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Mapping the Pitfalls of Postcolonial (National) Governance in Alobwed'Epie's *The Bad Samaritan*

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Abstract

Drawing examples from Alobwed'Epie's *The Bad Samaritan*, this paper examines how corruption and its consequent maladministration constitute major pitfalls of postcolonial national governance that have severely hindered socioeconomic and politico-cultural development in African societies such as Ewawa (Cameroon). Through setting, characterization, and narrative technique, D'Epie exposes how institutions at both local and central administrative levels become enmeshed in systemic corruption, inefficiency, moral decay and abuse of power. It further shows that *The Bad Samaritan* functions as a literary mirror reflecting the disillusionment and betrayal of nationalist ideals in the post-independence era. By figuratively inverting the Biblical concept of the "good Samaritan," D'Epie constructs a scathing critique of leaders whose unethical conduct and self-interest have transformed Cameroon into a metaphorical "banana republic." The paper draws on Charles Fombad and Nico Steytler's (2020) theories on corruption and constitutionalism in Africa to highlight how political elites have, ironically, acted as "bad Samaritans" to their nations, impeding democracy and development. The paper reveals how literature becomes a vital tool for interrogating and mapping the enduring failures of postcolonial governance in Africa.

Keywords: *Postcolonial Governance; Corruption and Maladministration; Alobwed'Epie's* The Bad Samaritan*; African Literature and Politics; Cameroon Postcolonial Society.*

Introduction

Drawing examples from Alobwed'Epie's *The Bad Samaritan*, this paper argues that maladministration and corruption significantly undermine socioeconomic and politico-cultural development in Ewawa through the diversion of resources and personnel intended for essential services, thereby eroding public trust. These two ills of Ewawan governance disproportionately harm the poor and vulnerable by increasing costs and reducing access to basic needs. They also exacerbate socioeconomic and politico-cultural inequality and reduce private sector initiative, leading to job losses and widespread developmental stagnation. Using Ewawa as a microcosm, the paper asserts that postcolonial Africa abounds with societies where "military men whose mother-in-law[s] [have] died, and who [have] been coming to the bank to no avail to withdraw money and prepare to take the corpse[s] home, [go] mad when a day before the removal of the corpse from the mortuary, [they come] and still [find] the gates locked; [they tie] a chain to the gate, [tie] it to [their] military jeep[s] and [tear] down the gate; [and] then [go] for the corpse[s] and [lay them] in front of the bank" (D'Epie, 2009, p. 18). This incident serves as a vivid metaphor that represents financial institutions in postcolonial societies as either guillotines or mortuaries—symbols of bureaucratic decay, inefficiency, and systemic

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failure. Reading Alobwed'Epie's novel from this perspective is therefore important because it constitutes a valuable literary contribution to the act of uncovering, revealing, and reporting unethical practices, misconduct, and illegal activities within and among institutions of governance.

This study derives its relevance from the fact that, unlike other studies on *The Bad Samaritan*, such as Wankah, Njong, and Pangmeshi's (2024) work that broadly focuses on "irresponsible leadership within post-independence nations, exploring its impact on governance, societal development, and sustainability of democratic systems" (p. 164), it singles out corruption in all its ramifications and discusses it as the cardinal and recurrent foundational cause of developmental stagnation in postcolonial Africa. This paper's argument resonates with Fombad and Steytler's observation that:

> Africa loses at least USD148 billion each year to corruption; [c]orruption poses a major threat to peace and stability on the continent, casting an ominous shadow over the prospects for social, economic, and political progress and undermining efforts that have been made over the years to establish a culture of constitutionalism, democracy, good governance, and respect for the rule of law (2020, p. 3).

The Bad Samaritan has been chosen for this study for two reasons: first, because it is a relatively recent depiction of maladministration and corruption; and second, because its narrative explores these themes with fearless perspicuity and force, rendering it committed literature *par excellence*. The paper thus contributes to the ongoing scholarly efforts toward understanding and combatting the hydra-headed crimes of corruption and maladministration in Africa.

Post-independence Africa has arguably suffered from bad governance more than any other continent. Since independence, African countries have struggled to construct systems, processes, and structures through which decisions could be made and enforced within organizations and societies. These structures—comprising the interplay of laws, socioeconomic norms, power dynamics, and communication—have not been properly defined or implemented to ensure that leadership is accountable and that decision-making processes are transparent and just. Consequently, there has been a persistent dearth of proper decision-making institutions and processes, accountability mechanisms, oversight systems, risk management, compliance, ethical behavior, strategic decision-making, and stakeholder engagement. This has meant that decisions are often not made transparently, fairly, or effectively enough to ensure that societies are well-governed and that leaders are held accountable.

African novelists have continually thematized this failure of governance, referencing the inability of African institutions and leadership structures to effectively and ethically manage public affairs, resources, and human rights. At the same time, they have demonstrated how corruption, lack of accountability and transparency, disregard for the rule of law, ineffective oversight, abuse of power, arbitrary policymaking, and nepotism have led to reduced economic growth, increased poverty and inequality, weakened institutions, and persistent human rights violations. In Cameroon, for instance, when one considers the above elements of bad governance, novels such as Beti (1978), Nkengasong (2004), Nyamnjoh (1995, 2006, 2007, 2008a, 2008b, and 2008c), and Alobwed'Epie's *The Bad Samaritan*, among others, readily come to mind. While acknowledging that corruption is a feature of all countries—both developed and underdeveloped—these novelists assert that what makes corruption in Cameroon and Africa distinctive is its ever-increasing scale and the multiplying debilitating effects it has on the continent's prospects and futures. Their fictional representations show that corruption not only enfeebles economic growth and development, frustrates foreign investment, and diverts resources from priority areas in the economy, but also brings with it unnecessary penury and desolation, especially for the most vulnerable in society.

Armah (1968), one of the most prominent chroniclers of corruption in African fiction, reminds us in *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*:

> "I saw men tear down the veils behind which the truth had been hidden. But then the same men, when they have power in their hands at last, began to find the veils useful. They made many more. Life has not changed. Only some people have been growing, becoming different, that is all" (1968, p. 101).

In the phraseology of *The Bad Samaritan*, the "good Samaritans" who fought against African colonialism have become the "bad Samaritans" who hypocritically and shamelessly promote the corrupt practices of neocolonialism. And teacher, just like D'Epie, adroitly sums up the persistence of postcolonial corruption and its resultant disillusionment when he rhetorically wonders: "After a youth spent fighting the white man, why should not the president discover as he grows older that his real desire has been to be like the white governor himself, to live above all the blackness in the big old slave castle" (2009, p. 101). It is this yearning to become as corrupt and hypocritical as the white colonialists—the colonial Africa's bad Samaritans—that D'Epie limns in *The Bad Samaritan*, and it is that yearning that this paper aims to strip bare of all its ideological adornments. Armah's delineation of the interdependence between Ghanaian and/or African corruption and ugliness, filth, and scatology or coprology resonates with D'Epie's depiction of the association between Cameroonian and/or African corruption and the absence of compassion and neighborly love that defines being a good Samaritan rather than a bad one. Seen as the voice of the voiceless, D'Epie speaks on behalf of the masses and criticizes the Biya regime that has failed to make meaningful decisions to curb corruption and foster the development of the country.

The Charles Fombad Conceptualizations of Corruption

In line with Fombad's (2020, pp. 17–18) arguments, this paper acknowledges that "Corruption takes many forms and is manifested in many ways; [and] there is no exhaustive list of what activities constitute it [but] such a list [would include] bribery, embezzlement, patronage, nepotism and cronyism, influence-peddling, kickbacks, electoral fraud, and unholy alliances" (p. 17). The paper also recognizes that corruption may manifest as either grand or petty. As Fombad rightly explains, "Corruption is grand corruption not because of the amount of money involved per se but because it occurs at a high or prominent institutional level" (p. 17). Thus:

> It is often associated with political corruption, acts committed at the highest level of government where policies and rules are formulated; [and] occurs when politicians and senior civil servants responsible for making policy decisions that affect the welfare of the state misuse their positions and the powers at their disposal to make decisions that benefit them personally or their patronage network rather than the state (p. 17).

Furthermore, Fombad maintains that "[i]n grand corruption, high-level decision-makers either side-step the laws they make or tailor them to suit their selfish interests. This is arguably the most dangerous form of corruption, because once a country's top leadership is engaged in it, corruption tends to spread rapidly downwards and can spiral out of control" (p. 17). Consequently, "the most extreme form of grand corruption in the political context is state capture, which occurs when oligarchs are able illicitly to take control of and manipulate strategically placed state officials to shape laws, policies, regulations, and state institutions in a manner that enriches them" (p. 18).

In contrast, "petty corruption (sometimes referred to as bureaucratic corruption) is small-scale, everyday corruption that takes place at the implementation end of policy formulation. It usually involves small sums of money, it is also referred to as low-level or street-level corruption [and] people experience it daily in encounters with public administration and services in forms such as schools, hospitals, licensing authorities, and police at roadblocks" (p. 18). Petty corruption, therefore, occurs where ordinary citizens directly interface with the state through its service institutions and functionaries.

Additionally, Fombad identifies "incidental corruption, also known as individual or sporadic corruption, that does not threaten the functioning of the country's administration or economy" (p. 18); "institutional or systematic corruption," where "corruption pervades particular institutions or sectors of activity and usually has a larger impact on government revenue and on development" (p. 18); and "endemic, societal, entrenched, or systemic corruption," which "describes a situation where corruption is virtually an integral part of national life because it is all-pervasive, routinized, and accepted by all. Such corruption affects every aspect of social, economic, and political life" (p. 18).

It suffices, then, to remember that because there are no clear-cut demarcations between acting as an individual and acting as a functionary of the state; between acting for oneself and acting on behalf of a group or an institution; and between what one society or person considers petty and what another considers grand, corruption in postcolonial Africa functions as a vicious cycle. It embodies several combinations of the different forms of corruption, creating a system in which dishonesty is normalized and institutionalized. In such societies, corruption has become "so unrestrained that honesty is seen as 'irrational' behaviour and dishonesty the norm" (Fombad, 2020, p. 19). This paper therefore, asserts that corruption exists on an ever-expanding spectrum, with neither a finite beginning nor a conclusive end.

Summary of Alobwed'Epie's *The Bad Samaritan*

Set in a kleptomaniac and corrupt fictional African country called Ewawa, D'Epie's *The Bad Samaritan* vividly delineates how corruption can precipitate the collapse of financial institutions and erode the moral fabric of a nation. At the center of this storm of corruption are Professor Esole and his wife, who find themselves doubly aggrieved by salary cuts, the dubious closure of their post office savings bank account, and the consequent loss of their hard-earned savings. Reduced to the urgencies, vagaries, and mercies of precarity, the couple resorts to intermittent borrowing from moneylenders at exorbitant interest rates. In desperation, Esole ventures into politics, hoping to effect positive change, but soon (re)learns the harsh realities and moral dirtiness of political life in Ewawa.

The Bad Samaritan also portrays how the youth of Ewawa, represented by Esole's daughter, Dione, are compelled by bad governance and socioeconomic decay to emigrate in search of greener pastures—pastures that often turn out to be far less green than imagined. The narrator presents Ewawa as a microcosm of postcolonial African states, riddled with all the vices characteristic of contemporary politics and politicians: dubious party activities, manipulated appointments, rigged elections, betrayal, and an unquenchable thirst for absolute power.

Government agents such as the Ministers of Territorial Administration, Finance, Defense and Justice are depicted as masterminds of political malpractice, working tirelessly to sustain the dominance of the ruling elite. Although the Senior Divisional Officer and some prominent members of society "x-rayed all political parties, studied old and new manifestoes of each party" (33) and discovered that despite being in power for over thirty years, "the Ewawa Party for Advanced Democracy (EPAD) had [never] fulfilled [its manifesto] at any stage of the existence of the party" (33), citizens are nonetheless expected to vote for the EPAD.

Ewawa is further portrayed as a nation where local and traditional administrators are coerced into mobilizing support for the ruling party. This manipulation is exemplified in the narrator's description: "The beggar chief of Lebmot central, a PhD cap-in-hand stooge decreed by Muankum that if one vote went to the opposition, the nonnatives of the area would be repatriated to their villages of origin. He even suggested that the opposition should be banned" (D'Epie 2009, 44). Moreover, the electorate is both bribed and intimidated. As the narrator recounts:

> The Minister had made several empty promises and was sort of dry in what to tell the people again. He convened a chiefs' conference and sent his fleet of vehicles to the villages to bring them to

> Lebmot. To entice a heavy turnout, he sent FCFA 20,000 pre-attendance stipend to each invitee with word that heavy pacts were on their way (43).

When manipulation fails, even human lives are sacrificed in the desperate quest for power. The narrator notes that:

> Everybody doubted who might have killed an innocent teacher and taken his parts. Suspicion started entering on the incumbent Mayor. It was alleged that finding the odds too much against him, he had killed the teacher and taken his parts to Ojebu Ode where his marabous would concoct election-winning talismans for him. If that were true, Esole thought it will work in his favor" (40–41).

In summary, *The Bad Samaritan* is a compelling political allegory that dramatizes the destructive consequences of greed, moral decay, and the abuse of power. The novel embodies Acton's famous assertion that "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely," and that "Great men are almost always bad men, even when they exercise influence and not authority; still more when you superadd the tendency or certainty of corruption by authority" (Dalberg-Acton 1887, 1).

Forms of Corruption as Catalysts of State Dysfunctionality

Read through an allegorical and symbolic lens, Alobwed'Epie's *The Bad Samaritan* stands as a scathing critique of President Paul Biya's regime, which has misgoverned Cameroon for over four decades. Through this literary mirror, D'Epie exposes the decay of public institutions and the moral bankruptcy of a leadership system that has long ceased to serve the interests of its citizens. The novel presents a portrait of a defective public administration that is neither accountable nor transparent, neither participatory nor dynamic.

In D'Epie's fictional world, Saul Kilcam's government and its governing bodies fail to prioritize the needs of the general public, instead favoring a privileged few whose personal enrichment comes at the expense of national progress. The state—meant to function as an enabler and resource provider, the principal actor of governance tasked with enacting and enforcing laws that ensure equity and transparency—fails woefully in its responsibilities. Its inability to provide the necessary legal and regulatory frameworks for the just management of the country's social and economic resources results in pervasive and normalized corruption.

Through the novel's setting, characterization, and narrative techniques, the narrator transports readers into the heart of several key public institutions—such as the Ministries of Finance, Territorial Administration, Post and Telecommunications, Transport, Justice, Defense, and National Security—exposing the incompetence, moral decay, and corruption that define Ewawa's public administration. D'Epie paints a realistic picture of how the greed and ineptitude of government officials trickle down to affect both individual citizens and the wider public, leading to institutional collapse, disillusionment, and social despair. These depictions strikingly resonate with the lived realities of Cameroonians under Biya's long rule, revealing how literature becomes a vehicle for truth-telling in the face of state repression.

Nelson Mandela's observation, made even in the early days of South Africa's post-apartheid era, hauntingly echoes this reality: "Little did we suspect that our own people, when they get that chance, would be as corrupt as the apartheid regime. This is one of the things that has really hurt us" (qtd. in Fombad & Steytler, 2020, 3). Mandela's lamentation encapsulates the moral tragedy of postcolonial African governance—where the liberators of yesterday, entrusted with the hopes of a continent, often become the oppressors and exploiters of today. In *The Bad Samaritan*, D'Epie allegorically dramatizes this betrayal, suggesting that postcolonial corruption is not only a political and economic failure but also a profound moral and ethical collapse that corrodes the very soul of the nation.

The Ministry of Finance as the Epitome of Ewawan Institutional or Systematic (Grand) Corruption

In the fictional world of Ewawa, as in many postcolonial African states, bribery and corruption are inseparable; they function as intertwined forms of bad governance that have deeply permeated the social and administrative fabric of the nation. In *The Bad Samaritan*, the protagonist Esole guides readers into the Department of Salaries within the Ministry of Finance, where corruption is most visibly institutionalized. D'Epie depicts how workers in this ministry employ fraudulent methods to extort money from citizens, revealing the mechanisms through which these employees have amassed wealth.

Due to administrative and professional incompetence, the management of retirement files is slow and overly complex. Retirees often wait two to four years before receiving their gratuities. Workers in the Ministry of Finance prioritize files only for those who bribe them. Consequently, all retirees and pensioners must travel to Dande, the capital of Ewawa, "to see" the office boys and "pay homage" to the workers of the Ministry of Finance (D'Epie, 2009, pp. 53, 65). The verbs "to see" and "to pay homage" function as euphemisms for bribery, indicating that corruption has eroded fairness, rationality, compassion, patriotism, and basic humanity among Ewawa's ruling elites. This underscores the commercialization of service within the Ministry of Finance and explains why "The Ministry of Finance is punctual in cutting people's salaries once they attain retirement age, but…no worker has time to get them to establish his pension" (p. 53).

The delays in processing retirees' files reflect systemic administrative dysfunction, exacerbated by centralized bureaucracy and bottlenecks. Centralized power in Dande allows corruption to flourish, causing retirees to lose 20 to 30 percent of their pensions to bribes before receiving any payment. Esole's attempt to circumvent corruption by avoiding direct contact with the office boys ironically leads him to the Private Secretary of the Director of Salaries, where 20 percent of his pension and that of his wife are extracted as a bribe. This irony illustrates the institutionalization of corruption within the Ministry of Finance, practiced uniformly by employees at all levels. Bribery expedites file processing—from two to four years down to merely two weeks—with the Private Secretary receiving FCFA 5,000,000 (p. 65) for facilitating this illegal act. Similarly, at the Post Office Savings Bank (POSB), Esole is compelled to surrender 15 percent of FCFA 5,000,000 to the Director as a bribe before his wife's savings can be released (p. 52). The humiliation and indignities retirees face in the Ministry of Finance are so severe that many hand over the pursuit of their pensions to their children, while others die before ever receiving their entitlements—not due to aging, but because they are effectively sentenced by an unscrupulous regime. Esole notes that the worst fate for a civil servant in Ewawa is to retire without sufficient personal savings to survive the two, three, or four-year delay before receiving a pension (pp. 64–65).

Through these depictions, D'Epie presents the Ministry of Finance as the epitome of institutional or systematic (grand) corruption, demonstrating how entrenched malfeasance, centralized bureaucracy, and the commercialization of public service combine to debilitate the state and oppress its citizens.

Public Service Jobs and Reckless Consumerism: A Bizarre Mixture of Incidental, Institutional, and Endemic Corruption

In Dande, government ministers have engineered an elaborate administrative racket involving the purchase of expensive vehicles under the guise of official administrative cars. Beyond the misuse of these vehicles, they have normalized the practice of disabling official vehicles by swapping engines between old and new cars in the Administrative Garage. In a flashback, Beri recalls how, under the instructions of Parliamentarians, "we removed engines from brand new Mercedez Benze, fitted them in Mercedez Benze scraps then auctioned the old-looking Benze to Parliamentarians behind the project. We then fitted the old engines in the brand-new body" (pp. 69–70). Beri and his colleagues were bribed to facilitate these swaps and were further introduced to an "accident brigade." The "accident

brigade" was mobilized whenever an old government vehicle met with a mishap; the brigade would replace the number plates of damaged government vehicles with those of new ones to sell them as scrap (p. 85). Administrative vehicles purchased at exorbitant sums were then sold to ministers and their relatives at giveaway prices: "brand-new cars were sold at FCFA 30,000 to the relatives of Ministers from the same ruling clan" (D'Epie, 2009, p. 57). One of Beri's responsibilities was to monitor and report on which administrative cars were allocated to Parliamentarians and which were to be auctioned (D'Epie, 2009, p. 69).

Beri recounts how he was recruited to the Administrative Garage by his brother, a Parliamentarian: "I was a taxi driver before my brother Parliamentarian had me employed as an apprentice mechanic in the Administrative Garage… He told me he was sending me there because there was big business there" (p. 69). This flashback illustrates how Beri and his colleagues were introduced to bribery and corruption, guided by recklessly consumerist Parliamentarians who were meant to be law-makers. The episode also reveals how Saul Kilcam's government has institutionalized nepotism and kleptocracy, teaching its agents strategies for survival in a corrupt society: "that is what Parliamentarians had taught us to do. People invent ways of surviving in a country like this one" (p. 86). This survival-of-the-fittest principle is further captured in the proverb, "a goat eats where it is tethered" (p. 86). Beri emphasizes that it was not the salary from the Administrative Garage that attracted him, but "because of the heavy fruit-yielding intrigues of working there…it is big business and there is nothing rosary-reciting can do about it" (p. 69).

D'Epie draws explicitly on Darwinian evolutionary theory to underscore this adaptive mechanism. According to Darwin (1868), the principle of "survival of the fittest" describes how organisms best suited to their environment are more likely to survive and reproduce. In Ewawa, this concept is transposed into a socio-political context, where individuals must navigate a predatory and corrupt administrative system to survive. Just as organisms in nature compete for limited resources, citizens, government officials, and Parliamentarians compete for material gain within the state apparatus. Those who fail to adapt—by refusing to engage in bribery, nepotism, or manipulation—are disadvantaged, while those who exploit the system, like Beri and the officials in the Administrative Garage, prosper materially and socially. Beri emphasizes that it was the "heavy fruit-yielding intrigues of working [in the Administrative Garage]…it is big business and there is nothing rosary-reciting can do about it" (Epie, 2009, p. 69) that motivated him rather than the official salary. The Administrative Garage thus becomes a microcosm of Ewawa's broader social ecosystem, where endemic, institutional, and petty corruption function as adaptive strategies. D'Epie's invocation of Darwinian theory highlights that in a society dominated by kleptocracy and nepotism, moral restraint alone is insufficient for survival; only those who adapt to the corrupt environment—by learning its rules and exploiting its opportunities—can thrive.

Beri's testimony underscores that corruption in Ewawa is endemic, pervading ministers, Parliamentarians citizens, and even remote communities such as Tonye Subdivision, where one might expect some moral restraint. Within the ministries of Ewawa, petty, grand, incidental, institutional, and endemic corruption coexist, performing a macabre dance dictated by the logic of survival. Yet, the proverb about the goat also serves as Alobwed'Epie's subtle warning: one day, the "snake of accountability" may emerge from the green grass and strike the goat while it feeds, reminding all that no corrupt act remains without eventual consequence.

The Police, the Gendarmerie, Finance Controllers, and the Senior Divisional Officer's Offices as Spatial Enhancers of Corruption

In Tonye Sub-Division, corruption is endemic in public institutions such as the police, gendarmerie, territorial administration, and finance offices, and is typified by the Senior Divisional Officer (SDO), the Commissioner of Police, the Commandant of the Gendarmerie, and finance controllers. These officials symbolically function as the "gods" of the locality, controlling access to economic opportunities. Anyone engaging in business or income-generating activities must bribe these authorities to secure protection or legitimacy. Esole's aloofness from this corrupt

system is immediately problematic: "He had not gone to see any of them, to greet them, to say that he was around their exclusive zone. That was not compatible with the norm" (Epie, 2009, p. 67).

Beri observes that since Esole became the new proprietor of the defunct Carburry & Fry—a once-thriving cocoa purchasing company central to Tonye's economy—he has refused to "see," "greet," and "pay homage" to the men that matter locally: "the SDO, the Commissioner of police and the Commandant of the Gendarmerie. To make good your stay here you have to see them. You even have to go Tumba 'to pay homage' to the Director of Taxes" (p. 70). Beri also reveals that the police collude with taxi drivers and insurance companies: drivers secure protection from the "accident brigade" by bribing the police directly with cash or indirectly by sending their children to school free of charge (p. 69). Esole's initial refusal to participate in this system leads to unjust treatment; when his brand-new car is damaged by a taxi driver, the police favor the driver.

To punish his noncompliance, the authorities incite tax controllers from Tumba to seal Esole's business premises, claiming illegal operations and imposing a default bill of FCFA 20,000,000 for a business with a capital of less than FCFA 10,000,000 (p. 74). Ultimately, Esole resorts to corruption, giving FCFA 5,000,000 to Beri to bribe the authorities, distributing money across multiple offices to reopen his business. The next morning, controllers from Tumba reopen the business and grant a six-month probationary period.

The SDO, police, and gendarmerie, though constitutionally empowered to enforce the law, deliver public services, resolve conflicts, and maintain public order, are depicted as incompetent officers who exploit their offices for personal gain, inflicting harm on individuals and the public. Beri's support of their actions, coupled with his personal accumulation of wealth through the Administrative Garage, including a FCFA 90,000,000 bungalow and seven taxis (p. 87), highlights his wholehearted acceptance of corruption. With his ambition fulfilled, he returns to Banso to assume his father's seat in the traditional council and restore his family's lost prestige (pp. 91–92). Alobwed'Epie thus illustrates that sometimes, powerlessness corrupts, and absolute powerlessness corrupts absolutely, showing how spatial control and administrative authority are leveraged to perpetuate systemic corruption in Ewawa.

The Operational Dialectics between Kakistocracy and Kleptocracy

In the world of *The Bad Samaritan*, kakistocrats and kleptocrats operate in tandem, creating a vicious cycle where one thrives through the other. Kakistocrats—unqualified or morally corrupt leaders—survive through the mechanisms of kleptocracy, while kleptocrats—those who misappropriate wealth—exploit the incompetence of kakistocrats to enrich themselves. For instance, the kleptomaniac Director of the Ewawan Airport diverts equipment and furniture worth hundreds of millions of francs, originally meant for the airport restaurant, to his personal establishment: "When the things arrived, he exchanged them with the old equipment and furniture he had in his personal hotel restaurant" (Epie, 2009, p. 7). Although a commission of inquiry is established immediately, three years later, no charges are brought against him. He is a classic kleptocrat, engaging in money laundering and safeguarding assets for personal use. The airport itself is rendered unattractive due to nepotism: "I have never seen an ugly airport like that... I know the Minister of Transport gave this contract to one of his primitive brothers" (p. 5). Here, kakistocracy intersects with favoritism, showing how unqualified leadership compromises public projects.

Similarly, Ewawa government officials, particularly within the Ministry of Finance, treat the treasury as a personal wealth reservoir. Public funds are transferred to fictitious accounts at home and abroad to secure personal wealth, even when officials leave power: "When the minister asks them to transfer billions of francs to his bank account abroad, they transfer hundreds of millions to their bank accounts spread all over the country" (p. 86). This form of political corruption—grafting—enables ministers and computer analysts to enrich themselves illicitly.

Misappropriation extends to administrative vehicles. The purchase of official cars has increased from "FCFA 8,000,000 old model vehicles to FCFA 75,000,000 new model ones" (p. 60), with ministers preferring luxury models such as Pajeros, Land Cruisers, and Fort Jeeps. This represents an organized scheme to enrich themselves: "While Ministers bought cars for their Ministries, they also bought for their families" (p. 61). The Minister of Junglery exemplifies this abuse during elections, arriving in Lebmot Sub-Division with "a fleet of 12 Pajeros, 8 Land Cruisers, and Fort Jeeps all marked CA (Car Administrative) Administrative vehicle" (p. 41), a tactic to intimidate or entice voters. The cycle completes itself when these vehicles are later "sold at FCFA 30,000frs to ministers and the relatives of ministers" (p. 57).

Government authorities also seize citizens' land. Esole's property and that of an epileptic woman are confiscated by the General Manager of the Airport and the Ministers of Finance and Territorial Administration: "You see that place…the General Manager of the Airport came and seized it from me…You see in the far left; the Minister of Finance seized that piece of land from an epileptic woman…there above the hill was my father's house. The Minister of Territorial Administration has seized it" (p. 9). Minimal compensation of FCFA 2,000,000 is offered, insufficient to purchase new land or build a home. Local authorities replicate this pattern: the Mayor and his councillors seize land and convert it for personal gain, often using land certificates to legitimize misappropriation (p. 33).

Political kleptomania is further exemplified by the parliamentarian and the mayor, who misdirect funds intended for local development. The Parliamentarian "had taken the contract to repair roads, culverts and bridges of the area and instead of doing that, he had misappropriated the funds and had made no repairs" (p. 28), leaving Lebmot Sub-Division inaccessible during the rainy season. Similarly, the Mayor "has misappropriated hundreds of millions of francs from the council's coffers" (p. 32) to secure electoral victory through marabouts.

Through these interwoven examples, D'Epie illustrates how kakistocracy and kleptocracy operate as mutually reinforcing mechanisms, undermining governance, misappropriating public resources, and perpetuating social inequality in Ewawa.

Political Manoeuvring as a Form of Institutionalized Corruption that Ensures Political Survival

In corrupt societies like Ewawa, political manoeuvring is a deliberate strategy employed by the ruling regime to maintain power, influence decisions, and manipulate situations to their advantage. Such manoeuvring is crucial because it largely determines who remains in or ascends to leadership and shapes how policies are implemented. The timing and programming of elections are strategic forms of manoeuvring that advantage incumbents and weaken opposition parties. For instance, elections are scheduled during the heart of the rainy season, creating a campaign disadvantage for opposition candidates due to the poor road network. Esole's campaign team, composed of unemployed graduates, struggles to finance party activities and provide protection from the rain: "the huddles the party faced was money to lubricate the campaign at all stages and vehicles to protect them from rain" (p. 39), resulting in members catching pneumonia from exposure (p. 41). They rely on borrowed money from thrift and loan groups and hire motorcycles to navigate rough terrains, whereas the ruling party uses ministers, directors, and state corporations such as Ewawa Oil Company, Ewawa Banana Company, and Timber Companies to fund their campaign (pp. 146–147).

This illustrates the lack of fairness in the treatment of political parties. As Van de Walle argues (qtd. in LeBas, 2019), ruling parties in many African hybrid regimes enjoy structural advantages, making elections uneven. Opposition parties depend on individual support and self-sacrifice, while incumbents leverage state resources—including administrative cars and personnel—to outmaneuver competitors (pp. 47–48). For example, the Minister of Junglery mobilizes a fleet of vehicles to cover in one day the distances that Esole's team covers in weeks, and compels civil servants from the sub-division to campaign for the incumbent mayor and parliamentarian: "he asks all top civil

servants, especially the Directors, to tell their village people that if the opposition won in their area, the government would dismiss them from their positions" (pp. 42–43).

The Minister also convenes a chiefs' conference, transporting village leaders to Lebmot and providing them FCFA 150,000 each to pledge loyalty to the ruling party (p. 43). Through intimidation, co-optation, and financial inducements, the Minister ensures political compliance and destabilizes the opposition. In this context, money, alcohol, and positions serve as tools of manipulation, while administrative authorities, chiefs, and civil servants become agents of the regime.

Esole's decision to contest for the opposition party, the Serious People's Deliverance Party (SPDP), rather than the ruling Ewawa Party for Advanced Democracy (EPAD), is met with disapproval by the SDO, who describes it as an "unwise choice of a political party" (p. 37) and asserts that "politics in Africa is personal survival not collective survival" (p. 37). According to the SDO, victory is determined not by popularity or a party manifesto, but by affiliation with the ruling party. He further notes, "there is nothing like democracy. Elections are not democratic if the ruling party loses. Elections are not democratic if the incumbent does not win. So, the ruling party must win" (pp. 37–38). Elections, therefore, are formalities designed to legitimize the status quo rather than reflect genuine democratic choice.

The Minister of Junglery, along with the Ministry of Territorial Administration, employs coercion and manipulation to suppress opposition. Opposition supporters face threats of dismissal, replacement, or exclusion from positions of power if their candidates win: "I can't make you win here… do you think Professor I can sacrifice my position because of your unwise choice of a political party?" (p. 27). Administrative authorities and the military act as enforcers of the regime, protecting personal and political interests over the collective good.

Manipulation extends to West Bassiland, where the Head Master—a proxy for the ruling party—uses money, alcohol, and food to influence votes. Chiefs who had planned to support the opposition are bribed to vote for the ruling party. During the inauguration of the ruling party office, each chief receives FCFA 50,000, while Chief Nkume, the spokesperson, receives FCFA 75,000. Villagers participate in feasting, drinking, and dancing, praising the Head Master and EPAD, highlighting the population's susceptibility to material inducements (pp. 165–167). This exemplifies the "politics of the stomach," as observed by Mesape: "our people are controlled by their throats. What goes down their throat controls their reasoning" (p. 154). Citizens literally sell their consciences and rights for immediate gratification, further entrenching institutionalized corruption and ensuring the survival of the ruling elite.

The Nexus between Bad Governance and Underdevelopment

Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations, once observed that:

> "Corruption hurts the poor disproportionately by diverting funds intended for development, undermining a government's ability to provide basic services, feeding inequality and injustice, and discouraging foreign investment and aid. Corruption is a key factor in economic underperformance and a major obstacle to poverty alleviation and development."

In line with Annan's assertion, the foregoing discussion has demonstrated that corruption and bad governance have systematically crippled Ewawa's economy. This ruin manifests in moral crises, inflation, the devaluation of the FCFA, multiple salary cuts, job losses, rising prices of basic commodities, and declining standards of living. University lecturers who once earned FCFA 1,200,000 now receive only FCFA 250,000, and headmasters' salaries have fallen from FCFA 250,000 to FCFA 120,000 per month. Gas prices have quadrupled, rising from FCFA 1,500 to FCFA 6,000. Arrears of workers go unpaid for years, prompting individuals like Beri to abandon formal employment: "I

could not find myself earning FCFA 75,000 a month. So, I took onto driving my own taxi… I made FCFA 15,000 a day" (pp. 88–89).

Beri later became an apprentice mechanic at the Administrative Garage, and when that closed, he turned to selling cigarettes. Even Esole, after forty years of work, cannot save enough to sustain himself for a month in retirement. Through flashbacks, Esole nostalgically contrasts the deceased "old man's" regime (probably Ahidjo's reign) with Saul Kilcam's (possibly Paul Biya's) rule, observing that during the former period, teachers were well-paid, prices were low, and standards of living were high (p. 56). This contrast highlights how nepotism, kleptocracy, and institutionalized corruption under Saul Kilcam have systematically impoverished Ewawa.

The economy suffers from embezzlement of public funds, the collapse of cocoa prices, deteriorating infrastructure, inability of parents to educate children, and skyrocketing costs of living, which have rendered low- and middle-income earners destitute (pp. 32, 57). Workers also lose FCFA 130,000 monthly to compulsory deductions like Credit Foncier and ERTV, while the ruling class continues to embezzle state funds: "The government cut salaries not because it was a measure to fight the economic crises, but a measure to hoard funds for ministers and top bras of the country to embezzle" (p. 13). This systemic kleptocracy is highlighted in Jeune Afrique Economie magazine, which identifies "all the big names of our country… as embezzlers of public funds" (p. 20). Ministers effectively privatize their ministries, using public budgets for personal benefit, employing only relatives or loyalists, and squandering funds abroad (pp. 56–57).

Bad governance has also precipitated the collapse of critical institutions, including the Post Office Savings Bank (POSB), Carbury & Fry cocoa purchasing company, and the Administrative Garage. The resulting unemployment and poverty have entrenched kleptocracy in Ewawa. For instance, Esole's daughter, Dione, becomes a victim of kleptomania at the Ewawan Airport, where her luggage is stolen (pp. 11–12). Esole observes that Ewawa is "rotten… Since the three salary cuts and the institutionalisation of kleptocracy, every Ewawan, even babies, were thieves" (p. 13). Beri concurs, asserting that "corruption is not only in Ewawa. It is everywhere… in Ewawa, it is total" (p. 78). The imagery of "a flood upstream contaminating downstream" (p. 13) and corruption as "a wound on the forehead" (p. 77) conveys the pervasive and destructive nature of corruption in Ewawa society.

Underdevelopment has further led to emigration, as citizens seek better lives abroad. Dione relocates to London and marries her white supervisor as a form of rebellion against Ewawa's corrupt governance. Mrs. Esole also emigrates, noting that her stipend in London far surpasses what she earned as a secondary school teacher in Ewawa, and she plans to send her remaining children abroad for better opportunities (pp. 52, 55). Illegal migration, referred to locally as "bush falling," becomes widespread, driven by the socio-political dysfunction and lack of opportunity (p. 31).

Ewawa's infrastructure is in disrepair, further exacerbating underdevelopment. Roads are barely passable: of the twenty-three kilometers from Nidong to Tonye, only four are even traceable (p. 99). Cocoa farmers cannot transport produce to urban markets, and villagers lack access to health care. Deaths occur due to inadequate transportation and medical facilities, including a child choking on a beer bottle, a woman dying during childbirth, and the chief's son falling from a palm tree (p. 100). Transportation is limited to reconditioned vehicles like Esole's pickup, highlighting the desperation caused by state neglect.

Education suffers similarly. Teachers are underpaid and distracted by part-time jobs, farming, or other income-generating activities (pp. 24, 145). The H/M remains in West Bassiland primarily for cocoa farming, stating: "I am here not because of teaching but because of my farms. What do I get from the teaching field? My main stay here is cocoa farming" (p. 145). This demonstrates how bad governance has transformed teachers into subsistence farmers

and beggars, while educational quality deteriorates. The H/M's allegiance to the ruling party and incompetent parliamentarian is motivated by self-interest rather than civic duty.

In sum, Ewawa's underdevelopment is a direct consequence of institutionalized corruption and kleptocracy, which permeates every facet of society, from infrastructure and education to public services, while simultaneously driving citizens abroad in search of opportunity and security.

Conclusion: Designing an Anti-Corruption Framework that Fosters Socioeconomic and Politico-Cultural Development

Nuruddin Farah's narrator in *Sardines* observes that:"The African politician is a blind man; he moves only in one direction towards himself" (Farah, 1992, p. 14).Drawing inspiration from *The Bad Samaritan*, this claim can be extended: the African politician is a blind man who moves only in one direction—towards corruption. Njume, a character in the novel, recounts his participation in election rigging:

> "And once lights went out, especially as foreign observers had gone, the police and the military and the Minister's rigging process went into action. Although I was incorporated into the rigging lot, your overwhelming victory convinced me that you were the people's choice and nothing should disturb you. But then, a twig does not build a fence. So, I helped in rigging in favour of the ruling party" (p. 48).

Esole, despite presenting resourceful manifestoes, questions the relevance of respecting long-serving ministers who have never empowered citizens:

> "Has he a plan for building up the manpower of this beautiful and fertile motherland so that he can have a strong team to face the challenges of the nepotistic politics of our country? Other Ministers put their people in strong places so that together they can constitute a strong force that is consulted before major decisions are taken. But see, your man has been Minister for more than twelve years, yet there is no one single boy/girl who can say, he has helped them get a scavenger's position" (p. 49).

Esole's electoral defeat underscores the permanence of political corruption, where wanton greed and self-interest blind African leaders and their supporters to their responsibilities toward citizens. As Fombad rightly notes: "Corruption is no longer a simple crime, or even just a crime against development… it qualifies to be ranked amongst crimes against humanity. It is difficult to disagree with those who maintain that corruption by political leaders is the 'worst form of treason'" (Fombad, 2020, p. 47).

In Ewawa, as in Cameroon and other African postcolonies, corruption inflicts "needless and intolerable hardship on the poorest and most voiceless members of society, some of whom are forced to live destitute or die of hunger and disease because the funds meant to remedy their situation have been siphoned away by politicians and their associates" (Fombad, 2020, p. 47). This raises a critical question: how can societies like Ewawa, Cameroon, or broader Africa design anti-corruption frameworks that promote socioeconomic and politico-cultural development? Although *The Bad Samaritan* poses more questions than it resolves, it conveys a sense of optimism that corruption, like other human ills, is curable. By focusing on the formation and performance of corruption in top-tier institutions—ministries, councils, banks, transportation, the police, education, and the gendarmerie—as well as among high-ranking government officials, Alobwed'Epie demonstrates that corruption thrives primarily due to the absence of strict legislation and accountability mechanisms.

Consequently, the novel implies that designing an effective anti-corruption framework requires the adoption of Fombad's twelve key legislative measures for a holistic, sustainable, and enforceable approach:

1. Whistle-blower protections to encourage reporting of corruption;
2. Conflict of interest laws;
3. Freedom of information laws, granting citizens the right to access government activity data;
4. Legislation on the seizure and forfeiture of proceeds of crime;
5. Mandatory asset declarations by senior officials, including parliamentarians, ministers, the president, and directors;
6. Provisions for international cooperation in criminal matters;
7. Transparent and merit-based appointments in the public service;
8. Legislation on political-party financing;
9. Procurement legislation;
10. Laws against money laundering;
11. Policies to promote administrative justice; and
12. Enforceable codes of conduct for public servants and politicians (Fombad, 2020, p. 43).

While adopting these twelve measures may not eradicate corruption entirely, they offer hope that Farah's "blind" African politician could regain his sight and begin the difficult journey away from self-interest and kleptocracy. Ultimately, *The Bad Samaritan* positions the fight against corruption not merely as a legal necessity but as a prerequisite for genuine socioeconomic development and the restoration of civic trust, accountability, and ethical governance across postcolonial African societies.

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