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Sambia Sexual Culture: Essays from the Field (Worlds of Desire: The Chicago Series on Sexuality, Gender, and Culture)

Gilbert Herdt

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Few cultures have received as much attention in the study of erotic desire, sexuality, and gender as the Sambia of Papua New Guinea. Here, for the first time, is a collection of groundbreaking essays and a new introduction on the Sambia's sexual culture by the renowned anthropologist Gilbert Herdt.

Over the course of 20 years, Herdt made 13 field trips to live with the Sambia in order to understand sexuality and ritual in the context of warfare and gender segregation. Herdt's essays examine Sambia fetish and fantasy, ritual nose-bleeding, the role of homoerotic insemination, the role of the father and mother in the process of identity formation, and the creation of a "third sex" in nature and culture. He also discusses the representation of homosexuality in cross-cultural literature on premodern societies, arguing that scholars have long viewed desires through the tropes of negative western models. Herdt asks us to reconsider the realities and subjective experiences of desires in their own context, and to rethink how the homoerotic is expressed in radically divergent sexual cultures.

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