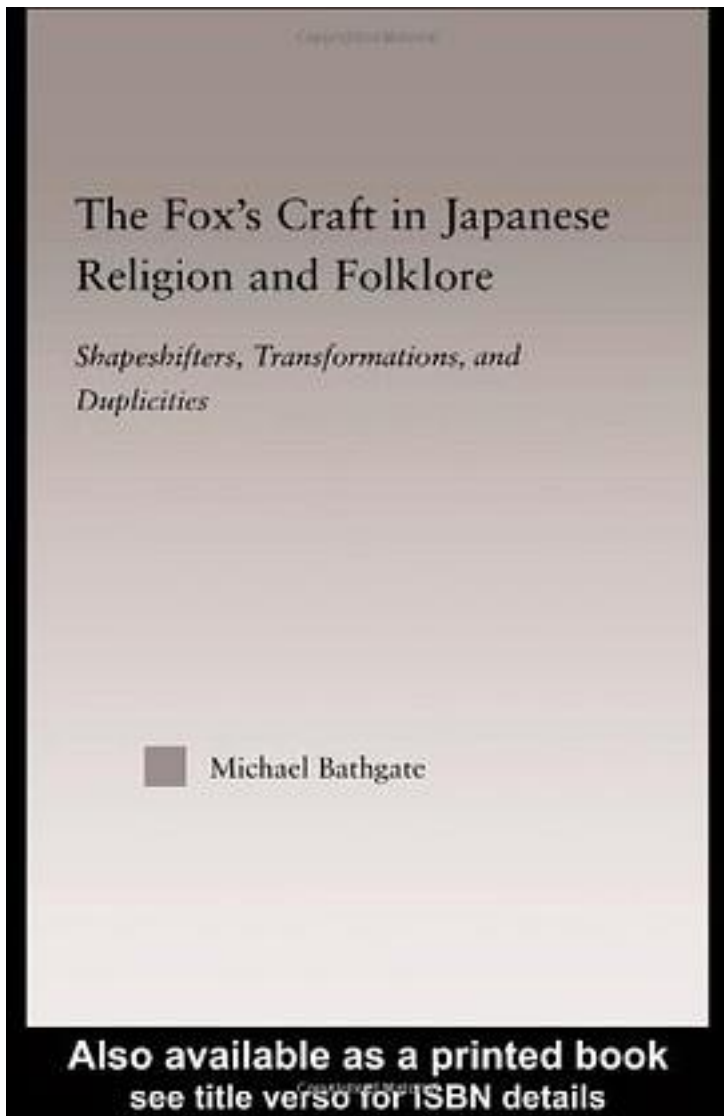


The Fox's Craft in Japanese Religion and Culture



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For more than a millennium, the fox has been a ubiquitous figure at the margins of the Japanese collective imagination. In the writings of the nobility and the motifs of popular literature, the fox is known as a shapeshifter, able to assume various forms in order to deceive others. Focusing on recurring themes of transformation and duplicity in folklore, theology, and court and village practice, *The Fox's Craft* explores the meanings and uses of shapeshifter fox imagery in Japanese history. Michael Bathgate finds that the shapeshifting powers of the fox make it a surprisingly fundamental symbol in the discourse of elite and folk alike, and a key component in formulations of marriage and human identity, religious knowledge, and the power of money. The symbol of the shapeshifter fox thus provides a vantage point from which to understand the social practice of signification.

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