



Chinese Ancestor Worship: A Practice and Ritual Oriented Approach to Understanding Chinese Culture

By William Lakos

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This book is a new approach to how we in the West understand China and Chinese culture. It challenges the master narrative of Confucianism and shows that ancestor worship has underpinned Chinese culture in many influential and vital ways and provides a nuanced and more efficacious paradigm through which Chinese culture may be viewed. It is an exposition and analysis of Chinese ancestor worship and its correlations, especially filial piety and ritual, and it shows the intrinsic importance of ancestor worship to Chinese culture. By using a practice theory - ritual - and communication theory approach this work highlights the relationship between the rituals of ancestor worship and their meaning within Chinese culture. In emphasizing the efficacy of ritual to cultural meaning it also questions and compares the master narrative of Confucianism in its role as the prime cultural symbol and paradigm of Chinese culture. China and Chinese culture is conventionally understood by the West through the paradigm and its articulated discourse of Confucianism. In order to ameliorate and overcome the epistemological problematic of a cross-cultural understanding of China, a new approach to the understanding of China and Chinese culture is proposed. The thesis approach is 'meta-disciplinary' and multi-viewed, and draws on a range of evidence and theories which focus on the problematic of 'cross-cultural understanding.'

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Chinese Ancestor Worship: A Practice and Ritual Oriented Approach to Understanding Chinese Culture By William Lakos Bibliography

- Rank: #2045679 in Books
- Published on: 2010-11-01
- Format: Unabridged
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.10" h x .80" w x 5.80" l, .85 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 170 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

'Confucianism has long been considered as the prime cultural symbol of Chinese tradition and values. This centuries old Chinese official and ruling class discourse has been supported and reinforced by Western scholars, and even current Chinese authorities. In this important book Dr Lakos challenges this master narrative of Confucianism as the Chinese culture and argues instead that ancestor worship practiced in terms of filial piety and ritual has underpinned Chinese culture in many influential and vital ways, both normatively and epistemologically. Dr Lakos also skilfully uses the theory of practice and theory of communication to analyse ancestor worship as a way of thinking and practical activities in Chinese daily life. This study brings fresh air to the field of China studies and provokes critical thinking about what is usually taken for granted.' --Professor Mobo Gao, Chair of Chinese Studies, Director, Confucius Institute, Centre for Asian Studies, The University of Adelaide

About the Author

Although an Honorary Research Associate with the School of Asian Languages and Studies at the University of Tasmania, I consider myself to be an independent research scholar. Over the past decade I have carried out field studies on an annual basis in India, China, and SE Asia, and I have presented research papers at International forums.

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