

LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY

THE COLONIAL LEGACY OF NATIONAL DISUNITY  
IN NIGERIA



BY

CHRISTOPHER A. UGI

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Department of Sociology

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with the colonial legacy of the national disunity in Nigeria and, it draws instances from post colonial events to illustrate the arguments.

In analyzing the colonial attributes of national disunity one has to be aware of the fact that it is impossible to attribute disunity to the activities of colonial rule alone. The causes of national disunity never work in isolation; they are intertwined and can reinforce each other. As such, national disunity can be studied from different perspectives.

The colonial perspective is one and its contribution to the causes of national disunity is analyzed. To make the contribution strong, it was necessary to confine our analysis to the most important events that took place during colonial rule. These are amalgamation and the adoption of indirect rule as a uniform government. The methods and processes by which these actions were institutionalized as well as their effects on intertribal relations are analyzed in some detail.

This analysis reveals that British colonial policies generated tensions and cleavages among tribal groups. Differential policies created inequalities between the Northern and Southern peoples. One result was that the difference between the Hausa-Fulani in the North and the



Ibo in the East was in time no longer simply that one group was Hausa-Fulani and the other was Ibo. There arose two additional distinctions. The Hausa-Fulani remained predominantly Muslim and the Ibos became mainly Christians. Secondly, the differential effects of modernization and westernization elevated the Southern tribes who were previously considered inferior to the Hausa-Fulani of the North. The latter gradually began to look as if they were "backward" or "pre-modern".

Amalgamation and indirect rule did not eliminate the prevailing cleavages and tensions but rather aggravated the situation. The very processes by which these policies were implemented further created a climate of suspicion and hatred among Nigerian tribal groups. The tensions naturally sharpened tribal consciousness thus intensifying tribal animosity. The accumulation of these grievances increased the potential for tribal conflict, the outbreak of which awaited only the slightest opportunity. The withdrawal of Colonial rule naturally provided the opportunity, and, post colonial Nigeria cannot help but become ridden with inter-tribal conflicts.

The appalling slaughter of members of the Ibo tribe by the Hausa-Fulani in 1966, and the Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970 are vivid reminders that political conflict and, ultimately, national disunity is a feature of post-colonial Nigeria.

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## INTRODUCTION

An examination of contemporary national life in Nigeria reveals the primary and existential pervasiveness of disunity. Almost immediately after independence a series of conflicts and violence began to rip through the country. This culminated in the bloody secessionist movement of 1967 to 1970 which tore the nation apart. In both human and material terms, disunity has done considerable harm to the nation. Statesmen and intellectuals alike have generally been content with deploring its existence but maintain different views as to its attributes.

National disunity in Nigeria has been viewed by some writers as a continuation of the traditional tribal conflicts; others attribute it to the termination of colonial rule which saw the end of a unity achieved under the force of an alien power; and, yet still, others view contemporary disunity as the result of tribal competition for scarce economic and political resources. The present writer sees in these arguments, a neglect of the colonial legacy of national disunity in Nigeria.

Modern Nigeria owes its existence to colonialism. It is not surprising therefore that events which shaped the country's image took place during colonial rule. Fun-

damental policies were undertaken which largely determined the shape, form, direction as well as the future of the country. The period of colonial rule thus deserves central consideration in any explanations of national disunity in Nigeria. And, it is surprising that so little attention has been given to the colonial contribution to disunity.

This research fills the gap in that it focuses on the colonial legacy of disunity in Nigeria. The causes of disunity and the form it took, as well as its consequences are analyzed in some detail. Events drawn from the past colonial era provide us with useful illustrations of the colonial legacy.

It is hoped that this research will provide social scientists concerned with national disunity with a new avenue of exploration. Similarly, I hope the research will yield politically beneficial dividends to statesmen to whom prime knowledge of the colonial experience of Nigerian tribal population can help to give substance to decision and policy-making.

## CHAPTER I

### THE PHYSICAL AND TRADITIONAL SOCIAL BACKGROUND

The present chapter is an introduction to Nigeria. We will first locate Nigeria in space and describe the physical features. Then we will describe its tribal structure and highlight the distinctive differences that separate the dominant groups from each. This is necessary as background information to the problems that confronted the colonial government. We will limit our description to the situation as it existed prior to colonialism. This means changes that resulted from colonialism are not reflected in the information.

Nigeria is located on the West Coast of Africa. It stretches inland from the coast; and embraces most of the region drained by West Africa's most important river system - the rivers Niger and Benue. Its climate varies from equatorial rain forest in the South, Savanna in the middle belt to the semi-desert conditions in the North. The rivers Niger and Benue both flowing from different directions (West and East respectively) and joining together almost in the centre of the country provide a sort of "Y" shaped view. This shape seems to have divided the country into three natural regions: Northern, Eastern and Western. As we will see presently, this natural physical division corresponds with the tribal structure we

shall next describe.

The 1953 census count in Nigeria placed the population of the country at 31.2 millions.\* The people who made up this figure did not share a common background. They belonged to various tribal traditions. The number of tribal groups in Nigeria has been placed at about 250. As one would expect, these tribal groups were not equal, some were more in numbers as well as in strength than others. As a result, there are three dominant tribal groups: Hausa-Fulani (8 million), Yoruba (5 million) and Ibos (6 million). The rest of the tribes constitute the minorities. Even though the three dominant tribes are not exactly the same in population they seem to be equal in influence. In terms of territorial location, the Hausa-Fulani inhabit the Northern part of the country, the Yorubas, occupy the Western region and, Ibos dwell in the Eastern part, thus, corresponding to the natural divisions discussed above. The minority tribal communities are scattered all over the country.

We shall limit our description to the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Ibo tribes because it is the actions and re-

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\*Nigeria: 1952-53 Census. London: 1955 p. 10. The latest census count was in 1975 and it showed that the country's population stood at 79.8 million. The accuracy of the count was disputed as a result of which the census has been cancelled.

actions of these dominant tribes that have made the country's history. The minority tribes have remained in the background often, merely as spectators of the interactions of the dominant ones. These three have very little in common. They differ from each other in social values, in religion, in civilization and in socio-political organizations.

To understand the socio-political organization of the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Ibo, it is necessary to attempt some theoretical classification of African political systems generally.\* These include patrimonial societies, chiefly societies and stateless or what is known in Anthropology as 'acephalous' societies. As our description will show, the Hausa-Fulani belong to the patrimonial category; the Yoruba, to the chiefly type; and, the Ibo fits the stateless dimension. We shall describe the socio-political organization of each of the tribes with the help of these categories.

## I

To say that the Hausa-Fulani socio-political organization is patrimonial means that it exhibits the

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\* Fortes, M. and Evans-Pritchard, E. (eds.) African Political Systems. London: Oxford University Press, 1940, pp. 6-7 contain a classification of African tribal systems based on Anthropological criteria. Therefore, our classification does not quite correspond with theirs.



principles of patrimonialism as outlined by Max Weber.\* Hence, I shall mention only some of the highlights in this chapter. The Hausa-Fulani have a highly centralized state which is organized in hierarchies. A single ruler called the 'Sardauna' whose headquarters is in the town of Sokoto is the absolute ruler of the Hausa-Fulani State. He retains political domination over all others and, as the 'master' no one can effectively oppose him. As to how the master rules, Max Weber stated that "military and judicial authority are exercised without any restraint by the master as components of his patrimonial power".<sup>1</sup> The Sarduana's position as master of the state was reinforced by the fact that he was both the spiritual and temporal head of the Hausa-Fulani people.

Beneath the 'Sarduana' are his subordinate or intermediary chiefs. They are known as 'Emirs' and, each 'Emir' rules over an estate or a sort of province known as an Emirate.\*\* The Emirs have no independent source of power. The office of Emir is the personal right of the Sarduana, not of the Emir himself. Once installed

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\* For the details of the principles of this system, the reader may turn to Chapter IV of this thesis.

<sup>1</sup>Max Weber, Economy and Society. Vol. 3. New York: Bedminster Press, 1968, p. 1013.

\*\* In the sixties, there were about 38 Emirates ranging in population from 17,000 to 2,000,000.

in power, his subjects could not depose him, only the Sarduana could do so.<sup>1</sup> As a result, the Emirs retain their offices at the discretion of the Sarduana. But, their position is nevertheless crucial to the system of rule.

As rulers of Emirates, the Emirs are closer to the people, in recognition of which they often are attached first and foremost to the Sarduana's courts. This makes 'Emirship' the pivotal point of the Hausa-Fulani state. Emirs, like the Sarduana have the ultimate power of decision and their position as dictators was recognized by all. As Dudley has put it, "Their rule was based on a system of fief holding and clientage, the authority of the Emir being maintained through an administrative machinery..."<sup>2</sup> The administrative machinery through which the Sarduana and his Emirs exercised their rule is one of the most renowned traditional bureaucratic institutions ever found in Africa. As we shall see in chapter V, this institution provided Lord Lugard with a ready made bureaucracy for the launching of his indirect rule policy.

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<sup>1</sup>Whitaker, C. S. The Politics of Tradition: continuity and change in Northern Nigeria. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970, pp. 260-61.

<sup>2</sup>Dudley, B. J. Parties and Politics in Northern Nigeria. London: Frank Cass, 1968, p. 11.

This bureaucratic institution is however not based on formal rational-legal norms. All regulations are purely discretionary and purely subjective as opposed to regulation by body of laws. To this end, civil administration and governance rest on a system of men rather than laws. Individuals may hold important positions in the bureaucracy in the spheres of military and judicial service but recruitment is wholly based on patronage and loyalty to a ruler. Thus, through loyal service and devotion to an Emir or Saruana, an individual may win sympathy and can be elevated to positions such as 'Alkali' (Court judge), 'Waziri' (Chief Minister) and 'Wakili' (an Official Agent) etc. Because the Hausa-Fulani state revolves around the Emirs, the Saruana appears to be much more distant from his communities. This combined with his personalized rule gives him the character of what Weber has called an 'absolute despot'.

Socially and economically, relations of domination and dependence characterize the structure of Hausa-Fulani society. Stratification consists mainly of the upper class and the lower class. The former is made up of a privileged aristocracy and the latter is comprised of peasants. These two classes are known in Hausa language as 'Sarakuna' and 'Talakuwa' respectively. The society is held together by norms of loyalty and fealty and, bonds

between the Sarakuna and Talakuwa (upper and lower classes) can be described as patron-client relationships. The subjects or peasants are viewed as existing for the ruling class and compulsory services are signs of subordination. This situation conforms with Webers theory that "In a patrimonial state the most fundamental obligation of the subjects is the material maintenance of the ruler(s)".<sup>1</sup> Oligarchically organized personal networks are the norms of Hausa-Fulani society. And, a system of taxation, compulsory labour services and honorary gifts to the rulers serve to keep the peasants in their servile position.

All land is nominally owned by the 'Sarduana' and the peasants pay "land rent" for working on the land. The rent is levied on a cluster of villages and the amount paid by the peasant farmers in different areas varied according to the type of crop grown and suitability of land. As to the incidence of this form of tax, Sir Ahmadu Bello who until his death in 1966, was 'Sarduana' has stated in his autobiography that "the taxation, though not unjust in principle was sometimes unfair in its incidence." And, it was the peasants, "being the least influential and unvocal", who "suffered more than they should have".<sup>2</sup> Villagers were also collectively liable

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<sup>1</sup>Max Weber, op. cit., p. 1014.

<sup>2</sup>Sir Ahmadu Bello. My Life. Cambridge University Press, 1962, p. 18.

for labour obligations and percentages of crop yield. This may have been a tactic for maintaining hereditary attachment to a village as the system made migration difficult for the inhabitants. It may have been acute for the peasants considering that land was not a saleable commodity. Being tied to the land but not owning it is synonymous to slavery. These conditions indicate that Hausa-Fulani society was not a democratic or egalitarian one. The form of domination is primarily as discussed by Webber. It is not domination based on legal norms of legitimacy but domination based on norms of fealty and maintained by the force of tradition.

The principal facet of tradition that contributed to the maintenance of the patrimonial set up is religion. Islamic religion is the unifying force of the society. As a 'religion of obedience', Islam prescribes social norms as well as sets goals. The people have great faith in the pervasive force of this religion. Arabic literature is the source of the wisdom of Islam and the people are literate in Arabic language. These elements of commonality and the basic patrimonial characteristics discussed above give peculiarity to the Hausa-Fulani society. Those facts distinguish them from their south Westerly neighbours -- the Yorubas.

## II

Unlike the Hausa-Fulani, the Yorubas are a chiefly tribe. We may describe Yoruba socio-political organization as less centralized constitutional monarchies.

Yorubas are organized into kingdoms but the character and structure of these kingdoms differ from that of the Hausa-Fulani in some fundamental ways. First, there is no single dominant ruler comparable to the 'Sarduana' of the Hausa-Fulani; secondly, while rulership is not based on formal rational-legal ways, it is nevertheless not personalized; finally, the Yoruba Kingdoms do not have a renowned bureaucratic institution, but what they have is much more complex than the Hausa-Fulani system. The most distinctive feature of Yoruba monarchies is the availability of legitimate and institutional procedures which restrain the freedom of action of the chiefs.

Yoruba political organization is grouped into kingdoms and, an 'Oba' (chief)\* is at the head of each kingdom. Consequently, no single chief, has supreme authority over all the kingdoms. Fadipe has stated that "for the last 120 years, Yorubaland has been split into several independent political units",<sup>1</sup> and, Smith adds that these units

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\*Titles for chief vary from one area to the other. For instance, 'Alafin', and 'Oni' are used in some parts but the most common title is 'Oba'.

<sup>1</sup>Fadipe, N. A. The Sociology of the Yoruba. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1970, p. 198.

have "retained their identities politically and culturally".<sup>1</sup> Yoruba Kingdoms are not hierarchically structured and the 'Obas' are relatively independent from each other. As such rivalry and competition has often characterized relations between each domain. The selection of an 'Oba' is far more (though not purely) democratic than the Hausa-Fulani ruler. Individuals can contest for selection as an 'Oba' when they meet certain qualifications, one of which is wealth. This criterion is facilitated by the fact that traditionally, individuals could own land, thus accounting for the presence of wealthy independent landowners.

Tradition (rather than Islam\* as among the Hausa-Fulani) dictates Yoruba norms, values, mores as well as set goals. It also sets limits for the Oba's actions and the people are aware of the thin line which separates him from his people. To this end, the Oba's subjects would not allow acts which by tradition are considered exploitative. In this respect, the relationship between the Oba and his subjects is not based on fealty (like the Hausa-Fulani) but is nevertheless based on loyalty. The

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<sup>1</sup>Smith, Robert. Kingdoms of the Yoruba. London: Methuen, 1969, p. 15.

\*The Yoruba area now known as Kwara State was conquered and maintained under Hausa-Fulani rule. Hence the people have adopted Islam as their religion. In terms of language, both Yoruba and Hausa are widely spoken.

fidelity is not purely one-sided and is held together by norms of reciprocity. Thus, the Oba can risk his status and legitimacy if he exploits his subjects. Moreover, the office of Oba is not the personal right of the ruler and remains easily replaceable.

All lands are not royal domains and, the presence of a landed nobility tends to diffuse the class system. There is not much disparity in the stratification system: the gap between the upper and lower class is narrower. This is because there is leverage for upward mobility through competition and industry. The independent landed aristocracy exists as an intermediary link between peasants and the ruling class. The existence of this landed nobility make it difficult for the Obas to force the peasants to submit to their personal edicts. In this way the landed aristocrats protect themselves against the Obas and thus may sometimes protect the peasants from the tyranny of an Oba's rule.

Traditionally, public expenditure centred around projects such as infrastructure (roads and bridges), erection and maintenance of town walls, the cleaning and maintenance of sacred groves and palaces, as well as for military purposes. To meet these demands, inhabitants were required to pay taxes in the form of levies. There were two types: labour levy and cash levy. Labour levy



was in the form of rendering customary labour services in support of special circumstances eg. military service etc. Of the cash levy, the most important are the 'tolls' which were levied on inhabitants as well as on strangers in the town. Other sources of cash revenue include fees and fines that resulted from the administration of justice. On the whole, the incidence of taxation did not weigh heavily on the peasants and they enjoyed more freedom than their Hausa-Fulani counterpart.

This is not to say that Yoruba socio-political structure reflected democracy pure and simple. But it was democratic to some extent. As commented by Professors Okediji and Okediji, "one of the traditional attributes of the political organization of the various Yoruba communities was their democratic nature".<sup>1</sup> This is indicated in the case of 'Ondo' kingdom where every community and hence every extended family was directly represented in the government of the community. Democratic values hold the respective Yoruba kingdoms together. But, by far the most important unifying force is the tradition of common descent from 'Oduduwa'.\* The Yoruba people also have a common language heritage: "Yoruba" language is widely

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<sup>1</sup>See Professors F. O. Okediji and Q. O. Okedijis' introduction in N. A. Fadipe, op. cit., p. 14.

\*Believed to have been sent from Heaven by the creator called "Olorun", which means owner of the sky. Such myths and legends about origins of people abound in Africa and elsewhere.

spoken except for occasional dialects. The only situation when one Yoruba would not understand the other is when one speaks in 'deep' dialect. But deep dialects are not commonly used. In terms of religion some part of Yoruba (as already indicated) is Moslem but the majority of them were animists before becoming Christians. In this respect, they are like their South Eastern neighbours -- the Ibos.

### III

To the south of the river Benue and east of the river Niger is the eastern part of the country which is inhabited by the Ibo tribe. Contrary to the condition of Hausa-Fulani and the Yoruba, the Ibos are known to have no indigeneous, traditional centralized political organization. As such, the largest political unit in traditional Iboland was the Clan, also known as a commune. Beyond that, the Ibo recognizes no distant, unrelated authority such as the 'Sarduana' and the 'Oba'. The commune consists of blood related villages and, the only authority the Ibo recognized was that of the family head of the commune. Writes Meek, "The most characteristic feature of the Ibo society is the almost complete absence of any higher political or social unit than the commune".<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Meek, C. K. Law and Authority in a Nigerian Tribe. London Oxford University Press, 1973, p. 3.

Because of the absence of a central authority, there are no real chiefs to whom obedience is paid. This is the reason why Ibos appear to some observers as anarchists at heart.

Ibo communes are based on common factors such as ancestry, loyalty, complementarity in economics as well as religious shrines. Thus, a commune has a common meeting centre that serves both as a ritual, as a market as well as a political centre. When member villages of a commune meet in their common ground, they do so as equals. There is no single individual, chief or village that exercises authority over others. Each member village may have a village council of elders and council of titleholders\* who enjoy a certain degree of authority in the village.

Yet, such authority is far from the Yoruba type of constitutional authority and from the Hausa-Fulani despotism. Individuals in Iboland could become titleholders for a variety of reasons. It could be attained through industry and wealth: success and achievement are highly valued. Or, the authority can be acquired by the simple fact of being the eldest living descendant of a certain man or still, by inheritance. Alternatively, it may just

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\*The title may vary from one part of Iboland to the other but the most commonly used is 'Okpara'.

be due to one's role as a ritual leader, a rainmaker or leader of a rain shrine cult. Whatever the attributes of a titleholder, one thing that is clear is that his authority does not entail more than a mere spokesman for the village. He has no traditional claim to chiefly office. As such, he is not a law maker and does not enforce norms nor collect taxes from the villagers. Hence, Crocker could only conclude that the authority of the titleholders is far from complete.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, in spite of the absence of a centralized hierarchy of authority relations, order and social solidarity are effectively maintained throughout the commune. This seems to be due to the high value placed on egalitarian principles. Consequently, the ordinary Ibo man has as much right as the titleholder or anybody else in deciding the affairs of this community. This political equality is also reflected in their socio-economic arrangement. No one has monopoly over land or other resources and, this means everyone has equal access to the resources. This is because land is a communal property and every living generation is only an apprentice or caretaker to it. This situation may have been due to the pressure of ecological conditions; for, the Ibos had one of the

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<sup>1</sup>Crocker, W. R. Self-Government for the Colonies. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1949, p. 54.

highest population densities in Africa and resources were very scarce.

Under this condition, monopoly of resources by one individual or group would mean starvation for others. Another argument attempts to attribute Ibo egalitarianism to their traditional values of success and achievement through competition. As we have seen, a particular person could win the respect of others or become a titleholder if he distinguishes himself in industry and wealth. In this respect, the Ibo is a diametrical opposite of the Hausa-Fulani citizen to whom loyalty and fealty to his superior is the only way he could move up. Suffice to say that these values produce among the Ibos the greatest sense of 'individualism', unmatched by any other Nigerian tribe. Because of these distinctive characteristics, the Ibos are sometimes referred to as the "Jews of Africa".<sup>1</sup>

The Ibo social organization did not feature a refined class structure. Among the Hausa-Fulani royalty furnished a privileged class and, in Yorubaland aristocracy combined with a landed nobility created an upper class. But, among the Ibos where neither royalty nor aristocracy derived, stratification took the form of statuses. The status system classifies people into

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<sup>1</sup>Gunther, John. Inside Africa. New York: Harpers, 1975, p. 760.

ascribed and achieved statuses. The ascribed category consists of those classified as free-born, slave, male and female age grades as well as priestly descendants. Of the achieved status, there are titleholders as well as membership in a voluntary association based on prestige, ambition, etc. So basic are these ascribed and achieved units of relationships that rights and privileges are associated with each. For instance, "the servile (known in the local language as 'Ohu') may not marry a free-born" (also known as 'Nwadiana').<sup>1</sup> In addition, the free-born as the highest beneficiary of the system can become a titleholder. He alone can participate in certain ritual activities as well as inherit certain property. Thus, the difference between the free-born and the servile is based on social prestige rather than economics. Therefore, the Ibo society may be viewed theoretically as classless.

The absence of a public machinery of a significant kind in Iboland means that huge public expenditure such as that required to maintain a patrimonial and monarchical system was non-existent. Therefore, taxation in Iboland was not as important as elsewhere. Taxation took the form of fines for infringement of the civil order and

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<sup>1</sup>Nzimiro, Ikenna. Studies in Ibo Political Systems. London: Frank Cass, 1972, pp. 24-25. An individual's social status may rise and fall depending on his behaviour in the community. By committing certain offences, a title holder could forfeit his title and become a servile.

of levies for the performing of civil activities such as ritual offerings. The most important public offering is that offered to the God (known locally in different names Chukwu, Chineke, Ala, etc.). As soon as the priests and elders determine that God required propitiation, an estimate of the cost is made. Thereafter, they set in motion a method of tax collection, the incidence of which is borne equally by every member - village of the commune as well as equally by every inhabitant of a village. To illustrate this process, we must quote Meek at length. We shall assume as did Meek that the total cost of the offering is estimated at ₦5 (about \$10). Accordingly;

the elders of each division would then direct that their two subdivisions should each contribute ₦1.5 (about \$3). The next stage would be that the elders of each subdivision would call on the various households to contribute equally; or they might say that all grown up men should contribute so much; or they might call on the women to contribute half, and exempt young men on the ground that they were accustomed to render other public services such as building bridges, cleaning paths, or (in the olden days) fighting enemies. Very poor or sick people would not be called on to contribute.<sup>1</sup>

If this levy may be called tax at all, it must be so called with reservations. For, it does not compare with the exploitative exactions that the Emirs and Obas levied on their respective subjects.

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<sup>1</sup>Meek, C. K. op. cit., p. 27.

The practical conclusions to be drawn from an examination of the nature of the traditional socio-political organization of the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Ibo is that fundamental differences separate them from one another. They did not share similar experiences with respect to civilization, traditional custom, religion and even temperament. This is due to the historical circumstances that moulded each tribe. The one evolved a patrimonial system; the other a monarchical set up and still, the other a stateless system. But, each of these tribal systems was dynamic on its own right; it worked for its adherents.

However, these systems ceased to be dynamic when confronted by a powerful modern state. They invariably lose their equilibrium and become fluid, marginal or take on a new shape. The most fundamental disturbance of the stability of Nigeria's tribal systems resulted from colonialism. And, colonial rule was primarily the confrontation of these systems by British civilization made up largely of differing ideals, modes of thought and aims. How did these affect the tribes? The following paragraphs will describe briefly early European influence in Nigeria prior to formal colonization.

Nigeria's highly differentiated tribal systems have existed for as long as is known of their pre-colonial



histories. They have lived through two significant early phases of European influences in Nigeria. First, there was the slave trade which lasted from 1480 to 1807 in which a large number of able bodied West Africans were exported to the Americas and the Islands of the West Indies. The adaptation of the tribal systems to the requirements of the slave trade was not without conflicts but the effects were felt largely in reduced economic productivity. As a result, the political stability of the tribal organizations saw little disorientation.

Secondly, there was the era of "legitimate" trade which followed the abolition of slave trade. Nigeria was thought to have offered exceptional opportunities for legitimate trade and, this civilized trade in goods led to the scramble among European firms to acquire exclusive commercial rights in the area. This movement was given legitimacy by the Berlin conference of 1885 and subsequently led to a generalized partition of Africa by European firms. Commercial rights became synonymous with territorial rights. Eventually, the area now known as Nigeria became the jurisdiction of a single company.\*

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\*The Royal Niger Company was an amalgam of three influential English firms (the West African Company, Miller Brothers and, James Pinnock and Co.) thus representing the single largest and most influential firm in Nigeria. It was formed in November 1879 and was then known as the United African Company. In 1881 the name was changed to the National African Company and, in 1886 it was again changed to the Royal Niger Company (R.N.C.)

The Royal Niger Company first monopolized commercial rights over Nigerian territory and later acquired administrative and political control as well. In a series of treaties initiated by the company, Coastal and hinterland tribal chiefs and kings in Nigeria "signed documents purporting to transfer to the company their entire rights on both banks of the Niger, Benue and tributary rivers".<sup>1</sup> The ceding of territorial rights to the Royal Niger company and its assumption of administrative and political prerogatives did not produce disorganization among Nigeria's tribal systems. As Norton Cook has stated, the company "exerted relatively little influence upon native institutions".<sup>2</sup> This may have been due in part to the fact that Nigeria's tribal systems were dynamic in resisting outside influences and, also to the limited activities of the Royal Niger Company. The activities of the Royal Niger Company however paved the way for formal colonization of Nigeria by the government of Britain. What are the implications of this transition to the people of Nigeria?

In 1900, Britain took over Nigeria from the Royal Niger Company and subsequently established colonial rule. This had far reaching implications for the fate of the

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<sup>1</sup>Hargreaves, John. Prelude to the Partition of West Africa. London: Macmillan, 1963, pp. 329-330.

<sup>2</sup>Cook, Arthur N. British Enterprises in Nigeria. London: Frank Cass, 1964, p. 57.

traditional tribal organizations which the R.N.C. left largely intact. First, it means largely that Nigeria was to be moulded in the ways that suited the interests of Britain. Secondly, it also means that the coercive might of Britain could be brought to bear on the natives to force compliance to British interests. How to carry out her objectives in a highly differentiated and complex tribal situation was difficult for the British authorities.

How would Britain deal with differential reactions and varied degrees of adaptation to her rule of Nigeria's tribal groups? In this situation Britain's policies and objectives were likely to please some tribes and hurt others, especially given her tendency to classify Nigerians into superior or inferior tribes and use of this division as the basis of evolving policy in different parts of the country. To this end, colonial rule produced tensions and conflicts among Nigerians. Herein lies the beginnings of tribal disorganization, tribal exploitation, the generation of tribal conflicts and, ultimately, the sources of disunity. Before we analyze disunity in Nigeria from this perspective, it is appropriate to review the existing explanations of disunity.

## CHAPTER II

### EXPLANATIONS OF NATIONAL DISUNITY

This chapter will explore three broad perspectives arising from different explanations of national disunity. There are seven explanations and it is convenient to group them into three headings: social perspective, Political Approach, and Diffusionist dimension. Each of these perspectives is made up of different schools of thought as follows:

- A) Social perspectives: (1) Social Anthropological school  
(2) Cultural-pluralist school  
(3) Ethnolinguistic school
- B) Political perspectives: (4) Political scientists' view  
(5) Marxist explanation
- C) Diffusionist perspectives: (6) Modernization school  
(7) Dependency school

The grouping of these seven schools into three perspectives is based on their relatedness and this will facilitate our summary of the themes involved. It will be seen as our discussion proceeds that the seven schools share a common tribal orientation, that is, a common tendency to attribute disunity to tribalism characterizes these approaches. We begin by clarifying the concepts tribe and tribalism. We conclude the chapter with a discussion of the principal weaknesses of these schools and why the present research must be undertaken.

TRIBE: The term tribe has been widely used in the

literature on national unity. Yet, the term seems to mean different things to different scholars. Some use it to refer to large ethnolinguistic units; others, to "any group of people distinguished by its members and others on the basis of cultural-regional criteria".<sup>1</sup> Yet still there are those who define a tribe simply as

a unit of social and political organization which occupies a defined area of land and comprises a defined number of people<sup>2</sup>

These sort of definitions, one stressing language, another culture and the other politics seems to suggest that the meaning of 'tribe' may vary according to the phenomenon or problem studied. Or, more accurately, that 'tribe' like many other terms may have different referents in different social situations.

However, from the above definitions, we can identify certain basic general characteristics of a tribe: it is culturally and linguistically homogeneous, has a subsistence economy and is self-contained and politically autonomous. A tribe may be literate or illiterate but its technology is relatively simple. These are the

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<sup>1</sup>Gulliver, P. H. Tradition and Transition in East Africa: Studies of the Tribal Element in the Modern Era, London: 1969, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>Chitepo, H. "The Passing of Tribal Man: A Rhodesian View", Journal of Asian and African Studies, Vol. 5-6, 1970-71, p. 11.

qualities of a tribe. But, do we still have tribes in the world of today? If we rely on the above characteristics then, we obviously no longer have tribal societies.

It must be argued that the world-wide expansion of capitalism in the wake of European industrialism coupled with a communication/technological revolution has since brought practically every known human group within some foreign influence.\* As a result of this incorporation, those entities we are used to calling 'tribes' have undergone changes either materially or ideologically. Subsequently, they are no longer isolated, have lost their political and cultural autonomy; they have acquired some foreign language or at least new ideas. Economically, they have become involved directly or indirectly in the wider capitalist market economy. In general, the present lifestyle of any human group of today, including the most primitive communities, reflect the distant complex of the industrial world and as such are incompatible with tribal society. It is against this background that one author has hinted that when we speak of a tribe, we are referring to: "an entity pre-dating capitalism and colonialism".<sup>1</sup> Thus, while one could speak of tribal

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\* For more on the Capitalist-world system, see Immanuel Wallerstein, The Capitalist World-System, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1979.

<sup>1</sup> John Saul, "The dialectic of Class and Tribe", in Race and Class, XX, 4, 1979, p. 349.

societies prior to colonialism, there are no such societies in a post-colonial era. It becomes necessary, therefore, that the concept ethnic groups be used to designate contemporary tribal societies since it is inclusive of the changes undergone by the groups. However, we shall retain the traditional usage of the term tribe not simply because it continues to be widely used but also because it provides us with the theoretical value to understand its abstract, 'tribalism'. We shall use 'ethnic groups' only in so far as it aids in the understanding of our discussion.

TRIBALISM: Tribalism also can mean different things to different people. In many instances, it has been equated with instability, with nationalism and even with disunity. But, one scholar has used tribalism to refer specifically to the carrying over from pre-colonial era of certain tribal characteristics into the post-colonial period.<sup>1</sup> The continued retention of primordial elements, namely, native culture and institutions, symbols, values and beliefs is seen as detrimental to stability in the post-colonial era. Tribal societies do exist, sharing their corporate feeling of oneness but they are also be-

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<sup>1</sup>Here Southall seems to be justifying the validity of the term tribe while disputing the argument that tribes are non-existent today. For, by acknowledging that certain human communities still exhibit or have retained their traditional symbols, values and beliefs, he is implying tribes are actually existing. Southall, A. W. "The illusion of Tribe", Journal of Asian and African Studies, Vol. 5-6, 1970-71, p. 30.

coming politically conscious. It is their politicization that generates friction and that is what is known as 'tribalism'. Tribalism threatens stability in the new states because it

thrives on ethnic group loyalties which undermine wider loyalties to emerging national states.

In a multi-tribal society, when a particular tribal group strives to dominate or to resist domination by or assimilation into another tribe, such a tribe is said to exhibit tribalism. This is more so because these tribal groups, acting as collectivities differ from each other in sentiments, aspirations and interests. Therefore, the behaviour of a particular tribal collectivity might provoke a defensive or aggressive response from the other.

We can thus speak of patterns of tribalism or patterns of tribal behaviour. Some tribal groups may exhibit defensive tribalism. This occurs when a particular group is engaged in resistance to real or imagined threats to its interests. Other tribes may engage in aggressive tribalism by initiating actions that encroach on or threaten the existence of other groups. Western examples of these patterns are the current developments in French speaking Canada and in Flemish speaking parts of Belgium.

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<sup>1</sup>Sklar, R. L. The Contribution of Tribalism to Nationalism in Western Nigeria. Journal of Human Relations, VIII, 3-4, Spring-Summer, 1960, p. 407.



In both cases, linguistic/cultural groups are mobilized to defend or expand their interests. While these countries may be blessed with mechanisms for resolving their group conflicts, in Africa where such procedures are largely lacking, tribalism becomes extremely rampant. This situation has led Legum to conclude that:

Tribalism is Africa's natural condition, and it is likely to remain so for a long time to come.<sup>1</sup>

Tribal loyalties and identities are very strong in Africa. The tribe is stronger than the individual, it is stronger than the nation and it seems to be getting stronger rather than weaker. It is appropriate to ask why? To answer this question, we must begin our exploration of the various schools of explanation.

We begin with the schools that comprise the SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES:

1) Social Anthropological School: advocates of this school include Kimble and Van den Berghe.\* They posit that post-colonial societies contain alarmingly numerous tribal groups among whom social relationships are still

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<sup>1</sup>Legum, Colin. "Tribal Survival in Modern African Political Systems", Journal of Asian and African Studies. Vol. 5-6, 1970-71, p. 102.

\*Kimble, George. Tropical Africa: Society and Polity. Vol. 2, Twentieth Century Fund, New York, 1960; and Van den Berghe, Pierre. Social Problems of Change and Conflict. Los Angeles: University of California, 1965.

mainly primary. Here the structure of society based on common blood ties, family, kin and tribe is seen to be incompatible with modern societies. It is argued that within the tribal congruities, individual personal identity is enmeshed in the 'idols of the tribe', that is, the symbolic meaning given to group differences in body, name and history. For the individual, "the highest and only loyalty is loyalty to the family, kin and tribe".<sup>1</sup>

That the individuals respond to a primal impetus to belong, to identify or for that matter to remain attached to their tribal units means that they are indeed traditional. Identifying with one tribe signifies that one does not identify with another; every in-group implies the counterpart of out-groups. Moreover, when non-identification with other groups is expressed in the political context not only as a phenomenon in the minds of political actors but also in the statistical arithmetic that often exists between tribes and political positions, friction may develop. Such situations might lead some groups to reassert their uniqueness over the others. In Van den Berghe's view, this process is perpetuated and reinforces tribal heterogeneity. This results in lack of national integration and of complementarity between the component groups of the society.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Kimble, George. op. cit., p. 438.

<sup>2</sup>Van den Berghe. op. cit., p. 78-79.

Social Anthropologists must be criticized for their narrow explanation of tribalism. If the multiplicity of tribes per se aids in disunity as they claim, we are forced to ask; why then is Switzerland, for example, the most ethnically heterogeneous country in Europe, relatively stable and united? This and other examples around the world lead us to argue that it is not just tribal communities per se that aids in conflicts but rather, the appendages of tribal groups namely, culture.

2) Cultural-Pluralist\* School of explanation: Himmelstrand and Smith fall into this category.\*\* In explaining tribalism, this school addresses not the multiplicity of tribal groups as do social Anthropologists but rather, the cultural attributes of the groups. Their argument is that the tribal structure of post-colonial societies is a diversity of systems of life or cultural entities. These continually condition the values, senti-

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\* The concept pluralism was first developed by J. S. Furnival who identified it with tropical societies: see his Colonial Policy and Practice, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1948. But, the concept has been refined by contemporary pluralists to cover any group which is culturally and socially homogeneous.

\*\* Ulf Himmelstrand's "Tribalism", Regionalism, Nationalism and Secession in Nigeria: in Eisenstadt and Stein Rokkan (ed.). Building States and Nations. Beverly Hills: Sage Publication, 1973. And, M. G. Smith, "Pluralism in Pre-colonial African Societies" and "Institutional and Political Conditions of Pluralism", in M. G. Smith and Leo Kuper (eds.). Pluralism in Africa. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.

ments and aspirations of their adherents. That these cultural entities as reflected in religion, habits, social mores and other customary practices have retained their vitality is correct. Some of the cultures differ widely from each other with the result that certain practices that may be valued in one culture can be 'taboo' in the other.\* Such differences in culture have led to inescapable division of societies into the 'clean' and 'unclean', 'pure' and 'unpure' and ultimately, primitive and 'cultured' categories. Derogatory symbols of this type are what Himmelstrand has described in a word as 'stranger'\*\* and strangers are despised. This process has wider implications as Himmelstrand writes:

In places where traditional values prevail or are nurtured for political reasons, a stranger simply does not rank as high on the social scale than a local person whose qualifications are otherwise

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\* Most serious of all is circumcision which is known to prohibit inter-marriage and/or intimate physical and emotional contact between tribes who practice it and those who don't. Across almost every country in Africa, one would find groups who are divided by their cultures including eating habits.

\*\* He tells us in his classic example that the term stranger was commonly used for 'aliens' from other regions or tribal communities within the country. When members of the Ibo tribe, for example, are referred to as strangers, it means savages and people who performed odd jobs.

on the same level or, perhaps, even lower.<sup>1</sup>

When these labels are used to evaluate candidates for federal positions, sharp cleavages arise.

We must agree with the culturalists that most post-colonial societies are pluralistic in their cultural settings. They vary from primitive savages to advanced cultures, from the hunting and gathering pigmies to the agricultural Luba cultures in Zaire, and from animists to Moslems in Nigeria, each of which moulds its adherents in different ways. Consequently, there does not exist a homogeneous culture comparable to the assumed 'melting pot' in the United States.\* This reference is not meant to equate any Third World country with American society. Rather, the point is that if a homogeneous culture can be forged out of diverse cultures, why hasn't this been done in Nigeria, for example? Of course, Nigeria is not a country of immigrants. Moreover, the cultural entities are territorially based, factors which distinguish Nigeria

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<sup>1</sup>See Ulf Himmelstrand's article on Tribalism in Eisenstadt and Rokkan eds., Building States and Nations, Sage: Beverley Hills, 1976, pp. 344-439.

\*For some time, the 'melting pot', the merging of different cultures into indistinguishable sameness with "real" Americans, was a popular way of viewing American society. However, today, multiculturalism rather than the 'melting pot' has gained popularity. Perhaps, Great Britain is an example of a nation that has homogeneous culture.

and which reinforce the cohesiveness of cultural units.

But, this cultural-pluralist school, by designating pluralism to be the root cause of tribal conflicts seem to imply that tribalism is rooted in cultural identities. And therefore, it leads us to believe that African societies will always be wrecked by irremedial internal conflicts. This attitude of course, serves mainly to reinforce a state of hopelessness. It must be denied that tribal conflicts are natural to cultural-plural situations. Significantly, the approach of this school is purely descriptive and static. It claims to have focused attention on culture and yet neglects the crucial role of language, a facet of culture. To the linguistic factor we will now turn.

3) Ethnolinguistic School: Belonging to this school of thought are Devenport and Gupta.\* The school emphasizes the linguistic characteristics of tribal societies. Looking at pluralism but from the standpoint of language, this school emphasize the disadvantage of having numerous languages within a particular nation or country. It views most post-colonial states as exhibiting many different

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\* See Devenport, T. R. H. "Nationalism and Conciliation: The Bourassa-Hertzog Posture" The Canadian Historical Review, #44, 1963; Das Gupta "Sociolinguistics and the Language Problems of the Developing Countries" in Fishman, Ferguson and Das Gupta (eds.) Language Problems of Developing Nations. New York: John Wiley, 1968.

and unrelated languages. Many of these are hardly literary languages (in so far as they have no literacy tradition) But, they have been for ages transmitted orally.

The importance of language as a medium of communication and as a popular cultural carrier is quite familiar to us. It seems natural that a people sharing in a common language etc. should constitute a nation. However, problems arise when the opposite is the case. And, the situation appears even more perplexing when linguistic differences stem from diverse tribal origins. In this situation writes Devenport, language becomes

"a medium of expression, .... the form of expression whereby a people can maintain its cultural distinctiveness and yearning for autonomy."<sup>1</sup>

Language thus serves the political function of motivating and mobilizing tribal groups either to assert the group's autonomy, to resist assimilation or to define conflicting language loyalties.

Numerous languages are also seen as a barrier to communication between individuals as well as among groups. The component parts of a multilingual country have the disadvantage of not understanding each other because they do not speak the same language. Similarly, the substance of communication can be potentially distorted due to different interpretations by different linguistic groups.

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<sup>1</sup>T. R. H. Davenport, op. cit., p. 197.

This would produce inconsistent reaction from the population.

Shall we therefore assume that stable and unified European nations are so because they are not multi-lingual? The answer is obviously no. Every nation needs a lingua-franca, a commonly shared language at least at the functional level. While some European nations are multi-lingual, they also possess a general language. But, the majority of post-colonial African states do not have a literary native language that is universally shared. Whatever exists as a functional language has been one that came with colonialism. Moreover, such foreign languages are only spoken and written by the educated few; the majority of the people depend on their native tongues for communication. Without going any further, the argument of ethnolinguistic school is valid to some extent. However, it is too narrow an approach to explain a phenomenon as total as disunity.

It is appropriate to summarize the views of the three schools we have discussed. What they have done collectively is to draw our attention to the problems that heterogeneous structures - tribal groups, cultural entities and linguistic units - have posed for national unity. The prevalence of these plural structures is a fact of twentieth century Third World and, it is apparent that



individually and collectively, these phenomena are the overriding social forces. They represent in a phrase, 'concrete patterns of primordial diversity'\* and are believed to have overpowering meaning for the individual whose sense of self remains bound up in the gross actualities of blood, language, kinship, locality, religion and tradition.

Primordially based solidarities have a deeply abiding strength among the people. The individual may be living in the city or in the rural area, he may be a wage worker or a peasant but his primordial affiliations remain paramount. Instability is the result of the actions and reactions of these forces. Writes Geertz:

To subordinate these specific and familiar identifications in favour of a generalized commitment to an over arching and somewhat alien civil order is to risk a loss of definition as an autonomous person, either through absorption into a culturally undifferentiated mass or, what is even worse through domination by some other rival, ethnic (tribal), racial or linguistic community that is able to imbue that order with the temper of its own personality.<sup>1</sup>

It is therefore the longing not to belong to any other group, not to speak any other group's language and not to adopt the culture of another group that become ex-

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\*This phrase is borrowed from Geertz. See his article in Geertz ed. Old Societies and New States, The Free Press, New York, 1967.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 108-109.

pressed in political instability. The feeling one gets from this conglomeration of factors is that the problem of unity has a wide scope. The problem is total and somewhat all embracing and extends far beyond the concerns of these social scholars. Therefore, we must proceed to explore the political perspectives in our search for further knowledge.

#### POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES:

To be discussed in this category are 1) the political school and 2) the Marxist explanation. The first school looks at the state apparatus and the second looks at the social class basis of the state.

4) Political School: Lofchie and Turner belong to this school of explanation.\* Their interest is to examine the structure of the state apparatus of the ex-colonial countries. Their aim is to determine the effectiveness with which the state machinery fulfills its principal function - regulation of society. As one scholar has noted, the states of Third World Countries lack coherence, that is, they have "not become separate from, dominant over, or capable of regulating society".<sup>1</sup> This is true, both of

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\* Lofchie, M. "Political Constraints on African Development", in Michael Lofchie (ed.). The State of Nations: Constraints on Development in Independent Africa. Berkeley University of California Press, 1971. Turner, Teresa. "Multinational Corporations and the Instability of the Nigerian State", in the Review of African Political Economy, #5, 1976.

<sup>1</sup> Turner, Teresa. op. cit., p. 63.

the organs of government such as political parties and legislatures as well as the bureaucracy - all of which are ridden with corruption and nepotism. The political school has argued that in spite of the central importance of the state as an institution that monopolizes authority in Western Societies, Third World States are basically fragile and vulnerable. As a result, they are unable to systematically integrate fragmented and divided societies into a unified, coherent whole, capable of self-identification.

If these states were able to legitimize themselves, to have the underlying diffuse confidence of their populations, obviously the states would not be subjected to series of violent military coups as has been the case in most of those countries. These coups occur because the state has been turned into a centre for factional power struggles. This is more so since we can easily point to the absence of military coups among the developed countries of Europe where the state power is widely and firmly entrenched. However, in making such judgements, we must be aware of some peculiarities. Third World States are still in their formative period and they have assumed greater and more complex roles. They are concerned with development, the generation of economic growth and with the alleviation of hardship created by social change. These

roles contrast dramatically with the role played by European States during their formative era. Economic development was not a state function but that of an autonomous entrepreneurial class outside the state. This means that the political burden on state institutions was considerably lighter. By and large, the social problems created by the greater involvement of Third World States imply more burden than the institutions can handle. Under these circumstances, Third World States are bound to be weak and fragile. For Wallerstein, "as long as the state machinery remains fragile..., there will be chronic instability".<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the only option seems to be to take the path that European states had followed namely, the creation of distinct classes.

5) Marxist School of Explanation: As an integral part of the political school, Marxists as reflected in the works of Bienen and Anise\* are concerned with the social class aspect of Third World States. They posit that a definite class stratification plays a fundamental role in

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<sup>1</sup>Wallerstein's essay "The Range of Choice" in Michael Lofchie (ed.). The State of Nations: Constraints on Development in Independent Africa, University of California, Berkeley, 1971, p. 33.

\*Bienen, Henry. "Political Parties and Political Machines in Africa", in Michael Lofchie (ed.) Ibid. And, Anise, Ladun. "Ethnicity and National Integration in West Africa: Some Theoretical Considerations in Raymond Hall (ed.). Ethnic Autonomy. New York: Pergamon Press, 1979.

every society. It creates an environment for motivation as individuals aspire for upward mobility. But, in particular, it provides an entrepreneurial class for promoting economic development. Besides that a stratification system fulfills a political function as well. It can fuel a nationalist political class with vested interest in the state. Some nationalisms have been a function of an elite class consolidating state power, thus ensuring stability. As Turner has stated:

A stable state is one in which authorized individuals\* make, apply and enforce legal imperatives and public policies.<sup>1</sup>

Marxists believe that the elites of post-colonial states lack these attributes. This is correct and is in part due to the fact that the existing state elites are a legacy of colonialism. As such, they are peculiar and contrast with the historical class structure that exist in the developed countries. They are peculiar in the roles they play in society, as a result of which there exists varying degrees of antagonism which undermine their cohesiveness as a class.

The first of the factors that betray this class is

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\* Implicitly referring to an elite political class. They have a vested interest in the state and make their career from holding public positions.

<sup>1</sup> Teresa Turner, op. cit., p. 63.

the dual roles they perform. They are state elites as well as economic entrepreneurs. The state is their principal employer and their partnership\* with foreign firms (which control the local economy) enables them to play a large role as investors and entrepreneurs. Yet in spite of their dualism as political and economic elites, they are not equipped with the cadre, myths and sentiments that would mould them into a solid, identifiable class. This is so because their class interest does not transcend their tribal affiliations. Marxists have argued that their lack of a pan-tribal base has undermined their effectiveness as a class and hence frailty in the state which they control.

Their division along tribal lines as opposed to an inter-tribal base make their control of the state a politically charged issue. By controlling the state, the elite class has 1) access to political power and social status and, 2) access to investment and income augmenting opportunities. To have ample access to these spoils or prevent deprivation, factions of this class often resort to competition with one another. Since their loyalties rest with their respective tribal communities where also they draw their support, rivalry for control of the 'spoil

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\*They earn huge income from organizing the access of multinational firms to local markets and raw materials.

of state' becomes tribal rivalry. Anise referred to this process when he stated that Third World

"elites in aspiring for power, status, or advantages, may adopt tribal symbols and rhetoric, ....to mobilize support"<sup>1</sup>

Since this support means by and large tribally based support which is aimed at eliminating rival tribal group(s), the situation sets one tribe against another. In this process, tribalism is activated thus exacerbating conflict.\*

The effects of elite manipulation of tribal sentiments can go a long way. After gaining their support, the elites usually reward the tribal community concerned. Such reward can be direct or indirect and can take many forms. Preferential treatment of the tribe in matters of development projects and revenue allocation being one. But, the most fundamental of all is the common practice of making tribal origin rather than merit the main qualification for appointment to office.\*\* The appointment of

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<sup>1</sup>Ladun Anise's article in Raymond Hall ed. Ethnic Autonomy, Pergamon Press, Oxford, 1979, p. 338.

\* In a very brilliant article, Teresa Turner (op. cit.) has demonstrated how this process led to the fall of Nigeria's Military regime in 1975. In fact, it is a pattern of African politics.

\*\* In March, 1965 it was made public by the council of the University of Lagos that the appointment of the University's Vice Chancellor, Professor Eni Njoku had been terminated. In his place, Dr. S. Biobaku, a Yoruba was appointed to replace him. There were no good academic grounds for the termination of Dr. Njoku's appointment and, this action was actively opposed by the University Senate and the majority of both staff and students. See Robin Luckham, The Nigerian Military: A Sociological Analysis of Authority and Revolt 1960-67, Cambridge University Press, 1971, p. 217.

one's tribal followers to fill important positions may not be massive but as Bienen has stated, "upward mobility for the group as a whole may be perceived, symbolically, in having one member rise high".<sup>1</sup> This situation is known to have produced discontent and often violent reaction from other tribes who are excluded from the favour. The perversiveness of this service to tribalism largely explains the endemic corruption and nepotism of these elites.

The Marxist School must be acclaimed for its insight and powerful argument. To make this argument even stronger, we can go as far as adding that the termination of colonial rule in 1960 marked the inheritance by these elites, of public positions bearing salaries and allowances designed originally for expatriate officials. By the general standards of poverty in the country, these salaries and allowances are inflated, unrealistic and potentially disruptive of social and economic equilibrium. The lucrative or luxurious entitlements attached to those public positions have remained a basic attraction to the elites. Efforts to eradicate instability must therefore involve re-structuring of the state positions so that its appeals may match with local standards of poverty.

Comparing African elites with those of Latin America,

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<sup>1</sup>Henry Bienen. "Political Parties and Political Machines in Africa", in Michael Lofchie, The State of Nations, University of California, 1971, page 203.



one finds that in many of the latter countries, a few families who own a substantial portion of national resources, also own and run the state. In these countries also the gap between the few privileged families and the mass of the population is very wide. If these countries have remained relatively stable and united, why can't African States where the gap is narrower have peace. Perhaps the question can be explained by stating that African societies do not have distinctive class lines as do their Latin American counterpart.

Both the Marxist and the political school have revealed how tribalism is reinforced and perpetuated: on the one hand by the incapacity of the state to legitimize itself (political school); and on the other, by the peculiar role of the political class. Both the fragility and frailty in authority betray the nation: it is of some benefit to the people to divert their loyalties and expectations to other social forms namely, their tribal groups. Consequently, tribal identification is perpetuated.

#### DIFFUSIONIST PERSPECTIVES:

In this final category, we shall discuss two schools of thought: Modernization School and Dependency tradition. The first looks at the effects on Third World societies of their imitation of the European path to development; the second school addresses the disadvantages

of the Third World's peripheral position in the world economy.

6) Modernization School: Among the figures in this school are Mazrui and Emerson\*. They posit that political problems in the New States are the result of their imitation of European path to development.\*\* It is argued that the foundations of a modern society are being laid alongside a structure of traditional society which has not lost its vitality. Hence, two types of societies are generally seen to exist in Third World countries: the modern sector and the traditional sector. The modern sector is composed of urban centres populated by the educated and skilled who are either working for wages and salaries or are engaged in modern trades and occupations. Their living is organized around a money market economy, modern facilities such as shopping centres, rented housing, electricity and pipe-borne water supply. Often serving

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\* Mazrui, Ali. Violence and Thought: Essays on Social Tensions in Africa. London: Longman's, 1969. Emerson, Rupert. "The Prospects for Democracy in Africa", in Michael Lofchie (ed.), op. cit.

\*\* Modernization or development is a preoccupation of most of the Third World Governments. In broad terms, this means social and economic development. In the social sphere, it means reduction or elimination of inequalities and a widening of popular access to government services for health, education, and welfare; and in the economic arena, it refers to steady improvement of the material conditions of life, agricultural diversification, the promotion of an industrial capacity, and a generally heightened level of self-sufficiency.

as bureaucratic centres, the population of these urban areas is individualistic in outlook as they seem to be considerably submerged in European values. The modern sector as a whole is a minority sector and the above characteristics distinguish it from the largely traditional sector of the countries.\*

The traditional sector on the other hand is mainly rural and populated by peasants still engaged in subsistence economic activity. They are geographically and socially isolated from the modern sector. Largely poor and homogeneous in their class outlook, they have no modern facilities as do the modern sector. Here traditional institutions, values and beliefs prevail. They are uneducated, unskilled and wage employment is almost nonexistent. These qualities distinguish the traditional sector from its modern counterpart. In fact, the notion of a 'society within a society' is often used to describe the existence side by side of these two societies. Writes Emerson the

"most grievous cleavage that exists in African societies is that which divides the Western-trained *évolvé* from those who have remained more closely attached to the traditional communities."<sup>1</sup>

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\* Here we are confronted with one of many controversies in academics. The modernization school stands firmly behind the dual society hypothesis. And, as we shall see, the dependency school rejects this hypothesis in favour of a monolithic view of post-colonial societies.

<sup>1</sup>Rupert Emerson, *ibid*, p. 248.

What are the consequences of this cleavage?

It seems as though modernization functions primarily in heightening tensions and conflicts. This is more so considering that modernization means largely the destruction or erosion of the traditional sector: the disruption of family and community life. This is particularly noticeable in the high rate of migration from the traditional rural areas to the urban centres. This exodus is caused by rising expectations which is due to the impact of European values. This situation has brought about 'marginalization' of a good proportion of the people. Caught in between the two sectors and faced with frustrated expectations, they often become the source of social unrest.

But, larger problems loom between the modern and traditional sectors. The authorities in the former sector are usually bureaucrats and in the latter are traditional chiefs. Conflicts between authorities in both sectors sometimes arise and they centre on matters of loyalty. The inhabitants of the modern sector are loyal to the bureaucracy and those in the traditional sector have remained loyal to their tribal community government. When the modern authorities try to impose their authority on the rural area, either by way of taxation or by legislation, they come in conflict with the tribal chief who

resists encroachment on his supposed jurisdiction.\* Such competing loyalties between the Buganda tribe and the Ugandan government led to the political fragmentation of the country's first republic.<sup>1</sup>

There is no simple solution to this sectoral division of society. No process of resocialization or revolutionary transformation would overnight change the dual structure of these societies. Kimble has reminded us that "it takes more than a tradition of gradual change to prepare the Stone Age rain forest dwellers for the arrival overnight of the Iron Age, the Air Age and the Electronic Age, and the social furnishings that come with them".<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, conflicts between the modern and traditional sectors will exist for as long as these divisions remain.

7) Dependency School: Adherents\*\* of this school of thought assert that political upheavals in today's Third World are not due to the persistence of any original state of affairs. Rather, this condition is the product of a structure of dependence. Accordingly, the Third World countries are kept in their subordinate place by

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\* For more on this issue, I refer the reader to Ethnicity and National Integration in West Africa by Immanuel Wallerstein, (Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines, 3-1, October, 1960).

<sup>1</sup> Mazrui, Ali. Op. cit., pp. 158-162.

<sup>2</sup> Kimble, Op. cit., p. 54.

\*\* Frank, Andre Gunder. "The Development of Underdevelopment", and, "Sociology of Development and Underdevelopment of Sociology", in A. G. Frank. Latin America: Underdevelopment or Revolution. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969. Wallerstein, Immanuel (ed.) World Inequality: Origins and Perspectives. Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1975.

means of endemic balance of payments problems arising from their trade, aid and investment relationships with the imperialist countries. The dependency school attempts to analyze the extent to which Third World countries have been economically subjected to the developed countries and the effects of this subordinate status on socio-political stability. It is argued that the economic position of these countries has remained essentially in the control and service of the metropolitan countries.<sup>1</sup> Third World countries are basically primary produce exporters; exporters of agricultural raw materials to the developed countries. In addition, they are consumers of manufactured goods imported from the developed countries. This trade relationship is seen to benefit the already developed countries to the disadvantage of the undeveloped ones - a situation known theoretically as 'underdevelopment'. The implication of underdevelopment of the Third World is that it creates a perennial shortage of government revenue and a growing gap between revenue and expenditure thus creating larger and larger budgetary deficits. This situation contributes to instability in a multi-tribal, multi-cash crops society.

Where there is tribal specialization in cash crop production, that is, in a country where tribe A produces

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<sup>1</sup>See Bloch in Berkeley Journal of Sociology, 1970, cited in M. Klare, War Without End. New York: 1972, p. 13.

cocoa, tribe B produces palm oil and, tribe C exports groundnuts (conforming with the differential territorial basis of the tribes), "the national impact of cash crop farmers" will occur "in tribal terms".<sup>1</sup> The state-owned marketing boards organize and market the exports on behalf of the farmers. But the marketing boards do not control the unpredictable market conditions of the crops: fluctuations in demand and price. Consequently, a fall in the demand and price of cocoa reduces the incomes and profits of tribe A whose entire economic well-being depends on cocoa. The tendency of tribe A to blame its hardship on the marketing board and hence, the state is high. The tribe directs its discontent to the state because in its view, the state is responsible for the economic difficulties. Such complaints about the state are, in a sense, directed at the governing party. Since the governing party is likely to be dominated by another tribe, such "complaints ...are transformed into complaints about the ethnic (tribal) group presumably in power".<sup>2</sup> This process can be repeated many times depending on which cash crop is the victim of fluctuating market conditions. In this way, economic grievances arising from the dependent status

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<sup>1</sup>Bienen, "Prospects for democracy in Africa", in Lofchie op. cit., p. 199.

<sup>2</sup>Wallerstein, Ethnicity and National Integration in West Africa, p. 137.

of Third World countries are transformed into political instability.

To counter this challenge to stability, some governments have adopted price stabilization policies by which they 1) buy from farmers, any surpluses that might arise from reduced world demand. They are stored and marketed during scarcity. 2) The setting up of a special fund has made it possible for some governments to pay a fixed price to farmers thus eliminating fluctuations. These approaches have so far been successful in reducing friction. We must conclude by acknowledging the contribution of the dependency school to our knowledge of the sources of conflict in the Third World.

### CONCLUSION

The three groups of perspectives already discussed have presented us with alternative explanations of the sources of disunity in the Third World. The emphasis, of course, varies according to the phenomena studied. Thus, the social perspectives and their explicit concern with primordial structures emphasize phenomena ranging from multiplicity of tribal groups and cultural-pluralism, to the diversity of languages. Using these phenomena as their basis of argument, they have shown how these are ill-adapted to modern conditions. Thereby,



these scholars take an implicit stance that the primordial heterogeneous structures are naturally inconducive to stability and unity. To refute this argument, we have drawn upon world-wide examples to show that the conclusion is wrong.

What the social perspectives seem to have forgotten or left out is the fact that it is not the presence of heterogeneous structures (whether these be of groups, of cultures or of languages) per se that aids in conflicts. But rather, it is the uses to which these structures are put. Heterogeneous structures can be skillfully managed in which case stability and unity can result. But when this situation is exploited, all we can expect is conflict and instability.

The political perspectives on the other hand are noted for their overt concern with the structure and basis of the state. The writers have shown the biases associated with their discipline. The theme of their argument is that Third World states are doomed: on the one hand, the states do not have authoritative apparatuses to govern and to win the loyalty and confidence of their subjects; and, on the other, the absence of a solid class of elites who have vested interests in the state helps to explain its fragility. It is in the making of these situations that the political perspectives locate conflict in the Third

World countries. This argument is convincing to some extent. However, it does not exhaust the range of explanations.

The diffusionist perspectives as reflected in the thoughts of modernization school and the dependency approach can be said to have arisen out of the world-wide expansion of capitalism through colonialism. Their emphasis vary from the impact of modern values and institutions on the traditional structure to the subjection of the Third World societies to the economic dictates of the developed countries. All of these are seen to have a contributive effect on conflict.

However, it is the view of this writer that these schools of explanation have not addressed all the attributes of disunity in the Third World. In particular, they have failed to address a core aspect of the histories of these countries and of the study of disunity. Their major common weakness is their orientation toward tribalism whereby conflict is explained only in terms of or in relation to the tribal structure.\* The second weakness is that these schools have prudently shied away from a

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\* Conflict, according to the social perspectives is the direct result of the complex traditional structure. Political perspectives locate conflict in the interaction between this complex structure and the state and Diffusionist perspectives explain conflict in terms of the reaction of the traditional structure to elements diffused from the West.

systematic treatment of the colonial situation. We cannot ignore the central importance of colonial policy and the method of its administration in shaping socio-political life in the now ex-colonies.

In our view the impact of colonial government policy can be traced throughout the three perspectives surveyed above. It is deemed here that the structures of heterogeneity were put to ill uses during colonial rule. Secondly, it can be proven that the basis and structure of the state were designed to remain fragile and vulnerable even after the withdrawal of colonial rule. Therefore, it becomes necessary that disunity in Nigeria be studied in terms of the effects of colonial policy and the method of its administration. Our analysis shall be confined to the single most important development in Nigeria's colonial history namely, amalgamation and the accompanying indirect rule policy. Only by so doing can we understand the contribution of colonialism to national disunity.

CHAPTER III  
THE AMALGAMATION OF NORTHERN  
AND SOUTHERN NIGERIA

In this chapter we shall show that until 1914 Northern and Southern Nigeria were administered as separate territories. During this period colonial administrations in each of the territories pursued different policies: indirect rule in the North and direct rule in the South. Then we proceed to analyze the effects of these policies on each of the two territories: one became modernized and another remained traditional. This leads us to analyze the anatomy of amalgamation. This raises issues at three levels of generality: first, what were the reasons behind amalgamation? How have cleavages between the North and the South been created and maintained? Finally, how have such cleavages been related to the effects of the policies of indirect rule in the North and direct rule in the South.

1. DIRECT RULE IN SOUTHERN NIGERIA

The form of government that the colonialists adopted in any colonial territory depended largely on whether the colony was to become a permanent colonial settlement or a non-settler one. Both Northern and Southern Nigeria belonged to the latter category. However, being non-

settler colonies does not mean that they shared in common methods of colonial administration. In fact, the two territories were subjected to profoundly different and contradictory policies. Indirect administration policy was pursued in the North and we shall return to a detailed discussion of this policy. In territories where indirect rule was not practiced namely, the colonies of Australia, Canada, Ghana and of course, Southern Nigeria, the colonialists established instead, the policy of direct rule. The aim of this policy was not to recognize native institutions and rule the people through same, but to extend as far as possible, British institutions of government, of law and order as well as justice. Under direct rule policy, administration was organized on the basis of British county councils. Thus, native councils were created everywhere in Southern Nigeria. Legislative councils were also set up in which officials and nominated unofficials participated. The introduction of such British institutions into Southern Nigeria facilitated the spread of British values and norms.

The direct policy of administration may have seemed desirable to the colonialists because of their confidence in British civilization of the time. It may also have been the choice because of their lack of understanding of native society, its institutions and how it worked for

the people. Whatever the reasons behind the adoption of this policy, one thing that is clear is that its application in Southern Nigeria was not a mistake. For the natives, it was a method of government that made good use of their values and aspirations. And, for those gifted colonial administrators,<sup>1</sup> the direct system of rule represented a commitment to integrate the natives on the British model and to raise them up in progress. This commitment seemed to have been in the minds of every successive administrator in Southern Nigeria between 1900 and 1914. From the time the British protectorate was declared over Southern Nigeria in 1900, Lugard notes that

A native Councils Ordinance was enacted and Councils were set up from one end of the protectorate to the other, over which Government officials exercised a supervision which was not merely nominal, and the natives acquiesced to this exercise of jurisdiction by the Crown.<sup>2</sup>

The Councils were composed of ten government officials, three Europeans representing commercial and missionary interests and three Africans of non-official status.

Though the composition of the Council did not quite favour

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<sup>1</sup>Prominent among them are Sir Ralph Moor (1900-1904) and Sir Walter Egerton (1904-1912). For a complete list of British Governors in Nigeria, see Michael Crowder, The Story of Nigeria. London: Faber and Faber, 1978, p. 288.

<sup>2</sup>Lugard, Lord. Report on the Amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria, 1912-1919. Great Britain, Cmd 468, 1920, p. 12.

Nigerians vis-a-vis the aliens, it nevertheless represents preparation for modern democratic government. By pulling together the interests of the Natives, the church, commerce and government, the method allowed administration to proceed on a sound basis. The combination of these varied interests combined with sound policy and method of administration, made Southern Nigeria a land of prosperous opportunities. British and German traders and missionary pioneers were continually attracted to foster influence in the direction of material development, evangelization and of education.

The activities of missionaries, commercialists and administrators combined to bring about rapid innovations that drastically changed the character of southern society. The development of import-export trade with Europe created opportunities in farming, trade and in service industry into which Nigerians quickly moved. With increase in opportunities and wealth, came the rise of a new class of native businessmen and traders whose interests were vested in the capitalist economy. At the same time, missionaries were pioneering educational development. Missionary schools were established everywhere providing the natives with education. Here the pioneering work of the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) remains a landmark. Mr. de Graft of the C.M.S. first opened a day school in

1845, which he called the "Nursery of the Infant Church". Later in 1859, the C.M.S. Grammar School was opened and was followed in 1878 by the opening of the Methodist Boy's High School, Lagos. These schools taught the basic educational staple of reading, writing and arithmetic, with a few extras such as history and geography. A number of Southerners emerged from these schools with literacy that enabled them to take up jobs in Government, Church, and in teaching, etc. As early as 1865, two Lagosians, S. A. Crowther and Henry Carr had risen to the ranks of Bishop and Inspector of Schools respectively.\* Educational efforts led to the emergence of an educated class of clerics, lawyers, teachers and clerks whose interest was based mainly on modern bureaucratic and professional occupations.

On every count, these social and economic changes represent a step forward.. These forward steps were thanks to the "liberal" policy of the Southern administration which permitted unrestricted missionary and commercial activities. The foundation of development had been laid and progress continued under direct administration policy until 1914.

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\* For more on educational development in the South, see Otita Nduka, "Colonial Education and Nigerian Society", in Gavin Williams (ed.). Nigeria: Economy and Society, Rex Collings, London, 1976. And, Lagos Handbook, Lagos: Ministry of information, 1898, p. 180.



## II. INDIRECT RULE IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

In contrast to direct rule is the policy of indirect rule. British authorities would make use of native agents and to some extent, recognize native laws and customs. In such cases, the traditional institutions and administrative machinery remain intact and become the basis of the new administration. Indirect rule seemed a practicable policy in the non-settler areas where the native population had achieved some form of hierarchical political structure thereby allowing for some use of the existing traditional institutions. It was the policy pursued in Java (S.E. Asia), in Uganda and in Quebec. But it received its most classic expression in Northern Nigeria. The system has the advantage of minimizing administrative costs both in money and in men. But whatever the advantages might have been, the British are not the first conquerors in history to adapt the institutions of the native to the task of ruling them. The practice dates back to the Romans, and the Germans also practiced it in their African colonies. Suffice to say that Northern Nigeria was not the first colonial territory to experience indirect rule but it presented a comparatively well-established structure for the thriving of the system. What are these distinctive features?

Modern sociologists<sup>1</sup> have variably described Northern Nigerian Society in terms such as autocratic and feudalistic respectively. But, while their descriptions refer to specific political and economic modes of organization which characterize Northern Society, its broad and general description fits Max Weber's concept of patrimonialism.\* Northern Nigerian Society can thus better be described as a patrimonial structure. Whitaker shares the view that patrimonialism is a better description because the concept is all-embracing and also because it provides a theoretical framework for further description. It is important to understand the meaning of a patrimonial structure because first, in contrast to the South, Northern traditional social organization was based on its principles; secondly, as we shall see in the next chapter, the adoption of indirect rule as uniform government meant the extension of patrimonial form of organization to the South.

Weber's discussion of patrimonial domination ranges over several different levels of analysis (household, village, region and Nation-State). In this paper, we are concerned with the Hausa-Fulani (Northern) state struc-

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<sup>1</sup>For instance, C. S. Whitaker. The Politics of Tradition, Continuity and Change in Northern Nigeria, Princeton University Press, 1970, pp. 177-259. And, Kirk-Green and Hogben, The Emirates of Northern Nigeria. London: Oxford University Press, 1966.

\*Max Weber. Economy and Society. New York: Bedminster Press, 1968, Vol. 3 (edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich).

ture, rather than the patrimonial domination that may also exist at the household, village or regional levels. However, in order to fully appreciate Weber's discussion of state patrimonialism, it is helpful to have some notion of his argument that patrimonialism at the "macro" level is a logical reflection of patrimonialism at the "micro" level. Discussions of patronage in a village or "patron-client bonds" in villages or regions represent attempts at understanding patrimonial domination which can be helpful as analogies in the discussion of patrimonialism at the nation-state level, or, in earlier times, the state level.

There is a logical connection between Weber's state patrimonialism and the structure of the Hausa-Fulani Society in the sense that both are based on the principles of domination and dependence. The dependency relationship in each case, writes Weber is based on loyalty and fealty. The fidelity is not purely one-sided and is held together by norms of reciprocity.<sup>1</sup> In this fashion, the rulers of the Hausa-Fulani State known by titles as "Sultan" and "Emir", cannot exploit their subjects without risking the loss of their status and legitimacy. The

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<sup>1</sup>Max Weber op. cit., pp. 1013-1014. It should be added that the Inca State and Jesuit State in Paraguay were based on similar lines of loyalty and fealty.

rulers are not bound in any formal "rational-legal" way but they are held in check to a certain extent nevertheless. While the ruler may be an absolute despot in some respect (e.g. Sultanism), his power of life and death in particular decisions such as punishment of theft is not matched by an absolute power over the community as a whole. His dependents are too well aware of the thin line which separates him from them to allow acts which by tradition, are considered exploitative. In this respect, the Hausa-Fulani patrimonial state is not as "civilized" as historic bureaucratic empires including Tang China, New Kingdom Egypt, where the ruler is much more distant from the community and much less like the patriarch of a household. However, discussion of Hausa-Fulani Society is incomplete without mentioning the role of Islam.

Islam is the religion of the Hausa-Fulani. Its influence on Hausa-Fulani Society is so all-pervasive that some authors\* are led to believe that it is the main force regulating the society. Social cohesion is not so much the result of the effectiveness of the rulers but is the function of the society's adherence to Islamic precepts. Complicated by the pervasiveness of Islam, the structure of Hausa-Fulani State remains, to many, including Lord

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\*Nicolson, I. F. Administration of Nigeria, 1900-1960. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969; and, John Hatch, Nigeria, the Seeds of Disaster. Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1970.

Lugard, a distinctive hierarchical structure. We can summarize the important features of the Hausa-Fulani Society as follows:

- 1) One ruler (the Sultan) retains political domination over the Emirs and he is the master of the patrimonial state and no one can effectively oppose him.
  - 2) Subjects are required to render military service, customary labour services, honorary gifts, support in special circumstances, and so forth.
  - 3) All land is nominally owned by the ruler, and
  - 4) The ruler is a political head as well as a religious leader from whom both secular and divine powers flow.
- All these factors combine to produce a kind of social solidarity in Hausa-Fulani land that is unparalleled anywhere else in Nigeria.\*

Such was the system which Lugard admired and which he effectively incorporated under his control. When

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\*Whitaker, 1970; Nicolson, 1969; and Heussler, 1968; have argued that the Hausa-Fulani patrimonial rule was on the verge of incipient internal decay when Colonial Rule was established in 1900. He says that Emirs and their estates were revolting against the overall authority of the Sultan and that Lugard saved the structure by encouraging traditionalism by way of reviving Islamic traditions. The reasons for the internal decay is irrelevant here but what is clear is that Lugard did attempt to revive Islamic religion and hence Islamic law which emphasizes respect for authority. Lugard may have done this as a justification for his own authority as well. We shall return to this issue. Whitaker op. cit.; Nicolson op. cit.; and Robert Heussler. The British in Northern Nigeria. London: Oxford University Press, 1968.

Colonial Rule was established in 1900, there was only one ruler who held power over all others: Lord Lugard, the High Commissioner. Beginning in 1900, Lugard successfully established indirect rule over the Hausa-Fulani, with a pledge that "the religion of the people (Islam) would not be interfered with."<sup>1</sup> Not only is it normal under indirect rule to recognize the native institutions of the Hausa-Fulani but Lugard realized that Islam was the source of law and of political authority, as well as holding sway over economic, social and cultural life. Remaining bound to his pledge of non-interference, Lugard spotted potential subversive influences and immediately formulated policies designed to protect the Islamic Society. Among the measures taken are the "barring of Christian missions from the North" and the restrictive permission given to European commercial firms.<sup>2</sup> Nicolson<sup>3</sup> has attributed the poverty of the North to these prohibitive measures. He argues that had Lugard permitted commercial enterprises and missionary activity in the North as was done in the South, the North would have been developed both materially and educationally, thus creating ample sources of revenue. This would have made the North financially self-sufficient.

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<sup>1</sup>Whitaker, op. cit., p. 269.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>3</sup>Nicolson, op. cit., pp. 124-179.

But since this was not the case, the North had to depend on a "grant-in-aid" from the imperial government to finance its administration. It can also be argued that the need to amalgamate the North and South would not have occurred since the reason for amalgamation was to relieve the imperial government of the burden of financing Northern administration. However, the fact remains that Northern people were encouraged to resist external influences whether upon their religion, dress, architecture, or way of life generally, thus preventing modernization.

Lugard's strong conviction that any action that weakened the authority of the Muslim religion would also weaken the authority and prestige of the rulers, and would thus imperil the system of indirect administration, prompted him to encourage consolidation of the authority of the Emirs and of the religion of Islam. Efficiency and stability tended to be the operative criteria within the colonial administration evaluated an Emir's performance. This rating was accompanied by the practice of rewarding supporters and punishing opponents. As the Emirs soon learned that in the last analysis it was the British Governor who controlled administrative functions, they naturally responded to this situation by cultivating the support of the administration through exhibition of the qualities most immediately likely to impress and endear.

Having won British support, the Emir then faced his Councillors and his people with the additional, indeed, crucial backing of British authority. This is the phenomenon that Himmelstrand refers to in his essay on tribalism in which he tells us that:

...the British Colonial administration had the effect of increasing the power of the Sultans and Emirs by introducing what is generally known as indirect rule.<sup>1</sup>

The Sultans and Emirs were made part of the Colonial administration, and in this way managed to maintain and even strengthen their positions in most cases. As their domination gained momentum, the rulers became increasingly insulated from their subjects and in this way intensified their dependence.

Fearing that the growing power of the Hausa-Fulani rulers over their subjects might lead to internal decay of the system of Indirect Rule, the administration made an appeal to Islam. Ancient Islamic traditions were revived in the name of religious purification and reform, with excessive emphasis placed on Islam as "a religion of obedience". This was part of a wider campaign to strengthen conservatism among Hausa-Fulani rulers and to ensure the continued submission of the people. It

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<sup>1</sup>Himmelstrand, Ulf. "Tribalism, Regionalism, Nationalism and Secession in Nigeria" in Eisenstadt and Rokkan (eds.). Building Nations and States. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1973, p. 436.



seems to have been a general imperial strategy when we recall that in the years following the conquest of Quebec, the British encouraged conservatism among the main forces in French Canadian society including the Catholic Church. Carl Wittke\* tells us in his history of Canada (1941) that Conservative Catholic priests were imported from France to man the French Canadian Church. If this was a general colonial tactic designed to increase British influence while preventing possible unrest (which it obviously was), they carried it to perfection in Northern Nigeria.

Colonial educational policy in Northern Nigeria saw fit to establish Islamic Schools in which the subjects taught were some Arabic and Islamic law. In a society where the religious code is also the Code of Law, it is only natural that Islamic instruction constitutes legal instruction as well. However, a feature of the system was the importation of Islamic fundamentalists from Sudan in North Africa to man these schools - something analogous to the importation of Catholic fundamentalists from France to Quebec. Here the Sudanese Islamic teachers re-interpreted the Koran (Islamic Holy Bible) and came up with a new set of codes on which Whitaker has commented:

The codes were deliberately modeled on the corresponding laws in the former British

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\*Wittke, Carl. A History of Canada. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1941.

Sudan, on the grounds that....they had already been modified to fit special needs in that predominantly Islamic and African country and therefore were particularly suited to Northern Nigeria.<sup>1</sup>

The object of these new instructions was to inculcate traditional Islamic respect for authority. The Emirs' secular power continued to be augmented by appeals to the ideals of Islam which combine temporal and religious authority in the person of the ruler. In standing behind indigeneous authority in this fashion, the British authority naturally reinforced the people's estimate of their rulers' coercive potential, and justifiably so in light of the refinements in organization and technology which the British might bring to bear. Lugard firmly established his method of indirect rule in the North, and it grew strong in consolidation and powerful in the influence of the rulers over their subjects -- a situation that led one of the colonial officials to remark that

By the time Lugard left Northern Nigeria, he had constructed both upon paper and in the practice of men, British and African, who worked under him, what can claim to be the most comprehensive, coherent and renowned system of administration in our colonial history.<sup>2</sup>

This was the situation of colonial rule in Northern Nigeria until the year 1914 when Lugard plunged indirect rule

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<sup>1</sup>Whitaker, op. cit., p. 225

<sup>2</sup>Perham, Margery. Lugard: The Years of Authority, page 138.

into a crisis. The crisis started in 1914 when Lugard was entrusted with the task of amalgamating Nigeria and he decided to extend indirect rule to the South, to make it a universal form of rule for the amalgamated Nigeria.

Indirect administration in the North and direct administration in the South produced incompatible differences between the two regions. The South acquired modern institutions and values and the North was moulded in the direction of traditional conservatism, thus accentuating the already existing differences of race, religion and culture.

"This divergence", writes Lord Lugard, "was in part due to deliberate differences of administrative method and organization, and in part, due to the earlier history of each Government and the circumstances which had moulded its development under British rule...."<sup>1</sup>

The earlier history of each government and the circumstances which moulded them emanate from the belief of each administration in the superiority of its policy and method. This belief which was often expressed in overt rivalry over matters of common interests, (as epitomized in the railway dispute of 1906 discussed earlier), obviously point to the fact that the two types of government were adopted as viable and permanent forms of rule. This further means the methods reflected the needs, values and

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<sup>1</sup>Lugard, Amalgamation Report, p. 12.

characteristics of the people of each region. Later on in 1914, the differences in race, religion and culture and, most particularly, the direct administrative method of the South, its earlier history and the circumstances which moulded its development were ignored.

The man who was to ignore the primordial differences between Northern and Southern Nigeria and, particularly, how the effects of colonial rule might widen these differences was Lord Lugard. For many years between 1894 and 1919 Lugard was the chief colonial architect in Nigeria. His outstanding service in the North made him the "king-pin" of British colonial empire. Therefore, it was not an accident that Lugard was entrusted with the task of amalgamating Northern and Southern Nigeria. Whether or not Lugard performed this task in the right manner does not matter presently but Sir Charles Jeffries has told us that "By general consent, the title of the maker of modern Nigeria belongs to Lord Lugard."<sup>1</sup>

In the absence of direct administration of Nigeria by the Colonial Office, Lugard was the man whose decisions, preferences and interests shaped almost the entire life

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<sup>1</sup>Jeffries, Sir Charles. The Colonial Office, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1956, p. 66. There is an excellent chronology of Lugard's life including his early private life in Nigeria before becoming a public figure in Perham, Margery and Mary Bull, (eds.). The Diaries of Lord Lugard, Feber, London, 1963.

of the country:

The executive powers of the Crown in the territory (Nigeria) are invested in him (Lugard). Except in certain specific matters such as the granting of honours and the power of assenting to legislation on matters reserved for the Sovereign's personal pleasure, he (Lugard) exercised all the constitutional functions of the Crown within the territory including the Royal prerogative of mercy.<sup>1</sup>

In 1900-1906, Lugard was High Commissioner in Northern Nigeria; in 1912-1913, he was Governor of Northern and Southern Nigeria; and in 1914-1919, Lugard was Governor-General of Nigeria. During these years, Lugard exercised all the constitutional functions including the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria in 1914. It represents his most important constitutional function in which the continuity of Nigeria's past with the present has been brought more sharply into focus. This development is highly crucial to our analysis and shall presently be dealt with to delineate the issues and problems of unity in Nigeria.

### III AMALGAMATION

In the first part of this chapter we stressed the point that indirect rule in the North and direct rule in the South are diametrically opposed policies. We also showed the differential effects of these policies on the North and the South. Finally, we showed that the effects

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<sup>1</sup>Lugard, Amalgamation Report, p. 35

of these policies further intensified the differences between the North and the South. In conclusion, we argued that the policies of indirect rule and direct rule were not intended to prepare the North and the South for future union as a single country. Therefore, the present writer contends that the need for amalgamation did not exist. Now, we must ask the question, why were the two regions amalgamated? This raises further questions: whose interests did amalgamation serve? Was amalgamation effected in order to satisfy the interests of the native population, of Britain or of both? Or, could it be that amalgamation was an inevitable result of some unexplained circumstances.

Some attempts have been made to explain the circumstances that precipitated amalgamation. There are those who think that Britain was faced with shortage of staff for its colonies and decided to overcome the problem by amalgamating the two Nigerias.<sup>1</sup> In this view, amalgamation pooled the staff of the two protectorates together thus reducing the number required to run the protectorates independently. Another argument, and presumably the most important is that the whole apparatus of colonial government in Nigeria including infrastructural development was designed to serve Britain's economic pursuits.

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<sup>1</sup>See for instance, Lindsay Barrett's review of General Alexander Madiebo's book: "The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran War", West Africa Magazine No. 3305, Nov. 24, 1980, p. 2365. He states that amalgamation was for administrative convenience.

A recent book review on British colonization of Nigeria draws attention to Britain's obsession with economic benefits. Its author states that "The British build roads, railways and harbours to advance their economic interests".<sup>1</sup> In their preoccupation with economic exploitation Britain in 1914 "linked the country tenuously together with the institutions of the law and order"<sup>2</sup> in order to effectively control its vital economic interests. What did Britain's economic interests in Nigeria consist of? And what was the economic relationship between Britain and each of the two Nigerias? How did this economic condition precipitate the amalgamation of the two protectorates?

It was common belief that Britain's trade with the empire was vital to her national survival and, wherever and whenever British government was set up over colonial peoples in Asia or Africa, particularly under non-settler situation, the pre-occupation of the Governor was

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<sup>1</sup>Ollawa, P. E. review of "Democratic and National Integration in Nigeria", in Africa Social Research, #20, December, 1975, p. 829.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

to make the natives concerned pay the costs.<sup>1</sup> Taxation was the principal method by which natives were made to bear the burden of their administration. So, if government was going to stipulate for payment of tax in cash, there was only one thing it could do. That is to put money into the hands of the natives and then take it back. Commodity relations between colony and the mother country was a typical policy for achieving this objective. The Colonial State machine, namely, the good offices of Imperial rule was geared toward developing exports to European countries. This normally took the form of export of agricultural produce and/or minerals. Where there were no indigenous produce that was needed in Europe, new cash crops were introduced from other continents. Applying this policy to Nigeria, Bertram Uba writes:

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<sup>1</sup> Leonard Barnes, in his book: *Empire and Democracy*, Victor Gollantz, London, 1939, tells us (p. 175) that the Chancellor of Exchequer in London insisted on that. Two other writers are in agreement that the Colonial Office did not control the financial operations of colonial governments. Though encouraged to be financially self-sufficient, a bankrupt colonial government could apply to London for financial assistance but the process of getting such funds was so arduous and humiliating that the method itself was discouraging. As a result, some Colonial Governors (e.g. Lugard) resorted to the imposition of high taxes in order to maintain the financial balance of the Government. See Nicolson, I. F. : The Administration of Nigeria, Oxford, 1969 and Margery Perham: Lugard, The Years of Authority, Collins, London, 1960.



The British on taking over control of Nigeria introduced new cash crops - ground nuts, cotton, rubber, cocoa, etc. which were cultivated and exported....<sup>1</sup>

Among the export crops mentioned by Uba, cocoa for example, is not indigenous in Nigeria. The crop was introduced there from South America. The innovations of export economy frequently proved revolutionary to the social as well as the traditional economic order of colonial peoples. William Woodruff reported that

"where tribes were reluctant to become involved with the European idea of cash crops and market economies, laws were enacted obliging each tribal community to grow cash crops where produce could be marketed."<sup>2</sup>

Thus, Colonial peoples were commonly directed what to grow and in what quantities, with the quality of their produce subject to regulation, as well as the prices they received, from which they had to pay their taxes.

The imposition of a cash tax in effect made work for money compulsory as well as facilitated the cultivation and export of raw materials such as palm oil and cocoa etc. Everywhere in the British Colonies, particularly British Africa, there existed one form of tax or the other.

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<sup>1</sup>Uba, Bertram. "Underdevelopment in Nigeria", Term paper presented to Professor Colin Ley's Department of Political Studies, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, 1979, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Woodruff, William. Impact of Western Man - A Study of Europe's Role in the World Economy, 1750-1960, London, 1966, p. 10.

There are parallels and uniformities in the colonial experience of various peoples with respect to taxation and the development of export trade. In North America where the colonizer came as a settler (as opposed to a visitor as in Nigeria) and where 'fur' as opposed to agricultural produce was the chief export, Nancy Lurie tells us that as early as 1646 when the 'fur' trade was just beginning to loom important to Britain the regrouped remnants of the once powerful Powhatan Confederacy was made "to pay annual tribute in 'furs' to the Colony, an interesting portent of things to come for their Indian neighbours to the West."<sup>1</sup> While this tribute does not resemble the weight and intensity of direct taxation in cash or kind as it existed in British Africa, the analogy does point to the fact that colonial peoples in general were made to pay for the benefit of being ruled by the British. While certain colonial peoples paid taxes in kind, others paid in cash in the form of poll tax or a hut tax or both. Barnes tells us what the practice in Nigeria was:

In Nigeria, the practice is to make a lump-sum assessment on a whole village or similar unit. In a few places the hut or poll tax is graded according to local circumstances,

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<sup>1</sup>Nancy Lurie. "Indian Cultural Adjustment to European Civilization" in James Morton Smith (ed.). Seventeenth Century America, Chapel Hill, 1958.

but generally is a fixed flat rate over a whole territory.<sup>1</sup>

The lump sum assessment was structured so that the larger the circle of a man's dependents, the larger the total tax he has to pay.

The average cash income per family was estimated to be three pounds sterling (in today's terms, about \$7) of which one third was paid to the government in direct taxation alone. This tax had to be paid by every male Nigerian when he reached the age of fourteen, sixteen, or eighteen, according to where he happened to be born. Barnes seems biased in his analysis of the impact of colonial taxation on Nigerians. Comparing it with the incidence of taxation in Britain, he states that "while colonial taxation is lighter for the rich" (British worker), "it is also heavier for the poor" (Nigerian worker). He sums up with the words "It is impossible to defend this discrimination".<sup>2</sup> It presumably did not seem discriminatory to the colonial governments of the time or if it did, the discrimination was not halted, since doing so would mean a decrease in revenue.

The whole process of raising government revenue involved a complex network of interdependent relationships. As already stated, the colonial government depended on taxation for its revenue. With cash tax itself depending

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<sup>1</sup>Leonard Barnes, op. cit., p. 177.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 176-178.

on the world demand for agricultural exports, it is obvious that fluctuations in the demand for palm oil, rubber or cocoa would inversely affect taxes and hence, government revenue. As we shall see in the next chapter on Indirect Rule, this tax situation contributed to the collapse of Lugard's indirect rule in Southern Nigeria. For, in the face of a drastic decline in the world demand for export crops, in order to ensure continuity of revenue, the colonial administration not only insisted on payment of taxes but raised the existing tax structures. This naturally provoked hostilities from the natives whose lives were threatened by the move. Suffice to say that fluctuations in government revenue would in turn reduce government investment in infrastructural development -- roads, railways, sea ports -- on which the export economy depended. This would have far reaching consequences since infrastructure forms the basis of communication and transportation in the country.

In Nigeria, railways were the most important of infrastructural development and these took up a good share of government revenue. Railways provided the means for transporting palm oil, cocoa and rubber, etc. from the hinterland to the coast from where they could be shipped to their overseas markets. The strategic importance of railway development gave it a key role in

deciding Nigeria's political future. It is recalled here that in much the same way, railways were crucial in the incorporation and the opening up of Western Canada. This was illustrated by John Macdonald's often quoted declaration that "Railways are my politics". In those early days of Canada, politicians like Macdonald who favoured Westward expansion of railways were credited with the best vision for the future of the country and was considered a nationalist. This is more so because in the preoccupation to create a strong British North America, there was a sufficient balance of forces between Central and Western Canada. The population pressure in Central Canada and the availability of capital was matched by abundance of land and investment opportunities in the West. The linking of the fertile prairie farmlands to the Great Lakes System had both economic and political advantage in terms of wheat exports and confederation.\* Railways thus seem to have played a key role in the early life of most colonial territories. As railway construction becomes strategically important, their financing becomes a critical or delicate issue.

Here government revenue is irrevocably called into question because such a gigantic venture was a public not

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\* For more on Canada in the Macdonald era see Donald Creighton, John A. Macdonald, the Old Chieftain. Toronto: Macmillan, 1955, pp. 300-304. And, Dominion of the North. Toronto Macmillan, 1957, Chapter 7.

a private responsibility. In particular, in the non-settler British Colony of Nigeria local capital and skills were absent. This situation was worsened by the reluctance of London financiers to invest in Nigeria's railway development. These unfavourable circumstances placed the entire task of financing railway construction on the Colonial administration. What is more, the Government undertook to invest in railway development. The first railway to be built in Nigeria was open to traffic in March, 1900. This was the line linking the Port of Lagos with the cocoa producing region of Ibadan. Thereafter, extensive lines were proposed for construction: a line from Kano down Kaduna River valley to the Niger with access to the southwestern cocoa region and the port of Lagos. Another line was proposed from Kano down the Niger River basin to tap the palm oil region with access to the south central port of Warri or Sapele. These two proposed lines which together meant about three thousand miles of railways were longitudinal in direction. The aim was to have them run in a north-south (inland to coast) direction with no horizontal design at all. However, theory is different from practice. While these railway lines were proposed in paper, their actual construction did not materialize. Rather, it gave rise to controversy and quarrels. These quarrels centred around possible

routes (single or double). Translated into economic terms, the quarrels were centred around costs. After the Lagos-Ibadan railway was opened, Nicolson tells us that the remaining railway

"construction was delayed, partly because of costs, partly because of Lugard's dogged preference for an interior railway .....so that it should be entirely independent of Lagos and its railway. It was not until 1907, after Lugard had been replaced by the Royal Engineer Girouard, that the Lagos railway reached Oshogbo and the Secretary of State authorized both the interior railway from Niger at Baro to Kano, and also the extension of the Lagos railway to meet it..."<sup>1</sup>

Railway construction in Nigeria was delayed due to disagreement between Nigeria's colonial administrators: Lugard (North); Sir R. Moor (South) and MacGregor (Lagos territory). Their quarrel centred on routes, gauge and tariffs. But it was also a quarrel over the economics of railways, which was a quarrel over financing, which was ultimately a quarrel over the most economical and yet most profitable routes that railways should go. In short, on the back of the administrators' minds was the "maximization of returns on railway investment". The quarrel, notes Nicolson led to the appointment of an official committee under the chairmanship of Lord Selborne, the parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Colonies, to do the first concerted planning and to report to Chamber-

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<sup>1</sup>Nicolson, op. cit., p. 71.

lain in London.

However, Nigerian historians have failed to pay adequate attention to the political side of the railway controversy. For, I think this was the most important factor in the minds of the administrators. Not yet an amalgamated state, with the two regions still administered by different men under incompatible policies, it was just natural that the two men of the North and Southern Nigeria, Lugard and Moor respectively, should each have the interest of his region in mind. This is more so since independence of the two regions rather than integration or amalgamation was the Colonial theme at the time. Until this time (1910) as Awa tells us, "Both North and South (Nigeria) were being administered as separate political entities, but each section was divided into provinces for administrative convenience".<sup>1</sup> The continued administration of the two protectorates as independent units gave rise to separate, incompatible and often competitive practices between the two administrations. The political nature and basis of the conflict has been expressed in Lugard's own words:

Where one administration comprises the coast area (Southern Nigeria) and collects the customs dues (which hitherto formed the bulk of the revenue in most African dependencies),

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<sup>1</sup>Awa, Eme. Federal Government of Nigeria, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1964, p. 4.



while another (Northern Nigeria) forms its hinterland, the latter must either establish an inland fiscal frontier, or share the duties collected by its neighbours. The former expedient adds to the cost of all imports -- already enhanced by the inherent expense of long and costly transport services....<sup>1</sup>

Thus, with a deeply ingrained sense of regionalism in the two administrations, their railway quarrel transcended purely economic matters as each tried to secure the interests of their region. Consequently, the "most economical and yet most profitable routes that railways should take" become translated into the most politically favourable railway routes, that is, which scheme would profit the north more than the south and vice versa.

This was a fundamental conflict that had great consequences for the future of Nigeria for, the rivalry stemmed from two identifiable sources. First was Lugard's belief in the superiority of his northern administration which he had founded on indirect rule. Nicolson has observed that Lugard

had succeeded in a propaganda campaign directed to the creation and manipulation of his own fame as an administrator, and the myth of the superiority of his territory (Northern Nigeria), and of his methods, over all others.<sup>2</sup>

Whatever the method (propaganda, manipulation or actual

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<sup>1</sup>Lugard, Lord: The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa, Frank Cass, London, 1965, p. 98.

<sup>2</sup>Nicolson, Administration of Nigeria, op. cit., p. 125.

achievement) by which Lugard's deeds reached the public ears, the fact remains that he earned fame in London as the most successful colonial administrator.\* Lugard did not want to see Northern Nigeria depend on Southern Nigeria's railway system, since this would mean subjecting Northern Nigeria (his symbol of achievement), to the dictates of Southerners. Thus, by seeking to secure "interior railways which will be independent of Lagos (Southern) Lines",<sup>1</sup> to borrow Nicolson's words in fact, if the best possible railway deal is secured for the North, Lugard would ensure, not only that the distribution of power favoured the North but also that this region remained superior and dominant over the South thus perpetuating his honourable legacy. But this is not all there was between the two regions.

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\* Indirect rule in Northern Nigeria earned Lugard honour in the Colonial Office on the strength of which he was assigned to Uganda and Hong Kong respectively to institute the system (1907-1912). Margery Perham (Ibid, pp. 22-23) states that "The strong Mohammedan Emirates of Northern Nigeria provided Lord Lugard with the right material for the achievements which have made Northern Nigeria the classical instance of the system" of indirect rule. In another book: "Lugard the Years of Authority", (p. 138) Perham concludes that "Indirect rule in Northern Nigeria was Lugard's greatest and most famous work, the achievement of his prime". And, Crocker (Ibid, p. 68) tells us that Lugard's example of indirect rule in Northern Nigeria "is now the accepted policy throughout British Africa and, to a large extent, the current practice". For more on these observations, see Crocker, W. R.: On Governing Colonies, George Allen, London, 1947. Margery Perham, Colonial Sequence, 1930-1949, Methuen, London, 1967.

<sup>1</sup>Nicolson, op. cit., p. 71.

The second source of conflict between the two Nigerias relates to the different policies pursued in the two regions by the respective administrations. The two policies of "indirect rule" and "open door" resulted in the one region (the North) being founded on conservative principles, dominated by autocratic elites at the head of which was Lugard himself; and on the other (the South) being founded on liberal ideals, governed by modern councils and headed by R. Moor and MacGregor (indeed, a preparation for modern democratic government). The open door policy in the South allowed for free missionary and commercial activity and in the North, these modernizing forces were restricted. Sir Allan Burns, a one time colonial civil servant in Nigeria tells us that in no way was the difference between Northern and Southern Nigeria more marked than in the quality of their histories. He went on to say that "...the lack of a uniform system of government had accentuated the already existing differences of race, religion and culture."<sup>1</sup> We shall return to this in our discussion on indirect rule. Suffice to say that the conflict was one of conservatism versus liberalism, the north versus the South respectively. And, Lugard was confident that if Northern and Southern railways were integrated,

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<sup>1</sup>Burns, Sir Allan. History of Nigeria. London: Allen and Unwin, 1963, p. 11.

education, commerce and individualism (the inevitable forces of modernization which would accompany railways) would weaken the authority of the Moslem religion. This would also weaken the authority and prestige of the Emirs, and would thus imperil the system of indirect administration.

Meanwhile, Lewis Harcourt the Colonial Secretary watched the quarrel between Lugard and Egerton with dismay. Far from direct administration, it was normal for Harcourt as already noted to relieve Lugard and Moor of the railway quarrel by appointing a committee of experts on whom railway development was entrusted. But this move did not put an end to the conflict which looked more like a power struggle than a struggle bordering on railways. With the crisis still unresolved, Lugard was posted to Hong Kong where he assumed Governorship of that colony in 1906. He was replaced in Northern Nigeria by Sir E. P. C. Girouard. At this stage, the message had reached the Colonial Office that the two Nigerias were at stake. But, whatever was going on between the two Nigerias was not the only concern or preoccupation of Britain.

Britain of 1912 was not exactly the same as Britain of 1900. New concerns generated by social forces in Europe were demanding the attention of British decision-makers and the British public in general. In Europe, Britain's

neighbours had acquired Britain's industrial magic and her imperial ambitions. Great wars were seen again in Europe. Large armies were being raised and fragmented countries were unified. In particular, Germany was of concern to Britain as the shock from the Agadir crisis was still causing great irritation. Internally, the liberal government had succeeded the conservatives and Lloyd George was making moves that were to lead Britain towards a Welfare State. The result was that by the first decade of the twentieth century, Margery Perham tells us, "we find Britain reacting vigorously to all the motives for empire, trade, security, emigration, philanthropy, all converging to produce the crowning motive..."<sup>1</sup> and this crowning motive was that Britain had to look again to her security! With these pressures, the attention of the British public was turned inwards. The need for security is analagous to the need for a strong economy which meant relieving the British treasury of some colonial financial burden. Colonies whose administrations depended on grants from the British treasury were to be affected and Northern Nigeria was not an exception.

Northern Nigeria was one of the colonial territories that laid a financial burden on Britain. While increasing

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<sup>1</sup>Perham, Margery. The Colonial Reckoning, Collins, London, 1961, p. 110.

commercial activity in Southern Nigeria was yielding ever increasing revenue, Northern Nigeria remained poor due to Lugard's reluctance to integrate Northern Nigeria into the modern capitalist system. As a result, Northern Nigeria remained and continued to be dependent to a small extent on financial assistance from the southern government treasury. Hatch has noted that "From the first year of the protectorates, the South was called on to contribute to Northern finances."<sup>1</sup> The contribution took the form of an annual subsidy and amounted to £45,000 in 1901 and increasing year by year. But this was only a small fraction of the dependence of the North on financial assistance.

The imperial government bore the major burden of financing Northern Nigerian administration. But the British Treasury was stern on matters of funding administration of colonial territories which were encouraged to be financially independent. Drawing a comparison between Lugard's days and the later days of colonial administration, Margery Perham observes that:

Today in Britain and even in Africa, administration is conducted upon comparatively lavish standards, with a parliament which seems willing to vote millions with less reluctance than in Lugard's day it voted thousands. He (Lugard) had to open up a vast region and create a new admin-

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<sup>1</sup>Hatch, John. Nigeria: The Seeds of Disaster, Henry Regnery Company, Chicago, 1970, p. 185. For more on the revenue situation.

istration (in Northern Nigeria) upon a civil revenue made up largely by a small and reluctant grant-in-aid.<sup>1</sup>

And this grant-in-aid as Hatch tells us, "rose from \$201,400 in 1900 to \$972,000 four years later and had only declined to \$660,000 by the end of the decade".<sup>2</sup> The effect of such government expenditure in a dependent territory was to raise severe treasury criticism, and this criticism in turn induced the colonial office to consider a proposal to create a united Nigerian administration. This would have the advantage of pooling revenue and costs between the two Nigerias. There were many arguments in favour of the idea and the most important of all was the booming trade of Southern Nigeria. Between 1906 and 1912, exports and revenue doubled. Of all the exports, palm produce predominated and it formed four-fifths of the exports. In his analysis of the trade of Southern Nigeria, Geary reported that in fourteen years (1900-1913), the total value of palm produce exported trippled, "rising from a value of a million and a half sterling to nearly five million sterling".<sup>3</sup> The actual figures of this booming proceeds from palm produce as reported by Geary (op. cit), himself a one time British

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<sup>1</sup>Margery Perham, Lugard: The Years of Authority, p. 139.

<sup>2</sup>Hatch, op. cit., p. 186.

<sup>3</sup>Geary, W. N. M. Nigeria Under British Rule, Frank Cass, London, 1965, p. 129.

official in Nigeria, show that in 1910, 173,000 tons of palm kernels and 77,000 tons of palm oil yielded a total value of £4,193,000. Maintaining a steady increase through the years 1911 and 1912, the export reached a peak in 1913 with only 175,000 tons of palm kernels and 83,000 tons of palm oil yielding a total of £4,964,000.

This tremendous increase in the value of palm produce was due to favourable world market condition. For instance, the price per ton of palm kernels at Liverpool in 1910 was £19 while a ton of palm oil in the same year sold for £33.5. In 1913, it was £23.5 and £34.5 respectively. From the point of view of the British treasury and hence, the imperial government, amalgamation would allow the surplus revenue acquired in the South to be used in the North, thus terminating British treasury responsibility to the North. This would then mean a relief to the British tax payer. It was these circumstances that gave birth to the decision to amalgamate the two Nigerias, a decision that necessitated the choice of a man who would undertake to study the two Nigerias and make recommendations as to the terms and conditions of the proposed amalgamation. And, as one would expect, Lord Lugard was the man chosen by the Colonial Office for the job.

The reasons behind the choice of Lugard as the right man for the job of unifying the two Nigerias are best



known to the colonial authorities in charge of the Colonial Office at the time. However, his familiarity with Nigeria, particularly, his administrative experience in the North and the popularity he gained from indirect rule policy in that protectorate cannot be ruled out. Nevertheless, the unification of Nigeria demanded both a man and the method and this was the concern of Lewis Harcourt, the colonial secretary at the time. Margery Perham states that on June 27th, 1912, during a debate on colonial estimates, Harcourt made amalgamation of Nigeria the main item in his speech. He also used the occasion to nominate a man who was to be entrusted with the new task. He is quoted to have said:

"Happily the man is at hand with a tried and proved capacity to supply the method though I have been convinced ever since I came to the Colonial Office that this amalgamation was desirable, I frankly admit that I should not have thought the moment opportune unless I had happened to know and to command the services of one man marked out for this great work, Sir Frederick Lugard."<sup>1</sup>

Whatever the qualities, real or imagined, actual or potential that Harcourt saw in Lugard, the fact remains that the appointment was far from unanimous. There were those who were fully aware of Lugard's excesses and arrogance, well enough that they saw him unfit for the task and voiced

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Perham, Margery; Lugard: The Years of Authority, p. 380, citing British Parliamentary Debates, 27, June, 1912, V 40: 512 as the source.

their opposition. Lord Temple who was Acting Governor of the North and then Lieutenant-Governor of the Northern provinces from 1911 until his retirement due to ill-health in 1917, expressed, according to Nicolson<sup>1</sup> dismay on hearing of Lugard's appointment to the task of unifying Nigeria. But the choice of the Colonial Secretary prevailed over all else.

The date was October 3, 1912, that Lugard arrived in Nigeria with orders to commence a study tour and recommend to the Colonial Secretary, the basis and form on which the two Nigerias should be amalgamated. Lugard started his inspection tour in Lagos, from where he visited the southern ports of Calabar, Bonny, Opobo and Port Harcourt (suggested and named after Harcourt, the then Colonial Secretary by Lugard). He then proceeded to the North where he visited Kano, Kaduna and Sokoto, the main seats of power in that region. With little difficulty, Lugard completed the inspection and office work which the tour entailed within five months before returning to London. Lugard's critics have feared that five months was hardly sufficient to complete such a vast undertaking especially if the native figures and other colonial personnel in the country were to be consulted and if accurate information on which recommendations were to be made must

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<sup>1</sup>Nicolson, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

be gathered. Nicolson has argued that the reason for Lugard's rush was to enable him to conform to the plan of "continuous administration" made for him by Harcourt, the Colonial Secretary, in which from the date of amalgamation, Lugard was to become Governor-General of Nigeria, spending five months in Nigeria and five months in London. But, in particular, writes Nicolson:

Lugard was in a tremendous hurry, throughout his five months, endeavouring to demonstrate to the Secretary of State that he could cram into this period all the travelling and inspection and office work which took other men a year to accomplish.<sup>1</sup>

The circumstances of Lugard's quick and brief tour of the country are still largely unknown and whatever the arguments for and against the manner in which he carried out his mission, the result was an eighty-eight page long document which he formulated under the title Report on the Amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria, and Administration, dated 1912-1919 which he submitted to the British Parliament in London. What were the contents of this document and whose ideals did the recommendations reflect?

Lugard's report dealt with a wide range of subjects, political, governmental and economic. In the political arena, the administrative boundaries of Northern and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 188.

Southern Nigeria remained unchanged and each was to be headed by a Lieutenant-Governor. Lagos, hitherto a part of the Southern protectorate was to form a separate administration under an Administrator. Both this and the two Lieutenant-Governors were subject to the Governor-General of the entire country who was Lugard himself. Further, Lugard suggested the division of each of the Northern and Southern protectorates into provinces, creating twelve in the North and nine in the South.\* Each of these provinces was to be headed by a District Officer who would exercise judicial and executive powers - something analogous to the customary practice under indirect rule in the North. The provinces remained under the enclave of each of the two administrations which became known as Northern and Southern provinces. The reasons for the division were according to Lugard himself "all based on the principle of dividing the territory into a large number of units - from four to seven - each under the control of a high official responsible to the Governor-General".<sup>1</sup> But, what we see in this arrangement is the continued separation of the units of the country from each other, notably,

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\* Created in the North were Sokoto, Kano, Bornu, Zaria, Bauchi, Nupe, Kontagora, Ilorin, Nassarawa, Munshi, Muri and Yola; and in the South, Oyo, Owerri, Ogoja, Calabar, Abeokuta, Onitsha, Ondo, Benin and Warri and, of course, the separate Administration of Lagos. See Amalgamation Report, p. 11.

<sup>1</sup>Lugard, Amalgamation Report, p. 10.

the maintenance of the former protectorates intact and the separation of Lagos from the Southern Administration where it previously belonged. However, separation in the sense of continuing the territorial and political distinctiveness of the country is less serious compared to what took place in the governmental arrangements.

The new government structure, the crux of Lugard's recommendations was characterized by profound separation, gross incompleteness and division - in fact, tending to ignore that the purpose of the entire exercise was to unify, to amalgamate the societies and their institutions. In what appeared to Lugard as the key government departments, he proposed their complete merger and placed them under his own control as Governor-General. These were the departments of railways with which Lugard as Commissioner of Northern Nigeria in 1906 had had a serious dispute with his Southern counterpart R. Moor; the departments of Marine and Customs which were second only to agricultural exports as a source of revenue and, often became first when exports fluctuated; and, the final departments that were centralized and fully merged were those of the Treasury and Audit, apparatuses which controlled, allocated and supervised the use of revenue. In other fields of government such as Posts and telegraphs, Military and health, separate Northern and Southern departments

would be preserved but with a joint head. The thread is seen here that the government departments which were centralized were those designed to make the Southern region pay for the Northern structure. But this was not all.

In addition to his exclusive control over the "central departments", Lugard himself was solely responsible for all legislation and, with regard to the principles of government, Lugard proposed the unification of laws and the assimilation of the policy of Native administration. By this, Lugard meant to have the chance to extend to the South the same principles of native administration and laws relating to direct taxation which Lugard had instituted in the North from 1900-1906. For, in his own words (Amalgamation Report, p. 8), "the South required a better organization of its Native Administration and of its judicial system" while, far from such fundamental changes, all that the North required was "... improvement in its departmental organization..."<sup>1</sup> While he saw nothing wrong with the indirect rule structure in the North which was based on unique principles of Native Administration, he deemed the government by council system in the South as improper. The form of government he deemed proper for the South was the same indirect rule

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<sup>1</sup>Lugard, Lord. Report on the Amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria, London: 1920, p. 8.

system he had created in the North. As he puts it:

The system (of Indirect Rule) may thus be said to have worked with good results in the North, and I desired to introduce its principles in the South. It is, however, obvious that it depends essentially on the principle of direct taxation, which provides the means whereby the Native Administration can pay salaries to the paramount chief and all other officials...<sup>1</sup>

Men of wisdom and vision knew this innovation, the introduction in Indirect Rule in the South, was productive of chaos and had cautioned against it and Lugard himself has recalled that even his higher authority "The Secretary of State was unwilling to authorize this innovation".

Suffice to say that Lugard was taken so much for granted everywhere in London as the colonial architect that even the Secretary of State was hesitant to oppose Lugard despite his difference of views. In these circumstances, Lugard's ideas and recommendations as embodied in his Report on Amalgamation prevailed in the Colonial Office. All his proposals were accepted and implementation was to proceed. Thus, on January 1, 1914 Nigeria came to being for the first time as a single geographical

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

unit as we know it today.\* The amalgamation took place along almost identical lines to those Lugard recommended and the occasion was celebrated in Nigeria. Lugard describes the celebrations thus:

After the oaths of office had been taken at each capital - Lagos and Zungeru - by the Governor-General, the Lieutenant-Governors, and the Chief Justice, etc., a Durbar was held on the great plain at Kano, which was attended by all the chief Moslem rulers from Sokoto to Chad, who met for the first time in common friendship to swear allegiance to His Majesty, and by representatives of the principal pagan tribes. . . . it was estimated that not fewer than 30,000 horsemen took part in the picturesque display.<sup>1</sup>

For sure, the celebrations brought together for the first time, tribal rulers both Moslem and Pagan who were previously hostile to each other, But their coming together was, as Lugard has aptly put it, "to swear allegiance to His Majesty, the King of England" not to swear allegiance

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\*Lugard was appointed Governor-General of the new country simultaneously, spending five months in Nigeria and five in England according to the "Continuous Administration" plan. While he was celebrating amalgamation as an achievement other colonial officials saw it as a negative enterprise. For instance, Margery Perham, for a long time a colonial official in Nigeria warned in her book Lugard: the Years of Authority (Ibid, p. 418) that the marriage of wealthy Southern Nigeria with a revenue in 1912 of two and a quarter million, to its impoverished Northern neighbour, with its bare half million of local revenue including a customs allowance £70,000 from Southern Nigeria, was bound in the face of total expenditure to bring both into conflict. So without vision as to the dangers that laid ahead, amalgamation was implemented.

<sup>1</sup>Amalgamation Report, p. 8.



to "the new nation" into which the rulers and their tribes were incorporated.

The foregoing analysis thus gives rise to many questions. Did the traditional rulers recognize the issues involved or have any vision as to the future objectives of what they were celebrating? How would these societies that only a few years earlier had been rival and often hostile, live together under one state? Should they form a nation? If so how could a single allegiance be created? By the way, what was the central objective of British policy? Was it to build an empire permanently subordinate to Britain, or to encourage a national spirit leading to ultimate self-government? Not only did no one appear to know the answers to such questions, but the questions do not seem to have been asked. Nor, have we been provided with answers to the questions but this paper shall attempt an interpretation of the event in the light of the consequences that have arisen.

When Lugard was given the task of effecting Nigeria's amalgamation, it was certain that he would be biased in whatever scheme that he came up with. And, his bias as has been demonstrated was a sort of pro-Northern and anti-Southern Nigeria. He would try to apply the policy he had instituted in the North (upon which he earned his reputation) and in which he believed as a basic principle of

government for colonial peoples. Thus, the most profound and far-reaching aspect of the policy he adopted in 1914 was the continued separation of the North from South and the strategy to establish hegemony of the former over the latter. To achieve this objective, Lugard sought first to rule the South on the basis of the North; second, to make the South pay for the Northern administration and; third, to tilt the railway balance in favour of the North. We reserve the first point for treatment in the next chapter but the second and third points, finances and railways respectively shall presently occupy us.

Noting on page 7 of his Amalgamation Report that up to the period of amalgamation, the material prosperity of the South was increasing with astonishing rapidity and that customs duties based on railways were a major and steady factor in this progress, Lugard recalled his earlier quarrel with Sir R. Moor, the Governor of the South over the issue. He writes:

To the financial dilemma, there was now added a very pressing difficulty in regard to railway policy and control. The North, to ensure development of its trade and to secure its customs duties, commenced a railway from Baro, a port on the Niger to Kano.<sup>1</sup>

Adding that this had been pressed for by himself, not only on these grounds but in order to render the realization of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid, p. 7.

Northern revenue, he went on to state:

That the South responded by pushing on the Lagos railway to the frontier, and obtained the Secretary of State's sanction to carry it on to the North, to effect a junction with the Baro-Kano Line at Minna.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, we see from this conflict why amalgamation enterprise gave Lugard the opportunity to achieve his earlier (see pp. 79-86 ) preference for an interior railway, so that it should be entirely independent of the Southern railways. This is too the reason why the railways, customs and treasury were the first government departments that Lugard centralized in his amalgamation scheme. It is also the reason why his adjustment of these factors preceded the creation of any new administration. What did these actions mean to Nigeria's multi-tribal society?

In his pro-Northern drive, Lugard either knowingly or unknowingly antagonized relations between the North and South, thus intensifying the traditional hostilities between them. Such hostilities would be expressed not at the time of amalgamation (when the balance of power was being deliberately shifted in favour of the North because Lugard's authority over the whole Nigeria was at this time unrivaled) but in the years that laid ahead. On almost every count, it is clear that this form of amalgamation, based on a keen interest in one region at the expense of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid

the other, in fact, a kind of federation without federalism, was unsatisfactory. The application of the scheme lit a series of explosives that would generate not only the growing suspicions, frustrations and antagonisms of Nigerian community against Nigerian community, but also resentment against British rule. In a sense, instability seems inevitable, given the patterns and characteristics of the colonial processes as a whole. Essentially, it was the implementation of indirect rule in the South that brought all the inherent conflicts into the open. It is therefore appropriate to examine how indirect rule created further cleavages between the North and the South.

## CHAPTER IV

### INDIRECT RULE AS UNIFORM GOVERNMENT

In this chapter, we will analyze tribal cleavages arising from the adoption of indirect rule as a uniform government. For one of the most striking features of this rule was its emphasis on the re-organization of Southern Society and institutions along Northern feudal lines. This occurred in three fundamental aspects:

- 1) the creation of a new Native Administration system
- 2) the appointment of chiefs to head each of the new administrative units and,
- 3) the substitution of indirect with direct taxation.

It is also interesting to note that Lord Lugard, the man behind this exercise is the same man who was Governor in the Northern Nigeria from 1900-1906. During this time, he successfully established indirect rule there. But, the mistake made by Lugard himself and the colonial office in London was the false assumption that indirect rule policy could be adapted to native peoples everywhere irrespective of their differences. As this research has discovered, the policy can succeed only under certain conditions. This is why we have borrowed Weber's concept of 'patrimonial society' to illustrate on the one hand that Northern traditional socio-political structure was organized along patrimonial lines; that is why indirect

rule was successful in the North. And, on the other hand our analysis illustrates that a patrimonial society did not exist in the South and that was why indirect rule failed there. In general, the uniform government as reflected in the new native administration system, the chieftaincy rule and in the institution of direct taxation can all be seen as an attempt to patrimonialize the South. Northern personalities played a crucial role in the extension of patrimonialism to the South, as a result of which the North was charged with attempting to dominate the South through collaboration with their colonial ally - Lord Lugard.

The amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria necessarily gave rise to issues such as the form of rule to be adopted. That is, whether to continue to apply the initial separate policies of liberalism in the South and of conservatism in the North or to adopt a universal form of rule for the amalgamated country. If this latter course, then what form of rule would be justified to the main divisions of the country; and how shall such a rule be established without generating conflict? Questions such as these did not seem to concern Lord Lugard the amalgamator of Nigeria, who saw it fit to adopt indirect rule as uniform government.

The adoption of indirect rule as a universal form of

government upon amalgamation in 1914 brought about the extension of patrimonialism to the south. This has three fundamental implications; first, the replacement of the existing system of county councils; secondly, the replacement of council members as heads of the administrative units; finally, the abolition of indirect taxation. All these were replaced with Northern models and with the help of Northern elements. Above all, they were models of the policy on which Lugard earned his reputation as a successful Administrator.

It was Lugard's hope that these policies would bring the South on the same plane as the North. In fact, it was a design to extend the influence of his allies - the Hausa-Fulani ruling class - to the Southern peoples. It also would put an end to the rivalry between the two administrations, giving victory to indirect rule as a superior method of government, thus gratifying Lugard himself. In several parts of the world, colonial administrations have assumed that all the native peoples under their charge were organized in states, sometimes in states of a specific kind. In any colonial territory administered as a unit, it is convenient to have a uniform system of native administration which can be applied by field officers wherever they are stationed and which can easily be adapted to territory-wide action. An indigeneous model, if it appeals to the administration, may be used even in

areas where the indigeneous political system is of quite another kind. Thus, in Nigeria where the British were impressed with the efficiency of the Hausa-Fulani state system in the Northern protectorate, Hausa-Fulani models were used for the administration of other parts of the country, namely, the Southern protectorate. In some of these areas (e.g. Yorubaland of South Western Nigeria) the traditional political system had indeed been largely similar to that of the Hausa-Fulani; but in other parts (Iboland of South Eastern Nigeria), there had been stateless societies of various kinds.

The British did not appoint Hausa-Fulani notables as paramount chiefs of these non-Hausa-Fulani areas. Instead, a scheme of native administration incorporating native authority and native courts, along with direct taxation was introduced using Hausa-Fulani patterns as the basis of administration. Step by step, villages were regrouped into larger units and a leader was appointed to each unit. In Yorubaland of the Southwest where some chieftaincy had traditionally existed, chiefs were persuaded to accept the reforms and, where opposition was encountered, the chief was deposed and one favourable to the administration was installed. Further, where new chieftaincy was due, the administration bypassed traditional procedures of selection and appointed a favourable one. On the other



hand, in Iboland of the Southeast, the appointed leaders carried the title "warrant chief".<sup>1</sup> Some of the men selected as "warrant chiefs" were ritual leaders or their descendants, others were rainmakers or leaders of rain shrine cults. A genuine effort seems to have been made to appoint those who had a traditional claim to chiefly office, for it does not seem to have been realized that indigeneously there were no chiefs. The administratively created chiefs have no traditional legitimacy and therefore have no traditional models to guide their conduct. More importantly, there are few or no institutionalized ways in which the community can exercise a check on their conduct. Moreover, the distributed authority characteristic of statelessness is incompatible with the hierarchical administrative and judicial system which asserts monopoly of executive and adjudicative power.

In both state and stateless societies, that is Yorubaland and Iboland respectively. The colonially maintained chiefs could create a difficult situation. Hogbin<sup>2</sup> has shown how difficult it can be for an administrator to realize that one of his warrant chiefs is exceeding his

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<sup>1</sup>For a detailed analysis of the origins of the warrant chief system, the reader should consult A. E. Afigbo, The Warrant Chiefs. London: Longman, 1972, pp. 37-77. This is the best textbook ever published on the subject of warrant chiefs.

<sup>2</sup>Hogbin, H. I. Experiments in Civilization, Routledge, London, 1939, pp. 141-159.

powers, and how hard it may be to take effective action even when the administrator does realize what is happening. Indeed, in a stateless society, it may be almost impossible for a man appointed as chief to carry out his duties efficiently in the eyes of the administration without at the same time exceeding his powers. He has the force of the administration behind him, but he has to assert his authority over his people and demonstrate to them that he must be obeyed; they do not automatically do what he says. His own definition of his role is unlikely to coincide exactly with the definition intended by the administration, and there is no traditional model for him to follow. Hence, he is likely to do either too little, and be acceptable to the people but inefficient in the eyes of the administration; or too much and become a tyrant. Since his status is unprecedented, there are no traditional mechanisms for limiting his power. Since he is the nominee of the administration, he is bound to get its support, and often there is no efficient way by which the common people can bypass the local autocrat and complain directly to the administrator.

Whatever the traditional form of political organization, the local representative of the colonial administration, (namely, warrant chief) has to employ some members of the indigeneous population full-time in order to carry

on the day-to-day business of administration. They may be employed as policemen, porters, clerks or even as interpreters. No system of administration seems to be able to operate entirely without this buffer of local employees. It would be impossibly expensive to operate with only expatriate labour, whether or not it was thought to be in the best interests of policy to do so. The group of indigeneous public servants, if they be so called, tend to identify themselves with their employers and to adopt in many respects, the values and attitudes of the administration. They may be able to exercise a fairly complete control over the activities of their superiors, particularly if the expatriate administrator cannot speak the local vernacular. Mitchell<sup>1</sup> has shown that the indigeneous public servants are often able to exercise considerable power even when they are dealing with traditional primitive states. With stateless societies, there are usually fewer checks against the abuse of authority imposed from above, and their position is likely to be even stronger. At the one extreme is Iboland, where a court clerk was feared and highly respected by the community.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, a chief, the Alafin of Oyo, incorporated more villages

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<sup>1</sup>Mitchell, J. C. "The political organization of the Yao of Southern Nyasaland", African Studies, Vol. VIII, 1949, pp. 141-159.

<sup>2</sup>Perham, Margery. Native Administration in Nigeria. London: Oxford University Press, 1937, p. 202.

into his jurisdiction than the administration originally assigned him.<sup>1</sup> Thus far is the background to our understanding of the circumstances, and outcome of the establishment of a uniform system of native administration within each territory of Nigeria, even though there were very considerable differences between one territory and another.

Lord Lugard has observed in his amalgamation report that "the system of indirect rule has worked with good results in the North, as a result of which I desired to introduce its principles in the South".<sup>2</sup> Indirect rule is the uniform system of administration adopted upon amalgamation in 1914. It is based on the principles of native administration and among its essentials are a hierarchy of recognized chiefs, the concentration of authority (executive and judicial) with these chiefs and above all, direct taxation, which provides the means whereby the native administration can pay salaries to the chief and all other officials. Direct tax, a major source of revenue was paid by the people in the name of the chief and to the chief, from whom the colonial administration appropriates the money. This system could not succeed except

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<sup>1</sup>Obafemi, Awolowo. Path to Nigerian Freedom. London: Faber and Faber, 1947, p. 115.

<sup>2</sup>Lugard, Lord. Report on Amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria. London, 1920, p. 15.

where a society is organized around a single dominant ruler who exercises authority over a large area, and who has district heads under him to conduct administration and to collect taxes. This, therefore, meant the creation of a hierarchically structured native administration system in Yorubaland. Here the society has traditionally shown a mixture of patterns and styles found in Northern and Eastern Nigeria. The hierarchical elements are considerably more evident in Yoruba communities than among the Ibos. But these small kingdoms and chieftaindoms differ from their Hausa-Fulani neighbours because Yoruba units have often been quite independent, or else, only loosely united. Meanwhile the new native administration scheme required autocratic, powerful chiefs such as those existing in the North but, contrary to this type, Yoruba chiefdoms incorporated both aristocratic and democratic principles, and as such were not autocrats. But, this situation did not discourage the administration from carrying out the new reforms.

Once again, the realities of Yoruba social organization and the policy of the previous (direct) administration did not enter into the minds of the new colonial administrators. Under direct administration, Yoruba chiefs and their people were left largely alone to fend for themselves, and to manage their civil affairs as of

old within the limitations of good conscience, and the principles of justice and equity. Any trespass beyond these confines invited the swift and firm response of the administration. Side by side, the British officials of the time conducted their civil administration in respect of such members of the community as cared to avail themselves of British justice and fair play at its local fountain. For this purpose, British officials ran their own courts and local constabulary. So colonial administration existed alongside traditional chiefdoms with neither interfering in each others affairs.

When Lugard arrived with his indirect rule package, this co-existence gave way to conflicts. For instance, the relative independence from each other of Yoruba chiefdoms was ignored as hierarchical native administration system was introduced. Under this system, various clans were grouped together and one influential clan chief was made paramount over the other equal clan chiefs. Obafemi Awolowo, a one time Governor of Western region and later leader of the opposition in the federal parliament recalls how indirect rule reformed his home district:

When in 1914 the indirect rule system was introduced into the Southern provinces, Ijebu Remo was detached from the colony district and merged with Ijebu Ode for administrative purposes.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Awolowo, Obafemi. "Awo" Cambridge University Press, 1960, p. 17. See all his publications for more on Yoruba history and colonial complications.

The suzerainty of the latter was established over the former and, the "Oba\*" acquired a more enhanced status and authority".

These reforms were hardly complete without the most important key position in the indirect rule system: an overall supreme chief, a chief to whom the entire Yoruba people must pay allegiance. It is important to note that this was another example copied from the North. For, it was deemed that this key position would parallel the "Sultan" of Sokoto who was the overall chief of the Hausa-Fulani Emirs. This pivotal position was essential because the supreme chief would act both as the recipient and payee of taxes. Thus, the "Alafin" of Oyo was made supreme chief over the entire Yorubaland and, Lugard tells us that the Alafin's authority was recognized by all.<sup>1</sup> In this delicate arrangement, Awolowo reports that the "Olubadan (chief) of Ibadan was mistakenly subordinated to the Alafin of Oyo", and the latter behaved oppressively toward the former.<sup>2</sup> While the Yorubas never

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\* Different chiefs at different places carried different titles e.g. Oba of Benin and Alafin of Oyo. Oba and Alafin are titles while Benin and Oyo are the seats of the chiefs. In academic use the term "Oba" is used to describe Yoruba chiefs generally. Here we shall retain the use of "Alafin" of Oyo because of the distinctive event involving the office of that chief.

<sup>1</sup>Lugard: Amalgamation Report, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>Awolowo, O. Path to Nigerian Freedom (op. cit.), p. 115.

had such an overall chief before in their history, the colonialists nevertheless hoped that the Alafin would wield as much power as the Sultan of the Hausa-Fulanis. But the Yorubas are not used to the Hausa-Fulani type of subordination.

The subjection of one chief to another, or the subordination of several chiefdoms to a single chief automatically implied the subordination of the subjects of the former to the authority of the latter, an unprecedented event in Yoruba history. Consequently, there was a blow to the prestige and personal aggrandisement of the chiefdom thus subordinated, and a rude shock and humiliation to the erstwhile exclusiveness and pride of his people. This could be a delicate situation especially if the Alafin, excited by his newly acquired authority over his former rival peers, behaved autocratically and oppressively. But such behaviour seemed to be inevitable under indirect rule. In fact, the Alafin had to demonstrate to his colonial authorities that he was capable of governing and, he could not get his former colleagues to obey him except by coercion. Moreover, the colonial administration ensured this by arbitrarily increasing the powers and jurisdiction of the Alafin. As Awolowo once complained:

The dictatorial powers which some Yoruba chiefs are wielding today are the making



of the British Government, who at the beginning misconceived the true nature of Yoruba monarchy.<sup>1</sup>

Some of their dictatorial powers were expressed in their attitude towards taxation.

The acceptance by the newly created hierarchy of chiefs of indirect rule as the method of administration, did involve the application in their area of authority of the principle of direct taxation. Of course, one of the major conditions for recognizing any chief was his acceptance of direct taxation. As a result, Lugard tells us that "During 1918, taxation was successfully introduced in Yoruba" and that in "one centre £3,400 was paid in 24 hours and in another, a similar sum was received in six hours". The total tax received in that year amounted to £72,000 in Yorubaland alone. The estimate for the following year (1919) almost doubles the 1918 figure. It is unreasonable to accept these tax figures as furnished by Lugard. But if the figures are right, it is not certain whether the tax was paid voluntarily or merely out of fear. What is not uncertain is the fact that in the same year direct taxation was introduced,

"In June, 1918, a serious rising broke out in the Western district. The telegraph was destroyed, a section of the railway was torn up, a train carrying specie was derailed and its escorts besieged in a station.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Awolowo, Obafemi. Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>2</sup>Lugard, op. cit., p. 15.

There was region-wide outbreak of disturbances and in Oyo province,

"...the native court at Okeho was burnt and the chief and those who had supported the new system murdered. At Iseyin, close to Oyo, the people not only burned their court but fired upon the troops, and it was some months before the movement was suppressed.<sup>1</sup>

A government Commission of Inquiry was set up to investigate these incidents but, since the findings were never published, the precise causes of the unrest is not known. However, experts close to the sources including Margery Perham believe that the unrest was induced by indirect rule and ultimately, direct taxation. The disturbances therefore represent the people's "inborn loathing of any form of direct taxation".<sup>2</sup> Thus, in Yorubaland the institution of autocratic chieftainship (with the exception of Benin) and the whole apparatus of indirect rule including direct taxation, all failed in the Southwest. It was pushed into the Niger forests of the Southeast, an area inhabited by the Ibos.

If indirect rule was unsuccessful in Yorubaland where some measure of chieftaincy traditionally existed, it was to prove more cataclysmic in Iboland where the traditional organization is different. Among the Ibos

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<sup>1</sup>Perham, Margery. Native Administration in Nigeria, (op. cit.), p. 77.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

of Southeastern Nigeria, neither the Yoruba monarchical nor Hausa-Fulani partimonial structure existed. Himmelstrand compares Ibo with Hausa-Fulani society and tells us that:

The social structure and lifestyle of the Ibos are in many ways almost the diametrical opposite of those prevailing among the Hausa-Fulanis. While the largest traditional political unit among the Hausas and Fulanis was the great Hausa-Fulani Empire with its hierarchical structure, the largest traditional political unit among the Ibos was a collection of neighbouring villages with a common meeting place that served both as a ritual and political centre, as well as a market.<sup>1</sup>

Having drawn this comparison, he went on to provide further description:

Every village had a local council of elders and council of title holders who enjoyed a certain degree of authority in the village ....Nor was there any central authority that bound together the clusters of villages, except for a small number of religious oracles whose services were used by villagers throughout Iboland and who, over a period of time, took advantage of their religious power to build up a certain measure of economic and political influence.<sup>2</sup>

The lack of centralized political authority and of a unified political organization over all of traditional Iboland are characteristic features of what social anthropologists

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<sup>1</sup> & <sup>2</sup> Himmelstrand, Ulf. "Tribalism", Regionalism, Nationalism and Secession in Nigeria" in Eisenstadt and Stein Rokkan (eds.). Building States and Nations. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1973, p. 437. Details of the structure of traditional Ibo society can be found in I. Nzimiro, Studies in Ibo Political Systems. London: Frank Cass, 1972. And, M. M. Green. Ibo Village Affairs. London: Frank Cass, 1964.

call a segmentary political system. Segmental and uncentralized traditional Ibo society may have seemed primitive and undeveloped to the ignorant Western European mind. This view is more or less the one British Colonial authorities seem to have had of the Ibos in early colonial years. To them, isolated people, with neither royalty nor aristocracy nor a political hierarchy seemed to be a primitive people. But whether or not this was the reason and justification for extending indirect rule to Iboland remains an issue to be verified.

It was in realization of the statelessness of Ibo Society that Lugard's predecessors established an administration that utilized Ibo equalitarian values. This, in sharp contrast to that of the North, involved direct administration in which native councils were set up to carry out the art of government. Under this government-by-council as it was known at the time, Arthur Norton Cook tells us that "No single ruler exercised authority over a large area so that it was necessary" for Lugard "to build a new system rather than repair one already in existence".<sup>1</sup> Thus, Lugard abolished direct administration in the South and replaced it with indirect government based on the Northern model. This involved essentially the appointment of chiefs and the creation for them, of

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<sup>1</sup>Arthur Norton Cook, British Enterprise in Nigeria, Frank Cass, London, 1964, p. 194.

extensive areas of jurisdiction. Lugard describes the process thus:

The first step is to endeavour to find a man of influence as chief, and to group under him as many villages or districts as possible, to teach him to delegate powers, and to take an interest in his native treasury, to support his authority and to inculcate a sense of responsibility.<sup>1</sup>

He appointed chiefs and delegated authority with the co-operation of the Hausa-Fulanis whom he could count on for his adventures in the South. In particular, since the present task involves the extension of Hausa-Fulani influence to the South, they wasted no time in co-operating. Without the knowledge of Southern officers, a delegation of Northern officers headed by a resident was sent to undertake a tour of the South and to recommend potential men who would be appointed chiefs.\* In the process, the delegation wrongly identified the lineage elders (in Iboland) as the local repository of authority despite the fact that the elder was usually no more than the spokesman for the village meeting. When the delegation carried their discovery to Lugard, Hatch reports that

"The elders were therefore invested with the powers of government and justice that

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<sup>1</sup>Lugard, op. cit., p. 14.

\* H. R. Palmer who led the delegation was one of the men with considerable experience in the North and on whom Lugard relied for his actions affecting Southern Nigeria. Officers who served in the South before 1914 were neither consulted nor took part in Lugard's actions in the South. See A. E. Afigbo, op. cit., pp. 155-156.

they had never before possessed. Inevitably, therefore, they came to be regarded by the local people under their power as tyrants representing British rule rather than as representatives of their own communities.<sup>1</sup>

Chiefs in the sense used in the North did not exist and the term "warrant chief" was used for those men who had been picked out by the government and given warrants as sole authorities and as presidents in the native courts. Among those appointed in Iboland was Warrant Chief Okugo<sup>2</sup> who was given jurisdiction over Oloko, a densely populated area in Owerri province. The warrant chiefs were often of recognized authority in their own bureaucratic enclave but not outside that unit. In relation to their people, they were often unrepresentative and unpopular. They were put upon a panel of judges and the court area seemed to bear little relation to any natural social grouping.

And so Lugard artificially created conditions principally to facilitate the establishment of indirect administration. The jurisdiction of these warrant chiefs included the power to make by-laws, rules and orders (having the force of law) and judicial authority. When the power to exact taxes was added, their executive power

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<sup>1</sup>Hatch, John. Nigeria, Henry Regnery Company, Chicago, 1970, p. 192.

<sup>2</sup>Perham, Margery. Native Administration in Nigeria, Oxford University Press, London, 1937, p. 206. Other important warrant chiefs include: Chiefs Mba Okoli of Ibe tribal area; Igwegbe of Odum and Chukwuani of Nkanu. For further list, see A. E. Afigbo, op. cit., pp. 141-42.

was complete. Before amalgamation, the form of tax maintained and paid by the Southerners was indirect tax, which mainly came from trade in spirits but with the dawn of indirect rule came a change from indirect taxation to direct tax policy:

...I was accorded permission (by the Secretary of State in London) to introduce direct taxation in Yorubaland, Egba, and Benin on my own responsibility, and subject to the proviso that both chiefs voluntarily agreed to it...The Lieutenant-Governor (Sir H. C. Clifford) expresses the view that before many years, the tax should yield a revenue of a million sterling, thus fully replacing the indirect tax accruing from duties on spirits.<sup>1</sup>

The replacement of indirect with direct taxation constitutes a dramatic turn in the orientation and practices of the Southern peoples. These people in the past had to pay occasional dues to their authorities but they were quite unfamiliar with regular taxation on the basis of the properties they owned. And, unlike their less sophisticated and less assertive fellow Africans in East Africa, they were very ready to resist this attribute of civilization. The British had not attempted to impose direct taxation upon the Gold Coast (now Ghana) where, fortunately, the prosperity of the cocoa trade allowed a very adequate revenue from customs. In Sierra Leone, the attempt to introduce a hut tax in 1898 had caused a very

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<sup>1</sup>Lugard, Amalgamation Report, pp. 15-15.

serious revolt, only put down with a very heavy loss of life. With the memories of this tragic event in mind, and similar experiences in East Africa, well thinking colonial personnel including the Secretary of State for colonies opposed Lugard's decision to introduce direct taxation in the South.

The opposition came from distinguished colonial figures. E. D. Morel, one of the best informed experts of the period, in his book on Nigeria published in 1912, "had given a strong warning against any brusque introduction of the tax in Southern Nigeria after fifty years of association (with Britain) without such taxation".<sup>1</sup> Even one of Lugard's "resident's" in the North, H. R. Palmer who had headed the delegation that studied the South and recommended on the appointment of chiefs, reported "that Southern officials believed that the Northern system of direct taxation was inapplicable in the South".<sup>2</sup> Lugard himself recalls that "The Secretary of State was unwilling to authorize this innovation" in the tax system.<sup>3</sup> The position of these opponents was basically that direct taxation was best suited to territories whose inhabitants possess an organization where chiefs with large regions

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Perham, Margery. Lugard: The Years of Authority 1899-1945. London: Collins Press, 1960, p. 443.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 444.

<sup>3</sup>Lugard, op. cit., p. 15.



and large powers also had large budgets as, for example, Northern Nigeria where the tax was of course very successful. The opponents rightly saw that these conditions were not present in the South. Secondly, Lugard's opponents were aware that from the time the British Merchant Firms (e.g. the Royal Niger Company) exercised jurisdiction over the southern peoples through to the period of formal colonization in 1900, the form of tax paid in the south was indirect tax. The people had become accustomed to this tax and a change would be conflictive. Finally, the attempt to introduce direct taxation elsewhere as already pointed out, had in many cases produced tragic results. However, in spite of the opposition, Lugard proceeded with the introduction of the tax in the south "on his own responsibility".

From the point of view of Lugard's government, direct taxation was not only a recognition of sovereignty of the people, it was the moral charter that "all civilized nations recognized the principle of direct taxation of the individual in proportion to his wealth, and the protection and benefits he receives from the state".<sup>1</sup> The view was also held that direct taxation brought the "warrant chiefs" (the recipients and payees) into closer contacts with the peasantry than any other of their func-

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<sup>1</sup>Nicolson, I. F. Administration of Nigeria 1900-1960. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969, p. 146.

tions. While the government would never use taxation as a means of enforcing labour, by using it as a means of recognizing the rights and responsibilities of the individual, the system would have the indirect effect of stimulating production; for men would know that they must pay tax but would be free to keep their surplus. But the view that direct taxation would make warrant chiefs appear not as hard exploiters, but as agents who would free the common man from the burden of heavy and capricious exactions was seriously misconceived. Margery Perham<sup>1</sup> has told us that the "Southerners were very ready to fight this attribute of civilization" meaning introduction of direct taxation. And, Nicolson adds that "serious outbreaks of disorder followed"<sup>2</sup> the introduction of direct taxation in the South.

By far the most serious trouble occurred in the Egba territory in 1918, the first territory in which direct taxation was introduced. This was followed by riots in Warri in 1927 and 1929 by the extensive and serious womens' outbreak, generally known as the Aba riots. A common pattern revealed in all these disturbances is the attack

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<sup>1</sup>Perham, Margery. Lugard: The Years of Authority, p. 443.

<sup>2</sup>Nicolson, op. cit., p. 213.

on Warrant Chiefs\* and on government bureaucracies, institutions obviously identified as attributes of the peoples grievances. In other words, the events demonstrate that the simple pattern of a single dominant ruler with district heads under him to conduct administration and to collect the new tax simply did not fit the Southern system. It had been too far out of touch with the people to observe their accumulating grievances.

The people's grievances against the introduction of direct taxation was aggravated by the events of the first world war (1914-1918). The start of the war coincided with the amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914, and disrupted Nigeria's trade with Germany thus causing a decline in revenue. As a result of this situation, Geary<sup>1</sup> and many others have argued that the extension of direct taxation to the South was due to Lugard's desire to raise compensatory revenue. For, direct taxation would guarantee a certain amount of government revenue thus avoiding the

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\*The gap in the periods between the riots is justified by the fact that direct taxation was not introduced simultaneously everywhere in the South. The years of the riots correspond with the year of introduction of the tax. The plan had been laid down by Lord Lugard so that even after his departure in 1919, his successors implemented the plans without modification. It is logical to argue that the decision to space out introduction of the tax stems from Lugard's uncertainty as to the success of this innovation. For more on the implementation of the amalgamation scheme after Lugard's retirement, see Margery Perham, op. cit., p. 464.

<sup>1</sup>Geary, W. N. M. Nigeria Under British Rule. London: Frank Cass., 1965.

fluctuations associated with indirect taxation. On the other hand, Nicolson<sup>1</sup> and Margery Perham<sup>2</sup> have argued that the extension of direct taxation to the South was part of Lugard's attempt (embodied in the amalgamation scheme), to re-structure the South on the Northern model. They argued that the new native administration and the associated direct taxation was part of Lugard's broader picture of extending to the South the same model that had earned his reputation in the North and which he deemed ideal for ruling native people. However, underlying these viewpoints is the fact that at the time of sporadic unrest in the country export trade had declined, affecting not only government revenue but also the incomes of the tax payers.

A large net fall in real exports occurred in Nigeria because it was cut off from its German export market. Germany accounted for about 50 per cent of Nigeria's pre-war exports and for about 75 per cent of its principal export - palm produce. Shipping restrictions and a discriminatory export duty which forced export of palm products to the United Kingdom also adversely affected Nigeria's exports. The result of these measures was a drop in Nigeria's revenue from £3,178,000 before the war to £2,831,000 at the end of the war, a loss of roughly

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<sup>1</sup>Nicolson, I. F. Administration of Nigeria, op. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Dame Margery Perham, Native Administration in Nigeria, and Lugard: The Years of Authority.

16%.\* To deal with the revenue deficit there were two remedies - reduction of government expenditure, or increase of and new taxation and, as Geary tells us, "The government took the latter alternative".<sup>1</sup> This shows that there is a direct relationship between taxation in the South and the occurrence of sporadic riots. Further illustration substantiating this point can be made from the Aba riots.

One of the areas most seriously affected by the 50% decline in trade due to prohibition of exports to Germany was Aba in Iboland. The area was seriously affected because the cultivation and export of palm produce (oil and kernels) was the main economic activity. Here a good proportion of the population were either producers or middlemen (traders) or engaged in allied services such as transportation and bookkeeping. Consequently their livelihood depended on the prosperity of the export market. As export of oil and kernels was reduced, so was production and the incomes of those engaged in the industry. But they were not alone in feeling the impact of the decline. For government revenue had also declined and measures were

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\*The imperial trade preferences were adopted in 1919, differential export duties on both tin and palm kernels were designed to reserve these Nigerian exports for the United Kingdom alone. These measures also succeeded in stopping United States companies from infiltrating Nigerian markets. For more, see Geary, W. N. M., Nigeria Under British Rule, Frank Cass, London, 1965. The public debt of Nigeria outstanding 31 March 1923 is £13,609,200.

<sup>1</sup>Geary, op. cit., p. 260.

underway to increase revenue through taxation. In the circumstance, a government ordinance emerged which provided for additional tax on the people. And, according to Perham

....Officers were instructed to assess the average income of the peasant farmer and to take 2.5 per cent as a reasonable rate of tax.<sup>1</sup>

In the process of assessment, women as well as children and property were counted. Then rumour began to spread that the purpose of counting women was to enable the government to extend the new tax to them. For, the new tax had already been imposed on the men. Meanwhile, fear arising from the rumour (which was unfounded) provoked over-reaction from the women. In a surprise move, they organized and launched attacks on warrant chiefs, district officers and on court buildings - all institutions perceived to be symbols of their oppression. This was the climax of similar but less serious tax related outbreaks of disorder in Kwale and Warri Districts and, as the Aba riots quickly spread to other palm producing centres of Owerri, Opobo and Calabar, the government took no chance. A counter-attack from the police force resulted in the death of over thirty women and another thirty-two injured. A subsequent government inquiry revealed that "taxation

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<sup>1</sup>Perham, Native Administration in Nigeria, op. cit., p. 203.

of this kind was entirely foreign to their customs".<sup>1</sup>

From the point of view of the government, riots of this kind are a manifestation of primitive behaviour. Violence is the only way illiterate people can express their grievances thus justifying brutal government reaction. On the other hand, the women demonstrated their ability to organize, to mobilize and to act collectively in defense of their common interests. Above all, it shows that indirect rule (which made no use of the people's traditional customs and institutions but was based strictly on principles imported from the North) was unsuitable as a method of ruling the South. It is upon this realization that the people rejected the system and opted for one that utilized their traditional values. Having thrown overboard the new 'warrant chief', native administration system, the Ibos:

Chose instead a system of local government largely taken from the British model of County-councils, District Councils (urban and rural) and Local Councils, based mainly upon straight election.<sup>2</sup>

The Ibos are not the first colonial people to reject indirect rule but their action serves as a challenge to the imperial conception that indirect rule was the best form of governing native peoples. This gives rise to

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<sup>1</sup>Perham, Ibid., 1937: 207

<sup>2</sup>Perham, Margery. Lugard: The Years of Authority, p. 465.

questions regarding the appropriateness of the term indirect rule as it was applied in Iboland. If we accept the definition of indirect rule as "a method of ruling people through their native institutions"<sup>1</sup> then we must ask to what extent was indirect rule really native in the South; had it had any roots in the past or been in harmony with existing institutions and social groupings? As we have just seen, as far as its application in the South is concerned, indirect rule has meant the implantation of Northern social and political institutions. Therefore, it is appropriate to revise the meaning of indirect rule to read 'a method of ruling native people through institutions borrowed from other colonial peoples'. This definition not only corrects the mistakes of the previous meaning, it arms the colonial researcher with better instruments of investigation.

In the previous chapters, we concentrated on amalgamation and indirect rule and argued that tribal cleavages in Nigeria was generated by characteristic colonial policies. We must now fit the consequent political conflicts into these colonially induced cleavages, in order to obtain a more balanced and complete picture of disunity in Nigeria.

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<sup>1</sup>Lugard, Lord. The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa, London: Archon, 1965, p. 193.



## CHAPTER V

### RECENT INCIDENTS OF CONFLICT

In this chapter, we shall survey some important incidents of conflict as pointers to the colonial legacy. We shall begin with a brief discussion of the development of the nationalist movement and the crises that characterized it. This will lead us to examine the first tribal massacre in Kano in 1953; the difficulties that plagued the transition to independence in 1960 and the subsequent disintegration of the first Republic. Finally, we shall look at the most appalling of all, the 10,000 tribal murders and the ensuing civil war which lasted from 1967 to 1970. Given the nature of the problems associated with amalgamation and indirect rule, one might predict continuing troubles associated with this forced and unnatural union. This was indeed the case.

The declaration of the American President\* on the right of all peoples to self-determination and also, the writing of new world negroes like W. E. Du Bois and his antagonist, Marcus Garvey, inspired the founding of the National Congress of British West Africa in 1920. The party was led by a Gold Coast (now Ghana) lawyer Casely-

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\* Woodrow Wilson was president at the time and his declaration of support of the right of colonies to self-determination set a spiral of nationalist movements all over Asia and Africa. See Ronen, The Wilsonian Principles of African Self-determination. San Francisco: African Studies Association, 1975.

Hayford and its aim was that peoples of West African descent should participate in the government of their own country. But, its fight was not so much for self-government, but for a measure of participation in the existing government.<sup>1</sup> The activities of the National Congress of British West Africa stretched from putting pressure on local colonial authorities to direct talks with the Secretary for the Colonies in London. And, it has been suggested that these activities compelled the then Governor of Nigeria to introduce some changes in the constitution of the country.<sup>2</sup>

Consequently, in the year 1922, the Governor of Nigeria, Sir Hugh Clifford introduced a new constitution, which for the first time in British African colonies provided for elected African members on a legislative council. This council legislated for Lagos colony and the franchise was limited to returning three members of the council every five years.<sup>3</sup> But the limited application of the new elective principle inevitably restricted nationalist activity to Lagos, since there was little scope for political activity in towns which had no seats on the Legislative

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<sup>1</sup>See Onwuka, Dike. 100 Years of British Rule in Nigeria 1851-1951, Lagos, 1957, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup>Kalu, Ezera. Constitutional Developments in Nigeria, London, 1960.

<sup>3</sup>Sklar, R. L. Nigerian Political Parties, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1963, p. 46.

Council. As a result, on June 24, 1923, Herbert Macaulay inaugurated the Nigerian National Democratic Party (N.N.D.P.). The aims of the N.N.D.P., beside seeking to return members to the council, also included local matters such as agitating for adequate water, educational and hospital facilities. Though this party was very local in its basis and in interests, it nevertheless marked the beginning of broad based and wider nationalist movements.

From about 1929 to 1934, the political climate of Lagos had begun to spread as people soon realized the benefits of such collective organizations. The Lagos Youth Movement was formed in 1934, which in 1936 was renamed the Nigerian Youth Movement and the Movement was strengthened in 1937 by the return to Nigeria of Nnamdi Azikiwe, after nine years as a student in the United States. From this time on, the party's restricted outlook was abandoned and it became geared into a genuine national movement with a broad representation. But, this party, exclusively composed of Southerners (Ibos and Yoruba) was short-lived.

Rivalry over who should stand for the vacant Legislative Council seat led to the effective demise of the party and brought the first tribal feeling to the core. "Nnamdi Azikiwe left the party with all his tribal followers, so that the party became effectively a Yoruba

controlled organization".<sup>1</sup> Then Azikiwe founded the National Council of Nigeria and the Camerouns, (N.C.N.C.) a predominantly Ibo party, obviously to counter the Yoruba dominated Nigerian Youth Council. The N.C.N.C. with Azikiwe as its leader declared its objective as

"To achieve internal self-government for Nigeria whereby the people of Nigeria and the Camerouns under British Mandate shall exercise executive, legislative and judicial powers."<sup>2</sup>

While the N.C.N.C. assumed a nationalist posture at least in ideology, its composition was tending more and more to be tribally based. Its main adherents were members of the Ibo tribe of whom the party's leader, Nnamdi Azikiwe was one. The result of the division was the absence of a single dominant party supported by both Ibos and Yorubas. The first sign of tribal politics and ultimately, of tribalism had now surfaced in the South. The tribal structure has basically defined the political structure and it seemed as though the moment had dawned for conflict. However, despite appearances, the major threat to stability lay not between sections of the Southern region organizing against each other, but between the North and the South.

While tribalization of politics and, in fact,

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<sup>1</sup>Michael Crowther, The Story of Nigeria, Faber and Faber, London, 1978, p. 228.

<sup>2</sup>The Constitution of N.C.N.C., Lagos, 1945, p. 1.

political activity was going on in the South, the North remained isolated as it watched with indifference. There, Colonial rule had deeply entrenched the power and rule of the nobility. Moreover, the disallowance of Christian Missions and educational institutions in the region meant that there was no educated class to champion political activity (reference discussion on Indirect Rule). The consequences of these past policies were now apparent:

Whereas the Southerners were determined that Africans should attain majority control of the executives, operating on a ministerial system, the North preferred to retain the British Commissioners as executive authorities with power to appoint their own executives, who would remain solely in an advisory capacity.<sup>1</sup>

So a major rift developed between the two regions regarding an issue so fundamental as the nationalist movement. The South adopted an anti-colonial attitude and the North, a pro-colonial stance. There can be no doubt that this is a reflection of their colonial past - for, colonial rule, right from its inception did not prepare the two regions for peaceful co-existence as a nation. And, this division was never to be resolved peacefully except by violent tribal warfare.

But, more importantly, the North's lack of inclination toward party politics was not so much a reflection of their indignation as it was a result of official policy.

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<sup>1</sup>Hatch, John. Nigeria: The Seeds of Disaster. Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1970, pp. 254-255.

For, official government policy continued to insulate the North from what was generally known as subversive influences from the South. Since the traditional form of government in the North had largely been preserved, there was little opportunity for western-style politics. As a result, the Legislative Council which established a franchise in the South in 1922, deliberately excluded the North. Thus, from 1922 to 1946, when the Southerners began to participate in Western style politics and in the making of their own laws, the Colonial Governor was the sole legislator for the North.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the constitutions of 1946 and 1951 introduced the principles of regionalization and of limited self-government to the regions respectively.\* These innovations led to the polarization of nationalist leaders and the emergence of political parties which vied for control of these legislatures: the Action Group party led by Obafemi Awolowo replaced the Nigerian Youth Movement as the strongest Yoruba party in the West; the N.C.N.C. party remained the stronghold of Ibos in the East, and, finally, the ban on party politics in the North had now been lifted and the Northern Peoples' Congress emerged

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<sup>1</sup>Crowther, Michael. Op cit., p. 229.

\*These were the Richardson (1946) and the Macpherson (1951) Constitutions, which divided the country into three regional assemblies - North, East and Western regions. For details, see Kenneth Post, Nigerian Federal Election of 1959. London: Oxford University Press, 1963.

as a Hausa-Fulani party. Thus, tribalization of politics was now concretely completed. Each main tribe had now formed its own political party, which would henceforth be used to further tribal as opposed to national interests. They had now prepared for open tribal confrontation and hostilities at the federal level. Time was the only factor holding back these tribal groups and their tribally defined political structures, from engaging in hostilities.

As the regional parties continued their struggle for a claim to national representation, they ran into conflict over the date on which self-government was demanded. For, an Action Group (Yoruba party) member, Chief Anthony Enaboro had tabled a motion in 1953, calling on the Federal House of Representatives to accept "as a primary political objective, the attainment of self-government for Nigeria in 1956".<sup>1</sup> The North and the South were divided on this issue. The Northern members felt their region was unprepared for self-rule and remained not only indifferent to the 1956 dead-line set by the South, but also indefinite about its timing. This division between the North and the South over an issue so fundamental as this was rooted in the former's suspicion and fear of the

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<sup>1</sup>Schwarz, Walter. Nigeria, Paul Mall Press, London, 1968, p. 106.

latter's dominance,\* a phenomenon that Emerson rightly described:

Everywhere the coming of independence particularly under democratic auspices tend to rouse fears of dominance of one group over another.<sup>1</sup>

Here, the Northerners suddenly found themselves threatened by Southern domination; people upon whom the Northerners had looked down in the past, but whose present greater formal education had meant a more rapid advance under colonialism.

Differences between the North and the South allow the members of each to view members of the other as outsiders. Indeed, the subjective sense of tribalism always depends on this interaction. By taking its standards into account and using them as criteria to assess its own judgements, performances or those of the South, the North was exhibiting its tribalism. The South was intolerant to Northern tribalism and exhibited its own tribal regional interests by remaining uncompromisingly in favour of 1956 as deadline for self-government. In opposition to the

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\* Northern fear was published in the Newspaper in the following words: "Now it is evident, therefore, that when this country has got a responsible government, the South will lead the North. We are neither jealous nor envious but it is unnatural for a minority to rule a majority honestly." 'Pilot' 28 August 1947, cited in W. R. Crocker, Self-Government for the Colonies. London; Allen and Unwin, 1949, p. 57.

<sup>1</sup> Emerson, R. "Nation Building in Africa", in Deutsch and Foltz (eds.), Nation Building, New York: Atherton Press, 1966, p. 99.



Northern rejection of the self-rule deadline, Southern leaders representing the N.C.N.C. and Action Group parties walked out of the House. After the adjournment of the House, Coleman tells us that

the Northern members were subjected to insults and abuse by (the predominantly Ibo and Yoruba) Lagos crowds, and during the ensuing weeks, they were ridiculed and strongly criticized by the Southern press.<sup>1</sup>

With this assault, the Northern members returned to their homes resolved never again to involve themselves in Southern politics and seriously contemplated secession from the federation.<sup>2</sup>

That one can view attacks on leaders of one tribe (the Hausa-Fulani) by the leaders and press of other tribes (Ibos and Yorubas) as a light concern is quite untrue. Here we can see without going further that the mistake of 1914 (when the North and South were amalgamated) had come to light. In the eyes of the Southerners, the refusal of Northern leaders to endorse the self-government motion meant that these leaders were "unrepresentative of their people", "have no minds of their own" and were therefore "imperialist stooges".<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the Northerners viewed Southern demand for self-government in 1956 as a

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<sup>1</sup>Coleman, James. Nigeria: Background to Nationalism, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1958, p. 309.

<sup>2</sup>Schwarz, op. cit., p. 232.

<sup>3</sup>Coleman, 1958, op. cit., p. 400.

device to dominate the former by virtue of the latter's presently greater formal education and material standard. It seemed as though the 1914 exercise in amalgamation and in indirect rule which portrayed the Northerners as allies of the Colonialists had not faded from the minds of Southerners. Moreover, inequalities in European education, wealth, values and general ways of life (arising from past differential colonial policies) was now beginning to define relations between the Hausa-Fulani and the Ibos and Yoruba. For, by stating that the North was "unprepared" for self-rule in 1956, the leaders were implicitly or explicitly acknowledging that they lagged behind the South in acquisition of modern values and institutions.\*

Suffice to say that the abuse on Northern leaders by Southern crowds and the continuing attacks by the Southern press have laid the groundwork for wider tribal hostilities. One of the Southern leaders, a Yoruba and leader of the Action Group party, (Obafemi Awolowo) who earlier had accused Northern leaders of being "despots and British stooges", announced a tour of the largest and most important city in the North-Kano. With deep resentment still

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\* It may be argued that perhaps the Northerners didn't want to modernize. If so, then the Northern colonial administrators did not want to see the North modernize either. Why then amalgamate the North with the South which wanted modernization? How were both peoples to participate in the modern nation-state system? We have devoted Chapter IV to this issue and the reader should consult it for that point of view.

fresh among Northerners over abuses and charges made on their leaders by Southerners, it was obvious that Awolowo's visit to the North would pull the trigger of Northern reprisals against the South. Though the visit was banned "at the last minute", its "publicity had been sufficient to excite deep resentment by local people against the South".<sup>1</sup> However, the ban on Awolowo's visit did not deter hostilities from taking their course. A scheduled meeting by Southern political leaders to campaign for self-government in 1956 in the Northern city of Kano quickly turned the event into four days of rioting. Northerners attacked Southern residential quarters in the city and there were 277 casualties, including 36 deaths.<sup>2</sup> Tribal conflict has thus tended to characterize relations between the communities at the first definite attempt at Western style political existence. Colonial policies of direct and indirect rule have differentially shaped the attitudes and thinking of the Northern and Southern peoples, with the result that the South was anti-colonial rule and the North was not. The Kano incident was however, only the beginning of a series of tribal conflict that would justify

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<sup>1</sup>Michael Crowther, The Story of Nigeria, p. 233.

<sup>2</sup>Sklar, 1963, op cit., p. 132. An official Commission of Inquiry attributed the riots to tribal tensions, the immediate cause of which was persistent criticisms of Northern political and traditional leaders by Southerners. See Report on the Kano Disturbances, 16th, 17th, 18th and 19th May, 1953 (Kaduna, 1953)

what Crocker has told us that

"instead of there being a Nigerian nation...  
the artificial administrative entity of  
Nigeria created by the British has all the...  
tensions of a multi-racial society"<sup>1</sup>

One need not argue with Crocker, for the colonialists linked the country together tenuously with the institutions of law and order in 1914 and failed to equip the communities for national integration.

The Kano riots had brought tribal and regional antagonism to the open. It triggered the demise of the existing constitution and the resumption of fresh constitutional talks as a result of which a new date (1959) for self-government was fixed and accepted by the contending parties. Independence however came in 1960 under conditions of tribal suspicion and mistrust. The long separation of North from South seemed to have left too deep an impression for even the post independence state to succeed. Moreover, the imbalance in the constitution, whereby political parties remained tribally based meant that the North (whose population almost doubles the South and which had a very disciplined electorate)\* would always win majority of

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<sup>1</sup>Crocker, W. R. Self-Government for the Colonies, George Allan, London, 1949, p. 52.

\*The Northern region contains over half (54 per cent) of the total population of the country (1953 Federal election) and in the 1959 Federal election, the Northern Peoples' Congress party won a plurality: 143 seats out of 312 seats. The curious thing in this election is that all but one of the 143 seats were won in the North - reflecting their disciplined electorate. The N.C.N.C. (Ibo based party) ran second with 89 seats and the Action Group (Yoruba based) came third with 73 seats. See Sklar, Nigerian Political Parties, op. cit., p. 508.

seats and hence ever remain the ruling party. In a situation so tense in tribal consciousness and antagonism, one can hardly expect that tribal majority rule itself is the basis of justice. The failure of the constitution to redress this imbalance between the regions, the tribes and the political structure, bedevilled politics in the years following independence. Referring to this phenomenon, Simon tells us that instability is prevalent in post-independent Nigeria because the colonialists who drew the constitution "distributed power unevenly between the regions and placed most of it in the hands of the Conservative traditionalists who ruled in the North".<sup>1</sup> This is the background to our understanding of the events that led to the first military coup.

Barely six years after independence, a regional election in the Yoruba territory (Western region) was quickly turned into a ground for competition between the Hausa-Fulani dominated Northern People's Congress Party and the Yoruba dominated Action Group Party. The Northern Peoples' Congress, acting through a newly formed party, Nigerian National Democratic Party (N.N.D.P.), sought to expand its influence among the Yorubas. And, the Action Group party indulged in active resistance to N.P.C. expansion. Disagreements and quarrels between party leaders

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<sup>1</sup>H. J. Simon's review of Dr. P. E. Ollawa's book in African Social Studies, #20, Dec. 1975, p. 830.

and their supporters, led to terror, riots, arson and murders in the region. Estimates show that about 2,000 lives were lost during the incident.<sup>1</sup> Tragically significant here is the tribal tension sparked off by the incident. Some of the victims were Hausas and their Yoruba supporters while the majority of the troops dispatched to quell the riots were not sympathizers of the Northern Peoples' Congress in the West.

Meanwhile, the military, fresh from its active participation in the Second World War in Cameroun and Burma and most recently, the Congo (now Zaire) crises kept a watchful eye on the inability of the leaders to rise above the limitations of their society. Perhaps it is true that the soldiers would not remain indifferent to a situation where law and order had broken down as some have argued or that they were driven by their own desire to have their share of the 'national cake'. Or yet still that the soldiers were nationalists and therefore, their intervention in politics was in national interests.\* Whatever the arguments for and against the intervention of soldiers (whose

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<sup>1</sup>John Hatch, Nigeria, op. cit., p. 278.

\*For a wide variety of theories that explain military intervention in politics, see Eleazu, Uma O. "The Role of the Military in African Politics: A Reconsideration of Existing Theories and Practices", The Journal of Developing Areas. April, 1973, pp. 256-86. And, Claude E. Welch, Jr. "The Roots and Implications of Military Intervention", in Soldier and State in Africa. Evanston, Ill., North Western University Press, 1970, pp. 34-35.

primary duty is to defend and not to rule) in politics, it is the tribal element and the conflict induced by such intervention that is of utmost importance to us here.

The date was 15, January, 1966 when a group of army officers, chief among whom were Majors Ifeajuna, Okafor, Anuforo and Nzeogwu (all Ibo) planned assassination of political leaders. Among the victims were the Prime Minister of the country Tafawa Balewa (North); the traditional leader and Premier of the Northern region, Sir Abukaka; and the Premier of the Western region, Chief Akintola (an active supporter of the Northern People's interest in the West). In the military arena, high ranking Northern and Yoruba Officers in the army were assassinated.<sup>1</sup> Following the assassinations, the military commander, Major-General Aguiyi Ironsi (Ibo) assumed presidency of the country. The acting president made the announcement:

I have tonight been advised by the Council of Ministers that they had come to the unanimous decision voluntarily to hand over the administration of the country to the Armed Forces of the republic with immediate effect. I will now call upon the General Officer Commanding Major General Aguiyi Ironsi, to make a statement to the nation on the policy of the new administration.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Kirk-Green, Crisis and Conflict in Nigeria, Vol. 1, Oxford University Press, London, 1971, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Kirk-Green, Ibid., p. 36, Citing Government Notice #147/1966 as source.

The unhappy side of the mutiny is that tribalism was inexorably implicated in the conflict.

First, the ringleaders of the coup were all Ibos and it naturally came to be interpreted by the Hausa-Fulani and some Yorubas as an Ibo conspiracy against the Hausa-Fulani.\* Secondly, the victims of the coup were mostly Hausa-Fulani and some Islamized Yorubas and, finally, none of the Ibo political leaders and military officers was killed, despite the fact that the Governor-General (President) of the country, the Military Chief and many federal ministers were Ibos, as well as having an Ibo premier in the East. The real intent of the coup is yet to be determined but an interpretation of the coup's outcome seemed to give massive credence to its anti-Northern character. In the North, fears that the coup had been directed toward establishing Ibo hegemony became particularly acute when the new military Head of State, Ironsi (Ibo) introduced a new constitution in which

"The former regions are abolished, and Nigeria grouped into a number of territorial areas called provinces. Nigeria ceases to be what is described as a Federation. It now becomes simply the Republic of Nigeria.<sup>1</sup>

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\* Whether this interpretation is correct or not is still being debated. It is difficult to reach a consensus on this issue. However, this writer is convinced by the events that followed the coup that the above interpretation is the correct explanation of the event.

<sup>1</sup> Press Release No. 723, Federal Ministry of Information, Lagos, 24 May, 1966 (Cited in Schwarz, op. cit., p. 205).



The announcement simultaneously unified the Federal and Regional Public Services and the country became a unitary state, administered directly from the federal capital. Here, the abolition of regional autonomy and the creation of unitary services was seen by Northerners as a design by an Ibo leader to get his educated fellow tribesmen (indeed there was a great mass of them compared with that of the North) to dominate positions in the civil service from top to bottom. The North would then cease to be masters in their own home.

However, critics have maintained, in addition to the tensions, grief and fears that the coup had generated, that the new Military Head of State did nothing to allay the fears of some communities, that the tense situation was particularly unsafe for his centralization policy and then that these policies contributed to the human slaughter that followed. But this was not the only factor. Among Northern Army officers, there was still considerable bitterness that the leaders of the coup have not been brought to justice for murdering their senior colleagues, an exercise which robbed the North of its tiny military and political leadership. Perhaps doing justice to the plotters was not the priority of the new military leadership which instead occupied itself with constitutional arrangements. However, the delay in bringing justice to

the men on whom justice was due meant that Northern patience was running out.

It was July of the same year that Northern army officers launched massive reprisal of human slaughter against the Ibos. The Ibo Military Head of State (General Ironsi) was killed while on a visit to Ibadan, along with his host, the Governor of the West, Colonel Fajuyi. The killings stretched from military barracks to Ibo civilian populations throughout the West and the Northern regions. It was estimated that 10,000 army officers and civilians of Ibo origin were murdered in the reprisal.\* A young Northern Army Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Yakuba Gowon then assumed presidency of the country.

In the eyes of political economists, the assassination of Hausa-Fulani by Ibos and the counter-assassination of Ibos by Hausa-Fulani is a reflection of competition for resources and opportunities.<sup>1</sup> This is an oversimplification and falls far short of an insight into the forces that have conditioned the Ibos and Hausa-Fulani.

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\* This figure may underestimate the total number killed. Eastern regional government sources put the number of victims at 30,000. Given the political climate at the time, there can be no doubt that the figure was manipulated to serve political ends. See Odumegwu Ojukwu. Biafra. New York: Harper and Row, 1969, p. 7.

<sup>1</sup>Anise, Ladun. "Ethnicity and National Integration in West Africa: Some Theoretical Considerations", in Raymond Hall (ed.). Ethnic Autonomy - Comparative Dynamics. New York, Pergamon Press, 1979, p. 316.

Different motivating grievances are more fundamental than the variety of different tribal groups. For, the Ibo grievances against colonial rule and the Hausa-Fulani antagonism toward the Ibos for their anti-colonial activity indicates that colonial rule did not equip them with what Mazrui has called "the psychological accumulation of a shared national experience".<sup>1</sup> The Ibos and Hausa-Fulani did not have a common subjective identification focused around - education, Western representative political institutions, economic institutions and the values of competition, success and achievement as well as individualism - that serve as center point and expression of their sentimental attachment to one another. At Independence, the Ibos had considerable advantage over the Hausa-Fulani in all the factors mentioned above and consequently, posed a serious threat to their northern neighbours. Tribal competition may sharpen or may help to weaken these structural inequalities but does not explain it.

However, the wave of tribal massacres seemed to have reached a point of no compromise as the Hausa-Fulani counter offensive against the Ibos in July 1966 merely reproduced among the Ibos, the same effects that the initial Ibo offensive had on the Hausa-Fulani. Suspicion of a

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<sup>1</sup>Mazrui, A. Cultural Engineering and Nation Building in East Africa. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972, p. 277.

Hausa-Fulani grand design to dominate the South prevailed among the Ibos who have now begun to seek refuge in separatism. Fearing that they were better off in a sovereign state than in a federation dominated by Hausa-Fulani conservatives, the Ibos sought independence by forcefully breaking out of the federation and declaring the Republic of Biafra in May 1967.\* At this peak, the two contestants took up arms and that same year saw the declaration of war by one tribe on another, thus, tearing apart, a nation that was created in 1914 with the primary purpose of sharing a common national life.

Meanwhile, the Yorubas, hitherto merely observing the Hausa-Fulani and Ibos contesting with one another, saw little alternative than to join forces with the Hausa-Fulani (though with the latter's pressure) in fighting to preserve an entity that the colonialists loosely linked together. The war lasted from 1967 to 1970, a 2½ year period. The total number of deaths from starvation and diseases will never be known; nor will the casualties resulting from fire-power, but they certainly run into

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\* Lieutenant Colonel O. Ojukwu, the then Military Governor of the Eastern Region and leader of Ibos led the secession. Compromises and attempts by the Head of State of the Federation, Major General Gowon, to persuade Ojukwu to back down from independence failed. The most notable of the attempts was the Accra (Ghana) Convention which rather intensified the tension between Ojukwu and Gowon. Efforts at peaceful negotiations have now failed and only time was needed for the bullets (rather than humans) to begin to speak. For more see Kirk-Green, Structure and Conflict in Nigeria, Vol. 2.

millions. Thus ended the tragic event that rocked the country, shook the world and stimulated social scientists to seek explanations.

To posit that this civil war was a continuation of traditional tribal antagonism as the Pluralists, the anthropologists and the tribalists\* would have us believe, means to deny that amalgamation and indirect rule did occur at all. This sort of approach thus robs the social sciences of any concern with the dynamic processes of societies, the fundamental impact of colonialism on Nigeria. It is not meant here that traditional animosity did not exist prior to the advent of colonial rule but we cannot understand why Nigeria

approached independence without the unifying effect of a shared spirit of anti-colonialism.<sup>1</sup>

and the conflicts that followed, by ignoring the circumstances that gave rise to the nation's existence in the first place. Colonialism made it difficult for Nigeria's tribal communities to merge, amalgamate, and develop into new collectivities with new and/or emergent identities. The conflicts we have surveyed may thus be seen as the culminating twists to a spiral of violence that had been

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\* Refer to Chapter III for the viewpoints of these schools of thought.

<sup>1</sup>Ali Mazrui adds that this was due to a basic Anglophilia that was prevalent among Haus-Fulani elites. See this book: Violence and Thought: Essays on Social Tensions in Africa, Longmans, London, 1969, p.113.

building up since the policy of amalgamation sponsored  
by Lugard.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Political integration is the central problem of modern Nigeria. Disunity has been a characteristic of national life since the withdrawal of Colonial rule in 1960. As has been proven in this thesis, much of the problems of unity are rooted in the country's colonial past.

Beginning from the establishment of formal colonial rule in 1900, colonial policy effectively insulated the two component parts of Nigeria (the North and the South) from each other in the name of autonomous colonial protectorates. This division or separation was further aggravated by the adaptation to each region of essentially incompatible and diametrically opposed governmental policies.

Indirect rule policy in the North preserved as well as strengthened conservative traditional feudal institutions. Northern Colonial government policy ensured this by deliberately prohibiting modernization of the society and its institutions and values.<sup>1</sup> European missionary agencies and commercial firms - the carriers of modern education and capitalist values respectively - were not allowed to operate in the North. In the political arena,

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<sup>1</sup>Hatch, John. Nigeria - The Seeds of Disaster. Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1970, p. 190.

European democratic liberal ideals did not find their way into the Northern political structure which remained essentially patrimonial in character and autocratic in method.

These policies pursued in the North not only took the region a generation behind times, but also prevented the development of its human and material resources. This "undevelopment" was reflected in the relatively alarming shortage of educated and skilled personnel. Above all, the region as a whole and the government in particular suffered chronic poverty.<sup>1</sup> Poor government revenue meant that the administration was not financially self-sufficient. Hence, the North had to depend on grants-in-aid from the British government to finance its administration. This dependence continued until Britain decided to terminate the burden by forging amalgamation whereby the 'wealthy' South would take over the task of financing the North.

Why was the South in the position to shoulder this responsibility? Contrary to the indirect rule policy pursued in the North, the government of Southern Nigeria encouraged effective integration of Southern Society into the British model. The system of "direct" administration ensured this through liberal policies. Missionary agencies

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<sup>1</sup>Birnberg and Resnick. Colonial Development: An Economic Study. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975, p. 21.



were encouraged to proselytize and to establish schools for the people. And, European enterprises developed the capitalist mode of production. The Southerners responded eagerly to these novel values. In massive numbers, they attended missionary schools where they acquired modern skills and education. In addition, the material resources of the South were greatly developed. The export to Europe of cocoa, palm produce as well as some minerals (tin, etc.) resulted in considerable wealth in the South. Huge government revenue furnished the capital for further development - a fact which in the eyes of Britain merited amalgamation.

In the political sphere, rather than autocratic rule as in the North, the Southern government ruled by councils. Representatives, both European and African, participated in collective decision making. A preliminary move, which at least, gave Southerners the chance to acquaint themselves with Western type of institutions. It seems though that the price paid for all these trends was the erosion of traditional values as well as the authority of traditional institutions.

The preponderance of these modernizing social, economic and political trends in the South constituted a leap forward (and not as in the North a step backwards). It has thus become obvious that colonialism took the North

and the South further apart. Colonialism did not establish integrative institutions but rather differential patterns which emphasized existing differences as well as created new ones thereby furthering the divisions between the two regions. For all practical considerations, these trends were not aimed at preparing the two regions for peaceful co-existence as a nation. One thus begins to wonder why amalgamation of the two regions was effected in 1914.

In chapter three, we showed that the single most important factor that gave the push for amalgamation was the desire to relieve the British tax-payer of the burden of financing the Northern administration.<sup>1</sup> It was deemed that by amalgamating the two protectorates, the South could assume the task of funding the North. This was more so since the South was booming in trade and wealth. This overriding financial factor overshadowed any consideration as to what the consequences of amalgamation might be for Nigerian communities and their future. Moreover, amalgamation was effected without first ensuring that the need for national existence did in fact exist; second, that enough time had been allowed to facilitate the objective and that adequate preparations have been provided; and finally, that amalgamation was the choice of the peoples of the two regions and that the move was in the best interest of both.

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<sup>1</sup>Nicolson, I. F. The Administration of Nigeria: 1900-1960. London: Oxford University Press, 1969, pp. 180-215.

Leaving these fundamental issues largely unaddressed and proceeding with amalgamation (which served external rather than internal interests), there was no doubt that the union was doomed to fail. However, colonial practice did not stop there. The continuation of divisive policies as epitomized by the advent of a uniform rule ensured that disunity was to accompany the union of North and South.

In chapter four, it was shown how the adoption of "Indirect rule policy" as a uniform method of government for the amalgamated state further intensified divisions between the North and South. This form of government which had its origin in the North; where it was best adapted, was merely extended (without modification and without justification) to the South. But, as we have seen, the South was not prepared to be modelled along the path of the North. The revival of traditional values and institutions, and, especially 'autocratic rule-by-chiefs' was not a welcome idea among the Southerners. Moreover, indirect rule with its attendant anti-education, anti-capitalism and anti-democratic tendencies was unappealing to a people in whose hearts progressive trends were beginning to become firmly entrenched. The appointment of chiefs and their assumption of overwhelming judicial and executive powers was unacceptable to people who were already on the path to absorbing full democratic political rule.

Many other factors associated with indirect rule triggered resentment among Southerners. Not the least among them was the change from levying 'indirect tax' to 'direct taxation'. Payment of indirect taxes simply in the form of commercial fees and licences in the South dated back to the inception of colonial rule in 1900. The tax reflected the degree of entrepreneurial undertakings in the region. Hence, the dawn of direct taxation - a fixed amount imposed on every household which increases with the number of heads in the house - was bound to provoke Southern reaction. The tax was deemed as a good method of bringing the appointed chiefs and their subjects closer together.<sup>1</sup> Here again, as in other instances, the colonialists showed a lack of insight into the damaging effects of policies imported from the North. For, in the eyes of the Southerners, not only did this tax innovation amount to repression, it was considered part and parcel of a broader design to subject the South to the dictates of the North. The Northerners and the colonial authorities, both adherents of indirect rule, were viewed as collaborating to subjugate the South. Suffice to say that this view that the Northerners were conspirators was very dangerous as it paved the way for Southern attacks on Northern leadership.

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<sup>1</sup>Lugard, Lord. Report on Amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria. London: Cmd 468, 1920, p. 15.

The wave of nationalist movements which swept through South East Asia and Africa following the end of World War II intensified the conflict between Northern and Southern Nigeria. The South featured prominently in the anti-colonial drives but the North remained pro-colonial in its attitudes. This has been shown in the case where the two regions took opposing stances on the question of the 'granting of independence by 1957'. The South favoured this move and the North opposed it.<sup>1</sup> The objection of the North lends further support to Southern allegations of Northern collaboration with the colonialists. Suffice to say that this antagonism would be extremely difficult to erase. The South attacked the North for its pro-colonial sentiment and the North counter charged the South for its anti-colonial stance. This conflict was nothing short of a reflection of fundamental differences stemming from the differential colonial experience of the two regions.

With the seeds of disaster deeply planted, colonial rule was terminated and independence granted in 1960. It has been shown in chapter five that conflict and confrontation have been a major characteristic of post-colonial relations in Nigeria. Almost all degrees of conflict, from the first military coup in 1963 (barely four years after independence) through tribal massacres in 1966 etc.

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<sup>1</sup>Sklar, Richard L. Nigerian Political Parties. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963, p. 126.

to the open tribal warfare of 1967 to 1970 have occurred in the country since independence. We have shown how these upheavals have rendered national unity difficult to attain. This situation is likely to continue for a long time to come. Above all, it has been demonstrated that the forces that induce conflict and hence, disunity, are the products of colonialism.

To summarize, modern Nigeria experienced sixty years of formal British rule. The North and the South were amalgamated without reference to Nigerian views. That the traditional histories of the tribal groups and their respective colonial experience did not fit them for this fate is self-evident. Colonial rule made no attempt to integrate the various tribal communities either before or after amalgamation. Consequently, the communities have shared nothing in common other than a common subordination to British rule.

Britain's legacy in Nigeria has remained visible to the present day and is likely to remain so. The structures created during colonial rule and inherited at independence are not adequate for nation-building. The political institutions are still largely fragile and incapable of legitimate rule. Similarly, the economic infrastructure are not designed to provide strong links between the many tribal groups. In material wealth, the South surpasses

the North and, power is still unevenly distributed between the regions. Considerable educational imbalances still exist, with the literacy rate in the South ten times higher than the North. Further, a greater part of the North is still rural and traditional while the South has taken a great leap forward in urbanization and the social furnishings that come with it. These disparities in degrees of modernization have increased diversities in the country as a whole. It has widened as well as intensified the potential for conflict between the tribal groups. So delicate have these diversities become that it will take more than human genius to correct the disequilibrium.

As we have seen, Nigeria's post independence government actions have appeared unable to avoid sharpening tribal feeling. This only serves to remind us that the colonial legacy of a Nigerian entity without national unity is still a reality. This cannot mean anything else but a strong case for reconstituting Northern and Southern Nigeria as separate sovereign territories. In this manner, the Northerners will accept their own responsibilities and the Southerners will be free to patronize their cause. In effect, we would then have stability in a region that has for a long time been torn by tribal conflicts.

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