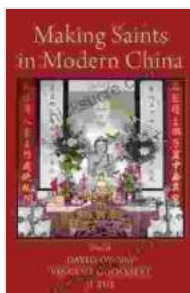


Making Saints in Modern China: The Rise of Folk Religious Movements and Their Suppression

In the vast and diverse landscape of modern China, folk religious movements have emerged as a vibrant and enigmatic force. These movements, rooted in ancient traditions and local beliefs, have attracted millions of followers, offering them solace, community, and a sense of purpose. However, the rise of these movements has also drawn the attention of the Chinese government, which has sought to suppress and eradicate them in the name of maintaining social order and ideological purity.



Making Saints in Modern China by Jen Lancaster

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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The roots of folk religious movements in China can be traced back centuries, to a time when Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism were the dominant religious traditions. Over time, these traditions blended with local customs and beliefs, giving rise to a myriad of folk religious practices. These practices often involved the veneration of local deities, the

performance of rituals and ceremonies, and the belief in the supernatural. In many cases, these practices were closely tied to the local community, providing a sense of belonging and identity.

In the early 20th century, China underwent a period of rapid social and economic change. The collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1911 and the subsequent rise of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) led to a period of political instability and turmoil. During this time, folk religious movements experienced a revival, as people sought solace and meaning in the face of uncertainty. New movements emerged, such as the Yiguandao (Way of the One Truth) and the Falun Gong, which attracted millions of followers with their promises of salvation and spiritual fulfillment.

The CCP, however, viewed folk religious movements with suspicion. The party's ideology was based on Marxist materialism, which rejected the existence of the supernatural. Moreover, the CCP saw these movements as a potential threat to its authority, as they could mobilize large numbers of people and challenge the party's monopoly on power. As a result, the CCP launched a series of campaigns to suppress and eradicate folk religious movements.

The first major campaign against folk religious movements was launched in the 1950s, shortly after the CCP came to power. During this campaign, thousands of temples and shrines were destroyed, and many religious leaders were arrested or killed. The CCP also banned the practice of many folk rituals and ceremonies, and it sought to replace traditional beliefs with socialist ideology.

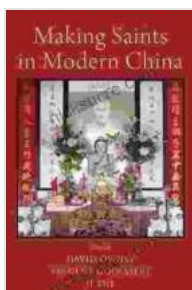
Despite the CCP's efforts, folk religious movements continued to thrive in China. In the 1980s, after the death of Mao Zedong and the launch of Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms, there was a brief period of religious liberalization. During this time, many folk religious movements reemerged, and new ones emerged. However, the CCP remained wary of these movements, and it continued to monitor and suppress them.

In recent years, the CCP has stepped up its efforts to suppress folk religious movements. In 2018, the CCP launched a new campaign to "eradicate superstition," which has targeted folk religious movements, as well as other forms of religious expression. The campaign has resulted in the closure of hundreds of temples and shrines, the arrest of thousands of religious leaders, and the confiscation of religious materials.

The CCP's suppression of folk religious movements has drawn criticism from human rights groups, which argue that the government is violating its citizens' right to freedom of religion. However, the CCP maintains that its crackdown is necessary to maintain social order and promote scientific and rational thinking. It remains to be seen whether the CCP will be successful in eradicating folk religious movements in China. However, one thing is clear: these movements have played a significant role in shaping the religious landscape of modern China, and they continue to offer solace and meaning to millions of people.

The rise of folk religious movements in modern China is a testament to the enduring power of faith and the human need for spirituality. These movements have provided millions of people with a sense of belonging, purpose, and hope. However, the CCP's suppression of these movements is a reminder of the fragility of religious freedom in China. As the CCP

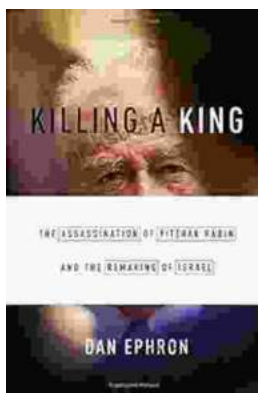
continues to tighten its grip on power, it is likely that folk religious movements will face even greater challenges in the years to come.



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