

Book Reviews

The Love of the Samurai: A Thousand Years of Japanese Homosexuality.

By Tsuneo Watanabe and Jun'ichi Iwata. Translated by D. R. Roberts.
Gay Men's Press, London, 1989, 158 pp, \$20.

*Reviewed by Walter L. Williams, Ph.D.*¹

Within the last decade, the scholarly study of the acceptance of homosexual behavior in many non-Western cultures has advanced considerably. Building upon Herdt's pioneering fieldwork in New Guinea, and this reviewer's study of the American Indian berdache alternative gender roles, the most prominent research has focused upon Asia. Books by Nanda on India, Hinsch on China, Jackson on Thailand, Murray on the Asian-Pacific islands, and Williams on Java have all helped to fill out our knowledge of male homosexuality in these lands. Unfortunately, only a few essays have focused on homosexuality among women; a major study on lesbianism in Non-Western cultures remains to be done.

Some of the most interesting new data on male homosexuality is emerging on Japan. Schalow has translated Saikaku's literary masterpiece on male-male love in 17th-century Japan. A more comprehensive attempt, covering Japanese history from the 16th to the 20th centuries, has been compiled by Watanabe, using earlier essays written by Iwata in the 1930s, and translated into English by Roberts. Unfortunately, these books report very little about female same-sex relationships.

The earliest Portuguese Christian missionaries in Japan reported in horror the widespread social acceptance of male-male sex, especially among Buddhist monks. With Buddhism not being condemnatory toward homosexuality, and with male monks being prohibited from even touching a female, it is not surprising that same-sex relationships were common. Demographic factors also played a role. Unlike Europe, whose population

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had been reduced by numerous plagues, witch-hunts, wars, and massacres of dissenters, and which encouraged procreation to produce soldiers and settlers for its expanding colonial empires, Japan was a nonexpansionist island with limited space. As population numbers reached an optimal point for the land available, there was pressure to reduce population growth. Abortion, infanticide, and nonreproductive forms of sexual expression were demographically useful means of keeping the population stable.

In this context, a Jesuit missionary wrote about homosexuality, "Nobody, neither man nor woman, young or old, regards this sin as abnormal or abominable; this sin is well known among the bonzes [Buddhist monks], and is even a widespread custom among them" (p. 20). Another missionary wrote about the monks: "The abominable vice against nature is so popular that they practice it without any feelings of shame. They have many young boys with whom they commit wicked deeds" (p. 20). Each monk was assigned a boy (age 10-17) as his pupil, and many of these teacher-student pairs became lovers.

According to Japanese historical sources, there were several reasons for the popularity of boy-love. Daishi, founder of the Shingon sect of Buddhism, was said to have brought the practice of homosexuality with him from China, and popularized it along with the new religion. This appreciation for boys built upon ancient Japanese traditions of divinities revealing themselves on earth in the form of a young boy. This led to a worshipful attitude toward the physical body of boys. The Mahayana Buddhist *Rishu-kyo* sutra states "voluptuousness is pure . . . desire is pure . . . physical pleasure is pure . . . All creatures are in essence pure" (p. 46). Since the body was not despised, as in Christianity, but was seen to be sacred, the sexual act was considered the holy union of two bodies (p. 44). Monks wrote numerous poems of love expressed toward their student/boyfriend, and this intimate loving relationship underlay the Buddhist system of education.

A number of novels, from the 14th century onwards, show that boy-love was commonly accepted in other areas of society as well. By the 15th and 16th centuries, Japan entered a long period of civil conflicts among *samurai* warriors. Each samurai took a pubescent boy as a page and assistant, and many of these *wakashu* youths became the lovers of their adult samurai sponsors. Since the samurai trained his *wakashu* to become a samurai (by about age 23), this homosexual relationship also fulfilled an educative function similar to the teacher-student Buddhist tradition.

Under the shoguns, a new art form emerged which celebrated male beauty. In 1374, an 11-year-old boy dancer became the lover of the shogun, and under the shogun's loving patronage became a genius playwright and founder of the *No* theater for the shogun's court. *Kabuki*, another form of

dance that was originally performed by women, after 1629 became popular when young men performed while dressed as women. Many of these male actors took men as lovers, and started dressing in women's clothes in daily life, not just on stage. Transvestism entered Japanese popular culture through Kabuki, and grew to represent traditional Japanese culture in the full flower of its civilization.

Shogun Tsunayoshi (ruled 1688–1703) was so fond of homosexuality that he kept about 150 young male concubines in his palace. He educated them, and some of them later became leading government officials. As male homosexuality became more popular among the noble classes, and spread among the merchants and commoners as well, the authors conclude that 17th- and 18th-century Japan was a “Golden Age of homosexuality” (p. 88). The book's numerous illustrations of man–boy sexual and emotional interactions perfectly demonstrate the authors' points. As in ancient Greece, older men were expected eventually to take a female wife and produce offspring. Despite this bisexual idea, some men continued their sexual relationships with males (not to mention monks, who never married), giving evidence of a lifelong homosexual orientation.

This social acceptance changed in Japan after 1868, when the Meiji restoration government embarked upon a strict course of Westernization. Influenced by missionaries and Japanese intellectuals who were impressed by the West, the Meiji government began repressing Buddhism, and also passed a law against sodomy. However, Watanabe argues that capitalism, rather than Christianity per se, exerted the biggest influence against homosexuality. As industrialization revolutionized Japan, and the need for more population to provide a growing labor force, a new repression emerged against nonreproductive forms of sexuality. Once Japan embarked on an expansionist military policy after 1900, even more people were needed to man the armies and navies, and to staff the large economic and political bureaucracies necessary for administering an empire. Just as had happened earlier with expansionist industrial capitalist governments in Europe and the United States, Japan rejected its sexually diverse heritage in favor of pronatalist and antihomosexual policies imported from the West. The requirements of being a good citizen in an expansionist capitalist state meant the necessity of producing more children to add to the growing work force. This economic factor, and continued Western influence, explains homophobia in contemporary Japan.

Watanabe offers an interesting argument that men in modern societies have given up the right to be feminine. In contrast to premodern Japan, where men who dressed as women were honored, and where even the samurai wore makeup and dressed androgynously, 20th-century Japanese men have adopted the Western view that only women are supposed to ex-

hibit beauty. Men are told that they should *possess* what they want (i.e., a beautiful woman), rather than to be beautiful themselves. This transformation of beauty into a feminine attribute "is in reality a limitation or reduction of the domain of masculinity itself . . . [It is] the body itself which modern civilization refuses to allow to men . . . and demands of men that they be only an active, invisible and disembodied spirit" (p. 130). Modernization has meant that men have had to renounce androgyny. Watanabe sees an unconscious desire of many men to break out of this increasingly restricted masculine role, which explains the anxiety that "normal" men have about transvestites and gays: "What they see in 'perverts' with so much aversion is the external projection of their own self-image" (p. 128).

Watanabe concludes that homophobia arises from a detest of the notion that a man would offer himself "as a beauty . . . as a passive object of desire" (p. 131). Yet, the impact of gay liberationist ideology is beginning to challenge this. By making androgyny more socially acceptable, he suggests gay liberation can help all men in reconnecting with their full human potential. Just as lesbians have greatly aided all women through their activist contributions to the feminist movement, "male homosexuality, too, will be an essential catalyst in the development of all men, helping in the re-eroticization of the male body" (p. 135).

In sum, this book demonstrates that premodern Japan deserves to be ranked, along with the cultures of ancient Greece and the American Indians, as one of the world's most important examples showing how a society can incorporate male homosexuality into the core of its social organization. What is most needed now is comparable research on lesbianism and female sexuality, in Japan and in other nonhomophobic cultures of the world.

Homosexuality: Research Implications for Public Policy. *Edited by John C. Gonsiorek and James D. Weinrich.* Sage Publications, Newbury Park, CA, 1991, 295 pp., \$39.95 (Hbk), \$19.95 (paper).

Reviewed by Joseph M. Carrier, Ph.D.²

This book purports to be a summary of "what science knows about homosexuality and its relevance for public policy (p. xi)." That is an overstatement of its accomplishments, but it does nevertheless present important and relevant data on homosexuality that will help sensible professional and lay people alike refute the specious arguments of "queer bashers" and radical right politicians and religious leaders. The book is an updating of a previous report published by a Task Force on Sexual Orientation (Paul *et*

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al., 1982) sponsored by the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI): *Homosexuality: Social, Psychological, and Biological Issues*. The new volume, also sponsored by SPSSI, was made necessary by "an unprecedented development of knowledge and theory concerning sexual orientation [in the 1980s]" and the "intensification and polarization [in the 1980s] . . . of the public policy debates about homosexuality. The emergence of the religious right wing in the United States and its use of homosexuality as a scare tactic produced levels of distortion about what science knew concerning homosexuality that surpassed anything in the 1970s" (p. viii).

Composed of 15 relatively brief papers by 19 contributors, the book focuses on what the editors believe to be the most salient issues of current public policy debates about homosexuality. Not surprisingly, given its sponsorship, the volume has a definite psychological slant with a majority of the contributors being psychologists or in the helping professions.

The first four chapters in the book deal with sexual orientation. Gonsiorek and Weinrich begin the book with a discussion of the problems associated with defining and measuring sexual orientation and briefly outline the current debates between the social constructionists and essentialists about the "nature" of sexual orientation, noting that their "own position is an interactionist one" (p. 10). Kirsch and Weinrich then look at homosexuality, nature, and biology and pose two questions: Is homosexuality natural? If so or if not, does it matter? They note that the aim of the chapter is not "to justify homosexual behavior on biological grounds, but rather to show that the frequent condemnation of gay people because homosexual behavior is unnatural must be rejected because the premise of unnaturalness is false" (p. 31). Pillard looks next at masculinity and femininity in homosexuality and attempts to answer the question of "how persuasively the association between homosexuality and atypical gender behavior is supported by current research" (p. 33). Weinrich and Williams follow with a look at sexual orientation cross-nationally and cross-culturally. They explore the similarities and differences of sexual behaviors between men and its meaning in non-Western societies, point out the strengths and weaknesses of the social constructionists view of it, and "suggest that an interactionist view can contribute even more to the study of human sexuality, by emphasizing the interaction of numerous factors in producing human eroticism" (p. 55, emphasis omitted).

Chapters 5 and 6 present detailed assessments about how mainstream American society has dealt with homosexuality both personally and legally. Herek presents a social psychological assessment of institutional and personal hostility toward lesbians and gay men in the United States at present. He focuses his review on stigma, prejudice, and violence and concludes

that social and behavioral scientists “have created an impressive body of scientific theory and empirical research on the social and psychological bases of hostility toward lesbians and gay men . . . [that] offers tools for formulating and implementing social policy that will hasten the elimination of antigay prejudice” (p. 79). Rivera presents a legal assessment of the criminalization of homosexuality in the United States. She notes that criminal laws dealing with homosexual behaviors are “not often based on a search for truth, reason, or justice but often tends to reflect the limited knowledge and homophobic biases of legislators and judges” (p. 81) and concludes that “the stigma of criminalization hangs over all American gay men and lesbians” (p. 94).

Chapters 7–10 deal with traditional mental health concerns: Silverstein reviews “Psychological and Medical Treatments of Homosexuality”; Gonsiorek looks at “The Empirical Basis for the Demise of the Illness Model of Homosexuality”; Davison explores “Constructionism and Morality in Therapy for Homosexuality”; and Haldeman looks at “Sexual Orientation Conversion Therapy for Gay Men and Lesbians: A Scientific Examination.” The editors of the volume note that although much of the material in this section may be “old hat” to many readers: “It is covered in such depth because the public policy debates about homosexuality continue to be cluttered with the discredited and obsolete belief that homosexuality is an illness, almost a decade and a half after it was depathologized” (p. xiv).

Chapters 11–13 examine lesbian and gay affirmative perspectives in psychology. Gonsiorek and Rudolph look at the “coming out” process as “an additional development effort of lesbians and gay men” and note that it “occurs in addition to, not instead of, the psychological processes and other aspects of identity development throughout adolescence and adulthood” (p. 166). Citing the cross-cultural and cross-national literature on coming out, they further note how this process may vary with the social forces that shape them. A proposed integration with the “self psychology” perspective of Kohut is also outlined. Peplau then reviews the literature on middle-class Anglo “gay and lesbian” relationships holding the belief that accurate scientific information about these relationships “can replace biased stereotypes with factual descriptions of the nature and diversity of homosexual couples [and] . . . can also inform the discussion of new legal and public policy issues that arise as gay men and lesbians become a more visible and vocal part of society” (pp. 177–178). Green and Bozett review the literature on middle-class Anglo lesbian and gay fathers. They conclude that the “most striking feature of the research . . . is the absence of pathological findings . . . and how similar the groups of gay and lesbian parents and their children are to the heterosexual parents and their children that were included in the studies” (p. 213).

The last two chapters of the book deal with major public policy issues related to homosexuality and the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). Dejowski, Dengelegi, Crystal, and Beck present a much-needed discussion of the arguments for and against a very controversial instrument for control of the transmission of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), partner notification. They conclude that partner notification can be useful for controlling HIV infection but should be used only to complement other methods of HIV prevention since research on the outcome of partner notification programs "is insufficient at this point to draw conclusions concerning efficacy, cost, or outcome" (p. 229). In the final chapter of the book, Gonsiorek and Shernoff look at intervention and prevention programs that were developed to prevent the spread of HIV infection in middle-class Anglo gay male communities in the United States. They point out that the major component of these successful programs, behavior change, has been "hampered by the inclusion of moralistic, social policy, or other goals that bear no necessary relationship to HIV infection prevention" (p. 233). They also address differences that may be required for HIV prevention programs in populations who are "nongay, nonurban, nonadult, and nonwhite" (p. 239); and note that a literature on AIDS prevention in these populations is emerging. They conclude that successful efforts for changing risk behaviors of men involved in homosexual encounters in any given population will come from an "understanding of the social, political, and cultural context of the . . . [men], followed by an analysis of appropriate goals, optimal reinforcers, and specific relapse vulnerabilities within this context" (p. 240).

This collection of papers relates data, findings, and analyses mainly on the homosexuality of "urban middle-class Anglo gay men and lesbians" in the United States to relevant public policy debates at the time of their writing in 1990–1991. As the antihomosexual initiatives in the fall elections of 1992 in Oregon and Colorado reveal, this continues to be a timely collection.

Given the urgent general need for this kind of information at present, however, a major omission in the collection is a paper dealing specifically with homosexuality and public policy issues in the Latino, black, and Asian minority populations in the United States. Sufficient research data exist on homosexuality in these populations to put together a useful and well-documented paper. It is no longer defensible to deal with these populations in a few asides as is the case in this volume.

Moreover, while interesting, the one paper in the volume that looks at homosexualities other than in the urban middle-class Anglo gay population—Weinrich and Williams's "Strange Customs, Familiar Lives: Homosexualities in Other Cultures"—does not address the public policy issues

of minority peoples in the United States. And in describing the goals of their paper, the authors do not appear to understand the full implications of their terminology. For example, in their first goal they want "to help readers steeped in our own culture's view of homosexuality"; and in another they talk about drawing "conclusions about . . . understanding 'the modern homosexual identity in America today'" (p. 43). Who does "our own culture" and "the modern homosexual identity in America" refer to? The middle-class Anglo culture? The authors appear to be ignoring the multiethnic makeup of the population in the United States at present.

REFERENCE

Paul, W., Weinrich, J. D., Gonsiorek, J. C., and Hotvedt M. E. (eds.). (1982). *Homosexuality: Social, Psychological, and Biological Issues*, Sage, Newbury Park, CA.

Transsexualität. By *Friedemann Pfäfflin*. Ferdinand Enke Verlag, Stuttgart, 1993, 117 pp., DM 38.

Geschlechtsumwandlung. Abhandlungen zur Transsexualität. By *Friedemann Pfäfflin and Astrid Junge*. Schattauer, Stuttgart, 1992, 447 pp., DM 128.

*Reviewed by Preben Hertoft, M.D.*³

Transsexualism has been discussed all this century, even before the term was coined by Hirschfeld in 1923 (often wrongly ascribed to Cauldwell in 1949). As soon as it was technically possible, there were patients with severe gender identity conflicts who sought a surgical solution and there were surgeons willing to take on the task. Professionals and laymen have wondered whether it is possible to "change sex," and also whether it is defensible to treat a psychopathological condition with a surgical operation that mutilates healthy organs.

The first sex-modifying surgical operations were carried out in Germany in the 1920s, and then later in other European countries. But sex reassignment accelerated with the often-mentioned metamorphosis of Christine Jorgensen in Copenhagen in the early 1950s. In Hamburg, where these two treatises originate, the first sex change operation was carried out

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in 1970. Sweden was the first country to introduce specific legislation in the field in 1972, followed by Germany in 1980, and The Netherlands in 1985. In other countries, transsexuals have obtained a satisfactory legal position on the basis of a gradually established practice. This is now the case in Denmark. But in England and France, transsexuals are in the awkward situation of being allowed to undergo sex-modifying surgery but without the possibility of having their new sex affiliation legalized. As a result, complaints have been submitted to the European Court of Human Rights but without a satisfactory solution.

All of these issues are mentioned and evaluated in these two books, of which the shorter is the volume by the German psychiatrist, Pfäfflin; the other is a supplementary collection of articles prepared by Pfäfflin and his colleague, Junge, plus six co-workers. Together they form an important work, the essential parts of which ought to be made accessible also in English.

In the years 1978–1992, Pfäfflin treated 616, mainly German, transsexual patients (449 biological males, 167 biological females) referred to the sexological department at the University Hospital in Hamburg. Barely half obtained sex-modifying surgical operations—196 men and 99 women. Of the rest, two thirds abandoned the wish for a sex change operation, while the remainder were still under observation or had sought treatment elsewhere at the end of the project.

Special attention will be paid to the volume by Pfäfflin. Here Pfäfflin looks for answers to some essential questions regarding the psychopathology of transsexuals, their defense mechanisms, and the value of current treatment possibilities. Moreover, the alleged etiological significance of H-Y antigen to transsexualism is disproved. All examination results are related to matched control groups. The thesis is completed with a list of references comprising about 400 articles covering the period 1910–1992.

To what extent is transsexualism psychopathologic? This essential question is subjected to a critical investigation through a series of “psychometric” tests carried out on 118 transsexuals (61 men, 57 women), but independent of the examination procedure as such. There were a total of six tests: the Bem Sex-Role Inventory and a German test, the Freiburg Personality Inventory, similar to the MMPI. In addition, four tests, only applied in Germany, were given to illuminate personality type and prevalence of psychopathological traits. The background for this part of the thesis is some authors’ perception of transsexuals as being severely psychopathologic, even psychotic.

This perception is not confirmed by the investigation. On the contrary, it points out that the transsexual syndrome must be perceived as a psychoneurotic symptom formation. Specific psychopathological traits could

not be proved. Pfäfflin emphasizes the importance of studying it in its entirety, of distinguishing between the psychic condition *before* and *after* sex reassignment. In the strained period before surgery, the patients appear much more psychically strange than later and thus give a more pathological impression in this period than what is reasonable. Before sex change, patients may appear "more Catholic than the pope," i.e., they exaggerate a series of gender stereotypes to give a convincing representation of the gender they identify with. After the sex change operation, they can relax, and are increasingly capable of tolerating and integrating traits from their original biological sex affiliation into their newly gained identity. This makes them to a greater extent look like other people who, gradually maturing, also come to terms with themselves, also in areas where they perhaps deviate from prevailing perceptions of femininity-masculinity. Other clinicians have learned this as well as seen from Pfäfflin and Junge's list of references in *Geschlechtsumwandlung* (sex reassignment). Here the finding is supported by a test procedure carried out before and after sex change.

Provided most transsexuals belong to a psychoneurotic sphere, it must also be possible in some cases to find other solutions to their problems than surgery. For this reason, the necessity of psychiatric counseling and perhaps psychotherapeutic treatment is discussed. Although half of the patients chose surgery, it was for many of the remaining cases probably just as proper a solution to desist from surgery, realizing that many problems are not solved this way. However imperative the transsexual's wish for surgery may be, treatment cannot be reduced to a decision for or against surgery. Although the satisfaction with a sex change highly correlates with the success of the surgical outcome, one also finds transsexuals who are dissatisfied in spite of a successful sex change operation. It turns out that the effectiveness of sex change treatment depends on an interaction among the following factors: (i) a continuous, sufficient contact with a research and treatment program; (ii) the course of the "real life test," i.e., what the patient learns by experience regarding life in the gender role in view; (iii) hormonal treatment; (iv) quality of the psychiatric and/or psychotherapeutic treatment; (v) success of the surgical treatment; and (vi) attainment of legal recognition, including change of name and civil registration number corresponding to the new sex affiliation.

From time to time, a somatic explanation of transsexualism has been put forward. Pfäfflin disproves the H-Y antigen theory through a research study: 68 transsexual patients of both sexes and a matched control group were examined for H-Y antigen. Both groups showed the same frequency of disputable H-Y antigen findings. This was due to the fact that the applied examination methods were neither reliable nor valid. Subsequently,

the researchers from Munich who postulated the H-Y antigen theory withdrew their results.

Late in the volume, Pfäfflin remarks that transsexuals undermine the understanding of a bipartite gender division. Maybe that is why they so often are seen as a provocation by family, colleagues, public representatives, and many professional therapists. The understanding they will meet in the future is much dependent upon the insight of the professional therapist. This is where Pfäfflin's thesis will be utilized well.

The joint work, *Geschlechtsumwandlung*, contains much material for reflection. Besides six smaller articles by six authors, it contains a 300-page annotated survey of the literature elaborated by Pfäfflin and Junge. It covers 100 investigations from 12 countries, including the postoperative course, published between 1961–1991. This survey alone is worth the whole book.

The smaller articles comprise the following subjects: Runte describes how transsexuals present themselves through their autobiographies, 1930–1990. After that follows two historical reviews, Steinkühler's about Chevalier d'Eon and Hirschhauer's about "Transsexualität als historisches Projekt." Finally, three articles deal with public matters: Lindemann: "Zur sozialen Konstruktion der Geschlechts-zugehörigkeit" [The social construction of gender affiliation], Augstein: "Zur rechtlichen Situation Transsexuellen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland" [The legal situation of transsexuals in Germany], and Will: "Zur Namen-und Geschlechtsänderung bei transsexuellen Menschen in Europa" [The change of name and civil registration number of transsexuals in Europe]. All are worth reading.

Now that so many people are no longer able to read German, once again the hope is expressed that Pfäfflin's thesis and his and Junge's annotated survey of the literature will be made accessible in English.