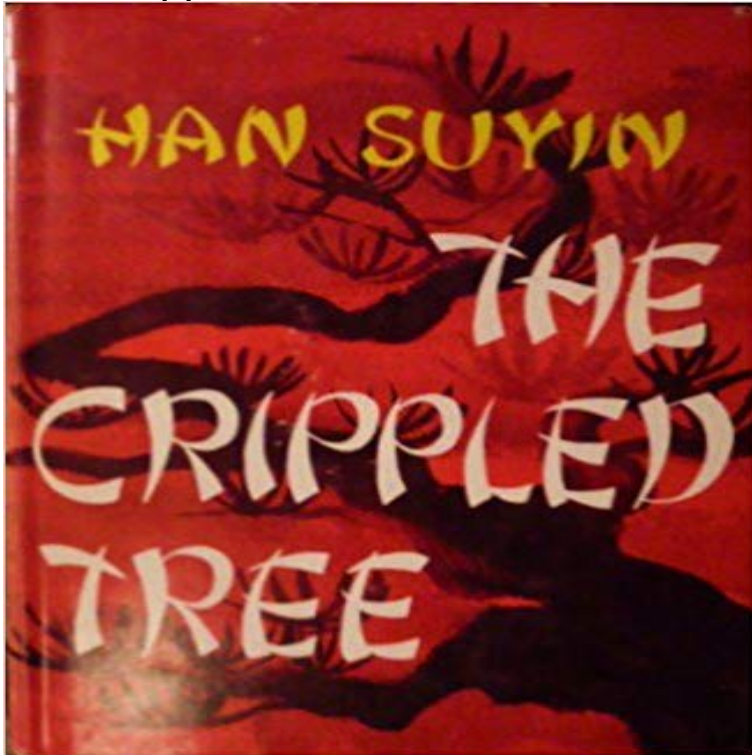


The Crippled Tree



In *The Crippled Tree* Han Suyin evokes, through the life of her two families (eastern and western), a panorama of the history of China from 1885 to 1928. It contains eye-witness accounts, from family papers, of the Sino-French War, of the revolution of 1911 and of the emergence of Chiang Kai-shek. This book is more compelling than history and more profound than biography: it describes how events mould the lives of individuals, and how their private emotions are twisted by the gigantic conflicts of a changing world. The theme of the book is the story of the Chinese family of Han Suyin, a family deeply feudal, rooted in a far inland province of China adjacent to Tibet; yet, because of the western invasion of China, brought face to face with compelling change. Han Suyin's father, marked for a life of classical scholasticism, became instead an engineer, sent by his government to study railway construction in Belgium. There he fell in love with the daughter of a respectable Belgian family, and both defied all the conventions of their societies to marry. Returning to a China in revolution in 1913, they endured and suffered, helpless in the face of tragedy beyond their grasp. Eight children were born to them, while Han Suyin's father worked on the railways of China, and her mother endured the hardships and isolation of an outcast, ostracized by her own people. Nearly fifty years later one of their children, Han Suyin, was to spend years of painstaking research, both in China and in Europe, reconstructing the life and times of her parents and grandparents. This is one of the most important books about China yet written; while other volumes will continue the story, *The Crippled Tree* is complete in itself, with its own satisfying ending. It is a unique contribution to our knowledge and understanding of the One World in which we all live, east or west.

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