

CORRELATIVE PARALLELS IN GREEK AND YORÙBÁ GREAT GODDESS TRADITIONS

IDOWU MOJEED ALADE
B. A; Classics (Greek and Latin); M. A. Classics (Ibadan)
Matric No. 74250

A Thesis in the Department of CLASSICS

Submitted to the Faculty of Arts in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

of the

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

Department of Classics
University of Ibadan
Ibadan.

October, 2012

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this work was carried out by Mr. Idowu Mojeed **Alade** in the Department of Classics, University of Ibadan.

.....
Supervisor

Olakunbi O. Olasope (Ph.D)

B.A., M. A., PhD. (Ibadan)

Senior Lecturer, Department of Classics

University of Ibadan, Nigeria

DEDICATION

For all the Torchbearers;

And

To Àsàbí & Àkànbí.

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All praises belong to Him (SWT), the Lord of the Worlds; peace on His Messengers from Adam to the Prophet of Islam, the Illumined and to all my Brothers; incarnates and discarnates. I use this opportunity to express gratitude, first, to my parents, El-Hajj R. O. A. Alade and Mrs. N. O. Alade and I pray to Almighty (SWT) to take care of them as they have taken care of me. I equally thank my grandmother, Màmá Alágbo, Daddy M. Adeyemi and Mummy M. O. Adeyemi.

My sincere appreciation goes to the Supervisor of this Thesis, the incumbent Head, Classics Department, University of Ibadan, Dr. Olakunbi. O. Olasope, for her understanding, patience, encouragement, support and assistance in numerous ways toward the successful completion of this work. I am extremely grateful; thank you, ma. I equally thank the former Dean of Arts, Late Prof. K. A. Olu-Owolabi, Dean, PG School, Prof. Olorunnisola, the Sub-Dean (PG), Dr. Odebunmi, Prof. P. A. Ogundeji for his very useful suggestions; Prof. Olowo Ojoade, Prof. O. C. Adesina, Drs. Christopher, Edo, Dada and Omobowale for their contributions to the success of this project.

Next my brothers and sisters deserve my utmost gratitude for their love and understanding, especially during the past five years: Mr. and Mrs. M. M. Alade; Late Tasleem A. Alade; Commander and Mrs. S. T. Adekolajo; Mr. and Mrs. K. Afolabi; Mr. and Mrs. O. M. Adeyemi; Dr. and Mrs. O. Adewuyi; Mr. and Mrs. M. B. Alade; Barr. A. Adeyemi and Miss L. Adeyemi.

I salute my colleagues and elders in the Department of Classics, University of Ibadan for their support and constructive criticisms: Drs. F. Onayemi, G. Adekannbi, E. Taiwo, O. Akinboye, B. Adebowale, Mrs. M. Aneni and Mr. B. Blavo. Mr. Nigel Henry, the oldest member of staff, deserves my special thanks for his confidence in my ability; thank you so much sir. I likewise thank Mr. Charles and Mr. Laolu of the Faculty Office as well as Mrs. Iroghuchie, Mrs. Olaoye, Mr. Yakubu, Mrs. Oduola and Mrs Victoria Agbabiaje. A few of the post graduates students of the Department of Classics are in no way forgotten: Philomena, Bolaji, Lamide and Joke.

I remember my friends who have all stood by me right from the beginning: Segun, who, despite his tight schedule, handled the camera, so skillfully during the 2009 Òkè'bàdàn Great

Goddess festival; Awodele, Isiaka, and ‘Daisi who assisted in conducting several interviews, especially those involving the Aboke of Ibadanland and his household. I am grateful to Awo Enifaada of the Linguistics Department, University of Ibadan, for providing information on Ifá Corpus. Niyi Yusuf and Saheed Aderinto; Taofeek and Wasii Azeez; Kazeem Owolabi and Hakeem Adepoju; Oladipupo and Damilola Odulaja, childhood friends who hosted me in London while putting this work together; Ajibola Akindele and Henry Agbo; Wasii Ogundiran and Shefiq Ariwoola; Dayo Idowu and Shina Nurudeen; Captain I. Kolawole, my best man, Miss Labake and M. Y. Adepoju. Other members of the Crescent Club, Ibadan: Giwa, Lanre, Tokunbo, Akeem, Bilewumi, Ajala, Raheem, and Tajudeen are all in no way forgotten. Mr. Adeoti and Mr. Alex in April, 2010, facilitated my sojourn in Accra, Ghana, working on this Thesis.

I will also like to express my sincere gratitude to Chief Mrs. Soyege, Mrs. Soluade, El-Hajj K. Oladokun, El-Hajj L. A. Balogun, Prof. (Mrs) Aduke Adebayo, Mummy Odulaja, Mummy Yusuff, Mummy Adegoke, Mama Chief Jayeoba and Daddy late R.I. Yusuff for their moral support over the years.

I thank CAMON, for a 100,000 Naira Ph. D registration grant and the Leventis Foundation International for the grant which made it possible for me to visit the Institute of the Classical Studies Library, School of Advanced Studies, University of London; the School of Oriental and African Studies; and the British Museum, United Kingdom between May and July, 2010 towards the completion of this work. I equally express gratitude to the Staff of Prof. Ade-Ajayi’s Library; Prof. Bolanle Awe and Prof. J. A. Ilevbare. I thank the Aboke of Ibadan and his entire household for gladly receiving me into the household every time I visited.

Finally, I thank both my son, Ibrahim Bolade Mofolohunso and my darling wife, Abiodun Raimat, for their understanding during my numerous absence from home; hibernation in rooms when around; lateness in getting home on several occasions, all because of the PhD. I love you so much.

Idowu Babatunde Mojeed,

Àsàmú, omo Orò ti n m’ògì tútù,

Ọmọ asé tin m’omi kikan.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page	i
Certification	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	vi
List of Figures	viii
Abstract	ix
Chapter One-Introduction	
1.1 Background to the Study	1
1.2 Statement of Research Problem	3
1.3 Objectives of Research	4
1.4 Justification for the Research	5
1.5 Methodology	6
1.6 Theoretical Framework	7
Chapter Two- Literature Review	
2.1 Cosmogonical Myths and Doctrines	10
2.2.1 The Greek Myths and Cosmogony	11
2.2.2 The Greek Mythical Doctrines of Creation	14
2.2.3 The Greek Philosophers and the Concept of World Creation	18
2.3 The Near Eastern Creation Myth	24
2.4 The Hebrew Creation Story	25
2.5 Modern Cosmogonical Doctrines	26
Chapter Three- The Greek Great Goddess and the Olympians	
3.1 The Origin of the Greek Gods	31

3.2	The Great Goddess	34
3.3	The Olympians and Zeus' Sovereignty	42
Chapter Four- Devolution of Gaea: Aspects and Archetypes of the Greek Great Goddess		
4.1	The Great Goddess and the Goddesses	49
4.2	The Great Goddess and the Gods	58
4.3	The Great Goddess and the Feminine Mythical Beings	61
4.4.	Some Archetypes of the Great Goddess Gaea	66
4.4.1	The Great Goddess Isis	68
4.4.2	The Great Goddess Cybele	69
Chapter Five- Àtàgé; Yorùbá Prototype of the Great Goddess		
5.1	Yorùbá Origin, Cosmogony and Theogony	72
5.2	Yorùbá Gods and Goddesses	76
5.3	Historical Myth: Àtàgé and the Foundation of Ìbàdàn	83
5.4	Àtàgé: Attributes and Functions	94
5.5	Àtàgé: Symbols and Imagery	97
Chapter Six- Ìbàdàn Annual Great Goddess Festival		
6.1	The Great Dionysia	104
6.2	An African Dionysiac Festival: Ìbàdàn Great Goddess Festival	106
6.3	The Abòkè, High Priest of the Great Goddess	127
Summary and Conclusion		
	Appendix I: Plates	134
	Appendix II: Clips from the 2009 Annual Great Goddess Festival	157
	Bibliography	158
	Personal Interviews	178

List of Figures

Fig. 1	Some of the Greek Gods and Goddesses	134
Fig. 2	Mount Olympus	135
Fig. 3	The Parthenon	136
Fig. 4	Demeter's Priestess	137
Fig. 5	Naked Aphrodite	138
Fig. 6	Aphrodite	139
Fig. 7	Venus of Willendorf	140
Fig. 8	Artemis of Ephesus	141
Fig. 9	Venus of Lespugue	142
Fig. 10	Snake Goddess of Knossos	143
Fig. 11	Venus of Dolnic Vestonice	144
Fig. 12	Many-breasted Goddess	145
Fig. 13	Ishtar-Inanna	146
Fig. 14	Madonna	147
Fig. 15	Map of Nigeria with the Location of Ìbàdàn	148
Fig. 16	Òsẹ-Méjì Temple, Ìbàdàn	149
Fig. 17	The Hill of Òkẹ' bádàn	150
Fig. 18	A Pictorial Representation of the Hero, Lágelú and the Great Goddess	151
Fig. 19	Pictorial Representation of the Great Goddess, Àtágé	152
Fig. 20	Pictorial Representation of the Traditional Staff of Olúbàdàn	153
Fig. 21	Signpost; Entrance to Abòkẹ Compound.	154
Fig. 22	The Incumbent Abòkẹ of Ìbàdàn land with the Researcher.	155
Fig. 23	Postal on the 2012 Òkẹ' Bádàn Festival Displaying the High Priest.	156

ABSTRACT

Increasing interests in comparative studies have led scholars to revisit the myth of the Great Goddess. While parallels of the Greek gods have been identified in Yorùbá mythology, there has not been a comparative study of the Great Goddesses. This study, therefore, examines the parallels between the Greek's Great Goddess, Gaea, and Àtágé, the Yorùbá Great Goddess of Ìbàdàn, to determine points of convergence between them in terms of origin, attributes, symbols and festival, confirming the existence of a Yorùbá Great Goddess.

The study adopted Jung's Archetypal Theory. Works of Greek mythographers including Homer, Hesiod, Appolodorus, Appolonius; Yorùbá historians like Johnson, Falola, Awe, Parrinder; and certain verses of the Yorùbá Ifá corpus were content analysed for parallels on the Great Goddesses. The study applied participant observation technique. Unstructured interviews were also conducted with Abòkè, High Priest of Àtágé, and nine of the *omò òkè* to verify those attributes not described in the literature. Information obtained was qualitatively interpreted.

There was evidence of similarities of the evolved aspects of Gaea and the Yorùbá's Àtágé, notably in origin, attributes, symbols and festival. While Gaea was extensively discussed, literature had little on Àtágé. It, however, described Àtágé as the spirit behind the foundation of Ìbàdàn as Gaea began the universe in Greek's cosmogony; suggested Àtágé as Goddess of Ibadan land known for motherhood, human, animal and soil productivity similar to Gaea's; made references to the pitcher-breasted image of the Great Goddess capable of feeding sixteen children at once; and the annual sacred orgasm festival of Àtágé which continued even to the present. This festival took place about the time of spring vernal equinox resembling that of Gaea and all other known archetypes of the Great Goddess. During such festivals, celebrants venerated Àtágé as the origin, mother and protector of Ìbàdàn indigenes as Gaea was so honoured by the Greeks. Phallic symbols like those of the Greek's Goddess festivals were carried while the procession prayed to Àtágé for healthy children, safety and abundance in wealth. Led by transvestite priest, reminiscent of the Greek's, they danced round the town, singing ribald songs and making gesticulations capable of stimulating sexual desire. The Priest, with plaited hair, confirmed that Àtágé had a covenant with Lágelú, the legendary founder of Ìbàdàn, to protect and bless the town. As the functions of Gaea were taken by Zeus, the priest gave evidence that Àtágé originally had a priestess before the role was taken over by a priest. The importance of the annual festival in relation to fertility, protection and success of the indigenes was corroborated.

Àtágé has similar origin, attributes, symbols and festivals as the Greek's Gaea. The significance of Àtágé in Ìbàdàn presupposes the presence of a Yorùbá prehistoric matriarchal society and confirms the existence of a Yorùbá Great Goddess.

Key words: Great Goddess, Ìbàdàn, Gaea, Àtágé.

Word count: 460.

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY