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Vignettes Of Taiwan: Short Stories, Essays & Random Meditations About Taiwan



Synopsis

When Joshua Samuel Brown first stepped out of the passenger terminal at Chiang Kai-shek International Airport in Taiwan, he was a stranger in a humid land with insufficient funds, zero job prospects and an over-packed suitcase. Like much else in his life up to that point, his decision to move to Taiwan was based largely on random occurrence and cosmic coincidence. He was twenty-four years old, thousands of miles away from home, and at that moment the happiest man alive. This anthology of short stories, travel essays, photographs, random meditations, and political meanderings grew out of his years on the island formerly known as Formosa.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

...offer some witty insights of life on the island for foreign visitors and locals alike... - Bradley Winterton --Taipei Times
The stories are superb and are accompanied by beautiful photographs - Keith Hughes --Letter to Salon.com
Literary Guide
Brown is a gifted writer, and paints a vivid picture of Taiwan ... - Patrick Sean Taylor --Clamor Magazine

Joshua Samuel Brown is a freelance writer who writes from various locations around Asia. He has written stories from the jungles of Laos and hobnobbed with high ranking communists in the underground buffet bunker of People's Daily in Beijing. His work has been seen in The South China Morning Post, The Hong Kong Daily Standard, The American Spectator, Beijing Scene, The Taipei Times, Boulder Weekly and The China Post. He is a semi regular contributor to various magazines in America and Asia.

Not only was it well-received, but it has become something of a favorite. By her reckoning, the writing is readable, meaningful, and engaging, and the sense of the place is deeply conveyed. She was overjoyed to have these stories to refer to—stories that she said took her back to the days and nights of Taiwan and the many lovely people and things that she misses there. After hearing this, I did some reading as well, and even as an outsider, I found that it compares well with much contemporary travel writing. The place is illuminated in little vignettes, each of which is artfully and subtly constructed. In some ways, they remind me of Zen Koans, though this will surely make actual practitioners cringe. It's not meant to be a comparison at the literal level, however—more at the instinctive one. In short, it's a nice read, whether you've been there or not, and the stories will enrich the reader as a human being and citizen of the world in the way that the best works of literature do.

I've always loved all things Asian. I found this book fascinating. I loved the photos in it. The stories about the authors' interactions with the people were so very personal. In no way did this author seem to be a "fish out of water". He was so comfortable as he traveled and reported, it made me comfortable too. I almost, almost got the courage to go there myself.

I thought that this book would be quite good, given the number of five star reviews it received by other .com users. Instead, I found it mediocre. The humor displayed by the author is interesting, certainly, but for those who really wish to learn anything deep about Taiwan and its people, this is not the book to look to. However, if you simply wish to read a mildly entertaining book, then this book would be fine.

I am a Taiwanese who grew up in the States. This book is so good. It points out many, if not all, of the complex cultural dilemma/paradox and people's confusing behavior in Taiwan. But this is not for you if you are not culturally aware enough or if you only want to know how to survive in Taiwan because you are flying there in 1 week. I love the short stories on people (based on real stories) - the local Mahjong legend whose own little shop was eye-balled by the mafia, the Betel Nut girl who fantasized that white men are good people, etc. Something about the book made me feel that it could have been better. So I am giving it a 4. But since it is only \$12, I'd definitely recommend everyone to purchase it, including my fellow Taiwanese.

Joshua Samuel Brown is the Mahatma Gandhi of restaurant criticism, the Rudyard Kipling of professional boxing, the Lance Armstrong of economic planning. His voice shines in this magnificent exposition of over a decade of perplexing customs and offensive odors. Proud and misunderstood like Taiwan itself, Mr. Brown regales us with tales of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, betel nuts, and how to avoid jail time by impersonating a mormon. This is a book to be read aloud by the fireside while snacking on extremely sour dried fruits and squid jerky.

What a thrill, what a depth of knowledge crammed in this tiny book...the understanding the author shows for this land and it's people overwhelms me...and I thought I like Chinese food before I read this book...oh my...who knew??? My only complaint is the scant bulk of this tome...not weighty enough to keep a broken window open...but cheap enough to mail to all the relatives...Buy this book, Joshua's Mother

I thought that I had a good understanding of Eastern culture. I was wrong. Where was Mr. Brown when we were making ill-fated decisions like the bombing of Cambodia? Anyway, this book is so funny that I think that I've soiled myself again.

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