

always a lag between the source of a narrative and its widespread acceptance.

NOTES

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DISCUSSION

DECIPHERING THE NATURES OF LUST

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We seem a curiously cursed species, caught in a dichotomizing combination of a lusting subjectivity and the experience of being an object of lust. We know we desire and we know we are desired, subject and object in a web of arousals and genders and roles and impersonations of natural order. It is the naturalness of engendered sexuality which is being questioned now, as anthropologists turn the subtlety of our analytic lens on a close examination of what, at least for those of us encultured into the European tradition, is a fundamental attribute of personhood and being. In this discussion I want to extend the range of questions which the insightful papers gathered here raise to a more general concern for how we 'read' sexual meaning from the anthropological evidence. What follows is in two parts. The first questions recent evidence from Brazil regarding the coexistence of mutually exclusive schemes of sexual classification in a single social milieu. My concern in that discussion is how frames of observation applied to novel contexts distort our ability to see sex and sexuality as they are lived. The second section of this discussion considers why Western analysts appear to be trapped in these limiting frames by

deciphering the Eurocentric assumptions which are embedded in much research and writing on sex and sexuality in other cultures.

Part 1:

MULTIPLE SEXUALITIES AND THE QUESTION OF SCALE

Parker (1985:159) considers "the extent to which multiple systems of sexual classification can co-exist and in fact intertwine within the context of a single social fabric" to be one of the most important and innovative conclusions of anthropologists conducting research on gender and sexuality in Brazil.

There are several assumptions embedded in Parker's approving reaction to the work on sex and gender emerging from Brazil. In order to consider the implications of these assumptions, I want to test them against the evidence from Oceania. In particular, the assertion from researchers in Brazil that varieties of expressed sexual identity represent multiple classificatory schemes needs to be placed alongside similar researches in the Pacific. To facilitate this discussion I will limit my consideration to only four cases, two each from Melanesia and Polynesia, but with this important *caveat*. There is no critical literature on sex, sexuality, and gender in Polynesia comparable to that which has emerged out of Melanesia in the last 15 to 20 years. Drawing comparisons between the two regions is difficult. To forestall any concern about over-generalization, my comparative comments should be read as society-specific observations. My own future research will aim to unravel these issues in the Pacific and elsewhere. I will treat four issues here: gender classification, acquiring gender, sexual behaviour and sexual identities, and the circulation of semen, using four societies: Sambia, Kaluli, Tahiti and Western Samoa.

GENDERS

There is a problem in discussions of gender in that they begin from the necessity that there be at least two genders which are distinctly coded within a single frame. Even while acknowledging that the experience of gender will be different for bearers of one gender or the other, studies as complex as Strathern (1985) or as simplistic as Mead (1961) begin with the assumption that all cultures of gender begin on the same playing field with the same basic raw material. Morphological difference, these studies assert, forces all societies to address a simple and singular problem. There are two types of humans.

This is not the case for the Sambia (Herdt 1981, 1984). They begin from a different assumption about gender status which complicates our bi-polar assumption in that they begin from the position of fundamental genderlessness or, more precisely, from the recognition of gender as a potential rather than an obviation of biology. The problem this poses is one of ambiguity which results in dramatic performances of gender classification in adult life. The end product, two diametrically opposed gender classes, is a function of a complex concern for resolving this ambiguity rather than a predetermining model of absolute opposites. Gender classification for the Sambia is, therefore, not a comment about dimorphism and its consequences. Sambian gender is a contingent classification system embedded in wider concerns for properly channelled physical powers which must be reasserted at regular intervals, especially in the inscribing of maleness on the amorphous and unfocused bodies of children.

In contrast, the Kaluli (Schieffelin 1977) begin from an assumption of polymorphic gender essentialism in that they express at least four gender classes which turn on the virginity of the bearers. Young Kaluli males are distinctive in the essence of their maleness, preferred as hunters as a function of a purity which is not sullied by sexual expression. Likewise, Kaluli females possess an originating gender essence which is supplanted by a new gender as a result of marriage, copulation, and childbirth. Young Kaluli males and females possess parallel essential genders in that each is premised on purity but this should not be taken to be similar to the ambiguity of the gender of Sambian children because there is no sense, for the Kaluli, that these essential natures are in any way fragile or tenuous. Rather, they are profoundly different from the essential natures which emerge in adulthood in such a way as to suggest the existence of four gender classes which are marked by behavioural changes. Where the Sambian child becomes male or female, the Kaluli adult switches genders completely, while remaining essentially either male or female.

Both Samoa (Shore 1981, 1982) and Tahiti (Levy 1973, Oliver 1981:271-339) express a similar gender essentialism, but in this case that essence is given at birth. While these essential gender natures only slowly come into expression, they are not understood to change so much as they are conceived of as overtaking behaviour. This process of developing into the expression of one's gender begins in early childhood, where gender specific expressions of classificatory difference are acknowledged and encouraged (Ochs 1988). What distinguishes this system of classification from the two Melanesian cases, however, is the existence of at least three classes of gender rather than only two (or arguably, four). The Samoan

fa'afafine and the Tahitian *mahu* are bearers of a third gender, in these cases a third gender which can be borne only by biological males. From all accounts this third gender is not simply a distortion of one or both of the others, as Shore (1981) claims, but a distinctive category of gender difference which stands alongside 'male' and 'female'. In Polynesia, love is indeed a many-gendered thing. While there are differences between the two Polynesian cases, in that *fa'afafines* appear to be more common in Samoa than *mahus* are in Tahiti, and in the greater ritual importance of *mahus* for Tahitians (Gilmore 1990:206-209), they are still comparable in that they locate gender somewhere other than on the surface of the body. Where the Sambias inscribe gender classification on the surface of the body, and the Kaluli read changes in gender from the actions by which the body is used to inscribe social space, the two Polynesian examples locate gender at the level of 'culture-driven' psychological essences (Schweder 1991) which are given expression in the body rather than defined by it. I will return to the 'problem' of the *fa'afafine* below.

This has implications for Parker's observation, because it calls into question whether gender can simply be observed on the surface of a gender-defined body. The four cases here suggest that multiplicities can be over-read when, in fact, they are features of coherent systems of classification, although systems which use different modes of evidence to draw their conclusions.

ACQUIRING GENDER

The second issue has to do with whether differences in how full gendered status is acquired by males and females constitutes multiple systems of sexual meaning in Pacific societies. Parker asserts that, for the Brazilian case, "an emphasis . . . [on] . . . temporal relationships allows an understanding of sexual classification as an ongoing historical process"(1985:160). An analysis of engendering practices provides one such temporal vantage point.

There is no doubt in my mind that Sambians acquire gender through the actions of initiation. In particular, males emerge from a nebulous non-gender through the direct intervention of adult men, and the direct collusion of adult women. Women, on the other hand, appear to emerge into their female gender almost automatically. Their ultimate acquisition of gender is **apparently** given in body processes such as menstruation. I stress the word **apparently** because Herdt's evidence for female engenderment is sketchy and very vague. However, from his explication of the male ideology of engenderment, we are probably relatively safe in

recognizing that Sambian males are made, while females may simply emerge. What is less clear is whether these differences in engenderment represent oppositional understandings or simply different expressions of the same basic premise. Herdt is clear in that he sees male engenderment as serving to counter the ill-effects of female 'polluting' influence on pre-males who are, by virtue of adult male concern with warfare, necessarily left to be socialized by females. This puts boys at risk of not completing their development into full social beings because, during their early, non-gendered phase, they are subjected to influences which may resolve their ambiguous natures in such a way as to deflect their full social potency away from necessary male pursuits. At issue here is a formal distinction between female power and male power, as expressed in engendered bodies. Female power, emerging rather than instilled, inspires fear because it is not ambiguous but persistent and obviated by biology. Male power must be made to inspire fear through intervening adults who employ pain and terror, along with insemination, to assert a dis-ambiguous maleness which depends on and, therefore, perpetuates the very ambiguity it seeks to overcome.

In contrast to the Sambia, the Kaluli do not build men so much as they 'jump start' their transition from young male gender to adult male gender. Kaluli oppositions between genders, while deriving from what appears to be a general Melanesian concern for the ill effects women may have on men, are not so much hostile as they are necessities of male and female natures. As such, males acquire their new adult gender through a combination of exposure to secrets, such as hunting and ritual skills, and insemination through homosexual acts which stimulate the development of powers which will protect their physical bodies from debilitation through physical contact with adult women. The issue is not retrieving an endangered male gender from ambiguity but, rather, ensuring a complete transition to productive male adulthood. There is ambiguity in this process of acquiring their new male gender in that there is a necessary articulation between male power and success and exposure to the physical dangers of women's powers in sexual reproduction, a source of tension given expression in male sexual reticence. The important point here is that, like the Sambia, the acquisition of adult male gender for the Kaluli is distinctive from that of females in that it requires direct intervention (Schieffelin 1990:265 n.2). Unlike the Sambia, however, once it is acquired it does not require re-enforcement.

Shore claims that, in Samoa, only males have gender. He bases this startling assertion on a distinction between reproductive and psychological sexualities, and claims that women's sexual natures are directly focused on

procreation while males' natures are focused on controlling, rather than directly participating in reproduction. Women's sexual natures are, therefore, organic and tied to their body processes, while men are psychologically sexual in that their natures focus on patterns of behaviour which are acquired. In this way, Shore's observations on gender acquisition parallel those from studies in Melanesia. Men learn their way into maleness while women have femaleness written into their bodies at birth. However, because such a model cannot account for what I claim is a tri-gender model of classification in Samoan sexual culture, I cannot accept Shore's claims in their entirety. Contrasting Shore's assertions about male socialization into gendered status with Mead's earlier observations on female movement into full womanhood, it is clear that two distinctive models of engenderment are operating, but that each is premised on the same general assumption about essential natures. In the Samoan case, essentially male, female, and *fa'afafine* persons learn the appropriate expression of their essences, but only males and *fa'afafines* appear to acquire recognized full gender status through intervention, males through tattooing and *fa'afafines* through instruction by females. What is interesting is that explicit rituals of instruction are performed by adult females, but in the service of bringing non-female *fa'afafines* to full gender. Full womanhood is accomplished by restraint rather than intervention, and in this it is young males rather than females who confer full gendered status on women through protective control, first of sisters by brothers, then by husbands over wives. Where opposition, either hostile or benignly necessary, informs the acquisition of full gendered status in the Melanesian cases, in Samoa gender is actualized in interactions between genders more so than in rituals of opposition. This is especially apparent in tattooing of males, which does not distinguish males and females so much as it expresses male values of excess and restraint which do not negate or express fear of femaleness. Tattooing inscribes adulthood on males, not maleness on adults. Because gender is given in essential natures which are not related to each other in a relationship of relative value, acquiring full gender does not entail either opposition or complementarity, but simply distinctive co-existence.

Without negating Parker's observations on the Brazilian cases, once again it is apparent from the Pacific cases that classificatory distinctions, as they manifest themselves in behaviours surrounding the acquisition of recognizable gendered status, do not necessarily generate multiplicities. These distinctions are coherent within a single, if complex, frame of meaning. Engenderment, therefore, does not produce evidence of multiple sexual schemes in these Pacific societies.

SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR AND SEXUAL IDENTITIES

Copulatory practices and their relationship to schemes of sexual meaning form a different matrix in which multiplicities may find expression. In particular, how sex acts are classified might provide evidence that there is more than one way to 'be' sexual in a given society. Each of the four cases is interesting in this regard.

Samoans have two expressed associations between sexual acts and the identities these acts denote. Male sexual desire is conceived of as conquering and competitive, and male sexual identity is characterized as primarily concerned with demonstrating strength and guile (Freeman 1983). A male sexual hero is one who can successfully 'take' many virgins without being caught and bearing the cost of the consequences. Male sexual desire is excessive and glories in its expression. Males are vain, preening, and potent. In contrast, Samoan females express their desire in restraint. They are the objects of men's excess, but they do not invite it. Female sexual identity manifests itself in an explicit concern for reproductive value in liaisons rather than in physical gratification (Shore 1981). Adult sexuality, for both male and female Samoans, is a serious business, but its motivations derive from distinctive concerns.

The sexual nature of *fa'afafine* identity is not as clear, however. This is a guess, because Shore is less forthcoming in his assessment of sexual meanings for this gender than he is for males and females. It is clear from his observations that, for males, *fa'afafines* are definitely anti-male rather than simply un-male, which I take to suggest that there are qualities of *fa'afafine* sexual identities which stand in oppositional contrast to the defining characteristics of male sexuality. While Shore attributes this to an ambiguity in the gender display of the *fa'afafine* which males find intolerable, I have already suggested that this is a misinterpretation based on Shore's insistence on reading *fa'afafines* as distorted women. Casual sexual relations between 'real' men and *fa'afafines* are even tolerated. Instead of gender ambiguity, I feel the issue at stake in males' negative concern with the implications of *fa'afafine* gender for masculine sexual identity stems from a sense in which the *fa'afafine* cannot be an object of sexual conquest because s/he has no engendered purity to be taken or controlled by the sexually compelled male. The *fa'afafine* undermines the competitive quality of male sexual identity by re-locating sexual gratification outside the arena of acquisition of reproductive value within which men normally define their sexual prowess. For females, on the other hand, the *fa'afafine* do not represent any sort of challenge to their sexual

identities, because their sexual nature does not entail the taking of female reproductive value. In fact, the *fa'afafine's* casual homosexual relations with real males acts as a strategic buffer against the sexual conquest of females that defines male sexuality.

Casual homosexuality also characterizes Tahitian sexual behaviour but, in this case, the *mahu* is said to stand in place of a 'real' woman as a reasonable and acceptable substitute, raising an issue which runs through the two Polynesian cases. When we speak of sex acts and sexual identities, we need to take into account at least two schemes of meaning, one serious and identity-structuring, and the other ludic and casual. Sexual identities in these cases are not invested solely in sexual acts so much as they are played out in the way in which certain sexual desires fulfil identity-framing projects. The serious business of male/female sexual interaction between real and complete men and women stands in contrast to a 'playful' sexuality which Mead exploited in her descriptions, and which Shore alludes to in his. There is space in the erotic interplay between the three Polynesian sexes where sexual gratification for its own sake overrides consideration of identity maintenance in a manner which must appear confusing to Western observers. This is an important distinction between Polynesia and Melanesia which demands closer examination.

Because, in the Melanesian cases, no sex act is ever dis-located from its effect on the identity of the actor. Whether the insemination of young initiates or the relations between husband and wife, both Sambian and Kaluli sex acts are fraught with danger and power in a way which would make no sense in either Samoa or Tahiti. In the Melanesian cases there is a combination of danger and growth, decay and regeneration which indicates a complicated duality in the schematization of erotic behaviour which is distinctive from the dualizations present in Polynesian sex act schemes.

Sambian initiate insemination is the means by which female influence, if not female substance, is replaced by male power in young boys. Failure to inseminate boys would lead, ultimately, to their deaths. In a similar vein, while not attributing such absolute generative power to insemination, the Kaluli recognize that semen is a rejuvenator which offers assistance in natural processes of growth and as a protection against evil and danger. This set of sexual acts is necessary and compelling in that the life of the child himself can be seen to be at stake. The inseminators risk depletion of their own finite supply of male substance in order to ensure the continued growth of their sons.

Similarly, male/female sexual relations are marked out as dangerous but necessary. Men risk illness and even death in copulation with females

in order to ensure the production of new sons. Sex in these cases is a deadly business, at least for men. The vigour with which Sambian men fulfil their initiation duties attests to the male determination to utilize sexual desire to maximum advantage by ensuring a steady supply of completed males. For Kaluli males, a reticence informs their sexual acts with women such that both men and women conceive of males as objects of sexual desire and females as desiring subjects, a direct inversion of the Polynesian case. Likewise, they keep their insemination of young boys secret, I suggest as a guard against female envy. Where the Sambian women seem to be direct collaborators in the female-opposing initiation of their sons, Kaluli women are explicitly excluded in the schematization of man-making sexual acts.

This is a man's-eye view, I realize, but to date it is the only view we have. Unlike the Polynesian cases, women are rarely given voice in these descriptions. However, even with that limitation on the Melanesian evidence, I want to suggest that, at this point in deciphering sexual classifications, a multiplicity does indeed emerge, with different implications for the two regions. In Melanesia, there is a coded antagonism between males and females such that females are a source of persistent danger to males. Male sexual identities depend, therefore, on the subordination of female danger and this subordination is enacted, at least in part, in sexual acts. But in tandem with this is a different coding of sex premised on necessity and duty. Males are obligated by their very identity-defining natures to submit themselves to extreme risk in the service of controlling that risk. The sexual schemes of the Sambian and the Kaluli encode both tragedy and urgent necessity in tying identity, physical well being, and sexual desire together.

Samoans and Tahitians do not encode sexual acts with danger, at least not all the time. The duality here is one between identity-expressing sexual desire and identity neutral desire. Such a distinction poses a problem for Samoan sexuality in that it allows for both confusion and deliberate code switching, complicating sexual acts by changing their meanings depending on contexts and intentions. This introduces ambiguity at the level of action, an ambiguity which, in the Melanesian cases, occurs at the level of identity itself.

What both sets of cases suggest is the possible co-existence of distinctive sexual frames in defining into consequence sexual acts themselves. Whether these frames are distinctive in opposition one to the other, or alternatively, either complementary or neutral in regard to the other, cannot be determined from the available evidence without doing

violence to the possibility that women in these societies do not share the ideologies of difference expressed in men's behaviour.

THE CIRCULATION OF SEMEN

The last issue I want to cover briefly concerns what we can determine about multiple codes when we address the issue of the circulation of semen. There are two differences between the Melanesia and Polynesian cases which are notable. The first concerns the valuation of semen as a substance. For both Sambian and Kaluli men, semen either is, or at least bears, men's power, and its circulation between bodies is determined by calculations of rational benefit, in each case a benefit accruing only to men. That this powerful substance must be regularly deposited in the dangerous bodies of women must effect in women at least a respect for semen as the vehicle of physical and social reproduction, while at the same time conferring on them a degree of power relative to their ability to demand semen from men. In a sense, men exchange their vital and finite supply of semen for sons, but in the process there seems to be no sense in which women benefit from this exchange, since they return the semen in the form of incomplete boys' bodies. There is a dissonance in that females are the incubators of semen's power and yet they cannot obtain any of the benefits from this exposure. Semen circulates, in these cases, within a closed system from which women are excluded, while at the same time being necessary as the location where male power expresses itself physically in childbirth.

Semen appears to have been similarly valued in Tahiti, but for different reasons and with different consequences. According to Levy (1973), early missionaries commented on the practice of 'kings' fellating commoner males. The explanation given for this was that the 'king' thus obtained from his male subjects a portion of their vitality and essential power which he then returned in his political authority and in the 'goodness' of his rule. At the same time, semen circulated from men to women in reproductive sex, the semen conferring attributes of vitality and strength to the developing foetus. In this case semen circulates in two distinctive systems of exchange, both among men and between men and women. Where the Sambia hoard male power, while at the same time recognizing their obligation to circulate it both among themselves and among women, the Tahitians appear to define the power of semen in its circulation rather than in its closely guarded accumulation.

There are multiple realities in Sambian semen exchange which are not present in that of the Tahitians, which are related to the multiple schemes within which sexual acts appear to be defined in these two cultures.

Tahitians, like Samoans, enact at least two expressions of sexual desire in their reproductive sex and play, or casual sex, to which we can add a third scheme which is explicitly about political power and authority. The Sambians, however, enact sex within the limiting frame of female danger, although in such a way as to encompass expressions of political and psychological power. But in each case, once again, we can see hints of where multiple sexual realities may co-exist in the operation of these differentiating classificatory schemes.

BRAZILIAN MULTITUDES IN THE SOUTH SEAS?

The issue this discussion raises concerns the extent to which the insights Parker sees emerging from the work on sex and sexuality in Brazil can be applied with any utility to Pacific societies. Of Brazil, Parker argues that

it may be more useful to conceive of these classificatory systems in dialogical terms, less as a collection of categories than as a chorus of voices engaged in an ongoing conversation that continually creates and re-creates meaningful sexual identities (1985:160).

While this may indeed be true in the case of urban Brazil, I want to suggest that there is only a hint of such multiple voices in Pacific sexualities.

I have been arguing in the foregoing that there are many points in Melanesian and Polynesian sexual schemes where difference is constructed and expressed, and I have been attempting to tease out in what way these constructions of difference might be defined as multiple, particularized schemes. At the level of explicit gender definition, while differential valuation of one gender over another may well be a point of contest between genders, there is no evidence to date that these specific societies elaborate more than one set of criteria for defining a person's gender. While genders are defined along different axes, there is no inconsistency or competing model of gender apparent in the descriptions I have been considering.

That this is not simply a matter of univocal ethnographic treatment is, I suggest, allayed by the concurrent consistencies of accounts of acquiring gendered status in these societies. While there are complications in the application of engendered distinctions, these complications are still consistent within a single unifying scheme. There may be more genders

than we are accustomed to, and I am particularly interested in third and fourth gendered manifestations in Melanesia, an issue which these authors do not touch on, but these additional genders do not represent multiplying sexual schemes so much as they indicate the flexibility of uniformity.

If, at the level of ideas about what constitutes gender, there appears to be consistency, at the level of action I have argued there are several points at which ambiguity can produce divergent interpretations. For example, I argued that in Samoa the co-existence of at least two frames for defining sexual acts opens the way for differences in interpretive schemes depending on the talents and proclivities of the individuals involved. Likewise, in assessing the consistency or inconsistency of the meanings attached to semen circulation, I suggested that there is room for both inter and intra-gender diversities in the Melanesian cases, and perhaps in the Samoan cases as well, because of points at which ambiguities of meaning must be mediated.

There is evidence of contrastive schemes in the Kaluli's ribald teasing of male dancers with homosexual innuendoes which seem to refer directly to the ambiguity of both denying and pursuing homosexual contact by men. While both Melanesian and Polynesian societies appear consistent at the level of ideology, they each exhibit sufficient ambiguity in action to suggest that, at the level of practice, multiplicities may well be present.

Parker's ebullience strikes me as overstatement, therefore, not because the work coming out of Brazil is not both insightful and provocative, but because he is mis-reading multiple sexual classifications rather than a recognition of the potential for multiple expressions within a single frame. There is nothing in Parker's review of Fry's work to suggest that there is more than one mode of classifying sexual natures operating in Brazil. What is apparent, however, is that the complexity of relationships in urban Brazil provides a field of interpretation where diverse expressions have proliferated. While there may be different and even competing codes of interpretation, they are each premised on the same set of basic assumptions about the nature of sexuality itself rather than on radically different schemes for defining sex, sexuality and gender into existence.

What distinguishes the urban Brazilian milieu from that of the Sambia or the Samoans, as I have been describing them here, is that mass urban society is itself a multiplying factor. While I have endeavoured to show that options are embedded in sexual action in Pacific societies, these options appear to be expressed only in very marginal ways, not because small-scale societies trap their members in limiting frames, but because small-scale societies provide fewer instances where radically different interpretive schemes can be deployed without disastrous effect. The contrasting schemes of action and interpretation which Fry observed in

Brazil are a function of the greater potential for secrecy in mass societies, and not of competing codes of fundamental sexual meaning. I have argued here that, even in the smallest of small scale societies, there are sufficient points of ambiguity to generate, under the right conditions, manifest versions of sexuality as diverse and colourful as any we might find in Brazil or France or Southern Ontario. Parker's enthusiasm, although somewhat misguided, is a useful directive to a more critical approach to sex, sexuality, and gender. I am thinking here specifically about the articulation of different codes of sexual classification in the colonial encounter, an issue not addressed by any of the examples I have considered here. This goes beyond Parker's observation, since it implicates the co-existence of more than one 'social fabric', most often in a relationship of domination. How the Sambia or the Tahitians have related to this encounter, an encounter which involved the radical re-classification of sexual practices by colonial administrators, needs more detailed consideration (White 1990). The Sambia and the Samoans are still there but an anthropology obsessed with 'traditional' cultures has left this important area unexplored.

The other thing I have tried to show here is that while it is not reasonable to assume uniformity of expression from uniform ideologies, it is equally questionable to assume uniform ideologies from what may only appear to be uniform expressions. I will need to re-assess my evaluations of Sambia and Kaluli uniformity in the light of future evidence of women's participation and understanding of these matters. The Hays (1982) hint at this when they suggest that Ndumba women collude in male schemes of understanding, but do not necessarily share them. Whitehead's (1986a, 1986b) survey of fertility cultism in PNG may prove a fruitful avenue which I am only now beginning to explore. But, like so much of my thinking and reading about questions of sex and sexuality, this understanding remains somewhere in the future when an anthropology of sexual meaning can, itself, be said to have come of age. One step in this maturut relies on our ability to think beyond the assumptions and presumptions of our own cultural space.

Part 2:

BREAKING THE EUROCENTRIC CODE

Torgovnick (1990) and Goldie (1989) point out that the image of 'the savage' often is associated with unbridled sexuality in European literature and thought. Most certainly early explorers and missionaries in Polynesia emphasized the enthusiastic sexuality of the peoples they encountered. This

image of the sexual savage, libido running rampant through his or her social relations, appears to have come full circle in the sixty odd years since Malinowsky tried to define primitive sexuality into an order compatible with Western experience. Barry Adam's assertion that what was once characterized as "aberration and pathology . . . can be rule bound and predictable" (1985:29) and Sahlins' (1985) startling assertion of a Hawaiian political order premised on sex and beauty rather than deranged by it, are two examples of a steadily increasing subtlety in the description and analysis of sex and sexuality in anthropology. That this sea change in sophistication is still in its early stages is made clear, however, by Davis and Whitten's review of the cross cultural literature on sex and sexuality which concludes that

human sexuality is not yet a coherent subspecialty of anthropology. There is need for further open discussion of human sexuality and for the development of uniquely anthropological theories of the relevant phenomena (1987:88).

This lack of a coherent central focus in anthropological discussions of sex and sexuality is nowhere more evident than in the literature on sex derived from study in Pacific societies. While there is a wealth of information on sex and sexuality in the Melanesian literature, paralleled but less extensive in the literature on Polynesia, most studies which focus, at least in part, on sex, do so in the service of some other analytic objective. This is a result, in part, of what Roger Keesing (1989) calls the "coral reef" conception of culture which sees all aspects of culture as equally interdependent and mutually explanatory; a persistent, small 'f' functionalism which reads societies as total systems rather than as possibilities for the articulation of interpenetrating smaller systems of ideas and practices.

I want to consider how descriptions and analysis of sex and sexuality have been framed by questions about other aspects of sociality, in order to show how contemporary studies which use sex and sexuality both reproduce and challenge Eurocentric conventions. These framing devices have included studies of social and political organization, ideology and religion, the etiology of sexual deviation and sexual continence, the position and function of sex in ritual, and the analysis of gender and identity, a list which is in no way exhaustive. I will only consider three of these here, although I should note at the outset that this does not imply a prioritization of the value or sophistication of these frames. A more complete review would be needed to adequately deconstruct the premises and implications of each of these important frames.

SEX AND RITUAL

The richest contemporary study of sexual behaviour is contained in analyses of ritual uses of sex acts and sexual body substances. The papers collected in *Rituals of Manhood* (Herdt 1982) and *Ritualized Homosexuality in Melanesia* (Herdt 1984) are important in that they place sexual behaviour into a wider frame of symbolic manipulations. Embedded in these studies, however, is a discourse on sex which, simultaneously fragments the Eurocentric frame while re-inforcing that frame's basic premise.

First, the reinforcement. Ritual meaning is asserted to be transparent, directly expressed in objectified experience. That is, the meaning of initiation rituals for young men is directly given in the observable artifacts of the ritual itself. Plotting ritual objects, in this case not only material objects such as bullroarers, but idealistic objects such as patterned speech or the pretence of secrets, is taken, in these studies, to be sufficient grounds for drawing conclusions about the meaningful consequences of these objects for the participants.

This has an important implication. It assumes a level of shared discourse, a consensual and uniform understanding of events. All ritual, in these studies, is normative and nomothetic, all participants operating from the same base of meaning and affect. While this may indeed be the case, it is never demonstrated to be true because, as Lewis cogently observed,

an idea may be attached to a symbol by convention and not because of any imitative representation or iconic power intrinsic to the motif . . . [but] . . . the same motif may be given different meanings by one individual in different settings; different individuals within one tribe may give different meanings to the same motif in the same setting . . . To attribute then a single right meaning intrinsic to the object or action flies in the face of both evidence against it and common sense (Lewis 1980:222).

Indeed, there is always an undercurrent of distinction between the meaning of the events for the initiates and the meanings for the initiators which revolves around the uses of fear and pain. This replicates the conventional Eurocentric model of sex which associates sexual pleasure with moral and mortal danger, a recent and medically driven development in the European sexuality model (Greenberg 1988), without ever calling

this association to account. What is apparent is that, for most of the cases discussed in these two volumes, there is a persistent and important dissonance which is left unexplored. That sex is simultaneously pleasure and harm is an aspect of the Western sexual discourse which is only most recently being undermined and analyzed (Caplan 1987, Weill 1990). The issue is the relationship between subjective and intersubjective experience, on the one hand, and ideologies of fear and control on the other. Like the discourse of masculinist domination in the West, a discourse of fear and power is elicited from the strained objectification of sex in these studies. At a fundamental level, such studies repeat and reinforce a denial of subjective experience, valorising the social at the expense of the local and the individual.

At the same time that this subtle reinforcement is being effected, however, these studies, along with others (for example Meigs 1984, Schieffelin 1976), challenge two imposing assumptions in the Western discourse on sex. The first is that sex is a local phenomenon which has meaning only in that it has effects in closely circumscribed social relationships. In other words, it directly challenges the presumption that sex is about copulation, and only about copulation, by arguing that sex can and must be re-located within a larger field of social relationships. For feminists and their intellectual offspring this comes as no surprise. What is distinctive here is that this challenge is being arrived at independent of explicit feminist influence.

The other challenge derives from an assumption in the conventional discourse on sex that sex is epistemologically and ideologically neutral, that sex is acted upon and given meaning by other constitutive practices, that sex is made to fit the ideological needs of larger structures. What these studies argue for is a recognition that these paths of influence are much more complex. Sex is not simply an object which is put to use by societies. Rather, the facts of sexual arousal may equally direct the shape and functioning of other social practices. As Roger Scruton has argued (1988), sexual desire poses a complex analytic puzzle in that it is simultaneously an experience of the individual subject and a web of interpersonal entanglements which exist outside the individual, in his or her field of social experience. Sexual desire both subjectifies and objectifies the individual, as both Freud and Foucault demonstrated. Studies such as these illustrate in novel ways how that complication of erotics and sociality cannot be subsumed to a single-minded analytic frame.

SEX AND THE STUDY OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

I quoted Adams somewhat approvingly at the outset of this section because his summary discussion of anthropological studies of homosexuality points out some of the intriguing discoveries these studies have made about the relationships between sexual acts, sexualities and social structures. Perhaps the most intriguing issue revealed by the studies he cites are the relationships between sexual acts and the constitution of kinship ties. In particular, the observation that age-graded forms of institutionalized homosexual behaviour serve the important function of formalizing relationships among affines which cross generational boundaries gives us a more complex understanding of how kinship is formulated and defined. But there is a strong 'however' to this positive assessment. Adams is still held in thrall by the Eurocentric convention that same-sex behaviour is evidence of a desire to cross out of the biologically gendered status a person is born with. Throughout his review, he refers regularly to the idea that homosexual acts between males involve a risk of feminization. He bases this contention on Herdt's reference to a single young Sambian informant who wondered if fellatio, because it involved ingestion of semen, might turn him into a woman (Adams 1985:31). At issue is a failure to accommodate a prejudged perspective on diverse expressions of sexuality and desire to the very evidence he summarizes. The insights into the relationship between non-marital and same-sex sex acts and the constitution of kinship are important ones, but they are undermined by this curious misreading of the ethnographic accounts he discusses.

Sahlins' description of Hawaiian political order as an erotocracy is, without doubt, the most intriguing attempt, to date, to relate sexual desire to larger social structures. Such an assertion is a direct and stimulating challenge to the Western notion that sexual desire is located only within the individual and, further, that the primary response of society to this phenomenon is repression or denial. In many ways, Sahlins' argument parallels the observation of Becker (1984) to the effect that both repressive and expressive approaches to sexual desire are compatible with social order. It also calls into question the validity of psychoanalytic accounts of civilisation as necessarily repressive (Marcuse 1955, Freud 1973, 1976, Becker 1971) by arguing that desire can, indeed, be institutionalized without denying or destroying it.

There are two issues, however, which leave Sahlins' work situated firmly in a Western frame, and both refer directly to Freud. First, there is the problem of libido as all-consuming. Sahlins is unequivocal on this.

While arguing that the pursuit of pleasure is a structured pragmatic pursuit, he simultaneously argues that the structure itself serves to restrain what would, if left unchecked, become a rampant eroticism. In a sense, he simply inverts Freud. Where Freud places the source of the limitations society places on behaviour in the resolution of the psyche's tendency to libidinous indulgence, Sahlins places that restraining function in the body of the eroticised chief. The model is the same, however, in that, in each, a putatively natural proclivity to excess is resolved by a normalizing structure which rechannels the ego outward into social responsibility. This is the other issue, as well. Sahlins' model is nothing more than a restatement of Freud where the eroticized and powerful body of the king becomes the super-ego to which non-royal Hawaiians -- replacing the libidinous ego -- become subordinated. The profound inconsistency here is that, on the one hand, Sahlins is arguing for a sexually expressive mode of sociality, persuasively demonstrating that such a mode is analytically compatible with social order. At the same time, he frames this argument within a repression model which simply restates general Freudian premises about the innate nature of human desire, writing it large on the political structures of Hawaiian sociality.

SEX AND PSYCHOLOGY

A similar combination of challenge and theoretical blindness appears in studies of sex which are psychological in focus. I will consider only two here, Herdt's *Guardians of the Flutes* and the Lidz's *Oedipus in the Stone Age*. I have chosen Herdt's only major work because I believe that his work in general has been of fundamental importance in advancing anthropology's subtlety and sensitivity in its slowly developing study of sex and sexuality.

Guardians is particularly important as a study of the psychology of desire, because it serves two purposes simultaneously. It offers an interesting, if not always convincing, analysis of the evolution of a propensity for violence in male warriors, which advances the study of the socialization of violence by placing it in a synchronic context. It also challenges the convention that sexual behaviour and sexuality, in the Western sense of 'having a sexuality', are the same thing. For the Sambias, sexual behaviour is not simply 'about' sexual identities but about complex identifications with social responsibility and power. Sambian sex does not only encode trans-genderal power, but power in a larger sense. Ritualized fellatio becomes, in Sambian initiation, the predicate of history itself. It re-circulates the vital substance of male power and reproduction in a

closed system which ties all initiates, as well as all initiators, to a chain of ancestors.

This stunning insight is counterpoised, however, against a conventional insistence on the general acquiescence of women to the superiority of male meanings, which is very disappointing. Women in Sambian socialization exercise considerable power over the early development of boys. So much so that elaborate ritual terror is necessary to break the bond young boys have with their mothers. Underlying this is the assertion that women are frightening. Like Sahlins, Herdt simply re-asserts psychoanalytic truisms, in this case that male identity is fused out of a terror of, and later a denial of, something called 'feminization'. My disappointment lies in Herdt's failure to take his insights about the effect of sex acts beyond a simpleminded Western frame. Fear of women is too simple an answer given the complex tangle of possibilities which the Sambias present us. What is especially puzzling in this is the women's complicity in giving over the boys willingly. Herdt cannot explain this because, for Herdt, only the male definitions are 'meaningful'.

Herdt's mapping of the intentions of the initiators onto the affect of the boys being initiated is a final and compelling disappointment. More than any other, the convention that children have sexualities imposed upon them by their socialization is an area which not only Herdt, but no other of the writers I have reviewed, explores in any detail. Children are the dull material from which society shapes real persons. Left unanswered is a profoundly important question about how these rituals of manhood produce normal adult Sambians, because how the children themselves read these rituals and incorporate them into their sense of the order of the world is never explicitly examined.

In contrast, the Lidz's psychoanalytic discussion of, among others, the Sambias, represents an attempt to re-incorporate the experience of the initiates into our understanding of the process by which insemination turns them into men. Like Herdt, the crux of their argument is that the ritualized homosexual acts serve to counter the feminizing influence of early socialization. Part of their rather novel argument is that the form of this de-feminization, homosexual insemination, can be psychoanalytically located in the development of the boys' psyche under the influence of dominating women. Their argument is that the homosexual component of the ritual making of men serves a dual purpose, in that it not only corrupts the female influence on boys, it also is part of a complex of resolutions of adult males' ambiguous gender identities. They suggest that the early socialization of males produces an arrested latency, whereby homosexual

desire, which they define as pathological, always remains just below the surface of the Sambian adult man's identity.

That such a model represents a direct imposition of a Western model of sexual identity as repressive is clear. The Lidzes, like Herdt and others, assume that sex acts reflect transparently complex inner states of identity. For the Lidzes, the fact of the Sambian males homosexual arousal is sufficient evidence for a homosexual identity, or at least identity crisis. In the process, the Sambian's own explanations are re-translated. Freudian psychoanalysis begins with the assumption that all statements are dissimulations; in effect, that the conscious ego can never speak the truth. Spivak's (1988) brief discussion of Freud's paper *A Child is Being Beaten* which originally argued that hysterics' recollection of physical child abuse is a dissimulation of unresolved sexual identity conflicts, as well as Masson's (1984) history of Freud's gradual denial of the factuality of patients' statements about abuse, illustrate how psychoanalytic models rely on the dissemblance of the ego's assertions in order to sustain their view of psychological development. If the ego can tell the truth, the super-ego is dislocated from its position of authority. Freud parallels the European concern over unbridled sexuality by raising to theoretical necessity the control of unbridled consciousness. While studies such as Herdt's or the Lidz's claim to recognize a psychological sophistication in the savage which is absent from earlier works such as Malinowski's, they do so by applying Freud's model of the unbridled consciousness as 'savage desire'. Such narrow-sightedness is disappointing in the light of more sophisticated neo-Freudian efforts to apply psychoanalytic principles to the study of sexual behaviour and sexual identities, such as Freidman's (1988) and Kakar's (1986), as well as Kristeva's (1982) re-evaluation of the innateness of desire, a new view which suggests that sexual desire is not the centre of psychic development except when socialization elevates it to that position.

GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND IDENTITY

The final issue I want to review here is perhaps the most complex, not because in practice this is the case, but because in contemporary Western discourse these are contentious and fragmenting issues which are being contested in the very milieu where anthropological studies of sex and sexuality are being formulated and carried out. Shore's (1981) analysis of the positioning of sexual behaviour as a local site where structures of identity and social control are constructed and manipulated is a case in point. He argues that the differential natures of men and women in

Samoan society produce different patterns of behaviour in such a way as to structure how males and females are controlled. For Shore, the Samoans hold an essentialist view of sexual natures which produce contrasting and not complementary identities. For Samoans, Shore argues, sexual behaviour derives from an innate sexual nature which cannot be altered but can only be channelled. This results in a differential valorization of sex by males and females which is a function of their differing capacity for sexual desire. The immediate consequence of this twinning of distinctive ideologies of sexual desire is the presence of paradoxical ideologies of control. On the one hand, virginity is prized in females. This is concurrent with the belief that men express their innate natures through sexual conquest. In other words, the fulfilment of the nature of men requires a violation of the natural tendency of women toward chastity and continence. The result is a system of sexual practices which encompasses the institutional demonstration of virginity at marriage as a cultural ideal with an equally institutionalized system of symbolic rape. While Shore does not pursue this paradox with the vigour it deserves, his discussion raises implications for my discussion.

He implies, in this, a system of at least two ideologies of gender identity which do not stand in a simple relationship of domination and subordination. While his discussion is framed in the language of male control, his evidence suggests that, rather than unidirectional control, these paradoxically related ideologies effect a mutualized control over each other. Rather than simple domination, his observations suggest a sort of mutual subordination between and about two distinctive but not competing essentialist models. Errington and Gewertz (1987) argue persuasively for an understanding of alternative cultural models which constitute differential interests for each constructed gender without standing in a simple competitive relationship. The resulting structures through which sexual behaviour is codified and controlled reflect this mutuality in a way which Eurocentric models of gender domination cannot account for.

And yet Shore cannot quite let go of a model of direct and unilateral domination. Rather than recognizing the paradox of non-competitive essentialist models, he insists, instead, on reading the categorization of maleness and femaleness as deriving, ultimately, from a male-determined exercise of ideological control. This tendency to totalize a single ideological practice as the dominant determinant of culture, I suggest, derives from a Western discomfort with ambiguity. And so, while acknowledging two distinctive cultures of sexuality in Samoan thought, he reverses the potential for insight by over-reading the institutionalized role

of the transsexual -- a non-male and non-female biological male -- as the location where male gender domination is exercised. The *fa'afafine* is, in Shore's explanation, the ideological construct which expresses male denigration of the female by exaggeration and distortion. The *fa'afafine* expresses a negative role model which defines femaleness exclusively in male terms, male terms which negate the value of being female. What Shore is blinded to by his absolutist determination to invent a dominator is that the *fa'afafine* can also be read as giving expression to the paradox of non-competing essentialisms. The *fa'afafine* stands between male and female, not as a derivative of one or the other, but as a third gender, one whose essential nature needs to be more closely deciphered rather than simply ascribed to male *angst*. What is blinding Shore are the Eurocentric principles of absolute gender dualism and of a necessary gender domination being forced into service in the analysis of a complex of contradictions where, quite simply, they may not fit.

In contrast to Shore's vacillation between insight and convention, the Hays' analysis of Ndumba sexual natures is a challenging and perceptive one, not because they solve all the puzzles I have been adumbrating here, but because they recognize that it is possible for two distinctive ideologies of sexuality to co-exist and mutually reinforce themselves without simply relating ideologies of sexual difference to 'androcentric obsession'. Their brief paper in *Rituals of Manhood* makes explicit the possibility of mutuality between oppositional cultures of sexuality which corrects some of the 'gender domination' bias which informs Shore's work, while at the same time suggesting that fear of women's powers are not necessarily reflections of an identity-fragmenting *angst* in men. They compel us to address the native explanations as 'real', rather than forcing these explanations and expectations into the questionable frame of a 'reality' Western ideologies of gender construct as universal. In the light of this, Shore's analytic retreat into a 'feminization anxiety' model of male sexual meaning and male gender domination parallels Herdt's and the Lidz's, leaving the intersubjective experience of the Samoans somewhere in the margins. Retrieving this experience from the margins of Eurocentric analysis is something my own research will seek to address.

CONCLUSION: RENDERING DESIRE

The theme running through this discussion is that, in order to step outside of the confines of European limitations on the critical discourse of sex and sexuality, we need to begin by understanding the complex of assumptions within which our own discourse is constructed. The

entangling of component cultural analytics in the inscription of the desiring object, the body, with a desiring subject, sexuality, needs to become the necessary starting point of our attempts to read experience from the bodies of the 'sexual savage'. To do that, we need to locate that 'savage' in its own specific and proper context, and not in the dissembling and fragmenting multiplication of discourses which constitute our desire. Western sexuality is embroiled in a cacophony of discursive practices including the super-ordination of maleness as the primary constitution of meaning; a contestatory conflation of multiple religious and political discourses which locate the desiring body as a primary site of social control; academic discourses of neutrality and truth which disguise evaluation by masking it as knowledge; and a dynamic and contradictory discourse of pleasure which locates self-fulfilment in the same space where control is being defined and effected. Following Foucault (1972), I want to suggest that it is only by determining our location in this concatenation of discourses, and by acknowledging the strategies by which we deploy these discourses in our analysis, that we can recognize and critique the function of otherness in our own thought, moving outward from that recognition to the possibility for understanding of the 'other' as more than just our mere reflection.

I want to stress the word possibility because there are profound issues at stake in the analysis of sex and sexuality. As Foucault (1978, 1984, 1986), Weeks (1985), Greenberg (1988), and Ruse (1988) have, in different ways, argued, sexuality is the core principle of self-aware identity in the West. Identities strive for, but perhaps never accomplish, stability. That analyses of these putative identity-defining principles in the 'non-West' have been circumscribed by fundamental theoretical blindspots is not surprising given that what is being studied is, in its current discursive formulation, the very centre of our consciousness. It is perhaps Freud's greatest insight that the foundation of Western self awareness derives from the resolution of sexual desire conceived as meaningless lust. We are only very slowly coming to understand how this focusing of identity in the groin occurred in the West. It is also Freud's greatest failing however, in his assumption that this imposing sexualization is universal. Theweliet's (1987, 1989) recent re-reading of the over-sexualized interpretation of Nazism suggests how the primacy of this model of identity blinds us to other possible avenues of understanding in considering our own historical experience. There is nothing in these cross-cultural readings to support the Freudian assumption, either. There are so many points of contradiction, so many possible challenges, in these works to suggest that the very spaces these diversities open up provide us with an important opportunity to

better deconstruct the blindnesses of discourse we define as truths. As Herdt has recently argued,

We cannot reduce the whole to a part: sex acts, or contacts, or identities, or beliefs, or even social relationships. For none of these fully contains cultural reality, though cultural ontology must contain them all. When we begin the comparison of traditional societies, these local ontologies must become a primary object of understanding. Only then shall we begin the translation process that results in our representations of sexuality . . . (1991:503).

But I want to stress again the word possibility. I am still uncertain that such a project can work, precisely because it demands a radical stepping outside of the very discourses which make the questions possible. To imagine the sexual body of the other, we need to imagine a different sexual body for ourselves. Thomas Yingling's recent study of Hart Crane's poetry argues that there has been a slow re-imagining of the homosexual body of desire in 20th century America that " registers the despair of homosexuality judged by a patriarchal and punishing Other" (1990:183), which suggests that our ability to comprehend the othered sexuality of the 'savage' might depend on resolving the incongruities of marginalized desire in our own sexual discourse. Some feminist psychologists (for example, Lorraine 1990, Hare-Mustin and Maracek 1990) have begun a new effort in the ex-corporation of female desire from the restraints of masculinist models of self awareness as a different approach to repositioning "minoritarian" (Hutcheon 1990) voices in order to disentangle the discourses of identity which have marginalized them.

But again, I want to stress the word possibility.

There are two suggestive possibilities for repositioning the marginal voices of desire in our analysis. First, multiple sexual realities, exemplified not only in Shore's Samoan evidence and the Hays' observations of the Ndumba, but compellingly theorized in Keesing's (1985) recognition of how Kwaio men's and women's experiences and accounts are both distinctive and deeply intertwined into a total but polyvocal vision of Kwaio cultural meaning, need to be explored. An important starting point could be the re-assimilation of children's voices into our analysis. Both Herdt (1981) and Mead (1961) noted that there is a strong component of play in children's perceptions of what is enacted upon them. Sambian ritual initiation explicitly encodes both the serious business of sex and war and repeated allusions to the ritual as a game, so much so that the climax of the ritual process is the revelation that the initiates have been tricked. The trick derives from what Winnicott describes as the "total unconscious

fantasy belonging to growth at puberty, [that is] the death of someone"(1971:145). I suggest that investigating the deadly serious combination of destruction, denial, and play can best be accomplished by re-siting the experience of defining a desiring identity in the experience of the children themselves.

The other line which needs to be opened is an escape from the domination of Melanesian studies of sex and sexuality. While the particularities of Melanesian desire can bring us a long way toward recognizing the shortcomings of our own particularized models, their predominance runs a concurrent risk of simply replacing one limiting discursive frame with another, albeit more exotic, one, and of marginalizing not only our voice but that of other 'others'. Works such as Ottenberg's (1989) Freudian analysis of male adolescence in a Nigerian society, Williams's (1989) re-avaluation of gender categorization as it is expressed in the Berdache, Davis and Davis's (1989) study of adolescence and identity in Morocco, as well as the very challenging work on multiple sexualities emerging from work in South America (Parker 1985, Gregor 1985) are each compelling examples which can be used to push the limiting case of Melanesian sexuality into new areas of investigation and insight.

There is a central confusion in contemporary analyses of sex and sexuality which stems, to a great extent, from embedded beliefs about the nature of desire. These authors are torn between a tendency to relativism which demands that desire be read as socially and historically specific, while at the same time coding their analysis in the conventions of European sexual psychology which give sexual desire a universal, pre-determining meaning prior to experience. I want to suggest that one of the most important theoretical revisions necessary for an analysis of sex and sexuality outside Eurocentric frames of reference demands a fundamental re-assessment of sexual desire. Arousal must come to be seen as a generative principle onto which meaning is attached, rather than as a predetermined limit on the possibility for experience. Then we can begin to " [understand] and [render] . . . the erotic in these other times and places "(Herdt 1991:502). Sex may well serve as a fundamental focus in sociality, but that primacy must be demonstrated rather than assumed. People everywhere 'do it'. Why they do it needs to be subjected to the same descriptive scrutiny which has been accorded how they do it. In this sense, understanding sex requires that we let the copulating couples tell their own story, within their own experience of desire. When we don't, we reduce our analysis of sex to yet another form of colonization, and we

render even our most thoroughly modern representations of the 'sexual savage' into nothing more than academic pornography.

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