



# **Sexual Hierarchies, Public Status: Men, Sodomy, and Society in Spain's Golden Age**

*Cristian Berco*

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Despite the increasing popularity of queer scholarship, no major work in English thus far has explored the evidence of male homosexual behaviour found in the inquisitorial court records of early modern Spain. This absence seems all the more glaring considering the wealth of available archival material. *Sexual Hierarchies, Public Status* aims to fill this gap by comprehensively examining the Aragonese Inquisition's sodomy trials.

Using court records, Cristian Berco provides an analysis of male sexuality and its connection to public social structures and processes. His study illustrates how male homosexual behaviour existed within a widespread gendered system that extolled the penetrative act as the masculine pursuit of an emasculated passive partner. This sexual hierarchy based on masculinity constantly intersected in a potentially subversive manner with notions of public hierarchy and posed a threat to local sexual economies. Yet, Berco demonstrates how the views of private denouncers and magistrates in the sodomy trials produced divergent sexual economies that rendered persecution unstable and diffuse. By focusing on how hierarchies were created both within sexual relationships and in the public eye, this investigation traces the significance of homosexual desire in the context of daily social relations informed by status, ethnic, religious, and national differences.

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