

The Erotics of History: An Atlantic African Example

This presentation challenges long-standing notions of sexuality as stable and context-free--as something essential, cultural or biological, that individuals discover about themselves. Rather, Donald L. Donham argues that historical circumstance, local social pressure, and the cultural construction of much beyond sex conditions the erotic. The argument is grounded in the ethnography of an unusual neighborhood in Atlantic Africa, in which local men, soon to be married to local women, are involved in long-term sexual relationships with European men. On the African side, such foreign couplings are motivated by local cultural projects and the pleasures of foreign commodities. On the other side, Europeans typically fetishize Africans' race, while a few search to become slaves in master/slave relationships.

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Donald L. Donham is Distinguished Professor of Anthropology at the University of California, Davis. His many books include *Marxist Modern: A Historical Ethnography of the Ethiopian Revolution* and *Violence in a Time of Liberation: Murder and Ethnicity at a South African Gold Mine*.