



RESEARCH ARTICLE

PREBENDALISM: A STUDY OF THE ROCHAS OKOROCHA'S CIVILIAN REGIME IN IMO STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper examined prebendalism under the Rochas Okorocha civilian regime In Imo State spanning 2015-2019. Three research questions were raised in the study viz: What are the immediate predisposing factors to Rochas Okorocha prebendal rule in Imo State? What are the predisposing effects of Governor Rochas Okorocha prebendal rule in Imo State? What are the possible solutions to the threat? The following objectives guided the study which includes examining the predisposing factors to Governor Rochas Okorocha's prebendal rule in the State. The theory of "two publics" was adopted as a framework. The study adopted an historical research design since it is a quantitative research. Secondary sources of data were adopted in the collection of data. The result of the study showed that Rochas Okorocha regime in the State was prebendalistic and parasitic and factors such as societal expectations was a causative factor. The findings also showed that the political "Will" to respect constituted authority in the State is eroding and people's faith or trust in government and leaders is weakening. Based on the findings, the study made recommendations which include political parties in Nigeria and Imo State in particular should ensure that collection of Nomination forms for interested candidates is free to give the youths, those in the academia and seasoned bureaucrats opportunity to contest. The study concluded that we must plan a change since tradition and culture demand from us a hand-over to future generation.

Keywords: Prebendalism, two publics, civilian regime, societal expectations.

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

Richard Joseph's "theory of prebendal politics" provides and provokes stimulating analysis of Nigerian politics and federalism (1987). The theory shows that the constituent ethnicities of Nigerian Federal society are the basis for the organization, mobilization, and legitimisation of prebendalism ethno-clientelistic networks of patronage, corruption, and rent seeking. Suberu, (2013:4). Rochas Okorocha became the governor of Imo State after winning the 2011 gubernatorial election which saw the poorly led civilian regime of Ikedi Ohakim off. The first four years of his regime brought hope to the people of the State as a result of his realistic policies such as prompt payment of salaries of civil servants. When he re-contested in 2015, it was a smooth sail because he had the popular support of the people. Unfortunately, he's second coming turned to be a total disappointment to the people of the State.

Jean Jacques Rosseau in his theory of a "General Will" argued that "General Will" connotes the promotion of the general welfare of the people. The second coming of Governor Okorocha which he termed "The Rescue Mission" unfortunately brought tears in the eyes of people of Imo State. He turned the State government to a "family business". Appointments and resources of the State revolved around his family members and reference groups. Properties such as lands and buildings in strategic areas in the State capital were unlawfully taken from owners and distributed among his family members and groups. The regime became a terror in the lives of the people. Buildings belonging to the people were pulled down (where the owners failed to sell to him) all in the name of "city renewal." This was so obvious to the extent that any time the governor addressed the public and said "My people, my people," they would reply "My family, my family" implying that his regime is for his family only.

It is of importance to highlight few of his major appointments to his family members and in-laws. The son-inlaw (Ugwumba Uche Nwosu) who was his family driver that accidentally married the first daughter was made the commissioner for lands and housing and later the Chief of staff of the State government. It was the same son-inlaw he wanted to succeed him as the governor of the State. The father-inlaw of the second daughter was the Secretary to the State government and later nominated as a minister-Prof. Anthony Awuka. The blood sister



was the Commission of Happiness - a portofolio that remained incomprehensible to the people of the State just to mention a few.

It was as a result of these prebendal acts that Hon. Kmeka Ihedioha on corning to power in 2019 instituted a judicial panel of injury that was cut short as a result of his leaving office prematurely. The present governor-Senator Hope Uzodinma following suit, nullified the over one thousand (1000) certificates of occupancy (C of ()) belonging to Okorochoa and returned the properties to original owners. However the following questions are pertinent - what were the predisposing factors to these prebendal acts?. What are the predisposing effects and possible remedies? It is the above, that this paper in the main seeks to examine.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

A citizen encounters politics and leadership in the government of a country, state, church, town, business firm, trade union, club, political party, civil association, and a host of other organizations (Alapiki, 2004 p8). To him, politics and leadership are unavoidable facts of human existence. They are inescapable, and so are their consequences.

Many years after the creation of Imo State in 1976 leadership has been characterised by high level intrigue, bitterness, prebendalism and rancour that have left in its trail wanton destruction of lives .and properties. Today the State is afflicted by so-called leaders that are morally bankrupt, ethnically rusty and blank on the most basic demands of rulership (Akonye, 2008 pi). They have led a well-endowed state to the brinks of collapse and have invented the "State of nature" in a State bristling with natural potentials. They have hobbled every system and reduced the State to one vast colony of want, despair and destitution. Imo State case in leadership in even worse because with each attempt, its leadership worsens even as other States in the country have made conscious and appreciable efforts to improve. The sad aspect of Imo State own terrible case is that most of our afflictions are man-made and are sustained by a cabal that have made a solemn vow to ensure things get worse for the whole because it prospers their tiny cartel.

Moreover, after the regime of Okorochoa that enthroned parasitism, the creation of empire with State resources, there is the fear that successive governors may follow suit as the "cry" of the present sitting governor seems like that of a "new born" that may not survive not to talk



of taking the people to the promise land. On the other hand, the travails of the Okorocha regime have dampened the spirit of the people created political apathy among many and has evoked societal expectation among the Ibos that believe once one has the opportunity to climb an iroko tree, he should fetch enough firewoods for the opportunity comes once. Therefore it is on this background that the paper tends to examine the prebendal rule of then Governor Rochas Okorocha.

1.2. Research Questions

The following research questions are stated to serve as guide to the study;

1. What are the immediate predisposing factors to Governor Rochas Okorocha prebendal rule in Imo State?
2. What are the predisposing effects of Governor Okorocha prebendal rule in Imo State?
3. What are the possible solutions to the threat?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The following are the objectives of the study:

1. To examine the predisposing factors to Governor Rochas Okorocha prebendal rule in Imo State.
2. To ascertain the predisposing effects of Governor Rochas Okorocha prebenda! rule in Imo State.
3. To prefer possible solutions to the threat.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The study will be of importance to the following:

First, it will be of significance to the people of the State by exposing the immediate factors and effects to Okorocha prebendal rule. It will also help the successive regimes to be aware of the dangers of prebendal rule. Finally, students and researchers will benefit from the study because it will provide data bank for further studies.

2.0. CONCEPTUALIZATION AND THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK



2.1. Concept Clarifications

Prebendalism

It refers to political systems in which elected officials and government workers feel they have a right to a share of government revenues, and they use them to benefit supporters, co-religionists and members of their ethnic group. Richard A Joseph is usually credited with first using the term prebendalism to describe patron-client or neopatrimonialism in Nigeria. He described it as a situation where leaders or workers use their positions to benefit family members and their reference groups.

Civilian Rule

A regime where elected representatives of the people preside. The election must be free and fair as in constitutional elected people. Rulers or leaders are not imposed on people rather through a democratic process.

Immediate Predisposing Factors to Governor Rochas Okorocha prebendal Rule

Political writers in the world over have acknowledged that there is a relationship between prebendalism, parasitism and political decay. According to Huntington (1968 p 41), he argued that corruption has the formidable power to bring down regimes, cripple administration and sabotage economic growth. Akonye. (2004 p.75) argued that praetorianism in addition to corroding the administrative machine, makes its task much more difficult by destroying the good will of the people, and ensuring that every initiative of the government will be met by suspicion and hostility. The danger is that once the idea that all governments are merely bands of thieves strikes deep roots in the popular minds as in presently the case in Imo State, then the task of governing becomes exceedingly difficult.

As already stated in this work, Imo State is afflicted by the so-called leaders that are morally bankrupt, and blank on the most basic demands for rulership. The culture of corruption is firmly entrenched in the Imo State and this has predisposed successive governors to prebendalism. Moreover, the absence of tolerance and patriotism among our political leaders or actors is another worrying cause. Writers have argued that the introduction of capitalism by the colonial masters in Nigeria is the introduction of evil, such like prebendalism. To Inauga (1991 p.13) what is disturbing about corruption or prebendalism is not only its



persistence and prevalence, but also the increasing complacency with which it is viewed, and the consequent possibility of our getting to accept it as a Nigerian way of life.

On the other hand, societal expectations from the position of this paper has been seen as the main cause of prebendalism and corruption. To meet up with societal expectations, government officials require wealth accumulation through any available means-legal and illegal. Uchegbu (1997:16) averred that the Nigeria social system covering polygamy, extended family system, materialism and others exert so much pressure on the pulse of the bureaucrats. Madaki (1990:29) argued that some public servants are corrupt because they want to be so as the expense of their good family name, honour and dignity. Welzel (2005: 11) stated that the degree of individual involvement into civic life matters greatly to the types of civil society they create.

Finally, it is pertinent at this point to relay a short story from the writer's travelogue experience to enable the reader understand the hang of the argument.

In 1988 during one of the writer's visit to the University of Ibadan, I was shocked with an experience I had in a public transport outfit (bus). An elderly man in "agbada" (clothes) has stopped the bus and joined us. Shortly after he boarded, the trend of discussion and attitude among Yoruba native passengers in the bus changed. I suspected something unusual. As soon as we got to the bus stop and the elderly man went down, the Yoruba passengers started raining all sorts of insults on him. The man in question was once a Commissioner in the State and they were disappointed that he had to travel in the same old bus with them without having his own chauffeur-driven vehicle. This single attitude exposes societal expectation on leaders of the society. The funny or ironical aspect of the issue is that the same people who expected show of wealth from leaders are the same that often and vociferously condemn the prebendal acts of such leaders.

Effects Governor Rochas Okorocha Prebendal Rule in Imo State

The question that remains to be answered is how will Governor Okorocha prebendal acts affect the people of Imo State and the administrative system?

Political scientists and scholars have often blamed our current prebendal and corrupt system on mere incompetence and insensitivity of our leaders in the State. This in my opinion, is



unfortunate because the blame seems misplaced. The effects of Governor Okorocha's prebendal practices in Imo State on the people and successive civilian regimes and leaders are varied. Governor Okorocha's prebendal records in the State could lead successive leaders to embrace corruption which will be inimical to the socio-economic development of the State. Sanda (1991 p 58) seemed to have alluded to this fact when he contested that if the ultimate goal of public administration is accepted to be the advancement of human welfare, any pattern of behavior which has detrious consequences for public service efficiency or is inhibitive to socio-economic development cannot simultaneously be in the interest of public administration; nor can it be in the interest of the promotion of people welfare.

Secondly, another effect in that it may reduce the level of public morality (especially when leaders are involved) other people get involved in order to obtain their "share." This is also the view of Sanda (1991 p 59). Further consequence could be seen in the mad rush for electoral positions in the last 2019 general election in the State. The picture in one that people or candidates who failed to win the gubernatorial primaries had to condescend so low to vie for either State House of Assembly or Local Government because what matters most is to be in government to 'grab'. Needless to assert that such tendencies have the viable implication of under-developing our State as Walter Rodney would argue.

Collary to this, the political Will to respect constituted authority erodes and weakens people's faith or trust in government and leaders. Many citizens in the State have become apolitical to government policies and programmes. The belief among some citizens in the State is that our hope is squandered and our State ravaged by our prebendal leaders. The aftermath therefore is that Imo is becoming a pariah State with what one may call "abiku" socio-economic development.

Finally, the most irritating effect of prebendal acts can be seen from the prevalence of societal lust for economic prosperity at the expense of morality, (Sanda, 1958 p 171). According to him, the race after money and things that money can buy had so permeated the everyday pre-occupation of Nigerians. The service to families, community, State or Nation appears to have become secondary to service for money and self. The implication for this today in Nigeria and Imo State in particular, include the continual workers demand for higher wages, the



increasing rate of armed robbery attacks the debasement of womanhood through refined prostitution among both the single and married all in the rush for money.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

The subject matter of the paper could be predicated on several theoretical platforms, especially in the social and management sciences where perspectives often differ based on a scholar's orientation and worldview. It is in the light of the foregoing that one undertakes this endeavour. When issues of leadership, prebendalism, corruption and governance are mentioned in contemporary times, the political culture, elite theory, theory of two publics and nature society theories come to mind. While other theories may be relevant in their right, this paper is anchored on the theory of Two Publics

Many scholars of African descent and politics such as Osaghae (1988) and Ekeh (1975) have traced the problem of leadership and corruption in Africa to the debauchery of colonialism. Theory of two publics is credible not only in the understanding of the State and its predicaments in Africa but also in providing important explanations for the pandemic leadership deficit, corruption and bad governance ravaging African countries. Ekeh (1975) argued that one of the most striking impacts of colonialism was the emergence of two public realms, which related differently with the private realm in terms of morality. For Nigeria in particular and Africa in general, Ekeh argued that only rights (ie benefits) are expected from the State by its citizens who owe duties (responsibilities) to a native sector. The former forms the basis of an "amoral civic public realm" and the latter a 'moral primordial public realm.' Therefore, the civic public realm was associated with illegitimate and exploitative colonial rule and had no moral linkages with the private realm. It was an amoral public realm in which cheating the system was considered a patriotic duty (Ifidon, 1996).

The result is that the same actors operate in the two realms, the State apparatus is employed to fatten the nest of the primordial' public, thereby making corruption and prebendalism, nepotism, impurity and ethnicity to mention a few the hallmark of the civil public (Osaghae, 1988). According to Hkeh (1975);

A good citizen of the primordial public given out and asks for nothing in return, a lucky citizen of the civic public gains from the public but enjoys escaping giving anything in return whenever he can. But such a lucky man would not be a good man when he channels part of the largesse from the civic public to the



primordial public. That is the logic of the dialectics. The unwritten law of the dialectics is that it is legitimate to rob the civic public in order to strengthen the primordial public.

The relevance of the theory to this paper is that it has provided a framework for understanding the wide gap between the leaders (Governor Okorocha) civic public and the followers (people of Imo State) primordial public. These disconnect between the leader and the citizens are evident. The snag here is that the leaders did not emerge from among the people, rather they were imposed on them by godfathers and political parties. Since the 'elected' officials are not accountable to the people, they engage in corrupt act and bad governance with impunity at the expense of the ordinary citizens hence Governor Rochas Okorocha prebendal ravages in Imo State.

3.0. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the historical research design. Data are collected from secondary sources viz, journals, newspapers, internet and Textbooks. The essence is to ensure thoroughness and to avoid any personal influence.

Celebrated indices of Governor Okorocha's prebendal acts in Imo State

AMAKOHIA

Name of Allotees

1. Ndubuisi Ezenwa Nwige
2. Ohover Osuji
3. Barr. J.A. Onuoha

Location of Properties

- Ohia Akwa Egbelu Umuodu Owerri
- Nwapiti land Umudagu Mbieri
- Plot 1326 Amakohia Akwakuma Layout

CENTRAL MARKET NEW AREA

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 4. Ibe Emmanuel N. | Warehouse 7 |
| 5. Nnodimele Fidelia N. | c/23 Motor Park Site |
| 6. Donez Global Services Ltd. | Central Market |
| 7. Joy Jonny Joyson Enterprises | Centra! Park New Owerri |
| 8. Ekwedasike Ozims | c/9 Central Market Motor Park |
| 9. Emerenini Mercelinus C. | Park Extension |

10. OWERRI METROPOLIS

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| 11. Methodist church Nig. | 22-24 Mann Street (land between Mann) Street and Wethedral Road. |
| 12. Ministry of Education | Emmanuel College Old Students Association |
| 13. C.T. Anvanwu | Emmanuel College Owerri |

Source: Imo State Implementation Committee on land and Related Matters.



Note: The above stated properties were forcefully appropriated by Governor Okorocha and were returned to original owners via panel of inquiry set up by the present Governor Senator Hope Uzodinma. As earlier noted, Okorocha had over one thousand (1000) certificate of occupancy.

(C of O) which the present regime nullified. See Appendix 'A' for more details.

4.0. DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE WAY FORWARD

This paper has argued elsewhere that corruption had become a way of life for Nigeria in general and Imo State in particular and therefore part of our political culture. But this is not without a hope for improvement so far we are ready to change our orientation and expectation for the better. It does not in any way portray that Imo State people are yet a people without consciences. It is painfully well known that our contemporary Nigeria society which Imo State is part is so wrongly politicized, so sectionally focused, and so full of individual enthusiasm to convert any socio-political position and social responsibility into materialistic resources, that the threat of societal collapse is apparently not distant (Otite, 1995 p 6). It is perhaps relieving to hope that this development is a passing one, and as one can suggest, we can hasten its departure. One is positive about Imo State future and believes that it is salvable and savagable. Therefore the writer's suggestions are precisely two-edged.

First, this paper quickly suggest that since good leadership is also a product of good and critical fellowship, (therefore the rest of the society) followers should not live as praise singers, boot-leakers or self-seeking State destroyers and materialistic upstairs as Otite (1995 p 21) contended but should also play the role of watchdogs, and avoid falling victims of the theory of baits or carriots as spite of their poverty. This is because followers constitute either asset or liability to good leadership.

Secondly, only virtuous and transparent men who hold the good and welfare of others at hearts as J.J Rousseau would argue in his theory of "General will" should be elected or appointed leaders. The family background, social and economic upbringing including any form of deprivation, shortcomings and merits of these statemen likely to have any bearing on transparent leadership should be highly and thoroughly examined to avoid any one mentally,



morally emotionally and physical unstable and defective, lobbying and getting into government positions.

5.0. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Conclusion

We must plan a change since tradition and culture demand from us a hand-over to future generation. The hang of the argument here is since the present or disappearing generation and our leaders are performing far below expectations, what they will hand over to the next generation and their leaders in the prevailing atmosphere of prebendalism, corruption, moral decadence, inefficiency, and dishonesty will breed disaster to the State in particular and Nigeria generally unless the change comes.

5.2. Recommendations

Previous researchers have recommended re-orientation, accountability, free and fair elections etc. as panacea. This paper argues that the above are mere remote solutions.

First, all political parties in Nigeria in general, and Imo State in particular should ensure that collection of Nomination forms for interested candidates is free to give opportunity to the youths, those in the academia, seasoned bureaucrats to participate. The otherwise of the above, will continue to leave us at the mercies of the corrupt circulating elites. The Federal and State governments, National and State Assemblies should ensure this.

Secondly, the National Assembly should go back to the drawing board to enact a law mandatory to all elected and appointed leaders to resign before picking nomination forms in order to neutralize the power and dangers of incumbency and to ensure a free and fair election at all levels.

Finally, this recommendation may look embarrassing. What Imo State requires is total revolution. Therefore all political leaders that have tested power since creation of the State should be arrested and executed or better jailed for life to serve as deterrent to future leaders. Jerry Rawlings did it in Ghana. Therefore a Sampson that can provide a "vanguard" can come to.



Competing Interest

The authors have declared that no conflicting interest exist in this manuscript.

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