

Panda Fandom

Nation, Capitalism, and Biopower

This book provides the first exploration of panda fandom, a term denoting the community built upon the deep and intimate emotional connections between fans and giant pandas. The book uncovers the dynamic relationship among China, the West, and the giant panda, rooted in over two centuries of cross-cultural encounters. Drawing from extensive fieldwork at the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding, the book explores how panda fandom has evolved as a result of China's participation in global capitalism, cultural exchange, and diplomatic strategy. This book aims at showing that panda fandom, although taking its shape in the Chinese nation currently, has been a consequence to the expansion of Western imperialism, colonialism, and capitalist industrialization in the Chinese community since the 18th century. It undertakes the task of inquiring how the Chinese communities, through the figure of the giant panda, have responded and made sense of this modern transformation. The book is loosely organized around the chronological order of the development of the panda fandom and can be divided into two parts. The first part explains the emergence of the panda fandom, and the second part deals with interviews. Through a rich blend of personal narratives, historical documents, daily observations, and carefully crafted interviews, it provides a fresh perspective on how cuteness, biopower, and nationalism shape both Chinese identity and the lived experiences of these fans. Based on an intimate look at the bond between panda fans and their beloved animal, the book also relates the panda fandom to theories of the more-than-human and multispecies world. The book will be beneficial to students and academicians interested in fan studies, popular culture, animal-human relations, conservation, and the consumption of animals. It will also be of use to anyone who wants to identify himself/herself as a panda fan and has navigated the panda-human relationship by their own means.

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