



ISA ALABI'S ARABIC POEM ON MAJOR CAUSES OF ECONOMIC CRIME IN NIGERIA: AN ANALYSIS THROUGH ISLAMIC LAW PARADIGM

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Abstract

*It is not in doubt that an average Nigerian citizen now passes through untold hardship in a bid to secure daily bread and sustain his family. Prevalence of economic crimes is one of the reasons accountable for this unpleasant situation. A discussion of the problem, economic crime, is the main thrust of this paper. Although, there have been monotony of legal and institutional frameworks from the side of the government to combat the menace, the thorny pain from the woes of the catastrophe is yet to abate. There has been a number of scholarly researches into the causes of economic crime but same is yet to achieve the much-anticipated result of taming the tide of the crime. It is thus the mindset in this treatise to survey what could be major factors responsible for the spread of economic crime with a view to advancing workable and effective solutions thereto. The fashionable perspective of Isa Abubakr Alabi, a Nigerian Arabic poet per excellence, in his poetic predication of the reason behind economic crime on moral decadence in man, has caught the fancy of the present researcher. To this extent, the work has adopted two different aspects of human moral turpitude which the poet under reference mentions as the twin points of instigation of economic and financial crime in the country. Employing doctrinal method of legal writing, which is in tune with pure analytic engagement that the pattern of work at hand requires, it is found that advancing adequate solutions to the two alluded moral deficiencies in man and heeding the said solutions will most likely checkmate economic crime and restore peace and fulfilment back to all. The writer shall achieve this by engaging in deep legal analysis of the said twin aspects of human moral decadence which have been discerned upon reading the first two collections of Isa Alabi's Arabic poem; *The Garden (Al-Riyadh)* and *The Seven Lines-Patterned Poem or Rhyme Royal (Al-Suba 'iyyat)* of the same poet, Isa Abubakr Alabi.*

Keywords: Economic Crime, Islamic law, Crimes and Nigeria

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Crime in its broad sense is bedeviling almost all nations of the world. Same thing is the case with economic and financial crimes to be specific. The latter, among others, is a usual albatross to attainment of individual comfort and national development. Nigeria has never been immune from this problem since time immemorial. Writers have at different times researched into the discovery of factors which could account for the said obnoxious crime. These range from unbearable environmental conditions such as poverty, hunger,



unemployment and urbanization¹ to profligacy and immorality.² Aside these, a number of other factors such as scientific and biological composition of man³ are also often referred to in the context.

In an attempt to look for a way out of this problem, the present researcher, as a social reformer, has found displeasure in searching for the monotony of reasons behind the prevalence of economic crime. This is to avoid boredom and disinterest which may ensue therefrom. Instead, the writer has chosen to opt for the much-needed solution only from the two angles which same poetic lines of Isa Alabi have pointed at as said earlier. These angles shall be subjected to deep analysis within the perspective of Islamic law teachings. This exercise shall however be preceded with some preliminary issues such as conceptual clarifications of economic crime and efforts of the governments so far towards anti-graft war. After this, the writer shall entertain brief profile of the poet under reference (Isa Alabi) for the fact that the thrust of this paper is predicated on his artistic work. What come after this are the analytical discourse earlier referred to and the conclusion.

2.0 WHAT ECONOMIC CRIME CONNOTES

Economic and financial crime as a phrase does not seem to enjoy a universally agreed definition among researchers and scholars – both classical and contemporary. This however does not preclude availability of some theories and views on the clarification of the phrase by some experts in the subject.⁴

According to Nuhu Ribadu, economic crime refers to human regular activities which are offensive to the dictates of economic reputation in Nigeria. The phrase is also said to denote some immoral and illegal steps of man having negative impact on the Nigerian economy and with penal consequences.⁵

In one of the resolutions of the United Nations, the term ‘economic crime’ is described as a collection of crimes repeatedly committed by the noble and elites in the society while undertaking their lawful duties.⁶

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¹Salisu, A.K., Causes of Corruption in Nigeria: Implication for National Development (Journal of Management and Economic Studies), 2009, 1 (4): 20-27, DOI: 10.26677/TR1010.2019.115, Journal Homepage: <http://www.jomaes.org>.

²Adiele, D. F., Serious Crime in Nigeria: An Empirical Analysis Using Time Series Data (between 2000 - 2010), Global Journal of Mathematical Sciences Vol. 12, 2013: 25-29. www.globaljournalseries.com

³Olagunju-Ibrahim, R.O., Lombroso’s Theory of In-Born Criminality in Criminals: A Further Review Through Islamic Law Perspective, Journal of Islamic and Comparative Laws, ISSN: 2536-6637, Vol. 7, No. 1, December, 2022.

⁴<http://law.jrank.org/pages/1055/economic-crimes-theory.html>

⁵Ribadu, N.,: “Problems Associated With Enforcement of EFCC Laws Against Economic Crimes” Paper Presented at the Nigeria Bar Association Annual Conference (Abuja, 23-27, August, 2004) p. 4

⁶“New Dimensions of Criminality and Crime Prevention in the Context of Development: Challenges for Future”



From the above, one can conveniently discern that there is parity between economic crime and mismanagement, smuggling, corporate malfeasance, rationing violation, white collar crime⁷ and abuse of economic power.⁸

From the perspective of the Nigerian federal government, below is the idea of ‘economic crime’ according to the National Assembly. It is put thus;

They are the non-violent criminal and illicit activity committed with the objective of earning wealth illegally either individually or in a group or organized manner thereby violating existing legislations governing the economic activities of the government and its administration and includes any form of fraud, narcotic drug trafficking, money laundering, embezzlement bribery, illegal arms deals, smuggling, human trafficking and child labour, looting and any form of corrupt practices, illegal oil bunkering and illegal mining tax evasion foreign exchange malpractices including counterfeiting of currency, theft of intellectual property and piracy, open market abuse, dumping of toxic wastes and prohibited goods etc.⁹

Going through the above, it is clear that the conceptual framework of economic crime usually radiates around offences in Nigeria – either by way of commission or omission known to be inimical to the general interest of the nation.

3.0 EFFORTS OF THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT AGAINST ECONOMIC CRIME

Combative legislations have always been the chosen approach of virtually all nations of the world in attempting to checkmate the menace of economic crime.¹⁰ Nigeria in this context is never an exception. For instance, the military government of the country promulgated Asset Declaration Decree in 1966 under General Yakubu Gowon. The Decree also compelled investigation of any federal government employee on the means of his wealth and property.¹¹ This particular legal framework worked out then as a good policy with positive effect on taming the tide of fraudulent enrichment¹² to an extent.

Late General Muritala Rahmat Muhammad succeeded Gowon in office. Following the same trend, he promulgated a similar Decree¹³ sanctioning investigation of Governors and Federal Commissioners in various ministries on wealth acquisition from time to time. Successive governments also had their own creations and innovation. Buhari/Idiagbon had their own

⁷United Nations Congress on Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders. A/CO/F. 121/20, 16th April, 1995.

⁸Titus, R., *Crime and Criminology*, 9th ed. (Mc Graw Hill 2000) p. 248.

⁹S. 46, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (Establishment) Act 2004. There are however other legislations against economic and financial crimes in the country, for example, the Criminal Code, Cap 77, LFN 1990 (Cap 38, LFN 2004); the Penal Code, Cap. 345, LFN 1990 (Cap. P. 3, LFN 2004); the Failed Banks (Recovery of Debts) and Financial Malpractices in Banks Act, 1994; the Advance Fee Fraud and other Related Offences Decree, 1995; Money Laundering (Provisions) Act, Cap. M18, LFLN 2004, etc.

¹⁰Obayelu A.E., “Effects of Corruption and Economic Reforms and Growth and Development; Lessons from Nigeria” paper presented at African Economic Conference, 2007 p. 18

¹¹No. 5 of 1966 (repealed).

¹²Okechukwu E., “A Critique of the Activities of EFCC vis-à-vis the 1999 Constitution” in *Ife Juris Review*. A Journal of Contemporary legal and Allied Issues. Vol. 3, Part 1, 2006, p. 104

¹³No. 38 of 1975



draconian policy¹⁴ on this. Same thing applied to each of Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida,¹⁵ Muhammadu Sanni Abacha,¹⁶ Shagari¹⁷ and Umar Yar'adua.¹⁸

What can be added to the catalogue above is the content of some provisions in the Nigerian 1999 Constitution (as amended) on the combative stance towards economic and financial crimes. Advance Fee Fraud and other Related Offences Act¹⁹ is one in this respect. Others are Money Laundering Prohibition Act²⁰ and Banks and Other Financial Institutions Act.²¹

Having said the above, it is apt to delve into the discussion on two other different Acts against economic and financial crimes. These two, which were creations of President Olusegun Obasanjo in his democratic dispensation, are Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission ICPC (Act)²² and Economic and Financial Crimes Commission EFCC (Act).²³ These two Acts, as at the time of writing this work (November, 2025), are the latest legislations on the subject of economic crime and they both possess good potential to end the menace in our midst. Provisions on forfeiture and confiscation of wealth and property of another, which are therein contained, constitute veritable weapon against the menace and resort thereto shall be had whenever sufficient evidence suffices that one has come about sudden wealth by way of deceit or fraud.²⁴

Without doubt, highly impressive and commendable are the above legal and institutional frameworks meant to combat the graft. But a question which continues begging for an answer up till now is “why do citizens of Nigeria still wallow in pains under the shackles of economic and financial crimes despite having this avalanche of anti-graft legislations”?? Without much ado, the simple answer to this interrogation can be located in man’s uncultured zeal to always amass and acquire wealth willy-milly and even beyond reasonable proportion. The Poet (Isa Alabi) has toed the path of this reasoning in his case study poem on the cause of human indulgence in graft. This poem shall be subjected to in-depth analysis in this paper. But before then, the writer at this juncture deems it fit to engage in terse biographical sketch about the person of the poet, Isa Alabi Abubakr.

4.0 ISA ALABI’S BIOGRAPHY

In the preclusion to this biographical engagement, the writer is under academic obligation to acknowledge that the following paragraphs on Isa Alabi’s profile are a translation of an Arabic biographical text of the same poet put together long time ago by Muhammad Mashood Mahmud Jimba, now Professor of Arabic and its at Kwara State University, Malete, Ilorin. The original text of the Arabic biography can be found at the back cover of the poet’s

¹⁴Olagunju-Ibrahim, R.O., et. al, “The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (As Amended) and the Imperative of Combating Economic and Financial Crimes” Redeemer’s University Law journal. (RUNLAWJ) Vol. 1, pt. 2, p. 394, ISSN: 2636 6462.

¹⁵Who introduced War Against Indiscipline. (WAI)

¹⁶Who introduced War Against Indiscipline and Corruption. (WAIC)

¹⁷Who introduced National Ethical Revolution (NER)

¹⁸Who introduced Policy of Zero Tolerance for Corruption (PZTC)

¹⁹(Cap. P. A6) 2006.

²⁰Vol. II, 20111.

²¹(Cap. B 3), LFN, 2004.

²²(Cap C 15), LFN , 2004.

²³S.46, EFCC Act, LFN, 2004.

²⁴See ss. 8, 10, 17, 18, 20 and 37 in the ICPC Act.



first Divan (Diwan), the Garden (Al-Riyadh). Hereinbelow is the translation of same by the present author.

Isa Abubakr Alabi, whose birth took place in Kumasi, Ghana in 1953, learnt the art of Quranic recitation and some rudiments of Arabic and Islamic teachings under the tutelage of some Ilorin scholars. He was thereafter enrolled at Shaykh Adam Al-Ilory's Markaz at Agege, Lagos where he underwent both the primary (I'idad') and secondary (Tawjihi/Thanawy) strata of Arabic and Islamic scholarship. He later attended Bayero University, Kano and University of Ilorin at different times. At the former, he bagged both the Diploma and Masters Degrees while the degrees he earned at the latter were B.A and Ph.D. All there were in Arabic language. The poet was also awarded Higher Diploma in teaching Arabic to the non-native speakers. This was at King Saudi University in Riyadh.

His teacher and mentor, Shaykh Adam Abdullahi Al-Ilory found reason to second him at a time to Darul-Ulum Arabic and Islamic School in Ilorin, Kwara State to serve as both a teacher and principal thereat.

Upon securing lecturing appointment at federal level, Isa Alabi worked between 1984 and 1994 in the Department of Arabic language of Usman Dan Fodio University, Sokoto from where he transferred his service in 1994 to the University of Ilorin (where he lectured Arabic language and its literature till he retired about three years ago). He was at a time at the Legon University of Ghana teaching Arabic for a year sabbatical leave.

Isa Alabi's reputation as a virtuoso of Nigerian Arabic poetry is highly recognized. He started poetic composition early in life and remained tied to the apron of this intellectual endeavour till his mastery of the art with elegant style, superlative, rhetoric, powerful imagination and uncommon creativeness. His impressive skill and super talent of composing Arabic poems has earned him a number of prizes and awards. The highest in this regard is the award for emerging as the best poet in the poetry composition organized by the King Su'ud University in Riyadh in 1991 as part of the activities of the Awareness week on the pains and woes of smoking. Isa Alabi's poems often feature on the pages of many academic magazines in Nigeria and in the Arab world.

The present writer's addendum to the translated biography above concerns the areas of two additional divans which the poet has been blessed to further publish. These are: The Seven Lines – Patterned Poem or The Rhyme Royal (Al-Suba'iyat) and the Voice of the Heart (Sawt al-Khatir). The latter, which came out early this year (2025), has within its contents a special poetic drama showcasing the personality of the late sage and scholar, Shaykh Adam Abdullahi Al-Ilory. The present writer also adds that the poet observed Hajj rites in 1991 and retired from the federal service as an academic in the University of Ilorin in 2023. On the last note, it is interesting to hint that the poet, Prof. Isa Alabi Abubakr is happily married with promising male and female offsprings.

4.1 Isa Alabi's Poem on the Causes of Economic Crime

This article has been quite expressive of reference to monotony of instigators of economic crime. This ranges from poverty and unemployment to urbanization dissoluteness, lewdness and even the point of inbuilt biological composition of man.²⁵

²⁵Olagunju-Ibrahim, R.O., Lombroso's Theory of In-Born Criminality in Criminals: A Further Review Through Islamic Law Perspective, p. 227.



Truly, there is hardly any of the above listed reasons for indulgence in economic and financial crimes which may be successfully challenged as being fit into the catalogue. The only exception in this regard is perhaps the issue around biological make up of man²⁶ which implies predetermination of criminal tendency in man by virtue of some natural bodily designs in him.²⁷

Further, this paper submits that even the other causes of economic crime earlier stated cannot in themselves instigate indulgence in the crime without the corroborative influence of man's covetousness, avarice, greediness and penchant for occupation and expropriation of belongings of others without just cause. This is nothing but moral decadence which many are deeply engrossed in and to which our poet, Isa Alabi, has eloquently referred as core catalyst of indulgence in economic and financial crime. This features in the poet's Divan (Al-Subaiyyat) where he says;

Will peace ever come or remain elusive?
Insatiable aspirations often lead to blood spilling.
When will man's lavidity dry off like water under heap of sand
Sorrows shall end when uncultured ambitions end.
Leaders are wealth thirsty.
They are hyper-resistant to combative forces.
Any hope of peace where lions spare not the small animals?²⁸

5.0 ISLAMIC LAW-BASED ANALYSIS OF THE POEM

The text of the poem above is contained in the second Divan of the poet (Al-Suba'iyat). This Divan, just like the two other ones, is a testimony to the poet's mastery of the art of poem composition. Same also speaks volumes of Isa Alabi's awareness about the happenings and occurrences both in his local environment (Nigeria) and at the global level.

The Divan (Al-Suba'iyat), which houses the particular lines of poetry under analysis, is constitutive of eight chapters ranging from Ecomia (Madahih), Congratulations (Tahani), Morals (Akhlaqiyyat), Description (Wasf) and Politics (Suyasah) to Vainglory (Fakhr), Love Poetry (Ghazal), Protest Poetry (Shakwah), Blame Poetry (Itab) and Elegies (Marathi).

As for the particular lines of poem under analysis, they feature in the Divan (Al-Subaiyyat) under the chapter of politics poetry. Although, the same poetic lines are validity fit to be categorized under other chapters such as morals, protest and blame. However, what spurs inclination of the present writer to the choice of the particular lines of poem under discussion is the relationship of the content therein with the title of this work as it relates to search for the solutions to economic crime by identifying the major causes of the crime.

Isa Alabi is no doubt a well guided Arabist and pure Islamic literate whose rating for good poem is predicated upon messages of meaningful societal values powered by good reasoning which is free from deviance and irrational thoughts. This impressive trait has influenced his

²⁶Ferrero G.L., *Criminal Man According to the Classification of Cesare Lombroso* (Putnam, Network, 1911), p. 95

²⁷Mednick S.A., "Genetic Influence in Criminal Convictions: Evidence from an Adoption Cohort: Science", Vol. 224, 1984, pp. 891-894.

²⁸This poem, which carries the title of "The World and Peace", was composed by the poet on the 23rd of March, 2004.



conclusion that greediness and lack of human contentment are the twin clogs in the wheel of peace and security attainment in Nigeria. This submission is clear in the poetic phraseology of the poet (Isa Alabi) where he says:

Insatiable aspirations often lead to blood spilling.

When will man's lividity dry off like water under heap of sand?

From the above, it is beyond ambiguity that cupidity (Hir's) and covetousness (Jasha'u) are directly responsible for man's indulgence in economic and financial crime. The poet points out this cause and refers to the solution in line three where by way of metonymy (Kinayah), he employs simile (Tashbih) to say that economic crime will abate whenever man's lavidity is exhausted just as water dries off under heap of sand. Here, the admonition from the poet is for one not to be an avid (Tamma') but to remain contented always and live within available means even where same is sober and minimal. This same solution, which the poet alludes to by way of anamatosia/metonymy in line three above has also been emphatically declared in line four by same poet. Though it is often said

Sorrows shall end when uncultured ambitions end.

Isa Alabi, by advancing the wayout of the problem of economic crime, has certainly met up with the overall duty on his side as a poet imbued with the lofty teachings of Arabic and Islamic literature. No societal problem will be raised in such a person's literary work without forging ahead to recommend useful solutions. This is especially so when the identified problem, like covetousness, happens to fall under what Shariah prohibits and the solution, like contentment, constitutes a disposition which Allahu enjoins mankind to espouse. Allah, the most High, says in the Holy-Qur'an:

“Greed for more and more distracted you (from God) till you reached the grave. Nay, you will later come to know. And Nay, you will latter come to know. Indeed, were you to know the truth with certainty” (Takathur, Q102:1-5).

Allah the Almighty says in another passage of the glorious Qur'an;

And you have the love of wealth which can never be satisfied. No indeed when the earth is crushed and ground to dust, and when your Lord comes down with the angels' rank upon rank, and hell is made to appear on that day, then man will be mindful but what will being mindful then avail him? He will say: “Oh, would that I had provided before hand for my life!”. On that day no one will punish as He punishes. (Fajr, Q89:20-25).

What is discernible from the quoted Quranic verses above in the Chapter of Takathur (Q102:1-5) is Allah's disapproval of excessive love of wealth by man. This tract is condemned especially where the obsession for wealth accumulation is for the purpose of boastfulness (Mubahat) or swaggering (Tafadhul). Allah the Almighty decries this attitude and considers same as a deficiency which can cause man to be so preoccupied that he would jettison the obligation to worship Allah, the most High.²⁹

²⁹ Al-Qurtubi A. A., *Tafsir al-Qurtubi ...* (1st ed., Vol. 10, part 15, series 2(Dar al-Taqwahfor Printing, Publication and Dissemination, Cairo, Egypt, 2008), p. 118.



The meaning of the second quoted Quranic passage³⁰ is similar to the explanation rendered above. The second Quranic passage however portrays Allah's puncturing of an irrational thought by some that being in opulence is an indication of higher divine rating for one as poverty signifies humiliation of the poor by Allah. This line of thought has been rubbished in the glorious Qur'an where it is said: 'Nay', which disputes validity of the idea.³¹ This same position of disapproval has been corroborated by a sacred hadith of the prophet (S.A.W) through Allah. It goes thus;

"I, Allah, do not make being in possession of worldly things the basis of my honor for man. I also do not humiliate anyone because he is in abject poverty. Compliance to my instructions is rather the determinant of my honor to one, while I downgrade usually by reason of disobeying me".³²

There is also a direct saying of the Prophet (SAW) which is in tandem with the sacred hadith above quoted. Below is the latter hadith in verbatim;

"Prosperity and success await him who submits to the religion of Allah and allows divine contentment to guide him".³³

The hadith above and the one before it both advocate avoidance of excessive avidity and hyperbole in the love for wealth acquisition – whether such wealth is from lawful means or not. Assuming without conceding that valid reliance on the above evidence (hadith) is challenged for not being a legislative authority, there is another Quranic verse with legislative flavour wherein Allah prohibits eating up an orphan's property wrongfully (bil-batil). The relevant verse is as follows:

"Believers, do not wrongfully consume each other's wealth, but trade with it by mutual consent ..." (Nisai, Q4:29).

On what greed actually connotes, this is clear, in a way, from the present writer's reading of what the experts of Quranic exegesis non legislative verses have had to say. Those in mind in this regard include: Al-Jassas, Fakhrudiya al-Razi, Qurtubi, Ibn al-Arabi and Muhammad Ali Al-Sayis etc. As they all put it, wrongful consumption of people's property may take the form of enjoying somebody's property, (in circumstances other than gift), with nothing given out by the beneficiary for the item enjoyed.³⁴ In the estimation of the researcher, it takes a greedy avid, who is uncontented with the little at his disposal, to fall prey to the hazard of this scenario as described. In the same token, an affluent whose desire it is to always amass more with no concern for wrongfulness of the means, can also fall in the same pit.

Back to the legal analysis of Isa Alabi's poem under reference, the present researcher ventures to say that the poet has followed the normal tune by limiting the cause of economic crime to greed and penchant for confiscating belongings of others. As if this is not enough, the same poet goes a step further in doing the needful. This is by hinting that abstinence from covetousness and imbibing the spirit of patience and endurance are the twin solutions to the

³⁰Q.89:19-25

³¹Al-Qurtubi A. A., Tafsir al-Qurtubi ... p. 37

³²The content of the above quotation is not really a direct saying of the Prophet (S.A.W). it is rather a set of words ascribed to Allah. Experts of Quranic exegesis are known with this submission while interpreting verses 16-18 of Q.89 (Surah Al-faji). Tafsir al-Tabari among others is an apposite reference on this.

³³Transmitted by Abdullahi Ibn 'Amr (Hadith No. 1054 in Sahih al-Bukhari)

³⁴Sayis M.A., Tafsir Aayat al-Ahkam (2nd ed., Vol. 1, Al-Mukhtar Foundation for Publications, Cairo, Egypt, 2010), p. 90



problem of greed as identified. Heeding these solutions as recommended is no doubt a sure path towards actualization of the pristine objectives of Islamic law³⁵ which ensure that people's interest and welfare are sustained. This is the lofty height purpose of Allah behind institutionalization of Islam as truthful religion. Same thing accounts for the divine rationale behind the raising and messengership of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). The two Quranic verses hereinbelow, among others, are clearly indicative of this important rationale. Allah in the first verse says "I have not sent you (Muhammad) as a messenger except that you be of mercy to the entire mankind".³⁶ In the second verse, Allah says;

O mankind! There has come to you an admonition from your Lord, a cure for what is in the hearts, and a guide and blessing to true believers. Say, In the grace and mercy of God, let them rejoice, for these are better than the worldly riches which they heard.³⁷

Going further through the contents of the seven-line poem under analysis, the researcher has been able to discern therefrom that the poet also describes majority of the Nigerian political leaders as heartless set of people who care not for the tough economic conditions of the citizens they govern. This informs the conclusion in this paper that the poet is of the view that the so-called leaders have failed the country in their expected responsibilities. At the same time, this work extols the virtue of the poet for using his seven-line poem under reference as a medium of orchestrated clarion call for the current and subsequent leaders in Nigeria to do the needful and stand by their mandate.

The seven-lines pattern of Isa Alabi's poem (Al-Subaiyyat) is also constitutive of many other poems portraying the same reformative sense by the poet as analyzed above. One of these is titled "The Festival in my Town" which it is herein quoted – by way of interpretation of same from Arabic (the original language of composition by the poet) to English, the language of this paper. See the lines as they follow one another;

With festival comes happiness despite all the issues.
But together with sorrow underneath pains the heart.
My country has no caring leader.
But a deceiver who one who makes empty promises of better tomorrow.
That is what our festivals have become.
May Allah help us
As we need efforts of a dedicated leader.³⁸

In the above poem, the researcher observes loss of hope on the side of the poet for timely reform of the country. However, the poet's identity as an Islamic literary figure later plays out when the poet alludes in the last line to the imperative of supplicating to Allah for the choice of a rightful leader who shall conscientiously fight for the good and welfare of all in the country. This is also noted by the writer as one of the many areas of quality in the festival poem at hand.

However, it is important at this juncture to state that this festival poem, though rich in content, style and language, is not totally free from being in need of some adjustments and

³⁵Kamali, M. H., Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence (2nd ed.), Ilmiah Publishers, Darul Ehsan Malaysia

³⁶Q Anbiyah: 107

³⁷Q Yunus: 57 – 58

³⁸Our poet (Isa Alabi) came up with this work in the month of Shawwal of 1424 A.H. equivalent to November 23rd of 2003. Kindly see these lines of poem on p. 97 of Al-Suba'iyat



editorial touches. Tripartite areas in the poem have been identified for this corrective exercise. Their analysis follows immediately hereinunder.

The first one concerns the poet's use of the phrase "despite all the issues" in the first and opening line. What the researcher criticizes in the phrase is locating a definite article "the" as a prefix for the word "issues". When, in fact, there has been no preceding explanation of what is meant by the term 'issues'. It is only this preceding explanation that can warrant and justify the use of such definite article. Otherwise, the phrase 'despite all the issues' will ever remain ambiguous in any similar context as it is in the instant case. The alphabetical particles (Alif) and (Lam) which signify definite article (Ma'arifah) or (al-Istighraqiyyah al-Jinsiyyah) in Arabic syntax (Nahw) are by rules not to be employed when there is no precedence of explanation of what is intended by such word coming after the definite article. The poet, with much respect to his high literary status, has without justification departed from this long time established grammatical rule.

Another aspect in the first area of critiquing the poem is as it relates to the poet's choice of 'the issues' in the same first line. This expression does not appear to be apt and relevant in the circumstance and thus a misfit in the usage. The appropriate word to be employed in the context is "conditions" not "issues" as the former seems more perfect than the latter on the deplorable economic situation which the poem laments. The corrective device being recommended by the present writer as replacement for the phrase is "despite the distress of minds" or "despite ill-feelings".

The above having been dealt with, the writer moves to the next area in the poem which equally begs for grammatical modification. But his time around, it concerns Arabic grammatical analysis or parsing (I'irab) in the science of syntax. The clause, "in order to make empty promises of better tomorrow", which the poet employs in the line five of the poem contains an Arabic word "in order to" (Likay). This, by a rule in syntax, requires the present tense verb (fi'ilMudari') coming after it immediately to carry an open upper-case symbol (Fatihah) at the end. The poet's clause referred to above runs counter to this rule as the present tense verb "yumannahim" which follows the word "Likay" falls in a position where it is impracticable for the said open upper-case symbol to apply.

The researcher thus thinks of correcting the above erratum by recommending a replacement of what the poet has on ground with another expression i.e. "in that, he makes empty promises of better tomorrow". The transliteration of this (fi dhayumannorihim bi khayrilmasir) features the present tense verb (yumannahim) i.e. 'to give them empty hope in a position where such an open upper-case symbol (Fatihah) is not required'. Thus, no error will be said to be committed by not having the symbol in the given option of replacement.

The third major observation in the poem under analysis which the present writer feels inclined to modify concerns the poet's expression "efforts of a dedicated leader" in the seventh and last line. In the researcher's opinion, the path towards reforming Nigerian society would not begin with efforts of a dedicated leader. It will rather begin with having such a good leader on ground first. It is therefore best for the poet to first supplicate to Allah to help the country with the choice of a dedicated leader and thereafter for such a leader to sincerely exert his reformative efforts.

In the researcher's final submission on this poem, the few indicated observations above are in need of adjustments as already recommended. However, the fact of these fractional faults of Arabic grammar and semantic in the poem does not by any stretch of imagination preclude



the literary work of Isa Alabi under analysis from being a top notch and a first class work of art rated high in pure elegance and rare creativeness.

The researcher sees the poet (Isa Alabi) as one of the very few breed of Nigerian countrymen with strong passion and uncommon nationalism to fight (in his own case, through his poetic literary work) for economic freedom of Nigeria. This trait in him has influenced his call, in another seven-line poem of his, for engaging the bad leaders in war as a roadmap towards the country's final economic redemption. For the purpose of clarity and precision, this other poem of the title of which is "Human Right" same poet, runs thus in the researcher's interpretation hereinunder:

Human Rights nowadays are elusive mirage
Judges are no longer just
Leopards are not secure in tiger's den.
Welfare is denied and no listening ear
War with sword is thus imperative.

These five lines above are an excerpt from the said poem of high spirit nationalism. Although, the researcher is quite at distance from the poet in his war-related clarion call in this modern and civilized time, the climax of an extent which the poet has gone here can be excused on the understanding that he is fed up as a literary social reformer with numberless works of art calling the leaders for a change of attitude but without much ado. What seems to have played out in the poet is possibly a saying that "endurance is the best solution to human problems, but human endurance is very limited". So what more! The poet, after all, is human. His poetic prowess cannot change his identity.

Exonerating the poet further, the imminent need for an Islamic poet (like Isa Alabi in the instant case) to recommend a way out of any social problem is an additional point of consideration in this circumstance. The good teachings of Islam, which Isa Alabi (the poet) has long time imbibed, must have inculcated in his psyche that wayout must be sought willy-nilly from the economic and developmental mess which Nigeria finds herself in. He could therefore be seen as a literary genius being pushed to the wall by recommending warfront approach as a measure of tackling economic crime and corruption. The poet himself has documented elsewhere what is similar to this submission in Arabic prose test. The prose is available in the exodium of the poet to his first published collection of poem (Divan) i.e. The Gardens (Al-Riyadh). It runs thus;

My attempts as an Arabic poem composer have always been shaped by burning penchant for adhering to the path of noble Islamic values inculcated in me much early in life. To Allah be my glory for making this infusion possible. My poems have thus reflected this rightful Islamic philosophy all along. This philosophy is indeed the foundation of any good society and noble living.

Aside the above translated lines of Arabic prose, the same prose-maker and poet (Isa Alabi) also has the same idea documented in poetic lines of his in another area in his first divan (Al-Riyadh). The particular poem, which entertains the reader with an exposition of what the value of a good Arabic poetry should be like, goes thus;

Poetry is useful only when it portrays virtue and guidance.
A poem lacking in good message is no more than dog's barking.
Moral rectitude is the much-needed virtue which distinguishes man.



Moral decadence nowadays often lead to sins and atrocities.

Good morals usually drive atrocities away.

6.0 CONCLUSION

This paper has discussed the major factors of economic and financial crimes in Nigeria as contained in the poetic work of Isa AbubakrAlabi (Al-Subaiyyat) i.e. the seven patterned lines of poem. The causes of economic crime as indicated in the poem under reference range from poverty, unemployment and urbanization, to profligacy and dissoluteness. This research work at hand has also delved into some antigraft recommendations as advanced by the poet.

The present work establishes the elegant status of Isa Alabi's poetry. It presents same as duly worthy of detailed academic study and further research thereon for the fact that numerous aspects of quality literary art are contained therein. The poet (Isa Alabi) has been presented in the research at hand as an established and seasoned composer of Arabic poem having started that from infancy and without quitting the stage till he became and remains one of the star wizards in the flagship of Arabic poem composition not only in Nigeria, but also around the Arab world.