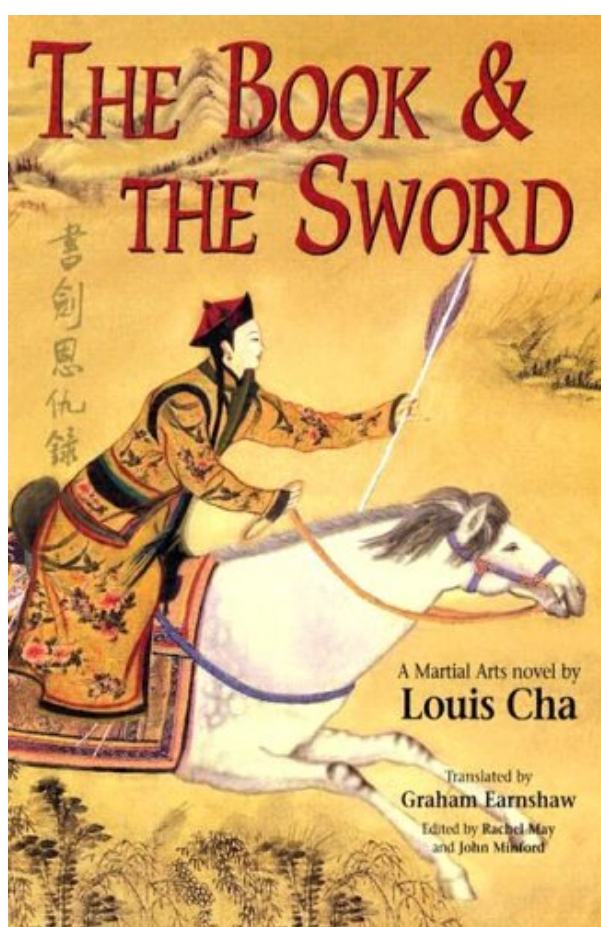
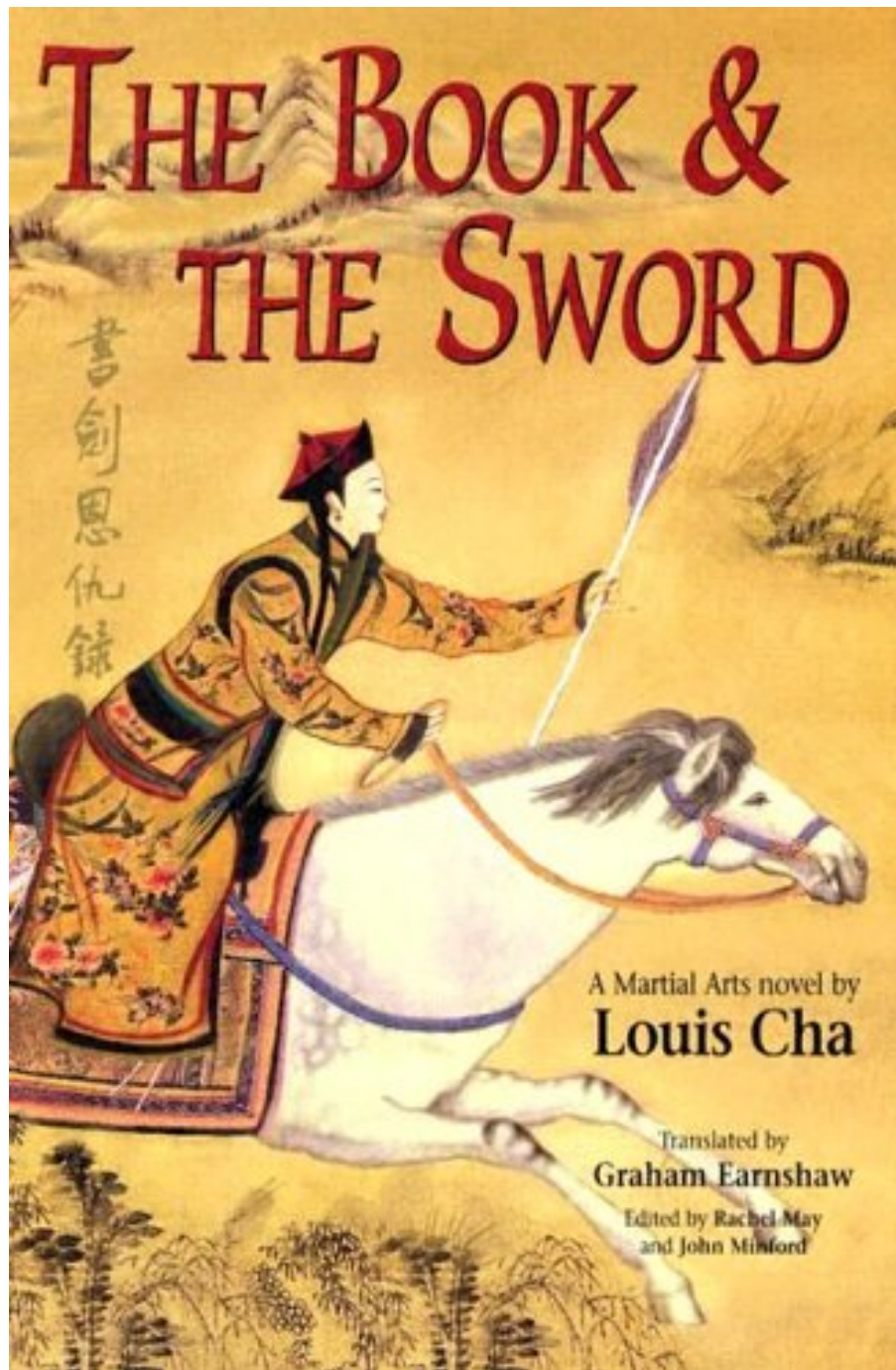


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BY LOUIS CHA, GRAHAM EARNSHAW,
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About the Author

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Earnshaw is editor-in-chief of Xinhua Finance, managing director of SinoMedia, Ltd. and a director and founder of Park 97 in Shanghai. He speaks Cantonese and Mandarin, and taught himself to read Chinese.

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THE BOOK AND THE SWORD (THE MARTIAL ARTS NOVELS OF LOUIS CHA) BY LOUIS CHA, GRAHAM EARNSHAW, RACHEL MAY, JOHN MINFORD PDF

In the Book and Sword, Louis Cha revives the legend about the great eighteenth-century Manchu Emperor Qianlong which claims that he was in fact not a Manchu but a Han Chinese as a result of a "baby swap." The novel is panoramic in scope and includes the fantastical elements for which Cha is well-known: secret societies, kungfu masters, a lost desert city guarded by wolf packs, and the mysterious Fragrant Princess.

- Sales Rank: #280545 in Books
- Published on: 2005-01-20
- Original language: Chinese
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 5.90" h x 1.40" w x 8.60" l, 1.72 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 536 pages

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Most helpful customer reviews

110 of 113 people found the following review helpful.

The Book and the Translator

By Graham A. Earnshaw

The Book & The Translator

By Graham Earnshaw

Once upon a time, in 1973, I landed in Hong Kong and sat in the lobby of the Mandarin Hotel and looked at a notice under the glass of the coffee table with identical information in both English and Chinese, laid out as numbered points. I looked at the English "1,2, 3", then at the Chinese squiggles, and saw that one stroke was 1, two strokes 2 and ... three strokes 3! I can read Chinese! It was a simple path from that moment to the translation of the kungfu novel "The Book & The Sword", now published by Oxford University Press.

The novel was written by author Louis Cha, who occupies a position in modern Chinese literature equivalent to that of Charles Dickens, Ian Fleming and Tom Clancy combined. He is a giant, and unfortunately a lonely giant. There are no other authors of his stature in modern Chinese popular literature.

The Book and the Sword is a story that virtually every Chinese person knows, involving kung fu secret society struggles against the Manchu court, the beautiful but tragic Fragrant Princess, whose tomb stands outside Kashgar, and the war between the Manchu armies and the Muslim peoples of what is now western China.

It was Cha's first book, serialised in 1955 under his pen name Jin Yong in the Hong Kong newspaper that he founded, Ming Pao. Louis Cha (Jin Yong), is a famous media person, and one of the top authors in the Chinese world. His novels have had a huge impact on the whole of Chinese society and culture, and have been adapted many times for TV, film, audio cassette, strip cartoon and even computer games. He is probably the most-pirated author of all time.

Cha's novels find favour with all levels of Chinese society, from the university professors who savour his command of the Chinese language, to kids who just love the fight scenes. From a western perspective, they provide a window into the Chinese world, revealing its essence through the dreams and fantasies that make up whatever it is to be Chinese. The equivalent, in other words, of Tolkein's success in "Lord of the Rings" in tapping into the sources of northern European culture.

Book & Sword's story has a panoramic sweep which takes as its base a few unbeatable themes - secret societies, kung fu masters, the sensational rumour so dear to Chinese hearts that the great Manchu emperor Qian Long was in fact a Chinese and not Manchu. It also mixes in the exotic flavours of central Asia, a lost city in the desert guarded by wolf packs and the unforgettable Fragrant Princess, who ate flowers and exuded a scent that every Chinese man would love to inhale. Me too.

Translating the book took around four years, and the fight scenes were by far the hardest part to get right. It inevitably involved some simplification. But I was as faithful to the spirit of the original as I could be. I took the view that I could omit or simplify, but not add and Mr Cha agreed with my approach.

When I translated the book, Chinese culture on the world scene basically came down to Bruce Lee. Now, the world has turned, "Heroes" and "Croaching Dragon" are major international box office draws, and kung fu culture has infiltrated western culture to a significant degree - the Matrix series is the proof.

(p.s. the Amazon system requires a star rating on all review entries, otherwise I would not have been so immodest as to rate this book)

30 of 31 people found the following review helpful.

Story slow to start, but good when it gets going

By FRANCIS PETTIT

This a kung fu adventure story full of fights, beautiful ladies, complicated romantic relationships, political intrigue and travel in China's wild west. The story takes a looong time to get going (about 300 pages out of 510.) When it finally gets going, it's quite good and hard to put down. The adventure gets more compelling, and at the same time it becomes something of a tragic love story.

This book shares some of the virtues and flaws of the other major Louis Cha/Jin Yong novel translated into English, "The Deer and the Cauldron." The virtue: both books are excellently and idiomatically translated by Graham Earnshaw, with a nice glossary to help you with all the character names. These two books are

currently the ONLY novels by Louis Cha translated into English (except for one notoriously bad translation by someone else, and some comic book adaptations.)

The flaw: like "The Deer and the Cauldron" which took about 250 pages to get going, after which the next 1,250 pages (or whatever) were simply un-put-down-able, with this novel, the first 300 pages just introduce the characters and have repetitive fight scenes. It shows its origins as a serial in a newspaper. When the real story gets going, here it's only 210 pages to the end, alas, but it does leave you wanting more.

At first you think the novel is about a teenage girl who learns kung fu in secret and travels in disguise as a boy. Then you think it's about this or that member of the Red Flower Heroes, a secret society of patriots in Qing Dynasty China dedicated to overthrowing the Manchu government. They engage in numerous repetitive battles. Several couples are introduced and they gradually pair off, each romantic pairing clearly signalled.

Finally the story centers on Helmsmen Chen, the leader of the Red Flower Society, and his, um, complicated romantic relationships. While travelling in China's Muslim Wild West, he falls in love with Huo Qingtong, a Uighur (Turkic) princess of extraordinary brains, courage, and kung fu skills. But, due to a romantic misunderstanding, he thinks she's already taken. By coincidence he meets her sister, the Fragrant Princess Hasli, the most beautiful woman in the world. Through various misunderstandings, the virtuous Helmsmen Chen winds up with both sisters in love with him. I'm not giving anything away to say that this kind of thing cannot end well, and the story has a tragic aspect.

The latter part of the story can be quite exciting, with lost cities in the desert, hidden passages, that kind of thing. As you'd expect for a newspaper serial, there are implausible parts and logical discrepancies. If there's one thing about this novel that makes it inferior to "The Deer and the Cauldron", it's that Helmsman Chen is so virtuous, he's boring. I kept hoping he would show some lust or jealousy or something.

There is also a lot of political intrigue; the Manchu Emperor is secretly a Chinese by birth, and the Red Flower Heroes hatch a plan to exploit this fact to drive out the Manchu oppressors. Anyone who knows Chinese history knows how that will turn out. So, this story does not have a happy ending, but it is tied up nicely.

Graham Earnshaw deserves a lot of credit for translating this important Chinese author. Hey Graham, when you gonna translate "The Eagle-Shooting Heroes"?

16 of 19 people found the following review helpful.

another good book for my collection

By A Customer

this is what i expect from Louis Cha, an involving storyline and lots of kung fu stuff that i can't understand but still enjoy...

this book has both.

it's a great book, but i wish it were longer, cuz when i get into a book i don't want it to end. even "outlaws of the marsh"(2000+ pages) seems short when you're done reading it.

here are some recommendations.

"Musashi"

"Taiko"

"Outlaws of the Marsh"

& "The Deluge"

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