



Passions of the Cut Sleeve: The Male Homosexual Tradition in China

By Bret Hinsch

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The first detailed treatment of the Chinese homosexual tradition in any Western language, *Passions of the Cut Sleeve* shatters preconceptions and stereotypes. Gone is the image of the sternly puritanical Confucian as sole representative of Chinese sexual practices—and with it the justification for the modern Chinese insistence that homosexuality is a recent import from the decadent West. Rediscovering the male homosexual tradition in China provides a startling new perspective on Chinese society and adds richly to our understanding of homosexuality.

Bret Hinsch's reconstruction of the Chinese homosexual past reveals unexpected scenes. An emperor on his deathbed turns over the seals of the empire to a male beloved; two men marry each other with elaborate wedding rituals; parents sell their son into prostitution. The tradition portrays men from all levels of society—emperors, transvestite actors, rapists, elegant scholars, licentious monks, and even the nameless poor.

Drawing from dynastic histories, erotic novels, popular Buddhist tracts, love poetry, legal cases, and joke books, *Passions of the Cut Sleeve* evokes the complex and fascinating male homosexual tradition in China from the Bronze Age until its decline in recent times.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Harvard scholar Hinsch's careful study belies the official Chinese notion that homosexuality is a recent import from the decadent West. Photos.

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From Library Journal

Hinsch cites evidence of the homosexual tradition in China derived primarily from literature--novels, poetry, and (often very frank and graphic) humor--and secondarily from historical documents. This evidence reveals societal attitudes toward various facets of the issue, such as superior-inferior relationships, prostitution, and political corruption. Examples from the earlier dynasties are few, and here Hinsch often resorts to reading between the lines; throughout there are conclusions based on supposition or assumptions. Nevertheless, the material is well covered, and monographic treatment of the topic is scanty. Recommended for Chinese and gay studies collections.

- *Kenneth W. Berger, Duke Univ. Lib., Durham, N.C.*

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Review

"This study sheds light on an important aspect of Chinese social history about which virtually nothing has been written previously, and does so with sensitivity, good sense, and grace. It opens entirely new vistas on the history of sexuality. Readers will learn new and unexpected things not only about Chinese history and homosexuality, but about human nature itself."--John Boswell, Yale University

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