## The Breath of Empire

Breathing with Historical Trauma in Anglo-Chinese Relations

This Palgrave Pivot combines anthropological, biographical and autoethnographic perspectives onto imperial intimacies, the transgenerational transmission of colonial and familial trauma, and violence in two kinds of household: the Chinese family in British Hong Kong and wider imperial Asia, and the Anglo-Chinese family in England. Conjoining approaches from literary anthropology, the historiography of Anglo-Chinese relations, and perspectives on colonial trauma, it highlights the relative neglect of women's stories in customary Chinese readings, colonial accounts, and an ancestral family record from 1800 to the present. Offering an alternative view of family history, this book links the body as a dwelling for assaults on the ability to breathe—through tuberculosis, opium smoking, asthma, and panic—with the physical home that is assaulted in turn by bombs, killing, intimate betrayals, and fatal respiratory illness. The COVID-19 "pandemic of breathlessness" serves as mnemonic both for state repression, and for the reprisal of historical fears of suffocation and dying. These phenomena converge under an analytic concept the author calls respiratory politics.

"Taking 'respiratory politics', 'intimacies' that are visceral and intrusive, and 'violence' as theoretical tropes and ethnographic narrative and mnemonic, this book offers fresh and important contributions to scholarly understandings in women's studies, the anthropology of the body, and post-colonial scholarship through its engaged examination of state repression, and its reprisal of historical fears of suffocation and dying across historical and geopolitical spans." —Junjie Chen, Professor of Anthropology, Minzu University of China "The book is timely and interconnected to recent history, particularly the connections drawn between historical trauma and intergenerational infection and contagion set against wartime trauma, and the Covid virus as a global phenomenon as devastating as the ravages of war. [...] Khan has accomplished an original and interdisciplinary academic work." —Xu Xi, Author of Monkey in Residence & Other Speculations, This Fish is Fowl, Dear Hong Kong, That Man In Our Lives This Palgrave Pivot combines anthropological, biographical and autoethnographic perspectives onto imperial intimacies, the transgenerational transmission of colonial and familial trauma, and violence in two kinds of household: the Chinese family in British Hong Kong and wider imperial Asia, and the Anglo-Chinese family in England. Conjoining approaches from literary anthropology, the historiography of Anglo-Chinese relations, and perspectives on colonial trauma, it highlights the relative neglect of women's stories in customary Chinese readings, colonial accounts, and an ancestral family record from 1800 to the present. Offering an alternative view of family history, this book links the body as a dwelling for assaults on the ability to breathe—through tuberculosis, opium smoking, asthma, and panic—with the physical home that is assaulted in turn by bombs, killing, intimate betrayals, and fatal respiratory illness. The COVID-19 "pandemic of breathlessness" serves as mnemonic both for state repression, and for the reprisal of historical fears of suffocation and dying. These phenomena converge under an analytic concept the author calls respiratory politics. Nichola Khan is Reader in Anthropology and Psychology in the School of Humanities and Social Science and Co-Director of the Centre for Spatial, Environmental and Cultural Politics at the University of Brighton, UK.



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