

**TOPIC: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE GREEK GODS
AND THEIR YORUBA COUNTERPARTS**

**COURSE: GREEK MYTHOLOGY AND RELIGION (CLC.
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INTRODUCTION

According to history and mythology, the Greeks and the Yorubas are both polytheistic in the worship of gods, in that they had different gods that performed different functions, and then the worship of some gods was held in higher esteem in some places than in others...the worship of these gods and goddesses were more peculiar and particular to them (just like the Athenians worshipped the goddess Athena; the people of Osun State too for instance also worship the goddess ,Osun, as their patron goddess).

Also, it is pertinent to note that both the gods and goddesses in the Greek and Yoruba mythology were essentially anthropomorphic in nature; they possessed human-like traits and characters. They lived amongst humans, they got married and in fact, they also gave birth like humans did.

However, there is a significant difference between the gods and goddesses in the Greek mythology and that of the Yoruba. While certain duties and roles were almost exclusive to each Greek gods in the Greek pantheon (because we have few cases whereby two gods performed closely similar function e.g. Ares and Athena were regarded as gods of war), the Yoruba gods seem to have conflict of duties in the sense that a god or more seem to perform similar functions. Hence, we seem to have different gods functioning in almost the same capacity. In other words, the capacity in which just one god functioned in the Greek mythology seemed to be distributed or shared by many gods in the Yoruba pantheon. As such, in this exercise, we are likely to have more than one god as a counterpart of some particular Greek gods, in terms of their portfolio.

ZEUS & his Yoruba counterparts:

- i. Zeus was considered as the father of gods and humans. He controlled thunder bolt.
- ii. He was known as the 'Lord of Justice'. He lived on mount Olympus.
- iii. He held lightning bolt as a staff and an eagle as his symbol.

ODUDUWA: This is the equivalence of Zeus in the pantheon of Yoruba gods according to myth.

- i. Oduduwa is believed to be the father of the Yoruba race and also the king of all gods and goddesses, and lived at Ile Ife, just like Zeus lived on mount Olympus.
- ii. He unified the Yoruba kingdoms by mediating and administering justice...even if he had to go to war.
- iii. Oduduwa also had a staff and an eagle as his symbols.

SANGO: Just like Zeus, Sango also held the portfolio as the god of lightening and thunder.

DEMETER & her Yoruba counterparts:

- i. Demeter was the mother of Persephone and the goddess of agriculture. She made the earth fruitful and tendered plants and grains.

OKO: In the Yoruba mythology, Oko is regarded as the orisha of agriculture and farming.

OSANYIN: This god also performs a similar role the Yoruba mythology; Osanyin was regarded as the god of plants.

POSEIDON & his Yoruba counterparts:

- i. He was the brother of Zeus and the god of the sea. He was called the god of horses, and he caused earthquakes and thus was widely regarded as the “earth-shaker”.

OLOKUN: The Olokun holds the portfolio of “the god of the sea” in the Yoruba mythology.

ELUSU: Elusu is another god who was referred to as the goddess of water.

ATHENA & her Yoruba counterpart:

- i. Athena was one of the most venerated of twelve Olympian gods, and she holds the position of the goddess of wisdom and strategic warfare.

ORUNMILA: He is regarded as the “god of wisdom” by the Yorubas.

HADES & his Yoruba counterparts:

- i. Hades was the brother of Zeus and Poseidon, and was regarded as the god of the underworld or the guardian of the underworld.

OYA: Oya is the third wife of Sango (the god of thunder), and she's popularly referred to as "the guardian of the dead".

OBALUAYE: According to Yoruba mythology, Obaluaye was known as "the god of the Earth".

HERA & her female counterparts:

- i. Hera was both the wife and sister of Zeus. She was the goddess of marriage who protected its sacred institution. She also helped the women in child labour.

OBA: Oba, the wife of Sango (the god of lightening and thunder), is regarded as the god of domesticity and marriage in Yoruba mythology.

YEMAYA: The Yoruba traditional myth regards Yemaya as the goddess of childbirth.

APOLLO & his Yoruba counterparts:

- i. Apollo is one of the most important and complex of the Greek gods; he is the god of light, music, poetry, healing and prophecy.

ERINLE: The Yoruba mythic tale says Erinle was the god medicine and healing, and that he was a physician to the gods.

OBATALA: The god of light.

EGUNGUN-OYA: The goddess of prophecy.

ARTEMIS & her Yoruba counterparts:

- i. She is Apollo's twin sister, and she was the goddess of hunting (uses bow & arrow), wild animals and wilderness.

OSOOSI: Osoosi is regarded as the god of hunting and forest.

OGUN: Ogun is both the god of iron and hunting in Yoruba mythology.

APHRODITE & her Yoruba counterpart:

- i. The most beautiful amongst mortals and immortals. She was the goddess of love, beauty and passion.

OSUN: Osun is the Yoruba goddess of love, intimacy, fertility and beauty.

ARES & his Yoruba counterpart:

- i. Ares was regarded as a ruthless god of war. And according to myth, he was the son of Zeus and Hera.

KONKOU: Konkou is a perfect equivalence of Ares...as he is described as "Orisha of war; and a very ferocious and violent warrior."

HEPHAESTUS & his Yoruba counterpart:

- i. He was the ugly, deformed and rejected son of Zeus and Hera...who later became the god of fire and blacksmiths.

ONILE: She is the goddess of metal work in according to Yoruba mythology.

OGUN: The god of iron.

HERMES & his Yoruba counterpart:

- i. Hermes was the god of wealth, trade, thieves and travellers. He was also known as the messenger god.

AJE SHALUGA: The Yoruba god of wealth.

DIONYSUS & his counterpart:

- i. Dionysus was the god of wine and celebrations.

OSUN: Amongst her various titles, Osun is also regarded as the goddess of festivity and celebrations.

HESTIA & her counterpart:

- i. Hestia was the goddess of domestic life, home and hearth; she provides the fire that helps keep homes warm.

MORIMI: She was the Yoruba goddess of fire.

OYA: She was the goddess of domesticity/domestic life...and marriage.

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