

## CANAANITES

The reference of the geographical term Canaan is complex. In ancient times "Canaan" was used to refer to an area between the Amanus Mountains in the north, the Sinai Peninsula on the southwest, the Mediterranean on the west, and, to the east, the Great Rift Valley (comprising the cleft between the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon mountain ranges, the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan River, and the Dead Sea), corresponding to modern Lebanon and Israel and parts of Turkey, Syria, and Jordan. The *Old Testament* also uses the term Canaanite to refer to members of the merchant class, because trade and commerce remained in the hands of the older strata of the population inhabiting the coastal cities even after the Israelite landowners and peasants had occupied the interior of the country. Hence the socio-economic opposition was paradoxically the reverse of that in some parts of early modern Europe, where Jews were merchants and traders in the midst of a rural native clientele.

Modern scholars use the term Canaanite to designate those aspects of Syro-Palestinian culture against which the religion of Moses defined itself; this usage leads to the simplified opposition of Israelite versus Canaanite. This is not a Biblical usage, since, for example, the Bible speaks of what we now call Hebrew as "the language of Canaan." The opposition does, however, reflect the dominant Biblical attitude toward the people of Phoenicia and Philistia and the non-Yahweh-worshipping elements of the population of Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel. Thus "Canaanite" is modern shorthand for what the core religious tradition of Israel opposed. There are many sources which can meaningfully be grouped together as illuminating Canaanite culture, but the Hebrew Bible is the most informative as well as one of the least reliable. Other sources include archeological remains as well as numerous texts, notably

from the city of Ugarit in modern Syria (1400–1225 B.C.).

Part of the character of Mosaic religion was adversarial, and the official and popular cults of Canaan provided much to oppose. Polytheistic devotions and political appropriations of theology were among the features most opposed by Israelite prophets and priests. Sexual activities that figured in fertility rites associated with the worship of Ishtar and Tammuz were also condemned, but the character of these is harder to deduce from the extant sources. That there was some degree of sexual license in Canaanite cult is certain, as is the role of female prostitutes serving male clients, but the texts are either laconic or formulated in a poetic language that is still being deciphered. The prophets, Hosea in particular, state clearly that the *kēdēshōth*, or female hierodules, fornicated with the male worshippers, and hence make sexual infidelity a metaphor for Israel's departure from the service of Yahweh. In contrast, the role of non-Israelite male prostitutes, or *kēdēshīm*, serving male clients seems to have been marginal. The institution of cultic "dogs" (attested in Deuteronomy, in one text from a Phoenician colony on Cyprus, and in a Punic inscription from Carthage) is often associated with male prostitution or homosexuality, but the institution remains obscure. (It has been associated with transvestism, which is not in itself a matter of sexuality. Although transvestism is well attested in the ancient Near East, it is notably absent from the Levant.)

Most interpretations of Canaanite religion and sexuality, from the rabbis and church fathers to the present, make up for a lack of information by fabulizing reconstruction. A few modern enthusiasts have glorified Canaan for its ostensibly permissive and celebratory attitude toward sexuality, but this view also seems unhistorical. Canaan remains the symbol of the cultural and religious tradition which Israel rejected and condemned, but whose rites and practices form the backdrop for

the historical narratives of the Old Testament.

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## CANADA

A vast, unevenly developed nation, Canada's culture has been significantly shaped by influences from France, Britain, and the United States. Approximately 75 percent of the population of 25 million is located in a 3000-mile long, 100-mile wide band along the top of the American border, making the development and survival of a nation-wide gay movement difficult and rendering local and provincial activity particularly important.

*New France.* Prosecutions of sodomy are recorded among the settlers in New France in 1648 and 1691, the latter involving three men. The death penalty was not imposed on any of the accused, perhaps because the population was too thin in the colony to permit unnecessary reductions. The French settlements on the St. Lawrence with their capital at Quebec were the base for extensive journeys by explorers and missionaries far to the west and south (where they reached the other French colony of Louisiana, established in the seventeenth century, with New Orleans, founded in 1718, as its capital). These trips familiarized the travelers with the North American Indian homosexual institution known as the *berdache*. Following his experience as a missionary in New France in 1711-17, Joseph François Lafitau wrote the first attempt at a synthesis of the phenomenon. Expansion of European patterns, of course, spelled the end of Indian social customs, and the *berdache* was not rediscovered by North American homosexuals until the 1950s.

*The Nineteenth Century.* English-speaking Upper Canada (largely populated by loyalist refugees from the American Revolution) was rocked by a scandal centering on Inspector-General George Herchmer Markland. This official, who was accustomed to having sexual relations with

young men (usually soldiers) in his office, was forced to resign in 1838. Several other cases came to light in the 1840s.

With the coming of the Confederation in 1867, Canada required its own legislative structure. Yet in matters of sexual law, the British example was imitated almost slavishly everywhere for almost a century. Thus Westminster's 1885 **Criminal Law Amendment Act**, the law under which Oscar Wilde was later to be prosecuted, was dutifully copied the following year by a Canadian law against indecent assault.

During the early pioneering days the Western provinces seem to have seen a good deal of variant sexual behavior that excited little notice. As in the United States, there are cases of women dressing as men: these may or may not have been lesbian. In the latter decades of the nineteenth century Canada was swept by the social purity movement of British and U.S. derivation. Through mass-circulation pamphlets and public meetings, the latter often held at churches, they sought to combat masturbation and other forms of nonprocreative sex, as individual pollution and "race suicide." Such agitation, and the "civilizing process" in general, spelled the end of the relative sexual liberty of the Canadian West, and a number of prosecutions for buggery occurred there from 1880 to 1910.

*Modern Canada.* Typical urban gay subcultures emerged in major cities, with distinctive cruising grounds and places of entertainment. As with U.S. service personnel, participation in the two World Wars gave many men and women ideas of sexual freedom that they could not have otherwise obtained. In Montreal and Toronto after 1945 a more visible gay subculture focused mainly on "queen's circles," coterie formed around one or more central figures, who controlled entrance to the group and set its standards. Through the mentor-protégé relations of such groups many young people were socialized into the gay subculture, in addi-