

## **The Body Matters: Rights and Rites of African Sexualities and the Body in the context of 1Cor.6**

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**Abstract:** *In this paper rights and rites related to sexualities of Africans with respect to their bodily affectionality is looked at. The paper explores ways by which sexual affections and relations are understood and are expressed in African societies. The relationship between the Rights and Rites of sexuality and the body in 1 Cor.6 is also examined. A collaboration between the discourses on the Rights and Rites of Sexualities in the African Context and the body and that of 1 Cor.6 with reference to the body in both contexts is done. Socio-scientific analysis is employed in doing this. The anticipated outcome of the interaction through the collaborative study of concepts in these two contexts is the contribution to the current discussions on Sexuality Rights and Rites in Africa.*

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The issue of sexuality rites and rights has taken centre stage in the media among religious, political and human rights activists and social commentators in Ghana in recent times. There are massive debates, comments and advocacy of various kinds on the print, mass and electronic media on sexuality. Generally, 'human sexuality refers to the gamut of human sexual experience (biological, social, cultural and psychological) and to the gamut of human sexual expression.'<sup>1</sup>

Sexuality involves certain developments that are closely related to individuals as well as their interactions with others. With regard to the individual, the key factor in sexuality is the 'production of desire and procurement of or participation in sexual activity'<sup>2</sup> which involves 'initiation, negotiation, reciprocation, rejection, participation, severance or dis-engagement.'<sup>3</sup> Some of the concepts that play vital roles in sexuality are sexual awareness, experience and expression. 'Sexual experience and sexual expression are modified by factors of history, society and culture...Beyond the individual, the society institutes "discourse" or language whose aim or import is to "govern" the behavior of members of the society.'<sup>4</sup> This means sexuality is perceived as part of a society's ethical or moral precepts which may involve taboos, rules and practices. Hence, the cultural mediation of sexuality occurs largely at the level of language and associated interpretations, mores, laws and practices, all of which are determined by socio-cultural perceptions of sexuality and of gender relations. Both sexual predilections and cultural taboos are thus represented in language and influence sexual communication.<sup>5</sup>

In our world today, there seem to be a "universal" language for expressing sexualities, namely, homosexuality, heterosexuality, bisexuality, bestiality etc. generally, but in particular terms, 'different ethnicities, societies, social groups have different ways of coding and expressing sexuality.'<sup>6</sup> When it comes to rights and rites related to sexuality therefore, there exist cultural

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<sup>1</sup> T. Oloruntoba-oju, "Sexuality Language and Communication in Africa," *Sexuality in Africa Magazine & Monographs* 7, n0. 2 (2011): 2.

<sup>2</sup> Oloruntoba-oju, "Sexuality Language and Communication in Africa, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Oloruntoba-oju, "Sexuality Language and Communication in Africa, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Oloruntoba-oju, "Sexuality Language and Communication in Africa, 2.

<sup>5</sup> Oloruntoba-oju, "Sexuality Language and Communication in Africa, 2.

<sup>6</sup> Oloruntoba-oju, "Sexuality Language and Communication in Africa, 2.

relativism based on particular moral codes, world view and legal restrictions that are considered by societies in dealing with it and communicating it.

In this paper, the term “African”, apart from its usage to represent the area of the colonial “map makers”, it is also used politically to call attention to some of the commonalities and shared historical legacies inscribed in cultures and sexualities within the region by forces such as colonialism, capitalism, imperialism, globalisation and fundamentalism. Even as these commonalities are proposed, however, readers will find them challenged.<sup>7</sup>

Due to the enormous size and diversity of the continent of Africa in terms of people groups and cultures it is more appropriate to talk about sexualities rather than sexuality in this paper. Thus we speak of sexualities in the plural in recognition of the complex structures within which sexuality is constructed and in recognition of its pluralist articulations.

The notion of a homogeneous, unchanging sexuality for all Africans is out of touch not only with the realities of lives, experiences, identities and relationships but also with current activism and scholarship. Ideas about and experiences of African sexualities are shaped and defined by issues such as colonialism, globalisation, patriarchy, gender, class, religion, age, law and culture.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, we are interested in rights and rites of sexualities in Africa. Even though anthropologists have been working on issues of sexuality over the years, their interest has not been on the rights. The focus was on issues of reproduction and issues of violence and abuse in various ways which are mainly negative in their approach to issues concerning sexuality. It was in the 1990s that sexual rights came to the fore in Africa that interest in studying positive aspects of African sexualities, such as pleasure, eroticism and desire became popular. But According to Tamale, after the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in 1994, activists were determined to reconceptualise sexuality as a human rights issue. The language of sexual rights made its debut on the international human rights stage in the Cairo meeting rooms and it has received increasing recognition ever since<sup>9</sup>. The methodology to be used in doing this work is similar to the Tri-polar approach to African Biblical Hermeneutics which employs three phases, namely the contextualization, distancing and appropriation. The first phase deals with the social-scientific analysis of the context of the reading- the African contexts, the second phase is the socio-scientific reading of the text in its context. The third is the appropriation or collaborative stage where the synthesis of the two contexts is done, that is the fusion of the two horizons and inferences are drawn from them. This is in line with Grenholm and Patte and Anum’s work (2000), modified by Draper (2001) and further elaborated by West (2007) on the Tri- Polar model. The starting point is the bi-polar comparative hermeneutical model that begins by identifying ‘the similarities between the biblical world and African religio-cultural practices’<sup>10</sup> and to continue to use ‘scholarly and scientific tools to show the relationship between African traditional religion and Christianity.’<sup>11</sup> The starting point is the context which is the African in this case.

## **2. CONTEXTUALIZATION: RIGHTS AND RITES OF SEXUALITIES AND THE BODY IN AFRICA**

In doing this work, I dwelt on the conception of the body both in a supernatural sense and in physical sense. This is because of the perception of the body in both its physical and spiritual dimensions in both the African context and the Judeo Christian Church in Corinth that I have selected to work in.

In doing this work I employed functionalism as my theoretical social scientific framework. I am aware of the weaknesses of this social theory in general as well as in specific terms that is, functionalism theories normally, turn around the normal trend of cause and effect and give record

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<sup>7</sup> S. Tamale, “Introduction,” in *African Sexualities: A Reader* (ed. S. Tamale; Cape Town, Dakar, Nairobi and Oxford: Pambazuka, 2011), 1.

<sup>8</sup> S. Tamale, “Introduction” in *African Sexualities*, 3.

<sup>9</sup> S. Tamale, “Researching and theorising sexualities in Africa” in *African Sexualities*, 23.

<sup>10</sup> E. Anum, “Comparative Readings of the Bible In Africa: Some Concerns” in *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories and Trends*, 468.

<sup>11</sup> Anum, E. “Comparative Reading of the Bible in Africa: Some Concerns@, 468

for phenomena by reference to what happens subsequently, not before. And in specific terms, ‘there are no plausible functionalist explanations for the construction of some aspects of the supernatural in sexualised terms’.<sup>12</sup>

However, functionalism is preferred in this work because, I subscribe to the socio scientific view that society depends on a system of sentiments, which regulate the conduct of the individual in accord with the needs of society. In applying this to the social importance of sexuality is thus not only that it satisfies sexual drives and the need for reproduction, but also that a large proportion of activities are concerned with performing, enacting and deploying sexuality, and that in these activities – with their daily instances of collaboration and mutual aid which are closely related to the rank and file of society.<sup>13</sup>

However, socio-scientific evidence indicates that from the pre-colonial era, there exist sexuality rights in Africa. For instance, the example of a wife in many pre-colonial African cultures who was (and still is) guaranteed the right to sexual pleasure; or the fact that sexual violence within marriage was frowned upon; or that denial of such formal rights constituted a clear ground for divorce in these traditions is a clear indication of such a perception. ‘Women in Ghana particularly the matrilineal Akan are said to have rights over their sexuality and to assert their right over an offending husband.’<sup>14</sup> So the status of the woman in the native household is equal to that of the man, except that he is the house owner and therefore the master of the house... Women do not hesitate to assert their liberty, and it is not only a humiliating but also an expensive matter to the husband who has to seek and woo again the wife who through his misconduct has left him.<sup>15</sup>

Another factor is the issue of adultery that also affects sexuality rights. ‘A man can only be accused of adultery if he has sexual relations with a married woman, whereas for a married woman, the marital status of the man does not matter’.<sup>16</sup> This is not to say that females do not commit adultery.

Female adultery and extra marital relations occur with varying degrees of covertness and openness in Sub-Saharan African societies. Among the Akan of Ghana that recognize the possibility of female adultery, an elaborate system of adultery fees has been instituted.<sup>17</sup>

‘Perhaps had historians and sociology researchers not shied away from studying African sexualities in more open ways, they would have discovered that the controversial foundations of sexual rights have their roots in Africa.

In recent times also with the democratization process has brought with it more contradictory attitude towards rights and rites of sexualities in Africa. There are situations where there are deliberate efforts to protect people from sexual injustice by others like rapists and culturally sexualizing laws like the puberty rites and initiation rites, widowhood rites and polygyny. Whilst it is also equally necessary to allow for freedom and sexual autonomy for people to make their own decisions in their choice of sexual desire and pleasure. In the midst of this situation,

Post independent Africa which is undergoing a process of modern democratization, has seen the revamping of their legal systems and sexuality rights and rites are not exempt from areas that people’s rights are affected. In this area, The law turns sexualities into a space through which instruments of state control and dominance can be deployed. For example, the criminal legal system in most African states attempts to regulate how, when and with whom we can have consensual sex. The offences of prostitution, abortion and adultery clearly curtail both women’s

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<sup>12</sup> C. O. Izugbara, “ Sexuality and the supernatural in Africa”in *African Sexualities: A Reader* ed.

S. Tamale; Cape Town, Dakar, Nairobi and Oxford: Pambazuka, 2011), 536.

<sup>13</sup> C. O. Izugbara, “ Sexuality and the supernatural in Africa”in *African Sexualities*, 536.

<sup>14</sup> K. Awusabo-Asare, J. K. Anarfi and D.K. Agyeman ‘Women’s control over their Sexuality, 12.

<sup>15</sup> A.W. Cardinall., *The Gold Coast, 1931* (Accra: Government Printer, 1931), 169.

<sup>16</sup> K. Awusabo-Asare, J. K. Anarfi and D.K. Agyeman ‘Women’s control over their Sexuality, 2.

<sup>17</sup> K. Awusabo-Asare, J. K. Anarfi and D.K. Agyeman ‘Women’s control over their Sexuality, 3.

and men's sexual autonomy (although as the Reader material suggests, it is women's autonomy that is most severely under threat), and the criminalisation of homosexuality affects both men and women who do not conform to the dominant ideology of heterosexuality.<sup>18</sup>

A case in point is the Ghanaian system where The Criminal Code of 1961 covers the legal sexuality rights of Ghanaians. Among the list of items in this code are issues related to rape, sex with under-age persons, defilement, sex with imbeciles, sexual assault, having unnatural carnal knowledge, and sexual intercourse with close relatives like grandparents, parents, siblings and step siblings.<sup>19</sup>

We cannot also overlook the influence of Western ideology that has enormous influence in today's global world. The discussions on sexuality rights are discussed in Western languages and legally framed in them. Africans therefore understand the capacity of language to confer power through naming and conveying meaning and nuance to sexuality concepts. Concepts such as silence, restraint, choice, gay, lesbian, coming out and drag queen, for example, all carry specific social meanings steeped in Western ideology and traditions<sup>20</sup>.

In preparing this paper I asked a history professor who is a traditional ruler the term for homosexual in his language and he could not give me one.

There are also the various pressure groups which include activists of various kinds that use the information technology to propagated and advance their own causes on the continent of Africa. The scenario is captured by Tamale who says that, Although diverse forces interrupted the shape of sexualities on the continent– redefining notions of morality, for example, and 'freezing' them into social and political spaces through both penal codification and complex alliances with political and religious authority – differences among continental spaces meant that such interruptions had diverse effects. Such forces further attempted to standardise global ideas about African sexualities, often erasing questions of diversities and complexities of sexual relations.<sup>21</sup>

In the light of what I have stated one can see a wide range of complex of issues concerned in looking at rights of sexualities in Africa which are entangled between the traditional/modern web. I would like to focus on the African body which is just one of the issues and correspondingly look at how it can be contrasted with the body in the Corinthian context as narrated in 1Cor. 6 in relationship to sexuality rights.

When we talk about the body of the African, it is important to understand what it has gone through in the decades in terms of its portrayal and its signification in relation to sexuality. 'In some ways, the representation of male sexuality has been reflected in constructions of female sexuality. Both African men and women have been defined in terms of sexual excess, bestiality and bodily deviance'.<sup>22</sup> Looking at the body of the African woman, 'myths about sexuality have been linked to definitions of the African female body in terms of domestic work, physical labour, sex work and all activity denying the mind and prescribing service'.<sup>23</sup> Pumla Gqola deals with the scripting of the South African female body in literary texts by stating that 'black female characters provide the sale on which the chalk marks of history and black patriarchy are inscribed.'<sup>24</sup> (Gqola 2009: 108). 'Such controls are anchored in discursive representations of the sexualised and degenerate female body, a body that threatens to pollute or weaken the 'healthy' national body politic.'<sup>25</sup> This stance has been rejected and feminist activists work has proved otherwise. Most of the mis-representations have been discovered to be connected to power

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<sup>18</sup> Tamale, "Introduction" in *African Sexualities*, 3.

<sup>19</sup> Criminal Code 1960– Chapter 6, Sexual Offences Articles 97 -105, 51-53.

<sup>20</sup> Tamale, "Introduction" in *African Sexualities*, 3.

<sup>21</sup> Tamale, "Introduction" in *African Sexualities*, 2.

<sup>22</sup> D. Lewis, "Representing African sexualities" in *African Sexualities: A Reader* (ed. S. Tamale; Cape Town, Dakar, Nairobi and Oxford: Pambazuka, 2011), 206.

<sup>23</sup> Lewis, "Representing African sexualities" 206.

<sup>24</sup> P. Gqola, 'Black women's bodies as battlegrounds in black consciousness literature: wayward sex and (interracial) rape as tropes in Staffrider, 1978–1982', in Jackson, S., Demissie, F. and Goodwin, M. (eds) *Imagining, Writing, (Re)Reading the Black Body*, Pretoria, UNISA: 2009, 108.

<sup>25</sup> Lewis, "Representing African sexualities" 206.

relations. It is noteworthy that these misrepresentations persist in the present, with the policing of African women and efforts to control their bodily presence in the public sphere taking the form of neo-imperial constructions of their sexual excess.<sup>26</sup> With reference to the black male body 'institutionalising black male bodies were therefore rationalised by beliefs about the rapacity of black male sexual desire.'<sup>27</sup> Even though the black male body is often portrayed as that of a potential rape and violent attack on white females, the standard ordering of the sexualised black body was that of an object of desire that is configured in paintings as black and homoerotic.<sup>28</sup>

### **3. SUPERNATURAL AND OCCULTIC RITUALS ASSOCIATED WITH SEXUALITY AND THE BODY IN AFRICA**

Turning to the supernatural, there are numbers of sexuality rites and rituals that are performed in various African contexts that I will like to consider in this work.

Yoruba marital partners can secretly affix the magical *magun* on each other, and only *magun* set upon a person by his or her marital spouse works effectively. If a man or woman on whom *magun* has been affixed has sex outside marriage, they would remain glued in coitus with the unlawful sex partner until they were discovered.<sup>29</sup>

To avoid the shame and disgrace of being stuck and publicly humiliated, people avoid extra marital sex in Yoruba areas where this practice still prevails. The *likubo* lethal magical potion is used in a similar way among the Xhosa of South Africa. One notable type of *likubalo* used by Xhosa men is made by cutting a small piece of flesh from a dog's penis, drying it and grinding it into a fine powder. Once administered to a wife, her husband asks her to close a penknife, which will cause her and any other man who has sex with her to become stuck together like mating dogs. Lovers can only be released from this position if the husband himself releases the penknife.<sup>30</sup> Crude as they may seem, they are traditional checks and balances on the use and abuse of sexuality rights within the context of marriage by the employment of sexuality rites.

### **4. UNACCEPTABLE WAYS OF USING SEXUALITY**

There are a lot of ways that sexuality is utilised in Africa that are unacceptable socially. For instance, 'African beliefs about sexual bodies and how they ought to mingle also discourage forms of sexual deviance that could potentially destabilise the social order, and protect the weak and infirm from sexual exploitation and abuse'<sup>31</sup>. For instance, the Oring of south-eastern Nigeria believe that illicit sexual activity can bring mystical illness upon offenders. Sexual activity with other people's wives infects a man with leprosy, while a cheating Oring wife experiences difficult births and might die if she fails to confess her misdeeds.<sup>32</sup> In several other African cultures (Zulu, Chewa, Sotho, Igbo, Ogoni, Ga, Akan) there are also generally, occultic rituals which involves sexuality used as batter or exchange of sexual organs, activity or condition for money, power or fame. There are urban collected stories of that kind by Izugbara in 2010. His report suggest that, in Nigeria urban areas ' occult sexual rituals vary widely, from those demanding sexual activity with the mentally ill, relatives, strangers, children, albinos, virgins, very elderly people, own child(ren), own parent(s), corpses, beggars, cripples, animals and supernatural beings, such as *Mami Wata* (water mermaid) or her agents , to those requiring total abstinence from sex, marriage or producing children.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Lewis, "Representing African sexualities" 206.

<sup>27</sup> Lewis, "Representing African sexualities" 206.

<sup>28</sup> Lewis, "Representing African sexualities" 206.

<sup>29</sup> C. O. Izugbara, "Sexuality and the supernatural in Africa" in *African Sexualities*, 536.

<sup>30</sup> I. Niehaus, 'Perversion of power: witchcraft and the sexuality of evil in the South African lowveld', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 2002, 32(3): 269–99.

<sup>31</sup> C. O. Izugbara, "Sexuality and the supernatural in Africa" in *African Sexualities*, 539.

<sup>32</sup> P.J. Ezeh, 'Sex, custom, and population: a Nigerian example', paper presented at the fifth African Population Conference, Arusha, 2007, 10–14 December.

<sup>33</sup> Izugbara, 'Nigerian tales of occult sexual economies', in Undie, C., Izugbara, C. and Khamasi, W. (eds *Old Wineskins, New Wine: Readings in Sexuality in sub-Saharan Africa*, New York, NY, Nova ), 2010.

This marks the get rich syndrome and some ways people resort to in dealing with poverty and this can also be found in Ghana. These are frowned upon by society and when the culprit is found out the community is prepared to deal with him/her.

In the current era of HIV/AIDS, there is also the particular belief, especially in eastern and southern Africa, that sex with virgins has curative potential.<sup>34</sup> This has no bases and its is totally unacceptable in can only be done in secret and not openly.

There is also what is known in Nigerian circles as the *koro* which has to do with the shrinking or vanishing of one's sexual organs upon contact with certain people and this can lead to violence and lose of lives because of the seriousness Africans attached to their genitals when it comes to their sexuality.<sup>35</sup> There are occurrences of this in Benin<sup>36</sup> and in Sudan as reported by the Sudanese columnist Ja'far Abbas.<sup>37</sup> Charles Mather's (2005) content analysis of Ghanaian newspaper reports on genital shrinking or vanishing in Ghana revealed that both men and women reportedly suffer mysterious genital vanishings and shrinking.<sup>38</sup> From the supernatural angle genital retraction can be attributed to rituals associated with wicked witches and sorcerers in Africa who work against societal norms for themselves and their client to the detriment of others in their communities.

From an anthropological perspective, however, genital retraction syndromes in Africa derive from the cultural emphasis placed on sexual reproduction, which creates an extreme anxiety about the security and functioning of reproductive organs and fertility.<sup>39</sup> However, the bottom line is that people believe they have a right to have a secure genital and any attempt to temper with it spiritually or ritually would be vehemently resisted communally.

In sum, the treatment of the body is regarded as part and parcel of the treatment of the whole people. When it comes to the supernatural, there were sexuality rites and rituals some of which are acceptable socially and others are unacceptable in the African societies. The exchange of sexuality or the stealing of sexuality from someone has dire consequences. We are told the suspicion of this kind of activity has sometimes resulted in mob attacks and sometimes death of the ones who is suspected of tampering with some people's sexuality. However, sometimes people take the law into their hands and can cause harm to people due to false alarm and panic. On the other hand, sexual involvements are prescribed within certain boundaries which are linked to rites which are performed within the different African contexts. In contemporary times allowance is made for legal and religious beliefs and practices that have influenced the different African contexts in varied ways. One of the religions that has influenced sexuality greatly is that of Christianity especially in Ghana where a greater proportion of the population belong to the Christian faith. That is why we would like to turn our attention to how the body and sexuality has been treated in a portion of the Christian scripture to see the resemblances between it and that of the African socio-cultural context. What then is the perception of the body put across in 1Cor 6?

## 5. DISTANCIATION: SEXUALITY AND THE BODY IN 1 COR. 6

In 1 Cor. 6: 9-11, there is a list that identifies a group of people as *adikos*. 'The translation of *adikos* – the key identifying word for this list- as “wrongdoers” (NRSV), “the unrighteous”, (RSV), or “the wicked”(NIV), obscures the connection between 6: 1-8 and 9-11'.<sup>40</sup> There is a

<sup>34</sup> , B.L. Meel 'The myth of child rape as a cure for HIV/AIDS in Transkei: a case report', *Medicine Science and the Law* 2003, 43: 85–8.

<sup>35</sup> J. Goad, 'Koro, Koro, Koro: The wild, wacky, and weird phenomenon of penis panics', October, <http://www.xmag.com/archives/13-04-oct05/feature2.html>, 2005 accessed 13 August 2010.

<sup>36</sup> C. O. Izugbara, "Sexuality and the supernatural in Africa" in *African Sexualities*, 548.

<sup>37</sup> J. Goad, 'Koro, Koro, Koro: The wild, wacky, and weird phenomenon of penis panics', October, <http://www.xmag.com/archives/13-04-oct05/feature2.html>, 2005 accessed 13 August 2010.

<sup>38</sup> C. Mather, 'Accusations of genital theft: a case from Northern Ghana', *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry*, 2005 29(10): 33–52.

<sup>39</sup> K. Schroer 'When size matters: genital retraction syndromes in cultural perspective', *Focus Anthropology* 5, <http://www.focusanthro.org/archive/2005-2006.html>.

<sup>40</sup> D.L. Lull, *I Corinthians: Revised and expanded edition of William A. Beardslee, First Corinthians: A Commentary For Today* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice, 2007), 50.

common trend in the rendering of *adikos* in both 1Cor.6: 7 and 8 in its verbal form which is *adikeo* which is translated as ‘injustice’ (NAB) and this seems to be similar to the way it is rendered in 1Cor.6: 1 and 9. So a more appropriate translation of the word *adikos* is “the unjust” which implies that ‘1Cor. 6: 9-10 could be read as a stereotypical description of “the unjust” such as the judges of the courts of outsiders’.<sup>41</sup> Among others, there is a list concerning how they handled each other legally and how they handled each other in the area of sexuality which is the linkage between Chapter 5: 1-13 and 1Cor. 6: 1-20. The law courts that they took each other to was perceived by Paul as the domain of “outsiders” that is, the jurisdiction of “the unjust”. And so the list in 1 Cor.6: 1-11 ought not to be handled with the same legal frame work and mentalities of “the outsiders” in terms of legal stipulations of the ‘their unjust’ ethos. Our main concern is not the entire list. We are interested in aspects of the list that are related to sexuality rights among the Corinthians. Here the term *adikoi* (unjust) is contrasted with the term *Hagioi* (saints). ‘*Hagioi* maintain their separation, not only from pagan courts (1Cor.6:1-11) but also from the sexual practices of their neighbours.’<sup>42</sup>

With reference to the word *adikos* which we have already dealt with, the entire list including the ones on sexuality are considered under the category of “the unjust”. We would look at *porneia*, particularly its linkage with ‘the body’ as it appears in 1 Cor.6: 19-20 with regard to sexuality rights.

Paul picks up the issue of *porneia* by saying that “a man has his father’s wife” (1Cor. 5: 1) which he identifies as incest. 1Cor.6: 12-20 as in 1 Cor. 5, Paul talks about the relationship between the Christian’s body and spirit with regard to the freedom that they have. In 1Cor. 6: 12, Paul says the Corinthians think all things are lawful so they can do whatever they like with their bodies with the view that it does not affect their spirit. Here Paul reminds them that the body is not just a container or a bag of bones but that it represents the whole person. “The believer’s body-the whole person- is not a self-sufficient entity but derives its nature from Christ to whom it is related. Their bodies are therefore intended “for the Lord,” and not for sexual immorality (“fornication” NRSV 1Cor.6:13) .’<sup>43</sup> He later talks of the believer as “a member of Christ”. 1 Cor.6:15. So to commit *porneia* or use the body for sex with a prostitute is the mis-use of Christ’s body of which the believer is a member.<sup>44</sup> Also, the body is portrayed as the temple with the Spirit in it and so if the believer has sex with a prostitute (1Cor. 6:16) it creates an unholy and unjust “one body” of God’s Spirit and the prostitute (1 Cor. 6:16). What we have here is further clarification of Paul’s advise to the Corinthians “not to mix with *pornoï*” (1Cor.5: 9). ‘His instructions are shaped by Israel’s identity as a holy people who avoid the idolatry (Lev. 19:4) and the practices of their neighbours ( Lev. 18: 2-3). These practices include a variety of sexual offenses Lev. 18.’<sup>45</sup> In sum, we cannot fail to note that ‘Paul’s instructions on sexuality reflect his Jewish heritage, according to which the Holiness Code [in Leviticus 17-26] defines obedience to the law in a pagan environment.’<sup>46</sup> So Paul repeatedly instructed his communities to abstain from *porneia*. ‘Just as the Holiness Code was important in Hellenistic Jewish paraenesis, it shaped Paul’s sexual paraenesis, for Paul placed the paraenetic instructions on sexuality under the rubric of holiness in 1 Corinthians.’<sup>47</sup>

## **6. APPROPRIATION: BODY SEXUALITIES IN AFRICA AND CORINTH**

The people in the Corinthian Community seem to have the impression that they have autonomy over their bodies so they have liberty to use their bodies in a way that pleases them. Perhaps this autonomy can be stretched to say that they have autonomy over their sexuality. However it seems what Paul is saying in 1Cor. 6 is that they do not have autonomy. Their bodies don’t in any way

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<sup>41</sup> Lull, *1Corinthians*, 50.

<sup>42</sup> J. W. Thompson, *Moral Formation according to Paul. The Context and Coherence of Pauline Ethics* (Grand Rapids: BakerAcademic,2011), 96.

<sup>43</sup> Lull, *1Corinthians*, 54.

<sup>44</sup> Lull, *1Corinthians*, 54.

<sup>45</sup> Thompson, *Moral Formation according to Paul*, 95.

<sup>46</sup> Thompson, *Moral Formation according to Paul*, 99.

<sup>47</sup> Thompson, *Moral Formation according to Paul*, 99.

belong to them but rather to Christ so they have no right over their bodies which meant they cannot use it as it pleases them. This calls for critical look at the issues. Paul's statement denying the Corinthians autonomy into a system where there is some kind of power relations through which one's body is bought and owned. Is it not just like women's bodies which are bought through the payment of bride price in Africa? Perhaps the problem therefore is, to what extent do people have autonomy over their sexuality in such a context? Is Paul therefore saying Christians cannot have sexual autonomy? Same questions will apply to the African sexualities that we have looked at. There seem to be complex issues that in the past has worked against the African body and continues to do so in boxing it into a certain mould that does not allow it to operate freely. With that of the female there is so much violence against it from all angles that it has become difficult to maintain any semblance of autonomy. Apart from the patriarchal power structures, cultural and traditional practices like the puberty rites you have the legal systems that also puts obstacles on the way of the African woman and her struggle for sexuality rights which includes sexual autonomy. Both contexts are suffering from foreign invasion of their bodies.

In the I Cor. 6. text the issues mentioned are all explained as relating to people who are looking for more than they are due. The implications of these are that they are branded as people who might be selfish and self-seeking and wanting to gain status, power, pleasure and perhaps wealth. In this respect, you see some resemblance between those who seek supernatural means to be rich and also to have power in the African context. In both contexts, the use of the body is unacceptable as they are for selfish gains.

In both the Corinthian and the African contexts one sees functionalism operating even though for different reasons. In the Corinthian context we are not told whether there were people with multiple interests. In the African contexts, there are those fearing that their genitals are being stolen or being made to shrink so that others might get rich or powerful. The most important difference here is that in the Corinthian context you cannot have the spirit and have your unacceptable sexual choices because your body belongs to Christ. You have no other choices. In the African supernatural contexts the spirit is manipulated in a magical way as a means to achieving one's selfish end. So there is a linkage between performing unacceptable ritualistic and occultic spiritual exercises and achieving riches. There is a link between shaking someone hands and your breast shrinking. In the African context also, the societal norms puts a check on practicing unacceptable sexual acts with one's body. So for the African context it is very important to address supernatural issues concerning sexualities in a pragmatic way. That is a combination of both supernatural with a clear liberative end.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the body matters a lot. I can hear the mob who are beating or chasing the one who has stolen their sexuality, saying, 'we will kill you before we all lose our source of sexual pleasure, fertility and reproduction'. Even though such mob action might seem legally inappropriate, the law is regarded as an 'outsider' in dealing with such issues related to sexuality rights and rites in most African contexts.

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