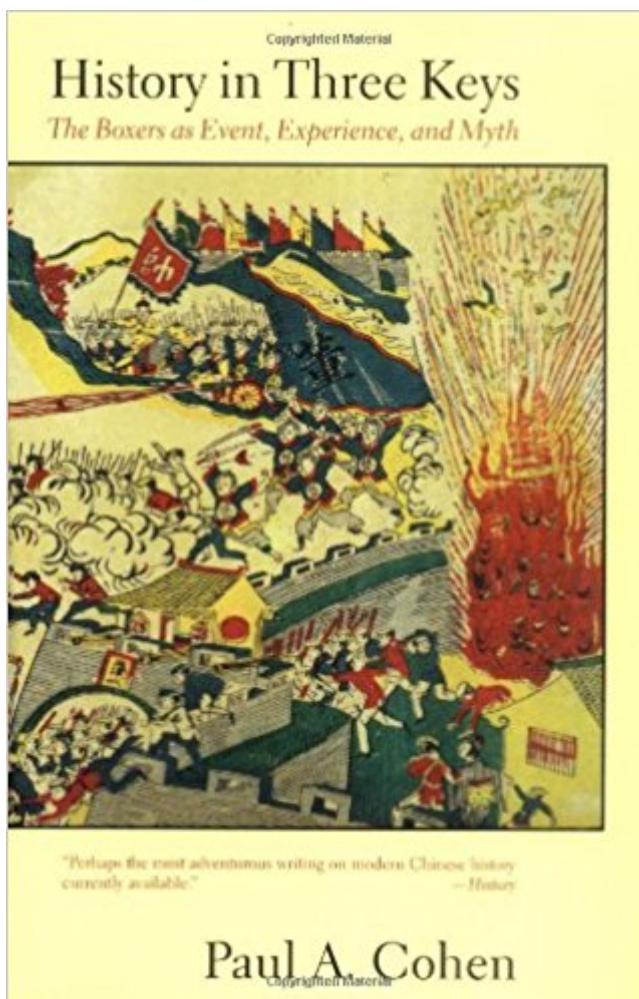


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# History In Three Keys: The Boxers As Event, Experience, And Myth



## **Synopsis**

A comprehensive look at the Boxer Rebellion of 1898-1900, a bloody uprising in north China against native Christians and foreign missionaries.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

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 Esherick'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. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

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)

Cohen's book is one of the few reference works I have found that explains not only the Boxers (the Yihequan) but also goes into significant detail regarding the Red Lanterns (the Hongdengzhao, -- the female Boxers). It even includes a handful of contemporary representations of the Red Lanterns I have yet to see anywhere else, along with an in-depth analysis of how these Chinese females fit into the Boxer Rebellion. Given how little contemporary Chinese males thought of women, the very existence of the Red Lanterns as a powerful supportive force in the uprising against the foreigners and the Christians is all the more remarkable, yet their role is all but ignored in most historical treatments of the Boxer Rebellion, so this book is a welcome addition to the history of the Boxers. The book covers the original events of the Boxers as well as their cultural aftermath in China up until the modern day, has many interesting photographs and period Chinese illustrations, as well as over 70 pages of notes explaining points in the text. For people used to reading about the Boxer Rebellion as seen through Western eyes, Cohen's work -- of the Boxers as Event, Experience and Myth -- is an interesting counterpoint, and one worth studying.

This is a very interesting book. Well done, as it looks at the Boxer rebellion through myth, as an event and as an experience. The author looks at this event in a holistic way, for example, this passage from page 9 of the book: " The Boxer episode, too, formed part of a plurality of larger event structures (but not confined to) the pattern of recurrent domestic violence in the late imperial era, the growing problem of rural breakdown, the history of conflicts between Christians and non-Christians from the mid-nineteenth century on, and Sino-foreign diplomatic relations. "

I bought this book for its China centered content, and I was not let down, but what I liked best about this work is that Professor Cohen weaves in a fourth component; a discourse on what historians actually do. Just as he divides the Boxer Movement into the above noted three parts he does so as well with the historical craft itself, in the process explaining his development as a historian and seriously examining in what ways history itself can have value greater than myth and commonly held beliefs. Cohen approaches history in a modest, human, and clear thinking way which makes this highly academic work also highly enjoyable to read. I enthusiastically recommend this wonderful book to anybody that is interested in Chinese society, Chinese history, or the art of making history.

I have read several accounts of the Boxer Rebellion but this one I believe is the best. The "Three

Keys" outlines the history of the rebellion. It digs into the minds and events of key players and also brings to life the problems at the time that drew so many nations into the dispute. I think you will see a common theme emerge here, one that could be recounted in many current disputes around the world. A most interesting and well documented read.

Cohen is a good writer, and does an excellent job explaining the nature of the Boxers. That being said, the book is laced with jargon that may not be immediately familiar to non-Humanities people, and which will feel awkward in any case. None of it is necessary, and it detracts from the readability of the text.

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OK.

I am trying to learn all that I can about the Boxer rebellion because my grandfather was one of the marines trapped there in the embassy compound. My goal is to write a book about him and his experiences.

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