

Abolition of the crime of sodomy



18th century, 1791

During the French Revolution, the crime of sodomy was abolished, thus decriminalizing relations between men. France became one of the first countries to do so.

The abolition of the crime of sodomy in 1791 was the culmination of a long social and repressive process. First, the definition of sodomy evolved and, towards the end of the 18th century, came to designate male homosexuality more broadly. Second, the 18th century was marked by a transformation in the discourse surrounding sexual and emotional practices between men. These practices were analyzed within the framework of a debate on nature. Similarly, the appearance of male sodomy in literature seems to have been motivated by a desire to distinguish different forms of pleasure. Finally, the crime of sodomy was very rarely applied: the last prosecution for pure sodomy dates back to 1750.

Ultimately, the abolition of the crime of sodomy in 1791 enshrined a development that transformed sodomy from a forbidden act into a stigmatized practice.

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