

LINUS MARVELOS NNATUANYA'S *THE FROZEN DEMOCRACY: GODFATHERISM & ELITE CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA* (2006). PLACE OF PUBLICATION: ENUGU, NIGERIA. PUBLISHER: TRIUMPHANT CREATIONS. NUMBER OF PAGES: 144. ISBN: 978-3667-27-3. PRICE: NOT STATED.

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The Frozen Democracy: Godfatherism and Elite Corruption in Nigeria follows in the footsteps of contemporary political science as well as leadership books on Nigeria's postcolonial condition. It is a book of seven chapters; it also has an epilogue that catalogues the incidence of brazen client-patron culture in Nigerian politics and its ancillary woes that reverberate with disempowerment of people, who ought to constitute the epicentre of politics as well as the reason for politicking:

Two of the major political and social behaviours that have Continued to dominate Nigerian polity since independence are the prebendal and the clientele practices among politicians and public servants. It can be argued that most of the politicians currently holding various offices in Nigerian [sic] were not motivated by true patriotism to serve the nation rather they were driven by greed and the pathological urge to loot in order to enhance their parochial interests ... In his 'Essay in Sociology', Max Weber conceptualised a prebendal state as a situation where certain amount of money is set aside permanently for rewarding state officials (p. 60).

The book reads from the same page as Richard Joseph's *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: the Rise and Fall of the Second Republic* (1987). Understandably, from the conceptualisation of elitism starting from Vilfredo Pareto to Gaetano Mosca and to Harold Lasswell, the overarching view is that elitist or prebendal politics is synonymous with killing healthy political values and virtue on the altar of self and greed as well as what Wole Soyinka (2004) has identified as "discounting the electorates".

Nnatuanya's gist in the book inheres in hijacking the public sphere as well as impoverishing the people by a few: the powerful, the rich, the elite and "big men", Nigeria's localism for the elite. This is what the Nigerian Nobel laureate, Wole Soyinka, characterised as "discounting of the electorates". The late Claude Ake, one of Africa's most formidable political economists, dubbed this operation the "privatisation of the public space" by the political elite. Nigerian novelist, Chinua Achebe, in his recent book, *The Education of a British-Protected Child* (2009), which is a follow-up to

his chapbook on Nigeria's leadership malaise, *The Trouble with Nigeria* (1983), referred to this system as "elite factor" (Achebe, 2009, p. 143).

The cultural, political and socio-economic space, which Mr. Nnатуanya's work mirrors, reels in palpable overlap of leadership failure – chicanery, political intrigue, political merchandising, stuffing of ballot box, violent electioneering, electoral scheming, murder and elitism – and other reverses that characterise a nation in thralldom precipitated by inept leadership and social seclusion of the masses. The book's foreword by a Nigerian political scientist, Obasi Igwe, speaks volumes: "Godfatherism had [sic] of recent become the new way of defining how people and political parties could 'win' elections and be put in office without anybody actually voting for them...". The author himself sees this political canvas as "... the reasons why political offices suddenly became a race of life and death ... political platforms have become a conduit via which the politicians cart away financial loots and the distribution of prebends, thus endangering the future of the very people they were meant to represent" (p. 7).

What makes the book unique is the narrative fluidity of the wordings lodged in simple language; it is not too academic. The book's readership cuts across disciplinary boundaries. It is also rich in philosophical nuggets that are interspersed in some of the chapters as mass headings. *The Frozen Democracy: Godfatherism & Elite Corruption in Nigeria* is also a contribution to resistance dialectics and philosophy in Nigerian politics and electioneering, which is one of the basic ways of transcending the current elite-salving colouration of democracy as well as leadership crisis in the nation. The book's epilogue, "A Paradigm for Nation Building" (p. 133) is cast in the mould of rising above the corruption challenge as well as frozen democracy, elitism and corruption.

Nevertheless, the book is beleaguered with what I call "teething problems" of a budding writer. Parts of these problems are bland sentence construction, insipid use of phraseology and terms, near ignorance of analytical and critical skills to corroborate arguments, poor reference to data to buttress position and weak referencing. The book is a bit hard-hitting and incendiary as well. The arguments are good and fresh, but too polemical for political discourses that could generate co-existent, sustainable, peaceful change in Nigeria. Be it as it may, the book is a bold move by a commentator on Nigeria's postcolonial condition, who envisions the enthronement of real democracy and the concomitant fall of elitism as well as evaporation of the culture of corruption that is standing in the way of Nigeria's development and reinvention. More than this, the author's invocation of Edmund Burke's famous words as prefatory note, "[t]he only thing necessary for evil to flourish is for good men to do nothing", supports his commitment to see a new day in Nigeria. This will be a time when fresh, people-centred democratic culture in Nigeria will supplant "the frozen democracy" that the author mentioned.

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