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## The Symbolic Death of Monarchs in the Process of Installation in Idoma Land: A Paradigm for Fighting Corruption in Nigeria

By Solomon Ochepe Oduma-Aboh

*Kaduna State University, Nigeria*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Idoma society is one of the ethnic nationalities that forms the current Nigerian political entity. Their worldview just like most worldviews across the African landscape, highly religious. Religion permeates all facets of the Idoma life. It is through the prism of religion that all phenomena in this universe are interpreted. Despite the fact of the various agents of change that have had their marks on the Idoma worldview based on their religious orientations that are indigenous in nature, it still survived in one form or the

other, this is because change is the only constant thing in life. The resilience of religion in developing countries is now plain to see. In Africa, religion shows no sign of disappearing or diminishing in public importance, as theorists have generally supposed.

Within the Idoma religious culture, there exist the symbolic death of monarchs in the process of installation and the beliefs and practices surrounding this important aspect of their life can help as a paradigm in solving a serious malady that has hampered all the developmental aspirations of Nigerians as individuals and as a collective. This symbolic death ensures that on assumption of office, the royal fathers become dead to all the human attributes, feelings, tendencies and negativities, including but not limited to corruption and corrupt tendencies. This malady, is no other than corruption, that has bedeviled the country.

Shishima posits that corruption, though a universal phenomenon appears to have become so endemic in Nigerians that most discourses about the country here and elsewhere, centre more on the high ascendancy of corruption in our public life. Corruption is institutionalized such that not only that are officials corrupt, but corruption is official. It has been contended that Nigeria is beyond doubt one of the most corrupt nations. In 1997 the Transparency International, the world leading nongovernmental organization fighting corruption, using the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) ranked Nigeria as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. In its September 2000 annual report, the Transparency International also put Nigeria on top of the corruption chart worldwide arguing that corrupt has so permeated both public and private sector in Nigeria to the extent that the social plague could pose a serious threat to leadership, followership, political stability and socio-economic development (241-2). Fourteen years after, Transparency International (TI) has ranked Nigeria the 136th most corrupt country in the world and the 3rd most corrupt country in West Africa after Guinea and Guinea Bissau. In its 2014 Transparency International Corruption Perception Index, the group said it ranked 174 countries it surveyed based on how corrupt their public sector is presumed to be. The measurement is based on a scale of 0 to 100 with a score of 0 perceived as "highly corrupt" and 100 "very clean". Nigeria was ranked 136th with an index score of 27

*Author : Department of Christian Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts, Kaduna State University, Tafawa Balewa Way, Kaduna State- Nigeria. e-mail: solomonoduma@gmail.com*

(leadershipship.org/news/392876/nigeria-ranks-136th-corrupt-country-latest-global-corruption-index).

It is in the light of the endemic nature of corruption in the Nigerian body polity, that the paper seeks to use the symbolic death of monarchs in the process of installation as a paradigm for fighting or curbing corruption. The endemic nature of corruption in Nigeria and attempts at finding solution (s) to this problem has informed this study.

## II. WHO ARE THE IDOMA?

The Idoma is one of the ten largest ethnic groups in Nigeria dispersed in a number of states in the country. But the focus of this paper is on the Idoma people of Benue State. By the 1963 National Population Census numbered up to 684,880. Based on that figure, the Directorate of information, office of the Governor, Benue State of Nigeria indicates that Idoma people are the second largest ethnic group in Benue State. They live in an area of 13,015 kilometers, covering: Otukpo, Okpokwu, Oju, Ado and Apa Divisions, with Otukpo as their main town. Idoma land is bounded on the North by the Benue River, on the West by the Tiv, on the south by Nsukka and Abakaliki areas respectively. Also, on the East reside the Igala people of Kogi State. Most of the Idoma area is inland South of the Benue, 72 kilometers East of the confluence with the Niger River (qtd. in Igboaka 12).

According to R. G. Armstrong "the country is nearly all 'Orchard bush though changing into the forest at the beginning of the rain, along the southern fringes of the territory". It is very fertile and hence, there is an annual cycle of hoe farming during the rains and hunting and bush fire during the dry season. In the southern part of the region bordering Enugu and Cross River States stretches of thick forest with palm trees, and many other economic trees, which provide timber for commercial purposes (qtd. in Igboaka 12). But currently, the Idoma people are spread across nine big local government areas of Benue State comprising Ado, Okpokwu, Ogbadibo, Agatu, Apa, Otukpo, Ohimini, Obi and Oju.

The language of the Idoma people is known as Idoma as stated by Armstrong, belongs to the *Kwa* language groups. The Idoma language is very rich, with five main dialects, which are categorized into the following: The central or Otukpo dialect spoken in Otukpo, Adoka, Ugboju, Oglewu, and Onyangede districts; The Igumale dialect spoken in Igumale and Agila districts; The Agatu dialect spoken in Agatu and Ochekwu districts; The Okpoga dialect spoken in Okpoga district, (It is closer to the Igumale – Agila dialects, but not the same), and the western dialect spoken in Otukpa and other districts in Ogbadibo (qtd. in Igboaka 13).

The geographical spread of Idoma people is indeed very wide and diversified. The Afor in the

Nasarawa, the Akweya-Yachi in both Akpa and Ogoja districts, as well as the Igede, all speak a language relatively close to that of the Idoma. Taking into account the fact that these groups are linguistically very near to each other, one can affirm that people speaking Idoma are spread from Keana, North of Benue River, to the region of Ogoja, and even further south to the bank of the Cross River, north of Ikom. The Etulo (*Utur*) also represent another isolated group near Katsina-Ala, in Tiv country. The Idoma people, as already mentioned are divided into numerous clans each with its particular history. Therefore, the Idoma unity is essentially a linguistic unity, and not a political one, as is the case with the Yoruba or the Igala, united into large kingdoms, whereas the Idoma language is essentially composed of many and varied dialects, as stated by Armstrong (qtd. in Igboaka 13).

Similarly, historically the Idoma people are said to have migrated from the Old Kwararafa Empire to their present location, though settling at Apa. Erim's study, enables us to follow step by step the settlement of each Idoma group at its present day location. This historical research calls for some observations. In the first place one can consider the pressure exercised by the Fulani of the north as being the deep underlying cause of the intermixing of these populations. This Muslim influence was particularly strong in the beginning of the 19th century. Secondly, these historical considerations explain the fact that today's Idoma society consists of a heterogeneous number of population, speaking the same language. Hence, we are able to comprehend more clearly, the symbolic and cultural world of the Idoma. The basic unit of the Idoma cultural structure was the compound. Armstrong shows that the compound comprises the man, his wife, their children and his sons. The family (*o/ə*) occupied a group of huts around an open space, one hut for each wife, one for the owner of the compound. There were various other huts consisting of club houses, granaries, grinding table and so on. These facilities were necessary to make the compound, *ole* a self-supporting unit. This setting is in line with what is obtainable in other african societies, the family does not consist of only parents and children, but rather, it includes the grand parents, uncles, aunts and others. These also include brothers and sisters who have their own children and other immediate relatives which anthropologists call the extended family (qtd. in Igboaka 15). The father or the head of the family exercised responsibility in the social, political, economic and religious life of the associates. Nzanuwa rightly points out with regard to the people of East of the Niger that:

The nuclear family is the smallest or lowest unit of political organization. The father or the elder male is the head politically, socially, economically and religiously. ...As the custodian of the family tradition

and ancestral cult, the head acted as the intermediary, between the family's ancestors and the living members (qtd. in Igboaka 15).

Armstrong stated that Idoma land comprises twenty-two districts. Districts could be called true areas or regions whose lineages and clans feel they are related genetically and they are of the same people or belong together. This relationship is very strongly and formally expressed by the totemic animals associated with a district which the people involved are forbidden to eat (qtd. in Igboaka 16-7). Erim, maintains: "in pre-colonial Idoma land, there were variety of totems". The Idoma regard such an animal as iho- forbiddances. The totems are bird or fish, which the people use as a symbol of their oneness or express their genetically relatedness. Such totemic animals include the civet cat (anwu) the leopard (ejeh), the black monkey (eka) the mud-fish (egbe), among others (141).

### III. THE CONCEPT OF SYMBOL

Etymologically, the word symbol comes from the Greek symbolon. It denoted such tallies as the two halves of a broken coin which were exchanged by contracting parties of any to them which established a person's identity such as a soldier's badge or watch word. A symbol is something we can perceive and which we can connect to a meaning of significance. A symbol is something, an idea, a sign, a ritual or a behavioural pattern that stands as an outer representation of an inner essence or experience of the unconscious (qtd. in Oduma-Aboh 139).

Cohen defined symbols as "objects, acts, relationships or linguistic formations that stand ambiguously for a multiplicity of meanings". This definition tries to indicate that there are different symbolic forms and that it is possible for one symbolic form to be given several interpretations and these interpretations could be given at different levels depending upon the level of the interpreter's consciousness and intelligence (qtd. in Oduma-Aboh 139).

Nabofa defined symbol as an overt expression of what is behind the veil of direct perception. It is quite usual for a perceiver to express his inner experience, sight or visions and mystical or religious experience in symbols. It should be noted that a word is a symbol, and a word can be either written or spoken. Myths, proverbs, and parables are very powerful and enduring symbols. Jung defines a symbol as:

What we call a symbol is a term, name or even a picture that may be familiar in daily life, yet that possesses specific connotations in addition to its conventional and obvious meaning. It implies something vague, unknown or hidden from us... Thus a word of an image is symbolic when it implies something more than its obvious and immediate

meaning. It has a wider "unconscious" aspect that is never precisely defined or fully explained. Nor can one hope to define or explain it. As the mind explores the symbol, it has led to ideas that lie beyond the grasp of reason (qtd. in Oduma-Aboh 139).

Otite perceived symbols as agents which are impregnated with messages and with invitation to conform and act. When decoded in the social and cultural context, they are found to have both cognitive and emotional meanings. For instance, the axe of the meteorite stones found in most of the cults of God and solar divinities in West Africa convey the meaning and idea about the wrath of God and they also represent the purity of God and His impartial justice (qtd. in Oduma-Aboh 139).

In addition, the sight of such symbolic forms inwardly reminds and urges the devotee, especially the cruel and the savage to lead a pure and honest life in order to avoid the wrath of God. They likewise urge the believer to guard against perjury and falsehood when it comes to the question of settling disputes in any shrine that houses such symbols.

### IV. THE CONCEPT OF DEATH

Anyacho opines that Africans see life as a continuous thing. Its extinction on earth paves the way for the soul to experience the life in the great beyond. Death is, therefore, seen as a passage to the hereafter. The last rite is given to man at his death. This rite makes the transition from the physical existence to invisible existence, which take place in the land of the ancestors. The real burial is accompanied by special rituals. Elaborate funeral rites and ceremonies are performed. It is believed that the dead does not settle in the land of the dead if not given befitting funeral rites. Serious care is therefore exercised in following the funeral rite to the latter. This is why children and relations of the dead spend alot of fortune in honour of the departed (265).

Mbiti observes that death is inevitable and in many societies the most disrupting phenomenon of life. Death stands between the world of human beings and the world of the spirits, between the visible and the invisible. It is something that concerns everybody, partly because sooner or later everyone personally faces it and partly because it brings loss and sorrows to every family and community. It is no wonder, therefore, that rituals connected with death are usually elaborate (149).

He further postulates that, death is conceived as a departure and not a complete annihilation of a person. He moves on to join the company of the departed, and the only major change is the decay of the physical body, but the spirit moves on to another state of existence. Thus, death is a monster before whom man is utterly helpless. Relatives watch a person die, and they cannot help him escape death. It is an individual affair in which nobody else can interfere or



intervene. This is the height of death's agonies and pain, for which there is neither cure nor escape, as far as African concepts and religious culture are concerned (157-58).

Erim opines that the Idoma, like most African groups believe in a number of spirit manifestations. Alekwu (spirit of the ancestor) is one among many. Like other human groups, the Idoma share in the belief of *Owoicho* (a Supreme God). However, in their opinion, he is considered too removed physically to cater for their immediate interests and needs. As a result, they employ such intermediaries as *aje* (spirit of the kindred group etc) and *alekwu*. That they should propitiate the *aje* periodically is understandable, for they are agriculturalists. However, for their practical and social needs, there is a continuing dialogue between the Idoma elders and their departed relatives. In Idoma cosmology, death is the physical sense does not deny the "dead" participation in the affairs of the community. He quoted an Idoma student saying:

The death of the corporeal man does not mean the end of his existence. All who cease to exist in the world of the living are believed to have "passed" into the world of the "living dead" (who) keep (a) keen interest in the activities of the living and protecting the society from external aggression (144-5).

## V. THE CONCEPT OF MONARCH

Monarch has been defined by the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* as a person who rules a country or empire, for example a king or a queen (757). A monarch is the sovereign head of state, officially outranking all other individuals in the realm. A monarch may exercise the most and highest authority in the state or others may wield that power on behalf of the monarch. Typically a monarch either personally inherits the lawful right to exercise the state's sovereign rights (often referred to as the throne or the crown) or is selected by an established process from a family or cohort eligible to provide the nation's monarch. Alternatively, an individual may become monarch by conquest, acclamation or a combination of means. A monarch usually reigns for life or until abdication. Monarchs' actual powers vary from one monarchy to another and in different eras; on one extreme, they may be autocrats (absolute monarchy) wielding genuine sovereignty; on the other they may be ceremonial heads of state who exercise little or no power or only reserve powers, with actual authority vested in a parliament or other body, constitutional monarchy ([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monarch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monarch)).

The concept of monarch as used in this paper includes; all those who rule or reign over a territory be they King, Queen, Chief, Traditional Ruler, Paramount Ruler and the like. Mbiti posits that rulers are not simply political heads, they are the mystical and religious

heads; the divine symbol of their people's health and welfare. The individuals may not have outstanding talents or abilities, but their office is the link between human rule and the spiritual government. They are therefore, divine or sacral rulers, the shadow or reflection of God's rule in the universe. People regard them as God's earthly viceroys. They give them highly elevated positions and titles, such as: saviour, protector, child of God, chief of the divinities, lord of earth and life. People think that they can do what they want, have control over rain, and link them with God as divine incarnation or as originally from heaven. Rulers are, therefore, not ordinary men and women: they occupy a special office, and symbolize the link between God and man (182).

In addition, the sacred position of African rulers is shown in many ways. Some rulers must not be seen in ordinary life- they wear veil, take meals alone, their eating and sleeping may not be mentioned, parts of the ruler's body (like saliva, faeces, hair and nails) are buried lest they should be seen by ordinary people or used in malicious ways against them. To protect and strengthen the position and investiture of the king, various measures are taken, mainly in form of sacrifices (of animals, subjects and prisoners), the wearing and keeping of amulets, consulting diviners and the like. In many areas the ruler takes part or leads in national ceremonies, and may play the role of the priest, rainmaker, inter-mediator, diviner or mediator between men and God.

## VI. THE CONTEMPORARY SCENARIO IN NIGERIA

Nigeria covers a land area of about 923,768 sq km. According to the 2006 National Population census result, revealed by the National Population Commission, Abuja and cited by Niworu, Nigeria has a population of over 140 million people (but today, officials of the Nigerian governments on different media and fora have put the population of Nigeria at about 170 million). The search for mineral resources cutting across the two major regions of north and south since 1903 and 1904 respectively decipher a huge deposit of replenishable and non-replenishable natural resources ranging from petroleum, gas, coal, tin, columbite, iron ore, limestone, gold, salt, marble, bitumen to agricultural resources. The United Nations System in Nigeria submitted that:

Nigeria is undoubtedly a richly endowed nation in terms of physical arable land stretching through five distinct vegetation zones of Sudan, savannah, tropical, rain forest and mangrove swamp and the ecology holds the possibility for abundant food production. The abundance of water resources has good potentials for fisheries. Nigeria has a rich deposit of mineral resources including crude oil, gas, coal, granite. Precious metal... (qtd. in Niworu 29).

Niworu is of the view that governance refers to the use of political power to manage a nation's public interest and societal progress. It is the use of political power with positive manifestation in the development of the society. Governance can be bad enough when the exercise of political power has negative impact on the society with the resultant effect of achieving personal, group or regional interest detrimental to the corporate interest of the entire nation. It also depends on the extent to which government is perceived to be improving the public welfare and responsive to the needs of its citizens, deliver public services, create an enabling environment for productive activities and equal distribution of the wealth of the nation (28).

He further posits that, without any contradiction, Nigerian government has been government of deceit, lies and connivance. Public officials tell blatant lies to defend the chief executives in order to sustain the own seats. The mass of Nigerians because of ascription to ethnic, religious and regional backgrounds cover and support falsehood to save their kinsmen even when they are guilty of criminal offence. It is on record where kinsmen came out to defend Tafa Balogun the former Inspector General of Police, his successor, Sunday Eyihero, Bode George, Aminu Dabo and the like even in the face of reckless embezzlement of public money. It is in these instances that greedy individuals and groups in Nigeria ascribe to other Nigerians to ethnic, religion and regional sentiments. It is in this regard that credible Nigerians are ascribed to Hausa Fulani or Northern Muslim, Middle Belt or Northern Christian, Southerner, Igbo or Yoruba, majority or minority. People who perpetuate this act live on falsehood and continue to siphon public fund meant for sustainable development (31). Giving credence to the above, Claude Ake cited in Niworu, lamenting on the Nigerian state commented that:

The only thing we seem committed to is unrelenting cynicism which we parade as a mark of honour. Scratch the surface however and you will see that it is only the other side of insecurity and despair. We wear it like protective armour against the discomfort of looking at reality in the face against the obligation of caring and the burdens of taking responsibility...The Nigerian ruling elite survives against all odds. There is no legitimacy to draw on. It has run out of ideas... we are always looking up to someone else, forever searching for good leaders to see us through... The Nigerian state is a negative unity of takers in which collective enterprise is all but impossible (30).

According to Ekpu Jonathan et al, it is hard to do business in many poor countries because their governments are corrupt. In fact, it is hard to get permission to build a factory or open a store without government permit. This is obtained largely through

bribering of government officials. In Nigeria, economic development would have gone far than we are today minus the evil called corruption. Malaysia and Indonesia which were at par with Nigeria in the 1960s are far ahead of us today because of corruption of our leadership and even among the led (61).

In addition, they adumbrates that in Nigeria, infrastructural facilities like road network, storage facility, electricity, transportation and others which ought to support economic development are in 'save our soul' conditions. This is typified in our road network which are now 'death-traps' for transportation of goods, personnel and services; epileptic electricity supply with excessive billing system and others in similar conditions. This has negatively affected the economy and made economic development a mirage in Nigeria.

The sorry state of affairs in the contemporary Nigerian society as illustrated above, is as a result of corruption which becomes cancerous spreading to every sphere of our life as individuals and as a collective. According to Eze, corruption is a canker worm which has not only eaten deep into the fabrics of the Nigerian society, but also soiled the character and personality of every Nigerian. The ability to contend and if possible avoid it is a courage and sacrifice, yet to be cultivated by many Nigerians. He adumbrates that:

If there is anything which operates efficiently, uniformly and smoothly all over the country, it is the twin engine of the machinery of corruption and bribery. The phenomena of corruption seem to be our unofficial ideology, our lingua franca, the universal language, which is spoken and understood in every nook and cranny of Nigeria (1).

He posits further, that corruption is one of the dare-devils that stares humanity in the face. It is a global problem with certain destructive tendencies in the third world countries like Nigeria. But the rate of corruption in Nigeria is so alarming that one is constrained to ask: is there anything specifically in the nature of Nigerians that makes them to be so corrupt? Corruption generally, is a term used to qualify the prevalent social ills that affect the entire facet of our society (3). Achebe cited in Eze wrote that the corrupt nature of the Nigerian society is such that:

Keeping an average Nigerian from being corrupt is like keeping a goat from eating yam. Corruption in Nigeria has passed the alarming and entered the fatal state; Nigeria will die if we keep pretending that she is only slightly indisposed (3).

In addition, the above statement seems to suggest that corruption is inherent and quite inevitable in the nature of Nigerians. Perhaps if we were fatalists or compelled to believe in predestination, that line of argument could have been seen to be sound, but since it is not an established case that corruption is naturally inherent or inborn in human beings, Nigerians cannot be

exceptional since they are not naturally and fundamentally different from other human beings. Hence, referring to what Achebe wrote, Odey cited in Eze noted that:

It is totally false to suggest, as we opt to do, that Nigerians are different fundamentally from any other people in the world. Nigerians are corrupt because, the system under which they live today makes corruption easy and profitable; they will cease to be corrupt when corruption is made difficult and inconvenient.

Corruption to Odey is as old as Nigeria's independence. Hence, he noted that:

Abubakar Tafawa Balewa's regime did not see it until the military struck in 1966. Yakubu Gowon did not see it either until he also was removed from office. Murtala Mohammed saw it, tried to do something about it. But they killed him before he could succeed. Obasanjo himself did not feel a pinch of it when he ruled Nigeria first. Today, corruption is his albatross. Muhammadu Buhari saw it as a great threat to Nigeria. He tried to do something about it, but failed partly because fighting corruption in Nigeria is not an easy task and partly because Ibrahim Babangida who ousted his regime felt that Nigeria could not live without corruption (2).

Corruption triumphs in Nigeria, because of the desire to get rich quick that is now prevalent among Nigerians. It is no longer news to hear that policemen, directors, teachers and the like can openly unshamedly demand for and accept gratifications of different kinds before doing whatever they are supposed or in some cases, genuinely employed to do for the development and progress of their country. Moreover, there is no doubt that a lot of factors are instrumental to the lingering crisis of corruption among the Nigerian populace. However, the basic and most central ones are due to lack of exemplary leadership, greed and inordinate ambition for material wealth, power and glory. This is also a great deal of support by the government authorities. Therefore, it is true to say that one of the most agonizing aspects of Nigeria's problem that had actually given license to corruption is the problem of ineffective leadership. For decades, Nigeria has not been opportuned to enjoy dividends of good and exemplary leadership be it military or civilian, who have the interest of the people at heart and also ready to sacrifice personal gains for the greater number of citizens. Hence Achebe cited in Eze succinctly explained that:

The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely, a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land and climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is unwillingness

or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, or to the challenge of personal example, which are the hallmarks of true leadership (1).

## VII. THE SYMBOLIC DEATH OF MONARCHS IN THE PROCESS OF INSTALLATION IN IDOMA LAND

The institution of the Ocheship, monarchy among the Idoma is rooted in their society and it goes back to the mist of time. It originated from the biological idea of the father of the family writ large on the political page. Among the Idoma, the Oche was and is still the highest officer within the kindred and although the lineage elders in the *Ojira*, council of state were and still are collectively higher than he, yet they are not so individually (97).

According to Erim, among the Idoma evidence further shows that the Ocheship is deeply rooted in religion. Thus, the Oche is both the king and the religious head of the community. In the Idoma view, the Oche reigns but does not rule. He assumed office by an act of symbolic death. By dying the Oche severed his connections with his immediate family and lineage and became a partial father to all. By his ritual death, the Oche was supposed to lose his personal identity and all obligations that he might have owed to others in the society. The process of the symbolic death of an Oche is well recorded by Armstrong cited in Erim. He, the Oche:

...assumes office by an act of symbolic death to his family and lineage attachments. He is hidden for fourteen days....During this time many ceremonies are performed on his behalf, in his absence. Finally his compound is sacked. He loses all his belongings to the society as a whole. An ancestral mask performs "opening Path to the Grave" ceremony for him. *Alekwu lowe he kilo*... he becomes the general son of the land. He becomes king owing no property of his own; but as a king he owns the whole land and its citizens... (97).

Erim states that the climax of the installation of the Oche:

is the symbolic burial of the new monarch. He is dressed like a corpse, laid in state, and undergoes all the rigorous ritual preceding the burial. He is then resurrected, a spirit among mortals... endowed with all the wisdom and attributes of the ancestors, no longer subject to hunger, thirst, or greed... (98).

In addition, these ceremonies which could be compared to religious over-tones in the coronation of a king of England, described how the Oche as a father writ large became imbued with the divine godlike qualities. Thereafter, like the king of England, the Oche lived for ever. "The King is dead; long live the King." The Idoma Oche is thus hedged with divinity. Among the

Ashanti of modern Ghana we see the same religious mystique around their king, the hene. He was, like the Mai of Borno or the Atah [sic] Attah of Igala subject to many restraints. He was and still is regarded as being quite distinct from normal beings. This goes to explain why there were elaborate procedures which hid the mortal humanity of these kings from the public.

In the Idoma worldview, *Owoicho*, God is transcendental, all excelling, supreme. He is also looked upon as *Owo no fie owodudu*, omniscient. But since He is too physically removed from the world, there must be an intermediary. It is the Oche who is therefore invested with god-like qualities and made the ruler of the community. Evidence indicates that the Oche was the priest-chief of nearly all the cults in the community. The Idoma religion consisted of three essential elements. The first was the *owoicho* (the Supreme God), the second *aje* (the outstanding earth), and the third *alekwo* (ancestral spirits). Although the *owoicho* was recognized as the creative supernatural force, yet because of the physical distance between the Idoma and God, the people thought it necessary to look for a substitute which acted as an intermediary between them and the Supreme Being. This intermediary was the *aje* through which God transmitted his force. In time, *aje* became sacred to the Idoma. In some Idoma traditions, *aje* is considered more important than God (Erim 98-101).

Erim posits that so important was *aje* in the Idoma religious belief that each kindred group established an earth shrine within its *ojira* (kindred playground). The chief priest of the *aje* was the Oche. In this capacity he is referred to as the *adalekwo* (father of the dead). In Idoma belief, the dead members of the kindred group were paradoxically alive. In other words, death in the corporeal sense did not remove the dead from kindred membership as such. Rather, certain classes of the ancestors were considered vital and living members of the community. Consequently, they were endowed with certain rights and responsibilities. The Oche, in his priestly role, was considered a vital link between the *alekwo* and the living community (101).

## VIII. THE SYMBOLIC DEATH OF MONARCHS AS A PARADIGM TO FIGHTING CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

The history of Nigeria from pre-colonial and colonial periods and from the period of independence, like any other earliest recorded history of political societies, has always sought and developed methods and systems of organizing herself to what is befitting to her true nature as a rational society. It is also, a social and political organization because it has the tendency to bring men to live as composite of fellow human beings in a close contact group known as the society. Man remains always a political animal and can only realize himself fully in a well organized political society. It is part

of human civilization to aim at the ideal, man is to set before himself the model for the best life. Furthermore, the citizen's judgement of the leadership or government based on their happiness, expediency, well-being or whatever else we call it is the nature of human affairs, the best thing (Oduma et al. 69-70). But, Nigeria as a political entity has not been able to achieve to a substantial level, the ideals that made persons to come together in forming the Nigerian society. This is as a result of corruption that has become so cancerous, permeating every sphere of the Nigerian life. This has informed the use of the symbolic death of monarchs in the process of installation in Idoma land as a paradigm for fighting corruption in Nigeria.

According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, paradigm is a typical example or pattern of something (845). Paradigm comes from Greek παράδειγμα (*paradeigma*), "pattern, example, sample" from the verb παραδείκνυμι (*paradeiknumi*), "exhibit, represent, expose" and that from παρά (*para*), "beside, beyond" and δείκνυμι (*deiknumi*), "to show, to point out". In rhetoric, paradeigma is known as a type of proof. The purpose of paradeigma is to provide an audience with an illustration of similar occurrences. This illustration is not meant to take the audience to a conclusion; however it is used to help guide them there ([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/paradigm](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/paradigm)).

A paradigm is a standard, perspective, or set of ideas. A paradigm is a way of looking at something. A paradigm is a new way of looking or thinking about something. This word comes up a lot in the academic, scientific, and business worlds. A new paradigm in business could mean a new way of reaching customers and making money. In education, relying on lectures is a paradigm: if you suddenly shifted to all group work that would be a new paradigm. When you change paradigms, you are changing how you think about something ([www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/paradigm](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/paradigm)).

An etymological analysis shows us that the word comes from the Latin word *paradigma*, and appears in Greek as *paradeigma*, whose English translation is 'example', or as its earlier form 'paradeiknunai'. The prefix 'para-' meaning 'alongside', and 'deiknunai' meaning 'to show,' so the two words together sound as 'alongside shown' or 'what shows itself beside'. But what is it that we "show alongside" or that "appears alongside"? (Göktürk 1). It is an intellectual perception or view, accepted by an individual or a society as a clear example, model, or pattern of how things work in the world. This term was used first by the US science fiction historian Thomas Kuhn (1922-96) in his 1962 book, *The Structure Of Scientific Revolution* to refer to theoretical frameworks within which all scientific thinking and practices operate ([www.businessdictionary.com/definition/paradigm.html](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/paradigm.html)).



The crux of this paper, is the call for the empyment of a very vital aspect of the religious culture of the Idoma people, that is, the symbolic death of monarchs in the process of installation as a paradigm or model for fighting corruption in Nigeria. The leadership and the followership, and indeed all and sundry should contribute their quota to the growth and development of Nigeria devoid of all forms of corruption and corrupt tendencies for the betterment of the generality of the Nigerian populace, just as monarchs in Idoma land die to all the human tendencies, including corrupt tendencies. In other words, those in leadership position and position of authority should be dead to all negative tendencies, most especially to corrupt tendencies that have militate against the development of the country in all ramifications.

Just as the monarchs after emerging from their symbolic death before their installation becomes a father to all, so also those in position of authorities that could impinge positively or negatively in terms of enacting laws, interpreting laws and implementing policies should also be a father to all. If that be the case, those in position of leadership and authority will not do things that would adversely affect the generality of Nigerians. For instance, if one is a father to all, the person will not put his own biological children in expensive private schools and allow the majority of children to be in public schools that is not functional as a result of non-payment of salaries and other issues that have plagued the system, if one is a father to all the person will not pass unjust laws that favour the elite who are in the minority and adversely affect the vast majority of Nigerians and the like.

The government should identify the various African Traditional Religious beliefs and practices spread across the different ethnic nationalities that have resemblance to the symbolic death of monarch in Idoma land, using them to give value re-orientation to the leadership and the followership so that, we can reduce to the barest minimum the cankerworm called corruption that has eaten deep into every fabric of the Nigerian life. The paper is by no means advocating for people to abandon the new found faiths in Islam or Christianity or any other religious conviction (s) nor is it call for religious syncretism. What the paper is simply postulating is that, we go back in time to emulate the positive authentic African way of living based on our Traditional Religion and Culture. Certainly, neither Islam nor Christianity gives room for corruption. But the admonitions are not effective enough because it is not in tandem with our worldview.

The government through the Ministry of Education at all tiers of government should incorporate the teaching and learning of the good aspects of African Traditional Religion into the educational curriculum, as a way of inculcating the positive values inherent in their indigenous religion to the impressionable minds in order

to guide against them imbibing negative tendencies including but not limited to corrupt tendencies.

The paper has also observed the Nigerians who profess either Islam or Christianity are not afraid of sanctions based on their faith convictions, when they transgress the law. But sanctions from the African Traditional Religion are feared because before the coming of the missionary religions, there is the belief in maintaining an ontological balance that the Supreme Being has put in place for the wellbeing of humans. Anything that goes contrary to this divine plan, including corruption comes with its own repercussions which may include death. The fear of the severity of the punishments been meted out to erring persons makes them to engage in activities that will always maintain the ontological equilibrium. So, the symbolic death of monarchs becomes a veritable paradigm or model for the fight against corruption and corrupt tendencies, which has become systemic and endemic in the contemporary Nigerian society.

## IX. RECOMMEDATIONS

Some of the recommendations include:

- i. The cultivation of the spirit of wide-range consultations in governance and letting people see transparency, accountability, integrity and the like in the day to day bussiness of running the country based on the symbolic death of monarchs in the process of installation in Idoma land, whereby all and sundry become dead to corruption and corrupt tendencies.
- ii. Just as the King or Chief becomes a father writ large to all and sundry, so also should the leadership and followership perceive and treat the generality of Nigerians giving them equal opportunities as a father will do to all his children.

## X. CONCLUSION

Nigeria as a nation in Africa is seen not only as the giant of Africa in terms of population and economy, it is also looked upon for exemplary behaviour. However, people get disappointed when Nigeria is properly examined. The reasons are quite obvious as our leaders and followership always attempt to cheat, pilfer and traffic for personal aggrandizement. It is an acknowledged fact that corruption has reached an unprecedented and alarming proportion in Nigeria (Shishima 242).

Considering corruption in Nigeria is as both ststemic and endemic. Shishima citing Atoyebi and Mobolaji see corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for private benefit. They argue that where one has monopoly of power over which he has discretion and exercise same without regard to accountability or fails to comply with relevant rules and regulations, such an individual is said to be corrupt. This aptly implies that

corruption is not only a development problem but also a problem of governance, of morals and ethics and of a weak and immature system of public order. Thus, corruption is the antithesis of progress and government as it creates political instability, social unrest, and crime infested environment, breeds inefficiency, incompetence, mediocrity, unethical values and other debased instincts in the leaders such as greed, avarice and rapacity (243). It is this ugly scenario that has necessitated the paper to make a historical reconstruction of the symbolic death of monarchs in the process of installation as a paradigm for fighting corruption in Nigeria, which has become a bane to all our developmental efforts as individuals and as a collective.

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