

Islamic homosexuality*

Abstract This paper will discuss the customary practice of male same-sex behavior in Islamic cultures. In polygynous societies females are put at premium, and virtually all marry. Homosexual relations are especially likely to happen in a single-sex setting, where contact with members of the opposite sex is entirely cut off, or when females are segregated and guarded, as in most Muslim societies. Polygyny reflects the natural desire of men of all ages for young females, but only powerful men can fulfill this all-male desire. The existence of young males available for sexual penetration protects women by providing a sexual outlet for many single men.

Key words same-sex behavior, polygyny, Islam.

Introduction

This paper will attempt to assess the customary practice of male same-sex behavior in Islamic cultures. There are many fascinating questions in trying to understand homosexuality from an evolutionary perspective. The existence of homosexual behavior and the present-day various forms of its sub-cultures present a problem for sociobiology. Many would see homosexuals as poor, perplexed persons who are choosing inappropriate sexual targets. In this view, homosexuality is an accident, a sexual confusion or a matter of a low parental investment, and it may even be genetic in origin. On the other hand, a number of traditional societies appear to tolerate, even encourage certain forms of male homosexual behavior even if such customary practices go against the respective prevailing religious norms. Many Islamic cultures seem to fit the pattern. "The Islamic world" is much too complex to be reduced to a single cultural design. From Morocco in the West to Indonesia in the East, many countries have Muslim majorities. In these societies Islam can take many different characteristics, and there are many doctrinal differences within Islam as practiced there. Still, the literature review point out that "...one might consider Islamic societies...to provide a vivid illustration of a 'homosexual-friendly' environment in world history" (Kugle 2003, Greenberg 1988). In fact, the historical and literary records of Islamic cultures reveals a wide ar-

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chive of same-sex (especially male-male) desires and expressions, reported by members of the societies in question or by foreign travelers, writers or scientists. And although medieval Muslim sources give the impression that sexual activity of certain type between males was a normal, if religiously illicit, part of Muslim life, there is very little on female homoeroticism in Koran, hadith or any interpretative texts, hence the analysis will focus on male homosexual behavior. The question then is why has male homosexual behavior come to be tolerated in many Muslim societies in spite of religious prohibition? Essentially, I shall argue that in these societies there is a positive relationship between tolerated male homosexual behavior and polygyny. The main reason for tolerated male homosexual behavior in the cultures examined is that it reduces conflict between unmarried males and adult, married ones, over access to female sexuality.

One of the most striking features of homosexuality in general is that it is far more prevalent in males than in females worldwide (Symons 1979, Ellis and Ames 1987). This male excess is part of an overall pattern of male overrepresentation in all kinds of sexual variance: sexual paraphilias, or misplaced sexual attraction occur almost exclusively among males. Men and women follow quite different reproductive strategies; it may be that male homosexuality and adjunct sexual paraphilias arouse as a consequence of women's control of the reproductive agendas in our natural environments (Gallup and Suarez 1983). Since women are selected to be more cautious and to delay sex, men are counter-selected to become seductive, urgent and demanding. As young males are neither patient nor skilled and have poor access to females, they may turn from frustration to their own sex for sexual outlet. In another way, homosexual men are men first and homosexual second (Symons 1979). Homosexual men behave in many ways like heterosexual men, only more so. Sexual relationships among homosexuals are not constrained by the necessity to compromise male and female desires and dispositions. Male, but not female, psychology should have evolved to value sexual variety and the maximization of numbers of sexual partners. Gayness is a male behavior.

Background

Islam is much more than a religion. In reality, it is a complete way of life. The *shari'a*, the traditional law of Islam, governs virtually every aspect of human life and Muslims believe that the word of God was given word by word to Muhammad 1400 years ago, who in turn copied it in the Koran (Wafar 1987). Then again, the most significant effect of religion as a communicative behavior that can account for its persistence through generations, is its influence on the behavior of others through their senses (Steadman and Palmer 1995). The important and identifiable consequence of communication

is on other individuals, on those who receive the message. An important effect of any behavior, and hence, religious behavior, the effect that continuously influences its frequency in succeeding generations, is its effect on the descendant-leaving success of those exhibiting it. Moreover, the most significant proximate effect of religious behavior (or law following, as in the case of Islam), the effect that has led to its persistence is in encouragement of enduring family-like cooperation between distant kin, kinsmen in different families, or more recently, during the past few thousand years, between non-kin. The ultimate cause of religion is that such cooperation has promoted not just the reproductive success of individuals over one generation, but the leaving of descendants of those involved over many generations (Steadman and Palmer 1995). Islam means literally submission to the will of God; Muslims consider themselves to be part of the *umma*, the community of living Muslims everywhere (Eickelman 1981).

Islamic societies are characterized by a "social stratification with a controlling patrilineal elite and a large poverty class, seclusion of women, and a decentralized political system involving individual political networks," where patrilineal inheritance results in intense paternity concern, with the seclusion and devaluation of women as household workers and childbearers, dangerous to men (Murray and Roscoe 1987: 310). Muslims "often have believed that there is a singular Islam that is a 'macrocosm', the 'Islamic world', which is presumed to share familiar interpretations and arrangements" (Roscoe and Murray 1987: 4). However, despite important similarities both across time and space, what different, multiple Islamic societies have in common is that they allow polygyny, where a man can have up to four wives at one time. Also, they share in the common seclusion of women, "a social system in which access to women is rigorously restricted" (Wikan 1977: 314).

The law survey referring to sodomy in Muslim states shows that there is no uniform legal position in relation to sex among males, even among states that have a penal code based on the *shari'a* (Sofer 1992). Various interpretations of Muhammad's word have co-existed. However, in general, states that have instituted *shari'a* regard sodomy as illegal. First Muhammad, and then many Islam religious schools have condemned sodomy between males, some arguing for severe punishment. There are numerous hadith of varying degrees of authenticity concerning homosexual relations between two men- anal intercourse- that harshly condemn it (Ali 2006). The major sins or enormities, compiled by medieval Muslim scholars include "anal intercourse between men" and "having intercourse with livestock" (Ali 2006: 76). Some argue for stoning of "those who practice sodomy, both the passive and the active", and some even insist on the death penalty (Wafer 1987: 89), nevertheless, the penalty was rarely passed in medieval or modern Muslim states. Murray (1997), for example, referred to the homosexual practice between males in Muslim socie-

ties as "an open secret", or "the will not to know". There was an omni-accepted thought that males like to penetrate desirable youths and that this desire was perfectly "normal", that is, they were not considered "homosexuals" in a modern sense of the word (Ali 2006). In general, Muslim societies accepted the ancient Mediterranean model based on ranked relationships of penetration, where no stigma was attached to an adult male who penetrates but where a free adult male who allows himself to be penetrated suffers stigma. And though Islam could be seen as "religion of peace" and the successor of Judaism and Christianity at the level of religious philosophy, there is nevertheless one area that one of the most basically outlined differences between the practices of the Islam and Christianity can be seen. The Christian Church beliefs contrast greatly with the polygamous traditions of the Muslim community. Traditionally, Islam has promoted large families, polygamous marriages and numerous children in order to help increase the number of followers of the Islamic faith. In the Christian tradition, the marriage of a man to more than one woman or vice versa is strictly forbidden.

Discussion

Historian Trexler (1995) argued that the scarcity of women helps explain male homosexualities: in polygynous societies, in so-called harem cultures, the relations between men depend in part upon men's access to women. "Males kept apart from women through war as well as through domestic 'asylums' such as harems or prisons or nunneries will often cultivate homosexual relations" (Trexler 1995: 23). Even in medieval Christian Europe, Trexler argued, there seems to have existed an inverse ratio between male homosexual behavior and the availability of women:

Nor was this so-called harem complex, in which relatively few men within any given class or status monopolized a large number of its nubile women, limited to North Africa, even if medieval moralists denounced a court full of women as the Mohammedan fashion. It was increasingly visible in continental Europe as well: in late medieval Italy, for example, the fewer the available women or prostitutes, the more male homosexual behavior seems to have occurred. And in the fifteenth century, the Florentine government made female prostitutes available to young men because, they thought, the males would consort with each other (Trexler 1995: 51).

All early Christian writers were opposed to male prostitution and homosexuality. Clement of Alexandria denounced homosexuality as non-procreative and therefore unnatural (Boswell 1980: 355). In Christianity, the first regulation of sexuality in the form of church canons appeared in A.D.309, in Spain (Greenberg 1988). The Council of Elvira Church was the first church to formulate rules for sexual regulation; the canon dealing with homosexuality specifies

that men who engage in sexual relations with boys should not be admitted to communion even at death (Greenberg 1988: 227). Official legislation was proclaimed in 342, when Constans and Constantius, sons of Constantine, promulgated a law which outlawed homosexual marriages and all homosexual acts (Boswell 1980: 123). The statute of emperors Theodosius, Valentinian and Arcadius was incorporated into the Theodosian Code, issued in 390, containing general condemnation of passive male homosexuality and forbidding "forcing or selling males into prostitution". The Code was accepted in both the Eastern and the Western Roman Empire. This fourth-century legislation may have been the basis for the provision in Justinian's Code that homosexuals offenders are to be castrated. The code, issued in 529 and revised in 533, was followed by two imperial edicts, which reiterated the death penalty for repeat offenders (Geanakoplos 1979). In Justinian's legislation, homosexuality threatens not only the individual sinner, but the entire community: "because of such crimes, there are famines, earthquakes and pestilences." Geanakoplos argued: "Through his famous code, then, Justinian played an important part in determining the Byzantine attitude to homosexuality" (ibid.: 366).

However, the actual incidence of homosexuality in Eastern and Western Europe is difficult to estimate. Information about homosexuality comes from record of Inquisition (West) and from anti-monastic or anti-papal tracts attacking the morals of monks or clerics. The Inquisition's accusations of alleged heretics homosexual behavior are dismissed today, especially in the case of the Cathars (De Rougemont 1995). On the other hand, the Byzantine record shows almost no evidence of the incidence of homosexuality. The subject of Byzantine homosexuality has not received any careful study. Jenkins' (1967: 88, 165-166, 198-199, 301) remarks about homosexuality concern Byzantine Emperor Michael III, who ruled in the ninth century. However, Michael III is one of the most controversial figures in the Byzantine history (Ostrogorski 1969). The accounts about his life derive from books composed almost a century after he ruled, and "they also had the best reasons for misinterpreting the truth, in as much as Michael himself was brutally murdered by the founder of the very dynasty under which they were writing; and it was thus their task to excuse this murder by representing Michael as a villain so black as to have richly deserved and even courted his fate (Jenkins 1966: 156). Michael III was credited with being a drunk, a blasphemer, player of obscene jests and a homosexual. His alleged lover was Basil I, the founder of the famous Macedonian dynasty, and his murderer. However, both of them were married, kept mistresses at some point and had children (Ostrogorski 1969) and their alleged homosexual relationship cannot be definitely proven. Geanakoplos (1979) argued that most notable tract about homosexuality in the entire medieval period was written by an eleventh-century Italian monk, Peter Damian, whose *Liber Gomorrhianum* reflects his alarm at the spread of homosexuality among clergy and monks. Especially hor-

rifying to him was the incidence of such acts between a monastic "spiritual" father and his "spiritual" son (Geanakoplos 1979: 366). In the West, the celibacy rule for priests, imposed by the Roman Church, met with violent resistance in the beginning; elimination of heterosexual outlets for priests only fostered the development of homosexual feelings (Greenberg 1988: 283). Greenberg (1988) argued that this is especially likely to happen in a single-sex milieu, where contact with members of the opposite sex is entirely cut off, as in monasteries, or in the case of celibate priests.

On the other hand, Eastern Orthodox Church required that its priests be married. Boswell (1980) argued that monastic homosexuality was widespread in Western Europe: when women became off-limits, homosexuality was widely practiced. Monastic literature all cautioned against homosexuality. The fourth-century Egyptian monks were warned against bringing boys into their communities, and there was a rule that prohibited any physical contact between monks (Boswell 1980). Late Syrian monastic documents urge monks not to spend too much time in one another's cells, or to accept young boys. The Second Council of Tours, held in 567, forbade monks and priests from sleeping two-to-a-bed, and the Benedictine Rule also calls for specific measures to prevent homosexual relations among monks (Greenberg 1988). In 802, Charlemagne, outraged that some monks were sodomites, warned that he would punish not only them, but others who consent to the same (Boswell 1980: 233).

Alternatively, the Christian laity solved the problem of the single-sex milieu differently. The 16th century Spanish army is said to have taken women and prostitutes on their expeditions. In 1532 the Ferrarese chronicler Bianchi praised the Iberians for their many prostitutes by referring to the evils that arose because they were absent from other armies (Trexler 1995: 52). Female prostitutes that accompanied the army also prevented rapes of native women. But, as Trexler pointed out, the great disadvantage was the endless battles within the army over who had a right to the sexual services of such women. In general, Trexler argued, European governments of this age sought to avoid conflicts over women by hiring a limited number of prostitutes, either from home or on the road, who would serve all troops in common (Trexler 1995: 53). Thus, easily available women played a central role in military settings by providing both domestic services and ongoing sexual services, preventing homosexual relations which frequently occur in all-male environments.

And while medieval Europeans were employing female prostitutes to prevent male homosexual behavior and rape of females, Islamic countries did the same by keeping male prostitutes. A report from the 12th century by Dominican William of Tripoli documented the African market in males. William described how Egyptian merchants developed such boys' attractiveness by bathing them in perfumes and dressing them in rich clothes to seduce Islamic buyers. These slaves were being sold not just for domestic services, but as male prostitutes

who would sexually service their new masters (Daniel 1979: 224). The Dominican pointed out that in Islamic societies men lived with such boys as husbands with a wife. Such boy-markets existed in North Africa well into the twentieth century (Coon 1931). Christians also participated in the boy traffic, by buying or stealing Christian boys to sell them to Muslims (Boswell 1980: 281).

The punishment for homosexual act was rarely carried out in medieval or modern Muslim states, since,

The rules of penal procedure are extremely strict. Only oral testimony by eye witnesses is admitted. Trustworthy Muslim men must testify that they have seen "the key entering the hole" or the culprit must confess four times. Since there is severe punishment for an unproven accusation, the punishment was rarely carried out (Sofer 1992: 132).

Not only was the punishment rarely carried out, but some religious authorities authorized intercourse with males, provided that they were not Muslim, making relations with non-Muslim slaves captured or purchased from abroad acceptable (Trexler 1995). For Arabs, for example, Greenberg (1988: 177) argued: "Notwithstanding the opposition of Islamic religious law, a *de facto* acceptance of male homosexuality has prevailed in Arab lands down to the modern era."

Tolerance of male homosexuality in Arab and other traditional Muslim societies may be explained by the existence of polygyny: the sexual availability of boys and effeminate men protects female virtue. Arab nomadic tribes had harems even before Muhammad appeared. Even some Muslim medieval writers argued for a similar point, arguing that male homosexual behavior is to be explained by the scarcity of women, or to avoid scandalous pregnancies. For example, the ninth-century savant Al-Jahiz claimed that homosexual behavior was unknown to Islam until, tragically, the Abbasid Abu Muslim refused to allow his army to have any contact with women; that isolation caused the fighting men to seek out boys, and once that practice was established, it became a cultural avocation (Trexler 1995: 52).

In the Arab countries, boys were kidnapped, sold to adult men for sexual gratification, and released when too old. Coon writes:

In the Jebala, markets were formerly held in which boys stolen from their families were sold. They were and still are kept by their purchasers for the purpose of sodomy, and other uses (i.e., apprenticeship) are made secondary to it. When they had grown to an age at which they cease to interest their purchasers sexually, they are released and allowed to earn their own living. The market el Had Ikauen of Ktama was a famous boy market and was not closed until the advent of the Spanish forces of occupation (1910) who have been trying to prevent such sales, although it is difficult to stamp out private transactions. Boy markets are found in the Western Arabophone Senhaja, Ghomara, and Ktama

(tribes), also, of course, in the rest of the so-called Jebala and centered at Sheshawen and in the tribes of Beni Zerwal (Coon 1931: 110-111).

The French consul-general in Morocco, Louis de Chenier, found out that in the 18th century, the public baths are

Receptacles of debauchery, into which men were introduced to the dress of women; and the youth of the city ranged the streets after sunset, in the same disguise, to prevail upon strangers to go with them to the inns, which were rather houses of prostitution than places for the convenience and repose of travelers (Chenier 1788, cited in Murray 1987: 46).

Homosexuality was an established custom, with boys readily available in the towns. Maxwell notes that Moroccan men

...considered sexual relationship with boys a normal and harmless convenience. Homosexuality between a man and a boy was never considered in any way abnormal or shameful in Morocco until the infiltration of European opinion with the French. *Harkas* were continually on the move, and boys were easier to take into battle than women. All the *harkas* were accompanied by numerous boys for the satisfaction of sexual needs, and no shame attached to the practice on either side (Maxwell 1983: 286-287).

In nineteenth-century Algeria, "the streets and public places swarmed with boys of remarkable beauty, who more than shared with the women the favor of the wealthier natives;" male cross-dressed prostitutes also existed in late twentieth-century (Murray 1987: 46). Tunisia and Siwah both had male prostitutes in the 1920s (Greenberg 1988, Cline 1936). Burkhard, traveling in Syria in the early nineteenth-century, found that "unnatural propensities are very common" (Greenberg 1988: 178). Joseph Pitts, an Englishman who visited Alexandria at the end of the seventeenth century, stated that while it was dangerous for women to walk in certain districts, it was

More dangerous for boys, for they are extremely given to sodomy, yet this horrible sin is so far from being punished among them that it is part of their discourse to boast and brag of their detestable actions of that kind (Murray 1987: 46).

In nineteenth-century Upper Egypt, young male dancers dressed as dancing girls served as male prostitutes (Murray 1987, Greenberg 1988). Sohar, a town of Oman, on the Gulf of Arabia, supports male transsexuals, who engage in homosexual prostitution (Greenberg 1988: 179). They make up about 2 percent of the adult male population. The practice is not approved—parents firmly discourage their sons when they begin to cross-dress, but it is not illegal. Greenberg (1988: 179) argued that "These cross-dressing sons are tolerated, both because it is considered no one else's business and because they are thought to protect women by providing a sexual outlet for single men, of which there are many". Patrons of these male prostitutes are considered nor-

mal, and even prostitutes can recover social status by consummating a heterosexual marriage.

The situation is no different in non-Arab Islamic countries. Chardin, writing in the seventeenth century, found numerous houses of male prostitution, but none offering females, in Persia (Greenberg 1988). Men caught in Persian harems were turned over to slaves to be anally raped. Also, the Muslim rulers of India often maintained young male lovers and male brothels flourished in nineteenth century. Ever since the sixteenth century, Western visitors have commented on the pervasiveness of Turkish pederasty. Large numbers of boys were captured or purchased for personal use, placed in brothels or resold; the demand for them struck all observers as remarkable (Murray 1987, Greenberg 1988). Sometimes, a sultan would receive a large number of boys as gifts, since it was well known that no presents were more acceptable (Lybyer 1913).

The Turkish Empire serves as a good example of so-called harem culture. The rulers, nobility and higher officers all had hundreds of young females in their harems. Lybyer (1913) stated that a harem may contain even thousands of women. The harem of the Suleiman the Great, in the sixteenth century, contained about three hundred women, who were kept in a separate palace well fortified and guarded (ibid.: 56). Freely (1996: 208), for example, writes that in the sixteenth century, Murat III sired 103 children during his reign, and that Ibrahim, early seventeenth century,

...Commanded beautiful virgins richly habited to be brought to him. In the palace gardens he frequently assembled all the virgins, made them strip themselves naked, and neighing like a stallion run amongst them and as it were ravished one or the other, kicking or struggling by his order (Freely 1996: 239).

At the same time, Christian-born male children were taken from their homes to be incorporated into the elite army forces, to serve as *janissaries*, or pages in some of the palace services. However, they often served as "the helpless materials of abomination" (Creasy 1877: 34). Foreign-born youths were separated from their parents, homeland and Christian faith, to be used for the sultan's military and other uses. Around 1438 a head tax was imposed (*devshirme*, meaning "to collect") on non-Muslim people in the Ottoman Empire (Itzkowitz 1972). At first, boys were taken only from the Balkans, but later, in the sixteenth century they were levied from Anatolia as well. Certain categories of boys were exempt, including married youths, with bodily imperfections and known behavior problems. The age varied between about eight and eighteen years. They were selected for their bodily perfection, muscular strength, and intellectual ability. When presented before the sultan, they were clothed in silk and cloth of gold and silver thread.

Sometimes, the recruiting officers collected a larger number than was asked for, and sold the surplus on their own account to high officials or wealthy private citizens. Lybyer (1913: 74-79) noted that the imperial harem

was a parallel institution to the school of pages, and also that "the vice which takes its name from Sodom was very prevalent among the Ottomans". Boys kept in the palace service were organized in groups of ten, and "were watched very carefully by eunuchs, both day and night to see or overhear if there be any wanton or lewd behavior or discourse among them" (Lybyer 1913: 33). According to the European observer Ricaut, pages "studied Persian Novellaries that endues them with a kind of Platonic love to each other"(Ricaut 1676: 33, cited in Murray 1987: 178). Since "the restraint and strictures of Discipline makes them strangers to women; for want of converse with them, they burn in lust one towards another" (ibid.). Pages were desired by others too:

This passion is not only among the young men to each other, but persons of eminent degree in the seraglio become involved, watching out for their favorites, courting them with presents and services. They call it a passion very laudable and virtuous, and a step to that perfect love of God, whereof mankind is only capable, proceeding by way of love and admiration of his image stamped on the young male creature. This is the colour of virtue they paint over the deformity of their depraved inclinations; but in reality, this love of theirs is nothing but libidinous flames to each other, with which they burn so violently, that banishment and death have not been examples sufficient to deter them from demonstrations of such like addresses to the sultan's pages (Ricaut 1676: 33, cited in Murray 1987: 177-178).

In the Balkans, Christian parents tried to resist this head tax. There are many historical notes and sources showing how parents used to hide their children from the subjugators. Some parents even mutilated their own sons, cutting off their hands or legs and some mothers made scars in the form of cross on children's foreheads, so that the Turks would not take them. Also, parents tried to keep their children by marrying them at a very early age, since married boys were ineligible; those who had means bought an exemption for their sons (Lybyer 1913).

Nevertheless, some sources claim that the medieval and other Christian animus for homosexuality

...was probably a product of culturally backward Europeans searching for reasons to feel superior to Muslim civilizations. Christian animus seems to have increased after the failed Crusades. As a marker of the Muslim enemy, homosexuality became a part of the antagonistic acculturation, an oft underlined-by-Christians "moral superiority" to Muslims (Murray 1987: 15).

A medieval example illustrates that Muslims' homosexuality was not simply a product of culturally backward Europeans. The story of Mehmet The Conqueror and the son of Lucas Notaras, the former megadux of Constantinople is well known and told by many Byzantine historians, eye-witnesses, and modern historians (Codex Barberinus Graecus 111, Phrantzes, Runciman 1965). As biased as it may seem, the story also reflects how Christians per-

ceived the conquerors. On conquering Byzantium in 1453, Mehmet wanted to appoint Notaras as the head of the city but, to test his loyalty, he demanded from Notaras his fourteen-year old son, for his pleasures:

The kindness that Mehmet had shown to the Emperor's surviving ministers was of short duration. He had talked of making Lukas Notaras governor of the conquered city. He put his loyalty to the test...Someone whispered to him that Notaras's fourteen-year old son was a boy of exceptional beauty. The Sultan at once sent a eunuch to the house of the megadux to demand that the boy be sent to him for his pleasure. Notaras, whose two elder sons had been killed fighting, refused to sacrifice the boy to such a fate. Police were sent to bring Notaras with his son and his young son-in-law, the son of the Grand Domestic Andronicus Cantacuzenus, into the Sultan's presence. When Notaras still defied Sultan, orders were given for him and the two boys to be decapitated on the spot. Notaras merely asked that they should be slain before him, lest the sight of his death should make them waver. When they had both perished he bared his neck to the executioner (Runciman 1965: 151).

After Constantinople was conquered, four hundred young Greek, Christian children were sent as a gift to each of the three leading Muslim potentates at the time, the Sultan of Egypt, the King of Tunis, and the King of Granada (Runciman 1965: 151). Phrantzes, another Byzantine minister, wrote a bitter account of the fate of Constantinople after the fall; he was sold into slavery and after eighteen months he was able to redeem himself. But his two children were taken into the Sultan's harem, where both of them died: the girl Thamar died by influenza while still a child, and the boy was killed by the Sultan for refusing to yield to his lusts (Phrantzes).

Codex Barberinus Graecus was written in 1573 and the first quarter of the seventeenth century, based on an anonymous Greek source. This source describes how the Turks raped both males and females:

Then the Sultan ordered all booty and prisoners to be brought before him. They brought 60,000 Christians, whom, it is said, he divided among the Anatolian troops; they took them to the east to perish and never to return to the City. Then he ordered the crosses on top on monasteries and of all churches to be brought down and trampled. They raped virgins, they enacted many perversions, and they inflicted punishment. My God, pardon my description of the evils and the shame that was forced upon the race of Christians. Let me be silent (Codex Barberinus Graecus 111, 1990: 71-72).

For the Turks, both male and female slaves, bought or taken as war captives, served the same purpose. The troops had to be rewarded for their success in a battle. And since marriageable women were reserved for the Sultan and higher officers, young male captives were regarded as a legitimate option.

Then again, many have claimed that Islamic glorification of love was gender-blind: "Linked with a theoretically perfect chastity it could escape moral

condemnation. In the literature...rapturous love poems ostensibly addressed to male lovers became a common way of symbolizing union with the divine" (Wafel 1987: 90). In fact, many hold that Islam, with its sensualism, is a religion with a positive view of human sexuality (Ali 2006). Some authorities reinterpreted Kuran 9.120 as authorizing the sodomy of non-Muslims (Sofer 1992). Some authorities even claim, on the basis of the stories about Mohammad's life, that the Prophet Muhammad himself was fond of sodomites in his own tribe:

Al-Tifashi, for example, says that "inverts" were common in the Prophet's own tribe, the Quraysh, and the Prophet is supposed to have been particularly amused by the wit of one invert called Hayth. He is also reported to have permitted inverts to be in the same room as his wives when the latter were not veiled (Wafel 1987: 89).

Some pre-modern biographical treatments of Mohammad's life celebrate his virility as a part of his sound human nature (Ali 2006). Commenting on widespread homosexual practices in Islamic countries, Greenberg writes:

A crucially important difference between Islam and Christianity was their relation to slavery: Islam freely granted men sexual access to their slaves, Christianity did not. Fiercely condemnatory of adultery with other men's wives, Muhammad nevertheless made an exception in the case of married women who were purchased or captured and enslaved. Unlike Christianity which for its first three hundred years lacked political or military power, Islam from the start had enormous military success, conquering nation after nation. In this triumphal atmosphere few moralists were prepared to challenge the victors' prerogatives, which included sexual rights to women, married or unmarried, belonging to men defeated in battle. To these all—powerful rulers riding the crest of a wave of military good fortune, it must have seemed reasonable that attractive young male captives should also be regarded as legitimate bedmates. Some authorities seem to have sanctioned such intercourse (Greenberg 1988: 177).

In 1819 when Byron visited Turkey, he referred to the Turkish baths as "marble palaces of sherbet and sodomy", and wrote "in England the vices in fashion are whoring and drinking, in Turkey, Sodomy and smoking. We prefer a girl and a bottle, they a pipe and a pathic" (cited in Murray 1987: 46). Eighteen- and nineteenth century reports from Albania, then under the Turks, note a traditional permissive attitude to male homosexuality, particularly when shepherds were away from feminine company in the hills (Crompton 1985).

Furthermore, among the camel drivers of the Afghan Pathan, young effeminate males played the role of "wives":

Zune-e-suffuree (traveling wives) were the essential part of any camel caravan or other company of travelers passing through the forbidding Khyber Pass and into the fertile Punjab. But these so-called "wives", not only the

ideals of Afgan traders but of Pathan troops going into battle on the Frontier, were in fact catamites. Hidden from strangers and the evil eye in camel panniers, these youths, ranging in age from five to twenty years, were scented, depilated, roughed hennaed, and adorned with long silken pomaded hair and kohl-rimmed provocative eyes. In a word, no one could have distinguished them from women or girls unless they stripped them of their costly gowns (Edwardes 1959: 249, cited in Murray 1987: 28).

Modern Muslim countries allow male same-sex activity under certain clearly defined limitations (Schmitt 1992). Among Muslims, there is no concept of the homosexual, except where it has been imported from the West, and no notion of exclusive homosexuality or a gay way of life (Ali 2006). Still today, in the central land of Islam, there is a strong separation between the domestic sphere of women and children and the public sphere of men. It is said that a man has the right to penetrate and his duty is to lie on top; in the past, sodomization of one's own slaves or a Christian was not only sanctioned by public opinion, but by some jurists as well (Schmitt 1992: 2). Also, the hierarchy appears to be very important:

The rupture with the domestic sphere and the passing into the public one, in which a boy has to stand his ground but at the same time to bow in front of his father and other men in a position of power and respect, allows only for a precarious male identity... The grown man remains a non-man in relation to his father (Schmitt 1992: 3).

In the societies of Muslim North Africa and South-West Asia male-male sexuality plays an important role; according to Schmitt (1992), it is self-evident that men like to penetrate all kinds of beings. But, the desire is not "doing": many a devout Muslim will have resisted and taken comfort in the prophet's saying "Who passionately loves and remains chaste, is a martyr", that is, he goes to heaven directly (Schmitt 1992: 5). This is how male homosexuality is explained: it is actually easy to impress boys, since in this respect they are similar to women, who have less experience and less knowledge of the world than men; on the other side, boys are less strange to men than women -- after all, the feelings of a boy were once one's own. It seems that boys who like to have anal intercourse are called "fuckees". Schmitt (1992) explains that if things are done discreetly and if the fuckee marries and gets children, nobody cares. Also, another important aspect: when the sodomised become the one who does the sodomy, it is best not to talk about it. If "...a man gets fucked, one forgets it or it was due to the alcohol or he pretends not to have enjoyed it" (Schmitt 1992: 16). Further, if a man is married and a father, he can have boy lovers; boys are doing it for some extrasexual benefit, like gifts, favors, help from a well-placed man, and if the boy is poor, even for the money. But the boy must stop at the age of about 16: the longer he continues the quicker he gives in to advances, the worse for his reputation. A grown

up man should not allow others to have intercourse with him; otherwise, he loses his name, his honor, etc. There is a clear rule: you cannot be fucked because it disturbs social relations if it becomes known (Schmitt 1992: 7). Also, not so much getting fucked, as enjoying it, is considered bad-- to show that a man likes it, increases the stigma. If a man suffers the penetration, more or less because a man gets something in return, or because a man was forced to do it, it is all bad; but to enjoy it, it is even worse.

To most Muslims, anal lust is not really unnatural; one has to avoid being buggered precisely in order not to acquire a taste for it, and thus become addicted. Males stop with this activity around 15-16 years of age, and forget that they ever allowed such a thing. But, Schmitt (1992: 21) argues, with the coming of tourism, sex with women is much easier, since young males can approach many tourist girls and women; because of this, the 16 to 30 year olds no longer depend on their young cousins and neighbors for gratifications. Also, with white males, an oriental youth gets paid for his services with cash, food and gifts. The tourists even offer the possibility of getting buggered without anybody knowing about it.

This is how De Martino (1992) reports on modern Morocco: sodomy is very common, one does it, but does not talk about it. De Martino (1992: 25) notes that male homosexuality is due to the inaccessibility of women and to the character of relations between boys and men. Because of poverty, it is common to find a young man to prostitute himself for a movie ticket, a few nickels or small gift. Also, there is a special category of young boys, between 9 to 17 years of age, called *zamel*; they are used by their cousins, teachers and neighbors, whether they like it or not. They are taken by force sometimes, intimidation, by seduction, by presents, or by "natural right". A boy *zamel* has to take all the advances until he reaches 16 years of age; at that time, he becomes a "man" and loses all of his admirers; now he starts to get involved with boys and tries to court girls. At home, within a family, sexuality is taboo: it is seen as something not belonging to the family, something outside, consequently suspected and shameful (Eppink 1992). In general, a sexually mature boy will feel shame about approaching a girl or a prostitute; any girl on the street is seen as indecent or a whore; apart from family and fellow students a boy may only have contact with lower status women. As in other Muslim societies, Morocco appears to be very restricted: for those who like to be sodomized, there is social punishment. They become an object of ridicule and the whole society is watching every step. Somebody old enough and capable of supporting a wife, who is still not married, but looking for boys, is considered childlike and regarded with scorn. In Morocco, continues De Martino (1992), sex is an act of hygiene, a release of tension of desiring a woman; sex with males is undiluted by sentiments and emotions, and Magribian men dismiss their male partner after the act; the importance of the act is denied, and it is declared free of sentiment. For Moroccan

Muslims, reproduction is the most important aspect of sex, more important than eroticism. Women are guarded in harems, or excluded from the public life; a virgin is worth a lot, but a deflowered woman passes as a "second hand thing". Marriage represents a social and commercial transaction; also, marriage both offers the possibility of lawful, unproblematic intromission and confirms the status of an adult man: without marriage, one is not a real man, a full member of society (Eppink 1992). Woman is the prime target of the desire and fantasy of the Moroccan male.

In Karachi, among the Pathans, views are similar: sex between men and boys is common and accepted as a necessary release in the absence of women (Khan 1992). Pakistanis have a saying "Women for breeding, boys for pleasure, but melons for sheer delight" (Khan 1992: 94). In Swat, in northern Pakistan, dancing boys were used to entertain and sexually service guests:

Homoerotic relationships were much more common a generation ago than they are now, since Western influence has brought a sense of shame about homosexuality, at least among the more educated. Formerly, guests in the *hujera* were entertained and sexually serviced by dancing boys, and a powerful man might keep several passive homosexuals (*bedagh*) in his retinue. In 1977, homosexuality was very much less in evidence in Swat than it had been. Dancing girls had replaced dancing boys, and transvestites had become rare. Nonetheless, the first sexual experience of many, if not all boys, is with one of their passively inclined peers, or with an older man who is a confirmed *bedagh* (Lindholm 1982: 224, cited in Murray 1997: 36).

Actually, Pathans place great emphasis on family: children live with their families until they get married. The higher goal is clearly childbearing and childrearing: families devote themselves selflessly to caring for their young and not so young children. Marriages are arranged, and whether husband and wife get along with each other is strictly secondary to whether they breed well. Khan (1992), being himself a Pakistani, explains that if a husband takes care of his family's security and bears many children, what he does for his personal satisfaction is uninteresting to everyone involved so long as he is being discrete. From the standard point of a family, it is less risky for men to have affairs with other men than with women, since one cannot fall for a man. Homosexual sex is presented as uninteresting, since it does not create children, nor does it add to the potential of the children in the family resource base. In fact, explains Khan (1992), sex in general is seen as interesting primarily because of the impact on family, rather than its potential for individual pleasure or carnal fulfillment. If any homosexual relations are formed, they are quiet and compromised, not only because of the families, but the police have been known to raid public places searching for potential homosexuals and to arrest scapegoat victims at random. In general, the satisfaction between two men never extends beyond the sexual (Khan 1992: 103).

In Iran, homosexuality is also tolerated and widely practiced. This is how Mansuor, a Teheran native, summarizes it: Every man in Iran is involved in male-to-male sex, because premarital, heterosexual sex and sex outside marriage are not only a sin, but are also very difficult to find. But being gay and having a gay identity is a Western phenomenon. Iranian men act in a very *clichéd* male/female role. One is either the active or the passive partner, but all men are involved in male sex (cited in Murray 1992: 18).

And here is how one Saudi Arabian male, Omar, presently studying in the US, explains male desires:

We assume that every man wants to fuck the most attractive thing he can from what is available to him (that he can afford). And I do mean a thing! Whether the thing is wife, a prostitute, a pretty boy, or a pretty mare. The man doesn't care whether the wife or the prostitute or the boy or the mare want to be fucked. He doesn't concern himself about whether they enjoy it, though they may. Sometimes some of those getting fucked may enjoy it, but then they don't tell anyone, including the man who fucked them, you know? Especially they make sure not to tell the man who fucked them!

A man who wants a cock and looks for men to fuck him is an entirely different thing from a man who pushes his cock in the hole of the prettiest thing he can manage to get into, even one who especially likes boys. If the thing he is fucking is human, the one who has provided the hole can try to get some kind of reward, some favors, in exchange for having served as the man's desire's receptacle. But, see, if the one who gets fucked obviously enjoys it, there's no need to give them anything else. I think you could say that the Arab view is that the one who gets pleasure should afterward have to give something for it, and the one who puts up with it should get some kind of reward, often some kind of support, sometimes money or a gift. Even the mare gets some reward of special food or a new blanket, or something... (Murray 1992: 42).

In reading the above text, Omar explained that taking "what he can get is not the same as not caring what he fucks", and, he added, "at low cost" that changed into "a price he can afford"; he also added that boys are generally viewed as demanding less than wives or female prostitutes, and as being safer than prostitutes, with regard to venereal disease (Murray 1992: 49).

The absence of a rule prohibiting multiple wives regularly involves competition between males, often involving violence. Each female to whom a male gains access potentially increases the number of his genes that will make it into next generation. The one resource that can always increase a male's chances of leaving descendants in another nubile, or reproductive female. In polygynous societies, where males can have as many wives as they can get, such competition can be particularly intense, with many males losing out, or not gaining a wife until they are old. All men have deep polygamous tendency, and even in monogamous societies, men will compete for females; in men, these tendencies

are natural and universal, and only limitations born out of the environment and culture are responsible for their suppression (Symons 1979). Evidence suggests that human males have gained sexual access to females primarily through marriage. Consequently, there is considerable competition for getting and keeping as many wives as possible. Rape and adultery, which may lead to reproduction, but are even more likely to result in perpetrator's serious injury or death, also create conflict and violence. Because of this violence, many polygynous societies have attempted to mitigate this violence through complex traditions. The cooperation among human males may reflect the achievement of cooperation as a competitive strategy: male reproductive success depended on social and political skills in controlling and managing aggression. On the other hand, one has to "pay for a woman", one way or the other (Symons 1979): "The sexual problem of the young man is acute. They're poor, and love is expensive. They don't have enough money to pay for a girl, still less to marry and set up a household, so they turn to homosexuals" (Murray 1995: 64.)

Conclusion

That there should be some differences in the way male homosexual behavior occurs and is perceived by peoples separated by long distances and great time spans is no surprise. What is more striking, is the comparison made possible by the similarities they all exhibit. There is an apparent tolerance of male homosexuality in Islamic societies, both medieval and modern. Extensive evidence from Koran and hadith point out to the gravity of homosexual acts; nevertheless, the most serious sin is illicit sex between a man and a woman, followed directly by anal intercourse between men. Yet, this explicit condemnation of male homosexuality in Islamic thought has been tempered by tactic tolerance for its practice, provided some degree of discretion is observed.

Traditionally, Islam has promoted large families, polygamous marriages and numerous children in order to help increase the number of followers of the Islamic faith. With females segregated and guarded, young males available for sexual penetration are tacitly accepted in Muslim societies, past and present. A recent new report described a rich 64-years old Saudi man who has wed 58 women and girls in his lifetime (BBC News); he has fathered 36 children and the last bride is 13 years old. He plans to wed two more, to "round off (his married life) with a 60th wedding". It is not known what happened to those wives he divorced. Obviously, he has acted in "legally valid if reprehensible, manner" (Ali 2006: 96). This means that at least 57 men were left with no access to potential female mate. And although this appears as an extreme example, we have learned from sociobiology that male-male competition for wives is not the result of skewed sex ratios or even polygyny, but a male psyche which makes females always a resource and in short supply.

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HOMOSEKSUALNOST U ISLAMSKIM KULTURAMA

U ovom radu bavim se običajnom praksom odnosa sa istim polom među muškarcima u islamskim kulturama. U poliginičnim društvima žene su na visokoj ceni i praktično sve se udaju. Najveća je verovatnoća da će se homoseksualni odnosi razviti u okruženju gde preovladava jedan pol, a kontakt sa suprotnim je potpuno onemogućen, ili tamo gde su žene odvojene i čuvane, što je slučaj u većini muslimanskih društava. Poliginija je odraz prirodne želje muškaraca svih uzrasta za mladim ženama, ali samo moćni muškarci ostvaruju ovaj ideal. Postojanje mladih muškaraca upotrebljivih za penetraciju obezbeđuje seksualno ispoljenje za mnoge samce, i tako štiti žene.