



The Cult of the Fox: Power, Gender, and Popular Religion in Late Imperial and Modern China

By Xiaofei Kang

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For more than five centuries the shamanistic fox cult has attracted large portions of the Chinese population and appealed to a wide range of social classes. Deemed illicit by imperial rulers and clerics and officially banned by republican and communist leaders, the fox cult has managed to survive and flourish in individual homes and community shrines throughout northern China. In this new work, the first to examine the fox cult as a vibrant popular religion, Xiaofei Kang explores the manifold meanings of the fox spirit in Chinese society. Kang describes various cult practices, activities of worship, and the exorcising of fox spirits to reveal how the Chinese people constructed their cultural and social values outside the gaze of official power and morality.

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The Cult of the Fox: Power, Gender, and Popular Religion in Late Imperial and Modern China By Xiaofei Kang **Bibliography**

- Sales Rank: #1121999 in Books
- Published on: 2005-12-07
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.22" h x .88" w x 6.48" l, 1.12 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 288 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

The Cult of the Fox is bound to be the definitive work on the subject.

(Gerald Vinten *Reviews in Religion and Theology*)

Kang has indeed given us a superb study of the fox cult in premodern China.

(Philip Clart *China Review International*)

I am certain that others will benefit from reading it as much as I have.

(Chun-Fang Yu *Journal of Chinese Religions*)

This book serves as valuable material for all readers interested in East Asian religion, history, and culture.

(Miki Morita *Religious Studies Review*)

Review

Xiaofei Kang's beautiful book epitomizes two of the most remarkable current trends in the field of Chinese religion: the interweaving of history, literature, and ethnology; and the uncovering of the widely underestimated richness of modern northern China's religious world. It is an enchanting new look at ethics, exorcism, and spirit-mediumship.

(Vincent Goossaert, research fellow, CNRS, Paris)

This book concerns a fascinating phenomenon in Chinese religion, society, and culture. Kang smoothly blends both literary-historical and ethnographic evidence into an integrated, balanced, and creative interpretation. *The Cult of the Fox* is particularly sophisticated in its sensitivity to the multiple meanings associated with foxes and the various types of social actors involved in constructing those meanings. It is a highly original, engagingly written, painstakingly researched work of scholarship that will immediately become the key book on its subject and essential reading for anyone interested in East Asian religion, culture, gender imagery, literature, and history.

(Robert Ford Campany, Indiana University, author of *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth: A Translation and Study of Ge Hong's Traditions of Divine Transcendents*)

Kang's book blends data from previously unexplored sources to show that the fox was a multivocal symbol that different people manipulated in order to justify their position in Chinese society, and at times even resist the imposition of standard cultural norms. Kang's stimulating treatment of the history of fox spirits rethinks conventional wisdom about the underlying unity of Chinese culture, as well as the ability of officials and

elites to impose cultural integration from the top down. Full of vivid descriptions and thought-provoking analysis, this book should prove inspirational for all readers with an interest in the religious and cultural history of China.

(Paul Katz, Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica)

About the Author

Xiaofei Kang is an assistant professor of history at St. Mary's College of Maryland.

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