



Aphrodite and Iyogbo mythologies: A comparative study of New Testament Corinth and contemporary Urhobo cultural settings

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Abstract

This article focuses on comparison of mythology of Aphrodite in New Testament Corinth and Iyogbo mythology in contemporary Urhoboland, in Nigeria. Using the comparative model as a method, the paper aimed at doing a comparative study on the First Century Graeco-Roman Corinthian cultural setting and the contemporary Urhobo cultural setting in Nigeria. The paper argues that Aphrodite, in first century Graeco-Roman Corinthian cultural setting, is similar to the *Iyogbo* festival in Urhobo cultural milieu of Delta State in Nigeria. The article asserts that their mythological love symbols in human society palliate indiscriminate sex and as such encourage promiscuity and thus possess health dangers for society because of the sexual promiscuity which it promotes and which is capable of promoting sexually transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS. The paper also posits that the *Iyogbo* festival can and should be modified into a social-cultural engagement that has educational value and must be devoid of indiscriminate sexual activities.

Keywords: Aphrodite, mythology, culture, Nigeria, Greece

Introduction

At a time when human world has been so sexually perverted in so diverse many ways, any festival or culture that promotes promiscuity needs to be re-examined for possible desirable reorientation. Biblical history has shown that the cult of Aphrodite in New Testament Corinth, was nothing more than a Hellenistic culture that promoted prostitution. Religion has received its fair share of blame as a result of being involved in certain practices that called for moral criticism. Wayne Stacy's reference on Corinth and her religious studies have shown that the location of Corinth was strategic for economic, religious and cross-cultural boom reasons.¹ This becomes clearer when Stacy explains the situation further:

Strange as it may sound to us, religion also helped create the licentious ambience of first-century Corinth. Being multicultural and "consumer-oriented," Corinth tried to satisfy even the most discriminating pagan's desires. Gods and goddesses worshiped at Corinth included the traditional gods/goddesses of the Greek pantheon (Zeus, Hera, Athena, and Hermes); the Greek goddess of good luck, Tyche (Fortuna was her Roman name); Apollo, who seems to have had his own temple in Corinth; Poseidon (Roman Neptune); Asclepius; and Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of fertility and love (Roman Venus), the patron goddess of the city. Prominently situated on summit of the Acrocorinth, the temple of Aphrodite dominated Corinth's landscape in Paul's day. Associated with

¹Wayne R. Stacy, "Corinth's Moral Climate", *Biblical Illustrator*, (Summer 1997), p. 36. http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lts_fac_pubs/376.



the worship of Aphrodite was the practice of sacred prostitution. Since the time of Solon (sixth century B.C.), Greek cities openly sanctioned brothels, regarding them as "supportive of family life." Consequently, burgeoning populations of courtesans, known as "ethereals," plied their trade in Corinth, often commanding large prices for their services. But the practice of sacred prostitution, that is, prostitution associated with the worship of a god or goddess, has baffled scholars in that it does not appear to have been associated with the promotion of fertility per se (common to many pagan religions), but seems rather to have celebrated sex as such.²

Corinth of New Testament era could be seen from the above description as a city of religion rapped up in polytheism, in which there were festivals, mythology, and prostitution. Other scholars have also attested to the reality of the practice of prostitution as promoted by the Aphrodite temple in Corinth. Thousands of prostitutes around the Aphrodite temple were referred to as sacred beings.^{3,4} Religious and cultural diversity are characterized by New Testament Corinthian society. The nations of the time and the people in general, seem to have moved along various divides such as cultural, religious and economic divides. These characterized the diversity in Corinth. Contemporary scholars who intend to or who are studying Corinth, and her religious-cultural diversity, are being challenged to take cognizance of these common diversities.

This same diversity has linked us to a cotemporary society where similar tendencies in religious-cultural diversity issues exist. Here, specifically, *Iyogbo* an equivalent of Aphrodite is found in Urhoboland, in Nigeria. Using comparative paradigm of African Biblical Scholarship and New Testament studies, the aim of this study is to compare the New Testament Corinth Aphrodite cult with Urhobo *Iyogbo*. Within this comparison, the article argues that Aphrodite in first century Graeco-Roman Corinthian cultural setting, is indeed very similar to the *Iyogbo* festival in the Urhobo cultural milieu of Delta State in Nigeria. The study intends to show that both have use similar mythological love symbols as aspects in human society. Such love, so promoted by duo cultural deities palliate indiscriminate sex and as such encourage promiscuity and possess health dangers for human society. This is a challenge for scholars who intend to engage in scholarship enterprise of this nature, to view cultural diversity in a constructive way that can benefit human societies for healthier positive human development. Diversity and multiculturalism have in any event, prompted scholars to see the need of harnessing diversity for educational and societal development.

Comparative Model and Theoretical Framework

The comparative model was adopted as a method for this study. Collier opines that "comparison is a fundamental tool of analysis. It sharpens our powers of description, and plays a central role in concept-formation by bringing into focus suggestive similarities and contrasts among cases."⁵ In case of hypotheses testing, it can also contribute to the inductive discovery of new hypotheses and to theory-building in research. Scholars in the discipline of social sciences have propounded three main areas of innovation and analytic alternatives which have emerged to strengthen the viability of the comparative method viz; within-case analysis, quantitative techniques employing a relatively small number of cases, and systematic comparison of a small number of cases with the goal of causal analysis.⁶ Also, political scientists see comparative study in research in the literature of comparative politics as a wide variety of

²Ibid.

³Hans Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians, trans. James W. Leitch (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p.12. Also see Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archaeology, Good News Studies 6 (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc. 1983), 125.

⁴Dio Chrysostom, Discourses, 8:381. Cited by Wayne R. Stacy, in "Corinth's Moral Climate."

⁵David Collier,r, David (1993). "The Comparative Method", Finifter, Ada W. (ed) Political Science: The State of Discipline II, (1993), 105-119. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1540884>. Accessed September 16, 2015.

⁶Ibid, 108-109.



meanings as attached to the terms "comparison" and "comparative method."⁷ The comparative method is defined here as one of the basic methods-the others being the experimental, statistical, and case study methods-of establishing general empirical propositions. In the natural sciences, comparative studies in biology use an investigative philosophy that many scientists identify as the "comparative method."⁸ While social and pure sciences concepts of comparative method of research focus on statistical representation, comparative model in African methods of biblical hermeneutics focus on the comparison between African life and the life in Bible time. Ukpong, one of the exponents of African methods of Biblical Studies, submitted that the comparative model is interested in comparing the Bible and African life and culture.⁹ This type of study was very common up to the 1980s. Other vigorous exponents of this method exist.¹⁰ Within this context, the first century concept of Aphrodite in Graeco-Roman cultural setting of Corinth shall be compared with the Urhobo concept of *Iyogbo* in Nigeria.

As a matter of theoretical framework, Dr. Jeffrey Carlson's work on "Site Visits and Epistemological Diversity in the Study of Religion" is one of the materials that can give insight into the study of religious and cultural diversity. Carlson revealed that in some curricula, "diversity" or "multiculturalism" is relegated to a single course on the non-Western or "minority" communities in the United States.¹¹ Based on this he argues that a central and abiding curricular goal should be to move from episodic moments of diversity within the curriculum to an epistemology of diversity across the curriculum, wherein our challenge is to engage multiple perspectives (cultural, national, religious, ideological, methodological, etc.) in our courses and curricular design, and to develop effective strategies for teaching a diverse curriculum within a diverse learning community. Rose is also a good theoretical framework for the study. She compared the mythological love between Aphrodite and Adonis with the oriental tale of Great Mother and her divine lover.¹² This comparison brings to bare the reality of Aphrodite in New Testament Corinth. It appears as if those who practiced Aphrodite prostitution migrated to other places like Urhoboland where a similar thing is being practiced.

Aphrodite and Iyogbo: Cultural Mythologies

In Greek mythology, Aphrodite is the goddess of love, beauty and sexual rapture. According to Hesiod, she was born when Uranus (the father of the gods) was castrated by his son Cronus. Cronus threw the severed genitals into the ocean which began to churn and foam about them. She was the daughter of Zeus.¹³ The Roman equivalent of Venus, Aphrodite being the goddess of love, presided over sexual

⁷Arend Lijphart, "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method", *The American Political Science Review* 65/3 (1971): 682-693.

⁸Glenn M. Sanford, William I. Lutterschmidt and Victor H. Hutchison, "the Comparative Method Revisited", *BioScience* 52/9 (2002), 830-836.

⁹Justine S. Ukpong, (November, 1999). "Can African Old Testament scholarship escape the historical critical approach?" *Newsletter on African Old Testament Scholarship* - Issue 7 (1999), Online edition: www.mhs.no/aotp? Accessed September 16, 2015.

¹⁰S.G.Kibicho, "The Interation of the Traditional Kikuyu Concept of God With the Biblical Concept", *Cahier des Religions Africaines* 2 (1968), 223-238. Also see K.A.Dickson, "Cotinuity and Discontinuity between the Old Testament and African Life and Thought. In: Appiah-Kubi, K and Torres, S.(eds.) *African Theology en route* (Maryknoll: Orbis 1979), 95-108. Also see J.O.Akao, The Aniconic Cult of Yahweh and Imageless Supreme Being in African Traditional Religion. *ORITA* 19/2 (1987), 90-103. See B.Goba, (1993). Corporate Personality: Acient Israel and Africa. In: Moore, B.(ed.) *Black Theology: The South African Voice* (London: C. Hurst, 1993), 65-73.

¹¹Jeffrey Carlson, "Site Visits and Epistemological Diversity in the Study of Religion", *Spotlight on Teaching* 19/4 (2004), iv.

¹²H.J.Rose, *A Handbook of Greek Mythology* (London: Routledge, 2004).

¹³Microsoft® Encarta® 2008. © 1993-2007 Microsoft Corporation.



interaction and the pleasures of love-*ta aphrodisia*.¹⁴ The classical period of Athens was described by Woodard as a period of melic poetry which was sung and danced by a professional chorus of which the primary occasion of such performances was the festival of the city Dionysian, the official venue of the Athenian state theater.¹⁵ While Hard sees Aphrodite as the custodian of love and sex, Woodard sees her as the muse of romantic poems. Aphrodite was seen symbolically in the use of *melon* such as apple, quinces, pomegranates, etc. used for love and seduction.¹⁶

In Urhobo cosmology especially among the Idjerhe enclave of the Delta State of Nigeria, it is believed that the ancestors and community deities control the activities of the living. Among the Idjerhe there is the legendry of Iyogbo which is believed to have emanated from the river goddess called *Olokun* who migrated from Bini in Edo State of Nigeria. This goddess is believed to be friendly with Mammy-water (local river goddess). In Idjerhe kingdom, Olokun is equivalent to Okunovun. Iyogbo was instituted by the goddess to instigate love and seduction. This was chronicled into Iyogbo festival which takes place every year within a week which is set aside by the priest and priestess of the deity.

Aphrodite in Bible Time Graeco-Roman Corinthian Setting

Corinth was great city in Bible times. Any scholar wishing to have a discourse on any theme from Corinth from the canonized Bible, cannot fail to mention the Apostle Paul who was once called Saul of Tarsus. His given name was Saul (Hebrew: שָׁׁאֵל, Modern *Sha'u'l* Tiberian Šā'ūl) and it means "asked for or prayed for." Some scholars suggest that he may had been named after the Old Testament king Saul, a fellow Benjamite. In biblical Greek it reads Σαούλ (*Saul*), Σαῦλος (*Saulos*), and Παῦλος – *Paulos*.¹⁷

Scholars have argued for and against his authorship of the letter written to the Corinthian Church community. We cannot speak about Corinth in the Bible time without talking about its authorship. Many scholars agree that Paul wrote first Corinthians. This agreement is due to church father's attestations to Paul's authorship of I Corinthians. For example, Clement of Rome (in A.D.95), Ignatius (2nd century) and Polycarp (2nd century) attested to Paul's authorship. Also, early church fathers like Justin Martyr, Irenaeus and Tertullian were said to have quoted from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Moreover, the epistle conforms in style, character and with Paul's pattern of writing.¹⁸ No wonder it falls into the genre of Pauline Epistle. Datiri opines further, that Paul wrote this letter from Ephesus (1 Cor.16:8), probably during his long stay there on his third missionary Journey and if we infer by time for Apollos' ministry, as well as the first letter referred to in 1 Corinthians 5:9, it is likely that Paul wrote towards the end of his three-year ministry in Ephesus, that is, around A.D.55.¹⁹ Brown takes a divergent view as to the Date. He says that when one views it from the account of Acts 18:12-17 which shows that Paul was in Corinth during the administration of Lucius Junius Annaeus Galio, who was sent to Corinth as proconsul in A.D.51 or 52 and since Paul arrived before Galio, the likely date of writing is between A.D.

¹⁴Robin Hard, *The Routledge Handbook of Greek Mythology: Based on H.J. Rose's "Handbook of Greek Mythology* (East Sussex: Psychology Press, 2004), 194.

¹⁵Roger D. Woodard, Roger D. (2007). *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Mythology* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 21.

¹⁶C.A. Faraone, "Aphrodite's *KEΣΤΟΣ* and Apples for Atalanta: Aphrodisiacs in Early Greek Myth and Ritual", *Phoenix* 44/3 (1990), 219-243.

¹⁷F.F.Bruce, F.F.(1976). Is the Paul of Acts the Real Paul? *Bulletin John Rylands Library* 58 (1976), 283-305.

¹⁸D.Datiri, "1 Corinthians", in T. Adebayo, S.Andria, I.Coulibaly, T. Habtu and S.Ngewa, eds., *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi, Kenya: Word Alive Publishers, 2006), 1377-1398.

¹⁹Ibid.



50 and 51.²⁰ If we agree that Paul wrote this letter from Ephesus as earlier argued by Datiri, A.D. 55 can be accepted. Paul encountered several religions, myths and philosophical movements including Aphrodite in Corinth.²¹

In the New Testament, Paul's first extended ministry in one city was at Corinth. On his first visit to Corinth, he remained for at least eighteen months (Acts 18:1-18). Paul's three longest letters are associated with Corinth. First and Second Corinthians were written to Corinth, and Romans, from Corinth. Prominent Christian leaders associated with Corinth include Aquila, Priscilla, Silas, Timothy, Apollos, and Titus.²² Corinth was the commercial center of Greece. Athens and Corinth were the most important cities in Greece during the Roman era. Corinth was a cosmopolitan city with a population of over half a million during the Roman period. The cosmopolitan nature of Corinth made it possible for the Greeks, Jews, Latins, Egyptians, Syrians, and Asians to rub shoulders.²³ Archaeological artifacts testify to the life of man on the site of the city in the Neolithic period.²⁴ By the seventh century B.C. Corinth had become very famous in pottery and bronze making and in the third century B.C., as a leader of Achaean League, it came into conflict with Rome. During Paul's time Corinth ranked with Rome, Alexandria, and Ephesus as one of the most important cities in the Roman empire.²⁵

Scholars argue that the Corinth which Paul visited was not the ancient Corinth because the old Corinth was destroyed by the Roman consul called Lucius Mummius in 146 B.C. It was not rebuilt until Julius Caesar undertook the task in 44 B.C., that is, 102 years after Rome had destroyed it.²⁶ A number of Roman names in the New Testament is said to have been associated with Corinth (cf. Acts 18:7; Rom.16:21-23; 1 Cor.16:17).

Geographically and economically, Corinth was very important because it was situated on the sea route between the Occident and the Orient. It had two harbours: Cenchrea which was six miles to the east on the Saronic Gulf; and Lechaion which was a mile and a half to the west on the Corinthian Gulf. Goods flowed across isthmus on the Diolkos, a road by which smaller ships could be hauled fully loaded across the isthmus, and by which cargoes of larger ships could be transported by wagons from one side to the other. Goods flowed through the city from Italy and Spain to the west and from Asia Minor, Phoenicia and Egypt to the east.²⁷ Glaze describes Corinth, thus:

It was located on the southwest end of the isthmus that joined the southern part of the Greek peninsula with the mainland to the north. The city was located on an elevated plain at the foot of Acrocorinth, a rugged hill reaching 1,886 feet above sea level. Corinth was a maritime city located between two important seaports: the port of Lechaion on the Gulf of Corinth about two miles to the north and the port of Cenchreæ on the Saronic Gulf about six miles east of Corinth. Corinth was an

²⁰R.B.Brown, “1 Corinthians”, in C.J. Allen, J.I. Durham, R.L.Honeycutt,Jr., J.W. MacGorman, F. Stagg, W.J. Fallis, J.F. Green and H.P.Colson *eds.*, *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol.10. (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1970), 287-397.

²¹Datiri.

²²R.E.Glaze, “Corinth”, in: Trent C.Butler, *eds.*, *Holman Bible Dictionary*. Broadman and Holman.

²³D. Guthrie, “The Letters”, in D. Alexander, P.Alexander, D. Field, D. Guthrie, G. Hughes, H. Marshall and A.Millard, *eds.*, *The Lion Handbook to the Bible* (Oxford: Lion Publishing plc.,1983), 574-643.

²⁴Brown, 287.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷W.H.Mare, “1 Corinthians”, in K. Baker, D. Burdick, J. Stek, W. Wessel and R. Youngblood, *eds.*, *The NIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 1734.



important city long before becoming a Roman colony in 44 B.C. In addition to the extant works of early writers, modern archaeology has contributed to knowledge of ancient Corinth. Excavation was begun by the American School of Classical Studies in Athens in 1896. From the results of this continuing work, important information has been published. For a century (about 350 to 250 B.C.) Corinth was the largest and most prosperous city of mainland Greece. Later, as a member of the Achaean League, Corinth clashed with Rome. Finally, the city was destroyed in 146 B.C. L. Mummius, the Roman consul, burned the city, killed the men, and sold the women and children into slavery. For a hundred years' the city was desolate. Julius Caesar rebuilt the city in 44 B.C., and it quickly became an important city in the Roman Empire. An overland shiproad across the isthmus connected the ports of Lechaion and Cenchreae. Cargo from large ships was unloaded, transported across the isthmus, and reloaded on other ships. Small ships were moved across on a system of rollers. Ships were able, therefore, to avoid 200 miles of stormy travel around the southern part of the Greek peninsula. Today, a modern ship canal, constructed in A.D. 1881–1893, connects the two ports.²⁸

Culturally wise, Corinth was characterized by Hellenism (Greek culture). Its people were interested in Greek philosophy and placed a high premium on wisdom even though the city was not a university town like Athens. In regard to Religion, Corinth had twelve temples of which Aphrodite (the goddess of love whose worshipers practice religious prostitution) was the most infamous. Other temples included inter alia, the temple of Asclepius (god of healing), the 6th century B.C. temple of Apollo, etc. Corinth can be referred to then as a multi-religious city and it was also known for its sexual immorality. There was also a Jewish Synagogue (Acts 18:4) where the Jewish monotheistic faith attracted some Gentiles who became God-fearers and attached themselves to the Synagogue worship without becoming Jews. Paul made good use of the opportunity to launch out his evangelistic ministry through the Synagogue to the Gentiles in Corinth. Politically, by 27 B.C., Corinth was the capital of the province of Achaea. It was also the residence of the Roman proconsul (Acts 18:12-17). In A.D. 51-52 while Paul was in Corinth, Galio, the elder brother of Stoic philosopher Seneca, was the Roman proconsul (Acts 18:12-17).²⁹

The city of Corinth flourished from the 8th to the 5th centuries B.C. Because of the leading-role it had played against them as a member of the Achaean League, the Roman consul Lucius Mummius burned and destroyed the city in 146 B.C., and left it in a heap of ruins. All that remained of the old Greek city is a part of the old marketplace, the seven columns of the temple of Apollo, and a fountain which was preserved by the Romans. Julius Caesar rebuilt Corinth around 46-44 B.C. as a Roman colony and renamed it *Colonia Laus Julia Corinthiensis*, "Corinth the praise of Julius" shortly before his demise.³⁰ Corinth became the capital of the Roman province of Achaia in 27BCE. First century Roman Corinth enjoyed infrastructural amenities and old temples were restored and enlarged, new shops and markets (agora) created, a South stoa built, new water supplies developed, and many public buildings added (including three governmental buildings and an amphitheater seating over 14,000).³¹ By 50 A.D., when Paul visited Corinth, it was the most beautiful, modern, and industrious city of its size in Greece.³² In Biblical times, Corinth harbored various people from different cultural and religious backgrounds including Greeks, Roman military veterans, Phoenicians and also Phrygians. David G. Horrell, a Professor of New Testament at the University of Exeter, United Kingdom has noted that the Greek city

²⁸Glaze.

²⁹See E.O. Alana, J.A. Onimhawo and J.A.Ottuh, *Paul's Epistles in the New Testament and their Theological Relevance to the Contemporary Church in Nigeria*, (Warri, Nigeria: Emakome Enterprises, 2014), especially pp.62-64.

³⁰Ben Witherington, III, Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 7-8.

³¹Brian J.Tucker, *You Belong to Christ: Paul and the Formation of Social Identity in 1 Corinthians 1-4* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011), 95. Cf. David Padfield, Corinth, Greece In The New Testament, in <http://www.padfield.com/2005/corinth.html>, Accessed September 13, 2016.

³²Wendell Willis, "Corinth", in David Noel Freedman and Allen C. Myers, eds., *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Amsterdam University Press, 2000), 279-281.



of Corinth flourished until 146 B.C.E., when it was defeated in a war with the Romans. Just over a century later, in 44 B.C.E., the city was refounded as a Roman colony with new settlers (particularly freed slaves) from elsewhere in the Empire.³³ This implies that the refounded Corinth may be slightly different from the former and was under dominion the Roman and as such, the Roman character of the city is reflected by the many Latin names associated with it in the New Testament: Aquila, Priscilla Crispus, Lucius, Gaius, Tertius, Erastus, Quartus, Fortunatus, Achaicus. Beside the impression of Aphrodite being the goddess of love and sex by Robinson Hard and Woodard, Aphrodite was also a symbol of religion in Graeco-Roman Corinth. It was reported that a Temple was built for Aphrodite and around it was the practice of prostitution. Padfield (2007) revealed that the city was filled with sailors who gladly spent their money there. The name "Corinth" became a synonym for immorality. The Aphrodite temple gave Corinth its reputation for gross immorality of which Paul often spoke.³⁴ The famous temple of Aphrodite further buttressed the issue of sexual promiscuity in Corinth. The Bible World in Picture explained further thus:

A famous temple to Aphrodite had stood on the summit of Acrocorinth in the Classical Age... It had fallen into ruins by Paul's time, but successors to its 1,000 cult prostitutes continued to ply their profession in the city below. Many of them were no doubt housed in the lofts above the 33 wine shops uncovered in the modern excavations. Corinth was a city catering to sailors and traveling salesmen. Even by the Classical Age it had earned an unsavory reputation for its libertine atmosphere; to call someone 'a Corinthian lass' was to impugn her morals. It may well be that one of Corinth's attractions for Paul was precisely this reputation of immorality.³⁵

The wealth of Corinth no doubt could have encouraged prostitution to flourish since money is involved in the business transaction which is involved. Despite the religious inclination accorded Aphrodite, the commercial aspect of the act cannot be ignored.

Iyogbo in Urhobo Cotemporary Milieu

Who are the Urhobo? Ekeh did research work on "clans and kingdoms in Urhobo history and culture" and described a basic unit of Urhobo culture which he termed clan.³⁶ The word "clan" according to him came into existence at the onset of British colonial rule in Urhoboland in the beginning decades of the 20th century and that from prehistoric times, and even during that era of colonial rule, the Urhobo people employed their own native expressions, including ẹkpoto (that is, ẹkpo r' oto in full phrasing), to describe these units of Urhobo culture. Other words that were so used to describe Urhobo cultural units were ẹkuoto and ubroto. However, that colonial term of "clans" dominated Urhobo studies and everyday analysis of Urhobo ways of life until its authority was undermined in the late 1990s.³⁷ Ekeh also made reference to O. Otite in which the term "kingdom" was first applied to the special case of Okpe.³⁸ Otite's use of the term "kingdom" was specialized and was largely circumscribed by the unique events of Okpe history. Ekeh also pointed out that the publication of Otite's book in the early 1970s did not diminish the use of the term "clans" for describing Urhobo's subcultures nor did it lead to any upswing in the use of "kingdoms" in Urhobo studies and everyday life. To Ekeh, the various units of Urhobo is called clan even kingdom is used by other scholars. Using the term kingdom to describe the various units of the

³³David G. Horrell, "Corinth", available Online: <http://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/places/main-articles/corinth>, Accessed September 16, 2016.

³⁴See 1 Cor. 6:9-20; 2 Cor. 12:20-21.

³⁵David Padfield, "Corinth, Greece in The New Testament", citing *The Biblical World in Pictures*. Available online: <http://www.padfield.com/2005/corinth.html>, Accessed September 17, 2016.

³⁶Peter P. Ekeh, (2008). Clans and Kingdoms in Urhobo History and Culture. A Paper Presented as a lecture at an Assembly of Urhobo Community, Abuja, Nigeria, Saturday, April 26, 2008.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Onigu Otite (1973). *Autonomy and Dependence. The Urhobo Kingdom of Okpe in Modern Nigeria* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1973).



Urhobo people could be controversial in the sense that some units which do not have a king cannot be called a kingdom. However, it is equally correct to refer the units as kingdoms especially when traditional monarchs are ruling such units or entities. In Ekeh's view, these basic subunits of Urhobo culture were prehistoric. That is, their existence predicated modern historiography that assigns dates and ascertainable time periods to historical events and that today, Urhobo scholars and culture artists have arrived at a sum total of twenty-two of these units of Urhobo culture. By saying that they are prehistoric, we mean to say that all of them-*Agbarha-Ame, Agbarha Otor, Agbarho, Agbon, Arhavwarien, Avwraka, Ephron, Evwreni, Eghwu, Idjerhe, Oghara, Ogor, Okere, Okparebe, Okpe, Olomu, Orogun, Udu, Ughelli, Ughievwen, Uvwie, and Uwherun* were well settled before the rise of significant historical epochs that defined the boundaries of medieval and modern Urhobo history. Thus, it is presumed that all these subunits of Urhobo culture were in existence before the rise of Benin Empire in the 1440s and before the arrival of the Portuguese in the Western Niger Delta in the 1480s.

The Urhobo people are spread over nine Local Government Areas of Delta State such as: Ethiope East, Ethiope West, Okpe, Ughelli South, Ughelli North, Sapele, Udu, Uvwie and part of Warri South. In both their homeland and in diaspora in 2002, their population is estimated to be over two million.^{39,40} In this same vein, Aweto and Igben say that the Urhobo are united not only by ties of ethnicity and culture but also by the salient geographical features of the territory they occupy as their homeland.⁴¹ Moreover, they held that the Urhoboland is a deltaic plain, generally under 30 metres above mean sea level, without prominent hills rising above the general land surface. The climate is also uniform, being humid sub-equatorial rainforest climate with a fairly marked seasonality in rainfall distribution. Otite also asserts that the Urhobo are surrounded by other neighbours' such as the Isoko to the South-East, the Itsekiri to the West, the Bini to the North, the Ijaw to the South and the Ndokwa to the North-East and that the geographical characteristics and natural resources played an important role in the migration history of the Urhobo.⁴²

Among the Urhobo of Idjerhe kingdom, *Iyogbo* was a mythological goddess believed to be the daughter of Okunovun. Okunovu who is believed to be a marine goddess is believed to have copulated with *Edjo-Ame* and it resulted to a pregnancy that produced *Iyogbo*. Just like Aphrodite, *Iyogbo* is believed to be the goddess of love and sex. Okunovun had a temple in Jesse Town in Delta State, Nigeria. In the early 1980s, its followers were numerous because it was the community's ritual cult. The chief priest and priestess fix a fourteen-day special festive period around March or April every year to celebrate love and sex. This festival was called *Iyogbo*. Within these fourteen days no female being adult or minor is allowed to come out of the house. All females are expected to remain indoors. Those adult females who are interested in the festival come out and any male that finds her approaches her and copulate either in a private place or harass her publicly. The slogan during the festival suggests the assumption that any adult female seen by an adult male becomes the automatic wife of such man. The slogan goes thus: "*Iyogbo-oo aye me yho*," meaning, "oh goddess of love and sex here is my wife." Immediately that is pronounced by the male, he can approach the female for sex and she is not expected to refuse. If she refuses, the male can even rape or harass her publicly.

³⁹Orhioghene Benedict Akpomuvie,(2009). Rural Development And Socio-Cultural Associations In Nigeria: Findings from Urhoboland, Delta State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Research in Arts and Social Sciences* 1 (2009), 92-111. citing Otite 2003.

⁴⁰S.U.Erivwo, Urhobo Religions Leaders and the Urhobo Nation. Keynote address delivered at Goldsmith College, (London University, London, 2003).

⁴¹Albert O. Aweto and Jomata L. Igben, "Geography of Urhoboland", in O. Otite, *ed.*, *The Urhobo People* (Ibadan: Shaneson C. I. Ltd, 2003).

⁴²Onigu Otite, (2003). A Peep into the History of the Urhobo. In: *The Urhobo People* (Ibadan: Shaneson C. I. Ltd, 2003), 23-29.



In recent times, the advent of Christianity has either reduced the cult ritual into extinction or into functioning unnoticed because many have people have become Christians. However, the temple of Okunovun is still in existence and has been made dynastic. The eldest son of a successive priest ascends the status of a priest at the demise of the father. The same was to be applicable to the daughter of the priestess.⁴³

Aphrodite and Iyogbo: A Comparative Analysis

Similarities

Ritual Cults: Aphrodite was synonymous with prostitution in New Testament Corinth. The practices around her involved rituals and festivals. The Aphrodite cult was very popular in ancient Greece with numerous shrines and temples erected throughout the land. Her main cult centres within Greece were the city of Korinthos (Corinth) on the Isthmus, and the island of Kythera (Cytherea) off the coast of Lakedaimonia. Beyond Greece the island of Kypros (Cyprus) was famed for its Mystery cult of the goddess. Aphrodite was also worshipped with private rituals and prayers.⁴⁴ Nudity was a symbol of the cult. This was depicted in classical sculpture in which Aphrodite was usually portrayed as a naked or partially disrobed women, often with her arms drawn in a futile gesture of modesty.⁴⁵ It has bee noted that the first sculpted nude Aphrodite by the artist Praxiteles in the 5th Century B.C. as a cult idol for the city-state of Knidos (Cnidus). It was received with a certain amount of controversy in its day, but the style quickly became the norm.⁴⁶ She became a symbol of worship and wedding rituals in classical Hellenism. This was also depicted in various ways in ancient Athens.⁴⁷ Rosenzweig offers innovative and compelling ways to interpret the material record by focusing her study on the major cult sites of Aphrodite in and around Athens. She helps us to understand the development of the worship of this goddess by considering artistic, literary, and epigraphic evidence. It implies that Aphrodite was an object of ritual activities. In similar description, Iyogbo is associated with the water goddess called Okunovun. She is also being worshipped with ritualistic activities and items. Sacrifices were offered to her in the river and the main shrine. Sacrificial items such as chicken, biscuits, kola nuts, goat, yam, plantain and it climaxed by an annual festival *Ugheukun* within which *Iyogbo* is practices like Aphrodite. *Iyogbo* is named after the goddess *Iyogbo*.

Religious symbols: Aphrodite became a religious symbol. Her worship spread around the regions of Athens as observed by scholars.⁴⁸ Aphrodite was worshipped as the goddess of love and beauty. Its temple was raised around Greek regions. Its image was erected in such temples to represent her presence in the society of those who believe in her. The pedigree of the deities in the Graeco-Roman community attracts worship from the people. Lisa Brody offers insight into Graeco-Roman deities and how they relate with Aphrodite when he writes that:

Graeco-Roman Asia Minor offers particular interest to scholars of ancient cult and religion, because many local Anatolian gods and goddesses at that time became identified with members of

⁴³Since the death of the priestess, no one emerged to take over the position. The priestess was my maternal ground mother. She died around 1992.

⁴⁴See “Aphrodite Cult I”, in <http://www.theoi.com/Cult/AphroditeCult.html>, Accessed September 13, 2016.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Rachel Rosenzweig, *Worshipping Aphrodite: Art and Cult in Classical Athens* (University of Michigan Press, 2004), 21-24.

⁴⁸Laurelei Black, *Cult of Aphrodite: Rites and Festivals of the Golden One* (CreateSpace, 2010), 138pp.



the Olympian pantheon, deities who had been introduced through increasing contact with mainland Greece and Italy. Although they came to be known by a variety of different names Artemis, Aphrodite, Zeus, Hera - the connection among these divinities is shown by specific similarities in their powers and attributes; many of them for instance, had associations with fertility, warfare, vegetation, and animals. They probably originated as aspects of a universal, mother-type goddess, becoming identified in later periods with a variety of Greek and Roman counterparts. The Artemis of Ephesos, for instance, began as a local Ionian goddess called the Mistress, 'Despina' in Greek, and it was in later periods that she became known as an unusual aspect of Artemis. Whereas Artemis seems to have been the most popular Greek deity in much of Asia Minor, particularly along the western coast, sanctuaries in other regions chose instead to identify their local goddesses as Kybele, Hera, or Aphrodite. Caria, in particular, seems to have preferred Aphrodite above all others. The best documented case of this appears at Aphrodisias, a city whose very name from the Hellenistic period onward signifies the importance of its goddess's cult.⁴⁹

Paul was aware of the worship of Aphrodite in Corinth. Sexual immorality that was addressed in Paul's epistle to the Corinthian church community may not be unconnected with Aphrodite sexual promiscuity. Sexuality, nudity and love were religious symbols of Aphrodite. The same is applicable to the *Iyogbo* goddess in Urhoboland. Although, the temple or imagery depiction of *Iyogbo* was not present in all Urhoboland, those who worship her in Idjerhe kingdom had her shrine located along the community river road in Jesse. She was worshipped along with Okunovun. The annual festival of *Iyogbo* was the only depiction of its worship in Jesse Town. The imagery of promiscuity was present in *Iyogbo*.

Mythological Symbols of Love and Sex: The New Testament period Greeks were familiar with classical mythologies. Certainly, Aphrodite and other Greek deities were built out of mythological trajectories spreading from other places. These myths were accorded reverence or translated into realities by imageries or sculptures. In some cases, the sculpture of Aphrodite was cast alongside a male deity symbolizing love and sex. The picture always show the nudity of the goddess and her lover. This implies love and sex. The original practice promoted prostitution as a way of religion more than a commercial enterprise. This concept is not different from *Iyogbo* mythology. *Iyogbo* mythology is also represented culturally and sculpturally. Although, the deity is not portrayed as a naked god or goddess, objects are used to represent the deity. In the shrine of Okunovun, many images of clay and wood stand in different strategic positions to represent the deities and the tribute each deserves. This emphasizes that Aphrodite and *Iyogbo*, are both symbols of love and sex. In a nutshell the description of Aphrodite fits into the description of *Iyogbo*. These goddesses are not human figures, they were framed by human society from mythological trajectories.

Encouragement of indiscriminate Sex: Prostitution implies sexual promiscuity. The Aphrodite temple was surrounded with prostitutes and could be seen as something that encouraged indiscriminate sexual relationships to flourish. Both its festivals and daily religious practices encouraged indiscriminate sex. *Iyogbo* does the same thing. The *Iyogbo* festival is precipitated on sexual relationship between male and females. It is done to please the deity and bring pleasures to humans who indulge in such sexual acts.

Dissimilarities

Greek culture and that of Urhobo also differ in various ways. Aphrodite and *Iyogbo* differ in personality and affiliation. While the emanation of Aphrodite was associated with Greek love deity in mythology, *Iyogbo* was associated with water deity in mythology. While the Greek culture is called Hellenism, Urhobo culture is called *Iruerhuism*. Hellenism means Greek religion, culture and education. It refers to the Greek ways of life and philosophy. The Hellenistic age according to Roger Ling is the shadowy and half understood background out of which emerge the technical know-how and many of the stylistic

⁴⁹Lisa R. Brody, "The Cult of Aphrodite at Aphrodisias in Caria", *Kemos*, 14 (2001), 93-109.



features which go into the making of the Roman state tradition.⁵⁰ Classical Hellenism was characterized by carvings, religion and music.⁵¹

On the other hand, *Iruerhuism* in Urhobo culture means cultural customs and cosmology. It extends to their beliefs and traditional modus operandi. *Iruerhuism* in this context, refers to the way *Iyogbo* is being perceived and carried out among the Urhobo of Jesse in Delta State, Nigeria. The nuance between Hellenism and *Iruerhuism* in this context is that while Aphrodite is a way of life which culminates in a religious belief that promotes a lifestyle of prostitution, *Iyogbo* is a temporary religious festival which promotes sexual promiscuity. The *Iyogbo* festival is periodical in the sense that it is being fixed to take place for twenty-one days once in a year. Unlike Aphrodite that allowed prostitution to exist as an accepted lifestyle in and around the temple.

Criticism and Arguments

Redaction

Normally, redaction criticism is mostly applicable to the Gospels especially the synoptic. However, for the sake of authorship and the discussion of Aphrodite mythology, redaction was adopted to reflect who certain idea raised in the 1 Corinthians fit into. Redaction in German is rendered as *redaktionsgeschichte*, *kompositionsgeschichte* or *redaktionstheologie*. In New Testament criticism, redaction criticism is a form of argument that raises the question of composition, editing and publication of New Testament literatures. In the study of biblical literature, Redaction criticism is the method of criticism of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) and the New Testament that examines the way the various pieces of the tradition have been assembled into the final literary composition by an author or editor.⁵² The authorship and editorship of New Testament books are argued on the basis of the who, and when of sources. The who, refers to the question of the author and recipients, the when refers to the date of writing and canonization, and the how or sources, refers to sources of material, editorial touches and how messages were transmitted to their original recipients.

The arrangement and modification of Biblical texts, according to the redaction criticism method's proponents, can reveal something of the author's intentions and the means by which he hoped to achieve them.⁵³ The New Testament literatures were situated in the 1st century Graeco-Roman milieu, the above questions becomes relevant to this study. The issue of Aphrodite in Corinth was raised by Paul in his epistle to the Corinthians' church community. In redaction criticism for example, scholars usually ask: how do you know Paul is the author of first and second Corinthians? This leads to argument 'for or against.' Here the question that concerns us is why Paul, a Christian will refer to Aphrodite in his Epistle to a Christian community. With all that Aphrodite stands for in that era, is it possible for an ardent Christian like Paul to make mention of Aphrodite in his letter to a Christian community and if he did, for what purpose was it mentioned? On the surface, one would have just insinuated that Paul could not have added such a name in his letter. If Paul was not the one who did so, then who did? These are the questions that concern us here. Robert Stein once argued that the "Evangelists were not merely 'scissors and paste men.' On the contrary, the 'scissors' were

⁵⁰Roger Ling, "Hellenistic and Graeco-Roman Art", in John Boardman, Jasper Griffin, Oswyn Murray, eds., *The Oxford History of Greece and the Hellenistic World* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 447-501.

⁵¹Cf. Antonia Tripolitis, *Religions of the Hellenistic-Roman Age* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), 30.

⁵²See Redaction Criticism in <https://www.britannica.com/topic/redaction-criticism>, Accessed September 14, 2016.

⁵³Ibid.



manipulated by a theological hand and the ‘paste’ was impregnated with a particular theology.”⁵⁴ While Redaction Criticism describes the original *Sitz im Leben* (life setting) of a saying in the life of Jesus, it is more concerned with the life-setting of the Gospel writer⁵⁵, that is, when we are referring to the synoptic gospels. Redaction criticism reads the gospels in two different directions. Rudolf Bultmann, a Leading 20th-century New Testament scholar had once postulated that the New Testament especially the Gospels be demythologized.⁵⁶ One cannot dismiss the concept of mythology in the Graeco-Roman world in which the New Testament is situated. Some scholars have even opined that the cosmology of the New Testament is mythical in character.⁵⁷ If this is true, then the writer of first and second Corinthians could just be seen as a Christian who was well abreast about his physical and metaphysical environments. This description fits the personality of Paul. Aphrodite could have been mentioned by the author to warn the Corinthian Christians against the practice of sexual misconduct in the Church and beyond. Aphrodite connoted sexual promiscuity, and those associated with it could not purport be good Christians at all.⁵⁸ In fact the issue being addressed in the preceding chapter was sexual immorality and the author noted that the magnitude of the sexual immorality being practiced by some members of the Church was at a very depraved level.⁵⁹ All of these issues were also addressed by Paul. If so Paul’s authorship of the epistle to the Corinthians is plausible. Two evidences have emerged to this effect. First is the internal evidence. Even F. C. Baur, that Hegelian-minded critic of the Tübingen school over one hundred and fifty years ago, said of the Pauline *Hauptbriefe* (Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, Galatians), “they bear so uncontestedly the character of Pauline originality, that there is no conceivable ground for the assertion of critical doubts in their case.”⁶⁰ The internal grounds for asserting authenticity are four:

- (1) the letter is “the product of a strong and original mind, and is altogether worthy of an Apostle
- (2) there are several coincidences (conceptual, verbal, historical, etc.) with what we know of Paul from Acts and other Pauline letters which are so unobtrusive as to be undersigned that they bear the stamp of genuineness;
- (3) there is controversy in the letter; Paul defends himself and his gospel as though both were doubted; later forgeries hardly recognize the tension and instead put Paul on a pedestal;
- (4) there is nothing negative in

⁵⁴Robert Stein, *Gospels and Tradition: Studies on Redaction Criticism of the Synoptic Gospels* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1991), 22.

⁵⁵“Behind the Text: Redaction Criticism”, <https://readingacts.com/2014/09/13/behind-the-text-redaction-criticism/>, Accessed September 14, 2016.

⁵⁶Rudolf Bultmann, *Kerygma and Myth* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1953), 40.

⁵⁷Rudolf Bultmann, Ernst Lohymeyer, Julius Schniewind, Helmut Thielicke and Austin Farrer, *Kerygma and Mythology: A Theological Debate* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, n.d), 1.

⁵⁸1Corinthians 7:12-20 RSV-To the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is consecrated through her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is they are holy. But if the unbelieving partner desires to separate, let it be so; in such a case the brother or sister is not bound. For God has called us to peace. Wife, how do you know whether you will save your husband? Husband, how do you know whether you will save your wife? Only, let every one lead the life which the Lord has assigned to him, and in which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches. Was any one at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was any one at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God. Every one should remain in the state in which he was called.

⁵⁹See 1Corinthian 5:12-20.

⁶⁰Robertson and Plummer, *I Corinthians* (ICC), xvii.



the epistle (historical discrepancies, language, theological development, etc.) to cast any doubts on authenticity.⁶¹

Secondly we have external evidence. This evidence also tends to argue for the authenticity of Paul's authorship of the epistle to the Corinthians church. For example, Clement of Rome (c. 95 CE) states explicitly that it is by Paul and by so doing grants to 1 Corinthians the distinction of being the earliest New Testament book in which an extra-biblical writer attaches a name.⁶² The Didache and Barnabas seem quite familiar with it; Ignatius and Polycarp know it intimately, collectively alluding to it scores of times; Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Basilides all refer to it-some, hundreds of times. This epistle even made Marcion's short list! These data are nothing less than overwhelming on behalf of authenticity.⁶³ Being that Paul's audience were new converts from Paganism, it is not unlikely that some of the converts were familiar or associated with Paganism such as Aphrodite. Martinus C. De Boer in his research work presented arguments for and against the composition of 1 Corinthians. Such Proposals urged that 1 Corinthians is a composite of two or more letters and have not won wider support and those who reject such proposals, argue that the letter's abrupt shifts in subject matter can be readily accounted for by deeming them Paul's seriation response to a diverse range of issues and problems made known to him through a combination of oral reports (1.11; 5.1; 11.18; 15.12) and a letter from the Corinthians (7.1).⁶⁴ While 2 Corinthians is widely regarded as a composite of several letters, 1 Corinthians by contrast is not.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD): Plausibility

How come scholars agree that Aphrodite promoted promiscuity yet no sexually transmitted diseases were presented or reported in Corinth? Does it mean there were no STDs in the Bible time Corinth? With the attestation of scholars that Corinth Aphrodite palliated illicit sexual relationship one would have expected that the elaborate socio-health consequences of such practice apart from the Christian idea of sexual immorality should have been revealed or presented. Hypothetically, it is plausible to argue that there was the possibility of the existence of STDs during the time and as such, there was also the possibility of people being affected as a result of indiscriminate sex. One hypothetical insight is the contemporary thinking that "if Iyogbo is capable of transmitting STD in the society and the duo are similar in practice, there is the possibility of the existence of STD. Can we attest to this with some historical inferences? This is a suggestion for another research in this dimension: "Investigation of the Possibility of STD in Aphrodite Oriented Society; A Study of New Testament Corinth."

Historicity

Is the existence of Aphrodite and Iyogbo historical and applicable for historical construction? I prefer to argue here that they are a mixture of myths and true history. Like Rudolf Bultmann argument, Aphrodite and Iyogbo should be demythologized so as to construct a cultural history that is congenial with the duo settings respectively.⁶⁵ The essays of Amos Wilder⁶⁶ and that of Kendrick Grobel⁶⁷ also offer good

⁶¹7. 1 Corinthians: Introduction, Argument, and Outline, https://bible.org/seriespage/7-1-corinthians-introduction-argument-and-outline#_ftnref3, Accessed September 14, 2016.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Martinus C. De Boer, "The Composition of 1 Corinthians", *New Testament Studies*, 40/2 (1994), 229-245.

⁶⁵See Hans Werner Bartsch, *Forward in Kergyma and Myth*, Rudolf Bultmann (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1953), viii. Also see Rudolf Bultmann, *New Testament and Mythology* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984), 1. See Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1957), 16.



insights into the subject of New Testament mythology. From the view point of theological science, Bultmann focused on demythologizing the New Testament proclamation. No wonder his definition of mythology refers to "the presentation of the otherworldly in terms of this world, and the divine in terms of human life; the presentation of the other side in terms of this side."⁶⁸ His modern scientific view made him argue that miracles in the New Testament are myths because they have a supernatural origin. To him this was contrary to natural cause and effect.⁶⁹ Bultmann has rightly been criticized because he places so much emphasis on the existential dimension so that for him it matters little if any objective or historical events recorded in the New Testament even occurred.⁷⁰ Bultmann's principle of demythology destroys Christian faith in the sense that the foundation of the Christian faith is being destroyed by his *aufklärung* (enlightenment) theology. Both Aphrodite and *Iyogbo* can be regarded as figments of imagination of those who try to construct classical history especially among classical scholars. They were never human figures. How do men know how to construct a history from an abstract phenomenon? It is possible that men formulated the ideal and gave it a religious rapping since the people of the times were religiously inclined. This is not different from the Homeric myth of Ulysses and others classical myths.

Another important question is how come the Graeco-Roman Corinth Aphrodite and the Urhobo *Iyogbo* have similar mythologies? Does it mean that those who venerated Aphrodite were the same people who migrated to Jesse town in Delta State of Nigeria? We have come to realize so many similarities between the Biblical period culture and events and Urhobo cultural practices. Firstly, the name Jesse suggests that there was a link between Idjerhe and the Jesse's family in the Old Testament. Secondly, the culture of Levirate marriage is similar in both milieus. Thirdly, the law of adultery is also similar in the duo cultural settings. All of these suggest classical similarities. However, that of the Urhobo has been based on an oral tradition unlike the Greek situation where many scholars or philosophers emerged and chronicled their myth and history in an organized and scholarly manner. This is a gap one cannot underestimate in contemporary historicism. Could this gap have been caused by racial discrimination? The answer to this question could give an insight to another research endeavour.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that Aphrodite and *Iyogbo* are symbols of sexual promiscuity and as such, STDs are inevitable in a society where such acts prevail. Although, prostitution has been given a new twist in the contemporary world, it does not make it a sexual sanity profession. Prostitution and promiscuity are twin behaviours that are capable of destroying human society. The work has also shown that any religion that palliate sexual promiscuity is an act of religious misdemeanor.

This study is an eye-opener to the danger being perpetuated by the festival *Iyogbo* today just as that was of Aphrodite in Classical Greece. It is a challenge to the Church and well meaning individuals to call for the review of *Iyogbo* in Urhoboland. Even though, we are to respect all religions in Nigeria, it

⁶⁶Amos Wilder, "Mythology and New Testament," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 69 (1950), 113-127.

⁶⁷Kendrick Grobel, "Bultmann's Problem of New Testament 'Mythology'", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 70 (1951), 99-103.

⁶⁸Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," *Kerygma und Mythos*. edited by Hans Werner Bartsch. Trans. By R.H.Fuller (London: SPKC, 1953), 1-41. Also see Myles M. Bourke, "Rudolf Bultmann's demythologizing of the New Testament," *The Twelfth Annual Convention Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* (2012), pp.103-131.

⁶⁹Alfred A. Glenn, "Rudolf Bultmann: Removing the False Offense", *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 16/2 (1973), 73-81.

⁷⁰Steven W. Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1988), 105.



does not stop us from being reasonable. Rather than allowing the Iyogbo festival to continue perpetrating sexual promiscuity in Urhobo-Jesse society, it should be converted to an annual carnival as is being done by the Calabar in Cross River State, Nigeria. This will surely promote tourism and add to Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which is greatly required to support governmental initiatives to develop the country.

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