AFRICAN INDIGENOUS RELIGIOUS RESPONSE TO GLOBAL DEBATE ON HOMOSEXUALITY: HERMENEUTICAL STUDY OF RELEVANT *IFÁ* CORPORA

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Abstract
The global debate on homosexuality has been a major religious concern to different beliefs. This present work therefore acknowledges the abundance of literatures on global debates on homosexuality. Homosexuality, in the recent time, has taken different dimensions in several academic disciplines from religion, extending to politics and economic engagements. So far, the emphasis on the quantum of literature about homosexuality is either argument in favor of the phenomenon or against the idea. However, it is worthy of note, to say that, virtually believers of religions have attempted to contribute their quota to the argument or debate by taking an introspective look at the sacred writings of their respective religions. By way of filling a part of the lacuna in the literature, this study examines the sacred literature of the indigenous religion of the Yorùbá people, especially, *Ifá*, in regards to homosexuality. It is noted that, *Ifá*, is the sacred genre for all the Yorùbá divinities and the springboard on which the culture of the Yorùbá people rests. The study as evinced from *Ifá* Literary Corpus established in strong terms, argument against the philosophical concept of homosexuality. The argument is generated from relevant stanzas of *Ifá* corpus; which are hermeneutically explicated and analyzed. This becomes part of an epistemological consideration into the debate concerning the issue of homosexuality. The paper concludes that, although, there may be other positions on the issue of homosexuality, the sola scriptura of Yoruba traditional religious beliefs, is of the opinion that homosexuality is ungodly, unhealthy, immoral, unnatural and therefore forbidden; as such hampers development of individual, society and the nation at large. This is against the backdrop of Yorùbá worldview that encourages the birth of children in perpetuity of the family. Furthermore, this study notes that while homosexual tendencies are abhorrent, homosexuals should not be rejected or stigmatized, rather they should be assisted to change their perceptions.

Introduction

The discussion over homosexuality has been in the front burner in global circles for several years now. It has followed a pattern whereby, the practice has continued till the present time when focus has spread to its nature. Many have continued to attack the idea that people of same sex should not marry while others are of the opinion that there is nothing wrong with the idea. These debates have created a lacuna between individuals, interest groups and even between nations. The cause of these arguments rests on the fact that religious communities and the gay communities are usually against one another. It is noteworthy to observe here that one of the reasons why this gay idea seems to linger for a long time in debate is not unconnected to the fact that the homosexual tendencies have pervaded virtually every stratum of the society. [1] Actors, politicians, and many people in financial institutions have openly announced their gay status. Here, in Africa, evidence of homosexuality has been with us for a long time, but today, there is beginning to emerge a group of people in Nigeria, who are also announcing their homosexual preferences to heterosexual unions. Many religious clergies have come out to openly accept their gay identity culminating into the resignation of some of the ministers from their assignment. All over America today, evidence abound showcasing single-sex marriage solemnization between lesbians and gay people who are convinced of their status and wish to get married. Each religious group has endeavored to seek from their scriptures what God teaches about these tendencies. Is God encouraging these tendencies or is it abhorrent to him? The point here however is not to question the validity of the scriptures in the justification of homosexuality and same-sex marriage from the viewpoints of religions all over the world. Rather, the focus of this work is to examine the oral traditions of the Yoruba speaking people of south west Nigeria. What does *Ifá*, the *sola scriptura* of the Yoruba says about homosexuality? How does the worldview contained in the *Ifá* Corpus support or reject homosexuality? The emphasis of this research is examining the contributions of *Ifá* scriptures to the debate of homosexuality. The methodology is theological and argumentative. Qualitative data will be taken across the nooks and crannies of Yoruba land in the determination of the avowed objective. The *Babaláwo* or *Ìyánifa* (the Priest or Priestess) the custodians of the mysteries of the message of *Òrúnmìlà* will be interviewed extensively as they will help in the hermeneutical approach of the research emphasis.[2]

Conceptual Meaning and Theoretical Framework

The term homosexuality is a blanket term frequently used to cover several sexual behaviors which covering such terms like gay, homosexual, lesbians, lesbianism, and single sex marriages to mention a few. However, for the purpose of elucidation in this paper, homosexuality covers the above mentioned names but actually deeper than that. In this paper, homosexuality is used in the description of a person's orientation and his or her behavior. Homosexual orientation is understood to mean sexual attraction to other members of the same sex which may either lead to marriage or not. On the other hand, homosexual behavior means active involvement in sexual activity with another of the same sex irrespective of whether they are married or not. [3]

Three theories are apposite in the consideration of homosexual tendencies. These include the attribution theory, the contact theory and the symbolic interactionism theory. While the three guide the thought of this paper, the symbolic interactionism theory will be primarily focused for some reasons. These include the fact that it is related to the utilization of religious perceptions in the determination of the attitude towards homosexuality. The attribution theory posits that individuals work to predict and control their environment by attributing others' behaviors as the result of internal or external factors. The theory was proposed by Heider and later developed by Weiner.[4] He introduced the idea of controllability to the theory, believing that human behavior can either be controllable or uncontrollable. Every controllable behavior an individual exhibits, he or she will be held responsible. Those whose responsibilities are controllable but fail to do this are viewed negatively, as a matter of fact, they are stigmatized. What the attribution theory does is to accept that some people may be homosexuals by nature and therefore may not be able to control their homosexual tendencies. Herek and Glunt and Whitehead found that people who believe that homosexuality is the result of natural or biological forces have more positive attitudes to gay rights and same-sex unions, whereas those attributing homosexuality as the result of a choice have more negative attitudes towards same-sex unions.[5]

The second theory is the contact theory which holds that a person becomes what he or she is in constant contact with another person. In this sense, proponents of this theory hold that people become homosexuals as a result of their contact with homosexuals. Hans maintains that interpersonal contact with homosexuals promote more positive attitudes towards homosexuality. He has tested this hypothesis among lesbians and homosexuals and have found this idea to be true with lesbians than with homosexuals.[6]

These hypotheses are important as they have little to do with religion. This leads to the third theory, the symbolic interactionism. The theory defines how religion influences attitudes towards homosexuality. Blumer, one of the strong advocates of symbolic interaction theory, is of the opinion that people create attitudes towards "things" in terms of meanings they attach to them. By "things" he meant everything existing in the physical world: human beings, social groups and activities to mention only a few. Accordingly, there exists a multitude of meanings, these meanings are social constructs and they determine what opinion a person will have toward a "thing" (the physical world). In other words, the meaning that is created by people will influence their interpretation or attitude towards that "thing."[7] Kuptsevych explains further:

> The application of the relationship between corresponding constructs (main variables) for this study can be viewed as following: That is, positive or negative attitudes towards homosexuality will be shaped by the degree people use religious ideology as a meaning system in their life. In other words, the degree to which a

person uses system of religiosity influences attitudes towards homosexuality (positive or negative).[8]

From the above, it is clear that religiosity as a system of meaning becomes an index in the affectations of homosexual perceptions.

Contemporary Arguments for and against Homosexuality

Over the years, there is increasing debate over the legalization or otherwise concerning homosexuality. This discussion has gotten to the level where nations are now involved in the legalization or outlaw of homosexuality. The debate is along two lines. First is the pro- homosexual group and anti-homosexuality. Many nations like America and in Europe do not see anything wrong in the idea and have therefore legalized homosexuality. On the other hand are those who detest the homosexual tendencies and have decided never to entrench such in their constitutions. Many of these nations are in Africa, such as Nigeria. This has led to the cancellation or suspensions of donations to these nations because of their contrary positions. The debate is so passionate that the African nations prefer to forfeit these subventions than to legalize homosexual, which is regarded as an affront against God. A critical look at these nations gives the impression that the nations that legalize homosexuality belong to the modern world, they do not hold religion on very high level. Meanwhile, African nations that do not accept homosexuality, are the nations that are religious (so to say) and backward. It must however be placed on record that, within the nations that support homosexuality, there are individuals and organizations that are preaching against the conduct. On the other hand, there are individuals who strongly support the idea of homosexuality in nations that reject same. A cursory observation of these contrary positions will be apposite at this juncture.[9]

Those who are in favor of this argument have advanced several reasons for this phenomenon. Sprigg posits that those in favor of homosexuality can be called the "Gay Identity" Paradigm. He goes forward to identify their views that:

> Sexual orientation is an innate personal characteristic, like race. People are born gay. Gay people can never become heterosexual. Being gay is essentially no different from being straight, except for the gender to which one is sexually attracted. There is no harm in being gay."This opinion highlights the position of the "Gay Identity" Paradigm which has been consistently held that just as people are born with the desire for the opposite sex, so are gay people with the attraction to single sex people. Hence, people are born lesbians or homosexual, as a result, they have not done anything contrary of the demands of God. His position that gay people can never be heterosexual is not very correct because some homosexuals are actually married to opposite sexes or carry on heterosexual relationships. The gay are such because they believe that being gay is not only natural but harms nobody. Those in favor of

homosexuality believe that preference for opposite sex is tantamount to racial segregation.[10]

Arguments Against

On the other hand are those who have stood vehemently on the idea that homosexuality is an error. Most literature in this regard is from religious quarters. According to Dallas, all the three primary arguments of homosexuality (innateness argument, insignificance argument and the intolerance argument) have no basis. Quoting copiously from the Bible, he dismantled the arguments of the homosexuals. He insists that homosexual acts are chosen rather than innate, that homosexual attitudes are very significant before God rather than insignificance and that the idea of intolerance does really have little to do in terms of acceptability.[11] On his own, Abass Bolatito prefers to view the debate on homosexuality from the perception of natural law theory of morality in African Culture. He believes that the theory often referred to by homosexuals is a weak one in the sense that man is responsible for all his action rather than the fact that being made homosexuals.[12]

***Ifá* Corpus: *Sola Scriptura* of the Religious Beliefs of the Yoruba of Nigeria**

The term *sola scriptura* is a Christian terminology that the authors of this paper have applied to the *Ifá* corpus and the Yoruba traditional religious consciousness. The term is originally applied to the Bible through the use of five indices that include: its revelation coming directly from God, its sufficiency for faith and practice, its possession of final authority and its perspicuity Geisler and MacKenzie. [13] When these indices are used to measure the *Ifá* Corpus of the Yoruba beliefs, *sola scriptura* captures the essence of the Yoruba traditional religious consciousness as the Bible does for Christians. When the validity of *Odù* is tested against the Bible and the Quran, Fashina insists that the *Odù-Ifá* is better because it cannot only be verified in daily living, but anyone can seek divination and regardless of the source or diviner - the scripture should hold its validity in the findings provided.[14] As a matter of fact, the *Odu-Ifá* corpora are believed to be the living word and the unfailing wisdom of *Olódùmarè*. *Ifá* is the compendium of Yorùbá ancient wisdom and primary culture. The *Ifá* corpora were directly revealed from *Òrúnmìlà*, one of the primordial divinities linked with *Olódùmarè*, the Supreme Being. For the traditional Yoruba, the corpora possess final authority and they are perspicuous. In addition to these, the corpora are sufficient for their faith and practice. *Ifá* cannot be literally translated as it refers to several issues. It covers the peoples' religious traditions, philosophy, perception of their ethics, a process of worship and a set of scriptures.[15] Karenga encapsulates *OdùIfá* in the following word:

> Nowhere is the profundity and beauty of African spirituality more apparent than in the Odulfa, the sacred text of the spiritual and ethical tradition of Ifa, which is one of the greatest sacred texts of the world and a classic of African and world literature. Its central message

> revolves around the teachings of the Goodness of and in the world; the chosen status of humans in the world; the criteria of a good world; and the requirements for a good world. [16]

The *Odù-Ifá* literary corpus contains sixteen major *Odù* (books). There are two hundred and forty other minor *Odù* which when combined will form two hundred and fifty-six *Odù*. These *Odù* corpuses are believed by the Yorùbá people in particular and *Ifá* worshippers in general to contain the capacity to solve all existential problems of man. *Ifá* epistles have certain codes attached to them which form the basis of *Ifa* traditional spirituality accounting for the basis of all the Yoruba systems of divination.

Ifá divination process begins with the consultation to the *Ifá* priest and the necessary pre-*Ifá* divination order, such as *ìbò-dídì* (casting of lots) commences the consultation of *Ifá* oracle. This is subsequently followed by divination performance with the use either *ikin* (divination palm-nuts) or *Òpèlè-dídà* (casting by the divination chain). It is noted that cola-nut of four lobes could as well be used for *Ifá* divination with the same *Ifá* output. However, the earlier two mediums mentioned are frequently used by *Ifá* priests. This will be followed by the reading, marking, interpreting and reciting the story that comes with the associated symbol revealed by the *Ifá* divination instrument. *Ifá* priest guides his client(s) based on the prescriptions on the associated *odù* on what "to do in the light of the precedent which has been cited for him". The client then goes to perform the prescribed sacrifice order associated with the client's or supplicant's case. Abímbólá, says "What has emerged so far is that *ẹsẹ-Ifá* is a type of "historical" poetry. Every poem of *Ifá* is an attempt to narrate, through the particular structure of *Ifá* divination poetry, things which the Ifá priest has been taught to believe actually happened in the past by narrating these stories of the past."[17]

Ifá is the greatest oracle of the Yorùbá that is "consulted on all important occasions." *Ifá* is regarded as the spokesperson not only for the gods but also for the living. It is regarded as the living foundation of Yorùbá culture. Munoz sees *Ifá's* scope beyond the Yorùbá cultural society when he says "*Ifá* is the most universal divinity among the Yorùbá and other West African people." *Ifá* is known to different people by different names throughout the world. For example, *Ifá* is known as *Fá* among the Fon of Republic of Benin, *Eva* to Nupes, *Ifá* in Cuba, USA, Brazil, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Surinam and Togo. *Ifá* is referred to by the Ewe as *Afa*, *Ephod* by Jews, *Geomancy* by Europeans and Margays. With these different realizations of *Ifá* nomenclature which cut across nations of the world, the prominence of *Ifá* is not in doubt. In fact, *Ifá* has over 70 million followers in Africa and the America. In 2005, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) proclaimed *Ifá* as one of the 86 traditions of the world to be recognized as masterpieces of oral and intangible heritage of humanity. By this proclamation, *Ifá* joined the league of heritages and therefore requiring urgent preservation. *Ifá*, as a religion, science or literary text, has over time been of great interest

to scholars in different areas of human endeavors, like medicine, philosophy, religion, art and culture.[18]

The message of *Ifá* is an archetype of what had happened in the past as it is connected with the *Ifá* divination. *Ifá* religion has been a means by which Yorùbá culture (including language) is propagated in the diaspora. According to Abímbọ́lá,

> *Ifá* divination literature is perhaps the most accomplished product of Yorùbá traditional culture.... No one who has studied *Ifá* in detail will fail to see the fact that the people of traditional Africa societies were not ignorant as we have often been told. The peoples of traditional Africa were largely illiterates to be sure. But they were no fools. Among them were elite classes such as the *babaláwo* who have preserved all the ingredients of their own culture in an almost completely oral form but in such a way that knowledge is codified and transmitted orally with care, patience and perseverance. *Ifá* is the Yorùbá traditional thought system *per excellence*. [19]

The preservation of the Yorùbá culture is guaranteed through *Ifá*. All the cultural contents of *Ifá* have been 'codified'. The codifications are in *Ifá* symbols in forms of *Odù* (major and minor). It is observed that *Ifá* poetry is a sacred Yorùbá genre that nobody may add or subtract from. The epistle is, according to Abímbọ́lá, "preserved and disseminated from ancient times. It is believed that in this way the texts in *Ifá* literary corpus have been kept free from errors. The corpus, therefore, till today, is one of the reliable genres of the Yorùbá oral literature." According to Abímbọ́lá,

> "Ifá literary corpus can therefore be regarded as a set of historical and mythical poems offering to us through the use of analogy images and symbols what to do in order to be at peace with God, the supernatural powers, or neighbors and indeed, ourselves..." [20]

Ifá and Homosexuality: Outline of Argument and Comments

Since the *Ifá* Corpus is undeniably the peoples' *sola scriptura*, it will be apposite to examine a few of the *Odù* against homosexuality. The relevant thematic passages in the *Odù*, with philosophical import for the present purpose are *Ìwòrì Ọ̀bàrà*, *Ọ̀fúnÌrẹ̀tẹ̀* and *Ìwòrì Ọ̀fún*. One passage each in the first two and two passages will be examined in the last one. This is with a view to striking a balance between homosexuality and lesbianism.

OdùÒfún-Alaaye (Òfún-Ìrètè) where *Ifá* as contained in Aseodu, [21] (with author's translation) says:

epoṣe é jẹ'ṣu
iṣuṣeéj'epo
àkàsòdùn-úng'àká
obìnrinṣeébásùnj'ọkùnrinlọ
ọkùnrinṣeésùntìj'obìnrinlọ
b'ọ́kùnrinbá ń b'ọ́kùnrinsùn
bí ikókó, bí ioówo
bíikú bíàgbáàárín
b'óbunrinbá ńbóbìnrinsùn
bíepété bíòórùn
bí ẹrọ̀fò bíèéri
b'ọ́kùnrinbá ńb'óbìnrinsùn
b'óbìnrinbá ń sùnt'ọkùnrin
bíeńf'oláyun'gbà
bí eńf'oláyun'ra
igiÒfún-O-Rètè lórógangan-olele
díáfúnÀpón-Akọ
tí ń lorèé fi OleleomoOlọ́fìnṣaya
Aponp'Olele ò jẹ o
kò juohuntí'fá ń ṣelọ o
Aponp'Olele ò jẹ o
kò juohunt'Ẹbọra ń ṣelọo

Palm oil is good to complement yam i onsumption
and yam is good as complement for eating palm-oil
the ladder is good for climbing the rafter
a woman is better for a man to make love to than his fellow man
a man is better for a woman to sleep with than her fellow woman
if a man sleeps with a man
it will result into lumps, boils, and yaws
if a woman makes love to a fellow woman
it will result into murk, stinking odor, dirt and irritation
if a man makes love to a woman
and a woman sleeps with a man
the result is feeling like being on top of the world
the feeling is like having unlimited and unqualified enjoyment
Ofun-Rete's organ is strong and turgid
This was the *Ifa* cast for a Chronic Bachelor
When going to marry *Olele* the offspring of *Olofa*
The Chronic Bachelor called upon *Olele* but she responded not
The problem is not more than what *Ifa* can solve

Comment on *Odù-Òfún-Alaaye*

Four important things are worthy of mention in this *Odù-Ifá* chapter. They include comparison, action, effects and resolution. Taking the first part of the four, mention is made of food items in comparison to copulation very early in the chapter. This is not strange because the Yoruba often identify enjoyment to taste matters. No wonder when they wish to talk of the enjoyment of copulation between a man and a woman, they talk about it in terms of the palate. They call it *adùn má dẹ̀ẹ̀kẹ́* (sweet but not of the cheeks). The Yoruba love good food; yam is one of the staple foods of the Yoruba. [22]

The Yorùbá people relate the similar things together. Things those are complementary of each or one another or things that are opposition of each or one another. For example, Chandler says "such natural pairs are invariably loaded with cultural significance of good and the bad, the permitted and the forbidden." On the other hand, the co-operative binary exists when the repeated items are in natural agreement. As contained in the *Ifá* corpus quoted above- *iṣu* and *epo*, *ọkùnrin* and *obìnrin*, *àkàsọ̀* and *àká*. Yam is a tuber which though softens with cooking is usually hard to the palate. On the other hand, palm oil is a lubricant. Drinking a lubricant is not often done unless one hopes at detoxification of his or her body system. Yam too, is not easy to eat without condiments. This the stanza corroborates with a ladder being efficient in climbing heights. When yam is conjoined with palm oil, in eating it becomes sweet. The implication here is that yam and yam is hinting at gay copulation, while oil and oil hints at lesbianism. The belief of the Yorùbá people on the naturalness of male-female sexual relation in an ideal society is supported with dualism. The observation of complementary roles of binary to the Yorùbá belief system is rendered by Ilésanmí that "The binary system, not of opposition but complementarily has always influenced the Yorùbá thought... The world is created in twins of another." A male and a female sexual relationship is found here to be in complementary relation.[23]

The next is the action stage which is the extension of the comparison. The action speaks of either relationship between man and man or woman and woman. This fact, in this ancient stanza is an admission (or an indication of) of the existence of homosexuality in Yoruba land over a long time. The stanza identifies the problem of the existence of homosexuality and addressing the matter. That is the reason why the stanza talks of seeking the sweet relationships rather than one that is not. Closely following the above, is the effect of the action gay or lesbian relationship is likely to produce. A gay relationship will produce lumps, boils and yaws. On the other side, a lesbian relationship will produce murk, odor, dirt and irritation. In the opinion of this stanza, a homosexual relationship breeds negative influences injurious not only to the individual but also to the community. By extension, this lends credence to the fact that homosexuality is unacceptable because of its injurious tendencies to the populace. This leads to the final stage which has to do with resolution of the homosexual crisis. Here, *Ifá* is the solution to the case at hand. *Ifá* will determine the situation, through an enquiry of the client's destiny since he is

elerìipin (witness to destiny) when the client was choosing his or her destiny. The divinity has the capability to proffer solution to an improper nature. [24] Another *Ifá* verse is *Ìwòrì-Ọ̀bàrà* as contained in Ifalola,[25] (with author's translation)

Ìwòrì-Ọ̀bàrà

Ọ dó ganganna
Ọ́ kanganganna
diáfúnìwòrì
tiitindoayarèlóòró
ìwòrì o ò dè bèrè
a tiseńdónilóòròd'ọmọ
ìwòrì o ò dè bèrè

you make love while standing
you make love while bending
this was the *Ifa* divination for *Iwori*
who always make love to his wife standing
Iwori kindly make love while lying down
It is wrong to make love while standing
(subtle reference to men being with each other)
Iwori kindly make love properly.

Comment on *Odù Ọ̀fún-Alaaye*

Ọ̀fún Alaaye Ifá epistle is an *Odù* that focuses on actual sexual relationship. This is evidenced that *Ifá* is a compendium of the tradition, practices and custom of the Yoruba people. The difference between the *Odù Ìwòrì Ọ̀bàrà* (above) and the present one is that the first talked about the union between gay and straight. *Odù Ọ̀fún-Alaaye* touches on what happens between the two people, the actual coitus relationship. This one talks of the pleasure derivable between a male and a female in a state of standing and bending. The stanza condemns making love while standing against making love while bending. It ends with an appeal to *Ìwòrì* to make love to his spouse while lying down which is the acceptable way with a woman. Here, there is a subtle reference to gay relationship in the standing up while the lying down points to the male and female.[26]

Ìwòrì-Wòdú (Ìwòrì Òdí) Ifalola, [27] (with author's translation)

Ìwòrìwòdioṣebinńkan ire lòunńṣe
Aworeren ìwòrì tónwodina?
DiáfúnPanla Apo
Tikorokofe

Tìyóò máafẹ̀bìnrinẹ̀gbẹ́ ẹ rẹ̀
Ẹbọniwọ́nnikó wá ṣè
Ọbìnrintiǹfébìnrinẹ̀gbẹ́ ẹ rẹ̀
Ẹ̀yin ò mọ̀ pé o nloowokuidini?

Iwori took a fanciful look at the genital andConsidered it a proper practice
Do you consider *Iwori* who looks at the genitalsAs a good *Awo* ?
This was *Ifa's* declarations to *Panla-Apo*
Who failed to secure a husband to marry
But choose to be in love with a fellow woman
She was advised to offer *ebo*
A woman who makes love to a fellow woman
Don't you know that she is just looking at aNon-productive lifeless genital ?

Comments *Ìwòrì-Wòdín (Ìwòrì Òdí)*

The relevant part here is little, though pregnant with meaning. It is worthy of note to comment that the passage her is dealing with lesbianism, that is the nuptial relationship between a female and another female. This portion concerns eye-contact of the genitalia. The point here is that *Panla-Apo* chooses to love a fellow woman for the obvious reason that she failed to secure a husband. In Yoruba land, the reasons for a woman not being able to get a husband are myriad. Common among these are either she is not destined to have a husband or her inability to secure a husband may be the handiwork of evil people. Other reasons may be pride or negative stigma in her family history to mention only a few. As far as this stanza is concerned, her choice of a fellow female premised on an unmentioned reason is unacceptable. The act in itself is not condemnable hence the basis for choice. The stanza posits that proper sacrifice can remove any reason and makes all impossibilities possible.[28]

Furthermore on the same stanza, *Ifá* continues with his argument on lesbianism when he says:

Báyìí làá ṣèlú
Ìlú ìbádùn
Diáfúnwọ́nnílùú Ìwòrì-Wòdín
Nibíwọ́nníkí wọn lé Ọmọ-Oṣúlèewọ́njàde
Èyí tó lọkọ tan
Tólóun ò lọ́kọ́ọ́fẹ́mọ́
Tìyóómáalèdímọ́obìnrinẹ̀gbẹ́ ẹ rẹ̀
Ẹbọniwọ́nnikó wáá ṣeǹjẹ́ tóbá ṣebáyìí làá ṣèlú
Ìlú ìbádùnná?

If this is the way we administer the community
The community would have been very desirous (to live in)

This was *Ifa* message to the citizens of *Iwori-Wodi*
Who were advised to send all *Omo-Osu* away
Those, who after getting married,

Who say they are no longer interested in their husband
to continue to have intercourse with fellow women
they were advised to offer *ẹbọ*
if this is the way we administer the community
would the community have been this desirous to live in?

The above brings the community into focus and tasks the elders of that community tc make sure that the community is made desirous to inhabit. The citizens of *Ìwòrì-Wòdí* were advised to permit *Ọmọ-Oṣú* to return to their fathers' houses after marriage. *Ọmọ Oṣú* are women who for one reason or the other are separated from their husband. Th stanza is saying that their parents should not to allow them to stay single, rather to g back to their husbands. Obviously this passage is hinting at the women who had earlie been exposed to sexual satisfaction before separations from husbands seek to satisfy thei sexual urge secretly with women to avoid adultery. *Ifa's* position is for them to seek th cause of their predicament through divination and proffer solutions to their individu challenges so as to be reconciled to their husband. Regarding homosexuality, this stanz holds that homosexuality is the function of a strained relationship with the opposite se which can be corrected through appropriate divination and sacrifices.[29]

In all the four *Odù* examined in this study, a few things come to the fore. Firstly, th homosexuality is not a new phenomenon; rather it has been with the people from tim immemorial. In addition to this is the fact that gay and lesbian relationships are spoke about. This is evidenced in the assumptions that the readers of the *Odù* alread understand the concept since; no effort has been made to describe the act. Secondl homosexuality is not a welcome idea in the sacred scripture of the Yoruba. This discernible in the condemnation of the enigma throughout the four passages examine Closely following the above is the fact that all the quoted passages all proffer solutio for recovery from homosexual tendencies. On the issue of destiny, *Ifá* is saying that th can even be corrected if a person in one way or the other believes that by nature they a people given to the phenomenon. On a final note is the people's perception of children another reason for detesting homosexuality in the Church. The Yoruba believe that woman who is childless cannot count herself a part of the family until she bears a chi for the husband. That is the reason for barren women's inordinate search for the fruit the womb. Besides, the Yoruba believe in child procreation. They want children who w survive after them.[30] Thus the Yorùbá do say that *ẹni tó wáyé tí kò bímọ, kò ráyé wá. l lówó, bókọlé, ẹnìẹlẹnini ó jogún ẹ.Omolàṣẹhìndè, Omol'aṣọ* (Whoever comes to th world without giving birth to a child or children, is just an onlooker(s) in the world. h riches and wealth will be inherited by an outsiders. It is a child that survives one, chi looks after one).

Ifá, Homosexuality and National Development

The fore going has been an attempt to examine homosexuality from the point of the sacred text of the Yoruba of Southwest Nigeria and as it relates to the idea of development. A cursory observation of the *Odù* corporal above, it is clear that homosexuality is repudiated. Furthermore, the passages reveal a few things of homosexuality and national development. These are seen in the areas of health challenges, child reproduction and the issue of stigmatization. The health problems that can emanate from homosexuality include but not limited to lumps, boils and yaws in gay relationships while lesbian relationships may result in murk, stinking odor, dirt and irritation. This position is corroborated by some medical researches that link single sex relationships to many ailments.[31] A paper delivered at the Fourth International AIDS Malignancy Conference at the National Institutes of Health reported that:

> Homosexual men with HIV have "a 37-fold increase in anal cancer, a 4-fold increase in Hodgkin's disease (cancer of the lymph nodes), a 71 2.7-fold increase in cancer of the testicles, and a 2.5-fold increase in lip cancer." "Studies Point to Increased Risks of Anal Cancer," [32]

Studies are replete with regard to stigmatization of homosexuals within the community, the works of Botnick, Cloete, Simbayi, Kalichman, Strebel, &Henda, Dowshen, Binns, &Garofalo, Herek, UNAIDS, are just a tip of the iceberg. Negative attitudes have been expressed towards people with homosexual tendencies. These are in the areas of HIV infected homosexuals by those who are not infected, age related stigma, self-stigma and those coming from relatives who see the homosexuals as queer people. These have come with dire consequences as observed by Smit et al. On the issue of inability to procure children, *Ifa* protests strongly that homosexuality is not to be encouraged. While the passages above speak about copulation, the joy to be derived from heterosexual relationship, they also talk about the value of raising children. The Yoruba take the issue of childhood serious as have been observed above. The child adoption strategy advanced by homosexuals in answer to inability to procure children has no basis in Yoruba land. The reason for this is the fact the Yoruba; though love children take care not to raise children whose ancestry is unknown or doubtful. The reason for this is that they believe that such social vices like stealing, epilepsy, mental disorder is hereditary. So they are careful not to jeopardize their own bloodline. [33]

Conclusion

The foregoing has been an attempt to examine the sacred scripture of the Yoruba religious consciousness. This is against the backdrop of attempts at looking at what other religions are saying about the homosexual tendencies. It was discovered that the Yoruba Religion through the *Ifá* corpus has fundamental things to say about the subject matter. Some of the observations include the fact that the existence of homosexuals is

acknowledged through all the passages examined. Those who are homosexuals are not condemned but the act is regarded as an anomaly that the scriptures have laid down guidelines to correct the issue. Invariably, while there are gays so are there lesbians. *Ifa* Corpus has touched everything in the worldview of the Yoruba. This work has been able to contribute its quota to the growing literature on homosexuality from the perspectives of the indigenous religion of the Yoruba. The position of the scripture is that homosexuality is an anathema but can be corrected through proper sacrifices and necessary counsel.

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