literature and identification of the explicit distortions within it.

Sun Yat Sen's 孙逸仙 deep relationship to the Song family is exemplified by the two Song sisters who were his English secretaries: Song Ailing for the five years from 1909 to 1914 and Song Qingling for the nine years from 1914 to 1925. Song Qingling's status as his second wife from 1915 to 1925, and his subsequent

widow from 1925 to 1981, has significantly overshadowed the relationship of her older sister to Sun. Sun's transition from employing Song Ailing to Song Qingling became critical for the future history of the KMT and for the CCP.

However, not only is the date for Soong Ailing's marriage to H.H. Kung, which opens the door to her sister's marriage to Sun Yat Sen, not specified in any of the major sources on the history of Republican China, as importantly the date for the marriage of her young sister (Song Qingling) to Sun Yat Sen is also a source of controversy. The lack of specificity over the marriage dates of two of the most influential women of 20<sup>th</sup>-century China, both of which should have been mundanely recorded as a matter of course, is unusual and assuredly reflects the political sensitivity of the dates.

The sequence of the marriage dates is uniquely important for the political structure of the Republic of China: Song Ailing's marriage to H.H. Kung in the fall of 1914 opens the door for Song Qingling's marriage to Sun Yat Sen in the fall of 1915. With Song Ailing remaining as Sun Yat Sen's private secretary though the summer of 1914, she becomes a founding personality in the Revolutionary Party (Gemingdang 革命党), the

Start from the left: Song Ailing, Song Qingling and Song Meiling.



members of which through pledging personal loyalty to Sun become the core of the KMT-Nanjing-Chongqing government. The sisters' relationships with Sun Yat Sen also allowed their younger brother, T.V. Song (Song Ziwen 宋子文), to play a leading financial role in the Canton government by August 1924. In this month he would set up the Central Bank of China with a US\$10 million Soviet loan and become the key financial broker in Canton. Both of the Song sister's marriages then make possible the 1 December 1927 marriage of Song Meiling 宋美龄 to Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi 蒋 介石), who accedes to the international support and network provided to the Song Clan and to Sun Yat Sen. By 1927, it will be the husband of Song Meiling, Chiang Kai-shek, who commands the armies that will provide the opportunity for the Song family's financial and political relationships in the Republic of China for the next 40 years.

Although Song Qingling's husband Sun Yat Sen is dead by 1925, while she moves radically left and out from influence in the KMT following Chiang Kai-shek's overthrow of leftist KMT elements in April of 1927, from 1926 to 1949 Song Ailing's position is immeasurably strengthened. Her husband acts as Premier, Vice-Premier, Minister of Finance and head of the Central Bank of China in the government of her younger sister's husband, Chiang Kai-shek, while her former colleagues in the Revolutionary Party occupy key positions in the government of the Republic of China and in the KMT. In the same period, her younger brother, the family's oldest son, T.V. Song, becomes Minister of Finance, Foreign Minister, and eventually Premier. This political positions evolution is made possible by Song Ailing's marriage to H.H. Kung in the fall of 1914.

What was the origin of Song Ailing's unusual capability, influence or luck? Being the oldest daughter of a talented clan and sitting at the nexus of the secret communication network for her father and Sun Yat Sen in the Tong Meng Hui and Revolutionary Party may well have been the origin of her influence. This article will seek to identify the inaccuracies in leading publications concerning Song Ailing's role as confidential secretary to the Tong Meng Hui, to her father and to Sun Yat Sen, and thereby bring into

clarity her role as arguably the leading woman of China's republican era.

#### THE BIOGRAPHIES

The more noted biographers that directly discuss the Song sisters and Sun Yat Sen include: (a) Grace Sydenstriker, using the pen name of Cornelia Spencer, in The Three Sisters in 1940,1 (b) Emily Hahn in The Soong Sisters of 1942,2 (c) James Burke in My Father in China, of 1945,3 (d) Sterling Seagrave in The Soong Dynasty of 1985,4 (e) Jung Chang in Mme Sun Yat-sen, the Extraordinary Life of Soong Ching-ling of 1986,5 (f) Israel Epstein in Life and Times of Soong Ching Ling of 1991,6 (g) Lloyd Eastman's Chiang Kai-shek's Secret Past of 1993,7 and (h) Laura Tyson Li's Madame Chiang Kaishek of 2006.8 While Boorman's Biographical Dictionary of Republican China contains a separate entry for Song Qingling, there is none for Song Ailing. Data from an earlier biographical series, originally published from 1918 to 1950 in Shanghai and entitled Who's Who in China 1918-1950, has extensive reporting on Song Qingling beginning in the fourth edition in 1931 and continuing to the sixth in 1950. Two entries for Song Ailing exist, one each in the fourth edition of 1931 and the fifth edition of 1936.

Although not a biography of any of the Songs, a publication that cannot be ignored due to its impact on modern American perceptions of the Republic of China is Barbara Tuchman's 1971 Pulitzer Prize winning text, Stilwell and the American Experience in China. Tuchman's narrative of Stilwell is strangely configured. She takes Stilwell's unsuccessful experience as Commanding Officer of the China-Burma-India Command (CBI) for the two years from 1942 to 1944 and suggests that this was an omen for the difficulties the United States experienced in the Chinese Civil War from 1947 to 1949. But she both ignores the fundamentally successful experience of the American general Claire Chennault in commanding the Chinese Air Force for the eight years from 1937 to 1945, while omitting details on the relationships and activities of Song Ailing and H.H. Kung. One of her most perplexing insinuations apropos H.H. Kung is her observation that he had 'the mentality of a child of twelve'. 10 Clearly an individual who was equally fluent in Mandarin and English, had two degrees from leading American institutions and was

responsible for the conversion of China from silver to a fiat currency subsequent to the Great Depression and before the Japanese attack on China, among other accomplishments, differed greatly from Tuchman's dubious assertion. W. Cameron Forbes, US Ambassador to Japan during the Manchurian Crisis and head of the US economic mission to China at the time of the Leith-Ross Mission in June of 1935 detailed the difficulties China faced due to the imposition of the American Silver Purchase Act of 14 October 1934, and the severe economic problems with which H.H. Kung dealt.<sup>11</sup> With Tuchman having ignored this critical economic issue and having inserted an unreferenced innuendo with respect to H.H. Kung's intellectual capabilities, her characterisations of Song Ailing and H.H. Kung are certainly unreliable. The purpose of Tuchman's distortion is a subject for contemplation.

There are many modern publications in Chinese on Sun Yat Sen, Song Qingling, Song Ailing and Wang Jingwei 汪精卫, but most seem to suffer from the same maladies. They rarely are indexed, almost never identify their sources and seldom utilise footnoting. Despite being extremely detailed, it is often impossible to verify the reliability of the information presented. A good example is a fact-filled tract on Sun's family published in 2004 by the Party History Publishing House of the Chinese Communist Party entitled Sun Zhongshan Yi Jia Ren, Yige Zai Zhongguo you Juda Yingxiang de Jiazu 孙中山一家人,一个在中国有 巨大影响的家族 (The People of Sun Yatsen's Family, a Clan in China with Extraordinary Influence). 12 Readers only have the prestige of the publisher to support the assertions made.

An example of the necessity of reviewing Song Ailing's background for a study of Macao in the decades from 1900 to 1940 is the well researched and presented Portuguese language publication *Macau e a Implantação da República na China, Uma Carta de Sun Yat-sen para o Governador José Carlos da Maia.*<sup>13</sup> The analysis was the first to report in detail the relationship of a key Portuguese Republican (Carlos da Maia) with the leading Chinese Republican (Sun Yat Sen). Unfortunately, the text confuses the sisters Song Ailing and Song Qingling. It claims that Sun Yat Sen married Song Ailing in July 1914, and subsequently described her as a leading leftwing political activist under the communist regime in China. The author is clearly speaking of Song Qingling, and has undoubtedly

fused the data of the two sisters, likely due to Song Ailing's prior and significantly under-reported role as the secretary of Sun from 1912 to 1914. The unusual feature of the error is the prestige of the publisher and the detailed reporting on the neglected and little-known figure of Carlos da Maia, Governor of Macao from 1914 to 1916. A letter from Sun Yat Sen to him in June 1916 testifies to the intriguing relationship he maintained with Chinese Republicans.

Merging the story of Song Ailing with Song Qingling obscures Song Ailing's role during this critical period of Republican revolution in both China and Portugal. Her likely role with respect to Macao in both the period of the Portuguese and Chinese early republics as well as in the Sino-Japanese War is not insignificant. In May 1904 as a young girl she had travelled to the United States using a Portuguese passport which her father had arranged for her in Shanghai. After May 1940, Japan and Chongqing were conducting negotiations through Macao via her younger brother (T.V. Song); and in June of 1944, while the Japanese Ichigo campaign threatened to topple the Chongqing Regime, she had travelled to Brazil where the husband (Dai Encai 戴恩赛) of Sun's only surviving daughter (Sun Wan 孙婉) had been Ambassador for the eight years form 1929 to 1938. With her was her youngest sister and Chiang Kai-shek's wife, Song Meiling, while Dai and Sun Yat Sen's wife maintained a significant home in Macao.

The strange phenomenon of merging the records of the two sisters is also in evidence earlier in the century. The Fourth Edition (1931), Fifth Edition (1936), and Fifth Edition Supplement (1940) of the China Weekly Review's Who's Who in China all inaccurately reported that Song Qingling, 'when the Republic was formed at Nanking, ...served in the Nanking Provisional Government under Dr. Sun Yat-sen,'14 and that she then fled with him to Japan. Since Song Qingling did not graduate from Wesleyan until June 1913, and did not return to China until September 1913, the 1931, 1936 and 1940 editions of Who's Who in China are clearly referring to Song Ailing. Importantly this report should have placed Soong Ailing at the core of Sun's entourage when he was heading the newly-founded Chinese Republic and when he was undertaking revolutionary actions against Yuan Shikai 袁世凯.

Equally significant, this reporting occurs from 1931 to 1940 in Shanghai during the time that H.H.

Kung and Song Ailing were reaching the height of their political power. To re-focus this thought: at the very time that H.H. Kung and Song Ailing were most influential, the leading English language publication of Chinese biographies in their hometown of Shanghai, the financial center of the KMT regime, was obscuring the fact that Song Ailing had been Sun Yat Sen's personal secretary during the most critical years of Sun's career. The entries of 1931, 1936 and 1940 purportedly refer to Song Qingling, when in fact much of the entry describes Soong Ailing. The editions state:

Madame Sun Yat-sen ...entered the Wesleyan College for Women at Macon, Georgia and was graduated with a B. A. degree; after graduation she returned to China and in 1912, when the Republic was formed at Nanking, she served in the Nanking Provisional Government under Dr. Sun Yat-sen; when Yuan Shi-kai took action against Dr. Sun as a revolutionist, she in company with other members of Dr. Sun's personal staff fled to Japan where they remained for sometime as political refugees; in Oct. 1915, she was married to Dr. Sun in Japan...<sup>15</sup>

By the Sixth Edition in 1950, published following the Communist takeover and control of Shanghai (by an American who would eventually be tried for sedition for pro-China publications during the Korean War),<sup>16</sup> the inaccuracies of the previous decades were corrected. The Sixth Edition of 1950 reads, 'Madame Sun Yat-sen...was graduated with a B.A. degree in 1913; in October, 1915, she was married to Dr. Sun in Japan...'<sup>17</sup>

One of the most intriguing issues of Song Ailing's background is the failure of any source to accurately provide the date for her marriage to H.H. Kung. The importance of Ailing's marriage to H.H. Kung and its date is not trivial. First, it determines the date of Song Qingling's marriage to Sun Yat Sen, because it is only after Ailing leaves as Sun's secretary that Song Qingling takes on the position. Second, it establishes the fact that Song Ailing was Sun's secretary when he formally established the Revolutionary Party in the summer of 1914. The members of this party would go on to become the core of the KMT regime over the next 40 years. With respect to Song Qingling's marriage to Sun, Song Qingling needed to be in the secretarial position long enough to establish the emotional relationship

with Sun that would allow for their marriage. The marriage of Sun and Song Qingling could not have taken place in the fall of 1914 as many conservative sources assert.

Song Qingling's marriage to Sun Yat Sen will become one of the most important dates in the Republican Period. It is the date that anchors the Song Family to the political leadership of China, allowing for the entry of T.V. Song into the KMT's financial management in the 1920s, Meiling's marriage to Chiang Kai-shek in December 1927, and H.H. Kung's leading financial and political positions between 1932 and 1944. Song Qingling's life-long role in international forums as the representative of the Chinese left wing as well as her positions in the government of the People's Republic is established by her marriage to Sun. She was Vice-Chairman of the Central People's Government between 1949 and 1954, and was elected as one of two Vice-Presidents of the People's Republic of China in 1959.18 A curious reader might query why the marriage dates for two such prominent sisters have been a source of mystery or controversy.

For the elder sister, Song Ailing, it seems highly unusual that date and place of her marriage to H.H. Kung has not been precisely determined. Both Kung and Song were confirmed, self-professing Christians. Kung had survived the massacre of his teachers and friends at the Oberlin College mission in Shanxi during the Boxer Rebellion of the summer of 1900; he went on to attend Oberlin (1902-1906) and Yale (1907), then to re-establish the Oberlin Mission School by 1908. He and Ailing were married while he was director of the Chinese YMCA in Tokyo, a position that was deemed by John R. Mott and Sherwood Eddy to be of primary significance for the development of Christianity in China due to the number of young Chinese who had flocked to Japan following its victory of Russia in the summer of 1905. Kung also claimed to be a direct descendant of Confucius. The determination of the ancestral line was of pre-eminent importance to maintaining his line's integrity under a recording system that apparently extended back over 2,000 years. Would not Christian faiths and Confucian lineage have required the recording of the Kung-Song marriage by family and church? At the wedding of such an important couple, and their undoubted wedding banquet, were no photos to record the event ever taken?

## SONG AILING'S MARRIAGE

Although the marriage date for Song Qingling varies between 1914 and 1915, the marriage of Song Ailing to H.H. Kung is even more obscure. Popular biographies of the Songs, as is evidenced by the wartime edition of Elmer Clark's The Chiangs of China, carry neither the date nor the church name.<sup>19</sup> Even W.H. Donald, the Australian newspaperman who specialised in being 'in the know' on the public and private lives of his politically-elite Chinese clients over his half-century long career in China did not disclose in his glibly written biography by E.A. Selle the date or the location of Ailing's marriage. He merely drolled, 'Ailing found her love in another refugee, a chubby, round-faced man, Dr. H.H. Kung, the seventy-fifth direct descendant of Confucius. They too were married in Japan.'20 Emily Hahn, with direct access to Ailing and her sisters in the early 1940s under a timely contract arranged for her by John Gunther,<sup>21</sup> produced a book entitled The Soong Sisters but did not identify the year, month or name of the Church of the wedding for this couple who so many writers have reputed to have such great powers of economic and political manipulation. She provided only a paragraph of fluff on the topic, relating that,

At the end of this term, the young people were married in Yokohama by Christian ceremony, in a little church on a hill. Eling's wedding dress was of pale pink satin (a Chinese bride always wears pink or red); ...It was a small wedding, with only the Soongs, Dr Kung's cousins and a few intimate friends as guests.<sup>22</sup>

Gordon Seagrave does no better in his poorly-referenced *The Soong Dynasty* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985) that purports to be a 'tell-all' on the Soong Family and its networks. Without referencing Hahn's description of the marriage, other than the colour of Ailing's dresses, he appears to have used only Hahn's assertions as to the event, but he added that the wedding occurred in the spring, although he provided no source for this enhancement of Hahn's text.<sup>23</sup> Without mentioning the year, month, date, day or church, Seagraves pronounced that,

They were married in the spring. ...Like the cherry trees, Ailing wore pink.... The ceremony was conducted in a little church on a hill, the immediate members of Charlie's family present,

along with Kung's cousins and a few friends. Afterward, Ailing changed into an apple-green satin dress decorated with golden birds... <sup>24</sup>

The Chinese language reference text published in 2004 by the Chinese Communist Party History Publishing Company that is entitled The People of Sun Yatsen's Family, a Clan in China with Extraordinary Influence, translates virtually word-for-word the Seagrave rendition of Ailing's wedding in Yokohama, including using the inaccurate and undocumented 'spring 1914' date for the event, and without referencing Seagrave as a source.<sup>25</sup> The only additional item that is added is that Kung's first wife, whom he married in 1910, is stated to have died in August 1913 of lung disease. It is, then, somewhat surprising that the History Publishing Company of the Chinese Communist Party reports Kung's marriage to Ailing as coming within six to eight months of the death of Kung's first wife, Mable Han Yumei, as well as the funeral of both Kung's wife and his father. These funerals occurred in mid-October of 1913 following her death on 3 August.<sup>26</sup> The event is recorded by the photograph in the 1914 Annual Report of the Shanxi District of the American Board.<sup>27</sup>

The Beijing published *Kongshi Jiazu Quanzhuan* 孔氏家族全传 (Kong Family Biography) of 2001 does no better when it provides an unreferenced assertion in the chronology in its appendix that H.H. Kong and Soong Ailing were married in the spring of 1914.<sup>28</sup>

The appropriate mourning period for the death of both a father and a spouse may likely have been longer than six to eight months. Jennie Chen Jieru 陈洁如, when discussing her marriage to Chiang Kai-shek on 5 December 1921, advises that 'in the imperial days, the death of either parent required a mourning period of three years,' although in her case she advised that 'since the establishment of the republic, ...one hundred days of mourning was considered adequate.'29 It may be that Kung was able to reduce the mourning period for his first wife and father, despite the lavish traditional funeral he held for both. But the assertion that the marriage took place in the spring of 1914 contradicts the publicly available records of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions that are held at the Houghton library at Harvard. Reverend Mark Williams of the Oberlin Shanxi Mission in Taiku Hsien reported only once regarding Kung's marriage in his regular and consistent monthly letters to his family in America. On 9 October

1914 he wrote that 'we hear that Mr. Kung was married at Tokio to Miss Regina Sung.'30

Even Martin Bernard in his 1944 biography curiously entitled *Strange Vigour*; a *Biography of Sun Yat-sen*, initially put the Kung-Song marriage into an undefined mélange. While he noted that H.H. Kung was coincidentally in Tokyo while 'Sun and the Soongs and other revolutionists' were organising their revolt against Yuan Shikai, Bernard provided no year, month, date or place, while also providing no dates that could offer an anchor reference. He merely related that when Ailing left as Sun's secretary, Qingling took her place

In Tokyo, where Sun and the Soongs and other revolutionists were beginning to reorganize their broken political work, there was a certain Chinese of a branch of the family of Kung, temporarily managing a Chinese Y.M.C.A. in that city. He was in general sympathy with Sun Yat-sen and took an active part in the revolution. Kung knew Eling Soong, having met her a few years earlier in New York. In Tokyo he renewed his friendship with the Soongs and within a year married Eling. When Eling gave up her secretarial work to marry Kung she suggested that her younger sister, Chingling, might take her place.<sup>31</sup>

Howard Boorman in his well-regarded *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China* seems to have equal difficulty defining the marriage date of what could arguably be called the first or second most important couple in Republican China. In his biography for H.H. Kung he merely states, 'K'ung, whose first wife, North China Women's College graduate Han Shu-mei, had died of tuberculosis, ...married Soong Ai-ling in 1914.'<sup>32</sup> Boorman did not provide Ailing with a separate biographical entry for his exhaustive encyclopedia of the leading figures of Republican China. In the entry for the Song Family, he merely stated, 'When Ai-ling left Sun's entourage to marry H.H. Kung (q.v.), she was replaced by her sister Ch'ing-ling.'<sup>33</sup>

The closest approximation to the date of Ailing's marriage from a reliable secondary source that has been surveyed is the date that appears by default in Israel Epstein's 1995 biography of Song Qingling entitled *Life and Times of Soong Ching Ling (Mme. Sun Yatsen)* (Beijing: New World Press, 1995), which states, 'From September 1914, Ching Ling worked with Sun daily as English secretary. She replaced her sister Ai-ling who left to marry Kong Xiang-xi (H.H. Kung).'34 Placing

this in the context of the letter from Reverend Mark Williams dated 9 October 1914 would locate the date for Ailing's marriage in late September or early October rather than the spring of 1914, as Seagrave asserted without citation. This date would also fit with Emily Hahn's biography of the Song Sisters undertaken in conjunction with Ailing Song, which stated that their marriage occurred near the end of H.H. Kung's term as secretary of the Chinese YMCA in Tokyo.<sup>35</sup> The term had begun after Kung's arrival in Tokyo in December of 1913. This would have allowed for his marriage sometime in the fall of 1914. Epstein's authority stems from his multi-decade friendship with Song Qingling who authorised him to write her biography; Mark Williams from his close association with H.H. Kung in Taiku as is evident from their photo in the Missionary Herald of October 191336, and Emily Hahn's from her direct access to the sisters.

The confusion unfortunately has never been properly resolved. In 2006 Laura Tyson Li asserted that 'when Eling left Sun's service in September 1913, Ching Ling stepped into her shoes...by November 1913 the idealistic young lady was clearly smitten.'37 Without providing her own references for the date, Li contradicts all other sources with respect to the date Song Qingling became Sun's secretary. She uses the date September 1913 when more reliable sources state that she became secretary in the fall of 1914, including arguably the most authoritative source, Israel Epstein's 1993 biography of Song Qingling, which is quoted above. Despite her extensive research on the Song sisters, Li provides no date for Ailing's marriage to H.H. Kung, she does not indicate that Ailing left Sun's employ to marry Kung, and she does not tie the Soong Ailing marriage date into Kung's one-year contract to manage the Chinese YMCA in Tokyo. Tyson Li's representation takes Song Ailing completely out of the fundamentally important creation of the Revolutionary Party in the summer of 1914, and provides no explanation for Ailing's activities for the year from September 1913 to September 1914.

Ailing cannot be tied to H.H. Kung in the fall of 1913, because he remained in Taiku Hsien, Shanxi, burying his first wife Han Yumei. On 25 October 1913, the Taiku Mission had passed a resolution which read, '...we express to Mr. Kung our heartfelt sympathy in his bereavement, and our hope that as he goes to his new work in his loneliness, that Other Presence, which is

more precious than any of earth, may be with him and keep him.'38 Kung did not get to Japan until December 1913. More importantly, the Shanxi Mission report written after its 14-19 May 1914 meeting in Fenchow, just to the west of Taiku, disclosed nothing regarding Kung's second marriage to Ailing. It merely stated, 'Our Greatvale church and community has suffered a great loss at the death of Mrs. H.H. Kung... she passed away on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1913 after two months of suffering.'39 Clearly, if H.H. Kung had taken Ailing Song for his second wife by the spring of 1914, the Taiku Mission where he had spent the last five years of his life as the founder and principal of its main school would have mentioned the marriage in its report for 1913-1914. But, despite the report being written after the Shanxi Mission's meeting in May 1914, there is so mention of such a marriage.

A limited review of Chinese language sources demonstrates that two of them, one published in Taiwan, the other in Qingdao, are of little assistance. Neither has bibliographies, footnotes or indexes. Both use interesting but unsubstantiated assertions with respect to the motivations of all the respective parties. The biography from Taiwan published in 1984 entitled, Jin Quan Furen Song Ailing, Jangkong Minguo Quanqian Zhengzhi Diyi Ren 金权夫人宋蔼龄, 掌控 民国权钱政治第一人 (Madame Money, Song Ailing, the Person that Controlled the Republic's Money and Politics), is similar to English language publications in that it merely states that Ailing's marriage took place in a Church in Yokohama in 1914 in a ceremony that was entirely Christian. It adds a short statement that of the weddings of the three sisters, the least information was for that of Ailing. Given that the first wedding of any of the Song sisters was the one that Charlie Song 宋嘉树 and Ni Kwei Tseng (Ni Guizhen 倪桂珍), regarded as most appropriately structured, that it was conducted in a Christian church, and that the Songs held the wedding banquet, 40 the absence of basic data on the wedding seems highly unusual. The mainland publication, Song Ailing Quanzhuan 宋蔼龄全传 published by Qingdao Publishing Ltd in 1998 is a fictionalised account of Ailing's life that presents vivid and detailed dialogue, from conversations that must have been sourced from the author's imagination. No presentation could be so utterly detailed and so utterly lacking in references. In any event, it neither provides a date or a place, other than the standard information

that Ailing's marriage took place in Yokohama in a Christian Church.<sup>41</sup>

To add to the confusion from mainland Chinese sources on the marriage date, a 1992 Beijing publication by Li Maosheng 李茂盛 entitled *Kong Xiangxi Zhuan* 孔祥熙传 states in its chronology that Kung assisted in the organisation of the Sun's new Revolutionary Party after 23 June 1914, and that not long afterward H.H. Kung left to marry Song Ailing: 'June 23: The Chinese Revolutionary Party is established, Kung helps Sun Yatsen arrange party matters and facilitate the handling of documentation. Not long thereafter, he marries Miss Song Ailing in Tokyo.'<sup>42</sup> Again, there is consistently no date provided for the Kung-Song marriage.

#### THE MEANING OF NO DATE

The failure to adequately address the marriage of Song Ailing by date, place and those in attendance obscures the role and period Ailing played for Sun Yat Sen as his key confidential secretary, and by implication, her relationship with his major political operator, Wang Jingwei. By moving her marriage from the fall of 1914 to early 1914, Song Ailing is removed from two critical events: (i) the creation of the Revolutionary Party, which forged a core of disciples that pledged personal loyalty to Sun, which he formalised in June of 1914 for the purposes of overthrowing Yuan Shikai; and (ii) the potential communication links from Sun to Wang Jingwei in Europe during the critical, crisisfilled atmosphere in Europe on the eve of the First World War. This would have, of course, included any meetings of the International Socialist Bureau (ISB) of the Second International, while Sun's chief organiser and propagandist, Wang Jingwei was in France. The world's leading revolutionaries, who included Lenin, Trotsky, Plekhanov, Martov and Axelrod were in close proximity to Wang in French speaking Belgium and Switzerland during the same period.

With Europe at war, Japan as a treaty ally of Britain was sure to take advantage of the isolated German holdings in Shandong and the Pacific. The Second International had pledged to prevent the outbreak of war, while Sun had taken aggressive steps to work with the Chinese Socialist Party following the Xinhai Revolution (Xinhai Geming 辛亥革命) of 1911. Had the International Socialist movement prevented an outbreak of war in Europe in 1914, China's

modern history may have been quite different. Shortly after war was declared, Japan, in conjunction with a small contingent of British Empire troops, attacked and eliminated the German concession at Qingdao in the fall of 1914, then Japan and British Empire naval units occupied the German-owned Pacific Ocean islands that dominated the American communication links between Hawaii and the Philippines. By January 1915 the Japanese position in the Far East with respect to China and the Western Powers had been vastly enhanced. The infamous Twenty-One Demands were soon promulgated by a victorious Japanese government on Yuan Shikai's increasingly isolated domestic regime. In the spring of 1919, the failure of the Versailles Peace Conference to return the German Concession to China led to the May 4th Movement. Thus, the First World War had resulted in Japanese power being firmly established in North China, American logistical links to China being jeopardised by Japanese occupation of the intersecting Pacific islands, and a growing Communist movement being implanted in China. In hindsight, preventing the outbreak of war in Europe was critical to China's security and to its modern history.

The extent to which Sun Yat Sen in Shanghai and Wang Jingwei in France attempted to influence the outbreak of war or modify its conduct in a manner non-detrimental to China would have likely been known by Ailing Song. A spring 1914 marriage of Ailing to H.H. Kung would take her out of this communications flow, while also permitting the assertion that Song Qingling had married Sun in the fall of 1914. More importantly, it would remove Ailing and H.H. Kung from the creation of Sun Yat Sen's Revolutionary Party in June of 1914. As previously emphasised, this created a core of revolutionaries that became the nexus of the right-wing of the KMT in the ensuing decades.

Interestingly, the desire to move forward by one year the date of Song Qingling's marriage to Sun Yat Sen is more in evidence in material that relies on KMT sources, than in sources that track the CCP. This possibly has to do with either (i) an attempt to demonstrate that Qingling's marriage to Sun was invalid as it preceded the divorce granted to him by his first wife, or (ii) the observations made by Donald and others that Sun Yat Sen's first affections had been extended to Ailing rather than Qingling. Implicating Sun Yat Sen in unwarranted advances towards Ailing would likely have tarnished the image of Sun that the

KMT wished to project in their ideological struggle against the CCP. By moving Song Qingling's marriage forward, it might have been possible to gain the benefits of disputing the legitimacy of Song Qingling's marriage, maximising the Sun Yat Sen image, and minimising the Wang Jingwei story. In this regard it is worthwhile to review the glib innuendo on Sun Yat Sen's view of Song Ailing that Selle slid into his 1948 biography of W.H. Donald. Selle reportedly derived the following remarks on Sun from Donald:

While the champagne of railway dreams bubbled in his head, the high blood pressure of romance also pounded within the quiet, dignified little doctor. In Shanghai one day, he glazed intently across the desk at Donald after the sweetly timid Ai-ling had passed through his office and whispered that he wanted to marry her. Donald advised him to sublimate his desire, since he was already married, but Sun said that he proposed to divorce his present wife.

'Ai-ling's Charlie Soong's daughter,' Donald pointed out. 'Charlie has been your best friend. Without him, you'd have been in the soup many a time. And as for Ai-ling and the rest of the children, you've been their uncle. They've been almost like your children.'

'I know it,' Dr. Sun said. 'I know it. But I want to marry her just the same.'43

In summary, obscuring the marriage dates of Song Ailing and Song Qingling serves to obfuscate Song Ailing's professional role as the TMH's confidential communication secretary between 1909 and 1914, and the role that she and H.H. Kung may have played as a result. Secondary literature for the period consistently ignores or disparages the role that H.H. Kung played between 1932 and 1939 in the financial and defense arrangements of the Republic of China

# SOONG AILING AS CONFIDENTIAL SECRETARY TO SUN YAT SEN

From historical records and photos it is evident that Ailing was acting as Sun's secretary from early 1912 through to the time of her marriage in 1914, or for approximately three years. However, her role in the Tong Meng Hui extends back further to at least 1909. After Ailing's return from Georgia in the late summer of 1909 she worked with her father in Shanghai helping

to coordinate support for Sun's activities. The Chinese translation of Seagrave's book Soong Dynasty 宋家皇朝 (Song Jia Huang Chao) that was published in 2002 in Taipei asserts that upon her return to China in 1909 she began to act as English secretary for Sun via telegraph cable.44 A granddaughter of Sun, Lily Sun Suifang 孙穗 芳, has sourced a series of photos with the earliest dated 6 April 1912<sup>45</sup> that portray Ailing in a close secretarial, if not familial role, to the Sun household. W.H. Donald related that when he arrived in Shanghai in early spring 1911, Ailing '...the year before, at twenty...had returned from school in America. ... besides teaching English, she was assisting her father in revolutionary activities,' while 'Mei-ling, about twelve, and eighteen-year-old Chingling were still in schools in America.'46 Bernard Martin (1944) provided further testimony that Ailing was working closely with Charlie Song on his revolutionary activities in Shanghai. He asserted in a passage, for which he unfortunately does not provide a reference, that:

...Eiling, afterwards Madame Kung, returned to Shanghai in the year 1909 having graduated at the early age of nineteen. At once she became her father's active partner in the work of organizing the local branch of Sun Yat-sen's party, keeping the secret register of members and collecting subscriptions. Chingling Soong and youngest sister, Mayling, were still at College in America.<sup>47</sup>

While Ailing was helping her father in Shanghai, between 1909 and 1911 Sun Yat Sen was traveling extensively in Europe and the United States. Based upon Lily Sun's itinerary, between the fall of 1909 and January of 1912, Song Ailing could only have been assisting Sun through her father at a distance. Lily Sun's sketch of Sun's itinerary between the critical dates of May 1909 and December 1911 shows him leaving Singapore for Europe on 19 May 1909, spending four months in Europe before leaving Britain for the United States on 30 October. Following another four months on the American mainland, Sun leaves for Honolulu on 28 March 1910 where he stays two months. Returning to the Far East in the early summer, he briefly touches base in Japan in June 1910, and then heads out for Singapore and Penang. However, by early 1912, Song Ailing is accompanying Sun Yat Sen on his survey of the Chinese railroad system and on his trip to Macao and Guangdong from April through May 1912. With her were the Sun children, Sun Fo, 'Annie' Sun Yan and 'Grace' Sun Wan.

In early 1913, between February and March, Ailing also accompanied Sun and his first wife, Lu Muzhen, on an important trip to Japan. This trip laid the basis for Sun's operations against Yuan which commenced in the summer of that year. Marius Jansen in 1954 emphasised the importance of that trip, stating, 'One of the central events in the "Second Revolution" of July 1913 was Sun Yat Sen's visit to Japan in the spring of that same year. '48 From first-hand witnesses, by July 1913 Ailing was acting as his main confidential secretary during a treacherous period during which the 'Second Revolution' against Yuan Shikai had been launched and failed. James Burke relates the following recollections of his father:

...Shanghai was in turmoil that July. The port was the headquarters of Sun Yat-sen's counter-revolution against Yuan Shi-kai. And the most feverish spot in the city was the building on Kiukang Road where Sun had his private office. Charlie Soon was in charge there. Burke wanted to call by to see him and tell him about having seen his daughter [Qingling] graduate, but Cline the missionary friend, advised against it....

'I went over there last spring, long before the fighting started, to try and get Dr. Sun to speak to the school,' recalled Cline, who then was president of the mission's Soochow University. 'First I met Soon's private rickshaw coolie at the street door. He was the outer bodyguard. If he hadn't recognized me, I would have got no further. After him came another bodyguard, posted at the stairway. On the second floor, a secretary stopped me outside a private office, then he went in and came out with Eling. Eling was as far as I got. Soon and Sun were having an important conference with party leaders inside. But Eling was nice as she could be and after learning what I wanted, she said she would arrange it, and she did. A mighty smart and efficient young lady, that Eling.'49

The periods from 1909 to 1914 when Ailing is in support of Sun are some of the most critical of Sun Yat Sen's career. In 1909, his insurrections along the Indochina border had been unsuccessful and he had been forced from both Indochina and Singapore. The TMH had split. Attacks came from influential intellectuals led by Zhang Binglin 章炳麟 who had kept the TMH's revolutionary magazine *Min Bao* 民



Lu Muzhen, Sun Yat Sen's first wife.

报 functioning following Sun's expulsion from Japan in March of 1907. After unsuccessfully operating in Indochina in 1907 and part of 1908, Sun rebuilt a base in Hong Kong and Penang, while launching two more uprisings in Guangdong in early 1910 and early 1911. The successful Xinhai uprising occurred in Wuhan in October of 1911, with which Sun may not have been directly involved; but by year-end he had been elected as the first President in China's 5,000-year history. As part of a deal to end a potential civil war, the Qing abdicated in February 1912 in return for Sun's resignation of the presidency in favor of the General of the Beiyang Army, Yuan Shikai. Sun became Minister of Railways in Yuan's administration. He then was pulled into a 'Second Revolution' against Yuan Shikai in the summer

of 1913. When that failed, he and the Soong family fled to Japan in the early fall.

The well-known Song Qingling was not involved in any of these activities. She did not return to Asia until the fall of 1913, and she did not commence her career as Sun's secretary until the fall of 1914. This was after the formal launching of the Revolutionary Party, subsequent to the outbreak of the First World War, and near the time of the joint Japanese-British Empire attack on German jurisdictions in China and the Pacific Ocean. Throughout this period Sun's secretary was Song Ailing.

#### THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

In September of 1913, while Sun was in flight and exile in Japan, he began to recruit the core of followers that became his new political party. By April of 1914 they totaled 400-500 followers in Japan. Finally, on 22 June 1914, Sun formally launched the new political movement, under the name the Revolutionary Party (Zhongguo Gemingdang 中国革命党).50 With the formation of Sun's new party, the 'Third Revolution' against Yuan commenced. With Song Ailing supporting Sun's efforts, she clearly, as with the other members of the Revolutionary Party, had taken the oath of personal loyalty to Sun. The members of the Revolutionary Party read like a 'who's who' of the core of the KMT in later decades. They included 'Ch'en ch'i-mei, Chu Cheng, Feng Tzu-yu, Wu T'ieh-cheng, Liao Chung-k'ai, Hu Han-min, and Tai chi-t'ao'<sup>51</sup> (Chen Qimei 陈其美; Ju Zheng 居正; Feng Ziyou 冯自由; Wu Tiecheng 吴铁城; Liao Zhongkai 廖仲恺; Hu Hamin 胡汉 民; Dai Jitao 戴季陶). Through Chen Qimei, Chiang Kai-shek was involved, as well as Lin Sen 林森, the future Chinese President who went to America to run Sun's operations there, and Zou Lu 邹鲁, a key Hakka organiser in Guangdong. As a component of the Revolutionary Party operations a political training center, a military school and the party propaganda organ Min-Kuo (Min Guo 民国) were established. These would continue at least until Yuan's death two years later in June 1916.

It is worthwhile to review the nature of the confidential secretarial duties Ailing and Qingling preformed, by referring to Qingling's recollections when she subsequently held the position. She related the following of the work that was required of her,

and hence of Ailing, as she took over primary duties as confidential English secretary from Ailing in the fall of 1914:

Increasingly, [Sun] initiated Ching Ling into the techniques and cautions of the political underground. She learned to decode secret letters and write in invisible ink, the importance of punctuality and precision, and the need to promptly destroy all superfluous paper. He taught her alertness against spies, careerists, and thrill-seekers insinuating themselves into the revolutionary ranks. It became her lifelong habit to keep different contacts and spheres of work warily apart, not out of over-distrust but because a split could endanger a whole endeavor, or many lives.<sup>52</sup>

### STRANGE CONFIGURATIONS

Despite the critical nature of Song Ailing's work with Sun Yat Sen and her father, her contribution has been minimised by historians, while that of Qingling has been emphasised. An example comes from Emily Hahn's 1942 publication, *the Soong Sisters*. <sup>53</sup> Containing neither index nor bibliography the book is not readerfriendly for those wishing to use it as a research source. The work includes a misleading photo of Song Qingling and Sun Yat Sen together before a group of soldiers on the Northern Expedition. <sup>54</sup>

There is nothing specifically inaccurate concerning the photo, as it is properly labeled 'Dr Sun Yat-sen and wife, with officers of the President's Army on their Northern Campaign.' The distortion is to include the photo in the Chapter entitled 'China in 1910,' while not providing a date for the photo itself. This gives the misleading impression that Qingling had become Sun's wife as early as 1910, and for a reader who is careless, that the Northern Expedition came in this time frame. This period was the most important of Sun's career. Sun emerged from being a well-known but unsuccessful revolutionary with an ineffective and under-funded movement of scattered students and secret societies, to being the President of the newly formed Chinese Republic. A 4,000- year-old system of monarchy, the longest on earth, was overturned, and Sun Yat Sen was named President of the government that followed. This occurred while Song Ailing, not Song Qingling, was the TMH confidential secretary. Despite these

momentous events later publications present Song Qingling as dominating the Sun story, as his secretary, wife, and widow.

A previously cited popular author who has without adequate references asserted a central and sinister role for Song Ailing is Sterling Seagrave (1985). He described her as being one of the world's more 'predatory inhabitants,' claiming that she was a 'women of enormous financial accomplishment...perhaps the wealthiest woman ever to put it all together with her own cunning ...the principal contriver of the Soong legend, and the true architect of the dynasty's rise to power.'55 Nowhere does he describe how she came to be such person.

Though the description seems a clear exaggeration, there may be an element of truth. When her father, Charlie Song died on 3 May 1918 at the young age of 52 from 'stomach cancer,' she would have been the logical heir to the communications network that her father had run which had



T.V. Song.

bankrolled and politically supported Sun Yat Sen. Song Qingling was then working with Sun, and was estranged from her father. The next in line, T.V. Song, had just returned from New York to China, and would have been new to the communications network, though as the first son he would have been the logical successor to Charlie Song's political relationships. Fittingly by the fall of 1923, T.V. Song was coordinating Sun's financial arrangements at his Canton base.<sup>56</sup> Apart from Song Qingling, the limited number of people that had run the TMH confidential communications, its code books and the bank accounts would have included Soong Ailing. In addition to Song Ailing's role as TMH secretary, she had another characteristic which gave her authority: she was the eldest sibling and eldest sister of a Hakka family. H.H. Kung and T.V. Song would be added to her nexus of operational authority as a result of her marriage to Kung and T.V. Song's position as Charlie Soong's eldest son.

Given this potential influence, it is therefore perplexing why through carelessness or manipulation

the substitution of Song Qingling for Song Ailing continues into the modern era. A glaring example is Eugene Anschel's otherwise well-researched book on the American supporter of Sun Yat Sen, Homer Lea, who during this time may have been one of Sun's most important military and financial American backers. Lea's 1909-published *Valour of Ignorance* was a blistering attack on the vulnerability of America's West Coast to Japanese invasion and would have been required reading for any military officer concerned about the Pacific.<sup>57</sup>

At Lea's early death in California on 27 October 1912, Sun wrote to Lea's widow to express his condolences, stating, 'In losing General Li [sic] I have lost a great and true friend. Miss Soong wishes to tender to you her heart-felt sympathy in your bereavement.'58 Unfortunately, Anschel identifies the 'Miss Soong' Sun speaks of as Song Qingling, in his sole reference to a Song in his index.<sup>59</sup> But Song Qingling will not graduate from Wesleyan College in Macon Georgia until June of 1913. She will not return to China until the early fall of 1913, and the date is October 1912. The 'Miss Soong' to whom Sun refers in his letter is Song Ailing. She is extending her regards to the widow of the leading American strategist for Asia who had bankrolled and trained Chinese American troops for Sun's revolutionary efforts.

It is worthwhile noting Anschel's background, as he, due to his birth, education, work and interests should have been focused on the nature of Sun's relationships to European Socialist revolutionaries. Anschel was born in Germany in the 1910s, graduated with a degree in law, political science and history in 1933 and was forced to emigrate in the same year. He then spent three years in Spain 1933-1936, and then emigrated to the United States in 1937 where he was employed at the left-of-centre Institute for Social Research, then Columbia University. He was the author of two books on Russian history that cover the period when the Socialist revolutionaries of the Second and Third International were most active: (i) The American Image of Russia, 1775-1917 (1974), and (ii) American Appraisals of Soviet Russia, 1917-1977 (1978).

Why, then, did Anschel mis-identify the person who would have been most knowledgeable concerning Sun Yat Sen's international support network, and particularly the international Socialist movement? Would this not have been one of Anschel's main

interests as he moved his research focus from studying revolutionary Russia to studying Homer Lea, an American supporter of revolution in China in 1910-1911? At a minimum, this misleading statement obscures the contact that Homer Lea maintained with the TMH subsequent to its period of extensive Japanese support, and by implication, the support of International Socialists for Sun who were using Japan as a lever against Tsarist Russia. It also obscures the contacts Song Ailing would have had back into the American defense community through Homer Lea. Though one would have thought these relationships would have been those that held greatest interest for Eugene Anschel, he leaves in place a glaring error that cuts his readers off from some of the TMH's most intriguing contacts..

In addition to Gordon Seagrave,60 writers such as Chang Jung<sup>61</sup> ignore Ailing's role in the TMH and the extent of H.H. Kung's network to characterise her as being a rapacious behind-thescenes manipulator of China's economy and 'one of the world's richest women.' They provide little but hearsay to support these assertions. They are also out of step with earlier descriptions of Ailing that stated she was both shy and highly apprehensive of publicity. The lack of evidence and corroboration to support their assertions concerning Ailing is a negligence that would normally be found in purely propaganda tracts. Despite Boorman's failure to include a separate entry from Song in his exhaustive Biographical Dictionary of Republican China of 1968-1971, somehow by 1984 Sterling Seagrave determined that 'Ai-ling Soong was notorious for her financial cunning, but most people were unaware that she was also the chief manipulator of the family destiny.' In another of his unreferenced and unspecified quotes, Seagrave asserted that 'if she had been born a man, it was said, she would have been running China.'62 Seagrave apparently partially obtained this insight, in the seventeen years since Boorman produced his encyclopedia, by referencing John Gunther's 1939 wartime book, *Inside Asia*, a book for which Gunther provides a modest bibliography but no citations.

Following Gunther's quick journalist's tour of Asia in 1937-1938 for the *Chicago Daily News*,<sup>63</sup> he unveiled for his audience the notion that Song Ailing 'is the most formidable of the Songs; she is, in fact, one of the most formidable women anywhere. A hard-willed

creature, possessed of demonic energy and great willto-power, violently able, cunning, and ambitious, she is as powerful a personality as any in China.'64 What were Ailing's credentials for becoming such a dominant personality? Gunther relates that she: (i) was educated at Wesleyan College in Macon, Georgia; (ii) became Sun's secretary after she returned to China; (iii) was courted first by Dr. Sun Yat Sen; (iv) married H.H. Kung, who was secretary of the Tokyo YMCA; (v) had Chiang Kaishek as a friend; and (vi) gave birth to four children.<sup>65</sup> Being educated at a Christian girl's school in the backcountry districts of the American South in 1904-1909, marrying the manager of a YMCA, and giving birth to four children, are not the prerequisites for a person possessing 'demonic energy and great will-to-power.' Gunther makes neither the case for his assertions, nor does he provide the references for the claims that he obviously has obtained from other sources. His political connections, however, were impressive. It was through Gunther that Emily Hahn obtained the contract and the contacts that allowed her to author her 1942 work, The Soong Sisters.

It is strange that Gunther was able to make his pronouncements concerning Ailing, after a short trip to Asia in pursuit of a sequel to his best-selling Inside Europe, while W.H. Donald, another journalist, after decades of association with the Sun-Song family, described her in early 1912 as being Sun's 'shy, pretty secretary.'66 Donald had first met Ailing a year after her return from the United States in 1909, and recalled that she was 'a pretty, shy girl with intense black eyes,' and that 'the year before, at twenty, she had returned from school in America. Now, besides teaching English, she was assisting her father in revolutionary activities.'67 While accompanying Sun in 1912 on a survey of China's railroads, Donald again judged her as 'the sweetly timid Ai-ling.'68 Emily Hahn confirmed Donald's judgment of her by stating that both Ailing and Qingling had 'always been shy and sensitive, more like the Chinese ladies of past dynasties than the Americanised Mayling.'69

Other reports from Elmer Clark in his *The Chiangs of China* from 1943 also provide a different perspective on Ailing that is significantly at variance with those that would like to project her as manipulative and obsessed with power and money. He states that following her marriage in Yokohama, she moved with H.H. Kung to the family home in Taiku, Shanxi, and

that there, 'Madame Kung overcame her shyness to the extent of becoming a teacher in the school which finally got under way.' He states that,

The birth of Rosamond in 1916 was so nearly fatal to both mother and child that it drove Madame Kung more deeply into her mother's faith. ... She had a feeling that the hand of God had intervened to save her life and that of her Child, for which she gave Him fervent and grateful praise. 70

The spiritual impact of the difficult child-birth of her first child, which Ailing named Rosamond in honor of her head-strong sister Qingling, whose marriage had so upset their parents, is also described by Emily Hahn. Both had been named for Rosamonde Ricaud, the daughter of the minister of Fifth Street Methodist Episcopal Church in Wilmington, North Carolina who had baptised Charlie Soong on 7 November 1880, and who arranged for him to attend Trinity College in Durham.<sup>71</sup> Hahn relates that,

For the first time, after Rosamonde's birth, Madame Kung discovered within herself a desire to thank God in person, as it were, for her recovery and her baby. She thinks that she became a genuine Christian at that time, and not before. Even today she is not much inclined to profess her feelings on this subject, nor does she in her rare public speeches use God's name overmuch or appeal to Him with many demands.<sup>72</sup>

Ailing's shyness and dislike of publicity seem also to be in evidence in the February 1941 article from the Wesleyan Alumnae Magazine that described her return to the campus in 1932:

...that brief visit in 1932 was overshadowed by an almost morbid fear of publicity. It was about the time of the Manchurian trouble. 'I long to tread once more the familiar grounds and to see the faces of those I have loved. I shall make desperate effort to come back,' she wrote. She was afraid that even at the last minute she might find it too much to face the possible notoriety. But we promised her that no trumpets would be sounded and were able, with the co-operation of friends who could understand her need for a little peace and privacy, to keep that promise. Her classmates were notified and came from far and wide to join her at Wesleyan. For two whole days she saw none except familiar faces and was

able to lay down for a few hours her country's burdens.<sup>73</sup>

Clark again reports in *The Chiangs of China* that Ailing's reaction to her return to Wesleyan and her college friends showed a different character than the sinister picture that has been subsequently painted of her. He states that, 'She was gloriously happy in their companionship, but she cried until aromatic spirits of ammonia had to be brought when admiring newspapers published comments she considered extravagant.'<sup>74</sup>

James Burke in his 1945 biography of his father, who was Charlie Song's classmate at Vanderbilt and subsequent missionary colleague in China, describes two anecdotes from Ailing's first trip to the United States. One suggests the shock of leaving China for America as a young girl in which, '...the sudden shock of the ship's whistle seemed to go deeper, upsetting the trained balance of her emotions. Burke looked down to see her sobbing softly. It was the only time he ever saw her betray her feelings.<sup>75</sup> Another anecdote also reflects a naïveté and her strong religious upbringing when asked by a ship officer to dance at a deck-party after dinner:

'No, thank you, I cannot,' Eiling answered, shaking her head.

'Well, there's no better time to learn. Come, I'll teach you,' the officer persisted.

'No, it is not right for me to dance,' she replied firmly.

'Why?'

'Because I am a Christian, and Christians do not dance.'<sup>76</sup>

Despite the testimony from Donald, Clark, Hahn, Burke and Wesleyan College, Jonathan Fenby in his recent publication, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and the China he Lost reasserted the past hearsay that 'Ailing Soong was the most ruthless and cunning of the three daughters of the powerful Shanghai family.' He wrote that 'Ailing was an expert at pulling financial and political strings...' and that an unspecified American had reported that, 'There was something about her... something so authoritative, so personally powerful, so penetratingly keen that one would have been struck with her anywhere.'77 To substantiate his views Fenby again cited the interview of an unidentified F.B.I. source of January 1943 that had been used by Seagrave and the 1993 purported expose of Chiang's second wife Chen Jieru which deemed Ailing to have been central

to Chiang's decision to marry Meiling, his third. But what additional facts were Fenby able to uncover that would lead to his conclusions? First, that she was 'the first Chinese girl to ride a bicycle, on which she made a scandal-raising trip in the International Settlement,' second, that 'She had been sent by her Methodist father, Charles Soong, to college in the United States,' thirdly, that 'she married a rich banker from Shanxi,... who claimed to be a lineal descendant of Confucius,' and finally that she 'settled in a house in Shanghai's French Concession where their four children were brought up.' <sup>78</sup>

For the 1930s, Fenby, like Seagrave, sprinkles damning hearsay amidst serious misquotes in less-than-complete descriptions of H.H. Kung and Song Ailing. This was a period when the Chinese economy was being stabilised, the national army built, and China was alone fighting Japan. Notable is the unreferenced assertion that Ailing passed 'insider information' to Du Yuesheng 杜月笙, which turned out to be wrong, leading to a major loss for Du. Fenby asserted that:

The Kung connection was a godsend for the minister's acquisitive wife, Ailing Soong, who would pick up tips when her husband discussed policy at home, and make a killing through her various investment vehicles, including one in which Du was a partner. ... Ailing gave the gang boss insider information which he used for a big speculative punt on the province's dollar. Unfortunately there had been a misunderstanding, which left him with a heavy loss.<sup>79</sup>

Fenby's distortion converts a rumour which Leith-Ross had heard, but could not verify, into a definitive statement of fact. Fenby inaccurately wrote that Sir Frederick Leith-Ross, the British international financial expert, 'recalled that a No. 1 style coffin was deposited on Dr. Kung's doorstep by half a dozen funeral attendants' as a warning for Kung to make good Du's losses. Actually, Leith-Ross wrote that this was a 'story' about Mme H.H. Kung and that he could not vouch for its truth.80 Further, rather than condemning Du unilaterally as a gangster, Leith-Ross stated that after he had protested the inclusion of Du on the board of the Central Bank of China, Leith-Ross's assistant Cyril Rogers of the Bank of England '...reported... that Dr. Du was one of the most sensible and helpful members of the Central Bank Board.'81

With respect to Song Ailing and H.H. Kung, Fenby's evidence, like that of Seagrave and Gunther, is grossly insufficient to support the conclusions that he, or those he quotes, present to his readers. Rather than historical analysis, the works of these three authors give the appearance of pre-emptive negative public relations campaigns. Donald G. Gillin, Professor of History at Princeton University, believes that to have been the objective with respect to Seagrave. In an article written under the aegis of the Hoover Institution and University in 1986, Gillin stated with respect to the 'best-seller' *The Soong Dynasty* which Seagrave had produced two years before, that

...Seagrave cannot prove that Madame Chiang's family ever enjoyed anything approaching such power and, in fact, his real aim is far more ambitious than any exposé of the Soongs and K'ungs – namely, to damningly indict Chiang Kai-shek himself: as a man, a soldier, and a political leader. In this respect, the book is so biased, so unreliable, so riddled with errors, and so utterly lacking in historical perspective that much of it could be classified as fiction rather than as a work of history.<sup>82</sup>

#### THE THREAT

What was the threat that Song Ailing posed that required such a pre-emptive public relations strike? In 1939 John Gunther launched what may have been the first significant negative statement in America against her. Being secretary to the first President of the Republic of China, reported to have been the object of Dr. Sun's affections prior to Song Qingling,83 and being a friend to Chiang Kai-shek suggests that Ailing was privy to confidential information and aware of political networks that could be embarrassing to many influential parties. Parties of concern would have included: (i) those on the Left that would have wished to use Song Qingling as a wartime lynchpin to tie the Allied efforts in China to the Communist parties of the Soviet Union and China, (ii) those on the Right that might have wished to disassociate Sun Yat Sen, as a symbol of Nationalist China, from any affiliation with the Marxists of the Second International, and more importantly in 1939 (iii) those focused on keeping China in the war against Japan who would have wished to discredit any moves that her political

network might have considered with respect to their former compatriot, Wang Jingwei, who had begun to affiliate himself with the Japanese by that April.

Recalling back to the TMH period from 1909 to 1914 one finds that it was in this era that Wang Jingwei established his close psychological and operating relationship with Sun. Following the failures of the six revolutionary attempts under the TMH in 1907 and 1908, Sun had been banned from Japan, Hong Kong, Indochina and Singapore. The TMH had split between the followers of Sun in Southeast Asia and those of Zhang Binglin and Tao Chengzhang in Tokyo. Zhang and Tao were charging Sun with both financial malfeasance and strategic misdirection, and had launched into a bitter struggle with him for followers in Southeast Asia. During this difficult period, siding with Sun were Hu Hanmin, Wang Jingwei and, undoubtedly, Charlie Soong.

In the midst of this disaster, Charlie Song's oldest daughter, Ailing, returned to Shanghai from Wesleyan College in the summer of 1909 at age nineteen after five years of education in the United States. By the following summer, she had become the efficient and competent confidential secretary for the treasury of the Tong Meng Hui, while publicly acting as a Sunday school teacher at her church. 84 Bernard Martin in 1944 reported that: 'Eiling, afterwards Madame Kung, returned to Shanghai in the year 1909 after having graduated at the early age of nineteen. At once she became her father's active partner in the work of organising the local branch of Sun Yat Sen's party, keeping the secret register of members and collecting subscriptions.'85

Nearly 30 years later during the Sino-Japanese War, Song Ailing was the wife of H.H. Kung whose positions included Minister of Finance, the Chairman of the Central Bank of China, and the Premier of the Executive Yuan. As the oldest sister of both the wife of China's military chieftain (Chiang Kai-shek) and the wife of Sun Yat Sen (who facilitated the coordination of war time relations with the Soviet and Chinese communists), Ailing also was the liaison between sisters who were the public symbols of the Chinese political Left and Right. In early 1940, as China was forced to rely on Hong Kong as its major logistics centre for the war against Japan, it was at her home on Sassoon Road in Hong Kong that Song Qingling and Song Meiling resided. Soon after Wang Jingwei had launched his

new government on 30 March 1940 in Nanjing, the sisters symbolically dined together for the benefit of the world press at the Hong Kong Hotel. 88 The media message was clear: there would be no doubt about the views of the sisters from Georgia's Wesleyan College. Assuredly after Wang Jingwei left Chongqing in late December 1938 on his unsanctioned peace mission to end the Sino-Japanese War, there could not have been overt political collusion with Song Ailing.

But, in Nanjing Wang Jingwei had three significant supporters with feet on many sides of the political spectrum: Chen Gongbo 陈公博 and Zhou Fohai 周佛海 had both been founders of the Chinese Communist Party in July of 1921, 89 while later playing leading roles in the KMT Nanjing Government; and Jiang Kanghu 江亢虎 had been the founder of the Chinese Socialist Party in 1911 with whom Sun Yat Sen had attempted to establish a political alliance in the fall of 1912. Jiang had also taught Chinese at Berkeley, worked at the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. from 1913 to 1920, and had represented Chinese Socialists at the Third Congress of the Comintern from 22 June to 12 July 1921 in Moscow.90

Wang Jingwei's self-confidence certainly would have led to his recalling the thirty-year professional relationship he had had with both H.H. Kung and Soong Ailing, which had begun as all were marginalised revolutionaries of a secret organisation assisting a leader who had failed so many times in the past. Then, too, he would have recalled H.H. Kung's work with him while he had headed the Executive Yuan and Foreign Ministry from 1932 to 1935, and the critical trips they had made to Germany from the fall of 1932 to the early 1933 that had resulted in the Military Mission which had built the Chinese Central Government Army that defended Nanjing from Japan in 1937.

As for the prospects of an early end to the Sino-Japanese War in 1939-1940, while Song Ailing's husband, H.H. Kung, was playing a leading role in the Central Government in Chongqing, the companions from the railroad tour of April 1912 resided in cities made distinct by the Japanese troops that divided them. Wang Jingwei was President of the National government in Nanjing; Song Ailing was the influential wife of the Premier of China in Chongqing, and Sun Fo's surviving sister Sun Wan, with his mother, Lu Muzhen, were resident in Macao.



Song Meiling, Song Ailing, and Song Qingling in Chongqing, China, 1942.

#### **SUMMARY**

The Song Sisters have played a leading role in China's political life for nearly 100 years over which time they represented a varying mixture of modernisation, internationalisation, nationalism, Americanisation, violently-opposed political factions, Christianity, economic development and the rise of female political power. Despite many biographies, however, the underlying nature of Song Ailing's political power remains obscure. Basic data concerning the marriages of the oldest two sisters, Song Ailing and Song Qingling, have not been properly specified with the result that even leading historians have presented data that distorts proper analysis.

What can be stated conclusively, however, is that the oldest daughter Song Ailing retired from her position as Secretary to Sun Yat Sen in the fall of 1914 after having served as confidential Secretary to the Tong Meng Hui following her return from the United States in the late summer of 1909. This allowed her to be privy to some of the most important actions of Sun Yat Sen's career, including the two insurrections he launched before the Xinhai Revolt of October 1911, his appointment and resignation as China's President in 1912, his launching of the Second Revolution in the summer of 1913 and his creation of the Revolutionary Party in the summer of 1914 in opposition to Yuan Shikai. As with all members of the Revolutionary Party, her personal pledge of loyalty to Sun would have provided her access to the closely-knit cadre who served him from June 1914 and to October 1919. From this group Sun created the initial core of the KMT.

Song Ailing, therefore, also would have been aware of whatever communications had been undertaken between Sun Yat Sen and Wang Jingwei from 1911 to 1914 as Wang stepped into the international network from which Sun had retired in 1912.

The critical function of communications administrator on top of her position as the elder daughter of a Hakka clan that had gained access to the top rungs of the American political world would have been strengthened by her marriage to H.H. Kung, an individual who maintained a separate and significant network which extended into American Christian society, its turn-of-the-century industrial elite, the Chinese banking system, and the military power of Shanxi province. The combination of their skills and networks placed them into the top echelon of the Nanjing government between 1926 and 1944, giving them direct access to the president of the Republic of China, the leaders of the Chinese Communist movement, and political network of Wang Jingwei. A cursory review of their accomplishments in consolidating China's banking system under the Nanjing government in 1934, converting China's currency from silver to fiat currency in 1935, and acquiring military support from Germany and Italy in 1933 belies the defamatory and unsubstantiated accusations that many critics have made.

In the fall of 1926, as part of the Song-Sun clan they were instrumental in facilitating the pivot of American and by default, British, diplomatic recognition to the Chiang Kai-shek led KMT government as Chiang successfully completed the first phase of the Northern Campaign. By the spring of 1927, Chiang had closed off the Bolshevik opportunity to turn China towards the Soviet Union. The Song-Sun group, with Song Ailing at its core, was not only part of this process in 1926-1927, but played an additional critical role from 1937 to 1941 in keeping China allied to the Anglo-Americans while Wang Jingwei courted peace with Japan. Relationships that contributed to these extraordinary accomplishments included their American education, Protestant Christian religious faith, strong family cohesion, and pivotal relationship to Sun Yat Sen and his extended political network. RC

#### **NOTES**

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- 19 Elmer Clark, The Chiangs of China. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1943) pp. 54-55.
- 20 Earl Albert Selle, *Donald of China*. New York: Harper, p. 143.
- 21 Emily Hahn, China to Me: A Partial Autobiography. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1944, p. 81.
- 22 Emily Hahn, The Soong Sisters, p. 78.
- 23 Hahn's use of the wording 'at the end of this term' suggests that the marriage came at the end of Kung's one year assignment with the YMCA in Tokyo, which Seagrave suggests began after he left China for Japan following Yuan Shikai's seizure of dictatorial powers in August 1913.
- 24 Sterling Seagrave, The Soong Dynasty, p. 135. The error of stating spring as the marriage date is made apparent by the extensive reporting

- of Epstein (1995: p. 34) and others that Qingling did not begin working daily as Sun's secretary until September 1914 as a result of Ailing's withdrawal from the position in order to marry H.H. Kung. For Seagrave to definitively state the marriage was in the spring, he needed to provide a source, which he does not do.
- 25 Huang Ying and Mao Sheng, Sun Zhongshan yi jia ren: yi ge zai Zhongguo you ju da ying xiang de jia zu, pp. 502-503.
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- 27 Shansi District of the American Board, Annual Report, 1914. Shanghai, 1914, pp. 61-63.
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