



The Libertine's Friend: Homosexuality and Masculinity in Late Imperial China

Giovanni Vitiello

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Delving into three hundred years of Chinese literature, from the mid-sixteenth century to the mid-nineteenth, *The Libertine's Friend* uncovers the complex and fascinating history of male homosexual and homosocial relations in the late imperial era. Drawing particularly on overlooked works of pornographic fiction, Giovanni Vitiello offers a frank exploration of the importance of same-sex love and eroticism to the evolution of masculinity in China.

Vitiello's story unfolds chronologically, beginning with the earliest sources on homoeroticism in pre-imperial China and concluding with a look at developments in the twentieth century. Along the way, he identifies a number of recurring characters—for example, the libertine scholar, the chivalric hero, and the lustful monk—and sheds light on a set of key issues, including the social and legal boundaries that regulated sex between men, the rise of male prostitution, and the aesthetics of male beauty. Drawing on this trove of material, Vitiello presents a historical outline of changing notions of male homosexuality in China, revealing the integral part that same-sex desire has played in its culture.

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