fits of using soap to wash clothes, he went into business doing laundry for local whites."
And eventually We'wha even went to Washington, DC to mimic those caricatures of Indians which whites had created in their own minds.

In thinking about the meaning of berdache status among American Indians, we can profit by comparing it in different societies. It is equally important that when we pluck out an individual from his or her culture (be it We'wha, U'k or the countless other berdaches that once lived) that we place them in the context of those societies’ hierarchies of gender. As for gays who seek a less rigid gender hierarchy in which to grow and prosper, the berdache status as a gender representation of power in war is probably not the place to find it. By finding gay models where they do not exist, let us not perpetrate on We’wha or U’k yet another level of humiliation with our pens. For then, the "conspiracy of silence" about the berdaches which Harry Hay had hoped to shatter will only be shrouded once again in romantic obsessions. ▼

2Though the berdache status is reported for men and women, the male variant is best known. Harriet Whitehead does examine female berdache status in "The bow and the broken strap: A New Look at Institutionalized Homosexuality in Native North America," in Ortner and Whitehead, eds., Sexual Meanings (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 80-115.
5S. Tread, Public Life in Renaissance Florence (New York, 1980).
6On berdaches as shamans see W. Williams, The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture (Boston, 1986).
ON MALE INITIATION AND DUAL ORGANISATION
IN NEW GUINEA

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A consideration of social organisation, culture and evolution in New Guinea suggests that male initiation rites which express sexual symmetry are not, as psychoanalytic interpretations maintain, based on unconscious relations of envy of female procreative powers but rather on perceived relations of analogy. They constitute a subset of possible magical acts designed to induce male growth. This subset is correlated with social structures based on dual organisation, or derived from it, and the entire set is congruent with a general type of social structure characteristic of New Guinea – one defined by a big man complex.

As a part of his psychoanalytic analysis of the bullooarer complex, Dundes (1976) interprets ritual homosexuality in initiation as an unconscious expression of male envy of female procreative powers. The New Guinea¹ societies adduced as examples are Marind (van Baal 1966) and Keraki (Williams 1936). Bettelheim (1962) in similar fashion interprets genital mutilation in imitation of menstruation among the Arapesh (Mead 1940; 1963) and Wogo (Hogbin 1970)—so that there is anal eroticism on the south coast and urethral eroticism on the north coast. Not mentioned by either author is the displaced urethral eroticism, nose-bleeding in imitation of menstruation,² in the Highlands, e.g., Gahuku-Gama (Read 1952). Similar interpretations of these types of initiation rites have been made by Roheim (1949), Ashley Montagu (1937), Hiatt (1971) and Mead (1975). Sympathetic critics, such as Spiro (1955) and Aberle (1955), have pointed out that such arguments fail to explain the context in which these rites occur, while others, including Leach (1958) and Douglas (1966), have flatly rejected equations between primitive rites and neurotic behaviour. Dundes maintains that the ‘ultimate test of [the] argument is not a matter of doctrinaire acceptance or rejection of Freud but rather how well or how poorly it succeeds in explaining the patterning of ethnographic facts’ (Dundes 1976: 236). For New Guinea, and perhaps more generally, there is a simpler explanation based on morphological, cultural and historical-evolutionary considerations which accounts for both the context and the motives of rites based on forms of sexual symmetry. The purpose of this article is not to provide a general survey in the manner of Allen (1967) but to suggest a structural approach which tries to discern aspects of the logic underlying notions of gender and other cultural beliefs and social relations in New Guinea. The analysis here, and in a subsequent article by Hage and Harary (in press), attempts to combine features of the semiological and contextual treatments of

¹ Man (N.S.) 16, 268–73

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structure found in Lévi-Strauss and Douglas respectively, and incorporates some of the evolutionary speculations of Rubel and Rosman (1978) on New Guinea societies. The general aim is to contribute both to comparative work in New Guinea and to the elucidation of structures in la pensée sauvage.

As a symmetric corrective to psychoanalytic theory, Bettelheim (1962), on the basis of clinical and ethnographic data, proposed that corresponding to penis envy in women there is vaginal envy in men. The clinical data consisted of impromptu rituals of freely, self-induced bleeding in adolescent schizophrenic males, instigated by females, together with statements expressing envy of female sexual organs. The ethnographic data consisted of cases of genital mutilation equated with menstruation. The basic assumption is that the biological antithesis of the sexes in and of itself generates an envy of the opposite sex, some expression of which, as in ritual, promotes the development of an integrated, whole personality.

As an antisymmetric corrective to the relation between psychoanalysis and anthropology, Douglas (1975) proposed that such rites be interpreted in Durkheimian fashion as an expression of social morphology. The basic assumption is that ‘Even the physiological differences between male and female can be masked by a categorization whose primary purpose is to reflect and sustain a particular social order’ (Douglas 1975: 70). Thus in Arapesh and Wogo, ritual penile incision, which is explicitly equated with the local conception of menstruation—the periodic discharge of bad blood as a condition of growth, is interpreted as a reflection of dual organisation: moieties which regulate feasting and initiation among the Arapesh and, in addition, marriage exchange among the Wogo. More generally Douglas states:

I would not argue that all rites of incision express the symmetry of dual social divisions. But if it is explicitly stated that the incision of the male genital organ is performed to achieve symmetry with the female reproductive system, then I would look for important dual social divisions whose symmetry I would suppose to be expressed in the ritual creating a symmetry of the sexes (Douglas 1975: 70).

If this proposition is generalised to include a variety of forms of ritual sexual symmetry, then it would account for the occurrence of the ritual analysed by both Bettelheim and Dundes in parts of the northern and southern coastal areas of New Guinea and also for their presence in certain areas of the Highlands and on the Papuan Plateau (see below). For the Sepik area generally, where dual organisation is common, e.g., Abelam (Kaberry 1941; Forge 1966), Iatmul (Bateson 1930), Banaro (Thurnwald 1916) and Umeda in addition to Arapesh and Wogo, Gell (following Forge 1966) notes the ‘elaborate cultural analogues of feminine reproductive activities (hence, e.g., penis-bleeding, ‘rebirth’ ceremonies at initiation, etc.)’ (1975: 277). On the south coast of New Guinea, in addition to the societies cited by Dundes (Marind, Keraki) there are others, such as Frederik Hendrik Island (Serpenti 1965), characterised by ritual homosexuality and dual organisation. Not only is the social organisation of the same basic type (namely, moieties which regulate feasting, initiation and in some case marriage, together with a rudimentary development of ‘bigman-ship’ and competitive exchange and smallness of scale) but the initiation rituals
as well are often similar and in some cases virtually identical in form, as can be seen by comparing the culminating ceremonies in Arapesh (Mead 1940; 1963) and Marind (van Baal 1966) (see table 1).

Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structural element</th>
<th>Arapesh</th>
<th>Marind</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The supernatural tribal patron is:</td>
<td>Tamburen, a giant (androgynous?) male (who dwells in the sea and is 'tall as a coconut tree')</td>
<td>Sosom, a giant castrated male (who dwells in the sea and is 'tall as a coconut tree')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Whose voice is</td>
<td>a pair of male and female flutes which sound beautiful</td>
<td>a (phallic) bullroarer which inspires awe and anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Whose mark is:</td>
<td>the imprint of his testicles and his anklets</td>
<td>piles of excrement and (reversed) footprints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Who is associated with:</td>
<td>a female cassowary initiator</td>
<td>male cassowary initiators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Who swallows the boys:</td>
<td>spitting them out 'plump and sleek'</td>
<td>excrating them 'stinking and disfigured'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The boys eat:</td>
<td>the good blood of the older men</td>
<td>the good semen of the older men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. After seeing the patron the boys are</td>
<td>incised</td>
<td>sodomised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>to make them grow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rites of sexual symmetry, then, may have a common underlying structure and appear to be characteristic of a certain type of society. At the same time they can be regarded as alternatives in a larger set of practices, ubiquitous in New Guinea, whose basic aim is to induce male growth.

Langness remarks à propos of Bettelheim’s argument that ‘given Bena Bena beliefs about males and females in general, and about procreation in particular, I find it impossible to believe that in any meaningful sense men could be said to envy women’ (Langness 1977: 13) since in Bena Bena and in the Highlands generally, ‘women are considered in every way inferior.’ Such objections pose no problem for psychoanalysis, which argues from biological givens and unconscious processes; indeed, they only manifest ‘resistance.’ A fundamental objection is Leach’s (1958). He distinguishes between public symbolic behaviour, the concern of anthropologists, and private symbolism, the concern of psychoanalysis. The first refers to symbols connected with the social status of the actor where interpretation is a matter of elucidating recognised and shared conventional meanings. The second refers to psychological states of the actor where interpretation is a matter of elucidating repressed sexual wishes in the ‘dreams and imaginations of individual psychopaths.’ It is therefore false to equate the meanings of the obsessive behavior of neurotics with the rituals of primitives. If the interpretations of psychoanalysis and anthropology differ, they do not contradict and if they agree, they do not support one another.

Taking the high road then, it would be well to look at the actual meanings attributed to phallic incision and homosexuality—to the traditional rationale offered by the natives (Dundes). In both cases, ethnography and sometimes
mythology make it clear that the motive is quite simply and unequivocally to induce male growth. Some examples may be given. Among the Arapesh, penile incision is part of a complex of practices; in addition to food taboos a boy learns of the disciplinary and hygienic use of stinging nettles and actual bleeding with a sharpened bamboo instrument. He becomes the responsible custodian of his own growth; and the sanctions are all in terms of that growth. If he breaks the rules, no one will punish him; no one but himself will suffer. He will simply not grow to be a tall strong man (Mead 1963: 62–3).

Among the Keraki,

More interesting is the rationalization of homosexual intercourse. The boys have to grow and the mothers are expected to be astonished at their sons having grown in stature when they return from seclusion. This alleged effect of sodomy is apparently parallel to the idea that prolonged cohabitation is necessary for pregnancy to be successful. The foetus must be built up through an accumulation of semen (van Baal 1966: 493).

Similar ideas prevail among the Marind where ‘everywhere the act is seen as a necessary condition of a boy’s physical development’ (van Baal 1966: 494). There is also an interesting Keraki myth in this connection:

The beginning of sodomy. Gufa, despite good feeding and attention, was a wretched undersized little boy, described as pot-bellied and constipated. He was the despair of his father until one day, ostensibly with the sole idea of promoting his growth, he conceived the idea of sodomising him. He took him apart from his mother during the night and put his idea into effect, rubbing semen over the child’s body. The result was a miraculous increase in growth. The boy was instructed to keep this a dead secret from his mother, and when she next saw him she was delighted at the change but attributed it wrongly to the good food which Kambel [the father] must have given him, just as nowadays mothers are supposed to attribute the size of the initiates to the special feeding they have had at the wara mungo [seclusion] (Williams 1936: 308).

In general, the problem is really, to borrow Read’s metaphor, an engineering one, and the solution is some form of imitation or analogy. As Read observes of Gahuku-Gama nose-bleeding,

Informants unfailingly connect menstruation with a girl’s physical growth. They point to its inevitable but unexplained advent and the concomitant signs of nubility, the increasing stature, the rounding and development of the bodily frame. It is a certain sign of her progress on the path to womanhood. But for the boy manhood and physical superiority are more a matter of chance and have therefore to be guarded, even engineered, in order to redress the balance of physiological inferiority. Initiation rites in consequence serve the same purpose for the male as menstruation for women. The one has been explained to me in terms of the other, and the same idea—the cyclical expulsion of blood—undoubtedly lies behind the men’s ritual of nosebleeding (Read 1952: 15).

The preoccupation with male growth is not unique to Marind, Keraki, Arapesh, Wogeo and Gahuku-Gama, but is common throughout New Guinea. Therefore ritual bleeding and homosexuality should be viewed as part of a spectrum of magical acts, which in a certain type of society may involve some form of sexual symmetry, but in others may involve verbal spells, chants or cults of purification. It is worth noting here that the basic aim of Enga cults is the promotion of growth (and strength) (so that they might be more
accurately termed 'growth' rather than 'purification' cults, to distinguish between their means and end):

. . . bachelors as a category seek a generalized protection from females. They find this in the intermittent performance of senggei rituals intended not only to cleanse and strengthen the actors but also to promote their growth and make them comely. Thus the more effective this magic is, the more attractive to young women the bachelors become, so that ultimately it procures wives for them and ensures that they will beget children for the clan (Meggitt 1964: 210).

Most senggei songs refer to plants and trees with desirable qualities, for instance certain mosses (Lycopodium and Polytrichum spp.) are brightly colored and grow rapidly; the pine (Podocarpus sp.) has a smooth skin; the beech (Nothofagus sp.) is tall and strong (Meggitt 1964: 223).

Since these rites are common throughout New Guinea, they cannot be explained by reference to medical-hygienic factors—differential growth rates in different (Highland) societies—as some authors, such as Brown (1978) and Langness (1977), have suggested; and since they are not universal (are not found in Polynesia and Micronesia for example), they cannot be explained by reference to biological givens or innate psychic dispositions. The obvious answer is a structural one, namely that such rites are congruent with a basic type of society—one which emphasises competition and achieved status, one which is 'ramptantly egalitarian,' in short, one which in the ethnological and native vernacular has a 'big man complex'. Literal and metaphorical bigness is here the precondition and sign of political success (and also of matrimonial success which the latter depends on), as opposed to situations in which status is theoretically determined by birth, as in the chiefdoms of Polynesia and Micronesia.

At the conclusion of his analysis, Dundes provides a synthesis of the anthropological theory of initiation rites—that they make men—and the psychoanalytic theory—that they make men into pseudo-women—by proposing that they make men by means of feminising the initiates. This is argued on the basis of the native equation between penile incision and menstruation and the passive role of initiates in homosexual rites. The ethnographic facts suggest otherwise: the relation between these rites and female physiology is based not on envy or identity but on analogy, that is, a perceived connexion between the onset of menstruation and growth, or on generalisation, that is, between initial and subsequent provisions of semen—if it induces growth in the foetus then it may also be thought to induce growth subsequently at adolescence. (In some societies a connexion may be made between mother's milk and semen.) They are magical acts which make a man more like a man; they put a (masculine) spring in his step and a gleam in his eye:

The salutary effects of penile surgery are said to be immediately observable. The man's body loses its tiredness, his muscles harden, his step quickens, his eyes grow bright and his skin and hair develop a luster. He therefore feels lighthearted, strong and confident. This belief provides a means whereby the success of all perilous or doubtful undertakings can be guaranteed. Warriors make sure to menstruate before setting out on a raid, traders before carving an overseas canoe or refurbishing its sails, hunters before weaving a new net for trapping pigs (Hogbin 1970: 91)

As far as the presumed analogy between active and passive homosexuality and initiation is concerned, not only is libidinal satisfaction irrelevant to the
culturally defined purpose of the act, but one could say that in the case of some societies, such as Kaluli (Schieffelin 1976) which define male/female on the basis of the opposition strong/weak, that the initiate is moved closer to the masculine pole and the initiator closer to the feminine pole as a result of obligatory and depleting provisions of semen.

Finally, on the subject of motivation, it should be noted that Dundes's emphasis on the secrecy of these rites lends no support to the sexual interpretation he advances (the sham sexual autonomy and therefore superiority of males) since initiation rites in general whether or not 'emulative of female procreativity' commonly involve secrecy. This can be taken as a formal expression of the superiority of one social group vis-à-vis another without any necessary reference to the specific content of the rites. In egalitarian societies, secrecy may mark off sex and age divisions and in stratified societies, class divisions as well, as the following example shows:

Todd reported that the Huon Gulf initiation ceremonies, which form part of a secret male cult similar to that found in the eastern Highlands and in parts of the Sepik river area, were recently introduced into Mówehafen. The people, however, radically altered the rites by initiating boys and girls together and excluding all commoners. The operation of circumcision, which in the Huon Gulf area is a strictly guarded male secret equated with female menstruation, is performed shortly after birth by an old woman. During the course of the rites proper, which are performed some years after circumcision, the initiates, both boys and girls, are shown bullroarers and then remain secluded for a short period. The cognitive and socially stratified Mówehafen have thus transformed a ritual complex usually associated with a sex division into one associated with a class distinction between aristocrats and commoners (Allen 1967: 91).

In Rubel and Rosman's (1979) evolutionary taxonomy of New Guinea societies, the earliest and simplest type is one based on dual organisation which regulates the exchange of women, goods and ritual services. In the course of successive transformations based on an expansion in the Highlands and a concomitant increase in scale, the dual structures become separated, attenuated and eventually lost, being replaced by structures of multiple and cyclical exchange. The societies in the Sepik and on the south coast cited above are close to their prototype while those such as Enga represent the furthest evolutionary advance. It appears that Highland societies, such as Gahuku-Gama in the Eastern Central Highlands and Etoro on the Papuan Plateau, exhibiting ritual sexual symmetry, can be regarded as less evolved types which have retained some of the original dual structures. Etoro (Kelly 1977), for example, have implicit moieties which regulate marriage, and Gahuka Gama are organised into clan and sub-tribal pairs which exchange women and goods and hold joint rituals. The rites of the latter are similar to Arapesh and Wogo: they involve a giant bird, nama, whose voice is a pair of flutes (age mates instead of male and female flutes) who comes to bleed the boys to make them grow. Geographically, then, there is a large area of ritual homosexuality on the south coast which reaches up to places on the Papuan Plateau and an area of ritual bleeding on the north coast which extends into the Eastern Central Highlands. The ritual and social resemblances suggest a common origin(s) and subsequent divergence from an ur-type. It should be a matter of considerable areal and theoretical interest to work out the general and specific transformations,
following the lead of Rubel and Rosman, which would thus put into relation a large number of New Guinea societies.

To conclude: initiation rites of sexual symmetry are not based on unconscious relations of envy of female procreative powers but on perceived relations of analogy. They constitute a subset of possible magical acts designed to induce male growth. This subset is correlated with social structures based on dual organisation, and the entire set is congruent with a general type of social structure found in New Guinea—one defined by a big man complex. The interpretation advanced here does not deny that such rituals may express male dominance, superiority or solidarity. It only insists that their distribution must be explained and that their interpretation must be sought at the appropriate level—that social structure, native rationales and history must be taken into account.

NOTES

1 New Guinea is understood to refer to Papau New Guinea and West Irian.
2 On the nose as an erogenous zone, functionally and structurally equivalent to the vagina, see the two volumes by W. Fliess (1897; 1902) which Paul Jorion has called to my attention.
3 Summarised in a tabular form after Leach's (1972) analysis of Tongan myths.
4 Forge's (1972) characterisation.
5 Sahlins 1953.

REFERENCES


