



History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth

By Paul A. Cohen

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History in Three Keys juxtaposes the accounts of historians with those of participants and witnesses and sets these perspectives against the range of popular myths that were fashioned about the Boxers. The first part of the book tells the story of the Boxer uprising as reconstructed by historians. Part Two explores the thought, feelings, and behavior of the direct participants in the Boxer experience, individuals who, without a preconceived idea of the entire event, understood what was happening to them in a manner fundamentally different from historians. Finally, in Part Three, Cohen examines the myths surrounding the uprising in twentieth-century China - and, to a lesser extent, the West - as symbolic representations designed less to elucidate the Boxer past than to draw energy from it in the present.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Harvard historian Cohen presents a comprehensive and enlightening look at the Boxer Rebellion of 1898-1900, a bloody uprising in north China against native Christians and foreign missionaries. The rebellion resulted in a rescue by eight nations and then the conclusion of a peace treaty. Cohen offers excellent insight into the idiosyncrasies of the Boxer movement, including its ideas, origins, rituals, and development. He successfully examines and discusses the uprising in terms of its historical narrative, the participants' experiences, and the literary myths to which it gave rise. Cohen also distinguishes between historians and mythologizers. A specialized, thorough, and well-researched book with good references, this is an excellent complement to Joseph Eshevick's *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising* (Univ. of California, 1987). Highly recommended for large public libraries and the East Asia collection of academic libraries. —Steven Lin, Dallas P.L., Tex.

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Review

The most adventurous writing on modern Chinese history currently available.

(History)

An extraordinary book. It is breathtaking, bold in concept, innovative in methodology, provocative at times, and eminently readable.

*(Edmund S. K. Fung *Asian Studies Review*)*

Cohen offers excellent insight into the idiosyncrasies of the Boxer movement, including its ideas, origins, rituals, and development.... Highly recommended.

(Library Journal)

Review

Cohen pares the overlays of historical accounts of the Boxers down to their constituent parts as myth and lived experience. The book is eminently readable, ideally suited both to the general reader and to the college teacher seeking to deepen students' understanding of the currents in modern Chinese history.

(Jonathan Spence, Yale University)

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