



# Arabo-Islamic Texts on Female Homosexuality, 850 - 1780 A.D.

*Samar Habib*

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Increasingly in mainstream discourse and rhetoric, there only seems to be one very serious and conservative face to Islam, Muslim communities, and their governments. Mainstream modern Islamic hermeneutics condemn homosexual orientations, sometimes with punishments as severe as death. Nevertheless, there were also instances in Muslim history, culture, and society where religiosity was playful not punitive, where the sexual body was inscribed with markers of pleasure not those of perdition. Exploring instances within the Arabian Islamic Empire that negate impressions about Muslim cultures as eternally monolithic, conservative, and orthodox, we can come to a better and more nuanced understanding of the complexities of former and contemporary Muslim civilizations. The question of gay and lesbian human rights in the Muslim world is a topical and pressing one, and the need now for alternative ways of approaching Islam in the modern world is more important than ever. The answers to today's modern crisis in human rights for LGBTIQ people lies in looking at the past and highlighting elements that can assist in the creation of a more equitable future. This publication discovers and brings to the English reader an array of surviving texts penned by Muslim scholars discussing female same-sex desire. From the tolerant days of the Abbasid caliphate to the celebratory text of Yusuf Tifashi in the thirteenth century and onwards toward growing strictures and greater intolerance, Arabo-Islamic Texts reveals a dynamic and lively discourse on sexuality in the Arabo-Islamic empire. The English translation of a lecture delivered in Arabic in Haifa by Samar Habib is also included in this book.

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