

QUEERING THE SPANISH CONQUEST OF AMÉRICA: WHO WERE THE BERDACHE AND AMUJERADOS?

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Gutiérrez, Ramón A." Queering the Spanish Conquest of América: Who were the Berdache and Amujerados?" *Camino Real*, vol.14, no.18, 2023, pp. 47-65

Recibido: 1 de febrero de 2023

2º revisión: 28 de julio de 2023

ABSTRACT

This essay explores the contemporary search for historical antecedents for LGBTQIA+ identities by turning to the remote past, delving into the chronicles of the Spanish conquest of the Americas initiated by the Columbian voyages of 1492. When Europeans first arrived in the Caribbean and soon ventured into North and South America, they routinely reported on the plethora of sexual practices. What at first glance seemed familiar to the *conquistadores* was that men had sex with other men, a behavior they had known for centuries, calling the receptive male partner in such acts berdache, or male prostitutes compensated for their service. Over time Europeans came to understand Native American sexual customs with more complexity, calling the receptive partner in male-male intercourse *amuejados* (womanish). These were captured prisoners of war, transvested as women and segregated among them, denied access to the instruments of war, enduring lives of hard labor and humiliation, reviled even by women and children. This essay argues that the labors of the *amujerados* illuminates gender as a status. Men and women share more biological similarities than differences. The feminine is most often a mark of subordination and inequality. LGBTQIA+ persons who seek less rigid, more fluid, liberatory historical models with which to grow and prosper, will not find them by looking backward to the lives of *amujerados*, to these enslaved prisoners of war.

KEYWORDS: berdache, *amujerados*, sodomy, prisoners of war, gender status.

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Over the last fifty years in Western Europe, the United States, and many points beyond, we have witnessed the emergence of a plethora of LGBTQIA+ identities (e. g., lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, allies, aromantic, and agender), deemed innate, celebrated, and of course, still reviled as sinful and unnatural by others. During this same period our knowledge and understanding of sexualities in the past has been enhanced by the equally impressive production of histories describing and analyzing behavior in the ancient and early modern Western Atlantic worlds. Sexual practices in the Greek and Roman Empires (Ormand, Halperin, Trafford), during the rise of Christianity (Boswell, Ringrose), and throughout early modern Iberia (Berco, Blackmore and Hutcheson, Perry) now chronicle a range of same-sex eroticism, the labor of male and female prostitutes, and the role of eunuchs, androgens, and hermaphrodites in domestic and institutional settings. The main difference between our contemporary

understandings and those of remote pasts is that sexuality is now embodied as an almost instinctive personal identity, consciously experienced in varied ways. Sex in the early modern Euro-Atlantic past was not enmeshed in anything resembling personal identities. It was anchored instead primarily to human reproduction, to behavior that forestalled conception, and to notions of sin.

With this understanding of the differences between our present and the remote past let us explore the sexual dimensions of the conquest of America's Indigenous peoples as reported by an array of European explorers, soldiers of fortune, and clerics licensed by Spain's Christian monarchs from 1492 on. The impact of the violent conquest, Christianization, and Hispanicization on native cultures quickly resulted in the imposition of patriarchy and misogynistic values and practices, stripping women of many of the forms of power and status they previously enjoyed. Enslaved by their conquerors and quickly decimated by hunger, disease, and labor regimes, Native America's men likewise saw their status hierarchies obliterated and transformed.

When the first Columbian expedition seeking a western route to the riches of the East Indies made landfall in the Caribbean on October 12, 1492, the sailors and friars fixated their gaze on the nakedness of the natives, their practice of cannibalism and polygamy, and their treatment of male prisoners of war. On observing these captives, the Europeans mistakenly called them *berdache* (from the Arabic *bardaj*), surmising initially that they were simply male prostitutes or kept pubescent boys enmeshed in behaviors Europeans had known of since the zenith of the Greek and Roman Empires. Columbian expeditionary chronicles located these *berdache* exclusively in male political spheres. They were Indigenous biological males gendered as female, forcibly transvested, performing women's work, and residing exclusively among men whom they sexually serviced. These effeminates, denigrated as *amujerados* (womanish) by Europeans, originated in theatres of war as captured prisoners, then pressed into slavery, enduring lives of hard labor and humiliation. They were not prostitutes willfully selling their services in European brothels, on streets, or in royal chambers, which is how Europeans understood and located the social position of the *berdache*.

To "queer" our understandings of these Native American men, I intentionally resist the ahistorical impulse to place *amujerados* in

fictive lineal genealogies of the emergence of contemporary LGBTQIA+ sexual identities. There is no evidence that anything approximating contemporary identities or even the robust lexicon we now have emerged in the Western Atlantic world before the middle of the nineteenth-century. When Europeans first began reporting the activities of the berdache in their own cities, they wrote about adolescent boys and low status men who willingly gave or sold receptive oral and anal sex to others. They were most often called *putos* (prostitutes) who engaged in such “unnatural” carnality to protect female virginity from their consorts until marriage, as a form of birth control, and as an exercise of dominance over subordinates. Powerful men, be they priests or wealthy noblemen, offered food, hospice, and money to beautiful boys and a variety of lower status men to participate willingly in such activities (Merrick and Sibalis, Rocke, Warner).

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After Christopher Columbus’s initial landfall in the Bahamas on Oct. 12, 1492, his convoy skirted the islands he named Hispaniola (now Haiti and the Dominican Republic) and Cuba. Believing that he had reached the “Orient” and confident that Japan was just beyond the horizon, Columbus called the inhabitants *indios* (Indians). This denomination endures to this day as a denigrating racialization, leveling what was a vast array of Indigenous social hierarchies into one undifferentiated, conquered, tributary, and reviled caste. Columbus returned to Spain in January of 1493, bearing treasures from the newly found land for Spain’s monarchs: gold, spices, parrots, *indios*. He immediately petitioned for license to return to conquer (Columbus 12-14). By May of that year Pope Alexander VI granted the Spanish crown sovereignty over these newly found lands. Spain’s Catholic monarchs reciprocated, promising that they would Christianize these “pagans.”

On September 25, 1493, Columbus again set sail for Hispaniola with a much larger fleet. His seventeen ships carried some 1,500 passengers, including several friars charged with the Christianization of the *indios*. Physician Diego Álvarez Chanca was among the crew

tasked with reporting on the island's flora, fauna, and natural resources. Among the many things he observed was that Carib warriors on the islands of Guadeloupe, María Galante, and Santa Cruz were extremely vicious toward enemy captives, castrating them, "cutting the member right down to the belly," regularly sodomizing them until they were adults, then staging a feast during which they were killed and cannibalized. Michele di Cuneo, an Italian soldier of fortune, noted that Caribs punished captured Arawak prisoners identically. These *indios*, wrote Cuneo, "are strong sodomites, not knowing, as I believe, if they are doing good or bad...this accursed vice occurs [because] they are very ferocious men, who subjugate and maul enemy *indios* out of contempt." While Cuneo found the castration and raping of male prisoners shocking, he did not express any revulsion about Iberian soldiers routinely raping native women. Cuneo boasted of the challenge he enjoyed ravishing "a beautiful, naked Cannibal girl... to amuse myself... Since I wanted to have my way with her and she was not willing, she worked me over so badly with her nails that I wished I had never begun... seeing how things were going, I got a rope and tied her up so tightly that she made unheard cries which you would not have believed" (Fernández de Navarrete, 33 and Morrison 209-14).

Clerical chronicles voiced larger moral concerns about native sexual behavior. "These *indios* do not deserve liberties," wrote fray Tomás Ortiz because "they eat human flesh... are sodomites... exercise no justice among themselves, they go about naked, they display no love or shame; they are crazy and lack reason" (Arrom 71-72). Queen Isabella was so unnerved by such widespread reports of cannibalism and sodomy that she authorized the enslavement of *indios* engaged in such sins. Spanish narratives of the invasion of the Americas rhetorically amplified the wide-spread presence of sodomy, human sacrifice, and cannibalism to rationalize waging "just war" against such peoples, thus ennobling the expropriation of native lands, labor, and riches (Devereux and Hanke).

Two subsequent Columbian voyages in 1498 and 1502 explored the coast of the lands proximal to Hispaniola and Cuba. When only small amounts of gold were discovered, the Europeans turned to the enslavement of the Indians they found. By 1508, as the native population of Hispaniola dwindled, the colonists began importing

African slaves to meet their needs; by 1518 so did Cuba's colonists. Spain's dream of acquiring the "Orient's" fortunes became reality in 1519, when Hernán Cortés, then residing in Cuba, learned of the wealth of the Aztec Empire in central Mexico and set out to conquer it. By 1521 he had vanquished its twenty-one million souls and pillaged its enormous wealth. Frenzied searches for "Other Mexicos" followed. Francisco Pizarro's troops conquered the rich Inca Empire in 1532. Numerous other expeditions of discovery were licensed by the crown during these years. One of the best known, but one that utterly failed, was led by Pánfilo de Narváez in 1527.

Confident, but utterly ignorant of American geography, Narváez was determined to find the maritime route to the East Indies that he believed existed to the north of Hispaniola through Florida. We know of the calamitous events that followed because Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, the expedition's treasurer, dispatched a *relación* (account) to King Charles V in 1537 (Núñez Cabeza de Vaca), describing how the crew of four hundred was ambushed and overpowered by Florida's *indios*, how over the next nine years his compatriots slowly dwindled, dying of illness, forced labor, and hunger, ultimately behaving just as their captors, forced by hunger to cannibalize their own dead to survive. Cabeza de Vaca and three others were the expedition's sole survivors.

Among the many things Cabeza de Vaca reported in his *relación* was that along the coast of Texas he saw "a devilish behavior (*diablura*)...one man married to another, and these are effeminate, impotent feminine men (*hombres amarionados impotentes*). And they go about covered like women and they perform the tasks of women, and they do not use a bow, and they carry great loads...we saw many of them, thus unmanly...they are more muscular than other men and taller; they suffer very large loads." On observing these men dressed as women, Cabeza de Vaca was himself as naked as the native men who held him as their slave. "Among these people," he continued, "the men do not burden themselves nor carry anything of weight, rather, the women and the old people, who are the ones they value the least, carry it...some...practice sodomy, the sin against nature (*pecado contra natura*)" (Núñez Cabeza de Vaca 131-32).

During his nine-year trek from Florida back to Mexico City mostly on foot, Cabeza de Vaca was repeatedly told that immense

cities of gold existed in the upper Rio Grande valley. Lying to the Iberians about golden cities nearby was a native ploy to keep the Iberian soldiers moving on, telling them that magnificent riches were *mas allá, mas allá*, further on, further on. When Francisco Vázquez de Coronado read Cabeza de Vaca's account and the mention of golden cities in the northern reaches of New Spain, he organized an expedition to New Mexico in 1540, with some 400 soldiers and 2,000 Indian guides and porters. Coronado found salt beds, pine nuts, and many richly productive agricultural towns, but no gold. Pedro de Castañeda, the expedition's chronicler, noted the many towns where "grand sodomites" resided. They were found along the western coast of Mexico toward the Gulf of California, around Culiacán, Sinaloa, among the Tahus of southern Arizona, the Pacaxes in the foothills of the Sinaloan sierras, the *indios* near the mouth of the Colorado River, and in Arizona's Suvo Valley (Hammond and Rey 147-48).

Castañeda reported witnessing a town chief's male slave ritually transvested before the town's residents. Once that was done, "the dignitaries came in to make use of her one at a time, and after them all the others who cared to. From then on, she was not to deny herself to anyone, and she was paid a certain established amount for the service. And even though she might take a husband later, she was not thereby free to deny herself to anyone who offered her pay" (Castañeda 448-51). Hernando de Alarcón, also a soldier in Coronado's expedition, added that after this man's status denigration as a woman he "could not have carnal relations with women at all, but they themselves could be used by all marriageable youths." Such sexual service, gained through payment is what led Spaniards to conclude that these men were little more than "*bardaj*," repugnant *putos*, male prostitutes who pleased men for money (Hammond and Rey 147-48).

The European soldiers of fortune who initially reconnoitered Florida, New Mexico, New Spain, and the Andean highlands, all wrote matter-of-factly about the sexual practices they saw. They seemed quite familiar with men who sexually serviced other men. They used the word *bardaje* to describe this behavior, which they claimed had originated in East Asia and Islamic Africa several centuries earlier. Celibate missionaries propagating Christian marital monogamy expressed only revulsion about the incest, polygamy, and devilish

“marriages” between native sodomites. Marriage had been established and sanctified solely for the propagation of children. This was the only God- given purpose of human sexuality. Everything else was *contra natura*, against nature (Berco; Trexler).

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Spanish sixteenth century clerical chronicles are thickly peppered with reports that *sodomía* (sodomy) and *sodomitas* (sodomites) were rampant among Native Americans; a contagion that allegedly was also spreading throughout Iberia’s Christian kingdoms. It had to be eradicated. The crown empowered the Holy Office of the Inquisition to do so (Garza Caravajal and Molina). Sodom in the Judeo- Christian textual tradition originates in the Old Testament, in Genesis (19:1-29) as a town name. Therein one reads how God punished the residents of this town, burning it to the ground with sulfur, even turning Lot’s wife into a pillar of salt for failing to show hospitality to two visiting travelers. John Boswell, Mark D. Jordan, and Bartolomé Clavero, all historians of early and medieval Christian theology, argue that the word “sodomy” was a rather late lexical development. It only became associated with sex between men during the twelfth century of the common era. It was then that biblical exegesis on the destruction of Sodom and Gomora began to interpret the towns’ demise as the fault of the residents who were engaged in sins against nature, which was called sodomy, denominating persons indulging in such carnality as sodomites. By inventing sodomy as the sin of Sodom and Gomora, writes Jordan, “Christian theology created a new technology for Christian political warfare” (Jordan, *The Silence of Sodom*, and Clavero 57-89).

Sodomy was punished differentially according to the level of “debauchery” involved. From the least to the most sinful, first was self-masturbation, followed by rubbing a man’s genitals causing him a “pollution” (ejaculation), next men who fornicated by rubbing the virile member between the thighs or legs of an accomplice, finally anal fornication with a man, woman, or animal. These were all mortal sins. But neither in Europe nor in the Americas were all sodomites castigated equally. The most sinful was anal sex between men,

practiced most frequently by soldiers who procured their partners in battle fields and brothels, and by priests who found them in confessionals, when penitents were interrogated about their sins and sought absolution. Handbooks for the administration of confession advised priests to examine the conscience of their penitents, asking very detailed questions about practices that violated the Ten Commandments, particularly the first (thou shall not have strange gods before me), the sixth (thou shall not commit adultery), and the ninth (thou shall not covet your neighbor's wife). In most jurisdictions the Holy Office of the Inquisition patrolled and prosecuted these transgressions. The Kingdom of Castile established its Holy Office of the Inquisition in 1478, amidst its centuries-long struggle to conquer the Moors and to exorcize Islam from the realm, simultaneously confronting riots against Jewish converts to Christianity and the covert religious practices of these *conversos*. Castile's Holy Office was extended to Peru in 1570 and to New Spain in 1571 (Roth).

Not all of Spain's inquisitorial tribunals were in clerical hands. In some jurisdictions secular judges adjudicated sodomy and heresy accusations. The Kingdom of Aragón made sodomy a crime in 1560, authorized torture to elicit "truth," and to mete out punishment. Between 1570 and 1630 there were nearly 1,000 sodomy trials here. In Valencia, Barcelona, and Saragossa, 1,623 cases of sodomy and bestiality were tried. Between 1567 and 1616 seventy-one men were first garroted to death for sodomy in Seville. After they had expired their bodies were publicly incinerated. If the sin had been committed with an animal, it too was torched. The justice priests received for soliciting sex in confessionals paled in comparison. Of all such clerical cases tried by the Holy Office only three percent resulted in punishment. Clerics were mostly stripped of their right to hear confessions, confined in cloistered monasteries, or exiled to remote mission fields in the Americas where the chances of a martyr's death were great and where many continued indulging in the sin against nature (Perry, *The Nefarious Sin*).

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We turn next to the indigenous people who inhabited New Spain's far north, and to what became the American Southwest, to New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona, first explored by Álvaro Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca. There is a continuous granular observational record here dating from 1529 to the twentieth century on the social location and treatment of Indigenous men who were transvested as women. As already noted, *bardaje* was initially the incorrect name Spain's colonizers used for what the Indigenous residents of Zuni called the *la'mana*, what the Tewa called *quetho*, and what to the Navajo were *nadle*. All were prisoners of war.

Half a century after the Spanish colonists became significantly more fluent about the cultural geography and practices of the Indigenous people they had conquered and begun Christianizing, Francisco López de Gómera, in his 1552 widely read and cited *Historia de las Indias* concluded two things about the transvested Indigenous men who allegedly were "married" to other men. First, they were "impotent or castrated" (*impotentes o capados*). Second, they were denied access to the instruments of war, "for they could neither carry nor shoot arrows," though they clearly marched into battle with warriors as auxiliaries, hauling loads, cooking, setting up camp, and offering sexual services on demand. Fixating on the fact that these prisoners were "more muscular than other men and taller," he concluded that they were eunuchs. For when men were castrated in youth, it was not uncommon for them to grow taller and more muscular (López de Gómera 182). Andrés Pérez de Ribas, a Jesuit missionary who labored in New Spain's far north from 1591 to 1643, in his *History of the Triumphs of Our Holy Faith amongst the Most Barbarous and Fierce Peoples of the New World*, published in Madrid in 1654, likewise marveled about the transvested males performing women's work including all its intimacies. Pérez de Ribas affirmed that these men "do not use the bow and arrow," the main weapon of war. *Amujerados* (literally womanish) were consistently described as men abnormally tall and heavy (Pérez de Ribas 132). When Fray Juan Agustín de Morfi described what he had seen while evangelizing in New Mexico and Texas in 1777, he too was fascinated by these transvested men and wondered if they were eunuchs. In the end, Morfi admitted uncertainty (Morfi 74).

Three hundred years later, in 1852, Dr. William A. Hammond, the United States Surgeon General traveled through the newly annexed territories of New Mexico and Arizona. The transvested men he met at Laguna and Acoma Pueblos were called “*amujerados*.” Hammond wrote that they were central participants “in the saturnalia or orgies, in which these Indians, like the ancient Greeks, Egyptians and other nations, indulge. He [*amujerado*] is the chief passive agent in the pederastic ceremonies, which form so important a part in the performances.” After the captive was transvested and pressed into sexually serving men, Hammond continued, “he is at once relieved of all power and responsibility, and his influence is at an end. If he is married, his wife and children pass from under his control” (Hammond 334-36).

Dr. Hammond, as a consummate scientist, was determined to understand the physiological “facts” of what he witnessed. He asked permission of the town chief to perform a physical exam on an *amujerado* at Acoma. Pueblo Indian men most certainly would have protested if a similar request had been made to examine a wife or daughter. In this case, the town chief agreed. He brought the captive to Hammond and remained there throughout the examination. Reporting what he had learned in this and during a similar examination at Laguna Pueblo, to Hammond’s great amazement, neither were intersex hermaphrodites. Both had scant pubic hair, small penises (“no larger than a thimble,” “not... over an inch in length”), and small testicles (“the size of a small filbert,” “about the size of a kidney bean”), which meant they must have had their testicles crushed or excised at some point, what was also deemed castration. More significant were the comments Hammond elicited from the Acoma *amujerado*. “He informed me with evident pride, [that he] possessed a large penis and his testicles were ‘*grande como huevos*’ – as large as eggs” (Hammond 334-36).

Between 1830 and 1930, more extensive ethnographic observations were recorded at Zuni by three American anthropologists: Matilda Cox Stevenson, Elsie Clew Parsons, and Ruth Benedict. Stevenson wrote extensively about We’wha and a few biological males known locally as *la’mana*.

They were all males transvested as females, exclusively performing women’s work and sexually servicing men. According to

Stevenson, in 1904 We'wha was "the tallest person in Zuñi; certainly, the strongest." During an 1890 fracas with American soldiers from Fort Wingate, We'wha accompanied Zuni's governor and the town's Bow warrior priests (a reference to bows and arrows) (Stevenson 37). When Zuni men routinely staged their own religious rituals in their sex-segregated ceremonial chamber, Elsie Clew Parsons reported in 1916 that the *la'mana* dressed like a woman, styled his hair like a woman, and then personified a woman in ritual dances. Yet, when a *la'mana* died, the corpse was dressed like a woman except that "under the woman's skirt a pair of trousers are put on." *La'mana* were buried among the men. Indeed, the Zuni would say of We'wha, "she is a man" (Parsons 529).

Stevenson further noted in 1904 that the *la'mana* were widely "ridiculed" by the town's residents. Parsons was told this too in 1916. Zuni elders were "ashamed of having a *la'mana* among its members." Of the *la'mana* named U'k, Parsons remarked that she was "teased...by the children." During a winter solstice sha'lko dances the audience "grinned and even chuckled" at U'k. Parsons admitted that this was "a very infrequent display of amusement during these sha'lko dances." After the dance ended, the Cherokee hostess who had gained Parsons's admission to the ceremonial asked her: "Did you notice them laughing at her [U'k]...She is a great joke to the people" (Parsons 529).

In Puebloan religious ideology all ritual ceremonial roles were deemed to have supernatural antecedents that originated in the actions of the gods in mythic times. Aware of this fact both Stevenson and Parsons were told that the "Destruction of the Kia'nakwe, and Songs of Thanksgiving" myth explained the origins of the *la'mana*. As Stevenson recounted it, "in the Zuñi dramatization of the *kia'nakwe* dance of thanksgiving for the capture of the gods the one impersonating the Kor'kokshi wears women's dress and is referred to as the *ko'thlama*, meaning 'a man who has permanently adopted female attire.'" The reason the *la'mana* performed in this dance was "because together with other *ko'ko* [gods] he [the *la'mana*] was taken prisoner by the *kia'nakwe*" (Stevenson 36-37).

Stevenson and Parsons both reported that the *la'mana* who personified Kor'kokshi during this ceremonial not only wore female clothes, but also had blood smeared between his thighs. As women, these two anthropologists assumed that a man transvested as a

woman with blood between his thighs signified menstruation. But Pueblo men greatly feared menstruating women and segregated themselves from them believing that they had the power to pollute the efficacy of their wars and hunts. For four days before and during their own rituals' men abstained from sex with women, but not with the *la'mana*. It appears highly unlikely that warriors would represent a menstruating woman in their war dances. Since the Kia'nakwe dance is about the capture and vanquishment of enemies, the blood might be more persuasively explained as coming from a torn anus due to rape or from castration (Stevenson 36-37 and Parsons 525).

This survey of the known extant textual evidence we have on the history of male native captives in northern New Spain, what became Mexico and later the United States Southwest, provides enough shards to illuminate the status and treatment of *amujerados*. Were they celebrated and embodied a direct lineage to contemporary sexual identities combining the masculine and feminine, or two-spirits as one, or maybe even as a third or fourth sexual identity, as Walter Williams (1986) and Will Roscoe (1998) have argued in the recent past? Was one socialized to this role? Was it freely chosen? Or was it a status of subordination and humiliation? From the sources presented here, the *amujerados* were first observed on battlefields, in military campaigns against Indigenous enemies. They were unarmed, hauling loads, cloaked as females, cooking, working beside biological females, and offering receptive sex service to their male captors. That *amujerados* were frequently described as biological males who were stronger and taller than most, who were forced to carry enormous burdens, and who dressed as women in the company of naked warriors, as Cabeza de Vaca attested in 1536, further illuminates their status as defeated warriors. Wearing clothes, particularly women's clothes, marked their subordinate status.

And if there is still doubt about the origins of their social rank, the Zuni myth "Destruction of the Kia'nakwe and Songs of Thanksgiving" is unequivocal. Matilda Cox Stevenson's informants reported that it commemorated the conquest and imprisonment of male enemy gods who were raped and castrated – recall the blood between their thighs – further humiliated by being dressed as women and forced to perform their gendered work. The evidence here indicates that the *la'mana* of Zuni, the *amujerados* of Acoma and

Laguna, and what initially the Spanish mistakenly called berdache were far from celebrated or revered in local affairs. Rather they were laughed at even by children, deemed foolish by adults, and considered jokes. They lost their social standing, were torn from their natal households, and forced to service the whims of their captors. So too explained Dr. Hammond.

In the Old World and in the New there remains a rather universal gender representation of conquest: victors on vanquishing their enemies asserted their virility by transforming losers into effeminates. We know that to this day heterosexual rape is a common habit of war. What we are finally starting to admit is that defeated male warriors were similarly punished and forced to perform demeaning forms of receptive sexual service for other men. When they were anally mounted and forced to fellate their captors in public these postures of power celebrated a victor's virility and prowess. It does not matter much whether we examine male prisoners of war among the Zuni or the Arawak, the Aztecs or the Inca, to understand what is so graphically depicted on numerous extant pre-Columbian Moche pottery figurines from northern Peru depicting male slaves in women's clothes being anally penetrated by men or kneeling before a superior male fellating him. Status inversions marked by gendered symbols have rather universally been used to humiliate defeated enemies (Cáceres Macedo, Kauffmann Doig, Trexler, Weismantel).

Spanish conquest narratives, travelers' accounts, and the nineteenth century ethnographies indicate that the social status of the men broadly lumped together as *amujerados*, had meaning primarily in the socio-political world of Indigenous men. They were owned by men. It was the town chief who presented his *amujerado* to Dr. Hammond for examination in 1852. Taken from the battlefield and brought into the center of political society, they were often kept in the ceremonial chambers within which men lived and in which they performed the rituals that kept rival factions from tearing a community apart.

Until quite recently, residential sex segregation was the rule in every Pueblo Indian village in New Mexico and Arizona, and in other northern Mexican Indigenous towns. Pedro de Castañeda observed during the 1540 Coronado expedition that the "young men live in the *estufas* [kivas or male ceremonial lodges]... it is punishable for the

women to sleep in the *estufas* or to enter them for any other purpose than to bring food to their husbands and sons” (Hammand and Rey 1940, 254- 55). Diego Pérez de Luxán reiterated the point in 1582, as did Fray Gerónimo Zárate Salmerón when he wrote in 1623, “The women and young children sleep in the [houses]; the men sleep in the *kiva*” (Zárate Salmerón paragraph 74).

Segregated from women in their *kivas*, men practiced the religious, political lore that kept a community’s factions at peace with itself and with its gods. Women’s rituals, centered in the household, celebrated their feminine powers over seed life and human reproduction. Their powers to bring forth life were immense and predictable. Men’s control over warfare, hunting, curing, and rainmaking –the basic preoccupations of Indigenous life– were always more unpredictable and precarious, and thus necessarily more elaborately ritualized. From men’s perspective, women’s capacity to produce, indeed, to over produce, was the problem that threatened to destroy the balance that existed between the cosmic forces of femininity and masculinity. Only by isolating themselves in ritual, placating their gods could men keep potent femininity from overpowering them and destroying everything. Women constantly sapped men of their energy. Men had to toil in the fields that belonged to their mothers and wives, they had to protect the village from internal, external, natural, and supernatural enemies, and they constantly gave semen to their wives. Men got little in return from women in this agricultural society, save for food and sex. Even if they begat children, until puberty they were under the control of their mothers (Haeberlin and Collier).

It is in this world of masculine political ritual invoking ancestral deities that we must place the *amujerados* as known variously. Male Pueblo rituals were highly stratified. Men who became war chiefs were persons with enormous political power by virtue of their physical strength, their cunning, and their psychological acumen in battle. Defeated prisoners of war were described as big and strong despite their female attire. It should thus be of no surprise that the men who were pressed into domestic slavery were there to service and labor for their captor. Recall that 1540 description offered by Pedro de Castañeda recounting how in the male ceremonial chamber he had witnessed a recent prisoner of war first mounted sexually by the dignitaries, then offered as a sign of generosity to other males who

wished to have him, and finally pimped to any man willing to pay. Some three hundred years later, according to Dr. Hammond's 1852 observations, these captives were still playing similar ritual roles in the daily life of Acoma and Laguna.

In Pueblo life, unmarried bachelors and junior men spent most of their time in the kivas. Ostensibly this was so that they could master religious lore. But it was also to minimize conflicts between juniors and seniors over access to female sexuality that only married men enjoyed. Sex with an *amujerado* not only serviced the personal erotic needs of junior men, but it was also an assertion of power by these young men that served a religious (political) end. So long as virile bachelors were having sex with *amujerados*, their village was not beset with conflicts among married men over their wives and daughters. European prostitutes, both male and female, initiated young men to sexuality and gave married men a sexual outlet without disrupting power relations among senior men over family, marriage, and patrimonies. Male prisoners of war pressed into prostitution in women's clothes were living testaments to their conqueror's virility and prowess. When they were offered to guests as a gesture of hospitality, this too testified to their master's power. And like every slave historically, they became economic assets when pimped to other men, so that they too could play out fantasies of domination.

In rethinking the meaning of male slaves transvested among American Indians we can enormously expand our understanding by studying gender as a status rather than as a role, or as a modern personal identity. It is equally important that when we pluck individuals from their cultures, be it We'wha, U'k, or the countless other *la'mana* and *amujerados* who once lived, it behooves us to place them in the warps of power that sex/gender represented. For LGBTQIA+ activists and camp followers who seek a less rigid, more fluid, liberatory sexual identities with which to grow and prosper, the *amujerado*, a gender representation of power rooted in war, is not the place to find it. When facts are misinterpreted with the goal of finding models of liberation where they do not exist, we perpetuate on We'wha, U'k, and all such devalued men who once existed yet another level of humiliation, shrouding their enslavement, rape, and prostitution in romantic webs of obfuscation. Finally, as the world witnessed just months ago, Roman Catholicism's legal definitions of sodomy have

not evolved much since the fifteenth century. In January of 2023 Pope Francis urged nation-states not to criminalize and punish persons who claimed and embodied LGBTQIA+ identities. Nevertheless, in his very next breath Francis reminded Roman Catholics that “homosexual acts” were a sin.

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.

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