

Canadian Anthropology Society

"Bisexuality" and the Politics of Normal in African Ethnography

Author(s): Marc Epprecht

Source: *Anthropologica*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (2006), pp. 187-201

Published by: [Canadian Anthropology Society](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25605310>

Accessed: 29/03/2014 14:08

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Canadian Anthropology Society is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Anthropologica*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

“Bisexuality” and the Politics of Normal in African Ethnography

Marc Epprecht *Queen's University*

Abstract: The purpose of this article is to explore the contemporary implications of the dismissal of “bisexuality” in the ethnography of sub-Saharan Africa. It problematizes the ways in which same-sex sexuality was represented in African ethnography, showing how colonial-era anthropologists tended to suppress, minimize or exoticize evidence of such practices in conformity with colonial ideologies, practices and prevailing debates around gender and sexuality in Europe and America. In the light of critiques launched by feminist, postcolonial and queer theorists against such anthropological representations, this paper demonstrates that the continual denial of “bisexuality” in Africa in the colonial era has become unsustainable.

Keywords: bisexuality, colonialism, Africa, queer theory

Résumé : Le but de cet article est d'explorer les conséquences contemporaines du rejet de la «bisexualité» dans les œuvres ethnographiques d'Afrique sub-saharienne. Il pose le problème de la façon dont la sexualité entre personnes de même sexe a été représentée dans l'ethnographie africaine, démontrant la tendance des anthropologues de l'ère coloniale à supprimer, minimiser ou tropicaliser les évidences de telles pratiques en conformité avec les idéologies, les pratiques et les principaux débats de l'époque coloniale sur les différences entre les sexes et la sexualité en Europe et en Amérique. Étant donné les critiques émanant des théories féministes, post-coloniales et allosexuelles contre ces représentations anthropologiques, le présent article démontre que le rejet continu de l'existence de la bisexualité en Afrique durant la période coloniale est devenu une position intenable.

Mots-Clés : bisexualité, colonialisme, Afrique, théorie allosexuelle

Anthropologists have played a central role in documenting the diversity of human sexuality as it is understood and expressed in different cultures around the world. Scholars in many other disciplines, including my own of history, are often heavily dependent upon their research. However, as Lyons and Lyons (2004) among others have persuasively demonstrated, anthropologists at times “conscripted” select evidence and even fabricated “facts” about the people they studied in order to advance ideals and preferences around sexuality in their own societies. By conjuring idealized or exoticized Others, they helped to create an understanding of “normal” and “modern” by way of contrast. This has resulted in a body of purportedly empirical or scientific data that in retrospect we can see as deeply flawed, morally normative, and sometimes actually complicit in the construction and maintenance of racist colonialist structures. Indeed, to one African critic, the ethnography of African cultures generated by European and American scholars from the 1920s to the 1950s was so “useless” in empirical terms that it is only useful today to the extent that it sheds light on how those colonial structures could function (Owusu 1978).¹

Owusu was much too harsh in such a sweeping judgment. In at least one specific area, however, the critique is warranted to a significant degree. This is the commonplace assumption or assertion as an unqualified fact that Africans south of the Sahara either did not practice same-sex sexuality in their traditional societies, or that they only did so so rarely that it was inconsequential. From the vast generalizations of late 18th- and 19th-century travellers, to colonial-era codifications of custom, to modern studies of sexually transmitted diseases, sexuality, prisons and masculinities, social science research has tended to portray Africans as virtually unique in the world in this respect. Same-sex issues meanwhile remain largely invisible in much of the resources available to HIV/AIDS educators in Africa, including what are otherwise frank

discussions about sexual health and sexual cultures. The non-existence or irrelevance of homosexual transmission among black Africans is apparently such a given that it typically does not even warrant a footnote or a web-link in this material.²

And yet, since Dynes (1983) and Aina (1991) first flagged hidden homosexuality and bisexuality in Africa as potentially important research questions, a growing body of research, activism, and art have comprehensively demonstrated the falseness of the “fact” of Africans’ exclusive heterosexuality. Moodie (1994), Harries (1994), Gevisser and Cameron (1994), Murray and Roscoe (1998), Kendall (1999), Lockhart (2002), Njinje and Alberton (2002), Epprecht (2004), GALZ (2002), Epprecht and Goddard (In press) and Morgan and Wieringa (2005), for example, thoroughly document the presence of diverse expressions of same-sex sexuality in Africa—in traditional societies, in colonial institutions and in present-day settings. A growing, pan-African network of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) associations also attests to diverse, indigenous, same-sex and bisexual cultures and practices in Africa.³ A range of images written or produced by Africans in fiction, theatre and film further destabilizes the stereotype of the “pure” African heterosexual.⁴

These sources on the whole do not propose a timeless, archetypal African gay or lesbian in opposition to that older stereotype. Rather, the women and men who have same-sex sexual relations most often also continue to marry, to have children, and to engage in heterosexual relationships. Whether this should properly be termed “bisexual” is a matter of debate. However, whether men who sometimes have sex with men but do not identify as homo- or bisexual (MSM), and whether women who sometimes have sex with women but do not identify as lesbian or bisexual (WSW) exist in Africa in greater numbers than commonly assumed or asserted cannot in good scholarship be disputed. That it *does* continue to be disputed is a cause for far greater concern than academic quibbling over numbers. Indeed, scholars, activists, and community leaders who deny the existence of MSM and WSW in Africa, who rationalize it as imported or recent, or who simply disregard the evidence, may be fuelling unhelpful or even dangerous homophobic and xenophobic rhetoric. Such rhetoric stigmatizes already vulnerable groups and self-evidently impedes HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention campaigns. The government of Uganda offered an especially disturbing case of this in November 2004 when it threatened to bar international donors from the country if they provided safer-sex education that might be useful to homosexuals (Seesholtz 2005).

Clearly, many factors contribute to the tenacity of the no same-sex sexuality in Africa argument. The ethnography, however, is unquestionably foundational in that it provides a scientific-sounding canon that gives authority to contemporary claims about what is normal and traditional, and what is deviant, non-existent or modern. But how trustworthy is that canon? Murray and Roscoe (1998) pointed to key discrepancies in the documentary record dating as far back as the 18th century. But what remains to be done is to show how and why the silences that helped to define an essentially heterosexual African-ness were first achieved and then changed over time. Those changes offer insight into the complex relationship between colonial rulers and subjects, and can help us to understand why some Africans today still remain attracted to and defensive of colonial notions of normal. Awareness of this history could also move us toward more pointed research about sexuality in the present that could, in turn, improve our ability to design more effective interventions against HIV/AIDS. A queer analysis of African ethnography could also sharpen the postcolonial critique of anthropology more generally by alerting us to hitherto unsuspected essentialist, “Westocentric” terms and concepts that remain embedded in our research tools.⁵

Early Accounts of Gender and Sexuality

The first accounts of gender and sexuality in Africa by European travellers tended to stress what they perceived as African women’s subservience and easy sexual availability to men, Africans’ seeming lack of sexual modesty and guilt, the practice of polygyny and the emphasis on fertility in African cultures. These were typically exaggerated and sensationalized, but on the whole captured a basic truth: African societies traditionally placed an extremely high and prodigiously overdetermined value on heterosexual marriage and reproduction. Individual sexual desire was largely subsumed to the broad interests of the extended family or lineage or enabled in ways that did not endanger those interests (reputation, political alliance, material production, spiritual health and more). Hence, for example, the highly-valued chastity of unmarried girls in many southern and eastern African societies was preserved while at the same time allowing a limited outlet for adolescent sexual curiosity and desire through the custom of non-penetrative (between-the-thighs) sex play. Hence also a wide range of fictive kinship relationships that ensured family and lineage stability while allowing for such idiosyncrasies of individual sexual behaviour as adultery, impotence and celibacy.⁶

Same-sex exceptions to heterosexual norms were also noted from as early as the 16th century. These were usu-

ally couched in vague but strongly disparaging language. Sir Richard Burton's grand overview of world sexuality, for example, notes a Portuguese document from 1558 that observed "unnatural damnation" (a euphemism for male-male sex) to be esteemed among the Kongo (Burton 1885:246-247). Andrew Battell, who lived among the Imbangala in the 1590s, was similarly disapproving: "They are beastly in their living, for they have men in women's apparel, whom they keepe among their wives" (Purchas 1905 vol. VI:376). Jean Baptiste Labat, cribbing from an Italian explorer in the same region of Angola, also described a caste of cross-dressing male diviners whose leader was "a shameless, impudent, lewd man...deceitful to the last, without honor. He dresses ordinarily as a woman and makes an honor of being called the Grandmother" (Labat 1998:163). Images of African polymorphous perversity and flexible gender systems along these lines then found their way into European middlebrow culture in the 18th century, notably in the ostensibly realistic novels by Castilhon (1993) and Sade (1990).

We need to be extremely cautious about taking these early accounts at face value. Moreover, little was said in them about the erotic content of same-sex relationships. Jumping ahead in time, however, the queer research noted above has established that these passing condemnatory references contained a fundamental truth. Same-sex relationships existed in African societies with a wide variety of motives, practices and emotions involved, including affection and fertility control. We have also learned that there was often a ritual or symbolic significance to, for example, anal penetration by one man of another. As was the case with incest, breaking a normally strong taboo could bring the taboo-breaker into direct contact with powerful ancestral or other spirits. To perform anal intercourse with a male under proper conditions could thus bring good crops or hunting, protection from evil spirits, and greater virility in marriage. According to Günter Tessman (1998:156), adult, married Pangwe men in the German colony of Kameroun understood mutual acts of sodomy not as an act of pleasure but as "wealth medicine." From elsewhere in Africa come whispers of chiefs who fortified their authority against political rivals, warriors who prepared for battle, boxers who steeled for their matches, and mine-workers who sought protection from rockfalls or achieved a promotion and raise, by resorting to such medicine. The power of the medicine stemmed in part from the secrecy of the act. New research by lesbian anthropologists suggests that there were also unspoken erotic relationships between African women within the rubric of spirit mediumship or divination. This was in addition to same-sex sexual play, experimentation, "accidents" and love affairs.⁷

Between the early, obscure and scandalized allusions, on the one hand, and contemporary queer scholarship on the other, something happened. With rare exceptions, a more or less collective silence descended on the topic. That silence creates an impression of radical discontinuity between the present and near-past, an apparent discontinuity that in turn is sometimes cited as proof that same-sex sexuality did not exist in Africa until introduced by whites in the colonial or even more recent periods. A close examination of the silence as it is affirmed in authoritative texts, however, suggests that the major discontinuity was not in Africa at all, but in Europe and America, whence came the authors of those texts. As a first step toward understanding the yawning gap in African ethnography on this issue, therefore, we need to consider factors in Europe and America that may have affected the way that anthropologists and other social scientists saw, interpreted, and wrote up their African evidence.

Michel Foucault (1978) provides the starting point. He first argued that the industrial and scientific revolutions of the late 18th and 19th centuries brought about a profound transformation in ideas about the nature of sexuality and the propriety of certain gender roles and identities. This change occurred as a result both of new scientific knowledge and changing class structures. As many scholars have since richly detailed with specific reference to Europeans' and Americans' relations with non-Western societies in this period, the rising class of bourgeoisie in the industrializing countries promoted ideas that served their material interests. This included the notion that broad types of people were by their very nature not only different but less suited to govern and to enjoy the economic and social privileges that the bourgeoisie were claiming for themselves. These racial and sexual Others also provided negative standards against which new social norms and ideals among the bourgeoisie could be affirmed, notably, black or native as opposed to and inferior to white, and female as opposed to and inferior to male.

One critical new standard in the emerging ideology was unwavering heterosexual desire and self-control over all other sexual feeling or expression. Same-sex sexual relations had long been taboo—indeed, punishable by death—in Western European society. In the pre-industrial era, however, such relations were understood as discrete acts of sin that could be atoned for or purged through prayer or mortification. In the emerging ideology, by contrast, sin gave way to the notion of homosexual character in whom the discrete act implied a whole range of deep personality flaws. An array of scientific-sounding arguments consolidated that character into a figure to be despised, shunned and repressed (ideally, self-repressed)

out of existence. Scientific homophobia in turn helped to consolidate a sex–gender system that emphasized virile masculinity and domestic femininity. This reified dichotomy of gender roles and identities was then harnessed to the causes of bourgeois class formation, more efficient exploitation of a disciplined industrial labour force, and nation or empire building.⁸

This emerging consensus about sexuality held that homosexuality was anomalous to nature, but that it flourished or was contagious under certain conditions. Above all, the more decadent or lax the civilization, the more widespread was the character and cultural flaw. The late stages of ancient Rome and the Arab or Turkish empires were often cited as both proof of this and as a harsh lesson: decadence leads to widespread homosexuality, effeminacy and pacifism among men which result in military defeat and humiliation by more virile societies. This understanding of history implied that homosexuality could (indeed, should) be contained or eliminated through rigorous moral instruction, strict parenting and state intervention.

Black Africans figured significantly in the debates about nature and civilization, virile versus decadent. Few Europeans by this time had travelled in Africa south of the Sahara and little reliable was known about black African societies. The prevailing prejudice, however, was that black Africans were generally uncivilized and close to nature. By definition this meant that they could not be decadent or exhibit social traits and behaviours assumed to come with civilization. The emerging consensus on homosexuality thus required that Africans conform to the expectation of a supposedly natural lack of sexual diversity (or rather, perversity, deviance, and corruption in the parlance of the time). Edward Gibbon was the first to put this forth, albeit only as wishful thinking in a passing reference explaining factors in the decline and fall of the Roman empire (1925:506). But soon after him, someone who had actually travelled in Africa brought the first authoritative seal of personal experience to the theory. The English explorer William Browne spent several years wandering about the Middle East and North Africa in the 1790s. In his account of those travels he simply noted that “paederasty” was rare in primitive Sudan as compared to decadent western Asia (Browne 1806:293).

The idea that Africans did not engage in same-sex sexual practices gained currency as the frontiers of European rule expanded into the interior. Christian missionaries at the forefront of that expansion had their hands full challenging the formidable array of what they regarded as heterosexual immoralities in African societies (polygyny, child-betrothals, marriage by cattle, female genital

castration and so on). Railing and reasoning against these visible practices, they had little interest in further stirring the pot of cultural conflict with too-close enquiry into more secretive ones. Indeed, the absence of overt homosexual relationships was sometimes the one straw of hope to clutch at to maintain their faith that an otherwise dispiriting struggle against “savage” lustiness could be won. There was also the concern of upsetting the sensitivities of readers back home. Eschewing details altogether, using deeply euphemistic language (like “nameless vice”), or reverting to Greek and Latin to describe the offensive behaviours are thus the mainstay of missionary and other early travellers’ and ethnographers’ accounts.⁹

Efforts by colonial regimes to codify African customary law around gender and sexuality similarly showed scant interest in querying exceptions to Africans’ heterosexual norms and ideals. Far from complicating the rhetoric of the civilizing mission, they typically prompted African informants to confirm the prevailing African-as-savage (close to nature, heterosexual) interpretation. The case of Basutoland is instructive. Soon after it became a protectorate of the Cape Colony, a commission of enquiry was set up to find out what Sesotho custom said. Interviewing elderly Basotho men through an interpreter, the commissioners raised the issue of “unnatural crime” with two witnesses only. These two senior chiefs calmly assured the commissioners that such crime did not exist, which was duly accepted as fact (Cape Colony 1873). In other cases where even that much direct testimony was not available or solicited, colonial magistrates simply applied their own logic and presumptions to fill in the gap. Why, for example, would African men and boys turn to each other for sexual release when African women and girls were so easily available for their enjoyment, including by thigh sex? By this reasoning, since there was no apparent need or function for same sex sexuality in African societies, it should not exist.

Exceptions to this narrative arose from those rare cases where male-male sexual behaviour was so overt that it could not be blithely rationalized out of existence. In those cases, it tended to be construed as a consequence of Africans’ contact with decadent outsiders, Arabs above all, whose sordid reputation in Orientalist discourse was firmly entrenched. The most infamous instance was that of Mwangi, the *kabaka* (king) of the Baganda people from 1884–99. Mwangi was said to have been corrupted toward bisexuality by his Muslim advisors at court, a moral danger that culminated in the sexual abuse and martyrdom of young Christian converts (Ashe 1970:218; Faupel 1965:82). Cureau, meanwhile, accounted for more mundane occurrences of “homosexuality” in French territo-

ries by pointing to “Semites” coming from the east and disreputable Europeans from the West (1915:166). Ibrahim Fawzi, an Egyptian soldier and administrator under British generals Gordon and Kitchener in the Sudan, portrayed sodomy as symbolic of the moral decay of Egypt’s Turco-Circassian rulers. The Mahdist revolt emerges from this trope as a legitimate, purifying, African response to foreign immorality (Jacob 2005:159). The unpublished commissions of enquiry into “unnatural vice” among mine workers in the Johannesburg area in 1906 and 1907 added Chinese and Portuguese to the list of corrupting elements (Epprecht 2004).

This is not to say that claims of exotic influences on African societies were unalloyed Orientalist fabrications. On the contrary, the fact that Arabic or Persian words for homoerotic relationships are widespread in Islamic parts of Africa suggests at least a modicum of truth in the claim of cultural influence on this issue.¹⁰ That the theory of an exotic origin of same-sex sexuality became generalized to the whole of Africa, however, was definitely not the result of careful research by missionaries or anyone else. The most authoritative statement of that theory in fact came from a man with only limited experience in Dahomey and on the Swahili coast but with almost unlimited, explicit contempt for blacks—Sir Richard Burton.¹¹ Burton’s terminal essay to his translation of the *Arabian Nights* is a grand mustering of prevailing conceits and snippets of evidence into a global theory of sexual “perversion.” It does not specifically refer much to Africa at all beyond declaring that the so-called Negro parts of the continent lay on the outside of what Burton called the Sotadic zone of the world. This fantastical climatic and cultural zone comprised those places where same-sex sexuality was supposedly tolerated if not widely practiced or celebrated. Being outside the zone meant that most of Africa was lumped together with northern Europe as an area where same-sex sexuality was supposedly rare and disapproved. Unlike northern Europe, however, Africa’s assumed low level of cultural sophistication placed its inhabitants at heightened risk of contagion by Sotadic zone enthusiasts.

Absurd as this may seem today, Burton’s thesis proved popular and enduring. In retrospect this was clearly not so much because of its empirical accuracy but because of how the thesis flattered his main audience—imperial-minded, bourgeois, and self-consciously virile Englishmen. The notion that sexually innocent, non-Sotadic Africans were at risk of contagion or corruption by Portuguese and Arabs also served their paternalistic vision of colonial and missionary interventions to protect Africa from those people. Indeed, so obvious and common-sensical had that threat to Africans from morally corrupt out-

sidiers become by the 1930s that colonial officials in some cases expressed amazement and disbelief when confronted with evidence to the contrary.¹²

Yet even as this narrative of primitive, natural, and at-risk heterosexuality was being constructed, a small number of anthropologists and other researchers who looked closely were finding evidence to contradict it. Men such as J. Weeks, Ferdinand Karsch-Haack, Kurt Falk, Günter Tessman, M. Haberlandt, Louis Tauxier, Adolphe Cureau and R.P.G. Hulstaert all reported forms of same-sex sexuality in traditional settings in their wanderings in Africa in the late 19th and early 20th century, including, as noted above, male-male anal penetration for “wealth medicine.” In most cases this was simply presented in passing as dry, descriptive fact or scientific curiosity. It is likely, however, that some of these men were wrestling with confusion about their own personal sexuality and their accounts may have been self-interested or self-justifying. Tessman, for example, was known to be “attracted to men, more particularly African men whom he encountered during his ethnographic expedition in Cameroon” (Bleys 1995:219).¹³ In other cases, the authors deployed their African evidence to score points about broad issues then being hotly debated back in Europe. African evidence was particularly useful to those who wished to do battle against moralistic and xenophobic models of homosexual corruption in European society. Ferdinand Karsch-Haack, notably, drew upon his findings among hunter-gatherers in Angola and Namibia to argue that they proved homoeroticism was not a condition of decadent civilization but an innate phenomenon to all of humankind: “We should finally give up the fiction that Sodom and Gomorrah are only in Europe and that everywhere else holy customs reign...the most unnatural vices, which we regard as the most recent ways of stimulation of an overcivilized culture are practised there in the light of day, in the open, as common practice” (Wierenga 2001:13).¹⁴ Tessman also used his evidence from Cameroon to suggest lessons for contemporary European audiences: “Punishment through temporal justice exists among no tribe, since no one feels harmed by homosexual relations” (Murray and Roscoe 1998:156). At a time of an emerging cult of militarist and extremely homophobic masculinity that eventually became Nazism, this was a fairly brave political point to make.

Karsch-Haack’s and others’ seeming proof of inborn homosexuality did not attract much attention among Africanists at the time. One reason is that the same-sex practices they described clearly did not impinge upon the dominant heteronormative ideals and kinship concerns. That is, while African men might take boys or other men

as lovers, and while African women might enjoy sensual relationships with other women or girls, they did not see this as inimical to or exclusive of normal, highly valued marriage and reproduction. The men and women who took partners of the same sex in fact were often adolescents or young adults self-consciously practising for marital roles. In other cases they were properly married and reproductive adults who nonetheless took same-sex lovers for various reasons, including ritual protection of men's masculine dignity against "pollution" by women. Tauxier (1912:569-570), for example, described how particularly beautiful young boys were groomed as *soronés* (pages) for the Mossi chiefs and other court dignitaries. Dressed as girls, they played the role of passive sex object on Fridays, only, when elites were proscribed from touching the female flesh that they enjoyed for the rest of the week. Martin (1913) and Seligman and Seligman (1932) also mentioned age-differentiated homosexual relations among warriors in the powerful military state of Azande. Those warriors were often simultaneously the heads of large polygynous households. Nadel, who was quite open about his belief that anthropology should serve to make colonial governance more efficient even noted a bisexual polygynous marriage among the Nuba (male husband, female wife and male wife) and other "perverts" who subsequently graduated without stigma to normal marriage (1947:109, 285). As for the relatively widespread practice of woman-woman marriage, only a single speculative exception from Dahomey allowed for the possibility of an erotic element (Herskovits 1967:340). Elsewhere, functionalist explanations of the practice prevailed, mainly how it provided heirs for widows and maintained the stability of the lineage against potential claims by biological fathers.

According to the prevailing taxonomy of perversion, all of this meant that no "real homosexuality" was involved. There was thus no need to investigate any further what amounted to a colourful but basically irrelevant native foible. Indeed, the one man who did substantively investigate during his fieldwork in the 1930s self-censored his findings for nearly four decades (Evans-Pritchard 1970, 1971—to be discussed below). Isolated references to same-sex phenomena or transvestism within authors' "tribes" were further isolated by the fact that the authors virtually never referred to or compared their findings with descriptions of analogous occurrences in other studies.

"Civilized" Vice and Colonial Insecurities

Complicating matters for anthropologists in this era was that Africans did not stay still. They moved from tradi-

tional to modern, and from raw to semi-civilized in the parlance of the day. One manifestation of this flux was in new forms of same-sex sexuality among Africans that began to appear, and to be talked about on the margins of public debate, in the late 1890s and early 1900's.¹⁵ These included a male-male sexual relationship associated with industrialization and large-scale male migrant labour among Africans (so-called mine marriages or *inkotshane* in the case of southern Africa), military service (most notoriously in the "Bat d' Af" of French North and West Africa), and prison or criminal gang homosexuality (such as the so-called Ninevite system in the South African case). In the first, men took younger men or boys as servants and "wives" for the duration of their employment contracts. As Moodie (1988, 1994) and Harries (1990, 1994) explain, these temporary male-male marriages often served (and in fact were often self-consciously intended by the men themselves) to strengthen traditional marriage with women back in the rural areas. Boy wives allowed the men to avoid costly and potentially unhealthy relationships with female prostitutes in town (although mine husbands sometimes still went for those as well). Homosexual gangs and prison relationships were also usually construed as short-term expediency or a symbolic assertion of masculine power and identity in a context that otherwise sought to crush African men's sense of dignity. The South African government, at least, was alert to an extremely disturbing political element (anti-white, anti-colonial) in the homosexuality within these gangs (see South Africa 1913:236).

Publicity about such developments was potentially devastating to the mine companies and colonial governments alike. What kind of civilizing mission was it that abetted "unnatural" and "odious" behaviours in the very people it was supposedly protecting? Various governments and companies consequently took steps to contain the damage in public relations terms by, for example, distracting attention with noisy, repeated public campaigns against female prostitutes. After an initial flurry of missionary indignation about mine wives, even their public remonstrances fell silent in lieu of quieter propaganda from the pulpit and mission station.¹⁶

Anthropologists, by and large, tacitly supported those efforts to suppress or contain the scandal. For example, to allay public fears that the practice of mine marriage was spreading among African labourers, the government of South Africa through the 1920s and 1930s disingenuously maintained that it was basically confined to Shangaan or VaThonga men from Mozambique. Supporting this view was the massive ethnology of South African tribes built around the photography of Albert

Duggan-Cronin in the 1930s. Henri-Phillipe Junod, the son of the very missionary who had led the campaign against mine marriage in the early 1900s, provides the only mention of “unnatural vice” in the entire multi-volume collection in his chapter on the VaThonga (Junod 1935). This was long after it was privately well-known that many other ethnic groups were implicated and indeed that a common vocabulary around male-male sex had developed over a whole vast region as far away as Malawi.

Another illuminating example of this marginalizing or trivializing discourse comes in an article by Percival Kirby entitled “A Secret Musical Instrument” (1942). Behind its anodyne title, a mystery of Africa’s strange ways is unfolded and solved for the reader. A percussion instrument, not seen by a European since 1694, turns up at an exhibition in Windhoek. The intrepid anthropologist goes far into the bush in search of its meaning. The “tribesmen” there are surprised and amazed to see the instrument, but refuse to say more until the white women in the visiting party are withdrawn. A player is sent for but vigorous debate ensues. Who, really, could join in the song? Was it for men, women, or hermaphrodites? Kirby names his two main informants, both European. Finally, on page four, the penultimate page of the article, the answer to the mystery is revealed: doctor and “sodomite” can play the *ekola*. They use the instrument and accompanying song to assist men so-inclined to come out from their masculine gender role to a feminine one (apparently a permanent but only mildly stigmatising condition). Conclusion: “It would appear that in the *ekola* we have an example of a ritual musical instrument of considerable antiquity, the true nature of which has hitherto remained unexplained, and the use of which has, in spite of the march of civilization, lingered on to the present time” (Kirby 1942:350).

Perhaps surprisingly, even the dubious genre of “sexology” that emerged in the middle colonial period also notably understated or denied the possibility of same-sex sexuality in Africa. Authors such as Bryk (1964), Jacobus X (1937) and Rachewiltz (1964), do not deserve respect for their methodology (mostly gossip and hearsay), apparent intention (to cater to a voyeuristic readership who preferred their pornography in a reputable disguise) or tone (often frankly racist and homophobic). Nonetheless, they did catalogue a range of sexual behaviours (and indigenous African terms for them) that took place within the rubric of normal village life. By not including plausible evidence about same-sex sexuality, however, they contributed to erasing the issue from the realm of discussion. Rachewiltz (1964:280), for instance, in a single chapter devoted to “sexual deviations” gives a single example of

homosexuality that is not lifted from Bryk and Jacobus. This refers to an oasis in Egypt. Bryk is even more definitive when he simply pronounces that “The abnormal in sexual life is despised in Africa” (1964:230).

How to explain this reticence to investigate or even to titillate? Part of it undoubtedly stemmed from Africans’ own denial, taboo, reticence, euphemism, and “double-think” on the topic. Monica Wilson, for example, who appended two short oral interviews about male homosexuality among the Nyakyusa, makes clear that her informants were breaking a profound code of secrecy by sharing their knowledge of these matters with her (Wilson 1951:196-197). Brian MacDermot also gives a hint of his frustration in this respect when he saw a Nuer man dressed in women’s clothes (and whom he later learned was addressed as a woman and who was married to another man). This was “so totally against what the Nuer had been telling me, that I questioned Doerdering [his translator] carefully, but this failed to produce any further explanation. Perhaps this goes to show how easily the people will accept the ruling of a prophet, or again *how easily their own rules can be changed should the gods be willing*” (MacDermot 1972:119-120, my emphasis). T.O. Beidelman, who mentions in a footnote that “a few men enjoyed homosexual relations” without detriment to their marriages, remarks that it took him six years of living among the Kaguru before his informants entrusted him with this information (1993:273, ftn 16).

The fact that MacDermot, like his colleagues in this period, did not pursue the investigation any further also likely reflects an underlying discomfort or disgust with the topic. To Hulstaert (1938:95) homosexuality was nothing less than “malice.” For others, however, it may have been close social ties with colonial officials and missionaries, and the desire to spare them embarrassment, which led to self-censorship. The sex itself was not necessarily the issue but rather, the other behaviours that often attended the sexual relationship, at least in those places where same-sex sexuality was most visible (mines, prisons, streets, courts). Violence, abuse of power over children, extortion, alcohol abuse and prostitution were relatively common in those situations, reflecting badly both on the colonial system and the men involved.

Culturally Westernized African elites with whom the anthropologists often worked closely and depended upon for translation and networking, likely added to the effect. Striving to appear respectable according to colonial standards, this most articulate group of Africans reinforced the starting assumption that African dignity depended on the suppression of certain secrets deemed disreputable. Indeed, white settlers and colonial officials often used

crudely racist language to demean African integrity and to emasculate or effeminize African men. Anthropologists who felt empathy with “their” tribes may have been loath to impugn their subjects with too close an enquiry into disapproved behaviours or implicitly compromised masculinity. The very first African trained as an anthropologist at the London School of Economics underscored this point by, first, mocking “professional friends of Africa” who might presume to contradict or qualify an authentic African interpretation of African tradition and, second, categorically denying the existence of same-sex sexuality in traditional Gikuyu society (Kenyatta 1961 [1938]:xviii, 162). Ironically, Kenyatta supports the latter claim with that old colonial argument that homosexuality was “unnecessary” since the opportunity for heterosexual sexual play was so readily available.

Lyons and Lyons (2004) point to yet a further factor. In their overview of the history of sexuality studies in anthropology worldwide, they argue that the middle-to-late colonial period witnessed a generalized retreat from sexuality topics as anthropology sought to carve out a niche for itself as a “respectable” discipline within academe. In most cases this retreat was likely unconscious as the dominant culture identified Politics, War, Economics, Kinship and so forth, as legitimate areas of scholarly investigation. In others, the retreat was made under direct pressure from institutions that disapproved of what they considered salacious or marginal topics. Homophobia and biphobia were especially intense in the context of Cold War tensions in the 1950s and 1960s. To publish something that showed too much interest in same-sex sexuality, or that did not cast it in a poor light, was a risky career move for professional scholars, particularly in the United States.

All in all, as David Coplan frankly admitted when finally breaking an eighty or more year silence on male-male sexual relationships among Basotho mineworkers, “some of our colleagues would rather this aspect of migrant life be left unexamined” (1994:137).

Gays Rights and Queer Anthropology

Times began to change quite rapidly in the 1960s, including steps to decriminalize and destigmatize homosexuality in law, psychiatry and popular culture in the West. Destigmatization then afforded the topic growing legitimacy as a research question across a range of social sciences. This produced some unexpected findings when the issue was raised in Africa. Tanner (1969:302), for example, was the first scholar to consider male-male sex in an African prison. Although he continued to characterize homosexuality as essentially Other to presumably Real

Africa (that is, largely confined to Arab and Somali prisoners), his remarks about local Ugandan participants actually contradict that old stereotype. Another striking piece of research from this time came from revolutionary Guinée, where French psychologist Pierre Hanry carried out the first self-consciously scientific study of same-sex practices among African youth. No less than 17% of his high school boy informants admitted to having participated in homosexual relations, not for money or because of rape, but for experience and, presumably, for fun (Hanry 1970:86). This and other findings pertaining to young men’s and women’s sexuality were so far out of line with prevailing stereotypes that they led Hanry to recommend radical changes to the sex education curriculum.

Political decolonisation in this period removed one of the stumbling blocks to such enquiry. It also opened the door to trenchant self-reflection about the relationship between anthropology and colonial rule. A growing number of anthropologists revisited data they had previously ignored or suppressed. Evans-Pritchard’s observations and explanations of “sexual inversion” among men and women in Azande are perhaps the best known such case, published just before his death (1970, 1971). The year after Angola achieved its independence, Carlos Estermann broke over two centuries of silence about *kimbandas* (also known as *chibados*) among the Kwanyama. Estermann, drawing on his observations as a Catholic priest in Angola the 1920s-40s, matter-of-factly described both these cross-dressing men (“passive homosexuals” who formally married) and “lesbians” who pointedly did not claim spirit possession to explain their sexuality (Estermann 1976:196-197).

Two articles by John Blacking (1959, 1978) also neatly illustrate the shift to re-evaluate earlier research. In both of these articles, Blacking describes and analyses a fictive marital relationship between Venda girls that he uncovered at high schools in 1950s South Africa. In both articles, the lesbian-like content of the relationships under study is thoroughly concealed by innocuous titles. In the first, however, Blacking explicitly denies that the relationship involved sex play or was “actively homosexual,” despite noting that the girls “may sleep together under the same blanket as ‘husband’ and ‘wife’” (1959:157). In the later article, by contrast, he concedes that the girls “enjoyed intimate physical contact” extending to kissing, petting and the use of home-fashioned dildoes with each other (1978:109). Did the girls’ actual behaviour change in the intervening years or was Blacking simply being more forthright? Gay (1985), who found a similar, well-established type of relationship among Basotho girls in the 1970s, suggests the latter.

Where the transfer of political power from whites to blacks was stalled, as in apartheid South Africa and in the self-declared Republic of Rhodesia, new research broached homosexuality in part as a strategy to sharpen the critique of colonialism and capitalism. Charles van Onselen, notably, in a seminal study of African migrant labour in colonial Rhodesia, argued that male-male sexuality and bestiality in the mine compounds had been tacitly condoned and exploited by the mine companies from as early as the 1910s and 1920s (van Onselen 1976:174-175, 307). South African church leaders also began openly debating how to deal with mine marriage as early as 1970, a phenomenon that they largely blamed on the apartheid regime (Berglund 1970).

A quixotic attempt by the South African government to keep with the times ironically may have fuelled the impression that homosexuality among Africans was indeed a new manifestation of apartheid. This was a series of dictionaries that emerged from so-called grand apartheid, the project to consolidate ethnic and linguistic distinctions between Africans in the 1950s and 1960s. Part of that project involved creating dictionaries to render official versions of languages that corresponded to newly designated African homelands or Bantustans. Headed by P.J. Joubert of the South African Broadcasting Corporation, the apartheid linguists ventured into areas previously considered too scandalous to include. Joubert's unusual determination to discover or invent African words for "homosexuality" and "homosexualist" may have reflected a personal, closeted interest in the topic. But whatever the case, the translations he and associates produced were so forced that no native-speaker would easily recognize their meaning: "homosexuality" in Zulu, for example, was rendered as *ukubhebhana kwababulili-bunye* ("two people of one sex being intimate with each other"). Tsonga was even more ridiculous: *ku va ni rinavelo ra rimbewu leri a nga na rona*. Such a clumsy attempt to make something visible using literal translations of European concepts would have discredited the exercise among native-speakers (indeed, when tested on Zulu speakers at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the phrase above first elicited bafflement and then unanimous consensus that *ukubhebhana*, meaning "intimacy"—was used quite inappropriately). To anyone who was actually paying attention to these minor shenanigans of apartheid ideologues, it would have provided a proof that Europeans were indeed trying to impose homosexuality on Africans.¹⁷

The most common response to such material was simply to ignore it—the copy of *Érotisme Africain* that I consulted at an important research library still had most of its pages uncut from the publisher 35 years after publi-

cation. In other cases, intrusions of historical or sociological evidence about same-sex sexuality prompted an actively defensive reaction by anthropologists determined to uphold the heterosexual reputation of "his" or "her" people. Eileen Krige, for example, whose original research was carried out in the 1940s, published an article in 1974 whose categorical language sought to shut down speculation that there might be a sexual element in the famous woman-woman marriage of the Lovedu rain queen (Krige 1974:34). Van Onselen's history of migrant labour also elicited a defensive response from a leading anthropologist of the Shona people, Michael Gelfand. Although van Onselen had placed the blame for homosexual relationships and bestiality primarily on the European mine-owners and impoverished migrants from Malawi, Gelfand clearly felt compelled to protect "his" people from possible slur. The methodology of his research does not give confidence in his impartiality, particularly bearing in mind that he conducted it during the height of violence in the struggle by black Zimbabweans to overthrow white supremacist rule. Gelfand (white man) first interviewed four Shona chiefs and studied the written transcripts of some of their native court cases. In this way, not too surprisingly, he found homosexuality to be "rare" (Gelfand 1979:202). A subsequent investigation involving interviews with 15 chiefs and a colleague at the university found that "None was able to confirm the existence of either homosexuality or lesbianism" (Gelfand 1985:137).

Gelfand's intervention was almost certainly intended to demonstrate solidarity between white liberals and African elites at a time of intense political and cultural struggle against institutionalised racism. J. Lorand Matory (2005), drawing upon the insights of Michael Herzfeld (1997), has used the term "nationalist allegory" to describe this kind of collusion between foreign anthropologists and local nationalists. He illustrates the concept with cases from Brazil and Nigeria, the latter focusing on the changing ways that the *oricha* cult among the Yoruba has been treated in the literature. There have long been suspicions that homoerotic elements of Brazil's *candomblé* religion originated in Yoruba practitioners of *oricha* who had been transported across the Atlantic as slaves. In trying to trace this link, Matory came across a respected Yoruba art historian who twice personally witnessed a ritual act of anal penetration by one *oricha* priest upon another. What is of interest to Matory is not how common the practice was, or whether it had meaning to the men as a sensual or homosexual experience. Rather, the key issue is that a scholarly witness chose not to publish his dramatic observations, self-censoring out of a sense of "cultural intimacy" or the shared desire among nationalist-

minded elites to repress certain facts about national culture that could be construed as embarrassing in light of an imputed homophobic colonial or international gaze.

Postcolonial conditions, including economic distress, politically unrepresentative governments, and a new generation of bossy Westerners, created pressures to corral Africans into a reassuring nationalist allegory of exclusive heterosexuality.¹⁸ Despite this, a new generation of African anthropologists began to produce work that tentatively conceded and tried to explain same-sex sexuality in traditional cultures, especially as it appeared in cases of spirit possession (Bozongwana 1983 and Ngubane 1977, for example). Additionally, small social scenes and informal networks of blacks who self-imagined and identified through the imagery of international gay life or gay liberation had begun to appear in major African cities as early as the 1970s. Drawn into political activism in the 1980s and 1990s by the anti-apartheid movement, by the struggle against HIV and AIDS, and by gathering state- and church-sanctioned homophobia, black Africans began to voice explicit challenges to traditional cultures of discretion (closets). Partisans of such gay rights activism quickly picked up the existing historical and ethnographic evidence as a potential ally to be cultivated and coaxed into service.

The first such interventions tended to be naïve about the history of anthropology and colonialism, to treat the sources uncritically, and to throw to the wind due caution around translation and context. Attempts to plug Africa into a global queer theory on the basis of such patchy evidence were typically not very successful.¹⁹ The early scholarship that took same-sex sexuality seriously nonetheless made significant contributions. Perhaps the biggest was to confound the lingering Victorian-era assumption that same-sex sexuality somehow endangered hegemonic heteropatriarchal gender roles and identities. Judith Gay was among the first to show how wrong that assumption was and, indeed, that the exact opposite applied in her close study of the fictive “mummy-baby” among Basotho girls. Gay (1985) found that the girls shared enough physical intimacy to appear lesbian-like by Western standards of the erotic. But the mummy-baby relationship actually enabled successful and safer heterosexual dating, notably by providing a relatively safe way for the girls to practice new notions of romantic love and sexual foreplay. The girls themselves valued lesbian-like relationships with heterosexual marriage in mind. Gay also showed that these lesbian-like relationships sometimes continued beyond adolescence, where they helped to stabilize heterosexual marriages under severe stress by long-term male absence. Similar seeming con-

traditions emerged from studies of male-male sexuality, including Donald Donham’s analysis of the *ashtime* role (or gender identity) in Maale society of southern Ethiopia. *Ashtime* (translated as male “transvestites”) performed domestic labour and ritual functions in the king’s court. One of the latter, apparently, was to enable the king and other men to avoid the supposed pollution of having sex with women just prior to a major religious ceremony. The king, as “the male principle incarnate,” had to be protected from even the merest whiff of female sexuality at key moments in the ritual life of the nation. For men to sleep with *ashtime* at those times was thus, ironically, a means for them to help preserve the symbolic, heterosexually virile masculinity of the head of the nation. In no way was penetrating an *ashtime* regarded as homosexual, bisexual or unmanly.

Studies conducted by expatriate researchers were inevitably occluded by at least one and often more translations, as well as the heavy cultural and political baggage the different interlocutors brought to the meaning of homosexuality, transvestite, lesbian and so forth. A critical turning point in the history of African sexuality studies therefore came when African gays and lesbians themselves first began to speak directly to academic audiences about their experiences and perspectives. Among the first was Zackie Achmat’s (1993) powerfully argued, erotically charged critique of white scholars who suppressed or gave a functionalist spin to evidence of male-male desire among African men in their analyses. Achmat urged a new generation of scholars not to fear homophobic or heterosexist nationalist allegories but boldly to seek evidence of the diversity of sensual desire among Africans as among any other group of people in the world. The remarkable flowering of queer anthropology, among other scholarly and artistic interventions noted at the beginning of this article, has ensued.

The new queer anthropology has thoroughly and dramatically destabilized both the African-as-lusty-heterosexual and the tired categories of heterosexual, bisexual, homosexual. It requires an article or more on its own. For now, however, it serves my argument to draw attention to just one of the more striking testimonies to the diversity of relationships and identities that formerly were subsumed within old silences and categories. McLean and Ngcobo’s informants were black, female-identified transgender men in Johannesburg known as *skesanas*. They spoke of *mapantsula* (super macho, gangster types who “accidentally” have sex with the *skesanas*), *injongas* (men who have sex in the active role with passive-role *skesanas* yet who claim to be heterosexual, even though in some cases they were formerly *skesanas*) and *imbubes* (men

who have sex with skesanas and who claim to be heterosexual but secretly enjoy being penetrated. But then, what skesana would agree to take the active role? Implicit in the imbube role were skesanas or perhaps injongas who secretly enjoyed penetrating a male-identified person). A skesana who never graduates to become an injonga may be a “real homosexual,” also known as *istabane*. “Chris” explained some of the difficulties: “I am in a relationship with a skesana. His name is Sello. I am an injonga, but my real secret is that I am an imbube” (McLean and Ngcobo 1994:168). As for the sex itself, these highly sexually active young men did not consider mutual masturbation to be sex. Older men and injongas often saw even anal penetration as nothing more than play, joking or an obligation due to them.²⁰

Conclusion

South Africa enshrined its present gay-friendly constitution in 1996. Since then, LGBTI activists have won dramatic legal victories and have helped to pioneer a nascent pan-African sexual rights network. These achievements sometimes obscure the fact that even in South Africa, homophobia remains a real threat to out gays and lesbians, often amplified by xenophobia and stigma against people living with HIV or AIDS. Elsewhere in Africa, violently homophobic rhetoric is frequently explicit and backed by state power. The coming out material discussed above is thus courageous on a personal level. The new anthropology, whether it explicitly aligns itself with global queer studies or not, also represents the kind of bold challenges to mainstream scholarship predicted by Kath Weston in her reflections on queer ethnographic research (1998). These would include:

First, establishing beyond reasonable objection that most African societies had normative ways of dealing with sexual difference that were discreetly hidden within the dominant heteropatriarchal norms. Sweeping claims about non-existence or murderous, dogmatic hostility to same-sex sexuality are thus empirically unfounded. Expressions of same-sex sexuality, moreover, changed over time in response to many factors, almost certainly including interventions by Western anthropologists.

Second, the research raises compelling questions on a number of contemporary issues. Are men who sometimes have sex with men but do not admit it and do not consider themselves homosexual or bisexual a more significant vector for HIV than has previously been considered? Do women who have sex with women yet consider themselves straight or normal engage in practices that would more accurately be termed bisexual or lesbian-like? It seems likely.

The new anthropology also causes us to reflect on whether the attitudes and political agendas that obscured MSM and WSW from the view of earlier anthropologists and other researchers had a bigger role in shaping heteronormative gender roles and identities in the majority population than has thus far been investigated. That is, even if homosexual practice is not commonplace, or recognized as such, could homophobia, transphobia, heterosexism and other “invisibilizing” discourses be significant cultural influences on the majority population? If so, interventions aimed at the majority population today (for women’s empowerment and for sexual health, notably) cannot afford blithely to ignore insights coming out of queer scholarship and activism.

The fact that the new anthropological studies of same-sex sexuality *do* continue to be largely ignored or downplayed in mainstream literature on sexuality in favour of old, nationalist or even colonial allegories thus becomes an artefact of interest in and of itself. It suggests a conclusion that supports Frederick Cooper’s analysis of a highly complex relationship between Africans and their colonizers and of the powerful, ambiguous legacy of colonial-era imagining and re-shaping of normal in African consciousness. The vicissitudes in the visibility and meanings attributed to “bisexuality” and other same-sex sex relationships in Africa suggests an enduring, but clearly quite problematic fascination with those colonial constructions of African-ness.

Marc Epprecht, PhD, Department of History, Queen’s University, 49 Bader Lane, Watson Hall, Room 212, Kingston, Ontario, K7L 3N6, Canada. E-mail: epprecht@post.queensu.ca

Notes

- 1 Owusu (1978). See also Faris (1973) for a close study of one particularly avid colonialist, S.F. Nadel, whose work is noted below.
- 2 Alerting us to the dangers of such silencing, see Phillips (2004) and Epprecht and Goddard (In press).
- 3 See the website *Behind the Mask* (www.mask.org) for activities, aspirations and preferred lexicon of sexual rights activists in Africa.
- 4 See Brooks and Bocahut (1998), for example, and Tcheuyap (2005) for analysis of key fictional and cinematic representations of African same-sex sexualities.
- 5 Oyéwùmi (1997). Explorations of global queer theory in developing world contexts include Herdt (1997) and Prieur (1998). The term “queer” remains problematic to many African activists but Amory (1997) makes a good case in its favour. Arnfred (2004) and Reid and Walker (2005) bring specific focus to theorizing Africa sexualities. Rigid dichotomization of straight versus gay with bisexual in the exact middle is articulately challenged with reference to global case studies in Murray (2000), but the problematic

concept of bisexuality is the pre-eminent concern of Storr (1999). See Weston (1998) and Lyons and Lyons (2004) on the history of anthropology's treatment of sexuality questions, and Nnaemeka (2005) for a strong African critique of Western scholars' activism vis-à-vis a similarly controversial issue (female genital cutting). My engagement with colonial studies follows cautions and insights astutely laid out by Cooper (2005). An important aspect of these critiques of Africanist scholarship is in pointing out the dangers of extrapolating arguments from a local study to the whole of Africa. I acknowledge this, and that the bulk of my primary research comes from around southern Africa. However, the parallels in published and secondary literature from elsewhere on the continent, including Egypt and the Maghreb (Inhorn 2005; Jacob 2005; Murray and Roscoe 1997), are so strong on this issue that the broad scale is warranted, at least for this preliminary venture. Finally, I frame the analysis in light of Michael Herzfeld's concept of "cultural intimacy" (1997) whereby diverse groups of people for different reasons come to share and to shape essentialist ideas about national or ethnic identity.

- 6 A truly vast literature exists that makes these points, including much of the ethnography cited below. Important overviews can be found in Amadiume (1997), Kaplan (1997) and Davison (1997).
- 7 Njinje and Alberton (2002) and Morgan and Wierenga (2005). For sources on male-male sexuality as medicine, see Estermann (1976), Niehaus (2002), Epprecht (2004) and Matory (2005).
- 8 See, notably, Bleys (1995) and Stoler (2002).
- 9 See David and Charles Livingstone (1865:284) for an allusion to self-censorship or deliberate averting of eyes on this issue; and Johnston (1897:395, 408) for an important example of ostensibly scientific observation where the discussion of African boys' "vicious" behaviour veers off into Latin. The missionaries who compiled the first generation of African language dictionaries further consolidated the impression of non-existence of same-sex sexuality, either by not providing translations for words they considered obscene or by imposing literal translations that erased nuance in the indigenous usage.
- 10 S.F. Nadel, for example, found only Arabic words for rumoured behaviour in the royal harems of Nupe (1942:152). See also Murray and Roscoe (1997) and Amory (1998) on Islamic influence the Swahili coast.
- 11 See Lyons and Lyons (2004) for a succinct discussion of Burton's work, racism and the context of his times.
- 12 See Epprecht (2004:91), for example.
- 13 Bleys cites several German sources. Robert Aldrich (2003) also suggests that repressed homoerotic feelings may have been relatively common among colonial explorers and conquerors.
- 14 Karsch-Haack (1911:130) translated and cited in Wierenga.
- 15 See, for example, Cureau (1915), Weeks (1909), and Junod (1911 and 1962 [1916]).
- 16 See Moodie with Ndatshe (1994) and Harries (1994). Research into private mission archives on this issue remains to be done. But note, for an example, the striking contrast between Junod's early polemics and the silence of his fellow Swiss Protestant missionaries and their Basotho evangel-

ists on the Witwatersrand in the 1930s through the 1950s (Khouthu 1939 and Mabile 1949, notably).

- 17 P.J. Joubert, K.J. Khuzana, no date *Afrikaans-Engels-Zoeloe and Afrikaans-Engels-Tsonga* Johannesburg: SABC. Remarkably, in his crude determination, Joubert somehow managed to miss the fact that Tsonga actually had an indigenous word for "servant" that could also mean "boy- or mine-wife": *bukhontxana*, in common usage for at least five decades (Harries 1994; Junod 1962). Another, even more eccentric source in this respect is Fischer (1985), who lists convoluted translations for homosexuality, homosexualist, lesbian, sodomy, pederasty and pederast, all for the first time ever in Xhosa.
- 18 See Kashamwa (1973) for a bucolic view of Tutsi sexuality, for example, or Amadiume's (1987) defence of African women's heterosexuality against Western lesbian innuendo.
- 19 Herdt (1997), for instance, cites but four diverse studies to back his summary of the research on same-sex sexuality in Africa. Among other critics of over-reach in the queer anthropology, see Pincheon (2000).
- 20 McLean and Ngcobo (1994). See Lockhart (2002) for another anthropological study of the semantics of sex among Tanzanian male prostitutes, relating this to HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention.

References

- Achmat, Zackie
1993 "Apostles of Civilised Vice": "Immoral Practices" and "Unnatural Vice" in South African Prisons and Compounds, 1890-1920. *Social Dynamics* 19(2):92-110.
- Aina, Tade Akin
1991 Patterns of Bbisexuality in Sub-Saharan Africa. In *Bisexuality and HIV/AIDS: A Global Perspective*. Rob Tielman, Manuel Carballo and Aart Hendriks, eds. Pp. 81-90. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus.
- Aldrich, Robert
2003 *Colonialism and Homosexuality*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Amadiume, Ifi
1987 *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*. London: Zed Books.
1997 *Re-inventing Africa: Matriarchy, Religion and Culture*. London: Zed Books.
- Amory, Deborah P.
1997 "Homosexuality" in Africa: Issues and Debates. *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 25(1):5-10.
1998 *Mashoga, Mabasha, and Magai: "Homosexuality" on the East African Coast*. In *Boy-Wives and Female-Husbands: Studies in African Homosexualities*. Stephen Murray and Will Roscoe, eds. Pp. 67-90. New York: Palgrave.
- Arnfred, Signe, ed.
2004 *Re-thinking African Sexualities*. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.
- Ashe, R.P.
1970 [1889] *Two Kings of Uganda*. Originally published in London by Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington Ltd. Facsimile Reprint. London: Cass.

- Beidelman, Thomas O.
1997 *The Cool Knife: Imagery of Gender, Sexuality, and Moral Education in Kaguru Initiation Ritual*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Berglund, Axel-Ivar
1970 *Transition from Traditional to a Westernized Outlook on Life*. In *Migrant Labour and Church Involvement*. Missiological Institute, ed. Umpumulo: Missiological Institute.
- Blacking, John
1959 Fictitious Kinship amongst Girls of the Venda of Northern Transvaal. *Man* 59:255-258.
1978 Uses of Kinship Idiom in Friendships in Some Venda and Zulu Schools. In *Social System and Tradition in Southern Africa*. J. Argyle and E. Preston-Whyte, eds. Pp. 101-117. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bleys, Rudi C.
1995 *The Geography of Perversion: Male-Male Sexual Behaviour Outside the West and the Ethnographic Imagination*. New York: New York University Press.
- Bozongwana, Wallace
1983 *Ndebele Religion and Customs*. Gweru: Mambo Press.
- Brooks, P., and L. Bocahut, eds.
1998 *Woubi Cheri*. Paris and Abidjan: ARTE France.
- Browne, William George
1806 [1799] *Travels in Africa, Egypt and Syria from the Year 1792 to 1798*. London: T. Cadell and W. Davie.
- Bryk, Felix
1964 [1925] *Voodoo-Eros: Ethnological Studies in the Sex-Life of the African Aborigines*. New York: United Book Guild.
- Burton, Richard
1885 *A Plain and Literal Translation of the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, Now Entitled: The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night, with Introduction, Explanatory Notes on the Manners and Customs of Moslem Men and a Terminal Essay upon the History of the Nights. Volume 10 (Terminal Essay)*. London and Benares: Kamashastra Society.
- Cape Colony
1873 *Report and Evidence of the Commission on Native Laws and Customs of the Basutos*. Cape Town.
- Castilhon, J.L.
1993 [1769] *Zingha, reine d'Angola, histoire africaine*. Bourges: Ganymede.
- Cavazzi, Giovanni Antonio
1998 [1687] *Ganga-Ya-Chibanda*. W. Roscoe, trans. In *Boy-Wives and Female-Husbands: Studies in African Homosexualities*. Stephen Murray and Will Roscoe, eds. Pp. 163-168. New York: Palgrave.
- Cooper, Frederick
2005 *Colonialism in Question: History, Theory, Knowledge*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Coplan, David B.
1994 *In the Time of Cannibals*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Cureau, Adolphe Louis
1915 *Savage Man in Central Africa: A Study of Primitive Races in the French Congo*. London: T. Fisher Unwin.
- Davison, Jean
1997 *Gender, Lineage, and Ethnicity in Southern Africa*. Boulder: Westview.
- Donham, Donald L.
1990 *History, Power, Ideology: Central Issues in Marxism and Anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dynes, Wayne
1983 *Homosexuality in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Unnecessary Controversy*. *Gay Books Bulletin* 9:20-21.
- Epprecht, Marc
2004 *Hungochani: The History of a Dissident Sexuality in Southern Africa*. Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Epprecht, Marc, and K. Goddard, eds.
In press *Homosexualities in Africa: A History*. Harare: Weaver Press.
- Estermann, Carlos
1976 *The Ethnography of Southwestern Angola*. 3 vols. Gibson Gordon, ed. New York: Africana.
- Evans-Pritchard, E.E.
1970 *Sexual Inversion among the Azande*. *American Anthropologist* 72:1428-1434.
1971 *The Azande: History and Political Institutions*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Faris, James
1973 *Pax Britannica and the Sudan: S.F. Nadel*. In *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*. Talad Asad, ed. Pp. 153-170. New York: Humanities Press.
- Faupel, J.F.
1965 [1962] *African Holocaust: The Story of the Uganda Martyrs*. 2nd Rev. edition. London: G. Chapman.
- Fischer, A.
1985 *English-Xhosa Dictionary*. Cape Town: Oxford.
- Foucault, Michel.
1978 *A History of Sexuality*. New York: Random House.
GALZ (Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe)
2002 *Sahwira*. Harare: Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe.
- Gay, Judith
1985 "Mummies and Babies" and Friends and Lovers in Lesotho. *Journal of Homosexuality* 11(3-4):93-116.
- Gelfand, Michael
1979 *The Infrequency of Homosexuality in Traditional Shona Society*. *Central African Journal of Medicine* 25(9):201-202.
1985 *Apparent Absence of Homosexuality and Lesbianism in Traditional Zimbabweans*. *Central African Journal of Medicine* 31(7):137-138.
- Gevisser, Mark and Edwin Cameron, eds.
1994 *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Ravan.
- Gibbon, Edward
1925 [1781] *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 4. London: Methuen.
- Hanry, Pierre
1970 *Érotisme africain: Le comportement sexual des adolescents guinéens*. Paris: Payot.
- Harries, Patrick
1990 *La symbolique du sexe: l'identité culturelle au début d'exploitation des mines d'or du Witwatersrand*. *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* 120(xxx-4):451-474.

- 1994 *Work, Culture and Identity: Migrant Laborers in Mozambique and South Africa, c. 1860-1910*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Herd, Gilbert
1997 *Same Sex, Different Cultures: Exploring Gay and Lesbian Lives*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Herskovits, Melville J.
1967 [1938] *Dahomey: An Ancient West African Kingdom*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Herzfeld, Michael
1997 *Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics in the Nation-State*. New York: Routledge.
- Hulstaert, R.P.G.
1938 *Le Mariage des Nkundé*. Bruxelles: l'Institute Royal Colonial Belge.
- Inhorn, Marcia C.
2005 *Sexuality, Masculinity, and Fertility in Egypt: Potent Troubles in Marital and Medical Encounters*. In *African Masculinities: Men in African from the Late Nineteenth Century to the Present*. L.Ouzgane and R. Morrell, eds. Pp. 289-303. London: Palgrave.
- Jacob, Wilson Chacko
2005 *The Masculine Subject of Colonialism: The Egyptian Loss of the Sudan*. In *African Masculinities: Men in Africa from the Late Nineteenth Century to the Present*. Lahoucine Ouzgane and Robert Morrell, eds. Pp. 153-169. London: Palgrave.
- Johnston, H.H.
1897 *British Central Africa*. London: Methuen.
- Junod, Henri-Phillipe
1935 *The VaThonga*. In *The Bantu Tribes of South Africa: Reproductions of Photographic Studies*, vol. 4, section 1. A.M. Duggan-Cronin, ed. Pp. 9-28. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Junod, Henri
1911 *Zidji: étude de mœurs sud-africaines*. St. Blaise: Foyer Solidariste.
1962 [1916] *The Life of a South African Tribe*, vol. 1. New York: University Books.
- Kaplan, Flora Edouwaye S., ed.
1997 *Queens, Queen Mothers, Priestesses, and Power: Case Studies in African Gender*. New York: New York Academy of Sciences.
- Karsch-Haack, Ferdinand
1911 *Forschungen über gleichgeschlechtliche Liebe. Erste, ethnologische Reine: Das gleichgeschlechtliche Leben der Naturvölker. Erster Band: [The Homosexual Life of Nature People]*. Munich: Reinhardt.
- Kashamwa, Anicet
1973 *Famille, sexualité et culture: essai sur les mœurs sexuelles et les cultures des peuples des grands lacs africains*. Paris: Payot.
- Kendall, K. Limakatso.
1999 *Women in Lesotho and the (Western) Construction of Homophobia*. In *Same-sex Relations and Female Desires: Transgender Practices across Cultures*. Evelyn Blackwood and Saskia Wieringa, eds. Pp. 157-180. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kenyatta, Jomo
1961 [1938] *Facing Mount Kenya: The Tribal Life of the Gikuyu*. London: Mercury
- Khouthu, N.
1939 *La vie des travailleurs noirs*. *Journal des Missions Évangéliques* 1:353.
- Kirby, Percival R.
1942 *A Secret Musical Instrument; the Ekola of the Ovakuanyama of Ovamboland*. *South African Journal of Science* 28(Jan.):345-351.
- Krige, Eileen Jensen
1974 *Woman-Marriage, with Special Reference to the Lovedu*. *Africa* 44:11-36.
- Livingstone, David, and Charles Livingstone
1865 *Narrative of the Expedition to the Zambezi*. London: John Murray.
- Lockhart, Chris
2002 *Kunyenga, "Real Sex," and Survival: Assessing the Risk of HIV Infection among Urban Street Boys in Tanzania*. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 16(3):294-311.
- Lyons, Andrew P., and Harriet D. Lyons
2004 *Irregular Connections: A History of Anthropology and Sexuality*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press.
- Mabille, G.
1949 *Missionary Work on the Rand*. *Basutoland Witness*. 3(1):6.
- Martin, Maurice
1913 *Au coeur de l'Afrique équatoriale*. Paris: Libraire Chapelet.
- Matory, J. Lorand
2004 *Gendered Agendas: The Secrets Scholars Keep about Yorùba-Atlantic Religion*. In *Dialogues of Dispersal: Gender, Sexuality and African Diasporas*. S. Gunning, T.W. Hunter and M. Mitchell, eds. Pp. 13-43. Oxford: Blackwell.
- MacDermot, Brian
1972 *Cult of the Sacred Spear: The Story of the Nuer Tribe in Ethiopia*. London: Hale.
- McLean, Hugh, and Linda Ngcobo
1994 *Abangibhamayo bathi ngimnandi (Those Who Fuck Me Say I'm Tasty): Gay Sexuality in Reef Township*. In *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*. Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron, eds. Pp. 158-185. New York: Routledge.
- Moodie, T. Dunbar, with Vivienne Ndatshe and British Sibuyi
1988 *Migrancy and Male Sexuality on the South African Gold Mines*. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 14(2):229-245.
- Moodie, T. Dunbar, with Vivienne Ndatshe
1994 *Going for Gold: Men's Lives on the Mines*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Morgan, Ruth, and Saskia Wieringa, eds.
2005 *Tommy Boys, Lesbian Men and Ancestral Wives: Female Same-Sex Practices in Africa*. Johannesburg: Jacana.
- Murray, Stephen O.
2000 *Homosexualities*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Murray, Stephen O., and Will Roscoe, eds.
1998 *Boy-Wives and Female Husbands: Studies in African Homosexualities*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

- 1997 Islamic Homosexualities: Culture, History and Literature. New York: New York University Press.
- Nadel, S.F.
1942 A Black Byzantium: The Kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria. London: Oxford University Press.
1947 The Nuba. London: Oxford University Press.
- Ngubane, Harriet
1977 Body and Mind in Zulu Medicine. London: Academic Press.
- Niehaus, Isak
2002 Renegotiating Masculinity in the South African Lowveld: Narratives of Male-male Sex in Labour Compounds and in Prisons. *AIDS in Context. African Studies* 61(1):77-97.
- Njinje, Mpumi, and Paolo Alberton, eds.
2002 Everything Must Come to Light. 25 minutes. Out of Africa Films. Johannesburg.
- Nnaemeka, Obioma, ed.
2005 Female Circumcisions and the Politics of Knowledge. London: Praeger.
- Owusu, Maxwell
1978 Ethnography of Africa: The Usefulness of the Useless. *American Anthropologist* 80(2):310-334.
- Oyèwùní, Oyèrónké
1997 The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Phillips, Oliver
2004 The Invisible Presence of Homosexuality: Implications for HIV/AIDS and Rights in Southern Africa. *In HIV and AIDS in Africa: Beyond Epistemology*. E. Kalipeni, S. Craddock, J. Oppong and J. Ghosh, eds. Pp. 155-166. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Pincheon, Bill Stanford
2000 An Ethnography of Silences: Race (Homo)sexualities, and a Discourse of Africa. *African Studies Review* 43(3):39-58.
- Prieur, Annick
1998 Mema's House, Mexico City: On Transvestites, Queens, and Mmachos. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Purchas, Samuel
1905 [1613] The Strange Adventures of Andrew Battell of Leigh of Essex. *In Purchas His Pilgrimage*, vol. 6. Glasgow: J. Maclehose and Sons.
- Rachewiltz, Boris de
1964 Black Eros: Sexual Customs of Africa from Prehistory to the Present Day. London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Reid, G., and Liz Walker
2005 Sex and Secrecy: A Focus on African sexualities. *Culture, Health and Sexuality* 7(3):185-194.
- Sade, D.A.F., Marquis de
1990 [1795] "Histoire de Sainville et de Léonore" (chapter XXXV of Aline et Valcour). *In Sade: Œuvres*, vol. 1. M. Delon, ed. Pp. 525-724 and 1256-1300. Paris: Éditions Gallimard.
- Seesholtz, Mel
2005 When Religion Becomes a Weapon of Mass Destruction: AIDS in Africa and Sex Education in America. Electronic document, www.onlinejournal.com/Special_Reports/040505Seesholtz/040505seesholtz.html, accessed April 11, 2005.
- Seligman, Charles, and Brenda Seligman
1932 Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- South Africa
1913 Director of Prisons Report for 1912. Pretoria.
- Stoler, Ann
2002 Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Storr, Mel, ed.
1999 Bisexuality: A Critical Reader. New York: Routledge.
- Tanner, Ralph E.S.
1969 The East African Experience of Imprisonment. *In African Penal Systems*. Alan Milner, ed. Pp. 293-315. New York: Praeger.
- Tauxier, Louis
1912 Les Noirs du Soudan: Pays Mossi et Gourounni. Paris: Émile LaRose.
- Tcheuyap, Alexie
2005 African Cinema and Representations of (Homo)Sexuality. *In Versions and Subversions in African Literatures I: Body, Sexuality and Gender*. Flora Veit-Wild and Dirk Naguschewski, eds. Pp. 143-154. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Tessmann, G.
1998 [1921] Homosexuality among the Negroes of Cameroon and a Pangwe Tale. B. Rose, trans. *In Boy-Wives and Female-Husbands: Studies in African Homosexualities*. Stephen Murray and Will Roscoe, eds. Pp. 149-162. New York: Palgrave.
- Van Onselen, Charles
1976 Chibaro: African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia, 1900-33. London: Pluto Press.
- Weeks, Rev. John H.
1909 Anthropological Notes on the Bangala of the Upper Congo Basin (part II). *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Society* 39:416-459.
- Weston, Kath
1998 Longslowburn: Sexuality and Social Science. New York: Routledge.
- Wieringa, Saskia
2001 Gender, Tradition, Sexual Diversity and AIDS in Post-Colonial Southern Africa. The Hague: Institute of Social Studies.
- Wilson, Monica
1951 Good Company: A Study of Nyakyusa Age-Villages. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- X, Jacobus (pseud.).
1937 (1898) Untrodden Fields of Anthropology, by a French Army Surgeon. New York: Falstaff.