**The Trap of Vote Buying: Understanding the Resilience of Corrupt Electoral Practices in Northeast Brazil**

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**Abstract**: Traditionally, vote buying has been associated with poverty. Scholars assume that in contexts of material deprivation, voters are more susceptible to sell their votes to secure access to critical survival goods. According to this approach, whit increasing income levels, vote buying should decrease, as wealthier voters will not place the same value in material handouts as poorer voters. Poorer voters are also assumed to be more accepting of the practice than wealthier voters. Contrary to the expectations of the literature, vote-buying practices have remained mostly resilient in Sertão of Bahia despite the broad reduction in extreme poverty in the region in last decade. Based on ethnographic research, this article draws from the Sertão of Bahia to understand the mechanism through which vote-buying practices persist not only amidst profound socioeconomic changes but also profound criticism of poor voters of the practice. The article argues that vote buying persists because implicit ideas about politics that underlie these practices have remained largely unchallenged by the socioeconomic changes in Sertão of Bahia. Voters’ habitual practice of using access to politicians to solve their everyday problems still influenced how voters interpret their electoral choices and perceive candidates. The article has broader consequences for policymakers as it shows that a change in the political practices within communities historically immersed in clientelistic politics requires not only empowering poor voters economically but also familiarizing individuals with alternative understandings and practices of politics.