



**AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY:
WHOSE PAST
AND
WHICH MODERNITY?**

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PART THREE

ETHICS AND AFRICAN SEXUALITY

- A Critique of the Ontological Foundation of African Ethics
- Old Wine in New Jar: A Critical Response to the *New* Anti-Gay Law in Nigeria
- Fluidity of Gender Roles and Homosexuality in Pre-colonial Nigeria: A Guide for Contemporary Social Relations
- Homosexuality in Traditional Africa

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

HOMOSEXUALITY IN TRADITIONAL AFRICA

Okwenna, Chrysogonus-Maria

Abstract

This chapter explores the cultural varieties of same-sex relationships that have long been constituent of traditional African life. A recent study shows that roughly 10% of the global population identify as homosexuals. This number consistently and equitably cuts across all cultures of the world despite variations in attitude towards homosexuality. If this is true of the contemporary world, then it extends to the ancient and by that traditional Africa. Accordingly, this research using phenomenological and historico-descriptive tools of enquiry together with ethnographical accounts of anthropologists retraces homosexuality to its African roots ranging from the practices of Hausas of West Africa, Zanzibars of East Africa, Ovagandjeras of Central Africa to those of the Herero, Ovambo, and Ovahimba peoples of Southern Africa. Consequently, this research avers that current attitude towards homosexuality in Africa is as a result of Western hegemony and the revolutionary changes effected by Euro-Christian and Arab-Islamic movements in their first and earlier contact with the continent. Hence, a fair disposition towards historical facts will deflate the current homophobic agitation, stripping it of any moral, historical or logical justification.

Introduction

That homosexuality is un-African or an imported merchandise is an untrue tale we (Africans) have been telling ourselves for a very long time. African leaders are even involved in publicly telling this untrue tale and scholars have not been any better. Oftentimes, mainstream African scholars, while discussing the issue, accentuate how the

homosexual phenomenon is incongruent within the African culture.¹ Similarly, in 2014, Yoweri Museveni, Ugandan President, signed the Anti-Homosexuality Bill in the public domain of the media while stating that homosexuality was imposed by the Global West. This is conspicuously, both a reversal of his earlier claims in 2012, when he was interviewed by BBC's "Hard Talk," he noted: "homosexuals in small numbers have always existed in our black Africa...They were never prosecuted. They were never discriminated."² This is a decisive disregard of the reports of the first-class Ugandan scientists whom he had asked to look into the issue, so as to make educated decision before signing the law. According to a news article, the commission's report reads: "in every society, there is a small number of people with homosexual tendencies."³ Museveni's action is nothing other than a lie, or at best, a political subterfuge because of the 2016 coming presidential elections. Notwithstanding this grotesque action of Uganda, they are not alone in this proscription, as Nigeria followed suit, that same year and some other African countries subsequently.

According to a 2016 survey done by the International Gay and Lesbian Association (IGLA), 34 out of the 54 nations in Africa somehow criminalized homosexuality.⁴ However, the legal proscription is a less cause to worry about than the continent-wide homophobia and discrimination found even in countries like South Africa where homosexuality is legal and in other countries whose constitutions and laws are generally silent on the matter. The justification for this

¹ Such is the assertions of Joseph Onuche Christian Ele Ebum Oduwole to name a few. See Christian Ele, "The Perception of Same Sex Marriage in Igbo Culture," *Online Journal of Arts, Management and Social Sciences*, 2016, 238-245; Joseph Onuche, "Same-Sex Marriage in Nigeria: A Philosophical Analysis," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2013, 91-98.

² Yoweri Museveni, "Yoweri Museveni – President of Uganda," interview by Stephen Sackur, *BBC-Hardtalk*, February 24 2012, audio, 30:00, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/ptogrammes/p00nw591>.

³ Wachira Kigotho, "Museveni Academics and the 'Gay' Debacle," *University World News*, February 28, 2014, <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post-mobile.php?story=2014o228113551951>.

⁴ Cf. International, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intesex Association, *State-Sponsored Homophobia: A world Survey of Sexual Orientation, Protection and Recognition*, 11 edition, ed. Aengus Carroll (Geneva: ILGA, 2016), 57-89.

discrimination is often based on arguments like: homosexuality is Western imposed; against family life; evil in the sight of God and man, etc. Whether or not these justifications have any merit or basis is the concern of this chapter.

Consequently, the purpose of this research is twofold: Firstly, it explores the reality of homosexuality in traditional Africa before the advent of Euro-Christian and Arab-Islamic traders, missionaries and colonizers; and, secondly, it aims to determine the social acceptability of the phenomenon at that time. These would enable us to deflate such bizarre argument that homosexuality is un-African, unearth the causes of the present discriminatory attitude towards homosexuals in Africa, evaluate such discrimination, and respond to the question of the morality of homosexuality, via the methods that had been stated above.

Some Backdrops for the Present Study

It is surprisingly ironical how we look for what is un-African, or what is a disease of the morally corrupt West in the obviously wrong direction. The origin of this conception that homosexuality is an imported merchandize can actually be traced to the “corrupt” West whom we have labeled as been responsible for this “taboo”, or in the words of an African Leader, Museveni: “European homosexuals recruit Africans.”⁵ Nonetheless, this trend incepted and could have knotted among the many myths Europeans have created about Africa. The logic goes like this – Africans are primitive, and since primitivism is closest to nature and devoid of cultural unsophistication, they necessarily had to be heterosexual. African (wo)man’s sexual drive had to be directed towards natural ends – procreation. If Africans are indeed the most primitive of all humanity, then they had to be the most heterosexual of all peoples.⁶

⁵ Xan Rice, “Uganda Considers Death Sentence for Gay Sex in Bill before Parliament,” *Guardian*, 29 November, 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/nov/29/uganda-death-sentence-gay-sex>.

⁶ Stephen Murray and Will Roscoe, “All Very Confusing,” in *Boy-Wives and Female-Husbands: Studies in African Homosexualities*, eds. Stephen Murray, Will Roscoe (New York: Palgrave, 1998), 9.

More concretely, one of the first “serious” scholarly works that recorded the occurrence or practice of homosexuality in African culture can be traced back to as early as 1781 in Edward Gibbon’s book, *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. It is noteworthy that at this time Europeans had hardly penetrated anywhere close to the interiors of Africa. In his book, Gibbon wrote that he believes and hopes that Negroes in their country remained unsullied from the moral pestilence of homosexuality.⁷ It is this hope and belief that has come to define the issue of homosexuality in Africa. Other historians and anthropologists subsequently gave credence to Gibbon’s wishful speculation, as did Richard Burton who reported that Negroes are largely pristine from sodomy and lesbianism.⁸ Still, other scholars who did acknowledge homosexual practices in pre-colonial Africa did so while asserting that they were ushered in by Arabian traders, Europeans and even other African groups,⁹ as it is in the case of some Bantu people of East Africa who accused Nubians of introducing them to pederasty, or in that of the Sudanese who reproached Turkish filibusters.¹⁰ *

The issue becomes more confusing as anthropologists who did significant study on the cultural practices in Africa supported these accounts with biased investigations of same-sex practices, as they either fail to report what they discovered or rebate or distort what they had witnessed in their reports. Stephen Murray singled out one of such anthropologists, Evans Pritchard in his 1937 study of the Azande. Pritchard did not report their same-sex activities only to do so several years later, after his field work. He then accounted what he had observed about homosexuality among the Azande people of northern Congo.¹¹

⁷ Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 4, 6th ed. (London: Methuen, 1925), 506.

⁸ Richard Burton, “Notes on the Dahoman,” in *Selected Papers on Anthropology, Travel & Exploration*, ed. (N. M: Penzer, 1924), 206.

⁹ Apolo Kagwa, *The Customs of the Baganda* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934).

¹⁰ Ferdinand Weine, *Expedition zur Entdeckung der Quellen des Weissen Nil* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1848), 120

¹¹ Murray and Roscoe, “All Very Confusing,” 10.

It is obvious then that it is this misrepresentation that propels contemporary African scholars and others to deny the presence of homosexuality in Africa. Those who even try to account for it discount its meaning and cultural significance by either claiming it is short-lived (as in the passage of the adolescent phase) or it occurs only when women were lacking in number.

Ultimately, another salient point that should be added to this is that political clouts also played important roles in what is reported (or not reported) about the homosexual phenomenon in traditional Africa. To this end, Sally Moore observes that, even fastidious ethnographers in this matter are dependent upon the whims of political authorities. To be sure, the research has always been based upon the material support and approval of political authorities – colonial authorities and the authorities of today's Western and African states. What implication has this over what is discovered? Surely, today's anthropologists would be wary of offending black governments who had already claimed and would always declare that homosexuality is un-African. The same is true of the Colonial epoch.¹² Kurt Falk also observed something similar; political authorities could also strain ethnographer-informant relations. The veracity of the answers given to the ethnographers is always suspicious. Sometimes, they are exaggerated; and when it is about homosexuality, the informants, more often than not, are taciturn and tend more than otherwise to denials.¹³ Perhaps, this is because of the preferred cultural stance of silence on sexual issues or the aura already projected by the political stance.

So far, following the progression of what has been said above, it is obvious that what began as unfounded but wishful speculation transformed into denial and then became a taboo (in today's Africa) – a taboo based on European-Christianity based morality. As we can deduce, the colonialists did not introduce homosexuality, but bigotry

¹² Sally Moore, *Anthropology and Africa: Changing Perspectives on a Changing Scene* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994), 6.

¹³ Kurt Falk, "Gleichgeschlechtliches Leben bei einigen Negerstämme Angolas," *Archiv für Anthropologie*, transl. by Google Translator (1923), 42.

and homophobia, to Africa. They also installed systems (customs) to check and regulate it so it does not ultimately disappear. However, these systems were not strong enough as long as the natives were simply hiding or denying it. Nonetheless, only when the indigenes began to forget that homosexuality was no stranger to their culture did homosexuality become really reprobated.¹⁴

Finally, to comprehend homosexual practices in traditional Africa, there is the need to discard unfounded claims or myths and suspend our European bequeathed sense of morality, beliefs and values.¹⁵

Yan Dauda: Gender-Defined Homosexual Men amongst the Hausa People of Nigeria in West Africa

In pre-Islamic and pre-Christian West Africa, homosexual practices or homosexually identifying persons have been reported to have some form of religious significance or knotted to some cult. Malidoma Patrice Some, a West African writer, once reported that growing up in his farming community of Dagara in the south of Burkina Faso, many of the individuals who performed religious/spiritual duties in his society were “gay,” and he attributed this to their wit to conciliate because of their ability to bridge gender roles. Just as an aside, in traditional Africa especially West Africa, gender has little or nothing to do with biological differences.¹⁶ This is best observed in Sophie Oluwole’s unearthing of the male and female relationship in pre-colonial Yoruba thought. This culture saw the male and female

¹⁴ Marc Epprecht, ““Good God Almighty, What’s this!.”Homosexual “Crime” in Early Colonial Zimbabwe,” in *Boy-Wives and Female-Husbands: Studies in African Homosexualities*, eds. Stephen Murray, Will Roscoe (New York: Palgrave, 1998), 197.

¹⁵ Just a quick disclaimer – this research is in no way exhaustive, and because of the cultural varieties and numerosity of homosexual practices in traditional Africa, and even within each of the regions in Africa, the research shall only dwell on one and particular ethnic group in each of the regions of Africa.

¹⁶ Bolanle Awe, *Nigerian Women in Historical Perspective* (Ibadan: Sankore, 1992): Gender (roles) became foregrounded in biological difference with the advent of the colonial masters. Prior to that, women held chieftaincies in their own alongside men. The line was really blurred between male and female roles in the society.

members of the society as equal partners in progress.¹⁷ There was no sharp distinction (as it is in contemporary Africa – a vestige of Western civilization) between what is culturally feminine or masculine. The male as well as the female were equally, religiously, politically and economically relevant and involved in the same way.¹⁸ Some presupposes that homosexuality is a result of some vibrational consciousness which an individual experiences in order to possess the capacity to bridge this world and the world beyond.¹⁹ Some also noted that this trend is not unique to his people, but that the great astrologers of the Dogon people of Mali were also gays and they were a blessing to their people.²⁰ On a slightly different note, it would seem that this kind of trend is not peculiar to Africa. In the reincarnation studies of a Canadian-born U.S. Psychiatrist, Ian Pretyman Stevenson, change in the gender of a reincarnated person may explain homosexuality. Stevenson observed from his chain of 1200 certified childhood past memory cases, that only 10% of cases involved gender changes. In some of these cases, individuals still relate to the gender in prior incarnation, which ultimately results in homosexuality. He substantiated this claim with an example of a male Japanese soldier who reincarnated as a Burmese woman and becomes a lesbian. This woman remembers the substantial portion of the soldier's life, hated all what he hated and appalled her present sex (woman) and as a result has women as her object of sexual desire.²¹

Against this backdrop, therefore, it would not seem outlandish that in the pre-Islamic religion of the Hausas of today's Northern Nigeria – the *bori* cult – gender-defined homosexual men are at the fore front of homosexual 'cults'. And this, Rudolf Gaudio avers, is similar to

¹⁷ Sophie B. Oluwole, "Culture, Gender, and Development Theories in Africa," *Africa Development*, 1997, 106.

¹⁸ Oluwole, "Culture, Gender, and Development Theories in Africa," 110.

¹⁹ Malidoma Patrice Some, "Gays as Spiritual Gatekeepers," *White Crane Newsletter*, September 1993, 1,6,8.

²⁰ Malidoma Patrice Some, *Of Water and the Spirit: Ritual, Magic, and Initiation in the Life of an African Shaman* (New York: Putnam, 1994), 8.

²¹ Cf. Ian Stevenson, *Cases of the Reincarnation Type: Thailand and Burma*, Vol. IV (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983), pp. 231-241.

possession cults in Brazil and the Caribbean established by descendants of West Africans.²² For the Hausas, those who are possessed are like horses being ridden by the spirit who possessed them. Now, homosexual persons possessed by these spirits are called *yan daudu* (the son of *Daudu*).

Yan Daudu are a strictly distinctive social category of males, who have adapted feminine mannerism, dress, and speech. They are mostly classified as homosexuals, transsexuals or transvestites.²³ Accordingly, in *Bori* rites, *yan daudus* dance femininely and donate money to the cult, especially when the spirit *Dan Galadima* appears.²⁴ The status of the *yan dauda* is often defined by their work and their visible characteristics – cross dressing. Hence, they are not just homosexuals, but also a socio-occupational group recognized by the society as such. They live and work in areas where prostitution exists. They mediate between the clients and the prostitutes, manage relations with authorities and recruit new prostitutes.²⁵

Furthermore, the *yan daudu*'s place is often associated with the *Bori* cult, because in patriarchal Hausa society, it provides a haven for various low-status persons. The cult provides identity to people who could not fit into the normal stratifications of the society. Examples include; people who neither distinctively see themselves as male nor female and people who are not sexually attracted to members of the opposite sex as most members of the societies are. Consequently, the *Bori* cult provides its members with a social niche and an alternative source of prestige. After the rites of *Bori* initiation, members, who due to their “divergent” personality would have been considered abnormal

²² Rudolf Gaudio, “Male Lesbians and Other Queer Notions in Hausa,” in *Boy-Wives and Female-Husbands: Studies in African Homosexualities*, eds. Stephen Murray, Will Roscoe (New York: Palgrave, 1998), 94.

²³ Maarit Sinikangas, “*Yan Daudu*: A study of Transgendering Men in Hausaland West Africa” (MA thesis, Uppsala University, 2004), 26.

²⁴ Fremont Besmer, *Horse, Musicians & Gods: The Hausa Cult of Possession-Trance* (Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey, 1983),

²⁵ Gerald Kleis and Salisu Abdullahi “Masculine Power and Gender Ambiguity in Urban Hausa Society,” *African Urban Studies* 1983, 45.

or deviants by the society will gain a degree of acceptance and become members of a particular class in the society.²⁶

Finally, a homosexual in this part of Africa might be seen as a dissension from what is considered 'normal'. However, the society does not cast such people away or brand them as abomination, rather the society avails them a social and symbolic transformation that ushers them into their own class with its own acceptance and prestige. So, if the homosexual was classless or nobody before he/she identifies with this group, then s/he becomes someone and belongs somewhere upon identifying with the group. Conversely, with the advent of Islam in West Africa in the 16th century, there was a clamp down on the *Bori* cult because of its principles that conflict with the maxims of Islam. As it would be expected, the *yan dauda* institution collapsed with the *Bori* cult that housed it after a very long battle against Islamic domination. So today, the term *yan dauda* that once meant prestige is now a pejorative sobriquet that is obnoxious to anybody called by it.

Contrary Sex among the Black People of Zanzibar in East Africa

In a letter which was sent to Dr. Oskar Baumann and later published in 1899, Michael Haberlandt described the distinctive nature of homosexual practices among the Negro population of Zanzibar with the term "contrary sex". Haberlandt's choice of word could most probably be influenced by his European background. In this letter, Haberlandt reported that there was both inborn and acquired contrariness – homosexual behaviour. The acquired contrariness was constantly increasing and this increase was attributed to the clouts of Arabs, Comorosans and Swahili mixed breeds. These foreigners took black slaves as their love objects, and any one of such slaves that was chosen were exempted from work, pampered and subsequently systematically effeminized. They were practically objectified and when these individuals come out of the service of their masters, they go to become male prostitutes, plying their trade openly. Sadly, they were not always perceived in good light, perhaps because they were

²⁶ Besmer, *Horse, Musicians & Gods: The Hausa Cult of Possession-Trance* 122-123.

seen as stout drunks and most suffer from several sexual dysfunctions and diseases acquired from the line of their work.²⁷

On the flip side, inborn contraries of both male and female sex exist and they were much favourable and accepted. From childhood, they show no desire for members of their opposite sex and find pleasure in the occupations of the opposite sex. Thus, while the boy delights in cooking, the girl in hunting. Most importantly, as soon as this is observed by the family, they reconcile themselves without further fuss to this distinctiveness. Haberlandt further contrasts between acquired contrariness and inborn contrariness. Both may not be outwardly distinguishable, but natives can still tell them apart. Hence, while the former is despised, the behaviours of the latter are tolerated as the will of God – *amri ya muungu*. Finally, as in the case of *Bori* cult, the advent of Islam ensured that male contraries are punished as the Qur'an vigorously forbids pederasty.²⁸

Same-Sex Union amongst *Ovagandjeras* of Angola in Central Africa

Among all the groups studied in this research, *Ovagandjera* culture has the most official and stable practice of homosexuality. Here, homosexuality is not seen as a fleeting desire or an anomaly, but as part of the people's socio-cultural life. Kurt Falk, a German anthropologist, reported in his 1923 research, some kind of union/marriage – between boys (or men) in *Ovagandjera* community. According to Falk's description, a young, unmarried, circumcised male who sees a younger boy around 12 years old that he loves, may go to his parent and pay some sort of a "bride" price – a cow, piece of cloth or some amount of money. If the father agrees, the younger boy welcomes him into his hut and from hence they are recognized as being in a relationship. Even if the older boy marries (a woman) this union is not dissolved. The older boy merely alternates the beds of his *katumua* (the name for his boy lover) and his wife. This continues until

²⁷ Michael Haberlandt, "Occurrences of Contrary Sex among the Negro Population of Zanzibar," trans. Bradley Rose, *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, no. 31(6) (1899), 668-670.

²⁸ Haberlandt, "Occurrences of Contrary Sex," 668-670.

the *katumua* grows up and wants to marry. Then at this juncture, the older boy brings him back home and pays some money. So, the younger now, for his part, takes his own *Katumua*, while the older boy finds another *katumua*.²⁹ According to this account, almost every man in this society, without exception – both the single and the married, has a male lover.³⁰

Homosexuality in Southern Africa: Accounts of the *Ovambos*, *Ovahimbas* and the *Hereros*

Falk, in his study of homosexuality among the natives of Southwest Africa, underscored the presence and existence of bisexuality as pseudo-homosexual behaviour and true homoeroticism or born homosexuals. Among the *Ovambos* – a Bantu tribe, Falk reported that, there are *ovashengi*, effeminate men who submit to passive anal intercourse. They cross dress and are employed in women's work. They are also in high demand by youthful unmarried men mostly because maidens are somewhat restricted in their movements.³¹ Falk also observed "forced" pederasty as sometimes wives or betrothed give young boys to their husbands or husband-to-be in order to keep them faithful. This arrangement is what Falk identifies as pseudo-homosexuality.³² Another important distinction Falk makes here is that, the kind of intercourse engaged by pseudo-homosexuals among the *Ovambos* is anal sex while true homosexuals use mutual masturbation. The *ovashengis* can also offer their selves for money.³³ The *Ovambos*' habitual tribal custom supports same sex relationships, and so almost every *Ovambo* has engaged in homosexual intercourse.

²⁹ Kurt Falk, "Same-Sex Life Among A Few Negro Tribes of Angola," trans. Bradley Rose, in *Boy-Wives and Female-Husbands: Studies in African Homosexualities*, eds. Stephen Murray, Will Roscoe (New York: Palgrave, 1998), 168-169.

³⁰ Falk, "Same-Sex Life Among A Few Negro Tribes of Angola," 169.

³¹ Kurt Falk, "Homosexuality among the Natives of Southwest Africa," trans. Bradley Rose and Will Roscoe, 187-190.

³² Falk, "Homosexuality among the Natives of Southwest Africa," 187.

³³ Falk, "Homosexuality among the Natives of Southwest Africa," 188.

However, some chiefs do not allow *ovashengi* in their regions.³⁴ But this rejection could be as a result of their making money off it.

Furthermore, the *Ovahimbos*, another group, had gay men who were both priests and herbalists. These and other homosexuals, as we have seen above (among the *Dagara* people and *yan daudu* in their *Bori* cult), validate Edward Carpenter's conjecture that homosexuality often coincide with wizardry and priest-craft.³⁵

Among the *Hereros* (an ethnic group that inhabit some parts of Southern Africa and can be found in today's Namibia, Botswana and Angola), it was customary for two boys to form *oupanga* (erotic friendship). They stringently and enviously guard this friendship so that neither one of them flings. However, when they marry, they turn naturally to heterosexual intercourse, this can also happen after puberty, before marriage. Nonetheless, when adults and married men go on a long tour on which their wives cannot go with them, they can and do substitute the presence of their wives with their former *epanga* (male-lover) or any other friendly contemporary with whom they can have sexual intercourse as they journey or as long as they are far from home. They primarily practice mutual masturbation. Despite this rife custom among the *Hereros*, the colonialists' presence made homosexuality a thing of ridicule and laughter. Nevertheless, there was never a punishment. Likewise, mention should be made of the rules of conduct that ban speaking about sexual acts, particularly if a member of another generation is present. The act is permitted but speaking about it is forbidden. This was a phase the attitude towards homosexuality assumed with the advent of Christianity.³⁶ This secrecy and systematized silence was described by Falk:

And when in the evening perhaps two young boys leave the collective circle around the fire, supposedly to lock up a calf that is not yet in the corral, quick grins might fly across the faces of

³⁴ Falk, "Homosexuality among the Natives of Southwest Africa," 187-190.

³⁵ Edward Carpenter, *Intermediate types among primitive folk: A study in social evolution* (London: George Allen, 1914), 15.

³⁶ Falk, "Homosexuality Among the Natives of Southwest Africa," 191-192

those remaining behind, but it will occur to no one to follow or watch them. That would contravene all norms of decorum. And if one encounters two such young chaps in the bush, one looks away and sees nothing.³⁷

This account shows that homosexuality did not just disappear with the Whites' systems of check; rather it disappeared and subsequently became a taboo when natives forgot it was part of their lives as a society. At best, the Whites' surveillance system was able to sweep it under the carpet.

A Philosophical Analysis of the “Un-African” Character of the Homosexuality

This research has so far shown that homosexuality is far from being un-African. To say it is, is an anti-historical lie. Homosexuality has always been here. However, there was no unified notion of homosexuality in the continent – for some people it was a fleeting passion, for others it was erotic relationship between adults and adolescents, yet for the majority it was a stable union and part of life that requires no more fuss than the ordinary habit of eating. Most importantly, its various cultural significances cannot be understood by comparing it to what we today understand as homosexuality.

Certainly, it is historically correct to declare that homosexuality existed in traditional Africa and that it was socially accepted. If it happens that it seems not accepted, it is only a variety of it that is considered by that “particular” society as a deviance. Furthermore, today's homophobia is arguably, as a result of a very long systematic clamp down on that aspect of the customs of Africa by the White foreigners. It also shows how important culturalization is regarding what people hold both internally and externally and to what extent people can assume risks for their convictions.

³⁷ Falk, “Homosexuality Among the Natives of Southwest Africa,” 192.

Consequently, reasons for today's homophobia and discrimination cannot be justified in anyway by an appeal to our African historical past. In other words, there is no evidence or justification that homosexuality is un-African from African history: it was not imposed; it was not unnatural and was even considered inborn; and, it was not a threat to family life – heterosexual unions (subsequently procreation) flourished and we are the descendants of the people of that era. Our ancestors seemed to have perfectly harmonized that part of their lives in such a way that they were able to live out their homosexual lifestyle while still ensuring continuity of the population. Accordingly, the only basic reason for homophobia can be hinged on Africa's contact with Euro-Christian and Arab-Islamic traders, missionaries and colonizers and whatever convictions they gave, whether prejudicial or not, is the only reason we can lean on for the justification of our today's present discrimination of homosexuals.

This chapter now turns to the question of the morality of homosexuality. It is palpable that, in itself, homosexuality has no moral worth. However, it becomes either good or bad according to what humans make of it. So, it is good, if informed by good reason we decide it is (as in part of our laws) and bad if otherwise. It is bad if others are harmed through it (as in rape, pedophilia) in this case it is not homosexuality that is bad but rather what is made out of it just as in heterosexuality. On the other hand, it is good if it creates healthy sexual bond between two consenting adults just as we have seen from African historical past. This is just an attempt to simplify a complex issue. This research concedes that the polemics for and against the morality of homosexuality exceed the boundary of this present discourse. Nevertheless, what has been proffered as answer can stand for a simple response to a complex question.

Furthermore, each society at its different epochs, has the right (although informed by good reason) to set and change its morals and laws. Hence, in determining the socio-cultural permissibility of homosexuality today, Africa should ask more concrete questions like; if we don't permit it are people harmed? If we do, are people

harmed? Obviously, besides prejudicial dissatisfaction, decriminalizing homosexuality will no longer be viewed in the same lens as it is today. Finally, a critical mind might disprove same-sex marriage because there was no such example amongst the various groups this research studied. The closest to marriage was that discovered amongst the *Ovagandjeras* of Angola – emphatically, it was not marriage. First, it has earlier on been hinted in a footnote that what is contained herein is not exhaustive and rightly not the only examples that can be found. Certainly, further research would prove otherwise. Denise O'Brien documented woman-woman “marriage” in more than thirty African populations, especially among the Bantu-speaking people.³⁸ In addition, the trend has also been reported among some groups in Southern Nigeria. Also, in this matter, it is scholarly incorrect to suppose that heterosexual marriage has always been as in the same way we have it today. Evolutionary psychologists have an alternative response – hetaerism or primitive/traditional promiscuity.

Before heterosexual marriages, women chose any man they would want to father a child with. This choice is made according to some favourable physical characteristics. Hence, male and female promiscuity ensured that the population increases and strong children are born respectively.³⁹ So, since heterosexual marriage evolved from this brute practice, why should homosexual unions not also be allowed to evolve? As it is now, everything seems to depend on what the majority of the people allow and remember of the previous customs of our ancestors. Whether, this majority's stance harm a substantial number of the population seems not to matter. This is unjustifiably what is presently obtained in the content.

³⁸ Denise O'Brien, “Female Husbands in Southern Bantu Societies,” in *Sexual Stratification: A Cross-Cultural View*, ed. Alice Schlegel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 109.

³⁹ Anthony Brown, “Women are promiscuous, naturally: Some Scientist Now Believe Infidelity is a Genetic Mechanism for Creation of Healthy Children”, *The Guardian Weekly; The Observer*, (2002), 59.

Conclusion

This research has been able to show that:

1. Homosexuality existed in different fashions in traditional Africa and was socially acceptable. Only a few variant which was considered a deviance was discouraged but never discriminated against.
2. Homosexuality was part of the socio-cultural “norm”, and homosexuals had social security and were classed according to their talents and abilities like everyone else.
3. Homophobia and discrimination is not backed by historical precedence as widely acclaimed and it began as a result of European and Arabian influence on the customs of traditional Africa.