



# **The Chinese Factor: An Australian Chinese Woman's Life in China from 1950 to 1979**

*Pamela Tan*

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**The Chinese Factor: An Australian Chinese Woman's Life in China from 1950 to 1979** Pamela Tan  
Pamela Tan (Tan Pingmei) left Australia in 1950 as a young Australian born Chinese woman patriotically attracted to the possibilities of the new China created by the success of the Communist revolution. She stayed for nearly 30 years, experiencing a roller coaster ride through a period of initial promise followed by a series of disasters to the country - disasters that inevitably affected her personally. Still she assessed Mao as 'a great man,' but one who 'had exceeded the limit.' Finally, disillusioned with her life in China, Pamela returned to Australia to start a new life in 1979 and was joined by her Chinese family the following year. She gradually completed her intellectual and spiritual movement away from the socialist ideals that had long sustained her in China to the quite different philosophy of Buddhism. In this honest and informative memoir, Pamela explores her experience, beliefs, confusion, and fear in China, while also providing insight into her young life in Melbourne that contributed to her quest, and her post-China journey once back in Australia. Pamela Tan's engrossing story puts a human face on the tortuous history of Mao's China. The very fact that her story is 'ordinary' provides great testimony to the power of Mao's regime in creating a narrative that could, to a large degree, be sustained even as one disaster after another engulfed the Chinese people. There is much to learn from the parallel stories of an individual we can empathize with, and a system that truly 'exceeded the limit.'

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