

# African Feminist Epistemologies: For the De-Westernization of Gender

Ineildes Calheiro<sup>1</sup> Eduardo David de Oliveira<sup>2</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** This essay delimits as a methodology the Cognitive Analysis, of bibliographical revision, with the cut of African literatures, aiming to disseminate African knowledge in gender in Brazil, as well as to discuss discussions of African authors in the context of the decentralization of the hegemonic knowledge euro American perspective from the gender perspective, in which, through the analysis, a group of authors advocates a gender relationship in African territory that is not characterized by submission, binarisms, oppression (either before or in post-colonization), and another emphasizes inequality the gender. In such studies, on the one hand, the strong influence of western hegemonic epistemology is evidenced, while at the same time it is advocated for the right to other epistemologies. In the face of the problem of epistemological ambiguity, emphasizing the place of speech in the discussion of itself, we made comparisons of the respective groups and, highlighting approaches that criticize the Westernization of the genre under north-eurocentric influences articulated by the ethnocentric bias of being a Western (white) woman, preliminary results: Western epistemological norms, we take them as a process that falls under African cultures, reshaping them, losing the essence of the world-worldview. However, the studies of African women strongly implies the de-westernization of gender, presenting the emergence of other epistemologies, contrasting with hegemonic science, the complexity of gender in Africa being present, which confuses with ambiguity, and, in addition, contributes for the strengthening of the approaches, be it of black feminisms, or of womanism.

**Keywords:** Gender in Africa. Multidisciplinarity. De-Westernization. Cognitive analysis. Knowledge Diffusion.

## I. INTRODUCTION

We would like to begin this essay by understanding the scientific form that leads us: "Cognitive Analysis". On the term as theory and method we are based on the author Teresinha Froes Burnharm (2012) when in its explanation it is understood not to be only a method, and that is beyond the analysis, for conducting itself in the meaning of the transductibility (transductibility), and more than that, it is a new field of knowledge that evidences multireferentiality. Cognitive analysis is carried by interdisciplinarity, in which, according to Dante Galeff (2003), knowledge agents must flee from Western hegemonic centrality and be ourselves authorized.

According to Burnharm (2012) the Diffusion of Knowledge is a medium that guarantees the exchange of knowledges, as opening the door of knowledge in the restricted and hierarchical process of knowledge in the global world. What other authors critically termed "subject knowledge," as well as the criticism of Eurocentrism, the negation of monological science and objectivity as a legitimate way of doing science.

This essay study defines as methodology the Cognitive Analysis with emphasis on the bibliographical revision, with the cut of African literatures and aims to disseminate African knowledge, as well as to discuss discussions of African authors in the context of the decentralization of hegemonic knowledge a group of authors has advocated a gender relationship in non-binary forms, devoid of submission in African culture (although in the post-colonization) and, with an opposing approach, another group emphasizes inequality whose gender relations are imbued with submission.

In an attempt to, not necessarily answer, because it is far from this restricted work, however, to understand about the tension or ambiguity in the question: submission / oppression or gender insubmission in Africa? We bow under cognitive analysis by believing in its aid for findings about such an inquisition. In the

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<sup>1</sup>Brazilian, Scholarship Funded by CAPES. PhD student at DMMDC - Multi-institutional and multidisciplinary Program on Knowledge Dissemination (Network Doctorate), coordinated by the Federal University of Bahia - UFBA. Master in Cultural Criticism, Licentiate in Physical Education, member of the Research Group Network of Africanities (UFBA).

<sup>2</sup>The author 2. Brazilian, PhD in Philosophy, Adjunct Professor of UFBA / FACED and the Multi-institutional and Multidisciplinary Doctoral Degree in the Diffusion of Knowledge. Coordinator of the Network of Africanities.

face of the problem, emphasizing the place of speech in the discussion of itself, we have compared, analyzing some studies of this set of literature and highlight approaches that criticize the Westernization of the genre under north-eurocentric influences articulated by the ethnocentric bias of being a Western (white) woman, considering the vast territory, continent with 54 countries and diverse ethnies we delimit the place of speech giving prominence to some territories: Nigeria, Cape Verde, Senegal, Kenya and the North / South Global context.

This study was carried out through doctoral research addressing gender theories focusing on decentralized epistemologies and for the purpose of contributing to the expansion in Brazil of knowledge on African epistemologies in the context of gender and feminisms, with development from the inclination of Ineildes Calheiro (one of the authors who writes to you) entering the course of "gender studies in sub-Saharan Africa" in the Graduate Program of UFBA and later to the group of readings entitled "Lidas e Vidas" (newly created in 2018, by Professor Patrícia Gomes) following the discussions through African literature.

The text is structured as follows: in the first part the knowledge production in the African context is synthetically approached; then we insert the authors' view that bring epistemologies pointing to a non-binary African culture, without oppression in gender relations in an earlier and post-colonization process; we inserted the controversies with thematic of polygamy and the construction of masculinities; and we proceed to the last part with authors who bring in their conceptions binary African cultures, oppression and inequality in gender relations, in order to conclude.

## II. EXCLUSION OF GENDER IN THE POWER SECTORS IN AFRICAN TERRITORIES

Beginning with the understanding of gender knowledge in the African context, we highlight African authors, Patrícia Gomes (2015, 2017) and Ângela Sofia Coutinho (2017) with studies launching hands on knowledge production in Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde, historicizing the participation of first women in the movement that culminated in the liberation of these territories and in the involvement with the parties - PAIGC and PAICV<sup>3</sup>, the formation of UDEMU - Organization of women, among others. Both authors contribute to the visibility of women's participation in the liberation struggle in those countries.

According to Ângela Coutinho (2017)<sup>4</sup>, on independence: Guinea Bissau became independent in 1973, and Cape Verde, on July 5, 1975. The author, analyzing documents and focusing on oral history / interviews and biographies highlights some African women participants of the history of liberation, despite presenting a general contingent of more than fifty women. It raises its trajectories, origin, nationality and mainly approaching its influences emphasizing the silencing on the participation of the women in the liberation and reform of the society. Introducing possible reasons for the silencing, for the author the erasing of the history of protagonism of women is a mechanism of androcentrism, aiming to keep them in place of subservience in relation to men. And, he concludes that Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde's struggle for independence was long and complex, with significant participation of women.

Patrícia Gomes (2015) points out that the end of the sixties of the twentieth century was accompanied by a growing interest of African intellectuals for the "rediscovery" of the continent's historical past and the ideas of freedom and unity. Emphasizing Guinea Bissau, colonized in the course of the twentieth century, in the economic context is a substantially agricultural country, and in the cultural context is one of the few places in Africa where it resists matriarchal society - political power exercised by women (monarch, chief, queen) , like the Bijagó societies of the archipelago of the same name, but with profound changes and setbacks in the field of freedom due to the legacies of colonization.

At this juncture, the author points out that the first written information of Guinea Bissau occurred between 1961-1974, but in the field of gender and feminism she appeared strongly in the 1990s, although it was in the 1980s that African feminist theories began to history of publications (GOMES, P. 2015). On the importance of gender as determinants for the direction of the UN it describes:

The category "gender" began to be used to indicate the social construction of the differences and inequalities characteristic of human societies, Western and not only. The "gender" was conceived as a political category oriented toward the redefinition of public and private power relations, between men and women, at the same time as

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<sup>3</sup>PAIGC - Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, officially founded in Bissau in 1956 by Cape Verdeans and Guineans under the leadership of Amílcar Cabral. Main Match: PAICV - Cape Verde Match.

<sup>4</sup>Entitled "The participation of Cape Verdean women in the national liberation movement of Cape Verde and Guine-Bissau, 1956-1974: the pioneers." Original text in English (in the list of references), Portuguese translation of Ineildes Calheiro and revision of Asuka Sawa (Japanese) in order to present a seminar and exclusively for didactic use (restricted to the discipline and for the group), although the translation is approved by the author, searched via e-mail, not authorizing publication.

it became an epistemological category of research, finished to refound the processes of knowledge (Gomes, P. 2015, p.169).

According to the aforementioned, from the theoretical point of view, from the 1980s, in the sense of deconstruction in "post-colonial" studies, in terms of gender, essential questions about the production of knowledge were sustained: who produces it, in what social and political conditions the discourse is formulated and to whom this knowledge is intended. In this sense, it is convenient to introduce the discussion of Cape Verdean Crispina Almeida Gomes, which relates these factors to a specific type of racism - that of "intelligence".

The author, one of the founders of the Women's Organization of Cape Verde, and one who has held several important positions, including as a National Representative for years, in her book entitled "Women and Power: The Green Cape Case" (Gomes, C. 2009)<sup>5</sup> discusses feminism, gender inequality and women's participation in the spheres of power in Cape Verde, and recalls in this study that after the country's independence only one woman was a National Representative. Cape Verde - a country on the African continent (sub-Saharan Africa), a portuguese colony since the 15th century and independent in 1975, through a complex struggle.

The aforementioned addresses the causes that prevent the participation of women in power, as well as political participation and in various sectors of the country's activities in terms of equality with men, however, through the method of orality / life history points to participation of women in the struggle for independence. Initiating the text, the author inserts her experience and tells of her history of violence suffered by racism in becoming a university professor (in Cuba, 1980), when she encountered gender exclusion and racism in academia, detecting a specific type of racism she calls "racism of intelligence". In other words, it would be the privilege of white (of both sexes) academics, the supposed not to entitle black people to intellectual thought and diffusion of self-knowledge and of other cultures, as well as the veto to an epistemology "of the bottom"<sup>6</sup>.

### **III. AFRICAN EPISTEMOLOGIES: GENDER IN AFRICA DECENTRALIZING THE GLOBAL GENDER**

In this part, as already mentioned, we approach African cultural forms in order to understand the relation of gender in the vision, thought / theory of the Africans themselves and thus giving majority attention to the studies of women, in order to understand the conceptions on the other side of the Atlantic.

The Oyenké Oyéwùmí conception: a synthetic approach

The African author, Nigerian, Oyóké Oyewumi brings the Yoruba culture to the context of gender and feminism. In the text "Conceptualizing gender", Oyewùmí (2004) brings the cultural complexity, describing that "husband" and "wife" in Africa has no gender specificity. According to the author, in this complex culture, men can be wives, as well as women can be husbands. And the text on family ties (Oyewùmí, 2000) goes deeper into the subject by focusing on the family:

In much of Africa, "wife" is just a six-letter word [...]. Being a wife tends to function more as a role than as an identity [...]. Across Africa, the category usually translated as a wife is not the specific gender, but it symbolizes relations of subordination between any two persons (Oyewùmí, 2000, p.04. the author's italics).

Explaining about subordination not being exclusively gender, the author affirms that in some places in Africa, in the relationship between the sexes related to family and marriage the subordinate can be of any sex, depending on the belonging of descent (matrilinear or patrilinear) and not of gender. Interceding for the recognition of a gendered concept and the recognition of African epistemologies, criticizing the Eurocentric foundations in feminist concepts starting from Simone Beauvoir studies<sup>7</sup>, Oyéwùmí (2000) leads us to the field of discussion of ethnocentrism and epistemicide, as well as , on Western mechanisms for the maintenance of supposedly legitimate knowledge.

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<sup>5</sup>The original text is written in Spanish, whose translation in Portuguese in this study is our own, under the responsibility of interpretation.

<sup>6</sup>I use this term, used by some authors, such as Milton Santos (2000), referring to the contingent majority of the poor population and concerning popular culture.

<sup>7</sup>Critique of the global genre and universal woman, from the perspective of Simone de Beauvoir, in the classic work "The second sex". A question also made by Lélia Gonzalez (see Raquel Barreto, 2005 and Cláudia Pons Cardoso, 2012, among others, in Brazil).

Drawing from family ties to her criticisms of Western feminist studies and the Euro-American nuclear family, which, according to her, ignores other family arrangements, such as African families and cultures that are not gendered or male / female and / or in binarisms based on sex / body, but on ancestry, "señoridad" (age / generation). For the author the discourse on the family is everywhere, but the worrisome issue is the widespread use of the family metaphor. And so, he questions Western feminism: what family are we talking about?

Another point highlighted in relation to the concept of gender as universal in Western traditional terms, in which we note its resemblance to the critique of black feminism (North American, Latin American, and prominent Brazilian), is the racial question. The invisibility of the race. Therefore, it is inclined to deconstruct the idea of a universal family without considering race and class in their family conceptualizations (OYEWUMÍ, 2000, 2017). There seems to be a tendency in this African thinking to the field of intersectionality.

In the classic work "The Invention of Women: An African Perspective on Western Discourses of the Gender", Oyewùmí (2017)<sup>8</sup> is inclined to discuss gender in African studies by situating the issue of women as a problem, which in the Western view, when oppressed they would be for patriarchy and in any society, however, she points out that in Yoruba society (West Africa) the social category "woman" anatomically identified and assumed as a socially disadvantaged victim - does not exist. Their study shows the absence of gender in the old Oyó, noting that the time of the genus in this society arrived in the colonial period.

For the author, outside Africa, the interpretation about family is Western, and has the patriarchal perspective, considering that this type of relation is not part of the precolonial African culture, and has been established from the colonization, being conformed in the modernity with the imposition of gender in Africa, constituted from the language with the command of the English language. In his analysis Oyewùmí (2017) discusses the production of history and the creation of the genre, it addresses the arrival of the genre in the colonial period, discusses the colonization of the minds, of the bodies, and returns to make explicit about the translation of cultures.

Criticism of gender studies and Western feminisms author addresses biological biology, foundationalism and determinism, recognizing the efforts of Western authors to conceptualize gender and sex by differentiating them, however, according to the author's judgment, they are still tied up and interdependent, ie , on the western side sex and gender are inseparable. Thus, in a word the author defines gender in Western terms and understandings as "BIO-LOGIC". And, comparing African cultures to other epistemologies, he asserts that gender in Africa was not based on biology / sex, but on the "seniority" system, that is, command, hierarchy of social position, age, generation, and in the context of leadership and respectability.

#### The Ifi Amadiume conception: a synthetic approach

Ifi Amadiume (2005) revisiting various authors such as Adam Kuper, Cheikh Anta Diop and Mudimbe, brings us abreast of the complexity of African culture. In the chapter titled "Theorizing Matriarchy in Africa: Ideologies and Kinship Systems in Africa and Europe"<sup>9</sup>, the author criticizes Western anthropology and the theory of patriarchy in the persistence of the European model. Contrary to this theory Amadiume presents the existence of matriarchy, bringing contemporary data, intercalating between yesterday and today and discussing cultural changes in the African territory, especially destructive in the cultural process through colonization, insofar as these complex forms of structure familiar and contrary to the pattern of the Western nuclear family suffers shortages.

Unlike the context of gender in the hegemonic-global terms in which reproduction is a factor that contributes to the submission of women, in the text of Amadiume we see other meanings. The author points out that in African culture (occurring in the territory analyzed) reproduction occurs in terms of lineage, maintenance of ancestry, granting autonomy and power to women, among other issues. Nevertheless, we note a political bias related to reproduction when it explains that the power acquired by the woman is related to reproduction - where the mother being means granting the maintenance of the lineage (or ancestry) and allows them to be granted to the spheres of power.

In the complex culture, in the gender relation presented by the above-mentioned author, matriarchy prevails with the law of matrilineality, the value of women being evident, since it is not the man who is surviving the family. Thus, with the offspring (child born) the woman will have the right to maintain the clan and family cohesion (AMADIUME, 2005), however, the figure of man is not negligible, it is important and is not related to (supposed) virility. In this section Cheik Anta Dio and Nah Dove are authors who support the matriarchy debate in Africa over yesterday and today.

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<sup>8</sup>Originally published in English in 1997, entitled "The Invention of Women. Making an african sense of westerngender discourses", translated into Spanish in 2017 (in the list of references).

<sup>9</sup>Published in the original work entitled "African, gender Studies", organized by Oyewùmí (2005), whose translation took place for the purpose of didactic-methodological use through the previously mentioned course, by the teacher regent and one of the students (North American).

Highlighting some points of these studies, communities in Africa are still visible, leaving traces of plural, matriarchal, matrilineal cultures. Nah Dove (1998, p, 20) is based on Cheik Anta Dio and T'Shaka to emphasize the existence of gender-balanced modeling in Africa, highlighting reciprocity, family and just societies pointed out by the authors of their research, believing in the possibility of recovery of the complementary relationship between women and men. Despite the above, we observe the ambiguity in the debate regarding gender relations when we appreciate other looks and investigations. Let's look at a more in-depth discussion of polygamy.

#### The woman in polygamy and the masculinity of the African man

For both Amadium (2005) and Oyewùmí (2017), in the polygamous family all of the group have different functions, and man is not necessarily the provider; women, in turn, are responsible for different roles and not exclusively domestic service (this does not have the same weight as in Western cultures, although it also forms part). The latter author also states that one of the functions of women is to provide food, a question that is not the same as that in the West - for food is not served at the table, it must be provided on a daily basis and produced.

Inserting other African studies and other cultures on this point, there are contrasts, such as Eufémia Rocha (2017) and Fatime Samb (2017)<sup>10</sup>, which focus on Cape Verde and Senegal respectively, perceive the domestic function as a dual occupation of women who work abroad, in addition to highlighting submission to marriage. Through experiences and ways of life, Rocha (2017) describes the relationship of gender in Cape Verde to the bias of monogamous marriage and understands marriage as a form of interruption of women's freedom, once made possible by the socioeconomic bias and especially with the strong work of rabidity practiced by women (informal commerce). Not being the woman the main socioeconomic maintainer of the home, however it often appears as such.

With Senegal's clipping Fatime Samb (2017) analyzing the literature (researching and interpreting novels) discusses religion and polygamy and shows that women's submission is not exclusively related to monogamous marriage, which, according to it, also occurs in polygamy, noting that it is the latter where the family modeling force in Senegal is found. The monogamy in this territory comes as an option with the new family law, unifying various forms of legislation, in force in 1972 (Id, 107). The author points out the sexual division of labor and social inequalities as elements that trigger women's struggles for their own emancipation. In the Romance that she evaluates in her study, the author reveals that it is a denunciation of situations of oppression in marriage, and she expresses this by highlighting the novel: "Mariama Bâ seeks to demonstrate the gender inequalities in African societies, where most do not question or denounces situations of oppression "(SAMB, 2017, p.102).

In relation to polygamy, the aforementioned points a part that should be highlighted: the preference of the husband for one of his women, although all are part of the relationship. As the author explains about polygamy in Senegal, men are entitled to four women (total number in legal right), and the woman does not have the same right, and can marry only one man and, contrary to the law, has a preference for one of the wives occurred, affecting consequences such as, eg, contempt, different treatment, including the sentimental factor (Id, p.100), and in this context there is machismo and gender violence.

On the one hand, the concern with the consequences, be they social, political, and / or of another character, and on the other hand, there is disdain for subjectivity, a human factor that is independent of sex. In polygamy it seems obvious not to consider the desire of women or men, and while we recognize that polygamy has enormous value for African culture, however, it is notorious that sex, when it does not have the purpose of reproduction, becomes a trivial matter, and, of course, despite the affection and the body of African women deserves special attention. Several authors denounce polygamy as a process of submission of gender, a factor that we exemplify with Paulina Chiziane and Fatime Samb.

Following the debate, when we analyze the studies of Rocha (2017), Samb (2017) and Chiziane (2004), the latter originating in Mozambique, in the work titled "Niketche: a history of polygamy", we note that a masculinity in the African men of these territories, caused mainly by the imposition of rules of marriage and by the non-right to live subjectivity, eg not to choose whom to love, whom to fuck, who to live with, subdividing the time between wives.

With regard to gender violence and oppression, we start with the external - colonization, slavery and the internal - the interior of the racial / African / black category with the participation, the blacks' complicity in the oppression of their peers - the black women. "Some black women writers [...] emphasize the complicity of African men and women in our own death." (NAH DOVE, 1998). It is appropriate to reflect on the debate of the loneliness of the black woman, sometimes and mistakenly linked to the practice of sex, affective relation,

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<sup>10</sup>Eufémia Vicente Rocha, demarcating Cape Verde discusses about women in the work of rabidance, which means the work of merchants; and Fatime Samb, focusing on Senegal in Dakar, discusses polygamy in Dakar, Senegal.

contradictorily, to our gaze is related to the multiple oppression caused by both white man, white woman and also black man, oppression is linked to the affective relationship, sexual practice in terms of exploitation and devaluation of the body, decompression, in whose reproduction the proles (care and support) are "exclusively of the woman".

Studies show that in the face of polygamy, subversions occur, and standards are circumvented in both sexes. On the part of men, mockery the law primarily when choosing who to love: the newest woman, more attractive, and against the rules, jealous of her, is when physical aggression appears. Moreover, they do not meet the schedule with the others; in the socioeconomic case, which should be equally distributed to all women (families), take one and give more to the preferred one, that is, a better life, with a better quality of life.

Subaltern masculinities are black masculinities and racial tension, and it occurs because the black man does not attain the supremacy of the white man, who carries hegemonic masculinity. Discussing the masculine enigma, Osmundo Pinho explains about the term, for whom, masculinities are representations, and, based on other authors expresses that "In the new world[...] relations of kinship and gender between enslaved Africans and their descendants, has been subject to a long time, of vigilance, pathologization and even criminalization by the State "(2013, p.233).It goes on to say that "to consider racialized masculinities as operative in environments constructed by gender relations implies, on the other hand, to recognize the effectiveness of gender (or state) regulation of gender" (ibid.). In this sense, a comparative study on the subaltern masculinity of the Brazilian black man and the masculinity of the African black man becomes relevant, an issue that will not be possible in this study.

In the reality of the socioeconomic precarization in many countries of the African continent, due to the sequelae of colonization and slavery, as noted in studies, in the face of modernity man (provider) has no socioeconomic condition to keep all families with quality of life, or there is no sense in maintaining tradition, and the woman inserts herself as an equally provider, and sometimes the main responsible for the maintenance of the home. Hence the importance of introducing the Rocha study (2017) by showing the participation of women in the work of rabidance (commerce) to guarantee survival and / or quality of life. Sometimes they become the family reference and the husband grows gaining status through the woma.

The consequences for women in the polygamous context and clearly seen with Chiziane (2004), among several implications there is the pain of loneliness, abandonment, especially of those older, already discarded by the husband. Among the consequences we highlight the pain of love (when there is) - having women who mediate sex, pleasure, tabulating this moment of desire of their body according to the polygamous calendar - ie according to the law week of this with the husband (by law), or rather, with the family. By means of episodes we observe subversion and breakdown of the rules of marriage, also on the part of the woman, as for example the figure of the strange man is pointed out that in the constant absence or abandonment of the husband, appears by the madrugada, entering the house in the dark and leaving at dawn.

Amadiume (2005) and Oyéwúmi (2000, 2017) affirm matriarchy and matrilinearity, and that patriarchy also exists, but as a consequence of colonization, yet it does not have the same force of matriarchy, which is the cultural form that reigns, being forms of life that does not cause strangeness to the natives. For the authors, in this vast continent the forms of patriarchy and monogamy are potent exclusively in the speeches of the Western anthropologists, who start from the assumption of a man-father-head of household and controller in the whole universe.

According to the authors, it is enough to find a case, a man head of the family, so that Western scholars will centralize this form as a standard and hide a whole group of women who find themselves in charge of the home. On these assertions Oyéwúmi points out the intentionality in Western research on gender in Africa. When we notice the cultural complexity, in the various forms of family there is the marriage between women - Another family model in the African continent mentioned by the last ones (and other authors), called "woman-woman or husband-female", form found in Kenya, by Wairimu Njambi and William E. O'Brien (2005), in the text entitled "Woman-Woman Marriage: Notes on Gikuyu Women". Let's see their descriptions:

Researching this group as the largest ethnic group in Kenya, the authors state that there are few studies on women who marry women in Africa, but point out they exist, and bring case studies and narratives to the voices of these women. These cases are presented as a specific form of culture, including not only accepted as endorsed by public institutions and advised by older women of the family, both as a way of maintaining the lineage and as a way for women to maintain political autonomy . And in this case, there seems to be no strangeness among the natives about this kind of family arrangement. But, nevertheless, there is the prominence of prejudices. Let's see.

About this type of relationship / marriage, although it exists (although infrequent), is not easily accepted by people. These women are the target of criticism, prejudices and, sometimes, violence (as highlighted in the text analyzed). In the studies, the relationship between "woman-woman" or "husband-female" has in its end the empowerment, companionship, affection, economy and financial social security, besides the maintenance of living ancestry, not being seen, explained or discussed in the carnal / sexual relationship or in the context of homosexuality.

In our understanding it is worth emphasizing this connotation, considering that the concepts about homosexuality (sexual orientation), part of the homoaffective relation and is explained by the attraction by the same sex. A brief description on the subject, emphasizing that it is not the objective in this study, however it is worth pointing out a concept. Featured by Jaqueline de Jesus,

Homosexuals are attracted to people of the same sex, which is not related to their gender identity. They do not question their identity as men or women and the gender they were assigned to when they were born, unlike transsexual people (JESUS, 2012, p.09).

Due to the methodological gaps in the studies that use the narrative but do not present the speeches of the interlocutors on the subject relationship / "sexual practice", especially among the women involved in the husband-female marriage, it is curious to know: there is attraction and / or sex among the women of the marriage in question? Who do they have sex with? Are they asexual? Do they touch each other, if they wish? Only with these answers can we discuss whether there is lesbianism (unknown or denied), or whether it is another factor, phenomenon, or even another type of sexuality that we do not know, since identities are fluid, constructed and reconstructed (HALL, 2015).

Thus, it is evident in the African epistemologies of gender that this type of "woman-woman" relationship has occurred and still occurs, nevertheless it becomes scarce in modernity, submerging. In sum, the authors of Cape Verde, Senegal and Mozambique presented here oppose the conceptions of Amadiume and Oyéwúmi, whose assertion in Nigeria there are no binarisms, oppression of women. Often there is superiority of women to men, as the clan-power relationship - the name, the family lineage, not the sex, and / or the body. Although, and it is an important point to highlight the difference of the place of speech and investigation of the authors analyzed. In this sense, since the relation between the sexes is binary or not binary on the other side of the Atlantic, it is equivalent to understanding the gender relation in Africa in terms of complexity.

#### **IV. REFLECTING ON CONTROVERSIES: GENDER BINARISM AND SUBMISSION IN AFRICA**

In this part we focus on studies that show gender inequality in Nigeria and beyond, across the regions of the continent, where we point to controversies from authors equally speaking from within, in the approaches of African studies on gender relations in Africa. Observing modernity, new generation and new cultural impositions, certainly complex culture undergoes changes, mainly in the modeling of complexity, either by colonization, with the force of the influence of the Muslim religion, Christianity, or by the assimilation and appreciation of the Western model, as discussed in the studies of MUKASONGA (2017), among others. By doing an analysis of studies by Zeleza and Chimamanda, we appreciate the discussion.

The Chimamanda Ngoze Adichie conception: a synthetic approach

Nigerian Chimamanda Adichie (2015, 2017) points to the unequal gender relations in African cultures and reveals male superiority and androcentrism, although it is understood as an issue that can be changed by education, that is, it is a question of sociocultural construction. Through his study, one notices in Nigeria the gender problem that has been strong for the centrality of the male subject, androcentrism and binary relations. Feminism appears as a new movement in the African context, exclusive among groups of women and even attacked as non-women, for its resistance, perhaps, to the impositions of gender (demarcating naturalness in inequality and estrangement from the position or position of equality).

The author understands that a feminist education is needed, starting at home to educate the feminist children (ADICHIE, 2017) and, seeing positive results in terms of the escape from submission, in front of those who adhere to feminism, the author suggests feminism for all people: "Let's all be feminists" (ADICHIE, 2015) as an effective change strategy in gender relations.

Some points in the author's studies are highlighted, based on her work of 2017 "To educate feminist children - a manifesto", are found in our review, Ineildes Calheiro and Eduardo Oliveira (2017), in which we consider the relevance for this study. It is noted in Chimamanda, an author who uses the method of personal experience, highlighting biology, body, education, marriage, the stages of life with childhood and adolescence and being a woman. In this context, it resembles the study of Simone de Beauvoir (*The second sex*)<sup>11</sup>, going beyond and, differently, leaves the presupposition of universality of gender and global woman, relating the debate with ethnic groups, other cultures, whose literature crosses borders, bringing to the field of knowledge other forms of life of black African women.

From the Nigerian context Chimamanda finds binarisms, gender inequality, prejudice, machismo, misogyny within the woman category, among other issues. In the face of this vast problem she struggles for

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<sup>11</sup> Simone de Beauvoir centers her studies on the work "The second sex," with white French women, without considering other categories of women and the ethno-racial question and other cultures.

gender equality (without being confused with the global gender and universal woman), which is possible through education - a feminist education. In their works, it is noted that the "Chimamanda" African women are deprived of poverty: focusing on good health, excellent education, enviable types of work, housing and income. In short, a socially inclusive life story.

It is the world from which the author begins, whose concern is the gender relationship in Africa and the reconstruction of the imaginary of what is understood in the world what it is to be African woman, and the story that is told. Surely, the author shows that African women are not the natural woman, and especially poor, uneducated and excluded, of a body marked by viruses and diseases "caused by ethnic reasons"<sup>12</sup>.

Concerning the African woman in the form inscribed in the Western imaginary: inferior, worthless, based on preconceptions, disseminated as the lowest human group among women, the "other from the other", extreme poverty, devoid of corporal and intellectual value. Chimamanda (2017) deconstructs this image, as highlighted in the review (Calheiro and Oliveira, 2017) - The African woman in a situation of inequality in relation to men, but within the category of women is in the context of equality with women western white.

In addition, in her works it is possible to interpret the possibility of equality of gender, race and ethnicity in spite of the marked differences and binarisms in the relations between the sexes and differentiated behaviors in childhood, from the intrauterine process: boy? Pink for her, and if it is it, blue (Chimamanda 2017). Therefore, and according to the aforementioned review, through its conceptions it is evident a struggle for the recognition of diverse ethnicities, other communities and equality of cultural value.

Paul Zeleza's conception: a synthetic approach

Due to the prominence of the study, we closed the discussion with Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, male author (from Malawi), in the text "Gender Perspectives in African Historiography",<sup>13</sup> which brings a gender approach by inserting a broad vision in several regions.

According to gender studies the addendum and important feminism is seen by many members as an exclusive movement for women and sometimes dedicated to attacking or eliminating men. As to the fact that in these studies we do not find a gender concept in Africa, whose discussion is centered on the concept of "woman", "womanism", a term that has been pointed out in Africa since 1993, as Nah Dove (1998) of women. And in the context of the African gender, women are not segregated from men in struggles. Developing the debate with the term articulated with the politics of unity, Afrocentricity, the author makes a genealogy approaching the roles of women in the protagonism, command and in the front line, as it exemplifies with the resistance of Candaces in Cush (Etipia), and emphasizes that the Moors were ruled by female chiefs.

"Womanism" or "womanist" is also a discussion of American black feminist theorists in the 1980s, with the centralization of race, and "it is the premise that blacks and whites can not acting as equals, living in the same territory or participating in the same social institutions "(PATRÍCIA COLLINS, 2017)<sup>14</sup>, concerns also differ within the genre. Explains the author revisiting Alice Walker and Sherley Williams, that womenism are committed to the survival and integrity of people entirely and independent of sex.

However the concept of gender described by Zeleza is based on the definition of Joan Scott, classic author of the West:

Gender has been defined as the social organization and symbolic representation of the sex difference in transformation. It is the main field in which or by which power is articulated and meaning. As a concept, gender offers an epistemological redefinition of historical knowledge as construction instead of reconstruction (SCOTT, 1989 apud ZELEZA, 2005, 225).

Thus we see the power of Western gender epistemology. In his critique, in historiographical studies, and still in force in Africa, for the author historians have described themes related to political development, wars, and celebrating the lives and achievements of great men. That is, in these studies are presented predominantly male and sexist visions, occurring the invisibility of women, or under-representation in the main currents of thought.

On the one hand, the author points out that in the last two decades (1980/90) there has been a significant increase in literary production on African women, on the other, it points to androcentrism in African historiography and the stereotyped form of women in literature. In the images evaluated by the author (ZELEZA, 2005), women are stereotyped and oppressed, appear as reproducers, mothers and wives, and also in

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<sup>12</sup>These are diseases found mostly among the black population, whose critique of these naturalizations on racialized genetic factors is debated by authors (scholars and breeders) in Brazil as factors of social inequality, racism and exclusion.

<sup>13</sup>Original text in English, translation by means of the previously mentioned course, like methodological proposal to facilitate the reading of the group.

<sup>14</sup>Original text published in 1996. According to Collins, Alice Walker discussed the issue in 1983.

situations of victimization, infantilization, violent and incarcerated. There are cases where they are mentioned, as well as appear half-naked, however, the latter withdrawn in subsequent editions. (Of the respective work verified by him).

He affirms that the references in these literatures indicate relations of marriage, fertility, morality from the perceptions of missionaries and colonial ideologies, and on the other hand, infertility and prostitution. Few studies are devoted to women's political activities and activities, as she found some references that address women leaders in local institutions, and are more geared towards the Yoruba people and the Wolof and Serer kingdoms (now Senegal); the leading role of Queen Amina, and few references to matrilineal, patrilineal systems; the author informs us about the Jihadist revolutions (which focuses on the role of women) between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the famous women's revolution "Aba" of 1929, but almost nothing mentioned on the subject in African historiography.

Following her analysis the division of labor is seen strongly in two contexts: in relation to family work and local commerce, undermining the influential role of women in the economy. In their understanding family labor has complex forms (according to the critics in these studies analyzed by it, they are not exploited), eg in the pre-colonial era West African societies distinguished between male and female work, although not being the division of rigid tasks.

A summary of the research carried out by the same, it indicates that in the African historiographic studies the women portrayed as permanent victims of an apparent primordial structure of poverty persist. Zeleza (2005) reports that they are inserted as secondary or additional issues, with the Eurocentric virus afflicting both women's studies and the social sciences as a whole, but it (warns) scholars Africans, including feminists, have fought vigorously against intellectual imperialism, although ethnocentric practices remain in place, especially among Western feminist intellectuals. It is worth considering that the analysis of the author is not limited only to a specific territory, but to the five African regions, as he points out in his methodology.

Race, class and ethnicity in African studies are inserted as secondary issues (Zeleza, 2005). In this sense, the intersectionality debate does not appear as a link to the advances in gender and social inequalities in African studies, which we understand by the justification of the "race" factor / concept to be a critique expressed by Oyewúmi (2017), which is focused on human hierarchies, and on class, as regards the political economy factor not centralized in capitalism, but in various forms of economies, as Claudio Furtado (2012)<sup>15</sup> also points out in his criticism under the ambiguity of the concept of ethnicity, hour linked to culture, language, time synonymous with race (black).

After the critique of historiography, the aforementioned talks about the importance of the restoration of African women, and when they write a history of gender, they make a kind of compensatory history, of contribution, despite the increase of studies on women in literature and under the responsibility of some areas and experts, such as feminists, beginning to examine in a more systematic way the development and historical construction of culture, networks of solidarity and autonomous social spaces of women. As for the colonial era, it was pointed out that there was no passivity, women challenged by taking initiatives and, contrary to previous studies, much of the current studies in the post-colonial period bring clarity to the subject despite tensions in gender relations.

In this study Zeleza criticizes the oppression and discrimination discussed and analyzed only in its relation with colonialism, being the African history, in the optics of the author, political and elitist. For him, there is a connection between the pre-colonial and colonial past not described in the studies, such as the influence of Muslim societies on cultural and gender changes; the development of exploitation and oppression of women in polygamous structures and being the privileged keys to the function of descent, despite the political powers of women, in practical terms; their limited access to instruction in colonization; gender retraction; achievements and independence; men combatants in the fight and women food providers, being a process considered common and not the opposite - imposition and inferiorization of the sex.

However, the assertions of non-gender binaries in Africa, pointed out by some authors, the alternative that puts women and gender roles in terms of equality or complementarity characterized as balance in harmonious pre-colonial Africa, in the conception of Paul Zeleza, it's pure romanticism. Thus, it finds inequality between the sexes and in gender relations, with more influential changes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries due to the development of colonization.

## V. CONCLUSION

In this essay, African authors point out crucial points in their studies: criticism of Western research, intentional Eurocentric studies, ethnocentrism in science, global gender-related hegemonic-monological epistemology and feminism; they also call for epistemological rights and the recognition of other epistemologies; point to the problems of the effects of colonization, imperialism and the imposition of Euro-

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<sup>15</sup> In the present essay was not intended the critical slope of the shortage on intersectionality in Africa. But we suggest the importance of this discussion.

American values on the genre, presenting devastating changes in the African continent, in the economic, political and cultural fields, among others.

Among the concepts that could be understood as gaps in gender studies in African cultures, we emphasize: blackness, race and racism, yet they are few focused and scarce in these discussions, not presenting centrality, emphasizing the concept of ethnicity, which we can read as synonymous with breed. However, the concept of racism appears more strongly in Oyewúmi and Chimamanda, and even concerning the field of knowledge, as the character racism of intelligence located in Crispina Gomes.

In an attempt to, not necessarily answer, because it is far from this restricted work, however, to understand about the tension or ambiguity in the question: submission / oppression or gender insubmission in Africa? From the method of Cognitive Analysis, which is beyond the traditional analysis, we identify a propensity for the loss of the originality and complexity of the African culture, being evident the cultural changes and the loss of the origin from the colonization.

We identify that a group of authors find inequality, binarism, gender oppression in African ethnicities and regions, while others point out different possibilities of readings, some harmony, integration or complementarity, theorizing gender by the bias of patriarchy, devoid of gender bias, binarism, recapitulating and memorizing cultural processes prior to colonization, pointing to forms still present and considering the aspects that strengthen women within the community itself. Oyewúmi (2017) and others, affirms that gender in Africa is the result of colonization. With Chimamanda, Zeleza and others, one interprets: sociocultural changes and loss of the tradition of African countries, with tensions of gender relations increasing.

In spite of the theoretical differences in the field of gender, we do not treat here as divergence, but as complexity, in which the two outstanding conceptions combat ethnocentrism, epistemicide and contribute to the decentralization of Euro-American-hegemonic knowledge, ratifying other and complex epistemologies. It is convenient to reflect on the African woman in the form of the occidentalist imaginary: inferior, the woman of the jungle, whose imaginary destructure is visible in the study of Chimamanda, as the review highlights (Calheiro; Oliveira, 2017). The African authors / revisits lead us to reconstruct this imaginary, impelling us to reformulate the thought about the differences, other cultures and diverse epistemologies.

Western epistemological norms have taken them as a process that falls under African cultures, reshaping them, losing the essence of world-worldview. However, the studies of African women strongly implies the de-westernization of gender, presenting the emergence of other epistemologies, contrasting with hegemonic science, and although, through the controversies, gender complexity in studies is emphatic in Africa. which can confuse with ambiguity. These thoughts / theories contribute to the strengthening of black feminisms in various nations, concerning intersectionality in gender, race, class and territory, especially with the theory / concept of the specificity "woman", "womanism".

From the gender perspective we have identified that, on the one hand, there is a struggle for unity, on the other there is hopelessness. In short, we summarize the critique of this essay on the gender debate in Africa, in two terms: Resistance X hopelessness. In a word we would say: Africa-gender complexity.

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