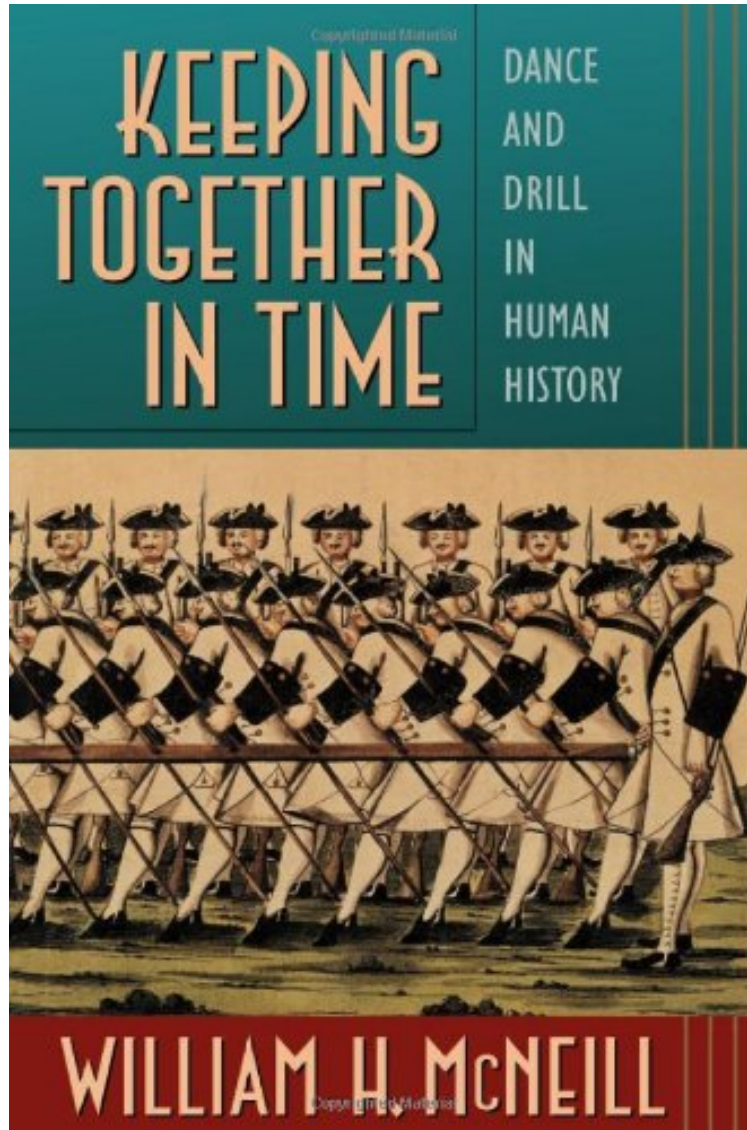


[Free] Keeping Together in Time: Dance and Drill in Human History

# Keeping Together in Time: Dance and Drill in Human History

William H. McNeill

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**William H. McNeill : Keeping Together in Time: Dance and Drill in Human History** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Keeping Together in Time: Dance and Drill in Human History:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An excellent approach to understanding a specific form of human behavior ...By Fuad TopicAn excellent approach to understanding a specific form of human behavior which can be observed in formal groups during activities performed together in time throughout the history of mankind.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A great thoughtful readBy grumpy23A tantalizing synthesis of a massive

amount of information related to one topic . . . . A great thoughtful read!6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. It has changed my view of history and the world's prospects for peace.By guy wilcoxIt distresses me that I have not heard of this book until recently and have not heard of any impact it may have had or may currently be having, either in the academy or in politics, national or international. His insights appear to have been developed during an impressively thorough historical study of dance and drill. His conclusions are consistent with my own intuitions and experience. The people apt to benefit most from it are likely not to get through the first chapter without scoffing or feeling uncomfortable. If I had one book to suggest be read (and thoroughly discussed) by the world, I think this would be the one.

Could something as simple and seemingly natural as falling into step have marked us for evolutionary success? In *Keeping Together in Time* one of the most widely read and respected historians in America pursues the possibility that coordinated rhythmic movement--and the shared feelings it evokes--has been a powerful force in holding human groups together. As he has done for historical phenomena as diverse as warfare, plague, and the pursuit of power, William H. McNeill brings a dazzling breadth and depth of knowledge to his study of dance and drill in human history. From the records of distant and ancient peoples to the latest findings of the life sciences, he discovers evidence that rhythmic movement has played a profound role in creating and sustaining human communities. The behavior of chimpanzees, festival village dances, the close-order drill of early modern Europe, the ecstatic dance-trances of shamans and dervishes, the goose-stepping Nazi formations, the morning exercises of factory workers in Japan--all these and many more figure in the bold picture McNeill draws. A sense of community is the key, and shared movement, whether dance or military drill, is its mainspring. McNeill focuses on the visceral and emotional sensations such movement arouses, particularly the euphoric fellow-feeling he calls "muscular bonding." These sensations, he suggests, endow groups with a capacity for cooperation, which in turn improves their chance of survival. A tour de force of imagination and scholarship, *Keeping Together in Time* reveals the muscular, rhythmic dimension of human solidarity. Its lessons will serve us well as we contemplate the future of the human community and of our various local communities.

.com No small themes for William McNeill, a writer of big, sweeping books, from *The Rise of the West and Plagues and Peoples* to the modestly titled--and wonderful--*History of the World*. Here McNeill turns his attention to the role of synchronized movement in human societies, whether in mass political rallies, the muscular bonding of military drills, or dances staged in ballrooms or mosh pits. Such motions, McNeill tells us, are "far older than language, and critically important in human history." Ranging from the Paleolithic to modern times, McNeill turns up unusual nuggets from the past: the Christian Church's abandonment of sacred dances in the 4th century, dances that survive now in the sign of the cross; and Adolf Hitler borrowing fight songs from American universities to solidify the nascent National Socialist movement. In his imaginative and provocative book...William H. McNeill develops an unconventional notion that, he observes, is 'simplicity itself.' He maintains that people who move together to the same beat tend to bond and thus that communal dance and drill alter human feelings. (John Mueller New York Times Book )Every now and then, a slender, graceful, unassuming little volume modestly proposes a radical rethinking of human history. Such a book is *Keeping Together in Time*...Important, witty, and thoroughly approachable, [it] could, perhaps, only be written by a scholar in retirement with a lifetime's interdisciplinary reading to ponder, the imagination to conceive unanswerable questions, and the courage, in this age of over-speculation, to speculate in areas where certainty is impossible. Its vision of dance as a shaper of evolution, a perpetually sustainable and sustaining resource, would crown anyone's career. (Penelope Reed Doob Toronto Globe and Mail)McNeill is one of our greatest living historians...As usual with McNeill, *Keeping Together in Time* contains a wonderfully broad survey of practices in other times and places. There are the Greeks, who invented the flute-accompanied phalanx, and the Romans, who invented calling cadence while marching. There are the Shakers, who combined worship and dancing, and the Mormons, who carefully separated the functions but who prospered at least as much on the strength of their dancing as their Sunday morning worship. (David Warsh Boston Sunday Globe)[A] wide-ranging and thought-provoking book...A mind-stretching exploration of the thesis that 'keeping together in time'--army drill, village dances, and the like--consolidates group solidarity by making us feel good about ourselves and the group and thus was critical for social cohesion and group survival in the past. (Virginia Quarterly ) [This book is] nothing less than a survey of the historical impact of shared rhythmic motion from the paleolithic to the present, an impact that [McNeill] finds surprisingly significant...McNeill moves beyond Durkheim in noting that in complex societies divided by social class muscular bonding may be the medium through which discontented and oppressed groups can gain the solidarity necessary for challenging the existing social order. (Robert N. Bellah Commonweal)The title of this fascinating essay contains a pun that sums up its thesis" keeping together in time, or coordinated rhythmic movement and the shared feelings it evokes, has kept human groups together throughout history. Most of McNeill's pioneering study is devoted to the history of communal dancing...[This] volume will appeal equally to scholars and to the general reader. (Doyle Dawson Military History)As with so many themes [like this one], whether in science or in symphonies, one wonders

(in retrospect) why it has not been invented before...[T]he book is fascinating. (K. Kortmulder *Acta Biotheoretica* (The Netherlands)) This scholarly and creative exploration of the largely unresearched phenomenon of shared euphoria aroused by unison movement moves across the disciplines of dance, history, sociology, and psychology... Highly recommended. (Choice) About the Author William H. McNeill is Professor of History, Emeritus, University of Chicago and author of, among other books, *The Rise of the West*, which won the National Book Award in 1964, and *Plagues and Peoples*.