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Ethnocentrism, otherness and power abuse in post-colonial cameroon as depicted in Alobwed' epie's selected fiction

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**ETHNOCENTRISM, OTHERNESS AND POWER ABUSE IN POST-COLONIAL
CAMEROON AS DEPICTED IN ALOBWED' EPIE'S SELECTED FICTION**

BY

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REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN
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November 2014

DECLARATION

I, **Audace Mbonyingingo**, do hereby declare that this study is original and has not been submitted for any other degree award to any other university before.

SIGNED:

DATE:

Audace Mbonyingingo

Student

This dissertation has been submitted for examination with the approval of the following supervisor:

Prof. Arthur Gakwandi:

DATE:

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DEDICATION

To my parents who first instilled in me the love for school,

To my wife and our children: Shammah Ariella Igiraneza, Queen Merphine Impundu, Mitt Mbonyingingo Mutere, and Mbonyingingo Seron for your patience and love during my absence from home,

I gratefully dedicate this work.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores concepts of ethnocentrism, otherness and power abuse as depicted by Alobwed'Epie's selected fiction: *The Death Certificate*; *The Bad Samaritan*; *The Day God Blinked*; and *Exhumed, Tried and Hanged*. It applies qualitative methods of data collection and analysis and uses the tenets of New Historicism theory to reflect on the selected themes. More specifically, this study seeks to determine the social dynamics of ethnic and linguistic differences in a multi-cultural society and how political leaders attempt to exploit them in advancing their political agenda. The study thus analyses how ethnic discrimination, injustice, exploitation, and marginalization plunge the discriminated groups into extreme hopelessness, gloom and poverty and how this leads to a chaotic situation among Ewawa nation, the author's fictive name for Cameroon. This work proceeds on the premise that, in Epie's fiction, the geographical, historical, ethnic, and cultural differences among the peoples of Ewawa are presented as leading to 'othering' (discrimination against) some of the people and consequently there is denial of their rights by those in power. In this case, the unity and the reunification process remain on paper.

Ethnocentrism should be understood as the fact of judging another culture solely by the values and standards of one's own culture. Ethnocentric leaders in the study judge other groups in relation to the formers' particular ethnic group or culture, especially with regard to language, behaviour, customs, and religion. These ethnic distinctions and subdivisions have served to define each ethnicity's unique cultural identity. As far as the 'other' is concerned, it refers to the excluded, or the oppressed because of their ethnic belonging or cultural origin. The term is used to refer to those from the "other" provinces, i.e. the Anglophone Cameroon. In the course of this analysis, someone who is not the "other" is referred to as "the son or daughter of the soil".

The method that was used for this research was fundamentally qualitative. It is a desk research involving textual analysis. The study was library based. The library was used to research and review what scholars have written about Africa in general and Cameroon in particular and the predicament after colonization and the re-unification process in order to understand and interpret the selected texts. Alobwed'Epie's four basic texts were my primary sources. My analysis was aided by secondary sources and existing literature on Cameroon, which consisted of books related to the topic, literary magazines and journals, articles, reports, official documents from the Anglophone publications and websites which are relevant for grounding my arguments.

This discussion used two theories which are the Postcolonial theory and New Historicist approach of literary criticism. This study fits in the Postcolonial theory in the sense that it is a continuation of the major issues and debates in the field of post-colonial literary studies. These issues are, among others, discrimination, representation or identification modes, difference, nationhood, etc. New Historicism is relevant to this study in that it concentrates on those at the top of the social hierarchy (i.e. the church, the government, the upper-classes) without sparing those at the bottom of the social hierarchy (the lower-classes and other marginalized peoples). The two theories that inform this study are complementary one another rather than contradicting.

The research findings show that post-independence Cameroon is still suffering from the politics of discrimination and oppression based on ethnocentrism and otherness. Too much centralisation in the society of our concern makes it possible that the ruling tribe discriminates, oppresses and amasses the country's wealth while the rest of the population is still considered as "othered" and pushed to the margins. This has created social strata where the "sons and daughters" of the First and Second Provinces (i.e., Cameroon Francophone) own the nation while natives from the other provinces (i.e., Cameroon Anglophone), because of their ethnic-linguistic origin, are strangers in their own country. The so-called reunification politics process that appears only on paper has not yielded any hope for peace and democracy in Cameroon.

The study concludes that Epie's characterisation and portrayal of his society are influenced by Cameroonian history and his personal experiences. His fiction presents the geographical, historical, ethnic, cultural differences among the peoples of Ewawa as leading to discrimination against some of the people and denial of their rights by those in power. Given the fact that the nature of political power remains linked to ethnic agendas and resource control and that the attraction of power is still strong in the Ewawa nation and many of the African countries, there is a need to confront and overcome the extreme tensions that elections have created. Leaders should learn that to change terms limits amendments in order to hold on to power results into the people's revolt and this is the root of instability and poverty in Africa.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction

This study investigates the themes of ethnocentrism, otherness, and power abuse in a post-independence society presented by Alobwed'Epie in his selected fiction. Charles Alobwed'Epie's fiction is concerned with these evils, particularly as they affect social stability in the Ewawa nation, a country that rightly is Cameroon. As a political writer and a social critic, he highlights the disruptive impact of these evils. Natives of the Ewawa nation as fictionalized by Epie have long been indoctrinated about the different identities that divide them. Minority group conflicts and marginalization have been a challenge to the peaceful existence and development of the country presented by Epie. This study then analyses how the writer shows that this indoctrination has created subjugation in order to dominate a people and how the latter, more often than not, responds in more revolutionary ways.

In Cameroon the Anglophones who form the minority claim that they are marginalized by the ruling Francophones majority. The Anglophones claim that they are not politically represented both in the government and in decision making institutions of the country. Besides their regions, the Northwest and Southwest Provinces lag behind both in social and economic development. They need a system that can guarantee all citizens inalienable fundamental and civic rights, equal opportunities and respect for the bicultural character of Cameroonian people.

Charles Alobwed'Epie is a prolific writer from Cameroon whose fiction has appeared on the literary scene from the year 2004. His published fiction includes *The Death Certificate* (2004), *The Lady with a Beard* (2005), *The Day God Blinkered* (2008), *The Bad Samaritan* (2009), *Exhumed, Tried and Hanged* (2010), *The Lady with the Sting* (2010), *What Next of Kin?* (2010), and *She Seized the Balls* (2011). He recently published a collection of poems entitled *Crying in Hiccoughs* (2011). Epie, like his contemporary Anglophone Cameroonian writers, is not widely known in the world of literary debates. Edward O. Ako, the editor of *Cameroon Literature in English* says that "Cameroonians writing in English are, to a large extent, still unknown both within and outside of their national territory" (1). As a new writer on the literary scene, Alobwed'Epie attracted my attention because of the way he uses art to mirror his society.

In his writings Epie attempts to promote an open society where life should exist independently of the Cameroonians' differences. The lives in community are movingly presented and his intention is to lead towards transparency in the service of the community. The social life is clearly sketched in his writings which expose realities such as corruption, ethnic-based discrimination, and oppression characteristic of his sociopolitical environment. Epie's writings are worth exploring for many reasons. At the centre of his fiction are people from the ruling class, whose way of ruling is presented; and those from the lower classes, with whom he sympathizes. A close reading of Epie's novels reveals that the society portrayed is at the crossroads of the relationship between the centre and the margin as he presents "the margins within the centre" and "the centres within the margin". All the evils that the society is facing result from the inherited practices by the centre and as such the aims of independence and re-unification are but a dream.

His novels seem to draw readers' attention to the mistakes of the past and the necessity of establishing sustainable and enduring values that promote and protect the interest of all. Most of the post-independence tensions of Alobwed'Epie's people originate from a limited understanding of all aspects of the colonial heritage, and the lack of understanding of responsibilities that power vests in those who exercise it.

This analysis shows how the selected novels demonstrate that political power abuse and ethnic indoctrination lead to underdevelopment and increase cases of violation of the rights of the masses. With the use of many different literary devices, the author makes a point that those who exercise political power or those who are affiliated with the ruling class commit crimes with impunity. The writer's use of contrast and juxtaposition, parallelism, symbolism, verbal art (proverbs, songs, speeches, etc), intertextuality (letters, newspapers, etc.), allegories, and biblical allusions helps the reader to penetrate into the minds of the characters in order to understand their actions and reactions in the course of the stories. In fact, not only the lower class and upper class are portrayed, but also ethnic and regional-based tensions are highlighted. Leaders manipulate these tensions in order to advance their political agenda. They try their best to prolong their stay in the ruling oligarchy. As a result, the majority of the elites and the oppressed flee the country to live in exile. Epie challenges this oligarchy to heed his warning that building

structures that are based on ethnocentrism and tribalism will inevitably result in national chaos. However, there is hope that the oppressed will finally liberate themselves from subjugation.

Racism in its historical development made the assumption that lower races existed for the service of higher races. To consider a social group as lower race is falsely judging its culture solely by the values and standards of one's own culture and by placing an especially high value on one's own ethnic origin and culture in relation to others. Politics of ethnic exclusion or otherness in the post-colonial African country, Ewawa, a veiled name for Cameroon, is therefore best understood by relating its shifting meanings to the long historical and political processes that define Cameroon as a Republic. The socio-political context of Ewawa captures the process of distinguishing "the other" oppressed Cameroonian regions referred to in Epie's novels as the 8th, 9th and 10th provinces, from the First and Second Provinces or "the privileged provinces" inhabited by "the sons and daughters of the soil".

1.2. Background to the Study

Cameroon is a country in Sub-Saharan West-central part of Africa, bounded on the north by Lake Chad; on the east by Chad and the Central African Republic; on the south by the Republic of the Congo, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea; and on the west by the Bight of Biafra (an arm of the Atlantic Ocean) and Nigeria. The country is shaped like an elongated triangle, and forms a bridge between West Africa and Central Africa. The country has a total area of 475,442 sq km (183,569 sq mi). Yaoundé is the capital, and Douala is its largest city.

In 1916, following the defeat of Germany in World War One, the territory was split between the victorious allies, the British and the French. This arrangement was later confirmed by the League of Nations and thus Cameroon was colonized by France and Britain. The French occupied four-fifths of the territory while one fifth fell under British administration. This explains why Cameroon is a bilingual country, using both French and English as official languages. The region where French is used as official language is called Francophone, while the other with English as official language is called Anglophone. We can note that the Anglophone part of the country is

smaller than its Francophone counterpart which has negatively affected the Anglophones' community. Cameroon has a population of 16.4 million (according to a national census of the year 2005); the Francophone community comprises about 85% (majority) of the population while the Anglophone part makes about 15% (minority) of the total population. This comparison could also be made on the basis of the geographical size occupied by each of the two communities. In fact, of the ten provinces that constitute Cameroon, eight belong to the Francophone community while the Anglophone folks cover only two provinces. The latter are called Northwest and Southwest provinces.

The British Cameroons which was further split into two parts (the British Northern and the British Southern Cameroons) evolved along British lines with regard to cultural, political and economic matters. The French administered their part of the territory as an outright colony using the same structures of administration and governance as obtained in the French Equatorial Africa. The Francophone Cameroon is found in the Eastern part of the country. Before the national reunification this territory was called East Cameroon while its Anglophone Western part was called West Cameroon. The latter's name was later changed to what is currently known as Southern Cameroon.

The North West/ South West divide, on the one hand, and the Western part on the other hand, is considered a very serious issue by Anglophones critics in Cameroon. For example, Bongfen (1976) mentions that the result of the 1916 split was that the former German colony steadily developed two different styles and attitudes in matters of language, attitudes towards governance, basic freedoms and more. In January 1960, the French Cameroons obtained its independence from France. But the British Cameroons was not accorded the same right when it was to achieve independence. Instead, the United Nations sponsored a plebiscite in the British Cameroons according to which the territory was to obtain its own "independence by joining", either the independent Republic of Nigeria or the independent Republic of Cameroon.

The plebiscite took place on 11 February 1961. The result showed that the British Southern Cameroons, where Alobwed'Epie was born, voted to join The Republic of Cameroon while the northern part, the British Northern Cameroons opted to join the Republic of Nigeria. Following

the plebiscite results and after some negotiations and arrangements, the Southern Cameroons and La République du Cameroun formed a Union that became the Federal Republic of Cameroon. This union came into being on 1st October 1961. The Federal arrangement was protected by article 47 of the Federal constitution which prohibited any action that threatened the basis of the federation, and provided the mechanism by which any change to the fundamental basis of the Union could be achieved. In 1972, the federal arrangement was reversed through a nationwide referendum. In its place, a more centralized unitary state was set up. The legislative, judicial and executive components within the federal structure were abolished in favour of a more centralized United Republic of Cameroon. Ndobegang (2009: 2) contends that twelve years later, and this time by a presidential decree, Paul Biya, Cameroon's second serving President abolished the United Republic of Cameroon, and in its place instituted the Republic of Cameroon, - La République du Cameroun, the name which French-speaking Cameroon had upon its independence in 1960, and which it used to enter the union with the Southern Cameroons in 1961.

Though nationalism enables Cameroonians to declare their difference from colonial masters (in this instance France and Britain), there is still a difference between the rhetoric and the reality of the nation state. The bicultural polity of Cameroon has become problematic over the years. According to Ndobegang (2009: 2) "the term 'Anglophone' is increasingly becoming ambiguous: especially as the term in the present context is exclusive, at a time when the term is emerging increasingly as one without borders". In addition to the increasing marginalization experienced by the English speaking part in domains such as politics, administration, economy, culture, the country has faced mounting inequality and disarray despite the nation-building aspirations at reunification in 1961.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

This study, based on Alobwed'Epie's novels, analyses how ethnic discrimination, injustice, exploitation, and marginalization plunge the discriminated groups into total desolation and gloom and how this leads to a chaotic situation in the Ewawa nation, the author's fictive name

for Cameroon. The problem investigated by this study is how, in the selected novels, elements of ethnocentrism and other ‘othering’ (binary discrimination) processes are presented as leading to power abuse and misrule in Ewawa. Though Epie is a largely unknown novelist, his use of literary tools to mirror his society is worth exploring. His artistic ingenuity helps the reader to discover that post-reunification Cameroonian rulers have not addressed effectively the problem of different identities that put together the two Cameroons. Rather, the violation of socio-cultural rights and discrimination of the “other” are institutionalized.

1.4. Scope of the Study

This study focuses on four of the six novels by Alobwed’Epie, i.e. *The Death Certificate*; *The Bad Samaritan*; *The Day God Blinked*; and *Exhumed, Tried and Hanged*. These have been selected because they underscore the themes under study and they cover a period of time that is significant in terms of socio-political tensions in Cameroon. The analysis focuses on the themes of ethnocentrism, otherness and power abuse as portrayed by the writer. By “other”, the study will refer to the discriminated from Anglophone Cameroon, i.e. the 8th, 9th and 10th provinces. This study treats first the questions of ethnicity and ethnocentrism, the questions of centre and margin and their consequences. It then focuses on the farce behind elections in Ewawa, how political leaders want to hold power forever, misuse it by plunging the country into extreme poverty caused by nepotism and corruption.

1.5. Definition of Key Terms

Ethnocentrism is understood here as the fact of judging another culture solely by the values and standards of one’s own culture. An ethnocentric individual judges other groups in relation to his or her own particular ethnic group or culture, especially with concern to language, behaviour, customs, and religion. These ethnic distinctions and subdivisions serve to define each ethnicity’s unique cultural identity.

Ethnicity: In this study, the contemporary definition of ethnicity by Isajiw (1974:118) is upheld as “a group or category of persons who have a common ancestral origin and the same cultural traits, who have a sense of peoplehood and of group belonging, who are of immigrant background and have either minority or majority status within a larger society”.

Other will be used in this dissertation in relation to its derivatives “otherness” and “othering”. As far as our analysis is concerned, the ‘other’ is the excluded, or the oppressed because of their ethnic belonging or cultural origin. The term is used to refer to those from the “other” provinces, i.e. the Anglophone Cameroon. In the course of this analysis, someone who is not the “other” is referred to as “the son or daughter of the soil”.

Power abuse is the act of using one’s position of power in an abusive way. This can take many forms, such as taking advantage of someone, or just manipulating someone, oppressing and suppressing with the ability to punish them if they do not comply. This should also be understood as improper and oppressive use of authority by someone who has that authority because he or she holds a public office.

Tyranny is defined as “irresponsible rule over equals or betters in the interest of the ruler but not in the interest of ruled”.

Discrimination in this study will include any adverse distinction made on the basis of social origin, ethnic group belonging, political opinion or language spoken which distinguishes or deprives a person of equality or treatment in national affairs and opportunities.

Corruption is any practice or act or omission, by a public official that is a deviation from the norm and that cannot be openly acknowledged but must be

hidden from the public eye. It diverts official decision-making from what a decision should have been to what it should have not have been. It also introduces discrimination and arbitrariness in decision-making so that rules, regulations and procedures become unimportant.

1.6. Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to analyse, through Alobwed'Epie's selected novels, how ethnic discrimination, injustice, exploitation, and marginalization plunge the discriminated groups into hopelessness, extreme gloom and poverty and how this leads to a chaotic situation in 'Ewawa' nation. This study traces these themes from *The Death Certificate*; *The Bad Samaritan*; through *The Day God Blinked*; and finally to *Exhumed, Tried and Hanged*. More specifically, this study aims to show that, even though re-unification has been proclaimed, ethnocentric spirit still characterises post-independence leaders in Ewawa. It also aims to show that ethnocentrism, otherness and power abuse are tools used to conquer and maintain power in the framework of "divide and rule" the oppressed.

1.7. Review of Literature

Flick Uwe in *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* indicates that "almost everything you want to research will probably connect with an existing neighbouring field, thus it is rather naive to think there is still a new field to explore where nothing has been published before" (58). Therefore, I used available materials both published and unpublished on the topic, which contain information, ideas, and evidence written from various standpoints to express certain views on the topic.

1.7.1. Literature on Ethnocentrism and Ethnicity

The by now classic account of the origins of ethnocentrism has been given by Adorno, Brunswick, Levinson, & Sanford (1950). These authors identify ethnocentrism as part of a larger “sickness” which they call authoritarianism and identify it as a phenomenon of the Ideological Right. Their study was in fact basically of extreme right-wing ideology. The generalization of their condemnatory results to all right-wing ideology was an easy step and one widely accepted but which was later on challenged by other psychological studies completely contradicting their account of right-wing ideology as accompanied by personality pathology.

Rüsen Jörn in “Some theoretical approaches to intercultural historiography” (1996) writes that ethnocentric concept in historical identity is the distinction between civilization and barbarism. He argues that this distinction has been frequently used in modern societies: one’s own people historically stand for civilization and its achievements, whereas the otherness of others is a deviation from these standards. In this case, the author contends, the hopes of bettering one’s own life-form are projected into the otherness of others. But he also argues that this is of secondary importance, and in fact does not essentially change the inequality in the interrelationship between selfness and otherness, togetherness and being different. This inequality inevitably causes a “clash of civilizations” since others follow the same logic and thus gain self-esteem at the cost of “other” others. Rüsen’s argument as discussed above is evident in the nature of discrimination and power abuse and justifies the need for the study and supports the problem.

Ethnocentrism and otherness are new adopted terms in the Cameroonian literary debates. In fact, as George Ngwane asserts it in an interview with Manjoh Pricilla Musoh, Cameroon Anglophone literature has been generational, the first dealing mostly with culture since protest was totally stamped out by the rulers of that time. In a keynote address, Ambanasom (2008) gives a history of Anglophone literature starting from Sankie Maimo *I am Vindicated* published in 1959, to Bernard Fonlon’s unpublished “As I See it” and to 2008, half a century later, wherein authors like Alobwed’Epie, John Nkemngong Nkengasong, Bate Besong, Bole Butake among others,

have made a mark on Cameroon Anglophone Literature with a variety of themes like feminism, the political situation and marginalization.

In his article “Who is Ethnic?” Werner Sollars writes that as Everett Hughes (1977) suggested in a personal letter, the association of the ethnic with “the other” is not made in some languages. According to him, “in Greece the national bank is the ethnic bank. In this country, Hughes continues, ethnic banks cannot be the national bank ... To say it in the simplest and clearest terms, an ethnic, etymologically speaking is a *goy*”. The Greek word *ethnikos*, from which the English ‘ethnic’ and ‘ethnicity’ are derived, meant ‘gentile’, ‘heathen’. Going back to the noun *ethnos*, the word was used to refer not just to people in general but also to ‘others’. According to the critic, in English usage the meaning shifted from ‘non-Israelite’ (in the Greek translation of the Bible the word *etlmikos* was used to render the Hebrew *goyim*) to ‘non-Christian’. Thus, the word retained its quality of defining another people contrastively, and often negatively. In the Christianized context the word ‘ethnic’ (sometimes spelled ‘hethnic’) recurred, from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century, in the sense of ‘heathen’. It is only in the mid-nineteenth century that the more familiar meaning of ‘ethnic’ as ‘peculiar to a race or nation’ re-emerged (219).

The question of ethnic group has been a concern of Gordon Milton in his *Assimilation, integration & pluralism* (1978) who mentions that “first and foremost, we note that early man identified himself as a member of a group” (106). Milton gives the etymology of the word “ethnicity”, which is from the Greek word “*ethnos*”, and meaning “people” or “nation” and this refers to a group with a shared feeling of peoplehood as an “ethnic group” (107).

An important essay by Taylor Charles in “The Politics of Recognition” (1994 b: 38) distinguishes between the typically modern “politics of equal dignity” and the recently discovered “politics of difference” (or identity). As Taylor argues, the politics of equal dignity seeks to establish what is universally the same and identical basket of rights and immunities. However, as far as the politics of difference is concerned, the author contends that:

what we are asked to recognize is the unique identity of this individual or group from everyone else. The idea is that it is

precisely distinctness that has been ignored, glossed over, assimilated to a dominant or majority identity. And this assimilation is the sin against the ideal of authenticity.

Since the identity is partly shaped by recognition we receive from the social setting in which we live, Taylor argues that “non-recognition or misrecognition” can be a form of oppression, “imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being” (25).

Hall Stuart in “The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power” (1992:6) says that identity is also relational, constructed through, not outside, the difference. In this article he argues that “it is only through the relation to the other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, that the ‘positive’ meaning of any term- and thus its identity- can be constructed”. Hall’s argument about “harmony in differences” can be well understood if we place the discourse in the current literary debates around ethnicity.

Mentan F.T. in *Democratization and Ethnic Rivalries in Cameroon* (1996) discusses the four principal ways, according to Africanist scholars, in which ethnicity serves to aid national integration in Cameroon. For these scholars, ethnic groups first tend to assume some of the functions of the extended family and hence they diminish the importance of kinship roles. Ethnic groups also serve as a mechanism of resocialization. To substantiate their views, Mentan continues, the scholars also argue that ethnic groups help keep the class structure fluid, and so prevent the emergence of castes. Lastly, ethnic groups serve as an outlet for political tensions. According to Mentan the society the Africanist scholars are talking about has got different diversities at different levels of the socio-political life: ethnic composition, geographical divisions, economic and religious organizations and the politico-colonial inheritances that brought about what we have today as the Republic of Cameroon.

The introduction of part V on *Nationalism* in Ashcroft (1995) et.al, insists that “the dangers of a national bourgeoisie using nationalism to maintain its own power demonstrates one of the principal dangers of nationalism - that it frequently takes over the hegemonic control of the imperial power, thus replicating the conditions it rises up to combat” (151). The critic is right because the so-called nationalism spirits that guide post-independence national bourgeoisie rest

on survivalist politics. That is why in most post-independence African countries where elections have made it possible that the leader accedes power he wants to hang on it forever.

Talking about the pitfalls of nationalism in “National Culture”, Frantz Fanon reiterates that

national consciousness, instead of being the all-embracing crystallization of the innermost hopes of the whole people, instead of being the immediate and most obvious result of the mobilization of the people, will be in any case only an empty shell, a crude and fragile travesty of what it might have been. The faults that we find in it are quite sufficient explanation of the facility with which, when dealing with young and independent nations, the nation is passed over for the race, and the tribe is preferred to the state. These are the cracks in the edifice which show the process of retrogression that is so harmful and prejudicial to national effort and national unity. We shall see that such retrograde steps with all the weaknesses and serious dangers that they entail are the historical result of the incapacity of the national middle class to rationalize popular action, that is to say their incapacity to see into the reasons for that action (Qtd from Ashcroft et.al., 156).

Many post-independence African countries are still held in bondage by a middle class that access to power under the name of “national liberation movements”. But these are, in the terms employed by Fanon, “an empty shell, a crude and fragile travesty of what they might have been”. The kind of dreamed nation they seem to build is characterized by dangers and retrogrades that are prejudicial to the mistakes of the past. For Chidi Amuta in “Fanon, Cabral and Ngugi on National Liberation”,

the nationalist writer’s preoccupation with the past must be ‘with the intention of opening the future, as an invitation to action and a basis for hope’. This recognition contains a tacit warning with far-reaching implications for the relationship between the writer and his people. It is the responsibility of the

writer not to immerse the people in a past they have left behind
but to join and inspire them to confront the present as a historic
moment (Qtd, Ashcroft, 160)

The past and the present in any circumstances interact and there is a need to reconcile the two in order to build a stronger and more peaceful future. The mistakes and wrongdoings of the past need a certain reparation, restoration and closure so that as new historicism claims, the past becomes more important for its lessons on faultiness that need to be fixed for the nation to move forward.

1.7.2. Literature on Epie's Fiction and the Post-independence African Leadership

Many critics and writers have been interested in the post-independence socio-political situation in Africa. Although Epie disclaims at the beginning of each of his books that events in the story have no connection with true historical occurrences, through deduction and nomenclature, as a reader who has the right to determine the meaning to the work of art under study, I state that the book is set in Cameroon. Alobwed'Epie's fiction is, among the so many others which were published before him, interested in the Cameroonian socio-political structures and institutions and the urgent need for change. Epie's tone, language, characters and themes are indictments of a post-independence Cameroonian experience where the contradiction between the rhetoric and reality is apparent.

As it is seen in the course of this study Epie's portrayal of his society is influenced by his personal experiences and views. However, this study looks at how the author's socio-historical background helps him to effectively represent the post-independence Cameroonian society.

Ogunbesan Kalawole in *West African Literature* (1975) says that at the initial stage virtually, all writers were content to affirm the worth of African civilization. He adds that cultural nationalism was a part of the anti-colonialism campaign, but that this mood of affirmation remained tenable as long as Africa continued to be a colony of Europe. He moves ahead to say that soon after independence was won, African writing entered a new phase; its mood became totally different

from the pre-independence mood of affirmation. For him, disillusionment set in since the ruling class was more interested in exploitation and in monopolizing the continent's natural resources than in improving the tragic scenario of post-colonial Africa.

Ohaeto Ezenwa in *Chinua Achebe: A Bibliography* (1997:77) argues that *No Longer at Ease* portrays the elite class gradually coming into leadership positions and the tragedy of Obi Okonkwo epitomizes the various elements that confronts the generation of his time and how they fare in the changing world of a nation on the verge of independence. He argues:

Obi's problems revolve around conflicting expectations held by the family, the clan, the village, the ethnic group and even the society. His eventual imprisonment for bribery which astounds people is rooted in the cumulative effect of those pressures.

Ohaeto's analysis appears to be a blame of Obi's financial problems because of the demands of his family, his clan, his village and his society. His definition of himself in the context of western values is what pushes him to mismanage the country's wealth. He finds himself unfit in the new changing African world with the new realities brought about by the clash of colonialism and African traditional values. The character Obi in *No Longer at Ease* is similar to so many characters in this study such as Mongo Meka, Dimvondo (the university rector), Ngii, etc. These from Epie's works misuse power and the national wealth under the cover of their ethnic origin.

Sèmbène Ousmane in *L'Harmattan* (1964) expresses strong sentiments against the exploitation of the people by the indigenous bourgeoisie and bureaucracy. At the same time, Ousmane is for the Harmattan of the title to clear the continent of corruption, injustice, and other obstacles to progress. But the question here today is whether, after around half a century, the harmattan has come and swept away the evils brought about by the post-independence African elite.

Bate Besong in "Postcolonial alterity in fiction: towards a definition of Alobwed'Epie's *The Death Certificate*" (2004: 2) discusses how manipulation and indoctrination guide the rulers of Ewawa. He further argues that specific ways of seeing and representing tribal, cultural and regional difference were essential to "The Council of the First Province's institutions of control,

and they also transform every aspect of society”. Furthermore, one can read from the blurb of *The Day God Blinked* that the novel

x-rays the politico-economic and socio-moral life of a rich and resourceful country called Ewawa from 1982 to 2007. The country had been ruled by a dynamic and insightful miser known as the Old Man. But because he had been in power for too long, his citizens longed for change. It happened when nobody expected it. The old man died suddenly in his sleep and was replaced by his handpicked successor. Unfortunately, the successor whom everybody had expected would do better plunged the country into terrible economic and moral crises. Lucia, the protagonist, narrates her predicament. To her, Ewawa is rotten in all totality. According to the editor, there is nowhere to turn for salvation. The editor concludes that the custodians of the economic, social, moral and spiritual values of the land are not up to the task and, as a consequence the country is left without any hope.

The post-independence situation in many African countries is portrayed by many scholars and critics as a phase of dictatorship, hopelessness and disenchantment. Moudileno mentions that

whereas the early years of national liberation gave many hope, the ways in which the transition took place, in which many of the new African leaders were or became puppets of the old colonial regime, would lead to a growing bitterness. Writers now faced with the dictatorial regimes of autocratic rulers quickly returned to questions of politics and power as major sources of inspiration. (Qtd, in *The African Novel*, 135)

This development and change of voice among post-independence African writers was dictated by the hard experience that was faced by the oppressed poor masses. For instance in Achebe's view, the main problem in contemporary Nigerian society, as well as in many independent African societies, is the lack of restraint in wielding power, added to an uncontrolled scramble for materialism, which in most cases results in the destruction of democratic principles. This

analysis of Epie's selected novels shows, however, that those who have power do not want to leave it and misuse it in a tribal conspiracy.

In his article "Prodigals of Dangerous Ambition: Commentary on Alobwed'Epie's *The Death Certificate*" Besong says that Alobwed'Epie's close to four decades sojourn, in Ngoa-Ekelle, Yaoundé has provided the author with an insider-view, in transmuting, into art form; the *folie de grandeur* of a twenty-three year *clannish, despotism; convulsing, in corruption*; on a road to nowhere (2). Tribalism as a political weapon, continues Besong, quickly attracted the ex-seminarians of "The Council of the First Province" (emphasis mine). Besong's analysis here relates with this study because, according to him, *The Death Certificate* is alternative fiction that anticipates, in every way, the better world of the future. It therefore entails a major shift in vision, as one can discover in the unveiling of the plot structure through the flashback technique. However, the present study proves that misusing power puts in danger not only the oppressed, but also the oppressor.

In an interview by Pierre Fandio, Besong was asked about the trends that push him and his contemporaries to defend the community. In "Anglophone Cameroon at crossroads: an interview with Dr. Bate Besong" (2004) he answers that:

the alternative literature that we write, with apologies to no one, is people-oriented literature, and this entails a dialectical approach of looking at society from the materialist angle, and unearthing the contradictions which bring about discrimination, injustice, exploitation, and marginalization in Cameroonian society... We question those in authority. We know that under a dictatorship, a nation dies... We prefer bald statement to enfeebled imitation. We are no one's catspaws.

Cameroon at the time of Epie and his contemporaries was convulsing in unprecedented forms of poor leadership based on discrimination, injustice, exploitation and marginalisation. The writers' concern is now to present the society the way it is in order to bring about changes. However, in his conclusion Besong (op.cit) becomes too violent and pessimistic. He reiterates:

Again and again, in *The Death Certificate*, the vision centres on the idea that no new society can be built in our trouble history unless there is social revolution which destroys, completely, the existing socio-political structure. Ewawa's problems will not be solved peacefully. When the child is coming from its mother's womb, he will come with blood. If there is no bloodshed, Ewawa, cannot have justice.

Contrary to Besong's argument, Ewawa nation (which alludes to Cameroon) does not have to shed blood in order to get rid of the criminal rulers. In the democratisation process, I think that "destroying completely the existing socio-political structure" is not an adequate way to peace and development. The destruction may cause many casualties which could include the change initiators themselves. On the blurb of *Exhumed, Tried and Hanged*, it is said that it

elucidates the abuse of folk good faith and ignorance by a conceited, ruthless and grasping leadership that sows carnage among the natives of Etambeng, culminating in unprecedented exodus, untold suffering and death of the people in neighboring villages. Upon the death of the perpetrator the few returnees are made to listen to the gruesome stories of how the aggrieved children of his victims took revenge on his corpse.

This is an indication that history never tolerates. The oppressed, though helpless and no matter how long the process will take, will rise one day and get rid of the oppressor. In the same lines of thoughts, Nkengasong's latest novel *Across the Mongolo* recalls the rebellious nature of Ngwe, the protagonist. Ngwe's ideas and actions are the same feelings as Anglophone youths who would like to take the Anglophone cause in their hands and fight for liberation since they cannot endure the "severe personal suffering dictated by falsehoods, the banalities and the panoply of macabre intrigues by leadership that indicts virtue and celebrates crime" as once asserted by the critic in a review of *The Day God Blinked* (Blurb). My point is that transitional justice is needed in order to rebuild the country. However, this should not be hurried up.

Ngwane's (2012) publication makes him one of the most renowned and committed Anglophone Cameroon writers. It is a collection of three influential essays. In "The Mungo Bridge" the writer

indicts the fragile relations between La République du Cameroun and the Southern Cameroon. In this article questions on the failed union are raised, and uncompromisingly suggests solutions. Secondly, “The Anglophone File” discusses the narrow and barren politics of belonging that have exacerbated divisions and controversies among Anglophone elites, turning them into political fodder for the Francophone dominated state. The essay suggests ways out of the divisions and intrigue that have kept Anglophones permanently at daggers drawn against each other, and facilitated their exploitation, humiliation and marginalization. The third essay, “Fragments of Unity”, concerns the South West Region, whose leaders Ngwane criticizes of political opportunism and of a chronic lack of vision and fortitude with regard to the socio-economic development of the region. It calls for a leadership free of opportunism, ethnocentrism, mediocrity and oppression.

This study, while recognising the insightful contribution made by the various critics to the debates around the writer’s perception of his society, differs from the aforementioned in that it concentrates on the themes of ethnocentrism, otherness and power abuse in the post-independence Cameroonian society as portrayed by Alobwed’Epie. It shows that such evils are tools used by politicians in Ewawa nation to conquer and maintain power. While this society is no longer in the hands of Western colonial oppressors, the evils at hand are committed by natives who were originally endowed the mission of safeguarding the unity among all citizens. This work therefore makes a contribution with a note that cultural specifics should bring about an interrelationship of cultures that enables people to come to terms with differences by providing them with the cultural power of recognition and acknowledgement. In fact, in order to strengthen one’s own historical identity in the post-independence Cameroonian reunification process, one has to recognize and appreciate differences in the collective identity.

1.8. Hypotheses

This work proceeds on the premise that, in Epie's fiction, the geographical, historical, ethnic, and cultural differences among the peoples of 'Ewawa' are presented as leading to 'othering' (discrimination against) some of the people and consequently there is denial of their rights by those in power. In this case, the unity and the reunification process remain on paper.

1.9. Significance of the Study

This study seeks to show how Alobwed'Epie selected fiction determines the social dynamics of ethnic and linguistic differences in a multi-cultural society and how political leaders attempt to manipulate them in advancing their political agenda. A comprehensive study of the concepts of ethnocentrism, discrimination, injustice, and abuse of power needs to be carried out within the Postcolonial Cameroonian context. These issues we are engaged with are vital in Africa's social development and the themes need to be clarified from the perspective of how they have been understood and exercised through time and up to the present. This has led critics to suggest interdisciplinary approaches, including the relationship between creative literature and political reality. This analysis brings freshness to the discussion on the role of literature in promoting human rights. This ground is also fertile for further and more advanced investigations and widens the field of critical scholarship in the African novel for those who want to teach new African novels. It has been said, Alobwed'Epie's fiction has received little attention in post-independent African literary debates. As a new writer on the literary scene, Alobwed'Epie attracted our attention because of the way he uses art to mirror his society in its time. He has a peculiar attraction for us in the way he deals with life in this imaginary postcolonial nation, Ewawa, and how he links politics to literature. He seems to be talking about people we see around us in our everyday life. He has an insight into human nature. The events brought before the reader are such that one can see in everyday life. After reading this work, we are left with a better understanding of the human nature: the themes developed here such as discrimination, ethnocentrism, corruption, unemployment, power abuse, oppression and governance are very sensitive in our contemporary societies. Still another reason is the didactic implication of the

work to an African audience. What is done in Ewawa can also be done elsewhere. It is applied to any society because a writer does not write for one group of people but writes for the world at large.

1.10. Theoretical Framework

This discussion used two theories: Postcolonial theory and New Historicist approach of literary criticism. This study fits in the Postcolonial theory in the sense that it is a continuation of the major issues and debates in the field of post-colonial literary studies. It is a theory that was expounded by such scholars as Homi Bhabha, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Stuart Hall, and Bill Ashcroft. In *The Post-colonial Studies Reader* (1995) by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (eds.), it is pointed out that this field itself has become so heterogeneous that it involves “discussion about experience of various kinds: migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place, and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe such as history, philosophy and linguistics” (2). The editors above give a distinction between postcolonial (in one word) and post-colonial (hyphenated). For them,

these terms themselves encapsulate an active and unresolved dispute between those who would see the postcolonial as designating an amorphous set of discursive practices, akin to postmodernism, and those who would see it as designating a more specific, and 'historically' located set of cultural strategies. Even this latter view is divided between those who believe that post-colonial refers only to the period after the colonies become independent and those who argue, as the editors of this book would, that it is best used to designate the totality of practices, in all their rich diversity, which characterise the societies of the post-colonial world from the moment of colonisation to the present day, since colonialism does not cease with the mere fact of political independence and continues in a neo-colonial mode to be active in many societies. (xv)

While applying this theory in this study, we shall affirm our agreement with the critics that

all post-colonial societies are still subject in one way or another to overt or subtle forms of neo-colonial domination, and independence has not solved this problem. The development of new elites within independent societies, often buttressed by neo-colonial institutions; the development of internal divisions based on racial, linguistic or religious discriminations; the continuing unequal treatment of indigenous peoples in settler/invaser societies - all these testify to the fact that post-colonialism is a continuing process of resistance and reconstruction. (2)

The different societies presented by Epie's selected novels suffer this form of neo-colonialism by the elites in Ewawa. They also suffer from the development of internal divisions based on ethnic and linguistic discrimination. The postcolonial theory helped us to ponder on these dimensions in a way that engages the reader in more debates. In "No Master Territories" Trinh T. Minh-Ha discusses the question of Centre and Margin and mentions that

"they promptly reject it as they assign it to their one-place-fits-all 'other' category and either warily explain that it is 'not quite what we are looking for' and that they are not the right people for it; or they kindly refer it to other 'more adequate' whereabouts such as the 'counter-culture', 'smaller independent', 'experimental' margins. To use marginality as a starting point rather than an ending point is also to cross beyond it towards other affirmations and negations. (216)

The question of centre and margin is also central to this analysis. Some of the people feel like they are pushed to the margins by the centre and this has generated an unending conflict between the "sons and daughters of the soil" and "the others" from the 8th, 9th, and 10th provinces.

Central in this discussion is also the question of ethnic groups and related tensions. So many postcolonial African countries are under the yoke of ethnic tensions which are exacerbated by leaders who want to manipulate these divisions to maintain themselves on power. To analyze the different tensions portrayed by Epie's selected novels, a look was made at

other forms of poststructuralist analysis, of the 'essential' or 'natural' or 'commonsense' categories by which identity is constructed: 'race', ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality. After Fanon, and after Said, postcolonialism sees identities, not as fixed and rooted, but as products of a world in constant motion. Although 'race', ethnicity, and nationality may appear to be the solid bedrock upon which we shape a sense of ourselves, these are not, nor have they ever been, stable, but are always being formed and reformed in different patterns and combinations in a process of constant interaction and change shaped by historical circumstance. (Qtd in Ashcroft et.al, 19)

Ethnicity and nationhood in the fictionalized societies are very sensitive issues in many postcolonial African countries. In the society portrayed by Epie, colonization brought along with it foreign languages which today constitute the major element of division. The history of Cameroon (or Ewawa, in the terms of Epie) is complex and requires a kin analysis of the different circumstances that created the nation.

Another theory that guided this study is New Historicism. It is a theory that evolved in the 1980s, with Stephen Greenblatt as its main proponent, and became quite popular in the 1990s. The first appearance of New Historicism; its concepts, themes and procedures were most advanced by scholars of the English Renaissance in the late of 1970s and early of 1980s. They stressed their attention to the literary form of drama, and alert within such texts the voices of the oppressed, the marginalized, and the dispossessed. Among other things, it suggests that literature must be studied and interpreted within the context of both the history of the author and the history of the society. While using this approach the study looked at the works and considered other writings that may have inspired it as well as the life of the author and how it relates to the text. According to Foucault no historical event has a single cause; rather, each event is tied into a vast web of economic, social, and political factors. Foucault sees history in terms of power and views power not simply as a repressive force or a tool of conspiracy but rather as a complex of forces that produces what happens.

Unlike previous historical criticism, which limited itself to simply demonstrating how a work reflected its time, New Historicism evaluates how the work is influenced by the time in which the author wrote it. And Alobwed'Epie, who is our main focus here, writes in a post-independence and re-unification era where the Cameroonian society is in hot socio-political debates. New Historicism also examines the social sphere in which the author moved, the psychological background of the writer, and the books and theories that may have influenced him or her. Beyond that, many critics also look at the impact a work had and consider how it influenced others. New Historicism is more concerned with ideological products or cultural constructs which are formations of any era.

Furthermore, New Historicism acknowledges that any criticism of a work is colored by the critic's beliefs, social status, and other factors. Both the work and the reader are affected by everything that has influenced them. New Historicism thus represents a significant change from previous critical theories like New Criticism, because its main focus is to look at many elements outside of the work, instead of reading the text in isolation.

New Historicism is relevant to our study in that it concentrates on those at the top of the social hierarchy (i.e. the church, the government, the upper-classes) without sparing those at the bottom of the social hierarchy (the lower-classes and other marginalized peoples). And our analysis is about themes of those classes' concern. Also, New Historicism helped us to draw from the existing situations in order to interpret how governments, institutions, and culture are working in the society of our concern. This theory also helped me to analyze Alobwed'Epie's fiction in relation to his socio-political environment from which he draws his protagonists. In the mirror of this theory I found answers to the problem at hand in order to empower the disadvantaged groups.

In essence the use of a theory in literary works would be flexible. In effect, there is no claim for exclusiveness on theories. This means that every work develops its greatness on the background of the epoch from which it evolved. This flexibility is accordingly determined by the problems that occurred and resolved within with the provision of theories. The theories that inform this study are complementary one another rather than contradicting.

1.11. Research Methodology

The method that was used for this research was fundamentally qualitative. It is a desk research involving textual analysis. The study was library based. The library was used to research and review what scholars have written about Africa in general and Cameroon in particular and the predicament after colonization and the re-unification process in order to understand and interpret the selected texts. Four of Alobwed'Epie's novels were my primary sources. Two theories (Postcolonial and New Historicism) were used as instruments and tools of analysis to interpret the texts. My analysis was supplemented by secondary sources and existing literature on Cameroon, which consisted of books related to the topic, literary magazines and journals, articles, reports, official documents from the Anglophone publications and websites which are relevant for grounding my arguments. By the use of such materials, I was able to obtain all necessary information. And thus I did an objective literary analysis of data collected in relation to the topic.

1.12. Encountered Problems

The researcher encountered the problem of finding adequate relevant information about the topic at hand and especially about the author, Alobwed'Epie, who is not very popular among East African scholarship. In fact, not only is the writer seemingly new in the literary debates in the postcolonial African literary debates, but also few critics have been interested in the question of ethnocentrism and otherness in Cameroon after re-unification. The limitation is also that due to the complexity of the Anglophone-Francophone antagonisms I was not able to fully evaluate the socio-political development trends in post-independence Cameroon. Financial constraints also affected the study, especially the fact that some materials had to be ordered from Amazon. However, the researcher overcame these constraints and made the study more successful. I managed to get the necessary materials and did an objective study of the selected texts.

1.13. Ethical Consideration

The researcher tried to adhere to all the ethical considerations of carrying out research, more so the acknowledgement of all sources of data irrespective of whether they have been published or not.

CHAPTER TWO: ETHNICITY AND ETHNOCENTRISM

2.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the notions of “ethnic groups” and “ethnocentrism” in general, and in Cameroon in particular, as they are presented in Alobwed’Epie’s selected fiction. It tries to answer these questions: “How does the author’s socio-historical background help him to effectively represent the turbulence and internal divisions of his society? Does this representation of fragmented structures reflect a collective experience or it is the author’s own views that are projected? Various instances of ethnic discrimination are discussed here as they lead to oppression of “the other” in the selected novels. Specifically, this chapter aims at showing that, in the society of our concern, the question of ethnicity is manipulated by leaders in order to discriminate against some people and deny them their rights. Minority groups are discriminated and oppressed by dominant groups who want to preserve supremacy and maintain power in order to achieve personal interests.

2.2. The Question of Ethnicity and Ethnocentrism

Understanding ethnicity involves exploring what is meant by an ethnic group or the ‘character or quality’ that such social groups possess. In this section we will discuss the notions of ethnic groups and ethnocentrism as they are presented by the author in order to bring out aspects of the socio-cultural, political, religious and economic realities of the different societies in the selected novels. The selected texts are not only an indictment of the Cameroonian post-colonial manipulation of ethnicity and the practice of ethnocentric politics but also of the society’s weaknesses at a particular moment in its history. Ewawa’s socio-cultural tragedy as portrayed by Epie is shared by many other post-independence African countries that face ethnic based social turbulences. For example, the author himself observes that:

The Death Certificate was inspired by the way black African leaders have torn the continent apart with the type of ethnic politics they practice. After their countries' independence, they became not leaders of their countries but leaders of ethnic groups, their ethnic groups. (Interview, December 2006)

Informed by African realities in general, and his country's in particular, the writer succeeds in portraying a society that is plagued by ethnic divisions. The socio-economic and political orientation of the novel indirectly expresses the public mistrust of and disaffection with political abstractions and diversionary measures of the elites of the fictional Ewawa nation-state. There is a re-creation by the author of a fragmented society that may be accounted for by the author's own past. As a Cameroonian Anglophone writer, Epie's concern in his fiction is consonant with Bate Besong's affirmation that "the Anglophone Cameroonian Writer at home and in the Diaspora must tell the outside world the story of his tragic land from the point of view of its hostage minority". Most post-colonial Anglophone Cameroonian writers express their feeling of subjugation because of their ethnic origins. For example Epie in the same interview says again:

the history of Anglophone writing is, in fact, the attempt to provide a fictional representation of the history of a people subjugated under Ahmadou Ahidjo's feudalism imperialism and, now, under over two decades of the dwarf vision of the "New" Deal. Art provides the writer the arena in which to explore political ideas as refracted through human character. (5)

Since this study is conducted within the framework of New Historicism, this chapter evaluates how Epie's works are influenced by the time in which he wrote them. Alobwed'Epie writes in a post-independence and re-unification era where the Cameroonian society is involved in fierce socio-political debates. New Historicism, within the sociological and historical contexts, examines the social sphere in which the author moved, the psychological background of the writer, and the books and theories that may have influenced him or her. New Historicists are particularly concerned with ideological products or cultural constructs which are formations of any era.

We learn from History and Anthropology that the first “groups” of people were formed for purposes of hunting and protection. As the society evolved, these groups came to be more complex to involve social interactions where shared languages played a very important role. Modern societies have formed “groups” of various sizes, for different reasons and to serve different needs. Families, homesteads, hunting groups, work teams, political parties, religions, feminist and national groups proliferate, sometimes competing for loyalty with their rulers, sometimes meeting different needs in the same or overlapping membership, sometimes conferring power, and sometimes stripping others of power.

Societies all over the world will tend to split into groups of belonging at all level. This is a natural trend which has nothing to do with bad leadership. Epie’s *Exhumed, Tried and Hanged* delves this notion of groups. For instance the elders are convened to a meeting to analyse a more serious issue and “customarily, the people sat according to their Houses or kin groups in which House-heads or delegated spokespersons spoke for the group” (3). On the one hand, the notion of “Houses” and “kin groups” informs us that the people in this society are group-conscious and comfortable when they keep close to their different groups where they belong, be it a family, a household or a clan. On the other hand, “speaking for the group” is an indication that the general interest of a whole community is not the goal. That is, the spokesperson will raise issues that are of interest to only his kin/her group and not the society as a whole. Likewise, in the context of the different societies portrayed by Epie, groups are formed in order to preserve or defend the members’ own interests. In the novel *The Death Certificate* for example the First and the Second provinces and the 8th, 9th and 10th provinces represent respectively the ruling and the ruled ethnic groups where the ruling groups are satisfied and the ruled are not and thus keep on negotiating their place and claiming their rights over access to the national cake.

Epie’s approach to the question of ethnicity in his society is uncompromising. He portrays a society that is caught in-between the turbulences caused by ethnocentrism and the willingness to overcome them. It is important to notice that Epie’s characterisation is inclusive of the different ethnic groups in Ewawa nation. In *The Death Certificate* for example, on the one hand, there is Musa, Nchinda, Mula and Ndjock who are respectively from the 8th, 9th, 10th and the non-

existing 11th province and which, according to them are the marginalised provinces in Ewawa. Though they converge on most issues about Ewawa, they sometimes do not share the same view points. On the other hand, Obona, Emda Odu, Reverend Father Jean-Pierre Engo, the driver who carried Mula and his allies to Ndotelle, the young man who welcomed and guided them in Mongo's mansion, Claudine and Vivienne are all from the First or Second Provinces and are the ones who helped to release the information about the weaknesses of the First and Second Provinces. For instance, Mr. Emda Odu rejects Madame Jacqueline Diwona's suggestion that Mongo Meka's disfigured body should be taken to France for embalment in order to restore it to "the semblance of normality" (60). Mr. Odu, though he is "a son of the soil", is the only one who dares to express different views from Diwona's. For this patriot the restoration of Mongo's corpse will "cost hundreds of millions when there are hundreds of millions of Ewawaians who need medical care"(61). This means that not all the members of the same group always share the same points of view. Although Nchinda and Mula's conversation about the people from the First Province report that "they [the people of the First province] are a gluttonous, extravagant and concupiscent lot" and that "to them, childbirth, baptism first communion, marriage, and death celebrations are occasions for the promotion of these vices"(97), at least we have Mr. Odu who is far different from his fellows.

Kisangani & Shaw (1998:53) argue that

ethnicity, as a political determinant, became entwined with social class formation. Ethnic groups with access to modern sectors developed self-consciousness and were able to capitalize on this access to modern roles. This favoritism unleashed political conflict as ethnicity became politicized in the post-colonial period. A dominant elite policy has been to exclude potential rivals from sharing state spoils.

Ethnicity in most of the post-independence African societies is politicized. Leaders manipulate the question of ethnic belonging in order to gain access to power and amass wealth. That is why the other groups which are not given the same opportunities to get access to power develop self-consciousness. If a given category of people starts to be group-conscious, we may find that the

group so categorized, if commonly oppressed, discriminated against or treated differently, might become a group acting together to defend itself, or improve its lot.

Epie's socio-political background played a great role in his writing. He himself reveals it in an interview with *The Ngoh-Kuoh Review* when he agrees that:

Writing in politics or about politics cannot be a disservice to literature. Most writers in politics write against abuses. They talk of change and fair play. This cannot be a disservice. What is annoying is that those who are criticized hardly write back. I once challenged the opulent to give us an inside view of their palaces as we give them the inside view of our ghettos, but perhaps because of hidden guilt none responded.

Epie's writings about the turbulences in his society are mostly informed by his own experiences and sufferings because he is from the part of the country or from the ethnic group that lives in "ghettos" while other parts of the country or other ethnic groups are living in mansions.

Epie addresses effectively the question of ethnic groups. For him, the fact that one group is discriminated against may be partly accounted for by the oppressed's naivety. Nkede, one of the elders of Etambeng says: "We the people of Etambeng are daft when it comes to dealing with the people of Etaku. We are naïve. We render ourselves inferior when we meet with them. We genuflect before them"(20). This elder is conscious of the difference that already exists between the 'people of Etambeng' and the 'people of Etaku'. We are presented with two villages where one is presented as acting as superior to the other. My argument here is that the more you genuflect in front of somebody, the weaker you become. People of Etambeng genuflect as a sign of inferiority and thus as "subjects" since "the chief of Etaku now behaves as if this village is an appendage of Etaku". And whatever mutual agreement that is made, "he and his subjects abrogate with impunity"(20). But the inferior group is ready to get rid of such denigration and seek for the independence of their village. Doctor Ebule reminds them of a proverb that "he who sleeps on a borrowed mat soon finds himself sleeping on the ground". We have found ourselves on the ground and it is time to take action"(22). Ebule is not any simple citizen from Etambeng. He is a learned medical doctor and has experienced much of this denigration by Etaku people.

Etambeng people have started to be conscious of their being considered “second citizens” in their country and they are showing signs of revolting against this denigration.

The oppressed group in Etambeng village has devised ways to leave behind a generation that is more conscious of their “groupness”. They do so in art forms that are transmitted from one generation to another. Ebule, a young man at the meeting moved to the centre of the grove and intoned a song: ‘Fathers of the land that is your land/ Mothers of the land that is your land/ If you will develop it do so now’(23). Ebue reminds the assembly of this proverb, “it is not how long rain beats a person but how deeply it soaks him that chills him” (24). Ebue is right because Etambeng people have “endured such humiliation from the people of Etaku” (25). The form of humiliation Etambeng people have suffered is unbearable as another elder at the meeting mentions: “People of Etambeng, the spleen our brothers have vomited here is not strange to any of us. We have in one way or another been subject to the spite and contempt with which the people of Etaku treat us”(Epie, 2010: 24). Spite and contempt here are forms of denigration and discrimination against Etambeng people by Etaku people, the dominant ethnic group.

The author interestingly brings to the stage the ethnic tensions between Etambeng and Etaku people with the use of songs and proverbs. These literary techniques help the reader to appreciate more the tensions and subjugation between the two groups. The song intoned by Ebue at the meeting is a way of awakening Etambeng people. They do not have to close their hands and endure silently humiliation. If it has been like that for years, now it is high time they changed their passivity into engaging actions to defend their rights. In addition, the author’s word choice has been done with great admiration: “rain”, “soaks”, “chills”, “spleen”, and “vomit” in the quotations above show the reader that the two groups are leaving in unending ethnic tensions.

Cameroon, the society of our concern, contains about 200 ethnic groups who speak many different languages. In general, Bantu-speaking peoples inhabit the south, and Sudanic-speaking peoples dominate in the north. Among the more important ethnic groups are the Bamileke, a Bantu-speaking people, and the Fulani, a Muslim people. Beti and Bulu ethnic groups (from which the current president comes) dominate government and parastatal organizations (Dicklitch, 2002). In the course of this discussion, I have considered Anglophone Cameroonians

and Francophone Cameroonians as two opposing ethnic groups because of their antagonisms that have existed for long. This has also been stated by Piet & Nyamnjoh (1997:208):

The root of this problem may be traced back to 1961 when the political elites of two territories with different colonial legacies - one French and the other British - agreed on the formation of a federal state. Contrary to expectations, this did not provide for the equal partnership of both parties, let alone for the preservation of the cultural heritage and identity of each, but turned out to be merely a transitory phase to the total integration of the Anglophone region into a strongly centralised, unitary state. Gradually, this created an Anglophone consciousness: the feeling of being ‘marginalised’, ‘exploited’, and ‘assimilated’ by the francophone-dominated state, and even by the francophone population as a whole.

Piet & Nyamnjoh inform us of a clash between two different cultures with different backgrounds and sizes. In such circumstances, the “strong” culture overwhelms the “weak” one and there is a relationship of “subject”-“object”. Therefore “the result is the positioning of the Anglophone as the ultimately “marginalised”, a concept which reinscribes the binarism of centre/margin”(214) [Ashcroft et. al. (2007)] that will be discussed in the following section. However, Epie’s concern about this form of relationship between the two Cameroons is a result of his own experiences. He once again admitted that:

the history of Cameroon is a permanent reality that is based on the fact that, once, French Cameroun reunited with English Cameroon. It would be a fallacy to say the contrary. So, there is nothing like subversion when one says Anglophone literature is different from Francophone literature. The two are different in history and experience, territory, population, style and language. The mask of integration cannot destroy the fact that Anglophones and Francophones have different political, educational, economic, social, psychological etc. experiences of Cameroon. Since literature expresses experiences, the one that

expresses Anglophone experiences surely differs from that which expresses Francophone experiences. As a united country however, there are grounds of convergence. (Interview with *The Ngoh-Kuoh Review*, 2011)

The fact that the two Cameroons have got different historical backgrounds should not be a case of diversion and hatred today in the post-reunification era. The Anglophone experiences expressed by Epie as different from the Francophone's are finally a reflection of the socio-political realities of post-independence Cameroon that the writer exposes. And this is, among other things, the role of a writer as once was affirmed by George Ngwane that "a writer is a compass indicating the direction that the ship of state should take; but the actual pilot is the politician who has a choice to ignore or respect the directives of the compass". Epie's role here has been only to indicate the directions in which the country should be governed. It is for the Ewawaian politicians to respect or ignore what the writer has preached.

Ethnic theorists have often dwelled on the antithetical nature of ethnicity. In ethnic name-calling the tendency persists, as George Murdock argues in Seligman's *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, that "a people usually calls itself either by a flattering name or by a term signifying simply 'men', 'men of men', 'first men', or 'people'. Aliens on the other hand, are regarded as something less than men; they are styled 'barbarians' or are known by some derogatory term" (631). To effectively bring this to stage, Epie makes use of a stylistic device: parallelism. In effect, Etambeng is a location in Cameroon Anglophone on the one hand, and Etaku is in Cameroon Francophone. In his novels, Epie often makes use of such kinds of parallelisms when he distinguishes the two antagonistic groups. In *The Bad Samaritan*, for example, he uses such expressions as "the ruling clans" (9), "people of this region" (9), "tribal conspiracy" (12), etc. or in *The Death Certificate* such expressions as "the First Province" (10), "one of us" (27), "First Citizen" (31), etc. to refer to the Francophones. As the phrases indicate, the people referred to are the privileged and the only rightful owners of the nation and its wealth. And such expressions in *The Bad Samaritan* as "the non-ruling clans" (12), "West Bassiland" (57), etc. are used to refer to the Anglophones who feel that they are marginalised because of their origin start to be group-conscious and search for recognition and protection.

The previous discussion helped us to answer the first question posed at the beginning of this chapter. We have shown that the author's socio-historical background helps him to insightfully represent the turbulence and internal divisions of his society. In the following discussion we are going to see how this representation of fragmented structures reflect a collective experience or if it is the author's own views that are expressed.

2.3. The Question of Centre and Margin

The notion of centre-margin relationship in post-colonial African countries can be understood when one traces its origins. For example, colonisation in Cameroon enabled the French colonisers to establish their centrality in relation to the indigenous' marginality. As the centre, the colonisers controlled the country's politics, economics, and culture. As far as the origin of the centre in Cameroon is concerned, the renowned historian (Abwa 2003: 5) argues that:

The French who were given four fifths of the divided territory, applied an administrative system founded on the Jacobin tradition of centralisation. Everything is subjected to the commissary or to the high commissary of the French Republic, the personal representative of the French President.

Not only does centralisation take origin from colonisation and the Jacobin tradition, but also it has been reinforced by the one-party system established in Cameroon after independence. All the power is centralised in the hands of one person. Epie's novels are written in a period when world literary debates are around this ideology of centre-margin. JanMohamed (1995: 216) holds that "the centre itself is margin... [H]ow possible is it to undertake the process of decentralisation without being aware of the margins within the centre and the centres within the margin? Without encountering marginalisation from both the ruling centre and the established margin?"

The relationship between the centre and the margin is central in Alobwed'Epie's fiction. From the beginning of *The Death Certificate* the manner in which the road in central city "dissects the hub of the roundabout" symbolically explains how the "rulers of the land will dissect tribes and set them at each other's throat as the road sets the vehicles" (6). The hub here is the centre and in this novel, the centre is Dande, the capital city where the "sons and daughters of the first and

second provinces” make decisions which plunge Ewawa in total desolation. It is important here to notice that it is “the rulers who will dissect the tribes” and this for their own survival. Again for the centre to dissect is a symbol of how the “sons and daughters of the first and second provinces” diverge and divide when it comes to pulling the national cake on each one’s side. This means, as discussed above, that there are internal divisions within the same ethnic group and therefore the reason behind ethnicity for communal interests is questioned. Dande, the capital city is used by Epie to allude to Yaoundé, the political capital of Cameroon. It is located in the central province; it hosts the presidency and the central administration. In Epie’s fiction, it is constantly referred to as the “First Province”. It is like the lung that is supposed to blow air to the other provinces. However, this air which is spread in all directions from the centre does not contain the necessary oxygen to allow the other provinces to breathe correctly. Instead it contains much carbon dioxide which asphyxiates the margin.

The story in the novel *The Death Certificate* is set in Ewawa and Dande, locales which symbolically represent respectively Cameroon and Yaoundé. The country is ruled by autocratic and ethnocentric oppressors. Epie’s portrayal of the centre-margin relationship has the aim of “transforming rulers into leaders and politicians into statespersons”. The centre that plunders the country is a cartel composed by Mongo Meka, the Treasurer General and Acting Director General of the Central Bank; the Minister of Territorial Administration, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Armed Forces, the Delegate General of National Security, the Managing Director of the Ewawa Airlines, etc. All of them are natives of the First Province that embeds the political and economic centre. These plunderers of the national economy (located in the centre) draw off the country’s wealth openly while the natives of other provinces (located in the periphery) are dying of hunger and are desperately living in poverty. Mongo’s feigned death, which is a result of his embezzlement of FCFA 550 billion, helps Mula to discover the centre:

I could not allow the people of the First Province to have the monopoly of everything concerning the death of a Director General of a dying economy, his death, especially in an accident along an obscure road could be very suspicious. Secondly, to donate 600,000 Frs. to bury one single Ewawaian while thousands remained without food and shelter, was very

questionable. Although my nerves were cracking under the weight of what I saw and heard, I decided to remain behind to record, so to speak, the truth, if there was any, about the reality of the death and on-coming burial of Mongo Meka. (Epie, 2004: 23)

Mula's concern here is to identify and expose the wrongdoings by the centre in order to report the truth to the citizens and Ewawa posterity. He is convinced that this endeavour is risky, but the truth about what the plunderers of Ewawa economy are doing has to be known. For this journalist, there is no way the First Province or the centre can live in opulence while the other provinces or the margins are being excluded.

Mula is able to eavesdrop the conversation between the two eminent "sons of the soil": The Delegate General of national Security and the Minister of Armed forces. This conversation seems to be serious because of the two have to withdraw themselves from the crowd. They are talking in privacy about the death of another "son of the soil" who has been shot as he was robbing "the Mineral Water Company Headquarters" (24). The conversation is full of exclamation and interrogation markers. This indicates that the case is not only serious, but also intriguing. Another interesting technique employed in many of Epie's novels is the use of expression and words from indigenous languages or French: For example, in *The Death Certificate*, we have such expressions as "Ateh!" (26), "E tede tam!" (29), "Atite!" (36), "Wa!" (36), etc. and French expressions such as "Monsieur le Ministre! Monsieur le Ministre!. Ce n'est pas possible! Vraiment ce n'est pas possible!", "C'est quoi?" (24), "Monsieur, comment va le village?", "Bien, bien, sauf cette mort de mon cousin", "Qu'est ce qui s'est passé ?" (35), etc. the writer's intentions to use these expressions is multifaceted. On the one hand, the use of indigenous language expressions can be understood as a form of close attachment of the author to his shared tradition and the meaning of such expressions can be better understood when they are used in the vernaculars. On the other hand, the writer's use of French expressions is to ponder on once more on the question of different identities brought forward in his novels. In effect, the relationship between the Anglophones and Francophones in the novels under study can be well understood if the reader makes a close look at the way conversations take place

among them. For example; Mula and Ndock use French language in order to identify themselves with the “sons of the soil” because the funeral ceremonies at Mongo Meka’s compound are a concern of only the First and Second provinces where French is only used and accepted. The two “spies” use French language for the purpose of collecting enough information that will help to understand or dismantle the centre.

Epie’s fiction takes the reader to the history of post-independence Cameroon, especially the years of the 1980s-1990s. Epie recollects his memories of this period when the political, social, economic and religious realities of Ewawa were in turmoil. In the selected novels, the choice of literary devices is done with great admiration: the narratives are complex; the structures of the texts are a mixture of so many voices from so many characters and the setting shifts from one place to another. For example, the story in *The Death Certificate* moves from Ewawa to Kabon, Paris, back to Ewawa and later covers places like Switzerland, Frankfurt, Australia, and again back to Ewawa. The narrative in *The Day God Blinked* takes place in Prison where Lucy is detained for more than two years without trial. But it keeps on moving forward and backward in a form of flashbacks to different places like at university, in a hotel, in a hospital, in Etambeng village, etc. where the intrigues which lead to her imprisonment take place. These many complexities and shifts in the different stories are used to show an already divided society where no one person owns the truth or no one place is free from evils.

In Epie’s novels under study, it may rightly be said that there is not only one centre but a multiplicity of centres. No one place, no one person, no one point of view is the unique centre of the stories. Moreover, the writer lends different voices to different characters like Mula in *The Death Certificate* whose radicalism is questioned by his friends Musa, Ndjock, and Nchinda; Lucia in *The Day God Blinked* whose truth is challenged by the Parson and the police; Esole in *The Bad Samaritan* whose uprightness is put to test by his drivers and the whole socio-political system in place; and Nkwel’Ngole in *Exhumed, Tried, and Hanged* whose wisdom is put to task by his village mates. This technique is interesting because although the main characters may be taken to be the main narrators, they do not control the narrative from the beginning to the end of the novel. In most of the novels under this study, there is often an expression of different points

of view or opinions irrespective of the ethnic group one comes from or the regional origin one is strongly attached to and would otherwise defend and speak for.

In Epie's fiction, especially in *The Death Certificate* there is a form of neo-colonialism and subjugation by the First and Second provinces. Natives from the First and Second Provinces (the centre) consider themselves "superior men". Natives from the 8th and 9th provinces (the margin) are considered as "sub men". The First and Second Provinces amass all the country's wealth while Ewawa suffers from economic crisis and it is only those from the 8th, 9th, and 10th provinces who suffer more as Mula complains to Musa that "there is no reason why, in the name of goodness, we should be loafers in a country overflowing with milk and honey" (47). His further revelation to his friend that "if the four of us are loafers, it is because we are not part of a country we call ours" (47) helps us to argue that the Anglophone-Francophone division has created a category of people (the Francophone) who are the decision-makers or simply the centre and another category of the exploited (the Anglophone) who are the margins or strangers in their own country.

The country's political economy is exclusively kept in the hands of people of the First and Second provinces while the other provinces are experiencing a terrible humiliation as Ntongwe, one of the young who exhumed, tried and hanged Ngii laments: "It is painful to recall the dehumanizing acts of spiting us, deriding and discriminating against us and preventing us from exercising our God-given economic might simply because, as the people of the village claim, we are alien, we don't belong to them" (Epie, 2010: 105). In the same country, there are people who enjoy God-given rights and others who are deprived of them. Ako (2009: 150) affirms that the country has been divided into structures "in such a way that, consciously or unconsciously, there are those who benefit and there are those who grunt under its weight". In this sense, the Anglophone are those who "grunt" under the Ewawa structures while the Francophone are the ones who "benefit" from the country's wealth and economy which "rightly belongs" to them. Takougang (1992: 31) states that:

The Francophone Anglophone division has proven to be one of the most divisive factors in Cameroonian politics. At times called "les enemies dans la maison" (the enemies in the house)

because of their perceived dedication to the “dismemberment of the nation” the Anglophones have suffered from an economic, political, and cultural marginalization in the Republic of Cameroon.

Immediately after independence and the failure of the re-unification process, the literary agenda in Cameroon has become increasingly dominated by what is known as the ‘Anglophone Problem’. Most of the recently published Anglophone Cameroonian literatures present this problem in relation to the discriminated Anglophones. In an interview by Pierre Fandio, Bate Besong notes that:

Anglophone Cameroon Literature is there to awaken us from our usual torpor. It testifies to the undiminished intellectual life of the homeland. Every homeland – as you’ll recall – always needs a voice in writing and print; and Anglophone literature, created, in the service of Humanity, shuns, the concerns of the fragmentary, neo-colonial elite and deals with the experiences of the marginalized in Cameroonian society ; workers, the urban and rural masses.

The post-independence Anglophone Cameroon Literature is mostly dominated by “the experiences of the marginalised” in the Cameroonian Anglophone community in general. Among other writers, Alobwed’Epie uses his power of writing to put forward his views about how the divide has created centres and margins within the reunified Cameroon. Through Musa, Epie reiterates the quagmire caused by unemployment in the Republic of Ewawa. He says: “all of us, who left the university, none members of the First Province, suffered under Pilate alike” (Epie, 2010: 173). Musa states that they are unemployed because of their provincial origin. The people from the first and second provinces call themselves the “sons and daughters of the soil” and consequently if you come from these provinces, you are on power and rich or you are on power and rich because you come from these provinces. The rest of the Ewawaians are strangers in their own country.

It was not until the political liberalization process in the early 1990s that some members of the English-speaking elite started openly to protest against the supposed subordinate position of the

Anglophones and to lay claims for self-determination and autonomy. Ngwane (2012: 6) complains about this ‘discrimination’ of the Anglophones in the national life spheres:

How can any one explain the fact that for 49 years, since independence an Anglophone has never held the important ministry of Finance, Foreign Affairs, Minister of Territorial Administration, defence or Chief Justice of Cameroon? Look at the disproportions, in numbers of Anglophone Generals, Governors, SDOs, Secretary Generals, Chief Executives of Government Corporations and parastatals. In most of these places Anglophones occupy a second position. How can you explain the fact that there is “regional balancing” in schools and universities only when it comes to admissions of Francophone students. We did not unify to become second class citizens.

Cameroon was at first put together as a Federation. That meant that it was accepted as a multicultural, multiethnic, multi-lingual and multi-religious State. Alobwed’Epie’s fiction depicts the challenges and complexities of identity and belonging in this multicultural and bilingual society.

In both *The Death Certificate* and *The Day God Blinked* religious actors are presented as individuals who struggle more for positions rather than being good shepherds. They fight for positions of power in order to appropriate more resources. The church, instead of preaching unity and love, preaches ethnic and tribal inequality and hatred. In *The Death Certificate*, Archbishop Boa is the prototype of this church which preaches hatred among the people. He is not an epitome of moral and religious authority, but like his fellows government officials from the first and second provinces, he fuels tribalism which leads to murder. His speech in the organisation meeting of Mongo Meka’s funeral does not bring the spiritual dimensions expected from a man of God. He says:

Within the flick of the finger, we’ve lost two illustrious sons. As if that was not enough grief, we’ve also lost the cardinalship that rightly belongs to us. [...] But now, see, Fimi, an unknown Bishop, has been chosen through intrigues that I can’t reveal

here. Let me tell you, each and everyone of you should be conscious of the machinations of Fimi's people. They will want to unseat you as he has done me. (Epie, 2010: 64)

Hearing this message from Archbishop Boa, all the people at the meeting developed hatred for Fimi and his people. Ndjock recounts this in these words: "Insults swung from his Eminence's person, to his family, to his village, to his Sub-Division, to his Division and finally to his province. Hostility built up gradually. There was a general call for a boycott of all the masses that were to be celebrated by him [Cardinal Fimi] (104). Epie's use of formal speeches is the writer's style which helps the reader to get more meanings of the conveyed message.

Archbishop Boa has preached and sown hatred instead of love. Worse than that, he connives with Dimvondo, Delegate General for National Security to murder Cardinal Fimi, a son of the 9th province who has "usurped" Cardinalship that rightly belongs to the First Province. Luckily, the conspirators fail in their abomination, but Rev. Father Jean-Pierre Engo, Rev. Sister Marie Therese and the Archbishop of Liopopo who helped the Cardinal to escape from the decoyed chalice have to die because, as Dimvondo remarks, "if a lamb saves a kid from the knife, shan't it swallow the knife itself?" (127). Boa's speech and his conspiracy with The Delegate General of National Security (the centres) to murder His Eminence are clear indications of Ewawaians excessive greed for power and wealth. His white cassock that was supposed to be a sign of purity and love among the people turns to be a symbol of hatred and murder. Like his fellows from the first and Second provinces, he uses tribalism in order to achieve his interests. Tribalism or ethnocentrism is the main source of division and hatred in Ewawa nation. In the discussion, the "we" (self) that refers to the sons and daughters of the First and Second Provinces is contrasted to the "they" (other) that designates the sons and daughters of the 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th provinces. The former are the rightful owner of everything in Ewawa while the latter are the strangers in their own country, the usurpers who have usurped the First province's exclusive right to cardinalship.

Reading Epie's novels, we get an impression that the so-called reunification process is doomed to failure. Vubo (2005: 275) argues in his review of Piet & Nyamnjo's *Negotiating an*

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while the politics of identity in the majority of cases has been predicated on primordial historic/ethnic communities, the Anglophone community in Cameroon joins the rare cases of Eastern Timor, Eritrea and even the Western Sahara in a politics whose very basis can be traced to the colonial reshaping of the political configuration of parts of the South.

The authors contend that while Anglophone consciousness is an imagined construct, it is nevertheless rooted in territoriality, language, inheritance of a different colonial tradition, and, of course, a shared sense of history, distinct from the experiences of Francophone Cameroon. The Anglophone part of the country is comparatively smaller than its counterpart Francophone. Being small in size or farther from the centre is not a reason to justify their exclusion. In his interview with Joseph Sylvain Azongo Ngono, Alobwed'Epie, commenting on the numbering of the provinces, gives the meaning behind these concentric structures which all have a unique central point

which is the central point for each of them [...] If this is the first province, the second province is very near the first province and therefore enjoys more amenities. The third province enjoys some amenities and as you go round and round, by the time you get to the tenth province, you find that some people of the tenth province have nothing [...] So the closer you get to the centre the better and that is why in the novel, the first three provinces are the ruling provinces. (Interview conducted in December, 2006)

The centre is the decision-maker and all of those around it feel its reflection in one way or another. The farthest from the centre one is the more excluded or discriminated.

Ndjock, one of the characters in *The Death Certificate* notes the kind of discrimination and sense of inferiority that he suffers in his country, because he is neither from the French speaking nor the Anglophone part of Cameroon. He regrets, "I come from a non-existent province generally

known as the Eleventh Province. My great grandparents had migrated and settled in the tenth Province. Though discriminated against, my tendency is to defend the interest of two sister provinces-the ninth and the tenth. I have done so indiscriminately” (101). For Ndjock, and therefore for the novelist, the ethnic group problem in Ewawa is becoming more complex with new realities because there is rise of a non-existing 11th province of people who were born of parents from both the centre and the margin or who were born from the centre but who were brought up and educated in the margin. These “hybrids” are indiscriminately negotiating their place and identity. Therefore, for Ewawa to bring about peace and unity, the internal divisions based on ethnic discrimination must give place to a ground where all citizens indiscriminately get access to decision making positions and thus contribute to building a nation which is free from centres and margins prejudices. This would allow all the citizens to share the national cake.

2.4. Consequences of Ethnocentrism and Marginalisation

There are representative claims to ethnic discrimination of the elite or dominant classes in postcolonial African cultures and societies. However, there is in every society a certain amount of ethnocentrism, a tendency to see one’s own community as the centre and its traditions, beliefs, and customs as the yardsticks for the normal. What is distant and different will easily be perceived as strange and odd. In this sense, one who is not of the same ethnic group is marginal and thus has to be kicked out to “the periphery” or “the margins”. It is a form of discrimination or marginalization. As Huggan (2001: 20) explains, “marginality represents a challenge to the defining imperial “centre” [. . .] The embrace of marginality is, above all, an oppositional discursive strategy that flies in the face of hierarchical social structures and hegemonic cultural codes”.

The antagonism between Etambeng and Etaku villages in *Exhumed, Tried and Hanged* reflects such kind of marginalisation that is a reflection of the politics of ethnocentrism practised in the societies portrayed by Epie. Esape narrates the marginalization of Etambeng children in Etaku village. He says: “then soon, three children from our village stepped forth to dance. As they danced, three despicable Etaku boys came in and pushed them to *the corner* saying that *the*

center was reserved for the sons and daughters of Etaku”[italics, my emphasis] (18). Etaku people, considered as the dominant class, are contemptuous and pompous and see their village as the centre which insufflates Etambeng, the periphery. Etaku boys marginalize the people of Etambeng by pushing them to the corner (or periphery, or margins) because for the former, there is no way the latter can have access to the privilege offered by the centre. This degenerates into a fight for the centre between the two opposing groups. This fight is metaphorically used to refer to the unending conflict which exists between the Anglophone and Francophone ethnic groups where each and everyone wants to be at the centre.

Epie’s *Exhumed, Tried and Hanged* does not give full reason to the discriminated in their state of being oppressed. For Epie, Etambeng people are partly responsible of their being marginalized as it is suggested by Ebue, the wiseman of the village. Ebue accuses his tribesmen of self-destruction. He argues: “I can’t blame the Etaku people. We have enslaved ourselves to them. As they sing, so do we sing. As they walk, so do we walk. If they say we should jump, we don’t question. We simply ask, how high?” (Epie, 2010: 24). From this quotation, it is understood that Etambeng people have already internalised their state of being “inferior”. They have developed an inferiority complex that reduces them to almost nothing.

Marriage of Etambeng daughters to Etaku boys is regarded as a privilege. The reverse is not possible. Etambeng people consider this marriage of their daughters to Etaku boys as a form of domination and discrimination. This domination makes Etaku husbands beat to death their wives naked and for no mistake. Beating one’s wife in her nudity in the presence of men, children and other women is an extreme form of humiliation. This humiliation is referred to as “Etaku Syndrom” (Epie, 2010: 20). It is important here to notice how the writer dramatises nudity as only connected with Etambeng women (the oppressed) while no Etaku woman (the oppressor) took the courage to go and cover the nude daughters of Etambeng (20). In other words, humiliation is connected with Etambeng while Etaku finds pleasure practising it.

The consequence of the marginalisation discussed above is that Etambeng people have agreed “to ban [...their] people from going to Etaku and [...their] daughters from marrying the boys of Etaku” (24). Marriage has been proven to be a very effective social form that strengthens

relationships between families, tribes, and nations. But the case here is different. If Etambeng people have decided to ban marriages and visits with Etaku people, the society is losing a social tie which facilitates unification.

It is important here to recall that the reunification process was based on the recognition of two different cultures that characterised the two Cameroons before reunification. However, the situation gradually generated hatred in Cameroon of all what is connected with the ruling clan or the Francophone as Marie-Claire states that “whatever it was, there was the simple truth, all Ewawaians hated the people of the First and Second Provinces. The hatred had taste and smell. It was as solid as a bulldozer and moved like flowing lava. It hung in the air, on walls, everywhere. It was total” (Epie, 2004: 295). As mentioned above, the conflict between Etaku and Etambeng villages, on the one hand or the First and Second Provinces and the 8th, 9th and 10th Provinces on the other, are metaphorically used to represent respectively the conflict between the centre and the margin. The consequence is that the margin struggles for its independence from the centre’s domination. This replicates what Anglophone Cameroonians have always been claiming: to secede from Francophone Cameroon domination. But, this independence sounds too abrupt and, in its own sense, would not resolve the issue at hand.

Sango Nkwel’Ngole, the wisest of Etambeng village challenges his people. He does not share the view of braking off relationships between the two villages. He says: “all I am saying is that we are not yet prepared to sever ties with Etaku” (25). Nkwel’Ngole is right to advocate for non-secession for Etambeng people are not yet prepared. They need some more time to get prepared because they have been subjected to a very long domination and discrimination from all the country’s sphere of influence. Epie challenges the long held opinion among Anglophone Cameroonians who think that the only solution to their being discriminated is to secede from Francophone Cameroon. Though the 1961 plebiscite had made it possible that the two Cameroons got reunified, among the Anglophones, the feeling is that they are still spared from decision-making positions. However, secession for parts of the country that have been reunified for nearly half a century does not sound effective. Nkwel’Ngole gives powerful reasons why secession should not be taken as a decision. He argues: “We cannot fight the people of Etaku from an emotional standpoint, from the effects of rhetoric. They have had decades of steady

growth. Their children are more educated, more patriotic and richer than ours”(26). For this wise man, Etambeng people should not be antagonistic to Etaku people. Instead they should relate to them while they are still building up resources for development. Moreover, they need some more time in order to learn from them. And Nkwel’Ngole believes that with adequate planning and good management, Etambeng people shall catch up with Etaku people.

Musa in *The Death Certificate* mentions that “the father of the nation then went on T.V. again to address part of the nation that belonged to him more than others” (190). Musa’s impression is that when the father of the nation addresses the people, the message is only directed to his tribesmen. For him the country is divided in parts where some people are strangers in their own nation. There is a way to understand also that there are people who have more citizenship privileges than others in the same nation. They deserve more rights and dignity than others. If the President addresses part of the country, the implication is that there are people who have the right to be informed and others who are denied this fundamental right. “The sons and daughters of the soil (1st and 2nd provinces)” are the targeted part that the President is addressing. “The other Provinces (8th and 9th) are not concerned” with the death of the Treasurer General. This division as we discussed it above refers to the Anglophone and Francophone divide in Cameroon. As a head of State, he should be above such “ills of society”. But as Ndjock emphasizes, “he was not addressing the nation. He was addressing his tribe. He had a limited audience” and as Ndjock recalls, “what is good for the First and Second Provinces is good for the nation” (193). This form of exclusion and discrimination creates a feeling of fear and hopelessness among the oppressed as Ndjock remarks: “I am threatened. You are threatened. The whole nation is paralysed. The wound has gone beyond the bone. Not only the flesh is threatened, the spirit, too. [...] people hardly take things for granted now. They have learned to brave bombs and bayonets”(193-194).

The Death Certificate illustrates how evident exploitation is because “advantaged clans exploit disadvantaged ones” and “that is the natural trend” (71). However, Mula, the most perceptive Investigative Journalist does not see it this way. He ironically refers himself to as a “son of the soil”. For him “the death of a Treasurer General of Ewawa cannot be celebrated within tribal walls. When a person is born, his parents give him a name that attaches him to the family and

tribe. But when society starts giving him titles directly or indirectly, he ceases to belong to a particular family or group. He becomes a national figure”(31). The society fictionalised by Epie is caught in between a transition period where the widely held ideologies about tribalism are widespread and a period where the new emerging elite are forging a new nation free of such social evil. The young generation represented by Mula is dreaming of a world where national figures should rule for the interest of the whole community. Ewawa cannot develop if a part of the country or a part of the community is left behind because of its ethnic origin. As Mula says, at times it is important for “civilized people” to think and act beyond tribal and ethnic origins if they want to develop their village or country into a [semi]-cosmopolitan township because “development is not only in infrastructures and entertainment centres. Development is also in the characters of the citizens of a given area” (Epie, 2010: 25).

2.5. Conclusion

The chapter has shown that the notion of ethnic groups in Ewawa is manipulated by the rulers in order to satisfy their own interests. This is so because ethnic groups, although they may seem to be socially defined, are distinguished both from inside and outside the group on the basis of many different criteria. In the societies portrayed by Epie the defining characteristics of a particular ‘ethnicity’ are dependent upon the various purposes for which the group has been identified. As far as Ewawaian society is concerned, Alobwed’Epie’s novels provide evidence that the ethnic divide has created a conflict which has widened the gap between the centre and the margin. We have also shown that there is an open clash between the marginalized and those who do the oppressing. This antagonism develops into an unending conflict where the marginalised seek for independence from the centre’s domination. In the metaphor of ethnocentrism and marginalisation at all levels of Ewawa nation life, the author has succeeded to use imagination to mould reality the way he perceives it and sometimes from his personal experiences. The statements of each of the characters in the various novels are confessional and the author sometimes manipulates events to suit his own purpose and to depict the past he wants to re-create. The following chapter will be concerned with issues related to elections rigging and the challenges of holding power and abusing it in Ewawa nation.

CHAPTER THREE: ELECTIONS AND POWER

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, we discuss elections as a way to power and the farce inherited in them in the post-colonial societies presented by Epie's selected fiction. These societies pretend to be democratic and organize elections in order to choose their leaders. The discussion will focus on how these elections are rigged and how the so-called leaders misuse power and discriminate the minority groups. The leaders, as it can be read from the selected fiction prolong their stay on their positions at all levels of decision-making. The different forms of power in this study are analysed as working in one elaborate apparatus in order to keep the status quo. The once "elected" leaders turn into absolute rulers referred to in this analysis as tyrants who sow carnage among their subjects. The concern of this chapter then is to show how Epie's selected fiction demonstrates that power, wrongly used, defeats the oppressor as well as the oppressed. In addition, the researcher in this chapter explores how some moral values are destroyed nationwide in Ewawa.

3.2. Electoral Fraud

Elections have been an integral part of African politics since independence. The electoral crises that gripped most African countries in the last half-century, fuelled by allegations of rigged elections and marked by ethnic and political violence, are evidence of the problems that confront democracy in Africa. Today nations worldwide have opted for democratic regimes where leaders are chosen to power positions through votes. In Africa, elections as discussed above are a means to get power and this power is a means to excessive wealth.

Elections in post-independence Africa are also, where they have succeeded, considered to be a democratic way of getting rid of dictators who have crippled the continent. Ngugi (1969: 58-59) comments on Chinua Achebe's portrayal of the typical post-independence African leaders and the complex predicament that the continent has suffered. He contends:

In his latest novel, *A Man of the People*, Chinua Achebe has delineated a typical representative of the emergent bourgeoisie.

If you have read the novel, you will remember that Chief Honourable Nanga, M.P., is the corrupt uncultured Minister of Culture in a corrupt regime of a newly independent African state. In a country where the majority of peasants and workers live in shacks and can only afford pails as lavatories, the Minister lives in a princely seven-bathroomed mansion with seven gleaming silent action water closets. He arranges for the tarmacking of roads, but only when his buses are about to arrive. The ten luxurious buses have been supplied to him by the British Amalgamated on a never-never basis. Elections are a democratic farce in which bribery, thuggery, and brutal force are used, with the connivance and financial backing of British commercial interests, to enable Nanga and his henchmen to return to power unopposed. These, I am afraid, are the realities of the contemporary African scene.

This quotation from Ngugi's study of satire in Nigeria illustrates the mood that prevailed after African countries got their independence. Ngugi made this study in 1969, at a time when many post-independence African countries in general and the Nigerian society in particular were attempting to do with self-governance and discovering the post-independence realities of corruption and political treachery. Close to half a century later, what he said then still has relevance in many independent African societies like the ones presented by Epie. The Nigeria Ngugi talks about can be anywhere in Africa where democracy and good governance are still limping. Esole, the competitor for the forthcoming elections describes Ewawa in these terms:

Ewawa was rotten. There was no saint. Since the three salary cuts and the institutionalisation of kleptocracy, every Ewawan even babies were thieves. For one thing, the government cut salaries not because it was a measure to fight economic crisis, but a measure to hoard funds for ministers and the top brass of our country to embezzle. Once there is flood upstream,

downstream must be contaminated. And that is it. (Epie, 2009: 13)

Epie's Ewawa nation in 2009 is like the Nigerian society depicted by Achebe in 1969. Esole hopes to contest elections in opposition in order to change this situation of complete disorder and confusion. Unfortunately, the opposition is no better and gives no reason for hope. A onetime university professor with unequaled uprightness, he refuses to join the conspiracy of the current one party regime. In a country where all the rulers are corrupt, Esole suffers much because of his right principles and, as shall be demonstrated below, he ends up falling prey of the corrupt system.

Epie writes in a post-independence era where Cameroon is in a terrible politico-economic situation. The 1980s and 1990s constitute a major source of inspiration for so many Cameroonian Anglophone writers, Epie included. As our work is informed by New Historicism theory, which among other things pays close attention to how a work is influenced by the time in which the author wrote it, it is better to have a quick look at the post-independence Cameroonian political situation. Cameroon, the country that Epie fictionalizes in *The Bad Samaritan* as Ewawa with its internal antagonisms based mainly on the Anglophone-Francophone problem entered multiparty legislative and presidential elections in 1992. In this arrangement, Udogu (1999:13) mentions that the following parties were formed along ethnic and regional lines:

Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM), with its support among the Beti-Pahouin collectivity in the center, south, and east provinces; the National Union for Progress and Democracy (NUDP), Foulbe and northern-Moslem dominated; the Social Democratic Front (SDF), Bamileke, Anglophone of the west province; Union des Populations du Cameroun (UDC) garnered its support from the Bassas in the littoral and west province; the Movement for Defense of the Republic (MDR) drew its support from Kirdi ethnic group in the far north province.

As Udogu states, the formation of these ethnoregional parties was not intended to foster democracy in Cameroon. Rather they were created in order to compete for the scarce resources in the poor country. Likewise, the Ewawaian political parties in opposition, as portrayed by Epie, have proven incapable of coming up with viable alternatives to the current system of governance.

Democracy is a form of government in which all eligible citizens have an equal say in the decisions that affect their lives. Ewawa's government is not democratic in the way laws are enforced to run country affairs. Instead, it is "the Government of the sons of the soil, by the sons of the soil, for the sons of the soil" (Epie, 2004: 70) and it "is under a military regime disguised as democracy. What the military says is what happens" (Epie, 2009: 18). But in a true democracy, the military institution is not involved in political issues. It is the voice of the citizen which counts and governs the country. In Ewawa not all the citizens have the same rights, obligations and opportunities in their country.

Democracy gives oppressed people possibilities to get rid of eternal regimes that want to manipulate power for their own gain. The population has rights to choose their rulers (but also dismiss them if the regime becomes oppressive). Professor Esole, the opponent to Ewawa oppressive regime regrets that "the exploitation of the masses is done by people this ravenous regime has put in place. What the Mayor is doing is not different from what the Ministers and the Director Generals are doing. The whole set up is a fief of thievery, kleptocracy at its peak" (Epie, 2009: 36). That is why he wants to contest elections in the opposition. He is convinced that it is only through ballots, but not bullets, that this regime can be dismantled in order to initiate positive changes. However, the ruling oligarchy in Epie's society is not ready to accept any change as the SDO affirms: "We have not reached the stage of change. Change can't come to this country now"(37). The SDO is of the view that status quo will be maintained in Ewawa nation. The ruling party will continue its fiasco. Nobody should oppose it. However, opposing the ruling party is not wrong in a democratic country like Ewawa whose ruling party EPAD (Ewawa Party for Advanced Democracy) pretends to uphold democratic principles. Therefore, if someone is menaced or persecuted because of their views that are different from the ruling party's, as is the case in Ewawa nation, we have a dictatorship regime and not a democratic one.

Elections in African dictatorships are seen as a means of influencing and manipulating the political elite or as ritual performances that help enforce citizen's obedience, induce complicity, and socialize the electorate. Goldery & Wantchekon (2004: 6) quoting Cohen, give an example where "Milton Obote, a former Ugandan president, clearly made this point when he stated that elections are a way of controlling the people rather than being a means through which they could control him".

Dictatorship is defined by Merriam-Webster as "a form of government in which absolute power is concentrated in a dictator or a small clique" or "a government organisation or group in which absolute power is so concentrated". In a dictatorship system like the one in Ewawa, the government has total control of police and army institutions; mass communications and social and economic organizations. Epie's novels, especially *The Bad Samaritan*, present societies where the government does not favour elections based on multiparty competition. The ruling party and the government do all their best to maintain the status quo by menacing opposition parties. The government knows that if it allows opposition freedom during the campaign period, people will not vote for it because the citizens are fed up with this regime that has oppressed them for long. Citizens want things to change at any cost and immediately. Changing things therefore entails voting for the opposition.

The absolute rulers that Epie portrays fear the people they oppress. They have realized that amongst their many victims, there is Esole who is surely going to rise against this tyrannical system and strike back. That is why his party members have to be intimidated in order to limit their sound influence among the electorate. To do so, the chairman of the ruling party calls upon the villagers to regard opposition party members as detractors, rebels, enemies and threatens them with juridical pursuits:

I am sure that the detractors, the rebels amongst us have heard this. And here and now, I pray that they should limit their diabolic activities within these villages. And today, today I implore all of you to denounce them once and for all. You see the enemy is in the house [...]. But let me warn them, the wand

of justice will fall heavily on any person found disturbing the peace and tranquillity of our dear fatherland. (Epie, 2008: 105)

The Chairman's message to his party members is intended to threaten opposition party members. He makes it clear that extra juridical pursuits will fall upon them if they do not vote for the ruling party. This is voter intimidation and it aims at putting undue pressure on a voter or group of voters so that they will vote a particular way. This form of intimidation in the election periods in Ewawa takes forms like violence or the threat of violence. Voters from the opposition party or those known to support it are directly threatened by supporters of the ruling party or by those hired by them. Not only that, supporters of the ruling party make it known that if in their village or neighborhood some people are found to have voted the "wrong" way, reprisals will be made against all the clan members. Within such a system which denies the existence of basic human rights, fear is the order of the day. The people have fear of imprisonment, fear of torture, fear of death, or fear of losing friends, family, property or means of livelihood. To save their lives and that of theirs, they vote the "right" way, i.e. for the ruling party.

In *The Bad Samaritan*, Professor Esole's SPDP (The Serious People's Deliverance Party) is accused of all evils and recorded in red books. But, Esole is presented as a real democrat since for him, though his party is classified enemy number one of the country, "elections are not a breeding ground for enemies as some people think and make of them (48). When he learns that Esole is going to contest elections in the opposition party, the SDO, in his total consternation, asks Esole a series of rhetorical questions: "The party that provoked riots after the last Presidential elections that it claimed it had won but was deprived victory by the Minister of Territorial Administration? The party we have been instructed to regard as enemy number one of the country? That party is in our red books?"(36). These rhetorical questions asked by the SDO translate the spirit of dictatorship that characterise the regime in Ewawa nation. This indicates that opposition parties are neither facilitated nor given equal treatment during political campaigns. Opposition parties are accused of such evils because the rulers know that these parties are stronger and would win elections while the ruling party is the only one that has rights to win irrespective of whether it has been voted for or not. And once the opposition party claims over its victory, it is the Minister of Territorial Administration (a member of the government) who handles the case, and not the Electoral Commission or any other competent court.

But even if the courts should be involved to handle the issue, things would not change. Courts themselves are as corrupt as the ruling party and the government. Esole's driver exclaims: "Court in this country! Is there any institution that is as frustrating as the court in Ewawa? Haven't you had a court experience in this country? Sir, if a snake of injustice is pursuing you, don't seek refuge in our court premises". The driver's exclamation, interrogation and the use of the allusion to "a snake of injustice" emphasize the extent to which he is disappointed by the court of justice in his society where "courts give verdict on the basis of who bribes them more, and not on who is aggrieved". In other words, "the criminal is better protected in this country than the honest citizen"(174).

It is important here to note that rigging elections is another way of exercising abuse of power by those who were supposed to promote democracy and guarantee human rights for all citizens. The different forms of power in Ewawa work in conspiracy to rig election: local and central administration, security forces, the juridical institutions, etc. This conspiracy aims to maintain power at each level of decision making. Change is difficult when all those on power work together to discriminate, and oppress.

Elections in Esole's country are not a secure and effective means to choose leaders to positions of power because the choice of the people is never taken into account. The votes are rigged by the ruling party in conspiracy with the government, the police and the army. Electoral fraud is understood as clandestine efforts and ways to shape election results. Esole, one of the very few members of the elite in his country who dare opposing the ruling party is a victim of electoral fraud, as it is later on revealed to him by Njume, one of the conspirators. Njume narrates the details of this conspiracy in these terms:

Please, Prof., I am sorry to introduce myself to you as a person you will never forgive and forget. I am sorry to tell you that I was one of the citizens of Lebmot who was brought in here from Timbe to foil your bid to get into Parliament. I am sorry to tell you this. Prof., I should congratulate you most heartily for your *brilliant performance* at the polls. To be candid, you were doomed to lose the elections. [...] And once lights went out,

especially as foreign observers had gone, *the police and the military* the Minister had arranged to handle the *rigging process* went into action. Although I was incorporated in the rigging lot, *your overwhelming victory* convinced me that you were the people's choice and nothing should disturb you. But then, a twig does not build a fence. So, I helped rig in favor of the ruling party. (48) [Italics, my emphasis]

From this sad revelation, it is evident that Esole is the "choice of the people" and his victory is overwhelming but the police and the army reverse it. Esole's success in election has been thwarted by the same people who were supposed to protect it. Rigging elections is a very common practice by oppressors who want to become eternal rulers. Such rulers run into politics for personal survival and not collective survival and then they reverse the people's choice. They do not care whether people have voted for them or not. Electoral fraud is illegal interference with the process of an election. Acts of fraud affect vote counts to bring about an election result, whether by increasing the vote share of the favoured candidate, depressing the vote share of the rival candidates, or both. In Lebmot, the village where Esole has campaigned, the successful electoral fraud gets the effect of corruption of democracy. This fraud gets a damaging effect as it reduces voters' confidence in democracy. As a consequence, Ewawa suffers from a breakdown of democracy and gains the establishment of a dictatorship.

As it appears from Epie's *The Bad Samaritan*, the opposition party can secure an overwhelming victory, but it is bound to lose. Because the rulers have police and army institutions that they control and manipulate, ballots are reversed without any problem. And the opposition party in such an oligarchy is "doomed to lose". It is not fit to resist and protest. We have a surprising case where the winner of elections is known before votes are held. Esole, the progressive and democrat competitor gets surprised and asks the SDO: "So, you know the results of elections before they are held?" (37). Esole wants to contest elections and win on merit because this is what it means to be democrat. But for the SDO, "there is no democracy in Africa. There is no democracy if the ruling party loses. Elections are not democratic if the incumbent president does not win. So, the ruling party must win and there is nothing we can do to change the situation"

(37-38). This is how things are in Lebmot Division and in so many post-independence African countries. The incumbent president has to win elections and this has created life presidents.

Rigging elections in Ewawa as is the same case with Cameroon does not occur the day of elections. It is done long before the date when elections are held. Most of the times, as Lucia in *The Day God Blinked* states, because the looters are frightened by any daring and fiery opposition leader, they precipitate elections in order to stop opposition at all cost. Lucia narrates that

though Krudi would win with a landslide, the kleptocrats with the backing of France, would rig and deprive him of his victory. So something has to be done to camouflage the rigging. To make the results look credible, they carried out a whitewashed campaign to impress on election observers (mostly Americans and Europeans who come a day or two before the elections as if elections in Africa are rigged only in polling booths. After watching the ruling party members line up peacefully to vote their man back to power, the observers dash back home the same day or next, with the conclusion that the elections were free, fair and peaceful). (Epie, 2008: 55)

Epie lends his voice to Lucia, a BA holder, to describe the way the looters in her country rig elections to maintain the status quo. For her, international observers are as bad as the looters in her country. In Africa in general, and in the society described by Epie in particular, the ruling party wants to “win” at all cost by using money and false promises to buy the people’s consciences. Esole in *The Bad Samaritan* recounts that “a few days before elections, the Minister of Junglety brought Pajeros and money and bought their consciences. He deceived them to vote for the ruling party in power and so enable him to maintain his position. They did”(118). The rulers want to hold on to power indefinitely and they make false promises, which the gullible voters take for granted under the effect of money and drinks given to them. This is referred to as vote buying. Socpa (2000: 2) makes this observation:

En observant la campagne électorale pour le scrutin municipal du 6 janvier 1996, notre attention a été attirée par le fait que les

responsables du parti politique au pouvoir offraient des dons aux populations venues assister aux meetings politiques. Ces cadeaux étaient offerts dans le but immédiat de convaincre cet électorat potentiel de voter en faveur du parti au pouvoir.

[Observing the election campaign for the municipal election of January 6, 1996, our attention has been drawn by the fact that the leaders of the political party in power offered donations to people who attended political meetings. These gifts were offered in the immediate aim to convince the potential electorate to vote for the ruling party]. (Translation, mine)

As a form of rigging elections, voters are given money or other rewards for voting in a particular way, or not voting for a particular party or candidate. However, Socpa A. in « Les Dons dans le jeux électoral au Cameroun » remarks that

le code électoral camerounais condamne pourtant formellement de telles pratiques. L'article 116, alinéas c et d de la loi no 91/020/ du 16 décembre 1991 fixant les conditions d'élection des députés à l'Assemblée nationale dispose: « Sont punis des peines prévues par l'article 123 du code pénal, alinéa c, ceux qui, par dons, libéralités, faveurs, promesses d'emplois publics ou privés ou autres avantages particuliers faits en vue d'influencer le vote d'un ou de plusieurs électeurs, obtiennent leur suffrage soit directement, soit par l'entremise d'un tiers; alinéa d, ceux qui, directement ou par l'entremise d'un tiers, acceptent ou sollicitent des candidats, des dons, libéralités, faveurs ou avantages cites en alinéa c. » Cette disposition s'applique à toutes les élections organisées jusqu'ici au Cameroun (2).

[However, the Cameroonian electoral code formally condemns such practices. Article 116, paragraphs (c) and (d) of Act No. 91/020 of 16 December 1991 laying down the conditions for election of members of the ‘National Assembly’ has a disposition: “Are punishable by the penalties provided for by article 123 of the penal code, paragraph (c), those who, by donations, gifts, favours, promises of public or private jobs or other specific benefits made to influence the voting of one or several voters, get their ballots, either directly or through a third party; paragraph (d), those who, directly or through a third party, accept or solicit candidates, donations, gifts, favors or benefits cited in subparagraph (c). This provision shall apply to all the elections held so far in Cameroon]. (Translation, mine)

The quotation above shows that the electoral code is clear about how electoral fraud is punished. These measures were taken in order to castigate the deep catchy phrase “*politics na janguì*” (pidgin expression that literally means “*politics is tontine*”) that is in use in the Cameroonians political arena. This expression refers to an investment plan in which contributors pay equal amounts into a common fund and receive equal dividends and benefits from it. The controversy in this deal is that only the final surviving contributor receives everything. The “*politics na janguì*” is a spontaneous and obliged give-and-take game between all the partners, i.e. the government (ruling party) and the voters. In other words, the ruling party obliges the voters of a given area to vote for it if they want tarred roads, health centre infrastructures, schools, or appointment in poignant positions of one of the natives’ son or daughter. Lucia describes another similar game in Ewawa political arena: “politics is a bolobolo game, a give and take game, if you give me, I give you. If you don’t give me, I don’t give you” (Epie: 105). As a consequence of this ‘bolobolo game’, ‘the nine villages will only benefit from the Head of Sate’s development projects if they solidly rally themselves behind him’ (105). This then entails that the government development projects will take into account the number of votes in the ballot that a given area gave to the ruling party.

Vote trading is a dangerous practice that influences how people will vote. Vote traders in Lebmot make promises which they know are not true and will never be fulfilled. And the people's consciences are dormant because of the reward brought with by the ruling party at the house inauguration day: "Cooking would be organized according to village groupings. There would be five cows- one for the dignitaries, one for the NW, one for the NE, one for the SW, and one for the SE villages of West Bassiland. After the inauguration and departure of the dignitaries, there would be dance till day break TDB" (Epie, 2009: 159-160). And of course when the day came, they were addicted with money, food, and drinks:

After the speech, the MC indicated where each group would be entertained. Before that, the chiefs were asked to meet at the newly inaugurated office. Each chief was given FCFA 50,000 and chief Nkume FCFA 75,000. The chiefs and their villagers then moved to their respective entertainment houses. Food and drinks were in abundance. After the dignitaries had eaten and drunk, they left. The natives of West Bassiland then took over. All night long, they drank, ate and danced praising the H/M and Ewawa Party for Advanced Democracy (EPAD) (165-166).

Under such addiction the ordinary and miserable citizens could not resist. Speeches delivered by the dignitaries were meant to regard opposition parties as enemies: "the Minister then said none of them should vote for the SPDP party which he labelled 'Stupid People's Destructive Party'. Conspiratorial squads were formed and promised FCFA 50,000 each if they carried out their jobs well. This was done openly and condoned by the police and the military" (Epie, 2009: 43). Unfortunately, for the ignorant people "it is better to deal with the devil one knows than the angel one doesn't know" (137). For the case in point in Ewawa, a ruler enjoys support from his ethnic group despite the fact that he is cheating them by extracting resources from them. That is, the leader steals resources from his supporter group, but also extracts even more from the opposition group. If the group in power decides to support the leader, the *status quo* is maintained with high probability. To some extent, the supporter group is reasonable because they know that if they decide to oust him they face a chaotic succession process in which they cannot guarantee whether the next leader will belong to or favour their group or not. Since their

predicament under the leadership of a politician from another group is worse than under their own ethnic ruler, they are forced to provide support to the current kleptocrat. Miquel (2007:1260) calls that the “politics of Fear: the fear of falling under an equally inefficient and venal ruler that favors another group is sufficient to discipline supporters”.

However, Esole had warned his people of the danger of voting their leaders based on emotions and empty promises. If they want development for their village, if they want their problems to be solved, they have to make themselves known by rebelling against the ruling party that has put them in abject poverty. He tells them emphatically:

Yes, nobody blows the wet-wood fire of another person. By this, I mean, nobody can solve your problems for you. You must assert yourselves. You must make yourselves known. Don't be deceived by the Minister's empty promises of a brighter future for you. Life is now, not tomorrow. A ruler who cannot provide you with the basic tools of survival now should not promise you a brighter tomorrow. [...] Make yourselves known by rebelling against the government. Don't vote for the party in power and you will see. You will see that the government will turn its attention onto you after elections. (Epie, 2009: 136)

For Esole, the people have to defend their rights and not expect everything from the government. All what is promised during electoral campaigns is mere lies. Once members of the government get to power, they get busy filling their pockets while the ordinary people who voted for them are living in extreme poverty. The rulers willingly make empty promises in order to prolong their stay to power and gather more wealth. In this sense, Esole should not be understood as a rebel to the government. He is simply calling upon the masses' attention and wants them to stand upright in order to face the challenges brought about by the ruling party. For these rulers, “politics is personal survival and not collective survival” (Epie, 2009: 37).

The novel *The Bad Samaritan* is set in Bassiland, Lebmot constituency where Professor Esole is challenged by the H/M, a member of the ruling party. The people in this constituency, the majority of whom are illiterate peasants who do not understand Western democracy and therefore its practices in Ewawa situation are highly superficial. In this area there is abject poverty and a total absence of social and physical infrastructure in forms of schools, roads and hospitals. The peasants are ignorant of their rights to claim for accountability of their leaders. Instead, the ignorant peasants are indoctrinated by the H/M that “it is better to deal with the devil one knows than the angel one does not know”. The H/M is like the SDO because they do not want anything to change in Ewawa. But for Esole, who is a learned University professor, the ruling party in Ewawa is “the devil the peasants know” and the opposition is “the angel they do not know”. The ruling party is thus able to hold the seat on the strength of ignorance of peasants whom it deceives and intimidates. Ruling parties in post-independence African context always blame their imagined political opponents because as Ngugi in *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in Africa* (1986) argues, “to the comprador-ruling regimes, their real enemy is an awakened peasantry and working class”(30). In Ewawa, the ruling party’s greatest enemy is Esole who stands with the peasants and helps them to defend their interests. Esole tells the peasants what the politicians in the ruling party are:

Non-consequential politicians are politicians who bring no development to their constituencies. They are those who have nothing to offer in Parliamentary debates. When real parliamentarians discuss and share development projects among themselves, the also-went-to Parliament, the mute salary and allowance mongers clap hands and return to their constituencies to make reported speeches to their people. They return empty handed. (Epie, 2009: 142)

Esole and his influential supporters are imprisoned by policemen who are deployed by the ruling party. This imprisonment is a reflection of the violent nature of the post-independence politics dominated by the wealthy class. The ruling party thinks that the best way to keep in power is by eliminating any opposition. This is against the very fundamental principles of democracy which

favours competition for power. Terror is a weapon for the post-independence African ruling elite to keep itself in power.

One more thing to mention is that parties in Ewawa nation are not given equal treatment when it comes to election campaigns. While the opposition party is menaced and intimidated, the ruling party is praised by all the government media and it uses public means for political party activities. This is done with the complicity of the police forces that are supposed to maintain order and security. The narrator in Epie (2009: 41) mentions that

four days to the election-day, the Minister of Jungletry came with a fleet of 12 Pajeros, 8 Landcruisers and 5 Fort jeeps all marked CA (Car Administratif) Administrative vehicle. Esole went straight and complained to the Commandant of the Gendarmerie that the Minister was about to misuse government cars for party elections. This, he pointed out was unconstitutional, and the gendarmerie had to impound the vehicles and stop the abuse of government property by unscrupulous individuals whether they were Ministers or not. The Commandant peered at him as if he thought he was insane.

Esole's concern is very clear here. The Commandant should know that government properties are not used by political parties for campaign activities because this is unconstitutional. The party in power uses public means to campaign and the gendarmerie does not care. The commandant has been appointed by the President on basis of nepotism and as a consequence he has to defend and protect his boss in order to secure his position when the incumbent "wins" again.

3.3. Maintaining Power

The common characteristic of post-independence African countries is that, once leaders have reached power, they do not want to release it. Most of the times, elected leaders prolong their terms though the constitution may not allow it. When they remark that their term is getting closer

to the end they check all possible ways to shape the constitution to fit in their machination and become life leaders. This has been so in so many post-independence or post-civil wars countries like Angola, Cameroon, DR-Congo, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Uganda, etc. It is important to recall here that New Historicists, inter alia Foucault, see history in terms of power and view power not simply as a repressive force or a tool of conspiracy but rather as a complex of forces that produces what happens. Posner and Young (2007:10), argue that “many African leaders still possess the power to shape outcomes to suit their preferences, even when those preferences conflict with formal limitations on what they are legally permitted to do”. According to these critics, constitutional amendments are one way of staying in power. Historically, African presidents have been hesitant to leave office. That is why constitution stipulates limited terms which intend to prevent “presidents for life” as they have a bad record of accomplishment, elimination of opposition, narrowing of the political field, or establishing personal armies. More often than not, the autocrats loot national wealth and use the same constitution to consolidate personal power.

In Alobwed’Epie’s selected novels ordinary Ewawaiaans are calling for a second independence, this time from the indigenous leadership who do not want to release power, yet whose economic mismanagement, together with brutal repression, have made mere survival all but impossible. Lebmot, the Sub-Divisional Head Quarters of Ewawa is in chaos. The parliament of the area has misappropriated funds destined to repair roads, culverts and bridges. The area is cut off from the rest of the country in the rainy season. The narrator in Epie (2009) does not mince words. He says: “The population went mad with writing petitions to the Senior Divisional officer (SDO), Governor and the Ministry of Territorial Administration. Even children advocated for change. The Mayor of the area was also in mess” (28), but the SDO wants to convince Esole that “change can’t come to this country now”(37). Misappropriation of national wealth is also on the agenda in *The Death Certificate*. For example, the embalmment of Mongo Meka’s body abroad costs “hundreds of millions when there are millions of Ewawaiaans who need medical care” (61) and all “these expenses are to be paid from the cash donations by the E.E.C to the victims of the lake Dos exploitation (62).

The ordinary and oppressed populace have realised that the politics of the present leadership that wants to hang on to power, far from offering any prospect of relief from underdevelopment, has deepened it immensely. Ewawa nation President clearly seeks to be president for life because “for the last thirty years only the Ewawa Party for Advanced Democracy (EPAD) had been in power” (33). The incumbent President has little tolerance for dissenting voices, and appears to have made a decision of maintaining absolute power even though the economy of his country collapses. This does not worry many people in Ewawa because profiteers have a way to amass more wealth. The power hungry citizens want to contest elections in the ruling party, not in opposition since

as an opposition, there won’t be spill over “food” for them. But a win with the ruling party ensured food [...] and would give them unlimited powers and opportunities to exploit the community by way of acquiring building plots in the new layouts. That was what the incumbent Mayor and his counsellors were doing. They were seizing people’s land and converting them into theirs. Acquiring land certificates was their ultimate goal. (Epie, 2009: 33)

In the Ewawa nation, ascendance to power is a way of getting more wealth, especially after having exploited the masses. Since the President is doing like that, his subalterns are also taking him as an example. However, most of those who compete to get those properties do not share the ruling party’s ideology. They militate in the ruling party because they want only to get rich. The SDO tells professor Esole this: “Professor, look, not all secretes are secrets. It is an open secret that I belong to the SPDP. I militate in the party, but I can’t make you win here. The Senior Divisional Officer, (SDO) himself a member of the SPDP can’t make you win here. That is true” (37). Epie’s portrayal of the Ewawaian leaders who become members of political parties in order to get to power positions and exploit the masses clearly show how post-independence African political parties are not fit to change the colonial legacies. Political parties’ ideologies are not formulated to save African countries from the poor leadership that characterise the colonial period. Neither are they advanced to get Africa from the extreme poverty it is still facing. Ake (1993:3) regrets that

poor leadership and structural constraints have turned the high expectations of the independence movement into painful disappointment, forcing many African leaders to rely more on coercion which has deepened their alienation. But the coercion and alienation have worsened the prospects of development, leading to yet more alienation and coercion. The tragic consequences of this vicious circle are all too clear in contemporary Africa: with minor exceptions, physical infrastructures as well as social infrastructures have collapsed, economies are mired in chronic crisis, poverty has greatly intensified and the people are in revolt.

Most postcolonial African countries have completely failed in their mission of developing their nations and they rely on coercion. With few exceptions, post-independence African countries are led by oppressive presidents. Having failed to rule correctly their countries, unfortunately, they do not want to leave power. Interviewed by Pierre Fandio, Besong mentions that “Mr. Biya has just completed his 22nd year in office. As the “Natural Candidate” for the ruling CPDM party, he is offering himself for another 7 years mandate or perhaps a Life Presidency”(3). For a President to want to rule all his life, it is as if in the whole country there is no other intellectuals who are fit to replace him. If this is the case in Cameroon, Kom (1991: 85) does not mince words when he writes that “with Paul Biya’s arrival in power in 1982, the atmosphere changed significantly. . . It was as if the monocratic reflex previously identified with the head of state had been displaced to the level of an intellectual elite that invested itself as the incarnation of established power”. In Ewawa, the emerging elite incarnate power. There is no difference between the president and the emerging elite. Most university professors join the ruling party in order to improve their life conditions that have deteriorated. Beri narrates this to his boss Esole, himself a university professor but different from his colleagues:

When that happened in Ewawa, everybody thought the university, the brain of the country, would counter with strikes and demonstrations and finally lead to the fall of the regime. Students started rioting and demonstrating. But they lacked solid leadership. They needed the support of their professors.

But what happened? When the professors found that the institutions of the nation were being privatized to those who headed them, they became complacent and nonchalant about the decadence. Each prayed to be appointed head of an institution and thus own it. And truly, most, especially ex-seminarians were appointed Ministers. Others were made heads of large corporations. But did they live up to expectations? No. (Epie, 2009: 81)

This quotation is Epie's indictment of the weaknesses of the emerging elite in the Ewawa nation. As Beri says, University professors are considered as the hope for any country or the brain that sees what is going wrong and that can help to initiate changes. But in Ewawa they become complacent, nonchalant and join the plunderers to loot the country. In this situation, there is no hope that the country will be saved from the "power incarnate".

The post-independence African elite that Epie portrays in the novels under study do not want genuine democracy because they are mainly interested in democracy as a means to power. They are nervous about the egalitarian implications of increased social and economic rights that will shift resources to social services, leading to a rise in the living standards for the vast majority of the people. Most post-independence African rulers view democratic principles the other way round. They profit from the ignorance or poverty of their citizens to hold power indefinitely. They never want to be replaced. Bynander and Hart 2006: 9) contend that

long-serving and highly praised leaders run a great risk of succumbing to the tendency to believe in the illusion of irreplaceability. Their old successes are still alive in their mind and form a double-edged reference point: empirical proof that they and only they are the right person for the job and an incentive to repeat the successes of the past. These types of leaders do not always sense that their political capital is shrinking. Moreover, rationalizations for their diminishing authority are readily available, including reassuring historical analogies ("we have seen tougher challenges than these, and

have always come out victorious”) or underestimation and demonization of critic.

Such kinds of leaders with this type of self-confidence are not easy to persuade that their time to depart has come. They always struggle to be given more time and that during this extra time they will be able to operate miracles more than they have before. Such leaders have got a disease that Epie calls ‘Fatiguegosimiasis’ which is “a mysterious disease akin to ‘aboulia’ that kills them because for one reason or another, they prefer to stay in power forever” (Epie, 2008: 110). The incurable disease, the author continues, devastates their brains and character when they remain in power at the age of seventy and develops into a more complicated similar disease called “schizophrenia when five to seven years terms of office are renewed several times-the curse of Africa”(110-111). For Beri, the driver at Eso & Sons Enterprises:

Apart from Nyerere, Senghor and Mandela, there is not any other Head of State who has willingly relinquished power. Eighty-eight year old African Head of State dye their hair black to look young. Those who get bald wear wigs for the same purpose. Those who look frail because they are anaemic go to Europe or America for blood transfusion. (Epie, 2009: 93)

So the problem with these old leaders is that they are no more efficient but they keep on renewing their terms in office which is most of the times limited to five or seven years. Epie regards this as “the curse of Africa”(Epie, 2008: 111). Roger Tangri & Andrew M. Mwenda in “President Museveni and the politics of presidential tenure in Uganda” (2010) argue that

politics in many African countries has been characterised by perpetual incumbency in leadership. This was particularly the case in Africa’s early independence decades when many presidents held power for indefinite periods. But even since the 1990s, as most countries took steps towards democratic governance, a number of leaders have manipulated political reforms to ensure a lengthy tenure in office for themselves. The reasons why African rulers have entrenched themselves in power for long periods are attributable to various factors. (32)

Tangri & Mwenda's argument has relevance in Ewawa nation. The president wants to hold power for indefinite periods. He does so by manipulating the constitution at his will. The two critics go ahead to explain why African rulers want to die rulers. Among other reasons, "leaders fear being prosecuted for their various misdeeds. There are presidents with dismal human rights records, and those who have been especially venal and rapacious while in office have perpetuated their political incumbency to prevent new leaders uncovering their abuses and prosecuting them for their corruption and personal enrichment" (Tangri & Mwenda, 2010: 32).

In Ewawa the regime is old of 26 years. The president has made himself a life or natural president. If we make a parallelism between the 26 year-old regime in Ewawa nation and the post-independence current regime in Cameroon, we come to the conclusion that Epie is making allusion of Ewawa nation president to Cameroonian current president, Paul Biya. Susan Dicklitch in "Failed democratic transition in Cameroon: A human right explanation" (2002) argues that

Biya seems determined to remain in power, either through the use of the stick or carrot (co-optation). In 1996, President Biya had the constitution amended to allow the president to remain in power for seven years. Thus in 2004, Biya can run for another seven year term. If he wins, he will have held power in Cameroon for almost three decades. (16)

The president that Dicklitch talks about has a belief that he is the only one to realise the people's aspirations. But that is wrong insofar as such kind of presidents prolong their terms in office for their own interests. Among Ewawaians, there is an increased awareness that the monopoly of power enjoyed by this failed leadership has to be broken in order that power can be transferred to the people who have little to lose and much to gain. They want things to change, but it is not easy since even the dead ones leave behind their sons to inherit their positions. Madam Jacqueline Diwona, the sister to the deceased Treasurer General laments: "if those who criticize me knew that I had only one brother, that he is dead without leaving behind a son to inherit his position in the government, they would be much comprehensive" (Epie, 2004: 55). We can deduce from this that in Ewawa, government positions are inherited as family properties. If one gets a position, upon death their sons will inherit it and these will leave it to their sons, and so on and so forth.

That is why Ewawa's government is composed of members "all from the three ruling clans" (Epie, 2008: 53).

3.4. Misusing power

The novels by Epie present rulers in the Ewawa nation as dictators, unjust, oppressors, and corrupt. Holding power is one thing, using it correctly is another. Those who hold power often get "drunken" of it and use it in a way that discredits them. This is the situation that prevails in several post-independence African countries which still remain under the yoke of venal political elites.

The Death certificate is Epie's indictment of post-independence Cameroonian power abuse. To do so, he fictionalises an African country, Ewawa, which "is jubilating on a volcano of mismanagement, corruption and embezzlement" (12). The author ironically ridicules the situation in the country when he mentions that;

the president of Ewawa in an address to the nation had condemned embezzlement of public funds, tribalism, nepotism and the untoward behaviour of his ministers and senior civil servants. In the same vein he had lashed out against the brutality and uncouth conduct of the Forces of Law and Order and promised stern disciplinary action against any Ewawaian found guilty of misdeeds. Furthermore, he had promised to set up commissions to investigate allegations that banks, parastatals and other financial institutions were crumbling under a vicious and unprecedented machinery of looting. (Epie, 2004: 13)

The quotation above gives a complete picture of what Ewawa nation is. Massive corruption is common, as is the politics of the 'big man', who doles out patronage to maintain political power. All the institutions and officials are characterized by their desire to mismanage the country's wealth, order and law. The author lends his voice to Ndjock, the narrator who ironically shows a president who pretends to be angry with this imbroglio. The president's condemnation did not change anything because he himself was worse than his Ministers. An old woman talking to

Esole at the airport complains, “if we write to him about his Ministers, to whom shall we write about himself? He has seized more of our land than the Ministers put together (Epie, 2009: 10). In such a hell, all the devils are equal. But for Esole, “this country must change. The rulers of this country must be brought to their knees. Enough is enough. The population cannot be mortgaged to uncouth plunderers of public funds (Epie, 2009: 93).

Mongo Meka’s death is a tragedy that the author uses to portray the crooked Ewawaian government. Meka, Treasurer General is “dead” but his death is given an extraordinary outlook. People are angry at how “a provincial death can be given a national outlook” (Epie, 2004: 15). When they heard the announcement of Meka’s death, they asked themselves these questions: “What has prompted this misuse of our National Radio? Who is Mongo Meka? Is a national treasurer the President of the nation? Why give an insignificant figure that honour?”(14). Not only this but also “only the road leading to his house from the main road is re-surfaced. That is it, and you should have known that in a Government that serves individual rather than the public, only private roads are re-surfaced for private occasions made national” (108).

In this country, the life of the nation lies in the hands of one man and his death means the death of the nation. In well run countries, each financial institution has its specific roles and duties. But, “the puddle in Ewawa has made it impossible to distinguish between the Central Bank and the central Treasury. Since the Director of the Central Treasury was stronger than that of the Central Bank, he took over the functions of that of the Central bank”(Epie, 2004: 194) and “each Minister owned the Ministry and could auction it out, use its budget the way he wanted, employ only people from his or her clans or do whatever he liked to do with the ministry. Director Generals could do the same with their corporations. Bankers owned their banks and they could do whatever they dreamt was fit to do with them” (Epie, 2009: 56). This is an indictment of antidemocratic and exploitative practices done by the oppressors in Ewawa and it has created a situation of hopelessness among the suffering masses “who have been hurt by the administration in one way or another and complaining about the politico-economic and moral mess of Ewawa, the embezzlement of public funds, the three times cut of salaries, the fall in cocoa and coffee prices, the high cost living, the poor state of roads, the inability of parents to educate their children” (Epie, 2009: 32).

All the money that was supposed to be used to build roads and bridges is misused to take Mongo Meka's wife, relatives and neighbours to France for the corpse embalmment. Mula, the Investigative Journalist witnesses how they read

a list of the delegation that was to visit Meka's body in Kabon. Each member of the delegation was placed on a 240,000 Frs. night allowance, free lodging and feeding in Belton International Hotel Kabon. The expenses were to be paid for, with the cash donation by the E.E.C. to the victims of the lake Dos explosion-money that was already in the coffers of her husband. From Kabon, she would proceed to Paris with 4 girls, each placed on 100,000 Frs. night allowance. The restoration and embalming of Meka would cost 150,000,000 Frs. The casket and dressing would cost 3,000,000 Frs. All that would be paid for with the loan recently acquired from Canada- a loan meant for the improvement of urban roads. (Epie, 2009: 62-63)

This is Epie's portrayal of how post-independence Ewawaian leaders misuse the national donations for private interests. Donors keep on sending money to help the country develop, but this money is misused by the same rulers who were supposed to take the front in building their nations. At the same time, the down-trodden are living in terrible conditions.

3.5. Nepotism

Nepotism is understood as any favouritism that is given to somebody like a relative or a friend by somebody in power. This has been a characteristic of bad governance and continues to put emerging nations at the margins of world development. Appointing somebody in a position of power or responsibility because they are only friends or relatives is a way of reinforcing poor leadership. Such appointed people will not be accountable with regard to their responsibilities, but will render report to those who appointed them.

Ewawa is one of those post-independence African nations where nepotism is an institutionalized procedure of getting jobs if you are a “son or daughter of the first or second provinces”. By awarding juicy positions and government contracts to elites from only some regions and by making them actually compete for these positions and contracts, elites from different regions perceive one another either as their potential or their actual rivals. This is so “since 1984 when Paul Kilcam, the president, institutionalized nepotism and kleptocracy” (Epie, 2009: 53) and the situation is like that “all departments in the Ministries and elsewhere are headed by people of the first province, and here and there, they are punctuated by those of the Second province” (Epie, 2009: 97). The question we ask here is whether other people from other provinces are not qualified or fit to head a ministerial department. Professor Esole and his wife are aggrieved by what happens at the airport and ask: “Who are labourers at the airport? Isn’t it boys and girls from the ruling clans?”(12). It does not matter which qualification you have for which job, provided that you originate from those provinces. The First and the Second Provinces are regarded here as the centre. Ambanasom (2005: 8) posits that

the closer one is to the centre of power and influence, the more satisfied, or less censorious, one is with regard to the system; and the reverse is true, discontent emanating from the periphery. Criticism is thus proportional to the distance from the centre, and the prerogative of the marginalised. No wonder, then, that the greatest critics of the government come from the marginal 9th and 10th Provinces.

Ambanasom’s statement implies that those near to the centre are more privileged and appointed in better positions than those from the margins. As we pointed it out above, in Ewawa, the president is the nation as his Ministers are the government because “each Minister owned the Ministry and could auction it out, [...], *employ only people from his or her clans* or do whatever he liked to do with the ministry. Director Generals could do the same with their corporations. Bankers owned their banks and they could do whatever they dreamt was fit to do with them” (56) [emphasis, mine].

In Ewawa most army and police officials are the president’s relatives. “The head of the army was his younger brother. The head of the National Gendarmerie was his nephew. The Delegate for

National Security was his brother-in law. Furthermore, three-quarters of each of these security units were made up of people of the First Province” (Epie, 2004: 13-14). Similarly, Mbaneko, a native of the First Province and ordinary soldier, is elevated to the rank of Major General for only having composed an anthem for the President. More than that, he is given an allowance of FCFA 375,000,000 to acknowledge his praise song. Such appointments based on nepotism are not fruitful because the appointed people are not fit in their positions. Mbaneko joins a gang of robbers that raids the water Company Headquarters despite the status and allowances given to him. As Besong notes in his “Prodigals of Dangerous Ambitions”, in “Ewawa, success is judged by ethnic origin and the accumulation of property; intellect, patriotism and hard work are not given adequate recognition”(5). When meritocracy gives place to mediocrity in a nation, people appointed in such ways are not accountable with regard to their responsibility, but in front of those who appointed them. For the case in Ewawa, the president appointed Mbaneko in order to establish an army that will favour the incumbent president to hold power indefinitely. Establishing personal armies is also a form, in countries like Ewawa led by dictators, of consolidating an unbreakable machinery of self-protection in order to loot national wealth and use the constitution to consolidate personal power. Besong reiterates that

the Ewawa nation, for instance, has become the private reserve of the President and his kinsmen of the First and Second Provinces. What is good for His Excellency, Dim Vondo, Director General of National Security (DGNS), and the Politburo of the Ewawa People’s Party for Advanced Democracy (EPPAD), constituting, Council of the People of the First Province, is good for the nation, and you can go hang. (4)

A nation is far different from a private property or a family. A nation has to be led according to the aspirations and the opinions of all the citizens. More often than not, officials who are appointed in positions of power through political patronage or on sectarian grounds feel insecure. They feel threatened because they are convinced that they do not merit the positions. Most of the times they do not have the required qualification and they fear that there is a possibility to be removed from their “eating” offices any time. Consequently, they try to grab as much as possible within the short time at their disposal. As we mentioned above this form of appointing only one’s

relatives in positions of power is to create acceptance of corruption, to eternalize oneself to power and hide their misdeeds because they know they have a bad record of accomplishments.

3.6. Corruption and Poverty

The recurring theme in Epie's selected novels is that of corruption. In fact, the novels are built on the idea that the Ewawaian society as a whole, which is an entirely fraudulent and neo-colonial society, is ultimately responsible for corruption. Corruption is one of the so many handicaps to development in most post-independence African countries. Individualism and obsessive materialism of the tribal mode of governance creates acceptance of corruption.

Economic embezzlement in the Ewawaian's government is facilitated by the President's complicity and inability to apply corrective measures against the embezzlers. Although he condemns "embezzlement of public funds, tribalism, nepotism and the untoward behavior of his Ministers" (Epie, 2004: 13), he himself is not different from them because as the woman that Esole meets at the airport says, "if [they] write to him about his Ministers, to whom shall [they] write about he himself" (Epie, 2009: 10)? There is no way we can expect good leadership from Ministers while the president is himself more corrupt because as English say "Like father, like son". Not only are the Ministers corrupt, but the President also is. The Ministers have seized people's land and the president has seized more. It is a shame that the whole country is full of thieves and embezzlers. Esole complains that

Ewawa was rotten. There was no saint. Since the three salary cuts and the institutionalization of kleptocracy, every Ewawan, even babies were thieves. For one thing, the government cut salaries not because it was a measure to fight economic crises, but a measure to hoard funds for Ministers and the top brass of our country to embezzle. Once there is flood upstream, downstream must be contaminated. And that is it. (Epie, 2009: 13)

Ewawa nation is crossing a terrible economic crisis caused by the members of its own government who steal and mismanage the country's wealth without fear. All the government

institutions are suffering from corruption. Esole tells us that even the airport, which was supposed to be tourists' attraction, is ugly:

There is nowhere one can refresh themselves there. The place is just a jungle. I have never seen an ugly airport like that. Airports are usually tourists' attractions. But the designers of this one might never have been trained abroad. I know the Minister of Transport gave the contract to one of his primitive brothers. (Epie, 2009: 5)

The society portrayed in Epie's novels is characterised by a weak administration and poor accountability. This is supplemented by straightforward fraud and bribery which adversely affect the society and the nation politically, administratively, economically, and socio-culturally. Ewawa international airport has not been spared by the institutionalized corruption though it is a place where all the donors, visitors and tourists pass. While the place is ugly like that, it is reported that

the Director of the airport ordered the equipment and furniture worth hundreds of millions of francs for the restaurant. When the things arrived, he exchanged them with the old equipment and furniture he had in his personal hotel restaurant. A commission of inquiry was set up immediately. It is three years since, yet no results. (Epie, 2009: 7)

Crimes of corruption are committed in Ewawa but they are not punished because even those who were supposed to condemn corruption cases are also corrupt. Epie's novels are indictments of antidemocratic and terribly corrupt practices by rulers against their own suffering citizens. The President himself is corrupt. He supports short-term money spinning projects like the Pure Air Company that is set up by the Minister of Health for better breathing to a population that desperately lacks basic infrastructures such as health centres, roads, schools and medicines. This is simply a way of enriching individuals to the detriment of the suffering masses. More expenses are illegally made by the government higher officials. A surprising case in point is the colossal amount of money (375,000,000 frs) given to Mbaneko, a simple soldier, for having only composed a praising anthem to the President.

Lack of accountability often results in officials misappropriating public funds and properties with impunity. Because of lack of corrective mechanisms, Mvondokabi, the Rector of the University of Ewawa “dismantled a University garage of 150 road-worthy vehicles which he sold at 30,000 fr a piece to his relatives (a garage with 210 work force, a garage that ordered spare parts in hundreds of millions of francs, a garage that facilitated field research” (Epie, 2009: 53). If a university rector can ransack a whole institution like that, this indicates that there is a general breakdown of controls and accountability. This embezzlement of the country’s wealth on a tribal basis is one of the so many cases in Ewawa which is a consequence of the privatization of large state firms to a virtual standstill. This contributes to the proliferation of corruption in the public service.

To show that corruption is a reality and normal in the Ewawa nation, the author succeeds to raise two voices, one from the centre and the other from the margin. In *The Death Certificate*, Madame Jacqueline Diwona, a native of the First Province (the Centre) exercises excessive power and she accumulates wealth illegally. Emda Odu, himself a native of the First Province breaks the taboo among his tribesmen and points out their corrupt nature:

Your Lordship, Ladies and Gentlemen, we the people of the First Province have incurred a terrible loss. We have demonstrated our capacity to handle the situation within the borders of our Province. But we must know when spill over can tarnish us. If the nation hears that we are sending corpses abroad at a cost of hundreds of millions when there are millions of Ewawaianians who need medical care, we shall be asking for rebellion...(61)

Emda Odu is the only one person in the First Province who is against the institutionalized corruption that has ruined the country. He distances himself from people of the Church (His Lordship Boa), people of the Government (all the Ministers and Higher rank officials present at the meeting) and other members of the First Province. As if to evidence the reality of corruption in Ewawa, Odu seems to replicate Nchinda’s warning at the beginning of the novel:

‘Mula’, he called, ‘I think I should agree with you. These fellows of the First Province are going to rake this country bare.

This marry-making is in fact, the traffic tunnel. This country is jubilating on a volcano of mismanagement, corruption and embezzlement. There is pus in our boil, it will burst'. (Epie, 2004: 12)

Mismanagement, corruption, nepotism and embezzlement are a reality in Ewawa nation. The situation is worsening like pus in a boil that is about to explode like a volcano. Ewawa nation has become a private reserve of the President and his kinsmen of the First and Second Provinces. What is good for His Excellency, Dimvondo, Director General of National Security (DGNS), and the Politburo of the Ewawa People's Party for Advanced Democracy (EPPAD), constituting, Council of the People of the First Province, is good for the nation. Since it is proliferated by all the government and administration members, it is like normal. Beri, Esole's driver, tells him that:

Corruption is part and parcel of us. It is fashioned by the top brass of our society and filters in degrees of sophistication. So, it is among the top brass, the middle class and the downtrodden of the Ewawan society. In fact, the top brass are giving it a whitewashed touch, a hypocritical phase, a phase with the smile of a guillotine. (Epie, 2009: 77)

The novel delivers an overview of corruption in a society teetering on the edge of social and economic collapse. Ewawa nation is portrayed as a society where corruption is generalized from the top to the bottom of the social strata. It is as if corruption has been a means of everyday life among Ewawaians. But this is more alarming if we can believe how Beri understands his society. For Beri, "corruption is not only in Ewawa. It is everywhere. The difference between corruption in Ewawa and elsewhere is that in Ewawa it is total (Epie, 2009: 78). Beri's overgeneralization of corruption in Ewawa is true because even those who seem to be against it, for example Professor Esole, are forced by the corrupt system to bribe. Beri and Esole's conversation shows how Esole's business is going to be closed by tax-controllers because he does not pay taxes. They bring a bill of 20,000,000 and ask him to bribe them with a half before the business is reopened. Can he resist?

"To go and bribe those fools?" yes, it is better to bribe them now before they establish records. They usually wait for two weeks before they establish documents. Once records are

established, there is nothing they can do. “OK. Here with 5,000,000.” (Epie, 2009: 74)

The once corruption fighter university professor falls prey of the corrupt system and gives bribe because he fears paying taxes. Though he complains that the corrupt government has to be overthrown peacefully or violently, Esole is not fit to do so. And of course, he has lamentably failed and at the end of the novel, we are left with lack of hope for the country to be saved. Epie’s insight and use of realism in his novels helps us to grasp easily his message. In effect, Epie’s novelistic art includes the use of biblical allusions, letters, media announcements, and newspapers captions which tell the reality of things. For example, in the novel *The Death Certificate*, prayers and so many biblical allusions are found. Jacqueline Diwona’s prayers are full of meaning as they show us how she acknowledges her wrongdoings:

O! Lord God, by this Lamentation
Hear me, hear my prayer,
For my guilt and my chastisement,
Bear not the same measure
O! Lord God, by thy grace,
Did I possess all of Ewawa,
And like the patriarchs of old,
Adored you and made sacrifices. (180)

In the second chapter of the same novel, the death of Mongo is announced by the national radio. “there was a buzz, a croak, and then a silence” (14). It then announces:

Dear fellow Ewawaians,
The Honourable Minister of Finance
Announces with deep regret,
The sudden death of our illustrious,
Monsieur Mongo Meka, Treasurer General,
National Treasury, Dande. (Epie, 2004:14)

Another similar death announcement by the national radio is found on page 33 when the Minister of Information announces the death of Mbaneko, another illustrious “son of the soil”.

Nchinda and Mula, though they were not concerned with the announcements, they went to Mongo's compound. Nchinda was reading Ewawa Tribune with the caption: "MONGO MEKA IS NO MORE. HIS WIFE MANIFESTS REMARKABLE COURAGE". Under the caption were the portraits of Mongo Meka and his wife Antoinette Yvonne (38). More captions from the Ewawa Tribune can be found in subsequent chapters. They read "THE WHITE WIFE OF THE LATE TREASURER GENERAL SUES HIS CORPSE FOR DIVORCE" (151), "WHITE LADY ABANDONS LATE HUSBAND'S PROPERTY TO HIS SISTER, PREFERS DEATH CERTIFICATE" (155), "WHITE LADY REFUSES 1,250,000,000 Francs COURT AWARD. SURRENDERS THE AMOUNT TO LATE HUSBAND'S SISTER" (156), and many other captions.

In chapter nineteen of *The Death Certificate*, we find a letter written by Mula to Nchinda "that stakes the future of two intimate friends on the goodwill of one" (144). The letter is enclosed with admission forms at the University of Biberia where Nchinda was offered a department scholarship to pursue his studies in Economic Sciences. Mula and Nchinda are offered scholarships by foreign institutions because the country they call theirs offers only "the sons and daughters of the soil".

The most surprising letter is the one written by Mongo Meka to his sister, Jacqueline Diowa, in which he reveals his "feigned death" that he had entrusted in Antoinette Yvonne (215). The letter is followed by a telephone conversation between Meka and Diwona. Mongo announces his eminent arrival to Paris to meet Diwona. He of course arrives at her house with his lawyer. They had come to sue Yvonne because she had "illegally" married another man, while Mongo Meka was still alive (216-217).

Through the use of intertextuality style, the author wants to report truthfully the reality of his society by referring to real events that happened during the New Deal regime in Cameroon. Epie's fictional representation and insights replicate those by Victor Julius Ngoh in *History of Cameroon* when he writes that: "Cameroon after 1982 experienced unprecedented capital flight, corruption and embezzlement from both high and low quarters..." (307). The top officials of the country have an unrestrained desire to get rich quickly.

The country that Epie portrays as Ewawa is a microcosm of betrayal and corruption. Mongo Meka feigns a death to camouflage his excessive embezzlement cases done when he was Treasurer General of Ewawa and Acting Director General of the Central Bank. As Mongo Meka himself reveals to the court his failed ploy, he arranged with his white wife, Antoinette Yvonne that he was going to feign death in a car accident. Her wife was going to establish a death certificate, receive death benefits and go for ever to stay in Europe where he had hidden all the stolen money. Asked why he did so, Mongo shamelessly responds to the court:

Your Worship, I was Treasurer General of Ewawa and Acting Director General of the Central Bank of Ewawa. After auditing myself and finding that I was short of large sums of money, I decided to feign death and to go into hiding for the rest of my life. (Epie, 2004: 230)

These are statements by a higher official of the country that is suffering from extreme poverty. The plunderer has used all the stolen money to organize an extraordinary wedding which cost 80,000,000 Frs. As Mula asserts, “if Mongo spent 80,000,000 Frs. on his wedding then he might have stolen” (*The Death*, 29). Mongo Meka is a paradigmatic and prototypical case of the Ndotelle elite of the First and Second Provinces of Alobwed’Epie’s fictional Ewawa. He has embezzled FCFA 550 billion from the Central Treasury in Dande, invested FCFA 100 billion in Kabon and Ewawa, and subsequently looted and deposited FCFA 350 billion into Antoinette’s account in Lyons, Paris. Mongo Meka does this with the belief that should the Ewawa government catch up with him, the money would be safe in his French wife’s account. But his fate turns against him because his wife gets married to a French husband, Gerard Roger. Roger finally benefits from all the money deposited on Antoinette’s account because the latter dies in a cyclone in Australia. Mongo himself dies in his own house after he has failed all his cases in French courts against Yvonne.

All the misuse of public funds for some people’s interest has effects on the living conditions of the ordinary man. Corruption in Ewawa has caused unprecedented poverty among the low and middle wages earners who constitute the majority of the population. Since the institutionalization of corruption in Ewawa

the devastating economic and moral crises, the sudden cut in salaries and the high cost of living turned low and middle income earners into beggars. Their salaries could not sustain the families to the middle of the month, which meant that they had to borrow to get to the end of the month. And if they had to borrow to survive for the month it meant they could not save. (Epie, 2009: 53)

The effects of the generalised corruption are evident given the fact that ordinary people will not be able to save for future consumption. Even the few who manage to save in the Post Office Bank, withdrawals are not done at the depositors' will or are reduced because "the new Director has instituted a payment scheme which entails a 15% deduction of whatever bank withdrawals are made" (Epie, 2009: 52). In Ewawa, "money in the bank was as unsafe as money at home"(20). If one keeps money in a bank, those who own the bank swindle it with impunity. The writer presents a population which lives daily and whose tomorrow is uncertain. While the salaries are low, the government does not have pity to cut them. Civil servants are therefore put into difficulties of making ends meet.

Upon their retirement they face more humiliation to get their pension fees. As the whole system is corrupt, the retirees are forced into a troublesome situation where they have to bribe the workers of the Ministry of Finance. The narrator in *The Bad Samaritan* says:

The shams then make fresh demands for impossible items and invent thousand lies about the dossier. After making the poor retiree believe that without their special interventions, the dossiers wouldn't be accepted, they rape the miserable fellow's conscience and make him accept to lose 20 to 30 percent of his pension to them. The poor fellow sulks in disgust and develops high blood pressure instantaneously. Many of such people die before they receive their pension. They die not because of age, but because they are sentenced to death by an unscrupulous regime they had served so diligently and devotedly. (Epie, 2009: 53-54)

Among the so many causes of corruption in Ewawa, there is the fact that many activities and services are concentrated in the hands of the same officials. This creates tedious procedures and rigid controls that become an open invitation to corruption. The quotation above describes how a corrupt regime betrays its citizens who, however, had served it diligently and wholeheartedly for long. As Beri mentions, the whole public service in Ewawa is corrupt. When there is corruption in the top brass, the low and middle classes also follow the same bad example and the result is that those who seek for public service will alone suffer much.

On the top of all, Ewawa juridical institutions are as corrupt, oppressive and tribal as the police, the church and the government. In this country all evils are caused by the oppressive system that finds support from men and women of order and law. In *The Bad Samaritan*, Epie lends his voice to Ngwa, Esole's driver, to describe how the juridical system works in Ewawa. He says:

Court in this country! Is there any institution that is as frustrating as the court in Ewawa? Haven't you had a court experience in this country? Sir, if a snake of injustice is pursuing you, don't seek refuge in our court premises. Courts give verdict on the basis of who bribes them more, and not on who is aggrieved. [...]. The criminal is better protected in this country than the honest citizen. (174) [as earlier quoted]

Corruption will continue so long as corrupt people are not severely punished. In Ewawa where basic rights are denied citizens, the government and its institutions have failed to mobilize themselves for a more democratic social and political order in Ewawa so as to fight against corruption. Not only are there no whistle-blowers for the abnormal behaviours, but also there are no charges against the powerful corrupt people. Judges are themselves corrupt. They have fallen prey to the politics of regional and ethnic imbalance to tolerate corruption. This has helped to stall the democratic process and heighten individual, regional and ethnic interests.

3.7. Truth against Power

The New Testament comments about truth are found in the Gospel of John, especially in chapters 18-19 (Jesus says "[...] that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the

truth heareth my voice”(chapter 18, 37). These comments celebrate the tragedy of Jesus’ arrest, trial, and execution. A close reading and understanding of these gospels and Alobwed’Epie’s fiction helps us to make a relation between power and truth and a parallelism between Jesus and Pilate on the one hand, and Lucia and the Police Officer, Lucia and the Parson, Esole and the Ruling Party on the other. These narratives are so important that they help us to draw out implications since they bring about theological and social issues against “the truth” in the society described by Epie.

In effect, Pilate is the symbol of the Roman power who ridiculed Jesus and acted as a cunning Procurator to preserve his own power and he is the only one to decide between life and death. Epie’s *The Day God Blinked* presents us two similar figures. The Police Officer who arrested Lucia is acting as prosecutor who has a right to determine her life and death. He is not looking for the truth before he can prosecute. Mula, the IJ in *The Death Certificate*, believes that “The truth about the country” (6) is compared to the “dead dangling bulbs” at the city centre roundabout in Dande the capital city. For Mula, this truth will be buried like the “buried river” that crosses the city and in this context we can rightly accept that the gravediggers are The Police Officer and The Judge inter alia.

Normally trials are supposed to be about finding out what happened and metting out justice. But as far as Lucia’s case is concerned, the judge does not care for the truth as was the case for Jesus. In both cases, the accuser wants condemnation. He does all his best to concoct the truth, which is obvious, in order to accuse and condemn Lucia, the innocent. Like Pilate, the Police Officer hands over Lucia to his men who beat her to death in order to make her unconscious and thus accept the concocted truth. But she remains steady and confident to her truth. For Lucia, “if the court which is the symbol of justice should arrive at the ‘truth’ from [...] tailored evidence then of course, its decisions can be nothing else but limping justice”(42). Ewawa is a country where justice is limping and there is no way truth can be known, especially that of the lowly. The court is corrupt, money-minded and fearful of the regime and therefore not independent.

The Parson, though not exactly similar to Pilate or the Police Officer, shares with them some common features. The Parson is a representative of a corrupt Roman Catholic Church. For all of

them, the truth is irrelevant because it works at cross-purposes to their hold of power. The only truth they recognize is “the truth of power”. The truth for the Parson is what is given by the government media and the police. Lucia tells beforehand this: “You believe I have sinned. You might have been influenced by the media and the so-called justice in Ewawa. I hate to talk to people influenced by what they call evidence and facts from the police”(31). She challenges him and says that

any state or church that works on human evidence or police facts imprisons its conscience and loses the truth. And when that happens the state imprisons its best brains and the church excommunicates her best Christians. That is why I would have liked you to listen to my story without pre-judging it”. (Epie, 2009: 36)

Lucia is a learned BA holder and “has always been born again in Christ”. It is surprising for her to be in prison while she knew she is the “best brain” and the “best Christian”. Her place is not in prison, but is rather in decision-making institutions. She tells the Parson: “let me talk to you in my terms and not in yours. Mine are truthful, yours are pejorative” (Epie, 2008: 39). But the Parson wants to hear Lucia accept the same things he had heard from the police and the media “because police evidence is the truth, and nothing but the truth in Ewawa”(41). It is against this ‘truth’ that he wants Lucia to repent. However, the accused, the innocent and the powerless one remains alone in her interest in the truth. The writer presents a verbal confrontation between the Parson and Lucia, who wants “the position of the truth in human affairs”(42) and says the truth and nothing more than the truth:

“Lucia is that all? Is that all, Lucia?” the Parson asked. “I have said that for all these sins and those I cannot remember, I beg for your absolution. Do you want me to invent a sin?” I responded. “What about the eh eh eh?” The Parson stammered “What Parson? The sin we committed together?” I asked with a frown. (Epie, 2009: 35)

Even though Lucia has warned the Parson to listen to her truth without prejudice, the Parson accepts only what has been said by the Police and the media as the only truth, and not what Lucia confesses. In a country like Ewawa where truth is always concocted, even the churchmen are not

right because “the Catholic Church adores Caesar and God alike. There is no state muddle that the Catholic Church is not neck-deep in (Epie, 2004: 6).

In *The Bad Samaritan* Epie presents the ruling party as oppressive. It has transformed itself into an oligarchy whose role is to silence every voice that exposes the truth about the Ewawa nation. It wants to eliminate Esole who has opposed it and challenged it during the campaign for elections. Esole is the symbol of the truth for Ewawaiaans and especially for “people who had been hurt by the administration in one way or another” (32). They have chosen a political party—the SPDP (Serious People’s Deliverance Party) – “the truth speaking party that would deliver the people from years of exploitation and deceit”(33) and “that would redeem the people from the crutches of misappropriation” (34). Esole is the only hope for his people and he represents their aspirations because “the population needed well educated persons to occupy [...] posts” (29). Esole is therefore one because he is a learned University Professor and himself has been a victim of the kleptocracy in Ewawa. The people in his village ask him a number of inciting questions:

Doctor, our people say, ‘He who has long nails does not die
of yaws’. Are we being deceived that we have long nails in
people like you? Why can’t you come and wipe our tears?
Are you not fit to be a Parliamentarian? (Epie, 2009: 29)

Esole is the only hope and truth for the gloomed. As the rays of confidence radiated in him, he said convincingly to himself, “the voice of the people would speak” (32). He is really the truth and the messiah to come and talk to the people (39). In spite of all this confidence in Esole, the ruling party and the 26 year old regime, through the chiefs of the villages, compromised in a meeting and ended up passing a vote of confidence in the Head of State, his Government, and the Minister who had made empty promises before (43). The ruling party in this case is the antithesis of Esole. While Esole uses confidence from his people to contest and win elections, the ruling party gives “FCFA 20,000 pre-attendance stipend to each invitee with word that heavier packs were on their way [...] and at the end, the Minister gave each chief, FCFA 150,000 (43). Not only are the voters’ conscience bought but also they are threatened that “if one vote went to the opposition, the non-natives of the area would be repatriated to their villages of origin” (43) and that “the opposition should be banned” (44). The ruling party is devoid of any truth. As long as it

uses unfair ways to rule the country, the citizens will never be free. If Esole stands for the truth and hope, the ruling party stands for power misuse and only lies.

3.8. Power and Tyranny

Wolfreys (2004:197) observes that the term power is “difficult to define given the many hidden, invisible ways in which it operates”. In this discussion it is important to mention that power is in the hands of individuals who apply it in order to ensure and produce narratives of dividing ‘us’ from ‘them’, just to use Mansfield’s (2000) words. This knowledge translates into an ideology that allows exploitation and discrimination and at the same time incites resistance.

Lately (1969: 20) defines a tyrant as “a ruler who exercises arbitrary power beyond the scope permitted by the laws, customs and standards of his time and society and who does so with a view to maintaining power or increasing that power”. Another apt definition is by Pascal Blaise who points that “tyranny consists in the desire of universal power beyond its scope” (*Pensées*, 123) because under the regime of absolute power, all authority goes unchallenged. The will of the despot is the supreme law arbitrarily executed by inferiors. The same rulers are in charge of civil, political, military and religious functions. In such despotism, tyrants see themselves or are taken for the country, government, or nation, etc. “Mongo Meka was the government. Who did not know him? He was the brother of the Head of States” (Epie, 2009: 111). Mongo Meka is a brother of the Head of State, who himself “is the constitution” (Epie, 2009: 42). The two are the embodiment of the country. This means that they have all the means to rule the country as they wish. This form of government is called dictatorship, i.e. an autocratic form of government in which the government is ruled by an individual: a dictator. Ewawa government is controlled by one person aided by a small group of people who are of the president’s family. In this form of government the power rests entirely on the person or group of people. The dictators also take away much of the peoples’ freedom.

The Anglophone Cameroonians have been denied fundamental rights. Ntongwe, the staff of peace as his name means, feels pains to “recall the spitting, deriding and discriminating against them and preventing them from exercising their God-given economic might” (Epie, 2010: 105).

This denial made it impossible for them to understand the course of public affairs; neither did they enjoy the personal esteem which the show of authority commands in the eyes of the people. In short, they were excluded and kept apart from the country's affairs in everything that concerned decision making. The people of Ewawa, especially the discriminated from Anglophone Cameroon, do not appreciate the way they are ruled but still authority is exercised upon them. Ewawa's government has made itself unwanted through the violation of the principles that constitute its foundation. As Mula, the Investigative Journalist observes, "any system that works against itself is doomed to die" (Epie, 2004: 73).

Power during the post-independence Ewawaian dictatorship portrayed by Epie is virtually equated with the ruling strongmen, who direct the administration and political institutions, arbitrarily pass laws to suit their own purposes, ban independent political organizations, maintain power through various forms of patronage, and use the military as a sectarian army. They use state machinery to perpetrate violence against citizens arbitrarily, with little regard for the law.

Epie's *Exhumed, Tried and Hanged* portrays how Etambeng people transferred all powers to a stranger, a "non-member" (33) who finally becomes their dreadful oppressor, though he has "thanked the people for the sacrifices they had made on him and his family. He accepted wholeheartedly the powers transferred on him and promised to use them as they had been assigned to him"(54). The ordinary people in Ewawa are bound by the triple yoke of ignorance, tyranny and corruption. It is significant that, at the end of the novel, the old, though they are frustrated at the beginning, are now happy. The seven young children and Sango Ngwel'Ngole (although he is no more able-bodied) emblemize the existence of wisdom and courage in Etambeng and thus symbolize Anglophone hope.

It is important to notice that an ignorant people is the blind instrument of its own destruction; ambition and intrigue take advantage of the credulity and inexperience of men who have no political, economic or civil understanding and they take to be realities what are in fact only illusions. Mula's ironical beatitudes in *The Death Certificate* indicate that ignorant people are a danger to revolution and will live unhappily: "Blessed are the ignorant, they will never have heart attack. Blessed are the simple minded, they will have peace" (33). Ignorant people are

never free given the fact that they are unaware of their rights. Ewawa citizens will have to build up their strength long before they are able to digest the life-giving nutrient of freedom.

3.9. Conclusion

In the above discussion, we have shown how Epie's novels portray the farce behind elections in the Ewawa nation, the author's allusion to so many African countries in general and Cameroon, in particular is evident. In Alobwed'Epie's societies discussed above, access to power is a means to get rich. This is done in complete violation of all democratic principles. From organisation of elections, through electoral campaigns to balloting and counting the results, the whole process is not fair. In *The Bad Samaritan*, it is shown that Professor Esole is one of the few elites in his constituency who dares contesting elections for the opposition. The opposition parties in Ewawa do not bring any hope for a positive change. The results of the votes are reversed to the advantage of the ruling party which has to win at any cost. This chapter also discussed the idea that once leaders have attained power, they do not want to release it. They use all means to hang on to power. The truth in the dictatorship of Ewawa is only said by the President and his Ministers. This creates a regime of tyrants who sacrifice truth in favour of wrong evidence in order to oppress the lowly. These tyrants are organised in a cartel of government members made of people appointed because they have familial or provincial relationships among themselves and not because they have required qualifications or skills. The next chapter demonstrates how oppression and discrimination have impacted on Ewawa structures.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE POLITICS OF DISCRIMINATION AND OPPRESSION

4.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the politics of discrimination and oppression as reflected in Alobwed'Epie's selected fiction. More specifically, the researcher shows that even though reunification has been proclaimed, post-independence Cameroonian society still faces institutionalised problems of discrimination that engender oppression at all levels of national life. There are significant ethnic divisions in Ewawa nation which lead to ethnic conflicts and the more a society is ethnically divided, the more political and personal interests become channeled into ethnic lines. In this chapter, we will discuss different forms of discrimination and oppression. Among other things, this chapter will discuss forms of discrimination which range from socio-cultural, ethnic, and economic to educational discrimination. Oppression by the government institutions will be discussed as the major cause of the fall of the oppressors.

4.2. Forms of discrimination

Discrimination is understood as different treatment of others based solely on their membership in a socially distinct group or category, such as race, ethnicity, sex, religion, age, or disability. In this sense the different treatment of some category of people is most frequently violent and thus leading to oppression. So long as some groups in the society dominate others, the problem of conflict between persons and groups will remain. Therefore, discrimination can be viewed as favorable or unfavorable, depending on whether a person receives favors or opportunities, or is denied them. In this discussion our major concern is unfavorable discrimination. In the societies presented by Alobwed'Epie, some people suffer from unfavorable discrimination mainly because of their ethnic origin.

4.2.1. Socio-cultural discrimination

People from the same ethnic group will have some sort of fundamental connection because of their shared culture and will therefore organize in similar ways. Their socio-cultural position becomes an object of value that has to be defended (preserved) or fought for to a certain extent.

One of the most tenacious social problems of modern times is the negative evaluation of others based solely on their membership in a particular group. Human beings naturally sort one another into groups based on sex, race, age, and other attributes. This process of social categorization leads people to see others as either similar to themselves or as different. The consequence of this process is that once one distinguishes between “us” and “them,” there is a tendency to assume that “they” are all alike. In the society of our concern, this belief makes it possible to view in stereotyped ways others who are different, “so different to be called twins/so different to be called one” (Epie, 2009: 57).

Epie’s choice of the proposed interethnic marriage and the journey motifs (Exodus or Refuge) in his novels becomes appropriate, since as a site of playing out and negotiating differences it is already predicting anxieties and tensions. Interethnic marriage and the journey motifs therefore, logically, allow ethnically constructed stereotypes and myths that define the “other” lose their value. In *Exhumed, Tried and Hanged* Ntongwe and Etane are complaining about being denied their partners because of ethnocentric reasons. In chapters fourteen and fifteen, the “rejected” announcement of their intention triggers a series of actions and reactions, revealing the deeply held ethnic tensions and anxieties.

Consonant with Epie’s vision, the Etaku ordinary citizens are portrayed as the obstacle to the realization of national unity. They are deliberately given credence that brings out their strongly held stereotypes and myths suggestive of their supposed exclusionary tendencies. Ntongwe (from Etambeng) laments that he has seen a beautiful girl (from Etaku) and proposed her for marriage but has been rejected. The girl asks him:

You want me to lose my personality by marrying a refugee?
 You are refugees here. You can never own houses here because
 your people migrated from Etambeng. If I marry you will you
 take me to Etambeng? I can’t go to Etambeng. I hear the people
 are terrible wizards. Witchcraft drove your people from there
 and they dispersed to all neighboring villages. That is why you
 are here. At first your people worked for us without pay but

now, because they are very good people, they work on ‘two-party’. Shall we survive on that? (Epie, 2010: 106)

Ntongwe cannot marry because of the long held stereotypes about different ethnic groups in the societies portrayed by Epie. He is a refugee. On the one hand, as a refugee, he does not have the same rights as nationals. If he is allowed to marry, this may confer him Etaku nationality and rights. On the other hand, if he decided to go back to his native village, he would go back with his wife. The latter does not want to go to that country where people are “terrible wizards”. If the two antagonistic villages (symbolic of Anglophone and Francophone Cameroons) are still stuck on these stereotypes, the so-called reunification process is doomed to failure. Of fundamental importance in this explication is the way Epie dichotomizes the reunification into the upper, modern, urban, and cosmopolitan against the lower, traditional, and village to lead his audience to accept his romanticized vision of the imagined reunited nation. For instance, the writer perceives the traditional witchcraft as a cause to being discriminated against and this stands as an obstacle to the realization of the imagined nation. The novel’s conflict denouement is gradually developed to its logical conclusion through the use of fear, nervousness, tension, and anxiety as the valid responses to the rejected interethnic marriage.

A similar discrimination happens when Etane, the beautiful as she believes she is, experiences the same treatment as Ntongwe. She narrates her predicament in these words:

One day, one Kako boy proposed marriage to me. I told my mother. She was very delighted, hoping perhaps that, that would elevate her status in the village. A few months later, I told my fiancé that I was pregnant. He became very happy and took me to his parents to hasten up the marriage. Although they did not show any hostility, something told me that his parents weren’t happy. I told my fiancé that I sensed that his parents weren’t enthusiastic about our engagement. He excused himself by saying that he thought their reaction was the natural way people responded to strange but pleasing situations. I took him for his word. [...]. By the time we returned, my fiancé had been forced to marry another girl. [...]. The girl was not more beautiful than

I. I saw nothing that made her the preference. I bugged my head for a long time and finally discovered why his parents preferred her to me. She was the daughter of the soil, I was a refugee. I asked my mother where we came from and she told me we came from Etambeng. (Epie, 2010: 107-108)

Etaku and Etambeng villages are facing terrible socio-cultural relationships. Interethnic marriages are no longer perceived as a socio-cultural form of strengthening relationships within society. The country has been divided into villages which symbolically reflect the long held ethnic antagonisms between the Anglophone and Francophone Cameroonians. It is precisely because of this that Epie's vision becomes more complex, especially his portrayal of the native villagers as decidedly the main obstacles to the wish fulfillment of the reunification process. To achieve his romanticized vision of the reunification, which seems to be informed by the native, national lower-class perspective of such processes, Epie puts the binary opposition of oppressor/oppressed, exploiter/exploited and reaffirms that ethnicity is propagated and perpetuated by both the upper and the lower classes for their own survival. Earlier on, we have discussed the fact that the upper-class is the engine of the ethnic discrimination. Thus Epie's complex opinion can be understood without equivocation. For him the realization of the vision of reunification is possible only through enlightenment and mutual understanding between the two Cameroons and only if both the lower and upper classes are involved. This has been played out with much clarity through the artistic deployment of contrast and juxtaposition in the texts under study. On the one hand, Anglophones are juxtaposed to Francophones in the sense that the former are the exploiter and the latter the exploited. Etaku is alluded to Francophone Cameroon and Etambeng with Anglophone Cameroon. The exploited have learnt to be silent in front of the exploiter as the poem "Let's Cup Our Hands To Christ" indicates:

Though we shrivel in want and move naked,
 For the patrons eat theirs and ours,
 Though they promise us golden 'morrow,
 A 'morrow that will never come,
 Though we can't educate our children,
 'Cause theirs must study abroad,
 Though our wives threaten divorce,

Cause we can't provide basic needs,
 Let's shut our lips brothers,
 Let's cup our hands to Christ. (Epie, 2008: 56)

The author succeeds in employing contrast and juxtaposition of we/they, ours/theirs, etc. where “we” relates to the exploited (Etambeng or Anglophones) and “they” to the exploiter (Etaku or Francophones).

When attempting to analyze the emergence of ethnic discrimination it is important to keep in mind that ‘ethnic discrimination’ is a complex phenomenon. One of the most pervasive forms of discrimination in Cameroon is that directed toward linguistic groups (here Anglophones vs. Francophones). For decades after reunification, the absence of adequate federal laws permitted discrimination against Anglophone Cameroonians in employment, public affairs, army, and the judicial system. My argument is however that the ethnic question in Ewawa nation, “a country brooding on a time bomb of tribal hatred” (Epie, 2009: 61), is a colonial inheritance maintained by the neocolonial socio-political divisions in order to create ethnic stereotypes favorable to their survivalist politics. And as a consequence the transition to democracy has instead fueled and exacerbated ethnic conflicts. Tribal tensions in Ewawa are like a bomb which is likely to explode any time. And when it explodes, it will kill only the innocent and thieves will be spared as the poem discussed above continues:

It spares the thieves and kills the innocent,
 For the thieves possess all means
 To flee to foreign mountain tops
 From where they watch the innocent die below. (Epie 2008: 56)

The difference between the two ethnic factions is strongly used in the poem “Jean Bosco, We Are So Different”, where the writer uses allusion to Little John and the grandsons of uncle Marsaillaise. This indicates to what extent the Anglophone and Francophone ethnic groups in Cameroon are different, “so different in location and history/so different in height and bulk/so different in thought and tongue/so different in body and soul/so different in mind and heart/so different in looks and deeds” (Epie, 2009: 57). The use of repetition here emphasizes the differences between the two Cameroons which indicate that the two tribes have nothing in

common, be they cultural, physical, spiritual, historical and psychological traits. Epie's complex ideas about reunification become again more complex and the reader is left with no clear perspective, especially in this postcolonial period where literary debates around the question of "difference" are heating up.

Majority ethnic groups in Ewawa are those who determine the character of the society's basic institutions, especially the main political, economic, and cultural institutions. Their culture is the culture of the larger society into which the minority ethnic groups assimilate. The framework for intergroup processes is provided by the institutions deriving from the culture of the majority groups. The majority groups, because of their position of power, are at the top of the ethnic stratification system. And people who are in constant need of a boost in self-esteem are often motivated to belittle "them" in order to feel better about "us". From this distinction, some people in Ewawa ("them") are denied the very fundamental rights, including the constitutional right to vote. Lucia complains that "only the members of the ruling party are registered. Only they vote. And only they count the votes and declare result" (Epie, 2009: 55). This agrees with the idea once propounded by Staszak in *Other/Otherness* (2008) that "Opposing Us, the Self and Them, the Other is to choose a criterion that allows humanity to be divided into two groups: one that embodies the norm and whose identity is valued and another that is defined by its faults, devalued and susceptible to discrimination" (1).

In Epie's *The Death Certificate*, there is this tendency to separate the society in two groups on the basis of who the "Them" are and who the "Us" are. "Them" here are defined according to their defaults. One man at Meka's house sardonically says "All that smearing is done by the people of the 8th, 9th and 10th Provinces. *They* are the large mouthed of Ewawa. But *we* promise to clip *their* lips once and for all. *We* are ready"[emphasis, mine] (129). This stigmatization of the natives of the 8th, 9th and 10th Provinces (a negatively-connoted reference) by those of the 1st and 2nd Provinces (a positively-connoted reference) foreshadows a plan to eliminate the "Other" as one unnamed man reveals: "Numbers don't fight. Arms and courage do. The Israelis are outnumbered by a thousand to one. Yet they beat the Arabs. They have signed a defence pact with our Government for the suppression of all internal uprising. They are training our boys now under cover in our village. When the training is over our boys will be the majority in the army,

police and gendarmerie”(129). Training troops for the purpose of eliminating “the Other” is synonymous to genocide. Talking about how “othering the other” revolves in genocide, Wilshire (2005: xiv) captures this when he reports that in the history of ethnic conflicts and discrimination, “all members of the alien group must be killed or incapacitated because each carries the germ of the alien world-experience”.

Much of the dynamics of interethnic relations derives from the structure of dominance and subordination involved in the majority-minority ethnic group relations. The Minister of Armed Forces shouts at the Delegate General of National Security because he has appointed an officer from the 8th Province as a *Commissaire* of the 8th District. With a frown, the Minister retorts: “Ateh! You see? I have always insisted that all those in charge of key positions in this city should be people of the First Province. Monsieur le Délégué Général, vous avez entendu?” (Epie, 2004: 26). The people of the First Province determine the life of the society as a whole, including the security system. The Minister is too angry when he learns that the cassette of Mbaneko’s apology was left with the *Commissaire*. But the issue here is not that Mbaneko has been shot by the crack-force when he was trying to steal, but that as a son of the soil from the first province, he must be covered up. That is why the Minister of Armed Forces exclaims: “Monsieur le Commissaire Central, do you say you are a son of the soil? And you leave the confession of one of us with a foreigner? Terrible!” and he orders the officer to “...get the cassette from your colleague and have him arrested...tell the doctor to remove the corpse from the mortuary to any room of the Intensive Care Unit of the Teaching Hospital...and the corpse treated as if the patient is in coma” (Epie, 2004: 26-27). The natives of the 8th, 9th, and 10th provinces are strangers in their own country and their identity is questioned. As such, Epie’s portrayal of his post-colonial or post-reunification society has indicated that the reunification process is still a dream.

However, as Bole Butake (in the foreword to the play *Betrothal without Libation*) confesses his enthusiasm for a unitary nation, tribal discrimination will lead Cameroon nowhere. He expresses his participation in the imagination of Cameroon as a unitary nation in the following terms:

Perhaps it is even more interesting that, right from the outset my first steps in creativity, I was already very concerned about Cameroon as a nation, rather than a conglomeration of tribal states with individuals who were ready to get at each other's throat just because they were from another cultural background. After more than four decades of reunification experiment, the hell hounds of tribalism and sectarianism are still at large in this country, causing untold havoc. (5-6)

The dreamed unity between the two Cameroons is challenged by tribal conflicts that have roots in the colonial set ups. However, it is within these differences that harmony will possibly sprout. That is why Bole Butake's *Betrothal without Libation*, like Epie's *Ehumed, Tried and Hanged*, employs as its organizing thematic structure a proposed interethnic marriage and identifies ethnocommunal consciousness as a major obstacle to the fulfillment of the "imagined" postcolonial united Cameroon.

The media in Ewawa is said to be involved in oppression and discrimination. The national press in Ewawa is not a real force in efforts for democracy in society because of contradictions arising from the exploitation of the press for personal and ethnic ends by certain segments of the population. This has thwarted the development of genuine democratic institutions in Ewawa. Ethnic and sectional loyalties are in a large measure responsible for the failure of the press to crystallize into a real watchdog of and spokesman for the democratic aspirations of Ewawaians. Rather than censoring the actions of the government and those groups that are judged hostile to the welfare of citizens, no matter from what part of the country they come, the press has degenerated into a theatre of ideological warfare. As a result, instead of serving the interest of Ewawaians the press has assumed a partisan role, dividing citizens along tribal political lines. As Nyamnjoh in "The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon" demonstrates, sectarian tendencies are reproduced in the media and the media's democratic objectives have been jettisoned in favour of more parochial considerations, such as the desire to share in the spoils of office.

One example concerns the reportage of the death of Mongo Meka, the Treasurer General of Ewawa. This event saw the press closely attached to the deceased's regional origin. Ndjock exclaims about the way the reportage of the death of a citizen like any other is given expensive coverage: "What has prompted this misuse of our national radio? Who is Mongo Meka? Is a national treasurer the President of the nation? Why give an insignificant figure that honour? I know it is because he comes from the First Province. But who cares?" (Epie, 2004: 14). The news reporter, it should be said, necessarily comes from the same division (and ethnic group) and province as the dead treasurer. The news expounded out of the norms of proper journalism and fanned the flames of the long-running north-west and south-west political and social divide by injecting indiscriminate doses of ethnicity and regionalism into a death that primarily appears to be a normal social phenomenon. The traditional political and social divide between these two regions, the Francophone and the Anglophone, has become a perennial feature in the politics of regionalism in Ewawa and the emerging elites of the First and Second Provinces exploit it for sectional and ethnical ends. The press, it would seem, has fallen prey to the ethnic divisions in Ewawa. Mula regrets that all those journalists who were brandishing cameras at Mongo Meka's burial ceremony are not real ones. He argues that

those are the claque of the Government. There is no real journalist in the official press of this country. Those fellows were trained and employed by Government, (the government of the sons of the soil, by the sons of the soil, for the sons of the soil, they can do nothing but cover up the truth with a black sheet. (Epie, 2004: 70)

This politicization of the media for ethnic ends weakens democracy in Ewawa and foreshadows the media's inability to build a consensus as to what represent the norms of proper journalism. For instance, because of the death of Mongo Meka, the shooting of Mbaneko and the failed plot to poison His Eminence Fimi with all the consecutive terrible murders of Rev. Father Jean-Pierre Engo, the Archbishop and the Rev. Sister of Liopopo, the media in Ewawa is overshadowed and convulsing in rumours. The church and the government are accused of complicity in all these murders. To restore the state's authority that was getting lost and confidence in public law and order that were eroding "the head of state went on television and told a puzzled nation that only the people of high esteem spoke the truth. Those of the low profile told lies. With this he implied

that only he, and his ministers could tell the nation what was right and what was wrong on the national radio and television” (Epie, 2004: 188). In his address, the father of the nation calls upon his citizens to listen to and believe their media- the Ewawa Tribune and Ewawa T.V., which are the only reliable sources of information in Ewawa. The limited audience the President was addressing to are the sons and daughters of the soil, his tribesmen because “what is good for the First and Second Provinces is good for the nation, and you can go hang” (Epie, 2004: 193).

The President in Ewawa has created a national media to praise him, his ruling party and his kleptomaniac government which is composed of only people from his clan. When he has “won” the elections against what he calls his “political distracters” (opposition), “newspapers started analysing the Head of State’s speech saying what he said and what he did not say, what he intended to say and how he would have said it, *the beauty of his language, his composure, the marvellous mannerisms and so on. They hailed his wisdom and likened him to Abraham Lincoln*”[emphasis, mine] (Epie, 2009: 183). The media here is simply fooling the public while the latter is disappointed of the president’s speech after elections. For Epie, if the media which are supposed to be an instructive instrument composed by people who have long and deep sight in what is happening in Ewawa are there to praise a discriminative and oppressive regime, the poverty-stricken populace cannot operate any miracle to change the debacle. This is what leads professor Esole to conclude by asking himself “why people who have had misfortune of being ruled by a heartless and brutal kleptomaniac administration for twenty-five years could not distinguish their right from their left?” (183). The politicization and factionalization in the media, with respect to supporting efforts to build a viable democratic tradition, is shown by its failure to galvanize all citizens towards the highway of democracy. The role of informing and educating the public has been replaced by one aimed at disinforming them and caricaturing social realities to undermine democracy and popular participation in the national affairs.

Normally it is the media that helps the masses to get right information and also to form opinions and make judgments regarding various issues. But the personalised media in Ewawa keep people relying on the lies the ERTV enounces. Lucia complains that “as state institutions and authority collapsed, the masses succumbed to the vicious and incessant lies ERTV (the personalised Ewawa Radio and Television popularly known as Mendomedia) told them, and remained

inactive” (Epie, 2008: 56). Esole laments the bad quality of media in Ewawa where “papers rely on told stories. And of course, this leaves the curious Ewawan as ignorant as yesterday” (Epie, 2009: 121). Media can be considered as a “watch dog” of political democracy. The media can denounce cases of offences by government institutions. But in Ewawa there is no difference between the police and the media when it comes to concocting the truth and showing wrong facts. As Lucia is addressing to the Parson she warns him not to be biased by what the media has said: “you might have been influenced by the media and the so-called justice in Ewawa. I hate to talk to people influenced by what they call evidence and facts from the police”(Epie, 2008: 31). Lucia is convinced that the evidence given by the media and the police are simply the concoction of facts. For her, facts are not the truth, especially facts from Ewawa police force because facts may be gathered from bodily and mental torture (27). To uncover the wrong information behind the lies of Ewawa media, Mula has introduced another form of media, Investigative Journalism (I.J.), which

is a cause and effect method of reporting an event. An I.J. journalist does not report for the sake of information but for the sake of the cause of the event. I.J. journalists are war front journalists-those who risk their lives for the revelation of the truth. (Epie, 2004: 69)

Investigative journalism is a camera focussed on the Ewawaian society; its lens captures societal ills and permits Mula and his friends to know the realities of the country. Probably this is the kind of reporter that Ewawa needs, “an ideal reporter, a reporter who will tell the world what things are”(Epie, 2009: 118). From a keen observation of their social environment, the investigative journalists have realised that “any system that works against itself is doomed to die” (73). The regime referred to has been reluctant to liberalize the media fully and enter the highway towards genuine participatory democracy. The example of the media’s inability to rise above sectarian politics in Ewawa and to serve as a catalyst in efforts to build a genuine democratic culture is illustrative of this trend.

4.2.2. Economic discrimination

It is important to note that economic and political rights are fundamentally intertwined. The Ewawans are denied three basic economic rights: physical subsistence (food), access to health care, and education. The economic rights of Ewawa have not fared well. In fact, they have worsened since the onset of the economic crisis. Anglophone citizens have unequal access to education (because of French language deficiencies) and thus to high-paying jobs. Anglophones have also been marginalized in high-ranking appointments to parastatal organizations and government positions, as well as in the military domain.

The Ewawa nation is full of embezzlers who are “possessed by the devil of greed and power” (Epie, 2008: 53). The monopolistic public ownership of enterprises goes without any accountability and competition from the private sector. This ownership becomes so inefficient that it almost invariably leads to nepotism and political playoffs, bloated payrolls, poor service and inefficiency. Perceptions of widespread corruption have fomented popular discontent in Ewawa, where the top political brass and the managers of state firms are perceived to have geared the privatization process for ethnic aims. Ewawaian indigenous ethnic groups have emerged as significant elements in the political divisions of the country. In other words, in Ewawa nation ethnic affiliations are linked to political groupings or factions or portions, and are often linked to occupational categories. And they are surely linked to job allocation. This is why individuals have been aligned and/or mobilized on ethnic lines for economic or political ends.

In its essence the central function of ethnic affiliations in Ewawa is to permit people to organize into social, cultural or political entities able to compete with others for whatever goods and services are viewed as available and valuable in their environment. In this competition, those who have direct access to economic resources have more advantages to amass as much as possible while those at the margins only watch. For example, Madame Jacqueline Diwona, sister of Mongo Meka and wife of the Minister of Territorial Administration insists and gives dictatorial pronouncements that Meka’s house in the village be “reconditioned as a house for burial ceremony...to accommodate the dignitaries we expect to honor Mongo on his last journey on earth. That work can be handled by E.S.I.U engineers. The director of E.S.I.U is one of us.

She proceeds with rhetorical questions like: “Shall we drive Meka’s body on a bumpy road... Is the Minister of Public works not one of us?” ...the marbles for the grave and tomb are to be ordered from Italy and draperies from the Gargini Funerary Home, Paris” (Epie, 2004: 44). ...“to reduce cost, we can ask one of our cargo planes to transport the things...is the Director General of Ewawa Airways, not one of us?” (45). From Madame Jacqueline Diwona’s pronouncements, it is evident that in Ewawa all key positions are given to the people of the First Province while the people of the other provinces occupy minor positions. This goes to further confirm the general consensus that Anglophone Cameroonians are marginalized and excluded from or deprived of all access to economic welfare given the fact that key positions are taken by Francophone and that the country’s economy is distributed and shared among the only Francophone.

Ewawa’s political economy is highly politicized by the First and Second provinces. This creates critical life conditions and access to employment in this country where jobs are offered on the basis of nepotism and ethnicity. The political economy of Ewawa is that of crisis. Its legacy is that of corruption, price distortions, inefficient public enterprises, unemployment, underdevelopment and dependence. Mula laments to Musa that “Economic crisis is a cover up term for mismanagement, embezzlement and nepotism. All our friends of the first province with whom we completed university are either doing Postgraduate courses or are fully employed” (Epie, 2004: 47). Musa reiterates the hardships of graduates without jobs. He says: “All of us who left the university, none members of the first province, suffered under Pilate alike” (173). Musa insinuates that only those from the First Province are employed and in good positions while the rest are unemployed because of their provincial origin.

In this country of Ewawa, not all citizens have got the same facilities in their businesses. Businessmen who are members of the ruling party are facilitated to achieve their business goals. Members of the opposition are discriminated and are subjected to higher taxes. This causes their businesses to go bankrupt and close. Esole’s business “Eso & Sons Enterprises” in Tonye Sub-Division suffers from this discrimination and is nearing collapse. As Beri, his driver who has discovered the systems in Ewawa reveals him, “levying taxes is one way of controlling the opposition. Business men who don’t belong or who don’t sponsor the party in power are rendered bankrupt with heavy, very heavy taxes levied on them” (Epie, 2009: 66). Esole’s

business does not have any chance to stand because all the authorities around get jealous and unhappy to see a member of the opposition prosper. They devise all possible plans to make the business get bankrupt:

The SDO, the Commissioner of Police and the Commandant of the Gendarmerie of Tonye Sub-Division were not happy with Esole's aloofness. He had not gone to see any of them, to greet them, to say that he was around their exclusive zone. That was not compatible with the norm. The SDO was particularly concerned with Esole's inroads to prosperity he had heard about his political views, views opposed to those of the administration, and views that were now spreading like wild fire in his zone. (Epie, 2009: 67)

All economic life is in the hands of the big men who matter in Tonye Sub-Division: The SDO, the Commissioner of Police and the Commandant of the Gendarmerie. These mighty of the sub-division determine whose business is to prosper and whose is to fail. This form of exploitation and discrimination is done on the basis of political or ethnic ideologies. Beri explains the big men's exploitation in Ewawa in these terms:

And that is the way all around. Big men must eat small men. And by big men here I don't mean big in terms of age or education. No, that would mean being static. By big men at this epoch, I mean big men in terms of ethnic group, type of job, job position, and ability to out-manoeuvre the status quo. Our big men are meant to eat us. [...] Advantaged clans exploit the disadvantaged ones. (Epie, 2009: 71)

Beri's resolution to the dictum: 'Big men must eat small men' is because he has resigned to the social order of things in the Ewawa nation. This ideology builds inequality and strengthens subjugation. "Big men" are those from the First and Second Provinces because they are the ones who occupy all the good positions in Ewawa. The sons and daughters of the soil, referred to as

the advantaged, have in their exclusive zones, the right to exploit the disadvantaged clans who come from the disadvantaged provinces. Dicklitch (2002: 166) explains that:

This centralization and personalization of power has led to the development of the “big-man” syndrome. The man with power (from the President to lower civil servant officials) uses his power as he sees fit, and the population generally looks up to the “man with power” to solve all their problems. The “big man” is thus “above the law.” This creates a negative human rights culture where the man with the most power can and does abuse the rights of men (and women) beneath him, because he has the power to do so, and because he makes the argument that it is in the national interest to do so. In other words, when you are the “big man” you don’t have to respect the rights of others.

This form of exploitation that places some people “above the law” does not favor those from the lower classes. The “Big men” in Ewawa have exclusive rights to oppress those who do not share points of view with the ruling party. Esole’s business is at risk of closing because he does not share political views with the ruling party. He narrates it in these words: “They gave me a default bill of FCFA 20,000,000 for a business whose capital is less than FCFA 10,000,000 and one of them shamelessly suggested that we could share the amount-that is, I give them FCFA 10,000,000 and I remain with FCFA 10,000,000” (Epie, 2009: 74). This exploitation surprises Esole and as he was still thinking of what to do, tax controllers come and seal the premises. Beri who is accustomed to this form of exploitation asks his boss to give him only five million instead of the ten to bribe the “big men” so that Esole’s business can be reopened.

It is also important to distinguish here the unequal distribution of development projects (“beauty and wealth” [Epie, 2009: 119]) between the first and the second provinces on the one hand, and the rest of the provinces on the other. There are “imposing buildings” which give Ndotelle village a “look of a township” (Epie, 2004: 119) and Ndotelle is blessed with prominent sons. The Head of State himself has built 2 hotels in the village. General Abo has built a 100 capacity hotel, the Director of Ewawa Shipping Lines has built a modest 80 capacity hotel and so on and

so forth. Meka's house itself can accommodate thousands of people" (110-111) and "only the road leading to his house is re-surfaced"(108).

In villages of the 8th and 9th Provinces, people are prevented from exercising their God-given right simply because they are alien, they don't belong to the first and second province (Epie, 2010: 105). For the strangers in their own country, there are no public infrastructures like roads and hospitals. To reach a hospital, people have to carry their patients on a local stretcher and trek for hours and hours because the road has deteriorated beyond comprehension. "Nidong, the Headquarters of West Bassiland (8th Province) is twenty-three kilometers from Tonye. Of the twenty-three kilometers, only four could be considered a traceable track, a track that was cleared and perhaps used by vehicles once in blue moon" (Epie, 2009: 99). Esole, the only elite in the sub-division laments that "if the party in power had honored its numerous pledges to build good roads, the people would not have been waiting for days to have a vehicle to carry their patients to hospital" (122). The society portrayed by Epie shows unequal distribution of socio-economic infrastructures on a regional and ethnic basis. Those who are closer to the centre enjoy more the country's wealth while those from the margin are deprived of it.

4.2.3. Educational Discrimination

According to Article 1 of the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, and for the purpose of the same Convention, the term "discrimination" includes any distinction, exclusion, limitation or preference which, being based on race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, economic condition or birth, has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing equality of treatment in education and in particular:

- (a) Of depriving any person or group of persons of access to education of any type or at any level;
- (b) Of limiting any person or group of persons to education of an inferior standard;
- (c) Subject to the provisions of Article 2 of this Convention, of establishing or maintaining separate educational systems or institutions for persons or groups of persons; or
- (d) Of inflicting on any person or group of persons conditions which are incompatible with the dignity of man.

The educational system in Cameroon is very discriminatory in so far as it does not respect the UNESCO convention above. The *Cameroon Post* of November 26th to December 3rd 1990 reports that “English private law students protested about discrimination, bitterly lamenting that some of their courses were in French while French private law students had no courses at all in English” (10). The Ewawaian society is divided into two major parts where two different languages (French and English) are officially recognized. This implies that both French and English languages should be given the same status and be used as means of instruction in both formal and informal education. But, the case in point is different. The fact is that the power of dominant Anglophone forms of representation and the use of French language make the Anglophone marginalized groups see themselves as the “other”. This form of trauma, as Hall (1996) explains, is not simply that a group of people are positioned as the “other”, but the subtle ways in which those positioned as the other accept and internalize that knowledge. The Anglophone speaking students, though they feel discriminated and assimilated, they have not yet accepted and internalized this form of domination. They are struggling to fight against this discrimination which violates the UNESCO convention against educational discrimination. Konings (2002: 185) contends that

though officially a bilingual institute, the University of Yaoundé has clearly remained a Francophone institute. The Anglophone students protested when, in September 1983, the Beti Minister of National Education promulgated an order modifying the Anglophone General Certificate of Education (GCE) examination by making it similar to the Francophone baccalaureate. Apparently the order was intended to facilitate the entry of Anglophone students into the country’s professional and technical institutes, which were exclusively based on the French system. The Anglophone students, however, interpreted the proposed reform as a subtle attempt by the Francophone-dominated state to assimilate the Anglophone educational system. They maintained that the problem of Anglophone exclusion from the professional and technical institutes in the

country could not be solved by assimilation but rather by the creation of institutes based on the English system.

It has been mentioned earlier in this study that the Anglophone minority deeply regrets for having voted for reunification with the Francophone majority during the 1961 plebiscite. They feel marginalized, exploited, and assimilated by the Francophone-dominated state and Francophone population as a whole. For Anglophone students, it becomes difficult to perform in schools if the Francophone educational system is generalized. Lucia, the prisoner and victim of this discrimination in Ewawa educational system regrets in these words: “People from the First, Second, and Third Provinces [...] could easily pass the exams into job-giving institutions of Ewawa while those from other Provinces could not pass (Epie, 2008: 35) and that “entrance examinations in Ewawa job-giving institutions were not objective. They were meant to enrich the already rich, employ brothers and sisters, stock the civil service with people of the same ethnic group, and show that Ewawa belonged to some people more than others” (74). The young Anglophone job-seekers suffer a double discrimination: first, the language in which they are examined is a hindrance because it is not their second language and second, even if they could pass the exams, they will not be given jobs simply because they are Anglophones. As a consequence “most candidates had lost confidence in internal examinations not only because of the extortion and corruption but also because the value of educational institutions had plummeted disgracefully in Ewawa. [...]. Privileged people passed exams before they sat them and that made nonsense of exams in Ewawa (58). From the above references, we observe that the educational system in Ewawa is discriminative. Students from the two different backgrounds, i.e. Anglophone and Francophone, are not given equal chances to the same opportunities. As a consequence, the discriminated group will not enjoy the same rights to education as their counterpart “children of the big guns” from the privileged provinces:

And who cared? After all, the children of the big guns were all abroad undergoing high quality education in the US and Europe. That was necessary because it was the surest way of maintaining the status quo. So long as they received superior education, they would, upon return to the country, cow us with the aura of high quality education, and so, rule us as their parents had ruled our parents. (Epie, 2008:53)

“The children of the big guns” are given such privileges to higher education and good jobs not because of their merits. The consequence is that those who are given jobs in such conditions will not perform better in their positions because even in schools they were not the best ones. The best ones are relegated to the back simply because they are not from the “privileged” group. When the marginalized lose confidence in internal examinations which at the same time are the only tool to good jobs in Ewawa, the young generation from “the other provinces” will definitely suffer from an unending deprivation from all the nation’s life spheres. As such they are denied life, “life that mattered. Life we were all craving for in different ways and means. Life of which we all had right to under fair play but life which some of us were being deprived of by I swear to God, this damn set up (Epie, 2008: 66). This form of discrimination creates deep gaps in life styles which characteristically distinguish the rich from the poor and “Ewawa would sanction the demarcation of roles. Poor families would remain poor. Rulers would remain rulers. And that would be it” (74). Poor families as it appears from the novels under study are only those from the 8th, 9th, and 10th provinces and these constitute an ethnic group in degeneration because they are not found in any position of decision-making in Ewawa where life is determined by someone’s origin. Not only a young student from the 1st and 2nd provinces will get a good job as soon as he gets out of university, but also “Each lady is married, is naturally or artificially light in complexion, is a wife of a Minister, a Secretary General, a Director General, a Banker, a Superintendent of Police and what have you?” (Epie, 2008: 74). Unlike other ladies from the “other provinces”, daughters of the soil have a double advantage of getting nice jobs without any problem and getting married to higher officials of Ewawa nation. As long as the status quo is maintained, this will keep some “up there” and others “down here” (86). There is thus a risk of the Anglophone tribe from the “other provinces” to degenerate.

4.2.4. Religious Discrimination

Internal divisions in Ewawa nation do not spare the church. Epie’s characterisation demonstrates that divisions, hatred and murder on the basis of ethnic conflicts are also manipulated by church leaders who were supposed to preach unity and love as moral and spiritual values. The conspiracy to murder Cardinal Bernard Fimi with “the decoy laced with a tasteless, colourless poison that kills slowly but surely in a clean and fair manner” (68) is significant for both what it

reveals and what it conceals. It reveals the intrigues within the church and the hypocrisy of the clergy. Religious betrayal is presented here as a consequence of the spirit of tribalism and ethnocentrism that characterise the Ewawa nation. The consecutive murder of Rev. Father Jean-Pierre Engo and Sister Marie-Therese is depicted in its excessive brutality, violence and terror which confront us with the utter destruction and dislocation of the society. All these are fuelled by the internal divisions that are portrayed at all levels of Ewawa's life: political, economic, religious, etc.

The conversation between Dimvondo, the Delegate General of National Security and His Eminence, Cardinal Boa, both indigenes of the First Province shows how the two are planning to murder Cardinal Bernard Fimi, because he is not "a son of the soil". Dimvondo goes to see His Lordship and asks him: "Do you stand a chance of winning over the Holy See if His Eminence the cardinal dies in a plane crash or one of those accidents?" His Lordship is not shameful to respond: "Sure. I am the most qualified...I am the only uncompensated Archbishop of my grade. My friends of Venezuela, Peru, Mexico, India, have been promoted. They had no backstabbers" (Epie, 2004: 66). The church here is accused of hosting people who usurp power and kill. Religious actors are seen as individuals who fight for positions of power in order to amass much wealth. His Lordship, the "devil in cassock", appears to be a handicap of the progress of most south westerners. The church thus has become a generator of inequality, divisions and hatred.

Like in the government, the systems of domination that are set in place are openly related to ethnic and tribal coalitions. Boa wants to get support from his fellows of the First Province by resorting to tribalism, the main factor of division in Ewawa. The "sons of the First Province" are the rightful owners of everything in the country. They are the usurpers who usurped the religious power and who are now struggling to usurp the political and economic power of Ewawa. When Dimvondo and Boa's ploy has failed, the "sons of the soil" plan to murder Rev. Father Jean-Pierre Engo and all those who contributed to the leakage that saved His Eminence from dying. Mula notes that "the Catholic Church adores Caesar and God like. There is no muddle the Catholic Church is not neck-deep in" (Epie, 2004: 6). In Ewawa, there is no difference between the church and the government. In both institutions actors oppress, compete for power and kill when it can secure their wealth. In this competition for power, both institutions collaborate

though they were supposed to be run differently. Though things may have turned the other way round, the sons and daughters of the soil still think that “the Archbishop and Bishops of a country make recommendations in conjunction with those of the Government and the Holy See simply executes their will”(64). So now that the Holy See has dared doing the opposite of what the pompous sons and daughters have set in place, murder is the only solution to maintain power in the hands of to whom it “rightly belongs”.

Epie’s fiction presents the church and the government in Ewawa as one and the same when it comes to oppressing the ordinary man. As the government keeps civil servants underpaid, the church also does not pay its catechists. Lucia’s predicament is a result of the Parson or simply the church’s greed which rendered her father Joseph poor. She laments to the Parson:

Now Parson, who are responsible for creating these conditions?
Is it God or man? How much do you Parsons pay your
catechists? Christ ate with his disciples. How many times have
you eaten with your catechist? What should be the fate of the
daughter of a catechist or do you call her a stone? Do you see
any similarities between the church and the state? Do you know
that in each case the leaders eat all, depriving even their most
fervent subjects? [...] Do you know that all mankind is in the
mess of greed? Do you now see that you Parsons who rendered
my father poor, and those plunderers of state funds, who have
caused this devastating economic crisis contributed in sending
me to work in the hotel? (Epie, 2008: 73)

Lucia’s expression of anger to the Parson is eloquent here. In fact, the church and the government in Ewawa have contributed to Lucia’s imprisonment. Lucia’s predicament is symptomatic of the way Joseph, her father is exploited by the church which pays him nothing and thus he is not able to pay for his daughter’s school fees at the University. The fees have kept on increasing because of the “devastating economic crisis” caused by the plunderers members of the government. So she decides to go and work for the fees in a hotel where she meets Joseph-Marie Essene, a son of the soil and former classmate. After university, Joseph-Marie gets employed in the most privileged positions in EWAWA. He was once appointed as the Director

of Customs in the North and now he is appointed as the new Secretary General in the Ministry of Territorial Administration (Epie, 2008: 67). Because of his big salary (“the pay packet”), he succeeds to impregnate Lucia against her will. Unfortunately he abandons her with her “unwanted and unsanctified” son, Joe. Unfortunately Joe dies of measles far away in Etambeng village where Lucia has fled after having been disowned and chased by the church and her own parents. Therefore, the church’s greed and exploitation stands here as the beginning of her predicament and the end of her life. Because of the death of Joe she is imprisoned. She is sentenced to capital punishment and is now in the cell waiting for the last day of hanging.

4.3. Population Exodus

An overwhelming number of Ewawaian citizens, because of their ethnic origin, are subjected to discrimination and oppression. Like Jews in Egypt, the discriminated Ewawaians decide to leave the country of subjugation to the Promised Land because they feel their lives are in danger. So they undertake long and difficult journeys to escape from the hostile socio-political environment created by ruthless rulers.

I think I was only seven years old when the calamity that put my life in shambles occurred. Etambeng was in the grip of terrible pestilence caused by indiscriminate use of *Ngalemudumbu*. People fled in their numbers. [...] our father as if to say enough is enough woke us up and said we should get ready to get out of the village. Where were we going to? People who had migrated to Etaku were said to be moving out because of bad conditions. Those in other villages were not better off. So where were we heading to? None of us knew. Since the order was given we prepared and very soon we were plodding over the hills. We took the road to Kumenda town. Although the night was chilly and the road rough our father’s incessant urges to move on, made us put more spirit into trekking and to his delight, we arrived the Pianga River Crossing at dawn. We met thousands of people at the crossing, some queuing to be

crossed, and others sitting dejectedly on stones and beams
feeding mosquitoes and midges with their blood. (Epie, 2010:
119-120)

The forced trekking journey is a horrifying episode. So many of the trekkers die mid-way and miss the Promised Land. Epie's use of the exodus theme is informative of the terrible periods once Cameroon passed through and which saw so many Cameroonians fleeing the country to Europe or America for safety. The socio-economic life conditions in Ewawa have deteriorated and the citizens cannot endure them. Lucia describes this situation of total desolation that causes brain drainage from the Ewawa nation to neighboring countries in these words:

The nation was convulsing in economic, moral and other crisis.
[...]. Ministerial buildings and banks were picking fire at will.
School buildings were 'collapsing standing' to be later
dynamited. Fortune seekers from neighboring countries were
fleeing. A mysterious gloom was settling on Ewawa. [...].
There was total desolation. (Epie, 2008: 46)

The socio-political situation in the post-independence country portrayed by Epie is despondent. After the death of the old man, the new ruling oligarchy has institutionalized corruption and repression at all levels of Ewawa. Poverty is at its peak. All the parastatals and government institutions are convulsing in economic, moral and other crises. The country that used to be the hope of Ewawaians and where economy was flourishing is now agonizing. As the narrator says, "within a short time, Ewawa wore the crown of the most corrupt nation in the world. Men of conscience started to sing this song of lamentation:

Let's flee this boiler to safety,
This isn't our once dreamland,
The *Little John*, the Moses,
The Red Sea is very red" (Epie, 2008: 47)

The country that was once the "dreamland" is a "boiler" and is no longer safe. The reign in Ewawa is that of terror and repression; the economy is in shambles. Because of low salaries and the economic crisis, all university teachers are seeking refuge in other countries. The Ewawa

nation has spited its citizens and the only hope is to look for asylum in one of those ‘promised lands’ or countries like America, Britain, Germany, France, and all of Europe which shone of bright hope (Epie, 2009: 48).

In the novel *The Bad Samaritan*, the main character Esole is troubled by the choice of either staying in Ewawa as a university Professor or going to England where his daughter is married to a whiteman, who is also a university professor. Beri demonstrates to Esole how “the African situation is pitiful”:

Illegal immigrations or what the children themselves call ‘bush-falling’ is the most disgusting experience Africa is going through right now. Why do the children call it ‘bush-falling’? ‘Bush-falling’ means circumventing conventions in the acquisition of travel documents on the one hand, and doing the same in the manner of travelling to the West by air, sea and land. Since circumvention presupposes confrontation with the law, for the circumventors to avoid the law, they dash into the wild forests, stormy sea and hell-hot deserts to go to the West; hence the term bush-falling. You see, bush-falling is a more taunting stigma than the once upon a time slave trade. But do African leaders care about it? Does it mean anything to them when they see hundreds of corpses of their citizens being dragged from the sea every other day? No. They don’t.(Epie, 2009: 96)

The situation in Ewawa has become unbearable. The fact that citizens are fleeing their country is caused by the dubious financial institutional crisis that worries Ewawaians. The leaders do not mind about the deaths from ‘bush-falling’. It does not matter as long as “immigrations reduce the number of jobless graduates in their countries and lessen the possibilities of rebellion against them” (96). Esole is one of the ‘bush-fallers’ who wants to escape to England by capitalising on his son-in law who would help him “get a befitting job that would pay a hundred fold the chicken feed they were paid” (Epie, 2009: 27).

University professors are among the most aggrieved because Mvondokabi, the University Rector has suspended the salaries of the professors who “militated” in the Professors’ Union. They start to flee the country in great numbers. The Rector, in collaboration with the police, denies any foreign travel to the University Professors for fear that they would go there for good. But “determined ‘bush-fallers’ devise several routes [...]. Some go to neighbouring countries by mami-waggons and fly from there to their destinations. Others enrol in banned political parties and apply for political asylum in lands of freedom-especially America” (Epie, 2008: 54). The university loses the brains and students start to abandon one by one and look for ways to go to study abroad, too. As the situation degenerates, natives lose confidence to be called Ewawaian. They long for finding refuge in one of those great countries where they think life is still possible. It is important to note that there is nothing more valuable in life than one’s fatherland. The citizens are not seeing any more value in their own fatherland. No matter how inhumane the journey to the “promised land” is, the ‘bush-fallers’ are determined to cross the red sea, though it is getting redder. The country that used to be theirs is now regarded as a foreign land. A lot of people have divorced with everything Ewawaian. In this country “one lost confidence in oneself and longed to be something else than being Ewawaian. And truly, there were thousands of people like that. People who had divorced themselves from everything Ewawaian”(Epie, 2008: 59).

The novels under study discuss the theme of population exodus, not only as a consequence of the “economic crisis” but also of the politics of oppression and discrimination that has been rampant in Ewawa since the accession to independence. The rulers who accessed power are more concerned with looting the nation and cultivating a spirit of exclusion among the citizens. Part of the population that is not killed flees the country and stays years and years in neighbouring countries where they are subjected to dehumanizing treatments. They cannot regain their countries as long as the oppressor is still there. Etambeng people who have fled the country have even forgotten that they once were Ewawaian. When Sango Nkwel’Ngole saves Etambeng by killing Ngii, the oppressor, peace is recovered. All the refugees can now regain their fatherland. He tells the assembly: “After his burial, I sent a word to our people in the Diaspora to return. Only a few harked. The majority are still out. Some have decided never to return. Others don’t even know they belong to Etambeng”(Epie, 2010: 102). People who have fled Etambeng have

become so deeply aggrieved that they hardly believe that the oppressor is no longer alive despite the message from Nkwel'Ngole that has been sent to them. Many have decided to stay in exile for good. The few who have listened and returned are now guaranteed maximum protection. Nkwel'Ngole tells them: "I promise to protect any person who returns to Etambeng. And [...] all returnees should settle on their land. [...] this is what caused the mass exodus from Etambeng to other villages" (Epie, 2010: 103).

4.4. Oppression by the Police

In Ewawa the oppressed population is fed up of the police because "there is no major crime in this country to which the police are not the perpetrators or witnesses" (Epie, 2008: 4). The prison officers are looters, rapists of prisoner girls, and they torture anyone arrested. The prison authorities are indifferent to such brutalities. Lucia tells the Parson that "no doubt our police force is trained to brutalize us the way it does, our hospitals are death traps and our prisons are simply to execute what the police and the hospitals leave undone (24). Detention centers are usually overcrowded with inadequate sanitary and medical facilities as well as insufficient food. Many accused of crimes in the Anglophone provinces are jettisoned to prisons without trial. Bruises from lashes indicate that those incarcerated have been tortured. This persistence of torture in the prison system reveals a brutal and corrupt system in which the law is flagrantly violated.

Even though public officials admit that they need to create a human rights culture among the public and the forces of law and order, little or nothing has changed. The accused often do not have right to an attorney or even to compensation for damages suffered. To compound these problems, there is no independent authority to conduct inquiries into offenses committed by members of the forces of law and order. In effect, there is little control over the police or the gendarmes, so human rights violations continue largely unabated. This situation creates a feeling of fear among the citizens. Analyzing the civil war in the former Yugoslavia, Ignatieff in *Blood and belonging: journeys into the new nationalism* (1975) argues that systemic fear arises when a state begins to collapse. Ethnic hatred is a result of the terror that is felt when faith in legitimate authority is lost. Whilst such an ideal may always have been met with some cynicism in Ewawa,

if now the state is no longer the provider of public services, and is perceived as serving only the interests of one particular group, it must lose legitimacy.

Bondage Central Prison authorities torture the prisoners in order to get evidence to present to the court for sentence. Evidence is gathered through terrible bodily torture. Lucia describes the scenario in these words:

Three hefty muscular policemen stood up to break the horse. They rained truncheons on me, not minding where they hit. I reacted rather instinctively. I curled up like a pangolin and thus surrendered my back for tattooing. My body turned crusty and so ward off pain. I did not groan nor whine. I did not plead. I just surrendered myself to the men of peace to piece me up. That apparent defiance wreaked havoc in the ASP; he seized a truncheon and came in for the kill. He landed two solid ones on the small of my back. My spine creaked, and at last I thought my twenty-six year old heart could bear it no longer. (Epie, 2008: 2-3)

Lucia's testimony shows extreme suffering at the hands of an unscrupulous and torturing police officer. They beat her to near death in order to get evidence from her that she killed her son, while he had died of natural causes. This long tattooing is what the ASP calls "a cup of tea-breakfast for a witch" (3). We may rightly say that Lucia will be waiting for another such tattooing for lunch and supper. The police in Ewawa are well trained to torture innocent people. As if the previous indiscriminate torturing was not enough, the hefty men go on to achieve their deal. Lucia describes the lunch torture like this:

The truncheon fell over all my body with untold savagery. I could no longer protect my face. At a certain point one of the officers held my hands and so exposed my chest. His colleague took aim at my breasts, and landed a solid blow on the right one. The pain coursed through me with the force of a thousand million watt electric current subjecting me to epileptic spasms. Before I could recover from it, one of the blows opened a gash

across my forehead and let the hose loose. Blood jetted out with such force that the wall got wet. (Epie, 2008: 5)

The police in Ewawa are well trained to torture the very people they were supposed to protect. After this terrible savagery they wrote a statement themselves and presented it to Lucia for signature. In her state of unconsciousness, she could not resist and she signed without having read the content of the statement. It is this same statement that the police will brandish to the court for Lucia's death sentence. The police, composed by the majority of sons and daughters of the soil, inflict dehumanizing treatment on the people from the "other provinces" in order to keep them under subjugation and discrimination.

Dimvondo, Delegate General for National Security defines clearly the mission of his security people. Security people who were supposed to protect all Ewawa citizens in the same way are the same people who devise ways to murder all those who are not from the First and Second provinces. In Ewawa, when it comes to discriminating "the other", the Church and the police are one and the same. Dimvondo agrees with His Lordship to kill His Eminence Fimi:

Yes, Your Lordship. We the security people think light years faster than the ordinary mind. I thought of destroying his flight in mid-air, but that would destroy other lives plus our only jumbo. So, I cancelled that. Then, I thought of an airport shooting. That too would involve or endanger other lives. So I have settled on poisoning. Poisoning. It will be clean and fair. Poisoning through Mass Wine. This is how it will work. [...]. During the procession from the sacristy to the altar, we shall swap his chalice with the decoy laced with a tasteless, colourless poison that kills slowly but surely in a clean and fair manner. It takes time and leads to no suspicion. (Epie, 2004: 67-68)

The immoral and brutal Delegate General of National Security sets up his plan to kill a servant of God and this is how he explains it in these words: "Your Lordship, we shall eliminate your enemy. I want to devise a way that would make the elimination clean and fair. Only one person should die, at most two, not more. So Your Lordship, I shall set my traps at all corners. They

require money, not only state money but also church money”(Epie, 2004: 66). A servant of God who does not come from the First or Second Province is an enemy. He has thus to be eliminated and leave the place to a son of the soil. The police are ready to execute the shame no matter the cost. In his conspiracy with His Lordship Boa to kill His Eminence Fimi, Dimvondo admits that “in politics, in survival, there is no morality” (Epie, 2004: 65). The conspiracy that involves government institutions and the Church shows to what extent the Ewawaian rulers are devoid of morality. A lot of money given by churchgoers as offertory and money paid by citizens as taxes is used to make the killing of a servant of God successful because only he is not from the First or Second province.

Prison in Ewawa is used by the government and its security bodies as a means to silence political parties which have different viewpoints from the ruling party’s. Professor Esole is oppressed because he has announced that he is going to contest elections in the opposition. The commissioner tells Esole: “I have been asked to lock you and your collaborators up. In a rural police station like this, there is only one cell for every Dick and Harry. We use its sad conditions as detergent”(Epie, 2009: 174). The ruling party uses the police to distress opposition during the electoral campaign in order to limit their influence in the community. Opposition party members and leaders are put in bad conditions as a means of silencing them. At the station, Esole sees “two wraith-like figures sitting in chains on a bench. Their bodies were tattooed with welts apparently inflicted by indiscriminate and brutal use of truncheons”(175). While the opposition party members are tortured and oppressed, the dictators in Ewawa are surrounded by the bayonets of their soldiers and the truncheons of their police to silence those who may dare run for power. Paradoxically, the tyrants, the oppressors and the exploiters are wrapped themselves in the cloak of patriotism, or religion, or both to deceive and overawe the people. Dimvondo, The Delegate General of National Security and His Lordship Boa are some of these. To start the plan to murder His Eminence Fimi, Dimvondo expresses to Boa his feeling of “patriotism” in these words: “two days ago, when you revealed your debacle, I felt the claws of patriotism, the spikes of the love of our Province tearing my flesh” (Epie, 2004: 65). Their “patriotism” is only evidenced when they are planning to eliminate all those who do not belong to the First and Second Province, as if the country is limited to these two provinces only. The rest of the people in Ewawa are strangers and enemies.

4.5. **Fall of the Oppressor**

Epie's novels evolve around issues of ethnocentrism, oppression, corruption, and violation of human rights by those who were supposed to fight against them. Most of his characters can be perceived as anti-heroes. The analysis here is going to focus on the non-heroic deeds by the characters in the novels under study and which deeds contribute to the anti-heroes downfall. An anti-hero is the leading character in a modern novel or play whose character is widely discrepant from that of the traditional protagonist, or hero, of a literary work. In the conventional sense the hero of a novel should evince some of or all the following attributes: courage, dignity, decency, honesty and an essentially kind disposition. He should be one who inspires respect, admiration and even love from both virtual characters and readers alike. Often when faced with adversity such a protagonist puts up a reasonable fight or resistance. Instead of manifesting largeness, dignity, power, or heroism, the antihero is petty, ignominious, passive, clownish, or dishonest. As such, an anti-hero is one who lacks all or most of the qualities of a hero. In other words, he often possesses but the very opposite.

In the Ewawa nation, a handful of oppressors have taken all the power in their hands and have constantly abused it. By doing so, they have usurped the community's power. By not resisting, the helpless community has given its rights away. It should be remembered that once you give an oppressor all power over you, you almost never get it back. We have stated it above that power, wrongly used, defeats the oppressor as well as the oppressed. Ewawaian's political instability is based on the suppression of political participation. The lack of a regime that protects rights not only undermines the prospects for democratic consolidation, but also heightens the potential for future violence and chaos. When formal mechanisms of democracy are grafted onto a political and social system that lacks a culture of respect of rights, the consequence is obviously violence and chaos, not democratic progress.

At the beginning of the novel *Exhumed, Tried, and Hanged* Epoge, the renowned oppressor and power usurper is portrayed as an extraordinary human being. He is at the same time referred to as

Ngii (the lion) or the Saviour. The good and ignorant folks allow a man that they ignore his origin to come and rule over Etambeng. Yet, Sango Nkwel'Ngole has warned them of the wrath of their ancestors invading the village should they install Ngii, "a descendent of the betrayer of the Esam kings group on the grave of the betrayed" (34). That notwithstanding, a meeting of all the village House-Heads is convened "in order to bestow their ancestral powers on Epoge (the other name for Ngii) in order to make him a citizen of Etambeng and to immunize him against the evil forces of Esam" (39). They transfer onto him all the traditional powers that they have inherited from their fathers, grandfathers and fore-grandfathers. Among other powers, Ngii is given the rights and powers that whenever he attends a meeting, he "should be listened to and never spoken to" (45), to "devour his enemies, to instil fear in the people, to "be powerful", to "be great" (44), to subdue the Etaku people and be a door of Etambeng, to see inside and outside", to "protect them, remove them from shame", powers of offensive weapons, etc. (45-47). However, Ngii turns to be an oppressor of the very people who transferred power onto him. He uses all the power given to him to oppress the indigenous. In the context of Etambeng tradition, the villagers express it in these words: "It is the weapon fashioned by father gorilla that kills baby gorilla" (Epie, 2010: 31) or "a crab is killed with its own pincers" (55). His power to rule Etambeng is conclusively given to him by the Sub-Divisional Officer who makes "pronouncements that compromise the powers of chief Mukete and gave the Saviour (Ngii) undefined powers and privileges" (73). Later on, we are presented the same traditional leaders who are gradually complaining because Ngii is seizing their power. Meetings are no more to be convened in the grove, but in El Do rado, the village bar that Ngii has built and used to addict people.

The transition from traditional ways of governance to the new democratic principles creates misunderstanding among Etambeng head-houses. Ngii wants the village to follow the modern approach of development. For him the traditional structures hinder development because they are closed systems. He "abrogated hereditary posts and replaced them with electoral ones. Thus the chief was to be elected by an electoral college of compounds-heads and compound-heads by people of the compound. He banned the holding of occasions in the village grove and changed the most prominent cults of the village (91). In this transition, not only Etambeng people are not prepared for these changes but also electoral fees are beyond their means. The citizens are not

given time to be trained on what democratic elections are and how they should run for elections. Things are hurried in order to confuse the ordinary citizens and thus give privileges to the usurpers of the power only. They see the creation of new structures and the introduction of elections as a provocative and unacceptable move to dispossess them of their inalienable rights. Consequently they do not contest for the forthcoming elections. Ngii alone who can afford the fees declares his candidacy. To legitimize it and for fear of his candidacy being questioned, he offers to pay the fees for a number of other candidates selected from his supporters. So Ngii and his fellows win the elections with the unbelievable majority of 99% and 77.77% respectively (92).

It is important here to recall the theoretical framework on which our study is based. According to new historicists, among others Michel Foucault, no historical event has a single cause; rather, each event is tied into a vast web of economic, social, and political factors. Like Foucault, historicists see history in terms of power and view power not simply as a repressive force or a tool of conspiracy but rather as a complex of forces that produces what happens. Epie's novels are best understood in the context of dominant ideologies during the late 20th century where gross violations of human rights in the world at large, whether in Latin America, Eastern Europe or Africa under authoritarian regimes have created growing popular anger that finally has exploded in mass revolts and demands for change, bringing the regimes to an end. The fall of Ngii in *Exhumed, Tried and Hanged* is a bottom-up process: a gradually rising discontent of ordinary people, who in the aftermath of the changes, make continuous calls for justice and accountability for the perpetrator of human rights violations, and simultaneous calls for compensation for the victims of these violations.

As far as I am concerned, this form of oppression is viewed in the lines of what Booker T. Washington once said that "you can't hold a man down without staying down with him." Traditional house-heads are complaining about Ngii's usurpation of village powers, destruction of time tested village institutions, illegal seizure of people's farmlands including that of the chief himself, seizure of people's livestock and Ngii's uppishness. They also complain about his arrogance and extravagance of the members of his family (Epie, 2010: 92) and the fact that "he attacked and killed people with impunity" (Epie, 2010: 102). Rather than making Etambeng

village a free democratic constituency as he seems to claim, Ngii turns to be a confirmed oppressor. Village people are dying “miserably after years of suffering and are buried there because Ngii wouldn’t allow their corpses to be brought home. (Epie, 2010: 93)

Anger against Ngii increases among Etambeng village people and Bwemine, the father of the late Mukala who has recently died starts “accusing him [Ngii] of being responsible for the deaths and burials of Etambeng patriarchs in foreign lands. He warns him that if he continues with the process of eliminating the patriarchs of Etambeng, the surviving people would assemble the whole tribe to try him”(93). In the whole of Etambeng, there is only one person who can save the people from that oppression. This is Sango Nkwel’Ngole, the only knowledgeable old person of the village who refused to give his powers to Eponge. Sango Nkwel’Ngole saves them from Ngii. The old man has the view that there is no way he can profess solidarity with those who are oppressed when he is unwilling to confront the oppressor. With all his preserved powers, he fires a combined volley of reinforced arrow shots at him. The narrator reveals the assembly that:

Ngii died like a fowl. [...]. His first wife discovered him dead in the morning. Dead, like a stone. [...]. Before long, the corpse was putrefying and had to be buried quickly. He was buried in a crude coffin without ceremony, without honour, without land, livestock, women and bars. Eponge died. He died like any other person-alone. (Epie, 2010: 102)

From the above quotation we may deduce that there will always be a clash between those who want freedom, justice and equality for everyone and those who want to continue the system of exploitation. Though the manipulation of ethnic/regional rivalries to divide and rule is a long-standing strategy in Ewawa national politics, justice will always win over injustice.

A few returnees from exile to Etambeng take revenge on the corpse on Ngii. The young, who were more aggrieved, are the ones who are more active. They exhumed, tried and hanged Ngii’s corpse. As they admit it themselves at the beginning of the novel, they “exhumed the corpse of the late Saviour, tried it, found it guilty of crimes against humanity then hanged and burnt it” (Epie, 2010: 2). According to the prosecutors, Ngii’s judgment was by all human standards free, fair and humane because even nature stood for his defense counselors.

For the young who have exhumed, tried and hanged Ngii, time does not seem to work against retributive justice if victims do not see the perpetrators investigated and prosecuted while they are still alive or when perpetrators are deceased. The young who are the most affected by Ngii's oppression want transitional justice because the highly sensitive and emotional nature of mass crimes he committed has to be de-emotionalized. Epie's novel summarizes Ngii's death with "the aggrieved children [who] are here and/Now about to carry out retributive justice on the/Corpse of a person who so offended the world" (Epie, 2010: 133). Justice means dealing with evil in a civil way, and facing inhumane acts with a humane approach. Judgments in courtrooms need to be reached through undisputed evidence and respect for the rights of the defendant. For victims and relatives who have experienced deep trauma by Ngii's oppression and violation of human rights, these legal punishments look impartial and satisfying to their suffering.

Epie's selected novels portray outstanding figures in Ewawa nation who command high esteem in their societies but whose end is deeply sad. At the beginning of *The Death Certificate* for example, Epie presents Mongo Meka as an extraordinary man of the First province. "Mongo Meka was the government. Who did not know him? He was the brother of the Head of State"(Epie, 2004: 111). Ewawa is organized in such a way that one person can be given many higher positions at once while many other qualified people are jobless. Mongo Meka is everything in Ewawa: "as a Treasurer General he was the bankers' bank and the nation's bank and..." (Epie, 2004: 29). From every indication the country's fate lays in the hands of one man, Mongo Meka. His death entails the death of the country and occasions unprecedented economic crisis. Obona provides Mula with information about Mongo Meka's possessions:

Money? Mongo was money. He had houses all over, in France, in Britain, in America. See here, he lived in his house. He had transport vehicles. All these gave him money. Eh atite! All that money will go to that white woman with whom he has not even had a child. Eh, atite! The fellow exclaimed again and again.
(Epie, 2004: 37)

Obona's numerous exclamations are a critique of materialism that is associated with barrenness. Mongo's wealth is unproductive as it fails to provide him with descendants to inherit it or, at

least to develop his country, Ewawa. In the villager's mind, the money that Mongo left with the white French woman belongs to France and not to Ewawa and will be used to develop France and not Ewawa. Vivienne, one of the mourners at Mongo's house reiterates Obona's critique when she exclaims: "My sister! What is the use of wealth if life ends like this?" (122). To conceal his mismanagement of public funds, Mongo feigns death. This ploy turns to be a quagmire for Mongo himself, his family, his province and the rest of Ewawaians. Jacqueline, Mongo's sister, rebukes him for his failed ploy:

Mongo! What is wrong with you men? Did you ever think of the consequences of your scheme before you devised it? Furthermore, you devise a scheme like that, and instead of confiding it in your sister, you confide in your white wife! Do you know what harm you have done to yourself, me, our village and our peoples as a whole? Do you know what harm you have done to Ewawa? [...] It is horrible. Now you want to sell all in order to win a case in a white court against a white woman married to a white man? What was the purpose of stealing if you were to sell everything as you have done? You have spent all your cash reserves. Now you want to sell all your buildings plus your building in Dande- [...]. And in each case, only a white man buys. Money that came from whitemen goes back to them through your stupidity. If you pledge all the houses here where will you live? (Epie, 2004: 240-241)

Jacqueline Diwona's expression of anger is mixed with disappointment. This extreme state of bad feeling comes when the novel's plot gets to its climax. It is here the beginning of Mongo's fall. Mongo's tragedy is not here meaningful alone, but what happens to him is also disgrace to his village, his Province, his ethnic group, and his country. Mongo "has reappeared" while Antoinette Yvonne, his legal wife has already legally married another man, Roger. The death certificate issued to Antoinette Yvonne immediately annuls Mongo's claim over his wife and money while it terminates Jacqueline's authority over the white widow. "The death certificate" is the device that Mongo utilizes to loot the state out of billions of FCFA and it is the same device that deprives the anti-hero of everything. While it confers total freedom to Antoinette, the death

certificate gives right to the Archbishop's announcement of Antoinette and Rogers's forthcoming wedding. This announcement in turn causes Mongo's self betrayal: the letter he writes to the Archbishop to oppose the wedding lays bare his feigned death.

Mongo Meka's fate is caused by his excessive desire of money. To recover the FCFA 350 billion he has deposited on his wife's account in Lyon, he starts legal actions against his former spouse although the lawsuit entails a lot of proceedings. Having emptied all his bank accounts and sold all his mansions to pay his lawyers' honoraria, the plaintiff learns to his greatest dismay that Antoinette Yvonne has been killed in Australia by a devastating cyclone. Despite his mettle that enables him to travel to Melbourne, Mongo has to acknowledge his defeat at the end of the novel. After he has realized that his downfall is approaching, Mongo Meka comes to his senses and asks Mula: "what is success? How can one say he has succeeded on earth?" (271). Mongo's long "success" is melted in doubt and hopelessness. Life for him becomes meaningless. Poisoned with self-loathing, he encloses himself in the house and commits suicide by setting his own last house in France on fire.

The witty use of symbols makes Epie a writer of extraordinary literary talents. The plot in *The Death Certificate* revolves around six objects that paradoxically contribute to bring about the downfall of the oppressor(s): the gold ring, the death certificate, the cyclone, the fire, the gun and the blood pool. In effect, the gold wedding ring, a symbol of union and love, is equally a symbol of confusion, disunion, and hatred. Mongo's gold wedding ring that is found on the Kabonese corpse's finger convinces Antoinette that her husband is in effect dead, although she was aware of the trick. It is this same ring that Antoinette Yvonne, the white widow, brandishes at the court of law to win over the plaintiff, Mongo Meka, whom she calls now an impostor. The death certificate, as earlier mentioned, serves the same purpose. It separates the two spouses. As for the cyclone, it is viewed by Mongo as a similar right punishment for Australians or all the whites, who contributed to his predicaments: "It serves them right. White fools. Australia is all white. The Aborigines have been colonized and reduced to slaves. If the weather avenges them, the better". (Epie, 2004: 259)

Paradoxically, the weather that causes havoc in Australia also destroys Mongo's life. It terminates his last hope by killing Antoinette, the custodian of his money while the court in France was still waiting for her to respond to the appeal Meka has made for the case. Again, the death of Antoinette "terminated the legal and physical personality of her. Even if Mongo won the appeal, there was no Antoinette to remarry him. Roger had a trump card-the death certificate. He would brandish it in court and so shut him up" (Epie, 2004: 281). We may rightly therefore admit that the 'colossal amount of money' that she had kept on her account in Lyon is now the inheritance of Roger, Antoinette Yvonne's legal husband after Mongo's "death".

The gun that Jacqueline keeps for self-defense becomes the tool to facilitate her suicide. The pool of Jacqueline's blood is the last element that concludes the death of Meka's family as it poisons FramMki. Jacqueline has always referred to the child as "this boy, this blood of my blood. This child of my sweat, 'my father'"(241). Jacqueline becomes the poison that ruins herself, her blood becomes the poison that ruins the child and consequently the whole family.

In his total desolation, Mongo sets fire on his own last house and dies inside after getting burnt like a lump of cooling magma. The burning body emitted a peculiar scent (Epie, 2004: 249). Like Ngii in *Exhumed, Tried and Hanged*, Mongo Meka also dies like a fowl. Upon his death, after he has sold everything he had stolen, he is no longer regarded as an important person. It is important to mention here two contrasting treatments of Mongo Meka's "two deaths" in two different countries to which he belongs at the same time and that he has served in two different ways. His burial ceremony upon his feigned death had been an extraordinary event. It was more honored in Ewawa [a country that he had eroded of its economy]. Before the announcement of the sad news, the national radio had been playing funerary music-prelude to obituary announcement (13); the Minister of Information had clearance to announce the death of [...] an important person (42), and a two-week mourning period was announced by the Minister of Territorial Administration. As Nchinda reports,

the body of the late Treasurer General, Monsieur Mongo Meka, arrived Ewawa by special flight E/CA 304 on Wednesday 1st May, Labour Day, a public holiday. Because Ewawa Radio and Television had broadcasted the arrival for a week, the

population was at hand to welcome the corpse. Labour Day manifestations were completely disrupted. All the members of the government and members of the Parliament were at the airport. (Epie, 2004: 91)

The arrival of Mongo's corpse saw the disruption of manifestations of an internationally recognized Labour Day. All higher rank officials were present at the airport to welcome the corpse. But in France [a country where all the money he had stolen was kept and was contributing to build the nation] his real death is a non event. Newspaper in France and in Ewawa reported his death as if it was a cat without a master that died on its own. The fire fighter brigade remarks cynically that it is "a black", "a *nègre*" who committed suicide. Mongo Meka dies in France as a nothing and is dumped as debris by a tipper.

Epie's *The Death Certificate* is, as mentioned in the previous sections, an indictment of religious moral decay. Epie portrays a church scandal manifested in the plan to poison His Eminence Bernard Fimi. The fall of the oppressor here is connected with His Lordship Boa whose failure to murder His Eminence Cardinal Fimi makes him troubled as he gets psychological guilt and trauma. Consequently he collapses during mass and goes into coma. The conversation between his servant and the Archbishop's personal doctor - Dr Bassil - is revealing. He tells the latter:

"Doctor, I noticed a remarkable change in his Lordship's behavior soon after the Delegate of National Security left after a brief visit about two weeks ago. After seeing him off at the veranda, His Lordship re-entered the sitting room and slumped into the sofa. I told him I was about to go. He stared at me but said nothing. [...]. I heard him exclaim: O Lord, what have I done to merit this mental torture? Neither my body nor my spirit is willing. Oh Lord! Was my end to be like this? (Epie, 2004: 76).

Later on, Rev. Father Jean-Pierre Engo reveals how His Lordship personally supervised the mass rehearsal of identifying and swapping the chalices His Eminence was going to use for the consecration during Mongo Meka's requiem Mass. Engo says that His Lordship was "nervous, waspish and even suspicious" (Epie, 2004: 85). His Lordship has been reported to Rome from

his vanity and concupiscence and this is what might have prevented him from his prestigious Cardinalship. His Lordship the Right Rev. Archbishop Boa does not stand for a servant of God because he is more involved in power usurpation than preaching the gospel. His expression of “grievance and bitterness” against His Eminence changes his face into one having “tremendous folds of anger”. Mula describes it through this symbol: “a white cassock cloaking a furnace of hatred” (Epie, 2004: 63). This white cassock that should stand for love and purity stands now for hatred, power struggle and impurity. His being accused of wanting to poison “the saving blood of Christ to kill in order to settle earthly scores” (88) is perceived as a church scandal dictated by carnal demands that had started to win over spiritual demands in the Ewawa nation.

4.6. Conclusion

In this chapter the researcher has looked at how in the Ewawa nation, citizens are discriminated and oppressed at different levels and by the different institutions which were supposed to protect and promote their rights and dignity. It has been shown that religious, juridical, police and media institutions in Ewawa are not equal to their tasks. These government institutions are presented by Epie as instruments used by the government to oppress and discriminate the citizens. Epie’s novels under study have proven it true that leaders in Ewawa do not govern democratically, but insist on imposing their decisions. They do not organize their people but manipulate them. They do not liberate them, nor are they liberated themselves. They simply oppress. The discussion has also shown that in discriminating the other, the oppressors contribute to their own downfall. Mongo Meka and Eponge (or Ngii, or the “Saviour”) have been discussed as examples of African post-independence power abusers whose fate is brought to an end by their own misdeeds. As Lucia says, “a crab is killed with its pincers” (Epie, 2008:17). From the discussion, it has been demonstrated that in Ewawa, not only is there a need for justice, but there is a need for justice to promote peace, reconciliation, human rights protection, accountability and the establishment of social trust.

CHAPTER FIVE: GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter, basing on data collected and analyzed in the preceding chapters, makes general conclusions on the findings about Epie's fiction and his portrayal of the society with regard to ethnocentrism, otherness and power abuse. In addition, the chapter has recommendations on post-independence Cameroonian fiction, how it should be approached, interpreted and suggests possible areas of further research.

5.2. General Conclusions

The exploration of Alobwed'Epie's works was based on four of his works, i.e. *The Death Certificate*, *The Bad Samaritan*; *The Day God Blinked*, and *Exhumed, Tried and Hanged*. Epie's selected fiction portrays a multi-cultural society where the ordinary citizens are not naturally antagonistic despite their differences. The selected fiction revolves around issues related to social dynamics of ethnic and linguistic differences. These are magnified by political leaders who exploit them in advancing their own political agenda. This is a handicap in building a post-reunification Cameroon and a strong democratic society.

In the course of our investigation, it was discovered that ethnic discrimination, injustice, exploitation, and marginalization plunge the discriminated groups in Ewawa into hopelessness, despair and social-economic hardships. People suffer from unprecedented corruption, and economic crisis and this has created a chaotic situation in Ewawa. An analysis of Epie's selected works helped us to confirm the argument that, even though re-unification has been proclaimed, post-independence leaders in Ewawa still promote ethnocentric hatred and they oppress, and abuse those who do not share the agenda with the ruling oligarchy. The study also aimed at showing that ethnocentrism, otherness and power abuse are tools used by leaders to compete for power, maintain it and help divide and rule the oppressed. The analysis also shows that excessive centralization in the Ewawa nation and, by implication in Cameroon, has led to excessive misuse

of power and moral decay. To redeem these countries, decentralization may be a solution among others.

Another argument that was raised in this work is that of retributive justice. Epie's call in *Exhumed, Tried and Hanged* of the young generation to revisit the history of their society shows that the past may never be forgotten or frozen forever. Through the young's quest for a retributive justice, Epie envisions revolutionary violence against post-independence oppressors who sow disorder among the citizens.

Since in all situations writers cannot express their thoughts in isolation outside their socio-political, and socio-economic experiences, it is evident that Epie's experiences in Anglophone Cameroon and his career as a writer, poet and critic have influenced his perception and understanding of Cameroonian society and the questions of ethnocentrism, oppression and power abuse. Looking at the socio-political situation of Cameroon at the eve of independence and eventual re-unification, it is evident that Epie was influenced by his personal background and the socio-political turbulences in his society. Having been born in Anglophone Cameroon and writing in an era when debates around the Anglophone Problem were rife, the writer struggles with his retentive memory to depict the past he wants to recreate.

In Epie's selected fiction, there is a clear interface between his own perception and the Cameroonian history. The prose is highlighted by the use of letters and newspapers mostly in *The Death Certificate*. These captions confirm the author's need to report, to give a truthful account of Cameroonian realities. He, to some extent, historicizes literature by referring to the real events that happened during the New Deal regime. The ills he decries are the same as the ills that Victor Julius Ngoh has recorded in his history book when he writes that "Cameroon after 1982 experienced unprecedented capital flight, corruption and embezzlement from both high and low quarters. The over centralization of power in the Executive stifled political initiative and growth" (Ngoh, 2004: 307).

Contrary to what other scholars and critics have said about a solution to the Anglophone Problem, Epie, in the novels analyzed, advocates for a strengthening of the re-unification process

that would accept all Cameroonians in their differences. For him, secession is not a means to an end or an end itself to resolve the conflicts and problems that are faced by Ewawaiaans.

The findings of the study thus confirm the hypothesis that in Epie's fiction, the geographical, historical, ethnic, cultural differences among the peoples of Ewawa are presented as leading to 'othering' (discrimination against) some of the people and denial of their rights by those in power. The findings also confirmed the idea that real unification cannot be attained as long as ethnocentrism, otherness and power abuse are tools still used by the rulers of Ewawa in order to prolong their stay in power.

5.3. Recommendations

In light of the above comments and observations, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

Since literature is about real and familiar worlds of culture, human experience, politics and economics illuminated through fiction as a literary construction and as used by different authors, Cameroonian Anglophone literature should not be ignored and left behind as was claimed by Ako (1999: 1) that "Cameroonians writings in English are, to a large extent, still unknown both within and outside of their national territory". However, in modern Cameroonian literature, he continues, there is a thriving literature in English which has grown in quality and quantity as the result of a number of cultural policies put in place in the 1990s. That is why Cameroon literature in English should be given as much attention as its counterpart Francophone Cameroon Literature not only within but also outside the territory. Anglophone Cameroon literature falls in the realm of African Literature. Alobwed'Epie's texts contribute to the development of modern African literature because of the neo-colonial post-independence African society they portray.

Post-independence Cameroonian leaders should engage in frank and open discussions in order to find a sustainable answer to the antagonisms that have lead to the internal divisions and turbulences of the society. Cameroon's past is understood as a social schism between victims, who suffered, and perpetrators, who enforced authoritarian ideologies. That is why Cameroonian

history needs to be re-investigated and rewritten, but it is necessary to avoid doing this on the basis of political or regional interests. The present, as a result, can be a transformation of those ideologies for a common ground free of any divisions. Given the fact that the nature of political power in the Ewawa nation and many of the continent countries where power remains linked to ethnic agendas and resource control, there is a need to confront and overcome the extreme tensions that elections have created. The attraction of power is still strong, and many post-independence African leaders are keen to stay in office for as long as they can. Epie's fiction has helped us to discuss the determinants that account for the refusal of term limits amendment. These include factors within society (the level of popular dissatisfaction with the leader and the level of media independence) and within the polity (the strength and ability of the opposition parties to stand against the incumbent to suppress them, etc.)

Since no study can claim to be exhaustive, there are questions that this study did not tackle and thus open new areas for further and more advanced investigations. Among other things, interested researchers should investigate Cameroonian colonial set ups and how they established internal turbulences and divisions between the two Cameroons. English and French colonialism only lasted 45 years. Cameroon has been independent for longer than that. Researchers interested in this area of study should also investigate why divisions based on colonial set ups are as strong as or stronger than those based on pre-colonial identities. Interested researchers should also make a comparative study of socio-political themes in Epie's novels and his contemporary Anglophone Cameroon writers like Bole Butake, Bate Besong, George Ngwane, among others.

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