

revert to heterosexual behavior once they regain access to the opposite sex, while the "true" homosexual prefers his own sex even when the other is freely accessible.

The situation of deprivation does not affect all people equally. Even late nineteenth-century authors realized that some individuals never engage in homosexual activity no matter how long or how intense the deprivation from heterosexual contact they endure. Similarly, many homosexuals fail to take up heterosexual activity even though homosexuality may be so severely repressed as to be practically unavailable. Nevertheless, cross-cultural evidence abundantly documents higher incidences of homosexual activity in situations of heterosexual deprivation, and markedly so for males in their sexual prime.

SIWA OASIS

A town in the Libyan desert of western Egypt, Siwa is the site of an ancient civilization which retained a form of institutionalized homosexuality into the modern era. The oasis was the location of an oracle consulted by **Alexander the Great** and modern observers have stressed how the Berber population conserved its own language, religious rites, and sexual customs despite the later overlay of Islam and Egyptian administration.

Sexual relations among men fell into the ancient pattern of pairing between usually married adult men and adolescent bachelors. In the nineteenth century, families lived within the walls of a town constructed rather like a single large adobe "beehive" while all unmarried men lived together on the edges of town where they made up a warrior class (*zaggalah*) protecting the oasis from desert marauders. In the twentieth century, as the military function declined and the townspeople have moved out of the walled center, the *zaggalah* have become agricultural laborers retaining their customs and clubhouses. The anthropologist Walter Cline, writing in 1936, found "All normal Siwan men and

boys practice sodomy. . . . Among themselves the natives are not ashamed of this; they talk about it as openly as they talk about love of women, and many if not most of their fights arise from homosexual competition."

Among the *zaggalah*, man-boy relationships were formally recognized when the man offered the boy's father a gift (or brideprice) as in heterosexual marriage. Abd Allah notes that "Siwan customs allow a man but one boy [vs. four wives] to whom he is bound by a stringent code of obligations." In the *zaggalah* clubhouse "laborers come together on any occasion for communal rejoicing and assemble on moonlight nights for drinking, singing, and dancing to the merry rhythm of flute and drum" (Cline). This festive and erotic tradition culminates in a three-day bacchanal dedicated to the medieval sheik, Sidi Soliman, following the Islamic fast of Ramadan. The various accounts of Siwa agree on the openness and fluidity of sexuality, in that divorce is casual and serial polygamy common, men having as many as a dozen wives over time. Male and female prostitution was noted and Cline remarked that the role in homosexual relations was variable and voluntary.

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SIXTEENTH-CENTURY LEGISLATION

This era brought to completion the trend toward criminalization of homosexuality throughout Christendom. The Jewish and Christian antihomosexual tradition that goes back to the fifth century