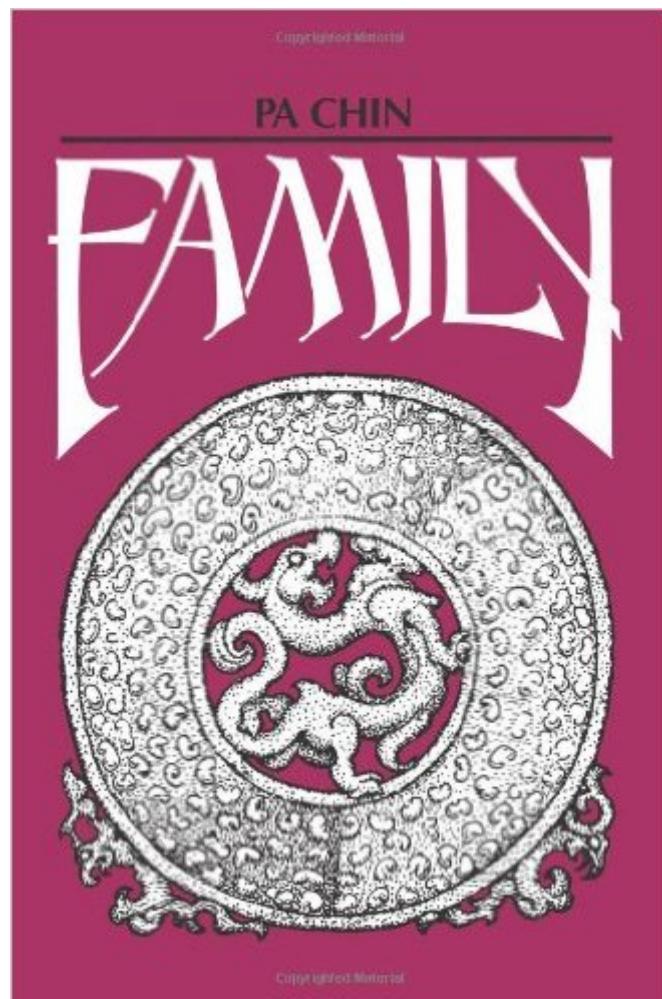


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Family



Synopsis

An essential work for anyone interested in the society and history of modern China! The first half of the twentieth century was a period of great turmoil in China. Family, one of the most popular Chinese novels of that time, vividly reflects that turmoil and serves as a basis for understanding what followed. Written in 1931, Family has been compared to Dream of the Red Chamber for its superb portrayal of the family life and society of its time. Drawn largely from Pa Chin's own experience, Family is the story of the Kao family compound, consisting of four generations plus servants. It is essentially a picture of the conflict between old China and the new tide rising to destroy it, as manifested in the daily lives of the Kao family, and particularly the three young Kao brothers. Here we see situations that, unique as they are to the time and place of this novel, recall many circumstances of today's world: the conflict between generations and classes, ill-fated love affairs, students' political activities, and the struggle for the liberation of women. The complex passions aroused in Family and in the reader are an indication of the universality of human experience. This novel illustrates the effectiveness of fiction as a vehicle for translating the experience of one culture to another very different one.

Book Information

Paperback: 329 pages

Publisher: Waveland Pr Inc; Reprint edition (January 1, 1972)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0881333735

ISBN-13: 978-0881333732

Product Dimensions: 0.8 x 4.8 x 7 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (36 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #268,618 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #271 inÂ Books > Literature & Fiction > World Literature > Asian #12123 inÂ Books > Parenting & Relationships #51368 inÂ Books > Textbooks

Customer Reviews

Pa Chin's "Family" is an excellent, absorbing account of one family in early 20th century China; through the conflicts between the generations, we see the larger conflicts about to engulf the entire country. The family is the Kao clan, five generations living in one complex headed by the Venerable Master Kao, the ultimate autocrat, monarch of all he surveys within his walls, unwilling and unable to

admit that his country and his family are changing before his eyes. The story centers around three brothers in the younger generation; Chueh-Hsin, married against his will to a woman chosen for him by his family, stuck in a job he hates, also chosen by his family, trying to navigate through life with his "compliant bow" philosophy which dictates that he must not oppose his elders under any circumstances; Chueh-Min, the second brother, determined to marry the girl he loves despite his family's opposition, and the youngest brother, Chueh-Hui, who sees his family as a ball and chain, loathes everything they represent, and is chafing to break free and live his own life. Pa Chin clearly identifies with Chueh-Hui; he rails against the stifling conformity of Chinese family life, which determines that everyone subordinate their will to the family elders; but in this reviewer's opinion, he doesn't give enough credit to the strengths in the same family life that held Chinese society together for thousands of years. However, this is a minor caveat.

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