

CHAPTER FOUR

Supernumerary Sexes

MARTIN AND VOORHIES

To begin with you must grasp the true nature of mankind and its sufferings. Our nature wasn't originally what it is now. No, it was quite different. First of all, there were three kinds of men, not two as now, the male and the female, but also a third kind combining both. We have the name still, but the thing itself has disappeared. The androgyne, separate in name and nature, partook of man and woman both. But the name is used now only as a reproach. Then also people were shaped like complete spheres. Their backs and sides made a circle. They had four hands, with the same number of legs and two faces—completely the same—on top of a circular neck. These two faces were set on opposite sides of the head, with four ears. And there were two sets of sexual parts, and whatever else one imagines goes along with this arrangement.

They walked around quite upright, just as we do today, but in whichever direction they chose, and whenever they got running fast, it was just like acrobats revolving in a circle—legs straight out and somersaulting! But then they had eight limbs to use for support when they were rolling swiftly around in circles! The three sexes were like this: the male was descended, in the beginning, from the sun, and the female from the earth, and the

SUPERNUMERARY SEXES

85

one that partook of both of them came from the moon, because the moon itself partakes of the natures of those two. So these things were globes themselves, you know, and took after their ancestors in the way they got around. In fact, they had terrific power and energy, were arrogant, and assaulted the gods.

Aristophanes's speech
in Plato's *Symposium*

INTRODUCTION

Aristophanes's discourse, delivered with great bravado at a dinner party described in Plato's *Symposium*, is obviously intended to satirize the improbable theories of pretentious Greek philosophers. While any attempt to investigate the idea of three sexes may align the present writers with those nebulous Greek thinkers, a fair examination of this concept offers a new perspective on human sexual identity.

In previous chapters we have discussed the basis for physical sex differences and sex-linked behaviors in humans. It should be clear by now that many factors interact in the determination of phenotypic sex and gender roles. The previous discussion has nevertheless been implicitly based on the assumption that there are invariably *two* phenotypic sexes and *two* gender statuses in every human society. In this chapter we shall examine whether, in fact, it is correct to assume universal duality of phenotypic sex and gender roles.

The fact that more than two physical sexes can coexist has seldom been recognized by investigators concerned with the interrelationship between physical sex and culture. Social scientists usually assume that human sexual attributes are perceived by all societies as exclusively dichotomous (Edgerton 1964; Trager 1962). According to prevailing thought, people in every society determine a child's sex on an either-or basis, which derives from a judgment about the appearance of the child's genitals. This perception of physical sex as bipolar persists, it is

said, even though a large number of societies are aware that occasionally a person is born with sex organs neither clearly female nor male (Edgerton 1964:1288). Most of the available literature thus gives the impression that physical sex is universally perceived as exclusively dichotomous.

Trager, for example, has published a paper that outlines an analytical framework for the systematic study of all activities pertaining to the broad concept of sex. This framework is explicitly designed as a "systematic map or guide book" for the "anthropologist who would do something anthropological about sex" (Trager 1962:114). According to Trager the starting point for the study of sex in any society is the recognition of the bisexual nature of human populations:

I propose to elaborate the focus I call bisexuality. I hold, with many other present-day anthropological theorists, that culture is firmly rooted in the biological nature of man. And I believe that this biological nature is in essence the fact that man is a mammal and, like nearly all other living things on our earth, is of two sexes. This means that the examination of human biology must be in terms always of the two sexes, that it is through and by virtue of sex that man expresses his biological nature (Trager 1962:115).

We, of course, agree completely with Trager that the reproductive aspect of sex is bipolar and that this aspect pervades human social life. But, in addition, we believe that Trager has underrated the fact that humans infuse their physical sex differences with cultural meaning. Because of this, physical sex differences need not necessarily be perceived as bipolar. It seems possible that human reproductive bisexuality establishes a minimal number of socially recognized physical sexes, but these need not be limited to two.

Before turning to the evidence supporting the argument that more than two physical sexes may be recognized by a society, we must discuss the background upon which this argument is based. The idea that cultural interpretations of sex may vary in

number as well as content seems plausible because of recent studies in anthropology, which demonstrate cross-cultural variation in many types of folk classifications (see Sturtevant 1964).

The growing evidence indicates that environmentally uniform physical elements are classified differently by societies. For example, a color spectrum, which consists of a range of visible light, is probably perceived as having the same color properties by all normal humans (Conklin 1955). The categorization of named color units, however, is highly variable from one society to another. For example, English speakers (Fig. 4-1) recognize six major named categories (purple, blue, green, yellow, orange, and red), whereas Bassa speakers recognize two (*hui* and *ziza*; Gleason 1955:4). Both languages have minor named categories that permit them to make finer color distinctions than is possible with the major categories alone. It is important to recognize that neither of these systems is inherently superior, although either may be more useful for a particular purpose. Gleason (1955:5) illustrates this by citing the shortcomings of English encountered by botanists wishing to generalize about flower colors. The botanists wished to distinguish blues, purples, and purplish-reds from yellows, oranges, and reds. They were forced to coin new technical words since the desired distinction is not made in ordinary English. Bassa speakers, in contrast, would have this particular distinction ready-made in their language.

Variations in folk classifications have been demonstrated for a significant number of cultural domains, in addition to the domain of color. The domains of soils, plants, firewood, diseases, and kin types (Sturtevant 1964), as well as perceptions of historic time (Hudson 1966), have been studied in a few different societies. It seems theoretically possible that the domain of phenotypic sex could also be variously classified by societies.

We readily admit that physical sexual characteristics are much less variable, in an objective sense, than previously studied areas of folk classification. Nevertheless, actual variation does occur. Some individuals are born with genitals that are neither typically male nor female in appearance (see Katchadourian and Lunde 1972:95-97; Money and Ehrhardt 1972 for

discussions of anomalies in the human reproductive system). The estimated frequency of this occurrence in human populations is between 2 and 3 percent (Overzier cited in Edgerton 1964:1289). Intersexes, although rare, apparently occur frequently enough for many societies to be aware of their existence (Edgerton 1964:1289; Ford and Beach 1951:134). It seems possible that the existence of such people could be accepted by a society as indicative of a third sex. This possibility will be examined in the following section.

Purple	Blue	Green	Yellow	Orange	Red	ENGLISH
Hui			Ziza			BASSA

Figure 4-1. Schematic representation of the color spectrum and its classification by English and Bassa speakers.

FOLK CLASSIFICATIONS OF SEX

As we indicated earlier, anthropologists have generally assumed that physical sex is everywhere viewed as dichotomous. This means that there are very few societies for which the classification of sex has been reported. Fortunately, there are available three studies of societies which illustrate some social possibilities in the classification of phenotypic sex. In one of these societies the folk classification of sex has two categories, but there are three categories in the other two.

The Pokot of Kenya (Fig. 4-2) are an example of a society that recognizes two phenotypic sexes (Edgerton 1964). Affiliation with either of these physical classes of sex qualifies an individual for either a masculine or feminine status in that society. The transition from child to adult is heralded by a rite of circumcision. Both gender roles place an emphasis on physical beauty, amorous achievement, and sexual skill.

Edgerton has reported the Pokot's treatment of intersexes. Such individuals, called *sererr*, are considered to be neither male nor female. Their genitals are too underdeveloped to be

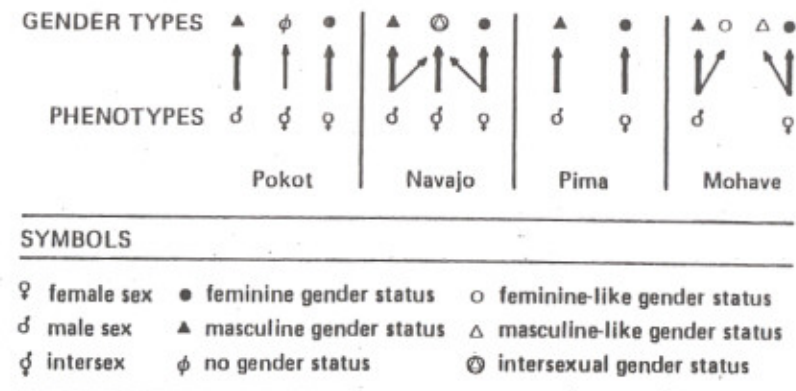


Figure 4-2. Schematic representation of the relationship between categories of biologic sex and those of gender in four societies.

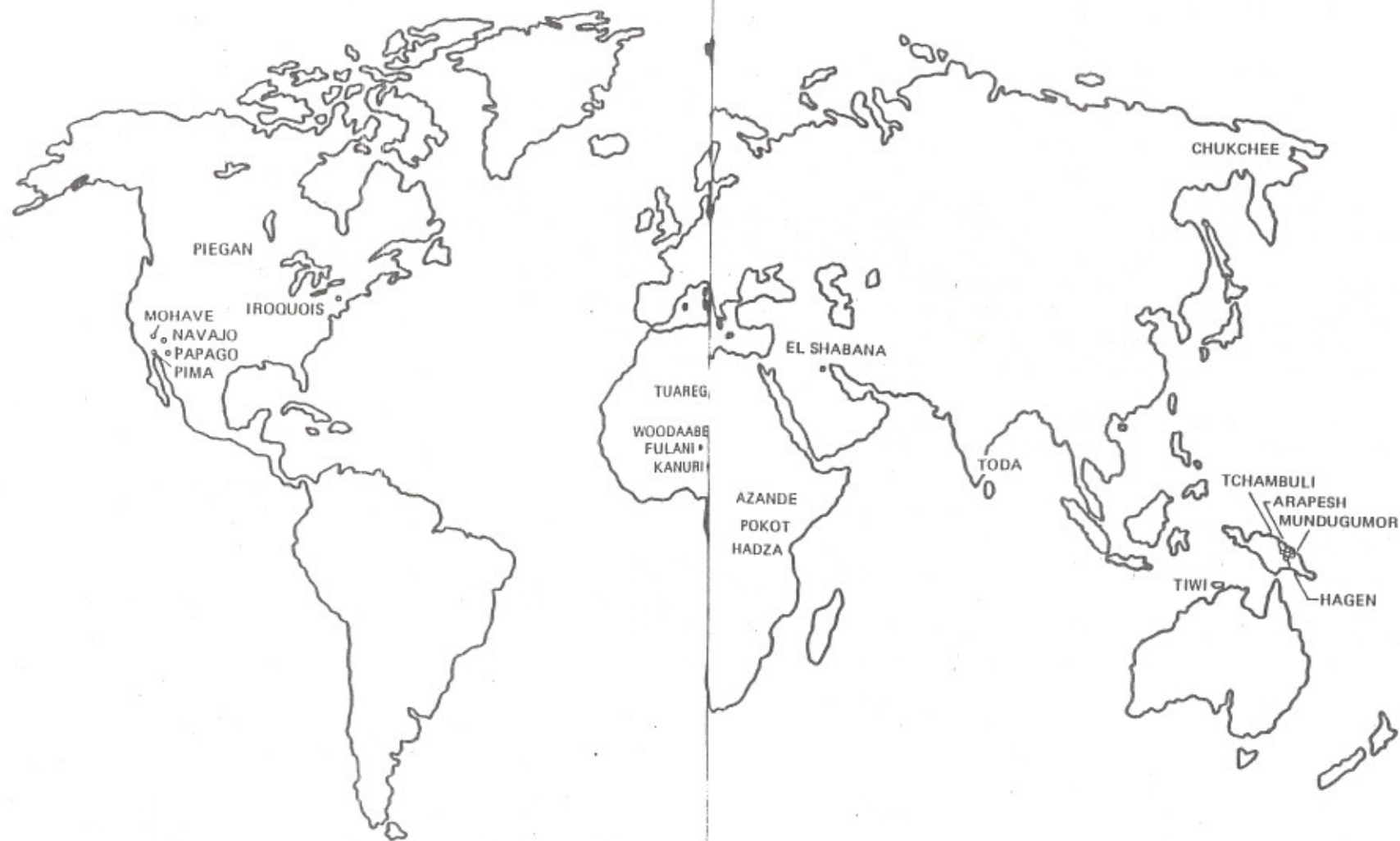
circumcised either in the male or female fashion. A Pokot's failure to be circumcised is equivalent to the denial of any adult gender status.

Some parents respond to the birth of a *sererr* by immediately killing it. This reaction is acceptable among the Pokot, who resort to infanticide whenever a malformed child is born. *Sererr* are thus one type of physical deviant who are diagnosed by that society as defective and undesirable.

Sometimes, however, *sererr* are permitted to live. Surviving *sererr* can never pass as legitimate males or females and their ambiguous condition is public knowledge. They live on the fringes of their society without a mandate for either gender status. Often they win some social approval by excelling in economic activities, yet their lives are ruthlessly limited in other respects.

The Pokot thus recognize two mutually exclusive sexes. The identification with one of these is the primary criterion for the attainment of one of two gender statuses.

The Navajo (Fig. 4-2) react very differently to the birth of an intersex (Hill 1935). Such infants are called *nadle*. "Real *nadle*" are recognized at birth. Their genital appearance sets them



Societies mentioned in text.

apart from either males or females and, in addition, provides them with a clear mandate for a gender status which we can also call *nadle*. This status also contrasts with masculine and feminine statuses.

The gender status of *nadle* is actually composed of two types of people: real *nadle*, and "those who pretend they are *nadle*" (Hill 1935:273). The pretenders are people with either male or female genitals. Hill reports that at the time of his study there was an approximately equal number of male and female *nadle*. These observations indicate that the Navajo have three recognizably different categories for physical sex as well as three gender statuses.

This interpretation of *nadle* as a third gender status is supported by other data provided by Hill. The dress code of the *nadle* is apparently variable, depending on the proclivities of the individual. Some wear either male or female clothing depending on specific circumstances. Hill's data suggest to us that in these cases the *nadle* matches behavior and clothing. That is, a *nadle* will wear women's clothing when doing women's work, male clothing when doing men's work. Real *nadle* are said to prefer the dress of women. Changeability of clothing and allowance for individual preference symbolically reflect the fact that *nadle* can perform the functions and duties of both men and women.

In an economic sense enterprising *nadle* have an advantage over either men or women. They may perform all Navajo tasks except hunting and war, which means their chances of discovering a special skill are enhanced compared with men or women. *Nadle* also have special rights over the personal property of other members of their households. They can even dispose of the private property of their relatives without their permission. Navajo men and women never have these rights.

Hill mentions that in certain respects *nadle* behave and are treated as women. They assume the women's role at dances, are addressed by appropriate female kin terms, and have the social and legal status of a woman, which is greater than that of a man. These circumstances, in addition to the fact that real *nadle* are said to prefer women's clothing, are possibly an example of partial "passing" in a primitive society (see Goffman 1966).

In other respects the status of *nadle* is clearly apart from that of either men or women. For example, these people act as mediators in disputes between a man and a woman, have unusual sexual license, and may marry a spouse of either biologic sex. According to informants, real *nadle* never marry.

The well defined and respected social status of *nadle* is possible because it is sanctioned by social ideology. One important figure in Navajo mythology is *May-des-tizhi*, who is described as having been both man and woman. This mythic person was especially rich and had the responsibility of caring for all paired creatures on earth. During a time in the mythological past when the sexes quarrelled and separated, *May-des-tizhi* was instrumental in tipping the balance in favor of the men because of his/her ability to perform women's tasks (Klah 1942).

There is yet another society that may recognize three sexes, but lack of information makes the issue unclear. The possibility arises in the study of a group of people called *hijarā*, who live in India. These are troupes of entertainers who perform at religious festivals and celebrations in honor of newborn children. The *hijarā* live and work together and each troupe has a territory in which it operates. In Allahabad the troupes have an assembly that formally allocates the individual territories (Opler 1960:507).

Three *hijarā* interviewed by Opler describe themselves as intersexes: they claim all *hijarā* "are born that way" (Opler 1960:506). Although these people wear women's clothing and adopt feminine names they consider themselves neither female nor male. Opler's informants distinguished themselves from female impersonators who wear women's clothing only while entertaining. Thevenot, who wrote in the seventeenth century, noted that hermaphrodites in Surat were forced by authorities to wear men's turbans in addition to their female clothing (Laufer 1920:262).

According to Opler's informants, intersexed children voluntarily join *hijarā* groups after living their earliest years in their own households. They retain only religious affiliations but not caste distinctions when they become *hijarā*. They say that they cannot carry on sexual activities and never marry.

Carstairs (1958:59), in contrast to Opler, reports that *hijarā*

are male prostitutes. This conclusion was reached on the basis of information collected from informants who were not themselves *hijarā*.

The lack of agreement in the literature concerning the genital morphology, social functions, and sexual functions of *hijarā* makes it impossible to accurately assess this situation at the present time. Are some of these people intersexes, as they claim to be? If so, is the condition recognized at birth as a distinct type of sex and thus a validation of the subsequent attainment of *hijarā* status? Or perhaps intersexes are considered malformed individuals who cannot function normally in Indian society and thus are driven together for economic security. Additional research is necessary before these questions can be answered.

Our analysis of folk classifications of sex has been limited to only three societies, perhaps primarily because most field workers have not been sensitive to this type of study. We have learned from this extremely small sample that physical sex can be categorized differently by different social groups. Probably, most societies recognize only two sexes; some recognize more. A minimal number of sexes is thus established by the dichotomous aspect of human sexual reproduction, but sometimes a third sex can be recognized. This can be called supernumerary because it exceeds the minimal number of two physical sexes.

In this discussion we have been careful to separate physical sex from gender status. We have found that, at least among the Navajo, there is a supernumerary gender status that corresponds to the supernumerary sex category. In the following section other examples of supernumerary gender will be discussed.

SUPERNUMERARY GENDERS

Anthropologists have been more attuned to variations in gender than to the classifications of physical sex. Cross-cultural variations in the content of gender, for example, are recognized by almost all anthropologists as proof of the importance of learning in human life. Fewer investigators have been concerned with

variations in the numbers of genders found in each society. Margaret Mead is exceptional in this respect.

All known human societies recognize the anatomic and functional differences between males and females in intricate and complex ways; through insistence on small nuances of behavior in posture, stance, gait, through language, ornamentation and dress, division of labor, legal social status, religious role, etc. In all known societies sexual dimorphism is treated as a major differentiating factor of any human being, of the same order as difference in age, the other universal of the same kind. However, where in contemporary America only two approved sex roles are offered to children in many societies there are more (Mead 1961:1451).

Mead clearly states her view that societies may have more than two sexual statuses. In this same work she continues with a discussion of what she terms "sex careers." In many of these cases the sex careers are so like gender statuses that we feel confident in calling them supernumerary genders.

The supernumerary genders we shall explore here have been selected from the Pima, Mohave, Siouan-speaking Plains Indians, North Piegan, Chukchee, and Azande societies.

The Pima, an American Indian group of the Southwest, apparently recognized two sex phenotypes and two genders in precontact times (Fig. 4-2). The evidence for this comes from a report (Hill 1938:339) on Pima attitudes toward transvestism, which is often practiced by people who take on many behaviors of the contrasex in addition to the clothing change (see Angelino and Shedd 1965). It thus involves the adoption of the gender role not congruent with a person's physical sex. The Pima prohibition against transvestism was therefore a prohibition against gender change.

This absence of Pima transvestism is explained in one of their myths (Hill 1938:339). Transvestites, it is said, originated among the neighboring Papago as a result of a shortage of raw materials in Pima territory. The Pima, finding they lacked mate-

rials for making bows and arrows (symbolic of maleness), requested material from the Papago. The Papago sent two boys to deliver the items, which they carried in net frames (symbolic of femaleness). The boys became transvestites when they returned to Papago country. The Pima did not suffer such a fate.

Pima raised their children in a way that prepared them for their future adult roles. Sexes were separated during early childhood and children were not allowed to play with toys of the opposite sex. If a boy began to adopt behaviors that were considered feminine, he was given a test to determine his future. The boy was put into a brush hut, which contained a bow and arrow, and a basket. The hut was set on fire and the object grasped by the boy as he fled was taken to be symbolic of his future role. If he chose the basket he was destined to become a *wi·kovat*. This can be translated as "like a girl." Such people used mannerisms that were considered feminine, but they had no special status within the society. *Wi·kovats* were ridiculed and treated as inferiors. *Wi·kovats* who committed crimes were treated with special leniency because they were considered "not normal" (Hill 1938:340).

Gender transformations were thus not encouraged by the Pima. Phenotypic males adopted feminine behaviors, but such individuals were believed to be not responsible for their social actions because of their condition. Pima probably considered this condition as a type of mental illness rather than a third gender type.

There is compelling evidence (Devereux 1937) for the existence of two supernumerary gender roles among the Mohave, a group of Indians who lived in California and adjacent states at the time of contact (Fig. 4-2). The two alternate status positions exist for phenotypic females adopting a masculine-like role, and phenotypic males adopting a feminine-like role. They are called *hwame* and *alyha* respectively. The change from a status congruent with phenotypic sex to one contrastive with physical sex is described (Devereux 1937:500) predominately in terms of sexual behavior, but it is clear that homosexual activity per se is not diagnostic of this role change. Sex partners, for example, of people with these supernumerary gender statuses are not considered either *hwame* or *alyha*. The sexual activity of individ-

uals with alternate sex status is clearly a part of the total role change commensurate with that status.

Boys who desire toys and clothing of the opposite sex formally undergo an initiation ceremony which serves the function of legitimatizing change in status. Phenotypic males in the process of becoming *alyha* behave like women during the ceremony and are presented with a bark skirt which they subsequently wear in the manner of women. These boys undergo the *alyha* ceremony in lieu of the male puberty ritual. They therefore do not have their noses pierced and always paint themselves according to the fashion of adult women. They also adopt feminine names.

Phenotypic females apparently undergo a similar ceremonial initiation into their new status of *hwame*. Although some conflicting reports are available (Devereux 1937:508) concerning whether or not such a ceremony existed, they probably result from the fact that the status of *hwame* was collapsing during acculturation to European-derived American society. The *hwame* traditionally wears paint according to male fashion, a breechclout, and adopts a new name. The activities of *hwame* are closely similar to Mohave men. One such individual, described by a Mohave informant, was a good provider who earned a living not only by practicing shamanism, but also by farming and hunting (Devereux 1961:416). *Hwame* are, however, restricted in their role adoption by being ineligible for tribal or war leadership positions (Devereux 1937:502).

The institutionalization of the two supernumerary gender statuses are sufficiently developed so that individuals of each can marry persons of the same phenotypic sex. An *alyha* upon marriage fictively creates first menstrual flow by drawing blood from "her" upper legs. Both husband and "wife" are thus required to observe puberty taboos in the customary fashion. Pregnancy is also acted out in an elaborate fashion. Labor pains, induced by drinking a severely constipating drug, culminate in the birth of a fictitious stillborn child. Stillborn Mohave infants are customarily buried by the mother, so that an *alyha*'s failure to return to "her" home with a living infant is explained in a culturally acceptable manner.

Hwame are able to assume paternity of children quite easily

because of the Mohave belief that intercourse with a pregnant woman can alter the paternity of the child (Devereux 1937:515). They do not observe their own menses but only those of their wives (Devereux 1937:515). Some women are reported to have become *hwame*· after having borne children.

Devereux's study suggests that the status of *hwame*· was regarded as socially less desirable than that of *alyha*·. *Hwame*· had restrictions on their adoption of male leadership roles, whereas no restrictions are mentioned for the *alyha*· role. Girls were discouraged from becoming *hwame*·, and, once the status was accepted, may have had more difficulty in finding spouses than their *alyha*· counterparts.

Validation for the Mohave supernumerary gender statuses is present in their mythology. Devereux cites two accounts, given by an old Mohave informant, which state that "homosexuals" and "transvestites" have been present since the beginning of the world (Devereux 1937:501, 503). The Mohave also believe that in the early periods of the mythical era sexes were undifferentiated. This is particularly significant in view of the fact that "it is a basic principle of the Mohave philosophy of life that everything on earth happens in accordance with rules and precedents dating back to the time of creation" (Devereux 1961:12).

Devereux's outstanding studies do not refer to the fate of Mohave intersexes. There is no available information concerning Mohave attitudes and treatments for this situation. If a phenotypically intersexed child is permitted to live by the Mohave, then theoretically four adult gender positions are open to it. Phenotypically male and female individuals each have a choice of two gender roles, one of which is ascribed at birth. If an individual wishes to renounce that status he or she does so publicly and thus achieves an alternate status position.

The available data make it reasonable to question whether the status positions of *alyha*· and *hwame*· are actually alternate to those of feminine and masculine statuses respectively, or if they are identical to them. In our opinion, the best interpretation is to consider these alternate statuses because, in addition to the different procedure in role assignment, the behaviors appropriate to the *alyha*· and *hwame*· statuses differ from those of

feminine and masculine statuses respectively. These differences relate primarily to sexual activity. In addition, social reaction to people of these alternate gender positions differs from that elicited by others. Such people are the focus of much teasing, especially of a sexual nature. Nevertheless, the statuses of *hwame*· and *alyha*· closely approximate those of Mohave men and women respectively, and they provide a good example of people of different sexes occupying nearly identical gender statuses.

Another example of an achieved supernumerary gender status is that of the *berdache*. The term has been applied widely to certain individuals in aboriginal groups in northern Asia and North America. It is an Anglicized version of the French *bar-dash*, the etymology of which traces back to a Persian word meaning "male prostitute" (Angelino and Shedd 1955:121). It was first applied by early French explorers to individuals who were believed to play passive roles in male homosexual activities. These people did not restrict their unusual behavior to sexual activity; they also dressed and behaved like women. As Kroeber (1940:209-10) pointed out, there is very little reliable information available about the sexual activity of these people. ". . . At any rate, the North American attitude toward the berdache stresses not his erotic life, but his social status; born a male he became accepted as a woman socially" (Kroeber 1940:209-10).

The institution of berdache, because it was so widespread in aboriginal America, must have had different attributes in different societies. Recruitment in general came from two distinct sources: (1) war captives (Angelino and Shedd 1955:122; Lurie 1953:710) and possibly disgraced warriors (Lurie 1953:711); and (2) individuals "chosen" for this role by some supernatural power. These latter recruits tended to be highly proficient in dealing with the supernatural as shamans, and accordingly were highly respected by other members of their communities.

The scattered information available for the berdache is most complete for Plains Indian groups of the Siouan language family. This family includes the Omaha, Crow, Mandan, and Winnebago tribes.

Only meager information is available concerning the phenotypic sex characteristics of berdaches. The Omaha say that a berdache is "indistinguishable from male infants at birth, but as he grows up his weak voice sets him off from other boys" (Lowie 1935:48). This situation could be due either to hormonal malfunction at puberty or to social learning. An individual Crow berdache examined by a doctor was found to be a morphologic male (Holder 1889). It is not possible to determine from available evidence whether intersexes could also become berdaches.

A Plains Indian man often became a berdache after having received a vision (Bowers 1950; Flecher and La Flesche 1905-6:132; Lurie 1953:708). The vision usually involved a female spirit who in some way guided (or tricked) the visionary into contact with objects symbolic of the female role.

In at least some of these societies role transformation included change in clothing style, speech habits, hairstyle (Flecher and La Flesche 1905-6:132), and permitted marriage (Lurie 1953:708). In every case known to us gender transformation also involved spiritualization. All berdaches were shamans who had increased access to the supernatural compared with non-shamans. Lowie (1935:48) notes the Crow berdache's special function in cutting down the first tree for the Sun Dance Lodge. He concludes that berdaches must have been relatively common because of this special task reserved for them.

Simms, who visited the Crow reservation in the early twentieth century, was informed of three people described as "half man and half woman." These people, referred to as "she," were apparently very well off economically by Crow standards. "They are also generally considered to be experts with the needle and the most efficient cooks in the tribe, and they are highly regarded for their many charitable acts" (Simms 1903:580).

Mead refers to berdache as combining the features of role change and ceremonialism. Her view is that the berdache role cannot be fully understood unless both principles of role definition are recognized. A berdache had rights and duties that overlapped with those of women and of shamans. Nevertheless, for each of these three roles the constellation of behavioral traits is unique.

Some alteration of gender role was possible for North Piegan women. The North Piegan are Blackfoot speakers who live in Canada. In their society the masculine role involves aggressive and bold behavior, whereas the feminine role requires submission, kindness, loyalty, decorum, and faithfulness (Lewis 1941:176). The society is male-dominated, and a higher social value is placed on male as compared with female traits. This is also true of most other Plains Indian groups. Lewis (1941:173) states that the North Piegan contrast with other Plains Indians in their emphasis on "ownership, manipulation and disposition of property." This social emphasis on wealth provides an opportunity for women to excel because they are able to accumulate property through inheritance and by means of their own personal endeavors.

Some North Piegan women become *ninauposkitzipxe*, which is translated as manly-hearted women. The manly-hearts are women who share behavioral traits such as aggression, independence, ambition, boldness, and sexuality—traits that contrast strongly with the ideal behavior of the non-manly-hearted women. Moreover, these characteristics are precisely those held to be desirable in men. Lewis makes it clear, however, that the mere presence of these traits is not sufficient for a woman to attain this status. She also must be married, wealthy, mature, and have a high social position.

The behavior of manly-hearts differs from that of other women in property ownership, public deportment, domestic and sex life, and participation in religious affairs. Manly-hearts have more individual wealth than do all other wives. They are industrious workers and excel in both men's and women's tasks. This advantage provides them with considerable economic independence. Because they can be economically self-sufficient, they do not need to immediately remarry if deserted or widowed. They also often earn income by practicing medicine. In public, manly-hearted women, according to one informant, "act as though they were men" (Lewis 1941:180). They talk freely, expressing opinions and disagreements, act at ease, and do not hesitate to make speeches. At dances they choose partners without hesitation. In the home, manly-hearted wives share the decision making with their husbands—a custom not typical of

most Piegan households. Manly-hearts are reported to be sexually more aggressive and demanding than other women, and also to engage in a wide range of sexual activity.

Manly-hearts are particularly important in the Sun Dance ceremony, which is sponsored by individuals who purchase medicine bundles. Any man or woman can make this purchase, but manly-hearts participate more than other women, probably because their personality characteristics are well suited for the responsibility. Also, manly-hearts, who are usually wealthy, are able to afford the bundles.

The role of manly-hearts is clearly different from the gender roles discussed previously. Manly-hearts remain women after achieving their new status, but they are women who act like men in many contexts. Thus the configuration of feminine traits and activities is repudiated by some select women in favor of masculine traits. This decision allows the manly-hearts to gain more respect and responsibility from their community than would be otherwise possible. At the same time they retain many characteristics of their feminine status.

It seems best to consider the North Piegan manly-hearts as having a gender status that combines features of both feminine and masculine statuses in their society. This status is available only to phenotypic women; there is no information regarding status positions, if any, for intersexes. All manly-hearts have previously demonstrated their abilities in the more common feminine role. The change in status is made only by women who possess certain manlike characteristics and are skillful in economic matters.

The Chukchee of Siberia also have a supernumerary gender status, which involves partial as well as total transformation of gender roles. Chukchee of both phenotypic sexes can transform their gender roles. A transformed male is called *yIrka-E-la'ul* (soft-man) or *ñe'učhičä* (similar to a woman), whereas a transformed woman is called *ga'čikičheča* (similar to a man) (Bogoras 1904-9:449). Male transformation is reported as more frequent than the reverse, and consequently this phenomenon is better documented than its female counterpart.

Transformation of gender for phenotypic males has three

levels of intensity. An individual who is transforming may stabilize his behavior at one of these levels and he may or may not later alter his behavior, either to conform with the traditional masculine role or to become more closely congruent with the traditional feminine role. The least intense behavioral change involves hair arrangement, which is simply styled according to female patterns. This is either done during the first stages of shamanistic inspiration or by a sick person for medical reasons. In the latter case the prescription has been given by a shaman with the intention of disguising the patient so that the malintentioned spirits will not recognize him. The data are not explicit on this point, but presumably after all danger is past the prescription is discontinued.

On the second level, a man adopts female clothing. This is also done either as a part of the process of shamanization or for magico-medical purposes. In either case the man can marry, have children, and carry on other traditional masculine activities.

The third stage of transformation is affiliated with shamanization exclusively, and is never prescribed for a patient. This stage involves complete role alteration. Economic tasks, speech characteristics, physical attributes culturally associated with masculinity, personal interests, and sexual activity are all feminized. The transformed shaman will take a male lover and eventually marry. The marriage union resembles that of heterosexual couples in most respects. However, the transformed "wife" is supposed to have a supernatural husband who is the real head of the household. This is an example of a *menage à trois*, in which one of the partners is supernatural. This partner's thoughts are known only to his "wife," who relays them to the mortal husband. Thus, in this type of household the "wife" has the primary voice in decision-making. Name changes do not accompany gender transformation, but many Chukchee men and women have contrasex names. These are given to them by shamans to protect them from evil spirits.

Transformed shamans are considered more powerful than ordinary shamans (Bogoras 1904-9:453). This belief is in accord with a popular folktale that attributes power, wealth, and pres-

tige to a legendary soft-man who triumphed when assaulted by a foreign tribe.

Female transformation is reported as being less frequent than the male counterpart and was never directly witnessed by Bogoras. He was told of a widow with three children who was inspired by the supernatural to become a *ga'člčheča*. Total transformation, including marriage to a young girl, eventually resulted. When the female "husband" wanted children, the couple entered into a mutual marriage agreement with a young man who fathered children with the "wife." The "husband" retained rights of paternity over the family's children.

In Chukchee society phenotypic males have the option of choosing between four gender statuses that are in some ways mutually exclusive. Two of these are mirror images of each other. One, the masculine status, can be replaced by a second status which is much like the feminine one in that society. In addition to gender status reversal, it involves supernatural sanctions so that the transformed individual is also a shaman. The two other statuses involve less complete changes from the behaviors associated with the masculine role. These statuses can also be held for a short time, after which a different gender status can be achieved.

Phenotypic females have at least two gender statuses from which to choose. A woman with a feminine status can adopt an alternate status, which is possibly very much like the masculine status in that society but is simultaneously based on the acceptance of the status of shaman.

The Azande of East Africa traditionally had a custom that allowed the regular alternation of feminine and masculine roles during the lifetimes of certain individuals. The Azande had a chieftom form of political organization—they were governed by a paramount leader. The Azande chief required the attendance of many young men at his court, who functioned as a residential labor force in time of peace and a military force during war (Seligman and Seligman 1932:506). These young men, between the ages of 20 and 35, lived in large houses outside the palace grounds and far from their own homes. The men were not able to marry because eligible females were usually unavailable.

This is because mature, wealthy men—who were permitted to have several wives—would often marry girls just after they were born. Thus young men were separated from their kin groups before the age at which it was socially possible for them to marry. This meant that they were separated from womenfolk, who, of course, provided important economic duties necessary for survival.

The Azande solution to this dilemma was to allow warriors at court to take young boys as wives. These boy-wives fulfilled most of the usual functions of female wives, such as providing food, water carrying, spear carrying, and sexual activities. The boys were addressed as women, were referred to by their individual partners as "my wife" and called them "my husband." Men paid spears for their wives, similar to the custom of providing bride payments for female wives. The bond between a young man and his boy wife was publicly recognized and accepted. When a warrior earned enough wealth to make a second bride payment he obtained a female wife while the boy wife, by then a young man, would assume the role of warrior.

This solution is nicely congruent with other aspects of Azande society. Warriors were able to perform their tasks without simultaneously being responsible for their own personal comforts. Boy wives were indoctrinated into the lives of warriors by witnessing first-hand what such a life was like.

In this example, men, during the course of a normal lifetime, performed first the duties and responsibilities of Azande women and later assumed those of Azande men.

DISCUSSION

One major conclusion that can be drawn from this review of supernumerary sexes is that the relationship between biological sex and social gender categories is neither simple nor direct. The biology of human reproduction requires two anatomically differentiated classes of persons, male and female. As we discussed in chapter 2, however, physical sex differences are the result of highly similar developmental processes. Because of

this, persons can be born with genitalia intermediate in form between male and female types.

Folk classifications of sex demonstrate the various social responses to these attributes of human bodies. Some societies, exemplified by the Pokot, recognize only two phenotypic sexes. Biological identification with one or the other of these is a necessary prerequisite for attaining adult gender status.

Other societies recognize three anatomically distinct sexes. This situation was exemplified by the Navajo and possibly India. The recognition of three sexes permits societies to create a gender status for each of the recognized biological categories.

We do not know how many societies perceive three classes of human sexes. One difficulty is that ethnographers, believing in the immutability of sex types, rarely examine this aspect of their study groups. Initial research has led us to believe that folk classifications that recognize three sexes are found more frequently in Asia than in other areas, but further research is needed.

Some societies that apparently recognize only two phenotypic sexes manage to use the principle of biological sex to generate four rather than two gender statuses. This is done by the social device of allowing cross-sex transformations. Both the Mohave and the Chukchee permit transformations between biological and social sex categories.

The Plains Indian berdache is similar in that phenotypic males were permitted to attain a feminine-like gender status. A reverse option does not seem to have been permitted for Plains Indian females, however. In the case of the berdache and other cross-sex transformations the process of sex change infused the transformed individual with great supernatural power. This device seems to permit a rudimentary form of social ranking in societies that are essentially egalitarian in nature. Ranking is generated by combining principles of sex and religious identity.

The Chukchee, North Piegan, and Azande societies permitted cross-sex transformations that are either partial or reversible. In the Chukchee case these transformations are linked with magico-religious attributes. The Azande and North Piegan cases are more mundane and associated with the segmentary princi-

ple of age. In the Azande case a feminine-like status is permitted for young boys, whereas in the North Piegan situation a masculine-like status is permitted for old women.

In all these cases, however, the lesson is clear. Biological sex is used by societies to build social categories, and human ingenuity permits more elaborations on the biological theme than at first seems possible. We are not yet ready to predict what governs the occurrence of supernumerary sexes in some societies and their absence in others. For the moment it is sufficient to recognize the range of possible variations in sex types and gender types. In the following chapter we shall turn our attention to variations in social roles in animals, which are of course more closely tied to their biological natures than are those of humans. We shall discover that even among these animals variations in the nature, but not the number, of social roles based on sex do occur.