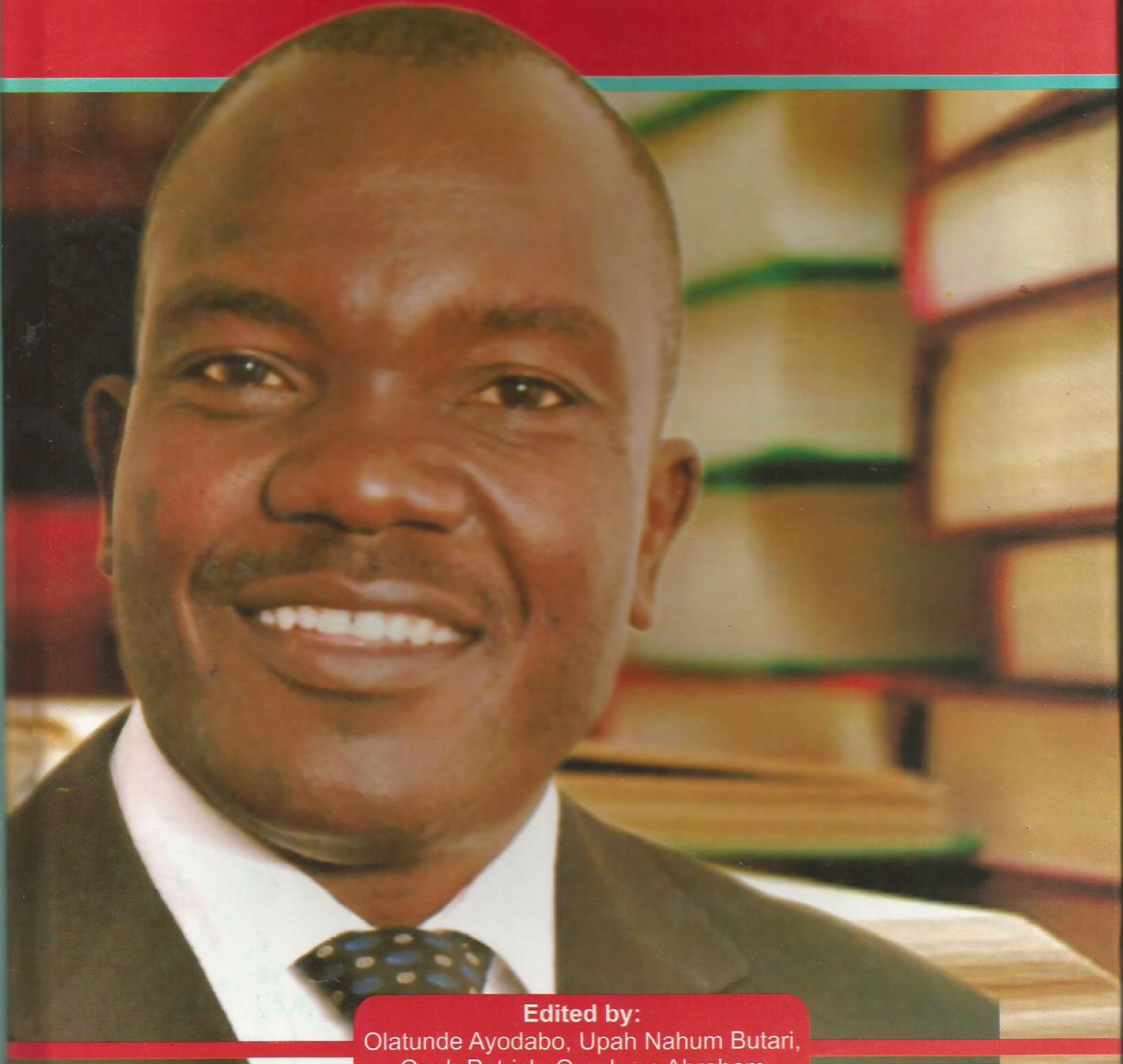


LINGUISTICS, LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE



A Festschrift for Gbenga Solomon IBILEYE



Edited by:

Olatunde Ayodabo, Upah Nahum Butari,
Onah Patrick, Oreoluwa Abraham

THIS BOOK

This Festschrift – Linguistics, Language and Literature -- contains eighty-nine articles structured into five sections. We have 19 articles under *Applied Linguistics and Discourse Analysis*; 15 under *Language and Meaning* Section; while Section Three *Language in Mind and Society* contains 16 articles, as well. Section Four, under *Language and Order*, has 12 articles. The last section – *Language in Action* -- contains 27 articles. This Festschrift is rich in diverse papers on almost all aspects of linguistic study.

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EDITED BY:

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ONAH EL-KANEMI PATRICK
OREOLUWA ABRAHAM SOLOMON**

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Dedication

To God the ALMIGHTY who has sown a seed, watered it,
metamorphosed it into a he, nurtured him, and seen him grow
this far.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our profound gratitude goes to God who initiated the need for this project and ensure that it was undertaken successfully, despite the short frame of time and considering competing interests on our hands. God did not just choose us for this great task but also mobilised contributors from virtually all the serious and research minded Universities in Nigeria and beyond. To Him be all the glory in Jesus name. Amen.

We acknowledge Professor Ibileye, Gbenga Solomon for providing the platform on which we find reasons to package this festschrift. In all sincerity, Ibileye is a valuable asset not only to the Nigerian linguistic circle but to Africa and indeed the global linguistic community. Despite his chronological age, his intellectual worth cannot escape recognition like the biblical David. No wonder, those who really understood his relevance- older and young academics- did all they could to celebrate him at the occasion of his 50th birthday anniversary with this festschrift. To the celebrant, we say you rose like an extra-terrestrial matter called meteor, blazing the path of academic excellence for protégés. Shine forth and the Lord, your God will guide you through into your very old age in Jesus name, Amen.

Of necessity, the following very important personalities must be acknowledged in their differing roles to this project. First is the very amiable friend of all, Professor Rafindadi, the immediate past Vice-Chancellor of the Federal University Lokoja. Sir, the passage of time will never erase your words of goodwill and encouragement to us when we visited to intimate you of this academic adventure. The God for whose sake you related with all men you met in your official capacities will reward you. Second is the incumbent Vice-Chancellor, Professor Angela Freeman Miri who on assuming office equally encouraged us in many ways to finish the project as scheduled. Our prayer for you is that God will encourage you in all your good purposes in life. Amen.

Our unreserved appreciation goes to our Editor-in-chief, an academic of no mean influence, Professor Joel OlatundeAyodabo, who mobilised the editorial team and placed his seal of superior oversight on our little efforts. Sir, the God who has started rewarding you will not stop his supplies of good health, physical energy and emotional disposition until you accomplish your mandate in life. Thanks sir.

We also wish to acknowledge Professor Adebayo Joshua, the academic mentor and father of Professor Ibileye for agreeing to write the Foreword to this work.

We want to express our gratitude to the following senior colleagues who encouraged us at different points while this work was undertaken. On this list are: Professor S. T. Babatunde and Professor N. OzoMekuri for advertising the call for paper both on NESA web page and LAN web page. You may not know that that singular act advanced the coverage and the undeniable evidence of the volume of this work. The God of heaven will reward you in Jesus name. Amen.

We are also indebted to our associate specialist editors.

These acknowledgements cannot be complete without a particular mention of the words of encouragement from Professor Ibileye's former University of service, the Ahmadu Bello University, and Zaria.

Finally, we want to acknowledge the secretarial staff and everyone who made submission for publication. While we apologise to those whose articles could not be published for any of the reasons they have been communicated, we say thank you to all who trusted us enough for this landmark and timely achievement.

FOREWORD

I am gratified to write this foreword on Prof.Gbengalbileye on the auspicious occasion of his Golden Jubilee birthday anniversary for which this festschrift is being written. I can confidently assert that I have shared thirty of these glorious fifty years knowing Prof.Ibileye closely. Our life-journey started in 1986 when he was admitted to the Bachelor Degree programme of the Department of English, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

The young Ibileye showed a lot of promise; his focus and determination started to manifest at this stage and one could hazard that he was set for a successful academic endeavor. True to this observation, he graduated among the three best in his class bagging a second class upper division in English Language in 1989. It was indeed from this stage that attention had been focused on him for his possible return to the Department for an MA and possible absorption into the lecturing cadre of the Department.

Upon the completion of the mandatory one year national service, he again enrolled into the Master of Arts programme of the Department and completed his MA in English with special focus on courtroom discourse. He completed the course speedily; and so started his sojourn as an academic, having been offered a lecturing position as a Graduate Assistant, pending senate approval of his result.

Gbenga showed uncommon passion and devotion to his work; as a young lecturer, one would admire his decency and self-worth. He carried himself with grace and dignity and accorded his work with an aura that was admirable. He devoted quality time to conference attendance, journal publication and to other components of scholarship that soon made him the reference point for his contemporaries.

His enrolment into the doctoral programme of the Department further showed his intellectual depth, his clinical attention to detail and his critical understanding of his area of specialization. With the Ph. D firmly in his kitty, Gbenga's ability to provide leadership and mentorship started to manifest. He was prolific as he was thorough. He would always ensure that candidates allocated to him completed their work within regulation. By the time he left the Department in 2012 for his current appointment, he had engrained his strong personage into every fibre of the functioning of the Department and indeed the Faculty of Arts.

It was therefore not unexpected when his former graduate students decided to publish this festschrift in his honour in commemoration of his Golden Jubilee. That the festschrift is coming at fifty is a mark of his uncommon achievements as a young scholar who has not only distinguished himself in the area of teaching and research but one who understands the critical intersection between the academic vocation and service to the community and to humanity as a whole. The kind of Prof.Gbengalbileye bridges the wide gap between the theoretical distance between the university and service to the community thus bringing the gown to town.

The diverse disciplinary backgrounds of the contributors to this volume and the fact that they are drawn from across the length and breadth of the universities in Nigeria bear unmistakable testimony to the wide reach of Prof.Gbengalbileye as a scholar and the diversity of his impact. It is therefore with a sense of pride and personal fulfilment that I write this foreword to celebrate this icon and beacon of hope, Prof.Gbengalbileye in honour of whom this festschrift is being published.

Prof. Adebayo Abiodun Joshua
Zaria, June, 2016

CONTENTS

Professor Gbenga Solomon Ibileye	vi
Acknowledgements	xv
Foreword	xvii
Notes on Contributors	xxv

SECTION ONE: APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

1. Contending With Poverty To Be Literate: A Young Northern Nigerian Woman's School Story and Its Implications for Women's Education - Phebe Veronica Jatau.....	2
2. Differences Between Good And Poor ESL Readers And How To Tackle The Problems TakimAjomOkongor.....	12
3. English Language Teaching In A Globalized and Digital Age: Implications For Teacher Preparation and Professional Development In Nigeria Theresa OhiOdumuh& Maryanne UdebuOhiare.....	21
4. Symbolic Discourse Analysis in African Historiography Amadi Maryann Adamma& Paul-KoladeTubi&Borok Andrew Maren.....	29
5. Teaching Medical Register in ESL Environment in Technological Age: A teacher's Innovation Faleke, V. O ¹ , Abaya, S. A ² &Ahamed, A ³ &Ahmadu Bello University Zaria ² & ³	41
6. The Monitoring of Literacy by Radio Programme as an Example Idakwo Jacob Akpa.....	55
7. Quality Assurance Mechanism in English Teacher Education: An Appraisal of Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) English Programme of Study on Oral Skills – J. I. Ndukwe.....	61
8. Language Planning in Education: A Positive Motivation Towards National Security and Transformation- James, AndokariZaku.....	71
9. A Review of the Thesis of Learner Autonomy in Non-Western Context and its Applicability to English Language Learning in Nigeria – Ruth Ibbi I.....	78
10. Hate Speeches In 2015 Nigerian Elections Campaigns: A Critical Discourse Analysis – Abaya Samson Angulu.....	88
11. Language And Power Dominance In Nigerian Political Discourse E.J. Otagburuagu.....	93

12. A Critical Discourse Analysis Of Language Interaction Among "Free Readers" At Newspapers Stand In Kaduna Metropolis Olagunju, TosinSamson	101
13. A Sociolinguistic Analysis Of Wole Soyinka's Play: <i>The Lion And The Jewel</i> : A Discourse Analytical Perspective Anthony Ayodele Olaoye	110
14. A Critical Discourse Analysis Of Threat: A Case Study Of Asari Dokubo's Utterances Abochol Simon Itine&AdegboyeOluseyeOlusegun	121
15. A Critical Discourse Analysis Of President Goodluck Jonathan's Confab Speech – K.P.C. Ashipu	136
16. An Analysis of the Grammar and Semantics of Possessive Pronouns in the Writings of the Preliminary Students of Nasarawa State Polytechnic, Lafia Adewole Adigun Alagbe& Sarah Adamu-Olawoyin	145
17. Exploring the Forms and Meanings of the English Present Tense in Written Communication of Some Science Undergraduates – Ochigbo A. Adaje	161
18. Information and Communication Technology in the English Language Classroom IBOK, Evelyn U.¹and AHEMBE, Terver Iorde²	174
SECTION TWO: LANGUAGE AND MEANING	
19. A Semantic Analysis Of Hausa Affixes IsaqGarba Yusuf	181
20. A Semantico-Pragmatic Study Of Non-Verbal Imprecations: The Example of Jukun Upah, Butari Nahum	194
21. Lexico-Semantics of Nigerianism, in The Tribune Newspaper – Stephen Arome	205
22. Linguistic Violence Against Women In Selected Christian Tracts – Aremu, MosesAdebayo	216
23. The Pragmatics Of Headline Writing In Nigerian Newspapers: Some Possible Implications for Learners of English as a Second Language Efosa Julius Legemah	226
24. Deixis In President MuhammaduBuhari's 2015 Campaign Speech – Emeka J. Otagburuagu& Justus C. Ugwu	237

25. Turn Taking as a Pedagogical Strategy: An Analysis Of Lessons in English as a Second Language (ESL) Classroom – Mohammad TajudeedSadiq	247
26. A Pragmatic Analysis of Wole Soyinka's <i>Death And The King's Horseman</i> – Rita Bossan	258
27. A Pragmatic Analysis of the Nigerian National Anthem – Agu Margaret Nonyerem	277
28. Incongruity in Lecturer-Student Spoken Communication a Study of Selected Lecturer-Student Discourses in FCE and ABU, Zaria Martha Nguemo Terna-Abah	289
29. Analysis of Thematic Structures/Patterns of Selected Bible Texts – HannatuKwasau	302
30. A Pragmatic Analysis of Universal "Language," The Song of King SaidiOsupa (Icon) Bello, 'Bayo Yekeen	314
31. Pragmatics and Meaning Explication in Context – Peter A. Ikhane&OsasKayode Charles Iyoha	325
32. In Search of a New Linguistic Waste Basket – Simon ShachiaOryila	337
SECTION THREE: LANGUAGE IN MIND AND SOCIETY	
33. A Psycholinguistic Study of Language Disorder in a Six-Year Old Nigerian Child – Ighile Joy Ezechiese	355
34. Language and Development in Nigeria – Abraham Oreluowa Solomon &Acheoah John Emike	366
35. Rescuing Nigerian Minority Languages: A Critical Perspective – Acheoah John Emike	376
36. Religious Faith: A Panacea to Rumour-Riddled-Boko-Haram Crisis for National Transformation – Bartholomew Chidili	381
37. The Imports of Language Pattern on Social Class – M.S. AbdullahiIdiagbon	390
38. An Examination of News Translation Practices and News Reception by Selected Audience of a Local Television Station in Adamawa State, Nigeria –	

Vivien Bello-Osagie&AbdullahiSaleh Bashir.....	397
39. The Implications of Social Media Language Use Among Students of Akwalbom State Tertiary Institutions – EmemobongUdoh&NsidibeUsoro.....	406
40. Restroom Graffiti: Accessing the Intersection of Language and Cognition – OgungbemiTemitope.....	421
41. The Challenges of African Languages in the 21 st Century – KayodeOmole.....	432
42. Legal And Economic Aspects Of Combatting Copyright Piracy; An Anglo-American Analysis – Mary Gani-Ikilama.....	437
43. Intraference in the Nominal Expressions of Speakers of Educated Nigerian English (ENE) – Omowumi Bode S. Ekundayo.....	451
44. The Withering Tongues: Empowering Nigerian Languages in the Face of Global Challenges – Salawdeen, WaheedOlanrewaju&HamzahAbdurraheem.....	466
45. Cultures; a Tool for National Integration And Sustainable Development in Nigeria – Ode Johnson Ekpeme.....	479
46. Linguistic Borrowing: A Study of Idoma - Anglicized Words – Patrick Onah E.....	488
47. Stress and Rhythmic Patterns in the Newscasts of Select Newscasters of a Nigerian Television Organisation – Omotosho Moses Melefa.....	497
48. Social Meaning of Slangs as Used among HND II Students of Federal Polytechnic Nasarawa– Adewole A. Alagbe&Saidu O. Yahaya.....	514
SECTION FOUR: LANGUAGE AND ORDER	
49. Realisation Of Fricatives among Selected Ethnic Clusters in Lokoja Metropolis Nsairun Theodore Shey.....	524
50. Lexico-Grammatical Errors and their Implication in the Language of Selected Senior Secondary School Students in Abia State, Nigeria Peace Chinwendu Israel &Fidelis N. Echendu.....	537
51. Choices in the Unit Groups –	

Bamigbola E. O.....	546
52. Conjunction in Urhobo Ejabee Lucky Ogheneruemu&MbapuunTordue Festus.....	554
53. Structural Solidity in Adichie's <i>Half Of A Yellow Sun</i> – TerrumunHemboarGajir.....	563
54. The Syntactic Functions of Tense, Aspect and Mood in the Fulfulde Verbal Complex Babayo Aliyu.....	573
55. The Syntax And Semantics Of Tense MarkersinNupe Idris Bida.....	582
56. A Contemporary Approach to Defining Parts of Speech James I. Udaa.....	593
57. Media, Language and Democracy: A Critical Analysis of Syntactic Choices in Some Nigerian Daily Newspaper Headlines – Ebenezer OluseunOgungbe.....	602
58. Making Sense of Discourse in English: A Critique of the Systemic Functional Grammar Approach to Text Analysis Okpeadua Sony Okpeadua.....	615
59. Negation in Tiv– MbapuunTordue Festus &Ejabee Lucky Ogheneruemu.....	621
60. Contributions of Traditional Grammar to Modern English Phonology – Abolaji S. Mustapha.....	633
 SECTION FIVE: LANGUAGE IN ACTION	
61. The Image Of The Contemporary Nigerian Politician In Wale Okediran's Tenants of the House – Moses Joseph.....	641
62. Farewell To Arms... But The Struggle Continues: An Evaluation Of <i>black November</i> In The Context Of The Niger Delta – Okpadah Stephen Ogheneruro.....	647
63. An Exploration Of The "Arrow Of God": Inspirations, Reflections And Lessons for Nigeria's Democratic Evolution – Samson OlusolaOlatunji.....	655

64. Strategic Essentialism and the Female Voice in Northern Nigeria: Sheefah Zarma's Poetry in Postcolonial Perspective – Audee T. Giwa	659
65. Fear as a Theme in the Fictitious Works of Jean-Paul Sartre: A Study of <i>Nausea</i> – Atile Godwyns Terhemba	668
66. Gender Differentials in Igbo Society: The Case of Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart - Ijah Gideon Akase	677
67. Issues in Razinat T. Mohammed's Writings: Paradigms for Northern Nigerian Women Writing – Olubukola Karik-Namiji	684
68. Traditional Historiographical Discourse in African Orature as a Tool for Historical Reconstruction: A Case Study of the Yoruba – Paul-Kolade Tubi	687
69. Interrogating Discourse: Man and the supernatural in African Poetry – Ezirim Chukwuma D. & Omorogbe E.F.	698
70. African Intellectuals at Cultural Intersection in M. A. M Ngal's <i>L'errance</i> Busari Lasisi	706
71. Time Travel and the Literary Space: Imagination Versus Memory- Stephen Onimisi Ajinomoh	714
72. Poetry and the Niger Delta Environment : An Eco-Critical Perspective – Fortress Isarah Ayinola & Abiodun Eniayekan Eugenia	722
73. The Nigerian Diasporic Experiences and the Green Pasture Façade in Buchi Emecheta's <i>Second Class Citizens</i> Onuh Martha Ene	735
74. Variations of Violence and Socio-Ecological Malady in Helon Habila's <i>Oil On Water</i> – David Mikailu	743
75. Symbolism as a Narrative Parable: A Postcolonial Perspective in Michael Anthony's <i>The Year in San Fernando</i> – Aule Moses	757
76. Music as Symbol in African-American Poetry: The Example of Langston Hughes Remi Akujobi	767
77. Religion as a Tool of Violence: an Exploration of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's	

<i>Purple Hibiscus</i> – Fashakin Yemisi Folashade & Idiamin Brains Ofum	775
78. Conflict of Genderism: The Emergence of Queer Literatures in Nigeria – Oladiran Victoria Taiyelolu	782
79. L’expression Du Futur En Edo Esther Imomoh Musa	790
80. Disillusionment and Life as an Immigrant in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s <i>Americanah</i> – ‘Dele Bamidele & Abubakar Isiaka Abaji	797
81. The Novelist as a Designer: A Study Of Festus Iyayi’s Novels – Kingston O. Onyijen	812
82. The Writer and Commitment in Africa: Examples from and Buchi Emecheta and Sembene Ousmane – Sarki, Philip Ereson	824
83. Parallel Structures and Stylistic Function in Niyi Osundare’s <i>dialogue With My Country</i> - Isaiah Aluya	831
84. A Linguistic-Stylistic Discussion of Metaphors in some of Gbengbuleye’s Academic Discourse – Peter Ochefuokpeh	842
85. A Stylistic Study of General Muhammadu Buhari’s Speech at Chatham House, London – Joseph Gbenga Julius	856
86. A Stylistic Analysis of Asa’s Song: “ <i>Fire on the Mountain</i> ” – Oyelakin Gbenga Samson & Fawunmi Mayowa Owolabi	867
87. Transitivity Resource of a Newspaper Report – Isyaku Saminu	877

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Chapter Sixty-Three

An Exploration of the "Arrow of God": Inspirations, Reflections and Lessons for Nigeria's Democratic Evolution

Samson Olusola Olatunji

Abstract

This study is an exploration into the various characters in Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* with the intent of identifying some of their character traits that are pro-democratic and those that are anti-democratic. This is with the consciousness that the system of government in the story is largely theocratic as exemplified by the enormous influence of Ezeulu on the political, socio-economic as well as religious life of the people of Umuaro and its environs. The consequences of the pro and anti-democratic traits of the various characters in the story are explained as very much relevant lessons capable of giving direction to the current democratic experiment in Nigeria. Thus, the author proves that Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* is as relevant to Nigeria's political life as it was when it was first published fifty years ago. It also demonstrates the fact that Literature, being a re-presentation of life, has great potentiality to transform a nation like Nigeria, provided such literary materials find their way into a reading community.

Arrow of God: The Story in Perspective

Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* is set in a patriarchal society where theocracy is evident. The theocratic nature of the setting is symbolised by Ezeulu. "In fact, Ezeulu fulfils the function of most kings south of the Sahara, as Duerden suggests: he fixes the calendar, foretells the seasons and is bearer of the sky spirit." (anonymous, undated. P.31). It, however, contains didactic elements that are instructive to the present-day Nigerian "democrats", lessons that could help both electorate and the elected work harmoniously to actualise our "Good People, Great Nation" slogan. The author uses the various character traits – the good, the bad, the excusable, the inexcusable, and so on – exhibited by different characters to exemplify the prophetic messages. The social functionality of *Arrow of God* has been severally acknowledged by critics. For example, Zouiche (2002) asserts that Chinua Achebe's pre-occupation in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* is to utilise his privileged status in the society as a writer to educate his people."

Zouiche (2002) captures the relevance of *Arrow of God* to the Nigerian life by observing that "fiction and reality merge in the novel which describes a decaying society on the verge of chaos and dismemberment which Achebe ends in a coup de'etat". To liken Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* to the present situation in Nigeria cannot be correctly waved off as an illogical comparison. Boko Haram's nihilism, threats from each of the six geo-political zones' preference for certain ethnic nationalities to occupy the exalted position of the president, proven cases of monumental fraud, and other horrible facts about Nigeria truly portray chaos and impending anarchy, similar to picture in *Arrow of God*. Just as the terrible experiences in Umuaro are caused by people, the architect, the engineers and the builders of Nigeria's "house of commotion" are people with similar character traits.

Lessons in Leadership for True Democracy through Ezeulu

We see Ezeulu struggling with an inner crisis that has personal, political and moral dimensions. He is the ordained chief priest of Ulu, the prominent god that calls the tune in terms of what time the festivals of the Pumpkin Leaves and the New Yam should take place. The power he wielded is tremendous, considering the fact that the people are predominantly agrarian. Nobody can start eating or selling their new yams until Ezeulu beats the ancient gong. Ezeulu's influence as a theocratically chosen leader somehow legitimately has his hand on the throat of every Umuaro indigene.

But similar to the 'sit-tight' syndrome of many African rulers that has subjected their countries to unnecessary devastation, Ezeulu is being tempted to desire self-perpetuation in the priesthood. He would have loved to be vested with the power to choose his successor. But the same supernatural force that handpicked him still has that prerogative to pick someone else as his successor. He would have loved to choose the festival days, but his is just to "name" the day dictated by the god. It then dawns on him that his authority in, and over the community is akin to a child's ownership of a goat. The child owns the goat while the animal is alive. He tends it and nobody challenges his right of ownership, but immediately the goat is slaughtered, the child's pseudo authority over the goat is revealed in its true colour as nobody consults the child on the sharing formula for "his" pet. This inflicts psychological trauma on Ezeulu especially as his "authority" is under a higher authority belonging to this same god that has unilaterally chosen him for priesthood.

One of the implications of the foregoing for our political office holders is that though it is natural for them, like Ezeulu, to have personal interest, they need to place the common interest of the generality of voters above the personal concerns. In the case of a Nigerian political office holder, the will and wish of the citizenry represent Ulu, the god of six conglomerates known as Umuaro. The politicians who find themselves in various positions must see themselves as holding the concerned authority in trust for the gods that voted them into offices if we are to enjoy true democracy.

Ezeulu's resolve to have his personal will submerged by Ulu's is however not sustained to the end. His protracted detention by the British officials, coupled with his people's accusation that he is in an unholy connivance with the foreigners take the better of him. Not even the hero's welcome accorded him can simmer his vengeful spirit (181). He, therefore, refuses to proclaim the commencement of the New Yam Festival, the only credible announcement of Ulu's authorisation of the harvest, sales and consumption of the new yam. The consequence of Ezeulu's vendetta on the citizenry includes destruction of their un-harvested farm produce, artificial farming and avoidable economic recession.

But at the peak of the untold suffering of the masses under the whip of Ezeulu's flagrant dereliction of duty also lies his self-destruction and demystification of the god for whom he serves as mouthpiece. The people gradually devise, or better still accept, an alternative to Ulu's authority. They take the first fruit offerings of their yam to the Christian God so that they may be authorised to harvest without any unwholesome spiritual consequences from Ulu. That the common people will always find a way to extricate themselves from the rope put round their necks by their rulers whenever burdens become unbearable and the leaders' insensitivity becomes unpardonable is clearly exemplified by the trick employed by Umuaro farmers, playing safe while running to the Christian God. The trick is to send one of the sons to offer the first one or two yams to secure protection from Ulu's wrath. Afterwards, each concerned farmer goes ahead to do proper harvesting in the name of the insured son. This twist which is to contribute to Ezeulu's eventual madness should have been instructive to political leaders that have had themselves consumed by the fires ignited by their personal agendas of vengeance, self perpetuation, self glorification and the like. It is not too late, however, for the present crop of politicians to learn from this fatal example because as observed by Mordaunt (1989), the novel shows that men cannot fight societies' will as the latter can bring a man to insanity.

Wren's (95) thesis that "Ulu's choice was between the clan and the priest" and that "Ulu chose the clan, as it was his nature to do" is symbolic of a marriage covenant between Umuaro community and their god: Ulu is in his people and his people are in him. The Ulu's decision to punish his chief priest is his own most terrible undoing. Obirieka's death and Ezeulu's madness leave the god with no priest and a significant portion of their distinctive spiritual and communal identity is erased: their peculiar identification with Ulu. This could serve as an adequate warning to the populace in a democratic tradition not to destroy the polity but rather help their leaders. The association of Ulu and the people against the chief priest spells doom for the trio: the conspiring community members and Ulu, their god, and Ezeulu, his chief priest. This is an invaluable lesson in democratic principles: There should be no plotting of downfall for any one or any party, no matter the ideological or interest differences because, as a popular Yoruba saying goes, "He that would drag his neighbour round in a bush must be prepared to make a path through the bush with his own back".

As pointed out by Olatunji (2000), each subsequent regime in Nigeria has been guilty of setting aside programmes begun by its predecessor to start its own, no matter how laudable or successful the former. This has been a terrible bane of sustainable development in the country. As subsequent regimes replace programmes started by the preceding ones in order to discredit the former, developments along such paths go back lower than zero level to deficit. The disgrace of global magnitude that this brings on the nation is shared by all. Those that have tremendously enriched themselves from the common wealth of the country are not exempted from the stigma that has become our national identity.

As a part of Ezelu's ploy to actualise his desperation for perpetual relevance in the community when he is confronted with the foreboding of Christianity's overthrow of Ulu, he sends his son, Oduche, to go and acquire the wisdom of the Christian white man. This serves as the genesis of the boy's unpardonable disgust for the people's tradition, culture and religion. Oduche, in total disregard to the socio-political and spiritual culture and tradition, captures a sacred royal python, keeps it in a box with the hope to kill it as soon as there is nobody watching.

This is akin to frequent cases of people that have been accused, and at times proven, to be guilty of anti-party practices in the Nigerian democratic experimentation. Such card carrying, even prominent, members of political parties go into unwholesome and clandestine romance and fraternity with opposition parties. The deception in which such acts are rooted is what makes them anti-progressive. The direct as well as remote consequences of this "sell-out" on Ezelu, Oduche and other members of their family could also help inculcate integrity and forthrightness in children and adults alike so that if they find themselves in politics, they are not to "break ranks" and betray trust for selfish purposes. That the far-reaching effects of this are going to better our democracy is not an overstatement.

Ezelu displays another sterling leadership quality which is rare to find in most Nigerian political office holders, thus bedevilling our democratic experimentation. He gives a truthful testimony before the white colonialists during the hearing of the Okperi-Umuaro boundary dispute case though the testimony did not favour his community. Had our past and present politicians and electorates been this detribalised, Nigeria would not be wallowing in the shameful, pathetic and destructive consequences of the anti-progressive and anti-excellence quota system or the crying wolf about marginalisation, the cases of real maginalisation, the mediocre mentality of zoning of presidency, and so on. Merit would have been the watchword for elections, selections or appointments and our country would have been the great nation that we chorus in our rebranding scheme and slogan. The fact that the colonialist Clarke and Winterbottom later deem him fit for appointment as Warrant Chief indicates that such qualities do not go unnoticed but are means of great reward for the person and their community.

Umuaro Citizens as Examples of Followers in the Nigerian Democracy

The elders' forum for deliberations on the appropriate approach to the resolution of Umuaro-Okperi land dispute reveals a number of followership deficiencies from which citizens of any contemporary nations can learn to avoid pitfalls in their democracies. Ezelu's words of caution fall on deaf ears as the people from the six villages prefer Nwaka's militant approach (18,19). They fail to see through Nwaka's motivation: jealousy and personal animosity against the person of Ezelu and unwarranted revolt against his authority and influence as the Chief Priest of the most revered deity in the land. Nwaka's high standing in the community and his sugar-coated lips blind them to the inferiority of his line of arguments to that of Ezelu. They fail to consider Nwaka's closeness to Ezidmili, the chief priest of Edemili, the oldest deity that Ulu bypassed to attain supremacy in the land. Though the theocratic system of government is predominant in Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*, the elements of democracy in the system can be observed on certain occasions, one of which is this village square meeting in which a wrong decision that has fatal consequences is taken.

The masses in a democracy need to be enlightened to carefully weigh the antecedents as well as the motives of the various advocates of different lines of arguments and actions before taking sides. The lone voice or unpopular opinion may be right while the loud majority may be unwise. After all, just as Ezelu's voice of reasoning advising the people to tread softly and wisely may sound weak and

insignificant. The people heed Nwaka's militant option and neglected the peaceful resolution alternative suggested by Ezelu and the whole community suffered for it.

Adedimeji (n.d. 5) describes Ezelu as "a symbol of truth, native intelligence, pragmatism, self-control and tenacity." But the citizenry also needs to be educated that no leader can be perfectly altruistic. They are to watch out for moments when their deservedly leaders falter and fall into self-centredness in their discharge of their statutory duties. As emphasised by Adeeko (1992) with close reference to the story in the text, Ezelu's testimony about the ownership of the land in favour of Okperi but against his own Umuaro people cannot be proved to be completely detached, after all, since the favoured Ukperi is the hometown of his mother. In addition, Nwaka's counter-argument cannot either be absolutely faulted:

Wisdom is like a goatskin bag; every man carries his own. Knowledge of the land is also like that. Ezeulu has told us what his father told him about the olden days. We know that a father does not speak falsely to his son. But we also know that the lore of the land is beyond the knowledge of many fathers. . . . My father told me a different story.

(17-18)

In essence, Ezelu could have, like any other politically influential figure, been guilty of distortion of facts because whichever way the pendulum of the judgement swings, he is a potential beneficiary through his father's side or his mother's. He could also have been a victim of misinformation from his father. Likewise, his mother could have mislead him with a biased version of the historical account.

Adeeko (1992) points out that, in the same vein, Ezelu's description of himself as a messenger that has no power over the message is revealed to be a mere political gimmick. Ezelu's resolve to refuse to observe the moon on his first night in detention, though the moon is visible to him, aptly articulates this.

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