



Research Paper

An Appraisal of *Dioke* (Adultery) Punishments in Ndokwa Society in the Context of the Entrapment in John 7:53-8:11

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ABSTRACT: *Dioke* (*μοιχεία* [adultery]) punishment in Ndokwa society has a level of semblance with that of the Jews which Jesus adjudicated on in John 7:53-8:11. Such punishments in Ndokwa society are not gender biased since the socio-cultural template of the people, is built on very strict ethics that totally forbids the crime and prescribes punishments for culprits irrespective of gender. As ethical as this, people like the religious leaders, prone to secret sins, often use its occurrence as tool for entrapment(s) over unsettled scores. The paper through evidence from the literature, exegesis of the text and historical survey methods, investigates *dioke* crime, its punishments and effects in Ndokwa society. Appraising the implications of the Ndokwa Justice System on these, *dioke* (*μοιχεία* [adultery]) is viewed as a crime against God and very injurious to the family orders of procreation and continuity. While authenticating the punishments of *dioke* culprits as necessary for deterrents, the paper identifies the dehumanizing scenes of culprits and the unnecessary destruction of economic valuables, when used for unsettled scores. The paper concludes that, for Ndokwa society to be devoid of *dioke* crimes, it should insist on building a stronger social order, through its age grade and religious systems. This hopefully, will imbue sexual purity, marital faithfulness and the outright rejection of cohabitant marriage system, which has remained a tool for such entrapments. The paper recommends that when punishing *dioke* crimes, instead of dehumanizing culprits, society should think more of Jesus' approach of Forgiveness, Reconciliation, Rehabilitation and Transformation (FRRT), for the correction, and rejuvenation of such culprits for societal usefulness.

KEYWORDS: Jesus, *Dioke* (Adultery,) Punishment, Entrapment, Ndokwa Society.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Dioke, like *μοιχεία* (*moicheia*) in Greek, is the traditional designate for adultery in Ndokwa language. It is a complex concept with very negative complications ever-present in most cultures. The act being iniquitous enough is also observed to be common in the societies of the Jews and Ndokwa people, which this paper investigates. According to Kapolyo, his society also has a prevalence of this same sexual indiscretion that disrupts the foundations of societal life [1]. Thus in most societies, *dioke* (adultery) has a social cum religious and cultural inferences that are disparaging, not only to the culprits but to the entire society. In a very Ndokwa traditional context, *dioke* (adultery) is a sexual aberration that is never condoned. It is viewed as an infringement that destabilizes societal values, destructs the sacrosanctity of marriage and family foundations. *Dioke*, produces very noxious and unforgiving relationships when it occurs. Didactically, sexual orientations and values, describable among Ndokwa people, highlight what they owe sacred with regards to human sexuality in marriage relationships. Culturally, there are clear cut distinctions between sexual activities prescribed within and outside marriage contexts, which inform their response to sexually related issues and values. To them, the impacts of sex and procreation are priceless. Their values in marriage and family lives also cannot be overemphasized. This value based garniture (sex), has probably remained the most universal pleasure expressible in human sexuality. It is also what has constituted most social maladies in society. According to O'Donovan, there is probably no desire that is stronger for most people, than this desire for the opposite sex [2]. It is on such premise that the Ndokwa society builds and holds sacrosanct norms that permit sexual expressions, to promote values and stability in human daily living. Against this background, *dioke* (adultery) is not condoned, and it remains a violation of marriage avowals made to *Chukwu* (God), before the progenitors and terrestrial family members and friends. Traditionally, *dioke* (adultery) when committed defiles the sacredness of marriage institution as it is painfully explained, to be any sexual intercourse done by a married woman with a

partner other than her spouse or a married man with another married woman or with a betrothed girl. It is seen as an abomination (*alu*), a social taboo (*nsò-ani*) and it goes with very stringent punishments among Ndokwa people. On a general note, a comparative review of *dioke* (adultery) shows a wide range of its abhorrence in most religions and races. In an exceptionally Ndokwa society, the aftermath of this crime hunts the culprit and members of his or her family. This way, an adulterer is seen as being a greedy thief, an irresponsible and an immoral person. The act when committed, does not only affects an adulteress and her immediate family, it extends to her backgrounds; since it is often interpreted on the ground that she lacked good home training. When both parties involved in the act are married, the consequences are graver, because *dioke* (adultery) punishment is not gender biased, and there is usually unforgiveness as a trend that trails it biases.

Ndokwa natives are the aborigines of the designated ethnic nationality known as Ndokwa nation in Nigeria. Ethnographically, the landmass lies between latitudes $05^{\circ} 17' 52''$ N to $05^{\circ} 02' 18''$ N and longitudes $06^{\circ} 7' 05''$ E to $06^{\circ} 42' 45''$ E, with an approximate population of over 4,098,391 people [3]. The geographical location is the ancestral home of the Ndosumili and Ukwuani people of Delta State. The area is located in the Northern region of Delta State, in the South-Southern part of Nigeria. It has a common boundary with Ika-South, Aniocha-South and Osumili-South Local Government Areas of Delta State in the North. It borders with Ethiope-East, Ughelli-North and Isoko-North Local Government Areas of Delta State, Nigeria in the South. Its boundary in the West borders with Edo State and in the East, with the River Niger [4]. The geographical positioning of the area, places the dwellers on two distinct belts of a very rich sultry rain forest and a tabled deltaic marshy woods [5]. Historically, Ndokwa became an official acronym for designating the people of both belts, through a political unification that came into being, under the Local Government Edict in 1977 [6]. The enclave is presently a political disintegration of three local government areas of; Ndokwa West, Ndokwa East and Ukwuani, in Delta State, Nigeria. They speak Ndosumili and Ukwuani languages generally with traceable dialectical differences in their various versions.

II. THE NDOKWA COSMOLOGICAL VIEWS IN THE LIGHT OF DIOKE (ADULTERY)

Cosmologically, Ndokwa people tie their view on the crime of *dioke* (adultery) to *Chukwu* (God). *Chukwu* is the Creator of the Universe. This constrains the traditional and socio-cultural templates in constituting a society with deep reverence and awe for Him. *Chukwu* is also believed to have other intermediaries (*umummo*[*divinities*]), through which He can be accessed. Getting involved with the need to tapping the vital forces which emanates from *Chukwu*, the assistance of the divinities (*umummo*) are employed to access various dispositions of *Chukwu's* morality. Thus they serve as panes and mediums through which the people could come closer and interact with Him. These divinities (*umummo*) are sacred and are believed to be very powerful. They can harm their terrestrial subjects in an occurrence of faulty behaviour, like *dioke* (adultery), while representing *Chukwu* in an Ndokwa society. Traditionally, the concept of life is viewed to be sacred and dovetails with secular life mysteries. Thus Ndokwa people do not have any compartmentalization in life related issues. They understand, and interpret their existential link to those of their progenitors, making the society in a way dyadic and sentimentally religious, with such phenomenon as *dioke* (adultery) seen to defile their relationships with the gods and the progenitors. Ndokwa societies are basically agrarian and aquadynamic in composition, given to their very rich bequest of abundant creeks and virgin forests. This unique environmental formation informs their fondness for farming and fishing which they do for food and trades. This fondness ties them also to the consult of *Ani* and *Ifjioku* (divinities), for the success tales of their annual agricultural adventures. Their aquadynamic predilection, occasions the practices in the worship of water spirits to which their quests for success in fishing expeditions are usually tied. They worship the spirits of their long dead progenitors, who are believed to be active in the terrestrial affairs of the living. Thus, the cultural identity of the people is complexly built on the belief that, this existential life is tied to the life after death. To them, death is not seen as the end of human existence, rather, it is a transition into the world of the living dead, from where the progenitors watch, influence and control what happens with their progenies in the terrestrial suburbs. This world as presupposed is most sacred; since the spirits of the dead are linked directly to *Chukwu*. The progenitors are held in high esteem, garbed with a non-gradable level of sacrosanctity. They are believed to have returned to *Chukwu* and also play the role of his intermediaries. The Ndokwa worldview being dyadic [7] in principles, but with no compartmentalization, has dovetailing practices that place those of the living dead, on a suzerainty predilection with their progenies. In this regard, the *Okpala-ukwu* – the eldest male of the community or clan with a patriarchal lineage represents the clan progenitors terrestrially [8]. He holds the *Ndichie*, the traditional *Ofo* (a staff or an emblem which represent their visible presence) in family, community or clan meetings. The ancestors cannot be defiled as they are highly revered by their subjects. Thus the *theologumenon* of the traditional ethics; which inform the socio-cultural template of Ndokwa people, is built on very strict ethical and high moral principles, which forbid social vices like *dioke* (adultery). The crime is seen as being capable of defiling the social sanctity of their indigenous society. More traditionally, *dioke* (adultery) is based on a man's insatiable crave for sexual gratification and greed over another's property, which is stealing in

a way. The act by implication smashes the mutual commitment of married spouses, and destroys the sanctity that defines marriage and family institutions. It taints the entire inheritance process which is the foundation of a healthy traditional society. In Henry's, assertion, *dioke* (adultery) is an irreparable wrong to the injured husband, and debauches the mind and conscience of both the offenders as much as anything [9]. In consonance, *dioke* (adultery) culprits are treated with very harsh and dehumanizing punishments in Ndokwa societies. Underscoring the fact further, as a heinous crime and an iniquity punishable by various legal, traditional and religious prescriptions, *dioke* has become a medium for remembering, and acting on lingering indifferences between parties. In a related shell, the link and interpretation of crimes relating to adultery, (*ibudioke*) among Ndokwa people, has often been used as snares in targeting individuals, families and communities, in occurring scenarios. There are therefore, products of breaches on the justice system, societal values, with aftermaths necessitating the backcloths of unhealthy rivalry, enmity and unwholesome relationships. The punishments as aimed, sometimes become targets not necessary for the crimes committed, but for the maiming and reprisals for old scores: a problem which this paper highlights, noting the continuous bad bleeding, pit digging, unforgiving resolutions and the unnecessary destructions of economic valuables that go with it, in reoccurring decimals.

Administratively, Ndokwa has rich socio-cultural and political institutions that adjudicate on their customary values, civic and penal ciphers. The *Okpala-Ukwu* (oldest man in the community with a patriarchal lineage) remains the culminating consult on issues relating to culture and traditional matters. His analogous, the *Ada* (the eldest community woman), is the concierge as well as the custodian and worshipper of the ancestral motherhood spirit. This is the goddess of feminine purity and fidelity (*umuada*) through which the sanctity of marriage is hallowed and protected. The *Ada* and members of her cult in their roles, ensures the continuous lighted night for the purity goddess [10]. By this position, she heads *Ndiom-osa*, the all powerful feminine court which adjudicates the jurisprudence on *dioke* (adultery) in women related matters. Elaborately, *Ndiom-osa*, is a composition of elderly women in the Ada-in-Council, with the responsibility of overseeing the general sanitation of the community or clan for their spiritual wellbeing. There is also the family unit (*imusu*), which discovers the act either by culprit's confession or when caught in the very act as seen in the verbs; 'to lay hold' or 'to seize' (*κατελήπται* [*kateilēptai*]) and 'to commit adultery' [*μοιχευομένη* [*moicheuomenē*]], used in John 8:4. Another process is when it goes through the community youth policing (the youth groups who forcefully serve as community watchdogs.) Here the culprits receive all forms of demeaning and dehumanizing mutilations before going through the penal of the justice system. Therefore, the interpretation and punishment of *dioke* (adultery) crimes, going through various departments and divergent branches has remained a reason, why it is often hijacked by haters and those who use it for payback predilections and the settlement of old scores.

2.1 The Thought of Dioko (Adultery) in Ndokwa Marriage Concept

Marriage (*Onunu-di-na-nwunye*) is a complex concept among Ndokwa people, like those of the Jewish society [11] and other Black Africans generally [12]. It is a sacred duty which every normal adult citizen must perform. Where this is not available in any adult of marriageable age, he or she will be seen as socially disjointed - a situation that arouses fear and discomfort among his or her family members. Marriage is a social institution that ties habitually individuals and different families together in traditional and social bonds. The definition of family in this context, runs from the nuclear to the extended, and then to the enlarged community which has traces of ancestral origins to a single common patrilineal progenitor. Structurally, every family, both nuclear and extended is consciously involved in reproducing their likes, for the purpose of existential sustenance and continuity. From this deductive viewpoint, marriage goal to Ndokwa people, is to procreate legitimate generations that will perpetuate their continued existence. This they do through the producing of descendants that will guaranty the organized and trustworthy management of the family lineage and household affairs. Thus the view that marriage (*Onunu-di-na-nwunye*) is a requisite for the continuity of family and community lineages cannot be overemphasized. In a very Ndokwa context, its sacredness is given to the fact that it solidifies relationships and enriches the family and community units. Marriage to Ndokwa people is beyond the relationship of a husband and a wife. It integrates society of people within its fair of influence. Parents, relatives (paternal and maternal), and friends play prominent roles in the understanding of it. Through marriage, new lives and hopes are brought forth to the consenting individuals, their families and communities. Since marriage is a substratum for the sustenance and continuity of life, proper investigations are carried out clandestinely for the purpose of producing itch-free generation of descendants, devoid of faulty behaviours like *dioke* (*μοιχεία* [adultery]) and other social vices [13]. Another understanding of it is that it is an institution built on inviolability, limpidness and integrity. Every Ndokwa society guides its sacrosanctity, to ensuring that no strange blood and moral degradation are introduced into its generational progenies. Therefore, faulty behaviours to laws relating to the sanctity of marriage are never toiled with or forgiven, and are usually treated with ignominious punishments. Other indiscriminating sexual behaviours, like a married woman permitting the touching of her compromising or sensitive body parts by any man other than her husband, are also forbidden. When such occurs, perpetrators are severely punished and such punishments are deliberate. The marriage

between a man and a woman is most honoured, however, where a man is capable; he is very free to practice polygamy. There are those who also engage in a type of marriage satirically referred to as “*amakulugbe*” (cohabiting couples). *Amakulugbes*, simply put, reference couples who live together without performing the required marriage rites. Through such relationships, children raised are also recognized and accepted in society. Sometimes, a married man keeps such relationship outside his marriage through which he raises children. In context, a female cohabitee in such relationship may not be charged of *dioke* (adultery), if caught in any form of sexual act with another man. However, this is usually an open avenue through which *dioke* (adultery) crimes are perpetrated by weak and greedy partners. It is also used as dangerous entrapment on targeted individuals, since greedy or loosed men may attempt approaching such women, given to the fact that they are not properly married to their partners and then face the pains and jealousy of their male cohabitees.

2.2 The Thought of *Dioke* (Adultery) During Ndokwa Festivals

During festivals, Ndokwa people display their revered heritages and values through cultural exhibitions. One of such is what they term as help rendering, to couples who have problems of frigidity and weak sexual arousals in their marital relationships. At the fixing of festival dates and during festive periods generally, Ndokwa people shun every form of violence and abnormal tendencies. This is premised on their belief that the spirits of the invoked venerated deities and progenitors, identify with them. Traditionally, defiling tendencies like *dioke* (adultery), among other social vices, capable of irritating their presence are totally avoided. Be that as it may, Ndokwa communal festive periods fuse the terrestrial and supernatural spheres for the benefit of natives, who play the giving and receiving roles between the two worlds. Therefore, in considering *dioke* (adultery) related practices during cultural festivals, some abhor all forms of vocal and demonstrative vulgarities on marriage and sexuality. Others on the other hand herald fixed dates for festivals with vocal vulgarities premised on the abominable sexual misconducts committed by their citizens. By heralding the wind of festivals through such chaotic, but well organized and composed choral vulgarities, those accused of *dioke* (adultery) in society, suffer all forms of social embarrassments. Their names and families are used for compositions of very harsh and derogatory songs, during the feasting periods and beyond. Thus vulgar renditions aimed at the ridiculing of male and female sex organs by feasting natives, are traditionally allowed. This however as presupposed, was never a license for married people to be involved in acts of *dioke* (adultery). Such vulgar renditions as explained are aimed at the ridiculing of those debauched societal adults and young married people caught in various forms of sexual deviances, not socially and trado-religiously approved by society. It is also aimed at helping the poorly aroused partners to develop mental sexual roughages in distilling frigidity in marriage. The implication here is premised on the fact that sexual problems and challenges among married people are usually treated with muteness amidst silent sufferings of parties involved. The people believe that such arousal and stability can be propelled in couples when they see fellow humans, accentuate publicly those vulgar and private aspects of marriage. This festive attitudinal social behaviour, where practiced, is believed to rupture and heal the frigidity and barriers commonly tired to marriages devoid of active and intimate sexual expressions [14]. However, any married person who engages in such vulgarities after the festive period will be charged with *dioke* (*μολησία* [adultery]) or other adultery related matters. Be that as it may, at the pronouncement of festival dates by the *Okpala-Ukwu*, the people dovetail in this free for all choral vulgarism. This becomes an open-cheque for freedom of expression by the feasting citizens. Perceptions like “*Okpala shi ibudioke adiwa*” (no more laws against adultery and its related offences), will be upheld strongly with its festive moderations. This way, holding of the wrists of married women and rendering vulgar utterances and activities will then be seen as mere jokes with sexual acts completely avoided. During such festivals in some of the communities, the belief remains in the assertion “*we bu dioke ni olile kọbu ni ikpo ọsa*” (adultery crimes are never committed in the public), so the feasting natives enjoy their festivals. From all indications, *dioke* (adultery) among the people is strictly forbidden and where it occurs, it is not forgiven as offenders must be duly punished through the procedural rudiments of the penal ciphers.

2.3 Interpretation of *Dioke* (Adultery): An Ndokwa Socio-Cultural Perspective

The definition of *dioke* in Ndokwa setting has very close semblances that are of same plinth and dais with Jesus’ definition of it. It is interpreted in culprit’s thoughts, utterances and actions. For instance, what is understood practically as *dioke* (adultery,) is any sexual intercourse between a married woman and a man other than her husband. Since polygamy is culturally accepted by the people, a married man’s sexual assignation with an unmarried woman is never seen as *dioke*. This is based on the fact that he has such right of friendship (*uso*) outside his marital confinement. In *dioke* (adultery) interpretation, no man has the right to touch a married woman’s sensitive body parts, or makes any form of sexual advances at her by secret or public expressions. Once a bride price is paid on a woman, her status becomes sacrosanct and she becomes only for her husband’s love and sexual gratifications (*nso-aba-nesu*). In another vein, where a man has no male child to perpetuate the continuation of his lineage, there is this obsolete practice of restraining one of his daughters from getting

married. This is for the purpose of raising male children for him. A woman in such condition of marriage known as *Idegebe*, gets pregnant and raises children who will bear her father's name, not that of their biological father. However, there are restricted measures to such institution, since that also, was never a form or leverage for multiple sex partners or sexual sins. Such woman must stick only to the man who does that with her, and must be submissive and respect him. Where she engages any other man in sexual assignation, she will be accused of *dioke*. The man in such relationship keeps his real family outside the "*idegbeship*," and plays the role of a son to the father of his concubine. At the death of a man, his widow is required to be given out in a levirate marriage, to any of his brothers or someone else within the family. By this, the new husband takes the conjugal and family responsibilities of caring for the widow and her children. Where this is not done the marital status of the widow to her late husband remains, and she will be accused of *dioke*, if she has sexual affair with any other man. The same applies to any man who approaches her for sexual intimacy. Where a widow does not have interest in re-marrying in her late husband's family, she makes her intention known to the family elders. She would be given a period of seven months for severing of the marriage tie, with the family (*igofu-onwe-madu*). Until such rituals are done, she will be charged with *dioke* if found with another man [15]. From a structural standpoint, *dioke* (adultery) concept and punishments have both masculine and feminine implications in Ndokwa Justice System. When a man intentionally conceals a *dioke* act that involves his unfaithful wife, he will be punished by the gods and the progenitors. Therefore, where it occurs, there is no room for forgiveness as both parties are severely punished.

III. THE NDOKWA TRADITIONAL JUSTICE SYSTEM ON DIOKE (ADULTERY)

The Ndokwa Justice System is an intrinsic part of every Ndokwa society. Structurally, it cut across the socio-cultural organogram of their age grade system. The age grades have regulatory systems within their delegated justice jurisdictions, which administer specific investigative, as well as punitive measures, on earring members. These social compartments interpret and control the behaviours and formations of the people, through the Justice System. It ensures moral and social orderliness, for the enhancement of stability, integrity and peaceful coexistence of the citizenry. The penal system authorizes the *Okpala-ukwu-in-Council* and others, like the *Onotu-ukwu* (High Chief), the *Ada-in-Council* and the village or community's General Council, to impose severe punishments on their subjects. In *dioke* (adultery) matters under the Justice System, the *Ada-in-Council* arbitrates and adjudicates, where it affects a woman (adulteress). The offended family members and at times, a man's age grade group, deals with those that involves a man (adulterer). Punishment of *dioke* crime in the penal code attracts a process of confession, reprisal, reconciliation and restitution. Unlike the Jewish justice system documented in the *Torah* and *Mishnah*, the Ndokwa people have unwritten moral and legal codes that are consciously impressed in their minds. The punishments for *dioke* (adultery) crime include; public beating (*igbu-inyi-osa*), confessions (*ikodi*), payment of fines or compensations (*nsa*), and the propitiation of the gods and the ancestors, through some prescribed purification rites and ritual cleansing (*iju-ani*). These as required, must be done before any reparation could be of any avail [16]. In a more contemporary template, community youths also play the role of aggressive community policing. Thus, at the slightest provocation, those who fall prey to this sexual quagmire, through the youths and families, receive more demining public beatings (*igbu-inyi-osa*), amidst jeering. This happens as preambles to their imminent punishments and payment of fines. Under the Justice System, *dioke* (adultery) punishment of an adulterer is usually orchestrated by the family of an aggrieved husband. He may also be sanctioned by other community welfare and security bureaus. The *Ada-in-Council* in the opposite direction presides and adjudicates on the rites and procedures for the punishment of an adulteress. These procedures are sectional in the justice system. There are those aspects to propitiate the gods and ancestors, and others on the appeasing of the offended husband, his family and by extension, the Community. Concealed *dioke* (adultery) leads to the attack of strange ailments by the ancestors, on a woman directly or any of her children and in most cases the ignorant husband when he engages her in sexual intercourse, or eats of food prepared by his adulterous wife. In the same vein, it can also lead to the death of the woman or her running mad, where she remains adamant to confessing her crime (*ikodi*), or a situation where she denies of not committing the crime.

Practically, when *dioke* (adultery) is committed by a married woman, and confession is made before the husband's family, the *Ada* amidst the *Umuada* (the women's court), conducts her, through the process of confession (*ikodi*), ritual distillation and purity rites (*ito-uko*), to right such violation [17].

In the main, the offended husband is required to stop having sexual intercourse with her, and eating of her food, until the purification rites (*ito-uko*) are performed. Even where the offended husband is willing to forgive his adulterous wife, and continue with the marriage, the procedural prescriptions of the Justice System for her punishment, must be observed in full. Consequentially, where the act is between a married woman and an unmarried man, the major punishment will be on her, while the partner may be given public beating (*igbu-inyi-osa*) and made to pay compensation through monetary and material fines as demanded by the offended husband. This comes after various degrees of reprisals by family members (*ichu-di-oke*). He will be responsible

for the payments for such domestic and economic destructions deliberately and maliciously carried out in the process, by the offended family. This way, people tend to be more belligerent in perpetrating these domestic vandalisms, at the remembrance of friend or family member's ordeals, in past related reprisals. Where a married man condescends so low to commit *dioke* (adultery) with another man's wife, the punishment will be full-fledged for both offenders. Pending on the scenario, if offenders are caught in the very act, they will be given instant public beating (*igbu-inyi-osa*), and could be made to walk nude on the street or sit nude in bowls of water in full glare of the offended family members [18]. Interpretatively, such punishment of stripping and public beating is one among the highest forms of punishment, short of death in Ndokwa land [19]. A situation where *dioke* (adultery) is committed within a family circle, (i.e. a man and his brother's wife, or a married woman with another married man within the husband's enlarged family), culprits are severely punished. The adulterer will provide a goat and will be made to eat raw, the earlobe, thoroughly rubbed with native soap (*ncha-oji, ncha-iji*). This is done under the watch of his entire kinsmen, amidst ridiculing and insults for the dastardly act perpetrated. In some communities, both offenders are made to go through this. The culprits, while eating the raw earlobes, receive flogging on their ears, with words of caution never to be involved in such act. In an extreme satirical punishment scene in Umutu family of Abbi, if the act was committed in the farm or in the bush, the adulterer is forced to perform sexual intercourse before his tormentors, with a penetrable dug-hole, filled with palm-oil. Women however, are free from *dioke* punishments particularly when they disclose the antics and attempts meted at them by male sexual interlopers. In such cases, the attempted utterances, touches etcetera by such interlopers, are overlooked with full blown punishment on the male offenders.

In an opposite vein, the procedure for such punishment on an adulteress, commences with public shaming through refuse or garbage dumping in her room (*ijiye afifia/ekwukwo ni unwo*), by fellow women treating her with contempt for the purpose of punishing her. This is done amidst shameful ridiculing, jeering, abuses and flogging with itching leave branches (*ekpele-eziza*) by family daughters and wives (*umuada*). It is often perpetuated with ferocious belligerence in most communities, to accentuate its graveness. When she confesses (*ikodi*) to the crime before the *Ndiom-osa* (Ada-in-Council), she is made go through very serious reprisals and purification rites (*iju-esu*), that have different moderations in the suburbs. The above punishment procedures can only be occasioned by situations of unwillingness by aggrieved husbands to file for divorce. Where an aggrieved husband is not willing to continue with the marriage, he approaches the *Okpala-Ukwu* for marriage dissolution rites (*ite-nzu*). Where the couple reconciles and are willing to get the marriage restored, the pacified husband returns to the *Okpala-ukwu* for rites of marriage restoration.

IV. A CONTEXTUAL EXEGESIS OF THE TEXT, JOHN 7:53-8:1

4.1 The Background and Authenticity of the Text, John 7:53-8:11.

The text "*Pericope Adulterae*," John 7:53–8:11, is one the most fascinating stories told of Jesus in the whole Gospel, but with doubted authenticity [21]. This has been based on the obvious damaging internal and external evidences. As remarked by Hodges, the *Pericope* has been at the core point of controversy in Christian history [22]. A major conjecture for the text not being studied by most scholars has been premised on the uncertainty of its originality [23]. On this obvious thin authenticity the text has been rejected from being part of the John's Gospel by most scholars, since it was omitted in most ancient authorities and its position as included in other Greek manuscripts, varied from each other [24]. It is omitted in the following manuscripts: P^{66, 75} A^{vid} B^{C^{vid}} L N T W X Y D Q Y 0141 0211 22 33 157 209 565 1230 1241 1242 1253 1333* 2193 2768 *Lect* it^{a, f, l, q} syr^{c, s, p} cop^{sa, bo} mss^{sch} 2 goth arm^{mss} geo Diatessaron^{a, f} Clement^{vid} Tertullian Origen Cyprian Chrysostom Nonnus Cyril Cosmos Theophylact^{comm}. [25]. Ancient manuscripts like A C L and D omitted the text but left blank spaces not adequate enough for the whole passage, while recording the John's Gospel [26]. In some, it appeared after Luke 21:24 or 21:58, while in others, it appeared in John 7:36; 7:52 or John 21:24 [27]. It was also included with asterisks or obeli to indicate their doubts in some of the manuscripts [28]. The fact that the text was first sighted in the fifth century Codex Bezae (D), has been the damaging evidence against it not being part of the Christian Canon [29], since Codex Bezae (D), has more interpolation to the New Testament, than any other ancient manuscript [30]. From what is historically evident, the text does not belong to the John's Gospel, since it was omitted by oldest representatives of every kind, including the manuscripts, versions and the Church Fathers [31]. Godet, concluding on this, remarked that it lacked harmony with the entire Johannine narrative, and that such account predisposed of moral instruction, was alien to the John's Gospel [32].

Literary, there have also been inferences with stimulating conclusions on the text. Scholars have argued through different views, externally and internally to front grounds that revisited the thinness and doubts surrounding its authenticity. Trites, referencing scholars in this regard, posited that the undisputed account of Jesus chasing business people out of the Temple, (John 2:13-17), would considerably be worse than the *Pericope* when compared. Another argument is sufficed in the overlooked stylistic trait of John's writings, suggested to be present in the *Pericope*. Such views included John's use of short explanatory phrases or asides like "They were saying this to tempt him," as seen in 8:6, to interpret the significance of the prior expressions,

as deducible in 6:6, 71; and later in 11:13,51, 12:32, 13:11 and 28. In this regard, Kostenberger, premising Slade, pointed three unique characteristics of Johannine style clearly available in the text. 1. John 8:6 has a semblance of John 6:6 where the only change identified, is in the use of *πειράζω* (*peirazō*), the verb ‘to test,’ as expressed in the singular and plural forms of *πειράζων* (*peirazōn*) and *πειράζοντες* (*peirazontes*) respectively in (6:6), and (8:6). 2. John’s characteristics of writing *ταῦτα* (“this”) with an antecedent referent, but without its complement. 3. The use of the verb *ἑρωτάω* (*erōtaō*) (“to ask”), which appeared more times in John, than any other book of the New Testament [33]. Hodges, in addition, included 7:39, 12:6, 33; and 21:19 and remarked that; in over 450 surviving Greek manuscripts, the text had a consistent transmission of the Gospel history, which dated back to its autograph. This with evidence according to him, have been placed precisely where it has traditionally been found in the English Bible [33]. As sufficed by Shepherd, regardless of whether the text was placed after Luke 21:38 or John 7:52, or in the last part of John’s Gospel, the text should be endorsed as authentic. In his conclusion, the text reveals knowledge of Christ as the Seeker and Saviour of the lost, who offers mercy, forgiveness and acceptance and one whose desire is not to condemn [34]. It is on this premise that the paper highlights the background of the text in view of Jesus, dealing with *dioke* crime in a Jewish society. This is with special emphasis on the linking themes of tradition, law and punishment in comparison with those of the Ndokwa Justice system on *dioke* (*μοιχεία* [adultery]).

4.2 The Socio-Historic and Religious Settings of the *Pericope*

The socio-historic and religious settings of the *Pericope* are premised on norms that relate to the *dioke* crime and punishment in the Jewish society. The setting highlighted the attempt made by some scribes (*οἱ γραμματεῖς*) and the Pharisees (*οἱ Φαρισαῖοι*) to entrap Jesus. This they did by demanding an interpretation and implementation of the Mosaic Law on a woman said to have been caught in the very act of *dioke* - “ἐπι μοιχείᾳ κατειλεμμένην” (*epi moicheiāi kateilemmēnēn*.) Like in an Ndokwa example, *dioke* (*μοιχεία* [adultery]) among the Jews is heinous enough to disrupt both social and religious orderliness of society. It occurs when a married woman or a betrothed girl engages in sexual tryst with any man other than her husband. This crime with a death penalty when committed must be confirmed by evidence of two witnesses. Therefore, by asking Jesus to judge the exposed sexual crime, the scribes (*οἱ γραμματεῖς*) and the Pharisees (*οἱ Φαρισαῖοι*) anticipated an answer that would be socio-politically or religiously entrapping against him. Socio-political; in a sense that the practicing norms of the people were Roman influenced at that time. Religious and historical, in another sense, because the people were legalistically holding to Yahweh’s injunction of “Thou shall not commit *dioke*” (*μοιχεία* [adultery]), as enshrined in Ex.20:14. The code in the Torah emphasized Yahweh’s warning to the Hebrews to refrain from unsettling the foundation of their society [35] with such act like *dioke* (*μοιχεία* [adultery]). Thus, *dioke* in the Old Testament historicity was viewed to attract a capital punishment by stoning, given to the fact that it distorts and violates the necessary holiness which should inform a godly Jewish society (Lev. 20:10-21). This socio-religious setting is as clearly spelt out further in Deuteronomy 22:22.

Again, the Jewish society was founded on the covenant they had with Yahweh (*Chukwu*). Therefore, this act of *dioke* (*μοιχεία* [adultery]) is one of the offences which threatened this covenant relationship as highlighted in Leviticus 20, and was punishable in the name of Yahweh (*Chukwu*). Socially, the family plays a central role in the experience, preservation and transmission of this covenant relationship between Yahweh (*Chukwu*) and Israel. Consequently, actions which threatened the family by such pervasive sexual deviation and disruption were viewed to threaten the covenantal foundation of the social system [36]. This application of the death penalty on *dioke* was therefore, not a matter of primitive vengeance, but an indication of how seriously the Jews, were to take the covenant. Over time, as they continued to exist, the punishment for *dioke* (*μοιχεία* [adultery]) crime went through continuous changes, in their penal code. There were obvious socio-religious and legal reinterpretations that informed the Jewish take on the concept and its punishment. Accordingly, the dawning of ‘rabbinic Judaism’ sprouted a new class of scholars referred to as scribes in Israel. These scholars copied by handwriting Jewish traditions as contained in the Torah for studies at the ‘*yeshiva*’ (seminaries for the training of rabbis). Rabbinic Judaism gave more attention and authority to expositions and applications relating to the text itself, especially as found in the *Mishnah* and the *Talmud*. Thus they developed doctrinal, ethical, belief and behavioural ethics, which informed their conservative and liberal religious views. They however, became associated with leading rabbis who became distinguished as scholars, whose theological views filtered down to the commonplace Jews through their local rabbinic appreciators. Hillel and Shammai became leading rabbis who were Jesus’ contemporaries in the NT era. Their schools of thought had different positions that informed the NT Jewish views, on what should be interpreted as *dioke* (*μοιχεία* [adultery]) and what should lead to divorce in marriage [37] and [38]. Therefore, this details which Jesus had with the Scribes and Pharisees in the text, was premised on the influential waves of both schools of thought of that era. People seemed to be using such theological development to influence what they wanted at any given time. Correspondingly, when people get involved in *dioke*, it affected the entire society and the offence was seriously interpreted to distort the mutual and relational commitments of marriage. Suggestively, the changes in the historicity of *dioke* (*μοιχεία*

[adultery]) in the *Torah* and the *Mishna*, informed the social and religious norms associated with it in the background of the *Pericope*.

4.3. Jesus Attitude to the Religious Leaders and the *Dioke (Adultery) Culprit*

Exegetically, the entrapment theme in the text flowed from the bottled animosity expressed at Jesus, by the religious leaders, earlier in John 7. While Jesus taught in the Temple at the feast, he displayed an unusual teaching proficiency, which divided the opinion of the crowd (ὁ λαός [*ho laos*]). The reason why some thought he was a prophet and others presuming him to be the Messiah. These public opinions brooded in members of the Sanhedrin, a strong animosity that made them attempted his arrest, but failed, thus the use of the *dioke* crime in the *Pericope* to trap him. In linking the accounts, a contextual exegesis of the opening, John 7:53-8:11, shows clearly the copulative conjunction (*Kai* [kai]) “And,” as used in 7:53 and 8:2, to have served as a linking maker that connected the scene to the already existing animosity which the leading priests held against Jesus [39]. At ‘daybreak’ (*Ὁρθρου* [*Orthrou*]), the text reopened with Jesus’ attitude of teaching the crowd (ὁ λαός [*ho laos*]) in the Temple, a scene that again fueled the already existing animosity. Suggestively, John 8:2 connotes a tripodal elucidation which justifies the easy flow of the accounts.

1. The use of *Ὁρθρος* (*Orthros* [daybreak]) in its genitive sense, accounted for the exact time the event happened, which was likely the morning proceeding the previous day. It will be recalled that Jesus had invited the ‘thirsty’ for a drink at the close of the feast, the previous day – a scenario that caused a hateful debate and the animosity that culminated in 7:52.

2. The use of (*ἔρχομαι* [*erchomai*]), the verb ‘to come’ in the third person, singular, imperfect, indicative, middle (*ἤρχετο* [*ērcheto*]), asserted the fact that the people (ὁ λαός [*ho laos*]) came to Jesus to be taught. This in a way, pictured the gusto that trailed the whole crowd (*πᾶς ὁ λαός* [*pas ho laos*]), as opposed to their division in Chapter 7 [40] and [41].

3. The verse displayed a Jesus’ regular teaching attitude that so much irritated members of the Sanhedrin. The Greek word as used is (*καθισας* [*kathisas*]), an ingressive active participle of *καθίζω* (*kathizō*), the verb ‘to seat.’ Jesus always took his seat in order to teach his audience. This in context set the stage for the religious leaders to challenge his recognition as a ‘teaching rabbi.’ Be that as it may, Jesus taking his seat to teach the crowd (ὁ λαός [*ho laos*]), highlighted the exact harmony of a normal rabbinic teaching practice which Westcott, presumed to have replicated the position of an authoritative teacher [42]. In a way, the interruption of the teaching process by the scribes and the Pharisees (*οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι*), with the *dioke* (*μοιχεία* [adultery]) saga, introduced the reason of Jesus coming into the world, which is to bring repentance and salvation to sinners, not punishment and destruction. This attitude of his with Johannine symbolism (John 1:9), as pointed by Baylis, demonstrated that he was the true light which by coming into the world, enlightens every man, a scenario which is much like the earthly light of dawn that marked the beginning of the *Pericope* [43].

Contextually, the text in verse 3-5 displayed key themes of arrest, law analysis and judgment that were not majorly on the *dioke* crime, but primarily on the attempt to entrap Jesus. Angered at Jesus’ success and frustrated in their inability to get rid of him, the religious leaders seized the *dioke* (*μοιχεία* [adultery]) saga as an opportunity for his entrapment. By doing so, the adulterous woman was also given a dose of public shaming, through the arrest and her being placed in the middle of the crowd (ὁ λαός [*ho laos*]). From every indication, such was never the procedure for the punishment of *dioke* (*μοιχεία* [adultery]) culprits, either in the Jewish *Talmud* or *Mishnah*. The arrest was therefore introduced in the use of (*ἀγουσιν* [*agousin*]), a third person, plural, present, indicative, active of *ἄγω* (*agō*), the verb ‘to bring,’ in describing the religious leaders’ action on the woman. Her appearance before Jesus was very dramatic - a prospect Dods, remarked to be unlawful, since they had a court where such matter should have been tried [44]. She was caught in the very act of *dioke*, as in (*ἐπιμοιχεία κατελειμμένην* [*epi moicheiāi kateilemmenēn*]). *Κατελειμμένην* (*kateilemmenēn*), as used is the perfect passive participle of (*καταλαμβάνω* [*katalambanō*]), the verb to catch. Making her stand in the midst of the crowd (ὁ λαός [*ho laos*]), was a public shaming meant to disgrace her before everybody, and to know what Jesus would administer as judgment against her. In their ploy, they referenced the death penalty in the Jewish penal code in 8:5. Knowing full well, that capital punishments had been removed from Jewish courts, except on temple crimes, they demanded for Jesus’ opinion. Their ploy was a two way entrapment to bring Jesus down to his knees, either by rejecting the Roman prohibition on capital punishment or compromising his Jewish faith by upholding the Roman regulation [45]. The outcome of Jesus’ response, introduced the theme of sin (*ἁμαρτία* [*hamartia*]). He asked, ‘anyone without sin among them, to commence the stoning. Sin (*ἁμαρτία* [*hamartia*]) here, is all inclusive faultlessness, as used in (*ἀναμαρτητός* [*ho anamartētos*]). To Morris, it implied general sinlessness [46], but for Hodges, it is a specific sin [47], a position Baylis, remarked to be a mere supposition [48]. The effect of this was searchingly compelling of the accusers, as Jesus clearly saw through their hypocrisy and the inclusiveness of their sin infested lives. His authoritative words struck conviction of sin (*ἁμαρτία* [*hamartia*]) in their hearts. Recognizing this, the accusers began to withdraw (*ἐξήρχοντο* [*exērchonto*]) one after

the other, beginning with the eldest. Ἐξήρχοντο (*exērchontoi*) as used is a third person, plural, imperfect, indicative, middle of ἐξέρχομαι (*exērchomai*), the verb 'to go 'out.' Most often those who inflict injuries on people all in the name of exerting *dioke* (μοιχεία [adultery]) penal are hypocrites. They either commit *dioke* (μοιχεία [adultery]) by way of fornication or through lustful appreciation of women in their hearts which among Ndokwa people, is referenced as *ibudioke*.

The *Pericope* climaxed with the dramatic turnaround that trailed the accusers. They 'discoed' away with self guilt over secret sins, and Jesus was left alone with the culprit standing in front of him as expressed in (καὶ ἡ γυνὴ ἐν μέσῳ οὖσα. [*kai hē gunē en mesōi ousa.*]) This position as elucidated by Spencer-Jones, was to her more cowering in shame and mortal fear than standing audacious, not knowing what Jesus would do to her [49]. He could have done the stoning since he was sinless, but he was more concerned with the rehabilitation of the sinner (ἁμαρτωλός [*hamartōlos*]). By asking her, "did no one condemn you?" (οὐδεὶς σε κατακρινεν;" [*oudeis se katekrinen?*]) Robertson, remarked, he was merely reemphasizing the question before the woman such as; 'Has no one declared that yours is an ease of stoning?' [50]. Interpretatively, Jesus had full interest in dealing with the helpless states of all the actors in the saga individually, according to the grace they needed. His position never condoned the sin (*dioke* -μοιχεία [adultery]) rather; it displayed his love to save. Thus the culprit got another chance for right living and proper reintegration into societal usefulness, as Jesus said to her "Neither do I condemn you." (Οὐδε ἐγὼ σε κατακρινῶ [*Oude egō se katakrinō*]). "Go and sin no more." ("ἀπο τοῦ νῦν μηκετι ἁμαρτανε" [*apo tou nun mēketi hamartane*]). Although, this combination of thoroughgoing justice and compassion is not easy to achieve, it remains an excellent paradigm of how the Ndokwa society can deal with *dioke* quandaries for the peaceful coexistence of its citizenry. Jesus' judgment did not only bring the accused to repentance, he also showed the accusers their sins, [51] but painfully, they withdrew from the scene without the treatments of such secret sins.

V. CONCLUSION

Although *dioke* (μοιχεία [adultery]) from the Ndokwa and Jewish backgrounds promote very lethal consequences, this paper shows that its punishment as tool for entrapment and the settling of old scores, has remained a threat and a major factor that has promoted very noxious relationships between individuals, families and communities. In most *dioke* quandaries as exemplified in the text, there is often in affected persons calculated actions, which promote complicated subtle measures that disrupt societal wellbeing and peaceful coexistence. There are usually instances of disguised hypocrisy particularly among those who make advances in punishing culprits. Going by the *Pericope's* account, the fact that the adulterous woman was caught in the very act of *dioke* (μοιχεία [adultery]) as reported could be doubted. This is because it takes two to commit the act, but nothing was said of the male partner in crime, thus the intrigue behind the actions of the religious leaders could be imagined. The scenario probably must have been stage managed for the cunning purpose of getting at Jesus. In the same way, among Ndokwa people, the implementation of the traditional reprisals of *dioke* culprits, are sometimes encumbered with relational actions, which go beyond the required punishments and fines. The quandaries are often used for payback reprisals and trap settings against targeted individuals or families. This way, people recall easily and retaliates very harsh treatments, or the destruction of their economic valuables and reprisals given to their friends or family members from such targeted axis. In such occurrences people only see opportunities in a reoccurring crime, to repay targeted victims on accumulated vexations and hatreds. *Chukwu* (God) as revealed in this study abhors *dioke* (μοιχεία [adultery]). It is also clearly forbidden and severely punished in both societies of the Jews and Ndokwa people. However, the reason for the presentation of the adulteress before Jesus was obviously not because of the disappointment in her supposed act, rather, the cunning measure of using the crime to achieve a concealed motive. This visible attitude clearly featured an exposure of the unscrupulous malignity, in their attempt to using the crime, to further their own design against Jesus. This is condemnable. By aligning with Dods, the paper notes that people who introduce such illegitimate method of trap setting and digging of pitfalls, do not deserve to be members of any society, but should be banished to the unreclaimed wilderness [52]. In conclusion, most people who play front roles, or those prominent in the maltreating of *dioke* (μοιχεία [adultery]) culprits, may be very successful pen robbers in public offices, or oil money thieves in their communities, or sexual harassers of male and female students in the universities, or cultists and such other people who secretly collect money from Fulani herdsmen, who in turn fight with poor farmers, destroys community farmlands, rape and kill helpless women. These are obviously more heinous crimes that defile and destroy individuals, families and community's common interests than *dioke*. Therefore, such people should first remove the specks in the own eyes to enable clear views of societal anomics.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

For an Ndokwa society devoid of *dioke* (adultery) maladies, the paper recommends: 1. Ndokwa people will need to build a stronger social order that should cherish sexual purity and faithfulness, premised on a deliberate standing on *Chukwu's* (God's) predilections on human sexuality, marriage and family relationships.

This can be achieved through a deliberate resolve to insist on inculcating moral values and standards in citizens, through their well organized age-grade system. In the same vein, religious institutions in Ndokwa land should insist and be resolute in teaching and encouraging relationships that should positively, promote marriage institution acceptable by *Chukwu*. 2. Proper marriage institutions should be upheld in Ndokwa society, while cohabiting relationships (*amakulugbes*) should be discouraged and treated with social disdain. 3. The Jesus' approach of forgiveness of the *dioke* culprit, should be adopted in resolving *dioke* (adultery) related quandaries, since the aftermaths will not only correct the sexual deviants. This will make them renewed and rejuvenated citizens who would become positive contributors to morally desired social society cherished by all. To Jesus, since men generally are sinners, misery should always be tempered with pity. The interest should always be on 'Forgiveness,' 'Rehabilitation,' 'Reconciliation' and 'Transformation' (FRRT) of such sex deviants.

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