

China: A Quick Look at LGBTQ Life



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Grammatical Aspects



- **He/She/It**
- Have the same pronunciation in Chinese /ta/.

Whether an object is male or female; human, animal, or object, the same pronoun is used. The only way to determine what is intended is by the context.

Written Forms for He/She/It



- Even though there is one pronunciation for "he," "she" and "it," there are multiple characters.
- 他 is for males or when used in the plural with mixed genders,
- 她 is for females,
- and 它 is for animals or objects.

A Look into History



Male homosexuality dates back to the Shang Dynasty (11th century BC), according to author Li Yinhe (book: **History of Chinese Homosexuality**).

“Luan Feng” is a term from the “Shang Dynasty Records” used to refer to homosexuality (male); there is no record of lesbianism in Chinese history.

Emperors



Per author Li Yinhe:

Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD)

For 2 centuries China was ruled by ten openly bisexual emperors, with their lovers acknowledged in public records.

Emperor's Love



Emperor Ai (named Liu Xin) who reigned from 6 BC to 2 BC supposedly cut his robe's sleeves off so that his male lover Dong Xian would not be awoken after he had fallen asleep. This became known as the ***Passions of the Cut Sleeve***.

Duke Ling shared his peach with his lover and this became known as the story of the ***Shared Peach***.

Lord Long Yang a lover of King Wei cries when he catches a small fish because he wants a bigger one and this became known as the story of ***Long Yang*** or the ***Fish***.

Poetry



Ruan Ji (210- 263 BC)

wrote about lovers in his poetry collection: ***Jade Terrace.***

Dual Lives?



After the Han Dynasty:

Homosexuality was tolerated as long as males fulfilled their filial duties by getting married and continued the family line.

Homosexual phenomenon “seemed to do no harm in maintaining family ethics.”

Male Prostitution



Flourishing period 1573-1620 of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644):

Per author Li Yinhe,

Prostitution was common and gigolos met their clients' specific requirements.

Neo-Confucian philosopher Wang Yangming spread moral concept that advocated acceptance of natural sexual needs.

Enter Confucianism & Anti-Homosexuality



The Europeans Enter China:

Marco Polo, 1261; Franciscans, 1294; Portugal in Macau, 1557

Qing Dynasty (1644-1911):

Emphasized strict obedience to the social order:

Husband-wife relationships are the norm, with homosexuals going against such rules.

1740, 1st anti-homosexual decree:

Defined “voluntarily homosexual intercourse between adults as illegal.”

1966-1976, Cultural Revolution:

No law against homosexuality, but gays and lesbians charged with hooliganism, disturbing the public order.

Effect: Homosexuality retreats to the closet.

1989 Edict & 2002 Classification



1989:

Defined homosexuality as “psychiatric disorder of sexuality.”

2001:

China declassified homosexuality as a mental disorder.

March 2002:

“Chinese Classification and Diagnostic Criteria of Mental Disorders” ruling by the Chinese Psychiatric Association brings the treatment of homosexuality closer to WHO policies.

Effect:

Shanghai is probably the most popular major city with gay and lesbian communities and open lifestyle (meeting places/bars).

Lesbianism in Literature



c. 1760:

***The Story of the Stone* or *The Dream of the Red Chamber* by Cao Xueqin (trans. David Hawkes).**

Subtle reference to “more than friends” about the female characters.

21st Century: Transgender



2012:

Qian Jinfan, China's oldest transgender woman (84) outs herself publicly but didn't start living as a woman until she was 80.

“I don't think I'm inferior to anyone. I will not give up so easily. I have done nothing wrong.”

She's waiting for a medical breakthrough for her surgery.

Same-Sex Marriage



2013:

Chinese parents of gays and lesbians demand same-sex marriage in an open letter to the National People's Congress.

Influence:

European/USA marriage policies and PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays).

An elderly Chinese gay couple held a wedding ceremony; one of the men's sons was absent because he disapproved.

Conversion Law Suit



2014:

Gay Chinese man wins compensation because he was forced to have electric shock treatment against his will.

Taiwan:

Has become the gay beacon for the GLBTQ community; place for 1st marriage equality bill; marches with over 150,000 in attendance.

2015/2016



Social Media:

App called “Blued” (created by former policeman) is used to meet others for companionship.

Blued has 15 million users.

Same-sex marriages:

Marriages have spread since the USA Supreme Court decision.

Jan. 27, 2016:

Couple files law suit to test same-sex marriage in China.

Sources



“China Through a Lens”

www.china.org.cn/english/2002/Oct/44940.htm

“Gay Loves in Ancient China”

www.gayexplained.com/gay-love-ancient-china