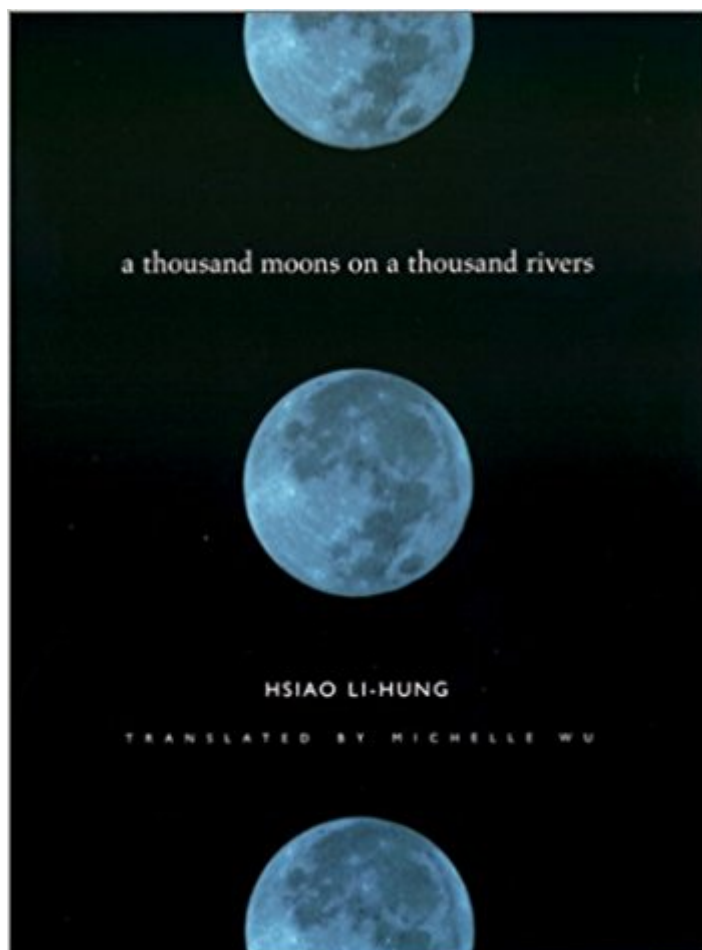


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A Thousand Moons On A Thousand Rivers



Synopsis

Winner of the 1980 United Daily Literature Competition, this novel about love, betrayal, family life, and the power of tradition in small-town Taiwan was an instant bestseller when first published in Taiwan. At once a bittersweet romance and a vividly detailed portrait of life in a southern Taiwanese coastal town in the 1970s, *A Thousand Moons on a Thousand Rivers* captures the intimacy of agricultural life in the midst of an increasingly industrialized society. At the heart of the story is Zhenguan, a sensitive young woman whose coming of age is influenced by new experiences in the city, the wisdom of her elders, and her strong, unique identity. In Zhenguan's journey of first love, suffering, disillusionment, and ultimately a zenlike triumph, Hsiao Li-hung celebrates the values and traditions that have sustained and nurtured life in Taiwan through the centuries. Hsiao traces the relationship of Zhenguan and her childhood friend Daxin against the background of daily existence and festival celebrations in their extended family. Daxin, in many ways Zhenguan's male counterpart, is fascinated by ancestral worship during Lunar New Year, riddle-solving during the Lantern Festival, and the noontime water and sticky rice dumplings of the Dragonboat Festival. These rituals, part of a rich cultural heritage, add charm to their romance while shedding light on the reasons for their eventual separation. Hsiao uses simple lessons taught in the garden and prayers uttered in a mountaintop temple to enrich and temper the story with the spirit of Buddhist teachings. The novel masterfully interweaves Buddhist maxims, poetry, folk songs, and puns with the dialogue, capturing the integral nature of tradition in the characters' lives as they search for meaning and solace in life's unpredictable fortunes. With understated elegance, Hsiao Li-hung's lyrical work affirms a way of life both fleeting and enduring. For readers interested in Chinese literature and culture, and anyone who enjoys a rich family saga, this is a unique and beautifully told story.

Book Information

Series: Modern Chinese Literature from Taiwan

Paperback: 320 pages

Publisher: Columbia University Press (September 15, 2001)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0231117930

ISBN-13: 978-0231117937

Product Dimensions: 5.7 x 0.8 x 7.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (5 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,240,956 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #140 in Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Regional & Cultural > Asian > Chinese #1088 in Books > Literature & Fiction > World Literature > Asian #10549 in Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Criticism & Theory

Customer Reviews

This book is in no doubt remarkably enjoying and fascinating to read. When I first encountered the title, I was a little set-back due to the idea that it has been translated from Chinese Literature, but oh how I wish I had started tasting the pleasures of the book earlier. A Thousand Moons on a Thousand Rivers kick starts with a slow paced scene in the first few chapters but it doesn't take very long at all to realize how the pages get sticky and how mind-grasping the book really is. As soon as the author, Hsiao Li-Hung is done introducing the main characters, the pace of the storyline starts rolling in ways none can imagine. The language implemented to express emotions in every sentence is unique and every word is spiced. Li-Hung does a great job coloring the book with the life of Zhenguan from when she is in the swollen belly of her mother till she is fully grown and experienced in cultivating the meaning of love with her partner, Daxin. The platonic love they share is so unbelievable in today's societies but yet, their relationship is tremendously moving and heart-taking as they exchange feelings for one another simply through rhythmic language. Daxin comes to thought as a man who is ideal to many women. He is very cultured, talented and ambitious, skilled to the fact he could be labeled as "perfect". Zhenguan on the other hand is presented as an average person who is motivated by her love for Daxin. Throughout the book, Li-Hung constantly keeps the reader at the edge of their seat, eager to know what will happen next to their long lasting, long-distance relationship. If you enjoy reading romance stories that sway your heart with poetry and metaphoric language, I am positive that you will take pleasure in reading A Thousand Moons on a Thousand Rivers.

For the first 100 pages or so, this tale of a young woman's growing up in the changing Taiwan of the 1970s was almost entirely lost in translation. Zhenguan is born in a fishing village that follows traditional cultural practices, and grows up in a close-knit extended family, and those early chapters consist mostly of descriptions of festivities, cultural practices, and cooking, as well as family events that don't seem to connect to one another. But the story finds its focus as Zhenguan comes of age, moves to the city to work, and experiences first love. I found it to be a surprisingly quick read, and the characters and their relationships feel realistic, although I am reading about them from the

other side of a cultural chasm. It is, in particular, a lovely story about the importance of family. Even when Zhenguan moves away from home, her family is her community; her best friend is a cousin, even her love interest is a more distant cousin. Westerners writing about Chinese characters tend to portray families as a source of antagonism and repression, so I appreciated this view from the inside, showing how the culture is supposed to work. The mix of tradition and modernity is also interesting; I especially liked the moment when Zhenguan, hiking to a mountaintop convent, wonders if the nun she's seeking will be there – then reassures herself that if the nun is on a different mountain, she can always page her over the convent's loudspeakers. That said, there is clearly quite a bit lost in translating this book to English.

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