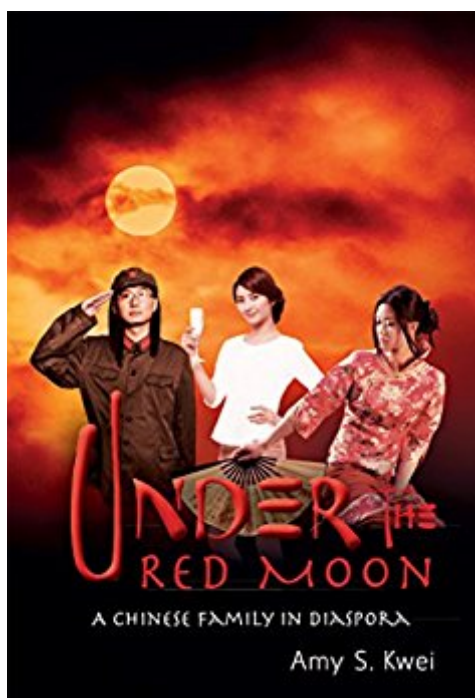


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Under The Red Moon: A Chinese Family In Diaspora



Synopsis

Kirkcups Review: "Kwei chronicles a Chinese family through exile, homecoming and Maoism in this historical novel. The three sisters of the Huang clan disperse during WWII. Golden Bell attends Syracuse University. Silver Bell attends a nearby American high school. Coral Bell, the youngest, remains in Shanghai, along with her mother, a concubine. The expat sisters return to China. Golden bell weds an industrial tycoon. Silver Bell marries an unscrupulous philanderer and mysterious manipulator. Coral Bell becomes a communist Red Guard. The three stories are intercut and eventually converge during the cultural revolution. Set in Shanghai, Hong Kong and New York between 1945 and 1968, the novel takes readers on a journey from the Nanking Massacre and Korean War to the Great Leap forward, English colonial rule in Hong Kong, and immigration to America. The silk thread that binds the story is the solidarity of these three strong, complex female characters that guide their family during their heartbreaking but ultimately uplifting struggle. A powerful saga of love and survival." "A sequel of sorts to A Concubine for the Family, this novel further analyzes China's shifts in the 20th century through the lens of one family. The writing is frequently striking ... the trials of the family are compelling and, at times, heart wrenching and leaves the reader with a new perception of the forces that shaped modern China. An absorbing exploration of mid-20th-century China through the story of a fractured family."

Book Information

File Size: 1919 KB

Print Length: 311 pages

Publisher: TATS PUBLISHING (November 30, 2016)

Publication Date: November 30, 2016

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B01N9C19L5

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #464,204 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #64
in Kindle Store > Parenting & Relationships > Family Relationships > Extended Families #300
in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Asia > China #1579 in Kindle Store > History > Asia
> China

Customer Reviews

Under the Red Moon, Ms Kwei's historical novel, is a story of mid-20th century China. She shows a thorough knowledge of her subject as well as a keen writing skill. The story is woven through the tumultuous and dangerous lives of three sisters which gives it an immediacy and human interest. It is a book that once you pick it up, you won't want to put it down.

Well written, an excellent bit of history with clear and real story. I would recommend this book to anyone. Please read.

While some sadness was contained in the ending of this book, I was very pleased to finally find out the rest of the story. I felt for the family for all their hardship and difficulties navigating a lot of cultural upheaval. Very good series and I thoroughly enjoyed it.

I enjoyed reading the book immensely. Could not put it down. The different characters are very well developed. Learned a lot about Chinese history. I would say it is a historical novel. I recommend it highly.

I did not realize until I received this book that it is a sequel to the book *A Concubine for the Family* by Amy Kwei. However, I did not feel like I was missing anything as I read the book. This novel focuses on 3 Chinese sisters (although one was a half-sister) in the Huang family and the different paths their lives took during the time period 1945 to 1968. It starts with the 2 older sisters, Golden Bell and Silver Bell living and attending school in Syracuse, NY. Golden Bell is attending Syracuse University and Silver Bell is in high school. They had both ended up in the United States through the assistance of a missionary after their family had to flee China and go to Hong Kong because of the father's involvement with the Nationalist Party. The lives of all 3 of the sisters diverge widely after both Golden Bell and Silver Bell return to China and are greatly impacted by the men they each marry. Golden Bell marries Yung, the son of a wealthy family and Silver Bell marries a man intent on making his way up the ladder in Yung's company. Coral Bell, the youngest, is the daughter of a

concubine who was the personal maid to Golden Bell and Silver Bell's mother and ends up getting involved with the Communist Party. Through the events of these women's lives, the reader is given a vivid portrayal of all the political and social changes that China goes through as a country---from the devastation by the Japanese to extreme poverty and the disasters of the revolution under Mao Tse Tung. Golden Bell's journal reveals her confusion and distress about the changes going on in the country which seem to be against everything her parents believed in. Through Coral Bell, the reader sees what life was like for the impoverished people of China and the horrors of the revolutionaries as they destroyed people and the land. This book gave me a fascinating view of a period of history in China and how it affected the lives of all different types of people. I gave the book 4 stars instead of 5 stars because I felt the characters could have been developed more fully, especially Silver Bell. I like

Amy Kwei's *Concubine for the Family* is a sequel novel to her *Concubine for the Family*. It is a masterful blend of family narrative and post-World War II Chinese history. Between the moving first chapters and the dramatic final ones the reader is led on a revelatory journey of young romance, hope for the future, terrible tribulations, stoic endurance in spite of enormous odds and a final rescue of most of the characters. The dramatic history of family and country is accomplished by some heart-stopping writing and competent use of simile, for example, "the distant hills undulated like a mythical dragon racing alongside the train" (page 227) and "like oil boiling inside a cauldron her emotions surfaced as if the suffering were alive within her again" (page 335). I invite readers to find for themselves other examples of Amy Kwei's fine writing; there are too many for me to list. I found the blend of insights obtained from both the Confucian and the Christian traditions heart-warming and loved the inclusion of the enigmatic, therefore thought-provoking, poetry of Tu Fu. These quotes provide a sharp contrast to the platitudes of Chairman Mao which also feature in the novel. It is a coincidence that I am writing this review in Sydney (Australia) during the celebrations of the Chinese New Year. The Opera House, Harbour Bridge and Town Hall are illuminated and fireworks adorn the sky. In a local paper I find the recipe for "Beggar's Chicken", the favourite dish of one of the characters in this novel. I read with interest that the chicken is cooked whole because this represents abundance and completeness. As in her previous novel the author's interest in food and a love of cooking is apparent. In the context of tasty, nourishing food I took note of the vivid descriptions of composting in Wei Village chapters. As a keen gardener and composter

myself I know its value in the production of home-grown vegetables. In the particular cases being described the enriched soil provided nourishment which no doubt saved lives. Once again I congratulate Ms Kwei on a great read.

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