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Bret Hinsch

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MASCULINITIES IN CHINESE HISTORY

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Bret Hinsch : Masculinities in Chinese History (Asia/Pacific/Perspectives) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Masculinities in Chinese History (Asia/Pacific/Perspectives):

Masculinities in Chinese History is the first historical survey of the many ways men have acted, thought, and behaved throughout Chinas long past. Bret Hinsch introduces readers to the basic characteristics of historical Chinese

masculinity while highlighting the dynamic changes in male identity over the centuries. He covers the full span of Chinese history, from the Zhou dynasty in distant antiquity up to the current era of disorienting rapid change. Each chapter, focused on a specific theme and period, is organized to introduce key topics, such as differences between the sexes and the mutual influence of ideas regarding manhood and womanhood, masculine honor, how masculine ideals change, the use of high culture to bolster masculine reputation among the elite, and male role models from the margins of society. The author concludes by exploring how capitalism, imperialism, modernization, revolution, and reform have rapidly transformed ideas about what it means to be a man in contemporary China.

Historian Hinsch (Foguang Univ., Taiwan) chronicles changing ideals of manhood in China from the 11th century BCE to the present, viewing the evolution of Chinese masculinities as a continuous historical process sustained and characterized by men's relationships with familial ideologies, the state, economic conditions, and cultural others. Hinsch employs the concept 'hegemonic masculinity' to come to terms with masculine paragons invented by both mainstream society and marginal men. He argues that hegemonic masculine values in Chinese history were not fixed values or behaviors of certain groups of men, but rather discursive positions open for tapping by men of different social standings. Hinsch develops the bipartite model of wen (civil) and wu (martial) into a complex and mutable system encompassing educated and refined scholar-officials, the male honor culture encouraging vengeance and violence, and variants. The author draws on hagiographical and popular representations to document the development of manhood over the centuries. The nature of the sources restricts his analysis largely to Han Chinese visions. Comparable to Susan Mann's *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Chinese History* (CH, Nov'12, 50-1627), Hinsch's book is indispensable for teaching gender and manhood in China. Summing Up: Essential. All levels/libraries. (CHOICE)The first historical survey of changing Chinese male identities, covering the entire chronology from the Zhou dynasty to the present day. . . . It is an important and welcome contribution to a growing interest in Chinese masculinity studies . . . [and] fills a significant void in Chinese gender studies. . . . One cannot help but admire Hinsch's finesse and the extraordinary knowledge he possesses to create this analysis of changing male attributes. . . . The strengths of this well-written and well-illustrated volume . . . make this rich study an excellent source for teaching and research on Chinese gender relations. (Women and Gender in Chinese Studies)Hinsch's new book, *Masculinities in Chinese History*, is...written in a straightforward, accessible style. It seems intended for undergraduate teaching and will probably be most useful in that context. . . .Hinsch...[is] to be congratulated for [his] useful contributions to the rapidly growing body of scholarship on Chinese masculinities. . . .[His] book should be required reading for anyone interested in this field. (Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture)While writing about China has grown exponentially in recent decades, scholarly discussions of Chinese men as gendered objects have only just begun. Bret Hinsch's comprehensive history of Chinese masculinity is part of that beginning. It reveals how Chinese men thought and behaved from the distant past to current times, and it is an excellent introduction to anyone interested in understanding Chinese men and women. The book shows how some masculine values that are instantly recognizable in the West (such as honor) as well as some particularly Chinese ones (such as wen-wu) have persisted throughout the centuries. It is highly readable, and passages such as Chinese men's obsession with flowers in the Song Dynasty will entertain and enlighten modern readers. (Kam Louie, University of Hong Kong and University of New South Wales)About the AuthorBret Hinsch is professor in the Department of History, Foguang University, Taiwan.