

SEXUAL INVERSION AMONG PRIMITIVE RACES

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BUT few details of sexual inversion and perversion are known among savages, and it is commonly and tacitly assumed that abnormalities of the sexual instinct are the concomitants of Oriental luxury or advanced civilization. Too often merely the grosser forms of perversion have been looked for or noted, the condition described by Moll as psycho-sexual hermaphroditism, in which, while the psychical resemblance to the opposite sex colours the whole social life of the individual, there are also present traces of normal hetero-sexual instinct, being unrecognized or ignored. Among American Indians, from Alaska to Brazil, homo-sexual practices occur or occurred. Sodomy was prevalent among the Nahua (Aztec) and Maya nations* the latter tolerating if not systematizing its practice. Among savage races Bancroft, speaking of the Isthmian tribes of Cueba and Careba, says: "The caciques and some of the head men kept harems of youths who were dressed as women, did women's work about the house, and were exempt from war and its fatigues."† Again: "In the province of Tamaulipa there were public brothels where men enacted the part of women,"‡ while the modern Omaha have a special name signifying hermaphrodite for the passive agent, whom they regard with contempt.|| Among the Aleuts of Alaska

*Bancroft, *Native Races of the Pacific Coast*, vol. II, pp. 467, 677.

†*Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 774.

‡*Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 635.

§Third Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, p. 365, Washington, 1884.

certain boys, whom Holmberg* states were selected for their girlish appearance, are brought up as girls and decorated as women. Similar instances might be multiplied, but, apart from the last mentioned, which, according to Havelock Ellis, suggests the possibility of congenital inversion, they are all examples of the grossest forms of perversion, and no details suggesting that any of these are cases of congenital inversion are given. Similarly there is reason to believe that the pæderasty practiced by certain New Caledonian warriors, which is stated to constitute a relationship more sacred than blood-brotherhood, is resorted to for convenience and perhaps for Malthusian reasons,† as it is among some Papuans of the western district of British New Guinea.‡

A somewhat different condition of things prevails among the Tupi, a Brazilian tribe in a low stage of civilization to whom Lomonaco|| has devoted considerable attention. While noting that sodomy was prevalent in almost every local tribe, and that a class of men were met with whose function it was to lend themselves to the practice, he states that among the Tupi many women took no husbands, devoting themselves for the whole of their lives to perpetual chastity, and quotes Gandavo§ to the effect that there are some women among those who decide to be chaste who will not consent to know men even under threats of death. They wear their hair cut in the same fashion as the males, go to war with their bows and arrows, and take part in the chase. They frequent the company of men and each one of them has a woman who waits on her, to whom she says she is married and "with whom she communicates and converses like man and wife." It seems probable that here, among a people addicted to sodomy and in whom here is no strong feeling against homo-sexual relations,

*Quoted by Havelock Ellis and J. A. Symonds in *Das Konträre Geschlechtsgefühl*, Leipzig, 1896.

†Foley: *Bulletins de la Societe d'Anthropologie de Paris*, 1879.

‡Beardmore, *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, vol. xix, 1890.

§Sulle Razze Indigene del Brasile, *Archivio per l'Antropologia e la Etnologia*, 1889 Florence.

||*Historia da Provincia de Santa Cruz*, quoted by Lomonaco, *loc. cit.*

there is an element of true congenital inversion similar to that present in the sporadic cases among Papuans to be immediately described.

While with the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits and New Guinea several instances were met with in the Rigo district of British New Guinea where, unlike the Fly river district, the habitual practice of pæderasty is unknown.* These cases occurred among a people practically still in their stone age and so uncontaminated by external influences that even white men's diseases had not yet obtained a footing among them. In the following notes the condition of the genitals is given on what is probably good authority, but in no case would it have been politic to have attempted to verify my informants' descriptions by actual examination. Three of the four cases alluded to were inhabitants of Bulaa, a considerable settlement built for the most part on piles in the sea. One of these had been dead for some time. In her, assuming the native diagnosis of sex to have been correct, there was maldevelopment of the genitalia, while the remaining two Bulaa cases are probably pure instances of psycho-sexual hermaphroditism.

Hiro, a female aged about 30 years, is a daughter of one of the most influential men of the tribe. She is rather taller and her figure is less rounded than that of the average Bulaa women. The skin over her breasts is somewhat wrinkled, but apparently the glands themselves are normally developed. Her thighs and buttocks are tattooed in the usual female manner and her genitals are said to be normal and the mons hairy. As to previous history, as a little girl she preferred playing boys' games which by all accounts she played remarkably well; as she got older she still preferred boys as companions and avoided her own sex. For a long time she resolutely refused to adopt the usual girl's petticoat and at puberty was only compelled by threats to do so. For the next two years her conduct was not remarkable. Menstruation, which was said to be neither

*Cf. Beardmore, *loc. cit.*

irregular nor scanty, occurred and has since been normal in character. At about the age of 16 years she aborted; since then she has lived with her mother and has refused at least three offers of marriage. As far as can be ascertained she has never had a lover of her own sex and since the abortion has lived a solitary life or has at least carried on no intrigue of sufficient duration to arrest public attention. She is said to be more intelligent than the average woman and carries weights man-fashion on her shoulders instead of by a band round her forehead as other women do. In the garden she uses the heavy digging stick (*kai*) for turning over the soil, which is essentially man's work, women, as a rule, only weeding, planting, and digging yams.

An instance of pseudo-hermaphroditism occurring two generations ago was well remembered and appreciated. The subject who, since she had connection in that capacity, was considered a woman, was said to have possessed both penis and vagina; there was some doubt as to whether she had testes. It was stated that she menstruated and passed urine *per vaginam* and that her breasts were small. She wore a modified petticoat, consisting of a short tuft in front and behind, and spent most of her time among the men of the tribe, with whom she took part in any hunting or fighting that was going on.

Gima, aged about 30 years, is a "chief" much trusted by the government and very intelligent. He is thoroughly masculine in appearance and active, plucky, and energetic. Having become a man of importance and a firm supporter of the Government he now wears a jacket and short trousers. It is, however, a matter of common tribal knowledge that his thighs and buttocks are tattooed in the elaborate fashion peculiar to women, without which no girl is considered marriageable. His genitals are said to be normal. He is said to have previously taken the passive part in sodomy soon after puberty, later he married, but had no children, and divorced his wife on the score of infidelity. He has since lived as a bachelor, it is stated to avoid women, and to have, at any rate till very recently, habitually taken the passive part.

I am indebted to Mr. A. C. English, Government agent of the Rigo district, for notes of the following case, that of a man belonging to the Garia, an inland tribe which is gradually pressing down towards the coast from the foothills of the main range.

Unasé is aged about 50 years, unmarried, and is somewhat doubtfully stated to have abstained from intercourse since soon after puberty. His breasts are normally developed and there is hair on his chest; his genitals are normal and hairy; virile organ perhaps rather small; his voice is shrill. He habitually associates with women and accompanies them on their trading expeditions towards the coast, when he carries his "trade" slung by a band round his forehead as women do. He takes a woman's part in domestic and social life as well as in the work he does in the garden. In spite of this he has on one occasion joined a war party and bears on his back the tattoo marks which distinguish the successful homicide.

With these cases may be compared the following occurring in Sarawak among a people in the barbarous stage. At Sibu on the Rejang river, Budok, a Mahomedan Milanau,* probably suffering from elephantiasis, asked for medicine for swellings in both groins. He refused examination and it was noticed that he wore a veil† such as Malay women wear. His voice was soft, not shrill or treble; physically he was small-boned and of a somewhat delicate build, but not undersized, and on the whole masculine in appearance. He was said to have normal breasts and genitals, but not to care for intercourse, in place of which he took the passive role in sodomy. He sat with the women in the house and like them sewed and made clothes, baked cakes, and weeded the paddy fields. He wore women's clothes habitually and whenever possible.

*H. Laing Roth ("The Natives of Sarawak and British North Borneo," vol. I, p. 12) says: "The Milanau are a quiet people, not Mahomedan, but dressing like the Malays and cultivating sago." Recently Mahomedanism has made considerable progress among them; there is, however, no reason to believe that it has led to or encouraged sexual perversion.

†Prostitutes at Kuching wore an exactly similar black veil.

