

Gay Marriage in Sa'adani Space

New York's passage of the same-sex marriage law has made quite a splash, culturally speaking. Since it's been in the news lately, I'd thought I'd make a comment or two on same-sex marriage in my science fiction setting, the Sa'adani Empire.

In my world setting, there are a variety of styles of partnership and three legally binding forms of marriage. All of these but the dynastic and highly formalized partnership called the *suenyos* allow for persons of any sex (including same sex, intersex, or for that matter aliens who have citizenship rights), to marry. It also permits them to have what we would call "trial marriages", or group marriages, or extended families with various degrees of legal obligation re children and/or property, and so on. Essentially, whatever configuration people wish to partner in, is legally acceptable and endorsed as long as the parties to it are of the age of consent.

Depending upon where one lives or travels, of course, these various permutations of relationship may or may not be looked upon favorably in the local culture. It is possible to experience discrimination at the social level, just as a black man and white woman would be treated outrageously in the South in the mid-1960s, even though their marriage was legal and (generally) socially acceptable elsewhere. The social acting-out of religious zealots protesting same-sex marriages or suing civic authorities for conducting them is very much an earth here/now phenomenon; societies that take that tack in Sa'adani space are generally regarded as rather backwater and tribalistic in their attitudes. In any case, how the locals may feel about such unions does not alter the fact that they are sanctioned by Imperial law. If local acting-out goes too far, it can bring with it serious repercussions from legal authorities.

How'd This Come About?

To accommodate the vast diversity of cultures and practices that came under the umbrella of a growing empire, the Sa'adani were long ago forced to strip the religious and "customary" practices out of marriage and relationship bonds, and reduce them to their minimal legal footprint that concerns the State. The State is concerned with what inheritance, property, tax, service, parenting, and lineage obligations might result from persons combining their statuses and their fortunes. Relationships are formalized by the State because doing so alters an individual's obligations in one or more of these regards. In fact, the term for a formalized marital relationship is *jintasu*, meaning "close-obligated." In Sa'adani space formal relationships are legally binding contracts, invariably written for a finite period of time and renewable at the end of that period. (The sole exception to this is the *suenyos*, which is considered to be a life-long alliance, as between two noble Houses or aristocratic dynasties.)

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Intimate Partnerships in the Sa'adani Empire

Against a backdrop like this, it's not so much that there is gay equality, as that being gay is a moot point. Gays are in the minority, but so are urban polyamorous groups and tribal multi-wife patriarchies. Yet they are all treated equally under the law, and may formalize their relationships as they like.

Some U.S. states could take a lesson from that.

Free Download: InfoNex Query on Intimate Partnerships

Want to read more about relationships in the Empire? Check out [this document](#). This free download contains the result of an InfoNex ("Information Nexus") query run on this subject in planet Casca's global Net[1].

1. Casca is a Sa'adani world that is the locale of some stories I'm working on at present. I expect they will appear in print at a future date.

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