Ritualized Homosexual Behavior in the Male Cults of Melanesia, 1862–1983: An Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Melanesia has long provided a rich stomping ground for anthropological studies of initiation rites, secret societies, sex-related principles of social grouping and, more recently, gender ideologies. The numerous studies of male/female relations and “sexual antagonism” (Brown and Buchbinder 1976; Langness 1967; Meggitt 1964; Read 1954; reviewed in Herdt and Poole 1982) alone distinguish Melanesia as a culture area. Considering this intersection of ritual and sexuality, it is puzzling how little has been written on the institutionalized aspects of eroticism in Melanesian societies, particularly since Melanesianists such as Haddon (1917:351) long ago argued that throughout New Guinea, “initiation ceremonies are not merely the promotion of the novitiates, but also their introduction to the sexual life.” But even more puzzling is the virtual evasion of a psychosocial phenomenon that is of patent anthropological interest and one that now appears more common than once thought: ritualized homosexual behavior.
I reached this conclusion when summarizing a study of such sexual practices and their gender symbolism among the Sambia, a hunting and horticultural society of the Eastern Highlands, Papua New Guinea (Herdt 1981). In reviewing the Melanesian literature of the past 100 years or so, it surprised me that similar practices are more widespread and significant than one would ever suspect from contemporary Melanesian studies (e.g., Allen 1967). Moreover, cross-cultural surveys of initiation and sexuality, which invariably draw upon Melanesia, ignore ritualized homosexuality (see, for example, Cohen 1964; Stephens 1962; Whiting et al. 1958; Whiting and Whiting 1975). By thus neglecting the data cited below, previous surveys and models of social and symbolic variation in initiation rites and relationships between the sexes and gender roles are lacking, and the incidence and meaning of ritualized homosexual practices in these groups remains obscure.

The aim of this introduction is to review the extant Melanesian literature and to explore the linkages between institutionalized homosexuality and certain sociocultural arrangements in Melanesia as a whole. My thesis is that systems that incorporate ritualized homosexuality can be seen as representing the extremes to which sexual polarity extends in a range of Melanesian societies. Rather than ignore homosexual practices as a tangential curiosity, we may look to their distribution, elaboration, and cultural meaning in helping to sort out cross-cultural variation in sexual behavior and gender ideologies in these groups. My review concludes with the possibility that there is a geographic-historical nexus of ritualized homosexuality between these Melanesian groups which is further substantiated by correlations of related sociocultural patterns among them.

What is the current state of the cross-cultural survey literature on homosexual behavior in Melanesia? The view outside of Melanesian studies is plainly muddled, a confusion that invites comment before sorting out the ethnographic texts. Opler (1965:121), for example, in a widely read textbook on human sexuality, denies the existence of institutionalized homosexual practices:

Clubs and societies have on occasion been sex limited, as in Melanesia, but there is no reason to believe that this limitation has
promoted homosexual behavior in these social, economic, or sometimes ritual settings—or indeed that such behavior exists at all in such instances.

Several years later, Minturn et al. (1969), in a Human Relations Area Files cross-cultural survey on sexual beliefs and behavior, coded homosexual behavior as being “absent” in New Guinea societies, but present in Australia. Yet Hiatt (1971:87), speaking in the context of Róheim’s early accounts of Australian aboriginal rites, states, “It would be hard to find empirical grounds for representing these rites as ‘guilty homosexual secrets.’” Where Australian and Melanesian materials bear comparison in this matter, Hiatt’s view seems inadequate (see below). And as recently as 1976, Parratt, in a literature review of F. E. William’s (1936c) Keraki work, writes:

The trans-Fly Papuans appear to have been unique among Melanesian peoples in that novices were initiated also into the practice of sodomy, which was thought to contribute to the physical development of the youths.

(1976:65)

Here we find homosexual practices either denied, coded as absent, or treated as unique. Why should scholars have developed such views?

There are several reasons. One is that many of the Melanesian references on ritualized homosexuality are skimpy, single-line allusions that do not inspire much confidence. Another is that sex remains one of the “taboo” subjects in anthropology (Marshall and Suggs 1971). Anthropologists, including Melanesianists, have not in general provided good descriptive accounts of sexual behavior, homosexual activity in particular. A third factor is a tendency for writers still to view homosexual behavior as universally deviant, unnatural, or perverse, not seeming to recognize that such practices are relative to particular cultural contexts and therefore invite analysis like any other form of social behavior. Fourth is the related matter of “authorities” who have tended to regard only heterosexuality as prevalent or “normal.” Malinowski is a case in point. In his early literature review on The Family Among the
Australian Aborigines, he paid no attention to ritual homosexuality, though he used Australian sources that had mentioned it (see especially 1913:262–269). Later, in his writings on the Trobriand Islands he denied the existence of homosexual activity except as “perversion” (1929:448–453, 468, 472–473), arguing that the natives saw “sexual aberrations as bad because a natural law has been flouted” (1929:468, emphasis mine). (He does not, incidentally, account for why Trobrianders should have a category for anal intercourse.) Elsewhere, he argued ironically: “Homosexuality is the rule among those upon whom white man’s morality has been forced in such an irrational and unscientific manner,” adding, however, that such indigenous “perversions” are “much more prevalent in the [nearby] Amphlett and d’Entrecasteau Archipelago” (Malinowski 1927:80; cf. Röheim 1950:174). Needless to say, no one has ever investigated that latter suggestion.

In his own day, when generalized to all of Melanesia, Malinowski’s view was overdrawn. To illustrate, Havelock Ellis3 (1936: Pt. II, 8–21), whose Psychology of Sex was widely read, cited various ethnographic examples of institutionalized homosexual practices in Melanesia and Australia. So did Westermarck (1917:459ff.) in another book of similar popular currency. Malinowski’s teachers—Seligman (1902) and Haddon (cited in Ellis 1936:9)—also referred to such sources. Van Gennep in his classic study Les Rites de Passage (1960:170–171), specifically argued that the use of heterosexual coitus as a final “rite of incorporation” held “equally true for those of homosexual nature,” and he quoted Parkinson’s (1907) New Britain ethnography to make his point. Moreover, the early Freudians, always quick to exploit new ethnographic data, specifically compared the manifestations of ritualized homosexuality in Austro-Melanesian groups (e.g., see Reik 1946; Röheim 1926:70).

Since the days of such old-fashioned ethnological scrapbooks, other scholars have unsystematically used various works cited below. They have ranged from eminent sex researchers (Ford and Beach 1951:132; Money and Ehrhardt 1972:132–139), to cross-cultural psychiatrists (Foulks 1977:12–13), classicists (e.g., Bremmer 1980:280ff.), the indefatigable German ethnologists (Baumann 1955:210–229; Bleibtreu-Ehrenberg 1980; Karsch-Haack
1911:92–115), Jungians (Eliade 1958:26–27), Freudsians (Bettelheim 1955; Vanggaard 1972), social historians (Trumbach 1977:26–27), biologizers (Tiger 1970:126–155) and popularizers (Kottak 1974:287–288; Tripp 1975:64ff.). Each of these writers, in terms not altogether congenial to social anthropology, have variously argued for, and used, Melanesian materials on ritualized homosexuality to make one or another point about universals of normality and variation in human sexual behavior. Throughout this long period, however, no one ever systematically studied the phenomenon; the ethnological comments of Haddon (1936) and Layard (1959) are notable exceptions, and they appeared, unfortunately, in obscure places. Allen's Male Cults and Secret Initiations in Melanesia, still the chief source book on the area, only mentions ritualized homosexual practices (1967:96–99). Not until Dundes' (1976) discussion had an anthropologist studied and challenged this literature to interpret Melanesian sociocultural systems. In sum, there are ample reasons for non-Melanesianists to be confused about the Melanesian materials on ritualized homosexuality. The remainder of my chapter is devoted to clarifying both what we do and do not know about it.

To ensure the fullest measure of control over the ethnographic material, I shall only examine ritualized homosexuality in Melanesia, especially the island of New Guinea. This culture area involves an immense literature that is thick and uneven, with the older sources in several different languages, published in obscure and inaccessible, often defunct journals, and often referenced to outmoded ethnographic names; but this material I know best. Similar phenomena are reported from elsewhere in the tribal world; perhaps, beyond Australia, the Amazon Basin is closest to the Melanesian situation (see Keesing 1982). Regrettfully I cannot review the Australian Aboriginal material, which properly should be considered alongside of Melanesia, as Róheim (1926:70; 324–337 and passim) and later Van Baal (1963) have argued. Thus, I leave it to others to make sense of the following explicit references to ritualized homosexual practices in the Australian literature, especially on the Kimberley Mountains and Central Desert tribes (see Berndt and Berndt 1951:67; Hardman 1889:73–74; Kaberry 1939:257; Mathews 1896:334–335; 1900:635–636; Meggitt

TERMS • Part of the difficulty in the anthropological literature on sex and gender stems from a plethora of confusing terminology which finds scholars arguing whether something is present or absent without first defining what that something is. The questions surrounding the Omani xanith (Wikan 1977) belong to this confusing morass (see Carrier 1980b). It is therefore crucial at the start to define the parameters of our subject as precisely as possible.

The subject of these essays is restricted to ritualized homosexual (RH)* practices and behavior. I myself prefer the adjective ritualized, despite its ambiguous and exotic connotations, over other imprecise terms such as ceremonialized, which is weaker and incidental. (Devereux’s [1937] classic paper on Mohave homosexuality utilizes these modifiers and many more.) Ritualized as a modifier applies best to the Melanesian situation because: (1) homosexual practices are implemented usually through male initiation rites, having (2) religious overtones, as well as being (3) constrained by broader cultural rules and social roles, for which the full moral and jural force of a society, or a secret men’s society, not only condones but often prescribes sexual intercourse among certain categories of males; and (4) various age-related and kinship taboos define and restrict the nature of this male/male sexual behavior. Ritualized homosexuality is thus a Melanesian type of institutionalized homosexual activity in the broader sense found elsewhere in the world.

Several other general points will help indicate the terms of the following review. First, the Melanesian literature advises that ritualized homosexual behavior is almost exclusively a male phenomenon (cf. Ford and Beach 1951). Institutionalized female homosexuality is very rare (cf. Hooker 1968:230), and little is known of the few reported cases (see below). Second, the males who are involved are usually of markedly different ages; they are

*I will at times use (RH) to indicate ritualized homosexual behavior or groups with such practices, to avoid too bumpy reading.
forbidden to reverse sexual roles (inserter/insertee) with each other, meaning, in effect, that they are in age-ranked, asymmetrical status relationships. Third, these homosexual contacts are culturally focused virtually everywhere on semen transmission. Fourth, as far as is known, Melanesian homosexual behaviors do not involve fetishistic cross-gender dressing or eroticized transvestism of any sort, individual or institutional (see Davenport 1977:155). Although nonerotic ceremonial transvestism is known from Melanesia, it seems infrequent and not strongly correlated with ritualized homosexuality;⁶ (see Schwimmer, chap. 6 below). Nor is there any evidence that primary male transsexualism (Stoller 1968, 1975) is involved.⁷ Fifth, in these societies males are involved in homoerotic contacts first as insertees, then as inserters, being often steadily involved, after initiation, for months or years. Yet in all known cases, they are later expected to marry and father children, as is customary. Their psychosexual involvement (to use a comfortably neutral term) does not make them into “homosexuals,” in the sense that this noun connotes (life-long habitualized sexual preference for members of the same sex) in Western culture (Stoller 1980). In other words, to engage in initiatory or secular homoerotic acts (behavior) does not necessarily mean that one is or becomes “homosexual” in habitual sexual motivation or sex object choice (identity). This analytic distinction is reviewed in my summary. Finally, if these acts are not performed by “homosexuals,” then why use the adjective homosexual? It might be objected that their initial ritual context places these sexual contacts in a category different from that with which Westerners mark off “homosexual.” While this objection holds truth in a sense, we should not forget that sexual acts, ritualized or not, always entail erotic arousal, at least for the inserter. Moreover, as a simple modifier, homosexual is preferable and more accurate than any other, since these societies permit sexual penetration and insemination between people of the same sex.* Bisexual is therefore inaccurate to describe these people or their homoerotic acts: typically, (RH) groups often forbid heterosexual contacts during the same period when boys

*Wherever possible below I shall use “ritualized homosexual behavior” or (RH) in this sense; where I slip into using “homosexuality” it is for stylistic economy, and it should be understood in the fuller sense.
are being inseminated by older males; and the younger insertees are strictly separated from females and are only allowed sexual contacts with superordinate males after initiation.

In these terms I thus exclude from this survey all of the following phenomena: individual (aberrant) or noninstitutionalized homosexual behavior; homosexual behavior as reported from acculturated settings such as plantations or prisons; all fetishistic cross-gender dressing or eroticized transvestism; transsexualism; psychotic behavior or any other form of social deviance as defined by the natives. We shall only be concerned, then, with ritualized homosexual behaviors supported by customary sociocultural arrangements.

Finally, I wish to make it explicitly clear that I am not asserting (or even hinting) any of the following: that all ritual involves homosexual activity, latent or manifest, in Melanesia or elsewhere; that all Melanesians are prone to engage in homosexual activity; or, to reiterate, that these homoerotic activities make the practitioners into "homosexuals." The patterns of (RH) examined below are clearly known from only a small number—perhaps 10 to 20 percent—of all Melanesian groups that have been studied. What matters is not the gross numbers of these societies or their total populations but rather their psychosocial and symbolic meaning when viewed against broader trends of sexual polarity and gender ideology in Melanesia.

Because of its historical depth and unevenness, I have organized the literature review geographically, then by the date of ethnographic reportage and by cultural subarea (e.g., Eastern Melanesia, Western Papua, etc.). The unfolding survey may be read as a story—of increasing allusions followed by fuller accounts of ritual homosexuality, the accumulation of which provides understanding of the pieces of a puzzle widely scattered and still not entirely unscrambled.

Comparisons between these texts involve huge problems concerning the comparability of social units. In some ethnographic reports (e.g., Chalmers's [1903a] note on the Bugi, see below), tiny communities are described; in others, there are far larger populations (e.g., the Marind-anim [Van Baal 1966]), tribes whose total numbers run into the thousands, scattered over vast areas. Then there is the question of considering related social units as discrete and historically unrelated (i.e., Galton's problem). This
issue raises difficulties in the entangled Melanesian literature. My solution is to be conservative: in doubtful cases of geographically close groups (e.g., the Bugi [Chalmers 1903a] versus Kiwi Islanders [Landman 1927]) I will assume social linkage. When dealing with whole subregions (e.g., Southeastern Irian Jaya), I count groups as different (e.g., Marind-anim versus Jaquai) when there is evidence sufficient to justify their classification as separate units. But such classifications do not mean that these peoples necessarily belong to different subregional cultural traditions. We can thus identify a people both as constituting a separate social unit as well as belonging to a broader cultural tradition in a geographic subregion of Melanesia. In this survey we shall examine eight different subregions which vary in size and in the number of their constituent social units (see table 1.1). Then I shall briefly reconnoiter several questionable cases. Each subregion will be treated separately; clear statements about ritualized homosexual behavior is the organizing theme. Finally, I have tried also to assess the quality of these reports where possible and to substantiate early reports with later ones, either in the same society or elsewhere from the same cultural tradition.  

The ethnographic material from the earliest historical period is often thin, diverse, and difficult to interpret. It covers the widest possible geographic and ethnological spectrum, from Eastern Melanesia (Fiji, the New Hebrides,* and New Caledonia), the offlying islands of old German New Guinea, and the Papuan Gulf at the Fly River, to disparate parts of North and Southeast Dutch New Guinea (see endpaper map). It is also checkered, being an unreliable mixture of reports from travelers, missionaries, and early anthropologists. (Some early travelers' reports are fantastic—"a stimulus for jaded imaginations": Whittaker et al. 1975:271ff.)

EASTERN MELANESIA

Fiji • Our earliest hints of ritualized homosexuality come from the extreme easternmost part of Melanesia, Fiji, which was colonized before island New Guinea. These data suggest the presence

*The New Hebrides will be used here to conform to the older literature references; however, it covers the New Hebrides Archipelago, the Banks Islands, Torres Straits, and other islands now incorporated in the new nation of Vanuatu.
### TABLE 1.1
THE DISTRIBUTION OF RITUALIZED HOMOSEXUALITY IN MELANESIAN GROUPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic Subregion</th>
<th>Social Unit (referred to in text)</th>
<th>Related social units (not referred to in text)</th>
<th>Language type*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Eastern insular Melanesia</td>
<td>1. Fiji</td>
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<td>A</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. New Caledonia</td>
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<td>A</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Malekula Island</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. New Britain</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Duke-of-Yorks</td>
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<td>6. East Bay</td>
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<td>II. Northeastern insular Melanesia</td>
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<tr>
<td>III. Western Papua</td>
<td>7. Kiwai Island (+ Bugilai)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8. Keraki</td>
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<td>9. Suki</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10. Boadzi</td>
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<td>IV. Southeastern Irian Jaya</td>
<td>11. Kanum</td>
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<td>12. Yei-anim</td>
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<td>13. Marind-anim</td>
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<td>14. Kimam (Fr. Hen. Is.)</td>
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<td>15. Jaquai</td>
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<td>Lower Fly River:</td>
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<td>7. Kiwai Island (+ Bugilai)</td>
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<td>10. Boadzi</td>
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<td>Trans-Fly Delta:</td>
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<td>7. Kiwai Island (+ Bugilai)</td>
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<td>10. Boadzi</td>
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<td>Karigare¹</td>
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<td>N</td>
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<td>Yarne</td>
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<td>Kaunjie</td>
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<td>Wekamara</td>
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<td>Maklew-anim²</td>
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<td>Yab-anim</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kurkari-anim</td>
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*Language type: A = Arrestation, N = Not recorded.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Society</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>V. Northeastern Irian Jaya</td>
<td>16. Asmat</td>
<td>N</td>
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<td></td>
<td>17. Casuarina Coast</td>
<td>N</td>
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<td>VI. Great Papuan Plateau</td>
<td>18. Humboldt Bay</td>
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<td>19. Bedamini</td>
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<td>20. Etoro</td>
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<td>21. Kaluli</td>
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<td>22. Onabasalu</td>
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<td></td>
<td>23. Gebusi (Nomad River)</td>
<td>N</td>
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<td>VII. Anga (Kukukuku)</td>
<td>24. Sambia</td>
<td>N</td>
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<td>25. Baruya</td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26. Jeghije</td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27. Other Highlands</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Anga groups</td>
<td>N</td>
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<td></td>
<td>28. Lowlands</td>
<td>N</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Anga groups</td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>VIII. Northern Province</td>
<td>29. Ai'i</td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total: 29 societies</td>
<td>N</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Total: 19 related societies</td>
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* Austronesian = A
* Non-Austronesian = N
1 From Williams (1936:208)
2 From Van Baal (1946; maps)
3 From Gajdusek et al. (1972)
of ritualized homosexuality, but they are highly questionable (see, for example, Seemann 1862:160–162, 169–170; and Waterhouse 1866:341, 345). Nonetheless, in the late 1920s, the authority A. M. Hocart speculated that “sodomy [anal intercourse] was once recognized between cross-cousins” among the hill tribes of Fiji (quoted in Layard 1942:491). Hocart linguistically compared the pertinent Fijian terms of address with those associated with anal intercourse in ancient Hawaii (cf. Remy 1862:xliii; and see below on Malekula Island). For Fiji, then, the case for ritual homosexuality is thin.

NEW CALEDONIA • Foley’s (1879) report is the earliest definite mention of (RH). Comparing the New Caledonian villagers to the ancient Greeks, Foley states: “It is true that this military club is complicated by pederasty” (ibid.:606). Arguing that the warriorhood is opposed to “the uterine club,” he also remarks, “Women are the enemies of pederasty” (ibid.). Collaborative sketchy reports can be found in De Rochas (1862:235) and in Jacobus X. (1893:330–331; 1898, 2: 359–360). New Caledonia is culturally similar to New Hebrides societies, where homosexual activities are much better described.

MALEKULA ISLAND (NEW HEBRIDES)* • The first major source for Malekula is A. B. Deacon, a Cambridge-trained anthropologist who carried out intensive fieldwork in Seniang district, South West Bay area, and who also collected valuable survey data on other Malekula communities (see map 2). Though the most elaborate forms of ritualized homosexuality occur in the northern districts, especially among the Big Nambas tribe, related elements of the same complex occur elsewhere on Malekula as well as on neighboring islands. The characteristics and possible interrelations of this complex are delineated in Allen’s important paper below (see chap. 2). Outside the Big Nambas area, “homosexuality is apparently very rare” (Deacon 1934:156), though among prepubertal boys masturbation and heterosexual play are “common.” In other, more northerly areas, male homosexual practices are “occasional and sporadic,” whereas lesbianism is “com-

*I am very grateful to Professor Michael Allen for clarifying the ethnographic data provided in this section.
mon” (Deacon 1934:170). Elements of the same ritual complex—including a belief in heads (both penis heads and mens’ heads) as loci of male power, the use of elaborate headdresses to represent spirit beings, the symbolic importance of sharks, and the performance of painful initiation rites with long periods of seclusion—are found in varying combinations throughout much of the northern New Hebrides and Banks Islands (Layard 1942:493–494; Allen 1981).

The main features of the traditional North Malekula case can be roughly sketched as follows. These groups tend toward chieftainship, the highest form being attained among the Big Nambas. Here, too, ritualized homosexuality is the most prominent. Layard (1942:489) describes the Big Nambas as “an extreme form of patrilineal culture . . . exceeding all other New Hebrides tribes in the very low status which they accord to women.” Boys are initiated at an early age and thereafter stringently avoid women. Circum-incision* accords them masculine status; and it is positively correlated with “organized homosexuality” (Layard 1942:486–488). Thus, while homosexual contacts may have traditionally existed in other parts of Vanuatu, they are most highly elaborated among the Big Nambas, where circumcision is practiced (Allen 1967:96–97). Is demography a relevant consideration? Here as elsewhere in New Guinea, there is a sex ratio disparity (126 males per 100 females [Layard 1942:745]), exacerbated by the chiefly system, which enables the Big Nambas chiefs to hold a virtual monopoly of the women (Layard 1959:109). Is cultural belief related? Yes: the natives see homosexual intercourse as a way to strengthen the boy’s penis (Deacon 1934:260–262)—which Layard (1942:489) believes to be a “transmission of male power by physical means”—for the penis is held in “high esteem” and the glans penis is accorded “extreme reverence.”

Finally, the New Hebrides complex reveals a symbolic relation between living and dead kinsmen and male gender ideology. Homosexual partners refer to each other as husband and wife, the initiate calling his man-lover “sister’s husband” (Deacon 1934:261; Layard 1942:488–489), terms that indicate the close affinal, sex-

*A rare and complex form of circumcision found here which Layard has described in detail and Allen (chap. 2) mentions below.
ual, and perhaps economic interrelation between these males. Layard speaks of homosexual anal intercourse as symbolizing "continuity with the ancestral ghosts in the male line," especially in areas, such as the Small Islands, wherein mystical anal penetration as a ritual hoax supplants actual homosexual coitus (Layard 1959:111). We see similar symbolic themes of spiritual insertion elsewhere in Melanesia (see Summary and Analysis). This same culture complex, minus circumcision and ritual homosexuality, is found in a wide area extending through Malekula, Raga, and the Banks Islands (Layard 1942:493–494). Deacon was so struck by the similarities between this cult and a structurally similar initiatory complex (with circumcision, devouring ritual spirits, bullroarers, etc.) found in the Finschhafen area, near the Markham River on mainland New Guinea, that he argued for a historical connection through diffusion from a common source, most probably located in Eastern Indonesia (Deacon 1925, 1934:268–269).  

If Layard found mystical support for patrilineal descent in the New Hebrides, he also saw symbolic connections between homosexuality, marriage, and masculinity. Drawing speculative parallels between Malekula, Fiji, and Western Australia, Layard (1942:494) states: "Among the Big Nambas a man took as his boy lover a member of his wife's marriage section, and it was only later that this love-relationship turned into one of joking and mutual violence." Further, Layard (1942:489–490) advanced a rather sophisticated argument about the causes of (RH). He believed that social forms (sexual polarity, chieftainship, sister exchange), created by the religious rationalization of male descent and affiliation (e.g., circum-incision and ancestral "mythical homosexuality"), gradually resulted in homoerotic contacts "as an everyday practice." In other words, ideology and social structure historically produced ritual homosexual contacts that became as regularly institutionalized as heterosexual contacts. I shall return to this historicist argument in the summary.

NEW BRITAIN AND NORTHEASTERN MELANESIA

If we now look north (see map 1), we may trace a series of ethnographic cases including New Britain and the nearby Duke-of-York Islands (formerly German New Guinea), and East Bay.
NEW BRITAIN AND THE DUKE-OF-YORKS • The German ethnologist Richard Parkinson wrote a massive early text which, though in German and little read, remains the classic source on the area. He describes men’s secret societies among the Tolai people of the Gazelle Peninsula area of New Britain island. Ritualized homosexual practices are present in the special Ingiet cult there.

When candidates are admitted in the Ingiet, sodomy [anal intercourse] is committed before the eyes of all present. An older Ingiet leaves the balama marawot [cult house] and returns quite naked and smeared with lime from top to toe. He holds in his hand the end of a coconut mat, the other end he offers to one of the novices. The two of them scuffle around with it for some time, and then fall over each other and the abomination takes place. Each initiate in turn must submit to this procedure. In extenuation of this, however, I will remark that paederasty is no crime in the eyes of the native, who regards it merely in an amusing light.

(Parkinson 1907:544)

Shortly later, no less an authority than Van Gennep (1960:171) used this passage as an example of homosexual “rites of incorporation” in Les Rites des Passage. It is unclear how widespread this practice was in the Bismarck Archipelago of that day, but it may have been restricted to the Ingiet secret society.

The lime-coated figure may here symbolically represent a “spirit woman,” which Parkinson (1907:537) tells us the fully initiated elder can “turn himself into.” If so, it would exemplify what Layard (1942:474) called a “mythical” symbolization of homosexual practices. Whether similar practices existed in the related Duk-Duk men’s cult (Rickard 1891) is unclear, but Richard Salisbury (personal communication) thinks not. On the Ingiet cult, however, Parkinson pointedly (1907:544) reassures us that his sexual information is reliable.13

No further reports even mentioned ritual homosexuality in New Britain for almost seventy years.14 Presumably, the practice is now long since abandoned. However, Epstein (1977:178–179) refers to fragmentary evidence indicating the traditional practice of anal homosexual intercourse among the Tolai. And Errington (1974), whose work on the neighboring Duke-of-York Islands is the first since Parkinson’s (1907:545), has supplied important confirmation.
of ritualized homosexual practices in the wider New Britain area. In the contemporary context of initiation on the Duke-of-Yorks, he notes:

One man, a volunteer, not otherwise important in the ritual, lay on his stomach without his waistcloth in order to expose his anus to the boy. An informant of sixty said that in the past a boy going to the taraiu for the first time had to perform fellatio* on one of the adult men. Another informant, a young man about thirty-five, was shocked when I asked about this practice. . . . [Errington here cites Parkinson. Thus, these practices suggest . . .] homosexual submission when a boy is separated from the society of women and incorporated into the society of men.

(Errington 1974:84)

The New Britain material clearly indicates homosexual practices in secret initiation. But we do not know whether (RH) occurred after initiation in secular life. And in contrast to Malekula and Papua (see below), no evidence of native ideas about “growth” is evident. (I take up Errington’s suggestion about “homosexual submission” later.)

No other definite reports are known from the off-lying islands north of New Guinea. The nearby island of Buka may be a candidate, “for homosexuality is actually found among these people, but is rare, and is regarded with intense disfavour” (Blackwood 1935:128). The channel islands and Vitiaz Straits groups, together with the lowlands’ Northeastern New Guinea mainland communities seem similar in cultural form to New Britian and the Duke-of-Yorks, but again the relevant ethnographic materials, often collected by missionaries, are difficult to assess (e.g., Neuhauss 1911).

EAST BAY • The only new report of homosexual activity in an off-lying island society here is that of Davenport (1965, 1977). Although he (1977:155–157) refers to “institutionalized male bisexuality” in an acculturated community, we may safely include East Bay in our sample.

*Note the presence of contrary sexual techniques—anal intercourse in the Ingiet society, and fellatio among Duke-of-Yorks—in such closely related areas. Cf. below on the Great Papuan Plateau.
It is particularly interesting that two contrary modes of homosexual relations exist side by side in East Bay. The first is reciprocal and egalitarian sexual satisfaction between peers (even “brothers”; Davenport 1965:199) or friends: each must please the other in return.

As boys reach late adolescence, they may also engage in mutual masturbation, but in the switch away from masturbation they also may have anal intercourse with friends and trade off playing the active and passive roles. No love or strong emotional bonds are developed. . . . It is considered to be part of the accommodations expected of friendship.

(Davenport 1977:155)

This type of homosexual contact between peers is apparently rare in Melanesia (but cf. below, and Hogbin 1970). It opposes the normative distinctions between inserter and insertee so common in (RH) groups. The other mode was asymmetrical homosexual contacts between East Bay men and boys, which is common.

Another substitute for older men was young boys, and they did take boys as passive partners for anal intercourse. Before a boy could be induced into such a partnership, permission had to be obtained from his father. 16

(Davenport 1977:155)

It is not clear if transmission of semen is here involved in “strengthening” boys, but it seems a likely possibility because of traditional initiation rites. The boy would receive small presents in return for his sexual favors.

Essentially, Davenport (1977:155) sees asymmetrical homosexual activities as a substitute sexual outlet for heterosexual relationships before marriage (for adolescents) or during postpartum taboos after marriage (for men). Ritual homosexuality was also associated with male initiation (Davenport 1965:205–206), at least in its men’s-house variety. Homosexual activities are sporadically engaged in for years, along with heterosexual contacts, even in adulthood. It is also unusual that two erotic modes (i.e., mutual masturbation and anal coitus) coexist in East Bay, while others (e.g., fellatio; see Davenport 1965:201) are considered “ridiculous.” Much social change has occurred in East Bay. Homosexual
practices, for example, are no longer secret. One wonders whether the more-or-less egalitarian mode of mutual masturbation does not represent cultural change. If so, it would help to explain the sexual mutuality of peers resulting from changes in the power relationships underlying customary asymmetrical (RH). Davenport (1977) has recently advanced an important idea about how "gender segregated communities" led to (RH) in Melanesia, to which I shall return in the summary.

WESTERN PAPUA

This area is vast and includes many different social groups that essentially belong to the same subregional cultural tradition. They were the first mainland New Guinea groups reported to have ritualized homosexuality.

THE LOWER FLY RIVER • Initial reports in this area came from the Fly River delta and Kiwai Island, which lies at its mouth. These small tribal groups were once fierce warriors. All males were initiated into a secret cult, the various forms of which extended west throughout the Morehead District. The status of women was low (see Landtman 1927; Williams 1936c). Beardmore (1890:464), a missionary, first mentioned that "sodomy [anal intercourse] is regularly indulged in" on the left bank of the Fly (see also Haddon 1890:315).

The next overt references came from James Chalmers, a better-known missionary, on two closely related peoples: the Bugilai, again of the left bank of the Fly (see Williams 1936c:32n), and the nearby Kiwai Islanders. Of the Bugilai, Chalmers (1903a:109) states: "At the initiation of young men, they practice sodomy, but not bestiality as some other tribes do." (No further explanation!)

On the Kiwai Islanders, Chalmers's often sympathetic view turned cold even when it came to their heterosexual life. "Fornication is rife, rife here and the old men are the greatest sinners" (quoted in Langmore 1978:22). (When Chalmers [1903b:123] alluded to heterosexual arousal in the Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, the editors placed the crucial passage entirely in Latin, presumably out of censorship.) And Langmore (ibid.), quoting
Chalmers’s unpublished papers, cites him thus on ritual homosexuality:

    The festival which so incensed him was the moguru: the series of ceremonies which initiated the young men. Chalmers opposed it partly because it emptied his classrooms for four months of every year, but more fundamentally because of its nature. It was “abominably filthy” he wrote. “The lads are prostituted by the men for quite a long time and soon become so diseased* that they never recover.”

Chalmers was heartened when they did “recover” from their heathen ways by dropping these cult ceremonies in around 1898 (ibid.).

    Censorship is apparent again with Baxter-Riley’s (1925:216, another missionary) work on Kiawai, for he obliquely refers to an “unprintable ritual” (cf. also Beaver 1920:158 on “sexual crimes,” and Strachan 1888:148, 155). In such instances we see what was seemingly common censorship practice vis-à-vis ethnographic reports on sexuality, at least until recently; at any rate it is clear from Haddon that Baxter-Riley was referring to ritualized homosexuality.17

    The richest ethnography of Kiawai came from the Finnish ethnographer Landzman. In 1917 he noted that anal intercourse, sanctioned by myth, was believed to promote the physical growth of initiates (see Landman 1917:78–80, 293–295). Later, in *The Kiawai Papuans of British New Guinea* (quaintly subtitled “A nature-born instance of Rousseau’s ideal community”), Landzman (1927:237) writes:

    In connection with the initiation of youths at Masingle [Kiawai village], these have to practice sodomy in order to become tall and strong. Mr. E. Beardmore, who stayed in Mawata in 1888, states that “sodomy is regularly indulged in”.... I did not come across any traces of it at Mawata as a general or ceremonial practice, but think it quite possible that the customs of the people, changing as they are, may have altered in this respect since Mr. Beardmore’s time.18

*Metaphorically.*
In the Kiwai case, we see a set of cultural themes which extend throughout the Western Papuan Gulf: a ritual cult feeding into a warriorhood; ritual seclusion and separation from women; and homosexual practices instituted through initiation to spur boys' masculine development.

It is worth underlining in general effects of social change on sexual customs as illustrated by the differences between the reports of Beardmore and Landtman. By 1910, when Landtman first worked, some twenty-two years had elapsed since Beardmore's work: undoubtedly, after pacification and missionary activity, social change had led the natives at Mawata to drop ritual homosexual practices. It is certain that for decades a similar historical process has been at work elsewhere in Melanesia: by the time an anthropologist arrived on the scene, trailing behind government and mission, (RH) activity, which was traditionally secret and hidden from the uninitiated in many areas, had been abandoned or suppressed owing to European authorities. (For striking examples of the political suppression of such homosexual practices, see the rare reports of Parkinson [1907:530n, 543–544], on German New Guinea, and Van Baal [1966:492–493], on Dutch New Guinea.) Thus, its presence was actively hidden from the anthropologist (see, for example, Williams 1936c:158), and/or the practice was defunct and unknown to younger natives themselves, so descriptions had to be salvaged from oldster's memories (e.g., Errington 1974, quoted above).

THE TRANS-FLY RIVER DELTA. We have already examined early reports from the mouth of the Fly River. Beginning in the 1920s, government anthropologist F. E. Williams immeasurably added to the ethnography of this cultural tradition, which extends up to the Fly headwaters, throughout the Morehead district, and west beyond the international border. Williams's classic studies of the Purari Delta, Keraki, Elema, Orokaiva, and other societies provide rich material for an emerging ethology of the Papuan Gulf and Southern Irian Jaya (cf. Haddon 1927, 1936; Parratt 1976; Wagner 1972; Van Baal 1966). The Lower Trans-Fly Keraki are also the most famous Melanesian example of ritualized homosexual behavior cited in cross-cultural studies (e.g., Ford and Beach 1951). Williams was usually careful to record notes on sexual
behavior—along with his biases about them (see n. 2). Until recent years, the Keraki were also the best described Papuan case of ritualized homosexual (anal) intercourse (see Williams 1936a:33n; 1936c:158–159, 194, 202, 294, 308–309). They were but one of several small tribes, numbering only a few hundred people, whom he believed to be nearly identical in culture and social organization. The following passage best illustrates the main features and context of Keraki homosexual practices:

It was frequently maintained that setiriva, or bachelors, remained truly celibate until they entered upon sexual relations with their own wives. Without giving too much credence to this statement, we may note that the hospitable exchange above noted was nominally restricted to married adults. Some informants maintained that setiriva could secure the favors of married women at feast times, but it seems evident that this was not definitely sanctioned. The bachelors had recourse to sodomy, a practice which was not reproved but was actually a custom of the country—and a custom in the true sense, i.e., fully sanctioned by male society and universally practiced. For a long time the existence of sodomy was successfully concealed from me, but latterly, once I had won the confidence of a few informants in the matter, it was admitted on every hand. It is actually regarded as essential to the growing boy to be sodomized. More than one informant being asked if he had ever been subjected to unnatural practice, answered, “Why, yes! Otherwise how should I have grown?”

The ceremonial initiation to sodomy and the mythological antecedents to it will be spoken of elsewhere. . . . It is enough to note that every male adult in the Morehead district has in his time constantly played both parts in this perversion. The boy is initiated to it at the bull-roarer ceremony and not earlier, for he could not then be trusted to keep the secret from his mother. When he becomes adolescent his part is reversed and he may then sodomize his juniors, the new initiates to the bull-roarer. I am told that some boys are more attractive and consequently receive more attention of this kind than do others; but all must pass through it, since it is regarded as essential to their bodily growth. There is indeed no question as to the universality of the practice.

It is commonly asserted that the early practice of sodomy does nothing to inhibit a man’s natural desires when later on he marries; and it is a fact that while the older men are not debarred from indulging, and actually do so at the bull-roarer ceremony, sodomy is virtually restricted as a habit to the setiriva.

(Williams 1936c:158–159)
These general patterns can thus be adduced on Keraki: Homosexual anal intercourse was (1) universal among all males, (2) obligatory, (3) implemented through ceremonial initiation, (4) secret and hidden from women and children, (5) culturally sanctioned by myth (Williams 1936c:194, 308–309), and (6) by the native belief that semen masculinized the initiate. The last notion is elaborated remarkably to the extent of fearing homosexual impregnation, which certain rites protect against (Williams 1936c; and cf. Meigs 1976). Trans-Fly homosexual contacts were also—as nearly everywhere else in Melanesia—(7) age graded and asymmetrical, so that bachelor youths inseminated younger males, who could not situationally reverse roles. (8) The Keraki initiate is inseminated by males of the opposite moiety, specifically his older cross-cousins (Williams 1936c:128), who have already been initiated and treated likewise by the initiates’ older male clansmen (F E1.B., FB, FBS0). Hage (1981) has made much of this dualism (see my summary), following the important analysis of Rubel and Rosman (1978). It is likely, as Layard (1959:112–115) and Van Baal (1966:493–494) have argued, that this customary homoeroticism between groups that exchange wive—potential brother-in-laws—is a symbolic underpinning of semen exchanges between structurally related affines (see Herdt, chap. 4, and Lindenbaum, chap. 9, this volume). Finally, (9) Keraki homosexuality is practiced by unmarried males who eventually marry, as Williams noted above. These themes are discussed from a different perspective in Schwimmer’s chapter 6.

Ethnographic data on other parts of the Fly River, Western Province, and eastern Gulf Coast are sketchy, but they should be mentioned here.* First, ritualized homosexuality is absent from the coastal Papuan societies east of the Fly River (Williams 1940a:428 n. 3), aside from the Ai’i and the probable exception of the coastal Anga peoples (see below). For example, the Elema people, in spite of symbolic and structural similarity to the Irian Jaya Marind-anim tribes, do not practice institutionalized homosexuality (Williams 1939:368 n. 3). (RH) also seems absent from

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*I am greatly indebted to Professor J. Van Baal for information in the following two paragraphs and for many substantive remarks in the following section on Irian Jaya.
the Lake Kutubu area (Williams 1940b), as seems true for the eastern Motuan groups. Barker (1975), however, reports (RH) among the Ai’i, a people south of Orokavia, which Schwimmer discusses below. (RH) was absent from the Massim area, as noted above, and was probably absent from Normanby Island (Röheim 1950). And ritual homosexuality is not explicitly reported for any of the off-lying islands of the Papuan Gulf (see Haddon 1890, 1936). For the Torres Straits, there is a hint that Waiat cult leaders, impersonating spirits, may have on occasion perpetrated homosexual acts (see Haddon in Reports [1910, vol. 6], pointed out by Jeremy Becket, personal communication; see also Ellis 1936:9).

West of the Fly the situation is clear. Williams (1940a:492 n. 2) tells us that ritual homosexuality extended west throughout all villages of the left bank of the Lower Fly (e.g., including the Bugilai [Chalmers 1903a] noted above). Farther west the same practices are found. Culturally closely related to the Keraki are the most eastern tribes of the lowlands of Irian Jaya just across the international border. These include two distinct tribes, the Kanum peoples in the savannah east of the Lower Maro River, and the Yéi-anim (or Yéi-nan) of the Upper and Middle Maro River (see map 3). Their languages are closely related to those of the Trans-Fly. Information on the Kanum is very limited, though we know that some were yam-growers, that they are small in population, and that they practiced anal homosexuality, at least in the context of Sosom cult rites.* The Yéi-anim also live in small groups, and although sago-eaters like the Marind-anim, they consume tubers as daily food (like the Marind). The Yéi seem very similar to the Keraki: their totemism and moiety dualism match Keraki, and they identify the male sex with bull-roarer and pahui (ceremonial head-hunting clubs). More importantly, they practice quite similar anal homosexual intercourse, with young boys as insertees and bachelors (and some younger mature men) as inserters, for the purpose of “growing” the boys (Van Baal 1982).

To the north of Keraki, ritualized homosexuality of a like form has been reported from the Suki people on the Lower Middle Fly (Nieuwenhuijsen-Riedeman 1979), and from the Boadzi, a tribe

*In this area and among the Marind-anim peoples (discussed next), two elaborate and widespread ritual cults, referred to as Sosom and Mayo, utilized (RH).
inhabiting both sides of the international border where it meets the Fly River (see below). Farther to the north, recent anthropological work at the Fly headwaters, bordering the Telefomin area (see below), has revealed no ritualized homosexuality (Barth 1971).

IRIAN JAYA (formerly Dutch New Guinea)

The ethnography of Irian Jaya is not presently well integrated into Melanesian studies for several reasons, and since most ethnographic research there halted after Indonesia’s annexation in the early 1960s, our contemporary knowledge is limited. Fortunately, we have Professor Van Baal’s essay below (chap. 3) on the Marind-anim peoples, who are, next to the Keraki, the best known and probably the most flamboyant case of ritualized homosexuality known from Melanesia. Two areas of Irian Jaya are definitely known to have (RH): essentially the entire southern area, from the international border to Frederik Hendrik Island, extending north along the Irian Jaya coast in some groups; and in the extreme north, at Humboldt Bay.

THE MARIND-ANIM TRIBES • The Marind-anim groups numbered some 7,000 people (as of the most recent census; Van Baal 1966:33–37), dispersed in coastal villages, inland villages, and those on the Upper Bian River. They were sago-eaters, and though ecologically adjusted, they were demographically declining. Despite their relatively small numbers, they were unquestionably the fiercest headhunters throughout the Papuan Gulf (e.g., Beaver 1920:106ff.). They speak different dialects but are fairly homogeneous culturally. Linguistically, they are closely akin to the Boadzi, who also share in their traditions of head-hunting and ritualized homosexuality. Van Baal (1966:99–104) has shown affinities between the Boadzi of the Central Fly area around Lake Murray and the Marind-anim. Indeed, he (1966:214, 218) suggests the Middle Fly as the precursor cultural tradition of the Marind. Furthermore, as with the Marind, “sodomy has an important place in [Boadzi] life. The men indulge in it both in the men’s house and in the bush” (Van Baal 1966:595). It had numerous magical functions in ritual, myth, and warfare.

First reports of the Marind came from Haddon (1891) and
others, but it is to Wirz (1922–1925) that we owe the first systematic study. Though published in German and not widely circulated, Wirz’s dissertation contained rich mythological and ritual material on the Mayo and Sosum (bull-roarer) male cults of the Marind-anim. Wirz was cited by specialists (cf. Haddon 1927, 1936; Mead 1949:228–229; Williams 1936c), especially before Van Baal’s (1966) work was available. Wirz (1922:39) noted, for instance:

This is a secret society whose ceremonies consist, above all, of sexual orgies and end up with cannibalism. *... According to the natives, the abstinence of the novices from nutrition and administering of certain dishes that are garnished with sperm are supposed simply to excite the [sexually dominant] youth, in the usual festivals, so that the feasts get all the more obscene.

Some years later Haddon (1936:xxvi) summarized Wirz’s data, in relation to ritual homosexual practices, thus:

When a boy leaves the village and resides in the youth’s house he comes under the care of the man to whom he is under complete obedience, and with whom he sleeps at night. There is sexual jealousy among the guardians, but when Sosom [spirit being] comes these proprietary rights vanish (as at ordinary feasts in the case of the women) and unrestricted sodomy prevails.

The Marind-anim material thus indicated the first glimpse of a widespread “homosexual initiation cult” (the phrase is Van Baal’s [1963] extending from the Trans-Fly River tribes in the east to the Trans-Digul River Jacquai in the west.

The following general points will serve to introduce the Marind groups, which Van Baal’s own essay below develops far more fully. The main point: ritualized anal homosexual practices are institutionalized on a widespread scale throughout the entire Marind area. They are associated with the Sosom cult, in particular, which is identified with the mythological figure of Sosom, an ancestral giant (Wirz 1922; Van Baal 1934, 1966:248). Homosexual anal intercourse is begun in male initiation for boys between the ages

*See Van Baal (chap. 3), who sees this cannibalistic act as a symbolic, rather than literal, practice.
of seven and fourteen years (Van Baal 1966:143–144). Afterward, boys live in the men's clubhouse for some six years, avoiding females and regularly engaging in anal intercourse. Initial promiscuous homosexual contacts, jealousies, and more extended liaisons are with members of the opposite moiety. Later sustained contacts are with the boy's appointed "mentor" or binahor-evai, who is usually his mother's brother (Van Baal 1966:113–115; 493). But, unlike with the Kimam of Frederik Hendrik Island (Serpenti 1965), there is no evidence at all that the binahor father—the (RH) inserter—cedes his daughter in sister exchange to the younger male.

As elsewhere, homosexual insemination here is seen as crucial to a boy's physical masculine development. Verschueren wrote early on: "In our studies of the notions underlying the [homosexual] practice F. Boelaars and I found that, everywhere, the act is seen as a necessary condition for the completion of a boy's physical development" (quoted in Van Baal 1966:494).

Compared to other (RH) groups, homosexual practices here are less secret, and women apparently know of their existence. This fact seems anomalous, considering the elaborate sexual polarity of Marind-anim society, a point pursued in my summary below. However, it may be, as Van Baal (1966:948ff.) argues, that the "phallic religion" of Marind symbolically concerns this oddity.

The secret of the great cults is that the men must submit to the women, caught in coitu, powerless. . . . The source of all life, sperma, is effective only—at least, in principle—if produced in [heterosexual] copulation. These self-sufficient males need the females and they know it; only, they do not care to admit it.

(1966:949)

Here is a very dramatic characteristic found only in Southern Irian Jaya: the efficacy of sperm used for certain (RH)-related activities must come from heterosexual intercourse. Homosexual activity is distinct from that, but as Van Baal (chap. 3) argues below, both types of sexual relationships must be seen as counterparts of each other.

The discrepancy between men's wanting to be self-sufficient yet needing women is associated with the act of head-hunting, which was so important in Marind-anim social reproduction. We know
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that head-hunting was the final incorporating initiatory rite of the Mayo cult (Van Baal 1966:740–742), and that it legitimized male adulthood. Van Baal (1966:949) goes beyond cultural facts, however, and sees a psychosocial dynamic in the men’s ritual denial of women’s power.

In secret, in the celebration of the rites, they will allow their dependence and immediately afterwards go out headhunting. It is as if by that time their rage had mounted to such a pitch that they have to find an outlet for it... It is fairly probable that these pent-up feelings of discomfort are, indeed, a major source of aggressiveness. It is aggressiveness directed toward the innocent. Somebody has to be killed and there is no real motive for the act.

(1966:949)

The Marind-anim were certainly regarded as among New Guinea’s most ruthless headhunters from the earliest period of contact (see Haddon 1891; Baxter-Riley 1925; Wirz 1934).

Ultimately, Van Baal (1966:950–954) sees the meaning of Marind-anim ritual homosexuality as being caught up in the contradictions of their heterosexual relationships. Theirs was a society with an “ineffective” sexual segregation, with some freedom of marital choice nevertheless curtailed by sister exchange, and with promiscuity and wife-beating. And yet, “couples seem strongly attached to each other”; even in the male initiation rites, women took a part, while at other times, the sexes ceremonially battled. Other social facts inform, such as the kidnapping of children; and the associated “alarmingly low fertility rate of women... [is] an indirect, but nevertheless convincing symptom of a serious imbalance in their sexual life” (Van Baal 1966:950). These conditions, in addition to the fact that men continue having homosexual intercourse throughout life, even into old age (unusual in Melanesia) suggest that “relations between the sexes are beset with [personal] conflicts and institutional controversies” (Van Baal 1966:949). The Marind-anim and related cultures thus show a complex system of variables that defy any simple causal explanation, psychological, ecological, or structural.

West of the Marind-anim, among groups occupying Frederik Hendrik Island, the north part of the Lower Digul River, and the Jaquai of the Mappi River basin, we are again confronted with
ritualized homosexuality. In contrast to the Marind and Boadzi, however, who are organized in patrilineal clans and moieties, these are nonunilineal descent groups. In other respects they seem like the Marind.

First to the Kimam of Frederick Hendrik Island, who lie directly west of the Marind: Serpenti (1965) has already reported pronounced ritualized anal homosexual practices among them, and his chapter 7 below is an important addition to the literature. Here I will simply place the Kimam in a broader framework. Upon initiation, a boy was placed under the charge of an older youth, who “adopted” him as his “mentor” (Serpenti 1965:162). They regularly practiced homosexual anal intercourse. “This ‘mentor’ is usually a classificatory elder brother from the same pabura (village-sector)” (Serpenti 1965:162–163). But this remarkably close relationship was unusual; mentors were often mother’s younger brothers or cross-cousins, too (biological brothers were excluded). At least some aspects of ritual homosexuality and initiation were secret (ibid.:171). The magical and medicinal employment of sperm here was central to cult activities: “Everywhere on the island sperm is believed to contain great powers” (ibid.:164). Sperm is rubbed all over an initiate’s body, particularly into incisions made by his mentor, to make boys “big and strong” (ibid.:165n.). Serpenti compares Kimam to Marind-anim and Keraki in these respects (see also Landtman 1927).

Kimam culture reveals the clearest relationships between sister-exchange marriage and ritual homosexuality.

For the purpose of arousing the sperm the “mentor” has to put his betrothed [wife] at the men’s disposal.20 Immediately after the betrothal the girl goes to live with her father-in-law. At the same time the boy goes to the [men’s house], for he is not allowed to see the girl. Sometimes he does not even know who she is. At this stage, however, the girl is not yet sexually mature. The [mentor’s] betrothed, on the other hand is mature, but the [mentors] are not allowed to have sexual intercourse with women. As a compensation for the use of his betrothed, the [mentor] has sexual claims on the [first-stage boy-initiate] for whom his betrothed is used [i.e., older men copulate with her to collect semen to anoint this boy’s body, helping to strengthen him]. Only contact with women is considered dangerous at this critical period of their lives.

(Serpenti 1965:164)
Here we see a complex exchange of: the right of the superordinate men to have sexual intercourse with the bachelor's betrothed woman; sperm collected from her through these contacts to “grow” younger initiates; and the bachelor-mentors’ right of sexual intercourse with an initiate in return. (Wives are often MBD or FZD; Serpenti 1965:124–126.) Older men continue having homosexual relationships as well as heterosexual access to the bachelor-mentor’s betrothed (ibid.:167). We shall see similar cases of structural relation between marriage and (RH) below.

Next are the Jaquai, reported on linguistically by Boelaars (1950:1, 60). They are linguistically closely related to the Marind but differ from them in social organization. The Jaquai (like tribes of Frederik Hendrik Island, the Asmat, and the Mimika) are organized in nonunilineal descent groups, the Marind in patricians. They are separated by the lower Digul River area (see map 2). We can locate the Jaquai along an affluent of the Digul River north of its right bank, whereas the Marind-anim live at some distance south of its left bank. In spite of differences in social organization, though, among the Jaquai, (RH) is prominent. We are safest to quote Boelaars’s (1981:84) most recent report:

A father can order his son to go and sleep during the night with a certain man who will commit pederasty with him. The father will receive compensation for this.21 If this happens regularly between a man and the same boy, a stable relationship arises, comparable to that between a father and son, mo-e or anus father and mo-maq, anus son (father = nae, son = maq). Such a boy is allowed to consider that man’s daughter as his sister and she will be “awarded” to him as his exchange sister for his future marriage.

Here we have perhaps the most extreme instance of an (RH)/marriage correlation known in Melanesia: the insertee has the right to use his male partner’s daughter for marriage exchange. In the marriage game, therefore, we can identify the Jaquai and the Kimam as being culturally very similar. Yet again, in significant aspects of social organization, both groups differ from the Marind groups even though all practice ritualized homosexuality.

What do we find north of these westerly Irian Jaya groups? The data are mostly useless. Along the western coast, only one group, the Asmat, is definitely known to practice homosexual activities.
But even here the situation is cloudy. Although the allusion is
skimpy, Van Amelsvoort (1964:43) states of the Asmat: “Homosexual
relationships are [present but] less institutionalized than
among the neighboring Jaquai people.” The same is probably true
for the Casuarina Coast peoples. Nothing else is known, except
that the northern neighbors of the Asmat—the Mimikans—do not
practice ritualized homosexuality (J. Pouwer, personal communi-
cation to J. Van Baal; see also Pouwer [1955]).

Farther north and inland east, ritualized homosexuality is also
absent. It is not found in the Wissel Lakes area among the Kapauku
(Van Baal, personal communication). Farthest north at Vogelkop
(the Bird’s Head), Elmberg (1955:88) states that there is “no homo-
sexuality” among the Mejbrat tribe. Likewise, at Geelvink Bay
men anal sodomy also occurs, but according to my informants
this only happens when they are drunk.” All available information
confirms that Held’s statement refers to homosexuality being treated
as a culturally standardized attribution of deviance (e.g., like mad-
ness) which should be taken on face value. The Waropen do not
have ritualized homosexuality.22

Finally, Highlands Irian Jaya: It appears certain that ritualized
homosexuality is completely absent here. Heider (1979:79) notes:
“There is no sign at all of homosexual relations” among the Grand
Valley Dani. In the Star Mountains to the east, extending to the
international border, ritualized homosexuality is clearly absent
(Hylkema 1974). (Here we see confirmation of the absence of RH
in the adjacent Telefomin tribes, noted below.) Moreover, there is
no indication of institutionalized homosexuality in the hill-dwelling
tribes south of these mountains (J. Van Baal, personal communi-
cation).

NORTHEASTERN IRIAN JAYA • The only other reports of in-
tsitutionalized homosexuality come from the northeastern part of
the territory. The one clear and unequivocal report concerns the
Humboldt Bay villages, due east of the Waropen. Ritual cult houses
(Karawari) are prominent here. K. W. Galis confirmed older re-
ports of ritualized homosexuality there:

The boys [initiates] receive food once a day, at 9:00 p.m. They have
to wait for it, and all the time they are teased. An important part
is played by a boy's mother's brother. He has the right to let the boy take any thinkable posture and to let him stand that way. He also has the right to commit sodomy with the boy, which he does openly and apparently repeatedly. The act is, obviously, an important part of the initiation ritual (it is said, inter alia, that it is done to let the boys grow). Another pastime is that the older men walk around in the temple [the Karawari house] playing with their genitals [masturbating?]. The novices are forbidden on pain of death, to laugh.

(Galis 1955:190)

Interestingly enough, Galis also noted that these ritual activities are necessary for the boys to learn how to play ritual flutes (see Herdt 1982a). The Humboldt Bay complex strikingly compares with that of other groups already described.

Yet, the combination of the Karawari cult houses and homosexual activity is limited to this group. Karawari houses are found as far away as the Sentani Lake area, much farther east. However, Wirz (1928) wrote that no form of homosexuality played a role in initiation there. The same is true of the Sarmi people, somewhat west of Humboldt Bay, whose Karawari cult houses are found as far west as the right bank of the Mamberao River (J. Van Baal, personal communication).

The Mamberamo River tribes are the only remaining Irian Jaya case. The situation in the early literature is murky. M. Moszkowski, an amateur explorer and ethnographer, lived for some eight months with the Kaowerawéj, one of the hill tribes of the Mamberamo River. Moszkowski (1911:339) claims to have seen the initiations, and he states that boys are initiated into the cult house at age ten. His astonishing report reads in part as follows:

Unmarried men live together in the men's house. The origin of the men's house is apparently to be found in certain efforts on the part of the men to emancipate themselves from the tyranny of women. One immediate consequence of these efforts is that the worst orgies of a homosexual kind are celebrated in the men's house. The Papuans seem not to have the slightest modesty in this regard. Not only were obscenities uttered in our presence... but also mutual masturbation was directly marked and homosexual acts were indulged in.

(Moszkowski 1911:339)
This paper and this particular passage, which has such an absolute ring of factuality about it, was cited by the old sexologists as fact (see Ellis 1936:20; Karsch-Haack 1911:528–529; Reik 1946:155). But Moszkowski’s data, coming from one who was a popularizer (and who was probably stimulated by the earlier sensation of the Russian Mikloucho-Maclay’s [1975] work), has never been confirmed.

Moszkowski’s findings were disputed by J. P. K. Van Eekhoud who investigated the Kaowerawéjd in 1939. The natives denied the occurrence of ritualized homosexuality not only among themselves but also among their friendly neighbors and enemies (Van Eekhoud 1962:50f.). Furthermore, in more recent, related work, G. Oosterwal has never mentioned ritualized homosexuality, neither east among the nearby Tor, a coastal people northwest of the Mamberamo (Oosterwal 1961), nor among the Upper Mamberamo villages (Oosterwal 1967). I think Oosterwal’s report suggests the absence of (RH) here: he noted important facts such as the ritual use of transvestism (cf. the Mejbrat, Marind-anim, etc.) and the months-long supervision of initiates under their mother’s brothers’ supervision (Oosterwal 1961:241–242; 1967:184, 188). Although we cannot completely rule out the possibility that social change had eliminated homosexual activities in the area, the total evidence makes that unlikely. At the very least, then, Moszkowski’s observations about male emancipation and female tyranny uncannily mirror the popular ideology of his day. At the worst, his reports were fabrications. We may assume that (RH) simply does not here occur east of Humboldt Bay.

But how far east is it absent? Ritual complexes that seemingly parallel Humboldt Bay Karawari cults traditionally extended along the north coast of Papua New Guinea. Yet the occurrence of homosexuality is not known. Should not we expect historical and cultural continuities here, say, along the lines of Wurm’s (1975:940–953) Trans-New Guinea Phylum migrations? Unfortunately, the concrete evidence for ritualized homosexuality must be culled from poor sources (e.g., Neuhauss 1911). And what of the Sepik River region? We shall later examine these questionable cases.

To summarize: Ritual homosexuality in Irian Jaya is a lowlands phenomena, concentrated along the southern coast. The related social units are numerous; they represent tremendous linguistic and cultural diversity. Yet, we are on safe ground in arguing that
ritualized homosexuality, as part of a pervasive ritual complex, is virtually universal west of the Trans-Fly River, throughout the Morehead district, across the international border, to Frederik Hendrik Island, including the adjacent coastal fringe areas. Initiation rites and head-hunting (usually including cannibalism) were also pervasive among these groups. Though they can be defined essentially as culturally cognate societies, we cannot ignore differences among them. For instance, the Marind-anim: Van Baal (personal communication) believes they were “unique in Southwest Papua; that they have more in common with the cultures of Arnhem Land [Australia] than with others of New Guinea, except, possibly, the Elema of the Papuan Gulf” (e.g., see Williams 1940a). Again, this Australian parallelism has long been advocated (Van Baal 1963). I shall later return to the diffusionist arguments for Melanesia. For the moment, let us ignore these infraregional cultural differences, however, and refer to this vast area as but one cultural tradition, the Southwestern New Guinea coastal fringe (or SWNG).

RECENT PAPUA NEW GUINEA WORK

The ethnography of the 1970s has revealed two new subregions in which ritualized homosexuality is prominent and probably universal. The Great Papuan Plateau (politically located in the southern Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea) saw anthropological work begin only in the mid-1960s. The plateau is relatively small, with small populations numbering only in the hundreds, who live in close proximity. They are “fringe-area” peoples, who hunt and exploit sago. These groups belong to one cultural tradition, however, and I think it may be argued that they should properly be considered cognate to the Southwestern New Guinea ritual complex (e.g., Boadzi, Marind-anim). The other new reports come from the Anga peoples (formerly called “Kukukuku”; politically located in the Eastern Highlands and Gulf provinces). They are diverse, with nine different languages and at least thirteen different tribal groups spread across a vast area numbering perhaps 100,000 people (see Gajdusek et al. 1972; Lloyd 1973). The Anga may eventually be seen as a cognate tradition of the SWNG systems too.
GREAT PAPUAN PLATEAU • On the plateau itself, four groups have been reported upon: Etoro, Kaluli, Onabasulu, and Bedamini. The Kaluli are best known from the works of E. L. Schieffelin (1976, 1982), who has written on their homosexual practices. The Etoro (Kelly 1976, 1977), are less documented in this regard. Thomas Ernst has not as yet published on homosexual activities among Onabasulu. Arve Sørum (1982) has mentioned homosexuality before on the Bedamini, and his chapter below is a new and important addition to the literature. Here, I shall examine the general relationship among these groups, highlighting the Kaluli in particular.

Raymond Kelly (1977) has provided a valuable schematic contrast between the Plateau tribal groups in terms of ritual and sexual techniques. I cite it in full:

The Etoro, Onabasulu, and Kaluli culturally differentiate themselves from each other in a number of ways, but most particularly by their customs of male initiation. All three tribes share the belief that boys do not become physically mature men as a result of natural processes. Growth and attainment of physiological maturation is contingent on the cultural process of initiation, and this entails insemination because it is semen which ensures growth and development. According to the Etoro, semen does not occur naturally in boys and must be "planted" in them. If one does not plant sweet potato vines then no sweet potatoes will come up in the gardens and, likewise, semen must be planted in youths if they are to possess it as men (and indeed they do not possess it as boys). Moreover, all aspects of manliness are consequences of this acquisition. Although all three tribes share roughly similar views concerning the necessity of insemination, each differs from the others concerning the appropriate mode of transmission. The Etoro achieve this through oral intercourse, the Kaluli through anal intercourse, and the Onabasulu through masturbation and smearing of the semen over the bodies of the initiatees . . . (Ernst, personal communication, 1972). Inasmuch as the members of each tribe become men in different ways, they are preeminently different kinds of men, culturally distinct beings at the most fundamental level. The Kaluli are traditional enemies of the Etoro, and the Etoro particularly revile them for their initiatory practices which are regarded as totally disgusting. (The feeling is probably mutual.) The Onabasulu, on the other hand, are closer to the Etoro in this area of belief and some boys of that tribe have undergone initiation at Etoro seclusion houses. Ernst (personal communication, 1972) reports that the Onabasulu pre-
viously followed Etoro custom and have distinguished themselves in this respect only in recent generations.

(Kelly 1977:16)

The neighboring Bedamini also practice homosexual fellatio (Sorrum, chap. 8), which is relatively rare (cf. below on Anga groups). Cultural variation in these homosexual techniques is clearly related to the organization of ethnic identity, as Kelly hints. But it is not obvious how cultural arrangements and beliefs are functionally or symbolically correlated with such divergent homoerotic modes. Here is a research problem worthy of comparative study.

Both Kaluli and Etoro emphasize the need for boys to be inseminated to grow and become masculine. Yet they appear to vary considerably in the duration and cultural timing of these activities. Among the Etoro, "a youth is continually inseminated from about age ten until he reaches his early mid-twenties" (Kelly 1976:45). This long period follows from the belief that males do not "naturally" make semen and "moreover, all aspects of manliness are seen as consequences of this acquisition" (Kelly 1976:45). Kaluli initiation and homosexual activities, in contrast, seem more truncated:

Semen is also necessary for young boys to attain full growth to manhood. . . . They need a boost, as it were. When a boy is eleven or twelve years old, he is engaged for several months in homosexual intercourse with a healthy older man chosen by his father. (This is always an in-law or unrelated person, since the same notions of incestuous relations apply to little boys as to marriageable women.) Men point to the rapid growth of adolescent youths, the appearance of peach fuzz beards, and so on, as the favorable results of this child-rearing practice.

(Schieffelin 1976:124)

Here we see that the duration of homosexual practices in the male life cycle of these two groups is quite different. We can certainly guess that the effects of this difference—years versus months of (RH) activity—would be significant, both in institutional and individual terms. (It is too bad neither ethnographer has addressed the meaning of this difference in comparative or regional study.) What conclusions can be drawn from the Papuan Plateau case? Here again the ethnographers differ. While Kelly (1977:16) and
Sørum (1982) argue that homosexual practices should be seen as part of the “cultural process of initiation” in Plateau groups. Schieffelin (1982) has recently described the Kaluli context, the bau a ceremonial lodge, as an “alternative to an initiation program.” He also says of their homosexual practices: “Certainly there is no ritualization about the act itself” (Schieffelin 1982:177–178), by which he seems to mean that the homoerotic acts are not framed by ritual or they occur also in secular situations. One fact that apparently supports this view is the nonobligatory character of homosexual practices: only certain males engage in them, and Kaluli stress choice in the matter. Here we have a distinct contrast with most groups reported on in this book, though I would argue that Kaluli are but a variant of the (RH) pattern. In these groups, warfare also reinforces an aggressive ethos among men. Schieffelin’s (1982) analysis sees hunting and homosexuality, and symbolic relationships to spirit beings, as interrelated elements in the social control of male transition from adolescence to the assumption of adult marital and sexual bonds in Kaluli society. He thus argues that “homosexual activity seems to have a certain aura of the profane or impure about it” (ibid.:178). On marriage, Etoro reveal a pattern strikingly similar to that of SWNG groups. “The ideal [homosexual] inseminator . . . is a boy’s true sister’s husband or her betrothed; brother and sister will then receive semen from the same man (ideally a FMBS) and be, in a sense, co-spouses to him” (Kelly 1976:52). (See also my summary, chap. 4, and chap. 9.) In Papuan Plateau groups, then, the male belief in the magical growth-power of homosexual insemination is stressed and symbolically elaborated in other domains, consistent with the above material on Southwestern Papuan groups.

Finally, the Nomad River area should be mentioned here. This region extends in both directions south of the Papuan Plateau, in the watershed of the Strickland gorge. Since it is geographically intermediate between the Plateau and the Upper Fly River area and has similar ecological parameters, we should expect to find similar homosexual practices. This area is still poorly described, though Shaw (n.d.) mentions “homosexual joking” among the Samo people. Nonetheless, it seems unclear whether actual homosexual contacts occur among Samo. Southwest of the Nomad area, however, Bruce Knauft describes widespread and obligatory male
homosexual activity among the Gebusi people very similar to that of the Great Papuan Plateau, for example, in the context of bawdy joking at spirit seances and ritual feasts (cf. Sørum, chap. 8). Homosexual fellatio “occurs for all males between 14 and 25 years of age.” And Knauth explains: “The explicit reason for insemination is ‘to make boys become big’ (wa kauwala), so that they can be initiated. Indeed, this same term is the proper name of the initiation ceremonies, these being the public celebration of the ‘bigness’ the young men have attained.” I expect that eventual publication of the Gebusi ethnography will confirm their similarity to cultural traditions of the Papuan Plateau, the Bedamini and Etoro in particular.

ANGA SOCIETIES • The Anga are a congeries of tribes spreading from the Papuan Gulf through the Eastern Highlands ranges of the Kratkes, east of the Lamari River. Some of these groups number into the thousands, and most of them are unstudied (see table 1.1). B. Blackwood (e.g., 1939) did the first ethnographic work in the Papuan hinterland near Menyamya in the 1930s; H. Fischer (1968) next worked farther inland in the 1950s. But the work of neither is well known. Colin Simpson, a flashy journalist—wrote a popular account in the fifties (Simpson 1953). New Guinea folklore depicted the Anga generally as fierce headhunters, thieves, and homosexuals. Little else was known about this region until the work of M. Godelier on the Baruya (1971, 1976), and my work on the Sambia, neighboring Eastern Highland fringe-dwelling groups, both immigrant groups from the Menyamya area who fled a great war, they say, some 150 to 200 years ago (Godelier 1969; Herdt 1981:22–23). Along with Lloyd (1973) and Gajdusek et al. (1972), I would argue that the Anga comprise many different social units of the same cultural tradition. They were all enmeshed in war; hunting and shifting tuber agriculture were pervasive; and initiation was obligatory.

Blackwood’s early work on the Langimar and Nauti of the Upper Watut River* illustrates the complexities of superficial reports on sex in New Guinea and the difficulties in reinterpreting them. She

*Edited by Hallpike (1978).
described these groups as evincing “greater secretiveness” compared with the Buka whom she had previously studied (B. Blackwood 1935), adding that “sexual interests play a minor part” for Anga, “whose main concerns are food and fighting” (Hallpike 1978:153). Although Hallpike (1978:153 n. 62) approvingly footnotes Fischer’s (1968) account of the Western Jeghuje—a neighboring people—in support of these views, Mimica (1981) questions its applicability to the Central Jeghuje (and, I would also add, to the Eastern Jeghuje, bordering the Sambia, based on my reconnaissance fieldwork there). Blackwood tried also to learn if homosexual practices occurred during the ritual seclusion of boys in the forest after initiation. Mimica (1981:226), in review of a relevant passage, derides Blackwood:

Miss Blackwood was limited by her sex and bold naivety in approaching the matter of the male secret cult. The following immortal passage rather aptly expresses it: “In answer to the direct question, whether sodomy occurred between the boys and their ‘big brothers’ while they were in the bush, they said that it did not” (Hallpike, p. 127).

Did these groups thus practice ritualized homosexuality? Mimica (1981) hints that they did. Hallpike (1978:127 n. 45) cites D. C. Gajdusek to the effect that “initiates” (groups unspecified) engage in homosexual practices because of prolonged periods of isolation from women. (Regarding the purely behavioral explanation of these practices, see the summary.) Yet Hallpike (1978:153 n. 62) later reaffirms Blackwood’s remark about absent homosexuality, this time by citing Fischer (1968)—who has not reported it—and concludes that Gajdusek’s earlier report seems “uncharacteristic of the Kukukuku as a whole.” No real evidence is thus cited in support of this claim. It is certainly false.

Godelier’s work among the Baruya began in the late 1960s. In an important recent essay he describes social and sexual aspects of Baruya homosexuality:

In the men’s house, initiates live in pairs of different ages. They stroke each other, masturbate, suck each other; but sodomy [anal coitus] was unknown until the arrival of policemen and soldiers belonging to tribes that practiced it. Girls stroke each other, but
we know little about what actually goes on among them.* Homosexuality apparently disappears after marriage.

(Godelier 1976:15)

He describes further the intricate ideas and customs that inform reproduction and male/female relationships. The Baruya view heterosexuality as a force that potentially threatens the entire social order.

Sex is dangerous, but the danger comes mainly from the woman, who constantly threatens to rob man of his integrity and above all of the synthesis of all his virtues which he calls strength. But the woman is dangerous too because, whether she likes it or not, she serves as a vector for the evil powers and hostile forces that populate the invisible side of the world. What is in fact threatened is the entire social and cosmic order. Sexual intercourse, therefore, is an evil under any circumstances, but a necessary evil, since homosexual relations are fruitless.

(Godelier 1976:20)

How do these views of homosexuality and heterosexuality cohere? Godelier's report provides important symbolic contextualization of homosexual activities in another Anga tribe. I would argue, however, that Godelier here blurs the natives' and observers' viewpoints on sexual contacts. It is true that homosexual contacts are "fruitless" in the procreative sense, since sperm does not create offspring in boys. But his observer model does not fully account for homosexual practices from the natives' point of view: they are fruitful given the belief in the magical power of semen to "grow" and "strengthen" boys, who will socially reproduce the village warriorhood in the next generation (Herdt, chap. 4; cf. Godelier 1982a). Given the symbolic power of male/male insemination in facilitating boys' reproductive competence, the "dangers" of women take on a new meaning. If we turn now to the nearby Sambia, certain contrasts will help fill out what can presently be said of the Anga case. Since my work is recent and sketched in chapter 4, I shall cover general themes here.

Among the Sambia, homosexual activities are believed vital to psychosocial and biological development. All males are initiated

*See also Godelier (1982a:80ff.).
into an age-graded secret society, coordinated with local patrilineal descent groups. Through prolonged homosexual fellatio, sperm creates growth and strength in males between ages seven through fourteen. Only older and younger unmarried males engage in homosexual intercourse, which is tied to the symbolic meanings of sacred flutes (Herdt 1982a). In this symbolic system, flutes are equated with mothers’ breasts and penises, and semen is compared to breast milk. All homosexual contacts are asymmetrical, and boys must not situationally reverse roles. At puberty, they are elevated through initiation into the fellated-bachelor role, when they appropriately inseminate younger males until marriage in their late teens or early twenties. But after they have fathered a child, men are expected to give up homosexual activity, and most of them do so, preferring heterosexual activities with their wives (cf. Herdt 1980). Homosexual activities among females are unknown.

Several broad patterns link Sambia to other (RH) groups noted throughout this chapter. First, as an institutional complex, Sambia practice intiation as a means of sex-role socialization, and induction and recruitment into village-based warrihoods. Warfare has been widespread and destructive within and between Sambia, Baruya, and their neighbors. Warfare and hunting are the chief secular contexts of public masculine performance. Initiation is the main sacred and secret context for demonstrating male “strength.” Second, sexual polarity is intense and permeates virtually all social arenas and cultural domains. There is a concomitantly strict sexual division of labor. Third, residential arrangements separate all initiates from all females, initiates residing in men’s houses, married men, women, and children living in women’s houses (albeit divided into “male” and “female” spaces). Children are primarily socialized by their mothers and other caretakers until initiation (males) or marriage (females). Fourth, women have low social status, and men dominate public affairs. Fifth, Sambia emphasize patrilineality and patriliation at the expense of other kin and social bonds, which include all sexual relationships. All persons outside the natal hamlet are seen as potentially hostile. Hence, women are imported for marriage, and homosexual partners are from hostile hamlets. Sixth, men fear both depletion and pollution from their wives and, in general, from all reproductively active females. Seventh, sexual
intercourse is carefully regulated and monitored through numerous taboos, institutional arrangements, values, and norms, including long postpartum taboos that result in prolonged mother/infant attachment bonds. Finally, semen is treated as a scarce resource that circulates in the population pool through both homosexual and heterosexual contacts. The "value" of semen thus rationalizes—"naturalizes" and "mystifies"—all sexual relationships (cf. Keesing 1982). Marriage and homosexual activities are therefore inseparably linked through semen exchange, in a manner paralleling that of Kimam, Etoro, and others (Herdt, chap. 4). Ultimately, the low population density of the Sambia and their warring relationships must be seen as the behavioral conditions that contributed to this cultural patterning of semen ingestion and (RH).

My impression is that this complex of factors applies in similar systemic relationship to all Anga groups of the Eastern Highlands, which includes many different tribes. Furthermore, this same ritual complex apparently occurs through the Menyamya area and probably extends south to the Papuan coast (although this latter suggestion must remain a conjecture for the present).33

QUESTIONABLE CASES

It seems clear now that ritualized homosexual practices are absent from the New Guinea Highlands, except among the fringe-area Anga groups just described. (Remember, though, that these mountain Anga groups are immigrants from the Papuan hinterland who should be seen as sharerers in SWNG cultural traditions.) No homosexual activity is known from the Western Highlands or adjacent Chimbu areas, which encompass many different social units of different cultural traditions (see Lindenbaum, chap. 9). Likewise, it is absent among the Maring (Buchbinder 1973:85). K. E. Read (1980b), the key early ethnographer of Eastern Highlands groups, reported only ostentatious ritual masturbation in the context of nosebleeding ceremonies. More recently, he has questioned whether individual homosexual activity occurred among the Gahuku Gama; but it seems clear that it was not institutionalized (Read 1980b, app. I). He extends his observations and relates them to (RH) groups in a retrospective account below (see
RITUALIZED HOMOSEXUAL BEHAVIOR: AN INTRODUCTION

below, chap. 5). Meigs (1976) has noted a male ideology of male pregnancy and related beliefs among the Eastern Highlands' Hua, though no mention is made of homosexuality. Even among the Awa and Tairora groups bordering the west bank of the Lamari, near Anga groups, ritualized homosexuality is absent (Terence E. Hays, David Boyd, personal communications). The nearby South Fore may have secretly practiced (RH), though it is not reported anthropologically, so this suggestion remains doubtful.34 (Keesing [1982:10], however, reports that one ethnographer in this central part of the Eastern Highlands has noted homosexual practices but has not published these data in respect of local people's wishes.) The only report of any Highlands homosexual activity is from DuToit (1975), on the Eastern Highlands' Akuna.

We do find a form of homosexual play. This is referred to as iyer-anenu, meaning simply "play," as children play with marbles or any other objects. In this homosexual play among boys, one will assume the active and another the passive role, while the first places his penis in the anus of the other. This seems to be relatively common among boys as they become increasingly segregated from their female age-mates, and informants explain that it usually continues until the sixteenth or seventeenth year of life. Among girls there is something similar, in which two girls associate intimately with one another caressing and petting the breasts and genitals of the other. In this homosexual play they assume the position of intercourse with one lying on the other. In neither case, it seems, is orgasm reached.

(DuToit 1975:220)

We are informed that Akuna parents disapprove of homosexual play, which is regarded as "dangerous," though we are not told why. These activities occur out of sight of adults, who can only warn against them. Nothing else is said about their context or meaning. Nonetheless, if DuToit's report is taken at face value, it compares with that of East Bay (Davenport 1965, 1977) and indicates a form of homosexual activity that is an ad hoc, if illicit, pattern in Akuna sexual development. The Akuna are doubly aberrant because females also engage in homosexual activities (even if orgasm reportedly does not occur).

DuToit's report is anomalous; and Akuna homosexual practices are not supported by any institutional forces. This fragment thus
reveals homosexual activity in Akuna but, until data are shown otherwise, not ritualized homosexuality.

No other Highlands instances are known, supporting the generalized and strong correlation between lowlands groups and ritualized homosexuality.

ADMIRALTY ISLANDS (MANUS) • The Manus Island case is dubious, but Margaret Mead's (1968) remarks are sufficiently suggestive to merit mention. Her data fall under the domain of what she called "variations of the sexual picture."

Homosexuality occurs in both sexes, but rarely. The natives recognize it, and take only a laughing count of it, if it occurs between unmarried boys, in which cases it is sometimes exploited publicly in the boys' houses. Sodomy [anal intercourse?] is the only form of which I received any account.

(Mead 1968:126)

This passage seems puzzling. For the natives to "recognize" homosexual practices and "laugh" at them (in public?) among bachelors—who nonetheless "publicly exploit" them—is somewhat inexplicable.

We can speculate about the historical context of such statements. Let us remember that Manus had sustained years of pacification and missionary activity well before Mead's fieldwork in the 1920s. Perhaps, then, seen as statements by acculturated natives to a European woman, the above passage might be interpreted as a means of admitting, yet simultaneously denying, homosexual practices, which were formerly practiced but then stopped (see below, on the Sepik Iatmul).

This suggestion remains purely speculative, however. No evidence suggests ritualized homosexuality. It is only the broader cultural pattern of explicit reports on (RH) in distant off-lying islands such as New Britain or the Humboldt Bay area that should make us question Manus Island in relation to Northern New Guinea as a whole.

THE SEPIK • The case for ritualized homosexuality in the vast Sepik River area is weakest of all. For others (see Keesing 1982:11n.) as for me, the great Sepik with its numerous anthropological stud-
ies for over sixty years remains an enigma in regard to the presence or absence of such practices. Despite contemporary stories from New Guineast and the folklore of New Guineans themselves to the contrary, I have not been able to uncover a single clear-cut ethnographic report of (RH) from the entire area. Nevertheless, my doubts persist; so I shall here risk a reinterpretation.

Consider the following fragment from Bateson's (1958) classic *Naven*, which remains (along with the texts of Thurnwald [1916] and Mead [1935]) a well-known work from the Sepik.

During the early period of initiation when the novices are being mercilessly bullied and hazed, they are spoken of as "wives" of the initiators, *whose penes they are made to handle.* Here it seems that the linguistic usage indicates an ethological analogy between the relationship of man and wife and that of initiator and novice.

*(Bateson 1958:131, my emphasis)*

What does Bateson's observation suggest? My first question concerns the kind of data it represents. We know (Bateson 1932, 1958) that Iatmul initiation was gone by the time Bateson arrived; therefore, this passage must be from an informant's retrospective account. In the absence of ritual observations, then, should we interpret the boy's "handling" of the initiator's (probably MB) penis as an allusion to sexual, not merely symbolic, behavior? Perhaps; and here follows a speculative rethinking of the Iatmul case.

The *naven* ceremony itself, as is well known, concerned the mother's brother's "demeaning" act of "rubbing the cleft of his buttocks down the length of his laua's [sister's son's] leg, a sort of sexual salute" (Bateson 1958:13). Such public displays required prestations in return. Does this act also represent or signify a homosexual component? Possibly: we know that sexual polarity and the subordination of women was marked in Iatmul society, that men were traditionally fierce headhunters concerned with maintaining a warriorhood and, through initiation, with instilling pride in the male ethos. We know also that boys had to stringently avoid women by hiding in capes after initiation (Bateson 1932:438). Furthermore, the fearsome gate to the initiation enclosure, represented by a crocodile jaw, was called "clitoris gate" (Bateson 1932:282), and men routinely referred to an "anal clitoris, an
anatomical feature frequently imagined by the Iatmul” (Bateson 1932:279; see also Hauser-Schaeublin 1977).

A few years later, Margaret Mead described the Iatmul scene (from 1938 fieldnotes) in these ambiguous terms:

In the men’s group there is loud, over-definite masculine behavior, continuous use of verbs that draw their imagery from phallic attack on men and women alike. But there is also a very strong taboo on any display of passivity, and there is no development of male homosexuality within the society. The slightest show of weakness or of receptivity is regarded as a temptation, and men walk about, often comically carrying their small round wooden stools fixed firmly against their buttocks. A male child from any outside village or tribe becomes a ready victim, and Iatmul work-boys are said to become active homosexuals when they meet men from other tribes away at work. But within the group, the system holds . . . so that his capacity and temptation to introduce sex into his relationship with other males is very strong and yet kept closely in control.

(Mead 1949:95–96)

How shall we view this report? Since Bateson has stated that the Iatmul male cult was in a state of “decay” by 1930, the men “fatalist” that “the mechanism of initiatory age grades had broken down” because “all the available young men had left the village to work for Europeans” (Bateson 1932:275), we wonder how Mead judged that there was “no male homosexuality.” A possibility is that Iatmul had secret homosexual practices that were never revealed to ethnographers or had been already abandoned by the time Bateson and Mead arrived. Another problem is definitional: Mead ethnocentrically saw “homosexuality” as passive, effeminate, and deviant lifelong sexual contacts with the same sex. On these terms one finds virtually no homosexual behavior anywhere in Melanesia. If the Iatmul practiced secret homosexuality, it almost surely did not take Mead’s form.

The Iatmul may have thus practiced secret homosexuality in the context of traditional initiation (see also Layard 1959:107); moreover, there are two additional points made by Bateson (for other purposes) that support this view.

First, Bateson (1958:81–82) suggested that the structural and symbolic aspects of Iatmul marriage explained the “sexual gesture” in the naven act. Why should MB present buttocks to ZSo?
Such conduct is of course not characteristic of a mother, but I have a casual mention in mythology of a man who rubbed his buttocks on the leg of the man who was marrying his sister. If we bear in mind the identification of a man with his sister, this conduct is comprehensible. . . . The man expressed his relationship to his sister’s husband by ritually making a sexual gesture in which he identified himself with his sister. . . . For the sake of clarity we may state these identifications as if mother’s brother were speaking, viz. “I am my sister” and “my nephew is my sister’s husband.” If now we consider these two identifications simultaneously it is perfectly “logical” for the wau to offer himself sexually to the boy, because he is the boy’s wife. . . . Upon this hypothesis the wau’s exclamation, “Lam men toi” “Husband thou indeed!” becomes understandable.

(Bateson 1958:81–82, emphasis mine)

The subordinate position of being a prospective younger brother-in-law is converted via ritual action into a symbolic game. This game—the naven—denies the shame and submission of ZSo (Bateson 1958:270). Whether naven is merely ritual play seems debatable; but as Handelman (1979:181–182) argues convincingly, it seems like a superb mechanism for maintaining “the correctness of the complementary mode” between MB and ZSo. The wife-taker’s shame-laden position is stressed in Bateson’s (1958:132) remark, “Each of these elements of culture is based upon the basic assumption that the passive role in sex is shameful.” I would go further than Bateson and argue, mutatis mutandis, that the symbolic structure of naven disguises the probability that the MB provides a wife for ZSo who, in the context of initiation, provides homosexual service to his “uncle.” The shame-filled submission of that secret homosexuality is symbolically inverted and thereby expressed through the naven act in public. The wau’s “sexual gesture” may be limited to the Sepik area, as Bateson (1958:82) thought. Yet the occurrence of homosexual service to the wife-givers by the younger initiate seems marked elsewhere (e.g., Ki-mam, Jaquai, Etoro, Sambia, etc.), in line with this reinterpretation.

Second, early on Bateson noted a cultural parallel that is germane to my reinterpretation. He believed that tribes of the Lower and Middle Sepik and of the Fly River all showed a “broad similarity of culture” (Bateson 1932:255). He names the Kiwai, the Marind-anim, and the Banaro, suggesting parallels between be-
cause they all had large villages, were headhunters, initiated, and built great ceremonial cult houses. It is interesting to note that these groups (should we exclude the Banaro?) practiced (RH). In the summary, I will return to the Iatmul as a possible instance of “mythical homosexuality,” in Layard’s sense.

Elsewhere in the Sepik region, only two other groups are worth mentioning as questionable cases. Wogeo Island lies just off the Sepik mainland, and its ritual cult is similar to those of Iatmul, New Britain, and perhaps Humboldt Bay. Male initiation involved ordeals, sacred flutes, and spirit impersonations. Male fears of female menstrual pollution, with associated sexual polarity, were intense. In relation to these thematic features we are told:

The popular attitude might well be thought to encourage homosexuality, especially as this is allegedly common among neighboring peoples of the [Sepik area] mainland.* Yet in fact homosexual relations, apart from mutual masturbation by pairs of youths, are rare in the village.

(Hogbin 1970:90)

The extensiveness, meaning, or cultural context of such “mutual masturbation” is not clear from this report (nor from earlier Hogbin [1945–1946]). Is such reciprocal male/male sexual contact like the East Bay situation (Davenport 1965) noted above? We cannot know; so these fragments are insufficient to include Wogeo in our (RH) distribution.

One other Middle Sepik people, the Kwoma, merit a side note. Whiting (1941:51) states that they did not practice homosexuality, despite homosexual “games” and “teasing,” which involved “very little genital contact” as such. In the same passage he remarks, “Sodomy [anal coitus?] is believed to be unnatural and revolting, and informants were unanimous in saying that anyone who would submit to it must be a ‘ghost’ and not a man.” Presumably this was in response to Whiting’s query. (Whom and what did he ask? The Sambia, incidentally, who practice fellatio, say the same thing about anal intercourse.) Whiting’s statement raises further problems by his odd aside that “this sanction theoretically applied only

*Another ethnic attribution? What groups? Says who?
to the person who played the passive role” (ibid; emphasis mine). It is well known (e.g., see Sørum, chap. 7) beyond the Sepik that the sexual role of the homosexual insertee is frequently stigmatized in tribal societies, whereas the inserter role is seen as masculine and even honorable, not stigmatized (see Carrier 1980a). Here, as with the Iatmul, we may see a symbolic emphasis on the phallic fantasy of anal penetration, as opposed to actual homosexual relations. But this case is too vague and cannot be counted in our sample.

Explicit statements by other ethnographers nevertheless make it clear that homosexual practices are absent in other Sepik societies (e.g., Mead 1935:293 on the Mountain Arapesh and Mundugumor; Tuzin 1980:47 on the Ilahita Arapesh). Likewise it is entirely unreported from the Torricelli Mountains and the West Sepik area, the Upper Sepik, and, more distantly, both south and west, it is absent from the Telefomin area (Fitz John Poole, personal communication).

A HISTORICAL NEXUS?

What can be said of the historical-geographic relationship between Melanesian groups that practice ritualized homosexuality? Although I was initially opposed to speculative diffusionist arguments when I began this study, the data surveyed above suggest prehistoric cultural linkages among (RH) groups which have not yet been explicated and cannot therefore be ignored.

The accumulating evidence indicates that we are not only confronted in these Melanesian cultures with similar cultural and ecological systems; I propose that we are also face with an ancient ritual complex that diffused through a vast area of lowland and fringe-area Melanesia, perhaps 10,000 years ago or less. Moreover, with the exception of some off-lying island societies of Northeastern Melanesia, all known cases of ritualized homosexuality are identified with non-Austronesian (“Papuan”) languages (see table 1.1). These factors in turn are correlated with other regional attributes, the prehistorical and systemic bases of which we may consider.

Ritualized homosexuality is a lowlands phenomenon. The extant data show conclusively that these ritual practices, in one form or
another, are confined to a few off-lying islands of Eastern Melanesia and the New Britain area, to the Ai’i, the lowlands of the Papuan Gulf, the entire Fly River basin, the Anga, the Great Papuan Plateau, Southeastern Irian Jaya, and the coastal fringe of northeastern Irian Jaya. On the entire island of New Guinea, the only certain Highlands area with (RH) practices is the Anga (e.g., Sambia, Baruya), migrants from the Papuan hinterland. Both the Anga and the Great Papuan Plateau groups are marginal fringe groups adjacent to, but not typical of, the Central Highlands cordillera. The questionable cases, which I shall exclude from this review, are not exceptions to their geographic distributional pattern, aside from Akuna, which is too weak to utilize as an ethnographic case. New Britain, East Bay, New Caledonia, and Malekula should be seen as an island fringe that rings the northeastern and southeastern circumference of Melanesia. No Highlands examples of (RH) are otherwise known from Irian Jaya or Papua New Guinea, an extraordinarily large area with enormous populations well reported for decades.

Taken together, a general pattern emerges in the geographic distribution of these New Guinea lowland and island areas. Ritualized homosexuality is found in a fringe-area belt along the Highlands. We can trace this belt from east to west, or vice versa: it is merely a historical quirk of colonialism that ethnographic reports emerged initially from eastern-lying groups since the 1860s. Thus, from the extreme east to west, we can trace two main lines of this belt. (1) Fiji, the New Hebrides (and probably the Banks Islands), New Caledonia, East Bay, and then, to the northwest, parts of New Britain, the Duke-of-Yorks, and finally, leaving aside the uncertain area of coastal Northern New Guinea (including Woge and the Sepik), Humboldt Bay, the most westerly northern coastal case. (2) From southeast to southwest, the Ai’i, the Anga groups, the Fly River and the Morehead district, the Great Papuan Plateau and Nomad River, and the entire southeastern Irian Jaya area, including Frederik Hendrik Island, the Jaquai, and the southwestern coast north as far as the Asmat, people of the Casuarina coast probably being no exception (see map 1).

This vast belt encompasses about 3,000 miles from east to west. What areas aside from the New Guinea Highlands does it exclude? (RH) now seems absent from the Solomon Islands, Northern Pap-
ua New Guinea, the Massim area, the Markham River Valley, most of Eastern Papua to the Fly excluding the Ai'i of the Oro district and the Anga, the Telefomin area, and the Bird's Head and adjacent northwest Irian Jaya coastal areas (the Sepik River and adjacent areas, too, although again I would not entirely dismiss the possibility of ritualized homosexuality in these areas). Thus, there are vast parts of Melanesia without (RH). More importantly, the concentration of societies exhibiting this ritual complex are in Southwestern New Guinea and adjacent areas.

If we focus on southwestern coastal New Guinea on both sides of the international border, there is no longer any question that ritualized homosexuality is universal there. What this survey has added to the earlier areal arguments on SWNG by Haddon (1936), Van Baal (1963, 1966), and Wirz (1934), is the Ai'i and Anga material. Previously, a line of societies with (RH) could be drawn from the Fly River west. Now that line must be extended farther east, to include the Ai'i south of Orakaiva, the hill-dwelling Anga groups east of the Bulolo River, as well as Anga peoples in the lowlands and highlands ranging west to the headwaters of the Vailala and Purari Rivers. A new boundary can be further extended north to include the Great Papuan Plateau (and probably the Strickland River watershed), and the Lake Murray area all the way west into Irian Jaya. All middle or lowland groups west of the Fly practice ritualized homosexuality, as far north as the Mayo River hills, and as far west (excepting the Mimika) as the coastal Asmat.

For years various New Guinea specialists have argued for one or another kind of historical diffusion in this area (SWNG). Leaving aside the Anga groups for the moment, because they were unstudied until recently, scholars have argued for common origins and diffusion throughout this area. Haddon (1936) and Wirz (1933) both speculated that the Marin-d-anim, Trans-Fly Keraki, and Kiwai groups were cultural traditions resulting from a single migration/diffusion pattern, from west to east. They saw symbolic reflections of this prehistoric diffusion in myth, legend, and ritual customs (cf. Van Baal 1963). Many writers have also seen striking cultural parallels between SWNG groups (Bateson 1932; Haddon 1920, 1927, 1936; Landtmann 1927; Rivers 1904:31; Serpenti 1965:171; Van Baal 1963:206; 1966:597n. and passim; Wagner
1972:19–24; Williams 1936a, 1936c; Wirz 1922). Wirz (1933), supporting his argument with legend and myth, saw the Kiwai as the “focal point” of a southeastern Marind-anim population stream that had prehistorically spread east. At the other end of the Fly River, its headwaters, Haddon (1920:244) saw the Sepik River as a great “cultural causeway” that had allowed diffusion from the Sepik to the Fly: “a convenient route for coastal cultures to reach the interior.” This speculative river migration scenario seems plausible: it would enable contact points between the headwaters of the Fly and Sepik, the Great Papuan Plateau, Nomad and Strickland Rivers, and hence, the Morehead district, Lake Murray area, and the Irian Jayan southeastern hinterland and coast.39

I have alluded to certain cultural and ecological similarities and to symbolic and behavioral aspects of (RH) among these Papuan groups that link them to the other scattered cases reviewed herein, and I shall summarize these in the next section. But can other evidence be shown to support prehistoric connections between (RH) groups? Yes, though the only other support is linguistic, and here the evidence, while suggestive, is very speculative.

Wurm and his colleagues (1975:935–960) have developed several possible scenarios of Papuan language migrations in Melanesia, following upon Greenberg’s (1971) “Indo-Pacific hypothesis” (i.e., interrelatedness between Papuan languages and those of the Andaman Islands and Tasmania). The details of Wurm’s linguistic prehistory and postulated ancient migrations are complex and cannot be described here. What matters, for our purposes, is the hypothesis of an original west to east Trans-New Guinea Phylum migration that diffused language elements from insular Southeast Asia into island New Guinea 10,000 years ago or “even much less, with the time element probably greater in the case of the West Papuan and East Papuan Phyla” (Wurm et al. 1975:40).

In Wurm’s reconstructed language migration of oldest Papuan elements, we can see a possible diffusionist basis for the regional and distributional relationships between groups that concern us.

The languages of the Vogelkop Peninsula... as well as those in the northern part of the non-peninsular main portion of Irian Jaya, contain a common lexical substratum which extends to the south into the eastern part of the Irian Jaya highlands areas. At the same
time, a substratum manifesting itself mainly on the structural and typological levels, i.e., in a prevalence of set II pronouns, an overt two-gender system, a tendency to prefixing in the morphology, number marking with nouns, verb stem suppletion and alteration in connection with object and subject marking and the absence of medial verb forms is, in varying degrees, mostly in evidence in the same areas (and reaches further east in the north), as well as in the south-eastern part of Irian Jaya, the adjacent southern parts of Papua New Guinea, and extends its influence, with interruptions, as far east as the Angan Family of the Trans-New Guinea Phylum whose speakers seem to have adopted an East New Guinea Highlands stock type language, though a few of the features mentioned above appear in the Angan Family languages as a substratum element.

It seems tempting to suggest that this far-flung substratum which may have surviving primary manifestations in some members of the West Papuan Phylum . . . may outline the earlier presence in the New Guinea area, of an old language type which entered the area from west of northern Halmahera and the Vogelkop Peninsula and spread from there to the regions of its present occurrence, to be later overrun and reduced to substratum level by subsequent language migrations.

(Wurm et al. 1975:940–941)

Here we see a speculative diffusionist basis of common linguistic origin for the so-called SWNG cultures.

We might speculate that along with some very old non-Austronesian linguistic elements, the migrants carried an ancient "root" ritual complex. Among the aspects of this structural complex was ritualized homosexuality. Perhaps a subsequent type II historical migration influenced and changed the eastern off-lying island world of Melanesia (e.g., New Hebrides), resulting in the interrelated East Papuan Phylum, before 3,000 B.C. (Wurm et al. 1975:941–943). This subsequent Austronesian influence thus resulted in the linguistic differentiation of the Eastern Melanesian group (New Caledonia, New Hebrides, East Bay) from the mainland non-Austronesian SWNG cultures. Yet, in spite of linguistic and probably other changes in their sociocultural systems, the "root" ritual structure of homosexuality among Eastern Melanesian groups remained. From the east, moreover, a major Austronesian migration about 5,000 years ago up the Markham Valley eventually influenced Highland peoples and the adjacent Angan groups of Papua (Wurm et al. 1975:947). Yet, again, we may hypothesize that these
historical changes did not sweep away the (RH) practices associated with their ritual cults, at least among the non-Austronesian Angan stock-level language family\(^\text{40}\) (see Wurm's language migration maps, ibid.:944–951).

In these speculative waves of language migrations, then, we find tentative support for the idea that a very old ritual complex was introduced by the earliest non-Austronesian speakers. It diffused over a vast area. Subsequent linguistic migrations affected language but not the element of ritual homosexuality. The exact time or geographic routes of these migrations is not my concern. But Wurm's migration scenarios do help explain why all groups evincing ritualized homosexuality are non-Austronesian speakers, excepting the Eastern Melanesian islanders, who apparently sustained later Austronesian influence. (This linguistic argument does not explain why other non-Austronesian or Austronesian groups do not practice ritualized homosexuality, an areal problem discussed in the summary.)

Once this old ritual complex permeated the Melanesian circle, as others have argued (e.g., Haddon 1920; Keesing 1982; Van Baal 1966), the great river systems, Sepik and Fly, may have served as a riverine causeway to adjacent lowland areas. Perhaps these migrants bypassed the Highlands, only touching its fringe areas. Or perhaps they settled early in some Highland areas, only to be pushed into the coastal areas by subsequent, and more numerous populations. We cannot know for certain. (To extrapolate further, perhaps this or a similar ritual complex spread across the Torres Straits: both Róheim\(^\text{41}\) and Van Baal [1963] have argued for actual historical diffusion between the Papuan Gulf and Northern Australian cultures. But this speculation is far removed from my argument and need not concern us here.)\(^\text{42}\)

One may reject these speculative diffusionist arguments altogether, while still acknowledging the impressive structural and symbolic parallels between Melanesian groups practicing ritual homosexuality. Nonetheless, we find recent precedents for diffusion as a contributing factor in the Austro-Melanesian literature (see Keesing 1982). Meggitt's (1965\(a\)) approach to the Australian areal aspects of Walbiri ritual is particularly attractive. He argues that an ancient ritual complex was introduced into Walbiri and then underwent successive regional, social, and ecological trans-
formations in response to local group adaptations. Yet, the “deep” structure of ritual roles and symbols remained. This structure was necessary, but not sufficient in itself, to allow for the expression of the Walbiri ritual complex, which required other sociocultural elements to support its present institutional form and distribution. A comparable argument is made below for Melanesia.

Here, then, is a tentative ultimate causal view of the distribution of ritualized homosexuality in Melanesia. Arguments concerning various social structural and cultural underpinnings or concomitants of (RH) in different social units and subregional traditions may be seen as proximate transformational causes, discussed next. All these suggestions basically extend the interdisciplinary and scholarly work of others. Even so, I would not care to say more now: this rather shaky diffusionism leaves me, a social anthropologist, cautious and uneasy.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

This survey shows clearly that ritualized homosexuality in Melanesia is more common than was ever thought, not to mention predicted, by contemporary surveys. Nor are its sociocultural forms and ecological distribution shapeless or random. I have argued that these customs belong to an ancient ritual complex manifested primarily in non-Austronesian-speaking groups of the western region of Papua and southeastern region of Irian Jaya and associated fringe areas, and some northeastern Melanesian island societies.

The range of ecological and social traits and institutions associated with (RH) is elaborate and rich. Sexual behavior, as much as or more than other human behaviors, is multivalent (Bateson 1972) in its antecedents and consequences. When one argues correlations, not causes, these factors can be catalogued and listed without concern for evolutionary or developmental sequels or systemic interactions between environment, psyche, social structure, and culture. But when we choose to explain systems such as these, our task is more complex. Then we must seek a hierarchy of constraints (Keesing 1982) that systemically create and maintain the observed outcome: ritualized homosexual behavior.

To deal with systems that produce this outcome is indeed a complex matter. The task involves many variables: ecology; his-
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torical relatedness; warfare; population trends; social structure; homogeneity of local kin-based polities (the [1967] Allen hypothesis); cultural definitions of selfhood and personhood, sexuality, marriage, the nature of the sexes and gender development, including beliefs about the body, its orifices, fluids, and boundaries; residence patterns; descent ideologies; sexual morality and restrictiveness; initiation rites; warriorhood; definitions of homosexuality, bisexuality, and heterosexuality; the nature of the homosexual act (is it honorable, shameful, why and for whom?) and associated bonds; peer groups, age-groups; sexual dominance and the social status of women; gerontocracy; ceremonial impersonation, hoaxes, and symbolic communication with spirits; female pollution, semen depletion, and bloodletting; dual organization; secrecy; shame; postpartum taboos and sleeping arrangements; sex-typing; cultural attributes of masculinity and femininity that affect sexual contacts; identity, identification, sex-identity conflict and avoidance behavior, envy, conversion reactions, passivity, aggressivity, misogyny; and on and on. Another book would be required to treat these conceptual issues and associated theories in depth. In lieu of that (and with apologies for an already lengthy introduction), I shall here touch upon only the essential points raised in my survey.

INCIDENCE • The reader may wonder how frequent ritual homosexuality is in Melanesia, given this new distribution. I noted this problem in the preface. For Melanesia, in spite of this comprehensive review, the question is difficult to answer in a meaningful way. Not only is it difficult to convert the literature mess into statistical frequencies but our sample is certainly not random. What ethnographic baseline do we select as our universe of phenomena against which to compare our data? (Highlands versus Lowlands? Austronesian versus non-Austronesian groups?) How do we count our sample? By cultural subregion or by representative social units? (The order of choice will affect tabulation.) For subregions, we could list as many as eight or as few as three—if one accepts the notion of a SWNG fringe area* (see map 1).

*These three subareas are: the SWNG area, including Anga groups; Humboldt Bay; and insular island Melanesia, including New Britain and adjacent areas, East Bay, and Eastern Melanesia.
When counting the total social units, the problems (due to Galton's problem) are greater. We may have as few as thirty-two groups,* or as many as fifty or so⁴ (see table 1.1). Given the available Melanesian data, our survey conservatively results in between 10 to 20 percent of all Melanesian cultures having ritualized homosexuality as defined. Current information does not permit more precision.

ECOLOGY • The societies reported on in this book are, by and large, ecologically marginal populations associated with sago, yams, or taro, intensive hunting, and sparse populations. Shifting subsistence horticulture exists side by side with hunting and gathering in some areas. These peoples have “low intensity” agricultural regimes; mixed agriculture without single staple crops (e.g., sweet potatoes) is the rule (Brookfield and Hart 1971:94–124). Sweet potatoes are secondary crops among many SWNG groups; taro and yams, especially as feast crops, are prominent (cf. Watson 1965). Coconuts and pandanus are economically and symbolically important in most lowland and coastal areas. Hunting is prominent; and head-hunting, although not universal, is symbolically seen as one of its forms in some areas (e.g., Van Baal 1966; Zegwaard 1959; and see Van Baal, chap. 3 below). Moreover, the association between masculine prowess in hunting and exclusive male attachments is marked (Schieffelin 1982; Williams 1936c). By contrast, pig husbandry is of moderate importance (e.g., Marind-anim) or absent (e.g., Kaluli) from these groups. And none are involved in large-scale pig exchanges or ceremonial exchange systems in general (cf. P. Brown 1978; Rubel and Rossman 1978), which distinguishes these societies from those of the Highlands and the Massim area.

As elsewhere in Melanesia, there is a marked sexual division of labor in societies with ritualized homosexuality. Economic activities are identified with gender: hunting is masculine, certain forms of gardening are feminine; warfare is masculine, baby-sitting is feminine. Sex-typing and social status are thus linked, with male activities accorded higher status to the extent that (RH) groups

*Excluding all questionable cases, i.e.: Manus, Wogo, the Sepik mainland, Iatmul (and all Sepik groups), Mamberamo River, Akuna, and all questionable adjacent areas of Irian Jaya and Vanuatu.
were called "men-admiring societies" by Layard (1959:108) and "comrad communities" (genossenschaft) by Wirz (1922:39–40). Brown and Buchbinder (1976) argue that these politicoeconomic patterns make the sexes complementary, not cooperative, with which I agree. Yet one wonders how far the emotional complementarity extended. Murphy (1959) has argued that sex antagonism—rivalry, ambivalence, envy—is generated in men working in close quarters and being dependent upon women as producers. Clearly, women are vital for the total reproduction of these socio-economic systems (Donaldson n.d.; Keesing 1982), a fact that these male ideologies generally deny.

These groups, especially those of the SWNG, are demographically tenuous, too. They tend to have small populations numbering from a few hundred (Keraki) to several thousand (Marind-anim). Typically, villages are small, though among the Marind these could run into hundreds of people. Everywhere the man-to-land ratio is low, among the lowest in Melanesia, ranging from 4 or 5 persons per square mile upward to a limit of 40 per square mile (see Brookfield and Hart 1971:90ff., on Marind-anim, Anga, and others). By contrast, Highlands populations are dense, ranging from the Kuma (49 per m²), to Mae Enga (160 per m²), to Chimbu (225 per m²) (see P. Brown 1978:106).

A related demographic factor is sex ratio at birth. Melanesian populations typically show a marked imbalance of males over females at birth (see Malcolm 1970). The data on this factor are uneven. However, Guiart (cited in Allen, chap. 3 below) showed a remarkable imbalance of 231 males over 115 females in his 1950 North Malekula census. Rates such as 120/100 males at birth for the Sambia (Herdt 1981) and 100/71 men over women (Bowers 1965:29) elsewhere are common (cf. Bulmer's 1971 survey). Was this overpopulation of males a factor in contributing to institutionalized homosexuality? It probably was, but how much of a causal role it played is unclear.

Male overpopulation must be seen in context. It is not simply the gross number of males at birth that matters, but how many survive into adulthood, and how women are reproductively controlled through marriage customs. Male deaths through warfare in Melanesia surely also affected the disparity. The role of misogyny, though, with chiefs (Malekula), elders, and war leaders taking
several wives, must have exacerbated the shortage of women in these groups. The late onset of menarche among Melanesians probably also contributed to the female “shortage” (Buchbinder 1973:211; Malcolm 1968). It is safe to argue that male overpopulation did contribute to the institutionalization of homosexuality, for intuition tells us that a shortage of males would have made such practices less likely. However, correlation is not causation. The Tor of Northeast Irian Jaya had a very high rate of male overpopulation: Oosterwal (1961:38) reports that fully 47 percent of Tor males are bachelors at marriageable age. But adultery still occurs (Oosterwal 1959), and they do not practice (RH), as we have seen. A more detailed regional analysis is needed to clarify this factor.

Low fertility rates may be another contributing factor in these populations. Again, the data are thin. Yet in two areas, Southeastern Irian Jaya and the Great Papuan Plateau, groups practicing ritualized homosexuality were faced with low fertility rates and declining populations at the time of pacification. Van Baal has written of Marind-anum low female fertility, high vaginal irritations, and associated medical complications (due to ritual sexual promiscuity?), and birth-related diseases that precipitated kidnapping and/or purchase of children, which was a “dire necessity for continuity” (1966:31–32, and passim). Kelly (1977) argued that the Etoro declining population was exacerbated by their postcontact epidemics and by the fact that they “taboo heterosexual intercourse for 295 days during the year” (quoted in Kottack 1974:287). These factors, plus the cultural practice of homosexual contacts among young males, certainly threaten the viability of a small population. Yet we must again take care in reading correlation as causation. Other Melanesian groups have sustained low fertility and depopulation (see Rivers 1922), some of whom later thrived. And heterosexual avoidance behavior, especially in the Highlands, seems marked (Meggitt 1964). Heider (1976), for instance, reports that the Dani of Highlands Irian Jaya have “low sexual energy” and practice extreme sexual abstinence for years at a time; yet the Dani do not practice ritualized homosexuality.

Left unchecked by Western pacification or colonialization, what would the long-term evolution of these marginal populations have been? Perhaps homosexual practices might have contributed to
their extinction, but we cannot be certain of this possibility: if one accepts the assumption of ancient migrations and ritual practices, these groups had flourished for generations. But perhaps we look back at them as they were at their zenith, with groups like the Marind-anim having specialized to the point that "could not have lasted much longer" (Ernst 1979:52; Keesing 1976).

In short, (RH) cultures are fringe-area ecological groups whose subsistence and populations were generally tenuous. It seems likely that their peripherality is no accident. In their niches they have little economic competition. One wonders here the extent to which SWNG groups may have been displaced by larger, later migrations of more numerous Highlands peoples, forcing them over generations into fringe areas. This raises the general problem of warfare and warriorhood initiation.

WARFARE • Warfare occurred among all these peoples,* though its forms (e.g., intratribal versus intertribal fighting) and intensity varied from place to place. Why did war occur at all, given their peripherality? The full answer to this problem is complex and far-ranging and remains to be seen.45 But given the small populations and lack of nearby competitors, a materialist explanation of war makes less sense here than it does for larger Highlands groups, for whom the data do not support it either (Keesing 1982; Sillitoe 1978). Among SWNG groups in particular, several patterns seem to hold true.

First, war was a fact of life that conditioned most cultural domains and social arenas in these societies. Warfare thus influenced the behavioral environment of child development, marriage and the family, gender roles, and sexual behavior (see Langness 1967; Mead 1935; Schwartz 1973).

Second, these groups generally recognized the difference between intratribal and intertribal fighting (Langness 1972). Their community-based warriorhoods did fight each other (though some did not, e.g., Marind-anim), but their real social concern was with intertribal fighting and war raids against enemies. These war raids took the form of head-hunting expeditions among many (Marind-anim, Kimam, Asmat, etc.), but not the Highlands Anga.46 Indeed,

*I shall be speaking primarily here of mainland groups.
the association of heads (body and penis head, coconuts and pandanus) and male substance is symbolically marked in various (RH) groups (see Allen, Van Baal, and Serpenti below). Finally, we know that war raids customarily followed initiation cycles among groups such as the Marind-anim, the Kimam, the Sambia, and perhaps on the Great Papuan Plateau.

Third, (RH) groups tend to use initiation as the social mechanism for recruitment to their ritual cults and to the village-based warriorhood corps as well. Survival and social reproduction of communities depend upon the warriorhood, and initiation means introduction to homosexual activity. It also brings with it adult, masculine socialization, through successive ceremonies and related achievements. Thus homosexuality is linked to what are essentially military and age-graded organizations. A number of important manifest and latent social functions stem from these military clubs.

INITIATION • What kind of initiation do (RH) cultures practice? They have initiations, not puberty rites, in Allen’s (1967:5) sense: ceremonialized admissions to discreet groups “normally held at set intervals for a number of candidates simultaneously.” These are all-male associations, with compulsory membership (but see Schieffelin 1982). Women are, in some places, involved (e.g., Marind-anim). Female initiation is usually confined to menarche or birth ceremonies (see Godelier 1982a), and the status and position of women is correspondingly low (cf. Van Baal 1975). Furthermore, initiation usually places boys in men’s secret societies from which women and children are formally excluded. Ritual instruments, flutes and bull-roarers, are seen as hostile to women (Gourlay 1975; Herdt 1982a; Williams 1936a). (RH) ritual and political authority in general is vested in cult elders, compared with Highlands “big man” polities (Allen, in press; cf. Hage 1981).

An important and ignored aspect of initiation in (RH) groups is that it frequently occurs before puberty, often as early as middle to late childhood (e.g., Marind-anim, Sambia, Keraki, etc.). Elsewhere I have argued that this young age is psychologically necessary for the radical resocialization into, and eventual sex-role dramatization expected of, adult men (Herdt 1981, 1982b; cf. Mead 1949; Young 1965). A related and still poorly understood aspect is that of ritual secrecy, which has significant psychosocial
consequences for gender formation (reviewed in Herdt 1982a; Schwimmer 1980). Separation from mother, household and playmates, ordeals and initiation traumas, the liminal stage of seclusion, fasting, and suspension of normal routines and relationships set the stage on which ritual homosexuality is begun.

Long ago Van Gennep suggested a view of erotic acts in initiation that merits renewed attention. In cultures where sex is seen as either impure or as holding magic-religious danger, as in (RH) groups, Van Gennep (1960:169) suggested that a taboo on coitus would be present. Among such groups, “Coitus is ‘powerful’: that is why it is sometimes used as a rite of great efficacy. . . . The physical impact of the act—that of penetration—should be borne in mind” (ibid.). Following other initiation ordeals and seclusion, the sexual act becomes a means of effecting ritual transition change in selfhood. “Coitus as a final act in initiation ceremonies I interpret also as a rite of incorporation,” which applies equally for heterosexual and homosexual practices (Van Gennep 1960:170–171). The homosexual act incorporates the boy into a new group, the ritual cult, with a new status and role. The boy’s insemination coheres with the native view, universal in (RH) cultures, that the key (manifest) goal of homosexual contact is to get sperm inside the boy’s body so he can grow.48 This initiation principle is special. Some Melanesian groups lack initiation rites altogether. But among those who practice initiation, the insemination idea is unique to (RH) groups.*

Yet there are actually three interrelated parties to this homosexual act of incorporation. On the one hand, the boy (and others) may believe that this act will make him grow and strengthen. He is, in this sense, demonstrating his desire to be masculine, to act in accord with ritual ways, to be unfeminine.49 On the other hand, his counterpart, the postpubescent inseminator, demonstrates his superordinate maleness by the homosexual act of masculinizing the boy (Herdt 1981:205). A third party is the ritual cult itself. The cult in turn is represented at three levels: through its concrete paraphernalia and cult house; through human agents (elders, cult leaders, father, and bachelors); and through spirit beings, who

*I exclude here insemination by analogy, i.e., sperm used in foods (see Schwimmer, chap. 6).
may be directly or indirectly personified through masks or dramatic impersonations. The paraphernalia becomes sacred stage, these authorities the audience (women a metaphoric audience for the men) which sanctify the homoerotic act, endowing it with the power of sacred tradition, the supernaturally blessed moral way of life. Thus, the ritual homosexual act serves here as a cultural sign, to self and others, of submission to ritual and spiritual authority (see Errington, cited above, and Tuzin 1980 in another context).

The question arises as to the nature of this submission. To what extent are the homosexual relations depicted in (RH) groups "real" or "mythical," in Layard's (1942:474) terms? Our survey is instructive, and it points to a new typology. Type I is represented by symbolic homosexual contacts. Actual homosexual penetration may or may not occur; or, as is likely with the Ingiet society on New Britain, it occurs but once only, in first initiation. Farces and hoaxes may be the genre of spirit impersonations. Actual homosexual contacts are not perpetuated thereafter. The person who inseminates the novice may be a spirit being impersonated by an elder. Homosexuality may also be symbolically projected in myth or folktale (see Schwimmer, chap. 6). Type II utilizes actual homosexual intercourse during initiation. It is usually with males who will copulate with the novice afterward. No hoaxes here; the boys' physical growth and the social effects of such for war and the marriage trade are serious business. Homosexual activity may go on in secular life for months or years. In our sample, Type I groups are few. (Does Iatmul belong in this group?) Type II groups are common, and they include all SWNG societies. Some societies, such as Malekula and the Marind-anim, seem to complexly utilize features of both types, with elaborate spirit impersonations and mythology buttressing actual homosexuality (Allen, chap. 2; Van Baal, chap. 3).

My guess is that Type II societies emphasize the actual physical penetration of the boy (in line with Van Gennep's idea). Here, real physical and psychological effects are expected from the male/male sexual act and implanted semen. Changes result, then, in "biological" maturation, which we may "read" analogically as also meaning changes in the boy's experience of self (see M. Strathern 1979) and in concomitant changes in his personhood (Read, chap. 5). In
groups such as Kaluli, these actual homosexual contacts may occur late, in adolescence, and may last only a few months. In most SWNG and Eastern Melanesian groups, however, the actual contacts extend from childhood into adulthood on an exclusive and regular basis. (Perhaps, in this sense, they are "profane," not "sacred," the latter more characteristic of Type I groups; cf. Schieffelin 1982.) Again, we should not underrate the power of sexual submission to effect psychosocial changes in the boy's gender identity and role (Herdt 1982a; Vanggaard 1972) and societal variations in this power (cf. Allen, chap. 2). Such gender changes involve the boy's incorporation into warriorhood life. He may experience his homosexual contacts with fear, honor, shame, excitement, or all of these; but here, we confront individual thoughts and feelings, not merely cultural rules and ideals, a problem on which there is virtually no data. The initiate is coerced and expected to emulate his seniors, to identify with and probably compete with his peers. This psychosocial process eventuates in his internalization of the warrior role, ritual beliefs, probably misogyny, and behavioral conformity to cult rules and norms. Aggressiveness is inculcated. Again, we should reiterate that some SWNG groups follow initiation rites with a war-raiding party. For the newly initiated older bachelor, this raid is a confirmatory rite demonstrating his prowess, just as his newly achieved role as homosexual inserter to younger boys demonstrates his sexual maturity (Herdt 1981). Initiation rites and warfare thus interact with the inculcation of warrior identity. Homosexuality contributes, that is, as a latent social function in the maintenance of the cult, obedience to authority, and the development of aggressivity and eventual sexual antagonism toward women.

What about the erotics of ritual homosexuality? Let us underline the obvious: without erotic desire, arousal, and consummation, any sexual intercourse is impossible.* The conventional sentiment which I have heard expressed, by laymen and anthropologists, is that "these Melanesians are performing rituals, not erotics." Ethnocentrism aside, it should be clear that these two modes are of one piece—experience—not opposed, in Melanesia. The Marind

*Excluding self- or other masturbation of course. The data show that masturbation to arousal is usually unnecessary here.
warrior who copulates with a boy may be aroused and still be conforming to or performing a ritual. The boy, in contrast, may be terrified or thrilled. But erection is necessary for the acts to take place, especially when they go on for a lifetime. The “sexual needs of bachelors” (Hiatt 1977:257) is involved, as are sexual segregation, suppression, and other factors already noted. Likewise, the social attributes of the role of homosexual partners must be taken into account. In most of these groups, the homosexual partners are in asymmetrical, age-graded older/younger relationships; but kinship, marital and ritual status, and other beliefs and rules about the function or purpose and outcome of the inseminating are contingencies. Secrecy, shame, and honor are probably crucial emotional factors (consciously and unconsciously) of sexual excitement here, too. A complex algebraic sum of all these things, as among the ancient Greeks,\(^{11}\) produces the erotics necessary for ritualized homosexual behavior.

And what is the relation between these homoerotics and adult masculine identity? The essays below only touch upon this issue (see Van Baal, Read, and Schwimmer, this volume; cf. Herdt 1981). The question of sexual motivation, at all levels of awareness (e.g., conscious and unconscious), raise important issues on which we provide little direct data as such; and we are not satisfied to “read” individual motives and experience from customs. Clearly, the male role is problematic in many parts of Melanesia; perhaps this is true for both (RH) and other groups, as elsewhere (D'Andrade 1966). Yet, the involvement of males in homoerotic bonds in (RH) groups implies a kind of sexual and interpersonal fluidity of psychosexual development that may be a fundament of these Melanesian societies, in particular. Power relationships, both in the general sense of managing others and controlling public affairs, and in the delimited sense of dominance over others in everyday life, are germane here. Men in (RH) groups attempt a sexual and social control over all others, a control that is difficult to achieve and sustain, for instance, in the circumstances of domestic life (Rosaldo 1974). The attempt is supported by the nearly universal conscription of boys into warrior life via initiation. All males are thus involved in (RH), and their personal choice is, as we have seen, limited by many factors. The modifier ritualized with respect to homosexual behavior addresses this dimension of sexual ori-
entation and identity formation. In spite of universal involvement in homosexual activities, however, no data indicate that these males become habitually motivated to same-sex contact later in life, or that the incidence of aberrant lifelong individual homosexuality, as an identity state, is greater in (RH) groups than elsewhere in the world. Homosexuality is the royal road to heterosexuality (to paraphrase Freud), but it is a temporary one. What remains unclear, however, is the effect of this early and transitional male/male sexual activity on the development or quality of male/female sexual bonds. In some, perhaps many, (RH) groups, men seem to view preinitiated boys as a composite of “feminine” and “masculine” characteristics. Homosexuality is designed, in this regard, to masculinize their selfhood and behavioral comportment in the direction of defined adult masculine roles. Yet, certain feminine characteristics may endure—to be expressed in secret male rites; is this why, perhaps, ritualized homosexuality itself is so often secret in Melanesia? No, (RH) does not make these males into what we Westerners call “homosexuals”; these data instead challenge our own views about what that category means, and what parts of nature and nurture it is made from. Perhaps we should now better look to understand how the fluidity of the human condition allows this Melanesian phenomena and what, in a general sense, bisexuality is all about.

SEXUAL POLARITY • The final set of interrelated conceptual issues may be grouped under the rubric sexual polarity. Though Melanesia has long been identified as a culture area with much “sexual antagonism,” what does sexual polarity mean in cultures that ritualize homosexuality? Is its form different than in other Melanesian groups (see Herdt and Poole 1982)? I believe it is; and, when we examine the configurations of this theme here, we see how the differences inform, and are informed by, homosexuality. I will argue that sexual polarity takes its most extreme form in (RH) groups.

These are societies in which the gender and social roles of men and women are viewed not only as distinct, separate, and polarized but as hostile in many respects. I have noted this in the economic division of labor and in ritual cultism. To what extent do these differences extend into everyday social action, marriage, and in-
tragroup relationships: not just a house divided, but one at war with itself?

The status of women is low in these cultures. (Social status is here indicated by women's low participation in public affairs; their low access to, or control of, their economic products; their lack of choice in marriage; beliefs about women's polluted bodies; negative images of women registered in idioms, myth, and everyday discourse; and the absence or peripherality of institutions such as initiation for women.) Women are described as being in a low or "degraded state" (William's 1936c term) among the Keraki, the Kiwai, the Marind-anim, the Baruya, the Sambia, the New Hebrides groups, and others, as shown in different ways in the chapters below. Ecological and economic factors are correlated with women's low status. The literature generally indicates that the larger the population, the higher the women's status (e.g., among Chimbu, Hagen, and Enga). Where economic exchange systems and pig husbandry are present, women play a crucial part which seems to provide higher status (Feil 1978; M. Strathern 1972, 1980). But these economic productive features are virtually absent from (RH) groups (cf. Lindenbaum, chap. 9).

These cultures are sexually restrictive. Sexual activity is fraught with rules and taboos, and in adulthood it is thoroughly ritualized through initiation and marriage customs. It is not clear to what extent premarital sexual play is forbidden in children among these groups, but it is strongly condemned among the Sambia and neighboring Anga peoples. Sex is morally charged: adultery and premarital heterosexual activity are generally considered shameful. Certainly rigorous taboos govern sexual contacts between men and women after male initiation occurs. One may argue that a similar situation exists throughout the Highlands, the Eastern Highlands initiatory systems in particular. Yet, (RH) cultures channel years-long male sexual development away from females toward males through homosexuality. That restrictiveness is unique to them. (Perhaps RH groups have more "prudes" than "lechers," in Meggitt's [1964] terms.) Sexual restrictiveness raises three related issues: gender differences, sex anxiety, and sexual segregation.

Gender differences are polarized in cultures with ritualized homosexuality. Adult masculinity and femininity are defined as essentially antithetical. The biological origins and cycles of males
and females are seen as fundamentally different (Kelly 1977:16). Men's ideology views women as "naturally" competent throughout their developmental cycle (childhood growth, the menarche, childbirth), whereas males need a ritual push, as it were, through initiation (reviewed in Herdt 1981). Homosexual insemination is crucial for male growth and strength. Highlands initiatory systems show similar ideologies of gender differences, but they do not require homosexual contact. What does this difference imply? I think that a pervasive cultural principle separates Highlands from (RH) cultures here, and it has been discussed by Allen (chap. 3) below. (RH) groups focus on milk and semen as critical gender fluids. Eastern Highlands groups especially emphasize blood. Mother's and women's womb and menstrual blood is seen as contaminating and lethal to male development in the Highlands, so bloodletting rites are key initiation activities (see Read, chap. 5). Letting polluted blood is thus a sign of being masculinized (Herdt 1982b) there. By contrast, bloodletting is rare or absent in (RH) groups, except, that is, for Highlands Anga peoples, who undoubtedly imported nosebleeding rites from their Eastern Highlands neighbors. Aside from circum-incision in the New Hebrides, penis cutting is absent from (RH) groups. The differential principle seems to be this: in (RH) groups no distinction is made between male and female blood, and female contamination is not feared (excepting Highlands Anga); but mother's milk and semen are seen as fundamentally different, so gender ideology focuses upon homosexual insemination as a kind of later masculinizing-parturition process.

What accounts for this Highlands/(RH) difference? Population size and integrity are indirectly related (Lindenbaum 1972). The fact that SWNG groups do not generally marry their enemies is surely related (excepting Highlands Anga again). Perhaps these factors are contingent upon an even more important process: the early ritual development of gender necessary for later sex-role dramatization in adulthood. Remember that both bloodletting and semen-intake are practices bound to ritual, and ritual makes use of differentiation and contrast by analogy (among other processes). If Highlands' groups pinpoint femaleness in the menstrual act, (RH) groups focus it on breast-feeding; and in male rites, Highlands men emphasize bloodletting, whereas SWNG men emphasize
homosexual insemination. Hage (1981) has criticized Dundes (1976) for interpreting these contrary ritual modes as "expressions" of (unconscious) envy, not of analogy. It is unfortunate that Hage sees these two processes as opposed, instead of complementary, as I think they are in this case (see Spiro 1982:168–171). At any rate, as Allen notes below (chap. 2), abundant evidence indicates that men exhibit envy of women's perceived "natural" powers here (cf. Van Baal, chap. 3; Read, chap. 5). Allen also suggests that two contrary images of women symbolically underlie these modes: "menstruating woman/reproductive mother" (Eastern Highlands, Wogo) versus "wife/nurturant mother" (RH groups).

Does heterosexual anxiety enter in, and if so, to what extent? Sexual anxiety is difficult to measure (Stephens 1962). But it seems pronounced in Highlands groups (Meggitt 1964) and minimal for (RH) groups such as the Etoro (Kelly 1976), the Marind-anim (Van Baal 1966), and others, though I have suggested it is extreme among the fringe-area Sambia (Herdt 1981). Sex anxiety is correlated with the sexual restrictions of postpartum taboos, as Whiting et al. (1958) argue. The secrecy of childbirth, like that of homosexuality, seems related (Schieffelin 1976). Economic cooperation needed between spouses may exacerbate the sex anxiety (Murphy 1959), as does intermarriage with enemy groups, whereby a woman is seen as a potential enemy (e.g., Sambia), though among the Marind-anim such marriages do not occur since the Marind warred against distant enemies. From all these factors, sex anxiety and ambivalence toward women especially, the effects upon the father/child relationship must be significant (e.g., rivalry, jealousy, envy, aloofness, overcompensatory "protest masculinity"; see Whiting and Whiting 1975). Unfortunately, data on this topic in Melanesia are rare (but see Van Baal, chap. 3).

Sexual segregation is marked in (RH) and Highlands groups, and it is associated with the restrictive factors noted above, but here again there is a difference between the two cultural systems. In virtually all (RH) cultures there are men's houses or cult houses where men congregate. In groups such as the Marind-anim, men and women live in separate but close huts. Following initiation, boys usually have to avoid women and children for some period of time—months, years, as the case may be. Yet, in contrast to
Highlands groups, many SWNG societies customarily allow men and women to live together in close proximity. This may mean separate compartments of one long-house (Etoro, Kaluli), or separate male or female spaces in the same sleeping quarters (Keraki, Anga groups). Highlands groups, however, usually have strict sexual segregation in different houses, even in adulthood. In (RH) groups, the result may be a kind of divided (even tense) togetherness. In this regard one may thus characterize the (RH) attitude toward male/female proximity as enigmatic and ambivalent. One may hypothesize that years-long exposure to this ambivalence results in sex-identity conflict later for boys at initiation (cf. Herdt 1982a, 1982b; Schwimmer, chap. 6; A. Strathern 1970).

Sexual segregation must be counted as a key contributing factor to the institutionalization of homosexuality. When residential separation is added to sexual restrictiveness and socioeconomic polarity, homosexual activity as an acceptable sexual outlet seems likely. Davenport has argued this point:

It should be noted that throughout Melanesian societies, where institutionalized forms of male bisexuality* are most frequently encountered, there is also a widespread tradition of separating men from women. So pronounced is this nearly everywhere, it can be regarded as a basic principle of social organization. . . . One can entertain the hypothesis that in the strongly gender-segregated communities of Melanesia, when the culture also imposes effective barriers to heterosexual intercourse, there is a likelihood that institutionalized male bisexual practices will result.

(Davenport 1977:156)

While I sympathize with this view, a caveat is necessary. It seems a quirk that in the most “strongly gender-segregated” societies in Melanesia, the Eastern Highlands, ritual homosexuality is absent. Gender segregation is therefore a necessary but not sufficient cause of (RH). The other factors noted above must interact synergistically with segregation to produce this special outcome.

A final, and very important, factor remaining is marriage. Marriage in all these groups is customarily arranged. Sister exchange is a common form in (RH) groups. Infant betrothal and bridewealth are uncommon but present. But bride-price marriage is

*Davenport uses this term in the same way I use ritualized homosexual behavior.
rare (e.g., among Marind-anim) and more commonly found in the Highlands. I suspect that sister exchange and moiety exogamy, as among the Marind (Van Baal 1966:122–127), are frequently correlated in (RH) societies; both are present in Irian Jaya, the Trans-Fly area, and Eastern Melanesia. Still, Anga groups such as the Sambia lack exogamous moieties, and intravillage marriage between closely related clans of the same phratry is common. Yet the (RH) inter-linkages between sister-exchange marriage and ritualized homosexuality are impressive. Since bride-wealth marriage is common in Highlands systems, we may see in sister-exchange marriage a structural pattern that distinguishes (RH) from Highlands cultures (cf. Collier and Rosaldo 1981; Lindenbaum, chap. 9).

The pattern that emerges in SWNG is one in which kin groups that intermarry are involved also in homosexual transactions. Women are controlled and traded as pawns by elders in the “marriage trade.” Age differences enter in. Given several years’ difference between brothers, older sisters, and even older sisters’ husbands (as among Australian Aborigines), a woman’s younger brother (biological or classificatory brother) is placed in a structurally subordinate position to his elder sister’s husband, his brother-in-law (Serpenti, chap. 7). Yet the nature of this subordination is convoluted. Because of sister exchange, both parties are “wife-givers” and “wife-takers.” The older man, however, takes his wife first, so he is temporarily, beholden to his younger unmarried brother-in-law. The younger male, though, by virtue of his lower ritual and social status, is socially subordinate to the older man.

Now their kinship relationship enters in. They are not only in a “double” brother-in-law relationship (i.e., wife’s brother is sister’s husband) in Layard’s phrase (1959:104), they can be matrilateral cross-cousins (Keraki), patrilateral cross-cousins (Sambia), or even, in the case of Etoro and Kimam, mother’s brother and sister’s son (real or classificatory). In (RH) groups that prescribe homosexual relations between these males, we have, in effect, a boy’s parents giving his sister to an older male who becomes his brother-in-law and who will (with other members of his kinship group) inseminate the boy. The boy is being ritually “masculinized” into adulthood as his sister is being impregnated by the older man. The most extreme form that homosexual service takes in
(RH) cultures is, among the Jaquai, a rather extraordinary kind of bride-service: a boy’s parents, lacking a daughter to exchange, eventually receive from the older man who inseminated the boy (e.g., Kimam, Kunam) a woman for him to marry, a kind of sentimental gift. Thus, exchange of women and semen circulation go together in these groups (see Herdt, chap. 4).

Lévi-Strauss (1969:307) has suggested that the Nambikwara of the Amazon through polygamy create a “disequilibrium between the number of young men and the number of available girls,” making homosexual relations a “provisional substitute” for marriage.\(^\text{52}\) His point can be applied to these Melanesian groups, too. In a culture with strictly arranged marriages, male overpopulation, polygamy among older men, and extreme sexual polarity—sexual segregation and heterosexual restrictiveness in particular—ritualized homosexuality is a transitional alternative sexual outlet for males. (Certainly there is no evidence that it is a population control method, as Money and Ehrhardt ([1972:126] or Kottack [1974:287–288] suggest.) Yet it must be clear that this alternative seems to apply only in groups whose history, social structure, and other systemic factors make transitional homosexuality both necessary and sufficient for individual and societal coherence.

Hage (1981) has argued recently that ritual homosexuality in New Guinea is a product of some underlying structure of “sexual symmetry,” also expressed in dual organizations, initiation rites, and a “big man complex” that is “rampantly egalitarian.” He sees this underlying structure expressed, on the north coast and in the Eastern Highlands, in bloodletting rites, whereas on the south coast its form is (RH). To reiterate, contra Dundes (1976) he argues that it is not envy but this structural “sexual symmetry” that provides a “simpler explanation” of (RH), based on structural-evolutionary principles. Space does not permit a full review of these arguments, but several of his points are germane to my summary. First, the simplest “historical” explanation of homosexual customs is that they are distributed in relation to long-term transformational adjustments to the postulated migration-diffusion outlined above. In this regard, Hage’s data are incomplete. Second, neither bloodletting nor semen-ingestion practices follow

\(^*\) Or perhaps it is bride-wealth, if one views semen as a scarce commodity.
any simple structural or historical-evolutionary pattern, as I have argued elsewhere (Herdt 1980, 1982b). For instance, how would this theory accommodate groups such as the Sambia who practice both bloodletting and homosexuality?* Third, Hage's appeal to a probably nonexistent "big man complex" ignores the Western Highlands, where such political figures are most developed but whose societies (e.g., Melpa) lack both bloodletting and homosexuality. Here Hage has it backwards: it is in groups that lack the big man prototype that (RH) is more likely to be present. Fourth, as I noted above, not all groups that practice ritual homosexuality have marriage by exogamous moieties. It seems that such ethnological models will remain inadequate until researchers take the literature of Melanesia as a culture area more seriously.

To what extent can we argue that the ritual complex of homosexuality was caused by male gender ideology, as Layard (1942) argued? This chicken-and-egg problem cannot be answered on the basis of the extant literature, unless, that is, one regards the hypothetical ancient migrations as both a sufficient and necessary cause of (RH), which I do not. Clearly, these cultures exhibit marked sexual polarity; perhaps, and just as importantly, they show extreme ambivalence toward women (Van Baal 1966). These male misogynist ideologies described in this book contain a remarkable view of women, not as dangerous and polluting beings, but as valued and scarce sexual objects to be controlled and envied for their parturition capacities. Perhaps, then, given such ideologies, economic and sexual segregation led to ritual separation (Kaberry 1939), which evolved gradually into ritualized homosexuality.

Ritual homosexuality is a powerful symbolic structure that unites these cultures in a single pattern, in spite of their differences. It is too simple to say that one or another factor caused their customs. But when we combine the whole—the system of presumed migration history, ecology, and sociocultural structures with concomitant effects on personality and sex roles—the synergistic effect makes their form of sexual polarity understandable in time and

*No doubt another pseudoevolutionary "transformation" type can be invented to account for such variations.
place. Is not this complex image but one instance of the fact that humanness is complex?

The themes touched upon in this summary are empirically studied in the chapters that follow. And Professor Lindenbaum examines their theoretical underpinnings in her concluding chapter.

The comparative ethnography surveyed here presents such an embarrassment of rich interlinkages and ideas that I must end by expressing my bewilderment at an anthropology that has ignored their theoretical importance for so many decades. Undoubtedly, Western prudery and outmoded research conventions, which excluded sexual behavior from much of anthropology, were responsible. We hope that this book adds momentum to the growing interest in cross-cultural studies on sex and gender in Melanesia and elsewhere.

NOTES

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1. Such general cross-cultural surveys as those of J. Brown (1963), Burton and Whiting (1961), Cohen (1964), Stephens (1962), Whiting et al. (1958), and Young (1965), though they make use of Austro-Melanesian data, do not mention ritualized homosexuality. Allen (1967:96–97, 99) only mentions two island cases and does not review the New Guinea material.

2. See, for examples, Bell 1935–1936:185 and Hallpike 1977:36. Carrier (1980a:101) laments in a recent survey: "Data available on homosexual behavior in most of the world's societies, past or
present, are meagre.” They are “complicated by the prejudice of many observers who consider the behavior unnatural, dysfunctional, or associated with mental illness, and by the fact that in many of the societies studied the behavior is stigmatized and thus not usually carried out openly. Under these circumstances, the behavior is not easily talked about. At the turn of the twentieth century such adjectives as disgusting, vile, and detestable were still being used to describe homosexual behavior. . . . In discussing sodomy with some of his New Guinea informants, Williams (1936c), for example, asked them if they ‘had ever been subjected to unnatural practice.’” (See below, p. 21.) Eric Schwimmer tells me that F. E. Williams’ relates in his unpublished diary how he discovered homosexuality by having been propositioned by a Keraki boy in the forest.

3. Remember that Ellis generously prefaced The Sexual Life of Savages, noting that “other students doubtless will be inspired to follow” Malinowski’s lead (Ellis 1929:xi). Too bad that never happened.

4. On the Amazon see, for example, C. Hugh-Jones 1979:160–161; S. Hugh-Jones 1979:110; Lévi-Strauss 1969:307; and Murphy 1959.

5. Here is Kamber (1939:257n.), for example: “Homosexuality amongst the men did exist. The youths of 17 or 18 who were still unmarried would take boys of 10 or 11 as lovers. The women had no hesitation in discussing the matter with me, did not regard it as shameful, gave the names of different boys, and seemed to regard the practice as a temporary substitute for marriage.” Cf. also C. Berndt 1965:265.

6. I know of no reports of institutionalized transvestism from Melanesia in which males have lifelong cross-gender dressing and associated homosexual behavior comparable, for instance, to those of the Mohave alyha (Devereaux 1937) or the Tahitian mahu (Levy 1973); cf. also Whitehead’s (1981) recent review of the berdache. Melanesian transvestite behavior is, apparently, nonerotic cross-dressing role behavior permitted only in restricted ceremonies (see Bateson 1932:277–278; Elmberg 1965:97, 110, 117; and Tuzin 1980:47n, 227; and other examples reviewed in Schwimmer, chap. 6).

7. Clinically, primary male transsexualism is defined as the conviction of biologically normal males that “from earliest childhood . . . they are really members of the opposite sex” (Stoller 1979:11). Data on this subject are virtually nil in Melanesia; the only report that seems appropriate to this category is still the old one by Seligman (1902), which is not associated directly with ritualized homosexuality. There are, however, folktales (Landtman 1917:293–295) or myths (Herdt 1981:255–294) that may be
hints of collective cultural projections related to transsexual fantasies.

8. There are scattered reports of individual homosexual behavior in acculturated settings such as sexually restricted plantations; see especially Davenport 1965:200–201; and examples in B. Blackwood 1935:128; Hogbin 1951:163–164; Mead 1949:90ff.; and Mitchell 1978:160. See also Bulmer's (1971:150n.) comparative note in this context.

9. I used the following procedures in assessing (RH) reports: all reports of any kind available to me (including popular accounts) were read and compared; early allusions were contrasted to later accounts; sources from neighboring groups were compared; and whenever a case seemed questionable, I wrote to the ethnographer who reported, or, if that person was deceased, to another expert who had worked in the same or neighboring areas. I have omitted several early cases of reports by laymen that seemed dubious or were contradicted by subsequent ethnographers. Finally, several Melanesianist scholars have read this chapter, and their critical evaluations of certain sources have also been used in my final interpretations.

10. The only definite report of institutionalized lesbianism comes from Malekula Island in the New Hebrides. Deacon (1934:170–171), the earliest anthropological source, states: "Between women, however, homosexuality is common, many women being generally known as lesbians, or in the native term nimog tāp nimomog ('woman has intercourse with woman'). It is regarded as a form of play, but, at the same time, it is clearly recognized as a form of sexual desire, and that the women do it because it gives them pleasure. . . . From the Big Nambas [tribal group] alone, it is reported that lesbianism is common. . . ." (See also Godelier 1982a:82.) This puny material is, however, virtually all that has ever been published. (Barker [1975:150] has an unpublished report.) For questionable allusions, see Baumann 1955:228; and Harrison 1937:362, 410. We should be wary of this lack of data on lesbian behavior, though, since most Melanesianist ethnographers have been males who primarily studied males; whether lesbian activity existed elsewhere and was hidden will probably never be known. Cf. below for DuToit's (1975:220) anomalous report of Highlands female "homosexuality play." Inge Riebe mentions that "adolescent girls engage in homosexual relations" among the Western Highlands Kalam (quoted in Keesing 1982:10n.), among whom no (RH) is reported.

12. Haddon (1936:xxviii) reports that such mainland groups as the Tami and Yabim "did not have sodomy" (anal intercourse? his source is not cited) in initiation rites. Cf. also Bamler 1911:496 on the Tami.

13. Parkinson (1907:544) is worth citing at length on the general problem of ethnographic reliability of reports regarding ritual homosexuality: "It requires an acquaintance of many years and an absolute confidence in the interrogator before a native can be induced to divulge these things, not so much because he is ashamed of them, for all the natives do them, and do not think them wrong. . . . These observations are based on the exact, detailed statements of natives, and are confirmed by white missionaries and their colored teachers. . . . The Imperial authorities are now taking steps, at the instigation of the missions, to restrain the abuses. It is questionable whether the ban will have any effect; it is highly probable that what previously took place in public is now done in secret." (Cf. also the translator’s note, ibid.:530.)

14. Chowning (1980:15) notes that the Sengseng of Southwest New Britain denied practicing "sodomy" (by which she meant anal intercourse), which also applies to their neighbors, the Kove (Ann Chowning, personal communication).

15. Davenport (1965:200–201) uses a pseudonym to protect the exact location of this group. But they belong in this culture subregion. Like me (Herdt 1981), he feared his informants would be placed at risk by disclosure of this data.

16. See Schieffelin (1976), and Boelaars (1981) quoted below, for examples of identical cultural rules pertaining to homosexual access to a boy.

17. Haddon (1936:xxxii), in his preface to F. E. Williams’s Papuans of the Trans-Fly, chides the work of the “late Rev. E. Baxter-Riley (1925:201). . . . He does not refer to sodomy; but that proves nothing, as the publishers omitted [i.e., censored] a considerable amount of his manuscript." For discussions of censorship and other facets of ethnographic reports on homosexual behavior in New Guinea sociétés by the doyen of Highlands studies, see Read 1980b:183–188 and below (see chap. 5). Cf. also Carrier 1980a; Layard 1959:112; and Mead 1961.

18. Landtmann lived with the Kiwai from 1910–1912 (see also Landtman 1954, his last report).


20. The older men are jurally entitled to have serial intercourse with this woman for the purpose of collecting “fertile” sperm from her vagina after sex in order to anoint the initiates’ bodies. This practice is found also among the Marind-anim (Van Baal, chap. 3), the Kimam (Serpenti, chap. 7), and is known from Thurnwald’s (1916) study of the Banaro.
21. The structural position of the chief in Malekula (Deacon 1934:261) may be here compared to the Kimam father. See Allen’s chapter 3 below.

22. Held (1957:87–88) continues: “Although this [anal intercourse] is not judged to be a direct violation of the manners established by the ancestors, it is considered highly ridiculous, so that it is a serious insult to say of somebody that he is a sodomite (agho rironi).” Held does not indicate if this derogatory term is applied to both insertee and inserter, but the evidence indicates nonetheless that ritual homosexuality was absent from Waropen, at least by the time of his (1957:156 n. 3) work. Still, as I have noted, there is a danger in reading negative attributions toward the insertee as a castigation of all homosexual behavior (i.e., the inserter role).

23. Here we have a vivid example of the Victorian heritage (e.g., Freud’s Totem and Taboo) underlying early writings about Melanesia. Notions about prehistoric hominid hordes, patriarchal authority in the family, and the prehistoric preeminence of “matriarchy” over “patriarchy” are explicit in ethnographic pieces such as those of Moszkowski, Atkinson (1903), Layard (1942), Róheim (1926), and Thurnwald (1911). (For Australian studies, see Hiatt 1975.) See Herdt and Poole (1982), who consider these intellectual influences on the concept of “sexual antagonism” in New Guinea studies.

24. As early as 1926 we find Róheim, who was well read in the Melanesian literature, making the following statement: “The Morehead River natives are the neighbors of the Marind (Kaia-Kaia) and frequently suffer their raids. I intend to discuss the close connection between the Marind and the Central Australians in a separate paper” (1926:448 n.4). To my knowledge Róheim never published such a paper.

25. Gebhard (1971:215) flatly states: “Anal coitus is the usual technique employed by male homosexuals [sic] in preliterate societies. . . .” Although he cites no data in support of this claim, it generally holds true for Melanesia. The only certain groups practicing homosexualfellatio are the Etoro, Bedamani, Duke-of-York, and Highland Anga peoples. Anal and oral intercourse seem to be “mutually exclusive” (Read 1980b:185) in Melanesia, which is almost certainly related to cultural beliefs about growth and procreation, though no one has yet investigated this suggestion.

26. Kelly adds: “This is accomplished orally. The boy manipulates the man to the point of ejaculation and consumes the semen.” (Cf. Herdt 1981, and chap. 4.)

27. Schieffelin’s (1982) paper is significant both in arguing for a more complex set of distinctions than “initiation” or “no initiation,” as well as in raising the issue of social constraints upon personal choice in institutional homosexual activities. Yet, interpretive
questions remain. Why do Kaluli differ so in both these domains compared with other Plateau groups? One factor may be the nature of Schieffelin’s reconstructed material. Homosexual practices and the bau a complex were gone by the time he worked, the result of several forces, missionaries in particular. One wonders the extent to which Schieffelin’s informants’ accounts were idealized and tended to represent (RH) activities as open to more choice than actually existed. I offer this speculation not so much to criticize Schieffelin’s fine account as to underline the complexities of interpreting all ethnographic reports in this book.

28. Personal communication from a field letter of October 27, 1981, quoted with the author’s permission.

29. The Pharisee reports:

[Government patrol officer:] “They say that if they don’t get rid of their mother’s blood [through initiation rituals] their skin will never become firm.”

[Simpson:] “And in a fighting society such as theirs a man needs to be a full man. Any pansies in the Kuk [ukuku] garden?”

[Patrol Officer:] “Never heard of any homosexuality at all among them—though I don’t say there isn’t. We’ve been here less than two years, don’t forget. There’s still a lot we don’t know” (Simpson 1953:139). How did the Australian folks back home view this sort of popular tripe?

30. In terms of long-term anthropological research. For fascinating accounts of early travels and medical contacts in these areas, see Farquhar and Gajdusek (1981), on Gajdusek’s Anga patrols. Jadran Mimica, a student at the Australian National University, has done anthropological fieldwork nearby, but he has not yet published his findings.

31. Here, as in the other early quotations, we have another example of using vague terms that make ethnographic reports useless. The dictionary defines sodomy as “unnatural sexual relations,” though we may speculate that Blackwood meant homosexual anal intercourse. (How else—through what Pidgin words—would one ad-duce “sodomy”: sitem as?) One’s questions and report must be precise. Again, were one to ask a Sambia or Baruya tribesman (who practice only fellatio) if they engaged in anal intercourse, the honest, and probably indignant, responses would be no.

32. Fischer has not mentioned homosexual activity, though we know he did not see important initiation rites (Fischer 1968:135). As with other cases mentioned above, Fischer should not be misconstrued to mean (RH) is absent. No wonder ethnologists have avoided topics such as sexuality in Melanesia; our literature is such an obstacle course.

33. I shall report elsewhere on these observations.

34. The Sambia, who interact with the South Fore, believe that the latter practice homosexual anal intercourse, but this proves noth-
ing since Sambia fear and hate the South Fore, and also regard anal sex as repulsive. We should remember that many ethnic groups make attributions, usually slurs about other groups, of this sort. However, Graham Scott (personal communication), the linguist, believes that anal coitus may possibly be practiced among the South Fore, and I have it on hearsay from several Fore myself that this is true. But again, these are only stories, and no ethnographer has mentioned (RH) there (e.g., see Lindenbaum 1979).

35. Several years ago a prominent anthropologist colleague who has worked in a Sepik basin tribe told me that he noticed homosexual illicit activities occurring quietly on the periphery of his village. He has never reported this because it is tangential to his research interests. I cannot help but wonder if other instances are not to be found; whether or not they are institutionalized remains open to question.

36. See the quotation below (p. 25) from Godelier, which belongs in this category. Many other examples are to be found in the literature. I would add—though again it is not published anywhere to my knowledge—that heterosexual anal intercourse is said to be acceptable practice in parts of the Sepik.

37. Here is a common example from Mead (1949:106): “When the fear of passivity is also present in the minds of the adults—that is, when homosexuality is recognized in a society, with either approval or disapproval—the fear is exacerbated. The parents begin to pick at the child, to worry about his behavior, to set him trials, or to lament his softness.” Elsewhere Mead’s equation of “homosexuality” with “passivity” and “inversion” was surprisingly consistent (see Mead 1930, 1935, 1949:73, 93, 107, 376, 378). Cf. Mead (1961), for more sophisticated views.

38. Thurnwald (1916) never mentioned homosexual activity among the Banaro, but see Baumann (1955). Nothing conclusive can be said, other than this; however, the 1916 work describes heterosexual activities in association with the magical use of semen, sister exchange, and the use of sacred flutes and spirit impersonations strikingly similar to that of the Keraki, Kimam (Serpenti, chap. 7, below), Kiwai, and others.

39. In a remarkable early passage we find Haddon (1924:vii) arguing: “Thus there seems to be but little doubt that the Tugeri [Marindanim], or at all events one element in the population, migrated down the Strickland branch of the Fly and along the Merauke [Mayo River] to the sea.”

40. Such a historical scenario implies that various groups who, in their social system, resemble Angan groups, may once have had ritualized homosexuality but abandoned it in prehistoric times, at the period of their Austronesian influence. The Elema of the Papuan coast might be an example. But another example which links
the eastern coast of mainland New Guinea with Malekula and New Hebrides is the Finschhafen ritual cults, which impressed Deacon (1925) in their similarity to Malekula (and cf. Balam 1911; Haddon 1936:xxviii; Wirz 1933).

41. Röheim's (1926:324–337 and passim) elaborate speculative diffusions—minus the primal horde fantasy (Röheim: “Papuan degenerate survivals”)—of archaic Malaya-Polynesian migrations into Indonesia, New Guinea, and hence Australia, may be partially vindicated. A landbridge probably traversed the Torres Straits at that time.

42. The explicit references to ritual homosexuality in Australia noted above should be emphasized again here. Of course, we can do no more than point to parallels between Australian and Melanesian systems, for there are many complex differences between these two culture areas. Nothing more can be said on the subject until a modern ethnology of these areas emerges. Will someone please move us beyond this crude state of affairs?

43. Anthropological studies in Melanesia are so uneven that it is difficult to draw up a complete list of the relevant social units, let alone to compare them on particular cultural patterns. Bulmer (1970:93–96) lists 138 ethnographic studies by writers just for Papua New Guinea, whereas Koch (1974:Map 4) lists 86 studies by professional ethnographers for the whole island of New Guinea. The number would be greater now, perhaps as many as 200 accounts, if one included all reports by all writers. But remember, we are dealing with a total universe of some 700 different cultures and 2,000 different languages in New Guinea and Melanesia. The choice of any of these subsets of the total will be arbitrary in one way or another.

44. Given the range of studies in note 43, we may devise these rough statistics: table 1.1 shows 29 distinct cultures definitely reported. (If we include adjacent groups among the Marind-anim, the Anga, and the Fly, the number would rise to about 48.) If our total baseline is 100 Melanesian societies, we have 29 percent; if 200 is selected, we have 15 percent. I would estimate between 10 and 20 percent as a reasonable estimate of frequency, given what we know.

45. Associated factors included cultural values that encouraged resort to violence and blood revenge as a part of public policy; the lack of repressive mechanisms for peacefully resolving wrongs or for inhibiting de-escalation (Koch 1974); and the range of societal scale, cultural rules, and armaments associated with levels of warfare (reviewed in Sillitoe 1978).

46. The general contrast: lowlands head-hunting (and/or cannibalism) versus Highlands war raids (but not head-hunting) holds for New
Guinea, and, moreover, for Highlands Anga versus Lowlands Anga (east of the Vailala River).

47. *Notes and Queries* (1951:109) had it right years ago: “In some societies with a strong military organization or with age-sets, homosexual practices are usual in certain grades before marriage, and are subject to conventional rules. Such temporary associations may not be regarded as detrimental to subsequent normal heterosexual development.”

48. “The worry that boys will not grow up to be men is much more widespread than that girls will not grow up to be women, and in none of these South Sea societies does the latter fear appear at all” (Mead 1949:107). Such beliefs are widespread but not universal in Melanesia (e.g., the Massim). However, I believe that careful study will show systematic Melanesian variations in this belief system, with (RH) groups revealing that most intense form of such ideologies (see P. Brown 1978:155; Herdt 1980).

49. The situation is more complex than this statement suggests, at least among Sambia, but the complexity cannot be examined here. See Dundes’ (1976) and Hage’s (1981) arguments noted below.

50. It is as ethnocentric to deny eroticism among tribal peoples, i.e., reducing their eroticism to customs and rites, as it is ethnocentric to “read” eroticism into situations where none exists.

51. In spite of the great differences between the ancients and Melanesians, this much they share in common: “Homosexual relationships are not exhaustively divisible, in Greek society or in any other, into those which perform an educational function and those which provoke and relieve genital tension. Most relationships of any kind are complex, and the need for bodily contact and orgasm was one ingredient of the complex of needs met by homosexual eros” (Dover 1978:203).

52. Nambikwara call these homosexual relations “the loving lie”; they go on between adolescent boys who are cross-cousins. “That is to say, in which one partner would normally marry the other’s sister and is taking her brother as a provisional substitute” (Lévi-Strauss 1969:307). He argues that the Nambikwara chief’s extra wives support his position symbolically: “They are both the reward and instrument of power” (ibid.:307–308).