

# BOOK REVIEWS

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## New and Noteworthy

As you know, New and Noteworthy is a medley of mini-reviews of books that we feel folklorists should know about and that, for any of a number of reasons, we don't have reviewers for. In many cases, we want to get the word out as soon as possible, and can't wait for what is sometimes a slow review process. Other times the book is a re-release which most of you are familiar with and so it doesn't need a review. All too often, though, very good books are not reviewed because we don't have a willing reviewer who "does" that topic. So if you see a book in New and Noteworthy (or elsewhere) that interests you, that may be a sign that we need each other. Write to us at *Folklore Forum* and let us know what your interests are. In fact, write even if your interests are already represented by other reviewers: the more the merrier. This New and Noteworthy covers several works of social history from various periods and places, as well as overlapping issues of power, gender, and belief. Two of the books covered are newly available translations from the works of European scholars; three others are impressive first works. As usual, they cover a range of "mother disciplines." And as usual, they are noteworthy books.

Bret Hinsch's *Passions of the Cut Sleeve* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990. Pp. 232 includes bibliography, index. Price \$22.50 cloth) helps to do for Chinese gay (male) social history what John Boswell (whose favorable comments appear on the book jacket and press releases) did for Europe in his masterpiece *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*. Drawing on centuries of sources as diverse as dynastic histories, erotic novels, Buddhist tracts, legal cases, joke books, theater, and private letters, Hinsch not only documents a history of male homosexual practice in China, but also describes the inter-relation of homosexuality with religious, aesthetic, political, and other shifting social philosophies from the Bronze Age to modern China. The book's grand range affords the reader an important perspective on the relativity of something as the practice

and expression of sexuality, and provides a necessary foundation for future inquiries focussing on Chinese homosexual history in more specific historical or social contexts.

A very different facet of gender in social history is represented by Roberto Zapperi's *The Pregnant Man* (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers. 1991. Pp. 246 includes bibliographic references. Price \$55.00 cloth). In its fourth revision since 1979, the book has recently been translated from the Italian by Brian Williams. Zapperi describes and analyses cross-cultural instances of the predominantly medieval appropriation of the motif of male pregnancy. In many instances, the Biblical creation story, in which Eve is "born" from Adam's side, was used as a paradigm and justification for gendered, religious, and social hierarchies. Many of the folk stories included, however, seem to implicitly mock this model of power by, for example, describing men, especially husbands, priests, and other representatives of relative power, who mistakenly—and often ridiculously—believe themselves pregnant. This book has a broad range of uses, but will especially interest those working on gender and Christian theology, or on discourses and counterdiscourses of power.

We have also received a recent translation of a 1986 work by Hungarian folklorists Walter Endrei and László Zolnay. (No copyright date is given for the translation, which was done by Károly Ravasz and revised by Bertha Gaster.) *Fun and Games in Old Europe* is a cultural history of diversions throughout most of Europe, and especially Hungary, in the Middle Ages. Using a wide variety of historical pictures and photographs of several surviving pieces, the authors show a broad range of pastimes and games, from chess played on round boards, to carnivals, gambling, children's toys, fights, cards, and other activities. Illustrations and texts have also been chosen to present customs, rules, and performance contexts in the words of participants and their contemporaries. Endrei and Zolnay's accompanying commentary about the role of these diversions in their cultural contexts likewise draws upon early writings, including poetic, legal, religious, and technical works. Because of this book's range and technical detail, it will probably be a valuable reference work for scholars of the Middle Ages, Hungary, or games and play. Because of its straightforward organization, its many photographs and other illustrations (both color and black-and-white), and high-quality production, the book would also be a good gift or diversion for nonspecialists. *Fun and Games in Old Europe* can be ordered for \$25.95 (cloth) through Kultura; Budapest 62; P.O.Box 149; Hungary 1389.

In 1856, the Xhosa people of South Africa, acting upon the prophetic vision of a young girl, began what has been called a "cattle-killing movement," eventually resulting in the destruction of nearly all herds and

crops. Britain had been trying to gain control over Xhosa leaders and lands for some time, and British leaders were unable to understand this movement as something other than a "chief's plot" to drive their followers to the desperation necessary to fight further. While official documents still reflect this view, Xhosa oral tradition describes the movement as a plot by British official Sir George Grey to trick the Xhosa people into destroying themselves. The prolonged event, which has also been called "The National Suicide of the Xhosa" is both vivid enough and historically significant enough to be familiar to South Africans. Yet, amazingly, J.B. Peires' *The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement of 1856-7* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.; collaborative publication with Johannesburg: Raven Press and London: James Curry Ltd., 1989. Pp. xvi +348. Price \$37.50 cloth, \$17.50 paper.) is the first history ever to have been written about the cattle-killing movement. Peies does equal justice to the movements of both British and Xhosa leaders, and whenever possible includes commentary and descriptions from such folk sources as oral history, private journals, and letters.

Stacy J. Olikier's *Best Friends and Marriage: Exchange Among Women* (Berkeley: University of California press. 1989. Pp. xxii +231. Price \$20.00 cloth) will interest scholars of both dyadic bonding and gender issues. Produced as a dissertation under Berkeley sociologist Arlie Hochschild (who wrote *The Second Shift* and *The Managed Heart*), *Best Friends and Marriage* explores the relation between "companionate marriage and intimate friendships, in both individual women and community values. Olikier complicates and enriches questions of gender by exploring rituals, ethics, and tacit expectations underlying women's dyadic relationships with other women and with men. She points out that while women's friendships do provide a focus for resistance to male hegemony, they often also serve to deflect anger or frustration. These functions are linked, and are definitive of the type of friendship Olikier has made the focus of this study. Her sampling of twenty-one working-class women was purposely kept small, and thus retained the type of qualitative specificity that folklorists usually find important and enjoyable. This is a long-overdue study of "best" friendships among married women.

Another worthwhile book which grew out of a dissertation, *The Art and Politics of Wana Shamanism* by Jane Monnig Atkinson (Berkeley: University of California Press. 1989. Pp. xviii + 365. Price \$38.00 cloth) describes shamans and shamanic ritual in the social and political lives of the Wana people of Sulawesi, Indonesia. Interwoven with both intelligent discussions of symbolic analysis and Wana culture, her descriptions of ritual behavior come to life despite Atkinson's scant use of literary ethnographic style. This book is a worthy study of an Indonesian tribal people and a solid addition to a growing body of scholarship about shamanism.

Finally, Clark D. Halker's *For Democracy, Workers, and God: Labor Song-Poems and Labor Protest, 1865-95* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press. 1991. Pp. 243 includes bibliography, index. Price \$29.95 cloth.) fills in an important chapter in folk song scholarship, addressing a period and genre which had been slighted by researchers. Halker brings together his own concerns as a cultural historian with refreshingly sincere, concerted research into folkloristic studies of labor lore and folk songs. Because this book addresses the song-poem tradition throughout the northern United States and a broad range of occupations, ethnographic context is necessarily general. But the study's primary focus—the song-poem and its role in creating a sense of community within the postbellum labor movement—is more thorough in looking at the use of genre to bridge national, regional, and occupational barriers. Halker introduces the labor movement in terms of postbellum socio-economic conditions and discusses several traditions which contributed to the song-poem's emergence, including balladry, ethnic cultures, and political and religious imagery. The final chapter, on the wane of song-poetry, provides the reader with a link to the works of Korson, Reuss, and other scholars of twentieth-century labor movements, their communities, and their songs. Check it out.

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