

## **Transgender 101 for the SCA: A Primer (Midrealm Version)**

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***Disclaimer:** This class is intended to provide a baseline of knowledge for the general public and/or allies. Any person who is considering gender transition should speak to their medical and/or mental health care team for further information.*

### **The Basics**

- Defining Sex and Gender
  - o Sex
    - Biological assignment at birth
      - Male – produces sperm, facial and body hair as secondary characteristics
      - Female – produces eggs, develops breast tissue as secondary characteristic
      - Intersex – possesses characteristics of both
        - o Often assigned a gender based on genital representation at birth
        - o May undergo genital reconstruction surgery shortly after birth at the will of the parents for representation of male or female
          - In the last decade, there has been a push for infants to NOT have this surgery and to let them develop their sense of identity and autonomy naturally
  - o Gender
    - Traditional social construct based on perception
      - Male – strong, brave, muscular
      - Female – docile, quiet, doe-like
    - Identity
      - Exists on a spectrum ranging from Masculine to Feminine and anywhere in-between or not at all
        - o Genderfluid – Person’s day-to-day identity fluctuates between male, female, and anywhere in-between
        - o Non-binary – Person’s day-to-day identity includes aspects of both or neither masculine and feminine traits/roles
- What is Transgender?
  - o Simply stated, a person’s gender identity and physical body are out of sync
    - For example, a person can identify as masculine while having secondary sex characteristics of a female.
    - Please note that transitioning is an individual experience that is unique to that person.
      - Not everyone who identifies as transgender or gender non-conforming is able to or wishes to access appropriate clinical care.

## Interactions

- Appearances
  - Trans and gender non-conforming individuals may or may not wear clothing in alignment with their gender identity
  - They are the same people you knew, loved, and respected prior to their transition
    - Especially if they are newly out, it is often a major display of trust for a transitioning individual to present as their authentic self at an event
      - Treat them no differently, as they are no different.
    - The SCA is a wonderfully open and accepting place; ask questions, remain open to change, and be courteous
      - However... DO NOT ask people if they have “had the surgery” or similar questions related to their transition; this violates U.S. patient privacy laws, as well as the SCA Non-Discrimination Policy.
  
- Forms of address
  - Pronouns (Basic)
    - Masculine: He, him, his, etc.
    - Feminine: She, her, hers, etc.
    - Neutral: They, Them, Theirs
  - If you're not sure, ask!
    - Many trans and gender non-conforming individuals would rather you ask out of respect instead of assuming
    - If someone tells you their pronouns are different, try to use the name and pronouns they tell you
      - Some people use pronouns that are not listed above. If someone asks you to use a different set, please try to do so.
    - Don't make a big deal out of it if you mess up
      - Calling attention to the error can create a bigger deal than it needs to be and has the potential of endangering the trans or gender non-conforming individual
      - Make a point of trying to use the correct pronouns going forward
        - If telling a story from times past, try to use the subject's current gender markers and pronouns.
  
- Court
  - Use the pronouns/form of address that most closely aligns with the person's gender identity
    - The SCA College of Heralds approved gender neutral forms of address on scrolls and in Court as of July 2018.
      - Armiger
      - Noble
    - The Middle Kingdom is excellent at providing its populace with the opportunity to have the Order of Precedence updated and requesting updated scrolls created with a person's new SCA name and gender.
      - Order of Precedence
      - Updated Scrolls
        - Contact the Kingdom Backlog Signet
        - Commission a Scribe

## History

- Until the late 1800s/early 1900s, there was no clear definition of what defines being transgender.
  - The term and definition did not exist until the late 1800s.
    - Early scientists defined being transgender or gender non-conforming as being mentally ill
  - There are also few to no notes or documents stating the reasons why someone may have lived as the opposite gender or as an iteration of non-binary gender presentation during the period that the SCA covers (pre-1650 CE)
    - Various cultures have different gender expressions and just accepted people as they are.
    - Modern history often is viewed through the lenses of Christianity and Colonialism, making it difficult to decipher the intent of those who lived in period, especially for those cultures outside of the spectrum of Christianity
- 1460 BCE – Hatshepsut
  - When Hatshepsut became Pharaoh, they took on a masculine role
    - Icons were created depicting the Pharaoh as male
    - Hatshepsut often wore a detachable beard and male regalia
    - This most likely was done for political reasons
      - “Hatshepsut also took a new name, Maatkare, sometimes translated as Truth (maat) is the Soul (ka) of the Sun God (Re). The key word here is maat—the ancient Egyptian expression for order and justice as established by the gods. Maintaining and perpetuating maat to ensure the prosperity and stability of the country required a legitimate pharaoh who could speak—as only pharaohs could—directly with the gods. By calling herself Maatkare, Hatshepsut was likely reassuring her people that they had a legitimate ruler on the throne.”
- 450 BCE – The *Torah*/ Jewish Religion
  - Denotes 6 genders
    - Zachar/זָכָר
      - This term is derived from the word for a pointy sword and refers to a phallus.
      - It is usually translated as “male” in English.
    - Nekeivah/נְקִיבָה
      - This term is derived from the word for a crevice and probably refers to a vaginal opening.
      - It is usually translated as “female” in English.
    - Androgynos/אַנְדְּרוֹגִינוֹס
      - A person who has both “male” and “female” sexual characteristics.
      - 149 references in Mishna and Talmud (1st-8th Centuries CE); 350 in classical midrash and Jewish law codes (2nd -16th Centuries CE).

- Tumtum/ טומטום
  - A person whose sexual characteristics are indeterminate or obscured.
  - 181 references in Mishna and Talmud; 335 in classical midrash and Jewish law codes.
- Ay'lonit/ איילונית
  - A person who is identified as “female” at birth but develops “male” characteristics at puberty and is infertile.
  - 80 references in Mishna and Talmud; 40 in classical midrash and Jewish law codes.
- Saris/ סריס
  - A person who is identified as “male” at birth but develops “female” characteristics as puberty and/or is lacking a penis.
    - A saris can be “naturally” a saris (saris hamah), or become one through human intervention (saris adam).
  - 156 references in Mishna and Talmud; 379 in classical midrash and Jewish law codes.
- 400 BCE – *Hijra* Community
  - First mentioned in the *Kama Sutra*, written as early as 400 BCE
  - “can be eunuchs, intersex or transgender, have been part of South Asia's culture for thousands of years. Eunuchs are celebrated in sacred Hindu texts such as the Mahabharata and the Kama Sutra. They also enjoyed influential positions in the Mughal courts.”
- 203 CE – Elagabalus (or Heliogabalus)
  - Roman Emperor who was born male, chose to live as female and chose the title of Empress during her reign
  - Was known to frequently wear cosmetics and dressed as female
  - Solicited physicians who could provide her with surgery to give her female genitalia
- 567 – Saint Anastasia the Patrician
  - Female who lived part of their life and was accorded burial rites as a male monk in seclusion from most people
- 1322 - Kalonymus Ben Kalonymus
  - Wrote “Even Bochan”, a poem which discusses transitioning and being genderqueer
    - See **Appendix 1** for full text
- 1354 – Rolandina Roncaglia
  - Prostitute who identified as a woman, born male, had feminine features.
    - “And he continually frequented the prostitutes of Rialto in bed and going to the public baths with them, and meanwhile he hid his member on both sides so that no one ever noticed and that they all very clearly considered him a female.”
    - Was prosecuted as a prostitute by the lord Doge in Venice and condemned to be burned
      - Did not recant statement of identity even when faced with death

- 1365 – Christine de Pizan
  - Venetian (Italian) who was a poet and author at the court of King Charles VI of France
  - *Book of Three Virtues* (1405)
    - Theorized that souls have no gender, but inhabit masculine or feminine forms based on the will of God.
    - Argued that the souls of masculine and feminine individuals are created in God's image and are equal to one another in all things.
    - Theorized that a person's gender can change by will of the spirit in accordance with the will of God.
      - "The composition of one's body is arranged so as to reflect the gendered form in conformity with one's gendered offices. If the duties change, the essence has to change, which means that the constituents have to be arranged."
- 1395 – John Rykener (called Eleanor)
  - Called herself Eleanor when called into court for prostitution, maintaining that identity
    - May not have been charged for the crime as a way of not acknowledging her gender identity
  - Worked as a seamstress for five weeks prior to feast of St. Michael's
- 1629 – Thomasine Hall
  - Lived in Colonial Virginia
  - Possibly intersex
  - "testified that 'hee was *both a man and a woeman.*'"

## **Other Things**

- The Use of “Cis” in reference to Gender
  - Originated in the 1880s as a way to describe chemical bonds
  - Adopted by the LGBT community as a way to describe non-trans individuals in 1994
    - Not originally intended as a pejorative term; was only intended to be used as a descriptor.
- Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation
  - Not mutually exclusive
    - One’s attraction to another is independent of their gender identity
    - Terms may change if a person transitions and their attractions remain the same
      - For example, a person who identifies initially as a straight male prior to transitioning would identify as a lesbian when their gender identity transitions to female.
    - Like gender identity, sexual orientation is on a spectrum.
      - Sexual orientation can and does shift for some people as they become more self-realizing.

## **Questions?**

Suggestions, Questions, or Feedback on this class can be made by e-mailing me at [SamiiTiger@gmail.com](mailto:SamiiTiger@gmail.com) with the subject “SCA Trans 101 - Midrealm”. I would like to continue expanding this class to include more updated information and topics of interest. Your feedback and questions are a vital part of that journey in helping me to shape the format of this class.

## Appendix 1

“Even Bochan” – Kalonymous Ben Kalonymous [Translation by Rabbi Steven Greenberg]

What an awful fate for my mother  
that she bore a son.  
What a loss of all benefit! ...  
Cursed be the one who announced to my father:  
“It’s a boy! ...

Woe to him who has male sons.

Upon them a heavy yoke has been placed, restrictions  
and constraints.  
Some in private, some in public,  
some to avoid the mere appearance of violation,  
and some entering the most secret of places.

Strong statutes and awesome commandments,  
six hundred and thirteen.  
Who is the man who can do all that is written,  
so that he might be spared?

... Oh, but had the artisan who made me  
created me instead—a fair woman.  
Today I would be wise and insightful.  
We would weave, my friends and I,  
and in the moonlight spin our yarn,  
and tell our stories to one another,  
from dusk till midnight.

We’d tell of the events of our day, silly things,  
matters of no consequence.  
But also I would grow very wise from the spinning,  
and I would say, “Happy is she who knows how to  
work with combed flax and weave it into fine white  
linen.”

And at times, in the way of women,  
I would lie down on the kitchen floor,  
between the ovens, turn the coals, and taste the different  
dishes.  
On holidays I would put on my best jewelry.  
I would beat on the drum  
and my clapping hands would ring.  
And when I was ready and the time was right,  
an excellent youth would be my fortune.  
He would love me, place me on a pedestal,  
dress me in jewels of gold,  
earrings, bracelets, necklaces.  
And on the appointed day,  
in the season of joy when brides are wed,  
for seven days would the boy increase my delight and  
gladness.

Were I hungry, he would feed me well-kneaded bread.  
Were I thirsty, he would quench me with light and dark  
wine.

He would not chastise nor harshly treat me,  
and my pleasure he would not diminish

Every Sabbath, and each new moon,  
his head he would rest upon my breast.  
The three husbandly duties he would fulfill,  
rations, raiment, and regular intimacy.  
And three wifely duties would I also fulfill,  
blood, lights, and bread...

Father in heaven, who did miracles for our ancestors  
with fire and water,  
You changed the fire of Chaldees so it would not burn  
hot,  
You changed Dina in the womb of her mother to a girl,  
You changed the staff to a snake before a million eyes,  
You changed hand to white  
and the sea to dry land.  
In the desert you turned rock to water,  
hard flint to a fountain.  
Who would then turn me from a man to woman?  
Were I only to have merited this, being so graced by  
your goodness...

What shall I say? Why cry or be bitter?  
If my Father in heaven has decreed upon me  
and has maimed me with an immutable deformity,  
then I do not wish to remove it.  
And the sorrow of the impossible  
is a human pain that nothing will cure  
and for which no comfort can be found.  
So, I will bear and suffer  
until I die and wither in the ground.  
And since I have learned from the tradition  
that we bless both the good and the bitter,  
I will bless in a voice, hushed and weak,  
Blessed are you, O Lord,  
who has not made me a woman.

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## **Updates:**

3/9/2018 – Updated OP Clerk Name; updated info about pronoun usage outside of the basic ones listed

6/4/2018 – Added information on more historical references

1/27/2019 – Established segregated versions of the document – one for general use, one for Midrealm-specific use. Removed Kingdom Signet/Backlog Deputy Chart for Midrealm document. Rearranged document flow to have History follow section on Interactions. Removed section on “Lore” until more research can be completed.

2/2/2019 – Updated information in the “History” section with additional instances. Added information about research perspective. Added full text of “Even Bochan” for reference as an appendix.

10/26/2019 – Added more information clarifying Eleanor Rykener and Rolandina Roncaglia. Added info on Thomasine Hall. Added information to Christine de Pizan. Moved info on the usage of “transgender” and research bias to front of “History” section.