

REFLECTIONS OF ANCIENT ROMAN CLIENTSHIP IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN SOCIETIES

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Abstract

Most modern scholarship on clientship or patronage system simply construe the concept as an exchange relationship between a socio-politically influential man (patron) and a free inferior client. In ancient times, however, the system (*clientela*) was a special case of dyadic ties in which a person of privileged socio-economic and political eminence (*patronus*) used his influence and resources to provide security, legal protection or material benefits for a person of lower social status (*cliens*) who, for his part, reciprocated by offering wide-ranging services to the patron as needed. Patron-client relationship was uniquely Roman in origin; but over the centuries, the practice metamorphosed in varying measures, motives and methods across different climes and societies. Approached chronologically through a method of content analysis of relevant archival materials, this paper reviewed the basic principles and practice of patron-client relationship in ancient Roman Republic with a view to showing how the Roman phenomenon has, indeed, mutated in time and space. To prop the foregoing claim, the paper focused on how the patron-client relationship resonates in the socio-economic and political dynamics of African societies, especially of Ghana and perhaps Nigeria. It concluded that clientship relationship is a transcultural phenomenon that has penetrated deeply into the fabrics of many contemporary societies just as it did in classical antiquity.

Key Words: ancient Rome, Ghana, Nigeria, clientship, patronage, patron-client

Introduction

At the very centre of the ancient Roman social structure lay a web-like relationship between a superior called *patronus* (patron) and a subordinate called a *clientele* (client). This relationship is described as ‘web-like’ because the patron might also be obligated to another patron of superior rank or influence just as a client might possess more than a patron. In other words, a patron could have his own patron, and a client could equally have his own client. However, since the family was highly regarded as the building block of the society, this relationship, when it came to two Romans, was best described as *amicitia* (friendship) instead of patronage (Tatum, 1988: 179-184). Patricians who were well-to-do considered this relationship with a fellow patrician who was in a much superior position as a ‘friend’. The clientship relationship was an association of interdependency which saw to it that an affluent patron, on the one hand, provided his client with services such as legal assistance, daily food, medicine, habitual monetary handout called *sportula* (dole) and other socio-economic resources that he could require (Carcopino, 1991: 191). On the other hand, the client reciprocated by providing the patron with political supports, daily salutations, escorts and other services which the patron could require in his daily life. The patron could seek the client’s services in preparing a wedding, in canvassing support for winning an election, or in finding out what his local rivals were up to. Once a patron-client relationship was established in this way, it became transferrable from one generation to the other. This is because a man received much respect and praise based on the number of clients he had as well as how long the patron-client ties had been in existence, clients were inherited by the children of patrons (Parkin & Pomeroy, 2008: 297). The larger a patron’s clientele and the more dependent on him they were, the greater his socio-political clout and hidden capacity to organize group action. In the typical patron-client setting, this ability to marshal a following was important in the contest among patrons for regional superiority. The link, then, was a very flexible one as it accommodates the needs and resources of both partners, hence, the nature of the exchange might vary widely over time. In what follows, we

shall explain the principles and practice of the institution of called *clientela* in ancient Rome and how the same practice is being re-enacted in the socio-cultural and political engagements of contemporary Africa, particularly Ghana and Nigeria. In this paper, the terms; patronage, clientship, patron-client, and clientelism would be used interchangeably for the relationship that exists between a superior, patron and a subordinate, client.

The principles and practice of Roman clientship

One the bequests of the ancient world, which has metamorphosed into forms and degrees in the contemporary times, is the concept of clientship system, a social structure that was uniquely Roman. In the system, a free man entrusted himself to another for the purpose of receiving protection, daily food, and other forms of assistance (Badian, 252). As an institution, clientship system reflected in the 12 tables of Roman constitution: *patronussi client fraudemfecerit, saceresto*(If the patron defrauds his client, let that be sacred) (8.21).

In ancient Rome, clients were normally required to visit the home of their patron every morning (Fowler, 2009: 269). As they greeted their patrons, they, in turn, received gifts and instructions regarding their duties for the day. Due to the large number of the clients in certain situations, a patron could keep *nomenclator* close to himself. The *nomenclator* was a slave who whispered to the patron the names of clients that the patron might have forgotten. He reminded the patron of any information that might provoke their conversation. While some clients received their *sportula* (doles) in form of food, others got theirs in form of money, loans, business deals, etc. clients were sometimes called *salutatores* (greeters) because of their daily greetings called *salutatio*(Badian, 252, Carcopino, 1991: 191). After this *salutatio*, both the clients and slaves accompanied their patron on all his rounds – personal or political. Patrons were meant to provide the peace of mind that their clients needed both in private and public affairs. In return, clients assisted in providing the dowry for the daughters of their patrons when they were about to get married. Furthermore, a client was duty-bound to ransom his patron when taken as a captive; he solicited votes for him and voted for him when he presented himself as a candidate during elections (Parkin & Pomeroy, 2008: 296). It was believed that the more clients that accompanied a patron, the greater his status and prestige. Thus, this was a mutually obligatory arrangement between a person with resources, authority, social status and another who profited from these privileges.

According to Dionysius and Plutarch, Romulus, the legendary founder of Rome, established the institution of *clientela* when he distributed the early plebeian settlers as clients among the patricians and gave the plebs the freedom to choose their patrons (Smith, 2016:14). The patron-client relationship, as established by Romulus, ensured that patricians helped their clients to know their rights when they had no idea of them. In return, the clients helped to look after properties and investment of their masters, whether they were present or away. The patrons at this time acted just as fathers do to their children (Parkin & Pomeroy, 2008: 296).

Apart from its conception as mutually obligatory system, the patron-client relationship aimed at connecting people together through a social hierarchy phenomenal of the Roman traditions. In this sense, patrons obtained justice for their clients from those who wronged them. This sometimes involved representing the clients in the law courts. Owing to the prestige attached to this clientship, a patron's prestige was washed when he allowed his clients to be unfairly treated in a legal proceeding. Since the patron-client relationship was thus deep, both parties were barred from either bringing a law suit against each other or serving as witness against each other. The penalty for

violating this principle was usually very severe.

Both in principle and practice, the *clientela* relationship reflected in various forms between in ancient Rome. It could be between a manumitted or former slave and their former owners, between landowners and their tenant farmers, aristocrats and artists, aristocrats and writers, military commanders and their troops, as well as between military commanders and their conquered states. For instance, a patron could have a client who was connected to him by friendship or lease of land by an earlier period of exchanges of services or previous tie of the client's father to his patron's father. Oftentimes, the affection involved in the clientship system was that of 'whole-person' relationships rather than explicit, impersonal-contract bonds. The continuing pattern of reciprocity that established and solidified the relationship usually created trust and affection between the partners. Thus, while patron and client were very definitely alive to the instrumental benefits of their association, they understood that it was not simply a neutral link of mutual advantage. Rather, it was often a durable bond of genuine mutual devotion that could survive severe testing.

As a result of the reciprocity that the patron-client relationship demanded, each party provided services that were of value to the other. Happiness between patron and client was measured not by good fortune but by influence and virtue. Consequently, both parties could go the extra mile to surpass the other in good deeds. For instance, clients could provide as much service as they could while patrons would also try as much as possible not to accept cash gifts or other financial help from clients. While the equilibrium of benefits might greatly favour the patron, some reciprocity was involved, and it was this quality which differentiated Roman patron-client dyads from many other relationships of coercion or formal authority that characterised our contemporary societies. This is not to say that Roman patrons have neither any coercive power nor official positions of authority. Rather, in a patron-client relation, power imbalance was not so great as to permit a pure command relationship since the patron operated in a context in which community norms and sanctions required, at least, a minimum of bargaining and reciprocity with the clients. It is important to note here that even though this relationship was not legally binding, it had a kind of legal implication from the earliest times. Accordingly, the need to abide by one's duties (commitment by the patron, support by the client) was legally and basically moral; and this was embedded in the *mos maiorum* (customs/traditions of the ancient Romans). It is equally important to hint that here that this same principle and practice of patron-client relationship became a powerful engine that drove the vehicle of Roman imperialism as reflected in Rome's dealings with client states and kings all over the Roman empire (Jehne & Pina, 2015: 27). The number of direct active ties a single patron could have was limited by the size of the resources of the patron as well as the quality of the dyad of the clients coming face-to-face before the patron (Lande, 1977: xxiii-xxxvii). Westbrook (2005: 210-233) added that even if a patron could control vast resources, personal contact and friendship, built into the link, were by far, more important to make clientship succeed. Since, traditionally, the patron-client relation had to do with positive emotional ties, the leader and his immediate entourage were comparatively small, not really above one hundred. On the contrary, due to the small nature of the number of clients a patron could have, it was the web-like nature that made the number so great in times of political supports and others. After all, as noted above, a patron could be a client to other patrons of higher influence. As a result of the flexibility of this relation the needs and resources of both parties as well as the nature of the exchange might vary extensively in the fullness of time.

By the Middle Republic (c.133B.C), *clientela*, although retained its basic principles of mutual trust and support, had practically taken a different turn. Ambitious and greedy politicians had too many clients than was really needed for the hitherto Roman society. These men became very powerful and fashionable. The senate, on its part, firmly monopolised decision-making positions of the Roman state. Individuals attained political offices first by buying the votes of the poor. Later, after the Marian military reforms, the trend graduated into the use of soldiers and coercion to pull voters and secure votes for patrons during elections. The soldiers first regarded as patron, whosoever army general that was responsible for their wages while they were in service and for their land allocations after their service. After their service, the veteran soldiers became clients of the individual or leader who had earlier recruited them. The same veterans were used to control and intimidate voters during elections. This was one of the reasons patrons were ready to do whatever was humanly possible to remain in very influential positions for as long as possible. This is true of Marius, Sulla, Crassus, and other notable leaders of the late republic.

Clients similarly saw to it that their patrons or the candidates they put forward got elected to desired positions after all, the previous laws which granted them land allotments could be replaced with a new one. As one would expect, there were frequent violence and riot in Rome which culminated in the collapse of the Roman Republic. Alliances were formed by various individuals during this period in order to promote the interests of their clients and the clients correspondingly fought for the interests of their patrons.

The Patron: Conceptual Clarification

In many discourses that relate the Roman experiences on patron-client relationship to those of contemporary politics (Olarinmoye, 2008: 066-073; Olarinmoye, 2006; Scott, 1973, Ibrahim,2006; Akinboye, 2015: 1-22), the role of the patron is often confused with that of a middleman, broker, or boss. Serving as an intermediary to arrange an exchange or transfer between two parties who were not in direct contact can be described as acting as a middleman or broker. Consequently, the role of a middleman or broker, then, involved a three-party exchange in which the middleman or broker functioned as an agent and may not personally control the thing (money or other material benefits) transferred. In this paper however, a patron was part of a two-person exchange and operated with resources he himself owned or directly controlled or acquired from brokerage or party. While a patron was by definition of superior rank to his client, the relative status of a middleman or broker in relation to others in a transaction is not specified (Westbrook, 2005: 210-233). If the foregoing discussion is anything to go by, patron-client relations or clientelism is a relationship characterized by an alliance between two persons of unequal status, power, or resources and involving the exchange of favours (Lande, 1977: xxiii-xxxviii). Due to the disparity in status, the favours exchanged were different (Rothstein, 1979: 29). Since the patron-client relationship appears superficially to be a series of dyadic alliances that link the lowest to the highest members of a society, Scott (1977: 483-505) points out that most studies on clientelism treat class and patron-client relations as mutually exclusive forms. Consequently, some societies like contemporary Nigeria or Ghana, as many scholars have noted, appeared to be more prone to patronage than others (Olarinmoye, 2008:066-073; Olarinmoye, 2006; Scott, 1973, Ibrahim, 2006; Akinboye, 2015: 1-22; Waterbury, 1977: 330-339).

Between Clientship and Other Relationships

As with the distinction made above between patron and its related terms, clientship can also be differentiated from other related relationships such as bureaucracy, legal relations and kinship obligation. In bureaucracy a far-flung relationship with its beneficiaries is generated based on rules, hence, it warrants different treatment for all parties (Merilee, 1977: 37-66). In clientship however, a personal relationship is established with no pre-determined criteria for the allotment of its benefits between parties (Rothstein, 1979: 32). Far from ensuring equal conduct, clientship gives an advantage to the client over other persons in like circumstances. Where scarce resources cannot be obtained by all, it is a way for a few to gain privileged access to them. The dynamics of clientship is serial rather than give-and-take. Being notionally based on exchanges, each benefit must be deemed an act of gratuitous generosity. It creates a moral obligation to respond generously at some point in the future. Although there is an overall accounting, no one counter-gift needs exactly equal the value of a previous gift. The standard is suitability, not equality. Unlike legal relations that are official and often give rise to rights that are enforceable in a court of law, clientship gives rise to prospects, not rights. It is an unofficial tie, based on moral obligations; the sanctions for the contravention of those obligations are moral and social. Again, unlike kinship obligations which share many similarities with clientship, but still based upon a spontaneous and everlasting tie, (Lemche, 1995: 119) clientship exists only as long as its obligations are met (Campell, 1964). According to Westbrook (2005), the three distinguishing features of clientship system are: their basis in inequality, their face-to-face character, and their diffuse flexibility. Traditionally, these factors serve as prototype of patron-client ties, between a high-status landlord and each of his tenants or sharecroppers. For instance, in the field of arts, a patron may make available the peace and comfort needed for an artist to work and the artist in turn could dedicate his work to praise and publicise his patron. Thus, for the ancient Romans, clientship was an important means to social and political success.

Reflections of the Roman clientship in Ghanaian and Nigerian Society

Clientelism, according to Roniger (2004:355), who explains the term from the perspective of one Richard Graham, is defined as an action-set premised on the principle of 'take there, give here'. In other words, it is a practice in which the client and patron mutually gained advantages from each other's assistance or support. It is a form of *quid pro quo* relationship which operated at different conditions and situations – social, political or legal. In many parts of Africa, including Ghana and Nigeria, the term 'patron-client relationship', clientship, 'clientelism', or 'patronage' does not linguistically and necessarily describe the relationship or exchanges that exists between an individual of a superior rank, who uses his wealth, position, profession, or influence in assisting someone of a lower rank, who, of course, also reciprocates in similar vein according to his or her abilities. On the contrary, one is likely to hear, within the socio-cultural spaces of the societies, words such as 'benefactor', 'uncle' or 'auntie' 'father', 'mother', 'boss', 'oga', 'chairman', among others even though there might be no 'blood' relationship between the two parties. This is especially so because in many societies in Africa, the relationship that exists between a superior and a subordinate is not seen as that of a patron and a client but rather one premised on communal or assumed 'blood relations'. This is because in many African communities, close kinship relations and communalism are held in high esteem. There is a synergetic nature of the average African community that allows people to work on farms together, eat at table together, wear certain clothes

in common, build houses together in form of compounds and collectively do many other things. Accordingly, the idea of communalism and collectivism is a core traditional African social value which is directly opposite to the Western individualistic model (Akinboye, 2018: 19). It is in this regard that the lines below from Chinua Achebe become instructive.

A man who calls his kinsmen to a feast does not do so to save them from starving. They all have food in their own homes. When we gather together in the moonlight village ground, it is not because of the moon. Every man can see it in his own compound. We come together because it is good for kinsmen to do so. (Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 19:24)

We are better than animals because we have kinsmen. An animal rubs its itching flank against a tree, a man asks his kinsman to scratch him. (Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 19:9)

In view of the above, it becomes easier, in 'African clientelism', for someone of a superior rank to help or assist another of a lower rank and vice versa because of the assumption that there is a sort of hypothetical communal or 'family ties instead of just a plain 'patron-client relation.

Thus, in a given Ghanaian community, the patron-client relations may reflect on the one hand between local leaders/chiefs and followers and, on the other hand, between local leaders/chiefs and regional or national leaders. Within the realm of politics, for instance, community leaders, acting as patrons could assist followers (clients) with jobs, bureaucratic knowledge, and political influence in return for political support and, at times, financial contributions. Regional or national patrons similarly could offer jobs, bureaucratic knowledge, and political influence to the community leaders (clients) in return for political support and occasional financial contributions. Thus, as in ancient Rome, a society far separated in time and space from contemporary African societies, many Ghanaian patrons have many clients and are clients themselves to higher level patrons. The patron-client network is therefore 'web-like', complex and pyramidal. For instance, a Ghanaian politician could lobby for jobs for his client in return for the latter's loyalty and political support. Even if the intention of the former was not to make the latter a client, once the employment or the opportunity is secured, that individual becomes eternally indebted to that 'big brother' or politician-patron. The indebted 'junior' subsequently tries his or her best to reciprocate in whichever ways the 'senior' deems necessary. Once this link of informal reciprocity starts, it becomes very difficult to break. Informal though such networks are, they are built and maintained in ways that can only permit generalization.

Although patron-client analysis provides a solid basis for comprehending the structure and dynamics of non-primordial cleavages at the local level, its value is not limited to communal studies. Technically, in Ghana, modern institutions such as bureaucracies and political parties are often thoroughly penetrated by informal patron-client networks that undermine the formal structure of authority. If we are to grasp why the authority bureaucrat (patron) is likely to depend more on his personal followings (clients) and extra bureaucratic connections than on his formal post, or why political parties seem more like ad hoc assemblages of notables together with their supporters than arenas in which established interests are aggregated, we must rely heavily on patron-client analysis. The dynamics of personal alliance networks are as crucial in the day-to-day realities of national institutions as in local Ghanaian politics; the main difference is simply that such networks are more

elaborately disguised by formal smokescreens in modern institutions. This is as a result of the fact that there is an imbalance in exchange between both parties which express and reflect the disparity in their relative wealth, power, and status. In this sense, a Ghanaian client is someone who has tacitly entered an unequal exchange relationship from which he is unable to extricate himself or fully reciprocate. Consequently, he or she is bound by an informal obligation of debt to the patron.

At this point, a pertinent question to ask is, how does this imbalance in reciprocity arise? This imbalance of reciprocity is based on the fact that the patron, like in ancient Rome, is normally in a position to unilaterally provide goods and services which the would-be client and his family need for their survival and economic wellbeing (Stuart, 1972: 19-42). In adverse times for instance, a community leader or landowner is often the major source for food, protection, security, employment, and access to arable land or education. As a monopolist for critical needs, the patron is in an ideal position to demand compliance or reciprocities from those who wish to share in these scarce commodities.

A potential client, in theory, has just four alternatives as his reciprocals when faced with a patron who can provide or rob him of basic wants. He may reciprocate with a service that the patron needs badly enough to restore the balance of exchange. The resources of a client, given his position on the socio-economic stratification ladder, are normally inadequate to re-establish an equilibrium. A potential client could also try to secure his critical needs services elsewhere if he is not comfortable with the requirements of the prospective patron. Another possibility is that clients may coerce the patron into providing services. In this case, the eventuality that his clients might turn on him may prompt a patron to meet, at least, the minimum normative standards of exchange (Scott, 1972: 91-113). In addition, clients can theoretically do away with a patron's services altogether. This option, however, is remote, given the patron's control over essential services such as protection, land, and employment. Oftentimes, affiliating with a patron is neither an entirely coerced decision nor a consequence of unrestricted choice. Rather, the degree of compliance which a client gives his patron is a direct function of the degree of imbalance in the exchange relationship and degree of dependence of the client on his patron's services. An imbalance accordingly creates a sense of debt or obligation on the client's part so long as it meets his basic subsistence needs and represents, for the patron, a store of value or social credit that the patron can draw on to obtain advantages at a later time.

The above analysis is true, not only for the contemporary Ghanaian society but also for many West African societies with similar socio-cultural and political orientations. For instance, in Oyo State, southwest Nigeria, the story of the late Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu readily resonates as an example of extreme patron-client exchange or clientship system. As a patron to many political godsons (clients), Adedibu, in many circles, was styled with designations such as 'the Strong Man of Ibadan Politics', 'Father of Oyo PDP' and 'Garrison Commander of Ibadan Politics' - the last nickname was given to him by Chiefs Olusegun Obasanjo and Ahmadu Alli, former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and former Chairman of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Adedibu practised exclusively and indeed, ingeniously a brand of patronage, termed '*amala* and *gbegiripolitics*'. It is known that preparatory to any election, Chief Adedibu would distribute cash and prepare food daily for suppliants numbering over 500 people. Hungry and homeless hangers-on throng his home to have for breakfast, *ogi/eko* (corn pap) and *akara* (bean cake), and for dinner, hot *amala* and *gbegiri* soup (cf. Abati, 2008). *Amala* is a staple food, common among the Yoruba of South-West Nigeria. Its consumption is deemed incomplete without the accompanying soup,

gbegiri and *ewedu*. As in Ghana, many local politicians, seeking national or state relevance also got invited to some of his many special banquets. It was said that he slaughtered a cow daily and employed the services of numerous men and women in the preparation of the daily banquets. He also spent about five hundred thousand Naira daily to prepare the meal. Thus, Adedibu's had a large following (clients), who were mobilised to sway elections in favour of his anointed ones. Before his death recently, he had a stranglehold on electorates, mostly city rabbles, public transport workers, thugs and the ordinary poor who benefitted from him. He seized on the importunity of the poor to create a social capital and empire of fame for himself. And whenever any of his political godsons failed to fulfil their obligation of reciprocities, he always wasted no time in deploying his large social capital and thugs (clients) to engage in violence and even remove political office holders (Akinboye, 2015: 14-15). The case of civil disturbance, orchestrated by Adedibu's thugs in Oyo state between 2001 and 2007 would not be forgotten so soon. He ensured the impeachment of the state Governor, Rashidi Ladoja through his men in the State House of Assembly and replaced him with his deputy, Adebayo Alao-Akala.

As can be clearly seen, the practice of clientship, both in ancient and modern times, is often abused. Just as two brothers, in African societies, may assist each other in a host of ways, the patron-client partners similarly have a relationship that may be invoked for almost any purpose; the differences in terms of benefits and inequality that typifies patron-client exchange are not stable. Clients are often grateful to the patrons because of varied favours they receive from them irrespective of the fact that they (clients) also reciprocate; the fact however, is that the relationship continues to be that of individuals who are not equals. During elections, for example, these clients are called upon before, during, and after elections to support, defend and canvas votes for their patrons. Just as the patrons of ancient Rome supported their clients, Roman clients, like those of contemporary Africa, could mull support for their patrons when law suits were brought against them. This was done either by causing mayhem in the city or going to the court premises to demonstrate their solidarity in all manners of ways. In Ghana, some patron-supporters could even go to the extent of calling their faction mundane names under the pretext of pressure groups. And when the patron eventually emerges victorious, many temporary job appointments and few permanent employment opportunities are then given to the 'loyal' clients, who are not made to go through the rigours of job interviews. At other times, as seen above, the local or community patrons exchange political support in return for help in community politics.

Again, in Ghana, candidates for the community assembly positions are picked by state leaders. Since every political party needs someone to speak for them at the various levels, the state patrons could help their clients in their party to get district, municipal, or metropolitan status. They could assist the community leaders (clients) to secure electricity, potable water, health centers, roads, and schools. The state patrons could advise their clients on where to go to request for community assistance or development; they could speak to other state or national leaders on behalf of the loyal local leaders and sometimes they could help with funds which they had collected from other clients elsewhere. All these local leaders (clients), in return, provide electorates to vote in elections, participants in marches, demonstrators for rallies, as well as mobs for protests in cases where the preferred candidate (the patron or his anointed) is not returned. Local clients ensure that voting is based on the dictates of their patrons. Sometimes, genuine workers' agitations are cloaked in such patron-client relations or, at worst, are necessitated by like motives (Rothstein, 1979). At other times, clientship in Ghanaian setting could come into play in terms of who gets certain jobs and

services at certain rich sectors of the economy. Bad still, requests for government funds to assist communal or district health centres, schools, roads, drainages, and other infrastructures are similarly facilitated by political loyalty, financial contributions, and other personal favours.

Since clientship relationship is an informal cluster consisting of an influential patron who is in a position to offer security, inducements, etc, and his followers who, in return, contribute their loyalty and personal assistance to the patron's designs, it may be argued that clientelism is not exactly synonymous to socio-political corruption. However, within the purviews of African societies such as those of Ghanaian communities, clientelism reflects as a kind of *quid pro quo* system which, unfortunately, is frayed with the use of public and private resources for private gain. While political corruption could be described as all deceitful and fraudulent conducts by those in power, clientelism will refer to the distribution of benefits targeted at specific individuals or groups for electoral favours. Elections in many parts of Africa are characterised by bribery, rigging, manipulation, godfatherism, hooliganism, assassination, etc (Akinboye, 2015:1). These, however, have nothing to do with the basic aims of clientelism. In the context of African societies like Ghana or Nigeria, clientelism may be seen as negative because the ultimate result could create personal revenue for patrons and clients, - revenues that are often deprived of members of the general community, who are not part of the patron-client relationship. According to a renown Ghanaian scholar, Kwame Gyekye, the African extended family system with its web of relatives, far and near, gives rise to patronage or clientelism. This is because a public official, 'normally' is expected to find jobs for some members of his extended family either in his own outfit or elsewhere, a practice that most often leads to nepotism (Gyekye, 2013: 88).

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is evident that issues surrounding clientship system, if well stretched beyond the present discourse, is quite elastic. Clientship, as practised in ancient Rome, is not immensely different from its application in most developing societies such as Ghana or Nigeria even though the societies are far separated in time and space. As can be seen above, it has both merits and demerits. To what extent it is abused by some self-centred individuals is a different matter. No doubts, the relationship could become negative when opportunities, government funded developmental projects and district, municipal or metropolitan positions are reserved for a select-few, who are clients of the persons (patrons) in charge, and necessarily because such clients merit the positions. Similarly, it could be disturbing when pressure groups that put on non-partisan colours turn out to be champions of their patrons instead of fighting for communal or national interests. Lately, Ghana is witnessing some quite bizarre developments which emanate from parochial patron-client system; certain individuals (clients) would embark on the destruction of public properties as a way of protest to demand the President to either appoint certain individuals to ministerial positions or retain them in their positions after being dismissed them for non-performance or misappropriation of funds. Like the Adedibu scenario in Ibadan, southwestern Nigeria, it is no longer surprising that in Ghana too, some political patrons use their clients (fanatic party thugs, hooligans and touts at motor-parks) during elections to intimidate voters, snatch, stuff, or destroy ballot boxes when they realise that the outcome would not go in their favour.

Beyond the abysmal misuse of patron-client relationship, clientship is a mutually benefiting association with immense merits. As seen in the case of ancient Rome above, a wealthy patron could help, with funds and representation, an indigent client who is accused of some wrongdoing

and taken to court. Similarly, a Ghanaian patron could assist a client who is well qualified to obtain an employment especially in the face of the 'near-choking' unemployment situation in the country. Just as the ancient Roman politician would always bid for land allocation to support and settle his veterans, a Ghanaian politician would not be the wrong when he lobbies government funded developmental projects for his community or constituency, not necessarily because he or she wants to be re-elected but because the community lack those amenities. In a related development, there is nothing wrong with clients canvassing or soliciting votes for their patrons, following him on campaign tours, and providing other services that are within their power to their patrons, so long as these acts are devoid of violence, bribery, rigging, hooliganism or even assassination. Thus, the patron-client relationships, over the years, has exhibited some metamorphoses and dynamism as it comes to us. It is a transcultural phenomenon that has permeated the vey hub of modern societies including the Ghanaian socio-cultural and political engagements, an indication that certain ancient phenomenon has not been lost on us.

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