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HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE EARLY MODERN GOA: CARMELITE & PROTESTANT PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract:

Homosexuality refers to an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. Based on the archival sources, this article shows that the Carmelites and the Protestants (non-Portuguese westerners) as well as the homosexuals were persecuted as a way of enforcing the ecclesial, doctrinal and the moral authority respectively of the Padroado Portuguese in early modern Goa. The case of Alberto Homem, the first known protestant who was persecuted for homosexuality in India is also presented.

Keywords: Homosexuality, Sodomy, Protestants, Carmelites, Inquisition.

Introduction:

Sodomy is an umbrella term to denote the sexual activity that lies outside the domain of procreation. In the Hebrew Bible, Sodom was a city destroyed by God because of the evil of its inhabitants and no specific sin is given as the reason for God's great wrath. The connection between Sodom and homosexual acts is derived from the described attempt by a mob of the city's people to sexually violate Lot's male guests.¹ Byzantine emperor Justinian I (527-565 CE) declared that Sodom's sin had been specifically sexual activities between same sex persons. He also linked

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¹ John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 92-98.

"famines, earthquakes, and pestilences" upon cities as being due to homosexuality and his laws influenced the west for centuries.² In the early modern era, the term '*Pecado Nefando*' (Nefarious Sin) came to refer to any sexuality that fell outside the natural order.³ The natural order, in terms of sexuality was understood as the sexual acts of procreation within the bounds of holy matrimony. Therefore, sodomy was considered as a nefarious sin against the very order of nature.

The Portuguese established their rule in Goa by 1510 CE and in 1560 CE they instituted the Goan Inquisition. The Goan inquisition was abolished effectively in 1812 CE. The Inquisition was an institution which served the purpose of the Portuguese colonial state to impose Catholic orthodoxy in doctrines as well as morality. Historical sources indicate that the Portuguese dealt with the problem of sodomy in early modern Goa.

Although, the history of homosexuality in Portuguese Goa was documented by Luiz Mott⁴, a specific study of it with reference to the non-Portuguese westerners has not been undertaken and this article analyzes homosexuality from this perspective.

Protestants and Carmelites: Non-Portuguese Westerners in Early Modern Goa:

The Portuguese colonial patronage of Catholicism was known as '*Padroado*'. This system allowed the kings of Portugal to nominate bishops to the dioceses that followed

² Boswell, *Christianity*, 171-173.

³ Peter Thompson, *The Outrageous Juan Rana Entremeses: A Bilingual and Annotated Selection of Plays Written for this Spanish Golden Age Gracioso*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 7.

⁴ Luiz Mott, "A India nos processos de sodomia da Inquisicao Portuguesa: 1550-1750" In *Império de várias faces: relações de poder no mundo ibérico da época moderna* Ronaldo Vainfas, edited by Rodrigo Bentes Monteiro (Sao Paulo: Alameda, 2009), 50.

the Latin rite in India. 'Propaganda' referred to the patronage of the Catholic missions directly from the authority of Pope through the Sacred Congregation of Propagation of Faith (Propaganda Fide) without the mediation/patronage of the King of Portugal. The conflict between Padroado & Propaganda is well documented.

The Persian Mission of the Italian Congregation of the Discalced Carmelites (one of the ancient religious orders of the Catholic Church) established themselves in Goa in 1620.⁵ These Carmelites were of different nationalities such as Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, French etc. In the early 18th century the xenophobic Portuguese government expelled these non-Portuguese westerners (who supported Propaganda) from Goa and confiscated their monastery on the pretext of their being foreigners.⁶ After expulsion, many Carmelites fled to the territory of Karwar⁷, where they received the support of the British.⁸ After Bombay was ceded to the British, they recommended that the Carmelites administer the Catholics of Bombay. With the approval of the Vatican, the Carmelites were appointed in 1720 and this move was a major blow to the Padroado power of the Portuguese.⁹ Also, after the occupation of Cochin by the protestant Dutch in 1663, the Carmelites were allowed by them to exist in their territory.¹⁰

⁵ Herbert Chick, *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia and the Papal Mission of the XVII and XVIII centuries* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1939), 1222-1226.

⁶ Chick, *A Chronicle*, 1244.

⁷ Chick, *A Chronicle*, 1244.

⁸ Ernest Hull, *Bombay Mission History: With a special study of the Padroado question* (Bombay: Examiner Press, 1920), 55.

⁹ Hull, *Bombay*, 55-64.

¹⁰ Francis Day, *The Land of the Perumals or Cochin, its Past and its Present* (Madras: Adelphi Press, 1863), 241-242.

The Protestants were referred to as “Lutherans” in the early modern Portuguese sources¹¹ and the Portuguese persecuted them even before the introduction of Inquisition. For example, during the Portuguese occupation of Ormuz, a Jesuit missionary named Fr. G. Berse strongly recommended that the Flemish, English and Germans be expelled from India, arguing that many of them had deserted as renegades to the Moors or were ‘contaminated’ by Lutheranism.¹² The inventory of the Goan Inquisition over the period of 1561-1623, drawn up by Joao Delgado Figueira shows that 1.5% (of the total 3500 lawsuits) were against Protestantism.¹³ Of them only seven were subjected to the death penalty.¹⁴

The Protestants and the Carmelites formed the bulk of the non-Portuguese westerners in early modern Goa. Historical evidence shows the existence of symbiotic relationships between the non-Portuguese westerners in the early modern period, which often transcended their religious affiliation and challenged the temporal and spiritual power claimed by the Portuguese. The Carmelites, though rooted in their Catholic faith, maintained diplomacy and dialogue with various Protestants such as the Dutch and the British. The approaches taken by the Padroado (Portuguese) and the Propaganda (represented by the Carmelite religious order) towards Protestantism were quite different from each other and therefore in this context we analyze the approach of the non-Portuguese westerners towards homosexuality.

¹¹ John G. Everaert, “Non-Portuguese Westerners trailed by the Goa Inquisition.” In *The Portuguese, Indian Ocean and European Bridgeheads*, edited by Pius Malekandathil & T. Jamal Mohammed (Goa: Fundacao Oriente, 2001), 150.

¹² Everaert, “Non-Portuguese”,150.

¹³ Everaert, “Non-Portuguese,”151.

¹⁴ Everaert, “Non-Portuguese,”151.

Homosexuality in Early Modern Goa- An overview:

It is said that the first case of sodomy in connection with Portuguese India dated back to the year 1547, before the arrival of Holy Office to Goa in 1560.¹⁵ However, the author has found that in 1528 itself the Judiciary of Goa punished a Muslim man for sodomy.¹⁶ It condemned him to be burnt, made into dust, his goods confiscated for the Crown and his descendants defamed.¹⁷

The Padroado Portuguese envisioned a “*Sodomy-free society*” by creating stigma, terror and fear around homosexual acts through the institutions of secular justice and the Holy Inquisition.¹⁸ Homosexuals were subjected to arrest, imprisonment, Inquisition, confiscation of goods & assets, admonishment, flogging, torment, paying the costs of the Inquisition, disownment by their own family & friends, condemnation to auto-da-fe’ (confession of faith) & death, being burnt alive, made into dust, family shaming, degradation, being made galley slaves (even for lifetime, mostly unpaid, rowing/paddling the ship), perpetual exile to distant lands etc.¹⁹ In the case of clergy, along with one or

¹⁵ Mott, “A India,” 50.

¹⁶ “Sentença que pela justiça de Goa se proferiu contra um mouro condenando-o a morte natural e queimado, feito em pó, seus bens confiscados para a coroa do Reino e seus filhos havidos por infâmes por ter cometido com o seu escravo o grave delito e nefando pescado da Sodomia, ficando este forro e livre por ser menor e constringido por seu senhor a consentir nele”, (18-05-1528), mc.148, nº 87, Corpo Cronológico Parte II, DGLAB, Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo, Lisbon, Portugal.

<https://digitarq.arquivos.pt/details?id=3810402> (hereafter cited as Sentença, Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo)

¹⁷ Sentença, Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo.

¹⁸ John Marshal, “Pride & Prejudice: Forgotten LGBT people of early modern Goa.” *The Goan*, August 28, 2021. <https://www.thegoan.net/sunday-mag/pride-prejudice-forgotten-lgbt-people-of-early-modern-go/73670.html> (accessed September 29, 2022).

¹⁹ Marshal, “Pride&Prejudice.”

more of the punishments above they could be expelled from the order, their holy orders revoked, and being disciplined, deprived of active voice, confined into the monastic prisons etc.²⁰ In this climate of antipathy, many of them led double lives, where they continued expressing their sexuality in secret.

Case of Alberto Homem, the first known Protestant condemned for Homosexuality in India:

Alberto Homem, a German soldier in the Portuguese army, born of Lutheran parents from the town of Enden²¹ was arrested and condemned in the year 1607.²² The inquisition record states that Alberto, induced by devil, committed the 'horrible and abominable vice of sodomy' since he was 16 years old, habitually with many men, also while he was serving in the North (Portuguese Bombay) as well as many cities where he lived and when he was sent in the army of Malacca too.²³ The inquisition declared him being infamous (notoriously evil), confiscated his goods and 'relaxed' him to secular justice to be burnt alive.²⁴ The sentence was written by the Inquisitor Jorge Ferreira, dated 09-12-1607.²⁵

²⁰ Marshal, "Pride&Prejudice."

²¹ This could be probably the city of Emden in Germany which briefly became an important centre for the Protestant reformation in the 16th century.

²² "TRASLADOS DE SENTENÇAS DE ALGUMAS PESSOAS DESPACHADAS NA INQUISIÇÃO DE GOA", (1632), Tribunal do Santo Ofício, Inquisição de Lisboa, proc. 4938, f.55, DGLAB, Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo, Lisbon, Portugal. <https://digitarq.arquivos.pt/details?id=2304940> (hereafter cited as TRASLADOS, Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo)

²³ TRASLADOS, Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo.

²⁴ TRASLADOS, Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo, f.55V.

²⁵ Bruno Feitler, Ana Paula Mendonca, Juliete Anios Souza, *Uma base de dados dos processos da Inquisição de Goa (1561-1623)* (2011), distributed by Departamento de História da Escola de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas, Universidade Federal de São Paulo, <http://www.i-m.mx/reportorio/reportorio/base.html>.

It is said that he was executed without trial at all. This could be because he was accused of having committed sodomy with many persons and he was seen as being 'naturally inclined' to commit same sex acts.²⁶

From the records of the Inquisition available so far, the author has not encountered any other Protestant condemned for sodomy.

Carmelites of Goa and Homosexuality:

Being non-Portuguese westerners, the Carmelites were viewed with suspicion and a letter from the Archbishop of Goa to the Inquisitor in 1685 was concerned about the preaching of the Carmelites in Goa.²⁷ It was the time period in which the xenophobia of the Portuguese was quite intense. The author has not encountered any of the Carmelites arrested by the Inquisition for Sodomy in Goa. However, references to homosexuality could be seen in their writings.

Archbishop D. Aleixo Menezes (1595-1612) was quite forceful in ensuring Catholic morality. The Lutheran Alberto Homem was also persecuted for sodomy during his time. The Jesuit Guerreiro and Carmelite Fr. Philip of the Most Holy Trinity, wrote an account of Turun Shah, a

²⁶ If the anal penetration led to the emission of semen within the anal cavity it was known as 'Perfect Sodomy' and death penalty was reserved for this act. All other homosexual activities constituted 'Imperfect Sodomy'. The document shows that he 'consummated' sodomy which implies perfect sodomy.

²⁷ "Ofício à Inquisição de Goa tratando das propinas recebidas pelos inquisidores, da prisão dos oleiros, das pregações dos carmelitas, da mudança da cidade [de Goa], das despesas com as diligências, e passando várias provisões de nomeações", (22-03-1685), 251005 n.026 – Manuscritos, A Biblioteca Nacional Digital, Fundação Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. http://objdigital.bn.br/objdigital2/acervo_digital/div_manuscritos/mss1352114/mss1352114_026.pdf

prince of Ormuz²⁸ who was killed for Sodomy during the time of D. Aleixo de Menezes in 1606 or 1607 despite his repeated pleas for mercy.²⁹ The king of Spain himself was greatly incised against Menezes for this act.³⁰ Fr. Philip mentions that the soul of Turun Shah, after his execution, went to Heaven.³¹

In the Portuguese Ormuz and in Persia, bath houses were often associated with sodomy. Hence, the Archbishop Menezes didn't allow construction of public bath houses in Ormuz even for the travellers from Persia.³² The Carmelite Fr. John Thaddeus of St. Eliseus of the Persian mission mentioned that the Persian Shah Abbas I frequented the bath houses accompanied by 30-40 handsome youths³³. His homoerotic tendencies are also attested in other sources.³⁴

An Inclusive theology in the Early Modern Period:

There are no items of evidence to show that the Carmelites and the Protestants in early modern Goa sought the legitimization of homosexuality. Neither is there evidence to suggest that the Carmelites were involved in carrying out an institutionalized persecution against homosexuals in the regions under their spiritual care, while in early modern Goa the Padroado Portuguese carried out state & church sponsored persecution. On the contrary, an

²⁸ Fr. Philippi a Santissima Trinitate, *Itinerarium orientale*, (n.p:1649),218-219.

²⁹ Fr. Agostinho de S.Maria, *Historia da fundacao do Real Convento de Santa Monica*, (Lisbon, Self-Pub, 1699), 37-38.

³⁰ Fr. Agostinho, *Historia*,38.

³¹ Fr. Philippi, *Itinerarium*,219.

³² Jorge Flores, *Unwanted Neighbours: The Mughals, the Portuguese, and Their Frontier Zones* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018),150.

³³ Chick, *A Chronicle*,920.

³⁴ Louis Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization*, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009),171.

inclusive perspective can be seen in the account of Fr. Philip about the prince Turun Shah. St. Thomas Aquinas viewed homosexuals as innately sinful creatures for whom there would be no salvation and thus he expected all sodomites to burn in hell.³⁵ On the contrary, the Carmelite theologian Fr. Philip envisioned sodomites attaining salvation in heaven.

Discussion and Conclusion:

In the early modern age, it was homosexuality which was viewed as the most vile, filthy and dishonest sin.³⁶ Homosexuals could be persecuted irrespective of whether they were Catholics or Protestants. From the evidence, we understand that the number of Protestants arrested for sodomy is much lower compared to the Catholics or Muslims.

It is also significant to note that the Carmelites, being non-Portuguese westerners, maintained diplomacy and dialogue with the Protestants. They also showed some elements of inclusivity towards homosexuality.

To conclude, the Carmelites, Protestants and homosexuals represented a challenging force to Portuguese Padroado Catholicism since they were outside the Portuguese religious patronage, Catholic doctrinal orthodoxy and the Portuguese sexual morality respectively. Various measures such as the Inquisition, confiscation of properties etc were imposed to ensure that the Padroado Catholicism of the Portuguese had absolute ecclesial, doctrinal and moral authority.

³⁵ Donald J Cantor et al, *Same-Sex marriage: The legal and psychological evolution in America*, (Middletown: Wesleyan university press, 2006), 26.

³⁶ "Gay and Lesbian Movements in Latin America and the Caribbean" in *Africana: The encyclopaedia of the African and African American Experience*. ed. Anthony Appiah, Henry Louis Gates Jr, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 772.

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Thompson, Peter. 2009. *The Outrageous Juan Rana Entremeses: A Bilingual and Annotated Selection of Plays Written for this Spanish Golden Age Gracioso*. Toronto, University of Toronto Press.