

# The Contemporary Cameroon Woman and the Politics of Leverage: An African Womanist Reading of Alobwed' Epie's Until I Sinned

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*Abstract- This paper examines the politics of leverage, illustrating how the contemporary Cameroon woman navigates constraints to reshape and project her social identities in Alobwed' Epie's Until I Sinned. The paper aims to analyse how the modern Cameroon woman, conscious of her social and cultural realities, harnesses submission, loyalty, and generosity to assert autonomy, uplift herself, for the advancement of her family and community. In conventional narratives, the Cameroon woman is depicted as silenced, marginalised, and often persistently subjected to the intersecting pressures of colonial legacies and entrenched patriarchal norms. Contrary to these literary and visual representations, she emerges as assertive and complex by resisting the reductive labels of innocence, naivety and challenging the assumptions embedded in some penned and oral literatures. This paper also illuminates how the woman, engages in fervent denial to construct the church, while simultaneously leveraging her devotion to create opportunities for social and personal development. Despite patriarchal oppression, she transforms her position, and actively reconstructs the distorted identity imposed by social norms and circumstances. The study is articulated through the lens of Clenora Hudson Weem's Africana Womanist theory. Through this framework, the study demonstrates how Epie's protagonist, seeks emancipation and liberation, similar to other feminist analyses, but through a distinct approach. She adopts a non-confrontational strategy by aligning with men, exploring these alliances as mechanisms to achieve her objectives. Epie spots the resourcefulness of the Cameroon woman, irrespective of religion and demonstrates how she –who comprehends the politics of her environment – uses them as an asset. This paper argues that, notwithstanding the naive appearances, the contemporary Cameroon woman actively reshapes prevailing narratives, moving from passive recipients to active participants, with the aim of attaining fulfilment through leverage.*

*Index Terms- Cameroon Woman, leverage, agency, Catholicism, African Womanism.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Within the traditional Cameroon society and wider African settings, the woman was historically positioned at the margins of public life. Her contributions were largely restricted to domestic responsibilities and their voices excluded from decision-making structures. She was systematically silenced, and denied meaningful participation in the political, economic and socio-cultural arenas that shaped her environment. From birth onward, girls were socialised to internalise loyalty and conformity, adhering to the expectations structured within a gender-segregated society. Girls were integrated into domestic and agricultural works under maternal guidance and were progressively socialised into relational roles of service – initially within their natal families (brothers and fathers) and subsequently within marital households. Boys followed their parents to the farm and assisted with tasks considered masculine such as bush cutting, felling trees building houses, hunting, fishing, and splitting of firewood. Fathers often demonstrated a preference for their sons, maintaining close association with them within central domestic spaces. At a tender age, girls participated in income-generating activities such as cracking and selling dried palm kernels, with the proceeds typically handed over to the father, who controlled household expenditures, including the purchase of meat. Miriam Goheen asserts that in the case of Nso, “Women produce virtually all food crops and provision in the household, while men grow coffee and engage in a variety of entrepreneurial activities” (36).

The spaces occupied by the woman were dimly lit, in contrast to the illuminated spaces allocated to men. However, there are conditions under which individuals located within the sphere of visibility do

not possess greater epistemic clarity than those positioned outside its reach. Those in the dark spaces, at the background and periphery have a concrete comprehension of what happens at the boundaries, and the centre. Standpoint theorists opine that “all knowledge claims are socially located, and that some such locations preferable as possible sources of knowledge” (Harding 10). The socio-cultural, economic and political voids, though shaped by marginalisation, paradoxically functioned as springboards for the woman to exercise agency, strengthen communal bonds, assert autonomy, and attain empowerment within patriarchal and structural constraints. Childbearing and nannying, often regarded as burdens and weapons of oppression, became avenues of empowerment as the woman assumed the role of traditional paediatricians, cultivating medical knowledge rooted in cultural practices; much of this knowledge persists, particularly when modern medicine falls short in addressing certain children’s health needs. Traditional tutorship, a saddling responsibility granting men utmost liberty, metamorphosed the woman into an educationist. The job of caring for their husbands and the home transformed them into managers. The farming job made them agro-engineers and sometimes their abused sexualities became instruments for assertion.

On these premises, pertinent questions arise such as; what were the societal dynamics like in the absence of the woman’s participation? Notwithstanding her spatial confinement to the suburbs, she assumed a pivotal role in the intricate politics of familial, communal, and regal administration. Within the family, she often assumed the role of the dutiful daughter, tasked with domestic responsibilities of household cleanliness, culinary assistance and serving the patriarch. Within the marital context, the wife’s responsibilities was to ensure her husband’s comfort, manage household provisions (including meal preparation from her own farm produce), oversee domestic chores like laundry and contribute to household management. Her role also included supporting her husband’s sexual needs with a primary focus on procreation. As a mother, she played an instrumental role in intergenerational cultural transmission, imparting traditional knowledge and values from her own upbringing and heritage to her

offspring. Again, the mother provided sustenance by nurturing her children, overseeing their health and instilling values that would shape them into responsible adulthood. Therefore, in the absence of women, the family would have insufficient food as Edda Ivan-Smith opines that, “agriculture employs three quarters of the population and women provide approximately 60 to 80% of the household needs in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa” (4). Without the woman, the society would equally experience disrupted education, environments degradation and deteriorating health conditions.

Miriam Goheen holds that, “women do not stand in line of succession to the throne, neither are they eligible for lineage offices” (35). In instances where the woman married into a royal home, she often assumed a position of significance within the royal family structure. Ncham and Ngwa state that, “In pre-colonial Africa, women were highly recognised and respected. They occupied important positions in the socio-cultural organisation of society, notably the role of the Queen Mother in palaces. Yet their contributions were invincible” (131-132). The centralised nature of governance and the patriarchal set up of the society forbade the queen mother from being at the centre of decision-making. The centrality of her power remained subtle at the background, as she was a significant mechanism for the male attainment of royal power. Annie M. D. Lebeuf asserts that, ‘in some African countries (like Niger and Chad and in Hausa territory, women founded cities, led migrations, conquered kingdoms ... In the myths concerning the establishment of So in North Cameroon, it was also often a woman who chose the site of a city, held the insignia of power and governed the district” (94 – 95). To buttress this point, Bulami Edward Fonyuy opines that, a woman called Ngonso founded Nso – in North West region. Concerning the founding of kingdoms, in many traditions there is a constantly recurring theme with variations of a woman, the queen or daughter of a chief, who marries a stranger to whom she hands over the insignia of the power invested in her (Lebeuf 96). This underscores the indispensable role of the traditional woman in sustaining dynasty authority and social order.

The woman occupied critical positions within the Cameroon context, in the pre-colonial times, but she lost that assertion during the colonial era. The system limited her to the roles of an obedient daughter, loyal wife and responsible mother, adhering to colonial and societal expectations, and familial obligations. All these roles, she fulfilled without interrogations. In the Post-colonial society, the woman reminisces these identities, understands the strings she pulls from the background, even though she still desires that the man should maintain the status quo. She does not aim to unseat the man, nor challenge his authority, but rather to assert and louden her voice. The contemporary woman holds esteemed positions across various domains but “despite the progress in women’s status, a majority of African women’s are still entangled in socio-cultural, economic, and political barriers that have continuously marginalised them” (Mesang and Mbunda-Nekang 92).

Leverage, derived from a French word “lever”, which is “a simple tool that employs the principle of mechanical advantage to amplify an input force so that the output power it produces is over and above the original input” (Allon 693). The term lever is commonly used to describe an instrument capable of generating an amplification of power that will in turn provide leverage. From an economic and financial perspective, leverage is the act of using other people’s money or resources to financially capacitate or empower oneself. Cambridge Dictionary Online defines lever from an everyday usage as a tactic utilised to shape an individual’s actions or choices, typically employing persuasive strategies to attain a specific goal or result. The politics of leverage, in this paper, focuses on how the contemporary Cameroon woman manipulates relationships to generate gigantic outcomes. It involves exerting pressure on patriarchy and the Catholic Church as systemic mechanisms employed by the black woman to raise the bar for herself and enhance her prowess in a gender-segregated society.

Alobwed’ Epie illuminates the trajectories and hurdles that the contemporary Cameroon woman experiences as she navigates the challenging corridors of education, religion, poverty and marriage in *Until I Sinned*. The novelist asserts that the modern Cameroon woman has access to education and

empowerment, but these powerful tools do not come on a platter. Inasmuch as patriarchal systems sometimes facilitated the woman’s pursuit of higher heights, the destabilisation of fatherhood financially or fate often cast the woman into precarious situations, wherein only her personal endeavour, ingenuity and resilience ensure her survival. Choices, decisions and execution – sometimes with patriarchal support – constitute fundamental tools to attain success, as the woman realises that her independence involves not only leaving her parent’s sight, but every step taken reflects individual development in all ramifications.

African feminism and African Womanism guided the analysis of this study. The global feminist movement emerged as a response to marginalisation and the violation of women’s rights. While it significantly advanced gender equality, mainstream feminism has been critiqued for its limited engagement with racial discrimination, class stratification and contextual realities shaping African women’s experiences. These shortcomings necessitated the development of African Feminism, which offers a more intersectional and culturally grounded framework for addressing multilayered forms of oppression confronting the African woman. Mesang and Mbunda-Nekang state that, African feminism is a theory for African women patterned by African women. The framework “addresses the conditions and needs of women from developing countries by encouraging policymakers to engage in a fight for the interest of the black woman in terms of acquiring education, affordable health care, humane treatment, reproductive rights and societal women’s rights” (94 – 95). In African Feminism, men are regarded as a quota of the problem and confrontation is regarded as a necessity. This strand of Feminism is also considered limited to handle the affairs of the African woman without setting aside the African man.

Clenora Hudson-Weem’s *Africana Womanism* emerged in the late 1980s. The ideology behind the framework is its applicability to all women of the African descent, succinctly grounded in African culture and Afrocentrism (Ndonibi 405). The theory is built on the premise that the African histories were gradually depreciating and giving room for the interference of the African culture to the point where

their feminine cultural values were declining in the process of the African women searching for themselves and their identity. Eunice Ngongkum ascertains that, “Womanism’s focus is on the family and the society, especially highlighting her experiences in settings chiefly defined by patriarchy” (139). A tenet of this theory ensures that the African woman “aid[s] in bringing to fruition the liberation of her entire race” (Weem 51). The struggle is supportive and not acting as a solitary agency; it contributes towards a collective long-term historic process, requiring material, ideological and institutional conditions to attain maturity. The ideology behind liberation transits individualism for a collective struggle to gain recognition in political institutions, be economically self-determined and experience cultural sovereignty.

In African Womanism, the woman is non-confrontational towards the menfolk unlike African Feminism does. It is built on a different approach that ensures the man’s presence gives an assurance of a fight towards a common goal. Logically, African men do not experience the same privileges and advantages relished by white males; they do not have similarly institutionalised power for oppression as the white men do. On this premise, the African woman should not dwell in comparisons with the white woman’s struggle but should embrace family pride and solidarity. Complementarity between men and women is encouraged in the theory. By complementing each other for the purpose of survival, the question of place and space in the venue of black women’s issues gets resolved (Weem 44). The African man and woman both experienced turbulent ordeals during colonialism and it becomes unfair for the African woman to adopt Western feminist tendencies to hijack the man. Understanding their systems from the pre-colonial epochs to the post-colonial era, Alobwed Epie’s womanist in *Until I Sinned* engages in a struggle against collective poverty through hard work, battles gender-based violence via masculine institutionalised vengeance, attains political height and economic prowess through hospitality, and secures motherhood by means of secrecy.

## II. THE CHURCH AS A PRAGMATIC PLATFORM FOR ADVANCEMENT

Catholic missionaries arrived Cameroon with a clear evangelical mission: to convert the local population to Christianity and integrate them into structures and doctrines of the new church. However, the missionary enterprise cannot be separated from underlying motives of colonial expansion and control. While the mission was presented as spiritual salvation, it frequently entailed the appropriation of indigenous lands for their edifices (churches, schools and mission stations). African communities willingly allocated vast hectares of lands to the missionaries and further demonstrated their generosity by providing labour on these sites until the structures were raised. This collaboration reflected an initial spirit of hospitality and mutual engagement, though its long-term implications proved complex. The woman – irrespective of age and background – serves by the church as a reverend sister or ordinary members of the Christian community (Epie 11). Reverend Sisters of both European and African origins, according to the novel under study, significantly contribute their quota in the evangelisation process. Nevertheless, the Black Reverend Sister occupies a unique transformative position within her community. Beyond religious duties, she leverages her role to challenge gender-based marginalisation as she advocates for children’s education, especially girls. Alobwed’ Epie in *Until I Sinned* states that:

*One day I saw a black Reverend Sister. She wore white from head to toe. She did everything like the white Reverend Sisters. But could she be an angel? Whether she could or not, in the fourth week of her being in the Mission, she assembled all the children for a brief meeting. She said she wanted to know whether we went to school or not and whether we were attending doctrine classes. Most children shied away from telling the truth but I put up my hand and said most of us did not go to school because our parents did not want us, mostly the girls. (11)*

The black Reverend Sister demonstrates consciousness of her identity and the problems facing the Cameroon society. Despite her interaction with the whites through their education and religion, she

remains loyal to her race and spearheads the challenge of researching on the conditions of children, humans with great vulnerabilities. She realises that just as envisaged, the child lacks formal education, especially the girls because most traditional Cameroon parents considered female education as wastage of resources but prepared them for early marriages. Sarah Lieungu Etonge, a Cameroon veteran marathon, says, “I did not go to school ... My dad didn’t send me to school because back then boys were sent to school while girls were sent to marriage”.<sup>1</sup> The black Reverend Sister in *Until I sinned*, understands all the stakes, takes advantage of her position to impact her society by launching a “crusade to persuade parents to send their daughters to school” (12). Parents of both genders collaborate towards the educational progress of their girl child and family as Epie states that, “When she met my father, he said if our mothers were interested in sending us to school, he would not object. Our mothers accepted and a new phase of our lives started” (12). The statement demonstrates collaboration between the Cameroon couple with the man raising a motion of support for sister’s suggestion and wife’s decision. This reinforces the African womanist perspective of the man being a pillar for the woman’s empowerment.

Western education is not free and Catholic education is no exception. Paying tuition fees, purchasing books, stationeries, and uniforms financially burden Cameroon families. The Black Sister is particularly conscious of this challenge and seeks avenues to support the children, especially girls - in accessing education. Understanding the socio-economic conditions of her society, with the spirit of collectiveness or development, she leverages her position to relieve the Cameroon family of this gauntlet. In *Until I sinned*, Epie narrates that, “Going to school entailed extra burden on our mothers. They had to pay school fee and buy uniforms and books for us ... One day, the Black Rev Sister called me and told me that they had decided to exempt me from paying school fee” (12-13). This gesture metamorphoses into a scholarship when Emerencia goes to college.

The Youth Ministry in the Catholic Church, a group under the appellation Christian Youth Movement

(CYM) represents a deliberate response by the Christian community to address the needs of young people, while facilitating the sharing of the unique gifts and talents possessed by the youth with the broader community. In simpler terms, it is a ministry of the youths, run by youths for the sustenance of youths and the larger community (Diocese of Charleston 4). The objective of this ministry is to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world today, to draw them towards a responsible participation in the life, mission and work of faith within the church. It also fosters the personal, spiritual and cultural growth of each youth. Emerencia in *Until I Sinned* establishes herself in the church in Yaoundé after her registration at the university and classes are yet to commence. The scramble for leadership positions at the expense of the vision of emulating Christ remains a fundamental challenge in the Catholic Church. Conscious of this crisis, the protagonist prefers to work in the background when she joins the Legion of Mary and the CYM, as suggested by the parish priest (Epie 23), but her engagement with the groups’ immediate concerns simultaneously produce capacity-building effects, revealing empowerment as an emergent outcome of everyday practices rather than a consciously pursued objective. Epie further says that:

*The CYM unconsciously propelled me into big business. With a membership of children mostly below 16, we had a financial crisis from the word go. We needed money to run the bureau, to give snacks after meetings and for logistics and other eventualities ... I went to Bamenda and bought the old bakery the Rev Sisters had discarded when they installed the modern bakery. In fact, though I say I bought, they gave it to me at giveaway price when I told them the challenges our CYM was facing, and how I wanted to solve the problems. Upon my return, I set up a mini-bakery. I named it Bright Day Bakery (BDB). That earned for me the nickname Miss Bright. (29)*

From an African Womanist perspective, Emerencia’s entrepreneurial initiative is motivated by her desire to assist the Christian community. Her engagement into economic activity is construed in genuine maternal

concern and moral obligation to vulnerable members of her community, which paves the way for her political consciousness. This indirectly propels her to empowerment, achieved through care. The protagonist demonstrates subtle power when she negotiates through a moral narrative as she converts vulnerability into bargaining power and metamorphosing need into legitimacy. Recycling is another mechanism the narrator harnesses to transform waste into infrastructure, which aligns with the 21st-century sanitation schemes wrought with innovation and sustainability.

The tables turn phenomenon is illuminated through the church represented by the reverend sisters who traditionally occupy a position of authority become the resource provider for the reformation of the Christian community, the empowerment of the youths and the emergence of a Cameroon womanist. Epie further states that:

*I employed an adult manageress and the CYM on these terms – any member who came to work received a stipend with a deduction of 20%, which went to the CYM coffers. The fact that members found themselves bagging 80% of their proceeds, made the attendance constantly heavy and very productive. Furthermore, the fact I fed the children with what they produced made them overzealous to work. (29-30)*

From the excerpt above, the Cameroon womanist demonstrates her strength in constructing an alternative economic system within the CYM. She creates governance structures void of state support by employing a manager, instilling wages, introducing taxation policies for reinvesting into the institution. Charity in this case becomes an impediment to growth because, while Miss Bright builds proto-bureaucracy asserting her political rationality and administrative competence, the children appropriate socio-economic mentorship for future independence. To ensure that the children do not lose focus in the process – become indiscipline and school dropouts – she obliges them to “limit the work to Saturdays and insist that only those who [do] their assignments and [pass] [are] to be allowed to work” (Epie 30). With this approach, she leverages the children into

working extremely hard at school and equally building their capacity at the bakery.

### III. THE REVERSAL OF AGENCY: MAN AS A UTILITARIAN MEANS

In this section, the focal point is demonstrating the condition in which the masculine gender, once the authors of systems, become the raw material those systems now exploit. Man’s value is not capitalised on what they are but how instrumental they can be towards the materialisation of external goals for the feminine gender. In the traditional Cameroon society (and even in some modern context), men have been at the forefront of power dynamics within the socio-cultural, political and economic context. The National Institute of Statistic et al. in “Women and Men: Girls and Boys in Cameroon” opine that, “women in Cameroon are poorly represented in appointed positions. Despite increasing gradually between 2019 and 2020, women’s representation in ministerial position is low ... National statistics show that Cameroon has no women governors” (105) and the same applies to other prominent positions in the country. The traditional woman loyally observed her place and space in the background though sometimes pulling the strings. However, the contemporary woman bluntly refuses to be in the shadows and is all out to display her strength for the progress of her friends, family, society and the nation. Women must be given greater consideration, as they have been more disadvantaged than men (5). She accomplishes this by making use of the opportunities presented to her by men; men who approach her with either a vicious secondary aim or genuineness.

Love is a fundamental tool in family ties, community growth and nation building. Most lovers, in the modern age, begin as friends, boyfriend girlfriend, fiancés and then marriage. It is certain that African ancestors may not have experienced these stages as theirs were based on interfamily ties, betrothal at birth or early marriage at adolescent age. In African Womanism, the lover’s relationship supersedes two individuals seeking personal fulfilment but directed towards preparing them towards marriage, which is central in Africa. In modern pre-marital relationships, the common interest of lovers varies from “shared activities, social involvements, intellectual

enthusiasms, moral and religious goals, economic needs, and especially emotional interdependence” (Martin 46). Nevertheless, it does not take away the aspect of leverage through which the woman can attain empowerment. The author under study narrates that:

*You don't have dresses. I have incorporated you into the wedding maids' group. In fact, you are the maid of honour. Tomorrow I shall bring a seamstress here to take your measurements for the maid's uniform ... Some days later I met Imelda and asked her how much I would pay for the dress. She said all she expected from me was to wear the dresses. That was all. She and her boyfriend had undertaken to dress the wedding maids as their contribution to the wedding of her boyfriend's friend's wedding ... if you want to help me, I shall be wedding him at Easter. At that time, you can exhibit your financial might. (33-34)*

African Womanism operates within a framework of collectivism, wherein relationships – particularly those leading towards marriage – are built on shared responsibility, mutual accountability and communal engagement. Imelda and her would be husband dually engage in a financial responsibility and position themselves as stakeholders in one of the most sacred rituals in Cameroon. Through this action, they build another family and not just being passive observers. Neither the bride nor groom are Imelda's friends but her boyfriend's. Nevertheless, she occupies an influential position at the wedding's planning. Inasmuch as Imelda's action is commendable, she demonstrates leverage by usurping her position as the assistant protocol officer for the wedding to attain a goal, which is to valorise her friend. Miss Bright demonstrates proficiency and artisanship in baking cakes. However, she lacks socio-aesthetic knowledge – particularly in social interaction and fashion expertise, which are Imelda's characteristics. The latter steps into the situation and provides both social and financial support to address these gaps. The wedding, a place where classes of cultures intermingle becomes metamorphoses unto a training space for Miss Bright to acquire practical competences in cake presentation.

The establishment of fake certificates in Cameroon have become a rampant phenomenon, depriving the system of credibility, but plunging into fraud and corruption. Tah Jarvis Mai states that:

*The issue of fake certificates is in an increase. Many have questioned the issue why governments across Africa are unable to resolve the issue of fake certificates. In Cameroon, over 1317 fake certificates were determined by Cameroon's military from the communique that was released by the spokesperson of the military, indicating that more than 1317 recruits within the military had fake certificates, fake baccalaureate, fake probatoire, fake GCE ordinary and advanced Level just to name these. Now within these aspects, this is just the military, what of the different ministries in Cameroon where these certificates are being used.<sup>2</sup>*

The discovery above illustrates how deeply corruption and weak regulatory mechanisms have penetrated core state institutions. This phenomenon undermines meritocracy, destabilises professional standards and erodes public trust. Ultimately, the prevalence of fake certification in Cameroon highlights not merely individual misconduct but a structured pattern of corruption in state offices. Epie advances a reason for Cameroonians' misconduct in *Until I Sinned* as he states that, “Our unmarried colleagues are establishing fake marriage certificates with men in town in order to be posted where their husbands are, that is here in town.” (84). Western feminism regarded the man as the oppressor while the woman the victim. However, there is a reversal of the agency and a flip in power dynamics as the woman leverages the masculine gender, ascertains her centrality as opposed to the marginalised peripheries the traditional woman had been relegated to. In the same vein, she (Miss Bright) chooses not to engage in fake certification but uses her economic prowess to leverage the Minister's Private Secretary to maintain her centrality.

In the African society, motherhood is an instrumental stage that fetches respect and cast away insulting looks on a woman who has come of age, especially an independent one. Motherhood is significant to

contemporary gendered expectations and the cultural expectation to bear and rear children is so powerful that parenthood seems normative while childlessness deviant (McQuillan et al. 478). In Cameroon, motherhood is imbued with profound sociocultural, psycho-emotional and economic import, reflecting the complex interplay of traditional and modern influences that orientate women's experiences and identities. It is the most pressing for the contemporary Cameroon woman. When this issue is involved, any other thing can be on hold. This pressure springs from the fact that she is the lone child of her mother and saddled with the responsibility of extending her maternal lineage (Epie, 138). Her incessant fears motivate her to imbibing 'Imeldamatrix', strategies for getting pregnant and with a man of repute. The novelist states that:

*I reviewed the invitation in respect of my longing. It has to be a man of substance, not another gold prospecting fake. Yes. A personality in transit and therefore far removed from easy gossip. Yes. Known only to me. Yes. To steal the act and give credibility to the ploy of having no contest for the product. Yes. All correct. One hundred percent correct. Mission approved. Embarquement immediat ... One day, I received a letter by post from my son's father in New York saying they were coming to Cameroon again for a three-week mission. (140 - 154)*

The protagonist's longing for a child illustrates one of the most challenging situations that women in Cameroon, Africa and the world experience on a daily basis. The fruit of the womb and the successful childbirth stabilises the woman, granting her psycho-emotional fulfilment and power in her cultural and social space. As a woman with a history of a failed marriage (wrought with a series of miscarriages due to domestic violence), she chooses the father of her biological children with caution and vision, a man who would not claim custody of the child because he would be unaware of his/her existence. She uses this same strategy to birth two children (excluding her two adopted children) with an influential man, who later sets her on a political platform, by having her

employed by the United Nations in Care Cameroon, as the Assistant for Refugees Affairs in Cameroon (Epie 159).

Mutual economic emancipation is a motivating factor for the Cameroon woman to engage in using man as a utilitarian means. Emerencia uses her position as a leverage to build other women, solve state problems and plan an empowering future for her children and the refugees. Understanding the idea of reinvestment and giving back into the society, she uses the advantage of her success to raise her manager's salary from 80.000 – 130.000 francs, buys a 6000-metres-square piece of land for her children and the manager. She reinstates the allowances of her junior staff, compensates productivity, honesty and respect for hierarchy, institutes risk allowances for workers at war zones and safeguard the rights of refugees (Epie 161 – 162). Through these interventions, Emerencia exemplifies African Womanism in practice, not as an abstract ideology but as ethical leadership grounded in collective progress, intergenerational responsibility and communal justice.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The paper has worked to establish the concept of contemporary Cameroon woman applying the politics of leverage to catapult her to greatness in Alobwed' Epie's *Until I Sinned*. The traditional Cameroon woman experienced marginalisation, though this springboarded her acquisition of competences. The purpose was to demonstrate how the modern woman as opposed to the traditional woman explored loyalty, not for the prosperity and empowerment of man, but to reshape her socio-economic, political and cultural environment. Catholicism, one of the most populated denominations in Cameroon today, was introduced into the country with a hidden exploitative agenda. However, the Black Reverend Sister sees the church as a pragmatic platform to rewrite the narratives by crusading for female education and empowerment. Fervent Christians, understanding the stakes, embark on a search for Christ and money, with the church serving as the perfect ground for the acquisition of both dreams. Corruption continues to plague the country and all efforts for its eradication prove abortive. Womanism was deployed to depict the

contemporary Cameroon woman's comprehension of the gender-institutionalised culture and how she leverages these norms to obtain a central position. The objective transcends individual accumulation of political, economic and social power to the empowerment of CYM children and her employees.

#### V. FOOTNOTE

- [1] Information transcribed from an online interview Fleo 237 "Sarah Etonge: I did not go to School". Online Video Clip <https://facebook.com/share/r/1EXcvT9Xku/>. Accessed on 22 February 2026.
- [2] Information transcribed from an online interview Tah Javis Mai "Combating Fake Certificates in Cameroon: What Measures Must be Taken". Online Video Clip [www.youtube.com/@mediagroup2589](http://www.youtube.com/@mediagroup2589). Accessed on 11 February 2026.

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