

PERFORMATIVE TRINITY

*Rasaki Ojo Bakare's Theory and Practice of
AFRICAN THEATRE*



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**PERFORMATIVE TRINITY: RASAKI OJO BAKARE'S
THEORY AND PRACTICE OF AFRICAN THEATRE**

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HISTORICISING THE POLITICS OF PREBENDALISM IN BAKARE, OJO RASAKI'S DRUMS OF WAR AND *ROGBODIYAN*

FEMI YINKA ATTEH

Introduction

The concept of prebendalism has significantly influenced the Nigerian political landscape in the postcolonial era. This has exerted a notable impact on governance and socio-economic development since the country's independence. Prebendalism generally refers to a governance system in which those in power present themselves as entities dedicated to the welfare of the people. As officers of the state, they amass wealth and allocate state resources to loyal supporters or clients. This phenomenon has had far-reaching implications for the country's political and economic growth. The widespread existence of corruption, clientelism, and persistent issues with leadership and accountability in Nigeria profoundly impact the daily lives of its people. Politics of prebendalism directly

illuminates the nitty-gritty of how the primordial public network works to sabotage the working of an ideal Weberian bureaucracy in the civic public, thereby rendering the Nigerian political structure a site of mere struggle for power and "sharing rights" (Oni, 2017: 427).

As we look ahead to the future, it is evident that prebendal traits will continue to pose significant challenges to societal endeavours aimed at nation-building, cultural amalgamation, and economic advancement. This study's analysis of prebendalism focuses on political discussions and artistic representation in Nigerian theatre and drama.

The politics of prebendalism are effectively portrayed in Nigerian drama through different historical dramas linking the nation's political history with its people's cultural output. Nigerian postcolonial drama, which emerged after the country gained independence in 1960, has been a crucial platform for critiquing the socio-political dynamics of the postcolonial state. Playwrights like Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi, Femi Osofisan, Ahmed Yerima, and Bakare Ojo Rasaki have probed into Nigeria's cultural, historical, and political challenges through their dramas. Interestingly, Olu Obafemi (2008: 1) informs that; "in the process of drama creation, varying aspects of human social history are contracted and expanded in artistic reflections and refractions". Postcolonial Nigerian dramas

often use allegory, satire, and symbolism to expose the effects of prebendal politics, inequality, corruption, and social disintegration. They reflect political instability, coups, and civil unrest as historical drama, providing a lens to examine the intersections of politics, power, and societal decay.

The works of Nigerian playwrights have not only mirrored the country's socio-political environment but have also acted as catalysts for political engagement and discourse. Interestingly, Bakare, Ojo Rasaki's plays "expose political tyranny and oppression of the masses" (Mbachaga, 2014: 152). Bakare, Ojo Rasaki's *Drums of War* and *Rogbodiyan* criticise Nigerian leaders for exploiting the state for personal gain using satire and symbolism." As a Nigerian male playwright, "Bakare epitomizes a writer whose works have consistently explored the beauty of language, culture, economy, and politics in all aspects of creativity" (Ojediran, 2014: 162). Therefore, this study examines how the plays *Drums of War* and *Rogbodiyan* offer a historical and political commentary on the development of prebendalism in Nigeria. They also emphasise the significance of drama as a form of resistance against corruption and patronage within Nigeria's political system. The playwrights, including Bakare, aim to reflect on governance failures critically and provide a deeper understanding of the political and social influences shaping the Nigerian state.

Historicising Prebendalism and Nigerian Politics

Prebendalism is a critical framework for understanding political corruption and clientelism, especially in postcolonial nations like Uganda, Ghana, and Nigeria. Introduced by Richard Joseph in his work *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria* (1987), the concept has been developed by postcolonial writers to raise awareness of prebendal tendencies in Nigerian society. Interestingly, prebendal behaviour "could be argued to have arisen in Africa as an outcrop of colonialism and the subsequent social structure that emerged" (Onuoh, 2022: 22). The political history of Nigeria is deeply intertwined with its complex ethnic, cultural, and colonial past. Nigeria, with over 250 ethnic groups and diverse languages, has experienced various political systems, from pre-colonial empires to modern democratic governance. Nigerian states have roots in traditional social structures based on religious, economic, and political principles, characterised by the prevalence of prebendalism.

In Nigeria, prebendalism differs from traditional patron-client relationships due to the establishment of a governance system that allows for the uncontrolled exercise of authority. According to Oni (2017: 425) this is

subjective to social, political, and legal dimensions in its perception and reality. Any attempt to make a meaningful definition of the term has either included too many acts that are illegal but socially and politically accepted, or excluded too many acts that are legal but are socially and politically reprehensible depending on time and jurisdictions.

Oni's assessment describes Nigeria's political system as a prebendal system, where state apparatuses are deeply intertwined with personal networks of allegiance. Leaders perceive themselves as having the right to use public offices to accumulate wealth for themselves and their supporters, viewing it as a customary practice rather than corruption in the narrow sense.

Nigeria, often cited as the primary example of a prebendal state, has been governed by military juntas and democratically elected governments, both grappling with the issue of prebendalism from precolonial times to independence from Britain in 1960. Colonialism has significantly shaped Nigeria's political landscape. P. Ekeh (2000: 2-3) also informs that "the constant struggle of the states that were already in existence in the West African region was to stay alive by aligning their practices and principles with Arab, and later, European powers". The quest for independence, internal power struggles, military interventions, and the transition between military and civilian governance have become deeply ingrained aspects of Nigeria's political culture. Interestingly, the mode of "socio-political organization and economic traditions played significant roles in the ways pre-colonial historical experiences manifested in different parts of the Niger area" (Oluwaniyi, 2024: 3).

In precolonial Nigeria, there were various kingdoms, empires, and city-states with different systems of governance. The Sokoto Caliphate in the north was a powerful Islamic empire governed by Sharia law. The Yoruba city-states in the southwest operated under a monarchical system, and the Igbo communities in the southeast had a decentralised governance system. The arrival of European colonists in the 19th century drastically changed the political landscape of Nigeria. Historically, the British officially annexed Lagos in 1861, marking the beginning of formal British colonisation. According to Atteh (2022: 13), the colonial masters discovered that communicating "British propaganda and Christianity required making documentaries". However, "lumping together of people of diverse, ethnic, socio-cultural and religious backgrounds and orientation by the erstwhile British overlords was aimed essentially to serve the imperialistic economic interests of the British Colonial powers" (Ojo, 2014: 2). Indirect rule was less successful in the southern regions due to the lack of

centralised authority. Colonial policies benefited the southern regions, fostering political and economic imbalances that contribute to ethnic tensions today.

Nigeria gained independence from Britain on 1 October 1960, with Nnamdi Azikiwe becoming the first President and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa the Prime Minister. Nigerian nationalism began to grow because educated elites and nationalist movements began to question the need to be subjugated as a nation. Also, Ekeh (2000: 8) expresses that the

contents of this national question were complicated by new developments following the expansion of politics as the decade of the 1950s matured. If there were only three solid groups, of Yoruba, Igbo, and Emirate Northern Nigeria in existence, the national question would have been transparent.

The emergence of political parties in Nigeria reflected ethnic and regional divisions. The Northern People's Congress (NPC) led by Ahmadu Bello represented the north, while the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) led by Nnamdi Azikiwe dominated the east, and The Action Group (AG) under Obafemi Awolowo represented the Yoruba in the west. These divisions shaped Nigeria's political path.

The First Republic adopted a parliamentary system of government modelled after the British system. Tensions between regions and competition for control of the central government exacerbated ethnic divisions. From the moment Nigeria gained independence from colonialism on 1 October 1960, "the prospects appeared promising and expectations for the future of the country were high (Falola and Heaton, 2008: 158). The discovery of oil in the Niger Delta led to widespread corruption, electoral fraud, and political violence, culminating in a military coup and a long era of military rule in Nigeria. In that time frame, they were "defectively planned and executed as plotters lacked full grips with the consequences, and hence got consumed by its complexities" (Odeyemi, 2014: 87).

The political tensions between the northern and eastern regions led to the secession of the eastern region and the formation of the independent state of Biafra in 1967, triggering the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970). After the war, military rule continued until General Olusegun Obasanjo led a transition to civilian rule as the Second Republic. Shehu Shagari of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) led a government marred by corruption, economic mismanagement, and political violence, according to Oni (2014: 10-11).

By the late 1980s and in response to the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of the federal government, several groups in the civil society emerged to

oppose state autocracy and to complement the activities of the Nigerian Labour Congress(NLC), the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASSU), the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS), ... the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) and the Muslim Student's Society (MSS). Some of these groups include the Civil Liberties Organization (CLO), Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR), Constitutional Rights Projects (CRP), Human Rights Africa (HRA), and a host of other professional and civic organizations.

Regardless of the efforts from the bodies cited above, the military under General Muhammadu Buhari seized power, changing the Second Republic into a military government. This military intervention was based on citing the need to curb corruption and restore order within Nigerian geopolitical space. Buhari's regime was eventually overthrown by General Ibrahim Babangida in 1985, and he ruled until 1993.

Babangida promised a transition to democracy but annulled the 1993 election, causing political unrest in Nigeria. He used the Armed Forces Ruling Council to carry out political activities and abandoned structures that promoted democracy. They "constantly tinkered with the electoral rules and elections timetable to make it impossible for the recognized political parties to function optimally" (Adewunmi, 2018: 5). Babangida's step down was overthrown by General Sani Abacha, known for human rights abuses and corruption. Abacha's death in 1998 led to a transition to democracy under General Abdulsalami Abubakar as the Fourth Republic. The Fourth Republic saw the election of Olusegun Obasanjo as president in 1999, bringing Nigeria back to civilian rule with subsequent changes in government policies.

Political issues like corruption, ethnic tensions, and instability persist as social realities in the country. According to Odeyemi (2014: 90), an error "by early post-independence leaders in their state-building effort is that the state is paternalistically conceived. The state became an omniprovider of an overwhelming plethora of services, many of which could have been efficiently provided by the private sector". The People's Democratic Party (PDP) dominated Nigerian politics until 2015 when Muhammadu Buhari won the presidency under the All-Progressives Congress (APC). Nigeria continues to grapple with issues of governance and insecurity, particularly due to the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast, Fulani herdsmen in the middle belt, and economic challenges related to oil dependency in the country. Nevertheless, the resilience of its democratic institutions and the commitment of its people to democratic governance offer hope for the future of Nigeria's politics.

Exploring the Political Implications of Prebendalism in Postcolonial Theatre

This study adopts Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's postcolonial approach as modified by James (2017). Through this approach, postcolonial theatre becomes an expressive tool for critically analysing the enduring effects of colonialism on present-day governance as an individual. In addressing power dynamics, cultural erasure, and socio-political systems inherited from colonial rulers, James (2017: 6) informs that the "view of the individual-or "subject" is central to "liberal humanism"- a philosophical/political cluster of ideas in which the ultimate autonomy and self-sufficiency of the subject are taken for granted", especially in Africa. Prebendalism is a system in governance where leaders prioritise their personal needs and emotions over the needs of the state, leading to corruption, nepotism, and a lack of accountability."

The constant engagement of Postcolonial theatre with themes of power, domination, and resistance provides a critical framework to interrogate prebendal politics in Nigeria. This is because postcolonial theatre centres "around cultural revival, deliberate fight against the oppressed and the marginalised, struggle for equitable distribution of national resources, bringing back lost memories and reclaiming ruins, and re-invention of relevant dramatic and theatrical conventions" (Adeoye, 2019: 2). The roots of prebendalism can be traced back to colonial rule, where colonial authorities controlled Africans by co-opting local elites and granting them access to resources in exchange for loyalty. However, the postcolonial realities of contemporary times which "we speak of, or may imagine that we know, as only fiction, something which is constructed and which does not copy any real essence since imperialism monopolised both philosophical and political representation of the so-called 'Third World'" (Abdalkafor, 2015: 11). This system of political patronage and exploitation generated a hybrid society that internalised the politics of prebendalism. Many postcolonial leaders in Nigeria adopted it to maintain power after independence. Interestingly, this "invariably became the early stage of prebendal politics and clientelistic relationship in the political relationship" (Fakanbi, 2018: 38).

Postcolonial playwrights, directors, and actors explore the impact of colonialism on political leadership and governance from a psychosocial approach, and "due to its dynamic and regenerative nature, African theatre has undergone series of dialectal and ideological transformations which nonetheless made scholarship on it diverse" (Adeoye, 2021: 1). Playwrights like Bakare, Ojo Rasaki's *Drums of War*, and *Rogbodiyan* focus on power struggles and the betrayal of the

populace within Nigerian society. Bakare's perception of Nigeria's politics of prebendalism has transformed him into a playwright whose "topicality shows a dramatist with a flair for social criticism for which the then political powers looked at with bad taste" (Mbachaga, 2014: 152). The political reality in *Drums of War* revolves around King Onome's desire for power and control, celebrating with state resources while his men die on the battlefield. In *Rogbodiyan*, Ilu Koroju has become a breeding ground for prebendal activities, prioritising Asagidigbi's desires and Gbadegesin's ego over the needs of the land.

Bakare's postcolonial theatre blends traditional and modern performances to critique societal issues and political practices like prebendalism. It incorporates local narratives, symbols, and history to showcase the exploitation of communal wealth in postcolonial societies, similar to what existed with colonial powers. This theoretical predisposition enlightens that the significance of Dramatic Literature, "lies in the importance of the period ranging from 1985 to 1999 during which Spivak's criticism changed its focus from colonial to postcolonial texts" (Abdalkafor, 2015: 140). Bakare's creative innovation, *Drums of War* and *Rogbodiyan*, was initially published in 1994, coinciding with a shift in Spivak's criticism. Playwriting during this period utilised historical drama as a serving framework for examining prebendalism in postcolonial theatre. Through storytelling, symbolism, and performance, Bakare, Ojo Rasaki's *Drums of War*, and *Rogbodiyan* critique how political leaders have inherited exploitative governance structures and highlight the potential for resistance and societal transformation. The characters represent the oppressed masses in Nigeria, challenging corrupt leaders and advocating for systemic change. The plays reflect and critique deep social inequality perpetuated by prebendal politics.

Synopses of the Selected Play-Texts

Drums of War

In Bakare, Ojo Rasaki's *Drums of War*, the story revolves around the need for a harmonious relationship between the leaders and the citizens in society. King Onome (Ogioke), driven by his desire to conquer the Ibuji people, ends up squandering resources meant for sustainable development due to his ego and pride. This action incites the women of the land to protest the King's decision by marching to the war front to prevent the soldiers from attacking Ibuji. Chief Beleku's response to King Onome's corrupt political regime is further intensified by Akogun's refusal to endure the suffering he experienced from the women and soldiers during the war. Akogun's unexpected resignation as the war general leads to political unrest in the palace. Despite being funded by the state, the chiefs refuse to assume the responsibilities of Akogun, the generalissimo.

Instead, they encourage the King by stating that a cub of a lion is still a lion. On the other hand, King Onome believes that the soldiers' salaries and bonuses, funded by the royal purse, are well-spent state funds to ensure compliance.

Rogbodiyan

Rogbodiyan by Bakare, Ojo Rasaki is a story about the political transformations of the traditional society of Ilu Koroju. Adebunmi, the daughter of Adebakin, the recently deceased King of Ilu Koroju, has been ruling as a regent since her father did not have a male child to ascend the throne after him. After ruling for over seven years, she openly decided to let go of her family's royal legacies because she wasn't a male child. Since the gods have refused to reveal the bloodline or household the throne should go to, Royal Regent Princess Adebunmi uses her office to suggest candidates for the royal position. The Kingmaker's Council of Elders is given the enormous task of selecting between Asagidigbi and Gbadegesin. Unfortunately, these two are politicians of prebendalism themselves with hidden intentions and motives. Asagidigbi's reputation precedes him as his forefathers controlled state wealth in ancient times. However, sacrificing the traditions of the land by disrupting the Oge festival sends Ilu Koroju into chaos. After going blind, Asagidigbi immediately tries to shift responsibility to state clients who also had their intentions. Adegban, the son of Royal Regent Princess Adebunmi, manages to turn the twisted tricks of Asagidigbi, Aloba, and his fellow kingmakers into successfully elevating the name of his grandfather King Adebakin. Freedom and liberation from the chaotic experiences in Ilu Koroju eventually sprung from Adebakin's lineage.

Politics of Prebendalism in Drums of War

The play opens with Ogbegun setting the stage for social and political commentaries. Ogbegun emphasises his right to question social ills and the politics of prebendalism in Abakpaland. "Some complain that I ask too many questions about the ways of the world, the futility of life, the stupidity of the human race, and the terrible state of our nation" (Bakare, 2004: 5). Ogbegun skilfully guides us through the tense situation of war initiated by King Onome of Abakpaland against the people of Ibujiland. King Onome insists on ancient historical claims regarding territorial boundaries and religious practices to justify his desire to subjugate the people of Ibujiland. This is supported by the chiefs, except for Chief Beleku, who finds it absurd. That is why he reaffirms his power and influence. You are here celebrating while your people die on the

battlefield and the fear of an uncertain tomorrow grips the subjects you govern” (Bakare, 2004: 19).

Beleku's reaction was triggered by King Onome's daughter, Omowale, returning from the land of the Whiteman and insulting her father because of her newfound knowledge of the Western world. She unapologetically ridicules the King and his chiefs by expressing that the Abakpaland she left has become a downtrodden prebendal state. She expresses that

why have we abandoned our responsibilities to each other? Why have we lost our principles of being our brother's keepers? It is this war... Isn't it?

Gbeje: (*Attempting to gag her*) Omowale!

Omowale: (*Asking her father to stop Gbeje*) Father?

(*King signals Gbeje to let her continue*) This war is not the wish of everybody, but that of one man... one man who has fed fat on wars and would not want wars, therefore, to end. It is time to stop this war (Bakare, 2004: 17).

Chief Beleku's reaction shows his maturing within the context of Omowale's Westernised perspective. He is displeased by the prevalence of prebendalism which he had failed to truly react to until Omowale the King's daughter urges that her voice be heard by the Abapka people. This effectively informs them of her refusal to participate in the political games that have enriched her father, the King. Omowale's stance demonstrates her understanding of the far-reaching consequences of prebendalism and her decision to have no part in it.

Beleku sees King Onome exacerbating prebendalism because he is backed by his position as King of Abakpaland. Beleku in the position of opposition reacts by stating that

Goats are beginning to lay eggs in this land. Wonders are beginning to happen since Onome became our ruler, but those of you whose throats eat the remnants from his kitchen will dare not speak the truth to his face. Now the soldiers are dying on the battlefield, our people are suffering just because somebody says we must fight Ibuji to submission. Yet, you are here with him singing, drumming, and dancing (Bakare, 2004: 20).

The system of prebendalism in Abapkaland had deteriorated to the point where the King and his chiefs distributed state resources based on political loyalty, undermining the voice of the people. King Onome turned against the will of the people by insisting on war rather than peace.

Beleku is a member of the Chief's Council of Elders and he is aware of the excesses of the state. According to King Onome, state resources are deployed to acquire new territorial boundaries, eradicate Ibuji's religion, and generally acquire wealth. Beleku complains that

soldiers are bleeding, soldiers are dying and there is merriment in the palace;

King: if soldiers are overpaid and overfed by the land to fight and die for the land, must I kill myself because they are now doing what they are paid and fed to do? Answer me, must the palace close down just because the land is involved in a war? (*Just then, Akogun rushes in. Goes to the King and salutes him*) (Bakare, 2004: 21).

King Onome accuses Beleku of treason. Akogun reports that the women of Abakpaland are the war front, subduing the men and insisting the war must come to an end. The people begin to turn against the king, demanding an explanation for his actions. In response, King Onome calls out:

Gbeje, Jeje, Osifo and all here present. The witch screamed yesterday and today, the child drops dead, ... You were all here when Beleku stood up and condemned this war which we had been fighting even before his father knew how to rain into a woman's pot, ... Beleku, if you bite my nose in spite of mucous, I shall bite your anus in spite of faeces (Bakare, 2004: 22-23).

The people challenge the King's privileged state of mind. King Onome invites the other chiefs to become more involved by sharing a larger portion of his loot from Ibuji. The performance space becomes a platform for expressing alienation and disempowerment. The chiefs remain in the position of clients, avoiding deeper involvement. Bakare Ojo Rasaki's postcolonial theatre approach encourages critical reflection and potential political activism.

The stand against prebendalism has led Abakpaland to oppose King Onome's corrupt politics. In response, King Onome sends his son and a group of young soldiers to their deaths to protect his fading legacy. Omowale confirms the stand of the state against her father's prebendal traits by stating that

It is painful father... but I am on the side of the people in this matter. Your people reject you... and I... I reject you. The land rejects you and I reject you. We reject you and all you symbolise. Never again shall we be ruled by warmongers and bloodthirsty political tin-gods. Together we shall rebuild Abakpa (Bakare, 2004: 43).

The impacts of prebendalism in Bakare Ojo Rasaki's *Drums of War* are significant. King Onome lost everything because he could not separate himself from the prebendal traits associated with his patriarchal rule. His chiefs failed to genuinely support the interests of the people by insisting that the war be called off. These officials prioritised personal gain over governance, rendering the institutions under the Ruling Council ineffective.

Politics of Prebendalism in Rogbodiyan

Bakare's understanding of the games of politics involved in the process of selecting good both good and leaders, put the politics prebendalism on display in Rogbodiyan. The play Starts with the first lines as a voice shouts out of the blackout on the stage, "R-o-gb-o-d-i-y-a-n" (Bakare, 2004: 6). The literal interpretation of the spoken word signifies potential challenges, calamity, or perplexity. Bakare employs a narrator to assist the reader or theatre audience in navigating their desire for societal and political critiques on the prevailing state of development in Ilu Koroju. This is articulated by the narrator, who conveys that the politics of prebendalism has led Ilu Koroju to its downfall. According to him,

They are now victims of self-inflicted disaster because the people dine and wine with injustice. Koroju, a land where merit is thrown to the winds, Koroju, an entity controlled by nonentities, Koroju, abode of religious hypocrites and political sycophants, Koroju, where intelligence means nothing and the academically brilliant is a potential pauper. Koroju is a land where truth has been hindered and falsehood exalted. Ladies and gentlemen, a land of corruption where material and political wealth are worshipped and the false acquisition of them is encouraged is bound to be stricken by Rogbodiyan (Bakare, 2004: 7).

Ilu Koroju's political structure is clearly defined as a prebendal state. It discusses the political transformations of the traditional society of Ilu Koroju under the rule of Royal Regent Princess Adebunmi, daughter of King Adebakin. The people begin to silently deliberate against her rule of over seven years due to the absence of a male heir to the throne after the death of King Adebakin.

Regent Adebunmi decides to let go of her family's royal legacies and suggests two candidates for the royal position of the King of Ilu Koroju. The Kingmaker's Council has the task of selecting between Asagidigbi the "Big Eagle" and Gbadegesin the "Horse." Aloba, Eto, Salotin, and Abere are caught between seeking religious help or using the power of their political office.

Eto: (Not bothered). Yes. That is how I get what I want, by belonging to all the camps. The only politics I play now is the politics of my stomach and probably that of my immediate family. How to continue remaining the number one citizen in my house and not give my wife the chance to overthrow me in this era of women's liberation? That is the politics I play now (Bakare, 2004: 20).

Eto is focused on maximising profit and the politics of prebendalism has led to widespread corruption in Iku Koroju. The Council's meeting was prolonged due to discussions about whether to invite the chief priest to follow the religious path or to select a winner based on their observations of the candidates and motivation from Regent Adebunmi's call, which the Kingmakers must respond to promptly. Unexpectedly,

(Just then Gbadegesin enters from the stage right).

Gbadegesin: Greetings elders of our land

Aloba: We greet you, welcome. What have you come to do here?

Salotin: Who invited you?

Gbadegesin: (*Approaching them*) I invited myself. The chicken is saved from the cold by its plume. I am anxious about this thing. Help me, and you will not regret it. None of you will ever need to work again. I have gifts for you. I will bring them tonight. (*No response from the shocked elders. Exit*) (Bakare, 2004: 22).

Gbadegesin, as a candidate for the throne, decided to attend a meeting where the Kingmakers were deliberating on who would emerge as the new leader. He emphasised that the state's wealth should continue to benefit the people of the state.

The Kingmakers are shocked because a more systemic problem that goes beyond individual malfeasance continues to persist as politics of prebendalism. However, they choose to invite the Diviner to ask Ifa what is best for the land. His efforts are interrupted when he arrives at the meeting and during his consultations.

(*Just then a voice is heard and Asagidigbi enters with two men, each carrying two bags*).

Asagidigbi: Just before you do that. (*He appears. Everybody except Abere is surprised. He speaks with absolute confidence*). Elders of our land, do not be surprised to see me, I have only come

to do business with you as men, and as men, I believe you will be ready to do business with me.

(There is a brief silence. Elder looks at Abere suspiciously).

Asagidigbi: *(To the thugs).* Give a bag to each of them. *(The thugs carry out the order.)*

Aloba: *(Appears confused)* What is this?

Asagidigbi: Money, man, money. Ego, wazobia! In each bag is contained what all of you combined cannot earn in twenty years. Give me the throne and take the money or give the throne to Gbadegesin and die in poverty. The choice is yours.

(There is silence. They look at each other in turn. Eto breaks the silence).

Eto: Asagidigbi, you are my man. You have always been my man.

Abere: Asagidigbi, I insist that you wear the crown. You are the best choice this land can have.

Salotin: *(Apparently happy)* Your ascending the throne Asagidigbi is as certain as milk in the breast.

Aloba: Salotin, you too *(Apparently shocked)*. If people like you could enslave themselves to money and allow their conscience to be bought then I weep for the land.

Abere: You fool. Can't you see nobody cares for 'this land! The issue is simple: your pocket is empty. Are you going to do something about it or not? (Bakare, 2004: 25-26).

In the wit of his dilemma, Eto finds the surprise Asagidigbi pulled on them all, and the wealth he is offering to the Kingmakers represents a great breakthrough in their lifetime. The reasons for the Kingmakers are tied to the structure of the state and the nature of political power. Kingmakers Eto, Abere, and Salotin unapologetically agree to become clients of Asagidigbi's intended rule over Ilu Koroju, while Aloba's refusal is threatened and subjected to the politics of prebendalism as dynamics of social change.

Asagidigbi's accession to the throne as the King of Ilu Koroju is immediately set into motion with the selection of a virgin girl. She and the King are sent into seclusion for seven days. This is in preparation for items that will be packaged to a point of spiritual enlightenment by the virgin girl during the Oge festival. Ilu Koroju is plunged into chaos as King Asagidigbi breaks tradition, however,

he states that who else apart from Gbadegesin and his supporters would have caused the calamity. This is why he falsely claimed "Gbadegesin has been planning mischief because he did not get the crown. I saw him right here in the palace. I caught him sneaking away but I didn't know his mission" (Bakare, 2004: 53). King Asagidigbi gone blind from the incident against the tradition of the land continues to blame Gbadegesin. Interestingly it is clear that "Ifa says it is only a drink of the water from River Awogbaarun that can cleanse the people and the land. Somebody must be sent immediately to Ite-Esumare after the land of the dead where the River Awogbaarun flows" (Bakare, 2004: 46).

To save himself from his civil responsibility to the land, blind King Asagidigbi selfishly relinquishes his Kingly Attire to Adegbanì "Then that is a different thing, Fadele. The oracle has only said that whoever is going to fetch the water must have a crown on his head" (Bakare, 2004: 47). Adegbanì, son of Regent Adebunmi, agrees to follow the diviner's instruction and journey to the land of solutions. On his way to Ite-Esumare after the land of the dead, Adegbanì tries to selfishly bribe Ara Orun, a spirit being, for passage through the land of the dead, proving his decayed background.

Ara Orun: (*Laughs hilariously*) Ha haha a. You lie young man. We know you. Speak the truth, no liar crosses the land of the Dead.

(*More hooting and humming. Adegbanì is scared though he appears confident. Adegbanì speak*).

Adegbanì: You know everything. You have seen everything. But please let me cross your land so that my people may be healed. If you allow me to cross and the deed is done, I will always offer you sacrifices.

Ara Orun: You bear this task not because of your people but because of yourself. But by helping your selfish self you may as well be helping your people. Do not forget what you have promised us. We will allow you to pass for your bravery, confidence, and readiness to give unto the Dead what is theirs (Bakare, 2004: 51).

Adegbanì promises Ara Orun that he will continue to make sacrifices to the land of the dead in exchange for passage, and later uses his success to convince the people of Ilu Koroju to allow him to become king. From Gbadegesin's lips, "It is time for us to take a wise decision... Kabiyesi has ruined us, but he isn't the only one who should be punished (Bakare, 2004, p.57). Their refusal to make Adegbanì King will cause the chaotic situation in Ilu Koroju to continue. The people concede to Adegbanì by making him King. This act invariably returned

the rulership of Ilu Koroju to the lineage of the late King Adebakin. Aloba, Eto, Abere, and Salotin perpetrated the politics of prebendalism in Ilu Koroju as a client of Asagidigbi. The Kingmakers were clients of the state under the reign of King Asagidigbi and were arrested and persecuted according to the law.

Conclusion

The concept of prebendalism is a significant impediment to the sustainable development goals of any society. This is effectively depicted in Bakare Ojo Rasaki's *Drums of War* and *Rogbodiyan* as they highlight the complexities of corruption in postcolonial states, portraying prebendal politics. *Drums of War* illustrates how political power is often wielded for personal and group enrichment rather than public service. King Onome never expected that the Abapka people would challenge his rule through a democratic process. This theme is similarly depicted in *Rogbodiyan*, where bribery, corruption, and favouritism prevail as Kingmakers become clients of the state in Ilu Koroju. Bakare's portrayal of the state of the nation depicts a cycle of political instability, economic mismanagement, and social inequality: This unavoidably makes the politics of prebendalism a central issue for those interested in studies on the intersection of politics, governance, and development in countries like Nigeria. Understanding prebendalism is crucial to diagnosing political issues impeding progress in Nigeria. Finding solutions that foster more inclusiveness, accountability, and effective governance will bring forth new historical accounts of the positive dynamics of social change in Nigeria.

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