Progressive Islam in Practice

A QUEER HISTORY OF ISLAM

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Colonialism & Anti-LGBTQ Sentiments

- More than half of the world's remaining "sodomy" laws have their roots in British Colonial Rule.
- Colonizers, including the French, British, and Dutch, imported their homophobic laws into the colonies they controlled as they viewed these conquered lands as "morally lax" on sexuality.
- It was thought that the presence of sexual diversity, something common in countries colonized by European powers, would have a corrupting effect on their empires.
The Indian Penal Code of 1860

- The Indian Penal Code of 1860 was the most notorious and influential of these laws, with Section 377 criminalizing gay sex, punishable by life in prison.
- The code was intended to condition colonized subjects to conform to authority.
- The law was put in place in India and eventually exported across other British colonies in South and Southeast Asia.
- Today, 57% of states with laws punishing homosexuality have a British colonial history and 70% of states with a British colonial history continue to punish homosexuality.
Remnants of the Colonial Laws

- The Pakistan Penal Code of 1860 (Great Britain)
- Article 543 of Lebanon's Penal Code of 1943 (France)
- Section 377 of the Penal Code of 1860 of Bangladesh (Great Britain)
- Sections 377 A - D of the Penal Code of Malaysia (Great Britain)
- Section 377A of the Penal Code of Singapore (Great Britain)
- Article 365 of the Sri Lankan Penal Code (Great Britain)
Hijras - Pakistan

- Hijra is the South Asian term for gender non-conforming individuals.
- It is an umbrella category for multiple genders and sexualities, including but not limited to transgender women, masculine women, and intersex individuals.
- Rooted in Islamic history, *hijr* marks the holy journey from Mecca to Medina and the beginning of Islam as a religio-political-cultural formation. Representing a double performance, it also denotes the beginning of the Islamic *hijri* calendar.
- Therefore, Hijra means migration and is a result of pre/post/colonial cartographies, histories of Pakistan and Islam.
The Bugis, the largest ethnic groups in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, recognize five unique gender identities.

The Bissu are considered to be the "meta-gender" or what people in the West would understand to be non-binary.

The Bissu are a vital part of Bugis society, overseeing cultural ceremonies, including blessing ceremonies before pilgrims make the *hajj* to Mecca.

They were also influential in the decision of the Bugis tribe to convert to Islam rather than Christianity.
Köçek - Turkey

- Köçek dancing has made history tracing its practice from the early modern Ottoman Empire to present day Turkey.
- Originating from the term Čoček, a bellydance performed by 'feminine men'.
- This first generation dance is still performed in Turkey or immigrant communities as part of a social event like a wedding where others who learned the dance informally can participate.
In Malaysia, the term sida-sida refers to priests or courtiers born as male who undertook androgynous behavior or presented as females who were imbued with spiritual powers because of their gender identity.

Until the mid 20th century, the sida-sida could be found across palaces in peninsular Malaysia, the homes of the Islamic royal families within the country.

In the palaces, the sida-sida were entrusted with protecting the high ranking female officials in the palace and the female members of the royal families.
Khawal - Egypt

- Before it became a word used to refer to anyone who acted queer, khawal were popular performers.
- In the late 18th century, a khawal was a biologically male dancer who presented as a woman to perform at celebratory occasions - such as weddings and births - after women had been prohibited from dancing in public.
- Khawal were considered sexually available by their male audiences who found their behavior desirable.
- A khawal was one in all aspects of their life; even after the dancing was over, they presented as women in public spaces.
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