

Tawanku:
Intercouple Bonds in a Qolla Village (Peru)

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1. Introduction

Although an interest in human sexual arrangements involving multiple males and multiple females has a venerable history in anthropology, during recent decades this topic has been virtually neglected¹. However, I think that one might confidently expect to witness a resurgence of theoretical concern over group sexual phenomena in the next few years, largely, of course, as a consequence of the widespread emergence of such arrangements in the social life of contemporary America.

While a few examples of multiple male-female bonds which include sexual intercourse are justly renowned – such as wife-lending among the Eskimo and the Chukchee and group marriage among the Kaingang of Brazil – surprisingly little information is available on the subject for other societies. It is quite likely, nevertheless, that other cases can be located. In 1969 BEN WALLACE described a previously unreported spouse-exchange institution among the Pagan Gaddang of the Philippine Islands. It is to be hoped that as more examples are brought forth our understanding of the theoretical problems posed by this type of sexual involvement – in our own society as well as in others – will be enhanced.

The purpose of this paper is to describe *tawanku*, a form of intercouple relationship in existence among the Qolla Indians of the Qollao (Altiplano),

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