



Ba Jin signing one of his numerous books

Photo: Jeni Fong



May-lee Chai



**University of  
Indianapolis Press**

List Price: US \$16.95

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# The Autobiography of BA JIN

Translated by May-lee Chai

“For those interested in life during the tumultuous years of early twentieth-century China, this autobiography offers a rich opportunity. Ba Jin portrays the possibilities and challenges confronting a young Chinese in a revolutionary era.”—Robert A. Scalapino, Robson Research Professor of Government Emeritus, University of California-Berkeley.

“*The Autobiography of Ba Jin* provides us with firsthand insights into the early influences and pivotal experiences of a writer of towering importance.”—Patrick Caddeau, Director of Studies, Forbes College, Princeton University, and author of *Appraising Genji: Literary Criticism and Cultural Anxiety in the Age of the Last Samurai*.

This translation marks the first time this seminal work by one of China’s most influential and prolific twentieth-century authors has been published in English.

*The Autobiography of Ba Jin*, published by the University of Indianapolis Press, is a portrait of the author’s early life in the compound of his enormous, educated, and wealthy family. This alone makes Ba Jin’s autobiography exquisitely compelling 70 years after it was written. The most famous of his early works—some would say Ba Jin’s masterpiece—was the novel entitled simply *Family*. It was written in 1931, the same year his eldest brother committed suicide. Ba Jin blamed his beloved eldest brother’s suicide on the strain of having to head this family with all its dark secrets and feuds. In Ba Jin’s autobiography, written at the young age of 30 in 1934, the connection between many of the themes of his fiction and his life experiences is evident. In 1975, Ba Jin was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature. When Ba Jin died in 2005 at the age of 101, his body of work—more than 80 books—was once again celebrated in articles throughout China and the world.

## **ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR**

**May-lee Chai** is the author of five books, including a collection of short stories and essays, *Glamorous Asians* (also from University of Indianapolis Press). She is the recipient of an NEA Grant in Literature: Fellowship in Prose. She received her MA in East Asian Studies from Yale University and her BA in French and Chinese Studies from Grinnell College. She has studied and worked in China, where she travels frequently.