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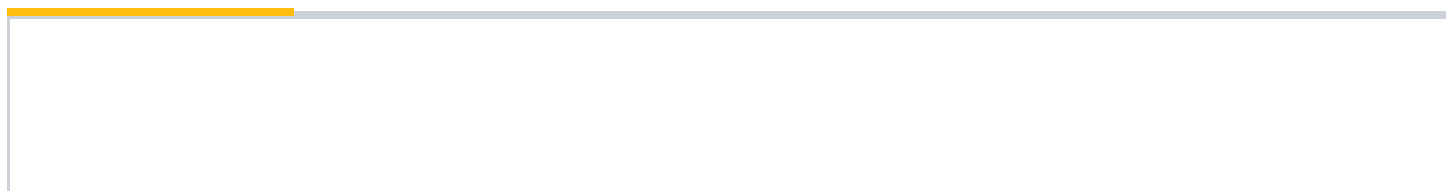
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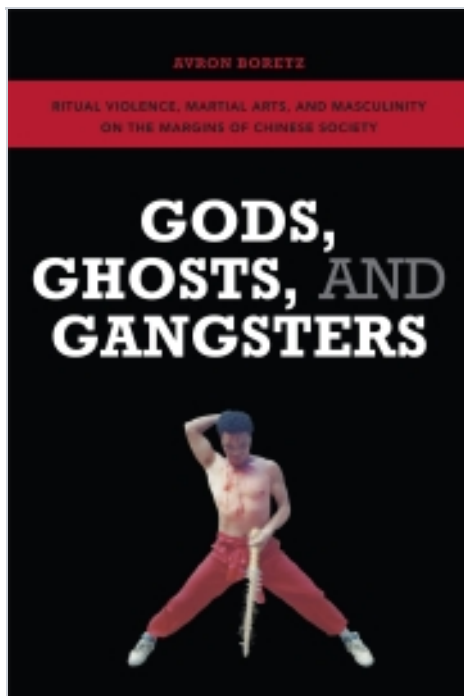


Gods, Ghosts, and
Gangsters: Ritual
Violence, Martial Arts,
and Masculinity on the
Margins of Chinese
Society



In this Book





Gods, Ghosts, and Gangsters: Ritual Violence, Martial Arts, and Masculinity on the Margins of Chinese Society

Avron Boretz

2011

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Published by: University of Hawai'i Press

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SUMMARY

Demon warrior puppets, sword-wielding Taoist priests, spirit mediums lacerating their bodies with spikes and blades—these are among the most dramatic images in Chinese religion. Usually linked to the propitiation of plague gods and the worship of popular military deities, such ritual practices have an obvious but previously unexamined kinship with the traditional Chinese martial arts. The long and durable history of martial arts iconography and ritual in Chinese religion suggests something far deeper than mere historical coincidence. Avron Boretz argues that martial arts gestures and movements are so deeply embedded in the ritual repertoire in part because they iconify masculine qualities of violence, aggressivity, and physical prowess, the implicit core of Chinese patriliney and patriarchy. At the same time, for actors and audience alike, martial arts gestures evoke the mythos of the *jianghu*, a shadowy, often



Table of Contents

Cover

 [Download](#) | [Save](#)

Frontmatter

 [Download](#) | [Save](#)

Contents

p. v

 [Download](#) | [Save](#)

Acknowledgments

pp. vii-viii

 [Download](#) | [Save](#)

Note on Translation and Use of Foreign Terms

p. ix

 [Download](#) | [Save](#)

Chapter 1: Introduction

pp. 1-20

 [Download](#) | [Save](#)

Chapter 2: Violence, Honor, and Manhood

pp. 21-57

 [Download](#) | [Save](#)

Chapter 3: Taidong: The Mountains and Beyond

pp. 58-86

 [Download](#) | [Save](#)

Chapter 4: Fire and Fury

pp. 87-114

 [Download](#) | [Save](#)

Chapter 5: Tales from the Jianghu

pp. 115-175

 [Download](#) | [Save](#)

Chapter 6: Wine, Women, and Song

pp. 176-203

 [Download](#) | [Save](#)

Chapter 7 Conclusion: Faces of the Gods

pp. 204-211

 [Download](#) | [Save](#)

Notes

pp. 213-246

 [Download](#) | [Save](#)

Glossary

pp. 247-254

 [Download](#) | [Save](#)

Bibliography

pp. 255-268

 [Download](#) | [Save](#)

Index

pp. 269-273

 [Download](#) | [Save](#)

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