

# Democracy and Prebendalism in Nigeria

Critical Interpretations



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Edited by  
Wale Adebaniwi  
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*Foreword by Larry Diamond*



DEMOCRACY AND PREBENDALISM  
IN NIGERIA

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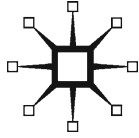
*Wale Adebaniwi and Ebenezer Obadare*

*Foreword by*

*Larry Diamond*

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DEMOCRACY AND PREBENDALISM IN NIGERIA

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## FOREWORD

The oldest and most enduring story of human political life is this: the strong exploit and abuse the weak. Those who wield political power use it to extract wealth from the powerless. “Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely,” as Lord Acton wrote. Historically, force was typically the means by which the wielders of power acquired it and held it. And force remains the ultimate guarantor of power, for, as Max Weber wrote, the irreducible feature of any state is that it exercises a legitimate monopoly on the use of force.

Political development can be viewed as a quest to solve three basic problems in the organization and exercise of power. First, how can violence be subdued and contained so that power is acquired and exercised by (largely) peaceful means? Second, how can the abuse of power—the exploitation of the powerless by the powerful—be restrained? And, third, how can the powerless be empowered, so that all members of the collectivity benefit to some fair—if not exactly equal—degree from the exercise of power, and hence the holders of power are held accountable by the people?

The first challenge is one of state building—generating and institutionalizing the authority and capacity of the official structures of power, based on certain shared rules. In the modern era, as peoples of distinct languages and identities were brought together in a common political order, this also became intertwined with the imperative of nation building. The second challenge involves building a rule of law, which further constrains the autonomy of political officeholders and subjects them to certain rules, neutrally and equally applied. The third challenge is democratization—giving the people ultimate sovereignty, and the institutional means, through regular, free, fair, and competitive elections, to hold their rulers accountable.

One of the seminal contributions of Richard Joseph’s brilliant work a quarter century ago, *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria* (1987), was to place the destructive dynamics of Nigeria’s politics in a deeper historical and theoretical perspective that engaged these basic questions of political order. The problem with Nigeria was not simply endemic corruption, but the profoundly systematic, *prebendal* character



of it. It was in fact *expected* that state office would be acquired and used for the material benefit of the officeholders “and their constituents and kin groups,” rather than the society at large. In an authoritarian, monarchical system like prerevolutionary France, this meant that positions of state authority (prebends) could be purchased from the ruler as licenses to loot. In the republican and superficially democratic context of Nigeria in the Second Republic, it meant that the electoral struggle was not for the power to enact one or another policy program but rather to acquire rents (unearned income) through the exercise of power at the national, state, or local level.

As Richard L. Sklar noted in his seminal work, *Nigerian Political Parties* (1963), competitive politics in such a context became the driver of class formation, as rival political elites struggled through elections to enter the emerging dominant class with the transition from colonial rule to independence. Unfortunately, when everything is at stake in an election, when all routes to wealth formation and class attainment pass through political power and the state, it is impossible to conduct competitive elections by democratic rules of the game. Thus, politics in Nigeria’s First Republic (1960–1966) was riddled with violence, fraud, and “tribalism.” Lacking much in the way of a real political program, rival parties and politicians fell back upon ethnic identity as the most reliable way of mobilizing electoral support. “Tribalism” became, in Sklar’s memorable words, “a mask for class privilege.” But if the polarization of politics around ethnic identity was socially constructed and cynically mobilized, it had very real and destructive consequences. Not only was it the immediate precipitant of the collapse of the First Republic, but it also spiraled downward into a ghastly civil war (1967–1970), in which well over a million people (and by some estimates, up to 3 million) died.

The devastation of that war generated lessons and institutions that remain with Nigeria today, and that have, at least, prevented a repeat of that Nigerian holocaust. The Nigerian military reorganized the country as a multistate federal system, cutting across the lines of the three major ethnic groups and empowering smaller ethnic minorities as well. Much of Nigeria’s considerable constitutional energy and imagination since then has been devoted to elaborating and reforming this federal system. And one of the secrets to the tenacity (if not stability) of prebendalism in Nigeria, as this volume makes clear, is that it has become, with the relentless proliferation of states and local government authorities, a thoroughly multiethnic affair. At the federal level, and in many of the states riven by ethnic and subethnic cleavage, identity groups contest for dominance. But elites from every group are able to ride the train of prebendalism to some degree of status and wealth, and typically to levels unimaginable outside the political realm.

The rise of a more complex, balanced, and resilient federal system was one of two great transformations Nigeria experienced between the collapse of the First Republic and the inauguration of the Second Republic in October 1979. The other was Nigeria's emergence as a major oil exporter, at roughly 2 million barrels a day. With the two great oil price shocks of 1973 and 1979, staggering new revenues poured into Nigeria's federal treasury. These massive oil rents fed the prebendal system the way dry brush fuels a forest fire—except that in this case, the fuel will continue to burn for decades to come.

When Richard Joseph arrived in Nigeria in early 1976 to begin the research that would lead to *Democracy and Prebendal Politics*, these two great transformations—political institutions and political economy—were gathering steam. The Nigerian public was seized with debate and imaginative thinking about the constitution for a Second Nigerian Republic. And hope was abundant as oil riches poured in, education and infrastructure expanded, and wealth began to pump through the system. There was talk, quite realistically, of Nigeria becoming a middle-income country within a generation.

The Second Republic, whose demise Joseph anatomizes in his book, had the misfortune of forming right at the moment of the second dramatic spike in global oil prices. By then the dynamics of prebendalism had been gathering substantial momentum through the failed First Republic and successive military regimes. Awash in oil, uncertain of how long they would be in power, and eager to make up for nearly 14 years of lost time, Nigeria's civilian politicians indulged in an orgy of looting that reached its peak just as the second boom in global oil prices was beginning to go bust. During this heady and calamitous period, prebendalism became consolidated and pervasively entrenched as the way of politics and governance in Nigeria. Barely four years later, with the economy a shambles, the public outraged, and the opposition seething from brazen electoral theft in 1983, the military swept aside Nigeria's discredited second civilian experiment.

The 1983 military coup provoked effusions of relief and even joy from the Nigerian public, and cautious optimism from many observers, who were heartened by the coup-makers' blunt denunciations of corruption and misrule and their vows to reform politics and governance, purge the corrupt politicians, and return the country to democracy. But these initial reactions proved profoundly naive. For in the context of entrenched prebendalism, the transfer of power from civilian politicians to the military merely meant a contraction—and militarization—of the number of offices providing a prebendal platform for looting. Under three successive military regimes, prebendalism became, as Richard Joseph notes in his Epilogue, predation; the transition to a planned Third Republic

was cynically manipulated and aborted; and the nation experienced new depths of tyranny and plunder.

With the relatively rapid transition to a Fourth Republic in 1998–1999, following the sudden (and by some accounts, unnatural) death of the tyrant, General Sani Abacha, Nigeria has come full circle. Civilian, constitutional rule has now survived for more than 13 years—well over twice as long as any previous attempt. Moreover, under the first president of the Fourth Republic, Olusegun Obasanjo, the military ruler who had returned power to the civilians on time in 1979, the military was reduced in scale and reorganized to diminish the prospects of another military coup. Yet prebendalism persists with a vengeance, and what prevails politically is a hybrid system. Elections are too riddled with fraud and corruption to qualify as a democracy, yet there is sufficient competition for power, alternation of personalities if not parties, and freedom and pluralism in civil society to allow for some degree of representativeness, and at least some possibilities for reform.

The problem is that prebendalism can represent a tenacious and self-reinforcing equilibrium when there are enough resources to sustain it through extraction by one means or another. Tax farming can be one way, but mineral wealth seems uniquely suited to sustaining prebendalism in the contemporary era. In the modern era of political equality and mass political consciousness, it is difficult to sustain feudal or semifeudal forms of extraction of wealth from a population of vassals. Foreign aid can function (and unfortunately it has) as a good enough source of external rents to fuel a prebendal system, but in the post–Cold War era the donors have periodically shown some willingness to suspend aid to the most hopelessly corrupt and predatory rulers, so aid dependence has its uncertainties. But when rents derive from oil (or other forms of lucrative mineral wealth), the money is there for the taking, because it is nobody’s money, really. Psychologically, that is the way a society too easily views external rents—as manna from heaven poured down on the country, to be grabbed by the lucky and well connected. As many scholars have noted, when state resources derive mainly from taxation of the people, people have a stronger and more natural incentive to demand accountability.

As Wale Adebaniwi and Ebenezer Obadare explain in their introduction, prebendalism represents a dead-end trap developmentally. When it reaches its full, natural, plundering logic, prebendalism robs a country of the promise of economic development. For the logic of governance in a prebendal system is not to generate public goods *for* development—transportation, education, electricity, public health and sanitation, efficient administration of justice, and so on—but rather private goods for the officeholder and his family, and “club” goods for a limited group of his clients and supporters. In this way, a potentially rich country like Nigeria can squander many tens of billions of dollars of manna from

heaven. According to the most recent (2011) statistics of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Nigeria ranks 156th (out of 179 countries ranked) in human development, scoring to be in the bottom tier of countries with “low human development.” Its human development performance is no better than average for all of sub-Saharan Africa, even though it is richer than most of Africa. It ranks well behind peer African countries like Ghana, Kenya, and Tanzania, none of which has had oil (at least until now). And its average life expectancy, 52 years, is below the average *even for sub-Saharan Africa*. For the 160 million or so ordinary Nigerians, prebendalism has literally been a killer. For this reason, I have long felt that corruption on a prebendal scale should be considered a crime against humanity, but in the case of Nigeria, it is almost an entire political class (across generations) that would have to be indicted and prosecuted.

If prebendalism could at least deliver modest economic development, it would gradually enlarge an educated middle class with capacities and interests in the private sector—the natural constituency for reform. This has happened to a certain extent in Nigeria, but much too little. While the independent entrepreneurial sector has grown in Nigeria, it still remains dwarfed by, and its fortunes excessively linked to, the state.

Nigeria is deeply stuck in a deadly and demoralizing development trap. The system of prebendalism serves the interests of a relatively small but multiethnic political class. Most of the rest of society hangs on to the coattails of its politicians and tries to catch—indeed demands to catch—the crumbs from the political table, because it is the only option they have or can foresee. In theory, the system could keep going until the oil runs out some decades hence, but with population still growing rapidly, at an estimated 2.5 percent annual rate, the population will double in less than 30 years, giving rise, as Joseph observes in his Epilogue, to tens of millions of more “futureless youths.” With infrastructure already, as he notes, hopelessly inadequate, the system is clearly unsustainable. The accelerating incidence of religious violence, ethnic violence, and radical Islamist terrorism are all worrisome signs of what could be to come. Large masses of angry, marginalized, “futureless youths” have historically been a crucial element in the combustible mix of political violence, social unraveling, and revolutionary change. There are many ways of imagining a Nigerian future of sustained prebendalism, but long-term political stability is not one of them.

What might transform this enervating and deeply unjust system? As Joseph recalls, citing Francis Fukuyama’s landmark recent work, it was violent revolution that brought down the exploitative prebendal system in France. In the twentieth century, class-based revolutions overthrew many a decadent, prebendal system, as in Russia, China, Iran, and Nicaragua. But those countries were more coherent in terms of national

identity than Nigeria, whose fractured mosaic of ethnicities makes it difficult to imagine a single national revolutionary movement. Rather, revolutionary impulses are much more likely to take the form of localized movements of violent resistance, as in the Niger Delta and now in the far North, often merging with criminal opportunism. And after successive military regimes have proven just as prebendal and corrupt as their civilian counterparts, few Nigerians have any illusion that the military holds the answers to the country's developmental quandary. In any case, the last thing anyone would wish upon Nigeria is a violent route to political change. Nigeria has already seen once the horrific toll that can exact in human life and physical devastation.

There remains the path of incremental reform, and as Joseph maintains here, it is bearing some promising results in a few states like Lagos and Ekiti. Where people can choose and replace their leaders in free and fair elections, leaders have an incentive to generate public goods—to deliver development—and more public-spirited candidates have a better chance of getting elected. In the context of genuine democracy, the most predatory politicians can gradually be weeded out from public office, and corruption can be shrunk back from prebendalism to the less debilitating forms of patronage politics that may not represent the peak of bureaucratic efficiency but can at least be consistent with genuine development.

There are three possible sources of pressure for reform: from within, from below, and from outside the country. Despite the pervasiveness of the prebendal logic and culture, at least some Nigerian state officials are disgusted by the country's developmental failures and want to see it exit the cul-de-sac of prebendalism. Prominent among them are internationally trained technocrats who broadly understand the economic policies, budgetary priorities, and management principles necessary to bring development. And there are some Nigerian politicians who appear more inclined to deliver the leadership for development, and in the case of Lagos State, have done so. Nigerian civil society has long boasted a vibrant array of NGOs, professional associations, interest groups, mass media, think tanks, and intellectual networks that—while not immune from the pressures and enticements of prebendalism—have long been advocates for accountability, transparency, clean elections, and the rule of law. Because Nigeria's oil wealth mitigates its dependence on international aid flows, external donors have limited leverage to demand change. Carefully targeted financial and technical assistance can, however, strengthen reform elements within the state and civil society and gradually help to give critical mass to a coalition for reform that cuts across ethnic, religious, regional, and other societal divides. The key is to show, at least in some states, that better, more accountable and honest governance can really deliver tangible developmental improvements,

leaving everyone in society better off. Then, states that have shifted off the prebendal logic can radiate positive demonstration effects, inspiring and empowering reformist leaders and coalitions in other states and in the country at large.

In the fight against prebendalism, transparency is crucial. Even though prebendalism represents a kind of societal conspiracy, widely expected and conceded to, the massive theft of public resources is not legitimate and can only thrive in the shadows. Transparency in all matters related to the receipt and management of oil revenues, and the budgeting and expenditure of public funds, is, therefore, essential to shrinking back the prebendal system and reducing corruption. In this regard, as Richard Joseph also notes, there is an exciting new array of tools and possibilities in the realm of liberation technology, the various digital platforms, and social media that can greatly amplify and accelerate flows of information. These tools can empower large numbers of citizens to become micro agents of accountability, monitoring what government does and fails to do, auditing the performance of promised development projects and the compliance with good governance and human rights norms, and reporting back to independent monitoring organizations in government and civil society. Getting effective, capable, and neutral agents of accountability inside the state—particularly in administering elections and monitoring and punishing corruption—is also crucial to the struggle for good governance.

In the absence of revolution, reform will be a long, messy, and incremental struggle. But the past few years in Nigeria have shown that progress is possible. Extending and deepening democracy—which means in part achieving real democracy—is an indispensable condition for such progress. In a context of civil and political freedom and robust, fair electoral competition, constituencies for reform can mobilize, expose outrages, build popular support, and gather institutional allies. New models of governance can gain traction and show cumulative results. Constitutional norms can extend roots. But another military coup would only set Nigeria back to the square one of a praetorian institutional vacuum.

If, 25 years after the publication of Richard Joseph's stunning and sobering book, one is looking for a silver lining across the bleak landscape of Nigerian governance, it may be simply that, for the first time in Nigerian history, the formal structures of civilian, electoral politics have survived so long. That is, at least, a beginning.

LARRY DIAMOND

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is conventional wisdom that every book is a collaborative effort. This is particularly true for an edited volume. In the specific case of this book, the collaboration started more than two years ago during one of the numerous casual phone calls between the editors that resulted in a debate on the provenance of the concept of prebendalism employed by Richard Joseph in his analysis of Nigerian politics. We later picked up the debate and decided to pursue the efficacy of the concept and theory in understanding Nigerian politics beyond the Second Republic (1979–1983), which was the specific focus of Joseph’s work.

A few weeks after our initial discussion, we broached the idea to Professor Joseph who, incidentally, had been thinking of a bigger project concerning democracy, security, and growth in Africa. In October 2010, we met Joseph in Lagos at a conference to discuss our co-edited special issue of the *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, ‘Nigeria at Fifty’. Later in the evening, at a dinner hosted by Dr. Kayode Fayemi to celebrate Joseph’s birthday, we mentioned the proposed conference on rethinking prebendalism and democracy in Nigeria to Fayemi, who jumped at the idea and promised to host the conference. Incidentally, at that point, Fayemi was suffering some of the consequences of prebendal politics. He had contested and won the governorship election in his home state of Ekiti, but had been robbed of victory by the ruling party. He sought redress in the courts.

At that point when we all agreed to work toward hosting an international conference on prebendalism and democracy in Nigeria, Fayemi had only a glimmer of hope left after more than three years of seeking justice through the legal system. We thought such a conference would help in examining the challenges of democracy, justice, equity, and governance. Barely one week after Joseph and the editors returned to the United States, the Appeal Court in Nigeria declared Fayemi as the duly elected governor of Ekiti State and ordered that he be sworn in immediately.

After he became governor, and in spite of the challenges of office, Fayemi kept his promise to host the conference, which was eventually held in October 2011 in Lagos. Leading Nigerian scholars were joined



neopatrimonial model toward violent predation and a “more despotic and rapacious...reconfiguration of neo-patrimonial rule” (Lewis 1996, 99). These excesses consumed an elaborate program of transition to the Third Republic, inflamed ethno-regional sentiments and resentments to a degree that had not been witnessed since the civil war, and effectively derailed a neoliberal economic reform program designed to rein in the country’s neopatrimonial, dysfunctional, and unsustainable dirigisme strategy.

6. The Fourth Republic, 1999–Present: Based on the 1999 Constitution (an updated version of the 1979 Constitution), this period has witnessed the longest period of civilian rule in the country’s history. Yet, the Fourth Republic has featured many of the malaises of previous eras of civilian and military misadministration, including political and electoral corruption, economic mismanagement and policy inconsistency, violent ethno-religious conflicts resulting in the loss of an estimated 19,000 lives since 1999, and vociferous ethno-political agitations for the restructuring or even dismantling of Nigeria’s multiethnic federal union. These and other malaises are more fully explored in the following section on current trends and practices in Nigerian prebendalism and federalism.

### PREBENDALISM AND FEDERALISM: CURRENT TRENDS AND PRACTICES

In a 2007 report that highlighted the disjuncture between Nigeria’s liberal federalist aspirations and the illiberal realities of neopatrimonial rule, Human Rights Watch observed: “federalism... enjoys wide legitimacy as the best and most inclusive possible mode of governance for the country. But... abusive, corrupt and unaccountable Nigerian political leaders have undercut serious efforts to construct stable institutions to govern the country, solidify the rule of law, and promote respect for human rights” (2007b, 10). Six current elements of Nigeria’s federal practice highlight the neopatrimonial degradation of the system, namely, the lopsided constitutional architecture of the federation, the abuse of the “federal character” principle, the patron-client structures of party organizations, the corrupt character of electoral politics, the political manipulation of the judiciary, and the dysfunctional design of the revenue allocation system. These degradations, in turn, reflect certain structural and institutional characteristics of the Nigerian federal model, including its roots in ethnic fractionalization, entrenchment of an ethno-distributive system of intergovernmental relations, and failure to develop independent agencies for restraining the use or abuse of power by officeholders at all three levels of the federal system.

The hallmark of federalism is the constitutional division of powers between national and subnational governments so that each order of government has some policy areas in which it is sovereign. But the Nigerian federal system fails to fulfill this basic federalist principle of subnational policy autonomy. Rather, the current Nigerian constitution endows the federal government with powers to intervene in virtually every area of public importance, but “is vague on the powers of the states and virtually silent on the powers of local government” (World Bank 2002, 13). The constitution assigns 68 specific and incidental policy powers exclusively to the federal government and places 12 other items under the concurrent list of federal and state powers, with the overall consequence that the actual scope of the residual powers assigned to the subnational governments under the constitution is “determined largely by what the Federal Government voluntarily chooses to leave to the states” (Joye and Igweike 1982, 94). This constitutional overcentralization is driven and sustained by several factors, including the top-down or devolutionary origins of the federation in unitary colonial rule (and, thus, the historic creation of constituent subunits by the center, rather than the classical practice of the units coming together to construct the center), the credible rationale for political centralization inherent in the country’s ethnic fractionalization and insecurity, the political legacy of military rule, the centripetal effects of economic underdevelopment and an oil-centric economic mono-culture, the opportunities for corrupt patronage at the national level inherent in the federal government’s policy interventionism and expansionism, and the neopatrimonial logic according to which politicized communal contention over access to central powers and resources, as distinct from a quest for local self-rule, is the predominant strategy of African and Nigerian ethno-political activism (Kymlicka 2006).

Communal contention over access to central resources in Nigeria is partly mediated by the constitutional paradigm of federal character, which has been effectively extended into a general principle of ethno-regional power sharing called zoning or rotation. This prescribes the sharing and rotation among geopolitical zones of key political positions, including the presidency, vice-presidency, and the leadership positions in the federal bicameral legislature. Celebrated by some as “a cornerstone” of ethnic justice and equitable intergroup distribution, federal character and zoning have been denounced by others as a “recipe for further corruption and ethnicization of Nigerian politics,” as a “a secret code for taking turns to seize possession of the keys to the treasury in order to brazenly divert a disproportionate level of development to one’s ethnic area,” and as a “simultaneously divisive and hierarchical” strategy of ethnic conflict management (see Suberu 2001, 186). Indeed, federal character practices

reinforce the overcentralization of the federation by encouraging “many Nigerians to view federalism not as a principle of non-centralized democratic government, but as simply a guarantee of ethnic and religious group representation in the institutions of government, no matter how centralized” (Adamolekun and Kincaid 1991, 178).

The neopatrimonial logic of the federal character principle extends powerfully to the Nigerian party system. Constitutionally, parties are required to reflect the federal character by enlisting persons from at least two-thirds of the states in the federation into their governing or executive councils. In addition, a candidate for president or governor is required to enjoy a geographic spread of electoral support (defined as winning a quarter of the votes in two-thirds of the states or localities, respectively) to be elected. As Joseph has noted, these requirements have transformed “much of Nigerian party formation” into a “fierce competition to recruit the men and women whose affiliation can mean the inclusion of a community of followers varying from a handful of villages to the block vote of an ethno-linguistic group” (1998, 53). In essence, the most successful of Nigerian parties, such as the NPN in the Second Republic and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the civilian dispensation since 1999, have operated as loose agglomerations of ethno-clientelistic networks and caucuses of sectional elites.

On the positive side, the implementation of the federal character principle since 1979 has ensured the control of the Nigerian federal government by a polity-wide political party. Such polity-wide parties are generally regarded as indispensable to federal stability in multiethnic societies. While promoting the formation of multiethnic governing coalitions, however, the federal character rules have fuelled communal contention for patronage within parties, undermined the ideological and organizational coherence of the parties, reduced them to weak, faction-ridden, personality-driven institutions, and detracted from their potential roles as genuine instruments of national integration, as distinct from mechanisms for organizing an ethnic spoils system. Moreover, although the federal character principle has promoted the formation of multiethnic ruling parties at the center, it has been less effective in preventing the development of ethnically based opposition parties at the periphery of the federal system. Rather, since the Second Republic, most of the country’s opposition parties, while fulfilling the formal requirements of federal character, have often contained a parochial ethno-regional core, thereby perpetuating ethno-political conflict, mobilization, and polarization.

A major impediment to the development of robust systems of party politics and federalist political decentralization is massive electoral corruption, which is driven by violent partisan, factional, and personal struggles to gain unrestrained political control of public resources and patronage opportunities at federal, state, and local government levels. A promise

of Nigeria's three-tier federalism is that the existence of multiple state governments and local administrations, with significant policy autonomy and access to resources, can disperse the stakes of political competition, making struggles for control over the center less intense and helping political pluralism and policy innovations to gain footholds in different states and localities governed by various parties. But the malign hand of electoral manipulation has suppressed this federalist genius, producing an artificial condition of single-party domination of central, state, and local governments.

In the 2003 and 2007 elections, for instance, the PDP used presidential control of the electoral administration and the security agencies to fraudulently maintain or gain political control of state governments in the face of strong opposition challenges. Although they were relatively more credible and competitive than earlier contests, the 2011 elections were characterized by significant violence and irregularities and they more or less preserved the political dominance of the PDP. The party currently controls the federal presidency, a strong majority of federal Senate and House of Representative Seats, and 23 of the 36 state governorships. The PDP also effectively controls all local councils in the states run by its governors, reflecting the fact that elections at the local government level have been the most farcical in the federation. Local elections are also very irregular, with localities throughout the country being run for extended periods by caretaker committees appointed by governors.

A related dimension of the crisis of Nigerian federalism is the increasing erosion and corruption of judicial governance as a potential mechanism for resolving intergroup and intergovernmental conflicts. The 1999–2007 period witnessed a bold and balanced arbitration by the Supreme Court of a series of ethnically fraught federal-state disputes over control of offshore oil resources, Federation Account revenues, local governance, and public order. In these litigations, the Supreme Court was broadly celebrated for functioning more as a trusted interpreter of the constitution than as conservative protector of federal hegemony or an activist promoter of state or sectional autonomy. This independence reflected the considerable political insulation of the Supreme Court and the judiciary generally under the 1999 Constitution. Essentially, the Supreme Court is constituted not directly by the executive but on the basis of nominees recommended by the National Judicial Council (NJC), which is headed by Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and comprises mainly senior members of the Nigerian bench and bar selected into the council by the chief justice.

However, arbitration by the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal in the country's corrupt electoral politics has produced very contentious and institutionally ruinous results. In particular, the judiciary's

overturning of many of the PDP's farcical 2007 gubernatorial victories has highlighted the political power of the courts, fragmenting the institution and embroiling it in damaging allegations of partisanship and corrupt inducement. The politicization and fragmentation of the judiciary was underscored by a succession of developments in 2011, including the abrupt termination by the Supreme Court of litigation in the Court of Appeal over the Sokoto State governorship elections, a public conflict between the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and the president of the Court of Appeal over the judiciary's involvement in election petitions, the investigation by the NJC of these two topmost judicial officers for alleged misconduct in the handling of electoral petitions, the rejection by the president of the Court of Appeal of his indictment by the NJC, and the eventual controversial suspension of the Court of Appeal's president by the council and the appointment of an acting president for the Court by President Goodluck Jonathan acting on the recommendation of the council. President Jonathan's subsequent decision to disregard a May 2012 resolution of the NJC reinstating the president of the Court of Appeal further compounded the political melee around the judiciary. Coupled with several allegations of bribery of judicial officers by litigants as well as some shocking election-related court decisions, these developments raised widespread concern about the judiciary's integrity and credibility and about its capacity to mediate Nigeria's intense partisan, ethno-political, and intergovernmental conflicts.

All of this, of course, echoes the experience of the Second Republic, when the courts were similarly drawn "into the electoral quagmire" (Joseph 1987, 178). As recounted by Joseph (178), "since the courts were obliged to make subjective judgments about comparative degrees of electoral misconduct, about which set of faulty documents were more reliable, and so on, it was not long before the political and personal biases of judges, not to mention material inducements, were cited by critics as the basis of their rulings."

To reiterate, the permeation, distortion, and emasculation of Nigerian federalism by prebendal practices have been embedded, reflected, and promoted through the concentration of policy powers in the federal government, the implementation of federal character practices, the ethno-clientelistic character of the party system, perpetration of electoral malfeasance, and the partisan degradation and corruption of the arbitral roles of the judiciary. But the process that has functioned most glaringly to underscore and reinforce the prebendalization of the Nigerian federal practice involves the system for the reallocation of oil revenues between federal, state, and local governments.

Nigeria's federal government legislates on and administers the most buoyant and lucrative revenue sources in the country, including mineral (petroleum and gas), import, and company taxes and revenues. However, these revenues are constitutionally attributed not to the federal government, but to the Federation Account, a common intergovernmental revenue pool, which is currently shared in the proportions of 48.50 percent, 26.72 percent, 20.60 percent, 4.18 percent to the federal government, states, local government, and federally controlled special funds, respectively (World Bank 2003, 14). The federal government also levies the Value Added Tax (VAT), retaining 15 percent of the proceeds (to cover the costs of administration), while allocating 50 percent and 35 percent to the states and localities, respectively.

Horizontally, the constitution requires that a minimum of 13 percent of natural resource revenues in the Federation Account be paid upfront to the resource-bearing areas on a derivation basis. The general allocations to the subnational governments in the Federation Account are then statutorily distributed among the states and among the localities on the basis of the following principles and accompanying weights: Equality (equal shares to each Nigerian state or locality), 40 percent; Population, 30 percent; Social Development Needs, 10 percent; Land Mass and Terrain, 10 percent; and Internal Revenue Generation Effort, 10 percent. The VAT allocations to the subnational governments, on the other hand, are distributed on the basis of the following formula: Derivation, 50 percent; Equality, 40 percent; and Population, 10 percent.

In addition to the federally administered and redistributed taxes, the federal government legislates on the rates and bases of key taxes that are collected and retained by state governments, including personal income tax, stamp duties, and capital gains, incomes or profits of persons other than companies. The only revenue sources in Nigeria that effectively belong to subnational governments by legislation, collection, and retention are, therefore, relatively low yield taxes like vehicle license fees, gaming and betting taxes, and right of occupancy fees in state capitals (all levied by state governments); and property rates, birth and death registration charges, and motor park, outdoor advertising and market fees (administered by local governments), with state governments regulating the most important local government taxes, especially property rates (World Bank 2003, 29).

Overall, the Nigerian states and localities, in aggregate, depend on federal revenue transfers for over 80 percent of their budgets. In 2008, for instance, Nigeria's state governments derived 78.83 percent, 8.30 percent, and 12.87 percent of their budgets from Federation Account, VAT, and internally generated revenues, respectively. The corresponding figure for 2009 was 76.29 percent, 10.07 percent, and 13.64 percent

(Central Bank of Nigeria 2009). Lagos State, which generates more than half of its revenues from internal sources, is a “strong” and “striking outlier” among the Nigerian states. With its “much smaller dependence on oil revenues than the average Nigerian state” Lagos has performed comparatively better than the country’s other constituent units on such indicators of good governance as fiscal responsibility, service delivery capacity, and governmental accountability (World Bank 2003, 15, 50; see also Hoffmann and Nolte in this volume).

Nigeria’s current revenue sharing system contains at least five features that reflect and reinforce neopatrimonial politics and practices. First, the overwhelming concentration of the most buoyant and lucrative revenue sources and taxes, especially oil and gas revenues, in the federal government establishes the central government at the fountainhead of Nigeria’s distributional system, thereby reinforcing the political overcentralization that we have already identified as a pervasive, neopatrimonial, pathology of Nigerian federalism. Second, the constitutional institutionalization of an extensive general system of vertical and horizontal revenue sharing promotes and perpetuates the practice of intergroup distribution or “cake sharing” as a defining and entrenched feature of the national political economy and culture.

Third, the overwhelming dependence of subnational governments on centrally redistributed oil rents as distinct from locally generated revenues, coupled with the politically unconditional and constitutionally automatic character of the intergovernmental transfers represents a powerful inducement to fiscally irresponsible and imprudent behavior by these governments. This dependence precludes the efficiency, transparency, and accountability gains that are often associated with a system of subnational revenue autonomy, competitive economic decentralization, or market-preserving federalism (Suberu 2010). The subnational governments lack any incentives to generate independent revenues of their own, do not face any hard budget constraints, and have repeatedly opposed any macroeconomic stabilization efforts that may defer or reduce the federal fiscal transfers. Subnational revenue dependence also promotes rampant corruption, breathtaking mismanagement, and extraordinarily poor service delivery.

Indeed, the use of public resource by state and local governments “has been characterized by extravagance, waste and opacity; their performance in providing for basic health and education services has widely been viewed as a shocking and disastrous failure” (Human Rights Watch 2007a, 2). Meanwhile, the entrenchment of practices that discriminate between state indigenes and nonindigenes, combined with the lack of any subnational incentives to generate local revenues, precludes the potential role of interunit mobility as an incentive for fiscally responsible subnational behavior.

Fourth, the practice of distributing the block federal transfers largely on the basis of interunit equality (or equal shares to each state and locality mentioned in the constitution) has fuelled intensive demands and pressures for the creation of new units of subnational governments. These agitations have persisted despite the more than tenfold increase in the number of subnational states since independence in 1960. Since 1999, for instance, there have been demands to create at least 25 additional states and to increase the number of localities from 774 to 2,000. Such fragmentation, to reiterate, reflects the enormous distributive and rent-seeking opportunities associated with the role of the subnational governments as conduits for the dissemination of federal fiscal transfers and patronage. As claimed by Daniel Bach, “accumulation and enrichment have become the key words and the ultimate justification in the process of establishing new territorial entities—whether they be states or local governments” (1989, 226).

Finally, reflecting the inherently acrimonious character of distributive politics and policies, the Nigerian revenue allocation system has remained a flashpoint of intense sectional animosity, grievances, and contention. These contestations and conflicts cover a whole gamut of ethno-distributive claims and counterclaims, including the perceived imbalance in the vertical allocation formula in favor of the federal government, the lack of transparency in the center’s administration of the Federation Account, the absence of effective subnational resource control for the oil-bearing communities of the Niger delta, the ultimately inequitable effects on more populous states of the application of the horizontal allocation principle of interunit equality, the use of unreliable or controversial population figures and related data in applying the horizontal revenue sharing formula, and the failure of the revenue sharing system to address interregional inequalities, including extreme levels of poverty and violent social discontent in the Muslim north. These grievances have catalyzed broad and powerful agitations and movements for federal restructuring and constitutional reform in Nigeria.

## THE STRUGGLE FOR FEDERAL REFORM

Ongoing debates about reforming the Nigerian federation have ranged from far-reaching suggestions by southern-based ethnic nationality groups for the restructuring of the system into a “true federalism” or confederation of large autonomous ethnic regions, to more liberal agitations by civic groups for a participatory constitution-making process that would review the country’s overcentralized, military-bequeathed federalism, to modest official efforts to improve the federation’s electoral systems, intergovernmental relations, and governance processes. However,



most of these reform proposals do not hold much potential for addressing the problems and pathologies of neopatrimonial federalism.

The southern-based agitations for true federalism have been spearheaded by primarily ethnic or regional organizations like the Yoruba-based Afenifere, the Ohanaeze Ndi Igbo, Union of the Niger delta, Ijaw National Congress, Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), Itsekiri Leaders of Thought, Movement for National Reformation, the Patriots, and the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO). Some of their most radical proposals for restructuring Nigerian federalism call for the abandonment of the centrist executive presidential system and a return to parliamentary rule, the promotion of effective political decentralization via the consolidation of the 36 Nigerian states into fewer (6–18) and bigger federating units, the devolution of several currently centralized policy functions (including policing, mineral resource control, and local government reorganizations), and the entrenchment of a constitutional right to ethnic self-determination and secession (PRONACO 2007).

A common refrain in the southern organizations' agenda for reform is the convocation of a Sovereign National Conference (SNC), which presumably would restructure the Nigerian federation into a loose ethnic union. Largely missing from this southern agenda is a political reform program that is achievable within the current rules for altering the 1999 Constitution. These rules do not provide for an SNC but require the ratification of constitutional change by concurrent legislative super-majorities at federal and state levels. The southern ethno-regional agitation for true federalism also lacks a strategy for cauterizing ethnic chauvinism and separatism, sustaining national integration, enhancing even interregional development, and ensuring "good governance" or preventing elite capture of new autonomous subnational units. In promoting the agenda of resource control, for instance, proponents of true federalism tend to ignore the substantial revenue decentralizations already in place in the federation today, and the gross mismanagement of federally transferred oil rents by the states in general, and the oil-bearing subnational governments, in particular.

Issues of democratic accountability and good governance feature more prominently in the federalist constitutional reform proposals of Nigeria's civic groups. Indeed, the Citizens Forum for Constitutional Reform (CFCR), a coalition of more than 100 civic (rather than ethnic) associations, is distinguished less by its commitment to any distinct agenda of federal restructuring than by its advocacy of a populist referendum-based, rather than purely legislature-dominated, constitution ratification process. The CFCR envisages a bottom-up, process-led, people-driven, and participatory approach to constitutional reform that would enshrine such principles of contemporary democratic constitutionalism as inclusiveness, diversity, participation, transparency,

autonomy (from governmental manipulation), accountability, accessibility, and legitimacy. Nonetheless, the CFR's 2002 *Model Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria* incorporates major proposals for federal reform including subnational control of natural resources, a discrete list of state legislative powers (as distinct from the amorphous residual powers granted to the states under the 1999 Constitution), full subnational control of state and local government electoral processes, independent state police units, and separate state constitutions. At the same time, the Model Constitution embraces strong elements of a centrist, national socioeconomic democracy, including provisions for the unilateral amendment of the federal constitution by the federal government, central government powers of taxation over devolved natural resources, and strong guarantees of federation-wide social (education, health care, and housing) and residency rights.

Despite its greater civic, pan-Nigerian vision, the CFR largely shares the southern ethno-federalism movement's rejection of the amending procedures written into the current constitution. Both are, therefore, disengaged from the official process of constitutional review and limited in their ability to achieve constitutional reform under the current civilian dispensation. This has left the momentum of constitutional change to the federal government and the professional political class in control of national and subnational legislatures.

The federal government launched its own constitutional review program in 1999 in response to the broad clamor for constitutional change from Nigeria's ethno-regional and civic associations. This program of constitutional review, which has developed in tandem with a series of statutory policy reforms, is distinguished by its endorsement of the constitutional amendment formula enshrined in the 1999 Constitution (as distinct from the more participatory and popular constitutional review processes envisaged by Nigeria's civic and ethnic groups), and by its promotion of multiple but relatively modest and incremental (rather than fundamental) changes to the current federal system. The proposed changes include alterations to the current maximum two four-year terms for political executives at national and state levels (in order to facilitate or regulate ethno-political alternations in power), adjustments to the intergovernmental distributions of legislative and judicial competencies, the restructuring of state-local government relations, a review of greater formalization of the political status of local traditional rulers, an expansion in the percentage of centrally collected revenues transferred to the oil-bearing states on a derivation basis, and, most important, improvement of the electoral administration system.

Yet, although some modest constitutional amendments for improving the country's electoral administration (including enhanced funding

guarantees for the Independent National Electoral Commission [INEC]) were accomplished in 2010, the official agenda of constitutional reform has largely remained unfulfilled. Rather, it has been heavily discredited and derailed by the federal executive's attempts to manipulate the process to elongate its tenure in office, as evidenced by Obasanjo's failed third-term agenda in 2006 and Goodluck Jonathan's six-seven-year single-term proposal in 2011. Indeed, relatively more positive change has been achieved since 1999 via the path of nonconstitutional or statutory policy change than by constitutional reform.

Several of the nonconstitutional policy and statutory changes introduced by the federal government since 1999 were putatively designed to significantly impact the quality of Nigerian federal governance. These include the establishment of the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), both of which are authorized to investigate and prosecute corruption at all governmental levels; the passing of the Nigeria Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (NEITI) Act, which is designed to promote the reporting and disclosure of all revenues paid or payable to government by oil companies; the establishment of the Excess Crude Oil Account and Sovereign Wealth Fund, designed to save or sterilize windfall oil revenues above a predetermined budgetary benchmark; the enactment of a Fiscal Responsibility Law to promote budgetary discipline; the establishment of the Public Procurement Act to sanitize government contracting and tender processes; and the passing of the Freedom of Information Act to promote transparency in the conduct of government business. Yet, these measures have been largely limited to the federal level, have been resisted or manipulated by the state governments, have been bereft of effective local civic oversight and monitoring, and have lacked adequate political insulation, making them vulnerable to emasculation or manipulation by the very political class whose excesses they are designed to curb (see Adebawo and Obadare 2011; Suberu 2010). Ultimately, these reform measures have failed to resolve the most intractable institutional feature of neopatrimonial rule in Nigeria, namely, the absence or fragility of "agencies of restraint" that are truly independent in their direction, staffing, functioning, and funding from the political class that they are designed to constrain.

## CONCLUSION

Prebendalism, Nigeria's uniquely decentralized form of neopatrimonial politics, has degraded the country's federalism by fostering institutional overcentralization, promoting a purely ethno-distributive approach to

federalism, distorting the revenue sharing system and entrenching a corrupt politics of ethnic patronage. To be sure, Nigerian federal strategies like the creation of states and the federal character principle have cauterized large-scale ethnic conflict and instability and helped to prevent a recurrence of ethno-secessionist warfare. Yet, these mechanisms have produced a costly “boomerang” effect by reinforcing a neopatrimonial politics of distribution, corruption, and rent-seeking, thereby undermining the effective realization of the potential democratic, developmental, and even political stabilization gains of federalist decentralization (Bach 1989).

The neopatrimonial pathologies of Nigerian federalism reflect negative historical legacies and problematic structural and cultural features, and implicate dysfunctional and deficient institutional designs. As suggested by Joseph, a major challenge for constitutional reform in Nigeria is to find a way to create truly independent and competent institutions that are not “susceptible to being captured by factions” for personal and sectional ends, but that, instead, can help restrain, referee, and refine the factional competition for, and use of, public power and resources (1987, 169; see also Diamond 1987). While the NJC was initially regarded as a model of such political insulation, its gradual degeneration into an instrument of “judicial recklessness” shows that a lot of shrewd “innovating in the institutional architecture” of Nigerian federal democracy still needs to be done to further democratize and insulate the NJC, in particular, and to craft other truly impartial and vigorous institutions of political restraint, in general (Ibrahim 2011; Diamond 1987). In the absence of any genuinely popular, practical, and peaceful alternatives to Nigeria’s aspirations for stable constitutional democracy and multiethnic federalism, the prospects for reforming prebendalism out of the country’s politics must significantly depend on the imaginative construction of truly independent and resilient institutions for restraining the abusive behaviors of officeholders at the three levels of the Nigerian intergovernmental system.

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# ELITE COMPETITION, INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE, AND POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY

*E. Remi Aiyede*

No government is better than its moral standards.

Apter (1965, 14)

## INTRODUCTION

One characteristic of political life in postcolonial Africa is the weak sense of, and commitment to, the common good or public interest. This is manifest in the way public resources are privatized, political power abused, and in the general disregard for legal restraints to the exercise of power, which undermine political and public institutions. These features, often referred to as the pathologies of the modern state in Africa or the crisis of governance, have been attributed to the amoral nature of politics, or the problem of power that lacks an ethical or normative grounding, or the moral incapacity of the state in Africa. This lack of a normative anchor for the institution of the modern state in postcolonial Africa is said to be responsible for the fragility of the state, and ultimately the collapse of some states on the continent, as state institutions are undermined and become vulnerable to centrifugal forces.

The moral dilemma of postcolonial politics in Nigeria has been an indirect preoccupation of some political scientists. To be sure, a great deal of effort has been invested in explaining how this dilemma plays out in politics and economy and its consequences for political and economic development. The aim has been to label or, at best, provide an explanation rather than to chart a path for or catalyze change. Indeed, the debates on these issues have largely focused on the structural basis and source of this moral dilemma, whether it is a product of the colonial

experience or a projection of precolonial patterns of behavior. In this regard, those who emphasize the epochal character of colonialism and its responsibility for this moral dilemma place importance on the consequences of colonialism in the structuring of the public sphere as the cause of the governance crisis. One strand of these argument is represented by Peter Ekeh's (1975) theory of two publics and its emphasis on the amoral nature of politics in the civic arena and the confinement of morality to the primordial sphere. The second strand emphasizes the episodic character of the colonial interregnum and resilience of precolonial and colonial patterns of political exchange and competition and their manifestation in the postcolonial period.

The second strand involves claims of the limited penetration of capitalist mode of production and the prevalence of the economy of affection as reflected in the limited spread of relations of contract, and the dominance of neopatrimonial politics (Hyden 1983, 1990). It may also trace the pathologies of contemporary politics to the patterns of politics of the traditional chieftaincy institutions in the nineteenth-century Nigerian communities. One of the very important contributions to these debates is the concept of prebendalism espoused by Richard Joseph (1983, 1987). Joseph's work (1987) is particularly important because it comes after the work of Ekeh and devotes significant attention to critiquing the latter's views in the light of the development of politics in Nigeria up to the collapse of the Second Republic in 1983. It indeed builds on the latter's effort by exploring the complexity of the reality. Agency in institutional changes over this period commands intellectual attention, given the benefit of hindsight and maturity of patterns of behavior, which Joseph conceptualized as prebendal, especially after the crisis and adjustment of the 1980s and 1990s.

This chapter reviews developments in elite competition in Nigeria from an institutionalist perspective. It argues that history is always a resource in politics and that what appears to be a throwback to precolonial or nineteenth-century patterns of behavior may be the outcome of choices made by political actors as they draw on available resources in the struggle for power. Furthermore, it argues that these choices reflect the values that drive elite competition and are crystallized in the institutional changes that have been made in the Nigerian federation. The quest for an "African moral order" at the level of collective action is misplaced. The process of institutional learning and adaptation has been underway in Africa, as part of the unfolding of human history. The failure to focus on institutions has hampered the capacity of political science to contribute to the resolution of the governance crisis in Africa. The challenge for scholars, therefore, is to investigate successes and failures in institutional innovation within a framework of elite political responsibility. This is essential given the character of the state as an "evil" force that can be



used for good. Political science must address political (ir)responsibility in the bid to promote innovation in institutions in order to enthrone justice and development.

### POLITICAL SCIENCE, PREBENDALISM, AND THE ENGAGEMENT WITH THE MORAL DILEMMA OF POLITICS IN AFRICA

Prebendalism is a concept adopted by Richard Joseph (1983, 1987) from Weber's notion of decentralized patrimonial authority to capture the pattern and character of politics in Nigeria that, he believed, were inadequately theorized by the then popular frameworks of patron-client relations, class analysis, and ethnicity. His focus was on how state power is treated. Prebendalism emerged as the outcome of an effort to rise up to the challenge of grappling with "normative expectation shared by bourgeois, petit bourgeois, and plebeian alike, that the struggle for a share of public goods will be conducted and assessed along ethnic and other sectional line" (Joseph 1983, 117). A prebendal system is "one in which the offices of the state are allocated and then exploited as benefices by the office holders, but also as one where such a practice is legitimated by a set of political norms according to which the appropriation of such offices is not just an act of individual greed or ambition but concurrently the satisfaction of the short term objectives of a subset of the general population (Joseph 1987, 67). Joseph's book does not merely describe, conceptualize, and predict the future direction of politics in Nigeria; it perceives a moral dilemma as underlying the failure of the Second Republic and explores ways and means to address them. In so doing, it draws on social experiences not only from the advanced capitalist world, but also from Latin America and elsewhere.

Crucially, Joseph engages with the major theorizings on politics in Africa. This included Ekeh's (1975) theory of two publics that sought to explain the social dynamics that underpin the moral dilemma of politics in Africa. Ekeh's view was that the colonial intervention accounted for an observed variation in the moral attitude toward the ethnic community and the civic realm. This variation manifested in the apparent sense of moral obligation to the communal sphere and the materialistic and exploitative attitude toward the civic realm, the latter reflecting the amorality of the public realm. For Joseph, Ekeh's view of the two public was too dichotomous, as the communal realm was idealized, and belied the active and legitimate pursuit of material interests that went on within it. Furthermore, he argued that individuals do not just "steal" from the civic public to benefit the primordial public; rather, they were more likely to connive with their folk to perpetuate corruption. For him, the two publics overlapped and interpenetrated. Finally, he disagreed with Ekeh

on the cause of the moral dilemma in the colonial administration. He argued instead that the cause of the problem lay in “the carry-over into the wider civic realm of interest seeking efforts unaccompanied by the normative and conciliar controls that usually keep such efforts functional to the stability and harmony of the community” (1987, 194). He went further to suggest that there were probable parallels of prebendal behavior in precolonial African societies that may have been transferred into the modern state in ways that produced destructive results. Thus, for him, the challenge for Nigeria was to evolve “forms of political order in which history is made relevant to the present in a positive way” (198).

Eghosa Osaghae (1995, 2006) does not think the arguments of Joseph against the two publics are strong enough to undermine its status as an explanation of the moral dilemma of Nigerian politics. Besides, in both prebendalism and the two publics, there is a common emphasis on what is unique about Africa. This is informed by an assumption that the status of many African states as laggards in development and, worse still, the fragility, failure, or collapse of states in Africa suggests that there must be something unique about the situation in Africa, hence the effort to identify the uniqueness of the African situation. He locates this in the epochal character of colonialism.

There is no doubt that the theory of two publics and prebendalism are easily the most popular theorizing on the moral crisis of politics in Nigeria. Both of them owed their popularity more to simplicity and neatness of their explanation than to their direct policy prescriptions on how to move out of the moral dilemma. As Joseph himself has observed, there are points of convergence between the two theories but their major point of divergence relates to the attribution of causes. Hence, it is left to other scholars to press forward with unknotting the problems.

In both cases, there is a common engagement with the colonial experience in its interaction with traditional African values and political processes. In Ekeh’s theory of two publics, there is an assumption of something unique and decisive about the African situation. This is the colonial experience, what Mamdani (1996) describes as the legacy of late colonialism. But while Ekeh emphasizes the legacy of colonialism, Joseph privileges the resilience of precolonial patterns of behavior. Both are further linked to the foundation of the Nigerian state as an artificial creation. But as Mamdani (2001) has explained, all boundaries are artificial, and political and cultural boundaries need not coincide to establish an effective state. My view is that while we engage with the “peculiarities” (I will discard the notion of “uniqueness” because it involves some essentialization) of Africa, we must not lose sight of Africa as part of the totality of human experience. To that extent, “uniqueness” must be interpreted within the bounds of one subset of the process of the unfolding history of man. While this may not be contested by many scholars,

it is not generally realized that we cannot legislate the extent to which today's challenges are fundamentally determined by the colonial experience, and the extent to which postcolonial choices and preferences have shaped the pathologies of the day even if such choices are conditioned. But certainly we will be on safer ground if we focus on the consequences of the choices and preferences of the postcolonial leadership within the framework of responsibility. After all, Karl Marx made an important point when he noted in the *Eighteenth Brumaire* that "men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past." This renders the emphasis by Osaghae (2006) on the distinction between the epochal versus episodic character of colonialism moot.

In a major restatement of Ekeh's thesis, Osaghae (1995) makes an analogy to Banfield's (1958) notion of "amoral familism," a concept used by Banfield to describe the moral disposition of the fictitious peasant community of Montegrano in southern Italy to reemphasize the strength of the notion of amorality. The realm of the moral is confined in Banfield's formulation to the family; Osaghae argues that the extension of the realm of the moral to the ethnic group defines the African variant of amorality. As Sanders (1959, 522) observed, for Banfield, the question of right and wrong applies only to one's immediate family (the in-group) while "anything goes" for the "out-group." For Osaghae, questions of right and wrong apply only to one's family and ethnic group, while in the context of the postcolonial state or civic public, anything goes. Questions have been raised about the source of this moral disposition that Banfield did not explain. In a reformulation of this view, within the context of the peasantry in Mexico, Foster (1965) attributes it to an "image of a limited good" in the thought of the peasantry, contrasted with the image of a growth economy. But both Banfield's and Foster's formulations have been challenged on the grounds that the image of a limited good pertains only to certain aspects of the life of the peasantry. Others have argued that the ideas of amoral familism or limited goods do not generate patterns of behavior but are themselves generated by processes of social control, by agricultural organization, or by objective limitations on economic opportunity. Furthermore, such behaviors have been found to be associated with other features of social life like the patterns of migration that may sap energetic commitment to local situation (see Du Boulay and Williams 1987; Miller 1974).

There are several issues arising from the idealization of the ethnic group, which to some extent applies to the notion of a broad acceptance of the principle of prebendalism. The first is the failure to see the corrupting influence or spread of perverted values that occurs when a perverse public officeholder seeks collaborators, likely confidants and loyalists

and draws on those with whom he shares primordial affection and relations in the unholy enterprise of seizing public funds, and the mercenary relations this act creates. Second, in the study by Jane Guyer (1994) of patronage exchanges in the context of rural Nigeria, she observes that the “sheer volume of money deposited in foreign banks during the oil boom is eloquent testimony that the demands of a legion of followers may be a pretext rather than a cause underlying the syndrome of prebendalism.” In the competitive and shifting context of Nigerian public and economic life, she argues, “the people have to know how to tap into clientage more specifically than by vague claims of shared moral community or they simply fall out of the picture” (30). Her study also shows how this perverted exchange affects the moral environment in those communities, rendering intercommunity collaboration in development activities in rural communities difficult. Besides, the persistent poverty of most rural communities from where many of Nigeria’s past and present billionaire leaders hail, bears eloquent testimony to the limited operation of a prebendal logic that incorporates ethnic reference group. Rather, the spread of moral perversion is clearly evident in the historiography of corruption in Nigeria from the “10 percenters” in the First Republic to the emergence of a “culture of corruption” in the country (Osoba 1996; Smith 2007).

Richard Joseph’s book is a major attempt at conceptualizing the moral dilemma of politics in Nigeria and its adverse consequences on development more broadly. It is not just an effort to investigate the reasons for the fall of the Second Republic; more important, it explores ways to avoid a repeat of the pitfalls of that republic. While he engages with the question of the choices made by elites, groups, or individuals as either goals or means, he does not explore in detail the question of responsibility probably because he believes that such choices were conditioned “by the problem of underdevelopment, by the effects of class formation, and by the ways and means in which Nigerians often pursue their interests even when they seem to be acting “outside the political arena” (1987, 30). Yet, his analysis is full of elaborate display of chicanery, involving electoral fraud, thuggery, oppression of political opponents, and intimidation of journalists and bribery of government officials. His analysis also features a detailed discussion of the debates about institutional choices. He shows a variety of possibilities and options, some suggested by the political elites “which were usually soon trampled underfoot in the drive to achieve decisive political advantage” (36). Even when such institutions are adopted there is usually no concerted effort to operate those institutions. This point is emphasized by Post and Vickers (1973, 64) about the First Republic that “there is no real evidence to indicate that the leaders of the three major parties had even an unconscious intention of working the system by mutual agreement in the 1960s.”

We cannot lay the short-sightedness of the postcolonial elites (leadership) and their failure to pay due regard to the consequences of their

actions on a historical pattern of behavior or colonial experience. To do so is to justify or provide an alibi for the failures of leadership. Indeed, this justificatory role, especially as it relates to the theory of the two publics, is evident in the anticorruption effort in Nigeria, where the Senate President David Mark, while inaugurating the Senate Standing Committee on Ethics, Code of Conduct and Public Petition, argued:

Public officials are pushed to the wall to commit crime by the unnecessary demands from the society. Immediately an individual is appointed or elected into office, a lot of pressure is brought on him to bring development to their areas; others want him to put money in their pockets... The society need to take a second look at our core value. The same society who pressurises the public official to steal is not reprimanded but is conveniently forgotten when it is time for punishment. (*Guardian* September 12, 2007. 80)

The Senate president made this point apparently to rebuke Nigerians for celebrating the achievements of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) under Nuhu Ribadu. He thought Nigerians should not revel in or celebrate the apprehension of politicians accused of stealing public funds by the EFCC. They are as guilty as the politicians. Personally, I think the support for the work of the EFCC only shows Nigerians' preference for a moral civic public, contrary to an acceptance of the amorality of the civic public. Similarly, in my study of intergovernmental relations (Aiyede 2005), I observed that the problem of institution building is partly attributable to tendency among the elites, who are the custodians of political institutions, to undermine and delegitimize these institutions in their struggle for power rather than work through such institutions. There are instances where they have worked through such institutions and achieved positive results in terms of stability and effectiveness.

Indeed, the question of political responsibility has underlined B. J. Dudley's engagement with Nigerian politics. One of Dudley's statements concerning politics in the First Republic command restating:

Compared to the gross domestic product of Nigeria, the proportion of wealth that went into private pockets of members of the political class was inordinately large; in carrying corruption to the extent that it was taken, the political class was destroying the prospects of a more rapid economic growth which was badly needed if the life chances of the mass of the population, abysmally low as they are now, were to be improved and raised. (1973, 52)

Responsibility is not only necessary for any meaningful project of political change and institution building, but also speaks to the character of political science research in Nigeria, and the direction of the debate on the moral dilemma of politics following Ekeh's theory of two public, and

the turn suggested by Richard Joseph's prebendal politics. The crucial point made by these scholars is the importance of morality in politics. As Ekeh (1975, 111) puts it, "any politics without morality is destructive." But central to the morality of politics is the idea of institutions and responsibility. This makes colonialism as an explanation for moral failure in politics very inadequate. Instead, we need to focus on the responsibility of the postcolonial elite. Responsibility is not only for politicians but also for scientific research and is at the heart of the role of intellectuals in public life. As in every aspect of life, political development involves learning from one's mistakes, paying attention to the consequences of one's actions. Hence, another important contribution of Joseph's thought on prebendalism, and one with which I strongly agree, is the realization that the solution to Nigeria's problem is to discover through "trial and error, reflection and debate about experiences rather than by a new constitution making exercise of a comprehensive nature" (1987, 192).

However, like many studies of the time, the problems of politics and multiple party democracies were often viewed in terms of the ineffectiveness of formal institutions, while the role of formal institutions in shaping informal exchanges were often ignored. More important, even in more recent studies, attention is often not paid to the agency of leadership behavior as a part of the process of value transformation, redefinition, and creation, hence, the tendency to disregard institutions. Mahmood Mamdani (2001) has described this tendency in political science research as the failure to historicize the legacy of colonialism as a legal/institutional complex that reproduced particular identities. The focus on institutions enables us not only to understand the extent to which the colonial institutions shaped the agency of the colonized, it holds the promise of distilling the role the dominant elite has played in perpetuating or deepening the contradictions of colonial rule, or fostering the effort to fashion innovative ways out of the quagmire. There can be no excuse: elite responsibility is central to positive political change.

### POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY, ELITES, AND POLITICAL CHANGE

There is a responsibility in any duty assigned to anyone in government. Thus, power is to be used to perform stated assignment. To use power for other purposes, often described as an abuse of power, is to act irresponsibly. Responsibility as used by the founding fathers of the United States, as Lerner (2001) explains, involves three elements: the first is that it implies reliability. An important political virtue is that those saddled with the exercise of power must be reliable. Second, responsibility implies that those assigned duties to perform must be given the required powers to be able to achieve the goals. Third, that responsibility calls for judgment. It

implies that “individuals, collectivities, actions, nonactions—all are to be weighed and measured, praised or blamed, rewarded or punished . . . to be responsible means to be answerable and to care about how your answer is received. If you have nothing riding on the response to your answer, if you are indifferent to, or disdainful of, those who might judge, you are no longer in the realm of responsibility” (33).

The founders of the American system were concerned with how to ensure a reasonable degree of responsibility. They promoted transparency and public opinion. They believed that to open up a field for cabal and intrigue means the loss of responsibility. They institutionalized a self-awareness of responsibility. The concealment of faults destroys responsibility. That is why they promoted the power and influence of public opinion. “The public had a right to know and a civic responsibility to judge” (35).

The idea of political responsibility touches on the very praxis of politics and represents a major dilemma in Nigeria. That is why it is appropriate to engage Weber’s characterization of politics as “dirty,” in his popular essay, *Politics as Vocation*. In that essay, Weber characterized the exercise of political power as involving a contract with demonic forces, given that politics of the state involves the use of force.

[T]hat those who threw their lot with power and force as means were making a pact with diabolical powers, and that as far as one’s actions are concerned it is *not* true that “from good only good comes, and from evil only evil comes,” but that the opposite is often the case. Indeed, anyone who does not see this is a child where politics is concerned. (2008, 200–201)

For Weber, political leadership is a privilege to put one’s hand on the wheel of history and it brings with it a degree of responsibility as great as that privilege. This is because of the consequences of the action of leadership on others and the nation as a whole knowing that human practice is full of unintended consequences that may be severe. Politics provides politicians with an opportunity and a challenge. The exercise of political power provides an opportunity for one to make history, just as it provides an opportunity to satisfy human vanity. But it carries with it a challenge to be responsible. This is because the action or nonaction of a politician may have severe consequences not only for the lives of a huge number of people today, but also for future generations. Thus, a politician must always take the probable and real consequences of the use or abuse of certain means of power into consideration. It requires clarity of insight and political passion. Responsibility requires that the politician develop the capacity to gain sight of the situation he or she confronts by means of an appropriate critical distance. He also must possess a healthy dose of

political passion dedicated to an ideal. For Weber, a true politician with a genuine vocation to politics does not see power as an end in itself, nor perceive political engagement as an informal or even frivolous intellectual game. It is a serious matter requiring commitment, loyalty, and an element of faith. In the words of Verstraeten (1995, 182),

[g]enuine politics, therefore, demands a complex yet subtle combination of clear insight, passionate dedication to the job and a sense of responsibility with respect to the consequences of what one does. These elements are not contradictory but rather complementary. They achieve unity in the “mature individual,” the true politician who courageously dares to “stick his hands into the spokes of the wheel of history.

The absence of an ethics of responsibility among the Nigerian elite is an aspect of the game of politics that has been largely left unattended. This is because of the dominance of structuralist orientation or the fear of being judgmental. Yet, the absence of a sense of responsibility and the failure of public officeholders to take responsibility for their action is a major limitation to the building of institutions in Africa. The ethos of responsibility among the elite is important for any society to survive and grow. This is particularly important for a democracy where the large majority of the population are illiterate and disempowered. Given the legacy of the modern postcolonial state, it is surprising that the logic of responsibility is not more appreciated by scholars, many of whom are carried away by the current discussion on civil society and governance notions of transparency and accountability. Yet, what we experience in Africa is the dominance of politicians who manipulate cultural symbols and mobilize the people to reproduce predatory rule. From Weber and Paine before him ([1776] 2003, 6) we see that government is an “evil” force that can be used for good. The benign aloofness of the state in stable democracies belies this character of the state as an evil force. In Nigeria we confront the state in its “evil” dimensions. As Paine remarks, “society in every state is a blessing, government even in its best state, is but a necessary evil, in its worst state an intolerable one; for when we suffer; or are exposed to the same miseries by a government, which we might expect in a country without government; our calamity is heightened by reflecting that we furnish the means by which we suffer.” Government is the lesser of two evils, the evils of anarchy and the punishing force of the state to restrain our vices and ensure freedom and security. The state is an evil not only because it punishes but more so because it has the capacity to turn the society against itself. This conception of the state is based on the value of responsibility, and intelligent men craft institutions both to express and promote responsibility.

Many of the pathologies of African politics can be traced to the limited level of political responsibility, not just of the political



leadership, but also among the elites more broadly. It is at the heart of the weakness of institutions. The notion of political responsibility is central to institutions since institutions are the outcome of bargains and trade-offs among the political elite. This is the same whether we focus on the adoption of federalism as a system of government or elements of change and restructuring within an existing federal structure, including such elements as affirmative action, zoning, states, and local government reorganizations or revenue sharing and tax assignment. Indeed, responsibility demands that we examine elite-mass relationship not only in determining the preference of institutions but also in terms of the consequences of such institutions, and proposing future change. After all, as Douglas North (2003, 1) makes very clear, institutions exist mainly to deal with the uncertainties and frictions of human interaction. They consist of formal rules, informal constraints, and their enforcement characteristics. Informal constraints do not show up in formal terms. Informal norms are more important than formal rules because they mediate enforcement. Enforcement is never perfect. This is why responsibility is crucial. In this regard, responsibility relates to personal maturity and the ability to change the course of one's action based on concern about their consequences.

Elements of responsibility according to Winston Davis include (1) a readiness to bear in mind the consequences of one's acts; (2) a sense of when to consult others and when to consult one's own conscience; (3) an ability to change one's plans in the face of consequences boding ill to other highly valued goals or commitments; (4) a willingness to give a truthful account of one's final course of action (2001, 6–7).

As elite theory (Mills 1956; Michels 1962; Bottomore 1982 [1964]; Burton and Higley 1987; Rahat 2007) has emphasized, the hierarchical organization of social institutions makes the rule of the elites inevitable. A minority will always monopolize power. This elite may consist of a multiplicity of competing groups that encompass political, ethno-linguistic, bureaucratic, military, and business segments. They define the values and rules that not only constitute political competition but also determine how the major issues of society are addressed. Thus, it is natural that their dominant values and worldview will permeate society, perhaps until it leads to a crisis. Wilson (1983, 67) has suggested that “the demand for positive change or negative rights is usually a response to an increasing awareness of perversion of the obligations owed by dominant groups. These perversions occur partly as the conscious choice of some dominant individuals, and partly because of shifts in underlying social and economic conditions that enhance the status of some groups and require new justifications for dominance.” He noted further that “expressions of outrage are not usually universal throughout society; rather, they are most prevalent within the elite

itself or within the strata just below the apex of dominance . . . the social groups that first demand rights are thus, in one sense, cousins of those who resist granting them.” This, he claimed, is true for the French Revolution, the protestant reformation, the Bolshevik Revolution, and the American Revolution (69).

Thus, political change in Nigeria should come from the elite not just because they are the source of the great perversion of values that stalk the land, but also because it is in their interest so to do. Indeed, it is their historic responsibility. This point is emphasized by Wilson (1983, 64) thus: “those who occupy dominant positions have an additional obligation for responsibility. As controllers of resources, coercive power, and ideological authority that can affect the lives of everyone, dominant individuals especially must demonstrate responsibility if political patterns are to be moral in nature.” They must first reform the values of governance and then invest in transforming the Nigerian society into a responsible society. I think the idea of a responsible society, which is properly the self-regulating society, as identified in democratic theory, is the outcome of moral maturity of leadership, including such qualities as reciprocity, empathy, and individual responsibility.

Davis (2001, 7) identifies the following as characteristics of a responsible society:

1. Citizens and their leaders are concerned about the consequences of their corporate activities;
2. Plans and decisions can be changed (since they are not determined by political ideology or sanctified by religious dogma);
3. The individual is treated as a free and accountable moral agent; the manipulation and coercion of individuals are curtailed so that people can be responsible; the state therefore does not assume responsibilities that rightfully belong to, and can be reasonably performed by, the individual;
4. The state does assist the individual in other cases;
5. There is an awareness that the individual’s freedom and abilities may be constrained by causes beyond his or her control and that, in these cases, individual responsibility may be limited;
6. Important decisions are made after due consultations with experts (and other involved individuals), and with the general “consent of the governed”; and
7. Members of all political parties, ethnic groups, and religious sects articulate their political positions in the lingua franca of the greater society.

A review of these characteristics calls for an evaluation of the previous measures of moral rejuvenation that have been practiced in Nigeria in the

past and the ongoing efforts to combat corruption in public life to see how they promote or fail to promote a responsible society.

It is also important to emphasize that political responsibility on the part of the political leadership has become a major issue under the current regime of the global system of states. This has been shown in the movement for sustainability for the responsible use of the earth's resources and the historic move by the global community to realize the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) citizens against a government that has run amuck. The latter, which is relevant here, is a global norm that has evolved from the need to protect human rights drawing on the experience of the Holocaust during the Second World War, the genocide in the Balkans and Rwanda. In Africa, this norm legitimized the external (French) intervention in the postelection crisis in Côte d'Ivoire and NATO's engagement in Libya, under the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 and 1975 to establish a ceasefire and ensure a complete end to violence and all attacks against, and abuses of, civilians in Libya, which has resulted in the removal of Col. Gaddafi from power and his eventual death. Irresponsible behavior among the power elite in Africa's weak states may be the harbinger of future external intervention as opposition forces look up to the United Nations for protection.

### THE DEFICIT OF ELITE RESPONSIBILITY AND INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATION IN NIGERIA'S FEDERALISM

One of the areas of institutional development that Nigeria has earned accolades for is the use of the "federal principle" to manage interelite conflict and competition. In a recent study of the performance of Nigeria's federal system, Suberu (2010) identified ten distinct achievements of federal practice in Nigeria. The principles that have been utilized for these achievements included the reorganization of states and localities, and the federal character principle. The reorganization of states has helped to protect smaller ethnicities from the unrestrained political hegemony of the biggest three groups and ethnic minority states that now play active roles in the decentralized polity, curbing the clamor for secession. By providing relatively autonomous arenas for political and resource competition, some conflicts have been localized. Some measure of state autonomy and the reintroduction of the derivation principle have created de facto asymmetries that mitigate conflict. The creation of new states by territorial fragmentation has led to the emergence of states that crosscut the three major ethnic formations in Nigeria, thereby eliminating the great disparities in the sizes and political influence of constituent units that promoted insecurities and dominant community imaginings that have led to civil war in the First Republic and state collapse elsewhere.

The subdivision of major groups into several states and the creation of several minority-controlled states have promoted state identities that are independent of, and compete with, raw ethnic identities. These states provide sites for intergroup encounters, a socialization process involving bargaining and other exchanges that facilitate the resolution of complex and delicate national issues. State reorganization has transformed the arenas that groups and parties could dominate as springboards to power, thereby promoting greater proportionality in relationship between ethnic group size and electoral strength. The national spread required in the electoral formula has also promoted interethnic alignments and coalitions. The principle of federal character has achieved more or less equitable representation of the various groups and units in the institutions of the national government. Finally, the revenue sharing and federal character principles have facilitated the distribution of revenue and opportunities to state and localities to mitigate interregional disparities and for fiscal appeasement of separatist units or regions.

Unfortunately, one element that has run through these achievements is that they are elite-focused and elite-favored. A major justification of this claim is the fact that these achievements have mitigated conflicts and increased elite access to resources without a similar record with relations among the mass of the people. Indeed, elite appeasement has been achieved at the expense of effective integration of the masses as stakeholders in the federal project. This is because the accompanying primitive accumulation processes have had adverse consequences on economic development, broad welfare, and social capital (Aiyede 2009). As Suberu (2010, 468) argued, “the revenue allocation system has been more successful in promoting accumulation among an ethnically and regionally diversified elite group, than ensuring mass-based social equity across the regions of the federation.” The masses are disempowered economically and politically, and are, therefore, susceptible to manipulation. Much more worrisome is the fact that this process of accumulation, underlined as it were by political predation, which is central to the whole question of the morality of power, is sustained through the disorganization of civil society. A major plank of this problem is the current prevalence of representation without taxation and “free riding” in the daily experience of citizenship, as federalism is converted into a formula for distributing political offices as political booty, and for sharing the national cake in Nigeria’s monomineral rentier state (see Aiyede 2009). In turn, the disorganization of civil society and disempowerment of the masses render democracy meaningless and the whole political process a cold war between various factions of the elites linked together by a common commitment to access oil rents. With the prevalence of irresponsible, shoddy, and shady governments, at every level,

corruption has not only remained a defining feature of governance, it has become a part and parcel of social life (Smith 2007). Elite lack of compassion and concern for the poverty of the masses, coupled with the politics of elite accommodation in Nigeria's predatorily distributive federalism, has thrown ordinary people into a dire struggle to eke out a living in very difficult conditions, conditions that test the morality of the most resolute of the masses. This forms the basis of the widespread culture of graft that has made Nigerians notorious globally.

## CONCLUSION

Nigerian elites have sufficiently demonstrated their capacity to innovate and deal with problems. But such innovations have come in the context of elite competition and at great cost to the ordinary citizens. Other innovations have been measures taken by previous military rulers to stabilize and consolidate their rule. The challenge of institutional innovation in federalism and other state processes in Nigeria today is to shift the focus of institutional innovation from the concentration on elite political accommodation to the empowerment of the masses and improvement of their social conditions. These will involve a redefinition of the notion of citizenship in practical terms, and the recognition of the responsibility of leadership for the fate of the ordinary Nigerian. It implies the adjustment of the federal system to put real content into citizenship, not in terms of *de jure* rights and privileges that are more abstract than real but in terms of promoting citizens freedom and responsibility by transforming governance into an instrument for achieving public good.

The thrust of my argument is that elite political responsibility is very low given the type of institutional innovations in Nigeria's federalism. These innovations have largely served the distributive and self-interested competition for power and its associated material benefits for the elite, with little or no expression of compassion and concern for the welfare of the ordinary citizen. In this sense, there is a low level of personal responsibility for the condition of poverty that currently stalk the land and the corruption that has rendered service delivery dismal. The low level of personal responsibility reflects the quality of moral development of the postcolonial leadership. This calls for a more systematic engagement with the notion of responsibility by scholars and activist interested and committed to political change. Accountability deficit cannot happen without deficit in responsibility on the part of the power elite.

There is a need for the movement for responsibility not only in politics but also in every segment of social life. The driving force of such a movement will be bringing into public consciousness the linkages between political decisions and actions and social conditions, the

linkage between leadership irresponsible behavior and the intensity of localized conflicts, the roads that have become death traps, the hospitals that are worse than mere consulting clinics, and the globally uncompetitive universities that produce half-baked graduates. Such a movement must engage the various means of mobilizing power as part of the problem. This relates to the unwillingness to address the indigene versus settler question that is a central element implicated in the disorganization of civil society. Institutional innovation must target improving social conditions and addressing the problem of suspicion, distrust, and deepening tendency to cheat the other in everyday transactions. The movement must seek new institutional incentives to make Nigerians behave in ways that support economic progress and broad welfare.

The challenge of Weber's preoccupation with political responsibility for political scientist is to grapple with the dangers of politics, making politicians aware of their actions and awakening in them a sense of responsibility (O'Donovan 2011). A lot of theorizing on politics in Africa has focused on defining the prevalent form of rule, regardless of the nature of political institutions. This is because it is assumed that modern state institutions do not work, and may never work in Africa. Scholars have produced a multiplicity of concepts with limited achievement in providing insight to address identified pathologies. They have largely been involved in history by analogy, suggesting that there is an African essence or a specific colonial legacy that may account for these pathologies. The challenge is not just to move away from marvelling or losing hope about Africa's status as a laggard, African scholars must double their effort to find ways and means of overcoming development challenges as they are. Scientific research will always be concerned about patterns and classifications, but they are also tools for social transformation and in the quest for justice. The crisis of governance calls for a reflection on the ways social science has engaged politics, the role and responsibility of the social scientists as a member of the intellectual elite, within the knowledge building environment and in the larger political process.

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# BEYOND PREBENDAL POLITICS: CLASS AND POLITICAL STRUGGLES IN POSTCOLONIAL NIGERIA

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## INTRODUCTION AND THE PROBLÈMATIQUE

It can be argued that the postpresidential election violence in Nigeria in April 2011 has very little or nothing at all to do with religion and ethnicity. Rather, the violence reinforces the argument made since the 1960s by progressive African/ist scholars about the epochal nature of west European colonialism on the continent. Nigeria is fully blessed and abundantly rich, yet about seven in ten Nigerians are poor, three out of seven desperately so. The British rigged all the foundational elections and censuses in favor of the most conservative fraction of the emergent nationalist political elite—pan-Nigerian, but largely woven around, and anchored on, the feudal political north (see also Suberu, in this volume). It is this fraction that has, for the most account, been in power since juridical independence on October 1, 1960.

Lost in the maze of an increasingly partial analysis of the Nigerian political situation is that, even in that region of the country, what is going on is a class struggle between the region's stunningly rich political elite and the desperately poor masses routinely used as foot-troops in personal political fights camouflaged as ethnic-cum-religious combats. This explains why northern Nigerians are comparatively poorer than southern Nigerians despite the fact that northern politicians and *militicians* (i.e., political soldiers) have been in power for nearly three-quarters of the postindependence era.<sup>1</sup>

What does the foregoing admittedly snapshot rendition of postcolonial Nigerian politics tell us about prebendal politics and the prebendal logic? I will argue that Richard Joseph's 1987 seminal work proffers, at

best, only a partial reading and understanding of the Nigerian political space and political processes. Though formal political authority is important, it does not everything explain. Even when everything about the ruling elite is stated, not everything about politics is stated because politics does not start and end with the ruling elite, however hegemonic and dominant they may be. I suggest that state powers and elite formations have been overanalyzed and overstated to the detriment of nonstate, subaltern, and nonelite powers and formations, such that what we have is a lopsided, if fashionable, reading of Nigeria's political economy. Prebendal politics has thrived because of the inability of artificial and weak state institutions and inchoate structures of politics to curtail and contain negative derivatives of class—as well as individual and group—perversions of the political sphere and the economic commonwealth.

Given the dynamics and dialectics of political and class struggle, nothing is won in advance or in perpetuity; access to, and maintenance of, power and its trappings operate in a continuity-discontinuity continuum. Political, electoral, and legal struggles are gradually aggregating to change the face of Nigerian politics and make the political economy less distorted and more equitable. It has to be a political work of the long haul, but a prebendal political template in toto and in situ—that is, one that is excessively state-centric and political elite-focused, with attendant subaltern political and class struggles receiving no more than a nodding attention—will not explain why and how the latter are slowly, perhaps surely, gnawing away at the fabric of the former, with eventual probable paradigmatic spin-off effects. The challenge is to clear the perverse prebendal bush and forest in order to begin to apprehend and comprehend the class analytical and conceptual trees in a more holistic manner.

The theoretical framework here is the nature and character of power. Two mutually reinforcing dimensions are particularly apposite here. The first is Michel Foucault's microanalysis of power. As summarized by Saul Newman (2004, 139), "power (is) centralized, diffused and organized methodically around antagonistic relations." That is to say, not only that power "does not have a place but rather is dispersed throughout the social network" but also that wherever there is power, there is counter-power, however underrated or ignored the latter may be. Foucault (1994, xx) goes so far as to contend that "the history of power is... a memory of struggles and, therefore, potentially at least, a re-awakening to refusals and new struggles." Who says power says resistance. The second is that power is nothing except it is deployed and used to achieve specific ends—class, anticlass, social, personal, and group. The emphasis is on the "fluid, dynamic and relational" nature of power. As expatiated by Jeremy Cronin (2008, 238), power "is like electricity, you use it or lose

it. It cannot be stored away indefinitely. Power is not a fixed or isolated object to be possessed or secured simply by an organogram or conference resolution.” Binding both dimensions of power together is the notion and understanding of politics and political struggles as contestation. The main site of the struggle is the state, principally because the state, in a typical neocolony such as Nigeria, is “the inherent locus of the process of class formation and of class domination” (Diamond 1987, 567).

### ON THE NOTION OF PREBENDALISM: ELEMENTS OF A CRITIQUE

Richard Joseph’s starting point is, to be sure, the explication of the notion of prebendalism. For him, prebendalism is an organizing concept that explains “the intensive and persistent struggle to control and exploit the *offices* of the state” (1991, 1, emphasis mine). Prebendal politics is explicated as “an unremitting and unconstrained struggle for possession and access to state offices, with the chief aim of procuring direct material benefits to oneself and one’s acknowledged communal or other sectional group” (75). Joseph argues that prebendalism is a principle that “knits together the main features of Nigeria’s contemporary socio-political system... whose logic eventually undermines the competence and legitimacy of state institutions, and finally saps the authority of state institutions” (150). Prebendal politics is said to hurt the potentialities and actualities of stable constitutional democracy in Nigeria (172). According to Joseph, this brand of politics is pervasive and endemic in the country because it was an intrinsic part of the pre-colonial political sociology of many Nigerian ethnic and subethnic groups. The major features delineated include mobilization of sectional support groups, exploitation of public offices, and a social terrain conducive to venality and graft (196).

A neo-Weberian category, prebendalism as defined by Joseph is akin to what Morris Sfetzel (1982) refers to as the use of the state as “a resource in itself,” principally by senior bureaucrats and cabinet ministers. In sharp focus is rampant corruption or venality *writ large*. The context of Joseph’s analysis is the nature of Nigeria’s lopsided federation or false pluralism, a deliberate and unconscionable colonial British design, in which, at independence, the north was equal in size to the west and the east combined (Suberu 2010; Osaghae 2010; see also Suberu in this volume). Yet, this was a clear travesty of the principle and ethics of pluralism. The consequences were nothing but a self-fulfilling prophecy: a zero-sum political game requiring patchy and largely self-serving elite pacts insofar as competitive politics could not but have “encouraged recourse to sectional identities” (Joseph 1991, 43) anchored, as they were, on “large ethnic groups often in conflict with each other” (32).

While there is nothing inherently flawed with ethnicity as an organizing principle of politics and elections, it is easily volatile whenever they are highly politicized. Over the past 52 years, ethnic stances have tended to harden among the three largest ethno-nationality groups in the country—Hausa-Fulani, Igbo, and Yoruba—with power in the hands of the most conservative faction of the ruling elite. It is a transethnic, multinational group, but structurally woven around the core feudal Hausa-Fulani group such that whether or not it is officially in power, the workings of power are often unofficially controlled by it. According to Crawford Young, quoted approvingly by Joseph, “as for political identity, the Hausa-Fulani defined themselves by opposition to the cultural threat posed by southern Nigeria” (50).

Yet, it is not wholly true that the struggle for power “often becomes one of individuals seeking to monopolize state power on behalf of particular sub-national communities” (43). Ranking politicians are versatile in the art and science of *methodological individualism*, that is to say, exploiting ethnicity and subethnicity to fight personal battles, not to further the interests of kith and kin. It is a political stratagem that is neither vintage nor uniquely Nigerian. Joseph himself gave vent to this type of analysis in several portions of his work. He argues, in one breath, almost haltingly, that “although ethnicity is a ‘group phenomenon,’ it is also one which is usually manifested through the behavior of individuals” (59) and, in another, more sure-footedly, that “ethnicity is not a sufficient explanation of Nigerian political behavior” (111).

In her excellent work on Obafemi Awolowo, fittingly subtitled *The Local Politics of a Nigerian Nationalist*, Nolte (2010) demonstrates the limits of patron-client politics. While not ignoring the fact that certain individuals with access to the state use their dominant positions to favor their communities that in turn support them, she enters an important caveat: “clientelism alone does not explain the success or failure of politicians, and communities sometimes bitterly reject the imposition of leadership even if in return for favors from a higher level.” Nolte cites the example of Akarigbo Adedoyin’s success in establishing himself as Remo’s paramount ruler, yet was continuously contested by many Remo citizens “despite the financial and political advantages linked to this development” (13). To say that patronage is the main, if not the sole, driving force of political intercourse is to unduly overemphasize so-called market rationality at the expense of public morality and personal integrity. As Nolte (14) has counseled, “beyond clientelism, the importance of personal convictions and concerns about morality, honor and truth in the political process must be emphasized.”<sup>2</sup>

In virtually all of Nigeria’s ethnic communities and political parties, socially conservative politics and “a redistributive and socially reformist

agenda” stand in very unstable juxtaposition. The latter was inherent in the original National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) and in the Action Group (AG)’s “redistributive politics,” a brand of politics that, not always successfully, sought to address both corruption and inequality (32). The work of civic associations and traditional cultural practices also have the capacity to tame prebendalism and predation—its more degenerate individualist form—at different levels of government and in their manifestation as varying degrees of bad governance. This is because there is hardly any one-to-one correspondence between public morality and perverse political practice. What does the totality of the country’s local political landscape instruct? It is a context in which, as in Remo, “communities vote(d) in response to a complex set of concerns reflecting popular and private ambitions in the light of local, traditional, regional and national politics” (213, 215–216).

In a specific empirical case in the country’s Second Republic—the political *battle royale* between the conservative National Party of Nigeria (NPN) and the progressive Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN)—Joseph furnishes a bone to his initial fleshy juxtaposition between the “less demanding tactics of ethnic politics’ and factors of class, ideology and social policies” (1991, 116). Thus, in underlining the organizational and ideological superiority of the UPN above the NPN, he argues that “it was . . . not merely political factionalism or sub-ethnic loyalties which explained why so many affluent and enthusiastically capitalistic individuals in the western states rallied to the emerging NPN rather than to the UPN” (117). Similarly, the UPN’s free education and free medical care programs combined with its policy that “promised to combine fiscally resourceful government with social progress” elicited “class sentiments” (118, 119) that undercut the supposedly ethnic foundation of politics. In the same vein, the Northern People’s Congress (NPC)’s politics of northern monolithism in the First Republic was regularly breached by the fact that stalwarts of Aminu Kano’s Northern Elements People’s Union (NEPU), tellingly antiestablishment, “were regular inmates in northern prisons” (Lawrence 2011, 84–85).

There are several other elements that belie ethnic-driven and self-aggrandizing prebendal politics. For one, the double notion of “manipulation of state power” and “manipulation of cultural identities” (Joseph 1991, 68) suggests an analytic category, arguably class or elite, more fundamental than ethnicity. Many issues are at play here: ordinary folks need the powerful and the well-connected in a fitful oil-dominated political economy precisely because public power and authorities set little store by their basic welfare; lack of political inclusion that could have created and sustained a widespread sense of national belonging; as well as the absence of an acute sense of balance and proportionality in a system where critical

issues of social equity and social justice in official thinking became a dead letter long ago. For another, on the interface between ethnicity and clientelism, the patron need not be of the client's ethnic, regional, or religious provenance. Class considerations often come to bold relief. On this issue, Joseph is very clear:

The members of Nigeria's dominant class—whose activities are so focused on the state—have a great interest in ethno-clientelism as part of their own self-promotion. The attitudes that underlie prebendalism enable them to function simultaneously along the axes of self, class and communal interests. (90)

By giving undue prominence to prebendalism and ethnicity over and above class dynamics, Joseph appears to be in denial of the latter. When Nigerians invoke “how their votes should yield immediate dividends to their communities and themselves in the apportioning of the ‘national cake’” (3), this is a vivid critique of the quality of the social contract between the state and society. Again, “the pronounced tendency in Nigeria for individuals to seek support from their better placed kinfolk in the pursuit of the most basic of economic and political goods” (7) is because this is perhaps the most rational and most pragmatic thing to do by those most victimized by overweening scarcity and deepening poverty. Yet, few, if any, people are sucked into the vortex of their ethnicities. Nigerians, like other nationals, organize themselves, and interact, beyond, below, and above their primordial affiliations. As argued elsewhere,

the Nigerian electorate votes for a variety of reasons, including, but not limited to, ethnicity. In this way, they resemble voters in other parts of the world who vote for parties of their areas or localities with which they are familiar and to whose political ideology or sentiment they subscribe. When that is done—voting for the AG/UPN/AD, the party of the Yoruba; or the NCNC/NPP, the party of the Ibo; or the Labor Party in the United Kingdom, the party of the workers; or the Democratic Party, the party of the Irish in the United States—the process is informed not so much by ethnicity as by tradition, habit and origins; anger, and opposition as well as satisfaction and support. (Amuwo 2010b, 93–94)

Several factors seem to defy the logic of the thesis of prebendal politics. The reality of subethnic, intra-Yoruba confrontations and tensions within the UPN is at variance with the logic of intraethnic harmony and cooperation woven around the party and the imposing personality of Chief Obafemi Awolowo as the best placed to covet and distribute federal resources and patronage to *his people* (Joseph 1991, 119). Awolowo represented more than the interests of his Yoruba ethnic stock; he was throughout his political career arguably the most consistent advocate of

“a more general politics of development and re-distribution” and “a politics that was concerned with the needs and concerns of communities at the grassroots” (Nolte 2010, 3, 7). In more contemporary times, the refusal of some Niger delta militant groups to give unconditional support to President Goodluck Jonathan because, as the cliché goes, this is the first time a “southern minority” was elected to the country’s *magistrature supreme* is also decidedly antiprebendal. Mujahid Dokubo-Asari, head of the Niger Delta People’s Volunteer Force (NDPVF), warned in May 2011 that his group may be forced back to the trenches if the president did not take urgent action to address impoverishment in the delta region within the space of one year. His words: “We are on sabbatical. We are giving Goodluck a chance to make a difference to bring about change . . . Goodluck does not have four years, he has one year.”<sup>3</sup>

Nothing perhaps rebuts the prebendal thesis better than the following statement by Joseph himself: “The historic achievement of the UPN in 1978–9 was the blunting of its vulnerability to ethnic political strategies among the Yoruba, while simultaneously mobilizing support along class lines” (1991, 116). Patronage does not always explain everything; popularity of candidates also counts for something. For instance, the fact that Jim Nwobodo secured the Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe’s support for his successful bid as the (old) Anambra state governor in the Second Republic does not automatically qualify as patronage. On the republic’s politics, Joseph writes that “months of frenetic maneuvering and campaigning culminated in the uncomplicated linking of three factors into one absolute equation: the people, wealth and skill of an ambitious politician, and the blessing of the Patron” (104–105). The patronage argument is weakened by virtue of the people being part of the equation.

The summary is that at the center of the Nigerian federal system is an important subtext about winning power: warring political elites—mainly of the colonially anointed conservative hue, whatever the tactics up their sleeves—often appear united in their overall strategy of economic exploitation and primitive accumulation.

## EPOCHAL NATURE OF THE BRITISH COLONIAL PROJECT

What has come to be regarded as “the very fiction of Nigeria as a nation” (Obadare and Adebaniwi 2010, 399) is emblematic of the worst effect of the British colonial policy that cobbled the Nigerian people together. The British drove a wedge between the admittedly mutually conflicting, but not irredeemably antagonistic, people as a deliberate and deliberative policy. There was no mistaking what the British wanted: a disabled Nigeria, from inception, that would be incapable of fulfilling its historic and manifest destiny for and on behalf of Africa and people

of African descent globally. The thinly disguised strategy was to create compliant and complicit inheritance elite that could be counted upon to protect the generic strategic and economic interests of the British (as well as, eventually, the United States, its senior partner) in the country. Governor Frederick Lugard and Governor Hugh Clifford openly gloated about this. For Lugard, “when we are discussing the past of Britain, I always tell (my African friends), yes, but it was all done in the interest of Britain, not of Africa” (381). Not without some exaggeration, Clifford describes the emergent Nigerian “state-nation” as a “collection of independent native states separated from one another by great distances, by differences of history and traditions and by ethnological, racial, tribal, political, social and religious barriers” (cited in Adebani 2002, 154).

The result was a multinational Nigerian state “made up of numerous communities which had evolved their own moral orders, their own notions of right, their own ways of practicing ‘limited victories’ among the clan or lineage groups which constitute them” (Joseph 1991, 188). Put in bold relief were micropluralism of power configuration, authority dispersal, and exclusive contending notions of the state-nation (Alamu 2011, 3). This explains why a minimum national consensus on the normative template to regulate the public sphere has remained largely elusive. Entrenched in the polity are virtual mutually exclusive notions of public ethics, the most dominant at the center—the core north—being the most traditional and least civic, by virtue of its entrenched feudalism. On account of varied and differing affective identities and ethical standards, overarching national solidarity is, at best, tentative. This phenomenon engenders social indiscipline making it difficult to rein in erring political leaders. Furthermore, there is the phenomenon Joseph refers to as “a relentless geographical logic to Nigerian politics that condemns the country to a triangular contest of north versus west versus east” (1991, 109). This was a colonial creation par excellence.

The epochal nature of the British colonial project is evident in several ways: the bonding interest between the British and the Hausa-Fulani and their political elite, preferred over and above the Yoruba, and the Igbo whose respective leaders—Awolowo and Azikiwe—were adjudged as too independent-minded and too nationalistic to be part of the inheritance elite that appeared “broadly committed to protecting Britain’s economic legacy” (Osoba in Lawal 2001, 220); the rigging of the foundation elections and census that effectively granted a veto power to the Leviathan north capable of being (mis)used to hold the rest of the federation to ransom (Soyinka 2006; Lawal 2001, 229–230). Due to the hegemony of the north, during both military and civilian rule, others have tended to play a second fiddle. For example, many ranking Igbo politicians have had the habit of formally declaring interest in the presidency only to be brow-beaten to accept the



vice-presidential slot almost as a communal group under northern leadership (Joseph 1991, 94–95). The NCNC, arguably the most nationalistic of the parties during the First Republic, was subordinate to the NPC, the least passionate about the country's independence, self-servingly pleading the need to protect "national interest." This phenomenon has been described as "a contradiction that would become a permanent reflection of Nigeria's deep political flaws" (Obadare and Adebawo 2010, 390). The Nigerian People's Party (NPP)—the NCNC's poor progenitor—played a similar role vis-à-vis the NPN in the Second Republic. Both in the aborted Third Republic and in the Fourth, since May 1999, the Igbo's political fortunes have plummeted. The Igbo have had, first, to be content with the presidency of the Senate (wrestled from it by the north central geopolitical zone) and, since May 2011, with the position of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF).

The British handed over to a conservative political elite, ignored the progressive political elite that, since independence, has provided a welcome opposition to what Joseph calls "arbitrary and irresponsible government" (161). Nigeria's postindependence politics can be summarized as a continuum of overt and covert attempts to entrench conservative politicians and suffocate progressive and radical politics. Scorned by the bullish British colonial administration, shorn of power, and humiliated at every turn, the latter have been perpetually ensconced at the periphery of power in the polity. The northern political elite, the arrow-head of the pattern-maintaining ruling elite, has controlled the country's postindependence political, military, and "democratic" life; derived considerable material mileage from it, but has seldom demonstrated that it fully believes in the Nigeria project. Little wonder, therefore, that Nigeria has always been in a perpetual state of becoming, but has yet to become what her nationalist founders—men and women—had envisioned her to be. The character of the dominant group in the country's history has largely determined the trajectory and finality of the polity. In the process, the country has yet to overcome fundamental constraints to the triumph of progressive and welfarist politics.

Had Nigeria had a progressive, development-oriented, and people-friendly political leadership at independence, the story of the country would have been remarkably and qualitatively different. Montesquieu (cited in Obadare and Adebawo 2010, 393) appears spot-on when he said that "at the birth of new politics, leaders mould institutions, whereas afterwards, institutions mould leaders." While there must have been some unknown and, therefore, unsung "Awolowos" tucked away in the bowels of various ethno-nationalities across the country at independence, the spotlight has always been on Chief Obafemi Awolowo—and his associates—as a premier example of astute, modernist, and visionary leadership missed at the national level. Felicitated by Harold Wilson, a former

British prime minister, as “such an unusually capable administrator in Africa’s unenviable political history,” “could lead the US or Britain,” but “came too soon for Nigeria” (cited in Adebani 2008, 338), he would be described by the late Biafra leader, Odumegwu Ojukwu, on his demise, in May 1987, as “the best president Nigeria never had.” Editorialists of the *New Nigerian* newspapers—rabidly pro-north, its name notwithstanding—declared that Awolowo’s accomplishments “dwarfed the accomplishments of virtually all his peers.” They lamented that he was denied the presidency that “would have been his for the asking owing to his perhaps erroneous perception as a tribalist” (348). Yet, as far as progressive political leadership qualities and credentials are concerned in contemporary times, the country boasts of perhaps hundreds of Awolowo.

In the rich comparison he made between the UPN and the NPN, Joseph clearly privileged the former over and above the latter in organizational, ideological, and policy terms. He commended the UPN as “one of the most concerted attempts to combine leadership, organizational cohesion, research and planning and a progressive ideological commitment in post-colonial Africa.” He adds that “more than those of any other party which obtained registration in Nigeria for the 1979 elections, the leading members of the UPN knew what they wished to achieve when they came to power (in the federation) and how their electoral campaign should be conducted to prepare the electorate for this mission.” By virtue of the widespread political violence in the west during the heavily rigged general elections in August 1983, Joseph laments that “all of this effort ended up in brutal street fighting... in the latter stages of the organization” (1991, 116–117).

In what appears as an indirect critique of the colonial policy to derail the alternative project of constituting the country’s major ethno-regional groups into autonomous nations, Joseph writes memorably as follows:

Had western Nigeria been a nation unto itself, the achievements of the UPN’s political campaign of 1978–9—and the detailed planning that preceded it—could have established a new model of progressive party politics for tropical Africa. Those who opposed the UPN would have constituted a minority opposition without the power to impede the party leaders in their implementation of a program which had been diligently explained to the electorate. However, the western states constitute only one-fifth of the Nigerian federation. (120)

And the clincher:

Even though the same populist program of the UPN could be recognized as coherent and praiseworthy by people in other areas of the country, other factors acted to prevent the party from obtaining anything but a derisory share of their electoral votes. (ibid.)

These “other factors” also explain the failure of the UPN “to attract non-western politicians or intellectuals of recognized stature who also had access to independent bases of support” (123).<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, while acknowledging that the NPN triumphed in all the five elections in 1979, displaying “an impressive demonstration of the range of strategies available to Nigerian political actors,” Joseph is worried about the import of the victory. He contends that it was a success that “incorporated the seeds of its own undoing.” This is because, for him, “its rationale was pre-eminently that of prebendal politics in all its dimensions... its demise was foreshadowed by the ultimately destructive logic of this very set of practices” (129). He suggests that what gave the NPN “the greatest resonance and the widest appeal”—in contradistinction to the UPN—was its promise “to be the party which would be the most capable and willing to give ‘every community and every Nigerian the opportunities to have all the amenities that all others have’” (149).<sup>5</sup>

As argued elsewhere, “given a shrunken pan-Nigerian public space from the onset, emergent nationalist/post-independence leaders and their political parties... were driven into their respective primordial, security and ethnic camps from where they have yet to effectively come out... It was as if they had no choice but to defend their privileged political turf against foreign rule” (Amuwo 2010a, 86).

### ON THE PRINCIPLE OF NORTHERN PRIMACY

Depending on usage and understanding, the geographical entity referred to as the north is simultaneously a reality and a myth. It is a reality when and if all Nigerians of northern extraction, irrespective of their ethnicity, religion, gender, and politicoideological persuasions receive equal and fair treatment, with their human dignity intact. When the opposite is true—that is to say, when otherwise equal people are treated unequally and social closure or exclusion on the bases mentioned above is rampant—then the north is nothing but a myth. The principle of northern primacy is intended to perpetuate the myth of a united, single, monolithic north ready, at every turn, to defend its historic and strategic interests both vis-à-vis a heterogeneous south and a fairly united front of mainly Christian northern minorities. It does so through several stratagems.

The notion of northern primacy has given expression not to popular government but to “Northern aristocratic chauvinism” (Joseph 1991, 145). It does not brook or tolerate any progressive/radical ideological moorings. This principle is also meant to get people from the core north, including otherwise northern minority elements, strategically placed with a view to cornering positions and resources. The latter, such as Generals Yakubu Gowon (Angas), Ibrahim Babangida (Nupe), and Sani

Abacha (Kanuri) are quickly appropriated as genuine representatives of the Emirate north. "Much of the dynamics of national political alignment and opposition," writes Joseph, "can be traced to a willingness to acquiesce to, or reject, the contention that the political elites of the former northern region should hold a position of primacy in any national government" (130). The idea or notion of "born to rule" is derivative of this principle.<sup>6</sup>

The pattern of political leadership at the federal level has been quite consistent with the principle of northern primacy. When the military head of state or elected president is not a "northerner," the logic of the principle is that the most senior northern officers or politicians in the government would be given the most strategic positions in compensation. After the assassination of Major-General Johnson TU Aguiyi-Ironsi in a "northern" countercoup in July 1966, then Lt-Colonel. Gowon (Chief of Staff, Army) was appointed head of state ahead of Brigadier-General Babafemi Ogundipe, then the most senior military officer and Chief of Staff, Nigerian Defense Forces, whose orders to mutinous junior officers were purely and simply ignored. A major reason for the annulment of the late MKO Abiola's historic victory in the June 12, 1993, presidential election was because northern hegemony could be endangered (Amuwo 1995, 2007). In February 1976, the late Shehu Musa Yar'Adua benefited from a double promotion—from lieutenant-colonel to brigadier-general—so that he could become Obasanjo's military deputy, a position he held until the eve of the Second Republic on October 1, 1979. As an elected president between 1999 and 2007, Obasanjo was widely believed to have constantly pandered to the principle of northern primacy.

Yet, the principle is deeply flawed. For one, northern minorities, that is, non-Muslim northerners in the non-Emirate north, have been treated as if they are second-class citizens. In a fundamental sense, "northern unity was an ideology that masked and provided legitimacy for their domination by members of a quasi-feudal aristocracy" (Joseph 1991 132).<sup>7</sup> For another, whereas the north has been in power at the center for over 38 years out of 52, it has very little to show for its vis-à-vis northerners, let alone in relation to the rest of the country. In a paper entitled "Mobilizing Capital for the Economic Transformation of northern Nigeria" at a North Economic Summit in March 2011, Sanusi Lamido, governor of Nigeria's Central Bank, blamed northern leaders for the pervasive poverty in, and poor infrastructural base of, the region. He also reprimanded them for reliance on statutory allocations, and for the general underdevelopment and insecurity occasioned by incessant ethnic and religious unrest.<sup>8</sup> It is difficult to imagine that such leaders have appropriated public offices in favor of their people and region. A corporate analyst laments that for all the power, authority, and resources the north had presided over since independence,

“the North has long been the poorest, unhealthiest, least developed part of Nigeria lacking the south’s oil resources, banks and businesses.”<sup>9</sup>

There is no respite, however, in the pursuit of power for power’s sake. On February 3, 2011, 22 days after losing the ruling Peoples’ Democratic Party (PDP)’s presidential primary to President Jonathan, former vice-president Atiku Abubakar, Adamu Ciroma-led Northern Elders Political Forum (NLPF)’s consensus candidate, having not yet congratulated his opponent, declared he and his group were amenable to dialogue—and horse trading. Atiku demanded for six ministerial slots, but Jonathan and his entourage reportedly were willing to concede only four. Upon reported representation to the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) by key political forces from several parts of the country (including the northwest and northeast geopolitical zones that did not vote for Jonathan in the primary), the core north supposedly dropped zoning and rallied the president with some key personalities in the group joining his campaign organization.<sup>10</sup> But Atiku was simultaneously busy challenging his rival’s victory. In a petition dated January 28, 2011, but filed only on February 14, he prayed INEC to cancel the primary on several grounds, including improperly conducted comprehensive delegates list (which allegedly facilitated the manipulation of the election process in favor of the president) and supplementary names presented at the accreditation venue under pretext they had been endorsed by the chairpersons of the party’s state chapters (a violation of Section 122 of the country’s 2010 Electoral).<sup>11</sup>

### CHARACTER OF NIGERIA’S POSTCOLONIAL STATE

The postcolonial state, like its colonial predecessor, has, over the years, progressively degenerated into a virtual farcical formal public institution precisely because it has been informally captured and garrisoned by different fractions of the ruling elite. Relatively strong during the first decade or so after independence with embryonic social welfare content, the state has effectively been evacuated out of the public realm, the consequence of its use for purposes other than public and social. Joseph is, therefore, correct to argue that “it is the pursuit of autonomous state power which has been blunted in Nigeria” (1991, 83). This phenomenon is akin to Claude Ake’s notion of “nonautonomousness” (lack of autonomy) of the state and the huge difficulty it has operating in relative autonomy (Ake 1981). The contemporary challenge is to bring the state back into the public space where it really belongs with a view to using it for people-regarding purposes. The post-civil-war attempt at state reengineering resulted in an oversized center, “a statist political order” that, perhaps inadvertently, “accentuated, rather than attenuated, prebendal attitudes to politics,” according to Joseph (74). Without increasingly intolerable graft and venality largely because of the sharp decline in

public “ethical or normative girding” (185), state-driven political order need not be prebendal.

In the past quarter of a century since Joseph’s volume was published, Nigeria’s postcolonial state has increasingly set little store by social contract and has become alienated from the people’s conception of, and expectation from, power. Two pertinent issues arise here. The first is that ordinary Nigerians do not expect too much from the state—and government, its principal institutional manifestation. All they demand is the provision of basic services (such as regular energy supply and good roads) and an enabling environment for self-development and self-improvement. It would appear that the ruling elite have cynically used this basic fact against the Nigerian people. Invariably, millions of ordinary folks are forced to get by as if the state does not exist, even if they know that it does matter. The second is that it is, quite paradoxically, the ruling elite who cannot do without the state. To the extent that politics is little more than a zero-sum game, the battle for the control of state patronage and resources has been nothing but harrowingly deadly. Different fractions and factions of the ruling elite appear persuaded that without the state they are finished.

This explains the use of verbal, virtual, and actual weapons of war and instruments of destruction in the struggle to control and exploit the state. Politics and democracy are conceptualized by various parties as war of some against all. It often appears as if the nation is at war during elections. Extremely combative and militarized grammar of electioneering campaign; rigged or prearranged party primaries; use of terror by incumbents and pretenders to power; undue desperation from candidates and their supporters; resort to extraordinary political and electoral malfeasance; aisle or carpet crossing and switching of political allegiances within and between parties; and a fight to the finish mentality. According to an editorialist’s summation of party congresses, “the inter-party process of picking a flag bearer has been largely characterized by sorrow, tears and blood.”<sup>12</sup> When politicians go through all these hassles, it is not to benefit their ethno-nationality group. Rather, it is to win or retain power with a view to accessing and controlling the public till.

Given a political elite with little interest in substantive democracy and the mass of the people outside the public sphere, the onus is on the middle class—the petit bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie tout court—to consolidate both liberal and constitutional democracy. According to Alamu, “the middle class is the bedrock of national stability and democracy . . . the middle class serves as the guarantor of peace and prosperity in the modern society. Without them, there can be no democracy or national stability.” He warns that “a nation which destroys its middle class has killed the capacity of the people to dream of a better tomorrow and has added a

dispossessed intellectual class to its list of moral and implacable enemies” (2011, 3). Majority of the country’s middle class—particularly intellectual, literary, and professional groups—talk of politics but hardly walk the talk through actual political behavior by, for instance, voting during electoral consultations.

### CLASS AND POLITICAL STRUGGLES IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA

I have suggested in the foregoing section that elite political behavior through the manipulation of primordial identities and cleavages such as ethnicity, religion, and geography is important but that it tends to hide more subtle and less visible class actions. The latter is more significant, however, which perhaps explains why Joseph saw it fit to discuss the politicization of ethnic identities ahead of “the factors of class, ideology and social policies” (Joseph 1991, 116). On the UPN, he also deploys class analysis to say that “the historic achievement of the (party) in 1978–9 was the blunting of its vulnerability to ethnic political strategies among the Yoruba, while simultaneously mobilizing support along class lines” (*ibid.*).

Obadare and Adebaniwi have argued that class and political combats speak to an “unending struggle for an egalitarian polity that is big enough to contain all, and functional enough to work for all Nigerians, whatever their ethnicity, region, religion, class or gender” (2010, 393). They are correct to underline the way class and ideological struggles have tended to be mollified by primordial or communal identities, such as ethnicity, region, or religion, the result being that “while, on the one hand, class and ideological interests that are detrimental to ‘national,’ collective interests of Nigerians and the Nigerian state are championed, defended and enacted on the bases of ethnic, ethno-regional and/or religious ideals and interests; on the other hand, class and ideological interests which are grounded in egalitarian, just and equitable politics are dismissed and discredited on the bases of ethnicity, ethno-regional politics and/or religion” (398). Osaghae (2010, 415) also argues that, in Nigeria, class interests have tended to be diluted or suppressed by inter- and intraethnic competition and rivalry. I argue that whereas the class character of the state, society, politics, and economy may be obfuscated by deadly interethnic competition and highly politicized religious differentiation, they are nonetheless class conflicts (Amuwo 2010a).

The limited autonomy of the Nigerian postcolonial state or its lack of hegemony in the civil society (Obi 2010, 455; Olukotun 2010, 159) has been worsened by the extreme externalization of the state vis-à-vis repressive foreign capital. Orthodox market reforms that have badly

affected and afflicted “ordinary people, especially women, children and the under-privileged” (Nwozor 2009, 23) irrespective of their ethnicities and religions have become the norm. This leads to a misplacement of priorities: the Obasanjo government—to cite only this extreme example—expended huge oil savings (about \$12 billion in three tranches) on debt servicing to the Paris club as a condition *sine qua non* to obtain debt relief of \$18 billion. Yet, the government had complained loudly earlier about the dubious nature of the debt. The promise that “resources freed from suspended debt service obligations” would be used by Abuja “to provide a wide array of infrastructure necessary for economic growth” (24) were honored more in the breach than in its observance.

Nowhere has the class project of the Nigerian ruling elite come into sharper focus than in the debate around petroleum subsidy and its removal on January 1, 2012 by the Jonathan government (cf. Guyer and Denzer in this volume). Social subsidies are an array of government-driven public policies to cushion the effects of market forces on the most vulnerable segments of society. They are a welfare package aimed at narrowing the gap of social denial and political stratification between different social classes and popular forces. In Pareto optimal terms, social subsidies are meant to make the poor better off while not necessarily making the rich worse off.

According to Samir Amin (2008, xv), capitalism, not unlike liberal democracy, was originally anchored on a negotiated social welfare system between the employers and the employee and between capital and labor. The rationale behind subsidy—a legacy of class struggle in parts of the west, currently a victim of the crisis of capitalism particularly in Western Europe (Kliman 2012, 24, 200)—was to temper the excesses of capital accumulation by addressing the pitfalls of social pauperization. Subsidy was, in a fundamental sense, a form of social inclusion; thus its removal represents a new form of social exclusion. Worse, it is part of the process of poverty exacerbation of the poorest of the poor and the relegation of the middle class into poverty. Old and new poverty tend to thereby become almost wholly conflated (Amin 2008, xv, xxi).

Over the past three decades or so, Nigeria’s central government and the Nigerian people have been locked in a battle of wits over the politics and economics of subsidy removal. Two major reasons account for this development. The first is that after several incidences of subsidy removal by successive governments under the guise of deregulation of the oil industry, majority of Nigerians are not persuaded that the subsidy regime still subsists. If it still is, they reason that it should be retained because that is virtually the only emblem of their social citizenship. The second reason is not so much that Nigerians are averse to petroleum price



hikes as that they do not trust a largely roguish ruling elite to spend accruals from the removal for social-regarding purposes. To be sure, it is natural and human to want cheap oil, though in relation to the average national income and purchasing power of over three quarters of Nigerians, the pump prices of oil have been anything but cheap, contrary to massive official propaganda. “Far from being wasteful,” writes a corporate observer, “a cheap energy policy boosts economic development” (*Guardian*, January 25, 2012).

The Jonathan government not only did a poor job of the preparation for the removal. It was extremely inchoate and incoherent in its advertised rationale for subsidy withdrawal. The official reasons ranged from the need to shore up government revenues in order to fund critical infrastructure programs; more money required to service the country’s debt portfolio; and the imperative, according to President Jonathan, to reposition the country’s economy for future challenges. In seeming utter desperation, the government went as far as claiming that fuel subsidies are being financed by loans and that about 25 percent of the national budget goes to fuel subsidies (Ejikeme 2012).<sup>13</sup> It is a curious claim in view of the enormous earnings from oil sales on the international market since the beginning of the Fourth Republic in May 1999. Nigerians are also entitled to wonder how annual huge budgetary outlays on social infrastructures have been spent. After all, as Sachs (2012) controversially reminded us during the mass protest, the much-trumpeted \$8 billion savings from subsidy removal is only about 4 percent of the country’s GDP. The government also claims it pays a subsidy to importers to keep the prices low. As Adichie (2012) has argued, “it is strange reason for raising prices, as though the government is incapable of policing fraud.” Government’s economic arguments are deeply flawed, not least because oil prices have almost always gone up, never down, something that is clearly alien to market forces. Between 2003 and 2007, the Obasanjo government adjusted pump prices upward ten times (Nwozor 2009, 28). The Jonathan government, like its predecessors, runs, at best, on mixed or partial market rationality or efficiency. At worst, the PDP and corruption rule, and the result can only be a “perpetuation of a culture of waste” (*Punch*, July 15, 2011).

Moreover, government chose to ignore expert advice and sober reflections from several sources, including the National Assembly and the Manufacturers’ Association of Nigeria (MAN). The government could not tell Nigerians the exact amount the country had spent on oil subsidy in recent years, including in 2011. Whereas the government earmarked ₦500 billion for the subsidy in that year, the amount had, by year end, ballooned to either ₦1.4 trillion (according to Finance Minister and Coordinating Minister for the Economy Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala) or

₦1.7 trillion (according to the Central Bank of Nigeria). By most accounts, the subsidy escalated from ₦630 billion in 2008 (an amount that was equivalent, in that year, to about 50 percent of the capital budget of the federal government) to ₦1.7 trillion in 2011. The Petroleum Products Pricing Regulatory Agency (PPPRA) claimed that between 2007 and 2011, government had spent about ₦3.5 trillion on subsidies.<sup>14</sup> Sanusi Lamido also announced that the country was losing about \$6 billion in external reserves as a result of fuel subsidy (Okereocha 2011, 47). Clearly, there is something fundamentally wrong with the huge amounts claimed to have been spent on fuel subsidy.

Another recurrent corrupt practice, which shows the extent of the moral stench, is the filling up of vessels with water, disguised as imported petrol and its allied products. Aided and abetted by compromised senior officials of Customs, State Security Service (SSS), Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) and PPPRA, among others, who inspect and certify imported petrol, the oil cartel has raked in billions of dollars in fake transactions since the military years in power.<sup>15</sup> A final documented way by which the cabal loots the national treasury is through overimportation for domestic use and the smuggling of the excess into neighboring countries. In its testimony before the House of Representative ad hoc Committee on Monitoring of the Subsidy Regime, the PPPRA admitted it paid a whopping ₦669.8 billion to dishonest petrol importers in 2011 alone. The latter imported 24 million liters of petrol in excess of the 35 million liters Nigerians consume daily.<sup>16</sup> Olukotun (2012) captures the hydraheaded morass as “stupendous racketeering and swindle which characterize the oil sector teeming with well-heeled importers, state officials, and colluding regulatory agencies.”

Thus, the government was right to have argued that the fuel subsidy was not sustainable, but not for the reasons it gave. It is unsustainable precisely because it is not so much subsidy as endemic corruption and oil sector financial opacity. To the extent that the Jonathan government is acutely aware of the rot in the oil sector—as evidenced by a flurry of supposedly reform activities post-general strike and mass action—its subsidy removal policy is tellingly procorruption. Campbell (2010, 17) has argued that “the federal government’s economic policy is focused on providing short-term benefits to the heads of the patronage networks that dominate Nigerian governance to the detriment of long-term economic development.” Subsidy removal policy has comforted the faceless cabal that the government itself had identified as drivers of the untold larceny in the NNPC and its sister organizations and why subsidy was not reaching ordinary Nigerians. After all, it is common knowledge that Nigerians are poor—millions of them extremely so—because the country’s political elite and its oil business

allies and proxies are stupendously rich. In the final analysis, subsidy removal may be a creeping war against the Nigerian masses by a government with transformation rhetoric but is not prepared to attack class privilege and malfeasance.

The way forward is very simple: remove the middlemen; fight the good fight of anticorruption in the oil sector; and revamp the refineries and build new ones.<sup>17</sup> If successive governments have failed to do these things, it is precisely because the logic of the class interest of the ruling elite dictates market injustice rather than social justice. It is the perpetual dilemma in modern capitalist democracy: how to entrench morality in public politics by effectively neutralizing political corruption. A ruling elite that claims it is desperate for money to fix social infrastructure should think outside the box. It could repatriate stolen monies stashed away in western vaults, including the \$100 billion the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) claimed has been looted from the public treasury since the return of franchise in 1999 (Nwozor 2009, 31).

When the National Assembly awards its members jumbo or outlandish salaries and allowances, false note or dissension hardly enters the political calculus, let alone primordial identities or party differences. As it was in the Second Republic, so it is in the Fourth. In 2011, Nigerians were shocked to their marrows to learn from the Central Bank governor that about 25 percent of federal government's overhead in 2010 was gulped up by the National Assembly. The figure put out in the public space is about ₦136 billion for just 469 people (360 representatives and 109 senators). Nigerians were also surprised and angry to hear that their lawmakers are in the habit of appropriating "wages for themselves far beyond what has been prescribed by the Revenue Mobilization, Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC), the agency statutorily responsible for fixing public office holders' salaries" and that their gross take-home pay is outrageous and unsustainable.<sup>18</sup> Yet, the RMAFC chair announced to a bewildered Nigerian populace, in June 2011, that the legislators' total package was up for upward review. While the commission claimed that an attempt to reduce the high incidence of political corruption informed the proposal to raise public officers' emoluments in 2007, it has been a Herculean task to wean the National Assembly out of sundry financial scandals. For instance, the leadership of the House of Representatives (2007–2011) appeared to have engaged in a relentless and persistent unilateral approval and payment of unbelievably high allowances to legislators. Dimeji Bankole's tenure as Speaker was enmeshed in, among others, a ₦2.3 billion car scam and misappropriation of ₦9 billion out of the 2008 capital vote for the House.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have suggested in the foregoing, both explicitly and otherwise, that the epochal character of British colonialism and its main spin-off effects constitute the principal barrier to the creation of a genuinely pan-Nigeria state and society and the articulation of a sense of national awareness, a conception of who a Nigerian is, a proper national identity. The starting point necessarily has to be the recomposition of the country's hollow federal, democratic polity. The present ruling elite is not likely to be enamored by this project, nor would it be realized on a platter of gold, hence the need for sustained class and political struggles (see also Aiyede in this volume). A strong state, a Bill of Rights, a new social contract that transcend all known primordial cleavages and privilege the welfare of the majority are all a *sine qua non* for a new Nigeria not bogged down by the heritage of colonialism and contemporary manifestations of neocolonialism.

The week-long, pan-Nigeria mass protest in January 2012 against subsidy withdrawal, a tellingly class act, ably coordinated not just by organized labor unions but, more significantly, by civil society initiatives such as Occupy Nigeria and Save Nigeria Group (SNG), may be a first step in the direction of recomposing the country's political economy in the interest of the disadvantaged majority. Both horizontal and vertical political struggles deserve intensification.

A major chunk of the class and political struggle should be the immediate valorization of chapter 2 of the 1999 Constitution. The chapter is entitled "Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy." These objectives and principles first featured in the 1979 Constitution but have remained meaningless because they are nonenforceable. The summary of the provisions is that "the security and the welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government." It is high time the Nigerian people embarked on a class struggle to demand that the provisions become justiceable. If this is done, government at all levels would be required by the principle of *force majeure* to use the country's immense resources in the interest of the people. The next step would be "deep state-society synergies that underpin a developmental state." This would be anchored on "a conception of a strong interventionist developmental state and a strong, self-activated civil society dominated by organizations representing the working class in its broadest sense (including the unemployed, students from working class families and the rural poor" (Pillay 2008, 47).

If Nigeria does not get it right within the contemporary context of Boko Haram-driven Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism in the country, the Ojukwu recipe—of a confederation of self-governing states, linked by a weak central government—on the eve of the declaration of

Biafra as a sovereign entity may become attractive to some. According to the late former Biafra leader,

It is better that we move slightly apart and survive; it is much worse we move closer and perish in the collision . . . no single person today in Nigeria can command loyalties of various groups and, therefore, to save the suspicion, to enable us to settle down, it is essential that whatever form of government we have in the centre must be limited and controlled by a consensus to which we all agree. (Joseph 1991, 185)

Consensus on the part of the dominated classes will say a resounding no to the ruling elite's continued brazen corruption and the penchant of its members for mobilizing ethnicity and religion to fight their personal battles. Nigerians have to use the present "troubled times" to create "interesting times" that are at once functional and people-friendly. According to Kole Omotosho (2008, 18), "it is something to be wished for to live in interesting times—when new ideas and sustained efforts are applied to emerging human problems. But when we mope speechless in front of imbecilic political leaders, who are clueless about the challenges we confront, we live in troubled times."

## NOTES

1. According to a March 2012 report, at least 80 percent of the ownership of Nigeria's oil reserves is controlled by a handful of highly connected northerners, notably emirs, princes, retired generals, and former ministers. See Donald Ojogo, "How North cornered Nigeria's oil blocs; Revealed: 80% of ownership of the nation's oil reserves is in the hands of some influential northerners; North, South-South in battle royale over oil," *Nigerian Tribune*, March 9, 2012.
2. A governor in Southwest Nigeria whose 2007 election was validated late in 2010 after a protracted politicolegal battle told this writer in January 2011 that, from his experience with his own entourage that was forced to spend a long time at the barricades, Nigerian politics is not only about rent, it is also about integrity, principles, and public service.
3. See "Niger Delta: Armed Struggle, Last Resort, Says Dokubo-Asari," *ThisDay*, May 18, 2011
4. Yet, Joseph cited, approvingly, and based his prebendal reading of Awolowo's politics on a less than convincing depiction of Awolowo as "a factional political fighter surrounded by devoted lieutenants" (124) by Adisa Akinloye and Adeniran Ogunsanya, two of his fiercest critics. The accusation that within Awolowo's Committee of Friends "those invited could perceive a tighter 'circle of friends' and nothing was done to alleviate that suspicion" cuts both ways: bring in people of doubtful political and ideological provenance and lose your closest and surest allies.
5. Joseph equally compared Aminu Kano's original populist People's Redemption Party (PRP) with NPN's Shehu Shagari: "Of all prominent

politicians in Nigeria in 1978–9, Aminu Kano was the one who most directly and convincingly argued the case for the freedom and equality of women.” Quite predictably, however, whereas the party would easily mobilize “the kind of enthusiastic popular following in the North that could not be matched by Shehu Shagari and the NPN,” it was hard put to become “a fully national party.” Aside of poverty of funds and materials by the PRP, the stranglehold of political conservatism in the North explains this failure (149).

6. Mannir Dan-Ali, editor of the Abuja-based *Daily Trust*, claimed that when the results of the April 16, 2011, presidential election that pitched incumbent Goodluck Jonathan against former head of state Muhammadu Buhari, which showed the former leading comfortably, he received “text messages saying things like ‘we have been conquered.’” See “Nigeria Risks Further Bloodshed as Divide Grows,” Reuters, April 20, 2011.
7. In May 2011, Professor Ishaya Haruna Nok, national president of the Platform of the Southern Kaduna People’s Union (SOKAPU), called on government to constitute a Sovereign National Conference (SNC) to allow Nigerians find solutions to the problems of zoning and other socio-economic challenges facing the country. More specifically, he demanded “a platform for dialogue among northern minority and majority tribes,” to discuss intranorth differences such as religion, politics, culture, and structure. He notably added: “There is no need to continue to fool or deceive ourselves that we are one *Arewa* when in reality we are deeply divided and even scheme from time to time to kill and destroy the property of Christians. The lives of the minorities in the North have been and are still being threatened. The Hausa-Fulani are carrying out ethnic cleansing against the minorities in the North by constantly destroying their churches, property and killing them.” See Saxone Akhaine, “Southern Kaduna Leaders Back SNC, Say One North Deceitful.” *Guardian*, May 19, 2011.
8. See “Sanusi Blames Northern Leaders for Set-Back,” *Daily Trust*, March 18, 2011
9. “Nigeria Risks Further Bloodshed as Divide Grows.” Reuters, April 20, 2011.
10. See Clifford Udujihe and Henry Umoru, “I Am Ready for Negotiation—Atiku,” *Vanguard*, February 4, 2011 and Saxone Akhaine, “Arewa Leaders Soft Pedal on Zoning, Back Jonathan,” *Guardian*, February 15, 2011
11. Other grounds were: circumscription of delegates’ independence in exercising their vote because state delegations were led by governors; no special congress where the 774 special delegates who voted for Jonathan were elected; change, a few days to the election, of state working committee members and local government chairpersons while known supporters of the president were allowed to vote in place of disenfranchised statutory delegates. See Olusola Fabiyi, “Atiku Asks INEC to Cancel PDP Primary,” *Punch*, February 15, 2011.
12. “Party Congresses and Undemocratic Acts,” Editorial, *Daily Sun*, January 10, 2011. See also “Democracy Is Not War,” Editorial, *This Day*, December 30, 2010; “Party Primaries and Electoral Violence,” Editorial,

- Punch*, January 10, 2011; and “The Bumpy Road to April Poll,” Editorial, *Nigerian Tribune*, February 9, 2011. Senator Ikechukwu Obiora, representing Anambra South, like Donald Dike, former Cross Rivers State governor before him, confessed in December 2010 that “we rigged 2007 election.” See *Vanguard*, January 1, 2011. To the best of my knowledge, neither of the two men was arrested and questioned by the state security service.
13. See Okereocha (2011) and Willy Eya, “Oil Subsidy: Jonathan and the Devil’s Alternative.” *Daily Sun*, December 18, 2011.
  14. See Louis Iba, “Fuel Subsidy Removal: The Gains versus the Losses.” *Daily Sun*, January 3, 2012.
  15. See Dare Adekambi and Qudirat Hakeem-Apampa, “How Cartel Presented Water as Petrol to Justify Bloated Subsidy,” *Nigerian Tribune*, January 3, 2012.
  16. Cf. “Smugglers Received N669 Billion Subsidy Last Year.” *ThisDay*, January 19, 2012.
  17. This is the rational recipe proposed by Professor David-West. He argues that the federal government has not built new refineries because of the interests of the oil cabal and their allies in government. See “Why Federal Government Refused to Build New Refineries—David-West.” *Vanguard*, January 25, 2012.
  18. In December 2010, the Senate president reportedly earned about \$586,667.00 monthly, compared to the American president’s annual salary of \$400,000. Each senator and representative earn, respectively, ₦15.18 million and ₦10.59 million as monthly salaries and allowances. There are also quarterly and constituency allowances that run into additional millions of naira per person. Further, each senator and representative is entitled to respective severance package of ₦6 million and ₦5.9 million upon completion of their term. See “Still on National Assembly’s Jumbo Pay Debate,” *Punch*, December 23, 2010; Everest Amaefule and Olamilekan Lartey, “Jumbo Pay: Senators, Reps Set for More Pay as RMAFC Review Emoluments,” *Punch*, December 23, 2010. In four years, federal lawmakers gulped ₦339 billion, yet actual salary on pay slips amounted to only ₦18.245 billion. See Martins Oloja, “Legislators’ Pay as Burden on Economy,” *Guardian*, June 19, 2011.

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POSITIONS OF SECURITY AND  
THE SECURITY OF POSITION:  
BUREAUCRATIC PREBENDALISM  
INSIDE THE STATE

*Olly Owen*

INTRODUCTION

Richard Joseph's concept of prebendalism was developed as an explanatory framework for the patterns and practices of electoral politics in Nigeria's Second Republic (1979–1983). Yet, as Joseph notes (1987), it predates that period, and has equally persisted after. I contend that the explanatory power of the theory is not limited to electoral politics; it also provides a useful blueprint that can be adapted to our understandings of bureaucratic politics and institutional procedure. After all, 29 of Nigeria's 51 years of postindependence life, and all of its preceding 46 years as an amalgamated colony, have been spent under nonelectoral regimes, where politics took place largely as internal bureaucratic procedures of particular institutions (primarily the military and civil service, but also others such as the police). That is a much longer period spent in the mode of bureaucratic politics than in electoral rule. Given this, it is hardly surprising that a great premium has arisen on being placed inside the state in order to better influence it. This applies both in the crude sense of accessing public goods, and in the more subtle influences that can be exercised over the course of public events and the nature of public institutions.

Neither is it surprising, given the continuities in political economy since the publication of Joseph's book, that many institutions of state have leaned toward a prebendalist logic that remains the organizing core of the political system. Given the primacy of the civil security agency in an

era of unstable electoral and executive politics, it is equally unsurprising that policing has been particularly vulnerable to debasement by prebendalism in the crude sense. While the Nigeria Police Force as an institution struggles to respond to public demands for security and service provision, it is unfortunately true that some persons within it can exploit political loyalties or ties of affinity, whether constructed anew or based on imagined primordialisms, to facilitate career paths wherein loyalty is made the condition for access to an economy of opportunities to misuse and leverage the particular monopoly of powers a police force enjoys. These opportunities can be as lucrative for individuals as they are damaging to the formal logic of a police institution. The nexus between sovereignty, monopoly, and opportunity makes for a powerful logic in which postings can become in some instances of greater relevance than formal career progression in terms of rank.

Yet, it is less obvious that membership of an organization such as the Nigeria Police Force also offers great examples of the ways in which prebendalism is refracted down to the microlevel and of the two-speed pattern of citizenship that arises from being either within or without the state. Following Achille Mbembe (2001), it is worthwhile to note the relevance of this distinction in creating regimes (and practices) of “exception.”<sup>1</sup> Thus, it follows that, in as much as we can seek to understand prebendalism by looking at the means by which ambitious officers aspire to high position, apparently mundane practices such as recruitment exercises are no less revealing. “Entryism” and the leveraging of enabling factors on the level of both family and larger community point us to the value of having a toehold, not just in politics, but in the state as a whole.

A refocusing on bureaucratic politics, and on the micropolitics of prebendalism, is especially worthwhile in the present day. Since the publication of Joseph’s work, destabilizations, reconstructions, and reconsiderations of the Nigerian state, in a continued milieu of scarcity and economic insecurity, have reproduced and intensively reified the everyday politics of entitlement, inclusion, and exclusion, to a point where even the most reduced “political office,” that of citizenship itself, becomes contested as a basis for entitlement claims. In this chapter, I look at the micropolitics of prebendalism in one particular institution, the Nigeria Police Force, which is formally concerned with one particular public good of practical and symbolic importance; the provision of civil security.

This issue is, like so much else in Nigeria, a complex interplay of conditions and dynamics whose layers require explaining in turn. Thus, the chapter attempts to analytically separate them in order to work through them. I begin by laying out how prebendal politics in the narrow electoral sense can draw in the police. Thereafter, I outline how policing can

more often be prebendal in a very everyday sense, describing a specific context where this can be seen to take place, in the recruitment of officers into the police. The second part uses ethnographic evidence to illustrate how people renegotiate the formal procedures of recruitment and strategically navigate them on a personal basis.<sup>2</sup> The third section shows how the Nigeria Police Force and supervisory bodies contest this and attempt to defend professionalism and standards. Fourth, I discuss the context of competition for employment, and how the condition of being *inside* the state reproduces itself. Next, I introduce the important consideration of federal character and how the previously discussed dynamics interact with constitutional positive discrimination provisions on ethno-regionally “balanced” representation to create differential dynamics in recruitment, which carry through into later careers. The sixth part of the discussion identifies “entryism” as an explanatory trope to chart the mechanics of microprebendalism and traces its development and how it works for both individuals and groups. Finally, the piece ventures some conclusions on how this case modifies our application of Joseph’s original model.

### POLICING AND PREBENDALISM

In the first instance, policing in Nigeria can be seen through a prebendal framework because to occupy a senior managerial office in the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) is to be at the commanding heights of a hugely important state institution. The NPF employs in the region of 377,000 officers, and has one of the largest operating budgets (a planned US\$1.84 billion in 2011)<sup>3</sup> of any federal institution, controlled by a centralized unitary national command structure. Therefore, to be a senior officer—a deputy inspector-general perhaps, or a commissioner—is to be one of the great barons of the Nigerian state, and of an oil-powered public sector that continues to economically dwarf the nation’s formal private sector. This is even before we consider the unique nature of policing as an activity that embodies and performs the state’s core defining functions of monopolizing legitimate force in order to regulate social relations; policing is indeed an activity in which sovereignty *consists*.<sup>4</sup>

Executive offices in the NPF, enhanced since 1999 by the retreat of the military from the political (and everyday security) scene, are hugely important politically. Hills (2008) examines a number of high-profile incidents of politicized policing in the recent past and concludes that the policing doctrine of the Olusegun Obasanjo administration (1999–2007) was that the police could fight crime as long as core priority was given to “regime representation and regulation.” This claim is only partially correct, in that while it undoubtedly describes an established broad dynamic in which the senior leadership of the police may not last long if opposed to the national

leadership of the day, it most accurately refers specifically to the “high politics” of that particular presidential dispensation and describes only the most visible phenomena.

My research shows perhaps a greater element of voluntarism than Hills’ formulation allows. There are plenty of ways in which a police officer can choose to be (and can choose *not* to be) “political,” and they vary in degrees of overtness and subtlety. Executive offices in the police allow great leeway in directing resources and operations to do with crime, provision of security, and public order. The commissioner of police of a state, or even an Area Commander or Divisional Police Officer (DPO) can influence public affairs simply by the provision of, or failure to provide, security (for a political rally, for example), by selective application of the law, or by devoting different enthusiasm and resources to investigating a particular complainant’s case based on their political position or that of the suspected perpetrator. In the colonial period, the tendency to politicize mundane practices went hand-in-hand with the advent of formal politics; police permission was required to hold political rallies. In fact, the need for the national police leadership to occasionally intercede and direct certain outcomes itself reminds us of the everyday primacy and autonomy of on-ground managerial officers in everyday circumstances. They themselves may see their career prospects and personal values best safeguarded by remaining “nonpolitical,” *or* by aligning with dominant political tendencies of the day, *or* by tacitly supporting an opposition, *or* in fact by attempting to utilize a close relationship with both sides.

In fact, in contemporary Nigeria, where many political actors unfortunately conflate governance with personal loyalty, even remaining steadfastly independent and professional can be viewed by others as an expressly *political* choice: in that it will inevitably affect the handling of any given politicized situation to the benefit or cost of one or other of the parties involved.

Thus, there is an explicit link between politics, prebendalism, and the police. Beyond this, we need to bear in mind that even when such is *not* the intention, policing retains at all times the latent capacity to be “passively” political; in that what the police do, or do not do, creates certain public reactions, and this intersubjectivity structures the landscape within which politics takes place. Policing remains charged with meaning, and those meanings structure the actions of particular groups and publics. A good example is the position of the police in the conflict-riven metropolis of Jos, in Nigeria’s Plateau State. In past phases of the conflict, the public looked to the army over and above the police to provide forceful public security; most recently (in 2010–2011) after a series of incidents, the public lost a measure of faith in the military’s ability to prevent communal violence, and following

the deliberate embracing of a more community-policing-oriented strategy by the state police command, the Jos public once again seemed to evince a preference to interact with the police. Yet even this generated contrasting meanings. Although the decline in regard for the military and the renewed popularity of the police occurred across the city's divided communities, there is a sense in which the presence of the military, whose leadership appears to be more directly accountable to federal government, was believed by some inhabitants to favor the "nonindigene" or "Muslim" constituency. On the other hand, perhaps because their leadership was in the first instance accountable to Plateau State's governor as chief security officer, and perhaps because many of its personnel hailed from the state, the police were perceived by some to be *sui generis* a preferable repository of trust for "indigene" or "Christian communities." The point here is that these perceptions and meanings were generated outside of any evidence that either security agency had acted in a particularly partisan manner.<sup>5</sup>

In this context, and in light of the continuing accent on access to security in Nigerian public culture, two concepts emerge as significant. For those outside institutions of state looking *in*, it becomes more important than ever to "have someone who is there," to use the colloquial phrase. For those inside those institutions, it allows them to "acquire relevance," a term imbued with multiple meanings.

Thus, policing is prebendal not just because of its size, or budget, but because it implies being able to influence certain outcomes in times of crisis, whether these be personal or political. The need to retain the potential to do this also informs behavior outside those times of crisis. Joseph's concept of prebendalism is a two-way street: it works reciprocally, both for the persons occupying office and for those who put them there. And the ability to further *secure access to* state payroll jobs, to reproduce being-in the state, is itself of value; this is also good for the occupier of that office as it can be brokered into personal status and prestige in the community that has sent them there. This is not just on the "macro" level of extraordinary events such as communal crises; the micropolitics of "having someone who is there" matter perhaps more in the everyday. The state good that is at stake is physical, economic, social, and existential security. Access to or membership of an institution such as the police is about human security in its most holistic sense; physical, economic, social, and existential. Being in an institution, as much as coming from a community, invokes a politics of belonging.

### JOINING THE POLICE

The dynamics outlined above are revealed more clearly in the actual process of constituting the human resources of the state; in this case

recruitment into the police. Recruitment into the Nigeria Police Force takes place in annual exercises, one each for each of the three cadres—rank and file, inspectors, and senior officers—each having its own entry requirements and training scheme. The exercises are large—a 30-year standard term of service would imply that 12,500 officers need to be replaced annually even if the institution is just to replace lost personnel; the trend, however, is toward expansion, so recent recruitments have been larger.<sup>6</sup> Recruitment exercises take place simultaneously across the 36 states and Federal Capital Territory, and are handled in the first instance by the State Police Commands. The federal Police Service Commission, composed of a board representing various regional and professional backgrounds directing a full-time bureaucracy, has competence over recruitment, but this is delegated to the police, while the commission seeks to exercise an oversight function. Forms are issued at State Command level, and the initial process is conducted by the state's Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO). Candidates for rank and file admission must be between the ages of 18 and 25, and have a secondary school completion certificate with credits in a minimum of five subjects, including English and maths. Candidates may also have further educational qualifications such as the National Diploma (ND). Prospective inspector cadets must be within the same age bracket, and for them the ND or a National Certificate in Education (NCE) is a compulsory requirement. Those seeking admission to the senior officer stream as cadet assistant superintendents must be between the ages of 23 and 28, and have a university degree at minimum of upper second-class honors. Traditionally, the system prefers law and social science graduates, though there are in reality a wide variety of graduates within the police. In addition they must fulfill certain physical criteria on height and build, and must be able to provide attestation as to their place of origin, probity, and past conduct and social status. It is noteworthy that women must not be married and/or not pregnant. After initial evaluation<sup>7</sup> the potential recruits pass up the hierarchy, through levels of further examination, evaluation, and elimination, until the lucky few are admitted to training institutions: one of the country's Police Training Schools for rank and file recruits, or the Police Academy at Kano for the senior and inspectorate cadets.

My period of fieldwork in (pseudonymized) Dutsin Bature town, in Gida State police command during 2010 and 2011 overlapped with a rank and file recruitment exercise. Over its course, I became aware of how the official process itself gave rise to a “shadow” process that derives from it, and was used by prospective entrants to negotiate and navigate the official process. The issue of recruitment first surfaced on June 14, 2010, when an inspector at a small satellite station told me that the police were planning to recruit 40,000 people across the country; this news was confirmed by



another officer, who told me she is “dreading” it because of the rush of people she expects to ask her for help.

In this state, a traditional recruiting ground for uniformed services, and with little in the way of formal economic opportunities for youth, the release of forms for the upcoming police recruitment exercise invigorated the whole town.<sup>8</sup> In fact, many youths spent a considerable amount of time throughout the year collecting forms for federal application rounds—a massively oversubscribed recruitment exercise for the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) and several other similar procedures. But submitting an entry form is not just a formality. For many people, the matter requires thorough consideration and planning. Answers can be “spun” and crafted in such a way as to present the best possible chance, and actually submitting the form itself is a matter of giving it the best possible trajectory from the outset. In this, the advice and assistance of someone who is already serving can be very useful.

A guy comes past to discuss entry form with Inspector B. The applicant is currently working for a microfinance bank. [...] At the internet café the constable I know from the Commissioner’s office is with a friend who has collected police form (which is on sale already printed out, at web café). (June 15, 2010)

I consider it significant that a very great many of the officers of assistant superintendent and above with whom I interacted disclosed that they had joined the police only after several years of fruitlessly searching for a job, or of trying another career that they found unrewarding. In fact some were explicit that they had been unenthusiastic applicants but saw the police as a career option only *because* they “had someone there” and, therefore, felt that they stood a good chance of success. One senior officer, now eminent at a national level, told me that when his friends had brought the application form to him as an unemployed graduate in the 1980s, he had protested that “I don’t love police.” They replied, “Who is talking of *love*? This is a matter of *job*.”

I cannot be precise about the historical genesis of this trend, but it seems reasonable to assume that the premium of a secure job on the state payroll becomes especially attractive amid the economic devastation of the formal sector in the post-SAP years of the mid-1980s; neither—with a young population which continues to outgrow the uneven expansion of formal private sector employment—does that seem to have changed much since. This situation equally applied to a number of the rank and file and inspectors. Policing, at least for some then, is a career choice of possibility, rather than aspiration.

It can be seen that not only the unemployed apply: Policing clearly has a particular position in the employment food chain. Being a policeman or

woman is not only potentially powerful, it is also a government job with a clear and relatively structured career path, national scope and opportunities, and a lot more job security than certain private sector employers; equally the police, as a state agency, is a lot less likely to be plagued by the cashflow and solvency issues that affect many private sector employers and their workers. At the same time, some people already in police employment have a strategic eye to other state agencies that they consider to offer better prospects. So policing has differential appeal in perceived hierarchies of opportunity. Some constables already serving were awaiting chances to apply to even more prestigious and influential national bureaucracies, such as the Navy and INEC (the Independent National Electoral Commission).

The scale and organizational difficulty of the PPRO's recruitment task is indicated by the large stacks of files stored around his office in alphabetical piles. In the year I undertook my fieldwork, the PPRO's conduct of the exercise was contrasted unfavorably with the way his predecessor ran it. The first stages take a number of days, and as there are usually a large number of candidates, tables are set out on the sports field or parade ground to process them. It does not always go smoothly. On July 7, 2010 I note:

The PPRO is hard to find, apparently because he fucked up the recruitment exercise. Last time around, under the former PRO, candidates were screened using height, using "read this newspaper to me," and using "write a letter to CP—or your father—explaining why you want to join police" to test their basic literacy. This time, the current PRO was losing it, running around with a stick, whipping people.

The premium on getting state employment also leads to a measure of desperation in candidates. The following day a senior officer tells me:

You get people's mothers standing outside the window with the answer sheet begging, "please pass this to my daughter; she's not too bright, she just needs to pass exam" and if you refuse, you're evil; "it's because of you my daughter didn't join police."

Recruitment renews the value of having a connection with "someone who is there," or with some other powerful patron who can help you; and this too is an opportunity for politics and local power structures to intersect with policing. On July 4, 2010, Constable F tells me that of 20,000 prospective rank and file candidates, only 200 were finally recruited from this state at this round. He says many of the 100 candidates the governor brought (he came to the recruiting ground *personally*) were party thugs. Not all will get in, however, because some

will be screened out at a subsequent stage. The involvement of the state governor to “open road” for his constituency of clients points us again toward the “micropolitics” of prebendalism.<sup>9</sup> It emanated not only from executive political officers but other loci of power as well. On July 9, 2010, Inspector F (a detective) observes to me:

By the time [names three prominent traditional rulers in the state] and all those small-small chiefs, then three senators from the state all bring their candidates, what poor man has chance?

Furthermore, the same informant commented on the ways in which the reciprocity implied in such a path to employment made the police institution vulnerable to the infiltration of overtly political logics, which would act to the detriment of professionalism:

By the time they are recruited, they will be trying to find ways to influence their posting back [to the state] and then come election time they do their masters' bidding.

The nexus between local political authority and the chances of success in joining a federal institution are even more subject to a further layer of complex conditionality due to the formal procedure, which—in order to achieve the ethno-regional balance known as federal character, which will be discussed further below—invokes the category of “indigeneship.” Indigeneship in Nigeria is both a legal and a “folk” category, being used in both government and popular discourse to differentiate between certain civic rights of those originating in a place and those merely resident there (Ostien 2009). Although not contested in my fieldwork site in the same way as locations such as Jos or Kano, where it has been a central and divisive political dynamic, the mobilization of the constitutionally undefined, yet emotive, category of indigeneship allows holders of local political office a powerful locus of intervention in the process, and an opportunity to filter who is able to fulfill the criteria. The local government chair must sign and stamp the indigene form and the police form, which must also be signed by a village head.<sup>10</sup> This is of secondary significance here but is worth remembering in situations elsewhere, in which the term is so contested that local officeholders have refused to sign such forms for those they consider do not “belong” and, therefore, should not be entitled to state employment.

In addition to requiring the involvement of these personages of the local state, the application also then requires access to at least a senior officer and a member of the judiciary. This is sometimes a problematic process for the applicant (given the very limited knowledge they may have of the applicant's character) and it is not risk-free for the officer

who is asked to sign, containing as it does the embedded risk of vicarious damage to their own reputation if the candidate proves unreliable. In fact, how that is handled seems in large part to depend on the individual's judgment and probity. The officer above said that when signing forms,

[s]ome people do it free: sometimes they change their minds afterwards and deny all knowledge. And most senior police are very careful about who they sign for. Sometimes they don't even know [somebody, therefore, refuse] and the admin constable charges [money] and does a very elaborate signature [so as to be illegible].

I witnessed this process again in July 2011, when two youths approached a chief superintendent in my presence asking for the same favor, and when asked where they were referred from, gave two contradictory names. In such circumstance, the only guarantee is the officer's own judgment of character. The understandable reluctance of senior officers with careers at stake to take this leap into the unknown for persons unknown to them also reinforces the emergent self-selecting nature of the police as a state class. Added to that is the fact that "having someone who is there" already helps as a prerequisite—providing "access to access."

### FIGHTING FOR STANDARDS

The profusion of methods and strategies to navigate or outwit the formal procedures leads to evolution within the recruitment process, with new measures constantly introduced to trump newly discovered methods of cheating. This is an arena in which the particularism of personal loyalty is in constant conversation with the professional ethic of police as an organization; while most people might want to help their friends and relatives, few would like to admit that they had encouraged a substandard person to serve alongside them. Moreover, the police leadership remains acutely aware of human resource capacity problems. So two logics evolve in tandem. One is the formal policy logic of the institution, devised on paper and in meetings; the other is the systemic aggregate of lots of little individual instrumental attempts to undermine or bypass that formal policy for personal advantage or financial gain. Making complicated arrangements to prevent cheating introduced more delays into the exercise I witnessed. On the eve of the exam, which was held on the same day across the country to prevent cheating, the list of names was not yet disclosed. Previously, all scripts were collated nationally and sent to Staff College Jos where selected officers marked them. Now it is done zonally, but scripts are swapped between states. The echoes of this recruitment exercise for rank and file continued to reverberate through the year. When I returned

to the field after a break in November 2010, new rumors were circulating through the system:

November 11, 2010: Inspector B says they cancelled the previous recruitment exercise. I asked how much does it cost, and he said there's no fixed amount but that "I wouldn't join police now—first I wouldn't have the money." [...] Then they tried to do recruitment again but only Higher National Diploma-holders up, but then northern states complained because it's unprocedural and tilts against them because of education.

The inspector's implication here was that the attempt to raise the qualification level of entrants was defeated because the northern states complained that this exceeds what is set down as an educational requirement in the recruitment rules: That in turn would mean that their own young applicants would be less successful in applying to the police because levels of formal higher—and even secondary—English-language education in the north are, for historical reasons, significantly lower than in southern states.<sup>11</sup>

The 2010–2011 recruitment and promotion exercises were an extended stop-start process subject to continual delays and reschedulings, reflecting a tussle for control of the process between Force Headquarters and the Police Service Commission. From my limited insights, I believe that the commission's genuine desire was to reassert its constitutionally mandated oversight in the pursuit of high-quality personnel to improve the capacity of the police force, and in that fitted with an ongoing drive to take a serious role in police reform on the part of the commission as constituted at that time.<sup>12</sup> Yet that is not how it was interpreted by everyone. Within the police, and in circles accustomed to dealing with the cut-and-thrust institutional politics of recruitment, promotions, and postings, some saw it quite instrumentally, a new wrinkle derived from the business-as-usual of bureaucratic politics, and as such just as likely to result in a compromised result. Inspector K<sup>13</sup> saw it this way:

People will say they are selling forms—HQ won't know but the information will leak out from Force Headquarters or the Police Service Commission. Then they come here to do screening—the first list had only about three names of indigenes, the rest were Igbo, Hausa, etc. (June 10, 2010)

As noted above, it is standard practice that application forms for state and private bodies are often sold, for a nominal fee, from outlets (such as banks) with nationwide networks. "Selling forms" as cited here refers instead to the malpractice of influential persons hoarding (or conversely, prereleasing) application forms and selling them at inflated prices for personal gain. In fact, the inspector's cynicism extended to even the possibility of a

meritocratic “clean” recruitment process, inasmuch as recruitment requires the police institution to interlocute with the logics of other institutions that are *themselves* not clean. He continued:

See, if you try to do thorough recruitment now, you won't get up to 20. Cos they will have certificate, go to internet their name will be there,<sup>14</sup> but ask them to work they can't do.

This comment on a rotten school system references the cheating and malpractices that allow someone to get their secondary school certificate without actually being sufficiently literate and numerate, as much as it is cynicism about the possibility of a clean recruitment process within the police itself. In that, it reflects a wider perception of declining standards, as cited by Inspector B quoted previously, who continued:

HND of today is not up to primary 6 of *then*; it should be dictation and aptitude test—maths, English and aptitude—oral there and then on the spot, not a written exam you can cheat at.

In fact, no one realizes better than the police themselves the corrosive effects of poor-quality personnel, and they go to great lengths to repeatedly screen and rescreen applicants, especially for the senior cadre. Of course, it follows that the competition to join the senior cadre, with its greater access to mobility, opportunity, pay, progression, and social elevation, is correspondingly higher. In fact the recruitment process evolves under twin pressures, the interplay between the people “cheat-proofing” the processes, and those trying to find new ways to gain marginal advantage. The entire process is a continual struggle between institutional meritocracy and professionalism on one hand, and personal instrumentality and particularism on the other. A female assistant superintendent laid out for me the recruitment process she herself had undergone in the recruiting exercise about five years previously:

Application starts at local government level. All the candidates from that level were screened by the local area commander (usually an ACP) who in this case was a very straightforward Yoruba man, known for not taking bribes and for checking up on checkpoints to make sure that his men did not extort motorists. Secondly, the 1,000 persons who cleared that process were checked at the state command, where “they don't compromise on schooling certificate.” Thirdly, 215 candidates cleared from that level were sent to zonal command (overseeing three states) for another screening and then were sent on to Force Headquarters in Abuja for more screening, from which the list was trimmed down to 30. Finally, the 30 candidates who cleared Force Headquarters were sent for final interview

at the Police Academy, Wudil, Kano State, where 15 were dropped and a final 15 selected to undergo the training course.

Only 1.5% of the candidates from this particular state (a large state in the central part of the country) were therefore eventually successful, and though the odds may be better in a smaller state where there are fewer suitable applicants, and/or policing is a less popular career option, it can be seen that it is still a hugely competitive process. Of course, the converse of the careful and multistage selection process is that it may also allow serving officers—of progressively more senior rank—the opportunity for personal intervention, to influence or attempt to influence, the process as it goes on.

In fact, the challenge of securing employment in contemporary Nigeria is such that a sizeable number of graduates from polytechnics and even universities apply to join as constables. Since the official requirement for a constable recruit is Secondary School Leaving Certificate, and since the minimal educational requirements are also interpreted as *maximal*—that is, overqualification is made a grounds for disqualification from the already overpopulated applicants list—many graduates or diploma-holders hide their higher qualifications in order to be enrolled as secondary school certificate holders.

Money, too, is mobilized in desperation. One informant, a police inspector (with, I was aware, a tendency to hyperbole), claimed that by the time it reaches the latter stages of the process, ASP candidates are paying from ₦200,000 up to ₦500,000<sup>15</sup> to influence the process. This informant was, however, an inspector and had not been through that selection personally. Interestingly, another senior officer claimed to have knowledge of some people who paid up to ₦100,000 to pass and yet *didn't* get selected. Though it is also possible that such persons represent disgruntled low bidders, and that some paid more and consequently *did* pass, the officer who related this to me said that they themselves had not personally paid anything, and indeed I knew them to come from a family background that could not easily mobilize money. They deduced that in general—“give or take”—overall the right people (i.e., the best candidates for the job) tend to get in.

That someone who emerged as one of the lucky few might seek to vindicate the system's logic is perhaps unsurprising. But it points us to an important modifier of the literature on corruption and/or informalization of state processes. The tendency in scholarly, advocacy, and public discourse on corruption is usually to assume—without further interrogation—that bribery and corruption *works*—that it is functionally effective and pays off for the person trying to manipulate the system. The further implicit assumption is that it has entirely displaced meritocracy as the logic of the system. This holds through not only

the broader analyses (Chabal and Daloz 1999) but also some recent fine-grained ethnographic work on corruption in state practice (Smith 2007; Blundo and Olivier de Sardan 2006). The assumption, however, is not fully supported by my observations during fieldwork, wherein I came to understand attempts to resort to corrupt practice in such situations as one tactic among many, and not always a successful option. In an analogous process, Willott (2009) documents the strategies used to negotiate access to higher education in a particular federal university, a life opportunity that is similarly an arena of class formation and status. In this sphere, also a context of heightened competition for a limited public good, corruption can be deployed both alongside or instead of social capital and identity-based claims to secure access. Yet in discussion of these themes, many Nigerian academics asserted to me that such a picture of university admissions is not nuanced enough—they cited, for instance, the existence of a minimum grade “floor” beneath which no amount of favoritism is likely to help an applicant, alongside the continued admission of candidates with no strategy of access beyond merit as based on school grades.<sup>16</sup> The general lesson to be drawn from both the police and university examples is that this kind of corruption is sometimes better understood as a system for gaining an edge over purely merit-based qualification, not as a system that has entirely *supplanted* the possibility of merit-based performance, as the gloomiest analyses would have it.

What does prove more successful than money, however, seems to be social capital. The officer mentioned above added that in his opinion, it’s not cash that helps, it is “connections”—for example, if you know a deputy inspector-general, your chances may immediately look different if you can persuade them to endorse your application. And likewise both police and university informants in Nigeria asserted the importance not just of identity-based but affinity-based links in forming and imagining social capital. Such practices also create at the outset the formation of vertical connections of personal obligation and indebtedness and mean that from entering the police personal loyalties may be important to some persons in a way that structures their own subsequent trajectories through the institutional career. Personalized loyalties indeed reemerged as relevant when understanding linkages within the police institution and the “office politics” of postings and opportunities.

Thus far, in identifying the emergent self-selection of the state class, and in noting emergent ties of loyalty that might cross-cut formal command and career structures, we might seem to be tacitly labelling such practices aberrant.<sup>17</sup> But there is in fact a comparative managerial case to be made that nepotism might not be all “bad” despite the frequent normative assumption. Certainly it is antimeritocratic in the sense that



it is particularist and skews equality of opportunity, but it can also be functional in guaranteeing something about the candidate. Personal guarantee and provenance signifies something of particular importance to police—respectability and the nonsuspect nature of a person, especially given that central criminal records are not well-maintained or coordinated.<sup>18</sup>

### STAYING IN THE STATE

The overall effect of the above is that the state class becomes to an extent self-selecting. *Being in the state reproduces itself*. Recruitment exercises are also the moments of formation of a state class. And this state class formation, although it incorporates the ethnic linkages on which Joseph's explanations are centered, and the affinal linkages testified to both by the experiences of academics cited above, and by my police fieldwork, involves a third core factor, that of family. A sizeable portion of the officers I interacted with said that they had a relative serving in the police at the time of joining; when collecting survey data orally in interviews, I phrased the question on this issue in the common idiom "did you *follow anybody* to the police?" Equally, many of those now there had a sibling or other relative who had followed them, whose access they had themselves facilitated, and at least one officer I know had both—a police mother and father who they had "followed," and a younger cousin who had "followed" them.

Hereditary occupational policing is not particularly unique to Nigeria; globally polices, like militaries, perhaps due to the distinct, semiseparate and totalizing nature of their institutional lives, tend to reproduce themselves in such a way (see, for instance, Emsley 2009). In Western contexts, this tends to be interpreted as the creation of a labor aristocracy, and as the distinct separation of a reactionary "guard" section of the working class (Marenin 1982). But I argue that it acquires a different slant in a situation of scarcity and radical insecurity, and against the context of the ever-present dangers of relegation to the permanently insecure masses.

It should be noted that there is no complete divide between communal group and nuclear family as a Western normative sociological perspective might assume, since extended families and wider kin organizations on lineage and other formats connect to and subsume into the way that communal group membership is imagined. Smith, writing of the means of securing access to secondary schooling in historically acephalous and kinship/status-based Igbo communities of southeastern Nigeria, argues that "at least in the Igbo case, the fundamental features of patron-clientism are rooted in the hierarchical reciprocal ties and obligations that characterize kinship relations" (2001, 349).<sup>19</sup>

So there is a continuity between the ways in which families and wider communities are imagined as planes of action. However, there are some observations worth making about family as a distinct sphere in the narrowest sense. Family “entryism” in the police was a strongly evident and visible tactic even prior to independence; ruling families in northern Emirates would frequently “send” a son to command the Native Authority (NA) Police in their domain, to merge political and administrative control of public security, and this was encouraged by colonial authorities.<sup>20</sup> Ambassador Shehu Malami, a veteran of the aristocratic-political elite of northern Nigeria, recently published recollections that illustrate

“Former President Alhaji Shehu Shagari remembers [...] the Prime Minister [Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa] asked him to convey to His Eminence [Sir Siddiq Abubakar], that members of the family should never be missed in the recruitment exercise for the Military and the Police. [...] Sir Abubakar himself, in his position as the *Sardauna* of Sokoto, was sent by his predecessor, Sultan Hassan, to the Kaduna Police College where he, and Prince Usman Nagogo from Katsina, were supervised and trained by no other person than the father of the late Alhaji Audu Bako, a one time military Governor of Kano State. Sir Abubakar was later to become the 17th Sultan of Sokoto and Usman Nagogo went on to become the Emir of Katsina.<sup>21</sup>

Malami’s recollections usefully illustrate that recruitment of aristocratic scions into the police was an act with triple significance: First, because it allowed those families who headed traditional polities to consolidate their rule over their historic civic domains through the reengineered modernized institutions of state;<sup>22</sup> second, because colonial authorities found it useful to encourage those with an existing interest in the system of rule to take on the duty and role of a more modern policing; and third, because such recruits and their families found in such institutions a field of play in which to develop their scope and relevance within the wider organs of the “new” colonial state.

The testimony underlines that policing was one of the organizational spheres in which, as African technical intermediaries, old authorities (as much as new educated counterelites) established hegemonic patterns that would endure in the postcolonial era.<sup>23</sup> Having established that leadership of NA police forces was a key technique of rule in maintaining social and political order in their own accustomed domains, it seemed natural to carry this through into the wider sphere of the national state after the NA police forces were integrated into the Nigeria Police Force in the 1960s.

Some aristocratic families carried this logic of statecraft far into the sphere of the postindependence state, strategically placing offspring in

the most relevant institutions. The process persists today; high-status families in Kano and other northern aristocratically centered city polities commonly “send” a son to the police, while another will be in the army, and yet another in the NNPC, civil service, or other institution of similar significance.

The salient point here is that entering such an agency of state is not just a strategic choice for an individual; sometimes, the family is the decision-making unit of relevance, in a technique most especially and early perfected by those families already deeply invested in the art of dynastic rule. In the service of such strategies, policing became one of the spheres in which the “reciprocal assimilation of elites” identified by Bayart (1993) as being key to the particular social formation of the post-colonial state, was performed.

Since choices are not always made exclusively by individuals, entryism is never a pact solely between a person and a communal group, as perhaps might be suggested in strictly following Joseph. It is also mediated by the narrower family, and to the intended advantage of that family within both the wider community and the nation; it is to an extent tripartite.

### NEGOTIATING FEDERAL CHARACTER

The patterns and means of recruitment into the NPF bear some historical contextualization. Recruitment into the national force has moved a long way from their antecedents, the nineteenth-century Hausa-staffed constabularies; and the later colonial era in which recruitment into employment was conducted by the combination of self-selection and stereotype that divided human resources into supposedly “martial” and “clerical” ethnicities. Formal institutions exist to ensure that postindependence Nigerian policing is nationally representative in its human resource profile. But this does not negate the evident fact that there are regional, and generational, patterns to the choice of taking state employment in the police; and that these choices have latterly been inflected by economic scarcity and insecurity, particularly in the quarter century since structural adjustment programs altered the nature of the formal economy and employment market.

Prior to explaining the mechanics of representative recruitment, it is worth recognizing that there are clearly certain areas of the country where policing *is* historically a more popular career choice than in others. Since policing requires a level of formal English-language education, though is not highly paid and in most cases not considered one of the highest-prestige avenues to mobility, it follows that policing is a popular career where (1) English-language education (originally spread by the Christian missions) is widespread; and (2) other economic opportunities

for the literate are limited, and, therefore, from which skilled labor emigrates. This is indeed what we find; the “Middle-Belt” or “North-Central” states of Benue, Plateau, and Kogi; neighboring minority-ethnicity areas of southern Kaduna State; ethnic-minority (often Christian) areas of Borno and Adamawa in the northeast zone; the less urbanized eastern Yoruba-land States of Ondo, Osun, and Ekiti; and areas of the Niger delta or “South-South” states away from the core nodes of the oil industry, such as inland Delta State, northern Edo State, Akwa Ibom, and Cross River, are all known for producing police officers. In fact this seems to apply to the uniformed services more generally—regions such as Benue, Kogi, and Plateau are notable recruiting grounds for military and paramilitary services alike.

That the tendencies above have emerged as a result of economic pressures and personal preferences, rather than from state policy, is clear because of a set of institutional practices intended precisely to stop domination of any of the apparatus of the federal state by any particular ethno-regional group. I refer here to the concept known in Nigeria as “federal character,” which dictates that any national institution’s personnel make-up should reflect the ethno-regional diversity of the entire nation.<sup>24</sup> A host of bodies exist precisely to ensure this provision is adhered to in the constituent organs of state. In fact the Police Service Commission itself was one of these bodies, set up in response to 1957’s Willink Commission of enquiry into the concerns of minority groups about their positions in a future independent Nigeria. Federal character provisions that ensure “balance” through quota and positive discrimination practices have undoubtedly been successful in achieving their primary goal of preventing any particular ethnic dominance in the country’s organs of state, but have given rise to a number of unintended secondary dynamics. Chief among these is their relationship to political structures and action, and even the shape of administrative units themselves (Suberu 2001), but also their reification and invigoration of the contested category of “indigene,” on which is based the claim to be “counted” in issues that invoke federal character, as illustrated above.

In policing, however, there is a more subtle interplay. Using a souvenir yearbook from a Nigeria Police Academy cadet class within the past decade, I noted that the total of 615 ASP cadets in that recruitment group was, although representing all states, somewhat unevenly distributed. The least number from a single state was seven—an outlier, from the still-urbanizing Federal Capital Territory of Abuja, and the most, 24, from Edo State. The modal average was 15, 16, or 17 candidates per state, which distribution accounted for almost half of the states. Yet this pattern can be considered equitable only if the issues of relative population size, and of the internal heterogeneity of certain states are excluded.

Interestingly, the states for “traditional” police recruitment were *not* the most overrepresented, prompting us to understand that when popular discourse talks of communal groups’ success in penetrating state institutions, we must understand something beyond mere numbers and consider also position and influence within such bodies. It also prompts us to look below state level, at which communities are successful in providing large numbers of candidates *within* certain states. And there is an issue of proportionality—federal character provides for equal representation of states, but does not adjust for population, so teeming Lagos gets in theory the same number of allocated places as do Bayelsa or Ekiti states, the nation’s smallest. In fact some large urban-center states had relatively few cadets—Lagos, Kano, and Kaduna had 15, 18, and 14 cadets respectively—on the course in question. Yet the competition for these places remains uneven. In Kaduna, a “modern” colonially founded large cosmopolitan city with ample educational opportunities, which is also a core historical recruiting ground for the uniformed services, my informant recalled that more than 3,000 people bought the candidacy form in that year.

Therefore, it can be seen that the relative differential “ease” of joining the police is not just a matter of the places on offer, but of the federal-character-stipulated competition for those places. There is an interplay between historical recruitment trends and federal character. A potential officer recruit from a state that does not have a large population; in which policing is not a popular career choice; or where policing is not a socially prestigious occupation may have a much greater chance than a candidate from a state where policing is a popular option.

The larger systemic logic of federal character further reinforces the dynamic: some states, especially in the Muslim-majority Hausa-speaking “core north,” have a tradition that valorized Islamic education above English-language schooling. To the present day, this results in significantly lower English literacy and school completion rates in those states. The recognition of this has led to a variety of positive discriminatory practices, such as the preferential treatment of “educationally disadvantaged” states in federal higher education planning, in order to encourage university education in those states. That in turn means that those who do complete secondary education, and secure places in the university system, are comparatively “bigger fish” in “smaller ponds.” And these graduates enter a labor market in which their individual chances play differently to those from other states; since they will not only be able to compete for a reserved allocation in police recruitment, but in other state employment where federal character is operative, such as very highly desirable jobs in the Nigeria National Petroleum Company (NNPC), the military, and the Federal Civil Service. In fact the combination of lack of interest and shortage of candidates capable of fulfilling enough of the

selection criteria may still leave states such as Kebbi or Sokoto under-represented; in the year sample I examined, the least-represented states (excepting FCT) were 5 states with only 13 cadets each; all of them were such nonurbanized states from the north of the country.

Even at this stage, candidates will be aware that it is not just their start in the system that is at stake, but their future prospects. Since, until shortly before the time of writing, promotion at a number of levels to the next significant cadres of senior management *also* followed a federal character quota logic, in order to reinforce balanced ethno-regional representation in the senior leadership levels (those levels at which prebendalism—in the direct sense in which Joseph intended it—becomes a more obviously relevant consideration) the likely future *ceterus paribus* promotion prospects for a new ASP cadet from Benue, for instance, looked very different to, and probably slower than, those that may unfold for a new cadet from Zamfara. On an individual level this may generate resentments and mitigate against the fuller internalization of a deethnicizing professional *esprit de corps* that is at the same time being constructed in the academy class and after. We should, therefore, recognize that not just representation, but aspiration to promotion and high position, depends on a complex interplay in which apparently antidiscriminatory and “balancing” practices may work differentially for participants of different backgrounds: A certain amount of unevenness and asymmetry is present from the outset.

This filtering and differences of opportunity then makes both the individual tactics of enrolling in the police and the options for communal tactics of entryism very different propositions in states of different populations, locations, and educational profiles; the practices are as such fundamentally uneven, and any discussion of recruitment practices needs to acknowledge this even as it attempts to discern general systemic logics.

## ENTRYISM

The premium upon state employment, access to security institutions, and a place in the state itself is reflected in a discernible set of trends we may analytically refer to as “entryism.” More usually employed in politics to describe the takeover of a party vehicle by a particular faction by means of cumulative membership and infiltration strategies, we may adapt it here to conveniently describe the means by which communities may employ mobilization strategies to insert their own members into state institutions.

Before describing the modes of such action, it is worth noting that it cannot always be assumed to be a deliberate and planned tactic. We may

note that certain communities are bases of traditional recruitment without judging whether deliberate intention or historical contingency was prime in creating that trend. Indeed, a comparative look at the military suggests that some such trends can be truly called emergent and iterative, rather than planned. Siollun (2009) documents the unexpected later significance of recruitment preferences in the military, that Igbo commissioned officers in the late-colonial era generally preferred to occupy clerical or technical rather than infantry command posts made possible the widespread intramilitary pogroms against them in the countercoup of 1967. Likewise, the young Tarok men who joined the military as junior officers and NCOs at the same period could not have foreseen the future conjunction of circumstances that would see them become a miniclique of “Langtang Generals” and then inspire and enable a new generation to follow suit. The trend of entryism may thus be seen as one emerging from a combination of personal voluntarism, federally representative constitutional measures, and a growing incentive to utilize these strategically, as postcolonial state practices and social trends began to structure each other in a milieu of unpredictability and a search for existential security.

There *are* though certainly cases where entryism is explicit and has been refined over generations. Benue State, a middle-belt region with a very strong tradition of recruitment into uniformed service, is numerically and politically dominated by Tiv-speaking communities. Yet within that Idomas constitute an “effective minority” due to their continued success in mobilizing elites to facilitate the enrolment of youths in federal employment, beyond what might be expected of their numerically marginal position.

What also became clear throughout the period of my fieldwork is that beyond this, entryism is *becoming* a conscious choice for some communities who previously did not see themselves as much concerned with it. In this their own communal positions of insecurity seem to be a direct and conscious concern.

Interviewing officers in my fieldwork site on their own backgrounds, one officer described himself as Jassawa. The term, itself a contested one, refers in his usage to a Plateau State inhabitant descended from migrants from present-day Bauchi and Kano States, who moved to the new mining city of Jos in colonial times.<sup>25</sup> Since the creation of Plateau State, Jassawa, a successful group who once sat atop the city’s social order, have been marginalized by formerly disenfranchised Plateau groups identifying themselves as “indigenes” and original owners of the land, and many of the episodes of violence that have racked the city since 2001 have been centrally concerned with the status of the Jassawa (Higazi 2008; Human Rights Watch 2001; Ostien 2009). I observed that I had met few police officers of this community and he replied that “we didn’t used to join

police, *before*, but now . . .” The implication was that a place in the security agencies had become desirable in the context of new marginality and insecurity (and no doubt also in light of the economic decline and shrinkage of economic opportunity that continued conflict has brought to Jos).

Likewise pastoral Fulani informants, perhaps the least likely group that the urban Nigerian public would consider as police material due to their distance from formal education, urban centers, and concerns of advancement in settled “conventional,” social, or economic registers, referred to their reluctance at joining the police in the same frame as other strategies of engaging with the formal and the state as *participants*. That is to say, they made reference not only to normatively avoiding the state (and the police) but also to the emergent need to engage with it, under the rhetoric (as expressed in English) of “becoming wise.” Cattle-rearers, nomadic or seminomadic, often unschooled, and used to dealing with state agencies through communal representation, interaction with traditional institutions, or selected brokers, sometimes spoke to me of such contexts, where becoming wise was portrayed as the remedy to situations of interaction where they had been taken advantage of by those more fluent in the realm of state and paperwork.<sup>26</sup> Thus the overarching “we don’t . . .” applied to activities such as joining the police was qualified by reference to “those of us that have become wise.” Wisdom here seemed to have the connotation not of intelligence but of the process of “wising-up,” having the realities of the world impressed upon one through bitter experience. A representative of MACBAN,<sup>27</sup> the umbrella Fulani ethnic-economic association asked me in the course of fieldwork what I, as an educated supposed “expert,” would suggest to remedy the negative and prejudicial treatment that he alleged that cattle-rearers received at the hands of the police. My liberal reformist suggestions of engaging with community policing programs were received with a detached politeness that made their irrelevance obvious. This contrasted dramatically with the attentiveness of his response when I asked “why don’t you send your sons to the police?”

There is a sense, then, for those who are latecomers to the strategies of entryism, and indeed to the wider complex of insertion and accommodation within the machinery of the modern state, that to be left out is to be left behind, to lose the chance for agency, and to risk being structurally excluded from the opportunity for agency in the future. To be left outside the state is to become permanently disadvantaged persons in the state-reliant process of elite class formation. To be existentially secure, itself a deferred status always seemingly incompletely achieved, is to be active on the field of play of the Nigeria state “game.” Having “someone who is there” in the police is a part of that, all the more important in that it gatekeeps the important issue of human security and position of relative victimhood vis-à-vis others who might manipulate the state against one.



Those groups most effective in their mobilization of entryism have well coordinated strategies of mutual assistance among their elites that point up the value of having, and of effectively using, someone who is there. An informant trained as a lawyer, who recently joined the police in a recruitment exercise for technical staff, told me that at his board interview he was questioned by three senior officers who he had not seen before. They asked one question each; two were on policing; the third officer asked only his ethnicity and village and passed the candidate.

In outlining these operative structures we should not also be over-determinist. Individuals are free not to take the option either to approach as a client or to aid as a patron; but such a choice may result in opprobrium. While entryism can be used to advantage both by applicants and by those in position to influence a process, not all officers are keen to get involved. What represents opportunity for some constitutes a headache for others, and some officers avoid involvement with recruitment exercises altogether because they see the pressure from applicants as intolerable.

## CONCLUSION

Entryism, like prebendalism in Joseph's political analysis, and like neopatrimonial systems in general, benefits both ends. In a milieu where life opportunities are as scarce and precarious as in contemporary Nigeria's youth employment market, it is a sensible strategy for the individual. And in a cultural context where a historically strong communitarian understanding of personhood is reinforced by a political system that deals with its citizens on the basis of their membership of ethno-regional groups, it makes sense for communities. "Having someone who is there" for the community and "acquiring relevance" for the individual are reciprocal sides of the same equation.

Before concluding our discussion of entryism as key to the micropolitics of prebendalism, it is pertinent to recall that this does not only rest on a relationship between an individual and a communal group, whether ethnic or otherwise defined. It also, as we discussed above, invokes the much closer and powerfully deployable sphere of family, which is not completely disconnected from the ways in which people understand themselves to be situated in wider communal groups. Kinship and family, we should remember, interposes between a crude reading of Joseph's prebendalism as a pact solely between a person and a group; the choices that are made in life strategies are not only a matter for individuals or more obviously "politically" mobilized identity groups.

In the end, though, the stakes are the same for all parties. Joining the state is a route to social mobility, whether that is newly achieved or a matter of securing established position. Being *in* and *up* is opposed with

the clear and unpleasant dangers of being *out* and *down*, which are communal and familial concerns no less than they are individual.

A friend in the Nigerian civil service once told me that the career advice given by a family friend was to “be of use to yourself, so you can be of use to them,” which is as neat a formulation of the principle as is needed.

This then is prebendalism as it is lived in the everyday. Power is gifted communally to privileged individuals in the hope that they will continue to exercise their membership in state institutions in a way that will reproduce for other members of that community a means of securing a privileged avenue to access, and an anchor in the process of state class formation. Joseph’s formulation of prebendalism showed how that works in tying constituencies into the state through the power-brokering of formal party politics. Yet I have argued above that it is equally present in the everyday processes of negotiating means of entry into state institutions such as the police, and, therefore, being able to influence the state by being part of its organs. Meanwhile, when considering the working of prebendalism in these arenas, we must recognize that it is not the path chosen by all, and that it maintains a complex coexistence with another set of formal imperatives, designed to ensure the professional and non-partisan functioning of the offices of state through whose procedures individual careers must be advanced.

## NOTES

1. Mbembe uses “exception” slightly differently in a number of contexts; here it is relevant to consider the concept in the light of the existence of people to whom and for whom rules are applied differently on account of their privileged position or lack of it.
2. Due to the sensitive nature of policing, it was a condition of my fieldwork that names and locations be anonymized/pseudonymized. In order to ensure the confidentiality of interviewees and other informants, police officers are referred to by rank, and sometimes role, gender, and/or ethno-regional origin where I have considered those additional details pertinent. Transcriptions from fieldnotes are inset in smaller font, and explanatory or editorial commentary within, that is, in square brackets.
3. N304,737,303,692 = US\$1,847,600,000 as of December 13, 2011. The figure is from the 2011 FGN Budget (proposal), Budget Office of the Federation Federal Ministry of Finance, [www.budgetoffice.gov.ng](http://www.budgetoffice.gov.ng)
4. The baronial attributes of powerful high offices that are both to do with the provision of security, and are politically significant, should prompt us to recall the medieval-feudal derivation of Joseph’s original theory.
5. I have used “indigene” and “nonindigene” for their currency as political labels rather than as analytical terms, while reserving my own judgment on the relative credibility of those positions. Readers should also note that—as we will explore below—recruitment into the police itself bureaucratically

rests on fulfillment of some of those criteria of “indigeneship” whose contestation the Jos conflict is itself *about*.

6. That is, however, a crude measure, as it assumes that retirement takes place at a steady rate, whereas in reality historical variations in recruitment trends have led to distinct demographics within the police.
7. State Commands may—and indeed until recently, had to—develop their own methods of evaluation, until the PSC (very recently) developed a standardized guideline. In practice this left the PPRO to work it out for himself.
8. This is standard procedure—in Nigeria many job applications, university admissions, and bureaucratic exercises such as obtaining a passport involve collecting or buying forms and/or scratchcards at venues with national network spread, such as bank branches.
9. “Open [the] road”—a Nigerian idiom evocating facilitating access. Note that at the same time as telling me their observations, most of the officers cited above also had their *own* candidates—sometimes family members—who they wished to bring into the police.
10. Two referees must also sign, one police officer of CSP (Chief Superintendent) rank or above, and a magistrate.
11. Broadly, to do with colonial policies of noninterference with an existing madrasa-based education system.
12. This is not, of course, to preclude that others further down the institutional “food chain” might find ways to accommodate their own more personal interests instrumentally in whatever process finally emerged as resolved between the two institutions. However, overall I believe the issue in this case remained firmly one of public policy.
13. An administrative officer supporting a senior officer in State Headquarters, and thus a man in a position that makes him well-informed and potentially influential beyond his rank.
14. That is, on the West Africa Examinations Council (WAEC) website or the websites of other examination institutions.
15. N500,000 = US\$3,031; N200,000 = US\$1,212; N100,000 = US\$606 (all rates as of December 13, 2011).
16. It should be noted that this does not preclude all of these observers’ participant observations being equally true given that their observations were situated in different institutions and at different positions within the system.
17. Or to be precise, the choosing of the state’s future servant-embodiments by their current predecessors.
18. Though this prompts a consideration of *who* defines respectability, the need for candidates to obtain formal references directs us back to consider the political aspect of local public office as cited above.
19. In the same place, Smith pertinently notes that “curiously, in his examples of social groups, Joseph leaves out kin-groups, though it is clear in the full body of his work that he recognizes the importance of kinship ties” and that “this omission of kinship and the emphasis [instead] on ethnicity is characteristic of a considerable body of scholarship on the nature of Nigerian politics generally.”
20. Dr. Kemi Rotimi, personal communication

21. Ambassador Shehu Malami in *Leadership* (newspaper), December 6, 2011, accessed online at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201112070378.html>. Malami was Sarkin Sudan of Wurno in Sokoto, and Nigeria's first High Commissioner to postapartheid South Africa; his career thus also reflects the traditional-to-formal sector "straddling" of postcolonial Nigeria, as well as being an instance of the globally common usage of traditional social capital in formal diplomacy (witness aristocratic human component of the diplomatic service in Germany, for example).
22. In fact, some scholars contend that colonial backing made the intermediaries in indirect rule *more* autocratically powerful than they had been as independent kings—see, for example, Pierce 2006.
23. And it is clear that this was a deliberate, rather than an emergent, practice: "At that time, at the Sultanate, there was that policy that our children should enlist both in the military and police." Malami, <http://inwent-ij-lab.org/Weblog/2010/10/26/day-i-got-a-query-for-posing-abacha%E2%80%99s-self-succession-bid-amb-shehu-malami/> (Accessed December 13, 2011).
24. Section 14 (3) of the 1999 Constitution states that "the composition of the Government of the Federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few States or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that Government or in any of its agencies."
25. Though the reservation of the term "Jassawa" exclusively for this community has itself latterly become yet another site of contestation in the war of categories that runs parallel to the conflict itself.
26. There is a selection bias here: in the representatives of cattle-rearing groups with whom I spoke were most often the English-speaking and—though not exclusively—the younger ones; thus those who had themselves in some ways "become wise" and occupied those positions of representatives for interaction between their communities and the formal world.
27. Myetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria.

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PART II

PREBENDALISM AND  
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# HAUSA TRADITIONAL POLITICAL CULTURE, ISLAM, AND DEMOCRACY: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THREE POLITICAL TRADITIONS

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## BACKGROUND

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the struggle for democracy in Nigeria contends with a resurgence of politically charged ethnic and religious consciousness, and the enduring pull of traditional political institutions and values. More and more mass movements are protesting against real and imagined grievances under the platform of religious, ethnic, or tribal associations. Politicians are appealing more and more to ethnic and religious sentiments in their electoral campaigns and in bargaining for power, position, and individual material interests. Western-educated elites are terminating their careers in the modern professions in order to become traditional rulers; an even larger number of elites are spending enormous amounts of money to acquire traditional chieftaincy titles in their communities. Apart from many protracted court cases over appointment to traditional chieftaincies, some communities have violently reacted against the imposition of unwanted chiefs, or to demand for the creation of new chiefdoms. These developments indicate the continued salience of traditional political institutions and values in what Richard Joseph terms “prebendal politics” in Nigeria.

Although *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria* is not, in the first instance, a historical study, Richard Joseph appreciates the relevance of history for understanding contemporary politics. On the first page of the book, he states: “One basic contention of this study is that fruitful discussions about Nigeria’s present and future depend upon a prior understanding

of the nature, extent and persistence of a certain mode of political behavior, and of its social and economic ramifications.” But he also appreciates the difficulty of ascertaining the relevant historical point of reference when he remarks that tracing the historical origins of prebendal politics depends upon “how far back one is prepared to go in history” (8). Not being a historian, he preferred brief historical excursions, and only when necessary for clarifying his key concepts, or strengthening his contentions.

For example, he clarifies his usage of “prebendal” by reference to “prebend” as “an office of state, typical of feudal Europe and China” (55–56), as well as “Indian *jagirdars* [and] Egyptian Mamelukes” (65). He also briefly invokes history to link his conception of prebendalism with “clientelism/patrimonialism,” which he contends “can be seen in the survival of traditional systems of chieftaincy in many parts of Nigeria, or their adoption where they did not formerly exist” (65–66). Similarly, while he could not fully explore the roots of what he terms “principle of northern primacy in Nigerian politics” (129–150), he had to acknowledge the relevance of “the early nineteenth-century Islamic revolution and the establishment of Fulani hegemony over a vast area under the Sokoto Caliphate” (130). Similarly, he observes that “it is impossible to study the lines of political division among the Yoruba from 1950 to 1983 without becoming increasingly conscious of the working out of the dynamics set in motion by the collapse of the Oyo Empire in approximately 1830” (110).

This chapter builds upon Richard Joseph’s brief historical excursions by exploring the historical evolution of Hausa traditional political culture (*sarauta*), Islam (*emirates*), and Democracy. The chapter argues that the reciprocal influences among the three political traditions provide not only linkages but also leakages that erode the internal checks and balances of each tradition, thereby providing political actors with greater freedom of action. The chapter demonstrates that elements from anyone of the three political traditions could be invoked to support political choices and actions without necessarily adhering to the checks and balances within each tradition.

Beginning with the historical roots of both Hausa *sarauta* and Islamic *emirates*, the chapter explores the complex historical relationships between the two, followed by examination of their transformation under British colonial rule, and analysis of their interactions within democratic politics in Nigeria. The conclusion is a reflection on how historical perspectives can enrich the continuing significance of Richard Joseph’s landmark study of contemporary politics in Nigeria.

### SARAUTA POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND VALUES IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

According to Hausa oral traditions, the political system of *sarauta* began in the ancient city-state of Daura (in the present day Katsina



State) sometime around AD 1000. Subsequently, *sarauta* system spread to other Hausa city states: Kano, Katsina, Zaria, Gobir, Kebbi, and Rano—the so-called Hausa Bakwai, that is, seven Hausa states. *Sarauta* system spread also to seven neighboring polities called “Banza Bakwai,” that is, the seven nonauthentic Hausa states. As a mode of political organization, *sarauta* developed institutions and values that are common to all the Hausa states, as well as local features unique to individual states. Historians believe that by the fifteenth century, the fundamental *sarauta* political institutions had taken shape (Barkindo 1985; Last 1985; A. Smith 1987; Usman 1981). Significantly, it is also in the fifteenth century that Islam began to replace Hausa indigenous religions as a salient political factor in *sarauta*, leading eventually to the identification of *sarauta* as *emirates* in the aftermath of the nineteenth-century jihad of Usman dan Fodio.

At the top of *sarauta* political institutions stands the office of *sarki*. As a sovereign, *sarki* plays political, military, judicial, and religious roles, but the extent of a particular *sarki*'s power in each of these domains depends on a variety of factors, including individual personality and character, political influence of aristocratic titleholders and governing/advisory council, domestic and external allies and opponents, general social, economic, and political conditions. While the office of *sarki* is hereditary, it is still open to contest by eligible heirs to the throne; hence the “electoral college” acquires crucial importance as a *sarauta* political institution. The eligible heirs are the male descendants of founding dynasts—with the pre-Bayajida Queens of Daura and Queen Amina of Zazzau as notable exceptions. There is no limited tenure, and once in office, a *sarki* will ordinarily rule for life except when removed through usurpation or rebellion. As a sovereign, a *sarki* is regarded as the owner of everything in his realm—people, land, and resources—hence a high degree of personalization of political office and proprietary management of resources are features of *sarauta*, which can easily translate into prebendal politics.

Other political values that define a good *sarki* include courage and boldness especially in war, charisma, fairness, justice, and generosity. Firmness, stubbornness, and even ruthlessness and being unpredictable in dealing with political opponents are also respected in a *sarki*. Tenacity and longevity in office are equally admired in various Hausa accounts of reigns of *sarakuna* (plural of *sarki*). As will become clear later, additional Islamic values came to also guide the office of *sarki*. Although *sarauta* has been significantly altered in the twentieth century, *sarki* is still a key model of political leadership among Hausa people even though both the office of *sarki* and most of the values undergirding it are not compatible with democracy. Consequently, *sarauta* does influence in the prebendal politics that Richard Joseph has described so succinctly.

Although the office of *sarki* is hereditary, an electoral college has to choose one among several contenders, except in cases of usurpation by powerful individuals. Campaign takes various forms, including formation of alliances, jockeying in senior aristocratic positions, and enlisting the support of kingmakers through friendship, marriage, and material inducements. The “electoral college” is better understood as part of *sarauta* system of succession. The keen competition for office is one democratic element of *sarauta* that in more recent years has allowed more and more people to seek *sarauta* even if they are only remotely eligible. Other important institutions of *sarauta* include (1) Governing/advisory council composed of senior aristocrats, who usually hold titles such as *wazir*, *galadima*, *madawaki/madaki*, *jarmai*, and so on; (2) junior aristocrats often affiliated to senior aristocrats in patron-client relationships; and (3) low-level palace personnel such as court jesters, royal musicians, messengers, enforcement agents, and courtiers, heads of occupational groups, including Muslim clerics and specialists of Hausa traditional religions. No particular schedules guide the operation of these institutions, and their relative importance varies considerably in the various Hausa states and from time to time, depending on the balance of forces between the *sarki* and members of the council.

Despite these variations, the historical evidence clearly indicates a remarkable capacity to endure, enabling several *sarauta* political institutions to survive the advent of Islam in the fifteenth century, the revolution of the nineteenth-century jihad of Usman dan Fodio and British colonialism in the first half of the twentieth century, and even the local government reforms of the 1970s. The specific ways *sarauta* political institutions operate in the modern republic of Nigeria is the focus of the second half of this chapter. But before that, let us briefly identify the political values that have historically guided the operation of *sarauta* political institutions.

Different sets of *sarauta* political values guide the entire system. One set of values revolves around deference by commoners (*talakawa*) to aristocratic hierarchy (*masu sarauta*). Another set legitimates rebellion as a mode of political protest, while patron-client relationship legitimates personalization of political office and proprietary management of economic resources that could fit in readily with prebendal politics. Frequent wars made warrior virtues another important set of *sarauta* political values, and firmness in dealing with political opposition. These political values are recognizable part of *sarauta* even before the advent of Islam (Smith 1960, 1978, 1990; Hogben and Kirk-Greene 1993). But from around 1450 onward, *sarauta* political values began to be overlaid with similar Islamic political values. Therefore, understanding the historical

development of Islam is necessary for comprehending *sarauta* political values (Hiskett 1984; Hunwick 1985; Usman 1981).

### ISLAM AND SARAUTA POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND VALUES

Starting from c. 1450, virtually all the rulers of Hausa states as well as increasing numbers of the populace began converting to Islam. In addition, Islamic administrative, judicial, and educational institutions took root in Hausaland during the same period. A notable development was the rise of Islamic clerics (ulama) as an important group that could Islamically criticize *sarauta* institutions and values. In the history of Islamic societies globally, the ulama have usually exhibited two opposing political orientations: some belong to the ruling elite by serving as judges, ministers, councilors, scribes, and, of course, as religious functionaries and spiritual advisers to rulers; but others preferred to keep distance from the political arena by dedicating themselves to scholarship, teaching, and ministering to the religious needs of ordinary Muslims (Black 2001; Lambton 1981; Madelung 1980; Marlow 1995). Historians of Islam in West Africa identify “Suwarian tradition” with quietism and distance from rulers, and “Maghilian tradition” with activism in politics (Batrān 1973; Hiskett 1962; Hunwick 1985; Levtzion 1978; Sanneh 1976; Wilks 2000, 1968).

As in the rest of Islamic societies in West Africa, the ulama of Hausaland exhibited both quietism and activism. In fact, Shaykh Abd al-Karim al-Maghili, after whom the Islamic activist tradition in West Africa is named, visited Kano and wrote *Taj al-Mulk* (The Obligations of Princes) to guide *Sarkin* Kano Muhammad Rumfa (r. 1463–1499) in the proper ways of Islamic governance (Bivar and Hiskett 1962; Gwarzo 1972; Hunwick 1986). This manual for Islamic government is nowadays regarded as the first Islamic constitution of Kano. Al-Maghili also visited Katsina where he served as a judge of Islamic law. Similarly, *Kano Chronicle* credits the “Wangarawa” with introducing Islam into Kano in the middle of 1300s, and these Wangarawa have been identified as followers of al-Hajj Salim Suware, after whom the Islamic quietist tradition in West Africa is named (Al-Hajj 1968; Wilks 2000; Sanneh 1976). Clearly, Islamic activism and quietism have had a long historical presence in Hausaland, in the course of which both have become mixed with similar *sarauta* political values.

The historical interactions between Islamic activism and quietism revolved around different strategies for Islamizing *sarauta* system. The quietists regarded as Islamic any realm whose ruler is a Muslim, even if only nominally so. Quietists were willing to work within the *sarauta*

system, incrementally Islamizing its institutions and values, hence it was very easy for Hausa rulers to adopt Islamic quietism as the official religion since it makes minimal demands on the system. Islamic quietism worked nicely with the *sarauta* political value of deference by commoners (*talakawa*) to aristocratic hierarchy (*masu sarauta*). But Islamic activists demanded more thoroughgoing Islamization of *sarauta* institutions and values, and would not hesitate to deny Islamic legitimacy to any ruler they saw as being a nominal Muslim only. Thus it was easy for Islamic activism to become a platform of protest against *sarauta* institutions and values. When conflated with rebellion as a *sarauta* mode of political opposition, Islam provided the ideological platform for the jihad of Usman dan Fodio. These examples of articulation of political values from different systems are very important points to note because similar articulations recurred later with democracy.

Equally important is the disarticulation of political values from the different political systems of *sarauta*, Islam, and democracy. Thus with the ulama popularizing Islamic governance, tensions with *sarauta* were inevitable. In Islamic political thought, sovereignty and authority belong to Allah alone, which He may grant to an individual ruler to exercise in compliance with His law, the Shari'a. Thus, Islam limits political power by requiring its exercise in accordance with Shari'a rule of law. This limit gives the ulama, as experts of the Shari'a law, considerable political clout to challenge the authority of a ruler by arguing that he loses his legitimacy if he fails to uphold the law of God. Through their writings on political issues, the ulama provided the ideological support for or against specific political policies and programs. It is important to note that these Islamic political ideas are not totally alien to the political philosophy of Hausa traditional religions since both give divine legitimacy to political authority; similarly, both empower the religious specialists with divine authority to challenge rulers. But a significant difference is that Hausa traditional religious specialists did not capture power in the name of implementing God's law. On the other hand, the ulama had, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, gathered sufficient political clout to lead the nineteenth-century jihad that significantly changed the political landscape in Hausaland.

### SOKOTO CALIPHATE AND TRANSFORMATION OF SARAUTA INTO EMIRATES CIRCA 1804–1903

The leaders of the Sokoto jihad envisaged far-reaching changes in *sarauta* political institutions and values, as well as the social and religious practices of the various states of Hausaland. In his *Kitab al-Farq*, written at the outset of the jihad in 1804, Shaykh Usman dan Fodio contrasted critically the *sarauta* status quo with his vision of the new Islamic

political dispensation. Specifically, he objected to hereditary succession, lack of consultation in government, forms of taxation not sanctioned by the Shari'a, political repression and corruption, *sarauta* political titles and governmental offices, and the neglect of religious precepts pertaining to status of women and slaves, sanctity of private property, criminal justice, dress, and diet. In contrast to *sarauta*, Shaykh dan Fodio argued that "the purpose of the Muslims in their governments is to strip evil things from religious and temporal affairs." He stated that the foundations of Islamic government are five: "the first is that authority shall not be given to one who seeks it. The second is the necessity for consultation. The third is the abandoning of harshness. The fourth is justice. The fifth is good works." This first foundation is informed by Islamic notions of modesty and skepticism against self-serving individuals who may seek public office for private gains. Hence it is not necessarily opposed to democratic norm of candidates contesting elections. The other four foundations of Islamic governance are clearly consistent with modern democratic norms.

For the structure of Islamic government, Shaykh dan Fodio suggested four offices in addition to the overall ruler. First, there is the office of a trustworthy vizier who should be "steadfast in compassion to the people, and merciful towards them." The second office is that of "a judge whom the blame of a blamer cannot overtake concerning the affairs of God." Third office is that of chief of police "who shall obtain justice for the weak from the strong." Finally, there should be a tax collector "who shall discharge his duties and not oppress the subjects." Shaykh dan Fodio appealed in God's name to "every scholar and righteous man, nay, every Muslim in these countries to assist me in building up the characteristics of the Muslims in their governments, and putting down the characteristics of the unbelievers in their governments" (Hiskett 1960, 570–571). Thus Shaykh dan Fodio seemed to be arguing for limited government with clearly defined responsibilities—an idea compatible with modern democracy.

Now, despite this clear vision of Islamic governance, the execution of the jihad did not produce the exact result envisaged. In point of fact, there was acute awareness that things did not go according to plan, as evidenced in some of the jihad literature, especially in Shaykh dan Fodio's two poems, "Tabbat hakika" and "Wallahi, wallahi" (Hiskett 1973, 105 ff.). Similarly, Shaykh Abdallahi dan Fodio (a younger brother and lieutenant of Shaykh Usman dan Fodio, and famous for his insistence on the rule of Islamic law) was so disappointed with the failure to realize the declared ideals of the jihad that he left Sokoto intending to migrate to Mecca but was prevailed upon in Kano to abandon his migration. While still in Kano, Abdallah composed his *qasidah ba'iyah*, which is a critical reflection in verse on the immediate outcome of the jihad (Hiskett 1963, 120–124). But this failure to realize

declared ideals does not mean that the jihad did not change anything at all. Changes resulting from the jihad included the political unification of the hitherto autonomous Hausa states under the central authority of the jihad leaders in Sokoto, and the enthronement of Islamic ideas in *sarauta* political institutions, renamed as emirates after the Sokoto jihad (Abubakar 1980; Balogun 1970; Kani and Gandi 1990; Usman and Alkali 1979). But the extent of change is difficult to determine because some changes seem more apparent than real, thus illustrating the longevity of *sarauta* and the complexities of interactions between the two different political systems of *sarauta* and Islam, made more complicated with the advent of democracy.

The continuities and changes were vividly recorded by Henry Barth in the course of his travels in the Sokoto caliphate c. 1851–1852. He documented the continuing existence of the *sarauta* political practices condemned by Shaykh Usman dan Fodio, most notably the continuing imposition of numerous un-Islamic taxes and the traditional offices and titles. Nevertheless, Barth observed significant changes that included the political unification of the various Hausa states under the authority of the Sultan of Sokoto, which operated virtually as a federation by recognizing local traditions in the midst of the broader Islamic dispensation. Perhaps more significantly, Barth also noted the extension of the *sarauta* system over non-Hausa communities that were conquered and incorporated into the Sokoto Caliphate, with the ambiguous consequences of fostering political homogeneity out of ethnic and cultural heterogeneities, but also generating grievances especially from the areas that Adeleye (1971) termed as “undigested conquests” within the Sokoto caliphate.

On the important issue of *sarauta* conformity with Islamic governance, Barth gives us no clear idea. Barth portrayed the campaigns of the reigning Sultan Aliyu dan Bello (1842–1859) and his district governors as mere slave raiding, pure conquest of territories, or ineffectual attempts to suppress the continued resistance by the guards of the old regime (Barth 1890, 1:260, 416, 2:160, 177).

The issue of Islamization in the Sokoto caliphate has been contentious. Hiskett (1973) observes that Shaykh dan Fodio’s attempt to impose Islamic ideals on *sarauta* can be easily criticized for falling short of the declared ideal. Hiskett observes that the “more useful approach is to measure the changes that did occur; and consider to what extent these approximate to the deliberately sought goals of the reformers,” and contends that Shaykh Usman dan Fodio did succeed in replacing *sarauta* with “a central imamate of an established Islamic form.” Clearly, centuries of interactions between *sarauta* and Islam have created organic links that are not so easy to separate, thus the more changes seem apparent the more continuities lay deeply underneath.

## TRANSFORMATION OF SARAUTA-EMIRATE UNDER BRITISH COLONIAL RULE CIRCA 1903–1945

British presence in Hausaland began with Captain Hugh Clapperton's visits to Sokoto where he met with Sultan Muhammad Bello in 1822 and 1825, followed by the Lander Brothers in 1830, and Henry Barth in 1852 (Umar 2002). But real British influence began only after Baikie (1867) established a British embassy in Lokoja in 1860, and steadily grew after the Royal Niger Company (RNC) was chartered in 1882. The RNC asserted British hegemony in the southern emirates of the Sokoto caliphate; its Constabulary's annexation of Ilorin and Bida emirates in 1897 launched the British conquest of northern Nigeria that was completed by the West African Frontier Force (WAFF). Under the command of Colonel Frederick Lugard, who proclaimed formally the British Protectorate of northern Nigeria on January 1, 1900, WAFF conquered the emirates one by one, culminating in the fall of Sokoto in 1903 (Tukur 1977; ; Fika 1978; Adeleye 1971; Heussler 1968). Except for Satiru and Hadejia uprisings in 1906, the British did not encounter serious armed resistance through the end of colonial rule in 1960 (Hiskett 1975; Mohammed 1983; Umar 2006).

One reason for the seemingly smooth running of colonial rule in northern Nigeria was the British appropriation of the ancient *sarauta*-emirate political institutions to form the basis of British indirect rule. Between the imposition of colonialism in 1903 and the beginning of decolonization in 1945, the British transformed the *sarauta*-emirate system in various ways. Beginning with territorial reorganization that got rid of absentee district heads in the 1900s, subsequent development of territorial administration turned *sarauta*-emirates into colonial machinery of local government administration, while the introduction of technical departments (agriculture, health, works, etc.) made *sarauta*-emirate institutions part of British colonial bureaucracy. Similarly, the British changed many *sarauta*-emirate political values by replacing aristocratic patrimonial administration with a modern bureaucracy. Loyalty to the British took precedence over all the *sarauta*-emirate political values, including Islamic values. But the British found much to admire in *sarauta* political institutions and values, preserving, strengthening, and modernizing them; occasionally, the British invented *sarauta* institutions and values. An important aspect of the colonial transformation of *sarauta*-emirate was its extension over ethnic minorities who had resisted Sokoto imposition of the system in the nineteenth century.

Not all of the colonial transformations of *sarauta*-emirates can be fully discussed here, especially because they are covered in the existing literature. Examples include Paden's (1973) study of Islamic influences on the emirate political culture in Kano, and M. G. Smith's (1960, 1978,

1987) studies on the *sarauta*-emirates and their colonial transformations in Zaria, Daura, and Kano. Also relevant are the studies on the colonial impact on the emirates of Katsina (Hull 1968), Kano (Fika 1978; Uba 1985; Naniya 1990), and Sokoto (Stouffer 1970; Tibenderana 1974). Therefore, only some of the key colonial changes can be highlighted here to emphasize on their consequences on the interface among *sarauta*-emirates, Islam, and democracy in Nigeria.

The British appropriated *sarauta*-emirates to form the basis of indirect rule, the system of colonial administration through African institutions and personnel. Initially born out of expediency, indirect rule quickly became entrenched, principally because its original underlying reason, namely paucity of British personnel, remained relevant throughout the colonial period, but also because *sarauta*-emirates offered several advantages. Their deep historical and cultural roots conferred a ready legitimacy that a colonial imposition could not easily command. Perhaps more importantly, *sarauta*-emirate system was much cheaper than transplanting all the paraphernalia of British bureaucratic administration. In its first few years, the economic viability of colonial northern Nigeria was, at best, uncertain, and had to be subsidized by the imperial treasury despite the policy that each colony had to be self-supporting. The incorporation of *sarauta*-emirates into colonial administrative infrastructure profoundly changed their political institutions and values.

To begin with, the Native Authorities Proclamation of 1907 legalized the emirates to function under the colonial territorial administration. *Sarauta*-emirate system of succession was among the first to change. While retaining as much of the precolonial aspects as possible, the British instituted absolute loyalty to the colonial administration as the supreme prerequisite for ascending to and remaining on the throne. Any emir lacking in this regard was simply deposed, but deficiencies in the traditional requirements could be overlooked, particularly if compensated by adequate loyalty to the British. Similarly, loyal emirs who failed to abide by the new colonial administrative ethos of bureaucratic efficiency could be tolerated in the hope that they will catch up in due course. To retain the semblance of continuity and hence legitimacy, the British collected and compiled genealogies of all the ruling families, thereby making the pool of eligible candidates readily available. They did not, however, feel always obligated to abide by the precolonial order of succession, or even by the clear choice of the kingmakers. Consequently, emirs appointed by British used their position to get rid of the traditional checks on their authority. Thus one clear consequence of the colonial changes in *sarauta*-emirate system of succession was the strengthening of authoritarian potential of the office of *sarki*/emir, who became the “sole native authority”—another clear example of the articulation of norms from



different political systems. This authoritarianism has been largely neutralized by the local government reforms of 1976. But the intervention in succession introduced by the British remains a major source of conflict, resulting in long legal battles and even riots. Similarly, the British demand for emirs' absolute loyalty continues in independent Nigeria with state governors demanding similar loyalty from emirs.

Territorial administration was the second *sarauta*-emirate political institution that attracted early British intervention. In the precolonial era, absentee district heads used to administer their fiefdoms through their agents (*jakadu*), and the fiefdoms were not always constituted in contiguous areas. Finding both features unacceptable, the British redrew districts into homologous units and insisted that district heads must reside in their districts. Closely related to the territorial reorganization was the introduction of new provinces, divisions, and districts as administrative units whose names and numbers varied from time to time. The Protectorate of northern Nigeria began with only 5 provinces in 1900, which rose to 17 in 1905, then fell to 11 in 1910, up to 13 in 1920, and back to 11 in 1930. Headed by a Resident as the chief political officer directly responsible to the Lieutenant Governor of northern Nigeria, a province consists of divisions and districts, each headed by a district officer and assistant district officer respectively. Residents and their subordinates are all British, and they carry out routine administration of their jurisdictions and represent the colonial government in its dealings with natives. They also administer justice according to British laws in provincial courts, and hold the power of judicial review over judgments of native courts, including Shari'a courts. This administrative hierarchy constitutes the modern system of public administration that the colonial regime imposed over the territorial organization of the emirates. Thus, for example, in 1920, Kano Province comprises 4 divisions and 90 districts, which overlaps with 9 emirates.

In the classical theory of indirect rule, a Resident was supposed to be an adviser to emirs within his province. In reality, the Resident wielded veto power over any decision in his entire province, including, as noted earlier, the power of judicial review by which a Resident could set aside the judgment of an emir's court, particularly in cases involving the death penalty. In the precolonial system, imposition of the death penalty was a sovereign prerogative of an emir. Therefore, curtailing this prerogative by colonial authorities is a clear indicator that Resident, not the emir, was the superior political officer. This provincial system of administration, which continued until the creation of 12 states in 1967, made *sarauta*-emirates subordinate units in territorial administration.

A notable consequence has been the recurrent tensions and violence in communities belonging to new jurisdictions, losing their ancestral lands,

or becoming a minority by being incorporated into a new district or division. A pointer to the persistence of this problem is the continuing creations of new chiefdoms even in contemporary times. The syndrome of indigene/settler that has devastated Plateau State can be traced, in important respects, to the colonial redistricting and reshuffling of the boundaries of precolonial chiefdoms. The same syndrome is simmering just below the surface in virtually all the states in the north-central and the northeast geopolitical zones.

Beginning with Treasury Departments established at the onset of the colonial rule to control revenue, most of the major emirates came to have their own technical departments for public works, agriculture, health, education, forestry, and so on. Apart from modernizing their administrative apparatus, the technical departments help to prepare *sarauta*-emirates for functioning later as the modern machinery of local government administration. But a very interesting development was the incorporation of technical departments into the *sarauta*-emirate administrative scheme by appointing aristocratic titleholders as heads of technical departments, often as a compensation for loss of fiefdoms. The creation of homologous district and elimination of absentee district heads under the territorial reorganization of *sarauta*-emirates had left the aristocrats without the fiefdoms that gave substance and significance to their aristocratic titles. However, their appointment to head technical departments created new opportunities to control resources and services, hence restoring some of the influence lost in the earlier reforms. This development had the unintended consequence of virtually converting the technical departments into traditional fiefdoms where patron-client relationship replaces the impersonal bureaucratic ethos that should guide operations of the technical departments. Herein lays the root of the prebendal politics that Richard Joseph describes so insightfully.

The British appropriated Islamic law and the Shari'a courts to form the basis of the colonial administration of justice. Three legal systems prevailed in colonial northern Nigeria, one based on English common law, another based on native law and custom, and the third one is Islamic law in Muslim areas of northern Nigeria. Of course, the British modified aspects of Islamic law they found unacceptable, notably Shari'a penalties and rules of evidence and procedure (Anderson 1954; Yadudu 1991; Naniya 2002; Umar 2006). Except for these modifications, Islamic law was left substantially intact up to the period of self-rule in northern Nigeria in the 1950s when new legal reforms incorporating Islamic law and common law were introduced (Ostien 2007). Having survived colonialism, Islamic law remains a major issue of contention in the politics of independent Nigeria particularly under democratic regimes. One of the least appreciated aspects of the continuing support for Shari'a among

the Muslims of northern Nigeria is the aspiration for rule of law that can hold political authority accountable, thereby reducing or eliminating altogether the abuses of patrimonial traditions of *sarauta* that can easily translate into prebendal politics.

The changes and continuities in *sarauta*-emirate political institutions and values discussed above were introduced in northern Nigeria from 1903 to the beginning of decolonization in 1945. Their full impact and long-term consequences began to manifest themselves more clearly during *zamanin siyasa*, the era of electoral democratic politics c. 1945–1966. Beginning with the adoption of the Richards Constitution in 1946, these years witnessed the introduction of electoral politics and formation of political parties in the 1950s, Nigeria's independence in 1960, Nigeria's first republic and civil war c. 1960–1970, and creation of 12 states that ended northern Nigeria as a single regional political entity in 1967. Having survived Islamic revolution of the nineteenth century and colonial rule in the first half of the twentieth century, *sarauta*-emirate system now for the first time faced the challenge of electoral democracy in *zamanin siyasa*, the turbulent era of party politics.

### SARAUTA-EMIRATES AND DEMOCRATIC POLITICS IN NIGERIA

The introduction of electoral politics, parliamentary system, political parties, and attainment of independence posed formidable challenges that called into question the relevance, and hence the continued existence, of *sarauta*-emirate political institutions and values. Their continued existence in contemporary Nigeria attests to their remarkable capacity for both change and continuity. But before exploring how *sarauta*-emirates coped with their first encounter with democratic politics, it is crucial to remember that the democracy Nigeria inherited from the British is vastly different from the contemporary conceptions of democracy.

Fortunately, the extensive literature on politics during the *zamanin siyasa* means that there is no need to reinvent the wheel here. For example, Yakubu (1996) shows that the politics of *zamanin siyasa* threw the *sarauta*-emirate into a serious political crisis that tasked their ability to adapt to the challenges of democratic politics. The relevant point to note here is that having survived their first encounter with democracy, *sarauta*-emirates seem to have inoculated themselves against future exposure, and are, therefore, likely to remain as functional political institutions that should be deliberately co-opted to support Nigeria's continuing search for viable democracy.

Similarly, Reynolds (1999) has revisited the roles of Islam in the transformations of the *sarauta*-emirates during the first era of democratic politics in northern Nigeria. While complementing Paden's earlier

study, Jonathan reiterates the different political utilization of Islam by Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) as a conservative ruling party, and the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) as a radical opposition party. This modern manifestation of ancient traditions of Islamic quietism and activism points to the possible lines of aligning Islamic political support for democracy in modern Nigeria; but the potentials and limitations can be seen in Loimeier's (1997) examination of the Islamic factor in Nigerian politics that critically engages the key issues from the older literature, as well as covering more recent developments under military regimes.

The magisterial work of C. S. Whitaker (1970) is by far the most insightful examination of the impact of *sarauta*-emirate political institutions, processes, and values on the democratic politics of *zamanin siyasa*. Whitaker develops the concept of "institutional convergence" to explain how elements from both *sarauta*-emirate and democratic institutions "coalesced to form a workable system of power and authority, one neither purely traditional nor purely modern, yet... conspicuous for its relative lack of strain and friction" (460). Whitaker demonstrates "the great extent to which traditional values and responses permeated the modern representative institutions of Northern Nigeria" (449). His examination of electoral campaigns reveals remarkable similarity with the traditional system of seeking *sarauta* (*neman sarauta*). He also analyzed the composition of northern Nigerian political class to show that *sarauta*-emirate aristocrats were also the ones elected to run the democratic institutions (313–353). This development led Whitaker to observe: "the office of Northern Premiership was in the process of becoming a kind of grand emirship, which is the way many people not unreasonably regarded it already in 1959. By 1963 the *Sardauna* was widely and with a deliberate irony being referred to as *Sarkin Arewa*—Emir of the North" (351). This is a particularly revealing example of the wider trend of many northern Nigerian politicians and citizens making no significant difference between the traditional political arena of the *sarauta*-emirate and the modern democratic arena of the defunct northern region of Nigeria. A notable conclusion by Whitaker states: "behavioral transference from the traditional institution to the modern one was not totally detrimental to democratic development" (452).

However, this finding does not mean there was no conflict between *sarauta*-emirate and democracy. For example, Yahaya (1980) demonstrates that Zaria Native Authority mobilized *sarauta* political institutions and values to stifle democracy by subverting popular programs of the radical NEPU politicians. Zaria Native Authority also proved unresponsive to popular demand for reforming district administration in the non-Muslim communities of southern Zaria. Similarly, the poetical

exchanges between Sa'adu Zungur and Mudi Spikin on the crucial choice between monarchy and republic (Yakubu 1996 and 1999; Furniss 1995, 1996) are strong indicators of the real political conflicts in the competing visions of the respective roles for *sarauta*, Islam, and democracy in Nigeria as a modern republic. The real and potential conflicts between *sarauta*-emirate and democracy cannot be denied.

One key area of conflict is the handling of political opposition. Viable political opposition is indispensable in a democracy. It is expected that political opponents will be allowed not only to criticize policies and programs of those in power, but also to openly seek to gain power through free and fair elections. In addition, those holding power are allowed to seek openly to retain power through the same process. And while holders of power can take advantage of incumbency to ensure their reelection, they must do so within clearly defined constitutional framework and electoral rules and regulations. Whitaker demonstrates that the acceptable ways of *neman sarauta* (seeking *sarauta* office) are in many respects the same as those of democratic electoral campaigns: criticism of the incumbents, forming alliances with supporters, and persuading kingmakers of one's own merits and competence, promises of material rewards, and so on. Yet, there are significant differences between democratic norms of political contests and the acceptable means of *neman sarauta*. The *sarauta* political value of deference to hierarchy restricts open criticism of incumbents, while *sarauta* political values of longevity in office and holding power firmly allow a wider spectrum of action for incumbents to deal with political opponents. Generosity and patrimonialism are great assets for *neman sarauta*, but they are liabilities if seen in democratic politics as favoritism and nepotism. Political songs and poems composed for the ruling NPC and the opposition NEPU reveal clearly that traditional political norms of deference to hierarchy, longevity in office, and holding power firmly had very negative influence in NPC's handling of NEPU's political opposition by articulating intimidation and suppression of political opposition in the vocabulary of *sarauta* political values. Similarly, NPC poets and singers utilize Islamic discourses to vilify political opponents as amply demonstrated by (Paden 1986; Miles 1988). But political opposition did exist, and *sarauta* political values do not completely reject the legitimacy of political opposition. Furthermore, by appealing to Islamic traditions of activism, NEPU added a very powerful support for the legitimacy of political opposition by demonstrating that laws should provide the framework for legitimate political opposition. Here we see clearly the disarticulation of Islamic political norms from the *sarauta* elements even in the modern era, and after centuries of the fusing of the two political traditions.

Hereditary succession, tenure for life, and aristocratic eligibility for holding office are key *sarauta* political values that create a formidable obstacle to democratic politics. Hausa political poems and songs demonstrate a clear sense of entitlement, particularly the right to hold office for life, wield power firmly, and dispense favor patrimonially. Popularization of these *sarauta* political values was reinforced by the reality of *sarauta* aristocrats dominating the composition of the political class. Often, these poems and songs call upon aristocrats holding public office to behave like the true aristocrats they are (Gusau 2008; Paden 1986). Similarly, Miles (1986) has documented the continued importance of Hausa songs and poems in Nigeria's Second Republic (1979–1983), especially during electoral seasons when poets, musicians, and singers are actively recruited to sing the glories of candidates who adhere to traditional *sarauta* values, and to ridicule the opponents of their patrons for lacking those values.

For example, in his analysis of 20 Hausa songs composed during the *zamanin siyasa* in the 1950s–1960s to praise Ahmadu Bello, who held the aristocratic title of Sardauna of Sokoto, and the premier of northern Nigeria at the same time, Paden (1986, 364–365) observes that Ahmadu Bello was an active candidate to become the Sultan of Sokoto, and was “known to have competitive relations with the incumbent Sultan” in accordance with traditional ways of seeking *sarauta*. Consequently, the songs proclaimed mostly Islamic qualities of leadership appropriate for becoming the Sultan of Sokoto, which were transferred to the larger northern Nigeria regional context of electoral politics, thereby “creating pressure of the Sardauna to live up to these expectations.” One particularly revealing song proclaims:

Ahamadu prepare for the world  
 God made you great  
 Listen to the talk of His Highness  
 Mu'azu's grandson, son of Ibrahim  
 Whatever he says is accepted  
 Ahmadu prepare again for the world  
 It is God that uplifts you  
 Your work is hard to learn  
 Men saw you and become afraid  
 Because in the first place  
 Your character is like that of Alu Babba  
 A lion collided with an elephant  
 We noticed the effect on the lion's body.

Among the important points in this song are: (1) the invocation of God as the grantor of temporal power, hence the futility of political opposition; (2) the emphasis on the aristocratic pedigree of Ahmadu Bello as a descendant of the illustrious Sultans of Sokoto (Mu'azu and Alu Babba);

and (3) the painful difficulty that awaits even formidable political opponents who dare to challenge the God-appointed holders of political power, expressed in the metaphor of the scars observable on the body of the lion that collided with elephant. Despite the invocation of the Islamic political notion of power belonging to God, the thrust of this song is securely anchored in *sarauta* conception of political power, which is clearly more incompatible with democratic norms.

Another equally revealing song addressed to Maj-General Hassan Usman Katsina, who served as the Chief of Staff to General Yakubu Gowon, head of state in the 1970s, challenges Maj-General Katsina in the following words:

While walking on the street of Katsina,  
I heard the Islamic clerics and elders of the Katsina  
Saying that among the children of the Emir of Katsina  
Is the one who will rule Nigeria and then become an Emir  
Hassan: you have ruled Nigeria  
It remains for you to become an Emir.

Here, becoming an emir is presented as a more important achievement than the occupying the second highest political office in the modern republic of Nigeria. In numerous other songs praising the various emirs and ministers of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the singers employ the same tropes to articulate *sarauta* political values, often overlaid with an Islamic veneer, as the goals that emirs and ministers should alike struggle to achieve. These values are: deference by commoners to aristocratic hierarchy, patron-client relationship that legitimatizes personalization of political office and proprietary management of public resources, warrior virtues requiring ruthless suppression of political opposition. Islam is usually invoked to confer divine authorization for these relations of power. Clearly, these *sarauta* political values contradict key democratic values of popular participation and political accountability. In light of the emphasis that Claude Ake (1996) places on the direct popular control of supreme political power as the defining characteristic of democracy, the stark contrast with *sarauta* political values becomes clear. But even if popular representation is emphasized over direct popular control, the democratic value of political accountability runs contrary to the hereditary succession and aristocratic norms and values.

While many Islamic norms are compatible with democracy, there are more subtle Islamic challenges to democracy. Both NPC and NEPU appealed to various aspects of Islamic political heritage. While NPC invoked Islam to justify its conservative political agenda of preserving the legacy of Sokoto Caliphate, NEPU employed Islam to challenge NPC conservatism by emphasizing that the legacy of the Sokoto Caliphate that

NPC wanted to conserve were in fact not Islamic political values, but the hereditary succession and aristocratic entitlements. The different appeals to Islam to justify NPC conservatism and NEPU radicalism in the context of the electoral democracy of the First Republic indicate clearly that Islam can be compatible with democracy. Yet, invocations of Islam in the multireligious society of modern Nigeria create problems for the popular participation of non-Muslims. The NPC resolved the problem by muting their invocation of Islam when campaigning among non-Muslims, but without much success. In fact, NPC's strong identification with the Islamic heritage of Sokoto Caliphate limited its appeal in the Middle Belt where the legacy of Sokoto represented not only a different religious tradition, but also memories of conquest and political subordination. Similarly, NEPU's handling of the problem of both embracing Islamic political tradition of activism while at the same time resisting NPC's application of the Shari'a courts to suppress NEPU members was only expedient, not wholly satisfactory, for as Muslims, NEPU members could not easily reject the validity of Shari'a even as they resisted its politically motivated enforcement. The ambivalence of NPC and NEPU in handling the Islamic factor demonstrates the subtle, and hence difficult to discern, articulation of political values from different systems.

It is arguable that the democratic value of majority rule justifies appeal to Islam since it is the religion of the majority of people in northern Nigeria. Furthermore, it is also the case that only by appealing to Islam that political parties could canvass popular participation of Muslims. But both arguments are valid only partially. Majoritarian democracy must allow the realistic possibility of ousting one majority from power by another majority. If Islam is the only basis of gaining majority votes, it follows that non-Muslims could only replace Muslim majority by converting to Islam. Democracy also requires that political opposition should have the right to criticize policies and programs, and even the legitimacy of those in power. The real difficulty of utilizing Islam as the basis of political legitimacy in the multireligious society of Nigeria posed formidable challenges to democracy in the First Republic, and still does so in the present dispensation.

The 1976 Local Government Reform effectively removed *sarauta-emirates* from the formal structures of power by subordinating them to the authority of local government, and replacing traditional aristocrats with modern bureaucrats, who should theoretically function according to rational legal authority rather than traditional patrimonial authority. The bureaucrats who took over as appointed chairmen and secretaries were not accountable to popular control through democratic elections. Instead, they were responsible to the military regime that appointed them. The tendency of bureaucratic elites to resist popular



accountability inhibited development of democracy. When that tendency is conjoined with the patrimonialism of the *sarauta*, then the inhibitive force becomes doubled, and when military rule is added, the inhibiting force is tripled. Thus although the 1976 local government reforms removed *sarauta* institutions from formal apparatus of power, the continuing force of *sarauta* political values combined with the undemocratic elements of bureaucratic power to further stifle the growth of democratic political culture.

Clearly, traditional political institutions are no longer the most formidable obstacle to democracy in Nigeria, for the local government reform has effectively removed them from the formal structures of power. Their political influence has to compete against others that may have the added advantage of formal recognition as political actors. A. Y. Aliyu and P. H. Koehn (1982) remark that “state government agencies have retained virtually unfettered authority under the 1976 reform to challenge local budget allocation proposals and to insist upon revisions in local government estimates” (63). This observation points to a proprietary attitude toward management of public funds that is very much akin to the patrimonialism of *sarauta*. Clearly, serious structural, institutional, and attitudinal constraints combined with military regimes and bureaucratic practices to stifle the democratic objectives of the 1976 local government reforms.

## CONCLUSION

Clearly, the insights into prebendal politics that Richard Joseph offered can be enriched by taking due account of the continuing impact of deeply entrenched traditions of *sarauta* and emirate political institutions and values that have evolved over several centuries. Since he is not a historian, Richard Joseph is justified in making only brief historical excursions and allusions when necessary for explaining his key concepts or providing contexts for his contentions. In contrast, this chapter’s relatively more detailed historical tracing demonstrates that multiple trends and divergent tendencies are the critical components of the historical evolution of Hausa *sarauta* and its interactions with Islam and democracy. The pertinent conclusion here is that several outcomes are bound to emerge when different political systems come into contact. Similar elements from the different systems can merge together to function well, such as when Islamic activism combined with *sarauta* acceptance of political rebellion as a legitimate mode of political opposition to provide the ideological support for Shaykh Usman dan Fodio’s jihad. The same dynamic explains how the Islamic conception of rule of Shari’a law translated easily into the mass support for reintroducing Islamic criminal law within current

democratic framework. The seamless convergence of the authoritarian tendencies of both *sarauta* and colonialism yielded the phenomenon of “sole native authority” that was free from the constraints of both colonialism and *sarauta*, thereby enabling political astute emirs to get rid of the traditional and the colonial checks and balances on their authority. This pattern, by no means unique only to northern Nigerian, creates serious predicament that leads Richard Joseph to observe that while prebendalism is “wasteful, unproductive, and contributes to the increasing affluence of a relative few, paltry gains for a larger number and misery for the great majority,” and yet at the same time “democratic politics and prebendal politics are two sides of the same coin in Nigeria” (10). A plausible explanation of the persistence of prebendalism in Nigeria despite its undeniably catastrophic consequences is the simultaneous invocations of traditional patrimonialism and democratic representation by elites who have discovered that they can purchase fealty from their traditional constituency with largesse obtained through the prebendalization of public office.

The complex and reciprocal influences from different political traditions that have kept prebendalism alive and well in Nigeria under both military and democratic regimes call attention to the intractable problems associated with prebendal politics as well as its remarkable resilience. Richard Joseph offers one plausible explanation when he concedes that there may be “positive aspects of prebendal politics” that include clearly democratic elements such as “representation and participation,” and bridging between center and periphery in a geographically extensive country (67–68). This observation raises an unpalatable question: are their “best practices” of prebendalism that could be appropriated to solve some of its “worst practices”? This question is in fact not all that unpalatable when the seemingly aberrant nature of prebendal politics in Nigeria is juxtaposed to virtually identical practices in the so-called advanced democracies of Western Europe and North America, where the wealthy can spend money to get a politician elected into office with the tacit understanding, and in some cases the explicit deal, to support legislation and policies favorable to the wealthy. When understood in broadly historical and comparative perspectives, prebendalism may turn out to be not a political pathology unique to Nigeria but a basic ingredient of politics in general.

In tracing the interactions among *sarauta*, Islam, and democracy, it is suggested that there is more than mere political pathology to the continuing salience of the patron-client relationship that led Richard Joseph to contend that “clientelism defines the nature of individual and group relationships within the wider socio-political sphere, while prebendalism is primarily a function of the competition for, and appropriation of, the offices of the state” (63). The chapter shows the complex ways

through which the three different political traditions of *sarauta*, Islam, and democracy have interacted historically, leading to the mixing of different elements from the three traditions, including the invocation of elements from one tradition to critique the other elements. Hence, the unpalatable question: in the absence of one common political tradition, is Nigeria compelled to make the best out of its political pluralism born out of diverse and sometime conflicting political legacies and cultural traditions?

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# MEDIATING JUSTICE: YOUTH, MEDIA, AND “AFFECTIVE JUSTICE” IN THE POLITICS OF NORTHERN NIGERIA

*Conerly Casey*

I was made to be a criminal not because of what I have done, but because of what I stand for.

Graffiti by “Justice,” a *daba* (urban ward gang) leader in Kano City

Recent protests across North Africa and the Middle East testify to public outrage at the failure of postcolonial states to produce “justice” in their governance structures. Attempts at the federal level in Nigeria to enact justice and institute accountability have led to changes to the Independence Constitution of 1960 in 1963, 1979, 1989, and 1999, to the deregulation of capital in the 1990s and the primacy of the market, and to demilitarization, in 1999, coinciding with democratic elections. Inflation in the 1990s, and unprecedented levels of poverty and insecurity that accompanied these efforts, mediated and refracted in political allegations of blame, galvanized Christian and Muslim reformist networks, as well as groups of armed youths who use violence to control the means of coercion. These armed groups gain advantage in conflicts over state and national sovereignty, the control of public space, and the appropriation and distribution of resources, their views and actions defining imaginings of Nigeria in national, transnational, and social media (Abbink and Kessel 2005; Adebawo 2005, 2008; Akinyele 2001; Baker 2002; Casey 2007, 2008, 2009; Comaroff and Comaroff 2006; Mbembe 2001; Nolte 2004; Obadare 2006; Pratten 2007; Smith 2004, 2007). As the implementation of *Shari’ah* criminal codes in northern Nigeria, and regime change in the context of the Arab Spring confirm, young people have the capacity to reform and enact diasporic, micronational,

national, and transnational forms of “justice,” exerting extraordinary public pressure for governmental change.

Richard Joseph’s 1987 path-breaking study of *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria* prefigures these changes in Nigerian national and global finance, security and media, and widespread access to satellite and Internet-based media, making it a critical juncture from which to reconsider Nigerian experiments with democracy and justice. Joseph advanced the idea of a “prebendal system” operating in Nigeria, in which “patterns of political behavior rest on the justifying principle that [state] offices should be competed for and utilized for the personal benefit of office holders as well as of their reference or support group” (1987, 8). The Nigerian Second Republic rose and fell, Joseph suggested, on account of the self-interest of political elites who supported extensive client networks in exchange for their votes. Prebendal behaviors functioned in systems of formal authority, personalistic, military, and electoral-competitive, behind facades of legal-rational, constitutional, and bureaucratic rules. Joseph (287) warned that prebendalism ends in catastrophe, a presage of regime change across the Arab Spring, as it eventually “undermines the competence and legitimacy of state institutions, and finally saps the authority of those who have successfully appropriated its strategic offices.”

Mostly significantly, Joseph carefully documented the dynamics of patron-client relations and pressures from clients that allowed patrons to justify prebendalism as responses to client needs. This relational aspect of prebendal politics perpetuated the ardor of patrons and the enduring inequities and injustices that have continued to plague Nigerians. Less clear in Joseph’s analysis were the various histories and registers of language and body, operating in Nigerian patron-client networks, in which patrons attend to the bodily and material “needs” of their clients, but not to their “rights.” This needs-based language framed the paternalism of British colonialism, the patronage of hierarchical ethnic, religious communal systems (i.e., in royal families), and in the military. Neoliberal lobbyists took this a step further, in the 1990s, to suggest that the deregulation of capital would allow multinational corporations to better provide for the needs of a global public. Multinational corporate “patrons” in the resulting patron-client networks, particularly in Nigerian petroleum sectors, heavily influence federal politics and policies without regard for individual or state rights, a point notably missing from Joseph’s (1987) analysis. Further, patron-client networks derived from precolonial, colonial, and communal ethnic and religious systems and the military have long been part of global systems, which, as Cooper (2001) reminds us, have diverse time-depths of cross-territorial linkage and power. Precolonial trade networks, the Atlantic and Indian Ocean slave trades, the movements of pilgrims to Jerusalem and Mecca, religious and educational networks and ideas associated with



Islam and Christianity affect “the long term impacts of the exercise of power across space, but also the limitations of such power” (191).

Global reconfigurations of security, finance, and media, in the 1990s, led to increased public concern about the “neocolonial” dimensions of globalization, fueled by affective remembrances of British colonial racism and domination and of Salafi/Wahhabi fundamentalism, which resulted in realignments, in Nigeria, of patron-client systems and voting blocks (Casey 2008, 2009, 2010). Multinational corporate control of Nigerian national and state politics, and the pressures and bribes ushered in with neoliberal deregulations of capital, amplified public rage about past, present, and anticipated inequities and injustices, affective responses to the (in)justices perpetrated by states and multinational corporations that consolidate financial and military power to control energy, food, and water resources. In the predominately Muslim states of northern Nigeria, petroleum security prompted concern about political access to, and control of, Nigerian oil and oil “revenue sharing,” as well as distress about Muslims living under the US-led or coalition military occupations and wars in North Africa and the Middle East. Growing awareness and visceral affective remembrances of domination renewed public debate about the causes of human torment, past, present and anticipated, and the proper role of religion in national and state politics, education, and approaches to health and healing.

In the course of ethnographic study, begun in 1991, I was alerted to the recognition and treatment of suffering in Kano’s medically and religiously diverse communities. These settings allowed me to meet Nigerians of all sectors of society, including youths who had experienced and meted out physical and metaphysical forms of violence. From 2000 through 2002, and again in 2004, my research shifted to the politics of neoliberal capitalism and religious orthodoxies in northern Nigerian patron-client networks, particularly with *‘yan daba* (urban ward gang members), *‘yan banga* (political vanguard), *‘yan farauta* (hunters), *‘yan tauri* (people protected through ritual magic against weaponry), and *‘yan Hisbah* (*Shari’ah* law enforcers). The young people of these groups were heavily involved in national and state politics and many took part in the large-scale violence that preceded the implementation of *Shari’ah* criminal codes in 12 states of northern Nigeria. This ethnographic work brought into focus an array of “affective” concepts and enactments of “justice,” meant to “stand in” for government (Casey 2008, 2009, 2010; Clarke 2009; Comaroff and Comaroff 2004, 2006; Mbembe 2001; Tsing 2005).

In this chapter, I offer two perspectives on justice and the affective forms of justice that occurred during the implementation of *Shari’ah* criminal codes in Kano State. One is meant to capture the expressive aspects of justice, and the other presumes a priori realms of public experience and understanding that mediate suffering and the cultural, religious, and political

forms of justice Muslim youths draw upon to make sense of their torment. My argument engages the everydayness of prebendalism in street-level logic about the Nigerian state, and access to Nigerian oil wealth, and to Kano State wealth, derived from federal oil revenue sharing as well as from financial assistance to the Kano State government from sources in North Africa and the Middle East. I hope to suggest some of the real-virtual remappings of self-other relations, and newly forming networks that evoke and alter memories of injustice, generating new experiences and expressions of affective justice. My research suggests the uneasy reliance, in Nigeria, on secular *and* religious legalism *as well as* on extrajudicial violence to assure justice, (re)enacts real-virtual experiences of authorized violence as justice in Nigeria's heavily mediated publics. Given the temporal and spatial dimensions of Nigeria's publics, and the centralization and dispersal of authority in the 1990s, what are the meanings of justice for Muslim youths in northern Nigeria? How does affective justice, operating in policy, law, popular justice mechanisms, political, economic networks, reforming publics—enter into imaginaries and actions of “democracy”?

Peter Ekeh's (1975) analysis of two African publics that have shaped Nigerian governance are critical to my views of the prebendalism operating in contemporary Nigeria. Ekeh's African publics, derived from colonial, autocratic superstructures, and from African communal structures—the former secular, amoral, and bureaucratic, and the latter articulating an array of communal moralities—make clear the frictions, in Nigeria, of ethics, policy, and law. Media, in print, broadcast and Internet-based forms, have become additional terrains on which media publics form political publics and, through debate, expose the limits and hypocrisies of liberal universalism, and of communal religious and/or ethic customary law, as these systems have been applied in postcolonial states (Casey 2008, 2009, 2010). These diverse media channel and repeat affective information that reverberates with remembrances of colonial, communal, and postindependence governance, and with the systems of authority and legitimacy that operate globally, including those that routinely authorize violence. Such memories form what Damasio (2000) terms “composite memories,” or memories that hold a link between categories of fact and categories of internal states, which jell with time and experience.

Composite memories of “unjust governance” and “authorized violence” emerge in everyday conversations about politics in Nigeria, but they also rise to collective consciousness via print, broadcast, and Internet-based accounts of political systems, local and transnational, in moral appraisals of particular politicians and systems, as affective communal and collaborative reconstructions of them, and in embodiments and acts of memory that evoke, alter, and reinscribe colonial and communal experiences (Stoller 1995; Casey 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010). These

memory processes juxtaposed with ongoing and new sources of authority and legitimacy, and greater access, in Nigeria, to media from North Africa and the Middle East, contribute to what I term affective justice, or ideas and embodied, emotional experiences of (un)just governance associated with composite memories, chains of remembrance, group affiliations, and acts, even violence, meant to restore or to produce justice.

## JUSTICE AND GENERATIONAL POLITICS IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

To make life easy, respect must be given to the elders.

Graffiti by “Justice”

The recent explosion of media interest in youths, resulting from heightened attention to security, religious extremism, and human rights, depicts Muslim and African youths as innocent victims, ravaged by the excesses of their political leaders, *and* as savage brutes, recruited into violence from childhood to be a political vanguard or army of soldiers (Abbink 2005; Honwana and de Boeck 2005). “Citizen” or “outlaw,” “freedom fighter” or “terrorist,” youths are rendered either endangered or dangerous, objects of national, state, and transnational NGO intervention. The sheer number of youths, their availability and eagerness to take up anything that may alleviate poverty, boredom, or a sense of meaninglessness, African youths are recruited into political parties, armed groups, or criminal networks that support prebendal systems, yet as Jon Abbink (2005) noted, youths have also formed their own political movements through which to pose their demands.

Murray Last (2005, 37) identified four periods when Muslim youths have come to power in northern Nigeria within the past two hundred years: “with the Sokoto jihad of 1804–1808, at the time of the British colonial takeover ca. 1900–10, in the 1950s with the advent of party politics in the run-up to independence, and recently when local government councils and the enforcement of *Shari’ah* law started being largely run by ‘the young.’” The imperative of restoring and producing justice in governance runs throughout this history (Paden 1986. See also, Umar’s chapter in this volume).

Traditional youth groups in Kano State, such as *‘yan farauta* (hunters) and *‘yan tauri*, a warrior class during the colonial era, emphasized bravery, skill with weaponry and with *tauri*, ritual herbal protection against the weapons of rivals. During colonial occupation, these groups were banned, but they continued illicitly as forms of youth development, entertainment, and for political and economic survival. The roles of these youths changed with the beginning of the transition to independence in 1951 and the

emergence of partisan politics in northern Nigeria ('Dan Asabe 1991). Faced with harassment and arbitrary arrests by the Native Authority policemen, leaders of the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), a political party of radical, young northern *talakawa* who opposed the Northern People's Congress (NPC) recruited hunters as bodyguards or political vanguard (*'yan banga*). Other parties followed suit, and conflicts among political parties reached street-level fighting among the *'yan banga* of these parties. According to Larry Diamond (1983, 463), "given the southerners' stated intention to dismantle what they saw as a feudalistic and unjust social system in the North, and their political liaison with radical young northern *talakawa* similarly pledged to sweeping reform, the traditional aristocracy found itself forced to choose between adaptation and extinction."

Prior to the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970), the Nigerian army took over governance and banned all partisan politics, eliminating most *'yan banga* activities in the process. The Nigerian Civil War generated thousands of internally displaced persons, requiring state governments to manage disputes about the constitutional and pragmatic rights of those displaced (Okpu 1977). The Head of State, General Olusegun Obasanjo, lifted the ban on *'yan banga* in 1978, and the emerging parties in Kano, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) dominated by wealthy businessmen and bureaucrats, popularly known as the "Kaduna Mafia," and the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) predominately *talakawa* ('Dan Asabe 1991; Falola 1998), once again, recruited *'yan banga*.

Party politics and the roles of armed Muslim youths were complicated further in the late 1970s when a man whom Nigerians nicknamed *Mai Tatsine* (the one who curses) came to Kano from Cameroon. *Mai Tatsine* claimed that Kano Muslims had no *kibla* (direction), and he repeatedly shouted at them, "May Allah separate you from all of His blessings!"<sup>1</sup> *Mai Tatsine* considered himself a Prophet, and enjoined his followers, *'yan Mai Tatsine*, to be "original" Muslims, uncorrupted by the *bid'a* and *shirk* of Kano Muslims. *'Yan Mai Tatsine* refused to accept watches, bikes, or other material goods emblematic of modernization and urbanization (Report of Tribunal of Inquiry on Kano Disturbances 1981; Watts 1996). They took over the Kano goat market, lived in cave-like dwellings and trenches, kidnapped and shared young women, while killing their enemies. *Mai Tatsine* and his followers were *'yan tauri*, drawing on traditional youth practices and anticolonial sentiments in their recruitment of youths. Unable to stop *'yan Mai Tatsine* from their criminal and recruitment activities, the local police enlisted the aid of other *'yan tauri* and the Nigerian military who eventually captured and killed *Mai Tatsine*. Checkpoints around Kano, manned by armed young men looking for the stomach tattoos of *'yan Mai Tatsine*, contributed to an emerging fear of Kano youths and of "strangers." People feared youths who had joined *Mai Tatsine's* movement, and

those who, alongside Kano state and the federal government, had armed themselves to fight against *'yan Mai Tatsine*.

### MEDIA, ISLAMIC REFORM, AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SHARI'AH CRIMINAL CODE

In the midst of the *Mai Tatsine* crisis, a burgeoning media industry and increased access to media coincided with a powerful reformist Sunni movement, *Jama'at Izalatil Bid'a wa Iqamatus Sunnah* (Movement Against Negative Innovations and for Orthodoxy), led by Sheikh Abubakar Gumi, former Grand *Kadi* (Paramount Islamic Judge), and Mallam Isma'il Idris, a former military imam. Popularly known as *Izala*, this movement's stated purpose was *tajdid* (reform and rejuvenation), inspired by Shehu Usman 'dan Fodio's nineteenth-century achievements and Wahhabi/Salafi revival, yet realized through the day-to-day struggle against what they considered the *bid'a* of *Bori*<sup>2</sup> and the Sufi orders (Barkindo 1993; Falola 1998; Hunwick 1997; Ibrahim 1991; Loimeier 1997; Umar 1993, 2001; Williams 1997).

Under General Murtala Muhammed and General Olusegun Obasanjo, political attempts by Gumi and northern Muslims to establish a Federal *Shari'ah* Court of Appeal failed, but *Shari'ah* courts gained state-level appellate status, and this status was incorporated into the 1979 Constitution (Christelow 2002; Gumi 1992; Okunola 1993; Williams 1997). These events, coinciding with the 1979 Iranian Revolution, emboldened reformist Muslims who considered the implementation of *Shari'ah* criminal codes a way to confront Nigeria's political economic and social ills. Nigeria's oil boom, in the 1970s, and what Michael Watts (2001) has referred to as the state's "petro-Capitalism" and "spoils politics," further deepened political antagonisms over federal and state control of Nigeria's land and resources. The creation of new states to capitalize on federal oil revenue sharing further enriched individuals and patron-client networks, while fracturing ethnic, religious, and regional political networks and transidentity networks (Falola 1998). By 1978, a new class of Nigerian entrepreneurs, who Joseph (1987) referred to as drone capitalists, had consolidated power in public and private sectors. The convergence of religious and state politics (Falola 1998; Williams 1997), in the 1980s and 1990s, and development projects (Ocheje 1997), again, displaced large numbers of Nigerians, reviving constitutional disputes over state jurisdictions and the communal dimensions of national and state rights.

Joseph (1987) documented the prebendal consolidation of capital power, in the patron-client linkages associated with state and private sources. According to Joseph, communal pressures and norms, emanating from kinship, ethnic, religious and regional affiliations, and the

military, further enriched certain individuals, whose private concerns and pressures from clients led them to block, alter, or circumvent state policies. Patrons justified their extralegal uses of office, Joseph wrote, as attempts to maintain their responsibilities to clients, a relational dynamic that perpetuated systems of injustice. What distinguished Nigeria's prebendal system from other state systems of the 1980s, Diamond (1989, 285) suggested, was "the virtual *absence* of any constraint at all on the use of office; the spectacularly voracious and predatory scale of the corruption that results; the narrowness of the circles that share in this fabulous accumulation; and the depth of the economic disarray, political chaos and popular anger and alienation that result." The collapse of the Nigerian economy, in part a result of the IMF Structural Adjustment program ushered in by the General Ibrahim Babangida administration, produced effects in Nigeria that Achille Mbembe (2001, 74–76) finds widespread in African postcolonies: the linking of deregulated capital, coercion, and war. As the state lost its ability to take political action and to pay government salaries, it lost its primary means of authority, legitimacy, and the control of social, political forums with power shifting to international brokers of authority. Accountability in government became blurred—state debts rose, the state lost credit, and it was left with coercive power, but no legitimacy. General Sani Abacha placed a ban on party politics in 1993, shoring up power early in his presidential regime, but lifted the ban in January of 1995, when his inner circle either recruited into the military or shot large numbers of *'yan daba* and *'yan banga*. Nigeria's fiscal crisis, demilitarization in 1999, the massive unemployment of armed military units, and a crippled police force led to a security vacuum, drawing communal youth groups all over Nigeria into the realms of "policing" (Adebanwi 2005; Akinyele 2001; Baker 2002; Casey 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010; Gore and Pratten 2003; Harnischfeger 2003; Nolte 2004; Pratten 2007; Smith 2004, 2007; Ya'u 2000).

Nigerian journalists variably portrayed the militant wing of the southern and southwestern Yoruba O'odu'a People's Congress (OPC), the southeastern Igbo Bakassi Boys, now officially disbanded (Smith 2004), and northern Hausa *'yan daba* as either mercenaries navigating a fragmented political space, or as "vigilantes," "ethnic militias," or "tribal armies." The author of a lead story in the widely read *Weekly Trust* (August 4–10, 2000) wrote:

The *'yan daba*, a reserve army of unemployed youths, have acted in ways that suggest that they can metamorphose into a tribal army some day. In 1999, when Hausa residents of Sagamu town in Ogun State had a clash with their Yoruba hosts, it was the *'yan daba* group that organized a reprisal attack against Yoruba residents in Kano. (1–2)

Residents of Kano explained their increased reliance on *‘yan daba* and on newly formed *‘yan Hisbah* as a public response to a corrupt nation-state that failed to provide security and to account for growing political, economic insecurities, inequities, and injustices. Across Nigeria, there was widespread regional support, and even state sanctioning, for vigilantes such as the Bakassi Boys and the OPC, who, at least initially, demanded social justice and government accountability, even when these groups employed violence as enforcement (Gore and Pratten 2003; Smith 2004, 2007). Working with the Bakassi Boys in southeastern Nigeria, Daniel Jordan Smith (2004, 431) suggested, “despite its massive popularity as an alternative to the perceived failure of the government and its policing institutions, vigilantism effectively deflected or obscured the role of politicians and the state in perpetuating the conditions that produced crime, insecurity, and inequality.” But, additionally, Nigerian forms of vigilantism were public responses to the frictions of policy and law that characterize the centralization and dispersal of authority and legitimacy. In the 1990s, reconfigurations of global finance, security, and media communications, centralized and dispersed power, in the heavily mediated postmilitary transition to “democracy” and postcolonial, communal, and neoliberal struggles over the codification of rights, privileges, and access to Nigerian oil revenues. These changes resulted in new forms and magnitudes of predatory prebendalism and responding political movements (Argenti 1998; Baker 2002; Gore and Pratten 2003; Mamdani 1996; Mbembe 2001; Obadare 2004, 2006) for affective justice (Casey 2008, 2009, 2010).

## MEDIATING JUSTICE

Reconfigurations in global finance, security, and media communications, and postmilitary transitions to “democracy” opened new possibilities for Nigerian and Kano state neoliberal and religious reforms to policy and law, but as authorities at federal and state levels seized the signs, resources, and publics they wished to restructure, they created new power centers in the gaps between the legal and illegal, the legal and ethical, the state and the nonstate with oscillations of democratic and autocratic authority (see Comaroff and Comaroff 2004). Heavily mediated images and events of 9/11 and its aftermath—of the World Trade Center bombings and the reprisal US bombings in Afghanistan and Iraq, amplified “affective” forms of justice as political publics engaged global and Nigerian national media refractions of injustice and violence. Media refract, channel, and repeat “affective information,” fracturing and instantiating the appearance of continuity, temporal, spatial, and affective, between authorizing political centers and publics.

Mediations of justice prior to the implementation of Shari'ah criminal codes attached temporal and spatial referents to Islamic reformism through print, broadcast, and Internet-based depictions of the political struggles of Nigerians such as Shehu Usman 'dan Fodio, Sheikh Abubakar Gumi, Mallam Isma'il Idris, and Sheikh Ibrahim El-Zakzaky, as well as such scholars as Ibn Abd al-Wahhab from eighteenth-century Arabia and Ibn Taymiyya (d. fourteenth century), Sudan's Hasan al-Turabi, and Iranians such as Ayatollah Murtadha Mutahhari, protégé of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. These key figures inspired young Muslims across Nigeria "to establish the rule of the oppressed" (Sanusi 2006), in local-global reformist protests and networks to produce political change.

The speed and density of these mediations heightened intrapolitical and communal accountings of Nigeria's worsening "realities." The Muslim Students' Society (MSS) members, many of whom had previous *Izala* affiliations, advocated Muslim unity by promoting austerity and feminism in their antielite rebuke of Sufi leadership. The Muslim Students' Society split into the pro-Saudi, *Wahhabi/Salafi*-inspired *Da'wa*, or missionary movement, and the pro-Iranian *Umma* (Ibrahim 1991), which took a firm stance on the implementation of *Shari'ah* criminal codes and the establishment of an Islamic state. The *Umma* split again into the *Hodabiya*, which favored some accommodation with a secular state, and *'yan Shia*, who, inspired by the *mujahidin* struggle in Afghanistan and Islamic state formation in Iran, preached no compromise with the secular state (Hunwick 1997, 39). Western-educated Sheikh Ibrahim El-Zakzaky, leader of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria, whose members are sometimes referred to as *'yan Shia*, was an early opponent of the idea to reimplement *Shari'ah* criminal codes in Kano. But, the United States' "War on Terrorism" during George W. Bush administration and international criticism of the implementation of *Shari'ah* criminal codes angered El-Zakzaky who began appearing frequently in Nigerian and global media to speak out against this as a "War on Muslims." *'yan Shia* referred to former president Olusegun Obasanjo as "the U.S.'s boy," complicit with the United States in the war on Muslims, and they began to keep track of the numbers of Muslims in federal and military service whom Obasanjo "retired" (Casey 2008, 2009)

Intra-Muslim conflicts emerged over control of mosques and public space, public preaching, accusations that Sufi imams were partial to the wealthy, and in response to new reformist publications, audiocassettes, and televised and Internet doctrinal and legal disputes (Casey 2008, 2009; Falola 1998). *'yan Izala* in conflict with Sufi adherents unequivocally presented Muslim authenticity and political morality as best realized through compliance with *Shari'ah* law, based on the laws of belief and conduct spelled out in the Qur'an and the Hadith, reports of the



words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad (Gumi with Tsiga 1992, 165). Mohammad Sani Umar (2001, 133) notes that “the *Wahhabi/Salafi* espousal of this overwhelming emphasis on the centrality of *Shari’ah* in Islamic beliefs and practices is comparable to the legal positivism that pervades modernity.” Stressing other aspects of modern life—the promotion of social justice and equality, a preference for bureaucratic rules over charismatic authority, universal education, including the education of women, and the provision of social services and amenities—*‘yan Izala* converted thousands of Nigerian Muslims to their form of Islamic orthodoxy. The intellectualism of the *Izala* leadership, along with vast funding from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Iraq (prior to the 2003 US War in Iraq) contributed to a rapid explosion of *Izala* publications, radio and television programs, and cassettes, which competed with media from other parts of Nigeria and the world.

Increased religious proselytizing, surveillance, and political, religious conflicts—framed and legitimated by state, legal, and media rationalities—and unprecedented levels of poverty compromised the abilities of young Muslim Hausa, whether *Sufi* or recently converted to reformist sects, to maintain *lafiya* (balance in all areas of life—social, spiritual, psychical, and physical). Young Muslim Hausa, living in the *Gari*, began avoiding non-Muslim media, vigilantly reading the litany of prayers that Sufis recite (Hausa, *wuridi*), until they lost a sense of time, place, and identity, and disturbed their relatives with shouting and bizarre behavior. Spirits from faraway places such as India, the United States, and the Sudan possessed women and men with greater frequency, causing new symptoms such as trance “dancing like they do in Indian film” and “American break dancing,” interspersed with paralyses (Casey 1998, 2008). Kano State government officials banned Bollywood films in 2001, suggesting that their song-and-dance sequences endangered public spirituality and health. Debates within various healing communities about the prevalence and signification of *rashin lafiya* (imbalance in all areas of life) led to a focus on the excessive consumption of non-Muslim media among Kano youths, and to mistrust and xenophobia, culminating with increased “orthodox” spirit exorcisms. During these exorcisms, Hausa *malams*, funded by *Wahhabi/Salafi* Muslims from Saudi Arabia and Egypt, forcefully read the Qur’an into the ears of possessed persons, “heating up” the spirits, while placing pressure on them to convert to Islam before expulsion. *Malams*, in *Wahhabi/Salafi* networks, converted humans and spirits, selling their taped audiocassette readings of the Qur’an as self-help. These global networks for Islamic education and health care built and staffed schools, hospitals, and clinics, most notably the Makkah Specialist Eye Hospital.

Well-funded at a time when the Nigerian national government was in a fiscal “state of emergency” and neither providing regular salaries for

government employees, nor social services and amenities for the poor, members of reformist movements became rapidly absorbed with the needs of Muslims, essentially taking over many government functions. In the process, they converted hundreds of *Sufis*, through education and free spirit exorcisms, to *Wahhabi/Salafi* reformism. Conflicts between reformist Muslims and nonreformist *Sufis* and *'yan Bori* emerged in response to the sensory structures associated with *Sufi* and *Bori* ritual uses of music, dance, perfumes, and amulets, visiting the tombs of *Sufi* saints, *Bori* spirit possession ceremonies, and excessive feasting and celebrations, practices that draw spirits to humans. Reformist Sunnis considered *all* of these practices forms of *shirk*, *bid'a*, and *sab'o* (blasphemy), *and* to be economically excessive, with reformist *Shi'a* concurring that many of these practices were emblematic of, or infused with, animism and Western capitalism. Yet, what constituted *shirk*, *bid'a*, or *sab'o*, or the conspicuous consumption of Western capitalism, was always a matter of interpretation and debate. For instance, in times of political conflict, most notably the 1999 violence in Kaduna, over the proposed implementation of *Shari'ah* criminal law, many reformist Sunnis and *Sufis* relied on *tauri* ritual forms of medicinal protection, heightening enmity between reformist and nonreformist patron-client networks.

The struggle to implement *Shari'ah* law in Kano State drew together reformist Muslims in public debates with protesting nonreformist Muslims and Christians, exacerbating mediated conflicts over historical perceptions of Nigerian ethnic and Islamic authenticity and belonging (Ado-Kurawa 2000). Similar to the Islamic state forming coalitions in Iran, Algeria, and the Sudan, the emerging Kano Independent *Shari'ah* Implementation Committee presented *Shari'ah* as a democratic alternative to, and strong critique of, colonialism and the elitism and corruption of federal and state politicians, appealing to Muslims of diverse sects and factions. *'Yan daba* agitated alongside other Muslim youths for the implementation of *Shari'ah* criminal codes, yet with others deemed "marginal Muslims," became the immediate objects of *'yan Hisbah* preaching and surveillance (Casey 2008). Through bitter political struggles with Kano State governor, Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso, the emir, Alhaji Ado Bayero, and the *Sufi* establishment, members of reformist sects, pressed for the implementation of *Shari'ah* law, drawing support for the claim that Nigerian national and Kano State political, religious leaders had benefited from corrupt financial arrangements with Americans and Europeans:

We have to confront the evildoers. The *Hisbah* exist and have 100% support from God. Most of the vices committed by poor people . . . are because

of the poor leadership in America, England and Switzerland. Why did they allow our leaders to go and take our money there?<sup>3</sup>

Muslim and Christian critics of *'yan Hisbah* complained that the insults, intimidations, and violence of *'yan Hisbah* were outside of *Shari'ah* law, insisting that most of the “troublemakers” were not Nigerians, but, Nigerian or Chadian, perhaps *'yan Tatsine*. Global, national, regional, ethnic, and gendered dimensions of religious ideology and practice became central discourses in a shift from the policing of “un-Islamic practices,” to the profiling of “un-Islamic people,” a conflation of ethnicity with Islamic authenticity that sharply differentiated ethnic Muslims who supported the implementation of *Shari'ah* criminal codes from those who opposed it. *'Yan Hisbah* vigilantly profiled Muslims living in ethnically plural spaces, Muslim ethnic minorities, and people who, by virtue of their region of origin, religion, or ethnicity, they considered “marginal Muslims” or polytheists, and thus, “out of place.” Yet, as complaints from Muslims and Christians mounted, members of the Independent *Shari'ah* Implementation Committee *Sirbul* (community of elders) and *Shura* (Islamic judges) also began to condemn as “un-Islamic,” the heavy-handed approaches to *Shari'ah* implementation that *'yan Hisbah* employed. At question were concerns about political realignment in federal and Kano State sectarian patron-client networks that constituted voting blocks, the limits of state intervention in personal, domestic, and communal affairs, and the identities of individuals and groups that would benefit and suffer under a *Shari'ah* system.<sup>4</sup> Arguments centered on the need for Muslim unity in approaches to federal politics, to ensure justice by gaining federal political and military positions that would secure access to and control of oil and oil revenue sharing schemes. In Kano State, Muslim sectarianism resulting in differing perspectives of morality and justice in terms of the public good led to vehement debates over marriage and the control of one's bodily desires, the moral use of public space, and of Kano State funds to support Muslim needs and lifestyles compliant with a Salafi rendering of *Shari'ah* law. The mediation of justice in public venues led to allegations by Salafi political and business leaders that the Emir and Kano State governor Kwankwaso were decadent and corrupt, self-interestedly lavish in their attentions to Nigerians in their own patron-client systems, while neglecting the needs of the poor. Growing political support for Salafi leadership, backed by financial assistance, particularly from Salafi individuals and groups in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq (prior to the 2003 US War in Iraq) and Egypt brought together unexpected coalitions of Muslim networks. In 2000, *'yan daba* agitated alongside *'yan Hisbah* to implement *Shari'ah*

criminal codes in Kano State, one of 12 states across northern Nigeria to implement the Shari'ah system.

### “STATES OF EMERGENCY” IN EMERGING MARKETS

When the *Shari'ah* system was implemented, Kano State government resources to create opportunities for jobs, education, and health care were limited, reserved primarily for reformist Muslims. And, the limits of state intervention, in personal, domestic, and communal affairs became evident in the governments' inability to police existing and emerging (il) legal markets, opting instead to declare states of emergency. *Yan daba* aligned themselves with the *'yan farauta* and *'yan tauri* of two villages 40 minutes to the south of Kano, *Kura* and *Yadda Kwari*, which they referred to as the “white team” and the “black team,” creating an East/West divide within Kano city. The white and black teams were essentially smuggling networks whose members competed for control of (il) legal Kano markets. *Yan daba* navigated these realms, as *'yan banga* for political, religious, and business leaders, and as their business partners in lucrative markets for petroleum, Indian hemp, and pharmaceuticals. *Yan daba* generally supported the leaders who paid the most for their *'yan banga* services or business arrangements, and if caught with illegal items, would use their political influence or financial resources to bail them out of jail.

*Yan daba* who participated in violence were typically the leaders of a *daba* and the inner core of members who have *zuciya* (heart) for their *dabas*. While *'yan daba* used violence to regulate business relations and territories of control or to seek revenge on rival groups, most of their operations were cooperative, based on peaceful negotiations between groups and among networks. *Yan daba* established networks with Igbo Indian hemp growers and traffickers to transport it from eastern farms into Kano, which, according to a NDEA (Nigerian Drug Enforcement Agency) officer, is one of the biggest markets for Indian hemp in Nigeria. The market for Indian hemp grew with the implementation of *Shari'ah* criminal codes and the outlawing of alcohol sales. Cotonou, Benin, and Lagos, Nigeria, were regional centers for *'yan daba* who smuggled subsidized or stolen petroleum into Benin and used this money to buy clothing, textiles, and pharmaceuticals for Kano markets. They referred to Seme, a settlement on the border of Nigeria and Benin, as Kuwait City, a distribution center for petroleum, the business of which provided cover for their operations. *Yan daba* also smuggled petroleum into Niger and Chad, with these networks, over several years, extending into other parts of East and West Africa, notably Rwanda, Congo, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, and Liberia, for guns, cigarettes, and assorted war merchandise. *Yan daba* operated transidentity patron-client networks

to access Nigerian petroleum, Indian hemp, and weaponry from outside the northern region.

In Kano, *yan daba* self-identified with wards, hanging out in particular joints, but they shifted among modes of violent opposition to other wards, tolerant separation, and eclecticism. They identified with *yan farauta* from *Yadda Kwari* and *Kura*, whom they considered expert hunters, *tauri* ritualists and fighters, and whose villages were on either side of the main thoroughfare to Zaria, Kaduna, and smuggling routes to the south. But, these relationships were tenuous, as depicted in a *mafarauci* (hunter) description of *daba* life:

an acquired habit, not a profession or tradition . . . stealing, drinking, smoking hemp, and general anti-social behavior is not the culture or subculture of hunters . . . what is paining us is that these groups of *yan tauri* and *yan daba*, even in the eyes of the law and the Emir, they see them as hunters, which is not so. To us, *yan daba* are hooligans.<sup>5</sup>

While predominately Muslim Hausa, *yan daba* incorporated youths of diverse ethnicities and religious backgrounds into their *dabas*. They frequently took non-Hausa words, like scorpion or pusher, or words combining Hausa with references to people elsewhere, such as *kayaman* (regge man) or *Takur Sahab* (person who has a leader in India), as street names. *Yan daba* adopted a style of dress they associated with media depictions of “Westside niggers,” or Los Angeles-based rappers. In their sunglasses, chains, and baggy jeans, *yan daba* showed a broad interest in world youth cultures, questioning me, through whirls of Indian hemp, about the impact on American politics of rappers such as Tupac Shakur and the revolutionary politics of his Black Panther mother. They followed political ideologies, displays of masculinity, and approaches to social justice in the songs of Bob Marley, in the writings of Malcolm X, and in their remembrances of former gang members, such as Change, who took his name and fashioned his personality, dress, walk, and the way he held his sword around a videotaped description of Chiang Kai-Shek, a leader of the Nationalist Army of China who expelled Sun Yat Sen, and established himself in Taiwan in 1949 (‘Dan Asabe 1991).

*Yan daba* recruits spoke affectively about getting even with people who had “downgraded” or “underrated” them. Insults and injuries were taken as reenactments of earlier acts, variably related to personal experience and to cultural or political abstractions, but that nonetheless excused their violence. Forceful acts of domination were accompanied by outbursts of ribaldry and derision that seemed to mock and mimic officialdom, while creating new forms of officialdom altogether (see Mbembe 2001, 102). A *dan daba*, dressed lavishly in a Muslim-style *riga* (dress), smoking a joint reminiscent of Cheech and Chong, slapped

an *almajiri* to the ground for forgetting to say his prayers. The crowd cheered and laughed.

*Yan daba* differentiated respect-respect, a form of social regard they felt unable to attain, and fear-respect, which they used to regulate social and patron-client relations in centralized government systems, and in what Mbembe (2001, 78) terms “private indirect government,” “independent power centers, linked in unstable chains where parallel decisions co-exist with centralized decisions, where everything and its opposite are possible.” Kano State political and religious elites, power brokers in unstable chains of power, instructed *yan daba* and others in their networks to hoard, bribe, and blackmail officials, undermining equivalences between commodities to control prices of basic household necessities such as agricultural food products, water, and petroleum. The privatization of public resources, the unstable, soaring prices for food, water, and energy, and the downsizing of civil servants blocked intrafamilial and intracommunity transfers of wealth, opening people to religious reform in governance and to new patron-client networks. Hundreds of formerly employed Kano State government workers joined *yan daba* networks to obtain the basic necessities of life, and as the value of people and things, of life and death, shifted, allegations of political and religious excess, witchcraft attack, and spirit possession became entangled sources of fear and desire (Casey 2008).

These new physical and metaphysical venues for producing wealth, settling scores, and consolidating public and private funding for business ventures insinuated themselves into the dynamics of emerging markets and the religious politics of Muslim patron-client networks. *Yan daba* began routine visits to *sarakuna Bori* or *boka* (native doctors) for herbal medicines to aid their Indian hemp smuggling. *Yan Hisbah* cracked down on prostitution, the use of alcohol, and the illegal sale of alcohol, street drugs, and petroleum. The rates of petty theft decreased, but those of rape and violent crimes against individuals rose, which the media attributed to *yan daba* “rampages,” even though there was no evidence to support these claims.<sup>6</sup> What emerged was competition between *yan daba* and wealthy businessmen from North Africa, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe, to control newly forming global networks to smuggle the prostitutes, drugs, and alcohol, forbidden by the *Shari’ah* system, and rivalry with *yan Hisbah* and their reformist networks, over public and private funds, securitization and the control of public space for religious economic and social activities. Mbembe (2001, 86) views this as “a process in which international networks of foreign traffickers, middlemen, and businessmen are linking with, and becoming entwined with, local businessmen, ‘technocrats,’ and warlords, causing whole areas of Africa’s international economic relations to be swept underground, making it possible to consolidate methods of government that rest on

indiscriminate violence and high-level corruption.”<sup>7</sup> This process of internationalizing *‘yan daba* and *‘yan Hisbah* networks in competition and convergence of market and religious politics affected debates about secularism and communalism, the constitutionality of *Shari’ah* criminal codes, and the political, economic, and social affects of the *Shari’ah* system at state and federal levels. The frictions of policy and law, at federal and state levels, led to realignments of patron-client networks that supported secular federalism and oil revenue sharing, in federal politics, but communalism, *Shari’ah* criminal law, and the exclusive use of public and public-private consolidated funds for Muslims in Kano State.

These frictions of policy and law found expression, in March of 2001, when Dr. Abdullahi Ganduje, the reformist deputy governor of Kano State, a member of All Nigeria People’s Party (ANPP), announced an Islamic “state of emergency” referring to the inability of *Shari’ah* criminal law, as it was being practiced in Kano State, to stop “prostitution” and the sale and consumption of alcohol. In conflict with the governor, Dr. Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso, a member of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP), Dr. Ganduje led *‘yan Hisbah* on a series of raids to local hotels, restaurants, and “cool spots,” with owners and patrons claiming they destroyed millions of dollars worth of alcohol. Because Christian Igbo and Muslim Yoruba owned most of these businesses, the raids bankrupted some, scaring others into a mass exodus of Christians and Muslims who feared increased violence. Some establishments stayed indefinitely closed or operated odd hours or with armed guards patrolling the gates, while new businesses owned by wealthy foreigners catered to the needs of the Kano elite. Jokes about “dying for a drink” became permanent fixtures as humor rose to meet increased levels of anxiety. Rumors about the arming of Muslims and Christians came more frequently. In response, President Olusegun Obasanjo called Dr. Ganduje to Abuja, stating in public that the deputy governor had endangered Nigerian state security, thus reframing Kano’s Islamic state of emergency as a national state of emergency. *‘Yan daba* and *‘yan Hisbah* quickly developed languages, sets of codes, and acts that were meant to signify their participation in democracies, state and federal, a framing necessary for their assertion that the implementation of *Shari’ah* criminal codes as state law was constitutional. The frictions of Kano State and federal policy and law became more pronounced with heavily mediated ideological and financial assistance from Salafi-oriented individuals and organizations in North Africa and the Middle East and neoliberal capitalists from the United States, Europe, and China. Realignment in patron-client networks, the privatization of government funds, and the consolidation of government and private finances, at state and federal levels, coincided with pressures on Nigerians, in 1999, to hold “democratic” elections.

## DEMO CRAZY

“Demo-crazy, Crazy demo, demonstration of craze...,” is part of Fela Kuti’s refrain in his song, “Teacher Don’t Teach Me Nonsense,” a vehement critique of the madness of learning a “democratic” system of governance from colonial and neocolonial authorities—those with “colomentality” and no legitimacy. Marked by inflation, austerity, corruption, mismanagement, and stealing, the shift to democracy in Nigeria reordered relations and structures of power and authority, reconfiguring the people who control the means of coercion in unstable networks that encompass centralized state and “private indirect” government. The fragmentation of authority in Kano State across these networks was evident in the signs and meanings of democracy for *‘yan Hisbah* and *‘yan daba*. *‘Yan Hisbah* found the *Shari’ah* legal system to be consistent with a democracy of “majority rules”:

We are a democracy. We are the majority. And, the Islamic injunction is superior to any other injunction. So they say it’s a government of the people, for the people, by the people—Abraham Lincoln, American President...since this is a democracy, we can use it (*Shari’ah*) as a political weapon, to make sure that someone who is conscious of *Shari’ah* is elected.<sup>8</sup>

By contrast, a response I commonly heard among *‘yan daba* is reflected by the hope that the *Shari’ah* system would bring about a form of justice that equalizes political economic opportunities and security:

We are all Muslims. *Shari’ah* will help us to know each other better. In this way, crimes will be reduced and the rich and poor will be the same under the law.<sup>9</sup>

Another *‘dan daba* shared his views on authority and legitimacy:

We can stop our activities perhaps...but you should remember that if a person is just killed without committing any offence, do you think if the *Shari’ah* doesn’t do anything about it that we will let the matter rest? To me, you cannot give advice to *‘yan daba* after such a thing...The *Shari’ah* says if you kill a man, you should be killed too. So why should you kill and not be killed?<sup>10</sup>

Justifying his violence against women who had “disrespected him” and non-Muslim political rivals, a *‘dan daba* said:

We do this violence because there isn’t any authority that we can go and report to. You yourself could be your own authority. Even I, myself, I am my own authority. If you do something wrong to me, I could pass my



judgment on you...We know there's no authority that hears our complaints, only God. We stand firm. Anyone who touches us will not go free.<sup>11</sup>

The frictions of policy and law in postcolonial Nigeria bear the weight of history, and the historical registers of language and body associated with colonial, communal, military, and neoliberal patron-client systems that claim to care for the needs of Nigerians, but not their citizenship or human rights. Such competing systems of governance, as they lose authority and legitimacy, and particularly the ability to provide for the minimal needs of their constituents, routinely authorize violence to bring individuals, communal groups, and patron-client networks into compliance, but with what system?<sup>12</sup>

**“A LIE IN YOUR SOUL IS A REAL LIE.”**

The coincidence of democratization and violence has been most visible in postcolonial societies with high value natural resources—in the mediated images and vocabularies of Nigerian narcotic traffickers, 419 cybercriminals, oil worker “hostages,” or impoverished child soldiers who risk their lives in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in Sierra Leone to fight for diamonds and “conflict minerals” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006; Mbembe 2001). In Nigeria, democracy has coincided with burgeoning reformist Muslim and Christian networks *as well as* networks of armed youths who use violence to gain advantage in conflicts over state sovereignty and in the struggles for national and state codification of new rights and privileges, state resources, extrajudicial challenges to the international judiciary, the Nigerian nation-state, Nigerian state governments, and corporate elites, who turn a deaf ear to the needs of the poor. A concern with justice during the implementation of *Shari'ah* criminal codes brought *'yan daba*, *'yan farauta*, *'yan tauri*, and *'yan Hisbah* into transidentity networks to produce wealth, power, and status, though simultaneously, they placed pressure on Kano State government officials to reserve state resources for communal ethnic, religious purposes. Youths in these groups took advantage of the regulatory frictions in Nigerian federal and Kano State legal systems, using violence to regulate relationships in centralized state and decentralized secular and religious networks. The uneasy reliance on secular and religious legalism as well as on extrajudicial violence to assure justice reflects and (re)enacts embodied memories of authorized violence as justice in colonial, postindependence military, and neoliberal democratic encounters. But, beyond embodied memories, affective justice emerges in emotional conflations of identity, morality, and security, evident in political and religious excess, witchcraft afflictions, the passionate reformism of Muslims and Pentecostal evangelists, new educational and healing therapies, and new

languages and laws to claim wealth and to identify crimes against persons and states. Affective justice, in states such as Kano, articulate with heavily mediated global realignments of power, finance, and security, which separate the “law abiding” from the “criminal,” the “legal” from the “ethical,” the “state” from the “nonstate,” to hide neoliberal criminalization of the poor and the racialization and Orientalization of lawlessness. Reactivating felt conflicts over the distribution of wealth and the morality of inequity and domination, reformist Muslims, evangelical Christians, *yan daba*, *yan Hisbah*, and other armed youth groups in Nigeria absorb and (re)produce colonial, military, and communal mediated displays of state and religious excess and power, embodied in the head of state—whether the Nigerian, British, Libyan, Saudi Arabian, Iranian, Chinese, or US head of state. These absorptions and reproductions of power camouflage and reveal prebendalism in Nigerian networks that are linked to global multinational state and patron-client systems of finance, communication, and security. Authorities in these networks use the frictions of policy and law—the regulatory slip-page and gaps—as sites in which to amass power and wealth, and through control of media conglomerates, to essentially “locate” prebendalism elsewhere, hiding theft on a grand scale.

## NOTES

1. Personal communication with Professor Phillip Shea, Department of History, Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria, July 19, 2004.
2. *Bori* is widely regarded as animism or a spirit possession cult that predated Islam (Besmer 1983; Greenberg 1946; Palmer 1973; Tremearne 1914). Scholars describe the *Bori* spirit possession rituals, practiced in Kano State as religious opposition to Islam, and as the expression of alternative or oppositional gender experience (Callaway and Creevey 1994). *Yan Bori* (followers of *Bori*) consider themselves Muslims, while Kano reformist Muslims variably refer to them as “fallen Muslims” or “pagans.”
3. Out of concern for the safety of my research participants, I have chosen to safeguard the identities of all research participants unless they hold public office and have the expectation that their views will be made public. I offer group affiliations and dates of my interviews to provide some contextual framing. This quote is taken from an interview with a member of *Hisbah*, Kano, Nigeria, August 3, 2001.
4. The Kano State government formed a Kano State Shari’ah Implementation Committee to address charges that *yan Hisbah* of the Independent Shari’ah Implementation Committee had abused their powers. They retained most of the *yan Hisbah* from the Independent Committee, but provided increased supervision and a written code of conduct.
5. Interview with a hunter, Yadda Kwari, Nigeria, October 26, 2000.
6. Many *yan daba* participate in *daukar amarya* (literally, carrying away a bride), kidnapping and raping women whom they feel have “slighted” or disrespected them, but these rapes are rarely reported. According to

a Magistrate Judge in Gyadi Gyadi, cases of reported rape increased six-fold between the implementation of Shari'ah criminal codes in November of 2000 and January of 2001. The Judge attributed this to a decrease in the number of 'prostitutes' available for older men, who had instead begun "turning to young girls" (personal communication, December 12, 2001).

7. These dynamics, not limited to Africa, have been well documented in Eastern European countries, Southeast Asia and South America where shifts to neoliberal market economies and the privatization of state resources are relatively recent, and in Iraq as part of the process of occupation, war and "reconstruction."
8. Interview with a member of *Hisbah*, Kano, Nigeria, August 12, 2001.
9. Interview with a *'dan daba*, Kano, Nigeria, October 13, 2001.
10. Interview with a *'dan daba*, Kano, Nigeria, February 23, 2000.
11. Interview with a *'dan daba*, Kano, Nigeria, January 29, 2001.
12. In 2003, Malam Ibrahim Shekarau, of the ANPP with strong support from Salafi patron-client networks, won the Kano State gubernatorial election, replacing Dr. Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso. Competitions for federal and state funds, as well as those tied to the political fortunes of nations in North Africa and the Middle East increased with the US War in Iraq, which diminished funding for public-private ventures in Kano State. In 2004, Muslim *'yan daba* (ward gang members) and *almajirai* (Qur'anic students), living in the city of Kano, brutally murdered their neighbors and fellow residents, referring to them as *arna* (unbelievers), *Kiristoci* (Christians), and *ba'ki* (strangers), settlers whom they held accountable for the poverty and widespread unemployment in Kano. This 2004 violence followed several months of communal violence against Muslim Hausa living in Plateau State that residents of Kano felt had been condoned by the inaction of the Christian Governor of Plateau State, Joshua Dariye, and the Christian President of Nigeria, General Olusegun Obasanjo. Local media such as the radio and newspapers detailed horrifying experiences of Muslim Hausa victims who had returned to Kano, along with the bodies of their dead relatives, and these stories intermingled with passionate, vivid descriptions of violence against Muslims in the occupied Palestinian territories and in Iraq. 'Yan Izala and Boko Haram capitalized on the affective dimensions of this suffering to reinforce and forge local-global patron-client networks for financial and political support, but their excessive use of "authorized violence" also backlashed, and led, in part, to the 2011 reelection of Governor Kwankwaso. It is not a coincidence that Boko Haram has recently stepped up its bombing campaign, targeting federal and state offices, Christian churches, and Christian services held on the federal Bayero University campus.

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ETHNO-REGIONALISM AND THE  
ORIGINS OF FEDERALISM  
IN NIGERIA

*Olufemi Vaughan*

With a penetrating theoretical explanation of the structural configuration of power relations in Nigeria's troubled postcolonial nation-state and society, *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria* critically focuses on the major themes that have shaped Nigerian politics—especially the rationale and logic of power—since independence. In many ways, this groundbreaking book is unique because it is among only a handful of books in Nigerian political studies that provides a systematic, theoretical explanation of the dynamic processes of political power in Africa's most populous and complicated nation-state, especially at a time when many political scientists were content to simply catalog the various issues that constituted the “crisis of the African nation-state.” Simply put, this landmark book's most significant contribution lies in its rigorous theoretical exploration of the interconnections between Nigeria's superimposed postcolonial nation-state and its diverse structures of society, paying careful attention to the dynamic nature of continuity and change since the decolonization process in the 1950s.

Joseph's preoccupation with the durability and dynamism of Nigeria's societal structure in the context of the historical processes of nation-state formation was among a second wave of comparative political science books on Nigeria. *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria* followed a first wave of theoretically innovative political science scholarship on Nigeria, shaped by extensive field research and published by American comparative political scientists in the golden age of Africanist social science scholarship, in the decade of African independence. Most notably, these include James Coleman's *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, Richard L. Sklar's *Nigerian Political Parties: Power in an Emergent African Nation*, and C. S. Whitaker's *The Politics of Tradition: Continuity and Change*



*in Northern Nigeria, 1946–1966*. These groundbreaking books set the stage for systematic analyses of Nigerian political studies, ushering in opportunities for and challenges to Nigeria's problematic federal republic during decolonization and the early years of independence. Because of the foundational contributions of these books, especially their rigorous theoretical explanation of the interactions between the structures of Nigerian society and the agencies of a modern nation-state (a recurring theme that is fundamental to the theoretical breakthrough in *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria*), it is useful to briefly return to these pioneering works. While *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria* (along with the Kenneth Post and Michael Vicker's *Structure and Conflict in Nigeria, 1960–1966*, and Larry Diamond, *Class, Ethnicity, and Democracy in Nigeria: The Failure of the First Republic*) provided a compelling structural explanation of the challenges of modern governance in Nigeria, these earlier works—though mindful of the formidable structural obstacles to Nigeria's political evolution—were more sanguine about Nigeria's future as a viable nation-state. Nevertheless, their powerful engagement with the structural foundation on which the Nigerian postcolony was constructed during decolonization, and the early years of independence is particularly instructive for our purposes.

A study by American political scientist James Coleman was the first systematic comparative political analysis to capture the character and nature of Nigeria's nascent nationalist groups and the political parties that subsequently emerged in the critical years of decolonization. For Coleman, the Nigerian region's extensive ethnic and demographic variables, with significant implications for the viability of an emergent federal republic, were essential to an effective articulation of the governance of Nigeria's diverse peoples during the transformative moment of decolonization (Coleman 1958).

Similarly, for Richard Sklar, Nigerian nation-state formation during decolonization entailed strategies of mobilization that strived to integrate antecedent structures and modern political institutions. Thus, a fundamental challenge confronting Nigeria's embryonic nation-states during this critical transitional phase of decolonization and independence lay in an intense struggle to reconcile an array of indigenous and modern (Western-imposed) structures into a viable system of compromise and accommodation (see, for example, in the case of India, Rajni Kothari 1974). However, by the time Nigeria attained independence in 1960, it was apparent that the massive political openings engendered by a highly contentious democratic transition had triggered an impending crisis of political legitimacy, exposing the contradictions between Nigeria's ambiguous public sphere and its increasingly illegitimate national political institutions that were incapable of unifying a deeply fragmented Nigerian

state and society (for an excellent theoretical explanation, see Ekeh 1974). Sklar's *Nigerian Political Parties* opened up an important non-Marxist conceptual framework for the articulation of how communal (ethnic, subethnic, regional) political elites defined collective political action in intense struggles for the scarce resources of wealth, status, and power (1963).

Focusing on the processes of institutional transformation during decolonization, C. S. Whitaker, in a compelling critique of modernization theory, contends that an emergent northern Nigerian political class—politicians and Islamic rulers—neither clung to a strict pattern of “traditional” government nor accepted “modern” elements indiscriminately. For Whitaker, political development in Nigeria's northern region did not involve a straightforward movement from a traditional Islamic aristocracy to a more modern pattern of constitutional democracy. Rather, political change during this transitional era was a complex combination of both elements. In fact, to underscore the dynamic interactions between the prevailing structures of society and modern political institutions, Whitaker rejected the fashionable binary of social change during global decolonization that tended to present traditional and modern as distinct analytical categories. To emphasize the centrality of a complicated process of political change and continuity—as well as the fluid interplay of the past in the present—Whitaker coined the term “dysrhythmic” to explain the “interdependence” inherent in complex processes of traditional and modern, revealing dialectical tensions, not immutable age-sanctified rules (1970) (for a good theoretical perspective, see Tambiah 1973).

In this chapter I wish to provide a revision of a foundational aspect of Joseph's interpretation of power configurations in Nigeria, especially in the context of the interconnections between ethnicity and class in the formation of the Nigerian postcolonial state. My analysis in this chapter will be limited to the transitional period between the Nigerian colony and the postcolonial state that emerged after political independence in 1960. Specifically, I focus on the structural basis of the prevailing communal identities that served as the locus of power configurations in the Nigerian state and society. Because Joseph's book primarily focuses on major issues that shaped Nigerian politics during the failed second attempt at constitutional democracy from 1979 to 1983, I wish to reflect on the contributions of *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria* by analyzing the structural basis of ethno-regionalism in Nigeria's initial attempt at a modern constitutional government during the decolonization process. By analyzing the construction of ethno-regional politics and democratic transition during decolonization, I hope to anchor Joseph's brilliant structural analysis of the politics of prebendalism, especially his deft analysis of neopatrimonialism

and ethno-clientelism, during what I consider to be the critical foundational moment for the rationalization of politics in Nigeria.

### CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVES

In analyzing Nigeria's historic engagement with constitutional democracy, I start with a conceptual analysis of the prevailing structures of society on which modern political institutions were imposed during the decolonization process. In this context, we should note the creative responses of indigenous political structures to the problems of modernization that evolved in Nigeria since the late nineteenth century. While these structures were integral to the process of social stratification and politics, they would have significant consequences for the struggle to legitimize the Nigerian state immediately after World War II. Under the control of British authorities, constitutional reforms during this period of uncertainty required the imaginative integration of antecedent structures with the agencies of the modern nation-state. The Nigerian experience exemplifies the dynamism of enduring traditional structures in modern national politics—a process that was effectively entrenched under the British colonial system of indirect rule (Afigbo 1971; Atanda 1973). The resilience of these communal structures is intimately connected to the formation of the Nigerian state itself. This is most apparent in the ways dominant ethno-regional political classes emerged to contest state power during the decolonization process.

As the driving engine of modernization, these ethno-regional political classes constructed and utilized communal structures as the medium for collective political action. Drawn from evolving ethno-regional blocs, ethno-regional political classes, as local and regional powerbrokers, attempting to harness collective political and social action, were deeply invested in communal doctrines that extolled the corporate character of local communities, even as they insisted that because of their expertise in Western ideas, they were the natural modernizers of the emergent Nigerian state (Hodgkin 1961; Smith 1991). This ethno-clientelist structure, drawing on Joseph's concept, planted the seed for the rentier state that subsequently dominated postcolonial Nigerian politics.

This is particularly significant because the theories and practices of colonial rule, along with a largely inefficient native authority system, were grafted on to contested neotraditional structures and doctrines in a turbulent and fluid nineteenth-century context. Rather than respond to the established traditional political order, these shifting contours of communal identities would provide the conceptual framework on which subjective ideological interpretations, drawn from a contested past, would define the dominant ethno-regional blocs in the transformative historic moment of decolonization (Smith 1991; Ranger 1993). With particular

reference to the construction of a modern Yoruba ethno-nation, Joseph, in retrospection between the Yoruba past and present, notes: “what remained unresolved throughout the Pax Britannica, and after a quarter of a century of independent government, was the absence of a stable hegemony among the Yoruba dating back to the collapse of the Oyo Empire and the subsequent [imposition] of new political suzerainty centered on Ibadan. That the Yoruba continued to live their history in the present in often culturally significant but also politically catastrophic” (1987, 111).

By projecting local histories and mythologies of diverse precolonial city-states as culturally homogeneous political communities, nationalist modernizers, in collaboration with traditional rulers, constructed ethno-regional projects that were precipitated by the exigencies of the formation of the Nigerian nation-state. Like the local struggles among elites during the colonial period, the hegemonic ideologies that were derived from the decolonization process—as expressed through communal, class, and ethno-regional media—were ambiguous as well. And since these traditional claims involved contested histories, they alienated those who were excluded by the dominant political class and its legitimizing ideologies. The resistance of those who rejected the evolving ethno-regional structure gave rise to countermyths drawn from precolonial and colonial themes (Peel 1984). The political significance of this grassroots structures thus lies, in part, in reconstructed histories of precolonial communities, contentious mythologies, and problematic theories of colonial rule. These ethno-regional structures shaped the direction of constitutional reforms and the democratic transition during the decolonization process.

Within these power configurations during decolonization, prevailing communal forces reinforced regional networks of power and patronage that dominated political behavior in a problematic federal republic. Looking forward, these forces were crystalized in Joseph’s penetrating conceptualization of the structural basis of prebendal alliances that rationalized state power and the democratic process in Nigeria’s second experiment with liberal democracy. In this context, Nigeria’s democratic transition reinforced the prevailing culture of ethno-regional aggrandizement and encouraged the propagation of communal doctrines and neopatrimonial political structures. This is, in part, what Joseph explains with the Weberian concept of prebendalism. In this evolving system, “offices are allocated and then exploited as benefices by the office-holders [and such practices are] legitimated by a set of political norms according to which the appropriation of such offices is not just an act of individual greed or ambition but concurrently the satisfaction of the short term objectives of a sub-set of the general population” (1987, 67). Indeed, within the first decade of Nigerian independence, it was already clear that a neopatrimonial system

had emerged to rationalize power relations within Nigeria's ethno-regional political class—and simultaneously—its deeply divided structures of society. The *modus operandi* of Nigeria's ethno-regional political classes was to use state agencies as instruments for personal wealth and aggrandizement. The state, in turn, promptly was held captive by ethno-regional political classes devoted largely to unbridled patronage. In a sort of vicious circle, the obsessive focus on regional power relations of these political classes heightened the salience of communal doctrines that, in turn, either reinforced or challenged major ethno-regional centers of power. In this structural framework of communal alliances, coalitions of politicians and traditional titleholders—such as *emirs*, *obas*, *obongs*, *obis*—fiercely competed for legitimacy in a fragile modern political system.

Consequently, it was partly the exigencies of colonial and postcolonial Nigerian politics that prompted communal powerbrokers to construct pan-ethnic doctrines and structures to tie together diverse groups in Nigeria's diverse societies. The durability of these broad ethno-regional groups reveals the importance of neotraditional doctrines to the old societies that were trapped in novel confines of the modern nation-state (Peel, 1984). Nevertheless, the uncertainties of the historic moment of decolonization exposed the profound structural imbalances between Nigeria's imposed nation-state and its formidable structures of society.

In this context, I map out the dominant ethno-regional political institutions and the communal structures on which they were reconstructed during the decolonization process. While I will draw from major regions in the country, my analysis of the dynamics of ethno-regionalism and the politics of decolonization will focus on the Yoruba region of south-western Nigeria.

### THE DECOLONIZATION PROCESS: ETHNO-REGIONALISM AND THE EMERGENCE OF NIGERIAN FEDERALISM

The process of decolonization in Nigeria was a creation of the rapid social and political transformation that had taken place during the interwar period and the years immediately after World War II. In this context, the decolonization process was not a neat break from earlier colonial sociopolitical transformations in the northern, eastern, and western group of provinces of Nigeria. Confronted with a prevailing tripartite political arrangement that had evolved from the amalgamation of Nigeria's northern and southern provinces in 1914, emergent political classes appealed to broad ethnic consciousness by reconstructing historically disparate, but culturally intelligible, communal groupings into panethnic fronts for collective political and social action. As new constitutional arrangements signaled a quasi-federal system, the instruments

of state power were located in new regional centers of political authority under British tutelage.

As political developments unfolded in the immediate post-World War II years, and with the future of Nigeria increasingly at stake, the British colonial government, under pressure from southern Nigerian nationalists, gradually transferred power to emergent regional-based political classes. The constitutional framework of this political system was rationalized by the Nigerian Constitution of 1951. The deliberations that led to this historic compromise reflect the role of ethno-regional powerbrokers in the construction of regional structures of power. The process of political institutionalization that emerged during this period involved a strategy of mobilization that sought to reconcile antecedent structures with the pressing demands of the modern nation-state.

A major dimension of Nigerian decolonization was a struggle between modern and traditional elites for power at the local and regional levels of government. For the politicians who subsequently controlled each of the dominant regional parties—the Action Group in the Western Provinces, the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) in the Eastern Provinces, and the Northern People's Congress (NPC) in the Northern Provinces—traditional and grassroots structures were vital to the initial strategies of legitimization that shaped the direction of regional power configurations. These regional parties provided the organizational nexus around which elite alliances and competition were organized. Consequently, while the AG provided the institutional framework on which the Yoruba political class mobilized support, the NCNC emerged as the party of disaffected Yoruba politicians and *obas*. Claiming to be the custodian of local values and aspirations within rapidly fading colonial native authority structures, politicians and *obas* dominated the alliances and conflicts that evolved during the decolonization process. It would be useful at this stage to discuss how major constitutional and political developments shaped ethno-regional power configurations during decolonization.

Vigorously debated by the representatives of Nigeria's major geopolitical regions, the 1951 Nigerian Constitution—the constitutional arrangement that set the stage for the debate that would lead to independence—gave extensive powers to newly establish regional governments—in the western, eastern, and northern Provinces through a quasi-federal system of government. Known as the Macpherson Constitution (for Nigeria's colonial governor, Sir John Macpherson, whose vision and commitment guided the constitution process), the constitution took effect after a year of intense deliberations by a drafting committee and a review conference drawn from the three regions of the evolving Nigerian federation. In the ensuing structural imbalance, the northern region (the old northern provinces—the geopolitical region with the largest

population where the Hausa-Fulani Islamic aristocracy had entrenched their power base under the colonial indirect rule system) gained major political advantage, as the new constitution sanctioned the electoral domination of the northern region over the western and eastern regions. In the dominant northern region, the Sarauta of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello—a prominent member of the Sokoto Sultanate ruling house who later emerged as the most influential northern politician—led the delegation at constitutional conferences (Proceedings of the Review Committee on the Nigerian Constitution Conference, 1951).

In the northern region, emirs and chiefs collaborated with educated commoners—led by Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, who later became Nigeria's first prime minister—to promote the interests of the dominant emirate elite in the evolving Nigerian federation. Northern delegates presented a cohesive voice on major issues that would shape power relations among the three geopolitical regions. They succeeded in warding off what they perceived as an onslaught from the delegates of the more advanced southern (western and eastern) regions and consolidated the political might of the socially and politically conservative emirate aristocratic structure.

As decolonization intensified, the gulf between the northern region, on the one hand, and the southern regions, on the other, was immediately apparent: on the critical issue of revenue allocation among the three regions, for example, northern delegates successfully challenged the formula established by the 1947 Nigerian Constitution (popularly known as the Richards Constitution, and named after the British Colonial Governor of Nigeria from 1943 to 1948), instituting a per capita system that gave weight to the dominant population of the northern region. Similarly, they insisted on a proportional representation system that guaranteed 50 percent of the seats in the national legislature for the northern region (see also Suberu in this volume).

In the western region, where the voice of the dominant ethno-regional political class—the Yoruba—was anything but cohesive, the decolonization process still encouraged the establishment of strong political ties between grassroots social organizations and a new regional political party. Looking at post-World War II Yoruba communities, anthropologist Peter Lloyd contends that although local sociopolitical organizations initially transcended “party issues and keep foremost their loyalty to the town,” these local groups would eventually “assume party labels and in time become party branches” (1955).

Similarly, the most powerful party in the northern region, the NPC, emerged in 1951 as the political offshoot of the *Jam'iyyar Mutanen Arewa*, a predominantly Hausa-Fulani elite organization structured on Fulani emirate doctrines. The NPC, led by Bello, was subsequently dominated

by an alliance between the *Masu Sarauta* (the Fulani emirate structure) and a small group of relatively young senior servants and businessmen from emirate societies (see also Umar in this volume).

In the eastern region, where indigenous political institutions were relatively marginalized under the indirect rule system, local and regional political parties still managed to consolidate themselves with the assistance of ethnic unions. The Igbo State Union, the central panethnic organization in the region, provided a rallying point for a cluster of grassroots organizations. The success of these sociopolitical groups, under the leadership of the Igbo State Union, contributed significantly to the eventual preeminence of the National Council of Nigeria Citizens (NCNC) in Igbo ethno-regional politics (Sklar 1963). In short, the connection of the Igbo State Union and other Igbo social groups to the NCNC compromised the progressive nationalist credentials of this premier southern Nigerian nationalist party, especially among an influential group of Yoruba elite from the western region. These powerful Yoruba nationalist modernizers were quick to dismiss the growing influence of the NCNC among Igbo leaders as an indication of the party's new agenda as an Igbo-centered political party. Their organized campaign eroded the popularity of the NCNC in Yoruba towns. This, in part, explains the basis for the formation and popularity of the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* (Oduduwa is the mythical progenitor of the Yoruba people) in 1948, and an ethno-regional party, the Action Group (AG), in 1951.

In the following section, I focus on the emergence and rationale for the formation of the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* and the Action Group, in the Yoruba region during the decolonization process. While many scholars have discussed the history of these important organizations over the past six decades, my main concern here is to highlight the rationale for their formation in the context of the ethno-regional frameworks and power configurations that were unfolding in Nigeria at this critical historic moment. In this context, I contend that Joseph's critical application of the theory of prebendalism to Nigerian politics requires a deeper structural and ideological understanding of local histories, myths, and traditions in the construction of modern political institutions, especially in the highly problematic context of a Nigerian nation-state system.

### BUILDING A YORUBA ETHNO-NATIONAL POLITICAL MOVEMENT

Initially, the primary objective of the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* was to foster unity among Yoruba subgroups that constitute the disparate Yoruba ancestral city-states, and thereby promote the interests of the Yoruba people through the encouragement of education and economic development.



The *Egbe*'s founders' strong emphasis on the mythology of the Yoruba ethno-nation led to a strong investment in the construction of Yoruba ethnic solidarity as the emergent Yoruba nationalist modernizers appropriated the myth of the legendary Oduduwa—a subjective, but tangible local history—as a symbolic focal point for the transformation of a fractured Yoruba region into a cohesive modern force in the evolving Nigerian federation. Thus, the political realities of decolonization, especially its salient regional dimensions, encouraged the *Egbe* leaders to emphasize cultural themes, especially the reconstruction of local histories and mythical past, to consolidate the contemporary social reality in a moment of significant political transformation. The Yoruba modernizing elite's embrace of the mythic conception—through a modern institution, the *Egbe*—in part, typifies the dilemma of many African nationalist modernizers during the decolonization process. Despite their commitment to modern ideas, the modernizers were still deeply invested in communal identities, most profoundly expressed through the reconstruction of an ethno-national Yoruba solidarity. Among the Yoruba of Nigeria's western region, this ethno-national identity, in effect, could only be constructed in the context of the exigencies of a highly contentious Nigerian nation-state. These were the overlapping local, regional, and national contexts in which an emergent Yoruba political class would struggle to consolidate the interests of the elite during the historic transitional moment of decolonization.

This was the dilemma that confronted the *Egbe* leaders who, in their attempt to legitimize their political claims and increase their popular appeal, embraced the custodians of Yoruba traditional political structures, the *oba* (the crowned kings of ancestral Yoruba states), *baales* (head chiefs of provincial towns and villages), and other powerful titleholders in Yoruba communities. Nevertheless, the Yoruba nationalist modernizers' political objectives and the rapid social transformation of southern Nigeria, especially since the colonial reform of the 1930s, eroded the power of *obas*, *baales*, and chiefly titleholders in the rapidly changing political and social context of decolonization.

Despite the apparent ambivalence inherent in the relationship between Yoruba nationalist modernizers and traditional potentates, Obafemi Awolowo, who soon became the most prominent political figure in the region as leader of the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* and the Action Group, admitted in his memoir: “the incalculable value [of traditional rulers] for the masses in western and northern Nigeria. This being so it is imperative as a matter of practical politics that we use the most effective means ready at hand for organizing the masses for rapid political advancement” (1947).

In their own case, the *obas*, *baales*, and other traditional titleholders took their commitment to the new *Egbe* seriously. This should not be surprising, since the cultural nationalism unleashed by the evolving Nigerian federal system gave the *obas* a new lease on life. Whenever new branches of

the *Egbe* were established in major Yoruba cities and towns, senior *obas*, as descendants of Oduduwa, presided over the inaugural ceremonies. Their dedication to the ideals of the *Egbe* was such that, in many cases, *obas* presided over local *Egbe* meetings in their own residences and palaces. In many cases throughout the region, some outspoken *obas* could not conceal their enthusiasm for the *Egbe*, serving as propagandists and spokesmen for the organization, while others encouraged wealthy townspeople to make significant financial contributions to the *Egbe*'s special endowment fund. *Obas* also reinforced their special ties with the *Egbe* by conferring honorary and traditional chieftaincy titles on its most prominent leaders. Despite the obvious political, pecuniary, and other considerations that often accompany the conferral of these chieftaincy titles, the titles evidently enhanced the prestige of local *Egbe* leaders as influential native sons within their own ancestral hometowns and as new regional Yoruba politicians. The *obas*' monopoly over these highly valued symbols of influence, power, and prestige was a source of material reward, as the *obas* often accepted gifts and money for conferring the titles. This title-giving process reinforced strong ties between the *obas* and the new Yoruba nationalist modernizers through the institution of the *Egbe* (Arifalo 1981).

Despite this formidable sociopolitical organization, the *Egbe*'s agenda was still too parochial to provide the expansive institutional base necessary for competitive regional elections, which was mandated by the 1951 Nigerian Constitution. The *Egbe* leaders realized that a political platform organized along the lines of a modern political party was essential to challenge the influence of its old regional foe, the NCNC, in Yoruba communities. On March 22, 1950, Awolowo, the brain behind the formation of the *Egbe* and its secretary-general, along with seven *Egbe* associates, met in his Ibadan residence to inaugurate a new political party—the Action Group, the party that established the foundation for Yoruba collective political action for about four decades. The primary objective of this new political party was to gain control of the western regional government in the 1951 regional election by mobilizing Yoruba opposition against the prospect of an NCNC government in the newly established western region. Given the NCNC's earlier influence in southern Nigeria, regional elites insisted that only a Yoruba ethno-national party could effectively articulate the real aspirations of the Yoruba people in Nigeria's unfolding federal republic.

Furthermore, as noted earlier, the Igbo State Union (an ethno-national Igbo organization similar in structure and mission to the *Egbe*) had assumed a visible role in the political activities of the NCNC by the late 1940s. The ties between this Igbo ethno-national union and the NCNC were so close that Nnamdi Azikiwe, the famous Nigerian nationalist and NCNC leader, assumed the position of the leader of the Igbo State Union from 1948 to 1952. To Azikiwe's detractors, involvement of an ethnic Igbo with an organization committed to the advancement of his own

ethnic (Igbo) interest, compromised the charismatic southern Nigerian nationalist's reputation as Nigeria's preeminent nationalist. NCNC leaders from other ethnic groups—especially the Yorubas, now working feverishly to promote the Yoruba-based political party, the AG—expressed concerns about the growing threat of Igbo domination in the affairs of the NCNC, and whether, as a legitimate southern nationalist party, it was capable of effectively representing the interest of the numerous ethnic groups in the vast western and eastern regions (Sklar 1963). By emphasizing the NCNC's growing Igbo affiliations, especially through its strong alliance with the Igbo State Union, the new AG leaders justified the need for a Yoruba-based party to serve as a counterweight to a purported Igbo domination within the NCNC. AG leaders further contended that, since the Igbo State Union reinforced Igbo interests within the nationalist NCNC, the Egbe should provide a critical linkage between the AG and Yoruba communities. *West Africa*, the subregion's weekly news magazine, in its obituary of Obafemi Awolowo in 1987, effectively captured the ethno-regional calculus of power so unavoidable during the transitional moment of decolonization: "to have been a Nigerian in the era before independence (the era of decolonization), and immediately after, meant that there was little choice but to operate from a regional ethnic power base. This was Awo's (Awolowo) lesson for Azikiwe, his alter ego, with whom he was locked in an epic struggle of love/hate, permanently foiling each other but needing each other, dooming each other by their very division, two buds on the single stem of [Nigerian] nationalism" (*West Africa*, 1987).

It was the regional basis of decolonization, especially the expansion of the electoral process, that created a need to consolidate the ties between the AG and the *Egbe*. AG leaders insisted that their new party must integrate its mission with the *Egbe* so that the latter could carry the message of the AG into the local communities. At the fifth meeting of the AG in August 1950, the party leadership formally agreed that the AG should be made the political wing of the *Egbe* in Yoruba towns. In addition, they pledged their support for the Edo Union, another powerful ethnic organization in the region, in which the *Oba* of Benin and his chiefs had assumed a dominant role (Sklar 1963).

At the inaugural conference of the AG in Owo, in the eastern section of the Yoruba region, in April 1951, Awolowo was elected president of the party while notables such as M. A. Ajasi, Gaius Obaseki, W. A. Mowarin, and Arthur Prest (Obaseki, Mowarin, and Prest are members of non-Yoruba ethnic minorities, showing the party's sensitivity to the interests of those minorities in the region) became vice-presidents. Bode Thomas (Oyo-Yoruba) was elected general-secretary, while Anthony Enahoro, an Ishan (another non-Yoruba ethnic minority) who became prominent in regional politics, and S. O. Sonibare became assistant secretaries. S. O. Ighodaro, another non-Yoruba member, was elected

treasurer, and M. A. Ogun became the party's publicity and propaganda secretary. S. T. Oredein was elected administrative secretary and M. E. R. Okorodudu and S. L. Akintola, editor of the regional newspaper, *Daily Service*, became the party's legal advisors.

Two months later, the party achieved a milestone in its bid to seize control of the regional government in Ibadan. In June, *Egbe's* leaders, *obas*, and traditional titleholders pledged their support to the AG. The decision of the traditional rulers was announced by the *Ooni* of Ife and the *Alaafin* of Oyo, two distinguished patrons of the *Egbe*, and the preeminent Yoruba *obas*. The AG subsequently won the majority of seats in the regional election of September 1951. Political mobilization in the western region operated largely through a pan-Yoruba ethnic alliance with minority ethnic groups dominated by regional politicians, *obas*, *baales*, and other community leaders in the various Yoruba hometowns and non-Yoruba minority communities. As in the case of the NCNC in the eastern region and the NPC in the northern region, it was a panethnic discourse deployed in the competitive context of the unfolding federal system and the ethno-regions that was critical for political success. Thus, as elite political interests crystalized along ethno-regional lines, the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* allowed for an effective political collaboration between pioneering Yoruba politicians, *obas*, and community leaders, laying, in turn, the foundation for a regional political party. In reaction to political developments in Nigeria as a whole, and to the need of an emergent Yoruba elite to mobilize protection and support, the AG was able to take power in the Yoruba-dominated western region. A strong pan-Yoruba, ethno-national ideology was the basis for its legitimacy and appeal; an evolving pan-Yoruba identity was the key to mass mobilization and support.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

A major dimension of Nigerian decolonization was a struggle of traditional and modern elites for state power at the local, regional, and federal levels of governments. For the politicians who subsequently controlled each of the dominant regional parties—the AG in the western region, the NCNC in the eastern region, the NPC in the northern region—ethno-national organizations and traditional political structures were vital to the initial strategies of legitimization that sustained regional power configurations during the decolonization process. In addition to these communal and indigenous modes of political legitimacy, the inheritors of state power also emphasized the importance of education and modern development that the old guard, traditional rulers generally tended to ignore. The processes of political institutionalization that emerged during this critical transitional period thus involved a strategy of mobilization that sought to

reconcile the antecedent structures with a pressing demand for modern nation-states. In many Yoruba hometowns, conflicting communal interests were reconfigured in response to the rapidly shifting social and political conditions in an evolving Nigerian federal system.

The *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* and the AG thus provided a formidable framework for the articulation of Yoruba elite interests during a historic moment of great political change, challenging the influence of the NCNC and its supporters. While the AG provided the institutional medium—within the western region—through which the Yoruba political class mobilized support, the NCNC, as the new political opposition, emerged as the party of disaffected Yoruba and non-Yoruba politicians, *obas*, and community leaders. Claiming to be the custodians of local values and aspirations within rapidly fading colonial native authority structures, traditional titleholders featured prominently in the alliances and conflict that ensued. The politics of decolonization must thus be understood in the historical context of precolonial notions of traditional authorities, the political configurations that resulted from the indirect rule system, and the reforms of the late colonial period that led to the major transformation of decolonization. Drawing from these prevailing sociopolitical arrangements, this Yoruba emphasis on the rationale for formation of modern ethno-regional political organizations—along with references to other regions—revealed the importance of reconstructed notions of history and mythology in defining neotraditional ideologies on which the structural basis of Joseph's concept of prebendal politics would have to be established.

These prevailing sociopolitical forces that were incubated during decolonization would have serious implications for political development in the Yoruba region and throughout the country. In the Second Republic (the period of Nigeria's second failed attempt in constitutional democracy), a period adroitly analyzed in *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria*, the earlier political alignments that emerged in the shadow of decolonization were revived and sustained in the entangled web of acrimonious partisanship in the Yoruba states of Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Lagos (and to a lesser extent Kwara) from 1979 to 1983, during the civilian government of Shehu Shagari (Joseph 1987). In the Yoruba region, many of the political cleavages that emerged in the wake of the Action Group (AG) crises (Post & Jenkins 1973) became effective instruments in the hands of what was largely the party of the Yoruba political elite, the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), and its northern Hausa-Fulani-dominated National Party of Nigeria (NPN). Similar to the period of decolonization, political confrontations between and within regional powerbrokers routinely appropriated neotraditional themes and historical reconstructions as they consolidated old alliances or constructed new ones.

But even in the intervening years of military rule, from 1966 to 1979, when formal partisan politics were outlawed by successive military regimes, the prevailing political alignments that were based on the imbalances of the precarious relations between the Nigerian postcolony and its diverse structures of society during the decolonization process exhibited the persistent dynamics of alliances and tensions among Yoruba ethno-regional powerbrokers as intermediaries between local communities and the regions, within Nigeria's problematic federal system.

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# THE PRECARIOUSNESS OF PREBENDALISM

*David Pratten*

What subjects will precarious Kings regard?

Dryden, *Conquest Granada* i. i. i. 9

## INTRODUCTION

A critical aspect of Richard Joseph's argument in *Democracy and Prebendal Politics* is easily overlooked. His analysis of the short-lived Second Republic (1979–1983) is well-known for identifying access to public office as the dominant political imperative in Nigeria, and that ethnic and regional identities became entrenched as a result of this quest for state resources. Less evident, however, is the basic, taken-for-granted motivation that sustains this prebendal system—insecurity.

Insecurity has several senses in Joseph's work. In the first instance he observes that individuals seek attachment to “big men” for protection and advancement in conditions of insecurity where “legal guarantees of physical security, status and wealth are weak or non-existent” (1987, 68). Joseph, therefore, draws on Sandbrook's (1972) analysis of patrimonialism where insecurity, conflict, and disorder were seen to derive from the “institutionless arena” of African postcolonial political life. In a related sense insecurity also appears in Joseph's work to refer to the politics of exclusion in Nigeria. In the conclusion to *Democracy and Prebendal Politics* he compares the Nigerian model with Clapham's (1982) analysis of Ethiopia and agrees that the appropriation of critical resources by one particular group over another generates a sense of “vulnerability and insecurity” that spurs on further patrimonial behavior. This is a vicious circle in which insecurity produces the very behavior that generates exclusion and further insecurity. Hence, as Joseph states, “in Nigeria, this sense of



insecurity is felt as much by those who temporarily win control of critical resources as by those who feel excluded from them” (1987, 191).

The state of insecurity, therefore, animates prebendalism. Insecurity, the perception and production of uncertainty, is more pervasive and more powerful than the lack of institutional protection and perceived marginality alone. Insecurity in this context creates an overriding sense of vulnerability, anxiety, and threat through the material assemblages that underpin, saturate, and sustain everyday life. This constitutes not only physical and material insecurity, though they are primary, but also uncertainty in political and epistemological fields. Insecurity is not an episodic moral panic as Joseph has most recently framed Nigeria’s “season of uncertainty” (Joseph and Gillies 2010) but the context itself (Vigh 2008), a permanent, radical sense of “uncertainty, unpredictability, and insecurity” (Mbembe and Nuttall 2004).

We may identify related concepts in Taussig’s “nervous system” (1992) or “siege” (2004), Lubkemann’s “social condition of war” (2008), Mbembe’s “state of war.” All these frameworks share features of uncertainty and lack of trust and produce “structures of feelings” that “generate and register” the contradictions and contingencies of lived experience. Mbembe and Roitman, for instance, refer to this insecurity in Africa simply as “the crisis”—the “incoherence, uncertainty, instability and discontinuity,” wrought by the conjunction of economic depression, instabilities, fluctuations, and ruptures—giving rise to experiences lived by people at all levels of society defined by physical and mental violence (1995, 324).

This chapter, therefore, attempts to capture several different senses of the relationship between insecurity and patronage, or the precariousness of prebendalism. This relationship refers to the context of insecurity that fosters and is fostered by prebendal behavior, and it refers to the insecurity of prebendal officeholding—the risks of being such an officeholder and of those who seek the support of such an officeholder. There is, in fact, an uncanny affinity between the terms “prebendalism” and “precariousness.” Both refer to states of social dependence. A prebend, an ecclesiastical stipend (a right to receive revenues), is by its nature uncertain or precarious as it implies dependence on the mercy of another and sometimes by means of prayer or supplication. Precarious, similarly, means to be vulnerable to the will or decision of another—though obsolete precarious once also meant suppliant or supplicating. In capturing the deeply social contingencies of insecurity and patrimonialism I find precariousness particularly apt variation of the more familiar concept of uncertainty (Whyte 2009).

This chapter, therefore, aims to illustrate the precariousness of prebendalism based on an ethnography of youth in the Niger delta and to show how insecurity leads to prebendal logics. The link between electoral

politics and violence in the so-called south-south zone of Nigeria is principally a result of a shift in the internal political economy of Nigeria's federation since the return to democracy in 1999 and to the associated redistribution of oil revenues. With increasing proportions of high oil prices being directed at the middle tier of Nigerian government, the federal states, governors in the oil-producing states of Akwa Ibom, Rivers, Delta, and Bayelsa have, and can expect, considerably more revenue than ever before. The zero-sum politics for access to these resources has given rise to the arming of street gangs in political campaigns as well as incidents of postelection violence when former political sponsors have failed to redistribute the spoils of office. Violence in the delta region and its hinterland primarily concerns these youth gangs and militia that have been armed by political patrons.<sup>1</sup>

### NIGERIAN CULTURES OF INSECURITY

Mary Douglas bequeathed us the cultural theory of risk perception—that risk and uncertainty are social constructions where society's common values shape its common fears and where consensus relates natural dangers to moral defects and social subversion (Douglas and Wildavsky 1982, 7). These ideas continue to inform our understandings of the political construction of insecurity, especially, the propagation of discourses of danger by the state. The contemporary literature on fear and uncertainty, for example, shows that the production of insecurities requires considerable social work and ideological labor.<sup>2</sup> Statist discourses not only provide representations of danger but also legitimating discourses for the state's disciplinary practices. In Nigeria “youth” has come to occupy a category of risk; it labels a dangerous, insurgent, and unpredictable force that threatens the social and political fabric.<sup>3</sup>

For Giddens (1990), the concept of “ontological uncertainty,” the generalized anxiety to cope with unseen and unknown risks is a consequence of modernity. Modern society, for Beck too, has become a “risk society” in the sense that it is increasingly occupied with debating, preventing, and managing uncontrollable risks that it itself has produced (Beck 2006, 332). A key feature of this theoretical literature, however, is its focus on a Western object of study, and we may, therefore, echo Beck's question:

How can non-Western risk society be understood by a sociology, which so far has taken it for granted, that its object—Western modernity—is at once both historically unique and universally valid? (345)

If different societies have different ways of socially producing insecurity, discursively portraying it, symbolically representing it and politically

managing it, we may ask with Bubandt and others, how useful is the idea of “vernacular insecurity” (2005, 277)?<sup>4</sup>

In Nigeria, for example, it is apparent that the subjectivities of young men in the oil-producing Niger delta region are fostered out of a generalized and profound sense of insecurity. In the creole pidgin of southern Nigeria this is captured in the concept of “the rugged life.” This conception of a tough, arbitrary, unpredictable life—in Annang of *ntime ntime*—trouble, *akeme itipe*—of anything can happen. How useful is this emic, vernacular perception of the rugged life in understanding the lived experience, the life worlds of young southern Nigerians. Is the rugged life a vernacular version of “radical insecurity”—a structural, epistemological uncertainty?

It is important not only to interrogate vernacular understandings of the concept of insecurity, but also to be more specific about generalized states of uncertainty and insecurity. On the whole scholars have addressed the concept of insecurity holistically, aptly reflecting the depth and range of its impact on subjectivity and experience. To analyze these processes, however, it is also necessary to delineate the key axes upon which uncertainty is experienced—material, physical, epistemological, and political. This context of radical insecurity is neither paralyzing nor entropic, therefore, but productive of modes of youth action—a politics of youth—based on niches youth carve out for profit and protection, evidence and truth. Hence, against this context of material, physical, epistemological, and political insecurity we must also trace the political processes that seek to conjure up “safe, imagined communities” and those contradictory practices that, while disordering, seek order and security.

The material insecurity of Nigerian urban and rural economies continues to be marked by stark inequalities. For the large cohort of “youth” in the delta region livelihoods are marginal and mobile. Many who are “stuck in the compound” find themselves in this precarious position precisely because a senior family member, their father, uncle, or mentor, had not been able to complete the sponsorship of their education, apprenticeship, or training. The material insecurity of the Nigerian urban and rural economies generates a range of practices for young people to get by. This cohort of the dispossessed turn to the transport sector in droves—touting at motor parks and riding motorbike taxis. It is against this context that the figure of the agbero—the motor park tout emerges. Agbero is a derogatory term for motor park touts common throughout southern Nigeria.<sup>5</sup> An agbero is usually a young man who loads passengers into taxis and buses, carries luggage, and can impose fines and impound unlicensed vehicles. Most definitions refer to agbero as street thugs, miscreants, and small-time extortionists. Agbero is a sort

of trickster who survives and can “eat” without having “handwork.”<sup>6</sup> In the moral reckoning of honest labor, taxi driving is “real” work, loading the vehicle is *agbero* work.<sup>7</sup> “*Agbero*” then refers to a mode of survival, and making do.

Physical insecurity is evident for most villagers, farmers, traders, and business people, in the violence wrought by the figures of the armed robber, the cult boy, and now the militant and the kidnapper (Pratten 2008). There is an episodic nature to perceptions of physical insecurity, punctuated as it is with periods in which families decamp into churches to sleep at night, but its persistent, underlying presence is undeniable. The young men of this study perform a “hypervigilance” toward such violent threats partly in the classical form of vigilante night patrols, but also because clashes with other youth groups and gangs, along with what is sometimes seen as arbitrary arrest by the police, are often cited as sources of physical insecurity.

Epistemological insecurity centers on anxieties over the authenticity of information and the veracity of claims in a highly generalized context of fraud, “419” tricksters, and everyday deception (Apter 2000; Smith 2006). In this context of fake licenses, fake drugs, fake policemen, and fake fuel causation for misfortune depends on the micropolitics of blame and on proximate social contingencies. These ideas are extended by Ashforth’s (1998) notion of spiritual insecurity in relation to the fear of witchcraft accusation and attack. A key feature of local practice in the face of the insecurity of knowledge is transparency. An imperative to transparency is born out of a fear of accusation—of taking the law, the deal, the money, into your own hands covertly and illegitimately. The social significance of transparency is evident in numerous everyday and extraordinary practices. Turning a conversation onto speakerphone to show to groups of angry young applicants that no secret arrangements are being made is imperative for youth leaders in their negotiations with oil companies and contractors. The public nature of the “rough music” of vigilantes parading a stripped and beaten thief through the village is also compelled by a moral imperative to reveal that bribes have not been taken secretly in order to release a thief.<sup>8</sup>

Political insecurity centers on the politics of belonging and patronage—the intertwining of political leadership and identity so neatly captured in Joseph’s concept of prebendalism. These exclusionary practices are configured in the logics of proving who’s who and have violent potential. In 2008, for example, some young men returned to the village in which I have based my research in Akwa Ibom State because a rumor in the oil city of Bonny circulated that the indigenes (the “sons of the soil”) were planning to behead strangers found in the town in order to assert their rights over employment opportunities with the oil

companies. Lines of inclusion and exclusion are constantly redefined between indigenes and strangers and at levels far below “ethnic” significations to lineage and family. Since 1999 and the return of multi-party democracy this process increasingly has penetrated to the most basic level of electoral politics—the councillorship ward—it is these wards around which constituents now mobilize—often on generational lines that makes youth as a political category an important site from which to investigate patronage. Sometimes uncertainties are opportunities. Youth routinely engage themselves in the practice of recruitment, appointment, and election, to vet or “screen” candidates on the basis of their claims to authentic indigenous origin and their character and demeanor (Pratten 2006).

Finally, and to concentrate on the topic of this chapter, risks are also attached to authority—patrons and patronage are precarious. The Nigerian political economy is defined above all by a mode of political rule and domination defined by personalized, patrimonial distribution and excess. As Jane Guyer (1992) argued, people engage with the Nigerian state through securing and making claims on public office that is seen as an imperative if unpredictable link to central sources of finance that in turn gives rise to modes of clientage and prebendalism that dominate the Nigerian political landscape. Indeed, we may argue that this process has only intensified in the often zero-sum politics of patrimonialism that Nigeria has experienced since 1999 (Hoffmann 2010; Obadare and Adebawwi 2010). Being without a patron is risky and capturing a patron is a necessary labor. In both situations knowing what patrons are doing is paramount and requires a constant vigilance over their behavior, consumption, and connections.

Political accountability, as John Lonsdale reminds us, is part of “the moral calculus of power; it concerns the mutual responsibilities of inequality” (1986, 128). This unequal relationship of clientelistic support and patrimonial obligation has played itself out most obviously in the post-1999 elections in Nigeria. As Hansen and Stepputat (2001, 26) observed, “transitions...from one political regime to another, are privileged contexts for the investigation of ways that regimes pursue and negotiate inclusions and exclusions.” As political patrons have become increasingly dependent on mobilizing youth around election time, as supporters and as “riggers,” the imperative for patrons to be seen to redistribute and “remember” these supporters has become ever more pressing. As I will illustrate further below, in order to ensure their own support and security politicians’ redistributive processes have become routinized, and at Christmas time, when even Abuja-based senators must return home to their districts, full-page newspaper adverts invite the public to a timetable of thanksgiving services and public engagements, to remember chiefs, PDP loyalists, and, of course, youth. Reports of politicians

being “embarrassed”—through physical assault and the kidnapping of their family members—provide a strong incentive to honor pledges of support to the youth.

No single ethnographic example will capture all of these aspects of insecurity or how perception and practice are formed by them. However, I present the following ethnographic sketch to provide a sense of how multifaceted insecurity is and how the practices of young men produce the insecurity that they are also victims of. Indeed, it is this production of insecurity that is constitutive of the prebendalistic system.

### DELTA BOYS

I had known one young man from the village where I’ve lived in Nigeria for about four years before the following events unfolded. He was 20 when I first met him, and struck a tall, confident pose. Akpan is a rugged guy.<sup>9</sup> He had been in student cults even at Okoyo Secondary School. He was a bunkerer in Warri, a street gang (*dewell*) member in Port Harcourt. He’d been an agbero tout in Mile One watersides in Port Harcourt. When I first caught up with him he said he had joined *agaba*, a banned cult, for all the familiar reasons (friendship, protection, and the performance) but also to use the spirit to identify the person responsible for the unexpected deaths of members of his family (including his elder brother who had been an armed robber).

Like many young men who had lived, worked, and fought on the streets of Port Harcourt he had come home to Ukanafun, a local government nearly two hours away, in 2003 after the clamp-down on the street gangs. In neighboring Ogoni villages these gangs had moved into the villages and had become implicated in local violence and chieftaincy disputes (Nyiayaana 2011). On his return Akpan had been working in a new motor park. Like many village and local government councils there is overwhelming pressure from young men to be given jobs by the politicians they supported during the elections. Often this means “tout-ing” or loading passengers in the motor park to earn fare-commissions. There is such demand for this work, in fact, that local governments try to create new opportunities to employ the young men—such as inventing new time slots or, even better, to license whole new motor parks like the one Akpan worked at, which was established in 2004 for vegetable goods. Working at motor parks and getting handouts, now regularized as skills acquisition programs, are familiar mechanisms by which local authorities attempt to keep violent youth on side and in check.

On December 4, 2007 Akpan and several of his friends, who together called themselves the “Niger Delta Boys,” intercepted a shipment of 49 drums of stolen (“bunkered”) oil being smuggled in drums through the creeks and out to suppliers along the main Aba-Uyo expressway. It had

become common practice for youth of each village through which the shipment passed to be “settled” with several thousand Naira in order for the route to be secured. The police and local government officials were also said to have been paid off to look the other way or provide protection in the case of the police. On this occasion, however, Akpan and his mates decided the settlement was not sufficient and stole this “stolen” fuel from “proper” militants, the real, heavily armed groups of Rivers and Bayelsa States. They quickly returned to Akpan’s village with a heavy machine gun and in the ensuing shootout recovered their oil drums and left one of the village boys dead.<sup>10</sup>

When I arrived for fieldwork over Christmas 2007 I heard that Akpan had been in police custody at area command for the past two weeks. When the police had swooped on December 14 they had arrested 28 “youths”—though they released 23 of them 3 days later (many had paid ₦50,000 for bail). The remaining five, including Akpan, had been kept in custody because the village council (the chief and elders of the village) had written a petition against the boys, the Niger Delta Boys, for causing the trouble with the bunkered fuel and because, allegedly, they had been pocketing a flat rate fee that they were supposed to return to the village authorities for the running of the vegetable motor park.

On January 7 Akpan was released and I caught up with him and his friend Aniefiok who had also been held. I bought them beers and they told me a story I found incredible. They said that at the Ikot Akpan Abia police headquarters they had been held in a room with 30 others. The room was so small, and the number of men so large, they could not sit or lie down. They stood, they told me, for three weeks. When they complained about the swelling in their lower legs, and showed me the running sores on their feet and calves I began to understand. The rations they received were so meager that they could as well have gone without food for one week. Many did not survive this ordeal. Still others, as their cases were progressed, were taken outside and shot. Akpan presented his survival as the triumph of his personal power, that his own spiritual, medicinal protection had kept him alive. A local politician, a former State House of Assembly member, whose guy-name is “Progress” eventually bailed the boys—no weapons had been found in Akpan’s home and no charges were brought. The boys who were released, I later discovered, were loyal to Progress’ political Godfather (a man who is appropriately nicknamed “Force”) and now these troublesome young men owed him their lives.

The community’s reaction to Akpan’s release and returning home merits a brief footnote. He said he was mobbed by friends and neighbors. Some wanted to know upon whom he would take revenge for the petition—“who will you finish first” they asked. Others, the more persuasive as it transpired, urged him to attend church. To repent, to forgive, to be reborn? He wasn’t sure, but he liked the attention, he had overcome an

ordeal that proved his strength, he was feared, and for the first time since childhood he took his seat in the Qua Iboe Church and prayed.

Akpan's story resonates with the concept of radical insecurity, and of the rugged life. The uncertain loyalties of patrons—elders who support and then accuse young men; politicians who denounce but secretly bail them. The unpredictability of authorities who are at once complicit in a smuggling trade they are combating. The assertion of identities of “village youth” securing ever more precarious economic niches. The conceptions of masculine power and protection through which the events are perceived—with contesting registers of spiritual presence bringing closure and order to events.

It is in this context of insecurity, a rugged, precarious life requiring vigilance and fortitude, that young men are liable to recruitment into prebendal political networks. These Niger Delta Boys, vulnerable to being denounced (in this case by village council elders), were incorporated into the client network of the ruling political party precisely because of their marginal position. Indeed, the precariousness of electoral politics, the need for “hard men” on election day who can “deliver the vote” (by fair means or foul), fosters precisely this patron-client relationship between political godfathers, officeholders and candidates, and marginalized “youth.” As Joseph identified, insecurity and vulnerability leads to the very behavior that generates exclusion and further insecurity.

### “THANKSGIVING”

This is not to imply that youths such as Akpan are merely “victims” of a prebendal system. Rather than identifying the dual possibilities of such youth as “makers” and “breakers” (Abbink and Kessel 2004; Honwana and Boeck 2005), it is important to recognize that their critical and violent potentiality is configured in precisely the creative forms and insurgent tactics by which marginality becomes a resource. As the following sketches illustrate, the apparent impunity with which youth are produced as clients is only one dimension and requires that we account for those practices by which youth navigate the terrains of the prebendal republic.<sup>11</sup>

These repertoires of accountability operate within a framework of implied or explicit violence and at various opportunistic nodes of redistribution. Hence, within these spheres youth groups have presented various responses including vigilantism, screening political candidates, monitoring local government expenditure, checking the award of compensation payments to local chiefs, threatening contractors and parastatals to complete development programs, and monitoring price controls. These modes of vigilance and accountability are configured



by internal imperatives as much as they are by the national and transnational political economy. They are intimately associated with the elaboration of constituencies and their localized rights of political contest and action. And, above all, they are about enforcing localized cultures of accountability that are shaped epistemologically by concepts of the person—especially the patron.

Political officeholding is a calculus of patrimonial reciprocity. Making account is judged in performative terms on the basis of the “achievements” acquired for one’s people (in Annang, *se enye anam*—your achievements for your people). Wealth begets responsibilities and it is in these aspects that one’s achievements are judged in terms of sending children to study overseas; educating poor people through sponsorship; donating in church; employing people in a company; entertaining visitors; holding the peace; and being truthful and steadfast. In short, accountability is judged in terms of redistribution (Ekeh 1975; Smith 2001). Petitioning and impeachment are familiar means by which the excesses of officeholders are screened and checked by youth associations and “concerned citizens” across southern Nigeria (Pratten 2006). The so-called impeachment mania of the 2000s has been distinguished by a public relish to invoke constitutional means against illegitimate or ill-performing political officeholders. In addition to petition-writing (what Guyer [1992] referred to as “the discrete overwork of the bourgeoisie”) the insurgent mechanisms by which the precariousness of prebendal officeholding is exposed takes a festive flavor.

The Christmas and New Year period is always a fascinating time to study local Nigerian politics. One particular aspect of social and political life that is thrown into relief at this moment is political patronage. Indeed, the politics of plunder and vigilance are perhaps most dramatically visible at this time of the year. The compulsions to return to one’s patrilineage, one’s home village to perform certain household rites, to give thanks at church and to celebrate the changing year in community meetings, parades, and events applies across the social classes—including elite politicians. Those politicians elected to state bodies in Uyo come home, those in federal positions based in Abuja must come home—and in doing so they must subject themselves to the claims of supporters. In these moments they are compelled to perform as good patrons and redistribute.

Christmas time, in fact, is now witness to a routinized and bureaucratized process of personalized redistribution. Taking out full-page adverts in the local press, politicians announce their intention to “give thanks,” and to attend “thanksgiving” services and events across their constituencies. On December 24, 2007, for example, the senator from Abuja representing the Akwa Ibom State North West Constituency, Senator Alyonsis Etuk, was due to conduct his thanksgiving in Ukanafun at the

local council hall. Live cows, bags of rice, motorbikes, sewing machines, and cash were presented to chiefs, party loyalists, and, of course, youth. Young men waited many hours to receive their shares, over which fights and scuffles ensued in the evening.<sup>12</sup> The publicity and public nature of the distribution belied the explicitly personal, prebendal process at work. It is through such work that politicians attempt to ensure support and security during the festive period.

Failure to meet the youth's expectations can lead to the familiar protest of dirtying a politician's clothes (with sand and water), but it can also have more violent consequences. On December 16, 2007, the honorable member representing the Ukanafun constituency at the Federal House of Assembly was due to give a thanksgiving service at the Qua Iboe Church in his home village. The night before, however, young men from a neighboring village broke into his compound and kidnapped his brother—demanding ₦200,000 ransom. They had supported the Assembly man in the 2007 elections. Their actions were interpreted generally as an attempt to seek recompense for their electoral efforts, and as a claim that since entering office the honorable member had not redistributed sufficiently well. Kidnapping has increased across southeastern Nigeria in recent years—originating from the insurgency against foreign oil companies and their workers, and extending out of the creeks and into the hinterland where family members of prominent wealthy families, and those with access to political funds, have been held to ransom (Osumaha and Aghedo 2011). In such circumstances prebendal office-holding is precarious indeed.

A final ethnographic sketch also concerns gift-giving but the consequences here are more nuanced than that of the examples of distribution and nondistribution above. On December 25, 2007, the local government chairman distributed his “Christmas presents” to friends and supporters. He controls a sizeable monthly revenue allocation. On Christmas day he presented a hamper to the Paramount Ruler, the most senior traditional chief in the community. The chief and his family expected luxury goods commensurate with his status—yams, goats, expensive imported whisky. Instead the hamper contained toilet paper, cornflakes, and washing powder. One of the chief's sons said—“you might give such a gift to a school girl, but not to a chief.” In response to this insult the chief's family returned the hamper. “There must be some mistake” the chief's son said when he handed it back to the chairman's rather perplexed looking wife. In local lore, “the returned gift is a tragedy to the giver,” and as such the local government chairman would either see that the delivery boy had seized items from the hamper, or he would realize that the gift was not of sufficient value commensurate with the Paramount Ruler's status. The following day the chief sent a note to the council itemizing the hamper's contents.

This additional paperwork was especially important—the family knew that the cost of the hamper would be claimed against the council chairman's expenses and that more than likely its value would be grossly inflated. By providing an independent receipt the family hoped to provide evidence that might be used one day, if necessary, to impeach and remove the chairman from office for fraud. Gift-returning, then, might be seen as a way of counteracting excessive illicit accumulation.

These examples illustrate Lonsdale's (1986) observation about the location of political accountability in the deep vertical politics of patrimonialism. Here the dyadic relation of patron-client, an intensity of social relations of inclusion and exclusion, is at work in shaping the political through tactics that are sometimes legal bureaucratic, sometimes criminal and subversive. By defining the limits of impunity albeit in an ad hoc, fragmented, and often instrumental way, these practices, which are clearly not located in some form of liberal civil society, but in a far more insurgent and ambiguous moment, provide us with a more accurate clue as to the nature of the micropolitical precariousness of a prebendal system that encompasses both the logics of impunity and accountability.

## CONCLUSION

To appreciate the myriad ways of being and knowing that can account for the contradictory and contingent ways in which order, security, truth, and justice are sought, however, perhaps the rugged life, the framework of radical insecurity, provides a useful perspective. Akpan's narrative, for instance, demonstrates how radical and rugged insecurity can be for political supporters subject to the uncertain loyalties of patrons. Yet youth also stand at the vanguard of a specific, localized mode of "insurgent citizenship" (Holston 2008) pressing, sometimes violently, to involve themselves at moments of redistribution. The cultural logic of impunity represented in the literature on patrimonialism in Africa (Bayart 1993; Bayart, Ellis, and Hibou 1999; Chabal and Daloz 1999; Schatzberg 2002) tends to depend on highly individualist conceptions of the state and of political action, and emphasize the role of leaders and "big men" at the expense of the lives, politics, and collective actions of ordinary people (Mustapha 2002). It is necessary, therefore, to examine the tactics of those who have yet to win and to study these localized struggles, and to recall Joseph's assertion that prebendalism is animated by insecurity. From this point of view, we are directed to understand the ways in which a long history of material and ontological insecurity in political fields is marked by the multiplicity of normative and regulatory regimes that produce techniques that evade a reductionist focus on institutions and interests.<sup>13</sup>

The precariousness of prebendalism points to the vulnerability of social dependence. A key feature of radical insecurity is a lack of interpersonal trust, a “crisis of sociality” as Simone calls it (2005, 517). Yet as he identifies, this also produces the possibility, the imperative for the creation of new sensibilities and collaborations. Hence investment in social relationship and the practices of being “social” (burials, meals, marriages), most notably political redistribution, are also investments in forms of insurance and protection and of forming relationships with people on whom one may rely for dispute settlement, bail money, and sanctuary. Security in this sense is an organizing principle both horizontally in networks, associations, fellowship, marriage, and congregational allegiances, and in the vertical politics of patrimonialism as relations with powerful patrons. The closer one looks, the finer the interweaving of security and sociality. In focusing on the circular dynamics of prebendal precariousness—how it is produced by insecurity and in turn produces it—we must add insecurity to the familiar tropes by which the Nigerian state is conceptualized. Dryden’s question, “What subjects will precarious Kings regard?” seems especially apt. When officeholding is precarious, what type of citizenry and what forms of subjectivity are produced?

## NOTES

1. It is estimated that there are around 100 gangs in the oil city of Port Harcourt, for example, whose members are said to represent “a standing army of the dispossessed” (Africa Confidential, September 10, 2004).
2. On this point, see, for example, Füredi 1997, 2005; Glassner 1999; Robin 2004.
3. For comparative, historical overviews see Comaroff and Comaroff 2005; Waller 2006.
4. Béland also concludes that “among the most pressing issues that require scholarly attention are the cross-national variations in the construction of insecurity...and the extent to which the framework developed in...reference to advanced industrial societies applies to countries of the global South” (2007, 336).
5. Agbero is a Yoruba word meaning “conveyors of passengers.” In Hausa-speaking areas Dan Tasha refers to the same category.
6. See, for example, Wole Soyinka’s play *The Road* that includes a character Samson Baba Agbero—King of Touts, Champion of Motor Park (Soyinka 1965).
7. To the public all motor park workers may be described as “touts” but important differences are derived from their union membership. Members of the NURTW (Nigerian Union of Road Transport Workers) who are licensed drivers and conductors distance themselves from their fellows who do not pay dues..

8. This revelatory logic applies in many familiar contexts in rural Annang society such as the disposal of poisons, and in the display associated with initiations and transformations of status (Pratten 2007).
9. I have used pseudonyms throughout.
10. For the broader context on the insurgency in the Niger Delta and its associated criminality—of bunkering, illegal refineries, and kidnapping—see Obi and Rustand 2011.
11. On the concept of navigation as a metaphor for youth agency see Utas 2005; Utas, Vigh, and Christiansen 2006; Vigh 2006.
12. Apart from Christmas the other key event in an officeholder's tenure (in terms of keeping supporter's happy) is the 100th day in office. When people complained that the State House of Assembly Member for Ukanafun in 2004 had done nothing for the community, he arranged a distribution at the primary school within two months. Recipients were prescreened and he distributed the following: 56 motorbikes (Klink, Skygo, and Grand King), 10 Singer sewing machines, 10 bicycles, barbing kits for young men (including clippers, mirrors, and generators), ₦10,000 for elders, and a car (Mercedes 190) for the PDP chapter chairman.
13. Ruth Marshall, personal communication.

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PART III

RECONSIDERATIONS

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY



## Epilogue

### THE LOGIC AND LEGACY OF PREBENDALISM IN NIGERIA

*Richard Joseph*

My country faces one of the most trying periods in our 52-year history: terrorist attacks; calls for splitting the country along ethnic lines, insecurity, inhumanity and alarming decay in our medical and education systems. It is now the children's turn to follow in our parents' footsteps, to take on the challenges of our time.

Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani<sup>1</sup>

We Africans we must do something about this nonsense

Fela Anikulapo Kuti<sup>2</sup>

The convening of an international conference in Lagos, Nigeria, in September 2011 to reassess the conceptual framework, prebendalism—formulated three decades earlier—reflected deep anguish over the misuse of public resources, the failure to establish a stable democracy, widening poverty despite renewed economic growth, and unremitting physical insecurity. With the support of Dr. Kayode Fayemi, governor of Nigeria's Ekiti State, two US-based Nigerian scholars, Dr. Wale Adebawo and Dr. Ebenezer Obadare, organized the conference and this edited volume. It is appropriate that this project is Nigerian in conception and direction since the theory of prebendal politics was nurtured within Nigeria during an earlier attempt to establish a sustainable democracy.

I began formulating this theoretical framework while teaching political science at the University of Ibadan, 1976–1979, and completed it as a member of the Department of Government of Dartmouth College. The research and writing were made possible by institutional resources of several institutions.<sup>3</sup> In the book *Democracy and Prebendal Politics*, first published in 1987, an acknowledgment was made of the sources for the “ideas and information” it contained.<sup>4</sup> They included “individuals who were actively involved in the politics and political debates in Nigeria which the author was able to observe at close hand between 1976 and 1979, and

for brief periods in 1983 and 1984”; and “Nigerians with whom he interacted on a personal and professional basis while lecturing at the University of Ibadan.” The final sentences of the 1987 book can also be recalled:

Consensual politics, government efficiency, economic resiliency and public ethics must evolve via a process of dynamic interaction. Such a process requires of political actors and commentators a long view of the contemporary historical period. There are no “quick fixes” for Africa’s postcolonial predicament in all its ramifications. This study of the political travails of Africa’s most populous nation ends, therefore, on a note of moderate optimism. After the completion of the current cycle of political rule by military officers, perhaps some author will have good reason to write of the political triumphs and temporary travails of the Third Republic.<sup>5</sup>

The “author” I foresaw could not write the “triumphs and travails” sequel because the Third Republic, contrived during the military regime of Ibrahim Babangida, 1985–1993, was stillborn. The “current cycle of military rule,” to which I referred, started in December 1983 with the overthrow of the Second Republic. It lasted until April 1999, in other words, even longer than the first military era, January 1966–October 1979, which included a 30-month civil war. The “long view” I proposed for considering “the contemporary historical period” has, a quarter century later, no end in sight. Also awaited is the process of dynamic interaction to achieve the goals of “consensual politics, government efficiency, economic resiliency and public ethics.”

### BEHIND THE VEIL OF AFFLUENCE

The conceptualizing of prebendalism can be traced to reflections that began in Oxford, England, during the summer of 1977. To make sense of what I had observed since my arrival in Nigeria in February 1976, I wrote an article entitled “Affluence and Underdevelopment: The Nigerian Experience.”<sup>6</sup> After the Nigerian civil war ended in January 1970, abundant oil revenues flowed through the institutions of federal, state, and local governments. Countless infrastructural projects were launched, especially for the construction of major roads. International companies responded to the shopping spree and imports flowed in. The Nigerian currency, buoyed by oil revenues, commanded high exchange rates. Some skeptical observers, including myself, did not perceive a developmental process in the spending craze. In my 1978 article, I compared the behavior of many Nigerians to that of individuals who acquired sudden wealth. “After a few years of dissipation,” I wrote, “the money has been squandered, the physical and mental health of the *nouveau riche* broken, and the glorious future of unlimited possibilities constricted into a bleak vista of regret and recrimination.”<sup>7</sup>

By 1979 I had realized that beneath the veil of affluence lay an intricate set of political and social dynamics. I first wrote about these dynamics in an essay, "Class, State, and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria," published in the special issue of a journal edited by my Dartmouth colleague, Nelson Kasfir.<sup>8</sup> In *Democracy and Prebendal Politics* published four years later, the theoretical framework was carried forward. The present project has inspired me to revisit this work. During a moment of growing national discord, and gruesome violence amidst the hardships, the bleak vista I foresaw in Nigeria has become more foreboding. This edited book project has, therefore, assumed greater significance than when it was first conceived.

### THE LOGIC OF PREBENDALISM

Akeem Lasisi, a Nigerian commentator, expressed succinctly the central reason for the September 2011 conference when he described the participants as having been brought together by a "living book."<sup>9</sup> Another writer, Bankole Oluwafemi, told Nigerians about prebendalism: "you're very familiar with this concept, you just might not know it."<sup>10</sup> He then quoted the Wikipedia page on prebendalism. This "wiki" has been steadily expanded by contributors and now represents an important introduction to the topic. Several excerpts, therefore, deserve citing:

Richard A. Joseph... is usually credited with first using the term prebendalism to describe patron-client or neopatrimonialism in Nigeria. Since then the term has commonly been used in scholarly literature and textbooks. The Catholic Encyclopedia defines a prebend as the "right of member of chapter to his share in the revenues of a cathedral." Joseph used the term to describe the sense of entitlement that many people in Nigeria feel they have to the revenues of the Nigerian state. Elected officials, government workers, and members of the ethnic and religious groups to which they belong feel they have a right to a share of government revenues.

Joseph wrote: "According to the theory of prebendalism, state offices are regarded as prebends that can be appropriated by officeholders, who use them to generate material benefits for themselves and their constituents and kin groups..." As a result of that kind of patron-client or identity politics, Nigeria has regularly been one of the lowest ranked nations for political transparency by Transparency International in its Corruption Perceptions Index.

Prebendalism has also been used to describe the nature of state-derived rights over capital held by state officials in parts of India in the early 18th Century. Such rights were equally held to be of a patron-client nature and thus volatile. They were thus converted where possible into hereditary entitlements. Max Weber discussed the prebendalism of India in the early Middle Ages in his book *The Religion of India*.

The occidental seigneurie, like the oriental Indian, developed through the disintegration of the central authority of the patrimonial state power—the disintegration of the Carolingian Empire in the Occident, the disintegration of the Caliphs and the Maharadja or Great Moguls in India. In the Carolingian Empire, however, the new stratum developed on the basis of a rural subsistence economy. Through oath-bound vassalage, patterned after the war following, the stratum of lords was joined to the king and interposed itself between the freemen and the king.

In India, as in the Orient generally, a characteristic seigniorie developed rather out of tax farming and the military and tax prebends of a far more bureaucratic state. The oriental seigniorie therefore remained in essence, a “prebend” and did not become a “fief”; not feudalization, but prebendalization of the patrimonial state occurred. The comparable, though undeveloped, occidental parallel is not the medieval fief but the purchase of offices and prebends during the papal seicento or during the days of the French Noblesse de Robe. Weber had previously discussed the prebendalism of China in the early Middle Ages in his book *The Religion of China*.

Feudalism in medieval Europe is usually the central reference point for discussions of patrimonialism. As the last two paragraphs cited above show, India and China provided significant models as well. Max Weber drew widely in his writings on patrimonial systems: “The office-holders in Weber’s decentralized patrimonial administration – feudal knights, Indian *jagirdars*, Egyptian Mamelukes—were able to exercise many of the powers which accrued to the patrimonial order as a whole.”<sup>11</sup> The appropriation of state offices as prebends in several countries parallel administrative systems that emerged separately in Europe. It is appropriate that Wikipedia, an open-source encyclopedia, makes it possible for many individuals to continue elucidating these systems of state administration that are ancient, early modern, and contemporary. It, therefore, parallels the exercise represented by this book.

Here are some key observations:

1. Prebendalism, as I conceptualized it regarding Nigeria, reflects shared expectations about the appropriation of state offices, and the use of revenues accruing to them. As Oluwafemi stated, many Nigerians may not know the term, but they know the practices and attitudes to which it refers.
2. To understand prebendalism, it is necessary to grasp what is a prebend. The dividing line is when the officeholder is able to *appropriate* the office, that is, convert it into his or her *piece* of the state. In contemporary Nigeria, and other peripheral capitalist countries, there is a short time-horizon in which resources accruing to the office can be diverted for personal and related uses, or for the capital accumulation

it facilitates. “The prebendalization of the patrimonial state,” in the Wikipedia excerpt, is, therefore, an apt formulation.

3. Prebendalism is not necessarily Nigerian. What I perceived was its entrenched and pervasive nature in that country; and how prebendal attitudes were woven into what Ken Post and Michael Vickers had earlier described as a “conglomerate society,” that is, a nation composed of cultural sections defined by ethnicity, language, region, and cultural practices.<sup>12</sup> Patron-client mechanisms were fundamental features of a dynamic system that linked the appropriation of state offices in Nigeria to the material and other aspirations of cultural sections of the population.
4. A key consideration is what happens to the state itself. A patrimonial order, under the authority of a king, feudal lord, or chieftain can be a stable one. A prebendalized system, however, is inherently unstable. Aspirations to build a capable state, a democratic system, and a coherent nation are ultimately foiled by prebendal practices. One of the questions addressed by contributors to this book, and others who should conduct the needed empirical research, is to what degree prebendal attitudes and behaviors are changing in Nigeria. I find particularly instructive in this regard Francis Fukuyama’s notion that institutions tend to be layered onto preexisting institutions.<sup>13</sup>

### PATRIMONIALISM, PREDATION, AND PREBENDALISM

There is wide usage of the terms patrimonialism, neopatrimonialism, and predation but less so of prebendalism. I expect that will change in coming years. Of the many authors who have made important contributions to these topics, I will focus on the work of three: Francis Fukuyama, Nicholas van de Walle, and Peter Lewis. Patrimonialism is one of the central concepts in Francis Fukuyama’s major study, *The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution*. Fukuyama, basing his analysis on the classic writings of Max Weber, distinguishes patrimonial from modern state systems. “Impersonal modern states,” he writes, “are difficult institutions to both establish and maintain, since patrimonialism—recruitment based on kinship or personal reciprocity—is the natural form of social relationship to which human beings will revert in the absence of other norms and incentives.” “The most universal form of human political interaction,” he continues, “is a patron-client relationship in which a leader exchanges favors in return for support from a group of followers.”<sup>14</sup>

Michael Bratton and Nicholas van de Walle, in their seminal study, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transition in Comparative*

*Perspective*, also placed patrimonialism (neopatrimonialism in the contemporary context) at the center of their analysis.<sup>15</sup> They provide a helpful description:

In patrimonial political systems, an individual rules by dint of personal prestige and power; ordinary folk are treated as extensions of the “big man’s” household, with no rights or privileges other than those bestowed by the ruler. Authority is entirely personalized, shaped by the ruler’s preferences rather than any codified system of laws. The ruler ensures the political stability of the regime and personal political survival by providing a zone of security in an uncertain environment and by selectively distributing favors and material benefits to loyal followers who are not citizens of the polity so much as the ruler’s clients.<sup>16</sup>

In my study of Nigeria, I had earlier argued that patrimonialism did not fully capture the practices and behaviors I observed. Of the many formulations of prebendalism I advanced, I would like to quote these specially:

In my adaptation of this concept to Nigerian politics as well as many peripheral capitalist nations, the term prebendal refers to patterns of political behavior which reflect as their justifying principle that the offices of the existing state may be competed for and then utilized for the benefit of office-holders as well as that of their reference or support group. To a significant extent, the “state” in such a context is perceived as a congeries of offices susceptible to individual *cum* communal appropriation. The statutory purposes of such offices become a matter of secondary concern, however much that purpose might have been codified in law or other regulations or even periodically cited during competitions to fill them.<sup>17</sup>

### FROM PREBENDALISM TO PREDATION?

The reflections of Peter Lewis, Nicholas van de Walle, and Francis Fukuyama complement those included in this volume. In a comprehensive essay, rich in empirical detail, Peter Lewis discussed the governance of Nigeria during the regime of General Ibrahim Babangida, 1985–1993.<sup>18</sup> He contends that under Babangida, and his successor as head of a military regime, Sani Abacha, a “special form of political and economic domination,” predatory rule, was consolidated:

The economic adversities fomented by the Babangida regime draw attention to a more fundamental change during this period, the shift from prebendalism, or decentralized patrimonial rule, towards predation, the consolidation of avaricious dictatorship. The personalization and concentration of power under Babangida reflected a new tendency in Nigeria’s political economy...State economic tutelage moved from a pattern of

diffuse clientelism under comparatively stable (though weak) institutional auspices, to more arbitrary and debilitating control by a single ruler.<sup>19</sup>

Lewis contends that predatory rule “should be distinguished from that of prebendal relations,” which has the following features: “widespread appropriation of nominally ‘public’ resources for personal or parochial gain”; allocations “patterned by ethnically-delineated patron-client networks”; and a “distributive arena” that was “largely decentralized” and in which “clientelist relations were diffuse.” Under Babangida, according to Lewis, “political authority and economic discretion” were concentrated “to an unprecedented degree . . . fostering the emergence of predatory rule.” The predatory order he posits had three essential features: “concentration of power under coercive auspices”; the augmenting of repression “by material inducement, requiring close discretion over public resources,” and “an enormous diversion of public resources for discretionary use” by “an elite stratum of loyalist officers, civilian cronies, and acquiescent politicians.”

Is predatory rule, we should ask, a distinctive political system? Larry Diamond has written pertinently about the rise of the predatory state in many postcolonial and post-Soviet countries. Much of his formulation is consistent with that of Lewis.<sup>20</sup> Under Babangida and Abacha, Lewis contends, a “more personalistic and predatory control of the state” emerged, reflecting developments in other peripheral capitalist nations. One of the key questions is whether the consolidation in Nigeria of a “purely avaricious dictatorship, or predation” ended the salience of prebendalism. The evidence, I would argue, suggests otherwise. Helpful in this regard, as earlier mentioned, is Fukuyama’s idea of the layering of institutional systems. Under Babangida and Abacha, Nigeria remained a conglomerate multiethnic and multireligious society. It is still one today. After serving for decades in the ruling echelons of military governments, these military officers were astute manipulators of prebendal attitudes. Predation was always a feature of Nigerian prebendalism. Babangida and Abacha carried the personalizing of supreme power—which they had benefited from as junior members of the military regimes of Yakubu Gowon, 1967–1975, and Olusegun Obasanjo, 1975–1979—to an extreme level using the control over, and selective distribution of, petroleum-derived resources. Yet, under them, and at all levels of the federation, the prebendal use of offices, and the ethno-regional clientelism that sustain it, persisted.<sup>21</sup>

Ibrahim Babangida, as Olusegun Obasanjo during his tenure as an elected president, 1999–2007, had the opportunity to move Nigeria toward a modern political system in which state offices would gradually cease to be prebends exploited to generate material resources for officeholders, their sectional clients, and their cronies. In a modern system, as described by Fukuyama, they would be principally used to conduct

public business in accountable and transparent ways, and in accordance with legal stipulations. This has not occurred.<sup>22</sup> The greater concentration of power, the repressive use of the state apparatus, the consolidation of an oligarchy of military and business persons, and further erosion of state institutions, as Lewis asserts, did take place under Babangida and Abacha. Their regimes may have been more repressive and predatory, and their systems of rule more centralized, than those of their predecessors, but the fundamental logic of the Nigerian system of revenue allocation, appropriation, and legitimation persisted.<sup>23</sup> A dozen years after the end of both the Babangida and Abacha regimes, Rotimi Suberu could write in this volume: “the Nigerian federal system operates almost exclusively as a mechanism for the intergovernmental distribution and ethno-political appropriation of centrally collected oil-revenues.” And, as another political scientist, Sam Olorunfoba, contends, predation in Nigerian is undiminished: “The politicians across the political divide are united in the rapacious looting of state treasuries, the result being the continued pauperization of the masses.”<sup>24</sup>

As the once excluded minorities of the oil-producing states of the Nigerian delta and contiguous areas corner central positions in the federal government, contemporary descriptions of the political economy echo what I wrote three decades ago: “The pervasive normative expectations . . . that the struggle for a share of public goods will be conducted and assessed along ethnic and other sectional lines . . . Such expectations . . . do not preclude egoistic appropriations by individuals or mutual exchanges among members of the dominant class.”<sup>25</sup> Under Obasanjo, in his second tenure as Nigerian head of state (1999–2007), and his successors Umaru Yar’Adua and Goodluck Jonathan, senior legislators have wrested a larger share of the enormous revenues accruing to the federal government—and the same is true at the level of state governments. Prebendal mechanisms keep the system going because there is always a queue of political aspirants for whom the path to personal wealth goes through the temporary command of state resources. Lewis’s essay captured what took place in many sectors of the Nigerian political and economic system during the Babangida and Abacha era. A complete analysis of this period, however, would show the layering and imbrication of predatory and prebendal practices.<sup>26</sup>

### FROM PREBENDALISM TO PATRONAGE?

An important effort to explore the logic of prebendalism in postcolonial Africa was made by Nicholas van de Walle. What renders his discussion of particular significance is that he earlier made, as mentioned above, important contributions to applying patrimonialism, and neopatrimonialism, to the study of African politics. In a series of articles, and a major



book chapter, van de Walle discussed the unique features of prebendalism within the general framework of patrimonialism.

In his essay “Meet the New Boss. Same as the Old Boss?,” van de Walle distinguishes patronage, which prevails in modern states, from prebendalism.<sup>27</sup> He describes patronage as “the practice of using state resources to provide jobs and services for political clienteles.”<sup>28</sup> Prebendalism, on the other hand, “refers to the handing out of prebends, in which an individual is given a public office in order for him/her to gain personal access over state resources.” In postcolonial Africa, van de Walle contends, “certain structural factors” led political leaders “to rely more on prebends than patronage.” One of these factors was the need for “intra-elite accommodation in young, multi-ethnic and poorly integrated political systems.” Cross-ethnic accommodation was facilitated by providing access to state resources through the prebendal use of public offices. Van de Walle shows the logic of an authoritarian ruler forging alliances among the political elite through the doling out of prebends; and the use of these offices, in turn, for “the mobilizing of ethnic constituencies.” Although the lion’s share of material benefits went to members of the political elite, ethno-clientelistic systems encouraged citizens “to vote for members of their own ethnic group, particularly in ethnically divided societies.”

Van de Walle’s delineation of the dividing line between prebendalism and patronage is worth noting:

Prebends and patronage overlap, but I wish to emphasize their fundamental difference. Hiring a member of one’s ethnic group for a senior position in the custom’s office is an example of patronage. Allowing the customs officer to use the position for personal enrichment by manipulating import and export taxes is an example of a prebend. Patronage is often perfectly legal, though it is frowned upon and constitutes a “gray area” of acceptable practice; it remains present in the bureaucracies of the most advanced economies of the world. Prebendalism, on the other hand, invariably entails practices in which important state agents unambiguously subvert the rule of law for personal gain.

As postindependence competitive party systems faded, so did legal constraints on the misuse of offices. Eventually, van de Walle argues, “the salience of prebends came to exceed that of patronage in most of post-colonial Africa.” His framework is helpful in distinguishing among African governments. In many cases, “regimes in Africa proved too weak to prevent clientelist systems from fragmenting and escaping any semblance of central control.” In Mauritius and Botswana, he states, there was little prebendal activity. Relatively effective public sectors could, therefore, be established while party organizations were “well-oiled with patronage.” Similarly, in the early years of the Ivory Coast under Houphouët-Boigny,

greater institutionalization was achieved through the fostering of “rule-based administrative behavior.” Ahmadu Ahidjo in Cameroon “kept a tight control of both patronage and prebends during his rule from 1960 to 1982”; while in Zaire under Mobutu Sese Seko, “state resources were almost entirely privatized.”

Van de Walle applies this framework to the first decade of resumed competitive party politics after 1989. In the initial wave, the modal party system of a large dominant party and many small and volatile parties reflected “the continuing importance of prebendal dynamics.” Individual politicians knew that “they are more likely to get access to state resources if they are in the president’s party.” On the basis of his analysis, we can expect that as legislatures wrest a share of power from executives, and as some countries (e.g., Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, and Zambia) evolve from single-dominant party systems, we are likely to see varying combinations of prebendal and patronage dynamics.

Several years after writing *Meet the old Boss* van de Walle revisited these topics in a conference paper, “The Democratization of Political Clientelism in Sub-Saharan Africa.”<sup>29</sup> He considered the possibility that competitive election systems in Africa will “shift the locus of clientelism away from the executive branch towards political parties and the legislature.”<sup>30</sup> Several other issues he raised are worth noting by future researchers. Van de Walle provides another statement on the logic of prebendalism that is insightful. It provides the conceptual clarity required for the much needed empirical work on the degree of persistence, or mutation, of these institutional and behavioral dynamics:

Political clientelism was often prebendal in nature, linked to illegal acts and undermined property rights... Officials of the state earn a low nominal official salary, but their position gives them discretionary access to resources because of the rules, regulations, and policies of the state, from which they are expected to profit. The selective implementation and manipulation of their own policies can allow custom officials to gain considerable revenues, ministerial officials can take a cut on state procurement contracts, or the officials of regulatory bodies can abstract bribes from the companies they are supposed to regulate. In Africa, following independence... most of the political clientelism took the form of prebends for top state elites.<sup>31</sup>

The comparative study of prebendalism, within the universe of African political systems that now includes an array of regime types from liberal democratic to neoauthoritarian, deserves attention. Van de Walle’s essays should encourage other scholars to take up the key questions and distinctions he raises, and also inspire them to apply the empirical research tools now available.

## PREBENDALISM AND THE MODERN STATE SYSTEM

Francis Fukuyama's magisterial study, *The Origins of Political Order*, makes a strong case for patrimonialism, and its various subtypes, as the default form of state administration in ancient, early modern, and contemporary political systems.<sup>32</sup> "Impersonal modern states," as was earlier cited, "are difficult institutions to both establish and maintain," because "patrimonialism—recruitment based on kinship or personal reciprocity—is the natural form of social relationship to which human beings will revert in the absence of other norms and incentives" (450). As was earlier cited, he contends that "the most universal form of human political interaction is a patron-client relationship in which a leader exchanges favors in return for support from a group of followers" (453). Even when impersonal state systems are introduced, "there is constant pressure to repatrimonialize the system" (453). Fukuyama does not use the term prebendalism as I, and others scholars of postcolonial Africa, do. He writes, for example, that "contemporary measures of corruption do not...distinguish between patron-client ties within a bureaucracy and prebendalism in which officials simply appropriate public resources without any obligation to take care of citizens."<sup>33</sup> As understood by Africa scholars, patron-client ties *are* intrinsic to prebendalism and the misuse of public resources.

A significant dimension of what Fukuyama describes as patrimonialism in ancient China, prerevolutionary France and sixteenth-century Spain, fits the designation of the "prebendalization of patrimonial states" mentioned earlier. In preparing the second volume of *The Origins of Political Order*, which will cover developments since the French Revolution, Fukuyama should ponder the important comment in Wikipedia:

In India, as in the Orient generally, a characteristic seignior developed rather out of tax farming and the military and tax prebends of a far more bureaucratic state. The oriental seignior therefore remained in essence, a "prebend" and did not become a "fief"; not feudalization, but prebendalization of the patrimonial state occurred. The comparable, though undeveloped, occidental parallel is not the medieval fief but the purchase of offices and prebends during the papal seicento or during the days of the French Noblesse de Robe.

Of the country experiences analyzed by Fukuyama, I will focus on those of China and France. Fukuyama makes a case for what would appear paradoxical, namely, that in ancient China a modern state was created "in Weberian terms" (135). China, he claims, "invented a system of merit-based bureaucratic recruitment" (113). Fukuyama focuses on the use of offices, which is also the central feature of prebendalism. "The hallmarks of the modern office," he writes, "are a separation between the

office and the officeholder; the office is not private property; the officeholder is a salaried official subject to the discipline of the hierarchy within which he is embedded; offices are defined functionally; and officeholding is based on technical competence. . . . All of these were . . . characteristic of the Chinese bureaucracy from the time of the state of Qin” (270) and repatrimonialized during later dynasties in the second century BCE.

Eventually, “the Qin effort to eliminate feudalism and create an impersonal modern state was undone; kinship returned as the primary avenue to power and status in China, a situation that lasted until the later years of the Tang Dynasty in the ninth century” (140). Interestingly, for students of Africa, “kinship and patrimonialism reinserted themselves as the organizing principles of Chinese politics” (140). To a remarkable degree, Fukuyama delineates the dynamics of a prebendalized patrimonial order familiar to students of postcolonial Africa, including the role of kinship ties “as the primary avenue to power and status” (140). Two millennia after the Qin era, a prebendalized system emerged in France. Fukuyama’s use of the terms “patrimonial officeholding” and “venal officeholders” are similar, in many regards, to how I, and the contributors to this book, use the term prebendal. His interpretation of what happened to the state in prerevolutionary France depicts, I would contend, the extreme prebendalizing of a patrimonial order: “the actual purchase of small pieces of the state, which could then be handed down to descendants. . . . Government offices. . . sold to the highest bidder. . . . Government. . . was privatized down to its core functions and public offices turned into heritable private property” (339).

In postcolonial Africa, it is only at the very summit of the political system, and notably that of the head of state himself, that efforts have been consummated to render the office heritable. This can be seen in such countries as Gabon and Togo. It is also instructive to be reminded by Fukuyama of the French coinage of such terms as the *rente*—to refer to “the selling of public offices to private individuals, entitling office holder to a revenue stream that the officeholder controlled”—and the *paulette*, entitling a *rente* holder to “convert his office into heritable property by bequeathing it to his descendants in return for a fee” (340–341). When Nigeria and other African countries are looked at through the prism of prerevolutionary France, the challenges appear utterly daunting: “The system created by the French government was an absolute nightmare. It virtually legitimized and institutionalized rent seeking and corruption by allowing agents to run their public offices for private benefit.” “If modern public administration,” Fukuyama wrote, “is about the observance of a bright line between public and private, then the *ancien régime* represented a thoroughly premodern system” (339). In reading Fukuyama, I was reminded of the key insight that came to me in Nigeria

in 1978–1979: that a vibrant premodern system was operating behind the paraphernalia of a modernizing state.

Fukuyama advances perspectives for which equivalents could be found regarding Nigeria: “The French state was thus a curious and unstable combination of modern and patrimonial elements” (339). Eventually, a “market in state offices” was consummated (370). Unlike prerevolutionary France, where “property rights in public offices” became legitimized (353), prebendalism in Africa, as van de Walle emphasizes, is mired in illegality. Fukuyama puts forward the important notion of “the bright line” (371). There is a *bright line*, he claims, in modern state systems between the public and private use of offices. The following statement about France conveys what is a major challenge to be overcome in postcolonial Africa: “The authority of the state had been built by empowering a broad coalition of rent-seeking elites and entrenching them in tradition and law . . . A modern France could not arise until venal officeholding was replaced by impersonal, merit-based bureaucracy” (349).

As van de Walle showed, state authority in postcolonial Africa was tied to the practice of accommodating rent-seeking elites. There are some cases, such as Kenya, where political barons have established a firm hold on public offices, informally rather than formally as in prerevolutionary France.<sup>34</sup> How, in such cases, will venal officeholding be replaced by an impersonal, merit-based bureaucracy? How did that transformation occur, according to Fukuyama, in France and elsewhere in Europe? Invariably, it involved a revolutionary process executed, in some cases, by force of arms:

The French Revolution was able to reestablish a bright line between public and private interest by simply expropriating all of the old venal officeholders’ patrimonies and lopping off the heads of the recalcitrant ones. A new political system in which recruitment into political office was to be based on merit and impersonality—something the Chinese had discovered nearly two millennia earlier—was then brought to the rest of Europe by the man on horseback . . . The nineteenth-century German bureaucracy that became Max Weber’s model for modern, rational public administration did not evolve out of patrimonial office-holding, but rather styled itself as a conscious break with that tradition. (371)

How will this “conscious break” in conducting public business be achieved in Nigeria and other African countries? Fukuyama does not consider how “venal officeholding” represents a qualitative alteration of a traditional patrimonial order in which the king, lord, or chieftain retains control of both the allocation and utilization of offices of the realm. But his dissection of what we would call a prebendalized patrimonial system casts a powerful light on a core challenge in Nigeria and other African

countries. The “absolute nightmare” in prerevolutionary France of “rent seeking and corruption” is familiar throughout postcolonial Africa.<sup>35</sup>

### THE LEGACY OF PREBENDALISM

Wale Adebani drew the title of his important book on corruption in Nigeria from a popular song by Fela Anikulapo-Kuti entitled *Authority Stealing*. Adebani quotes one of the stanzas of the song: Authority people dem go dey steal . . . / Authority people no dey pick pocket / Na plenty cash dem go dey steal . . . / Authority man in charge of money/e no need gun, im need pen . . . And he cites the song’s concluding lines: Authority stealing pass armed robbery / We African we must do something about this nonsense.<sup>36</sup> I could think of no more succinct way to describe the essence of prebendalism than as “authority stealing.” It is the authority entrusted to state offices that is stolen by those appointed or elected to fill them. The consequences, as Fela sang, exceed “armed robbery.”

My central aim three decades ago in exploring the dynamics of prebendalism was “to see what paths can conceivably lead from them to a more stable, efficient and democratic polity.”<sup>37</sup> Those paths are more obscure today. The contemporary Nigerian polity cannot be described as stable, efficient, or substantially democratic. Will the current “democratic dispensation,” to use a common Nigerian expression, succeed where all previous regimes have failed? Rising poverty rates in Nigeria, severe infrastructural blockages, and a demographically skewed population with tens of millions of “futureless youths” accentuate the levels of insecurity. Nigeria lacks a national railway system, a secure and expanding road network, adequate electricity supplies and sanitation facilities, potable water for most of its citizens, and satisfactory provision of other public goods of modernizing countries. Currently, dedicated public servants in some federal institutions such as the Central Bank and the Ministry of Agriculture are seeking ways to overcome these deficiencies. The same can be said of several state governments such as Lagos, first under Governor Bola Ahmed Tinubu, 1999–2007, and now his successor, Babatunde Raji Fashola. Nigerians in government, civic, corporate, and religious bodies are fighting back; but the challenges are overwhelming. One of the hoped-for consequences of this book is that it will provoke even wider waves of transformative action.

Reversing the dismal legacy of prebendalism involves uprooting prebendalism itself. But how can this be done? Nigerians are inveterate innovators. It is they who will have to design ingenious responses. States and local governments in India are constantly devising policies and institutions with the aim of generating transparent, accountable, and efficient public authorities. In Nigeria, federal, state, local governments, and nongovernmental institutions should similarly sponsor activities

aimed at promoting nonprebendal attitudes and behaviors. Could the difference between prebendal and nonprebendal administrative systems be taught in Nigerian schools, and other institutions? Could other accessible living books be produced and audiovisual methods devised? What role can Nigeria's dynamic Nollywood industry play in this process? In sum, how can the people of Nigeria be incentivized to dislodge prebendal practices?

Alongside the myriad challenges now confronting the Nigerian state and nation, a broad movement is needed aimed at developing modern administrative systems. The central theme has already been quoted from Fukuyama: "The hallmarks of the modern office are a separation between the office and the officeholder; the office is not private property; the officeholder is a salaried official subject to the discipline of the hierarchy within which he is embedded." There is a chasm between such a politicoadministrative system and what, to a significant extent, prevails in Nigeria. It is not the case that Nigerians are incapable of building and operating institutions that function according to a different set of norms. This is seen in the operations of mega-churches that efficiently provide an array of services for their congregants. And Nigeria has an untapped reserve army of millions in its Diaspora who thrive on building enterprises and pursuing professional careers that adhere to "the bright line." Can they take back to Nigeria what they have learned abroad and, if so, how? Alongside the remittances to family members and local communities, there is something even more valuable to be reinvested: the knowledge of how to build, operate, and sustain modern law-abiding, transparent, and efficient institutions. In such a grand venture, Nigerians could call on all the necessary human and material resources. Existing models worldwide can be copied and adapted. Expertise can be contracted from any nation in which prebendalism is not the default administrative system.

In my 1983 article, I wrote that "the self-destructive tendencies of this system must be thoroughly understood if ways can ever be devised to escape its debilitating cycle of renewal and decay."<sup>38</sup> It is hoped that this book will advance that process of understanding. When I asked Sani Umar, one of the contributors to this volume, how local and state governments in northern Nigeria used the resources available to them to try and reverse the downward slide of the region, he responded that most of them operated as did their counterparts elsewhere in the federation, namely, along predatory/prebendal lines. Aspirants to office, after garnering the votes of their constituents, proceeded to use their offices largely to serve themselves, their families, members of their identity groups, and cronies. From their researches in Kenya and Uganda, Bo Rothstein and his colleagues report on interviews that could have been conducted in Nigeria. They reflect the bottom-up dynamics that make prebendalism so difficult to transform:

If you have an office but have not stolen – if you have not helped your family – they are actually going to curse you... So there is pressure from everybody that you should take as much as possible... You eat on your behalf but also let some crumbs fall on those who are with you.

People are seeing their relatives and friends in high offices and they don't care how they get the money as long as the money is going to the village and they benefit.

If the State is allowing people like this [high-level public officials] to continue with looting, why should I be stopped from giving a clinical officer a hundred shillings to get faster health care service.<sup>39</sup>

How to engage not just political elites but citizens at all levels in the process of system transformation is the challenge confronting virtually all African countries. Three decades ago, I declared that “ways must be found to protect the state-power... from being prebendalized and then squeezed of its resources to satisfy the unceasing struggle among massed communities and their (self-serving) patrons for access to the public till.”<sup>40</sup> Sadly, there is no different message to be shared today. At the heart of the development process in Africa must be a revolutionary transformation in how state offices are perceived and used.<sup>41</sup> What can be added, following Fukuyama, is how profoundly difficult a goal this is to accomplish.<sup>42</sup> It took a very bloody revolution to transform the highly prebendalized system of monarchical France. No responsible person would call for such a cataclysmic event in Nigeria today. The country is currently wracked by terrorist violence that is provoking intercommunal and interreligious warfare. Is it possible for the equivalent of the French Revolution to take place in Nigeria via open, transparent, and democratic means? The technology is available today to make publicly known virtually every sum that is allocated to every office in the Nigerian federation (with the exception of “security votes” for federal and state executive officers). A powerful weapon against prebendalism is the cellphone in the hands of many Nigerians. The great creativity of Nigerians, and other Africans, in using and adapting communication technologies means that they possess some of the key instruments to effect the necessary transformation.<sup>43</sup>

During the prolonged global economic recession, accompanied by a crisis in governance, media revelations of corruption in many countries appear daily. Nigeria, which has become infamous for corrupt practices, is in a position to play a leading role in reversing them. Will Nigerians, especially the younger generations, knowing all they do about their own country's experiences, and the upheavals in many countries worldwide, take ownership and responsibility for engineering this transformation? I ended the 1987 book on a note of “moderate optimism.” Sadly, I can no longer use the term “optimism,” even with qualifiers. In my March 2012 lecture at Brown University on the topic “Can the Nigerian Project be Salvaged,” I said, using the metaphor of a sporting match, that Nigeria



was now in “injury time.”<sup>44</sup> In his remarks to the September 2011 conference on democracy and prebendalism, Governor Kayode Fayemi stated: “We have failed as a people to confront the fundamental structural challenges of our national togetherness and collective political life. Unless we...reorder the fundamentally flawed logic on which Nigeria has operated until now, we will not be able put the national state in the service of the diverse people who constitute it.” Prebendalism is part of this “fundamentally flawed logic.” Those who were children when I first wrote about prebendalism are now adults. To paraphrase Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani, they cannot wait for *their* children to take on “the challenges of our time.” By then, there may be no Nigeria to be salvaged.

## NOTES

1. “Reform in the Name of the Father,” *New York Times* June 17, 2012. Ms. Nwaubani is the author of the novel *I Do Not Come to You By Chance* (Hyperion, 2009).
2. From his song “Authority Stealing.” This is also the title of Wale Adebani’s book, *Authority Stealing: Anti-Corruption War and Democratic Politics in Post-Military Nigeria* (Carolina Academic Press, 2012).
3. In addition to the grants from these colleges, I was the recipient of a Fulbright grant, a research grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, both for 1978 and 1979, and a research grant from the Ford Foundation. The latter supported a sabbatical at the Center for International Affairs at Harvard University in 1981, where some of the writing was done.
4. *Democracy and Prebendal Politics: The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic* (Cambridge University Press, 1987). A Nigerian edition was published by Spectrum Books in 1991.
5. *Ibid.*, 198.
6. Published in the *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (1978): 221–239.
7. *Ibid.*, 1.
8. “State and Class in Africa,” *Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (November 1983). This collection was also published as a book: Nelson Kasfir, ed., *State and Class in Africa* (Frank Cass and Company, 1984). My essay was reissued in other publications, such as Peter Anyang’ Nyong’o, ed., *Estado y Sociedad en el Africa actual* (El Colegio de Mexico, 1989), and Peter Lewis, ed., *Africa: Dilemmas of Development and Change* (Westview Press, 1998).
9. <http://www.punchng.com/Articl.aspx?theartic=Art20110914175915>
10. <http://lordbanks.com/2011/09/on-politicians-and-professors-the-prebendal-conference-event/>
11. *Democracy and Prebendal Politics*, p. 65.
12. Ken Post and Michael Vickers, *Structure and Conflict in Nigeria, 1960–1965* (Heinemann Educational, 1973). It is pertinent that chapter 5 on “Clientelism and Prebendal Politics” in my book is preceded by the chapter on “Politics in a Multi-ethnic Society.” Also pertinent is the analysis and

- extensive information in Larry Diamond, *Class, Ethnicity and Democracy in Nigeria: The Failure of the First Republic* (Syracuse University Press, 1988).
13. *The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011). This is the first of a projected two-volume series.
  14. *Ibid.*, 450 and 453.
  15. Cambridge University Press (1997). See also by the same authors, "Neo-Patrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions in Africa," *World Politics*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (July 1994): 453–489.
  16. *Democratic Experiments*, 61.
  17. "Class, State, and Prebendal Politics," 30–31.
  18. "From Prebendalism to Predation: The Political Economy of Decline in Nigeria," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (1996): 79–103.
  19. *Ibid.*, 80. The other citations from Lewis are drawn from this article.
  20. "The Rollback of Democracy: The Resurgence of the Predatory State," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 87, No. 2 (March–April 2008): 36–48.
  21. A challenge to be taken up by a new wave of scholars is the need for empirical studies, especially at state levels, on how prebendal practices were modified or distorted during the wrenching upheavals, especially since 1990, from militarized to more civilianized systems.
  22. This assessment is based on several visits to Nigeria during the second Obasanjo era, many personal interviews, and participation in numerous group meetings. Two collaborative research programs, the Consortium for Development Partnerships (CDP), funded by the Foreign Ministry of The Netherlands, and the Research Alliance to Combat HIV/AIDS (REACH), funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, made possible many of these trips during the 2004–2011 period.
  23. Case studies could be conducted of the new level of synthesis of predation, as described by Lewis, and prebendalism. For example, by examining the political and economic networks of former governors such as Depreye Alamieyeseigha in Bayelsa State, or James Ibori in Delta State, it can be explored how predation was linked to ethno-clientelist attitudes and practices, from the summit of the federation to their local communities.
  24. Personal communication.
  25. *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria*.
  26. For substantial information on how these practices are sustained by Nigerians, while decrying them, see Daniel Jordan Smith, *A Culture of Corruption: Everyday Deception and Popular Discontent in Nigeria* (Princeton University Press, 2008). The extraordinary scale of predation, and its embeddedness in prebendalist attitudes and behaviors, is conveyed in Wale Adebawo's *Authority Stealing*.
  27. Published in Herbert Kitschelt and Steven I. Wilkinson, *Patrons, Clients and Policies: Patterns of Democratic Accountability and Political Competition* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 50–67. I briefly referred in *Democracy and Prebendal Politics* to the difference between a patronage and a prebendal system, 66–67. Van de Walle has fully explored that distinction.

28. Ibid., 51. All citations from van de Walle, unless indicated, are from this book chapter.
29. Third European Conference on African Studies, Leipzig, Germany, June 4–7, 2009.
30. Ibid., 4.
31. Ibid., 7.
32. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2011.
33. “The Pattern of History,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (January 2012): 18.
34. As shown by Jacqueline Klopp, the power of these barons often rest on vast landed properties obtained through the control of state offices. “Kenya Struggles to Fix Itself,” *Current History* (May 2012).
35. I raised these questions in a preliminary way in my talk, “Beyond Prebendalist Systems: State, Democracy, and Development in Africa,” at Stanford University on April 25, 2012. See <http://africaplus.wordpress.com/2012/04/30/beyond-prebendalist-systems-state-democracy-and-development-in-africa/>
36. Ibid., 153.
37. *Democracy and Prebendal Politics*.
38. “Class, State, and Prebendal Politics,” 22.
39. Anna Persson, Bo Rothstein, Jan Teorell, “Why Anti-Corruption Reforms Fail—System Corruption as a Collective Action Problem,” The Quality of Government Institute (University of Gothenburg, Sweden, 2012, 16. For similar commentaries in Nigeria, see Daniel Jordan Smith, *A Culture of Corruption: Everyday Deception and Popular Discontent in Nigeria* (Princeton University Press, 2008).
40. “Class, State, and Prebendal Politics,” 34.
41. See Richard Joseph, “Smart Partnerships for African Development: A New Strategic Framework,” Special Report, United States Institute of Peace, May 15, 2002.
42. Anne Persson et al., explain why most anticorruption programs fail, and why the system we have described as prebendalism require a collective action approach quite different from the usual panoply of reforms.
43. Sahara Reporters, an Internet media company began by a former student activist in Nigeria, Omoyele Sowore, is an example of the capacities that can be tapped by committed and innovative Nigerians.
44. See my lecture, “Can the Nigerian Project Be Salvaged? Growth, Democracy and Security,” delivered at Brown University on March 13, 2012: <http://africaplus.wordpress.com/2012/03/29/can-the-nigerian-project-be-salvaged-growth-democracy-and-security/>

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