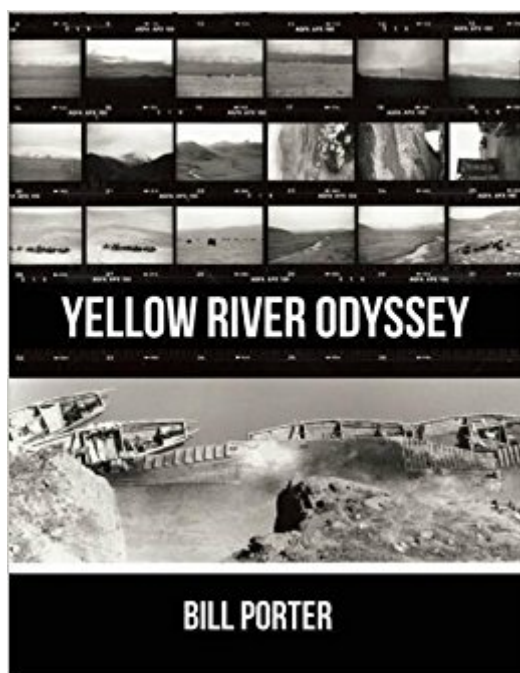


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Yellow River Odyssey



Synopsis

Bill Porter follows the Yellow River, the world's sixth longest river, from its mouth to its source high in the Tibetan Plateau, a journey of more than three thousand miles through nine Chinese provinces. The trip takes the master translator into what was once the cradle of Chinese civilization and to the hometowns and graves of key historical figures such as Confucius, Mencius, Lao-tzu, and Chuang-tzu. Porter's depth of knowledge of Chinese history and culture is unparalleled. *Yellow River Odyssey*, already a bestseller in China, reveals a complex, fascinating, contradictory country. Porter masterfully digs beneath China's present-day materialism and the deep wounds of the Cultural Revolution to get at the roots of Chinese culture. And he does so with an ever-present wit and a keen eye for the telling detail. The book also includes more than fifty black-and-white photographs taken by Porter during his travels. Bill Porter is an award-winning author and translator also known by his pen name, Red Pine. He is considered one of the foremost translators of Chinese texts, especially Buddhist and Taoist poetry and sutras. His translation work includes major Buddhist texts such as *The Platform Sutra*, *The Diamond Sutra*, and *The Heart Sutra* as well as the best-selling poetry collections *Taoteking* and *Collected Songs of Cold Mountain*. He is also the author of *Zen Baggage* and *Road to Heaven: Encounters with Chinese Hermits*. Porter lives in Port Townsend, Washington.

Book Information

Paperback: 284 pages

Publisher: Chin Music Press Inc.; First American Edition edition (June 24, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0988769301

ISBN-13: 978-0988769304

Product Dimensions: 0.8 x 5.2 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 9 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #195,423 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #8 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Photography & Video > Black & White](#) #106 in [Books > Travel > Asia > China > General](#) #145 in [Books > Travel > Pictorial](#)

Customer Reviews

Bill Porter: Bill Porter is an award-winning author and translator who uses the pen name Red Pine for his translations. He is considered one of the foremost translators of Chinese texts, especially

Buddhist and Taoist poetry and sutras. Porter was born in Los Angeles in 1943 and grew up in the Idaho Panhandle. After a tour of duty in the US Army, Porter graduated from the University of California with a degree in anthropology, and attended graduate school at Columbia University. However, he left academia, moved to Taiwan and joined a Buddhist monastery, where he stayed for four years. After his stint in a monastery, Porter produced thousands of radio programs for stations in Taiwan and Hong Kong about his travels in China. Porter's translation work includes major Buddhist texts such as The Platform Sutra, The Diamond Sutra and The Heart Sutra as well as best-selling poetry collections Taoteching and Collected Songs of Cold Mountain. He is also the author of Zen Baggage and Road to Heaven: Encounters with Chinese Hermits. Porter lives in Port Townsend, Washington.

This is an enjoyable book by Bill Porter, better known by his pen name "Red Pine", describing his early 1990s journey along the length of the Yellow River, beginning from where it enters the sea in Shandong to its source in Qinghai. As the pre-eminent translator of classical Chinese in the disciplines of poetry, Buddhism and philosophy, he brings a vital and fascinating perspective to his travels. I particularly enjoy how he makes it a point to seek out less well-known, but still highly significant historical sites, of which even many Chinese are unaware. The China he depicts in the book has largely vanished, but for anyone who spent much time in China in the 1990s, it will result in knowing nods of the head. He writes in an uncomplicated, easy-going style--who knows, he may just be a Western incarnation of Xu Xiake (徐霞客). The accompanying photos are spectacular, and evoked fond memories of my own journeys to many of the same places during the same period. His story ends rather abruptly, but the book was well worth the wait.

very nice -a good read wish there was a index

The style of Bill Porter is unsurpassed. This is my second book of his that I have read. His knowledge of the history of China makes all his books educational.

I feel like I'm right there with him. He's a favorite writer

This is well written and quite interesting. Porter knows Chinese history and though I've been to China 4 times, after reading about his journey to the source of the yellow river, I want to go again.

Will have to pass this book on to my wife and see if works as well on her.

This is a fascinating travelogue of a journey up the Yellow River in China, from mouth to source (over 3100 miles). Along the way, the author opens door after door to peer into history and legends -- populated by kings, invaders, communities, temples, monuments and museums. It is a riveting account. The book is especially gripping when the author "returns" to the river, after wandering off occasionally to see some hidden treasures of history. But even the off-track musings are enjoyable, and the author reminds himself before long that it is time to return to the Yellow River and to the focus of the book. Several related chapters, together with the accompanying black and white pictures, are well-written and presented. We are all keyed up as the author searches for the Source of the river (last chapter). It is quite a page turner. En route, the many amusing stories of lodges, people, food and drink lighten the weight of history. Altogether a must read for river/history/China buffs.

I enjoyed this book. I'd read Bill's other two books about his travels in China, so I ordered a copy as soon as I came across an excerpt of this latest work in Tricycle magazine. I always find his travels interesting, in part because his working knowledge of language and culture (twenty years in Taiwan and Hong Kong) must give him advantages and perspectives that are not available to other tourists, in part because of the unassuming way he manages to give me a better understanding of the immense vistas of culture and history that are China. The prose never over-embroiders, self-promotes, or seeks to make some kind of social/ political/ spiritual point, but always remains matter-of-fact and grounded in everyday experience. My one disappointment was that this is not a contemporary account, but is already almost a historical document, in that it covers two months of early 1991, probably an aeon ago in terms of the China of today. However, for all I know, a 1991 journey may well be much more interesting than one made today. I do admire the energy and determination that kept him going, aged 47, through two months of gruelling buses, trains, taxis, jeeps, and every other form of transport that can be imagined. Not only did he reach an arduous and challenging destination, but he made many a detour to significant sites. So, thank you Bill.

Another wonderful pilgrimage from Bill Porter. The book is superbly presented with excellent black and white photos, along with Porter's travel and historical narrative. If you've enjoyed his previous pilgrimage to China books (Road to Heaven, Zen Baggage), or his translations as Red Pine (Cold

Mountain, Wei Ying-wu etc), then you won't regret spending some time roaming in China. I hope general readers discover the growing number of translated Classical Chinese poetry, as well as Chinese history. It may become as important to us as the classic Greek and Latin revival during the Renaissance. A nice light, fun and informative read.

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