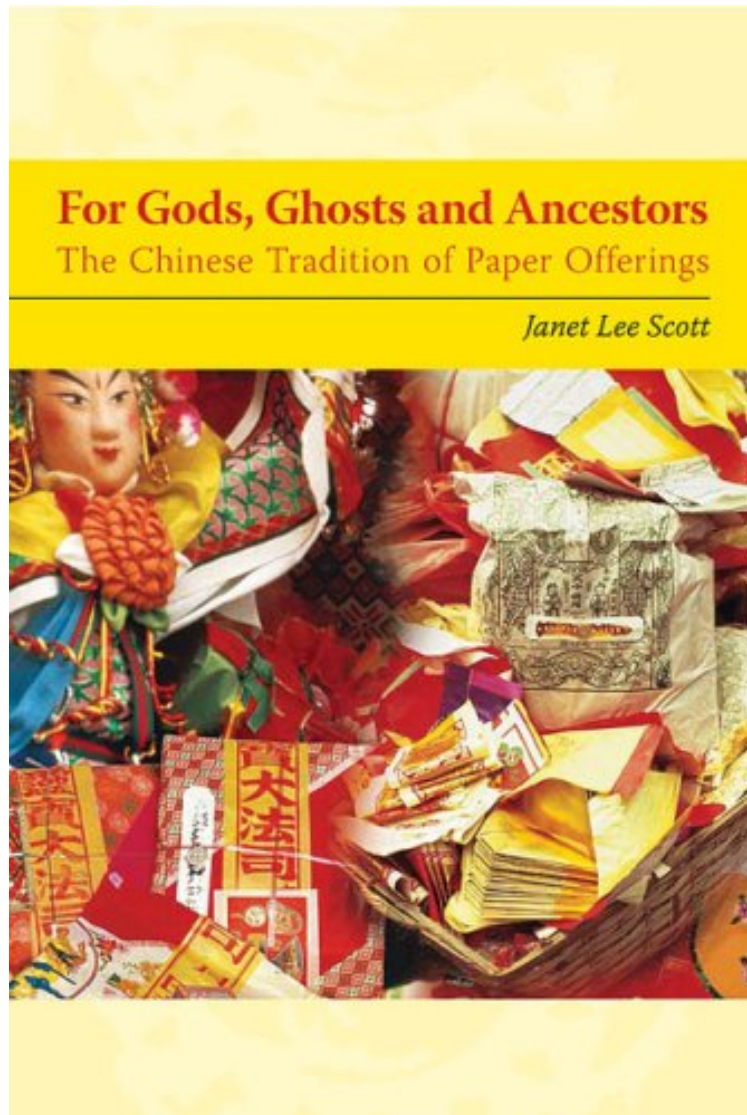


For Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors: The Chinese Tradition of Paper Offerings

Janet Lee Scott

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Offerings of various kinds - food, incense, paper money, and figures - have been central to Chinese culture for millennia, and as a public, visual display of spiritual belief, they are still evident today in China and in Chinatowns around the world. Using Hong Kong as a case study, Janet Scott looks at paper offerings from every conceivable angle - how they are made, sold, and used. Her comprehensive investigation touches on virtually every aspect of Chinese popular religion as it explores the many forms of these intricate objects, their manufacture, their significance, and their importance in rituals to honor gods, care for ancestors, and contend with ghosts. Throughout *For Gods, Ghosts and Ancestors*, paper offerings are presented as a vibrant and living tradition expressing worshippers' respect and gratitude for the gods, as well as love and concern for departed family members. Ranging from fake paper money to paper furniture, servant dolls, cigarettes, and toiletries - all multihued and artfully constructed - paper offerings are intended to provide for the needs of those in the spirit world. Readers are introduced to the variety of paper offerings and their uses in worship, in assisting worshippers with personal difficulties, and in rituals directed to gods, ghosts, and ancestors. We learn of the manufacture and sale of paper goods, life in paper shops, the training of those who make paper offerings, and the symbolic and artistic dimensions of the objects. Finally, the book considers the survival of this traditional craft, the importance of flexibility and innovation, and the role of compassion and filial piety in the use of paper offerings.

"Scott's descriptions are rich and evenly distributed among the various regimes of value through which the papers move . . . That the author's own observations of materials include extensive references to other scholarly works and that these materials are narrated with skill . . ." C. Fred Blake, *China International*, June 2011 "As paper offerings connect people to the heavenly world of deities and their ancestors, this study links us to the imagined worlds that complete the Chinese view of the universe in the context of popular religions." *Museum Anthropology* "Scott's book is a valuable contribution to our knowledge of Hong Kong religious practice, but its importance extends beyond the specifics of her study to all aspects of contemporary Hong Kong society, and to religion across the Chinese world. Its strength lies in her fine-grained and meticulous analysis, which would not have been possible without her long-term and serious involvement in all aspects of the business of Hong Kong ritual paper." *The China Journal* "A wonderful book." *Icon* "Shows how the paper offerings reveal people's beliefs about the nature of the afterlife and the gods, family relations and the ancestors, intergenerational and impersonal interaction, gender relations, the place of respect in Chinese culture, and the nature of human existence. . . . An excellent example of how an analysis of material culture can increase our understanding of complex religious behavior, belief, and meaning. . . . Both informative and delightful." *American Anthropologist* "One can learn a great deal about contemporary religious practice, particularly in the Hong Kong region, through Scott's detailed study of this surprisingly complex aspect of Chinese material/visual culture. . . . Her treatment of the various 'performative' aspects of the subject . . . is quite engaging, offering a surprising entree into an ancient religious culture. ." *Religion and the Arts* "This is the book on practices of making, offering, and consuming ritual paper in the Chinese cultural tradition. . . . the book is a gold mine, providing a wealth of specific information. . . a treasure which will be profitably transformed into intellectual capital by generations of scholars to come." *Journal of Chinese Religions* "This is a book that all specialists on Chinese religion, arts, and material culture need to read. *For Gods, Ghosts and Ancestors* is an excellent source for teaching, both undergraduate and graduate. Scott invested years of research into this project and is the world's leading expert on Chinese paper arts." James L. Watson, Harvard University From the Publisher "This is a book that all specialists on Chinese religion, arts, and material culture need to read. *For Gods, Ghosts and Ancestors* is an excellent source for teaching, both undergraduate and graduate. Scott invested years of research into this project and is the world's leading expert on Chinese paper arts." - James L. Watson, Harvard University