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The House is on Fire: Towards Engaging *Arialusi* in Resolving Nigerian Socio-Political Miasma

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Abstract

Nigerian people in the 21st century are faced with bad governance and leadership as a result of corruption, instability, senseless killings, insecurity, and among others. This idea of suffering also has praxis of humanity. Thus, where people experience evil, retrogression, anti-development and loss are substantially there undoing. Therefore, this undoing is the product of *Arialusi* which as an Edo religious concept means the law of retribution; sowing and reaping. As a matter of fact, *Arialusi* means the law of retributive justice; law of nemesis; a cosmic law of justice which holds that one's life is determined by the performance in the previous life that spills to the present and the future. *Arialusi* is a human 'sim' that imprints itself as a hidden force or potential in one's life. This hidden force or potential when activated by an external stimulus or natural law, produces corresponding effects either good or bad, happiness or suffering, progress or retrogression. This paper adopted moral, socio-cosmic methods leading to the fact that much emphasis on materialism and acquisition of wealth

than spiritual knowledge are the bane of Nigerian leaders. *Arialusi* is a never-ending process of life. Therefore, *Arialusi* is an eternal and immutable law of nature that has its seat in the soul of every human. No doubt, the payoffs are gain or loss, comfort or pains, enjoyment or suffering. To this end, the work postulates that *Arialusi* is about cause and effect and political activities are also accounted for by omission or commission. The end, the product of every political activity has corresponding effect either for the individual or the society.

Keywords: *Nigeria, Socio-Political, Arialusi, Miasma, House, Fire.*

Introduction

The Edo people of Nigeria are found in the South-South part of the nation. Edo can be identified as the “Ivbia;” Edo-meaning the children of Edo. They are Afenmai, Esan and Bini. Geographically, Afenmai comprises Akoko-Edo, Etsako, Owan and environs. Esan consists of Iruẹkpen, Ekpoma, Irrua, Ewu, Uromi, Evbohimi, Ubiaja and Igueben. The Binis comprise of Benin, Ovia, Uhunmode, Orhionwon and their environs (Egharevba, 1973:70). In essence, Edo consists of these several clans, which are bound together by language, traditions, and religious beliefs and practices. The existential experience of Edo reveals that religion to them is *a priori* real and a minute-to-minute phenomenon in their consciousness. Indeed, Edo Religion accounts for peculiar features of the individuals as regards the universe, which encompasses the physical reality. Thus, in Edo, religion identifies with human consciousness and the understanding of nature. Put differently, that something exists beyond the mundane encapsulates religion. A belief in the existence of the Supreme Being is fundamental and central to this religion. In their spiritual, rational and corporate existence, their religion becomes their will and précis of their life and possession.

It is worth noting that Edo religion is replete with spirituality, redemptive values against evils, misfortune and anxiety. To the Edo, spiritual or metaphysical issues are attempts to understand the universe by means of logical investigation of reality rather than an empirical inquiry based on sensory evidence. Suffice to state that some of these metaphysical issues are *Arialusi*, (Alamu, 2009: xv) reincarnation and death. Thus, Alamu (2009: 32) asserts that a metaphysical issue as evident

in *Arialusi* is a law of retribution and a hidden force which when activated by human conduct and external stimulus, produces corresponding effects either good or bad, fortune or misfortune, happiness or suffering. *Arialusi* is the law of retributive justice in Edo Religion. It is also a cosmic law of justice, which holds that one's life is determined by the performance in the previous life. Within the province of *Arialusi*, it determines the lot of humankind in the here and now. In the hereafter, it is imperative that leaders and the led should avoid bad conduct, a life void of corruption, senseless killings, cheating, and immorality in order not to reap calamity, suffering, terminal disease, colossal loss and untimely death. Therefore, it is the thrust of this paper to examine *Arialusi* as well as socio-political problems in Nigeria with the sole aim of proffering solution to them through the same concept of *Arialusi*.

The Concept of *Arialusi*

Like Africans, the Edos believe that *Osanobunwa* has imbued man with inherent potentials. In fact, some of these inherent potentials are intangible or immaterial in humankind. These immaterial potentials are described in philosophical parlance as metaphysical phenomena (Ohiokhokhai, 2007). These metaphysical issues are prevalent in the African worldview. African people believe that an inquiry into the fundamental nature of reality is a generic feature exhibited in experience, with the attendant essence of existence and reality. This implies that reality is the essence of metaphysics and its effulgent effects constitute its existence. To the Edo, metaphysical issues are attempts to understand the universe by means of a logical investigation of reality rather than an empirical inquiry or appearance based on sensory evidence. Eliade (1995: 437) captures the African and perhaps Edo strand of metaphysics as "rationally coherent and logically consistent systems of thought...believed to reveal the way the world really is." Suffice it to state that *Arialusi* is one of the metaphysical issues. In strong terms, these metaphysical issues supersede physical issues. In other words, life to the Edo is spiritual, and it takes the spiritual to determine and control the physical events, which make us conclude that one's thought, speech and behavior, either good or bad, imprint themselves as a hidden force or potential in one's life. This hidden force or potential when activated by an external stimulus or natural law, produces corresponding effects either good or bad, happiness or suffering, progress or retrogression (Iroegbu, 2004:63). The foregoing, therefore, is understood as *Arialusi*. *Arialusi* ultimately depicts

the law of retributive justice, law of nemesis, the law of sowing and reaping, and as well describes the corresponding consequence of good or bad acts in humans or the society at large. In fact, the corresponding consequence of good effects arising from good acts is not spoken of in society compared to the bad effects (Alamu, 2009:37).

However, it is generally attested to that when an individual flourishes in the present existence, it, therefore, means that the individual's previous life lived in good conduct hence the attendant good effects in their present state. In the same vein, it is the belief of the people of Edo that when a particular society experiences boost, it goes to show that the previous existence of this particular society was lived in good conduct, having upheld the complete ethos, norms, "dos" and conventions of that particular society. Be that as it may, bad acts supplant that of the good. This statement is also supported by Asekhome (2006) who also posits that it is true *Arialusi* exists, and this especially happens to those with bad conduct or behaviour in their former existence, thereby making their behaviour transferable to the present existence. *Arialusi* is sociologically seen as a generational curse platform without reference to *Osanobunwa*. In other words, *Osanobunwa* does not interfere with the working of *Arialusi*. Rather *Arialusi* is a natural and social mechanism to showcase the result of immoral acts and as well checkmate the evil conduct of individuals in the society (Omeregbe, 2006). It is discovered that in the aspect of ritual performances in expiating *Arialusi*, they are different because *Arialusi* has varying degrees. This is thus evident in the fact that what is obtainable in a particular community is different from others in which case, the ritual performance is ethnocentric in nature (Okizi, 2007).

Conclusively, *Arialusi* in its totality is at once real, metaphysical, scientific and moral in nature, involving the perception of knower and the victims in both thought and deed. There is a never-ending process of life. *Arialusi* lies in the acceptance of the need for a corrective process of experimentation with our own experience and this presupposes our readiness to admit openly our errors and to also learn from them. *Arialusi* is a reality and metaphysical ideal especially on freedom from its curse, justice and morality. Therefore, *Arialusi* is binding upon the recalcitrant, because it is an eternal and immutable law of nature. It has its own reward, so also it has its seat in the soul of every human being. To this end, a human being can avoid *Arialusi*, when he/she works for the highest moral law, the good of humankind, nobleness of character, purity

of soul and good motive, selfless service and goodness of means. The continuous existence and progress of human depend on his/her moral self. *Arialusi* is anonymous with allegiance to the natural and moral law, which pervades the whole of human life.

The Socio-Political Import of Causes and Effects

The concept of *Arialusi* is not only exclusively individualistic in Edo religion but also obviously collective. As sin is not individualistic in Africa so also *Arialusi* is not often individualistic. The idea of interdependence is discovered in the concept of *Arialusi*. Indubitably, there is a collective aspect of *Arialusi*; as a result, our lives and actions are always interconnected with the lives and actions of others in dynamic interrelations. At times, it is certainly difficult to dismember our own actions and their effects from those of others. In other words, *Arialusi* is thus a wholesomely social concept, since it implies the manner in which it affects the lives of peoples as a result of the interconnectedness of all reality.

Arialusi is also communal because, at the dawn of consciousness, people have often noticed that certain activities have had adverse effects on them. The concept of *Arialusi* not only affects the doer but also affects others. The extent of *Arialusi* determines the extent of the effects. The situations of individuals within society on the collective aspect of *Arialusi* entails that we are all responsible for the situation of others due to this ultimate and absolute interdependence. Khapoya (1998:44) maintains that African societies are collective societies, and the groups' interest clearly outweighs those of the individual. He buttresses further that when a person commits an offence against another, the offence reflects badly not just on the individual offender but on his/her groups as well. His/her group is, therefore, held accountable Khapoya (1998:45). It is interesting to stress that any *Arialusi* seen in an individual has a corresponding implication on the group or society at large.

Unah (1996:53) posits that we could not have authentic individuals without the collective, and we could not have the collective without the individuals whether they are fallen or risen. He maintains that the individual must rise above the ordinary mien of the world to assert his distinctive character, which he has to do within the matrix of the human community. Thus, to aspire to the collective life and to attain authentic selfhood is co-ordinate perspectives. To this extent; all men share with

each other this universal character, which truly defines man from an idealistic viewpoint.

Senghor (1964:74) is convinced that African society, perhaps the Edo put more stress on the group than on the individual, more on solidarity than on activity and on the need of the individual, more than on the communion of persons than on their autonomy. Ours is a communal society. In the same vein, Bujo, as cited by Ezekwonna (2005:54), argues that “without a communitarian relationship, there is no identity for the African person. Only together with others can one become a human person and achieve individual freedom, which again should be exercised in a communitarian manner.” In fact, the community structures cannot elude the indigenous reality and quality of self-assertiveness which individuals show through group influence and group action. It is this capacity to assert oneself in the community that makes possible the intelligibility of an individual’s autonomous choice of goals and plans for his life.

However, in Edo community set-up one can easily see the interplay or understanding existing between the collective and the individual’s interest. Recognising this indigenous fact Ezekwonna (2005:71) as quoted by Obiechina echoed that “in the traditional (Edo) society happy means exist which impart strength and unity. Its essential humanism, as exemplified in the folktale narratives, arises from the awareness of the individual destiny with a large, more inclusive communal destiny.” Succinctly, therefore, collectivist *Arialusi* is so prevalent in Edo, and this brings about solidarity suffering. By this solidarity suffering, people are brought together in suffering. Suffering as a font of solidarity can be immense and spontaneous. This idea of solidarity in suffering is also praxis of humanity. Not only that, it is true not only of human beings but also to nature and other inhabitants. We can,, therefore, agree totally with Dopamu (2001:43) in this regard that there are accidents of nature that human beings cannot account for their causes. This suffering can be interpreted to mean the fate of the earth. But on individual or group, it is the font of solidarity suffering. Thus, this negative solidarity where people experience evil is substantially their architect. As a matter of fact, this suffering is not fate and accident of nature completely as Dopamu (2001:44) has rightly posited, rather, it is a collective action that brings about the adverse effect they collectively suffer. *Arialusi* is a social mechanism in Edo society to checkmate evil excesses on individual or

group. Any suffering of *Arialusi* means social ostracism (Omoregbe, 2006).

It is worth asserting that the help of the oracle can jointly seek a solution to *Arialusi*. This solution can be described not as only individual freedom, but also as actualization of this interconnectedness that would allow persons to overcome selfish behaviour; and to work creatively within the cyclical world; as *Arialusi* is best explained as “reproaches to the phenomenal world of transitory form and suffering, the bound of worthless form of existence where the soul is imprisoned in the body and fettered to the cycle of birth and rebirths” (Umejesi, 1998:76). To this end, the suffering inflicted on oneself as well as others is a result of the noble freewill we have wrongly and culpably used. The payoffs are the same as for physical retribution, gain or loss, comfort or pains, enjoyment or suffering. Any suffering means social ostracism. Throughout human history, people have often noticed that certain activities have bad results. To this end, Mark Twain (2006) observed that “people who lie need better memories than those who tell the truth.” He was sincere, not because he believes in a giant invisible magic person who would punish him, but because he understands cause and effect. Put differently, he understands social *Arialusi*. The law of retribution not only affects the doer but also affects others. The magnitude of retributive justice determines the spheres of its effects.

Politically speaking, the earliest attempt to give a complete explanation from matter to human action, ethics, jurisprudence and politics in terms of efficient causality understood in a strong sense is found in the work of Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes starts from the premise that all life is but matter in motion and every aspect of life can be explained in terms of the accidents of bodies. Hobbes’s theory is strongly deterministic and he rules out completely the notion of free will (Omoregbe, 2004:17). Nonetheless, Hobbes has a strong view on human freedom and he is the first and one of the best-known examples of someone who is prepared to argue that a strong conception of efficient causality is compatible with a strong conception of freedom.

Thomas Hobbes added that in the paradigmatic model, the conception of the self is weak, perhaps even epiphenomenal, whereas, for Rousseau and Kant, the conception of the self is strong. Weak conceptions of the self are usually deterministic. This implies that if actions are usually determined then the mental state; dispositions and even consciousness of the actor are also caused. If the mental state, disposition and consciousness of the actor are caused then the actor cannot be said to

have a distinct self for the self is always explicable in more fundamental terms (Omoregbe, 2004: 23). The promise of *Arialusi* in efficient causality is the understanding and explanation of all action and future prediction. The ideal is the universe where everything is stable and if every present condition were known then in principle all future states would be predictable. Such knowledge, if obtainable, would result in a power of the kind expressed in Auguste Comte's positive philosophy where he posits that "To know in order to predict, to predict in order to control." As a programme, the potential control over the universe promised by knowledge of causes and the determining of events and actions becomes a significant hallmark of modernity (Omoregbe, 2004: 60).

Human life is simply meant for developing political consciousness. Unfortunately, the people of modern civilization have created so many other engagements that they are forgetting this political consciousness. This is called *Maya* –illusion. They are forgetting their real business. For instance, under political import of retribution, good leaders full of virtues, prudence and morality are bound to put actions that would be beneficial to their subjects in the here and now. Contrarily, the rascal blind or immoral leaders are leading everyone to reincarnation. In this way, both the rascal and immoral leaders and their unfortunate followers remain bound up by the stringent laws of material nature (www.theory-of-political-retribution, 2006. Retrieved on the 23rd June 2007)

Actually, everyone is engaged in service, either out of love or by force. One who is entangled in material life is engaged in natural service because he is forced to serve nature's external, material energy. It is just like what we see with the citizens of the state: whether one is a law-abiding citizen or a criminal, one is subservient to the state. The criminal may say he does not care for the state, but then the police will force him to accept the authority of the state by putting him in prison. The "natural path" is the political import of retribution. In a sense, the natural path is that human beings are all equal, and thus, the system which gives women equal privileges with men is the truly just one. Therefore, those who oppose these unequal privileges are actually the good ones. Those who oppose are bad ones (www.theory-of-political-retribution, 2006, Retrieved on the 23rd

June 2007). It is of interest to note that *Arialusi* is about cause and effect and political activities are also accounted for by omission and commission. The end-product of every political activity has corresponding effect either for the individual or society.

The Socio-Political Miasma in Nigeria

When one considers the attitudes taken by all the major stakeholders like governments, unions, businesses, the industrial commission, the churches, the mosque, lobby groups and individuals, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that no sincere effort goes into improving the lot of the masses vis-à-vis the body politic. It is a known fact that there are many lacunas in the Nigerian democratic system. Furthermore, the turns and twists in governance are corruption, insecurity, senseless killings, poverty, economic recession, instability and among others. The Nigerian nation seems to be dwindling to a relapse.

Going down the memory lane, self-governance in Nigeria has been in existence since the colonial masters had relinquished powers to the natives. From 1960 till date, it is unfortunate that all promising transitions embarked upon by successive military and civilian regimes alike have all failed to bring about the desired good governance, sustenance and continuity. The transitions from civilian administrations to military regimes and back to the civilians have been characterized by the fight against corruption, instability, insecurity, sectionalism and ethnicity. It is therefore evident from the above that corruption was the major bane that truncated the first republic and corrupt practices became incorporated into the polity. Gen. Aguiyi Ironsi who assumed leadership supported the fact that “one of the reasons why the military terminated the life of the first republic was corruption. However, the regime declared its intention to stamp out corruption from our public life, which was never done until Gowon appeared on the scene” (Iroanusi 2006:3).

However, during the military tenure of Gowon, he promised to quit governance in 1976, but he was so pressurized by some of his extremely corrupt accolades that he had to recant from that initial promise. Muritala/Obasanjo’s military regime purged and punished severely corrupt officers in the country. But this experience was later ignored when “ten-percenters” and the graft-masters became the movers and shakers of the Nigerian society. Nigeria again relapsed after Muritala’s attempt was silent in death, thus plunging the nation deep down into the basement of rot. Despite “Shagari establishment of a code of conduct

Bureau and a code of conduct Tribunal...his Second Republic administration would for long, represent one of the most corrupt and most graft-stricken periods, where politicians, public officers and lawmakers succeeded in elevating profligacy and public treasury looting to an art form. Thus, the Second Republic leaders fleeced the nation so massively that it bothered on probity. Some political leaders in this republic had the flair for corrupt tendencies.

They breakfasted in London, lunched in Madrid and dined in Lisbon. While the Nigerian Naira nose-dived in worth, they coursed their path to the vaults of the Swiss and became notorious for stashing stolen money abroad...Therefore; the political corruption centre seems not able to hold. Subsequently, the government gave a fillip to the bug” (*Sunday Tribune* 2002:3).

The above revealed the extent of corruption during the second republic. This resulted in the democratic breakdown, and the democratic consolidating fillip was thrown to the bug. The self-seeking and self-serving disposition of Nigerian political elites and opportunists were apparent in the second republic. Their shoddy deals dismissed the regime from being democratically consolidated by Buhari and Idiagbon military regime of 1983-85. Babangida came in, and as if in sympathy with corrupt politicians locked up by the Buhari regime, reviewed their issues. It must be noted that Babangida’s tenure at no point in time of the history of that regime, ever preached against corruption (Iroanusi 2006:4). In a nutshell, during the Babangida government, corruption became “institutionalised” as opportunities for stealing were almost limitless and the temptation irresistible. Thus, the words of Aluko in (*TELL* 1991:69) are apposite here: “When a nation gives its rule to the military, that nation is finished. When a soldier captures a city, he loots it, when a soldier captures a country, what do you expect? He loots it.” He emphasizes that military leaders do not spear any country they hijack and they never wish such country well. And so, corruption became full-blown cancer during Babangida administration (*TELL*, 1991:70). Things were not further helped by the nose-diving economy when it was obvious perhaps that Nigeria was scooping up extra dollars from the international market. The gulf oil windfall was a case in point (*Sunday Tribune* 2002:3).

In spite of the “institutionalisation” of corruption during the Babangida era, many thought that by so doing democracy would be

entrenched as he introduced vibrant and brilliant democratic transition programmes. In the end, Nigeria was faced with the annulment of June 12, 1993, election adjudged to be the freest and fairest election ever held in Nigeria. Thus, the journey of transition to civilian regimes came to fizzle out immediately after the annulment was stamped, sealed and delivered. However, the annulment generated unprecedented reactions which were not favourable and have the potential of destroying the very corporate existence of the Nigerian nation. Thus, the Nigerian people suffered the annulment “in the form of economic paralysis, political apathy, social industrial unrest and more recently the call for the restructuring of the armed forces, police and other governmental institutions/agencies and the rotation of the office of the president among the six major geopolitical zones in the country” (Oketa 1998:52). To this end, Babangida “stepped aside” by hurriedly introducing the Interim National government headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan.

Shonekan’s ill-fated adventurism as a “child of circumstance” into politics only recounted of his dream against corruption, of which before he had time to settle down for business in which he was absolutely unsuitable, (Iroanusi 2006:4). Abacha with “a gun on the head” approach terminated his interim government. Abacha with his own agenda became a dictator or tyrant in Nigeria. Abacha can easily pass as the world champion grafter of the century, after the order of the former Zairean dictator, Mobutu Sese Seko, who until his overthrow, had plundered his country’s treasury to the extent of perhaps more than \$1 billion during the 32 years he misruled and bankrupted his country” (Iroanusi 2006:4). Abacha’s enthronement was to perforate the till. It is customary with the military junta that overnight millionaires are made through the inflated contract, outright diversion of public funds, allocation of choice oil blocs and fraudulent allocations of money under the pretext of officialdom and democratic transitions. It thereafter became clear after the death of Abacha that he was the chief presiding officer over the flinch. Abacha as the Governor of CBN brazenly raided the Central Bank, using the CBN bullion vans and CBN top officials to execute the several raids (*TELL* 2001:69). He died with the five leprous political parties he floated all in the guise of a democratic transition.

Corruption has since remained unabated in the polity. The Abdulsalami Abubakar’s junta is yet battling with charges of having aided itself to colossal billions of Nigerian Naira. In fact, the alarming corrupt practices in Abubakar’s junta had elicited surprise from insiders. The financial recklessness was more scandalous than Abacha’s financial fraud

(TELL 2001:69). Moreover, people who thought Abubakar was a simple and naïve man were shocked to find out that he suffers from this inferiority syndrome that Abacha had, which made him want to surpass everyone with his acquisitive tendencies. In sum, his administration was deep-rooted in looting within the shortest period the administration lasted before the advent of a nascent democracy. The basic reason while people decided to let go was the fact that Nigerians were tired of military regimes and the mental torture they experienced in the military era. All these and other reasons made the people to downplay the financial recklessness during this period. However, the democracy he enthroned is still being sustained by the current civilian government. Those who thought that, with the enthronement of democracy, corruption would become a thing of the past were disappointed. The masses could not but express disappointment and chagrin at the massive theft in high and low places going on (*Sunday Tribune* 2002:4). While local and state governments literally sit in court over monthly allocations, the governors are busy building castles in the air and replicating the odious theft of the past regimes. In other words, corruption and its choking grip are common among cabinet ministers, legislators, governors, chairmen, and councilors who are plundering the nation, competing to outdo one another in the art of cornering the Nigerian wealth. In fact, Nigeria as a nation is stinking rich, and she is the richest country perhaps in the world. Despite the money stashed away and the ones still flying with wings, she is still rich and has money in foreign reserve. If what is happening to Nigeria in every successive regime had happened to the United States of America, she would have run aground long ago; yet Nigeria is still moving despite the problems of corruption.

Nigeria is rather very unfortunate as a country in spite of the fact that Obasanjo (1999:133) as quoted by Oyeshile (2000:54) had said among others during his inaugural speech that corruption:

must not be condoned. This is why laws are made and enforced to check corruption so that society would survive and develop in an orderly, reasonable and predictable way. No society can achieve anything near its full potential if it allows corruption to become full-blown cancer it has become in Nigeria. One of the greatest tragedies of military rules in recent times is that corruption was allowed to grow unchallenged and unchecked.

This speech led to the anti-corruption bill sent to the National Assembly after his inauguration. The results of this were the establishments of Independent Corrupt Practices Commission and other Related Matters (ICPC), Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) and among others. These various commissions started off well, indicting and arresting serving governors, public personnel and former corrupt leaders and their cronies; late Abacha's family and the Swiss bank phenomenon. Today, these commissions are being accused of being one-sided, targeting opponents in the Obasanjo's government, and they are also accused of living above their means. Actually, many allegations of theft were prevalent in the Obasanjo regime even before he left power. However, his government successfully relinquished power to Yar, Adua on May 29 2007.

Since the ascendancy of Yar, Adua into power, it had been the era of probe in the National Assembly of various embezzlements that took place during the Obasanjo era and this present government, i.e., the impeachment of the former speaker of the House of Representatives, Mrs. Patricia Etteh, and the Minister of Health; all linked to embezzlements and graft of different kinds. All these corrupt practices are antithetical to good governance in the Nigerian polity. Yar, Adua's tenure did not last as he died in May 2010. This made Goodluck Ebele Jonathan to become the *de jure* and *de facto* President of the Republic of Nigeria. As a result of his ineptitude as the President, corruption and insecurity as evident in Boko Haram insurgency became uncontrollable till 2015 when he democratically handed over to Muhammadu Buhari. President Buhari was massively voted in because of his previous resume of fighting corruption through War against Indiscipline and Corruption. From all indications, it is clear that Nigerians made one of the greatest mistakes in history. Today, corruption is not the only problem in Nigeria, but also the Boko-Haram insurgence since 2009 and the recent herdsmen attacks on indigents as ethnic cleansing. Life in Nigeria is no longer valuable and mystic as it can be snuffed out in a jiffy. Therefore, life is no longer safe in Nigeria.

The concept of democratic breakdown or erosion is too familiar with Nigeria because corruption has been elevated to the status of gold and adorned purple as a carnival without rules and limitations. Everywhere, one wonders if "corruption is not a Nigerian person" (Oyeshile 2000:55). Corruption in Nigeria soars like fern in the open field. The naked fact is that the electors and some electorates are simply pursuing self-seeking and parochial interest all in the name of corruption. Oche (2002:202)

argues that: “The dangers and possibility of democratic erosion, which may have already started, and breakdown, seem to have entirely discounted. The avaricious and self-serving disposition of Nigeria’s political class has been apparent within the past years.”

In fact, these things are happening in a religious society like Nigeria where there are three main religions. Therefore, they kill religiously, they are corrupt religiously; they rig election religiously; kidnap religiously; siphon and misappropriate the government coffer religiously and escape religiously. Broadly speaking, democracy suffers when the rulers embark on a mission of shameful extravagance in which money; sex, power and material acquisition are key elements of some of them. As a result of the pride of place, corruption assumes in Nigeria, it will be difficult for democracy and good governance to thrive in this thorny terrain. Except, corruption gives way to good governance to soar or democracy gives in to corruption so that good governance can be forgotten as usual.

***Arialusi* as an Antidote to the Socio-Political Miasma in Nigeria**

Life in Africa perhaps Edo is cyclical since reincarnation is tied to *Arialusi*. Since life is transitory, it,, therefore, carries the soul along. Both human and his/her soul must reap what he/she sows. Consequently, both the leaders and the followers must obey the moral tenets of governance and followership so that good leaders can reap joy, good health, longevity, and full of praise and commendation from the masses. Besides, since *Arialusi* is inseparably glued to reincarnation, good and noble leaders will either reincarnate well as a higher being, ancestor or be admitted to the abode of the departed and as well immortalized like Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Sir Herbert Macauley, Nelson Mandela and Kwame Nkrumah whom Ghanaians refer to as *Osagyefo* of Ghana- ‘You Saviour of Ghana.’ Subsequently, their effigy can be found in the Nigerian Naira, Ghanaian Cedi and South Africa Rand. From history, it is obvious that these aforementioned leaders and few others have imputed their marks in the sands of time. Within the province of *Arialusi*, the foregoing had joined their ancestors by overcoming a worthless form of existence to the level self-actualization, purification of the soul and subsequent salvation as a result of their good conducts and selfless service to the masses.

However, bad leaders will also reap their bad deeds because there is no action without reaction. Therefore, they must reap terminal sickness, untimely death, calamity, agony, sorrow, and become bankrupt and impoverished. There are well-established facts of past leaders who had been visited with catastrophe, terminal disease, permanent disability, mental illness, deformity and their ill-gotten wealth suddenly disappeared because of misappropriation of public funds. Some even die mysteriously, while some are nurturing one terminal ailment or the other. In fact, some are visited with one calamity or the other by expending the siphoned monies for such purpose. Without any contradiction, such money misappropriated is lavishly squandered by the children or relatives of the political evildoers. Not only that, some are perpetually on wheelchair or crotches because they can't walk perfectly, because what goes around comes around. While in death, they would reincarnate to right the wrong or reincarnate as a beast or ghost and their souls will wander about until they are able to right the wrong and their soul will be purified before they can unrestrictedly join their ancestors. The led or the followers would also reap whatever they sow arising from the above. It is imperative here to emphasize that some of the wrong deeds of the previous and current leaders are seriously and adversely affecting the Nigerian society. Thus, *Arialusi* is both personal and corporate in dimension.

Since the montage of *Arialusi* is what goes around comes around and makes it long and ancient in antiquity, it means leaders and followers must be accountable because accountability is paramount and non-negotiable even if we do not account to a human being. But, by omission and commission, we must be accountable to the Supreme Being. The Africans perhaps Edo recognize a higher being called *Osanobunwa*. To this end, humankind must render an account for his/her stewardship to the Supreme Being in death which will determine his/her eternity; either the abode of the departed or as a stone or ghost. It is no longer news that life is an illusion. Everything on earth is ephemeral and for a period of time. Every human possession is liable to destruction and it cannot transit. It is the only the human soul that is indestructible. In other words, it is an only human soul that can transit and render an account of how such life was spent while on earth. Therefore, spiritual knowledge is better than material acquisition, which *Arialusi* advocates for. This is fundamental to the soul of humans. Therefore, *Arialusi* postulates that ignorance is not an excuse since life is an illusion.

In the light of the above, it is expedient to note that what we are experiencing in Nigeria is the product of what our past and present

leaders have impinged on the masses because freewill entails responsibility and thus, this free will has been used blame-worthily. Consequently, human life is simply meant for developing political consciousness. Unfortunately, some Nigerians have created some many negative attitudes and engagements that reject this political consciousness.

Concluding Remarks

The paper has exposed us to the concept of *Arialusi* in Edo religious belief. It has been revealed by this study that *Arialusi* has its seat in the very soul of every human being. *Arialusi*, therefore, has the propensity for an individual or corporate body to account for one's deed i.e. by reaping what one has sown. With regard to the Nigerian commonwealth, it is discovered that Nigeria has been experiencing bad leadership without a human face. The end result is poverty, insecurity, instability, senseless killings and anti-development in the polity. Indeed, advancing human development requires good leadership in both form and substance. Nevertheless, the Nigerian fundamental approach to leadership is troubling, nauseating and appalling. Nigerian leaders at all tiers of government have not been effective and they are democratically despotic because they are incompetent and ignorant.

The paper, therefore, advocates that since death is inevitable, it is wise to prepare for the here and now and the hereafter by eschewing from corruption, which many have seen as a signboard of celebrity and gold with class distinction; anti-developmental programmes, masterminding senseless killings in the name of ethnic cleansing, rancour and acrimony; and render transparent and good governance indispensable for good *Arialusi*, good life, pure birth and immortalization of sort. Of a truth, human beings can avoid bad *Arialusi*, when they work for the highest moral law, the good for humankind, nobleness of character, purity of soul and good motive, selfless service and goodness of means. The paper concludes by positing that human will is free and responsible to develop political consciousness targeted towards praise-worthiness and good dividends of good governance within the Nigerian commonwealth. The consciousness of *Arialusi* is the answer to good and bad leadership in contemporary Nigerian society.

References

Oral Sources

1. *Arialusi* is the law of retributive justice in Edo Religion. *Arialusi* is defined as a generational curse and anti-social behaviours, which are intimately linked with the misdeeds of the deviant in his or her previous life. It is also a cosmic law of justice, which holds that one's life is determined by the performance in the previous existence. It pays one in one's own coin. *Arialusi* is similar in concept to the Law of *Karma* in Hinduism. This is an excerpt from my unpublished PhD thesis submitted to the Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, Nigeria, 2009.
 2. The term "Edoid" linguistically connotes the languages and dialects of Edo people. For details, see Z.I. Oseni, *Afenmai Proverb, Collected, Translated and Annotated*, (Auchi: Darun-Nur, 2003) p.x. However, previous endeavours by Elugbe, Egbokhare, and Oseni have studied the socio-linguistics, annotation, thematics or structure of the various dialects in Edoland. In view of the above, I decided to adopt the word "Edoid" to describe the people since we cannot confine the usage of this word to the dialects and language of the people. Within the context of this work, Edoid, therefore, goes beyond the dialects and situates the people in the position of their gamut of dialects as one entity hence the nomenclature.
 3. An interview with Elder Asekhame, 89years, Uhonmora, 28th December 2006.
 4. An interview conducted with Peter Agbolagba, 33years, Uroe, 12th May 2007.
 5. An interview conducted with Ruddy Ohiokhokhai, 50years, Lecturer, Department of History, University of Benin, Benin, 28th December 2007.
 6. An interview with Elder Udusevbokhai Okizi, 74years, Ivbodohen, 2nd January 2007.
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