CA XŌCHIHUA IN OQUICHTLI

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Abstract:

When looking at the understanding of gender and sexual identity, a key way in which we can get to these questions is through language and how it is used. For this paper, I look at the understanding and connection of gender and sexuality for early post-Conquest Nahua through linguistic analysis, primarily focusing on gender expression through key linguistic features and the ties those have on expressed sexual identity. Starting with brief notes on Nahuatl and material manifestations of gender in pre-Hispanic ceramics as a base, I explore how terms for "men" and "women" are expressed and defined before focusing on the phonetic and grammatical ways women and men were differentiated. I then tie these briefly into understandings of Xochihua and what it meant, at the time, to be Nahua.

Suchioa: In suchioa cioatlatole, cioanotzale…
— Florentine Codex, Book 10, Folio 25r

The pervert: The pervert speaks as a woman, of womanly discourse.

Patlache: In patlache: ca tlahelcioatl… oquichnacaio, ôoquichtlaque, ôoquichtlatoa, oquichnenemi.
— Florentine Codex, Book 10, Folio 40v

The hermaphrodite: The hermaphrodite is a dirty woman, of men's flesh and blood, of man's body, of man's speech, of man's living

1. Introduction

The imposition of the Colonial system in New Spain had irreversible effects on the conceptualization of gender and sexuality in the Indigenous lands of Mesoamerica. This is not just due to the introduction of European thoughts and ontologies, but also – and importantly here – the Spanish language and Christianity through the Catholic Church that both acted as extensions of not just the materiality of Colonialism that was present in New Spain, but the cultural conquests that followed and indeed their spiritual heart. As inherently foreign entities to the people of Mesoamerica, and throughout this paper specifically the Nāhua, how language, religion, and state are tied intimately in the efforts of Conquest and Colonization cannot be overstated. They form the basis for the deconstruction and reanalysis, as a whole, of Indigenous cosmologies and understandings of the world, of which gender and sexuality form a significant part.

There are a few reasons for this, which, while I won't be going into as much as I could, I do recommend looking into the *encomienda* system, the *repartimiento* system, and the *New Laws* (of 1542). There are plenty of other systems brought to the Americas implemented by the Conquests and important people involved in them, but I want to focus my attention specifically on the linguistic aspects as seen through Nāhuatl. Nāhuatl, the language of the Nāhua people to

this day, the language of the Aztec Empire, and a Lingua Franca (and co-official language) of New Spain, offers invaluable insight into how gender and sexuality are conceptualized by the Indigenous peoples of the central Valley of Mexico, as much today as in the early Colonial period, which is my focus throughout this paper. There are two methods through which I will aim to understand this connection: the features of the Nāhuatl language itself, grammar-wise through morphology and syntax, and then the use and meaning of language through semantics and pragmatics.

2. Disclaimers

Before continuing, a few disclaimers. While I am focusing on the early post-Conquest period and the Classical Nāhuatl stage of the language (NCI), that does not mean Nāhuatl is not used today as the native language of certain Nahua peoples. Indigeneity and language can be tricky subjects in Mexico, whether that be through the analysis of languages as "dialects" or "languages" (as is common with Nāhuatl), or the connection between Indigeneity and language use. This last point boils down to a very important question concerning Indigeneity: is language knowledge essential to being Indigenous? Language is important to identity and forms *a* cornerstone of culture, but is not *the* keystone – if we limit Indigeneity to containing a certain knowledge of the Indigenous language of the people, are we excluding Indigenous peoples who have had no choice but to lose their language? The history of Colonialism and the Conquest is a messy one, and while I have no immediate connections to the issue as my family has been Hispanicized for *generations* and even more recently anglicized, I felt it was important to bring up as I seek to talk about Indigeneity and Indigenous languages. *En bref*: the Nahua people are still here, but not all of them speak Nāhuatl.

Another note before going into the linguistic analyses: as I mentioned, the Colonial period and imposition of the new Colonial system in New Spain fundamentally changed the nature

surrounding how gender and sexuality were and are today understood. This leads me to the point that the sources we have are, without doubt, fundamentally influenced by the Catholic Church and the new Colonial system in Mexico. While archaeology can be used to understand the materiality of gender and sexuality, especially pre-Conquest (which I discuss briefly), when looking at language and linguistic embodiment of identity, ceramics can only do so much. The linguistic sources that we *do* have that amply aid us in the discussion of these ideas are from after the founding of New Spain and, as such, need to be understood as such. Yes, they greatly help us in understanding language, gender, and sexuality, but there is bias that we need to take a critical look at so as to not fall into the trappings of replicating a Colonial understanding that is at odds with the lived experiences of the Nahua post-Conquest. Not impossible by any stretch of the imagination, but there has to be a variety of sources used and a mental note that, when looking at post-Conquest sources, nothing should be taken strictly at *face value*.

3. Brief Grammatical Notes

An essential element of the Nāhuatl language that speakers of Indo-European languages might not get right away if that each "word," in of itself, contains within itself what J. Richard Andrews calls the *nuclear clause*, which can serve as "(1) as a complete simple sentence; (2) as either a main or a dependent clause in a complex sentence; or (3) as a conjoined clause in a compound sentence" (Andrews 45). Andrews gets into this quite a bit, but to demonstrate it as simply as I can, let's take the following example: **Xōchitl** [ˈʃoːtʃɪtɬ]. **Xōchitl** can further be broken down into two parts: **-xōchi-** (the stem), and **-tl** (the absolutive suffix). The "dictionary form" of **xōchitl** can be understood as "flower," but should be better understood as "they.sg (are) [a/the] flower" *or* "they.pl (are) [the] flowers." For my own ease of understanding Classical Nāhuatl, I translate it simply as **xōchitl** *(3sg/flower)* or *(3pl/flower)* depending on the context. This example also highlights another essential point in Classical Nāhuatl: the lack of gender on the whole in

Classical Nāhuatl. Going into gender and sexuality, this will be important to keep in mind – take for example the following two sentences, both taken from James Lockhart's *Nahuatl as Written*:

tehuatl	ni-mo-macehual
2SG.PRON	**1SG.SBJT-2SG.POSS/NML-subject**
	I am your *subject*

amo	∅-qual-li	∅-tlaca-tl	amo	∅-nech-palehuia
not	**3SG.SBJT-good-ABS**	**3SG.SBJT-person-ABS**	**not**	**3SG.SBJT-1SG.OBJ/V-help**
		[He] is not a good person, [he] does not help me		

In neither of these sentences is any person inherently gendered as an aspect of the language as would happen in Spanish. The masculine inference of the second sentence is due to the context of it, not due to any feature of what is being said itself. This holds true for a lot of Classical Nahuatl, but there are gendered terms for certain nouns as we will get into, alongside differences in the *cultural* uses of terms that do not inherently have gender.

4. Brief Archaeological Notes on Gender

Now, before further delving into the language of gender and sexuality for the Nahua in post-Conquest Mexico, I want to take a brief look at pre-Conquest Mexica ceramics as, while more of an indicator of pre-Colonial Mexica gender dynamics, they still reflect the general outlines of some Nahua (specifically the Valley of Mexico) gender dynamics that are seen to this day.

TABLE 1 ***Distribution of Action or Occupation in Mexica Ceramics by Gender and Culture***

ACTION / OCCUPATION	GENDER		
	Man	**Woman**	**Unknown**
Warrior	**7**	–	–
Religious Impersonation	**5**	–	–
Musician	**4**	–	–
Adolescent	**2**	–	–
Old	**2**	–	–
Priest	**1**	–	–
Load Bearer	**1**	–	–
Royal/aligned	**1**	–	–
Commoner	**1**	–	–
Sick/Deformed	**1**	–	–
Dead	**1**	–	**1**
With Children	–	**3**	–
In Bed	–	**2**	**1**
Religious Devotion	–	**1**	**1**
Cooking	–	**1**	–
With Animals	–	**1**	–
With Nature	–	**1**	–
Hearth/aligned	–	**1**	–
Autosacrifice	–	–	**2**

For my methodology, I went through the digital collection for the Mexica for Mexico's *Museo Nacional de Antropología* (MNA), its *National Museum of Anthropology*. I mainly looked at ceramics noticeably concerning gender, and then organized them according to the action they were doing and by the associated gender, discounting from **TABLE 1** deities and unknown actions.

Looking at the table, there are two prevalent things that we can see right off the bat: 1). men are much more prevalent in ceramics than women, and 2). there is a distinct difference in the manners of how women are depicted versus how men are depicted. While I don't like applying Western understandings of the gender divide to non-Western socio-cultural contexts, that men are shown in much more public aspects than women who are shown in more family or "private" aspects is visible — *at least in this very simple look at ceramics*. And this is only to speak of the Mexica and not wider Mesoamerica. Keep these in mind when we start looking at the division of gender and its ties into sexuality, as these will be important in understanding how the gender divide is conceptualized and *who* should be doing *what*. Men, for their part, are mainly shown in this collection as warriors, religious impersonators, musicians, and in age differences. Women (in ceramics numbering over 1 piece), are shown with children and in bed. That men are seen as more "active" and dominant than women, who are seen in a more "passive" and subservient light, is not lost in the linguistic differentiations that define both *man* and *woman*, and how non-standard sexual and gender identities embody transgressions beyond these boundaries.

5. The Language of "Man" and "Woman"

With the archaeological depictions of man, *oquichtli*, and woman, *cihuātl* out of the way, how do these hold up against the definitions of either term in grammars and dictionaries? Fear not! I've compiled a comparative table below.

TABLE 2 ***Comparative Definitions of Man (Oquichtli) and Woman (Cihuātl) in Nahuatl Grammars and Dictionaries***

	OQUICHTLI	*CIHUĀTL*
Molina 1571	Man, or male in ever species (78)	Woman (22)
Karttunen 1983	Man, male, husband (180)	Woman, wife (35)
Bierhost 1985	Man, consort, husband, brave,	Woman, wife, female,

	warrior, male, "woman who assumes the masculine role in a lesbian relationship," surrogate [male sexual organ] (252-53)	effeminate (87)
Wood	Man, husband, masculinity, manliness, courage, bravery	Woman, wife, uterus, possibly hymen

For the most part, there is nothing seemingly *out of place* when it comes to *oquichtli* and *cihuātl*, but — especially as seen through Bierhost and Wood — we start to see a difference in how *oquichtli*, specifically, is defined, with Lockhart stating that "in verbal compounds it often refers to valor" (Lockhart 228). *Oquichtli* also seems to hold different meaning when compounded with other words (Nahuatl being agglutinative), which we can see through the following definitions also provided by Lockhart:

OQUICHHUAH. *Married woman, person with a man* (Lockhart 228).

OQUICHŌTIA, NIN. *For a woman to marry* (Lockhart 228).

OQUICHŌ-TL. *Manliness, valor* (Lockhart 228).

OQUICHTLATQUI-TL. *Man's gear, the typical possessions of a man* (Lockhart 228).

Cihuātl, as given in *Nahuatl as Written*, is not treated the same in Nahuatl compounds:

CIHUĀCAL-LI. *A house at times occupied or inherited by women (full definition not well understood)* (Lockhart 215).

CIHUĀHUAH. *Married man* (Lockhart 215).

CIHUĀMŌN -(TLI). *Daughter-in-law* (Lockhart 215).

CIHUĀPAN. *(In the) women's quarters* (Lockhart 215).

CIHUĀPIL-LI. *Lady, noblewoman* (Lockhart 215).

CIHUĀTLAMACHTIA, NITLA. *A possible ad hoc construction for a warrior who acts like a woman* (Lockhart 215).

CIHUĀTLAQUI-TL. *Woman's things, household goods* (Lockhart 215).

Between both *oquichtli* and *cihuātl*, we see that there is an amount of differentiation that takes place when joining *cihuātl* with certain nouns. Not only does *cihuātl* indicate that the following noun (*the first noun in a compound acts as an adjective*) is either related to women or seen as embodying perceived behavior of women, but also to indicate that certain things is the woman equivalent of a noun, like the difference between actor and act*ress*.

6. Neutrality and Custom

I mentioned earlier that nouns are, overall, neutral in terms of gender, but that doesn't necessarily mean that they are in practice. Compared to *oquichtli* and *cihuātl*, *pilli* is an ungendered term for "lord" or "child" and can be used for both men and women; however, in practice, it is customary when referring to women to note specifically that a woman is being referenced by using the gendered stem -*cihuātl*- (Andrews 295). Andrews earlier states that with animate-entity[1] noun stems, either gendered term can be used to refer to its sex, but with humans they are usually neutral but *can* follow that same pattern if desired *or customary* (Andres 286). Another term like this relates to divinity (especially in the plural): *tēteoh* **[3PL.divinity]**, but *cihuātēteoh* **[3PL.divinity.F]**. *Cihuātēteoh* also refers to "divine women," or those women who died in childbirth.

Aside from the differences between gendered terms and then gendering otherwise neutral terms due to custom, there are also differences in custom between which term *itself* is used. One of these differences can be seen between *conētl* and the aforementioned *pilli*. For Michel Launey, the difference is that *conētl* refers to a small child mostly in relation to the mother, while *pilli* "is not necessarily young and is in relation with the parents in general" (Launey 20). According to

[1] Nahuatl differentiates between *animate* and *inanimate*, with that difference usually being between animals and "objects," though this *isn't* always the case. When referring to sex, Andrews means that in Nahuatl we can add a stem *oquichtli*- or *cihuātl*- to an animate nounstem (like *mazā-tl*, "deer") to signify that they are either male (*oquichmazātl*, "buck") or female (*cihuāmazātl*, "doe") (Andrews 286).

Bierhost, *conētl* can also be used to refer to one's husband, or father (Bierhost 92).

7. Man's Speech

7.1 Phonetics

Nahuatl phonetics are notoriously difficult, especially consonants such as ***/t͡ɬ/,*** though this is far from the only one. There is a big distinction between syllable-initial voiced and syllable-final devoiced consonants in some consonants: ***/l/*** versus ***/ɬ/***; ***/n/*** versus ***/n̥/***, ***/j/*** versus ***/ç/***, ***/kʷ/*** versus ***/kʷ/***, and ***/w/*** versus ***/w̥ /***. One of these distinctions, however, should not be treated as the rest of the phonetic inventory of Classical Nahuatl. While the voiced-devoiced difference hold up for the aforementioned sets of consonants, there is one set that cannot be held as equal to all Nahuatl speakers, and that ***/w/*** versus ***/w̥ /***, which, per Andrews, "are used by male speakers" (Andrews 2003). So, as a note, generally when learning Classical Nahuatl in particular, the language that is being learned uses the masculine pronunciation of the voiced and devoiced consonant usually written as *hu-* and *-uh* in Classical and Neoclassical orthographies (and those that take on that same standard). Look at the following 8 examples example2 (4 each voiced and devoiced):

Huēhueteōtl	**Nanāhuātzin**	**Ānāhuac**	**Mācēhualli**
Old, Old God	*Swollen Glands (rev.)*	*[Place] Next to the Water*	*Commoner*
[**we**ːwe**ˈ**teoːt͡ɬ]	[nɑnɑːˈ**w**aːtsin]	[ɑːˈnɑː**w**ɑk]	[mɑːseːˈ**w**ɑlːi]
Tōnatiuh	**Poliuhqui**	**Icnīuhtli**	**Xiuhtecuhtli**
The sun, day	Something lost	Friend, companion	Lord of Fire/Turquoise
[toːˈnɑtiw̥]	[poˈliw̥ki]	[ikˈniːw̥tɬi]	[ʃiw̥ˈteːkʷt͡ɬi]

7.2 Grammatical Patterns

7.2.1 The Vocative

Nahuatl doesn't have a lot of nominal declensions, I'd say that they don't have noun cases as it is, but rather constructions that can be formed from the noun itself that evoke nominal declension. The vocative is one of these, which itself has two forms: a "faux" vocative and then a "true" vocative. The faux vocative is formed with the second-person, a "supplementary subject whose head is in an optative" verb form (Andrews 147). Due to the translation into English (and Spanish) it has been called a vocative, but it's really a *"sort of vocative"* more than anything.

∅-xi-huāllauh	in	ti-cihuā-tl
3SG.SBJT-2SG.IMP-come	—	**2SG.SBJT-woman-ABS**

Come, you, woman!

That said, the faux vocative, from what I've found, is not gendered in the way that it is utilized, but I thought it essential to discuss the ungendered faux vocative before heading into the "true" vocative so as to avoid confusion between the two.

The *true* vocative form is formed by the *third person*, and no command or admonition has to be in the accompanying clause (Andrews 147). As we are discussing this under the section of men's speech, there has to be a relation between gender and vocative, and that'd be right. This is not in the use of the vocative as a case, however, but rather in its specific formations. For men, this is accomplished by adding an *-é* as a suffix to the noun *form* (<u>not</u> stem) (Andrews 147, Wright Carr 105, Launey 81). This is also the only exception to the rule of penultimate stress (Andrews 147). Take the following two examples from Andrews (147):

∅-xi-huāllauh	∅-cihuā-tl-é
3SG.SBJT-2SG.IMP-come	**3SG.SBJT-woman-ABS-VOC**

Come, O woman!

∅-xi-huāllauh	no-cihuā-huān-é
3SG.SBJT-2SG.IMP-come	**1SG.POSS-woman-POSS.PL-VOC**

Come, O, my wives!

7.2.2 "Bonding"

Men also have a special form of relating to a group of men, compared to what women can linguistically. Andrews separates this into two: the modifier and the supplement. In this part, I will be talking about the modifier, and in the following I will be discussing the supplement.

This is an idiomatic expression that can be used by men when using *oquichtli*, so long as the man in question has some sort of relationship to other men — whether that be a social or familial tie (Andrews 429). To form the "male-bonding modifier" (as named by Andrews), the man who seeks to do so uses the first person plural subject pronoun marker (*to-*) on *oquichtli* (which takes the plural *oquich**tin***), and there is "no agreement between the subject pronoun and that of a cooperating [noun]" with modification (Andrews 429).

Cē-(meh)	t-oquich-tin	ōmpa	∅-yāz
one-(PL)	**1PL.POSS-man-man.PL**	**there**	**3SG.SBJT-go.FUT**

One man (of us) will go there

The previous example, taken from Andrews (429), can also be understood as *"one of us men will go there,"* focusing on being part of an in-group. Here we can see that men focus on, dare I say, kinship relations in how they speak about said groups and actions taken amongst them, which is also taken when referring to women as "one of you women" (Launey 267). The way women explore this is later discussed under 8.3.3.

7.2.3 Supplementation

Finally, for the men, there is the "male-bonding supplement," which Andrews describes as when *oquichtli* is used as a supplement that speaks to men in a more generalized notion. Much like the modifier bond above, but instead of speaking about a *part* of the group, they are speaking *of* the group of which he's a member, using the first-person plural subject, although the noun's head pronoun can be third person (Andrews 146).

8. Women's Speech

8.1 Phonetics

The phonetics exhibited by women are largely the same, with one key difference, the consonants represented by syllable-initial *hu-* and syllable-final *-uh*. Instead of representing the sounds ***/w/*** versus ***/w̥/***, they instead represent the sounds ***/β/*** versus ***/ɸ/***, respectively (Andrews 28, Wright Carr 100.) The previous examples for the vocalization for one would thus be closer to as follows:

Huēhueteōtl	**Nanāhuātzin**	**Ānāhuac**	**Mācēhualli**
[**β**eːβeˈteoːt͡ɬ]	[nɑnɑːˈβaːtsin]	[ɑːˈnɑːβɑk]	[mɑːseːˈβɑlːi]
Tōnatiuh	**Poliuhqui**	**Icnīuhtli**	**Xiuhtecuhtli**
[toːˈnɑtiɸ]	[poˈliɸki]	[ikˈniːɸtɬi]	[ʃiɸˈteːkᶲt͡ɬi]

Note that even with the *-cu(h)*, and by extension *-uc,* follow the same changes, from ***/kʷ/*** and ***/kʷ̥/*** to ***/kᵝ/*** versus ***/kᶲ/***.

On a side note that's important in understanding language transmission, these voicings of *hu-*, *-uh*, *cu-*, and *-uc* are kept in some contemporary variants of Central Nahuatl. Some variants have taken on a full aspiration, and this of course changes variant to variant, though the central variants are much more conservative than other other variants such as Huasteca (the most widely

spoken variant of Nahuatl today), which has been highly hispanicized in both pronunciation and grammar. I take this to suggest that the language transfer of Nahuatl in the region of the Central variant has been passed down, by and large, by women. Given the history of colonialism and migration, I don't find this surprising, but that's for another paper.

8.2 Interjections

Nahuatl has a wide variety of interjections, and while they're not typically gendered (by my looking at Andrews*), there is one that he explicitly states is used by women, and that is *nō*, meaning "woe!" or "alas!" (Andrews 42). Other examples of interjection include *āuh* (approval or surprise), *hue/ya* (alas!), and *iye* (yes!). Men, for their part, have the vocative noun-form final *-é,* which is bound to said noun-form (Andrews 42).

8.3 Grammatical Patterns

8.3.1 The Vocative

The vocative for women serves the same role as it does for me, however the way that the construct it differs. For women, the vocative case is formed by keeping the third person ending and moving stress from the penultimate to the last syllable (in this, the *-é* is not the **only** exception to the rule, but rather represents the only systemic exception: that of the vocative) (Launey 82, Wright Carr 106). Launey provides four examples on this regard (82):

∅-cihu**á**-tl	∅-Pedr**ó**	∅-tē-tēcuh-**tín**	∅-pil-**lí**
3SG.SBJT-woman-ABS	**3SG.SBJT-Pedro**	**3PL.SBJT-lord.PL-lord-PL**	**3SG.SBJT-lord-ABS**
Woman!	*Pedro!*	*Lords!*	*Child!*

Compared to the men's formation, there are two main ways that the formation women take differ: 1). they don't take the final *-é*, 2). they keep the ending for the third person (plural or singular) and move the stress to *that* syllable. One may note that Pedro has a null subject marker

for the third person singular subject prefix (which, along with its plural counterpart, is inherently inferred), this is because names in Nahuatl are inherently in the third person singular.

8.3.3 "Bonding"

Whereas men explore the themes of actions taken by an individual from a group as an extension of that group, women, much as is generally done in English and Spanish, say "a woman," *cē cihuātl*. They can additionally show *possession*. Launey provides the following two examples (267):

Cē no-cihuā-poh

one 1SG.POSS-woman-like/equal

One woman like myself

Cē to-cihuā-poh

one 1PL.POSS-woman-like/equal

One woman like ourselves

While women don't necessarily refer to another as being part of an in-group as the men do in their constructions, they *can* refer to another as being equal; rather than being an expression of an in-group, it's, to me, a representation that while exterior to the woman speaking, they exist on equal ground. This is not to say anything of how kinship networks are expressed within social boundaries at a personal level, just looking at the linguistic level of how these ideas are expressed through language.

This concludes the discussion regarding gender and language itself, which while short, provides a look at exactly *how* gender is expressed through the patterns of language whether that be through phonetics, or grammatical patterns (social customs surrounding word use aside). With

this laid out, the last few pages will be looking at how these tie into sexuality and, by extension, sexual transgression (at least regarding post-Conquest inherently Colonial sources), especially in terms of the *xōchihua*.

9. Xochihua

[2]

Xochihua as a term translates to "flower-bearer," which the University of Oregon site *Online Nahuatl Dictionary* (Wood) further describes as

> *A possessor of flowers; someone who bewitches or seduces women (Wimmer 2004, citing Sahagún); Sahagún describes a doer of evil, a feminine man, and a*

[2] *The perverts and the damnation of the sodomite*. 2023, Digital Florentine Codex, J. Paul Getty Trust, https://florentinecodex.getty.edu/book/10/folio/25v/images/b44cae48-70a6-4b07-a688-fb713ae9b189

"pervert" in different books.

The name is not coincidental when it comes to understanding sexuality and gender. The flower, in this instance, represents a cross-dressing figure (Sigal 21), which can be seen in the above image where there are two men present in women's clothes, speaking with a flower, *xōchitl*, between them. Sigal further defines the meaning of the flower is Nahua cosmovision as a "vital metaphor" that "is used to emphasize the importance of philosophy, poetry, and song; it is a general symbol of life's dualities" (Sigal 21). Thinking back to the quote from the Florentine Codex about the "suchioa" (this is how it is written in the codex and does not reflect and later orthographic standards), being a possessor of flowers should not be seen quite in a positive light despite the other connotations that they have. Whether this reflects pre-Hispanic thought or is influenced by the Catholic overseers is much out of the purview of this essay, but yet again something to keep in mind. This is especially as Sigal says on the next page that "other primary sources maintain with convincing regularity that the xochihua was a cross-dresser" (22).

The image of the flower in the above image signals both sexuality and excess, which can also be seen throughout the codex (and other sources), such as the following set of images of prostitutes, an *āhuiyani*:



3

[3]

Again, flowers are a symbol of both sexuality and its transgression. This can be further understood in a *cihuāteōtl*, *Xōchiquetzal*, who Herself is represented by flowers (and quetzal, precious feathers, hence Her name "flowery quetzal." She is a deity associated with sexuality and pleasure, and if we tie that into both the *xōchihua* and the *āhuiyani*, it further reinforces the ideas of flowers being connected with sexuality and, under certain conditions, *excess*. Concerning this idea, Sigal says that in pre-Hispanic Mexico, an "interpreter and other Nahuas would have known that the figure was a cross-dressed male by identifying the significance of the flower, here thus a privileged signifier of a particular gendered performance incorporating transvestism" (Sigal 22).

In a society that highly prizes masculinity and what it means to be *oquichtli*, transgressing those norms is highly stigmatized, but also *institutionalized*, given how much language goes into constructing these views and understandings of what it means to be gendered and what it means to *transgress* gender, the *xōchihua* being seen as effeminate. Seeing as there's a word specifically for men who behaved as women (that we saw earlier, ***cihuātlamachtia, nitla***), this is of no particular surprise. This is further proven by the fact that many nobles has a *xōchihua*, much as a domestic servant, to perform chores at home, at the temple, accompany warriors to war, and provide plenty of other *services* to warriors when at war, and also to priests and nobles in as a servant (Sigal 23). On this last note, there was a subdivision of *xōchihua*, *cuiloni*, who particularly embodied the passive sexual role of the *xōchihua*, which shared similarities with how taking a passive role was seen in the Classical world of Greece and Rome (though in its own social context). Again, the Florentine Codex, where Sigal is doing his analysis is a post-Conquest text, which means that understandings of the Classical world may have been in the understanding that the Spanish had when looking to understand what it meant to transgress social boundaries concerning sexuality and gender in Mesoamerica. This is just but theory, but as a pillar in the

[3] *In ahuiyani*. 2023, Digital Florentine Codex, J. Paul Getty Trust, https://florentinecodex.getty.edu/book/10/folio/39v/images/db319d6d-6a36-4426-a2ac-e8924f4dd6ac

development of the Western world and its culture, it's an interesting thought.

11. Conclusions

As I come to a close, the intricate interwoven web of how gender, sexuality, and language interact with each other is as prevalent and, to an extent, evasive as ever. We can understand how language is used, we can understand its limitations, we can understand the theoretical applications of it, but that doesn't always mean that we get the whole picture of what it meant to be any particular person in the Colonial post-Conquest Nahua world. How men had the ability to embody their identity through language versus how women could, and the subtle changes in how they shaped — and passed down — that language is undeniable, especially when looking at the state of Nahuatl today. When understanding *oquichtli*, *cihuātl*, and *xōchihua*, there is an underlying foundation to this all: gender and sexuality are not solid and immovable forms — they can change, and how we engage with those aspects in language tells us a lot about *who* we are. Not only our place in society, but the deeper cultural implications of what it meant to be *Nahua*.

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