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# Unlawful Enrichment and Underdevelopment in African Societies in Alobwed 'Epie's *The Death Certificate*

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**Abstract:** Scores of post-colonial narratives revolve around the detrimental impact of colonisation on the development level of Africa. As opposed to those works which put forth a discourse of white men as the source of the underdevelopment of African countries, a fictional narrative by Alobwed'Epie - *The Death Certificate* which is a novel of disillusionment- shifts attention from the white and focuses on the practices of Africans themselves which hinder development on the continent. Through the lens of Socio-criticism theory, the objective of this paper is first, to show how tribalism and clannish management weaken the fictional postcolonialstate Ewawa. Second, it points out how weak state institutions offer a favourable ground for African elites who profit from their positions to achieve an unlawful enrichment. To answer the different questions contributing to reach the objectives of this paper, a qualitative research method has been used.

**Keywords:** Unlawful enrichment - Corruption - The Death Certificate – underdevelopment

## 1. Introduction

Unlawful enrichment is a topic that has pervaded postcolonial literature and scores of African writers have depicted its effect on the development of Africa. One of these writers is the Cameroonian Alobwed'Epie. The core topic of Alobwed'Epie's postcolonial narrative, *The Death Certificate* is unlawful enrichment as in most postcolonial narratives. In fact, in the wake of colonisation, Africans' yearn for freedom and better living that motivated their fight against colonial powers gave way to great disenchantment in that new African elites soon took to indulging in corruption as they were lured by megalomania induced by their new position. This tallies with Ngubia's opinion when he posits that "in the institution of leadership, the postcolonial leaders are greedy for wealth and power. Misrule of their nation-states, plunder of the public coffers and aping of the colonizer by exploiting their own fellow blacks is the order of the day" (2010, p.103) [1]. In fact, Africans in the post-independent era are victims of the utopian promises of their own black fellow leaders. On this score, knowledgeable observers parallel the sudden rise of corrupt attitudes among the overambitious postcolonial African leaders with rot especially with people in positions of power. Likewise, in African postcolonial disillusionment narrative exemplified by the focus novel "[...]the moral decadence prevalent in every section of the civil service [...]" (Gbaguidi, 2018, p. 74)[2] affects people's hope for a better life once the colonisers are ousted. This stand is also supported by Dianne O. Schwerdt as she contends that postcolonial African creative writings

[...] focus on colonialism's aftermath: the morally paralysing corruption and materialism dominating all levels of post-independence Ghanaian society. In such a context, individuals are characterised not as heroes but as victims of a system they cannot change: collectively, [...] urban workers symbolise the hopeless impotence of the [...] people when

faced with a powerful, exploitative elite(1995, p.265)[3].

Certainly, such corrupt practices pave the way to African postcolonial politicians' unlawful enrichment which Alobwed'Epie's fictitious narrative, *The Death Certificate*, expounds on as Mula - the protagonist - and his friends Ndjock, Nchinda, Musa standing for the marginalised grassroots of the fictional country of Ewawa, hover around and give accounts of the misconducts of some officials. As a matter of fact, Alobwed 'Epie depicts vividly through his characters' accounts, discussions and epistles they exchange, the dishonest conducts of post-colonial politicians who take an unfair advantage of their position to amass wealth to the detriment of their countries. Consequently, Besong-a (2004) rightfully points out that "*The Death Certificate* emphasizes that under tribal hegemony, as in the postcolony, money and commodities begin to stand in for human relations and for human beings, objectifying them and robbing them of their human essence" (p. 5)[4].

In this article, socio-criticism and post-colonialism serve as the linchpin we have used to analyse the different misconducts of African leaders depicted by Alobwed 'Epie. "Socio-criticism aims to bring out the relations existing between the structures of literary (or cultural) work and the structures of the society in which this work is deeply rooted" (Cros, 2011, p. 32) [5]. As to the term post-colonial, "[...] first, it is intended to promote and celebrate the 'New literatures' emerged from the former colonial territories. Second, it asserts and advocates the need to analyse and resist continuing colonial attitudes after the political independence in African countries" (Gbaguidi, 2018, p. 77) [6]. What is unlawful enrichment and what effects does it have on the country and the people in the focus novel?

## 2. Clannish Management and Tribalism: State Institutions Eroding Practices

Most African countries were colonised and exploited in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As the colonised Africans were fed up with the various inhuman treatments they were subject to, they fought for their political independence and ousted the former colonial masters; thereafter, African elites took to ruling over the destiny of their countries. However, these new leaders were too soon lured by the advantages that went along with their political positions. All the hope of their people gave way to disenchantment as these new leaders proved to be a replica of former colonisers from whom they took over. Scores of post-colonial narratives depict the malpractices of the new leaders; among these we have the Cameroonian Alobwed'Epie's *The Death certificate*. Indeed, in this narrative seen as a disillusionment novel, the writer portrays the impact of clannish management and tribalism on the fictitious country of Ewawa. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 7th edition*, the word clannish denotes the fact that members of a group do not show interest in people who are not in the group. Thus, in the context of this article, the clannish management is the practice whereby leaders or officials use their political positions to only serve and favour people who come from their region or community. As for tribalism, it is simply the state of existing as a tribe, or a very strong feeling of loyalty to one's tribe. As suggested by this definition, tribalism is an ideal which underlies the clannish management of African societies. This article focuses here on how the post-colonial issues of clannish management and tribalism affect African states' institutions. Indeed, in the novel *The Death Certificate*, Alobwed'Epie shows well how the clannish management of the state of Ewawa weakens the institutions of the country and offers an opportunity to officials who indulge in corrupt practices and public looting that Besong calls "a political weapon" (2004, p.2)[7]. As a matter of fact, in Ewawa, every key position is held by people of the First Province as the Head of State is from the same region. He therefore surrounds himself by native or inbred people from the First and Second Province. In such a condition, although he is ruling the country very well, there will not be any opposition as the following passage confirms:

[...]Had the looters conspired and dethroned the President? How could that be? 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 (Alobwed'Epie, 2004, pp.13-14)[8].

The above quotation pictures openly how the state of Ewawa is ruled only by the "people of the First Province" who are seen as the only privileged people, although they are not numerous, they decide for the entire nation. As Bate Besong puts it,

The Ewawa nation, for instance, has become the private reserve of the President and his kinsmen of the First and Second Province. 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 (Besong-a, 2004, p.4) [9].

This quotation sums up well how conflagrating the clannish management of the fictional state of Ewawa is; a clannish management which is supported by tribalism as every member of the ruling political party—Ewawa People's Party for Advanced Democracy (EPPAD) – is expected to show their loyalty to those who have chosen him/her as one of the few. As it is clearly depicted, "in post-independent Africa, this partisanship is noticeable in the political arena where recruitment or enrolment in the civil service highly depends, most of the time, on the support or blessing of a person in a high position regardless of the favourite's experience" (Gbaguidi, 2012, p. 90)[10]. Indeed, this loyalty is expected from every key position holder to make sure that the misdeeds of unscrupulous officials are easily covered up. Alobwed'Epie displays the post-colonial anti-social practice of tribalism in the focus novel through Mula's report:

'Mbaneko is no more,' the Commissaire said and sealed his mouth with the left hand, the right pressing the walkie-talkie to his right ear...'

'But I saw him in the evening,' the Minister said. 'Of heart attack?'

'Shot in a crossfire between the paramilitary police and armed robbers, at the Mineral Water Company Headquarters,' the Commissaire explained.

'What happened?' the minister asked.

'Two days ago, we got a tip-off that some armed robbers were planning to raid the Water Company Headquarters because there was a rumour that the Director General of the Company had large sums of money from the bank and put them in the safe in the headquarters. [...] Unfortunately for them, they ran out of luck and fell into the net [...] – four dead, two seriously wounded and captured, one of them Mbaneko [...].'

'Let me cut you short Monsieur le Commissaire. Do you know Mbaneko? Have you heard of that name? And you are talking as if you are an outsider? If your police have decided to eliminate Mbaneko you should not make stories about him. Mbaneko has no reason to steal. After composing an anthem for the president he was given 375.000.000 Frs. and upgraded from Sergeant to Major General. [...].'

'[...] I got there and we both rushed him to hospital. On our way, however, we recorded his apology. Shortly after the recording, he died of excessive bleeding in my presence [...].'

'Where is the cassette?' the Minister asked.

'It is with the Commissaire of the 8th District,' the Commissaire Central answered.

'Is he one of us?' the Minister asked with a frown.

'No. He is a man from the 8th Province.

'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 [...] We can't handle these two situations simultaneously. Monsieur le

Commissaire, go right ahead and get the cassette from your colleague and have him arrested' (Alobwed'Epie, 2004, pp. 24-26) [...] [11].

The decision of the Minister of the Armed Forces - tells more about the scale of tribalism in fictional Ewawa. The strong feeling to protect First Province's people has pervaded and despite the negative consequences of their deeds, they are always covered up as in the case mentioned above. According to the Minister, Mbaneko should be protected irrespective of the crime he has committed and the poor Commissaire takes the blame. This tallies with Gbaguidi's point of view when he writes that "in a corrupt political system promotion, respectability or high social status are not gained through personal achievement or merit; a criminal known to everybody may be given a chieftaincy title or a criminal may be set up as a hero in defiance of morality" (2012, p. 102)[12]. Furthermore, in this same thieving attempt case, another evidence is given of how Ewawa State institutions are used as tools at the hands of the few privileged who use them to their own advantage. Through his attendance of a trial, Nchinda exposes the blatant manipulation of the judiciary by officials through the prosecution of the Commissaire of the Eighth District. The prosecution is as follows:

-Monsieur le Commissaire du 8e Arrondissement, on the 2nd of this month, you instructed your police men to waylay and murder Major General Mbaneko and four of his men who were on routine duty around the area under your jurisdiction. Are you guilty or not guilty?

- Not guilty.' The judge registered and handed over the floor to the prosecutor.

---Section 338/221 of the Ewawa Military Ordinance. Any Military Commander, Police Commander or Gendarme Commander who orders a unit under his command into an area patrolled by another military, police or gendarme unit, thereby provoking cross-fire shall be punished with 20 years' imprisonment in the case of casualties (Alobwed'Epie, 2004, pp. 71-72) [13].

Through this hearing, Alobwed'Epie sheds light on the way the justice system of post-colonial Ewawa is at the disposal of politicians in that the people of the First Province have covered up a criminal – Mbaneko – who has tried to steal money. Thus, through this case, the author intends to show how clannish management and tribalism erode the institutions of the fictional state of Ewawa as in almost the aggregate number of African states. Depicting the impact of the weak state institution on African countries, Gbaguidi(2018) contends:"[...] In Africa, some of the identifiable causes of corruption include[...]weak institutions of governance (p. 75)" [14]. In the focus novel, an example of this is the president of Ewawa himself who lies to his people on the national television by gainsaying what is an open secret to Ewawians; the truth about the trick of Mongo Meka who has feigned death to dodge trial in Ewawa. Meanwhile the international press has witnessed the Antoinette Vs Mongo case at a French court while the president of Ewawa, in an attempt to cover up his former treasurer general, makes the following statement:

Mongo Meka died. We buried him. There is no way he can resurrect[...].All stories circulating around the country about Mongo Meka are lies[...].The restoration of his corpse did not cost 4.5 billion. It cost a meagre 2.5 million francs. His widow's expenditure on her marriage to Roger Girard was a meagre 1.5 million francs. Beware therefore of rumours. You have your media – the Ewawa Tribune and the Ewawa T.V. They are the only two sources of information in Ewawa. The foreign press is as dangerous as rumours(Alobwed'Epie, 2004, p.190)[15].

The head of State himself urges his people to ignore the foreign press as an endeavour to keep secret the financial crime of Mongo Meka has perpetrated. He makes false statements about the money that has been squandered for the funerals of former treasurer Mongo because, based on information provided by the intradiegetic character Madam Diwona – Mongo Meka's sister –, 1, 450, 000, 000 Francs (Alobwed'Epie, 2004, p.84) [16]has been used to only restore the so-called corpse of Mongo as opposed to the 2.5 million francs announced by the President. Furthermore, His Excellency encourages Ewawians to trust the national press which has long been manipulated by him and his set. As a matter of fact, the press as an institution is not an exception to the political ideal of tribalism in Ewawa. As we can notice, the press of Ewawa does not exist to serve people but to serve the president and the ruling political party as a whole. The last chapter of the focus novel illustrates well the denial of the freedom of speech among journalists of Ewawa. In his epistle to Mula, Nchinda writes:

I was seized and detained for two weeks for being in possession of the X-ray you sent to me concerning M.M's debacle in Europe and Australia. All the papers (foreign and local) that reported the incidents were seized by the police [...]. Investigative Journalism has come to a dead end in Ewawa. No outing, no merry-making (Alobwed'Epie, 2004, p.307)[17].

Nchinda's letter adumbrates the lost hope for the freedom of speech in Ewawa as the press is being gagged by intimidating efforts from the national police. All the people who know the truth about the so-called death of the former treasurer Mongo are unjustly detained. In this way, the government can easily wield its power over the press and silence it like all the other institutions. On this score, Gbolo, Gustafson-Asamoah and Issaka (2018) state that:

In modern democracy, particularly in Africa, things are different when it comes to who wields power in the society. Though the arms of government such as the legislature, the judiciary, and the executive are often put in place to check the excesses of one another, it often results in the situation where these arms of governments do not function independently. Consequently, they are not able to check the excesses of one another (2018, p.3)[18].

It appears that, as in the focus narrative –*The Death Certificate* – in African countries, governments hold such

leverage that all the state institutions are unable to play their role in challenging established authority. In the fictional state of Ewawa, for instance, the police which should protect the people as an institution of control is used as a national colonisation weapon to silence the people as mentioned in the last chapter of the novel. In this vain, Gbolo Sanka, Gustafson-Asamoah and Issaka (2018) buttress that “the military, in Africa, is also well known for its notoriety when it comes to abuse of power, corruption and irresponsibility” (p.3)[19]. Likewise, Ngubia (2010) contends that “all institutions of the government continue to exploit and oppress fellow black citizens just as the white institutions did” (p.102)[20]. It comes out that through the manipulation of state institutions, Africans are colonised by their own people. Therefore, Alobwed'Epie in his narrative demonstrates that, in the post-colonial context, clannish management and tribalism erode the institutions of African states. What then is the consequence of such a management in a country?

### 3. Unlawful enrichment: An open avenue to the underdevelopment of African societies

In post-colonial narratives, unlawful enrichment is a highly topical issue which is the concern of creative writers and is seen as one of the reasons for the underdevelopment of African countries. *The Death Certificate* by Alobwed 'Epie is a prototype of such a creative writing denouncing the damaging effects of illicit accumulation of wealth. Indeed, in this novel, Alobwed 'Epie presents unlawful enrichment as a blatant cause of the underdevelopment of African countries. According to the New 9<sup>th</sup> Edition of the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2015), the term unlawful is defined as what is not allowed by the law. As to enrichment, it is the fact of making something or someone richer. Thus, unlawful enrichment is the fact for someone, especially occupying a political position, to amass wealth by crooked means. Hence, the decaying state of the fictional African country Ewawa, in the focus novel, is the revelation of the underdevelopment of African countries. Indeed, the focus novel is the embodiment of the hope of Africans for a better life which gave way to disenchantment as post-independent African elites have subjected their own people to degrading living conditions due to the plague of bribery, embezzlement of public funds, abuse of power and many other malpractices. As a matter of fact, once in power, African leaders were soon lured by the yearning for personal well-being to the detriment of their people, a yearning that has led to personal enrichment by all means no matter what the consequences for the populations. In literature, very often postcolonial African politicians are perceived to be seeking for their personal welfare and the ones of their relatives and friends taking an unfair advantage of their political positions by growing rich to the detriment of the general masses, wallowing in utter destitution. In this wake, Macheke (2012) contends that “The leaders had wielded power and had been misusing it by pursuing personal interests” (p. 15)[21]. In the novel *The Death Certificate*, the imaginary State of Ewawa has experienced unlawful enrichment on a very large scale. On this score, a scholar points out that the “recurring theme is that corruption is an inevitable feature of a prebendal, fascist despotism. The individualism and obsessive materialism of the tribal mode of governance creates

the acceptance of corruption” (Besong-b, 2004, P. 4)[22]. In fact, through corruption, officials of Ewawa can easily make illegal money and still get away with it. Corruption has various forms which are discussed in the section below.

First, there is the issue of embezzlement of public funds which is the act of stealing the money that one is responsible for in the discharge of one's official duty or that belongs to your employer. With a socio-critical view, Alobwed'Epie depicts this post-colonial anti-social practice through the case of the character Mongo Meka, the treasurer general of Ewawa and acting Director of the Central Bank of Ewawa. Mongo misappropriates “about 550 billion Francs” (Alobwed'Epie, 2004, p.231)[23] and feigns death by buying a corpse in the neighbouring fictitious country Kabon. He has been reported dead in an accident by journalists he has bribed. Actually, he has informed his wife, a French woman - Antoinette Yvonne - whose bank account Mongo has used to bank the money in France. Unfortunately for him, though his trick to disguise the stealing works fine temporarily, his wife has betrayed him by getting married with a young French man, Roger Girard; a marriage that causes Mongo to file a case against the new couple in France. Despite his endeavour, he has lost the case as well as his appeal, and as a consequence his money; he ends up committing suicide. Of course, Mongo Meka's misconduct symbolises, in *The Death Certificate*, the behaviour of post-independent unscrupulous African leaders who are never deterred by anything in that corruption has been established as a norm. In fact, the resignation of Ewawians shows that corruption has become part and parcel of their lives and no one dares to speak out against it since all the institutions of Ewawa are just an extension of the ruling political party's arm - Ewawa People's Party for Advanced Democracy (EPPAD). The expression of this resignation is summed up in the following statement by Mbantene: “Stolen? Mongo? You don't know that as Treasurer General he was the bankers' bank and the nation's bank and ... Have you ever heard that the keeper of a stable has stolen?” (Alobwed'Epie, 2004 p. 29)[24] Mbantene's statement literally translates the inability of the people of Ewawa to take any actions against unlawful enrichment in the country. Furthermore, in an ironic reply to Mbantene's statement, the protagonist of the novel under scrutiny, Mula agrees: “you are right Mbantene. The keeper a stable does not steal even if he makes use of a sheep that belongs to someone else. After all, who will raise the alarm? He who is made to keep is made to own and to use without qualms” (Alobwed 'Epie, 2004, p.29)[25]. Alobwed'Epie uses irony to satire the impotence of Ewawians to fight corruption which is established as the norm. Thus, it continues unabated. Another case mentioned by Alobwed'Epie to showcase the dire situation officials create for their people through embezzlement can be read in the following statement made by Mula:

You see that vehicle? You know who owns it? You know its purpose? It is the 8th vehicle in the compound of the Director of the Farmer's Co-operative Bank. Recently, the World Bank in conjunction with the European Economic Community Bank lent Ewawa 8, 400, 000, 000 Frs. to help revamp the Co-operative Movement in Ewawa. The Canadian Development Bank Assistance to 3<sup>rd</sup> World countries gave the

Farmer's Co-operative Bank an interest free loan of 1, 620, 000, 000 Frs. to help pay farmers arrears. Have your naked parents been paid? [...]. The Director of the F.C.B bought 6 vehicles with his chunks, four Pajeros at 70, 000, 000 Frs. a piece and a Starlet for 4, 500, 000 Frs. for his girlfriend. One Pajero carries his children to school and runs village errands. (Alobwed'Epie, 2004 p.48)[26].

Mula denounces here the cupidity and selfishness of African politicians who do not care about the lot of their countrymen. On this score, Gbaguidi (2012) contends that "Dishonest politicians take advantage of their position by amassing unlawfully wealth openly and publicly" (p. 129)[27]. This is sustained by the fact that the Director of the F.C.B does not consider the poverty of the farmers the money is meant for instead, he embezzles it to buy fancy items which do not contribute in any way to the development of the country.

Second, there are also cases of bribery which is the act of trying to make someone do something for you by giving them money, presents or something else that they want. According to Gbaguidi "... bribery can be viewed as any unlawful act used to get something. It is the practice of giving or taking backhanders before obtaining or rendering a service"(2018, p. 74)[28]. Alobwed 'Epie, in *The Death Certificate*, also chastises this widespread form of corruption. Indeed, in the novel under study, the author skilfully illustrates how the practice works through an unnamed character who, when he cuts into a conversation between Mula and Nchinda at the bar "Chez Emilienne" declares:

He is the junior brother of the Minister of Finance and cousin to the Director General of the Central Treasury. He is in charge of paying contractors. He does not count money in thousands of francs but in hundreds of thousands. According to what he himself told me, he makes as much as 15 million francs for every contract above 100 million (Alobwed'Epie, 2004, p.11)[29].

The aforementioned statement denotes the spread of the canker in the political arena where dishonest politicians seek to achieve material accumulation against all odds. As matter of fact, bribery has become a shortcut to illicit enrichment reflecting bureaucracy in post-independent Africa. Bribery has become so rampant and normal that it is difficult, in post-colonial Africa, not to consider any critic as insane. To buttress this point, Gbaguidi (2018) postulates that "non-conformists, that is to say, the righteous who reject the scourge of corruption, observe moral virtues that are unfortunately cast out by close people. The family is normally seen as the first protective institution of individuals but here it constitutes an element of pressure to give in to the practice of bribery" (2018, p.74)[30].

Another form of corruption but not the least which is dealt with in *The Death Certificate* is nepotism –using your power or influence to get good jobs or unfair advantages for members of your own family. Indeed, in *The Death*

*Certificate*, the character Madam Jacqueline Diwona in a her monologue gives a clear picture of how nepotism works in Ewawa as she states: "If those who criticise me knew that I had only one brother, that he is dead without leaving a son behind to inherit his position in government, they would be much more comprehensive" (Alobwed'Epie, 2004, p.55)[31]. As one can read, she is complaining because her deceased brother does not have any child to 'inherit' his position. As a matter of fact, Alobwed 'Epie uses this monologue to depict how, through nepotism, political positions are handed over from generation to generation in the fictional post-colonial country Ewawa as in traditional kingdoms. The effect of this is the perpetuation of the wrong doings as in the case of presidents who die to be replaced by their children. All these various forms of corruption which pave the way to unlawful enrichment depicted through the focus novel have consequences on the people as well as on African societies.

#### 4. Impact of unlawful enrichment in The Death Certificate

The first impact that unlawful enrichment has on the society is the dwindling of resources available which leads to dire poverty among the subterranean populace. Thus, while officials are squandering the money of the country, people live in abject poverty. Commenting on this issue, Gbaguidi (2018) posits that "it is noticeable that the vast majority of the postcolonial African leaders care little about the masses' welfare but what matters mostly for them is how to grow rich and make their relatives and cronies happy" (p.79)[32]. Alobwed'Epie showcases this through the dialogue between Ndjock and Nchinda:

... 'For my uncle. He has been here for two weeks. This is where they sleep. Nobody leaves his position. See, the line is snaking-out across the road right up to the Cathedral. At about this time, I come to replace him. He then goes to the house, bathes and eats and comes back at six. We have done this now for one week, ' I said.

- 'What do they tell them?', he asked.

- 'They pay a few people and close, saying the money is finished. They talk of world crisis and all that bullshit. These are poor primary school teachers whose salaries are not up to 80, 000 Frs. They try all the treasuries in the Provinces and finally come here and are told the same old story – no money' (Alobwed'Epie, 2004, p.134). [33]

This discussion points out the scale of poverty in Ewawa in that, not even the salaries of teachers can be paid while authorities raise a lot of money, 600, 000, 000 Frs. just to bury a single Ewawaian – Mongo Meka – (Alobwed'Epie, 2004 p.41) and keep blaming economic crisis which is "...a cover up term for mismanagement, embezzlement and nepotism" (Alobwed'Epie, 2004, p.47)[34]. As a matter of fact, this poverty is also explained by unemployment which mostly affects the youth in Ewawa represented by the four characters Mula, Musa, Nchinda and Ndjock who have graduated but are jobless.

Beside unemployment, the state of the infrastructures in Ewawa reveals literally the chaos in which officials' plunder

has drowned the country. Alobwed'Epie dexterously gives a picture of infrastructures in the country. The homodiegetic narrator describes: "the traffic lights installed at different points of convergence ceased to function two weeks after installation. Now their bulbs dangle out of their broken lamps like the withered anthers of hibiscus flowers" (Alobwed'Epie, 2004, p.3). [35] The writer points out here, the true image of post-colonial Ewawa where politicians are too busy embezzling to think of fixing infrastructures as vital as traffic lights. Besides, the decaying infrastructures symbolise post-independence African leaders themselves. In fact, Alobwed 'Epie's skilful description of the decaying capital city of Dande – the capital of Ewawa – is a metaphorical attempt to depict how corrupt post-colonial Ewawaian leaders are and their loss of moral virtues.

In addition to the above mentioned consequences, there is also the fact that the subterranean population indulges in corruption as they see this as the only way to have their share in the national cake. To paint the practice, Alobwed 'Epie through the character of an unnamed character, puts forward that "you cannot serve big people and return empty handed. This is the national cake. The only way the lowly can eat is to steal while serving those who stole" (Alobwed'Epie, 2018, p.130) [36]. Discussing the impact of corruption, Lawal (2007) posits that:

Once corruption becomes entrenched, its negative effects multiply. It induces cynicism, because people begin to regard it as the norm. It undermines social values because people find it easier and more lucrative to engage in corruption than to seek legitimate employment. It erodes governmental legitimacy because it hampers the effective delivery of public goods and services (p.1)[37].

Indeed, post-colonial leaders are the "the bad role model" for their people as far as anti-social practices are concerned in *The Death Certificate*. Unfortunately enough, it is the political leaders who push ordinary citizens to indulge in corruption. This shows that unlawful enrichment will surely go on unabated for, there is nobody who feels uneasy about its impact and though there is a lot of debate around the issue, little is done to really hose it down in Africa just like in *The Death Certificate* which ends with the corrupt officials still thriving while Ewawaians are living in a very poor condition. But "... in a society where there are many people engaged in unscrupulous practices, those who keep their moral values and dignity are frustrated" (Gbaguidi, 2018, p.7)[38]. In post-colonial Ewawa too, the frustration of the righteous citizens is crystal clear and is an omen of the lost hope for the sustainable fight against crooked practices on the continent.

## 5. Conclusion

Africans' outcry against colonisation resulted in the independence of the territories under the colonial powers' rule. Independence meant freedom for the African people who were full of hope for a better future as African elites took over the leadership of their countries. This paper has demonstrated that being attracted and obsessed by the lust for power, personal well-being and wealth, African elites soon subjected their people to a national colonisation

through their various dishonest deeds. This article has also shown that tribal and clannish managements weaken state institutions which fail to play their role of check and thus favour bad practices leading to an unlawful enrichment. In this context, African leaders drown their people in abject poverty. Consequently, corruption which paves the way to unlawful enrichment is established as a norm. As such, unlawful enrichment continues unabated as in the fictional country of Ewawa where corrupt officials are not deterred in any way.

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