

resist out-stretched palms and needing to put an ocean between unlettered beggars and his own purse.

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Phoebe Lloyd

AMAZONIA

In addition to holding the world's largest tropical rainforest, the Amazon basin of South America has remained until recently the home of many tribal peoples scarcely touched by Western civilization.

Initiation and Joking Behavior.

As in the Melanesian cultures of the Pacific, initiation, more than marriage, is indispensable in northwest Amazonia to the transition from the asexual world of childhood to the sexual world of adults. In these customs, anthropologists have been struck by the commonness of joking sexual play among initiated but unmarried men. "Missionaries working in the Piraparaná are frequently shocked by the apparent homosexual behavior of Indian men. However, the Barasana distinguish between this playful sexual activity and serious male homosexuality. This play, rather than stemming from frustration of normal [sic] desire, is regarded as being normal behavior between brothers-in-law, and expresses their close, affectionate, and supportive relationship" (Hugh-Jones). Claude Lévi-Strauss, who had reported "reciprocal sexual services" by classificatory "brothers-in law" among the Nambikwara in 1943, added: "It remains an open question whether the partners achieve complete satisfaction or restrict themselves to sentimental demonstrations, accompanied by caresses, similar to the

demonstrations and caresses characteristic of conjugal relationships." Although maintaining that "the brother is acting as a temporary substitute" for his sister, he admits: "On reaching adulthood, the brothers-in-law continue to express their feelings quite openly." Stephen Hugh-Jones similarly reported, "A young man will often lie in a hammock with his 'brother-in-law,' nuzzling him, fondling his penis, and talking quietly, often about sexual exploits with women." About the Yanamamo, Chagnon wrote: "Most unmarried young men having homosexual relations with each other have no stigma attached to this behavior. In fact, most of these bachelors joked about it and simulated copulation with each other in public." Alves da Silva reported public mutual masturbation by boys, although officially, homosexuality only occurs in the puberty rites for boys.

Other Aspects. Nimuendajú and Lowie noted formalized, intense, but apparently non-sexual friendships among another Ge tribe, the Ramko'kamekra. Wagley's 1939 ethnography of the Tapi-rape—a southern Amazon tribe with a Tupi-Guarani rather than Ge language, who were therefore likely pushed from the coast rather than being traditionally jungle dwellers prior to 1500—included reports of males in the past who had allowed themselves to be used in anal intercourse by other men. "They were treated as favorites by the men, who took them along on hunting trips. Kamairaho gave me the names of five men whom he had known during his lifetime or about whom his father had told him 'had holes.' Some of these men were married to women, he said, but at night in the *takana* [men's house] they allowed other men to 'eat them' (have anal intercourse). His father told him of one man who took a woman's name and did women's work. . . . Older men had said that the "man-woman" had died because she was pregnant. Her stomach was swollen but there was no womb to allow the child to be born." None of

Wagley's informants could recall a case of a woman who had taken the male role or who preferred sex with another female.

Gregor added a muddled account of conceptions of homosexuality as (1) inconceivable, (2) situational, and (3) forgotten for the Mehinaku of the Xingu River. Soares de Souza asserted the Tupinamba were "addicted to sodomy and do not consider it a shame. . . . In the bush some offer themselves to all who want them." In the upper Amazon, Tessmann found that "while there are no homosexuals with masculine tendencies, there are some with extreme effeminacy. My informants knew of two such instances. One of them wears woman's clothing. . . . [The other] wears man's clothing, but likes to do all the work that is generally done by women. He asked one member of our expedition to address him with a woman's name and not with his masculine name. He lives with a settler and prostitutes himself as the passive partner to the settler's workers. He pays his lovers. He never practices active sexual intercourse." A more extended description of widespread homosexual play and of fairly-enduring but "open" relationships is provided by Sorenson: "Young men sit around enticingly sedate and formal in all their finery, or form troupes of panpipe-playing dancers." Occasional sex is regarded as expectable behavior among friends; one is marked as nonfriendly—enemy—if he does not join, especially in the youth 'age group' (roughly 15–35). Homosexual activity was limited neither to within an "age group" nor to unmarried men. Moreover, inter-village homosexuality was encouraged and some "best friends" relationships developed. That the "best friend" is more likely later to marry a sister of his "best friend" is implied in Sorenson's report.

Some of the denials that homosexual behavior among "my people" is "really homosexuality" say more about the observer than the observed. In other cases, denials of what can be observed come from natives. In such cases, it is

difficult to know whether the concern that imputations of accepting homosexuality will stigmatize their tribe are the result of Western acculturation or more venerable cultural concerns.

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AMAZONS, AMERICAN INDIAN

A distinct gender role for masculine females was accepted in many American Indian tribes of North and South America. This role often included a marriage between such a female and a woman. Though sometimes mistakenly referred to by anthropologists as "female berdaches," this term historically was applied only to males and does not account for the special character of the amazon role. Even though the Indians did not live in separate all-female societies, the earliest historic references to such masculine females referred to them as "amazons" rather than as "berdaches," and the Portuguese explorers