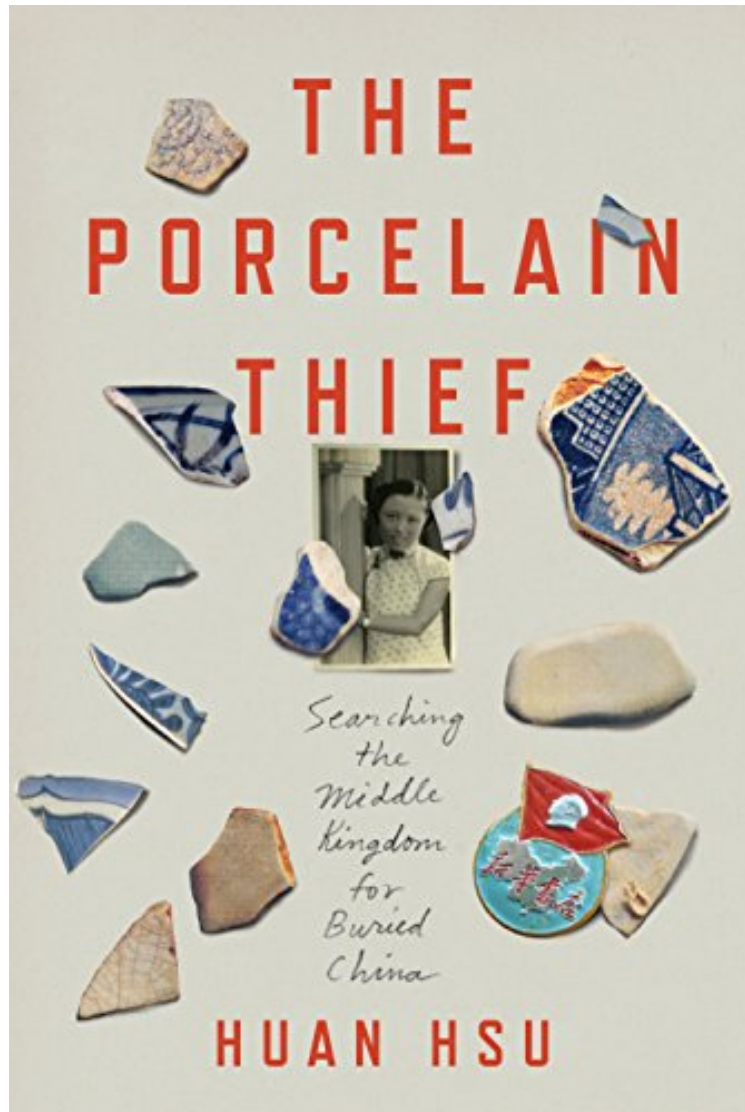


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## The Porcelain Thief: Searching the Middle Kingdom for Buried China

Huan Hsu

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**Huan Hsu : The Porcelain Thief: Searching the Middle Kingdom for Buried China** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Porcelain Thief: Searching the Middle Kingdom for Buried China:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating history of a Chinese family and Chinese porcelain By cycleknit Interesting and insightful book on a Chinese American's return to China and his coming to terms not only with his identity, but with his family and his relationship to them (both literally and figuratively). I particularly enjoyed how he placed his family's experiences in context with what was happening in China at the time, as well as his

efforts to draw a parallel between Chinese history and the significance of the Chinese porcelain industry. I did find off-putting what comes off, perhaps unintentionally, as self-loathing with respect to the Chinese, both on the Mainland and in Taiwan, although his observations, when stripped of their judgmental characterizations, were remarkably accurate and perceptive. (I read this book on the plane back from spending a week in Taiwan). And I suspect that the author meant his more perjorative comments to be representative of his personal search for his identity through the metaphor of his family's porcelain--he, the outsider looking critically at China and the Chinese, even as he finds common ground with them and his own family member. While, as a Chinese American I can relate to some of the author's negative sentiments, but I fear that those without this unique perspective will simply come away with negative stereotypes of the Chinese. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Marvelous writing and tale By swimmer Fascinating. Was given this book as a present, decided to buy a copy to give to a friend! Learned so much about Chinese culture from American born Chinese who returns to China to look for any possible remnants of his grandfather's storied collection, lost in the Cultural Revolution when the family fled to Taipei. Highly readable. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Engaging and informative By Roadrunner Told in a laid-back style that belies the wealth of historical insight about China's development as a nation, this book is a heartfelt exploration of what it means to try to understand our grandparents and their grandparents lives as they unfolded in real time. Loved this book.

A journalist travels throughout mainland China and Taiwan in search of his family's hidden treasure and comes to understand his ancestry as he never has before. In 1938, when the Japanese arrived in Huan Hsu's great-great-grandfather Li's Yangtze River hometown of Xingang, Liu was forced to bury his valuables, including a vast collection of prized antique porcelain, and undertake a decades-long trek that would splinter the family over thousands of miles. Many years and upheavals later, Hsu, raised in Salt Lake City and armed only with curiosity, moves to China to work in his uncle's semiconductor chip business. Once there, a conversation with his grandmother, his last living link to dynastic China, ignites a desire to learn more about not only his lost ancestral heirlooms but also porcelain itself. Mastering the language enough to venture into the countryside, Hsu sets out to separate the layers of fact and fiction that have obscured both China and his heritage and finally complete his family's long march back home. Melding memoir, travelogue, and social and political history, *The Porcelain Thief* offers an intimate and unforgettable way to understand the complicated events that have defined China over the past two hundred years and provides a revealing, lively perspective on contemporary Chinese society from the point of view of a Chinese American coming to terms with his hyphenated identity. From the Hardcover edition.

"An ambitious family saga that marries the intimacy of memoir, the sweep of political history and the suspense of an adventure novel; [Hsu's] thoroughness leads to a rich, welcome discussion of porcelain, making the book a valuable introduction to this artistic tradition." — Wall Street Journal  
"A standout book." — New York Times Book Review  
"Not only is *The Porcelain Thief* a tantalizing mystery — will he find the treasure, or will it be a wild goose chase? — but it is an unearthing of various kinds of booty for the reader: a riveting lesson in Chinese history; a fascinating story of porcelain and its prominent place in the development of China; a gastronomic tour; a vivid and complex portrait of contemporary Chinese culture and the texture of modern life in the world's largest country; and a group portrait of an extended, sprawling, fascinatingly eccentric Chinese family. Moreover, the story is all told through the lens of an ABC, or an American Born Chinese. And not just any old ABC, but one with attitude." — Washington Independent Book Review  
"In addition to documentary and family history, Hsu explores China's social and political history, as well as his personal feelings about China, and the value of documenting and sharing Chinese family stories. Hsu's fluid writing helps to synthesize these threads into a coherent story well worth reading." — Publishers Weekly  
"[Hsu's] persistence in the face of numerous obstacles is beyond admirable." — He offers plenty of intriguing information about Chinese history and culture, from wild Shanghai traffic to family dynamics. Some first-rate detective work." — Kirkus  
"Huan Hsu takes us on an intriguing journey into his family's and China's tumultuous past. The *Porcelain Thief* provides a great, intimate view into how modern China really works." — Frank Langfitt, NPR Correspondent, Shanghai  
"Huan Hsu's return to his ancestral Chinese village in search of buried treasure keeps readers turning the pages, eager to see what he finds. The dig turns up more than ancient family valuables, as Hsu meets distant relatives and learns of the turmoil that they endured and that he, as an American-born Chinese, avoided. Part memoir, part journey, and part archaeological expedition, *The Porcelain Thief* is as suspenseful as any Indiana Jones adventure." — Michael Meyer, author of *The Last Days of Old Beijing* and *In Manchuria*  
"Huan Hsu blends a fascinating search for his own family's roots with an illuminating portrait of modern China. *The Porcelain Thief* is a wonderful read." — Rob Gifford, author of *China Road*  
About the Author  
HUAN HSU, born in the Bay Area and raised in Salt Lake City, is a former staff writer for the Washington City Paper, in Washington, DC, and the Seattle Weekly. He is the recipient of two Society of Professional Journalists awards and has received recognition from the Casey Foundation for Meritorious Journalism. His essays and fiction have also appeared in Slate, The Literary Center, and Center: A Journal of the Literary

Arts. He currently lives in Amsterdam and teaches creative writing at Amsterdam University College.