

## Revisiting Post-Independence Leadership in Alobwed' Epie's *The Death Certificate*

Eleanor Anneh Dasi<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

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Most colonized African countries and Cameroon in particular took over the partial management of their political, economic and social affairs after independence from colonial rule. However, the persistent and continuous exploitation, oppression and suppression, added with the system of “divide and rule” witnessed during colonial rule destroyed the communal spirit of the traditional African society and substituted it with individualism. Thus a continuation of the legacy of dominance and inequality is witnessed way after the departure of the colonial masters. In Cameroon specifically, the transfer of leadership seemed to create another form of internal colonization as the leaders were simply perverted imitators of colonial values. In the process of amassing wealth and satisfying their selfish egos, state resources are drained, the rate of unemployment keeps increasing, paving the way to general unease amongst the unprivileged class. At the backdrop of Confucian principles of good governance, this paper examines the ways in which power is abused and misused by those of the ruling ethnic clan in fictional Ewawa, and how this results in a state of insufficient development and national inertia. It also looks into the possibilities of redress and avenues for change.

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**Keywords:** leadership, anarchy, ethnic stereotyping, domination, bad governance, political will

### Introduction

It is common knowledge that leadership in most post-independence African states is faced with indescribable crisis that anchors on bad governance. At the dawn of independence, the ordinary citizens expected a taste of real freedom – justice, equality and security - from the anticipated objectivity with which their socio-political affairs were to be managed. But disappointingly, these hopes were dashed by the unorthodox and unscrupulous means used by leaders to acquire and/or maintain socio-economic and political supremacy. Vices such as occultism, embezzlement, corruption, and general misappropriation and mismanagement of public funds, economically empowered those in high government positions, while collective interest was disregarded. The continent witnessed, and is still witnessing, socio-political and economic irregularities and upheavals since the break of independence. Literary writers and critics have not been indifferent to these events as they, in their different depictions, expose the ills plaguing contemporary Africa with a view to transform the situation. Armah presents his native Ghana as a country that stinks of moral, social, political and economic filth. The principal theme in one of his outstanding novels, *The Beautiful Ones are not yet Born* (1968) is corruption, a vice which has eaten deep into all layers of society. Achebe in *A Man of the People* (1966) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987), like Armah, illustrates how power is corrupted by the political elite in Nigeria. Similarly, Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross* (1980) portrays the different levels of corruption in modern day Kenya, symbolized by the “devil's feast” wherein “thieves” boast of how much they have siphoned in public coffers. In Ibrahim's assessment, such novels reflect the “socio-political realities of the post-independence era in which ... African technocrats, cadres and government officials are depicted exploiting the masses they had promised to uplift” (1990:85). The above-mentioned novels are just a few of the many literary works that picture post independence socio-political predicaments of Africa states, and highlight the near impossibility of running these governments without corruption.

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<sup>1</sup> Senior Lecturer, Department of English, ENS Yaoundé, E-mail: [wandasi5@yahoo.com](mailto:wandasi5@yahoo.com), Tel : 00237677587225

The Cameroonian situation has not been different from the above-mentioned, given that it has experienced different forms of colonial administration (from a German territory to a UN trusteeship territory under France and Britain). These colonial governing styles, which were fraught with oppression, suppression and discrimination, were xeroxed by the local administrators at the dawn of the country's independence (first from the French on January 01, 1960, and second from the British on October 01, 1961). Fru (2000) explains that Cameroon's administrative experience under Britain was one of indirect rule, whereby traditional political institutions were maintained but adapted to the interests and directives of the British administration. France, for her part, ruled its portion of the country through assimilation, a policy which sought to create French citizens out of the local Cameroonian population. Independence gained, the problem of unification was posed. The two Cameroons merged into a Federal Republic of Cameroon, then to a United Republic of Cameroon and finally to a reunification, which simply maintained the state as "The Republic of Cameroon." These occurrences leaned heavily and favorably on the French side, which unfortunately occupies more than two thirds of the surface area and population of Cameroon. With this advantage, French Cameroon conceived, propagated and sustained the idea of merging both portions of the country until the United Nations was forced to recognize the union.

This union seems, however, unfavourable for the English speaking side as Nkengasong's character, Dr Amboh, in *Across the Mongolo* (2004) expresses disappointment at the historical events that led to the merging of the two Cameroons that were polar opposites in cultures and heritages. He wonders whether it was "the design of the colonial masters to put the viper and the porcupine in one cage for their amusement or to see whether they could deliver the crocodile" (126). Dr Amboh's worry suggests that the plebiscite that joined the two federal states of the then Federal Republic of Cameroon into one country only promoted inequality and discrimination rather than the unity for which it was designed. From whatever angle it is looked at, the animal imagery used to describe the situation points to human bestiality, animosity, preying and rivalry that characterize the relationship between the two Cameroons. Whether by accident or by design, the fact of merging a small state with a large one already opened up avenues for an imbalance in the management of political, social and economic structures and resources. Predictably, as in the case under study, the larger state proved domineering and dictatorial. Under such circumstances, a rift is inevitably created, as any effort by the minority to emerge is restrained.

Furthermore, the rapid economic and political development enjoyed by this majority state of the country gave it an edge over the other camp thus laying a favorable groundwork for conflict and domination. This domination has continued till date and is witnessed at the political, economic and social domains. It is a cause for concern that has been staged in literary representations, especially by Anglophone Cameroonian writers like Mathew Takwi, Bole Butake, Victor Epie Ngome, Bate Besong, Nkemngong Nkengasong, Mbuh Mbuh Tenu and Alobwed' Epie amongst others. All these writers, to quote Besong in an interview with Fandio (2004), "are writing within a society that does not even attempt to mask the mechanisms of occupation and social injustice, and where democracy has become a circus" (7). He notes, in addition, that the writings uncover the illogicalities that bring about discrimination, injustice, exploitation and marginalization in the Cameroonian society (3). It is from this standpoint that this study examines, as represented in Alobwed' Epie's *The Death Certificate* (2004), the manifestation of political and social inequalities in Cameroon under the fictional name of Ewawa. It explores the misuse of power and political ill-will practiced by the ruling class and how it retards socio-politico-economic progress in Ewawa. These predicaments nonetheless are spiced with a vision of hope as delineated in the novel.

The system of leadership is looked at in relation to Confucius' principles of good governance and its role in socio-political and economic development. Confucius laid emphasis on the political organization of the state which should be based on culture, conduct, loyalty and faithfulness (Analects 7:24; trans. Lau D. 2017)). To set the stage for development, there is need for the development of moral character, responsibility and sincerity, both in personal and public conduct. When people of high moral values lead, the led are well governed. Confucius insisted on these virtues as paramount in bringing about a good political order, which does not only take care of practical matters but is able to generate a sincere rapport between the rulers and the ruled. This paper as such argues that the absence of these qualities bequeaths iniquities in the system, wherein privileged classes and ethnic preferences are created; and in a multicultural and multi-ethnic setting like that of fictional Ewawa, the result is ethnic stereotyping – a typical manifestation of the lack of political will. A lack of political will is considered by Afegbua and Adejuwon (2012), as the major cause of failure in most African governments. Lack of political will means there is no push in leadership quality; the ability to do what is right and relevant is absent.

To attain these qualities usually entail personal or group sacrifice so that only those policies that are of nationalistic importance are put in place (150). This is the major challenge that the fictional Ewawa of *The Death Certificate* faces.

Djockoua (2009) describes *The Death Certificate* as “a satiric representation of an autocratic and ethnocentric state government” (54). For her, such a government, that has formed an octopus centre, needs to be dismantled because the leaders are all natives of the First Province and have usurped the political and economic centres, condoning vices such as kleptomania and nepotism, victimizing both itself and the margin. Djockoua suggests that the only way forward for the country is to de-centre this existing centre. Djockoua’s suggestion is inevitable if the country has to progress, for as it stands, the country does not only suffer lack but also the inability of its leaders to properly manage state resources. Corruption is the inescapable outcome of individualism and selfish materialism that characterize the tribal mode of government witnessed in Ewawa. It is for this reason that Besong (2004) refers to the novel as an attempt in proffering a panoramic survey of those forces which tend to the debasement of standards and values we should hold so dear” (4). There is therefore every reason to believe that those in power have legalized anarchy thereby rendering useless the values that promote nation-building.

### **Ruling along Ethnic Lines**

A close reading of Alobwed’ Epie’s *The Death Certificate* offers evidence that the political set-up of the fictional state of Ewawa is constructed along ethnic and tribal lines thus the practice of ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism, which is the belief that one’s cultural ethnic group is superior to another, is not a bad way of seeing life provided it ends at maintaining ethnic values as cultural attributes of identification and development. But when it starts creating division amongst members of a given community; political, religious and social groups, questions begin to arise. In many cases, ethnocentrism has had very negative and far-reaching consequences. Historical evidence proves that this political attitude weakens human relations since it leads to hate, crime (against human integrity), inequality, injustice (political, economic and social), bias and discrimination. Nazi Germany offers a good illustration of this fact as Adolf Hitler, believing in the racial superiority of Germans, and intent on preserving their racial purity, incited hatred for Jews and Gypsies bringing about the holocaust – a happening that left a haunting memory on Jews up till date. Even in contemporary world politics, America considers itself better, greater and superior to other nations under the false belief that its values are universal. This misperception, according to Abramson (2015), explains why America’s involvement in the Middle East turned out to be illusive.

The above examples reveal that the myth of ethnic superiority occurs across and within cultures and functions to subjectivise minority people while paving the way for domination by a self-aggrandizing or mainstream group. Within the fictional state of Ewawa, this phenomenon is prevalent among members of the First Province who claim dominance by the simple virtue that their region happens to host the political capital of the country. The typecasting results from a deliberate misjudgment that is characteristic of anti-ethnic sentiments towards the people of the other ethnic groups that make up the state of Ewawa. *The Death Certificate* demonstrates how these anti-ethnic sentiments have greatly contributed in creating political and social divides, which further result in a state of under-development.

Independence was followed by a great euphoria as citizens of once colonized states hoped for change and better socio-politico-economic conditions. However, the capitalist tendency inherited from the colonial masters (the quest for wealth and power) promulgated the legacy of dominance and inequality as the newly enthroned African leaders only proved to be perverted imitators of colonial values. They were bureaucrats, concerned only with obtaining wealth and prestige for themselves rather than cultivating a vision that would build the state and benefit its citizens. This is one of the attitudes that Alobwed’ Epie highlights and castigates in *The Death Certificate*. He presents a class-distinct state, based on ethnic distribution rather than on economic and/or intellectual prowess. At the helm of the state is a member of the First Province, who is directly related to the Second Province by virtue of tribal origins, and this automatically gives other members of these two provinces the “legal” right to dominate, partly because they are of the French side of the colonial/political divide, which has a greater population and geographical space, and partly because their region happens to host the political capital of the country. Favoured by numerical and natural advantages, members of these two provinces do not only cling to power but practice ethnocentric stereotyping; thinking of themselves as being more politically powerful, more economically viable and generally better than everyone else.

Consequently, others are systematically cut off from the centre of power; creating prejudice and socio-political and economic splits that contribute in breaking the moral fabric of society as well as dwarf economic and social growth. As hinted above, the novel offers an insight into the way political positions are being consolidated. A strong ethnic and family-based security wall is built around the president, which hampers the possibility of questioning or opposing the false principles on which the state is run. Three quarters of security units is made up of people from the ruling provinces headed by the president's younger brother, his nephew and his brother-in-law. Such a malignant mechanism of defense, command and authority speak to the continuous use of force to ensure the hegemony of the ruling provinces while at the same time maintaining the citizens of the other provinces at a permanent marginal position. Under such malignancy, the president's condemnation of nepotism, tribalism, and oppression is clearly pretentious and sardonic.

The effectiveness of this machinery of control is further guaranteed by the Minister of Armed Forces' insistence that "all those in charge of key positions in this city should be people of the First Province ... (26). Tribal bias is further revealed when he rebukes one of his subordinates saying, "Monsieur le Commissaire Central, do you say you are a son of the soil? And you leave the confession of one of us with a foreigner?" (26). The choice of those to head sectors in the administration is therefore not based on merit but on allegiance to the ascribed superiority of the ruling clan. The appellation "foreigner," used to describe non-indigenes of the First and Second Provinces is indicative of an ethnic partiality that breeds contempt and injustice, and for as long as it remains, the state is bound to witness cracks in its systems. Fanon (1963) considers these cracks in the system as some of the major pitfalls of national consciousness – a situation where "the nation is passed over for the race, and the tribe is preferred to the state" (148-149). A nation that practices tribal politics does not thrive and is exposed to precarious circumstances for as Fanon (op cit) observes, such stratagems are prejudicial and detrimental to national unity (149).

Good governance is central to economic development thus most civilized states in today's modern world build their development agendas around their political cultures. These political cultures in themselves are built around state institutions that honour virtue, integrity and the rule of law for collective interest. For a country to boast of development, cases of nepotism, corruption, mismanagement and abuse of power should be averted. Diversities, if any, should be managed in the best possible way in order to discourage ethnocentric stereotyping. As Fonlon (1966) insists, "No man should wield, elicit or enjoy unlawful advantages ... merely because of his class, his religion, his party, his special connection with those in power (24). Unfortunately, the reverse has been the case in the fictional state of Ewawa as members of a single family enjoy the privilege of managing one of the strongest arms of the state. The implication is an inevitable plague of unemployment, corruption, embezzlement, social and political injustices and inequalities, which are typical of failed state institutions. Musa, one of the major characters in the novel, laments that "all [their] friends of the First Province with whom [they] completed university are either registered for postgraduate courses or are fully employed" (47). Musa's worry and the surrounding circumstances clearly prove that power is wielded not for social justice and development but for oppression and marginalisation. Musa, together with his friends, Nchinda, Mula and Ndjock, are young, educated and dynamic citizens who are alienated and forgotten because they do not belong.

The alarming rate of embezzlement that eats deep into the fabrics of the country is depicted through Mongo Meka's life and death. The rate at which he draws freely from the state treasury, investing in foreign countries while his home country lacks basic social amenities, is distressing. This superfluity continues in his death as his clan brothers put the budget of his funeral and burial at an amount sufficient enough to construct and equip a secondary school. According to the Minister of Finance, "the burial of Mongo Meka is ... a test of the prowess and ability of the First Province" (19). This is very provocative to the rest of the citizens of the country and further confirms that government/leadership positions and political power in the country are a shortcut to individual wealth, and have as consequence socio-economic stagnation. The traffic lights that ceased to function barely two weeks after their installation, the narrow, dusty and potholed roads, the dilapidating and unconventional-styled houses in the heart of the capital city, the frequent water and electricity dearth and the presence of hawkers at all corners of the city centre competing to sell their wares are proof of socio-economic inertia.

According to the political philosopher, Confucius, the political organization of a state is central in furnishing a proper environment for development. He underscored the need for the development of moral character and responsibility, that is, sincerity in personal and public conduct. Above all, he believed that when men of high moral principles are leaders of a nation, the people under them will be well governed. He stresses the importance of a leadership that generates a mutually trusting relationship between the leaders and their subjects.

These ethical values, developed and held by Confucius, are the basis for the evolution of any society which has as its core vision, economic development. Unfortunately, these values are not part of the ethical considerations of the leaders of Ewawa because even religious officials, who are supposed to uphold these values, rather contribute and participate in destroying them by ensuring the dominance and financial waste of the people of the First Province. As a member of the First Province, the Archbishop holds himself in very high esteem under the claim that the church in Ewawa is his personal belonging. He intimates that “when the whites were leaving, they handed the church to us, to me” (64). The pronoun “us” refers to the collective of the First Province, which he narrows down to “me” to reinforce his sole authority and supreme lordship over the Ewawaian ecclesiastic domain. Such an individual claim of power and ownership of a divine institution is revealing of the injustice, suppression and oppression that floods the institution, and which defeats the purpose for which it was originally designed. Furthermore, its intent becomes suspicious and dangerous when an individual treats it as his personal property as witnessed in Archbishop Boa’s hostile reaction when cardinalship is given to a citizen of the Tenth Province.

Furthermore, the intrigues and intricacies within the catholic church in Ewawa raise questions about the rule of morality within its religious institutions. The disgruntled Archbishop Boa draws freely from church funds to prepare the groundwork for the elimination of his senior colleague and fellow countryman in whom the conclave found favour and made cardinal. The objectivity, sincerity and faithfulness that are expected to characterize a man of such standing are opposed to the archbishop’s principles for success which hold that “In politics, in survival, there is no morality .... The success of life is strive, struggle, fight, war ...” (66). These ideologies by which an archbishop, who aspires to be cardinal, lives again puts to question the whole concept of perfection in Christianity especially when it is intimated that the conclave in Rome is in itself corrupt. The Archbishop’s white chasuble then becomes a cloak cover for his bias and hatred for the people of the other provinces rather than a symbol of unconditional Christ-like love, purity and devotion.

In addition, the Archbishop’s quest for wealth and fame is an indicator that there is no moral/religious line between the ecclesiastic and the secular factions of the people of the First Province, suggesting therefore that the conniving, scheming, lustful traits they manifest are rooted in their ethnic lineage. This is particularly revealed in the juxtaposition of occultism and Christianity. Inasmuch as these high ranking government officials profess the Christian faith, they also indulge in occultism to maintain and consolidate wealth and power. The “Eboni” Temple, which paradoxically, bears great resemblance to a cathedral, is a symbol of the movement and control of power from the mundane to the supernatural, in addition to using human body parts for money and political supremacy rituals. The cohabitation and blend of Christianity and occultism raises philosophical/metaphysical questions on the spiritual and moral integrity of the Ewawaian ruling class in particular and humanity in general.

From the instances noted above, it is evident that post-independence Ewawaian leadership is fraught with inconsistencies, fraud and general multiplication of destruction. A similar evaluation of leadership in Africa has pushed Macheke (2014) to conclude that “decolonization and independence have not brought real autonomy to African nations ... The African society’s expectations of shared power have been betrayed ... The greed of the few leave the majority in want” (17). For this reason, Dadja-Tieu (2018) suggests that “African leaders should introduce in their daily management of the continent’s affairs the international principles of governance” (290). These principles align with Confucius’ recommendation that governments should seek to make the people happy by being fraternal and parental to them since these governments exist for the benefit of the people. In Analects 13:16, Confucius states that “good government obtains when those who are near are made happy, and those who are far are attracted” (qtd Dawson, 1915:176). Unfortunately, the Ewawaian government, like many other governments in Africa, is still far from observing these codes. That notwithstanding, Dadja-Tieu’s recommendation is attainable but needs to be triggered by the people’s reaction. This reaction, as Ngeh (2015) suggests, should be “...a violent and radical intervention of the people in confronting an oppressive system” which to him “is the only means that can usher in liberty, freedom and democracy” (103).

### **Hopes and Prospects**

First and foremost, Alobwed’ Epie presents the Ewawaian population as either helpless in the face of oppression or simply ignorant. The helpless group of people is made up of unemployed university graduates, who are conscious of the responsibilities of each citizen vis-à-vis the state but who are limited by the ethnic divide, and have just anger as a weapon. The ignorant group chooses to be oblivious to the economic and political stalemate that the leaders have plunged the country into.

This group is made up of members of the ruling clan who ignorantly and willingly comply with the inadequacies of their leaders. Such ignorance is manifested by Mbamtene who believes that as Treasurer General, Mongo Meka has a right to state money and is in no way guilty of stealing and/or embezzlement. This act of compliance denies the people the right to complain, thereby making positive change a near impossibility.

Nevertheless, Alobwed' Epie still expresses hope, which he transmits through the voices of Mula, Emda Odu and Reverend Father Jean Pierre Engo. Gutierrez (1983) submits that "To struggle without hope would be futile ... To hope without struggle would be irrelevant ... But to struggle while affirming hope is to have a future ..." (155). These characters struggle, each in his own way, to break loose from the politics of exclusion and the use of tribalism as a political weapon; vices that plunge the nation to self-destruction. They stand out as symbols of nationalist consciousness – a consciousness that is based on the rule of law and justice for all citizens, irrespective of ethnic leanings; and one which arises from the dire need to change the course of the nation's history. This change, as Marx (qtd in Eagleton, 1976) observes, is triggered by class struggle, provoked by the state's use of its power to oppress and exploit its citizens rather than protect and provide for them. The conflict in classes, as Marx further notes, arises from the differences in their ideological formations; ideology in this case consists of a definite historical structure which underpins the power of a particular social class (3), which may conflict with or contradict the views of another class. Ideology is not a set of doctrines per se; it refers to the way men live out their roles in society, the values, ideas and images which tie them to their social functions and which most often prevent them from a true and broad knowledge of their societ(ies). As explained in the previous section, the ruling elite of Ewawa operate on the wrong values and ideas; the main one being an irrational ethnic ideology which considers tribalism as a political weapon thereby promoting the politics of exclusion. It is as a result of this that Ngongkum (2007) questions the values that sustain contemporary Ewawa in its historico-social dimension and observes that the lower class suffers because of these false values and ideology. She nonetheless believes that these false principles can be eradicated by absolute determination.

Alobwed' Epie equips Mula with such unflinching determination from the beginning to the end of the novel. Mula is one of the few characters who do not lose focus on the implications of the political and economic happenings of his society, and who reads situations with a critical mind. Mula understands that Ewawaians are ignorant of the happenings of the state, particularly the economic quagmire into which the leaders of the First Province have put the state. He therefore engages in investigative journalism, a well thought-out strategy through which the people will be conscientised and exposed to the truth about the state of affairs in their country. Mula believes, and as Ngeh (2014) attests, that "the masses can only be politically active if they are adequately educated and conscientised; and it is only when they are conscientised that they can start questioning the excesses of the ruling class" (6). It is through his self-set investigations that readers are exposed to the political debauchery, injustice and spiritual barrenness on which the leaders of Ewawa thrive. Nchinda's acknowledgement and appreciation of Mula's efforts at revealing the debacle of the Ewawaians therefore becomes significant at two levels. First, that the citizens need to be aware of the goings-on of their country and second, that they should understand the implications of such happenings. When these are achieved, the need to redeem the situation will naturally be felt.

Added to Mula's determination are his firmness, courage and strong-will – traits that are needed by every Ewawaian if they have to free their country from the hands of unjust and callous rulers. From his actions, it is clear that reason as opposed to emotion, defines his ideological stance. While others are wailing at the sight of the pall carrying Mongo Meka's remains, Mula is assessing the economic implications of the extravagance with which the remains are handled. Though his comment about the Jumbo being the main causes of the economic crisis meets with insults and disapproval from ignorant people, Mula stays focused on his observation and critical evaluation. Readers are as embarrassed as Mula and feel his frustration and disappointment at receiving dispiriting comments from citizens who, like him, are oppressed, suppressed and marginalized. It is dangerous for a nation whose masses fail to see and acknowledge the failure of their leaders. The result of such failure extends into the powerlessness to raise their voices against bad governance, and the inability to bond in a spirit of national sentiment. At this rate, redress is not assured and the vices associated with leadership continue.

Though the reactions against Mula's comment may either result from fear, frustration, cowardice, naivety, negligence, nonchalance or hypnotism, it is hard to fathom why people, who have known and still experience rejection, slander, pain and anger, decide to be blind to the economic and social implications when a lone state aircraft is used as a private jet. Not only will the company fall; the possibilities of employment will reduce extending into economic hardship which also has its own consequences - increase in crime wave, high rate of prostitution, disease and insecurity.

It is a complex chain of repercussions which Alobwed' Epie, through Mula, intends to lay bare to the people. Alobwed' Epie however attempts to bring Mongo Meka to justice through Mula. A man who has drained his country of huge sums of money and feigns death to live in a colonizing country till the end of his days does not deserve any pity or sympathy even in times of distress. It is with this thought that Mula becomes uncompromising and very bitter towards Mongo Meka despite the dejectedness and depression that are slowly eating him up. He takes upon himself to protect Meka in the hope that he would return to Ewawa to face justice, and adds to Meka's pain by reminding him of the scandalous and exaggerated ways in which the African political elite cultivate foreign (western) tastes whereas these same westerners treat them with spite and disdain. Though Mula does not succeed with his plan, Alobwed' Epie still finds a way of meting out retributive justice on Mongo Meka by forcing him into suicide after inflicting on him the pain of rejection and betrayal from his sister and wife, and the vainness of wealth, power and position. Suicide may not have been an appropriate end to Meka's excesses but it seems the only available option open to Alobwed' Epie. His death nonetheless symbolises the beginning of the end of the false doctrines on which the ruling elite of Ewawa operate.

Despite the desperate and desolate situation presented in the novel, Mula believes that Africa and consequently Ewawa can still be rescued from the hands of lustful and devious anarchists. His insistence that it is the responsibility of the youth to carry out this mission ties with Nkengasong's proverb in *Across the Mongolo* [op cit] that "it is not because the old man has lost his teeth that the young men will not eat the bones" (137). This is glaringly expressed in Mula's poem "To the African Youth" (see pages 52-53 of the text) in which he reveals the failure of their fathers, in securing a bright future for Africa. The youth should therefore take the challenge to restore the lost dignity of the continent and make a name for posterity. What this requires is an ideological and collective revolution as suggested by Besong (op cit) in the words, "No new society can be built in our troubled history unless there is a social revolution which destroys, completely, the existing socio-political structure" (6). This is why Mula strongly urges the young people to resist selfishness and egoism which their fathers were guilty of, and fight against discrimination and socio-political injustice while standing in defense of justice, liberty and equal opportunities for all.

Apart from using Mula to renew the people's hopes for a healthy socio-political and economic environment, Alobwed' Epie provides Emda Odu too with an endeavour, though feeble, to accomplish his vision. This attempt is by way of warning his tribesmen of an impending doom, given the rate at which the nation's resources are squandered with impunity. He elusively raises consciousness by exposing the extravagance and abuse on state funds, and predicts a civil uprising if these excesses are not immediately curbed. His point meets with derision from the high ranking elites of the ethnic family and is made of no consequence. However, the attempt is one step towards self-realisation of the harm the people of the First Province have been causing all along. Emda Odu's warning stems from the perceived loss of confidence in the leaders. Confidence and trust according to Confucius, in *Analects* 12:7, are the basic principles by which the people have to view their rulers. If the people do not have confidence in their ruler, then there will be no stability in the state (qtd Dawson op.cit, 183). Lack of confidence is naturally followed by displeasure and malaise which may extend into civil disobedience and consequent instability as Emda Odu forecasts.

Another hopeful attempt to break the vicious circle of domination by the First Province comes from Father Engo, who decides to rupture whatever malicious scheme Archbishop Boa is plotting irrespective of the envisaged target. His decision is borne out of his attachment to truth, his respect for humanity and his acknowledgement of the common brotherhood of all citizens of Ewawa. His understanding of the value of justice in building a strong and democratic nation - one that takes into consideration the worth of each of its citizens, regardless of ethnic origin, is commendable. But his endeavour, like Emda Odu's, is not allowed to yield the desired results. Nonetheless, the attempts of these characters should be looked at as a proclamation of the values that build a nation and promote the rule of democracy thus enhancing progress. They are the same values that Confucius recommends for any patriotic statesman deserving of the status. Alobwed' Epie endows Mula, and to a lesser extent, Emda Odu and Reverend Father Engo with these values to encourage and inspire readers of the possibility of change even in the most sordid circumstances.

## Conclusion

The foregoing discussion on *The Death Certificate* reveals that the novel is an effort to expose those negative forces that dishonor the values and principles that should be held dear in national development and progress.

It centers around leadership built on nepotism, anarchy, corruption, embezzlement and mismanagement – vices that maintain the state in a position of inertia. Patriotism, moral and spiritual values lose their meaning resulting in chaos at all levels of society from the secular to the ecclesiastical. This situation presents itself as a major challenge to political, economic and social development. Thus as the discussions illustrate, independence has failed in authenticating the dream of favourable life conditions for the ordinary citizen of Ewawa. Justice and equality are far from being achieved due to the malevolence of the rulers. However, goodwill, conscientisation and a collective consciousness of the people, which will provoke an ideological and a social revolt are suggested as avenues for positive change.

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