

Homosexuality in World Religions

Christopher Buck

Con Law Seminar

Professor Rostorfer

1 Aug. 2004

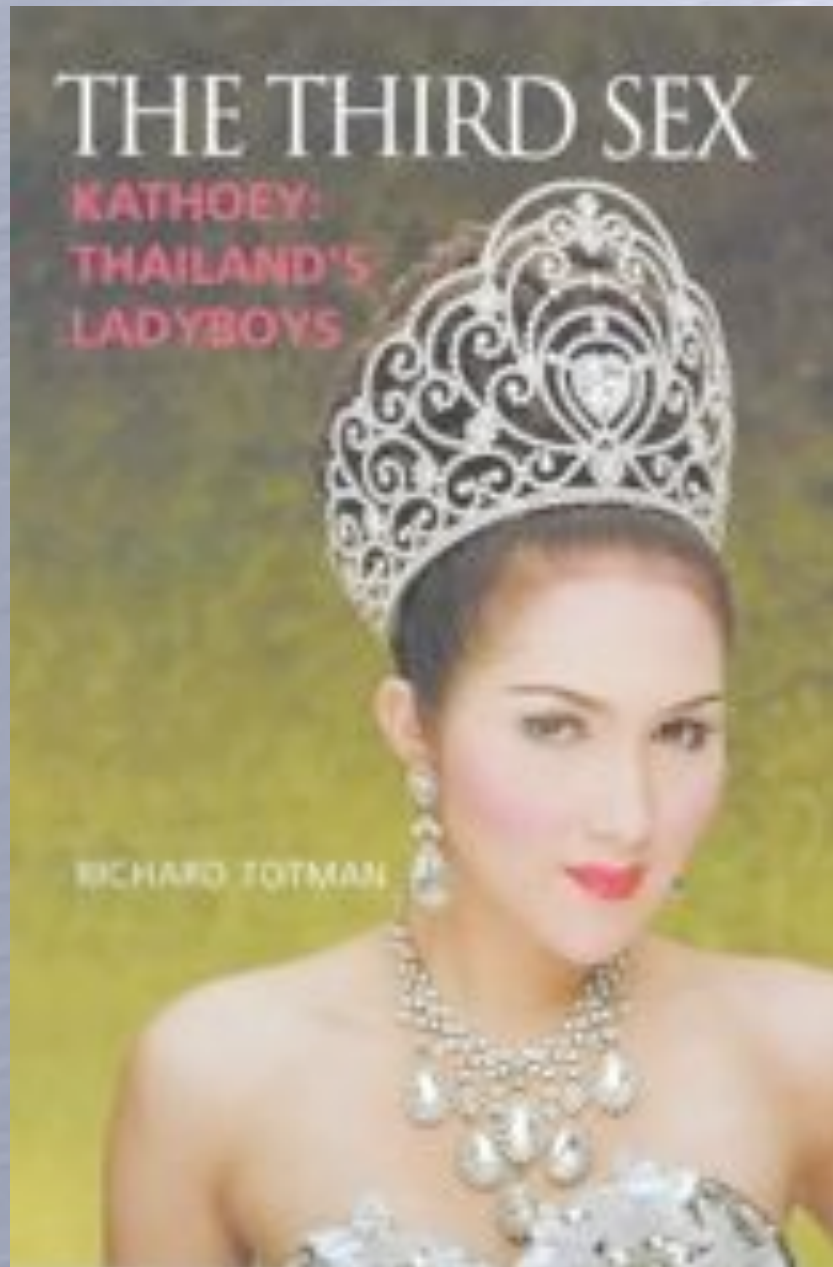
Thesis

- Core texts of world religions proscribe homosexuality.
- Gays & lesbians advocate for religious reform.



The Priest (1995)

An Ancient & Modern Question



- World Religions have had to deal with the the rise of public homosexuality.
- This has created polarities & rifts.

Religious Hot Topics

- Ordination of gays and lesbians.
- Gay & lesbian marriage.
- Civil rights.
- Acceptance.
- Liturgy.



Top Ten Organized Religions

1. Christianity (2 billion)
2. Islam (1.2 billion)
3. Hinduism (785 million)
4. Buddhism (360 million)
5. Judaism (17 million)
6. Sikhism (16 million)
7. Bahá'í Faith (7 million)
8. Confucianism (5 million)
9. Jainism (4 million)
10. Shintoism (3 million)

Traditional Hinduism

- World's oldest religion
- "Mother of all religions."
- Tolerant, diverse.
- Religious value of pleasure (*kama*)
- But traditionally against homosexuality.



Hindu Celebration of Sex

- There is a Hindu “pleasure principle.”
- One of the four “goals” of life is *kama*.
- But within a traditional context.
- Tradition of arranged marriages within caste



The Kama Sutra



- Ancient text on pleasure (*kama*).
- Embraces the notion of sacred sex.
 - Now divorced from its origins.
 - Many web sites—sex industry.
- Kama Sutra silent on homosexuality.

Tantric Hinduism

- Sexual exercises involving “serpent power” (*kundalini*).
- Goal is to drive sexual energy through the seven energy centers through the Crown Chakra.
- Again, silent on homosexuality.



Tantra for Everyone?

- Tantra for Gay Men (2002).
- Part of current trend to specialize all forms of spirituality for gays and lesbians.



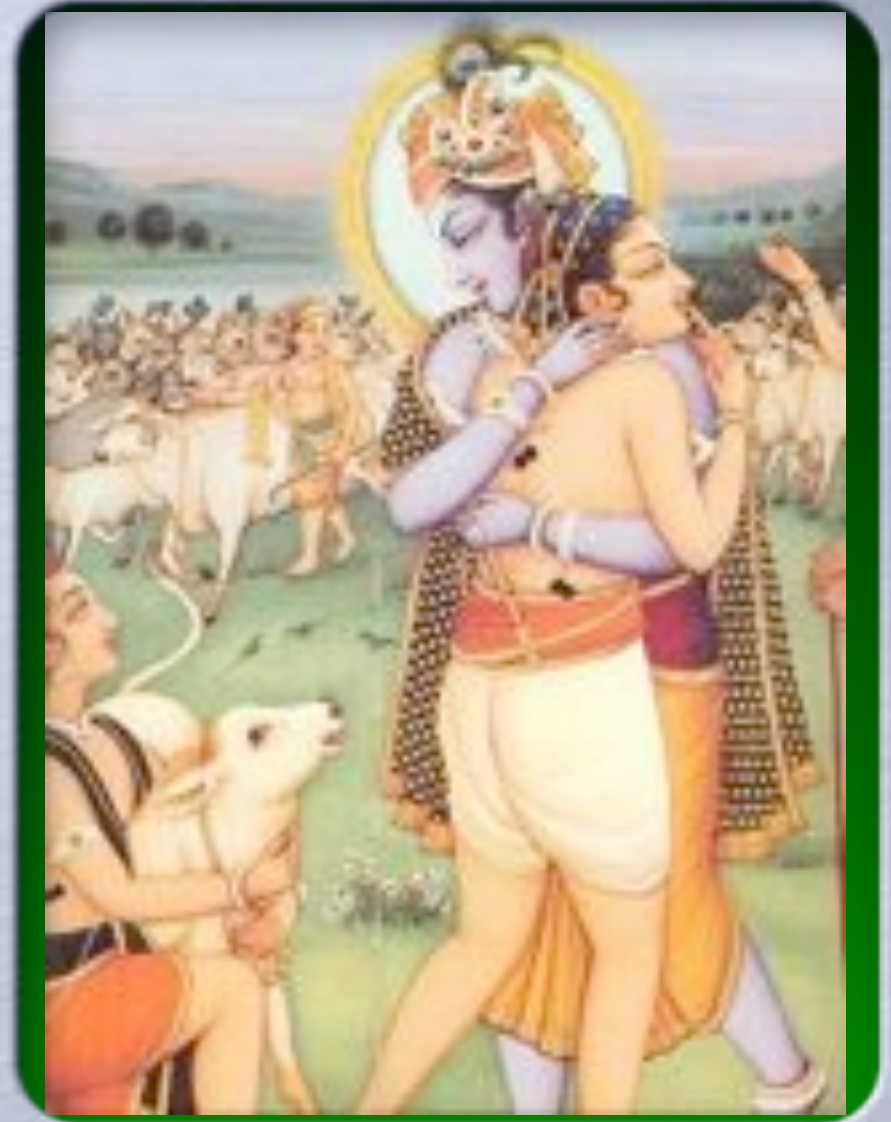
Bhakti Yoga

- Ways of liberation
- Karma Yoga.
- Jnana Yoga.
- Bhakti Yoga.
- Love of Krishna
most popular form



Expanding Love

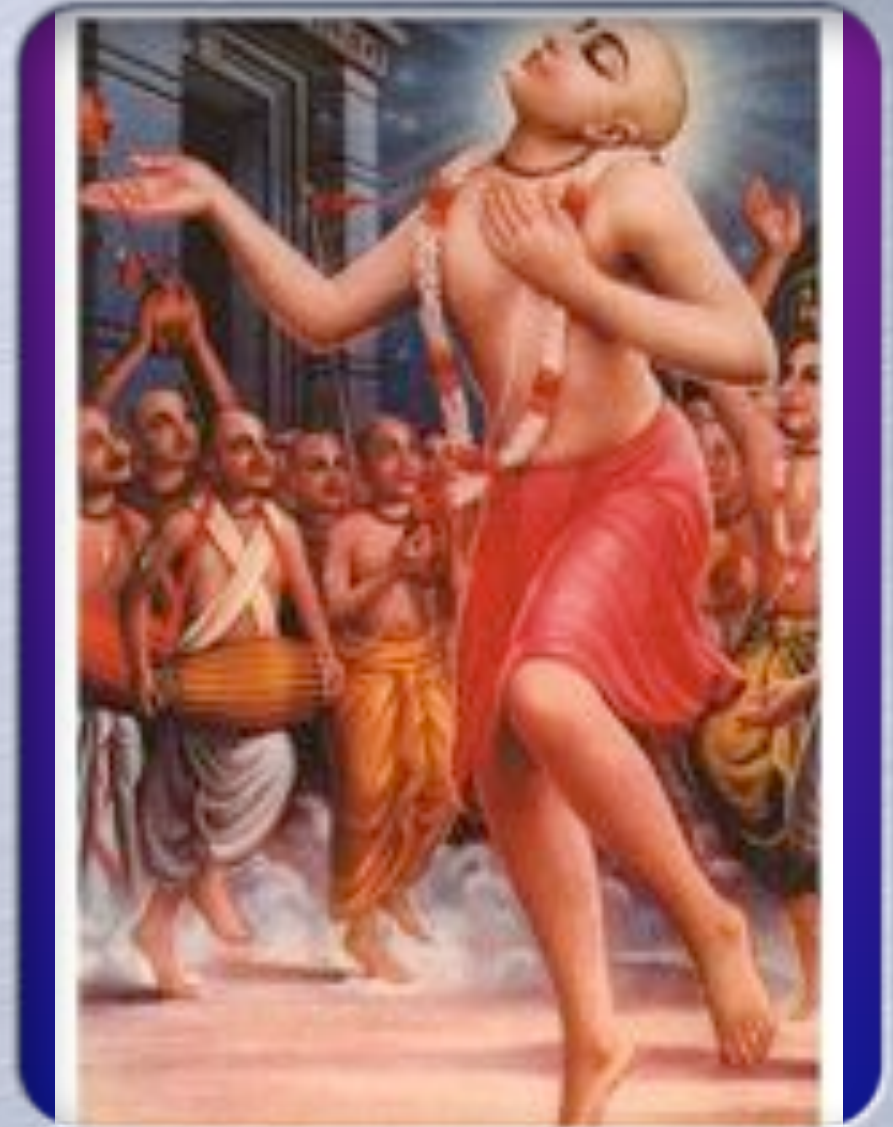
- Love is universal.
- Transcends sex.
- Men love Krishna.
- But can men love men?
- Or women love women?



Laws of Manu

❶ **XI.68.** Proscribes an unnatural offence with a man, are declared to cause the loss of caste (*gatibhramsa*).

175. A twice-born man who commits an unnatural offence with a male, or has intercourse with a female in a cart drawn by oxen, in water, or in the day-time....



Penalty for Lesbian Sex

- VIII.369–70: “If a virgin does it to another virgin, she should be fined 200 (pennies), be made to pay double (the girl's) bride-price, and receive ten whip (lashes). But if a (mature) woman does it to a virgin, her head should be shaved immediately or two of her fingers should be cut off, and she should be made to ride on a donkey.” (*Laws of Manu* 1991, 191.)



Hindu Androgyny

- Ardhanarishwara: androgynous deity, one of the principal forms of Shiva.
- Shiva divided himself and let his Shakti (his power) be apprehended by both himself and Brahma. The body of fire, of which erotic pleasure is the sparks, was divided.
- The Great Goddess sent her glowing ardour, in the form of a woman, into the world of the gods.
- Thus from Ardhanarishwara's self-division came the essential idea of woman, sex, and sensuality. Thus duality came into the world.



Bollywood's *Girlfriend*



Controversial lesbian scene.

Amrita Arora and Isha Koppikar

Gay Hindus

GALVA-108

The Gay and Lesbian
Vaishnava Association, Inc.

representing the Third Gender as described in ancient Vedic (Hindu) texts"



- Gay and Lesbian Vaishnava Association
- Web site: <<http://www.galva108.org/>>.
- Religious argument based on Vedic notion of "the Third Sex."

The Third Sex

- Throughout Vedic literature, the sex or gender of the human being is clearly divided into three separate categories according to *prakriti* or nature. These are: *pums-prakriti* or male, *stri-prakriti* or female, and *tritiya-prakriti* or the third sex.
- People of the third sex are also classified under a larger social category known as the “neutral gender.” Its members are called *napumsaka*, or “those who do not engage in procreation.” There are five different types of *napumsaka* people: (1) children; (2) the elderly; (3) neuters; (4) the celibate, and (5) the third sex. They were all considered to be sexually neutral by Vedic definition and were protected and

Traditional Buddhism



Not for Monks!

- '*Kamesu micchacara veramani sikkhpadam samadiyami.*' The word *kama* refers to any form of sensual pleasure but with an emphasis on sexual pleasure and a literal translation of the precept would be "I take the rule of training (*veramani sikkhpadam samadi-yami*) not to go the wrong way (*micchacara*) for sexual pleasure (*kamesu*)". (**Third Precept**)
- No specific text on homosexuality in the scriptures of Theravada Buddhism (*Tripitaka*).



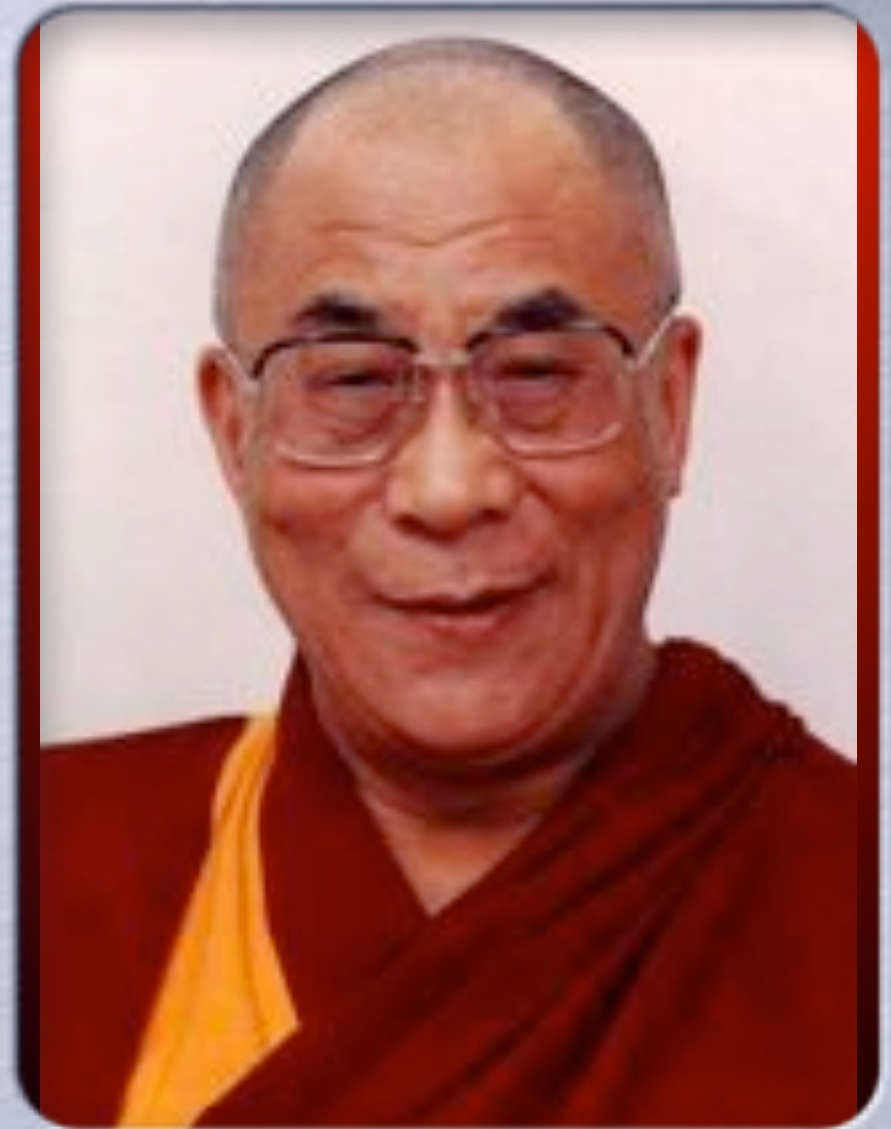
Tantric Buddhism

- *Vajrayana* —
“Thunderbolt” or
“Diamond” vehicle.
- Texts are called
“Tantras.”
- Exalts sexuality to a
ritual form.
- Nothing on
homosexuality.



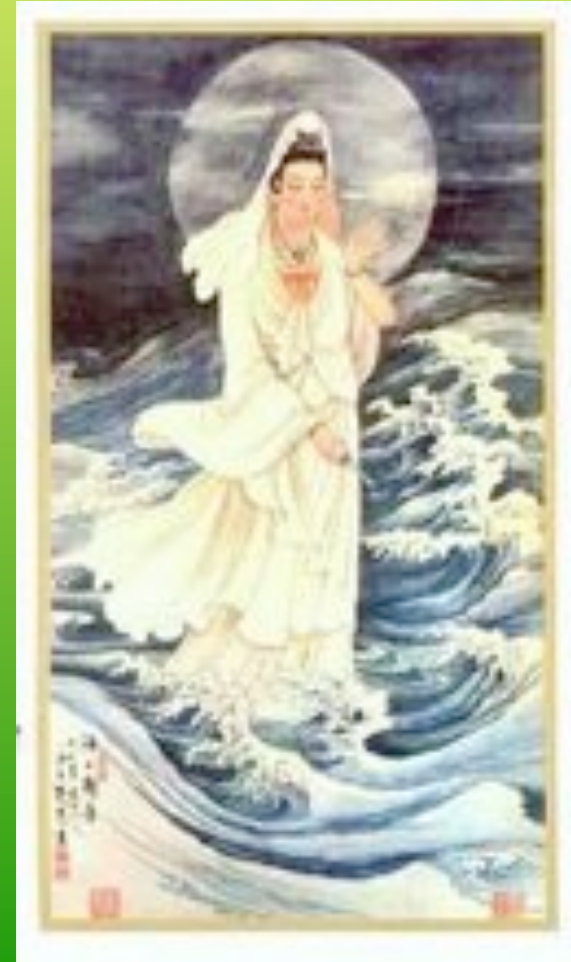
Dalai Lama

- 1997 press conference: “From a Buddhist point of view [lesbian and gay sex] ... is generally considered sexual misconduct.”
- “Homosexuality, whether it is between men or between women, is not improper in itself. What is improper is the use of organs already defined as inappropriate for sexual contact.” (*Beyond Dogma*)
- Buddhism prohibits oral, manual and anal sex for everyone — both homosexuals and heterosexuals.
- From “society's viewpoint,” same-sex relations can be “of mutual benefit, enjoyable and harmless.” He supports human rights “regardless of sexual



Lesbian Buddhists

- Yahoo Group.
- Virtual community.
- Web site: <<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Lesbian-Buddhist-eSangha/>>.



Queer Dharma

“There is a legacy that we all share as gay men, of separation and of loss, that I believe gives us an affinity for Buddhist practice. A gay *sangha* is a natural result of this affinity, and offers the opportunity to join with other gay men on a spiritual path. Together we can discover that our life experiences of separation and loss, this shared legacy, is no longer an impediment to fulfillment. It is, instead, a doorway to awakening to fulfillment. Of all the many meanings of the word ‘*sangha*,’ my favorite is simply, working together to discover our true nature.”



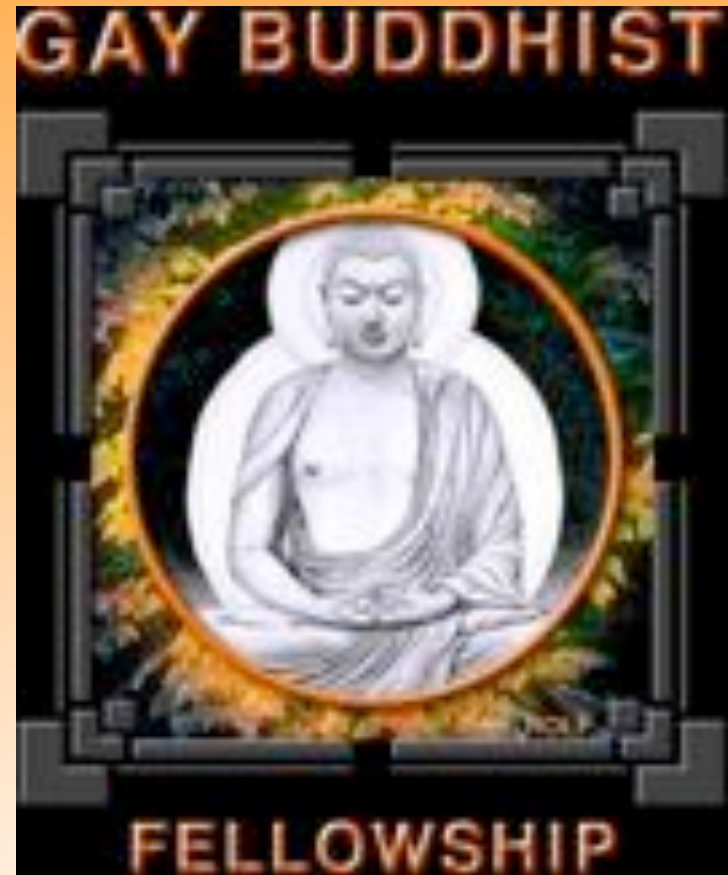
Queer Dharma

- Back cover.
- No comment!



Gay Buddhist Fellowship

● **Buddha's Inclusiveness:** "As teachers of the Buddha's way in the West, we want to state publicly that we understand that the Buddha's teachings for lay people do not distinguish heterosexual-ity from homosexuality. We also understand that the traditional guide-line the Buddha taught for sexual conduct among lay people--refrain from causing harm to oneself or another--applies universally to all sexual activity. We welcome, as the Buddha did, people of all sexual orientations, and of all races, classes, origins and physical abilities to our teachings and to the practices that liberate the heart."



<http://www.gaybuddhist.org/>

Orthodox Judaism

- Holiness Code: “Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.”
(Leviticus 18:22, KJV)
- Have times changed?
- Yes!



Gay Jews

- Controversial new movie (1995).
- About Orthodox & Hasidic Jews trying to reconcile their orientation & religion.



Lesbian Jews

Beth Chayim Chadashim

- First gay & lesbian synagogue.
- Located in L.A.
- Reform.
- "Queer liturgy."
- Go to: <<http://www.bcc-la.org>>



Gay & Lesbian Jews

● The World Congress of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Jews



קשת גאווה

Traditional Catholics



Marriage & Children

- Sex is procreative.
- Marriage is one of the seven Sacraments.
- Non-spousal sex forbidden.



Latest Papal Statement

- *On the collaboration of men and women in the Church and the World.* (7/31/2004).
- Feminism's view of equality has inspired ideologies which "call into question the family, in its natural two-parent structure of mother and father, and to make homosexuality and heterosexuality virtually equivalent."



Dignity USA

- Web site: <<http://www.dignityusa.org/>>
- Established 1969.
- Vision & Mission:
- “Advocates for change in the Catholic Church's teaching on homosexuality.”



Clockwise from left: Patty Dolan, Kerry Dolan, Paula Hills, Keegan Dolan.



through truth to freedom

DignityUSA Convention | Philadelphia 2005

Evangelicals Concerned

- Founded in 1975 by Dr. Ralph Blair.
- Ministry that reaches out to gays & lesbians.
- Inclusive, but nondenominational.
- Difficult to judge how large or successful.



Ordination of Gays & Lesbians

- Rev. Gene Robinson, Episcopal bishop (2003).
- Voted top religious news story of 2003! (Religion Newswriters Association).
- Divisive—may split Anglican church!



Lesbian & Gay Studies

- Center for Lesbian & Gay Studies in Religion & Ministry
- Marriage Project
- Religious Rites = Civil Rights!



The Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies
in Religion and Ministry

Future of Christianity?

- Controversies over gay & lesbian issues will cause serious splits in religious communities.
- However, change is on the way.



Islam



The Qur'an on Homosexuality

- And if two (men) of you commit it, then hurt them both; but if they turn again and amend, leave them alone, verily, God is easily turned, compassionate. (Q. 4:21)
- Do ye approach males of all the world and leave what God your Lord has created for you of your wives? nay, but ye are people who transgress!' (Q. 26:165–166)
- What! do ye approach men? (or Do you commit sexual acts with men?) and stop folks on the highway? And approach in your assembly sin?' but the answer of his people was only to say, 'Bring us God's torment, if thou art of those who speak the truth!' (Q.

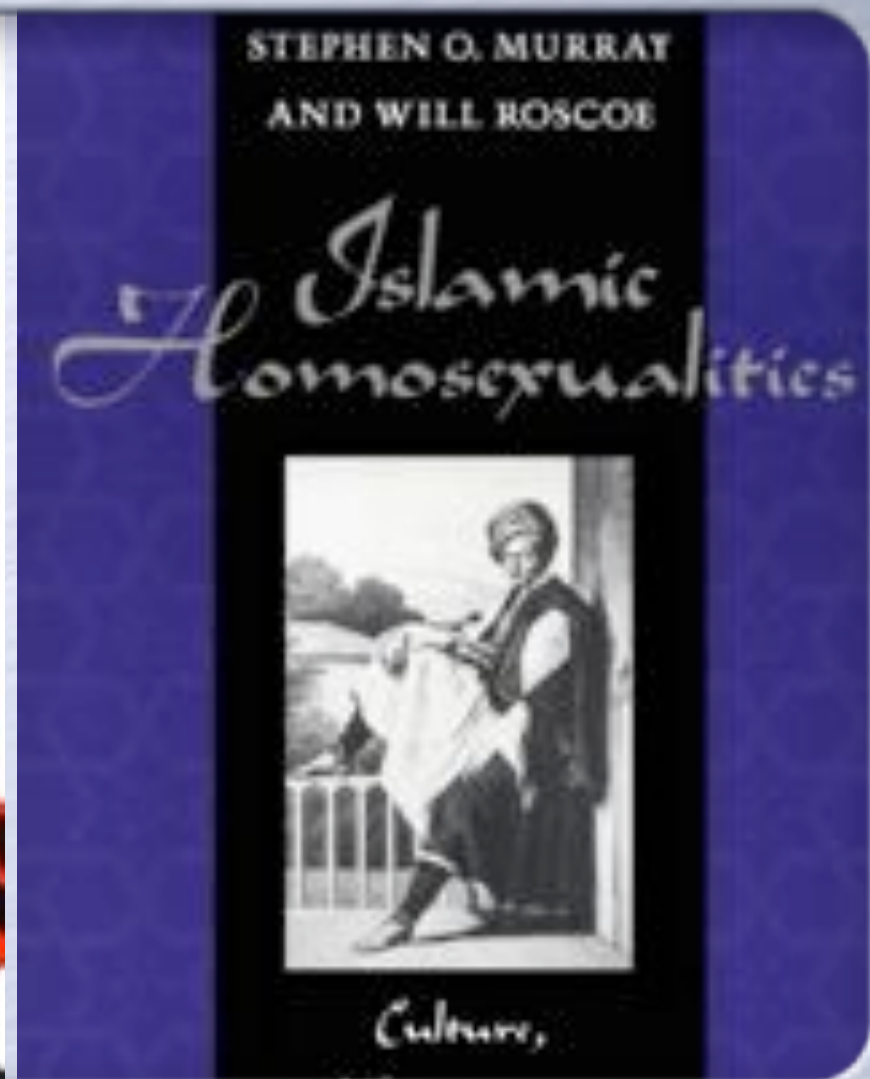
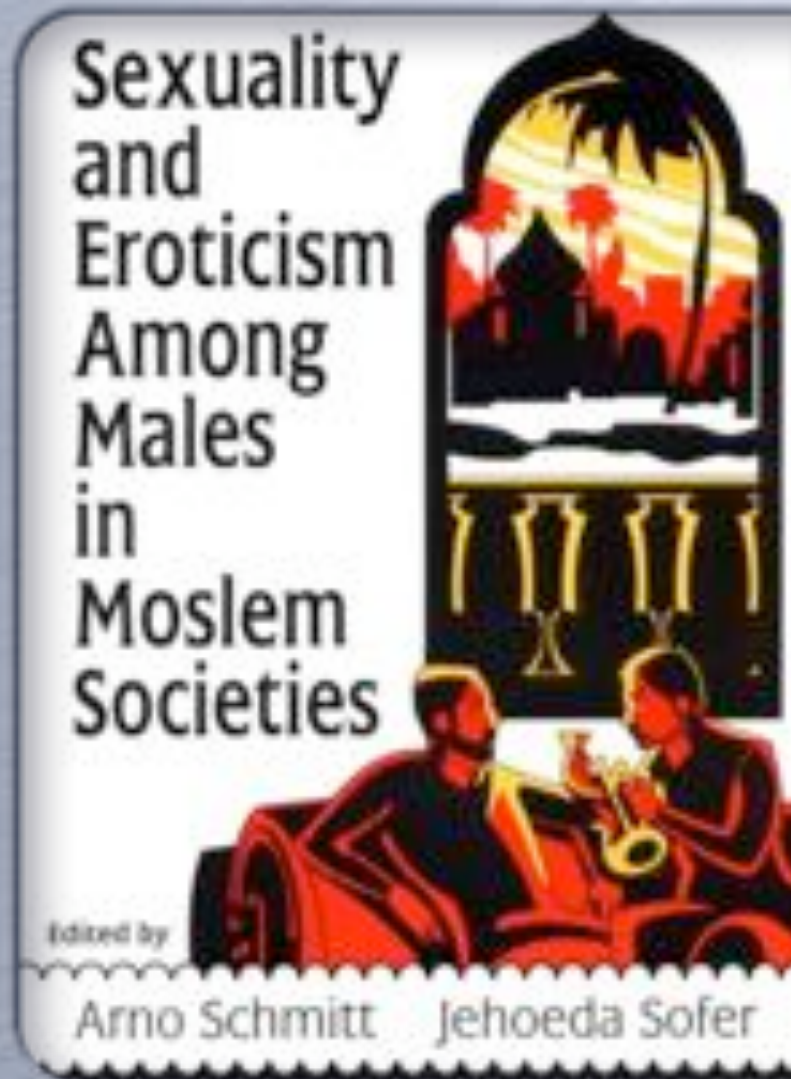


Traditions (*Hadith*)

- *"When a man mounts another man, the throne of God shakes."*
- *"Kill the one that is doing it and also kill the one that it is being done to." (in reference to the active and passive partners in gay sexual intercourse)*
- *"Sihaq (lesbian sexual activity) of women is zina (illegitimate sexual intercourse) among them."*



Forbidden, but Historical!



Fatih Sultan Mehmet

● Famous gay king!



Gay/Lesbian Muslim Orgs



Al-Fatiha



Gay & Lesbian Muslims

- Mardi Gras Parade, 6 July, 2002, UK.
- Can only “come out” in the West.
- Gay males still stoned to death.



Gay Bahá'ís?

- Oxymoron?
- Site of gay Bahá'ís seeking reform.
- Not official.
- Nahzy will present Bahá'í perspective.



Conclusion

- World religions frown on homosexuality.
- Major change in focus is from sexual acts to sexual orientation.
- Gay & lesbian public figures leading reform!
- Morality redefined?

