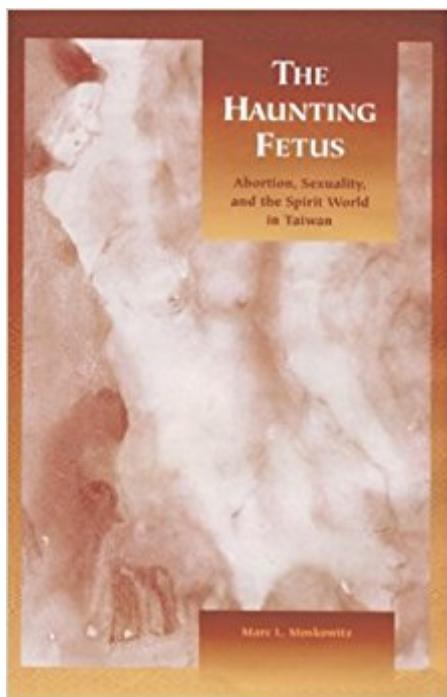


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The Haunting Fetus: Abortion, Sexuality, And The Spirit World In Taiwan



Synopsis

The Haunting Fetus focuses on the belief in modern Taiwan that an aborted fetus can return to haunt its family. Although the topic has been researched in Japan and commented on in the Taiwanese press, it has not been studied systematically in relation to Taiwan in either English or Chinese. This fascinating study looks at a range of topics pertaining to the belief in haunting fetuses, including abortion, sexuality, the changing nature of familial power structures, the economy, and traditional and modern views of the spirit world in Taiwan and in traditional Chinese thought. It addresses the mental, moral, and psychological aspects of abortion within the context of modernization processes and how these ramify through historical epistemologies and folk traditions. The author illustrates how images of fetus-ghosts are often used to manipulate women, either through fear or guilt, into paying exorbitant sums of money for appeasement. He argues at the same time, however, that although appeasement can be expensive, it provides important psychological comfort to women who have had abortions as well as a much-needed means to project personal and familial feelings of transgression onto a safely displaced object. In addition to bringing to the surface underlying tensions within a family, appeasing fetus-ghosts, like other dealings with supernatural beings in Chinese religions, allows for atonement through economic avenues. The paradox in which fetus-ghost appeasement simultaneously exploits and assists evinces the true complexity of the issue--and of religious and gender studies as a whole. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Fun

In this highly readable yet intellectually engaging work, Moskowitz delivers a remarkable account of the practice of fetus worship in contemporary Taiwan. Integral to this account is a compelling discussion of the cultural and emotional struggles Taiwanese women experience in their decision to undergo an abortion, and in their consequent attempts at finding psychological and spiritual resolution. Moskowitz's analysis is also noteworthy in its ability to situate the psychological implications of these practices in a complex religious and historical context. The result is a truly fascinating work and an important contribution toward the understanding of sexuality and spiritual life in Taiwan.

Moscowitz has done an excellent job of taking an incredibly complicated subject and made it accessible to a wide range of audiences without sacrificing any of the content. The topic itself is fascinating and will most likely prove to be a seminal work in understanding how ancient cultures adapt to modern life. I can think of no topic better suited than abortion and the haunting fetus to highlight the conflicts and contradictions inherent in this process. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in understanding the metamorphosis of traditional Chinese culture as it moves into the new millennium.

I read this book in its unedited form, so it may have changed a bit since then, but I loved it. The picture it paints of life in Taiwan is moving and explicit, and the language and situations range from compassionate to humorous. The topic is academic but the language isn't, so it's appropriate for the general public as well as academicians. I especially loved the section on the noodle vendor who ran an appeasement sideline. I recommend this book to anyone who has an interest, however passing, in Asian culture.

The author paints a unique portrait of Taiwan's spiritual underworld; thus, it is a wonderful resource for foreigners who wish to understand Chinese, specifically Taiwanese, culture. I just reread the book, and it was more "haunting" the second time.

The therapeutic benefits of black magic -- at times exorbitant -- in assuaging the guilt of Chinese women who have aborted an unborn child, usually because the fetus is female. How the guilty deal

with their ghosts and regrets in Asia.

this book really opened my eyes to the strange beliefs of some Taiwanese women. This book was a fun read and I recommend it to anybody who wants to learn more about Taiwan and the people there.

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