

Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality



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This 1996 collection of essays deals with the ways in which sex and gender are socially organized and conceptually construed in various cultures. Its scope is not limited to a series of cross-cultural issues of sex roles and sexual status but rather encompasses a wide range of sex-related practices and beliefs. Ceremonial virginity in Polynesian ritual androgynism in New Guinea, the valorization of young African bachelors, and fantasies of male self-sufficiency in South American myth are among the subjects discussed. Taken in their totality, these essays demonstrate that cultural notions sexuality and gender are seldom straightforward extrapolations of biological facts but are the outcome of social and cultural processes. The book is not only a compendium of symbolic approaches to gender but is also an important statement of the theoretical directions in anthropological research in this field.

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