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STUDIES IN NIGERIAN POLITICAL SYSTEMS:

THE ROLE OF LEGITIMACY AND
EXTERNAL VERIFICATION IN
POLITICAL LEADERSHIP (1890-1960).

PROJECT DEMONSTRATING EXCELLENCE

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Foreword:

The theme of this study is : "That the future may learn from the past." Nigeria, like many other nations of the world has its share of political problems. No one pretends to know all the solutions to these problems.

However, there comes a time when a people need to learn from their past history. Many Nigerians are of the opinion that as far as Nigeria is concerned, the time is long overdue. This study should be viewed as a step in this direction.

Professor Alexander Woodside, professor of history at the University of British Columbia is of the opinion that history was behind the Tet offensive of early 1968 in Vietnam. This is how he viewed it:

"The Vietnamese Communists' psychologically stunning Tet offensive of early 1968 was simply a modernized copy of a famous (to Vietnamese nationalists) surprise offensive by a Vietnamese peasant army against Chinese invaders of Vietnam during the lunar New Year of 1789. (The Chinese, who had been complacently celebrating the New Year, were defeated and had to sue for peace.)

The 1968 attack was a practical application, by Vo Nguyen Giap and others, of a visionary historicism which would hold in utter contempt any modern military and political planning that looked back no further than three decades." ^I

I. Carey, McWilliams (Editor). The Nation.

The Nation Association, New York.,
Vol. 221, No. 20., Dec. 13, 1975. P.614.

It is true that not everyone would agree with Professor Alexander Woodside, but the fact remains that history has an honourable place in politics. Few will quarrel with the observation that 'politics of yesterday often ends up as today's history'.

In the past, Nigeria had a stable and orderly political system. There were rulers chosen by the people according to the native law and custom. This traditional political system is worthy of study and full investigation by modern scholars and political scientists.

The goal of this study is to study how this political system worked in the past. The findings might contribute immensely in solving some of the political problems now facing Nigeria. Hopefully, history will be able to inspire the Nigerians the way Professor Alexander Woodside believed it inspired the Vietnamese.

PREFACE:

Many books have been written on Nigerian politics but none has addressed itself to the role of legitimacy and external verification in political leadership (1890-1960). In this study, the author is primarily concerned with the issues related to political leadership which is directly related to Nigeria's most challenging political problem which is political instability.

Several authors who wrote about Nigerian politics such as James Coleman: Nigeria, Background to Nationalism; C.S. Whitaker Jr. : The Politics of Tradition.; Robert O. Tilman and Taylor Cole: The Nigerian Political Scene; to mention just a few since more were listed in the bibliography, did not pay sufficient attention to the issues that were related to political leadership in Nigeria as has been done in this study.

In order to assure political stability, there must be an orderly transfer of power from one leader to the other guaranteed by the political system. In Nigeria, the traditional political system made adequate provisions for orderly transfer of power from one leader to the other and the kingmakers served as the guarantors of this political orderliness.

In this study, efforts were made to bring this point to light. The role of kingmakers in bestowing legitimacy and external verification on Nigerian political leaders received full attention in this study also.

Some might argue that the Western system in which the voters have replaced the kingmakers would be much better for Nigeria and other African nations. This study does not disagree entirely with this observation as the conclusion of this study shows.

Those who support this view believe that the voting system enables the leader to derive his political power from the consent of the governed. The author's position is that this statement begs other questions. For instance, what happens to others who did not give their consent? What if fewer than majority of the voters gave their consent while majority of those who actually voted preferred the leader's opponents?

Several leaders have assumed political powers with only 25% of the populace giving them their consent. The 1964 Presidential election in the United States in which President Lyndon Baines Johnson defeated Senator Barry Goldwater is a case in point. Out of about 200,000,000 Americans, only 43,121,085 voted for President Johnson while 27,145,161 voted for Senator Barry Goldwater.^I

In other words, Lyndon B. Johnson became the President of the United States simply because only 22% of the entire population of the country gave him their consent.

I. Guralnik, David B.

Webster's New World Dictionary.

The Southwestern Company, Nashville,

1967, P.1143.

According to the findings in this study, Nigerian nationalists identified parliamentary government with colonial power. As has been delineated in this study, the colonialists destroyed the traditional political system and replaced it with a much more corrupt system.

Such political evils as selling of votes, carpet crossing, political thugs and rigging of elections were unknown in Nigeria till the colonialists came along with their brand of politics. These issues were discussed fairly in detail on pages I22-I28 as well as on page I57 of this study.

However, as page I58 will show, this study did not blame the British alone for all the political ills of Nigeria. The Nigerian nationalists have their own share of the blames. Attempts were made to correct the mistakes of the past in the way of concrete proposals made in this study.

The bicultural orientation of the author coupled with the degree of difference which the author found to exist between the American English and the English spoken and also written in England made his tasks in this study all the more difficult.

To call some of these differences mere malapropism is an understatement. One or two examples will suffice in this case. The English say, "different from" while the Americans say, "Different than". Again, the English say, "neither nor" while the Americans often say, "neither or".

The Americans in this case include some college professors who teach English language. Spelling is another confusing issue. Whereas the English write, "Labour Party", the Americans write, "Labor Party". For someone who was taught English language by the English professors from England, these are no minor problems.

The author made great efforts towards eliminating grammatical and typographical errors by asking several people to read both the rough and the final drafts of this study. The author therefore hopes that these problems are now eliminated.

Since to err is human, the author hopes that if by chance few mistakes still escape his notice, his readers will be very understanding. Oxford University Press is well known for its efficiency when it comes to typographical and grammatical errors, yet this author found a glaring mistake which the Oxford University Press failed to notice and therefore correct in one of the books it has published. This is the mistake; "We are fully aware that a famous saw has it that 'emotion rules the world'."²

The point the author wants to make here is that if Oxford University Press with a team of professional proof readers could still make such a mistake, then the author with no access to such professionals has every reason to ask for more understanding should such mistakes be detected in his work.

2- Awolowo, Obafemi.

Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution.
Oxford University Press, London.,
1966., P.28.

The author of this study holds M.A. degree in International Relations from Lehigh University, and completed his course work for Ph.D. degree in the same field at the University of Pennsylvania before joining the Union Graduate School.

While accepting the sole responsibility for the views expressed in this study, the author wants to express his gratitude to all the members of his committee. Their suggestions and encouragements as well as criticisms helped the author very much at various stages of this study.

Finally, the author wants to thank the Union Graduate School for offering him the opportunity to conduct this study. He hopes that this study will help many people to become familiar with certain aspects of Nigerian politics which have not been fully dealt with by other scholars prior to this study.

Vincent Okwuosa.

June, 1976.

INTRODUCTION:

This study concerns itself primarily with the issues involving political leadership in Nigeria. It will cover three periods in Nigeria's political history. These periods are the pre-colonial era, the colonial era, and the era of nationalism.

With regards to the choice of political leaders in Nigeria, this study believes that legitimacy and external verification are the key variables. Other factors are no doubt very important, but no political leader can survive in office for long if he happens to lack legitimacy and external verification.

DEFINITION OF TERMS:

In this kind of study, one often encounters the difficulty of definition of terms. There is an ever present problem of finding an acceptable definition of such political terms as state, nation, country and authority. Efforts will be made in this study to define some of these terms as well as others like legitimacy and external verification.

Part of this problem relating to definition is due to the fact that often, political scientists tend to use state, nation and country interchangeably. It cannot be said that by so doing the problem is eliminated. Often, confusion results.

Thus, a political scientist will see nothing wrong in saying that the United States is one of the nations that joined the Latin American countries in forming the Organization of American States, signed at Bogata, May 2, 1948.

To avoid such confusions, some of these terms will be clearly defined as follows:

STATE.

- (1). An association of men and women formed for certain specific purposes (politics), with a clearly defined territory and an organized system of government.
- (2). The late President Woodrow Wilson gave a useful definition when he said: "A state is a people organised for law within a definite territory." ^I

The four essential elements contained in these two definitions of state are:

- (i) A definite territory.
 - (ii) A government organised to achieve the purpose for which the state was set up.
 - (iii) A system of laws.
 - (iv) A body of men and women having a common purpose.
-

I. Price, J.H.

Political Institutions of West Africa.
Hutchinson Educational Ltd.,
London, 1968., P.13.

NATION:

A nation is here defined as a group of men and women who have, or who feel that they have, the following things in common: a common ancestry; a common history or tradition; a common language; a common culture; a common religion; a common territory and a common government.²

In case of Nigeria, one can say that the Yorubas have a common ancestry (in that traditionally they are descended from Oduduwa), a common history and tradition, a common language, a common culture, a common traditional religion and a common territory. Yet the Yorubas do not qualify fully as a nation for they do not have a common government.

In the past, they were divided into autonomous kingdoms and empires. During the colonial era, one finds the Yorubas living under the Western Nigerian government, the Northern Nigerian government, the government of the Republic of Dahomey now known as the Republic of Benin, and also in Lagos, under the direct administration of the Federal Government of Nigeria.

In this study, Nigeria is treated as a nation in that it has a common government and recently fought a bloody civil war to remain as a viable nation.

2. Loc. Cit.

LEGITIMACY:

Legitimacy is here defined as the state of being legitimate, in other words that which is widely accepted as legal. Legitimacy therefore is the function of African values previously referred to as native law and custom.

These values are to Nigerians and other African nations what written constitutions are to some Western nations. The selection of political and religious leaders, waging of wars, marriage and coming of age are all required to be in keeping with these values.

Before any leader is accepted by those he is trying to lead, it must be established that he is properly entitled to lead. This entitlement when recognised and approved by the people is what in actuality bestows legitimacy on the leader and his leadership.

EXTERNAL VERIFICATION:

For this study, external verification is defined as the aura of sacred legitimacy which hitherto surrounds the true legitimate leader. Thus, external verification is what makes the people believe that their departed ancestors are in support of their present leader. Under this condition, a leader might be looked upon as god in flesh and his power becomes awesome.

M. Fortes et al recognised the importance of external verification to an African leader by making this observation:

"An African ruler is not to his people merely a person who can enforce his will on them. He is the axis of their political relations, the symbol of their unity and exclusiveness, and the embodiment of their essential values. His credentials are mystical and are derived from antiquity." 3

In other words, external verification is like the umbilical cord which in this case not only links the leader with the departed ancestors, but also nourishes him with the spiritual power and guidance he needs in order to rule his people wisely in accordance with native law and custom.

METHODOLOGY:

This study is divided into three phases. Phase I is designated as pre-colonial era and goes as far back as the nineteenth century. It concerns itself with the system of choosing a successor wherever a vacancy occurred in any given Nigerian society.

3. Fortes, M. et al.

African Political Systems.

Oxford University Press,

London, 1940, P.16.

Phase II. 1900-1938.

In Phase II, the study deals with the era of colonial administration in Nigeria. The key issues dealt with in this phase are certain measures which the British introduced in Nigeria in selection of political leaders. Some of these measures violated the traditional laws used for ages in choosing rulers in many Nigerian societies. The consequences of these violations are also dealt with in this phase.

Phase III: 1938-1960.

This phase designated as the era of nationalism began with the formation of Nigerian Youth Movement in 1938 and ended in 1960 when Nigeria attained its political independence. This period saw the birth of all the major political parties in Nigeria, hence nationalism also reached its peak during this period.

Finally, this period saw the dominance of Nigerian politics by three political leaders. The political activities of these three leaders will be dealt with in this phase.

Viewed as a whole, these three phases delineate the problems involved in choosing political leaders in Nigeria during the periods covered in this study.

Political leaders have often been described as nation-builders. Others have been referred to as the fathers of their nations. In the United States, many still refer to George Washington as 'the father of the nation.'

The successful nation-builders are those who have managed to create in one way or another a feeling of togetherness amongst previously separate peoples, as has happened in recent years in such different countries as Ghana, China and Yugoslavia. The Nigerian leaders will be judged by this standard in this study.

CHAPTER ONE:

PHASE I:

This part of this study designated as Phase I deals primarily with the system of choosing political leaders in various Nigerian societies in pre-colonial Nigeria. The choice made by each society was based on native law and custom, thus guaranteeing the leaders so chosen legitimacy and external verification.

At this point, one possible question might be: What was a given society in Nigeria like before the colonial era? The document which the author collected from the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria supplies the answer to this important question.

NIGERIA:^I

GEOGRAPHY:

The Federal Republic of Nigeria, the largest single geographic unit on the West Coast of Africa, is strategically situated in a position where the coastline of the Western side of Africa bends from a northerly direction to a westerly direction and where West Africa meets equatorial Africa.

I. Government Paper.

Republic of Nigeria.

Federal Ministry of Information,
Academy Press Ltd., Lagos, 1972.

P.6.

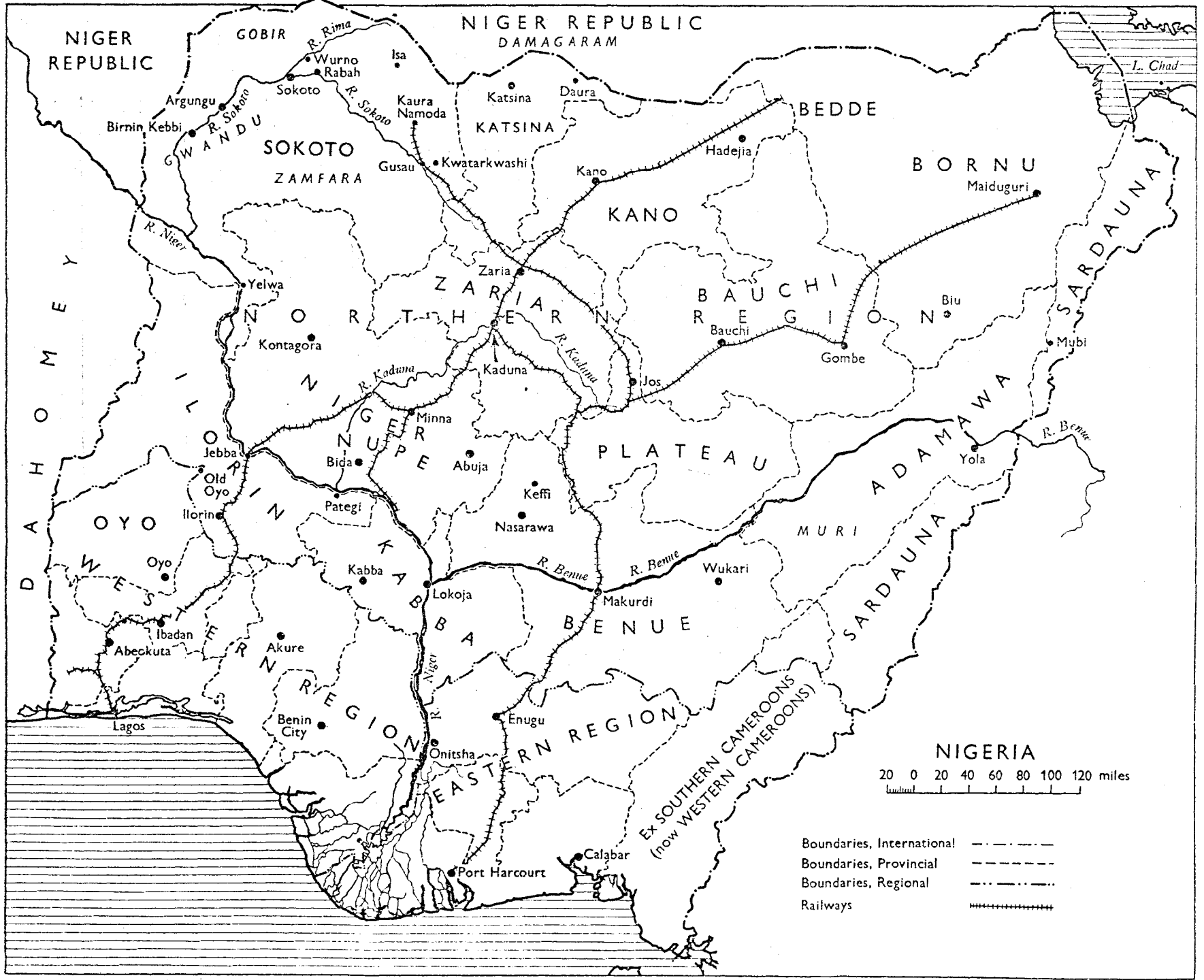


FIG. I -8a-

Nigeria has an area of 356,669 sq. miles which lies between latitudes 4 degrees and 14 degrees north of the equator and longitude 3 degrees and 14 degrees east of the Greenwich Meridian. The country is entirely within the tropical zone, extending northwards from the coast for over 650 miles. It is 700 miles wide at the widest part.

It is bound on the west by the Republic of Dahomey (now the Republic of Benin), on the north by Niger Republic, on the east by the Republic of Cameroun, and on the south by the Bight of Benin and the Bight of Biafra.

The climate varies from tropical at the coast to sub-tropical further inland. There are two well-marked seasons: the rainy season lasting from April to October and the dry season lasting from November to March. Temperatures at the coast seldom rise above 90 degrees Fahrenheit, but humidity is high. The climate is drier farther north where extremes of temperature are more common, sometimes reaching as high as 110 degrees Fahrenheit and falling to 50 degrees Fahrenheit.

HISTORY:

The geographical area now occupied by Nigeria was originally organised in ethnic groupings. Each ethnic group has a distinct culture, language, area, population and traditional system of government.

Among the major ethnic groups are the Hausa, Fulani (Fulbe), Ibo, Yoruba, Benin, Efik, Tiv, Kanuri, Ibibio and Ijaw. At the turn of the 19th century, a Fulani Jihad under a devout Moslem scholar, Shehu Otman* dan Fodio, swept across the northern parts of what is now called Nigeria, except the Bornu area and some parts of the area now known as the Middle Belt.

Dan Fodio overthrew the then Hausa rulers and installed his lieutenants as Emirs in the areas he has conquered. He divided his empire into two; an Eastern Empire which he controlled from his capital, Sokoto**, and a Western Empire which he gave to his brother and soldier, Abdullahi, to control from Gwandu.

The Fulani Empire was divided into emirates ruled by Emirs who were accountable to Dan Fodio in the Eastern Empire and Abdullahi in the Western Empire, and who sent annual tributes to them.

GOVERNMENT:

The Fulani/Hausa emirates had a well defined system of government. The Emir administered each emirate with the help and advice of a large number of state officials bearing specific designations and having specific schedules of duties and appointed by the Emir himself.

* This man's first name has been spelt differently in several other documents for example, Usuman(Bello), Othman (Enahoro).

** Ahmadu Bello maintained that it was Dan Fodio's son named Bello who built the capital at Sokoto. (Bello, P.12.).

Some of these officials included the Madawaki (Army Commander), Galadima (Administrator of the Emir's capital), Waziri (Emir's administrative adviser and head official), Magaji (Treasurer) etc. The Emir was expected to seek the advice of these senior state officials in making laws for the Emirate. The officials also executed the Emir's decisions. When the need for choosing a leader arises in this case an Emir, these senior officials serve as kingmakers in their capacity as members of the council of electors.

On territorial administration, the emirate was divided into districts and each district into villages. The Emir appointed officials to be district heads usually from the holders of the offices mentioned above. Each district head appointed village heads. It was the duty of each district head to maintain law and order in his district and to collect taxes there. The village head maintained law and order in his village and was responsible to the district head.

The village head also collected taxes from his village, which he handed over to the district head who in turn handed them over to the Emir. Thus there was a well organised administrative chain of command from village level (grass roots level) to the topmost authority in the Empire.

Moslem laws as delineated in the Moslem legal code called the Sharia, was administered all through the emirates by a law official called the Alkali, trained in religious matters (because the law was based on the Koran).

The Emir himself held a higher court which dealt only with very serious crimes and settled land disputes. The village heads at the lowest level settled minor disputes. The Emir was both the religious and secular leader of his people.

THE IBOS:

The Ibo ethnic group had their own traditional system of government whereby the political unit (the village in this case) was ruled not by a king or chief (except in a few areas of Iboland), but by a Council of Elders who do not exercise autocratic powers and who were made up of the oldest men from each lineage that made up the village.

On the issues that are controversial, they had to summon an Assembly of Citizens (the whole citizens of the town) to deliberate with them. During the meetings of the Council of Elders and the joint one with the Assembly of Citizens, the oldest member of the Council of Elders presided. His duty was not to have the final say on any issue but just to chairman the meeting and find out what was the consensus from the speeches of the citizens.

Every citizen, whatever his birth, had and demanded an equal voice in the affairs of the Assembly. There was no voting but the consensus at the meeting became the law or policy of the village. The decisions and laws of the village were executed by different age-grades.

An age grade is an organisation of people of the village of roughly the same age. The village was divided into different age grades of same sex, each age grade being assigned specific functions like being night-guards or building new paths or, in the case of women, sweeping the market place every market day. The assignment of duties to the age grades was done by the Council of Elders.

Minor disputes were settled by the family head. Crimes and serious disputes between people from different lineages were judged and settled by the Council of Elders and in very serious cases the Council of Elders would sit with the Assembly of Citizens which in this case acted as a very large jury. Their decision is final.

THE YORUBAS:

In the Yoruba traditional system of government, Yorubaland was divided into kingdoms each ruled by a king (called Oba). Each kingdom was made up of the capital city from where the Oba ruled and the surrounding districts.

The capital city was divided into lineage and each lineage had one or a number of chieftaincies which were either hereditary, or filled by election from among the male members of the lineage or were appointed by the Oba.

The most senior chiefs advised the Oba in legislation concerning the kingdom and in the administration of justice. The chiefs were also administrative heads carrying out the decisions of the Obas.

In the olden days, the chiefs met outside the Oba's palace, took decisions and informed the Oba through a palace messenger because the Oba had some sacred status, and did not meet directly with the chiefs. The Oba would then either confirm these decisions or make necessary alterations and send back his decisions to the chiefs to execute in their capacity as administrative heads.

These days, with the inroad of Western Culture, the Oba could meet the chiefs inside his palace. Matters like new laws, decisions on imposition of taxes and whether to wage a war or not were arrived at in this way.

The Yoruba also had a judicial set up. Disputes between different groups or people from the same lineage were settled by the lineage elders. The chiefs settled disputes between different lineages while serious crimes like murder were tried by the Oba and his senior chiefs. Some Yoruba towns had a form of police force which arrested criminals and broke up disturbances.

On territorial administration, the Oba ruled the towns outside his headquarters through a 'Bale' or 'Oloja' who administered the towns, just as the Oba administered the capital, with the help of subordinate chiefs. The 'Bale' or 'Oloja' was subordinate to the Oba. For instance, his appointment had to be approved by the Oba, serious crimes in the Bale's area and disputes between different towns must be referred to the Oba's Court and each 'Bale' had to pay tribute annually to the Oba in the form of gifts of food or goods. The Oba could also make laws which would apply all over his kingdom.

OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS:

Other ethnic groups in Nigeria also had their own systems of government but they were more or less similar to either that of the Fulani/Hausa, Ibo or Yoruba described previously.

- (1). The Tiv political system for instance was in many ways similar to that of the Ibos.
- (2). The Benin system was similar to that of the Yorubas.
- (3). The Ibibios have a system that had many resemblances to that of the Ibos.
- (4). The Efiks had a system that resembled that of the Yorubas.

These ethnic groups that later on made up what is now called Nigeria were therefore functioning under their own well set up governmental systems and cultures when Europeans first came to these parts.

SUCCESSION TO POWER:

These traditional and stable systems of government would not function as best they could if there were no rules and regulations governing succession to political power. In Nigeria as well as in many other West African kingdoms and societies, these precautionary measures were taken in order to minimise the impact of the inevitable struggle for power that usually followed whenever the ruler died or was removed from office.

To keep these internal struggles under control, each society had a standing committee generally referred to by various names in various societies. They acted as kingmakers in that they made the final choice of the successor to the leader. The Oyo people call these kingmakers 'Oyomesi', while the people of Benin call them the 'Uzamas' and the people of Onitsha refer to them as the 'Ndichie Ume'.

The task of choosing the most eligible candidate from among all the qualified candidates had never been an easy one. There were usually general principles which these kingmakers must follow.

The following general principles are common to nearly all Nigerian societies.

- (1). The candidate must be able to trace his genealogy to the founder of the royal clan or lineage.*
- (2). He must not be deformed (Eze ada alu alu).
- (3). His reputation must be exemplary by the community's standards.
- (4). The candidate must not be a debtor.
- (5). He must have given proof of his wealth by obtaining important titles or membership of a title society, without which he cannot be eligible for the office.²

In Onitsha kingdom, it is compulsory for the candidate to join the Agbalanze society, that is the Ozo title association. Among the Yorubas and the people of Benin Empire, the candidate in order to qualify must display his wealth by the number of wives he could marry and maintain. Among the Fulani/Hausa, besides marrying many wives, the candidate must have made holy pilgrimage to Mecca.

These rules are essential in order to limit the number of possible contestants.

². Nzimiro, Ikenna.

Studies in Ibo Political Systems.
University of California Press,
Berkeley, 1972. Pp. 194-195.

* Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and Ahmadu Bello tried to comply with the requirements of this principle as this study will show.

Beyond that, they help to guarantee that only the best finally made it. Some might wonder why women were not generally considered as candidates. In the first place, the king was the Commander in Chief of his Armed Forces in word and in deed. He always led them into battle. King Shaka of the Zululand, Emperor Theodorus of Ethiopia and Oba Ovorami of Benin in Nigeria were cases in point. Few women leaders could be expected to lead their subjects into serious battles. Joan of Arc was an exception rather than the rule.

The much more acceptable story among the Africans was told by Jomo Kenyatta in his book, Facing Mount Kenya. In this book, he told in detail how the Kikuyu women lost their power over men. To carry out this plan, the men agreed to make all the women pregnant at the same time.

While they were heavy with babies, the men revolted against them and siezed power. The men have been in power ever since. The same thing could happen to a people who had a female ruler, so reasoned the Africans. To avoid such a thing and make sure it never happened, the Africans resolved to bar women from contesting as candidates for the throne.

THE KINGMAKERS:

These were men generally selected from among the non-royal families of the society.

This guarantees their impartiality in their choice of candidates as required by the native law and custom. They are even today held in high esteem by all the members of the society including the king, as was usually the case in the past.

Adiele Afigbo in his book, The Warrant Chiefs., made the following observations:

"At the apex of the political system in Onitsha was the Obi, who held the title of Eze, the most elevated title in the community.

Under him were the three colleges of titled men called Ndichie. The most senior college, Ndichie Ume, contained six titled men who acting in concert with the Obi were said to constitute the traditional government of Onitsha." 3

As kingmakers, the Ndichie Ume not only determine who should become the Obi of Onitsha, they also assist in government matters. This fact accounts for the reason why the kingmakers enjoy high honour and respect among their people.

3. Afigbo, Adiele E.

The Warrant Chiefs.

Longman Group Limited, London.,

1972, P.33.

In all Nigerian societies, membership in kingmakers' society is not hereditary. Once a member dies, his office automatically becomes vacant. Recruitment is open and so is competition for filling the vacant position. All citizens of good standing can qualify except members of royal families where kingship rotates as in the case of Onitsha.

Membership to kingmakers society is for life, and no king can revoke it once conferred upon a citizen.⁴

Among Onitsha people, the initiation into the kingmakers society is usually performed by the Obi during the 'Igbu-nye ewu' ceremony. At this ceremony, the Obi says:

"God and my ancestors! This man is about to take the title of Onyeichie (singular for Ndichie) Do help him to look after his people well and to rule them in peace.

Protect his life and my life and the life of all Ndichie...." 5

At the stage of conferring the staff of office, he says:

"I confer on you the title of ,..... take it and
go home and rule your people in peace." 6

4. Op. Cit. (Nzimi) P.46.

5. Ibid. P.50.

6. Loc. Cit.

The order to govern is implicit in these words, and the senior chiefs of the Ndichie Ume constitute the main channel by which the decisions made by the Obi in council are transmitted to the people. The kingmakers constitute a check on the power of the Obi, and this is indeed recognized by the king.

In Benin Empire as well as in the Kingdom of Onitsha, the kingmakers' society is generally headed by the Iyase. This position makes him a formidable opponent of the king. As Nzimiro puts it:

"The Ndichie Ume (kingmakers) are the heads of the six administrative units of the state, and the Iyase, who is next in rank to the Obi, is traditionally regarded as the Obi's political rival and opponent, as is his counterpart in the Benin system." 7

Dr. Nzimiro is here trying to reinforce the observation made earlier in this study that the kingmakers along with the kings govern their respective societies. The Iyase is regent when an Obi dies, and he controls the affairs of the state with the support of other kingmakers until a new Obi (king) is appointed.⁸

7. Loc. Cit.

8. Loc. Cit.

The fact that the kingmakers hold non-hereditary positions in the society makes the fusion of new blood and new ideas into this august society possible. Also the fact that they are appointed for life makes them less prone to bribery and corruption and also absolves them from the intimidations which might come from a ruling monarch. Attrition is minimal thus making room for continuity.

The kingmakers are traditional leaders as well as political elites in their societies. As a result, people generally accept their decisions when it comes to the choice of new leaders.

The British once appointed a Commission to probe into the role of the kingmakers in Onitsha society. In its report, the Commission said inter alia:

"The Ndichie are the traditional pillars upon which rest the framework of the executive and administration of the town. In other words, by virtue of their social and political status the Ndichie supremacy in matters affecting the destiny of the town cannot be rescinded or challenged by Agbala na Iregwu or the minority splinter group." 9

9. Ibid. (Nzimiro). P.207.

SPECIAL TABOOS:

In order to be able to perform their duties more effectively, the kingmakers are forbidden to do certain things. In Onitsha for instance, they may not travel (leave the town) and, should they break this prohibition, they must sacrifice a goat to their ofo (symbol of authority).

They may not shake hands, but if they have to do so (eg. with a person of high social standing). they proffer their fans (azuzu) in place of their hands. They may not invoke any deity or take any other kind of oath. They have a special place in their residence where they eat their meals and these meals must be prepared by a young girl under the age of puberty.

The kingmakers must keep away from women in their periods and must undergo a purification ceremony if they come in contact with any woman in that condition by accident. Until a new king is chosen from among the candidates, the kingmakers are generally secluded from the rest of the community to give them time to communicate with their departed ancestors. This is why their decision is often unquestioned for it was generally believed that they were guided by the ancestors of the society in making their choice.

With the approval of the kingmakers and the performance of all the necessary coronation ceremonies and rituals, the power of the Nigerian kings generally becomes awesome.

This is so because most African political systems have one important element in common, a basic commitment to the past, to time immemorial. The Ashantis of Ghana illustrate this fact clearly in their system.

Among the Ashantis, the kingmakers choose the Asantehene (king) of the Ashantis. They have to sit him on the golden stool before he could be proclaimed the Asantehene. The golden stool has a myth surrounding it. That is the reason why it has become enshrined as the most sacred object of the Ashanti peoples.

According to oral tradition, Anokye, a priest, brought down from the sky, with darkness and thunder, and in a thick cloud of white dust, a wooden stool adorned with gold, which floated to earth and alighted gently on Osei Tutu's knees. This stool, Anokye announced, contained the spirit of the whole Ashanti nation, and all its strength and bravery depended on the safety of the stool.¹⁰

Osei Tutu was the Kumasihene (chief of Kumasi). As a result of this extraordinary event, the people of Ashanti elevated him above all the other chiefs in the Ashanti confederation. They made him the Asantehene, the paramount chief of Ashanti nation. As a result of this series of events the foundations of a national solidarity emerged.

10. Apter, David E.

Ghana in Transition.

Princeton University Press,
Princeton, 1963, P.102.

From then on, all the people of Ashanti as well as all the other chiefs of Ashanti owed their allegiance to the golden stool and also to the Asantehene. The Ashantis believe that the person of a chief was invested with sanctity just so long as he sat upon the stool of his dead ancestors.

The chief was thus a sanctified figure who was the nerve center of the tribe. His authority, deriving from the past, coursed through the blood in his veins and was made manifest by election to office. The lineage line gave authenticity to the ancestral heritage. Each new installation of the chief was a reinforcement and expression of solidarity. Each ceremony over a new chief was in effect a social contract. The chief, in this view, represented the crucial political unit in Akan organization.^{II}

The role of kingmakers in African societies among others is to make sure that no king ever becomes an autocrat. With regards to the Ashantis, Apter makes the following observations:

"The chiefs have ablebodied men of their towns organized for war purposes into what are called town companies, the captains of which are under the direct authority of the chiefs; and in time of war each takes the field in person with his own contingent.

The king of the tribe is not by any means
an absolute monarch possessed of unlimited power.

II. Ibid. (Apter). P.108.

"and he is always controlled to a certain extent by the chiefs. The king alone cannot make peace or war nor can he enter into negotiations or treaties which concern the interests of the whole tribe, without the consent of the chiefs.

Serious departure from the custom would eventually lead to destoolment." I2

David Apter was not even the only non-African who made this observation. In his book, Local Government in West Africa, L.Gray Cowan had this to say:

"Few traditional chiefs in the tribal political systems of Africa could be considered complete autocrats. In almost every case they were assisted by a council, sometimes made up of elders or of the heads of other lineages within the group.

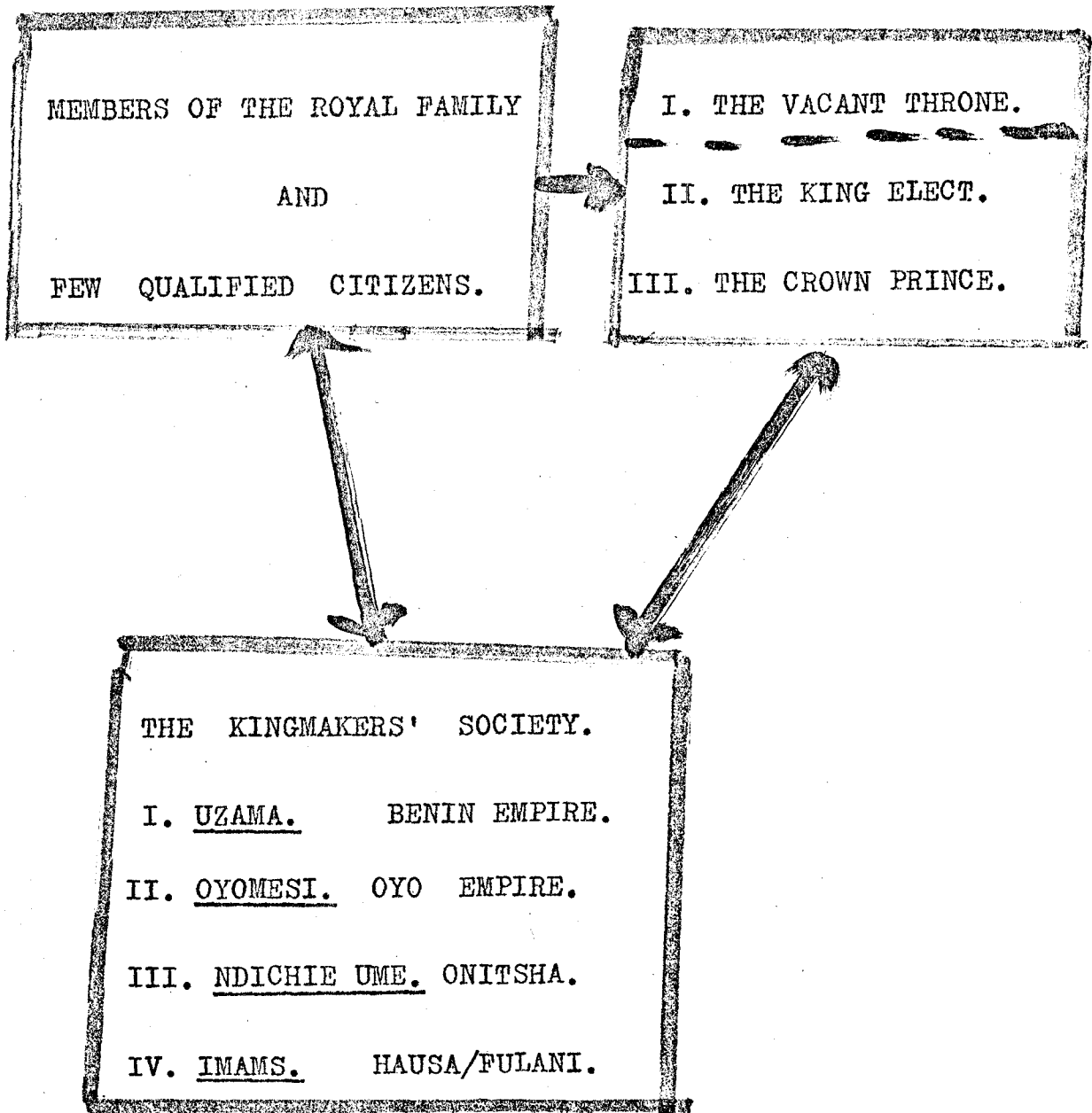
While the chief was not obliged to accept the advice of his council, no chief who expected to remain long in office would be unwise enough to ignore his council consistently.

Many tribes had clearly defined traditional procedures for getting rid of a chief who had overstepped the bounds of tribal mores; sometimes he was merely deposed but more often he was eliminated from the scene in order to prevent the outbreak of dynastic quarrels." I3

I2. Ibid. (Apter). P.107.

I3. Cowan, L.Gray. Local Government in West Africa.
Columbia University Press,
New York, 1970., Pp. 5-6.

FIGURE II.



MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL FAMILY

AND

FEW QUALIFIED CITIZENS.

I. THE VACANT THRONE.

II. THE KING ELECT.

III. THE CROWN PRINCE.

THE KINGMAKERS' SOCIETY.

I. UZAMA. BENIN EMPIRE.

II. OYOMESI. OYO EMPIRE.

III. NDICHIE UME. ONITSHA.

IV. IMAMS. HAUSA/FULANI.

Figure II illustrates the traditional power which the kingmakers had in Nigerian societies. They had the power to make and unmake kings. The two way arrow-heads show that the kingmakers could dethrone a bad king. They could also choose another member of the royal family or any other better qualified member of the society to replace the dethroned king or ruler.

The one arrow-head pointing from the royal family to the king elect shows that whereas the king elect could be elected from the royal family, he has no direct control over them.

This system therefore guarantees that the king has no right to appoint his own successor. Without such a provision, the king might be tempted to abuse his power and possibly make all the members of the royal family fall under his spell.

The controlling power thus lies with the kingmakers. The danger of abuse of power is greatly reduced for the kingmakers always have to act as a group. Most of their actions are strictly based on the native law and custom. Whereas they could remove a bad king from office, the king could not remove them from office. They hold office for life. Heavy fines are usually imposed on any kingmaker who violates the law of the land.

SUMMARY:

This chapter dealt with the Nigerian political system before the colonial era. The roles played by the kingmakers were also discussed. They serve as guarantors of the native law and custom. To make sure that the interregnum which usually follows between the death of a king and the coronation of a new one did not plunge the society into the state of anarchy and lawlessness, the Iyase, one of the kingmakers generally becomes regent. With the assistance of the other kingmakers, he controls the affairs of the state until a new king ascends the throne.

To be endowed with legitimacy and external verification, the king or leader must be properly chosen according to the native law and custom. After which, he undergoes all the necessary ceremonies before he ascends the throne or becomes accepted as the leader.

Mr. Esama Kaine emphasized the importance of these ceremonies in his book, Ossomari, A Historical Sketch. According to him, after the king has undergone all the necessary ceremonies, his legitimacy to rule his people becomes recognized by all. He is also bestowed with external verification in that the people within his state believe him to be a divine personage.

He cited the case of Kororofa kingdom in Northern Nigeria. These people are also known as the Idah people, together with other related ethnic group, they form the Igala people of Northern Nigeria. Here is part of what Mr. Kaine said about them:

"The Idah people in the same way believe the Atah (king) to be god. So to the citizens of the Kororofa kingdom the Ata-manyu (great king) himself was god incarnate. He could disappear to the heavens at will. He could never die." I4

Myths linger on in many instances especially when people chose to believe them. Among the people of Onitsha for instance, the Obi (king) may associate with his wives only in the daytime and they take turns in sleeping with him in the day. The Obi must sleep alone in the night so as to maintain his state of purity.^{I5}

The Nigerian societies as well as other African countries eventually began to witness the dawn of a new era. Their political institutions in time became increasingly affected by the forces of change. The extent to which the Nigerian political institutions were affected by these changes will be dealt with in the rest of this study.

I4. Kaine, Esama. Ossomari, A Historical Sketch.
Hazell Watson and Viney Ltd.,
London, 1963., P.I5.

I5. Op. Cit. (Nzimiuro). P.I58.

CHAPTER TWO:

PHASE II., THE COLONIAL ERA:

The first recorded European visit to the Southern part of Nigeria was in 1486 when the Portuguese came to the Bight of Benin and made contacts with the ancient kingdom of Benin. The British came in 1593.

The British first came as traders setting up trading settlements on the coastal areas like Eko (Lagos) and Bonny. Later on, under one pretext or the other the British took over administrative control of these coastal settlements.

After the mouth of the River Niger was made known in Britain by the Lander brothers, Richard and John in 1832, the missionaries sailed up the Niger. They reached Onitsha on July 27, 1857. They established churches and missionary schools and later penetrated into the interior parts of Nigeria.

The trading companies who for years concentrated their trading activities in the Niger Delta and coastal areas followed the example of the missionaries and moved up the Niger. George T. Goldie represented some of the British trading companies in Nigeria from 1870-1890. He was solely responsible for Nigeria becoming a British protectorate after the Berlin Conference of 1885.

First, he succeeded in unifying all the warring factions of the British trading firms in Nigeria into a very powerful company. As Rooney observed, by 1882, this company had become a going concern and he called it the 'National African Company'.^I

Secondly, he resisted the attempts made by the French and the German trading companies to penetrate into Nigeria. He did this by signing many peaceful trading treaties with several Nigerian kings and chiefs.

His efforts were richly rewarded at the Berlin Conference. At this conference, the other European nations recognised Britain's right to establish a protectorate over the Niger Districts, roughly from Lagos to the Niger Delta and up the Niger to its junction with the Benue River.

In 1886, the British government granted the National African Company, now known as the Royal Niger Company, a charter to control all the trading between Nigeria and Britain. George T. Goldie requested the British government to provide the Royal Niger Company with troops for protection. One of the company's undertakings was that the troops would not be used against the native Nigerians, but would instead be used to protect the company's trade routes.

I.

Rooney, D.D. et al.

The Building of a Modern Nigeria.

George G. Harper and Company Ltd.,

London, 1966., P.71.

The Royal Niger Company never lived up to the provisions of the charter granted it by the British government. It first violated this charter by meddling in domestic politics. Later, it began to indulge in trade monopoly, thereby denying the natives access to legitimate trade and foreign markets.

Finally, the company used the British troops under its command against the natives and did a lot of damages to the Nigeria's coastal town of Akassa in 1899.

The Akassa raid coupled with the other charter violations made the British government revoke the company's charter on 31 December, 1899. On January 1, 1900, the British government took over the administration of the protectorate of Nigeria.

As this study will try to delineate, the British were able to spread their influence into the hinterland now known as Nigeria subduing the area by a mixture of force and subterfuge. They called these new areas protectorates, under the fiction that the people themselves invited British rule and protection.

Thus by 1900 there had come into existence the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria and the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria apart from the Colony of Lagos. In 1861, the weak king of Lagos known as Oba Dosunmu the son of Akitoye handed Lagos over to the British as a Colony in order to stop his powerful uncle, king Kosoko from taking over his kingdom.

Together with the Colony of Lagos, the Protectorates of Southern and Northern Nigeria formed three separate jurisdictions though ruled by officials of the same country, in this case Britain, until 1906 when the Colony of Lagos and the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria were merged into one jurisdiction. In 1914 the three former jurisdictions were amalgamated into one Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria.

The system of administration was the Crown Colony system whereby the area was administered for the sovereign by a resident Governor who was answerable to the Crown through the British Secretary of State for the Colonies.

The Governor made laws for the territory except on currency, the army and certain aspects of public service which had to be referred to London for approval. The Crown could disallow these laws but rarely did. So the Governor had almost absolute power over the colony.

In executive duties he was advised by an Executive Council of senior government officials whose advice he was not bound to accept. In legislation, he was also advised by a Legislative Council, but the Governor retained veto power and power to 'reserve' or refer a legislation to the Crown for assent. There were no African members in either the Executive or the Legislative Council.

As alien rulers trying to push traditional societies into modern ways and Western standards of conduct, and to

open up the territories for trade, the British felt the necessity of appointing local representatives of the central government with clearly defined duties to establish and to maintain order, and to promote the welfare and development of the areas for which they were responsible.

These representatives, drawing their authority from the Governor, operated within a hierarchical structure, and were known variously as residents, chief commissioners, provincial commissioners, district commissioners, or district officers, depending upon the terminology of the territory concerned.

The British sought to carry out their policy of modernization of Nigerian societies through the institution of the Warrant Chief System. Adiele Afigbo defined this system as a system whereby the British selected certain natives who they thought* were traditional chiefs and gave them certificates of recognition and authority called warrants.²

The British based their judgement on assumption and thus violated the existing native law and custom always used in choosing leaders among the Nigerians.

The warrant entitled each of these men to sit in the Native Court from time to time to judge cases.

2. Afigbo, Adiele E.

The Warrant Chiefs.

Longman Group Limited,
London, 1972, P.6.

* Emphasis mine.

Discussing further the power the British bestowed upon these men they arbitrarily imposed on the people of Nigeria as their leaders, Adiele Afigbo also said:

"It also empowered him to assume within the community he represented executive and judicial powers which were novel both in degree and territorial scope." 3

In so far as this system was supposed to achieve the conversion of the indigenous political system of the peoples of the protectorate into an instrument with which the new rulers would govern, influence and civilize the natives, it was an attempt at Indirect Rule System. Moreover, since the Nigerian societies were undergoing a complete social and economic transformation, the British were reluctant to tamper too much with the existing traditional authorities which represented stability, cohesion and moral force.⁴

However, under the pretense of keeping a vigilant watch over the chiefs and their functionaries in order to prevent injustice and check abuse, the British, through their officials began to do what they said they would abstain from doing. They began to tamper with the traditional authorities.

3. Ibid. (Afigbo). P.7.

4. Op.Cit. (Price). P.9.

The British officials seem to believe that the indigenous African systems of government needed to be reinforced through the infusion of European ideas and practices before they could meet the increased demands being made on them as a result of the incursion of European economic and other interests.⁵

Sir Ralph Moor who succeeded Sir Claude Macdonald as Commissioner and Consul-General of Niger Coast Protectorate from 1896-1900, and served as High Commissioner of the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria from 1900-1903, believed in the use of force as a means of attaining some of his objectives.

J.E. Flint pointed out that under Moor, penetration was largely military in character. Negotiation played little part; and the effect if not the intent of policy was destruction of traditional institutions.⁶

Dr. Anene described Sir Ralph Moor as follows:

"The impatient and undiplomatic man of blood and punitive expeditions who broke Ebrohimi and Benin, shelled and burnt Ediba on the Cross River, and smashed up the long Juju (Ibiniukpabi) of Arochukwu." 7

5. Op.Cit. (Afigbo). P.39.

6. Flint, J.E. Nigeria, The Colonial Experience.
Oxford University Press, London, 1960.,P.240.

7. Anene, J.O.C. Establishment and Consolidation of Imperial Government in Southern Nigeria.
London University Press, London, 1952.
Pp. 178-180.

It soon became obvious that in spite of three centuries or more of European presence in the Bight of Biafra, the British had very little reliable knowledge of the social and political system of its interior peoples by 1900 when they took over the control of Nigeria from the Royal Niger Company.

This fact is witnessed by the following observation made by Dr. Afigbo. He said:

"The early years of colonial rule which were taken up with the hurly-burly of military subjugation gave neither the administration the time to collect and collate, nor the people the confidence and inclination to offer information on the indigenous political system." 8

In theory, the system of indirect rule meant the government of the African people through their chiefs. The British decided to carry on this policy in Eastern Nigeria through the traditional rulers. However, the story of the appointment of the first Warrant Chiefs does not reveal that there was any real plan or system designed to ensure that those chosen for the job were in fact the right men, that is, the traditional leaders of the people. 9

8. Op. Cit. (Afigbo) P.59.

9. Ibid. P.60.

Instances of nontraditional rulers being made Warrant Chiefs in Eastern Nigeria abound. For instance, the first Warrant Chief from the Ikwo clan in Abakaliki Division was one Anyigo Agwu, of whom it has been said that "neither he nor his father was a village head before the coming of the whiteman". Why then was this man made the ruler of his people? Dr. Afigbo supplied the answer to this question. According to him, this was the reason:

"After the subjugation of the clan, a meeting of the representatives of its component villages was held there, it is reported, 'the whiteman just looked at Anyigo Agwu and called him out to be a chief.'

This, it was admitted, was because Anyigo Agwu looked a strong and courageous man who could give effective leadership." IO

In Oraukwu, a town in Onitsha Division, something similar to the Ikwo clan's incident happened. After disarming this town, the British officer who came with the troops held a meeting with the men who were immediately available. After surveying the assembly, he called out Ubaejesi Mbanefo, Ugochukwu Mbanefo and Okoye Ezinwa all of Amaeze ward, and Nmetu Ububa of Amuda. The first two were brothers and were chosen as chiefs because, according to oral traditions, they were huge and personable men who had also managed to bring chairs on which they sat while others either sat on the ground or were standing about.

IO. Ibid. (Afigbo). P.61.

According to Dr. Afigbo, the two brothers were chosen because the British officials concluded that they were kings sitting on thrones. The other two who were also made chiefs had helped to induce the villagers to surrender their guns during the first visit of the soldiers.^{II}

The oftentimes repressive measures adopted by the British colonial officials in dealing with the Nigerians made cordial relationship between the two groups difficult. As a result, the Nigerians were not just reluctant, but uncompromisingly determined not to accede to the demands to hand over their traditional leaders to the British. Such leaders were not only generally wise (and therefore an asset) but religiously and ritually indispensable.

Also, it was generally believed among the natives that to sacrifice them to the unknown 'white creatures' was likely to provoke the anger of the gods and of the ancestors whose interests they were believed to represent among the living.^{I2}

J.H. Price observed that in Ghana, the Ashanti people adopted similar method in dealing with the British. After the brutal war they fought with the British, they resolved never to hand over their true leaders to the British who among others confiscated the sacred golden stool besides exiling the Asantehene.

II. Ibid. (Afigbo). P.62.

I2. Ibid. P.67.

Mr Price went on to say that after the war in which the Ashantis suffered defeat; the British requested a peace treaty. As Mr. Price puts it:

"Because of the fear of the British reprisals, many of the alleged chiefs who had signed the treaties of trade and protection were not real chiefs at all, but 'stooges' put forward to act as victims, if need be, of British wrath.

The true chiefs quietly continued to exercise authority without the British suspecting their existence until very recently, and not all the true chiefs had been identified even at the time of independence." I3

The playing of the kingmakers' role by the British were not restricted to the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. Sir Fredrick Lugard who served as the Commissioner for Northern Nigeria at the turn of the century was partly inspired by a zeal to reform away what to his British mind were evil elements in the system of government in the emirates. I4

From 1901-1904, Lugard waged colonial war against the Northern rulers. When it was all over, the rightful rulers had either lost their lives as was the case of the Sultan of Sokoto, or have been chased away into exile and replaced by their former subjects, for example the Emir of Kontagora.

I3. Op. Cit. (Price.) Pp. II-12.

I4. Whitaker, C.S.

The Politics of Tradition.

Princeton University Press,
Princeton, 1970., P.26.

THE MISSIONARIES:

The story of the British interference in selecting political leaders in Nigeria will not be complete without mentioning the role played by the missionaries. Their interference in the Obishop succession in Onitsha is a case in point.

In 1899, Obi Anazonwu, the fifteenth Obi of Onitsha and the tenth from Umuezeoroli died. This provoked a contest and the Umudei dynasty of Onitsha decided to recapture the throne from Umuezeoroli.

In accordance with the native law and custom, all the candidates submitted their names to the traditional kingmakers. One of the candidates was Samuel Okosi from Ogbeabu, which is also part of Umudei dynasty. Samuel Okosi defeated the other candidates, not because he was the choice of the traditional kingmakers, rather he won as a result of interference from without.

According to one reliable source, this is why Samuel Okosi became victorious:

"He was a Christian and a follower of the missionaries, which was to his advantage for he was the 'good candidate' of the zealous Catholic mission authorities.

The colonial government had to intervene in the dispute and the matter was disposed of by a judicial commission of inquiry held in 1900 at Asaba by Commissioner Bedwell.

"He pronounced in favour of Samuel Okosi, who became the sixteenth Obi of Onitsha." I5

The missionaries saw to it that Samuel Okosi was crowned without conforming to the traditional rules of succession. When Umuezeoroli lost the throne in 1900, the family of Obi Anazonwu held the traditional ofo Ezechima which was brought from Benin and which was handed on to each new Obi to symbolise the transmission of political authority to rule the state as ordained by their ancestor Chima.

Okosi I did not inherit this ofo (royal symbol of authority), and the Umuasele lineage group had to prepare a new ofo for him. Okosi I was asked by the Catholic priest to burn his new ofo, which he did; hence the people attributed all the dissensions in his reign to this act of sacrilege. A new ofo was again made and given to his son James Okosi who succeeded him to the throne as Obi Okosi II. I6

It goes without saying that with the approval of the kingmakers and the performance of all the necessary coronation ceremonies and rituals, the power of the Nigerian kings generally become awesome. In the case of Obi Okosi I of Onitsha, these ceremonies were bypassed due to the interference of the missionaries. They viewed these all important installation rituals and ceremonies as idol worshipping and heathen practices.

I5. Op. Cit. (Nzimirol). P. 199.

I6. Ibid. P.209.

INSTALLATION RITUALS:

Here are some of the installation rituals which Obi Okosi I failed to perform due to the pressure brought to bear on him by the Roman Catholic missionaries who supported his candidature for the Obishop. The importance of these ceremonies to the Obi elect and to the Onitsha community as a whole will be delineated.

(I). IMANZU:

Imanzu is a ritual of purification in which the candidate is cleansed for the other greater rituals ahead. This is held at the residence of the Okpala who officiates on this occasion. The Obi elect brings kola nuts (oji) tobacco (otaba), ten yams (ji ili), two gallons of palm wine (nmanya) and white clay (nzu) in a calabash (oba).

The Okpala (kingmaker) offers kola nuts and palm wine to the ancestral shrines and prays for the success of the ceremonies and for the guidance of the ancestors and their protection of the Obi elect. The Okpala then rubs the white clay on the body of the candidate. At this stage, the candidate is only allowed to tie a piece of white cloth around his waist.

This whitening of the body has its root in the idea of resurrection from the dead. To become a member of a title society, a man passes through the sacrificial ceremonies whereby he enters the spirit world. Thus he metaphorically dies.

After the purification is completed, he emerges as a resurrected being, hence the white body. From this time on, he is respected as a semi-spiritual being and as such sacrosanct.^{I7}

(2). ICHENDO:

In this ceremony, the candidate having undergone the Imanzu ceremony retires for twenty-eight days and remains incommunicado throughout this period. He continues to rub his body with nzu to keep himself in this state of purity and remains in this state awaiting the next important ceremonies.

The purpose of the next ceremonies which involve the bestowing of the emblem and insignia of office is to bring the Obi elect closer to the ancestral kings of the past. The ritual consists of the following successive ceremonies:

I7. Basden, G.T.

The Niger Ibos.

Frank Cass, London, 1966., P.138.

(3). IWEOFO.

The giving of ofo, the emblem of political authority. The ofo is supposed to be that of the first king which is handed from one Obi to the other to symbolise the continuity of the office and the power and authority attached hereto.

The member of Ndichie Ume (kingmakers) who performs this ceremony is known as the Omodi. This ceremony is performed at imeobi (palace). At the imeobi, the Omodi offers a sacrifice to the ofo, blesses it, and then hands it to the Obi elect.

The ofo having been given to him, he then proceeds to the Udo shrine, where the spirits of the past kings dwell, for the important ceremonies that eventually confirm him as the Obi. I8

(4). IJE UDO:

The Udo shrine is shrouded in thick bush beside an ant-hill (ikwube). This is supposed to be the place where the first Obi was buried and the new Obi goes there to commune with the dead Obis and be, according to Meek, "dynamised" by the spirits which haunt ant-hills (ant-hill being regarded as a porch to the underworld). I9

I8. Op. Cit. (Nzimiro). P.I66.

I9. Meek, C.K. Law and Authority in a Nigerian Tribe.

Oxford University Press, London, 1937. P.I86.

At the Udo, the priest of Udo (Eze Udo), who comes from the Obio lineage of Ugwunaobankpa, officiates. The Obi elect, who is clad in a white robe and wearing a white cap, sits on a mat. The Eze Udo then prays and invokes the spirits of his fathers who had performed this office for previous Obis, imploring them to assist him in carrying out the ceremonies in accordance with tradition. Then he recounts all the previous Obis of the land whose vigil and dedication had taken place at the Udo.

He slaughters a white goat and spreads the blood on the shrine. He also places on it white chalk and kola nuts (oji) which are also offered on the shrine. A white cloth is also placed on it. Then he releases a white cock into the Udo bush, to stray away and to carry away the impurities and objects that desecrate the Obi.

He slaughters another white cock and spreads the blood on the ufie, the royal drum, and pours a libation with palm wine and offers kola nuts on the ufie drum.

The Onye Ufie, the Obi's servant in charge of the drum, gives the drumsticks to the Eze Udo who then returns them to him, thus granting the authority to play the ufie to the Obi's servant. This completed, a cow is slaughtered and the meat is shared into two. The priest takes one part and the other part is shared between the two political

divisions of Umuezechima and Ugunabankpa. The Obi and the priest pass the night at the Udo and at dawn they leave this spot and move to an area where a small Ogwugwu shrine is located. It is part of the Udo shrine.

The Ada of Obio from the Udo priestly lineage comes forward and shaves the hair of the Obi and hands the hair to the Udo priest who deposits it on the okwu Udo. This ceremony is to commit the life of the Obi to the guidance of the Udo spirit. At this stage, he removes the white cap from the head of the Obi and rubs his head and body with white clay. He ties a white band on the Obi's head and puts an eagle feather in it and then calls the names of his own ancestors informing them that he has completed his duty. Immediately the ufié is played, re-enacting the playing of the ufié by Oreze.

(5). IBUEZE (THE CARRYING OF THE KING):

Having completed the rituals of Udo and thus reinforced by the ancestral powers, the candidate has become an Obi and as he comes out, he is carried shoulder high (ibueze) by the surging crowd, and they move to the Iyase, the people chanting "Obulu Eze Ayo! Obulu Eze Ayo! "
("He is the king, oh yes! He is the king, oh yes!").

He is then raised high above everyone in the state and they acclaim him their king and all powerful. The important roles of the Iyase and Ndichie begin at this stage and the rest of the investiture ceremonies are carried on with their co-operation.

(6). IJEZI OBODO (PERFORMANCE OF DOMESTIC SERVICES:).

The cheering crowd follow the king who is carried high to the Iyase's residence where the Ndichie are seated in the order of their rank. Before them, the Obi performs domestic services. He breaks some wood (nku), sweeps the floor (ezi), collects water (ichu mili), mends the roof (igba uno) in keeping with their tradition that he must render these services to the people for the last time.

These services are to teach him that he is the servant of the people and must cater for their general interest as a dutiful wife does to the husband and her children. The ceremony inculcates humility.

(7). OATH OF OFFICE:

After these services, he stands before the Iyase and the other five Ndichie Ume also stand beside him. The Iyase removes the white band which was tied on his head at the Udo and on which an eagle feather was fixed.

He holds a red cap and asks the Obi the following questions:

IYASE: Will you use your good office to govern well now
that you will be crowned king?

OBI: Yes.

IYASE: Will you pervert the traditions of the people?

OBI: I will not.

IYASE: Will you suppress the poor and terrorise your
subjects?

OBI: No.

IYASE: Will you respect the advice of your Ndichie for
the good of the people?

OBI: Yes.

(8). IKPUBE OKPU:

The Iyase then raises the red cap and says:

"This cap which I will place on your head will
be the first step to your being made a king
and I hope that from the moment this is done
you will be worthy of this trust." 20

Placing the cap on the Obi's head, the Iyase says:

"Your reign will be good. I have surrendered
into your hands the power that passed to me
when the Obi died. May God (Chukwu) give you
long life so that your reign with the Ndichie
will be a peaceful one." 21

20. Op. Cit. (Nzimiro). P.168.

21. Loc. Cit.

(9) RETURN TO THE PALACE:

The Iyase and Ndichie rise and proceed to the ime obi (palace), where they occupy their seats as if in a council meeting, waiting for the arrival of the Obi.

The Obi rises and the crowd follow. As he wends his way to the palace, he follows a traditional path and on the way offers sacrifice to various shrines by dropping nzu as he stops before the location of each shrine. He informs the spirits of these shrines that he is now the king and implores them to assist him in his reign.

(10). EWU ONU EGBO:

In front of every palace is egbo, a medical cult which is protective in function. This is suspended on the pole which is thrown across an arch made by two standing trees. The arch is the entrance to the palace and is called onu egbo. As the Obi comes near the onu egbo, a goat is slaughtered in front of this cult and the cult is invoked to protect the Obi against any medicinal charm from an enemy; and also to safeguard those who enter the palace and to neutralise any magic or dangerous medicines that any one might bring into the palace.

(II). IDOBA NA UKPO:

The Obi then proceeds into the ime obi, the inner chamber, and the Iyase raises the Obi to the throne (ukpo) saying:

"Today I have raised you to the throne as the Eze (king) of Onitsha according to our traditions; you are made a king today by me." 22

(I2). INTEGRATIVE RITUALS:

Public acclamation, and the feasting begin at the conclusion of this last ceremony. All members of the public are participants, for the periods of installation of the kings of Onitsha are occasions of great festivities in the whole town. Their emotions are charged and they show this by the large attendance at most of the ceremonies.

(I3). PAYMENT OF HOMAGE:

The Obi thus seated on his throne, the ufie (royal drum) and egwuota are played and huge crowd at the palace is in festive mood. The Iyase comes forward. He stands a little apart

22. Ibid. (Nzimiro). P.169.

from the Obi, and extends his clenched right hand towards the Obi as he repeats each of the praise names one after the other. When he finishes, the other five Ndichie Ume (kingmakers) come forward in their order of rank and each kneels and genuflects saying "Igwe! Igwe! Igwe!" with their foreheads on the ground as the words are repeated.

The second and third grades of Onitsha chiefs come forward one after the other according to their rank. When the Ndichie have finished, the Agbalanze, the Ozo titled association, repeats this procedure and then the Agbala na Iregwu and other members of the public follow suit.

(14), THE OPALA:

The Obi then dances as far as the palace square to the tune of the royal drum and then returns to the throne. The Obi then retires to the iba ime. The crowd disperse gradually as the Ndichie Ume return to their homes accompanied by their entourages.²³

²³. Ibid. (Nzimiro). P. 152.

The policy of interference adopted by the British in Nigeria had both political and economic overtones. The introduction of the "indirect rule system" by Sir Frederick Lugard, first in Northern Nigeria and later in the rest of the country after 1914 was a case in point. His aim was never to educate the natives politically, but rather to use the existing political system to run the affairs of the nation on behalf of the British government at a minimal cost for the British.

Like the Fulani conquerors, Lugard perceived that a solution for his problems presented itself in the form of the already effectively functioning system of government, which by then offered such obvious additional advantages as religious justification for authority, a formal code of law (the Islamic Sharia), specialized judicial institutions, a more centrally controlled apparatus of administration, the custom of taxation, and above all, the people's habit of obeying state authority.

As Whitaker observed, this habit of obeying state authority was cultivated and ingrained by the centuries-old tradition of monarchy and hardened by Fulani despotism.²⁴

It might be said that the essential difference between the British and the Fulani regimes was that while the Fulani rulers systematically abandoned and concealed

24. Op. Cit. (Whitaker). P.27

the original ideals of their mission, the British response was to construct a system designed to satisfy expedience and idealism simultaneously. Lugard called this system indirect rule, or the system of native administration.

In an effort to clarify what the system of indirect rule meant, Major Burdon, one of Lugard's original cadre of political officers otherwise called Residents, had this to say:

"Our aim is to rule through existing chiefs, to raise them in the administrative scale, to enlist them on our side in the work and progress of good government.

We cannot do without them. To rule directly would require an army of British magistrates.... which both the general unhealthiness of the country and the present poverty forbid.

My hope is that we may make of these born rulers a high type of British official, working for the good of their subjects in accordance with the ideals of British Empire, but carrying on all that is best in the constitution they have evolved for themselves, the one understood by, and therefore best suited to the people." 25

25. Crowder, Michael.

The Story of Nigeria.

Faber and Faber, London,
1962., Pp. 193-194.

SUMMARY:

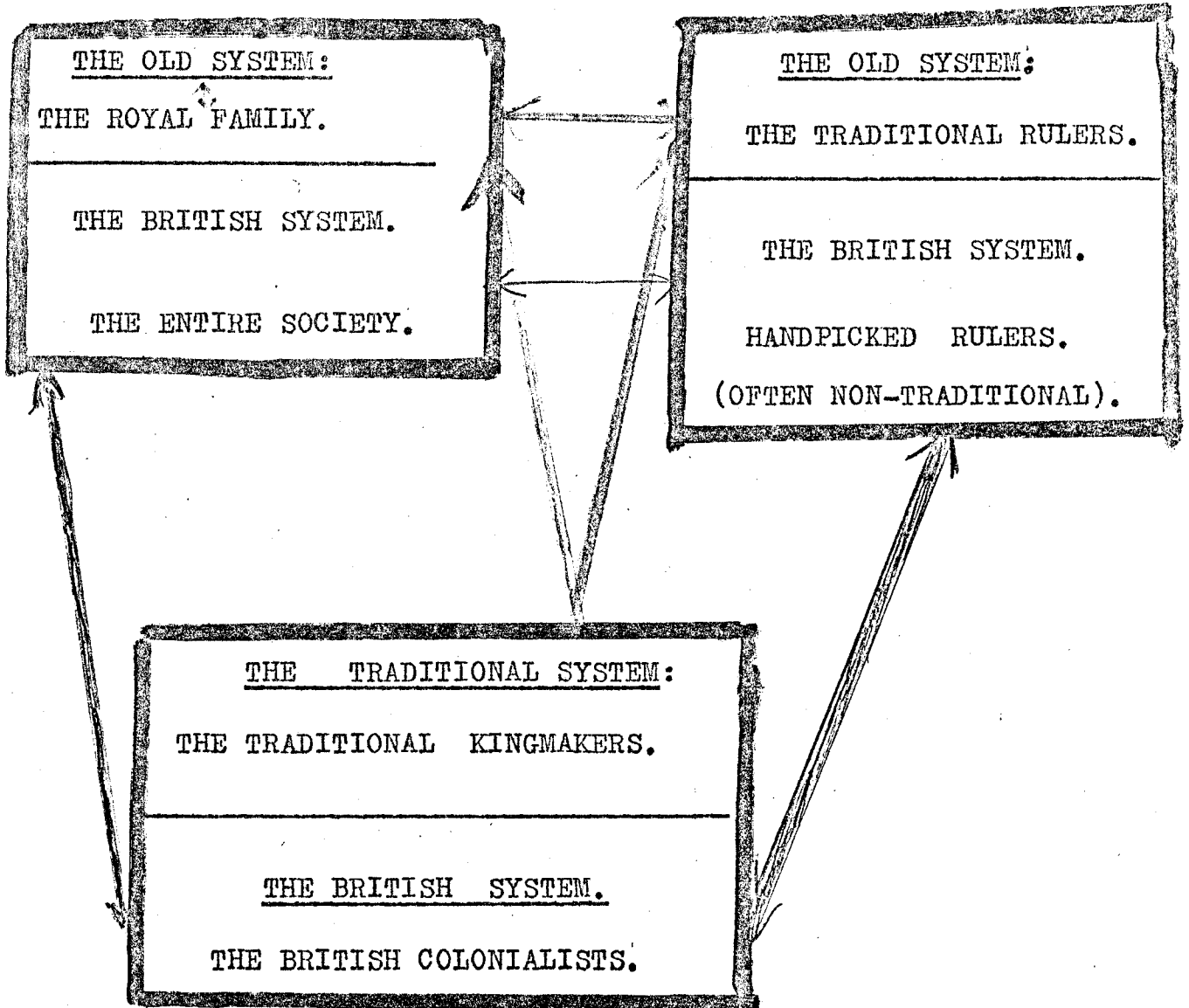
The British came to Nigeria as traders and ended up as political overlords until 1960 when Nigeria gained its independence. The explorers and the missionaries paved the way for them. Upon gaining political control of Nigeria, the British undermined the authority of some Nigerian political leaders. Some like Oba Ovorami of Benin and King Jaja of Opobo were exiled while the Sultan of Sokoto was killed by the British.

The British later appointed non-traditional rulers to replace the traditional rulers they had killed, dethroned or exiled. By so doing, they usurped the role of the traditional kingmakers. By adopting the system of indirect rule, Lugard among others sought to bestow legitimacy and external verification upon his political overlordship of Nigeria.

The system of indirect rule turned out to be mere political window dressing. If the British believed that the system of government they found in Nigeria was undemocratic, by the same token, they failed to rule Nigeria democratically, since democratic system of government as practised in Britain would run counter to colonial system of government.

On the contrary, the British created in Nigeria what many observers see as neither traditional African nor the British system of government. They replaced the traditional system of choosing leaders from the royal lineage with the arbitrary system of choosing whoever pleased them most.

FIGURE III:



In dealing with Nigerians, the British placed all the emphasis on the attempt to redefine, from a British perspective, the functions and conditions of high traditional office. But to introduce genuinely democratic local government would be to universalize the basis of political participation, to completely reorient the direction of authority and transfer the source of ultimate political accountability to the natives.

On the system of indirect rule, Whitaker said:

"Clearly, indirect rule had not prepared the peasants to exercise the opportunities of modern government. It had also precluded any chance for them to acquire the minimum technical competence in the management of public affairs, which democratic local control seemed also to imply ---- the more so if the local initiation and maintenance of public services and projects was to be emphasized." 26

The system of government which the British introduced in Nigeria failed to prepare the natives for the eventual governing of themselves because it was never meant to do that. Equally, it failed to perpetuate the British domination of Nigeria which it was designed to do.

This was the political situation in Nigeria when the nationalists began to make their demands in the Nigerian political struggle.

26. Op. Cit. (Whitaker). P.56.

CHAPTER THREE:

PHASE III. 1938-1960:

In this phase of this study, the focus will be on the efforts made by the Nigerian nationalists to rei Nigeria of British colonialism. The period covered is from 1938-1960. The reason for this choice is that political activities in Nigeria advanced more in this period than in any other period since Nigeria came under the British rule.

Such political activities included the following. The emergence of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe in the Eastern Region of Nigeria, the emergence of Awolowo as the political boss of the Western Region and the domination of Northern Nigerian politics by Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto.

The second important event was the formation of the three major political parties in Nigeria that came about in this period. These three political parties later formed the first three regional governments. Besides controlling the three regional governments, the three political leaders mentioned previously represented over eighty-five percentage proportion of the adult population.

The three major political parties that came into existence at this time were the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe; the Action Group of Nigeria led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo and the Northern Peoples Congress led by Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto.

Majority of the Nigerian nationalists believed in the concept of one Nigeria and strongly believed in the nationhood of Nigeria. Thus, only minority of them believed that Nigeria is a geographical expression.

Arguing that other nations attained their nationhood in the same way Nigeria did, James Coleman observed:

"The artificiality of Nigeria's boundaries and the sharp cultural differences among its peoples point up the fact that Nigeria is a British creation and the concept of a Nigerian nation is the result of British presence.

There are many nations in the world, of course, which began as 'geographical expressions' inhabited by peoples of widely different cultural backgrounds, and yet subsequently achieved nationhood under a unified administration imposed either by a dominant group within or by an alien invader from without." I

The United Kingdom (Great Britain) is an example of a nation that came into existence in its present form as a result of a unified administration imposed by a dominant group from within. Prior to 1603, Scotland was an independent country with its own monarchy and often at war with England. In due course, England absorbed both Wales and Ireland, and made several attempts to absorb Scotland.

I. Coleman, James.

Nigeria, Background of Nationalism.

University of California Press,
Berkeley , 1960., P.45.

Its opportunity to absorb Scotland came in 1603 after the death of Queen Elizabeth I. The English offered the throne of England to King James I of Scotland and he accepted. As a result of this clever move on the part of the English people, they achieved the union with Scotland which they had fought to accomplish for many years without success. This time, they succeeded without firing a shot.

Lately among some political scientists, nationalism has become a dirty word. Nationalism is here defined as a policy designed to achieve national self-determination by the removal of alien rule. Hence Nigerian nationalism means the efforts made by Nigerians to rid themselves of British rule. Equally, by nationalists is meant all those Nigerians who were involved in this endeavour.

The Nigerian nationalists realised that their prime task is to create and to develop a feeling of nationhood amongst the diverse peoples of Nigeria. They were also aware that their success as leaders depends very much upon their success in achieving this goal.

To achieve this objective, nationalists often organize the masses into a political action. This often results in what is known as political parties as was the case in Nigeria at this time (1938-1960).

POLITICAL PARTIES:

Political parties are defined as groups of individuals of similar political views organised to seek and to exercise political power. There may be many parties, two parties, or one party in a state, and the characteristics and quality of political life in each state are affected by whether or not there more than one party in a state.

Where there are many parties as in Nigeria during the period covered by Phase III of this study, it may prove difficult for one party alone to obtain power through an overall majority at an election and so form a government. In such a situation, a leading political party might be forced to seek the assistance of one or more of the other parties in forming a government, which is called a coalition government. Commenting on the ills of coalition governments, Mr. Price said:

"Coalition governments tend to be weak, since they are made up of men of different political views; the policies which can be put into effect can therefore only be those which are minimally acceptable to all members of the government, for otherwise the coalition will break up. " 2

In actuality, this was the case in Nigeria's political history until the military coup of January 15, 1966. There was always a weak coalition government at the Federal level.

2. Price, J.H.

Political Institutions of West Africa.

Hutchinson Educational Ltd., London,
1968., P.15.

This is not to say that Nigeria would have been better off by being a one-party state. The danger of one-party system is that it doesn't often tolerate criticism, at least, this is what the opponents of this system say. One hears this criticism often in the Western democracies as they talk of the political situations in the communist countries.

However, the supporters of one-party system claim that effective criticism of the government policy is still allowed, though it can only come from within the government party itself. Criticism within the party is necessary they still say, otherwise political thinking would stagnate and the government might commit foreseeable and avoidable blunders in formulating and executing its policy.

For the sake of maintaining the party's outward unity, they strongly believed that such criticisms should be carried on privately within the four walls of the party meetings. They would also like all members of the party, whether they are critical of a given proposal or not, to give their loyal support to, and to defend in public any policy decision which has received the approval of a majority of the party members.

When Tanzania became one-party state with Tanzania African National Union (TANU) as the official party, criticisms were allowed within the party. There could be more than one candidate vying for one seat in the Parliament all members of TANU.

President Nyerere, President Kwame Nkrumah and President Sekou Toure were all in agreement that one-party system is like a family, which in keeping with African tradition, would embrace all its members through the extended family system, while allowing differences of opinion to be expressed for the overall good of the entire family.

THE NATURE AND OBJECTIVE OF NATIONALIST PARTIES:

In the case of nationalist political parties in the colonial situation, the primary unifying factor is the common purpose of all members of the party to achieve national independence. There may be disagreements about methods such as whether independence should be won by lawful or by unlawful means (armed struggle as the nationalists might call it), or by radical or gradual means. No matter which of the methods they might choose to adopt, there is generally a complete agreement on the objective, which is political freedom.

IDEOLOGY:

Any political party which seeks drastically to change the existing situation is by definition a radical party. In that case, one could say that Nigerian political parties like many in other West African countries have tended to be left wing in outlook, and in most cases have paid lip-service to socialism.

The reason among others is that in Nigeria as well as in many other developing nations, a large proportion of the existing capital investment and commercial as well as industrial enterprise is under alien control. The meaning given to the word 'socialism' in West Africa, however, varies with time and place, and most of the so-called socialist policies put forward by nationalist leaders after independence (Pragmatic Socialism, Democratic Socialism, African Socialism, etc) would not be acceptable as socialism to a truly socialist party in Western Europe.

President Nyerere sees African Socialism as a means by which the traditional African extended family system is made to meet the needs of the entire community. That is to say, no one would exploit his brothers for the purpose of building up his own personal power or prestige. He added:

"This is completely foreign to us, and it is incompatible with the socialist society we want to build here. Our first step, therefore, must be to re-educate ourselves; to regain our former attitude of mind.

In our traditional African society we were individuals within a community. We took care of the community, and the community took care of us. We neither needed nor wished to exploit our fellow men." 3

3. Nyerere, Julius K.

Ujamaa Essays on Socialism.
Oxford University Press,
London., 1973., Pp. 6-7.

THE NIGERIAN POLITICAL PARTIES:

The Nigerian political parties were not overly concerned with ideology as was the case with Nyerere's TANU or the Convention Peoples Party (CPP) led by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. Both Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and Chief Obafemi Awolowo paid lip-service to socialism and none of them publicly admitted that he was a socialist the way Dr. Nkrumah of Ghana once did.

THE NIGERIAN YOUTH MOVEMENT:

Prior to the formation of the three major political parties that dominated Nigerian political scene during the period covered by Phase III, there was a political party founded in 1938 known as the Nigerian Youth Movement. It was the first nationalist organization ever to make real efforts to bring within its fold all the nationalists and politically conscious elements in Nigeria.

The sub-groups included in the Nigerian Youth Movement, from now on to be referred to as the NYM, were the Nigerian Traders Association, Nigerian Ex-servicemen Association, Nigerian Bar Association, Nigerian Medical Association, the Nigerian Union of Teachers, Nigerian Motor Transport Union and Nigerian Coal Miners Association.

Prior to the birth of the NYM, all these sub-groups were making independent deals with the colonialists for the benefit of their own members alone and often to the disadvantage of all the other sub-groups. The British colonialists encouraged this approach, hence the nationalists branded it 'divide and rule policy.'

PRINCIPAL AIM OF THE NYM.

The principal aim of the NYM was the development of a united nation out of the conglomeration of peoples who inhabit Nigeria.⁴ In other words, the NYM should endeavour to encourage the fullest play of all such forces as will serve to promote complete understanding and a sense of common nationalism among the different elements in the country.

To achieve this goal, the NYM broadened its membership. Its founding members included such Nigerians as Mr. Samuel Ikoli, Oba Samuel Akisanya, Chief H.O.Davis, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Kofo Abayomi and Chief Obafemi Awolowo.

The NYM came into existence in 1938 and made its political debut in the same year. It organized its members for the elections held that year and won all the three seats allotted to Lagos in the Legislative Council, and all but one of the elective seats in the Lagos Town Council.

4. Awolowo, Chief Obafemi.

Awo, The Autobiography of Awolowo.

Cambridge University Press,
Cambridge., 1960., P.121.

Chief Awolowo attributed this victory to the popularity of the NYM which grew in leaps and bounds when Dr. Azikiwe "brought with him a propaganda technique which was new in politics and journalism in Nigeria, and which further boosted the popularity of the Nigerian Youth Movement and disarrayed its opponents." 5

The political success of the NYM did not last long. The Akisanya/Ikoli dispute of 1941 brought about the weakening of the NYM and its final demise as a political force to be reckoned with. Again, Obafemi Awolowo was quick to blame it all on Dr. Azikiwe. He said inter alia:

"It was Dr. Azikiwe who delivered a succession of blows --- now subtle, then hard and heavy, but always accurate and harmful --- which, aggravated by a series of bungling and mismanagement on the part of some of its leaders, brought about the fall and the ruin of the NYM." 6

THE DEMISE OF THE NYM:

The NYM took a policy decision that where the President of their party expressed his intention to contest any election, he should automatically be selected to run on the party's platform.

5. Ibid. (Awolowo) P.133.

6. Ibid. (Awolowo). Pp. 133-134.

The former President of the party, Sir Kofo Abayomi benefited from this decision in the 1938 election. He later vacated both the seat and the Presidency and left for further studies in England. Mr. Ernest Ikoli was elected by the party to succeed Sir Kofo as the President of the party. He declared his intention to contest the bye-election. Many members including Obafemi Awolowo thought that that would settle the issue of selecting any other candidate by the NYM.

However, there were others who objected to this standing policy. A heated debate followed. In the end, those who wanted a change of policy won the day. The meeting then proceeded to the selection which resulted in 108 votes for Oba Samuel Akisanya, 60 for Mr. Ikoli and 37 for Dr. Maja.⁷

The trouble began for the NYM when the Executive Committee of the party which had the power to affirm or vary the results of the general meeting met and varied the decision in favour of Mr. Ikoli. It should be remembered that as the President of the party, Mr. Ikoli also served as the Chairman of the Executive Committee that varied the decision of the general meeting in his favour. This decision was not well received by many members of the party.

7. Ibid. (Awolowo). P.146.

At the bye-election that followed, there were two members of the NYM contesting the same seat. The two members of course were Mr. Ikoli and Oba Samuel Akisanya. Dr. Azikiwe who supported Oba Akisanya was accused of introducing the thorny issue of tribalism into Nigerian politics for the first time.

Awolowo who supported the candidature of Mr. Ikoli was among those who accused Dr. Azikiwe of introducing tribalism in Nigerian politics. On this issue he said:

"What was heart-rendering to many of us was the element of tribalism which was introduced into the campaign with a view to swaying the minds of the people in sympathy for Oba Akisanya and embittering them against the Movement.

The candidature of Oba Samuel Akisanya had been rejected because he was an Ijebu, declared the Pilot (Dr. Azikiwe's newspaper). And the Ijebus naturally felt outraged, and went all out to fight in defence of the good name and prestige of their tribe.

We were all determined to nip in the bud any attempt by anyone to introduce tribalism into our national life." 8

Mr. Ernest Ikoli won the bye-election which was a victory for the NYM. This turned out to be the last victory for the NYM as events soon showed.

8. Ibid. (Awolowo). Pages 150 and 153.

Part of the events that followed was the resignation of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and some of his supporters from the NYM. Majority of those who still remained faithful to the NYM were Lagotians. Thus, NYM became a Lagos affair, an image it fought so hard to avoid creating. The NYM branches in the provinces died out.

The demise of the NYM as a nationalist party of consequence could be explained in two ways. First, it failed to achieve one of its primary goals which was bringing about the national unity of the country. Secondly, it failed in its bid to achieve a 'complete autonomy for Nigeria within the British Empire.' 9

The now famous Ikoli/Akisanya dispute over Lagos Council bye-election in 1941 which led to split within the party need be seen as an effect rather than as a cause. Another outcome of this dispute was the birth of a new political party in 1944. This party led by Herbert Macaulay and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe became known as the National Council of Nigeria and the Camerouns (NCNC).

Chief Obafemi Awolowo tried to keep the Ibadan branch of the NYM going but met with little success. His efforts and what came out of it would be discussed later in this study.

9. Ibid. (Awolowo). P.121.

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NIGERIA AND THE CAMEROONS:

In 1944, a melange of clubs, improvement associations, labour unions and tribal unions met in Glover Hall in Lagos to form the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons, hereafter to be referred to as the NCNC.

Membership in this party was mostly organizational, that is what gave it the image of being a mass party.

As one observer puts it:

"The original members included two trade unions, two political parties, four literary societies, eight professional associations, eleven social clubs and one hundred and one tribal unions." IO

The NCNC at its birth had Herbert Macaulay as its National President, while Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe was the Secretary General.

THE AIM OF THE NCNC:

Its proclaimed immediate aim was to rid Nigeria of the British colonialism. It wanted to do all in its power in order to secure the independence of a united Nigeria within the Commonwealth. Here again, one sees little difference between what the NCNC wants to accomplish and the goal of its predecessor the NYM.

IO. Okpaku, Joseph.

Nigeria, Delimma of Nationhood.

The Third Press, New York.,

1972., P.19.

The NCNC as a political party also strongly believed in disseminating ideas of representative democracy and parliamentary government by means of political education. Dr. Azikiwe personally played a great role in this endeavour. His combative and provocative journalism was the principal source of his fame and power, and the most crucial single precipitant of the Nigerian awakening.

Dr. Azikiwe was on record as saying:

"There is no better means to arouse African peoples than that of the power of the pen and of the tongue." II

To arouse Nigerians and other African nations by the power of the pen, he established a chain of newspapers across Nigeria of which the West African Pilot based in the nation's capital of Lagos and the Nigerian Spokesman based at Onitsha his home town, became the most successful of all his newspapers. He established other daily newspapers at Ibadan, Kano, Enugu and Port Harcourt.

The NCNC provided him a forum to make use of the power of his tongue. As some of his critics observed, he sometimes used his tongue beyond the call of duty. More will be said on this in course of this study.

II. Op. Cit. (Coleman) P.223.

POLITICAL IDEOLOGY:

The NCNC believed in African Socialism. The use made of the wealth rather than who owns it marks the difference between the African Socialism and the Western Socialism. The Africans believe that it is morally wrong for people to exploit their brothers for the purpose of building up their own personal power and prestige.

In the sense that the NCNC believed in the greatest good for the greatest number, one could say that its ideology was influenced by Jeremy Bentham. However, it would be wrong to classify their ideology as the same as hedonism. As is generally believed, hedonism is the doctrine which teaches that pleasure is the principal good and should be the aim of action.

NATIONAL FAME:

The NCNC assumed a national outlook by diversifying its membership. Its next goal was to attain a national fame which it hoped would endow its leaders with legitimacy and external verification. The opportunity came in 1947 when Sir Arthur Richards, the colonial governor of Nigeria from 1943-1947 presented his proposal for the revision of the Nigeria's 1923 Constitution to the Legislative Council of Nigeria for approval.

THE RICHARDS CONSTITUTION AND THE NCNC:

Richards Constitution as the author of this constitution saw it, sought to maintain a balance between authority and responsibility. One of the problems that has plagued Britain throughout her imperial history was how to give the centrally-minded nationalists a larger role in the government without relinquishing ultimate imperial authority.

Specifically, government officials had to decide whether postwar political development in Nigeria should be directed toward the creation of a modern Nigerian state with parliamentary institutions, or toward the continued development of the native authority system with the ultimate coordinating or cementing link left unspecified.

Commenting on the Richards Constitution, an observer said:

"Nigerian nationalists and a few colonial officials pressed for the creation of parliamentary institutions; British imperial traditions and interests, the inertia of the Nigerian masses, the conservatism of chiefs and traditionalists, and the persuasion of most colonial officials pointed towards the continued development of the native authority system.

The final product was pretty much a compromise which pleased very few, least of all the nationalists." I2

I2. Ibid. (Coleman). P.273.

PROVISIONS:

Under the Richards proposals, three new Regional Houses of Assembly would be established at Kaduna, Ibadan and Enugu. They would merely discuss general legislation but would have also the right to pass their own regional budgets. That is to say that in matters of raising funds locally, they would have a big say, but in matters pertaining to general legislation, they would have little say.

This devolution of budgetary functions was to be matched by a corresponding decentralization of administrative authority to regional governments. The members of the regional houses would be selected from existing native authorities and would in turn select five of their number as representatives to a broadened Nigeria-wide Legislative Council, which would meet successively in Lagos, Ibadan, Kaduna and Enugu.

Besides dividing Nigeria into three unequal regions, the Richards Constitution made room for what the nationalists called "obnoxious ordinances." They include the following. Public Lands Acquisition Ordinance, the Crown Lands Ordinance, the Minerals Ordinance and the Appointment and Deposition of Chiefs (Amendment) Ordinance.

The first two Ordinances designated as crown lands all lands acquired by the government for public purposes, including those in the protectorate. The issue here is that in strict legal terms, only Lagos seceded to the British by King Dosunmu of Lagos in 1861 is a colony. The rest of Nigeria is a protectorate and should not be treated as a colony.

The nationalists argued that the British power over Nigeria, especially the protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria was presumed to be limited by treaty. As a result, they branded these Ordinances "obnoxious".

The Minerals Ordinance has it that:

"The entire property in and control of all minerals and mineral oils, in, under, or upon any lands in Nigeria, and of all rivers, streams and water courses throughout Nigeria, is and shall be vested in the Crown." 13

The idea of Nigerian minerals belonging to the British Crown shocked Nigerians. The nationalists saw it as an attempt on the part of the British to create another South Africa in West Africa. The analogy here being that in South Africa, the racist regime there allowed the Africans no rights to the minerals in their own lands.

13. Elias, T. Olawale.

Nigerian Land Law and Custom.

Oxford University Press, London.,

1953., P.57.

The nationalists naturally linked the term 'Crown' with the idea of a rapacious and exploitative imperialism progressively asserting its control over African mineral and lands.

The Appointment and Deposition of Chiefs Ordinance gave the governor the full power to appoint and depose chiefs. The nationalists who had always resented the British for playing the role of kingmakers denounced this Ordinance with vim and vigour.

In support of his proposals, Sir Author Richards argued:

"This embryonic, quasi-federal structure was a practical means of obtaining two major objectives of mine. It would promote Nigerian unity and at the same time would provide within that unity for the country's diverse elements." I4

Besides the obnoxious Ordinances, other features of the constitution, however, evoked bitter indignation from nationalists of all camps. Regionalisation of Nigeria was seen as a deliberate attempt being made by the British to keep Nigeria forever divided. The nationalists from the South feared that the Northern Region which turned out to be larger than the other two Southern Regions combined, would dominate the rest of the country.

I4. Op. Cit. (Coleman). P.276.

Awolowo remarked that the new constitution "retains some of the objectionable features of the old, contains unsavoury characteristics of its own, and falls short of expectation." I5

Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and Chief H.O. Davies were even more vehement in their denunciation of the constitution's gross inadequacies and its failure to satisfy any nationalist demands.

Expressing the views which he believed to be those of the NCNC as well, Dr. Azikiwe said:

"Whereas the minimum demand of the nationalists had been the appointment of a few Nigerians as heads of departments, as a step toward responsible government which would give them a share in the management of their own affairs, the most that the Richards Constitution envisaged was 'greater participation by Africans in the discussion of their own affairs'. " I6

Chief H.O. Davies in denouncing the constitution said:

" 'Discussion' seem the crux of the principle. There is neither intention nor the pretension to secure greater participation by the Africans in the direction, management, or control of their affairs.

I5. Awolowo, Obafemi.

Path to Nigerian Freedom.

London University Press, London.,
1947., P.53.

I6. Azikiwe, Nnamdi.

The Development of Political Parties in Nigeria
London University Press, London, 1957., P.I3.

"No attempt is made to democratize..... bureaucratic (sic) rule or make it sensitive to public opinion..... The head of Department..... formulates policy, he legislates it, and afterwards administers it,as an executive, he is irresponsibly backed by the law and all its sanctions..." I7

In short, nationalists viewed the new constitution as representing no advance whatsoever in the training of Nigerians for responsible self-government in executive functions. The group represented by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and Herbert Macaulay, leaders of the NCNC, decided to launch a continuing protest and demonstration against the constitution.

Armed with these grievances such as the shortcomings of the Richards Constitution, the alleged seizure by the imperial government of Nigerian lands and minerals, and the rankling reminder that the chiefs were but puppets of the British administration, the NCNC decided to tour the country. By undertaking this tour, the leaders of the NCNC hoped to arouse the people, and then with the people's mandate to send a delegation to the Secretary of State for the Colonies to demand reforms.

I7. Op. Cit. (Coleman). Pp. 277-278.

THE NATION-WIDE TOUR OF THE LEADERS OF THE NCNC:

The nation-wide tour organized by the leaders of the NCNC to protest against the Richards Constitution began late in April of 1946. In Kano, however, the tour was cut short by the death, at eighty-two, of Herbert Macaulay. His funeral, held in Lagos, was the largest in Nigerian history, with more than 100,000 in attendance.¹⁸

The leadership of the NCNC fell on the shoulders of Dr. Azikiwe. The tour later resumed and the NCNC explained the evils of the Richards Constitution to the Nigerians. During this tour, the NCNC argued that the repeal of the constitution and the ordinances and achievement of self-government would usher in an era of equality and prosperity which would make everybody happy and free.

RESULTS:

The tour was a huge success not only for the NCNC but also for Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe. All told, they spent eight months on the road. In his assessment of the tour, James Coleman said:

"It had collected £13,000 and had stimulated hundreds of thousands of Nigerians in the interior to an awareness of the nationalist ideal."

18. Ibid. (Coleman). P.291.

"Azikiwe and the NCNC were at the peak of their power and prestige, atop the crest of the highest wave of postwar nationalism.

This was confirmed a few months later by the overwhelming victory of the three NCNC candidates, led by Dr. Azikiwe, in the Lagos elections." 19

According to Chief Anthony Enahoro:

"Dr. Azikiwe became a national hero in the eyes of the Nigerian masses. They believed that he, Nnamdi Azikiwe, had told government not to take our land and gold, and to let our chiefs alone.

Parents named their babies after him. Azikiwe became a household word even in remote villages." 20

FAILURES:

The NCNC did not achieve all of its objectives. For instance, the party failed to attract enough members from the Hausas and other ethnic groups that live in the north during their tour of Northern Nigeria.

Secondly, in the Southern Nigeria, the Yorubas of the West and some Ijaws in the Niger Delta stayed away from the NCNC. Among the Yoruba leaders who refused to join the NCNC were Obafemi Awolowo, Chief H.O. Davies and Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola.

19. Ibid. (Coleman) P, 292.

20. Enahoro, Anthony. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Saint or Sinner.
Nigerian Printing Press, Lagos.,
1953., P.17.

DR. NNAMDI AZIKIWE THE POLITICIAN:

Dr. Azikiwe was born on November 16, 1904 at Zungeru, in the Wushishi District in Niger Province. At the time of his birth, Zungeru was the capital of Northern Nigeria and his father was a civil servant.²¹

He grew up in Hausaland and was able to speak the language very fluently. As for his childhood days in the Northern part of Nigeria, here are some of what he had to say:

"Up to the year 1912, I lived in Northern Nigeria with my parents. To all intents and purposes, I was a Hausa boy then, for I was able to speak that language very fluently, so that my father became apprehensive that I might lose my mother tongue.

He therefore decided that I should return to Onitsha to be trained by my aunt and paternal grandmother in the lore and traditions of Onitsha." 22

He later attended Hope Waddle Institute in Calabar where he also learnt Efik language. He also lived in Lagos where he went to school and learnt to speak Yoruba language as fluently as he did with Hausa language. From Lagos, he came over to the United States in 1925. Among the universities which he attended were Lincoln, Howard in Washington D.C. and the University of Pennsylvania.

21. Azikiwe, Nnamdi.

My Odysey.

Praeger Publishers, New York., 1970.
Pp. 7-8.

22. Ibid. (Azikiwe). P.9.

When Dr. Azikiwe made his debut in Nigerian politics, he was very fluent not only in English which is the official language and Ibo language which is his mother tongue, but also in Hausa, Yoruba and Efik languages. Dr. Azikiwe therefore could communicate with well over seventy-five per cent (75%) of Nigeria's population. This again added to his popularity and confidence as a national leader.

Dr. Azikiwe's legitimacy as a leader was not in doubt, and the connections he had with various parts of Nigeria seemed to have endowed him with external verification. Many Nigerians looked upon him as the long awaited national leader. Even Chief Obafemi Awolowo who has never had much admiration for Dr. Azikiwe admitted that, "Some of the writers acclaimed him as the 'Gandhi of Africa'." 23

Professor Coleman attested to Dr. Azikiwe's great popularity in Nigeria by saying:

"Although blind devotion to Azikiwe was more pronounced among the Ibo, he was likewise the idol of many previously inarticulate groups such as Cameroonians, Nupe, Tiv, Igbirra, Birom, Idoma and indeed of most of the Middle Belt; and a growing number of Hausa, Fulani and Kanuri youths looked up to him as the national leader." 24

23. Op. Cit. (Awolowo, Autobiography). P.137.

24. Op. Cit. (Coleman). P.290.

The question many Nigerians kept asking was, Why did Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe not emerge as a national leader in Nigeria the way Dr. Kwame Nkrumah did in Ghana or Jomo Kenyatta did in Kenya? No one single answer can do justice to this question. May be some day, Dr. Azikiwe himself will be able to answer this question. Until then, all one can do is to speculate bearing in mind that mere speculation has its shortcomings.

It is however on record that Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta were imprisoned by the British colonialists in their respective countries. They became national heroes as a result of serving prison terms. Both men were voted into office while they were still serving prison terms. Nkrumah was jailed for organizing the general strike in Ghana that nearly crippled the economic activities in Ghana. Jomo Kenyatta was jailed because he was accused of organizing the Mau Mau in Kenya.

In case of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, he was carried shoulder high from the prison by his supporters and was given a hero's welcome by a very large crowd of well-wishers. This prompted him to describe the day of his release from prison with the following words:

"This was the greatest day of my life, my day of victory and these were my warriors. No general could have felt more proud of his army and no soldiers could have shown greater affection for their leader." 25

25. Nkrumah, Kwame.

Ghana, The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah.
International Publisher, N.York, 1971, P.136.

Dr. Nkrumah went on to relate how he rose to power after his prison terms. On that he said:

"The day after my release from prison I was invited by the Governor to meet him at nine o'clock that morning. When I walked into the courtyard of Christiansborg Castle, the official residence of the Governor, I suddenly realised that it was the very first time I had set eyes on the place.

I left the Castle with instructions from the Governor to form a government." 26

While Dr. Nkrumah stood behind his party supporters and went to jail on their behalf, Dr. Azikiwe on the other hand abandoned his supporters to their fate. For instance, the youth wing of the NCNC known as the Zikist Movement believed in revolution as a means of attaining political independence in Nigeria. The British colonialists declared it an unlawful movement claiming that "its aims were seditious and its means lawless and violent." 27

Its leaders were arrested and prosecuted for sedition. Instead of coming to their aid, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe accused them of youthful impetuosity. One of them wept copiously and unashamedly. 28

26. Ibid. (Nkrumah) Pp. 137-138.

27. Enahoro, Anthony. Fugitive Offender.

Cassell and Company Ltd., London.
1965., P.99.

28. Ibid. (Enahoro.) Pp. 96-97.

This study finds Dr. Azikiwe's style of politics as one of the chief reasons why he did not attain the political height he was capable of in Nigeria. His style alienated his youthful supporters. Many defected to his opponents. Chief Anthony Enahoro who proved a faithful ally of Chief Awolowo throughout the Western Nigerian political crisis of 1962 to 1965, is a case in point.

Chief Awolowo who branded Dr. Azikiwe's style of politics too aggressive said inter alia:

"We were used to Herbert Macaulay's calling certain people imperialist agents. These people were re-christened by Dr. Azikiwe 'imperialist stooges', 'Uncle Toms', and 'Untie Jemimas'.

So far so good; but as time went on, he added on to this list of 'Uncle Toms', etc., the names of people whose patriotism and nationalism had never been in doubt.

You only had to disagree with him on any issue, however minor, and you at once qualified to go on the black-list." 29

The Nigerians were not alone in finding faults with Dr. Azikiwe's style of politics. When he led a delegation of his party the NCNC to Britain to protest the Richards

29. Op. Cit. (Awo). P.137.

Constitution, after his successful tour of Nigeria on the same issue, the British had the opportunity to take a first hand look at the man they have heard so much about. Unlike the other nationalists such as Herbert Macaulay, Chief H.O. Davies and Chief Obafemi Awolowo who attended British universities, Dr. Azikiwe was a product of American universities.

During its stay in Britain, the delegation received considerable publicity, both critical and reflective, in the British press. For example, shortly after its arrival the Daily Mirror (a British daily newspaper), referring to Dr. Azikiwe, commented:

"Six feet of charm, of eloquence, of dignity, of ability. Six feet of stupidity, of folly, of hate-blended prejudice.... A man who could have done much for his country, who could have been a real leader, he has degenerated into a will-o'-the-wisp, a figure of straw blown all ways by his own passions.... Zik could have helped in the wonderful future of his country." 30

On the other hand, the influential Economist endeavored to draw a lesson from the delegation's visit. It commented:

"But could not more be done in associating the Colonial peoples more directly with the responsibilities of government?...."

30. Op. Cit. (Coleman). Pp.294-295.

"If intelligent Africans could be given more responsibility than they are at present, some counter-weight of Zikism might be provided.....

Could not there be less of the ... outward symbols of the British raj that irritate the sensitive, educated Africans as much as they impress the illiterate?" 31

This observation by the Economist no doubt reflected the growing apprehension in responsible British circles that the postwar policy in Nigeria was inadequate. In this sense, it is reasonable to conclude that the visit of the delegation had some influence upon the significant policy changes of 1948.

What irked some Nigerians was not what Awolowo or the British said or thought of Dr. Azikiwe but what they heard him say. In his presidential address to the Ibo Federal Union in 1949, he said inter alia:

"It would appear that the God of Africa has especially created the Ibo nation to lead the children of Africa from the bondage of the ages.....

The martial prowess of the Ibo nation at all stages of human history has enabled them not only to conquer others but also to adapt themselves to the role of preserver....

The Ibo nation cannot shirk its responsibility." 32

31. Ibid. (Coleman). P.295.

32. Op. Cit. (Awolowo). P.172.

It seemed paradoxical to many Nigerians to hear Dr. Azikiwe now talking about Ibo nation, while he and the NCNC leaders were advocating one Nigeria policy. Added to his style which did little to win him more political allies was the fact that he talked of the Ibo conquest of others with the blessing of the God of Africa.

In his comment on Dr. Azikiwe's speech, Awolowo said:

"In spite of his protestations to the contrary, Dr. Azikiwe was himself an unabashed Ibo jingoist. It was clear from these statements (presidential address) and from the general political and journalistic manoeuvres of Dr. Azikiwe over the years that his great objective was to set himself up as a dictator over Nigeria and to make the Ibo nation the master race." 33

History would recall how President J.F.Kennedy endeared himself in the hearts of many Germans as a result of his style of politics. While in West Berlin on a visit, he made a speech to the Germans but ended it with a sentence in German: "Ich bin ein Berliner." ("I am a Berliner.").

Had Dr. Azikiwe capitalized on his ability to speak several Nigerian languages and addressed his Nigerian audience in their native language instead of high sounding English language, perhaps he would not have been branded an Ibo politician but rather a Nigerian nationalist.

33. Loc. Cit.

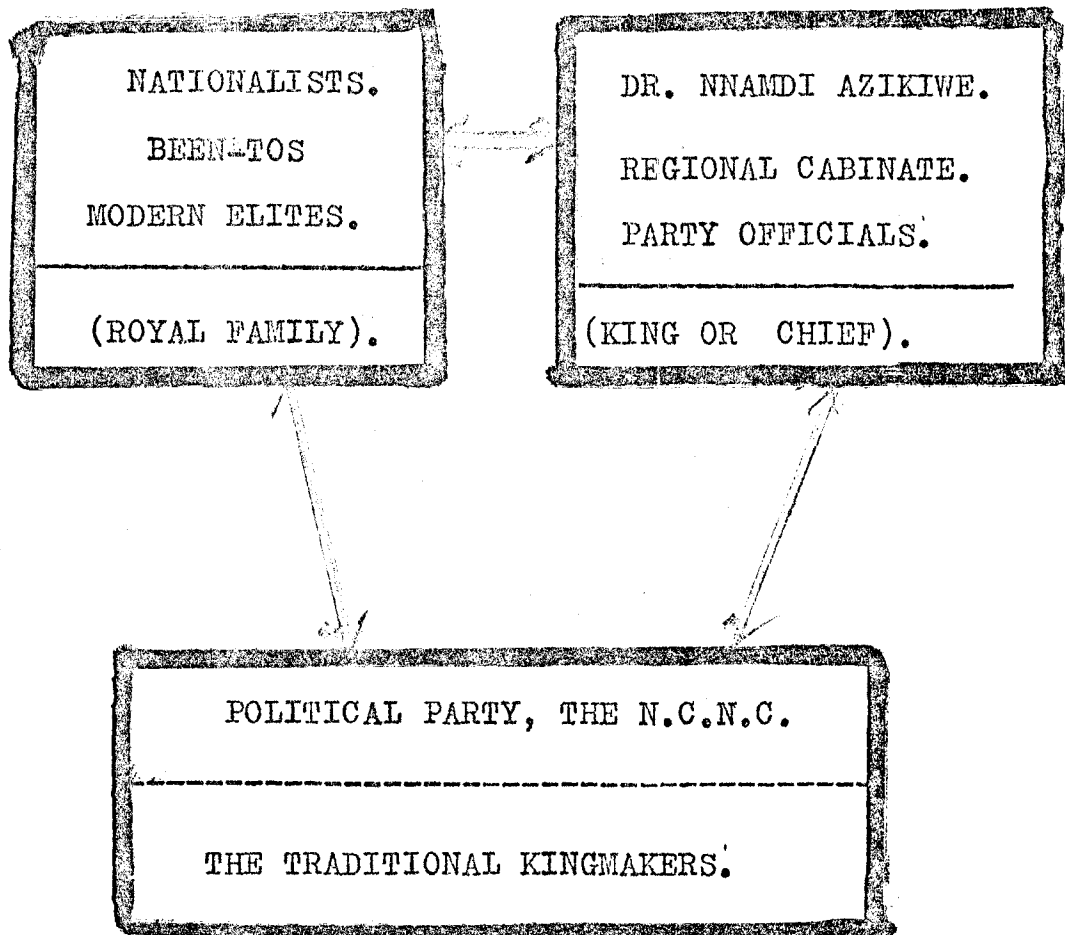
Dr. Azikiwe neglected this approach but instead followed the unfortunate example of the colonialists by undermining the traditional kingmakers and usurping their roles. He replaced the kingmakers with the political party which he was heading at the time. By so doing, he hoped that the party would bestow legitimacy and external verification upon his leadership and political aspirations.

As far as many Nigerians were concerned, the NCNC could not replace the traditional kingmakers. The people believed that the kingmakers could mediate between them and their ancestors. They never believed that the NCNC and its leaders could play such a role.

Traditionally, no kingmaker could be elected as king. As a member of the NCNC, the role of Dr. Azikiwe as a kingmaker became unquestioned. As a nationalist and a been-to*, he qualified as a candidate of the party for the top political post in the nation. As the leader of the party, he became the obvious choice of the party to fill the top post. This was how he became the Premier of the Eastern Region and then the Governor General and finally the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

* The term BEEN-TOS refers to the Nigerians who have been abroad for further studies. Majority of them studied in Europe and North America.

FIGURE IV:



For the first time in the political history of Nigeria, the system of separation of power was discarded. Dr. Azikiwe belonged to the group that replaced the traditional royal family since he was a been-to, a nationalist and also a modern elite. He also belonged to the NCNC which has by now replaced the kingmakers by assuming the role of selecting and electing candidates for political offices. Finally, as the leader of the party, the victory of his party at the polls meant that he would become the obvious choice of his party to assume political power.

For one man to become the kingmaker as well as the king was something new in Nigeria. Awolowo feared that Dr. Azikiwe by so doing was fast becoming a dictator and added:

"I am implacably opposed to dictatorship as well as the doctrine of Herrenvolk whether it was Hitler's or Dr. Azikiwe's." 34

In the past, the kingmakers could remove a bad king and replace him with another member of the royal family. This way, they were able not only to control the ruling monarch but his possible successor, while the king could not appoint his successor. This new arrangement under the leadership of Dr. Azikiwe changed all that.

34. Loc. Cit.

Since Nigeria failed to produce an all-embracing political party, no political party could play the role of the traditional kingmakers with success. The NCNC tried to do this but did not quite make it. Commenting on why the NCNC failed on this score, Chief Anthony Enahoro said:

"The NCNC which might so easily have filled the need, was handicapped mainly by the resistance of survivors in the Nigerian Youth Movement, the indifference of the more influential Yoruba Obas and by the traditional forces in Northern Nigeria.

It also suffered from intra-party disputes which had led to the resignation of some of its leading members, and the propaganda of its opponents which said it was dominated by members of the energetic Ibo tribe. All these contributed to the inactivity into which it had lapsed." 35.

This period of inactivity mentioned by Chief Enahoro began in 1948 and continued into 1951. During that period its name and its objectives were kept alive only in the person and activities of Dr. Azikiwe and in the pages of his newspapers. When the NCNC was reactivated in 1951, it was in response to a completely new situation.

This new situation was the birth of the Action Group and the political ascendancy of Chief Obafemi Awolowo in Nigerian politics.

35. Op. Cit. (Enahoro, Fugitive Offender.). P,98.

CHIEF OBAFEMI AWOLOWO:

Obafemi Awolowo was born at Ikenne, a small town in Ijebu Remo in Western Nigeria, on March 6, 1909. His father died when he was still a boy. Based on his accounts, one would assume that he was very fond of his father. Speaking of his father, he said:

"My father was to me the very embodiment of an ideal parent. He was truthful, forthright, fearless, and unyielding in his detestation of any form of hypocrisy and dishonesty.

He was famed in Ikenne for his tireless energy and industry, and for being an ideal parent and husband. He was accomodating and generous to a fault. His house was a dumping-ground for helpless relations. On one pretext or another they came in from time to time, stayed for as long as they liked, and lived on father's resources for the duration." 36

After his father's death he was forced by circumstances to leave home since his mother could no longer support him and the rest of the family. In order to continue with his education which was interrupted when his father died, he had to serve as a domestic servant to whoever agreed to pay his school fees.

36. Op. Cit. (Awolowo). P.16.

His uncle named James Awolowo made all the necessary arrangements before he left home. He lived with four different masters before he finished his elementary schooling. He had very unpleasant experiences with these masters and learnt to fend for himself from an early age.

His first master for instance, had a wife who did not like him and was in the habit of beating him most of the time. His second master was no better either. Of his second master he averred:

"My next master was a drunkard and could have cared less about my fees. He neglected his wife and an aged mother, and was always dead drunk for greater part of the day.

He was public letter writer! and was sober only in the mornings when he strove hard to earn enough money for food and for the next bout of drinking." 37

His summary of what he went through while living with these masters and their families confirms the assertion that he had it rough with them. He experienced poverty and learnt how to cope with it.

Commenting on his experiences with these families he said:

"In the course of this period of my young life,
I attended four schools namely: Ibara Anglican,
37. Ibid. (Awolowo). Pp.39-40.

"Ogbe Wesleyan, Itasi Wesleyan and Itesi Roman Catholic.

In the same period my clothes were reduced almost to tatters and rags, and there was a brief period when all I had for a decent apparel was a pair of shorts and a shirt (called 'Buba')." 38

Awolowo has often been accused by his political opponents as one who finds it difficult to adjust to the leadership of others. For instance, he was a founding member of the Nigerian Youth Movement. The Egbe Omo Oduduwa, a Yoruba cultural organization was his brain child. He was the founder of the Action Group of Nigeria.

Awolowo seemed to have acquired this knack of overcoming challenges in his life when he lived with his former masters. He recalled how he once faced his first master's wife when she posed a big challenge to him. On that incident he said:

"Because I broke a plate, his (first master) wife abused me to her heart's content --- well and good; but she also made derogatory references to my parents and my tribe.

At this point I was constrained to retort and I did so in such a rude and sharp manner as

38. Ibid. (Awolowo). P.42.

"to provoke her to take up a stick in order to beat me. I got hold of a stick too, ready and determined to give blow for blow." 39

Awolowo as a personality is not easy to characterise. It is often hard to tell whether some of his behaviors were prompted by the fact that he is an Ijebu and so always on the defensive, or as a result of his hard preparation for life which had been mentioned earlier.

The Ijebus as a people are not very popular among the Yorubas and the other Nigerians. For instance, among the Ibos, 'Ijebu' means counterfeit. Whether this has anything to do with the Ijebus of Western Nigeria is hard to tell.

One thing that seems to point to this direction is the fact that as goldsmiths, the Ijebus often cheated their unsuspecting customers by taking their pure gold and using counterfeit gold in making ornaments for them and still charge them as highly as they would if the ornaments were truly made of pure gold.

A foreign observer had a few things to say about the Ijebus and their relationship with other Yorubas.

39. Ibid. (Awolowo). P.39.

He said:

" Because of certain historical factors, many Yorubas were prejudiced against the Ijebu Yoruba. The Ijebu had never come completely under the old Yoruba kingdom centered at Oyo.

During most of the nineteenth century, the Ijebu controlled the main trade routes into the interior, and they had acquired the reputation of being the Jews of Yorubaland.

Situated as they were on the edge of the Lagos Lagoon, they had supplied most of the middlemen in the slave traffic. Yorubas from Oyo, Ibadan, Lagos, and the Egba Kingdom tended to look down upon or dislike the Ijebu." 40

As a young man, Awolowo became involved in Nigerian politics and soon became a prominent member of the Nigerian Youth Movement. The struggle for power within the NYM soon centered around him and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe. When Dr. Azikiwe resigned from the NYM in 1941, many other prominent members resigned with him. The remaining faithful members of the NYM, chiefly cocoa traders around Ibadan turned to Awolowo for leadership.

When he assumed the leadership of the NYM, he made Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe his favourite target. He devoted two chapters in his autobiography (Chapters II and I2) to the condemnation of Dr. Azikiwe and his style of politics.

40. Op. Cit. (Coleman). P.228.

He bitterly criticized Dr. Azikiwe for undermining the principle of national unity by belonging to the Ibo Federal Union, a tribal organization formed in 1943. He also was critical of the Ibibios, another ethnic group from Eastern Nigeria, for founding the Ibibio State Union.

All his efforts to revive the NYM proved abortive in that he failed to attract more members and thus increase its membership. Many Southerners began to view the NYM as Lagos affair and so would have nothing to do with it. To many of them, the people of Lagos were too proud and self-seeking, thus, a wise man need not have anything to do with them.

He found the political situation in the North more disturbing. When he ventured to the North in order to get them involved on his side in Nigerian political struggle for power, he found out that:

"The situation in the north was in no way reassuring. The powers-that-be appeared determined to administer the north in isolation from the south, and at all events to prevent Northerners from being 'contaminated' politically by educated Southerners." 41

41. Op. Cit. (Awolowo). P.164.

THE EGBE OMO ODUDUWA:

Obafemi Awolowo had hoped to accomplish what Dr. Azikiwe and the NCNC failed to accomplish. He had thought that once he became the boss of the NYM, he could bring all prominent Nigerian nationalists under its banner. When he realised the difficulties that were involved, he began to have second thoughts about the feasibility of "One Nigeria" slogan.

Awolowo would not let these obstacles end his political career before it even started. He decided to organise his fellow descendants of Oduduwa in the same way the Ibos and the Ibibios have done in the past. According to oral tradition prevalent in Nigeria, Oduduwa is the ancestral father of all the Yorubas.

His reason for going against his declared principle was his concern for the Yorubas who because of disunity among them were fast becoming second class citizens. Because this was a major departure from his "One Nigeria" stand which helped to bring him to the position of leadership, he decided to explain his reasons for compromising his principles. He said inter alia:

"The Yorubas were a highly progressive but badly disunited group. They paid lip-service to a spiritual union and affinity in a common ancestor --- Oduduwa. But in all their long history they had waged wars against one another.

When the Portuguese and the British had visited their coasts in the course of their slave trade, the Yorubas had shown no qualm of con-

"science in conducting violent and merciless slave raids on one another. These inter-tribal wars and slave raids had come to an end under the so-called pax Britannica. But the mutual hatred and acerbity which were attendant on them lingered.

Furthermore, the propaganda of Dr. Azikiwe was already having a deleterious effect on a once dynamic group. The Yorubas now indulged in mutual re- crimination and condemnation.

The younger elements thought that the Yorubas were inferior to the go-ahead Ibo people, and that whatever might be their past glories they had become effete and decadent.

To cap it all, it was freely bandied about that the Yorubas were no longer capable of leadership in any sphere of life. I thought that it was in the best interest of Nigeria that the Yorubas should not be reduced to a state of impotence, into which they were fast degenerating.

They had something which was all their own to contribute to the common pool of Nigerian nationalism and nationhood.

I decided, therefore, to do all in my power to infuse solidarity into the disjointed tribes that constitute the Yoruba ethnic group, to raise their morale, to rehabilitate their self-respect, and to imbue them with the confidence that they are an important factor in the forging of the federal unity of Nigeria." 42

This speech made by Chief Awolowo in his own defence is very important as far as this study is concerned.

42. Ibid. (Awolowo). P.I66.

It marked Awolowo's major departure from "One Nigeria" slogan which he once vowed to uphold to the bitter end. Secondly, it is the first public indication of Awolowo's burning desire to become not only the spokesman of all the Yoruba speaking people of Nigeria, but also their undisputed leader.

He has always envied Dr. Azikiwe for the type of support he has been getting from his fellow Ibos. On this, he once observed:

"The implicit and unshaken loyalty which the Ibos had shown Dr. Azikiwe during the Ikoli/Akisanya crisis, did not arise in my view from ideological faith but rather from linguistic affinity and ethnic self-assertion." 43

Whatever his true reasons are, Awolowo by compromising his "One Nigeria" principle seemed to have sacrificed the goal of national unity at the high altar of tribal politics. By so doing, he harmed his chances of ever becoming an undisputed national leader.

His opponents accused him of inconsistency. Not long ago, he was vilifying the Ibos and Ibibios for forming tribal organizations. Now that he has deemed it wise to form one for the Yorubas, they wondered how Egbe Omo Oduduwa would help to bring about Nigerian unity if Ibo State Union was said to militate against such a unity.

43. Ibid. (Awolowo). P.164.

FROM THE EGBE OMO ODUDUWA TO THE ACTION GROUP OF NIGERIA:

The Egbe Omo Oduduwa failed to band all the Yorubas behind Awolowo. Among those who opposed his leadership were such prominent Yorubas as Adegoke Adelabu of Ibadan, Fani Kayode of Ile Ife and the Alafin of Oyo.

When Awolowo realised that his efforts to unite all the Yorubas under his leadership by invoking the name of their common ancestor, Oduduwa, failed to produce the expected results, he decided to convert the Egbe Omo Oduduwa into a political party. He called his newly formed political party the Action Group of Nigeria.

To assure the success of his party, he made sure that he avoided the mistake made by Dr. Azikiwe. This mistake was the exclusion of the traditional elites in the NCNC. Awolowo on the other hand persuaded some prominent traditional elites to join his party as founding members. Among such traditional rulers to join the Action Group were the Odemo of Ishara and the Oni of Ife, Sir Adesoji Aderemi.

By enlisting the support of the Oni of Ife, the accepted spiritual leader of all the Yorubas, Awolowo hoped that the Action Group would be able to embrace all the Yorubas. He also hoped that the formation of the Action Group would bestow legitimacy and external verification on his political leadership aspirations.

The Yorubas regarded the Oni of Ife as the true representative of their ancestors before Awolowo made him a politician. The announcement in Nigerian newspapers on the 21st of March, 1951, of the birth of the Action Group, and the Oni of Ife as one of its members took the country by storm.

Until the Oni of Ife became a member of a political party, the office of the Oni of Ife was non-political and strictly spiritual. This was why many Yorubas were enraged while others were simply shocked.

Many Yorubas who were enraged by Awolowo's politicizing the office of the Oni of Ife joined the NCNC under the leadership of Dr. Azikiwe. Instead of winning them back diplomatically, Awolowo and his associates called them names. It must be remembered that in the past, Awolowo accused Dr. Azikiwe of name calling. He described his opponents as:

"Addle-brained Yorubas who have mortgaged their thinking caps to Azikiwe and his hirelings." 44

Awolowo's chances of ever becoming a national leader acceptable to all suffered a severe setback when he averred:

"Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression. There are no Nigerians in the same sense as there are English, Welsh or French.

The word Nigeria is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not." 45

44. Op. Cit. (Okpaku). P.19.

45. Op. Cit. (Awolowo; Path to Nigerian Freedom.) Pp. 47-48.

Certainly, he could not lead a nation he said does not exist. In other words, he has to accept the existence of Nigeria as a viable nation before he aspires to become its leader.

Probably, Awolowo was convinced that under the circumstances then prevailing in Nigeria, the only certain avenue to power was regional political party. While such a stand helped him for a while to gain control of the Western Nigerian politics, it certainly denied him successes in other parts of Nigeria.

Many Nigerians feared that Awolowo's present position (when he made his statement) was in harmony with the British policy, regarded by the nationalists as a calculated policy of fostering tribalism and preventing the development of a Nigerian national consciousness.

According to James Coleman, Dr. Azikiwe was more of a nationalist than Obafemi Awolowo. Of the two leaders he said:

"Azikiwe had a burning passion to liberate Africa, but circumstances limited his field of operation to Nigeria and the British Cameroons

On the other hand, Awolowo had always been a Yoruba nationalist first and a Pan-Nigerian nationalist second." 46.

46. Op. Cit. (Coleman). P.35I.

FIGURE V.

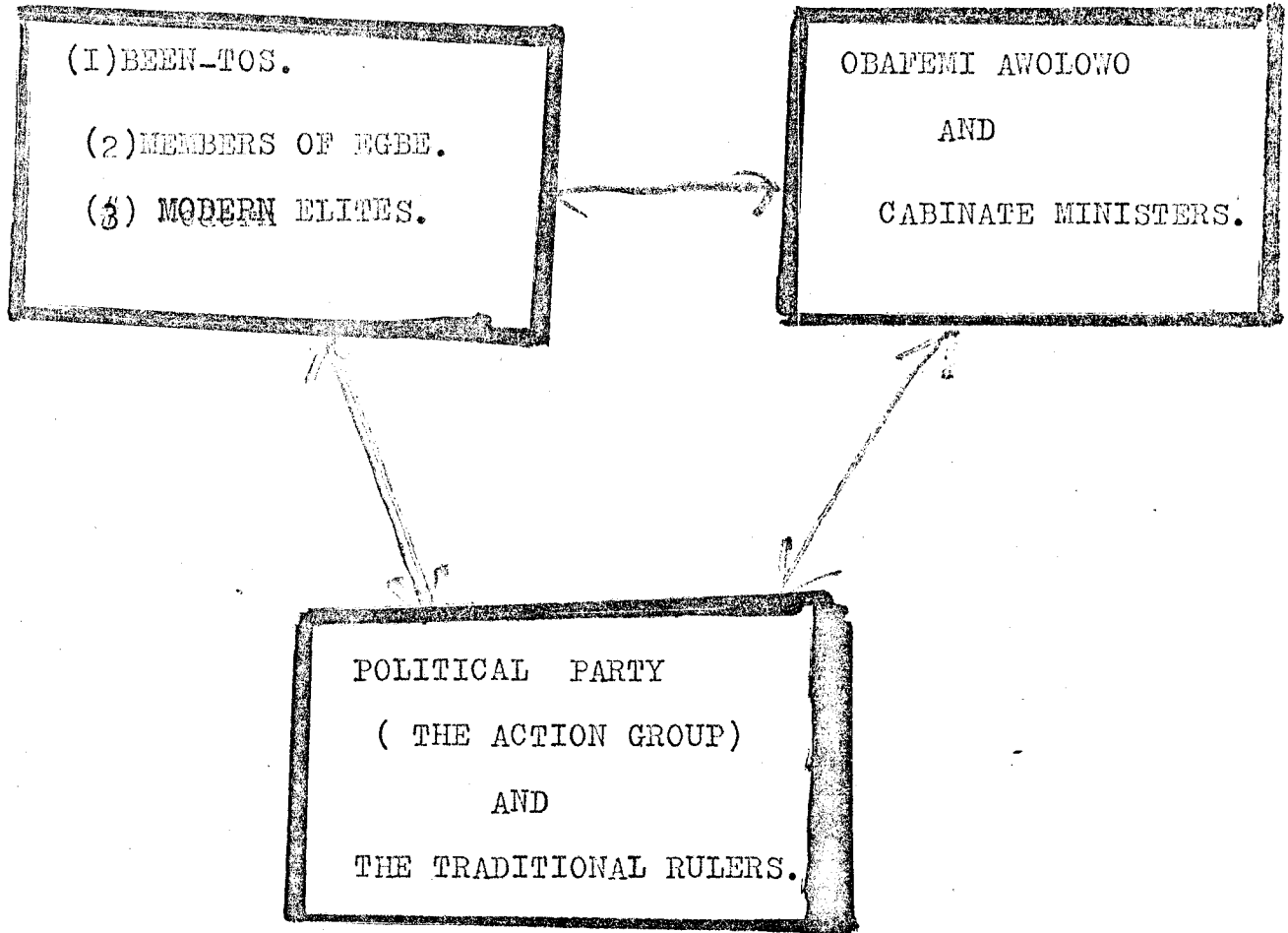


Fig. V shows that the only thing Awolowo did a little differently from Dr. Azikiwe was the inclusion of the traditional leaders in the Action Group. Together with the Action Group, they replaced the traditional king-makers. His major problem was that the Alafin of Oyo regarded by all Yorubas as the political head of all the Yorubas refused to endorse his leadership.

Awolowo realised that much of the opposition he encountered from his fellow Yorubas was due to the fact that he is an Ijebu Yoruba. Among the Yorubas, the Ijebus were generally regarded as outcasts.

Awolowo therefore spent much of his time and energy fighting for his political survival in Western Nigeria. As a result, he failed to project his political image across the entire country.

His attitude towards the Ibos and the Hausas cost him a lot of supports from these two major ethnic groups. He disliked the Hausas because, the average enlightened Northerner looked down on the Southerners as Kafiris (unbelievers).

Since he disliked Dr. Azikiwe he did not pretend to like the Ibos. He was one of those who claimed that the Ibos were out to dominate the whole of Nigeria. This sort of allegation coming from one who aspires to lead the whole nation made his bid for national leadership unacceptable to those who felt that they have been unjustly maligned by him.

No nigerian leader who failed to enlist enough support from the Obos, Hausas and the Yorubas could hope to achieve his political objectives between 1938 and 1960. Awolowo seemed not to have taken this into account, hence he failed in his all out efforts to emerge as the legitimate national leader.

THE BIRTH OF THE NORTHERN PEOPLES CONGRESS: 1951:

The Southern leaders tried two times to get the north involved in the Nigerian struggle for freedom. In each case, they made little headway. The north seemed to be enjoying its isolation from the south. The gap between the north and the south in terms of education continued to widen and the north was unaware of it since the British policy kept them isolated from the south.

According to one observer:

"The most important single feature of British policy was the effort made to preserve the Muslim North in its pristine Islamic purity by excluding Christian missionaries and limiting Western education, by denying northern leaders representation in the central Nigerian Legislative Council during the period 1923-1947, and by minimizing the contact between the northern peoples and the more sophisticated and nationally-minded southerners temporarily resident in the north.

All these aspects of British policy, and others, tended to perpetuate the individuality and separateness of the north." 47

The other aspect of the British policy was that in 1939, the British divided the South into two while the north was left intact. They were governed as if they were two nations, one the north and the other being the south.

47. Ibid. (Coleman). P.322.

In 1948, the new Governor of Nigeria named Sir John Macpherson decided to bring the north and south together under one central colonial government. His constitution later known as Macpherson Constitution introduced a federal system of government in Nigeria for the first time.

The political developments in Nigeria at this time caught the British as well as the Northerners by surprise. The British government did not anticipate that a united and independent Nigeria would emerge for a very, very long time. Some among them had placed it a century away.⁴⁸

In her foreword to Premier Awolowo's book; Path to Nigerian Freedom; written in December, 1946, Miss Perham concluded that "the day when Nigeria from being a name written on a map by Sir George Goldie and an administrative framework put together by Lord Lugard, becomes a true federation, still more a nation, is still far away."⁴⁹

As it turned out, it was not until 1948 and after that the northern peoples were shocked into a terrifying awareness of the great divide that separated them from the south. Needless to say, when northern leaders contemplated the rapidity of political advance and saw that the trend of events was leading inexorably to a self-governing Nigeria at a much earlier date than any of them had previously contemplated, north-south tensions were greatly exacerbated.

48. Ibid. (Coleman). P321.

49. Loc. Cit.

To combat the possibility of the domination of the north by the south, two cultural groups in the north namely the Bauchi General Improvement Union led by Abubakar Tafewa Balewa, a school teacher and headmaster of the Bauchi Middle School, and the Youth Social Circle of Sokoto, led by Ahmadu Bello of Sokoto, amalgamated. This amalgamation gave birth to the Jamiyan Mutanen Arewa otherwise known as the Northern Peoples Congress, hereafter to be referred to as the NPC.

Its birth in October, 1951 was just early enough for the NPC to field candidates for the first Northern Nigerian Regional elections to the new Northern House of Assembly. The NPC won enough seats to form the first regional government. The leader of the NPC was Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto, with Abubakar Tafewa Balewa as the deputy leader.

Again in the Federal elections of December, 1954, the NPC won eighty of the ninety-two seats in the north for the reconstituted Nigerian Federal House of Representatives. With these victories to its credit, the NPC became a formidable political force not only in the north where it is in power, but also in the whole of Nigeria.

There is no doubting the fact that the threat of southern domination, fancied or real, was the major stimulant in the northern awakening.

The claim that the Southern nationalists helped to force the Northerners to give up their policy of isolationism was supported by this observation:

"Southern nationalists have stirred the north out of its lethargy. The awakening has been largely a reaction to southern prodding, and not the result of a spontaneous self-generated northern consciousness.

Certainly it did not come from a feeling of common identity with the south. Mutual opposition to the British produced southern unity which, as we have seen, has never been very strong, but common opposition to the advanced and claimant southerners created northern unity, a unity not only among northern ethnic groups but among classes within those groups." 50

The Southerners had hoped that upon joining the struggle for independence, the Northerners would cooperate with them in working towards the unity of the country. By words and deeds, the Northerners seemed to indicate that they would like to have very little to do with the Southerners. Even the Southerners who lived in the north were restricted in the strangers quarters known also as the "Sabongari."

Leaders like Dr. Azikiwe and Awolowo were still hoping that the Northerners would change their attitudes towards

50. Ibid. (Coleman). P.360.

the south. They avoided open criticism of the north as much as possible. In an effort to allay whatever fear the Northerners might have of the Southerners, Dr. Azikiwe introduced a motion in the Nigerian Legislative Council condemning the creation of ill will among the peoples of Nigeria and urged instead the creation of a united Nigerian outlook.

Dr. Azikiwe's motion stemmed from the fears expressed by the Northern leaders during debates in the Legislative Council. In course of his speech in the Legislative Council, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa said inter alia:

"Many (Nigerians) deceive themselves by thinking that Nigeria is one... particularly some of the press people... This is wrong. I am sorry to say that the presence of unity talked of in this Chamber is artificial and it ends outside this Chamber.

The Southern tribes who are now pouring into the North in ever increasing numbers, are more or less domiciled here and do not mix with the Northern people... and we in the North look upon them as invaders." 5I

The more the Southerners and their leaders tried to appease the Northern leaders, the more intransigent they become. They kept on hammering at the differences between the north and the south.

5I. Legislative Council Debates.

(Nigeria) Lagos, March 4, 1948., P.227.

On this Balewa was very vocal. He made his position very clear by saying:

"I think 1947 will always stand as a very important year in the history of Nigeria. Since the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern Provinces in 1914, Nigeria has existed as one country only on paper.

It is still far from being united. The country is inhabited by the peoples and tribes who speak different languages, who have different religions, different customs and traditions and entirely different historical backgrounds in their ways of life, and who have also attained different stages of development." 52

Up to this point, Balewa was stating facts as he saw them hence the hope entertained by the Southern leaders that perhaps, the debates going on in the Legislative Council might help them in finding solutions to these problems.

However, their hopes were dashed when Balewa said *inter alia*:

"We would like the world to know that in the Northern Provinces, we have got our own leaders whom we have chosen ourselves to be our leaders and voices.

We do not want, Sir, our Southern neighbours to interfere in our development. If the Southern people feel that they are representatives for what they are agitating for and

52. Ibid. (Debates) March 20-April 2, 1947. P.208.

"demanding, well they must know that the case of the Northern Provinces is different....

BUT I SHOULD LIKE TO MAKE IT CLEAR TO YOU THAT IF THE BRITISH QUITTED NIGERIA NOW AT THIS STAGE THE NORTHERN PEOPLE WOULD CONTINUE THEIR INTERRUPTED CONQUEST TO THE SEA." * 53

The Southern leaders were not quite sure what to make out of these seemingly threatening remarks made by Balewa. The reason for this uncertainty was that Balewa was the deputy leader and so they were waiting for a confirmation or a dissociation from Ahmadu Bello the leader of the NPC.

The answer was not long in coming. In a statement which the Southerners interpreted as an approval of Balewa's previous statements, Bello said:

"I rise to associate myself with the last speaker. The mistake of 1914 has come to light and I should like to go no further." 54

What really shocked the Southerners more than his concurring with his deputy was this statement of his. He added:

"When the current political battle is over, I too, will divide this country between my two trustworthy lieutenants." 55

53. Ibid. (Debates). P.212. * Emphasis mine.

54. Bello, Ahmadu. My Life.
Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.,
1962. P.133

55. Whitaker, C.S. The Politics of Tradition.
Princeton University Press, Princeton.,
1970, P. 350.

Ahmadu Bello was thinking in terms of doing exactly what his ancestor Dan Fodio did after establishing the Fulani Empire. Dan Fodio at the completion of the Fulani jihad divided the empire between his son Bello and his brother Abdullahi. Ahmadu Bello had said on several occasions that he personally strove " to follow in the footsteps of my ancestors." 56

With statements such as these mentioned so far coming from the NPC leaders coupled with the arrogance of the Northern leaders, the chances of Ahmadu Bello, the Sar-dauna of Sokoto becoming the unchallenged political leader of a united Nigeria became very slim indeed.

What is more, the frequent hammering at the differences, rather than at the similarities of the different communities within Nigeria, by the leaders from the North, as well as the fear and the distrust of other Nigerian leaders, made the goal of a united, harmonious, progressive and very exemplary Nigerian difficulties to achieve.

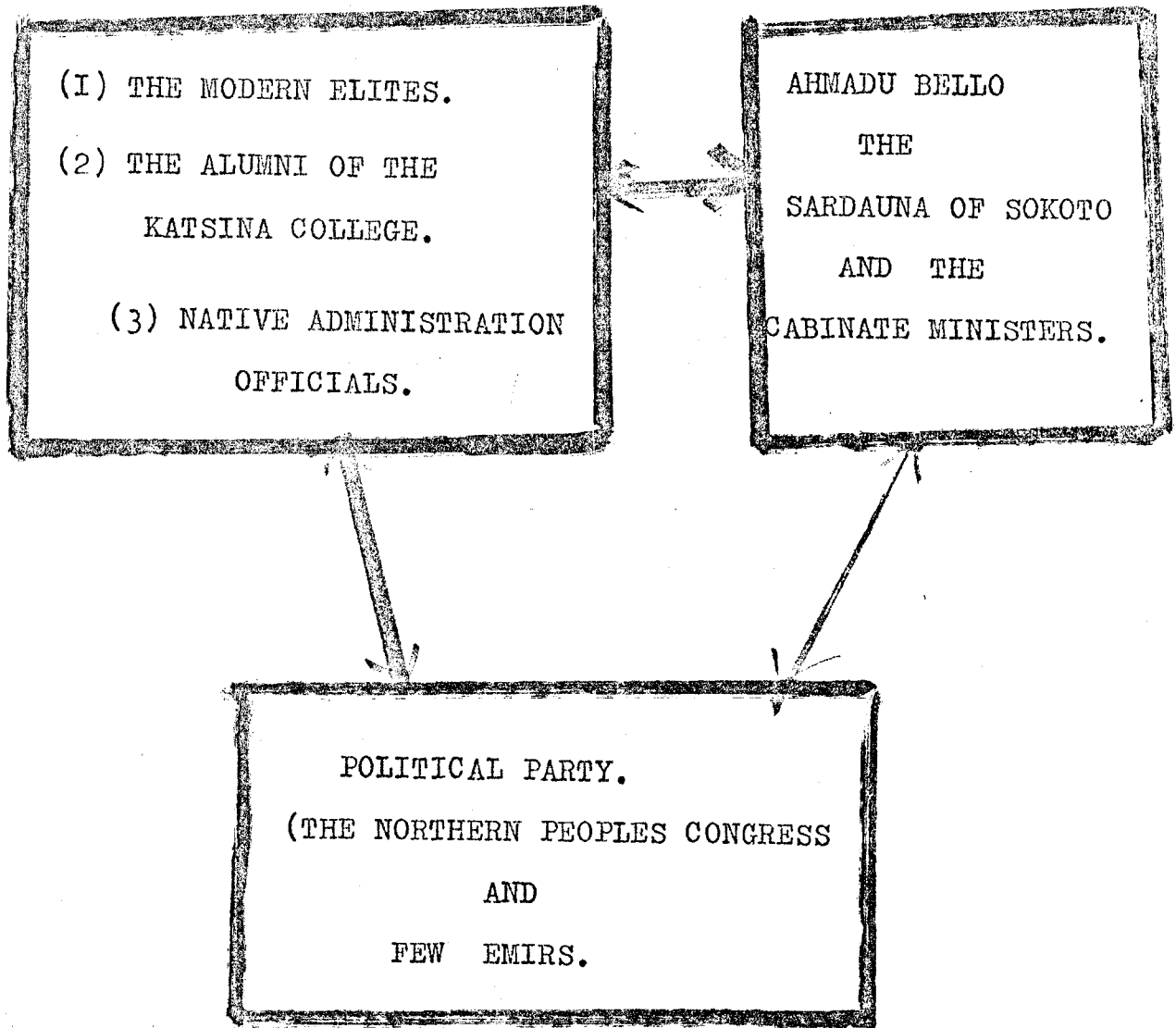
If the Northerners had called their party Nigerian Peoples Congress, perhaps, they would have been able to attract the membership of many Southerners. The NPC was regarded as a party for the Northerners and so remained a regional political party.

56. Northern Nigeria Government. House of Assembly Debates.

Kaduna, April 16, 1960.,

Col. 291.

FIGURE VI.



The NPC replaced the traditional royal family system with its own system. It chose leaders from among the modern elites often ignoring their humble backgrounds. The three most salient features of traditional leadership in the emirates of Northern Nigeria are stratification, hereditary legitimacy, and personalism.

Stratification is the system by which the traditional society of every emirate is divided into ruling class (sarakuna) and a commoner class (talakawa). Membership in either class is usually fixed at birth.⁵⁷

Hereditary legitimacy means that one has to be born into a certain office. Thus, for one to become an emir in a given emirate, one has to be the son or descendant of the former emir. The hereditary principle also determines access to the bulk of the other high offices of state.

Personalism is the system whereby a talakawa attains some recognition in the state. This might come as a result of his personal success in business as was the case of Dantata of Kano, a very wealthy trader from a humble origin, who was often a regular guest at the emir's palace.

Personalism also creates the element of interclass mobility present in the traditional structure of society. For through giving personal loyalty and service to a patron official, a talakawa might acquire political office and

57. Op. Cit. (Whitaker). P.314.

title and hence membership in the sarakuna class, a social elevation which might be acknowledged in and further strengthened by marriage into an aristocratic family.

Ahmadu Bello adopted the personalism system. Two of his able lieutenants were slave-descendants. They were Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and Alhaji Yusufu Maitama Sule. Both men were also graduates of Katsina College the 'Alma Mater' of Ahmadu Bello, the Sarkuna of Sokoto and the Premier of Northern Nigeria.

Commenting on the humble background of Balewa and Sule, Whitaker said inter alia:

"Alhaji Abudakar (sic) Tafawa Balewa, the Prime Minister of the Federation of Nigeria and Alhaji Yusufu Maitama Sule, the Federal Minister of Mines and Power, are two fascinating cases of slave-descendants who owed much to the fortuitous circumstance of having been selected by their fathers' masters to be recipients of the new learning designed for the heirs of traditional rulers." 58

Alhaji Yusufu Maitama Sule is a royal slave-descendant or bacucune (plural, cucunawa), as this status is known in Kano emirate, even today.

58. Ibid. (Whitaker). P.337.

The elevation of Maitama Sule to the rank of federal minister following the 1959 election raised the eyebrows of Kano traditional officials. Theoretically a minister of the government of Nigeria enjoyed precedence over a chief hence the Kano traditional officials were worried at the prospect of a bacucune becoming a minister.

That the incumbent enir, Sanusi, was widely regarded as being the proudest and most jealous of his authority of all emirs, made the situation all the more delicate.

This problem was happily resolved a short while before Maitama Sule became minister. To minimise the impact of Maitama Sule's appointment on the emir's authority and prestige, the Emir trubanned him Dan Masani of Kano.

This has been described as an action which at a stroke had the effect of expressing the Emir's sanction of his appointment dramatizing the connection between modern and traditional leadership prestige,,and emphasizing the loyalty the new minister was expected to retain toward his king and benefactor.⁵⁹

In the past, personalism worked on one to one basis. The patron was usually the Emir to whom the person so honored gives his allegiance. In other words, the beneficiaries of such favors in return owe loyalty to the Emir alone.

59. Ibid. (Whitaker). P.338.

When the NPC replaced the traditional kingmakers, the leader of the party, Ahmadu Bello usurped the right to bestow favors on the talakawa in return for their allegiance. Personalism as it exists in the north is intimately bound up with the phenomenon of rival solidarity groups within the ruling class (invariably encountered in every emirate), which form around the branching lines of descent within the royal dynasty or around the existence of the multiple dynasties. For it is above all the prospect of benefit from a patron's good fortune and of neglect or discrimination at the hands of his rivals that generates these solidarities.

By usurping the right to bestow favors, the NPC was able to undermine the authority and prestige of the Emirs. Needless to say that the NPC met with the same fate as its Southern predecessors. There were prominent Northerners such as the Sultan of Sokoto, the Shehu of Bornu, Mallam Aminu Kano the leader of the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) and Joseph Tarka the leader of the Middle Belt Progressive Alliance, who refused to join forces with the NPC.

By behaving like Dan Fodio's incarnate, Ahmadu Bello alienated the Emirs who never believed him to be Dan Fodio's incarnate. He also never gained the allegiance of the non-Muslim areas of the north nor that of the Shehu of Bornu whose ancestors defeated Dan Fodio and his invading forces.

PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT IN NIGERIA: 1951.

The people of Nigeria had the opportunity to witness firsthand how these self-appointed kingmakers would perform their duties of choosing political leaders for the entire society. This opportunity came to the Nigerian nationalists in the form of the 1951 elections. What the Nigerians saw did not impress them at all.

They interjected into the Nigerian politics certain political practices which other Nigerians viewed as very unbecoming. These included carpet crossing, political thugs and unopposed systems of gaining political power.

CARPET CROSSING:

The practice of carpet crossing originated from Britain. This is a system in which a candidate runs on the platform of a given political party, gets elected and then switches to the party of his choice, usually the party that offered him the most political benefits.

Carpet crossing made history in Britain when many elected members of the Liberal Party bolted their party. They crossed carpet and joined the Labour Party. By 1916, this system weakened the Liberal Party so much and made the Labour Party so powerful that it was able to form the first Labour Government in Britain in 1916. The Liberal Party has never fully recovered from this loss.

POLITICAL THUGS:

These are usually the young members of a given political party used by the party officials to harass their political opponents. Many a time, they acted like hooligans by beating up the candidates of the opposing parties and often disrupting their peaceful and orderly political rallies.

UNOPPOSED:

By this a candidate is generally declared elected when the other political parties failed to field candidates to oppose him in a given constituency.

Either one of these vices could alter the result of an honest election. In the 1951 general elections in Nigeria, these vices were present in all the regions in varying degrees.

Since the 1951 general elections in Nigeria was the first of its kind, it became a pace-setter for all the other elections that followed. From then on, elections in Nigeria have always been rigged and therefore controversial.

It is generally believed that parliamentary democracy thrives on honest, free and fair elections. In the case of Nigeria, the reverse became the process. Things got progressively worse and worse each time there was an election in Nigeria.

THE WESTERN NIGERIA:

The 1951 general elections in Western Nigeria turned out to be a fierce battle between the NCNC and the Action Group. Political thugs were used during the campaigns and one party accused the other for being the first to use them.

Dr. Azikiwe led the NCNC in the political battle against the Action Group from his constituency in Lagos. At this time, Lagos though the capital of Nigeria was a part of Western Nigeria.

The initial results showed the NCNC winning with a big margin. Dr. Azikiwe expected the governor to invite him and his colleagues to form the first regional government in Western Nigeria. However, before this could happen, Awolowo and his supporters got to work. They were able to persuade many newly elected NCNC candidates to cross carpet and join their party. Besides monetary rewards, most of them were promised ministerial posts in the Western Nigerian government to be formed by the Action Group.

By mere political chicanery, the Action Group altered the verdict of the electorates of Western Nigeria. To many Nigerians, carpet crossing became a political vice which makes a victor become a victim of the parliamentary system. Since it originated from Britain, they regarded it as an integral part of the parliamentary system. Needless to say that the average voter did not like it.

THE NORTHERN REGION:

In the Northern region where the NPC reportedly swept the polls, many electoral rules and regulations were violated. For instance, the NPC induced many elected members of the Northern House of Assembly to declare for the NPC. On the 1951 elections in the north, an observer said:

"In the North as a whole, candidates who were Native Authority officials triumphed in all but few cases; afterwards the overwhelming majority of members elected to the House declared for the NPC." 60

The NPC also used political thugs to disrupt the political gatherings of its opponents. The leaders of the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) the major opposition party at this time, were severely beaten by these thugs hired by the NPC.

Finally, the NPC used the Alkali Native Court under its control to harass and often jail its political opponents. Those who escaped being thrown into jail for all sorts of charges, were denied the necessary papers they were required to file by law in order to stand for an election against the official candidates of the NPC.

60. Ibid. (Whitaker). Pp. 361-362

The election results in the north were therefore predictable. Many of the NPC candidates were elected unopposed, in that no one was permitted to oppose them in the first place. How else could it be when those designated by their parties to oppose the NPC candidates were either languishing in jails or in hiding?

The NPC made no bones in publicly stressing that the opposition members deserved what they got. To them, their party was ordained by Allah (God) to save the North from the Southern infidels. So, any Northerner who opposed the NPC must be treated like an infidel.

The NPC accused the NEPU leaders of trying to hand over the Northern Nigeria to the infidels from the south. As one observer puts it:

" The argument that NEPU's alliance with the predominantly non-Muslim party, the NCNC, entailed an allegiance incompatible with fidelity to Islam, was a corollary of NPC's doctrine of unity which it relentlessly and effectively propagated.

NPC is the party of the Sardauna, the party of Shehu Usuman dan Fodio, but that party, NEPU is the party of Zik (Azikiwe), Sarkin Inyamilai (sic) (chief of the --- derogatory Hausa term for Ibos)." 6I

6I. Ibid. (Whitaker). P.385.

THE EASTERN REGION:

The general elections of 1951 went well and very smoothly in the Eastern Region where the NCNC led by Eyo Ita, swept the polls. The governor of Eastern Nigeria called upon Eyo Ita to form the first government of the region which he did.

Of the country's political leaders, Dr. Azikiwe was the only one left out of both ministerial office and the Central Legislature. He was the leader of the opposition in the Western House of Assembly.

Having been cheated out of power by the Action Group led by Chief Awolowo, Dr. Azikiwe finally decided to resign his seat in the Western Legislature. Upon doing that, he headed for the Eastern Region where his party the NCNC was in power. He asked the Eyo Ita government to resign so that a new government which he hoped to head could be formed. Majority of the cabinet ministers who refused to honor this request by resigning were branded 'sit tight ministers.'

The seemingly peaceful Eastern Region was thus plunged into a political crisis that was finally settled by the 1953 regional elections in which the NCNC under Dr. Azikiwe's leadership won enough seats to form the new regional government.

Based on what happened in Nigeria during the 1951 general elections, few would agree with the British that Nigeria was a bastion of democracy, let alone being a model for all the other African nations. Since the British were still in power in Nigeria at this time, one would have expected them to do something about these undemocratic practices that became very prominent in Nigeria during the elections.

The rock-bottom of parliamentary democratic system of politics in Nigeria was undermined by these undemocratic tactics used by some Nigerian political leaders to come to power. The victims of these illegal acts lost confidence in the parliamentary system. They also believed that the British gave their blessings to these abuses hence they did nothing.

All these considered, it will not be out of place to conclude that while the British called what developed in Nigeria under their political leadership and guidance democracy, in actual fact, it was nothing but democracy.

Democracy came from two Greek words; demos, the people, and kratein, to rule. Since the British either introduced some of these political vices in Nigeria or acquiesced to them, they should be blamed for the crazy political system that developed in Nigeria which finally resulted in the military coup d'etat and bloody civil war.

TOO LITTLE TOO LATE:

The methods adopted by Chief Awolowo, Dr. Azikiwe and Ahmadu Bello in entrenching themselves into power in Nigeria were responsible for the type of oppositions they faced in their respective regions shortly afterwards. The first to be challenged was Chief Awolowo, and his challenger was Alhaji Adegoke Adelabu of Ibadan.

Prior to becoming the NCNC leader of Opposition in the Western House of Assembly following Dr. Azikiwe's resignation, Adelabu served successfully as the chairman of the Ibadan District Council. His popularity soared when he stepped into the shoes of Dr. Azikiwe in the Western House of Assembly.

As a member of the NCNC, Adelabu was preferred in the Eastern Region to Chief Awolowo. Also, being from Ibadan ruling family and a blood relation of the Alafin of Oyo, he was more appealing as a leader among the Yorubas than was Awolowo who is an Ijebu Yoruba. Finally, the Northerners found him more to their liking than Chief Awolowo, for he was a Muslim by religion.

Close to the 1958 Western Nigerian election in which the NCNC under the dynamic leadership of Adegoke Adelabu were projected as sure winners, Adelabu died of automobile accident. Awolowo was spared the agony of defeat by this calamity that befell the NCNC. Adelabu's death was seen by many as a great loss to the entire country.

DR. AZIKIWE IN THE EAST:

The political crisis which was brought about by Dr. Azikiwe in his quest for power undermined the faith which the people of Eastern Nigeria had in the electoral system as a legitimate and reliable system of choosing political leaders.

The first opposition to Dr. Azikiwe's leadership came from the Roman Catholics during the regional election of 1953. They fielded their own candidates in many constituencies. He fought bravely for his political feature against the Roman Catholic political organization in the Eastern Region.

What saved him from suffering a political defeat at the hands of the Roman Catholics was the fact that many voters believed his story that the Roman Catholics were the agents of the British colonialists who wanted to keep him out of power in order to delay the independence of Nigeria then scheduled for 1959. The NCNC won an easy victory and Dr. Azikiwe became the proud winner of the contest against the Roman Catholics.

The second and the most difficult challenge which Dr. Azikiwe faced came from Mr. E.O.Eyo, the former NCNC chief whip in the Eastern House of Assembly. In 1956, Mr. Eyo fell out with Dr. Azikiwe and accused him of embezzlement and official corruption.

Some of these charges stemmed from the fact that Dr. Azikiwe was alleged to have invested about £2 million (\$5½ million) of public funds into his private bank, the African Continental Bank.

The British appointed a Commission of Inquiry headed by Mr. Foster Sutton to look into these allegations made by Mr. E.O.Eyo. The Commission finally cleared Dr. Azikiwe of all wrong doing, though he had to live with the traumatic experience.

AHMADU BELLO IN THE NORTH:

Two traditional rulers posed great threats to the leadership of the Sardauna of Sokoto in the north. The first was the Sultan of Sokoto. The relationship between these two members of the Sokoto royal family became strained in 1938 when Ahmadu Bello unsuccessfully sought to ascend to the throne of Sokoto as the Sultan. Since then, the new Sultan learnt to keep an eye on Ahmadu Bello whose ambition was still to be crowned as the Sultan of Sokoto.

In 1943, Ahmadu Bello was brought to trial in the Sultan's court and was convicted of misappropriation of jangali (cattle tax). Ahmadu Bello appealed his case to the secular British magistrate court successfully and was acquitted. This angered and horrified the Moslem rulers of the north, and as one observer puts it:

" At the time, it was unheard of for a Sokoto subject to appeal to the secular British magistrate against a decision of the court of the Sarkin Musulmai (sic)." 62

As the Sarkin Musulmi or Commander of the Faithful, Sir Abubakar, the Sultan of Sokoto was regarded by the Muslim faithful in all the emirates as their spiritual leader. He therefore refused to recognise the political leadership of one of his subjects.

THE SHEHU OF BORNU:

Another traditional ruler who opposed the leadership of Ahmadu Bello was the Al-Kanemi, the Shehu of Bornu. His great-grand father, Shehu Laminu led the repulsion of the Fulani invasion of Bornu in 1801.

This helps to explain why the Shehu of Bornu refused to accept the political leadership of a descendant of Usuman dan Fodio who suffered defeat at the hands of the brave Bornu soldiers. The shehu of Bornu is the only Muslim ruler who does not accept the Sultan of Sokoto as his spiritual overlord.

OTHER CHALLENGERS:

On the civilian side, Ahmadu Bello was challenged by Mallam (great teacher) Ibrahim Imam who claimed descent from the Sefawa dynasty which ruled Bornu emirate for centuries before the rise of Al-Kanemi also known as Shehu Laminu.⁶³

63. Ibid. (Whitaker). P.328.

In order to be able to wage a more effective political campaign against the regime of the Sardauna of Sokoto and the NPC, he formed his own political party known as the Bornu Youth Movement.

Another noted challenger to the leadership of Ahmadu Bello was Mallam Aminu Kano. He is a member of a Fulani judicial lineage of Kano emirate called Genawa. In order to be more effective in his opposition to the NPC, he founded his own party known as the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU). His party almost succeeded in wresting power from the NPC in the 1951 general elections had the election been free and fair.

Joseph S. Tarka of the Middle Belt was another formidable opponent Ahmadu Bello had to contend with. His people were never conquered by the Fulanis nor were they ever Islamised. He founded the United Middle Belt Congress and formed an alliance with the Action Group.

At stake in all these challenges encountered by these three prominent Nigerian political leaders is the issue of legitimacy. Political ideology was not the key issue nor was there any disagreement over ridding Nigeria of British colonialism. What is in doubt is the legitimacy of these men to continue in office as leaders of their respective regions. Every leader seeks to draw about himself and his government the cloak of legitimacy.

As Wriggins puts it:

"The new leader seeks to have it understood, without question, that he is properly entitled to rule.

Having legitimacy, he and his government are assured of their authority. With legitimacy much is simple; without it, everything is difficult." 64

Nigerian leaders would hardly quarrel with Mr. Wriggins observations, since much of what he said applied to them. They decided to make amends by using the traditional means in order to regain the legitimacy and external verification which they feared that they had lost. The only way to do this was to convince the masses of the people that they were mandated to become leaders of their people by their forefathers and not by the power conferred upon them by the British colonial administrators.

Dr. Azikiwe and Obafemi Awolowo refused to become Knight Commanders of the British Empire. Instead they accepted the traditional chieftaincy titles. This was a way of identifying with the traditional rulers.

To justify their claims that they have external verification as well as legitimacy to lead Nigeria into freedom, these three leaders, Dr. Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo and Ahmadu

64. Wriggins, W. Howard.

The Ruler's Imperative.

Columbia University Press,

New York, 1969. Pp.38-39.

Bello, decided to write their autobiographies in such a way as to convince their readers that they were of royal descent.

All these tie in with the observation made by Lucien W. Pye with regards to political leadership. He said inter alia:

"The personality problems of the leadership are especially complicated, for as men who deal in power, they are likely to be peculiarly sensitive to issues of status, pride and self-respect." 65

There is no doubting the fact that these three leaders are at this point very sensitive to issues of status, pride and self-respect. They are now bent on making all the efforts they could in order to convince their fellow Nigerians that they are truly of royal descent and that they truly belong to the traditional royal families.

They spared no efforts. All three of them were initiated into all sorts of traditional clubs. Ahmadu Bello took the title of "Sardauna of Sokoto" which he said was peculiar to Sokoto and restricted to men of ruling house. He went on to say:

"Like other similar titles it is greatly sought after, and the holding of it is a great honour. The title 'Sardauna' is not so simple but its original meaning was probably 'Captain of the Bodyguard.'

65. Pye, Lucien W.

Aspects of Political Development.

Little Brown and Company,

Boston, 1966., P.107.

"Its insignia are an ancient sword and baldric which are handed in by the last holder on laying down his office and presented to the new holder personally by the ruler.

Traditionally in battle he went before the ruler, as leader of the princes, to clear the way for him; he, of course, also protected him should the fighting draw unpleasantly close. He was known as the 'Brave One with the Sword' or the 'Brave Road-Opner.'" 66

In addition to assuming the title known as the Sardauna of Sokoto, Ahmadu Bello made a pilgrimage to Mecca in the company of prominent emirs, selected ministers and other dignitaries. Many observers interpreted this as his bid for religious glory as well as an obvious means of extending and reinforcing his political power.⁶⁷

Awolowo saw to it that the Oba of Ijebu Remo conferred several chieftaincy titles on him. One of such titles was the 'Losi' of Ijebu Remo. From then on he became known as Chief Obafemi Awolowo, which is the equivalent of being made a member of the House of Lords in Britain.

Dr. Azikiwe was inducted into the Agbalanze Ozo Society at Ogbeabu in Onitsha, with the title of Ogbuefi Nnanyelugo (Father has glorified you). Among the Ibos, the word 'father' also means God, depending on the usage.

66. Op. Cit. (Bello). P.49.

67. Op. Cit. (Whitaker). P.349

The British and the Nigerians share a common belief in aristocracy. The British have their Kings, Queens, Princes, Princesses, Dukes and Duchesses as well as Lords; the Nigerians on the other hand have their Obis, Obas, Chiefs, Emirs, Olinzeles and Ndichies. These are the groups that traditionally supply political leadership in their societies. This will also explain why these three Nigerian leaders are now doing all they can to become associated with this aristocratic class in Nigeria.

Nigeria is a status conscious society to a certain degree. It is true that aristocracy of birth is gradually making room for aristocracy of intellect (been-tos), still it pays to be of a noble birth in Nigeria.

Realising this fact, though belatedly, these three embattled Nigerian leaders fighting for their political survival felt that once they succeeded in convincing the masses that they have royal blood running in their veins, no matter how far fetched their stories, the questions and doubts about their legitimacy and external verification would be resolved once and for all in their favor.

Their skills in telling their royal stories were amazing. All of them suddenly became politicians-turn-historians. They wrote as if for a prize in which the winner will be he who descended from the noblest of all the Nigerian royal families.

Obafemi Awolowo was born on 6 March 1909, at Ikenne, a small town in Ijebu Remo. His father's name was Shopolu and his mother's name was Efunyela. In a status conscious society such as does exist in Nigeria, a man in Awolowo's situation will have an uphill battle ahead of him if he ever wants to attain national prominence.

Despite the fact that all the other Yorubas look down on the people referred to as the Ijebus, the Ijebus themselves look down on the people of Ijebu Remo. The Ijebus have three social classifications. The first class Ijebus are known as the 'Ijebu Ode', the ruling class from among whom the 'Awujale' (King) of Ijebuland is always chosen.

Next in line are the 'Ijebu Igbo' from among whom the high priest (Olumolushi) of Ijebu Igbo is always chosen. Not even the king can afford to ignore the medicine man in his kingdom. So in Ijebuland, the people of Ijebu Igbo are highly respected by all the other Ijebus.

The last and the lowest in rank are the 'Ijebu Remo' among whom Obafemi Awolowo was born. This accident of birth was a great political liability. Awolowo therefore resolved to minimize its impact on his political career. His claims to royalty were steps in this direction.

In 1954, the Action Group lost the Ibadan town council elections to the NCNC after a bitter struggle. Observers

blamed this loss on the fact that "the Action Group was presented as the party of the Ijebus (the leader Mr. Awolowo is himself an Ijebu), for whom the people of Ibadan had a traditional hostility dating from before the colonial period." 68.

When Adegoke Adelabu of Ibadan died in 1958, the leadership of the NCNC in Western Nigeria fell on the shoulders of Fani Kayode, a lawyer from Ile Ife. Among the Yorubas, the people of Ile Ife rank the highest since all the Yorubas believe that their ancestor 'Oduduwa' was also the founder of the town of Ile Ife.

Fearing that Fani Kayode's claim to the leadership of the Yorubas might become more credible than his, Obafemi Awolowo decided to make public his claim to royalty. He did this in his book which was also his autobiography where he devoted the whole of chapter two to his noble parentage.

He made several assertions supporting his claim to royalty among which were the facts that his grandfather and his grandmother were all descendants of ruling families among the Yorubas.

Awolowo further claimed that by the then prevailing social standards, his father was descended from an illustrious and noble ancestry. He also maintained that his great-great grandfather was reputed to be an outstanding statesman.

68. Cowan, L. Gray.

Local Government in West Africa.
AMS Press, Inc., New York., 1970.
P. 225.

He also held the double chieftaincy titles of Oluwo and Losi.⁶⁹ Also, his grandfather Awolowo, was made an 'Iwarefa'. The Iwarefa was the inner circle or the Executive Council of the Oshungbo (Village Council), which in those days was even more than a cabinet. Awolowo proudly pointed out that his grandfather was made the head of the Iwarefa.

He further claimed that the Iwarefa was the highest judicial body in the town of Ikenne to which appeals could be made, and it alone could pronounce a sentence of death, and order execution subject to the consent of the Awujale of Ijebu Ode.⁷⁰

Obafemi Awolowo, commenting on the political power held by his grandfather observed that:

"Awolowo held the key of the Oshungbo House and of the Inner Chamber (the meeting place of the inner circle), and no meeting could be held there without his knowledge and consent."⁷¹

As it is customary in Nigeria, no child is allowed to refer to his father or grandfather by their first names. Awolowo was not trying to be disrespectful to his grandfather whom he seems to revere, rather he was trying to show that a direct linkage does exist between the former

69. Op. Cit.(Awolowo). P.18.

70. Ibid. (Awo). P.19.

71. Loc. Cit.

famous Awolowo and the present Awolowo. After all, 'Like father like son', is a familiar old saying in Nigeria.

As a lawyer and a person who professed to be a Christian, one would expect Obafemi Awolowo not to not believe in reincarnation. However, in politics, whatever helps a politician to stay in power is often capitalized on. This explains why Awolowo tried to use the myth of reincarnation to inform his audience that in the past, he once lived as a warrior of note. Here are some of what he said:

"In my case, the Oracle declared that I was the re-incarnation of granny's own father. I am told that granny had a profound admiration and affection for her father, and I can never help feeling that she had transferred these emotions to me from the moment I was authoritatively declared his re-incarnation.

Granny was also very proud of her father. He was a warrior of note and fortune who held many chieftaincy titles in his lifetime." 72.

On his mother's side, Obafemi Awolowo maintained that he has much to be proud of. His mother, he said, had a distinguished military ancestry of which she was also very proud.

About his maternal grandfather he said:

"Her father (his maternal grandfather) Awofeko held the military title of Are (Generalissimo) at the early age of about forty-three.

72. Ibid. (Awo). P.15.

"Mother is very fond of telling the stories of her father's prowess and exploits, and of his matchless courage." 73

Awolowo also pointed out that in Ijebu Remo the instrument of authority, which was the equivalent of the British Parliament and Cabinet, was the Oshugbo. He had pointed out before that his great-great-grandfather, was the Oluwo as well as the head of the Oshugbo. With that fact clearly stated, he went on to say:

"The Oba and his Chiefs could hold deliberations as a Council; but any decision taken by the Council must receive the imprimatur or approval of the Oshugbo before it could take effect; and such a decision would not in any case be executed save by the Oshugbo.

The Oba was the king and head of all the community and he presided over the meetings with his Chiefs. In Ikenne, as in most parts of Ijebu Remo, the Oluwo is next in rank to the Oba, but it is the former who presides over the meetings of the Oshugbo.

As a rule the Oba does not attend the meetings of the Oshugbo. When he does, he takes precedence after the Oluwo. On the demise of the Oba, the Oluwo acts in his place." 74

73. Ibid. (Awolowo) Pp, 15-16.

74. Ibid. (Awolowo). Pp.18-19.

Awolowo further justified the fact that he persuaded the Oba of Ijebu Remo to confer the chieftaincy title of Losi on him when he was the Premier of the Western Region thus:

"The Oluwo title which was held by father's great-grandfather is a public title, whilst the Losi title, one of the chieftaincy titles which I now hold, is a family title.

The former could rotate from one recognized ruling family to another, whilst the latter remains in our family to be held by any worthy successor on whom the Oba may confer it." 75

What Obafemi Awolowo has tried to do so far is to let it be known that his family had produced famous and able leaders in the past. His claim to fame and legitimate leadership of all the Yorubas as well as the whole of Nigeria must be viewed from that perspective.

75. Loc. Cit.

DR. NNAMDI AZIKIWE'S GENEALOGY:

The Commission of Inquiry that probed Dr. Azikiwe's handling of public funds coupled with stiff oppositions within his party led first by the Roman Catholic members of the NCNC and later by Mr. E.O. Eya convinced him that something is lacking in his political leadership.

From the speeches he made in his self-defense which later appeared in his autobiography, it became clear that he wanted it to be known that he descended from a line of rulers. By taking this line of action, he hoped to silence those who branded him an upstart.

Along this line of action by which he hoped to inform the people of Nigeria of his royal lineage, he said:

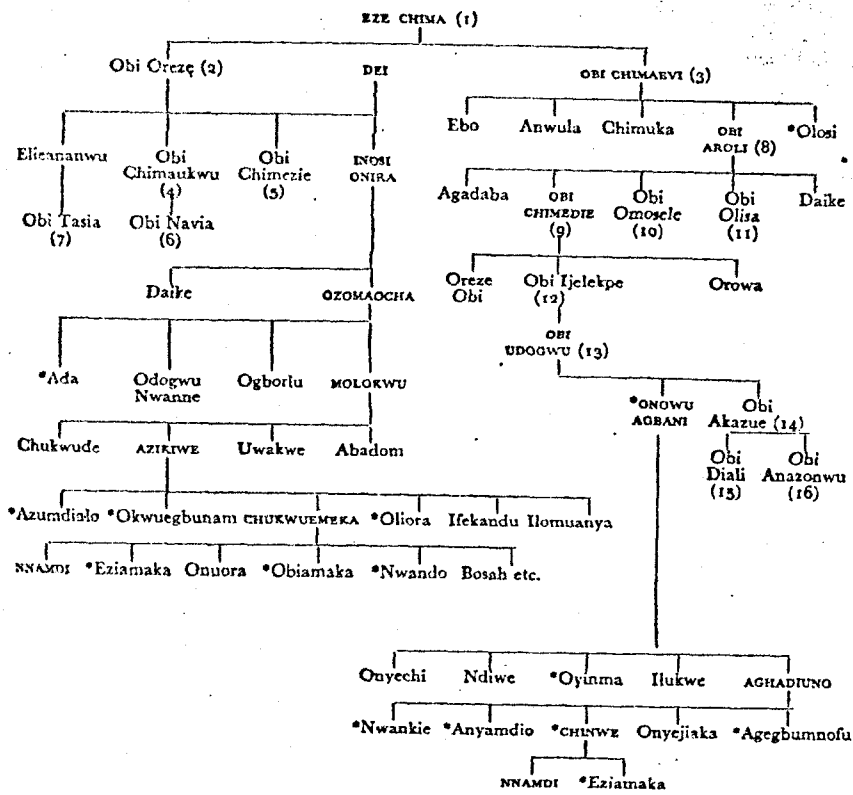
"From the information gleaned from my parents, relatives and other relevant sources, my genealogy derives from a DIRECT DESCENT FROM EZE CHIMA, THE FIRST KING OF ONITSHA,* whose direct descendants are generally known as Umu Eze Chima." 76

He went on to assert that his father traced his ancestry to Inosi Onira, who was the fourth son of Dei, the second son of Chima. What Dr. Azikiwe wants all to know at this point is that the blood of King Chima, the founder and the first king of Onitsha, is running in his veins.

76. Op. Cit. (Azikiwe: My Odyssey). P.I.

* Emphasis mine.

APPENDIX A
MY GENEALOGY



* Female

On his mother's side, he found that his claim to royalty was even stronger. He claimed that his mother could trace her ancestry from six kings of Onitsha beginning with Obi Udogwu, the thirteenth king of Onitsha, whose son Obi Akazue signed a treaty of friendship with Queen Victoria of England in 1877.

Besides the enclosed diagram meant to support his claim, Dr. Azikiwe further said:

"Thus, in tracing my paternal lineage, I could say that both parents of my father are direct descendants of Eze Chima.

As for me, I can trace my paternal ancestry in this wise: I am the first son of Chukwuemeka, who was the third child and first son of Azikiwe, who was the second son of Molokwu, who was the third son of Ozomaocha, who was the second son of Inosi Onira, who was the fourth son of Dei, the second son of Eze Chima, the founder of Onitsha." 77

On his maternal lineage he had this to say:

"In tracing my maternal lineage, I would say that my mother's parents were also direct descendants of Eze Chima. I can trace my maternal ancestry thus: I am the first son of Nwanonaku Rachel Chinwe Ogbenyeonu (Aghadiuno) Azikiwe, who was the third daughter of Aghadiuno Ajie, the fifth son of Onowu Agbani,

77. Ibid. (Azikiwe).P.4.

"first daughter of Obi Udokwu (sic), the son who descended from five kings of Onitsha.

Five of these rulers of Onitsha were direct lineal descendants of Eze Chima, who led his warrior-adventurers when they left Benin to establish the Onitsha city-state in about 1748 AD." 78

Realising that Eze Chima was the king and founder of Onitsha one of the towns in Iboland, he wanted all to know that his claim to royalty went far beyond the Iboland. To do this, he saw it fit to include the dialogue he said that he once had with his grandmother in his story. A close look at the contents of this conversation would bring to light why Dr. Azikiwe thought it necessary to make it known to others.

According to Dr. Azikiwe, this is what he remembered of his conversation with his grandmother:

"She told me that we despised others because WE DESCENDED FROM THE ROYAL HOUSE OF BENIN*, and so regarded ourselves as the superiors of other tribes who had no royal blood in their veins. It was therefore taboo for us to associate with others on a level of social equality." 79

After making his points, it dawned on him that others whose support he needed might read wrong meanings into this conversation he had with his grandmother.

78. Ibid. (Azikiwe). P.5.

79. Ibid. (Azikiwe). P.II

* My emphasis.

He also recognized the fact that the relationship between the Onitsha Ibos and the non-Onitsha Ibos had been strained for quite a while and it would be very unwise for him to make it worse.

After weighing all these facts, Dr. Azikiwe decided to add a rejoinder. On account of that, he said:

"Of course, this view sounds rather anachronistic today; I do not believe in aristocracy of birth but aristocracy of intelligence, but I have recorded grandma's views to show how the earliest Onitsha socialites regarded their contemporaries.

Of course, this fatuous attitude has been considerably modified as a result of external factors and the forces of social progress." 80

Dr. Azikiwe emphasized the fact that his ancestors were warriors from Benin. They were brave, courageous and very adventurous to boot. Their leader Chima, the ultimate founder of the Onitsha city-state was a prince of the blood in his own right.

When he led his men out of Benin Empire, as a result of the civil war that engulfed the Benin Empire, the ruling Oba (king) was his uncle. Chima left because he did not want to destroy his own people.

80. Loc. Cit.

THE SARDAUNA OF SOKOTO JOURNEYS BACK TO THE MIDDLE EAST:

Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto was born in a little town called Rabah in Sokoto Emirate in the year 1910. His father's name was Ibrahim and he was one of the forty-eight District Heads in Sokoto Emirate.

In his autobiography, Ahmadu Bello put down in black and white what he has been preaching orally for years. Besides claiming that he descended from Usuman dan Fodio, the founder of the Fulani Empire, he claimed also that he was a direct descendant of the Holy Prophet Mohammed, the founder of the Islamic religion.

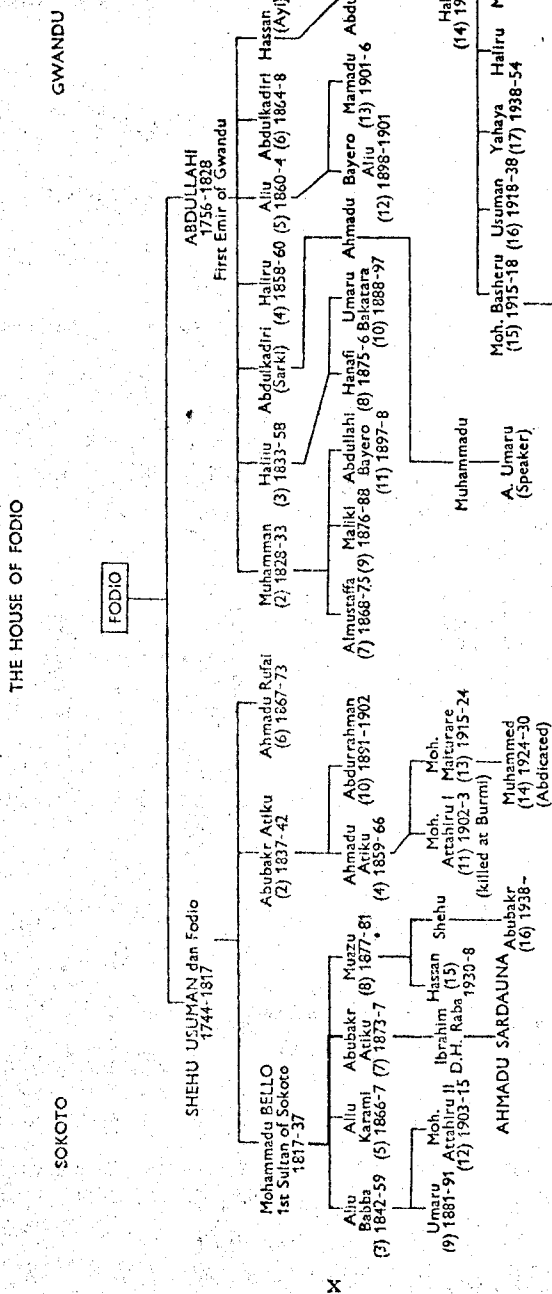
ROYAL DESCENT:

He asserted that his grandfather was the seventh Sultan (king) of Sokoto, and that all his great uncles had been Sultans. He then went on to say:

"Sokoto was founded in 1809 by my distinguished great-grandfather, Sultan Bello." 81

According to him, his father was the son of Sultan Atiku, who was the son of Sultan Bello who also was the son of Shehu Usuman dan Fodio, the founder of the Fulani Empire.

81. Op. Cit. (Bello). P.I.



(Numbers indicate order in succession)

CHAPTER MY FIRST

IN THE NAME OF GOD THE
THE MERCIFUL, I BEGIN
AND OF THE POLITICA
NORTHERN NIG

Across the northwest corner describes a vast semicircle of ne its source near Zaria to its junct point on that mighty waterway the sea. About half-way along thi land and swamps, is the modern is about a quarter of a mile wide i season carries quite a substantial founded in 1809 by my distinguis Bello. I will tell you about him founding later on.

About twenty miles upstream bank—that is, on the opposite sid the little town of Rabah. It was he father was the District Head. Heads in Sokoto Emirate and he years had passed since the British from his own capital, chased him caught up with him and his devo Bornu. Here he made a last stan died fighting, far from his people

His standard was found near and taken to England. Only th

Ahmadu Bello's greatest claim was that he was a direct descendant of the Holy Prophet, Mohammed. He had a chart in his autobiography to support this claim. Probably, he directed this claim against the Shehu of Bornu who refused to accept his political leadership.

Ahmadu Bello himself admitted that Bornu people never came under the rule of his ancestors. He was on record as saying:

"The countries which did not come under the Fulani rule were the area now known as the Bornu Province, the Plateau Province (less Wase), the Jukon, Tiv and Idoma peoples south of the Benue, and small parts of Kabba and Ilorin Provinces." 82

Since Al-Kanemi, the Shehu of Bornu is a Moslem, the direct descendant of the Holy Prophet must command his respect, at least that is what this claim was designed to accomplish. How far this objective was realised is very hard to tell since the Shehu of Bornu stayed out of politics.

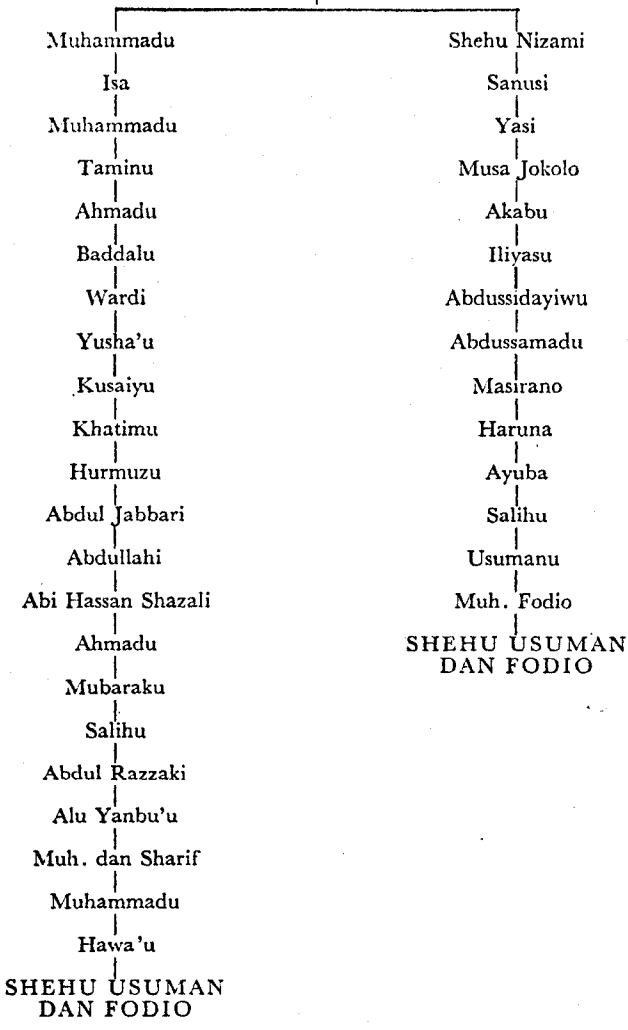
Chief Anthony Enahoro was of the opinion that these claims enabled Ahmadu Bello to become the acknowledged political leader of the north. He was relatively unknown in Nigerian politics until the NPC came into existence in 1951.

82. Ibid. (Bello). P.II

LINEAGE

This table shows my descent on two sides of my family thus¹:

THE HOLY PROPHET
FADIMATU
HASSAN



¹ I have used the Hausa form of these names as it will thereby be the clearer to my readers in West Africa.

Airing his views on Ahmadu Bello's claims, Chief Enahoro said:

"A new name in Nigerian politics was Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto, a Native Authority official from the Royal House of Sokoto who claimed direct descent from the Prophet Mohammed through his celebrated grandfather, Othman dan Fodio, the nineteenth century Arab-Fulani conqueror of a large part of what is now Northern Nigeria.

Ahadu Bello was the leader of the new ministerial group and when three years later he was elected President General of the Congress (NPC), he became the acknowledged political leader of the North." 83

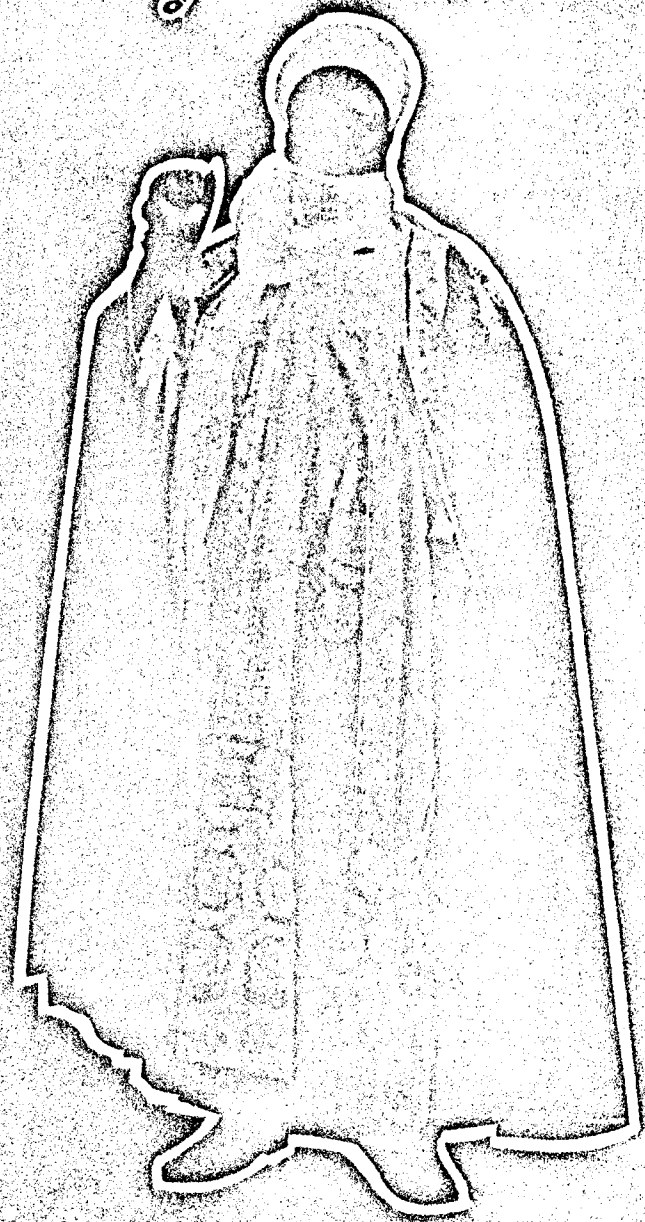
Ahadu Bello believed in doing things in a grand way. His evening meals were usually taken daily with the ministers, government civil servants, and other luminaries who regularly showed up at his house (indeed, prolonged absence was a matter for adverse comment), and sat on the floor, often around large bowls of food they shared, in a manner strongly reminiscent of dan Fodio and his followers.⁸⁴

He carried himself like a monarch. The Sardauna's dress was generally a gown of exquisite fabric, an elaborately brocaded cloak, crowned with a high turban.

83. Op. Cit. (Enahoro; Fugitive Offender.). P.106.

84. Op. Cit. (Whitaker). P.349.

My Life



6

SIR AHMADU BELLO
THE SARDAR NA OF SOKOTO

He was not only proud and impatient but believed that God entrusted him with the leadership of Nigeria. These facts came to light when he observed:

"They say that I am proud and impatient. I am certainly proud, for I have much to be proud of, and not the least the trust that God has given me to lift up our people from their primitive conditions into the light of life and the happiness of contentment.

But I am not proud in the arrogant sense, for I know that I am merely an instrument carrying out God's will and pleasure." 85

It seems obvious that what Ahmadu Bello has been trying to do is to make sure that he left no stone unturned in his efforts to regain legitimacy and external verification he must have in order to become an acclaimed national leader. He seems to have lost all these when he indulged himself in tribal politics. His style of politics which also included arrogant statements lost him many admirers in the south as well as in some parts of the north.

By claiming that God entrusted him with the leadership of Nigeria, he was trying to place himself above opposition, for anyone who opposed him would in a sense be disobeying God. His political opponents refused to accept this theory.

85. Op. Cit. (Bello)., P.238.

THE SUMMARY OF PHASE III:

The Nigerian nationalists led by Dr. Azikiwe of the NCNC and Obafemi Awolowo of the Action Group and Sir Ahmadu Bello of the NPC organized their followers into full-fledged political actions. They challenged the British in their political control of Nigeria, and finally forced them to grant Nigeria political independence in 1960.

In course of doing this, the nationalists undermined both the traditional system as well as the colonial system. They paid lip-service to the parliamentary system of government for they failed to follow the rules and regulations governing the system. Their failure in this regard is due to the fact that the elections were neither free nor fair.

Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Chief Awolowo and Sir Ahmadu Bello who emerged as the foremost Nigerian nationalists had irreconcilable views about the direction Nigerian politics should go. Ahmadu Bello was far more conservative than Dr. Azikiwe and Chief Obafemi Awolowo. He cautioned gradualism. For instance, he vehemently opposed the motion calling on the British to grant Nigeria political independence in 1956. In his opposition to this motion he said:

"It is our resolute intention to build our development on sound and lasting foundations so that

"they will be lasting..... With things in their present state in Nigeria, the Northern Region does not intend to accept the invitation to commit suicide." 86

Besides disagreeing on key political issues, the three leaders faced challenges in their respective regions. These challenges compelled them to write their autobiographies in order to convince their supporters as well as their opponents that they descended from ruling families.

If one were to compare and contrast their autobiographies with that of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, one would discover a great deal of difference. Dr. Nkrumah was born in the village of Nkroful in Nzima around mid-day on a Saturday in mid-September, 1909.⁸⁷

Unlike the Nigerian leaders, Dr. Nkrumah maintained that he was of humble origin from a very poor village. On his birth, village and his father's occupation, he said:

"My birth was of very little interest to the villagers. whilst I can claim to fall into the pattern of things by being born on a Saturday and bearing the name of Kwame, it is surely disheartening that I was the first and only child of my mother and am therefore, according to tradition, less bright than average!"

86. Ibid. (Bello). P.II9.

87. Op. Cit. (Nkrumah). P.I.

"Nkroful is a typical West African village composed of mud and wattle houses and bamboo compounds. The ground is high and stony leading down via a steep escarpment to a stream on one side and to a swampy lake on the other.

I lived there with my mother until I was nearly three years old when we left to join my father who was a goldsmith in Half Assini." 88

The British colonialists undermined the authority of the traditional rulers in Ghana just as they did in Nigeria. That being the case, Dr. Nkrumah chose a different method of attaining political power in Ghana which the Nigerian leaders avoided. His method became known as "colonial prison graduate." The colonial prison graduate system worked for Nkrumah in Ghana as well as for some of his colleagues. It also worked for Jomo Kenyatta and his colleagues in Kenya. Again in India, it worked for Mahatma Gandhi.

Jomo Kenyatta who was once branded the "leader of darkness and death" by the British was released from prison as a national hero, and became the unchallenged leader of his country to this day.

88. Ibid. (Nkrumah). Pp. 3-4.

In India for instance, the judge sentenced Gandhi for six years in jail in 1922. His crime was that he stood by his people in demanding their political freedom. He made some speeches which the British considered seditious. One of such speeches went as follows:

"How can there be any compromise whilst the British lion continues to shake his gory claws in our face? The rice-eating, puny millions of India seem to have resolved upon achieving their own destiny without further tutelage and without arms.....

The fight that was commenced in 1920 is a fight to the finish." 89

The Nigerian leaders failed to take stands on national issues that would have made either one of them a true national hero. The Zikist National Movement offered Dr. Azikiwe the rare opportunity to become a political martyr by going to jail and thus become a member of the colonial prison graduate club as well as a national hero. He turned down the opportunity and instead abandoned his supporters to their fate. Jomo Kenyatta on the other hand suffered with his people and so became a national hero.

Who would blame Nigerians for not handing their destiny to the men who would not fight for what they believed in, and would abandon their friends in the time of need?

89. Fischer, Louis. Gandhi, His Life and Message for the World.
The New American Library Inc., New York.,
1954., P.72.

CONCLUSION:

Nigeria is an example of a nation in crisis.

Nigeria's crisis is political in nature which due to negligence, has resulted in military coup. This study is designed to deal with certain aspects of this crisis. The focus is on political leadership, with legitimacy and external verification as the key variables.

This study is an application of a visionary historicism which aims at offering a new way of looking at the political crisis in Nigeria. This new approach calls for the cultivation of an intense communion with history.

Colonialism encouraged a chaotic rejection of the "ancestral" sophisticated political systems of the Nigerian people. The colonialists along with the missionaries waged a relentless war against the traditional kingmakers simply because they mistook the practice of consulting with the spirit of the ancestors before choosing a leader, for idolatry. If this were so, why do Christians pray to the so called saints to intercede on their behalf, especially the Roman Catholics?

Some experts believe that the causes of Nigerian political crises were entirely contemporary--- tribalism, nepotism, bribery and corruption.

They deny that these crises have anything to do with history. This study believes without any doubts that history has a part to play in these crises.

Decades of very complex exploitation by the British colonialists coupled with the type of education which some Nigerian leaders received from the missionary schools, did a lot to undermine the traditional political system. Obafemi Awolowo narrated how under the leadership of his father, a group of young Christians got together, and decided to destroy the shrine and the idol of Oluwaiye.^I

THE NATIONALISTS:

The Nigerian nationalists saw the British parliamentary democracy introduced by the colonialists as a system designed to perpetuate the British imperialism in Nigeria. The British did not introduce one man one vote system. Instead they introduced the indirect rule system also known as the electoral college system. By this system, voters elect delegates who would then elect from amongst themselves those who would represent the nation at the federal level.

The nationalists rejected this system out of hand claiming that it limited the people's right to choose their own leaders.

I. Awolowo, Obafemi. Awo, The Autobiography of Chief Awolowo.

Cambridge University Press, Cambridge,

1960., P.22.

However, in the elections of 1951, they compromised their principles and went along with the colonialists. Beyond that, they ignored all the rules and regulations that would have made free and fair elections possible. Thus they helped to deny the people the limited opportunity which was granted them by the colonialists in choosing their own leaders.

As true nationalists who believed that the British were trying to prolong their colonialism in Nigeria, they would have stood firm in their belief and refused to compromise their principles. By going through the rituals of elections, they made a mockery of parliamentary electoral system as a legitimate system of choosing political leaders.

Having succeeded in undermining the colonial system and also the traditional system, the nationalists were left with a corrupt system that was neither Western nor traditional. The result was confusion of the worst kind that finally resulted in the military coup and civil war. As one observer puts it:

"They realised their mistakes too late, and so were not able to avert the tragedies that befell Nigeria as a result of their failures." 2

2. Kitchen, Helen.

Africa Report.

The African-American Institute Inc.,
Washington D.C., March 1966, Pp.16-17.

A STABLE FUTURE:

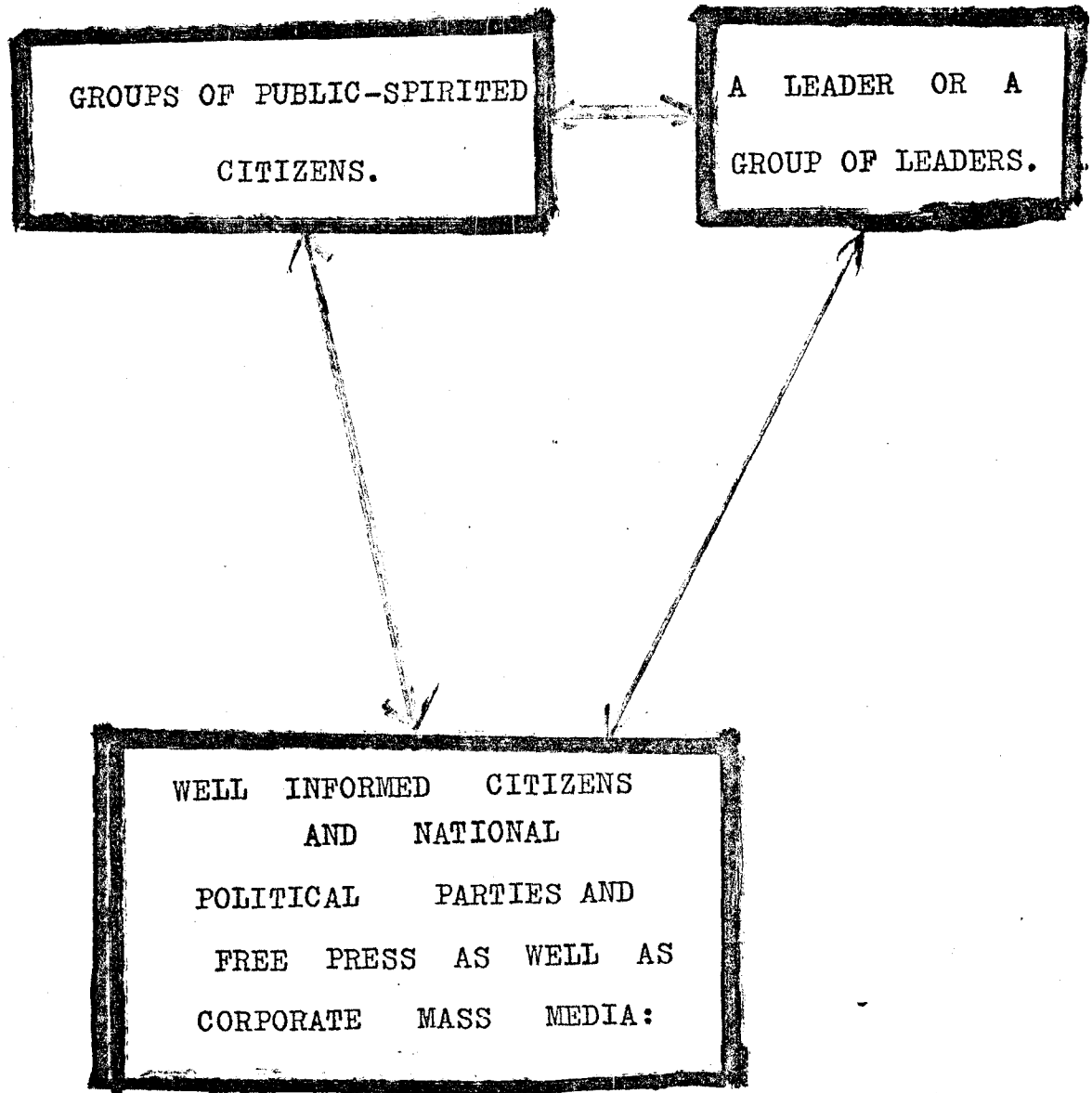
Part of what this study is trying to accomplish is to establish the fact that one of the most reassuring ways of guaranteeing a stable future for the Nigerian politics and its leadership, is for the Nigerians to be able to marry the past with the future very cleverly, by using the experiences of the present. By so doing, the Nigerian nationalists might be able to allow reality to become a part of their thinking.

History has it that Prince Oranmiyan of Ile Ife was sent by his father, the Oni of Ife under mutual agreements to Benin Empire where he fathered a son and later to Oyo Empire where he fathered another son. His two sons grew up in Oyo and Benin respectively to become kings in these two very famous and powerful empires.

Unlike the tales of inter-tribal wars which historians from Europe love to tell about life in Africa before they came in contact with the civilized white man, this act of cooperation between African monarchs could be used to show that civilized societies existed in Africa prior to the colonial era.

Nigerians need to know that their past had lots of things they could be proud of. One of such included a stable and orderly system of succession to power as well as a stable traditional system of government. Nigerian crafts and sculptures have world-wide recognition and could be found in many museums around the world.

FIGURE VII:



There is no doubting the fact that Nigeria needs no king or Emperor at this time. In that case, there would be no need for a Nigerian royal family from amongst whom a leader or leaders could be chosen as was the case in the past. Since it is generally believed that nature abhors vacuum, instead of a royal family, the leader would be chosen from among groups of public-spirited citizens.

By public-spirited citizen is meant one who places the needs of the entire nation above his, those of his family as well as above those of his ethnic group. He is also one who will do all he possibly could to guarantee that no one Region or State is dominated by another, or one ethnic group dominated by another. He would help Nigerians to remove any grounds for apprehension.

CONCRETE PROPOSALS:

Based on some facts and issues discussed in this study, these proposals might be helpful in dealing with some of the primary concerns of Nigerians and their leaders in their efforts to bring about political stability in Nigeria.

Firstly, this study proposes that all top political posts should have defined means of succession. Thus there should be limited and defined terms in office. No one should hold any form of political office for life. No one should succeed himself or herself in office. No member of parliament should serve more than three terms. Each term should not exceed a total of five years (It could be less).

Secondly, formation of political parties in Nigeria should be based on national issues and needs as well as on political ideologies but never on ethnic affiliations. In the past, the three major political parties were strongly affiliated with the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria.

As a result, the NCNC was accused of catering for the needs of the Ibos instead of paying enough attention to the needs of the whole nation. The Action Group was described as a Yoruba party and drew its major supports from the Yorubas. Equally, the NPC by its name (Northern Peoples Congress) and deeds, devoted its time and energy to meeting the needs of the people of Northern Nigeria.

The NPC rejected Nigeria's bid for independence twice claiming that the north was not ready. The first was in 1953, and the second was in 1959. They placed the needs of Northern Nigeria above the needs of the entire country. In the end, the nationalists failed to meet the needs of those they professed to cater for, hence the military coup and the bloody civil war.

Thirdly, political elections should be issue oriented rather than mere personality contests. Each candidate for leadership or any elective office must be judged by his public records and what he stands for on national issues. He or she must be of high moral calibre and a person who cannot be easily bought over by big commercial companies or different interest groups. Above all, he or she must not be given to bribery and corruption, not to mention tribalism and nepotism.

Fourthly, newspapers, radios and television and other means of mass communication should not be controlled directly or owned by the government, for it should be their duty to inform the public of any abuse of power by the government of the day.

Again, one or few individuals should not be permitted to control or own the mass media and use them for their own political advantages. Dr. Azikiwe was accused of this before.

To avoid all these, the mass media should be owned and controlled by government licensed corporations. In such instances where any mass media violates its charter, the government will have the power and duty to withdraw its licence. The media will also be permitted by law to challenge such a government action in the court of law. The decision of the highest court of the land will be final.

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