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Daniel Jordan Smith, *Every Household Its Own Government: Improvised Infrastructure, Entrepreneurial Citizens, and the State in Nigeria*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022. ISBN: 9780691229904 (cloth); ISBN: 9780691229898 (paper); ISBN: 9780691229911 (ebook)

This book, *Every Household Its Own Government: Improvised Infrastructure, Entrepreneurial Citizens, and the State in Nigeria*, by Daniel Jordan Smith is an anthropological study of the Nigerian state seen through the characters of its institutional agencies, such as the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration (NAFDAC), the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA), and the police, and human agencies, such as power elites and lower-level officials. It explores citizens' abilities to navigate the state's failure to provide basic amenities like water, power, transport, communication, education, and security, including their efforts to transform these failures into business opportunities.

Every Household Its Own Government begins with water's infrastructures and its distribution to citizens in different settlements and social classes. Smith presents the water supply story of Obiageri: "she performed many basic household chores such as sweeping, running errands to the nearby market … By far her most onerous task was the daily fetching of water" (p.28), which the family used for domestic purposes except perhaps for drinking. Emmanuel's cart-pushing business helped other residents with water supply. Chima owns a borehole. And Enyinna operates a pure water company that boosts the private water supply. These vignettes typify how private citizens innovate to cope with the failure of the state to provide water.

The state makes limited public supply to urban centres, which is unreliable but cheaper; the poor on the peripheries pay more given infrastructural failures, which Smith argues is common across Africa. The author (p.31-32) maintains that an average family in Ubakala, a peri-/sub-urban settlement of Umuahia, uses tanks to store rainwater or treated water purchased from the state. In a context of water insecurity, where the state encounters society, bribes or "dash" are not uncommon. This argument in my opinion is a true reflection of state officials' behaviours, even though one cannot rule out few individuals that may resist such dash collection.

Smith notes that people like Emmanuel, Chima, Enyinna, and many others across Nigeria make a living out of the state's failure to provide water. Pure water factories supply to wholesalers who distribute to vendors to sell to cold water hawkers and cooked food sellers in parks as well as individual households. From the author's analysis, there exists a disparity in the income of all these private water entrepreneurs. He observed that this inequality reverberates across the informal economy sector, as evident in the variations in the incomes of entrepreneurs across the private water supply market. Smith maintains that much research sees the boundary between formal and informal economies as blurred when they both share similar characteristics (p.53).

From my understanding of the informal economy in Nigeria, his evidence corroborates the existing reality. However, inequality can arguably not only be seen as a peculiar element of private water supply, but also of the entire capitalist political economy. The analysis of inequality will be appreciated if it is seen as an essential element of the entire logic of capitalist production rather than as peculiar to the Nigerian informal economy.

The second infrastructure examined is electricity. Electricity infrastructure, Smith tells us, had been on a downward spiral since independence—a period that as seen population growth from around 45 million to around 200 million in 2020. Today, NEPA officials sometimes prioritise electricity to places where powerful officials have weddings or funerals; also, during the World Cup or Olympic Games, electricity may be kept on. Further, inefficiency and corruption have destroyed the public image of NEPA; for example, a deal with the US-based energy corporation Enron in 2001 ended in scandal. NEPA changed its name to the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) in 2005 to evade a bad reputation, yet some renamed it "Please Hold Candle Now" (PHCN), while others call it "Problem Has Changed Name" (PHCN). Citizens avoid paying full bills by offering bribes to officials, and those who have been disconnected might have supply restored. When illegal reconnection provides people with a means of income, corrupt officials expect remittance—a small "dash" on top of payment. Beyond state supply, there has been a boom in generator businesses or "mafias".

From my perspective, corruption pervades almost all aspects of Nigerian official activities. Corruption manifests at different levels of the state–society encounter. The generator business and the rise of "mafias" actually points to the innovative spirit of citizens.

However, the Buhari administration has entered into a successful deal with Siemens and the German government, which is currently revolutionising Nigerian electricity infrastructure. Work needs to be done to capture dynamics in power supply in Nigeria which commenced towards the end of 2020.

Public transport—which includes okada (motorcycle taxis), keke (motorised tricycles), and danfo (minibuses)—is owned and operated by private citizens in Nigeria. Many workers are considered criminals or at best touts, and okada riders are often fined by police officers. Danfo drivers and conductors are forced to hand over a small "dash" at checkpoints, and are also subject to police fines. On top of this, roads are mostly in a state of disrepair, like other infrastructures in the country. It is often argued that the Nigerian power elite refuses to fix eastern roads as a punishment for participation in the 1967-1970 Civil War. This perception reinforces common insinuations that power elites engineer infrastructural failure to serve their interests. Work on the Lagos–Abuja–Kaduna–Kano–Maradi railway is not mentioned by Smith, nor is the Second Niger bridge in Onitsha that links the east and north with western Nigeria. Research on these recent developments might serve to complicate the "post-war punishment" thesis.

The cell phone become common in Nigeria with the introduction of the Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) in 2001. By 2014 the country's GSM subscriber base was seven million; just four years later, 172 million (of over 200 million citizens) were connected. Traditional behaviours of gifting and reciprocity are reflected when one does not have sufficient credit for a call; one might "flash" a friend or family member, and the flash recipient would call the flash sender. Kiosks provide such a service at a slightly higher rate than the usual call charges collected by the companies. These small extra margins keep many citizens in business.

Looking at the privatisation of public schooling, Smith offers the story of Chigurum and his family's struggle. Formal education is inextricably linked to social mobility and good livelihood in Nigeria. Free primary schooling was provided by the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), though private pre-primary, primary, secondary, and tertiary schools exist alongside. The private pre-school founded by Aunty Adaku in the mid-1980s after her return from London ("God's Precious Little Gifts Preschool") was one of the earliest, and is patronised mostly by the children of elites and middle-class citizens. Private tutors offer additional lessons in the home, and children like Chigurum might work with them in preparation for secondary school and/or university entrance exams. Smith argues that private tutors are concentrated in Nigeria's east, where entrepreneurial consciousness is highest; such activity is almost absent in most parts of the north where in some areas Western education is considered a sin under the influence of Boko Haram.

Mention of Boko Haram, of course, brings to mind insecurity, and Smith considers how a lack of security has eroded trust in both state institutions and social networks. Petty criminals, pickpockets, burglars, and even violent gangs thrive in neighbourhoods where there is little police presence (there is a popular saying in Nigeria, that only armed robbers and the police have guns). In response, vigilantism has arisen to cope with violence and criminality. The "Bakassi Boys" formed around the early 2000s; initially seen as incorruptible, they later became notorious for extrajudicial killings. Fear of violent crime compounds infrastructural insecurity—the daily uncertainties about water, electricity, transportation, and education, and the constant anticipation and stress citizens must manage. While infrastructural insecurity is steered by, and serves the interests of, the state and power elites, fear of violent crime (including kidnapping) is dealt with by citizens.

In conclusion, Smith vividly captures infrastructural failure in Nigeria and how citizens through private innovations transform poor situations into commercial opportunities. Corruption manifests in the state–society encounter, to be sure, yet some important exceptions in particular localities have not been observed by the author. Nigeria is a complex nation with diverse value orientations (even when they sometimes converge, like the love of modern mobile phones); any analysis of the Nigerian state must take seriously these diversities, and much research remains to be done.

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