

SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY THROUGHOUT HISTORY

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and related identities have been present in various forms throughout history. All cultures have included, with varying degrees of acceptance, individuals who practice same-sex relations as well as those whose gender, gender identity and gender expression challenge prevailing norms, and many cultures still do.



UNITED STATES

Native American Great Plains tribes viewed gender on a spectrum from male to female, including transgender and intersex persons who were considered to have special spiritual significance.



PORTUGAL

16th-19th Century: In Lisbon, communities of men and women were known to have same-sex relationships, and were targeted by the Inquisition.



ITALY

15th-17th Century: During the early Renaissance, "masculine love" was a term used to describe male homosexual orientation (also used in France and England). Michelangelo described same-sex love in his poems, although these references were later edited out. Ancient marble statues unearthed in Rome depicting intersex people inspired a number of Renaissance artists.



ALBANIA

Women identified as burnesha, who take a chastity vow at a young age, can live as men and assume traditionally male roles in society and in their family.



ANCIENT GREECE

6th Century BCE - 6th Century CE: Male homosexuality was an accepted phenomenon, practiced by high-status individuals usually with younger men. The poet Sappho wrote about her affection and desire for other women. The philosopher Plato spoke of a third sex, which was both male and female, as part of original human nature.



RUSSIA

The indigenous Chukchi people in Siberia identified seven genders in addition to male and female.



CHINA

1st century BCE - 17th century CE: Homosexuality was considered a sign of cultural elitism, was not persecuted, and has been documented as early as the Qing, Han and Tang dynasties in poetry and songs.



KOREA

1st century BCE - 1st century CE: Songs and poems from the ancient Silla Dynasty spoke of affection among men, especially among a group of elite male warriors, the *hwarang*, who were known to form same-sex relationships.



INDONESIA

The Bugis ethnic group, native to the Indonesian island of Sulawesi, recognizes three sexes (female, male and hermaphrodite), four genders (women, men, transmen = calalai, and transwomen = calabai), and a fifth meta-gender group, the bissu.



SAMOA

Fa'afafine are a third-gendered people who are mostly born biologically male, but have gender expressions and identity that embody both masculine and feminine behaviour.



NEPAL

The Buddhist term *Metta*, meaning mental union and loving-kindness, is used to identify transgender people (as well as same-sex couples) and is an accepted part of Nepalese culture since ancient times.



INDIA

Same-sex relations were accepted until British colonialism. Third gender and gender-variant people are still today recognized and accepted throughout Indian cultures.



MEXICO

In the Mayan culture of the Yucatan Peninsula, sexual relations between men were accepted as part of the social structure. Other indigenous peoples in the region have similar traditions.



NIGERIA

Among the Igbo people of Nigeria (and parts of Benin), a married woman with independent wealth may choose to separate from her husband and marry one or more women.



SOUTH AFRICA

16th-20th century: Wealthy and powerful women, could – even if already married to a man – marry other women, and having many wives was seen as a reflection of prosperity.



KENYA

Among the Nandi people, women may marry other women. The older generally takes on a traditionally male role and is considered a "female husband". The younger may become pregnant by a man but the legal and social 'father' of the children will be the female husband.



EGYPT

24th century BCE: The ancient Egyptian royal servants Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep are believed to be among the first recorded same-sex couple in history, as reflected by the drawings in their tomb.



ANGOLA

16th-17th century: Some communities openly accepted homosexuality, cross-dressing and other behaviour blurring the lines of gender stereotypes.



DEM. REP. OF CONGO

16th-17th century: Men who acted and dressed in a manner considered feminine and women who acted and dressed in a manner considered masculine, were identified as kitesha.

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