



Revenge of the Forbidden City: The Suppression of the Falungong in China, 1999-2005

By James W. Tong

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The Falungong movement originated in 1992 as a system of breathing exercises designed to promote health and well-being. Riding on the coattails of the *qigong* fever that swept through China, it attracted an extensive following until 1994, when the Chinese government suppressed the *qigong* movement. A series of protest rallies by Falungong organizations against local government repression set in motion an upward conflict spiral that culminated in the siege of the Party headquarters in Beijing on April 25, 1999, by more than 20,000 Falungong practitioners. *Revenge of the Forbidden City* begins with the shock of the Politburo against such insolent defiance, resolving to retaliate against the Falungong, a retaliation that represented "the most serious political incident" since the Tiananmen upheaval in 1989.

James W. Tong reveals how the Chinese government's relentless, sustained repression of the Falungong movement typifies its response towards perceived internal threats. Though many claim that the Democratic reforms in China have eroded the government's ability to monitor and control its citizens, the success of the campaign to eradicate Falungong indicates otherwise: the government effectively implemented a multifaceted offensive involving unsparing suppression, pervasive propaganda, and coercive conversion. The successful execution of this complex campaign reveals the resilience of China's authoritarian institutions. Using empirical evidence and thorough analysis, Tong reveals the Chinese state's formidable ability to crush dissent and provides a cogent rebuttal to those who claim that the Communist government is on the verge of collapse. The definitive account of China's response to Falungong, *Revenge of the Forbidden City* is essential for any scholar interested in how the Chinese state actually operates.



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Editorial Review

Review

"Recommended"--*CHOICE*

"China has certainly risen, but will it be free? This is the provocative question at the hub of James Tong's book. While many theories predict that modernization will weaken the state's power to monitor and punish deviance, thereby permitting pluralism to emerge, Tong subjects these assumptions to a systematic empirical test. In a comparative analysis of the 1999 campaign to eradicate Falungong, the quasi-religious exercise association, he finds the Chinese Party-state still to be suffocatingly powerful--though perhaps less so than before."--Lowell Dittmer, University of California at Berkeley

About the Author

James W. Tong is Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Los Angeles and Chief Editor of the journal *Chinese Law and Government*. He has served as a World Bank consultant, Director of UCLA's Center for East Asian Studies, testified at the U.S. Congressional Executive Committee on China, and briefed the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. His research interests include Chinese collective action and political participation, religious and media policy, and the democratization of China.

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