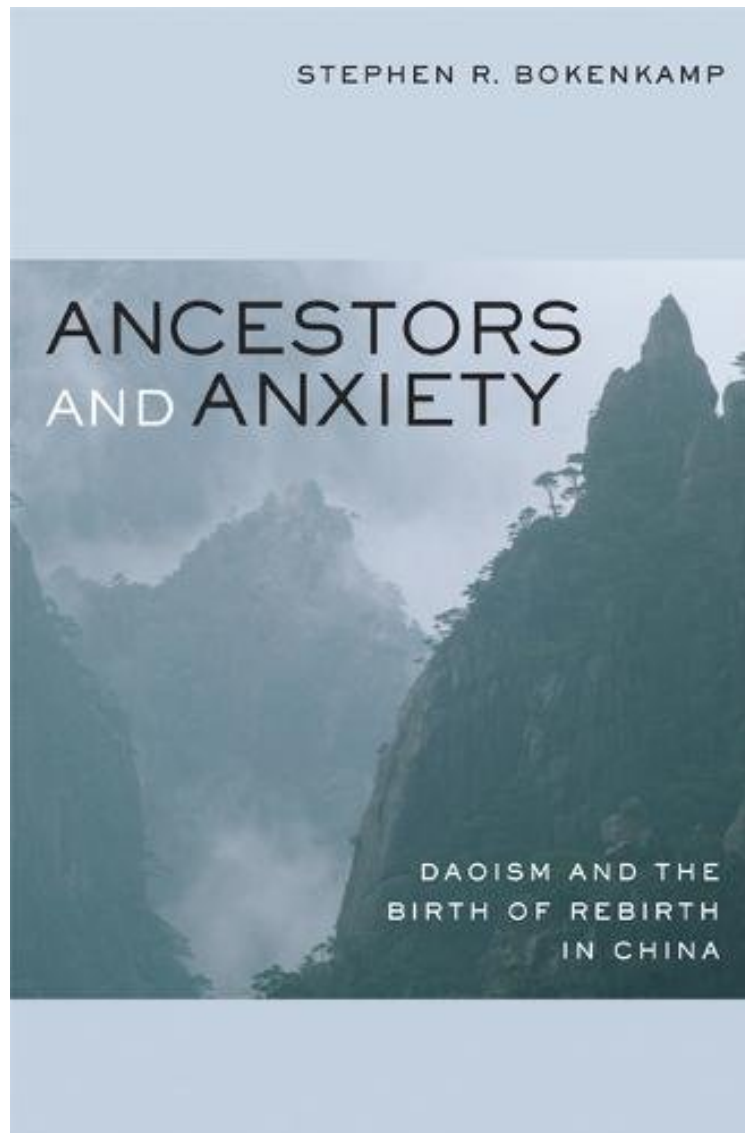


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# Ancestors and Anxiety: Daoism and the Birth of Rebirth in China

*Stephen R. Bokenkamp*

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**Stephen R. Bokenkamp : Ancestors and Anxiety: Daoism and the Birth of Rebirth in China** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Ancestors and Anxiety: Daoism and the Birth of Rebirth in China:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Re-imagining the netherworldBy Farmer JohnIn this book, Stephen Bokenkamp deals with the arrival of Buddhism to China and its effects on native Chinese conceptions of death and the afterlife. He traces a shift between Eastern Han conceptions of death, which treat ancestral worship as a private matter

and stress the ability of the ancestors to influence the world of the living, and the ideas of life and death that can be found in the Religious Daoist texts from the 5th century CE, which depict ancestral worship as a public endeavor and stresses not what the ancestors can do for the living but that duties the living have to do to ensure their fate. Buddhism, argues Bokenkamp, gave the Chinese new tool in dealing with this anxiety through the idea of rebirth. This is definitely not an easy book to read, mostly since it is intended for a fairly small target audience who is probably already familiar with Bokenkamp's immense contribution to the study of Chinese religion. Readers who are interested in the history of religion in China will find this book an excellent addition to a rapidly growing field. 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. it will find a good home for some graduate student By Squarecrow I didn't get into this book. I studied with one of Bokenkamp's disciples, but we never used the book in the course. I tried to read it later, and found it difficult to engage. 0 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Reletavily interesting By BLieuw I found this book quite interesting, but the only obstacle for me to really appreciate it would be the difficulty in relating to the examined culture. The writing was splendid though.

This innovative work on Chinese concepts of the afterlife is the result of Stephen Bokenkamp's groundbreaking study of Chinese scripture and the incorporation of Indic concepts into the Chinese worldview. Here, he explores how Chinese authors, including Daoists and non-Buddhists, received and deployed ideas about rebirth from the third to the sixth centuries C.E. In tracing the antecedents of these scriptures, Bokenkamp uncovers a stunning array of non-Buddhist accounts that provide detail on the realms of the dead, their denizens, and human interactions with them. Bokenkamp demonstrates that the motive for the Daoist acceptance of Buddhist notions of rebirth lay not so much in the power of these ideas as in the work they could be made to do.

From the Inside Flap "Ancestors and Anxiety focuses on one of the most important periods in the history of Chinese religion, the third through sixth centuries C.E., when social and political changes were matched by innovation and an outpouring of textual production in Daoism and Buddhism. Steve Bokenkamp makes an innovative and unprecedented contribution to the study of Chinese concepts of the afterlife. Anyone with an interest in Buddhism, Daoism or other forms of Chinese religion should want to read this book. It is a mature work of historical and literary scholarship that draws on a wide range of genres: revealed poetry, liturgies, ghost stories and anecdotes, historical sources, and other forms of literature. Bokenkamp's superb research will unquestionably provide a stimulus for future work in related areas." Stephen F. Teiser, D.T. Suzuki Professor of Buddhist Studies, Princeton University "Stephen Bokenkamp's *Ancestors and Anxiety* is well-written, lucidly presented, and based on cutting edge scholarship from around the world. Focusing on key interactions of the nascent Daoist religion and the recently introduced Buddhist faith, this book will assist readers towards a clearer understanding of the complexities of early China's ancestral system and has the potential to mark a wholly new phase in the study of Chinese religions. It is sure to be of interest to a wide reading public, including specialists in Chinese religion, Buddhologists, social and intellectual historians, and general readers interested in world religions." Terry Kleeman, University of Colorado