"Neopatrimonialism" and Agricultural Development in Africa: Contributions and Limitations of a Contested Concept

Aaron deGrassi

Abstract: The "neopatrimonial" character of African states has increasingly been invoked to explain the politics of agricultural stagnation across the continent. This article summarizes the literature on neopatrimonialism, reviewing how analysts have applied the concept in studies of food and agricultural policies in Africa. It then draws out some of the key contributions of such an approach, and describes limitations, both methodological and substantive. Finally, it asks how and why the concept has been deployed, and recommends greater circumspection, research, and refinement.

Recently an increasing number of analysts have implicitly or explicitly assumed that the concept of neopatrimonialism can be deployed usefully to understand how sub-Saharan African governments approach agricultural development and policy reform, and consequently why the continent's aggregate agricultural productivity has grown relatively slowly.[1] Neopatrimonialism is commonly understood as a hybrid regime consisting of, on the one hand, an exterior modern, formal, rational-legal statelike apparatus (the "neo"), and on the other hand, a patrimonial spoils network in which centralized elites mobilize political support by using their public position to distribute jobs, rent-seeking opportunities, and resources as personal favors (Bratton & van de Walle 1997).

The concept of neopatrimonialism draws from Max Weber's 1922 discussion of "patrimonial authority" as one form of "traditional authority."

African Studies Review, Volume 51, Number 3 (December 2008), pp. 107–33

Aaron deGrassi is a doctoral student at the University of California, Berkeley, focusing on agrarian political economy, technology, democratic decentralization, and transport, particularly in Angola, Burkina Faso, and Ghana. The current article forms one part of a project evaluating different studies of African agricultural policies.

Discussion and application of the concepts of patrimonialism and neopatrimonialism began to appear in American political science literature in the 1960s and 1970s (e.g., Eisenstadt 1973; Roth 1968), and then in African studies, particularly by French scholars (Lemarchand 1972; Médard 1982; Willame 1972) and scholars around the Centre d'étude d'Afrique noire at the École de Bordeaux and the journal *Politique africaine*. More recent research on neopatrimonialism examines partial reform during structural adjustment, democratic transitions, the roles of donors in sustaining neopatrimonial regimes, and changing patterns of international trade (Bayart et al. 1999; Bratton & van de Walle 1997; Chabal & Daloz 1999; van de Walle 2001a). This article focuses on van de Walle (2001a), because his is the most recent and systematic treatment of the concept, and it is also highly popular, having received the 2001 award from the American Political Science Association for best book in the field of comparative politics. It also is the work cited most often by authors working on food and agriculture. Though there are some acknowledged differences among neopatrimonial regimes and in thinking on neopatrimonialism, most agricultural analysts invoking the concept agree on the features noted above.[2]

Much of the literature on neopatrimonialism and agricultural development in Africa largely assumes a priori the existence and important influence of neopatrimonialism, rather than first empirically demonstrating or analyzing the historical development of the concept, its significance, and previous critiques. Food and agricultural policies and projects, such analysts contend, have been devised according to neopatrimonial logic rather than proclaimed objectives of food security or poverty reduction. These analysts share Callaghy's (1988:83) assumption that "welfare oriented development policies are discussed at great length, but development policies that augment state and ruler power are the primary focus of implementation efforts." Public interventions, according to this point of view, lead to the private appropriation, for the purpose of cementing political support, of land, fertilizer, and seed inputs, credit, and price subsidies. Analysts looking beyond the macro-strictures of dependency theory or Bates's (1981) notion of urban bias have turned to the concept of neopatrimonialism for its contributions to understanding politics and African agriculture.

Strengths of the Concept

One useful aspect of the literature on neopatrimonialism is that it emphasizes, first, an appreciation of politics qua politics, rather than as a subset of abstract economic models. It also provides a powerful counterweight to studies that focus on purely technical prescriptions, such as technologies or economic policies, as solutions to agricultural malaise in Africa. Further benefits include its attention to important issues of corruption and illegal activities (e.g., Bayart et al. 1999) and its emphasis on the interrelations among (and not just the individual contributions of) state, society, and the

economy. In addition, it points to the need for explanations of prolonged economic stagnation, and as a related problem, the partial implementation of economic and political reforms. And finally it emphasizes problems of state capacity. Van de Walle (2001a) notes that states can have both strong autonomy and weak capacity, and that there may be political reasons for underinvestment in capacity. The preceding points have interested many of the analysts cited above, who seek to understand the contemporary politics of agriculture and food in Africa. Nevertheless, the literature on neopatrimonialism also has several key methodological and substantive limitations that often go unrecognized in current invocations of the concept.

Methodological Limitations

The methodological limitations of much contemporary literature on neopatrimonialism in sub-Saharan Africa include a focus on relatively few countries, restricted attention to only a few journals, a tendency to present anecdotal evidence, insufficient attention to conceptual roots, and overgeneralization.

The literature on neopatrimonialism focuses on nine countries: Nigeria, Senegal, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Zambia, and especially Cameroon.[3] Extrapolating from a small set of countries is inappropriate, as their circumstances may be different. For example, the mineral revenues of Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and the DRC allowed unique forms and a unique extent of corruption and patronage. The hierarchical nature of Wolof society, combined with the influence of Islamic marabouts, is a situation somewhat unique to Senegal. And leaders such as Cameroon's Ahidjo or the DRC's Mobutu may have been particularly adept at coordinating patronage. Other countries that do not fit as well—Burkina Faso or Tanzania, for example—are cited less often.

Related to this focus on a specific set of countries is the tendency of some of the literature to be self-referential, with citations restricted to only a few journals, either from American political science or from a segment of Francophone *Africanistes*. Other sources, including those from African studies and disciplines such as sociology, geography, and anthropology, are largely ignored.

In connection to the two above tendencies, there is also a pattern of using selective anecdotes. Earlier studies noted similar problems in moving from empirical data to general assertions about political systems (see Lemarchand 1972:68; Kaufman 1974:287), but these challenges have not yet been met. This pattern is partly related to the difficulties of obtaining reliable and thorough information on corruption, patronage, illicit activities, and high-level political dynamics. Describing and understanding neopatrimonialism is only occasionally facilitated by a privileged position that enables one to access information on inner political and governmental

workings. Indeed, van de Walle's (1990) study seems highly exceptional in terms of his access, as a development consultant, to the inner workings of the Cameroonian government.[4]

But the current reliance on anecdotal evidence also derives partly from the aim of harnessing "mid-range" analysis—that is, "a 'meso' level between individual choice and structural determinism" (Bratton & van de Walle 1994:457). More important may be the tendency in American political science to construct dichotomies between general theorizations and detailed empirical case studies (most often with a privileging of the former), as well as attempts by some researchers to produce simplified policy-relevant messages for the donor institutions that fund their work. In addition, while analytically incorporating one's own positionality seems critical to research on neopatrimonialism, this is rare, perhaps due to the positivist orientation of much American political science (Monroe 2005). Many, though certainly not all, of the key writers have been white men, often associated with notable development or academic institutions in the West. Greater acknowledgement of issues of positionality would help shed light on, and thereby begin to tackle, the difficulties of gathering and interpreting evidence about neopatrimonialism.

Another problem is that while authors often cite key works like Médard and Bayart, insufficient attention is paid to the broader and deeper conceptual roots of neopatrimonialism in functionalist social science, modernization theory, and theories of patron–client relations, particularly in agrarian contracts between peasants and landlords (a topic, as we shall see, on which there is now a large corpus of insightful literature). As the term is increasingly invoked more widely, it is being used more loosely, and the precise connotations, justifications, and limitations of the concept are lost as it is turned into a default explanation or deus ex machina. Few people bother with examining precisely the different types of patrimonialism, how they relate to other facets of social, economic, and political life, how they are connected to international processes, and how and when they have changed over time—issues that were heavily debated in decades past.

Caution is also needed about the tendency toward overgeneralization about Africa and about neopatrimonialism. Too often commentators slip into talking about "the African State" as a uniform phenomenon. Many commentators are careful to qualify their analysis by noting, in passing, that there is variation in African state capacities (Botswana and Mauritius, for example, are often cited as exceptions that prove the rule) (see Chabal & Daloz 1999:xv,8; Bayart et al. 1999:2,31). But, despite mentioning variation, many studies go on to ignore it.[5]

Van de Walle (2001a) and others suggest that countries may differ in the extent of their neopatrimonialism along a unilinear continuum from ideal types of completely patrimonial on one end to completely rational-legal on the other, but as one commentator remarked, this framework is "merely descriptive and ultimately tautological" (Theobald 1999:497). Contrasting a

common African neopatrimonialism with more rational-legal non-African countries is improper for at several reasons. First, the endpoints are not as ideal as assumed; patrimonial tendencies in the West are acknowledged, but underestimated, and they are overestimated in Africa.[6] Second, such a continuum does not help us understand the numerous different trajectories of patrimonialisms or their varying origins and effects, and it also fails to capture the internal heterogeneity of countries. Finally, neopatrimonialism has often been the product of transnational processes; the continuum analogy takes countries as discrete units of analysis, yet our world has been globalizing, albeit in fits and starts, for at least five hundred years. Many others have questioned how useful it is to characterize patrimonialism as somehow inherently African (e.g., Berman 1974; Hull 1979; Sidaway 2003; Szeftel 2000), especially since many of the personalized systems were created and sustained financially and militarily by European and American regimes.

Difficult questions also remain about appropriate units of analysis. What exactly are the neopatrimonial entities? Are they national governments or political regimes? Ministries or local governments? Societies or cultures? Geographically defined areas? Does stating that a regime is neopatrimonial mean that neopatrimonial dynamics pervade a country's entire territory? If not, how do we know where neopatrimonialism exists? How much of a country's land and people needs to be neopatrimonial, and for how long, to make the nation-state so defined? These are difficult hermeneutic and methodological questions not yet addressed sufficiently by the literature (though Mbembe [2000] makes a start). The ad hoc and unsystematic nature of much writing on neopatrimonialism blinds us to dramatically uneven political geographies. Some areas commonly portrayed as dominated by chaotic patronage actually have their own specific patterns of state and social organization that defy easy categorization.[7]

The particular tendencies toward overgeneralization within the neopatrimonialism literature need to be seen in connection with a number of other studies that have documented how and why flawed and damaging stereotypes about Africa are produced and contested in academia and society, and how such discursive constructions of the continent feed into certain patterns of authority, resources, and expertise.[8] Criticisms of overgeneralization have been raised throughout the literature on neopatrimonialism in particular. Erdmann and Engel (2006:17) assert that "*not all* political and administrative decisions are taken according to informal rules determined by private or personal gusto." Ottaway (2003) likewise finds neopatrimonialism "an ill-defined code word for the political ills that afflict the continent." Van de Walle has in fact agreed that the concept is "elusive (2001b:71), "not always very precise analytically" (2001a:51), and that it "disguises significant cross-national variation" (2001b:71), yet these comments are made in passing and largely ignored throughout most of those works.[9] Sumich (2008:112) also finds that "the neopatrimonial thesis... misrepresents complex historical processes."

Similar cautions and criticisms have been raised about the utility of the earlier concept of patrimonialism itself. As Theobald (1982:554–55) notes, "rather than isolating a socio-political phenomenon, it tends to gloss over substantial differences—both within a society at different stages in time and between societies.... Patrimonialism is being used to explain political cohesion in virtually any society; it has become something of a catch-all concept."[10] The conceptual muddle is illustrated by the numerous terms and subterms that different authors often use in different, ambiguous, overlapping, and sometimes contradictory ways: patrimonialism, neopatrimonialism, bureaucratic patrimonialism, new feudalism, prebendalism, clientalism, personalism, personal rulership, and so on (see Erdman & Engel [2007] on this profusion).

With so many variations, exceptions, and qualifications, the actual utility of the overarching concept of patrimonialism declines. Ongoing conceptual redefinition, while providing substantial grist for publishing, may just cloud understanding. The elusiveness of the concept and the practical difficulty of measuring it perhaps make it a seductive explanation specifically because it is difficult to test and refute. As Therkildsen (2005:41) notes, "proponents of neopatrimonialism do not explicitly test its main propositions but take them as given." Part of this difficulty, as illustrated below, is related to important substantive limitations of the literature on neopatrimonialism.

Substantive Limitations

Many of the methodological limitations are inseparable from the substantive limitations of the neopatrimonialism literature. These include African essentialism, functionalist explanations, inattention to actual conditions of agricultural production, the discounting of rural and local politics and resistance, and the ignoring of social differences.

Analysts thinking about neopatrimonialism need to be careful, first, about essentialism—the tendency to assume that there is a common "core" or "essence" of neopatrimonialism throughout Africa. Bratton and van de Walle (1997:63), for instance, suggest that neopatrimonial personal relationships form "the foundation and superstructure of political institutions in Africa." While many authors make token qualifications that Africa is not unique in its corruption and clientalism (Chabal & Daloz 1999:xx,44,57; Bayart et al. 1999:4,8,33), Chabal & Daloz (1999:xix) nonetheless conclude that in the end "what all African states share is a generalised system of patrimonialism and an acute degree of apparent disorder." Likewise, Bratton and van de Walle (1997:62) argue that "although neopatrimonial practices can be found in all polities, it is the *core* feature of politics in Africa and in a small number of other states."

Such essentialist assertions overlook important differences between many African countries and neopatrimonial regimes. For example, there is

a range of studies on corporatism in Africa.[11] The inclusion of farmer representatives in many arms of West African government policy parallels classic industrial corporatist arrangements of Europe and Latin America (see Bingen 1998; 2004; Basset 2001; Molina & Rhodes 2002), not to mention the often very important influence of labor unions noted by Bates (1981) and amply documented by others (e.g., Arthiabah & Mbiah 1995).

Moreover, neopatrimonialism is also irreducible to an African essence because some non-African countries share characteristics of neopatrimonialism. Bratton and van de Walle (1994) juxtapose Africa with what they argue are largely corporatist regimes in the nations of southern Europe and Latin America, downplaying studies describing patrimonialism and its variants in these countries and others. One key study, for instance, notes that "clientelist behavior may be most visible in the political culture of Mediterranean extraction" (Powell 1970:423). Van de Walle (2001a:19) does note that "many of the features are not entirely unique to Africa," but fails to present a comparative analysis of how varying historical (and often transnational) forces lead to specific forms of neopatrimonialism. As Mkandawire (2001) and Therkildsen (2005:40) note, an overemphasis on peculiarly African political pathologies results from and contributes to idealizations of non-African states (particularly Western and East Asian), and derives somewhat from an analytic double standard.[12] The goal is not to pigeonhole Africa or other regions into specific regime types, but rather to understand, explain, and utilize the diversity in Africa and elsewhere.

In addition, there are major flaws in the few existing works that address the origins of the purported generalized neopatrimonialism in Africa. Bratton (1994) claims that "neopatrimonialism originates in the African extended family" without citing any evidence or studies, and he ignores Guyer's (1981) thorough review of the contested concepts of household and family in African studies. Neopatrimonialism may be an attractive concept, in fact—and a concept for which many analysts feel explanation is unnecessary—because it draws on deeply held tropes from modernization theory.The dualism between "neo" and "patrimonial" echoes the much-criticized dichotomies of modernity and tradition from this theory (Amundsen 2001). It assumes the existence of some prior "traditional" patrimonial system that has been integrated into what is viewed as an otherwise "modern" rational-legal state bureaucracy. Countries or cultures are treated as distinct units moving slowly in stages along a single path from tradition to modernity. Van de Walle (2001a) slips into this language when he asserts that "African political systems are relatively young" (273), in contrast to "mature" Western democracies. Booth et al (2006:16–17) likewise assume that patrimonialism naturally declines as urbanization and capitalism take hold. Such views, Martin (2001:181) notes, "fall into the trap of the modernization theories' 'unilinear evolutionism.'"

Such an approach also errs in reifying the "patrimonial" in "neopatrimonial" as a primordial African "tradition" that managed to seep into what

is idealized as a "Western" rational-legal state bureaucracy only recently bequeathed by colonialists. It fails to recognize the ways in which traditions are constructed and contested as well as the important, manifold relations societies have historically had with their wider surroundings, relations that lead to multiple historically specific and contingent trajectories.

Many key works on neopatrimonalism also rely on outdated concepts and studies about culture and tradition from the 1960s and 1970s, considering neither Terrence Ranger's landmark work in *The Invention of Tradition* (1983) nor the deluge of studies that have followed.[13] Bratton and van de Walle (1997:62) speak of "customs" of patrimonialism, and van de Walle (2001b) writes that "sociological structures evolve only very slowly." Van de Walle (2001:120) borders on reifying "everyday [patrimonial] practices at the village level," and seems to imply that they were adapted relatively smoothly into "a political instrument" for rulers in modern nation-states. For Chabal and Daloz (1999:13), the state remains rooted in "the strongly instrumental and personalized characteristics of 'traditional' African administrations." Booth et al. (2006:16–19) likewise write of patrimonialism in terms of the "cultural characteristics," "norms and values," and "enduring features" of "traditional rural society," such as "tolerance...for corrupt behaviour."

In contrast to such (largely unreferenced) claims, an enormous range of scholarship has shown how many traditions and ethnicities were forged through the interaction of local social formations and colonial strategies of indirect rule (see Berry 1993; Lentz 1995; Mamdani 1996). Patrimonialism, reconfigured through indirect rule, resulted in what Mamdani (1996) calls decentralized despotism, in which local chiefs were granted increased power with often weakened downward accountability.[14] As access to resources was conditioned upon membership in a colonially recognized ethnic group, so contestations over identity grew. Thus, rather than taking ethnic ties as preexisting channels of patronage and clientelism, we must follow Wilmsen (1996:6) in recognizing that "ethnic identification can never be explanatory; it is necessarily a constituted phenomenon" (see also Comaroff 1987). Such a recognition contrasts with explanations rooting neopatrimonialism in tribalism, communalism, or "the African extended family," which are often, in turn, seen through a reductionst view as functional responses to natural hazards.

Some writers on neopatrimonialism have misunderstood the politics of tradition in Africa partly because of their disregard for close historical study. Van de Walle (2001a) appears to eschew history for an underlying essence of African politics, failing, along with other analysts, to heed Said's (1989:225) point that to "see Others not as ontologically given but as historically constituted would be to erode the exclusivist biases we so often ascribe to cultures, our own not least." A historical approach generates important recognitions about patrimonialism in Africa. For example, the neopatrimonialism literature sometimes implies that centralization was a "traditional" feature of

all African societies despite literature on the diversity of precolonial acepholous and segmentary societies, and the multiple ways in which they were transformed under colonial authorities (e.g., Daannaa 1994; Zeleza 1994). In addition, histories of structural adjustment reveal that donors bear some responsibility for contemporary centralization because they collaborated to enforce policy conditionality and programs that strongly concentrated decision-making and financial control within small cliques of political elite and technocrats, despite token gestures of decentralization.

Furthermore, Allen (1995) explains neopatrimonialism historically in terms of the peculiarly rapid and recent nature of independence transitions in Africa. Rapid transitions, he argues, created power vacuums in which some elites formed and quickly moved to use patronage to shore up their tenuous legitimacy (see also Sandbrook 1986). Historical studies (e.g., Asiamah 2000), also illustrate how one aspect of neopatrimonialism, an increased blurring of personal and public power—for example, in southern Ghana—was related to indirect rule (Berry 2000) and was highly contested at the time and indeed continues to be contested (Nugent 1994). Historical analysis thus provides a strong antidote to excessive generalization.

In addition to essentialism, a second substantive limitation of the literature on neopatrimonialism in Africa is the tendency toward functionalist explanation. Functionalist analyses, as Giddens (1977) notes, explain the existence of an institution or cultural characteristic according to the functions it fulfills, rather than based on its development over history. The existence of neopatrimonialism, according to some analysts, is explained by its function in maintaining a centralized political coalition of elites through the distribution of spoils: according to van de Walle, "key practices such as pervasive clientalism should be understood as instruments to legitimize social systems of great inequality and inequity" (2001b:71).[15] Indeed, academically the analysis of patrimonial rule grew out of functionalist social science (see Eisenstadt 1973; Powell 1970; Roth 1968). Patrimonialism is often seen as fulfilling "the need for mechanisms of 'social insurance' in the risky and uncertain environment of low-income societies" (van de Walle 2001a:118)—a notion fostered by Scott's (1972) influential work. Likewise, Booth et al. (2006) make assertions about the functions performed by patrimonialism in terms of maintaining stability in "traditional rural society":

> Hierarchy is expected, inequality is desired and anticipated, less powerful people are expected to be dependent on more powerful people, women defer to men, subordinates envisage being told what to do, and the according of privileges and status to members of the elite is expected and welcome.... Opinions are formed by consensus, resources are shared, confrontation is considered rude and group loyalty is valued.... People displaying strong uncertainty avoidance feel less able to challenge their leaders' decisions and are likely to look to their government for answers,

> rather than to themselves or their peers. They are also more willing to ban groups and ideas they consider dangerous, and to feel that protest should be crushed. (18,20)

According to such a perspective, failed policies or partly implemented reforms are assumed, often on the basis of anecdotal evidence rather than detailed research, to have fulfilled some function for neopatrimonial rule. As Bird et al. (2003:v) note, "the point is that, in the context of neopatrimonialism, *any policies* (whether 'pro-market' or 'pro-state') will be distorted by a tendency for public resources to be diverted for private or political gain" [emphasis added]. If we follow this sort of logic we cannot avoid the rather unsatisfying conclusion that any policies that are effectively implemented must have performed some function for patrimonial networks.[16]

A weakness of functionalist explanations, as Hempel (1959) notes, is that they cannot account for competing arrangements—that is, they cannot explain why one potentially functional arrangement would have been adopted rather than another equally functional option. Therkildsen (2005:39–40,47–8), for instance, notes the inability of theories of patrimonialism to explain why particular public wages and taxation policies are chosen and finds that "the axiomatic self-interest ascribed to patrons is inadequate for understanding some actual decisions on tax policy" (48). Lonsdale (2006:11) comments on the "curiously mechanical quality" of neopatrimonialism analyses, and notes that "it is rare to meet fully rounded political actors."

Such functionalism is also flawed on issues of rationality, intentionality, and capacity in buying clients. How is it that nepotistic employees, who otherwise are portrayed as bureaucratically incompetent, are able to find effective ways to pilfer and to use pilfered resources to effectively buy or sell political support? This perfunctory view of politics does not adequately consider unintended effects, contingency, and local agency in "reworking development," which, as Moore's (1999) careful ethnographic analysis shows, can be important.[17] In economics terminology, there is a "principal–agent" problem in patron–client relations that writings on neopatrimonialism largely ignore: how do patrons monitor and enforce clients' actions?

The importance of principal–agent issues has been developed clearly in the literature on sharecropping. Attempts to buy political support of a given community may backfire, and policies aiming to benefit one group may end up unintentionally favoring another. Free distribution of plows, for instance, may inadvertently end up entrenching a despised local elite, thereby further alienating important voters or clients. The case of Zambian maize policy is exemplary; maize subsidies were captured by millers rather than consumers (as intended?), and cheap food policies benefited not only politically significant urban consumers but also rural consumers (either net consumers or those who sell early and buy back later) (Bird et al. 2003:24–25). As Berry (1993) presciently notes,

> State intervention in rural areas touches off dynamic processes which affect the consequences of state actions and limit the degree to which officials control actual patterns of resource allocation.... The impact of state policies and power on conditions of access to rural land and labor does not depend solely on the interest of politicians and bureaucrats, but on the specific histories of debate and interaction among farmers, traders, headmen, officials and their relatives and associates. (65, 66)

Likewise, Boone (2003:42) argues that "there is a politics of institution-building in the countryside—involving bargaining and compromise between central rulers and regional elites—that shapes the structure of the state itself...." Local populations may feign allegiance to patrons and/or play patrons off one another as part of a broader livelihood strategy emphasizing diversified "portfolios."[18]

Senegalese society is often cited in assumptions that patronage functions smoothly to purchase social stability and legitimacy, but it also contradicts these assumptions. Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith (2002:3) suggest that local Senegalese Islamic leaders (*marabouts*) perform a "function" by allowing patronage from state elites to be channeled through them, in return for which they "deliver the votes of their followers." Yet Villalon's (1995) careful ethnography reveals the "fictive nature of compliance with state demands" (113). Villalon writes, "In contrast to a vision of masses blindly manipulated by a religious elite, the ties of *taalibes* to their marabouts are frequently far more contingent and tenuous than assumed" (120). In fact, marabouts, he notes, "have an interest in perpetuating the myth of total control over disciples as a means of increasing the leverage they enjoy vis-à-vis the state. And because in this respect the more powerful one's marabout the better one's position, disciples in turn have clear incentives to claim the total allegiance which can reinforce the marabout's position" (193). In sum, buying clients is not as easy as is sometimes portrayed, although politicians may try. Thus actual patronage dynamics must be demonstrated and explained empirically and historically rather than presumed via recourse to some sort of intrinsic "logic of neopatrimonialism."

In addition, while the 1970s literature on patrimonialism (and specifically, on patron–client relations) emphasized rural contexts, recent neopatrimonial analyses do not give sufficient attention to actual agrarian dynamics of many largely rural countries described as neopatrimonial. The result is not just an insufficient application of the concept to relevant areas and issues, but also the neglect of important challenges to the substantive conceptual foundations of neopatrimonialism. Van de Walle (2001a), citing an assertion of Hyden (1983), writes that the African peasantry was "uncaptured" (144), without mentioning the wide rejection of such a notion among scholars on the grounds that it occludes the extent and intensity of historical processes associated with colonial rule, migration, conflict, and commoditization.[19]

Bird et al.'s (2003) functionalist analysis of how neopatrimonialism explains patterns of implementation of agricultural policy also remains too general to be convincing. These authors invoke several instances—fertilizer subsidies in Zambia and land reform in Zimbabwe, for example—and characterize them as neopatrimonial. But as Wantchekon's (2003) empirical analysis shows, it is not clear that the concept of neopatrimonialism is sufficient or accurate in understanding many key decisions in these cases of agricultural policy and their particular variations over time, between subsectors, across geography, and among individuals. Neopatrimonialism is simply invoked, rather than proved, as a rationale, in a similar manner to the way in which dependency theorists once relied on macrostructural appeals to "the needs of capital." It is notable that key studies on agricultural production and policy in that quintessential neopatrimonial regime, Mobutu's Zaire (e.g., Kassa 1998; Shaprio & Tollens 1992) have largely been ignored.

Engaging more with the literature on African agrarian dynamics that specifically highlights processes, history, and power might help overcome some of this functionalism. Neopatrimonial literature is sometimes guided implicitly by older explanations of patron–client relations that pointed to the function of such ties in protecting or insuring the poor peasant client against natural caprice, while in turn providing patrons with political support and perhaps material or financial tribute. Leonard (1987:901), for example, writes that "the values of the social exchange systems that peasant communities employed to ensure themselves against risk are still strong. Consequently Africans are unusual among the world's elite in the extent of their patronage obligations." Van de Walle (2001a) notes in passing that there is some connection between clientalism and "primarily rural societies" (19, 118), and describes some effects of elite neopatrimonialism on agriculture sector reform, but he fails to examine specifically how patronage and agrarian dynamics are related.

The view that patrimonialism arises from the risky conditions of agricultural production, sometimes via the intermediary institution of "the African extended family" (see Rosenzweig 1988; Binswanger & McIntire 1987), constitutes a crude, environmentally determinist view of politics that has long been countered (see Peet 1985; Englund 1988). Such views fail to explain different political systems in areas with similar environments (and vice versa) or why a given political system in a stable environment would vary over time. An assumption that African patronage is an enduring aspect of rural systems, and that patronage serves a function in the midst of rural poverty, runs the risk of portraying rural poverty in Africa as primordial, thereby occluding the processes through which African poverty was historically produced.

In addition to (and partly as a result of) the failure to examine agrarian dynamics, many texts on neopatrimonialism discount rural and local politics and resistance. Van de Walle (2001a) dismisses the presence of

rural political power across Africa, except in white settler states of Kenya, Namibia, and Zimbabwe: "Interest groups and professional associations are poorly organized and comparatively weak" (259), he says, and consequently "most African states are fairly autonomous from social pressures" (95). This is so, he asserts, because "African governments have typically outlawed, emasculated, or co-opted economic interest groups such as unions, business associations, and farmers associations" (30). For him, the "absence of mass organizations in Africa weakens the political influence of lower-class groups who have little leverage over the 'patrons'" (2001b:72).

These claims are unwarranted for several reasons. First, such assertions are often stated but not proven or well referenced (sometimes for stated reasons of lack of space and scope). There is insufficient mention in the literature on neopatrimonialism of the dramatic rise of farmer organizations and protest in the Sahel, for example, or of the dedicated struggles of numerous human rights activists throughout the continent (see, e.g., Docking 1999). As Mustapha (2002) notes "This is a reductionist perspective on African politics which robs non-elite groups of political agency." Boone (2003:5–6), writing about related literature, notes that "so striking were the generalizations about the exploitation and political disempowerment of rural producers that rural Africa was often depicted—often by default—as homogenous and uniformly alienated from national politics, capable at best of retreating into local communities and local associational life." The absence or weakness of such groups, if weakness has indeed existed, must be demonstrated and explained rather than assumed.

Such claims also ignore the ways in which active state intervention in the economy and in civil society has helped create and support, at times, what have in turn become fairly independent farmer associations pressuring the state (see Bassett 2001; McKeon 2002). Furthermore, the argument that the state has an extremely low capacity when it comes to, say, delivering basic vaccinations, but that somehow it can mobilize sufficient capacity to distribute patronage and repress rural mobilization when and where it so wishes, is contradictory. In addition, while it is important not to exaggerate the extent or romanticize the origins, aims, and internal democracy of African farmer organizations, a growing body of scholarship demonstrates the widespread existence and important influence of agrarian political mobilization, even outside of settler states.[20] This does not mean that patronage does not exist (indeed, farmer organizations are sometimes involved), but rather that one should be wary of crude dichotomies of "African neopatrimonialism" versus "Western interest group–based politics."

Finally, even where outright "formal" organizations or protests are not evident, resistance may nonetheless exist as a "hidden" but still highly effective force, what Scott (1985) calls "weapons of the weak." Research on neopatrimonialism needs to attend to protest not merely as a reaction to the drying up of patronage resources, but also as a complex historical development of cultural networks that underpin collective action, built and

sustained through hidden resistance (see Isaacman 1992; McAdam et al. 1997). For example, Schatzberg's (2001) analysis of the "moral matrix," "culturally rooted template," and "common discourse" of neopatrimonialism in "middle Africa" relies on state newspapers but largely excludes subaltern discourses, providing an account that Kelsall (2003:668) calls "too unitary, too synchronic, too consensual." It was in fact the relatively crude models of power in 1970s studies on patron–client relations that helped spark the massive interest in and literature on hidden resistance since the 1980s, which contemporary invocations of neopatrimonialism largely ignore.[21]

In fact, contemporary claims about the widespread legitimacy of neopatrimonialism in Africa are being made at the same time that a number of hard-to-miss stories of outright protest against patronage have been made public. The Goldman Prize for activism on the environment, for example, was recently awarded to the Liberian Silas Kpanan'Ayoung Siakor for his risky struggles against corrupt logging.[22] Certainly, some criticism of corruption and neopatrimonialism is self-serving, evaporating once some critics themselves obtain power, but this is by no means always the case. Moreover, an assumption that patronage functions to buy compliance overlooks the ways in which sheer violence and terror have been used by a number of regimes. Activists in the DRC and elsewhere have continued their struggles for accountability and transparency despite threats and imprisonment. Western analysts write about neopatrimonalism at a time when protests are overflowing about corruption in Kenya, with ministers resigning and people declaring a citizens' arrest of the vice president (*East African Standard* 2006); when Wangari Mathai was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize after decades of courageously enduring harassment and threats for her protests; and when Sierra Leone youth, echoing decades of popular denouncements by Fela Kuti and others (see Flemming 2004), belt out mass radio hits decrying corruption. Analyses of "African neopatrimonialism" are increasing at precisely the time when the World Bank—itself influenced heavily by the United States, Europe, and Japan—has finally and reluctantly come to acknowledge its own implication in corruption after decades of turning a blind eye to the complaints of ordinary Africans about Western development funds merely lining the pockets of corrupt elite. These examples do not prove a broad wave of accountability, but they do show that not all Africans accept patronage as "tradition." Such a portrayal overlooks (and, some argue, denigrates) the efforts of anticorruption and human rights campaigners facing serious personal danger in their struggles. The prevalence of such portrayals by preeminent figures long established in academic, research, and development circles should raise concern.

Finally, there is sometimes the tendency to ignore or downplay other axes of social difference—such as race, gender, religion, and youth—which are all often vitally important to understanding agricultural production conditions, local politics, and resistance. Where such social differences are recognized, moreover, they often are reified as primordial traditions. This

tendency is related to the methodological limitations of not exploring the broader non–political science literature, and particularly the more general literature on the subject of patron–client relationships. These literatures have shown that it is critical to understand such social differences in order to accurately comprehend patronage and its bases, changes, and effects.[23]

Toward an Explanation of the Concept's Popularity

If the concept of neopatrimonialism has such deep flaws, why has it proliferated? Theobald (1999) notes that the resurgence of discourse about neopatrimonial states can partly be explained historically. Cold War powers accepted corruption where strategically convenient. After 1989 a triumphalism prevailed and influential analysts predicted that the world was on course to emulate liberal capitalist democracies (see, e.g., Fukuyama 1992). Such triumphalism has worn thin, however, with many analysts now reverting to an emphasis on neopatrimonalism. Despite its limitations the concept seems to have gained currency, particularly in regard to Africa, because of the search for some explanation for the perceived lack of supply response to structural adjustment—a perception itself based partly on generalizations about continuing stagnation and crisis in African agriculture that Toulmin and Gueye (2003) and Wiggins (2000) have seriously questioned. The concept also has been invoked, as Szeftel (2000) notes, by those who believe that the state's role must be minimized to reduce the possibility of rent seeking.

The concept has proved useful in debates over the effectiveness of increasing aid to Africa (itself prompted by concerns about the negative aspects of neoliberal globalization in the wake of 9/11 and the subsequent conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq). As the United States and Great Britain faced criticism, and as public pressure mounted for debt relief and increased aid (e.g., the campaigns "Jubilee 2000," "Make Poverty History," or Britain's "Year of Africa"), various experts (e.g., ODI 2005) debated the "absorptive capacity" of African states.[24] Marquette and Scott (2005) show how some development agencies have begun paying more attention to political processes, as illustrated by the World Bank's (2005) handbook *Tools for Institutional, Political and Social Analysis* and the *Drivers of Change* series by Britain's Department for International Development (DfID), the latter of which has explicitly and repeatedly invoked the concept of neopatrimonialism in Africa.

Of related importance are the ways that "buzz words" get disseminated in development research (see Cornwall & Brock 2005). The term *neopatrimonialism* has been picked up by a number of analysts with almost no attention to nuance or criticism of the concept and is by now a convenient shorthand of Western development organizations seeking to position themselves on the cutting edge of analysis and justify continued support in a competitive funding environment. The repopularized concept has been circulated by

an "epistemic community" of researchers and consultants based around the Overseas Development Institute and DfID (see Bird et al. 2003; Cromwell & Chinteza 2005) and strategically appropriated by the "partners" of Western organizations who often are dependent upon Western funds and/or support (see Booth et al. 2005). Such dynamics point to important shortcomings in the way research on politics, agriculture, and development in Africa is conducted. They also suggest that research seeking to bring politics back into the study of agriculture, food, and rural development in Africa will require more careful investigation and improved research practices (see deGrassi 2006).

Conclusion

Certainly I am not arguing that no African state is neopatrimonial. Rather, I am suggesting that analysts need to avoid a priori assumptions about the existence of neopatrimonialism and hasty invocations of the phenomenon to explain agricultural and rural development policy outcomes without thorough documentation of the precise forms, characters, origins, transformations, contestations, extent, and other important features of neopatrimonialism. In such documentation researchers need to exercise much greater caution and rigor in the methodology, logic, and evidence used. Many analysts of neopatrimonialism are to be congratulated and appreciated for often creative and difficult research in attempting to understand complex political issues of patronage where scholarly, academic, financial, and/or personal pressures may be toward more narrow quantitative work or apolitical approaches. Nonetheless, much remains to be done.

Drawing from the above analysis, a few words can be offered about generative directions for future research. It may be valuable to investigate how the allegiances, idioms, effectiveness, objectives, and effects of patrimonialism were reconfigured through indirect rule, not only through changes in formal and informal local and national structures of rule, but also through complex changes in processes of migration and agrarian production and trade. It would also be important to consider relations with donor agencies, various local groupings, nongovernmental organizations, and multinational corporations in attempts to construct neopatrimonial relations. Another key aspect would be to consider patronage efforts that are ineffective or that backfire, as well as the politics of symbols, identity, and representation therein. It is essential to understand how forms of neopatrimonialism are constituted through multiple intersecting processes operating at several spatial and temporal scales. This would entail documenting not only changes in patronage forms among regions in a country and over time, but also how these forms relate to agrarian dynamics. Attending to the multiple, often contingent and contested intersecting processes that form state patronage in turn requires combining thorough historical research and detailed anthropology and ethnography of government and society;

Blundo et al.'s (2006) novel work begins to do this.

In cautioning about some of the literature on neopatrimonialism in Africa, I hope to have provided some conceptual space for empirical research, easing pressures to either assume neopatrimonial rule a priori, or to aim solely to demonstrate or elaborate models of neopatrimonialism. It remains for theoretically informed empirical research to provide more thorough examinations of neopatrimonialism based on a balanced assessment of different approaches to understanding politics in Africa.

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank colleagues and several anonymous reviewers who contributed useful suggestions about this article.

References

Allen, Chris. 1995. "Understanding African Politics." *Review of African Political Economy* 62: 301–20.

Amundsen, Inge. 2001. "The Limits of Clientelism: Multi-Party Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa." *Forum for Development Studies* 1: 43–57.

Andreasson, Stefan. 2005. "Orientalism and African Development Studies: The 'Reductive Repetition' Motif in Theories of African Underdevelopment." *Third World Quarterly* 26 (6): 971–86.

Arthiabah, Peter B., and Harry Tham Mbiah. 1995. *Half a Century of Toil, Trouble and Progress: The History of the Trades Union Congress of Ghana, 1939–1995.* Accra: Gold-Type Publications.

Asiamah, Alfred E. A. 2000. *The Mass Factor in Rural Politics: The Case of the Asafo Revolution in Kwahu Political History.* Accra: Ghana University Press.

Bassett, Thomas J. 2001. *Peasant Cotton Revolution in West Africa: Revolution in West Africa, Côte D'Ivoire, 1880–1995.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bayart, Jean-François. 1993. *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly.* London: Longman.

_____. 1979. *L'État au Cameroun.* Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques.

Bayart, Jean-François, Stephen Ellis, and Beatrice Hibou. 1999. *The Criminalization of the State in Africa.* Oxford: The International African Institute.

Beck, Linda J. 2003 "Democratization and the Hidden Public: The Impact of Patronage Networks on Senegalese Women." *Comparative Politics* 35 (2): 147–69.

Berman, Bruce. 1974. "Clientelism and Neocolonialism: Center–Periphery Relations and Political Development in African States." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 9 (2): 3–25.

Berry, Sara. 1993. *No Condition Is Permanent: The Social Dynamics of Agrarian Change in Sub-Saharan Africa.* Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.

_____. 2000. *Chiefs Know Their Boundaries: Essays on Property, Power and the Past in Asante, 1896–1996.* Oxford: James Currey.

Binswanger, Hans P., and John McIntire. 1987. "Behavioural and Material Determinants of Production Relations in Land-Abundant Tropical Agriculture." *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 36 (1): 73–99.

Bird, Kate, David Booth, and Nicole Pratt. 2003. *Food Security Crisis in Southern Africa: The Political Background to Policy Failure.* London: Forum for Food Security in Southern Africa.

Blundo, Giorgio, et al., eds. 2006. *Everyday Corruption and the State: Citizens and Public Officials in Africa.* London: Zed.

Boone, Catherine. 2003. *Political Topographies of the African State: Territorial Authority and Institutional Choice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Booth, David. 2005. *What Are the Drivers of Change in Ghana?* Policy Brief No. 1. Accra: Centre for Democratic Development.

Booth, David, et al. 2006. *Drivers of Change and Development in Malawi.* Working Paper No. 261. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Bratton, Michael. 1994. "Civil Society and Political Transition in Africa." *IDR Report* 11 (6).

Bratton, Michael, and Nicolas van de Walle. 1994. "Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions in Africa." *World Politics* 46 (4): 453–89.

_____. 1997. *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Callaghy, Thomas M. 1984. *The State-Society Struggle: Zaire in Comparative Perspective.* New York: Columbia University Press.

_____. 1988. "The State and Development of Capitalism in Africa: Theoretical, Historical, and Comparative Reflections." In *The Precarious Balance: State and Society in Africa,* edited by Donald Rothchild and Naomi Chazan, 67–99. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press.

Cammack, Diane, et al. 2003. *Malawi.* Draft Food Security Issues Paper. London: Forum for Food Security in Southern Africa.

Chabal, Patrick. 1998. "A Few Considerations on Democracy in Africa." *International Affairs* 74 (2): 289–303.

Chabal, Patrick, and Jean-Pascal Daloz. 1999. *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument.* Oxford: James Curry.

Chaumba, Joseph, Ian Scoones, and William Wolmer. 2003. "From Jambanja to Planning: The Reassertion of Technocracy Inland Reform in South-Eastern Zimbabwe?" *Journal of Modern African Studies* 41 (4): 533–54.

Cliffe, Lionel. 2006. *Politics and the Feasibility of Initiatives on Hunger and Vulnerability.* Wahenga Brief No. 4. Johannesburg: Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme.

Comaroff, John L. 1987. "Of Totemism and Ethnicity: Consciousness, Practice, and the Signs of Inequality." *Ethnos* 52 (3–4): 301–23.

Cooksey, Brian. 2003. "Marketing Reform? The Rise and Fall of Agricultural Liberalisation in Tanzania." *Development Policy Review* 21 (1): 67–90.

Cornwall, Andrea, and Karen Brock. 2005. "What Do Buzzwords Do for Development Policy? A Critical Look at 'Participation', 'Empowerment' and 'Poverty Reduction.'" *Third World Quarterly* 26 (7): 1043–60.

Cromwell, Elizabeth, and Allan Chintedza. 2005. "Neo-patrimonialism and Policy Processes: Lessons from the Southern African Food Crisis." *IDS Bulletin* 36 (2): 103–8.

Daannaa, Henry Seidu. 1994. "The Acephalous Society and the Indirect Rule System in Africa: British Colonial Administrative Policy in Retrospect." *Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law* 34: 61–85.

deGrassi, Aaron. 2006. "Hands that Feed: Power, Accountability, and the Demo-

cratic Deficit in African Agricultural Policy Processes." Report submitted to the International Institute for Environment and Development, London.

Diamond, Larry. 2004. "Promoting Democratic Governance." In *Foreign Aid in the National Interest: Promoting Freedom, Security, and Opportunity*, 33–53. Washington, D.C.: United States Agency for International Development.

Docking, Timothy W. 1999. *International Influence on Civil Society in Mali: The Case of the Cotton Farmers' Union, SYCOV.* Ph.D. diss., Boston University.

Dunn, Kevin C. 2003. *Imagining the Congo: The International Relations of Identity.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

East African Standard. 2006. "Kenya: VP Risks Citizens' Arrest for Refusing to Quit." February 22.

Edelman, Marc. 2003. "Transnational Peasant and Farmer Movements and Networks." In *Global Civil Society 2003*, edited by Mary Kaldor, Helmut Anheier, and Marlies Glasius, 185–220. London: Oxford University Press.

Eisenstadt, Samuel N. 1973. *Traditional Patrimonialism and Modern Neopatrimonialism.* Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Englund, Harri. 1998. "Culture, Environment and the Enemies of Complexity." *Review of African Political Economy* 25 (76): 179–88.

Erdmann, Gero, and Ulf Engel. 2006. *Neopatrimonialism Revisited: Beyond a Catch-All Concept.* Working Paper No. 16. Hamburg: German Institute of Global and Area Studies.

_____. 2007. "Neopatrimonialism Reconsidered: Critical Review and Elaboration of an Elusive Concept." *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 45 (1): 95–119.

Flemming, Lucy. 2004. "Sierra Leone's Music Crusader." *BBC News Online,* October 26. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3945201.stm.

Fukuyama, Francis. 1992. *The End of History and the Last Man.* New York: Free Press.

Gabriel, Jürg M. 1999. "Cameroon's Neopatrimonial Dilemma." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 17 (2): 173–96.

Giddens, Anthony. 1977. "Functionalism: Apres la Lutte." In *Studies in Social and Political Theory,* edited by Anthony Giddens, 98–129. London: Hutchinson.

Gore, Charles, and David Pratten. 2003. "The Politics of Plunder: The Rhetorics of Order and Disorder in Southern Nigeria." *African Affairs* 102 (407): 211–40.

Graf, William D. 1984. "Personal Rule in Black-Africa: Prince, Autocrat, Prophet, Tyrant." *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 17 (1): 165–67.

Guyer, Jane I. 1981. "Household and Community in African Studies." *African Studies Review* 24: 87–137.

Hagberg, Sten. 2002. "'Enough is Enough': An Ethnography of the Struggle against Impunity in Burkina Faso." *Journal of Modern African Studies* 40 (2): 217–46.

Hagos, Asegede. 2000. *Hardened Images: The Western Media and the Marginalization of Africa.* Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press.

Hall, Anthony. 1974. "Patron-Client Relations." *Journal of Peasant Studies* 1(4): 506–9.

Hart, Gillian. 1991. "Engendering Everyday Resistance: Gender, Patronage and Production Politics in Rural Malaysia." *Journal of Peasant Studies* 19 (1): 93–121.

Hempel, Carl G. 1959. "The Logic of Functional Analysis." In *Symposium in Sociological Theory,* edited by Llewellyn Gross, 271–307. New York: Harper and Row.

Hickey, Dennis, and Kenneth C. Wylie. 1993. *An Enchanting Darkness: The American Vision of Africa in the Twentieth Century.* East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.

Holmén, Hans. 2005. "The State and Agricultural Intensification in Sub-Saharan Africa." In *The African Food Crisis: Lessons from the Asian Green Revolution*, edited by Goran Djurfeld et al., 87–112. London: CABI.

Hull, Galen. 1979. "Zaire in the World System: In Search of Sovereignty." In *Zaire: The Political Economy of Under-Development*, edited by Guy Gran, 263–83. New York: Praeger.

Hyden, Goran. 1983. *No Shortcuts to Progress: African Development Management in Perspective*. London: Heinemann.

Ikpe, U. B. 2000. "Patrimonialism and Military Regimes in Nigeria." *African Journal of Political Science* 5 (1): 146–62.

Isaacman, Allen. 1993. "Peasants and Rural Social Protest in Africa." In *Confronting Historical Paradigms: Peasants, Labor, and the Capitalist World System in Africa and Latin America*, edited by Frederick Cooper et al., 205–317. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Jackson, Robert, and Carl Rosberg. 1982. *Personal Rule in Black Africa*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Johnson-Hanks, Jennifer. 2005. "When the Future Decides: Uncertainty and Intentional Action in Contemporary Cameroon." *Current Anthropology* 46 (3): 363–85

Kassa, Jeannôt Mokili Danga. 1998. *Politiques agricoles et promotion rurale Au Congo-Zaïre (1885-1997)*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

Kaufman, Robert R. 1974. "The Patron-Client Concept and Macro-Politics: Prospects and Problems." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 16 (3): 284–308.

Keefer, Philip. 2005. *Democratization and Clientalism: Why Are Young Democracies Badly Governed?* Policy Research Working Paper No. 3594. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

Kelsall, Timothy. 2003 "Political Legitimacy in Middle Africa: Father, Family, Food." *African Affairs* 102 (409): 667–69.

Kjaer, A. M. 2004 "'Old Brooms Can Sweep Too!': An Overview of Rulers and Public Sector Reforms in Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya." *Journal of Modern African Studies* 42 (3): 389–413.

Korovkin, Tanya. 2000. "Weak Weapons, Strong Weapons? Hidden Resistance and Political Protest in Rural Ecuador." *Journal of Peasant Studies* 27 (3): 1–29.

Lemarchand, René. 1972. "Political Clientelism and Ethnicity in Tropical Africa: Competing Solidarities in Nation-Building." *American Political Science Review* 65 (1): 68–90.

_____. 1988. "The State, the Parallel Economy, and the Changing Structure of Patronage Systems." In *The Precarious Balance: State and Society in Africa*, edited by Donald Rothchild and Naomi Chazan, 149–70. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press.

Lemarchand, René, and K. Legg. 1972. "Political Clientalism and Development: A Preliminary Analysis." *Comparative Politics* 4 (2): 149–78.

Lentz, Carola. 1995. "'Tribalism' and Ethnicity in Africa: A Review of Four Decades of Anglophone Research." *Cahiers des Sciences Humaines* 31 (2): 303–28.

Levine, Victor T. 1971. *The Cameroon Federal Republic*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

_____. 1980. "African Patrimonial Regimes in Comparative Perspective." *Journal of Modern African Studies* 18 (4): 657–73.

Leys, Colin. 1975. "The Politics of Redistribution with Growth." *IDS Bulletin* 7 (2): 4–8.

Lockwood, Matthew. 2005a. *The State They're In: An Agenda for International Action on Poverty in Africa.* Bourton-on-Dunsmore: ITDG Publishing.

_____. 2005b. "Will a Marshall Plan for Africa Make Poverty History?" *Journal of International Development* 17 (6): 775–89.

Lonsdale, John. 2005. "African Studies, Europe and Africa." Paper presented at the AEGIS Conference on African Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, June 30.

Mamdani, Mahmood. 1996. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Mann, Susan A. 1989. "Common Grounds and Crossroads: Slavery, Sharecropping and Sexual Inequality." *Signs* 14 (4): 774–98.

Marquette, Heather, and Zoë Scott. 2005. "Getting to Grips with Politics: Political Analysis at the World Bank and DfID." International Development Department, University of Birmingham, October.

Martin, Guy. 2001. "Criminalization of the State and Africa Works." *Africa Today* 47 (3–4): 177–81.

Martin, William G., and Michael O. West, eds. 1999. *Out of One, Many Africas: Reconstructing the Study and Meaning of Africa.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Mbembe, Achille. 2000. "At the Edge of the World: Boundaries, Territoriality, and Sovereignty in Africa." *Public Culture* 12: 259–84.

McAdam, Douglas, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly. 1997. "Towards an Integrated Perspective on Social Movements." In *Comparative Politics,* edited by Mark I. Lichbach and Alan S. Zuckerman, 142–73. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McKeon, Nora. 2002. "Farmers' Organizations and National Development: The Experience of the National Council for Rural Peoples' Dialogue and Cooperation in Senegal."

Médard, Jean-François. 1979. "L'État Sous-Dévellopé au Cameroun." *Année Africaine:* 35–84.

_____. 1982. "The Underdeveloped State in Tropical Africa: Political Clientalism or Neo-patrimonialism?" In *Private Patronage and Public Power: Political Clientalism in the Modern State,* edited by Christopher Clapham, 162–92. London: Frances Pinter.

_____. 1990. "L'État Patrimonialisé." *Politique Africaine* 39: 25–36.

_____. 1992. "L'État Postcolonial En Afrique Noire: L'Interprétation Néo-Patrimoniale De L'État." *Studia Africana* 3: 125–33.

_____. 1996. "Patrimonialism, Neo-Patrimonialism and the Study of the Post-colonial State in Sub-Saharan Africa." In *Improved Natural Resource Management: The Role of Formal Organisations and Informal Networks and Institutions,* edited by H. S. Marcussen, 76–97. Roskilde: International Development Studies, Roskild University.

_____. 1998. "La Crise De L'Etat Neo-Patrialmonial Et L'Evolution De La Corruption En Afrique Subsahararienne." *Mondes en Developpement* 26 (102): 55–67.

Mehler, Andreas. 1998. "Cameroun and the Politics of Patronage." In *History of Central Africa: The Contemporary Years Since 1960,* edited by David Birmingham and P. Martin, 42–65. London: Longman.

Mercer, Claire, Giles Mohan, and Michael Power. 2003. "Towards a Critical Political Geography of African Development." *Geoforum* 34 (4): 419–36.

Mkandawire, Thandika. 2001. "Thinking about Developmental States in Africa."

Cambridge Journal of Economics 25 (3): 289–314.
Molina, Oscar, and M. Rhodes. 2002. "Corporatism: The Past, Present, and Future of a Concept." *Annual Review of Political Science* 5: 305–31.
Monroe, Kristen R. 2005. *Perestroika! The Raucous Rebellion in Political Science.* New Haven: Yale University Press.
Moore, Donald S. 1999. "The Crucible of Cultural Politics: Reworking 'Development' in Zimbabwe's Eastern Highlands." *American Ethnologist* 26 (3): 654–89.
Mustapha, Abdul Raufu. 2002. "States, Predation and Violence: Reconceptualizing Political Action and Political Community in Africa." Paper presented at the 10th General Assembly of CODESRIA, "State, Political Identity and Political Violence," Kampala, December 8–12. www.codesria.org.
Nugent, Paul. 1995. *Big Men, Small Boys and Politics in Ghana: Power, Ideology, and the Burden of History, 1982–1994.* London: Pinter.
ODI. 2005. "Scaling Up versus Absorptive Capacity: Challenges and Opportunities for Reaching the MDGs in Africa." London: Overseas Development Institute.
Parpart, Jane L., and Kathleen Staudt, eds. 1989. *Women and the State in Africa.* Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner.
Peet, Richard. 1985. "The Social Origins of Environmental Determinism." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 75 (3): 309–33.
Phillips, Lucie Colvin. 1999. "The Political Economy of Policy Making in Africa." African Economic Policy Discussion Paper No. 4. Washington, D.C.: USAID/EAGER.
Ponte, Stefano. 2004. "The Politics of Ownership: Tanzanian Coffee Policy in the Age of Liberal Reformism." *African Affairs* 103 (413): 615–33.
Powell, John Duncan. 1970. "Peasant Society and Clientelist Politics." *American Political Science Review* 64 (2): 411–26.
Ranger, Terence. 1983. "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa." In *The Invention of Tradition,* edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, 211–62. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Rathbone, Richard. 1984. "Personal Rule in Black-Africa." *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 17 (1): 140–41.
Richards, Paul, and Khadija Bah. 2005. "Peace Through Agrarian Justice." *IDS Bulletin* 36 (2): 139–44.
Robinson, James A. 2003. "Politician-Proof Policy." Working Paper, Report No. 26945. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
Rosenzweig, Mark R. 1988. "Risk, Implicit Contracts and the Family in Rural Areas of Low-Income Countries." *Economic Journal* 98 (393): 1148–70.
Roth, Guenther. 1968. "Personal Rulership, Patrimonialism, and Empire-Building in the New States." *World Politics* 20 (2): 194–206.
Sahley, Caroline, et al. 2005. "The Governance Dimensions of Food Security in Malawi." Lilongwe: United States Agency for International Development-Malawi.
Said, Edward W. 1989. "Representing the Colonized." *Critical Inquiry* 15: 205–25.
Sandbrook, Richard. 1986. "The State and Economic Stagnation in Tropical Africa." *World Development* 14 (3): 319–32.
_____. 2005. "Africa's Great Transformation?" *Journal of Development Studies* 41 (6): 1118–25.
Schatzberg, Michael G. 1988. *The Dialectics of Oppression in Zaire.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

_____. 2001. *Political Legitimacy in Middle Africa: Father, Family, Food.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Scott, James C. 1972. "Patron-Client Politics and Political Change." *American Political Science Review* 66: 91–113.

_____. 1985. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance.* New Haven: Yale Universtiy Press.

_____. 1990. *Domination and the Art of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Shapiro, David, and Eric Tollens. 1992. *Agricultural Development in Zaire.* Aldershot: Avebury.

Shaw, Timonth M., and J. E. Nyang'oro. 1988. *Corporatism in Africa: Comparative Analyses and Practice.* Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press.

Sidaway, James D. 2003. "Sovereign Excesses? Portraying Postcolonial Sovereignty-scapes." *Political Geography* 22 (2): 157–78.

Smith, Lawrence D., Stephen Jones, and Stanley Karuga. 2004. "Agriculture in Kenya: What Shapes the Policy Environment?" Department of International Development, Project No. PASS AG0150. Oxford: Oxford Policy Management.

Sorenson, John. 1993. *Imagining Ethiopia: Struggles for History and Identity in the Horn of Africa.* New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.

Sumich, Jason. 2008. "Politics after the Time of Hunger: A Critique of Neo-patrimonial Interpretation of African Elites." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 34 (1): 111–25.

Szeftel, Morris. 2000. "Between Governance and Underdevelopment: Accumulation and Africa's 'Catastrophic Corruption.'" *Review of African Political Economy* 27 (84): 287–306.

Theobald, Robin. 1982. "Patrimonialism." *World Politics* 34 (4): 548–59.

_____. 1999. "So What Really Is the Problem about Corruption?" *Third World Quarterly* 20 (3): 491–502.

Therkildsen, O. 2005. "Understanding Public Management through Neopatrimonialism: A Paradigm for All African Seasons?" In *Understanding the African Exception,* edited by Ulf Engel and Gero R. Olsen, 35–52. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Toulmin, Camilla, and Bara Gueye. 2003. "Transformations in West African Agriculture and the Role of Family Farms." Report No. SAH/D(2003)541. Paris: Club du Sahel et de l'Afrique de l'Ouest.

Tripp, Aili M. 2001. "Women's Movements and Challenges to Neopatrimonial Rule: Preliminary Observations from Africa." *Development and Change* 32 (1): 33–54.

Udvardy, M. 1988. "Women's Groups Near the Kenyan Coast: Patron-Clientship in the Development Arena." In *Anthropology of Development and Change in East Africa,* edited by David W. Brokensha and Peter D. Little, 217–35. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press.

van de Walle, Nicolas. 1989. "Rice Politics in Cameroon: State Commitment, Capacity, and Urban Bias." *Journal of Modern African Studies* 27 (4): 579–99.

_____. 1990. *The Political Economy of Agricultural Reform in Cameroon.* Ph.D. diss., Princeton University.

_____. 1993. "The Politics of Nonreform in Cameroon." In *Hemmed In: Responses to Africa's Economic Decline,* edited by Thomas M. Callaghy and John Ravenhill, 357–97. New York: Columbia University Press.

_____. 1994. "Neopatrimonialism and Democracy in Africa, with an Illustration from Cameroon." In *Economic Change and Political Liberalization in Sub-Saharan*

Africa, edited by Jennifer A. Widner, 129–57. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

_____. 2001a. *African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis, 1979–1999*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

_____. 2001b. "Rejoinder to Inge Amundsen and Stein Sundstol Eriksen." *Forum for Development Studies* 28 (1): 69–73.

_____. 2002. "Africa's Range of Regimes." *Journal of Democracy* 13 (2): 66–80.

_____. 2006. "Meet the New Boss, Same as the Old Boss? The Evolution of Political Clientelism in Africa." In *Patrons, Clients and Policies: Patterns of Democratic Accountability and Political Competition*, edited by Herbert Kitsschelt and Steven I. Wilkinson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Van Donge, Jan Kees. 2002. "The Fate of an African 'Chaebol': Malawi's Press Corporation After Democratisation." *Journal of Modern African Studies* 40 (4): 651–81.

van Onselen, Charles. 1992. "The Social and Economic Underpinning of Paternalism and Violence on the Maize Farms of the South-Western Transvaal, 1900–1950." *Journal of Historical Sociology* 5 (2): 127–60.

Villalon, Leonardo. 1995. *Islamic Society and State Power in Senegal*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wantchekon, Leonard. 2003. "Clientelism and Voting Behavior: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Benin." *World Politics* 55 (3): 399–422.

Weber, Max. 1968. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. Edited by G. Roth and C. Wittich. New York: Bedminster Press.

Wiggins, Steve. 2000. "Interpreting Changes from the 1970s to the 1990s in African Agriculture through Village Studies." *World Development* 28 (4): 631–62.

Wiseman, John A. 1999. "Criminalization of the State and Africa Works." *Journal of Modern African Studies* 37 (3): 560–62.

Willame, Jean-Claude. 1972. *Patrimonialism and Political Change in the Congo*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Williams, Gavin. 1987. "Primitive Accumulation: The Way to Progress?" *Development and Change* 18 (4): 637–59.

Wilmsen, Edwin. 1996. "Introduction: Premises of Power in Ethnic Politics." In *The Politics of Difference: Ethnic Premise in a World of Power*, edited by Edwin Wilmsen and Patrick McAllister, 1–24. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Worby, Eric. 1998. "Tyranny, Parody, and Ethnic Polarity: Ritual Engagements with the State in Northwestern Zimbabwe." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 24 (3): 561–78.

World Bank. 2005. *Tools for Institutional, Political, and Social Analysis: A Source Book for Poverty and Social Impact Analysis*, London: Department for International Development.

Yeager, Rodger. 1988. "Democratic Pluralism and Ecological Crisis in Botswana." *Journal of Developing Areas* 23 (3): 385–404.

Notes

1. See Bird et al. (2003); Booth et al. (2005, 2006); Cliffe (2006); Cooksley (2003); Cromwell and Chintedza (2005); Holmén (2005); Keefer (2005); Lockwood (2005a, 2005b); Sahley (2005); Sandbrook (2005); Smith et al. (2004); van de Walle (1989, 2001a). Many of these claims come from people affiliated with

the London-based Overseas Development Institute, which is closely connected to and heavily funded by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development. See Diamond (2004:48) for a perspective from the United States.

2. For example, Levine (1980) provides an early recognition of some differences among neopatrimonial regimes, and Chabal and Daloz (1999) seek to distinguish certain of their claims from the work of Bayart (1993).
3. On Cameroon see Bayart (1979); LeVine (1971); Meddard (1979); van de Walle (1990, 1993); Gabriel (1999); Mehler (1998). On the DRC see Callaghy (1984); Lemarchand (1972); Schatzberg (1988); Willame (1972). See also Dunn (2003).
4. According to Therkildsen (2005:41), in studies of neopatrimonalism and bureaucracy, "a blanket dismissal of civil services in Africa based on only a few empirical examples is astonishing." Van de Walle himself (2001:24–25) criticizes the anecdotalism of much literature on urban bias, though his own book cannot be said to be entirely free of it. Mustapha (2002) denounces the "very reductionist and sensationalist impression of political life in Africa" and "the tendency to parade innuendo and hearsay as facts." And Lonsdale (2005:11) decries that neopatrimonialism's "lack of historical depth" makes it "difficult to see how African states have developed differently from one another, as they have, over the last half century." Booth et al. (2005) cite almost no concrete evidence to substantiate their claims that Ghana is just another neopatrimonial state; they seem to have eschewed referencing for the sake of readability, though endnotes surely would have solved the problem. Martin (2001:181) criticizes Chabal and Daloz (1999) for "bring[ing] very little, if any, hard empirical evidence and concrete case studies to bear on their analysis, beyond the merely anecdotal personal reminiscences of the authors." Ironically, in this work the authors themselves lament that "the analysis of post-colonial political systems in Africa is all too often conducted at an excessively abstract level" with "ill-defined notions" (1999:31), and Chabal himself noted elsewhere (1998:300) the unfortunate tendency of scholars to "rely on the evidence of what has happened in some African countries, while conveniently neglecting what has happened" in others. Yet to Martin's criticism Chabal and Daloz offer the the unsatisfying justification that "this is a book about ideas, arguments and interpretation, not a reference volume" (1999:xxi).
5. For example, Chabal and Daloz (1999:xix) contend that "although there are obviously vast differences... what *all* African states share is a generalized system of patrimonialism and an acute degree of apparent disorder" [emphasis added]. For them, "corruption is the norm," personalism is "universal," and disregard for rules "general." Bayart et al. (1999) note and occasionally describe "variants and performances which differed widely" (xvii), but such nuance is in clear tension with the much longer passages generalizing about "Africa" and its common "historical patterns." Bratton and van de Walle (1997:68) claim that "virtually all African regimes could be viewed as neopatrimonial." In their earlier work (1994:459) they had in fact analyzed varying degrees of competition and participation, but only under the "master concept" of neopatrimonialism: "The interaction between the 'big man' and his extended retinue *defines* African politics, from the highest reaches of the presidential palace to the humblest village assembly"—a statement they contradict by excepting certain

"settler oligarchies" (South Africa and Namibia) and "multiparty polyarchies" (Botswana, Gambia, Mauritius, Senegal, and Zimbabwe). Van de Walle (2001a) acknowledges that there are "key differences within Africa" but contends that "the regional patterns that can be observed are too striking to ignore" (19). It is the similarities that make up the bulk of his analysis, with variation noted again in passing in the conclusion (276, 279). His later work (van de Walle 2002) similarly analyzes a few variations in democratic transitions, but concludes with recourse to "Africa's... sturdy habits of clientalism." More recently van de Walle (2006) again notes variations in passing but leaves the issue for future study. Bird et al.'s (2003) review of four southern African countries considers only statistical variations in terms of population size, income inequality, poverty, and urbanization rates but then asserts (2003:4) that the countries nevertheless share relatively similar "political wellsprings of agricultural policy." A review of Jackson and Rosberg's (1982) early and much-cited book, *Personal Rule in Black Africa*, noted that it "creates something 'African' out of much more varied experience" and fails to heed "important lessons about glib generalizations in a continent as huge and as diverse as Africa" (Rathbone 1984:141,140). Another review remarked that the "approach which aspires to explain the process of African politics entirely on such personalistic premises leads too frequently to simplistic, undifferentiated conclusions which at best capture a fragment of reality" (Graf 1984:166). Recent works by Chabal, Bayart, and Ellis have also been criticized as "predisposed towards over-generalised assumptions" (Wiseman 1999:560) and for "far too sweeping generalizations about 'the African State'" that "ignore the specificities of national historical trajectories" (Hagberg 2002:218,241).

6. Needless to say, another factor that also tends to be ignored is the reality that the U.S. and other Western countries themselves have many of the notable features of neopatrimonialism such as clientalism, patronage, nepotism, and corruption (e.g., Jack Abramhoff or the former head of FEMA).
7. See Chaumba et al. (2003); Gore and Pratton (2003); Hagberg (2002); Ponte (2004).
8. See Andreasson (2005); Dunn (2003); Mercer et al. (2003); Hagos (2000); Sorenson (1993); Hickey and Wylie (1993); Martin and West (1999).
9. Ikpe's (2000) analysis shows similar problems.
10. See also Theobald (1999:494); Peters (1977). Likewise, another review notes in relation to Latin America, "a bewildering array of empirical phenomena are classified as clientelistic" (Kaufman 1974:299)
11. See the references in Shaw and Nyang'oro (1991).
12. For example, Chabal and Daloz (1999:xviii) contend that in the West "politics is relatively well-defined and self-contained."
13. See Lentz (1995) for a review.
14. Médard (1982:166–67) does begin to recognize this briefly, noting also that "Tribalism is considered as an artificial by-product of clientelist strategies used by political leaders to create a following. Thus, tribalism would be the outcome of politics, rather than predating it.... Ethnic groups are not static and unchanging as is often assumed" (173). He points to "colonial inheritance and the transformation made through the process of modernization. It is more than a simple translation with local adaptations.... Neo-patrimonalism then, is a by-product of a specific historical situation which resulted in a contradictory

combination of bureaucratic and patrimonial norms" (180). He suggests "an ideal type too must not be used as an *a priori* theory.... Neo-patrimonialism is conditioned by mechanisms of production, exchange, extraction, distribution and eventually, accumulation of resources" (185). He distinguishes between agricultural states and mining states. He also notes "concept stretching" (185) and "variety within the neopatrimonial state" (186).

15. Associated with functionalist explanation is the problem of tautology. For example, neopatrimonialism is *defined* as patronage-bureaucracy, and yet is said to *cause* patronage. Again, Kaufman (1974:304) notes the "tendency to define patron–client structures in terms of the functions they are supposed to perform. The result, of course, is tautology, rather than researchable propositions."
16. Kjaer (2004) and van Donge (2002) provide empirical accounts contradicting such reasoning.
17. Such contingency and complexity also makes it extraordinarily difficult to assess policies based on their "political viability" (Bird et al. 2003:2), not to mention making "politician-proof policy" (Robinson 2003).
18. See also Hart (1991); Johnson-Hanks (2005); Worby (1998).
19. For an overview of the criques of the notion of "uncaptured peasantry," see Williams (1987).
20. See, e.g., Asiamah (2000); Bassett (2001); Bingen (2004); Edelman (2003); McKeon (2002).
21. For more on the debates over the literature on patron-client relations, see Korovkin (2000).
22. See www.goldmanprize.org/node/442.
23. See Beck (2003); Hart (1991); Mann (1989); Richards and Bah (2005); Tripp (2001); Udvardy (1988); van Onselen (1992); Parpart and Staudt (1989).
24. Leys (1975) describes how similar concerns about absorptive capacity arose in reaction to planned increases in aid in the 1970s.