

Yan Daudu

A Study of Transgendering Men in Hausaland West Africa

By

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A Master Thesis in Cultural Anthropology
Department of Cultural anthropology and Ethnology
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ABSTRACT

This study deals with *yan daudu*, transgendering men in Hausaland, West Africa. The focus is on their role in Hausa society and more precisely in *bori* cult which is an old spirit possession cult. *Yan daudu* have mostly been mentioned in footnotes and margins and often their position is defined through different terms of sexuality –*yan daudu* have been categorised as homosexuals or transvestites.

In this study *yan daudu's* sexuality is seen as secondary trait; more important is their gender variation and productive specialisation. Still this study considers largely sexuality in order to understand that sexual categories (for example homo- and heterosexual) are not universally valid concepts.

The role of *yan daudu* is studied as a part of the Hausa society but also as an individual choice. This is an attempt to bring the question of self into anthropological discussion. Theoretical base is found in poststructuralism.

Bori cult is studied beside *yan daudu*. It is one context where *yan daudu* live and work. Special focus is put on the claim that the *bori* cult is a marginal cult for marginal people, such as *yan daudu* and *karuwai*. *Karuwais* are women that have often been compared to courtesans and they are closely associated with *yan daudu*.

Keywords: *yan daudu*, *bori* cult, sexuality, homosexuality, gender, third gender, marginality, *Karuwai*,

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Introduction

"Where homosexuality was thought to occur in tribal societies, in the sense of same sex desire coupled with gender transformation of social role and dress, it has been seen as the manifestation of something basic, primitive, biological: a certain kind of essential nature forcing its way out of the body. We now see how naive such a view was". Gilbert Herdt (1994:73)

This text of Gilbert Herd is an excellent statement of how in the history of anthropology the gender-crossing has been interpreted as an expression of homosexuality. Such a simplifying bias has also been the case in the writings of *Yan daudu* (sing. *Dan Daudu*), that is effeminate men who have been mentioned in the context of the Hausa *Bori* cult in the northern part of the Nigeria and the southern part of Niger.

When I first got interested in *yan daudu* my main focus was to study them as homosexuals since that is how they have been categorised in most of the cases. I found few texts on *yan daudu*. Most of the authors mentioned *yan daudu* in margins or footnotes naming them as homosexual, transvestites or deviants. The more I learned about *yan daudu* the more I felt it was wrong to call them homosexuals and the more curious I became. Finally, I had to ask what does the term "homosexual" even mean. What makes *yan daudu* homosexuals? In fact, are they homosexuals according the conventional definition of same-sex sexual relations?

I have three purposes for this paper: first, to deconstruct the terms homosexual and homosexuality and to show that they are not globally valid concepts. The term *homosexuality* is not appropriate for describing all same-sex relations because of the term's simplifying bias. Even though a number of references indicate that many *yan daudu* have same-sex

relations, the role of *yan daudu* is not explained in terms of homosexuality. The term has, first of all, too many connotations in English to be a valid concept (Fry 1986:141). I will show that “homosexuality” is hardly applicable in all contexts of same-sex relations. Many authors legitimise the use of the term by claiming that it refers only to physical sexual acts between two men (or women), but I question if we, as readers, can get rid of all the connotations the term itself brings, since for us it is loaded with meanings learned within this cultural context. And when two men are engaged in sexual intercourse, does that make them “homosexual”? How to define a homosexual? It can be assumed that same-sex relations are found all over the world, but to define them they need to be studied in a local context and defined accordingly. It can be also questioned, whether sexuality ultimately has such significance for the position of *yan daudu*.

The second purpose is to show that *bori* is not a cult of deviants, but an important part of everyday life for its members. The *bori* cult is often interpreted as a form of resistance and of women’s empowerment in the male-dominant, Islamic Hausa society (for example Masquelier 1993:3, Last 1993:50). It is seen as a possibility for such “deviants” as “prostitutes” and “homosexuals” to live in a more “understanding” community and receive appreciation for being what they are (Wall 1988: 167). This view was first presented in the work of I.M. Lewis (1971) who has divided possession cults into two groups; main morality cults and peripheral cults. Peripheral cults differ from main morality cults by their capacity to act upon the common moral rules of society. Because of the assumed “marginality” of the *bori* cult, Lewis places it to the group of peripheral cults. This second purpose is to show that the *bori* is not only an empowerment for “marginal people”, but it is also an integral part of life for several people from different backgrounds, not just for “deviants”. It is important to point out that *bori* fulfills several functions at the same time. It is a cure and medicine (Wall 1988, Besmer 1983, Echard 1991), cultural performance (Pittin 1996), tradition (Masquelier 1999) and resistance movement (Echard 1991, Masquelier 2001). Above all, it is a way of life.

And finally and most importantly, the third purpose is to study what is the role of *yan daudu* and what meaning the gender crossing has. I will point out that it is not a sign of "homosexuality", which simplifies the understanding of *yan daudu*. *Yan daudu* are mentioned mostly in the context of *bori* spirit possession cult, a social and religious institution that exists in the Hausaland situated in the northern part of Nigeria and the southern part of Niger. This will be the ethnographic context of this paper. There is no clear "membership" in the cult but the strength of the *bori* lies in the collective imagination, in shared beliefs (Masquelier 2001: 9). The everyday life is lived with the spirits, *the other world*, which is always present in the people's life. It is the ritual aspect of *bori* that has interested several anthropologists (for example Besmer 1983 Wall 1988, Onwuejeogwu 1969). Eye catching performances with the musicians, dancers and singers, ending to the possession itself (which has interpreted in the name of insanity in the early studies), have directed the interest of the researchers to the "sacred domain" of the *bori* (Masquelier 2001: 121).

What makes the situation of *bori* interesting is its existence next to the powerful Islam in the Hausaland. Since the islamisation in the 14th century, the position of *bori* has been renegotiated several times. Being considered as a pagan religion it has managed to live side by side with Islam and has nowadays experienced revivalism as traditional medicine and folklore. This creates cultural environment for *yan daudu* where, on the one hand, there are strict Islamic rules and concepts of gender and, on the other hand, assumed freedom in the *bori* cult.

My methodological reflections about the role of *yan daudu* will deal with the gender and the position of *yan daudu* in the Hausa culture. The methodological background of this work lies in poststructuralism. After the 1970s, poststructuralists have challenged "...the ideas of fixed meaning, unified subjectivity and centered theories of power" (Weedon 1999: 100). There are several authors who have used poststructuralism in order to understand subjectivity and gender. The main poststructuralist author presented in this work is Henrietta Moore and especially her work "*A Passion for Difference: Essays in Anthropology and Gender*" (1994).

In this book she calls for a re-examination of the relationship between gender and the body in relation to categories of sexual difference. Even though the poststructuralists have theorised the body mostly in the context of feminism and women, it helps to understand the constructions of sexuality and gender in general. She questions particularly fixed meanings of bodies and the assumed naturalness of gender categories. Moore also calls attention to the cultural specificity of the categories sex, gender and sexuality.

The poststructuralists consider that gender is produced by discourses as well as individual subjectivity. We learn to be a man or a woman (or something else) through the discursive practices that guide us. The subject is a site of different subjectivities constructed by different, often competing, discourses (Weedon 1999: 104). Still, as will be shown, this does not mean that individual is totally passive in this process. In the end of the paper I will call attention to this problem by presenting a term of Wendy Holloway (1984). She uses the term *investment* to describe the choices the individual makes to form his/her gender identity.

Outline of thesis

In the first chapter I will give a general view over the *bori* cult. The chapter will deal with different theories on the origins of the cult and show what kind of meaning the cult has for its members. I will also reflect on the relations between *maguzawa* (shortly translated as non-Muslims) and Muslims, as well as between Islam and *bori*.

The second chapter will consider the questions of marginality of spirit possession cults. I will present two different views (the cult in marginal position versus the cult as integral part of society) by I.M. Lewis (1971) and M. Lambek (1981). Through their two very different theories I will study the cultural position of *bori* cult. The main question of the chapter will be what kind of meaning *bori* cult has in Hausa society?

In the third chapter I will present *yan daudu* whose cultural environment has been studied in previous chapters. The focus will be on their productive specialisation and gender variation which has been the most eye catching element of *yan daudu*. In this chapter I will also consider their role in the Hausa society and in *bori* cult.

The fourth chapter presents some early studies on sexuality. Some important authors such as Freud and Malinowski will be presented and their meaning for the later studies reflected. I will also write few words about the early studies on "homosexuality".

The fifth chapter deals with the concepts of *sexuality* and *homosexuality*. I will present two views that have dominated the anthropological studies of sexuality, essentialism and constructionism, and show their impact on anthropological understanding of sexuality. In this chapter I will also consider the validity of the term homosexuality and to study whether or not it is universally applicable concept.

In the sixth chapter I will take a closer look on sexual dimorphism that has been a base for western understanding of sexuality since Darwin's theory of natural selection. I will study how sexual dimorphism has shown in different theories (on sex and gender) and finally present some central poststructuralistic ideas of sex and gender. By poststructuralistic theories I bring into discussion individual's meaning in creating one's gender. Thus from gender as cultural model (based on sexual dimorphism) we move toward theories where gender is (per)formed by individual him/herself.

The seventh chapter is about two different groups of people (Indian *Hijras* and North American *Berdaches*) who are sometimes categorised as *third gender*. I will compare these two groups with *yan daudu* and analyse if *yan daudu* can be categorised as third gender.

In the final discussion I will bring forward some methodological reflections of the role of *yan daudu* especially in the context of *karuwansi*. Their gender variation and productive specialisation will be in focus but I will also reflect on their motives for taking the role of *yan daudu*.

I will use Holloway's (1984) term *investment* to discuss why young men take such position as *yan daudu* even though the role is considered as deviant in Hausa society.

2. Bori spirit possession

Spirit possession is a phenomenon that exists all over the world. The origins of some contemporary possession cults can be dated as early as to 16th century and some are born during the time of colonialism, it therefore would be misleading to consider spirit possession cults as a relic of an ancient period (Lewis 1971:97). Many cults are born as a result of social change. Conversely cults have continuously been changing with the surrounding society. The capacity to change and modify to current social situations has kept many cults alive and strong. With the modernisation, local as well as global elements have been attached to the cults. The most clearly this can be seen in the spirit pantheons where one can find spirits named after rock stars, characters from the bible or presidents (Behrend & Luig 1991: xiii). As Evans-Pritchard interpreted spirits, they are “refractions of social realities” (Evans-Pritchard 1956: 106)

In the research of spirit possessions there have been three major approaches; first, the psychoanalytic approach has understood spirit as a therapy for people in crisis. Second, the sociological approach concentrates on the “social exclusion and ritual compensation” (Wendl 1999: 120). Third, the feminist approach has been interested in spirit possession as women’s special way of communication (ibid.: 120). Wendl criticises previous studies for having concentrated on the functional-pragmatic dimension of spirit possession. He underlines that since spirit possession is such a multidimensional phenomenon, it fulfils several functions simultaneously (ibid.: 120)

The *bori* is a Hausa cult of possession trance that exists in the northern part of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the southern part of the Republic of Niger in the area called *Hausaland* (Besmer 1983: 3-5) The word ‘*bori*’ itself refers to the act of possession–trance, to supernatural spirits or mediumship. The etymology of the word, like the origins of the cult, is uncertain (Last 1991: 56). The number of participants and the popularity of the cult are impossible to define with certainty: it varies, and has varied, greatly depending on the political

situation (Pittin 1996: 210). The cult varies also geographically and it is therefore a difficult task to write generally about *bori* spirit possession (Pittin 1996: 200). There can be differences between the *bori* groups even within the same region but common features can also be found.

Bori is fundamentally a communication between this world and the other world. It is a set of beliefs in supernatural spirits that can communicate with the people in terms of good or evil will. The spirits, always being present in people's lives, can cause several misfortunes and make the people ill, but they have also the power to cure and bring luck. (Besmer 1983: 1). The spirits form a spirit pantheon that includes numerous spirits¹ that has their own social and occupational positions in the spirit world. Every spirit has also its own name and character. These are known by the participants and this information forms the basis of cult practices (ibid.: 63).

The possession itself "...is a cultural evaluation of person's condition, and means precisely what it says: an invasion of the individual by a spirit" (Lewis 1971). People get possessed mostly to search a cure for diseases caused by spirits. This has made some anthropologists to name *bori* as a cult of affliction (Besmer 1983: 21). Involvement in *bori* is associated with misfortunes and suffering, but people who are in contact with the spirits consider themselves lucky (Masquelier 2001: 94). Affliction can be a mark that the person has angered the spirits, but as well it can be interpreted that the "victim" is chosen by the spirits to be their "horse" (Besmer 1983: 22).

The participants of the cult are called *yam bori*, the children of the *bori*. The trance possession taking place in the *bori* cult the spirits "mount" the devotees i.e. possess them. The relationship between the spirits and the devotees is described with this metaphor of a rider and his horse. Possessed women are called *godiya*, mare, and men *doki*, horse (Besmer 1983: 12). In addition there are several other members of the cult in various positions. The highest authority is *Sarkim Bori* who is usually a

¹ Masquelier estimates that in the Ader region the spirit pantheon contains more than 300 spirits (Masquelier 2001: 88)

man. His authority and tasks vary, but in general he is the one who promotes the services of the cult and takes care of the gifts and invitations (Ibid.: 12). The second person in the high position is *Magajiyar Bori* who is always a woman. The position of *Magajiyar bori* is subordinated to *Sarkim Bori*. Usually, the tasks of *Magajiyar bori* are similar, with the difference that she has a smaller district to control. *Magajiyar bori* are generally associated with the *karuwansi* ("prostitution") since they run often *gidan karuwai*, (a house of "prostitutes") (ibid.: 12)

According to Besmer (1983) women participating in bori are stereotyped as prostitutes. *Karuwansi* describes the status of an unmarried woman in an Islamic society. After divorce (or widowhood) a woman who refuses to remarry takes a new position as a independent woman. Such women live in the compounds run by *Magajiyar bori* (Besmer 1983: 13). In the compounds live also *yan daudu*.. They are never possessed by spirits but participate in the cult by dancing and preparing food. The role of *yan daudu* will be studied closer in the future chapters. Finally one more important group of people can be named: the musicians. They are responsible for the music in the cult and have an important position in creating atmosphere during the possession.

Origins of bori

The origin of *bori* cult is much speculated, but there is no certain information about it. Opinions are commonly divided into two; there are those who claim it to be of Islam origin and those who consider it as a relict of ancient animistic religion that existed already before the arrival of Islam. The oldest assumptions were made by A. J. N. Tremearne (1913) who claimed that the *bori* existed already before the arrival of the Islam. Jacqueline Monfouga-Nicolas dates the development of the *bori* cult at the end of the 19th century arguing that it developed as a result of the intrusion of the Islam into under-privileged minorities and therefore was born as a form of resistance (Echard 1991: 65). Echard claims that the origins of the cult are to be found in the 18th century basing this argument on the

information obtained from oral traditions. According to Echard, oral traditions are the only available sources of information that can help dating the origins of the *bori* cult. According to him the material shows that the *bori* cult developed during the 18th century in the Ader region out of local elements but being influenced by the migrants. Other data nonetheless suggest that the cult started during the 19th century among Hausa hunters. This argument is based on the list of *bori* leaders². It shows that most of the important cult leaders till 20th century belonged to hunter's lineages. An important notion is that the hunters have traditionally had the special knowledge of the physical and Botanical expertise and the current *bori* medical techniques are based on that.

Pittin (1996), in his article on *Changing symbolic structures and meanings in contemporary Nigeria*, does not define the origins of the *bori* cult but mentions that "It is clear that *bori* has been closely associated with the kingdom of katsina for centuries..." (Pittin 1996: 202). He sees that the roots of the *bori* are in the old spirit-based religion that has lived in coexistence with Islam for a long time. Lewis (1971) claims that *bori* existed already before the rise of Islam with the extend that it did not include the possession at that time. Possession emerged when women discovered the spirits men had abandoned (Lewis 1971: 96).

Besmer (1983) contrasts the practice of the *bori* between the rural Hausa (*Maguzawa*) and the urban Muslim Hausa. He contests strongly Nicolas' (1967) view that *bori* would be only a women's movement among the Muslim Hausa, born by the presence of the Islam³. Nicolas sees that the arrival of the Islam created a new cult where women were able to enjoy prestige among the male dominant Islam. The spirits of this new cult were brought from the "old" clan spirits and the "new" Muslim deities (Besmer 1983: 13-149). Besmer claims that evidences testify against this view: *bori* cult can also be found among the rural *Maguzawa* even in those areas where the influence of the Islam is minor. In fact, Besmer states, the

² Echard does not name the exact time when the list was collected, but according to my understanding this was done during Echards fieldwork 1961-1981 in the ader region of Niger.

³ This view is also supported by Masquelier (1996) who states that "...there is evidence that the *bori* cult has evolved in conjugation with islam" (Masquelier 1996: 223)

practice of the *bori* is “an integral part of *Maguzawa* religious culture” (ibid.: 15). Besmer seems to support the view of *bori* as a traditional *Maguzawa* practice. He writes that “*Bori practice is apparently untouched by Muslim influence even if Allah is placed above an extend pantheon which includes a few new personalities*” (ibid.: 15). Wall considers the similarity of *bori* spirit pantheons of the *Maguzawa* Hausa and Muslim Hausa to be a clear evidence that *bori* is a pre-islamic religion. The current *bori* is a “...thinly veiled and partially modified paganism existing in an otherwise Muslim society” (Wall 1988: 166)

Maguzawa and Islam

As written earlier, *bori* is a phenomenon that varies greatly in time and space. In the history the position of the *bori* has changed several times from the complete denial of *bori* to “revivalism”: Historical changes of the position of *bori* have often been attached to Islam. Since the islamisation of the Hausa land these two religions have existed side by side (Pittin 1996: 202).

Bori is a cult for both Muslims and non-Muslims, *Maguzawa*, even though it is often associated with the latter group (Last 1991: 56). The Hausa society is a composition of different groups, but *Maguzawa* are unique since they are identified by their religion. In Nigeria the term *Maguzawa* is often used for all non-Muslims and sometimes it refers to the “original Hausa” culture. Their current culture is seen as a relict of the ancient religion before the arrival of the Islam (Last 1993: 269, Besmer 1983:15). As Murray Last (1993) has pointed out in his article *History as religion: De-constructing the magians ‘Maguzawa’ of Nigerian Hausaland*, the label of *Maguzawa* is a consequence of specific historical relations of non-muslims who started to trade with the muslims. The word ‘*Maguzawa*’ comes from the arabic *majus* which means magician. This name was given to a group of non-Muslim merchants and mercenaries as a sign of “protected people”. Muslims were not allowed to deliver products

from pagan areas thus their plan was to create a Muslim state in West Africa and spread their religion and culture. This way they were able to trade with the protected people and deliver the products all the way to other Muslim states (Last 1993: 282-283):

In the Hausa area, the Muslim influence and power has been incontestable. Islam has provided political and social changes affecting also the identities of the Hausa. (O'Brien 1999: 3-4). Muslims presenting the visible "power", describes the defencelessness the life of *maguzawa*. This shows in two ways; First, *Maguzawa* have never demanded an independent state for themselves, but have been willing to migrate in the occasion of conflicts (ibid: 288). Second, the other power, superior to *Maguzawa*, is the other world – the world of the spirits (Last 1993: 289). The spirits, called *iskoki* in Hausa, comes from the other world being invisible but capable to communicate with the people (Wall 1988: 133). The spirits have both good and bad intentions and thus sacrifices are made to the spirits to keep them content and favorable. In the case of severe disease, an individual may have become possessed in the *bori* cult in order to reach the contact with the spirit causing the disease. This way the possessed have the possibility to get cured by the spirits. Often all the spirits have their special diseases they represent (ibid: 134). Spirits also have medical knowledge that they can reveal to possessed when they get familiar to each others (ibid: 134). This describes well the relation between spirits and humans. Between the living and with the other world there is a two way relationship; it is possible to live in a constant discussion with the spirits (Last 1993: 289).

Muslims do not accept the notion of the other world but emphasise the meaning of the *next* world (Last 1993: 288). They consider the worship of the spirits as paganism which prevents access of *Maguzawa* to the next world (Wall 1988: 134). Being more concerned about the other world than their salvation, *Maguzawa* are accused of being ignorant about the horrors they will face in the next world. Their religion is seen as a worship of the evil forces that disobey gods will and thus having somewhat "black magic powers" (Last 1993: 288). Both *Maguzawa* and

Muslims recognise Allah as supreme God but believes that Allah do not interfere directly in humans everyday life. Muslims see that Allah has sent “angels” and “devils” to deal with these things being still under His will. For *Maguzawa* these “angels” and “devils” are *iskoki* or *bori* spirits and they can act also independently (Abdalla 1991: 42-43).

Not only the religious differences separate Muslims and *Maguzawa*, but also their ways to live their everyday life. While Muslims live in the walled villages or cities, *Maguzawa* live in the rural areas having agriculture as their main source of income. Visitors, as well as spirits, are welcomed and they are offered a location when Muslims have more strict rules when it comes to intercourse between people. Also the clothing differs. Muslims having the obligation to cover completely their bodies (especially women) have *maguzawa* no such regulations. Women are allowed to go out even about bare-breasted. (Last 1993: 288).

Islam and bori

A central question with respect to the relation with Islam is how the *bori* cult has survived the pressure of Islam and what is its place in the Islamic culture. Nicole Echard (1991) sees that *bori* does not differ from other possession cults when it comes to their *association* with the dominant religious form of the surrounding society (Echard 1991: 67). These two "groups" have developed as overlapping constituting new sets of practices and beliefs, rather than two separate paradigms. The *bori* has been modified to meet the conditions of Islam in several ways which has proceed the maintenance of the *bori* in the Islamic regions (in spite of the periodical suppression). The relation of the *bori* and Islam is well seen in the development of the *bori* spirit pantheon, especially in its hierarchical structure (Abdalla 1991: 41). In the arrival of Islam new Muslim spirits were created and attached to the spirit pantheon. Allah and these new powerful Muslim spirits were positioned to dominate the spirit world which reflected the situation of the “real world” (the Muslims taking the control over political and economic activities) (ibid.: 41).

In the possession-trance the Muslim spirits appear in different ways than other spirits do: they behave in the way “Muslims do”. These spirits dress the “Muslim way”, eat the “Muslim food” and do not perform acts denied for Muslims. Characteristic to these possession rites is also that they are not presented during the important ritual periods of the Muslims. This indicates how the spirit pantheon and the ritual performances have been adjusted to the new political and religious realities of Hausaland (Abdalla 1991: 42).

The interdependence of Islam and *bori* is also shown in the travel narratives of the *bori* adepts (O'Brien 1999: 4) During the trips headed to Saudi Arabia, *bori* adepts trade their medical herbals and *bori*-knowledge. According to O'Brien these adepts mediate between two cultures gaining "...symbolic, economic, and social capital" through their illicit trade in Saudi Arabia. This way these trips work in an empowering way to create the appreciation of the *bori* adepts back in Hausaland. The fact that *bori* has relations both to larger Arab world and Hausa culture shows that it cannot be viewed simply a minor pagan religion. More, *bori* should be viewed as a dynamic subculture (O'Brien 1999: 4).

For Muslims, *bori* represents paganism against Muslim conventions (Masquelier 2001: 223). It has also been a "statement of protest and defiance in the face of Islamic hegemony..." (ibid.: 230). The living side by side has not always been a harmonic co-existence (ibid.: 230). Still, some Muslims take part to *bori* ceremonies or seek medical help from *bori* practitioners. Masquelier notes, that the association of the local "indigenous elements" with Muslim epistemology has greatly affected Islam's local practice. There is not only one form of Islam but many which varies along the context; it should not be reduced to an essentialist core (ibid.: 226). She concludes: "Neither *bori* nor Islam should be perceived as distinct and homogenous entities; they are both part of a larger set of intersecting, often dissonant, and rarely totally consistent discourses..." (Masquelier 2001: 47) The devotion to the religion changes, depends on the individual. Some are unconditional about their faith, some

are less, even if they have Islamic status (ibid.: 226). This means that also Muslims can take part to *bori* without losing His/Her Muslim identity.

3. Questions of Marginality

The claim that possession is a way for the powerless to express their problems or misfortunes has long dominated the studies on spirit possession (Masquelier 2001: 15, Sharp 1991:4). I.M. Lewis (1971) argued that the most powerless people of the society resist the power by participating in spirit possession ceremonies. The fact that most of the participants are women (also applicable to *bori*) has led to the definition that the spirit possession is a counterculture of women and social deviants. In this way the question of gender has had a great impact on anthropological discussions of spirit possession (Behrend & Luig 1999: xvii).

Given the fact that people participating in these cults tend to be members of lower classes or in a socially disapproved position, the cults have been located outside the mainstream culture (Lewis 1971: 32). Lewis divides possession cults into two groups; main morality cults and peripheral cults. This division is based on the evaluation of whether the considered cult presents (through the action) the general morality rules of the society or not. According to this definition, the *bori* would belong to the latter group, i.e. the peripheral cults. To Lewis there are several distinguishing marks to define cult as peripheral: First, these cults “*play no direct part in upholding the moral code of the societies*”(ibid.: 32). Second, the evil spirits are usually considered to be from the outside of the society like from the neighbouring peoples. Third, the targets of these peripheral spirits are also peripheral, i.e. woman. Fourth, these cults also “*embrace downtrodden categories of men who are subject to strong discrimination in rigidly stratified societies*”(ibid: 32). Many researchers have categorised assumed “homosexual” men to this group of deviants⁴.

As the word *peripheral* indicates, Lewis places the cults “outside” mainstream culture. He claims that possession cults are women’s counterculture. Possession cults are a way for the weak and downtrodden

⁴ According to Besmer (1983) the Hausa *bori* cult is a cult of deviants since prostitutes, homosexuals and people from the lower class participate in the cult.

(i.e. women) to demand prestige and attention in otherwise masculine main culture. Likewise according to Abdalla (1991) the *Bori-cult* gained a large popularity among women after Islamisation. In the 15th century islamisation took place in the Hausaland that caused a radical change in the social status of women. They were excluded from the political and economic arena. As a way to cope with this situation women turned to *bori* possession, a socially sanctioned therapeutic practice (Ibid: 41). The *bori* became a “counterculture”.

According to Lewis the spirit possession is, above all, about ongoing sex-war. It is a way to resist the male supremacy and to gain prestige and even material gains⁵. Lewis reflects why men then tolerate possession in the society and concludes that is because the demands come from the spirits and not from the women. This way it is possible to agree to the requests without losing male supremacy. Also he sees that men do not understand the total meaning the possession has for women: Men consider it as an illness and cure whereas for women it is a religious drama.

“Consequently, we have a feminist sub-culture, with an ecstatic religion restricted to women and protected from male attack through its representation as a therapy for illness” (Lewis 1971: 89)

Lewis compares western Women’s Liberation Workshop to possession cults in order to see them both as a result of lack of equality. By this Lewis wants to make a statement of global subordination of women and to show that women find different ways to resist it. Though, according to Lewis, it is easier in “our contemporary conditions” to have possibilities for “directly militant feminist action” (ibid: 87)

⁵ Lewis gives an example among the pastoral Somali where possession is interpreted as illness caused by evil sprites (ibid: 75-76). The evil spirits “attack” mostly married “hard-pressed” wives suffering from the absence of the husband or envy toward other wives of him. Spirits demand trough wives fine clothing, jewellery etc. that not everyone can afford. Lewis writes: “*It will now be clear, I think, that we are dealing with a widespread strategy employed by women to achieve ends which they cannot readily obtain more directly. Women are, in effect, making a special virtue of adversity and affliction, and, often quite literally, capitalizing on their distress*” (Lewis 1971: 85)

Lambek (1981) criticises Lewis' arguments for the marginality of cults and participants. First of all he claims that spirit possession is not some counterculture but an integral part of the whole culture. He also recognises the fact that men are mostly excluded from the cults, but does not consider it as a sign of women's marginality (Lambek 1981: 60). To Lambek, possession is a part of a coherent symbolic system what can be "readable" as a text (ibid.: 7-8). This is Lambek's theoretical base for his interpretation of the spirit possession. To him the text is a structure, separate from behaviour. People can use the structure (i.e. possession) for their own advantage, as Lewis argued, but it does not define the behaviour. People can have several models of behaviour, not just one. This idea is contrary to that of Lewis' since this denies that women participate to the possession because of their assumed marginality (behaviour). Why, then, women are majority in the possession cults? Why does not the both sexes participate in the same number since the possession has such positive effects on possessed (like Lewis argued) (ibid: 60)?

Lambek concludes that the symbolic structure of the possession favours women. This is for two reasons: First, most of the characters played in the possession are men. When women act these male roles they are "performed to best effect" (ibid: 61). The women can present the most explicit aspects of "male performance" of everyday life (i.e. different notions of power and responsibility in Islamic Mayotte culture). This way "the process of abstraction and reflection" of behaviour can be carried further (ibid:61). Were these actors male the result would be more implicit. Second, the possession requires suitable actors. Lambek states that women are more acceptable to the role of possessed because possession behaviour is not appropriate for men. In Mayotte the Islamic law strictly controls the behaviour of men and their public social role. The "loosing control" in spirit possession is a controversial act to men's social role (Lambek 1993: 61).

Marginality of the bori cult

In the discussion above there are two contradictory visions about the marginality of the possession cults. Lewis views possession as women empowerment having marginal positions in society. What Lambek has to offer is a more "positive way" to view the spirit possession. He does not see it as a result of peoples' deprivation but an important structure existing in the society. He does not place spirit possession to a marginal position but highlights that it is one structure among the others and should be considered in a larger context. How should the *bori* cult be viewed? Is the position of the cult marginal? If so, in what terms it can be viewed as marginal? This discussion will be started by notion that have been discussed above. The *bori* cult have developed aside of Islam that has had the religious hegemony in the Hausa society. In the terms of Lewis the *bori* cult *is* in the marginal position since it has been considered as immoral in relation to Islam in Hausa society.

Like in most of the possession cults women's membership in the *bori* is considerable. When it comes to the marginality of these women, many of them are socially unstable, having married and divorced several husbands. Women also break Islamic norms (such as modesty and respectful submission to husband) by abandoning their households for participating the cult. Masquelier shows that among the Mawri, *bori* is definitely considered as women's business. Women search help from the *bori* healers to ask about pregnancy, babies or to get advises for the marriage (Masquelier 2001: 92). Still, the situation is not one-sided: both men and women do have access to membership in the *bori*. Gender equality is promoted in the "institutional arena" by three aspects: first, both man and women can have economic benefits and social status as mediums. Second, both men and women are expected to follow the same rules of *bori* and participate in the performances (by dancing). Third, it is important for all to "display their capacities as mediums in a public setting" (ibid.: 95).

How about Lewis' claim that a marginal cult “play(s) no direct part in upholding the moral code of the societies”(Lewis 1971: 32)? Masquelier follows the ideas of Lambek. Like him, Masquelier emphasises that spirit possession is not only a ritual outside the main moral codes but a constitutive reality of the culture (Masquelier 2001: 123). As she writes:

“...the strength of *bori* –and the source of its resilience despite censure and competition –resides precisely in its deep embeddedness in mundane practices that provide sets of culturally constituted images and techniques through which mediums and others are able to share, transform, or contest changing social realities.” (Masquelier 2001: 124)

Bori is a part of everyday life. It is set of practices that do not occur only in a ritual context but exist constituting the worldview. It should not be put to a marginal position as a special practice occurring *only* in the situation of affliction. The extraordinary that shows in the understanding of the world of the spirits, is one side (essential side though) of the *bori* (ibid.: 124). Was it not to this side the Muslims would not have had any confrontation with *bori*. The Muslim elite considers *bori* as dangerous and hateful precisely because of these "harmful" pagan spirits.

There have been periods when *bori* has faced a great suppression, but in the current situation suppression of the *bori* is diminished because of the inner arguments of Muslims (Masquelier 2001: 223). Confrontations of *bori* values and Muslim conventions are losing their relevance. In the recent debate the question has been focused on the nature of Islamic knowledge and the right way to practice Islam. Two opposite groups in this debate are the *yan izala*, a fundamentalist group that aims to purify Islam, and the mainstream Muslims (*yan tariqa*). *Bori* cult has been left mostly aside, but used occasionally to lift Muslim profiles in contrast to the provincial cult adepts. (ibid.: 223).

On the other hand *bori* has gained a new meaning as "tradition". Among the Hausa-speaking Mawri villagers the *bori* has become a help to preserve a local heritage and to maintain the relations with the spirits in the

Islamised environment. For example, women use *bori* to affirm their fertility. This is not only for illiterate peasants but also for educated Muslim elite. Where on the past it was not socially acceptable to show such backwardness, nowadays it is safe to call attention to one's cultural roots. The *bori* presents authentic relict of traditions and is used to confirm cultural identities. This has also another side: the modern education and occupations have confirmed the re-evaluation of *bori*. Villagers with modern education or occupation get extra prestige by contrasting their occupational position with the old traditions (Masquelier 1996: 35).

Bori has also gained new recognition as traditional medicine. *Bori* rites have been re-evaluated with the increasing respect toward this medical practice. Even some local authority structures have associated with the *bori* functionaries. There are also "western" medical services available but it does not exclude the use of *bori* as a medical treatment (Pittin 1996: 211). According to O'Brien (1999), *bori* healers in Kano have such incomes that they have had the possibility to do several pilgrimages to Mecca. This, according to her, indicates the "continuing popularity and remunerative importance of the profession". The increasing popularity of the profession has led some older *bori* adepts to criticise the younger that they are in the business only for the money (ibid.: 12). Indeed, the *bori* has become a profitable business for some ambitious young men (Masquelier 1996: 36⁶)

This chapter has treated the marginality of *bori* cult. It has shown that some assumptions about marginality should be corrected. The cult is not in marginal (especially because of the participants) but an integral part of some peoples lives. What does this tell about the situation of the participants? Instead of some assumptions (for example Besmer 1983, Lewis 1971) the cult has participants from all societal groups. Not all of the participants are "deviants" or other "low class people" (Masquelier 2001: 93). Besmer have claimed that because of prostitutes, homosexuals

⁶ From Masquelier (1993): *Ritual economies, historical mediations: the poetics and power of Bori among the Mawri of Niger*. PhD dissertation, University of Chicago.

and other marginal people, "...bori takes on the appearance of a cult of deviance" (Besmer 1983: 19).

Since the *bori* is not only an empowering practice of a small group of marginal people, it is important to look closer these "deviants" specially *yan daudu* who are the main focus of this paper. In the next chapter their "role" and deviancy will be taken under closer consideration.

4. Yan daudu

Yan daudu (sing. *Dan Daudu*) are a strictly distinctive social category of males, who have adapted feminine mannerism, speech and dress in Hausa society. They have been mentioned mostly in footnotes and margins in texts concerning the *bori* cult and nearly always it is the status of deviant that has been addressed. *Yan daudu* have access to religious life but they do not participate in rituals as possessed persons. In *bori* performances *yan daudu* dance womenlike and donate money to cult-adepts, specially when the spirit *Dan Galadima* appears (Besmer 1983: 18). The term *dan daudu* comes from *Dan Galadima*, a son of *Galadima* in the spirit pantheon. *Dan Galadima* is considered as a loose living, handsome man who is popular among women (Greenberg 1946: 42). It is not known, however, why *yan daudu* are associated with him (Besmer 1983: 18).

Mostly *yan daudu* have been categorised as homosexuals, transsexuals or transvestites without considering their specific role any further. Some of the *yan daudu* do have same-sex sexual relations with other men but, as I will point out later, partaking in same-sex actions is neither necessary nor a sufficient criteria for the status of Dan Daudu. Moreover, their status is to be defined through their work and the most visible feature, gender crossing. These two key features of *Yan daudu*'s role could be named as *productive specialisation* and *gender variation* (Roscoe 1993: 332).

The productive specialisation indicates that more than simply viewing *Yan daudu* as homosexuals, they should be considered as a socio-occupational group (Kleis & Abdullahi 1983). They work and live in the areas where prostitution exists, mediating between the clients and the prostitutes, managing relations with authorities and recruiting new prostitutes (ibid.: 45). In the context of *karuwanci*, *yan daudu* participate also to work that are considered to be women's domain in the Islamic sphere. They, for example, prepare and sell food, mainly luxury snacs such as fried potatoes, eggs and chicken (Wall 1988: 153)

In the Hausaland *karuwanci* is an old pre-Islamic institution that has increased as the consequence of urbanisation, greater geographical mobility and the rise in marriage expenses (followed by prolonged bachelorhood) (Kleis & Abdullahi 1983: 51). *Karuwais* live and work in *gidan karuwai*, the community of *karuwai* which are usually placed outside the *birni* the traditional set of compounds. The space outside *birni* is called *waje* that means stranger quarters. *Waje* is inhabited by migrants from the *birni* and non-Muslims from the central and southern parts of the Nigeria. In *waje* the social pressure of Islam is minor and thus the atmosphere is more tolerable - also toward *karuwanci* (ibid.: 43). Many of the *karuwais* are divorced women who have refused to move back to their childhood home. In Islamic Hausa society, *Karuwanci* provides a temporary income, often more substantial than that earned in other professions typical for women (for example preparing food or potteries). It is mostly temporary, since several *karuwais* remarry and leave the *karuwanci* (Dunbar 1991: 76).

Even though *karuwanci* is common it is not a profession of much appreciation. It is disapproved by the Islamic morality norms and it violates several norms of Hausa womanhood (ibid.: 41). For example, *karuwais* live outside the seclusion which is not normal for Muslim Hausa women. *Karuwansi* offers possibility for women to move into spheres not allowed for married women, and have broader social contacts than otherwise. For example, unlike married women, they participate in public dances or to drink beer with men. Thus their social sphere is vaster than that of other women in Hausa society (Kleis & Abdullahi 1983: 42)

Another feature of the role of *yan daudu* is the *gender variation*. Their highly visible way of dressing and behaving "women like" has led a lot of researchers to define them as homosexuals or transvestites. Gender crossing in the case of *yan daudu* means that "biological men" have adapted mannerism of woman; they wear wrappers (Hausa female garment), speak in a "high-pitched falsetto voice" and move "swaying". (Kleis & Abdullahi 1984: 44). *Yan daudu* also dance publicly with *karuwais*. Public dancing is addressed commonly for women. Ames writes

about dancing men: "Some *bori* dancers are men, although female adepts far outnumber them, but they too are viewed as social deviants" (Ames 1982: 128).

Yan Daudu consider themselves as women, rejecting totally their male identity according to Kleis & Abdullahi (1984). Yet, according to Gaudio, *yan daudu* sees their feminine behaviour, dancing and joking as play, *wasa*, or craziness, *iskanci*. The womanlike behaviour is not serious and thus they keep their male identity (Gaudio 1998: 119). What they all agree on is that commonly *yan daudu* are considered as men in Hausa society (Gaudio 1998: 119, Kleis & Abdullahi 1984: 49).

Being a *dan daudu* does not exclude the possibility of getting married and having family. In the Hausa society marriage and the first child complete the social status of a man (Wall 1988: 57). They also spend time in women's company. Normally it is not allowed for a man to be alone with women, apart from his wife. *Yan daudu* are freely with *karuwais* without limitations. Their relation is not sexual but includes very intimate conversations and erotic lore. Young *yan daudu* are socialised by *karuwais* and later vice versa (Kleis & Abdullahi 1984: 46).

Given the strict separation of the spheres of men and women (in Islamic society) researchers have come to interpret the existence of such category as *yan daudu* in the context of the *bori* cult. As written earlier, the cult has been seen to provide a more tolerable environment for such "deviants" as "homosexuals". Since *yan daudu* deviate from the traditional role of the man (i.e. dressing, behaviour and productivity) they are considered as deviants among Hausa. They face periodically disapproval from religious leaders (other than *bori*) and authorities that consider *yan daudu* as immoral. This encourages "...the abusive treatment, including arrest, extortion, and physical violence, that '*yan daudu* often face at the hands of police and young hooligans" (Gaudio 1998: 122). On the other hand attitudes toward *yan daudu* can be good natured joking. Their visible feminist mannerism and clothing can become a subject of humored jesting. (Besmer 1983: 19).

The statement made about the deviancy of *yan daudu* requires some clarifying. As criticised earlier, being a *yan daudu*, is not a simply question of sexuality. Nor is their deviancy a reason for their participation to *bori* cult. O'Brien (1999) underlines that the reason is the possibility to dance to popular *garaya* music. Deviancy has been considered an unifying indicator between the *bori* adepts, *karuwai* and *yan daudu*. They all share the ambivalent relationship to a Hausa political and economic order but it is not enough to consider them as united group sharing social marginality (i.e. a group of deviants). Solidarity is not self-evident: Well-educated *karuwai* would never participate in the *bori* cult organised by people from the lowerclass. Moreover, relationships between *karuwai* and *yan daudu* are due to "overlapping social worlds and bonds of friendship" (O'Brien 1999: 10).

Several authors have categorised *yan daudu* as homosexuals. One of these texts that will be studied closer is Rudolph Gaudios (1998) "*Male Lesbians and Other Queer Notions in Hausa*". What makes his article special is that it concerns mainly the sexuality of *yan daudu*. His article contains valuable information about the lives of *yan daudu* but, as I will point out, he has done the research from perspective that transpires the whole studies. Gaudio underlines that *yan daudu* are occupational category but concentrates to study them as "gays" or "homosexuals". With these terms he refers to men "who are conscious of themselves as men who have sex with men, and who considers themselves to be socially [...] distinct from men who do not have this kind of sex (Gaudio 1998: 117).

Gaudio starts his article by telling about his own sexual orientation and how he assumed that being gay would help him to communicate and get contacts with the "local gays", i.e. *yan daudu*. He had also heard that Hausa society has a reputation for homosexual activity. Later he notices that such a view was naïve since the social world in Nigeria is different from the American one (Gaudio 1998: 118). During his research he becomes very aware of the cultural differences but he does not question the "homosexuality" of *yan daudu* at any point. To the contrary he criticises that researchers have refused to see the homosexuality of *yan*

daudu (ibid.: 119). According to him most of the *yan daudu* are homosexuals but they want to hide it from the society since heterosexuality is the norm.

Gaudio characterises the assumed "homosexuality" of *yan daudu* as "transgenderal" and "gender-defined" based on the "heterosexual" features of their "homosexual" relationships. *Yan daudu* have often male partners to whom they refer as *miji*, husband. This relationship follows the heterosexual norms in grammatical and semantic structure (names), sexual intercourses (the masculine one is the insertive partner) and in the way partners treat each other. For example the "male partner" is expected to give *yan daudu* presents such as money and clothing (ibid.: 120-121).

In particular, Gaudio accuses Kleis and Abdullahi (1983) for not dealing with the sexuality of *yan daudu*. They are one of the few who were studied particularly *yan daudu*. Kleis and Abdullahi's argument is that the terms homosexual or transvestite are not applicable in Hausa society but do not explain their claim any further.

My attempt in the future chapters is to deconstruct the terms homosexual and homosexuality in order to scrutinise the text of Rudolf Gaudio and others who have used the term homosexual to describe the sexuality and the role of *yan daudu*.

5. Early ethnographical studies on sexuality

Studies on sexuality are flourishing at present, but that has not been always the case. In her book *The geography of perversion* (1996), Rudy E. Bleys writes that ethnographic narratives have only recently become sources for historical research on non-Western sexuality. According to her, naturalising sexuality has prevented intellectual historians from seeing diversity in sexuality – the historical dimension of sexual categories and culture. The discourse mostly concentrated on the moral aspects of sexuality (Bleys 1996: 3). Beth Maina Ahlberg (1994) suggests that anthropologists' lack of interest on sexuality studies is due to the historical context of anthropology. In the Victorian era, when anthropology was still a young discipline, sexuality was a taboo subject, surrounded by silence. Additionally the fact that anthropology was mainly used to research on African social systems to colonial rule, reduced the interest in sexuality (Ahlberg 1994:224-225).

Freud occupies an important position in the work of many authors. It is often said that Freud started the research on sexuality, but the French historian and philosopher Michel Foucault claims otherwise (Sarup 1993: 71). According to Foucault, the problem of sexuality was widely considered in medicine and psychiatry of the nineteenth century. John Beattie sees that Freud's contribution to other disciplines (than psychology and psychiatry) has been remarkable but mostly indirect, like his "visit" to anthropology. His efforts to recover the origins of culture in his work "*Totem and taboo*" (1918) did not convince anthropologists (Beattie 1964: 28), but he showed the primacy of symbolic elements in human thought. Freud refocused the discussion from natural (biological) sexuality to sexuality's psychic dimensions (Bleys 1996: 5). Foucault asserts that the role of psychoanalysis was liberating. "Psychoanalysis was established in opposition to a certain kind of psychiatry, the psychiatry of degeneracy, eugenics and heredity" (Sarup 1993: 71).

Psychoanalysis had a great impact on the anthropological studies on sexuality. One of the first anthropologists, interested widely in sexuality

was Bronislaw Malinowski who became interested in psychoanalysis after it was recommended to him by Dr. C. G. Seligman (Malinowski 1929: 325). Malinowski used psychoanalysis for his studies of sexuality in the Trobriand Islands (Ombolo 1990: 18). In "*Sex and repression in Savage society*" (1927) Malinowski tested whether psychoanalysis could be adapted to study on so called primitive societies. To Malinowski, psychoanalysis was mainly "a theory of the influence of the family life on the human mind" (Malinowski 1927: 2). He studied the Trobriand islanders' family closely to show that the general attitude towards sexuality and the type of relations between parents and children have effected on the different types of *complexes of family*. "Complex of family" is a term that Malinowski used to describing a family's structured feelings and typical attitudes toward kinship and sexuality. His interest lay in researching the kind of effects the complex of family could have on some general habits, social organisation, myths and legends etc. Because Malinowski showed that families are constituted and variate in time and space, he also concluded that the complex of family vary.

Malinowski was also interested in the œdipus complex, which Freudian analysts believed to be universal.⁷ He demonstrated that the complex of œdipus was not universal after all – it was only associated with the Western, patriarchal family model (Ombolo 1990: 25, Malinowski 1927). This he concluded by analysing the complex of family in Trobriand Islands. Malinowski brought up the distinctive features from the patriarchal family where the œdipus complex could be applied. One of the distinctive features was the fact that in matrilineal systems, children were sent to live with the mother's brother, who was considered as children's provider. The biological father's role was to be a friend, unlike in Western society, where it was supposed to be characterised by power and authority. Because of the taboo concerning the relationship between sister and brother, the uncle had to keep distance between him and his sister, but he was the one with authoritative power. Malinowski therefore denied that

⁷ The complex of œdipus is a freudian concept with two components: A love for the mother and a hatred for the father

psychoanalytical generalisations could be adapted to every society. Still, he did not totally abandon psychoanalytical methods. As he wrote: *"...And my results showed beyond all doubt how even a theory which has, in light of investigation, to be partly rejected can stimulate and inspire"* (Malinowski 1929: 325).

In ethnographical texts and travel narrations in the 19th and 20th century, same sex relations were often mentioned only briefly and evaluated along European standards of morality (Bleys 1996). In anthropology, they were concerned not to exist in tribal societies. A lot of different explanations were given to support this view - for example easily available women (Bleys 1996: 166). From Freudian basis, some anthropologists considered the "lack of homosexuality" as a sign of balanced personal development. In psychoanalysis, homosexuality was seen as a neurosis (ibid: 5). According to Murray and Roscoe (1998) anthropologists denied the existence of tribal "homosexuality" even when they were faced with the clear evidence (Murray & Roscoe 1998: XIII, Bleys 1996: 166). In the West, the "primitive man" was considered to be close to nature, and tasks of the "primitives" were mostly considered as being reproductive-centric. Thus "homosexuality" was seen as an impossible or unlike feature in tribal societies. Because the black Africans were seen as the "most primitive" they were supposed as "the most heterosexual".

When "homosexuality" was identified, it was often explained as being an Arabic import. The linguistic "proofs" were given to confirm the view that "homosexuality" did not exist in Africa before the Arabs introduced it. Terms for homosexuality were traced to Arabics, and indigenous African languages were announced to be "free" from the terms (Bleys 1996: 167-168). Generally speaking it can be said that ethnographical texts (in the 19th and early 20th century) have nearly always been either negative or positive regarding the same sex relations, hardly ever neutral. The majority of ethnographers have presented these relations as a negative feature in tribal societies (ibid: 167-168).

6. Is there "homosexuality"?

In anthropological studies of sexuality, two major views have been dominant: essentialism and constructionism (Vance 1998: 160). In social science, essentialism is a pejorative word that has rarely been defined in academic discussion but used more and more in a rhetorical sense to “dismiss positions with which one does not agree” (Petersen 1998: 3). This has caused the common polarisation of essentialism and constructionism. Constructivism is easier to define but should not be left totally unproblematised. In studies on sexuality, social constructionism has: ...challenged the “natural” status of many domains, presenting the possibility of a truly *social* inquiry as well as suggesting that human actions have been and continue to be subject to historical forces and, thus, to change” (Vance 1998⁸)

In the studies of sexuality, constructivist writings have assumed “homosexuality’s” inter-cultural nature, emphasising the variation of its “cultural forms”. This view has been a cornerstone for those cultural constructivists who have rejected the transhistorical and transcultural definitions of gender and sexuality and highlighted the variation of their different expressions. Contrary to constructivism, essentialists emphasises that human behavior is natural and there can be found an essence of human (often sexuality is understood biological and fixed which will be soon discussed). Constructionism contests that the claimed “natural” is production of human action and history instead of biology. Different cultural variations of sexuality can be found throughout time and space.

Even though constructivism has managed to break through the essentialist ideas of sexuality as a purely biological drive and show the variety of different expressions of sexuality in different cultures, it is strange that it has not “questioned the existence of universal categories like homosexual and heterosexual” as Vance states (Vance 1998: 163). This particularly concerns reinterpretations of history made to support the view

⁸ First published in *Homosexuality, Which Homosexuality?* A. Van Kooten Nierkerk & T. van Der Meed (eds). Amsterdam: An Dekker

that homosexuality has existed throughout the time. Vance names this *historising sexuality* (ibid.: 160). Creating gay and lesbian history was mostly a project of early constructivism. Nowadays there are several views on studies of sexuality within the constructivism⁹; Vance stresses that constructivists have different opinions how much finally constructed. How much is due to culture and socialisation? How much is “essential”?

Common agreement is that physically identical sexual acts can be given different subjective and social meanings since the act itself does not carry any meaning. Some constructivists go further assuming that the individual's desire is socially constructed, and the most radical constructionists claim that even sexual impulse is constructed by history and culture and thus there is no biological lust (ibid.: 164). Many assume, nevertheless, that there exist certain sexual behavior or physical relations understood as sexual, that vary contextually (ibid.: 165). This supports my understanding of sexuality: extreme constructionism can hardly answer to all questions and, further more, I do not find it meaningful to try to prove that sexuality is throughout constructed. Is it even possible to define sexuality entirely?

Grosz (1995) lists three forms of essentialism, whereof *biologism* is the most recognised form (in Petersen 1998: 5). Biologism considers the social and cultural factors as effects of biological factors. It has been used to explain, among other things, the “essence” of men and women and, what is interesting for my study, “homosexual orientation”. The second form of essentialism is *naturalism*. In naturalism certain attributes attached to women and men are considered natural without any biological explanation. For instance, women are seen as naturally caring. Grosz considers Freudian psychoanalysis as such essentialism since it ignores the influence of the subject's social position and emphasises the genital morphology.¹⁰ The third form of essentialism, *universalism*, is also based

⁹ I take the liberty to write “inside the constructionism” even though it is notable that constructivism does not form any school, but theory.

¹⁰ Freud explained the difference between sexes by psychological development that was always attached to the same pattern: when the child notices the bodily difference (i.e. penis) between his/her parents (i.e. man and woman) it makes it possible to create the own sexual identity. Freud, Sigmund (1961): *Introduction à la Psychoanalyse*. Payot: La Petite Bibliothèque Payot

on biological assumptions, such as commonness of women and men. It differs, however, from biologism in fact that it is conceived in social terms. Universalism comprehends the idea of a united group of women (as well as men) that is ahistorical and cross-cultural (Ibid.: 1998: 5-6). The same way "homosexuals" have often been understood as one category.

In current research scholars often limit the concept of "homosexuality" to describe only same-sex intercourse in order to "undress" it from western connotations of homosexuality. This would present the common constructionist view on sexuality. Fewer have questioned the use of the term itself, as above commented. Gilbert Herd (1995) suggests that the term *homosexuality* should be put in quotation marks because there is not such a unitary entity as "homosexuality". More like it, he states, there exist "several species" of the same-sex relations that can be classified as four kinds of practice; age-structured, gender-structured, role- or class-structured and egalitarian-structured "homosexualities" (Herdt 1995: 75). While this view still assumes particular forms of sexuality, Peter Fry (1986) argues that *homosexuality* is not a valid term for scientific research because of its multiple meanings (Fry 1986: 141). This notion includes the idea that we can never define the term in a united way. He certainly has a point there since the term has so many connotations depending on the context.

Michel Foucault (1978) calls attention to time and context specificity of "homosexuality". It can be said that the category called "homosexuality" was born in the 19th century when the "world of perversion" was discovered (Foucault 1978: 40). Before this, till the end of the 18th century, sexuality was controlled by three major codes; canonical law, civil law and the Christian pastoral. They all defined what was "normal" and approved and what was condemned. The norm was the sexual relation of a husband and wife, everything else such as adultery, rape and sodomy were considered as equally condemned. Thus the same-sex relations were seen as a category of forbidden acts. They were "against the nature", but more importantly, against the law. When the category "unnatural" was discovered, the "homosexuality" was taken apart as its

own category and "homosexuals" were considered as a sub-race. The members of this special category were viewed sexually peripheral, deviant and even sick (ibid.: 40). The sexual orientation of "homosexual" was always present and it was the cause to all his actions. He became ..." a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology" (Foucault 1978: 43). The categorisation of homosexuality was also constituted in psychiatry, psychology and medicine that confirmed the view of homosexuality as something permanent, a quality of a person, contrary to previous comprehension of sodomy which was totally a temporary aberration. The history of the category called "homosexuality" shows that it is not a universal, essentialist category but a specific term born to describe the people suppressed to modal and medical criteria.

Global aspects of sexuality

The problem of the use of the term *homosexuality* is at the same time ethical and theoretical. Ethical in the sense of whether or not we have the right to define some people as homosexuals if they themselves do not consider themselves as such and theoretical in a sense that, because of the term's politicized history, whether or not we ever use it as a neutral concept having only one meaning? Thus in the end the question is, whether the concept can be used at all?

Murray and Roscoe (1998) defend the use of the term in the book *Boy-wives and female husbands: studies in African homosexualities*. The purpose of their approach is to show that homosexuality is a global phenomenon that has been suppressed in anthropological and sociological research due to West's negative attitude toward homosexuality. Even though the study is declared constructionist it could be viewed as essentialist; even if it is trying to show cultural particularity of different "homosexualities" it still assumes them as based on the same phenomena.

As Herdt underlines, it is important to interpret the phenomena rather than consider them as literal realities. When one claims such entity such as homosexuality one has to take under precise research the cultural factors (Herdt 1993: 24). Murray and Roscoe argue that when scholars state that homosexuality is not an African phenomenon it has real social consequences since “they stigmatise those who engage in homosexual behavior and those who are grappling with gay identities” (ibid.: XXII). Still, we cannot assume that all who have same-sex relations consider themselves as "homosexuals", or engage precisely in "homosexual behavior". On the other hand it is understandable that those engaged in modern gay ideology understand the situation differently.

Within globalisation, the ideas of "homosexuality" and gay-identity have spread across the world and new groups of people have expressed their will to live like western "homosexuals"¹¹. This means that they want to live according to their sexual desire and have long-term relationships with another man (Altman 2001: 8)¹². The major factor that has spread the modern gay-ideology is the “language of HIV/AIDS control, surveillance, and education” (Ibid.: 8). Aids has opened new channels to offer western ways to see sexuality -offering a model of gay-life and identity it has developed a new gay consciousness. Another factor has been gay-organisations which spread the gay-ideology. Thus for homosexuals who are a part of "the global homosexual consciousness", the research done about “homosexuality” has great significance.

To be correct it is necessary to highlight that "homosexuality" can never be adopted in one way. More, the western picture of "homosexuality" is used as a resource to create new, local versions of it. And thus there is not only one gay-identity but several (Altman 2001: 2). Even though Western "homosexuality" has new meanings, it still has the base in certain ideology: the ideology of acceptance (politics), special sexuality and implications to subculture.

¹¹ Also Herdt considers homosexuality as a modern phenomenon (Herd 1997: 39)

¹² Altmans research on Asian “homosexualities” can offer new and interesting perspectives to “homosexuality”, globalization and modernity. It shows how the “homosexual identity” has a great meaning in modern negotiation over lifestyles and identities.

What comes to the western influences of the "gay world", it is worth to notice that it goes also vice versa. Western gay world can be influenced by other cultures. Indeed, anthropologists have had a significant role for the people in creating alternative sexual identities.

Since the anthropology has a long history with the theories of different sexualities (anthropologists have done research about "third genders", "transsexualism" and "transgendering" both in "other cultures" and in Europe and Americas) anthropological data and theory have become a material for popular culture, and especially to gay and lesbian cultures (Weston 1993 in Moore 1999:159).

7. Sex and Gender dichotomies

Now that it has been demonstrated that homosexuality is not a valid, universal concept of a specific cultural category of sexual behaviour, there is a need to look closer on how the ideas of sexuality and its categories have been formed in the research of sexuality. In the very heart of this lie the western understanding of "male" and "female", i.e. the sexual dimorphism. In the previous chapter it was explained how the understanding of sexual dimorphism is nowadays a form of essentialism - biologism. Now we will take a closer look to the "naturalness" of this dimorphism and reflect how it has influenced on the understanding of sex, gender and sexuality.

The studies of sexuality are best understood when the terms sex and gender are contextualised to the western tradition. First, in the western culture sexuality has long understood as a consequence of the dimorphism of the (biological) sexes, as will be pointed out below. This means that sexuality has been seen as a part of the "biological bias" even though cultural constructivists have shown the diversity of sexuality among different cultures. As I will highlight in this chapter, the evolutionary theory and the dimorphism created by evolutionary thinking have had a great importance on the research of divergent sex and gender roles and in this way, on sexuality.

Secondly, sexuality has been an important aspect in the research of variable forms of sex- and gender crossing. Often gender-crossing have been interpreted as a sign of "homosexuality" or transsexuality. This rises also a question of the connection of sex and gender which is specially important when one does not seem to be fitting in either of the assumed sexes or genders. Individuals such as Indian *Hijras* and *Berdaches* fall between these dualistic categories. Even though there are several examples from different cultures that speak against to the dimorphism of sex and gender, it is still strongly present in different studies. The dichotomous pairs man/ woman, masculine/ feminine are being in the back ground when interpreting gender crossing.

The ideas of sexual dimorphism are strongly rooted in Darwin's theory of natural selection which assumed that natural selection gives a certain function to male and female sexuality: the reproduction (Herdt 1993: 25). "By sexual dimorphism is typically meant a phylogenetically inherited structure of two types of human and sexual nature, male and female, present in all human groups" (Herdt 1993: 25). This thinking has reached the point where it is considered as a base for all actions of "man" and "woman". Being universal, existing in all places and times, it is the "*principle of sexual dimorphism*" [italics added] (ibid.: 26). After the 19th century Darwinism, this view was confirmed by the science of sexology. It stated that *heterosexuality* is normal and necessary form of sexuality because of its reproductive nature (ibid.: 28) and that two sexes "male" and "female" form an universal structure that maintains the law of reproductivity. "Homosexuality", which did not belong to this category, became the counter pole for "normality" as we have already seen in the previous chapter.

"Male" and "female" became objects for medical definitions: the clinical and sexological practices were standardised in order to define all the human beings either "male" or "female" at birth. Individuals who did not fit to either of these categories (i.e. whose "biological sex" were uncertain) were considered as abnormal (ibid.: 30). Soon this dimorphism was adapted also in the research of social sciences. It followed the ideas that sexology had produced. The distinctions between nature and nurture, biology and society, and heredity and environment were formulated in the paradigms of essentialism versus constructionism that have been reduced to mean biologism versus culture. This analogy is, however, misleading (ibid.: 30). This has also been the case in the research of *sex* and *gender*. The concept of gender came to existence meaning "learned cultural elements" whereas sex referred to "biological elements" (Herdt 1993: 30). But as will be showed this dichotomy has not been unproblematic.

The distinction of sex and gender was created in the 1970's in social sciences but soon it spread to all humanities. First, *gender* was used to describe the "social sex" i.e. to explain the cultural ideas of "man" and

“women” and how individuals are socialised to become such (Moore 1999: 151 [1988]). This kind of anthropology was referred to as women's anthropology and it focused mainly on women's life explaining the universal subordination of women. The most known theorists of gender at the time were *Michelle Rosaldo* and *Sherry Ortner*, whose main contribution was based on the idea of the existence of major dichotomies considered to be universal.

Rosaldo (1974) presented the cross-cultural public sphere – domestic sphere dichotomy as the cornerstone of female oppression. The domestic sphere was linked to childcare, thus to women, and it was given lower status than the public one. The subordination gap depended on the level of differentiation between the two spheres (Public vs. domestic). Ortner theorised *gender* in the context of nature-culture dichotomous pair in her well known and much commented article “*Is female to male as nature is to culture?*” (1974). She based her binary opposition on Lévi-Strauss’ idea that the nature -culture dichotomy has global proportions, and continued by developing that idea. She claimed that representations of woman are close to nature when, accordingly, men are close to culture. This means that female subordination is situated in “cultural explications of biological difference” (Pine 1996: 254). These binary oppositions were based on a self-evident assumption that women’s biology (reproduction) kept women apart from men and gave them lower status (Pine 1996: 21).

In the 1980s the critical focus of the studies shifted and was renamed the anthropology of gender (Moore 1999: 152). The anthropology of gender studied gender relations as a structuring principle of men and women in relation to each other. The gender was still seen as cultural marker of the sex. What was important for anthropological theory, gender became a tool that helped to understand cultural variation of categories of man and woman. A remarkable work of this period is Ortner’s and Whitehead’s (1981) *Sexual meanings - The cultural construction of gender and sexuality* where the authors consider gender, sexuality and reproduction as symbols that can be analysed and interpreted *only* in the context of the culture in which they exist (Pine 1996: 257). They state that,

in order to define terms such as "male", "female", "reproduction" etc. (terms that belong to the study of gender and sexuality), one has to take the whole cultural context into consideration, "see the larger context of interrelated meanings" (Ortner & Whitehead 1981: 2). These terms are symbols that should be related to other cultural meanings and symbols on one hand, and to the forms of social life and experience on the other (Ortner & Whitehead 1981: 2).

Their work has been much appreciated, as it shows that gender and sexuality cannot be detached from the cultural context; they challenge essentialist assumptions of sexuality and gender. Nevertheless, the weakness of this view is that it assumes only one variable gender system; later work in anthropology has shown that there can be several contextually and biographically diverse gender systems in one culture (Sanday and Goodenough 1990; Strathern: 1987; Moore 1994: 559). We will return to this topic in the next chapter.

Until the end of the 1980's the categories of sex and gender were considered to follow directly the biological categorisation and "what was acquired through socialisation was really no more than a cultural gloss" (Moore 1994: 54). In the 1970s the radical message was that *gender* existed whereas in the 1980's the question was whether or not *sex* exists. Thus universal dichotomies were abandoned "as reflections of dominant Western discourse, historically situated and socially and culturally specific" (Pine 1996: 255). The assumptions of universal subordination and binary oppositions were to be used only in western contexts. Moreover it was said that these theories never managed to make a profane distinction between sex and gender, because of the assumptions that gender is a reflection of basic sex differences (Pine 1996, Moore 1994a: 816).

Poststructuralist theories

Poststructuralist theories have considered largely the problematic of gender, subject and body and have questioned fixed meanings given to these concepts. Henrietta Moore is one of the theorists who have taken up poststructuralist theories in order to understand gender and subjectivity. Moore (1994) questions the concept “*biological sex*”, that has been regarded as “natural” opposition pair to gender and agrees with Yanagisakos and Colliers’ claim that both sex and gender are socially constructed (Moore 1994a: 816, Yanagisako & Collier 1987). According to Moore, Yanagisako and Collier (1987) claim that “Bodies, psychological processes and body parts have no meaning outside of socially constructed understanding of them. Sexual intercourse and human reproduction are not just physiological processes, they are also social activities” (Moore 1994a: 816). Thus if we understand that also ‘sex’ is socially constructed, biological sex loses its validity as a “base” for the gender constructs. This notion has led several poststructuralists to theorise gender as free floating artifice that is built through discourses.

The path breaking author for many poststructuralists has been a French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault who questioned the idea that sexuality is something constitutive and, that human beings are sexed and sexual by nature. He saw that sexuality, as well as gender, is a product of social discourses (and powerful institutions) that make “sexuality” and “homosexuality” to look like they were “axiomatic truths”. Foucault (1978) writes in his *book The History of Sexuality* that “...sexuality is not a natural reality but the product of a system of discourses and practices which form part of the intensifying surveillance and control of the individual” (Sarup 1993: 72). Also gender difference is constituted through discourses. “[...]The meanings ascribed to bodies are culturally produced, plural and ever changing” (Weedon 1999: 102) which means that there is no essential core of gender inside person. The subjectivities of feminine and masculine are negotiated within different discourses in the middle of several power relations.

To insist, for example, that the meanings of 'woman' are neither singular nor stable and are effects of power, including class and racial power, is to suggest that what it means to be a woman varies. "This is not, however, to suggest that particular, socially and culturally produced forms of gendered subjectivity do not contain elements which may be shared by women across classes, races and cultures. Nor is it to suggest that particular forms of embodied, gendered subjectivity are somehow inauthentic and not lived as real. Ideas of true femininity and masculinity are replaced by competing discursive constructions of gender." (Weedon 1999: 102)

The disciplinary production of gender creates a false image of stabilised gender. This means that we experience gender as something coherent since the gender is applied (learned) through these discourses (Butler 1999: 172-173). People *incorporate*¹³ the gender from the discourses and carry out it in his/her action gestures and desire. This creates an "...effect of an internal core of substance" (ibid.: 173). Still, it is important to mark that this happens "on the surface of the body" (ibid.: 173). This is what Butler calls *the performative character of gender*. Since the gender is formed through different discourses, it is separate from biological sex and free to be "played" or "performed". Butler theorises that discourses form an idealised gender which we wish to incorporate as well as possible. This is an idealisation of gender coherence. To put it differently, things we do to perform the gender (i.e. acts, gestures, words) form a sense of a substance, but is really actions on the surface. The essence or identity that these acts are meant to present, are "...*fabrications*, manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means" (Butler 1999: 173).

The single gender system approach (that was theorised in the 1970s and 1980s) goes further towards a static picture of an individual and culture; gender is a cultural model in which individuals must be socialised. This view gives little room for "failure, resistance and change" (Moore 1994: 55-56). Those who do not fit in the assumed "gender system" are

¹³ Term by Foucault (1979) in *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage.

considered cultural variation. The poststructuralist view that Moore presents assumes that there are several discourses on gender, where the subject takes different positions, instead of one gender system (ibid.: 55). We cannot state that an individual is one subject. More likely, the individuals are “multiply constituted subjects who take up multiple subject positions” within different discourses (ibid.:55). Thus a subject is actually a location of several subjectivities. The man and woman categories are produced through several discourses and an individual understands his/her gendered subject depending on the discourse. To put it differently, there are several femininities and masculinities, as Connel (1987) argues (In Moore 1994: 59). This view minimise the meaning of the "physical sex" and highlights the "*...individual and social factors, such as occupational preference, behavior and temperament, religious experiences and so forth*" (Roscoe 1993: 342).

What is important to notice is that these categories can be oppositional and mutually exclusive, which means that an individual can live out several contradictory positions. The individual self does not experience this as disorder but constitutes the sense of self by three factors: the physical fact of having a body, the experience of identity, and the historical continuity of subject positions. As mentioned above, for Butler the self is construed by discourses and acted out in gestures, which give the sense of "permanence", the self. In my opinion, the poststructuralist theorisation of identity and gender is suitable for explaining the gender-crossing that many texts see as a direct consequence of sexuality. Men who behave or dress like women are considered to do so in order to show their “homosexuality” or “transsexuality”. According to Moore the construction of gender is not attached to biology and this way to reproduction and is free to be "played" as Butler reflects.

Third gender

Persons who diverge from the traditional idea of sexual dimorphism are sometimes categorised as third gender. This gender category includes those people who do not fit into the dimorphic categories of two genders i.e. man and woman. Herdt (1993) starts his definition of the third sex by naming what the third sex is not. Notable is his strong opposition that the members of this category are not "homosexuals" (Herdt 1993: 47).

As already Foucault pointed out, "homosexuals" became a sexual category in the 19th century which was later confirmed by the medical science of sexology. (Foucault 1978: 43). "Homosexuality" was for long studied as a such category assuming that the sexual orientation of those committing to same sex relations is an adequate principle to name them as "homosexuals". However, same-sex desires cannot be interpreted only in the name of sexual acts. They should be linked to their "social classification and expression by age, gender class and egalitarian modes of social ideas and relationships" (Herdt 1993: 47).

The persons categorised as the third gender constitute a social person and cultural reality. Thus they should be viewed from their social position, not their "sexual orientation" (ibid.: 47). Also, the application of the sexual dimorphism or the heterosexual/homosexual duality is part of the western culture and should not be automatically considered as valid in other cultures. This concerns also the term *bisexuality* that follows the sexual dimorphism and this way does not manage to get rid of the western tradition (ibid.: 49). To conclude these thoughts briefly: "There is no absolute link between sexual orientation and....a third gender" (ibid.: 50).

The best illustration of the third gender is their social role and position in society. The role itself is culturally constructed and includes different social tasks and certain statuses. It is important that the social structure maintains the role and the category of third gender. This way it is given a stronger position in longer period (Herdt 1993: 60). This category could be described also as an ontological entity. It is a distinctive subject where people identify to. Like Moore stated, an individual constitutes the

sense of self by three factors: the physical fact of having body, the experience of identity, and the *historical continuity of subject positions*.

Famous examples of such ontological third sex/gender entities are, for example, Indian *Hijras* and North American *Berdaches*. *Berdaches* are "womanlike" men who have been documented in approximately 150 North American societies.¹⁴ Until recently they have been studied only marginally, but during the last 20 years more interest have been shown toward this group of people (Roscoe 1993: 330). Many of the researchers have translated the *Berdache* as a "homosexual", "transsexual", "hermaphrodite" or "sodomite" (ibid.: 332).

Like in the case of *yan daudu*, the roles of *berdaches* is to be defined in other than sexual terms. There are three key features that define their roles. These are *productive specialisation*, *supernatural sanction* and *gender variation*. Like *yan daudu*, also *berdaches* have their special "profession". Many of the male *berdaches* work with domestic work and crafts when females hunt and are in leading positions. *Supernatural sactions* refer to *berdaches* as mediums of supernatural powers. As we have noticed before, *yan daudu* have no such powers. Their role is totally mundane, without any participation in possession itself. The third feature, *gender variation*, has appeared to be the less certain marker of *berdache* status. Only some of *berdache* cross-dresses or it might be occasional. What comes to the information about their sexual relations, some had same-sex relations, but not all (Roscoe 1994: 332-335).

Thus *berdaches* are a distinctive group of men and women who are specialised in their own society. In what terms can *berdaches* be defined as third gender? Definitely one term is that their status is considered as a separate category, different from "man" and "women". The name *berdache* is the sign of the category. As as described earlier, they have specialised occupational practices that includes specific symbols, such as "distinct color of feathers" and separate life-cycle rites from others. (Men and women have their own rites, when *berdaches* form the "third

¹⁴ Also *berdaches*, who are "biological" woman, dressing as man, are reported. However they are less in number, as are also studies concerning them

group" of initiated.) In some groups, the existence of this category is also confirmed "...in the same context in which male and female gender categories were defined" (Roscoe 1994: 339).

Another example can be taken among the *hijras* of India. They differ *yan daudu* and *berdache*, since they go through emasculation i.e. their genitals are removed. Their occupational role includes "performing at the birth of a male child and at marriages and as servants of the goddess at her temple" (Nanda 1994: 373). They also work as prostitutes. The word *hijra* is a masculine noun that is translated often as "eunuch" or "hermaphrodite". These both terms refers to their impotence in their sexual relations with women (ibid: 380).

Hijras have adapted feminine mannerism and dressing and many of them identify themselves as women. Still they clearly show that their feminine gender is a "play". Contrary to the traditional role of women *hijras* bring out their sexuality aggressively and exaggerate their dress and manners. They also participate to occasions that are uncommon for women. They, for example, dance publicly and smoke cigarettes (ibid.: 328).

As it is with *yan daudu* and *berdaches*, the signals of gender-role vary among the *hijras*. Not all of them adopt female names or wear women's clothes. Some might dress as men and grow a beard. Some *hijras* can also put off their genital operation in order to have more time to consider it through. The communities of *hijras* allow several gender roles and do not necessarily demand a solid gender identity from their members. Even tough many of *hijras* are socialised as men in their childhood they still take this alternative gender role as *hijras*. According to Nanda (1994) there are two explanations for this. First, many of them have had ambivalent gender socialisation in their childhood. Many of the *hijras* have been supported to bring out both feminine and masculine behavior in their families. Most of the *hijras* have joined *hijra* communities in their early adulthood. Second, most of the *hijras* enjoy being sexual receptors for men. This has led them to define themselves as "...effeminate man, no longer capable of having

Yan daudu as third gender

What is common to both *hijras* and *berdache* is their religious role in the society. *Hijras* participate in blessing the newborn and act as servants of Mother Goddess and *berdaches* are believed to possess supernatural forces. *Yan daudu* lack the supernatural aspect. The most obvious indicators of *yan daudu* status are economic and transgendering attributes. *Yan daudu* have a position in the context of *karuwanci* as recruiters of new *karuwais* and as mediators between clients and *karuwais*.

In which terms *yan daudu* could be interpreted as a third gender category? As *berdache* and *hijras*, are *yan daudu* a distinctive category of people who have their special role? Still it was impossible to find any evidence that Hausa would refer it especially as a gender group. *Yan daudu* themselves find them as men who behave like women but do not share any special marks that separate them from two other genders of Hausa society (i.e. man and women). They hold to gender signs that are commonly shared with the difference that they blend these signs. Also the social structure of the Hausa society seems to support *only* two gender categories, i.e. man and women. These categories are confirmed by the strict Islamic rules (for example women's seclusion) and brought out in everyday life. Boys are raised as boys and girls as girls. The socialisation of *yan daudu* starts when the other *yan daudu* recruits a new member for the occupation. By this it can be assumed that *yan daudu* do not form a category of third gender.

Finally, is it important to categorise *yan daudu* by their gender? Or can the whole concept be used at all? As it was presented in the previous chapter, gender can be understood as a set of subject positions that are taken in different discourses. This way it is possible to see the subject as a person who acts according to his/her own interests. Traditionally anthropologists have had the tendency to privilege culture against personal interests (Weston 1993, Graham 1998 in Moore 1999: 158). The context of *karuwanci* and *bori* cult create discourses for *yan daudu* where they carry out their role. *Yan daudu* are not forced to this role "by their nature" but

chooses it according to their interest. In the next discussion it will be looked closer how this poststructuralist understanding of gender can be applied in the case of *yan daudu*.

7. DISCUSSION

The post-structuralist understanding of the subject is useful especially when explaining the situation of the *Yan daudu*. Many authors have stated that the *yan daudu* are “homosexuals” treated as deviants not fitting either of the gender categories (for example Wall 1988; 167, Besmer 1983: 19). A closer look at the *yan daudu* role shows that gender crossing has explanation other than just being an expression of “homosexuality”. As different discourses produce different subject positions, we can see that *yan daudu* can negotiate gender, depending on the context. Same-sex relations are a totally irrelevant indicator for example in the context of *karuwanci*. On the one hand *yan daudu* are considered as (biological) male and thus by *karuwais* they are seen to present the male power (Kleis & Abdullahi 1983). On the other hand *yan daudu* present “feminine men”: The femininity of *yan daudu* is understood as a “play” (According to Gaudio 1998) and thus it is given a different meaning. For *yan daudu*, femininity presents a kind of equality in relation to women since they work among them. This seems to be a quite contradictory situation. Why do *yan daudu* take these different subject positions in the institution of *karuwanci*? And why taking these positions is important?

Kleis and Abdullahi assume that *yan daudu* are acceptable to both prostitutes (women) and the male establishment because of the gender crossing. The male establishment appreciates *yan daudus'* position as a representative of male power and because of *yan daudu's* assumed sexual ambivalence they are not a (sexual) threat to prostitutes (i.e. potential sex partners) (Kleis & Abdullahi 1983: 45). Or rather, they do not break the moral rule of separation. In the Hausa community the distinction between man and woman is strict and it is seen nearly in every aspect of life. Women are isolated from the men's sphere both symbolically and concretely. Men having more public roles, women are isolated into seclusion inside the household, according to the Islamic rule ¹⁵(Kleis &

¹⁵ (this does occur in all households -It is more common in upper class or among those who afford to have their wife at home)

Abdullahi 1983: 39, Wall 1988, Gaudio 1996, Besmer 1983). According to Barbara Callaway (1987) the strict separation is of Islamic origin. Any woman who is seen with another man than her husband is considered to have a sexual relationship with this man. Because of the separation between men and women in society, they are not assumed to meet for any other than sexual reasons (Callaway 1987: 44). The only women who can cross the boundaries between men and women are *karuwais*.

Karuwanci has been a way for women to gain economical independence in society -normally wives are much dependent on their husband's incomes, excepting some minor economical activities to have incomes such as selling food (Coles & Mack: 1991: 19, Callaway 1987: 76). Those who are engaged in *karuwanci* can also take social liberties such as drinking beer with the men or otherwise showing her independence of male authors - thus they are a complete contrast to a secluded and sexually confined wife (Callaway 1987: 43-44, Kleis & Abdullahi 1983: 50). Even though many authors describe the *karuwanci* nearly as a positive and appreciated phenomenon, they are socially in very low ranked category. They are deviants, deviating from the common female role (Kleis & Abdullahi 1983: 43)

Kleis and Abdullahi (1983) assume that all the strict rules are supposed to keep women subordinated to men and exclude them from men's dominant spheres (Kleis And Abdullahi 1983: 40). Kleis and Abdullahi consider the *karuwansi* as a potential threat to masculine hegemony. The only institution for diminishing this threat and conserve the masculine power are *yan daudu*. They are the ones who are in the position to "control" *karuwanci*: they mediate between the *karuwais* and the clients and manage relations with authorities. The role of the *yan daudu* appears to be professional (Ibid.: 44). For his thesis Abdullahi (1984) interviewed several *Yan daudu* and 57% of them admitted of being *yan daudu* for economic reasons. Second biggest group (22%) named the influence of friends and associatios. Many of them were from the countryside and the came to the town for Koran studies or to look for a job (Abdullahi 1983:53) As mentioned this profession is considered as deviant

in Hausa society. What motivates them to commit themselves to the role and profession as discussed above?

Wendy Holloway (1984) has introduced the term *investment* to explain why an individual sometimes takes subject positions in completely contradictory gender discourses. According to her, individuals invest in particular subject positions on the basis of emotional commitment and personal interest. Personal interest is related to the relative power that the individual assumes in the subject position (Holloway 1984: 238). The expectations are sufficient to waken the interests – the position does not necessarily provide such a reward. *Investment* becomes essential in order to understand the role of *yan daudu*. What kind of assumptions can be made about the investment and *yan daudu*?

First, there is an economic reward. As mentioned above those who commit themselves to the role of *yan daudu* are often teenage boys moving from the countryside to urban centers. Since most of them do not have any social contacts or any incomes there, it is tempting for them to take offered jobs in the context of *karuwansi* (Kleis & Abdullahi 1983:53). Also, in later age, the role of *yan daudu* makes it possible to earn an income. Thus we can assume that part of the reason men taking the role of *yan daudu* is economical.

Second, even though the “profession” is seen as marginal and deviant, *yan daudu* enjoy certain power within the institution of *karuwansi*. Even if they have an ambivalent gender status, they still present the masculine hegemony in the *karuwansi*. They are not considered as women but ambivalent men and thus they are given the power status of men (he is the “patron” of prostitutes). *Yan daudu* are acceptable to both prostitutes (women) and the male establishment because of the gender crossing. The male establishment appreciate *yan daudu*'s position as a representative of male power and because of *yan daudu*'s assumed sexual ambivalence they are not a (sexual) threat to prostitutes (i.e. potential sex partners).

Third, what resides in the power is prestige. This prestige is enjoyed mostly inside the institution, but according to Abdullahi (1984),

they are occasionally given even some administrative responsibility (Kleis & Abdullahi 1983:47). As Pittin has pointed out, a religious context may "permit or encourage the reflection of alternative positions or interests within the community" (Pittin 1996: 213)

The fourth reward for *yan daudu* is attached to their sexual relations. Even if we cannot state that all *yan daudu* have same-sex relations, their role enables them to meet potential (sex)partners. Rudolf Gaudio (1996) emphasises the meaning of same-sex relations for *yan daudu*. He considers *yan daudu* as a gay community and interprets the role to be primarily a "gender-play" based on their "homosexuality" (Gaudio 1996: 119ff). To my mind this view seems to simplify the understanding of *yan daudu*, overlooking economic, professional and prestigious rewards of *yan daudu*. But since Gaudio seems to present quite a convincing description of same-sex relations (that was the main focus of his research in Hausa society) it is possible to assume that *yan daudu* can also meet potential (male) sex-partners in the "shelter" the role offers. Abdullahi (1993) mentions that 7% of the *yan daudu* he interviewed attributed becoming *yan daudu* to *their nature*. Unfortunately Abdullahi does not give any further explanations if this "nature" implies to their sexuality (Kleis & Abdullahi 1984: 53) .

Finally, *yan daudu* invest in relations with other participants, as O'Brien (1999) has emphasised. In the context of *bori* cult, *karuwai* and *yan daudu* create bonds of friendship which is not because of shared marginality but overlapping social worlds (O'brien 1999: 10).

8. Conclusions

Inspired by Henrietta Moore's book, *A Passion for Difference* (1994), I decided to approach the role of *yan daudu* by focusing on gender identity, subjectivity and their relation to society. Anthropologists have avoided questions of identity and subjectivity by emphasising that gender systems are culturally constructed - individuals have been seen as a part of the collective. (Moore 1994: 55). The problem is situated between the individual and the culture. Traditionally, an individual subject is considered in anthropology subordinated to culture, but in reality individuals are not "singular entities which require a cultural imprint" (ibid.: 54). The relation between an individual and his society is surely full of resistance and change, not only submission to entities (culture). It is important to see the individual as an active actor in the dynamics of society.

The post-structuralist understanding of gender highlights the dynamics and change of the subject and society. This is particularly relevant to gender relations. It allows us to gain a more complex idea of gender and move further from essentialist assumptions of gender as a consequence of biological categories of man and woman. There are not just two genders, but a multiple set of gender discourses that overlap with the discourses of age, sex, class and kinship. Gender identity is not a simple entity, which is a result of direct socialisation, but a complex set of different identities that the subject takes out in different gender discourses. Gender discourses, as subject positions, are multiple and often contradictory. It is therefore possible to take into account the resistance and change in gender identity and why individuals take positions that can look contradictory to their identity. For instance why *yan daudu* take a position that is not appreciated in society or why he dresses as a "woman" if he is a "biological" man. I have shown that the gender-identity is attached to other spheres such as production and politics and thus only the sexuality cannot define one's identity.

This work has been based on the texts written about Hausa culture and *yan daudu*. During the writing process I have faced questions that would definitely require fieldwork among them. The ethnographic data found about *yan daudu* has been minimum and, as criticised through this paper, often only in footnotes. Valuable material has been Gaudios and Kleis' & Abdullahi's articles that have focused mainly on *yan daudu*. These articles have lightened up the mystics around them. In other texts many writers have considered *yan daudu* as something bizarre. In a way there has been "double otherness". By categorising *yan daudu* as homosexuals and deviants, anthropologists have considered them as "other" of the "other culture".

Other ethnographical data presented in this paper have focused on the *bori* spirit possession. *Bori* is dynamic set of beliefs that is also important way of life for several people. It brings the extraordinary to everyday life and everyday life to extraordinary. Anthropologists have had different views on *bori*: it has been considered as healing, tradition and resistance toward Islam and colonial powers. In this paper I wanted to emphasise the complexity of *bori*, that at the same it can have several functions. The most essential of them depends on the time and place, the context.

For *yan daudu*, *bori* has given the environment where they work, live and enjoy themselves. *Karuwais* organise often *bori* ceremonies where *yan daudu* dance and prepare food. *Yan daudu* also mediate between *karuwai* and their clients. The importance of their occupational role became the most important feature of *yan daudu* in this paper. Even though the sexuality was discussed quite largely it was done in order to show that our interpretations of transgendering are often made from a certain point of view.

Transgendering people are found in all over the world. Their position is sometimes institutionalised (third gender) sometimes reduce to deviancy. There are some who remove their organs (or replace them more correctly) and some who uses gestures or other signs to bring out their gender. The variation is endless. *Yan daudu* are one group of men who

dress themselves women like and represent an institutionalised form of transgendering people.

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