



Fact in Fiction: 1920s China and Ba Jin's Family

Kristin Stapleton

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Historical novels can be windows into other cultures and eras, but it's not always clear what's fact and what's fiction. Thousands have read Ba Jin's influential novel *Family*, but few realize how much he shaped his depiction of 1920s China to suit his story and his politics. In *Fact in Fiction*, Kristin Stapleton puts Ba Jin's bestseller into full historical context, both to illustrate how it successfully portrays human experiences during the 1920s and to reveal its historical distortions.

Stapleton's attention to historical evidence and clear prose that directly addresses themes and characters from *Family* create a book that scholars, students, and general readers will enjoy. She focuses on Chengdu, China, Ba Jin's birthplace and the setting for *Family*, which was also a cultural and political center of western China. The city's richly preserved archives allow Stapleton to create an intimate portrait of a city that seemed far from the center of national politics of the day but clearly felt the forces of—and contributed to—the turbulent stream of Chinese history.

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