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Doctoral Thesis

Theme:

Corruption in Nigeria: A Manifestation of Bad Governance. (A Socio-ethical Survey in the light of the Social Teachings of the Church; with particular reference to *Gaudium et Spes* and *Populorum Progressio*)

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CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA: A MANIFESTATION OF BAD GOVERNANCE. (A Socio-ethical Survey in the light of the Social Teachings of the Church: With particular reference to *Gaudium et Spes* and *Populorum Progressio*)

General Introduction

Human society understands itself as a place where man enjoys an authentic human existence. In the society therefore, man should have all the basic necessities of life. The universal destination of all the created goods as God intends it, is for the good use of man in order to live a fulfilled human life.¹ In so far as, man is the source, the focus and the end of all economic and social life, this must be respected.² In order to enhance his dignity as the *imago Dei*³, man has natural right to all the created goods.

However, there are tools that make this situation possible. One of such tools is governance which is the means of organising the created things in the society for the common good. The ultimate goal and purpose of the society is the good of man. If the goods are not brought to this use, there exist socio-ethical problems. There are so many socio-ethical ills in the world today, because of the denial of the created good to some people by the organisers of the society. The social ills include armed robbery, corruption of all sorts, official lies and deceit. These constitute a complex social problem as regards their justification in the society.

Subsequently, of all these social ills in the world today, corruption is the most devastating. Most people acknowledge this fact, but some others see it only as a means of survival, especially in countries that seem to appreciate or favour rigid capitalism, whereby wealth is power. Corruption is a common phenomenon in human society, and it is as old as the human society. Otiye Igbuzor confirms it thus, “Corruption is as old as the society and cuts across nations, cultures, races and classes of people.”⁴ Corruption knows no bound. At any rate, corrupt practices vary from country to country and even within a country it also varies from section to section in its intensity and propensity.

However, the manner with which it is manifesting itself presently accounts for its recent addition to the dictionary of the most global social problems.

¹ *Gaudium et Spes*, Nr. 69

² *Ibid*, Nr. 63

³ Genesis 1:26

⁴ Ogbuzor, O., Youth and the war against corruption in Africa: Roles and policy option, A paper presented at the National Youth Summit on corruption and corrupt practices in Nigeria, organised by Africa Leadership Forum at Ota, Ogun State Nigeria, September 9, 2005

Unfortunately, nobody admits that he is corrupt and yet corruption as a social problem is widespread. In this light, Lightowler Brain observes that, “Worldwide corruption is by its nature generally hidden, but nevertheless insidious and as potentially dangerous to society.”⁵ It affects the society adversely, and therefore leads to misery of some members of the society. In this line, Peter Eigen argues, “Corruption is a daunting obstacle to sustainable development, and results in a major loss of public funds needed for basic necessities of life, both in developed and developing countries.”⁶ These are the devastating effects of corruption.

The word corruption provokes an active discussion and condemnation among all classes of people in the society. It can be situated and discussed in any discipline but more especially in Social Ethics because this discipline deals with the interaction of human beings in the society.

Problems in life are divided into private problems and social problems. Julius O. Onwuka, differentiates the two thus, “When a situation affects members of the society adversely leading to misery, regret, despair, it becomes a social problem. On the contrary, when a problem is suffered by an individual alone, without other members of the society being affected, this is a personal problem.”⁷ From Onwuka, I understand that, social problem is more problematic than personal problem, because it concerns more than one person. Social problems are seen in the societies of human beings where the basic necessities of life are denied some people by corrupt organisers of the society.

Statement of the problem

In recent years, there has been an increase in corrupt practices all over the world and also in the Nigerian contemporary society. J. O. Onwuka opines: “In contemporary times, it is no exaggeration to say that the ‘giant of Africa’, (Nigeria) has been enmeshed in a plethora of social problems, most of which have become perennial and intractable.”⁸ Nnamdi Azikiwe acknowledges the fact that “bribery and corruption are enemies of Nigeria. It defaces the national image and brings shame to the Nigerian citizenship”⁹ On the international level,

⁵Lightowler, Brain, *Corruption: Who cares?*; Better Yourself Books, Bandra, 2006, p.11

⁶Peter Eigen at the launch of the Transparency International (TI) Corruption Perceptions Index 2004. (Peter Eigen is the Chairman of Transparency International) (TI)

⁷Onwuka, O. Jullius, *Social Problems and socio-economic underdevelopment of Nigeria: Contemporary considerations, in Nigerian Peoples and Cultures: Historical and Socio-structural Perspective*, Onwuka O. J.(ed), Echrissi &Co. Nigeria, Enugu, 2002, P. 322

⁸ Onwuka, J. O., *op. cit.*, P. 323

⁹ Nnamdi Azikiwe, presidential Address on the anniversary of Nigerian independence to the nation, Oct 1, 1964

many national and regional newspapers make Nigerian corrupt situation their headlines. For instance, *Welt am Sonntag*, “*Nigerianer-Mafia: Riesiger Betrug mit Kreditkarten*”¹⁰ and “*Nigeria: faule Tricks mit falschen Ausschreibungen*”¹¹ Furthermore, *Focus Magazine*, describes Nigerian leadership thus, “*Es geht um die Absetzung einer durch und durch korrupten politischen Elite, die Nigeria seit Jahren shamlos ausplündert und das Land- trotz der reichlich fliessenden Petrodollar- zu einem der grössten internationalen schuldner hat verkommen lassen*”¹² This was when the oil workers in Nigeria were on strike during Sani Abacha regime.

With all these in mind, some Nigerians seem to be ashamed to say that they are Nigerians when they find themselves outside Nigeria. Corruption has eaten deep into the fabrics of Nigerian society especially since after independence. Emmanuel Obuna summarised it thus: “Since Nigeria became independent, our experience of government has been nothing but a vicious circle of: democracy- followed by corruption- followed by military coup- followed by attempt at democracy- followed by yet more corruption.”¹³ This means that corrupt practices increase as the Nigerian society changes leadership.

Chinua Achebe also captures the situation better in these words: “Corruption has become the normal mode of national life, that there is no altruism in social life but calculated self-interest.”¹⁴ This means that there is an intentional effort by some Nigerians to care only for themselves at the expense of the social structure. J. O. Onwuka tends to agree with Achebe thus: “Nigeria is soaked in corruption and the degree of percolation of this monster in the society is such that it can as well be described as the people’s culture.”¹⁵ Culture is generally defined as a people’s way of life. If corruption can be described as Nigeria’s culture as Onwuka opines, then it means that corruption is in everyday life of the Nigerian nation. Achebe further argues; “The mainspring of political action was personal gain. They see their main interest as trying to find and sustain positions of vantage in the corrupt structure. Their reactions are determined by opportunism.”¹⁶ The opportunist leaders of Nigeria have continued to maintain

¹⁰ Aus *Aller Welt*, Tuesday 22 March, 1994

¹¹ *Welt am Sonntag*, Nr. 29, Sunday 17 July, 1994, P.31

¹² *Focus Magazine*, Number 34, 22 August, 1994, P.156, (It is absolute the dismissal or the displacement of quententially or thoroughly corrupt political elite that shamelessly looted or plundered Nigeria for years and despite the very rich petro-dollar that accrued to her, the corrupt leaders have made her one of the largest International debtors. (Translation mine)

¹³ Obuna Emmanuel, *The Roots of Violence*, Gregorian University Press, Rome, 1985, P.51

¹⁴ Achebe Chinua, *The Trouble with Nigeria*, Fourth Dimension Publishers, Enugu, 1983, P.76

¹⁵ Onwuka, J. O., op.cit, P..324.

¹⁶ Achebe, Ibid

the corrupt structure to their own advantage, the effect of which is weighing heavily on all Nigerians today.

Nigerians of all walks and cadres of life, the poor and the rich, find this problem manifestly impossible to ignore. Therefore, I perceive corruption to be the most serious, acute, dangerous, disturbing and devastating social problem in Nigeria today. It is regarded as the most manifest stumbling block to socio-politico-economic development in Nigeria. Indeed, apart from the apartheid government of South Africa before Nelson Mandela and perhaps the Ghana of eighties before Jerry Rawlings, no other country in the African continent has been labelled more corrupt than the Nigerian nation. So, there is the urgent need for corruption to be curbed in Nigeria so that Nigerians will enjoy the basic necessities of life, like shelter, food, clothing and overall human development.

Aim and Purpose of the work

The aim of this work is to find out the cause/s of corruption and why it is still a persistent social evil in Nigeria. It shall also examine the consequences of corruption and possible corrective actions made towards curbing corrupt practices in Nigeria, by using the historic-cultural data of Nigeria. The historical excursus aims at providing a clear and sound understanding of the historic facts for a better judgement of the current social situation in Nigeria. Finally, this work will make some useful suggestions on how to prevent corruption in Nigeria.

Scope of the work

My main concentration in this work is corruption in the Nigerian contemporary society. The scope of this work cannot cover all the aspects of corrupt practices in Nigeria. Therefore, I have chosen to discuss corruption in governance with particular attention to all the three arms of government, namely; Legislature, Executive and Judiciary. This is because they are responsible for the distribution of the created goods in the society. Even when they are not directly involved, they still make laws guiding all the activities in Nigeria thereby affecting and effecting the lives of all Nigerians.

Sources and Method of research

My method in this work is primarily the use of the library. The use of the library in this work means the consultation of some authors relevant to the topic. I shall make use of the writings of Theologians, Sociologists, Anthropologists and

politicians and of journalistic sources covering the current reporting of corruption. I shall make use of the documents of the universal Church, especially the papal encyclicals and the writings of the Nigerian bishops, especially as they concern its social teaching in relation to corruption in governance. I shall also make use of some journalistic sources covering the current reporting of corruption in Nigeria.

Finally, corruption and corrupt practices are as complicated as the technology of the time, so I shall use different methods of writing, including, historical, sociological, analytical, expository, explanatory, comparative and evaluative.

Structure of the work

This work is divided into five chapters with a general introduction and a conclusion. The general introduction makes known the problem, the aim and objective, scope and method of research used in bringing the aims and objectives of this work.

The first chapter is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the definitions and nuances of corruption. The second part sees the necessity of organising the society for the common good. It also argues that society is natural to man and that man can live a perfect human life by making use of all the basic necessities of life, like food, shelter and clothing.

The second chapter is divided into two parts. Part one is an appreciation of Nigeria and her socio-political situation. It also examines the influence of religion in the socio-political lives of the different ethnic groups in the pre-colonial Nigerian era. The second part deals on corruption in the colonial era and suggests that colonialism helped in making political corruption a part and parcel of governance in Nigeria. It took power from the people and gave it to the rulers so that power no longer belongs to the led but to the leaders.

The third chapter is further divided into three parts. Part one elaborates the coups and counter coups as a result of corrupt leadership after independence. Part two deals on corruption in the present day Nigeria. This part assumes from 1999 till date to be the present day Nigeria. It navigates into the activities of this period and establishes the fact that corruption has taken different styles in devastating the current Nigerian polity, particularly in the three arms of government and the police force. The third part discusses the causes and effects of corruption in the Nigerian society. It concludes by examining the anti-corruption efforts in Nigeria by the various administrations.

The fourth chapter examines some of the social teachings of the universal and particular Church on corruption with particular attention to *Gaudium et Spes*, *Populorum Progressio* and the teachings of the Nigerian Catholic Bishops. Finally, the work ends with general summary, conclusion and the opinion of the author on what could be the best solution to the problem of corruption in today's Nigeria.

CHAPTER ONE: Fundamental Thematic Delineation

Introduction

Corruption is a common phenomenon in human society, but the very way and manner it is manifesting itself presently is a recent addition to the dictionary of global social problems. For instances, the global bank crisis and the global recession cannot be dismissed with a wave of hand as not having their roots on corruption and corrupt practices. Nor can one sweep the present crisis in the United Kingdom where some members of the parliament made excess use of the public money for their private use (cfr. Daily Telegraph 2009) under the carpet as a highly positive developed politicking. Worse still, the Nigerian leaders in government are making use of the public money for their private needs with impunity. All these are traced back to corruption and corrupt practices. Therefore, corruption is not peculiar to any country.

However, corruption and corrupt practices vary from country to country and even within a country it also varies from region to region in its intensity and propensity. We are interested in corruption in Nigeria not only because we are Nigerians who have experienced the pinch of corruption, but also because we want to make some suggestions on how this social evil could be combated so that corruption in Nigeria could be eradicated or at least be minimised.

Corruption can be situated and discussed in any discipline but more especially in Social Ethics. This is because corruption is in the behaviour of man and not in man as man. So corruption has to do with human beings and their interactions and or relationship in the society. According to Gerhard Droesser, "Ethik fundiert ihren Begriff in der anthropologischen Grundbestimmung, nach der Menschen zu sich selbst: zu ihrem Fühlen, Sprechen und Handeln- im Verhältnis der Reflexion sind"¹⁷ This means Social Ethics deals with man and his total life in the society. In order words, how man feels, speaks and relates

¹⁷ Droesser, G., *Ethische Hermeneutik- Dialogische Praxis*. In : Heimbach-Stein, Marianne (Hsg): *Christliche Sozialethik. Ein Lehrbuch*. Bd. 1: Grundlagen. Regensburg 2004, Pg. 62

with and to others in the society is the very concern of Social Ethics. And it is in this relation of man and man in the society that corruption is found.

Part one: Definitions and nuances

1. Corruption

The problem of corruption provokes an active discussion and condemnation among all classes of people but agreeing on the meaning of corruption is another big social problem. *Eine genaue Definition des Begriffs Korruption gibt es nicht*¹⁸ This is because it is multi-dimensional with many characteristics. The difficulty is not in its existence but in its definition. Dare Babarinsa argues: “It would take some time before we are all agreed on the true meaning of corruption”¹⁹ This becomes more complicated in Nigeria, a land with many languages. No language in Nigeria can give the exact meaning of the word corruption. Therefore each word for corruption in any language in Nigeria is correct for the people provided they understand it very well. Elechi Amadi says that *Awuf*²⁰ is the only generally accepted word for corruption in Nigeria.

However, for Ndigbo and the Hausas, *awuf* is something gotten without payment. For instance in a feast, some people go there to eat and drink. Sometimes some overfeed themselves and get drunk. It can also mean *apriko* (ill gotten). At any rate, even if *awuf* really means bribery, then it is just a part of corruption, which can be compared to *iri aka azu* or *iri ngari*, (done in the dark or behind closed doors). This is an Igbo phrase meaning bribery. This is part of corruption and not the whole meaning of corruption. Another Igbo word that seems more embracing is *wuruwuru* which includes *iri ngari* or *aka azu*. A *wuruwuru* person seeks always his personal advantage or gain. He does not consider others. He must not always be a leader but wherever he finds himself he seeks his own advantages at the expense of others. *Wuruwuru* is more dangerous than *aka azu* because in *aka azu* both ends benefit, but in *wuruwuru* the non-*wuruwuru* person will only benefit when the *wuruwuru* person sees that it is the only way to satisfy his desire. When such people are found in governance, then they will perfect their act.

¹⁸ Umsetzungshilfen zur Korruptionsprävention in Lichtenberg von Berlin, März, 2008

¹⁹ Babarinsa Dare, Tell Magazine, March 6, 2000

²⁰ Amadi Elechi, Ethics in Nigerian Culture, Heinemann Educational Books, Ibadan, 1982, P.82 (The word *Awuf* is a special English in Nigeria called pidgin English. It is so to say an unofficial lingua franca in Nigeria. For Amadi, *awuf* means bribery.)

Corruption is often described “interchangeably with misadministration, incapacity and inefficiency, especially in relation to public duties.”²¹ The deficiency of approaching corruption in this manner is that firstly, corruption is only linked to the leaders thereby making the led a corruption free class. Secondly, corruption becomes difficult to streamline and thus impossible to address. Subsequently, there will be no solution even though it is easily identifiable. It is therefore, of paramount importance to establish a working definition of corruption, in order to give this work its orientation and focus.

In this light, I shall analyse some definitions of corruption by some authors which will help me formulate a definition suitable for my work. Innocent Nzemiro defines corruption as “a system that promotes and maintains the well being of a few at the expense of the majority. It should therefore be located in the social system”²² Nzemiro begins by exonerating man from being intrinsically corrupt. He maintains that social structure corrupts the behaviour of man. It is true that human beings are not ontologically corrupt, but it is the same human beings who create the corrupt social structure that promotes the well being of a few at the expense of the majority. The danger in seeing corruption only from this perspective is that firstly, the social system is blamed and not the people who make the social system to function. One cannot separate the corrupt system from the people in the system. Secondly, I see the danger of seeing any system that promotes the welfare of the majority at the expense of the minority as not being corrupt. But a corrupt free system maintains the well being of all.

Nonetheless, Julius O. Onwuka describes corruption as “a dishonest and immoral behaviour. A corrupt society is one which has become used to dishonesty, immorality, and illegality.”²³ This has to do with dishonesty and illegality. However, the questions to be asked remain: Firstly, when is a society said to have become used to dishonesty, immorality and illegality? Secondly, are dishonesty and immorality public or private problems? Thirdly, is every illegal and every dishonest behaviour corrupt? I believe that dishonesty and illegality can be part of corruption but immorality is purely a private problem.

²¹ The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes, Regional Office for South Africa, Department of public Service and Administration, Country Corruption Assessment Report, Cape Town, 2003

²² Nzemiro, I. The structural causes of Indiscipline and Corruption in Nigeria. (Paper presented at the National Seminar on Indiscipline and Corruption and their Adverse Effects on the Nigerian Society, Ahmadu Belo University Zaria, 11-15 April 1983

²³ Onwuka, J. O., P.324

Olusegun Obasanjo defines corruption as “an illegal system that promotes inequality and destroys the social fabric of the society.”²⁴ I think it is not only a matter of the promotion of inequality; but more so a matter of denying others their rights. Inequality as used by Obasanjo here is very ambiguous. It is arguable that there can never be a time when everybody will be equal in all things but only in human rights. However, it is clear that corruption destroys the social fabric of any society.

Nevertheless, The Independent Commission against Corruption (ICAC) defines corruption thus: “corruption occurs when an individual abuses his authority for personal gain at the expense of other people and puts the lives and properties of the community at stake.”²⁵ Even though this definition is more of descriptive, it points to the fact that the general welfare is always jeopardised whenever corruption occurs because it seeks only public officer’s individual’s interest. The commission says corruption is the abuse of public office for private gain.

Furthermore, The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English speaks of corruption as “dishonest and illegal, especially of people in authority”²⁶ In the illegal behaviour of man the Dictionary lays emphasis on those in authority. Unfortunately, when we talk of corruption and the betterment of the society, many people automatically and instinctively shift their attention to the government and their agents alone. This set of people forgets the saying that war was too serious a business to be left in the hands of the generals alone. This is perhaps why Nigerians are getting more than their fair share of the effects of corruption. They seem to have neglected the fact that not only those in public authority are corrupt but also some other individuals.

At any rate, Webster’s Encyclopaedic Dictionary of the English Language says that, “corruption includes dishonest practices such as bribery and favouritism, perversion of integrity and (being) debased in character.”²⁷ This Dictionary agrees with the Oxford Dictionary’s and Onwuka’s opinions that corruption is a dishonest practice. But it goes further to give some examples, such as bribery and favouritism. The Dictionary does not specify the class of people. It is arguable therefore, that corruption has no specific class where it must be found.

²⁴President Obasanjo Olusegun, His Address to the Nigerians on the occasion of the 39th anniversary of our Independence, October 1, 1999

²⁵ICAC, The Independent Commission against Corruption was set up in 1974. Since its inception, the Commission adopts a three-pronged approach of investigation, prevention and education to fight corruption. With the support of the Government and the community, Hong Kong has now become one of the least corrupt places in the world.

²⁶Sally Wehmeier ed. Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, Oxford University Press, 2005, P.344

²⁷Webster’s Encyclopaedic Dictionary of the English language, P.328 (Bracket is mine.)

Furthermore, Black's Law Dictionary defines corruption as "an Act done by an official or judiciary person with an intent to use his status or character to procure some benefit for himself or for another person contrary to duty and the right of others"²⁸ (Underlining mine). The three definitions agree on the illegality or unlawfulness of the act. However, Black's Law Dictionary goes further to say that the public officer has the intention to use his office to his own benefit or to favour another person at the expense of others and or his official duty. This definition is more specific and direct. This is when somebody in public office does something willingly and intentionally to his advantage but at the expense of his official duty and to the disadvantage of others. However, it is not complete to limit corruption to the public officers alone but to all people. One is not corrupt simply because one is a public officer but because of one's misuse of public office and trust.

In this work, my working definition of corruption runs thus: Corruption is the misuse of public fund, resources and opportunities for private gain. Corruption is the seeking of undue private advantages at the expense of public advantage by ignoring all the set down social norms and standards of operation in the society. It is an abuse or unfair use of public position for personal gain thereby putting the lives and properties of other people in jeopardy. Corruption seeks only the individual's interest and not the common interest.

1.1. Forms of corruption

Corruption is a very broad term with many aspects and dimensions. Understanding the multifaceted dimensions of corruption in this work is essential in order to identify workable and effective ways of dealing with it. For instance, in 1997, the government of South Africa established an Anti-corruption strategy that maintains that, "it is important to understand the various forms in which corruption manifests itself in the Public Service and elsewhere in the society, in order to develop a Public Service Anti-corruption Strategy."²⁹ Therefore, it is my intention in this section, to identify some of the forms of corruption.

1.1.1. Bribery

²⁸Black's Law Dictionary, Sixth Edition definition, West Group, 2001

²⁹In 1997, the Government of South Africa established a national anti-corruption campaign. This campaign progressed to a National Anti-corruption summit in April 1999 at which all sectors of society, [public and private] committed themselves to establishing sectoral anti-corruption strategies. They were also committed to the co-responsibility for fighting corruption through the coordination of these sectoral strategies.

Machesney S. Fred argues that, “bribery is the offering, giving, receiving, or soliciting of something of value for the purpose of influencing the action of an official in the discharge of his or her public or legal duties.”³⁰ Bribery has two ends; it is not only giving but also receiving or demanding money or something valuable. The intention of the giver and receiver must be proven to be corrupt. Our author further argues: “The expectation of a particular voluntary action in return is what makes the difference between bribery and private demonstration of goodwill.”³¹ These days, it is very difficult to differentiate goodwill gifts from bribery especially among public office holders. There are many ways in which bribery manifests itself. Some of them include; kindness done with a corrupt intention, corrupt relationship, kickbacks, visit that is intended to achieve an undue advantage. This is mostly seen among members of the same organisation, religion, club and among classmates or schoolmates.

1.1.2. Fraud

Chinua Achebe summaries fraud thus: “Fraud involves some kind of trickery, swindle and deceit, counterfeiting, racketing, smuggling and forgery.”³² In Nigerian parlance, it is generally known as *wayo*. (*Wayo* is Pidgin English in Nigeria). This means cheating somebody in order to get his money or other valuables. It also refers to a person who pretends to have capabilities and abilities that he does not really have. A fraud is simply a deception intentionally made for illegal personal gain. A fraudulent person is one who assumes a false pose, an impostor, a pretender and a deceiver. This is famous in Nigeria and it is called “Obtain by tricks”, (OBT) or “419” A fraudulent intentionally, conscientiously and consciously makes effort to deceive others for his illegal private gain. *“Wer einmal in den Fängen der sogenannten 419 advance-fee-fraud Mafia gelandet ist, kommt so schnell nicht mehr raus aus deren Netz an Lügen und immer neuen Geldforderungen. Denn diese Mafia ist höchst kriminell, effektiv und erfinderisch. Hier wird mit den Menschen und mit dem ‚Prinzip Hoffnung‘ gespielt“*³³

This is one of the most complicated social crimes in the world, because its face changes as technologies alter and develop. If they succeed in cheating you they

³⁰Machesney Fred S, Money for Nothing: Politicians, Rent Extraction, and Political Extortion, University of Harvard Press 2003, P. 1

³¹Ibid

³²Achebe, C, op. Cit. P. 36

³³ www.fato24.de, March 5, 2010, (Who gets into the clutches of the so-called 419, advance-free-fraud mafia, does not come out easily without demands for money from network of lies. For this mafia is most criminal, effective and innovative. They play with human beings by giving them hope. Translation mine)

will call you *mugu* or *mumu* (a stupid or unintelligent person). Another similar crime to fraud is embezzlement.

1.1.3. Embezzlement

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary says that "embezzlement is to steal money that you are responsible for or that belongs to your employer."³⁴ This is the fraudulent appropriation of another person's or public property entrusted to the care of another person. It is therefore, misuse or betrayal of trust. In this case it can be a public or private trust. For instance, when politicians embezzle from public or state treasury, when a priest/pastor embezzles Church money entrusted to his/her care and when a class prefect in a school embezzles the class money meant for the class. The list is endless.

Victor Dike summarises it thus: "Embezzlement is theft of public resources by public officials. It is when a state official steals from the public institution in which he/she is employed."³⁵ It involves the totality of public resources, like land, house etc. There are many ways of embezzling public money, including falsification of bills and the creation of Ghost workers. In Nigeria the embezzlement of public funds is one of the most common ways of having economic power and relevance. The worst enemy of socio-economic progress is the embezzlement of public funds and properties by public officials.

1.1.4. Extortion

Extortion is the use of violence or force or threats of authority to extract money or other resources for selfish or private gain. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary summarizes it thus; "extort something from somebody, to make somebody give you something by threatening them."³⁶ Extortion is an act of intimidation. The police, kidnappers, most customs officers, some lecturers and secondary school teachers are the main culprits in this case in Nigeria today.

This can also be likened to terrorism, which J. O. Onwuka defines as "the use of violence such as shooting, kidnapping, bombing, etc in attaining objectives or settling differences."³⁷ Extortion can also be persuasive. However, the person being extorted gives it unwillingly. In extortion, the private aim/objective is more important than the public interest and this is why those who are involved use every method available to achieve their private gain.

³⁴Sally Wehmeier ed. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Oxford University Press, 2005 P. 497

³⁵Dike, E., V., Corruption in Nigeria: A new Paradigm for effective control, African Economic Analysis, 2005

³⁶Sally Wehmeier ed. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Oxford University Press, 2005 P. 540

³⁷Onwuka J. O, op. cit, P.329

1.1.5. Favouritism

Favouritism is mostly noticed among those in the public service. Sometimes this is seen as a natural human proclivity (tendency) to favour friends, family and any close and trusted person. The Newswatch Magazine once conducted a children's opinion pool on favouritism in Nigeria and came out with the following results. Shade Afolayan an ex-student of Queens School, Ilorin says, "I hate the favouritism I see everywhere. Why is it that students with high grades cannot get admission, while others with low grades get admission?" Folake Oladin, a pupil of the Sacred Heart Private school, Ibadan says, "I don't like the way the rich cheat the poor in Nigeria. To gain admission into the University you must have a long leg."³⁸ Thus, even the Nigerian children know what favouritism means in Nigeria. Dangerously related to favouritism is nepotism.

1.1.6. Nepotism

Nepotism Comes from the Latin word *nepos*, meaning nephew. This is a special form of favouritism in which an officer prefers his/her kinfolk and family members to others. Common experience suggests that a tendency towards nepotism is instinctive, a form of kin selection. Nepotism combines with tribalism in Nigeria to create a very big nepo-tribalistic social problem. This is an issue of favouring relatives and tribesmen because of their relationship with the public officer rather than their abilities and capabilities.

All these definitions and nuances will be seen in one form or the other in my work in order to understand the styles with which corruption operates in Nigeria.

Chapter One: Part two

1.2 Society and Governance

Strictly speaking, this work is on corruption in the Nigerian government. I also call it political corruption. Politics has to do with governance and governance has to do with the organisation of the society for the good of man in the society. Governance is more of a public, inter-personal business than personal or individual business. As there are many people in the society where this business is carried out, there are also many and different interests to be represented. Theophilus Okere states to this effect that, "to cater for these interests by coordinating them, by reconciling conflicting ones, by deciding rationally and

³⁸Newswatch Magazine, Special Edition-Nigeria in the eyes of children, October 9, 1989

wisely on their order of priority, is politics/government.”³⁹ In this, I see politics simply as the organisation of the different private interests and resources for the harmony of the general interest of the society. Okere further argues; “It belongs to politics to establish a balance between the rights and duties of citizens either taken individually or in groups.”⁴⁰ Simeon Eboh corroborates Okere thus: “Democracy builds and survives on plurality of views, on the ability to accommodate different and opposing views. Our consensus politics should be then recognition of unity in diversity, individualism in communalism, competition in co-operation, autonomy in heteronomy.”⁴¹ These rights and duties are not in this case moral rights and duties. They are rather social rights and duties where politics makes it possible for all in the society to have equal ground to develop.

1.2.1. Governance or Politics

The word governance or politics generally presupposes and relates to the different ways of creating an ideal society. However, an ideal society is not only difficult but an impossible aim to achieve. Here, politics or governance implies policies, which could and should be implemented in the hope of creating a better society. It is all about positively improving the everyday lives of the people and the society.

Anthony Chidi Onyenagada states that, “in politics, the first element is the existence of the rulers and the ruled, the leaders and the led. Politics, therefore, becomes a necessary avenue of human management for the realization of a better society.”⁴² However, to me, the first element in politics is rather governance of a people. Governance is not a person or a group of persons, but an institution that helps to organize the people and the natural resources in the society. It is from the people that rulers and leaders emerge. The rulers can also become the ruled. Therefore, politics is not only an avenue of human management but also an avenue of the management of the natural resources and disasters, for the common good.

Simon O Eboh calls it body politics. “Body Politics (Political society) is required by nature and achieved by reason. It is a concretely and wholly human

³⁹ Okere, T., Church, Theology and Society in Africa, Fourth Dimension Pub. Co. Ltd, Enugu, 2005, p.71

⁴⁰ *ibid*

⁴¹ Eboh S O., Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa, SNAAPS press Ltd, Enugu, 2003, P.153

⁴² Anthony Chidi Onyenagada, Politics in Nigeria-The lessons of the general elections 2007, The Leader Newspaper Sunday July 25 2008, p13

reality, tending to a concretely and wholly human good-the common good.”⁴³ Government or governance is therefore, naturally reasonable or reasonably natural for the good of the whole man. Eboh emphasizes that government “is a set of institutions combined into a top-most machine made up of experts or specialists in public order and welfare, an instrument in the service of man.”⁴⁴ Therefore, there must be people who are at the service of man in the name of the instruments and or institutions. These specialists or experts are those I call government officials in this work. They are charged with the affairs of the society and the people in the society-the common good.

In this small section, I want to see whether society is natural to man, how the society should be organized and what man needs in the state. This will help me in this work to navigate into the activities of the public officers in Nigeria in order to find out how well or otherwise they organise the Nigerian society.

1.2.2. Society is natural to man

Society is a phenomenon that cannot be overlooked especially in our discussion of corruption in governance. However, it is not in the scope of this work to go into the definitions and nuances of a human society, but it is good to have a little idea of what a society means. We find man living in a society as far back as we can go in human history. Wherever man lives on the face of the earth, he lives as a member of a society. According to Joseph Folliet, “society is a stable, an organic combination of individuals, each in relation to the others, and all in relation to the group, within a circumscribed unity which performs an activity shared in by each of its members.”⁴⁵ The first look at this definition will tempt man to say that it may also be applied to the animals, trees as well as human beings. This means that there are many societies but this work is directly concerned with the human society.

In this light, Folliet further opines: “Human society is a system of relations between persons or groups that keep in view a common end considered by them to be their goal.”⁴⁶ Human society is therefore, a relation of human beings for a common goal. This relationship is very important for human interaction in the society. No man can survive as a human being outside of a society of human beings. Man is born in the society; he lives and dies in the society. In this line, Gerhard Drösser argues, “*Sozialsysteme sind keine letzte Wirklichkeit, sondern*

⁴³ Eboh S O, loc cit p.38

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ Folliet J., Man in Society, London, 1963, p8

⁴⁶ Ibid. P.9

differenzierte objektive Vermittlungsformen-oder Apparaturen-sozialer Praxis, von Menschen her-vorgebracht und zu ihrem Nutzen bestimmt. Die Idee des Guten Lebens aller Menschen verweist nicht auf ferne Zukunft, sondern qualifiziert als Sollen das tatsächliche Mitmenschliche Zusammenleben.”⁴⁷ In other words, man’s life has meaning only in the midst of human beings. Nature puts into man a social instinct that helps man to realize this relationship. This is in fact, absolutely constitutive and central in the being of man as a person. The social nature of man is not something an individual possesses all by himself.

The Vatican II Council in its Pastoral Document on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes* argues that, “social nature of man shows that there is interdependence between Personal betterment and improvement of society. Man by nature stands completely in need of life in society, he is and ought to be the beginning, the object and subject of every social organization.”⁴⁸ For *Gaudium et Spes*, man needs the society but man is the reason why there is a society.

Furthermore Aristotle argues: “It is evident that the state is a creation of nature and that man is by nature a political and social animal. And he who by nature and not by accident is without a state is either bad or above humanity.”⁴⁹ That the state is a creation of nature means that if the individual is isolated from the state he will not be self-sufficing. An individual is a part in relation to the whole, the part when taken away from the whole may die. To this effect Aristotle further argues that “he who is unable to live in society or who has no need because he is self-sufficing, must be either a beast or a god, he is no part of the state.”⁵⁰ All these show that the society is natural to man.

That man needs the society to survive is the most important aspect of his nature as a social being. Chibuiké Ukeh argues to this effect that, “each person is seen as an incomplete or imperfect piece of life. In order to be complete, he needs the other pieces of his life in, not only fellow men, but also in the other creatures.”⁵¹ In needing others for his existence, others need him too. Pantaleon Iroegbu describes this relationship thus; “Each human person is a being that is deeply structured by the community in which he originates. Person is person primarily

⁴⁷ Drösser G, *Christliche Sozialethik, Ein Lehrbuch, Band 1, „Ethische Hermeneutik- Dialogische Praxis“*, Regensburg, 2004, pp.79-80 (Social systems have meaning in human interactions. The idea of good life is not abstract nor is it to be found in the future but rather concrete and realizable only in human relationship in the society now. Translation mine)

⁴⁸ *Gaudium et Spes*, No.25

⁴⁹ Aristotle, *Politics*, translated by Benjamin Jowett, London, 1952, p446

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* P. 447

⁵¹ Ukeh, C. O., *Spirit-Between Man and God, An Igbo-African Christian Appreciation*, Iko Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 2007, p.177

because he shares and communes with others and therefore receives the tools for life and growth from others.”⁵² In other words, he shares what he has with the society in many forms which includes sharing his talents and working for a living.

However, mankind is not just a collection of separate units that come together to satisfy their needs, rather, man exists in a genuine community which is not a dream but a reality. To be a person is therefore to exist, among other things, as an appeal and a response to other persons. In this light Aristotle argued: “Without the other, an other who takes account of me, and for whom my free response means something, I do not exist.”⁵³ Life has meaning only when it is lived in a community of others. In this case, man is expected to be positively active and not passive in the society. That means to share with one another and the society.

To share does not necessarily mean to give out to others what one has, but also to receive from others what one does not have. This unavoidable need for one another in the society is what makes society natural to man. Chibuike Ukeh corroborates that, “this unavoidable need for mutual complementation is indeed the underlying ontological explanation for the communal reality that the African society is.”⁵⁴ I can understand from what Ukeh said that none has everything he needs. Along this line, J. S. Mbiti argues: “The individual in the African society can only say, I am, because we are, and since we are therefore, I am. This is a cardinal point in the understanding of African view of man and the society.”⁵⁵ In this light therefore, I can conveniently say that without the others there can be no ‘I’/ME. My being has meaning in the being of others. This being means performing one’s duty for the good of the society and the society plays its role for its members. This being should be devoid of greed, avarice and corrupt practices of any form. This is because, a corrupt man does not share what he has rather he tries to take what belongs to others if he is in the position to lead the society. This is why in the traditional Igbo society corrupt people were not given positions of leadership.

In furtherance of this line of thought, Chibuike Ukeh argues: “The human person has no relevance, meaning and even being, outside the community.

⁵² Iroegbu Pantaleon. *Kpim of Personality, Treatise On the Human Person, *Respect *Solidarity *Liberty*, EUSTEL Publications; Owerri, 2000, p.109

⁵³ Aristotle, *Politics*, Translated by T. A. Sinclair, London, 1962, p.59

⁵⁴ Ukeh, C. O., *Spirit-Between Man and God, An Igbo-African Christian Appreciation*, Iko Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 2007, p.177

⁵⁵ Mbiti, J. S., *African Religious and Philosophy*, 2nd Edition, Oxford, 1990, p.106

Excommunication is for him the greatest punishment. It is like a virtual death, a reduction to a Not-being, to Nothingness.”⁵⁶ I believe that Ukeh is right because, among Ndigbo, the highest punishment that could be given to a person is to excommunicate him from his *umunna*, (kindred).

However, it must be well noted here that excommunication does not just occur without any social evil. In other words, it is only the socially evil people that are excommunicated because the society abhors evil practices. However, excommunication has more to do with taboos and not political corruption.

Consequently, man is linked to his society and his society is linked to him. Ikenga Metuh eloquently captured the picture thus: “Ndigbo, like most African peoples, tend to define a person in terms of the group to which he belongs. A person is thought of first of all as a member of a particular family, kindred, clan or tribe. Even today in an Igbo village, one is rarely asked; ‘Who are you?’ but rather ‘what lineage or clan do you belong to? Thus one learns from an early age, that ‘I am because I belong.”⁵⁷ In other words, a child knows from his childhood that he comes from somewhere (a society) and this place is where he belongs to. In fact, the Igbo perception of man maintains a balance between man’s personal identity as a unique individual and his collective identity as a member of his society. The meaning of his life will be found in his search for harmony and balance in the life of the communal relationship with others in the society.

It is not a relationship where he will seek for his personal advantage at the expense of others. In this line, J.S Mbiti further argues: “To be human is to belong to the whole community, and to do so involves participating in the beliefs, ceremonies and festivals of that community.”⁵⁸ This idea of belongingness is not peculiar to Ndigbo or Africa, rather to all the peoples of the world. This is so because it has to do with personal identity. According to Benet Bujo, “one’s identity can only be found without contradiction by not forgetting the forefathers.”⁵⁹ The Africans make sincere effort to identify with their kinsmen in the positive sense of the word.

Still on society being natural to man Gerhard Droesser argues: “*Institutionen umschließen uns wie eine ‘zweite Natur’, die wir vorfinden, der wir von Geburt*

⁵⁶ Ukeh, C. O., 2007, p.176

⁵⁷ Metuh-Ikenga, E. God & Man in African Religion (A case study of the Igbo of Nigeria), Onitsha, Imico publishers, 1987, p.113

⁵⁸ Mbiti J. S African Religions and Philosophy, London, 1969, p.1

⁵⁹ Bujo, B, The Ethical Dimension of Community, The Africa Model And The Dialogue Between North And South, Pauline publications Africa, Nairobi, 1998, p.31

*bis zum Tod nicht entfliehen können.*⁶⁰ This is to say that man did not choose to be in a society but he sees himself in the society from birth. Therefore, society is natural to man. According to Droesser, man cannot run away from this fact of being in the society. Man needs the society from birth till death. Gaudium et Spes made it clearer in these words: “Life in the society is not something accessory to man himself: but through his dealings with others, through mutual service, and through fraternal dialogue, man develops all his talents and becomes able to rise to his destiny.”⁶¹ Man does not live for himself alone but also for others.

This fraternal dialogue makes it possible for people to pool their ideas together for the development of their talents for and in the society. Dialogue does not call for selfishness; it does not call for personal gains at the expense of the others in the society. Droesser thus further argues; “*Institutionen sind Festschreibungen oder Objektivationen menschlichen Planens, menschlicher Intelligenz. Solche Pläne werden nicht nach Lust und Laune entworfen, sie bauen sich durch langwierige Erfahrungen auf, in denen Menschen durch Versuch und Irrtum Lösungen für die Schwierigkeiten ihres Überleben und ihres Miteinanderlebens durch Experimentieren.*”⁶² Society is not the world of one person but the world of many, and they must come together to discuss how best to live together in the society. The decision of these people should have nothing to do with personal whims and caprices. In this way, man establishes a corrupt free society where no one thinks that his idea is better than the rest.

Similarly, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops argues: “The social nature of man emphasises family, community, solidarity and cooperation.”⁶³ Cooperation here is not cooperation in corruption and corrupt practices but in recognition of the fact that none has the whole good ideas, talents or resources alone. This is therefore solidarity and cooperation of the leaders and the led in the society. In other words, no man can really survive alone in a society without the others. In line with this idea E. N Njaka opines: “The individual claims an extraordinary autonomy within the society and it is this belongingness to the

⁶⁰ Droesser Gerhard, *Institutionen Und Soziales Handeln, Christliche Sozialethik, Ein Lehrbuch, Band 1, Grundlagen*, Verlag Friedrich Pustet, Regensburg, 2004, P. 224 ((Institutions are like 'second nature' to us. We just find ourselves in them. In fact, they so surround and involve us from birth till death, that we cannot escape them. Translation mine)

⁶¹ Flannery Austin, *Gaudium et Spes*, No. 25

⁶² Droesser G., *Op. Cit.*, (Institutions are objectivations or the established expressions of human plans and intelligence. Such plans are never built on personal whims and caprices. They rather result from long and strenuous experiments and life experiences; from the trials and errors of men in their survival struggles and their endeavours to find solutions to social problems. Translation mine)

⁶³ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic “Reflections on Food, Farmers and Farm workers”, November 18, 2003

society that helps him to develop his potentials, his initiative and drive for achievement, his originality and his ability to ward off inordinate self-ambitions that could remove him from the society's communion. His union within a communion of persons gives him pride, boldness and individualism."⁶⁴ The society checks inordinate self-ambition. This is not only the importance of the society but also the duty and aim of the human society. In this line *Gaudium et Spes* maintains that "God did not create man a solitary being. For by his innermost nature man is a social being; and if he does not enter into relation with others he can neither live nor develop his gifts."⁶⁵ So being in a society is a very important aspect of human nature as a social being.

It is also a fact that the society is not a perfect one. People who make up the society have not only different talents but also different mentalities and therefore different behavioural attitudes. The society should be organised for the development of the individual talents and for the common good.

1.2.3. Organisation of the society

The question of who should organise or how the society should be organised has occupied mankind from the beginning of human history. Different great minds and scholars have also given different answers and most of these answers have changed with time but some have retained their substance through the ages. For instance, in his politics, Aristotle saw man as a *Zoon politikon*, a political animal whose livelihood can best be realised in a state. People of different calibre and character constitute the state."⁶⁶ Here, Aristotle presumes already the fact of inequality of the people in the society, which in turn creates the notion of conflict. However, the question, which pre-occupied Aristotle, is finding out who should rule the society, in order to avoid the conflict. He then goes on to argue: "He who asks law to rule is asking God and intelligence and no others to rule; while he who asks the rule of human being is importing a wild beast, and anger perverts rulers and the very best of them."⁶⁷ For Aristotle, if individuals should rule the society, there is the tendency for them to allow their personal interests to rule and not the interest of the society. In so doing corrupt practices would be the order of the day. But the rule of law is a perfect one because law is the respecter of nobody.

⁶⁴ Njaka E. N, *Igbo Political Culture*, Evanston, 1974, p.60

⁶⁵ *Gaudium et Spes* No. 12

⁶⁶ Aristotle, *Politics*, translated by Sinclair, T. A., England, 1967, p. 226

⁶⁷ *Ibid*

Aristotle prefers the rule of law to that of the individual because anger of the individual ruler could be interpreted as his personal interest in his personal gain rather than the interest of the society. It is also of common knowledge, as Aristotle seemed to have presumed that man by nature seeks first for his personal interest before the interest of others or the society. For Aristotle and as we have seen above, the society which he calls state comes into existence to preserve life for the families and villages that make up the state because of their individual insufficiency. The law puts the ruler in power for the society.

Aristotle was intellectually attuned to his social and political environment. In his Ethics as well as his Politics he concerned himself with what should be the good for man in the state. He said that “eudainoia” which has traditionally been translated to mean happiness is the good for man. For Aristotle, it is in the city-state that man can get the full happiness.⁶⁸ His preoccupation was to bring out all the elements that are to be combined to make this realisation possible.

Furthermore, Bujo argues; “The community has to prevent the individual from arbitrary actions, so that one’s life and that of the clan can experience more opportunities for development. Within this framework, the taboos and statutes fixed by the community exert a protective function for moral norms.”⁶⁹ Bujo did not say; prevent the leaders or the led from arbitrary actions. That means, every individual in the community is bound to make the laws and the norms of the community to function for the development of all in the society. The law distributes functions to the members of the society. The rule of law is very important in the society so as to avoid conflict and corrupt practices.

Helen Yu and Alison Guernsey, define rule of law as a “legal-political regime under which the law restrains the government by promoting certain liberties and creating order and predictability regarding how a country functions.”⁷⁰ Laws say how a society should be governed so that no one individual solely determines what should be done. “In the most basic sense, the rule of law is a system that attempts to protect the rights of citizens from arbitrary and abusive use of government power.”⁷¹ However, who should make the law. Here comes a problem of good and bad laws. If corrupt people make the laws, then there will be corrupt laws.

⁶⁸ Aristotle, *ibid*

⁶⁹ Bujo, *Loc. Cit*, p.74

⁷⁰ Yu, H., and Guernsey, A, What is the rule of law? A paper presented at a seminar titled, “The rule of law as a goal for development” organized by World Bank, April, 5-8, 2010, India.

⁷¹ *ibid*

I have tried to discuss the society and its organization in relation to man because I feel that it will help me to analyse the Nigerian society and its organization. This will help us to see whether the Nigerian society organizers organise the society for its purpose or for their purpose.

CHAPTER TWO: Nigeria: Socio-Political Appreciation of Corruption

Part one: Corruption in the pre-colonial Nigeria

Nigeria like many countries in Africa is constituted along ethnic and religious settings. The ethno-religious grouping reflects in her socio-political reality. This chapter examines the ethno-socio-religio-political constitution of Nigeria. I intend to inquire into these compartments of the Nigerian society to see how they contribute to or obstruct political corruption in Nigeria. I shall look at religion and governance in the pre-colonial Nigeria in connection to the role of religious and community leaders like the Emirs in the North, the Obas in the West and the council of elders in the East. I shall try to bring out their functions, similarities and dissimilarities in governance and the place of corruption in their respective areas as far as social life was concerned.

I am taking them together because there was little or no difference between all these in the pre-colonial Nigeria. S.A. Adewale captured the picture well in these words; “In traditional African society the sacred and the secular are inseparable. What religion forbids or condemns, society also forbids and condemns, and vice versa. An offence against God is an offence against man, either offence is criminal.”⁷² In other words, to destroy religion is to destroy the socio-political structure of the people.⁷³ Benezet Bujo corroborates Adewale thus; “The traditional African world-view sees no dichotomy between religion and politics, since the human being does not act in a solely secular manner and without relationship to the religious dimensions even for a single moment.”⁷⁴ This description applies also to the pre-colonial ethnic Nigerian groups. In this era, corruption was seen as religiously, socially and politically evil.⁷⁵

⁷² Adewale S.A., Crime and African Traditional Religion, in “Orita” XXVI/1-2, Isizoh, C. D. ed, 1994, P. 54-66

⁷³ Cfr. Mbiti, J. S., African Religion and Philosophy, London, 1969 Religion was an ontological phenomenon of traditional African existence, it was the womb of the indigenous culture itself.

⁷⁴ Bujo, B., The Ethical Dimension of Community, The African Model And The Dialogue Between North and South, Paulines Publications, Nairobi, 1998, p.19

⁷⁵ Cfr. Chinua Achebe, in his book “Things Fall Apart” described, in a very interesting manner, how the new religion brought by the “white man” disintegrated the African society in the sagacious remarks made by Obierika about the evasion of his clan Umuofia by the strange religion. Obierika said, “The white man is very clever: he came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart”⁷⁵ If anything, it was religion that held them together before the advent of the

2.1. Religion in the pre-colonial Nigeria

Religion was seen in all aspects of the life of the pre-colonial Nigerian society, like in many other African traditional societies. It played a very important role in their behaviours and interactions with others in the society. Religion held the people together and determined the principles on which their daily lives and activities revolved. According to Oliver Onwubiko, “religion in the indigenous Nigerian culture was not an independent institution. It is an integral and inseparable part of the entire culture. One’s entire action is reflective of one’s religious concepts and practices as is seen in the ordering of the society.”⁷⁶ In other words, one could not separate religion from the ordinary life of a traditional [African] Nigerian. Therefore, socio-politico-morality is dependent on religion.

Onwubiko further opines: “African Society in its original form was solid, because it was built on a strong moral base provided by the traditional religion. This religion inculcated good behaviour in people, which could make a nation truly great.”⁷⁷ This does not mean that everybody got the good behaviour. There were still those who were caught in one corrupt practice or the other. However, all in all religion guided the behaviour of the political leaders and the led.

About the Yoruba ethnic community in Nigeria, Bolaji Idowu corroborating Adewale, Bujo and Onwubiko wrote: “With the Yoruba, morality is certainly the fruit of religion. They do not make any attempt to separate the two; and it is impossible for them to do so without disastrous consequences.”⁷⁸ This is not peculiar to Yoruba but also, applicable to all the tribes in Nigeria. Religion directed the behaviours and interactions of people in these traditional tribes. The word atheism was strange to the pre-colonial Nigerian people. In this light, Festus Okafor, informs us that, “the ancient Africa was far from being an abode of laissez-faire morality. There were strict moral principles and determined code of conduct. Custom laid down the code of law, which established the nature of right-doings, and custom established penalties and taboos against

missionaries and it is this strange religion that has come to divide them. They could no longer act like one because their own brothers have joined the new religion against them even though they live in the same society. It is therefore, very important to note that because their religion was destroyed all other aspects of their life was destroyed and they could no longer act like one. Therefore, when we talk about religion in the pre-colonial Nigeria we already occupy ourselves with the issue or relatedness between all the aspects of human life in the society. Man can correctly say that it is from here that it became very difficult for the people to fight against corruption together.

⁷⁶ Onwubiko Oliver, *Christian Mission & Culture in Africa: African Thought, Religion and Culture*; Vol. 1, Snaap Press Ltd. Enugu, 1991, P.24

⁷⁷ Ibid

⁷⁸ Idowu, B.E., *Olodumare, -God In Yoruba Belief*, London, Longman, 1962, p.11

malefactors.”⁷⁹ The strict moral principles were anchored on religion and this is why their sanctions were also religious. Okafor further opines, “Moral sanctions were mainly religious sanctions, and these metaphysical sanctions were truly effective.”⁸⁰ This is why we say that religion was a very strong source of morality and power for the leaders as well as the led in the society.

Still on religion, Elechi Amadi says: “Religion is seen in many quarters as a very powerful weapon, which can and has been used for good and ill. Religion has played a particularly important role in ethical philosophy all down the ages because it has been a useful instrument for enforcing moral codes”⁸¹ Religion has been very powerful because of its usage and functions in the society.

In some cases, the priests of different shrines were also the political leaders, for instance the *Emirs* and *Obas* in the Northern and Western Nigeria, and in very rare cases among the *Igbos* and *Ibibios* in the Eastern Nigeria.⁸² Corrupt practices found little or no place and support in the society because they tantamount to a breach of religion and a challenge to the gods and therefore, a challenge to the orderliness of the society.

2.1.1. Priests in the Nigerian traditional religions.

Religion often has a lot to do with priests and their duties. My duty here is to say who the priests are and how they were connected with governance.

It is difficult to define a priest of the Nigerian traditional religions without relating him to his function. According to Oliver Onwubiko, “to be a priest means in Igbo belief, to carry a deity. A priest is one who carries the deity”⁸³ To carry the deity means to look after that deity. It means to be his *uko* (messenger) and to do all that he tells you to do most often without any question. Being an *uko* [or a messenger] has also very much to do with his functions and this is why it is difficult to separate his person from his function. He is an *uko* of the god he worships and an *uko* of the people who worship the same god. He is between the god and the people. He is believed to be half man and half spirit.

The functions of the traditional priests are very important to the growth of the society. According to Chibuike Ukeh, “a Priest occupied a very prominent and often elite position in the traditional society. He is seen as being in closer

⁷⁹ Okafor, F., *Africa At Crossroads*, New York, 1974, p.24

⁸⁰ Okafor, F., *ibid*

⁸¹ Amadi Elechi, *Ethics in Nigerian Culture*, Heinemann Educational Books, Nigeria Ltd, Ibadan, 1982, P.3

⁸² *Ibid*

⁸³ Onwubiko, O. *Ibid*, 1991, p. 77

contact with the spirit world - the source of most of the society's mores and laws, his words are often regarded as almost divine."⁸⁴ Their words were really divine when they spoke *ex-cathedra*.

Raymond Ogunade specifically said: "Religion equally permeated the choice of political leaders and the practical administration of political power, both at the executive and juridical levels. Communal leaders spoke as the voice of the spirit of the land."⁸⁵ When they spoke as the voice of the spirit there is always the tendency for people not to understand them well.

This calls for the help of another group of people called the diviners. In this regard Ogunade further opines: "Often times, there was need to avail of the services of the diviner to ascertain the precise disposition of the spirits on important issues. But once the Oba and his governing council, or the full assembly of lineage elders *Ndi Oji ofo* (*Ofo* holders), pronounced their final decision, it was taken as divine mandate."⁸⁶ Thus, priests and leaders were expected to be upright, honest and corruption free. But if any of them became corrupt as some of them were, he was punished. For instance, if the priest used his position for private gains he was considered corrupt. Fulfilling sincerely and conscientiously their roles in the society then as defenders of the society's mores, priests helped in the total governance of the pre-colonial Nigeria.

2.1.2. Governance in the pre-colonial Nigeria.

Here, I intend to investigate into what aspect of corruption was common among the pre-colonial Nigerian political leaders. This will help us to understand why corruption still persists in a very large scale in today's Nigeria. In this light Ogunade Raymond opines that the "interaction of religion and politics in the pre-colonial Nigeria was predicated upon the primary goal to root a firm political order, to preserve the social order, which is the relationship of person to person. Thus, each society was able to preserve and nurture life."⁸⁷ The preservation of the social order was made possible by the organisers of the society.

For the purpose of this section, I intend to look at the functions of the Emirs and the council of elders who were in the real sense the political leaders *ipso facto*,

⁸⁴ Ukeh, C. O. Op.Cit. p. 279

⁸⁵ Ogunade, R., African Religion in Democracy" in Human Views on God: Variety Not Monotony Adam K. arap Chepkwony and Peter M.J. Hess(eds.). Eldoret: Moi University Press, 2010, p. 63-70

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

the organisers of the society. In doing this, I shall briefly examine governance in some of the major tribes in Nigeria. Here, their functions mean their governance.

2.1.2.1. Emirs in the pre-colonial Nigeria.

Arguably, it is pertinent to know who an Emir is. Knowing who he is, will help us to understand his functions as a political leader or ruler in order to judge him in this context in relation to corruption and corrupt practices. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary says that, "Emir is a title given to some Muslim rulers."⁸⁸ If it is a title given to some Muslim rulers, then it is also arguable that there are some Muslim rulers who do not go by this title. This means also that this title is strictly a religious title.

Matthew Kukah says, "Northern Nigeria was organized into emirates, ruled by the Emirs who were selected from the ruling lineages by a council of clerics Mallamai."⁸⁹ In the words of Amadi, "The Emirs wielded power in styles ranging from absolute dictatorship to near democracy."⁹⁰ The reason why they wielded such power could not be unconnected with religion. In this case, they combined religious and political powers to rule the people. In any case, not all the Emirs wielded power. In this line Pita Ogaba Agbese opines; "The Emir of Kano, both in the context of ethnic politics and within the larger purview of Nigerian politics is considerably more influential than the Tor Tiv."⁹¹ In whichever case, if it was absolute dictatorship, then one can correctly say that it was absolute corruption because dictatorship is nothing short of corrupt leadership.

According to C. N. Ubah, "Each Emir was the *defensor fidei* (defender of the faith) within his area of authority."⁹² It seems here that some of the Emirs were unwilling to accept or tolerate other authorities, be they political or religious in their Emirates. They would not like to share the loyalty of their subjects with any other authority. The Emirs controlled the people the way they liked. In fact, they were semi gods. Amadi also informs us that, "the Emirs were power feudal lords."⁹³ Mathew Kukah corroborates Amadi in these words: "Once installed, a Fulani Emir was assailable only through extra-legal means -assassination, civil

⁸⁸ Wehmeir Sally (ed), Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005, p.498

⁸⁹ Kukah M. H., Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria, Spectrum Books Ltd, Ibadan, 1993, P. 3

⁹⁰ Ibid

⁹¹ Agaese, P. O., Chiefs, Constitution and Policies in Nigeria" in The West African Review, Issue 6, 2004

⁹² Ubah, C. N., "Problems of Christian missionaries in the Muslim Emirates of Nigeria. 1900-1928", in Journal of African Studies, 1976, p.353

⁹³ Amadi, E, op. cit., p.100

war, usurpation, sabotage, etc or through the intervention of external authority.”⁹⁴ This shows how powerful and influential the office was. Therefore, the corrupt one among them was super corrupt.

Comparing the Emirs and the British government in Nigeria, Matthew Kukah asserts that, “the British and the Emirs both were oppressive.”⁹⁵ However, Kukah’s statement could be an overgeneralization. Could it be that all the Emirs were oppressive? Could there not have been a few of them who were not oppressive? Although Kukah did not explain the level or style of oppression, I understand from him that some of the Emirs were corrupt political leaders. This establishes also the fact that there was corruption among the political leaders in the pre-colonial Nigeria as represented in the corrupt Emirs. If they were oppressive, they were more interested in their private gains and this is nothing short of corruption. This could be because power was centralised on the Emirs, unlike the council of elders in Eastern Nigeria.

2.1. 2.2. The council of elders in Eastern Nigeria (Ndigbo case)

According to the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Information, “Many Nigerian tribes did not develop into centralized monarchies, like Emirs, Obas and Obongs. Among those who did not have centralised monarchies is the Igbo of the Eastern Nigeria. Igbo societies were organized in independent villages, or federations of village communities, with a society of elders and age-grade associations sharing various administrative functions and powers.”⁹⁶ This does not mean that there was no political leader.⁹⁷

The council of elders governed the communities or villages. Agbase argues; “For the most part, Eastern Nigeria did not have the well-established system of administration over which the Indirect Rule mode of governance was anchored.”⁹⁸ Even though this may be true, it is also true that the Eastern part of Nigeria had their own system of government, which effectively worked for them. Okechuku Nwaubani eloquently argues: “Every society has its own unique system of political, social, legal and economic control. These systems are sometimes referred to as institutions and they are very useful in ordering

⁹⁴Kukah M., H., Op. Cit. P.5

⁹⁵ Kukah M. H., op. cit, p.54

⁹⁶ The Nigerian Federal Ministry of Information and Culture

⁹⁷ The same was true of the Ijaw of the Niger Delta and people of the Cross River area, where even “secret societies also played a prominent role in administrative and governmental functions (“Secret societies” are Masquerades and such societies like them. They mostly meet and function in the night. They are secret to non-initiates. It is not negative)

⁹⁸ Agbase, Ibid

effectively the collective goals, and aspirations of the society.”⁹⁹ In this little subheading, I want to look into the unique system of government in the pre-colonial Igbo.

2.1.2.3. Organisational structure of the council of elders

According to Nzomiwu J. P. C, “Ibos live in villages of a few hundred to a few thousand people comprised of numerous extended families. An interesting thing about these villages is that there is no single ruler or king that controls the population. Decisions are made by including almost everyone in the village. There are established institutions such as council of elders, women’s associations, and secret societies.”¹⁰⁰ However, this way of putting it seems as if the villages have no leaders, and therefore, no body to take decisions for them. Ikenga Oraegbulem rather argues that, there is a council that made the decisions in the Igbo traditional society. He puts it thus; “Among the Igbo, law is based on rules which are enacted by the elders and sanctioned by the ancestors *Ndichie*.”¹⁰¹ The council of elders is one of the institutions in the traditional Igbo society that made decisions for the society. They were the real political leaders.

According to Justin Agu, “An elder in the traditional Igbo society is the eldest son in the family or village. This position automatically qualified him to be a member of the council of elders.”¹⁰² Therefore, the council of elders was made up of heads of families or villages depending on which level of council. Elechi Amadi opines; “If an elder is incapacitated by anything, for instance, too old that he can no longer walk around, sickness or even moral disability, the next elderly man of proven character could take over his position.”¹⁰³ In other words, the families or villages must be represented by somebody seen as a good person. In this light, Agu further states that, “the traditional Igbo tribe political organization can best be described in terms of structural principle of segmentation. In this case people who constitute the governing body represent each segment.”¹⁰⁴ There was no corruption at least in selecting the members

⁹⁹ Nwaubani, O.,O., Igbo traditional Political System; Nature, Organisational Structure and Relevance to Mdern Democratic Practices, Whytem Publishers Nigeria, 1997, p.124

¹⁰⁰ Nzomiwu, J., P., C, The Concept of Justice Among the Traditional Igbo: An Ethical Inquiry, Fides Publishers, Awka, 1999, 41. (The Ibos simultaneously emphasize individual actions and community living)

¹⁰¹ Oraegbulem, K. E. I., The Principles and Practice of Justice in Traditional Igbo Jurisprudence, Fides Publishers, Awka, 2010

¹⁰² Agu, J. A.,_Political Changes in Igbo tribe Nigeria, Remo Ambrosiani, Roma, 1985, P.121

¹⁰³ Amadi E. op. cit, p65

¹⁰⁴ Agu, J. A., op. cit. p.134

because there was no campaign and therefore, no election. It was based on the tradition of the people.

Consequently, Smock argues that “when a decision affecting an Ibo community is to be made, several groups concern themselves with the issue and within each group near unanimity must be reached before discussion can be closed. Participation is on such a broad scale that most traditional meetings have no chairman or central direction, take no votes, permit more than one person to speak at a time, have no agenda, and continue for long periods. A decision reached by one organisation within a community that is not acceptable to another organisation can usually not be implemented.”¹⁰⁵ It is a very big insult or lack of true knowledge of the meeting system in the traditional Igbo society for Smock to say that there was no chairman or central direction. If there was nobody to preside over the meeting, one could be tempted to say that there was disorder and chaos in the traditional Igbo society. At any rate, Elechi Amadi has another side of the people when he clarifies that, “in the meeting of the elders, the eldest of the elders was the political leader and in very rare cases he was also the religious leader. He had no special preference like the Emirs and Obas.”¹⁰⁶ In this case, the ruler did not see himself as a dictator or as a ruler rather he saw himself as a servant who must also obey the law of the land. He is indeed not above the law of the land. Therefore, it is difficult if not impossible to believe that the traditional meetings have no chairman or central direction as Smock claims. Smock should have said that democracy was really at work in the grassroots.

Onwumechili corroborates Amadi when he states that, “the Igbo people had a remarkable system of government, which involved wide devolution of powers. Government was the affair of every person and the whole community.”¹⁰⁷ Davidson describes the Ndigbo as one of those groups of people, who organised themselves well and managed their affairs properly without chiefs or kings. It is a political structure in which the common man was his own ruler, though within a complex pattern of community life.”¹⁰⁸ In this case, the political leaders would find it very difficult to be corrupt because they did not make decisions alone.

However, corrupt rulers that wielded more power than the tradition allowed them were sold into slavery or even killed. Amadi throws more light on this

¹⁰⁵ Smock, D. R., Changing political process among the Abaja Ibo. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, vol 38, London, p.281

¹⁰⁶ Amadi, op. cit. P.94 (Cf also Aligwekwe p.151)

¹⁰⁷ Onwumechili, C. A., *Igbo Enwe Eze (The Igbo have no Kings)*, Ahiajioku lecture, Owerri, 2000

¹⁰⁸ Davidson, B. *A History of West Africa 1000–1800*, London 1977

when he states; “Such rulers did not last long, they could be accused of witchcraft for instance, and, with the assistance of *Aro* agents sold into slavery.”¹⁰⁹ Amadi thus confirms the fact that there were some corrupt leaders. Here, we have three interesting assumptions: namely; (a) some rulers were corrupt (b) but they were punished, in other words, the enforcement of the law was practiced and (c) the rulers here were not as powerful as the Emirs who were really lords and masters of their emirates. This is called checks and balances and the real democracy.

According to Jude Njoku; “Both where monarchy existed and where it did not, each community had its pattern of checks and balances through which the exercise of public authority was controlled. This system of checks and balances were not only peculiar to the Igbo groups of Southern Nigeria but to some other cultural and linguistic groups.”¹¹⁰ Njoku goes further to give instance with the Oyo traditional community of Yoruba where members of the Oyomesi were supposed to present an empty calabash to an Alafin when he begins to grow tyrannical. The presentation of the empty calabash signified that the community had rejected him and in turn demands of him to either commit suicide or go into exile. This is an example of how some traditional African communities controlled the activities of their political leaders.¹¹¹ In most cases, the leaders were extremely careful to avoid any disgrace from their people.

The Igbo traditional government was an uncomplicated one, because most people at the helm of affairs were simple and ordinary in their life styles. It was a government of representation. Elizabeth Isichei throws more light thus; “It is perhaps instructive to reflect that for all its weighting for wealth and experience, traditional Igbo government gave its citizens more real participation in decision-making process than is possible in any western-style democracy.”¹¹² It is arguable that this government of participation and representation makes it possible for all to be represented thereby making sure that the decision taken at meeting was (a) not arbitrary and (b) implemented.

Furthermore, the decisions and their implementation were not for the benefit of the political leaders alone but for the common good. This is clear, because the traditional Igbo governance was all about democracy, if democracy is a

¹⁰⁹ Amadi, Elechi, *op. cit.* P.94

¹¹⁰ Njoku U. J., Colonial influence on Igbo traditional governance; Colonial Political Re-Engineering and the Genesis of Modern Corruption in African Public Service: The Issue of the Warrant Chiefs of South Eastern Nigeria as a Case in Point, Vanguard, 23 July 2004, P.34

¹¹¹ Ibid

¹¹² Isichei, E, A History of African Societies, University Press, 1997, p.81

government of representation and participation of all in the society. Richard, H. W summarizes it thus; “Every Igbo no matter how humble his birth could aspire to economic and political leadership.”¹¹³ It is then arguable that there was a level ground for all. The government tried to bring in as many people as possible to represent the interest of all the groups no matter how minute or small. This is because the traditional Igbo society acknowledged the fact that human beings are fundamentally equal. Although one cannot rule out corruption completely from the traditional Igbo society, it is obvious that corruption was highly checked by the very many people that participated in the decisions that affected their socio-politico-economic life. This is because the implementation of the decisions at the meeting was sometimes more important than the decisions.

Stating the importance and functions of the council of elders, Ekwunife said: “The main functions of the council of elders include maintenance of peace and unity in the community through settlement of cases between individuals and between groups and the general enforcement of law and order in the society. They also took decisions like embarking on warfare with another community.”¹¹⁴ Ndigbo believed in the authority of the elders. The council of elders is the highest form of government and therefore, the highest decision making body in the traditional Igbo society.

On the distribution of roles among the members of the council, Pauline Aligwekwe argues, “Though some young people achieve their membership into the council of elders; they were not expected to vie for the leadership of the council.”¹¹⁵ In the first place, there was nothing to vie for since roles were distributed according to age and achievement. Therefore, the council gave them the appropriate leadership role. Ikenga Metu summarized it well thus: “This is because the office was not based on wealth, status or prestige. They did not bribe in order to get their role. For instance, a warrior became a leader during the war. When there were many warriors at a time, the most experienced became their leader.”¹¹⁶ The same is applicable to other talents like wrestling, farming and dancing and so on. However, the most appropriate sign/symbol of authority in Igbo traditional society is the *Ofo*

2.1.2.3.1. *Ofo* Symbol

¹¹³ Richard, H. W, *Modern Africa, Change and Continuity*, Prentice Hall Inc. New Jersey. 1980, P.20

¹¹⁴ Ekwunife, A, “Integration of African values in Priestly Formation” IN *African Ecclesial Review*, vol.39,no.4, 1997

¹¹⁵ Aligwekwe, P. *The Community of traditional Values in the African Society*, Totan Publishers Ltd, Abuja 1991

¹¹⁶ Metu, I, *ibid*

Ofo among Ndigbo is a symbol of authority. According to Oliver Onwubiko, “*Ofo* among the Igbos, has essentially deep religious significance which can be converted into social and political uses within the Igbo culture and would demand a clear cultural perception to know what use it is being put into in some and specific cases.”¹¹⁷ In this case, it has religious and political uses. According to Christopher Ejizu, “In general, *Ofo* symbolizes truth, honesty, authority and sincerity. It remains sacred and a source of moral conducts for Ndigbo and does not encourage bribery or corrupt practices.”¹¹⁸ Ekwunife eloquently captures the picture thus: “The Igbo *Ofo* ritual symbol is one of the ways through which social control is ritually effected and internalised. Traditional religious leaders like priests, elders of all shades, use it to prove their sincerity in discharging their duties.”¹¹⁹ According to Onwubiko, “The duties of the eldest man and the *Ofo* holder in Igbo communities do not end only in representing at or presiding over a meeting; it is also his duty to preside over some religious ceremonies and rituals like the pouring of “libation”¹²⁰ to the gods of the land and the ancestors.”¹²¹ In this case, he has political and religious duties. He does this because he is also an *Ofo* holder. I have to mention here, that the eldest man in the community is not necessarily the priest of the gods, even though; he may carry out religious duties.

There are priests of the gods of the village who performed other sacrifices in the community. In all, both the elders and the priests were respected in the village because of their nearness to the ancestors and the gods of the society. If an *Ofo* holder misbehaved or became corrupt, he was punished according to the law of the land and the gods. The misbehaviour could be judged by the council and the decision of the council is carried out by the law enforcement agents. For instance, Secret societies, Masquerades and Age grades which I put in the judiciary arm of government.

2.1.2.3.2. Judiciary

As we have seen above, the council of elders was the executive as well as the legislative arms of government. They combined the two functions and made sure that all their decisions were carried out. We shall now see how their decisions

¹¹⁷ Onwubiko, O.O, African Thought, Religion and Culture, 1991, Snaap Press, Enugu, p.35

¹¹⁸ Ejizu, C.I., *Ofo: Igbo Ritual Symbol*, Michigan State University Press, 1986, p.99

¹¹⁹ Ekwunife A.N.O, op. cit

¹²⁰ Libation is a poetic prayer to the gods and ancestors for the protection of the land and the people, for long life with good health and prosperity, and for the fruits of the land and of the womb. At the end of this incantation or prayer, wine is poured on the ground for the ancestors and the gods to drink and be happy to accept the prayers, and all present would respond, ‘Iseeeee’ that means we agree to this prayer.

¹²¹ Onwubiko, op.cit. p.38

were carried out. This is what I call the judiciary arm of government. In this arm of government, there were also different departments that work together to bring about law and order in the society. It would have been aimless to have the council of elders who make decisions without having the people who would enforce the decisions. I shall discuss only three of the law enforcement agencies.

2.1.2.3.3. Secret societies, Masquerades and Age grade

Masquerades (*Mmanwu*) and *onyekuru*¹²² are secret societies. They were valuable instruments of social control. According to Elizabeth Isichei, “The different political institutions in the community – the masquerade, the age grades, the village meetings – gave different forms of political weight to different sections of the community.”¹²³ This means that every segment of the society was involved in the governance of the society. I am concerned here with the enforcement of the law of the land. According to Okechukwu E.N, “The masquerade cult is a government functionary. Much of the functions of these masquerades is to effect obedience to the sanctions of the town on a culprit.”¹²⁴ Okechukwu explains how the masquerades could enforce the decisions.

The further fine means that the offender did not only pay to the society, but must also pay the masquerade society for their work. Okechukwu maintains that this police action of the masquerades “is generally referred to as *iri iwu*.”¹²⁵ Some groups of the masquerades helped also in the maintenance of law and order in the society. Okechukwu singled out the clever ones thus, “Some masquerades, the clever one of the young boys, called *Iga*, also kept surveillance over the village streams during the dry season, to see that water wasn't misused.”¹²⁶ This could also mean that there were ones that were not clever. By implication, they were not entrusted with the affairs of the community. However, this shows that the whole welfare of the society is considered by the council of elders or the decision making body of the community.

¹²² *Onyekuru* is a night masquerade. It comes out only in the nights to announce the social evil that somebody had done thinking that nobody saw him. *Onzekuru* would tell him what to do to appease the gods. *Onzekuru* would build a house on the compound of the offender that must not be removed by any other person outside *onzekuru*. This house would only be removed after the offender must have performed the required ritual.

¹²³ Isichei, E., *Igbo Worlds An Anthology of Oral Histories and Historical Descriptions* Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1978, 71-75

¹²⁴ Okechukwu, E.N., *Igbo Village Democracy*, American Historian Association, Teaching and learning in the digital age, Pittsburgh, 2006 (These masquerades could invade a culprit's home, and seize all his belongings until the owner paid the stipulated fine for his crime, and again reclaimed his property by a further fine)

¹²⁵ *Ibid*

¹²⁶ *Ibid*

Omenka Innocent distinguishes two types of the secret societies thus, “The members of *onyekuru* would appear mostly at night masked in the role of supernatural beings and denounce and attack offenders of the laws and customs of the land and the corrupt leaders. The members were anonymous.”¹²⁷ In fact, the members were said to be spirits and this went a long way in making it possible to achieve their aim. In this light, Isichei argues that “the anonymity of the members and their supernatural aura made the society a potent sanction against crimes.”¹²⁸ This helped to checkmate all crimes but especially misuse of authority. It was believed that they did not receive any bribe from the offenders.

The second type of the secret society described by Omenka is the Mmanwu. According to him, “Mmanwu is a society of masquerades, which has the double function of providing entertainment and enforcing the law. By virtue of the last obligation, it acquired a political value that was of paramount importance in a society, which lacked a police force.”¹²⁹ As for the political aspect of their function, one cannot overemphasize their importance. As Omenka rightly pointed out, there were no policemen as we have them today, but these societies performed the work of today’s police.

Another powerful agency that helped in making sure that the common good was maintained as the sole aim of the society was the age grade. As the name implies, this is an association of people of about the same age in the same clan or village. Various clans have various ways of grading their age groups. Pauline Aligwekwe confirms that, “In the district of Etiti the groups were graded at the interval of about three years, which is in accordance with the traditional spacing of birth.”¹³⁰ However, Michael Widjaja opines, “Age grades are formed by people born within three to five years from each other, and are a means to create a peer group, foster unity and responsibility, acting mainly as a socio-politico-cultural institution.”¹³¹ Goddy Ozumba opines, “The enforcement of the decision of Igbo government was the sole duty of the youths, through their age-grade organisation. This organisation is in different grades, each being made up of young men of the same age. Each group took a name and appointed the eldest of them as their head.”¹³² There is no agreement among the authors consulted on

¹²⁷ Omenka, N. I. „The Church and Traditional leadership In Igboland” in *The Igbo and Tradition of Politics*, ed U. D. Anyanwu et al, Fourth Dimension Publishing Co. Ltd., Enugu, P. 250

¹²⁸ Isichei Op. Cit

¹²⁹ Omenka, N. I. „The Church and Traditional leadership In Igboland” in *The Igbo and Tradition of Politics*, ed U. D. Anyanwu et al, Fourth Dimension Publishing Co. Ltd., Enugu, P. 250

¹³⁰ Aligwekwe, P. E, op. cit., PP.145-146

¹³¹ Widjaja, M., *Igbo insight guide to Enugu and Igboland's Culture and Language*, SNAAP press, Enugu, 2007, p.21

¹³² Ozumba, G., *Gender-sensitivity In Igbo Culture: APhilosophical Re-appraisal*, Quodilibet Journal. VOL. 7(2), Apriel-June, 2005

the age of the members of each age grade. I think the authors are more interested in the functions of the age grades than in their membership qualifications.

This system found in the Eastern Nigeria could also be seen in many other parts of the pre-colonial Nigeria. Bascom informs us that, in Ile-Ife, *Olomode Ife* (Ife youths) were the public enforcement officers. They had underground dungeons (*gbere*) where they kept criminals awaiting trial or execution.”¹³³ Thus, these Ife youths have the same functions with the age grades in Igboland.

At any rate, these Age groups were to help in maintaining peace and order in the community. J. O. Onwuka and O. M. Philips describe the roles of the age grades in the following words: “In undertaking group tasks such as warfare, road construction and maintenance, festivals, collective security, age grades constitute a force to reckon with.”¹³⁴ Ozumba corroborates Onwuka and Philip¹³⁵ but goes further to say that, “These age grades also were charged with guarding public morality through censorship of their members' behaviour. In most cases, they were the people who enforced the decisions of any judicial council.”¹³⁶ This force is seen in all aspects of the life of the society. The age grades who engage in warfare or in security for the society are those youthful ones. It is important to note that any member found to be corrupt, was punished accordingly.

Age Grades and Masquerades were organisations that were very useful in curtailing or checkmating corrupt practices in Nigerian traditional society. They were able to function well because the structure on ground permitted or enabled them to perform. So many factors contributed to their success not excluding the fact of socio-economic needs of the people in the society. This might be the reason why J.O. Onwuka and O. M. Philips said, “The need for community development and welfare as well as collective security, particularly in the warfare situations, brought age organizations into being in Igbo land.”¹³⁷ The need for good governance brought out the formation of all these groups. All hands were on deck in the Igbo traditional society in making sure that the society was administered for the common good. Thus, an Igboman makes

¹³³ Bascom, W., *The Yoruba of Southern Nigeria*, Holt Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1965

¹³⁴ Onwuka, J.O., and Philips O. M., „Age grade and community Development in Nigeria: The Igbo Experience“, in *Nigerian Peoples and Cultures: Historical and Socio-structural Perspectives*, Onwuka J. O. ed., Chrisi & Company Nigeria, Enugu, 2002, P. 254. (Cf also „Age groups played the big role of the defence of the ethical values of the society. The age group served as the police and watched over law and order in the village in the time of inter-village wars or other great dangers. Aligwekwe, P147)

¹³⁵ Ozumba, G. op. cit (“These age grades perform both civic and military duties in the town. They acted as the night watchmen of the town, when threatened by rogues. They also did public works, like clearing the forests and making local paths and roads)

¹³⁶ Ibid

¹³⁷ Onwuka, J.O., and Philips O. M., Ibid

sincere effort to avoid doing anything that could make him feel the wrath of the society.

The work of the age grade and secret societies is very enormous and is complemented by the work of other societies in the village like the *Umukpu* or *Umuada* (womenfolk).

2.1.2.3.4. Women folk

This section will briefly examine the participation of women in the affairs of the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Nigerian socio-political system.

Some authors are of the opinion that the activities of the Nigerian women in the development of the society have not been given the desired attention by Nigerian historians and literature. They argue that women have contributed a lot to the society but that most of their activities are still hidden. For instance, Awe Bonlanle, argues, “Our History has not been gender-sensitive and at the same time, our history to data has demonstrated neglect of female’s contributions to their societies.”¹³⁸ Effah Attoe corroborates Bonlanle thus: “Literature on Nigeria's national development is relatively silent on the contributions of women. It is appropriate to state that the role of Nigerian women in development has not been sufficiently emphasized.”¹³⁹ The issue here is that of recognition and not involvement. From the above cited opinions, women are involved in the socio-political development of the Nigerian society, but perhaps not yet fully recognized by most Nigerian authors.

However, I think that it all depends from which perspective one looks at it. According to Gloria Chukwu, “The participation of African women in the political processes of their respective societies is an area that has attracted much scholarly attention. While some works have focused on women's roles in indigenous African political organization, others have traced the history of their involvement in politics from the colonial period to decolonization and the achievement of independence”¹⁴⁰ One may choose to write and highlight one aspect, another may decide to write and emphasize the other aspect. In any case, one must not forget that Nigeria started written documentation particularly late.

¹³⁸ Bonlanle, A., Development , Women and History in Nigeria, being a paper presented at the 37th Congress of the Historical Society of Nigeria, 1992

¹³⁹ Attoe, S.E, Women in the Development of Nigeria Since pre-colonial Times, Daily Time, 19 October, 2002

¹⁴⁰ Chukwu, G., Igbo Women and Political Participation in Nigeria, 1800s-2005, International Journal of African Historical Studies, 2009

However, one noteworthy aspect of the sociological structure in Nigeria is the issue of women in governance, especially in settling cases among individuals and communities. This is the concern of this section because in settling cases corruption may be involved. This section navigates into the activities of women in governance with regard to political corruption. The women folk in some tribes in Nigeria was exceptionally strong in deciding cases that were most often extremely difficult for the men folk. Ola says, “In pre-colonial Bomu, women played active parts in the administration of the state. They held very important offices in the royal family; including the offices of the *Megira* (the Queen mother) and the *Gumsu* (the first wife of the Mai or King).”¹⁴¹ It is also observed in Zaria (North of Nigeria), that a woman founded the kingdom and ruled it. Attoe eloquently summarises it thus, “Women also played a very significant role in the political history of ancient Zaria. The modern city of Zaria was founded in the first half of the 16th century, by a woman called Queen Bakwa Turuku. She had a daughter called Amina who later succeeded her as Queen.”¹⁴² They ruled like their men counterpart. These women were also interested in common good.

The story was not different in ancient Yorubaland. According to Adesina Yusuf Rajo, “Yoruba women since ancient times have been central to Nigerian society, and their role during that period cut across politics, culture and economy.”¹⁴³ Rajo did not see Nigerian women only active in the economy as some authors have described Nigerian women. In addition to culture and economy, Nigerian women were also extraordinarily useful in politics or governance. In this line Rajo further opines, “In several Yoruba towns there were women officials headed by the *Iyalode*. They participated in the decision-making process and settled disputes in their wards and compounds. Thus, women assisted in the maintenance of law and order, peace and harmony, in traditional Yoruba society.”¹⁴⁴ It is pertinent to note that decision-making is a very crucial and important role in any society in which, according to Rajo, women participated in traditional Yoruba society. Omu and Makinwa corroborate Rajo thus, “The significant role played by prominent women such as Moremi of Ife, Emotan of Benin and Omu Okwel of Ossomari in the pre-colonial history of Nigeria cannot

¹⁴¹ Ola, B., *The Yoruba Women in politics*, ALF Publications, Abeokuta, 1993, p.89

¹⁴² Attoe, S.A.E, *Ibid* (Queen Amina was a great and powerful warrior. She built a high wall around Zaria in order to protect the city from invasion and extended the boundaries of her territory beyond Bauchi. The people of Kano and Katsina paid tributes to her. She turned Zaria into a very prominent commercial centre)

¹⁴³ Rajo, A.Y., *Women in Pre-colonial Yorubaland, West Africa*, Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, Ibadan, 1988, p.65

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*

be ignored.”¹⁴⁵ These women directly affected the socio-political development of the Nigerian society.

The Igbo women in the pre-colonial Nigeria were also as powerful as other women in other tribes. In most cases, their collective decision was more powerful, more sincere and more binding than the decision of today’s Nigerian Supreme Court. These women are called *umuada* or *umuokpu*,¹⁴⁶ Rose Acholonu observes, “Women as *Umuada* (married daughters) both in the traditional and contemporary Igbo society wield tremendous power as peace makers in their natal homes because of a variety of reasons. In the first place, being disinherited by the matrilineal system, the women are seen as being nonpartisan and immune to any possible corruption by the system.”¹⁴⁷ I think this is not always the case because they are not entirely removed from their kinsmen.

However, partisanship has to do with interest; there could still be some of them who could have an interest in a case. Pauline Aligwekwe observes, “Women are married and are fully integrated at all levels in the life of their husbands’ community; they still have a very important place in their own fathers’ villages.”¹⁴⁸ It is because they are given a tremendously prominent place that the women helped in the socio-political governance of both the people of their husbands’ villages and their villages of origin.¹⁴⁹ They also helped in making sure that the decisions of the elders were carried out.

¹⁴⁵ F.I.A Omu and P. K. Makinwa (ed) *Integrated Rural Development in Nigeria and Women’s Role* Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd 1988, (Moremi and Emotan were great amazons who displayed tremendous bravery and strength in the politics of Ife and Benin respectively, while Omu Okwei dominated the commercial scene of Ossomari in present day Delta State)

¹⁴⁶ The word *Umuada* is a collective name for all the women born in Igboland, but then all the women born in a particular village are then *umuada* of that village, therefore, each village has her own “umuada” The singular form of it is *nwada*. *Ada* means a female child but particularly the first female child. *Umuokpu* means the same as *umuada*, but *umuokpu* is more meaningful to our discussion here because it has a connotation of permanence. *okpu* means unadulterated and not to be ever adulterated. So the female child still has an unadulterated relationship with her father’s village even though she is married outside the village.

¹⁴⁷ Acholonu, R., *Igbo Women and the tradition of peace: The Dynamics of Change and continuity*” in *Conflicts Resolution and Peace Education in Africa*, Uwazie E Ernest (ed), Lexington Books, Maryland, 2003, P.94

¹⁴⁸ Aligwekwe, P., *ibid*, P.65 (The women go to their village of origin to participate in the important meetings that touched closely the peaceful and smooth running of the life of their village of origin. An important place was given to them)

¹⁴⁹ Cfr. Ischei, E., *Igbo Worlds*, London: Macmillan Education. Ltd 1977, “Elsewhere in Igboland where there were no Obi or Omu, women had some functions. Aged women attended village level meetings along with adult males. Women also participated in discussions at the lineage level *Umu-Nna*. Similarly, a group known as *Unu-Okpu* or *Umu-ada* made up of women born within a village *Umuada*, constituted part of its governing body. They ensured that women affairs ran smoothly. They disciplined non conformists and ensured that women supported decisions taken at the village assemblies. They were also peacemakers if there was war between their village and neighbouring villages. (One group of women, the *Umuada* as the Igbo people call them were particularly powerful and important, they were respected and could exercise informal authority aimed at the unity and continued existence.

The group of *umuada* was so powerful that they could even handle cases which sometimes were exceedingly difficult for men. Okonjo captured the picture well thus, “The rural Igbo women display so much confidence and commitment that they could effectively tackle issues which the male folk is reluctant to tackle.”¹⁵⁰ Sometimes the reluctance could be as a result of the nature of the case and those involved in the case, or even as a result of expecting to receive bribes. Sometimes, the men were partisan. The women succeeded because of either their non-partisanship or because of the privileges which they enjoyed among their fathers’ kindred.

Acholonu summarised it thus, “The women are not only believed and expected to be fair and objective in their dispensation of traditional justice, but they also tend to guard the rights and privileges that guarantee their status.”¹⁵¹ The women have a lot of challenges to maintain peace and order in their father’s village and in their husband’s village. According to Aligwekwe, “In some parts of Igboland, when an *nwaokpu* dies she is carried back to her father’s village to be buried among her ancestors so that she is not separated from her ancestors.”¹⁵² Acholonu also observes that, “The Igbo communal ethos always allows *umuada* to seek refuge in their homes, should their marriages prove unbearable or if they are dumped or abandoned by their husbands.”¹⁵³ This means, alive or dead, the woman belongs to her village of origin. Iyabo Olojede, brilliantly observes, “It cannot be denied that pre-colonial Nigeria is essentially patriarchal. Women nevertheless had access to political participation through a complex and sophisticated network of relationships, rights and control of resources.”¹⁵⁴ This means women actually participated in governance in the pre-colonial Nigeria.

Some have argued that the Nigerian women and by extension African women were confined only to the domestic affairs like looking after children, cooking for their husbands and the general maintenance of the household. For instance, Fagbemi Akintola, argues, “During the pre-colonial era, Nigerian women contributed to the sustenance of the kin groups. Pre-colonial Nigerian economy was basically at a subsistence level, and Nigerian women participated effectively in this economy.”¹⁵⁵ Akintola did not say whether the women also

¹⁵⁰ Okonjo, K. “The Role of Women in the Development of Culture in Nigeria” In Leavitt, R.R. (ed) *Women Cross – Culturally: Change and Challenge*, Paris: Mouton Publishers. 1975, P.192

¹⁵¹ Acholonu, R., *Ibid*

¹⁵² Aligwekwe, P. A. op. cit. P. 67

¹⁵³ Acholonu, R., *Ibid*

¹⁵⁴ Olojede, I., Being text of the 41st inaugural lecture of Lagos State University (LASU) on Tuesday, May 5, 2009 at the MBA Auditorium.

¹⁵⁵ Akintola, F., *Farm work in Nigeria*, This Day, 12 June 2005

played any role in the decisions that also affected their lives. However, it seems that Makinwa Adebusoye is indirectly supporting Akintola in these words, “The patriarchal, hierarchical and polygamous organisation of many African households tends to perpetuate the low status of women in African societies. In such households, most women cannot exert much, if any, control over their lives in the families within which they live.”¹⁵⁶ This can only be true in some aspects of the family life, but economically every woman contributes for the good of the family.

Attoes brilliantly captures the picture thus, “Under the pre-colonial customary laws in most Nigerian societies, women were considered free adults. Women had independent access to income. At the same time, certain limitations were imposed which subordinated them to male authority.”¹⁵⁷ If women were considered free adults that have independent access to income just like their male counterpart what makes them subordinate to male. Attoes should be able to distinguish between shared functions and authority. It is better to say that women work as hard as men but in different areas. They must do it so that they would not be a burden to the family. Ogunshye argues it better thus, “Education in pre-colonial times, enabled women to obtain a skill in order to earn a living. A woman who was without a craft or trade, or who was totally dependent on her husband, was not only rare, but was regarded with contempt.”¹⁵⁸ As lazy men were looked down in the society, inactive women were not spared. Both folks were actively involved in the affairs that affected them.

Furthermore, Van Allen brilliantly opines, “In the pre-colonial Nigeria, political power was diffuse and leadership was fluid and informal. Community decisions were made and disputes settled in variety of gatherings, village wide assemblies, women’s meetings, age grades, secret, and title societies.”¹⁵⁹ Therefore, women participated in the decision that affected them. Iyabo Olojede corroborates Allen thus, “It is clear that wives, daughters, as well as men, had equal access to political participation. Women participated fully in decision making at most

¹⁵⁶ Adebusoye, M., Sociocultural Factors Affecting Fertility In Sub-Sahara Africa, A Workshop On Prospect For Fertility Decline in High Fertility Countries, organized by population division, department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Secretariat New York, 9-11 July, 2001

¹⁵⁷ Attoes, S. A. E, Ibid (Since land was usually owned communally, whoever worked or tilled the land, whether male or female, derived the benefits)

¹⁵⁸ Ogunshye Yoruba Women, Cash Crop Production And The Colonial State, C.1920-19571, **Presented at** the conference on "Atlantic Crossings: Women's Voices, Women's Stories from the Caribbean and the Nigerian Hinterland", Dartmouth College, May 18-20, 2001

¹⁵⁹ Allen, V., “Aba Riot or the Igbo Women’s War? Ideology, Stratification and the Invisibility of Women. In. Hafkin, N.J and Bay, E.G. (eds), Women in Africa, California; Stanford University Press, 1988.

levels.”¹⁶⁰ In this context, Okonjo opines, “In many traditional Igbo societies, the power of women is reflected in the dual political system.”¹⁶¹ The women began in the family and gradually progressed to the large society in the bid to exercise their rights and authority.”¹⁶²

From the foregoing, one can see that within this period in review, the womenfolk participated actively in the socio-political activities of the society almost as equally as their male counterpart. They were rather not seen to be corrupt. In other words, they were not known for accepting bribes before or after deciding a case. The pre-colonial Nigerian women were accorded a high socio-political status and responsibility, which are still useful in today’s Nigerian society. This does not go without the difficult wind of corruption in today’s Nigerian society.

Nigerian women of the pre-colonial era were pillars of peaceful governance in such a way that with their presence in politics, the common welfare was fairly distributed. Some authors have argued that women also play a pivotal role in the socio-political structure in today’s Nigerian society. For instance, Rose Acholonu confirms, “The high social status and role accorded to women as effective peace instruments in the traditional Igbo society still exists in the contemporary times.”¹⁶³ Theresa Akumadu opines, “Women sometimes intervene to moderate the scale of human loss by protecting targets of violence. In conflicts within their communities, women collectively step in to end the violence.”¹⁶⁴ This happens in most parts of Igboland, but Akumadu gave Abiriba town of Abia State as an example. She informs us, “In Abiriba town, Eastern Nigeria, women succeeded in bringing two years of violent political crisis to an end in the 1990s by organising themselves and deserting the town en masse until the protagonists of the crisis agreed to cease hostilities.”¹⁶⁵ This is just one method used by the present-day women. Different towns have different methods.

¹⁶⁰ Olojede, I., *Ibid*

¹⁶¹ Okonjo, K. “The Dual Political System in Operation: Igbo Women and Community Politics in Mid-Western Nigeria” In Hafkin N.J. and Bay, E.G. (eds) *Women in Africa*. California: Stanford University Press, 1988 (Traditionally, structures of political participation equivalent or parallel to those for men existed for women whereby women’s voices were heard and their participation guaranteed from the family households to the councils in the larger society)

¹⁶² Cfr. Acholonu, R., *ibid.*, “The umuada being nonpartisan and forthright have great freedom to exercise their rights and authority within their immediate families or kindred level”

¹⁶³ *Ibid*

¹⁶⁴ Theresa Akumadu, Executive Director, International Alert, a Non Government Organisation, “National Consultative Meeting on Women, Peace and Security Resolution 1325, Issues and Instruments The Nigerian Context, A symposium by the International Alert, 28 -30 March 2002, Ancil Adrian-Paul (ed), September 2002, Akure.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*

Akumadu further opines, “In Nigerian communities that have a tradition of collective action, women engage in discreet peace advocacy by exerting pressure on the main actors in the intra-communal conflict. In such communities, organised peace demonstrations are an additional strategy.”¹⁶⁶ They could study the situation and know which weapon or method to use and when to do it in order to achieve their positive aim. It is the argument of Akumadu that, “Nigerian women have mobilised themselves and formed groups to oppose particular aspects of structural violence such as harmful traditional practices, the political marginalisation of women, work-related inequalities, human trafficking and early or forced marriage among others.”¹⁶⁷ These are the aims of all the women groups.

However, it must be observed that the women no longer succeed in achieving all the positive aims as the women of the pre-colonial Nigeria. This might be, firstly, as a result of the fact that most of them do not have the kind of western education, which has a written legal process of settling conflicts. Secondly, there has been a change in the socio-political structure of the Nigerian society. Thirdly, is the fact that unfortunately, corruption has taken an upper hand in today’s Nigeria.

Acholonu regrets that, “both the limits and quality of their power are being encroached upon by the ill wind of socio-political and economic changes. Bribery and corruption have tended to threaten the image and credibility of the women’s role as brokers and custodians of peace.”¹⁶⁸ This unfortunate development of bribery and corruption can be attributed to the present-day structure in Nigeria which now lacks checks and balances. These days, there are some cases of influences from some rich men directly or and indirectly. Most of their officers now receive bribes of all kinds in order to pervert justice.

However, as we accept that the ill wind of corruption has affected the traditional impact of women in their contributions to the growth of the society, we should also accept the fact that they are still relevant in the development of today’s Nigeria. Their contributions have contributed in no small degree to the sustainability of orderliness in the traditional Nigerian society. It can still be useful today if properly engaged.

2.1. 3. Bribery in the pre-colonial Nigeria

¹⁶⁶ Ibid

¹⁶⁷ Ibid

¹⁶⁸ Acholonu, R., Ibid

In this short section, I want to consider aspects of corruption in the pre-colonial Nigeria. Elechi Amadi and some Nigerian authors are of the view that the aspect of corruption commonly practised in pre-colonial Nigeria was bribery. Bribery as we saw earlier is the giving or receiving of something in order to influence the position of a person (public officer) for his or her personal interest. Elechi Amadi observes that, “In the pre-colonial Nigeria, the practice of bribery was common in matters like settlements of disputes.”¹⁶⁹ In this case, some people receive bribe in order to make a bad judgement.

According to Elechi Amadi, “bribery primarily involved gifts and presents like palm wine, yams, fowls, and goats. Sometimes, it could be the offer to render a service without payment.”¹⁷⁰ This form of bribery was easier in the tribes where the kings selected members of their council. Amadi concurs thus, “In the higher courts where the Obas presided, there were notable differences. In the first place, the Oba chose his advisers; secondly, the Oba was not obliged to try cases in the public. In these circumstances, *awuf* would appear to have had greater opportunity to flourish.”¹⁷¹ The greater opportunity was only in comparison with other tribes where there were no Obas or Emirs, for instance, in the case of the council of elders, but also in the manner in which the Oba’s system worked.

2.1.4. Summary

In the pre-colonial Nigerian society, there was an organised political system which could not clearly be separated from the religious belief of the people. Both of them were seen as one structure. This is why, in some cases, the religious leaders were at the same time the political leaders. However, the society was not totally free from political or what I call leadership corruption. Consequently, before colonial era in Nigeria, some leaders were found to be corrupt. The different Nigerian ethnic groups devised means appropriate to their culture to fight corruption. However, what is certain is that political corruption was fought against in all honesty using all the available tools mentioned above, namely; age grades, shrines and womenfolk etc. They worked effectively.

Part two: Colonial era in Nigeria.

In the preceding chapters, I discussed political corruption in the pre- and post – colonial eras. In this chapter, I will look into the same problem (political

¹⁶⁹ Amadi, E., *ibid*, p.78 (There was the tendency for one party to bribe some members of the council in order to pervert justice)

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, P.84

corruption) during the colonial era. To do this, I intend to navigate into the activities of the colonizers and their interactions or reactions with and to the Nigerian political system. This will help us to know why political corruption is still a very big social problem in Nigeria today.

Before looking at the corrupt activities of the colonizers in Nigeria, I deem it necessary to define the term colonialism. Formulating a definition of the term remains vital because its definition will help us to focus on the aspect of colonialism relevant to my work. It will also help me to make suggestions on how to curb political corruption in Nigeria.

2.2.1 Colonialism

Sheldon Gellar defined colonialism as “a system of political, economic and cultural domination forcibly imposed by a technologically advanced foreign minority on an indigenous majority.”¹⁷² Like any other definition, Sheldon’s definition is open to debate. I believe this definition is very broad; it includes all aspects of a people’s life being controlled by another people by imposition. John Middleton sees colonialism as the erection by a state of an apparatus of administrative control over people who are defined as distinct.”¹⁷³ I understand administrative control by Middleton to mean governance of a people. Middleton does not say whether this control is by force or by agreement. The Oxford Advanced Learners English Dictionary defines colonialism as, “The practice by which a powerful country controls another or other countries.”¹⁷⁴ For the Oxford Dictionary, the country that controls must be powerful. Like Middleton, the Dictionary does not say whether it is by imposition or not. I believe from the tune it is by force. One thing common in these definitions is the fact that, there is a foreign political system that controls another political system. Colonialism is therefore, a foreign political system forcefully imposed on indigenous people and maintained by the foreign power.

Still on the definition of colonialism, Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia says “Colonialism is the extension of a nation's sovereignty over territory beyond its borders by the establishment of either settler colonies or administrative dependencies in which indigenous populations are directly ruled.”¹⁷⁵ The rule is not only in relation to political governance but also in all aspects of the life of

¹⁷² Sheldon Gellar, “The Colonial Era“ in Africa Phyllis, Martin M., and O’Meara P Eds., Bloomington; Indiana University Press, 1995, P.140

¹⁷³ Middleton, J., Encyclopedia of Africa South of the Sahara, Vol. 1, 1997

¹⁷⁴ Wehmeir, S. (ed), Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English, Oxford University press, Oxford, 2005, pp293-294

¹⁷⁵ Wikipedia, the free Encyclopedia

the colonised. Wikipedia further argues, “Colonizers generally dominate the resources, labour and markets of the colonial territory and may also impose socio-cultural, religious and linguistic structures on the conquered population.”¹⁷⁶ It is arguable that Colonialism has to do with undue wielding of absolute power and forceful control of a distinct territory.

From the analysis of the above mentioned definitions, we this work can conveniently state that colonialism is a concept and practice and at the same time a political corruption of the indigenous political system by the foreign political system. The foreign system helps to distort the indigenous political system in order to impose and or implant itself. This will help us to appreciate colonialism in Nigeria and perhaps Africa.

2.2.2 Effects of colonialism in Nigeria.

The debate about the effects of colonialism on the colonized is a diverse and complicated one. Some enumerate the advantages of colonialism to include; some innovations like Medicare and some physical structures like roads, railways and bridges built by the colonial powers as proof of their contribution to Nigerian development. Others see only the disadvantages, yet others combine the advantages and the disadvantages. For instance, Sheldon Geller argues, “Although the imposition of colonial rule eventually led to the abolition of slavery, it also meant the end of African political, economic and cultural autonomy.”¹⁷⁷ Simeon Eboh is more elaborate on this when he says, “During the colonial era, there were innovations on the technological, medical and social levels. The colonial Government fought gallantly to remove inhuman behaviours like killing of twins and human sacrifice.”¹⁷⁸ Therefore, in speaking about colonialism in Nigerian context, one should not be myopic about it. Every story has two sides; to emphasize one side does not remove the existence of the other side. One side is as important as the other.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Ibid

¹⁷⁷ Sheldon Geller, Ibid, P.138

¹⁷⁸ Eboh O Simeon, Op.cit p175

¹⁷⁹ These claims have, however, been challenged by some scholars who also agree with the above assertions but insists that they are nothing to be compared to its disadvantages. Walter Rodney argues that “In colonial Africa, the exploitation of miners was without responsibility. In 1930 scurvy and other epidemics broke out in the Lupa gold fields of Tanganyika, many African workers died because of lack of proper care. In fact, for Rodney, colonialism was a one armed bandit” (Cf. Rodney, W., How Europe underdeveloped Africa, Harvard University Press, 1972, pp. 223-224.) It is also the opinion of George Ekwuru a Catholic priest and Philosopher that, “Primarily the aim of the school system in the colonial era in Nigeria was to give the individual the little information he needed in order to function in the colonial administrative industry” (Cf. Ekwuru, G., E., The Igbo World in Disarray, Totan Publishers Ltd, Owerri, 1999, p.47) This is also the opinion of some authors (Cfr, Isichei, E., A History of the Igbo people, p.185, To the missions, the school was an invaluable way to influence the young in their impressionable years, and the government needed African who were literate to work in their

Generally, it does seem that colonialism does not consider the political system of the colonised as a good political system. Some authors view colonialism as a distortion of the Nigerian socio-political culture. In this light, Gerhard Droesser observes, “Colonialism in Nigeria is viewed as a distortion of genuine socio-cultural system.”¹⁸⁰ Even though Droesser mentioned Nigeria, this distortion of socio-cultural system is synonymous with colonialism anywhere it operates. Although there may be some good and positive aspects of the colonialists’ activities, these good and positive aspects may not have been originally and directly intended for the colonised. It seems as if they came only to exploit and to destroy the socio-politico- economic-cultural system of a people, in their quest for more power and control.¹⁸¹

Consequently, if colonialism distorts a socio-politico-cultural system of a people, one can then argue that colonialism is a practice that is enshrouded and thrives solely in the acquisition and protection of self-interest. It can give nothing more than that. It creates and supports only institutions and structures that guarantee its interests and destroys whatever was, that did not protect its sole interest. Droesser describes colonialism’s *modus operandi* in these words, “Colonial politics contributed to the fall of social and moral values so that corruption is viewed by political opportunists as a normal way of life.”¹⁸² This is true especially in the Nigerian nation. Unfortunately, soon after colonialism in Nigeria, the Nigerian political leaders made corruption their way of life.

Having destroyed the already existing socio-politico- economic-cultural system of the people, the colonisers established a system that is totally alien to the people. In this line George Ekwuru argues, “Every colonial package, in whichever way it was designed and parcelled, was not meant for the good of the colonised, but for the exploitative interest of the colonizers.”¹⁸³ Ekwuru’s

post office, railways, police force etc. Neither the government nor the missions were interested in Education per se.) Ekwuru and Isichei and their likes should acknowledge the fact that the individuals got the information for themselves with which they worked and earned money for their upkeep

¹⁸⁰ Droesser, G., Preface to Okpe Nicholas’ work, *Social and cultural Identity of an African Society- The Igala People of Nigeria*, Iko Verlag, Frankfurt am main, 2006, back page.

¹⁸¹Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem the Secretary General of the Pan-African Movement argues, “The corrupt and despotic government in Nigeria and other African countries is as a result of colonial power structure. The colonialists have absolute power and absolute power corrupts absolutely” (Cf. Africans on Africa: Colonialism, BBC Interview by Bandele Biyi., BBC News, 5 July 2005.) Stephen Morrison, Director of the Africa Programme at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington corroborates Abdul-Raheem thus, “The colonial state was inherently authoritarian. It allowed an ability to skim and award contracts and the like - it promoted a corrupt form of government in many places” (Cf. Ibid) In this case one can say that the present political corrupt system in Nigeria has its root in colonial political system.

¹⁸² Ibid

¹⁸³ Ekwuru, G.,E., *The Igbo World in Disarray*, Totan Publishers Ltd, Owerri, 1999, p.47

opinion is contestable because even the colonised benefited, whether the colonisers intended it or not. However, the moral and political values of the colonised become valueless in the judgment of the colonizers. The political system of the colonialists becomes the only recognised value.

However, I believe that colonialism in Nigeria could not have succeeded to the extent it did without the willing cooperation of some corrupt natives. Emetulu throws more light here when he argues, “The white man came to loot and plunder; he found willing tools in collaborating ‘natives’, who, recognizing the colonialists’ superior military strength and criminal determination, found it convenient and exceedingly profitable to join him against their people.”¹⁸⁴ This is an aspect that is very interesting, the white man found willing tools in collaborating natives.

Therefore, if there were no corrupt natives ready to enrich themselves from the public office, perhaps the mission of the white man would almost have been in vain. It is also obvious that they met fierce resistance from majority of the natives. Emetulu captured the picture well in these words, “The white man bought those he could buy to his side, conquered those he couldn’t buy and went on to establish an administration that depended on subterfuge and behind-the-curtain maneuvers to succeed in the continued exploitation of the people he administered.”¹⁸⁵ In all, the white man used two methods to succeed in his colonial mission, namely; bribery and superior war technology.

2.2.3 Colonialism as neo- slavery

Talking about the effects of colonialism among Ndigbo of Nigeria for instance, Ekwuru George opines, “Compared with the devastating experience of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, which considerably depopulated the Igbo, colonialism represents, for the Igbos, a higher and more disastrous form of slavery – the ‘deculturation’ and ‘depersonalisation’ of a people within their own land.”¹⁸⁶ While slave trade had to do with a very minute group of people; a few buyers and sellers, who took the slaves to another land to suffer, colonialism had to do with the entire Igbo nation and all it stood for. This was also the experience of other tribes in the pre-colonial Nigeria.

The colonised were always forced to change their cultural and political world views, which were seen not only as inferior but also as totally bad. When one

¹⁸⁴ Emetulu, *ibid*

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p.11

looks at the effects of the forceful control of the colonialists over the colonised, one would definitely see a destruction of identity and world view of the colonised. Colonialism re-enslaved and distorted the socio-politico- cultural identity of Nigerians. It corrupted its politics, religion, social life and all forms of human interaction in the Nigerian society.

It is the opinion of some Nigerian authors like Eme Awa that colonialism brought about a clear cut division between the leaders and the led, which in turn solidified political corruption in the post-colonial Nigerian society. Eme Awa maintains that, “The British administrators saw themselves as members of Plato’s upper class and all Nigerians as the masses whose only role was to minister to the need of the former. By the time we attained independent status, the upper class in Nigeria – political, bureaucratic, intellectual and business elites – had come to see themselves as the successors of the British colonialists and therefore, came to see the workers and peasants as the masses whose role is primarily to cater for the needs of the elites in many ways.”¹⁸⁷ Unfortunately this situation created a sense of two parallel extremes, namely, the extreme rich on the one hand and the extreme poor on the other hand.

In effect, Awa opines, “two classes in the society run parallel lines: the bourgeois include, intellectuals, the business class, the bureaucrats, professionals and politicians on one side and the masses, the peasants, the oppressed, on the other side.”¹⁸⁸ Eboh Simeon corroborates Awa thus, “The bourgeois constitute themselves to the caste of the chosen. The masses and the peasants forced into marginal existence, develop false political consciousness and dwarfed personality. This political thinking indirectly legitimizes fraud and robbery with the pen.”¹⁸⁹ Suffice it to say that colonialism in Nigeria led to the conquest of various traditional political values so much so that stealing public fund by public officers without control became the order of the day. From the foregoing analysis, one can imagine how colonialism encouraged or discouraged corruption in Nigerian’s leadership.

2.2.4 Leadership Structure

It is the belief of some Nigerians that colonialism brought political corruption to Nigeria. They argue that the political institutions and tools used by colonialists like the Warrant Chief system was in itself a corrupt practice. George Ayittey

¹⁸⁷ Awa E. O., *Igbo Political Culture*, in “The Igbo Socio-political system, Ahiajioku Lectures series 1985, p.39

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p.40

¹⁸⁹ Eboh O Simeon, *Ibid*, P.177

opines, “Corruption was bred into our societies by the colonial system. The Warrant Chief did what the colonial masters wanted. The colonialists had peace, and the Warrant Chief grew richer. Be paid off, ignore your conscience, became the order of the day.”¹⁹⁰ In so far as Ayittey’s statement is true, it is also true that there was political corruption in Nigeria before colonialism. Though, colonialism gave more political power to the Emirs and the Warrant Chiefs who did what the colonialists wanted at the detriment of the natives.

2.2.4. 1 Warrant Chiefs.

As I said above, not all the ethnic groups in the pre-colonial Nigeria developed into centralised government. The north and the West had monarchical systems. The Emirs in the north and the Obas in the west were political leaders of their people and power was centred on them. When the colonialist came he found them very useful in his mission of colonialism. However, in the eastern part of the country there was no centralised power on anybody. The colonialist wanted also to penetrate the people through their leaders, but they met some difficulties because no one man has the last word in any matter concerning the entire clan. In this light, V.C. Uchendu, opines, “The absence of such authority figures among the Igbo as kings, who wielded powerful influence over a wide territory as seen among the Edo, Yoruba kingdoms and Hausa/Fulani emirates led the British to erroneously conclude that the Igbo people were living in an ordered anarchy.”¹⁹¹ To make a breakthrough, the colonialist carved out a leadership structure, known as the Warrant Chief.

Uzochukwu J. Njoku describes Warrant thus, “Warrant designates the recognition, which the colonial officers gave to whoever they appointed to oversee a particular locality. The authority of these chiefs lay in the warrants.”¹⁹² It is only recognition from above (colonialist) and not power from below (the people). Therefore, this power was not deep-seated in the socio-cultural life of the people.

Elizabeth Isichei, captured the picture better thus, “What the British did not realise, however, was that peoples such as the Igbo of Southeast Nigeria were unfamiliar with the idea of ‘chiefs’ or ‘kings’ - in their society decisions were made on the basis of general consensus, which was usually achieved by

¹⁹⁰ Ayittey George, Who is for a Leadership Code with Teeth? Africa A platform for analysing and contributing to the issues and solutions . USA,03 June, 2006

¹⁹¹ Uchendu, V.C., The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria, New Harcourt College Pub, York, 1965, P.46

¹⁹² Njoku U.J., Colonial Political Re-Engineering and the Genesis of Modern Corruption in African Public Service: The Issue of the Warrant Chiefs of Southern Nigeria as a case in Point, Nordic Journal of African Studies, 14(1): 2005, P.102

protracted debate.”¹⁹³ Njoku corroborates Isichei thus, “Unlike in the traditional society where decisions were reached in the presence of the community according to generally accepted customs, the Warrant Chiefs operated under a different system characterised by surreptitiousness. They were accountable only to the colonial officer and not to the people or community”¹⁹⁴ In this light Agu C.C observes, “The introduction of the warrant Chiefs signalled the loss of both independence and the ultra-democratic political system of the Igbo. It re-arranged the Igbo political terrain by introducing a new organisational structure.”¹⁹⁵ The creation of the warrant Chiefs was not only a way of forcing their governance on the people but also a way of taking away the people’s power from them. In this way, the socio-political identity of the people was destroyed.

This new order, “which the Warrant Chiefs signified, created a new socio-political climate in which uncontrollable deceit, extortions and various forms of corruption held sway.”¹⁹⁶ Even though, those Warrant Chiefs were not recognised by their people, the colonialist gave them enormous power over their people so that most Warrant Chiefs became almost dictators. Adiele Afigbo points out two consequences, “As a consequence, authority in the community began to move away from working for the well-being of the people to working for the interest of the colonial master – a culture, which has largely remained up till date in the African socio-politics. It also creates a culture of non-commitment to the common good, where public affairs mean nobody’s affairs.”¹⁹⁷ Since the Warrant Chiefs were accountable only to the colonisers and not to the people, they became interested only in what will please the colonisers in order to retain their positions of political leadership, which eventually became a position of exploitation of the people for private gain. This system of pleasing those who put one into power is still alive and active in today’s Nigerian politics and is popularly called political *godfatherism*.

¹⁹³ Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of the Igbo People*, London: The Macmillan Press, P 254, 1976

¹⁹⁴ Njoku, U. J, *ibid*, p103

¹⁹⁵ Agu, C.C, *Secularisation in Igboland: Socio-religious Change and its Challenges to the Church Among the Igbo*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 1989, p.247

¹⁹⁶ Njoku, U.J., *Ibid*, 104. There were many reasons why the Warrants Chiefs were uncontrollable in their actions. Njoku argues, “It appears that it was the shortage of colonial staff more than any other factor, which may have made the British to recourse to the system of Warrant Chiefs, as a way of administering their territories with the natives themselves, under the supervision of a colonial officer or few colonial officers” If it were as a result of shortage of manpower, they would have gone home to employ more hands from Britain. I believe, this is true because bringing more colonisers would cost more fortune. More to this is the fact that, the colonialists did not control the Warrant Chiefs perhaps for fear of losing them back to the people. On the other hand the people did not control them for two reasons, namely; the people never accepted their authority, and secondly, those who empowered them were more powerful in war technology. It is arguable that colonialism operated on the wrong political philosophy of ‘Might is Right’

¹⁹⁷ Afigbo., A. E, *The Warrant Chiefs Indirect rule in Southeastern Nigeria, 1891-1929*, Macmillan, press London, 1972, p.56

The era of Warrant Chiefs thus, degenerated into an era of unprecedented political corruption in the history of the natives. Public office began to acquire the image of amassing wealth at the disadvantage of the community. The same situation is being experienced in today's Nigeria.

2.2.4 .2 Bribery as a colonial administrative strategy

Many tribes in Nigeria like Ndigbo, vehemently resisted colonialism even without knowing what good it could bring. They saw it only as an external enemy. To subdue this resistance, the British government responded with superior aggression and in 1901 she conquered Igbo tribe but not with ease. Adiele Afigbo confirms it thus, "Bent on preserving their culture intact, the Igbos fought the British with every means at their disposal. Eventually the British won but not before they had learnt their lesson that to rule Igboland, they had to fight and conquer, cajole and bribe every autonomous village-group in turn."¹⁹⁸ In fact, the Igbos wanted to preserve everything about their culture not excluding their socio-political system.

However, British government won the war because she had a superior war technology and bribery. There are different types of bribery. The colonialists used gifts of power to bribe the people in order to conquer them. They bribed mostly the Emirs and the Warrant Chiefs to get what they wanted.

The colonialists made this type of bribery a very effective administrative tool, then the practice swiftly diffused into every other sector of the political and social spheres of the people's life but more noticeable among the Warrant Chiefs especially in the judicial system.

2.2.4.3. The judicial system: Court Clerk and Court Messengers

The colonialists established native courts to replace the normal traditional process. They placed the Warrant Chiefs in charge of the native courts. Elechi Amadi asserts, "The Warrant Chiefs set up to administer the courts were often upstarts, and many were notoriously corrupt."¹⁹⁹ In the courts, the Warrant Chief had no recourse to the gods; they only respected and obeyed the colonialists. That is to say that they continued their exploitative mission. However, they worked with court clerks and court messengers. It is the activities of this group of colonial workers that I want to look into in this small section.

¹⁹⁸ Afigbo, Adiele, *An Outline of Igbo History*, Rada Publishers Company, Owerri, 1986, P.15

¹⁹⁹ Amadi Elechi op. cit. P.87

Jude Njoku, observes, “Apart from the Warrant Chiefs, Court Clerks and Court Messengers and other officials of the colonial administration had the reputation of exploitation, abuses and extortions.”²⁰⁰ Isichei corroborates Njoku thus, “Like the Warrant Chiefs, the Court Clerks grew rich through corruption. Some of them own prestigious houses, and possess motor cars.”²⁰¹ In fact, this system was a system very alien to the pre-colonial Nigeria where people could express themselves freely in their own language. In most cases, this expression was done in the open so that not only the officials but also the commoners could hear the case. But the new court system was on the contrary.

Only the native court Clerks understood the white man’s language and the people’s language. They could interpret any situation to their advantage. “As Court Clerks under the European District Officers, they could alter records of cases. Since the District officer and the local people did not understand the languages of each other.”²⁰² Here, language barrier plays a very significant role.

Side by side with the Court Clerks are the Court Messengers whose duty was mainly to serve summons to people. This office was not only as prestigious as the office of the Court Clerk but also as exploitative and self-enriching. Many of the Court Messengers abused this office by using it to enrich themselves. It was for them a means of great exploitation and wealth amassing. Elizabeth Isichei eloquently summarized it thus, “The Court Messenger built up the same grim record of exploitation and corruption as the Court Clerk.”²⁰³ Umoren corroborates Isichei thus, “Native court messengers and clerks like the warrant chiefs, were generally corrupt and unpopular.”²⁰⁴ The exploitation was more when they were told to collect some fines from offenders, they would increase the official amount approved by the court to their own advantage.²⁰⁵

2.2.5 Summary

²⁰⁰ Njoku, U.J, Ibid, p. 105, (The Court Clerks had some advantages, which made them powerful and enabled them amass much wealth, at times in proportion or even in a greater degree in comparison to the Warrant Chiefs)

²⁰¹ Isichei, E, History of the Igbo, p. 147

²⁰² Njoku, U.J, Ibid, p.104 (the Court Clerks equally acted as interpreters during Court proceedings and often manipulated information in this process to the advantage of those who had already bribed them. The Court Clerks knew the depth of power at their disposal and they used it fully to their self-enrichment)

²⁰³ Isichei, E., ibid

²⁰⁴ Umoren, Ibid

²⁰⁵ Cfr. Achebe, C., Things Fall Apart, p.137 The District Commissioner said, “I have decided that you will pay a fine of two hundred bags of cowries. You will be released as soon as you agree to this and undertake to collect that fine from your people. As soon as the men were locked up, court messengers went into *Umuofia* to tell the people that their leaders would not be released unless they paid the sum of two hundred and fifty bags of cowries”.

Colonialism in Nigeria brought about the total change of the pre-colonial socio-politico-cultural system. Pita Ogaba Agbese brilliantly argues, “The imposition of British colonial rule on Nigeria fundamentally changed the nature of the indigenous governing system. In places where indigenous rulers were not deposed by the colonial rulers, their central role was transformed from serving their people to ensuring colonial exploitation.”²⁰⁶ The colonial exploitation was passed unto the appointed native rulers who enriched themselves with their offices. Bolanle Awe corroborates Agbese thus, “British authority was superimposed on the traditional system and instruction filtered down to the people from them through the traditional institutions of government i.e. the traditional rulers and chiefs.”²⁰⁷ The imposition marked the beginning of the decline of the traditional political system which was truly democratic with effective checks and balances.

The imposition was powerful. Awe further argues, “to all intents and purposes, the agents of colonial rule did the bidding of the colonial government to whom he was now primarily responsible. Thus colonial government tried to enhance his position by attributing to him more power than was traditionally his due, in order to make him its effective agent.”²⁰⁸ In this case, what was meant to be a system of government that protected traditional institutions therefore turned out to be one that had, in practice, little respect for Nigerian cultures as exemplified in its system of government.”²⁰⁹ It became very hard to protect the traditional socio-political system.²¹⁰ This new system also created a new attitude towards material wealth. It created new ways of corrupt practices and in most cases the corrupt people who happen to be in the position of leadership tend to be uncontrollably more corrupt than ever.

Furthermore, the traditional measures against political corruption were neglected as primitive and barbaric. Kennedy Emetulu, eloquently summarised it thus, “The corruption that began in the era of the Warrant Chiefs created a new situation of corrupt practices.”²¹¹ The leaders became sacred cows and

²⁰⁶ Agbese, P.O., Chiefs, Constitutions, and policies in Nigeria,” in *West African Review*, Issue 6, 2004, (With colonial rule, traditional rulers were no longer sovereign)

²⁰⁷ Awe, B., *Nation-Building and Cultural Identity: The Colonial Experience, in Nigeria since Independence: The first 25 years*, Volume VII, Culture, Peter Ekeh and Garba Ashwaju(eds), Heinemann Educational Books, Ibadan, 1989, p.19

²⁰⁸ Ibid

²⁰⁹ Ibid

²¹⁰ Heinecke, P., *Popular Fallacies in the Nigerian Social Sciences*, Okpella Asekome and co., Publishers, 1986, p.6, (Patrick Heinecke corroborates Agbese and Awe thus, “Under colonial rule, traditional rulers became the instrument for enforcing British colonial policies including such policies as collection of taxes and levies and procurement of able-bodied men for forced labor services

²¹¹ Emetulu, K., Op. cit

untouchables because they got their leadership positions not from the people but from the colonialists.²¹²

Even in the Northern part of Nigeria where the Emirs were masters and lords of their political system and religion, they were also bribed with power. For instance, Heinecke argues, “Alienated from their local power base, and deprived of checks and controls that had previously prevented abuse of office, the rulers were reduced to the status of petty officials of the colonial government.”²¹³ It is arguable, that it was through the abuse of office by the native rulers that the colonisers achieved a lot in their mission. Agbese argues, “It was partly through traditional rulers that the most obnoxious aspects of colonial repression were given expression.”²¹⁴ However, some of them who resisted the alien rule were deposed and the greedy ones accepted the offer and stayed to enrich themselves. Any person who tried to resist colonialism was either totally destroyed or reduced to powerless bulldog with superior weapons.

The situation of the colonial era was such that the led were helpless in the face of the powerful colonialists through the help of some corrupt natives. This is a sharp revise from the pre-colonial Nigeria where the leaders were accountable to the people who allowed them to be their representatives in the various ruling bodies. Agbese thus confirms, “Colonialism also removed or curtailed the people’s entrenched mechanisms for removing or disciplining errant rulers.”²¹⁵ Till today, the Nigerian leaders have been using the colonial system of bribing their way into office. When they get into office through bribery, they also try to retain their office through bribery.

Thus far, we have been able to establish that there was corruption in the colonial Nigeria as in the pre-colonial Nigeria. However, there was a very big difference between the two eras. The main difference is that, in the pre-colonial era corrupt practices were punished because, power came from the people. In the colonial era the reverse was the case. The exploitation of the people by the political

²¹² Cfr. Agbese, *Ibid.* (While colonialism indeed subordinated African rulers to the dictates of the colonial state, it fortified the rulers’ powers for dealing with their political opponents. For instance, prisons, courts and police institutions were all established for the local rulers. Some of them used their police to arrest their political opponents who were then tried in courts which were presided over by the traditional rulers. Many of such opponents ended up in jail on trumped up charges. In several instances, the repressive character of the colonial state was exemplified by the traditional rulers’ harsh treatment of their political opponents)

²¹³ Heinecke, P. *Op.cit.*, p.6

²¹⁴ Agbese, *Ibid.* (Indeed, part of the current opposition to traditional rulers stems from the deep resentment over the role of traditional rulers in helping to enforce repressive colonial policies)

²¹⁵ Agbese, *Ibid.* (Unlike the pre-colonial practice whereby rulers governed through customarily established rules and procedures, traditional rulers now ruled under letters of appointment spelling out their powers and functions as colonial underlings)

leaders was enormous. It was done with impunity and it continues till today in various forms.

Most importantly, it is the opinion of this work that colonialism did not bring political corruption to Nigeria. It is also the conviction of this work that colonialism is not all about exploitation. Colonialism has also to do with the positive development of the people. Many examples abound, which include, schools. Many Nigerians can now read and write and can favourably compete with people all over the world. Improved health care system, abolition of some cruel cultural practises and the overall technology that is seen in Nigeria today are all thanks to colonialism. Therefore, colonialism is not totally negative.

Nigeria became free from colonialism on the 1. October 1960. In the next chapter I will investigate into the socio-political structure of the post-colonial Nigerian society.

CHAPTER THREE: Post-colonial Nigerian society

In this section, I shall survey the socio-ethno-political differences between the pre-colonial and the post-colonial Nigerian society. In doing this, I hope to find out where the sources of corruption are to be found in the present socio-ethico-political structure of Nigerian society. This is what I call modern Nigeria.

The Nigerian independence of 1st October 1960, which ushered in the so-called modern democracy, saw Tafawa Balewa as the first Prime Minister of Nigeria. This administration was shortly blown out by the military. A brief survey of the military coups and counter coups in Nigeria shortly after independence will be a great point of interest in this section and the whole work, because they seem to have formed the hatching blocks of corruption in Nigerian society today.

3.1. Part one: The First Republic – 1960-1966

After Nigeria gained her political independence, it seemed that the political corruption witnessed during the colonial era was intensified by the new political leaders. Femi Adegbulu argues that, “the new Nigerian political elite hitherto unaccustomed to huge amounts of money, now became exposed to money, some of which they could not account for. By the time the country became independent, this new way of life had become a die-hard habit.”²¹⁶ I think this is all about the creation of a new socio-political structure that sees the power

²¹⁶ Adegbulu, F., Nigeria, 8Unholy wedlock with corruption: can death put them asunder?, in The Journal of International Social Research, volume 3, Issue 12, Summer 2010

holders as lords rather than servers. The huge amounts of money they were exposed to were not the problem. It is arguable that in the pre-colonial Nigerian socio-political structure, the political leaders could see huge amounts of public money but some were also accountable in handling these. It is more of avarice and greed that created unaccountability of the huge amounts of public money.

This financial recklessness of the new Nigerian political leaders reared its ugly head a year after independence. Arthur Nwankwo observes, “In 1962, Obafemi Awolowo the leader of a political party called Action Group (AG) was alleged to have used his position to divert public money into unauthorized projects.”²¹⁷ The Prime Minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewa appointed a commission of inquiry led by Justice G.B Coker to look into the allegation. Nwankwo further observes, “The commission indicted Awolowo and accused him of atrocious and criminal mismanagement and diversion of public funds into the coffers of Action Group.”²¹⁸ This shows also that corruption was still very much pronounced among the political leaders. The era of Tafawa Balewa in Nigeria was called the first Republic.

Adegbulu states that, the First Republic was notoriously famous for its ten percenting. “Allegations of obtaining ten percent of funds allocated to projects as bribes by government officials were flying everywhere. So widespread was this bad reputation that Nigeria became known as a country of ten percenters.”²¹⁹ This administration could not stop government functionaries from lining their pockets at the public’s expense. Analysing all the political leaderships Nigeria has ever had since after independence, Isong Isong Egbona summarised them as being corrupt.²²⁰ Suffice it to say that soon after independence, the Nigerian politicians became corrupt even at the expense of the promises they made to the electorate. They employed other corrupt means of making personal gains and fostering personal interest at the expense of their promises. Nnechi Ota declares: “The incidence of corruption in Nigeria was accentuated by the fact that the politicians employed various fraudulent means of amassing personal wealth despite the many promises they made to the

²¹⁷ Nwankwo, A., *The stolen Billion*, Fourth Dimension Publishers Ltd, Enugu, 2000, p.45

²¹⁸ Ibid

²¹⁹ Adegbulu, Ibid

²²⁰ Egbona, I.I., “The first republic of 1960-1966 led by Alhaji sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, military era of 1966-1979 of General Aguiyi Ironsi, General Yakubu Gowon, General Multala Mohamad and General Olusegun Obasanjo, the second republic of 1979-1983 led by Alhaji Shehu Aliyu Usman Shagari, and the military era of 1983-1999 of General Muhammadu Buhari, General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, Late General Sani Abacha and General Abdulsalami Abubakar not counting the interim government of Ernest Shonekan were centered on personal interest, selfishness, bloodbath and betrayals. 50 Years Of Democratic Waste, Daily Times, 1 October, 2010

electorate.”²²¹ In this way, they made promises to the electorate in order to win their votes only to get more interested in their private gains after they had won.

The leaders could apply all forms of bribery including intimidation in order to stay longer in power. Oye Ogunbadejo confirms it thus; “The large-scale corruption that started soon after independence was another factor which was at the root of the Nigerian tragedy. The politicians, while their tenure of office lasted, turned the government treasury into a large private gold mine. To remain in office, they used armed thugs to silence opposition and rigged elections with ingenious chicanery.”²²² In other words, politicians with corrupt leadership threw the hope of most Nigerians and the future of Nigeria after independence, into thin air by enriching only themselves and their political cohorts. The post-independence economy, rather than improve for the common good, improved for the good of the corrupt political class only. Chinua Achebe describes it better thus, “The real explosive potential of social injustice in Nigeria does not reside in the narrow jostling among the elite but in the gargantuan disparity of privilege they have created between their tiny class and the vast ordinary Nigerians.”²²³

The situation was like a re-colonisation, which became worse than the British colonialism. Thus, Nnechi Ota rightly clarifies: “The electorate found out later that it was in an excruciating bond with those who were expected to end colonial servitude. Instead of concentrating on the prime duties of governance, the civilian regimes of both the first and second Republics placed priority on satisfying the political leaders by broadening their accumulative bases through a number of dubious channels.”²²⁴ (Cfr. also Adebisi)²²⁵ These dubious channels were new corruptive ways of exploiting the people and the public fund. Corrupt system of government is even worse than colonialism.

Corruption rate was so high that it created a socio-political tension in the civilian government after independence. It started influencing even the ordinary citizens. The Weekly Star (Nigerian Newspaper) once confirmed this on its front page “Keeping an average Nigerian from being corrupt is like keeping a goat from

²²¹ Nnechi Ota, *Ibid*

²²² Oye Ogunbadejo, *Loc.cit*, p.87

²²³ Achebe, C. *The trouble with Nigeria*, P. 22.

²²⁴ Ota Nnechi, P. 17

²²⁵ B O Adebisi], “The Challenge of Independence. Major issue before and after” Takena N. T and Atanda J. A. (eds), in *Nigeria since independence: The first 25 years*, Ibadan, 1989, P.20 „The promise of Independence that made the struggle worth its cost in human and material terms, was that Nigerians would be liberated from further exploitation by Western capitalist nations once Independence flag was won. Unfortunately, after Independence, the quality of life of Nigerians deteriorated shamefully while our economy [remained] firmly in the grip of imperialism“.

eating yam.”²²⁶ Political corruption in this era was so rampant that the military had to intervene. According to Nowa Omoigui, “Nigeria gained political independence from imperial Great Britain in 1960. In 1966 its elected civilian regime was toppled in a coup d’état that ushered military rule into Nigeria's public affairs.”²²⁷ After independence, the elected Nigerian civilian leaders did not meet up with the expectations of the people. The situation seemed to have made the first military coup a welcomed development by most Nigerians.

3.1.2 Coups and counter coups

During the first Republic in Nigeria, the military noticed an uncontrollable corruption and corrupt practices in Nigeria. Nnechi Ejitu Ota noted that “When Nzeogwu and his group launched the first coup d’état, they identified corruption, favouritism and nepotism as the bane of the civilian government they over-threw.”²²⁸ Here we can notice the sharp shift of emphasis from the society as a nation to individuals and tribes. The military therefore, gave widespread corruption of all kinds as their reason for intervening. Olatunde Ojo captured the role corruption played in the collapse of the First Republic thus, “The coup was the product of weak civilian institutions, failure to solve widespread corruption and the maladministration and disrespect for the rule of law and sanctity of the human person.”²²⁹ As we noted above, the human person has a place of pride in the society, but according to Ojo, the military noticed disrespect for the sanctity of man in the society. Corruption was widespread in the Nigerian society.

Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu, a Nigerian soldier who announced the coup said, “Our enemies are the political profiteers, swindlers, the men in high and low places who seek bribes and demand ten percent, those that seek to keep the country divided permanently so that they can remain in office as ministers and VIPs of waste, the tribalists, the nepotists.”²³⁰ Those leaders who gave and took bribes and were more interested in their personal and tribal interests at the expense of their political offices were the real enemies of the society. It is then correct to say that the widespread corruption made the military takeover in Nigeria possible and perhaps initially laudable.

²²⁶ (This means that it will be difficult to get an average Nigerian who is not corrupt). The Weekly Star, The Nigerian and Corruption, 15 May, 1983

²²⁷ Omoigui Nowamagbe, Accounts of Military coups in Nigeria 1966-1990, , Vanguard Tuesday, July 27, 2004

²²⁸ Ota N. E., „Military Involvement in Nigerian Politics: Origin, causes And Consequences” in J.O.Onwuka(ed) The Military And the State in Nigeria, Jane-mos communications, Okigwe, 2000, P.16

²²⁹ Ojo O. J. B., “Military Rule, democracy and the post-military state”, in S.E.Ozovbaire(ed), Democratic Experiment in Nigeria: Interpretative Essays, Benin City: Omega Publishers Ltd, P.150

²³⁰ Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu, January 1966 Radio Coup Broadcast

For Nwaobi Godwin Chukwudum, “The aim of the coup was to establish a strong, unified and prosperous nation, free from corruption and internal strife.”²³¹ Chukwudum is of course talking about an ideal society. But did the military regime fulfil his dream of an ideal society?

3.1.2.1 Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi and fight against political corruption

Aguiyi Ironsi became the first military head of state with the support of his fellow coup plotters. After taking over from the civilian government, Aguiyi Ironsi set out to correct the social evil in which Nigerians found themselves. According to Adawo M. A, “Johnson Aguiyi Ironsi promulgated 33 Decrees within a period of four and half months with the hope of sanitizing the Nigerian society.”²³² But some scholars argue that he did not do the first things he should have done. For instance, Oye Ogunbadejo argues, “From the very start, the Ironsi regime failed to recognise the need to bargain and compromise with the growing forces of dissent in the North, and neglected to make use of the talents of other groups such as the radical politicians who had previously been excluded from power.”²³³ I can see two different things in Ogunbadejo’s view, namely; tribalism and secondly corrupt politicians. Who were those radical politicians? In my opinion, they were either those who helped to make the coup a success or those who matter in their various tribes. But how could he have included those politicians perceived to be corrupt, if he wanted to fight corruption?

Furthermore, some people accused Ironsi of being tribalistic. Some arguably said that Ironsi was influenced by his tribal inclination in his fight against political corruption. For instance, Oye Ogunbadejo argues, “There was no doubt that the series of ill-conceived, ill-motivated, and ill advised steps taken by Ironsi increased the doubts of many as to his sincerity in the fight against corruption.”²³⁴ Was this accusation founded, or was it only informed by the fact that from the very beginning Nigerians did not see themselves as one nation?

However, there are also some others who argued that Ironsi was not tribalistic. For instance, Oyibo E Odinamadu argues: “It was obvious that Aguiyi-Ironsi was a man who loved one Nigeria and was on a mission of appeal to the Emirs,

²³¹ Nwaobi, Godwin Chukwudum, *The Nigerian wars, Regional crises and Ethnic disturbances: Policy responses and democratic implications*,

²³² Adawo M. A. *The Military and the Military-self: Implications on political economy in Onwuka J.O(ed) The Military and the State in Nigeria*, Jane-mos Communications, Okigwe, 2000, P. 97

²³³ Oye Ogunbadejo, *loc cit*, p.93

²³⁴ *Ibid* (Oye gave instance with “The one-sided promotions in the armed forces, the air of arrogant superiority of which Ibos were widely accused by non-Ibos, the caucus of Ibo advisers with which Ironsi surrounded himself and the spate of Government decrees made him and his regime suspect)

for peace and calm. He was trying to explain his idea of Unitary Government, which was the way he conceived the policy for pulling the hearts and minds of Nigerians together after the coup d'état."²³⁵ If Ironsi could fight for the unity of the nation, it will be difficult to say that he is tribalistic although the spirit of tribalism was very much in the air.

After the accusation of tribalism, the urge to defend one's tribe in Nigeria became stronger especially among the military. In this light Onyekwere G Nwankwo opines, "Ethnicity assumed an added dimension; and the forces that it generated plunged the country, first to the secession of the East and; then, to a bitter civil war."²³⁶ The civil war was known all over the world as the Nigerian/Biafran war.

Nigeria is not corrupt simply because there are so many tribes. Corruption comes in when the Nigerian leaders begin to favour their tribes at the expense of the whole nation. Corruption is noticed when merit is not rewarded but mediocrity is rather enthroned. This has continued to make political corruption a huge success in today's Nigeria. Then came another coup.

3.1.2.2 Counter coup 1: Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon

From the foregoing, it does seem that the Ironsi regime did not solve the problems for which it took over the leadership from the civilians. There was still tribalism, nepotism and ipso facto corruption in high and low places. Adegbulu brilliantly summarised it thus, "The first military coup terminated the regime but could not remove corruption as some military officers between the first and the third military coup emerged millionaires."²³⁷ They did not emerge millionaires from honest and hard work but from corrupt practices. It was then no surprise that some months later, there was another coup which saw the death of Ironsi and brought Yakubu Gowon to the leadership of the nation.

On assumption of leadership, Yakubu Gowon made the following statement; "Putting all considerations to the test, political, economic as well as social, basis of unity is not there."²³⁸ Chuks Iloegbunam suggests that; "When Gowon made the above statement, he was going to announce the "Republic of Northern

²³⁵ Oyibo E Odinamadu, "Comments on General Gowon Yakubu's conversation with Pini Jason" in Vanguard Newspapers Nigeria, 10 Oct., Lagos, 2005

²³⁶ Nwankwo G O, Who will save Nigeria, Reflections on the political, Economic and social problems of Nigeria and the way forward, Matram West Africa Consultants, Badagry, Lagos Nigeria, 2000, p.54

²³⁷ Adegbulu, F.A., "Nigerian and the Challenge of Transparency: The role of Government and civil society", The Constitution: A Journal of Constitutional Development, Vol.1, No.4, June, 2001

²³⁸ Leutnant Colonel Yakubu Gowon, August 1, 1966

Nigeria", secession being the North's reaction to the toppling of the First Republic."²³⁹ If this is true, then the problem they came to solve was multiplied, namely: corruption and tribalism. Could it then be right to say that Ironsi was wrongly accused of tribalism which eventually led to his death in a coup organised by Gowon. Did Gowon come to fight political corruption or tribal corruption, ipso facto tribalism?

However, soon after Yakubu Gowon took over the leadership, war broke out which lasted till January 1970. Titilayo Fasilat Adejumobi argues "The Nigerian political climate from particularly the civil war period was characterized by lack of commitment to the virtues of honesty, equality, social justice, accountability, trust, peaceful co-existence amongst co-ethnics and respect for human rights."²⁴⁰ Femi Adegbulu corroborates Adejumobi thus, "Yakubu Gowon's era was characterized by wanton profligacy. He completely lost control of accountability and fiscal discipline and was unable to manage the increasing oil wealth with prudence or efficiency."²⁴¹ The problem of accountability came up again. This led to the misuse of public resources for private gains. "Corruption hit high heaven during Gowon era as his key ministers, governors and other functionaries were implicated and publicly ridiculed."²⁴² In other words, there was corruption not only among the leaders but also within the led²⁴³ This means that the fight against corruption was temporarily ignored. After the war Gowon launched the programme of rehabilitation, reconciliation and reconstruction, which has never succeeded till date, because there has always been a corrupt way of implementing these programmes.

3.1.2.3 Counter coup II: Murtala Mohammed, 1975

Even though Yakubu Gowon promised to return power to a democratically elected government in October 1976, Murtala Mohammed staged a bloodless coup on 29 July 1975 that ousted Gowon. Gowon did nothing significant against corruption. In his regime the corrupt practices flourished. Murtala Mohammed gave gross mismanagement of the human and natural resources contrary to the expectations of most Nigerians as his reason for taking over. He delivered the

²³⁹ Chuks Iloegbunam, "No Basis for unity" in Vanguard Newspapers, 26 Feb, 2006

²⁴⁰ Titilayo, F.A., A Literary Understanding of Nigeria's Political Crisis: A Construction of ills Past and Future" Development Policy Management Network Bulletin, Vol. VIII, N3, September 2001, pp.37-39

²⁴¹ Adegbulu, F.A., "Nigerian and the Challenge of Transparency: The role of Government and civil society", The Constitution: A Journal of Constitutional Development, Vol.1, No.4, June, 2001

²⁴² Ibid

²⁴³ Cfr.,Tajudeen, A.B, ibid, Gowon`s regime was characterised by corruption in high and low places, and barely a year after he came to power, Nigeria plunged itself into a three-year civil war which claimed over a million lives

following address, “Events of the past few years have indicated that despite our great human and material resources, the Government has not been able to fulfil the legitimate expectations of our people. After the civil war, the affairs of state, hitherto a collective responsibility became characterized by lack of consultation, indecision, indiscipline and even neglect”²⁴⁴ The government became insensitive to the affairs of the general good and became selfish since the government officers were only interested in their affairs.

Murtala Mohammed was interested in discipline and sacrifice. He said, “The task ahead of us calls for sacrifice and self-discipline at all levels of our society. The Government will not condone abuse of office.”²⁴⁵ Abuse of office is the real meaning of political corruption. He wanted to fight corruption to its minimal representation in Nigeria. To achieve this, he established “A corrupt practices investigation Bureau and special tribunal to check corruption. He insisted that public officers would forfeit assets beyond their legitimate earnings.”²⁴⁶ This means, assets they got through corrupt means or through abuse of their public offices. In fact, the administration announced a low profile policy for public officers. Most Nigerians welcomed the idea.

Unfortunately, Murtala Mohammed was killed by a group of army officers, in a coup that did not succeed. Many Nigerians still see him as the best leader Nigeria has ever produced. For instance, Chuba Okadigbo observes, “Murtala Mohammed is seen as the only dynamic leader of national government till date.”²⁴⁷ After his assassination, Olusegun Obasanjo became the Head of State. Obasanjo did not do much in the fight against corruption before handing over to a democratically elected civilian government led by Shehu Shagari in 1979.

3.1.2.4 Shehu Shagari (1979)

It was the same story of political corruption when Shehu Shagari took over the leadership. He was not known to have given the fight against corruption a marching degree and propensity it needed. Some authors are of the opinion that his regime recorded the highest number of appointed and elected public functionaries. Eso K., says, “The prominence of money bags who financed the elections of 1979 and lapse ethical judgments by ministers under Shagari

²⁴⁴ Muhammed, M., His inaugural speech in Lagos on July 1976

²⁴⁵ Ibid

²⁴⁶ Adawo M. A., Op. cit. P. 99

²⁴⁷ Okadigbo, C., Power And Leadership, Fourth Dimension Publishing Co. Ltd, Enugu, 1987, P. 50

heightened allegations of corruption.”²⁴⁸ The financiers of the 1979 elections were the so called godfathers. It did seem as if Shagari was confused with the corrupt situation he found himself as the new head of state. In his inaugural speech, he did not even mention the problem of corruption. He kept repeating, “The task ahead is enormous and it is a task for all of us. Our government is committed to building a united, stable and prosperous nation; I need your contribution, co-operation and support.”²⁴⁹ One may argue that the enormous task could include the fight against corruption.

However, when one hears or reads what he said about corruption in Nigeria, one doubts whether he was prepared to fight it all. For instance, “There was corruption in Nigeria but it has not yet reached alarming proportions.”²⁵⁰ If corruption has not reached an alarming proportion, then Audu Ogbe, Minister of Communication in his cabinet contradicted him when he said, “The Federal Government of Nigeria is losing N50 million every month as salaries to non-existent workers.”²⁵¹ Adegbulu argues, “Nigeria was losing this much to only one particular racket at a time when with N600 million Nigeria could build two more international airports or buy three refineries or pay the salaries of 10,000 workers on grade level 01 for forty years.”²⁵² Nigerians would have benefited more from the above list if the government were a people oriented government.

However, the Shagari administration was toppled by a military coup led by Major-General Muhammadu Buhari to the joy of many Nigerians.

3.1.2.5 Muhammadu Buhari / Tunde Idiagbon (1983)

On December 31 1983, Muhammadu Buhari overthrew the civilian government of Shehu Shagari. Tunde Idiagbon became his assistant. Idiagbon was so involved in checking corruption that most Nigerians thought that he was actually the military head of state. In justifying their actions, Abacha cited Nigeria's grave economic predicament, brought about by an inept and corrupt leadership. Here is part of the announcement: “You are all living witnesses to the grave economic predicament and uncertainty, which an inept and corrupt leadership imposed on our beloved nation for the past four years. Our economy has been

²⁴⁸ Eso K., “Nigeria and corruption: Till Death Do them part”, in Nigeria’s Bumpy Ride into the 21st Century, The House of Lords, Ibadan, 1999, (This included the Nigeria election of 1983 marked by accusations of electoral fraud, which led to a marked deterioration in the national finances under Shagari's watch)

²⁴⁹ Alhaji Shehu Shagari, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Nigeria must be great : Inaugural speech, Federal Ministry of Information, Lagos 1st Oct. 1979

²⁵⁰ Adegbulu, F. Ibid

²⁵¹ Ogbe, A., Fraud at P&T, Daily Times, Monday, 16 May 1983, cfr. National Concord of the same day

²⁵² Adegbulu, F, op. cit, Nigeria and the challenge of Transparency, the role of government and civil society

hopelessly mismanaged. We have become a debtor and a beggar nation.”²⁵³ On the same day, the Military president Muhammadu Buhari explained the above statement giving specific areas where Nigerians mostly felt corruption. Some of the areas included, “Squandermania, indiscipline, electoral frauds, misuse and abuse of office.”²⁵⁴ In other words, corruption in Nigeria was seen in every aspect of the society but mostly among public officers.

According to Buhari, there was Squandermania, that is, unnecessary spending of public money by the leaders without accountability. The leaders were accountable to themselves because they were people of the same circle of corrupt leaders. As Buhari said the rule of law was neglected so there was no discipline. This is why discipline played a very important role in his regime.

Furthermore, discipline, which was the watchword of this regime, pushed it into introducing the famous “War Against Indiscipline” [WAI]. On the day of the inauguration of this campaign or war, Idiagbon in a Radio broadcast made it clear that “Without discipline in the society at large, the country would degenerate into a jungle where respect for law and order is disregarded, traditional norms and principles are cast aside, criminal tendencies find fertile ground to flourish and a sense of insecurity of life and property haunts the citizens.”²⁵⁵ The regime pursued this aim vigorously. Therefore, in an attempt to bring discipline into the Nigerian society, it enacted many Decrees. Some of the Decrees include; 1. Queuing (March 20 1984) 2. Work Ethics (May 1, 1984), 3. Nationalism and Patriotism (August 21, 1984), 4. Anti-Corruption and Economic Sabotage (May 14, 1985), 5. Environmental Sanitation (July 29, 1985).²⁵⁶ The Buhari regime popularised the war against indiscipline and made every Nigerian conscious of the consequences of indiscipline. The low-income earners and most Nigerians liked this regime.

However, it made itself very unpopular with the high class Nigerians especially civilian and military politicians. Adawo M. A. submitted that, “Buhari-Idiagbon ruled Nigerians with high-handedness. Idiagbon’s rule and his application of rulership were brutal, barbaric and primitive.”²⁵⁷ The regime was very harsh on the people. However, I also admit that the Nigerian society at that time needed such people to fight against corruption and corrupt practices. For instance, most

²⁵³ Sani Abacha, Radio Announcement, Federal Radio Cooperation of Nigeria Lagos, 31 December 1983

²⁵⁴ Ibid

²⁵⁵ Idiagbon, T., Radio Announcement, Federal Radio Cooperation of Nigeria Lagos, 31 March 1984

²⁵⁶ Federal Ministry of Information, Abuja, 2006

²⁵⁷ Adawo M. A., Op. cit. P. 101

Nigerians accepted the phrase “one by one for line”²⁵⁸ which the war against indiscipline introduced. This did not create any room for bribery or any other form of corrupt practices in this regard, like nepotism or favouritism. This system reduced and almost replaced the system of “*Ì ma mmadu*”²⁵⁹

3.1.2.6 Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida (1985)

The Buhari/Idiagbon government was ousted from office barely one and half years in office. Despite all the good efforts of this regime to bring the Nigerian society to the right track, the announcer of the coup, Joshua Dogonyaro said among other things, “The past leadership lacked the capacity and the capability of leading this nation out of its economic and social predicaments.”²⁶⁰ This accusation was not founded because the leadership of Buhari though very harsh, understood the nation’s situation and acted to bring it to order. Unfortunately, Ibrahim B Babangida’s regime which replaced the Buhari regime became the most corrupt military regime Nigeria has ever had. Sunny Chris Okenwa observes, “The history of corruption in Nigeria can never be written or complete without a generous mention of the leader perceived widely to have institutionalised it and democratized it. That person is Ibrahim Babangida.”²⁶¹ In other words, there are some Nigerian political leaders who really made corruption in Nigeria a culture of their administration

Some authors argue that Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida made corruption which in his time was christened 'settlement' a way of life of his administration, a state policy used to maintain, control and remain in reckoning while virtues once held sacrosanct were stifled.”²⁶² He went further to say, “Ibrahim Babangida who came to power psychologically prepared for kleptocracy stole billions and corrupted almost the whole nation including royal fathers and men of integrity.”²⁶³ Okenwa is not alone in this line of thought.²⁶⁴ Hafsat Abiola-

²⁵⁸ ‘One by one for line’ is a system whereby one is expected to wait for one’s turn in the post office, the motor parks, in the offices, in the filling stations and so on. In fact, it was a system whereby everything was done orderly. One does not jump the line because he is this or he is that.

²⁵⁹ The expression *Ì ma mmadu* means knowing somebody in authority who can use his office to render to you an unmerited service. This is what some Germans call vitamin B.(B for Beziehung)

²⁶⁰ Dogonyaro, J., Radio Announcement, Federal Radio Cooperation of Nigeria Lagos, 27 August 1985

²⁶¹ Sunny Chris Okenwa, Corruption Nigerian: Much Ado?, Daily Times Newspapers Nigeria, April 13, 2007, P34

²⁶² Ibid

²⁶³ Ibid

²⁶⁴Cfr. Anthony A. Akinola, A History of Corruption, The Journal of Modern African Studies (1996), 34:542-543 Cambridge University Press, “The Babangida government (1985-93), it must be emphasised, elevated corruption to an instrument of state policy. General Babangida would seem to have believed that every Nigerian had a price tag on his head. This was described by General Obasanjo as a policy of “settling” opponents. The government enriched its actors and many friends, and General Babangida himself is not doing badly in the life of unexplainable luxury into which he was forced to retire. The culmination of corruption and robbery during the

Costello corroborates Okenwa when she says, “IBB’s eight years of administration was marred by betrayal of public interest.”²⁶⁵ If a leader is concerned with only his own interest, then he is corrupt.

Furthermore, Nuhu Ribadu, the Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), says that Ibrahim Babangida and also the late Sani Abacha and Abdulsalami Abubakar made corruption the guiding principle for running the affairs of the country.²⁶⁶ These were the last three military heads of state in Nigeria. It was Abdulsalami Abubakar who handed over the mantle of leadership to Olusegun Obasanjo as the civilian head of state.

3.1.3 Summary

Between 15 January 1966 and October 1979 Nigeria had a total of four military heads of state. From 31 December 1983 to 29 May 1999 the military piloted the affairs of the nation with coups and counter coups within the military. It is also interesting to note that between 31 December 1983 and 29 May 1999, there were four military heads of state, and three coups. The other interesting aspect is that each of them accused the other of corrupt practices and rather than improve the situation on assumption of office, some made it worse than they met it. Private interest became for them more important than the common interest.

We can see that the military has ruled Nigeria more than the civilians. This might be the reason why most Nigerians continue to blame the corrupt state of today’s Nigeria on the military. However, Segun O. Osoba is of the opinion that all subsequent regimes, military and civilian, have been pervaded by corruption. Aided and enhanced by oil revenues, this has created a deepening crisis of kleptocracy. It results in a combination of scandalous wealth among the ruling class with growing poverty, misery and degradation among the masses of Nigerians. Economy and social institutions have been driven into decay.²⁶⁷ I agree with Osoba. I must, however, add that whatever any Nigerian might think, the fact of the matter is that there is a bad socio-political structure set up and strengthened by both the military and the civilian elite. Achebe believes that

Babangida era was the case of the nation's windfall from oil during the Gulf crisis - a windfall estimated at about \$12 billion - which is yet to be accounted for”

²⁶⁵Hafsat Abiola-Costello, “Ibrahim B Babangida betrayed Nigerians” Vanguard, 23 July 1998, Lagos

²⁶⁶ Mallam Nuhu Ribadu spoke at the 3rd Media Trust Annual Dialogue on the theme “Corruption: The Trouble with Nigeria”, at the Ladi Kwali Hall of the Abuja Sheraton Hotel and Towers. Thursday 19 January 2006, (The trouble with Nigeria is that we have allowed its influence to rule every aspect of our national life, to the extent that it has in fact become the way of life for most of our countrymen)

²⁶⁷ Osoba, O.S., Corruption in Nigeria: A Historical Perspective, this Essay is based on a paper presented to the August 1995 Conference on Ethics in Government, organised by the Civil Liberties Organisation, at Ijebu-Ode, Nigeria.

such bad structure is the reason why Nigerians today are corrupt. “Nigerians are corrupt because the system under which they live today makes corruption easy and profitable; they will cease to be corrupt when corruption is made difficult and inconvenient.”²⁶⁸ It must be done by those who have the power to do it.

At any rate, this section of our work found out that the socio-ethico-political structure declined to the extent that corruption became the order of the day. In all the military regimes, those in the position of leadership took interest in their private gains and were protecting their tribes and not the nation as a whole. It is then important to look at the present day Nigeria with democratic leadership.

Part Two: Nigeria back to democracy-1999-till

After years of punitive, brutal, corrupt and oppressive military dictatorship the word Nigeria and all associated with it became an expression of significant concern not only among the sincere Nigerians but also in the international circle. According to Max Siollun “The U.S., U.N., Britain and Amnesty International all frequently issued damning condemnations of the misrule and corruption in Nigeria, its gross human rights abuses and the engagement of many of its citizens in international drug trafficking.”²⁶⁹ The enormity of the problem of corruption in Nigeria, as compared to most of the other African countries or even other countries of the world, is a heartbreaking truth that can hardly be denied by any average Nigerian.

Olusegun Obasanjo, the Nigerian president from 1999-2007 observes, “One of the greatest tragedies of military rule in recent times is that corruption was allowed to grow unchallenged, and unchecked. The rules and regulations for doing official business were deliberately ignored to facilitate corrupt practices.”²⁷⁰ In this case, governance became unfortunately, the rule of no direction. In this light Obasanjo opines, “In the last decade, as military rule lost its initial social attraction, it became increasingly tyrannical, wantonly violating human rights, and degenerating into a harrowing one-man rule.”²⁷¹ One man rule means selfish rule. The common interest is relegated to the dustbin. Therefore, most Nigerians were happy that in 1999, democracy was re-introduced to the Nigerian political arena under the leadership of Olusegun Obasanjo.

²⁶⁸ Achebe, C., *The Trouble with Nigeria*, p.38

²⁶⁹ Siollun M., *In Defense of Obasanjo*, *The Punch Newspaper*, Lagos, September 9, 2007, p.23

²⁷⁰ Olusegun Obasanjo, *Inaugural speech*, 29 May 1999, Abuja.

²⁷¹ Obasanjo, O, *Speech at Harvard*, Wednesday, November 3, 1999

The excitement which heralded Nigeria's transition to democracy was founded on the hope that, constitutional democracy would constrain dishonesty and instill probity in government. This will push corruption and corrupt practices into the dustbin of corruption history in Nigeria. Onyekwere G Nwankwo, representing the opinion of many Nigerians intelligently summarized it thus, "Because of the recent wind of democracy which has been blowing very strongly across the globe, many of the political elite in Nigeria have realized that politics is so complex that most of its problems can hardly be solved by coercion."²⁷² Nigerians no longer want the military wind which blows not only the negative wind of corruption but also other social accessories associated with it, like unemployment, armed robbery, assassination and kidnapping.

3.2.1. Olusegun Obasanjo's administration

Olusegun Obasanjo seems to have understood the plight, hopes and expectations of the Nigerian people in the following words, "The entire Nigerian scene is very bleak indeed. I know what great things you expect of me at this New Dawn."²⁷³ This bleak was so glaring that even some of those who made it so expected a positive change. The president acknowledges the enormity of the social decline and solicited the cooperation of Nigerians in these words, "I will give the forthright, purposeful, committed, honest and transparent leadership that the situation demands. I am determined with your full cooperation, to make significant changes within a year of my administration."²⁷⁴ The effort of one and all was therefore, needed by the president who saw the situation as affecting all.

However, he was specific on his interest in curbing corruption in Nigeria which according to him is the bane of today's Nigerian society. He says, "Corruption, the greatest single bane of our society today, will be tackled head-on at all levels. No society can achieve anything near its full potential, if it allows corruption to become the full-blown cancer it has become in Nigeria."²⁷⁵ Obasanjo acknowledges the fact that, he alone has the genuine means of fighting corruption. He knows also that, those who benefit tremendously from the corrupt situation will make efforts to maintain it. To this end Obasanjo says, "The beneficiaries of corruption in all forms will fight back with all the foul means at their disposal. There will be no sacred cows."²⁷⁶ For Obasanjo, those who benefit from corruption have foul means but he alone has the correct means.

²⁷² Nwankwo G O, Ibid p.67

²⁷³ Olusegun Obasanjo, Inaugural speech, Abuja, 29 May 1999

²⁷⁴ Ibid

²⁷⁵ Ibid

²⁷⁶ Ibid

Therefore, Obasanjo made the fight against corruption one of his administration's top priorities.²⁷⁷ With this statement Obasanjo is convinced that treating the public workers well will help to stop corruption, because the ill-treatment of the public workers by the government is one of the causes of corruption in Nigeria.

Most Nigerians were exceedingly appreciative of the change from dictatorship to democracy. Matthew A. Izibili and Fidelis Aiya²⁷⁸ representing the opinion of most Nigerians captured the picture well in these words, "The character of the transition to what has been known as Nigeria's 'nascent democracy' did create considerable appreciation among various segments of the Nigerian polity."²⁷⁹ In fact, most Nigerians saw a saviour in Obasanjo.

After the inaugural speech of Olusegun Obasanjo, the people went home with the hope that most of the promises made by the president would be fulfilled. However, some Nigerians also had their fears, which bordered on whether Obasanjo would succeed in doing all that he said. This is because the military rule has diverted the attention of many Nigerian people from democratic rule. Siollum M expressed this fear of some people thus, "Decades of military coups and misrule ensured that Obasanjo inherited the most thoroughly politicized army in the world. Some elements of the army were viewed as little more than armed political parties that could threaten the existence of any civilian government."²⁸⁰ Most Nigerians believe that this fear was founded since there have been coups and counter coups in Nigeria before this time. Siollum concludes, "The fear and threat of a military coup was very real, as since 1966, the military had tolerated civilian rule for only 4 years, and busied themselves with Machiavellian coups and counter-coups."²⁸¹ This made the political situation very fragile.²⁸² Siollum and Oko disagree on the number of years, but they have the same fear that the new democracy would suffer the same fate.

²⁷⁷ Ibid Obasanjo, "The rampant corruption in the public service and the cynical contempt for integrity that pervades every level of the bureaucracy will be stamped out. The public officer must be encouraged to believe once again that integrity pays. His self-respect must be restored and his work must be fairly rewarded through better pay and benefits, both while in service and in retirement

²⁷⁸ Matthew A. Izibili and Fidelis Aiya are both lecturers at the Department of Philosophy, and Department of Public Administration respectively, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State Nigeria.

²⁷⁹ Izibili M A. and Aiya F, *Deregulation and Corruption in Nigeria: An Ethical Response*, in the *The Observer*, Benin City, 2007, p. 229-234

²⁸⁰ Siollum M, loc cit.

²⁸¹ Ibid

²⁸² Cfr., Oko Okechukwu, Durable democratic order in Nigeria has proved to be very elusive. Nigeria's first post-independence experiment with constitutional democracy lasted only six years (1960-1966) before the military killed the prime minister and his top ministers in a bloody coup. The second attempt in 1979 lasted only four years (1979-1983) and was terminated by another military coup, four months into President Shagari's second

On the other hand, there is the fear that politicians are more prone to corruption than the military. We saw this above, when in 1966 the military gave corruption and corrupt practices as their reason for taking over power from the civilian. If this is true, one wonders why the Nigerian people experienced the height of corruption of all forms during the military rule in Nigeria, especially between 1985 and 1999. In this light, Nuhu Ribadu²⁸³ says, "The military regimes legitimized corruption and in effect did not offer much to the Nigerian nation. IBB²⁸⁴ is the mastermind of institutionalized corruption."²⁸⁵ This makes it possible for the Nigerian people to be afraid that the military could strike again and come back to power.

Furthermore, Ribadu arguably listed all the social ills and effects of corruption Nigerians suffered under the military regimes thus, "The decline we noticed in the education, aviation, transport, health care sectors, and the thievery in the ports are a direct reflection of the poverty of leadership of that era."²⁸⁶ One might argue that, in a situation, in which corruption has become institutionalized or legitimized for more than four decades, it may also take nothing less than decades to make a dent on the solid wall of corruption in the Nigerian political society. However, emphasis here should be on leadership and not on the politicians or military because in each of them, the society abhors corruption. In this line, Chukwudifu Oputa observed, "The problem of governance in Nigeria is that those who claim to represent the people do not have the mandate of the people. Hooligans rig election to win electoral posts, soldiers use force of arms to snatch power, but once there, both civilian and soldiers represent themselves not the people."²⁸⁷ This is a very big social problem in Nigeria.

Therefore, any limited and narrow conception of corruption and corrupt practices as *ejiri mara*²⁸⁸ of only the military or civilians is likely to expose one to the danger of presuming that, corruption is in the force and not in the

term. The third attempt, initiated by General Babangida in 1989, was disrupted when Babangida annulled the elections soon after it became obvious that Moshod Abiola was to be elected president. The fourth attempt, initiated by General Abacha, was mired in schemes aimed at installing Abacha as the civilian president. Although elections were supposed to be open to the public, all the political parties fielded Abacha as their presidential candidate. General Abacha's sudden and mysterious death in May 1998 enabled General Abubakar, his Successor, to instigate a process that culminated in the election of President Obasanjo in 1999

²⁸³ Nuhu Ribadu is the Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), a foremost anti graft agency in Nigeria established by the Obasanjo administration to fight corruption in Nigeria.

²⁸⁴ IBB means Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida. He was once the military president of Nigeria.

²⁸⁵ Mallam Nuhu Ribadu spoke at the 3rd Media Trust Annual Dialogue on the theme "Corruption: The Trouble With Nigeria, Abuja, 15 March 2005

²⁸⁶ Ibid

²⁸⁷ Oputa Chukwudifu, Interview in „Wisdom Statelite Magazine”, VOL. IV, Assumpta Press Owerri, 1994, p.16

²⁸⁸ *ejiri mara* means what is peculiar or even natural to somebody or something or the characteristics of something.

leadership. On the other hand, a broader conception of it will remind one that, even though dictatorship is not government of representation, its leadership can as well be corrupt as the leadership of democracy, which is government of representation. In this light Simeon O Eboh submits, "A common denominator of undemocratic rule in Africa - civilian or military rule - has been the vast scale of corruption. Apart from the great loss and wastage of national resources, which could have been deployed in enhancing the productive capacities of the national economies, the overt corruption offends the deep moral sensibilities and values of our traditional heritage."²⁸⁹ So, it does not matter which form of leadership is piloting the affairs of a country.

Subsequently, it is always a corrupt practice to cheat on the community with the help of a public position. Eboh further argues, "To steal from the community has always been considered a very serious offence. Sadly, this code of behaviour, failed to be transmitted into the values of our modern society, with the result that some of those who commit crimes against the modern state, can even return as heroes to their traditional communities."²⁹⁰ It is then arguable that, corruption is not in the Nigerian system simply because it is a military or civilian rule but more so because the leadership; military or civilian is corrupt.

Nuhu Ribadu, argues that for Nigeria to pull back from the brinks of corruption, "it must respect the rule of law, adopt a zero tolerance position for corruption and strictly enforce sanctions against corruption. Nigerians must elect selfless, honest and courageous leadership and build and strengthen institutions for fighting corruption."²⁹¹ In this regard, Attahiru Jega, is of the opinion that "We have corruption as a problem because we have poverty of leadership who has institutionalized corruption in the country."²⁹² From his argument, we can see that Jega blames it neither on the military nor on the civilian but on the leadership. Bad political leadership made the system so corrupt that to be honest became a social vice. The question became, how much can I get from the government as a minister, or other government functionary, and not how can I serve my people better than before.

Did Olusegun Obasanjo actually fight against corruption as he promised? Could there still be corruption and corrupt practices noticeable during his administration? Where could one immediately notice corruption and corrupt

²⁸⁹ Ebo, S. O, Human rights and Democratisation in Africa,-the role of Christians, p.105

²⁹⁰ Ibid

²⁹¹ Ibid

²⁹² Attahiru Jega, spoke at the 3rd Media Trust Annual Dialogue on the theme "Corruption: The Trouble With Nigeria, Abuja, 15 March 2005

practices in the Nigerian polity today? To answer the above questions, I shall look into the activities of the three arms of government in Nigeria.

3.2.2. The three arms of government

There are three arms of government in Nigeria, namely; Legislative, Executive and Judiciary. They all work separately but for a collective goal, namely; the common good of the people. The three arms are found at the Federal, State and local government levels. At the national level, the legislature is called National Assembly, which is divided into two, namely; the Senate comprising 109 members and the House of Representatives comprising 360 members drawn from all the states of the federation.²⁹³

3.2.2. 1. Legislature

As the name implies, legislative arm of government is in charge of making laws for the people. All the members are elected for a four-year term, which is renewable for as many times as they can get the mandates of their people. The Nigerian constitution spelt out the functions of the legislature thus, “The legislative powers of the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be vested in a National Assembly for the Federation, which shall consist of a Senate and a House of Representatives. The National Assembly shall have power to make laws for peace, order and good governance of the Nation.”²⁹⁴ It goes on to state that, “they have the primary function of making laws for the betterment of the society.”²⁹⁵ The function of the legislative arm in all of the three levels of government in Nigerian is the same, namely to make laws for peace and order in the society.

There are thirty-six [36] states and seven hundred and seventy-four [774] local government areas in Nigeria. To be elected to represent one’s people in any place is a very big honour, but more so to be elected to represent one’s people in a law-making body that decides when, how and what should be done in the society, is the highest trust one can get from one’s people. Anybody given this honour and trust should therefore, reciprocate it not only by making good laws for the people, but also by seeing to it that the good laws are enforced for the good of the people. The members of the legislative arm of government should be women and men of integrity, probity, accountability, discipline and honesty.

²⁹³ The Nigerian Ministry of Information, Abuja

²⁹⁴ The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Chapter two, Part II, Art. 4, paragraphs 1 and 2

²⁹⁵ Ibid, paragraphs 6 and 7.(“The legislative powers of a State of the Federation shall be vested in the House of Assembly of the State. The House of Assembly of a State shall have power to make laws for the peace, order and good governance of the State)

The Nigerian constitution has spelt out the universal *modus operandi* and purpose of law-making acceptable in any country of the world. According to John Idumange, “lawmakers legislate to protect the interests of the people and engage in regular and periodic consultation with the people they represent. Looting, pillage and embezzlement of public funds are never contemplated in the rules of legislation. Negotiations and bargaining are known norms of debate predicated on rational and logical arguments”²⁹⁶ Unfortunately, it seems that, the opposite is the case in Nigeria. John Idumange in another article says, “The Nigerian National Assembly is a direct antithesis of universal standards and conventional legislature. The Legislature has lost its core values of representation, honesty, transparency and intellectualism.”²⁹⁷ He believes strongly that Nigerian lawmakers since 1999 have been a bunch of fortune seekers at the expense of their function as lawmakers, and opines further that, “Since democracy resurfaced in 1999, the National Assembly has been transformed into a hallowed chamber of unending scandals and chimney emitting toxic vapours of corruption.”²⁹⁸ Every society is governed by laws, and law making is a higher calling and not for business as usual individuals and economic opportunists. It is a business for serious minded individuals for the people they represent.

In Nigeria today, it seems as if political corruption has usurped the outstanding job of making laws for peace, order and good governance. Corruption has given way for chaos, anarchy, disorder and incompetent governance in Nigeria. Samuel Uwhejevwe-Togbolo describes this situation well in these words, “Some members of the National assembly have neglected their primary function; they are ready to amass wealth for their children unborn at the expense of their function as lawmakers.”²⁹⁹ This quest for money at the expense of their primary public function is the problem in the Nigerian legislature.

This was evidenced in 2000 when the then senate president took a lot of things for granted and reportedly abused his office as the chief lawmaker of the nation. The senate president was accused among other things of “spending \$225,000 on garden, furniture and having an excessive number of official vehicles - 32 in total. The deputy senate president resigned after being accused of gross abuse of

²⁹⁶ Idumange, J. Toxic Corruption in National Assembly, National Daily Newspaper, June 29, 2010, p.35

²⁹⁷ Idumange J, The National Assembly as National Embarrassment, Vanguard Newspapers, June 29, 2010, p.35
The behaviour of members of the National Assembly suggests that Nigerian lawmakers are yet to imbibe civilized values in the art and science of lawmaking

²⁹⁸ Ibid

²⁹⁹ Samuel Uwhejevwe-Togbolo, Corruption And The Nigeria Phenomenon, in The Punch Newspaper Nigeria, Lagos, Tuesday, March 29, 2005

public office.”³⁰⁰ (cfr also).³⁰¹ The social problem is not the money spent on garden, or the number of cars owned by the senate president, but on how he got the money, and how it has negatively affected the society. The money was meant for public use, but they turned it into private use.

Furthermore, most of the senior officers of the senate also were accused of one corrupt practice or the other. This was widely reported in the Media. Different people reacted to this differently. Oyewole Paul reacted thus, “Instead of deliberating on how to move the country forward, all those lawmakers deliberate on is how to enrich their pockets.”³⁰² As public servants, their job is to make laws that will be of immense help to the development of the society which will in turn benefit them and not for their private interest.

In addition, most Nigerians are of the opinion that not only some senators but also some House of Representatives members are corrupt. In fact, one of the Representatives, Haruna Yerima³⁰³ made it clear, when he says, “Even the corrupt ones among us would tell you that there is corruption in this National Assembly.”³⁰⁴ That means corruption is as open in the house as on the streets of Nigeria. In any case, the acknowledgement of the existence of corruption in the house does not mean the acceptance of members of the house being corrupt. Yerima further argues, “Ministers and heads of parastatals are often asked by some honourable members to bring money so that their budgets can be passed.”³⁰⁵ Haruna Yerima spoke as an insider. In this case, the ministers bribe the honourable members in order to get their budget proposals approved. It is also from this budget money that the ministers bribe the honourable members. One wonders why they should give and take bribe in order to do the job for

³⁰⁰ Old wine in new bottles? Vanguard Newspapers Nigeria, Lagos Tuesday, 15 August 2000

³⁰¹ Idumange John, Looking back in time, in 1999, the first symptom of legislative high handedness at the National Assembly was manifested in the demand for the outrageous “Furniture Allowance” when legislators boasted that they were not in Abuja to spread poverty. The legislators displayed affluence without regard to the prevailing poverty in the land. The furniture allowance debate was their most profound achievement in their first 100 days in the office. The same group of self-aggrandizing legislators supported the tenure elongation project of the Obasanjo administration and unashamedly sought re-election to the National Assembly. This dishonourable tendency permeated the hallowed chambers.

³⁰² Oyewole Paul’s reaction to the Senate President’s [Chuba Okadigbo] corrupt practices and subsequent impeachment as the Nigerian Senate president in 2000, BBC World Service, News and Information for Africa, Tuesday, 15 August 2000

³⁰³ Dr. Haruna Yerima is a Dr. of Philosophy in political science and a lecturer. He is a member of the House of Representatives representing Biu/Kwaya/Bayo/Shani Federal constituency in Borno state. He always spoke out against corruption especially among the members. His colleagues passed an order suspending him for accusing them of receiving a total of N48.5 million worth of telephone recharge cards as bribe from one of the providers of the Global System of Mobile (GSM) so that they could pass a bill that could favour their business.

³⁰⁴ Yerima, H., ‘Corruption is here with us in the National Assembly’, The Gaurdian Newspapers, Lagos, 12 January 2004

³⁰⁵ Ibid

which they are elected and regularly and promptly paid. This has made it difficult to fight corruption within the Nigerian political class.

Furthermore, the private sectors also bribe the honourable members so that they can make laws that will favour their private businesses at the expense of others in the society. According to Haruna Yerima, “MTN³⁰⁶ bribes us every month. It brings cards worth N7, 500 monthly to each member.”³⁰⁷ This re-charge card bribery goes a long way to proving that bribery does not only involve money. It can also involve any other thing like the card. According to J. A. Gardiner and T.R. Lyman, Political corruption involves the exchange of money or material benefits in return for preferential treatment by a public agent.”³⁰⁸ In this case, the lawmakers are the public agents who accept bribes in order to make laws that will favour MTN as a company. Leff brilliantly calls it “An extra-legal institution used by individuals or groups in order to influence democratic decisions. It is a hidden form of participation in the decisional process.”³⁰⁹ This is a pure case of outside influence on the lawmakers to make preferred laws.

Subsequently, one can correctly argue that the lawmakers have refused to discuss and make appropriate laws for peace and order in the society. They have rather decided to enrich themselves at the expense of making laws. There seems to be no focus and no seriousness in the business of making laws. This might have made Yerima to argue thus, “Most of us come here to make money. Most of our debates are beer parlour debates. There is no research. We argue like ordinary people on the streets. We are devoid of real patriotism to come and serve. We are just being hypocritical.”³¹⁰ Yerima’s testimony is from his personal observation and experience as a participant observer. The job is to serve the people and be paid by the people and not to exploit the people.

Yerima’s academic background [–a political scientist], may have influenced him to see things the way they should and ought to be. He knows what politics and political office are for, namely; to serve the people and not for self-aggrandizement or enrichment at the expense of the public. I took time to cite this long quotation because it is the observation of an insider. Unfortunately, this is the general situation in the Nigerian society. From the foregoing, we can see all forms of corruption in action, ranging from gifts to actual money.

³⁰⁶ MTN is a provider of the Global System Mobile in Nigeria.

³⁰⁷ Yerima H., Op. cit

³⁰⁸ Gardiner, J.A., and T.R.Lyman, Decisions for sale. Corruption and Reform in Land Use and Building Regulation, Praeger Publisher, New York, 1978, p.5

³⁰⁹ Leff, N., Economic Development Through Bureaucratic Corruption, American Behavioural Scientists, New, York, p.8

³¹⁰ Yerima H Ibid

There were many reactions from within and outside the House of Representatives to what Haruna Yerima said. Some were naturally, against what he said, others were against how and where he said it, and still others, were decidedly, in support of what he said, irrespective of where and how he said it. For instance in support of Haruna Yerima, Sola Adeyeye lamented the ugly situation in the National Assembly and regretted that the two bodies that were set up to fight corruption were not effective. If they were effective, Sola Adeyeye argues, “Most members of the National Assembly would have ended their political careers in jail.”³¹¹ The lawmaker did not only accuse his fellow lawmakers but also the law enforcement agencies especially the two bodies EFCC and ICPC³¹² detailed to fight corruption in the country by Obasanjo administration. He further opines, “There is a lot of corruption going on there. The allowances for members are untoward.”³¹³ The lawmaker gave another insight in the allowances they receive. The allowances are alarmingly unusual with the same purpose of making them to go contrary to their work. This aspect of political corruption involves unchristian increment in their allowances at the expense of the Nigerian people.

From where do these unusual allowances come? They come from the executive arm of the government so that there could be no checks and balances. For Wole Soyinka and Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, “The executive arm of government has, over the last eight years, constituted a corruptive influence on the legislature. It is a common occurrence, for money from the executive to pass to the National and State Assemblies so that a principal officer of the Assembly can be impeached.”³¹⁴ If it is true, then it can be argued that the government of Obasanjo is corruptly instituted. Epiphany Azinge³¹⁵ confirms this when he said, “A corruptly enthroned government is bound to have people of like mind in the parliament and as Ministers. Such administration is likely to encourage all forms of corruption. There will be a consistent financial inducement of members, inflation of contracts, kick-back or upfront payment.”³¹⁶ In other words, bribe is given so that the internal order of the house could be disordered. If the house is

³¹¹ Prof. Sola Adeyeye a member of the House of Representatives from Osun State spoke on Tuesday at an event organized by the State Correspondent Chapel of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) in Osogbo, the state capital.

³¹² Economic and Financial Crimes Commission and ICPC means Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission

³¹³ Ibid

³¹⁴ Elendu Jonathan, More Fall-outs from Obasanjo’s Library, Vanguard Newspapers, Thursday, 26 May 2005

³¹⁵ Epiphany Azinge is a Research Professor of Law, Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies Abuja, Nigeria.

³¹⁶ Azinge, E., Constitutions, Corruption and Good Governance, A paper delivered at the world Congress of Constitutional Law. Athens, Greece, 11-15 June, 2007

in disorder, how can they work for the public? How can they fight corruption? How can they make law for peace and order in the society?

Samuel Uwhejevwe-Togbolo opines, “The corrupt lawmakers are men and women who preach against corruption only in the pages of newspapers, but they do not match their words with action. They are blindfolded with the big money involved. They are worse than armed robbers.”³¹⁷ Of course, they are armed robbers with their pens and positions. However, many Nigerians believe that Haruna Yerima “has done Nigerians a good favour, at least, to stand out and tell his colleagues that they have to stop this ‘Cash and Carry’ tactics of legislation.”³¹⁸ The message is that the legislators should stop preaching water and drinking wine in the fight against corruption.

Unfortunately, bribery saga continued in the National Assembly. For instance, the ministry of Education and some of its ministers bribed some senators so that the senators could support the approval of substantial money for the ministry in the 2005 budget. According to Dotun Oladipo, “The Minister of Education, Fabian Osuji, was dismissed by President Olusegun Obasanjo following his indictment by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission for allegedly offering N55million bribe to the National Assembly.”³¹⁹ This is in support of what Yerima Haruna said above, that legislators demand for bribe in order to approve budget proposals.

Commenting on the side effects of corruption in the National Assembly, Olusegun Obasanjo maintains that “Corruption in such a highly regarded political institution compromises national integrity, contaminates public morality and misguides those that look up to you for leadership.”³²⁰ Here, we are not concerned with the morality of the act rather with its social effects. We are concerned that the money going from hand to hand in the National Assembly is public money for public use, but a few individuals share it among themselves. This is terribly unfortunate and ridiculous. The lawmakers ought to be the best among the best. They ought to show examples and deliberate for the *Bonum commune communitatis* -. (the common good of the community, -general welfare). This is certainly worrisome because *Corruptio optimi pessima est* (Corruption of the best is the worst).

³¹⁷ Ibid

³¹⁸ Samuel Uwhejevwe-Togbolo, ‘Good Revelations in the Nigerian Politics’, Punch Newspapers, Lagos, 14 January 2004, p. 23

³¹⁹ Dotun Oladipo, Oluyinka Akintunde and Dayo Aiyeyemi, Osuji dismissed, Wabara, others for trial, The Punch, Wednesday, March 23, 2005

³²⁰ Ibid

3.2.2.2 Executive

The Executive arm of Government at the Federal level consists of the elected President, the Vice-president and other members of the Federal Executive Council including the ministers who are appointed by the president with the approval of the National Assembly. At the State level, an elected Governor who is assisted by a deputy governor, commissioners and executive advisers heads the executive arm. Lastly, the executive arm in the local government is made up of a chairman, deputy chairman and supervisory councillors. These are also elected for a definitive term.

The Nigerian constitution of 1999 spelt out the functions of the executive arm thus; (a) “power shall be vested in the President and may subject to the provisions of any law made by the National Assembly, be exercised by him either directly or through the Vice-President and Ministers of the Government of the Federation or officers in the public service of the Federation; and (b) shall extend to the execution and maintenance of this Constitution, all laws made by the National Assembly and to all matters with respect to which the National Assembly has, for the time being, power to make laws.”³²¹ They are to execute the laws made by legislators, and thereby providing proper and legitimate governance.

The three arms are independent but they work collectively for the good of the people. There are checks and balances between the three arms. That means, the arms control one another not only against possibly corruption but also in all matters concerning the public, for the good of the society. If one arm becomes corrupt and the others allow it, there is the tendency that all of them are corrupt. According to Lightowler, “any system, however well designed, is only as effective as the people who operate it and the community environment in which it functions.”³²² If any arm of government accepts as normal the practice of corruption, the others must say no to it otherwise the society will be disorganized.

Subsequently, Obasanjo who was the head of the executive arm from May 29, 1999 to May 28, 2007 made the fight against political corruption the priority of his administration. Addressing the corruption exposed in the executive as well as the legislative arms, Obasanjo says, “The issue of transparency, accountability and eradication of corruption assumed a central place in the policies and

³²¹ Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, Chapter two Part II, Art. 5, paragraphs 1 and

³²² Lighowler B, *Corruption who cares?*, Better Yourself Books, Mumbai, 2006, p.8

programmes of this administration from its inception.”³²³ Obasanjo mentioned the name of the first casualty in his executive cabinet thus, “The Minister of Education is dismissed from office and he would be handed over to the ICPC for necessary follow-up action.”³²⁴ One may say that the executive acted immediately against this act of corruption thereby trying to win the confidence of the public. *This Day* (a Nigerian daily) and most other Nigerian dailies published the names of the indicted people in the ministry of education bribery scandal or corruption saga.³²⁵ There were undoubtedly others, but this will give us an insight to the level of corruption among the public officers especially the political office holders in Nigeria. However, it is outrageous that nothing more was heard about the case apart from the dismissal from office. Most Nigerians would have expected that having been found guilty of the allegation, those concerned should have served their jail terms.

Nonetheless, what makes the scandal revolting is the high profile positions occupied by the officers involved. As the nation digests the outcome of the scandal, so many questions come to mind. Does reputation, good image or integrity no longer play prominent role in politics? Is the individual nature of those corruptees so debased that they now accept the practice of corruption as normal? Why is the Nigerian society under the influence of corruption like somebody under the influence of alcohol or drug?

At any rate, if the individual integrity of those in politics means some good to them, they could ask themselves those questions raised. For instance, according to Lightowler, “Once the nature of individuals is so transformed that they accept as normal the practice of integrity then the whole society can begin to sideline

³²³ Olusegun O, The dismissal of the minister of Education and others, Nation Broadcast, This Day, 2005

³²⁴ Ibid., Obasanjo

³²⁵ Procuring or giving money:

- Prof. Fabian Osuji: main "briber" [Imo State];

- Dr. P.S. Abdu, Education Perm Sec and five other directors: procuring bribe money (N5 million); - Deputy Director, Finance: Mr. Frank Ike - Director, Administration, Dr. B.B. Ibe - Director, Planning, Research and Statistics, Mr. Olu

Il - Director, Inspectorate - Director, Higher Education -Prof. Peter Okebukola, NUC Executive Secretary: providing a N20million "loan" to Osuji [Ogun State]; - Prof. Jude Njoku, VC of the Federal University of Technology, Owerri: providing N25 million for passage of the 2004 budget; an additional N10million was given to Matazu. Other bit players: Hajiya Hafsat Mohammed, Assistant/Acting Chief Accountant, Central Pay Office (CPO) Mr. Njoku F. Ejike - a staff of CPO Mrs. Paulina I. Olaniyi - cashier of the ministry Mr. Andrew Ugwu - head messenger in the ministry Taking 2005 Budget bribe money; - Senator Wabara, Senate President; [Abia State]-Senator John Azuta Mbata, the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Appropriation; [Rivers State] - Senator Ibrahim Abdulazeez, Chairman, Senate Committee on Education; [Taraba State] -Senator Chris Adighije [Abia State]; -Senator Badamasi Maccido [Sokoto State]; -Senator Emmanuel Okpede [Nassarawa State]; - Alhaji Shehu Matazu, Chairman, House Committee on Education [Katsina State]. Mrs. Ngozi Obichere - Senior Legislative Officer and Secretary, Senate Committee on Education Taking 2004 Budget bribe money (N24 million); -Honourable Gabriel Suswan [Benue State] - Honourable Osita Izunaso (Imo State), This Day The Indicted Men, 03.23.2005, The Punch, March 23, 2005, Champion, March 23, 2005

corruption and advance towards new levels of integrity and openness.”³²⁶ Lightowler used the word integrity in a general sense since he did not specify which aspect of integrity he meant. Integrity has more to do with morality in general. In public office in Nigeria, there seems to be no serious consideration about personal morality. What most of them want is to use their offices to enrich themselves by any means.

It must be said that social integrity, which I call social morality, is required in politics, and in public office. Unfortunately, it seems that in Nigeria, a devoted and admired public servant is one, who carries out what he is bribed to do, whereas a lousy one is one, who takes the bribe and fails to do anything.

In an ugly situation where the Nigerian public leaders are corrupt, the led are left to the mercy of the leaders. Geoffrey Ejiga observes; “It was time Nigeria tackled corruption head-on. The fight against corruption must start with political leaders. Public officers convicted of corruption should face capital punishment.”³²⁷ Perhaps the idea of capital punishment suggested by Ejiga was either informed by the fact that corruption has eaten deep into the fabrics of the Nigerian society or his background as a trained soldier. Can capital punishment stop corruption in Nigeria? Who will have the political will power to implement it? For Obijiofor, “One of the issues that need to be examined is the public perception of politics and federal appointments as the entry points of easy money in Nigeria. Politicians invest their lives and their financial savings to ensure victory at the polls. A pauper who manages to win election in the country is guaranteed overnight transformation into an affluent man or woman.”³²⁸ Is there anything socially wrong in campaigning and winning an elective post? Obijiofor did not tell us how they are magically transformed into wealthy people overnight. However, we presume that it is through the abuse of public office.

Unfortunately, most corrupt practices in Nigeria especially in the executive have no human face. Nobody is directly accused and yet some people are corrupt. That is why it is systemic and endemic. This is why it seems as if every Nigerian is corrupt. Perhaps Akindele’s explanation of the problem of corruption suggests also the explanation of this chain involvement of public leaders in corruption. Akindele says, “Corruption is undeniably a socio-political economic and moral malaise, that holistically permeates all the nerves of any polity. It is contagious

³²⁶ Ibid., Lightowler B, p.9

³²⁷ Ejiga G., Corruption Among political leaders in Nigeria, Champions Newspapers, Lagos, September 13, 2005, p.24

³²⁸ Ibid Obijiofor

and malignant to the physiology of any political system. Once it sets into any part; it automatically contaminates all the strata of the system's socio-political structures in ways symmetrical to the spread of a bush fire."³²⁹ When one puts Obijiofor's and Akindel's statements side by side, one notices a similarity in reason concerning why corruption spreads like harmattan fire among the public office holders in Nigeria. Obijiofor says that people bribe their way to the office, and then the bribery becomes holistic in the words of Akindele. It becomes difficult for them to expose themselves because the exposition of one part means the exposition of the other part, if not the whole part.

Unfortunately the executive arm of government in Nigeria has reduced the legislative arm of government to subordinate institution, whereas they are two independent arms working together for the good of the people. We have seen this from the fact that the minister of Education once bribed the legislators. The fact that the executive sometimes bribes the legislature so that an official of the house could be impeached is also a cause for concern.

Furthermore, Nigerians witnessed the biggest executive corruption of the year when on the 14th of May 2005 the president, Olusegun Obasanjo launched a private library in his Ota village. "The launching of Obasanjo's Presidential library is still receiving critical reactions from Nigerians."³³⁰ No Nigerian educated or not would see anything wrong in somebody building a library. The social problem is that the money used was alleged to be public fund. Nigerians are questioning the credibility of the Obasanjo administration in its fight against corruption. Should he not have built it after his tenure if he has the money?

We agree in no higher logic with Uzokwe Obiora Alfred who said, "Conducting a fund raising event, for a presidential library while a president is still in office, amounts to influence peddling and abuse of office."³³¹ It is influence peddling in the sense that many people would want to make donations, expecting something in return from the presidency. It is abuse of office in the sense that it is difficult to draw a tangible line between the fundraising event, which was supposed to be a private event, and the president's official duties and materials.

Hence, the president used his official staff, official plane, official car and other official items even though it is a private event. Here there is no difference

³²⁹ Akindele S.T., A Critical Analysis of Corruption and its Problems1 in Nigeria, Daily Times, 23 Sept.,2005, p.32

³³⁰ Ijezie Ikeokwu, The Executive Scandal, Punch, 16 May 2005

³³¹ Uzokwe O. A., Obasanjo's Presidential Library, Vanguard Newspapers, Thursday 26 2005

between bribery and the president's action. It is more confusing when one reads or hears the noise being made by the president in his fight against corruption.

The scandalous climax of the executive corruption of Obasanjo administration was seen in the 2007 general election in Nigeria. Nigerian leaders, have a history of doing whatever it takes to stay in power and to hold on to the wealth that this power can give.³³² This entails many things, not excluding killing of political opponents in order to retain power. Obasanjo confirms this when he said, "I will campaign because, this election is a do or die affair for Peoples Democratic Party."³³³ Gani Fawehinmi described Obasanjo's utterances and actions as "amounting to treason."³³⁴ We all saw the resultant effect of his statement; the 2007 general elections were marred by corrupt practices and have attracted national and international condemnation to the detriment of the Nigerian people and polity.

Many people have called the April 2007 elections anything but free and fair. For instance, Gani Fawehinmi, described the polls as "A monumental fraud and veritable electoral robbery."³³⁵ The observation of the National Democratic Institute was that "The exercise was marred by so much malpractice that it was unclear whether its outcome reflects the will of Nigerians."³³⁶ On the part of the international observers, Max Van Den Berg, spoke on behalf of the European Union (EU) observer team when he said, "The 2007 elections have fallen far short of basic international and regional standards for democratic elections and the process cannot be considered to be credible."³³⁷ Another international observer Madeleine Albright, as the head of an observer team, said, "Regrettably, 2007 general election represents a step backward in the conduct of elections in Nigeria. In many places, the electoral process failed the Nigerian people."³³⁸ All these observations were not to discredit Nigeria and the Nigerian people, but to prove to people that, the Obasanjo administration could not organize a credible election despite his crusade against corruption.

It is therefore arguable, that Obasanjo actually used the Machiavellian principle that the end justifies the means. In this line of argument Marietu Tenuche argues, "The rhetoric of Olusegun Obasanjo is a key factor that influenced the

³³² Adewale George, *The Elections in Nigeria*, This Day, 24, June 2003

³³³ Obasanjo O, *2007 Election in Nigeria*, Daily Sun, Sunday, Feb 11, 2007

³³⁴ Fawehinmi, G., *Gani Blasts Obasanjo*, Punch, Tuesday, February 13, 2007

³³⁵ Fawehinmi, G., *The 2007 Election in Nigeria*, Daily Sun, 7 May 2007

³³⁶ National Democratic Institute, *The Guardian*, 18 April 2007, (cf also Daily Trust 3 May 2007, and Daily Sun, 7 May 2007)

³³⁷ Max Van Den Berg, *Observers Blast Nigeria Elections; Call for Urgent Action*, 23 April 2007

³³⁸ Albright, M., *Nigerian Election worse ever seen*, Daily Champion, 24 April, 2007

nature and conduct of the 2007 general elections.”³³⁹ Obasanjo succeeded in imposing his candidate on over 140 million Nigerians in 2007 using his executive influence and power. While the most glaring form of corruption in the legislature is bribery, that of the executive comprises of bribery, embezzlement of public funds and favouritism/godfatherism. It is only a fact that corruption in the executive arm of government is still on perhaps because the Judiciary is too weak.

3.2.2. 3 Judiciary

According to the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Information, “Judiciary is the arm of institution of government responsible for the interpretation of laws. It is made up of judges and all the courts and other law adjudicating agencies. Members of the judiciary are appointed on the recommendation of the Judicial Service Commission.”³⁴⁰ This means that the judiciary has a lot to contribute to the orderliness of the society. The word appointment brings in some doubts, on how the right people are appointed; since the ministry did not tell us the method used in appointing the judges. This gives room for every possibility.

The functions of the judiciary include but are not limited to “interpretation of laws, Resolution of disputes between arms of government and between citizens or among citizens, application of sanctions and punishments to the lawbreakers. Engaging in judicial reviews, to determine the constitutionality of legislation, and executive decisions.”³⁴¹

From the foregoing, it is obvious that the judiciary has a hugely essential function in any nation. According to Wole Olanipekun “The Judiciary is an essential integral arm in the governance of the nation. It is the guardian of the Constitution charged with the sacred responsibility of dispensing justice for the purposes of safeguarding and protecting the Constitution and its goals.”³⁴² The goals of any good constitution are the good of the citizens. The judiciary protects and guards the constitution and if it has to do her job properly and constitutionally, it has to dispense justice without fear or favour, that is, free from corrupt and external influences. It has to resolve dispute between the arms of government and the people in the society.

³³⁹ Tenuche, M., “The language of politics and political behaviors; rhetoric of President Olusegun Obasanjo and the 2007 general elections in Nigeria” in *Journal of public administration and policy research* Vol. 1(3) pp. 047-054 July, 2009

³⁴⁰ Federal Ministry of Information and Communications, Radio House, Herbert Macaulay Way (South), Area 10, Garki – Abuja, 2005

³⁴¹ Ibid

³⁴² Wole Olanipekun, The role of the Judiciary in the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria Friday, June 29, 2007

Furthermore, the judiciary makes sure that the society is not chaotic irrespective of whose ox is gored. In other words, it makes sure that no arm of government lords it over the others. Wole Olanipekun further asserts, “The Judiciary, when properly invoked, has a fundamental role to play in the structure of governance by checking the activities of the other organs of government and thereby promoting good governance, respect for individual rights and fundamental liberties.”³⁴³ The operative words are “when properly invoked”. The aim of any good governance is the common welfare of her citizens. The judiciary is the backbone of any corruption free society. Wole Olanipekun further maintains, “Without a strong and independent judiciary, there can be no impartial adjudication of disputes between individuals, between the state and the individual, and between different levels of government within the state.”³⁴⁴ (cfr.³⁴⁵)The judiciary has the duty, to translate into actuality, the noble ideas expressed in the basic law. In fact, it gives life, to the abstract concepts of freedom, liberty, transparency, a society free from corruption, abuse of power and all the noble goals articulated and reiterated in the Constitution.”³⁴⁶

Subsequently, one cannot agree less with the above opinions on the role and importance of the judiciary. The independence of the judiciary is essential if judges are to make impartial and corruption free decisions or decisions free from outside interference or influence. In this light Emmanuel Ayoola opines, “Absence of judicial independence, creates a corrupt judicial system and provides a fertile environment for the morally weak judge to indulge in corrupt judicial practices.”³⁴⁷ It must be borne in mind here that the outside influence has to do with other arms of government: the Executive and the legislative. It has also to do with families, friends and colleagues.

Furthermore, Aloysius Katsina-Alu, told the judicial officers how difficult their role in the society is when he says, “The task before you is important, daunting, enormous and demanding.”³⁴⁸ Their role is exceptionally demanding but also remarkably prestigious. Désirée Bernard argues: “Members of any judiciary by virtue of their eminence are expected to be pillars of rectitude in their

³⁴³ Ibid

³⁴⁴ Ibid

³⁴⁵ Ardo, M B., “Separation of Powers under 1979 Nigerian Constitution, in *The Nigerian Bar Journal*, Vol. XVII, No.1, 1983. Mr Justice Muhammadu Buba Ardo was the Chairman of the defunct Nigerian Constitution Review Committee, said “it is a very poor government indeed whose judiciary is nothing but a dependent appendage of the executive” also Dr Akinola Aguda said, “it is beyond dispute that to sustain a democracy in the modern world, an independent, impartial and upright judiciary is a necessity” (*The judiciary in the Government of Nigeria*, New Horns Press, Ibadan, 1983, p.34

³⁴⁶ Ibid

³⁴⁷ Ayoola, E., Integrity and elimination of corruption from judiciary, *This Day*, 4th June 2007

³⁴⁸ Ibid., Katsina-Alu, A

communities, and above reproach. They are expected to provide solutions to problems and redress for violation of rights.”³⁴⁹ Therefore, their work is particularly very challenging.

It is very essential to know that the independence of the judiciary in any country gives undoubted legitimacy to the judiciary itself and the government of the time. It also gives the people confidence. Unfortunately, corruption has found its way into the Nigerian judiciary, thereby making the legitimacy of the judiciary and the government very doubtful. Aloysius Katsina-Alu opines “Corruption is now a national malaise. It is a monster that has eaten deep into the fabric of the society and the judiciary is not isolated.”³⁵⁰ This could mean that the whole Nigerian nation is full of corruption and that the judiciary is not exempt. Mechthild Ruenger was more specific when she said, “The Nigerian judiciary is one of the three state powers with a negative record on corruption.”³⁵¹ Even though Katsina-Alu and Ruenger did not mention any particular type of corruption, it is probably bribery. Chidi Odinkalu argues “Bribery is the main type of corruption that is found in the judicial setting and it takes various forms.”³⁵² As we know bribery has many faces.

The various forms which bribery takes were seen above in National Assembly and the Executive. Odinkalu further opines, “In addition to bribing some judges to acquit them, defendants may pay prosecuting police officers not to show up in court. A judge may also be bribed to delay a case, thereby giving the defendant the opportunity to leave the country.”³⁵³ Could this be the reason why sometimes, we hear that the Nigerian police has declared this or the other suspect wanted? Sometimes the police will tell the public that among the six armed robbery suspects one is still at large. In this case a closer look might reveal that the relatives of the robbery suspect may have bribed the police.

It is incredibly but also unfortunately true that corruption has taken over the very fabric of the Nigerian judiciary. It might be in this line that Ikechukwu Uche Okeke a barrister at law, said, “Unfortunately, this unwholesome scenario has found its way to the Nigerian judiciary, a most vital sector considered as the last

³⁴⁹ Bernard, D, The Impact of Corruption within the court system on its ability to administer justice, 14th Commonwealth Law Conference, September 2005, (also, They are expected to be objective in assessing evidence and determining guilt or innocence

³⁵⁰ Katsina-Alu, A., 'Entire Nation's Soaked in Corruption', Vanguard, 16 July 2010

³⁵¹ Mechthild Ruenger, Enhancing judicial integrity in Nigeria (Korruptionsvermeidung in der Justiz), The U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre, 26 Mar 2003

³⁵² Chidi Anselm Odinkalu, Vanguard Newspaper, May 15 2007

³⁵³ Ibid

bastion of hope for the ordinary citizens.”³⁵⁴ The unwholesome scenario is the corruption that has covered every aspect of the Nigerian society. Okeke goes further to say, “Today, not a few hold the opinion that the Bench is hugely plagued by corruption and other unwholesome practices that have continued to widen the gulf between it and Nigerians.”³⁵⁵ These unwholesome practices may stem from the fact that the judicial officers have failed to uphold their integrity as the custodians of the most sacred function in the society.

Recently, the Lagos State government through the state's Judicial Service Commission terminated the appointment of three Judges and 22 magistrates in Lagos on account of corrupt practices. Yemi Osibajo argues, “The measure was part of efforts at sanitising the entire judicial system in the state because corruption is a matter of serious concern not just for the administration of justice but also for governance as a whole.”³⁵⁶ Corruption in the judiciary hinders not only judicial process and progress but also the progress of the entire governance in the Nigerian society. The saying that, the Judiciary is the last hope of the common man seems not to be so in Nigeria. It is even impossible for the common man to afford lawyers' fees. Owonikoko A. J. says, “For most Nigerians, the judicial process is nothing more than an auction in which justice goes to the highest bidder.”³⁵⁷ It is not far from saying that justice is being sold to the highest bidder in Nigeria.

Olusegun Obasanjo acknowledges this situation when he says, “Until 1999, the country had practically institutionalized corruption as the foundation of governance. Hence institutions of society easily decayed to unprecedented proportions as opportunities were privatized by the powerful.”³⁵⁸ The judiciary institution was also among those that decayed. There was also a process of informal privatization of the judiciary by the powerful. Obasanjo eloquently confirms, “This process was accompanied by the intimidation of the judiciary, the subversion of due process, the manipulation of existing laws and regulations,

³⁵⁴ Okeke, U I., The Editor, Nigerian Tribune, Arts and Reviews, Friday 12 January 2007

³⁵⁵ Okeke, U I, *ibid*

³⁵⁶ Vanguard Newspaper, May 15 2007

³⁵⁷ A. J. Owonikoko, Law and Human Rights: Tackling Corruption in the Administration of Justice, Vanguard, (Nig.), Apr. 3, 2003, cf also Okechukwu Oko is a Professor of Law, Southern University Law Center, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. “Convinced that judges decide cases on the basis of connections and gratification without regard to the legal merits of the case, citizens seek to influence the outcome of cases either by settling the judge, or intimidating judicial officers. Far worse, negative perceptions about the justice system encourage citizens to resort to violent, extralegal and possibly criminal practices to secure their rights. Popular distrust of the judiciary has fueled needless attacks on the integrity and the institution of the judiciary”. Seeking Justice in transitional societies: An analysis of the problems and failures of the judiciary in Nigeria.

³⁵⁸ Obasanjo, O, Nigeria: From Pond of Corruption to Island of Integrity, Lecture Delivered at the 10th Anniversary Celebration of Transparency International, Berlin, 07 November, 2003

the suffocation of civil society, and the containment of democratic values and institutions.”³⁵⁹ The powerful intimidated the judiciary and made it moribund. Obasanjo further opines, “The legitimacy and stability of the state became compromised as citizens began to devise extra-legal and informal ways of survival. All this made room for corruption.”³⁶⁰ If the rule of law is not in place, chaos takes its place. *Citizens must survive with or without law* became the motto of most Nigerians. Corruption seems to be the systemic disease of the Nigerian judiciary which generates complaints from all segments of the society.

Furthermore, The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes [UNODAC] argues, “The inability to deal with corruption in the Nigerian judiciary and the need to strengthen its integrity is an integral part of the overall corruption problem.”³⁶¹ UNODAC is convinced that corruption in the Nigerian judiciary has made it extremely difficult to fight the overall corruption in Nigeria.

3.2.2. 4 Reasons for corruption in the judiciary

There are many reasons why there is corruption in the Nigerian judiciary. It is also advantageous to know that, the reasons are not far from the reasons for the overall corruption in Nigeria. UNODAC lists the challenges of the judiciary to fight corruption effectively which include “The absence of thorough knowledge and data regarding the extent and nature of the malfunctioning of the judiciary, lack of systematic, realistic, time-bound and broad-based anti-corruption action plans, both at the federal and state levels.”³⁶² In most cases, there is also the absence of thumb printing so that one can swear affidavit as many times as one wants. This has also affected the civil service.

Most civil servants no longer want to retire because of irregular payment of pensions and gratuities. Chinedum Adiele eloquently argues, “Our teeming graduates are unemployed because those who are due for retirement have continued to falsify their age declaration. Managing directors, managers, directors, supervisors, etc, are now in the habit of yearly swearing of affidavit of age declarations”³⁶³ The question of how the young can grow in Nigeria still remains a puzzle. If the old ones cannot give way for the young ones, retardation is inevitable. We are concerned here because the affidavit is always done in the

³⁵⁹ Ibid

³⁶⁰ Ibid

³⁶¹ UNODAC Strengthening Judicial Integrity and Capacity, 23 July 2007

³⁶² Ibid

³⁶³ Ibid

court of justice. If the court were to have everything, it would be difficult for one to do it over and over again.

Furthermore, Bernard argues, “In some jurisdictions the failure of governments to ensure the independence of the judiciary by according to it adequate and reasonable financial resources leads to corruption within the court system.”³⁶⁴ This may also encourage corruption not only among the judges but also the ordinary workers in the judicial system, especially in Nigeria. If this is the case, then where is the function of checks and balances in the government? Separation of power means that each arm of government should be adequately funded so that none is vulnerable to corruption. The judiciary in Nigeria seems to have lost her integrity to corrupt practices.

Judicial integrity is one of the judicial values globally accepted as being the most aiding factor of judicial growth and progress. Ayoola Emmanuel opines, “Judicial integrity and independence are universally accepted and established values that are essential to the concept of the rule of law if that concept is to be meaningful and if law is to play any part in the pursuit of sustainable economic, socio-political development.”³⁶⁵ It is clear that judicial integrity plays a very important role in the life of the society. Judicial integrity includes accountability and honest judicial decisions. Babalola A., linked judicial corruption and legislative corruption together. At the first level, efforts are made by people to pervert the course of justice and influence judgments while at the second level, people try to influence law-making and policy decisions.³⁶⁶ If law-making and law interpretation are affected by external influence, then there is the possibility of having bad laws. However, if there are good laws, false interpretation will negatively affect the society.

Generally, the reasons why the Nigerian judiciary seems to be vulnerable to corruption are the same in the other sectors, like the Nigerian police force. I want to use the Nigerian police as an example of what happens in other sectors.

3.2.3 The Nigerian Police Force and their defence

All over the world, the police force is always for the maintenance of law and order. It enforces the laws made by the law-making body of any nation. Men and women of the force are specifically trained to protect lives and properties. This

³⁶⁴ Ibid, Bernard, (If judges and support staff are inadequately paid or remunerated for their services they will inevitably become vulnerable to external pressures and corruption)

³⁶⁵ Ayoola, E., Integrity and elimination of corruption from judiciary, This Day, 4th June 2007

³⁶⁶ Babalola, A., Corruption and political crisis in Nigerian: A sociological Viewpoint. The Conference proceedings of the Nigerian Anthropological and Sociological Association, December, 1995

includes also defending the citizens in times of war. If there are any civil disturbances in the country, the police station is always a place of refuge, a place of safety and protection for people. If one feels aggrieved then one gets recourse in the police force. I believe that Nigerian police force is not an exemption.

The 1979 Nigerian constitution spelt out the functions of the Nigerian police force. The functions include, “Preservation of law and order, protection of lives and properties, and enforcement of all laws and regulations with which they are directly charged.”³⁶⁷ In 1930 earlier than the 1979 Nigerian constitution, when it was established by an act of the parliament, the duties of the Nigerian police was made clear to them. Chidi Nwakaeze confirms it thus; “In 1930, the Nigerian police was formed with Headquarters in Lagos, it was instituted through an act of the parliament and given enormous rights to perform its duties, which entail the protection of lives and property.”³⁶⁸ These are the primary functions of the Nigerian police. There is no gainsaying that the duties of the Nigerian police force were well spelt out from its inception.

My task in this small subheading is to find out if the Nigerian police force has left her official duties for personal gains, or if she does her official duties for private gain. In the first instance, they could totally abandon their official duties only to seek for their personal gain. In the second instance, they could still do their official duties but only when they must have made private gains. According to Akindele, “Corruption in Nigeria include giving and receiving of kickbacks, Police insistence on taking bribes as a precondition for performing their duties.”³⁶⁹ This situation can be better understood when one sees that the whole Nigerian socio-political system has broken down. Akindele describes a situation where the police must take bribe before they perform their official duties. Sometimes they take the bribe and still abandon their duties.

Haz Iwendi admits that there is corruption in the police force when he says, “The police were actively exposing those who were corrupt within the service, unlike other government agencies. Nigerian police has the best quality mechanism in this country. There is no organization that cleanses itself like the Nigerian police force.”³⁷⁰ Perhaps Iwendi is either covering up the gravity and seriousness of corrupt activities in the force or pretending that they are not as alarming as most Nigerians thought it to be. The issue is not to compare the

³⁶⁷ The Nigerian constitution, section 4 of the Police Act and Decree No. 23 of 1979

³⁶⁸ Nwakaeze, C., IG and the 10,000 police personnel for Southeast., This Day, June 27, 2010, p.1

³⁶⁹ Akindele S. T., Ibid

³⁷⁰ Iwendi, H. The Nigerian Police and corruption, Vanguard, 29 June 2006

force with other sectors in Nigeria but to admit that the force is corrupt and then look for ways to stop the malady.

However, Chinua Achebe insists that, “Corruption in Nigeria has passed the alarming and entered the fatal stage and Nigeria will die if we keep pretending that she is only slightly indisposed.”³⁷¹ This is the danger in which Iwendi seems to have found himself. By comparing the police with other arms of government, Iwendi pretends that corruption in the Nigerian police has not reached the alarming stage. But corruption in the force is seen every day and anywhere they are. Aruga Omokard eloquently observes, “Corruption in the Nigerian police is a daily occurrence. At check points around the country, armed policemen regularly intimidate and extort money from motorists. Many innocent Nigerians have been sent to their early grave by corrupt policemen at roadblocks, for failing to provide the demanded bribe.”³⁷² Unfortunately, the roadblocks do not stop criminals from harassing the people. Nwakaeze observes, “These road blocks have turned a journey which ordinarily lasts between 10 to 15 minutes into a journey that lasts for 1 hour 30 minutes to 2 hours.”³⁷³ This is disheartening especially when the motorists have the correct motor papers.

Furthermore, in the police force, there is a section that is responsible for traffic. Why are they on the roads extorting money, instead of doing their work for the society? It seems as if they have abandoned their work in search of private gains. In this line, Nwakaeze argues, “The police have abandoned the towns they were assigned to protect and have gone after the most lucrative part of the job which is in setting up road blocks. These men can kill if you don't drop your rogger.”³⁷⁴ (rogger is a term or word for bribery in the Nigerian police). It is now a common sight that seems to have been accepted by the Nigerian society. Oladipo D argues, “Extortion of money from motorists at roadblocks or checkpoints appears to be a very common and widespread form of corruption involving law enforcement officials in various parts of Nigeria.”³⁷⁵ This corrupt practice has made it difficult to know the actual offenders because most motorists especially commercial drivers must bribe the police.

In this regard, the Nigerian Bishops appeal to the police thus, “We appeal to the police and other law enforcement agents on our roads to desist from extorting

³⁷¹ Achebe, C, *The trouble with Nigeria*. Loc. Cit. P.38

³⁷² Omokard A, “Fighting a losing Battle” *Insider*, No 34, Lagos, August 26, 2002, 28

³⁷³ Cfr. Nwakaeze C, *Ibid*

³⁷⁴ Omokard, A., *Ibid*

³⁷⁵ Oladipo, D. *Extortion among the police*, *This Day*, 23, May 2003

money from road users. The public, on their part should resist all demands for gratification by these law enforcement agents.”³⁷⁶ For the Nigerian Bishops, the public as well as the police must be involved in fighting extortion in the police force. Perhaps the bishops seem to forget the fact that resistance by some members of the public has led some to their untimely grave. For instance “On 24th March, 1997 a taxi driver Nnajim Oloko was killed by a police inspector for refusing to bribe him at a roadblock on Lagos-Ibadan expressway.”³⁷⁷ This is because, what the police on a roadblock want is money and not correct or incorrect paper, though they get more money when the papers are not correct.

Furthermore, “On 18 July 1998, 14 people, including a police Divisional Crime Officer (DCO) were killed in an exchange of gunfire between the police and truck drivers after a truck driver was killed at a police roadblock for not giving a bribe of N20, offering N10 instead.”³⁷⁸ Can resistance solve the problem? Chidi Akaeze rhetorically asks, “Are these men truly coming to work or are they coming to set up more roadblocks and render returns to the Ogas (Chiefs) in the office?”³⁷⁹ If the answer to the second part of the question is in the affirmative, then the case is hopeless. The chiefs who should bring the erring officers to order are themselves guilty of the same offence.

There are events of loss of lives and properties and many other crimes that are now rampant in Nigeria today including kidnapping. The police force has neglected her function of protecting lives and properties in search of private gains. Sometimes it is either they are bribed to abandon the investigation into these crimes or they are not well equipped by the government to do the investigation or they are involved themselves. A few instances here will be enough to buttress my point: “the dastardly murder of Pa Alfred Rewane on October 6, 1995 in his bedroom,”³⁸⁰ the brutal killing of Kudirat Abiola, June 4th 1996,³⁸¹ the assassination of the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Bola Ige, on December 23, 2001 and the assassination of former Chairman, Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Onitsha Branch, Barnabas Igwe and his pregnant wife September, 2002.”³⁸² Abundant instances exist that tend to qualify

³⁷⁶ A Communiqué issued at the end of the First Plenary Meeting of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) for the year 2003, held at Pope John Paul II Catholic centre Abuja, from 10th to 14th March 2003

³⁷⁷ Daily Times, 24 March, 1997

³⁷⁸ Vanguard 19 July 1998

³⁷⁹ Akaeze, C, Ibid

³⁸⁰ Pa Rewane was a national philanthropist and a strong oppositionist to the military rule in Nigeria. Tribune, 23 Nov 1995.

³⁸¹ Alhaja Kudirat Abiola’ is the wife of Chief MKO Abiola who was said to have won the 1993 presidential elections in Nigeria. Champion, 12 August 1996

³⁸² Ezeani, I.,A, So who killed Bola Ige? This Day, January 2002

the Nigerian Police Force as either the epitome of corruption and lawlessness or an ill equipped force in Nigeria. In all the above-mentioned instances, the police are yet to discover the killers.

Furthermore, it is a common knowledge that some policemen are not only known to aid and abet criminals but they are also criminals themselves. In this regard, Rilwanu Akiolu, the Oba of Lagos, a onetime Nigerian police officer, told Mohammed Abubakar the commissioner of police in Lagos State, that; “All these crimes of armed robbery are being aided by some of the policemen among you. You make innocent people to lose their souls for nothing because you want to make money.”³⁸³ They want to make money at the expense of the lives of the innocent citizens whom they are employed and paid to protect and guide.

Subsequently, the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria insist that, “The Nigerian police and other law enforcement agencies should be more prompt and resolute in combating crime in its different forms, especially armed robbery and assassinations. They should be painstaking in investigating crime, and bring all categories of offenders to book without fear or favour.”³⁸⁴ The Nigerian Bishops were emphatic in saying all categories of offenders. In most cases, the Nigerian police bring only the poor criminals to book, probably because they cannot bribe the police. Those highly placed criminals are not seen to be corrupt because they have what it takes to make the police close every possible way of exposing them to the wrath of the law. This concerns all forms of crime in Nigeria.

Some people who argue in favour of the Nigerian police believe that they are not well funded and equipped by the government. As true as this might sound, it must also be said that it is not peculiar to them but to all the government workers in Nigeria. Does this give them the leave to or exonerate them from, corrupt practices? Still seemingly defending the Nigerian police force, Emmanuel Ighodalo argues, “Decades of serving under repressive military regimes have not given policemen the sense of being a friend of the people.”³⁸⁵ Carina Tertsakian, in support of Ighodalo argues, “We see instances of police abuse and brutality in Nigeria every day. Nigeria still has a type of policing based on confrontation with the population rather than protection.”³⁸⁶ Ighodalo acknowledges the fact that “We want a police that respects the fundamental

³⁸³ Rilwanu Akiolu ‘Some policemen aid armed robbery in Lagos’, The Punch Newspaper, June 14 2007. [It is good to know that Rilwanu Akiolu was a policeman by profession, it was only after his retirement from active police work that he took up the Obaship stool in Lagos.]

³⁸⁴ A Communiqué issued at the end of the First Plenary Meeting of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) for the year 2003, held at Pope John Paul II Catholic centre Abuja, from 10th to 14th March 2003

³⁸⁵ Emmanuel Ighodalo, Vanguard, 15 January 2007

³⁸⁶ Carina Tertsakian, Vanguard, 25 May 2005

rights of the people and know that they are the servants of the people, using guns bought with the tax payer's money."³⁸⁷ This is what they should have learnt in the training college. Ighodalo further opines, "When we say zero-tolerance of corruption that does not mean police are no longer collecting money on the streets. We still have pockets of deviants."³⁸⁸ Then what does zero tolerance mean? Is extorting money, harassing or even killing some innocent ones on the road part of their duties or part of zero tolerance?

Unfortunately, some of the high officers in the force tend to take the blame to the public for the corruption in the police force in Nigeria. Mike Okiro confirms our claim thus, "In as much as you want to tackle corruption in the police, you have to go down to the society, you have to arrest people who offer bribes to the police to evade justice or to commit crime."³⁸⁹ Does it rest on the public alone to bring them to book or is it the co-responsibility of the public and the force? If you arrest the one who offers bribe and leave the bribe receiver, is the job complete? When has it become the job of the public to arrest criminals in Nigeria?

Furthermore, Nuhu Ribadu blamed Nigerians for the corruption in the force. He said, "When you give police your money you are making it impossible for the laws to be enforced. By that singular act, you are desecrating the entire structure of government."³⁹⁰ Ribadu affirms that the police receive bribe but he is implying that the people give this money willingly. But the police are extorting the money from the people under gunpoint or any other form of threat or intimidation which Ribadu knows very well. In any case, he is affirming that his men are corrupt, but that the people corrupt his men by bribing them.

I am tempted to say that the highly placed police officers graduate from taking bribes of tens of Naira to billions of Naira. For instance, in January 2005 the former Inspector General of Police, Tafa Balogun quit under a myriad of corruption allegations. Nuhu Ribadu said, "Tafa Balogun abused his office as the police chief by stealing N2 billion public funds allocated to the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) for its operations."³⁹¹ As I said earlier, old habits die hard. According to Wisdom Patrick, "Balogun was accused of being into money laundering, theft of police funds, invested stolen funds in blue chip firms, banks and owned several accounts where huge sums of looted monies were lodged in

³⁸⁷ Emmanuel Ighodalo, Op. cit

³⁸⁸ Ibid

³⁸⁹ ibid

³⁹⁰ Nuhu Ribadu, Do not give policemen money, Vanguard Newspapers, Lagos, 26 June 2007

³⁹¹ Ribadu, N., Balogun in court, Independent, April 4, 2005. Also Guardian, April 4, 2005

fictitious names.”³⁹² Three months later, he was brought to an Abuja court and was found guilty of corruption and was sentenced to six months in prison. Nigerians wondered why he was only sent to six months imprisonment while those who steal salt or pepper from the market women are given more than two years imprisonment if they cannot bribe the officers. Whether he returned the money is still a mystery in Nigeria today.

The most worrisome aspect of corruption in the Nigerian police force and also the general Nigerian polity is the fact that they are practically doing nothing to combat this social crime from within. Human Rights Watch says, “Violence, corruption and impunity are not just problems that government has failed to tackle; they are systemic abuses that flow from the heart of the very same government institutions that should be working to combat them.”³⁹³ The fact of impunity is a glaring one as we have seen. They do so because they have all the institutions at their control. The report continues, “In some Nigerian states, powerful political ‘godfathers’ control politicians. In return, the ‘godfathers’ have captured government institutions to serve their own interests.”³⁹⁴ This is evident in almost all the states of the federation.

A police officer narrated why it is difficult to stop this social crime in the force. According to him, “We fuel our patrol van from our own pockets to be able to work. We buy our own boots, uniforms and pay for our accommodation. These are things that are supposed to get to us through official funding.”³⁹⁵ They collect money to fuel their van in order to be able to go round for more money. For this officer, the road users are responsible for their plight. If this is justifiable and I doubt, why should there be checkpoints after each two poles?

The officer continues, “These bus drivers understand these things and they cooperate with us by assisting us with the N20.”³⁹⁶ Logically, everyone would agree with this police officer that the welfare of the police as well as other workers should be paramount, because the labourer deserves his wages. However, the motorists do not willingly give them N20, otherwise, why should there be conflicts between them and the motorists who refuse to give them N20?

Part three: CAUSES OF CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

³⁹² Patrick, W., Independent, April 4, 2002

³⁹³ Human Right Watch, in a report titled, Criminal politics: Violence, God Fathers and Corruption in Nigeria, 9 October, 2007

³⁹⁴ Ibid

³⁹⁵ Ameh John, The Punch, Wednesday July 13, 2005

³⁹⁶ ibid

Introduction

Corruption is a cankerworm, endemic, pandemic, erosive and systemic. It has afflicted and done havoc to the corporate existence of Nigeria and its positive growth. Mustapha Akanbi argues, “Corruption has become so deep-seated in the country that it had stunted growth in all sectors and has been the primary reason behind the country’s difficulties in developing fast.”³⁹⁷ There is no gainsaying that a lot of causes, (social, economic and political) contribute to the success of corruption in Nigeria. A proper understanding of the causes of corruption in Nigeria will help to a greater extent, in finding a solution to eradicating it. Without stating them according to the order of negative effects, I want to mention some of the causes.

3.3.1 Ethical standard in Nigeria.

Broadly speaking, ethical standard means ethical principles. Ethical principles are based on social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships and integrity, competence.³⁹⁸ These principles set forth ideals to which all public, private and social workers should aspire. Each profession, discipline and art has its own ethical standard. Ethics Code is intended to provide specific standards to cover most situations encountered by workers. It has as its goals, the welfare and protection of individuals and groups with whom they work and the education of the public regarding ethical standards of the discipline.³⁹⁹

In Nigeria today, there seems to be a lack of ethical standards throughout the agencies of government, and business organizations. This is a serious cause of corruption in Nigeria. According to Markkula Centre for Applied Ethics “Ethics refers to standards of behaviour that tell us how human beings ought to act in the many situations in which they find themselves -as friends, parents, children, citizens, business people, teachers and professionals.”⁴⁰⁰ As I said earlier, every discipline has its own ethical standard, for instance; the Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession represent a vision of professional practice.

³⁹⁷ Akanbi, M, Interactive seminar on “Fighting Corruption: The Stakeholders Perspective”, Abuja, 15 September, 2005

³⁹⁸ The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) The *NASW Code of Ethics* is intended to serve as a guide to the everyday professional conduct of social workers. Founded in 2001,

³⁹⁹ *ibid*

⁴⁰⁰ The Markkula Centre for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University is a nationally recognized resource for people and organizations wanting to study and apply an ethical approach to the crucial issues facing our world. The Centre supports research, assists faculty in integrating ethics into their courses, and helps businesses, schools, hospitals, and other organizations put ethics to work. Established in 1986

Unfortunately, many office holders in Nigeria, appointed or elected, do not have clear conceptions of the ethical demands of their positions. Nigerians expect that office holders should put in their best and that their best must be magnanimous enough for the good of Nigerians. They must use political ethical standard in order to remove poor and dishonest leadership. The ethics of politics is governance for the common good. Most Nigerian public officers are wallowing in political corruption because the ethics of politics is not being observed.

3.3.1.2. Poor and dishonest Leadership

Politics worldwide means leadership and service to the people. If the leadership no longer serves the people, but serves itself; then it is poor, dishonest, and weak and therefore, corrupt. Unfortunately, the Nigerian people have been witnessing poor and dishonest leadership especially since after independence. Chinua Achebe argues, “The prevalence of corruption in Nigeria is traceable in part to the venality, greed, and inadequacies of the nation’s leaders, both military and civilian.”⁴⁰¹ The inadequacies of the leaders have a lot in common with corruption. Hillary Rodham Clinton observes, “The failure of the Nigerian leadership over many years to respond to the legitimate needs of their own young people, to have a government that promoted a meritocracy, that really understood that democracy cannot just be given lip service, it has to be delivering services to the people, has meant there is a lot of alienation in that country and others.”⁴⁰² Clinton gave reasons for her observation thus, “There has to be recognition that, in the last 10 years, a lot of the indicators about the quality of life in Nigeria, have gone in the wrong direction. Illiteracy was growing, health standards were falling and corruption in Nigeria is unbelievable.”⁴⁰³ This is as a result of poor and dishonest leadership in Nigeria. Clinton’s observation is so *ad rem* that no serious minded Nigerian will disagree with her.

Furthermore, Okechukwu Oko said, “Lacking honest leadership and surrounded by uncaring and plundering leaders, most Nigerians surrendered to the ideology of the market place. This ideology, variously described as ‘settlement’, ‘egungge’, (Yoruba language) or ‘dash’, encouraged Nigerians to accept bribery as an inevitable, even necessary, fact of life. Every Nigerian and every issue had a price tag; the right amount of money could get anything moving.”⁴⁰⁴ The

⁴⁰¹ Achebe C., Op. cit

⁴⁰² Clinton, H., R.,” Clinton blames Nigerian woes on corrupt leaders”, The Nation, 27 January 2010

⁴⁰³ Ibid

⁴⁰⁴ Oko O., Op. cit

Nigerian leadership has made it possible for some corrupt Nigerians to believe in “press the right button at the right time and in the right place, and then you will get the right thing you want”.

Another sign of dishonest and poor leadership is the recklessness in spending the public fund for their private use. Oko further enumerates: “Reckless expenditure of public funds, including unnecessary foreign trips by public officials; inadequate regulation of access to public funds by public officers; inadequate accountability mechanisms; an inadequate and inefficient police force.”⁴⁰⁵ They do all these because they are in control of the public funds. They are not accountable to the people but to themselves. Leiken S. Robert estimates that, “In oil-rich Nigeria some \$12.2 billion in government revenue was diverted to ‘Extra-Budgetary accounts’ between 1988 and 1994, and there are no records of how these funds were used. Nigerians themselves wait in mile-long lines for gas.”⁴⁰⁶ Most of the Nigerian leaders create artificial fuel scarcity so that their agents could make more money from petroleum products which they import.

3.3.1.3. Poor Welfare System - Pensions and Gratuities

From experts in human sociology, we learnt that the first instinct in man is the instinct of survival, self-defence or preservation. This instinct concerns itself with the fundamental question of human existence. However, man strives not only to protect himself from the physical enemies but also from hunger, sickness and natural disaster. Because of this, people look for well paid jobs. An insight into the conditions of workers in Nigeria will help us to know and appreciate the reason why corruption is still in most sectors of society.

Of particular interest is the Minimum Wage Act 2000 that raised the minimum basic salary of the lowest cadre worker in the Federal, State and Local government civil service workers. Abiodun Folawewo argues, “Towards the end of 2001, the Minimum Wage was reviewed upward to 7,500 naira and 6,500 naira for Federal and State Government workers respectively.”⁴⁰⁷ An average

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.(absence of civil education and civic responsibility in the populace; high levels of poverty, unemployment, and under-remuneration; massive tax evasions by citizens and businesses; and non or late payment of contractors by the government)

⁴⁰⁶ Leiken, S., R., The International Forum for Democratic Studies, ‘Controlling the global Epidemic. Foreign Policy, Number 105, (Nigeria now imports nearly 70 per cent of its petroleum. Unfinished pipelines, financed by loans from multilateral development banks that have been pocketed by government officials, tell a large part of the story. Oil earnings do less to feed Nigerians than to enrich their corrupt rulers who instantly transfer their pickings to foreign banks)

⁴⁰⁷ Abiodun O. Folawewo Macroeconomic Effects of minimum wage in Nigeria: A general Equilibrium Analysis, Prepared for presentation at the CSEA Conference 2007: Economic Development in Africa, Oxford, 19 - 20 March 2007

Nigerian federal government worker earns a minimum wage of N7, 500 (about \$60.00) in the wealthier oil states while federal workers in non-oil states earn N6.500 (about \$50.00), other workers including private workers earn N5, 500 (\$40. 00).

According to National Minimum Wage (Amendment) Act 2000, “As from the commencement of this Act, it shall be the duty of every employer (except as provided for under this Act) to pay a wage not less than National Minimum Wage of N5, 500.00 per month to every worker under his establishment.”⁴⁰⁸

This is about \$40 a month. It is from this salary that they must buy food, pay their house rent, transport fare, bills, school fess, books and school uniforms for their children. Back in the villages, they are also expected to contribute for any community project. This is excluding their responsibilities from other numerous dependents.

The increase in the minimum wage in Nigeria alone does not cause corruption. The problem lies in the fact that there is also increase in the prices of things in the market, which do not match with the increase in the minimum wage. In this light, Oluwole Owoye observes, “It is notable that wage increase brought about by Minimum wage is usually counter-productive. Apart from leading to a rise in the general price level, wage increases, are always followed by threat of reduction in government workforce.”⁴⁰⁹ There are two causes of corruption here namely, increase in price and threat of reduction in workforce. The worker is faced not only with the problem of meeting the market price demand but also retrenchment from work. Furthermore, “The gap between public sector’s and private sector’s wages has often been given as one reason for the inefficiency and corruption in the public sector.”⁴¹⁰ This is so disheartening. (cfr⁴¹¹).

⁴⁰⁸ National Minimum Wage (Amendment) Act 2000, 2000 Act No 1 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria

⁴⁰⁹ Owoye Oluwole, “Wage Determination and Strike Activity in Nigeria”, *Journal of African Economics*, 3 1994, pp 447-80.(cfr. absence of civil education and civic responsibility in the populace; high levels of poverty, unemployment, and under-remuneration; massive tax evasions by citizens and businesses; and non or late payment of contractors by the government, Abiodun O. Folawewo, Op. cit.)

⁴¹⁰ Ibid

⁴¹¹ Muo, I., *Nigerian Workers and the challenge of an uncaring government*, This Day, 11 May 2010, “In Nigeria, the key issues in the labour-employer relations, disagreements and negotiations have always been salary-related and these have always been contentious and of little benefit to the workers for these reasons. The government rarely raised wages without prompting and when labour demands-after economic reality has rubbished the existing pay- the government will not respond until labour engages in desperate arm-twisting tactics. Before government responds, things would have further degenerated and what is eventually approved will be a far cry from what was requested or economically meaningful. Before then, the market forces-now visible men and women-would have ambushed the workers in the market-place and thus, make nonsense of the new awards. Almost immediately, another demand for wage adjustment is made and the circle begins afresh. While this scenario will be ameliorated by automatic/regular inbuilt wage-review mechanism that will not solve the problem because the government has failed to fulfill its responsibilities to the workers who are also citizens

Nwabuzor Alexander summarized it thus, “Low civil service salaries and poor working conditions, with few incentives and rewards for efficient and effective performance, are strong incentives for corruption in Nigeria.”⁴¹² This is the lot of most Nigerian workers whether in the public or private sector.

Furthermore, the national minimum wage did not provide a decent standard of living for a worker and his family. Muo Ikechukwu argues, “In a situation where nothing works; where the government takes as much as it can from the citizens and gives as little as possible back in return, the demands on the wages far outstrip what wages are ordinarily meant to carter for.”⁴¹³ Ikechukwu argues that there are certain things wages are expected to pay for, like food, house rent, electricity and water bills. Ikechukwu further observes, “Wages were not meant to take care of generators, private boreholes, expensive private medical hospital bills, unemployment and security. Those who cannot or who will not, steal and loot as much as they can, live miserably; they merely exist because the take home pay cannot take them home.”⁴¹⁴ From Ikechukwu, I can see that there are also some Nigerians who are deliberately not corrupt.

The Nigerian workers who are not corrupt suffer terribly. They live a miserable life. George Ehusani puts it well thus, “Millions of Nigerians, including family heads are now and again ejected out of their rented houses along with their wives and children. They take refuge under the over-head bridges, in motor parks and petrol stations.”⁴¹⁵ With the meagre or no income at all, they do not have houses of their own. In this light Ehusani further opines, “Today the average Nigerian family cannot think of ever owning a house of its own. Even the most senior officer in government service has no prospect of owning a house, if he/she were to rely on his or her honest income alone.”⁴¹⁶ This sounds ridiculous and untrue, but it is the reality. It is obviously a significant cause of corruption.

In Nigeria today, it seems more correct to say that, there is no middle class. Those who are not working, have no hope of getting any help either from the government or from their relatives, because, sometimes those relatives are equally poor. The system has totally destroyed the traditional system that

⁴¹² Nwabuzor, A., *Corruption and Development: New Initiatives in Economic Openness and Strengthened Rule of Law. Ethics*, a publication of Springer Volume 59, Number 1, June 2005 , pp. 121-138(18)

⁴¹³ Ikechukwu, op cit

⁴¹⁴ Ibid

⁴¹⁵ Ehusani O. George, *A Prophetic Church*, Provincial Pastoral Institute Publications, Ede, 1996, P. 7

⁴¹⁶ Ibid, P. 8

promoted solidarity. The system has enthroned individualism, self-centeredness and greediness knowingly or not.

3.3.1.4. The importance attached to wealth

The Nigerian society of today worships wealth. Unfortunately, the society no longer asks how somebody got or made his money. The decisive thing is that, he has the money, and that he spreads it about at big occasions. Emmanuel Ikediegwu captured the situation well in these words, “Obsession with materialism, compulsion for a shortcut to influence and affluence, glorification and approbation seem to be the unavoidable cause of corruption in Nigeria today.”⁴¹⁷ Most Nigerians make frantic efforts to secure wealth or power through illegal means. Abel Ubeku corroborates Ikediegwu thus, “Nigeria is one of the very few countries in the world where a man’s source of wealth is of no concern to his neighbours, the public or the government. Once a man can dole out money, the churches, the Mosques pray for him. He collects chieftaincy titles and hobnobs with all those who govern.”⁴¹⁸ Since the society does not care about the means of the money, the end seems socially acceptable in the society. Those who have not made it become not only envious but also greedy.

In Nigeria today, there are too many means of making illegal money including armed robbery, kidnapping and assassination. Maduagwu M.O corroborates Ubeku thus, “Nigeria also has a culture of affluent and ostentatious living that expects much from ‘big men’, extended family pressures.”⁴¹⁹ This is true. For instance, in the not too recent past, most Nigerian traditional rulers were known for their honesty and sincerity on their royal thrones. They were known to be the protectors of customs, moral and traditions and the custodians of the whole social truth of their kingdoms. Chieftaincy titles were given only to those who were seen to be honest and have done something for the general good.

In fact, chieftaincy titles were rewards for the work well done. It was between the traditional rulers, the recipients and the entire community. The recipients were highly honoured and respected. Their chieftaincy title names reflected what they did for the community and bore the name of the community. For instance, “*Ome udo 1 of Umuchieze*”⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁷ Ikediegwu, E, Corruption is deep in Nigeria, Vanguard Newspapers, 23 July 2003, Lagos

⁴¹⁸ Ubeku, A. K, The Social and Economic Corruption in Nigeria, This Day, 11 June, 1991

⁴¹⁹ Maduagwu, M. O., Nigeria in search of political culture. The political class, Corruption and Democratization. In “Corrupt and Democratization Nigeria, Alex Gboyege ed, vol.13, pp.18-19, 1996, Ibadan.

⁴²⁰ Peace maker the first of Umuchieze, or Peace maker I of Umuchieze

Unfortunately, these days in Nigeria, most people seem to have no regard for tradition and culture any more. They import anything and call it modern or civilization. Some traditional rulers are now more interested in wealth rather than in the protection of tradition and culture of their kingdoms. Chieftaincy titles have become so cheap that every thief can get the title without tears. Once he/she has enough money to throw at the traditional rulers and members of their cabinet he/she can get any title and as many as he likes. To this, Rasa Omenga contributes “This can only happen in Nigeria for a man that is facing corruption charges to be receiving chieftaincy title. Worst still, for the traditional ruler to be defending such a fellow.”⁴²¹ This can be classified as a socio-cultural cause of corruption, where most people want to be socially and culturally respected by all means. Stephen Mamudu said, “Corruption has eaten deep into us that it is being praised and rewarded with chieftaincy titles.”⁴²² The traditional rulers now sell chieftaincy titles to the highest bidders. It has made it exceptionally difficult but not impossible for people to know the real and honest chieftaincy title holder.

Some politicians who bribe the traditional rulers have also political motive. They expect the traditional rulers to reciprocate by giving them political support. From this viewpoint, John Ike Okeke maintains, “It is often said that our leaders (civilian and military) pour money on traditional rulers (over and beyond statutory allowances) as a sign of respect for the rulers. In truth, our leaders (civilian and military) expect to be repaid with political support from the traditional rulers.”⁴²³ The political support is not based on any deep and lasting contributions the leaders have made to the community but the fact that they have given the traditional ruler substantial amount of money to that effect.

In any case, the problem does not lie in the fact that the traditional rulers reward the politicians for the gifts they receive, but that they do it in the name of the community who did not benefit from the gifts. Again, the traditional rulers would not have received those gifts, if they were not traditional rulers. It is because of their public office. This is a terribly sharp diversion from the Nigerian society of the pre-colonial era.

3.3.1.5 .Tribalism and Nepotism

Another cause of corruption in Nigeria and indeed one of the most fundamental causes of corruption is the family system. The natural tendency in Nigeria and

⁴²¹ Rasa, O., Comments on “N21m Scam: Ehindero to Face Trial” in This Day Newspapers, 06.18.2007

⁴²² Stephen Mamudu, Comments on “N21m Scam: Ehindero to Face Trial” in This Day Newspapers, 18 June 2007

⁴²³ Okeke, I. J., Traditional rulers and politicians in Nigeria, Vanguard Newspapers, Lagos, November 18, 2003.

anywhere in the world is to help oneself, one's family, one's extended family and friends. Nigerians believe in *O nuru ube nwanne a gbala oso*.⁴²⁴ Lawrence Harrison acknowledges that, "The extended family system is an effective institution for survival, but it possesses a big obstacle for development."⁴²⁵ The development here should mean community development otherwise it is no obstacle for family development. Indeed, the family system is the strongest tie in the Nigerian socio-cultural system. No person can survive without the type of family system operative in Nigeria. In this line, Daniel Jordan Smith argues, "Corruption must be understood in the context of everyday instances of patronage as they occur in networks of kin, community, and interpersonal association. Kinship relationships and other social ties rooted in similar moral obligations and affective attachments enable Igbos to navigate Nigeria's clientelistic political economy...."⁴²⁶ This is not peculiar to Nigerians; rather it applies all over Africa.

The influence of extended family system and pressure to meet family obligations are enormous. It is so strong that colonialism only weakened it but could not destroy or eradicate it. In this line, Maduagwu clearly sees it as one of the causes of corruption in Nigeria when he says, "In postcolonial Africa, neo-patrimonial regimes become the rule, and the state emerged as an extension of the ruler's household, patronage, ethnic and kinship ties, and bribes became major modes of governance. Corruption funded patronage to Kinsman and crimes have exacerbated regional, tribal, religious, and ethnic divisions over and above the broader interests of the nation."⁴²⁷ It is not only a moral obligation but also a social obligation to help the members of the family.(cfr. also⁴²⁸)

⁴²⁴ That means literally, when your brother cries to you for help do not despise him, do not deny him help, do not turn your back on him.

⁴²⁵ Lawrence Harrison, *Underdevelopment is a State of Mind*, University Press, 1985, p. 7

⁴²⁶ Daniel Jordan Smith, *Kinship and Corruption in Contemporary Nigeria*, Published in: *Ethos*, Volume 66, Issue 3 November 2001, page 344

⁴²⁷ Maduagwu, *Op. cit*

⁴²⁸ Maduagwu, "Loyalty to one's ethnic group is highly celebrated in Nigeria and is often far more important than legal rules in shaping behavior. Obligations to an ethnic group often trump obligations of public office, causing public servants to deviate from established rules proscribing corruption. The pressures of an extended family system and other primordial ties often lead public officers to develop a sense of obligation that is inconsistent with the ethics of public service. In the African culture everyone has obligations towards his community. The higher one ascends the social ladder, the more one is expected to do for one's people. A highly placed government official or politician is constantly under pressure from his people for gifts of money, for jobs and for securing the provision of amenities for his area. Obligations of public office enjoin public officials to discharge their duties in a disinterested manner. The public interest should override every other consideration, including ethnic and family sentiments. In discharging their official duties, including awarding contracts, supervising projects, and hiring and promoting personnel, public office holders should be guided solely by the public interest. They are expected to apply an "arms-length" principle under which personal and family relationships are disregarded in the decision making process. Loyalty to culture, on the other hand, demands that public officials use public office to serve and protect their clan's interest.⁹³ Some ethnic groups subscribe.

3.3.1.6. Bad government policies

According to Patrick S. Ogedengbe, “policy may be viewed as a set of measures which aims to achieve the goals formulated by the public authorities. The goals and measures are influenced by the social and economic structure and development of a country.”⁴²⁹ Following Ogedengbe’s argument, policy is made by the public authorities and the policy should serve the economic and social welfare of the people. It does not matter how viable a policy may be or look, if it does not have any positive effect on the lives of the citizens, it is a bad policy and should therefore be rejected or abolished.⁴³⁰ Government policies are supposed to be for the good of the citizens. If this result is not achieved, then the aim is either wrong or defeated. Sound Politics is only found in good public policy. The policy must serve the needs of the whole people.

At this point, I will take one or two of these public policies in Nigeria as examples of the causes of corruption in Nigeria. Firstly, Structural adjustment programme (SAP) introduced by President Ibrahim Babangida. “Under SAP, unemployment rates soared, food prices increased significantly, and numerous user fees for education and health services were imposed. These hardships did not dissuade the government from SAP, which it believed to be the only approach to the country's social and economic problems”.⁴³¹ In other words, the policy was not good for the people. Still the government did not take into consideration the sufferings of the people. The Whirled Bank Group, clarifies “Structural Adjustment Policies are economic policies which countries must follow in order to qualify for new World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) loans and help them make debt repayments on the older debts owed to commercial banks and the World Bank.”⁴³² This is not to say that individual countries should not consider the common welfare before engaging in this project. It must be seen as a viable option for the welfare of the people.

Moreover, the Bank continues, “SAP requires countries, to devalue their currencies against the dollar; lift import and export restrictions; balance their budgets and not overspend; and remove price controls and state subsidies. By devaluing the currency, and simultaneously removing price controls, the immediate effect of a SAP is to hike prices up three or four times, increasing

⁴²⁹ P. S. Ogedengbe, *Formulating A Good Urban Land Policy for Nigeria*, Ile-Ife, Ibadan, 2004

⁴³⁰ Ibid

⁴³¹ The Library of Congress Country Studies and the CIA World Factbook. June 1991

⁴³² The Whirled Bank Group

poverty to such an extent that riots and corruption are a frequent result.”⁴³³ This is a way the leaders enrich themselves at the expense of the public.

The Whirled Bank Group further observes that, “In dozens of countries, where the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank have imposed (SAPs), the people have seen deterioration in their standards of living. SAP has reduced access to public services, and has produced devastated environments and plummeting employment prospects”.⁴³⁴ It may interest my readers to know that Nigeria is one of the countries that have protested against SAP in various occasions and ways. In most cases, most protesters lost their lives in the process.

I shall give a few examples. According to Adele Segun, “SAP had sapped life out of most Nigerians. The consequences of SAP were mass poverty, misery and general social malaise partly epitomised by anti-poverty protests, riots and strikes across the country.”⁴³⁵ This is a result of SAP. Instead of bettering the lives of Nigerians, they suffered more than before the introduction of SAP.

Furthermore, Kayode Babatunde, observes, “Since 1977, no year has passed without one University or other institution of higher learning being closed because of violent student protests.”⁴³⁶ He further noted that, “The most dramatic were the 1978 “Ali must go” riots, in which all Universities in the country protested a rise in the costs of University education; and the 1989 anti-SAP riots, which claimed many lives.”⁴³⁷ Organized interest groups played a crucial role in national politics. Student Union was one of the organised interest groups. It is clear but sad that the introduction of SAP in Nigeria brought misery to most Nigerians.

The second policy that encouraged corruption in Nigeria in the most unimaginable magnitude is the ban placed on used cars over ten years of age. Yetunde Aluku argues, “The recent ban on importation of *Tokumbo* (used cars) over five years of manufacture is in our opinion, an example of a bad policy that

⁴³³ Ibid

⁴³⁴ Ibid

⁴³⁵ Adele Segun, Online Nigeria Daily News, The Second Military Era. 1984-1999, Wednesday, July 04, 2007(acute food shortages; collapse of infrastructure and of businesses, including banks; abandoned capital projects; inability of government to pay workers’ salaries for months on end; and rising crime rate particularly of drug trafficking, armed robbery, (alias "419") for which Nigeria and Nigerians became notorious internationally and were shunned by many foreign investors and businessmen as high risks.

⁴³⁶ Kayode Babatunde, Nigeria: A Country Study, Organized interest groups played a crucial role in national politics, especially under military regimes when other forms of direct political participation were prohibited.

⁴³⁷ Ibid

could breed corruption.”⁴³⁸ He further argues that, “If this anti-business ban is not reviewed or discarded completely, it will affect the economy, as those making a living in the business will be exposed to poverty, and subsequently, corruption.”⁴³⁹ Victor Dike corroborates Aluku thus, “Businessmen would be forced to bribe the corrupt custom officials (to allow the cars in), causing the state to lose the needed tax revenue. In addition, the policy will divert business to other neighbouring countries.”⁴⁴⁰ The problem is not how old but how road worthy a car is. In Nigeria, some people are specifically employed to make sure that cars are road worthy. When I was younger, I used to hear that a car is placed **off road**. That means, the car is no longer road worthy. These days, most roads are no longer motorable. In fact, in Nigeria today, most roads are no longer car worthy and not the other way round. However, if all the sectors do their work remarkably well, both roads and cars will be worthy of each other.

3.3.1.7. The rule of law in Nigeria.

The lukewarm attitude of those who are supposed to enforce the laws of the land, could lead to people engaging in corrupt practices. In any country where the rule of law is relaxed, that country is bound to fail in all her policies, be they economic, political, educational or medical. Law puts things in order. According to Emmanuel Akanbi, “for almost about two decades, Nigerians kept talking about corruption yet no one was being prosecuted for corruption in any of the superior court[s] of record. The lethargy on the part of the law enforcement agencies or the authorities in dealing with issues of corruption gave the criminally minded corruptees and their cohorts a field day and encouraged them to continue to amass ill-gotten wealth at the expense of the nation.”⁴⁴¹ This is the aspect where every public officer does what he likes without any regard to the law of the land.

I want to summarise this section with the words of Agbu Osita, “Various factors have been identified as instrumental in enthroning corrupt practices. These include, the nature of Nigeria’s political economy, the weak institutions of government, a dysfunctional legal system, a culture of affluent and ostentatious

⁴³⁸ Aluku, Y., A, Corruption in Nigeria: Concept and dimension” in Anti-corruption Reforms in Nigeria sine 1999: Issues, Challenges and the way forward, eds., Enweremadu, D.U & Okafor E.E, IFRA Special Research Issue, Vol. 3, 2009, P.11

⁴³⁹ *ibid*

⁴⁴⁰ Dike, V. Bad Economic Policy, *The Vanguard*, June 4, 2002

⁴⁴¹ Justice Akanbi spoke in Abuja on the corruption status of the country before 1999 and now. The venue was the Conference Hall of the ICPC headquarters, Abuja, while the occasion was the opening ceremony of a one-day interactive seminar [where the] main focus was "Fighting Corruption: The Stakeholders Perspective. As recorded by Vanguard Newspaper, Lagos, September 16, 2005

living that expects much from “big men,” extended family pressures, village/ethnic loyalties, and competitive ethnicity.”⁴⁴² The causes of corruption in Nigeria are as many as its effects and cannot be all enumerated here.

3.3.2 Effects of Corruption

Corruption comes in many guises. Corruption strikes at the core of what Nigeria stands for. Nigerian democracy is not a healthy, efficient, and ethical government. Accountability in Nigeria is unimaginably weak. According to United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC), “Corruption undermines and retards all forms of development, and contributes to government instability, and societal insecurity. It distorts electoral processes, perverts the rule of law, and creates bureaucratic quagmires, whose only reason for existence is the soliciting of bribes. Corruption discourages outside direct foreign investment. Small businesses within Nigeria find it very difficult to overcome the “start-up costs”⁴⁴³ In this line, Kofi Annan says, “Corruption hurts disproportionately by diverting funds intended for development, undermining a government's ability to provide basic services, feeding inequality and injustice, and discouraging foreign investment and aid.”⁴⁴⁴ Corruption should therefore be fought against by all and sundry with every available weapon. Mine here is neither a cry of despair nor that of lamentation. My suggestion is that instead of attacking the devil we see; let us attack the system that causes and supports this devil.

Most Nigerians are unemployed and they have no confidence in the Nigerian government. Nicholas Greiner argues, “Nothing is more destructive of democracy than a situation where people lack confidence in those administrators that stand in a position of public trust.”⁴⁴⁵ Those in charge of the society should make efforts to be trusted by the people they are supposed to be serving. The socio-political institutions/structures are not only to be seen as credible but should unquestionably be credible. In this light Greiner further opines, “If a liberal and democratic society is to flourish, we need to ensure that the credibility of public institutions is restored and safeguarded and that community confidence in the integrity of public administration is preserved and justified.”⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴² Agbu Osita, Corruption and Human Trafficking; The Nigerian Case, in West African Review, 2003

⁴⁴³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC), South Eastern Europe on Corruption

⁴⁴⁴ Kofi Annan, United Nations Secretary-General, In his statement on the adoption by the General Assembly of the United Nations Convention against Corruption. That is why measures must be designed to hit both sides of the corruption equation.

⁴⁴⁵ Nicholas Greiner, (Member for Ku-ring-gai) Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Ethnic Affairs, Second Reading Speech for the Independent Commission Against Corruption Bill, Legislative Assembly, 26 May 1988

⁴⁴⁶ Nicholas Greiner, (Member for Ku-ring-gai) Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Ethnic Affairs, Second Reading Speech for the Independent Commission Against Corruption Bill, Legislative Assembly, 26 May 1988

Greiner is right because, the public officers should not only appreciate but also reciprocate the trust the public has in them. However, this seems to be lacking in the Nigerian society as a result of corruption.

3.3.3. Anti-Corruption Policies and Efforts

Corruption has become an issue of utmost socio-politico-economic significance in recent years. The necessity to take measures against it has become evidently pertinent. The war against corruption in Nigeria started long before the colonial times. Each ethnic group had its own method of fighting this social ill whose details we briefly saw above. Having gone briefly through the history of corruption in Nigeria, we have seen that the military regimes had set up some measures to curb corruption. My aim here is to take a closer look at Olusegun Obasanjo's efforts to curb corruption in Nigeria from 1999 to 2007

Olusegun Obasanjo accused the military of personifying corruption in Nigeria therefore he made the fight against corruption his priority. According to Emmanuel Olayinka Ayoola "At the time the civilian administration came into power, corruption in Nigeria had indeed become a full blown cancer."⁴⁴⁷ In his inaugural speech in 1999, Obasanjo raised the hope of the Nigerian people when he promised to fight corruption head-on. He established the Independent Corrupt practices And Other Related Offences Commission [ICPC] on 29th September 2000. The commission was empowered to fight corruption in all its forms and all other offences related to it in Nigeria. Ayoola further argues, "The swearing-in of Olusegun Obasanjo as the President of Nigeria, marked a new dawn for Nigeria in more ways than one, not least in the fight against corruption."⁴⁴⁸ It is obvious that, the Obasanjo administration went immediately into a fight against corruption and corrupt practices. ICPC has only one mission namely; "To employ all available legal means, to rid Nigeria of greed, avarice and all vestiges of corruption, and thus promote transparency, probity, accountability and integrity in the public and private lives."⁴⁴⁹ Is this a delightful talk accompanied with levity, or is the commission actually fulfilling its mission?

It is arguable, that the commission was either not effective or that the corruption which has become a full-blown cancer, was too cancerous for one commission to cure. This necessitated another commission for the same purpose by the same

⁴⁴⁷ Ayoola E., O., ICPC, A brief History of ICPC, Independent Corrupt Practices And Other Related Offences Commission was inaugurated on September 29th, 2000 by the Nigerian President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo

⁴⁴⁸ *ibid*

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid*

president in 2003. This time, he named the commission Economic and Financials Corruption Commission. [EFCC]. E. A. Owolabi⁴⁵⁰ observes that, ICPC and EFCC are “The two most recent agencies for fighting corruption, whose mandates cover investigation, prosecution and ensuring conviction of offenders, thereby making them a departure from their anti corruption predecessors.”⁴⁵¹ Is it a departure in nomenclature, or action, since they have the same purpose?

The 1999 Nigerian constitution states “The State shall abolish all corrupt practices and abuse of power. It also provides a code of conduct for public officers, which is aimed at eradicating corruption in the public service.”⁴⁵² The law is there to be implemented. It is to the advantage of the Obasanjo administration that Nigeria is practicing constitutional democracy.

However, EFCC has made a success in some areas in bringing some of the prominent corrupt Nigerians to justice. Comparing the two commissions Epiphany Azinge⁴⁵³ said, “At the National Assembly, the fight led to the resignation of the former Senate President and the sacking of the then Minister for Education, in what is described as ‘bribe for budget’ scandal. The ICPC has prosecuted some public officers including Judicial Officers. But the impact of the EFCC is most evident in all sectors of society.”⁴⁵⁴ Maureen Chigbo, corroborates Azinge thus, “ICPC is perceived as a toothless bulldog while EFCC effectively tackled the cases of 419 that pervaded the land. The administration also arrested and prosecuted the former inspector-general of police, for embezzling police funds.”⁴⁵⁵ In addition, Chigbo observes, “The EFCC was politicised during the tail end of Obasanjo’s regime, as it was used by the incumbent to haunt those perceived as Obasanjo’s political enemies, who stood firmly against his Third Term Bid.”⁴⁵⁶ If it is true that Obasanjo used the commission to hunt his political enemies, then those said to have been prosecuted may have suffered the same fate.

⁴⁵⁰ Owolabi, E., A., a retired Deputy Director, International Economic Relations Department, Central Bank of Nigeria and Senior Lecturer CETEP City University, Lagos

⁴⁵¹ Owolabi, E., A., *Corruption and Financial Crimes in Nigeria: Genesis, Trend and Consequences*, The Tell Magazine, vol. 32, number 3, July 23 2006

⁴⁵² The 1999 Nigerian Constitution, Section 15(5), see also sections 66, 172 and 318

⁴⁵³ Epiphany Azinge is a Research Professor of Law, Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies Abuja, Nigeria.

⁴⁵⁴ Azinge, E., *Constitutions, Corruption and Good Governance*, A paper delivered at the world Congress of Constitutional Law. Athens, Greece, 11-15 June, 2007

⁴⁵⁵ Chigbo, M., *From Obasanjo to Yar'Adua, They came, raised hopes and dashed them soon after*, in The Newswatch Magazine, Newswatch Communications Ltd, Tuesday, 26 May, 2009

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid

It is arguable that Obasanjo's administration is corrupt. The examples to prove this are many including the corruption of the 2003 and 2007 elections, which he rigged. In the Nigerian election history, the 2007 was the most rigged and therefore the most corrupt election. Others include presidential library and private university, which he built while in office. It is not a shock but a disappointment to many, that in spite of the threats and ranting of the EFCC prior to the lapse of Obasanjo's administration, only the purported enemies of that administration were being hunted by the EFCC. EFCC pretends not to see other corrupt leaders who happen to be the friends of the administration.

Subsequently, "The yardstick for determining the progress of a corrupt government is to examine the electoral process that brought that government into power. The purity and integrity of the electoral process are the indices for measuring whether a government will be *ab initio* corrupt or will be geared up to fight corruption in all its ramifications."⁴⁵⁷ If the administration is rigged into power, it will maintain the process that rigged it into power. In Nigeria they are called political godfathers. Azinge further opines, "A corruptly enthroned government is bound to have people of like mind in the parliament and as Ministers. Such administration is likely to encourage all forms of corruption."⁴⁵⁸

This is a very dangerous trend and precedence. This level of impunity portends a lot of economic and developmental danger for a nation struggling with the chains of poverty largely caused by corruption. A genuine fight against corruption should not be aimed at scapegoats. It should be thorough and should have no limits to its searchlight. There should be no cosmetic approach in dealing with corruption. Each regime had only given the means of the fight another name, and put their friends and relations as members in order to repay them for putting them in office.

3.3.4 Summary

The price of corruption in Nigeria has been extremely high. The economic, political, social and even the moral foundation of the country have been severely eroded and degraded. Religious institutions, said to be the nation's moral conscience, seem to be involved in corrupt practices. Many Nigerian heads of state at one time or the other, have given the impression that they were fighting corruption. The question remains, how far have they succeeded?

⁴⁵⁷ Azinge, E, op. cit

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid (There will be a consistent financial inducement of members, inflation of contracts, kick-back or upfront payment)

I acknowledge with emphasis the fact that not all Nigerians are corrupt whether in public office or not. There is a saying that in every twelve, there is a Judas. The fact that, there is a Judas among the twelve, does not make the rest eleven Judases. However, the alarming proportion of corruption in Nigeria tends to suggest that all Nigerians are corrupt. Corruption has taken up all the streets, offices and markets of Nigeria. The government claims to be making efforts to eradicate corruption in Nigeria. It must also be acknowledged that, her claims are not convincing enough to effect a positive change in the lives of Nigerians.

In Nigeria, politics seems to be for the corrupt selected few. Most Nigerian politicians no longer go to serve their fatherland but to privatise their fatherland. Nathaniel Ndiokwere captured the picture well in these words, “The struggle for political power in Nigeria is no more borne out of patriotism, but mainly to ascend the top of the social ladder in order to accumulate enough wealth and become disgracefully rich.”⁴⁵⁹ I believe that, this is the reason why, most of them are disgracefully lacking in transparency, accountability, credibility, integrity, impartiality and dedication. They are interested only in their personal welfare at the altar of general welfare. Therefore, corruption continues to harass Nigerians at home and abroad. Those who should fight against it are themselves corrupt. If anything, corruption has got progressively worse in Nigeria today.

Subsequently, the most urgent problem that needs immediate solution in Nigeria is the corruption of the leaders. The establishment of true democracy in Nigeria is a part of the problem as well as the solution. In this case, we should understand democracy as the establishment of political structures that can set up a government that is fully responsible, accountable and corruption free. It is not only a government that is not military but also a government that promotes the respect for human rights and dignity. Can the present politicking and politicians in Nigeria achieve this type of democracy? We are talking about democracy of the whole and of the part. Democracy is where people’s votes count. That is, where people are free to elect their leaders.

Although, it is true in my own view that, there is a failure of leadership in Nigeria, the whole idea of depending only on petroleum exports without thinking of how the Nigerian economy could be improved is the fault of all Nigerians, but especially the leaders. Tackling corruption is therefore, not simply a matter of the EFCC, the ICPC and other legal processes; there must also be conscientious efforts by the law enforcement agencies in Nigeria to fight

⁴⁵⁹ Ndiokwere, N. I., *The African Church Today And Tomorrow*, (VOL I), Snaap Press, Enugu, 1994, P.242

corruption by implementing legally all the legal policies aimed at curbing corruption in Nigeria. There must be a change of attitude by all Nigerians.

Corruption is manifested in many forms but mostly in the forms of bribery, nepotism, extortion, embezzlement of public funds, negligence of duties among public servants and law enforcement agents. Most Nigerians will agree that corruption, especially bribery, has shamelessly become a way of life in Nigeria.

I am of the opinion that revolution from the poor is the only way to stop corruption in Nigeria. This is because the harmful effects of corruption are especially severe on the poor. The poor leaders must be ready to die for their fellow poor ones in order to bring a long term solution to corruption.

All in all, the legal system must, as a matter of importance, be made to function in such a way that the law will become a respecter of itself and not of anybody. The students should be taught the law of the land even in its elementary stage so that they will grow to respect and obey it. This will help in avoiding the present situation where the laws are honoured more in the breach than in the observance.

In fact, bribery, which is a part of corruption, has become so well known in Nigeria that most Nigerians think that it is a part of the governmental policy. In most popular cities of Nigeria like Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, Enugu etc, the tendency to bribe one's way in order to get what one wants is higher. Corruption is widespread in Nigeria, not because Nigerians are more difficult people to rule than people elsewhere, but rather because the government officials do not strictly follow the rule of law. The strict adherence to the rule of law is unavoidable in any society because society is all about inter-personal interaction. Every game has a rule, and the rule of social interaction is the law of the society.

CHAPTER FOUR: SOCIAL TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH ON CORRUPTION

Corruption is at present the major social challenge facing Nigerians and the Nigerian society at all levels. This has drastically devastated the political governance of the Nigerian society. According to The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, "Corruption radically distorts the role of representative institutions. In this way political choices favour the narrow objectives of those who possess the means to influence these choices and are an

obstacle to bringing about the common good to all citizens.”⁴⁶⁰ I believe that the narrow objectives here in question refer to personal or selfish interest at the expense of the wider or common interest or objectives. This is to say that corruption makes egoistic choices, thereby hindering human growth in its entirety. Benedict XVI addressing Africans and African leaders said, “Africans needed a firm determination to change hearts and finally put a stop, once and for all, to corruption.”⁴⁶¹ This is a statement from the Church leader and by extension, a world leader who knows the sufferings of his subjects. In addition, this is a call of the Universal Church to all the local churches to “Cooperate in a valuable manner in the fight against corruption.”⁴⁶² I think this is because the local Churches are nearer the people and know their problems better.

Analysing Pope Benedict’s speeches during one of his visits to some African countries, Peter Henriot said, “It is clear from Benedict's speeches that the Catholic Church simply rejects out of hand any theology or political philosophy that would demand that the Church be quiet about the misery of the people and the mismanagement of government.”⁴⁶³ Mismanagement of government here should be understood to mean corrupt leadership which causes misery for the majority of the people. The local church is called, first and foremost, to fight against any form of corruption that afflicts the society. The Church should not keep mute in the face of corrupt leadership.

Consequently, in Nigeria, where corruption is high in almost every sector, the Church has more work to do. According to Pope Benedict XIV, “In the face of suffering or violence, poverty or hunger, corruption or abuse of power, a christian can never remain silent, but must proclaim the Gospel loud and clear.”⁴⁶⁴ The Church must not remain silent in a situation where people suffer because of corrupt political leadership.

How the Church in Nigeria deals with this social problem today will determine how better it will continue to respond to its vocation as the moral conscience of the society. I cannot therefore, effectively treat or examine corruption in this line of thought without looking at the social teachings of the Church. This is because; the Church's social teaching proposes a perspective of social relationships that are completely in opposition with the practice of corruption.

⁴⁶⁰ The [Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church](#), No. 411

⁴⁶¹ Philip Pullella and Henrique Almeida, Pope Benedict delivered his first papal speech on African soil, Pope urges Africa to end wars, corruption, tribalism, March 17, 2009

⁴⁶² Ibid

⁴⁶³ Henriot, P., Pope Benedict Championed Social Justice” Catholic Information Services, Nairobi, 27 March, 2009

⁴⁶⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, End war, corruption and tribalism, Catholic News Agency, Cameroun, 17 March, 2009

Suffice it to say that the Church especially in Nigeria has a lot to do in order to help those afflicted by corrupt leadership. According to Renato Raffaele Martino, “The Church's social doctrine makes use of all its fundamental guiding principles, which it puts forth as indications of personal and collective behaviour, placing them on the front-line in the battle against corruption.”⁴⁶⁵ The exposition of the principles of social teachings of the Church will therefore help me to analyse the problem of corruption in Nigerian society.

To do this, I shall rely heavily on the teachings of the Vatican II documents especially, “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, 1965, the encyclical of Paul VI titled, *Populorum Progressio*, (On the development of Peoples, 1967), the encyclical of John Paul II titled *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, (On Social Concern, 1987), the documents from the Nigerian bishops and other documents that are relevant to the social teachings of the Church especially with regard to corruption in governance. It must be borne in mind that these documents in most cases do not mention specifically corruption but by allusion and deduction we can see them addressing corruption. Whenever I say the Church in this work, I mean the Catholic Church.

4.1. A General overview of the social teachings of the Church

The Church has not relented in her duty as the prophetic teacher and guide of the human society. She has issued many prophetic statements on issues relevant to human society and political governance. These statements of the Church are generally called social teachings or social doctrine of the Church. Richard Gribble puts it thus, “The term social doctrine designates the doctrinal *corpus* concerning issues relevant to society.”⁴⁶⁶ This shows that the Church has always addressed itself to the socio-politico-economic problems of the society.

Consequently, Javier Hervada ⁴⁶⁷ opines, “The entire teaching of the ecclesiastical Magisterium which applies revealed truth and Christian moral principles to the social order is called the social doctrine of the Church. It

⁴⁶⁵Martino, R., R., The Fight Against Corruption, a paper presented at The International Conference organized by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace on the theme "The Fight against Corruption" was held in the Vatican on 2-3 June 2006

⁴⁶⁶Gribble, R., "Rerum Novarum" and the San Francisco Labor Movement Vol. 9, No. 3, Labor and Lay Movements: Part One, Summer, 1990, pp. 275, [Catholic University of America Press](#)

⁴⁶⁷Javier Hervada holds a chair in Canon Law and the title of Professor of the Philosophy of Law and of Natural Law in the University of Navarre (Pamplona, Spain). He is also editor of the journal, *Persona y Derecho* (Person and Law) and of the Human Rights division of CERSIP. He is a member of the International Association of Legal and Social Philosophy.

applies the Gospel message to social reality.”⁴⁶⁸ Pope Benedict in his visit to Angola urged the Angolan government and by extension the African continent to fight corruption by, "Freeing people from the whip of greed, violence, disorder and guiding it through the path of those principles that are indispensable to any modern democracy.”⁴⁶⁹ It is then the application of moral principles by political leaders so that the society could be better organised for the common good. Hervada further opines, “The purpose of the Church's social teaching is to present to men God's plan for secular reality. It enlightens men's minds with truth and guides them in building up the earthly city according to the divine plan.”⁴⁷⁰ The Church’s social teaching makes use of all its fundamental guiding principles, to organize the society, which Hervada calls earthly city for the common good.

In furtherance of this line of thought, Martino argues, “The principles of the Church’s social teaching are the dignity of the human person, the common good, solidarity, subsidiarity, the preferential option for the poor, and the universal destination of goods”⁴⁷¹ These principles respect man and distribute the societal natural resources equitably. On whether corruption helps these principles to effectively work for the common good, Martino argues, “Corruption stands in radical contrast to all these principles. It exploits the human person, disdainfully using men and women for selfish interests.”⁴⁷² The exploitation of the human person is done by the corrupt leaders who ignore the principles of the social teachings of the Church for their private interest. In fact, corruption “represents an obstacle for achieving the common good, because it is based on individualistic criteria of selfish, cynicism and illicit special interests.”⁴⁷³ Corruption is more interested in using public office for private gain than the common interest.

The idea of private and public interests has already created a dichotomy between individuals in the society. It creates inequality in the society in terms of common good and human dignity. But in human dignity there is basically, unquantifiable and unqualifiable, indefinable and inseparable human equality.

4.2. Dignity

⁴⁶⁸ Hervada, J, *The Principles of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, International Features Service Publications, Vol.XXV, Number 427, January, 1983

⁴⁶⁹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Ibid*

⁴⁷⁰ Hervada, J, *Ibid*

⁴⁷¹ Martino, R. R., *Ibid*

⁴⁷² *Ibid*

⁴⁷³ *Ibid*

The word dignity is used in all fields of life. It is used in ethical, religious, political and even moral discussions in relation to man. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English says, "Dignity is a sense of your own importance and value, the fact of being given honour and respect by people."⁴⁷⁴ The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary says, "The English word dignity is rooted in the Latin *dignitas*, the state of being worthy of honour or respect."⁴⁷⁵ Mette Lebech argues that "Dignity means the standing of one entitled to respect, and it refers to that which in a being induces or ought to induce such respect: its excellence or incomparability of value."⁴⁷⁶ For Lebech, dignity is superior to other things. The Dictionaries and Lebech talk about dignity in general where honour and respect are involved. The honour and respect could also be given to anything including animals.

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia says that, "Dignity is generally proscriptive and cautionary: in politics it is usually synonymous to 'human dignity', and is used to critique the treatment of oppressed and vulnerable groups and peoples."⁴⁷⁷ I am interested in the political aspect of this definition, which has to do with oppression of human beings by bad or corrupt governance. In this work, I am strictly concerned with human dignity.

4.2.1 Human dignity

The problem of the dignity of man is as old as human history. Each era has tried to understand it from different perspectives. Roberto Andorno eloquently observes, "The concept of human dignity carries a long history of being at the forefront of ethical and juridical reflection."⁴⁷⁸ In this way, it is not only a socio-theological problem but also a socio-philosophical problem. Andorno further argues, "The notion of human dignity is usually associated with supreme importance, fundamental value and inviolability of the human person."⁴⁷⁹ It is this inviolability of the human person which is fundamentally and ontologically attached to human person that this work is interested in.

Human dignity could be described as the importance or worth or value of human person. Lebech argues, "Human dignity means the status of human beings

⁴⁷⁴ Sally Wehmeier et al, Op.cit, P.425

⁴⁷⁵ The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary, New York, Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 398.

⁴⁷⁶ Lebech, M., 'Towards a Definition of Human Dignity', Vial Correa and Sgreccia (eds.): *La cultura della vita: Fondamenti e dimensioni*, Supplemento al volume degli Atti della VII Assemblea Generale 1-4 marzo 2001 (Città de Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2002) pp. 87-101

⁴⁷⁷ From Wikipedia, the free Encyclopedia

⁴⁷⁸ Andorno, R., The Paradoxical Notion of human dignity, *Journal of medicine and Philosophy*, vol.34(3), 2009, pp. 223-240

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid, Andorno

entitling them to respect, a status which is first and to be taken for granted. It refers to their highest value.”⁴⁸⁰ Suffice it to say that human dignity is the highest value which cannot be taken away from man. The dignity of man is equal to all men.

4.2.2. Equality of human dignity

Gaudium et Spes asserts, “There is a basic equality between all men.”⁴⁸¹ No person has a more dignified human dignity than the other. In other words, the human dignity of the public officers is not superior to the rest of the people in the society. However, Gaudium et Spes rightly asserts, “There are rightful differences between men but their equal dignity demands that there be fairer and more human conditions.”⁴⁸² The emphasis is on the equality of the human dignity and not on the way people are differently talented. With equality of dignity in mind, the created goods should reach every man in the society in a government that is not corrupt. Pope Benedict urges all, “Particularly lay people with social, economic and political responsibilities, to be guided by the Church's social teaching, in order to contribute to the building up of a more just world where everyone can live with dignity.”⁴⁸³ The equality of all men deals with the dignity of man and political leaders should endeavour to uphold it. This is also one of the principles of social doctrine of the Church. Human dignity cannot be removed from a government or leadership that seeks common good.

Looking further at the equality of human dignity, Hervada opines, “The condition of being a person causes man to occupy a special place in the created universe. Before other men he is an equal, a person, and he establishes with them relations of mutual understanding.”⁴⁸⁴ Hervada does not specifically say which or what type of equality. I think the equality of man as a person in the society should be differentiated from excellence and achievements. A thing is not equal to itself but to another, but in this case, equality of human dignity is not equal to another but to itself. Therefore, equality helps man to establish a social relationship in the society in order to live an authentic human dignity where the common good are equitably shared.

Still more on equality of human dignity Herbert Spiegelberg argues, “Equality of human dignity refers to the minimum dignity which belongs to every human

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid. Lebech

⁴⁸¹ Flannery Augustin, ed, Vatican Council II, Dominican Publications, (Gaudium et Spes, No 29), 1988, P.929

⁴⁸² G S, No. 29

⁴⁸³ Pope Benedicts Visit to Africa, lessons learnt, The Ghanaian Journal, March 30, 2009.

⁴⁸⁴ Harvada, J., ibid

being *qua* human. It does not admit of any degrees. It is equal for all humans. It cannot be gained or lost.”⁴⁸⁵ Roberto Andorno corroborates Spiegelberg thus, “The references to human dignity in legal and ethical instruments concern an intrinsic and universal perspective, it requires that people never be treated in a way that denies the distinct importance of their own lives.”⁴⁸⁶ (cfr⁴⁸⁷) Man’s dignity bestowed equality on him so that man is equal to man and not to God or anything else. Man establishes a relationship that is mutual which helps man to adore his dignity in relation to others. The mutual relationship in society is natural to man. Gilbert Meilaender captured the picture better thus, “The opportunity to live, and the opportunity to participate in a society, are metaphysically foundational; they correspond to our universal created nature as human beings.”⁴⁸⁸ Therefore, man has a metaphysical foundational right even to a society. In such a society man does not participate only as an observer but also as an actor because there is equality in dignity. Man seeks a social relationship with man because they are equal. Man does not seek a social relationship with animals or trees because they are not equal.

Furthermore, The Catechism of the Catholic Church puts it clearer in these words “Being in the image and likeness of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone.”⁴⁸⁹ His dignity differentiates him from other creatures and makes him superior to them. Man is not a thing but an image of God. It is an intrinsic worth or value. Hervada opines, “This singular position and man's value as an image of God is what we mean when we speak of the dignity of the human person.”⁴⁹⁰ Therefore, it is inborn. It is not bought or given by human beings.

Still more, Ndigbo of Nigeria call this intrinsic value or dignity *Mburu puta uwa* (in-born). It is not hereditary rather it is in the nature of man. John Paul II calls human dignity “A transcendental value that is always recognised as such by those who search for the truth.”⁴⁹¹ It is a transcendental value because it is not a value placed on ordinary things or on man, by man but a value placed in man transcendently by the transcendent God. The Catechism of the Catholic Church asserts, “Social justice can be obtained only in respecting the

⁴⁸⁵ Spiegelberg, H., “Human Dignity: A Challenge to Contemporary Philosophy,”

⁴⁸⁶ Andorno, R., Ibid

⁴⁸⁷ Ronald Dworkin “The principle of dignity refers to the intrinsic importance of human life” Dworkin, R., *Life's Dominion. An Argument About Abortion, Euthanasia and Individual Freedom*, New York, Vintage, 1994, p. 236

⁴⁸⁸ Meillaender, G., Human Dignity and public Bioethics, *The New Atlantis*, Number 17, Summer 2007, p.33

⁴⁸⁹ Catechism of the Catholic, op.cit p.357

⁴⁹⁰ Harvada, J., ibid

⁴⁹¹ John Paul II, Message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace, No. 2, 1 January 1999

transcendent dignity of man.”⁴⁹² John Paul II and Catechism of the Catholic Church use transcendence to show the fact that it is really *Mburu puta uwa* (in-born). I think the general point is that human dignity is inherent in man and cannot be wiped out or destroyed by any type of governance. This fact is recognised by every anthropo-socio-cultural history of any society at all times.

Apart from the biblical account of the writer of Genesis and the social teachings or doctrine of the Church concerning the importance, social nature and dignity of man, the importance of social nature and welfare of man is also emphasized in every socio-cultural society. For example, Ndigbo of Nigeria call man, *nma ndu*, which is also written as *madu*. *Nma* means beauty or good, while *Ndu* means life. This is a collective noun meaning the beauty or good of life. This refers to all humanity, male and female together. Ndu has right to everything that keeps it beautiful namely; food, housing, clothing and development of mind and body otherwise, its beauty is destroyed. Secondly, Ndigbo show the supremacy of man among other created things by the names they give to their children. Examples of such names include, *Madukaku* for male child. (Man is supreme, superior to all other created things and all wealth), while *Nwakaego* is for female child, (which means the same thing as *madukaku*).

Therefore, the hypothesis upon which this work revolves is the theological as well as socio-cultural principle that all human beings are equal in dignity not only because they are created in the image of God but also because according to Ndigbo they are the beauty of life, and so they have equal rights to all the basic necessities of life and the same opportunity of developing their different talents for the common good of the society. Every individual person has right to the common good. John Onaiyekan summarised it well in these words, “Man is an absolute value in himself, precisely because God has put his Spirit in each and every human being. (Gen 1:27; 2:7) This is why no human being has any absolute right over another.”⁴⁹³ Neither the leader nor the led is superior to the other in human dignity.

4.2.3. Human dignity and human rights in the Nigerian constitution.

As expected, Nigeria has enshrined in her constitution the rights and dignity of man. Some of these rights include: “Right to dignity of human person, Right to freedom from discrimination, Right to freedom of movement.”⁴⁹⁴ Article one of

⁴⁹² Catechism of the Catholic Church, op. cit, No. 1929, P.468

⁴⁹³ Onaiyeka O. John, Thy Kingdom come, Democracy And Politics in Nigeria Today, A catholic Perspective, Faith And Life Series vol.13, Daily Graphics Nigeria Limited, Ibadan, 2003, pp11-12

⁴⁹⁴ The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Chapter IV, titled Fundamental rights.

the United Nations Organisation on Universal Declaration of Human Rights says, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”⁴⁹⁵ They all have one interpretation, namely; human dignity should be respected and not violated.

This is to show that the Nigerian constitution has respect for the fundamental rights of man even if it did not trace its origin to the fact that man was created in the image of God as the social teachings of the Church did. This shows also that man should not be pushed into social or economic irrelevance or dustbin because of bad and corrupt governance. However, I would be reluctant to admit that the Nigerian political leaders are respecting this aspect of the nation’s constitution. I would be more inclined to say that it seems as if corruption in Nigeria has vehemently neglected that part of the constitution because corruption in Nigeria has to do with the vehement violation of human dignity and rights by bad political leadership. This is why I am interested in corruption in political leadership in order to see whether the leaders really respect and acknowledge human dignity.

4.2.4. Human dignity in the society.

There are certain rights that help man to live a dignified life in the society. According to Gerhard Droesser, *“Die Grundrechte sind eine der wesentlichen und notwendigen Ausdrucksformen moderner Gesellschaft. Sie sind normativ auf die Freiheit des Einzelmenschen bezogen, und auf seine individuelle Selbstentfaltung und Selbstbestimmung.”*⁴⁹⁶ For Droesser, the fundamental human rights are very necessary for human freedom, which in turn brings human development. Gaudium et Spes puts it better in these words “Human rights are inviolable rights which man ought to readily have access to in order to live a genuinely human life.”⁴⁹⁷ They ought to be readily available to all in the society and not to a few as is the case in Nigeria. The society has to make the situation possible for those things to be available. Rights like housing, clothing and food should not be denied man.

4.2.5. Food, Housing and Clothing.

⁴⁹⁵ The United Nations General Assembly on, December 10, 1948

⁴⁹⁶ Droesser Gerhard, Menschenrechte in der Alltagspraxis, in *Moderne Kulturen Relationen*, Herausgegeben von Gerhard Droesser und Stephan Schirm, Band 1, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 2002, P.21 (Fundamental Human rights are an essential expression of modern Society. They also offer standards for the freedom of the individual, his personal development and self-determination /self-definition. Translation mine)

⁴⁹⁷ Gaudium et Spes, No. 26

It is not only in the nature and dignity of man to have food but also his right to have access to food. *Gaudium et Spes* listed “food, housing and clothing as man’s inviolable rights which man ought to have readily access to.”⁴⁹⁸ The United States Catholic Bishops further submit, “Decent housing is a basic human right.”⁴⁹⁹ The Bishops are not interested in any type of housing but a decent housing worthy of the name. Man has a basic right to a decent housing. Nothing should prevent man from having access to all these rights not even corruption and corrupt practices. The purpose of food is to make man live an authentic human life. In this light, American Catholic Bishops submit, “The right to a truly human life logically leads to the right to enough food to sustain a life with dignity.”⁵⁰⁰ Therefore, the provision of food means that man is not only satisfying his hunger but also dignifying his humanity.

Furthermore, the right to food was also enshrined in the United Nations document thus, “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.”⁵⁰¹ In line with this declaration, Benedict XVI argues that “Food is a universal right which has no discrimination or distinction.”⁵⁰² The lack of this basic right to food hinders the progress of not only the society but also the individuals in the society. The right to food is the basis for other fundamental human rights. The lack of this basic right makes such situation a fertile ground for corruption. Public authorities should endeavour to make all the human rights available to the people in the society.

4.3. *Gaudium et Spes* on Public Authorities and the common good

Gaudium et Spes sees man as the master of all earthly creatures, and, accordingly, considers that all things on earth should be related to man as their center and crown.⁵⁰³ It is to this reciprocal relationship between humankind and human society that the authors of *Gaudium et spes* alluded in insisting that “Man’s social nature makes it evident that the progress of the human person and

⁴⁹⁸ Flannery Austin(ed), Vatican II Council, “*Gaudium et Spes*”, No. 26

⁴⁹⁹ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “The Right to a Decent Home: A Pastoral Response to the crisis in Housing” 20 November 1975

⁵⁰⁰ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops “Catholic Reflections on Food and Farm workers”, November 18, 2003

⁵⁰¹ Universal Declaration of Human rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948. Article 25, paragraph 1

⁵⁰² Benedict XVI, “Food to be Recognised as a universal Human Right”, Message to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organisation day, Rome, October 16, 2007

⁵⁰³ Flannery Austin(ed), Vatican II Council, “*Gaudium et Spes*”, No. 25

the advance of society itself hinge on one another.”⁵⁰⁴ This means that what one enjoys or suffers affects the other.

Man develops all his potentials in the society in order to reach his destiny. *Gaudium et Spes* listed family and political society among the important instruments that help man to come to full development. “Among those social ties which man needs for his development, like the family and political community, relate with greater immediacy to his innermost nature; others originate rather from his free decision.”⁵⁰⁵ Family and political community are natural to man, but other associations like political party, football clubs etc are his free choices. However, the political community, which is my point of interest here, is a larger society of people of different idiosyncrasies and needs. None of them can satisfy all his needs without the help of others, hence the need to come together.

Gaudium et Spes puts it thus, “Individuals, families and the various groups which make up the civil community are aware that they cannot achieve a truly human life by their own unaided efforts. They see the need for a wider community, within which each one makes his specific contribution every day toward an ever broader realization of the common good.”⁵⁰⁶ This part of the document builds on the needs of the individuals in the society and suggests that everyone must contribute to the growth of the society for the common good. This lends itself to the heart of the document’s central message of the dignity of man and the organization of the common good⁵⁰⁷ for the use of all and one in the society.

Consequently, “The persons who make up the political community are many and varied; quite rightly, then, they may veer towards widely differing points of view. If the political community is not to be torn apart, an authority is needed to guide the energies of all toward the common good, not mechanically or despotically, but by acting above all as a moral force based on freedom and sense of responsibility.”⁵⁰⁸ In this case, the functions of the authority would be tabulated so that no member of the society is disadvantaged. The authority which is above the people comes from the people. That means, the people have

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid

⁵⁰⁵ ibid

⁵⁰⁶ Flannery Austin(ed), Vatican II Council, “*Gaudium et Spes*”, No.74

⁵⁰⁷ *Gaudium et spes* defines the common good as the sum of the conditions which allow social groups and the individuals within them to flourish. GS, no. 26

⁵⁰⁸ Flannery Austin(ed), Vatican II Council, “*Gaudium et Spes*”, No.74

the authority, which they give to a few of them for the common good. They can take it away from them, if they exercise it for their private gain and not for the common good.

Since people come together freely to establish a political community, *Gaudium et Spes* advises, “Political authority, must always be exercised within the limits of the moral order and directed toward the common good. When authority is so exercised, citizens are bound in conscience to obey. The responsibility, dignity and importance of leaders are indeed clear.”⁵⁰⁹ John XXIII insists that, “a sane view of the common good must be present and operative in men invested with public authority. They must take account of all those social conditions which favour the full development of human personality.”⁵¹⁰ Although the people give the political leaders the authority to organize the society for the common good, they must obey their leaders while the leaders must work for the common good.

It is obvious that in having correct understanding of the common good, the public authorities may be influenced by their private interest. John XXIII argues that, “The common good embraces the sum total of all those conditions of social life which enable individuals, families, and organizations to achieve complete and effective fulfilment.”⁵¹¹ *Gaudium et Spes* corroborates John XXIII thus, “The political community exists for the sake of the common good, in which it finds its full justification and significance, and the source of its inherent legitimacy.”⁵¹² Common good is the aim of any political society or community.

Gaudium et Spes further advises that, “Where citizens are oppressed by a public authority overstepping its competence, they should not protest against those things which are objectively required for the common good; but it is legitimate for them to defend their own rights and the rights of their fellow citizens against the abuse of this authority.”⁵¹³ This means, where the public officers are organizing the common good for private good, they are oppressing the rest of the people. However, those being oppressed should resist the oppression with the help of the principles of the natural aim of the society, which is the common good. Oppression here is understood to be corruption, which also entails the use of public office for private gain.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid

⁵¹⁰ Pope John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, 1961, No., 65

⁵¹¹ Ibid No. 74

⁵¹² *Gaudium et Spes*, No. 74

⁵¹³ Ibid

The document *Gaudium et Spes* is interested in human beings, especially those who are afflicted by corruption caused by bad leadership or bad governance. The council fathers observe that, “God intended the earth and everything in it for the use of man. Thus, under the leadership of justice and in company of charity, created things should flow fairly to all.”⁵¹⁴ I am not sure of the meaning of charity here as used by the council fathers. Therefore, it is difficult to say that charity is wrongly used. However, I think there is something objectionable about this way of putting the matter. I believe charity has to do with choice, but in fundamental human right, man has no choice. In this work, fundamental human right is different from charity and the one does not substitute the other.

Moreover, if created things are intended for human beings and if human beings have fundamental rights to them, then charity should not help justice in distributing these created goods. Every man has equal right to the created things. No man should be at the mercy of another in things pertaining to human rights. I prefer Paul VI’s argument that, “If the earth was created to provide man with the necessities of life and the tools for his own progress, it follows that every man has the right to get what he needs from the earth.”⁵¹⁵ Therefore, charity as help or mercy does not play any role here. We must recall that Paul VI is interested in the integral development of man as man’s fundamental right. The only middleman, or conveyor of these created goods to man are the principles of the social teachings of the Church which emphasise good governance.

However, the council fathers maintain that, “All offenses against human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, degrading working conditions, and their like are criminal: they poison civilization.”⁵¹⁶ If they poison civilization, it means that they corrupt leadership or governance and therefore militate against the principles of common good. Those who perpetrate these social evils are the corrupt leaders. In corrupt leadership only a few people live dignified human lives while the majority live subhuman life. In other words, the created goods are available only to a few. In this line *Gaudium et Spes* regretted that, “These basic personal rights are not yet being respected everywhere.”⁵¹⁷ This is the case in Nigeria today. *Gaudium et Spes* further lamented that “A huge number of people are denied these goods while others have more than they need and even throw away some.”⁵¹⁸ Paul VI advises that, “No one may

⁵¹⁴ Ibid, No. 69, .P.975

⁵¹⁵ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, No. 22.

⁵¹⁶ *Gaudium et Spes*, No. 27

⁵¹⁷ Ibid, No. 29

⁵¹⁸ *Gaudium et Spes*, No. 63

appropriate surplus goods solely for his own private use when others lack the bare necessities of life.”⁵¹⁹ But even if others do not lack the basic necessities of life, the rulers have no right to use their public offices for private gain.

This is why the principles of social teachings of the Church should be the conveyor of the created goods. These principles are also known as or described as practical justice, which are always at war with corruption and corrupt leadership in the society. This war is neither against the rich nor for the poor, nor is it against charity and scarce created goods, but it is for an even distribution of the common good. The doctrine ensures that every person has the same opportunity of development, irrespective of the scarcity of the created goods in the society.

The Vatican II Fathers acknowledge the positive growth in governance in many parts of the world but regret the fact that in some others there is need for a greater increase on the recognition of human dignity. “Men are repudiating political systems, still prevailing in some parts of the world, which hinder civil and religious liberty or victimise their citizens through avarice and political crimes, or distort the use of authority from being at the service of the common good to benefiting the convenience of the political parties or of the governing class.”⁵²⁰ This is unfortunately the situation in Nigeria where the political or governing class govern at the expense of the whole common good.

Pius XI condemned the alarming concentration of wealth and power in the socio-economic realm, at the expense of the common good. He calls for the reestablishment of a social order based on the principle of subsidiarity, which is the empowerment of the lower authorities. “Wealth which is constantly being augmented by social and economic progress must be so distributed among the various individuals and classes of society that the common good of all, be thereby promoted.”⁵²¹ This is the promotion of the dignity of man and the common good.

This is an urgent global call by the Church to the political leaders to eradicate all forms of political corruption and to make way for total development of man in the society. John Paul II brilliantly opines, “It is not a question of raising all peoples to the level currently enjoyed by the richest countries, but rather of concretely enhancing every individual’s dignity and creativity.”⁵²² Some people

⁵¹⁹ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, No. 23

⁵²⁰ *Gaudium et Spes*, No. 73

⁵²¹ Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, 1931, No.57 O’Brien J. David and Shannon A. Thomas, Op. cit. P.55

⁵²² John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, No. 29

should have more and others less, but no man should have more at the expense of the others, or simply put, no man should be deprived of his natural rights. But in any country like Nigeria where there is corruption, deprivation of the common goods by the corrupt political rulers is the order of the day.

Just like in the document *Gaudium et Spes*, Popes have written many encyclical letters concerning the common good in the society. This work will limit itself to two of such documents as examples of such letters.

4.4. The popes on the common goods

4.4.1 *Populorum Progressio*: Common good and the political leaders

The encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, “On the Development of Peoples” by Paul VI, is concerned with the problems of global development and progress towards the common good. It is closely connected to the document of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council; it distinguishes itself on its emphasis on human holistic development. The work is addressed to all strata of global society. Its first paragraph is the summary of the encyclical and also the main point of this section. “The progressive development of peoples is an object of deep interest and concern to the Church. This is particularly true in the case of those peoples who are trying to escape the ravages of hunger, poverty, endemic disease and ignorance; of those who are seeking a more active improvement of their human qualities.”⁵²³ The improvement of human qualities in its entire ramification is the concern of this encyclical. There are specific points aimed at political leaders, business leaders, religious leaders, financiers and aid agencies but the work as a whole is also addressed to all people of good will.⁵²⁴

My work is interested in the areas addressed to political leaders, because the decision of political leaders will either “permit the fullness of authentic development, a development which is for each and all the transition from less human conditions to those which are more human,”⁵²⁵ or they will make man live in a more subhuman condition. The Pope explains less human condition as “oppressive socio-political structures, whether due to the abuses of ownership or to the abuses of power, to the exploitation of workers or to unjust

⁵²³ John VI, *Populorum Progressio*, No. 1., March 26, 19667

⁵²⁴ Cfr, John VI, *Populorum Progressio*, No. 3, Today it is most important for people to understand and appreciate that the social question ties all men together, in every part of the world

⁵²⁵ Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*: On the Development of Peoples, paragraph 19, in David J. O’Brien and Thomas A. Shannon (eds.), *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*: Orbis Books, 2006:244

transactions.”⁵²⁶ Although social nature of man is natural, social structures are made by the political leaders who are the organizers of the social society for the common good. Pope Paul VI includes, “lack of material necessities for those who are without the minimum essential for life, the moral deficiencies of those who are mutilated by selfishness as less human conditions.”⁵²⁷ As we know, selfishness is another name for corruption. If the political leaders are so selfish, it is arguable that the people they govern will live in less human conditions under their leadership. However, the situation is not one sided. The Pope shows us another side of the coin in these words, “Conditions that are more human: the passage from misery toward the possession of necessities, victory over social scourges, the growth of knowledge, the acquisition of culture, increased esteem for the dignity of others, the turning toward the spirit of poverty, cooperation of the common good.”⁵²⁸ All these positive conditions make the full development of man possible and they are signs of lack of corrupt leadership in any society.

Human development is integral, there should be no half measures, or if I should use a word that is now the most common parlance in Nigerian politics; there should be no marginalization of the weak in the society by the corrupt leaders. Paul VI highlighted the economic source of war and stressed that economic justice is the basis of peace, but warned that if present inequalities continue, there is the danger that the poor may resort to violence.”⁵²⁹ Therefore the task of putting right the structures of power and economics is an urgent one and a source of integral human development.

The problem of corruption in Nigeria is the abuse of power for private gain, compounded by the abuse of private ownership. The corrupt leaders who abuse power are also the real owners of wealth in Nigeria. They set up an oppressive and exploitative politico-socio-economic structure in Nigeria from which they benefit immensely. However, Paul VI is not against legitimate acquisition of wealth, but says: “The exclusive pursuit of possessions becomes an obstacle to individual fulfilment and to man’s true greatness. Avarice is the most evident form of moral underdevelopment.”⁵³⁰ In other words, the legitimate acquisition of wealth can lead to greed and disunity, “Then we see hearts harden and minds close, and men and women no longer gather together in friendship but out of self-interest, which soon leads to opposition and disunity.”⁵³¹ At any rate, the

⁵²⁶ Ibid, paragraph 21

⁵²⁷ Ibid, paragraph 23

⁵²⁸ Ibid

⁵²⁹ Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, No.19

⁵³⁰ Ibid, paragraph 19

⁵³¹ Ibid

concern of my work is the common good. People are free to gather out of self-interest but not at the detriment of the common good.

Though Paul VI wrote this document more than forty-three years ago, he prophetically described the present day situation in many parts of the world but especially Nigeria in the following words, “The injustice of certain situations cries out for God’s attention; lacking the bare necessities of life, they cannot act on their own initiative, they cannot exercise personal responsibility, they cannot work toward a higher degree of cultural refinement or a greater participation in social and public life.”⁵³² Most Nigerians are not allowed to participate in the political decisions affecting them because the greedy political leaders set up corrupt socio-political structures for their selfish interest. For instance, most Nigerian children cannot go to school because their parents cannot afford the school fees. In this case, they cannot develop their potentials. On the other hand, the children of the corrupt leaders go to school and develop their potentials. They come back and continue from where their oppressive parents stopped. Paul VI warns that where people are so pushed to the wall, the tendency to, “Recourse to violence, as a means to right these wrongs to human dignity is a grave temptation.”⁵³³ This is, of course, a temptation that is most often very hard to resist.

Most Nigerians have fallen into this temptation of violent means of fighting corrupt structure in Nigeria. This can be seen in the activities of the Niger Delta crisis under the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State Of Biafra (MASSOB) of Igbo extraction, Odua Peoples' Congress (OPC) of Yoruba extraction, Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP). Ken Saro-Wiwa comes to mind here. There are also many other movements in Nigeria fighting corrupt leadership and structure in Nigeria.

Furthermore, Paul VI suggested that in order to remedy the unjust situation, care must be taken not to cause more injustices, because “A real evil should not be fought against at the cost of greater misery.”⁵³⁴ Unfortunately, this prophesy of Paul VI is manifesting itself very negatively in the lives of Nigerians. Today more people are dying not only of hunger but also of strayed bullets from these movements. This occurs when they engage themselves in exchange of bullets with the agents of the corrupt leaders, the latter acting in the name of keeping

⁵³² Ibid, No. 30

⁵³³ Ibid

⁵³⁴ Ibid, No. 31, P.247

law and order. Often, some Nigerian children in the affected areas stay away from school, for fear of being killed by the strayed bullets; and others do not go to school because their parents cannot afford the school fees. These people are covered with thick walls of ignorance and helplessness. They are in a very thick darkness and whenever they see a reflection of light, they will pull down the walls by any means in order to go for the light.

Having identified the negative and positive aspects of the world problem of underdevelopment, Paul VI challenged all but particularly those who can do most by reason of their education, their office, or their authority.”⁵³⁵ The aim is not just eliminating hunger and reducing poverty or fighting wretched conditions, though this is an urgent and necessary task. It is rather the building of a human community where men can live truly human lives, free from servitude to other men.⁵³⁶ The Pope then advocates a situation where the society works for the common good, thereby ensuring possibly complete human development.

4.4.2. Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (On Social concerns).

John Paul II marked the twentieth anniversary of Paul VI’s *Populorum Progressio* with a new social encyclical titled *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*. This document is on issues of global corruption and the ever widening gap between the rich and the poor, which has given rise to the division of the human community into First World, Second World and Third World. Because of corrupt structure in all the so-called worlds, there are also first class citizens, second-class citizens and third class citizens.

John Paul II said that this division seriously compromised the unity of mankind as well as human dignity. For him, “the phenomenon of “superdevelopment” involving consumerism and waste, existing side by side with misery and indigence is inadmissible. He stressed that the poor distribution of the goods and services originally intended for all is one of the greatest injustices of today.”⁵³⁷ John Paul II reiterated that thirst for power and all-consuming desire for profit are two major factors, which hinder human development and promote corruption and corrupt practices. He therefore called for the adoption of the spirit of “solidarity” whereby, the rich and powerful on the one hand will be ready to share, while the poor and the weak on the other should reject passive and

⁵³⁵ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, No. 32

⁵³⁶ *Ibid*, No. 47

⁵³⁷ John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*

destructive attitudes. “In effect, beyond the rights which man acquires by his own work, there exist rights which do not correspond to any work he performs, but which flow from his essential dignity as a person.”⁵³⁸ There are certain rights, which flow from his nature as a social being.

With all these in mind one understands that the main concern of the Church in her social teaching is the whole welfare of man – the common good. The popes have always written in order to condemn corrupt leadership and to suggest ways forward. Their writings have always been a source of positive motivation and encouragement to both the leaders and the led.

The situations are not different in the present day Nigeria. Nigeria needs a reinterpretation of the encyclicals now more than ever, and must bring all the principles of social teachings of the Church to their practical reality. This will also help Nigerians to positively look at the present situation in order to benefit from the principles of the social teachings of the Church.

4.5. The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) on the society

At this juncture, it is very pertinent for us to take a good look at the opinions of the CBCN on the society, in order to appreciate their contributions in the fight against corruption in Nigerian society. This will also help me to make useful suggestions on how to curb this social ill wind that blows nobody any good. In this section, I shall use the designations *CBCN*, the Nigerian Bishops or simply the Bishops interchangeably.

4.5.1 Perfect temporary society

In their joint pastoral letter of October 1 1960, the CBCN discussed at length the need for a political society that is truly free from all social ills. Since then, this has continuously formed the basis of their statements with regard to fighting corruption in Nigeria. The CBCN compares the state to a form of the family thus, “Just as the family form of society must exist if men are to reproduce themselves in a human way, the political form of society or state must exist if men are to live fuller life than they could as isolated individuals.”⁵³⁹ The comparison of the state to a family has a double meaning. On the one hand, the family is natural to man on the other hand since no member of the family has all that he needs, there should be a harmonious methodology of making things

⁵³⁸ John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, No.11

⁵³⁹ The Church in an independent Nigeria, A Joint Pastoral Letter of the Nigerian Hierarchy, October 1, 1960, in Pastoral Letters and Communiqués of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria, 1960-2002, The Voice of the Voiceless, Peter Schineller(ed), Daily Graphics Nig, Ltd, Ibadan, 2002, p.4

available to all the members of the family. Perhaps, this prompted the Conference to argue that, “Men work together in the state to achieve a three-fold end: firstly, common ideal of temporary well-being, secondly, maintenance of internal order and thirdly the defence of the state from unjust external aggressor.”⁵⁴⁰ It is arguable that the maintenance of internal order would include freedom from corruption which could also be seen as internal aggressor.

Subsequently, CBCN argues: “A society where highly developed education for all, where the postal services and total communications are working, where economic and security activities are well co-ordinated is a perfect temporary society.”⁵⁴¹ It does seem as if the Bishops are proposing heaven on earth, but I rather believe that they are only talking about ideal society. It is not a state where every member is an authority; I rather think that it is a state where every member has authority. The authorities are to be organised in organs in order to achieve the aims of the state as the Bishops listed above; in order to have a perfect temporary society where the distribution of the common good is the aim.

4.5.2 Temporary society and political authority

The aims of the state are achievable only through the established organs. According to the CBCN, “The chief of these organs is the political authority or government. For the Bishops, this political authority is made up of the members of the state who unify and direct all the energies of all the members as they pursue their ends together.”⁵⁴² I dare to opine that here, what the Bishops call all the energies are the authorities that every member of the society has.

It is obvious that without the political authority the state will be in disarray. There will be survival of the fittest. Therefore, the power of political authority is defined by its functions to the people. The Bishops listed some of the functions of the authority to include, firstly, “the promotion of the general welfare of the members of the state by the use of means which is intrinsically good.”⁵⁴³ This is to say, that there are means, which are intrinsically evil in achieving the ends of the state. These are the corrupt means. However, the Bishops listed the positive means to include among others, “setting up of hospitals, regulating conditions of factory work and providing for unemployment relief.”⁵⁴⁴ This is achievable in a corruption free society and not in the corrupt society like Nigeria. Therefore, for

⁵⁴⁰ *ibid*

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid*

⁵⁴² *ibid*

⁵⁴³ CBCN, *loc. Cit*, p.5

⁵⁴⁴ *ibid*

the Bishops, the perfect temporary society provides its citizens with all the basic necessities of life. It is a society that has no corrupt leaders.

Subsequently, in relation to corrupt attitudes, the Bishops argue, “The Church must continue to play her prophetic role of being the conscience of the society. In view of this role we urge members of our flock to rid themselves of all corrupt attitudes and practices.”⁵⁴⁵ The Bishops are not specific on the political leader members of their flock but rather on all members. But I think this applies more to the leaders, because he who pays the piper dictates the turn.

The Nigerian Bishops have enormous task to perform because according to Paul VI, “Christian Communities must analyse with objectivity the situation proper to their country and draw the principles of directives for actions from the social teachings of the Church.”⁵⁴⁶ The situations are not the same all over the world. This is the more reason why the Bishops of each country should interpret the message of the social teachings of the Church as it applies to them. It is the duty of the Bishops to bring the message of social teachings of the Church to the practical realities of their local Churches.

With this in mind therefore, the African Bishops deplored in no uncertain terms “the power drunkenness of some African leaders that have caused and continue to cause misery and deny millions of Africans their personal freedom and fundamental human rights.”⁵⁴⁷ This situation is worse in some African countries than in others. In my opinion, it is worse in Nigeria, considering the economic and human wealth of this country. The Bishops lamented that “oppressive leadership in most African countries deny their people especially the poor and the weak their basic human rights.”⁵⁴⁸ They were specific on the leaders because it is the leaders who shape the social structure. It is obvious that whenever there are injustices in any country, the poor and the weak are the most vulnerable.

Furthermore, John Onaiyeka, argues, “The Bishops draw their inspiration from the social teachings of the Church to fulfil their responsibility in “guiding the nation along the path of sanctity, equity, peace and good government for a decent society.”⁵⁴⁹ The Bishops should use the culture and language of a people to interpret the message of the social teachings of the Church as it applies to

⁵⁴⁵ CBCN Communiqué, Sustaining the Hope of our people into the new millennium, Jos, September 6-10, 1999

⁵⁴⁶ Paul VI, Octogesima Adveniens, 1971, Nos. 3&4

⁵⁴⁷ Message from the 12th Plenary Assembly of the Episcopal Conference of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) held at Rome, 30th September to 9th October, 2000, Nos. 5&6

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid

⁵⁴⁹ Onaiyekan, J., Forward to Pastoral Letters and Communiqués of the Catholic Bishops` Conference of Nigeria, 1960-2002, The Voice of the Voiceless, Peter Schineller(ed), Daily Graphics Nig, Ltd, Ibadan, 2002, p, iv

them. There is also the fact that as Christians, “better than any other religious group in the nation, we do have at our disposal a coherent and valid set of principles and norms for public life. These principles and norms are encapsulated in the body of the Catholic social doctrine.”⁵⁵⁰ However, for the sake of precision, this section is interested only in the aspects of the Bishop’s writings that concern corruption in the political society of Nigeria.

4.6. The statements of the CBCN on corruption in Nigeria

The Nigerian bishops have made powerful statements against corrupt leadership in Nigeria. I do not intend to go into the history of their statements in this work. I intend to bring out some of their statements since after independence as they concern the common welfare of the Nigerian people. In their post independent joint pastoral letter the Bishops insist that “Nigerians, especially the country’s leaders must primarily look to the common well-being of all the members of the political community.”⁵⁵¹ The improvement of the Nigerian society for the welfare of all is the concern of the Bishops because, “Any government that comes into power is committed to improving steadily the standard of living of the Nigerian people.”⁵⁵² However, the Bishops sadly observe that “There is still a widespread of what they call dash-bribe system that is slowing up the economy, causing death on the roads and impeding efficient administration. They argue that those who take bribes betray the trust of the nation.”⁵⁵³ There is no specification on which sector of the society one could find this bribery saga. However, I believe that if it impedes efficient administration then it is mostly among the leaders who are the real administrators of the society.

After 25 years of independence, Nigerians were still in misery. The Bishops questioned: “What is freedom of the people without freedom from poverty, ignorance, disease, gross inequality in the sharing of the country’s wealth?”⁵⁵⁴ There is no freedom in the midst of corruption. They further observe, “There are far too many selfish people really in search for money and name, who are exploiting politics for their own purpose.”⁵⁵⁵ In this case, politics which means organisation of the society for the common good became an exploitative way of

⁵⁵⁰ *ibid*

⁵⁵¹ The Church in an independent Nigeria, A Joint Pastoral Letter of the Nigerian Hierarchy, October 1, 1960, in Pastoral Letters and Communiqués of the Catholic Bishops` Conference of Nigeria, 1960-2002, The Voice of the Voiceless, Peter Schineller(ed), Daily Graphics Nig, Ltd, Ibadan, 2002, p.7

⁵⁵² *Ibid*, p.9

⁵⁵³ *Ibid*, p.11

⁵⁵⁴ CBCN Joint Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria, “Listen: The Church speaks, Lagos, 1 October 1985. No. 5

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid*, nr 39

making money for some selfish leaders. However, the Bishops still see politics as a sacred duty to serve the people. They argue that “Even Though many of our politicians betrayed the trust placed in them by the Nigerian people, it does not make politics any less sacred duty of service to the people.”⁵⁵⁶ Ten years later, the Bishops noticed that, “Unfair competition, bribery, corruption, rising costs, embezzlement are now recurrent themes in Nigeria.”⁵⁵⁷ That is to say that corruption has taken over the governance of the Nigerian society.

Acknowledging the frequent assertion that “the problem with Nigeria is inept, corrupt and ineffective leadership, the Bishops commended those leaders who have striven to rule with fairness for the common good.”⁵⁵⁸ The common good is also for the ordinary Nigerians. The Bishops address the ordinary Nigerians with regard to corruption. In this work, I understand their ordinary Nigerians to mean those who have no political or economic power.

4.6.1. Ordinary Nigerian citizens

In addressing the so-called ordinary Nigerians, the Bishops acknowledge the fact that “High handedness, oppression and misuse of authority for private gain exist also in low places.” The Bishops give the following instances to buttress their point; “The messenger who takes a two naira (\$1) bribe from an applicant, the driver who pinches from petrol money entrusted to him, each will embezzle millions if they had their hands on the nation’s treasury.”⁵⁵⁹ Therefore, for the Bishops ordinary Nigerians are those low workers. The question is who then is free from corruption? They further argue, “If corruption and oppression thrive in high places, it is because the social atmosphere tolerates, condones and often encourages such vices.”⁵⁶⁰ I think there is something objectionable about this way of putting the matter. The Bishops do not tell us who makes the atmosphere favourable for corrupt practices. They are yet to tell us how those mentioned above, like the messengers, are being treated by their bosses or employers. I dare to opine that Nigeria is made fertile for corruption by the leaders. Furthermore, in the Nigerian politics money plays a very big role. Even the Bishops acknowledge the fact that the definition of our choice now is money. “In a

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid, No.51

⁵⁵⁷ The Church and Nigerian social problems: Memorandum of the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria, Claverianum press, Ibadan, p.7

⁵⁵⁸ CBCN, The Nigeria we want, September 11-16, Abuja, 1989

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid

poverty stricken society such as Nigeria, the electorate have become very vulnerable.⁵⁶¹ They are now very vulnerable because the leaders made it so.

It is obvious that, at least in certain contexts and for certain purposes, I make claim that there are some ordinary Nigerians who are corrupt. I am also of the opinion that there are some ordinary Nigerians who are ready to fight corruption but if it is not supported by the leaders, the efforts of the ordinary Nigerian will bear no positive fruits. The Nigerian Bishops argue in this line thus, “A broad spectrum of our citizenry from the Church leaders, elder statesmen, to university teachers and students have called the attention of our leaders to the inexorable drift to apathy, despondency and despair in the nation.”⁵⁶² The Bishops forgot to mention that some ordinary Nigerians have lost their lives in the fight against corruption. This has helped to widen the gap between the haves and the have-nots. There is no difference between middle class and lower class Nigerians because of corruption. According to the Bishops, “poverty has wiped out the middle class which used to bridge the yawning gap between the haves and the have-nots.”⁵⁶³ In this situation how does one expect an ordinary Nigerian to feed? The tendency is for him to feed by any means available to him.

Still more, I would be reluctant to say that people should not look for money to do whatever they like but they should not do it at the expense of the common good. John Paul II put it better thus; “Freedom consists not in doing what we like, but in having the right to do what we ought.”⁵⁶⁴ Any right has the right to consider others in the society. Gerharad Droesser corroborates Paul II thus, “*Wie jede ethische Perspektive, so dient auch die politische zur Selbstorientierung: Wer bin ich? Wer ist mein anderer? Was müssen, können und sollen wir miteinander tun? Unter welchen Voraussetzungen, in welcher Weise und um welcher Zweck willen führen wir unser Leben?*”⁵⁶⁵ Man must or should know that he is not alone in the society. Man must ask the above questions as stated by Droesser in order to live harmoniously with other people in the society.

Moreover, Droesser argues, “*Wenn das Wort Freiheit eine Realität bezeichnen soll, muss man versuchen den Wortsinn in Verstehen menschlicher*

⁵⁶¹ CBCN, The Truth shall make us free, Jos, September 9-11, 1992

⁵⁶² Ibid (Those who took this position were often dismissed with such tags as radicals, unpatriotic, subversive and disgruntled elements)

⁵⁶³ Ibid

⁵⁶⁴ John Paul II, Homily in Orioles Park at Camden Yards, 8 October, 1995

⁵⁶⁵ Droesser, G, “Politische Ethik” in *Angewandte Ethik und Religion*, Thomas Laubach (Hrsg.), A. Franke Verlag Tübingen und Basel, 2003, p.256 (Like every other ethical perspective, the political view is used for self orientation: Who am I? Who is my other (neighbour/opponent)? What must/could and should we do with each other? Under what conditions, how and to what end will we live our lives? Translation mine)

*Wirklichkeiten zu erschliessen. Das ist, was die Menschen angeht und was sie besorgen und zwar sowohl je für sich, wie miteinander- durch soziales handeln, das in hervorgebrachten und veränderbaren Ordnungen sich gestaltet.*⁵⁶⁶ In other words, people should play the game of politics according to its rules. They should not harass the people or the society simply because they are in authority.

4.6.2. Nigeria: A sinking nation

In 1994, the Bishops addressed the then head of the military junta Sani Abacha on the state of the Nigerian society. The Bishops observed among other things that “despite all efforts and promises, the condition of our people has worsened. The political Impasse has deepened, and the nation has become more polarise than ever.”⁵⁶⁷ Promises and efforts must be concretised in the lives of the citizens. In furtherance of this point, Droesser argues, “*Der Freiheitbegriff bleibt dem Staatshandel nicht nur widerständig, sondern erweitert sich zur Leitidee politischer Ordnung, die sich die Bürger selbst geben. Die abstrakten Menschenrechte sollen in den bürgerlichen sich konkretisieren.*”⁵⁶⁸ Every political theory must be put into practice in the lives of the people. The Nigerian Bishops sadly observe that there were more words than actions. They lamented that “For a good lot of people in our country today, the quality of life is well below human dignity. Basic necessities like food, shelter, healthcare and good education are getting more and more out of the reach of the average Nigerian.”⁵⁶⁹ The economic refugees have no refugee camp. Every street of the federation is their camp. In this lamentable situation in Nigeria, many Nigerians have left the country to be refugees in other countries.

Furthermore, the Bishops call the situation “a prolonged distress in which there is widespread hunger and starvation because the country is callously devastated by greedy and opportunistic Nigerians.”⁵⁷⁰ In this sinking nation called Nigeria,

⁵⁶⁶ Droesser, G, Freiheit und Befreien, Vorlaufende Überlegungen zur fundamentaltheologischen Idee des Ethischen, in Glauben in der Welt von heute, Theologie und Kirche nach dem Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil, Band 1: Profilierungen, Franz, T und Sauer H, (Hg), 2006, p.235 (If the word freedom is really intended/meant, one has to understand literally its meaning in relation to human realities. That is, in terms of human beings (people) and what concern and worry them, depending on how they relate with each other through social actions which are both designed and changeable. Translation mine)

⁵⁶⁷ CBCN Memo to the head of State and commander in chief of the armed forces of Nigeria, General Sani Abachi, Abuja, 26 September 1994

⁵⁶⁸ Droesser, G, Ibid, (The concept of freedom extends to the guiding principles of political order which are given by the citizens. The abstract human rights should be concretized in (the rights of) the citizens)

⁵⁶⁹ CBCN, ibid, Memo to the head of state, 1994 (The Bishops further lamented that many Nigerians are economic refugees in a country abundantly blessed by God. The unemployed youth are losing hope in their future and in the future of their country)

⁵⁷⁰ CBCN, A call of change of heart and for the rule of law, Enugu, September 12-16, 1994

the Bishops observed with deep concern that, “Some are thrown out on the streets to roam like lunatics, while others are living under subhuman conditions. In the face of this sinking distress, many Nigerians are trooping out to foreign countries where some of them live and work under intolerable conditions.”⁵⁷¹ That means, Nigerian refugees in Nigeria as well as Nigerian refugees abroad live under subhuman conditions because of corrupt leadership in Nigeria.

Subsequently, the Bishops observed that “Apart from a very privileged few, the quality of life of the people has continued to deteriorate.” For the Bishops, this also causes corruption. They maintain that “because of this sinking situation, many Nigerians were forced to adopt all kinds of survival tactics, with little or no ethical consideration.”⁵⁷² How can one think ethically in a situation that has to do with life and death? In this case, it is ‘seek ye first the protection of your life and other things will follow’. The unethical consideration in doing things in Nigeria accounts for so many other social vices. For instance, “There is still general insecurity to life and property especially as armed robbers seem to operate at will and with impunity, everywhere and at every hour.”⁵⁷³ The impunity aspect of the operation of the armed robbers and kidnappers is a cause for great and deep concern, because it is with the same impunity that the leaders siphon the country’s money for their private use. I can say that the armed robbers and kidnappers are just the products of the corrupt Nigerian society.

Still on the sinking situation of the Nigerian nation, the Bishops argue that, “The basic principles of social morality that must underpin the political life of a nation include honest and responsible administration of the common resources of the nation, and a climate of decent behaviour that encourages hard work and makes it difficult and risky to be dishonest and lazy.”⁵⁷⁴ If the leaders of a society are corrupt, as it is the case in Nigeria today, then the situation is already favourable for any social evil. In such society, the reward for indiscipline, dishonesty and any form of corruption is little or no risk for corrupt practices. In most cases, it would even be very difficult to see corruption as a social evil. The people establish the wrong principle of “after all everybody does it” to blind their consciences.

In this light the CBCN painfully observes that “corruption in Nigeria has become so pervasive that many now accept it as the Nigerian way of life, or the

⁵⁷¹ Ibid

⁵⁷² CBCN, *Moving the Nation truly Forward*, Makurdi, September 4-9, 1995

⁵⁷³ Ibid

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid.

Nigerian way of doing things. People now speak about a so-called Nigerian factor when they mean corruption.”⁵⁷⁵ This is to say that corruption is found in all the sectors of the Nigerian life. The Conference further lamented that “The socio-economic and political system itself appears to be built on corruption and thrives on it. However, the Bishops, while loudly condemning corruption in all its forms, shapes and sizes encourage those who fight corruption to keep it up.”⁵⁷⁶ This is all to show that the Nigerian nation is sinking into corruption.

4.6.3. Identification of the causes of corruption in Nigeria

There are different forms of corruption in Nigeria. It is logical that the causes of corruption will be as varied as its forms. The Nigerian bishops identify some of these varied causes of corruption in Nigeria to include cultural and socio-economic dimensions as we saw above. However, the Bishops added that “Poverty and denial of access to goods and benefits of the society, as well as the absence of social security, functional or reliable infrastructure and utilities, such as electricity and water supply leads many to seeking costly alternatives that are far beyond their legitimate earnings.”⁵⁷⁷ An instance of the alternative to pipe born water is private boreholes, to electricity is a generator. In Nigeria today there is no steady supply of electricity by the government. People try to buy at least the cheapest generating plant for electricity. Some of these generators are called “I pass my neighbour,” (I am richer/better than my neighbour).

In a society where the leaders are only interested in what concerns them and not the common good, there is the tendency that people will look for alternatives by any means excluding ethical means. The Bishops believe that “underlining all these causes are greed and avarice.”⁵⁷⁸ Though the Bishops did not say whether it is the leaders or the led that are greedy and avaricious, I believe that both sides are not free from greed and avarice.

4.6.4. Consequences of corruption in Nigeria

Among the consequences and effects of corruption in Nigeria, the Bishops identified the following as the most devastating, “Distress of economy, discouragement of foreign and local investors, and lack of confidence in the public institutions like hospitals, schools and judiciary and unprecedented

⁵⁷⁵ CBCN, Corruption In Nigeria Implications of Nation Building, Lagos, September 22-26 1999

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid

⁵⁷⁸ ibid

lowering of moral and ethical standards in all sectors.”⁵⁷⁹ This is why unfortunately the Nigerian nation is said to have totally sunk into corruption.

4.7. Summary

All the works on the social teachings of the Church and of other theologians consulted unanimously agree that the organisation of the society should be for the common good of the people and not for private interest. The old and new testaments of the bible condemn corruption too.⁵⁸⁰ Corruption is seen as socio-economic-political evil, which is the denial of natural human rights. Natural human rights are those rights that are in-born, or in Igbo language “*mburu puta uwa.*” Man has no choice over them. In this line therefore, those rights are fundamental to human authentic existence. We also saw that right is not charity. Charity comes from choice of man, but man has no choice in human rights. For instance, man does not choose to be hungry, to need shelter or cloth. “Food sustains life itself; it is not just another product. Providing food for all is a Gospel imperative not just another policy choice.”⁵⁸¹ The same principle of imperativeness applies to all other human rights. Their provision is not just a choice of the leaders but a compulsory duty of the leaders. The social teachings of the Church advocate a social structure where all in the society have access to the basic necessities of life and the respect for the human dignity. It will be truly very comical for anybody to talk about social justice or any type of justice without addressing the dignity of man and the fundamental human rights.

Nigeria is a country so blessed by God with enormous natural and human resources that one can correctly say that Nigeria has more than a fair share of these resources. Unfortunately, corrupt leadership has succeeded in denying most Nigerians access to the common good. Most Nigerians live sub-human life while a few wallow in the luxury of influence and affluence of the common good, at the expense of the majority. Only a few corrupt, greedy, selfish, visionless and reckless leaders have access to the common good.

⁵⁷⁹ CBCN, Corruption In Nigeria Implications of Nation Building, Lagos, September 22-26 1999, in Pastoral Letters and Communiqués of the Catholic Bishops` Conference of Nigeria, 1960-2002, The Voice of the Voiceless, Peter Schineller(ed), Daily Graphics Nig, Ltd, Ibadan, 2002, p395

⁵⁸⁰ You will accept no bribes, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and is the cause of the ruin of the upright, Exodus 23:8, cfr also, Exact no more than the appointed rate. No intimidation, no extortion, be content with your pay, Luke 3:13

⁵⁸¹ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Reflections on Food, Farmers and Farmworkers, November 18, 2003

From all I have said, we can see that corruption is the most worrisome problem facing Nigeria today. If this problem is at least reduced to its barest minimum, Nigeria will be a better society.

GENERAL SUMMARY, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

General summary

Corruption is a trans-socio-cultural phenomenon that devastates any socio-political society. It is a social problem found in all generations. It seems to be more in one society and less in another. However, its effects are the same, namely; lack of basic necessities of life and lack of respect for human dignity. Corruption is artificial, manmade, and man's inhumanity to man.

From the definitions of corruption by the authors I consulted, it is clear that corruption is not only the use of public office for private gain, but also the use of public office to purposely afflict pains, misery and hardships on others. In Nigeria, this is done with impunity. I have been able to trace the origin of the present day corruption in Nigeria to pre-colonial era. Corruption was found in those ethnic groups that make up the present day Nigerian nation. The tribes came into the accidental entity, named Nigeria, with their different styles and forms of corruption. In this way, forms of corruption were not only multiplied, by the number of people who are corrupt, but also by the number of tribes that make up the present day Nigerian nation. It became an enormous social problem, for the leaders to organise the different forms and styles of corruption. The most common among the corrupt practices, was bribery (*iri aka azu* or *iri ngari* in Igbo language). What differed could be degrees and styles with which they operated. Corrupt practices became as sophisticated as the society of the time. The more sophisticated a society is, the more sophisticated the corrupt practices will be.

Therefore, it may not be an exaggeration or an overstatement to say that Nigeria was founded on corruption, judging from the situation and circumstances that brought the tribes together as one nation. In any case, since corruption is not peculiar to the Nigerian or pre-colonial Nigerian society, it follows necessarily and logically that Britain could not have stopped it. Rather, Britain used a new dimension of corruption in colonising Nigeria thereby, making governance an empowerment of the leaders and not of the people.

Subsequently, the early Nigerian leaders found it difficult to abandon their native way of corrupt practices. They rather combined it with the ones they

directly or indirectly learnt from the British government. In this way, corruption in Nigeria became more complicated than ever, and seems to be difficult to fight but not impossible to eliminate or at least minimise.

Unfortunately, most Nigerians, think that politicians and public office holders as well as highly placed businessmen and women are only the corrupt Nigerians. In this way, they make corruption a social crime of only the wealthy. This is a dangerous sign of helplessness. This is a situation, where people see themselves as helpless. However, Nigerians should not lose hope, they should not despair. After all, not every Nigerian is corrupt. There is still the possibility of eliminating corruption in Nigeria by Nigerians. I would like to make some suggestions on how to curb corruption in Nigeria.

Suggestions

Equal opportunity

People are not equally talented or gifted, even though, they live in the same society. It is obvious that, if they are given the same opportunity to develop their talents, they could do that with happiness. Despite all these, there will still be people who are better than others in some way or the other. However, one cannot be better than others in all things. If everybody were given the same opportunity to develop, the society would develop for the common good, which is the aim of the society.

Bill Clinton acknowledged this fact in the following words, “The developing nations were faced with the challenge of building a system that would give people the opportunity to excel, and also reward hard work. We say, there is too much corruption in the developing world, what is there is little capacity. This creates a vacuum, where all sorts of bad things happen. People need an organised way to pursue their objective.”⁵⁸² If there is an organised way of doing things in Nigeria, most people would be more satisfied and more fulfilled, when they see their efforts rewarded by better living conditions.

Furthermore, Clinton argues, “Intelligence, ability and effort are evenly distributed all over the world, but effective systems are not. The ‘miracle economies of Asia, did not come about only as a result of intelligence and hard work, but also because of a system that will reward people’s efforts and intelligence.”⁵⁸³ Here, I notice that Clinton’s emphasis is on the system of

⁵⁸² Bill Clinton, „Why Africa is under-developed“ This Day Newspaper, 18 July 2006, Abuja.

⁵⁸³ Bill Clinton, „Why Africa is under-developed“ This Day Newspaper, 18 July 2006, Abuja.

Government, which I earlier called structure. People need a viable structure in order to make the process function well. Nigeria has no reason to be underdeveloped, since there are also intelligent and hardworking Nigerians. Nigeria needs only to create a viable system, an enabling environment to tap the very many talents in Nigeria. This will help to curb corruption.

If I must give an example with the school system, I would start with the government of Germany that gives every child equal opportunity to go to school. In Germany, Primary and secondary schools are free and compulsory. The government has created a system that gives all the German children the same opportunity to go to school and develop their intelligence and talents for the common good. Yet, some children are more gifted than others.

Elimination of “godfatherism” in politics.

Godfatherism is a hindrance to social development because it looks for personal gain. Jibrin Ibrahim observed; “Godfathers are defined as men who have the power personally to determine who gets nominated and who wins”.⁵⁸⁴ This means that people’s votes do not play any role in the election. In fact, the rulers are imposed on the people. It has no credibility, because due process is not followed in the election. When the godchildren get the public office, they only work for their godfathers and not for the people. Therefore, Nigerians must as a matter of urgency eliminate *godfatherism* in order to rid Nigeria of corruption.

Employment opportunity

The only way to minimise corruption in Nigeria, is to create job opportunities. Workers’ salaries should also be regularly and promptly paid. “A labourer deserves his wages” (Luke 10:7). This has to do with food, house, and clothing, as well as hospitals and security of lives and properties.

The government is not a ghost. It cannot directly provide everybody with job opportunity. However, it can indirectly do it, by creating enabling opportunities for private businesses to flourish. In this way, many people will be self-employed, thereby eliminating corrupt practices.

Punishments and Rewards

The Nigerian society should reintroduce the principle of rewarding honesty and hard work, as it was in the pre-colonial era. This makes for more honest and hard work. This does not only improve personal output but also improves the

⁵⁸⁴ Dr. Ibrahim Jibrin, BBC Focus On Africa Magazine, Nov 10, 2003

economy for the common good. Those who are rewarded are encouraged, to give their talents for the good of the society.

Those who offend the Land must also be rewarded according to the law of the land. There should be no sacred cows. Nobody is above the law. The law is the measure of all behaviours in the society. In this case, all the leaders and public office holders in Nigeria, past and present, should be probed, and if found guilty, they should be made to face the full wrath of the law.

Change of attitude and mentality in politics and places of work.

The attitude and mentality of some people especially, those at the helm of affairs in Nigeria, should be changed. The mentality and attitude of business as usual should stop. People should go to public office to serve, and not to enrich themselves at the expense of the common good. Politics is seen as service to the people, and not as service to self.

Law enforcement agencies

The law enforcement agencies should dutifully enforce the laws. There is no need for commissions against corruption, if the law enforcement agents do their work well. More commissions against corruption means more corrupt avenues for corrupt leaders. Therefore, more punitive measures should be introduced and enforced by the law enforcement agencies. In this way, those found to have embezzled public funds should be made to repay every kobo stolen. In addition, the law enforcement agencies should not only be well paid but also well equipped for the job. Informants should also be given the most security confidence, so that they are not exposed to danger of losing their lives. The question of paying the law enforcement agents well and promptly is an issue that is equally applicable to all other Nigerian workers.

The elimination of “everybody is doing it” mentality

The culture and mentality of “after all everybody is doing it” should be avoided. In fact, Nigerians should know that every Nigerian is not corrupt. In fact, most Nigerians are not corrupt. Unfortunately they are not noticeable because they do not play leading roles in governance or public office. There are only a few people who participate in governance. Nigerians should participate in governance, in order to make corrupt practices extremely difficult for the few greedy ones who are at the present manifestly corrupt.

One Nigeria

Nigerians should first and foremost see themselves as human beings, who must live human lives. Secondly, they must see themselves as Nigerians coming from different ethnic groups. They should not be deceived by those corrupt leaders who use the politics of ethnicism and the propaganda of marginalisation to enrich themselves. Most of them send their children abroad, so that they will develop their talents and come back home to rule your own children.

The led are in the majority; logically, they should be more powerful. If they continue to run away from their responsibility, corruption will continue to have its way, and the led will continue to suffer. The led should stop blaming the leaders. They should stand up; take the bull by the horn, and say no to inept leadership. Presently, there is only one Nigeria.

The Church should do more

The Nigerian Catholic Bishops, alive or dead, have spoken and written a lot on how to fight corrupt practices in Nigeria. Most individual priests and lay Catholics have also written too much in this regard. Nigerian Christians and Muslims have also prayed so much in the past years. It is my opinion that Nigerians have heard and read enough of those skilled homilies and sermons. Without throwing their prayerful attitude to the dustbin of despair, they want the Church to make a practical lead in the fight against corruption. Nigerians need Nigerian Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Nigerian Nelson Mandela, in order to give the fight the seriousness it deserves. The Church can start by making her schools affordable to the poor children. She can go further to treat all her workers well, through payment of decent salaries and provision of healthy working conditions. There is still a very big chance for Nigerians to heal and free Nigeria of corruption. All hope is not lost.

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