# NORTHERN IDENTITY AND THE POLITICS OF CULTURE IN NIGERIA 1945-1966

by

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Abstract

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The thesis begins with a review of the literature on Nigerian nationalism, in which it is argued that we can also speak of something called 'Northern nationalism', despite the rarity of demands for separate statehood. The period of study is defined by political events - the end of the Second World War and the military coup of January 1966 - because Northern identity was fundamentally a political phenomenon, conditioned by the important events of the day. It was, however, expressed in cultural terms.

The events described by the thesis can, it is argued, be divided into three loosely overlapping periods. In the first (c. 1945-1953), Northern identity was in a fluid state, lacking definition. In the second (c. 1953-1962), Northern nationalists asserted the primacy of Nigeria's regional boundaries over any other demands for loyalty. This was largely in reaction to an older One-Nigeria nationalism, articulated by southern intellectuals. In the third period (c. 1962-1964), Northern nationalism became more assertive and confident, dominating the Federation.

After a prologue discussing education, religion and journalism, this study re-examines the genesis of political parties in Northern Nigeria after the Second World War, before tracing the development of Northern nationalism during the period of legal and administrative reform prior to independence. It is argued that Northern identity was a composite of existing identities, which were themselves undergoing constant reinterpretation. Yet this amalgam was centred on loyalty to the emirates and a very broad conception of Hausa identity, generating contradictions for Northerners who did not share these markers. Such contradictions are discussed with reference to three specific areas: Bida town, Idoma Division and the Northern Cameroons. The thesis then looks at the development of a body of symbols that reinforced Northern identity and underlined regional autonomy, before discussing attitudes in the press, towards the end of the First Republic.

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For Katherine

## Introduction

This introduction is intended to serve three purposes. First, to give a very brief summary of events in Nigeria between the end of the Second World War and the January coup of 1966. Second, to discuss how these events have been recorded and interpreted. Third, to outline the problems addressed by this thesis.

### A brief summary of events in Nigeria between 1945 and 1966

Proposals for Nigeria's postwar constitution were agreed by the Legislative Council (LegCo) in 1945. The Richards Constitution (named after Governor Sir Arthur Richards, later Lord Milverton) came into effect in 1947, with the Northern Provinces sending their first African representatives to LegCo. These were chosen from among members of the Northern House of Assembly, who had, in the first instance, been nominated by their Native Authorities.

The National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), founded in 1944, protested against the new constitution, regarding it as device to give the impression of representation where there was none. They toured the Northern Provinces in 1946, trying to raise awareness of political matters, and win supporters in the region. The NCNC was accused of being dominated by the Igbo people. In particular, Secretary-General Nnamdi Azikiwe was accused of using his media influence to promote Igbos. Partly in reaction to this perceived imbalance, a Pan-Yoruba cultural organisation, the Ẹgbẹ Ọmọ Oduduwa (EOO) was formed in 1948. This was the forerunner of an openly political movement, the Action Group (AG) launched in 1951. In the same year, the Northern People's Congress (NPC) was declared a political party. It too had its roots in 'cultural' organisations founded in 1948. The NPC went on to be the Northern Region's governing party (and senior partner in the government of the federation) until 1966. The main regional opposition to the NPC came from the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) and the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC).

Party politics became a bigger issue after the promulgation of the Macpherson Constitution. The Constitution, named after Governor Sir John Macpherson who had arrived to replace Richards in 1948, allowed for the first elections in the North. Although parties were not officially involved, representatives in all the groups of Provinces opted to join one or other of the parties. With the emergence of three dominant parties (NPC, NCNC and AG) the Nigerian political landscape was beginning to take shape.

In 1953, representatives of the AG and NCNC made a rare show of unity in the House of Representatives (successor to the LegCo), by walking out of a debate on the possibility of Nigeria's gaining independence from Britain by 1956. The NPC members, for their refusal to support the motion, were roundly abused as they left the building. Shortly afterwards, a protest march against an AG visit to Kano, the North's commercial giant, degenerated into a riot. The scale of the disturbances sent shockwaves through the colonial system, and convinced many that more power would have to be devolved, more quickly, and with greater emphasis on regional autonomy.

Under the 1954 Lyttleton Constitution (named after the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Oliver Lyttleton) the North, East and West were all officially designated as Regions. Each had its own Governor, and a government led by a Premier. In the North, the Premier was Ahmadu, the Sardauna of Sokoto, later known as Ahmadu Bello. In the West, Obafemi Awolowo became Premier; in the East, Azikiwe. From 1954, elections to the federal and regional legislatures were separate. The former body held residual powers only; the future of Nigeria lay in its regions.

The first regional elections took place in 1956 and confirmed NPC's leadership of the North. At the same time, the party was the senior partner in a national government in Lagos, with its Vice-President, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, appointed Prime Minister in 1957. By then, Western and Eastern Nigeria had already achieved self-government. The North waited until 1959 before doing the same.

The Lyttleton Constitution marked the end of the nationalist struggle with Britain. For the next six years, the attentions of Nigerian leaders were taken away from the struggle against the colonial power and focused, instead, on the struggle to achieve the basis for a lasting co-operation after independence. This was done through a series of constitutional conferences, which ultimately settled the date of independence as 1 October 1960. Governor-General Sir James Robertson retired, to be replaced by Nnamdi Azikiwe. The new Eastern Premier was Michael Okpara.

The 1959 Federal elections were the first to use direct voting in the North. They led to a coalition government of the NPC with the NCNC, at the expense of the AG. The AG leader, Obafemi Awolowo, became the leader of the federal opposition, leaving S L A Akintola as Premier of the Western Region. When, in 1962, the two men clashed, splitting the party in the process, the NPC and NCNC were quick to exploit the situation, favouring Akintola over Awolowo. The latter was later convicted of treasonable felony.

Part of the Western Region was split off in 1963 to become the Mid-West. The new Premier, the NCNC's Dennis Osadebay, was elected the following year, despite the opposition of the NPC-backed Mid-West Democratic Front (MDF). 1964 was also the year of a calamitous Federal Election. With the NPC-NCNC alliance having broken down, two political blocs emerged: the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA) and the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA). The former was centred on the NPC, in alliance with Akintola's new Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), the MDF and some others. The latter was mainly made up of the NCNC, NEPU, UMBC and the remnants of the AG. After widespread violence and fraud, the NNA emerged victorious, but with diminished moral authority. Due to the last-minute boycott by the UPGA, parts of Lagos and the Eastern Region had to re-run elections in March 1965. Later in the year, the NNDP clung to power in the West, having won a regional election, the results of which have been described as 'utterly without

credibility'.[1] Lacking popular legitimacy, Akintola struggled to establish control. On 15 January 1966, a group of army officers staged an attempted revolution, taking the lives of Tafawa Balewa, Akintola, the Sardauna and others in the process. What was left of the civil administration agreed to hand over power to the military to stabilise the situation. The first era of military rule had begun.

**The literature**

Given Northern Nigeria's current political climate, it is hard to picture the region in 1966, when, according to B J Dudley, 'most Nigerians felt a welcome relief' at the January coup and even the Northerners among them did not rue the murder of the Sardauna.[2] As William Miles noted in the early 1980s, 'the image of the slain Sardauna for the Hausa of Nigeria may in many respects be likened to that of John F Kennedy for Americans'.[3] The presence of the Premier in the North is still strong.

That Ahmadu Bello is a political totem almost four decades after his death should be no surprise, however. Although neither he nor his party had any monopoly on Northern nationalism, the NPC was its most prominent and successful exponent and its rise to power can partly be explained by this fact. But to what extent? Put more broadly, how much did electoral success depend on the winning of an ideological war? Or was the NPC driven to power by a political alliance of elites?

The earliest studies of African nationalism showed an implicit approval of their subject. Nationalism was good; 'tribalism'[4] was bad. Tribalism was an intrinsically negative force, a force in and of itself, capable of destroying the best of political intentions. Nationalism was productive, progressive, modern. This is something of a caricature – but it is fair to say that, in the academic literature, nationalism held the moral high ground. The principal difference

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[1] Larry Diamond *Class, Ethnicity and Democracy in Nigeria: The Failure of the First Republic* (London: Macmillan, 1988) p266.

[2] B J Dudley *Parties and Politics in Northern Nigeria* (London: Frank Cass, 1968) p ix.

[3] William Miles *Elections in Nigeria: A Grassroots Perspective* (London: Lynne Rienner) pp41-2.

between 'nation' and 'tribe', however, is one of success or failure. Success means becoming the legally constituted receptacle of authority and focus of loyalty. Failure means being seen as anachronistic sentiment, an obstacle in the way of progress. What else could make the promotion of the nation so laudable, but promotion of the tribe small-minded, or parochial (and less worthy of scholarly attention)?

Big fleas have little fleas, of course. For Northern nationalists, those who insisted on Nigerian unity first and foremost were selling out. In the words of one poet, they were 'laughable fool[s]' who had become the 'enemy's servant'.[5] Those who demanded autonomy from the Northern Region, on the other hand, were the small-minded parochialists. What, for one person, seems a selfish, self-deluding attempt to usurp authority – to destroy the integrity of the nation – is, for another, a brave attempt to free the nation from the clutches of imperialism. Whether the nationalist 'project' is Biafra's secession from Nigeria, or Nigeria's exit from the British Empire, success, confirmed by popular and, eventually, international acceptance, seems to be the only crucial criterion of nationhood.

For advocates of a strong North, during most of this period, success meant regional autonomy – not secession. Yet the word 'nation' appears to have been used often enough with reference to the Northern Region to justify speaking of 'Northern nationalism'. Although some writers, such as Crawford Young, have used the term 'subnationalism' for identities which are politically mobilized without being 'firmly committed to separate statehood',[6] it seems unnecessary, in this particular case, to refer to 'nationalism' only during those brief phases when the cry of *a raba!* ('let us separate!') was heard. Northern nationalism contained a similar set of sentiments, whether its immediate concern was for statehood or for optimising the regional position within a

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[4] This is the word used at the time. The terminology of today ('ethnic separatism', 'irredentism') is no less disapproving.

[5] A Ibrahim Katsina 'Gargaɗi ga 'Yan Arewa' in *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo* 30/01/1959.

[6] Crawford Young *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin, 1976) p72.

federal framework. If we allow for a broad definition of 'nation', then there are situations in which people believe that they are furthering the interests of their nation without demanding an independent state in the process.

Usually, however, 'nationalism' connotes a pan-Nigerian approach. The first great study of this subject was J S Coleman's *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism.* Coleman discusses the emergence of national consciousness in Nigeria in terms of a series of political 'awakenings'. His sees these as happening on a regional basis, the Northern Region being the last to emerge, blinking, into the daylight of modern political activism. Coleman sees Northern politicians as essentially conservative, involved in party politics only as a brake, wanting to reform rather than overthrow the colonial state. However, the assertion that the region's awakening was 'largely a reaction to southern prodding', went too far for some.[7] Gabriel Olusanya wrote an important paper in 1967, highlighting the history of political activity in the North before the first visit of the NCNC.[8]

Another of the most important components of the literature is B J Dudley's *Parties and Politics in Northern Nigeria.* This traces the rise and fall of a generation of Northern politicians and is especially valuable because of the way it gets under the skin of the parties involved. Of particular interest is his work on the social composition of NEPU, and its problems with losing supporters and activists to the NPC. Dudley is by no means anti-Northern in his approach, but he is often critical of the way the NPC were running the region. He believed that the psychological effect of Northernization (an NPC policy discussed in Chapter Three) was 'turning the North and northerners into introverts such that nothing is good for the North which is not Northern'; an attitude Dudley refers to as 'ethnocentrism'.[9] This is a problematic term. So long as the North contains

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[7] J S Coleman *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1965) p354.

[8] G Olusanya 'Political Awakening in the North: a Re-interpretation' in *the Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* Vol IX (1) 1967. See also *JHSN* Vol IX (2) 1968 and *Journal of Asian and African Studies* Vol III (3) and (4) 1968.

[9] B J Dudley *Parties and Politics in Northern Nigeria* (London: Frank Cass, 1968) p225, p233.

many ethnic groups, it is hard to speak of Northern ethnocentrism as such – unless

a) we redefine the term to allow for an alliance of ethnicities at the 'centre', or
b) we make the sloppy assumption that Northern ethnocentrism must mean Hausa ethnocentrism.

Here, however, we run into problems of definition, since the label 'Hausa' is by no means self-explanatory or uncontested. Dudley follows J D Fage by saying that there is no Hausa tribe, as such, only people leading a 'Hausa way of life'.[10] Coleman, too, argues that the Hausa are 'basically only a linguistic group which includes a wide variety of cultures and physical types' – although he later refers to the Hausa 'tribe'.[11] But what does this distinction really mean? Despite appearances to the contrary, the labels people apply to themselves and each other are prone to surprisingly sudden change. The emergence of a 'natural' Northern identity would seem to be a part of this process. What was once understood to be 'automatic' association with a 'tribe', is now regarded – in some cases, at least – as possessing an elective element.[12] The feeling of *being* Hausa (or Tiv, Kanuri, Nupe or Idoma) is necessarily a product of the mind, first and foremost; rather than the clear-cut, 'natural' designation implied in the word 'tribe'. Most of the people, most of the time, make no active choice in what their ethnicity is. Yet to be publicly acknowledged by one's peers as a Hausa, for instance, depends on the current conception of what 'the Hausa way of life' means. It is therefore important to understand that being Hausa has meant different things at different times and places.[13]

This thesis argues that Northern identity was in effect, an alliance of existing (but perpetually renewed and reinterpreted) identities. This assertion follows up

[10] Ibid., p2.

[11] J S Coleman *Nigeria* p21, p324.

[12] See, for instance, David Anthony '"Islam does not belong to them": Ethnic and religious identities among male Igbo converts in Hausaland' in *Africa* Vol 70 (3) 2000.

on ideas advanced by John Paden in his *Religion and Political Culture in Kano*. For Paden, the key to Northern identity was the use of the Caliphal legacy to inspire loyalty to the Northern Region Government. It was being used as a 'surrogate' for ethnic loyalty, because a diverse Northern Region could never be described in 'classical ethnic terms'. Instead, there was instead an 'amalgamation ... of other types of ethnicity'.[14]

This is a useful starting point, but we are faced, once again, with the problem of terminology. The term 'ethnicity' contains a mass of ideas that have been bundled together, perhaps unhelpfully. Naturally, it is difficult to use the term without appearing to accept it as a concept – yet, to skirt around the subject by speaking of 'regionalism' is to deny the reality of the way common origins and primordial affinity with the North (however fictitious) *were* invoked. For instance, when Ahmadu Sardauna spoke to the NPC's National Conference about the party's aim 'to unify the North and make all tribes living in the region feel that they are one and the same people', he felt the need to add: 'the people of the North are in fact already one on account of inter-marriages between the tribes'.[15] Without this qualification, the statement might have been interpreted as an admission that the 'tribes' did not, as yet, feel themselves to be one and the same people. There was always a delicate balance between the need to build a nation and the need to assert that such a nation already existed.

After Nigeria's civil war, scholars viewed the country differently. Larry Diamond's *Class, Ethnicity and Democracy in Nigeria* examines the period 1960 to 1966 in terms of the *failure* of party politicians and democracy. He lays the blame on 'the deliberate, systematic effort of an emerging dominant class to accumulate wealth and to establish control over the means of production, at

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[13] See, for instance, Mahdi Adamu *The Hausa Factor in West African History* (Zaria: ABU Press, 1978).

[14] John Paden *Religion and Political Culture in Kano* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973) p180, p335.

[15] S I Nchi and S A Mohammed (eds.) *Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto: His Thoughts and Vision in His Own Words* (Makurdi: Oracle, 1999) p11.

public expense'.[16] Diamond vividly describes how the financial rewards of being a successful politician were enormous, unrivalled, and inestimably attractive to the wrong sort of person. For him, ethnicity is not an uncontrollable force, but a manipulable one. By a process of 'cultural entrepreneurship', it was possible to 'mould latent corporate feelings into a coherent identity that could be embodied in a political party, which the politician could then ride to power'.[17] But was this process as self-conscious as Diamond makes it sound? What exactly was Northern identity? Where did it come from? And how important was it that ideas of Northern identity should resonate with the region's people?

Dudley's work implies that popular absorption of Northern identity *was* important – but that NPC success was not simply an example of democracy at work. Rather, victory was achieved by, first, gaining the approval of traditional authorities and, second, using the Native Authority network to shoehorn NPC members into government. That meant deposing District Heads who failed to ensure an NPC victory in their area, refusing to give permits for political rallies and using the NA Police to break up private meetings. In cases of violent confrontation, it meant arresting only the hired thugs of the opposition. One former NEPU activist told me that 'outside the Northern bureaucracy it [NPC] had no support ... But obviously, because it was in control of power and resources, it could claim that [it had popular support] and it could repress people ... enough to make that ... the reality'.[18] Yet intimidation alone does not explain the depth to which Northern identity penetrated. Certainly, Dudley would have been the last to claim that the NPC were imposed on an unwilling population by brute force. So, how popular were the NPC? Was the winning of an ideological war important to their success?

If we accept that it was important, the overwhelming temptation is to making Northern identity seem purely a means to an end. Specifically: to use the constitutional arrangement which put a narrow majority of Nigerians within the

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[16] Larry Diamond *Class, Ethnicity and Democracy in Nigeria: The failure of the First Republic* (London: Macmillan, 1988) p41.

[17] Ibid., p42 and p55.

[18] Interview, Alhaji Abdulkadir Balarabe Musa, Kaduna, 10/5/2002.

Northern Region. If enough people in this region could be convinced to support a single political party, that party would gain control of Federal Government and resources without ever having to contest a seat in the Southern regions. So, get a diverse population to back the idea of Northern unity and gain control not only of the Region but, paradoxically, the whole of Nigeria. It sounds cunning, conspiratorial, Machiavellian. But are people ever really that rational? Were members of the educated elite in command of any such grand plan? We can make it seem so: if all we look for to explain the idea of 'Northern-ness' is an instrumental explanation, then that is all we will find. Likewise, by concentrating too heavily on the NPC government, making Northern identity the exclusive property of a party disbanded decades ago, we contribute to an environment in which history centres around the victors, while those who lose out are of interest only in their role as the vanquished. The questions of *how* and *why* Northern identity gained common currency are the most important ones in this thesis.

After the collapse of the First Republic, and the division of the North into small pieces, Northern identity ceased to have this obvious instrumental value – but it did not disappear, as a brief perusal of the internet shows. 'We are not unaware of the plot to divide the North,' writes one web-based columnist.

> The north is not like Nigeria that was artificially amalgamated by the Britons in 1914, but it's a nation that was formed by natural forces ... The components that make up the North are like that of electron, proton and neutron that make up an atom, they will always be together.[19]

It is hard to see how anything so modern as the Northern Region can ever have been seen in these primordial terms. Yet the juxtaposition between *Nigeria: the colonial invention* and *The North: a nation formed over time by 'natural forces'* is made with surprising frequency, even now that there are thirty-six states.

Around the same time as Diamond published his work, centring on political events at the federal level, A D Yahaya's examination of the way authority was exercised at the local level appeared. It focussed on Zaria Native Authority, but

[19] Mohammed Wailare on www.gamji.com, February 2001.

had relevance for the whole of Northern Nigeria. Over two decades since it was published, the book remains highly influential.[20] More recently, A M Yakubu has examined the links between the Native Authority system and the regional government in his absorbing work *An Aristocracy in Political Crisis.*[21] Starting with an examination of how the policy of Indirect Rule[22] developed, Yakubu goes on to describe the way that emirs' authority was gradually reduced, to be replaced by that of party politicians. As part of this process, he considers the importance of the first Hausa newspaper, *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo*, and provides an illuminating insight into the way in which the activities and movements of the paper's employees were restricted by a cautious and overbearing management.

Another recent publication, Jonathan Reynolds' *Time of Politics*, covers similar ground. A thoughtful piece of work, the book revisits the relationship between religion and politics in Northern Nigeria with some verve. Having been through many of the Hausa sources, and spoken to the protagonists, Reynolds is able to show how the public debate of political issues was conducted within an Islamic framework. Especially worthwhile is the chapter on the debate surrounding women's suffrage, which, he observes, has been ignored for too long. He also looks at the issue of Sufi brotherhoods in the context of Northern politics, and refines the 'oversimplified' picture presented by C S Whitaker of a 'natural alliance' between Tijaniyya and NEPU on the one hand, and NPC and Qadiriyya on the other.[23] In this aspect, his work complements (but, in scale, does not approach) that of Paden.[24]

Reynolds does much to counter the picture presented in early writing on Nigerian nationalism of Islam as essentially conservative. (Dudley, for instance,

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[20] A D Yahaya *The Native Authority System in Northern Nigeria 1950-1970: a Study of Political Relations with Particular Reference to Zaria Native Authority* (Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1980).

[21] Alhaji Mahmood Yakubu *An Aristocracy in Political Crisis: the End of Indirect Rule and the Emergence of Party Politics in the Emirates of Northern Nigeria* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1996).

[22] i.e. using 'native' rulers to administer and control local populations.

[23] C S Whitaker Jr. *The Politics of Tradition: Continuity and Change in Northern Nigeria 1946-1966.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970) p397.

[24] Paden *Religion and Political Culture.*

writes that Islam 'enjoins on its members a seemingly unconditional subservience to the ruler'.[25]) However, his focus tends to be on NEPU, and his analysis of the NPC is sometimes wide of the mark. For instance, his characterization of the NPC as the party 'of the *Masu Sarauta* [traditional office holders] for the *Masu Sarauta*' seem rather limited,[26] especially after Richard Sklar, in his 1963 book *Nigerian Political Parties*, has convincingly argued that the NPC's rise to power was underpinned by its success in reconciling three different (if overlapping) classes: the *masu sarauta*, the *attajirai* (wealthy merchants) and the newly emerging Northern educated elite. One of the party's major tasks was to gain the backing of the entrepreneurial class, which had, in the past, been accorded little in the way of status and authority.[27]

Questions of class and religion are also tackled in A M Yakubu's superb anthology of Sa'adu Zungur. An uncompromising nationalist and Islamic scholar, Zungur provided much of the intellectual justification for opposing the NPC and used his religious education to this end. Yakubu rightly feels that the collection of documents challenges the perception of Northern Muslims as unquestioningly obedient and 'incurably fatalistic'.[28]

Zungur wrote poetry in Arabic and Hausa – but he was equally comfortable in the idiom of West African nationalist journalism, having in his NCNC days been a correspondent for the *West Africa Pilot*. He appears to have been largely responsible for the most famous piece of NEPU propaganda, the *Sawaba Declaration*, which included the frequently quoted line: 'all parties are but the expression of class interests' (NEPU being the party of the *talakawa*, or commoners).[29] However, this Marxist-influenced language was the exception rather than the rule. For the most part, Zungur and Malam Aminu Kano (the

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[25] Dudley *Parties and Politics* p56.

[26] Reynolds *Time of Politics* p19.

[27] Richard L Sklar *Nigerian Political Parties: Power in an Emergent African Nation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).

[28] A M Yakubu (ed.) *Sa'adu Zungur: An Anthology of the Social and Political Writings of a Nigerian Nationalist* (Kaduna: Nigerian Defence Academy, 1999) p4.

[29] Ibid., p78.

NEPU leader, whom Yakubu calls Zungur's 'disciple') conducted most of their political campaigning within the traditions of Islam.

Was it an inability to argue from within this Islamic framework that prevented Southern-based political parties from making headway in the North? Mackintosh suggests, in his *Nigerian Government and Politics*, that 'the only explanation that carries any conviction is the simple failure of Southern leaders to study or understand the North'.[30] Both literally and metaphorically, Northerners and Southerners did not speak the same language: they lacked what has been called a 'complementarity of communication'[31] and so could not articulate their arguments in an appealing way. The implication is that this problem, of communication and differing cultural backgrounds, combined with a constitution which encouraged regionalism, made the job of regionalist political parties that much easier. If propaganda is the management of collective attitudes by the manipulation of significant symbols[32], it helps to know which symbols are significant, and how.

This idea can be taken too far. Too often, it is implied that differences in culture, especially language, are an automatic bar to good political relations, or even mutual tolerance. Even Steven Pinker, in his marvellous book *The Language Instinct*, comes close to blaming linguistic diversity itself for violent unrest. He writes that 'as a native of Quebec, I can testify that differences in language lead to differences in ethnic identification, with widespread effects, good and bad ... Once there is more than one language, ethnocentrism can do the rest'.[33] For a country like Nigeria, this suggests very bleak prospects for the future – yet antagonism between speakers of different languages is by no

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[30] John P Mackintosh *Nigerian Government and Politics* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1966) p582, quoted in Diamond *Class, Ethnicity and Democracy* p199.

[31] Karl Deutsch, quoted in Robert Melson and Howard Wolpe 'Modernization and the Politics of Communalism: A Theoretical Perspective' in Melson and Wolpe (eds.) *Nigeria: Modernization and the Politics of Communalism* (Michigan: Michigan State University, 1971) p2.

[32] Harold Lasswell, in V O Key *Political Parties and Pressure Groups* (New York: Crowell, 1946) p576.

[33] Steven Pinker *The Language Instinct* (New York: William Morrow, 1994) p241.

means universal. Nor are areas of relative linguistic homogeneity (such as Somalia) always more peaceful.

William Miles, in introducing his immensely enjoyable microstudy *Elections in Nigeria* expresses dissatisfaction at the way previous literature has been 'unabashedly elite-oriented'.[34] To some extent, that description can be applied to all the major studies produced around the 1960s, including the contributions of Coleman, Dudley, Whitaker, Sklar and Post and Vickers[35]. In all of these, the *talakawa* appear as a single group, voiceless and easily manipulated by elite groups. He also confronts assumptions that voting patterns can be determined by 'ethnic arithmetic', by looking at the political diversity of an almost totally Hausa town. Yet Miles may himself be guilty of relying too heavily on cultural explanations for political phenomena. He says, for example, that 'the notion that "all men are equal" - the underlying premise of western democratic government - has not equivalent in a society constituted and permeated by barantaka [clientage]'. But by relying on such essentialist observations as explanations for the failings of democracy in Nigeria, Miles rises little above those whom he criticizes for assuming that political allegiance is all down to 'ethnic' or 'regional' factors. If the idea of equality is new to Hausa culture, that doesn't preclude its appeal or success. Democratic values are hardly 'traditional' anywhere.[36]

There has been much debate about the relationship between elite groups and the masses in the construction of national identities. Historians such as Ernest Gellner[37] and Eric Hobsbawm[38] have tended to see nationalities as the inventions of elite groups, imposed upon the rest of society. Benedict Anderson sees the nation as 'imagined' by elite groups, making creative use of

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[34] Miles *Elections in Nigeria* p12.

[35] Kenneth Post and Michael Vickers *Structure and Conflict in Nigeria 1960-1966* (London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1973).

[36] Further, by saying that the ideas that underpin democracy 'lack conceptual as well as linguistic currency in Hausaland', Miles is applying the Newspeak principle (if you cannot say it, you cannot think it) which Pinker took apart so convincingly in *The Language Instinct*.

[37] See, for instance, Ernest Gellner *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983).

[38] See, for instance, Eric Hobsbawm *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

history.[39] Anthony Smith has warned historians against falling victim to an 'exaggerated belief in the powers of elite manipulation of the masses'.[40] Adrian Hastings, by contrast with Anderson's position that the idea of the nation is essentially a modern one, emanating from the new world, argues that the idea of a world of nations can be traced back to biblical origins and that England, the 'prototype' of the nation, could accurately be described as such well before the enlightenment period.[41]

Among recent contributions to the study of Nigeria, one of the most important has been the series headed *Nigeria Since Independence: The First 25 Years*, which began with the publication of the proceedings of a conference held in Zaria in 1985 and was added to over the subsequent years. Eventually, the series ran to eleven volumes, covering all aspects of Nigeria's first quarter-century since independence. The final contribution to this series, *Inside Nigerian History 1950-1970: Events, Issues and Sources* was published in 1995.[42] It included transcripts of discussions between some of the actors in the events described and some of the leading historians in Nigeria. It also featured papers detailing the nature of the sources available (the most useful of which is Yakubu's comparison between the National Archives, Kaduna and the Public Record Office, Kew[43]). The start-date for the project was to have been, as with the related volumes, 1960, but the convenors found that 'there was so much that was rich, and significant about the 1950s that this had to go, and the proceedings actually covered the two decades, 1950-1970'.[44] This was a good decision. It is the contention of this thesis that 1960, although a significant date

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[39] Benedict Anderson *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

[40] Anthony D Smith *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000) p25.

[41] Adrian Hastings *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[42] Yusufu Bala Usman and George Amale Kwanashie (eds.) *Inside Nigerian History, 1950-1970: Events, Issues and Sources.* (Ibadan: Presidential Panel on Nigeria Since Independence History Project, 1995).

[43] A M Yakubu 'Internal and External Sources for the Study of the Political history of the Nigerian Emirates, 1950-1960: The Significance of British and Nigerian National Archives' in ibid.

[44] Usman and Kwanashie *Inside Nigerian History* p xviii.

in Nigerians' national consciousness, was, in an empirical sense, not such a great turning point. Before that year, Nigerians were effectively running their own country. For instance, in 1958, when the Northern Regional Government held an enquiry into Ilorin Native Authority, resulting in the NA's dissolution, the reaction within Whitehall was negative – a typical remark was that most of the report was 'a catalogue of insinuations and vague condemnations apparently unsupported by any vestige of evidence' – but nothing could be done about it.[45] And after 1960, many people felt that Nigeria was still tied to Britain's apron strings, lacking true independence in economic and foreign policy. So, while any periodization has its weak points, it seems more helpful to look at 1945 to 1966 as a discrete era, rather than insisting on 1960 as the dividing line. Following Kirk-Greene, Yakubu calls this period the *zamanin siyasa*, meaning 'time of politics' in Hausa – a term drawn from contemporary usage, which avoids formulations such as 'the terminal colonial period and the period immediately after', used by George Kwanashie. *Zamanin Siyasa* has also appeared in work by Mervyn Hiskett and H A Birniwa and, most recently, Jonathan Reynolds.[46]

Publishing in Nigeria has been making a come-back in recent years, as the technology involved has become cheaper and more accessible. This does mean that the quality of printed works varies enormously, in both content and presentation – but there is still much to celebrate, particularly in the field of biography and autobiography. This thesis quotes from the memoirs of public

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[45] PRO: CO554/2015 'Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Ilorin'. R Barder, minute, 3/7/1958.

[46] See Yakubu *Aristocracy* p11 n21. A H M Kirk-Greene 'A Neglected Nigerian Nationalist' in *West Africa* 22/7/1974. Mervyn Hiskett 'The Development of Sa'adu Zungur's Political Thought from *Maraaba da Sooja* Through *Areewa Jamhuuriyaa koo Muluukiyaa* to *Waakar 'Yancii'* in *African Language Studies* XVI (1975). H A Birniwa 'Conservatism and Dissent: A Comparative Study of NPC/NPN and NEPU/PRP Hausa Political Verse from Circa 1946 to 1983. (PhD Sokoto, 1987). Jonathan T Reynolds *The Time of Politics (Zamanin Siyasa): Islam and the Politics of Legitimacy in Northern Nigeria* (San Francisco: International Scholars Publications, 1999). Glassman uses the Swahili version in discussion of events on the other side of the continent. See Jonathan Glassman 'Sorting out the tribes: the creation of racial identities in colonial Zanzibar's newspaper wars' in *Journal of African History* Vol 414, No 3 (2000) p427.

figures such as Yahaya Kwande, Jolly Tanko Yusuf, Abubakar Imam and Nuhu Bayero.[47] Shehu Shagari has also published an autobiography recently.[48]

The past few years have seen biographies of Aminu Kano, Sa'adu Zungur, Gambo Sawaba and other major figures on the left of Nigeria's political spectrum.[49] There is also the exciting prospect of the publication of Aminu Kano's diaries, by the project based at Mallam Aminu's former residence, Mambayya House, now a library and study centre attached to Bayero University, Kano.[50] In Zaria, meanwhile, the Centre for Democratic Development, Research and Training (CEDDERT) continues to publish informative sources such as the recent collection of documents relating to NEPU.[51]

The productions might not be quite so lavish, nor so meticulously edited[52] – but it seems that there may soon be as many biographies of opposition figures (and collections of documents) as of those who governed, such as Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Kashim Ibrahim and Ahmadu Bello.[53]

Among these, Paden's biography of the Sardauna stands out as a monumental work. Based on a huge number of interviews, newspaper reports and some of the archive material, *Values and Leadership* summons up something of the

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[47] Yahaya Kwande *The Making of a Northern Nigerian* (Jos: Quarhess, 1998). Jolly Tanko Yusuf and Lillian V Grissen *That We May Be One: the Autobiography of Nigerian Ambassador Jolly Tanko Yusuf* (Cambridge: William B Eerdmans, 1995). Abdurrahman Mora (ed.) *Abubakar Imam Memoirs* (Zaria: Northern Nigerian Publishing Company, 1989). Nuhu Muhammadu Bayero *My Life* (Lagos: University of Lagos Press, 1990).

[48] Shehu Shagari *Beckoned to Serve: an Autobiography* (Lagos: Heinemann, 2001).

[49] O Omoruyi *Mallam Aminu Kano and the Legacy of Grassroots Politics in Kano* (Abuja: Centre for Democratic Studies, 1991). Rima Shawulu *The Story of Gambo Sawaba* (Jos: Echo Communications, 1990).

[50] Biographies of Mudi Sipikin, Lawan 'Danbazau and Raji Abdallah and memoirs of Tanko Yakasai (all of whom are associated with the Northern Elements Progressive Union, NEPU) are forthcoming. See www.kanoonline.com.

[51] Alkasum Abba *The Politics of Principles in Nigeria: The Example of the NEPU* (Zaria: CEDDERT, 2000).

[52] Ibid., for example, (pxii) dates the start of the Second World War to 1938.

[53] Trevor Clark *A Right Honourable Gentleman: Abubakar from the Black Rock* (London: Edward Arnold, 1991). Akinjide Osuntokun *Power Broker: A Biography of Sir Kashim Ibrahim* (Ibadan: Spectrum, 1987).

atmosphere of the time as well as reproducing many primary sources in full. However, its uncritical, almost reverential, tone indicates that this is less of a history book than a celebration of the Sardauna's life. This need not be seen as a criticism. The same can probably be said of most biographies, not least Feinstein's biography of Aminu Kano.[54]

The memoirs of colonial officials are also useful sources, which, although sometimes marred by a very British flippancy, can provide helpful information, as well as eyewitness reports from a unique standpoint. They often reveal an emotional attachment to the Northern Region that does not come through in the archive materials. Far more of these autobiographies were written than were ever published, and the library catalogue at Rhodes House, Oxford, lists a large number of them.

There is still much good work emerging from Nigerian Universities, despite limitations on funds and resources. For instance, Alkasum Abba's thesis, on the political significance of NEPU, is a thorough study of the party as a whole, rather than of particular individuals within it.[55] The thesis also describes the context in which NEPU emerged – the chapter on politics in the North before the NPC is especially strong. Another comprehensive work is Kazah-Toure's MA thesis on nationalism in Zaria Province. Like Abba, Toure refers to all organised resistance to colonial rule as 'nationalism', whatever its aims or means. Although this approach is questionable, Toure does a good job of showing how the first political parties 'sprang up on the pillars of other previous anti-colonial efforts'.[56] Both men are clearly from the NEPU school of thought themselves and, in this respect, they follow in the footsteps of Ahmadu Jalingo. Jalingo, a NEPU activist turned political scientist, now at Bayero University, wrote a widely appreciated thesis on 'radicalism', at Edinburgh University.[57]

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[54] Alan Feinstein *African Revolutionary: the Life and Times of Nigeria's Aminu Kano* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension, 1987).

[55] Alkasum Abba 'The Significance of the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) in the Politics of Nigeria (PhD Zaria, 2000).

[56] Kazah-Toure 'The Development of the Nationalist Movement in Zaria Province' (MA Zaria, 1991) p409.

[57] Ahmadu Usman Jalingo 'The Radical Tradition in Northern Nigeria' (PhD Edinburgh, 1980).

Other important theses of the 1980s (also completed outside Nigeria) include those of Yusuf Turaki and Paul Chunun-Logams. Both of these discuss the Middle Belt, in far greater depth than has been possible in this thesis.[58]

The single greatest contribution to debate on the idea of 'The North' is the PhD thesis of George Kwanashie (co-editor of *Inside Nigerian History*). He describes the evolution of the Northern Provinces/Region over the course of time and shows how the British maintained policies in favour of both a 'united Nigeria' and Nigeria's existence as a series of 'self-contained and mutually independent Native-States'; this had important implications for the future. As Dennis Austin put it:

> There was always a hidden conflict, a constitutional tug-of-war, between Indirect Rule – which tended to accentuate differences within and between Regions – and the developing system of Crown Colony Government – which, in the reforms of 1922-1954 [from the opening of LegCo to the Lyttleton Constitution], had to reconcile such conflicts at the centre'.[59]

Kwanashie attacks the assumption that the British simply handed over power to a 'traditional ruling class', insisting that there was a transfer of power from one elite to another, despite the 'biological links' between the two. He writes that the new elite 'sought legitimacy by seeking to appropriate the paraphernalia of traditional authority and by affirming continuity with the past – albeit a largely invented past'.[60]

**The thesis**

The thesis begins with a prologue. This takes us through some of what happened in Nigeria before 1945, but with no pretence at being comprehensive. It attempts merely to set the scene, by looking at the pre-

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[58] Yusuf Turaki 'The Institutionalization of the Inferior Status and Socio-Political Role of the non-Muslim Groups in the Colonial Hierarchical Structure of the Northern Region of Nigeria: A Socio-Ethnical Analysis of the Colonial Legacy' (PhD Boston, 1982). Paul Chunun-Logams 'The Middle Belt Movement in Nigerian Political Development: A Study in Political Identity, 1949-1967' (PhD Keele, 1985).

[59] Dennis Austin, quoted in Richard L Sklar 'Nigerian politics in perspective' in *Government and Opposition* Vol II (4) 1967 p536.

[60] George Kwanashie 'The One-North Phenomenon in Northern Nigeria, 1900-1965' (PhD Zaria, 1992) p202.

history of Northern nationalism, with particular reference to education, religion and the press. These were heavy influences on the development of identity politics in Northern Nigeria and would continue to be so right up to the time of the first military coup, so it is well worth examining their roots.

The period studied in this thesis is defined by political events – the end of the Second World War and the military coup of January 1966 – because Northern identity was, it will be argued, fundamentally a political phenomenon. The end of the Second World War was the beginning of fundamental changes for Nigeria, as was the overthrow of the First Republic government over twenty years later. Although it can be argued that the events described in this thesis led inexorably to the Nigerian civil war, it is fair to say that the end of civilian rule was the end of an era.

The thesis is arranged according to a looser internal periodization. The first two chapters of the thesis proper describe the early years, around 1945 to 1953. During this phase, Northern identity was in a fluid state, lacking definition, only gradually developing a distinctive voice. In Chapter One, we turn to the resumption of political activism in Nigeria, which had been in a state of suspended animation during the Second World War. The chapter covers some old ground, but also provides new information about the early life of the Northern People's Congress and the speech that threw Abubakar Tafawa Balewa into the public gaze for the first time. The chapter also discusses the changes undergone by the state-owned *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo*, which was, and remains, by far the most widely read Hausa newspaper. Chapter Two follows this by looking at the alternatives to *Gaskiya*, such as they were. For both of these chapters, my knowledge of Hausa has enabled me to use material that has often been overlooked.

The second phase, from around 1953 to 1962, begins with the controversy in the House of Representatives and subsequent rioting in Kano, followed by threats of Northern secession. During these years, Northern identity became more firmly entrenched, as a defence against the spectre of southern domination. Chapter Three tackles the huge changes undergone by the North

in the run-up to independence, dealing with the solutions adopted by the regional government to three sets of problems: the lack of Northerners in senior positions; the concentration of power in the hands of emirs; and the confusion arising over the different codes of law in place.

Chapter Four goes back to the pages of the Hausa press, looking at *Gaskiya* during this phase, from around 1953 to 1962, characterised by a defensive 'North for the Northerners' attitude. It concludes that, although *Gaskiya* promoted the idea of strong regions, and was firmly pro-North, it rarely contained out-and-out propaganda during this period.

The next chapter attempts to escape the temptation to look at Northern identity only where it is strongest, by concentrating on people other than the Hausa Muslims who were the NPC's core constituency. It begins with a study of NEPU activity in Bida (capital of the Nupe emirate), moves on to the Idoma Division of Benue Province and ends up in the Northern Cameroons. Along the way, the chapter examines the activities of the Commission appointed to look into the fears of minorities.

Chapter Six looks at attempts to unite Northerners around a common set of symbols, as if the region were a nation-state. It also discusses the development of a Northern civil society, and of a political discourse that managed to be vigorously pro-Northern without suggesting plans of secession.

Chapter Seven, the final chapter, returns once more to *Gaskiya*, this time as a lens through which to view the increasing dominance of the North in Nigerian affairs which characterises our third period, from the 1962/3 census through to the demise of the First Republic. It argues that the paper's more strident and populist tone from this point on is reflective of a greater confidence at the heart of Northern nationalism.

While no study of this nature can ever hope to be comprehensive, it is hoped that this work will fill a gap in the existing literature, and answer some of the questions posed in this introduction. How was the idea of the Northern 'nation'

constructed? What political purposes did it serve? What was Northern identity really about?

## Prologue: the generation of an elite

On the 8th of December 1965, the guest of honour at Sokoto Provincial Secondary School's Diamond Jubilee celebrations was its most famous former pupil, the Premier of Northern Nigeria and Sardauna of Sokoto, Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello.[61] 'It was the last time many of us saw him alive,' remembered Jean Boyd.[62] Within six weeks, the Premier had been assassinated, and Nigeria's first period of military rule had begun.

The Premier's speech had been well received, and it took on a new poignancy after his death. In it, he urged the pupils present to think of the future:

> This is not now the only school in Northern Nigeria ... This school is now an integral part of Sokoto history, a history rich in Islamic culture and full of great heroes. Be part of that culture and emulate the examples of our great men of the past, so that students of the future may remember you with pride ... Large cars and large gowns do not necessarily make a man who will be respected by others. You have to possess qualities of leadership and before you can become leaders, you have to learn how to follow and obey leaders.[63]

The Premier had learnt obedience at the hands of his family, his elders and his teachers. In his speech, Bello gave credit to one of those teachers, who had great influence on him in his formative years: Umaru Nagwamatse. Nagwamatse, who had died earlier that year, aged eighty-eight, had taught Ahmadu first at Sokoto, when it was a primary school run by the Native Authority, and then at Katsina Training College. As a youth, Nagwamatse had been witness to the British conquest of Sokoto.[64] Two years later, he had enrolled in the school, founded by Major Alder (later Sir John) Burdon, the

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[61] For biographical details about Ahmadu Bello, Bukar Dipcharima, Abubakar Imam, Sa'adu Zungur and Aminu Kano, see subsequent chapters and glossary.

[62] RHO: ALLEN, AR Mss Afr. S. 2233. Jean Boyd, 'Barewa' a paper (later published as 'Barewa: A Bastion of Excellence' in *Africa Events* March 1986) p42.

[63] Speech by Ahmadu Bello at the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of Sokoto Provincial Secondary School, 8/12/1965. I am grateful to the principal of Nagarta College for allowing me to take notes from a copy of the speech.

[64] Obituary of Umaru Nagwamatse in *Nigerian Citizen* 25/9/1965. Quoted in John N Paden *Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto: Values and Leadership in Nigeria* (Zaria: Hudahuda, 1986) p78.

Resident of Sokoto, in May 1905. As the Premier said, it was the first government-run school in Northern Nigeria.[65]

Nagwamatse was such a success that he was taken on as a trainee teacher, under the guidance of Malam Dorugu, whose life has been documented elsewhere, by Kirk-Greene and Newman.[66] Born near Daura, Dorugu was taken to England as a young man by the explorer Heinrich Barth, whose travelling companion, Overweg, had redeemed the lad from slavery. On his return to West Africa, having mastered the English language, Dorugu worked as an interpreter for various explorers, soldiers and administrators, before taking up his appointment at the new school in Sokoto.

For reasons unknown, the Sokoto Gazetteer (prepared for the benefit of colonial administrators between the wars) asserted that the school was a failure.[67] This, perhaps, is the origin of some mistakes and omissions in the literature since then. Gbadamosi, for instance, suggested that the school had to be closed down for lack of patronage[68], while Hubbard, more recently, has described it as 'tiny, feeble, and short-lived'.[69] In fact, the school, now known as Nagarta College, Sokoto, continues to prosper.

Ahmadu Bello was well aware of the school's long history as he delivered his speech to the gathering. 'When I first attended this school as a boy of eight it was a fairly recent innovation,' he remarked. 'Today it has reached maturity and has already acquired stature in the history of Sokoto of which we can be

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[65] NAK: Sokprof 2/2 315/1905 'Report Number 25 on Sokoto Province for months of May and June 1905'. Other documents relevant to the school, referring to Dorugu and Nagwamatse, may be found in the Sokprof series.

[66] A H M Kirk-Greene and Paul Newman *West African Travels and Adventures* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1971).

[67] WJBHAC: *Sokoto Gazetteer* (Government Publication, date unknown).

[68] G O Gbadamosi 'The Establishment of Western Education among Muslims in Northern Nigeria 1896-1926' in the *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* (Vol IV, 1, Feb 1967) p98.

[69] James P Hubbard *Education Under Colonial Rule: A History of Katsina College, 1921-1942* (Oxford: University Press of America, 2000) p56. A manuscript concerning the history of the school is available at RHO: ALLEN, A R Mss Afr. S. 2233. However, the manuscript is somewhat short on details because its author was evidently unable to consult the quarterly provincial at NAK.

justifiably proud. When we arrived as small and somewhat nervous boys of eight and nine, we little realised at that time how important our entry to this school would turn out to be and we little thought that many of us would one day return as leaders of an independent country'.

The men who would lead Northern Nigeria through the *zamanin siyasa* ('era of politics') to self-government had, in the majority of cases, progressed from their nearest Native Authority school to the only institution in the Northern Provinces providing secondary education: Katsina College, founded in 1921.[70] James P Hubbard has written a comprehensive history of the College that generated this new elite.

Hubbard identifies two broad streams of thought within the colonial administration with regard to education. Major Burdon, founder of the Sokoto School, and Hans Vischer, who was charged with setting up an education system for the North, wanted to provide 'education along native lines'. Clearly, neither man sought the continuation of the status quo; the policy meant 'adopting African content rather than form'.[71] Others stressed the importance of emulating British practices. A high proportion of education officers in the North had received their own education at public schools and then Oxbridge, and they tended to draw on that experience.

What Hubbard's work shows very well is that neither side really won. Although it appears that, between the wars, there was a movement in government policy for Katsina College, 'from northern to British models', many initiatives to achieve this were shelved with the onset of the depression. In any case, he remarks, 'the change was never more than a shift in emphasis'.[72]

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[70] The College was, at first, known as Katsina Training College. In 1930, it became the Higher College, Katsina. In 1938, it moved to Kaduna, to become Kaduna College, before changing to Government College, Zaria, in 1949. Today, it is called Barewa College. Throughout this thesis, it is called Katsina College, for the sake of simplicity.

[71] Hubbard *Katsina College* p27.

[72] Ibid., p71.

Burdon's school had been set up with the specific remit of teaching the sons of chiefs. The idea was that the Native Authority system should benefit from more enlightened rulers and functionaries – an idea that retained its potency in Northern policy-making throughout our period. Clearly, education had to be exclusive in some sense: access was necessarily limited, if only by the funds available. However, British policy continued to concentrate on the children of the emirate royal families. Famously, some Emirs, told that they must send one of their sons to the new school, sent one of their slaves' sons instead – this is how Abubakar Tafawa Balewa got as far as he did. But, overwhelmingly, they complied. Soon, there was a massive overlap between the 'educated elite' and the 'traditional elite'. As politics swept Northern Nigeria at the start of our period, it became clear that the school's graduates had higher ambitions than the Native Authority system. The College had, by then, produced people capable, not only of working for their NA, but of going into the service of the regional and federal governments, and, indeed, of commanding them.

Elsewhere in Africa, one of the crucial parts of the decolonisation story was the transfer of power from 'traditional leaders', whose qualifications necessarily included their genetic inheritance, to a new generation of 'commoners', whose only qualification was the ability to gain public support, by any means. The distinction between these two groups was never watertight; but nowhere is it less applicable than in Northern Nigeria. Authority was not passed from the conservative Islamic elite to a class of western-educated youth, but, generally, to those with a foot in both camps – the perfect example being the Sardauna. In a twin development, the tendency since the first generation of Katsina alumni came to maturity has been for appointments to chieftaincy positions to be given to the candidate whose credentials best combine blue blood and book-learning.

**Language policies in schools**

When the Sardauna attended primary school in Sokoto, what few books were available were in Hausa, in the Latin script known as 'boko'. One of the striking things about the early years of that school, however, was that some classes were in English, taught by Dorugu and a clerk from the Gold Coast named Moses. Burdon himself was wary; he feared that the teaching of English could

create a class of 'disgruntled intellectuals',[73] as had happened in India. So why did he choose English for the school that was under his personal control? It seems to have been little more than an experiment. In the long run, British policies overwhelmingly favoured the continued spread of Hausa as a lingua franca. Only at the very top – i.e. Katsina – was English used.

There are some scattered exceptions to this general rule. For example: one head teacher in Igbirra Division in 1940, insisted that, since there was no single language spoken by a majority of his pupils, and they therefore had to be taught in a foreign tongue, English would be the logical choice. 'We want Southern Education and civilization,' he wrote to the Kabba Province Education Officer. 'We do not want our children to be taught Hausa'.[74] The aspiration to be part of the 'Southern' civilization across the border seemed to be shared by parents, and, since the teacher was qualified to teach English, a concession was made. Elsewhere, NA schools continued to use Igbirra for the early years before transferring to Hausa[75]. This was in contrast to that area's mission schools, with their headquarters in the Western Provinces, which used Yoruba and English.

For the most part, the 'Southern' approach was anathema to the Northern administration. The Senior Education Officer put the case for Hausa in the following terms:

> The lack of any satisfactory African lingua franca in the South, and the absence of any clear planning in the past, have led to the deplorable position in which the people as a whole, after two or three generations of education, have no means of literary self-expression in *any language*.
> ... I believe that this state of affairs can be avoided in the North, at least as far as Hausa-speaking areas are concerned; but not if the matter is left to the undirected wishes of the children and their parents ... who cannot possibly know the issues involved...
> The prestige of the vernacular depends largely on our attitude towards it. Hausa was not considered a suitable vehicle for literary expression before we came, so

[73] J A Burdon, quoted in P K Tibenderana *Sokoto Province Under British Rule, 1903-1939* (Zaria: ABU Press, 1988) p187.

[74] NAK: DEN631 'Medium of Instruction'. Quoted in Education Officer, Kabba Province to DO Igbirra Div. 20/8/1940

[75] Kabba Province began a policy change in favour of English in the 1950s.

> authors wrote in bad Arabic. Without our intervention, they would now have no other means of expressing themselves except in bad English (as in the South).[76]

This attitude explains something of the efforts invested in developing a literary tradition in Hausa, with subsidised newspapers, novels and poetry collections.

In a culturally plural society, few education issues can be so emotive as the choice of a medium of instruction. Although the British tended to favour Hausa, this was still a highly contentious issue, even within the administration. R E Ellison, Senior Education Officer of Bornu Province, for instance, held out in supporting the Kanuri language. In 1944, he wrote unofficially to twenty-five teachers and former pupils to canvas their views.[77] In doing so, he expressed a belief that Kanuri literature had been neglected in the rush to promote the status of Hausa. The last (notoriously dry) Kanuri textbook had been published almost a decade earlier, but the Gaskiya Corporation had promised to do more after the war, if demand was high enough. Did the Bornu intelligentsia want to see this happen, or would they prefer the situation as it was? If there was something rhetorical about this question, the next was rather more serious: if a language other than Kanuri was to be learnt, should it not be English? Ellison felt that this was worth considering, 'especially when we consider the limitless extent of cheaply produced English literature and the consequences of the "Ibo invasion" which are likely to become progressively more of a problem after the war'. But that left the problem of where to find trained teachers.

The responses came quickly. Muhammad Ngileruma (later Nigeria's representative at the United Nations) suggested that the real reason Kanuri foundered was that Europeans found it difficult to learn. They all had to pass their Hausa exams to get promotions, but few stayed in one place long enough to learn another language. Umar Yale suggested this indifference explained

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[76] W S Rankin, Senior Education Officer, to SNP 11/4/1944. NAK: DEN631 'Medium of Instruction'. Emphasis in the original.

[77] NAK: DEN631 'Medium of Instruction'. R E Ellison to Bukar Dipcharima and others 30/6/1945. Replies cited are from Muhammad Ngileruma 9/8/1945, Umar Yale n. d., Mallam Kaumi 14/7/1945, Bukar Dipcharima 10/8/1945, Othman Idrisa 12/7/1945, and Ibrahim Yaleri 7/7/1945. Some (possibly all) of the letters were originally in Kanuri, translated by Ellison. NAK: DEN631 'Medium of Instruction'.

why no Kanuris had prepared materials for publication: 'a man does a thing for which his seniors bless him'.[78]

The question of English received significant attention. Many echoed the suggestion of Mallam Kaumi that Kanuri be taught first, then English, and finally Hausa (as a foreign language), while Bukar Dipcharima, to whom we shall return in Chapter One, preferred to drop Hausa altogether. 'It is expecting too much from children to master the 3 R's and learn Hausa at the same time,' he argued. 'If the Education department is willing to take all this trouble, is it not wiser to teach English, rather than Hausa?' English, he continued, apart from being the official language, had a greater literature. Kanuri literature, on the other hand, had not been allowed to show its 'immensity' in printed form. 'We must not forget the fact that the Kanuris have a longer history and [greater] culture than the Hausas', he wrote. Dipcharima was also critical of recruitment practices. Parents were given 'glowing descriptions of what their boys will be if they get European education. When these boys fail to live up to these high expectations both they and their parents become angry...' Fear of such reaction was the only reason Hausa stayed on the curriculum in the first place, he wrote.

There were also many practical issues. Othman Idrisa wisely pointed out that teaching Kanuri at schools would have little value if things like tax receipts, NA correspondence and labels on medicine bottles were not written in that language. And Kanuri, a language with great regional variation, had no 'standard' form, and a problematic orthography that had been designed for the convenience of foreigners (if it had been otherwise, the letter ɘ, cause of legion printing errors, need never have been included). An education officer was later to report that neither children in classes III and IV *nor their teachers* were able to read a simple passage correctly.[79]

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[78] Or, as Ibrahim Yaleri put it, 'a servant must try to have the same interests as his master'.

[79] U M Bozman, Woman Education Officer, Bornu Province, 'Memorandum' 1952. The memo concerns the use of Kanuri in schools and paints a bleak picture.

Alone among the correspondents in being self-critical was Ibrahim Yaleri. Written Kanuri had failed to progress, he wrote, because 'none of the educated Kanuri take the least interest in the language. Truly this is a shameful thing for all of us'.

The minutes of a Bornu Literacy Society meeting confirm this range of views among the intelligentsia. A resolution was passed that Kanuri should be taught before Hausa is introduced, but that English should replace Hausa as soon as possible.[80]

Armed with the results of his survey, Ellison wrote to the Assistant Director of Education to complain of the 'Hausafication' (cf Adamu's 'Hausanization'[81]) that was spoiling Bornu. The 'national language' was suffering: he had even heard traditional children's games being played using Hausa words. Was this the tip of the iceberg? '[R]acial individuality and national pride are factors which it would be dangerous to eliminate,' he wrote. 'Their fostering, however, should not imply merely a blind and slavish devotion to the past'.

Ellison left the Education Service the following year. His replacement firmly believed that Bornu's educated elite saw no value in written Kanuri and only read Hausa.[82] The abject failure of *Albishir*, the news-sheet launched in the 1950s, seems support this view. Ellison's fears, too, have been partly realised: schools continued to teach both languages, usage of Hausa among Kanuri people continued to rise and Kanuri, while still very much a living language, has never been the basis for a vibrant and popular written literature to rival Hausa.

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[80] Bornu Literary Society, *Minutes* 4/8/1945. NAK: DEN631 'Medium of Instruction'.

[81] Mahdi Adamu *The Hausa Factor in West African History* (Zaria: ABU Press, 1978).

[82] F D Hibbert, Senior Education Officer, Bornu, minuted on 9/9/1952 that he could not understand why people persisted with Kanuri. 'It seems to be in much the same position as Gaelic in Scotland – the language of the people but not used in schools. I doubt if the Scots would admit that as a result of this they are educationally backward. In Wales on the other hand the pendulum has swung in the other direction and Welsh is used in Primary Schools. The solution seems to be to go all out for English using Kanuri readers only in the very early stages'.

This situation began to change during our period, but only slowly. The 1940 Chiefs Conference expressed concern that too many positions in government service were going to southerners and suggested that English be taught in elementary schools. Governor Bourdillon ordered the extension of English instruction in 1943.[83]

There is something of a contradiction between the promotion of Hausa outside Katsina College and the use of English within it. The rules on this were so strict that any student heard speaking their own language was made to wear a badge imprinted with the words: 'I spoke the vernacular today'.[84] However, the education officers rightly reasoned that, if a job was worth doing, it was worth doing properly. As a result, throughout the *zamanin siyasa*, Katsina Alumni remained conspicuously proud of their English, and promoted the language as far as they thought practical – which was not so very far. Hausa was given a further boost by its use in the Northern Houses of Assembly, interchangeably with English, with the official transcripts being published in both languages. Hausa remained the main language of communication between the government and people and it achieved the effective, but never official, status of the region's national language.[85]

**Western and Islamic influences**

As Toyin Falola has remarked, an assumption runs through much of the literature concerning the political class in Northern Nigeria that 'the legacies of the Sokoto Caliphate of the nineteenth century and of Islam are the most crucial in the understanding of this elite'. Falola suggests that more attention be given to western education as a formative influence, emphasizing the fear of southern domination. In the 1950s, he says, the Northern intelligentsia 'began to see education as a way to modernize, even if aspects of Islam would be compromised'.[86]

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[83] Hubbard *Katsina College* 129.

[84] Jean Boyd, 'Barewa'.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Toyin Falola's review of James P Hubbard *Education Under Colonial Rule: A History of Katsina College, 1921-1942* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000) in *Journal of African Historical Studies* Vol 42, No 2, 2001 p334.

There is much truth in these observations. However, with regard to the historiography, it is worth noting, but not essentialising, a general tendency towards difference in outlook between commentators (not necessarily historians) who are from Northern Nigeria and those from outside. Each side first notices the deviations from its own way. Thus, from the viewpoint of an (non-Muslim) outsider, the defining characteristics of the political elite were the Islamic/Northern mores (the dress, the prayers, the particular moral code they followed), while from the Northern viewpoint, the class is defined by its deviations from the norm (e.g. the use of western medicine, *boko* education, playing polo). This crops up in the sources, and in turn rubs off on the scholarship. Northern historians tend to view the British as disrupters of tradition rather than supporters of it.[87]

Further, perhaps the Islamic/Western dichotomy is too simple. What was imposed on the western educated elite was a British interpretation of what 'Islamic tradition' was supposed to mean. At Katsina, for instance, students had to show proper regard for persons in authority, by taking their shoes off and prostrating (*sunkuyawa*) before their superiors. They learnt Arabic and were given religious instruction. They wore local costume: the *babbar riga*, or 'big gown', later replaced by a less ostentatious tunic. The school observed all Muslim holidays and festivals. The buildings, too, were along 'native lines', erected using the locally-available technology and building materials, to a specification supplied by the school. The shape of the school was inspired by the needs of a 'western' educational establishment; the style was unmistakeably Hausa. Although built from mud, the buildings had glass windows and some running water.

The westernisation of Islamic education (and the Islamisation of western education) is well exemplified by the Kano Law School, founded in 1934 to train personnel for the North's Islamic courts. The school, modelled on Gordon

[87] See, for instance, Sabo Albasu 'From Caliph to Sultan: the Changing Role and Function of the "Caliph" of Sokoto after British Conquest' in A M Kani and K A Gandi (eds) *State and Society in the Sokoto Caliphate* (Sokoto: Usumanu Danfodiyo University, 1990).

College, Khartoum, taught all aspects of Islamic Law, as well as other subjects, such as geography and history. Sheikh Abubakar Gumi, recalled that his decision not to attend Katsina College was met with consternation. 'Former classmates, friends and education officials all came to speak to me. How could you refuse the chance to have the best education and the best job in the country[?], they would ask'.[88] Years later, after the School had expanded in size and scale to become the Kano School of Arabic Studies, he returned as a teacher, under the direction of Mervyn Hiskett. Gumi later became the North's Senior Islamic Judge.

The rather conservative brand of Islam that prevailed in the North, with its emphasis on obedience and social stratification, was not imposed by the emirate system on its own, but was supported and conditioned by the British. There was, for instance, a constant refrain from political officers that the Islamic Courts provided a better and more comprehensible system of justice than English law ever could – yet they were barred from sentencing people to have a hand cut off or to be stoned to death. And the British were obviously not keen on the more radical forms of the religion, turning a blind eye to repression of 'heretics'. So, not only is the 'Islamic' side of the coin influenced by non-Muslims, but the 'Western' side of the coin is influenced by non-Westerners, inasmuch as there were Northern schoolteachers, who, within the limits afforded them, promoted those aspects of 'Western' education they liked and rejected those they did not.

There were many reasons behind the choice of Katsina as the site for the College. The city was, historically, a centre of learning; it was among the smaller of the major emirates, so the college was less likely to become the focus of political competition; the buildings would be cheap to construct there and land easy to acquire. Perhaps the most intriguing reason, however, is that Katsina was a hundred miles from the nearest railway. The pupils, therefore, could imbibe the atmosphere of one of Hausaland's oldest cities, free from the 'exotic' influences of the rest of Nigeria.

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[88] Sheikh Abubakar Gumi with Ismaila Tsiga *Where I Stand* (Ibadan: Spectrum, 1992) p29.

As Hubbard observes, the way that the British saw Northern Nigeria was an important part of its political development. 'While the British concentration on maintaining political control of the Northern Provinces was producing the Native Administration system, it was generating an image of the Northern Provinces in the minds of British officials,' he notes. 'To most British officials in the Northern Provinces, including many Education Officers, the emirates were Northern Nigeria. The Northern Provinces were a land populated by Muslims, by Fulani and Hausa'.[89]

**The education of non-Muslims**

The non-Muslim experience of western education was fundamentally different. For the most part, this meant mission education. With the Bible as the central textbook, translated into local languages as well as English, mission schools had been present in the North from the earliest times. As early as 1904, Walter Miller of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) was able to report that each of the Society's five stations had a school attached.[90]

Government education for non-Muslims was limited, especially at the higher levels. Only in 1928 was a teacher-training college founded at Toro, near Bauchi. Education at Toro is said to have been of a lower academic standard than obtained at Katsina.[91] Any students who converted to Islam during the course of their studies would be expelled from the school.

There was some concern that this approach might have negative social effects. The Education Department circulated a questionnaire asking its Provincial Officers for their opinions on the possible consequences of current policy,

[89] Hubbard *Katsina College* p156.

[90] NAK: SNP 7 2372/1904 'Mr Ball C. M. S. Starting of School for Mallams at Bida'. The five stations were Lokoja, Gbebe, Kpata, Akabe and Bida.

[91] See P Chunun-Logams 'The Middle Belt Movement in Nigerian Political Development: A Study in Political Identity 1949-1967' (PhD Keele, 1985) p104 and E P T Crampton *Christianity in Northern Nigeria* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975) p104.

asking questions such as: might we, one day, see the emergence of a class of educated 'pagans'? H G Butler, of Niger Province, gave a typical response:

> There is no such thing as an educated pagan ... The Elementary IV boy does not pay the same respect to tsafi [magic], dodo [goblins], etc. as his uneducated brother. In consequence he normally turns to a higher religion, Christianity or Islam ... Many pagan parents wish their children to be brought up as Moslems. Having no conception of a moral God they see nothing incongruous in this. In Moslem or Pagan areas the boy enters the cultural circle of the ruling class as an Englishman joins his local Conservative Association – I doubt if a deep conviction is conspicuously prominent in either phenomenon. If these children spend 5 years in Moslem Middle Schools and leave them for a Moslem environment they will remain Moslems; if they return from an Elementary School to a pagan environment they will follow both cults after a fashion, slaying the tsafi cock and salla ram with equal zest.[92]

There was also correspondence over the effects of educating girls and young women. A young Shehu Shagari, then Senior Visiting Teacher of Sokoto Province, described the situation as a 'grave concern'. 'It is generally accepted,' he wrote, that girls are always found to be backward in every mixed School in the Province. The reasons are obvious – neglect by the male teachers, discouragement from parents and in some places local prejudices against Western Education particularly for the girls'.[93]

There was no single commodity that we can simply label 'western education'. Many of those being educated by missions might have found their school life had more in common with that of children in the Southern Provinces than the rest of the North – the Igbirra children being taught in Yoruba is a fine example of this. However, it is under-recognised that some missions, such as the CMS in Wusasa, made substantial efforts to blend in with existing cultural and literary practice in the North. In some limited sense, they may actually have contributed to a sense of Northern identity.

Having been refused a permanent site inside Zaria city, the CMS based itself in nearby Wusasa village from 1909. There, the educational efforts of the

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[92] NAK: DDN.1944 'Replies to Questionnaires on Religious Instruction'. H G Butler (Niger Province Education Officer) to Director of the Department Education 31/1/1950.

[93] NAK: WEN 265 Sokoto Province. Shehu Shagari (Senior Visiting Teacher, Sokoto Province) to Sokoto Province Women Education Officer 23/11/1955.

mission, which had started in 1907[94], were allowed a free hand. The boys' school was under Dr Walter Miller, one of the more colourful figures among Britons in Nigeria, known in his lifetime as the most famous white man in Northern Nigeria. Somewhat less flattering was the comparison by one of his former pupils, later the chief of Wusasa, Stephen Audu. Miller was, he said, like the honeybee of the Hausa proverb: it brings forth sweetness, but also stings.[95]

Although he inspired deep devotion among his pupils (and deep irritation among his CMS colleagues[96]) Miller's regime at Wusasa boys' school was tough. The morning's work began at 6am when the pupils would make sure that the compound was spotless with no sign of litter, before having a bath. This was always outdoors, with a bucket of cold water, even in Harmattan. After the boys had worked in the gardens, cultivating vegetables, came an activity known as '*kewaye*' (to enclose). Nuhu Mohammadu Bayero, later chairman of the University of Lagos Council, describes it:

> *Kewaye* was a sort of punishment inflicted upon boys who would line up in two rows with enough space in the middle for a boy to run through. [Each boy] ... would get a stick of any kind in his hand, either of raw wood or dry. Then each boy who urinated in bed would be told, one by one, to run between the lines of boys and while he ran other boys would give him such severe punishment one by one until all had their share. Then, Dr Miller, who had been watching, would administer a stern warning to the boys not to bed-wet again.

Numbered among those who experienced this legendary sternness are many of the more well-known and successful Northern Nigerians. R. A. B. Dikko, founder of *Jam'iyyar Mutanen Arewa* (JMA[97]) and Northern Nigeria's first doctor

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[94] Issues surrounding the exclusion of missions from Muslim areas in the early 20th century are out of the scope of this thesis. The most frequently quoted statement on the subject is Lugard's address to the defeated chiefs in Sokoto (the import of which is disputed between E A Ayandele *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914* (London: Longmans, 1966) p132 and Gbadamosi 'The Establishment of Western Education among Muslims in Northern Nigeria 1896-1926' in the *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* Vol IV, No 1 (February 1967) p98).

[95] Arewa House pamphlet ND/A118: *Dutsen Wusasa* [The Rock of Wusasa] (Kaduna: Wusasa Old Students Association, 1989) p4. The Hausa proverb is 'zuma: da zaki da harbi' (bee/honey: both sweetness and sting).

[96] See, for instance, CMS: G3 A9-2 Executive Committee Minutes May 1950.

[97] *Jam'iyyar Mutanen Arewa* means 'Northern People's Congress' and was a 'cultural society', the precursor of the NPC as a political party.

(known during his training in Birmingham as Russell Dickson) had been taught by Miller, who then arranged for him to be sent abroad. The first Northern Nigerian pharmacist, Mu'azu Audu, was also a product of Wusasa, as were educationalist E O Audu, the first female controller at the Nigerian Broadcasting Company (NBC), Affiniki Hamman and the first Northern paediatrician and later Nigeria's representative to the United Nations, Ishaya Audu.

Rather like Katsina College, the buildings inhabited by Wusasa schools emphasised 'Northern' culture. The kindergarten, for instance, was a mud building similar to those found in the larger Hausa towns, its arch decorated with stars, diamonds and a cross in relief and the word 'Bethlehem' spelt out in Arabic letters. A better-known example is St Bartholomew's Church, Wusasa. The builders were recruited from Zaria City and the structure followed a design 'borrowing almost exclusively from Hausa architecture'.[98] The shape, however, is cruciform, and the interior likewise sticks to the Anglican norm.

The need to make Christianity more acceptable to local cultural mores was taken into account throughout CMS activity. Although the neologism 'inculturation' is generally applied to recent religious developments (the contrast usually being drawn with a stereotype nineteenth century missionary ethic that demanded the obliteration of all African culture) it seems equally well to describe a current of missionary thought exemplified by the Sudan Party, first convened in 1889.[99]

It was a thoroughly inconsistent process. While Hausa architecture was adopted on a large scale, and the original Sudan Party had all worn Hausa clothing, devotional music did not adapt. Hymns used in church services were taken straight out of *Ancient & Modern* and translated into Hausa, a process which disturbed not only the rhythm of the hymn, but the tone patterns of

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[98] *Dutsen Wusasa* p7.

[99] For more about the Sudan Party, see E A Ayandele *The Missionary Impact on Nigeria 1842-1914* (London: Longmans, 1966). For more on attempts to develop a 'native' Anglican church, see Walter Miller *Have We Failed in Nigeria?* (London: United Society for Christian Literature, 1947) and the papers of the Northern Nigeria Mission in the CMS Archives, Birmingham.

Hausa. In translating the Bible, however, Miller's version made numerous concessions to Islamic religious language (where this was felt not to create doctrinal difficulties). So, for example, the word for God was *Allah,* while Jesus was *Isa Almasihu* (later versions have *Yesu Krista*) and the Holy Spirit is *Ruhu.*[100]

The most obvious reason for this inconsistency is that the church's efforts at inculturation did not fully take on a life of their own. It was not the conversion of Northern Nigerians that prompted an outpouring of spirituality in a specifically 'Northern' guise. Rather, European missionaries refashioned the outward forms of worship in a bid to attract converts. Having buildings put up in the Hausa style was easy enough; translating the Bible rather harder. But generating a living Hausa Christian tradition was impossible, without the active involvement of Hausa speakers in the church leadership. (Yet, of course, a Northern priesthood could only become established in the first place by European missionary endeavour.) In short, it was easier to build a church out of mud-bricks than it was to build a church out of people.

The CMS's Northern Nigeria Mission (NNM) had started out life as the Hausa Mission, before changing its name in 1908. There were still complaints, however, that 'Northern' was always used to mean 'Hausa' and that the Society's other work, in Nupe areas, was being ignored. [101] Partly, this was because it had always been the CMS's aim to break the firm association between Hausa identity and Islam, and invent a native Christianity.[102] The effect of this was further to entrench Hausa as the lingua franca of the North, and to make Christianity a force for 'Hausanization'. People who, in another

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[100] W R S Miller (translator, with Paul Amfani and John Tafida) *Sabon Alkawali na Ubangiji Isa Almasihu Mai Chetonmu [New Testament of The Lord Jesus Christ Our Saviour]* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1925).

[101] CMS: G3 A9-1 Northern Nigeria Mission 1935-59. Claud N. Daintree to Cecil Bewes 15/11/1952.

[102] CMS: G3 A9-1 Northern Nigeria Mission 1935-59. Another reason for keeping them separate was that, due to the sparseness of supervision for the Southerners, 'the general standards of conduct and belief were not strong. It was therefore felt that co-operation between the mssion [sic] work dealing with the Hausas and the Church work among the Southerners, would not be beneficial to the young Hausa Church'. Memorandum on conversation between the Bishop in Northern Nigeria, Secretary of the NNM and Canon Bewes 13/11/1949.

age, might not have been regarded as Hausas, came into the church through the schools and *became* Hausa by association.

Meanwhile, things were beginning to change at the College, which enrolled its first Christian pupils in 1936. This was a big step. Bigger still, however, was the feeling of dislocation caused by the move to new premises in Kaduna two years later. Although still a growing city, Kaduna already had a highly cosmopolitan atmosphere, with people from right across Nigeria living in close proximity to each other. Naturally, the College authorities feared that students, no longer isolated, either geographically or socially, and even further away from the restraining influence of their parents, might be lured by the temptations of drink, women, and politics.

**1939: The meeting of the College Old Boys Association**

Politics was on the agenda in 1939, when the College Old Boys Association (COBA) held its first meeting. According to Nuhu Bamalli, the major topics of discussion were essentially political: they spoke about the need to end imperialism; to end southern domination; and to get rid of the sole Native Authority system, which had made Emirs virtual autocrats within their own areas. Most importantly, it was at this meeting, he remembered, that the very idea of 'One North' came into existence.[103] According to Bamalli, it was there that the Northern People's Congress (NPC) had its origins.

Although Hubbard plays down the political significance of the COBA, pointing out that meetings were sporadic and not always well attended,[104] the point is that the framework existed, and was used to great effect in the nationalist period which forms the subject of this thesis. Even if the 1939 meeting was not as politically impassioned as Bamalli remembered, the common experience of former pupils counted for much. It may not be too great an exaggeration to say that the NPC's electoral victories of the 1950s and 1960s were won on the playing fields of Katsina.

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[103] Nuhu Bamalli 'How the NPC was founded' in *Nigerian Citizen* 15/5/1959.

[104] Hubbard *Katsina College* p214.

In his speech at the anniversary celebrations in Sokoto, Ahmadu Bello had praised the College as 'a powerful tool for forging regional unity'.[105] Indeed, it was. The alumni of Katsina College went on to govern the North, to reinforce ideas of regional identity, and to exert control over the rest of the country. The College had been instrumental in convincing a generation of the relatively privileged that their deepest public loyalty was to the North as a region, perhaps even to Northerners as a people. For the students, being alongside colleagues from across the North had allowed them to see that, despite their differences in background, there was a great deal they all had in common, not least their experience of life under colonial rule (an experience markedly different for those brought up in the Western and Eastern Provinces). Even after the Northern People's Congress (NPC) was up and running, it was said, by *West Africa* magazine, to be not so much a political party as 'a reunion platform for old boys of the Katsina College'.[106]

**The foundation of *Gaskiya***

Another important development of 1939 was the foundation of the Hausa newspaper, *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo*. It was produced by the Literature Bureau, which had also been responsible for the first attempts at journalism in Hausa.[107] Starting in 1932, the *Northern Provinces Newsletter* had been written in Hausa, English and Arabic. The English section was dropped when it became apparent that few people appreciated the paper (which, in any case, had insufficient resources to achieve wide distribution) and publication ceased altogether when the more heavyweight replacement – *Gaskiya* – came along.

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[105] Jean Boyd, 'Barewa' p42.

[106] *West Africa* 9/2/1952 in B J Dudley *Parties and Politics in Northern Nigeria* (London: Frank Cass, 1968) p116.

[107] The Literature Bureau, serving the Northern Provinces, began life in 1929 as the Translation Bureau. In 1932-3 there was an attempt to produce an ecumenical mission-sponsored newspaper to be known as *Gamzaki*, which is Hausa for 'the Morning Star'. See CMS: G3 A9 0 1923-4. One of the *Jakadiya* newspapers, based in Plateau Province, coincidentally adopted this appalling pun as its own name in the 1950s. The original *Gamzaki* was to have been launched by the CMS, the Sudan United Mission (SUM) and the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) but the project apparently came unstuck over the issue of a £250 bond that they would be required to enter into with the government.

It was, as Ibrahim Yaro Yahaya has observed, the first serious attempt at public enlightenment in newspaper form to be distributed right across the North.[108]

The first editor, Abubakar Imam had, naturally enough, passed through the College with flying colours. It was he who chose the name, which means 'Truth is worth more than a penny'. This phrase not only informed readers of the price of the paper but set out a serious statement of intent for Imam, the other writing staff and the head of the Literature Bureau, Rupert East. The aim of the project was to bring to readers the 'truth' about the coming world war. However, although sold to its colonial backers as a means of counter-acting German propaganda in West Africa, the newspaper quickly became much more than that. If we fear that Nuhu Bamalli's recollections of the 1939 COBA meeting were coloured by later events, and if we wish to understand more about what the College Old Boys might have been thinking and saying around that time, we could do worse than look through the pages of *Gaskiya*.

Dr East worked with Imam on a number of projects over the years. It was a writing competition organised by East at Katsina College in 1933 that led to the first real Hausa novel, Imam's *Ruwan Bagaja*. With East's encouragement, Imam followed up this achievement with three volumes of *Magana Jari Ce*.[109] He was appointed Hausa editor of *Gaskiya* in 1939, full editor after 1948, and worked with East on numerous other publications, including the *Ikon Allah* series of science textbooks.[110] East was also responsible for the publication of materials in other languages, such as Tiv.

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[108] Ibrahim Yaro Yahaya *Hausa a Rubuce: Tarihin Rubuce Rubuce Cikin Hausa [Written Hausa: the History of Writing in Hausa]* (Zaria: NNPC, 1988) p142.

[109] Abubakar Imam *Ruwan Bagaja [The Water of Cure]* (Zaria: Literature Bureau, 1934) and *Magana Jari Ce [Speech is a Treasure]* (Zaria: Literature Bureau, 1938). Walter Miller's *Fatima: A Hausa Novel* (Lagos: CMS, 1933) was published a year earlier – but Hausa was not Miller's mother tongue, and the book did not have the same impact. In later life, he wrote that he could not see a future for Hausa books of any sort. See Walter R S Miller *Have We Failed in Nigeria?* (London: United Society for Christian Literature, 1947).

[110] R East and A Imam *Ikon Allah: Labarin Halitta Iri Iri ta Cikin Duniya* (Zaria: Gaskiya Corporation, 1949). It is a measure of East's (Christian) and Imam's (Islamic) faith that a science textbook is entitled *The Power of God: a Description of the Differing Forms of Creation in the World*. The title was also a means of adding religious legitimacy to a thorny subject.

The newspaper was the pro-British voice of truth during the war – indeed Isa Kaita had *Gaskiya* delivered to him in Accra, and used it as the basis for news bulletins in Hausa which were broadcast across West Africa[111] – but it was also a forum for the exchange of opinions and local news; this was by complete contrast with the old Newsletter and was part of what made *Gaskiya* readable and influential. Another asset was the lively journalistic style of Hausa, for which East gave Imam sole credit.

Among the more controversial topics covered by *Gaskiya* in its early years – when the role envisaged for it had been as nothing more than galvanising support for allied war aims – was the practice of *sunkuyawa*, which, as mentioned above, had been enforced at Katsina College. The Hausa equivalent of a kow-tow, which has many equivalents across West Africa – such as that noted by Ibn Battuta in Mali – was the subject of a strongly-worded letter from Sa'adu Zungur in February 1943. Zungur, whose life and work will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter One, believed, just as Battuta before him, that such extreme prostration before a social superior was tantamount to paganism. For Zungur, it was an embarrassing relic of Hausaland's pre-Islamic past, but others disagreed. Among the many responses printed was a letter from the Tafida of Kano, who agreed that bowing down so far as to touch the head to the floor was unIslamic, but felt that anything else was a customary way of showing respect. Another reader wrote:

> To my teacher M Sa'adu Bauchi [Zungur]. Dear Sir! Do not think that I am disrespectful to you or of your commentary ... [But] in my ignorance, I thought that in Islam intention is paramount and in that case it is alright if one person bows before another without the intention to worship him. If we stop this, then how else do we express obedience and respect...? Is it conceivable not to bow before our parents? ... our custom is even better than that of the Yoruba who fall flat on their bellies.[112]

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[111] Yaro Yahaya *Hausa a Rubuce* p142. See also *New Nigerian* 16/1/1979.

[112] Yakubu *Sa'adu Zungur* p117.

The rhetorical style was typical of the existing literary tradition in Hausa. Letters to the editor, without exception, started with greetings and expressions of loyalty and respect and were tactful in any criticism they conveyed. Writers such as Sa'adu Zungur were just as comfortable writing in the rather more forthright language of nationalist newspapers in English.

The debate touched upon above, however, was Islamic in tone and content. So too were subsequent exchanges about whether 'Western' dress was suitable for a Muslim and if it was right to take off one's shoes in the presence of a social superior, as had also been the rule at Katsina College. Zungur's main intention, however, was political: to highlight what he saw as the underlying problem of excessive deference to 'big men'.

A M Yakubu notes that the readers' column served as a kind of social barometer; a means for the authorities to check on the thoughts and frustrations of the elites. Summaries of unpublished letters were regularly sent to the Secretary, Northern Provinces (SNP). They provided the administration with some sort of advance warning about the coming changes to the political landscape of Northern Nigeria. As early as 1942, the European Editor wrote to the SNP that the bulk of letters being received by *Gaskiya* revealed the 'growing self-consciousness' of an emergent class – the 'educated Northerner of College or Middle School standard.'

> There are now several hundred of them who are regular correspondents to the paper. Nearly all of them are in good Government or Native Administration jobs and on the whole are refreshingly free from place-hunting motives in the suggestions or criticisms they make. They are intensely interested in Administration in the North and increasingly ready to criticise what they feel to be weaknesses. I believe they are at present entirely loyal and, although some of the more old-fashioned Emirs tend to regard their suggestions and criticisms as

> "interference", genuinely anxious to cooperate with Government and Native Administrations in a progressive policy.[113]

Apart from the subjects already discussed (such as *sunkuyawa*) the letters revealed a growing preoccupation with the North's educational needs and local government reform (having literate people as District Heads, for instance) but, as yet, no demand for the introduction of parliamentary democracy. They also indicated an awareness that most Government posts in the North were held by Southerners. 'There is nothing to suggest at present any serious anti-Southerner complex', wrote the editor, 'but they are worried by the apparently greater attention that Government pays to any complaint or petition voiced by Southerners'.[114]

So how broad was *Gaskiya*'s reach? The number of letters received was at an average of 150 per month, as early as 1943[115]. Unlike English, Hausa could be read by most people who had been educated as far as elementary school – even if Hausa was not their first language – and those with a firm grasp of Arabic script would be able to read the *ajami* supplement. It was this that enabled *Gaskiya* to achieve a monthly circulation of 15,000 in the 1940s.

However, circulation figures are notoriously untrustworthy and, even if accurate, the potential readership of the paper was insufficient to make its distribution across the Northern Provinces a viable commercial proposition. East identified this as one of the main problems for the newspaper. The only way of having it delivered was via the Native Authorities, meaning that they had the power to stop people reading anything which reflected badly on the NA. Whether

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[113] RHO: Mss Afr s. 597 'Gaskiya Corporation'. Rupert East to Secretary, Northern Provinces (SNP) 29/8/1942.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Rupert East 'Recent Activities of the Literature Bureau, Zaria, Northern Nigeria' in Husaini Hayatu (ed.) *Fifty Years of Truth: The Story of the Gaskiya Corporation, Zaria* (Zaria: Gaskiya Corporation, 1991) p6.

through political sensitivity or sheer inertia, it was routine for bundles of newspapers to be abandoned to the termites in NA offices.[116] On the other hand, the readership figures might be a little low – because it was commonplace for newspapers to be read out loud to those who were illiterate.

**Abubakar Imam and the College Elite**

The influence of *Gaskiya* was given early recognition in the use of its editor, Abubakar Imam, as a 'safe' channel for the articulation of opinion between the educated elite and the government. In 1942, he was selected to sit on a committee considering African participation in the Administrative Service. Unable in good conscience to represent the western-educated elite without having spoken to them about it first, Imam fired off about a dozen letters asking for opinions from his old College friends. The replies make interesting reading, because they tell us more about the thoughts and intentions of the College-educated elite before the onset of the nationalist period.

'I am sending you recommendations which we have dared to make,' wrote the Sardauna of Sokoto, submitting his replies. 'The reason why I said "dared" is because Sokoto is not the same as other areas. I doubt if we have the freedom to state the facts as we see them for fear of conservative leaders'.[117] The Sardauna suggested that Africans should be able to join the Administrative Service and that there should be an end to hereditary succession to positions other than Emir. His peers made similar suggestions. Yet the central issue from the point of view of this thesis is that of co-operation with Southern Nigerians. Respondents believed that such co-operation was undesirable 'until it becomes unavoidable' (Ahmadu Sardauna), due to 'age old enmity' (I M Katsina) and the fact that southerners 'are solely interested in these posts for the money and the power attached to them' (A B Dikko). The only dissenter to

[116] According to John Court, Adult Education Officer, in an interview with Clare Thomas. See Clare Thomas 'Colonial Government Propaganda and Public Relations and the Administration in Nigeria, 1939-1951' PhD Cambridge, 1986 p272.

[117] This is probably in reference to his having been imprisoned by the Sultan's court for embezzlement. He was freed on appeal.

this line of thinking was Imam's own brother, Ahmadu Kagara, who wrote that 'the question of separating the people of the North from the South is raised mostly from ignorance of the true situation. Most people cannot give any concrete reason for this requirement. We should realise that the people of the North and the South have the same colour and share the same country'. Here, the phrase 'people of the North' does not connote the same 'national feeling' which it would in later years. What strikes one about the correspondence is the relative absence of the term 'Northerner'. Where it is used, it seems – as in most journalism of the time –to be interchangeable with the word 'Hausa'.[118] The Sardauna, for instance, writes of 'Hausas' in a very broad sense, which includes people from Borno and Bauchi, and in a way anticipates his later attitude towards 'the Northern people'.[119]

**From Hausa nationalism to Northern nationalism**

When schoolteacher Aminu Kano wrote to Imam in 1944 to discuss projects that Barclays Bank could help to fund for the development of the North, he suggested (rather cheekily, perhaps) a new newspaper, which would be 'staunchly inclined to moulding the North into the solid mass'. He went on to say that 'A newspaper, independent and free is one of the solutions of spreading pan-*Hausa* nationalism'.[120] Here, again, Northern unity and Hausa cultural expansion were seen as the same thing. Some people would argue that, to all intents and purposes, they were.

Perhaps the problem is that 'Northern-ness'[121] (like 'Hausa-ness') has always been such an ill-defined concept. In today's Nigeria, long after the Northern

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[118] Much the same principle applied in *Gaskiya*'s regular translation of the word 'British': 'Ingilishi'.

[119] Abdurrahman Mora (ed.) *The Abubakar Imam Memoirs* (Zaria: NNPC, 1989) pp38-51.

[120] Mora (ed.) *Abubakar Imam* p96. Emphasis added.

[121] The writer freely acknowledges that this word (like 'Hausa-ness') sounds daft. However, there is a need for a single word which means 'that which defines someone or something as being essentially Northern' in the same way as, say, the word *pulaaku* does for the Fulani (see Philip Burnham *The Politics of Cultural Difference in Northern Cameroon* [Edinburgh:

Region ceased to exist, people argue over which areas of Nigeria are still Northern and which had only ever been included out of administrative convenience/accident.[122] For an idea so central to the political debate in present-day Nigeria and to the historical debate about the Nigerian past, what people really mean by 'Northerner' is discussed surprisingly infrequently. Karl Maier's definition of the word as a 'catch-all term to mean anyone who is Muslim and whose family traces its ancestry to northern Nigeria' is poor: there are Northern Christians, Northern adherents of 'traditional' beliefs and Northern atheists; there are people who would call themselves Northerners even though they cannot trace any of their family back to the region, and people who would baulk at the term even though their every family member, nuclear or extended, had been born and brought up within its boundaries. However, the definition has little competition.[123]

**Abubakar Imam in the United Kingdom**

In 1943, Abubakar Imam was invited by the British Council to join a party of West African newspaper editors visiting Britain. This provided him with an opportunity to meet the elderly Lord Lugard. The published account of the interview strengthens the image of Imam as someone who tended towards conservatism (or, as Kazah-Toure puts it, was taken in by the Lugardian view of Nigeria 'hook line and sinker'.[124]) They spoke about ways of reforming the Native Authority system and allowing *Gaskiya* more editorial freedom, but Imam made it abundantly clear that he did not envisage 'taking the Government from the hands of older people and giving it to [the] younger educated elite' or allowing complete freedom of speech - 'We are not yet ripe for the sort of speeches I heard on Sundays at the Speakers Corner', he said.[125] However,

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Edinburgh University Press, 1996]). Until something better comes along, these words will have to do. The quote marks are henceforth dropped to avoid further irritation to the reader.

[122] See, for instance, Cornelius Adebayo's article on Ilorin in *Vanguard* 7/9/2001, available on www. Vanguardngr.com/news/articles/2001/September.

[123] Karl Maier *This House Has Fallen: Midnight in Nigeria* (New York: Public Affairs, 2000) pp143-4.

[124] Kazah-Toure 'The Development of the Nationalist Movement in Zaria Province' (MA Zaria, 1991) p366.

[125] Abdurrahman Mora (ed.) *The Abubakar Imam Memoirs* (Zaria: NNPC, 1989) p87.

his views on the priority of age notwithstanding, he did see self-government as a long-term goal.

On the long voyage to Liverpool, Imam had struck up a friendship with Nnamdi Azikiwe, then editor of the *West African Pilot*, who acted as a big brother to Imam for the duration of the trip. However, the latter's refusal to sign a memorandum prepared by Zik (demanding, among other things, internal self-government within ten years), earned him a sharp rebuke from *Pilot*, which he took rather personally. His response was to write an editorial explaining his decision. He had gone to London as a representative of *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo* readers, he said, none of whom had indicated a desire for the Europeans to leave. This stance was praised by many readers (the Emir of Zaria and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa included), but criticised by Aminu Kano.

He based a later editorial on his speech to the West African Students' Union (WASU) during his visit to London, detailing what he saw as press prejudice against Northerners. 'If the matter is viewed dispassionately,' he had said, 'it is clear that it is the Northerners and Southerners themselves who create differences amongst themselves and not, as some maintain, Europeans'. To illustrate his point, he brought up the question of clothing:

> If any of you [WASU members] were to dress as Moslems, like myself, and attempt to sit on the same seat in a railway carriage with a southerner dressed like a European, there would be trouble unless he knew who you were. I myself, whenever travelling have had to argue with a Clerk before I could get a seat in a second-class compartment .... When I left Lagos there were three qualified Northern dispensers in the hospital in Lagos. But in order to get their medicine accepted by the people, these qualified men had to refrain from wearing Northern clothes. In other words, a Hausa is considered an ignoramus.[126]

It was Abubakar Imam's belief that such small-mindedness extended right the way up to colonial officials.[127] In today's Nigeria, where 'national dress' is worn by the bank manager, the politician and the big businessman, it is hard to

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[126] Ibid., p59.

[127] As Imam said to Lord Lugard, *Malam Audu* in a gown and turban, received less courtesy from a European than *Mr Audu* (the same man in a suit). This kind of thing, he said, gives people the wrong impression, that the British are 'deliberately training us to be submissive, so that they can use us as tools'. Ibid., p81.

imagine a time when the only people in First Class were wearing a suit and tie. In part, this is the legacy of Sa'adu Zungur and his peers. As a pharmacy student at Yaba College, Zungur made a point of wearing the Hausa clothes to which he was accustomed, despite being ridiculed as 'the malam in pyjamas'.

In the North, the situation was rather different. There, Muslims were encouraged to wear 'native' dress. The fashions of the emirate centres, which would later be re-branded as 'Northern traditional dress' were rapidly spreading across the region, even to non-Muslims. This process was older than British rule – Hausa culture had long been assimilating its neighbours – yet it was hurried along by aspects of the colonial experience. After the rule of 'pagan' areas began to be transferred from Fulani intermediaries to locally appointed headmen, they adopted, in the words of A D Yahaya, 'the mannerisms, the style of life, and the general respect for sarauta, that could be easily identified with the Hausa/Fulani village head'.[128] Trends passed from these 'satellite chiefs', as Kukah calls them, to their peoples.[129] Missions did the same, hoping to synthesise a Hausa-Christian culture. Earlier in the century, even some European officials had taken to conducting their duties while wearing a *babbar riga* – a practice which was swiftly banned.[130] And so, it was in Sa'adu Zungur's typically bold and contrary way that, on returning to the North, he chose to wear a shirt and tie in public, just to show that there was nothing to stop an African from wearing European clothing if he wanted – and certainly nothing irreligious about it.

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[128] A D Yahaya *The Native Authority System in Northern Nigeria 1950-1970: a Study of political relations with particular reference to Zaria NA* (Zaria: ABU Press, 1980) p164. Yahaya recalls that the 'pomp and ceremony' which pervaded the court of the District Head of Kacia, in Southern Zaria, was 'much more elaborate than for any Hausa/Fulani district head in the Emirate' and that, in the village of Idon, the 'pagan' headman 'wore a big flowing gown, and a long *dara* (fez) cap, he talked with dignity and with his mouth full of *goro* (kola nut)'. See Yahaya *NA System* p167 fn 36. Yahaya Kwande, too, notes that, in the Middle Belt, 'newly created royalties ... now even out-do the kings of the old kingdoms'. See Yahaya Kwande *The Making of a Northern Nigeria* (Jos: Quarhess, 1998) p31.

[129] Matthew Hassan Kukah *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria* (Ibadan: Spectrum, 1993) p14.

[130] NAK: SNP 6 155/1907 'Wearing of Native Dress by Government Officials'.

**Conclusion**

One of the ironies of regionalism is that the importance of the 'homeland' seems to grow with distance; arriving somewhere new and different increases awareness of what distinguishes one's own society. So it is worth remembering that, for instance, the Northern Teachers' Association (NTA) and the Ẹgbẹ Ọmọ Oduduwa (the Yoruba cultural society that was the precursor of Obafemi Awolowo's Action Group) were both formed in London. Although the idea of One North was put through its first major test during our chosen period of 1945 to 1966, we can see that it had, in a sense, already been tested. Northerners had already realised that, when they came to the South, they were regarded as second-rate. They were marked out by their clothes, their religion and their languages – all aspects of life that an education in Katsina College had taught them to be proud of.

Northernness as a political idea was also developed during the postwar era, but again, the potential for such a movement was already present. The diverse influences on Northern Nigeria during the colonial era brought together much of the raw material for a national identity, which would, in turn, dramatically transform Nigeria.

## Chapter One: The Early Days of Party Politics in the North

### 1.0 Introduction

They had served in Burma. The surviving Northern soldiers who had fought against the Japanese expansion were, by 1945, exhausted; some were badly injured, most were desperate to be demobbed. The new Hausa newspaper, *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo*, had cheered their progress all the way, publishing the anti-German propaganda for which it had been set up, as well as greetings from servicemen to their friends and families back home, and stirring pro-Britain news items. It also printed hysterically anti-Japanese articles, in which the enemy was described as a pagan (either *kafiri* or *arne*) whose emperor, Hirohito, was the *allan Japanawa*: the god of the Japanese[131].

One soldier – a teacher, in his civilian days – wrote a poem on similar lines:

*Here, the air is thick with dust*
*Only those whom God chooses will see tomorrow!*

*Here, the Hausa man does what comes naturally*
*He sings heartily, and kills pagans!*

*We praise your name, God*
*Let us cut their heads, these Japanese people*[132]

The clear analogy between the enemy in Japan and the 'pagans' to be found back home shows something of what a divided society Northern Nigeria was at this time. This way of thinking may have been productive in wartime –religious motivation could encourage bravery – but the publication of such sentiments could do little to ease the inevitable social tensions when the soldiers returned.

In London, there was widespread fear that such tension would manifest itself in various ways, throughout the British Empire, when the servicemen came home.

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[131] See, for instance *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo* 23/5/1945.

[132] Garba Zariya *Wakar Burma [Poem on Burma]* in *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo* 22/11/1944

In short, the theory was this: having fought for their colonial masters against an enemy who was perceived by many as just another empire-builder, soldiers would return home tired, hungry and unemployed. They had been promised – so they felt, at least – a better world once it was all over. They had learned new skills, they had broadened their horizons, and they had seen first-hand that the Europeans were every bit as human as themselves. Not all Europeans were wealthy and powerful – for a lot of people, military service provided their first experience of seeing white people engaged in physical labour. The white soldiers shared the same vices as their subject counterparts – and, in battle, they died just like anybody else. With the 'mystique of the white man' gone, it was felt, the empire might gradually become too hot to hold on to. There was considerable fear that the British Empire in Africa had sown the seeds of its own destruction by recruiting and arming 'natives'. Frank Furedi has put forward a powerfully convincing argument that the ubiquity of these predictions in the Colonial Office documents has coloured historians' perceptions of what actually happened. The weight of expectation also had a disproportionate effect on the formation of policy; it may even have added momentum to the nationalist cause.[133]

Yet Northerners were not supposed to be troublesome. A report on a meeting of West African soldiers in India noted 'a considerable difference in the attitude of the Northerner of the Gold Coast and Nigeria, and the better educated Southerner and Sierra Leone'. The dichotomy may have sprung from the military man's accustomed need for a quick assessment based on generalisation, but there was some truth in it. Northerners 'asked fewer questions', it was noted, and showed a 'philosophical attitude and a patient acceptance of their present position without much thought of the future'.[134]

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[133] Frank Furedi 'The Demobilized African Soldier and the Blow to White Prestige' in David Killingray and David Omissi (eds) *Guardians of Empire: the Armed Forces of the Colonial Powers, c1760-1964* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

[134] Arewa House: SNP 15/1/14 33354 'Examination of Problems which may arise after the war'. Report (undated) of H P James on visit to 81 (West Africa) Division.

Of course, the suggestion that Northern servicemen 'only wish to return to their farms'[135] was too optimistic: many had acquired new skills and wanted white-collar jobs with a regular wage. Some felt aggrieved enough to join the emergent political parties. Others were sufficiently frustrated to write a letter to the Emir of Katsina threatening the assassination of the Governor and several notable Nigerians who had supported the war effort.[136] But the prospect of an anti-imperial revolt was far away: such mass violence as occurred in postwar Northern Nigeria was not directed against British authority.

Political officers still found that it paid to be vigilant. The Resident of Plateau Province, for instance, suggested that, as an antidote to 'the more irresponsible self-styled leaders and politician-journalists', a mobile cinema should be set up to tour the country showing films of Nazi atrocities. 'It will not be necessary to indulge in any blatant propaganda in this connection,' he wrote. 'The recorded facts will speak for themselves and cannot fail to impress on all audiences the fate that would have been theirs had the Empire been overwhelmed'. The Secretary, Northern Provinces (SNP) overruled this idea. He did not consider the 'irresponsibility' of politician-journalists to be 'of sufficient import to justify a departure from the ordinary rules governing the censorship of films to be shewn to Africans'.[137] Whatever the relative merits of the Resident's plan, a less dismissive response to the 'self-styled leaders' would soon be required. The North's western-educated elite had been beginning to involve itself in political activity just as the war broke out. Soon, it would begin again.

It is easy to see the early political exchanges of the 1940s as some sort of dress rehearsal for the 1960s. With hindsight, we can find many of the problems that would plague independent Nigeria having embryonic existence during the very first stages of decolonisation – so that much of what can be said about Nigeria after independence applies equally well to the time of the

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[135] Ibid., summary of events.

[136] Arewa House: SNP 12/3/55 40657 'Anonymous letter from Ex-servicemen' received by SNP 29/5/1946.

[137] Arewa House: SNP 14/4/48 42882 'Propaganda by Cinemas'. Resident Plateau to SNP 2/5/1945 and SNP to Resident Plateau 7/5/1945.

Richards Constitution. In both periods, for instance, the North's political affairs were under the heavy influence of the Native Authorities; members of the legislative bodies haggled over the distribution of resources; powerful individuals linked the worlds of journalism, business and politics, with those who made a career out of one seeking out opportunities to exploit the other two; a powerful few prospered, but the economy was dependent on and geared to that of Great Britain; political parties struggled to rein in their radical left-wing elements, while radical left-wingers struggled to find influence within their parties; and politicians – the *same* politicians: Zik, Awo, the Sardauna – drew on popular culture and manipulated its symbols as a means of gaining approval.

Yet this is a comforting illusion for historians: that whatever events we nominate as our conclusion were signposted all along the way. How tempting it is, in searching the wreckage of the past, to pick out what fits and ignore what does not; to point to the one sentence in a document that, in retrospect, seems eerily prescient; and to focus only on those events that can be made to provide a neat link from one part of human history to another.

With a little imagination, it is just as easy to see in the Northern Nigeria of the late 1940s another world altogether: a twilight zone where Tafawa Balewa is suspected of being a Zikist revolutionary, where Nnamdi Azikiwe boasts of his Northern credentials, where Sa'adu Zungur is desperate to avoid association with the *West African Pilot* and where the Sardauna is plotting the downfall of the Northern People's Congress. But to present such a picture as an accurate representation of what happened would be an abuse of the evidence. This may be an abuse to which the evidence readily lends itself by its very quantity, its subjectivity and its flexibility – but there is still such a thing as accuracy, even if we cannot know or fully describe the truth we believe we are aiming for.

This chapter has two main aims. The first is to explain something of the circumstances in which the North's parties were formed. Much of this will be well known to those familiar with the existing literature, but some of it is new. The second aim of the chapter is to demonstrate that early political alliances

were not predictable or formulaic. There was no obvious divide between the conservative and the radical, or between 'Westernised' Nigerians and 'traditionalists'. Nor was there even a clear split between North and South.[138] There were individuals trying to make decisions about who was on whose side – trying to adjust to the rapidly-changing realities of life in Nigeria.

### 1.1 NCNC and Their Tours

In 1946, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) began a nationwide tour, celebrating the success of the General Strike of the previous year, encouraging people of all backgrounds to get involved in politics, and giving dire warnings of how the country would fare under the Richards Constitution. The most ambitious nationalist movement that Nigeria had yet seen, the NCNC was the first of the Lagos-based political parties (such as the Nigerian Youth Movement and Nigerian National Democratic Party) to make a serious effort to spread its influence beyond the capital. Its appeal was broad, attempting to attract Nigerians from all walks of life through its uncompromising demands for immediate self-government. Its Secretary-General was the press baron and entrepreneur Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe.

When the Resident of Plateau Province spoke of 'politician-journalists', 'Zik', as he was known, was almost certainly the figure he had in mind. His newspapers were vocal supporters of the party, which loved to show how fearful the British were of NCNC influence – just as much as the British loved to tell themselves they were not the least bit concerned. To take one small example: When Hubert Ogunde was arrested for having staged a play without a licence (and later convicted both of assaulting the policeman who investigated the 'subversive' performance *and* stealing his helmet) the *West African Pilot* reported that the Assistant Superintendent of Police for Jos had barked at him:

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[138] Recent publications by the Centre for Democratic Development Research and Training (CEDDERT) attempt to alter the simplistic picture of a Nigeria dominated by 'tribal' politics, with Igbos voting NCNC, Yorubas voting AG and Hausas voting NPC. See 'The Misrepresentation of Nigeria: the Facts and the Figures', www.ceddert.com/Article3 (12/04/2002).

'this is a Hausa Province and I cannot allow you to come here and begin to educate my people on how to strike, you and your Herbert Macaulay'. Herbert Macaulay, the doyen of nationalist politics in Nigeria, was the NCNC's President – but Superintendent Taylor, in a press release issued by the Public Relations Officer the very next day – denied ever having heard of him, until he read what he was reported to have said in the newspaper. The words attributed to Taylor do seem unlikely. (For one thing, the Plateau's population was too heterogeneous for the Province to be labelled 'Hausa'.) But the swiftness and the vehemence of the response suggest that the administration were giving more attention to the activities of the NCNC than they cared to admit.[139]

The NCNC, for their part, usually portrayed the North as a feudal system waiting to be overthrown. Northerners needed only to be educated on 'how to strike' and they would rush to support the NCNC. Yet, conversely, the latter tried to win over more conservative thinkers by citing 'mandates' from Emirs and chiefs, who, constrained by the hand of the British, were unable to voice their support openly. There were countless rumours on this score; even within the administration, tales of chiefly skulduggery gained some acceptance. One of the more persistent stories was that the Atta of Igbirra had volunteered to Zik the services of his son as Governor for the Northern Provinces in the event of a revolution.[140] The Resident of Niger Province, P F Brandt, wrote: 'Knowing the Atta of Igbirra personally, it would not surprise me if the rumour was true. He is vain, egotistical, and inordinately ambitious. But he is too shrewd to come out into the open until he thinks he has a certainty'. Brandt's predecessor, Bryan Sharwood Smith (best remembered as Governor of the North) had similar reservations about the Emir of Bida, said to be involved with the NCNC. He had a natural tendency 'to stick a tentative finger into any form of intrigue that

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[139] Arewa House: SNP: 13/3/47 41408 'Ogunde Incident'. The play was set in Lagos during the 1945 strike. For more about Hubert Ogunde, pioneer dramatist, see Ebun Clark *Hubert Ogunde: The Making of Nigerian Theatre* (Oxford: OUP, 1979). The incident in Jos is mentioned pp35-39, and the Superintendent's words appear in slightly different form.

[140] Arewa House: SNP 12/1/26 40428 'NCNC and its connection with the Zikist Movement'. Political Intelligence Report, Niger Province, September 1947.


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showed promise of profit' that was, Sharwood Smith insisted, 'the Nupe way'.[141] Despite the extraordinary quantity of such rumours, it is hard to see any of them as credible, particularly where the Emir of Bida was concerned: in 1949, the Emir was to place a ban on the NCNC from holding any demonstrations. He, like the other Emirs, knew what side his bread was buttered on.[142]

As ever, it paid to be cautious. Just in case the Emirs were unsure where their interests lay, the Resident seized on the opportunity presented by the publication of the NCNC's alternative to the Richards Constitution.[143] This document contained sections which, when brought to the notice of the Emirs and the intelligentsia, Sharwood Smith believed would 'make crystal clear the underlying object of the Council which is to bring the whole country and in particular the North under the political and, automatically, economic domination of their organisation'. His main example was the suggested distribution of seats for the Legislative Council: Lagos 7, West 11, East 11, and North 11, which, relative to population, would leave the North under-represented. He had hit on the issue which would be perhaps the single most bitterly-contested in Nigerian politics for the next twenty years.[144] Some months after Sharwood Smith made this suggestion, a letter from a reader in Niger Province appeared in *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo* attacking precisely this aspect of the NCNC's programme.

### 1.2 The Gaskiya Corporation

The Gaskiya Corporation was established in 1945, with the assistance of the Colonial Welfare and Development fund. Named after the newspaper which would always be its most readily identifiable publication, the new corporation, which took on all the functions of the former Literature Bureau, made *Gaskiya*

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[141] Arewa House: SNP 01/02/2 40428 S.1 'NCNC Tours by members of'. Sharwood Smith to J H Carrow 27/4/1946.

[142] Some of these ambiguities are illustrated by the battle between the West African Students' Union, trying to raise funds for a new hostel in London, and the Northern Provinces administration trying to prevent them from approaching Native Authorities. See Arewa House: SNP 13/2/29 41259 'WASU relations with Government and NAs'.

[143] The NCNC had never approved of the 1946 constitution and boycotted the Legislative Council until 1948.

[144] Arewa House: 'NCNC Tours by members of'. Sharwood Smith to J H Carrow 30/4/1946.

*Ta Fi Kwabo* responsible to a board of trustees rather than directly to government. The 'independence' of *Gaskiya* was intended to allow the paper to become more attractive to the young, educated Northerners to whom the Zik press might have some appeal. 'If the columns of a decent paper were denied them,' said one writer, 'they would look for one which was bound by no such scruples'. The same commentator acknowledged that there was 'some truth' in the suggestion that

> such a paper is independent only in a limited sense. Besides being subsidised in the initial stages [*Gaskiya* in fact required subsidy throughout the period of this study], it will be controlled by men selected in the first place by Government, and also, in consequence of the autocratic political structure of the Moslem States, it must be dependent to a large extent on the goodwill and support of the native rulers for its popularity and distribution among their people.[145]

Far from being only partly true, these two sentences effectively sum up the difficulties faced by *Gaskiya* in trying to become more independent. It never quite surmounted them.

The editorial published in the first issue of the newly 'independent' *Gaskiya* stated: 'We do not stand for the North against the South but on the contrary hope that we shall work for the common good and that *Gaskiya* will bring the peoples closer together'. However, this commitment was often ambiguous. Let us take, as an example, an edition of *Gaskiya* which appeared in November 1945. The most prominently featured letter to the editor was one which called for the teaching of the Yoruba and Igbo languages in Northern schools, and the teaching of Hausa in the South, so that Nigerian unity might be fostered. And yet, on the very next page, there was an article which seemed to be trying to undermine such unity as existed. Headlined 'Igbos beat up NA policeman', it described the outcome of a court action against two men who hit a ɗ*an doka* who had stopped them for riding a bicycle with no lights on. They then stole his truncheon. In what seems a rather large column for a relatively unimportant

[145] A British Nigerian (otherwise anon.) 'An Experiment in Colonial Journalism' in *Fifty Years of Truth: The Story of the Gaskiya Corporation Zaria, 1939-1991* (Zaria: Gaskiya Corporation, 1991) pp73-4. Originally published in 1946.

story, the miscreants are referred to throughout as 'these Igbos' and the tale is told in a 'comic' way which seems quite inappropriate. A crowd of fifty Igbos was said to be waiting outside the court house, eager to hear what sentence had been handed down. When the convicted men emerged, one of them, Babington Ayo, was reported to have slapped his head and yelled 'tixt mont for prison!' whereupon the people went home, unhappy. Instances of English appearing in *Gaskiya* are very rare and the choice of language in this case is important. Readers were not exposed to a garbled version of their own language but that of the colonialists, whose ways (readers were encouraged to believe) were unsuccessfully being emulated by Igbos. The mockery of the way Ayo spoke English is symbolic of what *Gaskiya* readers might think the folly of an African trying to live an English life.[146]

The article mentioned above has two degrees of snobbery. On one level, there is implicit criticism of Ayo for speaking English *at all*. On another, contrary level, there is criticism of the *way* he uses it, and an expectation that readers would not only be able to understand the sentence, but would understand why it is 'funny'. That is, that they could see what Ayo's mistakes were and avoid replicating them. As an editorial in the *Leader* newspaper put it: 'We pride ourselves in the Northern Region that those of us who speak English, speak it with a purer accent than people from other parts of Nigeria ... [but] of late years our pure accent is in danger of being defiled'. Yet Northerners visiting England were still delighted to find 'that we speak as middle-class Englishmen speak and not as the working classes do. So pure are our accents'.[147]

The editorial celebrating the paper's freedom also announced a brave pledge always to stand for the truth, even if this meant disagreeing with Emirs and government.[148] Yet the content of *Gaskiya* was still closely monitored by the

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[146] *Gaskiya*, 10/11/1945.

[147] *Leader*, January 1956. *Leader* was a monthly newspaper in 'Simple English' published as part of the Adult Literacy Campaign.

[148] *Gaskiya*, 11/4/1945. The translation comes from an English supplement published alongside the Hausa. Elsewhere, translations are my own.

administration and, if necessary, altered. For instance, when Isa Kaita (later to be Northern Minister of Education) wrote a letter to the editor at the instigation of the Resident of Katsina, it was forwarded to the Secretary for the Northern Provinces with the Resident's recommendation: 'Above article is very uncompromising. It should do good'. The letter, complaining that the NCNC had posted a notice inviting 'all Southerners' to a meeting at the United Africa Company headquarters, to the apparent exclusion of Northerners, ('are we not Nigerians?' he asked) finished with these words:

> You have heard the kind of things they say, that they want North and South to co-operate ... This is the kind of co-operation Hitler said he wanted with the small nations before the war started ... Well, northerners, you have seen the NCNC's kind of plot ... Until the end of time the Western and Eastern Regions will not be joined together – just so with the North and South. The North is the North, the South is the South.[149]

The Secretary to the Northern Provinces underlined this portion of the letter and wrote a rebuke to the Resident that 'it is *not* the policy of the Govt. to foster antipathy between North & South. Editor of Gaskiya has been so informed'. The letter was printed, shorn of its reference to Hitler and to the never-ending separation of North from South.

By contrast, two missives which the Resident of Adamawa Province forwarded to *Gaskiya* were rejected as being 'too mild in tone'. More strident ones were composed and later printed. According to the Assistant Resident, these letters, denying that the NCNC had any Northern support, contained the 'genuine opinion of the writers on whom very little pressure was brought to bear on what was required'[150]. Be that as it may, it seems that the response of the Northern educated elite to the NCNC tour was to some extent stage-managed.

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[149] Arewa House: 'NCNC Tours by members of'. Isa Kaita to *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo*, published in *Gaskiya* 13/8/1946.

[150] Arewa House: 'NCNC Tours by members of'. Acting Resident Adamawa to SNP 26/8/1946.

Every time the NCNC arrived in a Northern city – Kano, Zaria, Bida – they were met by a large crowd of resident southerners. Speeches were, however, always translated into Hausa for the benefit of the local population. It is uncertain how many Northerners turned out: the *Pilot* would claim that the politicians were joyfully received by throngs of local supporters, while District Officers and police reports claimed they were met with total indifference.[151] The truth probably lies somewhere in between, although the main sources are, of course, heavily biased towards the administration's view of things. Yet, even within that system – usually so naïve in the assumption that colonial rule was universally popular among Northerners – there were voices of dissent. Stanhope White, as Resident of Sokoto, warned during the 1947 tour, that, with the exception of Sharwood Smith 'no one seemed to be aware of the intense excitement which was being engendered by this [NCNC] visit'.[152] Two months later, a branch of the Zikist Movement was founded there.[153]

On the occasion of a previous tour, a lecture had been held at Sokoto's African Club, at which Ahmadu Sardauna and Nnamdi Azikiwe had the first meeting of their long and tempestuous relationship. The latter, newly in charge of the NCNC after Macaulay's death, gave his speech wearing Northern dress and 'claimed special sympathy with the Hausa as a native of Zungeru'.[154] Azikiwe had indeed been born in what was then the capital of the Northern Nigerian Protectorate, and spent his early childhood there, later claiming that 'to all

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[151] Police Intelligence on the NCNC's 1951 tour claims that attendance figures published in the Zik Press were exaggerated 'by anything from four to ten times, and on at least two occasions exceeding the known population of the town'. Arewa House: SNP 01/02/2 40428 S.1 'NCNC Tours by members of', Police Intelligence Summary, Northern Provinces July 1951.

[152] Arewa House: SNP 12/1/26 40428 'NCNC and its connection with the Zikist Movement'. Political Intelligence Report, Sokoto Province, September 1947.

[153] It seems the Sokoto Zikists did very little other than organise football matches against the Sokoto Games Club. The Zikists also had a front organisation called the Nigerian Citizens' Welfare Association which at one time attracted 58 Northerners and 10 Southerners to one meeting but was defunct by early 1948.

[154] SNP 'NCNC Tours by members of'. F B Sharp's Police Report 4/5/1946.

intents and purposes I was a Hausa boy then'.[155] We can only guess at whether his audience was impressed. What is noteworthy is that he tried it: during what this thesis terms the 'open phase' of Northern nationalism, from the end of the war until the time of the rioting in Kano in 1953, the idea of Northern identity was something sufficiently lacking in definition for all-comers to attempt to manipulate it. NCNC appeals for political support on grounds of 'Northernness' were not unusual before the NPC arrived to stake their exclusive claim to Northern loyalty.

At this early stage in the political process, it is hard to doubt the sincerity of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons. Although the NCNC later effectively became a regional party, boxed into the East by the AG in the West and the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) in the North, it did much to avoid this fate. The *Pilot* even published an article in Hausa by 'Dan Kano' to try to win over more moderate Northerners. It told Hausa readers that on no account did the NCNC intend to drive the Europeans out of the country – what they really wanted was Nigerian unity and, ultimately, self-government.[156]

The tone of Dan Kano's article was markedly different from that adopted by the Zikist Movement, the revolutionary wing of the NCNC.[157] H R Abdallah's election as president of the Zikists was hailed by the *West African Pilot* as 'a note of ... warning to adversaries and reactionaries. It is the first time, perhaps, that a movement of its type has come to realize the latent enthusiasm,

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[155] Nnamdi Azikiwe *My Odyssey* (London: C Hurst and Co., 1970) p9.

[156] *West African Pilot* 23/7/1947.

[157] Azikiwe was later to be rejected by the organisation that took his name, and Raji Abdallah was jailed for sedition. In 1950, there were persistent rumours that the Zikists were planning to assassinate the Governor and other senior figures. Rex Niven, the Resident of Bauchi, wrote to the SNP to ask 'whether I am permitted to shoot my assassin while engaged in his employment or do I just smile and sing "Rule Britannia"?' One office wag suggested he shoot first and then say 'Vivat Rex'. Arewa House: SNP 12/2/26 40428 'NCNC and its connection with the Zikist Movement'. Niven to SNP 25/3/1950.

patriotism and spark that burn in the hearts of the Hausa men'.[158] Abdallah was an Igbirra, not a Hausa, but for the *Pilot*'s purposes, that did not seem to matter. He was one of a number of early Northern members of the NCNC, (all described, with varying degrees of accuracy, as Hausa) feted by the Zik Press in the 1940s but who left the NCNC for other organisations. Others included Abubakar Zukogi (about whom we will hear more in Chapter Five), Sa'adu Zungur and Bukar Dipcharima.

Sa'adu Zungur was of the Jarawa people of Bauchi, but was from a family who were fully assimilated to Hausa norms. A pioneer nationalist, Islamic scholar and poet, Zungur became Federal Secretary of the NCNC in 1948 only to leave in disillusionment shortly after the formation of NEPU. It is under-recognised, however, that Zungur had always had his doubts about Zik. In a letter to the Acting Resident of Bauchi Province in 1947, Zungur wrote of his despair that poor health might make him unemployable as far as the Native Authority was concerned.

> I deeply regret to have to inform you that unbearable conditions of living and [a] series of fruitless efforts to obtain a humble job are inducing me to accept the attractive offer made to me by the Zik's Press Limited to act as the accredited representative and agent to the notorious Zik's Group of papers in the three north-eastern provinces. This means that difficult conditions of living are forcing me to act as a moral coward by pretending to believe in what I sincerely disbelieve, and to have faith in what I naturally detest mentally. But I have no alternative.[159]

In the light of all we know about the rest of Zungur's life, this statement seems astonishing. Did he really mean it? After all, he was an advocate of *taqiyya* (dissembling) when the situation called for it, and may have been hiding his true

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[158] *West African Pilot* 8/8/1947.

[159] Arewa House: SNP 12/1/5 42126 'M. Abubakar Tafawa Balewa Political Views Of'. Zungur's letter is quoted in Secretary to the Northern Provinces (Bridel) to the Chief Secretary to the Government 5/5/1947. The original is not on this file; it is more likely to be somewhere in the Bauchi Provincial Records. So long as one has not seen the original, there may be some doubt as to the letter's authenticity – but not much.

feelings in a last-ditch bid to persuade the administration to employ him. He was later offered a place on the Bauchi Provincial Development Committee, but this, writes A M Yakubu, 'never dissuaded him from taking up the *Pilot* offer. The opportunity to address not just the Northern intelligentsia but a national and pan-African audience was too attractive for him to have a second thought about it'.[160] The above letter suggests this is wishful thinking. Even if we see Zungur's remarks about moral cowardice as a pretence, it seems clear that he had rather more than a second thought.

Zanna Bukar Dipcharima was from Bornu. Described by his teachers at Katsina College as 'an able man and original thinker: often most refreshingly unorthodox' whose future could nevertheless prove to be 'rather a difficult problem',[161] his political career was, indeed, erratic. Like Zungur, he was never completely happy with the NCNC, a frustration that grew as political in-fighting increased. 'It is not unity between the North and South that is as difficult', he wrote, 'as unity among the Southerners themselves'. Showing how what would later be regarded as chauvinism was, in this 'open phase' a staple of NCNC propaganda, he continued: 'The North is superior to the South ... in that once Northerners acclaim any man to be leader, they remain loyal to him'.[162] (It was perhaps in this spirit of Northern consensus that, after a brief spell with NEPU, he later crossed over to the NPC and, eventually, a cabinet post.) Challenged by the *Gaskiya* editor to explain how he, as an NCNC member, could claim to represent his home province, Dipcharima's bullish response was: 'Had I been asked by a Bornu man, I would have been really mortified, but since the query came from you I feel I am not unduly concerned. As an employee of a government paper you have to do something to justify your continued employment'.[163]

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[160] Yakubu *Sa'adu* pp 45-6.

[161] Arewa House: SNP 12/2/28 40428 S.2 'NCNC Delegation to England'.

[162] *West African Pilot* 15/10/1947.

Yet this issue was not just the focus of good-natured banter. The question of who has the right to represent whom was central to the debate about the political future of Nigeria. The NCNC and, later, NEPU challenged the right of chiefs to sit in the Northern legislature as representatives of the people. If anything, it was argued, the chiefs should represent the government. It was impossible, they claimed, for a hereditary chief (who may be deposed at any time) to express opinions which were not in line with official thinking. The real representatives of the people were those whom the people had chosen to support: the politicians. The British took the opposite view, that, in the words of an article in *Gaskiya*, 'the northerners listen to no one but their chiefs'.[164] This was a favourite colonial fiction: it was impossible for an African to hold opinions which were at variance with those of his traditional ruler. Exceptions to this rule could all safely be written off as lunatics, heretics or disgruntled ex-Native Authority employees with axes to grind. Nigerians with significant levels of 'Western' education were considered to be so alienated from their own people that they could never be said to represent anyone but themselves. This picture was more complicated in the Northern case. Products of Katsina College, who had been indoctrinated with the value of their own culture as the British imagined it, were met with a certain ambivalence – distrust of those who associated themselves with political organisations but support for those who came out against the southern politicians.

The British approach[165] was at its most shaky among peoples whose chieftaincy tradition was the most shallow. The Tiv Progressive Union (TPU), for instance, was all too often dismissed as irrelevant because it had no major chiefs among its membership. Problematic as this may have been for the colonial administration, it was hardly so for the Tiv. Likewise, *Gaskiya*'s rejection of the TPU lay on a false assumption: that its status as the only Northern constituent of the NCNC meant that it was intended to represent the

[163] *West African Pilot* 31/8/1946.

[164] SNP's office translation of *Gaskiya* 19/6/1946.

entire region. The newspaper ridiculed the idea that 'the Tiv are now the mouthpiece for ... the people from Ilorin to Bornu from Adamawa to Sokoto!'[166] Regular letter-writers jumped on the bandwagon. One correspondent asked how it was that a division whose first middle school had been built less than fifteen years previously had managed to produce a worthy representative of the Northern Provinces. 'I am sure,' he wrote, 'that up to 1935, the year I left Katsina College, not a single *Munshi* was there, and in the short time since then is there one among them who can represent the North?'[167] The only person who could represent the whole North, he declared, would be an educated man, chosen by the Sultan of Sokoto with the agreement of other Northern chiefs. The feeling that the ground was being prepared for someone with all the qualities of Ahmadu Sardauna is hard to escape.[168] The newspaper's attacks on the alleged pretensions of the TPU suggest not just an oversight on the part of the NCNC but a gap in the market for the Northern elite.[169]

### 1.3 NEPA and NEPU

As with all of the earliest political associations in Northern Nigeria, there is an element of mystery about the formation of the Northern Elements Progressive Association (NEPA)[170]. This forerunner of NEPU was founded in Kano, in 1946. According to Tafawa Balewa's biographer, 'NEPA's philosophy was that the enemy was not the south and southerners, but autocracy in any form, for which an all-Nigerian nationalist movement would be the only remedy...

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[165] 'The British approach' describes a set of attitudes frequently encountered among colonial officials, and is not meant to imply that all British people thought or behaved the same way.

[166] SNP's office translation of *Gaskiya* 19/6/1946.

[167] Naturally enough, this was the case. Katsina College was Muslim-only until 1936. The Teacher Training College at Toro, however, had been running since 1928.

[168] Here again one is wary of the dangers of teleology. I do not suggest that there was anything inevitable about Ahmadu Sardauna's rise to power.

[169] Umaru Agaye in *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo* 11/9/1946. My translation.

[170] Known in Hausa as Jam'iyyar Al'ummar Nijeriya Ta Arewa (JANA). Some sources give the date of NEPA's foundation as 1947. JANA's role in the south of the country appears to have been as much as a welfare organisation for Northerners as a political one. See Monday Yakiban Mangwat 'Oral Sources and the Reconstruction of Party Politics on the Jos Plateau' in Yusufu Bala Usman and George Amale Kwanashie (eds.) *Nigeria Since Independence, 1950-1970: Events, Issues and Sources* (Ibadan: Presidential Panel on Nigeria Since Independence History Project, 1995) p301 fn 14.

their obvious southern sympathies lost them their hope of mass northern urban support'. The writer takes a contrary view, that NEPA – whose political philosophy was always a work in progress – failed because it was made to fail.

A contemporary intelligence report suggests NEPA was founded as an offshoot of Abubakar Zukogi's Nupe Progressive Association, but there appears to be no evidence to confirm this.[171] It is, however, no surprise to hear that name: one of the most vocal Northern radicals, Zukogi was involved in politics at an early stage. Although the party is usually characterised as a revolutionary opponent of chieftaincy, Zukogi's career, which is discussed in Chapter Five, suggests that the picture of NEPA/NEPU as radical and NPC as conservative is too simple, especially in the context of the 1940s and early 1950s when organisations' memberships overlapped so much.[172] Many members were queasy about allowing their organisation to be used as a platform to attack the Native Authority system. 'Instead,' writes Kirk-Greene, 'the Northern agenda was reformist rather than radical'[173]. Indeed, NEPA devoted a lot of time and energy to trying to bring the Emirs on to their side – perhaps the main difference between them and the NPC lies in the latter's success in this endeavour.

The characterisation of NEPA as a one-Nigeria party differs somewhat from its contemporary reputation, if we accept the account of a police eavesdropper. The latter overheard three Yoruba men discussing politics in Kaduna Post Office. When the Zikist Movement was favourably mentioned, one of the men countered by claiming that the Kaduna Branch of the Zikists was obviously just for the Igbos, as could be seen by the almost-exclusively Igbo reception for Azikiwe the previous week. NEPA, by contrast, was 'composed mainly of Hausas who are claiming "North for Northerners and South for Southerners"'.

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[171] CID Report, June 1947. Waziri Junaidu Bureau of History and Culture, Sokoto: Niger Province Archives: 'Abubakar Zukogi, NEPU and Bida Vol I'.

[172] Trevor Clark *A Right Honourable Gentleman: Abubakar From the Black Rock* (London: Edward Arnold, 1991) p93.

[173] A H M Kirk-Greene 'Shaping the Hero: The Politicization of the Cultural Imperative in Nigeria's Search for Leadership 1945-1960' in Heidi Willer et al. (eds) *Macht der Identität – Identität der Macht: Politische Prozesse und Kultureller Wandel in Afrika* (Mũnster: 1995) pp42-3.

He went on to say that Yorubas in Kaduna should be trying to inaugurate a branch of the Ẹgbẹ Ọmọ Oduduwa 'which would also be for the Yorubas only'.[174]

This view of NEPA as saying 'North for the Northerners' is coloured by the desire to garner support for the forerunner of the Action Group, but it begs the question: if members wanted an 'all Nigerian' movement, why not stick with the NCNC? Or why not make the NEPA a constituent body of the NCNC rather than an independent affiliate? The reason is that what NEPA had was a prototypical Northern nationalism – but a brand of Northern nationalism not reliant on a total juxtaposition of Northern and Southern interests. It is far from clear that such an approach was unpopular. NEPA's successor, NEPU, achieved widespread support despite alliance with the NCNC. They found it advantageous to have candidates standing for election in their home areas, but this had more to do with the knowledge required to tap into local political disputes than any innate disregard for southerners on the part of the electorate.

The report quoted above comes from March 1948, when the police were focussing their energies on finding out more about the Association, where it had come from, who was involved and what potential threat it posed. The timing is significant. The Gold Coast Riots of that month had made the authorities suddenly aware of how precarious their hold on the colonies could be. Overnight, all social and political organisations became suspect. For instance, when an informer revealed that ex-Servicemen had started holding meetings in the *Sabon Gari* (new town, or strangers' quarters) of Zaria, the Assistant Superintendent of Police wrote:

> According to him the meetings so far are completely non-political. In fact I am given to understand that their characteristics are more nearly allied to an Old Comrades Association, whose object is to help each other. This seems too good to be true. *At the present time it is not easy to envisage any assembly of Africans which is innocent of all political bias.* Nevertheless, such an Association contains untold potentialities for evil and I shall do my best to watch them through the means at my disposal. *If we are to be faced with a situation such [as] has*

[174] Arewa House: SNP 15/1/14 43049 'NCNC'. Assistant Commissioner of Police, Kaduna to Commissioner of Police, Lagos 3/3/1948.

> *already developed on the Gold Coast, it is reasonable to suppose that any existing core of es-Servicemen [sic] will be the first to take the field.*[175]

The emphasised sentences are revealing inasmuch as they express in so many words a sentiment implicit in many of the documents: we must avoid a repeat of the Accra riots in Nigeria.

In Kaduna, a keen interest was taken in the riots. According to intelligence reports, it was popularly believed that people in the Gold Coast were more capable of rioting because they were 'more united than Nigerians'. This disunity was said to have affected even the Nigerian reinforcements who had been sent to help police Accra. Rumour had it that the troops were split along regional lines: Southerners would not open fire on fellow Africans, while the more obedient Hausas would do as they were told. Within a couple of days, the rumour had mutated: Northern soldiers were refusing to shoot at rioters because of a dispute over money, but Southern soldiers had not been sent at all (because it was feared that they would just fire at the Europeans).[176] This gossip may tell us more about the state of the colonial order than about how Northerners and Southerners saw their place in it. That such tittle-tattle was monitored and recorded shows something of the heightened sensitivity of the regime to its own susceptibility.

Throughout 1948, NEPA members were harassed, intimidated and, in the case of civil servants and NA employees, threatened with the sack. There were plenty of cases of politically-motivated dismissals to serve as a warning.[177] By

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[175] Arewa House: SNP 15/3/62 43801 S.4 'Police Intelligence Zaria Province'. Intelligence Report, 2/4/1948. The Superintendent's fears were not far wrong. In May, the Zaria Ex-Servicemen's Union (approximately 1000 people, 100 of whom were Southerners) began to discuss a possible alliance with the NCNC.

[176] Arewa House: 'NCNC'. Assistant Commissioner of Police, Kaduna to Private Secretary to the Officer Administering the Government 6/3/1948.

[177] Ironically, the example most frequently cited, that of Abdurrahman Bida, pharmacist, is not a clear-cut case. The latter claimed he had been sacked because he was the leader of the Kano Native Authority Workers Union (and a NEPA member) but never expressly denied the accusation that he had falsified store records to cover up shortages in supplies. (See Abdurrahman Bida 'The Resident of Kano Versus the N. E. P. A.' in *West African Pilot* 20/9/1948 quoted in Alkasum Abba (ed.) *The Politics of Principles in Nigeria: The Example of the NEPU* (Zaria: Ceddert, 2000) pp1-3.) The Civil Secretary later wrote: 'I am aware that there was ample justification for his dismissal as an incompetent storekeeper, but I have no doubt in my own mind that Kano [N. A.] was very glad to get rid of him on other grounds also'.

September 1948, Kano's Superintendent of Police was able to report that NEPA had 'been quiet for a long time'[178]. Nothing more was heard from them. That same month, in Zaria and Kaduna, meetings were held that would result in the formation of what would become the dominant political force in Nigeria: the Northern People's Congress.

### 1.4 The *Jam'iyyar Mutanen Arewa* – The Northern People's Congress[179]

That this project begins as the Second World War ends should not be taken as an indication that Northerners were politically inactive before that time. [180] New 'discussion groups' were constantly emerging both before and during the war. Trying to avoid overt politics, they took names like 'Bauchi Discussion Circle', 'Zaria Friendly Society' and 'Sokoto Youth Social Circle'. Sa'adu Zungur started one under the guise of a keep-fit class – it grew into the Northern Nigerian Youth Movement, which in turn became the Northern Provinces General Improvement Union.[181]

Also, political questions were constantly debated by the newspapers throughout the war – even by *Gaskiya*. The paper had regular correspondence about whether district heads should be given compulsory training before being appointed, whether it was Islamically acceptable to prostrate the whole body before an Emir (see prologue), and why so few Hausa people worked on the railway.[182] But the end of the war brought with it such massive change that the social and political life of the country was injected with a new vitality and dynamism.

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(Minute, 7/5/1953. Arewa House: SNP 27/1/21 55340 'Mallam Abdurrahman Bida'.) In 1953, five years after his original sacking, he was re-appointed under the northernization programme.

[178] Superintendent of Police, Kano Province to Assistant Commissioner of Police, Kaduna, 3/9/1948. Arewa House: 15/3/60 43801 S.2 Police Intelligence Reports, Kano Province.

[179] It is conventional to refer to the organisation as JMA before it was declared a political party and as NPC thereafter (even though the name NPC had been in use before then). The translation of the names follows that of A H M Kirk-Greene in 'Shaping the Hero'.

[180] See G Olusanya 'Political Awakening in the North: A Re-interpretation' in *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* Vol IX (Dec 1967).

[181] Yakubu *Sa'adu Zungur* p27.

[182] *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo*, e.g. 29/4/1944, 22/11/1944, 6/12/1944, 31/1/1945, 14/5/1945. For the debate on prostration (*sunkuyawa*) see Yakubu *Sa'adu Zungur* pp111-123.

Zungur's Northern Nigerian Youth Movement may have been a broad, inclusive organisation (as with many of its contemporaries, honorary membership even extended to colonial officials) but it did not reach beyond Zaria. What distinguished the Northern People's Congress (NPC) from its predecessors was that it had members representing every Province in the North. This was largely down to the Old Boy network. The core members of the organisation had been educated together at Katsina College – indeed, according to Nuhu Bamalli, it was at a meeting of the Old Boys' Association in 1939 that the idea of One North was formed.[183]

Two crucial meetings were held in September 1948. In an apparent coincidence, two separate groups established movements with similar names: the *Jam'iyyar Mutanen Arewa A Yau* (JMA *A Yau* or Association of Modern Northern People) convened by D A Rafih in Kaduna and the *Jam'iyyar Jama'ar Arewa* (JJA or Northern Nigerian Congress) convened by R A B Dikko[184] in Zaria. On 12 October, members of both groups met up and agreed to found a single entity, to be called the *Jam'iyyar Mutanen Arewa* (JMA). This organisation was inaugurated on 26 June 1949.

The developments of September/October 1948 may be unrelated to a flurry of activity earlier in the year, or they may not. Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, for instance, was observed visiting Sa'adu Zungur (who was to furnish the JMA with its English translation) in Kaduna in March 1948, in the company of the editor of *Gaskiya*, Abubakar Imam (who was to play a key role in persuading Northern parliamentarians to join the NPC in 1951). Imam then went on to meet the Private Secretaries to the Emirs of Katsina, Bauchi, Gwandu and Zaria, followed by a further meeting, between Abubakar Zukogi and the Emirs of Katsina, Bida, Zaria, Bauchi and Bornu some days later. The combinations of

[183] *Nigerian Citizen* 15/5/1961.

[184] A Fulani Christian from Zaria, Russell Adamu Barau Dikko was educated by Walter Miller and sent by him to study medicine in Birmingham (where he was known as Russell Dickson). He was the North's first qualified doctor. He resigned from the NPC when it became a political party because of his position in the civil service. However, there had been no problem with political opinions voiced as a private individual: his strong comments against the NCNC in *Gaskiya* 165 (1946) earned him much admiration

people seem strange, and suggest a concerted effort to bring together Northern Emirs, more conservative members of the intelligentsia (like Tafawa Balewa and Imam) and more radical ones (like Zukogi and Zungur) under the same umbrella. These discussions may have been connected with the formation of the JMA later in the year, but it is equally possible that they were connected to the Northern Nigeria Tribal Union, which will be discussed below.[185]

The same police intelligence reports that tell us about all this have no reference to the meetings at which the JMA *A Yau* or JJA were formed. However, the authorities were, as ever, keeping tabs on the NCNC and it is in the record of one of their meetings in Kaduna on 7 October that the following observation is made: '[it was] suggested that unity and co-operation between the Northerners and Southerners should be sought. Members were appointed to meet Dr Diko [sic] and seek his advice on how the unity and co-operation may be gained. Mr Ahmed of G. B. Olivant, Zaria, volunteered to speak to certain Northern Organization in Zaria on this subject'[186]. Coming less than a week before the famous coming-together in Zaria, this report suggests a great irony: that NCNC members may have provided the catalyst for the meeting at which the prototype-Northern People's Congress was formed.

'The cultural imperative in the founding of the JMA,' writes AHM Kirk-Greene, 'is as clear and unchallenged as the noonday sun above Sokoto in mid-May'[187]. Kirk-Greene's article, 'Shaping the hero', provides an incisive argument that culture was politicised, not only in the nationalist sense (to mobilise people against colonial domination) but as part of the competition for national political legitimacy within the Nigerian state and that, in the case of the JMA, we have an example of the cultural imperative being the very 'mainspring' of the creation of a political party. The implication is that the desire to preserve Northern

[185] Arewa House: 'NCNC'. Assistant Commissioner of Police, Kaduna, to the Private Secretary to the Officer Administering the Government 4/3/1948

[186] Arewa House: SNP 15/3/62 43801 S.4 'Police Intelligence Zaria Province'. Assistant Superintendent of Police to Assistant Commissioner of Police, Kaduna 7/10/1948. It is unclear whether the writer intended to use the plural or simply forgot to include the indefinite article, so we cannot tell whether the NCNC members were aware of multiple Northern organisations in the Province.

[187] Kirk-Greene 'Shaping the Hero' p43.

*culture was, in itself, the genesis of the NPC and that all else follows on from* that.[188]

There are four relevant points that, while not necessarily in opposition to this argument, can perhaps moderate or balance it. The first is that the JMA's apolitical stance was more out of necessity than choice. Although the organisation promoted itself as a Northern cultural organisation, non-political in *nature, this was at least partly a pragmatic ploy to avoid the fate of NEPA. It* was important to convince the British that the organisation was harmless. The JMA were equally concerned to impress the Emirs. More prescient members may have seen that great rewards would one day be reaped by whoever could forge an alliance between the (overlapping) educated and traditional elites. For the moment, however, most were simply aware of how difficult it would be for their organisation to operate without the approval of the Native Authorities.

According to Yahaya Gusau, an important part of the non-political façade of the JMA was its refusal to adopt an English name.[189] It seems that, for all that had been said about turning Hausa into a high-status literary language (see prologue), the JMA could rely upon a colonial assumption that an organisation which conducted its affairs in English was threatening, and one which did not, was not. Yet there is a flipside to this: if the choice of a Hausa name was – in Dudley's phrase – 'to emphasise its "Northern" outlook', what did that mean?[190] Hausa was the most widely spoken language in the North, but the tacit implication that Hausa=Northern is not without its problems.

This leads us on to the second point: that asserting the existence of something called *Northern culture* is itself a political act. The boundaries delimited by the colonial state were not uncontested and, by implying a cultural similarity running through the Northern Provinces, the JMA was making a statement about where people's loyalties should lie.

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[188] A H M Kirk-Greene 'Shaping the hero' p42.

[189] Yahaya Gusau, interview, Kaduna 21/5/2002.

[190] Dudley *Parties and Politics* p79.

The third point concerns the content of the early nationalist discourse. Kirk-Greene readily concedes that there is something definitely political about the 'War against ignorance, indolence and injustice' that was the JMA motto, but argues that this is exceptional: 'in nearly every instance it was Northern culture and traditions, language and history, which found their way into the debates', he writes. However, newspaper reports seem to indicate that there was a fair amount politics, too – despite the limits that the JMA had imposed on itself. According to *Gaskiya*, the meeting hosted by Dr Dikko had the following agenda:

1. 'Nigerian affairs'
2. The need for children 'of all tribes' to receive education.
3. The possibility of raising money for self-help schemes.

Dikko, in his speech, pointed out that Igbo and Yoruba groups had long since been forming self-help clubs and that theirs was an example worth copying. He asked the assembled people what they thought the North's main problems were, before giving his own opinion: that the NA system was too restrictive and that people's roles in it lacked definition – in contrast to the civil service with its clear guidelines. Further, he felt that promotion was not always given on merit, meaning that employees lacked ambition and drive. The content of the speech was perhaps conditioned by how many NA workers were in the room, but even at this early stage, the new organisation was looking for ways to persuade others to join. Chiefs, merchants, NA employees and commoners were all wanted. *Gaskiya* invited suggestions from its readers as to how this could be achieved.

Rafih's group also had the North's problems at the top of the agenda. As mentioned above, those meeting in Kaduna were discussing the 'war on the three evils' (*Yaki da Ci Uku*) of indolence, injustice and ignorance (*lalaci, zalunci, jahilci*). In neither of the articles describing the meetings is there any

mention of protecting Northern culture.[191] This leads on to the fourth point. In an environment in which political activity of any sort was regarded as dubious, how were the JMA leaders to achieve the aim that Dr Dikko announced, of enticing Emirs, merchants and commoners to join them? A slogan such as 'Self-Government now!' or 'Let's Reform the NA System!' would attract no royal support. Even those who were well placed within the new assembly, such as Tafawa Balewa (a trustee of the Gaskiya Corporation) would be risking their positions by supporting such a strong policy. But 'No to Self-Government!' could only alienate those who wanted to use the JMA as a political force in the future. The important thing was to have a large, well-connected organisation that could spring into action as soon as the prohibition on politics was lifted. A commitment to 'protecting Northern culture' could safely be supported by everyone, from Aminu Kano to the Sarkin Kano. It was innocuous enough not to stir up too much trouble. The initial spark for the JMA seems, if *Gaskiya* is anything to go by, to have been political. The development of a discourse that involved tradition, language and history was to follow.

Although the British were not as hostile to the JMA as they had been to the openly-political NEPA, there was still a good deal of suspicion in the air. From this standpoint, it may seem surprising that *Gaskiya* took the step of giving its apparent endorsement to the JMA. However, the political climate in 1948 was different from what it had been when the NCNC toured in 1946. Gradually, the newspaper was beginning to assert its independence. The editor, himself a founder member of the JMA, could act with greater confidence, having played a major role in the dispute between the management and staff at the Gaskiya Corporation, which ran from 1946 to 1948. Although the main issues under contention involved living conditions in the quarters of the *Gaskiya* village (the accommodation was free, but it was also compulsory[192]) there seems to have been a larger issue, of control, underpinning them.[193] The dispute was, to

[191] *Gaskiya*, 22/9/1948 and 6/10/1948.

[192] Yakubu *Aristocracy* p48.

[193] The minutiae of the dispute are not discussed here. For more information, see the eighth chapter of Mora (ed.) *Abubakar Imam*, which reproduces some of the fascinating documentation, including letters between Imam and East, which also appear in Husaini Hayatu (ed.) *Fifty Years of Truth: The Story of the Gaskiya Corporation Zaria 1939-1991*

some extent, fired by the success of the 1945 General Strike, with the newspaper workers forming themselves into a union for the first time. Relations between East and Imam soured so much during these two years that the latter tendered his resignation, only to be persuaded to withdraw it later. Rupert East's writings from before the dispute make it clear that a transfer of more power into African hands was always on the cards – but perhaps not this early. From 1948, Abubakar Imam was no longer just 'Hausa Editor', with a European Editor shadowing him; he was in sole charge of what went into the paper, responsible only to the board. From August 1948, it can be argued, *Gaskiya* became less of a mouthpiece for the Northern Provinces administration and more of a mouthpiece for the emergent elite – although the interests of the two were often in alliance.

Some time after the official inauguration of the JMA in 1949, a contingent of its members, based in Kano and containing many former NEPA supporters, lobbied for the association to become openly political. Failing, they founded the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) in Kano on August 8, 1950 – the first Northern political party – as a faction within the JMA. NEPU and the JMA did not finally part company until December of that year, when the latter's conference in Jos voted to remain a 'cultural' group.

The following year, after a good deal of political horse-trading, the decision was taken to convert the JMA into a political party and allow members of the Northern House of Assembly to join after the 1951 election. Only in 1954 was the leadership of this parliamentary party accepted by the NPC as a whole. NPC members had to overcome objections to being led by the Sardauna and Tafawa Balewa, both of whom had kept a tentative distance from the organisation to begin with. Indeed, for those two men, joining the NPC was Plan 'B'. Plan 'A' had been to form a new party, led by those who already sat in the Northern Houses of Assembly: the Emirs and their nominees. This party

(Zaria: Gaskiya Corporation, 1991). The second chapter of Graham Furniss *Poetry, Prose and Popular Culture in Hausa* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996) is also informative.

would then attract so much of the JMA membership that the JMA would become obsolete.

Dudley laments that there is nothing to substantiate these claims[194]. However, such evidence is now available, in the form of intelligence reports. These show that members of both houses met on 29 and 30 April 1949 to agree the formation of a body to be known as the Northern Nigeria Tribal Union, or *Jam'iyyar Kabilun Nijeriya Ta Arewa*, which, it was said, would 'include all sections of the population native to Northern Nigeria, pagan as well as Moslem'. As of June 1949, the constitution was, according to the Sardauna, still being drawn up, but would be 'political in inspiration'.[195]

'At the moment,' reads the Sokoto Province Intelligence Summary for that month, 'it is far from clear why the Chiefs and Members of the House of Assembly wish to form this body when they already have a forum from which they can and do express their views'. On the one hand, this seems naïve: with hindsight it seems obvious that they wanted to form a political party that could be the main beneficiary of the coming transfer of power. (Of course, this is an illusion – self government seemed a distant prospect at the time.) On the other hand, it seems a fair question – why did the representatives need a party to belong to? For most of its history, the NPC was not so very much more than a corporate brand-name for the Native Authorities. After the 1951 elections, the NPC acted only as a rubber-stamp for a process which had been engineered by the NAs. The answer, according to the writer of the report, was that the NNTU was intended by the Sardauna to 'give freer expression to the traditional views of the North than it is possible [to do] in the Northern Houses and to press for the greatest possible measure of regional autonomy'. For this, the Sardauna believed it would be necessary to 'absorb and smother the Northern Nigeria Congress [sic]'. Another report suggested that the aim was to 'absorb and *destroy*' the JMA.[196] Why should this be so?

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[194] Made by Nuhu Bamalli in *Nigerian Citizen* 15/5/1961.

[195] Arewa House: SNP 17/4/61 45986 'Northern Nigeria Tribal Union'. Sokoto Province Intelligence Summary, June 1949.

[196] Ibid., Northern Provinces Intelligence Summary, July 1949. Emphasis added.

Perhaps the JMA's main selling point – that it was a broad organisation which tolerated many shades of opinion – was also its main problem. It was broad enough to permit the membership of people like Sa'adu Zungur. The report suggested that the NNTU leaders 'must be congratulating themselves that they remained aloof from the Kaduna meeting' at which the *Jam'iyyar Mutanen Arewa* was inaugurated[197] because of the forthright way in which Zungur and his comrades called for the powers of Emirs to be curtailed.

By July, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa had gone further with what was described as 'his project of forming a political party on the lines of Egbe Omo Oduduwa'. The latter was a 'cultural' society for Yorubas which, rather like the JMA, would eventually be converted into a political party: the Action Group (AG). Tafawa Balewa had finished a draft of the Union's Aims and Objectives but, unfortunately, there is no full record of them. The report only mentioned two, and this with the sarcastic intention of highlighting an apparent contradiction. The NNTU's stated aims, the report said, 'attempt ... to secure the co-operation of both the traditionalists and of those with Western education, and include: - (b) to "keep the customs of the North free from modern influences" and (e) to "encourage mass literacy of the modern type".[198] Sarcastic this may have been – but the comment also identifies a potential problem for any modernising nationalist movement. How do you protect the 'tradition' that helps define the nation at the same time as importing the new ideas essential for modernisation[199]. This relates to another question, of central importance to a plural society such as Nigeria: which traditions are those that define the nation? Many on the Lagos political scene had made the assumption that the process embarked upon under the Richards Constitution involved bringing the North into the political mainstream – that is, the world of the coastal elite. Tafawa Balewa, by contrast, warned 'that a nation of Nigerians would not be developed

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[197] Ibid.

[198] *Ibid.*

[199] Or, as Tafawa Balewa later put it 'grafting modern ideas on the old stock'. From his speech to the Northern House of Assembly 19/8/1950 quoted in A D Yahaya *The Native Authority System 1950-1970: A Study of Political Relations with Particular Reference to the Zaria Native Authority* (Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1980) p225.

out of southern heritages alone'.[200] Since that time, commentators have tended to focus on the opposite tendency: the supposed cultural dominance of the North within Nigerian nationhood, as symbolic of Northern political hegemony.[201]

For Tafawa Balewa, the more immediate issue was simply how to persuade the Emirs that it was in their best interests to get involved. Intelligence reports suggest that, even with the help of people (such as the Sardauna) who were equally close to the leading royal families and to the College Old Boys, this crucial part of the plan was not working. The Emirs were not interested, nor would they be until after Tafawa Balewa's momentous speech to the House of Assembly in August 1950.

**1.5 Abubakar Tafawa Balewa**

Abubakar Tafawa Balewa stood up at the Northern House of Assembly on 19 August 1950, to move that a commission be established to look into ways of reforming the Native Authority system. His powerful speech articulated the grievances of his college-educated brethren who, while willing to vote for the motion, had been unwilling to stick their own heads above the parapet in this way. To understand the significance of this moment, we need back up a little.

A low-born member of the Gerawa ethnic group of Bauchi Province, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was a rare example of the state-educated *talaka*. Having excelled at Katsina College, he completed his teacher training at the Institute of Education in London and returned in 1946 to become headmaster of Bauchi Middle School and to take up a post in the Council of the Sarkin Bauchi. The Emir himself was not best pleased at being leant on to include an 'upstart' commoner in his Council.[202] Nonetheless, he was picked as Bauchi's

[200] Clark *Right Honourable Gentleman* p94.

[201] See, for instance, Andrew Apter 'The Subvention of Tradition: A Genealogy of the Nigerian Durbar' in G Steinmetz (ed.) *State/Culture: State Formation After the Cultural Turn* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1999).

[202] Arewa House: 'Tafawa Balewa'. Bauchi Political Intelligence Summary, December 1947 reports the lack of trust. An undated report in the same file says that the other councillors 'consider him an upstart'. A M Yakubu's interviewee remarked on the Emir's resentment at having to appoint Tafawa Balewa. See A M Yakubu 'The Demise of Indirect Rule in Northern

representative in the new Northern House of Assembly. Under the Richards Constitution of 1946 (first brought into action in 1947) authority over the affairs of the Northern Provinces was passed to the Assembly, whose unofficial members were nominated by their Native Authorities. The House would, in turn, elect from among its members representatives to sit on the Legislative Council in Lagos (later to conduct some of its sessions in the Northern capital, Kaduna). This is how Tafawa Balewa found himself preparing to give his debut speech to the LegCo in March of 1947.

Tafawa Balewa was in the habit of writing to the Resident of Bauchi for 'fatherly advice'[203] on political matters, and he had done so on this occasion. The speech began with words of warning about 'Nigerian unity'. '[Since] 1914 Nigeria has existed as one country only on paper', he said. 'It is still far from being considered as one country, much less to think of it as being united.' He went on to call for a higher percentage of government revenues to be spent on the North[204], on roads, water supplies and, above all, education, before launching into a withering attack on the NCNC. Referring to their recent tour of the North, he said 'We did not ... understand the real intention of that tour and we naturally mistook it for one of friendship. We had never dreamed, Sir, that it could ever possibly happen that these people could have thought of becoming our mouthpiece'. His final words are the best remembered:

> The Northern people are men themselves and do not ask for any other people to fight for them. We shall demand our rights when the time is ripe. We do want independence and we shall demand it when the time is ripe and we shall even be prepared to fight for it if necessary, 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.

Tafawa Balewa had inserted the remark about preparedness to fight for independence, in pen, to the typed version of the speech which he sent to the

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Nigeria' in T Ranger and O Vaughan (eds.) *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth Century Africa* (London: Macmillan, 1993) p187 fn16.

[203] Arewa House: 'Tafawa Balewa'. Tafawa Balewa uses this phrase in e.g. his letter to H H Wilkinson (Resident Bauchi) 26/4/1947.

[204] This was prompted by the Governor's observation that the 54% of the population who lived in the North had contributed 46% of all regional revenues but that only 36% of total expenditure had been in the North. See Clark *Right Honourable Gentleman* p97.

Resident in advance. The Resident suggested that it be published in *Nigeria Review* or *Gaskiya* but the Secretary, Northern Provinces (SNP) said that it would not be 'nearly so effective' in a newspaper.[205] Tafawa Balewa had got the go-ahead to deliver the speech to the Legislative Council, and no one had suggested that the extraordinary remark about conquest might 'foster antipathy between North and South'.[206] The Governor, on hearing the speech, immediately passed him a note of congratulation.

Tafawa Balewa's biographer reports that the speech was prepared with something 'more than encouragement' from the District Officer (D. O.) Robert Wright. As Tafawa Balewa's supervisor in the education department, Wright reported that, as a headmaster, Tafawa Balewa 'is overbearing with his staff, lazy and has no head for detail'[207]. This seems a curious comment from someone so willing to dedicate time and energy to Tafawa Balewa's political activities. Other comments dotted around the official correspondence indicate the ambivalent nature of Tafawa Balewa's relationship with officialdom. Although he respectfully consulted senior figures in the Provincial administration before making big decisions, there seems to have been some suspicion that this was part of a wider plan to ingratiate himself with authority.[208] Indeed, some people were willing to believe reports in the *West African Pilot* to the effect that Tafawa Balewa was, in reality, a firm supporter of the NCNC. Even after he had sent letters to the *Daily Times*, to *Gaskiya* and to the Public Relations Officer protesting that he had been misquoted and condemning

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[205] Arewa House: 'NCNC Tours by Members of. This line of the speech is omitted from the version reproduced in ibid., (which also uses the word 'uninterrupted' rather than 'interrupted'), but features in the official record. See Legislative Council of Nigeria *Debates* 24/3/1947.

[206] D J M Muffett believes that this phrase accounts for the way in which Abubakar Tafawa Balewa's corpse was disposed of. The body was found as far south as the Caliphate's soldiers ever got, at the 'precise point' where they had turned around. He was 'propped against a tree, his eye sockets empty, staring south'. D J M Muffett *Let Truth Be Told: The Coups d'Etat of 1966* (Zaria: Hudahuda, 1982) p61.

[207] Arewa House: 'Tafawa Balewa'. Report, undated.

[208] Tafawa Balewa gave himself the tactical advantage of having the administration apparently on his side. As one report put it, 'He is anxious to keep in with authority, whether African or British'. Ibid.

Azikiwe and the NCNC, the suspicion continued.[209] In a meeting initiated by Tafawa Balewa, the Resident of Bauchi asked how close he really was to Zik. Tafawa Balewa responded that the Zikists had threatened to assassinate him – but this failed to impress the Resident, who wrote that 'as he is closely associated with Aminu Kano [through the Northern Teachers Association] who is hand in glove with Saadu Zungur who is Federal Secretary of the NCNC methinks the gentleman doth protest too much'.[210]

It was at this meeting, in 1948, that Tafawa Balewa brought up his idea for another speech, this one to be delivered to the Northern House of Assembly. In it, he intended to call for 'a Commission of Inquiry into the working of the system of Indirect Rule introduced by Lord Lugard'. According to the Resident:

> He said he feared to do so, as he risked martyrdom if he gave facts supporting the resolution. These facts turned out to be vague and unconvincing charges that the Emirs had held back their people in education. In the end it turned out that what he really wished to advocate was that emirs should be made constitutional monarchs and the councils given greater powers. After an hour's conversation he decided to drop the idea.[211]

But Tafawa Balewa did not drop the idea. He waited for a little over two years, biding his time, and trying to coax the Emirs into becoming active members of the proposed NNTU. Seeing that these efforts had failed, and aware of the potential of NEPU, which had formed a few days earlier, Tafawa Balewa took the plunge. He arrived at the Northern House of Assembly on the 19th of August 1950, clutching the speech that would make his name.

The tone of the speech was quite different from his previous efforts. Where his calls for reform had once been tentative, he now rounded on the Native Authority system itself, saying that it had 'outlived its usefulness so long that it

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[209] Arewa House: 'Tafawa Balewa'. The original comments were quoted in *West African Pilot* 10/4/1947. Abubakar Tafawa Balewa's letter to the PRO was dated 15/4/1947. His denials appeared in *Daily Times* 1/5/1947 and *Gaskiya* 14/5/1947.

[210] Arewa House: 'Tafawa Balewa'. Political Intelligence Summary, Bauchi Province 20/6/1948.

[211] Ibid.

*now constitutes the chief barrier to our progress*'[212]. It was inflexible, unresponsive to public opinion and afflicted by endemic corruption. The 'helplessness' of the masses was, he said, 'shockingly abused'. 'Far from the chiefs having well defined duties, one of the biggest defects of the system is the complete ignorance of everyone from top to bottom about his rights, his obligations and his powers'.

The people, he claimed, had known no change in their status since the arrival of the British – they were 'still ruled by might'. Denouncing the very concept of the Sole Native Authority as against the principles of Islam, he called for the democratisation of the NA councils. His frank warning to the Emirs that they would have to take account of a 'new class' of western-educated Northerners spoke volumes about the frustration he had felt when trying to set up the NNTU.

Abubakar's motion was passed with the unanimous support of his fellow NA nominees. All the official members voted against. The SNP, as president of the chamber, remarked that the officials were opposed only because of the proposed method – democratisation could not be imposed by a commission made up of outsiders.[213] This seems a little disingenuous. Tafawa Balewa had, in fact, been careful to ask for a commission including people with experience of Nigeria. He was, perhaps, aware of the Watson Commission in the Gold Coast, which consisted of three Britons who had never set foot in the country until they were asked to examine the causes of the Accra riots. Although that commission (unexpectedly) made suggestions for constitutional reform of the sort that Tafawa Balewa wanted for Nigeria, he believed that 'an entirely Alien Commission could never hope to absorb our atmosphere or appreciate, for example, the extent to which the system is deep in the poison I have mentioned'. Consequently, he called for a five-man team, consisting of:

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[212] This and all other references to Abubakar Tafawa Balewa's 19/8/1950 speech to the Northern House of Assembly can be found in Appendix 1 of Yahaya *The Native Authority System* pp225-229.

[213] Clark *A Right Honourable Gentleman* p145.

(i) A Professor of Political Science 'from an English University'.
(ii) A retired administrative officer of the North.
(iii) A serving administrative officer of the North.
(iv) An 'experienced and trusted friend of the North'.
(v) Someone with recent knowledge of local government in East Africa.

His suggestion as to (iv) above was Dr Walter Miller. Miller had recently published two books: *Have We Failed in Nigeria?* and *Success in Nigeria? Assets and Possibilities*. The government had not foreseen the popularity of the former and, in banning the latter, (a far less dangerous work, concentrating on the potential future of the country rather than its existing faults) had greatly increased Miller's credibility in the eyes of the intelligentsia.

Both the Sarkin Musulmi and the Sarkin Kano took umbrage at the mention of Miller. The latter, remarking through the Resident, Kano Province, that 'Dr. Miller is by no means universally liked or trusted in the North' suggested that Tafawa Balewa 'may have been inspired by the writings of, or personal contact with, Dr. Miller, whose published views they accurately reflect'.[214]

There are indeed similarities between Miller's thoughts and those of Tafawa Balewa (who, as stated above, originally intended to give his speech in the same year as *Success in Nigeria?* was published). While the latter believed that the NA system was a 'barrier' to progress, Miller described it as 'a festering sore'[215] needing to be amputated. Both were at pains to assert their admiration of Lord Lugard, but just as Tafawa Balewa believed that 'Lugard surely never intended that the expedient of the hour should remain the unchanging authority of all time', Miller said that Indirect Rule, though the brainchild of 'one of the greatest rulers Africa has ever had', had failed to change with the times, degenerating into 'a fetish from which the author would have turned with

[214] Arewa House: SNP 19/6/123 47946 'Abubakar's Motion'. Resident Sokoto to SNP 7/9/1950 and Resident Kano to SNP 6/9/1950.

[215] Walter R Miller *Success in Nigeria? Assets and Possibilities* (London: United Society for Christian Literature, 1948) p19.

surprised displeasure'.[216] Also, both were scathing about bureaucracy – Miller pitying the capable men who had to 'break their hearts over red tape and work for which they were not intended'[217], and Tafawa Balewa decrying the 'ever growing piles of paper' with which administrators were saddled. However, there is a crucial area where the two differ: Tafawa Balewa was a strong advocate of adapting the Westminster model of government to Nigeria. Miller, however, did not feel 'that a parliamentary system such as our own would be suitable in this land'[218], preferring a series of councils 'approximating to the fine ideal underlying the Russian Soviet system'. To a man like Tafawa Balewa, whose blood ran cold at the mention of communism, this held no appeal.

The effect of the speech was enormous. Inside the House, 'the administration put up a feeble defence before it caved in'.[219] Outside, Tafawa Balewa's speech was serialised by *Gaskiya* and received the overwhelming support of its readers.

Tafawa Balewa did *not* get his commission. Instead, two District Officers were despatched to tour the Northern Provinces, surveying the NA system. Yakubu describes this as 'an exercise in damage-limitation'. As he has observed, the administration began to consider reforms 'in panic rather than from any blueprint'.[220] According to Clark, the two men selected, Maddocks and Pott, had not even read the speech which had prompted their mission – a mission completed at break-neck speed, in under six weeks.[221]

Yet the importance of the speech is not to be measured by its popularity with district officers, so much as its capacity to mobilise opinion among the elites. The Maddocks-Pott report was not the only immediate consequence of the

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[216] Walter R Miller *Have We Failed In Nigeria?* (London: United Society for Christian Literature, 1947) pp37-8.

[217] Miller *Success in Nigeria?* p21.

[218] Miller *Have We Failed in Nigeria?* p39.

[219] Yakubu 'The Demise of Indirect Rule' p179, p173.

[220] Ibid.,

[221] Clark *A Right Honourable Gentleman* p147.

*speech – there was also a summary of Emirs' reactions, hastily compiled by* Acting Chief Commissioner Bryan Sharwood Smith, which convinced the Governor to allow for the establishment of a series of two-tier conferences across the length and breadth of the Northern Provinces. In these 'NA Conferences' and 'General Conferences' discussions were held by traditional and western-educated/commercial elites respectively, which led to sweeping changes in the way local government was run and contributed to a revision of *Nigeria's constitution – the Macpherson Constitution of 1951 – many years* earlier than had been anticipated.[222]

A M Yakubu has written thoughtful and intriguing work on Tafawa Balewa's 1950 speech, comparing its impact with that of a Despatch to African Governors written by Colonial Secretary Arthur Creech-Jones in 1947, which has been credited with inspiring reform across the continent. In the Northern Nigerian case, Yakubu feels this does not apply. The first steps towards democratisation of local government were, he says, the result of 'pressures mounted by the educated elites'. Such pressures had been anticipated – but not this soon, and not of this intensity. The hurried colonial response and the absence of any reference to Creech-Jones' Despatch in any of the related correspondence suggest 'that local circumstances rather than imperial foresight dictated the widening of the collaborative basis of indirect rule by incorporating the hitherto despised western-educated elites'.[223]

We can gain a different perspective from the more radical work of Kazah-Toure. He maintains that there is a two-way split between scholars who believe (as Yakubu appears to) that independence was achieved by the agitations of the educated elite and those (such as himself) who think independence was achieved by the struggle of the masses. A possible third group, who believe that Britain gave up her empire because, politically and financially, it was no

[222] The Western and Eastern Provinces held their own conferences separately. For more on the conferences, see Chapter 2 'The changing political environment of Northern Nigeria 1950-1954' in Yahaya *The Native Authority System* pp21-47.

[223] Yakubu 'The Demise of Indirect Rule' pp181-2.

*longer affordable (Azikiwe's ubiquitous 'platter of gold') is given short shrift by* Toure.[224]

Objections can be raised to such an exclusive categorisation. It is quite possible to incorporate elements of each approach without self-contradiction. For instance, we can (as Toure does) attribute the speed of reforms in part to the demonstration of workers' power in the 1945 General Strike at the same time as conceding that the Colonial Office had the capacity resist such changes, but chose to make them (if only out of fear that Nigeria would one day become ungovernable).[225] For the same reason, class struggle in the shape of the Gold Coast riots was important - but the rioting had such a great impact on thinking within the Colonial Office because it resonated with existing insecurities about Britain's place in the postwar world. We have a conscious choice of whether to focus on the hand pushing at the door from the outside, or the hand opening it from the inside.

In the Nigerian case, while the educated elite could not possibly have achieved independence on their own, they, in negotiation with the traditional elite and the colonial power, determined the timing and the terms of that independence, engineering positions of political authority for themselves as they did so. Such a result would not have been possible without the reluctant acceptance by the Emirs of the need to accommodate the new elite. What the Emirs bought with their bargaining-chip (i.e. their capacity to impede or accelerate the progress of decolonisation) was a diminished but still privileged position in the postcolonial order, with their chosen heirs running the country. The same is true of the British, who, as Kazah-Toure says: 'had to do a lot of work to prepare grounds which would place the NPC on course, as an eventual successor of the British, and to ensure that the colonialists have allies in power at independence, so that the British would remain as beneficiaries of a neo-colonialism'.[226]

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[224] Kazah-Toure 'The Development of the Nationalist Movement in Zaria Province' MA Zaria, 1991, pp1-52.

[225] Ibid., p411.

[226] Ibid., p461.

Of course, to speak of a 'traditional' elite and a 'western educated' elite is a generalisation. There was a large measure of overlap between the two groups and, as Kazah-Toure points out, there was nothing so very 'traditional' about the NA system. It was a 'deceptive ideological weapon' to give the impression that people were free to run their own affairs.[227] And, over the course of the 1950s, the ruling class came to incorporate wealthy merchants for the first time, providing the financial basis for political parties in return for patronage.

It seems that the changes that followed in the wake of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa's speech were not an immense act of will by the educated elite. Rather, they arose out of a complex of forces. If Tafawa Balewa *had* given his speech when he had first intended, only two years into the Richards Constitution; without a reformist Acting Chief Commissioner like Sharwood Smith yet in place and with Macpherson not long in the Governor's seat; at a time when *Gaskiya* lacked the editorial freedom to popularise political opinions; and before the implications of the Accra riots had sunk in, the results would have been quite different.

Where next, then, for the somewhat startled Emirs? Suddenly, it seemed that they had little choice but to throw their lot in with the educated youth – something Tafawa Balewa had spent much of 1949 trying gently to do. Having failed with the carrot, he had succeeded with the stick and he was never fully forgiven for this. The assembly members who supported the motion could rebuild a relationship of trust with the Native Authorities who had originally nominated them. Yet Tafawa Balewa, having so publicly bitten the hand that fed him, would never be trusted to hold authority in the North again. His career would henceforth be in a city he despised – Lagos. What, to an outsider, seems the top job was, for Tafawa Balewa, something of a punishment.

### 1.6 Conclusion

In 1951, after the hurried passing of the Macpherson Constitution, Northern Nigeria held its first elections. This was a novel experience for all involved, but

[227] Ibid., p22.

posed no challenge greater than those on the horizon: the struggle for popularity and the struggle for legitimacy.

Popularity was of growing importance, as the successful candidates of 1951 were aware that the system under which they had been elected could not go on forever. The constitution allowed for NAs to inject their nominees into the final electoral college, meaning that NEPU, having scored numerous victories in the primary stages, saw its candidates ousted in the later rounds – often by the very people they had beaten earlier on. This would have to change one day, and both major parties sensed that they would have to redouble efforts to spread their message if they were to last.

Legitimacy was a crucial question, too. Although the boundary between the Northern and Southern Provinces had existed before the Richards and Macpherson Constitutions, early Northern nationalism imbued it with a new significance, staking a claim over not just territory, but people's loyalty. The regional boundary marked out a sphere of interest, in which Nigerians from the South could not legitimately involve themselves; indeed, it was implicitly asserted that the only reasonable determinants of spheres of interest and of loyalty were the regional boundaries – in short, that southern politicians should back off, because Northerners were happiest being led by their fellows. This paradigm became increasingly entrenched through what is referred to, in this thesis, as the 'North for the Northerners' phase (from around 1953 to 1962) but, during the same period, began to be challenged (not least by the arrival in 1951 of the Middle Zone League). Northern nationalism, to be successful, would have to find some way to answer awkward questions about who Northerners were, what they were supposed to stand for and how they fitted into Nigeria as a whole. This would mean ironing out some of the contradictions inherent in the existing system of Indirect Rule. This subject will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three. The next chapter gives further consideration to the role of journalism, paying attention to the newspapers other than *Gaskiya*.

## Chapter Two: the alternatives to *Gaskiya*

### 2.1 *The Northern Star* and *The Way*

On the 8th of January 1947, a new newspaper hit the streets in Jos. Its first issue was only four pages long (in effect, a single sheet) and the stories it covered were fairly conventional. Hoping to attract the sympathy of the North's Muslims, the first article told the tragic tale of a group of pilgrims travelling home from Mecca – only thirty miles from home, they were killed in a motor accident. There was also coverage of the courts, of the railway workers' threats to strike and of the Nigerian Union of Teachers conference. The letters page included a suggestion from a Mr. R Gbaigbain that Hausa should be adopted as the national Lingua Franca, in the interests of Nigerian unity.

The title of the newspaper was *The Northern Star*. Styling itself 'The Northerner's Own Mouthpiece', its motto was: 'God first'. The first issue was also the last.[228]

The problem was that the newspaper had originally been registered as *The Way*, not *The Northern Star*. The last-minute change of name, without prior consent, contravened the terms of the Press Ordinance, meaning that every unsold copy had to be withdrawn at once. For the paper's editor, also the founder and Managing Director of the Northern Publishing Company, it was a major setback. It would have been the first independent 'Northern' newspaper. And yet neither he, nor the other director of the company, nor any of the people whose money was used to get the paper off the ground, was a Northerner. This contributes to our characterisation of this period (after the war but before the 1953 Self-Government motion) as the 'open phase' of Northern identity.

Adeyinka Babington Olumuyiwa was born in 1914. He was educated at King's College, Lagos and worked briefly for Elder Dempster and the United Africa

[228] Later, there was another, unrelated, newspaper called *The Northern Star*. It was owned by the Action Group. See Dayo Dukile *Makers of Nigerian Press: An Historical Analysis of Newspaper Development, The Pioneer Heroes, the Modern Press Barons and the New Publishers from 1859-1987* (Ikeja: Concord, 1987) p159.

Company (UAC) before setting up his own newspaper, *The Way*, in 1938. When the opportunity presented itself to go to London to study, he let the paper die a natural death, but he soon returned to Nigeria, becoming editor of *Nigerian Advocate*. Later, in 1946, he headed North, to Jos, to found the Northern Publishing Company. He had originally planned to resuscitate *The Way* as the company's first title, but decided that there was a market for a pro-North newspaper in English.[229]

That ill-fated issue contained an editorial and an open letter to the Chief Commissioner. The former tried to work on the deference to traditional authority that Olumuyiwa felt would capture the Northern newspaper-reading public. Entitled 'Salaam Aleikum', the piece began 'In keeping with age-old tradition, we pay our respects to our City Fathers and our brethren in the North'. It also greeted the Chief Commissioner, the Residents and the King, with a 'message from Mother Africa herself'. What the message *was* is not so very clear: the editor could only say that *The Northern Star* wanted to 'find our kith and kin and join forces with them in seeking a common destiny'. The second half of the letter ran like a checklist of journalistic clichés: 'bugle call ... noble pilgrimage ... another milestone ... national race for self-determination and independence ... Augean stables to be cleansed ... Together we SHALL win'.

The letter to the Chief Commissioner was not much more illuminating. It said:

> We do not promise to avoid direct constructive criticisms of government policy. You yourself would never wish that. But we do promise to uphold, appraise and even defend, but only those things which, in the light of our public conscience, duly stimulated by progressive public opinion, appear best in government policy.

There were only two serious indicators of a political stance. First, the brief mention of independence in the open letter. Second, the positive report given to a speech by Nnamdi Azikiwe at an NCNC meeting.[230]

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[229] Arewa House: SNP 13/4/71 41684 'The Northern Star: The Way: Publication Of'.

[230] *The Northern Star* 8/1/1947. The whole paper is contained in ibid.

*Perhaps the suggestion made in the previous chapter about the 'cultural'* origins of NPC applies here. While the JMA wanted to attract the membership of Emirs and wealthy merchants, the Northern Publishing Company wanted to keep on the right side of the Native Authority system and attract advertisers. Clearly, Olumuyiwa felt that the Northern market could be cracked. Perhaps, though, he was not confident enough to know what readers wanted until they had told him. Both the JMA and the Northern Publishing Company wanted to *be 'pro-North' – but neither was sure what that meant.*

For funding, the paper was dependent on two solicitors and a tin miner.[231] Olumuyiwa's former employers at the UAC were interested in the paper, when it made a comeback under the old name, *The Way*, but wanted to avoid any connection with the likes of Azikiwe. Olumuyiwa had, in any case, fallen out with Zik, accusing him of trying to undermine the paper.

The editorial line being developed by *The Way* gradually became less and less inhibited in calling for independence, such that Olumuyiwa's chances of getting a British Council scholarship to study journalism in the United Kingdom were being damaged. His referee for the scholarship, the Resident of Plateau Province, described *The Way* as 'a very shaky concern with the bailiffs always close at hand'.[232]

In March 1948, Olumuyiwa was reported to have written to Abubakar Zukogi, of the Northern Elements Progressive Association (NEPA) asking him to become the paper's editor.[233] Perhaps it was felt that having a Northerner as editor could increase the flagging sales.[234] From the NEPA point of view, having one of their number as a newspaper editor must have seemed attractive. They

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[231] M H F Holden, O A Alakija and A E Janes, respectively. The second first came to public notice when he accused the owners of the Rex Cinema, Jos, of racial discrimination. See Arewa House: 8/2/17 36259 'Alleged Discrimination at Cinema' and *West African Pilot* 15/9/1943. According to the Resident Plateau, the third, Janes, was regarded by other miners as 'undesirable' and 'ready to receive stolen tin'. See Resident Plateau to SNP 13/11/1947 in Arewa House: 'The Northern Star…'

[232] Ibid.

[233] Plateau Province Intelligence Summary, March 1948 in ibid.

[234] Resident Plateau wrote that *The Way* 'to a large extent, caters for immigrants to the North'.

were already looking into starting their own newspaper in the NEPA heartland of Kano, and when Abubakar Imam resigned from *Gaskiya*, it was alleged that it was to this new enterprise that he had gone.[235]

None of this potential was fulfilled. Imam's resignation, as mentioned in Chapter One, was only temporary. *The Way*'s attempt to become a public limited company fell through and the paper was wound up. NEPA continued their attempt to start a newspaper of their own and organise a boycott of *Gaskiya*, but these efforts, like NEPA itself, simply petered out. What would have happened if NEPA and *The Way* had survived, instead of being replaced by NEPU and *The Daily Comet*? Would Olumuyiwa, out of favour with Azikiwe, have used his influence to make NEPA ally itself with the Action Group rather than NCNC? What if Jos had become the North's main centre of unofficial press activity? One could speculate; but what is important is what actually happened. Kano was the North's centre for independent publishing, not Jos. NEPU was the region's radical conscience, not NEPA. And *The Daily Comet* was its mouthpiece, not *The Way*. It is to these issues that we now turn.

### 2.2 NEPU and *The Daily Comet*

The *Comet* was established by an Egyptian émigré in 1934. Nnamdi Azikiwe acquired the newspaper for Zik's Press in 1944 and relocated it to Kano around 1950,[236] where it lived a precarious existence, ceasing production on several occasions. It is still published today, however.[237]

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[235] Arewa House: 'NCNC'. Assistant Commissioner of Police (Kaduna) to the Private Secretary to HE the Officer Administering the Government 18/3/1948. See also Arewa House: SNP 15/3/62 43801 S.4 'Police Intelligence Zaria Province'.

[236] Azikiwe's autobiography suggests the relocation was in the early 1950s while Dayo Dukile says it happened in 1949 (this book, however, is dogged by inaccuracies). The earliest Kano-based editions of *Comet* to be held in Arewa House files are from 1950. See Nnamdi Azikiwe *My Odyssey* (London: C Hurst & Co., 1970) p395 and Dukile *Nigerian Press*.

[237] See www.cometnews.com.ng

Because of NCNC's alliance with NEPU, *Comet* supported the latter from the moment it arrived in Kano (according to Kazah-Toure, *Comet* was not distributed outside the city, which was the hub of NEPU support[238]). Officially, NEPU was committed to assisting the paper financially, but party funds scarcely allowed for this. Being a bilingual paper, *Comet* had two editors, one for the English section and one for the Hausa section. According to the English editor, M P Iweanya:

> The Hausa pages were edited by the Hausa editor, employed by NEPU. And these pages brought more trouble to the paper and the managing editor who knew no word of Hausa. Many a time I was dragged along with the paper to the court for offences I hardly could give account of. In some cases I won and in some others I was convicted or fined heavily. Some of the fines were borne by the *Comet* itself and the NCNC, but this on rare occasions.[239]

The litigious approach of the colonial administration was a key part of its policy towards the newspaper. Bryan Sharwood Smith, while Resident of Kano Province, saw *The Comet* as especially threatening and had suggested to the SNP that every opportunity for legal action should be taken, even if there was no guarantee of success. 'Far more than papers such as even the "Pilot" and the "Service", its object appears [to be] to create mischief by any means that come to hand,' he wrote. 'Its circulation admittedly is not wide, but its influence among the young Northern literates, both ex-Elementary and ex-Middle School, is definitely harmful.'[240] It is for this reason that some copies of *The Comet* are available in the SNP files at Arewa House.

Although Abba Maikwaru was, until 1952, still the leader of NEPU, Mallam Aminu Kano was among the most frequent early contributors to the Hausa

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[238] Kazah-Toure 'Nationalist Movement' p429.

[239] Quoted in Azikiwe *My Odyssey* p396.

[240] Arewa House: SNP 19/1/13 47138 S.1 'Zik's Press – Comet Pilot Advocate'. Resident Kano to SNP 13/2/1951.

content of *The Comet*. He was also highly praised by the paper upon the foundation of the Northern Askianist Movement (the NAM, regarded as a Northern offshoot of the Zikists) with Mudi Sipikin as its leader and Mustafa Dambatta as its secretary. 'Aminu's character, his impetuosity, his keenness and frankness is [sic] well known to the people of Bauchi, Sokoto and Kano. Indeed, after Askia the First, there is no doubt that Mallam Aminu is Askia the Second', the article said.[241] The organisation was later briefly known as the Northern Aminiyya Movement, in tribute to Aminu Kano, before it became the *Rundunar Samarin Sawaba* (RSS or Youths Freedom Movement) in 1954. It was always a militant organisation. Indeed, the article quoted above was retained in the hope that the stated aim of the NAM – 'to try to free every Black Man wherever he may be in the world, whether in America or South Africa from the mouth of the English and the rest of oppressors, even if blood will be shed' – could provide the basis of a court action.[242]

Prosecutions against *The Comet* continued after Sharwood Smith became Lieutenant-Governor. However, there were also attempts to poach some of the paper's rising stars for the Gaskiya Corporation. Magaji Dambatta and his younger brother Mustafa, both of whom had served as editor of the Hausa page, left the paper when offered high positions in the Corporation. The former was given a scholarship to study in England, where he later served as Senior Information Officer in the Agent-General's office. The latter was sent for training in the United States of America, before returning to become editor of *Nigerian Citizen*. This was part and parcel of the 'brain-drain' suffered by NEPU, which rendered the organisation so vulnerable.

[241] *The Daily Comet* 22/3/1951 in ibid. Translation by the Resident Kano.

[242] Ibid. Translation by Malam Ladan of the Northern Provinces Secretariat.

Some of the Hausa articles are like the one quoted above, in that they bear some similarity to their English language counterparts.[243] However, there is often a marked difference in the way English and Hausa articles approach political subjects, even when they are written by the same people.

Thus, writing in *Comet*'s English section, Aminu Kano's rhetorical style seems, like the Sawaba declaration, to be inspired by the socialist movement in Britain:

> I am prepared to be called by any name. Call me a dreamer or call me a revolutionary; call me a crusader or anything this imperialist government wills. I have seen a light on the far horizon and I intend to march into its full circle either alone or with anyone who cares to go with me ...
>
> To these same suppressors of our people, I say this: 'Look Out! Africa is a sleeping giant no more!...'[244]

It was inevitable that, when writing in the Hausa section of the same newspaper, Mallam Aminu's style would be different. This much was necessitated by the difference in the metaphors, idioms and other reference points available in the two languages. It was also motivated by the expectations of two differing readerships. For those who preferred to read English, it would be safest to attack the imperialist nature of the state and the ways that it fell short of the ideals enshrined in, say, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For those who preferred to read Hausa, an attack on the system of nomination to the House of Assembly could be phrased in the following terms:

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[243] An article in *Comet* 2/11/1951, for instance, favourably cites Walter Miller's criticisms of the administration and attacks the NPC for declaring itself a political party so soon after the split with NEPU which had ostensibly occurred because NEPU had done just that.

[244] *The Daily Comet* 11/11/1950 in Alan Feinstein *African Revolutionary: The Life and Times of Nigeria's Aminu Kano* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension, 1987) p130.

> This is the [kind of] election that these people have organised; they have nothing but fraud, conceit ... and trickery.
>
> They have arranged it so that their own kind get elected ... In their opinion everything is fine, just as if they themselves had created the people.
>
> They have totally forgotten about changing times.
>
> The Muslims among them are ignorant and have forgotten all about God ... They say that elections should be conducted according to tradition – when everyone knows what they mean by tradition!
>
> ...
>
> This is forbidden by God. [*Haramun ga Allah*][245]

Here, rather than relying on his experience of Speaker's Corner and the Communist Manifesto, Aminu Kano draws on his ability to speak and write authoritatively on Islamic subjects.[246] Yet the juxtaposition of these quotations is not meant to imply an inherent contradiction in NEPU's political philosophy. Rather, it points out the effect that style can have on content. Aminu Kano and his ilk were reinterpreting and reinvigorating the language of dissent (just as NPC leaders did for the language of authority) but this was conditioned by the existing model. With two overlapping speech-communities – or, in the context of newspapers, two literate sub-cultures – this makes for interesting reading.

By moving the *Comet* to Kano, and providing it with Hausa pages, written by members of a new Northern political party, Nnamdi Azikiwe seemed to be recognising that the direct approach had its limits; perhaps NEPU and *Comet* would be able to win over more people than the NCNC and *Pilot*.

For the politically-active Northerners, too, a change was afoot. Few of those early members believed the NCNC would suffice as a vehicle for their political

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[245] Arewa House: 'Zik's Press'. *Comet* 22/6/1951. The identification of Aminu Kano as author of this piece is tentative. An editorial error means that two articles had their headlines in the wrong places. From the way they are set out, it seems that the authorship was similarly misattributed. If this assumption were wrong, the writer would be one Garba Kano.

[246] For more on Aminu Kano's work as a *tafsir* malam, see John Paden *Religion and Political Culture in Kano* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

ambitions. Some, such as Sa'adu Zungur, left amid a certain amount of bitterness. Zungur had been a journalist on *The West African Pilot* and Federal Secretary of the NCNC and had featured in this, one of the earliest cartoons to portray an 'ideal type' Northerner[247]:

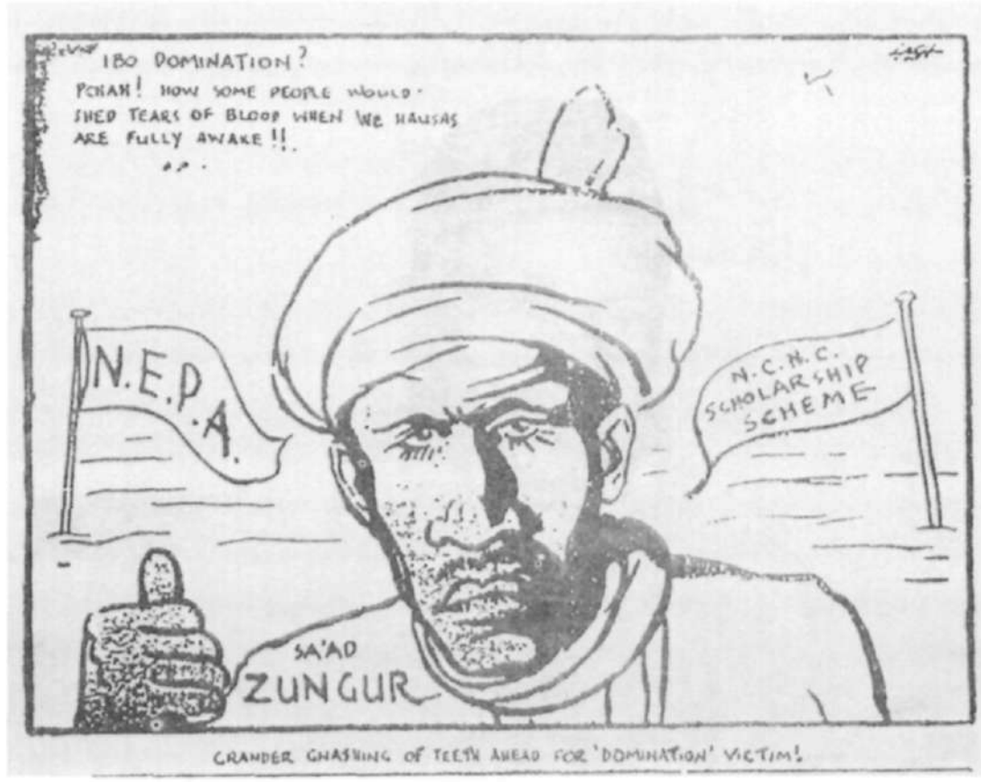



Illustration 1: Sa'adu Zungur, NEPA, NCNC.

The flags in the background refer to the Northern Elements Progressive Association, of which Zungur was a member, and to the NCNC's scholarship fund to send Northerners abroad for schooling. This was to be a first step towards bridging the educational gap between the regions. Such a development, it was felt, could only be good for Nigeria as a whole. It seemed that 'pro-North' was not the same as 'anti-South'.[248]

It is ironic that Zungur is here depicted attempting to discredit the idea that the NCNC is Igbo-dominated, for, although he had written articles with precisely

[247] *Pilot* 1948 reproduced in Yakubu *Sa'adu Zungur* between pp210-11.

[248] *Comet*'s headline of 23/6/1951 – 'Northerner Says North Owes Her New Political Consciousness to Southerners' – was not untypical.

this message, one of his first acts on leaving the NCNC was to write a furious and passionate poem, predicting Southern domination of Nigeria if Northerners did not become more politically active.

> Without any doubt the men of the South will rule us
> In the Saddle of Nigerian rule
> And they will continually gallop over us
> Even though we beg for mercy[249]

Zungur wrote this poem: 'The North: Republic or Monarchy?' soon after leaving the NCNC. Although it is often quoted, the poem seems (on the evidence of Yakubu's splendid biography/anthology) to be unrepresentative of his political philosophy. Zungur, at this point, was angry. He had begun to feel that the scholarship programme and the NCNC's other efforts to attract Northern support were examples of tokenism. He was nostalgic for a mythical past in which politics was a noble thing, unaffected by what he had come to think of as 'Southern' values. It seems sad that, now Zungur is enjoying a posthumous comeback in Nigeria, these words should get the attention,[250] but they do show a great depth of feeling. Zungur wanted emirs to reform – while other NEPU pioneers, such as Mudi Sipikin, believed that any system of inherited authority was beyond reform.[251]

When Zungur expressed his fears about southern domination, the idea that Northern unity was merely a stepping-stone on the way to Nigerian unity was already beginning to decline. For most of the 1950s, the spectre of Southern domination would haunt the Northern political scene.

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[249] Trans. D Abdulkadir in Furniss *Poetry, Prose* p227.

[250] See *Magaji Galadima Abdullahi* 'Obasanjo in the Metaphors of *Sa'adu Zungur*' on www.gamji.com. Abdullahi praises Zungur 'for his sagacity in warning us on the dangers of Yoruba presidency more than two scores ago'.

[251] Sipikin's rejoinder, a poem entitled 'The North – A Republic Pure and Simple' also features in *Furniss* pp230-1.

### 2.3 *Jakadiya* and the politics behind culture

In 1948, *Jakadiya* was founded by the Gaskiya Corporation, at the instigation of the Mass Education Officer. Written in Hausa, the newspaper was specifically intended for the rural population of Northern Nigeria.[252] Yet the Hausa newspaper was just the start of a truly remarkable series of developments in vernacular publishing in the North. *Jakadiya* quickly became not just a newspaper but a brand name, diversifying into a series of provincial outfits, each drawing stories from a common pool and translating them into either the local dialect of Hausa, or the local language. The first of these variants was *Mwanger U Tiv* (the *Tiv Star*) which got off the ground in part because of the special interest of the Corporation's Director, Rupert East, an enthusiastic speaker of both Hausa and Tiv.[253] It was followed by editions in Kanuri, Fulfulɜe, Igala, Idoma, Igbirra, Yoruba and Nupe.

From 1953, *Jakadiya* was run as part of the Adult Literacy Campaign (*Yaƙi Da Jahilci*). After only two years of this campaign, according to Governor Sharwood Smith, 150,000 people had been taught to read. And yet this was not the sole purpose of *Yaƙi Da Jahilci*. It 'was designed not so much to spread literacy as such but rather, by means of literacy, to enable the common people to protect themselves against exploitation in any form and from any quarter, having particular regard to the rapid political advance which seemed certain'.[254] Clearly, then, the campaign and, by extension, the newspapers, had a political element, despite the directive issued to editors to keep out of politics. Government information was not 'political' (constitutional changes, for instance, were given a very large amount of space being explained, line by line, in the simplest possible terms). Nor, to an extent, were chieftaincy issues, which could be touched on, if glossed over: the abdication of the Emir of Bauchi in 1954 was described in the barest detail, with none of the sensation that the

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[252] RHO: Mss Afr s/597 'Gaskiya Corporation'. Annual Report 1948.

[253] It also benefited from the support of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). See Husaini Hayatu (ed.) *Fifty Years of Truth: The Story of the Gaskiya Corporation Zaria 1939-1991* (Zaria: Gaskiya Corporation, 1991) pp64-5.

[254] PRO: CO554/1161 'Governor's Reports – Northern Region'. Report, 18/5/1955.

story probably merited.[255] Yet, in a sense, keeping out of politics was a mission impossible. The very simplest of statements can reveal a lot about a person's outlook on life and thus politics in the broadest sense.

What significance can we attach, for instance, to the contents of the 'wise sayings' spot? Intended to help readers who were also learning English, the section included the following paraphrase of Macaulay[256]: 'Many politicians are in the habit of stating that no people ought to be free till they are fit to use their freedom. The maxim reminds me of the fool in the old story who resolved not to go into the water until he had learned to swim'. How close did this come to breaching the rules?

The success or failure of the *Jakadiya* newspapers was dependent on accessibility. This perhaps explains why they provide the first examples of cartoons in the Northern Nigeria press. There is an immediacy about the visual image that can draw in a reader who is only browsing and, for new readers, it was easier to follow a short message which was presented with pictorial 'clues' as to the meaning. Most were public service announcements, or supporting government campaigns such as the growing of groundnuts or the Yaki Da Jahilci itself. In this cartoon, we see two wrestlers grappling with each other. The man with the upper hand is reading a book at the same time – a manual for wrestling, presumably – showing how, as the caption puts it, there are always opportunities for reading.

[255] *Jakadiya* 1/11/1954.

[256] Thomas Babington, not Herbert Samuel.

THERE IS ALWAYS TIME TO READ




**Hah! He's Going Down!**

**Even wrestling is only possible with education!** [257]

Illustration 2: Adult Literacy Cartoon

To call *Jakadiya* a newspaper is to use an elastic definition of the word 'news'. Neil Skinner recalled writing almost all of the first edition of the Fulfulɗe version, *Arɗo*, from his imagination. His fellow editors were inexperienced in the job, many of them 'fresh out of primary school'.[258] They filled the papers with whatever they could find. Sometimes this meant printing a story of

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[257] *Himma* February 1957

[258] Neil Skinner 'NORLA: An experiment in the production of vernacular literature, 1954-1959' in Husaini Hayatu *Fifty Years of Truth: The Story of the Gaskiya Corporation Zaria, 1939-1991* (Zaria: Gaskiya Corporation, 1991) p64. First published in 1970.

doubtful authenticity, headlined 'Believe it or Not'. For instance, it featured a story about a man who had his bicycle stolen by a monkey; and a tale of a man who liked to tease hyenas but ended up having his finger bitten off.[259] Sometimes, what appeared to be a short article would in fact be a joke, the butt of which was often the *Bamaguje* (the Hausa pagan), portrayed as unsophisticated and stupid. The tale featuring a *bori* devotee, whose 'trance' came to an abrupt end when he was stung on the bottom by a scorpion, is not untypical.[260] Other articles are blatant plugs for the *Yaki Da Jahilci* programme. One tells of how a *Bamaguje* man, disappointed to be told that that Adult Literacy class he wanted to join was fully subscribed, begged to be allowed to attend anyway. In only three months time, he was able to write a letter to his teacher, thanking him. The story is rather kinder than the jokes, but is written in a way that draws stark contrast between the man's literacy (advancement) and his Bamaguje status (backwardness). The literary history of the North was inextricably linked with Islam, so it was natural enough that education and unbelief were not considered to be natural bedfellows.[261]

Such unwitting prejudice would have conflicted with efforts to create a homogenised, unified North – if any such attempt had been made. Despite the spread of factors which tended to draw Northerners together (common experience of British rule, the NA system, the Hausa language, 'Northern' clothes etc.) the 'One North' project was never intended as a substitute for localised identities. A good example of this is the section of *Jakadiya* called '*Gani Da Ido Maganin Tambaya*' (freely, 'Seeing is Believing') which featured photographs of people and places across the Northern region.

In one issue, the first half of 'Seeing is Believing' was taken up by differing categories of Fulani – a girl from Zaria, another from Sokoto, a 'bush' Fulani girl. No such typology applies to the second half, a mixed bunch, including, somewhat incongruously, some youths from near Bamenda in the Southern

[259] *Jakadiya* 1/11/1954.

[260] *Himma* April 1957.

[261] *Himma*, May 1957.

Cameroons. While readers were coached into believing the *Northern* Cameroons to be just another part of their region (itself a political statement) Bamenda seems a bit out of place. Perhaps this is the exception that proves the rule: it seems out of place because the routine of 'Seeing is Believing' was to look exclusively at the North – only exceptionally did it stray outside.[262]

Most of the readers of *Himma* (the *Jakadiya* paper from which this example is drawn) would never have left Katsina Province, so it is perhaps not surprising that there is something of the freak-show about this, the most colourful section of a black-and-white newspaper. All the examples were mined for their exoticism. In Niger Province, for instance, we are shown that 'even men have fancy hairstyles'. In Biu, we are invited to look at the facial markings by which we can spot a Fulani from the Borno area. In Agwara, we are shown a Bakambara girl and reminded that 'the sign of their tribe is that they pierce the nose and put a ring through it'. While captions describing the Fulani speak of 'beautiful maidens', we have to be reminded of the sex of the *arna*: 'This is not a boy, but a young lady, a pagan girl from Dikwa' (followed by its opposite, a man who allegedly looks like a woman).

While, on the surface, there are similarities between this kind of pop-ethnography and the absurdities of racial semiotics, it would be stretching the evidence too far to suggest anything sinister here. The taxonomy is broader than one of 'race' – it is a checklist that includes jewellery, facial marks and hairstyles. The classification of people as if they were butterflies has echoes of some 'colonial' anthropology, but the 'Seeing is Believing' section of the paper was more than mere imitation. It was a sincere attempt to teach readers about the diversity of the North, but, conversely, to convince them that all the parts belong naturally to a whole. The pictures of landscapes perform the same function: a hill in Adamawa, a lake at Kaura Namoda, and a village near Ilorin are all seen as different aspects of the same region. Importantly, in the run-up to the Willink Commission, (and later the Cameroons Plebiscite) the Yoruba-speaking areas, the Jos Plateau and the Biu mountains are included.

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[262] Ibid.

Not everybody was happy with the idea of celebrating diversity. One reader complained that *Himma* seemed happy to print photographs of pagans but did not show any of 'our chiefs'. *Himma*, he argued, was intended for Katsina Province, so the photographs should all be of the people of Katsina.[263] The reader was one of many who seemed happier when Hausa culture provided the 'default settings' for the Northern Region. Even in *Jakadiya*, Hausa-speaking Muslims, the core readership, were portrayed as 'normal' and others as 'exotic'. So, while the 'quiz' section might have questions about Islam[264] (which requires an assumption about what, from the readers' point of view, constitutes 'general knowledge') and poetry corner might have a polemic on the evils of the demon drink and unstinting criticism of Muslims who partook of it, articles of anthropological interest focussed on that which, from the Katsina standpoint, seemed most outlandish. A piece on the Dakarkari people of Zuru Emirate, for instance, highlighted their preference for eating dog. A snake, the article claims, will flee when it sees a *Badakkare*, because it knows that snake is their second favourite meat. Their children, we are told, are taught to wrestle as soon as they can walk.[265]

A preface to the Zuru item puts into words some of the assumptions that were (and are) commonly made about Northern Nigeria – that the North consists of tribes, each of which has its own language, culture and *its own* 'original place of living' (*wurin zamansu na asali*) where the tribe has resided since time immemorial.[266] The writer accepts that sometimes the different peoples may share a religion with their neighbours, or live in the same area, or even have similar language and customs, but the assumption of a primordial attachment to the land is the most interesting one, because it leads inexorably to a question

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[263] *Himma*, November 1957. The editor's response was bizarre: he denied that *Himma* ever published photographs of pagans and challenged the reader to name an instance.

[264] By contrast, the 'Wise Sayings' section of *Jakadiya* 168 (1954) quotes Jesus ('lay not up yourselves treasures upon earth where they mostly rust and corrupt and where thieves break in and steal') and Muhammad ('a man's true wealth is in the good work he does') back to back.

[265] *Himma*, April 1957.

[266] A free translation of the phrase 'tun shekaru-aru'.

which has been carefully examined by Matthew Hassan Kukah: how do we know whose claim to primordial attachment is genuine?

> Is it the language or culture? Indeed, what constitutes culture? Is it the dress, religion or what? If we limit these concepts to these categories, what do we say of those who are born and do not speak the language, do not even know the culture? What makes one person settler and what makes another indigene? Perhaps we should leave these philosophical abstractions and take the issues on their surface value: namely, that they exist and that people are stupid enough to want to die for them.[267]

Questions of language and identity were also raised by the women's section. Although its editor, Habiba Kaile, steered clear of party politics in favour of childcare and basic hygiene, she often had some controversial things to say. On one occasion, for instance, women readers were asked if they had ever considered the potential monetary value of the work they did for their families. If a woman's husband went away to another town for some time, how much would he have to pay to have his clothes washed, his food prepared, his room swept, his shopping done? Research in England, the article went on, suggested many housewives were working 100 hours per week. While other workers do fewer hours, get paid wages, have free weekends, and laws governing their treatment, the average Englishwoman, it was reckoned, was missing out on an estimated £12 per week. Could the work of Nigerian women be similarly valued? The article conceded that, due to polygamy, Nigerian households had more people to share the labour, but added that Nigerian women did not have access to piped water, electric ovens or washing machines.[268]

An edition published in October 1954 featured a piece on the need for co-operation among women. 'If you see one of your sister women in trouble, even if you have never seen her before, you should gather together and help her,' the column reads.

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[267] Matthew Hassan Kukah 'Orphans in Paradise: Settlers vs Indigenes and the Politics of Belonging in Nigeria' at the Seminar on Ethnic, Religious Peace and Harmony in the Northern States, Arewa House, Kaduna 27/3/2002.

[268] *Himma* 22/5/1958.

> By helping each other you will get to know many other sister women. That is what is desirable for we women of the North. If we say we shall [only] help our own kinswomen if they are in trouble, that is not at all right.
>
> So, therefore, it is not right that we should be divided amongst ourselves, to say because we do not know this person, we have no business with her. What troubles us, the women of the North, is our lack of co-operation. If we look at the other women of the towns, and how they co-operate, they are helping each other as is desirable. Well, what is to stop us from doing this? We must not say our languages are not the same, or religion – no, that should not stop friendliness.
>
> Language and religion do not prevent us from co-operating. Now, women of the North have never been found to meet up to discuss what will be useful to them. You must not say that you cannot read, so because of that you do not see the use of mingling with other women who can. It is right that you should make friends with that kind of person, so that you can learn. If you have learned, teach someone else. The women of other regions meet up with a woman who can read, so as to be of use to everyone. They also pool their money, so as to help each other by themselves.[269]

It is interesting to note that the newspaper was specifically targeted at an illiterate audience (indeed, at women in purdah[270]). One of the early aims of *Gaskiya* was to bring literacy to the villages, but this took things a step further. It seems that the makers of *Jakadiya* were aware that newspapers had not only readers, but listeners too.

Not all of the variants were successful. The Kanuri paper, *Albishir*, for instance, ceased production in March 1957, despite the fact that Hausa papers like *Gaskiya* and *Jakadiya* retained their popularity in Bornu. This was not lost on the editors of *Gamzaki* who chose to publish an extraordinarily triumphalist article listing the full range of Hausa papers so that the Kanuris might recognise them and ending with the exclamation: 'in short, Hausa has overpowered Kanuri!'[271]

The paper cost three times its selling-price to produce. Native Authorities bought the paper at twice cost-price and the remaining cost was borne by the

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[269] *Jakadiya* October 1954.

[270] Ibid. The suggestion was made that all women, even those in purdah, could take up a useful occupation: '... We must not relax and say we will wait for our menfolk to do everything for us ... If you are in purdah, you can do spinning or blanket weaving ... these are also good trades'.

[271] *Gamzaki* April 1957.

regional government.[272] This made it very expensive. By the time of self-government in 1959, it was decided that NORLA would have to be dissolved and its resources returned to the Gaskiya Corporation. All the provincial versions of *Jakadiya* closed down and the main paper itself was allowed to go into decline. By 1965, *Jakadiya* was appearing once every two months.[273] Yet, despite somewhat mixed results, we must recognise the immensely ambitious experiment which the *Jakadiya* series represents. Collectively, these newspapers constituted an attempt to build a series of publications on the foundations of just one. Or, by a different metaphor, each version of *Jakadiya* was tailored to suit a particular community, yet cut from the same cloth as the others. Ideally, all would have prospered; in reality, few did. The effort to make a region-wide success out of a series of projects which drew on what was essentially a Hausa centre is, perhaps, analogous to the spread of Northern identity as a whole. Northern patriotism drew on the emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate for much of its content, just as the vernacular reading-sheets drew on the Hausa version of *Jakadiya* for theirs. In some places, it worked, in others, it did not. Northern nationalism took some aspects of life in the Hausa emirates, such as clothing, language and symbols, and recast them as 'Northern traditions'. In recognition of the futility of any attempt to portray the North as a monolith, the essentials could be grafted onto ideas that had local appeal.[274] These could then act as a binding agent to convince people that at least some of what they shared with their neighbours, their families, their 'brothers' and their co-religionists was shared by others across the region. While the main aim was to secure the political allegiance of the elite, a look at *Jakadiya* makes it clear that the masses were being targeted as well. *Jakadiya* was also the first

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[272] NAK: DEN/391 'Vernacular News Sheets'.

[273] NAK: DEP/51 'Gaskiya Corporation General Correspondence'.

[274] *Himma*, for instance, was named after a sword, of historical significance in Katsina Province, while *Sokoto Zaruma* was written entirely in Sokoto dialect. These attempts to appeal to local communities were replicated at the political level.

of the Northern newspapers to target women – and it seemed to have something of a political message for them.

# Chapter Three: The Reforms of the 1950s

## 3.0 Introduction

The 1951 elections were conducted (according to the Macpherson Constitution) using a college system, which began with a simple show of hands at the village or ward level, and ended with the successful candidates, now members of the Northern House of Assembly, choosing from among themselves those who would take a seat in the House of Representatives in Lagos, formally opened in 1952. Officially, at least, the system was not intended for party politics: individuals stood under their own names only, and the level of representation gained by each party depended on how many representatives declared their allegiance *post facto*.

In 1952, the first ministerial posts were allocated – although, to begin with, these positions did not carry great responsibility. However, with the Northern House dominated by the Northern People's Congress (NPC) and the Southern Houses dominated by the Action Group (AG) and National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), Nigeria's future political landscape was beginning to take shape. This chapter focuses on the changes undergone by the Northern Region as Nigeria sped towards independence. It is divided into three sections. The first deals with the ways that Northerners began to take control of their region after the explosive violence of the Kano riots and the simmering tensions of the 1953/4 Constitutional Conferences and examines the set of policies known as 'Northernization'. The second section shows how the new political elite gradually took control out of the hands of the chiefs, focussing in particular on the Native Authority Law of 1954. The third section looks at changes to the legal system, especially the introduction of the Penal Code in 1960, which, as with the changes to the status of chiefs, had the effect of resolving some of the contradictions of Indirect Rule.

### 3.1 Northernization[275]

To know more about the motivation behind NPC policy in the 1950s, we need to understand the importance of the rioting that took place in Kano in 1953 and the events leading up to it. Nigeria's history is dotted with bouts of violence often termed 'communal' or 'tribal'. The Kano Riots, however, were a crucial episode in the North's modern history. They bore many comparisons with the disturbances that erupted after the Unification Decree was announced by the Ironsi regime in May 1966. Paden goes so far as to say that the latter violence was 'so parallel in detail to its predecessor that the same report might have been used to describe and explain it'.[276]

### 3.11 The Kano Riots

One of the formative experiences for the Northern political elite came when Anthony Enahoro, of the Action Group, tabled a motion in the House of Representatives calling for the House to unite behind the common objective of gaining self-government for Nigeria by 1956. Responding on behalf of the NPC, Ahmadu Sardauna spoke of the disadvantage to which the North would be put if the transition to independence was so hurried. 'The Northern Region does not intend to accept the invitation to commit suicide', was the graphic way that he put it. An amendment was proposed substituting 'as soon as practicable' for '1956', prompting a walk-out by members of the NCNC and Action Group. The resolution was passed in their absence.

It was not the heated atmosphere in the debating chamber that impressed itself on the collective memory of the NPC representatives that day so much as the journey home. As they left the House of Representatives, they were jeered at by an organised mob, targeting anyone who appeared to be a Northerner. The verbal abuse attacked not only the politics of the NPC members, but their regional origins as well, calling them 'kolanut men' and giving 'sarcastic

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[275] In this chapter, Northernization is spelt with a 'z'. It was often spelt with an 's', however.

[276] John N Paden 'Communal Competition, Conflict and Violence in Kano' in Robert Melson and Howard Wolpe (eds.) *Nigeria: Modernization and the Politics of Communalism* (Michigan: MUP, 1971) p133. The Unification Decree is discussed in Chapter Seven.

repetitions of the customary Northern salutation to a superior'[277] – presumably *ranka ya dade* (may your life be prolonged). This scene was repeated at every stop along the railway track on the way back to Kaduna.

Around a fortnight later, Noel Sandford, secretary of the Northern Nigeria Mission (NNM), noticed a change in the atmosphere of Kano, the city in which he was based. His cook returned from Friday's market, reporting that many of those at the market had 'suddenly taken up their wares, and run home'. Rumour had it that 'people were coming from Lagos to attack them'.[278]

It turned out that the anticipated 'attack' was nothing more than a lecture tour: the Action Group (AG) were expected to arrive in Kano the following day, with the aim of explaining why they felt Nigeria ought to be self-governing by 1956. The local NPC branch had other ideas; it resolved to hold a protest march to demonstrate that there was no support for the AG in Kano, and that the party's visit risked a breach of the peace. This turned out to be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

On Saturday morning, Inuwa Wada was reported to have told an audience of his fellow NA workers that the march would meet 'force with force'. These words were criticised in the report of the committee which investigated the riot, for being 'provocative', but it was Wada who, seeing that the crowds were becoming rowdy, told them to turn back, before the procession passed through the *sabon gari*. His words fell on deaf ears.[279] As the protesters moved into the immigrant quarters, they began to beat and stone southerners, apparently at random.[280] The hostilities began to escalate as the day went on.

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[277] *Report on the Kano Disturbances 16th, 17th, 18th and 19th May 1953* (Kaduna: Government Printer, 1953) pp3-4.

[278] CMS: G3 A9-g4 'Kano 1953'. E N T Sandford (Acting Secretary, Northern Nigeria Mission) to Cecil Bewes, CMS, 18/5/1953.

[279] The Emir also gave orders that the march should not proceed into Fagge.

[280] Noel Sandford wrote that, before the violence started, 'it was rumoured that the Hausas would attack the Ibos in Sabon Gari at 2.30 p.m.' but that, as it turned out, there was no organised attack at that time. Sandford to Bewes, 18/5/1953.

The following day, the 17th of May, events took a turn for the worse, with fifteen people being killed, in a series of revenge attacks. On the night of the 18th, the Sardauna spoke on the radio, appealing for calm. The Resident of Kano announced a State of Emergency, which included a curfew, and said that anyone touching the newly-erected barbed wire fences was liable to be shot. By the end of the next day, it was all over. The police had employed tear gas and baton charges but had rarely opened fire – and none of the deaths (of which there were at least 36) came directly from police action. [281] Over 240 people had been injured and property worth around £10,000 was destroyed.

The report of the inquiry into the disturbances is a curiously simplistic document, using doggedly dualistic terminology: Kano is described as 'the meeting place of two contending cultures'; a section discussing the 'Present Day Relationships Between the Northern and Southern Peoples' ignores any question of the Middle Belt; and all incidents of violence are described as having taken place between Northerners and Southerners.[282] Nor does the report seriously address one of the hardest questions to have been raised by the disturbances: why were attacks directed mostly against Igbos, few of whom supported the Action Group? It is hard to find a clear answer. However, the following seems plausible: the events in Lagos had caused a wave of ill-feeling against southerners of all sorts, not just Yorubas (indeed, in Kano, Yorubas had experienced less friction with the host community than the Igbos had; historically, the Yoruba presence in the city went back further, and there were elements of common culture between the two groups) and, even though few Igbos had connections with the AG, the party's visit provided an opportunity to target a new, visibly prosperous community of Igbos in the vulnerable *Sabon Gari*. After all, among the southerners, it was the Igbos who were Northerners' main competitors when it came to skilled and semi-skilled work. Paden writes that the relationship between Hausas and Igbos in places such as Kano has been misunderstood because of an undue focus on 'the alleged difference of modernization values. While there may be a difference on preferred means or

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[281] Aminu Kano said, when interviewed by the investigative committee, that he believed the police should have opened fire on the rioters. See *Report* p37.

[282] *Report* pp39-40.

behavioral norms', he continues, 'it is clear that much of the trouble in Kano has resulted from the fact that both Hausa and Ibo communities have very similar values with regard to achievement, materialism and modernization'. Competition for employment opportunities probably had more to do with the violence than the often-overstated cultural incompatibility of the two groups.

Some of the committee's findings were published in secret. Material that was withheld included anything that might identify the prominent individuals interviewed, or further inflame public opinion. The committee also did not wish to make public mention of the USSR or communism. It was in the 'Further Commentary' that the full depth of the committee's antipathy towards NEPU was revealed – especially the possibility that the organisation was Communist inspired. To illustrate this possibility, the report included a full translation of Mudi Sipikin's poem in praise of the USSR, which ends with an appeal to God to bring the Russians to Nigeria. At times, the poem was fantastic, bizarre. Although written at the height of the Great Terror, it lauded the Islamic righteousness of the Russians and the freedom of assembly which they enjoyed by contrast with Nigeria: 'If you would lecture, you need no permit/ The reason nobody would question.'[283]

Yet the riots had nothing to do with foreign interference. The Resident of Kano felt that underlying problems had long been waiting to emerge. In his Annual Report, he reflected that 'just as some micro-organisms constantly present in the body only become active in certain temperatures and under certain conditions so the hooligan element in Kano only becomes active when the political temperature reaches a certain pitch and injured pride and anger make normally law abiding citizens tolerant of acts of violence.'[284]

The Resident noticed that this same 'hooligan' element was rather more organised, later in the year. The *Jam'iyyar Mahaukata* (Party of Madmen) first

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[283] *A Further Commentary on the Recent Troubles in Kano* (Kaduna: Government Printer, 1953).

[284] PRO: CO657/86 Administration Reports 1953-5. 'Annual Report, Kano Province, 1953' by A T Weatherhead.

came to prominence after the Kano airport incident, mentioned elsewhere in the chapter. This group, he believed, sprang up 'overnight', to combat the influence of NEPU.[285] According to Tanko Yakasai, formerly of NEPU, the so-called 'NPC Youth Wing' were in fact founded by the new Emir of Kano, Muhammadu Sanusi, in a bid to prove his pro-NPC credentials.[286] Others sources, however, state that the *'Yan Mahaukata* (i.e. members of the *Jam'iyyar Mahaukata*) were already active at the time of the riots, when Sanusi was not yet the Emir, but the Ciroma, and had in fact been behind much of the violence.[287] According to Bryan Sharwood Smith, the new Emir showed his opposition to the group on accession to the throne: 'Although the ['*Yan*] *Mahaukata* were secretly subsidized and encouraged by some of his principal supporters, an astonished city was soon to hear that he [Emir Sanusi] had, in person, sentenced some of their more notorious leaders to exemplary prison sentences, as severe, if not severer, than those inflicted on their NEPU opponents'.[288] Dudley also attributes the group's formation to palace hangers-on rather than the Emir himself.

When the Regional Government gained effective control over the NA system, it meant that the NPC had even greater influence over the NA police, the *'yan doka*. The *'Yan Mahaukata* were practically allowed a free rein inside Kano, and new branches began to crop up elsewhere in the North. According to Dudley, the *'Yan Mahaukata* organised the disturbances in Maiduguri in 1958, which caused Ibrahim Imam to flee the Province after an attack on his home. In a pattern to be repeated across the North, only Bornu Youth Movement (BYM) supporters were jailed in the aftermath.[289]

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[285] PRO: 'Annual Report, Kano'.

[286] Jonathan T Reynolds *The Time of Politics (Zamanin Siyasa): Islam and the Politics of Legitimacy in Northern Nigeria 1950-1966* (San Francisco: International Scholars Publications, 1999) pp187-8.

[287] Dudley *Parties and Politics* p25.

[288] Sir Bryan Sharwood Smith *But Always as Friends: Northern Nigeria and the Cameroons, 1921-1957* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969) p280.

[289] Dudley *Parties and Politics* p157 fn57 and p189. The memoirs of one colonial official suggest that the riots were instigated by Imam in the first place. See N C McClintock *Kingdoms of the Sand and Sun: An African Path to Independence* (London: Radcliffe, 1992).

### 3.12 The Lyttleton Constitution

Although the crisis in the Eastern Region[290] was an important factor in the collapse of the Macpherson Constitution, the Kano Riots were the final straw. They had the effect of strengthening the resolve of those who wanted greater autonomy for the North. This was exactly the feeling, for instance, that the Resident of Sokoto picked up on; he also reported a 'deepening of mutual distrust' between Northerners and southerners.[291] By the end of the month, residents of Gusau sent a worried telegram to the Resident saying that rumours were circulating that the town's relatively small community of Southerners was planning to attack Northerners on the day of Queen Elizabeth II's coronation. There were many similar telegrams across the Northern Provinces. The Resident responded that neither the government nor the Sultan would tolerate lawlessness and that the people should remain calm. The telegram was not coded, 'in the full realization that the telegraph staff would almost certainly repeat its contents'.[292] As it turned out, there was no disturbance in the North on the day of the coronation, but there was rioting in Lagos.

It was as a reaction to the carfuffle in Lagos and riots in Kano that the NPC submitted its famous 'eight-point plan' before the Constitutional Conference in London. The plan amounted to a virtual secession of the North – but it was more of a threat than a serious statement of intent. It boldly showed that the North had the power, not only to impede progress towards independence but to break up the country. The end result of the Conferences[293] was the Lyttleton Constitution, named after the Secretary of State for the Colonies. The groups of Provinces, Northern, Eastern and Western, were now officially re-named as

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[290] This was the 'sit-tight' crisis of 1953. NCNC regional cabinet ministers were ordered to resign by their party, but refused, forming the National Independence Party (NIP) instead. This put them at odds with a majority of members of the Eastern House of Assembly, leading to political stalemate.

[291] WJBHAC: Sokoto 2/23/175 'Kano Riots'. Resident Sokoto to Civil Secretary 28/5/1953. That June, the Alake of Abeokuta circulated a letter to his fellow chiefs, appealing for funds to go to the relatives of those who died in Kano 'in the cause of freedom'. The Sultan put his copy in the waste paper basket. See WJBHAC: Sokoto 2/23/175 'Kano Riots'. Acting Resident Sokoto to Senior District Officer Gwandu 20/6/1953.

[292] WJBHAC: Sokoto 2/23/175 'Kano Riots'. Secretary Gusau Community to Resident Sokoto 20/5/1953 and Private Secretary, Lieutenant Governor to Resident Maiduguri 4/6/1953.

[293] There was another Conference in Lagos in 1954.

'Regions', their Lieutenant-Governors becoming simply Governors. Each Regional Government would be led by a Premier (as opposed to the Prime Minister, a Federal appointment from 1957) and a group of ministers who would have substantial powers. The House of Representatives, conversely, would have residual powers, and would have to be separately elected. The first Federal Elections took place that year, resulting in a national government dominated by the NPC. The problem of when self-government should be granted was solved by allowing each region to make the decision for itself. The Western and Eastern Regions became self-governing in 1957, the North in 1959.

### 3.13 The NNMB and the NNDC

It was during the pivotal year of 1953 that the NPC government established two important bodies: the Northern Nigeria Marketing Board (NNMB) and the Northern Nigeria Development Corporation (NNDC). It did so as part of what would, from 1955, come to be known as 'Northernization'. This was the Northern Region's own version of the 'Africanization' programmes being enacted across the continent by colonial regimes transferring power into the hands of an independent government. Like all of these programmes, Northernization was centred on the employment practices of the public sector: the regional government, concerned that Northerners educated to Middle School or College level would be put at a disadvantage if positions were awarded in open competition with other Nigerians, decided that jobs should be offered to Northerners wherever possible. (If no qualified Northerner was available, positions were to be given to expatriates on fixed term contracts and, failing that, to Southerners). Yet Northernization was about more than the public sector. Its comprehensive aim was to have 'Northerners gain control of everything in this country'[294] and that meant the economy, too. To understand more about the needs which an NPC government would be expected to fill, we need to go back to the 1940s. We begin with the frustrations of a Northern merchant: Alhaji Alhassan Dantata.

[294] Ahmadu Bello, quoted in B J Dudley *Parties and Politics* p220.

### 3.14 Alhassan Dantata

Alhassan Dantata, founder of Kano's most celebrated commercial dynasty, became a highly successful figure around the time of the Second World War. His shrewd business acumen and close contacts with groundnut farmers gave him access to a huge proportion of Northern Provinces' annual produce, often in excess of 10%[295], yet he was unable to sell them directly to customers in the rest of the world because of the tight controls on shipping, through a quota system. He complained about this situation to the Officer in Charge of the Groundnut Campaign, J H Carrow. Carrow sympathised with Dantata, and was keenly aware of the potential public interest in the issue. He wrote to the SNP recommending that Dantata be allowed extra access to shipping. 'From the political point of view,' he wrote, 'the advantages in granting this additional quota seem obvious':

> (a) It would show that an African (in fact a Hausa) can make good as merchant and compete on terms of equality with European firms and others
> (b) Would detract from accusations that the big European combine firms do not permit of Africans trading except in subordinate capacities.
> (c) Would counteract some of the criticisms generally levelled at the United Africa Company, and Association of West African Merchants.[296]

Dantata himself claimed that it was the second of these considerations that motivated him. What he wanted was not money, so much as 'position and status – due recognition as a MERCHANT (and equal, as such, to the big firms): NOT AS MIDDLEMAN'.[297] Yet, clearly, he was concerned that his nationality counted against him financially. In the same letter, he wrote that 'I have suffered very seriously as compared with young Syrian Merchants and others, who have been granted quotas, where I ... cannot ship a grain. My identity is entirely lost as a trader of significance'. Although the Governor endorsed Dantata's application by writing to the Secretary of State

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[295] See Appendix 1.

[296] Arewa House: SNP 9/2/30 37449 'Alhaji Alhassan Dan Tata'. J H Carrow to SNP29/5/1944.

[297] A Dantata to Chief Commissioner, Northern Provinces (CCNP) c/o Resident Kano 19/5/1944. While the thoughts expressed in this letter clearly come from the heart, it appears to have been written with the assistance of unidentified individuals in Dantata's employ.

(paraphrasing what Carrow had said, but with 'native of the Northern Provinces' instead of 'Hausa'), no concessions were made. Dantata was most unhappy. His response is worth quoting extensively:

> I am sure that if he [the Secretary of State] knew all the facts ... he would not in justice agree to a control that worked against my interest as a local merchant born and grow[n] up in Kano and yet help foreigners – companies and individuals such as Syrians who have only come to Kano to make money and are not connected by family with this country, its future or its people.
>
> I am a Kano man. I have built my business as Groundnut merchant since the earliest days of the trade ... I set a good example to my fellows by showing what can be done by hard work and trufulness [sic] and regard religion. Now I am suddenly cast down and I am nobody ... I buy every year about one tenth of the Groundnut crop. What I gain by my own work and God's help in competition with others is taken away not by my failure but by a minister of [the] King of England ... I am a true Mohammedan and if Allah does not wish me to have a quota, I accept – but do not understand what I or the people at Kano have done to receive such treatment, we of this land who were born here ... I feel as [though I am] representing humble men not those in high position.[298]

In the 1945/6 season, the quota system was abolished. Dantata, who had for the past two seasons bought almost exclusively for the United Africa Company, feared the possible consequences of becoming a buying agent in open competition. Rather than risk commercial disaster, he continued to operate as a middleman for some years.

Dantata's predicament was precisely the sort of situation which the NPC's Northernization policy sought to address. In common with other forms of 'Africanization' being employed across the continent, the policy is usually associated with the employment of Africans in the public sector, but it was broader than that. As the Premier explained:

> We do not want to go to [Lake] Chad and meet strangers catching our fish in the water, and taking them away to leave us with nothing. We do not want to go to Sokoto and find a [non-Northern] carpenter who is nailing our houses. I do not want to go to the Sabon Gari Kano and find strangers making the body of a lorry, or go to the market and see butchers who are not Northerners.[299]

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[298] Alhassan Dantata to the Governor 26/8/1944.

[299] John Paden *Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto: Values and Leadership in Nigeria* (Zaria: Hudahuda, 1986) p325.

The nomenclature is important to this issue. Before the *zamanin siyasa* ('time of politics'), the North had often found itself publicly defined in negative terms. Yahaya Kwande later put it like this: 'questioning the justice of the Northernization policy would be like trying to refute the common saying about self-preservation being the first law of survival. I remember that in those days it was the belief of the average Southerner that *every* Northerner was an ignoramus'.[300] So, where the South was educated, the North was *un*educated (in spite of centuries of literacy and learning in the region). Where the South was 'westernized', the North was 'non-Western'. Where the South was modern, the North was considered backward. The ideology underpinning Northern identity brought to prominence a mindset that defined 'us' as 'Northern' and all others as 'non-Northern'. Not only did the language of Northern nationalism encourage people to feel proud to come from the North, but the policies lumped together as 'northernization' made it a practical advantage.

For Alhassan Dantata, this practical advantage came from the Northern Nigeria Marketing Board (NNMB), established in 1953. A statutory monopoly handling the major agricultural exports of the Northern Region, the NNMB made Alhassan Dantata its first licensed buying agent (LBA), giving him the high status he wanted and the protection his business needed.[301] For others, the fruits of Northernization took the form of contracts, awarded to Northerners wherever possible – often through the agency of associations such as the Northern Amalgamated Merchants' Union, the Northerner Contractors Union and the Northern Middlemen's Trading Association, which in turn gave support to the NPC. Such links, as Forrest observes, 'were important in securing access to state patronage, finance and contracts, which became progressively more important as power shifted away from the colonial rulers'.[302]

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[300] Yahaya Kwande *The Making of a Northern Nigerian* (Jos: Quarhess, 1998) p133.

[301] See Tom Forrest *The Advance of African Capital: The Growth of Nigerian Private Enterprise* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994) p207.

[302] Tom Forrest *The Advance of African Capital: The Growth of Nigerian Private Enterprise* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994) p199.

Privately, Alhassan Dantata had his doubts about politics and politicians. To the committee investigating the Kano riots of 1953, he gave the impression:

> [that] if there were no interference by the political leaders the various communities could live peacefully together. If the behaviour of some of the younger members of the Southern communities was at times provocative, they did enrich Kano with their technical skill and ability. Alhaji Alhassan, in particular, noted that from long personal experience he had found the Ibo's word to be as good as his bond and on this score preferred Ibos in general to Yorubas.[303]

Despite his generally positive feelings towards immigrants to Kano, Alhassan Dantata's earlier appeals had been phrased in a way that drew attention to his roots in the city, with ties to his community that foreigners could never have. During the Northernization period, such appeals were re-framed, stressing the unique ties that *Northerners* had to their *region*. Although Dantata had complained about the opportunities allowed to Levantine traders (being too savvy to say the same things about British companies), the NPC generally maintained good relations with Syrians, Lebanese and others, who were, together with the British, classified as 'expatriates' rather than 'non-Northerners'. The latter term unavoidably picked up negative connotations.[304]

The relationship between the region's emergent political elite and the older capitalist elite – known in the literature as the *attajirai* – was given further impetus by other public bodies such as the Northern Nigerian Development Corporation and the Provincial Loan Boards. While the *attajirai* could not make the most of the economic possibilities offered by an independent Nigeria without such assistance, politicians in a lot of areas relied on the goodwill that locally popular merchants were able to channel in a party's direction.

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[303] *A [Secret] Further Commentary on the Recent Troubles in Kano* (Kaduna: Government Printer, 1953) p4.

[304] For example: before 1964, the press were too polite to refer to Ibrahim Musa Gashash (a Tripolitanian Arab, and the second person to be appointed an LBA for the NNMB) as a non-Northerner when he held the posts of Minister of Lands and Survey and later Deputy Premier. It was only after he fell out with his constituency party in Kano that he was so described. See *Gaskiya* 7/2/1964.

Sometimes, this involvement was direct. Whitaker notes that, facing a challenge from NEPU that used the politics of class, the NPC responded by fielding candidates from among the most popular of the *attajirai*. The prime example was Alhassan Dantata's son Ahmadu, who defeated Aminu Kano in the 1956 regional election. The style of dress, speech and comportment favoured by the *attajirai* identified them as *talakawa*, despite their wealth, so it seems that what Dantata senior said about his representing the 'humble men' was publicly accepted. As Sklar notes, 'traditional class consciousness [in the North] mitigates the intensity of modern class struggle'.[305] As always, we cannot generalise too far. Ahmadu's brother Mahmudu Dantata was a prominent NEPU supporter and the funds he provided kept the party afloat.[306]

### 3.15 Selection Criteria: British Council Scholarships

Private companies were encouraged to emulate government policy by choosing a suitably qualified Northerner over any other candidate wherever possible. Increasingly, they found 'it was inconvenient not to have Northerners in their employment'[307]. Enquiries about employees' 'Northern Status' became part of the workload of the Public Service Commission (PSC) when that body became the arbiter of such matters.

But how did the PSC decide who was considered a Northerner? One of the first bodies to be asked to make such a decision was the selection committee for British Council Scholarships to UK universities, which was regionalized in 1946. Selection for such a scholarship was a great privilege and all but guaranteed a successful career for the returning student, so competition was naturally fierce.

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[305] Richard Sklar *Nigerian Political Parties: Power in an Emergent African Nation* (Princeton: PUP 1963) p329.

[306] Mahmudu Dantata was convicted of possessing forged banknotes in 1957. He emerged from jail in 1964 as an NPC supporter, and went on successfully to contest Aminu Kano's seat in the federal election. See John N Paden *Religion and Political Culture in Kano* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973) p113 n15.

[307] Dudley *Parties and Politics* p232 fn78.

The Committee did not consider academic qualities alone. The relevant files show how potential candidates were vetted according to their political preferences and social habits. One candidate, for example, was rejected because he was 'an ardent disciple of the Zik school of thought'. Another was prevented from taking up his scholarship because he had appeared drunk in public (during a meeting of the Bornu Literary Society).[308]

It was the recommendation of Sharwood Smith, as Resident of Niger Province, that family background should be taken into account.

> Young men with a cultural background and a family tradition of administrative experience are far more likely to learn the things that matter most when they visit the United Kingdom than young men without roots whose main qualification is a veneer of knowledge. Furthermore, the former with their natural courtesy and wider experience in their own country will prove better "ambassadors" than the "parvenu" type that by always looking for offence thereby gives offence.[309]

Even without the favouritism Sharwood Smith suggested, the educational policies of previous decades meant that those with a 'family tradition' of leadership were always going to be well represented among those qualified to apply for a scholarship. However, the committee members were uncertain as to which applications they should accept. Ought applicants to approach the committee in the area in which they live, or the region 'in which their tribes are domiciled'? If an Igbo, born and brought up in Kano, applies for a scholarship, do you make him trek all the way to Enugu for his interview?[310] The answer, it was eventually decided, had to be Yes. For southerners born in the North, this was hard to take: as Bola Ige wrote of his youth, 'it never occurred to you to ... imagine that some day you would have to go "home". Home for you was Kaduna, full stop'.[311] After a flurry of correspondence in 1948, it was decided that the committee serving the Western Provinces could be approached by

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[308] Arewa House: SNP 9/2/31 37467 S.1 'Scholarships to British Universities'. Assistant Director of Education, Northern Provinces (Gott) to Director of Education, Nigeria 14/11/1945. See also Senior Education Officer, Bornu Province (A A Shillingford) to Assistant Director of Education, Northern Provinces (C J Whitting) 4/9/1945.

[309] Arewa House: 'Scholarships'. Sharwood Smith to SNP 28/10/1946.

[310] Ibid.

[311] Bola Ige *People, Politics and Politicians of Nigeria (1940-1979)* (Ibadan: Heinnemann, 1995) p2. Ige was particularly shocked at being refused permission to study at Kaduna College. He went on to become Nigeria's Attorney General, but was assassinated in 2001.

candidates who either lived in or came from the Western Provinces; the same would go for the Eastern committee. The Northern committee, meanwhile, was only to consider applicants whose tribes were domiciled in the North. The decision that people qualified as Northerners through their 'tribe' set an *important precedent*.

### 3.16 Selection Criteria: Government Service

When the NPC came up with the name 'Northernization' in 1955, 'Northern Status' continued to be via the 'community'. The relevant directive said that:

> 1. A Northerner is a person who, by descent from his or her father, is a member of a tribe or community of people indigenous to the Northern Region.
> Any case of doubt as to whether a particular tribe or community of people is indigenous to the Northern Region shall be decided by the Governor in Council.
> Any case of doubt as to whether a particular person possesses the required membership of a tribe or community of people indigenous to the Northern Region shall be decided by the Public Service Commission.
>
> 2. Any other person may be deemed by the Public Service Commission in its absolute discretion to be a Northerner if he or she possesses either of the following qualifications: (a) he (or she) resides in a community indigenous to the Northern Region and is, in the opinion of the Public Service Commission, accepted by that community as one of themselves; (b) his (or her) mother was a Northerner as defined in paragraph 1.[312]

The form to be filled in by applicants for government service therefore contained five boxes. (1) was the candidate's name. (2) was the candidate's father's name. (3) was the home town of the father, including the full address of the district, village and compound in which he was born. (4) asked for a referee to confirm that the father was a Northerner and (5) asked for any other evidence, if the claim was not based on the father. Some candidates filled this box in for good measure, one remarking that 'I claim Northern Status on my father's status and the Angas mark I have on my face'.[313]

A claim to membership of a community seems, then, to have been based on the idea of the 'home town' rather than a broader 'ethnicity'. So, despite the

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[312] NAK: DDN 2739B 'Northernisation of the Civil Service'.

[313] NAK CON 6 'Claim to Northern Status: Pankshin Division'. The form went through a few changes but remained the same in most respects.

popular generalisation that the Yoruba were a 'Western' people, distinction was made between Yorubas indigenous to the North and those who were not. Similarly, an application from Isa Andi Matankari was accepted only because he could demonstrate that he was regarded as 'one of the community' in Sokoto, his mother's town. His father was a Hausa, but he did not count as a Northerner, because he came from Niger Republic.[314]

The third box shows an implied expectation that the home town is where one was born, but this was clearly not always the case. A lot of Nigerians have a 'home town' which they have never been permanent residents of. While a candidate who had been born outside the region could easily qualify if his father was a Northerner, there are numerous cases of individuals born and brought up in the North who failed to pass muster.

The Public Service Commission (PSC) clearly had its work cut out. There were not only referrals from all the public bodies and private companies to consider, but also complaints from concerned individuals, such as the members of the Plateau Contractor Union, who wrote to accuse one Salawu Owolabi of being a westerner in disguise.[315] Their letter also pointed out, with no great subtlety, that Owolabi was a member of the Action Group. Clearly, this was a process which it would be easy to rig against social and political 'undesirables', but in this case, the PSC, having made enquiries, concluded that Owolabi was who he said he was. Having to deal with a torrent of similar background checks was a mammoth task, which put considerable strain on the commission. There follow some examples of the kinds of decisions that were made and the reasons behind them.

The borderline cases are the most interesting. George Hamboul Founeir, a candidate for Government service in 1960, could only hope to qualify under section 2(a) of the PSC's requirements. He was born in Jos in 1932 and had

[314] WJBHAC: Sokoto 2/64/570 'Northern Status Claims of'. H A Yauri (Sokoto NA) to Provincial Secretary 25/5/1965. The application had been made over a year previously.

[315] NAK: CON.4 Vol II 'The Position of Non-Northerners'. Ishiyaku Gwamna et al. of Plateau Contractor Union, to Resident Plateau 8/8/1960. The Resident made the referral to the PSC.

remained there until he was sent away to school. What the PSC needed to know, according to its secretary, was 'whether in that period [1932-1944] he so associated himself with indigenous communities rather than non-indigenous people that he was accepted by them as one of themselves.' The result of the enquiry is, sadly, not recorded – but the point is that, in this case and cases like it, an individual's career path was determined by who his friends were as an eleven year old. Yet the qualification criteria seem to have been inconsistently applied. In the Founeir case, the questions concerned his past. In others, such as the two following examples, individuals trying to qualify under sections 2(a) or 2(b) were assessed according to how well they had integrated into the community in which they were living at present.

Northern Status was granted automatically to someone whose father was a Northerner, but given only at the discretion of the PSC to someone claiming descent on their mother's side.[316] This made for problems in cases such as that of A F Comlavi, who applied to join government service in 1958. Comlavi had lived in Sokoto for sixteen years, ever since his father, a civil servant originally from British-administered Togo, had been transferred from Benue Province. A minute on the file noted that he had served the Northern Provinces for 23 years, that he had been awarded a Certificate of Honour in the Queen's Birthday Honours list of 1956 and that 'it was always Mr Comlavi senior's wish that his son should serve in the Civil Service of the Northern Region'.[317] These comments are indicative of the cultural – one could say emotional – yardstick which one (British) member of the provincial administration wished to apply to the question. Yet, as another minute pointed out, these considerations were irrelevant. What was being asked was whether Comlavi, who claimed Northern Status through his Jukun mother, was 'acceptable by the community *among whom he lives* as one of them'.[318] In the colonial mindset, this meant asking

[316] Sadly, none of the documents discusses the reasons behind this ruling. However, in Nigerian society, and especially in the North, far more is determined by who one's father is than by who one's mother is.

[317] WJBHAC: Sokoto 1/22/162 'Northern Status Claims'. Minute by H. P. N.

[318] Ibid. D B Baikie for Acting Secretary PSC to Resident Benue 20/1/1958. Emphasis added.

the Native Authority, the only recognised barometer of local opinion. Sokoto NA responded in the negative, and Comlavi's application was rejected.

The case of Mamman Sokoto is similar. A Motor Driver at the Ministry of Agriculture in Zaria, he faced redundancy in 1959 because his father was an Igbo. He based his claim to Northern Status on his mother, who was from Birnin Kebbi in Sokoto Province. The PSC therefore wrote to the Resident to ask 'whether or not ... the indigenous natives [a necessary tautology given the linguistic contortions of colonial administration] of Sokoto regard him as one of themselves'.[319] A minute on the file suggested the matter be forwarded to Zaria NA instead, because that was where he lived; Mr Sokoto was then ruled not to be a Northerner.[320]

Such outcomes suggest a number of things. One is that Northernness, in its practical effects, was a loose collection of allied identities, more than a single, overarching one. If it had been otherwise, the breadth of pan-Northern experience offered by both Comlavi and Sokoto would have stood in their favour (Comlavi had been born in Benue Province and was a long-time resident in Sokoto Province; Mamman Sokoto had been born in Gwandu, raised, as his name suggests, in Sokoto, and was resident in Zaria). They also suggest a two-tier system, disadvantaging Northerners who claimed descent from their mother. Perhaps if Comlavi had returned to Wukari to make his application, he would have been successful – or perhaps he would simply have been regarded as 'that man from Sokoto'. Mamman Sokoto would surely have stood a better chance of success if the rules had allowed for his indigeneity to be assessed by his home NA rather than that of the area in which his lived. Yet in both cases, had the father been indigenous to any part of the region, the son would have been qualified to work in any part of the region, without making the slightest effort to integrate with the local community.

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[319] Ibid. Secretary PSC to Resident Sokoto 28/1/1959.

[320] NAK: PRE 19 'Premier's Demi Official Letters Vol I'. This file includes M Sokoto's letter to the commission (dated 23/8/1960) complaining about the termination of his appointment.

By the mid-1960s, the strain on the PSC and the NAs was beginning to show. Claims to Northern Status commonly took six months or more to be processed, and many applicants had to be kept on temporary contracts until the paperwork was concluded.[321] Replies from Sokoto NA to PSC enquiries, to the effect that the applicant was a 'true' Northerner (sometimes 'genuine', indigenous' or 'bona fide') were, by this time, almost invariably accompanied by an apology for lateness.

### 3.17 Community Membership and the 1979 Constitution

These issues were revisited by Y B Usman when he sat on the Constitution Drafting Committee in the build up to the Second Republic. The committee decided to include a clause in the constitution requiring the President to appoint at least one cabinet minister 'from among Nigerian citizens who belong to each of the States comprising the Federation'. There were numerous other provisions along similar lines, designed to give Nigeria's government a sufficiently 'federal' character – but Usman and one other member refused to be party to any of them, because they perceived a number of potential problems. One was that a person was deemed to 'belong' to a state if either parent was a member 'of a community indigenous to that state'.[322] Logically, the next question is '*what exactly constitutes "a community indigenous to a State"?*'

> Who are the indigenes of Gongola State for example? Is it the Bachama who somebody will say come from Gobir? Is it the Jukun, who somebody will say come from Egypt? Or the Chamba who somebody will say come from Chad? Or the Fulani who somebody will say come from Senegal? If it is a matter of length of occupation: how many years have a people got to stay in a place before they become indigenes of the place? One thousand years, five hundred years, one century, just a generation or just one dry season?[323]

The answer, as far as the old Northern Region had been concerned, was that a community became indigenous as soon as the Government agreed that it was.

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[321] WJBHAC: 'Northern Status'. See Sani Daura's letter on behalf of the Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Establishments and Training to all Provincial Secretaries 1/11/1963.

[322] As has been mentioned, in the earlier case of the Northern Region, 'membership' came in the first instance through the paternal and only in special cases via the maternal line.

[323] Yusufu Bala Usman *For the Liberation of Nigeria* (London: New Beacon, 1979) p117. Emphasis in the original.

An individual, meanwhile, had to wait for as long as it took to be recognised by that community as 'one of us' (with local opinion assumed to be embodied by the NA). Usman's sympathies were with those Nigerian citizens who slip through the net, appearing not to 'belong' to any state. In the future, he predicted, wryly, 'there shall be a very lucrative business for us in history-fabricating'.[324] As has recently been shown by a public spat between Usman and other writers, this appears to be true.[325]

### 3.2 Reforms of Local Government

Various reforms of the Native Authority system were instituted in the 1950s. Some were more successful than others. The changes were, as argued in Chapter One, sparked off by Tafawa Balewa's 1950 speech to the Northern House of Assembly. However, it is important to point out that, at this point, the most pressing issues for most Northerners were the local issues. All the big political parties that dominated Nigeria in the nationalist era had had their ranks swelled by members of smaller and often much older organisations. There were a lot of them, and they were not swallowed up by the big parties. As late as 1961, Plateau Province was home to all of the following bodies:

| | |
|---|---|
| Oturkpo District Youth Association | Ogbomosho Parapọ |
| Mongu Progressive Union | Sokoto Recreational Club |
| Pankshin Divisional Union | Tiv Tribal Union |
| Katsina Fraternity Union | Bauchi District Union |
| Bagarmawa Trible [sic] Union | Bende Divisional Union |
| Ohuhu Clan Union, Bukuru | Ibo State Union |
| Benin Youth League | Northern Idoma Youth Association |
| Hausa Progressive Union | Bread Sellers Union |

There were similar organisations right across the North. Jos, being a new town, was full of 'Tribal Unions' such as those listed above, which tended to play only a small role in political matters,[326] working instead as self-help groups.[327] The

[324] Ibid., p118.

[325] See Appendix 2.

[326] This generalisation should not be taken too far. There was an organisation for settlers in Plateau called 'Idoma Union Club Unity and Faith to Ahmadu Bello'. See NAK: PLT.1 'Political Parties'.

rights of people indigenous to Jos, on the other hand, were championed by the Birom Progressive Union (BPU).

Groups, such as the BPU, who were based in the area they claimed to represent, tended to act as lobbying groups to force constitutional changes at the local level. The BPU's great achievement was the installation of a Birom, Rwang Pam, as the chief of Jos. The Moppa Youth Patriotic Union (MYPU), at around the same time, generated a moderate amount of press coverage[328] surrounding the question of whether the chief (Aluko) of Moppa, a town in East Yagba District of Kabba Province, should have primacy over the surrounding villages. Quickly, though, what had been a question of royal politics expanded to take in the big issues of NA jobs and money, with the MYPU alleging, in a letter to the Chief Secretary, that favouritism was being shown to people from the neighbouring village of Isanlu. They ended their letter by saying that 'Yagba can never be compared with other parts of the North. She is 100% yoroba [sic] and the absolute monarchy allowed to Northern Emirs would fail to work [in] Yagba peacefully'.[329] The area would soon become fertile ground for the Action Group, which suggested union with the Western Region might provide the answers.

### 3.21 The Outer Councils

Political organisations, small and large, were arguing in favour of reforms to a government that was more receptive to such ideas than it had previously been. Under the direction of the regional government, many NAs began to experiment with ways of bringing local government closer to the people. These included the establishment of 'Outer Councils'. Although there were variations (in Zaria,

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[327] For instance, the Zage Zagi Union provided temporary lodging for any *Bazazzagi* (citizen of Zaria) who arrived in Sokoto without any friends or relations to go to. Members contributed to a fund for the payment of wedding expenses, naming ceremonies or medical treatment. See WJBHAC: Sokoto 25/2/24 'Unions General Correspondence'.

[328] E.g. *Daily Service* 18/2/1948 and *Daily Times* 11/11/1947.

[329] Arewa House: 14/1/1 42066 'Moppa Youth Patriotic Union'. MYPU to Chief Secretary to the Government (cc. Chief Commissioner, Northern Provinces and Resident Kabba Province) 6/1/1949.

for instance, the body was called the Provincial Council[330]), the Outer Council was usually an advisory body, with some elected members, whose job would be to assist the Emir and his Council.

*Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo* was enthusiastic about this development. Reporting the 1956 elections to the Adamawa Outer Council, the paper was characteristically paternalist: 'now the commoners have confirmed that it is they who have elected everyone in the council. The commoners are truly happy about the way that this year's election has been conducted'.[331] So why did interest in the Outer Councils die down after so short a period? This section analyses the question by looking at the activities of the Outer Council of Argungu in the west of Sokoto Province, now Kebbi State.

The Council was formed in 1950, before any system of popular election had been established. Its non-official membership was therefore made up of appointed representatives for occupational and ethnic 'special interests'. In addition to five District Heads and six Village Heads the Council included a member of the Zabarma community and two representatives of the nomadic Fulani; a fisherman, a member of the western-educated elite, two traders and two farmers. Meetings of these twenty men were chaired by the Emir of Argungu.[332]

Although the inclusion of two representatives of nomadic Fulani was intended to encourage the involvement of marginal groups in local matters, some of the proposals raised reflect a certain antipathy towards them on behalf of the *Kabawa*. For instance, one motion suggested that the NA should reconsider the amount of grazing land allowed to the Fulani near the town of Arewa, because, while local people lacked sufficient farmland, the Fulani did not even stay in the area allocated for their use. The first speaker opposed the motion because he believed it implied that the Fulani should give up their nomadic

[330] Yahaya *The Native Authority System* p232.

[331] *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo* 5/6/1956.

[332] NAK: 5507.S4 'Argungu Outer Council – Composition and Proceedings of'.

lifestyle and settle down, but another responded by saying that all that was being suggested was that 'we should stop turning everywhere into grazing land, because it prevents farmers from using it as farm land'. The Emir eventually ruled that the Fulani should be left to use the land, that no one should farm in it and that if Fulani cattle did damage to crops on designated farmland (a common complaint) that this should be reported to the proper authorities.[333]

Some of the newly appointed members clearly came with an exaggerated idea of the Council's capabilities. One asked whether the NA could provide salaried work for people who had been educated by the *Yaki Da Jahilci* Adult Literacy Campaign, but was opposed by a District Head on the grounds that the campaign was about teaching people to read for its own sake, not in order to gain employment. 'Even some who have been to Middle School are without work,' he observed.[334] No one else supported the motion, so it was dropped.

Another member brought up a complaint that parents were no longer disciplining their children for disobedience and that this was down to the bad influence of Europeans.[335] Again, this issue was beyond the council's capabilities. The Madawaki felt that a lessening in parental discipline was not down to the imposition of European values *per se*, but was a product of 'modernity' (*zamani*). That is, people were scared to punish their children in a way that was too extreme, because, unlike in former times, young people now had the option of running away from home.[336]

The Outer Council was called, in Hausa, *Majalisar Ra'ayin Jama'ar Argungu* or 'Council of the Opinions of the Argungu Community'. However, the Emir was clearly in the driving seat. For instance, early on in a debate in 1951 over

[333] Ibid. Minutes of meeting 28/4/1952

[334] Ibid. Minutes of meeting 24/1/1951.

[335] The content of the motion is not clear (even the Hausa-speaking members of the council admitted to not understanding what was meant) but one of the officials, Mai Arewa Gabas, explained the implied meaning: 'if a girl refuses to marry then her parents should shave her head or give her some other harsh punishment, and if children are lazy, then parents should give them a harsh punishment to make them work, but now, this is not being done'.

[336] Ibid. Minutes of meeting 30/5/1951.

whether nomadic Fulani normally resident in French West Africa (*Fillanin Faransi*) should pay some form of tax given that they did not pay cattle tax (*jangali*) in Nigeria, the Emir put an end to the discussion by saying: 'well, this is indeed a weighty topic, and, since you are aware that it is not only we who are on the borders of French country, I shall suspend discussion of this issue until I have received information from other districts which are, like ourselves, neighbours of French country'.[337] On another occasion, the Emir had cause to warn members not to speak angrily, reminding them that their position was as advisers only. From what remains of the Council's records, it seems that the body met with decreasing regularity over the course of six years. The last minutes to be filed date from 1956.

A lot of Outer Councils ceased to function at around this time. Perhaps part of the problem is that they had no power to control the distribution of resources. In the terms of Vickers and Post, members of such bodies were outside the 'system of rewards'. In Bida Outer Council, the District Officer wrote, two leading members 'gave the impression of regarding, however subconsciously, such meetings as a platform from which rich prizes would some day go for the picking'.[338] There, as elsewhere, that day never came, and it seems that interest waned as a result.

### 3.23 The Native Authority Law, 1954

In 1953, when the Regional Government put forward the suggestion of appointing a Minister for Local Government, chiefs worried that their independence was under threat and openly opposed the plan, which was subsequently put on ice. Bryan Sharwood Smith remembered that the chiefs 'supported the NPC because it stood for law and order and for progress, but they openly referred to Ministers as their *Wakilai* [representatives] ... and thought of them in no other light'.[339] The chiefs only gave their grudging acceptance to the proposals when they were given assurances that the Minister

[337] Ibid. Minutes of meeting, 22/1/1951. My translation.

[338] WJBHAC (Niger Province Archives): 'Divisional Intelligence Reports Bida'. Intelligence Summary April-May 1952 (F G Rogers, DO Bida).

[339] Sharwood Smith *But Always As Friends* p241.

would not give orders to the NAs, would not interfere with their day-to-day operations and would not be involved in the removal of chiefs from office. The Minister would tour the region, advise and encourage the NAs and bring them the suggestions of the Lieutenant-Governor. 'We did not oppose a Minister of Local Government who would tour around and inspect the progress of various local administrations,' commented Yahaya, the Emir of Gwandu (remembered as one of the more 'progressive' chiefs of the day). 'What we opposed was that the Minister would be above the chiefs'.[340]

### 3.24 The British and the Development of the NA System

The Government had always been above the chiefs. From the moment of conquest, all chiefs had been stripped of their authority and only re-appointed after they swore an oath of allegiance to the King of England. As Lugard put it to the defeated Emirs, the right to rule over Northern Nigeria had passed to the British, by right of conquest.

Meanwhile, from an Islamic point of view, the position of the re-appointed Emirs was legitimated by the Waziri, who ruled that it was legal and proper to find some accommodation with a conquering non-Muslim power, if it became necessary for the survival of the *umma*. (The victor was, however, still the enemy, to be ousted at the first opportunity.)[341] The basis for the relationship between the British and the chiefs was to change only gradually – but it would change. Over the course of decades, what had been an uneasy alliance, disrupted by confrontation and deposals, developed its own symbiosis.

The new rulers' first priority lay in restoring the public image of the chiefs. 'We can never hope to administer this country except through the native chiefs,' wrote one of the early Residents of Sokoto Province, 'and if the people get the idea into their heads that the Resident and not the chief is the ruler this will be

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[340] Dudley *Parties and Politics* p210.

[341] R A Adeleye 'The Dilemma of the Waziri: the place of the *Risalat al-Waziri ila ahl ilm wa'l tadabbur* in the history of the Sokoto Caliphate' in *JHSN* 11/6/1968.

impossible'.[342] From the earliest years of British rule, then, emphasis was laid on the independence of the Native Authorities – the very term 'Resident' was meant to imply a 'hands-off' form of control. Despite marked differences from pre-colonial days in the way the new 'Native Authority' system operated, many Emirs ended up with a greater level of control over their populations than ever before.[343] Clichéd as it may sound, the Caliphate, having lost the war, won the peace.

To resort to cliché once again: the British were still paying the piper and calling the tune. They were happy enough with (the rather compromised) 'Islamic' rule to extend it to new areas, but saw it as their duty to shape and manipulate it. The first forty-five years of that process are not covered in this thesis, but have been painstakingly documented by George Kwanashie of Ahmadu Bello University, in his work, 'The Development of the One-North Phenomenon in Northern Nigeria, 1900-1965'. Kwanashie deftly shows how Northern Nigeria came into being as a distinct political entity because of British interests and under British direction: it was they who provided the Northern Provinces with a 'precedence of distinctness and autonomy'[344] that became so important during the various stages in the transfer of power.

Rex Niven, like so many of his peers within the administration, felt a connection to the Northern Provinces that was more than just professional. His reminiscences of returning to the North after having been on leave are illuminating:

> The first station in the North was Offa, in Ilorin Province, and to arrive there was always an emotional moment for the white officers serving in the region. This

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[342] WJBHAC: ARG/3/6/31. Edward J Stanley to Capt. Harbord, n. d. (c. 1907) See Mark P. Smith 'Collaboration and Conflict: Sarkin Kebbi Sama'ila and the Early Years of British Administration in Argungu' (B.A. thesis, SOAS, 1999).

[343] Bornu reached a separate accommodation with the British. Many of the region's other monarchies remained also (e.g. the Atta of Igala) while Fulani intermediaries were later replaced by newly-instituted paramount chiefs in other areas (e.g. the Atta of Igbirra). For examples of the ways in which the NA system differed from pre-colonial government, see P K Tibenderana *Sokoto Province Under British Rule 1903-1939* (Zaria: ABU Press, 1988) or R Heussler *The British in Northern Nigeria* (Oxford: OUP, 1968).

[344] George A Kwanashie 'The Development of the One-North Phenomenon in Northern Nigeria 1900-1965' PhD Zaria, 1992 p40.

> simple platform was the threshold of "home". The policemen were Northerners. It was not the same for Northern Nigerians: their threshold was Minna, and in some cases Kaduna. That was the veritable North. The Northern officer had a patrimony that was never shared with his southern colleagues: a sacred loyalty, like that felt to a good regiment. Curiously, Ilorin, 50 miles further north, had no emotional appeal, but the Niger river, crossed at Jebba, again raised a lump in the throat.[345]

The colonial service was staffed with many other young, enthusiastic and idealistic recruits. They went to the North bearing their own preconceptions, they had those preconceptions altered or renewed and applied their experiences to the way they approached the job. Some tried to understand the Northern Provinces by analogy with India, the alleged model for the Indirect Rule system[346], while others saw similarities with the Roman Empire[347], or Britain itself at various stages of history: there are documents that portray the North as belonging to the eighteenth[348] and to the twelfth century,[349] while Stanhope White clearly had the region situated somewhere between the two:

> As we approached the older man came forward to greet us.
> "Zaki, sanu sanu," he said. "Lion, greetings."
> "Sanu mai shanu," I replied. "And to thee, O Master of the Cattle."
> "Thou art well?"
> "Only well; and thou? And the cattle? Are they well?
> "We are well, but we shall be glad to leave this spot; it is bewitched. For there are ghosts here and the animals have been disturbed. Last night they were panicked and it is but now that we have collected them again. One of my boys is still away looking for the last animal which has not been found. If we find it not, I shall come to ask you to beat the wire and tell my European in Kano that we have lost one of his beasts.
> Bukar Maroua nodded his head sagely.
> "Verily the place is haunted, of that we are aware..."[350]

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[345] Rex Niven *Nigerian Kaleidoscope* (London: C Hurst and Co, 1982) p23.

[346] Colin Newbury argues that 'Lugard himself did not look to an Indian model and admitted in 1908 that he had no "accurate knowledge" of the resident system in Indian states'. Colin Newbury *Patrons, Clients and Empire: Chieftaincy and Over-Rule in Asia, Africa and the Pacific* (Oxford: OUP, 2003) p109.

[347] PRO: CO65784 'Administrative Reports 1951'. Kabba Province Annual Report, 1951. . The Resident of Kabba saw his Province as being like Gaul.

[348] PRO: CO554/1183 'Political Situation in the Northern Region'. Bryan Sharwood Smith to the Secretary of State for the Colonies,1/7/1955.

[349] NAK: WEN 265 'Sokoto Province'. E Knight (Women Education Officer, Sokoto Province) to Chief Women Education Officer, Kaduna 23/9/1954.

Here is a further example: The Permanent Secretary to the Premier, H A S Johnston, giving a speech at a cocktail party, said that 'it took the British about 900 years to progress from Duncan's court to Victoria's. The North, I think, will require fewer decades than we needed centuries to cover the same ground'. *Nigerian Citizen* 8/4/1959.

[350] Stanhope White *Dan Bana* (London: Cassell, 1966) p31.

By rendering the conversation in this kind of English, White is deliberately showing us his mental picture of Northern Nigeria, a place locked into the late Middle Ages, a place where people still believe in ghosts and witchcraft. One could, of course, argue that White's use of 'thou' as second person singular is grammatically correct and that the patterns of speech correspond to what they would have been in the original Hausa – but his translation of 'mai shanu' as 'O Master of the Cattle' shows that the effect is intentional.

The British, then, had their own imagined North and were sympathetic to calls for regional autonomy. Although this certainly affected the way that the transfer of power was conducted, Northern nationalism was no colonial invention: as Kwanashie says, the 'One-North Phenomenon' came together on the initiative of Northerners, 'based on their perceptions of their and their communities' interest in the evolving political realities of Nigeria'.[351]

**3.25 The Effects of the Native Authority Act**

The Native Authorities had never held the independence popularly attributed to them. The difference, from the Richards Constitution onwards, was that Africans were beginning to absorb some of the powers previously vested in Europeans. So, although Dudley says that the Native Authority Law of 1954 'in effect placed the N.A.s under the regional Government – a change emphasized by successive amendments to the original statute',[352] it was more of a clarification than a change. The NA Law was the long-term result of Tafawa Balewa's big moment in 1950, providing the detailed break-down of the rights and responsibilities of NAs that he had called for in his speech. It recognised the importance of chiefs and made provision for popular participation in local government (including the democratic election of councillors) but left the decisions regarding the extent and timing of such participation to the NAs.[353]

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[351] Kwanashie 'One-North' px.

[352] Dudley *Parties and Politics* p211.

[353] Yahaya *The Native Authority System* p54.

Perhaps most importantly, it ironed out a few of the inherent hypocrisies of Indirect Rule. On the one hand, British power had, in its early days, relied on the Resident's establishing firm control of the Province, taking ultimate authority away from the Emir. On the other hand, it had relied on a public perception that the Emir was stronger than ever. As time wore on, the myth became the reality. Chiefs could gain plenty of leeway to operate without hindrance within their defined sphere of influence, if they made it clear that they meant to play within British rules rather than foment rebellion[354]. Political Officers found that they could make a good career for themselves simply by knowing when to back off: a dry and dull Annual Report for the Province could do one's prospects for promotion no harm. Theoretically, however, the central administration still retained ultimate control. The real change that occurred with the enactment of the 1954 NA Law, and subsequent amendments, was that the pretence to NA independence was being disposed of. The irony is that the politicians involved in this process had all started their political careers in 1947 as nominees of their NAs. By 1955, Sharwood Smith had to persuade the Sultan of Sokoto and the Emirs of Zaria and Kano not to resign their ministerial portfolios over ministerial interference in NA affairs.[355]

Just as in the immediate aftermath of conquest, chiefs who could not cope with the demands of the new regime were dispensed with. Most of them were removed from office under the Sharwood Smith's governorship[356], which is why Yahaya calls him 'one of the greatest opponents of chiefly power' in this period.[357] Yet such a characterisation misses the fact that Sharwood Smith governed the North during a period of rapid political change. From 1952 to

[354] The danger of rebellion was, in the early years of British rule, a considerable one, and this affected the balance of power. British control was never absolute and depended, to a greater or lesser extent, on the goodwill of the chiefs. The administration was constantly aware of the possible consequences of deposing a popular chief.

[355] Sharwood Smith *But Always As Friends* p310.

[356] Sharwood Smith became Lieutenant-Governor of the Northern Provinces in 1952, when this office replaced that of Chief Commissioner. The Lyttleton Constitution of 1954 re-styled his office Governor of the Northern Region, while the Governor in Lagos became known as Governor-General. Sharwood Smith was replaced by Gawain Bell in 1957, after which appointments and deposals of chiefs ceased to be the Governor's responsibility and, through the Council of Chiefs, effectively became that of the Premier.

[357] Yahaya *The Native Authority System* p24.

1957, Nigeria took giant steps towards independence and, unavoidably, this meant clarifying the position of chiefs vis-à-vis the government. Sharwood Smith was, throughout his career, vigorously pro-chief. He was the kind of person Walter Miller was thinking of when he said that Nigeria was run by men with 'an instinctive leaning towards old families, good (sic) blood, good manners, patriarchal type rule of peasantry (squire and gentry), and (I rather suspect) pageantry...'[358] He had such fondness for the institutions of Northern monarchy, and believed so strongly that they were almost universally popular (not to mention a political necessity) that he had to do whatever was necessary to retain as much of the NA system as could be saved during the transfer of power – even if this meant removing those chiefs who appeared not to recognise that their position was now, and in reality always had been, subordinate to the Northern Regional Government.[359] In a sense, it is remarkable that the North got through the period of neutralising its chiefs with so few major casualties: the Wazirin Bornu in 1953; the Emir of Argungu, the Emir of Bauchi and the Shehu of Dikwa in 1954; the Atta of Igbirra in 1955; and the Atta of Igala in 1956.

In 1956, a regional election was held in the North which saw NEPU gain its first seats in the Northern House of Assembly yet confirmed NPC's ability to win elections. Afterwards, the regional government could afford to speak with greater authority than it had previously dared admit to. The Premier's landmark speech to the House of Assembly that year was formalised into the December 1957 'Declaration of the Government of the Northern Region on its relations with Native Authorities'. This declaration said that 'within the field of local government, the Regional Government is ready to grant Native Authorities complete freedom of action provided always that certain essential conditions are observed'. The conditions were that the NA retained the confidence of the mass of the people, correctly discharged its duties, etc. The Regional Government was, however, ultimately responsible for the maintenance of 'law,

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[358] Miller *Have We Failed in Nigeria?* p27.

[359] Governor Macpherson said the forced abdications were part of 'Sharwood Smith's rampage to save the Native Authority system in the North by trying to get it to purge itself of its worse abuses'. See PRO: CO554/235 'Reform of Local Government in the Northern Provinces'. Governor to T B Williamson 4/3/1953.

order and sound administration' and therefore had to 'reserve to itself the right to intervene in local government matters if these conditions are not met'.[360] Any pretence that the NAs were sacrosanct was gone. Although the declaration stated that the government would be unbiased in the execution of its powers and that, if it failed in this respect, it risked 'exposure at the bar of public opinion', it does seem to have used its capacity to interfere selectively – particularly in disbanding the elected government of the Ilọrin Talaka Parapọ.[361]

A D Yahaya notes that this line became even firmer later on. 'Whereas in 1956 Government was unwilling to interfere with the N.A.s provided they showed acceptable organizational behaviour and a reasonable degree of administrative competence, in 1962, non-interference by Government was conditional on the N.A.s' willingness "to carry out the lawful instructions and directives of the government".'[362] The 1962 circular to which Yahaya refers was issued to all Provincial Secretaries by the Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Local Government and explained the official status of chiefs. Part (a) set out the views of the Regional Committee on the Future of Native Authorities regarding the details of chiefs' continuing role in local government. For instance, that they should continue as 'active chairmen' of their councils and that their position should be subject to periodical review. Part (b) talked in more glossy ideological terms about 'the future'. Chieftaincy, the committee felt, was an institution 'of the greatest value ... a stabilising element in a rapidly changing world'. The chief was supposed to act as the focal point for a people, the 'personification' of the 'tribal or group personality'. Tucked away within these expressions of approval was a warning that the chief should confine himself to 'supervision' of the NA's activities, 'i.e. satisfying himself that *the policy of the Regional Government* and of his N. A. is being properly carried out'.[363]

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[360] WJBHAC: Sokoto 25/1/11 'Declaration on Relations with Native Authorities'.

[361] *Statement of the Government of the Northern Region of Nigeria on the Report of the Inquiring Officer appointed to investigate allegations about Ilorin N. A.* (Kaduna: Government Printer, 1958). See also: PRO: CO554/2015 'Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Ilorin'.

[362] Yahaya *The Native Authority System* p124.

[363] WJBHAC: Argungu 1/1/1 'Annual Reports on Chiefs'. Circular, Permanent Secretary to Ministry of Local Government, September 1962. My emphasis.

### 3.26 The Abdication of the Emir of Kano

Of all the dismissals that were carried out between 1946 and 1966, the single boldest and most controversial was the forced abdication of Muhammadu Sanusi, Sarkin Kano. The official explanation was that Sanusi's administration was being inefficiently run and had allowed itself to become mired in debt.

Yahaya Kwande's memoirs give something of the atmosphere in Kano around that time. Kwande had joined the Administrative Service in the 1950s and, through a mixture of hard work and family connections[364], advanced himself to the position of District Officer in Kano Province. He was also a favourite of the Emir Sanusi. On one occasion, in either 1959 or 1960, Kwande returned home from work to find a brand new Opel Kapitan, a gift from the Emir. 'That got me dumbfounded,' he recalls. 'Car gift from a traditional Head to a civil servant? Immediately, the terms "corruption" and "receiving of gratification" jumped into my mind…' Quickly, he considered his options. He could not return the car, for fear of causing offence. He could not keep the car for fear of compromising his integrity. In his training, Kwande had been taught that such embarrassing situations could be resolved by reference to the tradition of *tukwici*, the giving of a tip to the person whose job it is to deliver a gift. If it is a particularly large *tukwici*, the errand-boy keeps only a small amount, and returns the money to his employer. Kwande's strategy was therefore to increase the size of the *tukwici* to the approximate price of the car. He set about selling his old car and taking out a loan to cover the cost. However, the money was returned by the 'errand boy' – in this case the United Trading Company (UTC) Kano branch manager – with a note that his instructions had been to give the car rather than to sell it.

Kwande had a similar problem later on, when a District Head sent him an expensive radio set as a present. This time, he had insufficient funds to pay for the gift, so he asked the advice of the Resident. The Resident only laughed,

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[364] He was the Minister of Education, Isa Kaita's brother-in-law. When Kwande's application to join the Administrative Service Training School in Zaria was rejected due to lateness, Kaita asked the Sardauna to order Abubakar Imam (former editor of *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo*, now working for the Public Service Commission) to accept Kwande anyway. He did so. See Yahaya Kwande *The Making of a Northern Nigerian* (Jos: Quarhess, 1998) pp128-30.

and invited two other District Officers to come into the office to share the joke. 'While they shared a good laugh at my expense, it finally dawned on me that I was not supposed to be as rigid as I was being in carrying out this particular directive. The superior officers raised only ten shillings between them and gave the money to me to give as tukutchi for the radio set. After that I was able to keep the gift with a clear conscience.'[365]

Such extravagances were not uncommon, anywhere in the country. The distribution of gifts to and from traditional leaders was a well-established tradition, known as *gaisuwa*, and had continued through decades of official opposition. In Kano, however, the Muffett enquiry found evidence of widespread corruption and financial mismanagement that could not be overlooked. Yet, strangely, the head of the NA Department of Finance was permitted to stay in his employment. And, as Dudley points out, a similar enquiry in Zaria had uncovered a comparable state of affairs, without the Emir being deposed.[366]

The biographer of Sir Kashim Ibrahim suggests that there was a power struggle between the Sardauna and the Emir. In a sense, this was personal. (For instance, the two made an issue of the breakdown of a marriage between members of their respective families.) The Sardauna was irked by the Emir's constant showboating, while the Emir felt that his authority was not given due recognition. Having kept the Governor's seat warm while Bell was on leave in 1961, Muhammadu Sanusi felt he was the obvious candidate when the substantive position fell vacant the following year, but Kashim Ibrahim got the

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[365] Yahaya Kwande *Making of a Northern Nigerian* pp161-164. His attitude on this issue is in stark contrast to the intransigence he displayed towards the AG as Secretary to the Northern Region Electoral Commission. He told the party that it could not use the Palm Tree as its symbol, because it was already in use by the Nigeria Police, army and on currency, despite pleas for lenience from Awolowo, Aminu Kano and Ibrahim Imam. 'When they had finished,' he writes, 'I told them that the law was not mine and so I was incapable of bending it to please them'. The AG were left without an electoral symbol until a week before the 1961 regional elections and there is a hint of satisfaction when Kwande (an NPC supporter until he joined the civil service) says that 'because of the now very limited time at their disposal, the AG had a lot of logistics problem[s] to battle with, and so did not perform well at the election in the Northern Region'. This story highlights the distortions that can follow when, as in the case of the North, the civil service is run by party men. See ibid., p176.

[366] Dudley *Parties and Politics* p214.

job instead.[367] To cap it all, the Regional Government was preparing to enact the Provincial Administration Law of 1962, which would replace Residents with Provincial Commissioners. The latter were to have the status of cabinet ministers and would take precedence, in official protocol, over the Emir – and the Provincial Commissioner for Kano would be a Sokoto man, of royal slave origin. The Sarkin Kano told the Kano Members of the House of Assembly (MHAs) to oppose the bill. At an earlier time, such opposition would have been tolerable (as it had been when Emirs had opposed the appointment of a Minister of Local Government in 1953). Now, it was fatal. The Council of Chiefs (a committee chaired by and dominated by the Premier) ruled that Sanusi would have to go.[368]

J H Carrow, now retired, mentioned in a letter to the Premier how sad he had been to hear the news. As Resident of Kano Province, he had known Sanusi when he was the Ciroma. The Sardauna replied

> It is very sad indeed about the Emir of Kano. He is my personal friend and few feel as much as I do regarding his departure from public life. But it has become necessary in the interests of values cherished in a modern society and which we have inherited from two successive administrations in the past century or so to which we owe our present character.[369]

In a bizarre twist of fate, Sanusi now joined forces with NEPU, who were desperately trying to gain more electoral appeal by association with the Kano People's Party (KPP), which demanded Sanusi's reinstatement.

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[367] Akinjide Osuntokun *Power Broker: A Biography of Sir Kashim Ibrahim* (Ibadan: Spectrum, 1987) pp83-6.

[368] The antagonism was mutual. Sharwood Smith felt that the Sardauna had over-stepped the mark, in 1955, with 'exhibitions of arrogance or loss of self-control'. 'His "royal" entry into Kano City, preceded by a mounted escort of N. A. Police and his inspection of a N. A. Guard of Honour at the Gates of the Emir's Residence, did not at all please the Emir who showed remarkable restraint,' Sharwood Smith remarked; 'particularly in that the ceremony had been arranged direct by the Sardauna's staff without any prior reference to the Emir or his Household'. See PRO: CO554/1183 'Political Situation in the Northern Region'. Governor to Secretary of State for the Colonies 5/4/1955.

[369] NAK: 2/22 PRE.10 S1 'Autobiography of Sir Ahmadu Bello – Correspondence'. J H Carrow to Ahmadu Bello 14/4/1963. Ahmadu Bello to J H Carrow 20/5/1963.

Balarabe Musa, best known as the Governor of Kaduna State during the Second Republic, was chairman of NEPU's London branch at the time of the abdication. In his opinion, the decision was purely pragmatic: 'the NEPU leadership found it in their interests to champion the cause of Sanusi the oppressor in order to hurt a greater oppressor, the Sardauna'.[370]

Only four years previously, NEPU had complained to the Governor about the Emir's behaviour at the Friday Mosque. According to Acting Secretary General Yahaya Sabo,

> The Emir quite openly and boldly spoke in a manner tantamount to a decree that people should go to register and that if they did not certain people would win which would be to the detriment of this community.
>
> Now, not only is this a flagrant attempt and a clever royal move on the part of the Emir to make use of religion to further the ends of the party he supports but also a direct participation in partisan politics by the Emir of Kano.
>
> More, the use of a pulpit [for politicking] is ... shocking to all orthodox Muslims.[371]

NEPU themselves could not afford to ignore the political potential of religion. In alliance with the KPP, NEPU drew on the religious differences between Kano and the rest of the Muslim North. These differences tend to revolve around membership of one or other of the two major Sufi brotherhoods[372] in Northern Nigeria, the Qadiriyya and the Tijaniyya. The former was founded in Baghdad in the 11th century, the latter in Southern Algeria in the 18th century. The founder of the Sokoto Caliphate, Usman Dan Fodio, was a Qadiri, as were his followers and flag-bearers; however, all Emirs of Kano since the conversion of Emir

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[370] Alhaji Abdulkadir Balarabe Musa, interview, Kaduna 10/5/2002.

[371] NAK: ASI/919 'Political Affairs'. Yahaya Sabo (Acting General Secretary NEPU) to Governor Northern Region 8/3/1959.

[372] Sufism is commonly described as Islamic mysticism. The brotherhoods are called, in Arabic, *turuq*. The singular is *tariqa*. The issues surrounding *turuq* in Kano are complex, and will only be given a surface treatment here. For a more serious discussion of brotherhoods and associated politics, see John N Paden *Religion and Political Culture in Kano* (Berkeley: University of California, 1973).

Abbas (reg. 1903-1919) during World War One had been Tijanis.[373] The city became the North's centre of Tijaniyya, reflecting political rivalry with Sokoto.

There is no evidence to suggest that Ahmadu Bello or Aminu Kano were initiated into *turuq* but family connections associated them with the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya respectively. Whitaker suggests the existence of a 'natural alliance' between Tijaniyya and NEPU but Reynolds argues that the picture was a little more complex.[374] Although recognising that NEPU were often heard to speak out on behalf of the Tijanis being 'repressed' in the North, Reynolds points out that there were plenty of NEPU members in the Qadiriyya and NPC members who were Tijanis, not to mention people like Sa'adu Zungur who were suspicious of brotherhoods altogether.[375] Furthermore, there were new leaders within the Qadiriyya who were a cause for concern in the ruling party. Auwalu Anwar suggests that radical reformist *turuq* leaders from both traditions were seen as 'potentially more dangerous to the N. P. C. than even the rival political parties in the South'.[376]

One of the better known examples of 'repression' comes from March 1957, when NEPU requested permission to hold a lecture in Gusau, followed by a demonstration. According to the Sokoto NA Council, 'they were given

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[373] Many groups in the North claim the jihad as their own. The NPC could demonstrate their links with the descendants of Dan Fodio and his followers. NEPU believed themselves to be the intellectual descendants of the jihad. The Tijanis have always said that Dan Fodio's son, Sarkin Musulmi Muhammad Bello, was a Tijani. Sheikh Abubakar Gumi's autobiography, meanwhile, claims Dan Fodio came to reject Sufism of any kind. See Sheikh Abubakar Gumi with Ismaila Tsiga *Where I Stand* (Ibadan: Spectrum, 1992) p36.

[374] C S Whitaker Jr. *The Politics of Tradition: Continuity and Change in Northern Nigeria 1946-1966.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970) p397. Jonathan T Reynolds *The Time of Politics (Zamanin Siyasa): Islam and the Politics of Legitimacy in Northern Nigeria 1950-1966* (San Francisco: International Scholars Publications, 1999) p187.

[375] Aminu Kano had similar feelings, but managed to repress them. As Feinstein observes, 'Religious brotherhood politics entered into Aminu's tactical thinking principally as a defensive measure, since the thrust of his ideology was away from any mysticism.' See Alan Feinstein *African Revolutionary: The Life and Times of Nigeria's Aminu Kano* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension, 1987) p206.

[376] Auwalu Anwar 'Struggle for Independence and Identity: The Ulama in Kano, 1937-1987' (MA Maiduguri, 1989) p90.

permission [but] then they met up with some *'Yan Wazifa*[377] [Tijanis], who went [marching] forward doing that kind of shouting of theirs which has been forbidden them and those NEPU supporters later on were giving their own cry of "Sawaba!".' The minutes for the meeting only noted that, in future, NEPU would have to make a written agreement with the NA about what their activities would be.[378] However, according to Dudley, Tijanis 'were attacked, their property looted and in some cases their houses burnt down ... Some were forced to smoke cigarettes while in prison contrary to their religious beliefs'.[379] Even though NEPU rushed to the aid of the Tijaniyya, publicising what had happened, this was perhaps just a case of sticking up for the underdog, or uniting against a common foe. For there were still many Tijanis who supported the NPC, not least among them the Emir Sanusi of whom, as we have seen above, NEPU often had cause to complain.

The leader of the reformed Tijaniyya (encompassing most West African Tijanis), Sheikh Ibrahim Niass, had appointed Muhammadu Sanusi his *muqaddam* (representative) in Nigeria, making him a focus of religious loyalty for many people in Kano Province and elsewhere. After Sanusi was forced to abdicate, and made his unlikely alliance with NEPU via the KPP, the parties sought to capitalise on this loyalty. Posters for the 1964 General Elections featured a photograph of Sanusi's new ally, Mallam Aminu Kano, receiving a blessing from Niass. NPC's posters, on the other hand, showed the Premier's photograph, above a 'diagrammatic rendering of his spiritual and lineage descent from the Prophet Muhammad'.[380]

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[377] Forms of worship within the Tijaniyya often involve collective chanting, known as Wazifa. This was sometimes used for political effect in public places and was, as the minutes say, forbidden.

[378] WJBHAC: Sokoto 1/2/22 'Sokoto N. A. Council Minutes'. Minutes, 30/3/1957. My translation. 'Sawaba!' (often translated as 'Freedom' or 'Redemption') was NEPU's party slogan.

[379] Dudley *Parties and Politics* p190.

[380] Paden *Religion and Political Culture* p312.

### 3.27 The Sardauna and the Governor

The Sardauna's habitual references to his ancestry were a source of irritation to Sharwood Smith, in the days when he was Governor. Although the official memoirs of both men give the impression that their professional relations were marked by mutual admiration, Sharwood Smith's reports to the Colonial Office indicate otherwise. He disapproved of the Sardauna's pride and flamboyance, and never had quite the same confidence in him that he so obviously had in Tafawa Balewa; nor did the Sardauna appreciate the Governor's hands-on style as much as that of other European officials (say, Bruce Greatbatch, his Private Secretary).

During the early years of Ahmadu Sardauna's premiership, Sharwood Smith wrote regular reports to the Secretary of State for the Colonies enumerating what he saw as the Sardauna's inadequacies. The Premier, he wrote, was 'fundamentally a weak character though his bombastic roarings can give the uninitiated a different impression'.[381] He regularly speculated as to who might be the next Northern leader. Kashim Ibrahim, for instance, was 'generally spoken of amongst the Chiefs as an alternative Premier, far preferable to the present one'. However, the Governor felt that the Sardauna was consolidating his position by his 'gift for achieving personal popularity with the crowd in every town and village he visits', adding that this was 'a popularity which he enhances with acts of irresponsible munificence far beyond his means'. Sharwood Smith refused to believe that this could last. The Premier, the Governor wrote, 'has ... a very impressive façade but the great majority of his brother Ministers do not like him'.[382]

Rex Niven, the President of the Northern House of Assembly, had the same assessment of the situation. In an interview with R J Vile, Niven expressed doubts that the Sardauna would stay in power, 'not only because on his conceit, but also because the leadership of Sokoto did not pass unchallenged,

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[381] PRO: CO554/1183 'Political Situation in the Northern Region'. Sharwood Smith to Secretary of State 23/4/1955.
[382] Ibid. Sharwood Smith to Secretary of State 5/4/1955.

particularly in Bornu'. Perhaps this is why Kashim Ibrahim was suggested as a possible challenger.[383]

A M Yakubu suggests that Sharwood Smith's involvement went beyond speculation and that, in 1955, he was plotting the removal of the Sardauna from the NPC presidency and thus from office. Apparently, he convened a meeting of Emirs and Ministers while the Premier was taking a break in Jos and urged those who attended to make either Tafawa Balewa or Kashim Ibrahim party leader instead – but the plan lacked the necessary support to come to fruition.[384] As Yakubu notes, Sharwood Smith makes no mention of this plan in his memoirs.

A different story emerges from Abubakar Imam's introduction to the Hausa translation of those memoirs. In it, Imam recounts a visit from Aliyu Makaman Bida and Muhammadu Ribadu. They came with a proposal: to call Tafawa Balewa back to Kaduna to replace the Sardauna as Premier. The Sardauna, if he was willing, could then be sent to Lagos – presumably to be Prime Minister. They did this, Imam recalls, not because they failed to appreciate the Sardauna's efforts, or his character. But they felt that he was so well acquainted with the Governor that he was unwilling to take actions that might offend him. Imam told them they would be making a big mistake if they followed through. The North, he said, did not appreciate 'Tafawa-ism' any better than the South appreciated 'Sardauna-ism'. According to Imam, the Sardauna grew to realise the extent of the dissatisfaction in the party's more 'progressive' wing and started disagreeing with the Governor when he felt it necessary. The Makama confirmed all this by letter, reproduced in the book.[385]

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[383] PRO: CO554/372 'Political Situation in the Northern Provinces of Nigeria'
Minute by R J Vile on discussions with C R Niven, President of NHA and Senior Resident, Plateau Province, dated 9/5/1952.

[384] A M Yakubu 'Internal and External Sources for the Study of the Political history of the Nigerian Emirates, 1950-1960: The Significance of British and Nigerian National Archives' in Yusufu Bala Usman and George Amale Kwanashie (eds.) *Inside Nigerian History 1950-1970: Events, Issues and Sources* (Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1995).

[385] Abubakar Imam (ed.) *Auren Zobe: Abutar Nijeriya da Ingila: Tafsirin Littafin Gwamnan Arewa, Sir Bryan Sharwood Smith - Mai Wandon Karfe [Commentary on selected translations from the Memoirs of Sharwood Smith]* (Zaria: NNPC, 1974) pp6-7.

Sharwood Smith certainly appreciated Tafawa-ism. He had a great fondness for the man, whom he considered a restraining influence on the Premier. It seems Tafawa Balewa also shared the Governor's critique of the new political process. The newly appointed Prime Minister had apparently 'remarked more than once that the results of the 1956 election constituted an N. P. C. defeat and not a victory by nature of the deplorably low calibre of the Members of the Legislature'. They were all too willing, Sharwood Smith believed, to tow the party line, to follow the dominant personalities and generally to treat the Executive Council of the North as just a larger version of a Native Authority, with the Premier installed as the 'natural ruler' and 'all the trappings, protocol and intrigue that characterised the old time Emir's Court'. Sharwood Smith said that Tafawa Balewa shared these views, and had even inferred that 'he sees no real hope for the future until a new Party comes into being in the Region more responsible and more broadly based than any existing party'.[386] The situation was further complicated, he said, by the Sardauna's 'intense jealousy' of Abubakar.[387]

With Self-Government looming, Sharwood Smith sought permission to retire in 1957. For some time, Ministers had been wanting a 'freer hand'[388] and it seemed that they would appreciate someone who would be willing to take a back seat in the running of the region. British control of Nigeria was ebbing away. Yet still, a guessing-game continued at the Colonial Office, as civil servants suggested possible successors to the Premier. The name of the Federal Minister of Defence, Mohammadu Ribaɗu, was bandied about (despite being described in one minute as 'a very sinister figure')[389] as were those of Isa Kaita, Northern Minister of Education, and Kashim Ibrahim (again). By now, however, there was little that could be done to push the Premier out of his job and the potential consequences of trying were frightening. What was

[386] PRO: CO554/1841 16/9/1957 'Governor's Reports Northern Region'.

[387] PRO:CO554/1863 'Political Situation in the Northern Region'. Sharwood Smith 18/9/1957

[388] Sir Bryan Sharwood Smith *But Always as Friends: Nigeria and the Cameroons, 1921-1957* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969) p376.

[389] PRO: CO554/239 'Governor's Reports'. Mr Eastwood, minute, 29/7/1960.

important, one official remarked, was that the new Governor had 'few illusions (and who is better placed to have none) about the Prima Donna who he has as Regional Premier'.[390]

The bracketed comment was an aside about the Governor's background in the colonial service. Sharwood Smith had worked in Nigeria and the Cameroons since 1921, holding some of the most important jobs in the region, including Resident of Sokoto, Resident of Kano and Resident of Niger. His replacement was Gawain Bell, whose experience of Nigeria was nil. Bell had, however, been hardened in the furnaces of the Sudan and Palestine and knew well what was expected of him. He was to ensure the clean and efficient handover of power to the regional government without getting personally involved.[391]

### 3.3 Changes in the Legal System

NEPU was not only concerned by bias on the part of the traditional rulers. The party also had to contend with the judges (*alkalai*, sing. *alkali*) who were appointed by them.[392] In fact, From the NEPU point of view, the courts were the most objectionable part of the Native Authority system. Operating the Maliki code of Islamic Law, the highest Native Court (in the British classification, a Grade 'A' court) was presided over by the Emir himself, without any clear separation between the powers of executive and judiciary. Despite working in favour of the NPC, in a rather heavy-handed manner, the *Alkali* Courts still had their powers reduced by the Regional Government eventually.

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[390] Ibid. E C Burr, minute, 16/9/1960.

[391] Harold Smith, who worked for the Federal Government preparing new laws before independence, has an alternative theory. He claims Governor Bell, Governor-General Robertson and the Chairman of the Federal Public Service Commission Geoffrey Hawkesworth, all of whom had worked in Sudan, had been given orders to rig elections. 'It is doubtful if Nigeria's top administrators would have carried out Whitehall's orders', he writes. While Smith's essays on this subject are often interesting, he provides no compelling evidence for the diabolical conspiracy which he evidently believes took place. See 'Rigging of Nigeria's Independence Elections by the British Government' on www.libertas.co.uk.

[392] Approval of the Resident was required, and almost always given. A file in the National Archives contains complaints from NEPU in Benue Province that a recently-appointed *alkali* was ignorant of Islamic Law (a common accusation from NEPU, many of whose members were experts on the shari'a). The Resident made enquiries and was told that the man had been trained at an Arabic School in Lafia and was well versed in the law. He was allowed to continue as a judge. See NAK: ASI.918 'Northern Elements Progressive Union'.

For as long as they were in Northern Nigeria, the British tried to use their position to develop the region's 'Islamic' institutions, so that they would be defined by 'tradition' yet continually shaped and influenced by the British presence. Perhaps 'develop' is the wrong word; many of the nationalists who came to power in the 1950s believed that they had been allowed to stagnate. C S Whitaker describes how the contradictory pressures on British officials meant that they

> had to be alternatively censorious and permissive, to applaud alike orthodoxy and innovation, to expose emirs favourably to alien values while confirming the essential preferability of traditional culture, to encourage Native Administrations to become responsible organs of government, but to insist on control remaining indefinitely in the hands of the colonial government, to allocate resources and rewards on the principle of functional rationality and yet uphold ancient privileges, to defend the surveillance over the Native Administrations on grounds of the welfare of the peasantry, but to discourage direct contact between commoners and British officers.[393]

Whitaker criticised the idea of a unilinear progression from 'tradition' to 'modernity', with the latter embodied by Western Europe. He fully appreciated that institutions are made up of people; so, people operating from within 'traditional' institutions can, at the same time, appreciate and work within the 'modern' political environment. They can use 'modern' institutions to protect 'traditional' privileges or use 'traditional' authority to effect 'progressive' change.[394]

Under British direction, the legal system in Northern Nigeria was pushed towards the same kind cultural fusion as the education system had been. *Boko* schools in the North combined aspects of Islamic education (the best aspects, as the British saw them) with elements of the British public school. When it came to the courts, there was another attempt at synthesis: the application of an Islamic legal system, tempered by (or, from another viewpoint, polluted by) British notions of justice.

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[393] C S Whitaker Jr. *The Politics of Tradition: Continuity and Change in Northern Nigeria 1946-1966.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970) p12 and p46.

[394] This point was made by Lloyd I Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph in *The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1967).

When the contradictions inherent in such a scheme were exposed, there was alarm. We can sense the panic, for instance, in the Resident of Sokoto's reaction when, in 1949, the Sultan of Sokoto stood up at a joint meeting of the Houses of Chiefs and Assembly and, referring to an inflammatory and anti-Islamic newspaper article by Gideon Urhobo, reminded his audience that the penalty for apostasy was death. If there had been such a judgement (unlikely, since Urhobo was neither resident in the North nor a Muslim) the system allowed for the Resident to overturn it; the same went for any punishments which were deemed to be against natural justice. However, the Resident would not want to be seen to defend Urhobo, and began looking into ways of prosecuting him under the Criminal Code instead.[395] The latter was based on English Law and was applied through the Magistrates Courts, which ran parallel to the Native Courts. In the first instance, Magistrates Courts were referred to 'in cases involving British citizens or of grave concern to the colonial state'.[396] Most of the time, however, they heard appeals from people convicted by an *Alkali* Court.

Gideon Urhobo had published his article in the *West African Pilot* as an advertisement for the 'God's Kingdom Society'. While most of the text was dedicated to praise of Jesus and Nnamdi Azikiwe, much of it vilified the prophet Muhammad who, the author stated, had failed to prophesy anything, and had 'died in ignorance of God's purpose of creation'.[397] In a subsequent issue of *Pilot*, Sa'adu Zungur called on Urhobo to withdraw these words, as well as 'Muhammad was a murderer and he killed many people'.[398] This sentence, however, had never actually been printed, but had been censored by the *Pilot*'s editors (it seems that Zungur had access to the unedited script when preparing his rejoinder). If that allegation had appeared in the original, it might have been possible to prosecute under Section 204 of the Criminal Code, which required

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[395] Arewa House: SNP 17/4/60 45982 'Attacks on Moslem Religion'. Resident Sokoto to CSG 12/5/1949.

[396] Reynolds *Time of Politics* p62.

[397] Yakubu *Sa'adu Zungur* p190. The article was originally published in *Pilot* 1/3/1949.

[398] Ibid., p198. Zungur's reply was printed in *Pilot* 4/3/1949.

that the writer *intended* his words to be taken as an insult. Fearing the possible consequences of an unsuccessful prosecution, the Resident and the Chief Secretary to the Government (CSG) agreed it would be better to sit back and allow Sa'adu Zungur to attack a fellow Zikist.

Still greater was the level of disquiet occasioned by the Sardauna of Sokoto's words to the Northern House of Assembly six years later. Debating an amendment to the Native Authority Act of 1954, Bawa Bulkachuwa had said that the NA system should be democratised. 'It is true,' he said, 'that the Native Authorities should go by traditional system but the word "traditional" is used in a very vague way. It was our tradition to sell slaves and to receive all sorts of bribery'. These comments were answered by cries of 'No!' and 'Shame!' The Premier's response, however, met with no such disapproval:

> ... [Malam Bulkachuwa] said that it was our tradition to sell slaves and accept bribes. It is rather unfortunate that the speaker should say we are committing what God has forbidden us. When the foundation stone of the Administration of the Northern Region was laid before the British came, there was no question of bribery. The right traditions that we have gone away from are the cutting of hands of thieves, and that has caused a lot of thieving in this country. Why should we not be cutting the hands of thieves in order to reduce thieving? That is logical and it is lawful in our own tradition and custom here. As regards slaves it is only because the Moslem power is not strong here that we have not got the slaves to sell.[399] *Akwai su kuwa.*[400]

The author of the Political Intelligence Notes observed, with relief, that the last three words, meaning 'indeed, there are [still] some [slaves]' were not recorded in the proceedings of the House, nor were they noted by any of the journalists present. This he described as both a 'reflection on the standard of journalism in Nigeria and the acoustics of the Press Gallery'.

The British were generally happy to support 'tradition' and 'native custom' – but, if it was something of which they simply could not be seen to approve, such as

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[399] Northern House of Assembly *Debates* 10/3/1955.

[400] PRO: CO554/1183 'Political Situation in the Northern Region'. Bryan Sharwood Smith remembers the final three words as *suna nan kuwa*, which he translates as 'and they're here all right'. Sharwood Smith *But Always As Friends* p304.

slavery, then the custom was restricted as far as possible.[401] Arguably, there was less room for manoeuvre in the process of 'disinfecting' tradition in the Islamic North than elsewhere. Igbo culture, for instance, is now overwhelmingly Christianised, and the longstanding tradition of killing twins at birth, unacceptable in colonial and missionary eyes, has gone. Islam, however, still retains its legal component, believed by most adherents to be divinely authored – making it rather less malleable than other Nigerian religious customs. The same applies elsewhere in the Islamic world. Turkey, for instance, has spent a similar amount of time, effort and money trying to break the link between the prevailing culture of its people and their perception of the legal/religious duties of the state as missionaries spent in Igboland trying to eradicate 'bad' traditions while retaining the 'good' ones. Yet Turkey still has a substantial 'fundamentalist' element only hemmed in by the military. However, there were surprisingly few conflicts such as this, between the British version of Northern 'tradition', from which slavery and some *hadd* punishments had been carefully excised, and the less compromised version which a lot of people clung to. Still, though, the system was unstable, and needed reform before independence.

Given the strong alliance of interests between the NAs and the NPC, it is natural that a range of sanctions available to the courts were employed to keep NEPU and other opposition parties in check. The more serious cases[402] could be sent, on appeal, to the Magistrates Court, which usually applied the Nigerian Legal Code but could also invoke 'traditional' or Islamic Law if the situation demanded.

This led to some unusual rulings, such as that which followed the Kano airport incident. The case began when fifteen NEPU members came to the airport to meet returning delegates from the 1953 Constitutional Conference in London and criticise them vocally. They were convicted of 'insulting behaviour' by an

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[401] For a description of how slavery was (officially) abolished in the North, see Paul E Lovejoy and Jan S Hogendorn *Slow Death for Slavery: The Course of Abolition in Northern Nigeria, 1897-1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[402] Cases originating in the junior *Alkali* Courts could not be appealed further than the Emir's Court unless the punishment had exceeded a fine of £25 or six months in jail. This meant that many politically motivated cases never got to the Magistrates Court.

*Alkali* Court.[403] On appeal to the Magistrates Court, however, the judgement was overturned because the *Alkali* had not provided proof that the offence occurred within his jurisdiction. There was no such rule in Islamic Law, as practised in Northern Nigeria at the time. Even the Legal Secretary professed to be almost baffled by the case, which had to be retried *de novo*.[404] The men were convicted this time, and sentenced to 3 months each in jail.[405]

### 3.31 Complaints by and against Opposition Politicians

NEPU, and other parties, claimed that the court system was being abused. What, specifically, were their complaints? And what kinds of cases were coming before the *alkalai*?

Let us deal with the former question first. One regular complaint was of the partisanship shown by the Emirs. For instance, the Etsu Nupe was quoted as publicly saying in 1958 that he hoped God would allow an NPC victory in the Bida Town Council elections 'because the NPC is a party for the Moslem', while NEPU simply 'follows the Ibos'.[406]

Another complaint was that Native Authorities did not behave properly towards NEPU candidates who had succeeded in elections. In Yerwa, for instance, some of the newly-elected NEPU members who did not speak Kanuri found

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[403] PRO: CO657/86 'Administration Reports 1953-5'. 'Annual Report, Kano Province, 1953' by A T Weatherhead.

[404] PRO: CO554/1143 'British Courts of Justice in Northern Nigeria'. Legal Secretary to Attorney General 17/9/1953. From 1958, appeals went instead to a Moslem Court of Appeals, which made for fewer conflicts of interpretation. In 1960, this body became the Shari'a Court of Appeals, but could henceforth only deal with civil and family law.

[405] This was one of the major incidents to be listed in Sir Bryan Sharwood Smith's 'indictment' of British courts in the North, submitted in 1954, highlighting incidences of incompetence, corruption and procedural difficulties. An effective summary of the Colonial Office's opinion was given by Sir K Roberts Wray in a minute dated 28/4/1954: 'We cannot pay any serious attention to this dossier in so far as it consists of mere generalisations which take us nowhere'. See PRO CO554/1143 'British Courts of Justice in Northern Nigeria'.

[406] NAK: ASI/918 'Northern Elements Progressive Union'. M Abdulkadiri (NEPU Divisional President, Bida) and Malam Manmasu (NEPU Divisional Secretary, Bida) to Northern Region Ministry of Local Government 14/2/1958.

that they were unable to follow meetings of the Town Council.[407] Rather more seriously, the party claimed that one of their representatives in a district of Zaria Province 'received 80 strokes of the cane for being elected',[408] while in Sokoto Province, NEPU's Haruna Tela alleged that the District Head, the Sarkin Kyawa, was punishing the people of Kaura Namoda for having elected Tela to the Northern House of Assembly in 1956.[409] The Sultan's Council, the following year, had a long debate over the various affronts that Tela had committed, including being disrespectful to various chiefs and NA employees and disobeying the legitimate orders of the NA.[410]

One of the most frequently mentioned complaints was over the right to speak in public (referred to in Mudi Sipikin's poem). Dudley's description of the lengths opposition parties had to go to, to obtain the all-important permit comes close to comedy. 'In rural areas,' he explains, 'the district head, acting as the Native Authority, may ... give specific directions as to the venue of any meeting and it is not uncommon to find opposition parties being given a permit, a couple of hours before the scheduled time, with directions that it be held at a village forty or even eighty miles away. The result, inevitably, is that the meeting is never held.'[411] NAs could also demand to know the topics to be discussed at the meeting and give heavy fines or even custodial sentences to speakers who deviated from what they were meant to be talking about. So, in July 1954, when Obafemi Awolowo wanted to speak in Offa, Ilorin Province, he was told he could not mention the divisive issue of the Northern-Western regional border

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[407] Ibid. Usman Na Manga et al. (NEPU-NCNC local working Committee, Maiduguri) to Governor-General of the Federation of Nigeria, 26/11/1958. The letter concedes that Kanuri speakers were in a majority, but points out that all of them understand Hausa.

[408] Ibid. T A Masau (Secretary of NEPU Election Committee, Zaria) to Senior Resident Zaria 23/5/1958.

[409] NAK: ASI/147 'Personal Complaints Sokoto Province'. Tela claimed that the measures adopted had included the taxation of minors and forcing peasants to provide mats and rope for local cotton markets. Tela's complaints describe Sarkin Kyawa as the defeated NPC candidate; however, in Kaura Namoda as well as Katsina, Zaria and Gusau, dissident NPC members were standing as independents, splitting the vote.

[410] WJBHAC: Sokoto 1/2/22 'Sokoto N. A. Council Minutes'. Sokoto N. A. Council Minutes, Emergency Meeting 7/9/1957. One of the other meetings covered by this file (1/5/1957) was attended by the Sardauna of Sokoto, who dominated the discussions with talk of development issues, such as the electrification project.

[411] Dudley *Parties and Politics* p187.

and the possibility of adjusting it. Even this restriction was a climb-down forced by the Acting Governor – the NA had originally banned Awolowo from speaking at all. Responding to criticisms of this situation, the Northern Regional Government issued a statement to the effect that everyone had a fundamental right to freedom of speech, but that the public's right to go about their daily business without being put in danger took precedence.[412]

Paden states that, as time went on, '"abuse of the Sardauna" became a more frequent cause of legal incarceration than "abuse of the emir"'.[413] One example is that of Yusufu Tailor vs. Umasasan, tried in Lokoja.[414] Umasasan, the local Organizing Secretary of the Action Group, was alleged to have told a crowd of people outside Lugard Hall that his leader, Obafemi Awolowo, had followed the Sardauna to London to participate in the Constitutional Conferences and not once seen him say his prayers.[415] He was alleged to have continued by saying that the Sardauna was a pagan (*kafiri*).

In his defence, Umasasan claimed that what he really said was that the NPC had insulted the AG, calling them pagans following a pagan leader. He had followed this by adopting the NPC's own tactics – pointing out that the NPC had formed a federal alliance with the NCNC and must, therefore, be pagans themselves.

Tailor's three witnesses (two of whom were NPC members) essentially confirmed what Tailor had said, including the crucial part, which was that the Sardauna had been mentioned by name. By contrast, the witness called for the defence was no help. Trying to remember the wording used, he suggested that Umasasan had said:

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[412] *Quoted in Daily Service* 9/8/1954.

[413] Paden *Religion and Political Culture* p328.

[414] NAK: ASI.919 'Political Affairs'. 'Yusufu Tailor Hausa Moslem of Lokoja vs. Umasasan Kakand Moslem of Lokoja' 14/1/1959. Quotations come from the official English translation in the file. It is reproduced in full in an appendix to A U Jalingo 'The Radical Tradition in Northern Nigeria' (PhD, Edinburgh, 1980).

[415] Since the Sardauna was travelling at the time, he was, in any case, under no obligation to perform the five daily prayers and could instead have done them when he got back to Kaduna.

> How should Sardauna make [an] alliance with the N. C. N. C. and not with Yorubas when Yorubas have been going on the Pilgrimage. Those Ibos who are pagans, the Sardauna made an alliance with them, [so] he has become the same as the pagans.

This forced Umasasan into admitting that he *had* mentioned the Sardauna by name, but denied calling him a pagan. Ironically, the *alkali* refused to accept the witness's testimony because of his refusal to swear on the Qur'an.

Sentencing Umasasan to six months in jail, the *alkali* said:

> You ... know it is a major offence for a man to get up at a lecture and mention somebody's name and insult him, how much more Sardaunan Sokoto the leader such as Ahmadu Bello who is leading about three quarters of the people of this country. Had it not been that the N. P. C. supporters were patient and careful to lay their complaint in the court it should have resulted in a fight which may lead to loss [?of life] as happened in Bornu[416] and it would not have been pleasant at all.

As can be seen from the above, judges made little or no political neutrality. Some reportedly heard cases while wearing an NPC badge.[417] Others were said to have offered to withdraw a fine it the defendant left NEPU for the NPC.[418]

### 3.32 Tactics for Successful Prosecutions

There were offences under English Law which had no equivalent in the shari'a and vice-versa. So, cases of 'insulting behaviour' (which, as interpreted, included practically any derogatory mention of an individual) could not be tried under the Criminal Code. Nor could cases of 'incitement' be sent to an *alkali*, because, under Islamic Law, an individual is responsible for his or her own actions, with little or no blame attached to whoever incited those actions.

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[416] I.e. the riots of the previous year.

[417] Reynolds *Time of Politics* p64.

[418] One such incident is related by Reynolds *Time of Politics* p64. Another can be found in the National Archives. See NAK: 'Northern Elements Progressive Union'. T A Masau (Chairman of NCNC/NEPU Election Committee, Zaria Province) to Senior Resident Zaria Province 23/5/1958.

These difficulties were explained in a carefully compiled compendium of prosecutions, designed to provide a rough guide of when to prosecute and in which court. In the compendium, which was circulated to all Residents in the North, the Wazirin Zaria commented on various specific cases, explaining why some cases had succeeded and others failed.[419] There was also some explanation of offences that could be tried before Magistrates but not *alkalai*.

Another document circulated among Residents gave a list of offences which had been committed by NEPU members.[420] Many of them had since been awarded 'Prison Martyr' caps (cf. 'Prison Graduate' caps awarded by the CPP in Ghana) and it was the Civil Secretary's hope that Residents, if kept well-informed, would be able to use the list to debunk any claims that NEPU supporters were suffering political persecution. They would be able to show that the charges were not political, but included Receiving Stolen Goods, Concealing an Escaped Prisoner, Gaining Money Under False Pretences and Interfering with a Sanitary Malam in the Course of His Duty. If a lot of NEPU members happened to be in jail, it only went to show what a disreputable bunch they were.

However, the *Alkali* Courts required only the sworn evidence of two Muslim witnesses to convict – and a shortage of witnesses was rarely a problem, even if this involved perjury. Charges against political undesirables may not have appeared political in nature, but they were very frequently political in motivation.

Furthermore, a closer look at the charges reveals that many of them could be considered to have significant political content, such Libel, Insulting Chiefs and *Niyyar Ta Da Al'adun Kasa*, meaning 'Attempting to Destabilise the Traditions of the Country'. The latter offence was punished ten times, always in Abuja Emirate. There are other regional patterns. Most cases of Unlawful Assembly

[419] WJBHAC: Argungu 1/13/52 'NEPU'. G Wilson for Civil Secretary Northern Region to all Residents 14/7/1954.

[420] WJBHAC: Argungu 1/12/46 'List of Offences'.

either come from Mubi or Giwa[421]; all charges of Insulting Chiefs come from Kano or Gezawa[422]; only seven of 28 charges of Obstructing the Police originate outside Nguru; and all seven charges of Unmarried Women Consorting in Public with Men come from Kano.

One suspects that the list was not circulated with the sole intention of keeping Residents and District Officers informed. None of them, especially the new breed who first came to Nigeria only shortly before the exciting changes of the 1950s, could be immune to political temptations of the 'wrong' sort. The propaganda which was ostensibly provided to members of the colonial service as ammunition, to help them convince Northerners that NEPU were bad news, also served to remind the officers themselves where their loyalties were supposed to lie.

The same motivation may also have lain behind the circulation of pamphlets, prepared anonymously by the Foreign Office, entitled *International Communist Front Organisations* and *Communists and "Colonies"*.[423] (The pamphlets were meant to provide information which the Residents and District Officers could use to combat the lies and distortions of closet Communists.) Likewise, the 'Personality Lists', giving biographical details of left-wing politicians and portraying them as greedy, corrupt, incompetent and (with notable regularity) mentally ill, were intended to keep colonial officers informed, but also keep them on the right track.[424]

It may be observed that when the Rev. R W Sorenson M. P. (a friend of Aminu Kano from his London days) asked, during Prime Minister's Question Time, how many NEPU members were being kept in prison, the reply was given that no record was kept of prisoners' political connections. In a literal sense, the

[421] Mubi had 14 cases, Giwa 8 and all others 18.

[422] Kano 19 cases, Gezawa 9.

[423] WJBHAC: Argungu 1/2/9 'Political Agitators Communism'.

[424] WJBHAC: Argungu 1/12/46 'Personality Lists – Undesirable Migrants'.

reply was true, but it gave a distorted impression of conditions in the North. Admittedly, the question was asked over three years after the list had been compiled (so it would no longer have been accurate) and it was true that there was no centralised and up-to-date record of such affiliations; but the implication, that the justice system in Northern Nigeria was blind to party politics, was false.

### 3.33 The Introduction of the Penal Code

The introduction of the Northern Nigerian Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code in 1960, like the NA Law of 1954, cleared up some of the apparent contradictions of the colonial system. Based on the recommendations of a panel of jurists, who had looked at the experiences of other predominantly Muslim societies, such as Sudan, Pakistan, Malaya and Libya, it introduced a codified system of criminal law applicable across the region. The shari'a, meanwhile, 'was confined to matters of personal status and family relations and, when applicable, to civil cases'.[425] Although the Code was based on English Law and the amendments which had already been made to it in Nigeria, separate provisions were made to cover adultery, gambling and consumption of alcohol by Muslims. Corporal punishments were also sanctioned.

On the question of chieftaincy, the regional government had maintained a public discourse which acknowledged the importance of the chiefs, while at the same time passing measures that severely limited their real powers. Now, on the question of Muslim Law, Northern Nigeria was faced with a similar situation. Regional government spokesmen lauded the North's Islamic heritage (indeed, the Premier himself was to spend much of his time and energy promoting the Islamic way of life) yet, in practice, the role of the shari'a was reduced. The Regional government stressed that 'the code is acceptable to Moslems because it contains nothing that is offensive to or incompatible with the injunctions of the Holy Qur'an and Sunna' – but it seems the change was

[425] Yahaya *The Native Authority System* p100.

pushed through because the British regarded legal reform as a prerequisite for independence. Many in the NPC were sceptical about the new system.[426]

NEPU's attitude to the new Penal Code was also ambivalent. On the one hand, it severely limited the capacity of the NA Courts to harass and intimidate NEPU supporters[427], and was hailed in some of the *Comet*'s editorials as a victory for the party, in its long-standing demand for a single legal system. On the other, NEPU's politics, particularly at the grassroots level, had always had a strong and pious Islamic voice which maintained not that shari'a itself was faulty, but that it was being applied in a biased and corrupt way; if there was a problem with the legal system, it was that it was not Islamic *enough*. This strain of opinion, too, was reflected in the party newspaper.[428]

### 3.34 Conclusion

Northern Nigeria at the handover of independence was a much changed place from what it had been in 1946. Although many expatriates continued to work there after the start of Northernization, often in high positions, Northerners were now in control of the administration of Northern Nigeria and were beginning to direct its economy as well. As Paden says, northernization 'established the predominance of politics over economics'.[429] It was no longer the case that Native Authorities nominated representatives to the Northern House of Assembly; rather, chiefs could be appointed or deposed according to the wishes of the elected government. The latter was now firmly in control, with any remaining ambiguity regarding its position in relation to the chiefs removed by the NA Law of 1954 and subsequent alterations to it.

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[426] A government statement quoted in Reynolds, *Time of Politics* p96.

[427] However, from this point, there is a higher incidence of complaint against pro-government thugs. In Plateau Province, for instance, Akosa A Ezenobi, solicitor, complained on behalf of NEPU to the Provincial Commissioner about police inaction in the face of punishment beatings. The same man wrote on behalf of Bukuru Igbo Community, to complain of attacks on Igbos by NPC thugs 'with their big shots secretly holding out the green light'. See NAK: PLT.1 'Political Parties'. Bukuru Igbo Community to Provincial Commissioner 11/11/1964 and 19/11/1964.

[428] See Reynolds *Time of Politics* pp98-101.

A similar process had taken place in the legal system. In 1946, there had been parallel Islamic and English systems operating in the North. By 1960, shari'a was confined to family and civil cases, while all criminal matters were dealt with under the newly-established Northern Nigerian Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code. Opposition politicians went from complaining about arbitrary imprisonments, whippings and fines from the *Alkali* Courts to complaining about mistreatment at the hands of hired thugs.

During these changes, Northern identity had shown itself capable of adapting to different situations, perhaps because of its diverse origins. During the Kano riots, for instance, Kano identity and Northern identity might as well have been the same thing[430]. Indeed, as the test criteria employed in the Northernization programme tend to indicate, Northern identity was rarely anything more than a composite of existing identities; it emerged not through invention but through adaptation, by sewing different identities together. Given the right conditions, the stitches could be unpicked, as was shown after the deposal of the Sarkin Kano, Sanusi, in 1963, when former Northern nationalists founded a movement for the establishment of a Kano State.

Northern identity existed in a shared mental space, where people from diverse communities could recognise the validity of each other's backgrounds, dwell on that which they had in common (brushing over what they did not have in common) and situate their own identity within a social and political structure calling itself 'The North'. Theoretically, all groups involved were equal. For many, however, the process of reconciling oneself with Northern identity meant

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[429] Paden *Religion and Political Culture* p335.

[430] 'Kano identity' was no more 'primordial' than Northern identity itself, however. Paden notes the emergence, in the 1950s, of 'a new communal amalgamation ... in which people became identified with the city itself. This amalgamated identity has been more noticeable in areas outside of Kano Emirate, in other parts of Nigeria and along the coast of West African where people from Kano City are known as *Kanawa*. The factors which have contributed to this Hausa-Kano identity have included common religious identity (Islam of a distinctive nature),

acknowledging one's position in a hierarchy. As Patrick Dokotri said, of the Middle Zone League's alliance with the NPC, 'Our intention ... was to give to the Northern People's Congress our inner self; to make it realise that they were perhaps one big fish swimming in the same pool with small fish; the small fish would want to make its position clear to the big fish.' A negotiating process of agreeing on who were the big fish and who the small was a necessary part of establishing Northern identity and was, to a great extent, dependent on relations with the ruling NPC.[431] Where there was no agreement, there was conflict. For instance, at an NPC convention in Jos, Yahaya Kwande asked why his own traditional ruler, the Long Goemai, got so little recognition, when the Emir of Wase (also a third class chief) was given a seat in the House of Chiefs. He even suggested that the NPC motto of 'One North, One People' was being paid mere lip-service. At this point, there were shouts, accusing Kwande of being a NEPU supporter, and he was thrown headfirst out of the window.[432]

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common language (Hausa, with a distinctive accent), and the external ascriptions of southern Nigerians and expatriates'. See Paden 'Communal Competition' p119.

[431] See Yusufu Bala Usman and George Amale Kwanashie (eds.) *Inside Nigerian History, 1950-1970: Events, Issues and Sources.* (Ibadan: Presidential Panel on Nigeria Since Independence History Project, 1995) p32.

[432] Yahaya Kwande *Making of a Northern Nigerian* p171.

## Chapter Four: *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo*, 1953-1962

### 4.0 Introduction

The most prominent northern organisation of the present day, the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), makes the claim that a pro-north policy can, by focusing attention on the region's problems (for instance, bringing it up to speed with the south in terms of education) actually foster Nigerian unity.[433] The Forum's leaders try to sidestep criticism by saying that the ACF speaks for the North *in order* to forge Nigerian unity, *not* as an end in itself. Here, the ACF is very different from the NPC. There were isolated occasions when NPC leaders voiced similar sentiments – but most of the time, it was clear that forging Nigerian nationhood was, at best, low on the list of the party's priorities. For many members, it was not on the list at all. As the NPC grew more confident, other parties became wary of trying to speak on behalf of the North; indeed, as the NPC began to set the political agenda, it was harder and harder to see Northern nationalism as compatible with Nigerian nationalism.

After the turbulence of 1953, Northern Nigeria entered what is here referred to as the 'North for the Northerners' phase, in which Northern nationalism was essentially defensive. Tafawa Balewa's 1947 declaration that 'we have got our own leaders' was given some more definition by the emergence of the NPC,[434] which staked its exclusive claim to represent the region. The NPC saw the regional boundaries as the only legitimate means of determining who had the right to represent whom. As Tafawa Balewa said, 'we do not want our

[433] One of the chief failings of the First Republic was that it allowed a party whose interests lay wholly within one region to hold sway over the others. In the Second Republic, therefore, regional political parties were banned from contesting office. In today's Fourth Republic, the same rules apply. (The tendency, however, has been for 'national' parties to be formed from coalitions of localised parties, in a way not dissimilar to the formation of the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) and Nigerian National Alliance (NNA) in the First Republic.) The ACF, therefore, while seen as a powerful actor behind the scenes, cannot take an active part in elections.

[434] Meanwhile his observation, that same day, that 'The major Divisions, the Western, Eastern and Northern Provinces, are also far from being united even in their own groups' was played down from this point.

Southern neighbours to interfere in our development'.[435] The North was fencing itself off. This chapter examines how the defensive aspects of Northern nationalism were reflected in the pages of *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo*.

**4.1 The One-North viewpoint**

From our standpoint, after half a century of what is often referred to as 'Hausa-Fulani hegemony'[436] (a hotly-contested bundle of terms) it is hard to appreciate how real the threat of Southern domination felt. Tafawa Balewa had asserted his belief that, as far as some Southern politicians were concerned, 'in a united Nigeria, the North would furnish only the labour'.[437] This prospect diminished as the NPC negotiated a strengthened regional system of administration that afforded some protection to the Northern elites – but its potential was still heavily emphasised.[438] As the Provincial Commissioner for Zaria told B J Dudley in an unguarded moment: 'we had to teach the people to hate Southerners; to look on them as people depriving them of their rights'.[439]

It is all but unavoidable that the choice of which stories to cover and how much space to give them should reflect the biases of those in charge of the newspaper. *Gaskiya*'s stories tended to emphasise the benefits of a One North outlook, the small-mindedness of a more provincial or sub-regional outlook, and the potential inequalities hidden behind the One-Nigeria outlook. This reflected a growing consensus between the British, the Native Authorities and the College-educated elite that the NPC was the way forward. Despite the commitment that many in the colonial service had to maintaining their impartiality as Nigeria underwent a transition towards democracy, the NPC was widely regarded as the least worst option.

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[435] Legislative Council *Debates* 24/3/1947.

[436] See, for instance, Okechukwu Okeke *Hausa-Fulani Hegemony: The Dominance of the Muslim North in Contemporary Nigerian Politics* (Enugu: Acena, 1992) *contra* Y B Usman 'Nigerian Myths and Nigerian Realities' (Lecture presented at the Federal Palace Hotel, Lagos 27/6/1994).

[437] This is a paraphrase by J S Coleman in *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1965) p361.

[438] This was the main problem faced by the Unification Decree of May 1966.

[439] Dudley *Parties and Politics* p181.

Northern parliamentarians joined the NPC in 1951. By 1952, in the opinion of Lieutenant-Governor, Bryan Sharwood Smith, the party had started to lose ground to NEPU. In his opinion:

> The main hope for the future is an N. P. C. revival backed by the more progressive Chiefs and supported by the more responsible of those who now adhere to N. E. P. U. because there is no attractive alternative. The Editor of "Gaskiya" with whom I had a long discussion in July, is one of those who is aware of this fact. He possesses more competence than most to bring it about given support and advice.[440]

Both *Gaskiya*'s policy not to stand for North against South and the administration's commitment not to 'foster antipathy' could have been compromised by this intention to use *Gaskiya* to promote the NPC, whose raison d'etre was standing up for the North against the South. But perhaps the word 'promote' is too strong. Years earlier, Governor Richards had recognised that the North might 'be captured by newspapers of the most undesirable type'[441] without more flexibility for the government-owned press, and there was a widespread acceptance that *Gaskiya* would have to become less dominated by official opinion if it was to compete with the likes of *Comet* and *Pilot*. Therefore, during the mid-1950s, *Gaskiya* had a clear pro-North outlook, but little explicitly party political bias. The paper gave the same amount of space to advertising NEPU and United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) meetings as NPC. It also gave significant coverage to NEPU's efforts to set up local branches across the region. It even covered the criticisms levelled at the NPC, such as those voiced by Shehu Yaro, when he defected to the Action Group (AG). Yaro had served on the Central Committee of the NPC's Kaduna branch and gave a lecture explaining his reasons for leaving. He believed (as the headline blared) that there was no party in Nigeria that could claim to be the commoners' party, except the AG – citing as evidence the party's record on provision of healthcare and education.[442]

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[440] PRO: CO554/235 'Reform of Local Government in the Northern Provinces'. Bryan Sharwood Smith 'Informal notes on the present political situation in the Northern Nigerian Emirates' 1952.

[441] Yakubu *Aristocracy in Political Crisis* p68 fn33.

[442] *Gaskiya*, 5/6/1956.

When NEPU sent a delegation to London in 1956, *Gaskiya* reported on it. A two-part article discussed all the issues that the party was hoping to raise with the Secretary of State, such as freedom of assembly and the need for direct elections.[443] Six months later, the newspaper ran a biographical feature about Aminu Kano, treating the subject sympathetically: Northerners like Mallam Aminu, the article said, even if they do not accept his political opinions.[444]

How, then, did *Gaskiya* underline Northern solidarity? One example is provided by the visit of the Queen to Nigeria in 1956. The paper published a praise poem by Aliyu A J, in which he asserted that every single area of the North welcomed her. He named them, going right from Sokoto to Ilorin to Bornu to Bida. It is perhaps symbolic of Northern nationalism that the poet felt qualified to speak for people right across the North but still spoke for them as an alliance of peoples rather than a single nation.[445]

A more negative example can be found in *Gaskiya*'s criticism of other regions. Articles in 1956 by 'Danhausa' explained the sufferings of Hausas resident in the East: harsh taxes, discriminatory employment practices and no access to building plots. Hausa newspapers were not available and, while radio services in the North included broadcasts in the Igbo language, there was no Hausa on the radio in the Eastern Region.[446] A subsequent letter to the editor demanded that Igbo be dropped from the radio schedules. Later in the year, it was (although it made a comeback later).[447]

**4.2 Aminu Kano and the Jos Hausa Party**

In the same year, *Gaskiya* reported how NPC branches in the Jos area had passed a resolution opposing the Hausa Tribal Party (HTP or *Jam'iyyar Kabilar Hausawan Jos*). High up on the plateau in the centre of Northern Nigeria, Jos

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[443] *Gaskiya* 11/1/1956.

[444] *Gaskiya* 31/7/1956.

[445] *Gaskiya* 15/2/1956.

[446] *Gaskiya* 10/7/1956 and 17/7/1956.

[447] *Gaskiya* 14/8/1956.

grew massively during the twentieth century, largely because of the expansion of the tin-mining industry. The British had, at first, appointed a Hausa man as the *Sarkin Jos*, but lobbying by the Birom Progressive Union had succeeded in replacing him with an indigenous Birom, Rwang Pam, whose son, Bitrus Rwang Pam, was to become a major figure in Middle Belt politics.[448] Jos attracted large numbers of immigrants, many of them providing labour for the mines, some entrepreneurs hoping to exploit the potential of a large and growing market, and a few Europeans attracted by the moderate climate. It was natural that there should be some tension in the competition for resources. In a plural society, the battle lines were more likely to be drawn in ethnic terms. In an era that was politically defined by the emergence of the 'tribal union', Jos was one of the few places in Northern Nigeria ever to have one for Hausas.

1955 and 1956 saw a rapid exchange of views on this subject cross the pages of *Gaskiya*. It seemed that nobody wanted to take the blame for the HTP's existence. An NPC member, seizing an opportunity to respond to the allegations that his party promoted the interests of Hausa Muslims, wrote to the editor claiming that the HTP had been founded by NEPU. Yaro Bauchi, secretary of the HTP, wrote back, denying this. His organisation, he said, had no party-political affiliations, but included supporters of many parties, NEPU and NPC included. He said that the Party's intention was to remind Jos's Birom authorities of their obligations to their guests and to ensure that the Hausa chiefs were given due respect and recognition. Finally, he remarked that he was sad to see his accuser, Inuwa Yakasai, supporting the Biroms against his own brothers.

The organisation left little documentary trace. Either it went through several name changes or there were a variety of groups claiming to represent Hausas in Jos. The names that come up include the Hausa Tribal Party, the Hausa Society, and the Hausa Progressive Union, but we will stick with HTP for the

[448] Bitrus Rwang Pam was the original leader of the Middle Belt People's Party (MBPP), which later joined the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC). He was no relation of Moses Rwang Pam, who led the wing of the UMBC which demanded a separate state. The former successfully contested the latter's seat in the Northern House of Assembly in 1956.

purposes of clarity. Although a direct link with NEPU is impossible (the HTP having been formed first) the evidence can be used to support the contention that Mallam Aminu Kano was involved. Mallam Aminu's biographer, Alan Feinstein, relates an anecdote from Aminu Kano's time as a teacher in Bauchi, in the early 1940s. Visiting Jos, he got caught up in an argument with a preacher in the market place. Having acquitted himself rather well, he was followed home by fifty or so people, who had been impressed by what he had to say. He stood outside his host's house, holding forth on various subjects close to his heart. 'The outcome', writes Feinstein, 'was a Hausa Society, the counterpart of the Ibo and Yoruba fraternal unions and the first of its kind in Jos.'[449]

We are so used to hearing only about Aminu Kano's pan-Nigerian or even pan-African concerns that the idea that he could be involved in anything so parochial as the HTP seems strange. Indeed, the connection would not be mentioned in this chapter if Feinstein's biography were all we had to go on.[450] Aminu Kano wrote to the editor of *Gaskiya* several times in the 1940s on behalf of the Hausas in Jos who, he felt, were getting a raw deal. Some of them, he said, had been in the town so long that they were 'naturalised'[451] but their applications for building plots were left waiting, while new arrivals to the town from elsewhere were given land straight away. Hausa areas of town got less access to electricity and water than the *Sabon Gari*, and while the Igbo and Yoruba communities had representatives on the committee which set tax levels, the Hausas had none. All of these points were contested and subsequent issues of *Gaskiya* featured angry rebuttals of them. The terms of the debate are more important to this study than who was right or wrong about each issue. Here, Aminu Kano was evidently considered qualified to speak for the Hausa wards of the town against the population of the *Sabon Gari* – even though he was not a Jos resident himself.

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[449] Alan Feinstein *African Revolutionary: The Life and Times of Nigeria's Aminu Kano* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension, 1987) p94.

[450] While a laudable effort in many ways, *African Revolutionary* is also riddled with inaccuracies which should have been ironed out in the revised edition.

[451] *Gaskiya,* 1/12/1948: *suka zama 'yan kasa* – literally, 'they have become sons of the earth'.

The NPC's problem with the HTP was not so much its opposition to Igbo and Yoruba settlers as its attitude to the indigenous population. *Gaskiya* reported that the NPC in Jos felt that the party undermined the principle of 'One North, One People'. This phrase is translated in the article as *Arewa Daya, Kabila Daya*. The word *kabila*, in those days usually translated as 'tribe', appears again, in the second half of the slogan, '...irrespective of religion rank or *tribe*'. So, with the same word being used for the concepts of 'people' (i.e. nation) and 'tribe', the whole sentence comes out as 'One North, one *kabila*, irrespective of ... *kabila*'. How much sense did this make to the people reading the newspaper? And was the article relying on its readership being familiar with the slogan in English?[452]

The problem was not unique. Writing about Swahili journalism in Zanzibar, Jonathan Glassman notes that 'As if recognizing that the distinctions now drawn by westerners between "ethnicity" and "race" are arbitrary, *Afrika Kwetu* [a newspaper] often used the same word, *kabila*, to denote both concepts.'[453] Both Swahili and Hausa have borrowed the word (along with thousands of others) from the Arabic language. However, William Miles, in researching his book *Hausaland Divided*, found that *kabila* was not understood by some of the villagers he was interviewing, and had to change his questionnaires accordingly.[454] For many, newspapers provided a crash-course in political education.

Concluding his paper, Glassman says: '[What] remains to be addressed, is the question of how these relatively esoteric notions became transferred into "facts" of popular consciousness; that is, how large numbers of ordinary Zanzibaris, as opposed to political journalists, came to think of their everyday interactions in

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[452] *Gaskiya*, 5/6/1956.

[453] J Glassman 'Sorting Out Tribes: The Creation of Racial Identities in Colonial Zanzibar's Newspaper Wars' in *Journal of African History* Vol 41 No 3, 2000 p396.

[454] William S Miles *Hausaland Divided: Colonialism and Independence in Nigeria and Niger* (London: Cornell University, 1994) p90.

terms of exclusive ethnic categories'.[455] If you swap 'Zanzibari' for 'Northerner' and 'ethnic' for 'regional', you have an equally pertinent question for Nigeria. How did Aminu Kano go from a supporter of the rights of Hausas in Jos to the leader of a party which sought Northern unity? How did NEPU go from a party embedded in the Northern Region to a pan-Nigerian party? How was it possible to do all these things at once? And how did ordinary Northerners, outside the educated elite, begin to think of themselves in these terms?

**4.3 Votes for women.**

Jonathan Reynolds is right to express surprise that some of the major sources for understanding the debate around women's suffrage have received little scholarly attention.[456] Perhaps the problem is related to teleology – *we* know that women in the North did not vote until 1979, so their struggles prior to that date are, subconsciously, dismissed as irrelevant, doomed at the outset.

In his autobiography, Ahmadu Bello states that his hostility to enfranchising women was 'not particularly due to prejudice, nor to Islamic preaching, for there have been many important and influential women, as well as many highly educated and pious ones, in the history of Muhammedan countries'.[457] Haroun Adamu relies on this and similar statements in presenting his argument that the Premier opposed female suffrage not on religious grounds, but because it would run against the customs followed by most Northern men (including keeping wives in purdah, as the Premier himself did).[458] However, this is not how the Sardauna always justified his position. There were numerous occasions on which he and other senior party figures did say, in so many words, that the North would not allow women to vote because Islam did not

[455] Glassman 'Tribes', p427.

[456] Jonathan T Reynolds *The Time of Politics (Zamanin Siyasa): Islam and the Politics of Legitimacy in Northern Nigeria 1950-1966* (San Francisco: International Scholars Publications, 1999) p113 fn23.

[457] Ahmadu Bello *My Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962) p233.

[458] Haroun Al-Rashid Adamu *The North and Nigerian Unity* (Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1973. 2nd ed., 2000) pp19-21. As Paden points out, Ahmadu Bello had little to do with the writing of his own autobiography.

allow women to vote. Asked by the BBC why the NPC was opposed to the female franchise, the Sardauna replied 'because of our religion'.[459]

Such statements led, naturally enough, to demands that non-Muslim women should be allowed to vote – a situation which could have swung the balance towards the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) in marginal areas. Azikiwe pointed out that the number of seats representing the North in the House of Representatives was calculated on the basis of the region's total population. 'Either there should be a universal suffrage in the North,' he wrote, 'or the seats allocated to it should be reduced to make it reflect its male population only'.[460] The strength of the NPC was such that it could afford to dismiss these arguments.

In the press, by contrast, the issue was given serious attention, with *Gaskiya* giving coverage to political meetings that discussed it. Audu Danladi, for instance, was reported to have given a lecture to the Jos NPC women's wing, warning them of NEPU's plans for electoral reform, saying that only 'enormous damage' could come from them.[461]

It may seem paradoxical that the NPC, a party which opposed the entry of women into politics, should have women's branches. Reynolds suggests they were only set up to attract women away from NEPU, which had a very visible female presence.[462] There was also a non-political body called the *Jam'iyyar Matan Arewa* (Northern Women's Congress) of which the Sardauna was 'grand patron'. He agreed to this arrangement only 'with reluctance'[463]. The Premier's

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[459] Reynolds *Time of Politics* p112. A telegram from Sarkin Dawaki Bello dated 21/8/1962 commends the Premier's stance on this issue, saying 'God will always be with you'. The Premier's reply dated 23/8/1962 said that he had taken a stand 'for [the] NPC and [the] Muslim cause'. NAK: PRE.197 Vol I 'The Honourable Sir Ahmadu Bello'.

[460] Ibid., p19.

[461] *Gaskiya* 1/1/1956. Danladi was the treasurer of the NPC in Plateau Province.

[462] Reynolds *Time of Politics* p107.

[463] NAK: PRE/291 'Northern Women Organisations'. The Premier's own wives were not able to attend the meetings, held at the Governor's residence. One member reported that the Premier initially suspected the organisation 'might breed something bad politically' (p70). After these suspicions were overcome, he donated a house and £800 towards the

own experience taught him to beware of organisations that claimed to be purely cultural.

One *Gaskiya* reader, Nuhu Audu Waya, was confused as to what NEPU's plans actually were. In a letter to the editor, he wrote that he could see the point of single-stage elections, but did not know which women the party wanted to enfranchise. Was it intended that only unmarried women would vote, or would NEPU go so far as to allow women with husbands to do so? In the United Kingdom, earlier in the century, the question had been the other way round: for the first decade of the female franchise, it was considered that only married women could be considered responsible enough to exercise their vote wisely.

To their detractors in Britain, defenders of the status quo would point out that women still could not sit in the House of Lords and that elections in Switzerland were still men-only. Within Northern Nigeria, however, especially in the Hausa press, the debate was largely Islamic in form. The most significant contribution came from Isa Wali (a civil servant and closet NEPU supporter). In an October 1956 article entitled 'The Position of Women in Islam', Wali challenged the view that Islam prevented women from voting – and he expanded the debate to take in questions of purdah and polygamy (which Wali believed were, in all but exceptional circumstances, actively discouraged by the religion[464]), claiming that Northern women were being treated worse than at the time of the *Jahiliyya* Arabs.[465] Few issues had sparked off such an intense debate on the letters page since Sa'adu Zungur had written in criticism of *sunkuyawa* thirteen years previously.

Arguments on both sides were put in religious terms. Wali would cite precedents from Islamic history, arguing, for instance, that women should be

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establishment of an orphanage, to be run by the group. See Ladi S Adamu *Hafsatu Ahmadu Bello: The Unsung Heroine* (Kaduna: Adams books, 1995).

[464] Reynolds *Time of Politics* pp117-126. See also Hauwa Mahdi 'The Position of Women in Islam' in A Imam, R Pittin, H Omole (eds.) *Women and the Family in Nigeria* (Zaria: CODESRIA, 1989) pp59-64.

[465] *Gaskiya* 16/10/1956 in Reynolds *Zamanin Siyasa* p114.

able to take up office, because they had done so in the past (e.g. when Aisha led a rebellion against Ali). Respondents would counter by, for instance, quoting a Hadith – such as 'People will rarely triumph if a woman is assigned as leader'.[466]

Opinion was divided as to what would happen if women did vote. The Premier revealed something of his own attitudes when he wrote that it could only be to the NPC's advantage, because women would automatically vote the same way as their menfolk.[467] The opposing argument was that those Muslim women who *would* vote if enfranchised would come from 'progressive' households (e.g. without purdah) and would be more likely to support NEPU.[468] Abubakar Garba, in a letter to *Gaskiya* in 1964, pointed out that 'thousands of Igbo women in the North' would be able to vote if enfranchised. He said that this was proof that NEPU had always been looking for an opportunity 'to sell the North and the Northern people to these hyenas that lead the NCNC'. What NEPU wanted most of all, he wrote, was 'to see all the good Islamic traditions and our own good traditional customs left behind and got rid of, to leave the light behind and walk into darkness'. The picture of a crumbling ethical castle was reinforced by a cartoon which associated the women's vote with sexual impropriety. The South here is portrayed as a den of vice, which the North could become if people allow 'good customs' to fall by the wayside.

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[466] Reynolds *Zamanin Siyasa* p115, p119. Reynolds gives a more detailed examination of the terms of debate than space allows in this chapter.

[467] Ahmadu Bello *My Life* p232.

[468] Reynolds notes that the support of female voters was crucial to the unexpected levels of success for NEPU's successor, the People's Redemption Party (PRP), in the Second Republic. Reynolds *Time of Politics* p130.




Illustration 3: A warning against the female franchise. *Gaskiya* 26/3/1964.

Women who were politically vocal had always had to put up with aspersions being cast on their sexual morality. They were often arrested during anti-prostitution campaigns. According to Gambo Sawaba, national leader of NEPU women's wings, forty of her supporters in Kano were arrested in one fell swoop and sentenced to a month in jail each. [469] Some of the women were indeed prostitutes – but, as *Comet* pointed out in 1959, those who had been hired by NPC to attract more men to their rallies were not targeted.[470]

Gambo Sawaba was an extraordinary figure. Born in Zaria to a Nupe mother (her father was from Accra) she grew up speaking English, Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. Her soubriquet 'Sawaba' (based on the NEPU slogan, meaning

[469] *Gaskiya* 26/3/1964. *Comet* 16/7/1959 in Reynolds *Time of Politics* p111.

[470] Ibid. (pp109-110) also cites Renee Pitten's work, which describes the understanding between party organisers and prostitutes, by which access to the latter became one more form of party patronage. A popular saying at the time was *siyasa sai da mace* meaning 'politics cannot exist without women'. (Pitten's translation). See Renee Ilene Pitten 'Marriage and Alternative Strategies: Career Patterns of Hausa Women in Katsina city' (PhD SOAS, 1979/80).

Whatever their source of income, politically active women – usually single – were described in Hausa as *karuwai*, a designation which does not usually imply anything so exact as the direct exchange of sex for money, but is often translated as 'prostitute'.

'freedom') was given her in homage to a (male) NEPU activist also called Gambo Sawaba – yet, by the end of her lifetime, her fame had greatly surpassed his. She was concerned about issues that usually attracted men to join NEPU – forced labour, NA corruption, the defencelessness of the *talakawa* – but the issues foremost in her mind were forced/early marriages and girls' access to education.[471]

She was imprisoned for the first of many times in 1954, for holding a political meeting without permission.[472] Losing her fear of prison, she recalled later, only strengthened her resolve. 'I became even more steadfast,' she said. 'What ever they could do, I would not stop my war to free women from slavery.'[473]

The word 'war' is instructive. Sawaba was often the victim of violence, repeatedly suffering physical attacks from hired thugs (who, on the most infamous occasion, left her for dead in the bush near Jos) but was also content to get involved in such activity if the circumstances were of her choosing. She trained women and *'Yan Tauri* (freely, 'tough guys') as *Aljanun Dare* (usually translated as 'night devils') the militant element of NEPU. To her biographer, she explained that, when word reached them that NPC adherents were planning an attack, the *Aljanun Dare* would go and get their retaliation in first: 'at the dead of night, they would wander round, cutting the heads of NPC supporters, and whipping some of them ... if we heard that they had arranged to sort us out, we would go and sort them out.'[474] In the same book (in many respects more revealing than Shawulu's biography[475]) Sawaba gives a vivid account of an attack on the home of a policeman. A group of NEPU women, led by Sawaba, cut the telephone wires outside the house, before threatening

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[471] Ahmed Abdulkadir *Gambo Sawaba: Kallabi Tsakanin Rauwuna* [*Gambo Sawaba: Headscarf Among the Turbans*] (Zaria: Ganuwa, 1993) p78. All of Abdulkadir's other informants (Bala Keffi, Ibrahim Na-Godiya and M B Yunusa) suggested these same three reasons for originally joining NEPU.

[472] Sawaba claimed the charges were false and that she had permission. See ibid., p26.

[473] Ibid., p26. My translation.

[474] Ibid., p31.

[475] Rima Shawulu *The Story of Gambo Sawaba* (Jos: Echo Communications, 1990).

him with a Molotov Cocktail.[476] It was the kind of incident that occurred with greater regularity as the 1960s wore on. Nigeria became increasingly troubled by politically-motivated on all sides, and in all areas of the country.

[476]Abdulkadir *Gambo Sawaba* p31.

# Chapter Five: The Fringes of Northern Identity

## 5.0 Introduction

It was suggested in Chapter Three that Northern identity was 'sewn together' from other, more established identities. This metaphor is similar to that which Diamond uses when discussing the 'cultural entrepreneurship' that characterised Nigeria's First Republic: '[Elites] were not manufacturing ethnicity out of whole cloth,' he writes, 'but rather exploiting a powerful tendency for politics in plural societies to be seen in ethnic or even communal terms'. People who were sufficiently astute could 'mould latent corporate feelings into a coherent identity that could be embodied in a political party, which the politician could then ride to power'.[477] It was exactly this which the NPC attempted when trying to forge a coherent Northern identity, but with one important complication: in some areas of the region, there were no 'latent corporate feelings' that could be integrated with those of the majority. It was a situation which led to strong separatist tendencies in many areas.

To avoid the perceived threat of southern domination, Northern elites sought to gain public support by promoting a particular identity. In Crawford Young's neat summary: 'The vehicle for identity mobilization was Northern solidarity, a concept which nearly doubled the numerical scope, and thus electoral impact, of the Hausa-Fulani core'. The pace at which smaller communities were incorporated into their Hausa neighbours increased, and was given further impetus by the Premier's religious conversion tours. However, areas populated by the Tiv, Idoma, Igala or Igbirra all required 'active coercion' because Hausa culture, Fulani leadership and Islam could not serve as 'brokerage mechanisms'.[478]

Perhaps this is too neat; at least, those promoting Northern identity would not have looked on their task in these terms. Yet, undeniably, the idea of the North

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[477] Larry Diamond *Class, Ethnicity and Democracy in Nigeria: The Failure of the First Republic* (London: Macmillan, 1988) p42 and p55.

was more successful in areas where certain elements coincided, such as the Hausa language, the emirate model of government and the religion of Islam. Elsewhere, it was less successful. And it is this 'elsewhere' that forms the subject of this chapter. By looking at nationalist failures as well as successes, we can find out more about the limitations of Northern identity. The chapter therefore visits areas at varying distance to the Northern cultural 'mainstream'. It begins in Bida, the principal town of the Nupe people, where the situation was very similar to that of other emirates owing allegiance to Sokoto, but where the complexities of royal politics were difficult for outsiders to understand. It passes through Idomaland, where calls for Northern solidarity could have little resonance, but where the NPC still enjoyed electoral success. It ends in Sardauna Province, an area of great cultural diversity, which could have rejoined the Cameroons but chose to stay with Northern Nigeria. It also pays close attention to the Willink Commission, which was set up to examine the problems that might be encountered when such a diverse population inhabited a shared physical space.

### 5.1 NEPA and NEPU in Bida

The History of NEPA and NEPU activity in Bida is inextricably linked with one name: Sadiq Abubakar Zukogi. Born, around 1923, to the royal house of Masaba, Zukogi was one of a number of prominent Northern left-wingers who came from a privileged background only to immerse themselves in opposition politics. After leaving Kaduna College in 1941,[479] Zukogi worked for the Forestry Department before leaving under a cloud in 1947. Officially, he resigned over a pay dispute, but Zukogi claimed his political beliefs had forced him to leave: he was an occasional correspondent for the *West African Pilot* as well as being the Field Secretary of the Northern Elements Progressive Association (NEPA).[480]

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[478] Crawford Young *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin, 1976) pp277-8.

[479] *Prior to college, Abubakar Zukogi attended Bida NA Elementary School (1930-4) and Middle* School (1943-38). His teachers described him as 'a very able boy with a sense of duty', though 'inclined to use expressions which he does not understand'. See WJBHAC: Niger Province Archives: 'Abubakar Zukogi, NEPU & Bida' Volume I. Report, by CID Lagos.

[480] See WJBHAC: 'Abubakar Zukogi...' Vol I. Abubakar Zukogi to Acting Regional Public Relations Officer (John F Hindle) 5/6/1951.

In 1947, the Bida branch of NEPA was said to have twenty-one members, all of whom were Native Authority officials. According to the District Officer of Bida, this was because the branch's constitution, which stated that membership was open to 'all sons and daughters of Northern Nigeria, literate or illiterate, irrespective of language, locality or creed'[481] was imperfectly observed.[482]

Bryan Sharwood Smith, then Resident of Niger Province, was convinced that NEPA's members were looking out for their own interests:

> This association is typical of others. The real aim is the advancement of the pecuniary interests of a particular class – or any how of certain members of that class. The method is a sort of political-cum-trade-union pressure. High-sounding phrases about the rights and brotherhood of man, form an effective smoke-screen which even blinds the makers themselves, to their real motives. Talk of this kind is also useful if you want to pull in a large number of rank and file to make a demonstration, or to sign a petition. But except on such occasions, the rank and file can go hang.[483]

The issue of motivation is a difficult one. Although colonial officers made occasional innuendos about Zukogi's sources of income, we can never know whether he saw politics as a money-making game (as they claimed) or as a means of improving people's lives (as he claimed). What is certain is that Abubakar Zukogi knew the importance of getting 'rank and file' support, selecting grievances with popular appeal and attaching the NEPA flag to them. For instance, he often advocated moving the date of taxation back, so that farmers could pay immediately after harvest, when they could more easily afford it. He was also a vocal opponent of forced labour. One of his first letters on this subject complained to the Resident that people in Bida were being ordered to clear banks at a point on the river Lanzu which they believed to be haunted by jinns. [484]

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[481] Note the similarity between this sentence and NPC's later commitment to 'One North, One People, irrespective of religion, rank or tribe'.

[482] WJBHAC: 'Abubakar Zukogi...' Vol I. DO Bida to Resident Niger 14/8/1947.

[483] Ibid. Resident Niger to Secretary, Northern Provinces (SNP) 20/8/1947.

[484] Ibid. Abubakar Zukogi to Resident Niger 6/7/1948.

### 5.12 Abubakar Zukogi and the Na'ibi

The case of the District Head of Bida town (who was also the Na'ibi, or deputy to the Chief Imam) is a complicated one; what follows is an abbreviated version, such as could be gleaned from the colonial documents, themselves necessarily incomplete.[485] Here is a case in point: there is insufficient evidence to show why the Na'ibi, by August of 1948, had become unpopular in Bida. The sources record no specific cases of any real weight against him but there seems to have been a public impression of him as being rude and high-handed. Yet there may well be more to the story than the colonial sources can tell us.

Zukogi, ever sensitive to the public mood, sent a complaint to the Etsu Nupe. 'I want you to help us using the status and rank which God has given to you,' he wrote. 'Anyone who has power or status in Nupe country has been given it by you, because you are the father of all'.[486] This seemed a tactful way of approaching the subject of one of the Emir's appointees failing to behave appropriately – yet the letter received no serious attention. Zukogi tried again later, this time taking it up with the District Officer (DO) in charge of Bida. The latter also refused to listen to Zukogi, saying that he was happy to hear from people who had a grievance of their own, but that 'intermediaries were wholly suspect'. Zukogi took this to mean that if he could rally enough opposition to the Naibi, action would be taken. He therefore wrote a circular to District Heads saying that he had been told by the DO 'that if the people of Bida came to him and said they did not want this Naibi, he would be able to get rid of him'.[487] (The DO later strenuously denied having said anything to this effect.) The circular suggested taking a delegation to the Emir.

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[485] There may well be aspects which the officers in charge of the District either failed to understand fully or missed altogether. With each area of the North having its own political intricacies, opaque to the outsider, it is no wonder that the Sardauna relied on 'gateways' for influence and information.

[486] Ibid., Abubakar Zukogi to Emir of Bida 23/8/1948. My translation.

[487] Ibid., Resident of Niger Province (Backhouse) to SNP 20/11/1948. The letter quotes Zukogi's circular of 18/10/1948, in the Resident's own translation from Hausa. It is due, perhaps, to translation problems of one sort or another that Zukogi mistakenly attributes these words to 'the Resident' rather than the DO.

On the 19th of October, a crowd of between two and three thousand people converged on the Etsu Nupe's palace. The Emir appeared before them, and invited a few individuals to come inside and discuss their grievances. According to the District Officer, most of the problems raised were mundane, focussing on issues such as taxation; there were other complaints, but these were mostly 'nebulous trivial or ill supported'. The real objection to the Naibi, he felt, was 'on grounds of character rather than on grounds of the usual kind, i.e. malpractices'.[488] Having aired its views, the deputation left.

Zukogi's own report, published in the *West African Pilot*, narrated the meeting rather differently:

> The people went as far as to remind the Emir that he should know that he himself is accountable to them since it was they who collectively elected him to be the Emir and he should not hesitate to discharge his duty in the interest of his Employers – the people.
>
> He then begged them to hold on while he consulted his British overlords who now own him body and soul with all his subjects.[489]

As the Emir was making these consultations, it dawned on the District Heads that Zukogi was not, as he had implied, acting with the sanction of the District Officer. Their sudden anger with him could achieve nothing; the damage had been done. Clearly, the Naibi could not continue as District Head without support, so he resigned – although there remained the usual question of whether he jumped or was pushed. According to the DO, the matter was 'regarded in the Town as a "dismissal"' and therefore represented 'a complete victory by the dissident elements led by M. Zukogi'.[490]

A report prepared by the Resident of Niger Province observed:

> It was quite clear that he [Zukogi] had his finger not only on the popular pulse, but on that beating in higher circles as well. I do not think it can be said that he raised a wave of feeling. It would be truer to say that he perceived that such a wave was forming. A few extra breaths of wind from

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[488] Ibid. District Officer of Bida to Resident of Niger Province 1/11/1948.

[489] *West African Pilot* c. October 1948. An undated copy of the article can be found in ibid.

[490] WJBHAC: 'Abubakar Zukogi...' Vol 1. District Officer of Bida to Resident of Niger Province 1/11/1948.

> him, and he might expect to ride to fame on its crest. It looked dead safe. Even the Emir would not support the Naibi.[491]

The report stated that the underlying problems included the 'innumerable intrigues' going on in the town, as well as the 'innate arrogance' of the Masaba House (whose adherents made up a majority of the crowd).[492] The report conceded that Zukogi may have had some genuine desire 'to help the underdog', but claimed he was also deliberately 'stirring up trouble' on behalf of Nnamdi Azikiwe.

The politics of Abubakar Zukogi often related back to competition between Bida's three royal houses. These were descended from the three sons of Malam Dendo, who conquered the Nupe kingdom for the Sokoto Caliphate: Umaru Majigi, Usman Zaki and Masaba. From 1934 to 1963, the Etsu Nupe was Ndayako, of the Umaru Majigi family. Zukogi was from the Masaba family.

One of the problems identified by the Resident of Niger Province was that the Naibi was of slave descent, so members of the Usman Zaki family were 'particularly aggrieved by his increasing prosperity when they, his masters [of old], enjoy so few lucrative posts...' Among those whom Zukogi persuaded to join the protest was an ex-District Head from the Usman Zaki side and the Natsu (a traditional title) who had been demoted from District Head to Ward Head. There was also the former Lafarma (another traditional title) who had been forcibly retired on grounds of age and was also from the Usman Zaki house and the Yarima, head of the Masaba house, who had taken Zukogi in as a child, after his father had died. The Yarima's son was in the police force but had not been given a promotion yet, due, in the Yarima's eyes, to some perceived fault on the part of the Naibi. All were irked by something – not by imperial rule as such – and wanted to see what they could gain by supporting Zukogi (who had implied, in his circular, that he had once used his influence to secure a salary increase for a District Head in Bauchi Province. This was

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[491] Ibid. Report, n. d. The report seems to have been prepared for the benefit of the SNP.

[492] Ibid. The Masaba House is described, in the CID Report into Abubakar Zukogi (op. cit.) as having 'a reputation for producing arrogant & turbulent men'.

not a claim they could easily check, but none of them had much to lose). For Zukogi, there must have been a constant struggle to keep in touch with NEPA across the region and NCNC across Nigeria at the same time as keeping his eye on the ever-crucial ball of local politics.

### 5.13 Zukogi, Zungur and the language of nationalism

There is a shocking difference in Zukogi's tone between when he is writing to the Emir in Hausa and when he is writing for the *Pilot* in English. In the former, he respectfully asks that the Emir use the authority that God has invested in him and states that all power within the division is distributed via the Emir, who is the father of all. In the latter, he cites the people as the source of all authority, with the Emir as their mere employee.

There are similar questions about Sa'adu Zungur. Mervyn Hiskett, in his examination of the political thought of Zungur, says that it is 'difficult to believe that Sa'adu conceived of any status for non-Muslims other than that of subjects in an Islamic state, and thus to describe him as a "nationalist" certainly seems inappropriate'.[493] It is indeed difficult to believe this if one focuses solely on Zungur's Hausa poetry (which, as Hiskett points out, often treats pagans harshly). However, in a lecture Zungur gave as an NCNC representative (before he grew disillusioned with southern politicians) Zungur spoke out in favour of greater representation for the North's 'pagan' peoples. At the time, under the Richards Constitution, Emirs sat in the House of Chiefs and their nominees sat in the House of Assembly, while pagans took no part in the proceedings. Zungur argued that, if it was necessary that 50% of the Legislative Council members should originate from the North (so as to prevent domination of the North by the South) then, by the same logic, it was necessary for 50% of the Northern House of Assembly members to represent pagans (to avoid 'oppression by Fulani aristocrats').[494]

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[493] Mervyn Hiskett 'The Development of Sa'adu Zungur's Political Thought from *Maraaba Da Sooja*, through *Areewa, Jumhuuriyaa Koo Muluukiyaa*, to *Waak'ar 'Yancii'* in *African Language Studies XVI* (1975) p8.

[494] *West African Pilot* 2/2/1950, quoted in Alkasum Abba 'The Significance of the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) in the Politics of Nigeria 1950-1960' (PhD Zaria, 2000) p156. Similar concerns about the level of representation for pagan peoples had been voiced by the editor of *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo*, Abubakar Imam. See Yusuf Turaki 'The

Hiskett says that 'to speak of Sa'adu Zungur as a "nationalist" may be to confuse his essentially Islamic political philosophy with the very different ideas on African nationhood of men like [Kwame] Nkrumah'.[495] However, in characterising Zungur as 'above all else, a Muslim *'ālim*', Hiskett runs a similar risk: the risk of confusing Zungur's approach with those of other Islamic scholars who were not influenced by a lifetime of western education and exposure to British ideas. One of the poems Hiskett quotes makes mention of the *[London] Daily Mail*; more typical Islamic poets would not have done this.

On the one hand, we can see that, whatever the medium, the message is substantially the same. While Zukogi's initial letter to the Emir appears subservient in translation, the challenge to the Emir's authority and sense of judgement is still discernible. The probable reason that the Emir did not reply to Zukogi's letter is, therefore, its insolence: in Hausa, a little disrespect goes a long way. Time and again, NEPU approaches to Native Authorities were ignored because of their rudeness and boldness – something Zukogi and Zungur's writings in the English-language press had in spades, just expressed in a different manner. They used pungent, pamphleteering prose in English, and respectful pleadings with religious references in Hausa, yet were aiming at the same thing. When Zukogi reminded the Emir that he was appointed by God, he was trying to remind him of his responsibilities to his people.[496]

*So: can we say that, although the statements made in English and Hausa* appear different, they are, in essence, the same? Well, no. Over issues such as how much parliamentary representation should be given to non-Muslims, there was a clear difference between the demands of two worldviews.

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Institutionalization of the Inferior Status and Socio-Poltiical Role of the non-Muslim Groups in the Colonial Hierarchical Structure of the Northern Region of Nigeria: A Social-Ethnic Analysis of the Colonial Legacy' (PhD Boston, 1982) p265.

[495] Ibid., p6.

[496] Similarly, the 'Sawaba!' slogan which NEPU adopted is usually translated as 'Freedom!' but has religious overtones, meaning that (to borrow from the Christian concepts of which the English language has a ready supply) 'Redemption!' might be better. This was clearly in the minds of Aminu Kano and others when launching the People's Redemption Party (PRP) in preparation for the Second Republic.

Ultimately, the decision was left to the religious/political conscience of the individual believer/activist. However, there is a danger inherent in using sources exclusively in Hausa or English, of missing an important part of the picture. In particular, the saying 'addininmu addinin biyayya ne', meaning 'our religion is the religion of obedience', has been quoted without subtlety or imagination.[497] As Yakubu observes, this snippet of Hausa has been taken out of context, and been used to imply that Northern Nigerians were 'incurably fatalistic and lethargic, lacking any desire to see an end to British rule'.[498]

### 5.14 Official responses to NEPA and the rise of NEPU

The Resident believed that Zukogi had to be stopped, lest he garner enough support to become Etsu Nupe next time the post became open. 'While Zukogi was writing letters about the effects of Djinns', he commented, 'he was comparatively innocuous. The organisation of a revolt ... is in a completely different category'.[499] He therefore advised the Emir to withdraw his earlier recognition of NEPA and have its members investigated.

> I do not think that too much reliance should be put on the principle that subversive organisations must not be suppressed for fear that their activities will thereby be driven underground and fanned by persecution. It may hold good in the United Kingdom and in the Southern Provinces ... But the social system in the Emirates is such that unless subversive activities are stopped by the Native Authorities, the view will be taken that they are encouraged by Government. Repression will not send them underground in the sense that they will be able to carry on without the knowledge of the Native Authorities.[500]

This attitude would change as time went on, and the British became increasingly aware of the importance of not being seen to interfere in the political process. For the moment, however, the pressure being brought to bear on NEPA was sufficient to silence it. In 1949, public meetings or

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[497] E.g. Dudley *Parties and Politics* p69 fn64. Dudley goes so far as to say that Islam 'enjoins on its members a seemingly unconditional subservience to the ruler' (p56).

[498] Yakubu *Sa'adu Zungur* p4.

[499] WJBHAC: 'Abubakar Zukogi...' Vol I. Resident Niger to SNP 5/12/1948.

[500] Ibid.

processions organised by the NCNC or 'kindred societies' were banned, to avoid inflaming public opinion.[501]

Yet despite the death of NEPA, Zukogi could still get into trouble. According to witnesses who went to the DO of Bida in July of 1949, Zukogi and two others had approached the Yarima, his former guardian and head of the Masaba house, to say that (in the words of the Yarima) '[they] wanted everything affecting the house of Masaba to be settled by me. They for their part would not accept the Emir. I told Zukogi I would report his statements to the Emir as they constituted rebellion'.[502]

The Nupe succession operates on the principle of rotation. The royal houses are supposed to take it in turns to provide a new Etsu Nupe when the old one dies (as happened most recently in 2003). This system has not always run smoothly, but the idea of rotation is firmly entrenched. Many other Nigerian peoples employ such a system, including the Igala and Bini (from whom the Nupe often claim descent) and this is reflected in the widely popular idea that the national presidency should rotate between various 'geo-political zones'. The Resident, M V Backhouse, wrote a report summarizing the history of the rotational system and expressed his belief that

> This balance of power in Nupe politics has been preserved for nearly a century to the satisfaction of the Nupe people. Any attempt by one of the Houses to obtain a measure of internal autonomy outside the control of the reigning Emir would upset this balance and run the risk of civil war.[503]

It was therefore decided to prosecute Zukogi under the NA Ordinance of 1943, for attempting to undermine the lawful power of the Bida NA. In October, Zukogi was sentenced to six months in jail – however, he was later freed on appeal, when the Yarima appeared vague and unconvincing in the witness box. 'If I had gone on with the case,' wrote the Senior Crown Counsel, '[other

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[501] Ibid. DO Bida to Resident Niger 2/3/1949. It seems the Etsu Nupe was taking up the Resident's 'suggestion' of repressing political activity. The DO wrote that a prohibition on public meetings was justified 'in view of recent events and bearing in mind the excitable nature of the Nupes'.

[502] Ibid.

[503] Ibid. M V Backhouse, report, undated.

witnesses] might have given more satisfactory evidence ... but at best there would have been a divergency between the prosecution witnesses, such as to create a doubt in the Judge's mind ... I hope the result in Bida will not be to increase Zukogi's influence'.[504]

Those in charge of Bida – and the rest of the North – were loath to admit that Zukogi had any influence to begin with. His claim, in a letter to the Secretary, Northern Provinces (SNP) to be 'an esteemed figure among the Nupes' was highlighted in the margin with an exclamation mark, as if the very idea were preposterous. Sharwood Smith, who was Resident of Niger Province before Backhouse, had always held, as an article of faith, that 90% of the Northern population was 'completely loyal, sometimes blindly loyal, to its chiefs'.[505] Dissent was, at best, confined to urban areas. This was how the British could explain the foundation, on the 8th of August 1950, of the Northern Elements Progressive Union, in Kano – a fast-growing city which had long been exposed to outside influence.

Abubakar Zukogi became the new party's Secretary-General. As such, he no longer limited himself to writing letters to the Emir and District Officer of Bida, and began a lively, if one-sided, correspondence with figures higher up the ladder, including the Acting Regional Public Relations Officer, John Hindle. Zukogi greatly objected to the assumption that the peasants of Northern Nigeria were always happy, and he believed he knew how this idea persisted. As he wrote to Hindle:

> I know that the average white official today does not bother his head to know exactly what is going on and only content[s] himself with the beautiful words of the Palace ... If the officer insists on going on tour to the District, you find that he has to go with an Emir's Wakili [representative] and again the Hakimi's [District Head's] Wakili so that when a peasant sees these people he does not open his mouth.[506]

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[504] For the circumstances surrounding Zukogi's successful appeal, see ibid., Senior Crown Counsel (Lionel Brett) to Resident Niger Province 28/11/1949. For information regarding the initial prosecution see NAK: Minprof 8/1 6706 'Rex Vs Abubakar Zukogi'.

[505] Arewa House: 23/1/4 51069 'Political Situation: Relations between N. P. C. and N. E. P. U.'.

[506] Arewa House: 22/2/24 50664 'Malam SGA Zukogi – Correspondence'. Abubakar Zukogi to Acting Regional Public Relations Officer (J F Hindle) 5/6/1951.

The letters were ignored. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the British tended to assume that an organisation or individual who lacked chiefly support was not to be taken seriously. People like Zukogi could only get in the way of the utopian vision of the North as a land where all were satisfied, because all had such low material aspirations.

Zukogi pursued many different tactics to get his letters answered. Some were couched in vaguely threatening language and others were more submissive (ending in 'obediently yours'). Sometimes Zukogi was just a critic; at other times, he offered his services to government should they be required.

### 5.15 The Mokwa Groundnut Scheme and forced labour

The groundnut scheme at Mokwa was one of several on the African continent, set up to produce more vegetable oil for the British market. Zukogi often railed against the scheme, which he accused of using forced labour, which the *Daily Comet* described as 'a challenge to the conscience of the natural ruler who is said to be behind labour conscription'.[507] The Resident of Niger Province denied that there was any forced such thing[508], claiming that workers from Mokwa and nearby were simply answering the Emir's call for volunteers – and that they were satisfied with the high rates of pay they received.[509] He saw the work as a form of *gayya*, or communal labour. As he observed, '[gayya] is regularly used by individual farmers in the clearances of new farms; it falls upon men of certain age grades to provide this labour which is undertaken voluntarily, though there is moral compulsion in the sense that any man evading his duty would incur the censure of the community'.[510]

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[507] *Daily Comet* 22/5/1951.

[508] The DO of Bida accused Zukogi of using the word 'conscription' out of context and in a glib way, 'rather typical of a Fabian tractarian'. Not much earlier, the DO's ultimate boss, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, had been Arthur Creech Jones, former chairman of the Fabian Colonial Bureau. See WJBHAC: 'Divisional Intelligence Reports', Political Intelligence Summary, November to December 1952.

[509] Obligatory paid 'service' to chiefs was excluded from the League of Nations 1930 prohibition of forced labour, to which Great Britain had agreed.

[510] Arewa House 22/2/24 50664 'Malam SGA Zukogi – Correspondence'. Resident Niger, minute, 15/6/1951.

Zukogi insisted that what was ostensibly a call for volunteers often ended in conscription of labour. Nor were the workers as satisfied as the resident claimed, often missing out on any payment whatever. 'More than 50% of the peasantry in this country can not say that they have departed materially from the type of life they were leading before the whiteman,' he wrote, 'except that they are not being sold into slavery'.[511]

After another letter from Zukogi on this subject, a member of the Emir's Advisory Council brought up the question: was labour for the Mokwa scheme conscripted? The Etsu Nupe replied that 'there is no compulsion [tilas], it is just communal development work; that is, it is incumbent [*Wajib*] upon us'.[512] At this, the meeting 'gave a murmur of assent', which the DO saw as 'the complete answer to spanner-slinging efforts by such as Zukogi, twisting the half-truths (there is always an element of truth in his complaints) in desperate search for party capital'. Note that the agreement of the councillors is taken to mean the farmers themselves are happy with the arrangements – even though the same District Officer had previously admitted that labour had, until recently, been by compulsion.[513] Quite apart from which, what practical difference is there between *tilas* and *wajibi*? Both are commonly translated as 'necessary' or 'compulsory', but the former may imply the ultimate sanction of physical force if the work is refused. At best, the difference is a shade of meaning.[514]

The DO believed that schemes such as Mokwa could be an ideal testing-ground for the new layers of bureaucracy which were being introduced in the wake of Tafawa Balewa's motion in the Northern House of Assembly.

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[511] *Ibid. Abubakar Zukogi to Acting Regional Public Relations Officer (J F Hindle) 5/6/1951.*

[512] WJBHAC: Niger Province Archives: 'Divisional Intelligence Reports Bida'. Intelligence Summary, Bida, July-August 1952. I have given a free translation of 'taimakon kasa', literally 'helping the land' as 'communal development work'.

[513] WJBHAC: 'Divisional Intelligence Reports'. Rogers noted in the Intelligence Summary for April-May 1952 that Zukogi had not mentioned the Mokwa project at a recent party meeting. The DO went on to say that 'Labour is *not now* by compulsion...' My emphasis.

[514] See Paul Newman and Roxana Ma Newman (eds.) *Modern Hausa-English Dictionary* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1977). This work, produced by the Centre for the Study of Nigerian Languages at Bayero University, Kano, translates *tilas* as 'necessity' or 'by force' and *wajibi* as 'necessary' or 'compulsory'.

> It appears that this problem of labour supply will provide an admirable opportunity for District and Village Councils to function ... to reinforce local support for such schemes as Mokwa ... [They] can get a climate in which co-operation will develop from below. Until then, the idle Nupe needs his paternal control from above. The only alternative, if labour is to be obtained, will be the blatant compulsion which nobody wants.

NEPU often returned to this issue. The newly-elected party leader Aminu Kano wired the Lieutenant-Governor in early 1953 comparing conditions in Mokwa to 'Nazi camps'.[515]

### 5.16 The 1951 elections in Bida

Abubakar Zukogi was always on the lookout for new recruits to the NEPU cause. He persuaded one Abu Dogo to join the party, during the 1951 elections. Dogo had recently been elected to the Emirate Electoral College and might, therefore, have proved useful in getting NEPU candidates – Zukogi included – into the Northern House of Assembly. However, Abu Dogo was told by the Makun (a District Head) that he was now forbidden from attending the College. Although Dogo defied the order, (proving unable to secure the victory of any NEPU member in the election) the Makun's actions still rankled with Zukogi. Therefore, when Dogo brought a complaint over a separate (rather minor) matter, Zukogi decided to attend. He arrived at the Emir's Court and waited for Dogo, but the latter mysteriously failed to turn up on time and the hearing was postponed. On hearing this, Zukogi stormed into the Council Chamber and used abusive and threatening language to the Emir. He was remanded for fourteen days, found guilty of contempt of court and sentenced to time already served.

'The case illustrates Zukogi's customary technique', remarked the Senior District Officer (SDO) of Bida. 'The Makun's stupidity in forbidding Abu Dogo to attend the Emirate Electoral College because he had joined N. E. P. U. gave Zukogi a heaven sent opportunity which he was quick to seize'.[516] The SDO

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[515] WJBHAC: 'Divisional Intelligence Reports'.

[516] WJBHAC: 'Abubakar Zukogi...' SDO Bida to Resident Niger 5/12/1951.

believed that 'such little influence he possesses among the riff-raff of Bida Town' had been reduced by a fortnight in jail.

The Makun is here criticised for his 'stupidity' in obstructing NEPU members – even though the DO in charge of Bida less than three years previously had openly advocated the repression of NEPA. The new message, that NEPU should be opposed only by *legal* means, seemed to take a while to sink in: the following year, the Native Authority granted NEPU permission to hold public meetings, on condition that Zukogi was not present. The District Officer, Rogers, wrote that 'Neither the Emir nor his councillor appeared to realize in the slightest how damaging such an autocratic act could be'.[517] However, it appears not to have had any serious repercussions. NEPU were relatively inactive during 1952.

### 5.17 *The Masaba graveyard incident*

In 1953, Zukogi was back in trouble. In early February, the Etsu Nupe sacked the caretakers of the three Muslim graveyards in the town, because they had allowed unsanitary conditions to prevail. The townspeople were instructed to clean the graveyards up – a request which the NA was legally allowed to make. Two of the town's wards completed the work, but in the Masaba ward, Zukogi and his NEPU comrades declared that they would prefer to mark out and fence a new one. The Emir replied that the Masaba ward could have a new burial ground as soon as the old one had been cleared of the high grass which constituted a fire hazard. The NEPU leaders then urged the people to refuse to carry out any work for which they were not paid and wrote to the Emir asking him to send a messenger to show them a new site, which they would clear on the 12th of February. 'This letter, which is one of a continual series, most of them offensive, was disregarded as usual', wrote the Resident.[518] On the morning of the 12th, having heard no reply, NEPU leaders and fifty of their followers chose their own site and began making a new burial ground. Within a

[517] WJBHAC: Niger Province Archives: 'Divisional Intelligence Reports Bida'. Intelligence Summary April-May 1952.

[518] WJBHAC: 'Abubakar Zukogi...' Vol I. Resident Niger to Civil Secretary, Northern Regional Government 22/3/1953.

short time, the Native Authority police had arrived and arrested four of the 'ringleaders', Zukogi among them.

The case came before the Etsu Nupe's Court in March. After the charges were read, the defendants were asked who their leader was. Zukogi spoke up:

> We do not have a leader. We are all equal.

A member of the Etsu's Court[519] responded that, since it was well known that Zukogi had founded NEPU in Bida, he was clearly the leader.

> We do not have a leader, [Zukogi insisted] because we are all God's creatures, none of us is superior.

The charges were related to Zukogi and his fellow accused. They were accused of resisting a lawful order from the Native Authority and usurping the authority of the Chief. He commented:

> I know that in this day and age everyone has the right to give his opinion, but it is the Native Authority alone which has the right and the power to perform activities which benefit the people of the District.

Zukogi could only protest that he had told the NA what NEPU were planning to do but their letter had received no reply; also that graveyard clearance was supposed to be paid work, not communal work.

Zukogi was asked whether he knew that obedience to authority was an obligation of the Islamic faith. Zukogi was evasive, returning to the subject of payment. The question was put more bluntly this time:

> Does NEPU obey the Native Authority or does it not?

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[519] The transcript refers always to 'Etsu da Majalisa' (Emir and Council), such that it is impossible to tell which member of the council was speaking. At some points, the treasurer must have been speaking, since Zukogi asked why the other councillors had remained silent for some time. At other times, context makes it clear that the Etsu Nupe himself was speaking. The transcript is contained in WJBHAC: 'Abubakar Zukogi...' Vol I. My translation.

This time, Zukogi said that the party had clearly indicated its obedience in the letter it had written to the Native Authority, stating the day on which work on the new graveyard would begin. The NA treasurer (*Ma'aji*) was outraged.

> You mean to say you have the power to decide what day work is going to start when the Native Authority has not even given you permission to do the work?

Zukogi replied:

> We just said that through the power of God we would go and do the work on the Thursday, because God has power over everyone.

The discussion revolved around these same points for a little while, before the treasurer said:

> Graveyard clearance is indeed paid work [*aikin lada*] but you did not have permission to carry it out in a place you do not have authority over, because the town does not belong to you. The town belongs to the Etsu.

Zukogi did not repeat what he had written in the *Pilot* in 1948, that the Emir was merely the employee of his people. Throughout his court appearance, he had relied on religious arguments for his defence, such as it was. Nevertheless, he and the other three men were jailed for six months each.

Zukogi was, therefore, in prison at the time of the Kano riots. Soon after he emerged from incarceration, he found that his party had a new adversary to fear – the *Jam'iyyar Mahaukata* (Party of Madmen). It is unclear whether the *Jam'iyyar Mahaukata* in Bida was a spontaneously-organised vigilante group, or (as in Kano) had palace connections. They organised a protest at the motor park, denouncing NEPU and threatening to 'give them something to think about' wherever the party next held a meeting. In the DO's estimate, there were only about ten of them (two of whom were 'cadet members of Royal houses') and he was relatively confident that violence could be avoided if the problem were nipped in the bud. The youths were given a stern warning.

'To the extent to which the local "crazy gang" represents the rallying of a set of people against the anti-N. A. activities of N. E. P. U.,' the DO wrote, 'it might well have occurred before now. Unfortunately, appearances are that it comprises a set of irresponsible young hotheads bent on making a rumpus, in imitation of the Kano hooligan element. There is nothing in this to encourage the hope that a reasonable body of public opinion will soon make themselves [sic] heard. N. E. P. U. are still the only articulates and their abuse brings no spontaneous rejoinder.' However, Rogers believed that NEPU in Bida was not so much a party as a 'faction intrigue'.[520]

### 5.18 NEPU in the countryside

In October of 1953, the District Head of Jima Doko, who bore the title of Dan Madami, went to Gaba village to discuss tax matters. He was greeted by a group of NEPU supporters shouting the party slogan, 'Sawaba!' Angry, he demanded the men remove their NEPU badges and, when they refused, he 'snatched the badge of the nearest member and in the ensuing scuffle other badges were snatched and gowns torn'. The District Head became fearful and made to get back into his lorry, only to find his way blocked. According to the reports given to the District Officer, the Dan Madami instructed the NA police to arrest a man who had shouted an insult, but they were manhandled by the crowd. Eventually, the District Head managed to get back into his vehicle and flee the scene, leaving the two policemen to fend for themselves.[521]

Zukogi was quick to defend his fellow party members. He said that the Dan Madami had slapped one of the NEPU supporters who refused to hand over his badge, and had then torn the badge off him. The order that he had given to the policeman was not to arrest the man who had allegedly shouted an insult – but to hit him. Most seriously, Zukogi alleged that the claims of manhandling the

[520] WJBHAC: Niger Province Archives: 'Abubakar Zukogi, NEPU & Bida' Volume II. DO Bida to Resident Niger 27/10/1953.

[521] *Ibid. DO Bida to Resident Niger 10/10/1953.*

police were untrue, backed up by a 'false illness report' prepared by a corrupt medic.[522]

After making further enquiries, the DO found that the first allegation was true – but he disputed the severity of the slap and excused the District Head's actions by saying that NEPU members had been too prominent in Gaba market, 'swaggering about & showing off their badges'. He made no explicit denial of the second allegation, that the Dan Madami had instructed a policeman to slap a NEPU supporter, only saying that the order was never carried out, because the policeman was set upon by the crowd. The third issue, therefore, was implicitly rejected.[523]

Perhaps it was this incident having taken place in one of the villages rather than Bida town that convinced Zukogi that the countryside was ripe for rebellion. It was noted later in the year that NEPU activities had been transferred to the nearby districts, according to the Acting Resident, 'with the hope that the unsophisticated countrymen might prove more malleable than the less gullible citizens of Bida Town where Zukogi has for some time past been a discredited person'[524].

Zukogi hoped to obtain the approval of peasants by campaigning for tax to be paid immediately after harvest – he even encouraged farmers in Lemu District to withhold payment.[525] When eight of his supporters were jailed for following this advice, Zukogi began a campaign for their release, culminating, on the 16th of December, in a protest which involved around 200 people. Exactly what happened next is not certain. However, a minor riot ensued and – somehow or other – the eight accused were set free. Seven of them were re-arrested soon

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[522] Ibid. Zukogi to DO Bida 16/10/1953.

[523] Ibid. DO Bida to Resident Niger 21/10/1953.

[524] Ibid. Acting Resident Niger to Civil Secretary Northern Region 30/12/1953.

[525] This featured as an example in the compendium of cases compiled with the help of the Wazirin Zaria, mentioned in Chapter Three. No action could be taken against Zukogi under Islamic Law because there was no such thing as incitement. His followers chose not to pay tax of their own volition and he could not be prosecuted for encouraging them.

afterwards, one of whom was found to be hiding in Zukogi's house. He went back to jail for a further six months, convicted of helping an escaped prisoner.

Although the Acting Resident believed that 'remedial measures' would be required to prevent similar disturbances from occurring, he was confident that there was no underlying cause to the riot. Zukogi's only 'followers' were a few 'unsophisticated' farmers living in villages which adhered to the Masaba house of Bida. They had allowed themselves to be manipulated because they were too simple to resist. In the Acting Resident's words: 'I have referred throughout to Zukogi's "followers" in inverted commas. They are not followers in the accepted sense of the term but only his pawns in a game about which they know nothing'.[526] Assumptions such as this run through much of the correspondence, raising certain problems. How, for instance, can one learn more about the thoughts, motivations and political opinions of people who are alleged to have none of these things? Given that we are dealing with events that occurred only half a century ago, the answer must surely be to supplement information obtained from the archives with an extensive range of interviews – something which time and circumstances have not allowed to this project and perhaps represents a further avenue for research.

### 5.19 The 1954 General Election in Bida and its aftermath

Zukogi was out of jail in time to stand in the 1954 election, the first to be fought under the new Lyttleton Constitution. Central to the NEPU campaign was continued opposition to 'forced labour' at the Mokwa Groundnut Scheme, while the NPC told their audiences not to be led astray by a convicted criminal. They were also reported to have employed 'anti-Iboism' in their campaigns,[527] and made careful use of *habaici*, or innuendo. A crowd at an NPC rally was told:

> There is a certain horse in the town who is running wild; what do you do to such a horse? You fit a curb-chain. You wait and see – we shall fit it!

[526] WJBHAC: 'Abubakar Zukogi...' Vol II. Acting Resident Niger to Civil Secretary Northern Region 30/12/1953. 'Remedial measures' included fines for 94 of those involved in the disturbances.

[527] WJBHAC: 'Divisional Intelligence Reports'. Political Intelligence Summary, December 1954. These are the first mentions of NPC activity in the file. It seems the party only really came together during elections, when it was boosted by defections from NEPU.

> What do you do to catch a rat in a hole? You pour water down one end of the hole and you get a dog to watch the other end. Then Snap! You have the rat. We shall have him.[528]

It was clear that the speaker was referring to Zukogi – but this could never have been proven in court. In the final college, Zukogi managed to gain 23 votes, to Malam Usman's 91.

In the light what happened to Zukogi the following year, the above comments make interesting reading. Zukogi had embroiled himself in a quarrel with Alhaji Haruna, a son of the Etsu Nupe, whom Zukogi accused of accepting money embezzled from the Northern Region Produce Marketing Board. Zukogi was initially brought before the *Alkali* (judge) on a charge of defamation, but Zukogi was so defiant in court that he was charged with contempt as well. When the judge remanded him in custody for a week, all hell broke loose. As it was reported to the Senior District Officer:

> NEPU hooligans rushed forward and the police in the court house shut all windows and doors. Eventually the police cordon was over powered and some of the crowd battered down the door windows of the court. It was at this stage, I think, that Zukogi personally set upon the Alkali, striking him in the face, knocking out a tooth and drawing much blood (the Alkali is over 60 years old and much respected); it [is] also said that Zukogi drew a knife but was prevented from using it by a court messenger. Meantime, Zukogi's friends set upon Alhaji Haruna and others who were with him, split open Alhaji Haruna's head and beat him to the ground. Zukogi and most of his gang then withdrew to his house (Zukogi in his car with the NEPU flag flying).[529]

Zukogi was re-arrested on charges of contempt, assault and incitement to riot, and jailed for three years. A curb-chain had been fitted to the wild horse. Given that an NPC representative had predicted that Zukogi would be silenced in some way, it seems reasonable to ask whether all is as it seems in this case. However, the main documentary sources – the two volumes on NEPU in Bida, held at the Sokoto archives – fall silent at this point, in August 1955.

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[528] From an undated report by the SDO, Collison. See WJBHAC: 'Abubakar Zukogi...' Vol II.

[529] Ibid.

### 5.1.20 NEPU in Bida: conclusions

On his release from jail in 1958, Zukogi was presented by his followers with a white horse. The horse, symbolic of leadership, was given as an expression of the hope that Zukogi might one day become Etsu Nupe. But is that all that NEPU in Bida was really concerned about? Was the party nothing more than a 'faction intrigue', as District Officer Rogers suggested? Whitaker suggests that Zukogi can properly be regarded 'as a regional leader and as a radical ideologue by conviction, [although] his role as a modern politician in Bida was inextricably bound up in the fabric of Bida traditional politics'. He points out that Zukogi based his 1959 election campaign[530] around the suggestion that the Etsu Nupe was trying to engineer the violation of the rotational system by appointing a member of the Umaru Majigi house as *Shaba* – usually the heir apparent. Whitaker notes that, on the Emir's death in 1962, the system was violated, but in favour of Zukogi's own Masaba house. The newly-appointed Etsu Nupe was Usman Sarki, Zukogi's NPC opponent in the 1954 Election, now Federal Minister of Information![531]

NEPU's activities in Bida, including its role in chieftaincy politics, suggest that to define the party by its blanket opposition to the Native Authority system is misleading. On a day-to-day level, the relationship often showed an ambivalence not in evidence in the Sawaba Declaration, a document which is often quoted to demonstrate NEPU's political principles. It states that 'the interest of the Talakawa is diametrically opposed to the interest of the master class both white and black'[532] but this did not appear to be Zukogi's belief. He once wrote: 'we want you to understand that N. E. P. U. of Bida Division embraces all classes of people from the Filanis of the royal family, the

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[530] Zukogi was defeated in the 1959 federal election, the regional election of 1961 and the federal election of 1964.

[531] Whitaker Jr *Politics of Tradition* p445. Whitaker makes a number of errors here. Zukogi was initially charged with contempt, not receiving stolen goods. He was sentenced to three years in jail, not four. *Shaba* is a Nupe equivalent of the Hausa *Yarima*, not *Ciroma*. The ruling house was known as Umaru Majigi, not Muhammadu Majigi. And the Etsu Nupe, Muhammadu Ndayako, died in 1962, not 1963.

[532] Yahaya *The Native Authority System* Appendix IV. Yahaya's work is itself dedicated 'to the *Talakawa, victims of local bureaucratic oppression*'.

Mallamis, the Srakis (warriors), the town plebescites [sic: plebeians] and peasantry class in fact it transcends all castes and ranks'.

Zukogi indicated a desire to reform the system from within (an attitude which the Sawaba Declaration can be used to support). He would probably have wanted to become Emir if the opportunity arose, and had earlier attempted to follow in his father's footsteps by becoming a District Head.

NEPU's complaints about the Emir were always carefully worded. Writing in Hausa, they would begin with greetings and expressions of respect and loyalty and phrase complaints in a set format. For instance, a petition against the Etsu Nupe from 1952 protested at the 'lack of mercy and lack of justice' he showed. Even though the petition went on to allege corruption, the NEPU supporters described their own obligations in terms of *biyayya* (obedience) and *ladabi* (politeness) and those of the Emir in terms of *tausayi* (mercy) and *kulawa* (being attentive, caring).[533] These NEPU members, and others like them, did not wish to abolish the very idea of Emirs. Rather, the political philosophy to which, for instance, Lawan 'Danbazau subscribed required the North to be governed according to the 'orthodox' Islamic system – the definition of which was, of course, always contested.[534]

Among themselves, NEPU supporters were often more strident with their language. At the NEPU General Conference in Bida during January 1953, a senior delegate was quoted by the DO as having said: 'God says that *oppressors have none of him & that he will help those who stand up undefeated* by them. Yet the Chiefs do what the Europeans do & they are infidels'.[535]

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[533] WJBHAC: 'Abubakar Zukogi...' Vol I. Abubakar Zukogi and nine others to DO Bida, Resident Niger and Lieutenant-Governor of the Northern Region 24/2/1952.

[534] This did not just apply to the Native Authority. A NEPU petition which complained about the Resident, Backhouse, said that he lacked morality, probity and reasonableness and was therefore 'undoing all the good works of the Colonial Office under the wise, patient and considerable leadership of the Colonial Secretary Right Honourable Oliver Lyttleton'. See ibid., Abubakar Zukogi to L-Governor 8/9/1953.

[535] WJBHAC: 'Divisional Intelligence Reports'. Political Intelligence Summary December to January 1952/3. The speaker was either Yahaya Adda or Abba Maikwaru, but a confused typist has rendered it impossible to tell.

However, even this does not imply a rejection of the monarchical model – the same speaker went on to praise the Emirs of former times for being stronger. (It was a common refrain of Aminu Kano's that only the Sultans of Sokoto who succeeded Atiku (reg. 1837-1842) had been oppressors.[536]) The speaker emphasised that the party did not want to create a rebellion (*tawaye*) which suggests the term 'revolutionary', often applied to NEPU, can only be used in a metaphorical sense.

Although he had wide experience of Nigeria, Zukogi described himself as dedicated 'to the cause of Nupeland'[537] and his activities were overwhelmingly concentrated on that part of the country. However, like the rest of his party members, he was proud to be a northerner and a Nigerian. Although the NPC tried to claim Northern nationalism as their own, and alleged that NEPU were trying to sell the North to southerners, NEPU was clearly a pro-North organisation, which urged 'all patriotic Northerners'[538] to vote for it. Alkasum Abba argues that while the Action Group was a regional party by design, NEPU was a regional party by default. 'The NEPU had to be a regional party in order to fight the NA notables in the NPC ... This enabled the party to take up issues with the colonial government and the NPC without being ... accused of pursuing a southern agenda'.[539] If that was the tactic, it failed. NEPU's continued link to the NCNC meant that such accusations were constant.

In calling on its followers to 'liberate Northern Nigeria' by joining the 'battle for freedom', however, the NEPU brand of nationalism did not juxtapose the interests of North and South. As one of their newspaper articles put it: 'Once the NEPU candidates have won the seats in the North, as surely we will, the Southerners need not be afraid of our majority in the central legislature'.[540]

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[536] Malam Aminu said as much to a crowd at Chafe in 1952. See WJBHAC: Argungu 1/13/52 'NEPU'.

[537] WJBHAC: 'Divisional Intelligence Reports'. Abubakar Zukogi to DO Bida, 24/3/1955.

[538] Mohammed Giwa 'The Condition of the Northern Commoner' in *West African Pilot* 13/6/1951, quoted in Alkasum Abba (ed.) *The Politics of Principles in Nigeria: The Example of the NEPU* (Zaria: Centre for Democratic Development Research and Training, 2000) p23.

[539] Alkasum Abba 'The Significance of the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) in the Politics of Nigeria 1950-1960' (PhD Zaria, 2000) p296.

[540] Mohammed Giwa 'The Condition of the Northern Commoner'.

However, NEPU members were not immune from bigotry. According to the District Officer of Bida it was urged, at the 1953 party conference 'that Northerners should be encouraged to become L. B. A.s [Licensed Buying Agents – see Chapter Two] & that Syrians – whose numbers should be lessened – should be forced to employ them'.[541] Sharwood Smith, as Governor of the Northern Region, alleged that NEPU derived much of its financial support from blackmailing the Syrian and Lebanese communities.[542]

Alkasum Abba writes that 'the spirit of NEPU survives because Nigerian society still requires that spirit of courageous opposition to all forms of oppression and exploitation'. [543] This spirit can be illustrated with a cartoon from the *Daily Comet:*



*Illustration 4: a chief being carried by one of his subjects. Daily Comet* c. 1960, reprinted in *Fitila 4* (1988). I am grateful to Graham Furniss for allowing me to see a copy.

[541] WJBHAC: 'Divisional Intelligence Reports'. Political Intelligence Summary, December to January 1952/3.

[542] PRO: CO554/116 'Governor's Reports – Northern Region'. Governor to Secretary of State for the Colonies 18/5/1955.

[543] Alkasum Abba (ed.) *The Politics of Principles in Nigeria: The Example of the NEPU* (Zaria: Centre for Democratic Development Research and Training, 2000) pxvi.

But was NEPU all about dissent? The party has often been defined as anti-authority, as if this was the limit of its capabilities.[544] Yet the party had a good record when, gradually, its members began to be elected to town councils in various areas in the North.[545] Zukogi himself was a member of Bida Town Council at the time he was sent to prison in 1953.

**5.2 NPC and the Idoma**

The Idoma people reside in the south-eastern corner of the old Northern Region, in what was once Benue Province. The British began to occupy the area in 1908, although there were pockets of military resistance as late as 1928. Confounded by the complexity of the mechanisms that the people of the area employed in governing themselves, the British chose instead to use Hausas and Yorubas as headmen until 1919. According to Okpeh O. Okpeh, the rejection of these 'alien' rulers was 'an essential element in the development of the Idoma ethnic consciousness'.[546] Being critical of the way they were being governed forced people to think seriously about how they would like to be governed. The antagonism towards rulers who shared few of their cultural values made them think more about the people who did share those values. With the arrival of the railway and of Christian missionaries, there was a re-appraisal of the boundaries of 'Us' and 'Them', extending people's collective identity beyond the level of the lineage or the village.

Included in the new identity were the speakers of a cluster of eight or nine related dialects, which came to be called the Idoma language. On the periphery of Idoma identity were some groups whose languages could not be classified as 'Idoma'. Excluded were the Igala, Tiv and Jukun peoples who, together with the Idoma, had previously been bundled together by the British in

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[544] The Resident of Niger Province in 1953 expressed a belief that '[NEPU] prefers to remain subversive and opposed to the administration'. WJBHAC: 'Abubakar Zukogi...' Vol I. Resident Niger to Civil Secretary, Northern Region 22/3/1953.

[545] For Discussion of NEPU's role in local government in Zaria, see Yahaya *The Native Authority System.*

[546] Okpeh O. Okpeh 'The Idoma and Minority Group Politics in Northern Nigeria 1944-1960: A Study in an Aspect of the National Question' (PhD Jos, 1994) p167.

the term 'Munshi'. So the rise of Idoma ethnic identity was, as E O Erim has argued, a twentieth-century phenomenon.[547]

As they developed this new identity, Idoma people became more visible to the British. The British gave them recognition in the creation of Idoma Division in 1928, which in turn entrenched Idoma consciousness, by ensuring 'a common territorial area, a common economy, a common transport and communication system ... and a common superior N. A. for the whole of the land'.[548]

World War II had an enormous impact on the division, not least because two thousand Idoma men joined the army. In 1944, the Idoma Hope Rising Union (IHRU) was formed, in the hope of acting as a go-between with the British. In the opinion of Okpeh, the IHRU came out of Idomas' 'conscious realisation of their subordinate status in Northern Nigeria'. However, the British proved uninterested in 'youth' organisations and would not recognise their claim to represent anybody. With IHRU support, Idoma elders asked for the appointment of a paramount chief, who could speak to the British on their behalf, and allow for their representation at the new House of Chiefs. They were sorely disappointed, however, with the man who was appointed as the first Och'Idoma in 1947, because, until his death in 1960, he attempted to consolidate power in his own hands. [549]

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[547] E O Erim *The Idoma Nationality, 1600-1900: Problems of Studying the Origin and Development of Ethnicity* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension, 1981) p32. Erim states that Idoma ethnic consciousness 'is a modern phenomenon which did not predate British rule'.

[548] Okpeh 'The Idoma' p173.

[549] As Magid puts it, 'reforms adopted between 1947 and 1960, ostensibly to encourage efficiency and democratic rule, were in fact manipulated by him to benefit the centre'. (Alvin Magid 'Political Traditionalism in Nigeria: A Case-Study of Secret Societies and Dance-Groups in Local Government' in *Africa* XLII [IV] October 1972, p295.) The same criticism was levelled at the Tor Tiv, appointed a few years earlier. The two cultures have a shared hostility towards anyone who appears power-hungry. It has been said that 'Tiv egalitarianism is more concerned with whittling everyone down to the same size than with giving everyone the same chance' (Laura and Paul Bohannen, quoted in Dudley *Parties and Politics* p59) and much the same seems to be true of the Idoma. This made it difficult for the NPC to rely on the success of using 'gateways', as Paden calls them – well-connected individuals who could arrange the right sort of alliances between the most influential people.

The title *Och'Idoma* was invented by analogy with the title accorded to a clan head, *Oche*. While Idoma culture has an aversion to strong chieftaincy, the Oche is an important symbolic figure, who reigns but does not rule. Before his appointment, he goes through a 'symbolic death' where he is hidden for fourteen days and various ceremonies are performed, his belongings are distributed and he loses his personal identity, becoming the 'father of all'. Usefully, this means his normal social obligations to family, clan or lineage evaporate and he can settle matters between clans without bias or favour – in theory at least.[550] The paradox of Idoma chieftaincy, as Magid discerns it, is that, despite its 'proud and vigorous' tradition, the institution was dying out at the dawn of colonial rule. In one district, only two of the fourteen clan-headships were filled when the British took over.[551]

The IHRU was in an odd position. It had supported the appointment of the Och'Idoma and the creation of an Advisory Council the following year, on the assumption that some of its members would gain influential positions. However, the educated few were passed over, in favour of older, but illiterate candidates. The IHRU, now opposed to the Native Authority, found itself in alliance with the District Heads, whose positions had been created during an earlier period of 'reform' and who wanted to avoid losing their authority to a strengthened centre. When national politics entered the division, the NA and Och'Idoma allied themselves with the NPC, while the Idoma Hope Rising Union supported first NEPU, then the UMBC, before petering out in 1960, by which time most of its leaders had been co-opted into other parties.

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[550] Okpeh O. Okpeh 'The Idoma' p112.

[551] Alvin Magid *Men in the Middle: Leadership and Role Conflict in a Nigerian Society* (Manchester: MUP, 1976) p37. Magid (p28) notes that some Idoma clans borrowed traditional titles from the Igala. He also points out that the Idoma's commitment to chieftaincy can be traced back to their contact with the Jukun, the Igala and the Fulani, but that 'Only among the Agala [clan] in southern Idoma and some clans further north is there evidence of state organisation and kingship'.

Alvin Magid began the fieldwork for his fascinating study of 'role-conflict' in Idoma Division in the early 1960s, focusing on the members of the twenty-two district councils. Providing the councils with elected majorities, in accordance with the 1954 NA Law, was intended to 'modernise' local government in the area. However, this was not how everyone saw it.

The political life of Idoma Division was dominated by local concerns and by competition between lineages. Adult males from the different lineages would meet in an assembly known as *ojira*. (In Tiv, the word is *ijir*.) As Magid shows, the public perception of the councils was that they were intended to act as representatives of the *ojira*.

This meant that councillors had conflicting pressures on them. The NA expected them to support 'modern' bureaucracy in the division. The greater part of the Idoma public, however, expected them 'to oppose bureaucratic centralism by spearheading a move to restore the constitutional system as a basis for local government'[552]. They were expected to apply the principles of rotation (which 'checked the concentration of chiefly power in a single unit') and seniority (which 'virtually ensured that the clan head would be too old and infirm to participate actively in political affairs'[553]) to the newly-created posts. This partly explains why 79% of the district councillors appointed in 1962 were serving for the first time.[554]

Few of the district councillors could afford to alienate the Native Authority by remaining outside the NPC. In fact, 89% of them had joined. However, having interviewed all the councillors, Magid found that only 45% could name the Northern Premier, meaning that at least 34% of those who were card-carrying

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[552] Ibid., p21.

[553] Ibid., p38.

[554] *Ibid., pp62-3. There were other reasons for councillors leaving, such as the pressure of* being a councillor and a self-employed farmer at the same time (which all of them were).

members of the NPC did not know the name of their own party leader.[555] Such astonishing figures automatically raise doubts about how the questions were put, or how they were translated – but, incontestably, the Division's NPC was not a very active institution, even in Oturkpo town. Branches were practically invisible outside election time.

Of greater importance were the organs of civil society, such as secret societies and dance groups, which, together with the clan head and assembly, had historically played a part in the exercise of authority. The recreational aspect of these organisations involved staging plays, singing and beer-drinking – but they also contributed members to an ad-hoc constabulary with the power to enforce the decisions of the clan head and assembly. Often this was through the threat of mystical sanction. Magid cites the example of a tax collector who was having trouble with a recalcitrant farmer. He approached a secret society with a *humble request for help and a supply of beer. The secret society placed a* masked figure outside the farmer's house. His wife refused to set foot outside the house for fear that the power of the mask would make her barren and persuaded her husband to pay his tax.[556]

A large majority of district councillors appointed in 1962 were members of at least one secret society or dance group. These groups often took the initiative when organising the nomination of district councillors through the *ojira*. Any aspirant with a serious chance of success would have secured the support of senior members of the *ojira* before the assembly met. He would not declare his own candidacy, for fear of being thought immodest, but would wait for his name to be put forward by others. 'After much acrimonious debate, sometimes accompanied by scuffling, the lineage assembly usually managed to reduce the intensity of conflict between groups by establishing a schedule of rotation',

[555] Almost half claimed not to know of Bello – yet 86% could name Eastern Premier Michael Okpara.
[556] Magid 'Political Traditionalism' p302.

notes Magid.[557] However, the schedule would often have to be renegotiated before each election.

Successful candidates reported that the reason they had been selected was a) to enhance the prestige of their lineage and b) to work for the restoration of chieftaincy, gerontocracy and democracy. Only six of the councillors suggested that they had been selected because they would work to bring roads, pipe-borne water or schools to the area.[558]

Nonetheless, the councillors were overwhelmingly in favour of western schooling. It had come into the area comparatively late, with the arrival of Methodist and Catholic missionaries after the First World War. Frustratingly, for the missionaries, the Idoma were enthusiastic about learning to read and write, but indifferent towards the new religion. Among the members of the new district councils investigated by Magid, 58% rejected Christianity out of hand, while most of the 41% who called themselves Christians attended church less than once a month. Yet 82% of the councillors gave a ringing endorsement to mission education.[559]

How did the NPC secure electoral success? First, through alliance with the Native Authority, which could wield considerable influence. However, the NA was still dependent on civil society to maintain law and order – and these were often conservative organisations containing elements hostile to the Native Authority's centralist policies. Yet popular opposition to the NA did not translate into votes for the NPC's rivals. The IHRU seemed rudderless as its most effective members deserted it for the major parties.[560] The Idoma public did not

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[557] Magid *Men in the Middle* pp87-9.

[558] Ibid., p92.

[559] Ibid., pp65-6. The remaining 1% represents the single Muslim councillor among the total of 71.

[560] In the opinion of one of Okpeh's informants, the IHRU by 1955 represented only a narrow class of interests among the Idoma elite. Their aims had 'ceased to be anything but the best possible selfish defence of their interests'.

warm to these parties[561]: the NCNC and the AG were perceived as Igbo- and Yoruba-dominated, and the prospect of a Middle Belt state held out by the UMBC seemed tainted with the possibility of Tiv domination. The idea of the Middle Belt did not become as firmly engrained as it would have been without continual disputes over land between the Idoma and their Tiv neighbours.

The Idoma were not receptive to calls for unity with their neighbours in the Province, such as the Tiv, or the Jukun. This was despite the role that their ancestors had played in one of the great Sudanic empires, the Kwararafa Confederacy. When the leader of a Jukun 'tribal' union put forward a case that 'brothers from the same origin (who had raided and devastated Northern Nigeria before the advent of the British)' ought to unite and 'revive [their] past heritage', members of the Idoma Hope Rising Union IHRU were completely unmoved.[562]

If even localised alliances were problematic, how could nationalists promote Northern identity in the area? The answer seems to be that they did not – and that support for NPC was on the grounds of pragmatism rather than principle. This problem is not unique to Nigeria. If we accept that elites put forward nationalist ideas in the hope that they are popularly accepted – that they achieve resonance – then we must accept that the scope for success is limited by the cultural materials available. Anthony Smith points out that this is a perennial problem for the pro-European lobby. Of nationalism in general, Smith says that

> in order to appeal even to some of the population that the elites wished to mobilise, they had to select elements that possessed some meaning and significance for that particular population ... it was – it is – no good trying to rouse

[561] Idoma culture stresses the political necessity of conciliation. Party politics has often been regarded as something of a nuisance because of the way it 'spoils the land'. Tiv people often express the same sentiment in the same terms. Magid reports a widespread hostility to Igbos in particular, which the NPC could have taken advantage of.

[562] Magid *Men in the Middle* p29.

> the English with appeals to French history or Russian literature or German football![563]

For the NPC in Idomaland, this could have been a more serious difficulty than it in fact turned out to be. Trying to garner political support by invoking the triumphs of Usman Dan Fodio would have been a bad move: the collective memory of the Idoma people is scarred by what they call *Efu Onya*, the horse war – that is, slave raiding expeditions originating in the emirates. In the end, convincing people that their destiny was inextricably linked with that of their fellow northerners was unnecessary. Idomaland's isolation meant that few people in the division could follow national or regional politics in any case. Local issues, therefore, took centre stage.

### 5.21 NPC and the Idoma: conclusions

The new system was, as we have seen, being used according to old principles. We could speak of 'tradition' meeting 'modernity'; yet that would do a disservice to centuries of history, and historic changes. Even a project such as this, which covers only a twenty-year period of the twentieth-century, needs to be mindful of such change. In a lecture delivered at Ahmadu Bello University in the late 1970s, Y B Usman praised Tesemchi Makar's PhD thesis about political changes undergone by the Tiv people.[564] He mentioned, as examples, the *Tar* system, which involved lineages controlling defined areas of land, and the *Tor Agbande* (drum chief) system – with the economy in the hands of a few wealthy individuals and the *ijir* assembly relegated to an advisory role. The details of these systems do not concern us here – but Usman's next question is most pertinent:

> Which of these systems constitutes the traditional Tiv political system therefore? Is it the earlier one? Or is it the elders or the *Tor Agbande*? Which one? Is it a combination of both? If you say that the traditional Tiv political system was simply one which the Tiv people lived under at any time, and you just collect all of them together and say this is it, you'll have to include the political system around the Aku of Wukari [i.e. Kwararafa], the political system around the emirs of Muri and around the Arago rulers of Doma and Keana, as

[563] Anthony D Smith 'The poverty of anti-nationalist modernism' in *Nations and Nationalism* 9 (3) 2003 p362.

[564] Since published as Tesemchi Makar *The History of Political Change Among the Tiv in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension, 1994).

> all these had Tiv people involved in them. My argument is that it does not make much sense to talk of the traditional Tiv political system in a historical sense, because the Tiv have gone through many fundamental political transformation[s]. One of these transformations was their emergence as a people.[565]

The emergence of the Idoma as a people was only one episode among the massive upheavals which occurred in colonial Nigeria. It touched peoples' lives and affected the way they lived and was, in this sense, more than mere ethnic myth-making. However, the Idoma Hope Rising Union missed out on its big chance to be the focus of attention in 1958, when its leader said that, lacking a clear popular mandate, he would be unable to speak before the Willink Commission, which was examining the fears of minorities such as the Idoma. *The Commission, the evidence presented before it, and its findings, form the* subject of the next section.

### 5.3 The Middle Belt, the North and Nigeria

This chapter concerns alternatives to Northern nationalism. The most important of these is the idea of the Middle Belt, which was essentially a reaction against the One North worldview. Early alumni of Katsina College had come to think of the Northern Provinces as 'Us' and the South as 'Them'. Yet, at an emotional level, 'Us' had, in essence, meant Muslims who bore allegiance to the Caliphate or Bornu; the peoples who did not practise Islam were anomalous to this. With the birth of Northern nationalism, 'Us' expanded to include Christians and pagans as fellow Northerners – yet still, this was something of an afterthought. It was natural that many of the latter should resent their status within the Northern Provinces and the new political scene. Some chose to reject the whole North-South paradigm and focus instead on an

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[565] Y B Usman 'History, Tradition and Reaction: The Perception of Nigerian History in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries' (Lecture, delivered at Ahmadu Bello University 27/4/1977. A copy of the paper is retained by the Northern History Research Scheme Library at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria). In the same paper, Usman argues against the idea of a 'Hausa' system of government, as there were Hausas who never lived under *sarauta* (kingship), let alone an emirate. Even within the emirates, we cannot afford to generalise: Usman describes five different systems of government in the history of Katsina, none of which can exclusively claim to be 'traditional'. The title of Sarkin Katsina is today described as such, but 'there was nothing traditional about it in the year 1470'. He clarifies this by saying: 'I am not saying traditions do not exist. Every political system, every epoch has what it calls "tradition" in order to sustain itself. What is unfortunate is that in the present epoch we are by confusing "traditions", trying to ossify history'.

imaginary 'belt' or 'zone' running across the middle of Nigeria from east to west, with a 'far North' above it and the South below.

The phrase 'Middle Belt' had been in use since before the Second World War.[566] However, for the Middle Belt to function as a social and political *identity*, this geographical expression needed to be infused with ideas that could form the basis of strong empathy among the area's people. These ideas needed to be emotive. They needed to bind together an educated elite. Most importantly, they needed to resonate with a significant proportion of the population. What cultural materials were available for this purpose? In short, what did people have in common?

There was no language binding the various peoples of the area together – or, if there was, it was Hausa. There was no indigenous set of cultural values to which a majority subscribed, nor a pre-existing 'national history' to draw on. What people had in common was a shared hostility towards the Emirates – which is perhaps why the prototype Middle Belt political party, founded in 1950, was called the Non-Muslim League (NML). Matthew Hassan Kukah says that this organisation and its successors, 'were expressions of *otherness, We are not You,* in the same way that the NPC was a way of saying *We are not You, Southerners*'.[567]

The NML was superseded by the Middle Zone League (MZL), founded on the initiative of the Birom Progressive Union (BPU) the following year. The MZL quickly became affiliated to other 'tribal' unions of the lower north, but lost a lot of support by forging an alliance with the NPC in 1953. A rival organisation emerged, known as the Middle Belt People's Party (MBPP), inspired, in large part, by the Tiv Progressive Union (TPU).

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[566] Sharwood Smith says that the expression came into use at some point between the First and Second World Wars. Sharwood Smith *But Always as Friends* p332.

[567] Matthew H Kukah 'Orphans in Paradise: Setters vs Indigenes and the Politics of Belonging in Nigeria', paper delivered at the Seminar on Ethnic, Religious Peace and Harmony in the Northern States at Arewa House 27/3/2002.

Efforts to bring the two parties back together stalled until after the 1954 Federal Election. When the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) was formed, in June 1955, the movement was reunited, including all five of its House of Assembly members. But the unity was always fragile. When the party leader, Pastor David Lot, arranged a parliamentary alliance with the NPC without the consent of the rest of his party, there was another split. At a party meeting in Jos, Lot and his deputy, Patrick Dokotri, were 'expelled', and new leaders elected. Lot, now a cabinet minister, refused to accept the decision, insisting that he was still the UMBC president. There were now two parties calling themselves UMBC.

The UMBC never lost its fissiparous tendencies. By early 1957, there were at least three factions of the party.[568] However, the UMBC Conference held in January, after protracted wrangling[569], ended by acknowledging J S Tarka as president. Tarka went on to forge an alliance with the Action Group (AG) that was far more stable than the earlier pacts with NPC.[570] Central to the new alliance was a trade-off: UMBC would withdraw their claims on Ilorin and Kabba Divisions as part of the envisaged Middle Belt State – leaving this issue as a straight fight between the Northern and Western Regional Governments – and the AG would provide financial support and political expertise, which became most important when the Minorities Commission arrived.[571]

The Commission to enquire into the fears of Minorities and the means of allaying them was appointed in September 1957. It was chaired by Henry

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[568] John N Paden *Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto: Values and Leadership in Nigeria* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1986) p348.

[569] See Dudley *Parties and Politics* pp97-8.

[570] Lot and Dokotri were not allied with the NPC at the time of the Commission's visit. Indeed, the latter appeared before the Commission to accuse the Northern Regional Government of discrimination against Christians. The Minister of Health, Ahman Galadiman Pategi, who reported on the proceedings to the Executive Council, said that Dokotri had shown his 'mendacity' and that Lot 'displayed none of the drive or fervour which one would expect from a leader and founder of his party. As a political force in the future', the Galadima continued, 'he can probably be disregarded. He gave every impression of being a weak and unconvincing man'. Lot resigned from politics before the 1959 Federal Election. NAK: Premier's Office: PM 17 'The Minority Commission' Ahman Galadiman Pategi memorandum to Executive Council, Northern Region 17/3/1958.

[571] See PRO: CO957/4: 'Willink Commission Evidence day 9 onwards'. The AG intended to campaign for these two divisions to be incorporated into its Western Region heartland, while the remainder of Ilorin and Kwara Provinces could go to the Middle Belt.

Willink QC, the former MP for Croydon who had been Minister of Health during the war. The other members were Gordon Hadow, Philip Mason and John Burt Shearer. Their task was to 'ascertain facts' about the fears of minorities, to suggest any constitutional safeguards that might allay those fears and, if there was no reasonable alternative to the creation of new states, to re-define borders. The commission heard a great deal of evidence, covering many topics. Our only concern in this section, though, is the concept of the Middle Belt, as it represented a significant alternative to the NPC's One-North worldview.

**5.31 The NPC opens its case**

Having visited major towns in the South, the Commission arrived in Kaduna on the first day of February 1958. Welcoming the Commission, the Premier expressed the hope that its members would take time to appreciate the North's way of life, and the 'many and varied factors which serve to unite us'. In a carefully crafted speech, the Premier praised Lord Lugard, adding that the British were 'the people who began to weld the North into the unified whole which it now is', before attacking separatist tendencies as being 'inspired solely from political motives by parties whose main interest, and virtually whose total interest, lies outside this Region'. He ended with soothing words about religious tolerance, asking the Commission to 'ponder the high place which Christians have always had in the respect and regard of the followers of Islam'.

Abba Habib, Secretary-General of the NPC, had rather different ideas about Christianity and Islam. The recently-departed Governor, Sir Bryan Sharwood Smith, had regarded him as something of an extremist, a vocal opponent of missionary work who had been partly responsible for inspiring fear among Christians in the first place.[572] On the day that he spoke to the Commission, Habib knew he had to avoid leaving such an impression on its members and, accordingly, skirted around the subject of religion, concentrating instead on the

[572] Sharwood Smith believed that Middle Belt separatism had been on its way out in 1957, but that 'the crass ineptitude and provocative anti-Mission and rabid pro-Islamic pronouncements of Abba Habib, the [NPC] General Secretary, and his lieutenants have brought the matter alive again'. See PRO: CO554/1841 'Governor's Reports Northern Region'. Governor to Secretary of State for the Colonies 14/3/1957.

practicalities of dismembering the Northern Region. He pointed out that he was from a minority group (a Shuwa Arab, from Dikwa in the Trust Territory of Northern Cameroons), and that many within the proposed region would share his concern that it might be dominated by the Tiv and the Birom. They would be dominant, he said, 'in the sense that they together would provide [one] third of the population in the area. The Igalas who would probably be the third largest group have seen the red light of danger ... and have decisively ... rejected any proposal that they should be part of ... a Middle Belt Region'. Habib went on to discuss the smaller groups. Would they be better off?

> I doubt it. In fact I more than doubt it, I deny it, and it is significant indeed that in the main it is the smaller tribes who, by their association with the party which forms the Regional Government and of which I am the Secretary-General, seek to ensure that the endeavour to establish this Middle Belt State about which they have such qualms, should be defeated.

Later in the day, the Commission heard from D A Ogbadu, a protestant Igala and cabinet member, who pointed out that Christians made up around one-twenty-eighth of the region's population, yet held one seventh of the Ministerial portfolios.[573]

**5.32 The North as a 'race'**

It was important that the Northern Regional Government show its strength throughout the region, and the contribution of men such as Ogbadu was vital to this. Aliyu Makaman Bida also appeared, pointing out that he was chairman of a Committee on Moral Standards in which prominent Northern Nigerian Christians and Muslims were working together, to produce a code of ethical standards acceptable to both religions, while retaining the best parts of 'tribal organisation' and preventing 'the relaxation of tribal sanctions which often attended upon the work of the missionary societies'.

The Sarkin Minna spoke to the Commission on 5 February. He claimed that years of intermarriage between the Fulani, Hausa, Nupe and Gwari peoples

[573] PRO: CO957/4 'Willink Commission: evidence days 1-8'.

had 'fused them into a common race'.[574] Tafawa Balewa had a similar point of view. In a private meeting, he told Henry Willink that 'the tribes in the Northern Region were so mixed through intermarriage and a common language that they had to a large extent, lost their separate identities. The Hausas had ceased to exist as a tribe and it was difficult to find a pure Fulani. The entire people of the North could now be said to be of one blood'.[575]

Implicit in all the above statements is the belief that the area covered by the Northern Region had once been home to a large number of self-contained and self-reproducing 'tribes', which had begun to interact only recently. In this imagined past, the North was like a series of paint-pots, of different sizes and colours. First under the Fulani and now under the British, the pots had been knocked over and the colours were beginning to mingle; in time, they would be fully mixed.

There are a number of problems with this way of seeing Northern Nigeria. First, ethnic identities had never been internally stable. There had never been agreed criteria for what makes someone a member of a given ethnic group. Moreover, the focus of people's loyalty was more often to the family, the lineage, or the town that to a wider 'ethnicity'. Some identities had a greater internal stability than others: the Fulani, for instance, have been spread right across West Africa for centuries and are, despite their diversity, still identifiable as Fulani; Idoma identity, by contrast, coalesced during the twentieth century. Yet such a distinction is not always helpful, because it ignores the way that each generation redefines itself. However rooted in the past, ethnicity exists for the present – hence Peter Ekeh's assertion that 'Nigerian ethnic groups have their socio-political meaning only in terms of the development of Nigeria'[576].

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[574] Ibid. This echoed the sentiments of the Premier as expressed in 1954 when he became NPC leader. Elaborating the aim expressed in the party's constitution, to 'make all tribes living in the region feel that they are one and the same people', Bello had commented that 'the people of the North are in fact already one on account of inter-marriages between the tribes'. See S I Nchi and S A Mohammed (eds.) *Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto: His Thoughts and Vision in His Own Words* (Makurdi: Oracle, 1999) p11.

[575] PRO: CO957/6 'Willink Commission Private Discussions'.

[576] See Chapter Three, Appendix 2.

A second problem is that, however coherent the identity of a people, a people cannot exist in isolation. The paint metaphor mentioned above is a false analogy because there had never been separate pots to begin with. The general historic trend in the North had been for ethnically heterogeneous states without an exclusive 'national' character[577]. The same is true right across Nigeria, and elsewhere.

The third problem with this worldview is the arbitrary choice of the North's regional borders as the limits within which inter-marriage and the fusion of a 'common race' were taking place. To be sure, the existence of an autonomous Northern Region encouraged the circulation of people and ideas within the region more than outside it (as had the way the British administered the North) but there continued to be constant interaction between different peoples across borders, regional and national. This is an objection that may be raised against Ekeh, as quoted above. To say that Nigerian ethnic groups *can only* make sense within the Nigerian context is to attribute unquestioned primacy to Nigeria as a nation-state – something it has never fully achieved.[578]

**5.33 The Lawyers**

The UMBC's alliance with the Action Group meant that it gained access to some of Nigeria's most skilled lawyers, including Rotimi Williams and Remi Fani-Kayode (who went on to become Deputy Premier of the Western Region). The North's only qualified lawyer, Abdul Razaq, represented the Northern Regional Government. The NCNC applied to be represented as a 'political' minority by Dingle Foot QC (brother of the former Chief Secretary to the Government, Hugh Foot, and the future leader of Labour Party, Michael Foot) but were told that the Commission would only hear from 'ethnic and religious minorities of a permanent nature'.[579]

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[577] To quote Bala Usman yet again, '[Past political leaders] never sat down to say that this is the Edo thing, this is the Torodbe thing and therefore this is what we should do. They were concerned with the problems that faced them, as a people, as a class, at a particular time, and they dealt with them'. Usman 'History, Tradition and Reaction'.

[578] Ekeh himself has made statements to this effect more recently. See www.ngex.com/personalities/voices/politics.htm.

[579] NAK: Premier's Office: PM17 'The Minorities Commission'. It was after the NCNC were ruled out of the Willink Commission's investigations that the Northern Regional Government

### 5.34 The Ilorin Issue

The issue of Ilorin generated a lot of noise and controversy. Ilorin Division was within the Northern Region, but was claimed by the Western Regional Government, because it was a Yoruba-speaking area. However, others claimed Ilorin was rightfully part of the North, because an Emirate, loyal to Sokoto, had been established there in the nineteenth century, after the Governor of Ilorin, Afonja, had broken away from the Ọyọ Empire. Afonja was able to secure victory for the rebels only after the deployment of Hausa and Fulani mercenaries, whose services were procured with the assistance of Mallam Alimi, a Fulani cleric. When Alimi died, however, Afonja found himself forced out of power by Alimi's son, Abdulsalam, who then appealed to Sokoto for recognition as the Emir of Ilorin. He gained this recognition around 1829. The town had, in effect, been taken out of the Empire of Ọyọ and into that of Sokoto.

All this, claimed Fani-Kayode, was immaterial as far as the Commission was concerned. What was important was that Ilorin's people were Yorubas. The first Emir, he said 'had come as a foreigner to rule a portion of Yoruba-land in place of the former indigenous ruling house ... The Emirs had [since] been absorbed as Yorubas. The succession of William of Orange to the throne of England had not meant that England had become Dutch'.[580]

Yet the people of Ilorin's status as Yorubas did not mean that they automatically wanted to be part of the Western region. The chairman of Illofa Town Council insisted to the Commission that 'When his people heard about the merger in the newspapers and on the radio they came to him and said that those who

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dropped its claim against the Eastern Regional Government, for the return of Ete District, which had been transferred from the Northern Provinces to Nsukka Division in 1924. There was a population of Igalas in the area who, it was said, would prefer to be governed from Kaduna. It seems that the government had been keeping the Igala issue to use as rhetorical ballast, if claims were made against it from the East. Similarly, the government made a claim against the West for the transfer of part of Benin Province which was largely populated by Igbirras. However, when it became clear that the Willink Commission would recommend that Ilorin stay in the North, the NPC chose not to press the issue before the Commission. See *Report* Appendix IV and PRO: 'Willink Commission'.

[580] PRO: CO957/4 'The Willink Commission Evidence days 1-8'.

wanted the merger were the people who had in the past taken his people as slaves and sold them to the Portuguese'.[581]

The Northern Regional Government, in a written submission, pointed out that 'when the British Government finally established the protectorate over the whole of Northern Nigeria in 1903, the Fulani administration was the basis on which it recast and rebuilt the Administration of the Northern Region, and the Fulani administration beyond any shadow of doubt included the whole of what is now Ilorin Emirate'.[582] Abdul Razaq, who came from Ilorin, made a rather more prosaic and (one suspects) more important point: 'In the Northern Region they [Ilorin people] occupied a prominent place and their children had no difficulty in securing posts, even with only a standard VI education. In the Western Region competition would be much more keen'.[583]

The Commission were not convinced that a majority of Ilorin's inhabitants were in favour of joining the West. Even a vote for the Ilọrin Talaka Parapọ (Ilorin Commoners' Party) was not necessarily a secessionist vote, they argued, since the ITP was overwhelmingly concerned with local issues (which, for reasons of space, do not come under scrutiny in this project) and had allied with the Action Group for largely pragmatic reasons. The Commission recommended that a plebiscite be held only if the 1958 Constitutional Conference agreed on the matter. It did not.

### 5.35 The Middle Belt

Representing the AG and UMBC at the same time was a tough brief for Fani-Kayode. The former party wanted him to establish that political and ethnic divisions ought ideally to mirror each other (as in an imagined past) and that religion was an irrelevance. The latter relied on religious differences to define their proposed new state. This meant that, when discussing Ilorin, he insisted that the 'ethnic basis for the creation of states in the Federation had already

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[581] Ibid.

[582] WJBHAC: *[Secret] Memorandum to the Minorities Commission from the Government of the Northern Region of Nigeria* (Kaduna: Government Printer, 1958) p6.

[583] PRO: CO957/4 'The Willink Commission Evidence days 1-8'.

been accepted', because it suited his argument – Ilorin and Kabba were clearly 'Yoruba' Divisions. However, it was almost impossible to find any ethnic criteria that encapsulated the whole of the envisaged Middle Belt. Fani-Kayode, when later challenged to define which people would belong to the Middle Belt State, reverted to religious distinctions, saying that its citizens would be those who were commonly referred to as 'pagans' or 'kafirai'.

There were also attempts to define the Middle Belt in other terms, however. For instance, when Fani-Kayode began speaking to the Willink Commission, he claimed that the North was divided into the 'true North' and the 'false (banza) North'. *Banza North* sounded like a more authentic, less clinical expression than *Middle Belt*, implying an older distinction at work. It was inspired by the historic dichotomy between the 'Hausa Bakwai' (the original seven Hausa states) and the 'Banza Bakwai' (the seven 'illegitimate' states that followed) found in the legend of Bayajida. The legend and its importance will be discussed in the next chapter, but it should be noted here that the *Banza Bakwai* and the Middle Belt are two very different ideas. Fani-Kayode did not mention the *Banza North* after this.

Efforts to define the Middle Belt by ethno-linguistic criteria could never be comprehensive. Mr O M Rewane, speaking for the UMBC-AG alliance, told the Commission that it was not true that the Middle Belt would be 'a chaos of tribes chaotically delineated. It was possible,' he said, 'to classify them under four main groups':

1. The Nupe group. This included the Nupe, Igarras, Igalas, Idomas.
2. The Tiv group. This included Tiv and such 'associated tribes' as the Jukuns and Aragos.
3. The Biroms, classified together with the Ankwes, Angas and Eggons.
4. Non-Fulani in Benue Province, including the Bachamas, Chambas and Bulawa.

Abdul Razaq objected to this classification, saying that each of these 'groups' contained numerous languages and dialects.[584] 'In the Middle Belt area,' he said, 'there was still tribal consciousness but there was no desire for tribal government.' To prove his point, Razaq, relying on the old assumption that a chief's opinion always reflected that of his people and vice-versa, called the Sarkin Nassarawa Eggon, the Sarkin Wamba, and the Sarkin Mada (all chiefs in Akwanga Division) to speak to the Commission. None of them said anything in favour of the Middle Belt region.

J S Tarka also spoke of the four 'national' groups having 'intermarried and traded together' before the arrival of the British. 'The idea of the four National Groups was not his own,' he said. He had read about it in many books (none of which were specified) and 'his grandfather and his father had told him about it.'

### 5.36 Women and the Middle Belt

Women were not specifically covered by the Commission's remit, but Willink took note of the fear that, following independence, Christian and pagan women might find themselves forced to adopt the more restrictive Islamic customs, such as purdah. Fani-Kayode had suggested that 'before long, the veil would be enforced even in the Middle Belt area if it did not become a separate state'.[585] The report acknowledged that there was a wide range of attitudes towards women across the region, but suggested that increasing liberalism within the Islamic world would spread to Northern Nigeria and that, far from increasing, restrictions on women's freedom of movement would lessen with time. The report gave no explanation for this prediction. The rationale underlying the findings was that modernisation would inevitably alter the values of Africa and the Islamic world towards those of Western Europe.[586] This

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[584] The Commission mistakenly believed that Rewane had claimed that the Middle Belt could be administered using four languages, while Abdul Razaq claimed that each of the four groups contained 150 languages (this was either a slip of the tongue or a wild exaggeration). To settle the matter, the Commission listened to a recording of a lecture by J H Greenberg, which suggested that there were thirty to forty languages on the Jos Plateau alone.

[585] PRO: CO95974 'Willink Commission Evidence days 1-8'.

[586] *Nigeria: Report of the Commission appointed to enquire into the fears of Minorities and the means of allaying them* (London: HM Stationery Office, 1958) p59.

seems odd now, both in the light of the present controversy surrounding *shari'a* in the northern states of Nigeria and, more broadly, the apparent persistence (or, often more accurately, reinvention) of traditional values in parts of the world which are on the cutting edge of technology, communications and capitalism. Yet the assumption that, for instance, the veil would be phased out of Islam, to make way for more 'modern' practices, was not uncommon; indeed, there was an unspoken understanding in the political and social debates of the time that this was simply the way the world worked.

The issue of votes for women was barely mentioned by the report, reflecting the scant attention paid to it at the hearings. This was a missed opportunity for the UMBC. It did not seem like a big opportunity at the time – after all, the issue of women's rights was not then as great an international concern as it subsequently became. But the point is that skilled lawyers such as those deployed by the UMBC could have presented what was essentially a case of sex inequality as one of ethnic and religious inequality. When Fani Kayode suggested that Islamic beliefs might be foisted on the Middle Belt, it was easy enough for the Willink Commission to reply that the Regional Government had promised to preserve religious freedom and there was no evidence that it would do otherwise. However, the female franchise, if addressed as a question of religious freedom, would have been harder to tackle. It would have been a simple argument: women could not vote in elections; asked to justify this situation, the NPC almost invariably cited Islam. Was this not, therefore, a case of Islamic values which had *already* been imposed on non-Muslims? Were the ideals of the far North not being pushed onto an unwilling Middle Belt? Of course, such an argument would conveniently ignore those Muslims from the far North who were equally unwilling to accept the exclusion of women on supposedly religious grounds; but the Regional Government was unlikely to draw attention to these dissenters, and such an omission could only strengthen the UMBC position. Thus, it could have been argued that Christian and pagan women were denied the vote, not through their own religious convictions, but through those of their neighbours and that they could only rectify this situation in a Middle Belt state. Yet efforts to gainsay Abdul Razaq's assertion that Northern women did not want the vote – from people such as the Waziri of Jos

and Patrick Dokotri – were insufficiently co-ordinated. As with so much of the UMBC's evidence to the Commission, the arguments seemed under-rehearsed.

Mrs Mary Pricewell, President of the Birom Women's Union[587], for instance, mentioned the female franchise – but she spent more time bemoaning the fact that Birom children were taught Hausa at school. This complaint was unlikely to be sympathetically heard, since Willink had already said positive things about Hausa as a regional language. His eventual report praised Hausa as a unifying influence, believing that other languages would, in time, be used only 'in the home and in the village' and that its use in schools, therefore, should be encouraged.

What Pricewell had said about votes for women was counteracted by the appearance of Mrs H A Deshi of the Angas Progressive Union, who declared that she did not want to vote. In the final report, the Commission concluded that it was unlikely 'that the desire for the vote is widespread among women, *since it is a comparatively new idea for men in the Northern Region*'.[588] By this questionable logic, the issue was sidestepped.

**5.37 The Middle Belt and Islam**

The UMBC's lawyers focused on the idea that, after independence, promotion of religion other than Islam would be an offence. Furthermore, it was suggested, 'Muslim customs would be compulsorily substituted for the indigenous customs of the inhabitants'.[589] No evidence was produced to support this allegation, but complaints were made that Muslims refused, for instance, to eat with non-Muslims and used 'contemptuous expressions' about them. The Commission's report replied that dietary restrictions meant Muslims had to be careful about what they ate before pointing out that: 'as to

[587] The Birom Women's Union was formed in 1952 to improve the status of women in Jos Division and claimed over 1000 members.

[588] *Report* p59.

[589] There were enough non-Muslims on the government's side to neutralise this argument. Fani-Kayode overstated his case somewhat – especially in his suggestion that a caste system would evolve in which non-Muslim groups would be considered 'untouchable'.

expressions of contempt, we do not suppose that they are used only by Muslims, nor is Northern Nigeria the only place where people speak contemptuously of each other'.[590]

On the subject of religious freedom, the report quoted the Regional Government as saying that it had 'no intention of favouring or advancing any religion *at the expense of another*'.[591] This seemingly simple sentence obscured the reality of the Government's position, which may be better understood by reference to the Attorney-General's mammoth speech before the Commission. In the midst of the speech's twenty-four pages is a reference to 'criticism of Islam as the official religion of the Northern Region'. Rather than refute the claim that the Northern Region *had* an official religion, the Attorney-General said that:

> The Regional Government can find nothing repugnant to democratic practise [sic] or natural justice in one particular religion being preferred before others as the "official religion" of a Region. There are ample precedents for this, not least being the Established Church of England.[592]

The Northern Regional Government apparently took the view that, since neither Christianity nor 'Animism' were materially disadvantaged by not being the official religion, it was not 'at the expense of another [religion]' to favour Islam in this way. Here was a possible line of attack for the UMBC-AG legal team to pursue – yet it seems that neither they nor the Commission subjected this statement to close scrutiny.

### 5.38 The North's Memorandum and the Willink Report

The Attorney-General's speech was not the only document which the Regional Government submitted to the Willink Commission. It also drew up an impressive secret memorandum, highlighting its main arguments.[593] D J M

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[590] *Report* p59.

[591] *Report* p64. My emphasis.

[592] Attorney-General's speech to the Willink Commission, 27/3/1958 in NAK: Premier's Office: PM 17/S.1 'Commission of Enquiry into Minorities'.

[593] *Memorandum to the Minorities Commission.*

Muffett had been charged with its preparation, and given the title of Special Duties Officer, Minorities Commission.

Some of the most impressive features of the memorandum were the maps suggested by Abubakar Tafawa Balewa.[594] One was dotted with pie charts showing the proportion of the local population whose children were receiving primary education (and only in the South-West was the ratio greater than one in four). Another attempted to map the distribution of religious affiliations across the region, showing very graphically how difficult it would be to separate Muslims and Christians into different states.

Cleverly, the opening page had a quotation from the Bible (Luke 11:17): 'But He, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every Kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth'. As Niels Kastfelt observed, 'The message was clear: Biblical and historical authority was called upon to substantiate the basic point of the Memorandum, namely that the survival of the Nigerian house was dependent upon its unity.'[595] The Commission accepted this viewpoint without reservation, recommending that Ilorin and the Middle Belt remain within the North.

Sometimes, Willink and his colleagues absorbed the opinions of the Government too readily: for instance, they greatly underestimated the partiality of the Native Authorities and *alkalai* towards the NPC and their supporters. The Willink Report played down tales of physical intimidation, persecution through the courts and the taxation of minors whose parents supported an opposition party. Here, again, the representatives of the Middle Belt could take some of the blame for not presenting their evidence properly. The Commission took the view that, since the NPC clearly supported the existing order, it was small wonder that the party enjoyed the support of people in the employ of Native Authorities, judges and policemen included. As to fears that, once the

[594] NAK: Premier's Office: PM 17 'The Minority Commission'. Abubakar Tafawa Balewa to Ahmadu Bello 1/10/1957.

[595] Niels Kastfelt *Religion and Politics in Nigeria: A Study in Middle Belt Christianity* (London: British Academic Press, 1994) p156.

British had gone, the NAs would find themselves under the thumb of central government, the Commission referred to the statements of the Premier, including his promise of 'complete freedom of action' for responsible NAs. 'These are the declared views of the Government; so long as they proceed in this spirit, the fears of minorities are groundless,' the report observed. 'It is difficult to suppose that any constitutional provision will force a government to act in a particular spirit if it is determined to do otherwise'.[596]

The report acknowledged that Muslims were keen to convert as many people as possible, but denied that this was any threat to Christians. 'Islam is a dogmatic and proselytising religion – but not the only one', it said.[597] Middle Belt campaigners had failed to back up the suggestion that the regional government put pressure on chiefs to convert to Islam, or that Christians were illegally obstructed in their efforts to build churches, or that restrictions on public preaching in Muslim areas were less than reasonable. They also failed to push home some of their advantages. For instance, no one pointed out the contradiction between the constitutional right to change religion that was being discussed before the Commission[598] and the strict ban on Muslims converting to another religion, enforced by the shari'a.

The Commission also took the view that support for a Middle Belt State in Niger and Ilorin Provinces was all but non-existent. Ahmadu Bello's closing speech had said as much. 'If the areas which positively showed that they favoured a new Region were shaded onto a map they would look not like a belt so much as a bikini, that is to say, like something that is more conspicuous by its absence than by its presence'.[599] Perhaps this is why the UMBC was never able to meet the Commission's repeated requests for a map of the proposed state. The map inside the report was based on what the Commission heard over some weeks and involved a certain amount of guesswork. The

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[596] *Report* p63.

[597] *Report* p65.

[598] The Commission recommended Nigeria enshrine the right to change religion in its constitution, along with most of the rest of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

[599] NAK: Premier's Office: PM 17.S1 'Commission of Enquiry into Minorities'.

*Commission observed that UMBC policy appeared to have fluctuated during* that time.

Was the battle un-winnable from the start? The basic message of the Willink Commission – that there was no need for change – was precisely what the Secretary of State for the Colonies wanted to hear. Moreover, the UMBC's desire for a Middle Belt State covering those areas where 'the Northern *System' was less established – i.e. where Christians and pagans predominated* – would be impossible to realise, because religious groups were so widely dispersed. As the commission remarked, 'it is seldom possible to draw a clean boundary which does not create a fresh minority'.[600]

After these words had been published, it became clear that, for the foreseeable future, no Middle Belt State would be created. The UMBC leaders closest to the NPC fell back under its spell, and the mainstream party, under Tarka, got closer and closer to being a mouthpiece for dissent among the Tiv.

**5.39 The Middle Belt, the North and Nigeria: conclusions**

One of the biggest problems for northern nationalists who wanted to use Islam as a part of the national identity was the risk of alienating a substantial, if scattered, minority of Christians. Middle Belt separatists who wanted to use Christianity as a platform for a broader identity ran the same risk with the substantial minority of Muslims in their imagined region – not to mention the 'pagans'. Abubakar Zukogi was reported to have been involved with the Middle Zone League when it started up but he, and others like him, could only have been discouraged as its predominantly Christian character became apparent.[601] We have noted that the Idoma people's collective identity coalesced during the twentieth century in response to both the conditions of colonial Nigeria and

[600] *Report* p87.

[601] See Personality list no 1. 29/9/1953 in WJBHAC: Argungu 1/12/46 'Personality Lists – Undesirable Migrants'. A lot of people belonged to multiple political organisations during what chapter five of this thesis terms 'the open phase' of Northern Nigerian politics, meaning that NPC, MZL, NEPU and others had overlapping memberships. A clear pattern of allegiance did not emerge until late in the 1950s and, even then, did not settle. Over the course of a career, Ibrahim Imam belonged to the NPC, the Bornu Youth Movement (BYM), NEPU, the UMBC and the Action Group (AG).

shared memories of war with Muslims. Other peoples of the Middle Belt went through a similar process. The effects of western education and the clear potential for advancement offered by the new political process were also hugely important to the emergence of Middle Belt identity. Chunun-Logams argues that non-Muslim populations accepted Christianity in the context of an unequal social order, 'in subordination to a conservative Islamic leadership' and that, therefore, Christianity was automatically the basis for Middle Belt identity when it emerged.[602] However, to demonstrate that there was sufficient material for a concerted reaction to Northern identity is not to explain why it happened. At all levels, the potential strength of any irredentist challenge had to be weighed against the reasons why it might be a bad idea. For the most part, these reasons were not cultural but material.

Let us take Northern nationalism as an example. The region which the NPC controlled had ample scope for the development of a national mentality. The party's dominance at the Federal level meant that they could have forced through significant constitutional changes if they so desired. The NPC, therefore, had the means and the opportunity to create a nation-state. What they lacked was motive. Bryan Sharwood Smith wrote that the threats of secession made around the time of the 1953-4 Constitutional Conference were 'in deadly earnest'[603]. However, it seems that the advantages of continued association with the rest of Nigeria were too great. After all, why should the North want to deprive itself of access to the sea, of skilled workers from the South, and the chance to exert remote control over the centre?[604]

Within the Northern Region, Bornu possessed about enough 'national' feeling to demand a separate state – yet the threat was never as serious as it could

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[602] Paul Chunun-Logams 'The Middle Belt Movement in Nigerian Political Development: A Study in Political Identity 1949-1967' (PhD Keele, 1985) p13. There was no single Christian identity as such: numerous missionary movements brought Christianity to numerous populations. Internal divisions within the UMBC tended to reflect this.

[603] Sharwood Smith *But Always as Friends* p275.

[604] Kwanashie suggests that secession, although often mentioned, was 'never seriously consisdered'. See Kwanashie 'One-North' p116.

have been, because the area benefited from the northernization policy and the appointment of prominent Kanuris to high positions (such as Kashim Ibrahim as Regional Governor). Dudley goes so far as to speak of 'Bornu-ization'.[605] Being part of the North was no bad thing for the Middle Belt elites, either, especially as the Northernization policy got into full swing. Like threats of secession in the North, Middle Belt separatism had a tactical element.

While the NPC's nationalism, rooted in an Islamic political discourse, could meet with little success in the non-Muslim areas, the regional government could gain access to such places through whatever Middle Belt-based organisations might be willing to compromise on the issue of a separate state. Many UMBC politicians agreed to provide this link, however much it divided their party.

The Willink Commission neatly summarized the elements which bound most Northerners together:

> There is the faith and the law of Islam; there is a tribal grouping, the combination of the Fulani, the Hausa, the Nupe and the Kanuri ... there is the Hausa language, widely used as a lingua franca; there is a system of administration based on the Emir and a feudal pyramid below him – all these elements fusing to make what may for convenience be called the Northern System'.[606]

To this extent, there had been a Northern System and a Northern identity long before it was named as such and mobilised for political purposes. In the *zamanin siyasa*, the edges of this identity were blurred just enough to allow for acceptance of people who did not necessarily speak Hausa or practise Islam.[607] Yet it did little to embrace or incorporate the values and cultural attributes of such people. Even the efforts of Northern leaders to encourage tolerance of such values were often shot down.

Yet, if the Middle Belt was outside the Northern mainstream, it was always Northern by association. As Chunun-Logams writes: 'While rejecting Islamic

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[605] Dudley *Parties and Politics* p222.

[606] *Report* p52.

[607] This acceptance only went so far. Zaria NPC, for instance, was divided into two, with a *reshen Musulmi* (Muslim branch) and a *reshen Kafirai* (Pagan branch).

society in the context of politics in the North ... M[iddle]-Belt politicians are as much Northern as their counter parts in the Islamic society when it comes to issues on the domination of the North by southerners'.[608]

A week after the Commission first arrived in Lagos, David Muffett had heard some disturbing news, which he passed on to the Premier's Permanent Secretary, Bruce Greatbatch: a group within the Trust Territory of Northern Cameroons was to petition the Willink Commission that it should be included in the Middle Belt State. 'This is rather unfortunate,' he wrote, 'since it does explode the argument which we put forward on unanimity in the Trust Territory in the desire to have closer relations with the parent Region.'[609] Although Muffett believed the problem purely to be a local one (inspired by the Sudan United Mission at Gurumpawo), the issue of the Trust Territory would be of greater concern over the following years. It is to this issue that we turn in the next section.

**5.4 The Northern Cameroons**

In 1922, the League of Nations mandated Britain and France to administer the former German colony of Kamerun[610], giving legal status to an occupation which had taken place in 1915. The larger part of the country went to France, while Britain incorporated two sections of the Cameroons into Nigeria. The Southern Cameroons formed a separate province of its own, while the Northern Cameroons became incorporated into Bornu and Adamawa (to which many of the areas concerned had historically been subject) with a smaller section as part of Benue Province.

Hilly and inaccessible, with an immense variety of languages spoken, the Northern Cameroons were often neglected. Gwoza Division, for instance, (in Dikwa District of Bornu Province) had never been fully understood by the

[608] Chunun-Logams 'The Middle Belt' pxvi.

[609] NAK: 'The Minority Commission'. Special Duties Officer, Minorities Commission (Muffett) to Permanent Secretary to the Premier (Greatbatch) 30/11/1957.

[610] Throughout this chapter, the German colony is referred to as 'Kamerun'. The British-administered areas are referred to as 'the Cameroons', the French-administered area is referred to as 'Cameroun' and the reunified independent state is referred to as 'Cameroon'.

people who bore ultimate responsibility for its administration and, when called upon to deal with a crisis, the British and the Kanuri alike resorted to strong-arm tactics. As late as the mid-1950s, the District Officer of Dikwa, N C McClintock, resorted to old-fashioned methods when dealing with a village whose people were staging a revolt:

> In situations such as this in the past it had been customary to burn the village down. This did nobody much any harm, especially at this time of year when grass for rethatching the huts was plentiful. But this was altogether too drastic a measure in these enlightened days. If reported in the Press at home the deliberate burning of villages would be made to sound too awful for words, for people would not understand that nothing really burned except the thatched roofs and these could be replaced with very little trouble. Moreover Dikwa was in United Nations Trust Territory, and in the United Nations in New York the burning of villages would sound ten times worse. But I knew no other sanction we could use to impose our authority on these people and persuade the other villages not to join them, so finally I agreed to a compromise; we would burn, but only slowly. Tomorrow we would burn seven houses, and we shouted up the names of the owners, reputedly the ring leaders of this business, to the people of Johode on the mountain across the valley. "Burn and be damned", they shouted back.[611]

The story highlights two aspects of the subject. First, that contact between government and people in the remotest areas was often limited to such crude exchanges. Government – African or European – was not principally seen as the provider of education, or of medical services. Government was the destroyer of villages. Second, it illustrates one way in which the Northern Cameroons' status as a UN Trust Territory was considered, but then ignored. (By the time the revolt was over, the whole village had been burned.)

This thesis is not about Cameroon. However, it is hoped that this small section will shed some light on the means that were employed to convince the inhabitants of the Trust Territory that they, too, were Northerners. This only became necessary as independence approached, and they were forced to choose: Cameroon or Nigeria?

Contested areas of land provide some of the most impassioned episodes of any nationalist struggle, taking on a significance which is often out of all

proportion with their size. For a nation which is under imperial rule but fighting for independence, the whole country is, in a sense, contested. For more established nations, however, arguments over boundaries are a test-bed for a people's commitment to the nation, however defined. And yet, in another sense, the very idea of a disputed border is an affront to the concept of the nation, which relies on the illusion that the latter is not the product of human hands. If it is not to be continually challenged, the nation needs to have a definition that is so 'obvious', so widely accepted, that its possible inconsistencies do not form the subject of discussion. One petitioner to the United Nations wrote that 'God was not stupid when he created one Kamerun'.[612] He must have been hoping that his fellow-countrymen shared his viewpoint – or, at least, that the Trusteeship Council (TC) would believe they did. Yet opinions on the other side were equally uncompromising. The phrase 'North for the Northerners' could be, and was, made to include the Northern Cameroons.

None of this seemed to matter until the early 1950s, as the possibility of self-government began to seem less distant. The Commissioner for the Cameroons (ComCam), E J Gibbons, anticipated early on that most people in the Southern Cameroons (a semi-autonomous region from 1954) would wish to be reunited with French Cameroun but did not foresee any problems with the North. 'It appears', he wrote, 'that in the Northern Cameroons public opinion could be expected to remain; unanimously in favour of integration with Nigeria'.[613] If anything, he thought there might be political agitation for Adamaoua (Adamawa in Cameroun) to join Nigeria.

The United Nations paid rather more attention to the way that Britain was meeting its obligations as trustee than the League of Nations had done. There were visits by UN missions in 1949, 1952, 1955 and 1958. After the first of

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[611] N C McClintock *Kingdoms in the Sand and Sun: An African Path to Independence* (London: Radcliffe, 1992) p74.

[612] NAK: ASIII 323 'Petition concerning the Cameroons'. B Tamo to United Nations Trusteeship Council 6/2/1958. Translated from French by the UN.

[613] NAK: 1/36/290 21062 S.10 'Cameroons – General Policy'. E J Gibbons, Commissioner for the Cameroons (ComCam) minute 23/10/1951.

these, concerns began to be raised within the administration about contradictions between British policy and the terms under which the United Kingdom had accepted the United Nations mandate. One senior figure wrote:

> What exactly is our policy? I have found it difficult to reconcile our responsibility [under the terms of the trusteeship] "to preserve the identity of the Trust Territory" with our general policy – which I feel is the obvious and correct one – of treating the areas to all intents and purposes just as any other part of the North ... Sooner or later we shall, however, reach a situation in which we as the Administering Authorities will have to admit that full integration of the Northern Cameroons with their present Nigerian neighbours must take place. If then that is the future we foresee, we should face up to it now. By "facing up to it", I do not mean admitting it in T. C. meetings: it must remain a Security subject and the time is not ripe, but I do mean recognising that that is what we shall have to do, discussing with Comcam, letting Residents know and generally preparing the ground.[614]

Although the British were coy about mentioning this contradiction to the Trusteeship Council, advocates of reunification were not, and the United Nations received a deluge of petitions. The Kamerun United National Congress, for instance, cited British newspaper reports which complained of UN 'interference' in 'their' colonies to show that the Cameroons' status as Trust Territory was not taken seriously.[615]

Meanwhile, the political developments of the 1950s continued apace, affecting the Northern Cameroons as much as anywhere else. In 1951, the final electoral college in Adamawa selected five representatives to the Northern House of Assembly. All of them were Fulani. However, by the next election, in 1954, the NPC would no longer be able to think of the province as a Fulani preserve, because it had been divided up into four divisional colleges, (two of which were entirely within the Trust Territory) each electing a single candidate. This made all the difference. NPC realised that three of the constituencies would be impossible to win without local candidates and quickly set about looking for some.[616] Yola was still a safe seat, and returned Muhammadu

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[614] Ibid. Mr Wright (first name not given) minute 18/4/1951. Another minute, unsigned, agrees that 'to avow our ultimate goal [of incorporation] ... would invite political attack in U. N. O.'

[615] Ibid. Kamerun United National Congress to UN Trusteeship Council 30/10/1951.

[616] Kenneth Post writes that there were areas of the North 'where the people who had only recently come down from the hills were unlikely to vote for the NPC, which appeared to them to represent the forces which they had taken to the hills to avoid.' Kenneth Post *The Nigerian*

Ribadu as expected. The NPC's two new 'tribal'[617] candidates in the two northerly divisions also made it through. However, in one of the Cameroons constituencies, the party was unable to find an indigenous candidate, and indiscipline led to the NPC vote being split by two Fulani aspirants. The victor, a Chamba man, 'was promptly dragged into the Northern Peoples' Congress fold'.[618] The Resident observed that, with 75% of representatives from 'tribal' backgrounds, and 25% Fulani, the results reflected the Province's ethnic make-up.

Nigeria and Cameroun spent the 1950s edging ever closer towards independence. For the latter, the big date was to be 1 January 1960. For Nigeria, it was to be 1 October 1960. After a special session of the United Nations, it was finally agreed in March 1959 that a plebiscite would be held in 1961 to establish the future of British-administered Cameroons. The Secretary of State for the Colonies had already announced that the Her Majesty's Government believed that Northern Cameroons would be better off within Nigeria, but that strict neutrality would be observed.[619] The Northern Regional Government made similar assurances.

Despite these words, it was obvious whose side they were on. The Northern Region Ministry of Information had always encouraged the idea that the Northern Cameroons was part and parcel of Northern Nigeria – even if these attempts were, at times, ham-fisted. For instance, a pamphlet, in Hausa, addressed the educational needs of the area by saying that 'almost 25% of the 300,000 inhabitants are pagans, mired in ignorance and illiteracy'. The publication lauded the regional government's attempts to persuade people to

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*Federal Election of 1959: Politics and Administration in a Developing Political System* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963) p369. Yusuf Turaki, however, refutes the idea that people were living in the mountains out of fear, saying that the mountains and caves in the area which he studied – in the South of Zaria Province – had been inhabited since well before the jihad. See Turaki 'non-Muslim Groups' p30.

[617] This is what the Provincial Annual Report insisted on calling them. N. B., in this context, the Fulani are not 'tribal'.

[618] PRO: CO65787 Administration Reports 1954. Annual Report, Adamawa Province, 1954.

[619] Mamman Zakari Kano 'Social Structure and Leadership: A Study of Rural Political Structures in Mubi, 1809-1976' (PhD Indiana, 1979) p102.

come down from the mountains and settle in the towns, where their children would be able to go to school. 'Before this difficult country can be revitalised, it is necessary, first of all, to join the tribes together', it said. 'Since they are ignorant, and they have never experienced any sort of authority over them before the arrival of the Fulani, it is essential that this be done with the utmost care'.[620] The main theme of the document was how much money was being spent on the area by both government[621] and missions. If it had been intended to convince the few people who could read in Hausa that they had never had it so good, the language would surely have been more sensitive. It is more likely that the pamphlet was intended to instil the ethos of 'progress' into Native Authority functionaries.

Rather than wait until Cameroon had become independent, the United Nations agreed that the North should hold a plebiscite in November 1959. The reason was simply this: it was predicted that support for joining Nigeria, (rather than deferring the decision to a hypothetical 'later date') would be so overwhelming as to render the issue irrelevant. As *Nigerian Citizen* put it, a vote 'could hardly be necessary among a people who spoke without a dissentient voice'.[622] Nevertheless, the paper supported the early plebiscite as a means of settling the issue quickly and quietly. It would soon be one thing less for everyone to worry about.

The government were not alone in this viewpoint. Michael Crowder justified his focus on the Southern Cameroons in an article for *West Africa* magazine by saying that 'The Northern Cameroons has been so completely integrated with the Northern Region that the question of reunification is of no significance

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[620] *Arewacin Kamaru: Kasar Amana Mai Ci Gaba da Arewawcin Nijeriya ke Mulkinta* (Kaduna: Northern Ministry of Information, 1957). My translation. The Ministry's logo, depicting a man in a gown blowing a *kakaki* (the long horn sounded in honour of an emir) is a typical example of Hausa-centred imagery.

[621] The Ministry of Northern Cameroons Affairs (MNCA) had also requested information from the Northern Region Development Corporation (NRDC) about how much money had been spent on the area, with the clear intention of using this information for promotional purposes. See NAK: ASIII.286 'Political Future of Cameroons'. LT Stevenson (NRDC) to Guy Lorrimer (MNCA) 29/1/1958.

[622] *Nigerian Citizen* 15/11/1958.

there'.[623] The local leaders of the NPC – mostly senior figures in the Native Authorities – were similarly confident that a victory could be achieved.

There was great confidence, perhaps because party politics had been so slow to take root in the area. The Kamerun National Democratic Party, for instance, formed its first branch in Yola as late as 1959. NEPU was also a latecomer. Both these parties argued in favour of the second option in the 1959 plebiscite – deferring the decision until a later date – but NEPU differed from the KNDP in one important respect: the argument was not that the voters were not Northerners, or that they should join Cameroon, but that a measure of autonomy could be gained by being 'difficult'. This turned out to be quite right. The electorate, whose knowledge of national political matters was slight, but who knew how overbearing the NA system could be, voted in favour of waiting by 70,546 votes to 42,788.

When the Sardauna heard the news, he was furious, and gave an impromptu speech denouncing the British and accusing them of sabotage. Later on, an Inquiry chaired by the Emir of Yauri found that voters had wanted 'to achieve a better bargaining position by longer separation so as to be able to claim ... a more independent status for the territory'.[624] This seems a fair conclusion. Indeed, a certain amount of dissent had been anticipated.[625]

The Premier's Private Secretary, Bruce Greatbatch, looked into the dissatisfaction and came to the conclusion that the greatest difficulties emanated from Adamawa, where the activities of the NA did not 'encourage the people the Trust Territory to feel that they are members of the Northern Region'.[626] He had heard, for instance, that people from the Trust Territory had

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[623] *West Africa* 3/1/1959.

[624] PRO: CO554/2369 'Reform of Local Government in the Northern Region'. Emir of Yauri to Premier 1/2/1960.

[625] NAK: ASIII.286 'Political Future of Cameroons'. Northern Executive Council minutes of a meeting held 11/6/1959 note that 'discontent in Adamawa was directed against the Adamawa Native Authority rather than against the Regional Government and could be remedied, if necessary, by the establishment of certain small independent units'.

[626] NAK: Premier's Office: 2/4 PM.23.S.4 'Political Developments in the Trust Territory'. Greatbatch to Acting Premier 1/6/1960. According to Mamman Zakari Kano there was abuse

been refused treatment at a dispensary in Uba and refused access to a market in Zomo. Through Greatbatch, the Premier fired off a stern letter of rebuke. The Acting Resident of Adamawa Province ordered an internal inquiry into the complaints, and found them to be untrue. He wrote to the Premier that NA Councillors were 'upset' and feeling 'singled out for persecution'.[627] Regardless of who took the blame, the NAs of Northern Nigeria had to release control of areas within the Trust Territory before independence, so that the Cameroons could remain under British trusteeship for the time being.

After creation of new Native Authorities, the Cameroons prepared for the second plebiscite, and the straight choice: Nigeria or Cameroon? Under such circumstances, none of the Nigeria-based parties could see any tactical advantage in voting against the government's wishes. All the major political parties in the area, including NPC, NEPU, AG, UMBC and NCNC, formed an alliance known as *Jam'iyyar Tarayya Don Haɗuwa da Nijeriya*[628] (Federal Party for Union with Nigeria) which held out the prospect of a separate province for the Cameroons within the North. Also included in this alliance was a group called the Haɓe Party[629], the popularity of which seems to support the view that the 1959 result was, in part, a rejection of the Fulani.[630]

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of power by Adamawa Native Authority, which jailed NEPU, KDP and UMBC supporters and refused them campaign permits. Such measures were strongest in Mubi. See Mamman Zakari Kano 'Social Structure and Leadership: A Study of Rural Political Structures in Mubi, 1809-1976' (PhD Indiana, 1979) p107.

[627] Ibid. Acting Resident of Adamawa Province (Ross) to Premier 20/6/1960 and 1/7/1960.

[628] Mamman Zakari Kano 'Social Structure and Leadership: A Study of Rural Political Structures in Mubi, 1809-1976' (PhD Indiana, 1979) p112.

[629] Possibly related to the Haɓe People's Party, operating elsewhere across Northern Nigeria.

[630] When writing in English, the term *Fulani*, borrowed from Hausa, is used to describe the people who call themselves *Fulbe*, or, in the singular *Pullo*. In their language (Fulfulde) Pullo is to Kado as Jew is to Gentile. That is to say, Kado, and its plural Haɓe, denote non-members of the group. As Usman puts it, explaining his aversion to the hybrid term Hausa-Fulani, 'the *Fulbe* are *Fulbe* because they are not *Haɓe*. A *Pullo* cannot be a *Kado*'. (Usman 'Nigerian Myths and Nigerian Realities' p7.) However, although the word started out as an out-group term, it is now incorporated into Hausa usage, to mean a 'Hausa person who has no Fulani ancestry'. See Paul Newman and Roxana Ma Newman (eds.) *Modern Hausa-English Dictionary* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1977). The term 'Hausa-Fulani' may, therefore, reasonably be used in English to describe a Hausa person who *does* have identifiable Fulani ancestry. In the historiography, the term 'Haɓe states' is used to describe the Hausa kingdoms before they had Fulani rulers. Hausa-Fulani seems adequately to describe the rulers of the present-day emirates (with odd exceptions such as Argungu).

The result on 11 February 1961 was as follows:

Southern Cameroons: 97 741 for Nigeria, 233 571 for Cameroon.
Northern Cameroons: 146 296 for Nigeria, 97 659 for Cameroon.

The South, then, was to join Cameroon. The North would officially become part of Northern Nigeria for the first time.

The result had been achieved without much overt campaigning. In 1959, the Regional Government issued a statement acknowledging 'that it should not participate actively in the campaign preceding the Northern Cameroons Plebiscite' and announcing rules of conduct for NAs and ministers to maintain their neutrality. In the face of these restrictions, a persuasive, yet subtle, form of propaganda presented itself: the cinema. Mobile cinemas had already been touring the North for some years, but now their efforts were focused on the Northern Cameroons. Each time the cinema visited a town or village, the officer in charge submitted a report form, estimating the size of the audience and giving other information. These reports, taken together, may be used to compile statistics, which seem strongly to indicate:

1. That the movements of the cinema in Northern Cameroons from 1959-1961 were concentrated into two periods of heavy activity shortly before each plebiscite
2. That the second cluster of activity included more visits to more places than the first.

Allowing for a modest margin for error[631] it seems that, in the run-up to the first plebiscite[632] the mobile cinema gave 138 showings at 109 different venues,

[631] See Appendix 3.

[632] From 21/10/1959 to 20/11/1959. The plebiscite was held on 17/11/1959.

with an average audience of 892 people.[633] In the run-up to the second vote[634], there were 267 showings at 181 venues, with an average audience of 735.[635]

The observations recorded on the forms also make it clear that more effort was made in 1961 to provide commentary in locally-understood languages. In the 1959 reports, the only languages mentioned were Hausa, English, Fulfulde and, very occasionally, Kanuri. In 1961 there was mention of Marghi, Chamba and Gawa, among others. It appears that interpreters were sometimes employed to explain the films, often the first moving images that the audience had seen.

A glance at the list of titles seems to indicate that the films themselves were more 'Nigerian' during 1961. For instance, in 1959, British newsreels were often shown, but by 1961, these had been replaced by news reports from the Northern Region. A 1959 film was entitled 'How to Cast Your Vote'; by 1961, there was another called 'Vote for Nigeria'. Here are some other examples of the films most commonly shown:

| 1959 | 1961 |
|---|---|
| How to Cast Your Vote | How to Cast Your Vote |
| Our Land and People | Our Land and People |
| Held in Trust | Held in Trust |
| British News | Northern Newsreel |
| Trooping the Colour | Durbar Day |
| Northern Magazine | Nigeria Constitutional Conference |
| Washington Mosque | Malaria Project |
| Plebiscite | Vote for Nigeria |
| New Kano Airport | The North Rejoices |
| Minister Visits Holland | The Premier Tours Ilorin |

[633] 37% of whom were children and, of course, ineligible to vote.

[634] From 11/12/1960 to 10/2/1961. The plebiscite was held on 11/2/1961.

[635] 41% of whom were children.

| | |
|---|---|
| Congo Council Debate | Heart of the North |
| Boxing for Boys | Installation of Emir of Zaria |
| Happy Scouts | Installation of Emir of Argungu |

The first plebiscite was eagerly anticipated. When 'How to Cast Your Vote' was shown in Bama, it was reported that 'great applause arose in the midst of the audience' when shots of polling day were screened.

Before the second plebiscite, the advantages of NA reorganisation were driven home. One of the more popular films showed 'traditional' dances from across the Trust Territory, followed by scenes depicting development activities under the new NAs. In Wagga, the latter images were said to have 'cheered [the viewers'] minds and [they] promised to join Nigeria during the plebiscite'. This was a subject which the cinema staff brought up regularly: projectionists often announced that there would be more and better films if the Northern Cameroons voted to join Nigeria. In Dimakara, one wrote: 'Let us rejoice with all these people as they shouted Black is our colour so we shall cast our votes in to the black box in four to five days time'. (On polling day, the black box would be marked 'Nigeria', the white box, 'Cameroon'.) A crowd of over three hundred in Kumshe was reported to have found 'The North Rejoices', a film of self-government celebrations, to be 'really convincing', to the extent that some viewers shouted out '*Faranshi bama yi!*' – 'we're not going to join the French!' The most positive responses were evinced by a film of the great durbar held to mark the Queen's visit in 1956, showing how important the more visual instruments of 'Northern solidarity' could be.[636]

The result of the plebiscite was attributed to the popularity of the NA reforms celebrated by the newsreels. However, it is worth remembering that the question was different. In 1959 it had been a choice between Nigeria and a

[636] There were material as well as emotional incentives to join the North. The DO of Mubi, observing that the main item which 'pagans' bought at market was salt, made the following suggestion: 'that ten tons of salt should be purchased and issued in small quantities to the pagans with the Premier's picture on one side of the package and the words "vote for union with Nigeria" in Hausa on the other. This would only cost about £500 and could be done through the Information Service'. NAK: Premier's Office: 2/4 PM.23.S.4 'Political Developments in the Trust Territory'.

deferred decision. In 1961, the choice was between Nigeria and Cameroon, so the majority who had sat on the fence in the first vote were forced to jump off two years later. Eyongetah and Brain remark that the result 'came as a shock to many political leaders in the Cameroon Republic, who had interpreted the 1959 vote for continued trusteeship as an indication of strong support for reunification'. Indeed, Cameroon took the United Kingdom to the International Court at the Hague, protesting the way that the plebiscite had been conducted. The decision went Britain's way. 'In fact', the authors observe, 'there should have been no surprise that Northern Cameroons joined Nigeria. There had never been a strong leader, or a powerful political party, in favour of a merger with French-speaking Cameroon.'[637]

After 1961, the former Northern Cameroons became known as Sardauna Province[638], in tribute to Ahmadu Bello. Asked whether he saw anything wrong in naming a whole province after a single person (Yahaya Abdallahi of NEPU had already lodged his party's protest) the Sardauna replied that Adamawa had been named after Modibo Adama early in the previous century. Asked whether he was trying to make a name for himself, the Sardauna replied that he had no need to do so: his ancestors had already made a name for him.[639]

### 5.5 Conclusions

This chapter has looked at some of the ways in which identity politics was conducted in areas of the North beyond the Hausa core. In Bida, the capital of the Etsu Nupe, regional and national politics were subsumed by local rivalries, the more skilled politicians being able to involve themselves in both. In Zukogi's case, this meant spending a large proportion of his political career in prison. In the case of the NPC's local leader, Malam Usman (Usman Sarki), it meant satisfying two ambitions at once, by becoming Federal Minister for Information and Emir of Bida. Each position reinforced the other. Being

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[637] Tambi Eyongetah and Robert Brain *A History of the Cameroon* (London: Longman, 1974) pp157-8. The authors also note that many Northern Cameroonians knew Hausa and practised Islam, making union with Northern Nigeria more likely.

[638] With one exception: Dikwa remained within Bornu Province.

[639] Yahaya Abdallahi, interview, Kaduna 7/6/2002.

*Northern* was not directly important, but access to public support appears to have been easier for those with royal credentials – and the Nupe monarchy was strongly identified with the Northern Nationalist movement. Lacking such support after the NPC era, Usman Sarki was forced to abdicate as Etsu Nupe in 1969 (on the grounds that his appointment violated the system of rotation).

In Idoma Division, as elsewhere, it was the war that gave the greatest impetus to the beginnings of political activity beyond the local level, with the foundation of the Idoma Hope Rising Union. It would be easy to dismiss the predominant mood of Idoma politics as 'parochial', but this would ignore the massive changes that had taken place as contact with the rest of Nigeria grew. That people were thinking of themselves as Idoma was in itself a new and exciting development, an enlargement of scale. The Idoma proved adept at manipulating the new machinery of local government to enforce the older political principles, generally considered more authentic and 'traditional'. The tradition involved was a far cry from the 'Northern traditions' invoked by the NPC, yet Idoma support for the party continued, on pragmatic grounds.

There were no alternative 'Middle Belt traditions' to invoke, as was clearly demonstrated by the performance of the UMBC-AG alliance before the Willink Commission. The UMBC arguments were unconvincing because the party lacked unity. It lacked unity because it was still, at heart, a collection of 'tribal unions' not necessarily committed to the same ideas. The idea of the Middle Belt was held together by a shared fear of the Emirates – yet it could only be expected to work if there was no greater hostility at work. Fear of domination by the Tiv and Birom peoples led many to oppose the creation of a new region. One witness before the Commission claimed that he preferred the Fulani 'because they were further away'.[640]

Sardauna Province was as far away from Kaduna as it was possible to get within Northern Nigeria. Before the 1959 plebiscite held there, British administrators and African politicians assumed that the Northern Cameroons

[640] *Report* p72.

had been treated as part of Nigeria so long (through the Native Authorities of Adamawa, Bornu and Benue) that decision would be almost unanimously in favour of continuing this association. They were wrong. The result showed that the people of the area had rather more political sophistication than they had been credited with. It also showed the advantages (the establishment of a new Province and new local governments) that could be bought by making a tactical rejection of the North. The electorate of Northern Cameroons in 1959 was using the same threat as the NPC had used in 1953: give us the reform we want or we will leave.

Northern nationalism could not afford to draw on the same symbols in every area – only when appealing to people who shared *some* of the Islamic and Hausa cultural values that formed the *core* of northern identity could NPC politicians speak of 'the Northern people' with absolute confidence. The Nupe and Kanuri peoples, for instance, had been associated with the Hausas for long enough to accept this. The next chapter is less concerned with national identity as it appeared at the local level and more on how Northern identity was interpreted for the benefit of a wider public. It looks at the methods adopted to explain the One North idea to people who were only lately becoming conscious of their place within a self-governing region and an independent nation. It looks at the ways that Northernness was reflected by, for instance, a rapidly developing regional civil society. From this broader standpoint, the next chapter asks: What makes a Northerner?

## Chapter Six: Representations of the North

### 6.0 Introduction

The questions posed by this section of the chapter are perhaps best summed up by a 1955 editorial in *West Africa* under the headline 'Northern Nigerian Nation?' It is worth quoting extensively:

> "He was once a Sokoto – or a Katsina, or an Ilorin man; now he is a Northerner; and is bound to think first of the welfare of the whole Region before he pays attention to one particular area of it". This was the reply, the Sardauna of Sokoto suggested in the Northern House of Chiefs, which a Member should give to constituents who thought a Minister should pay special attention to his own people. Earlier the Prime Minister [sic] told the House of Assembly proudly that he had introduced a colleague to a meeting by saying that he was once a Nupe but was now a Northerner.
>
> Northern Nigeria is a creation as artificial and new as Nigeria itself: yet the Sardauna scornfully dismissed the suggestion that if he called a man a Northerner he might call him a Nigerian by saying that Nigeria was only fifty years old.
>
> Does this mean that there has grown up a Northern Nigerian "nation"?; if so, what stronger bond has it than the Nigerian "nation", except administrative unity? Perhaps the Sardauna has in mind the limits of Fulani power; but that would exclude Bornu Emirate and much of the riverain areas as well as the Plateau. Perhaps he was thinking of a religious bond: but the 1952 census showed over half a million non-Moslem households in the North against 1.3m Moslem ones, while non-Moslems are a majority in four provinces. Perhaps he was thinking of the Hausa people: but they number only a third of Northerners, or, with the Fulani, half.[641]

The article concluded that, despite the ambiguity of the situation, there was indeed a 'powerful sentiment' of nationhood among Northerners of all ethnic and religious backgrounds. But how accurate was this summary? This chapter will examine the development of a public image of Northern Nigeria.

### 6.1 The Northern Nation

The first part of this chapter covers four questions raised by the above article. First, did Northern national sentiment act as a counterweight to 'tribalism', subsuming it with patriotism? Second, how 'artificial' was Northern Nigeria? Third, what bound the region together (in the belief of the North's political

[641] *West Africa* 9/4/1955.

leaders)? Fourth, was there a Northern 'nation' (again, as far as the region's leaders were concerned)? The second part shows how the 'national' character of the region was reflected in its use of symbols and its institutions.

### 6.11 Was Northern patriotism a counterweight to 'tribalism'?

The crucial phrase 'he was once a Nupe but was now a Northerner' implied that the two ideas were mutually exclusive – that, if one wanted to become a Northerner, one had first to give up one's ethnic identity. As Abdul Razaq phrased it, speaking to the Willink Commission, 'the tendency was for tribesmen gradually to become northerners and for Northerners to become Nigerians'.[642] It is hard to believe that this idea was ever taken seriously – and, if it was, the predominant view soon changed. As we saw in Chapter Two, citizenship of the North was, certainly in borderline cases and probably in all others, through identification with an existing community. Far from discouraging local loyalties, Northernness entrenched them.

Partly, what the Premier had said to the House of Chiefs must have been for the benefit of a British audience. Northernness vs. Sokoto-ness was a simple way of presenting a complicated picture to outsiders. As Chinua Achebe wryly observed:

> You could always find idealistic people from every part of Nigeria who were prepared to do battle if anyone (especially European or American) should ask them: *What is your tribe?* "I am a Nigerian," they would say haughtily, drawing themselves to their fullest height. Though alive and well *tribe* had an embarrassing odour.[643]

[642] PRO: CO957/5 'Willink Commission Evidence days 9 onwards'.

[643] Chinua Achebe *The Trouble With Nigeria* (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1984) p6.

Rarely, however, have Nigerians, among themselves, felt their Nigerian-ness to be diminished by their Efik-ness, their Birom-ness or their Ilesha-ness. Problems have only arisen when an individual is believed to be bestowing a disproportionate amount of favour on people of similar background. When a Nigerian enters public office, he is under two sorts of pressure: first, he is expected mentally to go through the same 'ceremonial death' as the prospective Idoma *Oche* mentioned in Chapter Three. The *Oche*, it will be remembered, loses all the obligations that he is normally under towards his immediate family, the rest of his lineage and the clan. Everyone knows the background of the new chief and knows he is still the same human being he was before gaining the title – but the expectations are different. Similarly, Ahmadu Bello could never have disavowed his Sokoto heritage; indeed, he shouted it from the rooftops. Yet it was still his aim to become a father figure for all Northerners, wherever they came from, and to delegate political power in a way that would avoid accusations of favouritism. Of course, such accusations are, almost by definition, unavoidable. Partly, this was because the second pressure, contradictory to the first, is for the official to use his position to fulfil social obligations on an expanded scale. In particular, this means distributing patronage along established networks, often as a pay-off to those who put him in power. The pressure to provide 'jobs for the boys' exists, in one form or another, for all political leaders, the world over. As elsewhere, the channels along which favours were passed were often defined by extended-family-ties as much as old-school-ties. What makes Nigeria stand out is that, as a culturally plural society, this led to an imbalance which was the more obvious because of the differing languages and religions of the beneficiaries.

### 6.12 How 'artificial' was the North?

In the second paragraph of David Williams' *West Africa* article, the Sardauna was said to have responded with scorn to the suggestion that anyone called a Northerner might also be called a Nigerian. Is this such an odd idea? After all, the very word 'North' implies the existence of a 'South' – *North* of what, then, if

not Nigeria? Ahmadu Bello was implicitly asserting that the North had existed *before* it was known by that name.

Any nation is an artificial creation, but the arbitrariness by which Africa was divided between the colonial powers has been emphasized so often that it has become something of a banality.[644] Uzoigwe has suggested that this is unfair: 30% of the borders drawn on the political map of Africa at the 1884-5 Berlin Conference consisted of straight lines, he writes, but, by drawing the remainder along ethno-linguistic boundaries, the Europeans made 'a remarkably efficient job' of it, albeit an illegal and immoral one.[645] As more African states became independent, there was a general re-assessment of the continent's colonial boundaries; for the new governments, these became something to defend rather than attack. For Nigeria specifically, the case was first made by J C Anene[646], and later by Ajayi and Alagoa in *The Groundwork of Nigerian History*. The latter conceded that Nigeria was not a self-contained geographical unit, but that 'there is a compactness about the Nigerian geographical environment which encouraged greater movement and interaction of peoples within it than with people outside it'.[647]

Usman and Abba strongly oppose the view that the Northern and Southern parts of Nigeria were delineated in a less 'arbitrary' manner than Nigeria itself. They argue that there is more logic to Nigeria's boundaries than is popularly

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[644] A book about Nigeria from the *Wealth of Nations* series, aimed at young children, notes: 'Nigeria's borders were decided by the British in the nineteenth century. Some tribes, who had always been enemies, found themselves living beside each other. Now, they fight each other for power instead of working together'. Jane Ayliffe *Nigeria* (Hove: Wayland, 1998) p14.

[645] G N Uzoigwe 'European Partition and Conquest of Africa: An Overview' in *UNESCO General History of Africa* Vol VII (London: Heinemann, 1985) p38.

[646] J C Anene *The International Boundaries of Nigeria, 1885-1900: The Framework of An Emergent Nation* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1970).

[647] J F Ade Ajayi and E J Alagoa quoted in Yusufu Bala Usman and Alkasum Abba (eds.) 'The Misrepresentation of Nigeria: The Facts and the Figures' (Zaria: Ceddert, 2000) p16. A separate, but related, point is that if the European powers, or anybody else, had spent a century trying to fix the boundaries of Africa so that each perceived ethnic or linguistic group remained intact, they could not have managed it. See Chapter Five.

supposed, and less internal consistency to 'the North' and 'the South' than is popularly supposed. At its foundation in 1900, the Northern Protectorate was 'just a sphere of influence claimed by the British', a varied collection of polities of differing size 'which by the time of the 1914 amalgamation cannot be said to have constituted a distinct entity standing on its own'.[648]

It was this amalgamation which Ahmadu Bello famously called 'the mistake of 1914'. Ahmadu Bello's view of history did not give great scope for a One-Nigeria standpoint. He was by no means a historian, but he had a strong sense of history, weighing heavily on his shoulders, and firmly felt that there was more to unite the North than divide it. In short, he believed the opposite of what Usman and Abba believe: he believed that the region of which he was Premier had an incomparably greater internal logic to it than Nigeria as a whole.

**6.13 What bound the Northern Region together?**

As the Northern nationalist leaders saw it, solidarity was based around the Sokoto Caliphate, the Bornu Empire, the common bonds of the Hausa language and Islam and – just as importantly – the cultural exchanges that had taken place between the North's peoples. Such a definition of Northernness, necessarily vague and rarely put into so many words, could, at a stretch, be made to include non-Muslims. They did not exist in a cultural vacuum, but had, to varying degrees, had influence on and been influenced by their neighbours. Nevertheless, the NPC slogan, 'Unity not Uniformity' was useful, as it gave recognition to the cultural plurality of the North. Overwhelmingly, however, in the discourse of Northern nationalism, prominence was given to the Sokoto Caliphate. While the Northern Regional Government's submission to the Willink Commission mentioned the Jukun and Igala kingdoms as being

[648] Yusufu Bala Usman and Alkasum Abba (eds.) 'The Misrepresentation of Nigeria: The Facts and the Figures' (Zaria: Ceddert, 2000) p15.

important to the foundation of the North,[649] these polities seldom made it into the Premier's speeches.

In Timothy Asobele's play *Gamji*, Jolly Tanko Yusuf, Provincial Commissioner for Benue and founder of the Northern Christian Association, is made to say:

> We Jukuns are proud of our military exploits. I mean our Kwararafa empire, the power and influence of which were felt not only in Borno, but in [the] far away Hausaland cities of Kano, Katsina and Zaria. Yergam people of the plateau also felt our influence, so did the Igala, Idoma and Tiv. By this token our history is our source of Unity as Arewa [i.e. Northern] people.[650]

The play, published in 1993, is written in praise of the Sardauna and of Northern nationalism generally. Although essentially fictitious, the script draws heavily on the recorded comments of those of the *dramatis personae* who are, or were, real people. As a piece of literature, it is very much of its time – at the end of the play, the spirit of the Sardauna speaks through a *bori* priestess expressing reservations about the fragmentation of the North into ever-smaller states – and the above section stands out precisely because it does not appear to fit alongside other quotations from Northern nationalist leaders at the time. Glorification of the Kwararafa Confederacy may have made its way into (say) the local press or the speeches of NPC leaders in Benue Province but rarely, if ever, appeared in the mainstream of Northern political debate.

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[649] *Memorandum to the Minorities Commission* p3.

[650] Timothy Asobele *Gamji* (Lagos: Foundation, 1993) p42.

### 6.14 Was there a Northern nation?

> Over a billion [sic] people live in Nigeria today, and they come from many different tribes ... The tribes are given money by the government to rule their land. Each state in Nigeria is controlled by a certain tribe ... In the north, the Hausa and Fulani tribes are Muslim. In the south, the Yoruba are Protestant and the Ibo are Catholic.[651]

Sometimes, it is easy to spot an over-simplification. The output of Northern Nigerian nationalism, however, relied on a series of smaller generalisations which, in a subtler way than in the above quotation (from a textbook for young children) glossed over the manifold differences between the region's present constitution and its history. In essence, it was an attempt to project the North back in time. Ahmadu Bello was often given to speak of the North in a historical (and anachronistic) way. For instance, when opening the first branch of Bank of the North, the Premier was reported to have said that

> it was quite appropriate to have the bank established in Kano because quite apart from being a commercial centre of the North, Kano as a commercial centre had a history and tradition which was widely known and respected before the name of Nigeria was even thought of.

> In the days before the advent of motorcars, railways and aeroplanes, he continued, the camels and the Northern traders were carrying goods produced by the skill of Northern craftsmen across the desert to all parts of the Mediterranean and thence Europe. Kano was one of their starting points and to Kano they all returned. It was therefore no wonder that Kano was so famous and had become the embodiment of the commercial acumen, initiative, integrity and ingenuity of the Northern people.[652]

In this speech, a typical one, Nigeria was mentioned as a mere 'name', while the North was a real entity, even before 1900, and its people Northerners by character if not yet by name.

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[651] Jane Ayliffe *Nigeria* (Hove: Wayland, 1998) pp14-16.

[652] *Nigerian Citizen* 16/1/1960.

One of Ahmadu Bello's most important speeches was at the Self-Government celebrations in May 1959. Taking a break from his usual invocation of Usman Dan Fodio, he made a scarcely veiled comparison between himself and Winston Churchill, praising the latter's ability to bring out the 'highest instincts of patriotism and courage' in the British people and suggesting that, for Northerners, 1959-60 might be 'no less decisive than the year 1940 was for the British'. The tacit assertion of nationhood for Northerners on the same terms as for the British was a bold one, but could only be taken so far. This was shown later in the same speech, when he brought up a 'little known fact': 'the North, with a population of 18 million is the biggest single unit after Egypt in the continent of Africa'. One can sense the Sardauna's desire to say 'nation' or 'country' rather than the sterile-sounding 'unit'. But to do so would be to make waves in the federation, tempting fate with the prospect of secession. The most the Premier dared to say was that, despite the progress made since the building of Northern Nigeria's first railway, half a century was 'an insignificantly short time in the life of a nation'. The strength of this comment lies in its ambiguity: the 'nation' involved *might* be Nigeria, so regionalists and federalists could reconcile this comment with their own political consciences as they wished. Likewise, the Premier's colossal presence and authority allowed him to refer to the North as 'new-born' and 'modern' in the same breath as calling it 'ancient' and 'historic'.

The anniversaries of Northern Self-Government were always treated rather more seriously than Independence Day. On the second such anniversary, the Premier said:

> When I address you as 'People of the North' I can most gladly again include the people of the Northern Cameroons. I have already thanked them for putting their trust in us and on this occasion I take the opportunity to remind all the rest of the people of the Region that we have a duty to justify the faith of these our brothers who have chosen to march forward with us in unity. This victory in the Trust Territory plebiscite was indeed an example of Northern Unity as both Muslim and non-Muslim joined together to vote for Nigeria and the Northern Region.[653]

[653] NAK: PLT/7 Vol II 'Regional Self-Government Anniversary Celebrations'.

When speaking of the North in these terms, the Premier was unable to stress its antiquity and indivisibility – after all, Sardauna Province had only recently decided that it was part of Nigeria.

After independence, the Sardauna was less restrained in referring to the North as a nation. His 1964 Self-Government anniversary speech, for instance, he referred to the North as 'a great agricultural nation', and bemoaned the way that educated young people thought themselves too good for farming. He only wished, he said, that his duties left him more time to attend to his own farm in Bakura.[654]

There are many other examples of the North being described as a nation. One of the Northern Region's promotional brochures features a picture of the Premier and the new Governor, Sir Kashim Ibrahim, dressed in identical blue gowns. Beneath them are the words: 'The founding fathers of the nation'.[655] The pamphlet itself is described as 'a little book about a great land'. Any question of whether the 'land' or 'nation' concerned is Nigeria itself is soon cleared up. The subject of the book, it says, is 'a country whose northern boundaries march with the Saharan sands, yet whose Southern fringes approach the sea'.[656] Note: *approach* the sea (within 130 miles at some points) not *reach* the sea.

Similarly, in his introduction to *Our Land and People*, one of the propaganda films shown to great acclaim in the Northern Cameroons, Ahmadu Bello says:

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[654] The Premier was joint owner of the farm, at Bakura in Sokoto Province. The Northern Region Development Corporation (NRDC, later renamed Northern Nigeria Development Corporation, NNDC) gave loans totalling £106 000 (guaranteed by Sokoto Native Authority) to the 'Ahmed and Ahmed' project. A publication by the military government in 1966 questioned whether the full amount was spent on agricultural operations. 'Some assets purchased for the late Premier's Lodge at Bakura would be of little value to the project,' the report remarked, dryly. 'For example, gilded chairs, settees and similar items...' In 1968, the decision was taken to write off the debts as a liability to the NNDC, and the North-Western State Government took over the farm. See WJBHAC: Sokoto 35/3/21 'Application for loan of £10 000 from N. R. D. C. by Alhaji Ahmadu Rabah and Alhaji Danbaba for mechanized mixed farming (1961)' and *White Paper on Military Government Policy for the Reorganisation of the Northern Nigeria Development Corporation* (Kaduna: Government Printer, 1966).

[655] *Land of Tomorrow: A Story of Northern Nigeria* (London: Northern Nigeria Ministry of Information, 1962) p3.

[656] Ibid., p5. This quotation comes from the foreword by Ibrahim Biu, Minister of Information.

'This film is about our country: Northern Nigeria'.[657] The picture is one of unrelenting progress, in the fields of education, medicine and industry of all sorts. The film is dominated by images of happy factory workers (nearly all of whom, we are reminded, are Northerners), and dwells for some time on the new textile mill at Kaduna. At the end of this scene, the narrator says: 'But this is *Northern* Nigeria' introducing a depiction of the 'age-old' weaving which the regional government was encouraging, 'so the art of craftsmanship is not lost'. The same was true of dyeing and glassmaking.

To an audience in America, the Premier stated: 'Northern Nigeria is a country which, before the British came to Nigeria, had its own system of local government'. He went on to make an implicit assertion of the absolute continuity between the modern region of Northern Nigeria and the pre-colonial 'country' of the Sokoto Caliphate, and described the Emirate system and the ways it had been altered and partly democratised since the advent of the British.[658] The Premier adopted a similar stance in his autobiography, the first page of which mentions the ceremonial return of Attahiru's flag, taken by the British from the battlefield where the Caliph had made his last stand. It was as if, in returning both the flag and political authority to Sokoto, a natural balance had been restored.[659]

Yet, despite the above examples, there were times when Ahmadu Bello used the word 'nation' to connote Nigeria, depending on the political context of the speech.[660] At other times, he avoided the issue of 'nation' altogether, relying on the idea of 'unity not uniformity' that was one of the slogans of his party. When

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[657] The film was repeated on Kaduna State Television 30/5/2002. Excerpts from it are included in *Sir Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto* (Kaduna: This Day and Zamani Newspapers, n.d. *c*2000), a film available from Arewa House.

[658] Stephen A Amune (ed) *Work and Worship: Selected Speeches of Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto* (Zaria: Gaskiya Corporation, 1986) p211.

[659] Ahmadu Bello *My Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962) pp1-2.

[660] In his final Self-Government anniversary speech, for instance, Ahmadu Bello said that the 'whole nation' had been 'seized in an amazing drama skilfully and cunningly adorned with an organised campaign of rumours, threats, lies and a calculated reign of calumny' but that, in the end, and under the guidance of God, 'good sense prevailed'. He could only have been referring to the chaos that attended the 1964/5 federal elections and thus the whole of Nigeria.

appearing before the Willink Commission, for instance, the Premier knew how vital it was to show sensitivity to cultural diversity and 'modernity'. It was important that the Willink Commission should not conclude, as one observer later did, that there were many Northern leaders 'who see (probably rightly) a threat to their authority in the spread of education, and who would like to see a return to the pre-British Islamic society, but without wars, and with Cadillacs'.[661] It was a flippant remark, (made by the UK's Information Officer in Nigeria) but still an incisive one.

The Sardauna started by reminding his audience of his royal pedigree. 'My great-great grandfather was Shehu Usman Dan Fodio (peace be upon him); my grandfather and my great-grandfather were both Sultans of Sokoto, the latter being Sultan Bello. I am a Fulani of the Toronkawa Clan.' So far, so typical. The next two sentences are interesting, though: 'But it is not as the Premier of a Fulani Empire that I address you today. It is as the Premier of a region, diverse but united, and as head of the only party which can truly claim a large measure of support in every province, in every division and virtually every district'.[662] Suddenly Ahmadu Bello was stressing that his real role was that of party leader and Premier of a modern polity, fundamentally different from the Empire of old. This is an example of the importance of ambiguity in political rhetoric. A skilful orator *can* have his cake and eat it.

### 6.2 National Symbols

If the idea of a 'nation' is to become established, there must be certain symbols with which that nation's people can readily identify. If, as the previous chapter suggested, it was hard for the North to find sufficient material to entrench latent national feeling, it was harder still for Nigeria as a whole.

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[661] PRO: CO1027/539 'UK Information Office, Northern Nigeria policy'. C F McLaren (UK Information Officer) to Owen Morris 20/5/1960.

[662] Ibid., p135.

**6.21 Zikist symbols and the failure of unitary Nigerian nationalism**

One of the first organisations to understand the importance of national paraphernalia was the Zikist Movement – the radical nationalists, who took Nnamdi Azikiwe as their inspiration but not their leader (or even a member). Driven by the desire to establish a clear Nigerian alternative to the colonial state, which might quickly be embraced in the event of a revolution, the Zikists looked to popularise the symbols which the movement had made its own. These included a flag, a uniform and a national anthem/pledge.

The flag featured a cross (coloured red, symbolising the blood of martyrdom) superimposed onto a background of white (for peace) and blue (for unity) with a central gold star, the 'symbol of the Zikist faith'.[663] Both the cross and the word 'faith' are important because, for some Zikists, their new philosophy was so comprehensive as to include religious observances. Not only did the language of Zikism draw heavily on that of the church (Iweriebor speaks of the 'secular liturgy of Nationalism') but, with the emergence of the National Church, Azikiwe was hailed as a messiah and Macaulay a prophet. The National Church's bastardisation of the Nicene Creed, which bears comparison to those of the Italian Fascist Party and the Ghanaian Convention People's Party[664] succeeded in offending Christians, while the movement's insistent emulation of Christian language and practice for its 'national' symbols must have alienated Muslims who would otherwise have joined in. However, there were some (Northern) Muslim Zikists. As was mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, Habib Raji

[663] Iweriebor *Radical Politics* p78. The explanation of the significance of colours comes from an article in *West African Pilot* (25/10/1946) by K Balogun.

[664] The Zikist Creed states that, on 'the third day', Azikiwe 'escaped [the] assassin's bullet to Onitsha and sitteth on the right hand of [Chief of Onitsha] Obi Okosi ... from thence he shall show the light to the people'. (See Iweriebor *Radical Politics* p88). The Fascist Creed, meanwhile, says that the Italian nation is 'seated at the right hand of Mother Rome; who will come thence to judge the quick and the dead'. (See www.blueletterbible.com) The CPP creed states that Kwame Nkrumah 'sitteth at the Supreme head of the CPP, From whence he shall demand Full Self-government for Ghana' (See A H M Kirk-Greene 'His Eternity, His Eccentricity, or His Exemplarity? A further contribution to the study of H. E. the African head of state' in *African Affairs* 90 [1991] p180).

Abdallah, an Igbirra, became the group's leader in 1947, a post he held until being jailed for sedition in 1949, shortly before the movement was outlawed.[665]

The Zikists also had a national anthem, 'Land of Our Birth'. Iweriebor points out that the line 'Land of our birth/ Our faith, our pride/ For whose dear sake/ Our fathers died', was part of a broader attempt to engender a sense of shared history.[666] The ancestors who had died defending their own corner of the country from British invasion had, whether they knew it or not, been defending the Nigeria which the Zikists now sought to liberate. Some of these ancestors were celebrated by All Heroes' Day, an alternative to Empire Day. Iweriebor notes that none of the historic figures whose lives were celebrated was a Northerner, and speculates that this was because the movement's members were unaware of possible candidates.[667] Azikiwe himself was celebrated by All Heroes Day (as were his political peers) and, as an alternative to the King's Birthday celebrations in Nigeria, Zikists observed Zik's Birthday. The NCNC leader may have enjoyed the adulation, but he became increasingly embarrassed at the militancy of the group, which began to distance it from the mother party.

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[665] Most Northern members of the NCNC decamped to NEPU around 1950. The more militant among them also joined the Northern Askianist Movement (NAM), founded in 1951 and regarded as the Northern branch of the (now banned) Zikist Movement. For more about the Zikists, see Ehiedu E G Iweriebor's thoroughly comprehensive study, *Radical Politics in Nigeria, 1945-1950: The Significance of the Zikist Movement* (Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1996).

[666] Ehiedu E G Iweriebor *Radical Politics in Nigeria, 1945-1950: The Significance of the Zikist Movement* (Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1996) pp76-7.

[667] Iweriebor *Radical Politics* p84. Although primarily intended as a national occasion, Heroes Day also recognised outstanding individuals from abroad, such as Gandhi. Iweriebor notes that, with the appointment of Abdallah as leader, the movement's 'historical referential framework [was] broadened' but mentions no effect on All Heroes Day itself.

**6.22 Northern symbols and the success of regional nationalism**

If the NPC's effort to unify a nation around shared symbols was more successful than that of the Zikists, it was, in part, because the former gained some measure of formal political authority and the latter did not. Moreover, the NPC gained control of a region which had ample scope for the development of a national mentality – even though this came at a cost. It is argued in this chapter, and throughout the thesis, that Northern nationalism relied on symbols which were predominantly Hausa and Islamic in character. If we look directly at the symbols which the North used to present itself publicly, we can understand more about this. Having argued that the emotional centres of Northern nationalism lay in the Islamic history of the region, the shared Hausa language and a common pool of cultural influences, it is necessary to show how this basis was reflected in the institutions surrounding the Northern Region.

This became increasingly important after the passing of the 1954 Lyttleton Constitution, as the amount of political authority devolved to the regions grew. There was a commensurate increase in the regions' demands for loyalty, often expressed in cultural terms, and the new governments surrounded themselves with the same ephemera as nation-states.

But there was a balance to be struck: the NPC wanted to run the North as *if* it were a different country, but without risking the potentially ruinous break-up of Nigeria. So, the region had:

Its own Government (with a bicameral legislature, Executive Council etc.)
Its own Governor – *but* ranked below the Governor-General
An Agent-General in London – *not a* High Commissioner or Ambassador
A Premier (the Sardauna, Ahmadu Bello) – *not* a Prime Minister
A kind of 'national' language (Hausa) – but *without* official status
Its own Coat of Arms
Its own flag – *but* with limitations on its use

Its own passport – *but* only a single-use Pilgrim Passport for taking on the hajj

Its own civil society

The North's armorial bearings were established by Royal Warrant on 20th February 1959, a month before the region's self-government. The Northern Ministry of Information had come up with suggestions for the Coat of Arms, which was designed by Sir George Bellew of the College of Arms in London.[668]




Illustration 5: The Armorial Bearings of the Northern Region.

[668] I am grateful to Mr. P LI Gwynn-Jones, Garter Principal King of Arms at the College of Arms, London, for this information and for supplying a copy of the armorial bearings, reproduced *here*.

The shield itself was divided into four parts, coloured green (representing agriculture) and gold (representing wealth). Each quarter featured a rural image commonly found in the North: a cow, a goat, some millet and some guinea-corn. The blue and white wavy lines running across the middle of the shield represented water, in this case the rivers Niger and Benue. The black line down the centre of the shield represented the railway, bounded on either side by tawny lines, representing roads, and two thicker red lines, representing the Jebba and Makurdi bridges. Resting on a wreath on top of the shield was a book. This stood for three things at once: the importance of literacy generally; the Bible; the Qur'an. The strength of the symbol lay in its ambiguity – a Christian and a Muslim could each look at it and see their own scripture. Indeed, an agnostic with an interest in literature could appreciate the solid simplicity of the open book, if not the motto at the bottom: *Work and Worship.* Here, too, interpretation was everything. Work *for what?* Worship *what* or *whom?* Individuals could find their own answers.

This sense of calculated ambiguity is embedded in the 'national' ephemera of Northern Nigeria, and is in stark contrast to the specificity of 'nationalist' politics at the local level. For instance, the Coat of Arms featured a ceremonial trumpet, the *kakaki*, to show how important the 'traditions of chieftaincy' were to the North; while Abubakar Zukogi, as we saw in the previous chapter, worked with the intricacies of competition between the royal houses of Bida as his raw material.

Supporting the shield were, on the left, a horse in 'typical Northern furnishings' and, on the right, a camel, representing, in the words of John Smith, 'the caravans that through the ages have brought salt from the desert to the

markets of the North, and in their train the influence of the Arab world and the introduction of Islam'.[669]

The strongest and most emotive images in the design were those most closely connected with the royal houses of the far North. The *kakaki*, the decorated horse and the camel – looking haughty but uncomfortable with its front legs raised – all fall under the category of 'Hausa etc.'. The only explicit references to areas in the Middle Belt are rather more prosaic: a bridge, the road, the rivers. None of these are apparent without an explanation such as the one given above.

The North also had its own flag. Naturally enough, the adoption a symbol so closely associated with the nation-state provoked some nervousness among people who were anxious that the North should not attempt to go it alone. The issue first came up as early as 1952, when there was 'considerable debate' by Ministers of the Executive Council in Lagos as to what distinguishing design they should fly on their cars to show that they were representing the North.[670] A minute to the Civil Secretary suggested that there was 'a considerable danger of Lagos underestimating the importance and strength of feeling in this matter.'

> [It is a matter to which] Ministers attach considerable importance and in which personal pride is involved. They are already very suspicious of interference by the Centre in matters which they regard as being of purely local concern and I have no doubt that, if approval for the flying of flags is withdrawn, or if they are required to accept a design uniform with the West and East which they regard as inferior to that upon which they have already agreed, there will be trouble.[671]

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[669] J H Smith 'Heraldry and the Armorial Bearings of Nigeria' in *Nigeria Magazine* December 1965.

[670] Arewa House: 26/2/44 54643 'Ministers Cars Flags for'. C W Michie (of Nigerian Secretariat, Lagos) to H R E Browne (Civil Secretary, Kaduna) 10/12/1952.

[671] Ibid. Minute (unsigned) to Civil Secretary 29/12/1952.

In the end, Northern Ministers were allowed to display the flag on their cars, as was the North's Agent-General (the region's equivalent of a High Commissioner) when outside Nigeria. No other use was permitted. The Northern Regional Government had been told by the UK Government that the North would not be allowed a flag to represent the region as such, 'so long as Nigeria remains a dependent territory'. The flags were manufactured by a British Company.[672] After independence, restrictions were removed and the North had its first official flag.

The motif at the centre of the flag is used as a decoration on walls and buildings in much of Northern Nigeria, and is generally described as a 'Hausa' symbol.[673] In the political climate of the 1950s, however, it was necessary for this symbol to become known as a 'Northern' symbol. Sometimes known as 'Dagi' or, in English, the 'Kano Knot' or 'Wise Man's Knot', the symbol was henceforth called the 'Northern Knot'. It featured on government publications and on the Pilgrim's Passport issued by the region.

The Pilgrim's Passport started out as a means of regulating the flow of people going on the *Hajj*. In 1954, however, only 5% of pilgrims made use of it. The passport was a single-use document, costing £41/15s, including an allowance to be drawn at Jedda and pre-payment of fees to the governments of Sudan and Saudi Arabia.[674] One of the interviewees for Bawa Yamba's excellent book *Permanent Pilgrims* (concerning Hausa speakers in Sudan, whose lives are defined in relation to the *Hajj*) was still able to produce his family's Pilgrim

[672] The contracted company was Lewis & Peat Ltd., of Plantation House, Mincing Lane, London EC3, who manufactured the flags through an associate company, Messrs Benjamin Edgington of Sidcup.

[673] See, for instance, Susan Denyer's *African Traditional Architecture: An Historical and Geographical Perspective* (London: Heinemann, 1978) and Hamman Tukur Saad 'Between Myth and Reality: The Aesthetics of Traditional Architecture in Hausaland' (PhD Michigan, 1981) Appendix D.

[674] *The Pilgrim Passport for Overland Travel: Instructions* (Zaria: Gaskiya, 1954).

Passports, some decades after first leaving Nigeria. To him, they were 'prized relics'.[675]

The flag, shown below, was designed by John Hindle.[676]

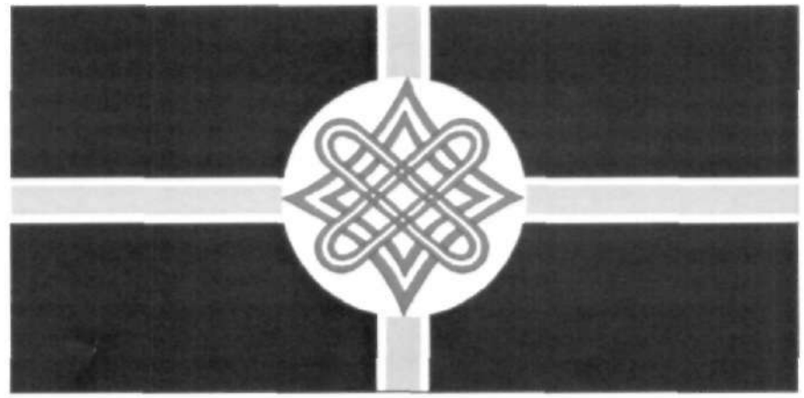


Illustration 6: the first Northern Region flag.
www.worldstatesmen.org/Nigeria_regions

Hindle had been trained as an artist before joining the colonial service and had been a great asset to Bryan Sharwood Smith when, as Resident of Kano Province, he set about organising a survey of the city. Hindle devoted himself to producing 'a series of brilliantly executed charts, maps, and diagrams that were to enhance beyond measure the impact of "Kano Survey, 1950".'[677] He went on to be Public Relations Officer for the region, then Director of the Northern Nigeria Information Service. In 1955, he drew up a striking map of the

[675] C. Bawa Yamba *Permanent Pilgrims: The Role of Pilgrimage in the Lives of West African Muslims in Sudan* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995) p60. The book is superbly readable and well researched. Its major defect is the absence of any proper Hausa orthography.

[676] www.worldstatesmen.org/Nigeria_regions. Hindle's were not the only British contribution to national symbols. The first national anthem of Nigeria was written by a British woman, a Miss Williams.

[677] Sharwood Smith *But Always as Friends* p202.

region, which fitted so well with the regional government's ethos that it was included in the Memorandum that impressed the Willink Commission so much.

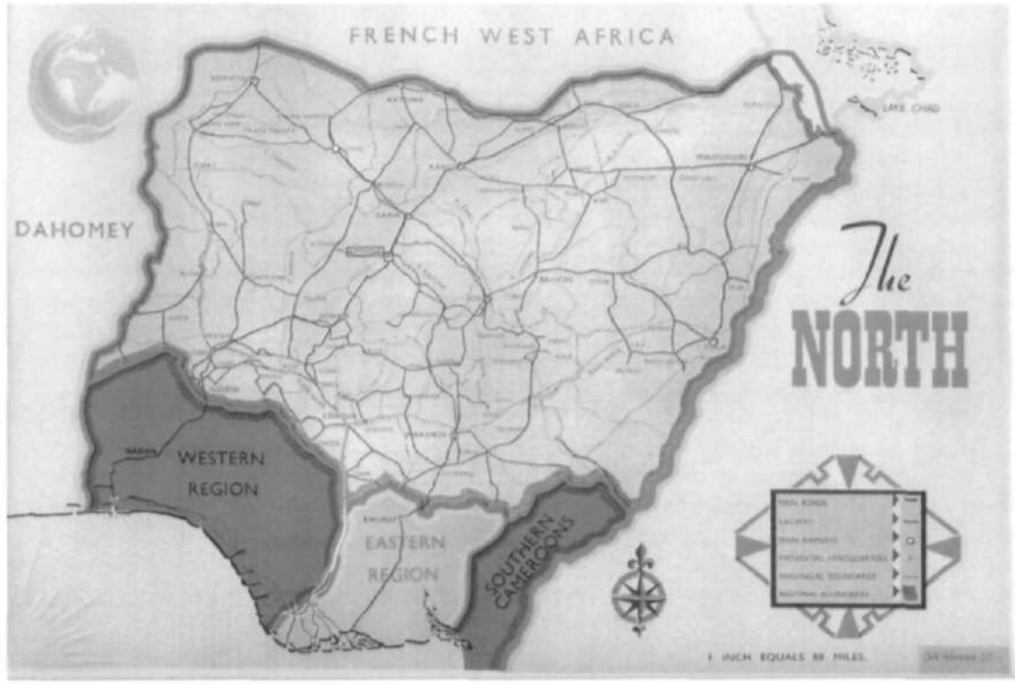



Illustration 7: J F Hindle's map of the North. PRO: CO554/1841

A few things are notable about this map. First, that the decorative shape of the key is such that it vaguely mimics the Northern Knot. Second, the colouring: the North is a light green, while the West, East and Southern Cameroons are purple, orange and purple again, providing a stark contrast. The regional boundaries are so strongly defined that the map looks, at first glance, like a map of neighbouring states rather than a single country. Third, the Northern Cameroons has been depicted as part of the region, with no indication of its Trust Territory status, while the Southern Cameroons is shown as a separate region. Of course, this reflects the political reality – the Southern Cameroons *was* by then a semi-autonomous region, which would decide in 1961 to join Cameroun Republic. And the Northern Cameroons *was* run as part of the Northern Region. Nevertheless, the visual effect is to make the North seem

bigger and the South smaller, more fragmented. The fourth point concerns not what is included in the map so much as what is missed out: the word 'Nigeria' does not appear anywhere on it. This was not an accidental omission. The clear aim of the map was to distance the North from the idea of Nigeria as a federation, without making any overtly separatist claims. This was reflective of a nationalism that did not aim to establish a nation-state.

Before the London Constitutional Conference of 1959, NEPU suggested that Nigeria adopt a new flag and a new name (rather as Ghana, formerly the Gold Coast, had recently done). The flag would look like this:

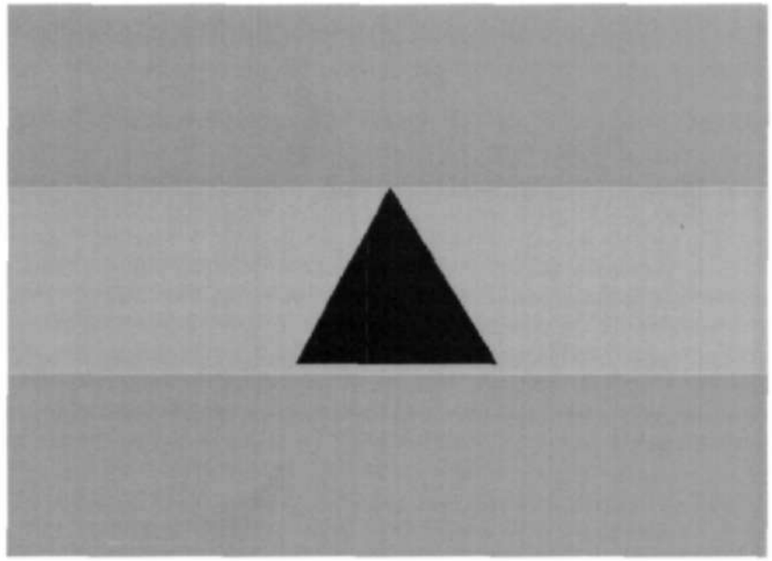


Illustration 8: National flag of 'Kwara'. Picture by author, based on detailed descriptions from NEPU.

The Light brown strip at the top was to represent 'nature', in particular Nigeria's sandy soil. The green strip was to represent the country's lush vegetation. The blue strip was to represent the sources of water in the country, especially the

Niger, the Benue and Lake Chad. The Black triangle stood for the Cameroons highlands.[678]

Acting Secretary-General Yahaya Abdullahi wrote that a change of name would *also be justified because Nigeria was 'the creation of a foreign power'. Unlike* Ghana, however, NEPU did not advocate the adoption of the name of a historic empire. Rather, the nation should continue to be named after its principal river, which, in Hausa, is called 'Kwara'.[679] This was to be the new name of the nation, its inhabitants to be called 'Kwarans'. Nigeria, wrote Abdullahi, 'is only an English translation of the word "kwara" which is the actual African name of the River Niger'. In point of fact, 'Niger' is of Tuareg derivation, being a shortened form of 'egereou n-igereouen', meaning 'river of rivers'.[680] In any case, the idea did not take off, because the Constitutional Conference never discussed it.

The Conference did, however, give its approval to what is still Nigeria's flag today, with two vertical stripes of green sandwiching a single white stripe. The new design was adopted after a nationwide competition, which attracted 2 870 entries. The winner was Michael Taiwo Sunday Akinkunmi, a 22 year old from Ibadan, studying engineering in London.[681] It is interesting to note that none of the participants at the discussions leading to the publication of *Inside Nigerian History* – some of whom had been intimately involved in the Constitutional Conferences – could remember the circumstances under which the flag had been designed.[682]

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[678] NAK: ASI.919 'Political Affairs'. Yahaya Abdullahi (Acting Secretary-General, NEPU) to all *Premiers et al.* 24/1/1959

[679] Ibid.

[680] Adrian Room (ed.) *Brewer's Dictionary of Names* (London: Cassell, 1992) p379 and *Webster's New Geographical Dictionary* (Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, 1988) p847.

[681] NAK: Premier's Office: AGNN/1124 'Northern Nigeria Flag'.

[682] Usman and Kwanashie (eds.) *Inside Nigerian History* pp 41-51.

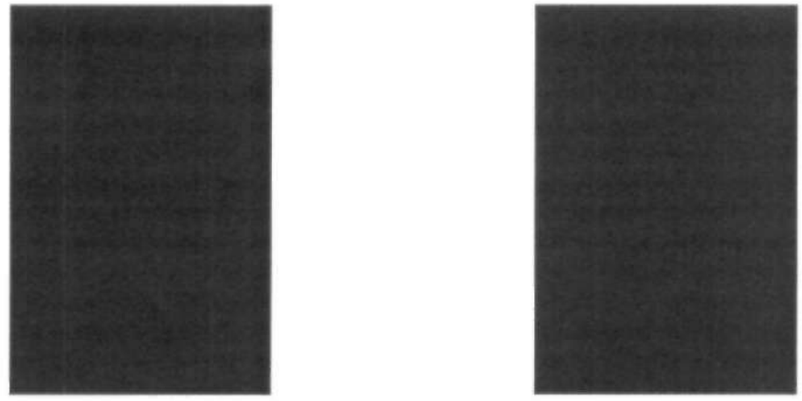


Illustration 9: The Nigerian federal flag.
www.worldstatesmen.org/Nigeria

The idea is advanced in this thesis that Northern nationalism became increasingly interested in and involved with the rest of the federation from around 1963. Symbolic of this change of attitude was the adoption of a more 'Nigerian' flag for the region on Republic Day in 1963. It was identical to the federal flag but for the motif placed in the centre.

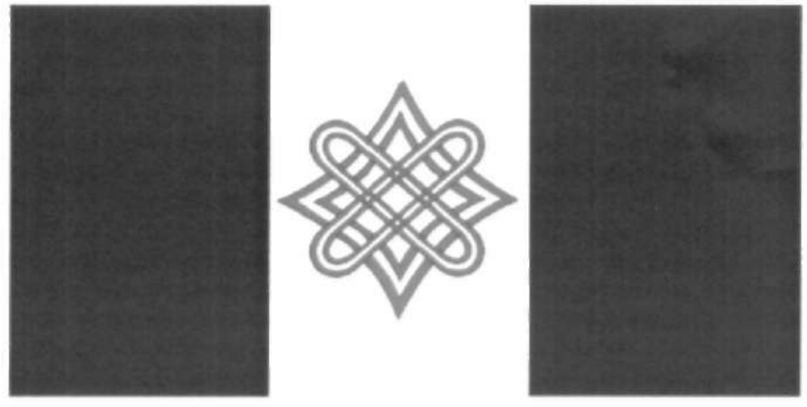


Illustration 10: The second flag of the Northern Region.
www.worldstatesmen.org/Nigeria_regions

According to Abubakar Gumi's autobiography, questions surrounding Nigeria's flag were treated with greater urgency after his first hajj in 1955. The flag, at the time, looked like this:

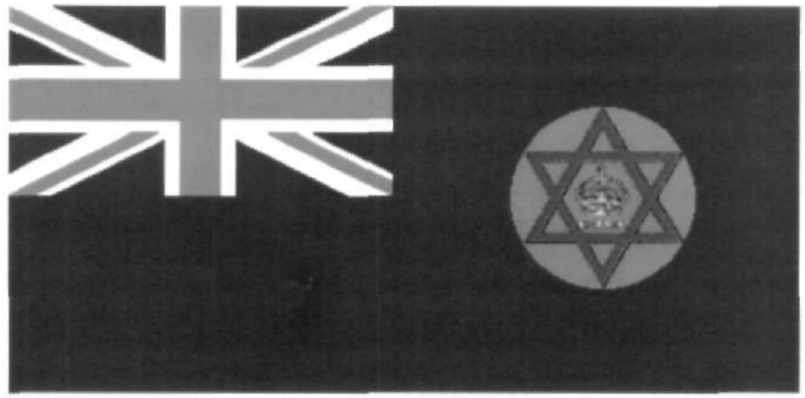


Illustration 11: the colonial flag of Nigeria. www.worldstatesmen.org/Nigeria

When it was raised to identify the Nigerian party among the throng of pilgrims, many among the crowds responded with anti-Zionist chants. The Nigerian pilgrims, unaware of the associations that the six-pointed star of Nigeria had for the Middle East, had no idea what was happening.[683] Gumi, later to be Nigeria's Grand Khadi, wrote a report of the incident to Prime Minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewa that, he believed, 'helped to change the old design more quickly.'[684]

[683] The star became the national emblem because it was 'said to have been discovered engraved on a large rock in Northern Nigeria'. *Daily Service* 12/1/1955.

[684] Sheikh Abubakar Gumi with Ismaila A Tsiga *Where I Stand* (Ibadan: Spectrum 1992) p71.

Unlike the Zikist Movement, the NPC never had an official uniform.[685] However, as has often been observed, the Premier was an enthusiastic promoter of the *babbar riga* (Hausa: lit. 'big gown') among his followers and colleagues. Yahaya Kwande saw first-hand how the Sardauna transformed the image of the flowing gown. In Lagos, writes Kwande, it had been associated with the homeless and the destitute, but Ahmadu Bello turned it into the 'trademark of the Northerner'.

> The Sardauna worked to carve out an identity for the Northerner. He wanted the Northerner to take pride in himself, to believe in himself ... [When visiting Federal Departments in Lagos] he made it a point to berate those officers whose names were Northern but whose dressing spoke differently. Then it came to be known that any Northerners who wanted to see the Premier must be dressed in the babbanriga before he [sic] could have audience with him.[686]

This was part of a process much older than Northern nationalism; older, even, than Nigeria. At the time of the British conquest, the forms of clothing most commonly associated with urban Hausa Muslims were spreading to other communities.[687] The point, as far as this chapter is concerned, is that, as NPC politicians became more prominent and vocal, fashions once called 'Hausa Dress' (inexact though that term may be) were now to be known as 'Northern Traditional Dress'. It was part of a wider exercise in what is now known as re-branding.

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[685] The Zikist uniform was, at first, a white suit and red tie, soon to be substituted by a more 'authentic' white *agbada* and a red muffler. The *agbada* is practically the same as the *babbar riga* – it represents one of many cultural attributes shared by Hausas, Yorubas and others. Yet why should a gown be more authentic than a suit? To many Nigerians, both forms of dress were alien. To others, the three-piece suit was what they had always worn.

[686] Yahaya Kwande *The Making of a Northern Nigerian* (Jos: Quarhess, 1998) p137.

[687] For Kwande, these modes of dress were not spreading quickly enough. With great humour and affection, he describes the shock undergone by his wife (from Katsina) at the sight of naked people, first from the train window and then in Shendam itself, when the newly-weds were making their first visit as a couple to Kwande's home town. Despite 'modernity', differences in culture remained. See Kwande *Making of a Northern Nigerian* Chapter 2.

This was not the only thing to be re-branded. Forced labour, officially non-existent, continued in the guise of 'Community Development' programmes. According to Ahmed Talib, the Acting Secretary to the Premier, Community Development was all about 'carrying out self-help projects at the initiative of the communities themselves'.[688] A L Ciroma, from the Ministry of Water Resources and Community Development, also stressed that projects would be voluntary, and that the Government would be 'working together *with* communities rather than *for* communities'. He told the Provincial Secretaries that 'Community Development is in vogue ... It is desirable that this "movement" should be spread to all parts of the Region'.[689] Innocuous as all this sounds, we should remember that imperial shorthand was still at work, even in 1965. The will of the community was equated almost exactly with that of their Village Head, District Head or Native Authority.

The Sarkin Gobir chaired the Argungu Emirate Community Development Committee, the minutes of which are instructive. In them, the chairman points out how much money the NA has saved by using 'Community Development' rather than paying for public works. Water drainage in Argungu town, for instance, would have cost £2000 if the labour had been paid for in cash; the building of a dispensary in Kamba would have cost £500; and so on.

The Committee also decided that classes should be set up across the emirate to 'make the common people more enlightened and also explain to them the benefit of communal labour'.[690] It seems, then, that some of the 'common people' were not especially happy with this system – the same suggestion was made in the provincial capital, Sokoto. Further, it was agreed that 'No one

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[688] WJBHAC: Sokoto 1/10/6/57 'Community Development in Northern Nigeria'. Ahmed Talib (Acting Secretary to the Premier) to All Provincial Secretaries Northern Nigeria 1/6/1965.

[689] Ibid. A L Ciroma (Acting Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Water Resources and Community Development) to All Provincial Secretaries, Northern Nigeria 16/9/1965. Emphasis in the original.

[690] Ibid. Argungu Emirate Community Development Committee, Minutes 17/9/1965.

should be exempted from attending such communal labour as the mere presence of some personalities in a community would stimulate the would-be laggards'.[691] Community Development was, apparently, not as voluntary as it seemed.

### 6.23 The Self-Government Celebrations

The date chosen for the hand-over was March the 15th, despite the immense inconvenience of being right in the middle of Ramadan (meaning that most celebrations had to be put off until May). The significance of this date was that on March the 15th 1903 the West Africa Frontier Force finally occupied Sokoto. In the literary output of Northern Nationalism, there is a recurring emphasis on the conquest of Sokoto as a crucial date in the history of Northern Nigeria. But why? The Protectorate of Northern Nigeria was declared in 1900. Bida was conquered in 1901; Zaria the following year. Parts of the Middle Belt were not effectively occupied until the 1920s. Why should 1903 always be the reference point? The reasonable and obvious answer is that with the conquest of Sokoto came the downfall of the Caliphate, Black Africa's largest polity, and the single *serious* obstacle in the way of Britain's imperial ambitions. As a key moment, it is hard to beat.

Yet this is one of those occasions when the reasonable and obvious answer is not the right one. March 15 1903 *was* when Northern Nigeria became something more real than a name on a map – but the reason that this date was chosen was subtly different. It was because, as we have seen, the Northern Region itself was seen as a resurgent Sokoto Caliphate. Even though, at convenient moments, such as the Premier's appearance before the Willink Commission, the region is identified as a modern political entity, 'diverse but united', the identification of the Northern Region with the Sokoto Caliphate is usually as strong in the discourse of Northern nationalism as the identification of the Italian state with the Roman Empire in fascist ideology. The big difference, of course, is in time span. Among the Premier's personal entourage

[691] Ibid. Sokoto Province Community Development Committee, Minutes 14/7/1966.

on the day he was assassinated was an elderly man who had fought against the British in the very battle that Self-Government day commemorated.

The celebration was a big affair, requiring the co-operation of hundreds of people. Those who had worked hard to make the events a success were rewarded with one of the memorial medallions that were also on sale to the general public. A manufacturer in Birmingham had been commissioned to make a million of the souvenirs, each of which had a green ribbon attached, and featured 'a suitable inscription on one side and an illustration of Lugard Hall on the obverse'.[692]

Kaduna Textile Mill manufactured more than thirteen miles of bunting for the self-government celebrations. There was also a magnificent durbar, involving 8000 men and 3000 horses. Celebrations came to an end with a fireworks show at Kaduna racecourse, culminating in the display of 'pyrotechnic' portraits of the Premier and Queen Elizabeth (which can be seen in the film *Sir Ahmadu Bello*[693]). Other events included a children's pageant, depicting the history of Northern Nigeria, and a beauty contest. The Premier had asked a Department of Education official (a Miss Foster) to organise the latter, but she regarded it as 'inconsistent with her proper job – in fact definitely inimical to the effective carrying out of her proper job' and retired from the service in protest.[694] This incident seems inconsistent with the idea of the Sardauna as an Islamic 'fundamentalist', as popularly understood. Indeed, there is a much ambiguity on this score: the Premier's comments on slavery and *hadd* punishments (see chapter two) suggest that Sir Gawain Bell's assessment of the man as an uncompromising proponent of Islam and shari'a was correct, as do his missionary activities and his continual reference to the life and works

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[692] PRO: CO554/1665 'Celebrations of Regional Self-Government'. Northern Regional Daily Press Service 5/12/1958.

[693] *Sir Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto* (Kaduna: This Day and Zamani Newspapers, n.d. c.2000). The film is made up of archive footage, mostly newsreels.

[694] PRO: CO554/1657 'Self-Government for the Northern Region'. C G Eastwood, minute, 25/3/1959.

of Usman Dan Fodio. That the Sardauna acquiesced in the restriction of shari'a law to the personal sphere suggests otherwise.

### 6.24 Changing Roles

At the Sardauna's instigation, it became usual for the Sultan to read the Premier's address to the people of Sokoto town on Self-Government Day.[695] That the Sultan was now the representative of the Premier was indicative of just how important far the image of Ahmadu Bello was being promoted. As an alternative to Islamic brotherhoods, Ahmadu Bello had, in 1960, founded the *Usmaniyya*, which 'came to represent a transethnic, transbrotherhood basis for northern regionalism'.[696] The Premier conferred the Order of *Usmaniyya* on his 'lieutenant' Abubakar Tafawa Balewa in 1964. Convinced that he would never become *Sarkin Musulmi*, this was one religious hierarchy of which he could be head.

It was around that year that the Sardauna's ego was to receive a sharp blow. For the first time, the Premier announced the end of the Ramadan fast over the radio. The broadcast from Kaduna was heard right across the North. Yet the Sardauna and his party arrived in Sokoto to find the whole town still fasting. The people would stop only when instructed to do so by the proper authority – the *Sarkin Musulmi*.[697]

This must have been a shock for the Premier. He was used to hearing only good things from the general public, and expected them to accept his leadership role, even if it seemed to trespass on that of the Sultan. By this time, the Sardauna was popularly known as the *Sarkin Arewa* (Chief of the North) and was treated as such, even by chiefs, whose letters often addressed the Premier as a traditional ruler, rather than leader of a modern polity. The

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[695] WJBHAC: Sokoto 14/12/122 'Self-Government and Independence Celebrations'.

[696] Paden *Religion and Political Culture* p147.

[697] Kukah *Religion and Politics* p20. In 1965, there was a similar case in the village of Gandi, near Sokoto, at the beginning of Ramadan. The *Alkali* was dismissed for (among other things) telling the townspeople 'not to commence the fasting for [a] mere radio announcement by the Government'. See WJBHAC: Sokoto: 1/47/383 'Gandi Native Courts General'. Alhaji Abubakar, Alkalin Alkalai to Provincial Secretary Sokoto 23/6/1965.

newly appointed Obaro of Kabba, for instance, wrote soon after independence to congratulate the Premier, marvelling at 'how mindful you are of your subjects however grand or small' (and promising his full support for the Northern Regional Government and the NPC)[698], while the Ohinoyi of Igbirra addressed the Sardauna as 'my lord'.[699] A non-royal correspondent called the Sardauna (in Hausa) the 'the honourable ... king of kings, leader of leaders',[700] while another referred to him as 'Your Highness'.[701] An NA official from Gusau wrote to the Premier addressing him as 'the leader of all the world's Muslims'.[702]

In the 1960s, Ahmadu Bello was also promoted in the North as a brand name. His office was showered with requests for permission to use his name for commercial purposes. On the long list of things which were approved, we can include:

Streets

A Ship

An aeroplane

A rock in the river Benue

A perfume (with the Premier's picture on the bottle)

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[698] NAK: PRE/44 Vol I 'Correspondence from Emirs and Chiefs to the Premier'. Obaro of Kabba to Premier 28/8/1960. Ahmadu Bello was fastidious in following protocol, and most insistent that any communication with a chief to emanate from his office was to be personally signed by him. Usually, it was chiefs of the second or third class who wrote letters to the Premier, who saw the first class chiefs often enough in person.

[699] Ibid. Ohinoyi of Igbirra to Premier 20/3/1961

[700] NAK: PRE/222 'Requests for Religious Books'. Mallam Uwais to Ahmadu Bello n.d. circa October 1963.

[701] NAK: PRE/10 S1 'Autobiography of Sir Ahmadu Bello Correspondence' Simon Gboko Yough to Ahmadu Bello 20/11/1962.

[702] WJBHAC: Sokoto 35/3/24 'Application for a loan of £5000 from N. N. D. C. by Alhaji Muhammadu Nadange Sokoto (1963)'.

An exercise book (The Premier Exercise Book, approved on the proviso that the cover be a fittingly Islamic green, which was also the Premier's favoured colour of ink)

A village

The village of Nyiru, in Wukari Division of Benue Province, was renamed Nyiru Bello at the request of the chief and ward heads, who wanted to show their appreciation for the increased prosperity of the village since the building of the Yola-Takum road nearby. (They also took the opportunity to complain of an increase in road deaths because the pedestrian bridge had not been completed.)

One request which was turned down was from United Trades Company, which wanted to produce textiles with Ahmadu Bello's picture as part of the pattern. Although the company was based in Kano, its directors were all southerners and it planned to have the wax prints produced in Britain. The idea was therefore rejected because there was 'no Northern interest'.[703] Similarly, when the editor of an Israeli-based biographical dictionary requested a copy of the Premier's photograph and short biography for inclusion in the book, no reply was sent. It easily could have been, because the Premier's Office had a standard short biography which it sent out to almost anyone who requested it. However, the civil servant who presented the letter noted that, of the other prominent Nigerians who were said to have agreed to the publication, none was a Muslim, before suggesting that 'In view of the nationality of the Editor, you may wish to direct that the request be ignored?'[704] The Premier marked the letter 'NFA' (No Further Action).

### 6.25 Historiography and the North

The rise of nationalist politics in Africa, followed by independence, focused academic attention on the continent as never before. Through the 1950s and

[703] NAK: PRE.197 Vol I 'Honourable Sir Ahmadu Bello'. These are the unsigned words of a civil servant.

1960s there was a reassessment of what was known about the African past and, crucially, what potential existed for further study.

Kenneth Onwuka Dike once wrote that 'I am convinced that history and culture are factors as important in the construction of a nation as more material considerations, for a nation without a distinctive history and culture is without content'.[705] For a lot of the emerging historians of the 1950s and 1960s, a factor in the decision to research the great states and famous leaders of African history was the hope of providing inspiration for the newly independent states and their leaders. Although, as Kapteijnes points out, good historians 'were not ready to make history a handmaiden to nationalism', they were looking for the best possible examples. [706]

A distinctively Northern Nigerian 'school' of history did not emerge until the late 1960s and early 1970s, when the Northern History Research Scheme (set up in Zaria in 1965 as a joint venture between Ibadan University and Ahmadu Bello University) began to bear fruit. The head of the Scheme was Charles (Abdullahi) Smith, whose essay on the Jihad of Usman 'Dan Fodio, 'A Neglected Theme in West African History' had been hugely influential, provoking a lot of interest.[707] Scholars began to analyse the evidence and come up with a more sophisticated alternative to the view of the jihad as an ethnic conflict between Hausas and Fulani[708], swapping 'Fulani Empire' for 'Sokoto Caliphate' in the process. Murray Last's *The Sokoto Caliphate* was

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[704] NAK: PRE.110 'Premier's Biography'. O A Salceano, editor of *World Free Peoples Biographical* to Ahmadu Bello 8/11/1965.

[705] Quoted in Lidwien Kapteijnes 'African Historiography written by Africans, 1955-1973: The Nigerian Case' (PhD Amsterdam, 1977) p26.

[706] Ibid p27.

[707] H F C Smith 'A Neglected Theme of West African History; The Islamic Revolutions of the nineteenth century' in *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* Vol 2, No 1, 1961. Smith changed his name to Abdullahi on his conversion to Islam.

[708] Wolfgang Kaese 'Akademische Gescichtsschreibung und Politik in Nigeria seit 1955: Ein Überblick' in *Afrika Spectrum* 34 (1999) pp246.

thus a key point in the historiography, as was R A Adeleye's *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria.*[709]

As John Ralph Willis observed in 1971, the changes that occurred in the historiography of Muslim Africa during the 1960s are such that 'one cannot help but be astonished by the comparison'. Western scholars, he wrote, had been living through 'a sort of *jāhiliyya*[710]'.

> Before 1960 there were no university centers devoted to the study of Islam in Africa; there was only a handful of scholars fully engaged in Islamic studies, and of these very few trained in the historical discipline ... [Over the 1960s] several prominent centers of African studies have been established, and while a serious shortage of Arabist-historians continues, it is encouraging to note that each of these centers has placed high priority upon the acquisition of scholars in African Islamic Studies.[711]

By the mid-1970s, the focus had started to shift away from establishing the legitimacy of African history as a discipline and more towards an investigation of the past using Marxian methodology, centred on productive relations. Like the Ibadan School, the ABU School of history focused on Africa from the African point of view, but put more emphasis on Arabic sources than oral ones, pushing back the boundaries beyond the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries.

Yet before the universities of Ibadan and ABU had made their mark, a small group of non-academic authors had been writing about Northern Nigerian history, often from a distinctively nationalist viewpoint. One of these was Abubakar Imam, the popular Hausa novelist and editor of *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo*. Around 1954, he published a book entitled *Kunne Ya Girmi Kaka* or 'The Ear Reaps the Harvest'.[712] In it, he relates one version of the story of Bayajida, the legendary founder of the seven original Hausa states (the Hausa *Bakwai*). In brief, the story runs like this: a mysterious stranger arrived in Daura

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[709] Murray Last *The Sokoto Caliphate* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1967). R A Adeleye *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria* (London: Longman, 1971).

[710] 'Era of ignorance', usually used with reference to pre-Islamic Arabia.

[711] John Ralph Willis 'The Historiography of Islam in Africa: The Last Decade (1960-1970)' in *African Studies Review* 14 (3) 1971.

[712] Abubakar Imam *Hausa Bakwai: Kunne Ya Girmi Kaka! [The Hausa Seven: The Ear Reaps The Harvest!]* (Zaria: NORLA, c.1954).

(in present-day Katsina State) after a long and arduous journey. This man, named Bayajida, was grateful and relieved when an old woman offered to let him stay at her house. He asked her if he and his horse might have a drink of water. The old woman was surprised: did he not know that the townspeople were only allowed to draw water from the *Kusugu* well on Fridays, and then only after their queen had pled with *Sarki*, the giant snake who terrorized the town? Bayajida, being both brave and thirsty, determined to kill the snake and liberate the town. He did so, and was rewarded with the queen's hand in marriage. Together they had a son, Bawo, whose children went on to rule six towns: Daura, Katsina, Kano, Rano, Zazzau (now Zaria) and Gobir. Together with Garun Gabas (whose king was the product of an earlier union between Bayajida and his first wife, a Bornu princess) these are the Hausa Seven.

Imam does not mention the *Banza Bakwai*, the seven 'illegitimate' states, founded by the sons of Bayajida's child by a concubine (one of Queen Daura's Gwari slaves). Lists of the *Banza Bakwai* and the *Hausa Bakwai* differ occasionally, but the seven towns commonly cited are Zamfara, Nupe, Kebbi, [Birnin] Gwari, Yauri, Yoruba and Kwararafa.[713] Today, the peoples of Zamfara, Yauri and Kebbi are largely assimilated into Hausa identity. The Nupe are closely associated with Hausa culture but do not usually refer to themselves as 'Hausa'. Neither do the Jukun (Kwararafa) and Gwari peoples. The 'Yoruba' referred to in the legend is the town of Oyo – whose inhabitants would object strongly to the suggestion that their town is an 'illegitimate' sub-branch of Hausaland!

According to Imam, the HaƁe (in this context, Hausas without Fulani background) were originally Arabs.[714] A princess fled Palestine, together with her followers, and set out into the desert, finally settling at a place now known as *Tsohon Birni* (old town). After the death of the princess, the town continued

[713] This was the list which the Northern Regional Government included in its memorandum to the Willink Commission. It was compiled by D Westermann. See *Memorandum to the Minorities Commission* p5.

[714] Abubakar Imam *Hausa Bakwai: Kunne Ya Girmi Kaka! [The Hausa Seven: The Ear Reaps The Harvest!]* (Zaria: NORLA, c.1954) p3.

to be run as a matriarchy and a subsequent *Magajiya* (queen) called Daura moved the town to a new site, naming it after herself. It was she who married Bayajida, who, in some versions of the tale, was a prince from Baghdad. After her death, the town was ruled by a king, whose title, *Sarki*, referred back to the vanquished snake.

M G Smith asserts that the Bayajida myth was 'created by the Kanuri in the sixteenth century', to legitimise Bornu's hold on the area.[715] The northern Hausa states routed their tribute through Daura, which the myth identified as the senior Hausa state of the seven, all of which were under the domination of Bornu. Yet, despite the external origins of the tale, it has been absorbed into Hausa literature and remains an important part of people's self-perception. As Miles points out, in an excellent summary of the strands of scholarly opinion on whether 'Hausa' denotes an 'ethnic' or a linguistic grouping, there is one school of thought that suggests someone can only call themselves 'Hausa' if they can claim a place of origin in one of the Hausa *Bakwai*.[716] The view of the (Haɓe) Hausa as a race, however, is not consistent with the continuing tendency of Hausa identity to assimilate its neighbours.[717]

Like Imam, the authors of *Land of Tomorrow*, a brochure designed to promote the Northern Region to outsiders, suggest the Hausas have an exotic origin:

> The growth of trade and spread of Islam naturally enough led to the settlement of some foreign elements, mostly Hamitic peoples. It was the descendants of these immigrants through inter-marriage with the indigenous inhabitants who

[715] M G Smith *The Affairs of Daura* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978) p56.

[716] Miles *Hausaland Divided* pp43-51. The section 'The Nature of Hausa Identity' is well worth reading. Miles' suggestion as to the etymology of 'Bayajida' (lit. 'He didn't understand [Hausa] before') is, however, to be taken *cum grano salis*.

[717] There are signs that this tendency is less pronounced than it was. Douglas Anthony notes that at one time, conversion to Islam by an Igbo immigrant to the North was the beginning of a long process of 'Hausanization'. Today, however, there are those who 'actively challenge the view, so widely embraced in Nigeria, that Igbo and Muslim identities are mutually exclusive'. See Douglas Anthony '"Islam Does Not Belong to Them": Ethnic and religious identities among male Igbo converts in Hausaland' in *Africa* 70 (3) 2000 p422.

> formed the Hausa-speaking peoples, the dominant strain in the territory for hundreds of years.[718]

A fine example of the tendency to project the idea of Northern Nigeria back in time, *Land of Tomorrow* gave a brief review of the region's history, emphasising all continuities and playing down all change. Admittedly, there was no suggestion that the Northern Region itself had existed hundreds of years ago, but the following sentence is typical:

> With a colonial history of little more than half a century against a background of a thousand years of the rise and fall of states, Northern Nigeria has a heritage as deeply rooted in history as that of many a nation.[719]

The text went on to say Bornu was flourishing at the time of William the Conqueror, before covering the arrival of Islam along the caravan routes and then the nineteenth century Jihads. The pamphlet discussed the economic motivations behind the British invasion and focuses particularly on the figure of Lord Lugard, who 'spent the first few years of the century carrying out expeditions against the Fulani rulers, the Kingdom of Bornu and the numerous independent chiefdoms'. This sentence is the first mention of anywhere outside Bornu or the Sokoto Caliphate (except for a fleeting mention of Songhay in the introduction). The British relied on Indirect Rule, the pamphlet said, so as not to interfere with the culture of the people of the North – note that the words used, *culture* and *people*, are singular in both cases. The pamphlet then brushes past the remainder of the colonial period to arrive at 15th March 1959, the date of regional Self-Government. National independence was not mentioned.

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[718] Ibid., p8.

[719] *Land of Tomorrow: A Story of Northern Nigeria* (London: Northern Nigeria Ministry of Information, 1962) p7.

Abubakar Imam did not write only about the ancient history of Hausaland. Indeed, his book about the Hausa Seven covers the takeover of Daura by the Shehu's flagbearers during the jihad and the subsequent restoration of the HaBe monarchy (in exile at Zango) by the British. Imam, a member of the *Tijanniya* brotherhood, took a keen interest in both history and religion, and went on to publish two books about the early history of Islam, in the 1950s.[720]

In 1960, Imam gave a lecture on 'the constitution of Northern Nigeria before the coming of the British' at an early meeting of the Historical Society of Nigeria. The 'constitution' referred to is Al-Maghili's fifteenth century treatise on the obligations of princes. According to *Nigerian Citizen*, Imam 'pointed out that the Constitution of Northern Nigeria 400 years before the advent of the British was based partly on principles laid down by the Moslem Caliphs'. In speaking of the 'the pre-British Constitution of Northern Nigeria', Imam typifies the tendency to base historicized interpretations of 'the North' around the Caliphate or (as in this case) earlier Islamic polities, especially in Hausaland.[721]

Abdulmalik Mani's *Zuwan Turawa Nijeriya Ta Arewa*[722] (The Coming of the Europeans to Northern Nigeria) also centres itself around the Caliphate. Before writing it, Mani had already been published, having written a book about Kano in 1946, as well as working on a variety of projects at the Gaskiya Corporation and NORLA.[723] He went on to write biographies of the Emir of Kano Abdullahi Bayero in 1958 and Ahmadu Bello in 1959.

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[720] Abubakar Imam *Tarihin Annabi da Halifofi [A History of the Prophet and Caliphs]* (Zaria: NORLA, 1957) and *Tarihin Musulunci Zuwa Rasuwar Sayyidina Ali [A History of Islam up to the Death of Sayyidina Ali]* (Zaria: Gaskiya 1960).

[721] *Nigerian Citizen* 10/2/1960. Al-Maghili of Tuat was a major Islamic scholar, commissioned by the Sarkin Kano, Muhammad Rumfa (reg. 1465-1499) to write the text. For a translation, see T H Baldwin (ed.) *The Obligations of Princes by Sheikh Muhammad el-Maghili* (Beirut: 1932).

[722] Abdulmalik Mani *Zuwan Turawa Nijeriya Ta Arewa* (Zaria: NORLA, 1957). Husaini Hayatu in *Fifty Years of Truth: The Story of the Gaskiya Corporation Zaria 1939-1991* (Zaria: Gaskiya Corporation, 1991) p187 notes that Mani co-wrote the book with Neil Skinner.

[723] Hamza Mohammed Maishanu 'The Evolution and Development of Historical Scholarship in Northern Nigeria' (PhD Sokoto, 1998) p362.

Mani's view of Nigeria was strongly coloured by his sources, mostly the work of Lord Frederick Lugard, Heinrich Barth and Dr Walter Miller. 'Other sources were used minimally,' writes Hamza Maishanu. 'Oral sources were selectively restricted to such faithful servants of colonialism like Malam Bako who was rewarded with a chieftaincy title ... Even the Arabic letters taken away from Wazir Bukhari's house were simply intended to show the level of anxiety that was generated in Northern Nigeria by the coming of the British'.[724]

To the extent to which Mani's work discusses the way in which the British made Northern Nigeria rather the way Northerners made it themselves, it belongs to the era before African history had developed as a subject. However, the book also touches on the North before the British arrived. Although he refers to Northern Nigeria in the title, Mani prefers to use the phrase *Kasar Hausa*, or Hausaland. Perhaps this was more than just avoiding an anachronism: the diversity of the North makes it hard to generalise across the imaginary ethno-linguistic boundaries. Yet it should be remembered that *Kasar Hausa* is a somewhat elastic term, covering anywhere the Hausa language is spoken, rather than just the seven states.[725]

As the text moves on to the period of the jihads, Mani makes liberal use of the phrase 'this country', equating the Northern Region directly with the Sokoto Caliphate.[726] Exceptions are quickly skirted over:

> ...everyone has heard of [Shehu Usman Dan Fodio] and how his followers planted his flags *everywhere here in the North*, except for Borno and certain mountains and forests where the Haɓe fled to, and hid and kept coming out to fight against the emirs.[727]

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[724] Ibid. The letters found in the Waziri's house were published as H F Backwell (ed.) *The British Occupation of Hausaland 1900-1904* (London: Frank Cass, 1969).

[725] It is with some bitterness that the author remembers dropping a mark in a multiple-choice paper at Haliru Binji College, Sokoto, for saying that Daura was the first town in Hausaland to be visited by Bayajida. The correct answer, the examiner later explained, was Borno. A Kanuri town, yes, but well within the boundaries of *Kasar Hausa*.

[726] *Kasan nan* literally means 'this land'. *Kasa* was often used to mean 'Province'. However, context makes it clear that the 'land' referred to is the North.

[727] Mani *Zuwan Turawa* p12. My translation and emphasis.

The book takes a conciliatory tone with Borno, but the *arna* ('pagans') of the mountains are treated less sympathetically. The major role ascribed to the Tiv, for instance, is that of highway robbers.

The book is critical of the Caliphate's leadership after Muhammad Bello, especially the slave raids on what is now called the Middle Belt. Mani accuses the leadership of 'deviation' from the path of justice which the Shehu and Muhammad Bello had set out.

> Later on [after the jihad] they went back to waging war for one reason only. There was war simply to capture slaves. That is to say, raiding. And even though the wars were not being fought to convert the conquered to Islam, they still referred to them as "jihad".[728]

He then goes on to justify British intervention in the terms that the British themselves used – by reference to the war, famine and slavery that were prevalent at the time of conquest and, retrospectively, by the material progress which the North had made under British guidance.[729]

There were other historical works published in this period. These included biographies of Mungo Park, the explorer, and of Yakubu, who led the jihad into Bauchi.[730] The latter work was a short and simple pamphlet published as part of the Adult Literacy campaign, as was Mani Kankiya's history of the wars between the peoples of Katsina and Maraɗi.[731] In the field of ethno-history, more serious works were published, such as the work of Hassan, the Sarkin Ruwa of Abuja, on the history and customs of the *Haɓe* people of Abuja emirate and *Tarihin Fulani* (History of the Fulani) by Junaidu, the Waziri of Sokoto.[732] The latter has been called 'the major modern work on Sokoto

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[728] Ibid., p15.

[729] Mani points out that cotton and groundnuts were unheard of in the North before 1905 – not to mention planes, trains and automobiles.

[730] Nuhu Zariya [i.e. Nuhu Bamalli] *Mungo Park Mabuɗin Kwara* (Zaria: Gaskiya, 1948) and Abdulkadir Akabi *Yakubu, Bajimin Bauci!* (Zaria: Gaskiya, 1960).

[731] Mani Kankiya *Yaƙi na Karshe Tsakanin Katsinawa da Maraɗawa* (Zaria: Gaskiya, c. 1960).

[732] Hassan Sarkin Ruwa, Abuja and Shu'aibu Muƙaddamin Makaranta, Bida *Tarihi da Al'adun Haɓe na Abuja* (Zaria: Gaskiya, c. 1960) and Waziri Junaidu *Tarihin Fulani* (Zaria: Gaskiya, 1957).

history, carrying the account through from the origins of the Fulani to Sokoto in the 1950s'[733]. It was composed in Arabic before its translation into Hausa.

Ahmadu Bello liked to associate himself with many phases of Northern history. Despite the decidedly un-Islamic tinge to the idea, a member of the Northern House of Assembly once described him as 'a reincarnation' of the Shehu and this was an image he enjoyed playing up to.[734] Yet, in 1960, he received the soubriquet of Bayajida II, bestowed upon him by the Emir of Daura[735], highlighting Bello's desire for association with the pre-Jihad history of the Hausa people at the same time.

Kirk-Greene aptly categorises Ahmadu Bello as a 'culture-hero', meaning a modern leader who 'consciously and quite deliberately, reaches back into the history of his people and, by a positive reaffirmation of their cultural dynamic, simultaneously enhances both his stature and his legitimacy'.[736] The Premier's fondness for titles is one of the more striking examples of this. Conversely, the Shehu himself had warned his followers not to imitate the Hausa administrative forms, 'not even in the titles of their king, such as ... Galadima and Ubandawaki'.[737] However, within ten years of Usman 'Dan Fodio's death, traditional court titles had begun to make a comeback.

Bello also enjoyed comparisons with his great-grandfather Muhammad Bello, as his adopted surname shows, and with all the subsequent Sultans. The Premier could afford to place no dividing line between those of the Sultans who had kept to the path of justice trodden by Usman 'Dan Fodio and those who had 'deviated', as Abdulmalik Mani put it. Nor did he alienate the 'colonial

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[733] Murray Last *The Sokoto Caliphate* (London: Longman, 1967) pxlv.

[734] A L Baki in the Northern House of Assembly 8/3/1961, quoted in B J Dudley *Parties and Politics in Northern Nigeria* (London: Frank Cass, 1968) p134.

[735] *Daily Times* 26/11/1960.

[736] A H M Kirk-Green 'His Eternity, His Eccentricity or His Exemplarity? A further contribution to the study of H. E. the African head of state' in *African Affairs* 90 (1991) p174.

[737] M G Smith *The Affairs of Daura* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978) p262.

masters' by rejecting their advances, happily accepting a knighthood and the CMG. Thus, Ahmadu Bello was given accolades reflecting his association with ancient Hausaland (Bayajida II), the time of the Jihads (Reincarnation of Usman 'Dan Fodio), the period afterwards (his surname Bello; his title Sardauna), the British colonialists (knighthood) and even the Christian saints Michael and George. Later, he would add 'Grand Commander of the Niger' – an honour awarded by independent Nigeria – to his collection.

### 6.26 The Northern Regional Festival of Arts

In addition to his other commitments, Abubakar Imam was heavily involved with the Northern Region Festival of arts, started in 1962, as the chairman of the judging panel for the literature competition.

Cups were awarded for the winners in various categories. Rather like the residential area of Ahmadu Bello University (where Tor Tiv Road meets Sarkin Musulmi Road), the prizes were named after traditional rulers of the North – reinforcing both their corporate identity and their subordination to the state. Some were named after political figures. Here are just some of the prizes awarded:

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|---|---|
| Shehu of Bornu's Cup: | Most impressive individual contributor |
| Premier's Cup: | Highest scoring Province |
| Sultan of Sokoto's Cup: | Play-writing |
| Atta of Igala's Cup: | Pottery, textiles, carving, metalwork |
| Emir of Zaria's Cup: | Photography |
| Emir of Katsina's Cup: | Dancing (with strict instructions that the music should be such that 'people could dance in an orderly fashion ... It should be purely recreational and presentable') |
| Emir of Ilorin's Cup: | Conjuring tricks |
| Emir of Kano's Cup: | Acrobatics |
| Emir of Bauchi's Cup: | Hausa written song (which must be non-political, non-religious and non-tribal) |
| Tor Tiv's Cup: | Humorous display |

Lamido of Adamawa's Cup: Drawing, Painting[738]

The literary section included an essay-writing competition, Abubakar Imam's Cup. Entrants were invited to write up to two thousand words on either 'the educational progress in Northern Nigeria between 1900-1960' or 'the Improvement of [the] Transport System in Northern Nigeria between 1900-1960'. The drama event was open to entries in English and Hausa, while other categories allowed the use of Hausa, Yoruba, Fulfulde, Kanuri, Tiv, Nupe, Idoma, Gwari, Igbirra or Margi. The set subject in the poetry competition was 'Evils of Bribery and Corruption', while, in the junior section, it was 'my town'.[739]

There are photographs of the competitors for the Emir of Katsina's Cup in *Land of Tomorrow*, the promotional pamphlet mentioned above. The section entitled 'The Robe and the Dance' featured Tiv dancers performing a 'traditional' routine. Yet it was the Sallah – the Islamic celebrations of Eid – rather than the Tiv dancing, that was portrayed as the centrepiece of Northern tradition. The pamphlet's authors wrote of the 'vast processions' on Sallah day, which 'cover a millennium in a kaleidoscope of colour'. It described the horses, (looking like the one on the Coat of Arms) decorated in 'the most vivid colours that the north can devise'. Riding the horses were soldiers, wearing 'the very same chain mail which their ancestors wore in the days of the Jihad'. The booklet went on in this vein for some time, before trying to tie in the North's expectations of industrial development. 'In the Industrial field,' it read, 'Northern Nigeria is fast flexing her muscles. In the sphere of pageantry and ceremonial she is already a land of splendid strength and colour'.

The logical extension of these mounted processions in celebration of Sallah (known in Hausa as *Hawan Sallah*) was the durbar, a glorious spectacle of horse-riding skills in celebration and re-affirmation of the 'traditional' power

[738] WJBHAC: Sokoto 14/18/182 'Northern Regional Festival of Arts'.

[739] NAK: MSWC/468 'Literature Section of Festival of Arts'.

structure. The word 'durbar' comes from the Farsi 'darbar', originally meaning a court room or audience hall. In British India, the word came to mean assemblies held to mark big events. The practice was transferred by the British to Northern Nigeria, where it found fertile soil. The horse was already associated in popular and scholarly discourse with Islamic control of the Western Sudan and with public celebrations such as *Hawan Sallah*.

**6.27 The 1956 Durbar**

The film of the 1956 durbar held to celebrate the visit of the new Queen was one of the most popular films to be shown by the Mobile Cinema. Joseph Goebbels, one of greatest propagandists of the twentieth century, firmly believed that the greatest form of propaganda was entertainment. Political objectives could be met by giving people a show. This is an important point. Although much of this chapter is devoted to what we in Britain now call 'style rather than substance', we must not lose sight of the importance of style, particularly in something so ethereal as a nation-building project. Durbar is the epitome of both the 'invented tradition' and the (now conventional) caveat that a tradition, however artificial, must achieve popular resonance if it is to succeed.

The 1956 durbar was not the first to be held in the North. There had been numerous others, some major, some minor, and none bigger than that which attended the visit of the Prince of Wales in 1925. [740] Rex Niven fondly remembered this occasion, because it was the first time that 'all the varied peoples of the North had attended a single event and taken part in a common display. Before the earlier [1925] event they had not only not been on speaking terms but had been actively hostile. By this time the passage of the years had smoothed away some of the difficulties, but the fact remained that the tribes were strangers to each other and to each others' religions: some of them lived 600 or 700 miles away from the others and had no mutual contact. Their languages were as strange to each other as were their customs and beliefs, and yet there was no murmur of discord'.[741]

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[740] Abdullahi Rafi Augi *The History and Performance of Durbar in Northern Nigeria* (Lagos: Nigeria Magazine, Federal Ministry of Information, 1978) p9.

[741] Rex Niven *Nigerian Kaleidoscope* (London: C Hurst and Co 1982) p263.

There was, then, something like a nation-building quality to the early durbars. Augi writes that they 'were primarily ceremonial in nature and served to remind local rulers and the people of their subordination to British authority'.[742] Apter argues that the durbars also signified the entrenchment of a racial hierarchy in Northern Nigeria. He notes that, in a grand durbar of 1912, held in Zaria, the head of the parade was taken up by mounted Fulani aristocrats (usually described as 'dignified'), followed by representatives of Ilorin and Bida ('perhaps more educated than the Fulani but less refined') and, last of all, 'the brutish pagans, occupying the lowest position in this colonial pecking order'.[743] The eyewitness reports that Apter quotes tend to emphasise the bringing of order out of chaos. Indeed, this is a theme running through most contemporary descriptions of durbars. Thus, the Annual Report for Bornu Province for 1956 makes much of the fact that the eighty-two year old Shehu insisted on heading the Bornu contingent 'despite the fact that he had not ridden since 1948'.[744] 'We had a feeling that his closest attendants were holding his legs to steady him,' remembered Niven. '[He] was very old and going blind'.[745] Niven then contrasted this image with that of the 'unruly pagans, nimble in their hoe-ing dance ... neatly loin-clothed but [with] their skins well greased.' He continued:

> Never was there such a sight, and such a spectacle of friendship between people not so long ago bitterly hostile to each other: the slaves and the raided, the rich and the poor, purest of Muslims and pagans, plainsmen and people from the High Plateau, the men from the sandy wastes of Bornu and Northern Kano and the stalwarts from the steamy fertile valleys of the great rivers. All were there and all went home in peace with improbable, and indeed incredible, tales of the young Queen who wore jewels that glittered and flashed in the sunshine, of the people from other countries yet within the boundaries of [Northern] Nigeria, of the songs and the languages they had heard, and the dances they had seen.[746]

The idea of the North was spread, both by the return of the 60,000 men who had attended the durbar and by the subsequent newsreels of the event. Both

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[742] Augi *Durbar* p9.

[743] Andrew Apter 'The Subvention of Tradition: A Genealogy of the Nigerian Durbar' in George Steinmetz (ed.) *State/Culture: State-Formation after the Cultural Turn* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1999) p234.

[744] PRO: CO657/89 'Administrative Reports' 1956. Annual Report Bornu 1956.

[745] Rex Niven *Nigerian Kaleidoscope* (London: C Hurst & Co., 1982) p264.

[746] Ibid. pp265-266.

this durbar and that of 1959 played a role in solidifying the idea of the North in the popular imagination.

### 6.28 Northern Civil Society

Civil society usually fits in with the political boundaries of the state. On the one hand, organisations are supposed to reflect the needs and aspirations of their members and having the word 'Northern' in the title helps to do this. That is, if there is to be such a thing as the Northern Farmers' Union, we need to have such a thing as the Northern Farmer.[747] Only if there are enough farmers who believe their own 'Northernness' to be sufficient reason for advancing their interests collectively can the thing go ahead. In short, civil society organises itself along the same lines as the mental boundaries that people set for themselves. But why, on the other hand, when the four-region constitution of Nigeria evaporated, did Northern civil society go with it?

Before the civil war, the North was home to dozens of societies such as the Northerners Sports Association, the Northern Nigeria Cultural Society[748], the Northern Amalgamated Merchants Union and the Northern Christian Association. There were also public events such as North versus South rugby matches. Although these were largely expatriate affairs, they provided a big enough audience (some thousands) for the Western Premier, Samuel Akintola, to agree to perform a ceremonial kick-off for a match held in Ibadan, in 1961.[749]

Yet these societies gradually phased themselves out to come into line with the new political realities. Let us take the example of the Northern Christian Association (NCA).

Officially, the NCA was founded in 1964, under the leadership of Jolly Tanko Yusuf (mentioned above) and E B Mamiso. The two men (Provincial

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[747] This is a hypothetical example. So far as I am aware, there was no Northern Farmers' Union.

[748] NAK: Josprof 2/58 Tou/16 'Resident's Personal Correspondence'.

[749] Arewa House: Pamphlet ND/A121: Programme for South vs. North rugby union game, hosted by Ibadan RFC at Liberty Stadium 2/9/1961. Club President Don Mather noted that 5000 people had seen Kaduna Police beat Ibadan five weeks previously.

Commissioners for Benue and Sardauna Provinces respectively) announced the existence of the organisation in a letter to the Premier:

> We as beloved sons of yours in whom you have confidence, feel duty bound to make our contribution to safeguard the interest of our beloved mother north which you are destined to lead. And it is with this objective of "One North, one people, irrespective of tribe, religion or rank" that we decided to get all Northern Christians indirectly having their own separate Christian association; in order to stop some Southern opportunists from wedging our age old solidarity in Northern Nigeria.[750]

According to Matthew Kukah's rather confused account, the NCA's inauguration in 1964 was just the first public acknowledgement of an organisation that had existed in secret since the *Rahol Kannang* meeting of 1948.[751] However, while Yusuf was a vigorous proponent of the One-North approach, the organisation founded in 1948 seems to have been pro-Middle Belt. The change in direction was, as far as Kukah is concerned, tantamount to treachery. He writes that, for the sake of patronage, 'the cream of the Christian leadership had placed political survival above the interests of the faith' and, again, that Yusuf, in sending the above letter to the Premier, was 'caught between political expediency and the Christian interests'. Having accused the NPC of advancing its interests 'by depicting political opponents, not as politicians with different views, but as being bad Muslims', Kukah does practically the same thing.[752]

Commitment to the idea of the North did not continue into the military era, however. 'After the creation of states, many of our key members went away to their new states', Rev. H. Aledeino said. 'When we wrote to the people of Kwara, for example, saying that the NCA should be continued in the new states

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[750] Jolly Tanko Yusuf and Lillian V Grissen *That We May Be One: the Autobiography of Nigerian Ambassador Jolly Tanko Yusuf* (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 1995) p96.

[751] *Rahol Kannang* is a Birom term, connoting the secrecy of the meeting. Kukah suggests this might have been as a safeguard against reprisals by the 'ruling NPC'. Since the NPC was not inaugurated until 1949 and did not become a political party until 1951, this seems unlikely. See Kukah *Religion, Politics and Power* p63 n94. The picture is further complicated by the existence of a group called something like 'the Social Union of Northern Christians', the aims of which were said, by George Vellacott of the CMS, to be 'somewhat nationalistic as well as Christian'. Vellacott was not certain he had got the name right. CMS: G3 A9-1 'Northern Nigeria Mission 1935-1959'. George Vellacott to Cecil Bewes 16/1/1959.

[752] Kukah *Religion, Politics and Power* pp51-2, pxii.

in the North, they told us that the "North" is dead. If we want them to be members, we must drop the word "North".'[753] As Kukah remarks, such a response might be expected from Kwara, which had always been on the periphery of the region, but the broader point is that, once the regional government that the NCA had been lobbying ceased to exist, the NCA had to adapt itself to the new structure. This new structure (the twelve-state Federal republic) imposed a more diffuse form of government intended, first, to prevent the emergence of a dominant region and second, better to reflect the diverse cultural landscape of the country. Of course, a ratio of twelve states to several hundred ethnic units did not 'reflect' this very far; nor does today's arrangement of thirty-six states. Yet the elements of Northern civil society quickly did just what the NCA had done. More and more organisations that had once defined themselves regionally now did so on a state-by-state or pan-Nigerian basis. How was this accomplished so quickly, and with so little resistance? The answer seems to be simply that the North was not a monolith. It was easily broken down. There is constant repetition of the North's diversity in the literature yet it is still easily missed, if only because the ease of the 'North=Hausa=Muslim' stereotype is so attractive. Just as an individual Northerner would usually envisage himself as part of the north through the agency of his hometown, his language and his 'ethnicity', so the bricks with which Northern civil society had been built could be re-arranged with relative speed. From here, the argument becomes circular: the political influences the cultural and vice-versa. Perhaps the boundary between politics and culture is, in a sense, an arrangement of convenience.

Counting against all this is a persistent One-North identity, a survival from the *zamanin siyasa*. It still exists, in a transformed state, despite being a politically blunt instrument in a country whose constitution bans 'sectional' parties.

### 6.29 Issues surrounding religious conversion

It can be speculated that the NCA made itself public as a reaction to the Premier's conversion tours. From 1963, Ahmadu Bello, (desiring, perhaps, to

[753] Ibid., p54.

fulfil his destiny as a modern-day Usman Dan Fodio) began to cast himself as a religious leader and preacher, touring the Northern Region and visiting areas whose populations had reportedly expressed an interest in becoming Muslims. The Sardauna consciously avoided touring areas of the country with a high concentration of Christians, for fear of causing offence. However, there had already been occasions when Christians did convert to Islam – sometimes with apparently political motives.

The conversion of Northern Christians to Islam was, for the CMS in Wusasa, a source of acute embarrassment and disappointment. 'Quite o [sic] good number of those who were "recruited" from the outstations and later became good christians [sic] fell by the wayside by abandoning the religion and reverted to the Islamic faith', notes a pamphlet celebrating Wusasa's diamond anniversary. 'Needless going into the reasons as to why this happened', it continues, 'doing so will be a purely academic exercise'[754]. But, for those of us who *are* interested in purely academic exercises, this is an interesting topic.

Nowhere was the pressure on Christians to convert greater than in Zaria and Kano: two cities at the heart of the North, one neighbouring the administrative capital of the region, the other its unofficial commercial capital, and both the site of CMS schools turning out highly motivated, well educated individuals, some of the best fitted to move into the political and administrative gaps being left behind by the withdrawing colonial power. Given the tight grip that the (Muslim) Native Authorities had on their own areas and access to elected office, there was little to stop religion being used as a bargaining-chip.

Nuhu Bayero, one time chairman of the University of Lagos Council and former Chief of Wusasa, is coy in his autobiography about his conversion.[755] Born into a Muslim family, he became a Christian while being taught at Wusasa, only to switch allegiance again almost two decades later, in 1954. He says nothing

[754] Arewa House pamphlet ND/A118. *Dutsen Wusasa [The Rock of Wusasa]* (Kaduna: Wusasa Old Students Association, 1989) p7.

[755] Nuhu Muhammadu Bayero *My Life* (Lagos: University of Lagos Press, 1990) p79.

more about the change, or what prompted it, but it is clear that his return to Islam opened some doors for him. In 1957, he accepted the offer of a post in the Emir of Zaria's council (in charge of NA Schools), along with the title of Dan-Iyan Zazzau, a title created especially for him (the name Dan-Iya being borrowed from Kano).

A similar tale can be told of John Tafida. He had held a special place in the North's Anglican community, having been taken to England around 1925 by Walter Miller to assist his translation of the Bible into Hausa.[756] On his return he was to marry, become chief of Wusasa and put the education he had received at the hands of Miller and others to good use in his short novel *Jiki Magayi*, published in 1955. His political ambitions were tolerated – perhaps, to the extent that he had the potential to represent the Christian minority in the coming transition, they were even encouraged. But it was, as one missionary wrote at the time, 'a very bitter blow' to hear what happened when Tafida finally accepted the post of Treasurer in the Emir of Zaria's council. Twice before he had turned the job down because it would conflict with his church commitments. This time, wrote Dr E T Mess, 'although we all knew it was going to be very difficult we felt that he was strong enough to try.' She goes on:

> First of all he said that he was going to continue to live in Wusasa for a while until he saw how things worked out but later they packed up their goods and sent them in on Friday morning into a new house in the City. He was installed on Friday at a ceremony in the Emir's palace after the 2 o'clock prayers. Some of us went along from Wusasa as he had asked us to go and support him (We were of course not among those admitted to the Council room.) Needless to say there was a spate of rumour all round about what exactly was happening... Mallam Amfani [who had also assisted Miller's translation] tried to contact Tafida to get him to make a statement which would quiet some of the rumours down, but couldn't get him and last night his recantation was made public over the radio and all the trappings that go with it – change of name, one or two more "wives" etc. Duma [Tafida's wife] returned to Wusasa with the boy on Saturday evening and is with the Amfanis. She refuses to recant ... It is all very sad and rather horrible and I know you will keep us in your prayers. We are trusting that good will come even out of this.[757]

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[756] *Sabon Alkawali na Ubangiji Isa Almasihu Mai Chetonmu [The New Testament of the Lord Jesus Christ, Our Saviour]* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1925).

[757] CMS: G3 A9-1 Northern Nigeria Mission 1935-59. E T Mess to unknown 29/6/1952.

Noel Sandford, Northern Nigeria Mission (NNM) Secretary, was also philosophical about the matter, suggesting 'it may be a blessing to us ultimately'. However, his reasoning was rather different: 'the Church,' he said, 'will be purer without him'. But why and how had Tafida's conversion (recantation as he saw it) happened?

> The primary reason would seem to be a craving for "sarauta" (ruling power) [Sandford continued]. He is closely related to the Emir, and may even be hoping to succeed him ... It can probably be said truthfully that Malam Tafida was not a particularly good Christian, and he is unlikely to be any better a Moslem ...
>
> I have not heard much more from Wusasa, but a little persecution might really be a blessing to the Church there, if it came, in making things more live. Within the "Christian village", things are sometimes too protected and easy perhaps for Christians in a Moslem land. One feels like this is sure to raise a good deal of comment. But it will also lead to the strengthening of such as do stand.[758]

Despite his evident personal distaste for Tafida, when Sandford did get the opportunity to speak to Wusasa Christians, he was keen to know if there was any chance of bringing Tafida back on board, hopefully citing a case from the 1930s 'when Malam Stephen Audu was offered the same position, and recanted for a short time, but the persuasions of his father and the intervention of Bishop [Alfred] Smith saved him'.[759] Indeed, the Secretary's hopes were not without foundation: Tafida eventually came back to Christianity.[760]

Even if Sandford was right in his suggestion that John Tafida was motivated solely by a craving for *sarauta*, it would be dangerous to turn that assumption into a generalisation. Like anybody else, Christians in Northern Nigeria were in control of their own choices – however limited – and took decisions relating to conversion based on myriad factors. However, whatever importance people

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[758] CMS: G3 A9-1 Northern Nigeria Mission 1935-59. N Sandford to Cecil Bewes 2/7/1952.

[759] CMS: G3 A9-1 Northern Nigeria Mission 1935-59. N Sandford to Cecil Bewes 10/7/1952. Sandford, who says Audu recanted in 'about 1936' may be referring to the time, in 1932, when he was made Sarkin Ayyuka (Councillor in Charge of Works) and abdicated as Chief of Wusasa. This incident is referred to in *Dutsen Wusasa*.

[760] Yahaya states that Tafida, the Dangaladima of Zaria, was made District Head of Zangon Katab in 1954, *because* he was a Christian (in the hope that he might be more acceptable to that particular district). See Yahaya *The Native Authority System* pp76-77. Although referred to in the latter text as John Abbas Tafida, he published under the name of John Umaru Tafida and was referred to in official documents as J Tafida Umaru Abbas. See NAK: DEN/630 'John Tafida Umaru'.

attach to their spiritual beliefs (and they attach a great deal) it would be naïve to suggest that none of these factors had a material side.

Christians in the North lived with a strong feeling of being discriminated against. These feelings were well summed up by J H M Hargreaves, Sandord's successor, in 1954. Hargreaves expressed delight at the way his mission had been able to co-operate with the Government in agreeing on ground rules for actively seeking converts to Christianity.[761] During the time that these negotiations were happening, a young Anglican Northerner was granted a state scholarship (to study theology in England) by a committee consisting of Muslims. This, too, wrote Hargreaves, was 'most cheering'.

> But we should not cheer too loudly. The situation still needs watching... It is not 100% certain that the Government will in practice interpret the Agreement in the way we meant it. And it was most disappointing when the British Government officials, in being requested to take a lead in introducing the United Nations Freedom of Religion Clause into the new constitution which comes into force in 1956, were not willing to do more than "note the request"... One must not forget ... the social disability under which many Christians live. In certain Government departments, a Christian finds he is passed over when promotions are made; (this probably does not apply to the Medical Department where any qualified staff, whatever his religion, is regarded as pure gold). [762]

C N Ubah argues that the sense of discrimination was greater after Self-Government, as the Northern Regional Government was able to pursue a more 'pro-Islamic' policy than had been possible under the British. More than ever before, non-Muslims were discriminated against when it came to gaining employment and getting promotions. Many Christians, he says, 'embraced Islam in order to strengthen their credentials, gain acceptability, and ensure their future in the Northern system'.[763] However, Ubah maintains that the increase in the number of Muslims still had more to do with the active evangelisation campaigns of the Premier than any broader economic or social pressures. Between 1964 and 1965, Ahmadu Bello is said to have converted 40,000 people in Adamawa and Sardauna Provinces.[764] During 1965 alone,

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[761] For more on the agreement, see CMS: G3 A9-4 'Religious Freedom'.

[762] CMS: G3 A9-1 Northern Nigeria Mission 1935-59. J H M Hargreaves *Report* July 1955.

[763] Chinedu N Ubah *Islam in African History* (Kaduna: Baraka, 2001) p315.

[764] Isa Alkali Abba 'Islam in Adamawa in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries' (MA Zaria, 1976) p247 fn2.

100 000 people were said to have become Muslims in Zaria and Niger Provinces.[765]

In each case, the provincial authorities would notify the Premier's office of how many people had requested, through their Village or District Heads, to be converted to Islam and have the Premier preach to them. Statistics were often compiled for the Premier's information. For example:

> Converts in Akwanga Federation [Plateau] up to 23 September 1965:
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | Wamba (9 Districts) | 13,320 |
> | Nassarawa Eggon (8 Districts) | 3,720 |
> | Mada (21 Districts) | 1,950 |
> | Total | 18,990[766] |

The conversion tours were planned out to the last detail. So, a two-day tour of Pankshin Division of Plateau Province was scheduled to convert around 5000 people at Mongu, 2000 in Pankshin town and 9000 in Kanam, with a welcome from the local NPC branch at each point, and 'traditional dances' to celebrate the end of the occasion.

Even some of the Sardauna's closest allies felt uneasy about the conversion campaigns. Yahaya Kwande writes that there were 'genuine as well as fake' Muslims among the Sardauna's converts. Kwande was present when Ahmadu Bello spoke to a large crowd of new adherents in Kachia, Southern Zaria, and asked them for whose sake they had converted.

> Without the briefest pause, the clear chorus sounded: "Sabo da kai!" (for your sake!). The Sardauna's face registered consternation. "No, it couldn't be for my sake, for I am only a human being," he said.
>
> Then he began to give a host of reasons why people should turn to the worship of Allah for Allah's sake alone ... I doubted that his words made any meaning to the people, and besides, the damage had already been done.[767]

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[765] Ubah *Islam in African History* p316.

[766] NAK: JosProf 2/58: Tou/81/S.1 'Converts to Islam'.

[767] Kwande *Making of a Northern Nigerian* p89.

According to Isa Alƙali Abba, opinion on the conversion tours can be divided into two camps. There are those who believe that the Premier wanted to convert as many people as possible out of his sincere religious beliefs, just as his forebear Usman Dan Fodio had done. Others believe him to have been motivated by the desire to remain in power. A view which seems to straddle these two schools of thought is that the Sardauna believed that the Middle Belt would be more stable if Islam predominated there.

Abba says that Ahmadu Bello received 'considerable moral and financial support' from wealthy contacts in the Middle East.[768] Abba's informants state that Saudi Arabia made a donation of £60,000, and Kuwait £300,000, half of which was to be given to the Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI, the Society for the Victory of Islam), which was founded in 1961 for the promotion of Islam. This way, the Sardauna was able to give presents to each convert: robes, *cazbi* rosary beads and £5 in cash. However, Abba's informants claim that a would-be Muslim had to bribe an official to be included in the list of people to be converted, meaning that the net sum was less than that.[769]

The Sardauna also paid for the publication in Arabic and Hausa of the works of Usman Dan Fodio. The Arabic versions were printed by El-Azhar University, Cairo, in 1962, the year after it awarded Ahmadu Bello his honorary doctorate. Mallam Aminu Kano was one of several people to write and congratulate the Sardauna on his decision to publish. Despite their political differences, Aminu Kano and Ahmadu Bello were always on friendly terms, and the Premier promised to help the NEPU leader whenever he could. On one occasion, Aminu Kano wrote to the Premier asking for this help. Although the letter does not state exactly what favour is being requested, it is interesting if only for the way that Malam Aminu asks the Premier to asking 'use the position that the

[768] Abba 'Islam in Adamawa' p247. Auwalu Anwar repeats the same claim but admits: 'I have no evidence to either accept or reject this claim. However, it seems to this writer that the Jama'at [JNI] and its leaders had very strong connections with the Arab nations'. Auwalu Anwar 'Struggle for Independence and Identity: The Ulama in Kano, 1937-1987' (MA Maiduguri, 1989) p340.

[769] Abba 'Islam in Adamawa' p248.

Lord has given you, without thought for those who seek to make profit from association with you'.[770]

Foreign donations also put the Sardauna in a position to respond to requests from the public for religious texts. Dozens of people wrote to the Premier to say that they had insufficient funds to buy a copy of the Qur'an and were requesting his help. He would always reply by sending a free copy. The only exception to this was when he was asked to provide a translation of the Qur'an in Hausa, which, at the time, did not exist, despite abortive attempts by both Sa'adu Zungur and the Gaskiya Corporation.[771]

### 6.3 Conclusion

The Premier famously once referred to the historic decision of his ancestor Usman Dan Fodio to divide responsibility for the lands he had conquered into two unequal portions, leaving his brother Abdullahi in control of one and his son Muhammad Bello in control of the other. 'When the current political battle is over,' he said (by which he meant the 1959 federal election) 'I too will divide this country between two trustworthy lieutenants'.[772] The Premier never fulfilled his wish to retire from active politics, but, in the following years, he did begin to withdraw from many of the day-to-day political and administrative activities of his office, becoming more wrapped up in religious matters. Ironically, it was at the same time that Northern nationalism began to imbed itself with greater confidence into the fabric of the federation. In a sense, this does not matter. The remaining members of Bello's generation of the Northern political elite speak with great emotion and pride of Ahmadu Bello as a hero before they speak of him as an administrator. It was Bello who made Northerners believe in themselves, they say. It was he whose charisma held the region in awe, and held the region's elites together. On the anniversary of his assassination, the

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[770] NAK: AGNN/1089 'Northern Nigeria Peoples Congress'. Aminu Kano to Ahmadu Bello 3/5/1958. My translation. The diaries of Aminu Kano, currently being prepared for publication by scholars at Bayero University, Kano, may well shed some light on the issues the two men discussed.

[771] NAK: 'Requests for Religious Books'.

[772] Quoted in Kirk-Greene 'Shaping the Hero' p54.

great and the good from Northern Nigeria and the rest of the republic gather at Arewa House, former official residence of the Premier and now a first-rate history archive and conference centre, to honour him in precisely these terms. So, as Northern nationalism was becoming more interested in outright control of the federation, from around 1963 to 1966, Ahmadu Bello the ideal-type Northerner (or culture-hero, as Kirk-Greene puts it) was still part of the picture.

Regionalism still operates in Nigeria, despite that three-way split of the country having turned into a 36-way split. Yet some things have changed. Once, the Northern nationalists ridiculed the claims of western-educated southerners that all Nigerians were equal and should therefore have equal rights to jobs and resources anywhere in the country and asserted, out of fear of being dominated by the South, that the North was for the Northerners. Now, with a multiplicity of states in place, the tendency is for the Northern elite to decry the 'parochialism' of the myriad pressure groups demanding that the rights of state 'indigenes' be respected over and above those of 'settlers'. This issue has been put in a whole new light by the discovery of Nigeria's oil reserves and goes some way towards explaining the clamour in some parts of the country for a National Conference to create a new political settlement. Issues of nationhood are still high on Nigeria's political agenda.

## Chapter Seven: *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo* 1962-1966

### 7.0 Introduction

This project is more concerned with events inside the Northern Region than with politics at the federal level. Sometimes, however, the two are inextricable. What we identify as the third stage undergone by northern identity, as expressed in the media, is characterised by a bullish confidence, which had a lot to do with developments in the south of Nigeria.

### 7.1 The breakdown of the NPC/NCNC alliance

Members of the NPC and the NCNC had served in federal governments together since the Northern Representatives first came under the NPC banner in 1951. Since the 1959 elections, the two had formed a coalition (to the exclusion of the AG) and, as the 1960s wore on, the NPC were increasingly assertive, in their role as senior partner. In the terms of Post and Vickers, 'It was becoming more and more evident that the Northern People's Congress was the decisive force in the System [of Rewards] ... it had become more and more willing to intervene openly in the politics of the southern regions.'[773]

In the Western Region, there had been a split in the Action Group (AG), as Premier Samuel Akintola clashed with the party's president (and leader of the federal opposition) Obafemi Awolowo. Akintola was removed from office by the Western Governor, but attempted to cling to power, in the knowledge that he could not only challenge the decision through the courts, but that both the NCNC and NPC had declared their support for him. In May 1962, the simmering tension between AG and the NCNC members of the Western House of Assembly – divided over whether Akintola should go or not – gave way to fighting, which was broken up by the police use of tear gas. By the end of the month, the Federal Government had declared a state of emergency in the West and appointed Dr M A Majekodunmi as Administrator of the region. Whether or not this was really necessary (and it can be argued that the government was

[773] Kenneth Post and Michael Vickers *Structure and Conflict in Nigeria 1960-1966* (London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1973) p97.

making a mountain out of a molehill in order to circumvent the democratic process in the region) it was the beginning of huge changes, from which the NCNC, as the principal opposition party, expected to benefit. When the Supreme Court ruled that Akintola's removal from office had indeed been improper[774], and that the declaration of a state of emergency for six months was valid, all seemed to be going according to plan. Tafawa Balewa announced, a week after the verdict, (in July 1962) that, rather than simply re-installing Akintola, there would be fresh elections. It must have seemed to the NCNC that, with the AG in disarray, both factions could be beaten.

In the event, the Western Houses of Assembly were restored, in January 1963, without new elections. Akintola, whose faction had become the United People's Party (UPP), formed a coalition government with the NCNC and was unanimously returned as Premier, as the remaining AG members began a boycott[775]. When this alliance (which had always been essentially a tactical one) began to fall apart, over the course of the year, the NCNC might have expected to receive some assistance or support from its federal partner – but Akintola was still fervently backed by the NPC. The party then showed its continued interest in politics outside the North after the creation of the Mid-West Region in August 1963, by assisting the newly formed Mid-West Democratic Front (composed of the UPP and the Mid-West People's Congress) to defeat the NCNC in a by-election. The Sardauna predicted an NPC victory in the upcoming Mid-West regional elections.[776] Although he was wrong – Dennis Osadebay, leader of the Region's NCNC, led his party to victory – competition between the two parties was now less restrained than ever before.

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[774] On appeal to the Privy Council, this verdict was overturned. The Prime Minister then announced that the Federal Government did not accept the Privy Council's ruling and changed the rules retrospectively so that it did not have to.

[775] The AG, meanwhile, had suffered irreparable damage as a result of three things: first, its split into two factions, one supporting Akintola (now the UPP) and one supporting Awolowo. Second, an inquiry into the actions of the Western Government, which not only condemned the AG but led to the freezing of party funds. (This was the Coker Commission, which the Federal Government set up at the request of Majekodunmi, the Administrator. It uncovered the sorts of corruption which had long sustained all three regional governments.) Third, and most seriously, by the arrest of its leaders on charges of attempted treason. Without support from Ibadan, the AG outside the Western Region quickly crumbled.

[776] Larry Diamond *Class, Ethnicity and Democracy in Nigeria: The Failure of the First Republic* (London: Macmillan, 1988) pp190-1.

Of course, The NCNC had never allowed the NPC a free hand in the North, campaigning there by alliance with NEPU; but the NPC seemed more of a threat now that it was involved in the politics of the Western Region and (less successfully) the Mid-West. Indeed, it was rumoured to be considering a change of name to reflect its national aspirations (just as NEPU became the Nigerian Elements Progressive Union around this time). It was during this period, in 1963, that the Northern Region's flag was dropped in favour of a federal flag, with the Northern Knot superimposed onto it. Symbolically, this firmly situated the North within Nigeria. Northern nationalism, as embodied by the NPC, was no longer limited to protecting the North from the southern elites and was taking a definite interest in the rest of the country. Where once the NPC had said 'the North is ours', it now said 'Nigeria is ours'.[777] Although printed shortly before the Mid-West election, this cartoon, from *Gaskiya*, expresses precisely this aspiration:




**'The Leader of the NPC Holds All Nigeria'**

Illustration 12: Ahmadu Bello holding Nigeria. *Gaskiya* 21/4/1964

[777] The following year, the NPC's Parliamentary Secretary for the Northern House of Assembly said he had no doubt that the party 'is going to rule the Federation of Nigeria for ever'. See ibid., p131.

The symbols dotting the map are hoes, the NPC emblem, and signify areas held by the NPC. Note that this includes areas of the south of Nigeria where the NPC had started campaigning by proxy. The only exception indicated, as far as the North goes, is Tivland, where UMBC support remained solid.

The NCNC's leaders were equally vexed by the 1962/3 census.[778] Why was this so important? The first-past-the-post system, which had given the NPC by far the largest number of seats in the House of Representatives in 1959, even though in total fewer votes were cast in their favour than either NCNC or AG, was dependent on an accurate distribution of constituencies.[779] This, in turn, was dependent on the census, which soon became a bone of contention, politically. Nigeria has never had a population count that could be described as achieving reasonable accuracy. The 1952 census had suffered, as had its predecessors, from people's unwillingness to declare the number of people in their households. Partly, this was because it was considered bad form (not to mention tempting fate) to boast about how many children one had.[780] Partly, it was because people suspected that they would be taxed more severely if they had a large family. Prior to 1962, then, most census results were probably underestimated.

The 1962/3 census, by contrast, was treated as if it were an election. Posters were distributed across the Northern Region with photographs of the Sardauna pointing, Kitchener-style, at the viewer. A written message declared that the Sardauna was like the head of a large family who wanted to know how many people were in his household so that he could provide for them properly. Every Northern man, woman and child, the message said, must be counted.[781]

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[778] The 1962 census was conducted amid so much irregularity that it was cancelled and restarted the following year. For the purposes of this brief summary, the two are treated as the same census.

[779] It was the decision of the 1958 Constitutional Conference that representation should be determined by population. Hitherto, seats had been divided equally between the North and the South on a 50:25:25 basis.

[780] For a humorous account of the difficulties associated with the census, see Anthony Enahoro *Fugitive Offender: The Story of a Political Prisoner* (London: Cassell, 1965) pp157-8.

[781] The poster is on display in the museum at Arewa House, Kaduna.

The results were greatly favourable to the NPC, and widely celebrated. As the Sardauna wrote to one young admirer, 'no doubt, our victory in the census is a thing of joy to every Northerner and we thank God for helping us'.[782] The attitude that the census was a competition seems to have been widespread, and not restricted to the NPC. In Lafia Division (to take one small example) NEPU's local leader Tanko Ibrahim had written to the Plateau Provincial Secretary to assure him that NEPU wanted to 'win' the census just as much as anyone else. The Sarkin Lafia, he said, had called members of various organisations together to encourage them to do everything they could to ensure 'victory' but had forgotten about them.[783] From what Larry Diamond has to say, it seems that the other regions approached the census in the same way, but less successfully. By the time Michael Okpara, the Premier of the Eastern Region and leader of the NCNC (since Azikiwe had taken up office as Governor-General and, from 1963, President of the Republic) denounced the results as 'worse than useless'[784] and launched a court action to contest them, any hope of a continuing alliance between the two parties was gone. In the following cartoon, the split is portrayed as an eviction, with the Prime Minister telling the NCNC to pack their bags (each of which is labelled with one of the party's shortcomings).

[782] NAK: PRE.197 Vol 1 'Honourable Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello Personal File'. Ahmadu Bello to Umaru Dikko 11/3/1964. My translation.

[783] NAK: PLT.32 'NEPU activities in Benue Province'. Tanko Ibrahim to Province Secretary 4/11/1963. The original is in Hausa.

[784] Diamond *Class, Ethnicity and Democracy* p138.

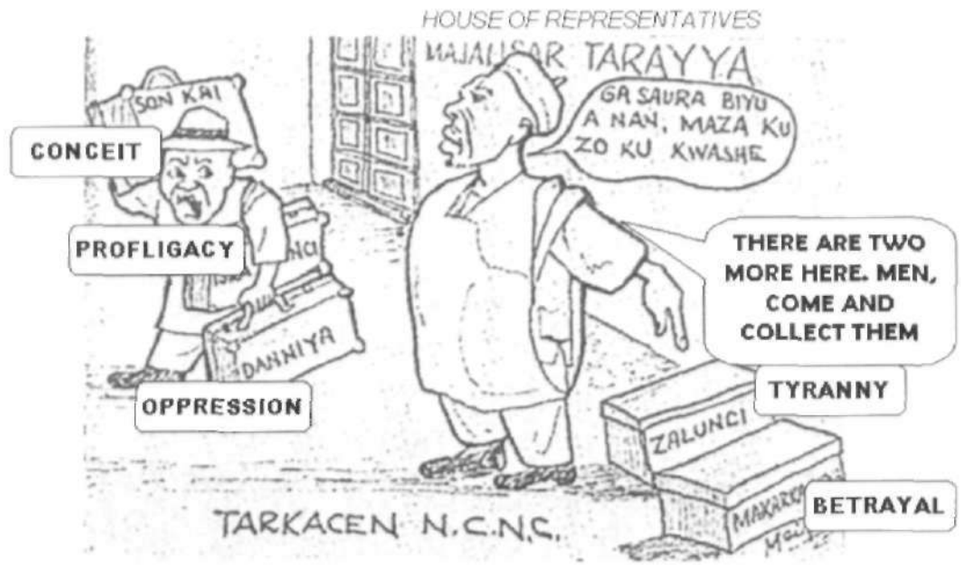



Illustration 13: Tafawa Balewa sends the NCNC packing. *Gaskiya* 27/11/1964

In March 1964, the Nigerian National Democratic Party was formed out of Akintola's UPP and much of the Western section of the NCNC. By the time of the 1964/5 general elections the NNDP was part of a new grouping, calling itself the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA), which also included the NPC, the MDF and the Dynamic Party (DP) among others. Facing them was the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA), the principal constituents of which were the NCNC, the Northern Progressive Front (a combination of NEPU, UMBC and some others) and what was left of the Action Group.

The NCNC found themselves boxed into the Eastern Region. The oldest of all the parties (in spite of Akintola's appropriating the name of a predecessor) and the first to make serious attempts to spread itself nationwide, was now starting to live up to the old allegation that it was an 'Igbo' party.

This affected *Gaskiya*'s coverage in two ways. One was that NEPU were ever more open to the charge that they had sold out. Garba Mai Tebur, for instance,

wrote a poem entitled 'A Warning to Those Who Seek to Sell the North'[785] which was pure vitriol. Similarly, when NCNC leader Michael Okpara gave a speech promising that a UPGA government would bring Northernization to an end – it was NEPU who took the criticism:

**NEPU's BOSS SHOUTS OUT LOUD, SAYING**




**"IF WE WIN THE ELECTION, WE WILL CANCEL NORTHERNISATION – AND GIVE [CONTROL] TO THE IGBOS AND YORUBAS OF THE UPGA"**

Illustration 14: Okpara threatens Northernization. *Gaskiya* 13/11/1964

Okpara is holding a picture of Aminu Kano, labelled 'the friend of NCNC'. The same issue of the newspaper includes a reader's letter headlined 'If NEPU do not like being ruled by Fulani, they should get rid of Aminu Kano', which is typical of the tactics used by the newspaper to try and split the party – *Gaskiya* had earlier printed rumours that the NEPU leader (a government whip in the federal parliament) was planning to give his party up and join the NPC.[786]

Okpara's (rather unlikely) use of the derogatory term 'Inyamurai' for 'Igbos' in this sentence points up the second development that followed the big split.

[785] Garba Mai Tebur 'Gargaɗi Zuwa Ga Masu Neman Sayar Da Arewa' in *Gaskiya* 18/12/1964.

[786] *Gaskiya* 21/2/1964.

*Gaskiya* became ever more stridently anti-Igbo in sentiment. The appearance of cartoons (by 'Maigari') on a regular basis happened at around this time. There were also poems, such as the one mentioned above, or another, entitled 'Poem to Show the North is for the Northerners' by Garba Ebisidi Funtuwa.[787] Here, all the negative associations which *Maigari* had portrayed as belonging to the NCNC are applied to Igbos as a whole:

*Those who oppress and confiscate*
*Those who defraud and take bribes*
*Those who embezzle and steal*
*They want to tear off half the North*
*We know the character of the Igbos [again, Inyamurawa]*

*Those who eat grasshoppers and worms*
*Jet black, with mucus around their eyes*
*Dirty, even rusty*
*When will you quit*
*Talking about the business of the Northern Region?*

*Those who stink a bitter stench*
*Who are prosperous but petulant*
*Who are thick-set and ugly*
*Who don't have a penny to their name*
*But claim they will buy half the North*

*Greetings to the jet black non-Hausa ['bagwari']*
*Those who are fat and stinking*
*Whose work is disorganised*
*Who bragg and boast*
*Your bad habits know no bounds*

The reference to 'non-Hausa' here is, from the one-North point of view, an own-goal. The word 'Bagwari', used here in a secondary sense (with a small 'b') as

[787] Garba Ebisidi Funtuwa 'Wakar Nuna Arewa Ta 'Yan Arewa Ce' in *Gaskiya* 13/4/1964. These are four selected verses (25, 31, 32, 34) from a 62-verse poem. Translation my own, with the help of Philip J Jaggar, SOAS. In other verses, the poet attacks Igbos' dress, living conditions and religious practices. There are also more positive, inspiring verses which encourage the various areas of the North to work in unison, citing the historical example set by Usman Dan Fodio.

a disdainful word for anyone who is not Hausa, normally means a member of the Gwari[788] people. This could only have the effect of further alienating the population of that 'half [of] the North' (i.e. the Middle Belt) which the poet says the Igbos have designs upon.

This was not the first poem that seemed to aim at inciting hatred. Back in 1959, Ibrahim Katsina had made scathing attacks on the average NEPU supporter, a 'laughable fool' who had 'become the enemy's [i.e. the NCNC's] servant', suggesting that to his fellow Northerners

> Let us drive out our opponents, they are enemies
> Make them cross the Niger and the Benue
> Make them go back over there, and leave us alone
> In our North, completely[789]

The 1964/5 federal election, more than the 1959 election, was portrayed as the North versus the Igbos – or, in some instances, Northerners versus Southerners as personified by Igbos. Attacks on the latter, in *Gaskiya* of the 1960s, had much in common with the 'amusing' article about the people who were sentenced to 'tixt mont for prison' back in 1945 (see Chapter One). As in the following cartoon, aspects of their lifestyle were mocked as a failed attempt to copy Europeans. Note the subject's thick glasses, spotted tie and shorts:

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[788] I.e Gbagyi, as the people call themselves. Most of the literature dealing with Northern Nigeria uses Hausa ethonyms

[789] Ibrahim Katsina 'Gargadi ga 'Yan Arewa' ('A Warning to the Northerners') in *Gaskiya* 30/1/1959.

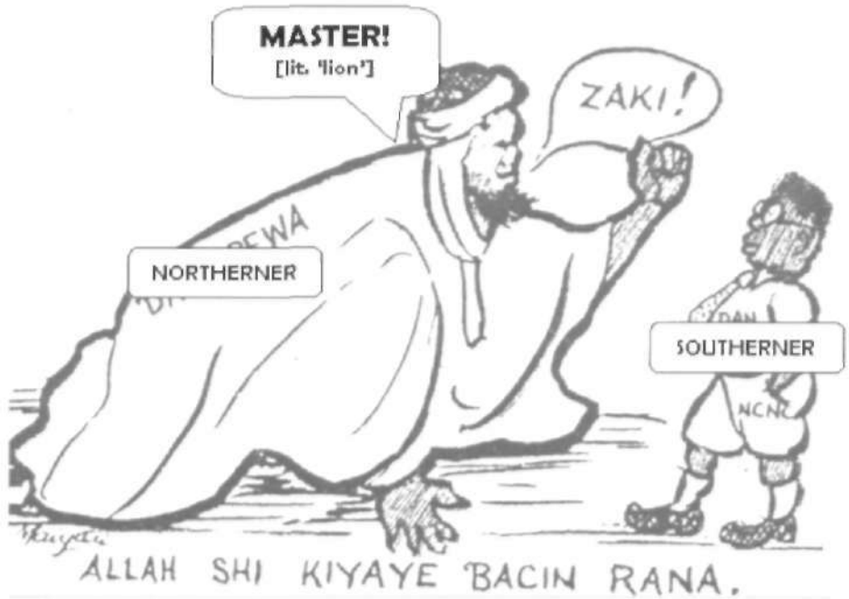



Illustration 15: Northerner salutes Southerner. *Gaskiya* 23/10/1964

The southerner's shorts are important. For the cartoonist, they seem to indicate a childish quality – an idea that is reinforced by the relative size of the two figures. This physical difference is clearly meant to correspond with the men's natural authority. The gigantic Northerner, resplendent in his robe and turban, offers his salute (*jinjina*) to acknowledge the senior status of the Southerner, in a scene that is meant to look like reality turned upside-down. The caption beneath indicates as much – May God prevent the day when the North stoops so low as to accept the South as superior.

The elections, when they came, quickly became notorious for the level of violence and vote-rigging that attended them.[790] The UPGA made things worse for themselves by organising a poorly-observed boycott at the last minute. In the North, the NPC captured every seat they contested. One of Nigeria's

[790] The same is true of the Western Regional elections of October 1964. The subsequent NNDP government stayed in office, despite conditions more like a state of emergency than those which had obtained in May 1962.

greatest journalists, 'Peter Pan', voiced a question that was on the minds of many:

> After the massive debate of an election we had in December [1964] where there were justified cries of manoeuvring ballot boxes to obtain given results, the question that has often been asked is whether barring the disappearance of electoral officers at vital times and the zeal of alkali courts who saw to it that known dissenters were not available to register their opinions in the polling booth, the NPC would have survived ... Yes, the NPC would still have survived.
>
> The more I see of the North the more convinced I am that Southern politicians with an ambition to break through the monolithic grip of the NPC simply do not appreciate the psychology of the Northern electorate.
>
> The majority of the people of the North are solidly behind the NPC. Not as a political party but as the platform for preserving their culture, religion and the traditional administrative system into which they have been born.[791]

In the introduction to this thesis, the question was asked: How popular were the NPC? In the end, the impressions of eyewitnesses such as Peter Pan may be the best answer we can get. By 1964, at least, the election results themselves could hardly be relied upon. On the ground, the role of the journalist was, in many ways, less important than that of the thug. Of course, the efforts of *Gaskiya* to hold the coalition of Northern elites together were important – but the essential means of securing victory lay in the support of NA structures, NA police and the organised gangs (like the *Jam'iyyar Mahaukata* on the NPC side and the *Aljanun Dare* for NEPU[792]). This being the case, one has to wonder whether the expression of Northern identity through the media has any serious significance, or even meaning. Was the 'voice' of Northern nationalism really just an empty noise?

After the elections, there was a heated disagreement over whether President Azikiwe should invite Abubakar Tafawa Balewa to form the new government. In the end, he did. The Prime Minister wanted to include representatives of many parties in the new administration, and offered to appoint some NCNC cabinet ministers – a move hailed by *Gaskiya*: Tafawa Balewa, it said, 'has

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[791] *Headlines* (Lagos) February 1978, quoting one of Peter Pan's articles from 1965. Peter Pan is Peter Enahoro, author of the loving caricature *How to be a Nigerian* and brother of Anthony Enahoro, formerly of the Action Group and, more recently, presidential aspirant.

[792] 'Party of Madmen' and 'Night Devils' respectively.

shown he is a lover of peace'.[793] Involvement of NCNC members on these terms was fine - in place of talk about 'selling out' was a softer language, of 'peace', 'co-operation' and 'federal character'. It was a far cry from March 1964, when the paper printed a cartoon showing a family of Easterners being forced out of the North.




Illustration 16: A family being forced to leave the North.
*Gaskiya* 20/3/1964

It seems facile to point out that this cartoon anticipates the events of May and September 1966, when Igbos (and those perceived to be Igbos) were hounded out of the North. The implication would be that the fantasy ethnic cleansing had a direct connection to the actual violence that followed it. On the face of it, this is nonsense: what kind of person follows the implied instructions of a newspaper cartoon? When *Gaskiya* headlined an editorial 'Discipline these Insolent I[g]bos living in the North'[794] – as it did in March 1966 – how many people could actually read it? Surely this literature (the cartoons, the poems,

[793] *Gaskiya* 8/1/1965.

[794] *Gaskiya* 28/3/1966 in John De St Jorre *The Nigerian Civil War* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1972) p55. The headline was 'fairly typical' of the time.

*the articles, the angry letters to the editor and so on), was a reflection of an* existing xenophobia, intolerance and fear, not its source?

Yet, in some ways, it was both. It stemmed from a background of hostility, but did a lot to galvanise and perpetuate that hostility. Of course the anger that inspired the violence had its own causes, but the cartoon above was a significant contribution to an atmosphere in which it was acceptable and proper *to regard the outsider as a danger, a problem to be dealt with. The* newspapers were read by a small, educated elite, but they were not living in a world of their own. Those who could read often spoke aloud for the benefit of those who could not – and, when the Unification Decree came out and the protection hitherto afforded to Northerners was under threat, it was generally literate individuals who were organising anti-Igbo demonstrations, ferrying mobs to convenient places and, in effect, timetabling the violence. 'What happened *was utterly inexcusable,' writes Sharwood Smith. 'But there is still a need to* understand. Throughout history, peoples believing themselves to be in grave peril have done terrible things'.[795]

### 7.1 Conclusion

Nigeria spent the 1960s dashing the stratospherically high expectations that observers the world over had of it. Yet, despite the governing parties' lack of *commitment to democracy, it never became a truly totalitarian state (if such a* thing can exist). Even in the North, with a single party dominating the region, no steps were made towards making it official – although there are indications in Ahmadu Bello's autobiography that he had considered taking them. In the concluding chapter, Ahmadu Bello says that the North is run on the 'principles of democracy' and goes on to say that the operative word here is 'principles', with each nation having the right to develop its own form of democracy as it sees fit (a common excuse for the democracy-*lite* regime[796]). So long as a system involves the 'vote of the common man', it will suffice. 'It seems to me,'

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[795] Sir Bryan Sharwood Smith *But Always As Friends: Northern Nigeria and the Cameroons, 1921-1957* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969) p403.

[796] Bello *My Life* pp230-1. It is reminiscent, too, of the justification given for Indirect Rule, that it allowed a people to develop their own system of government along 'native' lines. Bear in mind, however, that Bello approved the book but did not compose it.

the Sardauna writes, 'that even without an official Opposition at all, there would still be plenty of opposition within the party and more than enough to keep the Government on its toes'.

The Sardauna had plenty of experience of internal dissent. The NPC's own publicity department had gone on air in April 1957 with the following statement:

> *The present set-up and policy implementation of the Northern Peoples Congress is* nothing short of a menace – the present policy-making body of the party enters only for the opportunists, and privileged few – the leaders have deviated from the party's policy which we believe to be best suited for the North.[797]

Perhaps receiving such a slap in the face from his own party members made the Premier think more about ways to silence his critics, under one-party rule. So why did it never happen? One reason is that changes to the constitution would be required, needing the support of other parties – whose Northern branches would be made illegal in the process (if a single party dominated all the regions, it would perhaps have been a different story). Two other, apparently contradictory trends worked against such an outcome. One is that the Northern establishment was strong enough not to need it: having the support of the NAs, including their considerable coercive powers, the odds heavily favoured the NPC, however loudly the opposition protested. The second is that the Northern Regional Government was weak enough for one-party rule to be impracticable, even if constitutional hurdles were overcome. By comparison with other countries of its size and population, the Northern Region was run on a shoestring.

It was this weakness that made propaganda so important to the party that ran the region. And the cheapest publicity, from their point of view, was that which took advantage of the NPC's control of public institutions. So, rather than buying or hiring vehicles for electioneering, the resources of the Adult Literacy Campaign could just as easily be 'borrowed'; rather than relying on a publicity department that had failed in the past, the NPC could use the Northern

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[797] Dudley *Parties and Politics* p131.

Region's Public Relations Office[798]; and, although the NPC never had a party newspaper[799], *Gaskiya* could be made more supportive of the party.

*Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo*, at its best, was innovative, educational, funny and informative. It gave expression to the thoughts and opinions of the emergent elite, and acted as a force for unity among them. At its worst it was terrible. It printed some of the crudest and most hateful material that Nigeria has ever seen – something its English-language equivalent, *Nigerian Citizen*, would not have got away with.

Just as the North began to establish its 'Nigerian' identity (with Northern nationalism getting more interested in the south of the country, and more involved in its affairs) NPC propaganda became less well disposed towards southerners themselves. This contradiction, between Northern chauvinism and its new Nigerian outlook, was perhaps resolved only after the civil war, when the country experienced a reinvigorated federalism, often said to be dominated by the North. Any attempt to highlight the apparent Northern hegemony (especially the exclusion of Igbos) could be attacked as divisive or tribalist. During the civil war, erstwhile Northern zealots became committed to One Nigeria, in a bid to prevent the secession of 'Biafra' – the area of the country

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[798] Clare Thomas' assessment of the North's Public Relations Office is that, unlike those of the other regions, it generally went ignored by the general public and even the Government departments which were supposed to feed it with information. See Clare Thomas 'Colonial Government Propaganda and Public Relations and the Administration in Nigeria' (PhD Cambridge, 1986) p284.

[799] The only exception to this is the Kano *Daily Mail*, which was founded in the 1960s.

whose elites had hitherto been the most prominent advocates of Nigerian unity. In a sense, the changes in prevailing attitudes during the early 1970s demonstrated how convincingly Northern nationalists had triumphed. They could now afford to jettison the reactive and potentially unstable Northern nationalism in favour of *wazobia*.[800]

[800] *Wazobia* is a combination of the Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo words for 'come' and signifies reconciliation between Nigeria's ethnic groups and the development of a single Nigerian outlook. Apter, however, argues that the norms of the North tended to serve as default for all that was Nigerian from the civil war onwards, citing the Festac '77 Durbar as an example. This, he believes, was indicative of Northern political hegemony. See Andrew Apter 'The Subvention of Tradition: A Genealogy of the Nigerian Durbar' in George Steinmetz (ed.) *State/Culture: State-Formation after the Cultural Turn* (Ithaca, New York: Cornel University Press, 1999).

**Appendix 1: Groundnuts supplied by Alhaji Alhassan Dantata**

| Season | Tons supplied* | Expressed as percentage* | Tons supplied** | Expressed as percentage** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1936/7 | 23217 | 6.63% | Not quoted | Not quoted |
| 1937/8 | 18376 | 8.89% | 18380 | 12.95% |
| 1938/9 | 20357 | 11.50% | 20288 | 20.07% |
| 1939/40 | 16500 | 10.31% | 16520 | 11.25% |
| 1940/1 | 24723 | 10.40% | 24705 | 10.66% |
| 1941/2 | 18650 | 9.00% | 18749 | 11.35% |
| 1942/3 | 12217 | 11.35% | 12217 | 12.13% |
| 1943/4 | 16550 | 8.58% | 16550 | 9.59% |

*Figures according to Dantata himself.[801]
** Figures according to the Association of West African Merchants[802]

Note that the quantities quoted by the Association of West African Merchants (AWAM) are roughly (sometimes exactly) the same as quoted by Dantata, but are always indicated as a higher percentage. The discrepancy is not explained by any of the sources.

[801] Arewa House: 9/2/30 37449 'Alhaji Alhassan Dantata'. A D Dantata to CCNP c/o Resident of Kano Province 19/5/1944.

[802] Arewa House: 9/2/30 37449 'Alhaji Alhassan Dantata'. Governor to Secretary of State for the Colonies 17/7/1944.

**Appendix 2: A Note on the Y B Usman vs. Peter Ekeh Controversy**

The argument began in 2001, when Bala Usman delivered a paper which was highly critical of certain comments by leading public figures on the subject of Nigerian ethnography. He believed that such comments were not only historically inaccurate, but motivated by greed. For example: G G Darah, chairman of the Guardian group of newspapers in Nigeria, had earlier said that the Federal Government, in drilling for oil, was destroying the area of Nigeria from which he came. 'That land is Urhoboland,' he said. 'And Urhobo people were there before Nigeria was founded. Nigeria is only 87 years old. We have been there for 6,000 years'. Usman argued, in typically strident tone, that the Urhobo identity only coalesced during the colonial period, prior to which the people now called Urhobo were a disparate group of clans of diverse origins. 6,000 years, then, was something of an over-statement.[803]

Professor Peter Ekeh, chairman of the Urhobo Historical Society, wrote an equally robust rejoinder, saying, amongst other things, that the Portuguese had met with Urhobo people (whom they identified as Soubo) when they arrived in 1485. Like Darah, he linked the antiquity of the Urhobo nation with its claim to oil wealth. The Niger Delta, he wrote, belongs to the 'Niger Deltans'.[804]

A heartfelt response to Ekeh's paper came from bank manager and social columnist Sanusi Lamido Sanusi. He quoted some of Ekeh's own work as a political scientist in the 1980s, to the effect that: 'Nigerian ethnic groups have their socio-political meaning only in terms of the development of Nigeria. As social formations, these ethnic groups are not older than Nigeria'. Sanusi contrasts this with a more recent pronouncement, that 'the ethnic composition of the Western Niger Delta has not changed [for] ... more than five centuries'

[803] See Yusufu Bala Usman 'Ignorance, Knowledge and Democratic Politics in Nigeria' on www.africaresource.com/scholar.

[804] Peter Ekeh 'The Mischief of History: Bala Usman's Unmaking of Nigerian History' on ibid.

and appears to believe that Ekeh has, at some point in the past twenty years, been seduced by the Dark Side in the form of commercialised history:

> The information available to Professor Ekeh on pre-colonial and colonial Nigeria did not significantly change between 1980 and 2001. What changed was Professor Ekeh's politics. In 1980, he was a Professor of Political Science with strong nationalist credentials. His paper was motivated, in his own words by "a desire to know, not to control" ... Now that the bread is buttered on the side of "resource control" and ethnic nationalism, Ekeh abandons all nationalist pretensions...[805]

Whether or not this is indeed the case, such arguments are part and parcel of political debate in present-day Nigeria. In a sense, they are the product of a constitution[806] that places so much emphasis on 'belonging'. In another way, both they and the constitution are part of a much older process of staking political claims with the creative use of history.

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[805] Sanusi Lamido Sanusi 'Usman, Ekeh and the Urhobo "Nation"' on ibid.

[806] The 1999 constitution is based around the 1979 constitution and retains variations on the clauses that Y B Usman and Dr. Osoba originally objected to.

**Appendix 3: Attendance Figures for Mobile Cinema Shows in the United Nations Trust Territory of Northern Cameroons**

The following table has been compiled from the information given in reports from the projectionists themselves, under the auspices of the Northern Regional Information Service.[807] A standard form was used to take down estimates of audience figures.

The forms were not always completed properly. Where data are missing, attendance is assumed to be identical to the previous showing. Such assumed figures are highlighted in **bold** type. The erratically-recorded data for 'Cameroon Province' [sic] are an exception: estimates are based, on a) previous figures for the place (Jada) b) comments made about the size of the crowd (Kojole, described as a very small crowd, is based on Gomlare; likewise Danaba based on Mubi Town as a small crowd; Gamu and Mayo Hako based on Jada as a fair crowd for the area; Gurem based on Yerwa School as a large crowd) or otherwise c) an average figure taken from previous results (Nyibango, Ganglazami, Ganye, Sugu, Wuro Abbo).

The place names are written as recorded, to avoid the difficulties of distinguishing an alternate spelling (e.g. Gambaru vs. Gamboru) from a separate town. Allowing a modest margin for error, then, it seems that during 1959, the mobile cinema gave 138 showings at 109 different venues and during 1961, 267 visits to 181 venues. It is not easy to demonstrate how widely these visits were distributed across the provinces (Bornu, Adamawa and Benue). While town names were always recorded, the relevant details of province and district were often omitted, or incorrectly recorded. However, it seems that each province had a fair share of large crowds and small ones. The data are presented in the order in which they have been filed, which is apparently chronological.

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[807] NAK: Kadmininfor 1 CIN/34 Vol I 'Mobile Cinema Northern Cameroons'.

1.1 From 21 October 1959 to 20 November 1959

| Cameroons Province [sic] | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Place** | **Children** | **Adults** | **Total** |
| Jada | 400 | 700 | 1100 |
| Yola Palace | 300 | 400 | 700 |
| Yola Club | 0 | 220 | 220 |
| Mubi GRA | 0 | 200 | 200 |
| Mubi Town | 200 | 500 | 700 |
| Bama | 300 | 500 | 800 |
| Yerwa Dandal | 600 | 800 | 1400 |
| Yerwa School | 800 | 1000 | 1800 |
| Jada | **400** | **700** | **1100** |
| Jada | **400** | **700** | **1100** |
| Nyibango | **325** | **540** | **865** |
| Ganglazami | **325** | **540** | **865** |
| Ganye | **325** | **540** | **865** |
| Sugu | **325** | **540** | **865** |
| Wuro Abbo | **325** | **540** | **865** |
| Gomlare | 0 | 30 | 30 |
| Gurem | **800** | **1000** | **1800** |
| Gamu | **400** | **700** | **1100** |
| Danaba | **200** | **500** | **700** |
| Mafio | **200** | **500** | **700** |
| Kojole | 0 | 30 | 30 |
| Mayo Hako | **400** | **700** | **1100** |
| Sub total: | 7025 | 11880 | 18905 |
| Average: | 319 | 540 | 859 |
| % 1959 total: | 13.35% | 13.32% | 13.33% |

| Adamawa Province | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mubi Palace | 600 | 2000 | 2600 |
| Wuro-Gude | 300 | 1000 | 1300 |
| Paka | 400 | 1200 | 1600 |
| Jalingo Maiha | 500 | 1500 | 2000 |
| Kowagol | 100 | 600 | 700 |
| Sorau | 500 | 1200 | 1700 |
| Belel | 400 | 900 | 1300 |
| Konkoi | 300 | 900 | 1200 |
| Sorau | 600 | 3000 | 3600 |
| Jalingo Maiha | 500 | 2000 | 2500 |
| Lamorde | 50 | 100 | 150 |
| Maiha | 200 | 600 | 800 |
| Mucala | 400 | 2000 | 2400 |
| Muvur | 70 | 300 | 370 |
| Muvur | 400 | 800 | 1200 |
| Liela | 400 | 600 | 1000 |
| Sub total: | 5720 | 18700 | 24420 |
| Average: | 358 | 1169 | 1526 |
| % 1959 total: | 10.87% | 20.96% | 17.22% |

| Bornu Province | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bama | 800 | 500 | 1300 |
| Bashari | 120 | 100 | 220 |
| Lawanti | 150 | 100 | 250 |
| Kashimri | 250 | 120 | 370 |
| Gulumba | 700 | 250 | 950 |
| Gulumba | 750 | 300 | 1050 |
| Bama | 600 | 400 | 1000 |
| Bulongu | 150 | 200 | 350 |
| Katombe | 180 | 120 | 300 |
| Da ra Jama | 120 | 80 | 200 |
| Mbaga | 120 | 100 | 220 |
| Kumshe | 500 | 200 | 700 |
| Kudari | 200 | 120 | 320 |
| Mangeri | 150 | 100 | 250 |
| Bama | 150 | 100 | 250 |
| Sub total: | 4940 | 2790 | 7730 |
| Average: | 329 | 186 | 515 |
| % 1959 total: | 9.39% | 3.13% | 5.45% |

| Benue Province | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Baissa | 500 | 600 | 1100 |
| Baissa | 600 | 700 | 1300 |
| Atuku | 300 | 400 | 700 |
| Ndaforo | 700 | 800 | 1500 |
| Abong | 500 | 600 | 1100 |
| Abong | 400 | 500 | 900 |
| Mbessan | 100 | 200 | 300 |
| Nama | 300 | 400 | 700 |
| Absuku | 300 | 350 | 650 |
| Didon | 150 | 200 | 350 |
| Kufai | 200 | 300 | 500 |
| Kufai | 250 | 350 | 600 |
| Yindo | 250 | 350 | 600 |
| Tutua | 250 | 350 | 600 |
| Sub total: | 4800 | 6100 | 10900 |
| Average: | 343 | 436 | 779 |
| % 1959 total: | 9.12% | 6.84% | 7.69% |

| Adamawa Province | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Micika PS | 0 | 15 | 15 |
| Micika Town | 400 | 800 | 1200 |
| Vilegwa | 400 | 700 | 1100 |
| Gubuli | 200 | 550 | 750 |
| Bazza | 800 | 750 | 1550 |
| Galamba | 150 | 250 | 400 |
| Bazza College | 400 | 600 | 1000 |
| Gulak | 350 | 700 | 1050 |
| Micika | 500 | 750 | 1250 |
| Madagali | 600 | 1000 | 1600 |
| Agayendi | 250 | 450 | 700 |
| Gambula | 150 | 300 | 450 |
| Mildo | 60 | 100 | 160 |
| Madagali | 350 | 1500 | 1850 |
| Micika PS | 0 | 30 | 30 |
| Micika Town | 450 | 900 | 1350 |
| Gulak | 400 | 800 | 1200 |
| Sub total: | 5460 | 10195 | 15655 |
| Average: | 321 | 600 | 921 |
| % 1959 total: | 10.38% | 11.43% | 11.04% |

| Bornu Province | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bazza | 450 | 400 | 850 |
| Nguro | 600 | 800 | 1400 |
| Gadangari | 400 | 500 | 900 |
| Bashari | 200 | 300 | 500 |
| Iza | 150 | 100 | 250 |
| Budurmi | 80 | 70 | 150 |
| Dipchari | 50 | 60 | 110 |
| Tufa | 40 | 30 | 70 |
| Banki | 900 | 800 | 1700 |
| Yabiri | 20 | 30 | 50 |
| Gunuri | 90 | 100 | 190 |
| Bama | 200 | 300 | 500 |
| Masaari | 200 | 300 | 500 |
| Gwoza | 450 | 890 | 1340 |
| Wala | 50 | 90 | 140 |
| Warrabe | 75 | 95 | 170 |
| Pulka | 10 | 35 | 45 |
| Bokko | 270 | 450 | 720 |
| Ngoshe | 360 | 758 | 1118 |
| Gana | 95 | 250 | 345 |
| Gava | 210 | 450 | 660 |
| Ngoshe | 85 | 250 | 335 |
| Ashigashia | 250 | 760 | 1010 |
| Keraina | 500 | 1300 | 1800 |
| Gwoza | 280 | 750 | 1030 |
| Hambagda | 140 | 220 | 360 |
| Dimamkara | 120 | 340 | 460 |
| Gwoza | 130 | 2400 | 2530 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dikwa | | 1000 | 850 | 1850 |
| Dikwa | | 1500 | 1300 | 2800 |
| Gajibo | | 500 | 430 | 930 |
| Logumane | | 400 | 300 | 700 |
| Boboshe | | 900 | 850 | 1750 |
| Bulonguwa | | 1500 | 1300 | 2800 |
| Auye | | 700 | 650 | 1350 |
| Malammaja | | 1200 | 1700 | 2900 |
| Kaza | | 50 | 150 | 200 |
| Koife | | 200 | 1000 | 1200 |
| Gajibo | | 2000 | 3600 | 5600 |
| Maga | see abv | see abv | see abv | |
| Ngudoran | see abv | see abv | see abv | |
| Logumane | | 1400 | 2200 | 3600 |
| Magene | see abv | see abv | see abv | |
| Dikwa | | 2300 | 3000 | 5300 |
| Wufege | see abv | see abv | see abv | |
| Ngala | | 300 | 600 | 900 |
| Ngala | | 400 | 750 | 1150 |
| Gamboru | | 500 | 850 | 1350 |
| Ladari | | 200 | 350 | 550 |
| Bula Burim | | 200 | 400 | 600 |
| Tumo Kaka | | 300 | 600 | 900 |
| Wulgo | | 400 | 1000 | 1400 |
| Ndufu | | 400 | 1000 | 1400 |
| Logumane | | 400 | 640 | 1040 |
| Musane | | 150 | 250 | 400 |
| Ngala | | 400 | 900 | 1300 |
| Gamboru | | 300 | 700 | 1000 |
| Ladari | | 90 | 200 | 290 |
| Tumo Kaka | | 80 | 150 | 230 |
| Wulgo | | 500 | 1000 | 1500 |
| Sub total: | | 24675.00 | 39548.00 | 64223.00 |
| Average: | | 441 | 706 | 1147 |
| % 1959 total: | | 46.89% | 44.33% | 45.28% |
| | | | | |
| 1959 total: | | 52620 | 89213 | 141833 |
| As% | | 37.10% | 62.90% | 100.00% |
| Average: | | 451 | 892 | 1343 |

1.2 From 11 December1960 to 10 February1961

| Adamawa Province | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jada | 500 | 400 | 900 |
| Jada | 1000 | 800 | 1800 |
| Yelwa | 400 | 300 | 700 |
| Yelwa | 200 | 300 | 500 |
| Sugu | 400 | 300 | 700 |
| Tongo | 500 | 400 | 900 |
| Ganye | 700 | 600 | 1300 |
| Nbula | 150 | 100 | 250 |
| Kubaje | 300 | 200 | 500 |
| Leko | 40 | 30 | 70 |
| Tantile | 150 | 100 | 250 |
| Jada | 900 | 800 | 1700 |
| Serbi | 500 | 400 | 900 |
| Serbi | 400 | 300 | 700 |
| Karambi | 74 | 12 | 86 |
| Jamtani | 30 | 40 | 70 |
| Gayam | 30 | 40 | 70 |
| Garbabi | **30** | **40** | **70** |
| Baisa | 300 | 500 | 800 |
| Abong | 200 | 300 | 500 |
| Ashuku | 300 | 400 | 700 |
| Sub total: | 7104 | 6362 | 13466 |
| Average: | 338 | 303 | 641 |
| % 1961 total: | 8.84% | 5.49% | 6.87% |

| Bornu Province | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Kala | 500 | 800 | 1300 |
| Shangaya | 400 | 700 | 1100 |
| Mudu | 350 | 600 | 950 |
| Ajiri | 230 | 550 | 780 |
| Mulge | 300 | 600 | 900 |
| Babashe | 150 | 200 | 350 |
| Mbuliya | 160 | 230 | 390 |
| Kotembe | 1800 | 2200 | 4000 |
| Jerce | 300 | 350 | 650 |
| Kaushe | 2000 | 3000 | 5000 |
| Walasa | 500 | 700 | 1200 |
| Tarmuva | 700 | 800 | 1500 |
| Bomari | 600 | 800 | 1400 |
| Masa | 500 | 700 | 1200 |
| Lawanti | 250 | 300 | 550 |
| Gawa | 200 | 250 | 450 |
| Pulka | 700 | 750 | 1450 |
| Ashigashiga | 2600 | 3600 | 6200 |
| Kerawa | 2500 | 3600 | 6100 |
| Ngoshe | 2000 | 3000 | 5000 |
| Warrabe | 200 | 210 | 410 |
| Hangbagda | 200 | 300 | 500 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Iyge | 2100 | 3000 | 5100 |
| Bila | 1000 | 1500 | 2500 |
| Gwoza | 2000 | 2300 | 4300 |
| Sub total: | 22240 | 31040 | 53280 |
| Average: | 890 | 1242 | 4098 |
| % 1961 total: | 27.68% | 26.81% | 27.16% |

| Province unspecified; apparently all Adamawa Province | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mayo Bami | 150 | 350 | 500 |
| Mbeco | 170 | 300 | 470 |
| Muwa | 80 | 95 | 175 |
| Kodorte | 90 | 120 | 210 |
| Mayo Lugguye | 70 | 90 | 160 |
| Didef | 70 | 90 | 160 |
| Manzil | 60 | 80 | 140 |
| Mayo Bami | 120 | 200 | 320 |
| Micika | 120 | 250 | 370 |
| Bazza | 80 | 95 | 175 |
| Model Village | 50 | 80 | 130 |
| Garta | 85 | 120 | 205 |
| Kamale | 40 | 65 | 105 |
| Wuro Ngiki | 50 | 70 | 120 |
| Sub total: | 1235 | 2005 | 3240 |
| Average: | 88 | 143 | 231 |
| % 1961 total: | 1.54% | 1.73% | 1.65% |

| Adamawa Province | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Maiha | 500 | 700 | 1200 |
| Maiko | 1000 | 2000 | 3000 |
| Maiha Tsoho | **1000** | **2000** | **3000** |
| Wuro Alaji | 500 | 700 | 1200 |
| Lugga | 600 | 900 | 1500 |
| Paka | 800 | 1000 | 1800 |
| Sub total: | 4400 | 7300 | 11700 |
| Average: | 733 | 1217 | 1950 |
| % 1961 total: | 5.48% | 6.30% | 5.96% |

| Various provinces | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gurdafe | 400 | 500 | 900 |
| Mannjikin | 500 | 700 | 1200 |
| Bawchosone | 400 | 300 | 700 |
| Njayi | 200 | 300 | 500 |
| Kwagol | 60 | 70 | 130 |
| Bafere | **60** | **70** | **130** |
| Konngoli | 200 | 30 | 230 |
| Wafugo | 900 | 100 | 1000 |
| Sorau | 1000 | 1500 | 2500 |
| Sorau | 800 | 1000 | 1800 |
| Ombel | 40 | 70 | 110 |
| Wurolade | 30 | 40 | 70 |
| Wuro boka | 79 | 60 | 139 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Konkol | 400 | 800 | 1200 |
| Kindagirma | 20 | 50 | 70 |
| K Nasarawa | 150 | 70 | 220 |
| Bungel | 200 | 250 | 450 |
| Belel | 70 | 90 | 160 |
| Jada | 400 | 600 | 1000 |
| So'o | 200 | 300 | 500 |
| Tantile | 40 | 60 | 100 |
| Toungo | 500 | 400 | 900 |
| Ganye | 500 | 400 | 900 |
| Yebbi | 90 | 80 | 170 |
| Jada | 300 | 400 | 700 |
| Nbulo | 300 | 400 | 700 |
| Hamuci | 300 | 250 | 550 |
| Garta | 140 | 300 | 440 |
| Sira kisamde | 120 | 200 | 320 |
| Kamale | 200 | 350 | 550 |
| Moda | 130 | 150 | 280 |
| Woro Ngiki | 100 | 130 | 230 |
| Kufun Matiza | 140 | 200 | 340 |
| Kwaliya | 150 | 250 | 400 |
| Micika | 400 | 540 | 940 |
| Ui | 80 | 100 | 180 |
| Ganta | 180 | 140 | 320 |
| Bazza | 100 | 120 | 220 |
| Gulak | 300 | 400 | 700 |
| Dukul | 120 | 200 | 320 |
| Kirshriga | 120 | 200 | 320 |
| Madagali | 120 | 200 | 320 |
| Belel | 100 | 220 | 320 |
| Wagga | 200 | 150 | 350 |
| Chakawa | 120 | 150 | 270 |
| Mildo Selmi | 200 | 350 | 550 |
| Kojiti | 200 | 180 | 380 |
| Kopa da Wafago | 130 | 250 | 380 |
| Mayo Wanda | 140 | 250 | 390 |
| Gulkkiwa | 200 | 350 | 550 |
| Gwoza | 450 | 600 | 1050 |
| Hambagda | 150 | 200 | 350 |
| Kirawa | 150 | 300 | 450 |
| Shigashiga | 150 | 250 | 400 |
| Ngoshe | 300 | 500 | 800 |
| Agapalawa | 180 | 250 | 430 |
| Arboko | 140 | 150 | 290 |
| Gavva | 80 | 150 | 230 |
| Pulka | 150 | 120 | 270 |
| Boko Majo | 120 | 150 | 270 |
| Dure | 100 | 250 | 350 |
| Bita | 130 | 140 | 270 |
| Matube | 120 | 150 | 270 |
| Izge | 300 | 450 | 750 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Malakoga | 80 | 120 | 200 |
| Jaje | 100 | 130 | 230 |
| Dimakara | 100 | 130 | 230 |
| Warrabe | 100 | 130 | 230 |
| Sub total: | 14729 | 18440 | 33169 |
| Average: | 217 | 271 | 488 |
| % 1961 total: | 18.33% | 15.92% | 16.91% |

| Bornu Province | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sabon Gida | 200 | 300 | 500 |
| Baisa | 500 | 600 | 1100 |
| Karamti | 30 | 40 | 70 |
| Jamtari | 60 | 80 | 140 |
| Garbabi | 70 | 100 | 170 |
| Abong | 100 | 150 | 250 |
| Asuku | 100 | 150 | 250 |
| Karasuwa | 70 | 100 | 170 |
| Serbi | 300 | 400 | 700 |
| Sub total: | 1430 | 1920 | 3350 |
| Average: | 154 | 213 | 372 |
| % 1961 total: | 1.78% | 1.66% | 1.71% |

| Province unspecified; apparently Bornu Province | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Lokuwa | 1000 | 2000 | 3000 |
| Mubi MP | 600 | 1000 | 1600 |
| Wingel | 100 | 200 | 300 |
| Jadafa | 100 | 200 | 300 |
| Mugulba | 40 | 100 | 140 |
| Gude | 100 | 200 | 300 |
| Gela | 100 | 300 | 400 |
| Yawa | 50 | 100 | 150 |
| Bahuli | 50 | 100 | 150 |
| Mujara | 400 | 500 | 900 |
| Laba | 20 | 100 | 120 |
| Diwa | 60 | 80 | 140 |
| Vintim | 40 | 60 | 100 |
| Muchala | 300 | 1000 | 1300 |
| Mukue | 20 | 60 | 80 |
| Lumurde | 20 | 50 | 70 |
| Lokuwa | 900 | 1000 | 1900 |
| Kolere | 600 | 800 | 1400 |
| Sabon Layi | 1000 | 2000 | 3000 |
| Wuso Bulude | 0 | 1000 | 1000 |
| Wuso Lansohe | 1000 | 2000 | 3000 |
| Yalwa | 200 | 400 | 600 |
| Minister | 300 | 500 | 800 |
| Lokuwa | 1000 | 1000 | 2000 |
| Sabon Layi | 600 | 800 | 1400 |
| Sabon Layi | 200 | 400 | 600 |
| Wurogude | 400 | 600 | 1000 |
| Mugulbe | 25 | 60 | 85 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mayorguli | 700 | 1000 | 1700 |
| Wodiliyara | 40 | 100 | 140 |
| Mayorguli | 1000 | 2000 | 3000 |
| Sorau | 400 | 600 | 1000 |
| Belel | 600 | 1000 | 1600 |
| Bahuli | 100 | 400 | 500 |
| Mujara | 20 | 60 | 80 |
| Sapti | 50 | 90 | 140 |
| Banki | 300 | 350 | 650 |
| Zakura | 80 | 100 | 180 |
| Tarmuwa | 90 | 120 | 210 |
| Gambaru | 400 | 500 | 900 |
| Wulgo | 400 | 450 | 850 |
| Saleri | 100 | 150 | 250 |
| Muzugwe | 150 | 180 | 330 |
| Mudu | 250 | 300 | 550 |
| Mubi | 200 | 250 | 450 |
| Mubi | 250 | 300 | 550 |
| Bama | 150 | 200 | 350 |
| Kumshe | 130 | 200 | 330 |
| Gulumba | 150 | 250 | 400 |
| Kala | 120 | 200 | 320 |
| Gambaru | 300 | 350 | 650 |
| Gambaru | 300 | 350 | 650 |
| Jere | 150 | 120 | 270 |
| Darel Jamal | 70 | 120 | 190 |
| Babbashe | 50 | 100 | 150 |
| Dikwa | 150 | 200 | 350 |
| Muliye | 100 | 150 | 250 |
| Muntala | 100 | 150 | 250 |
| Durbe | 150 | 250 | 400 |
| Jammuva | 200 | 300 | 500 |
| Gulumba | 200 | 250 | 450 |
| Gulumba | 250 | 320 | 570 |
| Banki | 150 | 250 | 400 |
| Kara | 150 | 200 | 350 |
| Daman | 100 | 150 | 250 |
| Mubi | 200 | 300 | 500 |
| Bazea | 100 | 80 | 180 |
| Micika | 200 | 300 | 500 |
| Mubi | 400 | 400 | 800 |
| Mubi TC | 50 | 200 | 250 |
| Sorau | 150 | 300 | 450 |
| Sorau | 400 | 500 | 900 |
| Belel | 300 | 400 | 700 |
| Mubi PB | 50 | 300 | 350 |
| Bama | 300 | 500 | 800 |
| Gamboru | 400 | 500 | 900 |
| Gajibo | 150 | 300 | 450 |
| Jabbari | 150 | 300 | 450 |
| Kwate | 150 | 300 | 450 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bama | 500 | 800 | 1300 |
| Mubi | 300 | 400 | 700 |
| Micika | 200 | 300 | 500 |
| Bazza | 200 | 400 | 600 |
| Gulak | 150 | 200 | 350 |
| Madagali | 250 | 400 | 650 |
| Gwoza | 300 | 500 | 800 |
| Ashigashiga | 200 | 500 | 700 |
| Yabiri | 200 | 300 | 500 |
| Maksawari | 50 | 150 | 200 |
| Gubunsu | 200 | 500 | 700 |
| Gwunsur | 60 | 200 | 260 |
| Dikwa | 450 | 500 | 950 |
| Bama | 500 | 250 | 750 |
| Mubi | 600 | 800 | 1400 |
| Mubi PB | 150 | 300 | 450 |
| Mubi MA | 400 | 500 | 900 |
| Muchalla | 100 | 400 | 500 |
| Khourvi | 60 | 220 | 280 |
| Mayo Bani | 100 | 200 | 300 |
| Digil | 100 | 200 | 300 |
| Gella | 200 | 400 | 600 |
| Yadafa | 50 | 150 | 200 |
| Yawa | 30 | 100 | 130 |
| Gude | 150 | 200 | 350 |
| Mujara | 70 | 200 | 270 |
| Mubi PB | 200 | 300 | 500 |
| Jadafa | 400 | 700 | 1100 |
| Marpeo | 200 | 200 | 400 |
| Sugu | 300 | 700 | 1000 |
| Tourgo | 300 | 600 | 900 |
| Mayo Butale | 10 | 26 | 36 |
| Jamtari | 30 | 45 | 75 |
| Serbi | 200 | 500 | 700 |
| Gashaka | 20 | 35 | 55 |
| Didan | 100 | 250 | 350 |
| Baissa | 200 | 300 | 500 |
| Andafaro | 200 | 400 | 600 |
| Nama Babba | 40 | 200 | 240 |
| Abong | 100 | 200 | 300 |
| Joda | 300 | 500 | 800 |
| Gurum Pawa | 200 | 300 | 500 |
| Sugu | 300 | 500 | 800 |
| Tourgo | 200 | 500 | 700 |
| Koginbaba | 20 | 50 | 70 |
| Sub total: | 29215 | 48726 | 77941 |
| Average: | 236 | 393 | 629 |
| % 1961 total: | 36.36% | 42.08% | 39.74% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1961 total: | 80353 | 115793 | 196146 |
| As % | 40.97% | 59.03% | 100.00% |
| Average: | 301 | 434 | 735 |
| | | | |
| Grand total: | 132973.00 | 205006.00 | 337979.00 |
| As % | 39.34% | 60.66% | 100.00% |
| Average: | 327 | 504 | 830 |

**Abbreviations used in the text**

| | |
|---|---|
| AG | Action Group |
| CMS | Church Mission Society |
| ComCam | Commissioner for the Cameroons |
| EOO | Ẹgbẹ Ọmọ Oduduwa (see glossary) |
| HTP | Hausa Tribal Party |
| ITP | Ilọrin Talaka Parapọ (see glossary) |
| JANA | Jam'iyyar Al'ummar Nijeriya Ta Arewa (see glossary) |
| JJA | Jam'iyyar Jama'ar Arewa (see glossary) |
| JMA | Jam'iyyar Mutanen Arewa (see glossary) |
| JMA A Yau | Jam'iyyar Mutanen Arewa A Yau (see glossary) |
| JNI | Jama'atu Nasril Islam (see glossary) |
| LegCo | Legislative Council |
| MBPP | Middle Belt People's Party |
| MDF | Midwest Democratic Front |
| MHA | Member of the House of Assembly |
| MZL | Middle Zone League |
| NA | Native Authority |
| NAM | Northern Askianist Movement |
| NCA | Northern Christian Association |

| | |
|---|---|
| NCNC | National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons or (after 1961) National Council of Nigerian Citizens |
| NEPA | Northern Elements Progressive Association |
| NEPU | Northern Elements Progressive Union or (after 1964) Nigerian Elements Progressive Union |
| NNA | Nigerian National Alliance |
| NNDP | Nigerian National Democratic Party |
| NNM | Northern Nigeria Mission |
| NNTU | Northern Nigerian Tribal Union |
| NPC | Northern People's Congress |
| NPF | Northern Progressive Front |
| PSC | Public Service Commission |
| RSS | Rundunar Samarin Sawaba (see glossary) |
| UMBC | United Middle Belt Congress |
| UPGA | United Progressive Grand Alliance |
| UPP | United People's Party |

**Abbreviations used in the footnotes:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Arewa House | Arewa House Library of Historical Documentation and Research |
| BNL | British Newspaper Library, Colindale, London |
| CMS | CMS Archive, Birmingham |
| NAK | National Archives, Kaduna |
| PRO | Public Records Office, Kew |
| RHO | Rhodes House Library, Oxford |
| WJBHAC | Waziri Junaidu Bureau of History and Culture, Sokoto |

**Biographical list of people mentioned in the text**

| | |
|---|---|
| Abdallah, Habib Raji | President of the Zikist Movement; President of NEPA. |
| Abdulsalam | First recognised Emir of Ilorin and son of Malam Alimi. |
| Afonja | Governor of Ilorin, who broke away from the Oyọ empire. |
| Akintola, Samuel | Premier of the Western Region; Vice-President of the AG; President of the UPP; President of the NNDP. |
| Alimi, Malam | Supplier of mercenaries to the Ilorin rebellion. |
| Awolowo, Obafemi | Premier of the Western Region and President of the AG; Leader of the Opposition, Federal House of Representatives. |
| Azikiwe, Nnamdi | Leader of the NCNC; Premier of the Eastern Region; later, Governor-General and President of Nigeria. |
| Bamalli, Nuhu | Organizing Secretary of the NPC. |
| Bayajida | Legendary founder of the Hausa states. |
| Bayero, Nuhu | Chairman of the University of Lagos council |
| Bello, Ahmadu | Premier of Northern Region; President of NPC. |
| Dambatta, Magaji | Hausa editor, *The Daily Comet*; Senior Information Officer, Northern Nigeria Agent-General's office. Older brother of Mustafa. |
| Dambatta, Mustafa | President of the NAM; Hausa editor, *The Daily Comet*; editor, *Nigerian Citizen*. |
| Dan Fodio, Usman | Leader of the jihad against the *Haɓe* chiefs of Hausaland. |
| Dantata, Ahmadu | Kano Merchant and MHA for the NPC. Son of Alhassan. |
| Dantata, Alhassan | Kano Merchant. |
| Dantata, Mahmudu | Kano Merchant and supplier of funds to NEPU; later, MHA for the NPC. Son of Alhassan. |
| Dendo, Malam | Leader of a jihad against the Nupe kingdom. |
| Dikko, Russell | The first Northern medical doctor, and convenor of the |

| | |
|---|---|
| Adamu Barau | JJA. First president of the JMA. |
| Dipcharima, Zanna Bukar | President of the Zikist Movement; President of the Bornu NPC. |
| Dokotri, Patrick | Leader of the UMBC. |
| Enahoro, Anthony | Leader of the Midwest AG. Brother of Peter. |
| Enahoro, Peter | Journalist. Brother of Anthony. |
| Habib, Abba | NPC Secretary-General. |
| Ibrahim, Kashim | First Northerner to be Regional Governor. |
| Imam, Abubakar | First editor, *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo.* |
| Imam, Ibrahim | Leader, Bornu Youth Movement. |
| Ironsi, Major-General Aguiyi | Nigeria's first military leader. |
| Kaita, Isa | Northern Minister for Education. |
| Kano, Aminu | President of NEPU. |
| Kwande, Yahaya | Senior Northern civil servant. |
| Macaulay, Herbert | The first President of the NCNC. |
| Macpherson, John | Governor of Nigeria, after whom the Macpherson Constitution (1951) was named. |
| Maikwaru, Abba | First President of NEPU; leader of AG Northern wing. |
| Masaba | Emir of Bida, a son of Malam Dendo. |
| Miller, Walter | Medical doctor and pioneer missionary. |
| Milverton, Lord | See Richards, Arthur. |
| Okpara, Michael | Premier of the Eastern Region and leader of the NCNC. |
| Osadebay, Dennis | First (NCNC) Premier of the Midwest Region. |
| Rafih, D A | Convenor of the JMA A Yau. |
| Richards, Arthur | Governor of Nigeria, after whom the Richards Constitution (1947) was named. |
| Rwang Pam, Bitrus | Leader of the UMBC. |
| Sawaba, Gambo | Leader of NEPU women's wing. |
| Shagari, Shehu | Senior Northern Civil Servant; First executive President of Nigeria, during the Second Republic. |
| Sharwood Smith, | Resident of Kano, Niger and Sokoto Provinces. Governor |

| | |
|---|---|
| Bryan | of the Northern Region. |
| Sipikin, Mudi | Leader of the NAM; poet. |
| Tafawa Balewa, Abubakar | Prime Minister of Nigeria; Vice-President of NPC. |
| Umaru Majigi | Emir of Bida, a son of Malam Dendo. |
| Usman Zaki | Emir of Bida, a son of Malam Dendo. |
| Zukogi, Sadiq Abubakar | NEPU Secretary-General. |
| Zungur, Sa'adu | Federal Secretary of the NCNC; poet, Islamic scholar and NEPU member. |

**Glossary**

| Word | Language | Description |
|---|---|---|
| A raba | Hausa | Lit. 'Let us separate'. The call for secession of the Northern Region. |
| Ajami | Hausa | Hausa written in an adapted Arabic script. |
| Aku Uka | Jukun | Paramount Chief of the Jukun people. Sometimes known as the Aku of Wukari. |
| Albishir | Kanuri | Lit. 'Good News'. Newspaper in Kanuri. |
| Ālim | Arabic | See *Malam.* |
| Aljanun Dare | Hausa | Usually translated as 'Night devils'. Lit.= 'jinns of the night'. Militant gangs of NEPU supporters; analogous to *Jam'iyyar Mahaukata*, supporting the NPC. |
| Alƙali | Hausa | Islamic judge. |
| Arɗo | Fulfulɗe | 'The Leader'. A newspaper in Adamawa. |
| Arne | Hausa | Pagan. Pl=*arna.* |
| Atta of Igala | Igala | Paramount Chief of the Igala people. |
| Atta of Igbirra | Igbirra | Paramount Chief of the Igbirra people. Title later changed to *Ohinoyi.* |
| Attajiri | Hausa | Wealthy merchant. pl.= *attajirai.* |
| Babbar riga | Hausa | Long, flowing robes. |
| Bamaguje | Hausa | Non-Muslim Hausa. Pl.=*Maguzawa.* |
| Banza Bakwai | Hausa | The seven 'illegitimate' states founded by the offspring of Bayajida and his concubine. |
| Barantaka | Hausa | Clientage. |
| Biyayya | Hausa | Obedience. |
| Boko | Hausa | Hausa written in an adapted Latin script. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Bori | Hausa | Spirit possession cult. |
| Cazbi | Hausa | Prayer beads. |
| Ciroma | Hausa | A traditional title. |
| Dagi | Hausa | The Northern Knot. Symbol traditionally adorning Hausa architecture. |
| Dan | Hausa | Literally 'son of'. Can be used as a diminutive or to denote membership of a group. E.g. *Dan Mahaukata* = '*Jam'iyyar Mahaukata* member'; *Dan Najeriya* = 'a Nigerian'. Pl.= *'yan*. |
| Dan Doka | Hausa | Native Authority Policeman. |
| Dodo | Hausa | Goblin. |
| Efu Onya | Idoma | Lit. 'the horse war'. Slave raids from within the Sokoto Caliphate. |
| **Ẹgbẹ Ọmọ Oduduwa (EOO)** | Yoruba | Lit. 'Association of the Sons of Oduduwa'. Yoruba cultural organisation; precursor of the AG. |
| Etsu Nupe | Nupe | The Emir of Bida. |
| Gaisuwa | Hausa | Lit. 'greetings'. Presents given by one who has received a *sarauta* to the person who appointed him. |
| Galadima | Hausa | A traditional title. |
| Gamzaki | Hausa | 'The Morning Star'. A newspaper in Plateau Province. Also the name of a proposed mission-sponsored newspaper. |
| Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo | Hausa | Lit. 'Truth is worth more than a penny'. A Hausa newspaper. |
| Gayya | Hausa | Collective labour on voluntary basis. |
| Habaici | Hausa | Innuendo. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Haɓe | Fulfulɗe | See Kaɗo. |
| Hakimi | Hausa | District Head. |
| Hausa Bakwai | Hausa | The 'Hausa seven'. Seven states founded, according to legend, by Bayajida's offspring. |
| Himma | Hausa | 'Perseverence'. A newspaper in Katsina Province. |
| Ijir | Tiv | Assembly of elders. |
| **Ilọrin Talaka Parapọ (ITP)** | Yoruba | Lit. 'Ilorin Commoners' Party'. |
| Inyamiri | Hausa | Derogatory term for an Igbo person. Pl= *Inyamurai, Inyamurawa.* |
| Jāhiliyya | Arabic | The 'Era of Ignorance' in pre-Islamic Arabia. |
| Jakadiya | Hausa | 'The Envoy'. A Hausa newspaper, and series of newspapers in other languages. |
| Jam'iyyar Al'ummar Nijeriya Ta Arewa (JANA) | Hausa | Lit. 'Party of the Community of Northern Nigeria'. The Hausa translation of NEPA. |
| Jam'iyyar Jama'ar Arewa (JJA) | Hausa | Northern Nigerian Congress. Precursor to the JMA. |
| Jam'iyyar Mahaukata | Hausa | Lit. 'Party of Madmen'. Militant gangs of NPC supporters; analogous to *Aljanun Dare*, supporting NEPU. |
| Jam'iyyar Mutanen Arewa | Hausa | Northern People's Congress. A cultural organisation; precursor to the NPC itself. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| (JMA) | | |
| Jam'iyyar Mutanen Arewa A Yau (JMA A Yau) | Hausa | Association of Modern Northern People. |
| Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI) | Arabic | Society for the Victory of Islam. |
| Jangali | Hausa | Cattle tax. |
| Jinjina | Hausa | Salute given to a social superior. |
| Jinn or Djinn | Arabic | Spirit. |
| Kusugu | Hausa | The well featured in the Bayajida legend. |
| Kabila | Hausa | Ethnic group, or 'tribe'. |
| Kaɗo | Fulfulɗe | Non-Fulani. Pl.= *HaƁe.* |
| Kafiri | Hausa | Pagan. |
| Kakaki | Hausa | Trumpet for fanfare. |
| Kasa | Hausa | Land. |
| Kasar Hausa | Hausa | Hausa land. |
| Khadi | Arabic | See *Alkali.* |
| Kulawa | Hausa | Caring. |
| Kwara | Hausa | The river Niger. |
| Ladabi | Hausa | Politeness. |
| Lamiɗo of Adamawa | Fulfulɗe | The Emir of Adamawa |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Long Goemai | | Leader of the Goemai people. |
| Ma'aji | Hausa | Native Authority Treasurer. |
| Mai | Hausa | 'One who has ...' Therefore *mai sarauta*='a titled official'. Pl.=*masu*. |
| Makama | Hausa | A traditional title. |
| Malam | Hausa | Religious teacher. Also a respectful term of address. |
| Masaba | Nupe | One of the royal houses of Bida. |
| Masu | Hausa | See *Mai*. |
| Muqaddam | Arabic | Appointed religious representative or deputy. In Hausa=*Mukaddas*. |
| Mwanger U Tiv | Tiv | The 'Tiv Star'. A newspaper. |
| Na'ibi | Arabic | Deputy Chief Imam. |
| Och'Idoma | Idoma | Paramount Chief of the Idoma people. |
| Oche | Idoma | Clan head. |
| Ojira | Idoma | Assembly of elders. |
| Qadiri | Arabic | Member of the *Qadiriyya*. |
| Qadiriyya | Arabic | Sufi *tariqa* founded in the eleventh century. |
| Rundunar Samarin Sawaba (RSS) | Hausa | Lit. 'Freedom Youths Brigade'. NEPU Youth Wing. |
| Sabon Gari | Hausa | Lit. 'New Town'. The 'stranger's quarters' of a town or city. |
| Sallah | Hausa | Islamic religious celebrations of *Eid*. |
| Sarauta | Hausa | Ruling power or a chieftaincy title. |
| Sardauna | Hausa | A traditional title. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Sarki | Hausa | Emir or Chief. +*n*='of'. Therefore, *Sarkin Kano*=Emir of Kano. |
| Sarkin Kebbi | Hausa | Emir of Argungu. |
| Sarkin Musulmi | Hausa | Lit.= 'Leader of the Muslims'. The Sultan of Sokoto. Translation of the Arabic *Amir al-Mu'minin* ('Commander of the Faithful'). |
| Sawaba | Hausa | Freedom, redemption. |
| Shari'a | Arabic | Islamic law. |
| Shehu | Kanuri/ Hausa | Learned and pious person. Often refers to *Shehu* Usman Dan Fodio. The traditional leader of Bornu is also called the *Shehu*. From the Arabic *Sheikh.* |
| Sunkuyawa | Hausa | To bow down before a social superior. |
| Talaka | Hausa | Commoner. Pl.=*Talakawa*. |
| Taqiyya | Arabic | Dissembling. |
| Tariqa | Arabic | Islamic brotherhood. Pl.=*turuq*. |
| Tausayi | Hausa | Pity. |
| Tawaye | Hausa | Rebellion. |
| Tijani | Arabic | Member of the *Tijaniyya*. |
| Tijaniyya | Arabic | Sufi *tariqa* founded in the eighteenth century. |
| Tilas | Hausa | Compulsory. |
| Tor Tiv | Tiv | Paramount Chief of the Tiv people. |
| Tsafi | Hausa | Magic. |
| Tukwici | Hausa | A 'tip' given to the bearer of a gift. |
| Umaru Majigi | Nupe | One of the royal houses of Bida. |
| Umma | Arabic | The Islamic community. |
| Usman Zaki | Nupe | One of the royal houses of Bida. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Usmaniyya | Hausa | A trans-brotherhood religious grouping, under the leadership of the Sardauna, Ahmadu Bello. |
| Wajibi | Hausa | Compulsory. |
| Wakili | Hausa | Representative. Pl.=*wakilai*. |
| Wazifa | Hausa | Form of religious observance associated with the *Tijaniyya*. |
| Waziri | Hausa | Vizier. Senior adviser to the Emir. |
| Yaƙi da Ci Uku | Hausa | The 'War on Three Evils' of indolence, injustice and ignorance (*lalaci, zalunci, jahilci*). |
| Yaƙi da Jahilci | Hausa | The 'War on Ignorance', or Adult Literacy Campaign. |
| 'Yan | Hausa | See 'Dan. |
| 'Yan tauri | Hausa | Tough guys. |
| Yarima | Hausa | Prince. |
| Zamani | Hausa | (This) era, or 'modernity'. |
| Zamanin Siyasa | Hausa | The 'Time of Politics', or nationalist era, from around 1945 to 1966. |

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