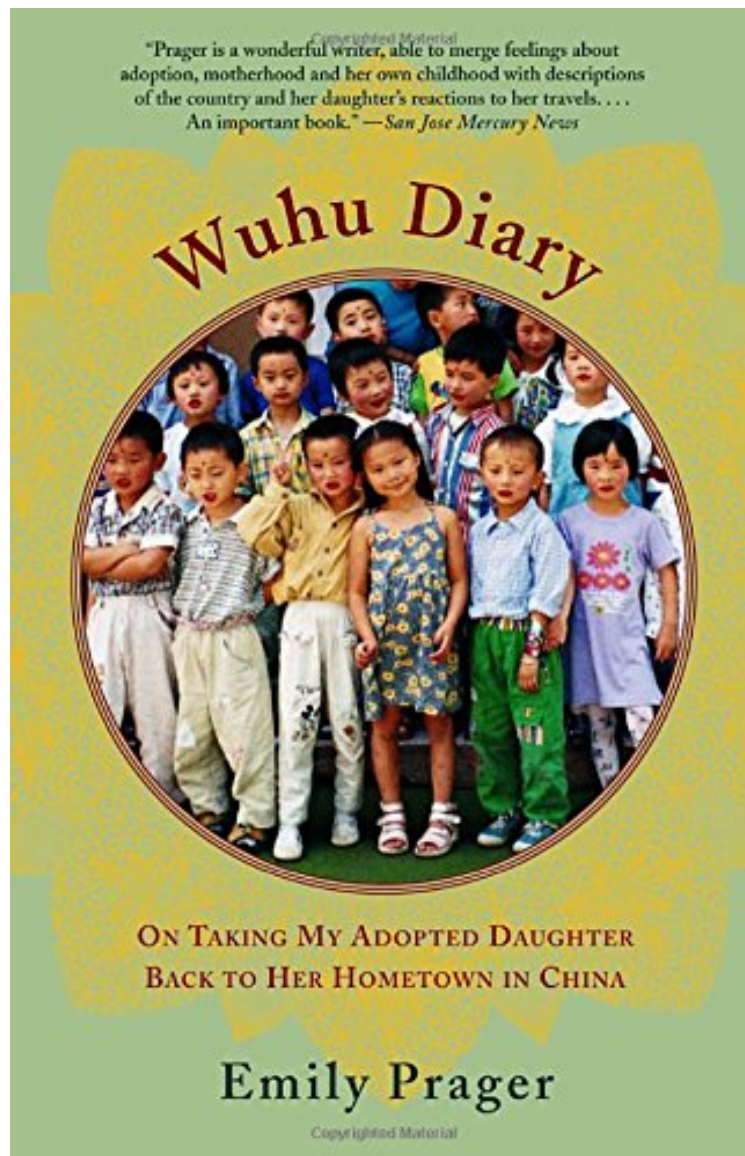


(Library ebook) Wuhu Diary: On Taking My Adopted Daughter Back to Her Hometown in China

Wuhu Diary: On Taking My Adopted Daughter Back to Her Hometown in China

Emily Prager

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Emily Prager : Wuhu Diary: On Taking My Adopted Daughter Back to Her Hometown in China before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Wuhu Diary: On Taking My Adopted Daughter Back to Her Hometown in China:

2 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Negative reviews unfairBy A CustomerThe reviews dated

September 16, 18 and 23, below, I think really have it wrong. There may be a germ of truth in them, but each betrays a particular rigid perspective on the part of the reviewer. Moreover, none of them is truly a literary review, but instead each is an intolerant political/social diatribe with which many of us will not agree. I think it is frankly outrageous and arrogant to say that the book tells us precisely how not to raise an adopted Chinese daughter. Ms. Prager seems to me to be a loving and thoughtful mother, who grants her daughter appropriate autonomy and respect. The book is well worth reading by China adoptive parents.

2 of 8 people found the following review helpful. A very charming and interesting story

By A Customer This book really is a diary, and is not even partially investigative journalism. But I do not fault it in this regard; it is appropriately cast as a personal story. It is extremely well written, and, I think, insightful. I would recommend it to any adoptive parents of Chinese-born children, as well as to anyone else with an interest in adoptive families or China.

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Amusing because of author's heartfelt ignorance, idealism

By Mary Mekko Emily Prager wrote this book about her 5-year-old adopted daughter, Lulu, and their trip back to Wuhu (Anhui province), China. Ostensibly this mother/writer wanted Lulu to get to her "roots", however, since the girl had been, like most of the 40,000-plus such babies in USA now, abandoned on the road, picked up by the police, and then put in the "Welfare" (an orphanage), in fact, what both the mother and poor young daughter must learn are tearful things. One, that the Chinese tradition has made such baby-abandonment commonplace for centuries, as old photos of Wuhu show; and secondly, that the one-child-only policy of modern China forces such a Chinese mentality-family to try for a boy again and again, abandoning the "bad luck" (girl) each time. This is a very sad reality that goes very far back, and is well known in the modern Western world through the world press, in spite of our glorious Beijing Olympics opening ceremony and its army of pretty young women and below-age female gymnasts. What amused me about Emily as a writer was her naivety, her shining eagerness to embrace all things Chinese, her wish to see everything rosy-pink - in spite of the brutal realities that she does not omit in this travel journal. I admire Emily and her writing, and her obvious infatuation with her adopted Chinese daughter, but objectivity she does not seem to have. From an educated, well-traveled and well-read writer like Emily, one expects a far deeper understanding of China, its traditions both beautiful and reprehensible. Her ignorance comes through all too often - ignorance of Communist dictatorships' absolute control; of Asian male-dominance; of China's long-standing and desperate poverty. How can she not realize that she must read, read and read some more? Where is her preparation in understanding the motivations of the people? Another interesting omission: in the 1999 bombings of the Chinese Embassy in Beograd, our author is in Wuhu, and the Chinese TV news saturates the country, its 1.2 billion, with anti-American propaganda. Emily feels afraid to walk in the streets or go to the markets, rightly so. She gets into several discussions with the local adults about how America and NATO, and our lovely Clinton, could not possibly have done this. At the very least, a roving world traveller/writer like Emily should have known that it MUST have been purposeful. It was discovered and revealed very quickly, back in 1999, that the Chinese Embassy there was a rebroadcast point for the Yugoslavs; the Chinese were hoping to make some kind of trade on weapons and did this "favor" for them. Meanwhile, our intelligence sources had three verifiable readings on these transmissions. The bombings were planned for nighttime, when the Embassy employees would be all gone. The three in the building - two were intelligence agents that night. Emily could have included this later in the book. However, aside from these criticisms, let us say that this book is a good read for those interested in the everyday details of a Chinese trip - how is the food, the train, the road system, the bureaucracy, the Internet connections, the access to American food products, and of course, how are the Chinese children treated. She must perforce focus on this latter, because the book is about her daughter Lulu (LU= street; Lulu was found in the street, hence the poetic name given by the orphanage!) Lulu is described as an adorable, outspoken, charming, captivating, heart-winning, bilingual and identity-confused Chinese girl. She has confidence and curiosity oozing out of her, making her run with eagerness to every activity, toy, food, child or adult available. The Chinese children, in contrast, are inhibited and well-controlled. The reader slowly realizes that aside from the yellow skin or epicanthic folds, clearly this girl is more American than Chinese, or Welsh, or any other nationality, in her sheer openness of personality. If she had been stuck in Wuhu - let's say the American mother found her a family to stay with, paid them well, put her in a good school, etc. - Emily would have returned to have found a completely different child than her "daughter". I look forward to more articles or books from Emily Prager about China and Lulu, simply to see if she has matured in her attitude about China's deplorable view of women. Yes, Emily's mother was a writer, and provided the wisest statement in the book: the one-child-only policy and the cultural "need" for male heirs will be the only way the Chinese ever value their girls and women. Meanwhile, about 4000 Chinese women a day commit suicide, usually self-poisoning, as we sit here reading and writing about them. Emily saved this girl from a backward cultural curse. Finally, a note about Emily's daughter's face - see the front cover photo of the school group - the teacher is right in noting that Lulu does NOT resemble the other children there, with their more rounded eyes, less stocky builds, shortness and oval faces. Anyone can see that Lulu comes from a different part of China than those children. Adoption agencies in China are moving the she-babies around for many financial reasons. My guess is that Lulu is from the Northern parts, even Manchuria or Mongolia, or let us say, her sperm donor was, and the local woman had to abandon the girl because her facial features would reveal the affair she had with a "foreigner". That's my theory after knowing their internal racism.

In 1994 an American writer named Emily Prager met her new daughter LuLu. All she knew about her was that the baby had been born in Wuhu, a city in southern China, and left near a police station in her first three days of life. Her birth mother had left a note with Lulu's western and lunar birth dates. In 1999 Emily and her daughter now a happy, fearless four-year-old--returned to China to find out more. That journey and its discoveries unfold in this lovely, touching and sensitively observed book. In *Wuhu Diary*, we follow Emily and LuLu through a country where children are doted on yet often summarily abandoned and where immense human friendliness can coexist with outbursts of state-orchestrated hostility particularly after the U. S. accidentally bombs the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. We see Emily unearthing precious details of her child's past and LuLu coming to terms with who she is. The result is a book that will delight anyone interested in China, and that will move and instruct anyone who has ever adopted--or considered adopting--a child.

From *Publishers Weekly* Childless and in her 40s, novelist Prager (Roger Fishbite, etc.) realized that her generation has taken a terribly long time to "understand what children could bring us." Ironically (since she's a feminist), she took advantage of the sexism that has emerged in the execution of China's "one-child policy" and adopted an unwanted baby girl from Wuhu, a village in southern China. This is the journal of the return voyage Prager made with LuLu, her five-year-old daughter, in an effort to come to terms with the circumstances of her adoption and to reintroduce LuLu to her roots. Acknowledging that travel with young children often "opens different doors," she recounts her visits with LuLu to nursery schools, hospital waiting rooms and delightfully "un-p.c." amusement parks, instead of museums and national monuments. As LuLu becomes a "local," hanging out with the hotel's bellboys, chambermaids and musicians, Prager wanders the department stores and watches TV, in between futile efforts to find out more about LuLu's birthparents. In the end, it's the whole process they've gone through that lessens LuLu's adoption angst, rather than learning the circumstances of her adoption: "She came back from China... unencumbered by old doubts or anxieties, having reclaimed... some essential part of her self." Writing in a "daily diary" format, Prager keeps the pages turning. By the end, the unsent letter she wrote to the undiscovered birth parents, explaining all the ways she would love their child, may inspire a few tears. Photos not seen by PW. (Sept. 4) Forecast: If Prager is able to tap into the highly organized and active networks of adoptive parents of Chinese children, this book will be heartily embraced in hardcover and an evergreen paperback. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From *Library Journal* This moving story of a single mother's two-month trip to Wuhu, China, in 2001 with her five-year-old adopted daughter, LuLu, combines memoir, travelog, and a bit of philosophy. A novelist (Roger Fishbite) and satirical columnist for the *Village Voice*, among other publications, Prager herself spent some of her childhood in LuLu's homeland. For anyone considering multicultural adoption or already involved in one, this compelling work offers encouragement and an example of how to help an adopted child get acquainted with her roots and build her sense of self. For others, it provides a wonderful view of a part of China seldom written about. Readers will also gain insight into the strengthening bonds between children and their adopted parents and the insecurities both feel. Following the trip, LuLu no longer exhibited frantic behavior. She seemed to have a better sense of herself and her heritage, which gave her more confidence, as well as a firmer comprehension of her adopted mother's commitment. Enthusiastically recommended. Kay Brodie, Chesapeake Coll., Wye Mills, MD Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Booklist* The one-child policy in Communist China has been a boon to Americans wishing to adopt a child. Because of the Chinese preference for boys, if the extra child is a girl, she is often put up for adoption. Novelist Prager's adopted girl was actually left in the street, so her background was very incomplete. Prager returned to China with LuLu, now four years old, to learn about the place where LuLu was born. What she found surprised her. The Chinese people she encountered showed a great deal of interest and kindness toward her and LuLu. Prager's frustration in most of her attempts to find out about LuLu's past seems minor compared with the understanding she gained from visiting the land of her child's birth. Marlene Chamberlain Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved