

Filipino Keywords Related to Sexuality

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Introduction

This study of sexuality in the Philippines uses keywords in Filipino, the national language. An explanation of the history of Filipino is important to set the context. Filipino was promulgated as the national language in 1935 by President Manuel Quezon, with Tagalog as its base. The choice of Tagalog was not without controversy and opposition. In terms of numbers, it was the country's second most widely spoken language, after Cebuano, which is spoken mainly in the central Philippines. Tagalog, however, was the language used in the capital city, Manila, and adjoining provinces.

Through the years, Filipino has incorporated words from other Philippine languages but it remains largely Tagalog in vocabulary and certainly in grammar and syntax. It is now widely understood in the Philippines, but facility in spoken Filipino still varies. Typically, on national newscasts featuring interviews with people from non-Tagalog areas, interviewees still respond in the local language, with a voice-over giving the Filipino (Tagalog) translation.

One can say Filipino is still a work in progress, but that is slowly becoming accepted as national language. It was therefore important to conduct this study in Filipino keywords, at least as a one of the first steps toward the "back to basics" research for sexuality in Asia.

Methodology

This study of Filipino keywords related to sexuality was conducted through both primary and secondary research. The primary research consisted of interviews and focus group

discussions. The individual interviews involved 20 informants of different socioeconomic status and ages, but all of whom use Tagalog as their first language, using an outline to help probe for terms. There were also four focus group discussions conducted with young (aged 18 to 24) Filipinos, again all of whom use Tagalog as their first language. (See Appendix for demographic information.)

Secondary research consisted of a review of dictionaries, mainly the UP Diksiyonaryong Filipino, compiled by the University of the Philippines and intended as a national language dictionary. I also frequently refer to Panganiban's classic 1973 Filipino dictionary-thesaurus.

Many slang terms emerged in the interviews but as part of secondary research, I also scanned Zorc and San Miguel's 1993 compilation of Tagalog slang.

The secondary research also includes a survey of Filipino movie titles, which are notorious for its many double-entendre. The cinema is an important part of Filipino culture, many of which have had sexuality-related themes over the last 50 years or so. Some of the posters used from the movies have been reproduced here to give a light touch to the study.

Some reflections

This study on sexuality keywords in Filipino has been useful in surfacing: (a) the ways in which Filipinos think of sex and sexuality and (b) the influences or channels through which Filipino sexual cultures are developing.

The keywords show how Filipino sexuality (or sexualities) is deeply embedded in other spheres of life, in a way that has been described by Foucault as *ars erotica*. We find the keywords reflecting the close linkages between food and sex, from perceptions of sexual pleasures being so sublime as to be called *luto ng Diyos*, to sex being a matter of tasting (*tikim*). The term *luto ng Diyos* also shows how embedded sexuality is in the religious

sphere, but with a tension here, simultaneously recognizing sexual pleasure as celestial, and yet seeing sex as dangerous, as the section on virtue and vice will show.

The keywords also show the diverse influences that have shaped the way Filipinos think of sex and sexuality. The many terms from Spanish and English show the colonial imprint, although it is important to break out of the stereotype captured by the phrase “300 years in the convent and 50 years in Hollywood”. The keywords suggest that the Spanish influence was not exactly one of prudery alone, while the American occupation did not necessarily mean liberalism. Today, Filipinos use the English word “liberated” to refer to women who are seen as promiscuous and of “loose” morals; conversely, many Spanish terms are used for the variations on sex, particularly around sexual acts, suggesting that there was more to those “300 years in the convent” than Filipinos might care to admit.

Certainly, a larger linguistics project could be useful, especially to look at the way words have evolved. Francisco de San Antonio’s *Vocabulario Tagalo*, first published in 1624 and one of the earliest extant Tagalog-Spanish dictionaries, was edited and republished in 2000. It is a potentially rich source for the study of sexuality-related words. To give just one example, *titi*, the term used now to mean the “penis”, apparently had a different meaning in the 17th century and this was to be “truly valiant”. Thus, to say *titing tapang* meant to be “valiantly brave” in the 17th century. The semantic change from “valiant” to “penis” do reflect different dimensions of masculinity in Tagalog culture, but without a more thorough study of dictionaries across the centuries, we would not be able to reconstruct the semantic shifts of these keywords.

Another example comes with the term *syoki*, an older word referring to effeminate men, which Zorc and San Miguel say are derived from a replacement of the *lala* in *lalaki* (male) with *syo*, or as a play on the Tagalog *suki* or regular customer. It is more likely, as Manuel (1948) proposes, that *syoki* comes from Hokkien (Minnan) words *syo* and *ki*, meaning “with weak spirit”, which would make sense given the perception of effeminate men as “weak”.

This research project did show how some words can be quite stable in their meanings, as with the basic *lalake* and *babae* (male and female) while others are quite ephemeral. Some of the sexual terms found in Zorc and San Miguel's compilation of Tagalog slang, published in 1993, are no longer in use today, while new ones seem to have emerged and which were not current when Zorc and San Miguel did their study.

The inclusion of keywords gleaned from movie titles show how those words reflect society's battles over sex and sexuality, reflecting attitudes and norms, as well as the challenges to those norms. What can be acted out, what scripts, what photography can be used are all barometers as well of social attitudes. The Philippines has had its share of encounters between the government's censors, filmmakers and the public, the censors often claiming that society is "conservative" (and, in the case of the Philippines, "Christian").

Censorship has led to many bold and creative attempts to depict sexuality. Lamberto Avellana's *Kundiman ng Lahi*, produced in the 1950s, is often said to be the first local film to depict erotic desire, featuring a young village girl dealing with male predators. Her response is mainly one of silent suffering, a far cry from the films today that depict women who not only fight back, but who assert their sexuality.

Even the titles show how film producers find ways to subvert the norm, using euphemisms and metaphors to attract people to watch the film. Ultimately, we find the keywords reflecting as well as shaping society.

1.0 Sex

The English "sex" has evolved through the centuries to mean mainly "sexual intercourse" and "male and female". The word has been borrowed into Filipino, sometimes spelled as *seks*, with similar meanings as the English, the *Diksiyonaryong Filipino* carrying the following entry:

Sex png (Ing) 1: kasarian 2: karat.

(Sex noun (English) 1. gender 2. sexual intercourse

The UP Diksiyonaryong Filipino lists other words derived from sex including sex appeal, sexism, sex maniac, sex object, sexploitation, sexpot, sex symbol, sexual, seksuwal, sexual intercourse, sexy and seksi.

What is important to note here is that unlike English, there are two separate clusters of words to refer to “sexual intercourse” and to the distinctions between male and female.

1.1 Sexual Intercourse (and other sexual activities)

We start out with euphemisms, polite ways of referring to sexual intercourse. These include the English “do” and the Filipino *ano* (“what” or “you know what”). Thus, “Nag-do kami” (We did it) or “Nag-ano kami” (We had “you know what”). The use of *ano* reflects a degree of reluctance to use more explicit terms, although this hesitance is situational: the same person can use *ano* in one instance, for example, when children are around, and use much more direct terms when among adults.

The English-derived word seks (from sex) is used, as in “Nag-seks sila.” (They had sex.) The UP Diksiyonaryong Filipino lists karat as the main entry for sexual intercourse, with synonyms of hindot, coitus, iyot, fuck, kado, kantod, kantot, sekso, sex. The terms kantut and hindut are considered very vulgar, but kantut will often be heard in conversations, sometimes for the shock value. Kantutan, which gives the term a sense of mutuality, is also used often, together with a slang variation where the syllables are transposed to yield totnakan.

Kantut is not listed in Panganiban's 1973 dictionary but there is an entry, *hindot*, described as "up and down movement of the waist in coition". Panganiban lists a Malay word, *enjut*, which means "bob up and down", as a possible cognate.

Manuel (1970) proposes that the suffix "tut" is a prototype Austronesian language term that means "to insert" and that the suffix *hin* might be derived from *hinhinang*, meaning gentle or careful. *Hindut* could therefore mean gentle insertion. Curiously, in a recent TV documentary (*I-witness*) the term *gahasa*, currently used to mean "rape", originally meant to be in a rush. So forced sex could have been "rushed sex" while *hindut*, regular sexual intercourse, was gentle and careful.

Kangkang is a curious term which is defined in dictionaries (Panganiban 1973 and UP Diksiyonaryong Filipino 2003) as the crying sound of dogs and of babies; yet in popular usage, it has come to refer to sexual intercourse, probably linking sex and crying sounds. *Kangkang*, swamp cabbage, sounds so close to *kangkang* that it is sometimes used to describe the settings for impromptu sex, i.e., a plot of land, usually watery, where *kangkang* is grown.



The English "fuck" is used, more by upper-class Filipinos. "Fuck you" is, however, a curse term that has come to be used as well by lower-class Filipinos. The term "fuck", to mean having sex, still refers specifically to the male role, i.e. "I fuck you." A Filipina woman will never say she fucked a male partner.

Sex, pleasure and God

A rather intriguing term used by lower-income Filipinos to refer to sex is *luto ng Diyos*, which means God's cooking. As one informant explains, "Ang sarap kasi. . ." (It is so very pleasurable. . .), the pleasure presumably so sublime only God could have created it. The term seems to be more commonly used by middle- and low-income groups, and sometimes shocks people because it seems to border on blasphemy, considering the way sex is seen as so "sacred" that it should not be associated with religion.

But the term should not be surprising considering the close association between eating and sex is found in many cultures. In the Philippines, the term “tikim” (to taste) is used to refer to sex, especially first sex.

I will return to a discussion of sexual pleasure in the section (3.2) on sexuality.

The reproductive imperative

The Philippines has one of the lowest contraceptive prevalence rates in Asia, at 49% of women of reproductive age. The reproductive function of sex is still emphasized. Almost playfully, lovers and spouses will invite each other: “*Gawa tayo baby*” (Let’s make a baby), reflecting the importance of reproduction.

A variation, still playful and still playing on the reproductive imperative, is “Magbundatan tayo”, derived from the root word “bundat” which means a big belly. It is used more often to refer to a beer belly, but when it is transformed to a verb, it literally means “Let’s do something to make you (the woman) have a big belly”, in other words, “Let’s get you pregnant.”

Power, Force and Objectification

In everyday conversations, males will use words like banat and tira, both words meaning “to hit”. The male forcefulness extends into the use of the word putok (explosion) to refer to an ejaculation. A less explosive term is *lalabas na* which means “to exit”. (Bahasa Indonesia uses the term “Aku keluar”, which is similar, sometimes translated to mean “to leave”, and which is contrasted to the English “to come”. Actually, “labas” and “keluar” could also be translated as “coming out”.)

The power connotations of sex are captured by the term *yari*, sometimes used to refer to sex. Curiously, Panganiban (1973:1025-1026) did not include a sexual meaning for *yari* in his dictionary. Instead, he defined *yari* to mean “finished, completed”. In contemporary usage, “*Yari na!*” still carries that meaning of completion, but it can also mean “I’m finished with sex” as well as “You’re screwed.”

“*Nangyari*” also means “to happen”, with the connotations of completion. One anthropologist, Teresa Dagdag, did her doctoral dissertation on sex among young people, and entitled it “*May Nangyari Na!*” (Something has happened).

Yari is the root word for *kapangyarihan* or power; in other words, *yari* is the power to complete something. Sex as *yari* is therefore a concept heavily laden with connotations of power.

Note how so many of the words used to describe sex are from the male perspective, of a man doing something to the woman. Some of the more powerful terms that objectify women are:

Galaw: to move. This is also used to refer to what men do to women. “*Nagalaw na*” refers to a woman who has had sexual experience, but notice how the agency is shifted toward the male, i.e., a woman’s experience is tied to a man’s act. There are negative connotations to the use of this term, insinuating the loss of virginity or chastity.

Kakarnihin (to make meat). *Karne* is the Spanish-Filipino term for meat. Risa Jopson, one of our informants, says it is used to refer to “vigorous sex without emotional investment, as in *kakarnihin ko lang*.”

Sibak, biyak: to split or to cut in half, a male description of sex with a woman. “*Gusto kong sibakin yan*” (I want to split her.)

Gamit: to use. Men will say “Ginamit ko ang misis ko” (I used my Misis) while women will say “Ginamit ako ng mister ko” (I was used by my Mister). So common is this word that even gynecologists use it when they take a case history of their patients, for example, “Misis, kelan ka bang huling ginamit ng mister mo?” (When was the last time your Mister used you?)

A man will never say he was “used” by his female partner, but the term is now sometimes used by male sex workers to refer to sex with clients, i.e., they were “used” by their customers. The power relations are clearly reflected here.

Agrarian metaphors

Araro: To plow. Agrarian metaphors can be found in Filipino terms related to sex and sexuality. Pag-araro, to plow, is used to describe a male having sexual intercourse with a female.

Agrarian metaphors are found throughout the world and in different historical periods. Fissell (2002) cites 17th century childbearing guides in England which describe the processes of reproduction in agrarian terms, an example being: “The Yard (the penis) is as it were the Plow wherewith the ground is tilled, and made fit for reproduction.”

Other agrarian metaphors that can be cited include: pagdidilig (to water plants, again used to refer to males having sexual intercourse with a female, with the counterpart magpapadilig, to be watered, to refer to the woman having sex), bayo (to use a mortar in pounding rice, to mean masturbation). Not to have sex for a prolonged period of time is described by women as being tigang (parched) or uhaw (thirsty). Again, the terms are applied to women in a passive sense, waiting to be watered.

Sex acts, sex positions

There are many other terms used to refer to the varieties of sex acts and sex positions, e.g., blow job and tsupa (from the Spanish chupa, to suck) for fellatio; brocha (from the Spanish brocha, a brush) for cunnulinglus; “69” for simultaneous fellatio and cunnulinglus. A male rear entry position for penile-vaginal sex is described as “dog style”, which some women will describe this position as demeaning, associated with prostitution.

Terms for anal intercourse seem to come from gay slang, including “an-an” (a play on anal), uring (origins unknown). The term kantut, for sex, can also be used to refer to this position.

Gay slang has also contributed terms like “to sing” meaning to give oral sex and “to dance”, to have anal intercourse. Note that the penis is also referred to, in gay slang, as nota, or a note, and that giving oral sex to someone with a long penis is sometimes described as “singing high notes”.

Other variations on sexual positions are described with English terms such as helicopter, kangaroo, wheelbarrow.

There are various terms for masturbation: bati, bayo, jakol. There are, again, agrarian influences for some of these terms, bayo being the term used for winnowing rice, taken from the similarities between holding a pestle and moving it up and down, with masturbation. Bati, on the other hand, brings back the food and sex connection, referring to the churning motion used to beat milk, eggs or chocolate.

The concept of female masturbation is not widely recognized, but those who do will use the English term “finger”, as in “Nag finger siya” (She fingered [herself].)

1.2 Genitalia and Reproductive Organs

A generic term for male and female genitalia is *ari*, which means “possessions”.

The standard terms for the genitalia are:

Titi, burat for penis

bayag for the scrotum (from which the term Bayag-ra was coined as a play on Viagra)

puki, kiki, pekpek for the vagina

tinggil for the clitoris

It is not usually considered polite to use these Tagalog terms in general conversations. English terms such as “penis” and “vagina” are more acceptable, reflecting the colonial heritage where local languages were devalued as vulgar and of the lower classes. Even English terms will have varying degrees of acceptability in polite conversations and generally, Filipinos will use the English term “the organ” to refer to the genitalia.

Many metaphors have been coined to refer to the genitalia. The metaphors for male genitalia can be broadly classified into the following categories:

- a) Those with connotations of weaponry, e.g., kanyon (cannon), baston (cane), batuta (stick used by the police);
- b) Those taken from food terms, with phallic shapes. The most popular are saging (bananas), talong (eggplant) and hot dog. The use of food metaphors should not be surprising considering how sex and eating are so intertwined.
- c) Animals, mainly the generic ibon (birds), ahas (snakes). The usage here is flexible and playful, such as references to the anaconda to refer to a large penis.
- d) Those with connotations of a little boy, as in totoy (a young boy) and pototoy (extension of totoy).

e) Names. *Manoy* is one of many playful, sometimes affectionate, terms for the penis, as is Pedro, the local version of Peter (also used in American slang). Why Peter is chosen rather than Kardo as in Dick, is a matter for conjecture.

Large penises are also described more specifically with terms like *tarugo*, a large wooden peg. The gay slang words *dako* (from the Cebuano *dako*, large) has also been mutated to *dakota* to refer to a large penis.

The terms for female genitalia fall into the following categories:

- a) Flower. No specific flowers are named, although it is interesting that the term *pukinggan* (like a *puki*) is used for a particular plant with flowers that do resemble the vagina. Its scientific name, *Clitorea ternate*, shows that botanists also noted the morphological similarity.
- b) Food. The range of food items used as metaphors for female genitalia is much wider than that of males. There are pastries such as monay and bibingka (rice cake), quekiam (Chinese food made from meat), seafood (talaba), peanuts (mani to refer to the clitoris). Most of these terms suggest the form of the vagina, except for quekiam, which may be a play on the sound of “kiki”.

Using the term *puki* is considered to be more vulgar than *titi*, with the former term often used as a curse word, or as an exclamatory remark, as when one is startled (Ay *puki!*).

Ensler’s “Vagina Monologues” inspired local playwrights to weave in “densensitization” segments into plays. The Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA)’s play, *Libby Manaog Files*, was revolutionary in using the term liberally on the stage.

Genital Folklore

References to the genitalia are often incorporated into jokes and into folklore, including riddles, puns, ditties, even children's rhymes (for example, *pulis pulis, titi mong matulis*, which means Police, police, with a pointed penis).

Felipe Jocano, Jr., one of my graduate students and a faculty member of the anthropology department, shared some sexual ditties from his high school Citizen's Army Training in a paper he submitted for a course in anthropological linguistics.

Two stanzas from *Ang Sapatos ni Sion* (Sion's Shoes) shows the sexual innuendos around genitalia:

Ang sapatos ni Sion
Ooh wah ooh,
Lagyan yan ng biton,
Ooh wah ooh,
Titibay yon, titibay yon,
Ang sapatos ni Sion.

Ang sapatos ni Sion
Ooh wah ooh,
Lagyan yan ng biton,
Ooh wah ooh,
Kikinis yon, kikinis yon
Ang sapatos ni Sion

The ditty talks about strengthening Sion's shoes by using biton or shoe polisher, but goes on to use the penis and the vagina as puns. "*Titibay yon, titibay yon*" translates as "it (the shoes) will be strengthened" but also sounds like "*titi ba yon? Titi ba yon?*" (is that a

penis, is that a penis?) Correspondingly, “*kikinis yon, kikinis yon*” can mean “it becomes smoother” or “is that the vagina? Is that the vagina?)

Such punning songs allow Filipinos to transgress borders on what is acceptable public behavior. From a town in Quezon province, one undergraduate student from the University of the Philippines documented several *loa* with ribald sexual themes. Again showing the breach between the sacred and the profane, the *loa* originally meant a religious song. Two samples of *loa* from that Quezon town follow:

Ang sabi ng iba, masarap ang patis,
Ang sabi ko naman, kumporme sa patis,
May patis-patisan, may tunay na patis,
Ang gusto kong patis, yaong nakakabuntis.

(Some say fish sauce tastes good
I say it depends on the fish sauce,
There’s fake fish sauce, there’s real fish sauce,
The fish sauce I want is the one that makes someone pregnant.)

Ang sabi ng iba, masarap ang gata,
Ang sabi ko naman, kumporme sa gata,
May gata-gataan, may tunay na gata,
Ang gusto kong gata, yaong nagiging bata.

(Some say coconut milk is good,
I say it depends on the coconut milk,
There’s fake coconut sauce, there’s real coconut milk,
The coconut milk I want, is the one that becomes a child.)

These songs are composed and sung by elderly women, sometimes with elderly men, during weddings, and are clearly intended to tease the newly weds, as well as to desensitize them to sexual matters.

Note the similarity in the Tagalog *loa* cited above with this one from Cuyonon, submitted by Aldrin Lee, a member of the linguistics faculty at the University of the Philippines, also for a class in anthropological linguistics:

Dutu sa amen sa Bisukay
Aku mi manuk na bukay
Maglabas si Lang Kikay
Intusik anang bilalay. . .

Trala la la

Tagalog translation:

Doon sa amin sa Bisucay
Mayroon akong manok na puti
Noong dumaan si Lola Kikay
Tinuka ang kanyang pwerta. . .

English translation:

Over at Bisucay
I had a white chicken
When Lola Kikay passed by
It (the chicken) pecked at her vagina.

Such sexual folklore contradict the stereotypes of a conservative Filipino. The naughty aspects of folk culture are not limited to such songs. In May 2006, GMA-7, one of the television networks, got into trouble when they featured a documentary “Hindi Ito Bastos: Lolas with Phalluses”, featuring elderly women in the town of Kalayaan, Quezon,

who would dance at weddings with wooden penises, accompanied by ribald songs and actions, with attempts to get the new bride to hold the dildos. The television production unit was suspended for a week for allegedly featuring “frontal nudity” and “masturbation”.

Supot

We should look at the word “supot” (paper bag) used to refer to an uncircumcised penis. To be “supot” is to be the object of ridicule and derision. An uncircumcised male is believed to be physically weak and unable to produce children. Thus, when someone is playing basketball and is unable to shoot a ball, people will shout, “Supot!”, insinuating that this comes from weakness, and the weakness from being uncircumcised.

Being “supot” also carries notions of being unclean. Peers will tease an uncircumcised man by wrinkling their noses when he passes by, to insinuate that being uncut, he smells from accumulation of smegma.

Breasts

Breasts are highly eroticized in the Philippines. “Suso” tends to be non-sexual, with an emphasis on the breastfeeding functions, but note that “susos” also means to suck, which can be sexual as in sucking a penis. The more common term used for breasts is the English “boobs”. [The Online Etymology Dictionary has this entry for boobs: breasts, "1929, U.S. slang, probably from much older term boobies (late 17c.), related to 17c. bubby, perhaps ultimately from L. puppa, literally, "little girl," hence, in child-talk, "breast" (cf. O.Fr. pope, popel "breast," Ger. dial. Bubbi, etc.).]

So eroticized are the breasts that tabloids are typically described as dishing out a fare of “crime and cleavage”, referring to the crime stories and photographs of women showing their breasts.

Breasts also figure strongly in the construction of the transgender category bakla, and bakla-ness. A bakla is anatomically male, but many are able to recreate themselves by taking the female hormone estrogen (usually through contraceptive pills), which leads to some enlargement of the breasts. Having the breasts makes the bakla like a woman (*parang babae*), including expectations of enhanced desirability from lalake or men. It's interesting that estrogen may actually decrease the libido, yet the bakla interviewed for this report see this diminished sexual libido as part of becoming more "female", given the tendency to desexualize the "decent" woman in the Philippines. (See the discussions below on lust.)

The Uterus

There are few indigenous terms for the internal reproductive organs; in fact, these seem limited to the uterus: *bahay-bata* (literally house of the child), *sinapupunan* (womb) or *matris* (from the Spanish *matriz*) and *ovario* for the ovaries.

The uterus is the focus of a cluster of folk beliefs, such as the idea that a woman's inability to bear a child may be due to a problematic positioning of the uterus. Women are generally advised not to carry heavy things because the uterus will descend (*bababa ang matris*), endangering fertility. The folk belief is widespread and women will avoid carrying heavy objects; yet no one protests when women have to carry babies and toddlers.

Gay men will also invoke a symbolic uterus as a marker of their own sexuality, as in the way they claim to be able to detect another gay man: "*naaamoy ko ang matris niya*" (I can smell his uterus.)

Genitals as Metaphors

If metaphors are used for the genitals, we shouldn't forget that the genitals themselves can become metaphors, for example, to say someone is *walang bayag* is to suggest

cowardice, as in the English “no balls”. Curiously, in Tagalog, cowardice can also be described in terms of “puting bayag” (white balls), its origins now obscured but one is tempted to trace this to either the Spanish or American colonial period, where the white colonialists may have been the source of this derogatory metaphor.

Burat, the penis, can also be used as an adjective to mean “being upset”. It is not clear how the penis becomes a metaphor for being upset but other languages yield similar negative connotations, as in “what a prick!” in English, to mean a person who is disliked.

Ephemeral Slang

The slang terms for genitalia are ephemeral, constantly changing. The penis, for example, is constantly being rechristened, recently coined words to include “Bogart” and “Tweety Bird”. These frequent changes reflect how the genitalia are in fact a major cultural focus, taken seriously as well as whimsically, glorified as well as trivialized.

2.0 Gender and Gender Categories

Philippine Daily Inquirer movie columnist Dolly Ann Carvajal recently wrote about a new movie, “Twilight Dancers” (“Dollywood”, July 20, 2006) where several gender categories are captured in one paragraph:

Now, Brillante Mendoza’s Centerstage Productions. . . is doing “Twilight Dancers” for Toronto this September. Startruck Year One Avenger Tyron Perez plays Dwight, star dancer of the gay bar row. Also in the cast are Cherrie Pie Picache as the manipulative Madam Loca, Joel Lamangan as the gay politician Mayor Manibog, William Martinez as the macho gay Bruno and Arnel Ignacio as the gay bar floor manager Taurus. I keep teasing William (my first BF) that from Pabling (a film), he now plays a bading!. . . Direk Joel has no qualms about playing a drag queen. . .

Gay. Macho gay. Bading. What’s what in here?

In all cultures gender is fluid and flexible, the categories constantly being redefined together with social ascriptions and expectations, prescriptions and prohibitions. The English term “gender” has itself gone through several transformations (see Foreword).

The Filipino term “kasarian” has been used to mean “sex” and “gender” but is more accurately translated mainly as “sex” in terms of a male-female dichotomy.

The English term “gender” itself has been incorporated into middle- and upper-class conversations, but is often associated with women’s issues. The term is widely used because gender sensitivity training (GST) has become standard in many government and non-government offices. There are, however, varying degrees of acceptance of these campaigns for gender sensitivity. People will sometimes duplicate the term, gender-gender or pa-gender-gender, to insinuate a degree of mockery or tongue-in-cheek attitudes toward gender sensitivity training.

As in western countries, the term gender is sometimes confused with sexual orientation. For example, in the Philippines workshops on gender and sexuality will often name local gender categories as “lalake”, “babae”, “bakla”, “tomboy” and “silahis”, and then translate these into “men”, “women”, “gay”, “lesbian” and “bisexual”, the first two categories implicitly assumed to be heterosexual.

But closer analysis of each of the terms will show that they involve more than sexual orientation, sometimes even contradicting the English or western definitions. “Lalake” for example does not necessarily mean a male heterosexual in the Philippines, in the sense of a man who has sex only with women. Many “lalake” will have sex, even long-term relationships with a “bakla” and yet not see himself as homosexual. Yet using definitions from western psychology, such a “lalake” would be considered “gay”, “homosexual”, or by translation, “bakla”.

Ask that “lalake”, however, about his identity and he will often protest, vigorously, that he is not “bakla”. As will be described later, a “bakla” is defined mainly as a male taking

on behavior – from clothing to hand movements – that are seen as feminine. Sexual orientation is often thrown into the definition, but is not the only criterion for the label “bakla”.

To discuss gender categories in the Philippines, it will be useful to refer to the more commonly accepted terms lalake, bababae, bakla, tibo and analyze the way they are defined in the Diksiyonaryong Pilipino (2001):

Ba-ba-e. png. 1: tumutukoy sa sex na may kakayahang magbuntis at manganak. Var babai, babaye, babayi, bayi. Cf ALE, BINIBINI, DALAGA: BEBAY, BII, DAME, FEMALE, LAHIGNIT, PARAMPOAN. 2. Zoo. Sa hayop, may kakayahang magbuntis o mangitlog. 3: Bot. sa halaman, nagtataglag ng estrukturang pangreproduksiyon na may elementong nagdudulot ng binhi. 3: Mek idinisenyo upang lumapat sa bahaging lalaki.

Ba-ba-e. noun. 1. refers to the sex that has the capability of becoming pregnant and having children. Varieties: babai, babaye, babayi, bayi. Cf ALE, BINIBINI, DALAGA: BEBAY, BII, DAME, FEMALE, LAHIGNIT, PARAMPOAN. 2. Zoology. Among animals, having the ability to become pregnant or to lay eggs. 3. Botany. In plants, refers to the reproductive structures that have. . . seeds. 3. Mechanics. Designed to fit the male part.

Bak-la. Png. 1. lalaking parang babae ang kilos at pananalita: BINABAE. 2: lalaking nagkakagusto, umiibig, at nakikipagtalik sa kapuwa lalaki: AGI, AGINGING, BADAP, BADING, BANTUT, BAYOT, GAY, HOMOSEXUAL, PONCE, QUEEN, SWORD.

Bak-la. Noun. 1. a male whose movements and speech are like those of a female: BINABAE. 2: a male who likes, loves, has sex with other males: (Terms from other languages used in the Philippines: AGI, AGINGING, BADAP, BADING, BANTUT, BAYOT, GAY, HOMOSEXUAL, PONCE, QUEEN, SWORD)

La-la-ki pnr (Bik Kap Hil Iba Ilk Pan Seb Tag War] Tumutukoy sa sex na nakakabuntis o nakakapagdulot ng bunga sa pamamagitan ng pertilisasyon o inseminasyon 2: sa halaman, nagtataglag lamang ng bulaklak na hindi nagdudulot ng bunga o binhi 3: idisinseyo upang lumapat sa bahaging babae 4: nauugnay sa pormal o aktibong prinsipyo ng kosmos Cf BABAE: LOGI 5: Kol kaapid ng babae.

La-la-ki (Bikol Kapampangan Hiligaynon Ibanag Ilokano Pangasinan Sebuano Tagalog Waray] 1. Refers to the sex that can make one pregnant or which produces fruit through fertilization or insemination. 2: in plants, need translation! sa halaman, nagtataglag lamang ng bulaklak na hindi nagdudulot ng bunga o binhi 3: designed for a fit with the female part. 4: refers to the formal or active principle of the cosmos. Cf BABAE: LOGI 5: Colloquial. kaapid ng babae.

Tom-boy png (Ing): babae na umaasatang lalaki. Cf lesbian.

Tom-boy. Noun (English): a woman who. . .males. Cf lesbian.

Lesbian (les-byan) png, pnr (Ing) 1: babae na homosexual 2: babae na may relasyon sa kapuwa babae: DYKE, TOMBOY.

Lesbian (les-byan) noun. pnr (Ing) 1: a female homosexual 2: a female who has a relationship with another female: DYKE, TOMBOY.

Inversion

The definitions clearly show how Filipino concepts of gender are biologically based, related to roles in reproduction. The terms are also relational, male to female for example, as in the fit of mechanical parts.

The definitions keep going back to a biological dichotomy of a male and female; thus, the bakla is still a “male who is like a female in movements and in speech”. Both “tomboy” and “bakla” center on “inversion”, in the sense of a male taking on female mannerisms, way of dressing and of a female taking on male. . .

Note that sexual orientation does not figure explicitly in the UP Diksiyonaryong Filipino’s definitions, except in a naturalistic, essential way (eg a male is designed to “fit” with a female and vice-versa). The definition of “tomboy” has no reference at all to sexual orientation, with readers referred instead to “lesbian” as the more specific category with sexual orientation.

The dictionary definitions are also useful indicators as to what society recognizes. Note the invisibility of the lesbian in language, the terms used coming from English, as in tomboy, lesbian and lesbiana.

Local gender categories refer more to gender inversion and the social responses elicited. A bakla, for example, often describes himself as someone with “pusong babae” or a woman’s heart. Bakla has been described as being derived from “babae” and “lalake”

but in the 19th century, as used in the novel *Florante at Laura*, “pabakla bakla” meant to be indecisive. The inversion therefore comes to connote ambiguity. “Alanganin” (uncertainty) is in fact sometimes used to refer to a bakla.

A slang word for lesbians, *tibo*, is defined in *UP Diksiyonaryong Filipino* as “matalim at matulis na organ ng ilang kulisap, gaya ng bubuyog o ilang uri ng isda, at ginagamit bilang proteksiyon” (a sharp or pointed organ in insects, such as the bee, and in some species of fish, used as protection).

There could be connotations here for a “masculinized” female, described in terms of being more assertive or aggressive. The imagery here is not always taken negatively. For example, there is the stereotyped Waray woman, supposedly tomboyish. A film by that name was a box-office hit in the 1950s, starring popular movie stars Nida Blanca and Nestor de Villa. Nida Blanca plays a feisty Waray girl who comes to the city to work. The photograph below captures the tomboy in the Waray. This particular scene has the Manila household looking at her, with a young boy asking: “Babae ba ‘yan?” (Is that a girl?)



"Babae ba 'yan?"

These categories are fraught with semantic “tension” because they reflect social changes that cultures may not always be prepared for. For example, the term “macho gay” has

emerged in recent years to refer to a homosexual who is “not obvious”, sometimes differentiated from “bakla”. A “macho gay” will protest if he is called “bakla”, yet in the company of other “macho gays”, it may be acceptable to call each other “bakla”, even “sister”, said in jest.

Much of the confusion and tensions around gender categories come about in relation to visibility and disclosure, which is discussed separately (see Section 3.1 under Sexuality).

Chicks and sexism

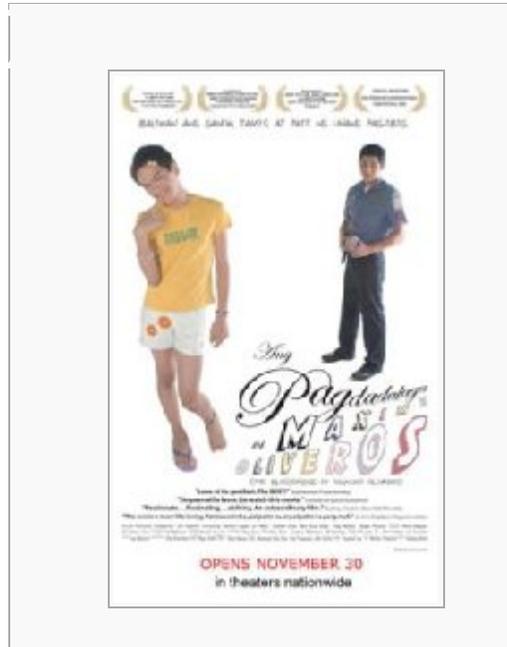
Slang words sometimes become keywords in the sense that they reflect how sexist norms can persist. The term “chicks” was borrowed, perhaps in the 1960s, from American slang to refer to women, particularly younger ones. As in the United States, the term is sometimes resented by women, seen as sexist, but its use has persisted through the years in the Philippines, testifying to how oblivious language can be to changing norms. In fact, “chicks” has even evolved in the Philippines to produce “chick-boy”, referring to a man who is constantly chasing after women.

Evolving times, evolving terms

Gender slang terms change constantly, sometimes responding to the visibility or invisibility of particular groups, and the need for some degree of “secret” coding. *Bianing* is sometimes used to refer to lesbians, an abbreviation of *lesbiana*. While bakla has remained in use for many years, synonyms and have come and gone: *biniboy* (possibly from *binibini*, for “Miss” and “boy”) in the 1950s and 1960s, *sward* in the 1970s and 1980s.

The term “tsiksilog” is now sometimes heard, derived from the words “tsiks” (chicks, to refer to women) and “itlog” (eggs). Tsiksilog therefore means women with eggs, the eggs being a metaphor for the testicles. The term is used to refer mainly to male transvestite sex workers who dress up as women, sometimes in a way that it is so

convincing that men are deceived. The term is also a play on a popular breakfast called “tapsilog” (tapa or dried meat, with itlog, or fried eggs).



In recent years, the term “baklita” has come into use to refer to very young, sometimes even pre-pubescent boys who publicly cross-dress, wear make-up, in other words act out the role of a “little bakla” (thus baklita). The baklita caught the national imagination with a recent film, “Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros” about one of these baklita, “pagdadalaga” referring to his coming of age, one that is accompanied by a crush on a local policeman.

The film, a comedy with a bit of drama, helped to focus some public attention on the baklita, with producers taking pains to clarify it was not a “gay” film. In a way, the producers were right because the film does bring out an aspect of sexuality that is not discussed often enough, and this is the emergence of sexual attraction, one that often occurs even before physical puberty.

The baklita phenomenon is mainly found in urban poor communities and reminds us that popular sexuality, in this case urban poor gendered sexuality, may be less restrictive than those of the upper classes. It is almost unthinkable for a baklita to roam the streets of

upper class subdivisions as they do urban poor communities, in semi-drag and with make-up.

3.0 SEXUALITY

The English term “sexuality” and the Spanish-derived “seksualidad” are used, but more often in academic discussions. Seksualidad is, however, a weak term that fails to describes the much more colorful sexualities in popular culture. Several clusters have been identified for discussion here: (a) lust, (b) pleasure, (c) appeal, (d) identities, (e) virility and performance, (f) virtue and vice. These six clusters are drawn out of the interviews, in a way representing dominant themes in the discourse around sex, gender and, ultimately, sexuality.

3. 1 LUST AND DESIRE

Discourse around sex and sexuality strongly revolve around lust and desire, with the ambivalence that we have seen in relation to sex itself. *Libog* is the most frequently used term to refer to lust, sometimes abbreviated to “l” (pronounced “el). “Pagnanasa” is sometimes used to mean “desire” but this term can be used for non-sexual yearnings as well.

Libog is lust, the sex drive. Malibog is to be lustful, to be horny. In Cebuano, nalibog means to become confused. It is tempting to speculate if at one time libog might have captured both concepts of lust and confusion.

Libog is gendered. A man will boast about being malibog, but a woman would not. A man also uses the term “nakaraos” (relieved) to refer to satiated lust more often than a woman would.

As with males in many other cultures, Filipinos are subject to performance anxiety, often excessively concerned about the ability to have an erection and, sadly, a resignation to declining performance with age. Eventually, sometimes as early as the 40s, it is presumed that the penis will no longer be able to wake up: *laging tulog* (always asleep), as opposed to *laging gising* (always awake) or *laging handa* (always ready). The close connection of sex to reproduction is also captured in the way *baog* is used to refer to both impotence and to infertility. (Medically speaking, the two are different: one can be impotent and yet be fertile, and one can be “potent” [the English term bears analysis too] and yet infertile. There are no Filipino terms yet to refer to various degrees of erectile dysfunction.

Female *libog* is not as clearly delineated, but female needs are recognized, described through agrarian metaphors such as *tuyot*, *tigang* (facing drought, to be dried up). “*Kailangan akong madiligan*” (I need to be watered) is a way of describing sexual needs, with the male providing the watering. A man will not use words like *tuyot*, *tigang* to describe his own sexual needs.

On the other hand, there is recognition that female sexuality may be bottled up. “*Sa loob ang kulo*” (the boiling is inside the body) is sometimes used to describe as someone who is believed to be “wild” in the inside.

Note that *libog* can also have non-sexual meanings, referring to the enthusiasm or passion that someone has for a cause, or for a task. A speech, for example, may be described as being void of *libog* (*walang kalibog-libog*) because it has no fire to it. However, when applied to a person, *libog* is always sexual. Thus, while a politician’s fiery speech would be called “*libog*”, the politician would never be called *malibog*. . . unless he has a reputation as a Lothario.

Other terms used to refer to lust and desire include:

Kati, noun, an itch, is a euphemistic way of expressing lust, referring more to an urge.

Makati pa sa gabi refers to someone who is perceived to have a strong sex drive. A literal translation of the phrase is “to be itchier than gabi”, referring to the itchiness induced by gabi, a yam plant variety.

Kirot is a more compelling sexual metaphor used to refer to lust. Kirot means a stinging, recurrent pain.



Init, heat, is another metaphor for lust.

Mahilig, adjective, to have a fondness for. When someone is described as “mahilig”, without any particular reference to what he or she is fond of, the conclusion is that the person enjoys sex, sometimes to an excess.

Maniakis, noun, from the English maniac. A person who is perceived to be excessively fond of sex.

3.2 SEXUAL PLEASURE

I have mentioned how Filipinos sometimes refer to sex as luto ng Diyos or God’s cooking, to describe how sublime the pleasure is. The discourse around sexual pleasure revolves around the male experiencing this pleasure, or giving it to the woman (“paliligayahan kita”, I will make you happy), which will be discussed in greater detail in the section on sexuality. It is also the focus on male pleasure that becomes a major obstacle to the promotion of condom use, described as “parang naliligo na naka-kapote” (taking a bath with a raincoat) and “parang kumakain ng kendi na may kasamang wrapper” (eating candy with the wrapper on).

Surprisingly, my interviews did not bring out metaphors for orgasms and climax, except the English terms. Here is an instance where the linguistic domain is quite sparse; on the

other hand, as we will see later in this section, there is great emphasis on performance, on what one might call pleasuring. Thus the pleasure focus is there, but much more, in the linguistic domain, around verbs rather than nouns.

3.3 SEX APPEAL

The English “sexy” is used in the Philippines, used more often to refer to females but now applied quite often as well to males. The towering billboards along Metro Manila’s Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA) provide many interesting examples of what male and female sexiness are in the Philippines.

There are many colorful terms that describe sex appeal and sexiness. There is “nakakagigil”, referring to the way someone’s sexiness excites the person who is attracted. Panganiban’s 1973 definition still holds: “trembling or thrill due to suppressed or irrepressible pleasure or liking”. A less elegant term that has come into use in recent years is “laglag panty” – makes panties fall – referring to sexy males.

Sex appeal is gendered as captured in “kilabot” and “kembot”. Panganiban (1973) defined “kilabot” as the terror and fear, as well as the “terrifyingness and fearful character” of people. Curiously, “kilabot” also refers to goose pimples. “Kilabot” is used as well to refer to male appeal, both in terms of the character attributes as well as the response elicited, i.e., the goose pimples.

“Kembot” seems to be the product of recent semantic transformation. In Panganiban’s 1973 dictionary it is not listed; instead there is a term “kimpot” described as “pulsating, jerky or vibrating movement of orificial muscles, as of the anus of fowls.” “Kembot”, on the other hand, is defined in UP Diksiyonaryong Filipino as “bahagyang igiling ang baywang at puwit, karaniwang upang mang-akit”, or the swaying motion of the waist and the rectum, to attract people.



Clearly, kembot is female, complementing the male kilabot, as we see in the movie title, a love story between a secret agent and a stripteaser.

Note though that while kembot is often associated with female sexuality, it is also a keyword in relation to bakla sexuality. Kembot is exaggerated movement which is not usually expected in a “decent” female. Sex workers, guest relations officers and entertainers are expected to display kembot.

3.4 IDENTITIES AND GENDERED SEXUALITIES

Language is not just a medium for exchange, but also provides the identities for those engaged in an exchange, as in “male talk” (usapang lalake) complete with its anchor words, the most important of which is “pare”, from kumpare, referring to co-godparents. Filipino males inflect their speech with frequent references to “pare”, which in a way reflects male solidarity but at the same time also allows one to express masculinity because the word has to be said in a “masculine” tone.

Bakla talk does not use “pare” except to parody masculinity. Bakla slang (called, in the past, sward talk or swardspeak) is an important part of bakla identity, starting out as a kind of secret language but which has since become an important cultural force. Many bakla slang words have entered mainstream Filipino, from “t.y.” (thank you) to many of the sexuality-related words mentioned in this report (e.g. tsupa for oral sex, hada to cruise or look for a partner).

But while we recognize language as a focus, helping to give shape to some kind of sexual identity, we have to recognize how that very identity is itself floating, to use Judith Butler’s description. In the Philippines, sexual identities are more fluid, almost confusing, often entangled in multiple discourses. I attribute this in part to the constant

attempts to desexualize society, and people, for example, young people (“Abstain”) or homosexuals (“It is all right to be homosexual, as long as you don’t practice”; “Love the sinner, hate the sin.”)

Identities therefore tie into social constraints on disclosure, on the space society allows those identities to emerge, as well as the attempts to downplay one’s sexuality. This is best exemplified by the use of the term **buntis** or pregnant. Buntis is used as “evidence” and a source of hiya, at weddings for example. Middle-aged pregnant women will also often describe their hiya or embarrassment because their pregnancy is “proof” that they are still having sex in their mid-age.

Constraints in the Philippines, and the responses to social strictures, are captured by the term *ladlad*, an unfurling of the cape. This is a rather dramatic, performative way of describing what in western societies is called a “coming out” process, a homosexual who decides not to hide his or her sexual orientation. To disclose one’s being homosexual has become important in Filipino gender politics, as in the establishment of “Ang Ladlad”, a political party dedicated to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered issues:

In Filipino, "magladlad" means to unfurl the cape that used to cover one's body as a shield. It means to come out of the closet, to assert one's human rights as equal to that of the next Filipino. Thus, it means to take one's place in the sun, with dignity intact. (From Angladlad e-group.)

Keywords are particularly important as we explore gender identity. Take *lalake* as an example. When a man says “Lalake ako,” he is not just saying he is a man but that he is entitled to the privileges bestowed by society. For example, if his wife discovers he is having an extra-marital relationship and confronts him about the affair, his two-word reply, “Lalake ako” may carry some or all of the statements below:

1. I am male and biologically all males are promiscuous. It is our nature.
2. I am male, the breadwinner of this family. You have no right to question what I do.
3. I am male, and have my male barkada. You can’t expect me to “behave” when I am with the barkada.
4. I am male and must search out women. Do you want people to think I am bakla?

No doubt, sexual orientation is one important facet of gender definitions in the Philippines, but great caution is needed in the interpretation of these terms. For example, the English “gay” is used in the Philippines mainly to refer to sexual orientation, quite often as a noun: “Is he a gay?” In the United States, gay is more often used as an adjective. Homosexuality is still implicit here but the uses of “gay” as an adjective reflect a much broader domain of meanings, as in gay community, gay lifestyle, gay pride.

After the AIDS epidemic began, the term “men who have sex with men” (MSM) came into use first among AIDS groups and later gained limited use in popular culture, especially among those who have gone through AIDS seminars or workshops. Example: “Do you think he is MSM?”

There is a whole complex of terms that reflect the tensions around disclosure as a “homosexual”, the quotation marks used to refer to its almost tenuous and contested semantic status in the Philippines. Some homosexuals will say they are not “gay” because they are not effeminate, a reference to the construction of the *bakla* as an effeminate male. “Bisexual” has mutated in the Philippines, used as self-ascription in chat rooms to mean a homosexual who is not “obvious” (meaning not effeminate).

3.5 Sexual Partnering

From sexual identities we can move to sexual partnering. Who one thinks he or she is to a large extent determines the types of partnering the person will have. Here, the emphasis is not so much on sexual orientation than on partnering itself.

Asawa

In a society that emphasizes marriage, asawa or spouse becomes a keyword. It implies commitment, life-long in the Philippine case since there is no divorce.

But in popular culture, asawa becomes ambiguous. Marriage is a social event that requires huge expenses, so many couples live in but call each other asawa. There is implied commitment here, with fidelity (more often female) and responsibility for children.

Sexually, asawa could mean a limit to certain activities. Some wives are reluctant to have oral or anal sex, seeing this as bastos (disrespectful or insulting) because it is associated with sex workers. Likewise, even a rear entry for penile-vaginal sex may be seen as demeaning, again associated with sex workers.

There is, too, the dilemma of the asawa not wanting to use condoms. A condom is associated with sex work, with preventing sexually transmitted infections rather than pregnancies, and so a wife who asks her husband to use a condom may be reprimanded: “Don’t you trust me?” In many cases, the wife does indeed mistrust the philandering husband, but because she is an asawa, she may not be able to protect herself. The painful consequences are there, of monogamous wives who are infected by sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS.

A discussion of asawa inevitably ties into concepts of marriage. If there is a reproductive imperative, there is, too, a kind of implicit understanding that everyone marries. Marriage allows the partnering, with an asawa, with whom one has children. Many Filipinos will dichotomize the functions here: a male may find himself attracted to other males, but will marry because marriage and reproduction are imperative. Who one enjoys sex with is not the same as one with whom you have children. It may even be possible for a man to say he loves his male sexual partners, as well as his wife.

Boyfriend/girlfriend

With young unmarried Filipinos, a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship also implies commitment and some demand for fidelity. Not surprisingly, young people may playfully call each other *asawa*.

Querida/kabit

The mistress figures prominently in Filipino male sexuality. Men like to boast about having these mistresses, and the Spanish term *querida* is interesting because it means “the loved one”. Until fairly recently, marriages among more affluent families were often arranged, for purposes of economic and political alliances. So, one married the person chosen by the family, but ended up eventually with a mistress, the loved one.

Kabit, “latched on”, has less of the loving connotations of *querida*. Kabit is often said as “kabit lang”, only someone latched on, seen as second class, and sometimes with connotations of being mainly a sexual partner.

Other terms used for the mistress are *kalaguyo* (a lover) and *kulasisi* (a colorful parrot). The latter term implies the mistress is heavily made up, a loose woman.

Sex workers:

There is a whole range of terms used for sex workers, reflecting how prevalent prostitution is.

An old term is “*kalapating mababa ang lipad*” or doves that fly low. The term may have emerged early in the 20th century in association with a red light district in Tondo, Manila which was called Palomar or pigeon-house.



Pokpok (from the sound of hitting, evoking the forcefulness of sexual intercourse) was popular in the 1980s and 1990s, but has since evolved to mean a woman who is easy to get sexually.

Guest relations officers (GROs) used to be a term used to refer to receptionists and others who greet guests and respond to their needs. Through the years, the term has been expropriated by nightclubs and bars and now refers to women and men who entertain guests by being “tabled”, i.e., they sit with guests and earn money by ordering “ladies’ drinks” or “macho drinks”, usually overpriced non-alcoholic drinks on which the GROs get a cut. Some bars and clubs also charge customers (called “guests”) for the time spent, usually on an hourly basis. While much of the income comes from the tabling activities, it is usually understood that sex can be negotiated. Some clubs charge a bar fine when a GRO leaves with the guest while others allow the GROs to negotiate sexual transactions after the club closes.

Massage parlor attendants, both male and female, are called masahistas. After the massage the masahista will offer “service”, which means sex. “Sensation” is more specific, referring to masturbation.

Jappayuki

Until recently, the Japanese government allocated the Philippines an annual quota of 80,000 entertainers. These have been mostly women, but also include male transvestites. The term “jappayuki” has been used to refer to these entertainers. In the period before the Second World War, Japanese women who would go overseas to work as prostitutes were called “karayuki-san”; today, those who go to Japan to work as entertainers are called “jappayuki”. The term used to be pejorative but given the large numbers of Filipinas who leave to work in Japan, it has become more neutral. Officially, the Philippine government prefers the term “Filipino performers”.

In 2005, the Japanese government began to reduce the quotas for entertainers, following international pressure from UN groups that said the jappayuki industry was actually a front for sexual trafficking.

The term jappayuki has itself gone through semantic transformation, with a noticeable reduction in the stigma associated with the term. One middle-class grandmother, who teaches catechism, once boasted to me that one of her granddaughters was a jappayuki, and that she was hopeful still another granddaughter would leave soon.

The de-stigmatization of jappayuki reflects how practical considerations come to reshape sexual norms. In this case, working in Japan may even be seen as a badge of honor, a willingness to work, even as a sex worker, to change her family's fortunes.

In an article in the New York Times in 2006, marking the 60th anniversary of the Second World War, Carlos Conde was able to interview grandmothers from a village in central Luzon, many of the women raped by Japanese soldiers. Yet that same village now sends many of their young women out to Japan as jappayuki. When Conde asked one of the grandmothers what she thought about this situation, she answered: "You can't eat pride."

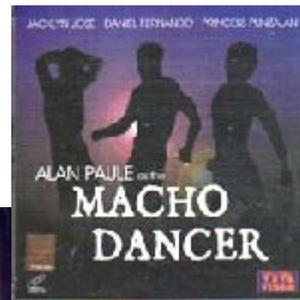
Male sex workers

There are also a number of terms now for male sex workers, from the older "call boy", which has mutated in gay language to "sholbum", to more occupationally-defined terms such as those used for female sex workers: GRO and masahista. There is even an equivalent of the jappayuki: the hosto, taken from the Japanese-English word.

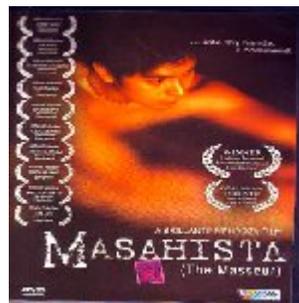
These terms for male sex workers are revealing, too, about changing gender statuses and roles. The male sex workers first emerged in "gay bars", catering mainly to gay men. Note that in western countries, gay bars are places where gay men meet other gay men. In the Philippines, a gay bar is a place where male sex workers work, as macho dancers and as GROs. A number of films have been made about the macho dancers.

Through the years, the gay bars have expanded their clientele to include “matronas” (middle-aged women) as well as younger women sex workers. Female tourists, particularly the Japanese, also occasionally visit these gay bars. Macho dancers are occasionally hired to perform at bridal showers, depicted in a local film entitled, predictably, “Bridal Shower”.

Macho Dancer



Masahista



Casual and transactional sex

There is far too little attention given to casual sex in the Philippines, partly because sex work is always more sensational. With the advent of chat rooms and the Internet, it has become easier now to get casual sex partners. Upper class Filipinos now sometimes refer to “fucking buddies”, a relationship that presumably does not involve emotional commitments.

A gray area is that of transactional sex, where people will exchange sex for material favors. “Prostitution” is a term sometimes used to refer to students who have sex to raise tuition. But transactional sex can also involve material favors: a cellphone, new clothes, and will not always involve students.

In Baguio City, young people refer to *chupit*, a hybrid word taken from *chupa* or oral sex and *gupit* or a haircut. This happens when young men go to a *bakla* beautician who will give a free haircut, plus a beer or monetary compensation, in exchange for oral sex.

In recent years there have been a number of terms referring to “easy to get” women. For example, *bilat* (etymology unknown) refers to adolescent girls who allow jeepney drivers to fondle them.

In Cebuano, the term *buntog* has been used for a number of years now to refer to young girls, often homeless or stowaways, who engage in casual, transactional and commercial sex.

Transactional sex is a gray area that highlights the importance of keywords research. Many of those engaging in transactional sex may not see themselves as sex workers, the terms themselves being highly stigmatizing. But because they do not see themselves as sex workers, they may be less likely to protect themselves during sex.

Even sex workers may themselves go through shifting identities. A new client is seen as a “guest” or “customer”, with whom condoms are more likely to be used. But if this guest returns several times, a “boyfriend/girlfriend” or even as “asawa” relationship changes. The condoms are dispensed with, and the risks increase, as it does for a real wife or regular partner.

3.6 SEXUAL STRATEGIES: DISKARTE AND ROMANSA

Identities and partnering tie in closely to sexual strategies, which are best described by the terms *diskarte* and *romansa*.

Diskarte in Spanish refers to the dealing in card games. In Filipino, it has come to mean strategizing behavior. In relation to sexuality, *diskarte* refers to the way someone

behaves to capture the attention of someone he or she is interested in. This is extensively described in “Love and Desire” (Tan, Batangan and Espanola 2001).

There is a sexual element to *diskarte* since it is, after all, part of courtship that does not necessarily have marriage on the horizon. An amusing spin-off here is the expression “*Ligaw tingin, kantot hangin*” (courting by looking results in fucking the wind), with a milder version that goes “*ligaw tingin, halik hangin*” (courting by looking results in kissing the wind), almost an admonition, intended for males, to be more aggressive and assertive. Thus, males will talk about the need to be *porma*, literally to show one’s form.

And yet, being too aggressive has its risks. Part of effective *diskarte* is being simple (pronounced the Spanish way), being unassuming. Much more needs to be explored around the gentler side of machismo in the Philippines, as expressed in *diskarte* that emphasizes this aspect of “simple”.

There is, too, the dilemma of *diskarte* being required amid expectations of sincerity. Males who put too much into *porma* are labeled “fake” and may lose to someone perceived to be more sincere.

Another gender aspect to *diskarte* is the female response to *diskarte*. Women are expected to accept the bluster and braggadocio, the hyperbole, that comes with courtship’s *diskarte*, yet part of female wisdom is being able to see through the *diskarte*.

Reflecting growing gender equality, our informants also say that women are now allowed to play out their own *diskarte* as well, with warnings that men, too, need to be careful lest they fall for the *diskarte* of wiley women.

Another keyword in sexuality is *romansa*, from the Spanish word that means “romance”. Used as a verb, *pagroromansa*, it refers to the entire process of love-making, with emphasis on foreplay but including sexual intercourse. *Romansa* can become part of

sexual strategizing, the period of courtship marked by male compliance with all that a woman wants.

However, romansa has potentials for more semantic transformation, to emphasize notions of mutual responsibilities in sex, involving both partners, even as it incorporates notions of prowess and skill (see Section 3.6). One's *abilidad* is partly measured by *pagroromansa*, and, ultimately, the goal is to satisfy each other. Aguilin-Dalisay and Jagmis-Socrates' (2000:50) research on male sexuality had informants emphasizing how male *abilidad* ties into his ability to satisfy his wife so she need not look for another partner. The term *magpapasarap*, to give pleasure, is sometimes used almost synonymously with *romansa*, except the former term is more goal-oriented. A gender variation here involves women feeling obligated to give sex to the husband, lest he look for someone else.

3.7 PERFORMANCE

One strategies to get sex, and then needs to perform. I have mentioned several times that sex, as sexual intercourse, often focuses on the male, but this does not mean the female is totally passive. In fact, the Filipino male faces great expectations when it comes to sexual performance, and these expectations tie in closely to sexual virility, prowess, reproduction and fertility. Some terms that emerged frequently in the interviews:

Galit, adjective, angry. An erect penis is described as being *galit* or angry, as in "Galit si Pedro".

If the penis is sometimes compared to animals (birds, snakes), it should not be surprising that its readiness is also described in animal terms as in *nanunuklaw* (ready to peck); and *manunungab* (ready to pounce).

Galing: to be good at something, is used to refer to sexual prowess, the ability to satisfy.

Abilidad, from the Spanish word for ability, is also sometimes used in a sexual context, sometimes described as magpaligaya, to make one's partner "happy".

Baog: Baog means both "infertile" as well as "impotent", showing how the reproductive function so dominates the discourse around sex. San Antonio's 1624 dictionary defines baog as 1. esteril, hombre o mujer (Vide: comil, ganay) and 2. el acto de perder la fuerza o sabor algunas cosas, o la tal cosa, como la canela, anis, palo de china, su fortaleza. . . Nababaog ang anis, ang gabi. Baog na anis., which shows the agricultural connotations of the word. The 17th century usage shows how the word is used to refer not just to infertility but also to a loss or deterioration of strength, flavor or freshness.

Asim: literally sourness. Unlike the English word, which may have more negative connotations, "may asim" in Filipino, "to have sourness" means that one still has the energy, the drive, the attractiveness, with sexual connotations. The concept is derived from the sense that vinegar is still good, and flavorful, if it remains sour.

The terms tend to emphasize individual performance, rather than mutuality and consensus. I mentioned earlier that there is potential in developing the keyword pagroromansa ("to romance") to emphasize mutual satisfaction. This could be linked to another concept, that of tamang kondisyon, the right conditions. Condition here includes individual disposition, a kind of mood not just to have sex but to enjoy it as well.

There is an interesting interface between sexual strategizing the sexual performance for the bakla. Male diskarte, described earlier, is mainly sexual strategizing, the term is not always appropriate to refer to bakla strategizing. Instead, a more performative term is sometimes used: "pagrarampa", from the English "ramp", a term clearly borrowed from the fashion industry. The metaphor here is one of doing the catwalk.

Performance is pervasive in the bakla, and in the baklita, but should not be seen simply in terms of performance for shock value. The idea of performance refers as well to an "acting out", sometimes of norms or socially desirable behaviors, and of reconfiguring

one's identity. I have mentioned that "bisexual", which in western psychology is defined as someone who is attracted to both males and females, now often means "discreet gay" in Filipino Internet chat rooms. The term "discreet gay" itself of fairly recent coinage to refer to men who identify themselves as "gay" but who try not to be effeminate. "Bisexual" is therefore not just a label, but a category that has to be acted out, to "affirm" the identity one seeks to project.

The move toward "discreet gay" actually carries elements of discrimination, used mainly by middle-class Filipino men who try to differentiate themselves from the lower-class "parlorista" (referring to the stereotype of the traditional bakla as someone working in a beauty parlor). The terminologies here represent a distancing of the middle-class Filipino "gay" away from the lower-class bakla.

Strategizing, performance, identities – all these converge to create the entanglements that is sexuality.

3.8 VIRTUE AND VICE

I chose "virtue and vice" as the final entry for clusters of keywords because this allows us to return to the societal construction of meanings around sexuality. Virtue and vice bring us into the discourse around morality, and society's attempts to regulate and control behavior.

The social compulsion to control morality is strongest in the area of sex and sexuality, often invoking language which tries to naturalize both sex and morals. The language used borrows strongly from Judaeo-Christian religious culture, with frequent references to tukso (temptation) and kasalanan (sin) that reflect an over-arching sexual ideology of biological reproduction. Temptation and sin are used in relation to non-reproductive sex (read pleasurable sex), including masturbation, extramarital sex, homosexuality, sex with contraception. To enforce this sense of reproductive morality, "natural law" will often be invoked, meaning the kasalanan, sinful acts, are wrong because they violate nature.

It should not be surprising that while there is recognition of the intense pleasures of sex, accompanied by positive terms such as *luto ng Diyos* (God's cooking), there is too an intense underlying erotophobia or a fear of sex. Young people are encouraged to postpone sex because of the idea that once they have had a taste of sex, they will keep wanting more, described as *maghahanap*, looking for more sex.

This erotophobia, a fear of sex, is often mixed with the need to control women's sexuality. Parents are particularly fearful that their daughters might have a first taste of sex, and want more. Husbands, particularly seafarers, are worried that their wives may have a taste of extramarital sex and want more of that.

A frequent concern expressed around ligation is that the woman becomes more promiscuous after the medical procedure. These fears help to show how ultimately, it is the need to preserve male "ownership", of the woman and of offspring, that gives rise to the many restrictions around sexuality.

Kabastusan

Applied to sexual matters, the terms *bastos* and *halay* mean "lewd" and "obscene", with the former used more often in daily conversations. *Bastos* is often used as a kind of blanket censorship to enforce a silence around discussions of sex and sexuality, i.e., any mention of sex runs the risk of a label of *bastos*.

But the tensions remain. The term "*bastos*" makes sexual matters more alluring. Anyone knowledgeable about sex – in theory or in practice – is also called *bastos* in a tone that mixed a bit of mock contempt with grudging admiration.

The concept of "*bastos*" as lewdness tends to sidetrack a more important core meaning of *bastos*, which is that of disrespect. "*Binastos ako*" means that someone has been

disrespectful to us, and this can mean both sexual and non-sexual matters, and could be through words, deeds, or even a whole demeanor, as when a child scowls at an elder.

Bastos has figured prominently in debates around censorship of print and broadcast media. Bastos then ties into attempts to define pornography and, as in other countries, can border on the absurd. At one time, censorship rules declared that exposing one female breast was acceptable but not both breasts.

In 2006, the Movie and Television Regulatory and Classification Board (MTRCB)



suspended I-witness, a documentary production of the GMA-7 network, for their production, “Hindi Ito Bastos: Lolas with Phalluses” (This is not bastos: grandmothers with phalluses). The documentary featured the town of Kalayaan, Quezon, where grandmothers dance with wooden penises, to greet newlyweds. The MTRCB reprimanded I-witness for featuring “frontal nudity” and “masturbation”. The focus again is on exposure, even if this involved wooden penises.

The MTRCB’s decision reflected a cruder definition of bastos, a censorial term that sees anything sexual, including nudity, as lewd and obscene. The decision lacked a contextual understanding of how the dancing is so much part of local culture, one which has been done for many years, out in the streets. I-witness’ Howie Severino asked some Kalayaan residents if they thought the dances were bastos or not, and opinions were split, but even those who said they were “bastos” said it light-heartedly, with ill-disguised glee.

Exposes and Scandals

Scandal is a word frequently used in the tabloids, mainly to refer to sexual activities that violate the norm. It should not be surprising the word is a popular choice for X-rated films, starting first in relation to certain cities, e.g., Dumaguete Scandal, Quezon City Scandal and then later naming particular schools, for example, UP Diliman Scandal, La Salle Scandal. The films claiming to be video footage of students in dorms or campus grounds, shot with a hidden camera.

Other X-rated films often have the word “expose” in it, reflecting another aspect to the binary of virtue and vice. Investigative journalism is popular in the Philippines’ rough-and-tumble democracy, with expose following expose.



Scandals and exposes in a digital age again capture the tensions between virtue and vice. Vices, kabastusan, are “wrong” and yet appealing, so the genre of scandals preserved on videos becomes popular, appealing to the voyeur or *mamboboso*. In the case of alleged scandalous behavior of university students, the X-rated films almost mock the ideal of the desexualized, virginal teenager, almost as if to say: they’re doing it, and they’re having fun doing it, and most importantly, they’re good at it.

Da Vinci Code

The discourse around pornography and kabastusan feeds back into religion, as was seen recently in the attempts of conservatives to totally ban the movie *Da Vinci Code*. The City Council of Manila banned the film in their city while the Philippine Alliance Against Pornography (PAAP) appealed to Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to stop the showing of *The Da Vinci Code* nationwide, branding the film as "the most pornographic and blasphemous film in history Here, a movie was considered blasphemous because it dared insinuate that Jesus Christ might have had sex. The film was eventually given an R-18 (Restricted to those aged 18 and above) rating.

The moves against the dancing grandmothers, as well as *The Da Vinci Code*, highlight the tensions around sexuality, as it is embedded in other spheres of society and culture. The fear of sex is so overwhelming that the censors need to check out dancing, singing, religious representations in popular culture.

In one of my columns I’ve argued that censorship itself can be bastos in the way it is disrespectful of existing culture. If people feel comfortable with their sexually-related metaphors and songs and dances, then attempts to ban their expression should certainly be seen as malicious and bastos too.

VIRGIN AND MALANDI

The need to control, to censure sexuality is particularly focused on women. Virtue is closely tied to concepts of the (female) virgin and virginity. The demands for female virginity are strong in public rhetoric but in practice the demands for female virginity are not as rigorous, especially as marriage is on the horizon (Tan, Batangan and Espanola 2001). Nevertheless, public discourse does focus strongly on female virginity, including all kinds of folk theories for differentiating virgins from non-virgins. The discourse around virginity centers on preserving it, usually with descriptions like “the best gift for your husband”.

Chastity and virginity, interestingly enough, are tied to the Spanish word, *birhen*, indicating its close links to Catholicism. In contrast, “non-virginal” behavior is described with many different words, not necessarily tied to virginity itself. The term “*naglalandi*” is used to refer to animals in heat. To be *malandi* is to be flirtatious. Often, too, the term *nanunukso* (tempting) is used.

There are gendered aspects to the term. While men are described mainly in terms of *libog* (sex drive, lust) and of *diskarte* (strategizing during courtship), *landi* is more often used for females and for the *bakla*, specifically referring to the way the person seems to be inviting sex. Note however that the female and the *bakla* are the objects of the male gaze.

The flirting can be done through clothing, cosmetics, manner of walking, speech, or the whole body language and demeanor. For example, a woman can begin fixing her hair as she talks to a man. The preening here, including the way the breasts are moved forward, can be seen as *landian* or flirtation.

Feelings about a *malandi* woman are ambivalent. Sometimes the term can be used half in jest, but others time it is used to chide or put down a person. In recent years, the term

kikay (probably derived from kiki) has been introduced to refer to someone who is playfully flirtatious, without the more pejorative connotations of malandi.

Kita ang bituka (her intestines can be seen) has been used to refer to someone whose attire is seen as sexually provocative. This need not be literal, as in a bare midriff; the idea here is that a woman who is out for sex displays her motives all too transparently.

As I mentioned earlier, discourse around virginity and chastity is in fact quite muted, confined mainly to occasional exhortations to preserve virginity, or, for young people, to abstain.

Celibacy among the religious is raised as a gold standard, yet here, we find tensions as well. Even before the scandals erupted around pedophile priests, popular culture had many jokes about liaisons between priests and parishioners, male and female, young and old. Movies often have scenes showing a priest grappling with his lust as he listens to a parishioner, usually a young seductive woman, confessing her sexual sins.

One seminarian many years ago described to me the dilemma of male religious: “If I am seen with a woman, they will say I am womanizing. If I am seen with a man, they will say I am gay. If I am seen with children, they will say I am a pedophile. “

The attempts to desexualize priests often means they are de-socialized as well, forced to retreat into the safe confines of religious houses and unable to deal with problems of parishioners that deal with sexuality and family life.

Films play as well on the theme of the young sexually innocent Woman seduced by a male wise to the ways of the world. One film title says it all: Kilabot here is an ex-convict, a male Charmer who teams up with Pakipot, the reluctant female. Pakipot actually means tight, an obvious reference to a quality Of the virginal female anatomy.



Wages of sin and misogyny

The consequences of a violation of sexual norms are described not just in religious terms of sins, but also, increasingly, in biomedical jargon. Young people are warned against PMS, a uniquely Filipino English word that sounds like some medical syndrome (premenstrual syndrome) but actually means premarital sex. The fear is not so much of early sex and early pregnancy than the PM of PMS, the premarital nature of sex. Newspaper headlines warn about increasing PMS among teenagers, oblivious to the fact that until 1988, girls could marry at 14 and boys at 16. After 1988, when the minimum age of marriage was raised to 18, there was public outcry about how this was leading to many live-in arrangements among the young. One senator, supported by the Secretary of Social Welfare, proposed a lowering again of the minimum age of marriage. That Secretary is now the president of the Philippines.

Besides PMS, various sexually transmitted infections (STIs) figure prominently in the alphabet soup of dire consequences, from the generic VD (venereal disease) to HIV/AIDS. Tulo, a drip, is used to refer to infections with discharge. Significantly, the local Filipino term that is used more often to refer to these infections is *sakit ng babae* or women's diseases. Women are seen as repositories, carriers, transmitters of infection. This translates to public health policies that insist on testing women in the entertainment industries for STIs. The testing is done in Social Hygiene Centers, the term again reflecting the medical ideology that seeks to control sexuality. The term was introduced by the Americans during the colonial occupation.

The discourse around virtue and vice keep taking us back into misogyny, the idea that women, and female sexuality, is dangerous. With this perspective, it becomes easier to understand why censorship and notions of virtue and vice are in fact products of dominant misogynist ideology, as well as ways of enforcing that ideology.

Thus, the reluctance to actually say “puki”, even as it is used to curse, speaks volumes about the ambivalence around sexuality:

But what, you may ask now, is the big deal with having to be able to say puki? A lot. Conservatives say we need to keep puki shrouded, kept mysterious because it is sacred. In reality though, our daily self-censorship around puki vulgarizes not just the term, not just the vagina, but women and womanhood. It reinforces the idea that sex is dirty, made so particularly by women. “Titi,” although also considered a “bad” word, is never used as a curse word. “Puki,” on the other hand, is a very powerful curse word: against a woman, “puki mo” denigrates her. Each time someone uses puki to curse someone, it reinforces notions of the dirty vagina, of the dirty woman. Used against a male, we have a terrible variation: he is cursed “puki ng ina mo” (or its many variations, the Ilokano ukinam being one example), you are as foul as the vagina that brought you into this world. (Actually, I suspect there is a stronger misogynist element here, the term suggesting that only a woman could have brought forth such low life as you. The mother is cursed for bringing scum into the world. (Tan 2002:150)

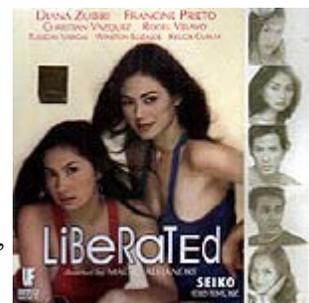
Liberated

The tensions around sexuality, between what is prescribed and proscribed, between virtue and vice, can be intense. Bawal, the forbidden, is never really absolute, subjected to negotiations, maybe even defied.

This film about an extramarital affair, asks the quintessential question about sexuality and the tensions between “vice” and “virtue”: masarap ba ang bawal, is the forbidden pleasurable?



How far can one go with transgressing the boundaries, with asserting personal agency? Some insights come with the way the term “liberated” is used in the Philippines. The English word itself is used to refer to a woman who is perceived to be easy to get sexually. The perceptions may come from the way she walks, talks, dresses.



It is hard to establish the actual origins of the term but it may have come from the 1970s when the women's liberation movement emerged in the west. It is possible that the imagery of the "liberated woman" in the west were conflated with those of Sexual Liberation, with connotations of promiscuity.

The importance of this term is reflected in the fact that two films were made, "Liberated" and "Liberated 2".

One synopsis of the film reads: "The film attempts to paint a picture of today's more sexually assertive yuppies. Or as the filmmakers deign to admit, Liberated is more like the local answer to the HBO TV series Sex and the City." There's a single mother in the film, a gay love affair between two men. The synopsis notes: "This gang is liberated alright. They're addicted to sex and one-night stands—even the film's virginal heroine isn't above enjoying her lover's body. It's just for as long as they don't go all the way. And of course, they have a moral lesson to learn and suddenly, they're the most wholesome bunch you could ever meet."

Whatever the origins, the negative association of sexual promiscuity with women's liberation shows how powerful the patriarchal gender ideology is. Note that the term "liberated man" is never used to refer to a promiscuous male, since male promiscuity is generally more accepted, even admired.

The dilemmas around "liberated" reflect economic changes in the Philippines. More women are entering the labor force, including overseas deployment. Families and schools encourage young girls to be more assertive and autonomous, hoping they will be ready to meet the new demands outside the home; yet there is a fear of that independence. Filipinos want women to be "liberated", yet fear that liberation. The dilemmas with the liberated woman is in fact embedded in the dilemma Filipinos have about sexuality in general.

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