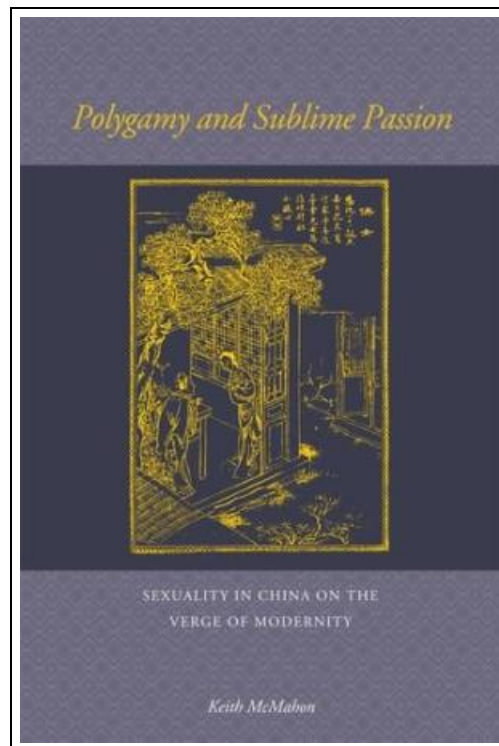


Polygamy and Sublime Passion: Sexuality in China on the Verge of Modernity (Hardback)



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Reviews

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(Kitty Crooks)

POLYGAMY AND SUBLIME PASSION: SEXUALITY IN CHINA ON THE VERGE OF MODERNITY (HARDBACK)

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University of Hawai i Press, United States, 2009. Hardback. Condition: New. Language: English . Brand New Book. For centuries of Chinese history, polygamy and prostitution were closely linked practices that legitimized the polygynous male , the man with multiple sexual partners. Despite their strict hierarchies, these practices also addressed fundamental antagonisms in sexual relations in serious and constructive ways. Qing fiction abounds in stories of female resistance and superiority. Women - main wives, concubines, and prostitutes - were adept at exerting control and gaining status for themselves, while men indulged in elaborate fantasies about female power. Keith McMahon introduces a new concept, passive polygamy , to explain the unusual number of Qing stories in which women take charge of a man s desires, turning him into an instrument of female will. To this he adds a story that haunted the institutions of polygamy and prostitution: the tale of sublime passion , in which the main characters are a remarkable woman and her male lover. Throughout McMahon examines how polygamy, prostitution, and the story of sublime passion encountered the first stages of paradigmatic change in the nineteenth century, decades before the legal abolition of polygamy. By the end of the Qing dynasty in 1911, love stories were celebrating the exploits of street-smart prostitutes who fleeced gullible patrons in the bustling city of Shanghai. What do these characters have in common with their early counterparts as men and women became inhabitants of a new city in an era flooded with ideas from radically foreign sources - all of this taking place in a time of economic and cultural dislocation? McMahon reads late Qing love stories in a historically symbolic way, taking them as part of a larger fantasy of Chinese civilization undergoing a fundamental crisis. The polygamous marriage and the affairs of...

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