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HIS/ETHN 118

11 December 2023

### Gender Roles of Ancient Civilizations Compared to the Present Year

There is a significance to the past in connection with the present that sets the foundation for the future. Gender roles of Ancient Maya and Aztec society portray there are distinct tasks performed by each gender, this system works to take care of the community as a whole. Today, the living descendants of Ancient Maya or Aztec ancestry, do not live their lives by solid and definite roles. In the city living of San Diego, those in power are not of the same culture, in fact, the ‘culture’ of the entire u.s, in connection with California where San Diego is located, is every man/woman for themselves. What this has done to the people as a collective, is created the social ideal/act of individualism. Roles, and more specifically gender roles were put in place to help run an empire as a whole, since we do not have that in present times, there is no empire and the organizations in power will eventually fall due to internal and external discrepancies.

The culture of Aztec society embedded in an empire run by an emperor/leader. Family was sacred in Aztec society and culture. “Family life was important to the Aztecs. Every family member had a job to do.” (Landau 19) The specific roles were placed onto an individual according to status and gender. The men of the families were expected to provide for their wives

and offspring. They worked jobs of trade, such as wood-carvers, soldiers, potters, hunters, and metal/stone work. Women of the families were expected to do the household duties, such as cooking, cleaning, making clothing/house items, and caring for the children. The women could also learn trade work to sell their goods at the market for extra income. Young boys and girls learned the gender roles at a young age so they could take on the tasks honorably as they grow to become adults. Education was important in Aztec society, each boy and girl learned history, war, religion and culture. The children of nobles went to different schools that broadened their education, which equipped them with the abilities to seek higher positions for career and social purposes.

The Maya civilization had similar social and cultural aspects as the Aztec. For instance, just as Aztec society, family was important in Mayan life. “Maya families usually lived together in one small house. Everyone in the household helped with daily work.” Just like Aztec gender roles, young girls and boys were taught them alongside their gender specific teachers, usually the parents or relatives. “Boys helped their fathers in the fields, and went with them on hunting and fishing trips. Girls stayed at home with their mothers and learned how to cook, weave cloth and look after the home.” (Ganeri 24) There is a difference in how Maya children were raised than how Aztec children were raised. In Maya culture, school was not something that was taught vigorously.

The similarities of gender roles in these ancient civilizations paints a picture of the importance of creating a foundation, for example teaching children the roles and ways they can provide for their family at that time and it teaches them how to provide for their family they will have in the future. This foundation is part of a system that works to collectively function as a

whole for the greater good of the empire. Another similarity between these two civilizations was the ability to farm and produce food. This was a skill necessary to feed the whole community, future generations and keep the empire running and thriving. “*Food procurement, preparation, and storage* apparently were carried on by every household during the period 1500-500 BC” (Smith and Masson 28) Food was life for both these ancient civilizations.

In the present day, Ancient civilizations do not exist. But the descendants of these Ancient people are still living and thriving despite losing our foundations in connection to our native culture that was created hundreds of years ago. Gender roles are not so transparent as they were in societies of Ancient Maya and Ancient Aztec. But society has changed dramatically since the times of Ancient Mesoamerica. As told by my fellow colleague/friend and founder of the community organization that creates spaces for those Chicano/Chicana stories to be shared, Firme Voices creator Bertin said, ““In Chicano and Chicana culture, gender roles transform, creating empowerment that transcends traditional norms.” (Bertin) The realities of the changing times, calls for ever changing normalities that are not present and cannot be replicated from the past.

In conclusion, gender roles in relation to Ancient civilizations of Aztec and Maya were important to life and society. Each gender had specific roles that were taught and mastered to be part of the collective of each family and family was the most important aspect of life. A few hundred years later, today, gender roles are not specific. But we have all had to adjust to the changes and at least now, have a little more freedom to be able to choose what we want to do, whether we choose to live close to traditional gender roles or more modern gender roles.

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