

It is Monday, June 10, 1566

Found guilty of *having indulged in the abominable and despicable crime of sodomy*¹, the judgment is handed down before the public in front of the city hall:

[...] You Batolomew Tecia, are hereby condemned to be tied-up with rope, led out of the Corraterie, to the Rhone River, and then be submerged and drowned in the customary manner, so that your soul is separated from its body. And so will end your days to be an example to others who might commit similar acts.

And you lieutenant are hereby commanded to execute this judgment in full.

The rumour spreads and little by little the crowd gathers. Men, women, children, some are attending on purpose; others watch as they are distracted from their daily routine.

The docks are slippery. Several clashes erupt. Some men take up a vantage point on the boats; the best place to see the show of punishment because it is in this place that the executions by drowning are carried out.

Mules' hooves, cart wheels, the metallic din of arms, screaming ... in the midst of the commotion the condemned man arrives. He's young, he's only 15.

The tumult is at its peak. Bound hand and foot, he is escorted by the lieutenant of justice and two "ministers of the faith"; he is then hoisted on a boat in the company of the executioner and the pastors, who accompany him for his last rights. On the shore, the lieutenant of justice waits.

Does he cry? Does he implore? It is impossible to distinguish the expression of the young man now he is offshore. In the middle of the river, he is immersed and kept underwater by the executioner. He struggles; his final fight of hope, then gives up as he suffocates. His lifeless body is brought back to the boat and then to the shore.

As a final mark of disrepute, his body is bound to a grid, dragged to the gallows in the city to be buried in the cemetery of the condemned.

The crowd falls silent. The show has fulfilled its function and has sown terror. Bartholomew Tecia has undergone an exemplary sentence.

With the kind contribution of Sonia Vernhes Rappaz, historian and author of "La noyade judiciaire dans la République de Genève (1558-1619)"; the author is currently researching the subject of legal practices and judicial discourse in sixteenth century Geneva.

BARTHOLOMÉ TECIA



Étudiant piémontais âgé de 15 ans, dénoncé, torturé et condamné **le 10 juin 1566** à être noyé **en ce lieu**, pour crime d'homosexualité.

Aujourd'hui, l'orientation sexuelle et l'identité de genre doivent être reconnues universellement comme étant des droits humains fondamentaux.

À TRAVERS LE MONDE, DES PERSONNES CONTINUENT D'ÊTRE DISCRIMINÉES, PERSÉCUTÉES ET CONDAMNÉES DU SEUL FAIT DE LEUR ORIENTATION SEXUELLE OU DE LEUR IDENTITÉ DE GENRE. Posée le 10 juin 2013 à l'initiative de [network](#)

BARTHOLOMÉ TECIA

15 year-old Piedmontese student denounced, tortured and condemned on **June 10, 1566** to be drowned **at this location**, for the crime of homosexuality.

Today, sexual orientation and gender identity must be universally recognized as basic human rights.
THROUGHOUT THE WORLD PEOPLE CONTINUE TO BE DISCRIMINATED AGAINST, PERSECUTED AND CONDEMNED MERELY BECAUSE OF THEIR SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR THEIR GENDER IDENTITY.

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GAY LEADERSHIP



Ville de Genève – Service Agenda 21 Ville durable – Pôle Égalité-Diversité – www.ville-geneve.ch/bartholome-tecia

Epigraphic plate Bartholomew Tecia

A place of remembrance and hope for the LGBT community

Lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgenderⁱⁱ

447 years after his conviction, Bartholomew Tecia gives his name to this epigraphic plate laid at the place of his torture; its message, beyond commemoration, invites reflection.

While the case of Bartholomew is here remembered, he was not the only one in Geneva to be convicted and put to death because of his homosexualityⁱⁱⁱ. Placed in a different perspective, this account from our local history serves to remind us that individuals from the worldwide LGBT community are still subject to real discrimination and persecution; an on-going reality that pretends to hold the moral high-ground.

In 2011, the [Martin Ennals Award](#) was presented in Geneva to Kasha Nabagesera for his actions in Uganda, for which he risked his own life; this award reminds that, even today, still over [78 countries condemn](#) sexual relations between consenting adults of the same sex. On 6th December in the same year, Hillary Clinton delivered a historic speech^{iv}, in front of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva, inviting the world to recognize and defend the rights of LGBT minorities and urged the world to recognize and defend these rights. The plaque dedicated to Bartholomew Tecia echoes this call, a witness in our times, of his struggles and his aspirations.

Linking **the memory** of all those who have suffered from similar convictions and similar judgments, with the hope of a universal recognition of human rights, NETWORK^v maintains **the hope** that this epigraph be a contemporary milestone whose future obsolescence we will celebrate.

By its [active support](#) in the accomplishment of this project, the City Council and the Administrative Council, the City of Geneva marks its attachment to the values of diversity, equality, integrity and dignity.

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ⁱ *Sodomy* was the term used at the time by lawyers or legal experts to define the sexual relationship between two people of the same sex irrespective of whether they were men or women.

ⁱⁱ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, transgender, also includes intersex persons.

ⁱⁱⁱ From 1444 to 1662, date of the last execution for the crime of sodomy in Geneva, there were 31 men and two women, who were sentenced to death for this crime. Cf. Monter, 1987 and Vernhes Rappaz, 2007.

^{iv} “[...] *In many ways, they are an invisible minority. They are arrested, beaten, terrorized, even executed. Many are treated with contempt and violence by their fellow citizens while authorities empowered to protect them look the other way or, too often, even join in the abuse. They are denied opportunities to work and learn, driven from their homes and countries, and forced to suppress or deny who they are to protect themselves from harm. I am talking about gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people, human beings born free and given bestowed equality and dignity, who have a right to claim that, which is now one of the remaining human rights challenges of our time.*”
Hillary Clinton, Geneva 06.12.2011

Read more: <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/texttrans/2011/12/20111206180616su0.4842885.html#axzz2UzmBfiYi>

^v NETWORK is an association of gay and bisexual men, businesses, executives, entrepreneurs, politicians and artists willing to offer their skills to the Swiss gay community leaders. The Swiss organization NETWORK is committed to greater openness, respect and social diversity, as well as to obtain the same rights as the rest of the population of our country. www.network.ch