

**CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA: A REVISIT OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL ETHICS
AS A RESOURCE FOR ETHICAL LEADERSHIP**

by
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DECLARATION

I declare that '*Corruption in Nigeria: A revisit of African traditional ethics as a resource for ethical leadership*' is my own work and that all sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at this or any other higher education institution.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

R.O. ATOLAGBE

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I am, however, responsible for errors of fact and interpretation which might be found in this study. All glory is given to God for granting me good health to sail through the rigour.

Raphael Olusegun Atolagbe

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ABSTRACT

The problem of leadership and corruption in Nigeria is a known fact. A good number of Nigerian politicians and top government officials do not think that politics has anything to do with ethics. Currently, injustice is displayed in all spheres of Nigerian life. Indigenous moral values are almost completely ignored and abandoned. Nigeria no longer operates according to the hallowed observance of the rubric '*Aa kii see*' (it is not done). It is no longer a society of law and order, crime and punishment, good behaviour and adequate reward. It is no longer a society which recognises the principles of abomination/taboo, or what the Yorubas describe as *eewo*. Taboos represent the main source of guiding principles regulating and directing the behaviour of individuals in the community.

However, experience has shown over the years that politics' functional peak is only attainable with the help of ethics. Politics based on the ethical principle of social equality is one of the indispensable features of true democracy. For politics to be effective and meaningful, ethics must not be forgotten. Politics without morality produces unethical leadership. This study claims that, the much desired political moral uprightness is achievable in Nigeria, if African traditional ethics is harnessed as a tool in solving the problem of unethical leadership and corruption, especially embezzlement. The thesis also attempts to show that, through reinforced moral education for both young and old, it will become more accepted that morality is the backbone of politics and it must not be ignored.

KEY TERMS: African traditional ethics, politics, communalism, taboos, leadership, embezzlement, moral education, resources, love, character.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

There are two parallel 'Nigerias' co-existing within the same geographical space; Nigeria of legendary affluence and opulent excess, and Nigeria of deprivation, abject poverty and misery. The problem of corruption and leadership has been implicated in the current situation the country finds itself. A good number of Nigerian politicians and government officials do not think that politics has anything to do with ethics; that is why injustice is currently displayed in all spheres of Nigerian life. All these are as a result of the almost complete abandonment of indigenous moral values. The country is no longer operated by the hallowed observance of the rubric '*Aakii see*' (It is not done). Nigeria is no longer a society of law and order, crime and punishment, good behavior and adequate reward. The society no longer recognizes the principles of abomination/taboo, or what the Yoruba people call, '*eewo*'. Taboos have been forgotten as a main source of guiding principles regulating and directing the behaviour of individuals in the community.

Politicians have forgotten that politics based on ethical principles of social equality is one of the indispensable features of democracy; and that for politics to be effective and meaningful, ethics must be given prominence. It is ethics that gives politics its human face. This study claims that moral uprightness in political leadership is plausible if morality is practiced by the Nigerian political leaders. African traditional ethics is believed to be capable of becoming a tool in solving the problem of embezzlement by political leaders, if the leadership begins to practice the tenets of African traditional ethics. It is therefore necessary that everyone should be constantly reminded, through moral education, that morality is the backbone of politics.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Why is it that the Nigerian government has failed to harness African traditional ethics as a resource for ethical leadership? The unethical practice of embezzlement by the Nigerian political leadership is responsible for the current state of injustice and inequality in the country. The 1914 amalgamation of the southern and northern protectorates of Nigeria abolished the traditional system of governance in place prior to the arrival of the

colonial system. The traditional system of governance had earlier been built on traditional ethics and followership. One of the major characteristics of African morality that have been substantially eroded by this contact include what Onwuachi (1997: 16) describes as the core principles of African communalism derived from indigenous African principles of live and let live; collective sharing; common concern for one another; sense of belonging together; social justice; economic progress and viability for all; and the indigenous African political process of participatory democracy. It was a system in which every adult took part in governance and in the affairs of their community.

In addition, the local dynamics of checks and balances (which held old forms of corruption in manageable limit), was equally eliminated, thereby creating a new disproportionate political playing field. By so doing, the modern and more elusive culture of corruption of political public life was introduced. At the dawn of political independence, the elites who replaced the colonial masters saw the colonial system as a qualification for membership into the ruling class and therefore did not find it reasonable to replace the colonial system, let alone its ethical foundations. These earliest elites became not merely leaders, but also heroes and custodians of knowledge and information. In fact, that became political dictionaries and encyclopedias. Subsequent regimes have made no difference in that direction because all previous regimes became a tradition that must not be jettisoned. To gain political ascendance, all political parties compete in showing their affinity with the political founding fathers of the 50s and 60s, and upon winning elections, become not less corrupt than previous regimes and much more incompetent than their ancestral mentors.

On the eve of political independence in Nigeria, Nigerian elite agitated successfully to displace and replace the foreign rulers without uttering the ethical and epistemological frameworks that had supported the colonial system. While numerous Nigerian and African wide scholarship has condemned the colonial system, the existential reality remains that the unwanted system has remained unruffled half a century after the independence. Worst still, the suggestions of previous scholars on the issue have remained like the proverbial '*aja inu iwe ti ko le bu ni je*' (that is, the pictorial or literary dog, which cannot bite) because they have failed to show the practicality of their suggestions.

Consequently, Nigeria has witnessed various forms of repressive political leadership cum governance, which have hindered any meaningful socio-political development. This must have prompted Achebe (1984: 1), to conclude that, “the trouble with Nigeria is squarely a failure of leadership [...] the Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to their responsibilities, to the challenge of personal example, which is the hallmark of true leadership”. Achebe’s statement can be compared to that of Alonge (2005: 345-346) that certain aspects of our traditional moral values – especially, love, concern and care for one another have shown that traditional African ethical principles have helped to maintain and ensure social order and stability in pre-colonial African societies. This has helped to expose the main thesis of this study that the Nigerian political state has remained pitiable as a result of the abandonment of specific ethical and social values which had hitherto provided support for the sustenance of communal system in pre-colonial African societies that form the present day Nigeria. Leadership in governance is a concern in Nigeria. This study argues that African traditional ethics should be brought back into practice because it could become a powerful resource in creating the much needed ethical leadership in Nigeria.

1.3 Philosophical focus of the thesis.

The philosophical interest of the thesis lies in emphasising the necessity for living a moral life, which cannot be overemphasized. It seeks to provide an answer to the problem of unethical leadership which has plunged Nigeria into socio-political quagmires. The thesis is therefore making ethical considerations a ‘*sine qua non*’ for the achievement of meaningful and just political activities, since politics is endemic in all human endeavours, whether on the micro or macro level. This is necessary for over-all peace, justice, stability and happiness of any people in any political set up. As Nwala (1985:11) reminds us, “man’s quest for both theoretical and practical solutions to the problem of life, is the origin of philosophy”.

This thesis thus views corruption, especially of embezzlement, as a ‘life problem’ hence Nigeria needs a moral code based on the traditional moral values of the African people. Such a code could help breed ethical leaders for the country and at the same time, serve as a guide to its political administration. The code will also enable its citizens to live a life of peace and harmony rather than in misery and abject poverty caused by unethical behaviours of the leadership. This thesis will explore the plausibility of the communal

aspect of African traditional ethics becoming the bases and foundation of socio-economic control upon which corruption of embezzlement in Nigeria could be stemmed.

The nucleus of African traditional ethics is humaneness, love and caring, sharing, fostering participation, and service for the collective good other than individuals that make up the community. It is about the leaders' integrity, honesty, justice, and accountability as opposed to rampant embezzlement of public funds which results in sufferings for the people. Furthermore, because it has been difficult for philosophers to come up with an all-embracing moral theory for all situations, the utilitarian and character-based ethics traces or tendencies in African culture and traditional ethics, could provide a solution to the problem of imbalances and inequality in socio political conditions among the common people. Hence, this thesis views African traditional ethics as a moral code that should be given a pragmatic trial in the practice of political leadership in Nigeria.

1.4 Purpose and objectives of the study

One of the main objectives of this thesis is to show that both colonial and post-colonial eras in Nigeria have negatively impacted African traditional ethical values. Another objective is to stress the need for the revival of African traditional values, especially the traditional ethics in order to guarantee the quality of democracy and justice. In order to achieve those objectives, it will be necessary to make use of the African indigenous knowledge system to re-orientate the leaders and those aspiring to become political leaders, to bring us back to the ethical standards. This moral re-orientation or education is necessary because it is very important for everyone to know what we had in the past which was good but missing now for us to be able to restore it. The thesis also intends to prove that moral uprightness is a possibility if the masses are properly re-oriented about traditional ethics and the evils of corruption. This thesis intends to demonstrate that communal, humanistic and man-centred living as an integral part of African traditional ethics could replace selfish and unethical behaviours currently exhibited by Nigerian leadership. Hence, the thesis aims at theorising the African traditional ethics as a practicable solution to the problem of corrupt leadership in Nigeria by making references to African Kingdoms which existed before the advent of colonialism.

1.5 Methodology

This thesis will be carried out with the use of qualitative method with primary emphasis on the use of secondary data or information analysed through content and descriptive methods of analysis. The sources of the secondary data include books, Journal articles among others. The researcher will be describing political events and situation in Nigeria through literature review methodology in order to come up with a successful project. The qualitative approach is preferred because it enables an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon.

According to Myers (1997: 12), the qualitative methods were developed in the social sciences to enable researchers to study social and cultural phenomena. Since philosophical analysis has to do with a critical and reflective conceptualization of the phenomenon under study, (Schofield, 1982: 31), the researcher will critically analysed and evaluate the notion of African moral values with emphasis on traditional ethics as they are found in the texts. To achieve the stated objectives, the thesis has adopted the methods of historical and logical analysis, using the theoretical framework of hermeneutics complemented by both written and oral literature.

Wealth of existing literature on African studies, African philosophy, African history and oral literature and history on Africa, are given a careful blend in the work to produce an original thinking regarding the way out of the current Nigeria's political crisis which has for decades hinder the growth and development of the country.

1.6 Scope and delimitations of the study

This study will focus on exploring the role of African traditional ethics as a strong weapon in the elimination of embezzlement and creation of ethical leadership in Nigeria's political administration. The scope advocates the practice of ethical values of honesty, accountability, transparency, citizens' participation, access to information, the rule of law and concern for the people as it is urged by traditional ethics.

Due to the broadness of the word corruption, the study has picked a particular form of corruption –embezzlement – which has been a stumbling block in the way of the nation's social, economic and political development. It has also inflicted personal damages on the character of individual Nigerians at home and in diaspora. Although it is a known

fact that corruption in general has eaten deep into the fabrics of Nigerian social life, involving even commoners, the study has concentrated on the cases of embezzlement involving political leaders from the pre-independence to the present.

1.7 Outline of the thesis

The thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter 1, in this introductory chapter, the focus and the parameter of the study are set. Some key issues that underpin the entire research are introduced, including the Background to the study, 'Statement of the problem', Philosophical interest of the thesis, Purpose and objectives, Methodology, scope and delimitation of the study and outline of literature review. The chapter generally provides a good insight into how the research would be conducted.

Chapter two is a review of relevant literature on ethics and leadership theories related to running organisations be it social or political. The literature reviewed provides the conceptual framework upon which the study is grounded.

Chapter three gives an insight in to how African traditional ethics was blended with political administration among the three major kingdoms of Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa in Nigerian communities before colonialism.

Chapter four discusses people's socio-political experiences with the scope and extent of corruption in political administration in Nigeria during the colonial period and after independence.

Chapter five examines corruption and its effects on socio-political life of both the country Nigeria and its people nationally and internationally.

Chapter six theorises African traditional ethics as a viable solution to Nigeria's socio-political quagmires, emphasizing some major features or characteristics of African traditional ethics as embodiments of love and tools for creating ethical leadership.

Chapter seven is a personal reflection on the thesis which also brings the thesis to a

logical conclusion where recommendations for effective combat on all unethical behaviours are made; and suggestions for further studies in the war against corruption were made.

1.8 An outline of work already done

It is common knowledge that no new research can be adequately carried out without the knowledge of the research that has been done in the particular field, hence reference will be made to some prominent scholars who have been championing the course of a return to indigenous ways of political administration in Africa. Notable among such scholars are professors Gyekye and Wiredu, who were concerned that since the demise of colonialism, the contemporary African state is still not able to guarantee justice, equality and security to its citizenry because the traditional way of doing things have been neglected, creating bad governments full of corrupt and immoral practices. For instance, Gyekye (1997b), had argued that democracy in Africa must be established based on traditional system for it to succeed. In the same vein Wiredu (1997), had made a plea for democracy based on 'consensus' fashioned against the indigenous practice of problem solving by African elders who would sit under the tree to talk on an issue until an agreement was reached. Wiredu believed that some thorny issues in governance can be resolved by consensus, which was a traditional way of resolving issues. Both scholars basing their argument on their Akan tribe of Ghana, have fundamentally argued in favour of indigenous democracy rather than what could be termed as 'imported' democracy because of their belief in traditional democracy being firmly rooted in people's culture.

However, both philosophers seem to be in disagreement over the quality of traditional democracy. Gyekye opined that democracy in pre-colonial Africa was not full-fledged, it only possessed elements of democracy which could be nurtured and refined for use in modern day politics. On the other hand, Wiredu insisted that there existed traditional democracy in pre-colonial Africa, and there is no need to borrow from the west. Wiredu went further to express strong opposition to multi-party system of democracy in favour of non-party democracy.

In his response to Wiredu's non-party democracy, Eze, (1997) did not see non-party democracy as capable of solving Africa's problems because, according to him, most

African dictator heads of state had used such traditional resources to suppress those who are opposed to them and oppress the people. Kolawole (2003), in his contribution agreed with both Gyekye and Wiredu by expressing his strong belief that responsible and responsive governance can bring public good to the community and good life to individual which is only possible through the adoption of democracy. Kolawole however felt that reliance on indigenous culture alone will not be enough to sustain the type of democracy we yearn to have, and cautioned that the return to the past in order to have a foundation of democracy could make us fall into what he described as 'the trap of venerating an obsolete and anachronistic culture. Instead, he advocated for what he called 'eclecticism'. In essence, he called for a blend of the good past with the workable present to forge the future.

Drawing from historical perspectives, this thesis discovers that ethics cannot be obsolete in any community, African or western; it will always remain relevant. This thesis will demonstrate that one important aspect of African indigenous value that is needed to restore sanity and justice to governance in Nigeria, is the revival and injection of African traditional ethics into the practice of democracy. The absence of ethics in the practice of governance by the political leadership is responsible for the woeful failure of democracy not only in Nigeria but throughout Africa, to provide stability and justice.

Therefore, this thesis will conclude that African traditional ethics be revived and be used as a weapon against immorality in general and corruption of embezzlement in particular, through oral dissemination of its tenets. By re-orienting people about traditional ethics, it becomes a form of moral education, capable of curing the moral sickness of corruption which has infected both the Nigerian society and the individuals in it, especially the political leadership. Corruption can only be cured through moral re-generation because the moral sickness of an individual in a society, is the moral sickness of the society.

1.9 Significance of the study

This study is optimistic that, a good comprehension and application of the African traditional ethics as a resource for the establishment of ethical leadership will enhance the achievement of good governance through the eradication of corruption. The primary purpose of this study is to gain an in-depth comprehension of African traditional ethics and how its practice could lead to the establishment of ethical leadership and good

governance in Nigeria. The outcome of this study has the potential to effectively address the leadership crises in the public sector, which can promote and lead to the desired socio-political change.

Another significance of this study lies in the fact that it complements existing literature and concerns on the state of Nigerian political challenges. Many previous scholars have either advocated the adoption of African traditional systems or decried the uncritical post-colonial adoption of the western systems. Much of the previous theoretical militancy have failed to show how the modern Nigerian leaders can make a difference or provide clear theoretical guide to contemporary Nigerian political practitioners.

The study attempts to establish the existence of another dimension of the problem that a large percentage of the voice advocating the adoption of African culture are somewhat over simplistic advocacy because they have made no systematic outlines and recommendations of how the advocated African culture could be adopted in the practice of democracy towards the reduction or outright elimination of corrupt governance in Africa, and especially in Nigeria. Specifically therefore, this study acknowledges that there have been scholarly attempts by scholars of African politics to erect theoretical solutions and panaceas of the problems of corruption that is impeding the smooth-running of democracy in Nigeria. The study adopts similar thesis as those of previous researches on the problem, but with a caveat that specific recommendations are indispensable. In other words, like previous scholars, this thesis equally advocates a return to African indigenous values and rejection of the western ethos as a foundation for politics and governance in Nigeria.

Its main contribution to knowledge lies among other things on the fact that unlike those previous scholars, this thesis intends to achieve further scholarliness by proposing specific features of the African ethical system towards theoretical clarity on how to adapt the African communal systems which this thesis views as a moral system and which has a central place for love in its practice. Ultimately, the study could contribute to the body of knowledge needed for understanding the significance of ethical leadership and its role in promoting and sustaining good governance in the public sector.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF ETHICS AND LEADERSHIP

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the objective is to provide conceptual clarifications to the phrases; 'ethical principles', 'ethical theories', 'leadership' and 'ethical leadership' as will be employed in the subsequent chapters of the work. It is of primary importance, to carefully guide readers from misreading, misinterpretation and ultimately, to provide interpretative keys to policy makers whom from time to time may want to consult the work. In order for us to understand why ethics is necessary for leadership, principles and theories of ethics are discussed to show how they guide leaders in their decision-making activities. It makes it more relevant also to discuss the concept and theories of leadership as both go hand-in-hand. Other issues to be discussed include the necessity of ethical leadership in governance, ethics, accountability and political leadership, and the relationship between ethics, governance and corruption.

2.2 Ethical principles and theories

Philosophers have come up with theoretical ways of telling right from wrong and for giving guidelines about how to live and act ethically through formulation of principles and theories of ethics. As there are theories of leadership so also are theories of ethics and principles upon which the ethical theories depend. Ethical principles and theories are regarded as general standards of conduct that make up an ethical system. They provide the foundation for all ethical behaviour. They also convey significant characteristics to the decision-making process. Some ethical principles and three prominent ethical theories – deontology, utilitarianism and virtue ethics - will be discussed briefly below, beginning with ethical principles.

2.2.1 Ethical principles

Ethical principles, according to Hare (1964: i-iii), are the foundations of ethical analysis, because they are the view points from which guidance could be obtained along the pathway to a decision. Each ethical theory emphasises different points such as predicting the outcome and following one's duties to others in order to reach an ethically correct decision. However, in order for an ethical theory to be useful, the

theory must be directed towards a common set of goals. Ethical principles are the common goals which each ethical theory tries to achieve in order to be successful. Some of these goals include; justice, universality, integrity, beneficence, least harm and respect for autonomy. They will be discussed only briefly below for lack of space and time.

(a) Beneficence

The principle of beneficence is the principle that guides the ethical theory to 'do good'. Berglund (2007: 12) defines beneficence as "the principle of doing good". The principle is concerned with the promotion of well-being of everyone in the society. This priority to do good makes an ethical perspective and possible solution to an ethical dilemma, acceptable. This principle is also related to the principle of utility, which states that we should attempt to generate the largest ratio of good possible over evil in the world. The principle further stipulates that ethical theories should strive to achieve the greatest amount of 'good' because people benefit from the most good. It is also the principle that mainly associates with the utilitarian ethical theory that will later be discussed in this study. An example of doing good could be found in politics where the life of individuals could be bettered by the provision of basic social amenities for a community.

(b) Respect for autonomy

This is the principle, which guarantees "self-rule with no control, undue influence or interference from others" (Griffith & Tengnah, 2010: 29). It states further that an ethical theory should allow people to be able to make decisions that apply to their lives. In other word, people should have control over their lives as much as possible because they are the only people who completely understand their chosen type of lifestyle. Each person deserves respect because only he or she has had those exact life experiences and understands his or her emotions, motivations and body in such an intimate manner. In essence, this principle is an extension of the ethical principle of beneficence because a person who is independent usually prefers to have control over his/her life experiences in order to obtain the lifestyle that he or she enjoys.

(c) Justice

Another principle is justice ethical principle which states that ethical theories should prescribe actions that are fair to those involved. This means that ethical decisions should be consistent with the ethical theory unless an excuse or special circumstances that can be justified exist in the case. This also means that cases with excusable circumstances must contain a significant and vital difference from similar cases that justify the inconsistent decision (Hendrick, 2004: 7). For example, in case of a critically ill person in hospital, such a person might sometimes receive more attention or special care over others with less serious case. That preferential treatment might be justified.

Justice is the obligation to treat others fairly. According to Beauchamp and Childress (2009: 257), this principle can also be best described by the term fairness or giving each person his/her due. This is related to distributive justice or equity and impartiality. In other words, we have an obligation to provide others with whatever they are owed or deserve. Justice is about meeting everyone's individual needs fairly. Fairness is linked very closely to the idea of justice.

Any ethical decision that contains justice within it, has a consistent logical basis that supports the decision. For example, a policeman is allowed to speed beyond the limit on the highway if he must arrive at the scene of a crime as quickly as possible in order to prevent a person from getting hurt. Although the policeman would normally have to obey the speed limit, he is allowed or excused to speed in this unique situation because it is justified under the extenuating circumstances.

(d) Universality

Another ethical principle relevant to this study and which is in consonance with the golden rule, is 'universality'. Immanuel Kant makes universality the central maxim of all moral judgement. The basic idea is that an act is good when it can, without absurdity, be turned into a universal law (Kant, 2002: 115-116). A universal law is one that can be binding upon anyone. For example, if you seek to cheat someone out of money, you ask yourself whether this can be a universal rule. However, in reality and sincerity, it cannot, since if everyone cheated in this way, the economy would collapse and there would be no more trust for anyone. For this reason, to borrow money and refuse to pay back will be inherently evil and immoral. It follows then that, if an action

does not pass the universality test, it is immoral.

(e) Integrity

An ethical principle, which could be regarded as central, is 'integrity'. It is central because it suggests that the personality is genuine and true. The integral personality is one that is based around several ideas; a mission and a strong sense of self that is present at all times. Its opposite is one that wears 'masks', that tell people what they want to hear but disguises its intentions and opinions. The opposite of the integral personality is, where one believes in his/her purpose and moral ideas, but tries to disguise them. The dissimulating personality is dishonest and pretentious in that it mirrors its surroundings by conforming to what is popular for the sake of social acceptance only (Omoregbe, 1993: 9). It is important that one's action matches his/her believe to be described as someone with integrity.

(f) Least harm

The last principle I shall discuss here is 'Least harm', which is similar to 'beneficence', but deals with situations in which neither choice is beneficial. In this case, a person should choose to do the least harm and making sure harm is done to the fewest number of people. In other words, in a situation where there is no how you cannot avoid to do harm, make sure the harm you are going to do affects the fewest number of people. It could be argued that people have a greater responsibility to do no harm than to take steps to benefit others.

2.2.2 Theories of ethics

Having discussed ethical principles, it is deemed appropriate too to discuss some ethical theories. Ethical theories are based on previously discussed ethical principles. They serve as foundations for ethical solutions to different situations encountered by both ordinary people and leaders, on day to-day basis. These theories can be used to analyse situations in everyday life as well as hypothetical dilemmas. They also emphasise different aspects of an ethically correct resolution according to the guidelines within the ethical theory itself. According to Omoregbe (1993:12), ethical theories generate certain moral convictions and outlook, which in turn influence and guide peoples' conduct along certain directions. People usually base their individual choice of ethical theory upon their life experiences.

Some of the most widely accepted ethical theories include; deontology, utilitarianism, virtue, casuists and 'rights'. However, for the purpose of this study, deontology, utilitarianism and virtue ethics, which are of great significance to this study, will be discussed briefly below due to lack of space and time, as earlier hinted, starting with deontology.

(a) Deontology

Deontology claims that certain actions are inherently good or bad; right or wrong without regard at all for consequences. Put in another way, whether something is right or wrong does not depend on its consequences, rather, an action is right or wrong in itself. Deontologists believe that morality is a matter of duty. The theory states that people should adhere to their obligations and duties in analyzing an ethical dilemma (Reamer, 1995:53). In other words, the rightness or wrongness of any act depends on whether the person has followed his or her duty regardless of the consequences. We have a moral duty to do things, which are the right things to do and moral duties not to do what is not right to do. For an action to have a moral value, it must be performed strictly for the sake of duty, that is, in reverence to the moral law. Omoregbe (1993:220) explains to act for the sake of duty as "acting not because one feels like doing it or because one has a natural inclination to doing such things, but purely out of reverence to the moral law".

According to Kant (2002:49), to be subject to moral duty is to be under a categorical imperative. In other words, the idea that we morally ought to act in a certain way, for example, helping the needy, can be analysed as the idea that, to act that way is demanded by a categorical imperative. This means that, a person would follow his or her obligation to another individual or community because upholding one's duty is what is considered ethically correct.

It is my considered opinion that a person who follows this theory is very likely to produce consistent decisions since such decisions will be based on the individual's set duties. It appears though that deontology concerns itself more with motive than actual result; actions are good or bad depending on the motives.

Deontology provides a basis for special duties and obligations to specific people, such as those within one's family or community. For example, an older brother may have an obligation to protect his little sister or brother when they cross a busy street together. This theory also sings the praises of those who exceed their duties and obligations, which is called "supererogation". For instance, we know it is the duty of teachers to protect their students while the students are in the care of teachers at school, but it will be a supererogatory action for one teacher to volunteer himself or herself to be killed instead of the students. He or she has done more than his or her normal expectation.

Although the deontological theory contains many positive attributes, it also contains its fair number of flaws, just like any other theory. One weakness of this theory is that, there is no rationale or logical basis for deciding an individual duty. For instance, a businessperson may decide that it is his duty to always be on time to meetings. Although the choice appears to be a noble duty, we do not know why that person makes this his duty. Perhaps the reason that he has to be at the meeting on time is that he always wants to sit in a particular chair every time.

A similar scenario reveals two other faults of deontology. One, sometimes a person's duties conflict. Secondly, deontology is not concerned with the welfare of others. For example, how does the deontologist who is running late for a meeting supposed to drive? Is he supposed to speed over the limit thereby breaking his duty to society to uphold the law; or is he supposed to arrive at his meeting late, breaking his duty to be on time?

This scenario of conflicting obligations does not lead us to a clear ethically correct resolution neither does it protect the welfare of others from the deontologist's decision. Since deontology is not based on the context of each situation, we may say that, it does not provide any guidance when one enters a complex situation in which there are conflicting obligations.

One other big criticism of deontology is that it neglects or ignored the outcome as a valid factor in evaluating the morality of an action. While it is not necessarily wise to rely solely on outcome, it is not a good idea either to completely ignore the outcome altogether.

(b) Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism is an ethical theory based on the principle of utility; the principle of the greatest good or the principle of the greatest happiness. The utilitarian ethical theory is founded on the ability to predict the consequences of an action (Omogbe, 1993: 233). According to utilitarianism, utility is the yardstick or criterion with which good actions are distinguished from bad ones. That is to say, the rightness or wrongness of an action is judged in relation to its consequences. To utilitarians, the choice that yields the greatest benefit to the people is the choice that is ethically correct. This is a consequentialist approach to morality.

According to Smart and Williams (1982:9-11), there are two versions or types of utilitarianism - Act utilitarianism and Rule utilitarianism. Act utilitarianism adheres exactly to the definition of utilitarianism as described above, that is, those actions that produce good results – the greatest good for the greatest number – are good. Act utilitarianism holds that the rightness or wrongness of an action should be based on the consequences of the action. In act utilitarianism, a person performs the act that benefits the most people, regardless of personal feelings or the societal constraints such as laws. Act utilitarianism does not appear to take into account the nature of an action itself; what matters is the consequence of the action; for instance killing a person could be justified as good action if it saves ten other lives.

Rule utilitarianism, on the other hand, agrees that moral rules should be based on principle of utility. However, “only those rules which would result in useful consequences if adopted and obeyed by everybody and which would produce the best possible results for the greatest number of people, should be adopted” (Omogbe, 1993: 237-238). Hence, rule utilitarianism takes the law into account and it is also concerned with fairness. A rule utilitarian seeks to benefit the most people but through the fairest and most just means available. Therefore, added benefits of rule utilitarianism are that it values justice and includes beneficence at the same time.

One other benefit of this ethical theory is that, a utilitarian can compare similar predicted solutions and as a point system to determine, which choice is more beneficial for more people. This point system provides a logical and rational argument for each decision. It also allows a person to use it on case-by-case context. Faults

have however been found with both types or versions of utilitarianism.

According to Smart and Williams (1982: 77-81), both act and rule utilitarianism contain numerous flaws as with all ethical theories. Inherent in both are flaws associated with predicting the future. Although one can use his or her life experiences to attempt to predict outcomes, it might be difficult to be too certain that his or her predictions will be true. This uncertainty can lead to unexpected results, making the utilitarian look unethical as time passes because his choice did not benefit the most people as he or she predicted. For example, if a utilitarian lights fire in the house in order to warm the living room, but instead, the fire burns down the house because the soot in the chimney caught fire, then the utilitarian now seems to have chosen an unethical decision even though it is an accident. The unexpected fire now judged as unethical because it did not benefit anyone.

Another assumption the utilitarian makes is the ability to compare the various types of experiences against each other on a similar case. However, comparing material gains such as money against intangible gains such as happiness is impossible since their qualities differ to such a large extent. A third criticism of the theory is that it does not allow for the existence of supererogation or heroes. Meaning, no matter how extraordinary one thinks his or her action is, one is still doing what is expected to be done. In other words, no action can be described as supererogatory under utilitarianism because no action is too much. People are constantly obligated to behave in such a manner as to benefit the most people regardless of the danger associated with such an action. For instance under utilitarianism, the teacher who sacrifices her life to save her students' life is actually fulfilling an obligation to the society rather than performing a selfless and laudable act (Smart & Williams, 1982: 77-81).

(c) Virtue ethical theory

In most other ethical theories, whether an act is moral or not depends on the act itself as we have seen with deontology and utilitarianism just discussed above. In contrast, virtue ethical theory is agent or character-based. For Aristotle, the rightness or wrongness of an action depends on the evaluation of the character of the agent who performed the act. For example, if a person cheats people out of money all the time, he or she could be judged a cheater but not when he/she does it only one time due to

unavoidable circumstance.

Omoregbe (1993: 165) describes virtue ethics as “a state of mind which spontaneously gives rise to good actions as a matter of habit”. In other words, if a person does a good action only once in a while, not as a matter of habit but only when he feels like doing so, his action although good, is not a virtuous action. This can be explained further that, to become virtuous, one has to constantly and persistently practice virtue until it becomes like a second nature; just as a person becomes a good athlete in no other way than by practicing athletics. Some character traits commonly regarded as virtues include, courage, justice, generosity, wisdom, and good temper. The virtue ethical theory judges a person by his or her character rather than by action that may deviate from his or her normal behaviour. This theory takes a person’s morals, reputation and motivation into account when rating an unusual and irregular behaviour that is considered unethical.

This theory, like others discussed above, has flaws. One of the criticisms of virtue ethics is its failure to acknowledge cultural relativism. Given that different cultures sometimes hold different traits of character to be virtuous, it is difficult to figure out which characteristics count as virtues.

It also seems that virtuous characteristics can be exhibited even when the actions carried out are immoral. For example, a bank robber could exhibit courage while robbing a bank, yet we generally agree that robbing is morally wrong.

I see this consequence as problematic because, as we all know, the aim of any normative theory is to arrive at standards or norms of behaviour for living a moral life. In the case of the courageous bank robber, it seems that the bank robber lives according to the standard set by virtue ethics by acting courageously but his behaviour is nevertheless immoral.

In concluding this segment, we have seen that ethical principles and theories bring significant characteristics to the decision-making process. Although all of the ethical theories attempt to follow ethical principles in order to be applicable and valid by themselves, each theory falls short with complex flaws and failings. However, it is my

strongly considered opinion that, these ethical theories can be used in combination in order to obtain the most ethically correct answer possible for each scenario. For instance, the deontological, the utilitarianism and virtue ethics might make use of the rights ethical theory or even the beneficence theory to arrive at what they can confidently consider to be ethically correct decisions. This brief study of these theories would afford us the opportunity to compare and see where they have something in common with African traditional ethics.

2.3 The Concept of leadership

Any organization, be it political or social, needs leadership for its survival and achievement of its goal; and the leader's behaviour and actions are crucial for positive organizational outcomes. There is almost a unanimous agreement on the indispensability of leadership for the success of organisations and institutions. There are also numerous discussions on leadership in the literature and among diverse fields and their practitioners, but the concept does not seem to have a widely accepted conception or definition and achieving such does not seem to be in view.

Leadership is defined in many ways that it may not be easy to come up with a single working definition but it is sure that the quality of leadership in any human interactions and endeavours is centrally important. Leadership has currently become one of the most contested concepts in the business world, in politics and academics as well as in corporate and private lives. In numerous aspects of public and corporate lives, the concept is gradually becoming a mere buzzword. This situation explains why Stogdill (1974: 259) concluded that there are "almost as many definitions of leadership as are persons who have attempted to define the concept". There is no unanimity as to what 'leadership' means (Jing & Avery 2008 and Northouse 2007). It might be of interest in an academic work of this nature to sample a few definitions in order to appreciate its complexities.

Traditionally, leadership is conceived in terms of personal attributes. For instance, leadership has been defined as "a body of people who lead and direct the activities of a group towards a shared goal" (Ogheidi, 2012: 4). Following the traditional conception, another definition of leadership is given as "the process of influencing people to direct their efforts towards the achievement of some particular goals" Altman

and Hodgetts (1979: 182) and Cohen, (1990: 9) also see leadership as “the art of influencing others to their maximum performance to accomplish any task, objective or project”. Similarly, Hersey and Blanchard (1998: 86), conceives leadership as “the process of influencing the activities of an individual or a group in efforts toward goal achievement in a given situation”. In contemporary discusses however, the conception of leadership has changed from being an isolated achievement and charisma of an isolated individual to a by-product of a synergy and collective efforts. Hence, the emergence of concepts such as transformational leadership (Burns 1978; Bass 1985, Brown, Harrison, and Trevino 2005).

The combination of the traditional and the contemporary conceptions of leadership makes leadership between people; individuals who moves by setting constructive goals and galvanise the people to pursue those goals and the people who provide motivation and inspiration to achieve the goal. By this emerging description, the importance of leadership becomes axiomatic. However, whether traditional or modern, since leadership has to do with human actions and choices in relation to individuals and groups, it must be based on principles that guide or should guide human actions. Suffice it to say therefore that there is an inseparable theoretical and practical link between ethics and leadership.

2.4 Theories of Leadership

The teleological and deontological models (otherwise known as utilitarianism and Kantianism respectively), provide the principal framework for theorising leadership. To this may be added the axiological. The teleological model of leadership is one with a mindset that leadership and leadership quality should be assessed based on results achieved and future goals. That is, if it has a good or perhaps an approvable foresight.

The deontological model conceives of leadership with a mindset of judging performance by the approval of society, this is regardless of the chronological orientation of its qualities. For example, regardless of its foresight, many countries do not approve of military government. In fact, many would not accept it as a government in the first place. The third would evaluate leadership based on some ideals. These ethical models provide the principal framework for making a decision in public administration (Adams & Balfour 2005 and Garofalo & Geuras 2007).

In this dimension, it was asserted that the utilization of deontological ethics in public administration ensures that public officials keep to the established norms and avoid any action that betrays the public trust. Ethical framework provides government officials at all levels with guidelines for acting and decision-making. It enables them to focus on undertaking policy decision for the best interest of the public they serve. It is fair to think that ethical government officials are likely to be more concerned for and pursue the public interest than the unethical ones. Thompson argued that public administrative ethics is the application of moral principles by public officials in carrying out their duties. He observed that moral principles are not focused on personal interests; instead, they are oriented toward the well-being or the common good of the public. He noted further:

Instead of asking how an action or policy serves the interest of some particular individual or group, morality asks whether the action or policy serves everyone's interest, or whether it could be accepted by anyone who did not know his or her particular circumstances (Thompson, 1985: 555).

In his contribution, Jennings (1991: 66) argued that “[n]orms such as justice, equity, accountability, individual rights and common good are the lingua franca of legitimacy in liberal democratic society”.

The impetus of serving public interest and thus, providing good governance and service delivery lies in the public officials' capability and willingness to abide by and act according to ethical standards in a democratic society. To have the capacity and the requisite attitude needed to serve the public altruistically, government officials, elected or appointed, occupying leadership positions in government should be men and women who (a) understand and have the ability to apply ethical principles to specific conditions, and then (b) have the moral integrity to make decisions based on those principles. Public officials need to be people who know and understand the importance of ethical leadership and be committed to its practice in their various constituencies.

Two major leadership theories that are noted for their ethical orientation are, *transformational leadership* and *servant – leadership* (Northouse 2007 & van Wart 2003). Smith, Montagno, and Kuzmenko (2004) claimed that *transformational and servant – leadership* theories were among the most popular leadership theories among researchers in recent times. But, Ilies and Macaulay (2007); Northouse (2007); and van Wart (2003) remarked that scholars recognized Burns’ theory as the first leadership study that accorded ethics a prominent place. However, van Wart (2003) contended that Robert Greenleaf’s *servant – leadership theory* was the first major leadership theory to have focused on the ethical dimension of leadership, though it did not receive much mainstream attention. Northouse (2007) also regarded *servant – leadership* theory as one of the theories that emphasised ethics as an important element of leadership.

2.4.1 Transformational leadership theory

Introducing the study of his leadership theory and noting the importance of the subject, Burns (1978) wrote, “we fail to grasp the essence of leadership that is relevant to the modern age and hence we cannot agree on the standards by which to measure, recruit and reject it” (1978: 1-2). He went on to formulate a leadership model that makes the case for ethics in leadership. Burns posited that transforming leadership involved the leaders’ ability to elevate both themselves and followers “to higher levels of motivation and morality” which is done when leaders motivate followers by appealing to higher ideals and moral values for the achievement of common goals (Burns, 1978: 20). A genuine transformational leader is not selfish but one who is motivated by altruism; deeply engaged with followers via effective communication channels; and addresses the “wants and needs, and other motivations, of the followers and the leaders” (1978: 20).

True leadership takes place when leaders utilize their power to motivate all the available resources “to arouse, engage, and satisfy the motives of the followers...done in order to realise goals mutually held by both leaders and followers” (Burns, 1978: 18). This mutuality of goals which is the essence of true leadership entails, representing “the values, motivations, wants, needs, interests, and expectations of both leaders and followers” (Denhardt *et al.*, 2002: 201).

The implication for this study is that if political leaders at all levels of government were transformational leaders, according to the theory, they would always make the needs, interests, and aspiration of the people a priority in their administration, for both the leaders and the led have shared values, interests and goals. A transformational leader is committed to the improvement of the followers' welfare; understanding that the well-being of those being led enhances the leaders' as well. The transformational leaders know the essence of ethics; they model ethical living, employ ethical practices, and challenge their followers to be ethical and moral in their actions for the achievement of the common good.

Burns (1978) distinguished between transformational leadership and individuals who merely hold power. Power wielders do not put the need and interests of followers into the equation of leadership. Even when they seem to do that, the primary aim is to use the opportunity for their personal interests. Apparently, we only have *power wielders* in Nigerian politics. Burns argued that real leadership is primarily exercised for mutual benefit of both the leader and the followers. It is not just what the leaders do to the followers "but rather as a relationship between leaders and followers – a mutual interaction that ultimately changes both" (Denhardt *et al.*, 2002: 199). The relationship established between the leader and follower is symbiotic in nature, a kind of mutual dependence; both sides "become mobilized, inspired, and uplifted" (2002: 200). It is a mutual relational interaction geared toward achieving a common goal that is beneficial to all the members of the organisation or society; both the needs and well-being of the leader and the led are within the equation of things.

An attempt has been made by Bass (1985) to expand Burn's concept of transformational leadership. He argued that transformational challenges followers to go extra miles in "doing more than expected by (a) raising followers' levels of consciousness about the importance and value of specified and idealized goals, (b) getting followers to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the team or organization, and (c) moving followers to address higher-level needs" (1985: 20).

Bass and Avolio (1993) articulated four dimensions that characterise transformational leaders; among them is idealised influence. Idealised influence delineates the leader's behaviour that results in admiration, respect, and trust by the led. Tracy and Hinkin

(1998: 225) posited that the idealized influence dimension of transformational leadership, among others, includes concern for the followers' needs and encouragement for ethical and moral conduct. Bass (1998: 72) noted, "Idealised influence is characterized by high moral and ethical standards"; thus transformational leaders, according to Brown *et al.*, (2005), are modelers of ethical conduct for the emulation of their followers.

However, we must apply caution and note that, not all leaders who manifest these characteristics are truly transformational leaders. For example, leaders like Ibrahim Babangida and Sanni Abacha of Nigeria, appeared initially to manifest transformational leadership skills in pretending to be concerned about the needs and aspiration of their followers. These behaviours were used as camouflage to pursue their personal and selfish agenda. Such leaders are, to use the term employed by Bass and Steidlmeier (1999), *pseudo transformational* as opposed to authentic transformative leaders. For Bass and Steidlmeier (1999: 186), pseudo transformational leaders are "deceptive and manipulative" they use their powers primarily to enhance their own selfish end. Pseudo transformational leaders, according to Northouse (2007: 177) are "self-consumed, exploitative and power-oriented with warped moral values". These descriptions aptly fit the type of leadership we experience in Nigeria.

Authentic transformational leaders, on the other hand, are sincere, concerned about the welfare of their followers; and use their power to serve the needs and well-being of others. Transformational leadership, according to Kouzes and Posner (2007: 137), has the ability "to appeal to people's ideals, move their souls, and uplift their spirits". Northouse (2007) stated that transformational leaders have internalised values and ideals, to which they are committed, through which they are able to motivate their followers to act in a manner that enhances common good rather than self-interest. Transformational leaders, the type of leadership we crave now in Nigeria, are likely to encourage the end values of justice, equality, and human rights. It is also more likely to ensure that such values as honesty, loyalty, and fairness exist in our polity.

Bass (1998) posited further that true transformational leaders encourage what is right, good, important, and beautiful; elevate their followers' needs for achievement and self-

actualisation; promote higher moral maturity; and encourage them to transcend their self-interests for the common good. Howell and Avolio (1993) suggested that true transformational leaders must focus on the need to encourage ethical policies, procedures, and processes. True leaders need to be committed to a clearly stated and consistent enforcement of ethical conduct; and need to promote an organizational culture that supports ethics and its practice. Hence, transformational leadership is grounded in ethical values and encourages followers to be ethical as both the leaders and the led navigate their ways to achieve their mutual, common goal.

2.4.2 Servant-leader leadership theory

The second theory, as conceptualized by Greenleaf (1977) distinguished between two leadership motivations, the *leader first* and the *servant first*. According to him, the *leader first* are those leaders delving into leadership because of their hunger for power or for other material and personal gain – a situation which accurately describes the type of leadership style our political leaders are running in Nigeria. Conversely, the *servant first* are those who have the natural disposition that they want to serve others.

The *servant first* type of leaders, continued Greenleaf (1977), make sure that their followers' most important needs are served and that those led grow to their utmost potential; that they are healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely to be servants themselves. Furthermore, "the living conditions of the less privileged in society are improved or at least, not worsened" (Greenleaf 1977: 13-14). *Servant leaders* are committed to serving or addressing the needs and well-being of their followers, so that the people come first before the leader. The servant leader is more concerned about public interest than self-interest; the type of leadership needed in Nigeria.

It will be right to say that Servant-leadership embodies the kind of humility and other qualities that we expect from our government officials in Nigeria. The fact that public officials are supposed to be nothing but public servants warrants them to put the public interest first in all their endeavours. Political leaders at the local and national level with servant-leadership qualities will not lack in accountability, transparency, involving citizens in the decision-making process and responsiveness, which are among the key factors of good governance. *Servant leaders* know that the public are the masters,

and they as public officials, are the servants.

As a result, servant leaders are disposed to seek the opinions of the citizens in policy decision-making; they are to be accountable, transparent, and responsive to how the public good is utilised and managed. True servant leaders are supposed to be particularly eager to provide the needs and aspirations of their followers. When such leaders hold the mantle of leadership at all levels of government in Nigeria, they are likely to ensure that public resources are used to provide service delivery and also enhance social and economic development for the well-being of their fellow citizens.

Sendjaya and Sarrows (2002) have argued that *service first*, which is the philosophical foundation underpinning *servant-leadership*, is basically different from all other leadership paradigms. While the traditional leadership models focus on motivating followers towards achieving organisational goals, the *servant leadership* style focuses on encouraging followers to be ethical and become the best persons they possibly could. Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) also asserted that servant leadership is a desire to serve and a willingness to sacrifice self-interests for the benefit of others. A servant leader understands the leadership position as an opportunity to serve and to help others to develop to their full potential.

Page, Wong, and Langley (2004) stated that the main purpose of servant – leadership “is to serve others by investing in their development and well-being for the benefit of accomplishing tasks and goals for the common good” (Page *et al.*, 2004: 2). The authors also maintained that the genuine desire and drive to serve others for the common interest is at the heart of servant-leadership. Some other scholars argued that the servant leadership paradigm focuses on collective human development and the well-being of the followers rather than on self-interest (Smith *et al.*, 2004; Stone, Russell, and Patterson 2003).

Servant leaders take an interest in developing followers and enabling them to strive and flourish (Stone *et al.*, 2003). Similarly, Patterson (2004) argued that the focuses of servant leaders are squarely on the follower and their behaviours and attitude are aligned with this primary focus. Page *et al.*, (2004) further argued that it is the servanthood attitude that fundamentally informs servant leader’s interactions with

followers and the execution of their leadership tasks. Page et al added that the servant leader is committed to serving followers with integrity and humility. Based on this assumption, Page *et al.*, argued that servant leaders are accountable for their actions and encouraging community spirit for achieving organisational objectives, “seeking the common good as a prime motivation, seeking work as a partnership of service, and exercising good stewardship of resources” (Page *et al.*, 2004:4).

Spears (2004), Reinke (2004) observed that servant leadership has gained reputation both in private and public sector and among both consultants and practitioners because of its being strongly rooted in ethical principles. Servant leaders pursue their vision in a manner that is based on ethical and moral process. Reinke observed that leadership is gaining the attention of a scandal-weary public because of its vision of principles and caring for others, quite the opposite of the ethics of compliance common with the government. Page *et al.*, (2004) stated that servant leaders pursue their vision with humility, empathy, compassion and commitment to ethical behavior.

Typically, servant leaders see themselves as stewards of their organisation and its members; they are aware that they hold their position in trust for the people and as such, their behaviour is guided by a strong sense of values (Reinke, 2004). Servant leadership, argued Patterson (2004: 2), is “a leadership process based on virtue”. He proposed seven virtuous constructs that constitute the leadership model: agape love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service. This study is particularly interested in ‘agape love’ as African traditional ethics is rooted in it.

From all the above, the basic tenets of transformational and servant leaderships have been examined and explained. Transformational leadership theory has emphasised the need for leaders to be ethical; while servant leadership theory emphasized the need for followers to be ethical. Both leadership theories emphasise the importance of ethics in the leadership process. They both underscore the moral responsibility of leaders toward their followers and in their own characteristic way, posit that serving the followers’ needs is essentially the reason for leadership.

Organisational leaders are expected to lift their followers to a higher level of ethical standards and encourage them to transcend self-interest, seeking the common good

in their actions and conducts. The leaders should, in the way of their decision-making and in the manner of their action, lead by example, modeling good and appropriate conduct. It is clear from all these theories that no leadership model in government can promote good governance without a strong ethical component.

2.5 Ethics, accountability and political leadership

According to the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, ethics or moral philosophy is a branch of philosophy that involves systematising, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct. Menzel (2007: 6) noted that “ethics are values and principles that guide right and wrong behavior. As a branch of philosophy, ethics investigates the questions about the best way for people to live; and what actions are right or wrong in particular circumstances. Ethics provide people with a framework or guideline for doing the right thing, making good decisions, and avoiding wrong behaviour and wrong decisions. Thompson *et al.*, (2006: 36) sees ethics as a help for us to examine how we “behave and function within society”. It has also been defined as the “systematic study of the fundamental principles of the moral law; or as the normative science of human conduct” (Lillie, 1951: 1-2).

There are as many definitions and ideas about ethics as there are scholars; it is clear that ethics, like philosophy itself, has no definite definition except that it is widely accepted as that branch of philosophy which deals with the morality of human actions; or as the branch of philosophy which studies the norms of human behaviour. Kidder (2003: 63) however states that “standard definitions of ethics have typically included such phrases as ‘the science of the ideal human character’ or the science of moral duty”. From various views expressed by scholars about ethics, it could be said they are unanimous on the nature of ethics as a normative science which concerns the good life for the individuals who make up the society.

Morality on the other hand is concerned with the principle of right conduct or ability to differentiate between right and wrong conduct at an individual level (Ilaninska & Garcia-Zamor 2006; Van Wart 2003). It also refers to the decisions we make about two types of behavior, good or bad. Omoregbe sums it up as follows:

Ethics presupposes that we already have a sense of morality and it is the

systematic study of the fundamental principles underlying our morality. Hence, morality is the basis of ethics, the latter is an explicit reflection on, and the systematic study of the former” (1993: 5).

Strictly speaking, morality is used to refer to what we would call moral standards and moral conduct while ethics is used to refer to the formal study of those standards and conducts. In other words, while morality tells us that an action is either good or bad, ethics gives us the principles and reasons why an action is good or bad. For example, morality would tell us that corruption is bad, it will be the duty of ethics, based on a theory, to tell us why corruption is bad. It is from this point of view that one can say that ethics and morality are fundamentally related. Kanungo and Mendonca (1996) however noted that the two terms are interchangeable in that “what is ethical is moral, and what is moral is ethical” (1996: 33). Both are needed for good political leadership.

It is safe to say there is a problem with today’s political leadership. Since lack of ethics has been implicated in the ineffectiveness of our political leadership in Nigeria, understanding the importance of ethics will show leaders that ethics is not only helpful, but necessary in decision-making and reflection process. Ethics is very critical in leadership in any organizational setting. Ethics as used here, refers to values and principles that guide right and wrong behavior (Menzel 2007). Lancote and Irving (2007) remarked that leadership scholars and practitioners have accentuated the link between ethics and leadership. Dobel (1998) noted that leadership demands ethics because of the responsibilities it shoulders. It is also noted that ethics is the key to the flourishing of democracy and its administration. Those in leadership positions in a democratic government and, in fact in all forms of government, need to be ethical as they pilot the affairs of their organisations or societies.

The importance of ethics in organizational leadership is stressed by Kanungo and Mendonca (1996) by observing that the moral quality of individuals living in a society determines the survival of and the flourishing of life in that society. Those in leadership roles, to a great extent, play a part in determining the moral quality of their followers. Kanungo and Mendonca (1996) noted that leaders do more than physical harm any time their actions and behaviour fail to be in congruence with the shared moral values. Such neglect or compromise, according to the authors, can cause moral cynicism,

which “like a cancer, corrodes the moral health of society” (Kanungo & Mendonca 1996: 6).

Stressing the significant impact a leader’s influence has on his or her followers’ lives, Northouse (2007: 346) noted that such influence has “a great ethical burden and responsibility”. He also observed the centrality of ethics in the leadership phenomenon. Sendjaya (2005) observed that the exercise of authority and power always involve ethical challenges and, as such, no true leadership exists without morality “since all forms of leadership is value-laden” (2005: 76). “Effective organisational leaders need ethics as fish need water and human beings need air” remarked Kanungo and Mendonca (1996: 3). Comprehending the place and role of ethics in leadership leads to the conclusion that no true leadership exists without ethics.

Fournier (2009) observed that having ethical requirements for public office holders is not something new; it is as old as democracy and it is also a fundamental element of democracy. Underscoring the link in a deeper fashion, Bowman and William (1997) posited that the question of ethics in public service is as old as government. Government officials are supposed to be the frontline providers of services that are of critical importance to the ordinary citizens of the country; therefore the concern about how the resources are made use of and how the services are provided, is not out of place. Government officials at every level “must be conscious of ethics in public administration” affirmed Menzel (1992:94). The administrators have the moral obligation to provide efficient and effective public services to the electorate. The efficiency and ineffectiveness of the services they provide, in great measure, determine “the well-being and quality of life of the whole nation” (Mitchinson, 2003: 242).

Further, before people can live together they must have all agreed that they want to live in peace and harmony with one another. Once they agree to live together, certain rules of conduct must also be agreed upon in order to establish the system under which the goal might be realised. According to Omoregbe (1993: 3-5), “for a social organization to survive as a means of social control there must be a moral order as the foundation”. It is the “practical science of the morality of human conduct” opines

Glenn (1930: ix). To Mackenzie (1924: 1), ethics is simply “the science that studies the ideal in conduct” that is, a normative science that deals with the rightness or wrongness of an action. In other words, ethics help us to be able to say whether a particular action or behavior of persons or an individual is morally right or wrong. Hare (1964: iii) conceives of ethics as the logical study of moral language”.

To Paul and Elder (2006), ethics is a set of concepts and principles that guide us in determining what behavior helps or harms sentient creatures. The scholars seem to be in agreement on the nature of ethics as a normative science which concerns itself with the good life for the individual who make up the society. Ethics is then a very important requirement for human life, and particularly for political leadership. It is also a means of deciding a course of action; without which our actions could be random and aimless. Flaws in our ethics could reduce our ability to be successful in decision-making endeavours. In other words, there must be a system of ethics that is concerned with our relationship and also recognises each other’s importance to everyone’s physical survival, well-being and happiness.

Such rules of conduct or ethics must not be merely agreed upon, they must also be understood by every member of the organisation. In the same manner, a proper understanding of the nature and purpose of ethics to political administration is important and necessary for all citizens, to make it easier for them to comply with the rules and regulations governing their country. In that respect, every citizen should receive constant moral education or what is also known as Civics. Through this, they will know what their rights are under the law; and they will immediately be able to call the leadership to order.

In other words, ethics seeks to resolve the practical question of human morality, by defining concepts such as good and evil, right and wrong, virtue and vice, justice and crime. So, one important usefulness of ethics is that it gives leaders, indeed anyone, a baseline for understanding the concepts of right and wrong. It also allows us to be consistent in our judgements, provides reasons for our beliefs and to critically examine opinions. Most importantly, I see ethics as allowing us to act in a manner that accords us a set of core values and principles. Ethics affect every decision made which greatly determines a leader’s success. If ethics is properly used in leaders’ actions to address

how and why decisions are being made, whatever decisions eventually made, become ethical and effective.

It should however be noted that many people lived, and are still living, morally upright lives without having studied ethics formally or associated with any religion. The late Tai Solarin of Nigeria was a good example. Solarin was an educator and atheist but renowned internationally for his high moral standards. The claim that Solarin did not formally study ethics is equally true of African traditional societies who received their morality through the practice of traditional ethics. Yet a formal study of ethics would do society more good than harm; it would help in elevating moral standards in both leadership and followership. Lillie in an introduction to Ethics, writes:

A training in ethics should enable us to see the defects in our own and other people's conduct and to understand their exact nature so that if the desire is there we are better able to set things right in our own conduct and to make profitable suggestions to others (1951: 237).

The above expresses two basic beliefs: how to decide right from wrong and what counts as good or evil. It can also be deduced that the knowledge of ethics can improve the lot of individuals within a community by establishing basic guidelines and rules for determining which behaviours are likely to promote the achievement of the best and the greatest over the long term. Since ethics is about what ought to be, not what is, it is recommended that every citizen should be equipped with the knowledge of ethics in order to help us conform our conduct to the norms of morality; in this case, traditional ethics.

Political leaders and members of their constituencies should therefore study and understand ethics to ensure that their behaviours conform to it; and to guide their conduct in all walks of life, politics inclusive. By this, they will come to realise that ethics in any organisation, political or just social, underscore the fact that the power of public officials to manage public affairs is only given in trust and that they should utilise the power to promote the common good.

Since this thesis is concerned with the normative aspect of ethics, it will urge everyone

to be versed in its knowledge. Hence the purpose of studying and understanding ethics should be to ensure that human behavior conforms to it and to guide our conduct in all walks of life, especially in politics. The revival and knowledge of African traditional ethics could make leaders, and indeed people, conscious of the fact that they live with others in the community; and that the kind of life they live affects the moral and social order. I am again optimistic that once understood and used, ethics become more than a philosophy. African traditional ethics is up to the task.

2.6 Relationship between ethics, governance and corruption

In this section, I will discuss the practical link between ethics, bad governance and corruption. It is important to point out from the onset that ancient theories of morality and politics make little or no distinction between morality and politics apparently to prevent bad governance as a result of corruption. I also intend to show that the separation of ethics from politics is not likely to produce good leadership and governance; instead, it is most likely to breed corruption.

The possibility of isolating ethics from politics has become a subject of debate in most intellectual and political discourse. Starting from the early period of intellectual contemplations, philosophers and political writers have always rummaged on the possible relationship between ethics and politics. Although ethics is highly needed in every organisation, it can be argued that its need is even more crucial in political administration.

Besides to complicate the debate further, they were meant to grapple with the problem of situating those notable concepts that are integrally related to the debate, concepts like; right, good, virtue, personal liberty and public interest. Nevertheless, the big question is, should politics be subjected to the dictates and demands of traditional moral principles? As a matter of fact, the above question has generated two opposing views. These two popular opposing camps are strongly represented by the Aristotelian and the Machiavellian views.

For Aristotle, the hallmark of human action, including politics, is the pursuit of moral virtue, which in turn guarantees common happiness for the individual and the society at large. This claim is hinged on the grounds that morality is an essential and integral

part of any political culture. Put in another way, ethics and politics are intimately related because public good can be attained through individual good. They equally argue that conscious effort to separate morality from politics will amount to removing the very essence of politics, which will in turn increase its vulnerability to all shades of corrupt practices.

This is the reason why ancient theories of morality and politics make little or no distinction between morality and politics. Both Plato and Aristotle make no distinction between these two concepts in their moral and political thoughts. For these great philosophers “ethics is at the same time politics” (Aristotle, 1985: 135). According to Garret (1994: 159), “High politics must have a moral base” Garret sees morality as a regulator which is concerned with interpersonal relations and interactions between person and group, whereas politics regulates relations between groups, different socio-political organisations and the state, all with the control of state power as their focus. He argues positively that “problems of individual morality cannot be separated from the problems of political institution” (Garret, 1994: 159-176).

Therefore, it can be inferred that since men and women are believed to be both social and political beings, and the individual and the state are interdependent, then morality and politics should not be separated from each other if the good life we all desire is to be achieved. Those officials who disregard the core values of their organisational ethics are “taking ethical risk that is inimical to the citizens’ interest, their careers, and reputations of their jurisdictions” (Berman, West & Bonczek, 1998: 1). The authors stated on the other hand that, public managers and workers who are ethical have added advantages of possessing the ability to know the right thing to do, undertaking and justifying actions based on professional and moral grounds, and knowing how to avoid ethical impropriety.

It should be acknowledged that, with many stakeholders leaders serve, their job is enormous and could be complex too. Garofalo and Geuras (2002) pointed out that in the course of their daily duties, their ethics inevitably are challenged as they confront moral dilemmas. In the light of this, Bowman remarked, “Public officials have many difficult decisions to make, and ethical ones are tougher than most” (1991: 2). Any democratically constituted government supposedly rests on two basic frameworks;

bureaucratic ethos and democratic ethos. These constitute the normative ethical framework for such government's public administration.

Pugh (1991), recognized both bureaucratic and democratic ethos as the primary frameworks for approaching public management. The author identifies ethos as that which consists of "efficiency, efficacy, expertise, loyalty, and accountability" (1991: 10). All of these qualities taken together are the foundation of ethics in public administration. They provide guidance for public officials working in any level of government. They are essential and crucial for establishing and maintaining the culture of good governance in any society.

Farazmand (2002), argued for the integration of both bureaucratic and democratic values for effective service for public interests; he insisted that the two values should be complimentary of rather than in conflict with each other. Farazmand however warned that, insisting on efficiency at any cost threatens this complimentary value and may jeopardise the development of ethical virtue "in the political as well as administrative cultures of a country" (2002: 129).

Shafritz and Russell (2005) remarked that public administrators with integrity are aware of their moral obligation to the people; in a democratic system, the constitution provides the moral foundation of ethics for public administrators. Haraway and Kunselman (2006) insisted that it is imperative for public leaders to provide ethical leadership by acting on the interest of those they serve; protecting their fundamental constitutional rights and making policy-decisions based on moral values. We should remember that, the Standard and quality of governance and its outcomes in any government reflect the moral caliber of officials that constitute the administrative force –ethical or unethical.

I agree with Brewer (2009) that the highest standard of ethics is required in politics for all public officials based on the fact that, government has tremendous authoritative influence on citizens. The government collects levies and taxes from citizens; thus tax payers expect integrity from public officials. The administrators in public service are supposed to be servants of the people and accountable to the people. According to Tompkins (2005), the primary purpose for the establishment of public administration

as an instrument of governance is to enhance and achieve social and economic justice. Thompson (1998) agreed that ethics in public service should be regarded as a reminder to the public office holders that they are in power primarily to serve and be accountable to the public. In the same vein, Hellsten and Larbi (2006) made it clear that public service ethics underscore the fact that the power of public officials to manage public affairs is only given in trust and that they should make use of the power to promote the common good.

The Aristotelian camp views politics as more concerned with human actions and their resultant effect on public image than our private interest; the hallmark of human action, including politics, is the pursuit of moral virtue, which will in turn guarantee common happiness for the individual and the society at large. On the other hand, those who think like Machiavelli project politics as an autonomous entity that should be free from “the constraints and dictates of moral judgment” (Ramsay, 1998: 103). That is to say, the enterprise of politics should be spared the usual itches and complicities of moral dictates. Machiavelli is in the fore-front of this argument.

Ayodele and Bolaji (2007) pointed out that public officials play a vital role in formulating and implementing public policies that impact the lives of many people. Northouse (2007) believes that, because of this impact, public officials’ decisions and actions carry enormous ethical weight and responsibility. Ethics underpins democratic government and its administration as it “provides the preconditions for the making of good public policy, so all policies depend on it” (Bowman and Knox, 2008: 627). This indicates that public administrators cannot afford to be unethical if they are to serve the public interest.

However, in his famous book, ‘*The Prince*’ Machiavelli proposes a blueprint for politicians to follow if they must become successful rulers. He sees politics as essentially a game of power acquisition and retention. For this reason, he advises politicians to be weary of moral dictates, which he considers as incompatible with the demands of power politics (Machiavelli, 2003: 50). Machiavelli seems to be suggesting that it will be difficult for politics to live up to its primary role of preserving the interest of the state by adhering to the traditional dictates of morality. This opinion by Machiavelli has created the notion that evil means can always be justified by good

ends, especially in the field of politics. Machiavelli believes that the idea of morality in politics is unnecessary, since both human nature and the mechanism of politics do not warrant it. He counsels rulers and prospective politicians against any contemplation of a possible place for morality in politics.

Those who advocate this idea of separating morality from politics strongly believe that it is possible to successfully carry out the art of politics without recourse to the idea of morality. To them, the notion of morality in politics is as an unnecessary burden that should be taken off the shoulders of politicians since “politics is about choice and consequences which has greater weight on our public life than our private life” (Coudy, 1994: 374-375). Machiavelli’s idea has opened the gate for entry to individuals whose main aim of going into politics is just to have a feel of power, that is, for the sake of power. It is however important to note some interesting factors that informed his attitude towards politics. First, were the political exigencies of his time and secondly was his pre-conceived notion of human nature as hinted above. With this background, Machiavelli makes a strong case for morality to be separated from politics since history has shown him that a good end has a way of justifying the means – good or evil, in governance. Machiavelli’s conception of politics can best be described as myopic.

From the contribution of scholars like Lasswell (1936), Leftwich (1984) and Neilson (1950) about the nature of politics, it is clear that the ultimate goal of politics is not the grabbing of power but the rendering of service. Politics as we have learned goes beyond mere power acquisition and retention. Politics encompasses all activities through which people make, preserve, and amend the general rules under which they live. Put in another way, politics is a means of resolving by compromise and negotiation rather than force.

Politics as widely known around the world is one of the indispensable features of true democracy. However, for politics to be of benefit, it has to have all necessary ingredients of which ethics is chief. Thus this study perceives ethics as a lubricant to the engine of politics and should not be separated from one-another because, politics without ethics is the foundation for super corruption in any organisation, political or just social. However, it will be illusory to believe that, an idealist politics cannot prove deceitful. For example, rulers who are Machiavellian supporters might commence their

administration by vilifying Machiavelli while observing all his recommendations. There is no assurance that those who oppose Machiavelli's thought would not tread the same path once they obtain power. Examples of such leaders abound in Nigeria: Babangida is a typical example. However, ethics in politics may as well start with modest steps, even in difficult situations.

Though politics and ethics are different concepts, as Machiavelli wants us to believe, they should not be separated when it comes to the business of governance. To do so is an open invitation to all sorts of immoral practices, like what is now being witnessed in Nigeria. People are supposed to be lured or attracted into politics with the intention of serving the people with diligence and hence leave a good legacy, not only in their time but also for generations to come.

The point here is that the individual is a moral agent with private and public life. The connection between morality and politics is found or situated in the individual. Public good can be attained through individual good. When the individual moves from private life to public life, the necessary relationship between morality and politics comes to the spotlight. The enterprise of politics will be without meaning if it does not define the place of individual in it. It is the action of these individuals that determine the scope and justification for politics. The moral status of individual to a large extent justifies the relevance of political activities to men.

My position here is that power acquisition is part of political mechanization, which should not be used or seen as the ultimate goal of politics. The acquisition of power should be regarded as a means not an end in itself. If power must be the focal point of politics then, it should be used for the betterment of both the one holding the power and the generality of the people in whose domain this power is exercised. This is my conception of power and how it should be used in a political organization.

Logic states that if the premises of an argument are erroneous, the argument is likely to end up in an erroneous conclusion and thereby making it unsound. For this reason, I am inclined to agree with Omoregbe that Machiavelli's starting point or premise is faulty. His fundamental error lies in his "absolutisation of power which he wrongly considers as the ultimate goal of politics" (1993: 129).

Another error observed in Machiavelli's thought is his view that the end justifies the means that one can justifiably use an immoral means to bring about a good end. This is morally unacceptable; the end does not justify the means. "A good end does not justify an immoral means used in bringing it about" (Omoregbe, 1993: 130). Experience over the years has indicated that politics' functional peak is attainable only with the inclusion of ethics.

Notwithstanding the perceived inseparability of politics and ethics by scholars, Nigerian politics as currently being played by Nigerian political leadership, still appears separated from ethics, probably due to the influence of Machiavelli. This possibility might come to better light when the scope of corruption and possible origin of corruption in Nigeria are discussed later in the thesis. We can ask ourselves this question, what impact would politics have on the lives of people living in a society when the key actors in politics have no moral qualms? Can today's politicians be described as leaders with good leadership skills for good governance or just a gang of thieves looting the treasury?

One will be right to believe that any moralist will argue that if the concept of morality is removed from politics what will be left are gangs of fraudsters in government. With this perceived dangers, it is arguable that any attempt to divorce morality from politics will result in bad governance, which in turn spells doom for any political administration and its leadership. We therefore need ethics in politics for good governance. In order to avoid individual doom, Nigerian leaders are hereby urged to take advantage or opportunity provided by the African traditional ethics to improve their leadership quality.

2.7 Summary

The main task in this chapter has been that of conceptual clarification. Perhaps the need for ethical leadership may be seen in the many definitions scholars have advanced above. It can also be noted that ethical leadership stresses good character and the right values or being a person of strong character. Ethical leadership, as explained above, suggests that leadership possess strong personal character and a passion for doing right things. We have also learnt that an ethical framework provides government officials at all levels with guidelines for acting and decision-making. It

enables them to focus on undertaking policy-decision for the best interest of the public they serve. It is fair to think that ethical government officials are likely to be more concerned for and pursue the public interest than the unethical ones. An ethical leader is one whose character is impeccable and who will work primarily for the interests of all his followers whom he should consider as key stakeholders. This is why the importance of ethics cannot be overemphasized because leadership is the vital catalyst for promotion of good governance.

The next chapter will attempt to show that governance was better and leadership was more ethical in the pre-colonial Nigeria than these modern times, though population and size of kingdoms were much smaller than today. Examination of three kingdoms gives us a glimpse of typical examples of traditional ethics and governance. Hence the next chapter is titled; *Ethics, politics and governance in Nigerian Societies before colonialism*.

CHAPTER THREE

ETHICS, POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIAN SOCIETIES BEFORE COLONIALISM

3.1 Introduction:

The task of this chapter therefore, is to show that morality and democracy existed in pre-colonial Nigeria (Africa) before the advent of the colonialists. In other words, a system of political administration and morality was already in place. This claim will be confirmed as I discuss politics in pre-colonial communities. To this end, the political administration of ancient kingdoms of the Yoruba of the southwest, the Igbo of the east and Hausa of the northern part of Nigeria will be discussed to prove the claim that democracy had existed before the country was colonised. We shall also learn about the style of leadership and ethics that was available during the period in question.

3.2 Description of Nigeria societies before colonialism

According to Afolabi (2013), in pre-colonial times, what is known as Nigeria today was just a territory made up of a number of highly influential and diverse societies or kingdoms from the North, South, East and West. Some of these kingdoms include the northeastern kingdom of Borno, the Hausa kingdoms of Kano, Zaria, Katsina and Gobir in north-central Nigeria; the Yoruba Kingdoms of Oyo, Ife, Ijebu in southwest; kingdoms of Benin and Igbo communities of eastern Nigeria. "Some of these cities were founded by women. The territories were governed by kings, their queens and the cabinet of chiefs; and their administration was based greatly on their individual cultures and traditions" Afolabi (2013: 38). Oral accounts have it that, despite the individuality and diversity that existed in the setting, these kingdoms related in so many ways especially by establishing networks of trade which span across the Sahara.

The imperialists have claimed that because there was no Western knowledge of any social or political organisation, there could be no talk of good governance, in any part of Africa before their arrival. All traditional African governments were characterised by European imperialism as autocratic, barbaric and oppressive to justify the imposition of colonial rule. For example, Basden (1964) writing about the Igbo of Nigeria says that, "the word morality has no significance in Ibo vocabulary...where the natives have

remained untouched by outside influence. There is nothing exactly corresponding to the social evil of European life” (Basden, 1964: 34). That statement appears prejudiced and shows ignorance on the part of Basden concerning African culture. It is however interesting to note that Basden contradicted himself in the same writing. He writes:

In the majority of Ibo towns, a very clearly defined code of morals exists theoretically. Infringement of these laws may lead to severe penalties being inflicted, and cases are known where infidelity on the part of a wife has been punished by torture and death of both offenders (Basden, 1964: 34).

Basden’s second statement confirms that morality did not only exist in Africa and Nigeria in particular but it existed in reality. It is not a mere figment of imagination as Basden would like us to believe. Just like Basden, Nadel (1954) before him echoed the non-existence of social and moral principles in Africa when he says the following about the Nupe tribe of Nigeria:

As for the realm of ethics, Nupe religion is altogether silent. It upholds no ideal man or condemns his antithesis. There is no eschatology, no mythology, exemplifying rights and wrongs, crimes and retribution, and no promise of reward to the law. Nor is there formulated doctrine concerned with norms of actions of more common currency, the simple rights and wrongs or everyday morality (Nadel, 1954: 265).

These were the types of claim used by early Europeans to justify their strong negative opinions about Africa and Africans. This is portrayed in Burton’s opinion that:

The Negro is still at that crude dawn of faith-fetishism and has barely advanced the idea of personal deity, a duty in life, a moral code, or a shame of lying. He rarely believes in a future state of rewards and punishments which whether true or not are infallible indices of human progress (Burton, 1964: 199).

Like Basden before him, Burton also contradicted himself in a study he carried out about the Fon people of Dahomey where he observed that the Fon people had “a

sense of the numinous with a philosophical concept of the Supreme Being comparable to that of any thinkers in modern Europe” (Burton, 1964: 291). He further recognized the fundamentally religious and philosophical basis for human sacrifice practiced by the kings of Dahomey but attributed it to “innate human cruelty” (1964: 292). These derogatory observations portray the bias and wrong notions which early Europeans and Christian missionaries had about African people’s religion, morality and culture. However, this claim raises the questions: was there morality in Africa’s social and political life before the advent of the whites; and were the leaders really autocratic, barbaric and oppressive, making them unethical?

The answer might vary from one African country to another. For Nigeria, however, the answer is that traditional governance was neither autocratic nor barbaric. It was not oppressive either but democratic. For example, Fayemi (2009: 110) sees the claim of the imperialists as a “misconception and grossly inaccurate for many traditional African societies”. An examination of the social and political realities of these kingdoms shows that Africa already had a sense of morality and also knew what democracy was, proving that democracy was not introduced to the continent by the West.

Whilst it is true that patriarchy did exist in Nigeria, indeed in Africa, women were not entirely removed from political positions. According to Magbaily (1999: 97), although men dominated politics in pre-colonial Africa, “there were a few women who played active roles in politics and government, whose activities contributed immensely to the peaceful environment necessary for the development of their kingdoms”. Agbalajobi (2010) confirmed that, “in traditional Yoruba states, women always held high political offices like the Iyalode, Iyalaje and Iyaloja and their political impacts in such societies were seriously felt” (2010: 75). These women chiefs were members of the Alaafin’s Judicial Council.

It is noteworthy that prior to the 19th Century, some royal women had held direct authority as rulers in their own names and they sometimes ruled as regents between the death of one king and the installation of the next. In Yoruba land, according to McIntosh (2009), women were often key figures in the rituals that accompanied the installation of kings, such as placing the crown upon the next king’s head. Women could use rituals surrounding kingship to protest the Oba’s actions and a ruler could

be deposed through pressure from his people, men and women. During such protests, abusive songs were directed at the king, high chiefs and other 'big men' in the town. For example, they might complain in their song that the king had "misappropriated money posted by a candidate for an office" (McIntosh, 2009: 217-218).

During the pre-colonial period, continued McIntosh (2009), women were said to have commanded great influence in the affairs of traditional administration, contrary to the belief by the West. For example, "both male and female chiefs were named in the highly centralized kingdoms of Oyo and Ife" (2009: 220). This shows that women were both politically and economically involved in the pre-colonial politics. "No decision would be taken without the involvement of the Obinrin-Ile (Wives of the compound), and the obinrin Ilu (Village women combined)", asserts Akintoye (2009: 2). Women's view in all matters were taken seriously because women were regarded as the backbone of the oba. "The Yoruba traditional belief was that no king could be successful without the support of women" (2009: 2) though there is a rare instance of a woman who became a substantive king, especially in pre-colonial Nigeria. Achebe (2011: 123) confirmed that "female kingship was an exceedingly rare phenomenon..." in any part of the country. History however recorded only one female king in Igala-land before Ahebi Ugbabe became the first and only female king of Enugu-Ezike, in the Igbo community in the eastern part of Nigeria during the colonial era. Not a regent.

Thus, the exploits of legendary women like Queen Amina of Zaria in the northern part of present day Nigeria, who was said to be the founder of modern city of Zaria, Iyalode Efunsetan Aniwura powerful woman of Ibadan, *Iyalode* Tinubu of Lagos, Princess Moremi of Ile-ife who sacrificed her only child to rescue her city from invaders, Princess Inikpi of Igala and Emotan of Benin, and many more, are worthy of note. These women, according to Awe (1996), could rightly be called "the saviours of their societies as they displayed tremendous acts of bravery in fighting for their community and representing women interest in government" (1996:2). Generally, women's influence in pre-colonial Nigerian politics was so effective that should a naked woman sit in the throne of the king in Onitsha, (eastern Nigeria), such a king would be dethroned. And in some parts of Yorubaland, the role of women in traditional rituals is so important that, no Oba or King can overlook or ignore. For example, Apter (1992) remarked that, during the festival of Iyemoja, every ritual involved in the festival is handled majorly by

women.

Despite the great achievements by women in pre-colonial era, some scholars still saw women in pre-colonial period as existing in a world exclusively for men because, most of the existing cultures gave premiums to males. He saw women's role in the society as mothers of men's children. Mba (1982) observed that:

The women's political fortune dwindled during the colonial era as a result of discrimination against women which is rooted in the Victorian Concept brought by colonialism which highly encouraged the public invisibility of women who were only to be seen and not really heard. This has marginalized women and seem to limit their roles in economic, political and social arenas (Mba,1982: 36).

3.3 Ethics and politics in Nigeria's local Kingdoms before colonialism

Dahl (1971:17) defines a political system as "any persistent pattern of human relationship that involves, to a significant extent, power, rule or authority". Administration in pre-colonial Nigeria fits that definition. Dahl's definition (referring not to any particular system but political systems in general) gives me the courage to believe there was a system of governance in Africa before the West came to disrupt it, even though it was not described exactly in modern terms of democracy and was indigenous.

Scholars have identified two main forms of states in African traditional political systems. Mengisteab (2005) and Oni and Joshua (2010) identify these two forms as the *centralised* state and the *non-centralised* or *fragmented* traditional state. The centralised state was a more structured and sophisticated political system.

These states were organised under well-entrenched, highly structured and sophisticated political authorities complemented by a hierarchy of courts presided over either by a king, the head chief or the village head. Though the courts were headed by a king or chief, the king was not autocratic because no king was customarily authorised to take unilateral decisions; he needed to consult and seek advice. He also could not impose his opinion on the council. The king was ultimately accountable and liable to

deposition or even death upon violation of norms considered subversive to the entire political system or particularly heinous. In other words, citizens could criticise the actions or inactions of the king and could ultimately demand his removal in cases where he grossly disrespected the time-honoured customs and traditions of the kingdom.

These *centralised* or *non-acephalous* states as they are sometimes called, had a political sovereign backed by well-organised law enforcement agencies and habitually obeyed by the citizenry. Infraction of well-articulated legal norms attracted swift sanctions imposed by state officials. Mengisteab (2005) remarked that “although autocracy was not known, the rule of law was a cardinal feature of their system of governance” (2005: 185–186).

On the other hand, the non-centralised African traditional political system was fragmented, stateless, acephalous or headless, and lacked a sovereign but was “characterised by consensual decision-making especially in the areas of resource allocation, law-making and settlement of disputes” (Oni and Joshua, 2010: 4). Techniques of social control in this political system are said to have revolved around the dynamics of clanship. This normative scheme consisted of elaborate bodies of well-established rules of conduct. These rules were usually enforced by heads of fragmented segments and, in more serious or subversive cases, by spontaneous community action.

Oni and Joshua (2010) highlight two major features of the non-centralised system of traditional governance as “the existence of well-defined norms despite the absence of hierarchical system headed by a sovereign; and the direct and pronounced participation of members of clans and segments, in decision-making” (2010: 4–5). These forms of traditional governance assured a visible democratic process and the presence or absence of a chief did not affect the basic principles. As Nyerere insists: “The traditional African society, whether it had a chief or not, was a society of equals and it conducted business through discussion” (Nyerere, 1960: 103).

Although ancient kingdoms have been characterised by the West as “autocratically and barbarously oppressive” (Feur, 1986: 4), studies show that government in African

traditional societies was based on established customs and traditions. There were no written constitutions, as found today, but there were political organisations in each kingdom similar, in some way, to what is seen today. These organisations were responsible for the administration of societies as exemplified in the ancient kingdoms of pre-colonial Nigeria. In both centralised and decentralised pre-colonial communities, governance was conducted with utmost seriousness as we have learned earlier. Though laws were mostly unwritten, they were obeyed religiously. Evidence exists to show that there was a reasonable degree of morality both within the leadership and the followership. Examples abound of heavy emphasis on accountability and good governance in both the Yoruba and Igbo kingdoms as will be discussed below, as both thrived on strict rules and regulations.

In the Igbo acephalous society, in the absence of any form of overreaching authority, leadership was placed in the hands of the people. To my mind, this is the epitome of accountability and good governance. The titled chiefs sat together to address the more difficult issues of governance. The point I am making here is that a set of rules and regulations, agreed principles and moral values that guided human interactions held those communities together and kept administrative corruption down to the barest minimum. Society abhorred dishonesty, cheating and fraud. The ancestral moral uprightness and probity were kept alive. Getting rich overnight without working for it raised suspicion of fraud. In pre-colonial Nigeria, wealth resulted from hard work. Whoever possessed wealth and could not account for it was viewed with suspicion because wealth was linked with accountability and transparency.

However, like other systems, the indigenous African political system had its inherent weaknesses and strengths. It will not be correct to rule out corruption completely in pre-colonial African settings, what was not present is what is today described as 'institutionalised corruption'. For instance, to depose an oba or chief, it must have been that he did something contrary to the morality of the community. If it was found out that "an *oba* or chief or a family leader had misappropriated money meant for particular project, such a person would face the wrath of the people by getting him deposed" (Gyekye, 1997b: 202).

The possibility of bribery was also rife under the pretense of gift-giving. The gift to an

Oba or chief might be an indirect way of seeking favour. One of its weaknesses was that kingship and chieftaincy were restricted to certain lineages. No one could become a king or a chief if he did not have royal blood. In that sense the native system could be faulted, although it might be argued that this criterion was not overriding. For example, other qualities considered before one can become a chief or crowned as king, included leadership qualities, oratory skills and, most importantly, good character.

The next weakness pertains to the fact that the indigenous system was based upon kinship, which is regarded as a poor cohesive force beyond the village or town boundaries. Ironically, according to Ayittey (1992), the Oyo kingdoms were unified on this basis. By contrast, religion is said to have provided a more cohesive and stronger basis for empire building. "It was no accident that the Islamic empires, such as Ghana and Kanuri, lasted the longest in African history" (Ayittey, 1992: 71–72). The general lack of cohesion in African communities is also said to have reflected the cultural passion for independence. Although many African tribes converted to Islam, they still retained their indigenous cultural identities, because they were "fundamentally anti-imperialistic" and naturally rebellious of authority (Ayittey, 1992: 7).

Further to the above, the participation of Africans, on a large scale, in the transatlantic slave trade, especially the ruling class, has cast a dark spot on the morality of the kings and the chiefs in the pre-colonial period giving the fact that slavery is considered immoral by a lot of people. Slavery is defined as bondage to a master or household. In other words, to be a slave is equal to a complete loss of one's liberty which I can also compare to total or complete loss of humanity as well. One would not expect a people rated to be of high moral standard to be part of such activity. So, what was the motive behind their participation?

In a paper delivered at the University of Illinois by Perbi (2001), he noted the diverse of opinions among scholars as to what the motive behind Africans participation in the transatlantic slave trade could be. Some believe that the need for labour, especially agriculture, gave rise to slavery. Others believe that political reasons gave rise to slavery and yet others postulate that it was commerce that gave rise to slavery. According to Perbi, slaves were needed in pre-colonial Africa to provide labour in

Agriculture, trade and industry. Some slaves were employed in the administrative sectors of the state, kingdom or empire. Other slaves served in the military; some performed domestic chores, a few were said to satisfy the personal needs of individuals.

These slaves were acquired by capturing them as prisoners of war during the rampant inter-tribal wars and when there was no war, a chief could just order his military to raid another tribe or kidnap able bodied men randomly from a neighbouring tribe considered weaker to help the economy of the captor. Such acquired prisoners could be sold to the white man or a trading merchant whose European goods have lured the chief in to selling his people as slaves. When a trader wanted slaves, he applied to a chief for them and tempted him with his wares. According to Perbi (2001), it is not extraordinary if on this occasion the chief yields to the temptation with as little firmness, and accepts the price of his fellow creature's liberty with as little reluctance as the enlightened merchant.

In explaining the role pre-colonial Nigerians played in the promotion of slave trade, Omolewa (1986) remarked that although the Portuguese themselves kidnapped some Africans directly, the bulk of the supply came from the Nigerians. These Nigerian middlemen, Omolewa continued, moved to the exterior where they captured other Nigerians who belonged to other communities. The middlemen also purchased many of the slaves from the people in the interior. Many Nigerian middlemen began to depend totally on the slave trade and neglected every other business and occupation. The result was that when the trade was eventually abolished by England in 1807, these Nigerians began to protest. As years went by and the trade collapsed, such Nigerians lost their sources of income and became impoverished (Omolewa, 1986: 96-103).

In spite of the disappointing participation of Africans in slave trade, Equiano (1998) makes it clear that, African slave masters were much more humane in their treatment of slaves than white slave masters. African slave masters gave their slaves the right to be fed, clothed, housed and granted the privileges of children while staying with their owners. In contrast, slaves did not receive the same treatments from their white masters. For example, Equiano, who was kidnapped as a little boy and sold into

slavery, recalled his experience with an African slave master thus:

I was sold here... by a merchant who lived and brought me here [...]. The next day I was washed and perfumed, and when meal time came, I was led into the presence of my mistress, and ate and drank before her with her son. [...], and I could scarce help expressing my surprise that the young gentleman should suffer me, who was bound, to eat with him who was free; and not only so, but that he would not at any time either eat or drink till I had taken first, because I was the eldest [...], made me forget that I was a slave (Equiano, 1998: 400).

On the other hand he had a different and bitter experience with his white masters who made life very unbearable for him on the ship. He writes:

The first object which saluted my eyes...was the sea and a slave ship waiting [...] for its cargo. These filled me with astonishment, which was soon converted in to terror when I was carried on board. Every circumstance I met with, served only to render my state more painful, and heightened my apprehensions, and my opinion of the cruelty of the whites. One day they had taken a number of fishes; and when they had killed and satisfied themselves with as many as they thought fit, to our astonishment who were on deck, rather than give any of them to us to eat, as we expected, they tossed the remaining fish in to the sea again, although we begged and prayed for some as well as we could, but in vain; and some of my country men, being pressed by hunger, took an opportunity, when they thought no one saw them, of trying to get some privately; but they were discovered, and the attempt procured them some very severe floggings (Equiano, 1998: 402).

These two accounts appear to have clearly demonstrated the full and complex humanity of Africans as much as the inhumanity of slavery and cruel slave masters. Although I do not condone the Africans' participation in such an inhuman trade which runs counter to the traditional ethics, it appears they have been driven into it by their economic conditions, or ignorance, that is why we see them still reflecting on their

traditional values of love for another human being who has been less fortunate by treating the slaves like human beings that they are.

This is not to claim that African traditional institutions or individuals were perfect but there was a good measure of merit in the systems of government and the way they care about one-another with love. For example, Busia (1967) emphasises the success of the Asante's decentralised government in serving the needs of the community:

The tribe was administered on a policy of "decentralization". The chief communicated directly with the elders, they in turn with the headmen of the villages under them, and they with their subjects. When the system functioned well, it was democratic. It could check those in power and protect those who were ruled, and regulate behaviour for the peace and well-being of the community (Busia, 1967: 22).

The above arrangement appears democratic in the sense that it gave the people the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process thereby creating less strife and rebellion which helped to retain the community values.

3.3.1 The Yoruba kingdoms

The Yoruba kingdoms of present-day south-west Nigeria were said by Salami (2006) to be highly structured and sophisticated, making them "centralised" according to the description given above. Though the administrative structure appeared complicated or complex, there was effective control from the center. Some of the Yoruba kingdoms included Ekiti, Ijesha and Igbomina. The people had a cherished history of freedom and independence before the arrival of the British. Salami (2006: 69) recalls that "the first well-documented Yoruba kingdom in this area, centered at Ile-Ife, was established between the 11th and 12th centuries". An investigation into the socio-cultural history of the Yoruba kingdom by scholars like Ayittey (1992) reveals the democratic structure of their political and cultural heritage. The Yoruba political system is said to have rested on an acknowledgment of the sovereignty of the people and respect by the rulers for their subjects.

Salami (2006) argues that the social and political organisation of the Yoruba kingdoms during the pre-colonial era contained strong elements of participatory democracy, where everybody participated freely in the administration of the kingdom starting from the family, the base of the Yoruba traditional system of democratic government, up to the kingdom level at the peak of the hierarchy. The Yoruba lived in small kingdoms which shared the same homeland among themselves, and each of these small kingdoms comprised a central town and a number of other towns and villages. The king, or the oba in the local language, was the ruler of the kingdom and lived in a large palace. His most important mark of kingship was “the exalted beaded crown which only he could wear” (Salami, 2006: 69).

A subordinate ruler, called the Baale, ruled each of the subordinate towns and villages. The Baale acknowledged the suzerainty of the king. Each town, according to Akintoye (2009), was “divided into quarters, each under a quarter chief. Each quarter in turn was made up of many large family compounds, each of which housed many nuclear families all claiming descent from one ancestor” (2009: 2–3). It is important to remember that the democratic process started from the family meetings where every adult was expected to be actively involved. In fact Akintoye (2009) as cited above stressed the fact that participating and contributing was regarded as every member’s duty; and any member who habitually failed to honour that duty risked becoming obnoxious.

The Yoruba political system took a decidedly democratic direction in the appointment of a king. The king did not have to be the eldest child of the late king or even related to his predecessor; rather, a successor was picked from among all members of the royal family, including sons and even grandsons of former kings. Each stood an equal chance of becoming the next king and all were subjected to the same rules and treatment. Hence the Yoruba rejected what Akintoye (2009) describes as the “primogeniture system of succession” in which the eldest son of the late king automatically becomes king, as was the practice in some kingdoms instead, the Yoruba oba was selected on merit (Akintoye, 2009: 2–3).

The power to select an oba on behalf of the people was vested in a standing committee of chiefs, known also as a committee or council of kingmakers. The council’s selection

was final, as decisions of the kingmakers were frequently expressions of the people. Furthermore, the one chosen by the kingmakers finally became the king as recommended by Ifa oracle; not necessarily the richest but the one with the best character or *iwa*. Akintoye (2009) notes that “neither the chiefs nor the common people ever wanted to give the obaship to some rich or powerful prince who would later claim he won the throne on the strength of his wealth or power” (2009: 3). Instead they wanted the ideal candidate to be a prince who was duly assessed to be temperamentally able to work within the traditional limitations of royal power.

When, at the end of the exercise, the council of kingmakers told the people “we have given you your king, we have done what you asked us to do, they were speaking the truth” (Ayittey, 2012: 3). The selection was essentially a decision of the people as an acknowledgment that ultimate power belonged to the people. In the words of Akintoye (2009) “this system of selection meant that a Yoruba king was not only born, he was also selected by his subjects from a list of eligible princes through the kingmakers” (2009: 2–3).

Principle of checks and balances: As earlier observed, the oba represented the head of the political organisation of traditional Yoruba society. He could exercise political, juridical and executive power in council with other chiefs and officials. It is observed that traditional Yoruba society accorded a considerable amount of respect to its oba. According to Salami (2006), the oba naturally earned his peoples’ respect; it was not based on force or intimidation. For example, in theory government belonged to the oba and he was even spoken of as having the power of life and death over his subjects. In the belief of the Yoruba people, the oba represented the deity and since the oba represented the deity and interpreted the deity’s will, the oba would not mislead them; hence the oba was obeyed because he was presumed divine. That tells us how powerful the oba would have been – if there had been no mechanism in place to curb him.

However, Salami (2006) makes it clear that, “though the oba was never expected to have absolute power in reality, the respect accorded him almost equaled veneration” (2006: 67). In spite of this respect, it can still be said that the people set the standards – the constitution in today’s parlance – by which the actions of the ruler were judged.

The leader could not rule if the people did not sanction or approve his leadership. This in my view resembles Western democracy, where leaders are elected and can be removed by the people. Salami (2006) observes further that:

Anthropologically, traditional Yoruba society was monarchical. Traditionally, a Yoruba king was highly feared and respected. He was ranked next to a god. That is why the Yoruba oba (king) is described by his subjects as alase ekeji orisa (next in power to a god), (Salami, 2006: 70).

However, in practice the monarch did not enjoy sole political authority as the power arrangement in the political setting provided for checks and balances. While the king occupied the highest seat of society, there existed an elaborate organisation of palace officials and a council of chiefs with whom the king directed the affairs of the kingdom. In other words, the powers of the oba were actually not his own in totality but also those of his chiefs and, indeed, all in the community.

This council of chiefs met daily with the king in the palace to take all decisions. The council also functioned as the highest court of appeal. After its decisions were taken, they were announced as the “king’s decisions” (Fayemi, 2009: 112). Other functions of the king as the head of the council, according to Fadipe (1970), included overseeing the general health of the society. Included in the king’s portfolio were issues of internal security, peace and war. Administration of justice was the duty of the king, who was honoured as the final court of appeal in the kingdom.

The king was also “responsible for the management of relations with other regional kingdoms and societies” (Fadipe, 1970: 206). It is interesting to note that even modern obas (kings) still carry this responsibility. It is called *Ipade awon Loba-loba* (meeting of the obas). The king, with two or three of his chiefs, attends monthly meetings with other regional kings to discuss socio-political issues affecting their kingdoms and citizens. The main purpose of these meetings is to be able to present a common front on government’s policies and to foster unity among the regions. The above indicates how the affairs of society were transacted by the king in full consultation with the chiefs and other palace officials, which can conveniently be classified as the council of society.

This arrangement is further described as “limited or constitutional monarchy” by Akintoye (2009: 3). Fadipe (1970: 207) brings it to our attention too that, apart from the central administration of traditional Yoruba society by the oba-in-council, “there was local governance by the ward chiefs, heads of family compounds and military chiefs”. These leaders performed executive and juridical functions at their levels of authority similar to the activities of the oba-in-council. The king’s power was not absolute though it appears so in theory.

To corroborate the limited power of the king, it is necessary to talk about the limiting powers of the oyo-mesi on the oba. The oyo-mesi was the representative council of state consisting of seven members of each of the seven wards that made up the kingdom. Emphasising the power of the oyo-mesi over the king, it is reported that a “checks and balances system reined in the king’s power through fear, because at the command of the oyo-mesi an autocratic oba could commit suicide by opening the calabash” (Fadipe, 1970: 206). The calabash was a mysterious kind of container which held something the king’s eyes must not behold; the king would die the day he saw the inside of the calabash. Under this rigid system, therefore, the king’s power was held in constant check by the representative council. We can infer from this that the oyo-mesi was very powerful, to the extent that no oba messed around with that body.

Secondly, the king’s power was limited by a need to retain public confidence and loyalty, bearing in mind that his political authority resulted from the interplay of mutual support between him and the people. This means that honour and respect for the people by the oba were the pillars of his administrative success. Fadipe (1970) explained further that, the oba could not afford to be despotic, tyrannical or cruel if he wanted to remain on the throne until the end of his life. In this system, society and government were more centralised and the power of the monarch limited by bodies or agencies as noted above. As powerful as the oyo-mesi appeared to be, it is interesting to note that it did not enjoy absolute power or influence. For example, while the council may have wielded political influence, there was another body known as the ogboni, which in turn regulated the authority of the oyo-mesi or council of chiefs. “The ogboni was a body made up of freemen of integrity, age and experience, and was appointed by the king with the approval of the council of chiefs” (Fadipe, 1970: 206).

The views of the oyo-mesi could be moderated by the ogboni because it represented popular opinion backed by the authority of religion. As powerful as this body also appeared to be, there was another force, the Bashorun, which could keep the power of the ogboni in check. “The Bashorun was the head of the oyo-mesi and equally a strong member of the ogboni” (Salami, 2006: 72). The Bashorun found himself in a position where he could influence the political decisions of both the oyo-mesi and the king so that none of those entities was arrogated absolute power. Nevertheless, as powerful as the Bashorun was portrayed, he also could not manipulate the will of the people. In other words, absolute power belonged to the people. The above description is why Ayittey (1992: 19) explains the institution as having a “system of checks and balances in which two or more power centers – judicial, legislative, and military – were balanced against each other”. It was a system applied at all levels of the community so that no single center predominated.

The political system can be accurately described as “a complex and delicate balance with checks and counter-checks against concentration of power in one person’s hand” (Ayittey, 1992: 6-19). It is worth emphasising that this ensured that a king or chief did not rule arbitrarily. Although on the surface it could be argued that the traditional Yoruba system of governance was monarchical because it was headed by an individual, with the above assessment it is difficult to see it as truly monarchical as the king was bound to consult very regularly and decisions were reached by consensus without formal vote. Whereas a monarch rules single-handedly, the Yoruba king ruled with his chiefs-in-council.

Freedom of expression: In spite of the seemingly tremendous authority and power of the traditional rulers, “the people were free to express their opinion on every issue of administration without fear of intimidation” (Ayittey, 1992: 6-19). For example, every kingdom had institutionalised town meetings in the palace where any citizen could express an opinion or offer a suggestion about current events or even ask the chiefs questions. These meetings were warmly welcomed by the kings and chiefs as opportunities for them to test their popularity among the people. Such meetings brought the rulers and the ruled closer. They were also an opportunity for the rulers to explain policies that were controversial to the ruled. In most cases, consensus was

reached on such controversial policies. Meetings were held from time to time throughout the year.

In addition, people were free to demonstrate in the streets and say whatever they chose to say, usually in crudely composed songs, about their king and chiefs without fear of intimidation or arrest. People did this as a way of reminding those in authority that power and authority really belonged to the people. "This was done with great success" (Salami, 2006: 4–5). We should remember that the oath of office of the king was to seek the welfare of the people and progress of the kingdom. The consequence of failure was not something an *oba*, or king, wanted to bear. However, in the unlikely and unusual event of an *oba* refusing to listen to the people and grant their requests, people were forced to take the extreme measure of protest against the administration.

During such protest, old women would threaten to go naked before an *oba*; it was a bad omen and no *oba* could afford to incur the wrath of the gods. So, whenever the women felt dissatisfied with an *Oba*, they demonstrated topless in broad day light to the King's palace. An *oba* risked deposition and eventual death if he saw these women topless. The practice is still seen today in core Yoruba communities. This confirms that the king is only powerful in name and title; in reality he succumbs to the will of the people. A dictatorial attitude on the part of the king or ruler would lead to his suicide or removal by his people.

In the same vein, family group meetings held inside the family compound were strongly democratic because every member had full rights and freedom to express his/her views. During the *Ipade Omo'le* (Family meeting), all controversies were cleared and consensus reached before the next village meeting where the *Olori ebi* (Family head) would present his family's view on the topic or issue of discussion. In fact, Akintoye remarked that, "the culture of the family group compound was that of a school where eloquence and confidence of expression were inculcated" (2009: 2). He stresses the significance of the family group further in that participating in and contributing to village discussions was regarded as every member's duty, and any member who habitually failed to honour that duty risked being seen as obnoxious in the compound, as mentioned earlier. He or she might even be branded an *Omo Ale* (Child born to a concubine, or bastard) for refusing to participate actively in family meetings. Refusal

to participate in family matters was a misbehaviour. Yorubas believe that a true child of his/her father would not misbehave; to misbehave was to suggest that one was an *omo Ale* (bastard). That belief is expressed in a proverb which says *Omo ti Erin ba bi, Ajanaku ni yio Jo* – that is, the child born of an elephant will resemble and behave like an elephant, otherwise the child does not belong to the elephant and hence it is a bastard child (Akintoye, 2009: 2).

That was a major reason why an oba could not afford to face women demonstrators, as indicated above. It can be observed from the foregoing that the practical consequence of this foundational principle was that the Yoruba system vested in the people the right to choose their rulers and the right to be consulted in the making of community decisions. In addition, people had the right to dethrone the ruler if he suppressed the will of the people.

From the above, it appears that the Yoruba kingdom evolved a political culture that was truly democratic. Tangwa (1998: 2) opines that governance in pre-colonial Yoruba society was a “synthesis of the autocratic dictatorship and popular democracy”, as traditional Yoruba kingdoms exhibited a balance of authority and democracy. A reasonable degree of ethical leadership could be claimed to have been displayed by the king (Oba).

3.3.2 The Igbo kingdoms

Alagoa (1985) observed that, “the indigenous political system of the Igbo of south-eastern Nigeria presents one of the most elaborate examples of direct and participatory democracy in traditional Africa” (1985: 79), as shall be shown below. The pre-colonial political culture of the Igbo has been labeled variously as acephalous, stateless and republican. The first term, as noted earlier, implies that the Igbo communities, unlike the Yoruba communities, did not have heads or institutions of government with persons serving as chief or a ruling political authority. The second term, also unlike the Yoruba, implies a complete “absence of any structure of government with a hierarchical organisation based on persons charged with political functions” (Alagoa, 1985: 79). The only similarity I observe between the Yoruba and Igbo pre-colonial administrations is in their complexity and the difficulties they present in understanding them.

According to Nwabara (1997), the Igbo operated as a decentralised political organisation apart from a few centralised polities such as Nri that were monarchical in their system. Although most Igbo political groups possessed no sole authority or paramount ruler, they lacked no essential norms of government in the two layers of the Igbo political structure. The two layers, the village and the village group, shall be examined in this section. Villages varied in size and population, and “government at the village level was an exercise in direct democracy in that every adult directly participated in legislative and decision-making processes pertaining to public affairs during general assembly” (Nwabara, 1997: 2).

During this gathering, Nwabara (1997) explains, public matters were brought up and every attendee who wanted to contribute to the debate or discussion was entitled to a hearing. After the matter had been thoroughly discussed, the leaders from each lineage within the village retired for *izuzu* or consultation. Participation in *izuzu* was highly imperative and treasured; it was restricted to persons of substance, wit and prestige. Such people were believed to possess the wisdom to analyse all strands of thought and suggest a compromise that the *ama-ala* (assembly) would accept. After *izuzu*, a spokesperson was elected, based on his or her “power of oratory, persuasive talents, and ability to put the verdict in perspective”, to announce the verdict (1997: 8). This decision was either accepted by the *ama-ala* by general acclamation or rejected outright. In the event that the decision was rejected, the view of the assembly prevailed by popular assent. The village system was said to be analogous to the city states as each village was “autonomous and sovereign in most matters affecting it and tolerated no interference or dictation from any other group” (1997: 9).

It appears from the above that the village was the center of political, economic and social life for the principal institutions – the council of elders (*izuzu*) and the village group or assembly (*ama-ala*) of which every adult was a member. According to Ndoh (1997: 31), “the duties of the council of elders were different from that of the village group or village assembly”. The council of elders was responsible for issues of tradition, custom and ritual, while essential matters of policy – including law-making – or any other issue affecting the life of villagers, were decided by the village group.

It was also the duty of the village assembly to settle quarrels between warring parties. This arrangement shows that power was diffused and shared by numerous institutions with what Otubanjo (1989: 13) describes as “cognate status”. He observes that the absence of autocracy and authoritarianism was more glaring in “tribes without ruler”, that is non-centralised states.

The key feature of the indigenous African political system – centralised and non-centralised – as seen in the way the king ruled with his council, was unanimity. Majority opinion did not count in the council of elders, which explains the African penchant for debating, sometimes for days, to reach unanimity. Ayittey explains the primary reason for unanimity as “survival” (1992: 41). The communal nature of peoples’ ways of life was glaring in meetings and other activities. Ekei (2003) also identifies one thing to learn from governance in traditional Africa as the general acceptance of the primacy of the community over individual interests, and its greatest legacy as the sense of patience it offered in waiting for one’s opportunities for leadership – as against modern African political conflict, struggle and rancour. This relies on the principle, as stated in Yoruba language, ‘*asiko ti Oluwa lo dara ju lo* (God’s time is the best)’. Ekei writes:

[...] the sense of co-existence and co-operation marked traditional leadership. Leadership in traditional Africa is not a source of struggle and acrimony. It is rather a position of trust and service to the community. It teaches us that leadership devoid of trust and service is a mirage, an illusion (Ekei, 2003: 454).

The above has cleverly described the ethical nature of African traditional leadership – social and political. The closest reference to this attribute today is patriotism – the love of one’s fatherland by leader and subjects alike. The right to rule is often located in the commonly accepted myth of descent. In other words, rulers derive their mandate from the same divine source from which society has emerged. This divine source is also explained as the inspiration for the identification of the ruler. Consequently, “the authority of the ruler is both legitimised and limited by the myth of descent and not by any other considerations” (Otubanjo, 1989: 9).

3.3.3 The Hausa kingdom/empires

Just like the Yoruba, the Hausa system of administration was highly centralized in nature. According to Deji (2013), the Hausa Kingdoms of Kano, Katsina, Zaria and Gobir were governed by monarchs – Emirs/kings, their queens and the cabinet of chiefs; and their government was greatly based on their individual cultures and traditions. After the great Jihad of 1804-1810 led by Uthman Dan Fodio, the Hausa states were merged and then divided into two caliphates –eastern and western. Each caliphate was divided into emirates and each emirate was further sub-divided into districts headed by a ruler known as Hakimi. Each emirate was headed by an Emir. The Emir was “assisted in each emirate by a number of officers who were assigned specific portfolios” (Deji, 2013: 86).

The officials included the ‘*Waziri*’ who was the administrative officer (equivalent of a prime minister). The day to day administration of the palace fell unto the ‘*Sarkin Fada*’ while the command of the army was the responsibility of the ‘*Madawaki*’. ‘*Sarkin Pawa*’ and ‘*Sarkin Ruwa*’ were the officers in-charge of fishing in the rivers and butchery respectively. The ‘*Alkalis*’ were officers of the court and served as Judges. They were “trained and versed in the interpretation of the basic principles of *Sharia*, the Islamic laws” (Deji, 2013: 86). So, the ‘*Alkalis*’ were the judges who adjudicated in matters of property ownership, divorce, marriage, and slander.

Deji (2013: 86) explained that, the Emir was in constant consultation with these title holders in conducting the affairs of the emirate while the senior officers in turn were in consultation with the *Hakimis*. The Emir performed the executive and legislative functions with assistance from his senior officers. In other words, the Emir made and executed the laws of the land, including tax collection. The *Hakimis* performed essentially the same function as the Emir in their areas of jurisdiction but generally, the emir exercised enormous power over their subjects as they were dictatorial or autocratic; but both the Emir and the *Hakimis* made sure they did not contravene the Islamic laws, which in this case appears to be a check against the powers of the Emir and the *Hakimis*. It is said however that the “emirs could be removed if he became a dictator when there was a general agreement on the issue among the senior officers from the ruling houses” (Ndoh, 1997: 27).

We can say from the above that in comparison, the Yoruba system was segmentary in nature but more democratic than the Hausa/Fulani system as the prevalence of autocracy was not clearly evident there. Although the Igbo society was acephalous as they did not have a particular figure to be called the leader, government in pre-colonial times was essentially democratic as each village was a small republic. Thus far we have seen that the Nigerian traditional political arrangement started at the nuclear family level up to the village group level and higher. A representative system of governance, similar to modern-day representative democracy, evolved from the village whereby each village elected or appointed its own delegate to the village group assembly. One can thus infer that these leaders have purported themselves ethically well in their activities.

3.4 The concept of an ethical person among the three major tribes of Nigeria

In African ethics we have to pay attention to cultural diversities and similarities among African societies, no matter how insignificant they may seem. Given the limited scope of this thesis and to avoid the charge of over-generalisation, I will focus on particular moral systems within the country, Nigeria, i.e. the traditional Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba moral systems. Therefore, the questions are asked, 'Is there a consensus among the three major tribes in Nigeria as to who can be described as a 'good person' or of good morals? Does character play any role in making someone a good or bad person? In the next section, I shall discuss the concept of a 'good person' and what qualifies a person to be described as 'good' or 'bad' among the major tribes of Nigeria.

Interestingly, the three major tribes in Nigeria appear to have anchored their philosophical tradition on and entrenched in the concept of character development, that is why the Yoruba describes somebody of outstanding character as '*Omoluabi*', the Hausa describe the same person as '*Mutumin kirki*' and the Ibo describe the same person as '*Ezigbo Mmadu*'. From what we know of African traditional ethics above, the wellbeing of a community is grossly dependent on the peace and unity maintained by every individual component of that community while engaging in social interactions. Every individual which constitutes a social player must at every point in time display acceptable values, ethics and morals that society dictates. This is reflected in their character. The characteristics of a good person as determined by the morality of the three major tribes of Nigeria is discussed as below, beginning with the Yoruba.

The concept of '*omoluabi*' in Yoruba thought probes into the Yoruba understanding of the characteristic features constitutive of a person. When somebody is referred to as 'Omoluabi' in Yorubaland, such a person is an epitome of a thorough breed such that he or she is regarded as worthy of being entrusted with leadership responsibilities. He or she is a responsible human being. It seems there is consensus among African scholars concerning the importance of *iwa* (character). For instance, Idowu (1962: 142) says "character emphasises the total development of the individual in Yoruba moral beliefs". Abiodun (1983: 14) describes a person with good character as a "cultured person who is well brought up". Oke (1988: 94–96) rates *iwa* above other valuable things and says "central to all moral and social norms in Yoruba traditional society is '*iwa*' ...". Gbadegesin (1991: 79) claims for example that *iwa* for the Yoruba is perhaps "the most important moral concept". Oyeshile (2002: 57) stresses that the social ethical beliefs exhibited in Yoruba communal society emphasise *iwa*. Ogundeji (2010), writing in the Encyclopedia of African thought, explains that "*iwa* in Yoruba morality makes a person more valuable or less valuable, creating a distinction between good and bad character". All the above opinions about the importance of character in morality appear to be applicable to the major tribes in Nigeria.

Although Balogun agrees with these scholars, he goes further to explain the quality of *iwa*. According to Balogun (2013: 112), there are two types of *iwa* within the Yoruba moral context: ` *iwa rere* (good or positive character) and *iwa buruku* (bad or negative character). This is also applicable to most cultures. Sometimes in the Yoruba the word *iwa* is used generally to mean good character. Hence the Yoruba will say *iwa l'ewa Omo eniyan* (a person's real beauty consists in his or her character). This implies that a person with good character, however ugly he or she may be, is morally beautiful; while his/her counterpart with bad character, although he/she may be physically attractive, is thought of as morally repulsive. In this case, the Yoruba will say of the former person that he or she has *iwa* (*Omo na ni Iwa*) whereas the latter does not have *iwa* (*Omo na ko ni Iwa*).

The nature of *iwa*, which is held in high esteem among the Yoruba, goes beyond mere etymological derivation and the diverse interpretations of the term. The two other major tribes in Nigeria also hold character in high esteem. According to Oke:

Iwa is rated above all other valuable things, such that a person who has all the other valuable things and opportunities of life but lacks good character or moral beingness, which is the essence of proper human existence, will sooner than later forfeit all his material possessions which would not let him be moral (Oke, 1988: 96).

In addition, the value of *iwa* is emphasised by Oyeshile (2002: 92–93) where he cites a myth contained in Ifa literary corpus on how Orunmila (Orunmila is mythical personality believed by the Yoruba to possess a perfect measure of wisdom) when seeking success, was advised to get married to *iwa* and how the marriage yielded bountiful successes. The implications of this are that it is through *iwa* that true success in life, including the afterlife, is determined. Hence, it is said that *Iwa nii bani de saree; owo tabi Ola ko je nnkan funni* (character is what follows one to the grave, money or wealth is of no help) (Balogun, 2013: 113).

It is worth noting that the concept of the hereafter and its division into heaven and hell appears not to be foreign to the Yoruba mind prior to the arrival of Christianity and Islam because the Yoruba talk of *Orun rere* (good heaven or simply heaven) and *Orun Apaadi* (heaven of potsherds or hell). Dopamu and Alana (2004: 170) maintain the following about the general lack of clarity as to the location of the duo: “There are sufficient hints that the good go to the ‘good heaven’ and the bad go the heaven of potsherds” or hell. In order to understand the place of *iwa* in the Yoruba moral universe, it is important to understand the role of *esan* (repercussion or what can roughly be explained as cosmic justice). We can also interpret *esan* as vengeance or retribution. Balogun (2013: 114) explains *esan* as that which a moral agent receives as a consequence of his/her moral deeds. This may be pleasant or otherwise, depending on the agent’s character. Yoruba people accept that whatever a man sows, he shall reap sometime in the future. According to the Yoruba, *rere kii gbe beeni ika kii gbe* (neither good nor bad shall be lost). Good begets good and evil begets evil (*ohun buruku a ma ba eni buruku; ohun rere a ma ba eni rere*). Consequently, the Yoruba lay strong emphasis on always doing good.

Following from the above, it is my considered opinion that *iwa* possesses the highest moral virtue in the Yoruba value system and it is not courted for its own sake but rather for its pragmatic purposes. So, who is an ‘*Omoluabi*’ or what are the characteristic features of an ‘*Omoluabi*’? Before the Yoruba can describe somebody as ‘*Omoluabi*’ the person must have been judged as well brought up or highly cultured. The opposite of *Omoluabi* is ‘*Omolasan*’ (a worthless individual). Oluwole (2007) has broken down the meaning of *Omoluabi* thus: “*Omo ti oni iwa bi eni ti a ko ti osi gba eko*” (a person who behaves like someone who is well nurtured or trained and who lives by the precepts of the education he has been given). Such a person is thought of as a paragon of excellence in character.

Abimbola (1975) makes it clear that *omoluabi* is a function of exhibiting and demonstrating the inherent virtue and value of ‘*iwapele*’, that is, a good or gentle character which is ultimately the basis of moral conduct in Yoruba culture and a core defining attribute of *omoluabi*. Abimbola explains further that the concept of *Omoluabi* is set as a conglomeration of principles of moral conduct demonstrated by a person. The most fundamental of these principles widely known to a Yoruba person include, mutual respect (*Iteriba*), honesty (*Isotito*), trustworthiness (*Afokantan*), good heartedness (*Inu rere*), love for others (*Ife si omolakeji*), gentle behavior (*Iwapele*), bravery (*Igboya/akikanju*), hard work (*Itepa mose*), and an intelligent use of language (*Oro siso*), especially, via the appropriate use of proverbs (Abimbola, 1975: 389).

An *omoluabi* is expected to demonstrate this capacity because the *Yoruba* regards the sagacious use of the spoken word as an embodiment of good character. They also believe that spoken word is the harbinger of peace and war. For the *Yoruba*, the wellbeing of a community is grossly dependent on the peace and unity maintained by every individual component of the community while engaging in social interaction. For this reason, every individual which constitutes a social player is expected, at every point in time, to display acceptable values especially if such an individual is aspiring to be a leader in the future. The concept of a good person by the *Igbo* is examined next.

Ezigbo Nmadu is the phrase used by the *Igbo* people to describe a good or moral person whose actions or character traits are worthy of emulation. The phrase is also

descriptive of one who is equitable, unflappable and calm in character and disposition (Agulana, 2011: 141). In English language usage such a person would be said to be level headed, imperturbable or unflustered. Agulana (2011) explains that, the Igbo people recognize some character references that define who a good person is; and they have social indicators that are used to gauge a person that is adjudged as a good person, *ezigbo mmadu*.

Ukpokolo (2011) has linguistically analyse the concept of *ezigbo mmadu* as follows: *Ezigbo/ezi* means that which is good, correct or acceptable while *mmadu* means humankind, human being or person. So, in the context of human relationships, “*ezigbo* connotes such traits as sincerity, truthfulness, self-respect, good nature, trustworthiness, fidelity, genuineness, fairness, dependableness, loyalty, faithfulness, and integrity” (2011: 37). Ukpokolo goes further to explain the opposite of ‘*ezigbo*’ as ‘*njo*’ which means ‘ugly’, ‘bad’, ‘wicked’, ‘evil’, ‘lack of beauty or comeliness’. However, Ukpokolo makes it clear that when ugliness is used to describe an individual in human relationship, it is not the outward appearance that is being emphasized, but the non-material aspects of the individual, that is, character, behavior or conduct (2011: 37). It is noteworthy to learn that *ezigbo mmadu* is exhibited through responsible conduct.

The fact that the word *mmadu* means ‘beauty exists’ implies that the Igbo acknowledges that beauty is inherent in the human person; they also recognise that this beauty can be lost. For this reason, when the Igbo describes a person as ‘*ajo mmadu*, ‘bad person’, it means that the person has lost the beauty through bad character (2011: 38). This suggests that the beauty in the creature called ‘humankind’ is revocable if not cultivated and nurtured by the individual; this also points to us that the Igbo sees human beings as moral agents who is held accountable for his or her conduct. According to Nwala (1985), a close link exists between the Igbo concept of ‘*ihe-oma*’ or ‘*ezigbo*’ (that which is good) and the notion of ‘*ndu-oma*’ (the good life).

The good life (*ndu-oma*), is “the most general value cherished by the Igbo” (1985: 143). In other words, the Igbo stress the preference for ‘*ndu-oma* (the good life), not just any kind of life which could be regarded as their *sum mum bonum*, that is, the highest value to be sought after. It is only the person who possesses ‘*ndu*’ (life) that can ever hope to live ‘*ndu-oma*’ (the good life), and it is only the person who possesses

'ndu-oma' (the good life) that can attain to the enviable position of *ezigbo mmadu*, (a good person) (Agulana, 2011: 146).

For the Igbo people, there are some basic qualities of life or character traits or qualities beyond mere possession of 'ndu' (life) an individual needs to possess before he or she can be said to be an 'ezigbo mmadu' or a good person; some of the qualities include; respect for social norms or customs, loyalty to ancestors and good moral conduct. Generally, among Africans as we all know, community is believed to have redeeming features such that anti-social idiosyncrasies involving the individual may be redeemed by the renewal of communal contact or solidarity. It is also for this reason that Africans see community as being supreme over the individual.

According to Omoyajowo (1975: 34) that, it is regarded as a curse akin to the one laid upon Cain in the Bible among Africans if one is cut off from one's natural relation with the soil and with society. The belief is that no one can live successfully outside of the social setting or human community. For the Igbo, from the time a person is born until he or she dies, the person is made aware of the value or importance of the communal group and of his or her dependence on the kin group. More importantly, a person is only a 'good person' (*ezigbo mmadu*) if he or she reveres the social custom or norms. For the Igbo therefore, according to what constitutes the norm of right and wrong is nothing more than social custom. In this regard, a person's actions are judged as either good or bad depending on the approval or disapproval of the community (Agulana, 2011: 146).

Therefore, to be an 'ezigbo mmadu' such person must necessarily submit to the thought system and values inherent in the community for one to be socially healthy. Such a person stands for common good and when self-interest is on a collision course with the common good, the overriding consideration is to promote common good. *Ezigbo mmadu* is that person to whom the members of community can entrust responsibility knowing fully well that he or she is responsible, honest, trustworthy, and dependable. An *ezigbo mmadu* does not cheat or defraud people of their belongings and dues. An *ezigbo mmadu* does not relegate his or her role as husband, father, wife, mother, daughter, son, brother but carries out the social roles and responsibilities as demanded of him or her by the customs and traditions of the people. He recognises

the power of the gods and ancestors and gives them their dues. For one to be an ezigbo mmadu he or she must live a socially acceptable life, a life of integrity (Ukpokolo, 2004: 40).

Mutumun Kirki: Like the two cultures discussed above, Hausa culture also has its own concept of the standards of good behavior and of what is to be admired or abhorred in a person. Character takes the central position in the evaluation of an ideal or moral person. What does a Hausa person mean by the cynosure of '*shi mutunmin kirki ne*' (he is a good man) or the opposite of '*ba shi da kirki*' (he has no kirki; no intrinsic goodness of character)? According to Kirk-Green (1998: 21), the fundamental locus of 'kirki' of man's intrinsic goodness in Hausa land, rests in the '*hali*' (his character).

Kirk-Green then defined '*kirki*' as an inner quality, or an accumulation of qualities which are not physical attributes. "A war-hero of a lion heart and heroic stature" may never qualify for recognition as '*mutumin kirki*'. On the other hand, "a man as modest as an Ostrich and meeker than a gazelle" may earn the title or admiration (1998: 121). This means that physical stature and heroic qualities alone are no index to the moral stature nor any warranty of '*kirki*', of inner truth. Kirki reposes in the character so that '*haliin mutumin*' (a man's character), is at once the wellbeing of his virtue and the mirror of his moral make-up (1998: 121).

For the Hausa, this '*hali*' (the character), is all-important that a Hausa proverb says "character is a line drawn on a rock nobody can erase". Stressing the importance of character further, Kirk-Green (1998) uses another Hausa proverb which describes character as a tail; "If the inner character is sound, the exterior is nothing but a sham" (1998: 122). This proverb indicates '*hali*' without any qualifying epithet presupposes 'good' character but with an accompanying epithet, such a character may be raised to the excellence of "*tana da kyan*" (she has a sweet disposition) or to the reprehensible "*mungun hali a gare shi*" (she has a nasty nature) and the summary dismissal of "*bas hi da hali*" (absolutely no character at all).

So, what are the distinguished characteristics of a '*mutumin kirki*', our man of approved behavioural qualities? It is worthy of note that Kirk-Green emphasizes the fact that the concept of '*mutumin kirki*' (good man), is explained and referred to in its social context

(1998: 122). As earlier indicated, a national hero in Hausa land may not necessarily also be a good man but the good man will always be a hero of his community. In other words, the accolade of '*mutumin kirki*' is awarded by the Hausa only in social intercourse and in relationship with his fellow man because it is said that "men of character are the conscience of the society to which they belong" (Kirk-Green, 1998: 122).

The first characteristic of '*mutumin kirki*' (good man in Hausa is '*gaskiya*' (Truthfulness). Kirk-Green notes that, although 'truth' is an item of universal esteem, "the frequency of its occurrence in Hausa conversation is noticeably higher than in any equivalent western situation" (1998: 122). The priority of truthfulness as the hallmark of the good man has been sanctioned by Hausa aphoristic lore. There are maxims asserting that "truth is stronger than an iron horse" and "a lie can give more pain than a spear". Just like in Yoruba morality, the Hausa believes that too that nothing can ever harm the man who takes honesty as his tenet.

Trustworthiness is the next characteristic virtue that does have peculiar force in Hausa society where it embraces a notion of the sanctity of something or someone given in trust. It is a belief so strongly perceived among the Hausa so much so that both the giver and the one charged therewith are sensitive to the awesomeness of the responsibility (Kirk-Green, 1998: 123). That is the reason why the sin of "*cin amana*" (to embezzle or convert something entrusted to one's care (not necessarily money), ranks as an exceedingly grave blemish of character among the Hausa.

The next characteristic is 'generosity. As expected in a peasant society, considerable importance is attached to the traits of generosity and to its antithesis, the social sin of niggardliness. According to Kirk-Green (1998: 123), both terms are loaded in Hausa, condemnation of one being matched by contempt for the other. Hausa identifies true greatness of a person by his generosity. One aphorism warns that it is a waste of breath to beg from a man acknowledged to be a miser; another implies that the man who can make gifts but does not is far more despicable than one who does not, because he cannot. A man who eats a meal without offering to share it with those present is regarded as 'barbarous'. Both Yoruba and Ibo tribes feel the same way about someone who eats all by himself or herself.

Another virtue or characteristic of a '*mutumin kirki*' (good man) in Hausa is the much prized and preached virtue called '*hakuri*' (patience). In a topic count of Hausa proverbial lore, '*hakuri*', according to Kirk-Green (1998), is an item that emerges high up the list. "Whatever the trouble, it always has an end" and "whatever you have endured, you will see it come to a finish" (1998: 124). The advice is always in the maxim, "*hakuri maganin duniya*" (Patience is the universal remedy). This always give continued encouragement to the Hausa attitude of uncomplaining, unemotional acceptance of '*rabo*' (fate), be it adversity or good fortune. "This then, is *hakuri*, that marked feature of daily life in rural Hausa land; the Hausa's immense capacity for patience – a gift that is not yet altogether lost even in the hurly-burly of metropolitan Kano, Zaria and Sokoto" (Kirk-Green, 1998: 124).

To earn recognition as *mutumin Kirki*, one has to be a man of many parts; and much perfection. According to Kirk-Green (1998), no Hausa can aspire to the title of *mutumin kirki* unless he be amply endowed with the quality of '*hankali*' (common sense/intelligence). But for the Hausa, a man who has *hankali* has more than common sense. He has sound mature judgement. He knows the wrong time as well as the right time to do or say the right thing (1998: 124). He is described as '*mai-hankali*' (the intelligent man). We might say a man who has *hankali* in Hausa culture is intelligent and full of manners too. He is a prudent, well behaved and sober individual. Opposite is true of a man without *hankali* – '*ba shi da hankali*'. It implies that such an individual not only lack common sense; he also does not know how to behave.

The next two characteristics – '*kunya and ladabi*' ('shame' and 'good manners') are two related aspects of *mutumin kirki*; a proper sense of '*kunya*' and the due display of '*ladabi*'. According to Kirk-Green (1998), the term '*ladabi*' is a word borrowed from the Arabic language "which has an influential factor in the ultimate assessment of the good man in Hausa that it would be no exaggeration to view it as the summation of '*hankali*' and '*kunya*' put together; sober behavior and the due modesty of conduct together form good manners (1998: 125). Hausa would describe one who has bashly trespassed against their social code as "he is a shameless creature" (1998: 125). Hausa believe that it is a waste of time to feel shame for a shameless man. '*Ladabi*' on the other hand, "is the public display of personal manners, it is the oil that lubricates

the wheels of social intercourse, the supreme and easy index of what is and what is not good behavior” (1998: 125). To the Hausa, *‘ladabi’* could be regarded as the equivalent of what the western world calls etiquette. It is a courteous behaviour obligatory towards all who traditionally earn such respect; parents, older folks and those in authority.

Another characteristic of a *mutumin kirki* is *‘mutunci’* (his capacity for interaction with his fellow man). The term *mutunci*, according to Green, is to describe the manner of treating others with due respect for their feelings. The term *‘ladabi’* is different from *‘mutunci’* in the sense that, *ladabi’* – good manners, are largely manifested by outward action or words. *‘Mutunci’* on the other hand, is demonstrated by an inner spirit, “it is a psychological humanism, the ability to respect the dignity of everyman” (1998: 126); the idea is similar to that of *Ubuntu*. *Mutunci* is said to be at its most visible in the behaviours of a superior towards an inferior. It may be regarded as human dignity residing in the individual. The vice of *‘cin mutunci’* – to humiliate a person by depriving him or her of his or her self-respect or to treat someone like dirt is pointed out by Kirk-Green (1998), as one of the ‘worst sins in the roll-call of reprehension in Hausa society, [...] nowhere is the offence of *‘cin mutunci’* more heinous than when it is committed by a superior on an inferior” (1998: 126).

The last two characteristics of *mutumin kirki* by Green (1998) are related to the whole Hausa religious conduct. The strongly Islamised culture-hero of Hausa land expects a *mutumin kirki* to display the virtues of *‘hikima’* and *‘adalci’*. *‘Hikima’* (wisdom), presupposes a certain measure of age and education. *‘Adalci’* (scrupulous behaviours), is likewise regarded as an essentially Islamic virtue. Both are particularly sought for in a leader, indeed, without them no one in a position of leadership is likely to be conceded the tribute of *‘mutumin kirki’* (1998: 127).

Both Yoruba and Igbo equivalent of *mutumin kirki*, which are *omoluabi* and *ezigbo mmadu* respectively, is not merely descriptive of a person’s character but also of the person as an atomic individual or human entity. These qualities of a good person could be identified as normative principles that could aid human wellbeing and communal existence. These Nigerian major tribes seemed to have figured out how humans can come together to achieve the much valued communal wellbeing. They also appear to

assume that the individual is imbued with rationality and the power to discern and choose between good and evil. “Good” to Africans is that which promotes community interest and human wellbeings.

Therefore, the importance of character in creating an ethical leadership is not merely an outward appearance, as we have seen from the expression of the concept by the three major Nigerian tribes, but something much deeper. Possession by our leaders of those qualities discussed above under the concept of a good person will go a long way in enhancing ethical leadership in Nigeria. To all the tribes discussed above, character is the non-material aspects of the individual. Only the *omoluabis*, the *ezigbo mmadus* and the *mutumin kirkis* in Nigeria should be entrusted with the leadership responsibilities of our great country as demanded by traditional ethics.

3.5 Summary

The administrative structure of African kingdoms is proof that a system of governance existed, no matter what it was called. These assertions have been substantiated by reference to three ancient kingdoms found in what is now Nigeria – the Yoruba kingdoms of the south west and the Igbo kingdoms of the south east and the Hausa to the northern part of the country, beginning with the Yoruba. The examination of ethics and politics in the pre-colonial period established the claim that there was democracy and morality in African traditional politics before the colonialists came to Africa. The chapter has therefore tried to show that governance in pre-colonial Nigeria was indeed democratic and moral, making use of African traditional ethics. It is concluded that no era was completely free of corruption but the pre-colonial era fared much better than both colonial and post-colonial eras as we shall discover later in the thesis. These issues will be explored further in the next chapter titled, ‘socio-political experiences in colonial and post-colonial eras in Nigeria.

CHAPTER FOUR

SOCIO-POLITICAL EXPERIENCES IN COLONIAL AND POST COLONIAL ERA IN NIGERIA

4.1 Introduction

I will attempt to show in this chapter that, even though corruption has eaten so deep into Nigerian polity, it will not be correct to say it is a behavior that was created or started in Nigeria. As indicated earlier, pre-colonial politics in Nigeria, for the most part, was founded on strong ethical values to ensure social justice and compliance. In both centralised and decentralised pre-colonial Nigerian (African) communities, politics was conducted with utmost seriousness, though the laws were mostly unwritten they were obeyed religiously. If viewed historically, it will be discovered that corruption is alien to Africa. So, how was corruption introduced to Africa in general?

It is believed that before the incursion of colonialism, and imperialism in Africa generally, of which Nigeria is part, “corruption, dishonesty, violence and crimes were very minimal if not inexistent” (Kouassi, 2016: 6). According to Okolo and Raymond (2014), it was colonialism that introduced systemic corruption on a grand scale across much of Sub-Saharan Africa. They write:

The repudiation of indigenous values, standards, checks and balances and the pretensions of superimposing western structures destabilized the well-run bureaucratic machinery previously in existence across pre-colonial Africa. The end result is what is rampant across Africa today; [...] oppressive and corrupt state institutions [...] (Okolo & Raymond, 2014: 31-32).

This chapter is therefore going to explain how colonialism is partly responsible for corruption on a large scale in Nigeria, indeed Africa; and how that has tremendously affected the socio-political life of the nation. The chapter also examines corruption as a common denominator of Nigerian political leadership since independence. Thereafter, I will describe the type of leadership that has been provided in Nigeria before and since independence in 1960 and up to 2015, so as to be able to make an

effective comparison to justify my assertion that unethical leadership has been on display flagrantly in Nigeria since independence. Consequently, I shall attempt to give an explanation of what constitute corruption and also attempt to present a picture of an ethical leader and leadership. In the light of the foregoing, I shall critically examine how political corruption is played out in almost every aspect of Nigeria's socio-political life.

This is necessary in order to prove the almost complete erosion of traditional African ethical values, which, according to me, is a major reason for the flagrant display of unethical egoism in the political administration of the country. An examination of political administration from an historical perspective will reveal how the foundation for the current situation was laid right from the colonial period through independence in 1960 up to the present; that is, issues that could bring about corruption existed right from the beginning.

Moreover, I will examine the role played by the size of the country, its diverse population and economy in creating the current situation. I will also discuss the following aspects: the scope and extent of corruption in Nigeria, causes of corruption in Nigeria, stemming or addressing corruption in Nigeria and the effects of corruption on socio-economic affairs in Nigeria.

4.2 Ethics, politics and governance in colonial Nigeria: 1900 – 1960

The term 'colonialism' in this context is used to refer to an international system of economic exploitation in which more powerful nations dominate weaker ones. Johnson (1995), made a distinction between two phases of colonialism; that is, active and passive. The 'active' refers to the conquest of a people followed by the direct control or domination of the same by the conquerors using a combination of measures such as military cohesion and dominance of major internal institutions such as polity. The 'passive' on the other hand represents what is commonly referred to as 'neo-colonialism' or the extension of especially economic domination of a people beyond the attainment of self-rule. This second or passive phase of colonisation is associated with practices, policies and structure inherited from the first phase.

These constitute a colonial legacy that, in my view, impacts on the extent of corruption in independent African nations of which Nigeria is one. While the former phase could be associated with the origin of corrupt practices in Nigeria, the latter could be considered to be partially responsible for its entrenchment. The rationale for addressing colonisation is not to apportion blame but to understand our past in order to know how to move forward. There are several other ways in which colonialism contributed to the prevalence of corruption in Nigeria but within the scope of this thesis, only a few examples will be discussed.

The very initial historical basis for the emergence of corruption appears to have been the industrial revolution of the 19th Century. According to Mulinge and Lesetedi (1998: 15), “it was the financial growth which accompanied this historical event that was directly responsible for the birth of white-collar crime of which corruption is part”. It is explained further that corruption requires a well-developed monetary economy characterized by a clear differentiation of interests to thrive. Mulinge and Lesetedi (1998) remarked that pre-colonial African economies reveal that emerging colonial powers did not find sizable monetary economies in their newly acquired territories. The existing economies, therefore, lacked the financial and economic infrastructure necessary for engaging in corruption. Consequently, the new economies promoted by colonial governments had to nurture the conditions for evolution of structures that were conducive to corrupt practices.

In the first instance, the system of indirect rule adopted by the colonial masters turned leadership in Nigeria into a corrupted enterprise. In the view of Okolo and Raymond (2014), the system made the rulers hold power in trust for the colonial masters rather than holding power in trust for the people. Government became an antagonistic platform of forceful obedience from the people. People who were regarded as ordinary were promoted as warrant chiefs by the British authorities to slight the royalty. Such actions by the British officials unwittingly enthroned corruption at the highest echelon of government. These warrant chiefs, without character, demanded money from citizens with a promise to secure the favour of the colonial masters. Moreover, “in order to avoid being punished for crimes committed, and to be granted access to the most basic rights, people saw bribery as a first and last resort” (Okolo & Raymond, 2014: 32).

The introduction of a monetary tax, that is, the hut and later poll tax, was a very significant way by which colonial governments fostered the growth of corruption. Having found no meaningful monetary economies in their newly acquired territories, the British introduced “compulsory tax payable only in cash for purposes of meeting the cost of administration and generating cheap African labour necessary for the establishment of productive economic activities” (Mulinge and Lesetedi (1998: 18). Money collected from the hut tax was said to be mainly used by the colonial masters in paying compensation as salaries from a post of employment (emoluments) for their officers. Having grown up in a village, I now understand how corruption was introduced to the people through the imposition of flat rate taxation on the people without any knowledge of the economic earnings of the potential tax payers. The mode of tax payment was often said to be “steeped in violence, whereby district commissioners or warrant chiefs were empowered to arrest any defaulter” (Ayittey, 1992: 46–48).

I remember how the dongaris (local policemen) would storm the village unannounced to round up those who had not been able to pay their *owo-opa* (hut taxes). To avoid been beaten or taken to the headquarters, villagers would rally round to collect something to give to the policemen in exchange for those male villagers who had been arrested. Many young men of tax-paying age would escape to their farms in order to avoid arrest. The so-called policemen would come back to the village even if they were not sent, just to collect more bribes from the villagers. This was a kind of way to reward tax collectors, which became a principal method for the accumulation of private property. It became a way of life for these tax collectors which became difficult to give up and which encouraged local chiefs to abuse their office.

As Leonard (1991: 29) put it. “Colonial chiefs were implicitly encouraged to use their positions to amass wealth and demonstrate thereby that it paid to cooperate with Europeans” The amount pocketed from taxes was said to have transformed the chiefs into willing agents of colonialism and blinded them to the plight of their people as a consequence of taxation. In spite of the troubles faced by the villagers in paying this tax, I am a witness to the fact that, there were little or no benefits accrued to the people in terms of social services, in turn for the taxes they paid. The result was a cover-up of a corrupt system, devoid of accountability, and one that pitched citizens against

themselves and against the ruling class.

According to Kalinga (1985), colonialism is also associated or connected with corruption through the methods employed by the colonial authorities to subdue and control the colonised peoples. Of great importance is the system of indirect rule. The policy created a favourite or superior groups at the expense of others in the colony. Those groups enjoyed a privileged status in the colonial administration by being rewarded with easy access to western education and government sponsored economic opportunities. This created immense regional disparities in the extent of educational attainment and economic opportunities, which sowed the seeds of corrupt behaviour which has now become entrenched in many African countries like Nigeria.

The history of police and military formations in several parts of the world can be traced to the need to protect citizens and ensure territorial integrity. However, in the case of Nigeria and perhaps in the rest of Africa, it may not be too far from the truth that, the police and the military were established primarily to crush civilian opposition to colonial rule. Police engagement with the populace was founded on the need to enforce hateful and debilitating colonial laws, including forced taxation, segregation and the quelling of anti-colonial uprisings.

Another way through which colonialism impacted on Nigeria negatively is the creation of what I describe as conspicuous consumption. Pre-colonial Africa, as discussed earlier, was known for practicing strong moral values. Those who were rendered unfit by circumstances as a result of age, ill-health or physical impairment were well taken care of by their families. But colonialism destabilised this pre-colonial value system by “uprooting men from the farms to work for white people as houseboys, clerks and in other menial capacities” (Ayittey, 1992: 49). This exercise introduced a form of greed unknown to most pre-colonial African societies.

As a result, the morally upright members of the African societies who acted as role models for the younger generation aspired to become like the colonial masters who lived in big houses, drove big cars and treated Africans with disdain. In my opinion, it is a matter of moral concern that colonialists may have influenced the poor to such an extent that they saw the colonialists as symbols of success and tried to emulate them

in different political ways. I recall my primary school days when we had to sing a song encouraging us to aspire to be like the white man if we would like to ride big cars, live in big houses and have wealth in abundance.

At the end of colonialism, the newly independent Nigerian government inherited institutions that had internalised a culture of citizen oppression and extortion. It appears as if Post-colonial police and the military were designed to inflict terror on innocent citizens, while citizens, especially in Nigeria, had internalised the art of buying their way out of unwarranted harassment. The major challenge for immediate post-colonial African leadership was to know how to embark on massive re-orientation exercises. While this challenge was not taken seriously by successive administrations, it is rather unfortunate that they were constrained by a lack of adequate resources to bring about a meaningful change even if the need for a meaningful change was recognised.

The scope of corruption in Nigeria can also be discussed from socio-political perspective. Omotola traces corruption to colonialism. He argues that by all standards, colonialism in Nigeria was built on corruption “because of the colonialists’ corrupt disposition to exploit the state for their exclusive benefit, [colonialists] liquidated social structure against corruption associated with pre-colonial Africa and replaced or transformed those to their own purposes” (Omotola, 2006: 217). The colonial era was characterised by allegations of corrupt practices against civil servants and the police. This legacy of corruption was carried into the independence period and from the independence period to the post-independence period.

Ayittey (1992) also views corruption from the perspective of African history and argues that administrative corruption is an alien culture, though now rampant across the continent of Africa. Pre-colonial Africa, for the most part, was founded on strong ethical values with the end result of ensuring social justice. It was colonialism that introduced systematic corruption on a grand scale across much of sub-Saharan Africa. The repudiation of indigenous values, standards, checks and balances destabilised the well-run bureaucratic machinery previously in existence before the superimposition of western cultures (Ayittey, 1992: 44–45).

The influence of colonialism on Nigeria's political history cannot be ignored. One would have thought that Nigeria would resume its pre-colonial traditional values after independence. Yet it appears as if Nigeria's politicians and many businessmen adopted the values of their colonial masters. As a result, modern Nigeria is disconnected from its pre-colonial past. Dishonesty, cheating and fraud have now replaced ancestral moral uprightiness and probity. Getting rich overnight without working for it has become the new criterion for achievement. In pre-colonial Nigeria, wealth resulted from hard work. Whoever possessed wealth and could not account for it was viewed with suspicion because wealth was linked with accountability and transparency.

However, in modern Nigeria the emphasis now seems to be on power to the exclusion of transparency, accountability and ethics. Traditional values have thus deteriorated in all spheres of Nigeria's economic and socio-political life. The deterioration of values is so pervading that Ewelu (1999: 43) writes satirically that "in Nigeria a blind person can be given a driving license if and only if he is able to put on the table the required amount". That explains some scholars' argument that democracy in Africa generally has failed because it has no root whatsoever in African cultural values but is rooted in the Western political system and values. To my mind, Nigerian politicians have fully imbibed the political ideas of Machiavelli, which can be regarded as unethical because they place much emphasis on the need to preserve political power at all costs instead of providing service to the people.

It is a common belief among Nigerians that the imposition of colonial rule dealt a deadly blow to African culture with the immediate consequence of the introduction of such values as individualism, corruption and oppression. It is unfortunate that African nations in general have taken on more elements of colonialism rather than of the pre-colonial state. This is the reason why some concerned scholars, such as Wiredu and Gyekye, call for a return to the ways whereby our great forefathers operated and lived their social and political lives before contact with Europeans.

In addition, Okoduwa (2008: 18) says that apart from an exploitative agenda, "colonialism expressed the ethnocentric belief that the morals and values of the coloniser were superior to those of the colonised". For example, as part of the erosion

of African cultural values, Africans now bear at least a European or Christian name, making African names inferior or paganistic. We now accept that anything European is better than ours. Awolowo expresses the situation like this:

It is surprising that our European guardians and tutors have not found it worthwhile to turn their attention to the wealth of knowledge which our country has in store for the world. It is more surprising still that the educated Africans have never stopped to think whether it is not possible to make some good out of what we generally term "devilish". This default on our side, of course, is partly due to the fact that the voices from the pulpits ... have always admonished us to close our eyes to the fact that we seem to prefer, in any case, Europeanism to Africanism, and thus every mistake in Britain is a style in Nigeria (Awolowo, 1939: 18).

What brought about Awolowo's lament above is the failure of even some educated people to see anything good in what is traditional in the face of foreign religion. This belief is contrary to African traditional values. Even in government policies we find the importation of foreign ideas that do not have cultural soil to grow in Africa. One can therefore describe Africans as a queer mixture, only African in skin – although some have also bleached their skins. Living between these two worlds, to my mind, is causing us a lot of devastation. To continue living like this means Africa is doomed. According to Magesa (1997: 9) "the problems and solutions of today have to be envisaged within a historical framework, an indigenous historical framework, no matter what contribution an external world may have made".

While I agree with the above views concerning the problem of governance in Africa in general, I maintain that democracy has failed because no sincere attempt has been made to practice it with integrity and love. Moreover, colonialism has infected our practice of politics and especially in the area of morality. It must be stressed that our moral values constitute the framework for the sanity of our society but politicians have completely abandoned our values to fashion what I describe as a mundane ideology for themselves. It is on this false foundation that post-colonial Nigeria has been built.

In this respect, Magesa (1997: 9) says that the negative influences of foreign values on the lives of Africans are real as well as the consequences of not going back to our traditional values. I agree with this view and think that the realisation of this challenge and its pursuit should constitute our first step towards recovery from the perennial degradation of our cherished values. To this end I maintain that African traditional values will serve as an active response to the challenges that confront us daily. It is here that sanity can be restored to our lives, government and society. We should therefore adopt the African values of the past that are not detrimental to Nigeria's development.

For example, progressive values that respect the authentic dignity of humanity are to be embraced, while those values that are preposterous to the goal of human realisation are to be disposed of. Those values that have passed the test could serve as the yardstick to measure acceptable and unacceptable foreign cultures. One such value that has stood the test of history is African traditional ethics. The question however is: how can we inject traditional ethics back into our political administration? I will attempt to answer this question later in the study.

Apart from the effect of colonialism, there are many other causes of corruption in Nigeria. However, I will focus only on the following: a great inequality in distribution of wealth, political office as a primary means of gaining access to wealth, conflicts between changing moral codes, the weakness of social and governmental enforcement mechanisms and the absence of a strong sense of national community (Oladeji & Oladeji, 2011: 185-186). Unethical leadership and excessive materialism can also be added to the list. However, within the space of this thesis I will not offer a detailed discussion of all of these factors. Rather, I will focus on the factors I consider most prominent.

There is a common belief among Nigerians that poverty is one of the major causes of corruption. According to Eze (2002) there exists a great deal of poverty among Nigerians in almost every segment of their social life. In Nigeria today, it is only a few families who can boast three square meals a day, wear good clothes or enjoy the basic necessities of life such as water, a good road network and electricity. In this respect Eze observes: "Hence everyone takes corruption, no matter one's own small capacity,

as a way of making up or balancing the prevalent inequalities and injustice” (2002: 6).

Eze (2002: 6) explains corruption in Nigeria further in terms of low salaries and strong kinship ties. According to this perspective, public officials in developing countries like Nigeria are corrupt because their salaries are so low that they cannot make ends meet by depending solely on them, in other words, the reward system is poor. “Strong kinship ties, characteristic of Nigerian society, place nepotistic pressure on public officials” (Obuah, 2010: 20). Consequently, they resort to corrupt activities to make ends meet and to help relatives. In addition, the ridiculously low salaries are not even paid regularly, especially teachers in both tertiary and secondary institutions of learning. While low salaries may not be a justification for corruption especially graft, this perspective offers some insight into the widespread corruption, cronyism and nepotistic activities in Nigeria.

Although the above factors of corruption might have relevance to medium and low-level public officials, it does not seem to explain why highly paid public officials like governors and ministers partake in corrupt activities. I cannot think of better reasons for highly paid public officials’ participation in corruption other than sheer greed, selfishness and lack of conscience. Another reason advanced for corruption in Nigeria is the imitative lifestyle and behaviour of some people who are, or have been, in positions of authority or what Osakwe describes as “excessive materialism, flamboyant affluence and conspicuous consumption” (2002: 77). Everybody wants to be like that somebody who has made it big and they will do whatever it takes to achieve this. This is the kind of behaviour that gets them into dubious activities. While I do not see anything wrong in people aspiring towards a better life, I believe people should aspire to be honest and hardworking and not live big on stolen or ill-gotten wealth.

In consonance with the above, another catalyst for the emergence of corruption in Nigeria is the dilemma of incessant greed for money, power and glory. The urge for material acquisition is so alarming that those who have wealth become recognised in the society while the have-nots or the poor ones are abandoned to their fate. I see this as a poor reward system. For example, currently in Nigeria no poor man would be honoured with a chieftaincy title. This situation is unlike pre-colonial Nigeria when character and hard work were used as criteria to judge people, instead of wealth.

Presently, corruption seems to be encouraged by the recognition of wealth. To my mind, this is the reason why things are going wrong in the public and political domain of Nigeria.

Furthermore, according to the perspective of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), corruption arises when public officials have wide-ranging authority, little accountability and perverse incentives as we currently have in Nigeria. This view maintains that corruption results from a failure of state institutions and the lack of capacity to manage society by means of a framework of social, judicial, political and economic checks and balances. This is closely related to the monopoly control of public officials wielding discretionary powers and personalisation of public office in the absence of accountability systems. According to this view, the situation translates to unethical leadership.

The above view helps us to understand the breadth and depth of corruption among governors and chairpersons of states and local government areas in Nigeria since the years of the military regimes. These administrators have behaved in such a way as to say “we are above the law” because of the immunity from prosecution they enjoy while in office. Would they have behaved better if they knew they could have been prosecuted while in office? In my view, no one should be above the law and I advocate that no immunity should be granted to any public office holder in Nigeria any longer. Apart from the aforementioned factor, we can think of other causes like ‘peer pressure’. Some people might not genuinely have any interest in any bad behaviour like corruption, but because they have financial problems; and they see their friends doing it and going scot free, they are forced to try. Additionally, when they succeed the first, second and third time, it becomes normal to them to embezzle public fund.

Although I agree that the above causes of corruption explain to a certain extent the perpetuation of corruption in Nigeria, I consider them merely as parts of a phenomena cause. A significant cause of corruption is the lack of conscience, absence of love as a result of a complete absence of any sense of morality. In my opinion, corruption will not be eradicated until Nigerians revisit traditional ethical values. To this end, the following questions are relevant. What efforts has the current government made to stem or address the high tide of corruption in Nigeria? How successful have these

efforts been? What is responsible for the success or failure of the efforts? I will attempt to answer these questions later in the thesis. Moreover, in order to draw out the extent of corruption in Nigeria, I will revisit some major historical events in the episodes of corruption in post-independence Nigeria in the subsequent section.

According to Nyerere, one of the earliest African leaders, governance was a duty done on behalf of the ancestors and the human community. For governance to be considered good, Nyerere asserted that a certain level of accomplishment for the betterment of the people must have been attained. Nyerere claims that:

When a society is so organized that it cares about its individuals, then provided he is willing to work, no individual within that society should worry about what will happen to him tomorrow if he does not hoard wealth today (Nyerere, 1968: 4).

Governance, then, is involved in channeling the resources of the state towards the well-being of its citizens. "Since each society is made up of individuals, whatever specific aim is in question must logically be zeroed in on the overall betterment of the individual even if it is only indirectly" (Okoye, 2003: 13). It can be deduced from the foregoing that the individual in a society or community is very important and must be looked after as he/she looks after the community through his/her contribution to its development as was done before the advent of the colonialists.

Going by Russell's (1963) idea that "political and social institutions should be judged by the good or harm they do to individuals" (1963: 13), the question that arises about governance in Nigeria is: how much care or attention does an individual Nigerian get or receive from the established political and social institutions? It is observed that part of the problem of governance in Nigeria today is that the individual is not seriously put into consideration. Individuals in Nigeria suffer unthinkable injustice as this study shall show. It is then going to be difficult, against that background, to adjudge governance in Nigeria as good. I sincerely wish that Nigeria today can learn from its pre-colonial past in order to improve the present and lay a solid foundation for a better Nigeria for the sake of the unborn generation.

The tragic reality is that Nigeria, indeed Africa, has abandoned its heritage of political ideals. I am inclined to believe that those abandoned ideals gave rise to humane and orderly societies irrespective of what the imperialists say. The past was no utopia but it is infinitely preferable to the ugliness of the present. Nigerian leadership today rules with the authoritarianism and ruthlessness, which traditional African political sentiments abhorred. The societies of traditional Africa, as observed by Otubanjo, were “democratic in the effective sense of a pluralistic input into decision-making and in the opportunities which existed for dialogue with and control of rulers” (Otubanjo, 1989: 16). That been said about African traditional politics, we have also seen how politics was played during colonialism. The question now is how moral can we describe politics in Nigeria after colonisation? The question will be partly answered as we discuss the phenomenon that followed colonialism – neo- colonialism.

The 1951 Constitution, negotiated by Nigerian politicians with the British, had granted greater participation in the governance of the country. The political scene leading up to independence was dominated by three regionally based parties; the National Council for Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC) in the east, the Action Group (AG) in the west, and the conservative Northern Peoples’ Congress (NPC) in the north. The regional administrations were not free of what could be described as corrupt practices. For instance, shortly before independence, in 1956, the Foster-Sutton Tribunal of Inquiry investigated the premier of the defunct eastern region, Dr. Nnamidi Azikiwe, for his involvement in the affairs of the defunct African Continental Bank (ACB). The code of conduct for government officials stipulated that a government official should relinquish his holdings in private business when he assumes public office. The tribunal discovered that Azikiwe continued to use his influence to promote the interests of the bank (The Foster-Sutton Tribunal of Inquiry report, 1956: 42).

It was further revealed that Azikiwe, his family and the Zik group of companies were the principal shareholders of the bank. The bank also loaned over £163 000 to the Zik group of companies at a lower interest rate over an extended period of time. This means the Zik group did not have to repay the loan until 1997. Consequently, “the bank became bankrupt resulting in the refusal of the registrar of banks to grant a license of operation to the bank” (Sklar, 2004: 185). In addition, there was no report or record of prosecution by the colonial government. Why did the colonial government

refuse to prosecute Azikiwe for his failure to observe the code of conduct for government officials?

In the western region, the Coker Commission of Enquiry also found the premier, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, culpable of the ills of the Western Region Marketing Board, due to failure to adhere to the standards of conduct, which were required of persons holding public office. Chief Awolowo was blamed for the failure of the western region government-owned National Investment and Properties Co Ltd to “repay a loan of about £6.7 million for building projects out of which only £500 000 was repaid” (Magid, 1976: 73). Other government corporations were said to have received loans, which were never repaid in full or not paid at all.

In the northern region, allegations of corruption leveled against some native authority officials in Bornu forced the government to enact an order to forestall any further breach of regulations. Later on, it was the British administration that was accused of “corrupt practices in the results of elections which enthroned a Fulani political leadership in Kano” (Magid, 1976: 73). The above cases serve to confirm that there have been cases of official misuse of resources for personal enrichment even before independence in Nigeria involving colonial masters and local politicians.

4.3 Ethics, politics and governance since independence

Nigeria became politically independent on 1 October 1960, after about seven decades of colonial rule by the British under a constitution that provided for a parliamentary government and a substantial measure of self-government for the country’s three regions. Prior to colonial rule, most of the groups that today make up the country were often distinguished by differences in history, culture, political development, economy and religion. The story of Nigeria during the post-colonial era has been one of a search for the constitutional and political arrangement that, while allowing for the self-expression of its socially and culturally diverse peoples, would not hinder the construction of a nation out of this mosaic. In this search, the country has experienced cycles of military and civilian rule, civil war and peaceful reconstruction. The African continent is described by Sklar and Whitaker (1991: 45) as a “workshop of democracy”. Nigeria is no exception to this characterisation. The country has experimented with different federal, state and local government systems, learning

more about its needs, resources and constraints with each experiment.

For administrative and economic convenience, the British brought together three colonies to form the country now known as Nigeria in a historical event called “The Amalgamation of 1914”. The three dominant groups are the Hausa-Fulani to the northern part of the country, the Yoruba to the southwest and the Igbo to the south east. This makes Nigeria essentially an artificial creation of the British. Like most other African states, it is a product of colonialism. We shall see how this creation happened to be an unintentional solid foundation for the current political and ethical turbulence we are now witnessing.

Ideally, one would expect that after independence, the newly independent African countries, including Nigeria, would not continue the legacy of colonialism. Independent African countries might have thought that with independence, they would begin to develop rapidly, politically and economically, and would be like “modern” western countries. It soon became clear, however, that this was not happening decades after independence. Many nationalists were thus disappointed and upset to find that the economic, political and cultural exploitation of their countries actually continued in what became known as neo-colonialism.

According to Oguejiofor (2015), neo-colonialism, is the “geo-political practice of using capitalism, business globalization and cultural imperialism to influence a country in lieu of either direct military control or indirect political control, imperialism and hegemony” (2015: 1). Neo-colonialism has been regarded by Johnson (1995), as the passive or second phase of colonialism, or simply put, the extension of economic domination of a people beyond the attainment of self-rule. It is associated with practices, policies and structure inherited from the first phase – colonialism. The states which are subjects of neo-colonialism, have all the outward trappings of international sovereignty in theory, but in reality their economic system and political policy are directed from outside. Even “though these states were independent, their economic system and eventually their political policy were indirectly formulated by colonisers” (Nkrumah, 1965: 415).

As indicated earlier, the neo-colonialists are able to exploit nations by supporting and installing puppet leaders at independence. These puppet leaders embezzle national funds and bank them overseas, thereby creating more capital for the neo-colonialist country. Thus, the puppet leaders benefit individually from the deal while their countries remain impoverished. This situation adequately describes the situation with Nigerian political leadership some of who are stupendously rich while the citizens wallow in abject poverty. While colonialism could be associated with the origin of corrupt practices in Nigeria, neo-colonialism could be considered to be partially responsible for its entrenchment.

From the above, a neo-colonialism relationship is not very different from a colonial relationship except that it is more subtle. In a neo-colonial relationship, the people and resources of a country that has the outward appearance and trappings of an independent country but poor and relatively weak, are subjected indirectly and informally to power, authority and control of the rich and powerful states of the world. The term neo-colonialism defines the influence of countries from the developed world in the respective internal affairs of the countries of the developing world. Despite decolonization, that occurred in the aftermath of the second world war, the colonial powers continue to apply existing and past international economic pressure and thus maintain colonial control.

Most Nigerians, including me, will agree with Egwemi (2010: 178) and Ajibewa (2006: 261) that the challenge of corruption remains one of the most debilitating issues facing Nigeria after independence. The issue of corruption and leadership remains one of the most difficult problems that has been confronting successive governments in Nigeria since independence. As has been indicated earlier in this study, Nigeria is a country richly endowed with natural resources and high quality human capital. Yet Nigeria has not taken its rightful place among the comity of nations. A major reason for this has been the unbecoming level of unethical leadership as a result of corrupt practices of embezzlement. Available records on the history of the political development of Nigeria have shown that the reins of government have always fallen into the hands of a political leadership class that is more interested in private, group or ethnic gains than in the general wellbeing of the Nigerian state and her citizens.

Above all, political power has alternated between the civilian and the military since independence in 1960. However, neither the civilian nor the military has done well in terms of corruption ratings. Indeed, the political leadership class, both military and civilian, has succeeded in entrenching corruption into the system by providing fertile ground for it to grow in. This was achieved by separating ethics from politics. Over the years, as will be explained, the nation has witnessed the development of a vast system of institutionalised political corruption, mostly emanating from the very top down to the entire society.

For example, Sklar (1963) reported that, the first post-independence national government, headed by Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, was formed by a conservative alliance of the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC). The NCNC was formed in 1944, and was dominated by the Igbo ethnic group of the south east and led by Dr. Nnamidi Azikiwe. The Nigerian People's Congress (NPC) was formed in 1959 and was dominated by the Hausa-Fulani of the north and led by Ahmadu Bello. The Action Group (AG) was dominated by the Yoruba of the southwest and was formed in 1950. The AG became the official opposition party to the government under its charismatic leader, Chief Obafemi Awolowo. These three major political parties reflected the ethnic composition of the country. The political system became "fragile and unstable because of the ethnic rivalry that existed between the three major regions that make up the Nigerian state" (Sklar, 1963: 46–50).

The nature of Nigerian politics will be appreciated better if the role of ethnicity is properly understood. It is a problem, which has its roots in the pre-independence era when the British government merged different ethnic groups from different regions in the Amalgamation of 1914 and called this area "Nigeria". It is common knowledge that this amalgamation brought together peoples and cultures that have little or nothing in common, with each ethnic group struggling for political power, and this marks the genesis of the problem.

The problem first raised its ugly head during the first republic when the three major political parties that contested the election were formed according to ethnic considerations. The NPC was made up of the Fulani-Hausa ethnic group from the northern part of Nigeria, the NCNC was dominated by the Igbo ethnic group from the

eastern part of the country while the AG was the Yoruba ethnic group-controlled party from the western part. With this ethnic composition, each party strove to project and furthers the interests of its group and this generated conflicts, which saw the collapse of the first republic. Coupled with that is the issue of shameless politicians who were determined to assume power at all cost.

The following is a typical example of how politics and ethics were played in the first republic. Consider this shameful comments made by a leading politician from the then eastern region at a campaign rally in Nigeria's first republic: "We use what we have to get what we want; politics is not like going to church". Another politician from the former western region made a similar thought-provoking statement at a campaign rally when he said: "Whether you vote for us or not, we will remain in power" (Osaghae, 1995a: 62). Assertions like these truly confirm what the generality of the people have been saying about the amorality of politics, particularly of the civilian democratic type. Osaghae (1995a) made the following inferences from the above statements:

- a. The political arena is amoral and behaviours which would normally be considered morally reprehensible in other contexts are permissible in it;
- b. Governments, even supposedly democratic ones, do not have to be reprehensible of the people, and the politicians who govern do not necessarily have to have the peoples' voluntary consent or support to hold power;
- c. Government is perceived in terms of personal rule;
- d. Politics and government are approached in extractive or instrumentalist terms, meaning that people rarely become politicians or seek public office for altruistic reasons (Osaghae, 1995a: 62).

In my mind, the above issues have relevance to the problematic moral order in which politics takes place in Nigeria. The parochial interests of the nation's selfish and corrupt leaders have spoilt the character of sound political leadership as prescribed, intended and expected in every presidential democracy. Firstly, they reveal the negative perception of politicians, including the popular notion that politics is a dirty game. Secondly, this development is a clear demonstration that the noble democratic culture of good governance has been deliberately drowned in the pool of negative political scheming. Thirdly, and most significantly, ethics and politics were not and still not

allowed to coexist in the administration of the country.

A brief history of the political development of the country will revealed more. The first republic (1963 to 1966) under the leadership of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the Prime Minister, and Nnamidi Azikiwe, the President, was marked by widespread corruption. Government officials were reported as looting public funds with impunity. Federal representatives and ministers flaunted their wealth recklessly. In fact, it appeared there were no persons of good character, as founded on African traditional ethics, in the political leadership of the first republic. In this respect, Osoba (1977) observes the following about first republic politicians:

Motivated by fierce hunger for political power [...] accentuated by the pervasive poverty from which all Nigerians were struggling to escape. These were for the most parts, “first generation educated and prosperous men”, having emerged from humble peasant and working class stock and from the most grinding and most dehumanizing poverty; to which they could not “with equanimity” contemplate returning (Osoba, 1977: 378).

Politically, it appears as if the thinking of the first republic Nigerian leadership class was based on the politics of material gain, i.e. making money and living well. Notwithstanding this kind of thinking, I argue that, though corruption among these politicians was prevalent, it cannot be compared to what we are currently witnessing because corruption that time was kept at a manageable level.

The situation described above, among other factors, provided the pretext for the young officers –majors – of the Nigerian Army to sack the first republic politicians from power through a coup d'état on January 1966 on the grounds of corruption. This action was observed as a 'turning point' by the editorial column of the Daily Times Newspaper of 16 January 1966 observes the following:

With the transfer of authority of the Federal Government to the Armed Forces, we reached a turning point in our national life. The old order has changed, yielding place to a new one [...] For a long time, instead of settling down to minister to people's needs, the politicians were busy performing

series of seven day wonders as if the act of government was some circus show [...] Still we groped along as citizens watched politicians scorn the base by which they did ascend [...] (1966: 3).

The coup of January 1966 could be rightly perceived as a direct response to the corruption of the first republic. Moreover, it seemed that the popular support the military received for the coup indicated that Nigerians were long expecting such intervention to free them from the claws of the politicians of that era. However, despite the killings of some major politicians, widespread jubilation was reported throughout the country (Ogheidi, 2012: 7). The new military government instituted commissions of inquiry which found that a number of ex-ministers formed companies and used their influence to secure government contracts for their companies. Furthermore, they were found guilty of the misappropriation of funds as well as disregarding stipulated procedures in the award of contracts by parastatals under their ministries.

The census crisis of 1963 and the election imbroglio of 1964 resulted in what finally brought the first republic to a halt in 1966. The military quickly took advantage of the situation and seized power in the first military incursion to Nigerian politics. Gross dissatisfaction among the Nigerian public to the corrupt and selfish manner in which the politicians were piloting the affairs of the young nation was the reason given for the intervention (Adejumobi & Momoh, 1995: 362). On 15 January 1966, a group of young army officers with the rank of major – mostly south-eastern Igbos – overthrew the government and assassinated the prime minister and premiers of the northern and western regions.

The bloody nature of the majors' coup caused another coup to be carried out by General Aguiyi Ironsi. A few among the first coup plotters were arrested while many of them fled the country. Many people, especially the northerners, were not pleased with either the first aborted coup or the one that brought Ironsi to power because the two coups were planned by officers from the same ethnic group; that is, the Igbos. This development was viewed by the northerners as an attempt by the Igbo ethnic group of the south east, to dominate the politics of the country.

Worse still, Ironsi failed to appease the northern political elites who demanded that the coup plotters be placed on trial (Meredith, 2005: 201). Ironsi equally appointed officers from Igbo extraction into key political offices. In addition, Decree 34 of 1966 was promulgated to nullify the federal system of government and replace it with a unitary system. Ironsi considered the unitary system a better alternative to the federal system. This very action by Ironsi reinforced the fears of the northerners who earlier saw Ironsi's government as a calculated attempt by the Igbos to take over the politics of the country (De St. Jorre, 1972: 58).

In July 1966, six months later, a counter coup – this time mostly by the northerners – was staged at the height of the northerners' opposition to the unitary system of government. It was also alleged that the first coups killed only politicians from a particular part of the country. No surprise then: this counter coup saw the killings of ranking Igbo officers including the head of state, General Aguiyi Ironsi. The same coup brought Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon, from the middle belt, to power, making sure that the new head of state was neither a northerner nor a southerner but from the middle belt. Despite that arrangement, the northerners started killing all southerners of Igbo decent living in the north. Gowon, the new head of state, brought back the federal system of government by 31 August 1966 with four regions, namely: the northern, eastern, western and Midwest. "These regions represented the major ethnic groups that make up the Nigerian state" (Meredith, 2005: 203).

However, the unabated massacre of thousands of Igbo in the north must have prompted hundreds of them to return to the southeast where increasingly strong Igbo secessionist sentiments emerged. Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu, the governor of the eastern region, finally opted for a secessionist mission by declaring the region as "The Republic of Biafra". International community efforts to resolve this crisis, like the Aburi Ghana accord of January 1967, failed. Consequently, a civil war broke out in 1967 and lasted until 1970. The head of state, General Gowon, delivered a "no victor, no vanquish" speech after the war in 1970 and immediately resumed the task of economic development and nation building. According to Meredith (2005: 203–204), "foreign exchange earnings and government revenues increased spectacularly with the oil price rises of 1973 to 1974".

General Gowon, 1966 to 1975: Nigeria experienced unprecedented wealth from the oil boom of the 1970s. Corruption in Gowon's administration was hidden from the public until 1975 when another military administration took over. However, some informed officials voiced concerns and labeled Gowon's state military governors as "misguided individuals acting like lords overseeing their personal fiefdom" (Jegele in African Guide 1976: 24). In 1975, a corruption scandal surrounding the importation of cement engulfed the administration. Many officials of the defense ministry and the Central Bank of Nigeria were involved in the scandal. Those involved were later accused of falsifying ships manifests and inflating the amount of cement actually purchased (African Guide, 1976: 25). It was revealed that 20 million tons of cement was ordered for a port that has capacity for only one million tons of cargo per year.

The result of this was port congestion with basic supplies stalled. Two individuals – J.S. Tarka and D. Gomwalk in the administration – were accused of corruption. The federal government-controlled newspapers, the Daily Times and the New Nigerian, gave great publicity to the denunciations of the administration of the two individuals at the state level. Apart from the mismanagement of the economy, the Gowon regime was enmeshed in deep-seated corruption, as exemplified by Gowon's 12 state governors. In July 1975, the Gowon administration was toppled in a coup d'état led by Brigadier Murtala Mohammed because, according to Ojo writing in the Time Magazine (1984: 49–50), "corruption among the state governors and officials, both at state and federal levels, had reached a peak". The defunct government was also accused of delaying the return to civilian rule. The 29 July 1975 coup that ousted the Gowon regime was bloodless and Murtala, the new military head of state, and his men promised to purge the civil service of its "dead wood" with zero tolerance for corruption.

Murtala/Obasanjo military coup: The coup, among other reasons, was an attempt to end corruption in the public service. The new government, headed by Murtala and assisted by Obasanjo, began to live up to its word by sacking and arresting all the 19 states' military governors of Gowon's administration. The civil service, at both the state and federal levels, was indeed rid of its dead wood. Various panels of investigation were set up. One of such panels was the Assets Investigation Panel of 1975 which found ten of the twelve state military governors in the Gowon administration guilty of corruption. The guilty persons were dismissed from the military services with ignominy.

They were also forced to give up ill-gotten properties considered to be in excess of their earnings (Gboyega, 1996: 3).

General Murtala's regime was a very short one as he was assassinated after six months in office during an unsuccessful coup attempt led by Colonel Buka Suka Dimka. He was succeeded by General Obasanjo, who did not show the same zeal as his erstwhile boss in the prosecution of wrongdoers. However, Olusegun Obasanjo eventually handed over power to the civilian president, Alhaji Sheu Shagari, in 1979. Obasanjo made history by becoming the first military leader to hand over power to a democratically elected government in Nigeria which makes him stand in a good light with Nigerians.

In my opinion, the Murtala-Obasanjo military government (1975 to 1979) deserves to be described as a corrective regime as it made frantic efforts to inject some sanity into the society by its purge of officials who were either corrupt or unproductive, and its strict adherence to policies and programmes outlined for a return to civilian rule. However, like other governments before it, the Murtala-Obasanjo regime cannot be said to have been free of corruption accusations or insinuations. Certain individuals were believed to have been enriched through money paid for uncompleted contracts or total non-performance. But the return of democracy in the Sheu Shagari era (1979 to 1983), meant the return of political termites and the democratisation of corruption. Corruption was witnessed at every level of government and was not limited to any political party.

The Shagari administration 1979 -1983 witnessed a resurgence of corruption. It was marked by severe government corruption because the president did nothing to stop the looting of public funds by elected officials. Corruption among the political leaders was amplified due to great availability of funds. It was claimed that over \$16 billion in oil revenue was lost between 1979 and 1983 during the regime of President Shagari. It was quite common during this regime for buildings to mysteriously go up in flame, just before the onset of ordered audits of government accounts. This made it impossible to discover written evidence of embezzlement and fraud (Washington Post, 27 February 1983). No politician symbolised the graft and avarice under the Shagari administration more than his combative Transport Minister, Alhaji Umaru Dikko. He

was alleged to have mismanaged about N4 billions of public funds meant for the importation of rice. This second republic lasted from October 1979 to 31 December 1983 when it was terminated at the commencement of its second term by another military coup that brought general Buhari to power.

General Buhari/Idi-Agbon 1984 – 1985: This popular coup aimed at rescuing the economy from high level corruption and economic mismanagement of corrupt politicians of the second republic. This coup was carried out with the aim of halting corruption and restoring discipline, integrity and dignity to public life. General Buhari's regime promised to bring corrupt officials and their agents to book. Buhari, as the leader of the Supreme Military Council (SMC), announced the following in his first speech to the nation:

For four years, the military watched the presidential system being mismanaged. The economy was badly run down [...] Corruption was rife at all levels of the government. Law and order was breaking down. We believe that if this situation continues, there would be anarchy, so we had to intervene to save the country [...]. If the 1983 elections had been run fairly, there would have been no cause for the military to intervene [...] (Time Magazine, July 1984: 50).

Buhari promised the entire nation that his administration was more determined than ever before to root out corruption and maladministration completely from the political system. To prove this, the government swiftly launched the anti-corruption campaign tagged "War against Indiscipline (WAI)", which became a popular and welcomed slogan among most Nigerians. After barely two years in office, the positive effect of the campaign was beginning to be felt. For example, one positive effect which I personally experienced was improved punctuality at the office and less truancy among government workers otherwise known as civil servants. State governors and commissioners were arrested and brought before tribunals of inquiry.

The military government of General Buhari went into action by investigating and arresting the major political actors of the second republic for being responsible for the economic woes of the country (Ihonvbere, 1994: 232). The regime introduced

measures to check the excessive activities of trade unions and other interest groups like the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) and the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS). Two decrees were promulgated to restrict the freedom of the press and suppress critics of the government. Of particular note is Decree 4 which forbade any journalist from reporting any information considered embarrassing to the government.

For example, Nduka Irabor and Tunde Thompson were convicted under this decree for publishing articles considered embarrassing to the government. Both journalists were sent to jail. Further still, there was Decree 2 which gave power to the Chief of Staff of Supreme Headquarters, Babatunde Idiagbon, to detain anyone considered a security risk for six months without trial (Ihonvbere, 1994: 233).

In 1985, a cross section of political gladiators was convicted of different corrupt practices under the government of General Buhari. However, the Buhari administration itself was only involved in a few instances of lapsed ethical judgment. The regime lacked respect for human rights in its bid to entrench discipline and sanity in public life. So, the Buhari administration was peacefully overthrown by Babangida, popularly known and called IBB, on 27 August, 1985. He described the deposed government's actions as draconian. He cited the misuse of power, violations of human rights by key officers of the SMC and the government's failure to deal with the country's deepening economic crisis as the justification for the takeover. "The deposed Buhari government was regarded as too rigid and authoritarian, especially within the military circle' (Ihonvbere 1994: 234). The administration of Buhari/Idiagbon (1984 to 85) is better remembered for its tyranny and double standards in political decisions than for corruption. What follows is politics of deceit and apparent lust for power. Nigeria's long and apparently confused attempts at democracy have been frequently interrupted by the military. As mentioned earlier, Nigeria has been ruled for almost 30 out of the 57 years of independence by the military under the pretext that the civilian governments were corrupt. Events have not, however, proved the military any better. Instead, what the nation witnessed for several years after the overthrow of the Buhari/Idiagbon regime was politics of deceit and lust for power by successive governments).

The Babangida regime 1985 – 1993. “When Babangida ousted the Buhari regime in 1985, he immediately promised to return power to a democratically elected government by 1 October 1990” (Lewis, 1994: 323). During his first few days in office, Babangida moved to restore the freedom of the press which had been banned by the previous administration of Buhari. He also released political detainees who had been locked up without charges. As part of a 15-month economic emergency plan, he announced pay cuts for the military, police, civil servants and the private sector. By this, President Babangida raised the hopes of the electorate that the nation’s third republic might be a success. He also raised Nigerians’ hopes by announcing a programme of transition back to civilian rule. Babangida demonstrated his intent to encourage public participation in decision making by opening a national debate on proposed economic reform and recovery measures.

It however did not take a long time before he changed course and began to show his true colour. For example, Babangida appointed a political bureau to advise him on the transition programme when he took over in 1985 but after receiving the recommendations of the bureau two years later in 1987, he argued that a two-year extension of the transition deadline was necessary for the government to be able to stage what he called “a durable transfer” (Lewis, 1994: 324). While Nigerians were still looking forward to 1 October 1992, another sudden change of date was announced: 2 January 1993. This also did not materialise, because of the botched presidential primaries. 27 August 1993 was then made the new handover date. This never happened either.

Thus the programme seemed to have been turned into one which had a beginning but was without end. A pro-democracy lawyer, Olu Onagoruwa, lamented: “It is rather tragic that a government that has spent eight years pursuing a tortuous transition programme is now clearly disrupting it at the trial end” (The News, 28 June 1993: 19). Another Lagos-based lawyer spoke the mind of most Nigerians when he commented: “The transition programme has been amended 38 times. If you really want to transit to democracy there is no need for all these” (The News, 28 June 1993: 23).

The failure of government to keep faith with the numerous handover dates did not come as a surprise to most Nigerians because, at every turn, people had doubted the

government's sincerity. In addition, they started to suspect that the president nurtured a hidden agenda to remain in power perpetually. This view was expressed in *The News* magazine by Ayeni in an article titled "Back on Course?" (Ayeni, 1992: 19).

Eventually, the National Electoral Commission (NEC) was created to supervise a new presidential nomination process after an earlier one was cancelled due to irregularities. The voters' register was reportedly pared down from the inflated figures of previous elections. Polling was also said to have been conducted in a peaceful and orderly manner, and there were no reported cases of serious violence or casualties. At the end of the primary elections, M.K.O. Abiola was nominated as the presidential candidate for the SDP, while Alhaji Bashir Tofa won the NRC's nomination. Lewis (1994) observes that the election campaigns were conducted with unprecedented decorum and there was a plausible opportunity for a southern candidate to win the presidency. "Nonetheless, the election itself, scheduled for 12 June 1993, did not happen without drama" (Lewis, 1994: 325).

On 10 June 1993, the Abuja High Court issued an injunction against the election in response to a suit brought before it by a group which called itself Association for Better Nigeria (ABN). The late-night court ruling, coming two days before the voting, caused a lot of confusion about the elections. The following day, the regime came out with Decree 13 which overruled the court's decision, but "suspicions of covert military intercession ran rampant" (*Tell Magazine*, June 28, 1993, 9–13).

In spite of all the confusion, the NEC carried on with the elections on 12 June 1993. Both local and international observers described the elections as possibly the fairest in the history of voting in Nigeria, to everyone's delight. The polling was described as the most free in Nigeria's post-independence history in spite of the reported apathy, apprehension and confusion which kept people away from the polling booths (Lewis, 1994: 326). Voter turnout was estimated at only 5 %. Widespread administrative and logistical problems were reported to have prevented a number of intended voters from registering their ballots. Election observers however reported that there was little evidence of systematic fraud or vote-rigging compared to the 1983 presidential election (*The Guardian Newspaper*, Lagos, June 13 and 14 1993).

Two weeks after the poll, peoples' hopes were turning to dismay and anger because no official results were released even though the NEC had promptly collated the election results. After such a successful poll, people were naturally eager to know the outcome of the elections in spite of their limited choices. Meanwhile, the national press had leaked the result to the public in spite of a military embargo on partial release of incomplete tabulations. Figures as released by the press indicated a decisive victory for the SDP candidate, Abiola, but why then did the government oppose the release of the election results if there was no hidden agenda, after all, an election includes its result. According to the pro-democracy lawyer from the south, the late Onagoruwa:

An election includes its results. What is going on is a disgrace and a national shame [...] There is a conspiracy against this society [...]. It is clear from what is happening that even the military can't conduct a free and fair election (The News, 28 June 1993: 19).

The result was eventually released and INEC declared M.K.O. Abiola the winner. It was a remarkable achievement for Abiola because he thus became the first Yoruba man (from the south) to win a presidential election in Nigeria. However, Babangida did not allow Abiola to carry the glory through. Babangida annulled the election results because, he claimed, the vote had been "irreparably tarnished by procedural irregularities and legal haggling" (African Affairs, July 1994: 326).

As expected, the cancellation of the results incited bitter ethnic, regional and populist resentment in the light of common knowledge about the electoral outcome; even more so when the theme of the ABN was revealed by an ex-member to be "Abiola must not be the next president and Ibrahim Babangida must remain president" (Tell Magazine, 2 August 1993: 16). Reacting to the cancellation, a member of the Nigerian Bar Association, Segun Onakoya, captured the public mood when he said: "The credibility that has been given to the NEC about the conduct of that election has been completely thrown overboard by the announcement [of the cancellation]" (The News, 28 June 1993, 21). The issue of northern domination over the southern part of the country reared its ugly head once again after the annulment of the presidential election which was won by a southerner for the first time.

I see peoples' reaction to the election annulment as a legitimate concern, especially as all former Nigerian heads of state (both military and civilian) since independence in 1960 had been from the north – except General Obasanjo who was from the south west. Probably Obasanjo would not have become the head of state if he was not second in command to the slain head of state, Murtala Mohammed. The fact is that the Hausa-Fulani tribe of the mainly Muslim north sees the rulership of Nigeria as their birthright. This is why people saw the cancellation of the results of the election as a sign of the north's aim to perpetuate itself in power.

The military regime of General Babangida, also known as the 'Maradona' of Nigerian politics, is seen as the body that legalised corruption in Nigeria. The next 13 years saw no serious attempt at stopping corruption. If anything, corruption reached an alarming rate and became institutionalised during the Babangida regime. For example, corrupt politicians found guilty by tribunals under the Murtala and Buhari regimes were released and found their way back to public life. Not only did they find their way back, they also recovered their seized properties. According to Gboyega (1996):

Not only did the regime encourage corruption by pardoning corrupt officials convicted by his predecessors and returning their properties, the regime officially sanctioned corruption in the country and made it difficult to apply the only potent measures, long prison terms and seizure of ill-gotten wealth, for fighting corruption in Nigeria in the future (Gboyega, 1996: 5).

That action by government seemed to have given politicians more boldness in stealing government funds, knowing well that if they were arrested they would be released in the near future. While Babangida claimed to have a transitional programme in place, he had a hidden agenda to remain in power indefinitely. Corruption assumed new heights under his regime and came to be analogous with the term settlement (Peter, 1997: 214). Corruption or settlement, as it became known, manifested itself in several ways. For example, he changed his governors, ministers and service chiefs as often as possible so as not to allow anyone to get too powerful. In this way, he was also able to spread the largesse that comes with holding public office. Babangida was said to have no fewer than 80 military governors and administrators throughout the period

he was in office (Peter, 1997: 215). The spreading of the largesse was extended to both junior and senior military officers, and indeed civilians, long before he became president. For instance, it was alleged that Babangida helped a former military governor under Obasanjo to purchase a Mercedes Benz car when the senior military officer was retiring.

Whether he had a hidden agenda or not, the strategies he devised to ensure his survival as head of state all helped to encourage corruption. To my mind, he was Machiavellian to the core. After the annulment of the 12 June elections referred to earlier, Babangida was alleged to have spent billions of Naira 'settling' people such as legislators and high-ranking party officials, so that they would agree with him continuing in office after 27 August 1993, when he was due to hand over power to an elected government. The regime was also accused of the inability to account for \$12.4 billion of the Gulf War windfall.

In my opinion, General Babangida did all the above to build bridges of loyalty and commitment in order to assist him after he became president in 1985. This is probably why nobody close enough to Babangida ever said anything terrible about him before he became the president. The same reason must have been responsible for the warm welcome Nigerians gave him when he came into power. Given the above exploration of Babangida's exploitation of people and power, I maintain that Babangida deserves the title "The Machiavelli of Nigerian politics".

Chief Earnest Shonekan 26 August – 17 November 1993. In the face of intense public opposition to his rule, Babangida was finally forced out of office through both internal and international pressure on 26 August 1993 when he reluctantly handed over power to a non-elected military/civilian interim national government on 26 August 1993. After only three months of unacceptable stay in office, the nominal civilian leader of the Interim National Government (ING), Chief Earnest Shonekan, was forced aside by his defense minister, the now late Sani Abacha, on 17 November 1993.

Sanni Abacha 1993 – 1998. The politics of lust for power continued when Abacha took control in a bloodless coup (another palace coup) on 17 November 1993, as the polity went through another era of military dictatorship. Abacha had forced Shonekan

to resign. Abacha promised, like predecessor Babangida, to return the country to democratic rule but continued to prolong the transition programme. At the same time, Abacha started cracking down harder on pro-democracy activists and anyone who dared to criticise him (The Economist, 1 July 1995: 38). For instance, the presumed winner of the 12 June 1993 presidential elections, Abiola, was locked up in 1994, charged with treason for declaring himself the elected president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Labour union leaders were sacked and replaced with government puppets. Independent newspapers that were pro-democracy were closed down.

All democratic structures like the house of parliament, the civilian state governments and local governments, put in place by the previous administration, were dismantled. All structures had to be started afresh. This created the impression in my mind and the minds of other Nigerians that the new dictator had no intention of stepping down in the near future. This concurs with the observation of The Economist (1 July 1995: 39): “When Nigerian soldiers grab power, they have little or no idea of what to do with it, thus turning power to an end in itself”. Within a year in office, Abacha began to show bold disregard for human rights and scarcely pretended to be a democrat, though he had initially pledged a brief rule.

As a result of his crude and dictatorial activities, he has been described as “Nigeria’s most brutal and oppressive dictator in the long line of military strongmen who ruled the country for over 30 years” (Newsweek, 22 May 1995: 30). It was a surprise to most Nigerians when, early in 1995, the government of Abacha alleged that certain military officers and civilians were engaged in a coup plot. Security officers rounded up the accused, including former military head of state Obasanjo and his deputy, Shehu Musa Yar’Adua. A secret tribunal found all the accused guilty and several of them were sentenced to death. The alleged coup plot was probably a wake-up call and an indication that people were not satisfied with his administration.

On 1 October 1995, Abacha eventually announced a three-year programme for transition to civil rule – he hoped and promised to hand power back to civilian rulers on 1 October 1998. However, after this announcement it became hard for Nigerians to read the mind of the general. Past experiences suggested that he was not to be trusted: he might say and do some things to please the democrats inside and outside

the country, yet he might not abdicate power on 1 October 1998, as he had promised.

The above suspicion was confirmed when the initial deadline of 1 January 1996 for the return to civil rule, which was set by the Constitutional Conference in 1994, was cancelled without an alternative date being set. The action of the conference thereby extended Abacha's rule indefinitely. The editorial of Newsweek described the conference as "Abacha's Rubber Stamp" (22 May 1995: 30). The conference however came up with what it thought would be a permanent solution to the problem of power sharing among Nigeria's many ethnic groups. It was called rotational presidency, whereby regions would take up the presidency in turns in order to stop what most Nigerians saw as the northern domination over the south. Though democrats saw the rotational presidency as a new idea, they were skeptical about its workability. They were also skeptical about taking Abacha's transition programme seriously.

Although it is a known fact to Nigerians, if not the whole world, that civilians had made a mess of democracy during the brief period between 1979 and 1983, this actually should not be an excuse for the military to want to hold on to power. After all, the military has not proved itself any better in the administration of the country. It is equally true that the military never had any genuine intention to return power to civilians. How else can we explain the events that surrounded the 12 June 1993 elections, which were planned and conducted but later annulled by the same military? This action clearly shows a great deal of greed for power. Irrespective of Abacha's promises to hand over power, Nigerians and the international community remained skeptical because people think that handing over power to an elected government should not take as long as three years, especially when the structures are already in place.

To ordinary Nigerians, Babangida is known as "Maradona" in Nigerian politics, after the famous world soccer hero from Argentina, because of his cunning behaviour. Yet to my mind Babangida, as cunning as he was, was a more decent operator than Abacha (1993 to 1998). Nevertheless, an unexpected solution to peoples' worries came in 1998 when Abacha died of a sudden heart attack. I consider the sudden death of Abacha as a classic lesson about vanity and excessive pride. It is a common belief among Nigerians, and even internationally, that Abacha's government was one of the most ruthless regimes in Nigeria's history. Dissidents were tortured, jailed or killed. A

typical example is the killing of the Nobel Prize-winning playwright, Ken Saro-Wiwa, who was publicly hanged in 1995 (in spite of international objections), “for voicing an opinion that oil exploration caused environmental damage” (Osaghae, 1995b: 325).

Corruption under General Abacha became blatant and systematic. Abacha and his family, together with his associates, looted Nigeria’s coffers with reckless abandon. The extent of Abacha’s openness to bribery, that is, his venality, seemed to have surpassed that of other notorious African rulers such as Mobutu Sese Seko of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Some of the vices he committed include siphoning billions of dollars out of the oil industry which accounts for about 80 % of government revenue.

The Guardian (2000), reported that, two hundred thousand barrels of oil per day was reportedly diverted into accounts controlled by the military under General Abacha. Between 1990 and 1994, \$12.2 billion was reportedly missing. All these details were suppressed by the government until after the death of the general in 1998. Upon the dictator’s death, Abacha’s National Security Advisor, Ismaila Gwarzo, allegedly returned the sum of \$250 million in cash which had been siphoned from government coffers. (7 September 2000). In addition, the minister of Federal Capital Territory returned \$5 million in cash. One can only speculate that those who returned the sums of money did so because they were afraid of prosecution or pricked by their consciences to do so since The Guardian did not say specifically how and why the returns were made.

Two years after General Abacha’s death, a Swiss banking commission indicted Swiss banks for failing to follow compliance processes. The bank had given access to the account to family and friends of Abacha, contrary to normal practice. The Swiss account was said to contain about \$600 million. In the same year, 2000, it was reported that a sum of one billion dollars had been found in a London account (The Guardian, 7 September 2000). Furthermore, French investigations revealed huge bribes paid to Nigerian officials in order to ease the award of a gas plant construction in Nigeria. The investigations resulted in the freezing of accounts containing about \$100 million (Vanguard, 6 December 2004). Such an exceptional record of corrupt practices cannot be ignored.

More staggering revelations, made after Abacha's death, made him a true icon of corruption. In the Federal Capital Territory alone, the general was asked to forfeit six ultra-modern buildings worth millions of Naira. In addition, his family was asked to return \$625 263 187.19 and over £75 million and another N100 million acquired illegally to the state. This is not inclusive of N250 million and a total of N96.9 million forfeited to the Nigerian government by his sons. Several of his cronies too were asked to return different sums of money to government coffers (Ogundiya 2009: 288).

Abubakar, 1998 – 1999, who took over after the death of Abacha and who exposed some of the late general's corrupt practices, hurriedly organised a transition programme to hand over the mantle of power to a democratically elected government. Elections were held in February 1999 with three political parties – the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), the All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP) and the Alliance for Democracy (AD). This important election produced yet another ex-military head of state, Chief Obasanjo, as the democratically elected president. He was sworn in on 29 May 1999. With the election of Obasanjo, Nigerians hoped for better days ahead in terms of fighting corruption and repairing the international image of the country which was damaged by previous leaders before him, especially Abacha.

The leadership mantle fell back in the hands of Olusegun Obasanjo, a former general and one-time military head of state from 1976 to 1979. Abubakar showed a dedicated commitment to returning the country to civilian rule but did not do much to fight corruption. The entrance of Obasanjo as the civilian president in 1999 marked the commencement of the fourth republic. Did he live up to the peoples' expectations? This will be discussed below. Obasanjo is said to have laid the foundation of his civilian administration on the "vociferous campaign and determination to eliminate corruption in public life" (Ogundiya, 2009: 289). For example, he proposed and later signed the Anti-corruption Bill into law with the establishment of two anti-graft commissions.

Despite these efforts, "corruption continued to spread like wildfire to the extent that it became legendary" (Ogheidi, 2012: 16). Throughout his eight years in office, Obasanjo was fully in charge of the petroleum ministry, where high-level corrupt practices took place. Huge sums of money set aside for the maintenance of the refineries failed to yield any positive results because the contractors did not do the job

for which they were paid. Records also showed that the Nigerian Petroleum Corporation was at the center of major corrupt practices in the industry with regards to the operation of its finances (Adekeye, 2003: 30).

4.4 Recent development in Nigerian politics and governance

Olusegun Obasanjo, 1999 - 2007. The re-emergence of democracy in Nigeria in May 1999 ended the 16 years of consecutive military rule. Obasanjo inherited a country suffering from economic stagnation and the deterioration of most democratic institutions. The restoration of democracy in 1999 is viewed by Ogheidi (2012: 12) and most Nigerians as “the end to an era in the history of Nigeria during which corruption was practically institutionalised as the foundation and essence of governance”. Obasanjo, a former army general, is admired for his stand against Abacha’s dictatorship. He is also admired and supported for his record of returning the federal government to civil rule in 1979, becoming a civilian president 20 years after leaving office as a military head of state and his claim to represent all Nigerians regardless of religion or ethnicity.

The new president took over a country faced with numerous problems ranging from a dysfunctional bureaucracy to amorality. He faced the daunting task of rebuilding a petroleum-based economy whose revenues had been squandered through corruption and mismanagement. Another problem faced by this new leader was the reformation of the electoral system of the country. Reformation was necessary in order for the country to be able to conduct reliable elections which would be free and fair in the future. Hopefully, these actions would help to rebuild a stronger foundation for economic growth and political stability.

One of Obasanjo's first moves towards solving the many problems was the immediate retirement of hundreds of military officers holding political positions and the establishment of a blue-ribbon panel to investigate human rights violations under the previous military regimes. Those who were detained without charge were released and numerous questionable licenses and contracts left by the previous regimes were rescinded. Most encouraging was his move to recover millions of dollars in funds secreted to overseas accounts. These were some of the goals set for Obasanjo's administration from 1999 to 2007, when his two terms were completed.

It is also claimed that, during the first four years of Obasanjo's administration, federal ministers allegedly stole more than N23 billion from government coffers. An audit report showed that in 10 major ministries the amount in question included financial frauds ranging from “embezzlement, payments made for contracts not done, over-invoicing, double-debiting and the inflation of contract figures to release money without the consent of the approving authority” (Adekeye 2003: 31). In 2001, the Obasanjo administration awarded the \$214-million National Identity Card project to a French company under controversial circumstances because, according to Asaju (2003), the Nigerian Security Printing and Minting Company, which bid for the contract at a lower rate, was not obliged. It was alleged that seven prominent public servants collaborated with the French company to scuttle the \$214-million project (Asaju, 2003: 38-41).

Umaru Yar'Adua 2007- 2010. The April 2007 general election ushered in the administration of Umaru Yar'Adua and Goodluck Jonathan as president and vice president respectively. Both belonged to the PDP. The elections were reportedly marred by massive electoral fraud and roundly denounced by other candidates and the international observers (SMH News, 24 April 2007). The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) deemed Yar'Adua the winner in spite of the allegations of fraud. Though the Supreme Court also acknowledged flaws in the election it upheld the results, claiming the problems were not widespread enough to nullify the results. But according to the Associated Press there were reports of people purchasing votes, stuffing ballot boxes and intimidating voters. Yar'Adua's presidency was fraught with much uncertainty as media reports said he suffered from kidney and heart disease.

In November 2009 he fell ill and was flown out of the country to Saudi Arabia for medical attention. He remained incommunicado for almost two months, during which time rumours were rife that he had died. This continued until the BBC aired an interview that was allegedly done via telephone from the president's sick bed in Saudi Arabia. By January 2010 he was still abroad (Reuters April 24 2007). In February 2010 his deputy, Jonathan, began serving as acting president. Yar'Adua's death was announced on 4 May 2010 and Jonathan became the substantive president, according to the constitution, to complete the tenure of erstwhile president Yar'Adua (2007 to 2011). Thus ended the official tenure of Ya'Adua and Jonathan's tenure

began thereafter.

Goodluck Jonathan, 2011 – 2015. On 16 April 2011 Jonathan ran for re-election in his own capacity and won a four-year term due to end in 2015. One of Jonathan's undertakings to Nigerians and indeed the international community had been that he would ensure the next general elections were free and fair. Although Nigerians were generally skeptical about the promise, it nevertheless raised hopes that corruption would once again be tackled properly.

According to the US Immigration News of 4 May 2011, the president delivered on his promise as he followed through on the electoral reforms initiated by his predecessor. He even went further by introducing several novelties into the electoral process in the 2011 general elections as checks to rigging and other electoral malpractices. For instance, computers and fingerprint capturing machines were observed to have been used in taking the eligible voter's personal information and preventing multiple registrations. However, technical itches here and there plus logistic problems were spotted.

Towards the 2015 general elections a few other achievements were credited to Jonathan since he became president. For example, his ardent supporters have argued that despite Boko Haram the country is thriving; the economy continues to grow and with the rebasing of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) it became the largest economy in Africa. Jonathan's supporters also point to his success in containing the Ebola virus, which earned him commendations from countries and Institutions around the world. And his supporters point to his record on the re-habilitation and construction/re-construction of federal highways as unequaled since 1999 (The Punch, 13 October 2014).

But for his critics, the trend of corruption continued under the administration of President Jonathan. For example, under Jonathan's watch we have not heard of any high-ranking public official brought to account for corruption despite widespread and increasing allegations of corruption at the highest level of government. His incompetence is reflected in the high unemployment rate, which worsened from 12 % in 2006 to 24 % in 2011 (Premium Times 2013). Former president Obasanjo accused

Jonathan of being a polarising figure who promoted clannishness – the accusation came from the ex-president in the wake of general insecurity in the country and deepening suspicion among the ethnic groups. Obasanjo also accused the president of in-action especially concerning the missing 20 billion Naira from the petroleum commission. This was contained in an 18-page letter written to President Jonathan by Obasanjo (Daily Post, 11 December 2013).

What is however worrisome is the general attitude of President Jonathan towards corruption, particularly when allegations of corruption continue to taint his government. At a time when concerned Nigerians at home and abroad were embarrassed by how corruption scandals had taken a toll on our country's reputation, the president denied that corruption was the cause of the country's underdevelopment. Much to the bewilderment of patriotic Nigerians, he declared that corruption was not Nigeria's problem by his reactions to allegations of corruption. For example, it was unthinkable that the impeached governor of Bayelsa state, Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, who was convicted of corruption in London for laundering several billions of Nigerian Naira, was granted state pardon by Jonathan.

Further still, most Nigerians were scandalised by the president's refusal to probe the cash-for-arms scandal rocking his government; so also the 20 billion Naira oil money missing from the petroleum commission to which he was alerted by the ex-central bank governor (Premium Times, 14 March 2013). That he remained silent even as these allegations continued to taint the integrity of his administration was unnerving to Nigerians. By these actions, Jonathan showed the whole world and whoever cared to listen that he was not interested in fighting corruption.

Meanwhile, it has become common knowledge that under his administration, all the agencies set up to fight corruption have gone comatose. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that this happened under his presidency. The lack of leadership which had characterised most of his predecessor's regimes and the damage inflicted on Nigerians by the administration's delay in confronting growing insecurity, had its attendant consequences especially in those areas mostly affected by the Boko Haram activities. This position was not favorable to any president seeking re-election. The year 2015 is an election year: could Nigerians afford four more years of Jonathan?

From my viewpoint, it is unfortunate that Jonathan does not seem to have much of a presidential record. It should be noted that demographics in Nigeria are changing. Increasingly, as we progress in our democratic experience, it is becoming clear that it is the voters who will ultimately determine the fate of candidates running for election. In the past, defeating an incumbent was unthinkable. Incumbents held what proverbially could be called the yam and the knife. Not anymore – as the results of the recent elections in Nigeria have shown. Despite the huge arsenal of funds and state machinery at the disposal of the Jonathan presidency, politics and life often have other plans.

This is what the recent elections have taught whoever cares to observe. The reality is that incumbents can be defeated. This happened in Nigeria's general elections of March/April 2015. The usual argument about the incumbent advantage proved an exception. The Nigerian electorates appeared to have become wiser; more discerning. They expressed their displeasure with Jonathan's administration. The greatest obstacle to his re-election was his attitude to corruption. Nigerians seem to have expressed their tiredness of this administration's arrogance, contempt and disdain for their welfare as a people.

Recent events confirmed Jonathan's insincerity about fighting corruption. Nigerians were surprised to learn that the notorious dictator, Abacha, was on the list of people to receive awards in celebration of Nigeria's centenary. Millions of Nigerians, including me, wondered why a military dictator who plundered the nation was being celebrated. The Nobel Laureate, Wole Soyinka, was so incensed that he rejected his own award – describing Abacha as “a murderer and thief of no redeeming quality” and “a man who placed this nation under siege during an unrelenting reign of terror” (BBC Africa, 12 March 2014). The above scandal must have led Nigerians to say enough is enough.

General Muhammadu Buhari, 2015 – present. Since the end of the military rule in 1999, Nigeria had been governed by a single dominant party, Jonathan's PDP. But now that has changed. General Buhari's All Progressives Congress (APC) defeated the incumbent as the president elect. The New York Times described the 31 March 2015 general elections in Nigeria as the most competitive presidential race ever in

Nigeria (31 March 2015). The country chose an austere former army general, earlier referred to in this thesis and who once ruled with an iron hand, as its new president. Why did Buhari get voted in by the same people he allegedly ruled with an iron hand in the past? Below are some of the factors that prompted the peoples' decision.

According to Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index for 2014, Nigeria was up eight places from 128 to 136 out of 175 countries ranked by the index. Unfortunately, the Jonathan administration interpreted this to mean that Nigeria was winning the war against corruption. This is the government's response to the report as expressed by the spokesman:

It may not be immediately apparent to those who do not understand the dynamics of applying creative techniques in upturning an age-old habit that has cost this country a lot in terms of financial resources; but to those like the officials in Transparent International knowledgeable in the nuances of fighting corruption, a lot of grounds have been covered (Open Source, 16 December 2014).

I view the above government response as nothing more than a standard public relations tactic. The government should have placed its fight against corruption in proper perspective. Yes, the current ranking is better than it was in 2013 but it doesn't really tell us something we don't already know — that the government is still considered highly corrupt as the country is still ranked at the bottom half of the index.

Millions of Nigerians who continue to live from hand to mouth, unsure of the next meal, while their leaders enjoy the commonwealth with their families and friends, certainly will not celebrate such a score. It would seem that the government does not realise the depth of disgust Nigerians feel for the increasing level of corruption among high-ranking government officials and the impunity of perpetrators. It is common knowledge in Nigeria that no high-ranking public official has been brought to account for corruption under Jonathan, despite widespread and increasing allegations of corruption at the highest level of government. This confirms that corruption remains as rife as it has ever been in the country, making Nigeria's government one of the most corrupt on earth. It stands to reason that Jonathan's failure to fight terrorism, curb corruption and

control leakages in the oil industry were good reasons for peoples' refusal to re-elect him. What his supporters regarded as a long record of achievement was simply not enough to erase the negative perception of Jonathan. Buhari and his party must have seen Jonathan's failure as an advantage to them and they did not fail to grab it with both hands.

Secondly, Buhari's record in the fight against corruption when he was a military ruler appeared to have worked in his favour. He was perceived by most Nigerians as a frugal leader and a strong disciplinarian who provided a needed antidote to the corrupt and undisciplined civilian administration of Shagari, who he ousted in a military coup in 1983. He became famous with his "War Against Indiscipline" (WAI) slogan. With hindsight, according to *The Punch*, Buhari's sandwiched position between Shagari and Babangida had highlighted Buhari's austere mien and fiscal discipline. His frugality shows today in his lean purse, which led him to borrow money, he claimed, for his nomination form (*The Punch*, 13 October 2014). It was widely reported in Nigerian media that General Buhari had only one house in his home state, the same house he returned to after he retired from the army. This is commendable if we compare him with ordinary sergeants who were reported as having a chain of houses simply because they had been part of a corrupt government.

Another important factor that has worked in Buhari's favour is the broad and varied coalition that makes up his supporters. More than any northern candidate, Buhari's appeal cuts across classes, particularly the *sarakuna* and the *talakawas*, thus reflecting the broad and varied coalition that makes up the APC, his party, at present (*The Punch*, 13 October 2014). *Sarakuna* and the *talakawas* are the equivalent of the down trodden masses I discussed in the introduction of this thesis. I also believe the APC must have worked hard to convince people that their candidate would be a successful leader in a constitutional democracy. Apparently when people saw the composition of the party, many PDP members defected to the APC. That is a common practice in Nigerian politics, an action which reflects the politicians' lack of a strong ideology.

However, the main point is that Nigerians had totally lost confidence in the administration of Jonathan. Although Nigerians did not see Buhari as a messiah who

would use magical powers to turn things around overnight, they were tired of the way things were being run in the country. Nigerians were eager to replace a government boasting to have created jobs which appear only in theory; they were eager to change a government that had not been able to provide security. Nigerians were eager to change a government whose achievements only appeared on the pages of newspapers and were not real. And that is exactly what they did in the 31 March 2015 elections.

Nevertheless, due to perpetual ethnic politics planted by colonialism, people are still skeptical about Buhari's ability to effectively fight corruption under democracy as he did in the military era. For example, a famous Port-Harcourt based television evangelist, David Ibiyomi was reported as saying that the root cause of corruption in modern Nigeria remains tribalism sown as a seed by the colonial masters when they divided the nation along regional lines before independence. This action hence "created tribal consciousness in the psyche of modern Nigerians" (The Guardian 2015: 9). In other words, the British left Nigeria as an already divided people who would rather identify themselves first by tribes and not citizenship. That is one of the greatest evils of colonialism. This is the problem that the current administrative structure of the country has attempted to solve but without a significant positive result as will be discussed in the next segment.

4.5 The administrative structure of the post-colonial government in Nigeria

This section shall explore the preparedness of contemporary Nigerian government, in terms of necessary infrastructure, to meet the requirements of good governance. Does the country have what it takes to put good and responsive governance in place? If so, why then do we still not have an effective or good governance? To this end, the administrative structure of contemporary government in Nigeria will be briefly discussed.

The amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914, as pointed out earlier, was a milestone and watershed in Nigerian history because it gave Nigeria its present size, shape and the legacy of corruption. It also gave Nigeria its present complexity, one measure of which is a diversity of cultures. Human Rights Watch (2006) describes Nigeria as a country of "extraordinary complexities" which reflects the avalanche of ethno-cultural and

religious groups co-habiting the country and the intricacies of interaction among them. Nigeria's ethnic composition is estimated to be between 250 and 400 (Human Rights Watch, 2006: 5). This diversity necessitated the adoption of a federal structure in order to ascertain good governance and fairness to all because, according to Umoh (2005) the adoption of a federal structure by the people through the constitution, gives more room for separation of powers than the parliamentary system.

A federal constitution implies the presence of a heterogeneous society. To assure the minority that their rights will not be denied, it is reasonable that the constitution provides for separation of powers. That way, power would not be concentrated in a particular group to other groups' disadvantage. Perhaps this is why Long (1991) asserts that "federalism is an institutional solution to the destructive tendencies of intra-societal ethnic pluralism, making the relationship between federalism and political stability axiomatic" (Long, 1991: 192).

In view of its ethnic complexity, Nigeria seems to have taken the right step in opting for federalism in order to play it fair with all ethnic groups. This intention is made manifest in the 1999 constitution. Hence the Federal Republic of Nigeria is governed in accordance with the provisions of a body of laws known as the constitution. The constitution is the country's supreme document based essentially on the views expressed by Nigerians. This document is the affirmation that Nigeria is one and indissoluble sovereign state whose constituent units are bound together by a federal arrangement. It provides for a presidential system of government in which there is an executive, a legislature and a judiciary. Each of these arms acts as a check and balance on the powers of the two other arms – just like the traditional model of the Yoruba kingdom, their powers are separated. The physical structures for good governance are present, what is lacking is responsible and ethical leadership as we have learned earlier from this thesis.

4.6 Summary

From the above examination of politics and corruption, it follows that ethnicity has played a decisive but also disruptive role in determining how power is distributed in Nigeria. The multi-ethnic composition of Nigeria has continued to inspire a lot of competition for power, with different groups mapping out strategies of how to control

power at every general election. For instance, in the 1964 general elections the Hausa tribe voted enmass for the Northern People's Congress (NPC) to ensure that the northern-based party won the election. The Igbo of the eastern region voted for the NCNC and the Yoruba of the western region voted for the AG. With this ethnic-based type of politics, control of power becomes essential and strategic to the furthering of the interests of every group.

It can also be inferred that leadership and corruption are intrinsically linked in Nigeria. It is my considered opinion that all the leaders who came to power in Nigeria had the sole purpose of enriching themselves and their cronies rather than offering selfless service to the nation and its people. The end result was that Nigeria became a chessboard in the hands of the military class with various military individuals, at different times, attempting to seize power primarily to enrich themselves.

It is therefore evident from the foregoing that corruption of embezzlement in Nigeria has become the defining variable in the determination of who gets what, when and how. The actions of these leaders were unethical, meaning that they are not the type of leadership that can move the country forward in terms of moral, physical and economic developments. The next chapter is titled, *corruption and its effect on Nigeria's socio-political Spheres*.

CHAPTER FIVE

CORRUPTION AND ITS EFFECT ON NIGERIA'S SOCIO-POLITICAL SPHERES

5.1 Introduction

It is understood that one thing that prevents Nigeria's political leadership from being ethical is corruption, especially embezzlement. It is the same problem that has hampered socio-economic development. In this chapter, the concept of corruption will be discussed briefly so as to understand what corruption is before I discuss its effect on the country.

5.2 The effects of corruption in Contemporary Nigeria

An all-embracing and unprejudiced definition of corruption appears to be proving difficult but every definition sourced sees corruption as a dishonest or illegal behavior, especially of people in authority. It is an impairment of virtue and moral principles. Corruption is seen as an act or effect of making somebody change from moral to immoral standards of behaviour. According to Gyekye (1997a: 193), political corruption is "the illegal, unethical and an authorized exploitation of one's political or official position for personal advantage". Uduigwomen (2006) gives what could be accepted as an operational definition of corruption thus:

A deliberate act of indiscipline against the legalized moral norms of the state., and the natural law of justice, as it affects the realization of the common good of the citizens, whereby an individual or a group of individual's directly or indirectly diverts or misuses, with the tool of political maneuvering, the wealth of the state for his/her personal use (Uduigwomen, 2006: 202).

Gould defines corruption as "an immoral and unethical phenomenon that contains a set of moral aberrations from moral standards of society, causing loss of respect for and confidence in duly constituted authority" (Gould, 1991: 761). This definition underscores the fact that corruption involves devaluation of values and loss of respect for social, eco-political institutions and for those in place of authority. This definition is not too different from Doherty's conception as "the moral incapacity to make disinterested

moral commitments to actions, symbols, and institutions which benefit the substantive common welfare” (Dobel, 1978: 958). Those two definitions above show corruption as a moral failure. Other prominent definitions of corruption share a common emphasis on the abuse of public power or position for personal advantage. According to the World Bank and Transparency International (TI), a leading global anti-corruption watchdog, corruption is the abuse of public office for private gains for the benefit of the holder of the office or some third party. Viewed from these definitions, political corruption can be broadly understood as “unethical behavior, which violates the norms of the system of political order” (Heidenheimer & Johnston, 2002: 6).

It has been observed that, all the definitions above seem to be aimed at public office holders in general. But it should be noted that anybody can be corrupt if he or she perverts or subverts the moral values to which he or she actively or even passively subscribes. Corruption could be a general word for different kinds of unethical behaviour put up by either public and private organisations or individuals. For example, it is not new to any Nigerian to hear that corruption glaringly parades itself in our police force and even in our higher institutions of learning. However, any political or any leader for that matter, who does not conform to that which is moral for the general good, could be accused of an act which amounts to political corruption and unethical leadership.

The last definition I like to consider is the one given by Osoba (1996) which refers to corruption as:

a form of antisocial behavior by an individual or social group which confers unjust or fraudulent benefits on its perpetrators, is inconsistent with the established legal norms and prevailing moral ethos of the land and is likely to subvert or diminish the capacity of the legitimate authorities to provide fully for material [...] well-being of all members of society in a just and equitable manner (Osoba, 1996: 372).

Consequently, when the political leadership class of a country espouses corruption, it becomes difficult for it to act positively to the benefit of the state and its citizens. This

has been the situation the Nigerian state has found itself since independence as the leadership grows in corrupt practices. Northouse (2007: 346) remarked that the leaders' influence has significant impact on their followers' lives. He noted that such influence has great ethical burden and responsibility. This study therefore urges our leaders to live by example for the general public to have confidence in their leadership. Kanungo and Mendonca (1996: 6), observed that the behavioral influence of a leader can positively or negatively impact the moral fiber of society, noting that leaders do more than physical harm any time their actions and behaviour fail to be in congruence with the shared moral values. Such failure or compromise can cause "moral cynicism, which like a cancer, corrodes the moral health of society" (1996: 6).

However, it is important to note that any act of fraud, nepotism, kickbacks and blatant misappropriation of public funds are all considered acts of political corruption if they are committed by an individual charged with the responsibility of championing and protecting the interest of the common wealth. A prominent type of corruption among our government officials and which this study wants to see completely eradicated, is 'embezzlement' because of its devastating effect on the national morality and socio-economic development of both the country and social wellbeing of the people.

One could also see embezzlement as an act of withholding assets for the purpose of conversion of such assets, by one or more persons to whom the assets were entrusted, either to be held or to be used for specific purposes. In other words, to embezzle is an abuse of trust. It is understood to be different from theft per se in the sense that, theft does not involve trust. Money or anything stolen by a thief was not entrusted to him or her, but money embezzled was entrusted to a person or group of persons. It is public money.

To my mind such embezzler or group of embezzlers of money that is supposed to belong to the organization, are not trustworthy and not fit to be a leader. And that is the situation with Nigerian leadership. In view of the foregoing, one may suggest that Nigerian leadership needs to become ethical in order to be able to make the sin of embezzlement a thing of the past and to lay a solid foundation for the common good. Instances of embezzlements, which could be categorized as political corruption, have been discussed above. But what are the effects of all this corrupt behaviours on the

country? Some of the effects will be discussed next,

The negative effects of corruption in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. It stands to reason that political corruption has acute immoral and pernicious effects on every aspect of the social, political and economic life in Nigeria. Millions of Naira have been embezzled, denying especially poor people the much needed infrastructure. The young ones are born into corruption, are living in it and will possibly die in it if proper care is not taken. In my observation, succeeding generations could see corruption as part and parcel of the social order and the normative system. According to Igbuzor (2008), the impacts of corruption include “the erosion of the moral fabric of society, violation of the social and economic rights of the poor and vulnerable, undermining of democracy, subversion of the rule of law, retardation of development and denial to society – particularly the poor – of the benefits of free and open competition” (2008: 145). In addition, Hagher (2002: 125) remarks that “corruption breeds poverty, sickness, low life expectancy and unequal distribution of national wealth”. This assertion could be applied to the Nigerian situation where there is a lot of government influence in the life of an average citizen. Social capital in the forms of roads and water, which are basic necessities to rapid industrialisation, are still government responsibilities. A denial of these amenities through corrupt practices could thus impair the quality of life of the people.

Among the evils of corruption is the upsetting of ethnic balances and precipitating national disintegration. Cases in point are those of Governors Dariye of Plateau state and Alamiyeseigha of Balyesa state who were removed from office on charges of corruption but whose minority ethnic groups in the country were “alleging victimization” by the Obasanjo administration. (Afolabi, 2013: 58). These cases, among others, have taught Nigeria a dangerous and wrong lesson: that it does not pay to be honest, hardworking and law-abiding. Consequently, it appears as if the ill-gotten gains of corruption have made politics a big and lucrative business in Nigeria. Corruption discourages honest efforts and valuable economic activities, and breeds inefficiency and nepotism. It also leads to possible information distortion as it cooks the books. A high level of corruption is also said to be capable of making public policies ineffective. Above all, corruption can tarnish the image of a country and its citizens (Sen, 1999: 135).

In my opinion, Nigeria and its citizens suffer more than most nations from an appalling international image created by the inability of the Nigerian government to deal effectively with embezzlement and bribery. Odey captures the way Nigerians are humiliated outside the country because of their soiled hands of corruption, thus:

Today in Nigeria, corruption has become a structural sin so contagious that it hardly leaves anybody without a smear. And since the country was justifiably stigmatized as a den of corruption, all Nigerians, both the guilty and the innocent, have been paying very costly for it. Everywhere in the world, Nigerians are generally feared like dogs, dreaded like criminals, cautiously approached like dangerous snakes and avoided like lepers (Odey, 2001: 42).

As a Nigerian residing outside the country, I testify to the above as an accurate description of the situation because I have witnessed and experienced what Odey describes above. Any patriotic Nigerian would testify to the above statement as true, because any day spent as a Nigerian in a foreign land is pitiable and regrettable due to the despicable attitudes of foreigners towards Nigerians. Eze also notes that even the highly placed Nigerians, including government officials, do not escape the humiliations meted out to them at airports, hotels and other places of social gathering where they are “suspiciously searched and mercilessly beaten up at times for fear that they might have emigrated illegally or perhaps have come to either dupe or introduce dangerous drugs to their nationals” (Eze, 2002: 10–11).

I want to re-emphasise the fact that morality has for a long time been thrown to the dogs and Nigerians have embraced and applauded the Machiavellian principle of the end justifies the means. However, we should not forget that morality is an integral part of development and progress. Hence a morally deficient nation is dwarfed and incapacitated in all aspects of human development. In the event of such scenario, Omoregbe (1993) writes:

An immoral society is also a sick society. By an immoral society, we mean a society permeated with corruption, dishonesty, fraud, selfishness,

embezzlement of public funds and other immoral acts, such society is sick and cannot function properly because they are not in sound health conditions. Life in such a society becomes increasingly difficult, insecure and unhappy. Something has to be done to save the situation. (Omoregbe, 1993: x).

What then can be done to stop corruption in Nigeria given that all efforts currently advanced have failed, and especially when the perpetrators of corruption get more perfect in sabotaging all efforts? Omoregbe identifies the situation as a “character” problem which manifests itself in mass corruption among Nigerians. According to him, corruption is a “moral sickness affecting both the Nigerian society and the individuals in it” which can only be cured through “moral re-generation” and “the moral sickness of a society is the moral sickness of the individual members of the society and the cure has to start from the individual members” (1993: xi).

Embezzlement of public funds has become damaging in Nigeria to the extent that both political and economic lives have been devastated. Perhaps embezzlement has for far too long been overlooked or government has been too lackadaisical about it, to the extent that it has been deeply rooted. Fortunately, the persistent outcry by the masses against and concern over corruption in Nigeria is a welcome call. People probably realise that it is time for change because there cannot be development and progress in any nation without honesty, the right attitude to work, devotion to duty, moral obligation and social responsibility.

I concur with Omoregbe’s view that we need to heal our society of its sickness by starting with the individuals that make up the society because if individuals are morally upright and healthy, they will be able to influence the entire society and the society will eventually be morally upright especially if we have leaders that are ethical. Consequently, this calls for a revival or a revisit of African traditional ethical practices which abhor corruption in all its ramifications. To my mind, corruption can be curtailed and eventually eradicated through the re-orientation and re-direction of priorities towards individual and social values. To this end, I suggest that we turn to African traditional ethics for guidance.

Although corruption is often interpreted as having regressive consequences, scholars like Obuah (2010), and Nye (1967) have argued too that corruption has positive effects: it humanises the workings of bureaucracy, offering a way through red tape and opportunities for face-to-face interaction. Moreover, it satisfies the unfulfilled needs of particular groups. Corruption is seen as “an alternative to political violence and may even promote growth where it involves high-level public servants who reinvest their spoils compared to lower-level functionaries who spend it on consumption” (Nye, 1967: 417–418). In addition, Obuah (2010: 19) points out that corruption could be a “lubricant to a sluggish economy if used as a deliberate tool of administrative delay that attracts more bribes”.

Notwithstanding the above view on corruption, it is my considered opinion that the conventional wisdom and standpoint remains relevant. According to conventional wisdom, corruption subverts resources away from the poor and acts against the wider interest. Corruption of high-level public servants in Nigeria could have probably been bearable if some of the stolen resources were reinvested in the country thereby creating jobs for millions of fresh university graduates who just roam the streets. Instead, all the loot is syphoned out of the country, boosting the beneficiary country’s economy. To my mind, corruption does not have any positive effect on the community. Rather, corruption serves to benefit individuals who perpetuate it because they stand to gain from it.

5.3 Short-comings of previous Solutions to Corruption

Nigeria, like every other country, has laws that condemn extortion, bribery, fraud, embezzlement, kick-backs and other forms of corruption. Yet these corrupt practices remain a perennial threat in Nigeria. Now that explosions of dissatisfaction and anger are beginning to erupt from the long-suffering and docile victims of corruption, can the government afford to fold its arms?

Attempts have been made by different administrations to forestall corruption in Nigeria. According to Falore (2010: 84–85), “many attempts were made to stem the spate of corruption in Nigeria before 1999”. Since then, there seemed to be a renewed determination to fight corruption. For example, a number of anti-corruption bodies were set up for this purpose. These include the Independent Corrupt Practices and

related offenses Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). However, in spite of these agencies and commissions, corrupt activities have never ceased in the country, almost making nonsense of the commissions' efforts to fight corruption. Egwemi (2009: 12–20) also observes that, “the problem of corruption in Nigeria seems to have defied solution and the national integrity system of the nation has effectively collapsed”. This is quite unfortunate because corruption seems to have become an established pattern. According to Mundt and Aborishade (2004: 707), “each political regime comes to power promising to eliminate the practice and to punish offenders, only to fall into the same pattern”.

Apart from setting up commissions and agencies to fight corruption, other measures during the military era included the use of tribunals and constitutional measures. Yet Nigeria has consistently occupied one of the top positions among the most corrupt nations of the world. The persistence of the problem calls for another approach. The need to adequately confront corruption in Nigeria cannot be over emphasised. The need has been acknowledged by governments over the years, especially since 1999. However, according to Egwemi, the rhetoric of war against corruption does not appear to have been matched by action. Rather, “corruption continued to soar even higher in the country” (Egwemi, 2009: 127). What then is wrong? Why does corruption continue? Why does corruption remain undefeated or even weakened?

With reference to the above, it has been suggested that what is lacking in the war against corruption is political will. Lack of political will has been identified as a “big obstacle confronting the war against corruption” (Egwemi, 2009: 127). Political will refers to the willingness of government at all levels to genuinely fight corruption instead of dealing with it in a half-hearted manner, as was pointed out in the introduction of this thesis. To address corruption full-heartedly means there should be no sacred cows when it comes to dealing with culprits. The full extent of the law should be applied irrespective of who the offender is. In the words of Ekwunife (1995: 122): “[...] corruption has deeply penetrated all levels of Nigerian politics and leaders are fond of paying lip service to the practical implementation of accountability”.

A clear case of lack of political will in the fight against corruption played out on 17 April 2012 with the conviction of former Delta state governor, James Ibori, on charges of

corruption by Southwark Crown court in London. Ibori's conviction in London came almost three years after he was acquitted of a 170-count charge of corruption by a Federal High Court of Nigeria, in Asaba (Adegbamigbe, 2012: 14–20; Arhewe and Oluwalana, 2012: 6–7). His conviction casts a long shadow on the fight against corruption in Nigeria. Apart from Ibori, many high-profile individuals have been prosecuted but the institutions which are supposed to conduct the prosecutions do not appear to be serious about it. For example, in the case of Atiku, the vice president to Obasanjo, he was found guilty of “misappropriating a total sum of \$145 million. Yet he was allowed to contest the 2007 general elections. He was never prosecuted in any court of law” (Ogundiya, 2009: 289). The government therefore “needs to rethink and re-ignite its anti-corruption war to give it credibility” (Bisuga, 2012: 39).

It has further been argued that the war on corruption in Nigeria should not be a one-time or a temporary affair. In fact, it should be seen as a long-term and challenging undertaking which requires a high level of commitment and continuity in policies. In this respect, Ogundiya observes that anti-corruption policies in Nigeria have suffered serious policy discontinuity arising from incessant political and governmental instability. He describes anti-corruption policies in Nigeria as a “mere political facade designed to buy political support and loyalty from the citizenry. He concludes that “the battles against corruption have not been fought on a sustainable basis” (Ogundiya, 2009: 291).

Considering the discussion on the history of corruption in Nigeria above, there are clear cases of immorality which confirm that politicians have given no place at all to ethics in their practice of politics. Various reasons have been advanced for this high level of immorality in Nigerian politics, ranging from colonialism to greed and a culture of living above one's means. However, according to my considered opinion, the reasons given for corruption are secondary causes. One important reason for the high level of corruption is the actuality that all African values, particularly traditional ethics, have been lost to modernisation.

In my thinking, the war against corruption can begin to record significant success if the government stops paying lip service to the fight and starts to pay serious attention to the moral fibre and integrity of those who operate the agencies. Political will can also

be achieved if the government of the day gives a free hand to the institutions already in place to do the fighting. A situation where government constantly interferes with the work of the agencies or where it frequently and unnecessarily changes the leadership of anti-graft agencies, does not augur well for a good fight against corruption. Government should not hesitate to go into the extreme in punishing offenders even if it means the going against the political powers that be. Above all, those who want to stop corruption, must be corruption-free and morally upright themselves.

Peer pressure has been another reason why the fight against corruption has become so difficult to fight. Most leaders, particularly in important positions, are equipped with a good education and hopefully a basic knowledge of right and wrong. However, when faced with an ethical challenge, they know what is the right thing to do, yet they do what is wrong anyway. The reason being that some of their colleagues have embezzled public fund without any consequences; no arrest not to talk of conviction. That is a good excuse for those who embezzled the public fund even when they know it is wrong they continue to do so anyway; they allow short-term gain, greed and other non-ethical values to take precedence over traditional values like honesty and accountability.

5.4 Fighting corruption: the Singapore experience

As hinted earlier, Nigeria is not the only country experiencing corruption, other nations of the world are in the same boat with Nigeria. Some have made remarkable progress in their struggle against corruption while others continue to struggle like Nigeria. Nigeria can learn from the experience of those who have made good progress against corruption. Almost every country in the world has some measure of corruption involving highly placed government officials and or citizens. What is different is the intensity of the practice. Each country must have tried several methods of combating the multi-headed monster called corruption but with varying degrees of success or no success at all. Nigeria has been one of those countries. However, there is a country that has been able to achieve an impressive degree of success. That country is Singapore.

As in Africa, corruption remains a serious problem in many Asian countries but Singapore is the least-corrupt in Asia, according to the annual surveys conducted by

the Hong Kong based Political and Economic Risk Consultancy Ltd (PERC), and the Transparency International in recent years. For example, in 1996, PERC ranked Singapore as the third least corrupt country in the world, after Switzerland and Australia and the least corrupt of the 12 Asian countries used in the survey (Quah, 2001: 29).

Before Singapore became independent in 1959, corruption was said to be a way of life in the country during the colonial regime of the British. Corruption was seen as a low risk activity with a high reward, since corrupt officers were seldom caught and even if they were caught, they were not severely punished. However, by independence in 1959, The Peoples' Action Party came into power with a strong determination to fight corruption and win. In spite of the fact that the new government was "faced with problems of poverty, poor public health, an acute shortage of housing, a stagnant economy and exploding population, it was able to turn things around for better because of their strong political will to succeed" (Quah, 2001: 29). One is therefore not surprised by PERC's ranking of Singapore in 1996 when this was said about the country:

All countries have laws aimed at fighting corruption, but very few governments apply such laws as strict and consistently as Singapore. Corrupt officials, particularly high-ranking ones, are dealt with in Singapore with a severity rarely seen elsewhere (Straits Times, 1996: 3).

In other words, no one was treated or given any special preference unlike in Nigeria where the government and the anti-corruption agencies treat certain people as 'untouchable; and that is one of the reasons why we don't seem to see any success in their efforts. The mood and resolve to vigorously curb corruption was echoed by the government of Singapore as early as 1960, (probably as soon as they settled down in office), when parliament declared that it:

was determined to take all possible steps to see that all legislative and administrative measures are taken to reduce the opportunities of corruption, to make its detection easier and to deter and punish severely those who are susceptible to it and who engage in it shamelessly (Hin n.d.:

22).

Nevertheless, the parliament did not fail to realise that certain conditions exist within the community which create ample opportunities for corruption and which must be removed if they mean to succeed. “The expanding role of government in development has placed the bureaucracy in a monopolistic position and has enhanced the opportunities for administrative discretion” (Gould and Amaro-Reyes, 1983: 17). Indeed, executive regulations together with this increased bureaucratic discretion provide opportunities and incentives for corruption in that regulations governing access to goods and services can be exploited by civil servants in extracting ‘rents’ from groups vying for access to such goods and services.

Another important factor or condition that encourages corruption, which must be removed, is the issue of low salary. “if the official is not to be tempted into corruption and disaffection, clearly there is an obligation on the government to provide or at least allow such benefits that will ensure his loyalty; one might call it an implicit contract”(Palmier, 1985: 2- 6). Palmier concluded that adequate pay was an essential ingredient in reform. “When civil service pay is too low, civil servants may be obliged to use their positions to collect bribes as a way of making ends meet, particularly when the expected cost of being caught is low”, opined (Mauro, 1997: 5). Corruption thrived in Singapore during the colonial era because perpetrators saw the activity as a low risk with a high reward as corrupt offenders were unlikely to be detected and punished. The colonial government’s efforts to curb corruption failed according to (Quah, 2001: 31) because the Prevention of Corruption Ordinance (POCO) and the Anti-corruption Branch (ACB) were said to be ineffective and that accounts for the low risk of detecting and punishing corrupt offences in colonial Singapore. Since corruption has been discovered to be caused by two major conditions – the incentives and opportunities to be corrupt; the PAP government’s comprehensive strategy was based on the ‘logic of corruption control’ as attempts to eradicate corruption must be designed to minimise or remove the conditions of both the incentives and the opportunities that make individual corrupt behavior irresistible (Quah, 1989: 842). Due to economic reasons, the PAP government was unable to raise wages immediately, instead it focused attention on strengthening existing legislation to reduce the opportunities for corruption and increased the penalty for corrupt behaviour.

However, when a reasonable level of economic growth was achieved by the government of the country in the 80's, the second part of its comprehensive anti-corruption strategy – the reduction of incentives for corruption by means of improving salaries and working conditions in the Singapore Civil Service (SCS), was implemented. The improvement in wages began in 1972 when “all civil servants were given a 13th month non-pensionable allowance comparable to the bonus in the private sector” (Quah, 1989:842). The strong anti-corruption refrain was sounded again in this statement made by the then prime minister Lee Kuan Yew, which best explains the need for a corruption free Singapore:

The moment key leaders are less than incorruptible, less than stern in demanding high standards, from that moment the structure of administrative integrity will weaken, and eventually crumble. Singapore can survive only if ministers and senior officers are incorruptible and efficient... Only when we uphold the integrity of the administration can the economy work in a way which enables Singaporeans to clearly see the nexus between hard work and high rewards (Quah, 2001: 122-123).

The government of Singapore was actually living to its promise and determination to stem the growth of corruption, when in 1975 a minister of state, Mr. Wee Toon Boon, was convicted of corruption. Such action by the government and the judiciary showed Singaporeans that the government was serious and determined to punish anyone found guilty of corruption no matter how high or low the person is regarded in the society. It clearly shows that no exception is made for any one and there are no black areas where the law cannot deal with. This means that a robust and comprehensive anti-corruption framework that spans laws, enforcement, the public and public outreach, was institutionalised. The Prevention of Corruption Act (POCA) that was enacted by the government put the burden of proof on the accused to show that he acquired his wealth legally. Any unexplained wealth disproportionate to known sources of income, is presumed to be from graft and can be confiscated (The Straits Times 14 May, 2016):

Again in 1993, the then prime minister emphasised in the parliament that:

I have every intention to make sure that Singapore remains corruption-free. I will not let standards drop. And everyone should know that corruption in any form will not be tolerated. I expect all ministers, all MPs and all public officers to set good examples for others to follow (Quah, 2001: 123).

According to Straits Times Newspaper report, the anti-corruption campaign is not limited to within Singapore, it is extended to international community. For example, the current prime minister of Singapore is quoted from an essay for an anthology compiled for the first inaugural anti-corruption summit held in London recently as saying:

We keep our system clean not just for ourselves but also to uphold our international reputation. Thus we deal strictly also with those who use financial institutions in Singapore to launder money or transact ill-gotten gains from corruption. We are zealous in protecting the integrity of our financial center and business hub (The Straits Times, 14 May, 2016).

It is obvious from the foregoing that the Singaporean leaders received a lot of support from the people of Singapore when they saw the sincerity and determination in the leaders to fight corruption; and that is a big factor responsible for the success achieved. These leaders have actually matched their words with action. Corruption is no longer a low risk high reward activity but now a high risk low reward activity which now keeps people away from it. This outcome of Singapore's fight against corruption raises the hopes of Nigeria and other African countries fighting corruption to a positive level.

If Singapore can do it, Nigeria and other African countries also can. The ball is now in the courts of the Nigerian leadership to play it right. Our leaders should display a strong and sincere political will to fight corruption. Such moves by the government, to my mind, would enhance patriotic and responsible followership and motivate citizens to adhere to a leadership that calls a halt to corrupt practices. When leaders show their determination to lead by example, it will not be difficult for such leaders to initiate genuine policies that are intended to fight corruption. This will also afford them the

opportunity to introduce radical programmes of social and political re-organisation with consistent agendas of reform.

Fighting corruption, which is an abuse of public office for private gains more effectively, would also mean installing systems, which promote transparency as a preventative approach and enforcement compliance. Equally important is the issue of checks and balances in governance, which could enhance the practice of separation of powers. In this respect, I agree with Dahl's view that to win the war against corruption, Nigeria has to fortify the institutional checks and balances among the country's major social forces and the separation of powers within government (1993: 73).

I am of high hope that, the practice of African traditional ethics, will address corruption and the issue of unethical leadership in Nigeria if its tenets and practice are well harnessed by every citizen of the country, young and old. I also agree with Magesa's (1997) observation that:

No sane society chooses to build its future on foreign cultures, values and systems. Every society is obliged to search deep in its own history, culture, religion and morality in order to discover the values upon which its development and liberation, its civilization and its identity should be based. To do otherwise is nothing less than communal suicide (Magesa, 1997: 9).

What we need in Nigeria therefore, is a model of leadership which will focus on the people and the country; a leadership rooted in traditional African cultural values, especially, morality. One of the central points of this study is that our political leaders should exemplify ethical leadership for the country to progress. The egoistic nature of the current leadership is not acceptable as it is abhorred by African traditional ethics and the spirit of Ubuntu. Leaders' commitment to the welfare of the people they lead will positively affect peoples' commitment to work together with the leadership for the common good. It is important to remember that, no one can give out what he or she does not have; a corrupt and unethical leader cannot provide an ethical leadership.

Without a clear moral guidance which I see in African traditional ethics, we could best describe our situation as being on a ship sailing through dangerous waters without

chart or compass. The stakes are now too high for such a reckless adventure in our national politics. Enhancing good governance in Nigeria depends on ethical leadership at all levels of government. This desire is underpinned by high standards of ethics and transparency. Good governance necessarily encompasses participation, transparency, accountability and responsiveness among other qualities. This is why it is advisable to take a clue from the practice of politics and ethics of pre-colonial days when all the above qualities were present in a quantity and quality that was able to keep corruption under control.

As we can learn from the traditional ethics, all of us as both passengers and crew are responsible for each other. It is important to sound this note of optimism that we can achieve the kind of society we crave when we are in the right relationship of 'love' with one-another; and we constantly strive for a better understanding of interpersonal relationships based in the community. Ethical leadership could be acquired by making everyone aware of African traditional ethics through public awareness programmes; then we can be confident that the kind of development we desire, but which cannot be achieved in a corrupt political community, might be the experience of Nigeria. If we allow African traditional ethics, with its teachings of love, honesty, humaneness, impartiality and communal living to drive our quest for good governance, Nigeria would be a better country to live in where justice was served and corruption minimised. I therefore conclude with the thoughts of Prozesky (2009: 12) that: "[...] African ethics can indeed be seen as a salvatory in today's heartlessly globalising world, a potential moral saviour in a time of deep trouble".

5.5 Summary

Corruption in any form and its effects on social, economic and political affairs of Nigeria have been discussed. The chapter also touched on the short –comings of both previous recommendations and specific suggestions of African ethics as solutions to the problem of corruption. Nigerian political leaders were also urged to learn from and emulate other countries that have successfully fought corruption. In the next chapter, I shall examine specific ideals of African traditional ethics, which could provide a life-long solution to the problem of corruption, especially embezzlement in Nigeria. Hence, I entitled the next chapter, *“African traditional ethics as a viable solution to Nigeria’s socio-political quagmires”*

CHAPTER SIX

AFRICAN TRADITIONAL ETHICS AS A VIABLE SOLUTION TO NIGERIA'S SOCIO-POLITICAL QUAGMIRES

6.1 Introduction

African traditional ethics in this thesis refers to those norms, precepts, principles and moral codes which regulate the conduct and actions of individuals in African societies. It is concerned with the dos and don'ts of society; it focuses on what society ought to be like, which is based on human actions and relationships. I am going to argue in this chapter that strict adherence to African ethics as part of the ethos, can prove to be a viable solution to the current socio-political quagmire. This is to say that African traditional ethics is geared towards an ideal society where there is peace and tranquility.

Sogolo (1993: 119) explains African values further as “a set of institutionalised ideals which guide and direct the patterns of life of Africans”. I earlier indicated in the thesis that scholars who advocated for a return to African traditional political values, as it was in pre-colonial days, failed to pinpoint a specific value that could have been responsible for the relative success and stability of the era, thereby making the call too broad. This thesis is therefore specific in selecting the traditional ethics in order to prove that it is an embodiment of love and was responsible for the relative success of pre-colonial political administration. In this chapter, I will discuss some specific features of African traditional ethics which are considered to be ‘ingredient’s of love. I will also attempt to show how those ingredients blended together could be an effective weapon in our fight against corruption in general. Practical and sincere use of the ‘ingredients’ is also capable of producing progressive and ethical leadership for the country, in particular. A leadership that could become the pride of the country.

6.2 Love: the potent ingredient in African traditional ethics

Gyekye (2010: 1) describes the ethics of a society as “embedded in the ideas and beliefs about what is right or wrong, and the ideas and beliefs about moral conduct that are articulated, analysed and interpreted by the moral thinkers of the society”. He explains that African societies as organised and functioning human communities have

undoubtedly evolved ethical systems, that is, ethical values, principles and rules that are intended to guide social and moral behaviour. In addition, Wiredu (1998: 210) defines African ethics as “the observance of rules for the harmonious adjustment of the interest of the individual to those of others in society”. To Tempels (1967: 121) African morality is something demanded by the very nature of things: it is “ontologically understood and has social dimensions to it”.

In addition to the above, Metz (2009: 339–340) believes that a moral theory counts as “African” if informed by many of the firm ethical beliefs of a variety of sub-Saharan peoples. He compares African ethics, utilitarianism and Kantianism, and claims that morality is possible only through interaction with others. Breaking promises and telling lies as politicians do, implies that they consist of unfriendly behaviour involving “thinking of oneself as ‘I’, subordinating others’ ends, making them worse off, and failing to care” (Metz 2009: 341). African ethics should be seen as a moral cluster that is immensely old, is deeply embedded in the cultures of the continent, has survived “massively powerful, disruptive outside influences” and yet remains strong (Prozesky 2009: 8).

Ethics has been defined earlier as the science of morality, that is, the study of the meaning of good and bad with reference to human behaviour. According to Ramose (1998: 324), we can understand ethics in two ways from this definition. The first one is that ethics is a focus upon moral human behavior as it manifests itself in practice; and the second meaning of ethics is that it is a philosophy, that is, a focus upon the specific principles underlying particular moral behaviour and a justification of those principles. African ethics can be understood in both ways. The practice of African traditional ethics can be a solution to the problem of unethical leadership. It does not matter to this thesis whether African ethics is based on religion or not. Being morally upright, as demanded by African ethics, does not appear to be a matter of pleasing the supernatural forces as it is of promoting human welfare. What matters most is its humane impact on the community where it is practiced. The fact that African ethics emphasises human relationships shows the significance that is attached to the care of individual human beings.

From all the scholarly arguments advanced above, I maintain that African traditional ethics is capable of solving one problem, i.e. immorality— whether in political governance or in general life through what I regard as its most potent weapon – Love. Traditional ethics is the ethics that can lead to peace and unity in Nigeria because it is community-oriented and looks beyond individual to the community. Traditional ethics holds that immorality brings immediate punishment meted not only on the individual but the entire community. This ethics also holds that immorality brings shame to the individual as well as those that are connected to such individual. From what we have learned so far about African traditional ethics, concern for one another’s well-being has been basic. I see humanism or humanness, caring, respect for each other and so on in traditional ethics, as clear acts of love. In my opinion, this ethics radiates Love.

Different people have different opinions about the nature of Love. According to the Encyclopedia of philosophy, (<http://www.iep.utm.edu/love/>), philosophical discussion of Love logically begins with questions concerning its nature. The nature of love has, since the time of the Ancient Greeks, been a mainstay in philosophy, producing theories that range from the materialistic conception of love as purely a physical phenomenon – animalistic or genetic urge that dictates our behaviour – to theories of love as an intensely spiritual affair that in its highest permits us to touch divinity. This implies that ‘Love’ has a nature, a proposition that some may oppose arguing that love is conceptually irrational, in the sense that it cannot be described in rational or meaningful propositions.

For such critics, who are presenting a metaphysical and epistemological argument, Love may be an injection of emotions that defy rational examination; on the other hand, some languages, such as Papuan, do not even admit the concept, which negates the possibility of a philosophical examination. The word ‘Love’ in English which is said to have been derived from Germanic forms of the *Sanskrit lubh* (desire), has defined Love too broadly and imprecisely. This is said to have generated first order problems in definition and meaning which are now resolved to some extent by the reference to the Greek terms, eros, philia and agape. (<http://www.iep.utm.edu/love/>).

The term eros – *erotikos* in Greek, is used to refer to that part of love constituting a passionate, intense desire for something; it is often referred to as a sexual desire.

Omeregbe (1993) explained eros as “an infatuation, from which the English phrase, erotic love derives. Eros is the Greek god of love in Greek mythology, and it represents passionate sexual love” (1993: 258). I can describe eros as a form of madness brought about by one of Cupid’s arrows. The arrow breaches us and we ‘fall in love’. This is however not the type of love we are talking about here.

Another type of love is Philia. It is friendly love or affection which Omeregbe describes as “ordinary love, the kind that a mother has for her child” (1993: 258). It will be correct to describe philia further as shared goodwill. Aristotle believed that a person can bear goodwill to another for three reasons – that the person is useful; that he is pleasant, and he is good. Such a person could be described as ‘rational and virtuous’. We have learned from Aristotle too that friendships founded on goodness are associated not only with mutual benefit but also with companionship, dependability and trust. For Plato, the best kind of friendship is that which lovers have for each other. That is philia born out of eros.

The third and last type of love to be discussed, due to lack of time and space, is ‘Agape’ love. Agape refers to the paternal love of God for ‘man’ and of man for God but it is extended to include a brotherly love for all humanity. This is the love recognised by situation ethics as “the only absolute law in morality and which must be absolutely obeyed in all situations without exception” (Omeregbe, 1993: 258). The concept is expanded on in Christian tradition of loving God: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might” (Deuteronomy, 6: 5) and loving “thy neighbour as thyself” (Leviticus, 19: 18). This command obviously employs the logic of mutual reciprocity.

The Bible’s command above also entails an egalitarian love – hence the Christian code to “love thy enemies” (Matthew, 5: 44-45). Such love transcends any perfectionist or aristocratic notions that some are or should be more lovable than others. Agape therefore asserts the moral importance of giving impartial respect or love to another human being. Agape love, as we can see, arguably draws on elements from both eros and philia, in that it seeks a perfect kind of love that is at once a fondness, a transcending of the particular, and a passion without the necessity of reciprocity.

However, the universalism of agape runs counter to the partialism of Aristotle and it poses a variety of ethical implications. For example, Aquinas seems to admit that a partialism in love towards those we are related while he still maintains that we should be charitable to all, whereas Kierkegaard insists on impartiality. It may also be argued that the concept of universal love is not only impracticable but logically empty. Aristotle (1999), argues for example, that:

To be friends with many people, in the sense of perfect friendship, is impossible, just as it is impossible to be in love with many people at the same time. For love is like an extreme, and an extreme tends to be unique, it does not easily happen that there are many people who are good (NE, 8.6, 1158a: 225).

Aristotle (1999) believes that love results from the belief that a thing or person is lovable because not everything or person is lovable. He says, “for, it seems, we do not feel affection for everything, but only for the lovable” (NE, 8.6, 1155b: 217). It is also very important that love is reciprocal whether it is based on the good character of the beloved or on the fact that it is lovable or pleasing provided it is an altruistic desire for the well-being of one another. Aristotle identifies the character traits that inspire love in others, such as justness and moderation. Such people will not seek their own advantage unfairly, hence they are likely to wish good things for others; if others favour justice, they in turn will be similarly disposed toward them, and that is what Aristotle called ‘love’, the description of which I believe, adequately also describes the practice of traditional ethics.

According to Aristotle (1999), one cannot extend sympathy and affection to another person without loving himself or herself first, “for, as we have stated, all friendly feelings toward others are an extension of the friendly feelings a person has for himself” (NE, IX.8, 1168b: 260). Aristotle does not see that as hedonistic or glorified, depending on the pursuit of immediate pleasures or the adulation of the crowd; instead, it is a reflection of his pursuit of the noble and virtuous, which culminate in the pursuit of the reflective life. He makes us aware further that, people tend to love those who have treated them well, or who they believe, wish to do so, and also those who love the ones they love. In short, we have seen that love and friendship in Aristotle are best

understood not as entailing obligations or as based on kinship, but as an altruistic desire which, when reciprocated, results in a state of affairs that Aristotle, and the Greeks in general, called '*philia*'.

Therefore, what is love? Love as practiced between opposite sex as an intense affection, a feeling of attraction resulting from sexual desire. However, the love we are talking about in this chapter is greater and more serious than the physical or sexual type. Love is such a powerful kind of emotion and the combination of so many different feelings and circumstances. That is why it is difficult to understand and define appropriately and precisely. Probably that is the reason too that Platonic philosophy claims that love cannot be understood by everyone but the experienced and philosophical or only the philosopher king. In other words, the uninitiated cannot understand love in the real sense of it, they only have physical desire and not love.

Some could see love just as an abstract noun that is not attached to anything concrete, but in reality love plays an enormous and unavoidable role in our several cultures; people talk seriously or humorously about love in songs, movies and books. Love is a common topic of discussion among matured adults because it has the power to guide us in the path toward profound communion with others. It is also a vibrant theme for the youth. According to Sidwick (1981) love is not only a desire to do good to the object beloved, although it always involves such a desire. "It is primarily a pleasurable emotion, which seems to depend upon a certain sense of union with another person, and it includes, besides the benevolent impulse, a desire of the society of the beloved" (1981: 244). For Rawls (1972) love has clearly among its main elements the desire to advance the other person's good as his rational self-love would require (1972: 190). This suggests that one loves another person because he or she loves himself. If you don't love yourself, it may be difficult to love another person, and vice versa. Soble (1997: 65) believes that "when 'X' loves 'Y', X would wish the best for Y and acts, as far as he or she is able, to pursue the good for Y".

There are so many opinions about love that it is quite difficult to understand precisely what love is, except may be philosopher kings - but Nozick (1993) is able to find something common to love, be it personal or romantic love. He writes:

What is common to all love is this: your own well-being is tied up with that someone or something you love...when something bad happens to one you love, something bad happens to you [...] If a loved one is hurt or disgraced, you were hurt; if something wonderful happens to her, you feel better off (Nozick, 1993: 258).

From what has been said by different scholars above, one can see love as a stance that promotes the welfare of the other and it is always happy and contented to know that the other person or the beloved, has benefited in some way by its efforts. We can also see that love transcends mere physical desires or emotions for one-another; it is the desire for what is best for the other person. It is also clear that love is primarily a desire to interact with the one that is beloved. When we are really in love, we give up selfishness and we emphatically enter the world of other person's needs, hurts, and dreams. The other person is loved as an end in itself not a means. He or she is loved for his or her humanness.

In African ethics, individuals are seen and treated as ends in themselves not as a means to an end. In other words, individual is loved for what he or she is a human being, not for physical appearance or anything else. Consequently, I define love in a moral sense as, caring, seeing and recognising a person beyond the physical appearance. With real love, we find joy in giving and are simply happy to make someone else happy. We are directly or indirectly projecting the good quality of being able to make us happy all the time. With real love, the person we love becomes a window to deepening our love for all human being.

Love plays an important role in personal choices, so can it have an influence in the public realm. I will argue that if we put the right kind of emotion – love, (which I believe is present in sufficient quantity and quality in African traditional ethics), to work, we can succeed in building a society where corruption will be at its barest minimum, if not completely eradicated. I believe that African traditional ethics can be of great assistance in creating the right emotions for the task of building a just and corruption-free society.

Consequently, I argue further that love is an activity; it is not just a mere feeling. It is important to reinforce the idea that acting on behalf of the loved-ones is central to loving. We have seen a lot of things an African ethics practitioner does for a fellow human being. Aristotle (1999) writes in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that:

The friendly relations which we have with our neighbours and which serve to define the various kinds of friendship seem to be derived from our relations to ourselves. We count as a friend a person who wishes for and does what is good or what appears to him to be good for his friend's sake, or a person who wishes for the existence and life of his friend for the friend's sake. This is also the feeling which mothers have for their children [...]
(Aristotle, NE 1162A: 1-7).

Meaning that goodwill, mere wishing good for the other but not going to any trouble to secure those goods, is not active *philia* (love) but inactive *philia* (*argen philia*). It is only when one goes to some trouble to benefit the other that one begins to be a *philos* (friend/lover) toward the other. Aristotle believes that love (*philein*) requires that the one who loves act in ways that benefit the loved one. He defines love in the *Rhetoric* as deliberately “willing (*boulesthai*) for anyone the things which we believe to be good for his sake but not our own, and procuring them for him as far as lies in our power” (*Rhet.* 1380B5 – 1381A1). I equate friends here to other people living with us in the community thus, this definition of love aptly fits what African traditional ethics does.

Passages like these make it quite clear that activity on behalf of the loved one was central to the ancient philosophical understanding of what love for another involved. Centuries later, St Thomas Aquinas does argue, by means of an analogy, for the claim that activity is central to love. Aquinas is trying to understand whether perfect love toward all others is possible or required. In response to this question, he argues that love for others requires activity, saying, “when a man truly loves another as himself, he will show his love not only by good wishes but by practical benefits” (Aquinas, 1948: 72). He explains that self-love clearly involves working toward practical benefits for oneself.

By analogy, it follows then that other oriented love will also involve working toward practical benefits for the loved-one. Aquinas must have taken a clue from the Bible injunction that one must love one's neighbour as one loves oneself (Luke 10: 27). Meaning that, loving the neighbour and loving self should both involve the same degree of practical concern. It is clear from the arguments from the above passages that love is not just a mere emotion, it requires action to be described as genuine love. For instance if one sees someone in need of shoes in a cold winter, it will not be enough to say "oh what a pity" and work away doing nothing. That will not be enough. The proper action is to do one's best to provide shoes for this needy person without ever thinking of getting anything back from him or her. Neither is it enough to see a hungry person and say, "I am sorry" without giving him or her food or money to buy food. To my mind, that should be the correct action because all human beings are supposed to be bound in mutual community as the African traditional ethics teach us. By that, one's action has no attachment but it is done simply because the needy person is a human being. In that case, one has backed his or her emotion with action, which makes it a perfect love.

From the perspective of African traditional ethics, one's understanding of what is good for others and what is good for one's community shapes one's actions and draws one toward a life of love for others. African traditional ethics qualifies to be both political and moral because there are places where both moralities overlap and yield powerful, multifaceted arguments about certain states of being or ways of acting are morally problematic. Consider, for example, the vast inequalities in wealth that currently exist in Nigeria. The morality of justice shows that these inequalities are the result of unjust manipulation of the economic system by those leaders who embezzle public fund.

Therefore, in order to create a just, loving and happy society, which could become a stable reality, we have to cultivate a public culture which is capable of creating emotions supported by action to make it stable. This emotion is Love, which I equate with the practice of African traditional ethics. According to Nussbaum (2013), "although people are not too often satisfied with the condition of their nation, they are still deeply bound to it in their hearts". In other words, they still wish the nation well. That is the type of love we are talking about here. Love, which endures imperfection while striving for justice for everyone. Nussbaum writes:

Just as personal love and friendship are at their best when they are directed not at ideal images of the person, but, instead at the whole person with flaws and faults – not of course, without criticizing or arguing, so too with love of a city or country: it gets under one’s skin, is undeterred by imperfection, and thus enables diverse people, most of them dissatisfied with reality, but in many different and incompatible ways, to embrace one another and enter a common future (Nussbaum, 2013: 393).

If we allow the above situation to prevail, it will allow easy overlapping of both morality and justice. For a society striving to be moral and seeking justice and equal opportunity for all its citizens, every member of such community must be committed to making that goal a success. It is a worthy project, which requires efforts and sacrifice and everyone must work to make sure it is accomplished. Secondly, tendencies to protect the fragile self by denigrating and subordinating others must be prevented. This tendency is described as “radical evil” (Nussbaum 2013: 3), but I am using the morality of love to call for the system to be changed because they are detrimental to well-being.

Let us now examine African ethics against the above background, to see how its tenets and practice fit the definitions and descriptions of love as given by various scholars above. For a better understanding of this topic, a discussion about the features or characteristics of African traditional ethics will help us to discover the hidden acts of love in its practice. It is important to note that African traditional ethics presupposes that human beings ought to live a life of moral soundness and uprightness toward each other. African traditional ethics make people realise that they need to live a morally upright life that takes into consideration the interest and well-being of their fellow human beings. Some of the prominent features or characteristics of African ethics include; *humanism and hospitality, impartiality, portent taboos and unarmed policing, and communality of involvement*. These qualities or features of African ethics indicate that people loved one-another as will be shown below. What is good is made up of actions, habits and behaviour patterns considered by society as worthy of being good because of their consequences for human wellbeing and society.

6.3 Some characteristic features of African traditional ethics

African traditional ethics possesses certain characteristic features that are capable of producing ethical leaders who will eventually establish ethical leadership in political administration in Nigeria. Coincidentally, most African moral values are common to most indigenous African tribes. The moral values are derived largely from peoples' experience living in the community and morality is informed by peoples' understanding of what is appropriate in inter personal relationships. Any behaviour that is not geared towards the well-being of both the individual and the community is considered morally wrong. Noone is ignorant of the existence of these values, they, especially leaders only chose to ignore them but they now need to be re-orientated.

What is needed to bring them back to the practice of traditional ethics is constant moral retreats and workshops where they are reminded of the moral imperatives of African ethics. This constant moral re-orientation will make them conscious of the fact that they live among other human beings in the community. Soon they will begin to feel a considerable effect of traditional ethics on their character. This is not difficult because traditional ethics is after all rooted in their culture. Leaders will also realise that the whole community is watching and looking up to them for ethical leadership and for positive moral and social order. This consciousness by the leaders will motivate them to live a morally upright life and become empathetic to the problems and conditions of other human beings around them. They will see and appreciate life and issues from other human beings' perspectives. Appreciating other peoples' needs and challenges will motivate leaders to come to the help of the masses who are in abject poverty. They will begin to think less of themselves alone and start thinking about other human beings in their community as well. Constant practice of this behavior will eventually become permanent, and soon we can describe the leaders as 'ethical'.

African traditional ethics will help the leaders to accept the fact that, what is good for the goose is good for the gander. In other words, they begin to practice the communal and humanistic nature of the ethics which includes values like kindness, care, love, integrity, trustworthiness, diligence, and so on, which are the type of character traits needed for good and ethical leadership. They now become their brothers' and sisters' keepers – a complete change of behaviour and attitude. Thus, the overall effect of constant retreat and re-orientation as a form of moral education is capable of helping

the leaders shape and develop moral characters. This will in turn lead to significant reduction in corruption and its eventual elimination. This type of moral education is capable of putting Nigerian leaders in a better shape for the development of morality and character. It can also reposition Nigeria as a country free of unethical leadership and corruption.

Some of the characteristic features of African traditional ethics which are discussed below include humaneness, hospitality, belief in portent taboos and unarmed policing plus communality of involvement.

6.3.1 Humanism/Humaneness

The Revised Webster's dictionary explains Humanism as "a system of thinking in which man, his interests, and development are made central and dominant tending to exult the culture and practical rather than the scientific and the speculative". Humanism is also explained as a "moral philosophy which places human as primary in range of importance" (1996: 614). This suggests that the central point of humanism is humanity itself. Humanism is a word with many meanings, but its philosophical meaning can be seen when contrasted to the supernatural or appealing to higher authority. Therefore, African humanism is that ethical understanding which is enjoyed by the Africans in their way of life, we shall therefore examine the idea of humanism in relation to African ethics. Ifemesia (1979) describes humane living in African communities as a concept that is defined as "[...] a way of life emphatically centered upon human interests and value; a mode of living evidently characterised by empathy, and by consideration and compassion for human beings" (Ifemesia, 1979: 2).

The Nguni people of South Africa use the word "ubuntu" which means humaneness or humanism. Mnyaka and Motlhabi (2009: 63) described ubuntu as an "old philosophy and way of life that has for many centuries sustained the African community". Humanness is an integral part of African traditional ethics and it is a set of institutionalised ideals, which guide and direct the patterns of life of Africans. Ubuntu as a way of life is also based on the maxim: *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, "a person is a person through other persons" (Metz, 2007: 323). This is an insight that gives the African conception of community its distinctive character; that a person cannot be a person without co-existence with other people in the community. Metz explains further

that the maxim in its descriptive senses implies that one's identity as a human being causally and even metaphysically depends on a community. In its prescriptive sense, "it implies that one ought to be a mensch; that is morally support the community in certain ways". (Metz, 2007: 323). "Ubuntu implies that humaneness is derived from our relatedness with others" opines Murove (2009: 315). Ubuntu is an African traditional philosophy that gives us an understanding of ourselves as human beings in relation with the rest of humanity.

The expression, "*a person is a person through other persons*" as one of the basic tenets of ubuntu "has helped to diffuse the individual ego and makes Africans less prone to acts that do not contribute to community building" (Sparks, 1990: 249). Ubuntu as an abstract concept can be said to support and make concrete certain components that can be identified in the expression 'a person is a person through other persons'. Such concrete components include personhood, compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony, humanity, respect, morality and importance of community.

The traditional worldview of ubuntu, according to Broodryk is "based on the values of humanness, caring, respect, compassion, and associated values ensuring a happy and qualitative human community life in a family spirit" (2004: 31). Ubuntu could then be described as a community based mindset in which the welfare of the group is greater than the welfare of a single individual in the group. Although, individuality, the sense of self is recognized as important in the concept of ubuntu, just like in African traditional ethics generally, it is different from individualism that seeks to promote selfish interests at the expense of others. Ubuntu's sense of morality would therefore not accept individualism. Van Bins Bergen believes that ubuntu recognizes four attributes of being human. These, according to Van Bins Bergen are, "human dignity, equality, universal brotherhood and sacredness of life which provide the most desirable state of life in community-based living" (2001: 19).

In the African context, to be human means that it is not possible for one to live outside a human community: since the human being does not voluntarily choose to enter into the community, community life is not optional for that individual (Gyekye, 1997a: 39). This means that an African individual is a communal being inseparable from

community. He or she is also incomplete without the community because he or she is an integral part; he or she needs the community to find fulfilment:

Only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his being, his duties, his privileges and responsibilities toward himself and towards other people. When suffers, he does not suffer alone but with the corporate group; when he rejoices, he rejoices not alone but with his kinsmen, his neighbours and his relatives whether dead or living. When he gets married, he is not alone, neither does the wife “belong” to him alone, so also the children belong to the corporate body of kinsmen, even if they bear only their father’s name. What happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say “I am, because we are, and since we are, therefore I am” (Mbiti, 1969: 108-109).

For an African individual, the above is a cardinal point in the understanding of the African view of man. According to Mnyaka and Motlhabi (2009: 66), “a person in the ubuntu world view is the basis, center and end of everything; all other things only make sense in relation to persons”. That is why Biko sees a person as “the cornerstone of society, making a person valuable in himself or herself; not just in his or her welfare, not his or her material wellbeing just a person in himself or herself in all his or her ramifications” (Biko, 1978: 46).

It follows then that Individuals who displays acts of individualism, selfishness or a lack of caring is condemned by ubuntu and African ethics in general – such an individual is seen as having lost his or her humaneness, that is to say such individual no longer behaves like a human being. “Part of being a person is to have feelings and moral values that contribute to the wellbeing of others” (Mnyaka and Motlhabi 2009: 71). As Gyekye (1997b) puts it, “a person comes to know who she is in the context of relationships with others, not as an isolated, lonely star in a social galaxy” (1997b: 43). So, the morality of ubuntu is intrinsically related to human happiness and fulfilment. Above all, we should remember that, a person is, in effect, a person through what he or she does. “One’s actions make one either *umuntu onobuntu* – a humane person or *umuntu ongena buntu* – an inhumane person – without ubuntu” (Mnyaka & Motlhabi,

2009: 82). Ubuntu has taken us back into the mainstream of what African traditional ethics has taught us that, a humane person is understood as a person who possesses good moral qualities and who puts them to good use. I hereby urge everyone who wants a more ordered, caring society based on humanity, to be more ubuntu conscious.

We should not forget that the community plays a dominant role within African culture. A person is defined as belonging to a given community and gets his or her identity from the community; in other words, 'he or she is because they (community) are'. Therefore the practice of the African traditional ethics demand that an individual living in a community can only realise his or her humanity by recognizing the other person as an integral part of one another. This is why it is easy and common for them to live a common life of sharing and caring. Every member of the community rejoices in the fortune of another because he or she is going to be a partaker of the fortune; for the same reason, everyone is unhappy when an unfortunate thing happens to any member of the community. In my opinion, any action directed at alleviating another human beings suffering can be described as love. There is a Yoruba proverb, which conforms with the idea that if you love someone, you will be happy for such a person, because you also want to be like him or her. (*Eni ma se rere odi dandan ko yo fun eni ba nse rere*) I see African traditional ethics as love, because it possesses characteristics of love, as defined above.

6.3.2 Hospitality

African traditional ethics emphasises goodness of character. As Gbadegesin (1991: 79) points out: "Iwa (character) is perhaps the most important moral concept for the Yoruba because a person is morally evaluated according to his or her *iwa* (character) – whether good or bad". This is also true of the two other major tribes in Nigeria, Hausa and Ibo. A good person is a man or woman of good character. Hospitality is an attribute of (iwa) character, and it is one of the African values still alive and relevant today. The story told by Boon about his experience of African hospitality confirmed this claim. Boon was on a solo kayak trip from the source of the Zambezi River in the heart of central Africa to its Indian Ocean mouth in Mozambique when it became necessary for him to camp somewhere overnight. He came across two black African brothers who offered him a warm reception. Boon recalls his experience thus:

In the morning the brothers are cold and they sit huddled close to the fire to warm up. A little carved stool is set in the circle for me and I join them. The eldest brother leaves the fire and goes down to the Mekoro, returning with an old enamel cup. He gives it to me saying, "here is something for you to eat". The cup is full of shelled groundnuts. They are so poor, yet they gave me something of what they have. I am deeply appreciative (Boon, 2007: 97).

In addition, Okafor (1974) describes the hospitality feature of African ethics as follows:

In traditional African culture, whenever there is food to be taken, everyone present is invited to participate even if the food was prepared for far less number of people without anticipating the arrival of visitors. It would be a height of incredible bad manners for one to eat anything however small, without sharing it with anyone else, or, at least expressing the intention to do so (Okafor, 1974: 21).

The value of hospitality is also esteemed in Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba cultures where one is expected to share one's food and or drinks with whoever is around at the time of eating or drinking. Failure to do so will earn one an appellation of *Aahun, oni'mo t'ara eni nikan* – a miserly and selfish human being, in Yoruba morality.

One is also morally obliged to invite a stranger just passing through the village to one's shelter for a short break from his or her journey. While under your shelter, the stranger will be provided with cold water to calm his or her nerves and, at the end of the short break, the stranger is sent back to the road with some provisions for the rest of the journey. When it becomes dark, he or she is urged to stay overnight, during which warm dinner and comfortable accommodation will be provided. All these are done in realisation of common humanity and universal brotherhood and love. To behave otherwise runs counter to the spirit of Ubuntu and the traditional ethics.

Visitors from the West also testify to the wonderful and warm hospitality of African people. Prozesky (2009: 1) reports that, contact by Portuguese seafarers at the end

of the 15th century with Africans confirmed the generosity of African people. The acts of generosity by Africans moved the Portuguese to change the name of the coast where they met to “*Tera da boa gente*” meaning “*The land of the good people*”. Those acts of generosity testify to the fact that the essence of African traditional ethics consists in doing good and showing love and concern to others while the essence of evil or hate, of course, consists in doing harm to others. From the above, it follows that morality in African traditional thought is essentially interpersonal and social with a basis in human wellbeing: an African is his or her brother’s or sister’s keeper. An African is concerned about his or her brother’s or sister’s wellbeing and considers him or her as part and parcel of a body.

Concern for one another extends beyond what the Europeans call the nuclear family. For example, any member of the extended family who is in a better financial position than the rest of the family comes to the aid of the less fortunate. Children of poor parents are helped by such well-to-do relations to acquire an education. Many Africans generally help train the children of relations before their own children are grown up and sometimes even along with their own children. In this way the whole extended family shares in the fortune – or misfortune at times – of its members. This is why a Yoruba from south-west Nigeria makes no distinction between brothers, sisters, first or second cousins in the sense a European makes such distinctions in relationships.

Furthermore, African moral thought and values can also be described as supererogatory because the moral agent does not mind going beyond and above what a person is required to do as a moral agent. This thesis advocates that traditional brotherhood – or more precisely familyhood – be extended beyond the confines of the extended family to embrace the whole continent of Africa. By doing this, selfishness which leads to all sorts of corruption will have no place in our body politic and we could arrive at an ideal state, where peace and justice would reign.

6.3.3 Portent Taboos and Unarmed Policing

Among most African tribes, a *taboo* is commonly understood as a vehement prohibition of an action based on belief that such behaviours is either too sacred or too accursed for ordinary individuals to undertake. This belief is usually activated under the threat of supernatural punishment. Such prohibitions could be said to be

present in virtually all African communities or even extended to other societies outside Africa.

Etymologically, Holden (2000) explained taboo as a derivation of the Polynesian term, '*tabu*,' which means forbidden; and the Hawaiian '*kapu*' which means 'marked-off, or 'off-limits'. It is claimed that taboos are not a feature of primitive societies as it was assumed sometime ago by some anthropologists but it is a characteristic of any society (2000: ix). Durkheim calls taboos a "phenomenon that is universal" (Durkheim, 1963: 70). Magesa (1997) describes taboos as a "system of prohibitions with regard to certain persons, things, acts or situations. The objects considered as taboo are perceived to contain within them certain assumed danger that always has repercussions against anyone who transgress them" (1997: 75). It is explained further that, the danger might not be well defined nor immediately perceived by senses. However, the consequences of that danger will always affect the one who broke a taboo. The Yorubas of south western Nigeria call it '*Eewo*' while the Igbo people of the south western Nigeria call it '*Nso*'.

Within its historical context, taboo was a sacred term for a set of cultic or religious prohibitions instituted by traditional religious authorities as instruments for moral motivation, guidance, and objectivity for protecting the sanctity of their shrines and the well-being of their worshiping communities. Subsequently, Steiner (1956: 47) sees taboos as a means to an end. Such an end, the *raison d'être* of taboos, would be seen in maintaining harmony between God and spirits – invincible world and human beings and the rest of the creation – visible world. This harmony would be ruled "by moral order instituted and sanctioned by God and channeled through the ancestors of any given community.

This order is preserved by tradition and, if followed, has the power or force to sustain the existence and operation of the universe, ensuring a bountiful life for humanity" (Magesa, 1997: 72). It is equally known that the term is also applicable to any sort of social prohibition imposed by the leadership of a community regarding certain times, places, actions, events, and people especially, but not exclusively, for religious reasons for the well-being of the society. However, Parinder sees a clear connection between taboos and ancestors and thus claims that a taboo is an offence against the

ancestors (1969: 69).

Needless to say that taboos were a common feature found in almost every African society, little surprise then that, among most West African tribes, most taboos are taken seriously since they are believed to have been imposed by traditional rulers and priests on their behalf and in the general interest of the community. In fact people reckoned that taboos played a significant and positive role in the traditional African societies. Taboos were believed to ensure peace and security in the pre-colonial community. Young people learn about taboos from their parents and grandparents during communal ceremonies; they also learn from day-to-day activities when one is about to do something that is prohibited. In other words, taboos may be promulgated and transmitted in the form of religious ordinances, creeds or vows hence, I like to understand taboos as a means of social control. It could also be described as something that is not acceptable to talk about or do in a particular culture or religion, for fear of immediate harm or repercussion. So, do taboos have any moral value to individuals and the society at large?

It is now known that every moral system requires the existence of guiding principles, sources of motivation and some grounds for objectivity. In addition, some moral systems provide moral transformation. Taboos therefore represent the main source of guiding principles regulating and directing the behavior of individuals and the community towards the ancestors in African traditional societies. Magesa (1997: 76) sees taboos as a “moral ambience... or moral codes that are intended to serve harmony and the order of the existence of the universe”. Reflecting on moral and social values in general Cassirer noted that the “restrictions on individual license or, freedom which are due to respect for a known and friendly power or powers, allied to man, however trivial or absurd they may appear to the modern mind in details, contain within them germinant principles of social progress and moral order” (1972: 106). He explains further that, taboos are mostly about *don'ts* and have the tendency to make us passive and consequently, conservative and since they dwell on fear they also tend to make people superstitious. Despite these seemingly obvious defects, Cassirer (1972) observed further that, the taboos system was the only system of social restriction and obligation in the early stages of human development; it was “the cornerstone of the whole social order... there was no part of the social system that

was not regulated and governed by taboos” (Cassirer, 1972: 106). For example, Cassirer cited the relation between rulers and subjects, political life, sexual life, family life as well as economic life.

From what we have learned about taboos so far, one can infer that they were an expression of the ‘natural law’ – a general set of rules commonly understood by all human beings. Similarities among various tribes concerning prohibitions against such acts as incest, murder and stealing show the common ground of various taboos. Taboos were also used to convey moral values, especially to the youth. I can describe taboos as ‘teaching aides’ in explaining some moral principles to them. Taboos can equally be viewed as an effective system of preserving and transmitting the moral values from one generation to another; after all traditional African culture was an oral one. It is also clear that taboos made people aware that any action viewed as improper by the community should not be performed because of its consequences which could negatively affect the harmony of the person concerned. Such consequences could also affect the perpetrator’s family or even the whole community.

Taboos showed the communal dimensions of one’s action. In a culture where an individual was defined by belonging to a community and where the community was far more important than its individual members, one’s actions affected that community. Taboos thus aimed at preserving harmony and well-being of the community. It served as a guardian of moral values. No one wanted to disrupt the peace and harmony of the community for fear of the consequences, which in some cases, came automatically. The fear of harm was enough to deter people from committing crimes so there was no need for a regular police force as we know it today. Everyone just followed the unwritten code of conduct tenaciously. One might even say, to some extent, that taboos, as physically unarmed as it was, was able to enforce the law more effectively than the modern day police. Taboos helped the people to realise that an improper behaviour would always have unpleasant consequences for them and the community. Taboos have thus played an important role in the traditional African societies; and have helped them to preserve moral rules that helped them as individuals and as communities, to live a peaceful and harmonious life. Although our contemporary society is quite different from the traditional ones in many ways, it will not be out of place to urge community and political leaders and elders in contemporary

societies to enforce taboos or come up with an alternative one aimed at producing leaders who will fear and respect traditional values. In other words, we need to have something as potent and feared as taboos in order to put a stop to acts of embezzlement by the political leadership thereby creating moral or ethical leadership that we crave.

6.3.4 Communalism of Involvement

Humanism and Impartiality are however not the only basis of African morality – it is also communalistic. Moral and ethical considerations in African societies are communitarian in nature. Every individual is expected to participate in the life of the community from which he or she derives the sense of belonging. Bujo (2001: 4) explained that, the relationship between the community and the individual is intricate, for black Africa, it is not the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am) but *cognatus sum, ergo sumus* (I am known, therefore we are) that is decisive.

As I pointed out in this thesis, Africans in general and Nigerians in particular place high value on communal living. These communal values express the worth and appreciation of the community; the values guide the social interaction of the people towards a common goal. In Africa, interpersonal bonds go beyond biological affinity in expressing the values of communalism. Many things are mutually shared, people care for one another, they are interdependent and they stand in solidarity. Whatever happens to one happens to the community as a whole. The joy and sorrow of one extends to other members of the community in profound ways. The willingness to help others for the development of the community is reciprocal. They love one another. “It is within this communalism that Africans are most fulfilled” (Igboin, 2011: 100). This fulfillment in communalism is expressed by Mbiti when he writes: “I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am”. This is dialectically opposed to Western individualism, which has unfortunately threatened the root of African communalism through colonial and missionary contacts.

Our sense of community has taught us to believe and feel that whatever calamity or good fortune that befalls one in the community befalls all of us. Everyone belongs and there is no one who does not belong. This sense of belonging is generally important in African traditional ethics and so it is central to ubuntu. Coetzee and Roux (1998)

explain that Community for Africans is not just a collection of individuals who happen to be together but it is “a group of persons linked by interpersonal bonds, biological and or non-biological, who consider themselves primarily as members of the group and who have common interests, goals and values. The notion of common interests and values is crucial to an adequate conception of community; the notion in fact defines the community” (Mnyaka and Motlhabi, 2009: 69).

It should however be noted that, individualistic values in African communalism are closely linked with communal values in order to prove that Africans also have and appreciate personal will and identity. The communal values that guide the social life of the individual members of a community appear to be all that matter. But when one takes a critical look at the people, one discovers there are individualistic values which co-exist perfectly with communal values. They may sometimes clash but the communal values are the superintending ones in adjudication. Gyekye (1996: 47) emphasises that in spite of this, the individualistic values of the persons in the community are not consciously trampled upon. Instead, they are respected just like the communal values. Moral values are intrinsically social, and arise from interdependent relationships. It should be noted here that morality in Africa is crucial to the proper functioning and orderly nature of the community.

The communal African worldview as depicted by ubuntu, contrasts with the more individualistic and self-centered one. Communalism at the core of ubuntu, according to Broodryk (2004:42), implies that the interests of the individual are subordinate to that of the group. The community will focus on the interests of each individual member and those activities and behaviours that will ensure the good of the group. Individuals will have to align their interests, activities and loyalties to the group’s cause and wellbeing because ubuntu is “a collective solidarity” (Mokgoro, 1997: 45). It is worthy of note that, participation in community either enhances or reduces an individual’s self-respect or recognition as a person, depending on the type of character in which the concerned individual is engaged in.

Community interest was more important and was placed over the individual’s interest but this did not mean the individual was without rights and autonomy. Law and order were maintained and relative peace reigned supreme in the community as a result of

each individual's effort to keep the community safe and orderly. The moral rules were religiously obeyed and offenders punished accordingly. The relationship between the community and the individual was that of interdependence as they cared for each other. Such living arrangements have been described by scholars as communalism. Consequently, the total wellbeing and welfare of the community are essentially important to the moral values. Moral values such as responsibility, kindness, honesty, hospitality, compassion, faithfulness, love, dignity and diligence were all present in sufficient quantity in the pre-colonial days.

Further in the pre-colonial days, as seen in chapter two, it would be absurd for anyone to think of embezzling the money that belonged to the community even if he was in such a position because, first and foremost, he saw himself or herself as part and parcel of the community. Secondly, there was no need for such a behaviour also because everyone had access to the means of production, which was land. In other words, there was even distribution of opportunity. Further still, his or her judgement told him that it was wrong and unacceptable to be selfish and refuse to think about others. Finally, it was not a normal behavior in the community; it is anti-community.

This forms the bedrock of African social values which abhor ethical egotism. Ethical egotism allows individuals to pursue their own welfare and interests which gives rise to selfishness. Furthermore, great moral and social values are placed on family in Africa because that is where moral lessons start and that also is the place where children learn how to live together with other members of the community and do things in common. For example, in a polygamous family, children of all the wives eat together from a common plate. If they are many, they sit around the plates in groups. This practice teaches children to love one another and do things in common so that they will not find it difficult to do the same in a larger community.

Above is what African traditional ethics teaches. An example of this practice is when a wealthy individual within an extended family takes it upon himself or herself to train the children of the less privileged member of the family together with his or her own children in school, such individual is acting in accordance with the tenets of traditional ethics. Concern for the future well-being of the less privileged family has been displayed in the action described above; knowing fully well that if he or she refused to

do it now, the uneducated children are likely to become greater burdens for the family and even the entire community in future. It may then be correct to say that helping the less privileged children is an indirect way of helping self and the future of the whole community.

Unfortunately, the type of love we are talking about above is not present in this modern world. One major reason for this is urbanisation. People no longer live in villages with a small population where they all know each other, instead, they now live in cities where the population is so large that they hardly know each other not to talk of being families. I acknowledge that due to modernization, living a communal life might be impracticable but there are ways one can still express love to other human beings even if you have no blood relationship with them, they are human beings just like you. Modern technology has made it easier to communicate your good will with a larger group of people nowadays better than the olden days. You can car-pool with neighbours if you go the same way to work, that is, sharing. You can become philanthropic; needy people are all over the place on street corners, that is, humane. Show mercy to people because you also want to receive mercy, which is caring. This means then that a good person in African ethics, is someone we could describe as welcoming, generous, warm, hospitable and willing to share.

However, with all the qualities and features of African traditional ethics, can we say, with emphasis, that there was no corruption in pre-colonial Nigeria, indeed Africa? There are two opposing schools of thought on the question making it difficult to answer in emphatic 'yes' or 'no'. The two schools of thought as discussed by (Igboin, 2016: 148-153) are the 'decolonisation school' and the 'Afrocentric School'. Decolonisation school answered 'yes' while the 'Afrocentric school' answered 'no'. The decolonisation school believes that, although the pre-colonial communities contributed immensely to global development, it could not have been corruption-free because it was a human society. The school argues that community life does not mean that people's rights were not trampled upon. In the school's thought, individual's rights and achievements were essentially subsumed under community life. The school claims that, those at the top hierarchy of the community leadership usually gained most from the cumulative efforts of individuals, even though in many cases the community might not have contributed to the process of such success in the first place. Subsequently, there was corruption.

The Afrocentric school sees it otherwise and they answered 'yes' to the question. This school believes that pre-colonial Africa was not corrupt. In fact, the school views the pre-colonial era as a near perfect community. The school even posits that contemporary Africa does not have to just borrow from the past but they may have to wholly adopt the pre-colonial African past as a response to the negative effect of colonialism. The argument goes further to explain that the pre-colonial Africans were guided by both religious and moral rules, which the members of the community lived by. The rules of the community, according to the school, ensured that everybody was his or her brother's and sister's keeper. As a result, the school concluded that, acts of corruption could not have existed, since what affected a member of the community was believed to have affected all members in the community system. This school thus presents people of pre-colonial Africa as superhuman and incorruptible thus making our pre-colonial system of political administration ethical and able to minimise corruption.

While pre-colonial Nigerian social and political arrangements were not perfect, they are, according to me, more sustainable as an ethical matrix than the current moral decay and high level of corruption in the country. In pre-colonial times, democratisation involved the free and unfettered exercise of fundamental freedoms of expression, association and political choices. Governance took care of peoples' needs and welfare. There was accountability. It also involved the ability of all citizens to participate in the process of governance. There was consensus on political issues because everyone was allowed to question, debate and discuss moral, social and political issues.

The virtues of respect for public property and respect for the laws of the land were commonplace in pre-colonial Africa because it was known to everyone that they jointly owned everything. There was a reward system that served to promote hard work, and punishments were given to individuals who broke the laws of the land. Political leaders, for example kings, elders and those in authority, showed accountability, transparency and honesty in the affairs of the community.

6.4 Summary

Arguing for African traditional ethics does not mean that there was no corruption in pre-colonial Nigerian communities. For example, as indicated earlier, slave trade by African merchants was common place. However, in traditional kingdoms of Oyo, Igbo and Hausa, the leaders were ousted or removed once they betrayed the expectations of the people they ruled. That happened despite the fact that the rulers ascended to power through lineage and were believed to possess divine powers. This gives hope that today's political leaders can also give ethical leadership with society's return to African traditional ethics.

We have learned that African community spirit is epitomized in the notions of Ubuntu communalism and humanism. We can deduce from the meaning of those two notions that, there is a high estimation of the community in African thought and practice, higher than that of the individual, but not at the cost of forgetting the individual person. A person is a person in the community and through the others of his or her community. This implies a culture of mutual help, of caring for one-another and sharing with each other; every member can rely on support from somebody from the extended family when in trouble at any time in life. The principle of caring for each other's well-being is being morally promoted and the spirit of mutual support, which is being fostered by ubuntu, should extend to politics also. This is imperative because each individual's humanity is ideally expressed through his or her relationship with others; and theirs in turn through recognition of the individual's humanity.

Ubuntu, like African ethics in general, is a philosophical and moral concept that calls for recognition of the humanity of other persons, thereby promoting respect while challenging everyone to create a community that is caring, accepting and compassionate and loving. Ubuntu has called on all Africans to be true to the legacy of their ancestral culture. From what we have learned so far about African traditional ethics, concern for one another's well-being has been basic. I see humanism or humanness, caring, respect for each other and so on in traditional ethics, as clear acts of love. The discussed Ideals or qualities of African ethics, including a functional system of checks and balances on political leaders, need to be incorporated into the practice of governance.

The last chapter will conclude this study by expressing some personal reflections before I make a number of recommendations. It will also suggest possible areas where further research is needed for more effective fight against corruption of any sort. The chapter is thus titled '*Recommendations and conclusions*'.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Introduction

This final chapter is a logical ending of discussions and arguments of the thesis, which, provides a lead way to the continuation of further discussions on the study. Put in another way, this chapter is meant to give a systematic reflection of the study, crowning it with a conclusion. The chapter is to emphasise further, how traditional ethical principles can help in creating ethical leadership and how it can also maintain and ensure fair social order and stability in Nigeria. This is carried out under the subheadings of reflections, recommendations and conclusion.

7.2 Personal reflections

This study was grounded on a couple of assumptions. First of all, the study assumed that African traditional ethics has the potential to make leaders ethical and that ethical leadership in turn is capable of promoting good governance in Nigerian political administration. Secondly, the study also assumed that men and women of ethical integrity are needed in government to deliver good governance to the citizens. It further assumed that ethical leadership is possible in Nigerian public administration if individuals of ethical integrity are in-charge of the management of the affairs of government. Lastly, the study assumed that if everyone is educated in African traditional moral values, corruption would be reduced to the barest minimum level, if not completely eradicated. The study has made it obvious that, the absence of good governance has been the result of corruption, especially of embezzlement.

The study has therefore strived to provide justification for improved and effective leadership in Nigeria mainly from the viewpoint of morality by establishing the need for leaders to be ethical. It has accentuated the need for honest and ethical individuals, particularly in the position of leadership for the delivery of good governance at every level of government in Nigeria. It has been established in this study through theories of and discussions on leadership as propounded by various scholars that, effective or ethical leadership is the core of every successful organisation, be it political or social. It is also established that ethical leadership projects integrity by promoting and

supporting an environment where everyone are always striving to do what is right. Leaders with integrity are purposeful and always attentive to being consistent with what they say and what they do. Consequently, such leaders are models of ethical leadership. However, corruption must be eliminated among the leaders before ethical leadership can emerge.

The baseline argument is that effective and ethical leadership manifesting in the form of good governance and sustainable development are inseparable. The basis for ethical leadership is a personal desire to be ethical and model ethical standards in ways that are visible for followers to see and emulate. Leadership is regarded as the soul of organisation because of its specific role, which is moral-laden. Leadership ethics is vital because of the leader's influence on the followers. Organisational leadership's ethics, to a great extent, has much influence on the moral quality of the organisational members and the way the organisation functions and operates. Ethics is regarded as crucial and that is why it is found at the heart of leadership.

It was also shown in the thesis that every adult in the traditional communities examined was free to express himself or herself without fear of intimidation in all matters. If that was the case, then we can infer that every individual had political freedom in pre-colonial Africa despite the claim that it was highly influenced by the community. Individuals also had access to land, which was the main means of production, meaning there was equal opportunity; everyone received his/her share of what could be described as "the national cake". All those are no more, what we have instead is corruption, which has defiled all efforts at stalling it.

It is my considered opinion then that any effort aimed at stalling corruption in Nigeria should take a clue from the African traditional ethics. At present, it appears as if the idea of communalism, humanism hospitality and fear and respect for taboos has been completely thrown out of the window in contemporary governance. Does that mean that politicians see no reason at all to be concerned about fellow countrymen and women? Do they still believe it is not in the nature of politics to be humane? From what we learned earlier from this study about the nature and purpose of ethics in relation to the practice of politics, they should give it a second thought.

In the course of the analyses in the chapters, the following observations were made:

1. That it is evident in the literature that corruption has dominated the democratic governance in Nigeria since independence; and that there cannot be ethical leadership without a return to traditional ethics.
2. That for leaders to be perceived as ethical and to be able to influence ethical-related outcomes, followers must perceive them as credible, legitimate and trustworthy.
3. That many scholars who have reliable evidences about pre-colonial Africa, testify to the idea that governance and social life in traditional pre-colonial Africa had mechanisms with which it guarded against corruption.
4. That corrupt practices in governance were the very fabric of governance in the colonial system.
5. That the way out of the intractable political quagmire cannot be a continuation of the same system and methods that have entrenched corruption in the governance of Nigeria.
6. That leadership that has empathy for the people can be relevant and effective.
7. That there have been previous recommendations of panaceas to the intractable problem, which are themselves theoretically incomplete and faulty. This is more so because merely returning to the past will not achieve the desired political governance, therefore there is a need for selective adaptation because the new social realities are not exactly the same as the pre-colonial situation. Ethics, traditional or otherwise will always be relevant in any situation, pre-colonial or modern.

7.3 Recommendations and suggestions for further research

For attainment of ethical leadership in Nigeria, corruption must be eradicated, but corruption will never disappear by itself. Every Nigerian, including the leaders, are aware that the country has a moral problem that will not go away on its own but must be fought and defeated. It must be realized that leadership is supposed to be service to the society and not a money spinning business venture or a rare opportunity to feather one's nest and bequeath material security to one's offspring. Whereas democracy is gaining currency in Nigeria, it is liable to fail if it is not rooted in humaneness, which African traditional ethics is all about.

Consequently, the following recommendations were made as necessary conditions for solutions to challenges of corruption in Nigeria:

1. First and foremost, it is important to stress that, personal change is key to social change in the community. So, in line with that popular adage, 'charity begins at home', let individual political leaders in Nigeria practice and learn more about the traditional ethics in order for them to be able to practice it and teach others, thereby lead by example, since one cannot give what he or she does not have,
2. Secondly, the government must display a strong political will to fight corruption by enacting very strict preventative laws, which should be enforced without fear or favour of anyone. Perpetrators must be fairly tried and severely punished without fear or favour. In other words, the rule of law must be honored; there should be no sacred cows, everybody is equal before the law. By that, a strong message would have been sent to perpetrators that corruption has become a high risk activity with low rewards.
3. That whoever aspires to be a leader must be willing to learn and practice the tenets of African ethics in order to be able to lead by example. The traditional Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo strove to inculcate practical moral values in their children through a combination of myths, proverbs, songs and adages. The traditional medium of impacting morality through myths could be very effective. Morality among most Nigerian tribes is always associated with good behaviour and character. To this end, the storyteller always stressed the good or bad behaviour of the characters in the story and then advised the children to emulate such good character. To me, this indicates that the act of storytelling among the traditional Nigerian tribes can be regarded as a hands-on training in morality for children. Remember, one cannot give what he or she does not have. This idea of holistic moral education is a necessity, given the fact that leaders are made from the people.
4. Starting within nucleus family, African traditional ethics was traditionally transmitted through story-telling, proverbs, myths and taboos, folklore, drama and songs. Therefore, government should encourage and stress the need for traditional moral lessons to begin within the nucleus family, before they go to school, as it was in the olden days. In their formative years, children learn good and bad behaviours innocently from home and early school years. This is where the involvement of women becomes critical. For positive result from the moral education, school

curriculum in Nigeria should concentrate on the emergence of leaders who are not just intellectuals but also people of sound moral rectitude. I am optimistic that moral education can restore Nigerians back to the path of collective commitment, as it has in the pre-colonial period, to the needs of one another instead of this present immoral pursuit of personal gains, as it is evidently obvious in our social and political system.

So, one of the several objectives of moral or civic education is to induct people into good, responsible citizenship that is well informed and effective; it is also to impart citizen responsibilities, roles, rights and obligations beyond the perpetual ritual voting, as we learned earlier. Through education, citizens can learn both their rights and raise awareness about the system of government they have. They can also learn how and why corruption is a problem that lowers their standards of living and how corruption can be resisted in their individual lives. It is my hope that moral education, at all levels, will entail laying values on the dignity of the human person as stressed by traditional ethics. It will also encourage and involve respect for communal existence. This will necessarily improve tolerance for one another. This is what makes the difference between Plato and Aristotle; Plato was concerned with educating the political leaders, to have a philosopher king, while Aristotle was committed to educating the children of the citizens in order to produce citizens of good character. Nigeria needs both. The production of citizens with good character is central to Aristotle's idea of moral education as it is central to African traditional ethics.

5. Whistle blowing can be another effective tool against corruption of any sort. I recommend that government should encourage the art of whistle-blowing against anyone, including government officials. To that effect, a law legalising it and protecting the whistle blower should be put in place. After a successful prosecution and conviction of the suspect, I suggest that government should reward the whistle blower for his or her honesty so that it encourages others to be honest and hardworking. In addition, the private sector should have a free hand to offer incentives to create employment opportunities especially for the youth.
6. Fortify the institution of checks and balances with the instrument of removal of corrupt leaders. Although the system is theoretically entrenched in the presidential system of government being currently practiced in the country, it has been rendered impotent by corruption.

7. Adequate remuneration for civil servants. The current substantial gap in the earnings of political leaders and civil servants predisposes the latter to corrupt practices like asking for and accepting bribes and kick-backs, in order to make ends meet.
8. Put in place a system of transparency and accountability as a preventive and enforcement measure against corruption. For example, let each government ministry give a progress report and relevant information on regular basis to the public on the implementation of their policies. Appropriate officials should be ready to answer questions from the public on any issue affecting the people.
9. Empowerment of a fearless and formidable Press working hand-in-hand with a Police force morally trained and technologically equipped to enforce the law, can weaken or reduce the occurrence of corruption.
10. Alleviate poverty by giving everyone equal opportunity or access to means of production. As long as poverty remains widespread in the country, no reform will make any meaningful difference in the lives of Nigerian people. So as a major step in preventing corruption and creating equality and justice, government should make basic living amenities accessible to all people. These amenities include clean and drinkable water, good roads and, most importantly, employment for the youth. If this can be achieved, the tale of two 'Nigerias' occupying the same geographical space – one in affluence and the other in abject poverty – will be eliminated.
11. I call on African Psychologists, sociologists, educationists, economists, historians, moral, political and education philosophers to come up with a curriculum that will teach traditional African social and cultural values in areas of politics, ethics, economics, social relationships and civics in general, in our institutions of learning.
12. Finally, let corruption be seen through the eyes of African traditional ethics, then, corruption of any sort will be acknowledged and seen as a great evil to be avoided.

If the above recommendations based on the precepts of African traditional ethics are implemented with strong political will and good intent, the recommendations can become a catalyst for social change not only within individuals but also in the whole nation at large. The overall outcome will be that public officials will be ethical in their decision-making and actions as they pilot the affairs of the public, which will go a long way to improve and sustain the general well-being of the citizenry.

The following areas were suggested for further researches:

1. In pre-colonial era, women were respected and dreaded by kings and rulers in the area of misrule. Can women still play the same role in these modern times to curb the excesses of our leaders, especially, in the area of embezzlement?
2. Can we find or create effective modern equivalents of *Taboos*?
3. Checks and balances were effective in pre-colonial times as we see for example in the Yoruba Kingdoms; is there anything we can do in this contemporary period to fortify the principle of checks and balances as guaranteed in the constitution of most African countries?
4. Come up with measures to present corruption as a high risk but low rewards venture. In other words, how do we make corruption of embezzlement unattractive to aspiring leaders?

7.4 Conclusions

Specifically, the following conclusions of previous scholars were nullified:

1. That there can be no solution to the problem of corruption in Nigeria,
2. That Nigerians are naturally corrupt,
3. That it was because African cultures support authoritarianism and human rights abuse and consequently, corruption,
4. That the problem of corruption in Nigeria can be solved merely by returning to the past systems even haphazardly.
5. That the problem confronting democratic governance in Nigeria can be eliminated by replacing democracy with alternative system of governance.
6. That post-colonial African leaders are entirely responsible for the corruption problem in the Nigerian democratic practices.
7. That with time, the problem will necessarily get itself solved with no efforts, after-all, it has taken Europe and the United States several centuries to be where they are now.

Lack of ethical political leadership is holding Nigeria back, therefore, corruption must be eliminated before ethical leadership can emerge. Strengthening ethical political leadership through the inculcation of African traditional ethics is key to rebuilding Nigeria as a powerful engine, given her natural resources and human capital. Leaders

in organisations need to be knowledgeable in ethical principles and acquire ethical virtues to check the undue influence of self-interest as they carry out their responsibilities. It has also been learned that ethical leadership is leadership that is directed by respect for ethical beliefs and values, and for dignity and rights of others. I see those ideas as in tandem with what African traditional ethics demand from any leader who wants to be regarded as 'ethical'.

Appropriate conduct as prescribed for an ethical person by African traditional ethics include, honesty, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, and love for another human being. Ethical leadership can be regarded as a prerequisite for a stable and strong country; it is also needed in the fight against corruption as well as in the achievement of individual or societal goals. A society either falls or rises depending on the kind of leadership within its system. This is particularly crucial in public organisations where public leaders exercise enormous power and have access to public resources. The fight against corruption will be effective if and when educational, preventative and punitive measures are proportionally combined. Elimination of corruption and unethical leadership will afford us the opportunity of avoiding a slide back to Darwinian society where only the fittest survive.

Consequently, I conclude that, an ethic which is as anthropocentric (human-centered) and which institutionalised ideals which guide and direct the pattern of life, and which is also firmly rooted in peoples culture, as African traditional ethics, could be effective in controlling a human problem such as corruption in leadership.

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