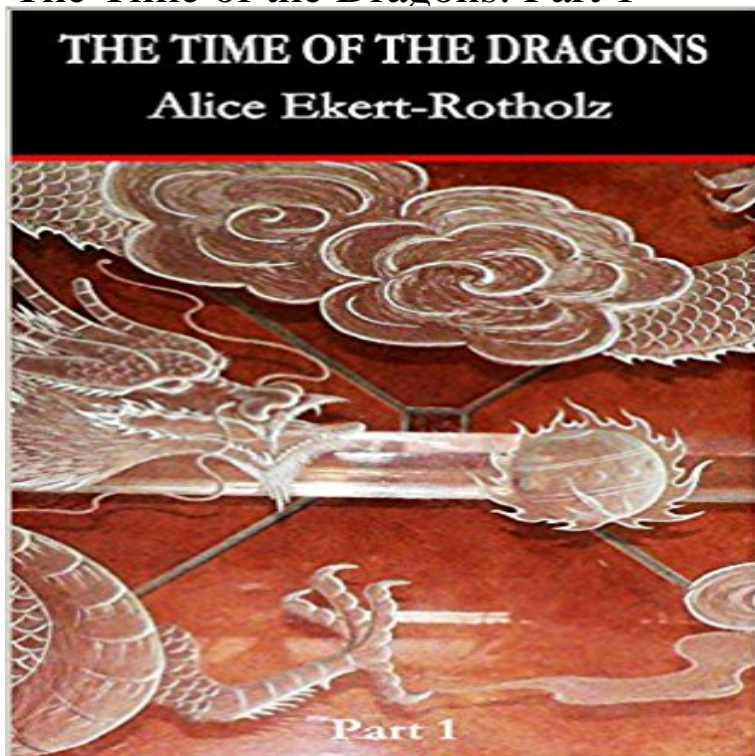


The Time of the Dragons: Part 1



First two chapters of classic 1950s novel, *The Time of the Dragons*. THE TIME OF THE DRAGONS Copyright 1958 Alice Ekert-Rotholz FOREWORD *The Time of the Dragons* was the author's second novel. It was first published in 1956 in German [under the title *Wo Tränen verboten sind*] and quickly aroused widespread international interest, leading to translations into 12 languages. The English translation by Richard and Clara Winston appeared in 1958 and was an immediate success: in New York, it stayed in the Top-16 Best-Seller List for 16 weeks (rising as high as No.5), and in England it was selected as Book Society Choice. Why? Its wide international canvas of fictional characters was and is unusual: they range from Norwegians, French, Germans, Russians and other Europeans to Americans and (in the Far East) Japanese, Chinese and Thai. The events of the novel cover a period of 30 years from 1925 to 1955 with settings changing from Shanghai, Bangkok, Hanoi and Angkor (when Vietnam was still part of French Indochina) to Tokyo, Paris and Trondheim. Above all, the setting of its most dramatic section is probably unique in global fiction: Bangkok during World War II. These were years when Thailand was nominally allied with Japan, but when the Japanese Kempetai (Military Police) exercised power and influence behind the scenes. The author had personally experienced the war years in Bangkok. Born in Germany in 1900, Alice Ekert-Rotholz started her literary career in Hamburg and Berlin in the late-1920s with a series of socially critical poems. Among these, one published shortly before Hitler came to power - was entitled *Eros in the Third Reich* and satirised love as a form of Nazi party discipline for women, with the refrain: when the Fascists are marching through Berlin. Two years later, the author spent six months in concentration camp

and remand prison pending trial for allegedly trying to publish anti-Third-Reich literature in Switzerland. She was eventually released without explanation, and emigrated with her husband to Bangkok in 1939. After Japan and Thailand entered the war in December 1941, Alice Ekert-Rotholz and her husband (although technically stateless as refugees) were treated as Germans by the Japanese and not interned. This gave the author remarkable insights during the years of the Japanese presence in Bangkok. These are reflected in numerous characters in *The Time of the Dragons* above all, in Baron Matsubara whom we met first as a young man (first time away from Japan) in Shanghai in 1925, then in Bangkok during the war, and eventually in Japan in 1955 after his release from custody as a war criminal. This portrait is subtle and many-sided, based on a succession of misunderstandings between East and West that form the backbone of the plot. *The Time of the Dragons* is worth reading today as a mid-20th-century classic set in a period that continues to command widespread interest. Copyright 2015 Heinz Redwood

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