

THE CAMBRIDGE WORLD HISTORY OF
SEXUALITIES

Volume II focuses on systems of thought and belief in the history of world sexualities, ranging from early humans to contemporary approaches. Comprising eighteen chapters, this volume opens with a chapter on the evolutionary legacy and then delves into the sexualities of ancient Egypt, the Near East, Greece, and Rome, continuing with pre-modern South Asia, China, Japan, Africa, the Americas, and Oceania. Chapters include an examination of sexuality in the religious traditions of Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and also look at more recent approaches, including scientific sex, sexuality in socialism and Marxism, and the intersections between sexuality, feminism, and post-colonialism.

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THE CAMBRIDGE WORLD HISTORY OF
SEXUALITIES

General Editors

MERRY E. WIESNER-HANKS, *University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee*

and

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Split into four volumes, *The Cambridge World History of Sexualities* examines sexualities across time and around the world at varying geographic and chronological scales. Featuring over eighty contributions from scholars across more than twenty countries in a number of disciplines, the volumes represent a cross-disciplinary approach that characterizes the history of sexuality as a field in itself. The first volume combines historiographical essays with general overviews of important topics and themes. The second evaluates sexuality in systems of thought and belief, from early humans to contemporary feminism. The third targets specific locations at different times to navigate further the lived experience of individuals and groups. Lastly, the fourth examines the intersection of modernity and human sexuality on issues such as colonialism and consumerism. Thorough and authoritative, the collection is a much-needed addition to the world history of sexualities.

Volume I General Overviews

EDITED BY MERRY E. WIESNER-HANKS AND MATHEW KUEFLER

Volume II Systems of Thought and Belief

EDITED BY MERRY E. WIESNER-HANKS AND MATHEW KUEFLER

Volume III Sites of Knowledge and Practice

EDITED BY MERRY E. WIESNER-HANKS AND MATHEW KUEFLER

Volume IV Modern Sexualities

EDITED BY MERRY E. WIESNER-HANKS AND MATHEW KUEFLER

THE CAMBRIDGE
WORLD HISTORY OF
SEXUALITIES

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VOLUME II
Systems of Thought and Belief

*

Edited by

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Editors' Preface to the Series

Sexuality – the range of acts related to erotic desire, romance, and reproduction, and the meanings attached to them – lies at the centre of human existence. This has been as true throughout human history as it is today. From the customs of marriage and family life to rules about inheritance and status, from the pronouncements of philosophers and religious leaders to the lived daily experience of persons across society, from the global impact of commercialized sex to local regulations on sexual diversity – sexuality touches all areas of life.

Historians have included discussions of sexuality and its impact on human history in their writings since antiquity, often using sexual customs or actions to highlight differences between their own culture and others, praise or censure those they were writing about, or provide the moral guidance that was so often a part of history. In the nineteenth century, advocates of women's and gay rights sought to uncover the historical roots of oppression and to find exceptions to patriarchal and homophobic traditions. Anthropologists and social theorists also linked the varied sexual customs of modern peoples with patterns derived from the past. In the first half of the twentieth century, social historians focused on marriage and kinship in their examinations of the lives of ordinary people, and a few even concentrated explicitly on sexual issues.

The women's and gay liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s inspired the first professional historians of sexuality. Many of them specialized in the modern histories of Europe and the United States, and they theorized mainly from the modern Western experience. This is beginning to change: the field has expanded to incorporate pre-modern histories and histories in all regions of the world, becoming increasingly transhistorical and global. World and global histories have encouraged broad cross-cultural comparisons and the study of *longue durée* trends, developments now also seen in the history of sexuality. Historians can now move beyond

Editors' Preface to the Series

concentrated specializations in one time and place to create a more comprehensive image of sexuality in human history.

The Cambridge World History of Sexualities reflects these recent trends in the history of sexuality. It is made up of four volumes. The first volume offers historiographical essays on past, present, and future directions of the field, along with general overviews of central topics in the long history of human sexuality. The second volume contains essays on sexuality in systems of thought and belief from the world's regions and cultural and intellectual traditions, beginning with the earliest human groups and ending with contemporary approaches. The third volume targets specific times and places to more closely investigate the lived experience of individuals and groups and to highlight the diversity of human sexualities. The fourth volume examines the intersections of modernity and human sexuality through the forces, ideas, and events that have shaped the modern world, and the challenges we in the modern world have faced and continue to face. Across the four volumes, the series offers chapters at varying geographic and chronological scales, providing depth of coverage along with breadth of vision.

Our aim is to produce a useful reference for scholars, advanced students, and interested general readers, as well as for those who specialize in the history of sexuality. As with other Cambridge World Histories, this collection is intended to be the best and most detailed source of reliable, up-to-date information on the field. It will also provide readers with opportunities to make their own comparisons and contrasts between chapters and volumes. It is not exhaustive: despite our best efforts, the global crisis of the pandemic obliged some contributors to withdraw on short notice, and we were unable to replace them. We particularly regret the absence of chapters on Indigenous Australian sexualities, on the impact of slavery on sexuality, on LGBTQ+ rights and activism in the modern world, and on sex in film, television, and digital media.

This series reflects the best of contemporary scholarly discussions of sexuality. We recognize that 'sexuality' is a modern word and that some historians choose to avoid it when discussing the past, arguing that it is anachronistic. Investigations of the past are always informed by more recent understandings and concerns, however, and using modern concepts can often provide great insights. We also recognize that 'sexuality' is a Western invention and may not accurately reflect the cultural diversity even of modern societies across the globe. Yet we do not wish to draw too firm a line between the systems of sexual knowledge in modern European and European-influenced societies and those of other human traditions. As many

Editors' Preface to the Series

of our contributors do, we reject the sharp distinction that the French historian of sexuality and philosopher Michel Foucault drew between *scientia sexualis* (sexual science) in the West and *ars erotica* (erotic arts) in the rest. So we use the term 'sexuality' with these caveats and have intentionally chosen the plural 'sexualities' in our title to signal the enormous diversity on all matters relating to sex across time and space.

A similar caveat must be made about the range of terms possible to describe gender and sexual diversity in history. Most of our contributors have used LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other) for these identities, or individual terms from within the list, even when referring to the distant past, and have used the pronoun 'they' for gender diverse individuals. Some have included historical terms used to identify such persons and groups, some of which might be considered derogatory or exclusionary today. Some authors have chosen to use terms from the language of the people they study, explaining what these mean rather than attempting a translation. Forms of gender and sexual diversity extend far beyond those covered by the LGBTQ+ label, and our intention is always to be as inclusive as possible.

We are very pleased with the broad scope of the series and have worked hard to make it truly diverse and interdisciplinary. Most chapters range widely across time and place and demonstrate the richness of a comparative approach. The series is diverse in other ways as well. The contributors live and work in more than twenty different countries, and their backgrounds and education represent about twice that number, providing a global perspective on many topics. They range in gender and sexual identity and in age. Their voices are those of distinguished senior scholars, mid-career researchers, and up-and-coming scholars, thus those who have shaped the field's history and those who will shape it long into the future. In addition to professional historians, some contributors are trained and teach in anthropology, archaeology, cultural studies, social sciences, languages and literatures, religious studies, theology, philosophy, area studies, communications, education, women's studies, and gender studies.

We acknowledge gratefully the work of the staff at Cambridge University Press and the support of our families. Most of the work on the series took place during the global pandemic, and we salute the perseverance of the scholars who contributed, despite personal and professional challenges that were unimaginable when we first invited them. This series is dedicated to those around the world who faced or still face persecution because of their perceived or actual sex, gender, sexuality, and/or gender identity.