

THE EDUCATED ELITE IN THE NIGERIAN SOCIETY

E. A. AYANDELE



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THE EDUCATED ELITE IN THE NIGERIAN SOCIETY

(UNIVERSITY LECTURE)

by

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Jos Campus*

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Contents

	<i>Page</i>
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	vi
FOREWORD	vii
PREFACE	ix
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. DELUDED HYBRIDS	9
3. COLLABORATORS	55
4. WINDSOWERS	79
5. NEW NIGERIANS?	139

List of Abbreviations

C.M.S.	Church Missionary Society
M.M.A.	Methodist Missionary Society Archives
I.U.L.	Ibadan University Library
N.A.I.	National Archives Ibadan
C.O.	Colonial Office (records in the Public Record Office London)
R.C.L.	Royal Commonwealth Library (London)

Foreword

by

PROFESSOR H. ORITSEJLOMI THOMAS
Vice-Chancellor, University of Ibadan

Professor Ayandele is to be commended as much for his skill as a historian as for his courage as a man. To chronicle impartially events which involved a number of participants who are still living, to comment incisively on the chameleon-like alteration of complexion of political leaders seemingly adjusted more to ensuring their self-interest and survival as an elite group in an emergent society, rather than to the advancement of the political liberation of their fellow-countrymen, is not a task for the timid scanner of contemporary newspapers nor yet for the chronicler of desiccated facts gleaned from official gazettes.

This book is largely made up of a series of university lectures delivered by Professor Ayandele previous to the 25th Anniversary Celebrations of the Foundation of the University of Ibadan in 1973. The final chapter in the book forms a suitable rounding off for the subject although it was not included in the original lecture series.

The headings of the chapters "Deluded Hybrids", "Collaborators" and "Windsowers" are pungent enough and are indicative of the author's acerbity and complete lack of chauvinism in his approach to his subject. By recording the shortcomings of some of our leaders of the recent past, Professor Ayandele may be said to have held a looking-glass in front of those who now essay to lead the nation, among whom are university teachers and graduates. For those who heard him and for those who now read him in these pages, his strident voice, almost that of a latter day Cassandra, carry the injunction for them to beware lest the "New Nigerians?" of his last chapter be no more than a ghostly reflection of the "Deluded Hybrids", "Collaborators" and "Windsowers" with whom the book began.

In places his book bears a striking similarity in style and presentation to Bernard Levin's highly successful book, *The Pendulum Years* (Jonathan Cape), which gives an account of Britain in the Sixties. Professor Ayandele's *The Educated Elite in the Nigerian Society* deserves to be equally successful.

Preface

Parts I, II and III of this Lecture were penned in Jos in March during the Easter recess and Part IV in London in the latter half of July in the course of a working vacation. The three first mandatory lectures were delivered on 1, 7 and 25 May respectively and are, with the exception of a paragraph towards the tail end of the third lecture, as intact as originally composed and delivered.

It is pertinent to record here that it was an accident, pure accident, that I found myself in the historic position of starting off the Ibadan University Lecture which was established by the decision of Senate of 9 March 1971 with the following "Terms and Conditions":

- (a) That lecturers be invited from among the ranks of Professors and Associate Professors in the University to deliver these series of lectures;
- (b) That each lecturer should normally give a series of three lectures;
- (c) That the lecturer should attempt in those lectures to make a significant and original contribution to his field of research and the lectures, while being scholarly and of high literary standard, should be presented in a manner to give them a wide appeal;
- (d) That there should be only one such series of lectures in any one session;
- (e) That the lecturer should receive an honorarium of one hundred guineas;
- (f) That the University Press should have the first option of publishing the lectures.

The accident inheres partly from the fact that the first Lecturer should be supplied by the Faculty of Arts, the oldest Faculty, and partly from the fact that a colleague who had accepted Faculty's nomination early in the 1971/72 session declared towards the end of Summer inability to do the Lecture. Hence my nomination in October 1972, thereby giving me a welcome opportunity to share with the wider Ibadan University audience thoughts that might never have been recorded, or at best recorded later and differently for a different audience.

I take this opportunity to thank specially my audience for bearing so graciously my "imprisonment" of them in the auditorium for at least one hour and a half with each lecture. Apart from the Faculty of Arts which did me the honour of nominating me for the Lecture, I am indebted to a number of individuals of whom I should mention: Dr Paul Mbaeyi, a colleague in the Department of History, who surrendered for my perusal the rich materials on the Nigerian crisis produced inside "Biafra"; my friend, Christopher Fyfe of the Centre of African Studies, Edinburgh University, who obliged to go through the entire manuscript; Mrs Margaret M. Ibvori, my Secretary, who as I learned later, nearly delivered her child in the office in the process of finishing off the typing of the third lecture; Professor H. Oritsejomi Thomas, Vice-Chancellor, for the special encouragement he gave me.

Jos Campus,
29 September, 1973

E. A. AYANDELE

Introduction

MR VICE-CHANCELLOR, SIR, DISTINGUISHED EDUCATED ELITE AUDIENCE: It is pleasantly fortuitous that, with the theme I have selected for the inauguration of Ibadan University Lecture, this premier seat of learning in Nigeria is observing the maxim: "Charity begins at home". For Ibadan is the leading manufacturer of the cream of the Nigerian educated elite to date—8,110 successful alumni, as opposed to a total of 11,408¹ by the four other Nigerian universities combined. We should be justly proud that in a "developing" country's society like ours where, literally, knowledge is power, our institution has done so much, within a quarter of a century, in producing this primordial strategic class in the emergence of "New Africa".

However, at the same time, in this Silver Jubilee year, we should stop looking upon ourselves exclusively in unscientific, romantic spectacles. In this respect I have been anticipated, happily, by alumni in the literary world and in particular by Vincent Ike whose exposure of the other side of the undergraduate in *Toads for Supper* and of the don in *The Naked Gods* is vivid in the minds of many in this audience. Whilst, therefore, my focus is on the educated elite in the area that was to be labelled Nigeria, going back to the middle of the nineteenth century, it should not be imagined that most of what will be said about this class of culturally semi-Nigerians does not apply to ourselves. It would not be a matter of visiting on the University-trained generation the sins of their less-trained nineteenth century predecessors: it would be, simply, a question of our vicariously sharing the characteristics of a group of people who are neither authentic Nigerians, nor Europeans, but a *tertium quid* between the two. For, after all, the

¹ As of June 1972 analysis of successful graduates and diploma-holders of the four other universities was as follows:

(i) University of Nigeria, Nsukka	— 3468
(ii) Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria	— 2887
(iii) University of Ife, Ile-Ife	— 2411
(iv) University of Lagos, Lagos	— 2642

Ibadan Campus, more or less a chip of Europe in its physical expression, has proved a successful hybridizer,¹ completing the process of transmogrification of Nigerians into a motley of trousered and frocked burlesques with a veneer of Western culture.

The educated elite, the Nigerian species Ibadan has been refining in the last twenty-five years, began to appear in an increasing number on the Nigerian scene some one hundred and thirty-four years ago. From that time until this day, no class in the Nigerian community has been continuously a subject of profuse comments as this class. The unlettered, whose first reaction in the pre-colonial era was to pity the educated elite as Africans who had decivilized and devalued themselves, were eventually to turn their commiseration into consternation, as the educated elite proved themselves harbingers of British colonial rule; to sullen resignation during the colonial period, as they saw this class of semi-Nigerians ganging up with the British to exploit them; to inevitable acceptance of the leadership of this class of people in the last twenty-two years. Today the wheel has turned full circle; the unlettered are only anxious to contribute their own quota to the enlargement of the educated elite. Even in the Islamic parts of Nigeria, where for a long time aversion was nurtured towards the Roman character and the British colonial masters were reluctant to encourage the rise of the educated elite this class, for good or ill the greatest sociological factor in African society in modern times, has not only emerged but has seized the initiative from traditionalist religion-encrusted rulers.

Both in the pre-colonial and colonial periods, British rulers in Church and State were forced to make endless jaundiced comments on the educated elite, their rivals, dismissing the latter as incorrigible ingrates, or caricatures of Western civilization, veritable semi-Nigerians who had shed off the virtues of the romanticized unlettered tribal Africans, whilst adopting the vices of the white man's culture. However, as the colonial era was coming to an end, these very British mentors were to do a right-about-turn and begin to sing a different song. Forced to transfer power to the very class of people they had venomously vilified for decades, the colonial mentors began to appreciate and woo their elite heirs, whom they came to trust to retain, strengthen and further promote the cultural, economic and technological legacies of the colonial era and of the Western world.

¹ The spectacle of Ibadan as a veritable hybridizer is a theme of *Power and Privilege at an African University* (Routledge & Kegan Paul), an X-ray of the University of Ibadan by an American sociologist which appeared three months after the delivery of this Lecture.

Ever self-centred since the middle of the nineteenth century, the educated elite have all along commented upon themselves, presenting themselves as the class around whom history has been revolving in modern Nigeria;¹ as clairvoyant modernists and modernisers, who were to create, build and integrate Nigeria in the developed zone of the world; as the oppressed nationalist crusaders who used their brain, pen and tongue to expel the British colonial exploiters; as the wizards of nation-building, who were to erect a virile, sphinx-like Nigerian nation upon the ashes of British Nigeria.

It is natural that the educated elite have been a theme of major attention for historians of Nigeria. In terms of sources the tons of written materials by, or on, this class of semi-Nigerians are relatively the easiest to come by. Moreover, as their importance infinitely outweighs their number, it is easy for Nigerian historiography to be partial to the educated elite, at the expense of the other classes in Nigeria. Happily this highly prejudicial and unbalanced historical scholarship is being corrected. Social scientists, too, have been tuning their minds on the educated elite. But partly because of the nature of their disciplines, which makes them concentrate on the more contemporary period, and partly because of the terms of reference they have assigned themselves, the Political Scientist and the Social Anthropologist have not committed the methodological crime of the Historian.

And yet apart from the necessity for the historian to atone for his sin of omission, he owes the world of learning the duty to turn attention to social history, to date an important gap in Nigerian historiography. It is his exclusive province and responsibility, a responsibility that can only, at best, be shared peripherally by the Political Scientist or Sociologist. For social history cannot be turned into a backward projection of sociology, just as political history cannot be turned into retrospective theory of politics.

It is, therefore, as an historian of Africa and with modest pride as a teacher and learner of the Ibadan School of History, that I stand here to anatomize the educated elite in historico-socio-political terms. Given the condition in which sociologists, psychoanalysts and economists are yet to begin to apply themselves to the vast subject of the educated elite, my effort has, necessarily, to be a broad-based intellectual undertaking in which I amateurishly cut across disciplines, generalising in order to treat broad problems with broad questions. My consolation is that my analysis and approach are new, and the

¹ This phenomenon has been treated in the Lecturer's article "How Truly Nigerian is Our Nigerian History?" *African Notes*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (January 1970), pp. 19-35.

hope that my pioneering effort will help draw the attention of historians to some rich areas of social history. In this effort the methodology, approach and definitions employed by Political Scientists and Social Anthropologists in their writings on the African educated elite are of little relevance. Nor the vocabularies of scholars of the elite communities in Europe either. Their vocabularies and classifications, which scholars of Africa are tempted to borrow, are obviously more appropriate for the elites in the relatively monolithic homogeneous culture of the industrial society of which the elite are a natural and logical outgrowth. That society never went through the trauma of colonial experience.

In Nigeria, where, as the unlettered saw them, the educated elite appeared in the nineteenth century like a malevolent meteor hurled upon indigenous society by an unkind providence, the elite were ideologically and potentially the *strategic elites*. Because Nigeria went through the colonial experience there was no question of their being able to have, how much less use, political power to attain their desired goal until the sixth decade of the present century. All that happened, and could have happened, was that the colonial masters laid down the infrastructure of the Nigeria envisioned by the educated elite. As an intruding force from without the educated elite never, nor ever could have, had a consensus that could have been endorsed by society; as a divisive factor they could not have been an agency for social cohesion; they simply lacked the attributes with which to knit society together emotionally and psychologically.

Indeed, except with reference to the last quarter of a century, when the number of elite professionals, sedentary and occupational, increased very fast, it would yield little dividends to divide the elite in terms of functions. Prior to that time the educated elite were a class: their desire and aspirations, remained basically the same—to achieve modernization, bureaucratization, sophisticated economy and a life-style that was closer to that of the white man. In this respect the use of salary structure by some political scientists to define the educated elite is arbitrary.

As employed in this Lecture, the educated elite may be defined as the Western-style literate group in Nigerian society, with emphasis on their articulate self-styled leaders. They symbolize the moral and social unity of a collectivity by emphasizing a common purpose and interests different from those of the unlettered.

I am of the opinion that, for the greater part of the one-hundred and thirty-four years under survey, 1839-1973, the best way to understand the educated elite is through prosopography, that is, a collective

study of the lives and characteristics of the main leaders. It is unfortunate that historical prosopography still has a long way to go in Nigeria where scholarly biographies are still very rare. For all that we have now—and that tantalisingly in a tiny number—is a series of uncoordinated biographical insights of some ill-assorted leaders of the educated elite and only two full-scale biographies. In the series of four lectures in which I am exploring the theme *The Educated Elite in the Nigerian Society* my intention is to explain the phenomenon of the educated elite in four phases of modern Nigerian history. The first lecture, which I shall deliver presently, covers the pre-colonial epoch, the second the colonial period, when the British were absolutely in control of the Nigeria they had created; the third the period starting roughly from 1951, when the educated elite began to govern, to the end of the Nigerian crisis and the fourth 1966 to present day. In the first three lectures the educated elite are seen in their sandwiched relations with their white mentors and the unlettered masses; the last lecture is along the same line, the educated elite leaders in their sandwiched relations with neo-colonialists and the masses.

I

DELUDED HYBRIDS

The educated elite more or less under the influence of the Christian faith, more or less imbued with Christian principles, precepts, are and will be indispensable as a vanguard of the great army of civilisation that must be projected upon the ignorant barbarism of heathen Africa whenever the means for such projection shall be arranged. *African Times*, 1 July 1880.

Deluded Hybrids

The first generation educated elite were not a product of the Nigerian situation: they were slaves, or children of such slaves who, it was believed by society, were a happy riddance banished for ever from Nigeria. They had been either war captives, or incorrigible criminals, or the scums of society, or slaves assessed as of little capital value. They were certainly deemed inferior to the slaves retained at home as inestimable assets¹—Nupe spinners and weavers in the textile enterprise in Sokoto; the ugly Marghi girls who were guards on Kanuri farms; shrewd Igbo slaves who had the makings of hardheaded businessmen in the Niger Delta; the *Sabaruma* from the north in Yoruba households; confidants and officials in courts all over the country; the mameluke-like war-boys who were highly prized by the military leaders in pre-colonial nineteenth century Ibadan. Here, then, is a challenge to histogeneticists who might be able to substantiate, or disprove, the view held by many European observers in the last years of the nineteenth century, that the creoles were not the success that had been expected by over-sanguine mentors and philanthropists because these ex-slaves or offspring of slaves were the poorer species of their ethnic groups.

Nevertheless it is ironical—certainly a great irony in the modern history of Nigeria—that the banished slaves and their offspring should be the rejected stone that was to become the corner-stone of the Nigerian edifice. For when they returned to Nigeria the *Saro*, as the first generation Western-style educated elite came to be widely known, had been metamorphosed in such a way that they began to see themselves as leaders who should be followed by the rest of Nigerian society. They returned with a different conception of man, his world-view, his religion, his life-style, his value system, the attributes a leader should have and the course of history society should chart. Their metamorphosis made them regard the indigenous milieu as something that should be wiped off completely, Nigeria as a *tabula*

¹ E. A. Ayandele, "Observations on some social and economic aspects of slavery in pre-colonial Northern Nigeria", *Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies*, Vol. IX, No. 3, 1967, pp. 329-338.

rasa on which new things should be written, its society as one to be transformed by the magic wand they thought they possessed. The society they had left behind was prescriptive—the members being expected to conform to laws, norms and habitudes immemorially in existence; the *Saro* stood, ideologically, for innovation according to which the laws, norms, habitudes and so on they had learned outside Nigeria, and which they were convinced had propelled other human societies to higher levels of material and social achievements, should be adopted; the society that had sold them away was ascriptively structured—that is emphasis was on heritage, on birth, the family a person was born into; in contrast the new elite wanted an achievement-structured society according to which birth would be eliminated in favour of meritocracy, a meritocracy measured in terms of literacy and Anglo-Saxon standards. Rather than see themselves as reverting to the status of slaves in the Nigerian context, they believed that they were free and began to have pity for their unlettered countrymen, rulers and ruled, whom they saw as the real slaves—slaves of superstition and ignorance.¹

From the beginning the *Saro* saw themselves in strategic terms, claiming or assigning to themselves responsibilities for, and influence over the unlettered part of society of which they had ceased to be members. Setting themselves apart from the rest of the community, they began to claim preferences, authority and superiority. In contrast to the unlettered majority in the country, they were persuaded, they had seen the wider world; they had acquired supremacy of the cultured intellect; they had come to know God and the best way to approach Him; they had come to perceive what the liberated energies of the Nigerian could achieve in their envisioned milieu—how he could read and write, how he could become a successful businessman, how he could have a greater appreciation of the economic wealth of his country and how he could justifiably claim equality with other people in the world.

In their delusion and chimerical belief, that they had become leaders of a brand-new envisioned society, before which the traditional society should collapse, the *Saro* forgot completely the conviction of Nigerian peoples in the indigenous setting that slaves were mere chattels who should never dream of becoming leaders of society; that slaves had no status in law and could be disposed at will by their master;

¹ For insight into the picture the educated elite held of themselves in the nineteenth century see E. A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914* (A Political and Social Analysis), Longmans 1966. J. H. Kopytoff, *A Preface to Modern Nigeria*, Wisconsin, 1965. Robert W. July, *The Origins of Modern African Thought*, London 1968.

that it was absolutely unimaginable, criminally reprehensible, that a slave should ever think of becoming a ruler: it would be turning the world upside down.¹ In the language of the Yoruba "Imado iba se bi eledede a ba ilu je; eru iba joba enia ibati ku"—"were the hedgehog to behave as the pig the town would be spoilt physically; were a slave to become a king, he would have no subjects".

A society entertaining such views about domestic slaves cannot be expected to adopt a more tender attitude toward the much less-valued returnee slaves or their offspring, more so when the *Saro* had added cultural and religious dimensions to their crimes in the process of being Europeanized. Thus it was no surprise that the *Saro* who began to return to Nigeria discovered that, contrary to the idyllic conception of themselves as *the hope, the asset and the catalyst* of a new Nigerian society, they became for the vast majority of people an object of intense aversion, moral and cultural lepers. They discovered that their rejection by indigenous society was total and irrevocable, that in the very few places where their presence was tolerated at all they were not recognized as authentic members of society but as a bunch of pitiable, bumptious and contemptible people, ultimately a dangerous political liability whose ejection was most desired but regrettably impossible because of threat of retaliatory British bayonet.

Indeed only a part of one ethnic group, the Yoruba, in the territory that was to be called Nigeria countenanced the return of the *Saro* in the nineteenth century. This event, which decisively affected the ethnic demographic pattern of the rise and growth of the educated elite in Nigeria, deserves more than a passing mentioning. Why did *Saro* from other ethnic groups in Nigeria, who were in large numbers in Sierra Leone colony, not imitate the Yoruba? First, the evidence is strong that nostalgia was strongest among the Aku (as the Yoruba were known in Sierra Leone) than among other ethnic groups. It was such nostalgia that impelled the da Silvas, the Paynes, the Grillos, the da Rochas and the Alakijas to return home from far away countries like Cuba and Brazil. In contrast were the Igbo, the next largest ethnic group in Sierra Leone, and the Nupe also with a sizeable number. The Pratts and Hortons (prominent Igbo) led no return-to-the-fatherland movement, J. A. B. Horton making only a defective mental excursion to Iboland. The Ezzidios and Markes (prominent Nupe) made no move at all. Second, the Yoruba had the advantage of the British occupation of Lagos which non-Egba *Saro* seized to intrude into Lagos. There by far the majority of them stayed

¹ For insight into the position of slaves in some indigenous communities see R. N. Smith, *The Ibo People*, Ph.D. (Cambridge), 1929 and M. G. Smith, *Government in Zazzau*, Oxford 1960.

permanently under British protection because they feared that if they returned to their places of birth in the interior, they would be reconverted to slaves for export. Their fears were very well justified indeed. For instance the Awujalẹ would not offend the gods and have Ijebu-land desecrated by having back ex-slaves who, in the Ijebu view, had committed more crime by deIjebulizing themselves; the Ọni of Ifẹ who saw himself in special spiritual terms and believed that the history of mankind was revolving around Ile-Ifẹ, for the Yoruba the cradle of Man, the idea of a *Saro* moving near the Ifẹ kingdom should never arise. Although the Alafin of the Ọyọ Yoruba never proclaimed an anti *Saro* law, he never invited them either, a warning that the Ọyọ Yoruba took by staying away in Lagos. Little wonder that Samuel Ajayi Crowther, an Ọyọ Yoruba, mislabelled himself an Ẹgba and dare not bother to locate Oṣogun, his birthplace; little wonder that Henry Johnson, a distinguished linguist and later Archdeacon in the Niger Mission, never attempted to go to Muslim Ilorin, his ancestral place, where as an infidel he could hardly have been pardoned for adding to his non-respectability the crime of embracing Christianity.

In no other part of Nigeria was there a British enclave like Lagos where the *Saro* could move near to their ethnic groups. Hence the failure of the reconnoitering visit to Old Calabar by some Igbo who dare not move into Igboland. It was to Old Calabar and Fernando Po that many of them returned, but only in a very tiny number. Igboland was entirely sealed to outsiders, including the *Saro* Igbo. On the Niger where mission stations and commercial stations were manned mainly by non-Igbo *Saro*, the few Igbo mission agents lacked the temerity to venture into the interior.¹ Obviously for the rather small number from ethnic groups north of the Niger-Benue—the Hausa, the Kanuri, etc.—in Sierra Leone Colony the odds against any attempt by them to return to their fatherland were very great indeed. One group conspicuously absent from Sierra Leone and Lagos, a reflection of the utter insularity of the Edo kingdom *vis a vis* the white man's world in the nineteenth century, were the Edo. No Edo were sold out as slaves across the Atlantic.

¹ The isolation of the Igbo is partly described in F. K. Ekechi *Missionary Enterprise and Rivalry in Igboland 1857-1914*, London, 1971. But it was not only to outsiders that the Igbo forbade entry to their country. Internally travelling was restricted, the Aro and Oka Smithsmen enjoying immunity to go around Igboland. There is ample evidence from the novels of Chinua Achebe about Igbo village exclusiveness. It was in 1906 that the new British colonial masters attempted to bring the Igbo together, inviting 6,000 people, in an industrial exhibition. Reported Bishop Herbert Tugwell on the reaction of the people to the event: "Some of the tribes present have been at deadly enmity with one another for years, but today some of them have been running races, wrestling, dancing and taking part in other competitive games with the greatest good humour". CMS G3/A3/010 Tugwell to Baylis 26/12/1905.

The ethnic imbalance of the statistical growth of the educated elite continued to be tipped almost exclusively in favour of the Yoruba when Christian missions—as many as four in Yorubaland in the nineteenth century—began to produce the educated elite locally.

By the last decade of the century thousands of Primary school leavers and hundreds of secondary grammar school graduates had passed out of mission schools. They found ready appointments in mission, government and commercial enterprises. By 1890 when no other people in Nigeria had the luxury of post-primary schools the Yoruba had in their midst in Lagos four secondary grammar schools. Similar results were not produced among other peoples who had the advantage of Christian missions working in their midst. For reasons into which we cannot enter here, for example, neither in the Lower Niger nor in Efikland, where there were CMS and Presbyterian missions respectively, were there to emerge any significant number of educated elite. The CMS, who had started the Niger Mission in 1857, did not produce their first Igbo catechist, G. N. Anyaebunan, until 1898 whilst it was not until the following year that the first set of Igbo elite, Obed-dom C. Azikiwe, Alphonso C. Onyeabo and Abel Ekpunobi, graduated from the Asaba Training Institution which had been founded in 1895. Among the Efik where the Presbyterian mission had started work in 1846 only two pastors had been produced in 1900. These were Essien Essien Ukpabio and Asuquo Ekanem. In the Niger Delta the small nineteenth century educated elitist group were trained abroad in Britain, notwithstanding the activities of the CMS in the Niger Delta. Prominent among the Delta elite trained abroad are King George Pepple of Bonny, his brother Charles who became a postmaster on the Gold Coast, and several children of Oko Jumbo of Bonny and of King Jaja of Opobo. Among the Efik a few notables, particularly the Eyo Honesty royal family of Creek Town, were self-educated individuals.

The early emergence of the educated elite among the Yoruba gave the latter more than an ordinary lead in the matter of Western-style education over other ethnic groups in the country, a fact destined to inflame inter-ethnic rivalry in the twentieth century along directions not always healthy. The early lead by the Yoruba was not just in number but in quality and variety as well. The number of "Firsts" in the country, which Yoruba politician braggarts liked to fling in the face of opponents, goes a hundred years' back and is quite impressive. In contrast to the Igbo whose first medical doctor, Francis Akanu Ibiam, appeared in 1935, the first medical doctor in Nigeria, an Egbá Yoruba, Dr Nathaniel Thomas King, had appeared in 1876. In

contrast to the Igbo whose first university graduate, Nnamdi Azikiwe, was in the thirties of the twentieth century, the Yoruba had produced in 1878 the first two Nigerian graduates, Isaac Oluwole and Obadiah Johnson. In contrast to the Igbo whose first lawyer, Louis N. Mbanefo, appeared in 1937, the Yoruba had produced the first Nigerian lawyer, Sapara Williams, in 1880. Whilst the Yoruba had produced the first Negro Bishop in modern Africa—Samuel Ajayi Crowther, in 1864—the first ‘Half Bishop’ of the Igbo, A. C. Onyeabo, was not produced until 1937, long after the Yoruba had had all the “Half Bishops”—Isaac Oluwole, Charles Phillips, James Johnson, A. W. Howells, Alexander Akinyele—between 1894 and 1934. By 1900 the Yoruba had produced top civil servants whose positions anticipated several posts today. For instance, I. H. Willoughby and A. C. Willoughby were heads of the Police Force; J. A. O. Payne was for decades Registrar of the Supreme Court of Lagos Colony; E. H. Oke headed the Prison Department. A civil engineer, Herbert Macaulay, had been produced. They had produced principals of secondary schools—C. B. Macaulay, Isaac Oluwole, J. H. Samuel and W. Euba. They had founded and edited newspapers that were virile, pungent and high-quality—R. B. Blaize *Lagos Times* 1880; J. B. Benjamin *Lagos Observer*; O. E. Macaulay *Lagos Eagle and Critics*; A. M. Thomas *Lagos Iwe Irohin* G. A. Williams *Lagos Standard*. Finally they had produced about a score amateur authors who covered a wide range of subjects—medicine, religion, Yoruba literature, linguistics, geography, poetry, mathematics and musicology.

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In speaking about the origins of the educated elite it is essential to stress that with very few but notable exceptions (three sons of ex-King Dosunmu, including Wojuade Ogunjinmi Dosunmu who was a foundation student of the Wesleyan Boys’ High School, Lagos, T. A. J. Ogunbiyi, O. I. Manuwa of the Mahin, George Pepple and Charles Pepple, King Eyo Honesty VII of Creek Town and Obed Azikiwe), their leadership role in the Church and State being created notwithstanding, they were members of the slave class in the indigent milieu. But this slave class further divided into two—the *Saro* proper, that is, immigrant and those born and bred in Nigeria. For the greater part of the second half of the nineteenth century leadership in every walk of life was in the hands of the immigrants—Bishop Crowther and James Johnson in the Church; R. B. Blaize, J. S. Leigh, J. J. Thomas and Henry Robbin in the world of business;

J. Otunba Payne and Nash Williams in the judiciary. However, by the last quarter of the century a number of the elite born and trained, mostly in Nigeria, had begun to emerge in the forefront, successfully making bid for leadership—H. R. Carr and Herbert Macaulay in the civil service; Isaac Oluwole and Mojola Agbebi in the Church; Kitoyi Ajasa in the legal profession and J. P. Haastrup in the world of business.

By the sixties the educated elite had begun to dream dreams about Nigeria and Nigerians. The ideal society they envisaged can be readily retailed. First and foremost was that Nigeria should be Christianized. For, in the words of one of them, Christianity was “the grandest and greatest revolution that has ever affected humanity”.¹ For the *Saro* this religion was the *primum mobile* of all true progress, the harbinger of material wealth, technological triumphs, national greatness, industrialization, peace and prosperity. In their view Christianity could not be separated from the economic development of a people or things temporal; it was the Christian who ginned cotton and produced palm oil for export; it was him who cultivated cocoa and coffee; he made soap and was inventive, trading in the style of the Europeans on the Niger; he worked very hard and saw a logically necessary connection between religion and capitalism. Among the *Egba*, the educated elite boasted, only the Christian won wars. For the *Saro* Christianity depicted the kind and pattern of education that should be in existence, proscribing Islam and African Traditional Religion. Although few of the educated elite went as far as suggesting that the British should use force to enforce Christianity all over Nigeria, it was more or less assumed that British policy should be “Christian”. As some of them memorialized the British in 1882 against any recognition of African Traditional Religion and Islam: “we know that England and indeed Europe owes her prosperity, greatness and security mainly to Christianity”.²

Whilst they were all agreed that Nigeria should be Christianized the educated elite expressed diversity of views on the best means to achieve this end. For a number of them like Isaac Oluwole and Charles Phillips the white and the black should do it under the leadership of the former, and it must be the Anglican version of Christianity that should be spread. In the view of the group led by James Johnson, J. A. Otunba Payne, R. B. Blaize and J. P. Haastrup, Africans were the best agency; but Africans were not to depart from the forms and

¹ Sermon by David Brown Vincent (later Mojola Agbebi) at the United Native African Church 20/9/1891 published in *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, 5/3/1893.

² *Lagos Times*, 9/8/1882.

formularies of the Western-established Churches. Hence the fact that they were all manacled to their various Western-established Churches, never joining the African Churches they helped to inspire. James Johnson never abandoned the Anglican Church and died a dyed-in-the-wool Anglican; Augustus Payne, who supported vigorously the formation of the Native Baptist Church in 1888, died Church-warden of Breadfruit Church, whilst J. P. Haastrup, another African Church supporter, remained a Wesleyan to death. The third group, led by those inspired by James Johnson, believed that only Africans could and should spread Christianity and make it become a lasting monument, a religion around which the affection of Africans would gather; that these African churches should discard the Western version of Christianity. Therefore from 1888 onwards they began to found independent churches, and began to evolve forms and formularies which, they hoped, would make Christianity incarnate in the indigenous milieu.

A by-product of Christianity, it was believed, was Western-style education. To this end the educated elite, who themselves lacked the means to bring about the desired revolution, expected the British Government to provide this brand of education as a matter of duty, the levels to be primary, secondary and tertiary. The syllabuses, they said, should not only have religious overtones but Christianity must be given every emphasis, for it was the only religion which "teaches the purest morality and supplies to scholars the highest motives of life, and upon which we, and we are persuaded the Government also, mainly reckon for the improvement of our country and people".¹ It is significant to note that as early as the eighties some of the educated elite recognized the necessity to have professional teachers and demanded, for secondary schools, syllabuses related to the Nigerian milieu. They demanded an education that would emphasize Africa, the Yoruba country, its natural objects, its manufactures, its language and proverbs, its customs, habits and amusements, the geography and history of the Yoruba country, reading and composition in Yoruba prose and poetry; above all, they demanded that teaching in the secondary schools be conducted in the vernacular. As early as 1881 the elite in Lagos had asked that Fourah Bay College, which had always been the property of the CMS, be taken over by the Government and developed into "the University of West Africa".² And, obviously

¹ *ibid.*

² *ibid.*, 11/5/1881.

piqued by the indifference of the British Government to their demand in this respect, a few of them attempted to found a University institution at Ebute Metta in 1896.¹

Another aspect of the vision of the educated elite—again an aspect they also saw as part of the Christianization of Nigeria—was economic development. It was not by accident that, invariably, the apostles of new and open routes for free flow of trade between the people in the interior and the coast were Christians. Outside the Niger Delta the educated elite were the big traders in Yorubaland and on the Niger. They were not just retailers but exporters and importers, veritable predecessors of the Henry Fajemirokuns and Dantatas of our own day, dealing directly with their trading partners in Europe. One could easily mention those who achieved wealth in their own right—Henry Robbin alias *Olowo of Ake*, Aderupokò Coker, J. S. Leigh, J. J. Thomas, S. H. Pearce, J. P. Haastrup and the richest of all, R. B. Blaize.

However, in contrast to Christianization about which the educated elite had theories—even though diverse theories—they shed little or no thought on the economic development of the country. They were unabashed free traders at a time their British mentors, after 1879, were turning protectionist. The educated elite did not talk of monopolizing trade in the way they were of monopolizing the spread of the gospel; they were never opposed in principle to participation by Europeans. It would appear that, before 1887, when their white competitors began to persuade British industrialists to stop taking orders from the *Saro* businessmen, they were so sure of themselves that they could outcompete with the white. It was not that they had enormous capital, nor that they organized themselves into companies. Their sense of security was in the knowledge of their fellow Nigerian clients, in a situation in which the African middlemen system was still the most sensible mode of trade and in which discriminating alien banks had not been founded.² None of the educated elite spoke of going into production or manufacturing; none considered developing the inventive genius of handcraftsmen. The emphasis was on distributive trade, as far as imports were concerned, and collection of primary produce for export.

Quite naturally the educated elite were political animals and many had vision of the Nigerian State they would wish to see evolve. In the belief that Britain was a Christian State they wished for a Nigerian Christian State with the following ingredients—an administration

¹ *Egba Archives* (Ake, Abẹkuta) "The Lagos Literary and Industrial Institute" dated 25/5/1896.

² The first, Sir Alfred Lewis Jones' Bank of British West Africa, was not founded till 1891.

that would be manned and guided by the educated elite; if traditional rulers were to be recognized at all—and only a few of them ever spoke favourably of these so-called natural rulers before 1900—they would play a very subsidiary role; the leaders must be highly literate, and operate through the legislative council, which was to become a House of Assembly or Representatives; only the educated elite should be electors and members of such a House. They had no modicum of thought for the unlettered masses. They were all happy to be under the British flag in Lagos as “British subjects”, and they looked forward to the day when the government of Nigeria would be transferred to them. They recognized only one monarch: Queen Victoria, about whom they were very sentimental, practically all the leaders of the educated elite regarding it the greatest honour to be received by the Queen.

It was in their attitude to the rest of the country outside Lagos Colony that the educated elite were mostly divided. The few, led by James Johnson who had never liked the idea of the British installing themselves in any part of the country, were critical of the British occupation of Lagos and preached the doctrine of the sanctity of indigenous polities. They did not want any part of Nigeria absorbed into the British empire as such. All they wanted was that the British use what they described as “moral influence” to persuade the interior peoples to keep open the trade routes, accept missionaries or even accept British “Residents” to live among them. The group, the most deluded of the educated elite, was to be cruelly disappointed in the scramble era when the British bayonet smashed unethically one kingdom after another. Another group—the larger and more pragmatic group—looked forward to a British-created Nigeria. They had no particle of respect for the traditional polities and had since the middle of the nineteenth century—when imperial hawks had not yet appeared in Britain—been anxious to have the British subjugate Nigerian rulers and peoples who seemed an obstacle to the triumph of “Christianity, Commerce and Civilization”. Perhaps the most important of these unabated anglophile hawks, incidentally all missionaries, were: Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther, Charles Phillips in Ondo, J. C. Taylor in Onitsha, Henry Johnson on the Lower Niger. A third group hovered between the two groups just mentioned. In their heart of hearts, ideally, they did not want any alien rule—British or otherwise. However, as they saw European powers scrambling for influence—in Old Calabar as early as 1848—on the Niger and in Yorubaland in the eighties, they became frightened. For them it was not just a

question of Hobson's choice. It was that, of the two evils the much better was the British, for whom there existed already a favourable disposition in the anglicised elite. When therefore between 1880 and 1891 there was threat of French influence among the Egba the educated Egba in Lagos had no qualms in persuading the unlettered rulers in Abeokuta to pronounce in favour of the British.

In the meantime all the elite, irrespective of their political instincts, were already mentally, religiously and culturally part of the British empire. They had all originally accepted without questioning the Western version of Christianity, had adopted European names in favour of African ones, donned European dress, regarded with reverence—as many of us still do today—the language which Shakespeare spoke as the only language worth speaking. It may sound amusing to us today—but it should not so sound—that the educated elite in the nineteenth century were fond of wearing European costumes made of winter stuffs all day, even during the dry season. And whilst the body was smarting under the heat, brandy, whisky and Old Tom were being taken in excess, in order, as they boasted, to make "Heat expel heat".¹

The conquest of the educated elite by Western Civilization can be amply illustrated, but one might mention two areas only in respect of which the white man's conquest is yet to be fully repelled. Converts were given alien names by the white foreigners, names which remind one of similar names given to the American negroes by their masters during their enslavement. Until the last decade of the nineteenth century none of the elite saw any wrong in their alien names, sometimes chosen because they were alliterative, or polysyllabic or hyphenated. A few examples: James Johnson, Richard Beale Blaize, Charles Joseph George, Joseph Pythagoras Haastrup, Joshua Blackall Benjamin, John Augustus Payne, Henry Rawlinson Carr, David Brown Vincent, Jacob Henry Samuel and James Pinson Labulo Davies; Ebenezer Ephraim Collins-Tella Adebisi, Michael Thomas Euler-Ajayi.

The mental and cultural enslavement which this wearing and parading of alien names implied was demonstrated in respect of freemasonry. Although traditional freemasonry institutions like *Oşugbo*, *Ogboni*, *Adamuorisha* and *Egbo* were there, the craze was for the alien masonic lodges in which, with only very few exceptions, the elite revelled. Hence the impressive numerical growth of freemasonry institution between 1868 and 1906. The following have been identified:

¹ *Lagos Standard*, 28/2/1906. "A General History of the Yoruba Country" by A Yoruba Historian.

1. Lagos Masonic Lodge No. 1171—founded in 1868 at Bamgboṣe Street of which in 1888 J. B. Benjamin of the *Lagos Observer* was Secretary and J. A. Ọtunba Payne, Worshipful Master.
2. The Ancient Order of Foresters "Fount of Hope" No. 7789 (members included Rev. A. W. Howells & Rev. S. A. Coker). By 1891 J. A. Ọtunba Payne was the Most Worthy Chief Ranger.
3. St John's Lodge No. 2668 had come into existence by 1898 and had as members Herbert Macaulay, Ademuyiwa Haastrup and C. J. George.
4. Rose of Sharon Lodge—a branch of which was founded in Abẹkuta in 1898. Membership included Dr Oriṣadipe Ọbasa, Dr Oguntọla Sapara and the Rev. E. W. Euba.
5. "Lily of Valley" Lodge No. 1850 of the National United Order of Free Gardeners.
6. The West African Psychical Institute 12 April 1901.
7. The Loyal Order of Ancient Shepherds A. U. St George's Lodge No. 2605.

So enchanted with foreign institutions were the educated elite that the two attempts made in 1874 by Aderupọkọ Coker in Abẹkuta and in 1900 by T. A. J. Ogunbiyi in Lagos to persuade the educated elite to patronize a reformed and Christianized Ogboni were discouraged. It was not until the colonial era had advanced—and even then in the teeth of opposition by several elite patrons of the white man's freemasonry—that Ogunbiyi succeeded in the establishment of the "Christian Ogboni Society" later christened Reformed Ogboni Fraternity.¹

By the last decade of the nineteenth century the leaders of thought of the educated elite had begun to congratulate themselves on the rate at which in Church, in State, in commerce and in the professions their number was increasing. They had begun to see themselves as constituting the nucleus of the society on the path of modernization—technocrats, journalists, legislators, lawyers, pastors and teachers, auctioneers, medical doctors and educationists. They had begun to acquire euphoric feelings, gratified that they had proved the equal of the white man, in some respects superior to the white man in contemporary West Africa. Somehow, they believed, their hope and aspirations for transformation of Nigeria to their dreamland would be fulfilled.

¹ This was after 1934. It is now popular among the top educated elite.

But the educated elite were singing their *nunc dimittis* too prematurely, falsely believing that they were secure. They were thinking as if themselves only constituted society, as if there were no other classes, far more powerful than themselves, with interests and aspirations inherently in conflict to their own. The facts of the situation were that no other group welcomed their emergence, or recognized their pretensions, or saw them through their self-selected spectacles; that the atmosphere in which they were dreaming was hardly congenial to fulfilment of any part of their dream; that none of their wishes or programmes was endorsed by the other sets of people with whom they had to reckon. Consequently they became objects of attacks, ridicule, hatred and oppression. Of attacks by pseudo-anthropologists and secular officers; of ridicule and pity by their missionary mentors; of hatred by unlettered rulers and peoples who saw them as fifth columnists and knight-errants of British imperialism; of oppression by the white rulers in Church and State.

First to denounce the educated elite were the founders of the Anthropological Institute of London who were very much amused by their claims, articulateness and desire to be put on the same plane as Europeans. It seemed to the pseudo-anthropologists, some founding members of which knew the West African scene very well, that the greatest mistake of the white man was his attempt to educate the allegedly ineducable negro; to europeanize and christianize the African. They sincerely believed that the African was simply ineducable, biologically inferior to the white, incapable of understanding, how much apply in his life, the tenets of the Christian faith. Using data provided by negrophobe R. F. Burton, T. J. Hutchinson and Winwood Reade, Dr Hunt, the first President of the Institute, declared in a paper read on 17 November 1863 entitled: "On the Negro's place in History":

The assertion that the negro only requires an opportunity for becoming civilised, is disproved by history. . . Not only has the Negro Race never civilised itself, but it has never accepted civilisation. . . With the Negro, as with other races of man, it has been found that the children are precocious: but that no advance in education can be made after they arrive at the age of maturity, they still continue mentally children. It is apparently of little consequence what amount of education they receive, the same result nearly always follows, the reflective faculties hardly appear to be at all developed. . . From the most remote antiquity the Negro Race seems to have been what it now is. We may

be pretty sure that the Negro has been without a progressive history, and that Negroes have been for thousands of years the uncivilised race which they are at this moment.¹

Such doctrinaire evaluation of the negro, and in particular of the educated elite, was endorsed by the overwhelming majority of secular commentators on Africans. But special epithets were reserved for the educated African as being infinitely inferior to his uncontaminated unlettered countryman. The common-place idea was that Africans could be improved by Islam only; that Christianity was beyond the understanding of the negro. Said H. H. Johnston who loved to quote the Nigerian coast 'Christians' as his example;

The savage, with his low-grade mind, is not capable of holding rightly the abstruse dogmas of the Christian faith. He will instinctively seize on all that is puerile, superstitious, or fantastic with which successive generations of Europeans have coated and clogged the simple, indisputable principles enunciated by the Messiah . . . The Negro will greedily catch at the faith tendered to him; the difficulty comes in when he is expected to accompany it by works . . . But it too often happens that while the Negro rapidly masters the rule and regulations, so to speak, of the Christian religion he still continues to be gross, immoral, dishonest, and deceitful.²

Others who would be classified as anthropologically-minded observers were more than disgusted by the existence of the educated elite. Thus A. B. Ellis said that education merely made the elite "better swindlers of their countrymen".³ Said Mary Kingsley: "The missionary-made man is the curse of the coast". They were "skilful forgers" and "unmitigated liars".⁴ In the words of Joseph Thomson, the Nigerian Christian was "... a mere jackdaw tricked out in peacock feathers".⁵ Prejudiced attacks on the educated elite as hybrids was to continue far into the colonial period, as they were to be the pet theme of writers of African literature like Joyce Cary, Chinua Achebe, Okafor-Omali, T. M. Aluko and Wole Soyinka.

Far more devastating for the educated elite was the fact that within a generation their producers had become disillusioned with them. Although Afro-philés in Europe and mission headquarters at first hailed their emergence and pronounced the view that the educated elite would be the future leaders of Africa, they were to retract such

¹ *Memoirs Read before the Anthropological Society of London 1862-4*, London, 1965, Vol. I, p. 27.
 Winwood Reade, *Savage Africa*, London, 1863, Chapter 36. T. J. Hutchinson, *Ten Years' Wanderings*

Among the Ethiopians, London, 1861, pp. 16-17; 33-35.

² H. H. Johnston, "Are our Foreign Missions a Success?" *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 45, 1888, p. 482.

³ A. B. Ellis, *The Land of Fetish*, London, 1883, pp. 122-123.

⁴ Mary Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa*, London 1897, pp. 658-662.

⁵ Joseph Thomson, "Mohammadanism in Central Africa", *Contemporary Review*, December 1886, p. 881.

views before the end of the century, more or less endorsing the view of the secular observers that genuine Christians could not be produced overnight. As a Church organ in Britain put it blatantly in 1890: "the more educated classes, while boasting much of their Christianity, manifest little of the spirit of Christ...We have perhaps not only been wise and faithful parents. We may have boasted of our offspring too loudly. We may have petted it too much. We have been too indulgent with them".¹ Indeed the disillusionment of the missionaries in Nigeria with the educated elite had begun much earlier, not because the missionaries were better professors of the Christian faith but because they were frightened that the *Saro* were becoming more of competitors than wards. As many of them were not as literate as their African colleagues before 1885, the former began to adopt the self-preservation strategy of presenting themselves as spokesmen of the unlettered Christians. Thus in the Niger the *Saro* were dislodged because they were "black Englishmen" and therefore unqualified to speak as authentic spokesmen of Africans. And it should be emphasized that, until the eighties there were in Nigeria *Saro* pastors, teachers and civil servants, better educated than their white counterparts. The leadership role of Archdeacons Henry Johnson and D. C. Crowther made them objects of special hatred by white missionaries.² Henry Townsend openly sought to discredit the Crowther family in Abẹokuta purely for political reasons: because of the stature of the Crowther family which, he felt, was undermining his own. And there were the undisputed and undisputable leadership claims of 'Holy' Johnson over the white missionaries, a fact which made the latter have special hatred for him!

Far more alarming to the missionaries was that some leaders of thought were advocating a dog-in-the-manger policy, dreaming of a Nigeria in which white missionaries would be excluded as propagators of the gospel and leaders of the Church. True Christianity, a Christianity incarnate in the indigenous milieu, these educated elite thought and said, could be disseminated by Africans only. They were speaking of an African Church that would cast to the devil sectarianism and the forms and formularies which the Church had acquired in the white man's society. In the State, too, the educated elite believed that the civil service, including the top posts, was primarily for them not for Anglo-Saxons. Several missionaries were further angered by the displeasure expressed by some of the educated elite with the imperial

¹ *Church Missionary Intelligencer*, 1890, p. 681.

² CMS G3/A2/01 Henry Johnson to Hutchinson 31/3/1881.

annexationist tendencies of the Lagos Government. Finally, ethnocentric missionaries were irritated by the interest which the elite began to have in their culture, an interest that they saw clearly would lead logically to clamour for, and establishment of, African Churches.

Bewildered by the "Africa for the Africans" slogan and vision of the leaders of thought, the missionaries were very quick in defending their interests. The elite were labelled as ingrates and infants who wished to run before they could toddle. Many missionaries were genuinely convinced that the educated elite were most unsuitable to spread Christianity, except under European direction. It seemed preposterous to them that Christianity could be divorced from Western culture and that nothing but syncretism would follow any departure from the Western edition of Christianity! How could the elite see themselves as Christians when they would not eat or walk with their wives, some of the missionaries asked?¹ As late as 1911 a Qua Ibo missionary was genuinely shocked at the suggestion that indigenous forms of dancing could be wholesome and innocent; that Christian hymns sung to African music could turn such dances into innocent amusement. Such a thing, he said, would be "covering the heathen with a cloak of Christianity". He declared:

Let us, for example, take one of our Hymns and wed it to the music used in these dances. Now, we say, everything objectionable has been removed, let the Christians sing and play amongst themselves. They come out in the moonlight, the drum begins to beat out the old melody, the old tune is sung to new words. I venture to say that before those Christians play two minutes their minds and hearts are back to their unregenerate days: it could not possibly be otherwise. Then begins that compromise with Sin and Satan that is so deadly in its effects on all Christian life, stunting the growth and impeding all further development . . . I do not think the picture is overdrawn: we have the native with all his peculiar superstitions ingrained in his very fibre, unaccustomed to restraint of any kind, moral sense dulled from infancy, and with nothing in his surroundings to stimulate any higher instincts he may have.²

The greatest aversion for the *Saro* was nurtured by the indigenous society into which they had intruded. In their reaction society was divided into two. There were rulers and people whose initial reaction was to welcome back their kith and kin, prepared to allow them to live separately. On the other hand were those who from the beginning regarded the educated elite as outcasts, unfit to be absorbed back into society, veritable polluters of indigenous society. With respect to the

¹ CMS *Brooke Papers*, Diary F4/7 part 2 Entry for 1 April 1889. CMS G3/A3/05 J. S. Hill to Archbishop 20 December 1892.

² NAI RP2/3 Westgarth, "The Attitude of the Church to Native Customs", p. 61.

former the major centre was Abẹkuta, capital of the Ẹgba, though a few settled in Ibadan, Oyo and Old Calabar. However in Abẹkuta and Old Calabar where the *Saro* attempted to influence the course of history the Ẹgba and Efik ultimately regretted that the *Saro* had ever been allowed back into society and the desire to have them expelled like a jigger was very strong indeed. In Lagos, another area where they settled in very large number, they were imposed on the latter by the British bayonet.

The point should be emphasized that in all the towns where they were admitted, the *Saro* were treated like a separate class, an aberration, that should not be integrated in society. In Abẹkuta where they were among their kith and kin they were more or less segregated and although their services were utilized in relations with the British, they were not accepted into full citizenship. Perhaps the best illustration was the failure of G. W. Johnson and other educated elite to form among the Ẹgba Board of Management with the aim of turning the Alake into a British-model constitutional monarchy and of instituting a kind of civil service and ministerial form of government. Hatred for the *Saro* in Abẹkuta increased in proportion to the annoyance created by the Lagos Government. From 1861, when the British Government forcibly took Lagos, the Ẹgba began to wonder whether the *Saro* were not a danger after all—an evil to be avoided. And although they were not expelled in 1867 the demand for their expulsion—of all *Saro* and Christian adherents—was to come persistently in 1891.

In no other part of Yorubaland were the elite in any significant number. As mentioned earlier the Oyo Yoruba settled mostly in Lagos, whilst those of them in Ibadan and Oyo were very small indeed, ignored or treated with contempt. Lagos was the centre of operation of the Ijẹsha, the Ekiti and the Ijebu *Saro*. Perhaps it was not that the Ijẹsha and Ekiti were not wanted back in their fatherland but, judging from the fact that they remained in Lagos after the end of the Kiriji war, it is not clear whether they would have liked to abandon Lagos for their fatherland, so remote and so out of touch with the forces of Western civilization. After the war the Ekiti *Saro* wirepullers retired to the haven of Lagos, where they claimed that they were “British subjects” rather than Ekiti citizens.

In those parts of Southern Nigeria and the Lower Niger to which the educated elite intruded themselves, nowhere were they accepted as leaders; nowhere was their vision of ‘New Africa’ endorsed. At best they were squeezed for what they were worth. Thus in Egbaland the economic advantages of British influence and political power with which the Ẹgba neutralized the imperial ambitions of the Dahomians, Ibadan and

Ijebu were clearly appreciated. But on each occasion that the educated elite wanted to pretend that they could influence the chiefs politically or socially the *Saro* were made to suffer for their pretensions. Thus Henry Robbin who affected to believe that he was in control of the Alakeship trembled in 1879 as the Egbas threatened his life and pronounced him an enemy of the Egbas kingdom. Thus in 1881 the Owu publicly flogged G. W. Johnson for assuming that he was an important person. Thus in 1888 the Egbas rulers brushed aside the pro-British pleas of J. S. Leigh and J. O. George, and went ahead to sign a treaty according to which Egbaland was to become a French Protectorate.¹ Thus in January, April and June 1891 the Egbas authorities ordered that all *Saro* and Christians should leave Egbaland for ever. In Ibadan the rulers went on manipulating Samuel Johnson and Daniel Olubi, commanding them to put their interests to the Lagos Government—open routes to Lagos in particular—and offers of alliance with the British allies against the Ijebu and Egbas. Indeed, at a time that the social effects of the Kiriji war were so bad on Ibadan the chiefs were not reluctant to prostrate to Samuel Johnson, begging him to persuade the British to intervene. But when in 1892 the Ijebu authorities asked that Daniel Olubi's head was required to make it possible for Ibadan to allow ammunition to be passed on to the war camp in Offa the war chiefs were spontaneously willing to lop off his head!²

Particularly interesting was the experience of Charles Phillips in Ondo. This dedicated Anglican ecclesiastic, who was to spend himself on the Ondo for thirty years and was the first advocate of modernization for Eastern Yorubaland, was valued by the Ondo for purely selfish political reasons. With his presence they believed that the Ife imperialists who had seized and occupied Ondoland in Okeigbo earlier in the century and had contributed to the woes of Ondos, would be unable to gobble them up. Through Charles Phillips, they believed, the British Government in Lagos would help them dislodge the Ife from Ondoland. But they were not a bit interested in his personal welfare or in the white man's religion—as Christianity seemed to them—about which he was talking. To Charles Phillip's chagrin, when starvation threatened him in December 1878 no one would show him ordinary hospitality by offering him food. Rather they eagerly bought his household materials, including his wife's trinkets and the caps into which she converted her dress! Stung beyond words, he discovered that he had been living in a world of illusions about the ratings of him by the Ondo. When smallpox

¹ CMS G3/A2/05 J. B. Wood to Lang 25/6/1888 Society of African Mission Archives, Rome. *Private File of J. B. Chausse*. J. B. Chausse to Trappiste 29/12/1888.

² CMS G3/A2/06 Harding to Lang 11/4/1892.

descended on the Ondo in 1880, the people were convinced that it was an affliction from the gods who had been offended by the presence of Charles Phillips and his mission in their country. Nor was that the end of his humiliation. For not only did the Ondo ward off his interference about the annual human sacrifice to *Oramafe* but they publicly scolded him as "the public enemy of the Ondos" on 25 January 1882 because he was the spy of the Lagos Government, reporting to the latter what they regarded as absolutely indispensable national event. As the gospel seeds fell more and more on stony ground Phillips became disillusioned. "I can have no more confidence in the Ondo authorities", he recorded, "and I feel that all endeavours to enlighten or benefit them must prove useless . . . until they are forced to a better state of mind by some heavy national calamity or Divine Judgment".¹

In the Lower Niger the experience of the educated elite was not different. In the view of the Igbo rulers they were fit only for plundering. Although Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther thought he was qualified to pontificate on the religious, social and political needs of the country, including the Sokoto Caliphate, he was not worth much in the eyes of the Delta chiefs. Jaja described him as "a bad man". Bonny chiefs saw him as a wrecker of their society who incited their slaves against them to the point that, in the name of Christianity, their slaves would not run errands on Sundays. In the eye of his Igarra captor, who turned him to a prisoner, Bishop Crowther was a nobody and the latter was lucky that in his escape bid the arrow intended to send him to the other world fell on an unintended humanitarian white victim!² In Yimaha on the Benue and other places on the Lower Niger, physical punishment, or even death, was the lot of any *Saro* who dared to resist plundering by the rulers; they were regarded as disturbers of society. In areas controlled by the Muslim rulers, the educated elite were not foolhardy to attempt to preach among the muslims who regarded them as infidels.

But the insuperable opposition to them by their white detractors or rivals and indigenious society apart, the educated elite were a problem to themselves. There were elements of weakness in them and they exhibited characteristics which patently undermined their never concerted, enfeebled and uncoordinated effort. Lacking a common sense of purpose, they worked independently of, when not against, one another. And whenever they agreed on a common goal

¹ CMS G3/A2/02 Charles Phillips to Wood 23/2/1882.

² His captor was Abokko, ruler of Gbebe. The event occurred in 1867. Mr Fell, British Consul at Lokoja, who arranged Crowther's escape was killed in the process. See F. Dean Walker *The Romance of the Black River*, London 1930, pp. 137-139.

on any issue they tended to disagree on the means or mode of achieving such a goal. Until too late they did not see themselves as they really were in relation to their white mentors and indigenous community.

Although the educated elite set much store by themselves and believed they were superior to the unlettered masses, thinking of, and seeing, themselves exclusively in terms of their leadership role in Church and State, they were deluded hybrids throughout the nineteenth century; hybrids in the cultural and sociological sense that whilst they were black in their skin, with pure Negro blood, they were superficially and artificially white in their cultural and social ambitions. Deluded that they were culturally and socially Anglo-Saxons, they saw themselves as the kings of Nigeria on whom the history of the country should be about from the middle of the nineteenth century, a delusion that has persisted unto this day and an error that has been prejudicially endorsed by Nigerian historiography.

The essence of the matter is that whilst the educated elite could validly claim superiority in literary affairs they were inferior to the rest of indigenous society in some moral and social matters. They never have been extraordinary people genetically, a new race of super-Nigerians. By and large they were ordinary human beings, in some cases more ordinary than unlettered members of society. Literacy and exposure to the white man's world did not refine their human nature; on the contrary it would seem to have devalued it in moral matters *vis a vis* the human nature of the unlettered. The deluded hybrids exhibited more or less the follies and foibles found in every human society in all cultures, climes and in all ages. Thus, in spite of their profession of the Christian faith, they did not introduce any new virtues or superior moral values into Nigeria. They quarrelled endlessly, sometimes with passion, and not frequently on idealism but largely for personal reasons; they envied one another and found it invariably impossible to exhibit team spirit. In a sense they were the vanguard of moral pollution in Nigeria. The records emphasize in bold relief that sexual immorality began among them on a scale quite alarming, leaving question marks on the quality of life and moral tone of many of the Church leaders.¹ A full-scale Commission of Inquiry in the first decade of this century revealed that they were the biggest patrons of "fire-water", that is spirited alcohol in

¹ Practically all Christian missions had to deal with problems of sexual lapses among African agents in the second half of the nineteenth century. Even on non-sexual moral matters, educated elite leaders were found wanting. Perhaps the most startling example of *Saro* immorality was the Onitsha murder case. See Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*, Oxford 1962, p. 434.

Nigeria and the more inebriate members of society.¹ It was they who introduced division into families on religious and cultural grounds. They began to display the vice of selfishness in their narrow, white man's conception of the family, thereby failing to be their brother's keeper—a trait that has gone deeper with this class today.

A few words about some distinctive characterization of the nineteenth century educated elite. They were a colourful group of individuals, markedly varied in their character in ways that added humour and liveliness to Nigerian history. Thus there was G. W. Johnson, a tailor turned flute-player in a British ship, who settled in Abẹkuta in 1865 and spent the remaining thirty-five years of his life in political buffoonery. Or take King George Pepple of Bonny who was happiest whenever he was in London, denouncing with relish the customs and institutions of the Ijọ.² Or take the Ijẹsha Frederick Haastrup, an active member of the Ijẹsha Association who helped to send arms, to Ijẹsha warriors in the Kiriji war, ascended the throne in 1896 as the first educated Ọba in Yorubaland but who went on flogging his wives. Or imagine Isaac Oluwọle, taciturn, vivaciously proud that his wife was trained in England (a "been to") and who went on worshipping the white man's dress as suitable to Nigerians as he was to worship the Anglican Prayer Book for the rest of his life. Or J. P. Haastrup, a semi-Ijẹsha, semi-Ijẹbu Rẹmọ plebian who ascribed to himself a royal pedigree and strove all his life to inflate his importance. Or "Half Bishop" Charles Phillips, a sincere believer in the magical superiority of the white man. Take P. J. Meffre, an Ifa priest and Ijẹsha immigrant from Brazil who turned Christian and saw Christian theology in Ifa Odus. Or Gurejẹ Thompson who planted himself in the Ekitiparapọ camp and whose hatred for the Ibadan was so pathological that he encouraged the Ekitiparapọ to make their war of liberation a do-or-die matter³. Or consider Mọjọla Agbebi whose ascetism extended to the point of living on parched corn, would neither drink nor smoke nor baptize anyone seeking membership of his Church who had ever taken alcohol or pork. Of course there was James Johnson whose holiness imposed awe around him; there was Henry Carr, every inch an intellectual, living in a society overwhelmingly non-intellectual. Last but not the least consider King Eyo Honesty VII of Creek Town whose ambition was

¹ Cd 4906 *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Liquor Trade in South Nigeria*, Part I. Cd. 4907 Part II, *Minutes of Evidence*.

² I.U.L. *The Fombo Papers*, See in particular his speech at the Albion of a dinner given in his honour by the city of London School committee 26 July 1878.

³ I.U.L. *Reverend Daniel Olubi's Diaries*, Entry for 27 September 1884.

to govern the Efiks according to "Divine Law" in the Nehemiah fashion and died in 1892 sorrowing that Britain did not take up Efikland as a Crown Colony.¹

Apart from the colourfulness and new forms of humour they introduced into Nigerian society, the educated elite were ruggedly individualistic, far more than was possible in the indigenous society. Their idiosyncrasies came into greater and greater prominence, partly because they were small in number and partly because their response to the Western world varied. One just has to mention the leaders of the educated elite, to perceive that they did not have similar or same views on any single issue, besides the belief that Christianity was the best religion for Nigeria. Thus in his spiritual and other-worldly contemplations and holiness James Johnson was a class by himself, so alone in this respect that he had admirers only, no followers, to the extent that till today society has not produced another like him. His view about the Christian Nigerian was too platonic: he censured every human being he encountered, black and white, and far away human beings in Italy, Europe, Russia and South Africa whose behaviour he judged to be out of tune with Christianity, the religion by which he assessed all men.² There was Mojola Agbebi with his combative diction which he used to fight on behalf of Africa's cultural heritage with a passion unmatched by no other person in his age and ever since. Perpetually suffering from pecuniary problems, perpetually fighting with others, perpetually changing denomination, he diffused his energies in poetry, journalism, education, oratorical lectures and, above all, pastoring. Or take guileless Samuel Ajayi Crowther with his simplicity, his genuine anxiety to see the British flag waving over Nigeria, his conviction that the English had done so much for him and his family that he instructed members of his family that they should never complain about any white man. Or consider Captain J. P. L. Davies who did not know the part of Nigeria he came from, finally settled in Lagos, became prosperous for a short time, then went bankrupt and ended up as one of the pioneers of cocoa farming in Nigeria. Or take C. J. George who earned the nickname "Pacific" because he would never argue on any issue, nor venture to initiate or clamour for innovation. Or Dr Henry R. Carr, the philosopher ensconced on the olympian height, cultivating his mind through the thousands of books in which he found solace and consolation, serenity of mind and unstinted pleasure, in a state of war

¹ Hugh Goldie, *Memoir of King Eyo VII of Old Calabar*, 1894, pp. 49-50.

² E. A. Ayandele, *Holy Johnson*, (Pioneer of African Nationalism 1836-1917) Frank Cass 1970.

with the Nigerian society in which he found himself—that in which for the majority of people the material—what he described as “worthless pleasures”—was more important than the spiritual.

The individualism of the educated elite would have been a good thing were it not a jarring one. Unlike in the indigenous society where individualism was healthy, in the sense that it integrated the individual in the corporate unity, the individualism of the educated elite made the society they were creating ever more atomistic. There was a community of individuals that never succeeded in nucleating into small groups, how much less evolve into one single society with corporate attributes.

One cannot, therefore, talk of the educated elite being a corporate group in which one can of corporate units within indigenous society like age-grades, religious groups or guilds. Their individualistic and varying response to Christianity and Western culture tells the tale. Not only were they divided by denominational loyalties; they were divided as well by personal rivalries and tribal affinities. There was hardly any issue on which they had a consensus. A few examples will suffice. For *Mojola Agbebi* native songs, sung to native tunes, to the total exclusion of alien music, was crucially important; for *Herbert Macaulay* and the founders of the *Philharmonic Club* and *Melodramatic Club*, Lagos, it was alien songs sung to alien tunes that should flourish in Nigeria. For *Mojola Agbebi* and *Ogunṭola Sapara* national dress was the most sensible attire for Nigerians and was as well an emblem of their national identity; but for *Bishops Ajayi Crowther* and *Isaac Oluwole* neither of whom would experiment with native dress, European dress was no less suitable for Nigerians than for the white, a physical evidence of their mutation from the ‘pagan’ to the Christian. *Mojola Agbebi* saw polygamy in Nigeria as creating a much better moral standard than the monogamy being introduced by the elite in contemporary society; *James Johnson* believed that it was not a basic evil, an original sin, and that the Church should learn to live with it until economic forces brought about the supposed ideal of monogamy; for *Samuel Ajayi Crowther*, however, polygamy was an original sin, even when he could not adduce scriptural or philosophical or scientific reasons for his credo. For *I. H. Willoughby*, an *Oyo Yoruba*, the polygamist was “an animal of sensuality” who “has no mind left for his Saviour, Redeemer, and Lord and Master”;¹ for *Henry Carr*—and that in spite of his barren wife—monogamy was the ideal that should ultimately prevail in Nigeria. For the majority

¹ *I. H. Willoughby, Polygamy in West Africa*, Reading 1887, pp. 6–7.

of the leaders of the so-called African Churches, polygamy had scriptural and moral sanctions, was rational and an instrument for dispensation of social justice. Where James Johnson and Mojola Agbebi extolled the virtues of Nigeria's cultural heritage, and saw unlettered Nigerians as superior to the white in some respects, Henry Johnson dismissed the latter as "savages".¹

Given the clash of personalities that prevails even in homogeneous communities, such a conglomerate of individuals as the nineteenth century educated elite could hardly be expected to concert their effort, become a well-organized group, achieve common goals and constitute the nucleus of a nation. Little wonder that the leaders, each of whom was convinced his views or ideals were worth fighting for, received little or no support or cooperation. As they lacked the capacity to combine or design commonly approved projects, the educated elite never became a movement in the nineteenth century. It was natural that the leaders who championed causes they believed to be in the interest of the group were all frustrated, hardly ever dying in harness. Captain J. P. L. Davies, the first prominent semi-Nigerian to attack British imperialism in Church and State, was singularly alone, without followers; he languished in utter oblivion. With all his oratory and personal suffering Mojola Agbebi received little encouragement, no financial support to put his ideas into practice: he died penniless, a disillusioned man. James Johnson grew sour with age, becoming more and more lonely as his advocacy of independence in Church and State sounded ever more jarring to the new generation of elite collaborators at the turn of the century. G. W. Johnson became a laughing-stock of the Egba whom he strove so much to redeem: he died unmourned and unsung. Although Henry Carr lived far into the present century, he was already by the end of the nineteenth century suffering alone the pangs of racial discrimination in the colonial civil service.

That the leaders of the deluded hybrids should be cruelly disappointed and end up in disillusionment was in the logic of the situation. In spite of their pretensions and affected belief that formal education would take them to a new world of bliss they were a pitiable group, an ill-assorted group with no discernible or definable corporate identity; they were psychopathic personalities and constituted a psychological problem. Their problem, which ourselves share in some measure, could be traced to the facts of their artificial world in Sierra Leone and the Western-style education they had received. The

¹ CMS CA3/023 Henry Johnson to Hutchinson, 14/12/1877.

artificial world of Sierra Leone Colony and the formal schools they had attended had created in them new appetites, new value-systems and new hopes that they could neither achieve nor fulfil. Their enemies were legion. First were their mentors in the Church and State which the British were creating, who could not, as rivals, endorse their hopes. Second were the unlettered rulers and masses who could not appreciate the "New Africa" values for which the deluded elite stood. It was natural that the tension produced in them by the dichotomy of their insatiable hope and what they could achieve, should affect their psyche. Their error, which we share, is that they never knew or believed that Western or formal education is not an unmixed blessing for the psyche of the African. How could they have found in the Western-style Western-oriented schools in Nigeria substitutions—psychically, emotionally or ideologically—sources of happiness or satisfaction? It is a point which apostles of Western-style education should ponder. Is it not a worse evil than we are prone to accept? Can we ourselves claim that we achieve emotional and psychical stability in the schools today, or in the country's higher institutions of learning where syllabuses—until very lately—were too much Western-oriented? Like the deluded hybrids in nineteenth century Nigeria, we could contrast ourselves with the unlettered Nigerians in the traditional milieu who found in the world of nature the sources of happiness, satisfaction and stability—who had their roots down deep in the same place where their ancestors had lived for a long time, and where they had built their lives around the rhythms of the earth and their mental stability upon the constancies of nature. Ever haunted with a sense of what they were missing in life, the *Saro* were eternally aggrieved and grieved that their appetites were never assuaged. They were never to obtain the highest posts in the Civil Service and the Church, or control the economy of the country, or have their material tastes gratified, or have Christianity flourishing successfully, or convince the white man that Nigeria was more for them than for the white, or have the best forms of schools established throughout the country. On such measures they were to spend themselves, only to discover that they were Don Quixotes charging at the windmills. Little wonder that they were irritable, ever complaining. And it would be worth the while of histo-psychologists to examine whether the beginning of hypertension and neurosis among the educated elite in Nigeria should not be traced to this period; whether the brevity of their lives—they went on dying at forties in the first decade of this century—which the deluded hybrids themselves unscientifically ascribed

to the white man's civilization¹—was not due to hypertension they inflicted upon themselves with the tempo of their dissatisfaction, the philosophy of grab-grab or the desire to supersede others; their abandonment of philosophy of contentment enshrined in the religious proverbs and sayings of uncontaminated Nigerian peoples.

Like all Nigerians today inducted in the Western-style education and exposed to the white man's cultural heritage, the *Saro* were lost selves. They had not been taught, but indoctrinated. The ideas they were forced to accept in schools and churches, in the mosque and the press, were someone else's version of the facts of religion, of legitimate aspirations, of attitudes to, and philosophy of life; of their standing in the community, the amount of honour, gain and respect they were to expect, their entire value as a human being; of their relationships to others, friendships and so on. The emphasis was—and to some extent still is—on alienation, an educational system based on the white man's milieu; the Western-style education they were receiving did not develop their innate physical and mental powers to achieve individuality. They grew from without rather than from within, by accretions from without and not generally by development from within. And as their level of attainment in the Western-style educational system was so vastly different, their understanding of the white man's world and perception of priorities for the Nigeria of their vision varied from person to person.

Hence their utter confused state, planlessness and rudderlessness. Thus for James Johnson brought up in the artificial society of Sierra Leone Colony with overdose of Christian religion, Christianity should displace Islam and African Traditional Religion in Nigeria almost in the twinkling of an eye; for Mojola Agbebi brought up in Ibadan and Lagos where Islam and African Traditional Religion were already entrenched realities, these religions could and should not be wished away; moreover Nigeria's cultural heritage was wholesome and it behoved Christianity to integrate in it. For Henry Carr, the philosopher the thing that mattered was emergence of a Nigerian society that would be founded, governed and eternally inspired by VIRTUE. Christianity was to be the instrument *via* Western-style education, the aim of which should be inculcation in pupils and students "the practice of virtue, and the right conduct of life, and manners, the

¹ *Lagos Standard*, 13/2/1907. *Lagos Weekly Record*, 23/2/1901.

We have no reason to suppose that the *Saro* had a shorter life span than other Africans, though it was probably shorter than that of middle class Europeans in Europe. See Christopher Fyfe, *op. cit.*, pp. 472, 602, 617-8 for discussion of this point.

science of improving the temper and making the heart better".¹ For over-anglicized King George Pepple of Bonny all that mattered was transformation of the Bonny kingdom into a carbon-copy of Britain and British help to extend the imperial interest of Bonny in the Delta. For "Professor" J. A. Abayomi (an Egbá from Ilugun which he had left for Sierra Leone in 1867) the Supreme Magus of the Lodge of The West African Psychical Institute, the most important thing for Nigerians was the esoteric and metaphysical material of West African peoples, the study of "the psychic laws as known by the ancients, as may be discovered in the several mystical societies of West Africa, and of studying and developing the powers latent in man".² With Moses Lijadu, an Egbá priest in Ondo, the most important programme for Nigeria was the spread of the gospel on the basis of an agrarian economy. For T. A. Ogunbiyi, one of the first educated elite from the indigenes in Lagos, the most important thing was Ogbonism as an instrument for the worship of Jehovah in the way he believed the apostles of the Bible did!

The confusion was further compounded by the priorities conceived for Nigeria by a much lower cadre educated elite who never had the privilege of secondary or formal education. Themselves were ex-domestic slaves. Thus for W. Allakura Sharpe, a Kanuri slave sold in Kano but who found freedom in Lagos in 1862, the Christianization of Nigerians north of the Niger, including the Hausa and Kanuri Muslims, was all that mattered.³ For H. Atundaolu, an Ijèsha slave redeemed in Abèkuta in 1883, Christianization of Nigerians should go hand in hand with respectful study of African Traditional Religion. For Essien Ukpabio, an ex-slave of King Eyo Honesty II of Creek Town, Christianization of Nigerians should go hand in hand with their being trained for self government by the British colonial rulers.⁴

The mental and cultural enslavement of the educated elite, mentioned earlier, did not only make nonsense of their political ambition to be independent but revealed other unsavoury aspects of their character. It is very difficult, perhaps impossible, to say how far Christianity was for them a spiritual matter, or a convenient device for attainment of social and political aspirations. What is clear is that they displayed exceptional liberality in donation to churches and that a few of them were no less spiritually inclined than contemporaries in Europe and the New World. Nevertheless, though there is no

¹ *Henry Carr* (Lectures and Speeches) collected by C. L. Gwam and edited by C. O. Taiwo, O.U.P. 1969, p. 47.

² *Lagos Weekly Record*, 15/12/1900.

³ M. M. A. W. Allakurah Sharpe to John Milum 8/9/1879.

⁴ The Reverend Esere (pseudonym) *As seen through African Eyes*, London (n.d.), p. 69.

evidence that they were ever worse than their white mentors, or the average "Christian" in contemporary world, there were aspects of their lives which would seem to reveal a contradiction between Christian prescriptions and their behaviour. For instance, although they were ex-slaves or their offspring, they were, outside Lagos, invariably slave-holders. In Abeokuta, the Egbas capital, for instance it was discovered that they were the most cruel to their slaves.¹ There and elsewhere they took with easy conscience chieftaincy titles, with rituals incompatible with the purity of their adopted religion. Certainly they were unblushing hypocrites in matters of sex, marriage, alcohol and cults. Thus although sexual immorality might have existed in Nigerian communities before the advent of European civilization, there is no doubt that it increased among the Christians and that prominent among those accused of sexual scandals were ministers of religion. It would be worth examining how far the issue of the disordered monogamy, the doctrine of the Church which the educated elite accepted formally in place of the more honest, rational and ordered polygamy of the traditional society, was responsible for the greater sexual incontinence found among the elite. It is also a fact that, in spite of the theoretical preaching against alcoholism by the Christian missions throughout the century, drinking became more general, and increasingly a symbol of social prestige, among the Christians.

More prominent is the fact that the educated elite were a bundle of contradictions over some issues, revealing clearly the different forces working on them at the same time. In one breadth, for instance, they were pan-Yoruba or pan-Nigerian or pan-African. Such an attitude was certainly compatible with the view of man enjoined by the Scriptures, with Christian doctrines of love, neighbourliness and the oneness of mankind. In some ways they were prepared to put their pan-Nigerian credo into practice by working zealously outside their ethnic areas and they spoke on behalf of the Nigerian peoples *vis-a-vis* the white intruders. However, in another breadth, they became, consciously, an instrument for the promotion of sub-tribal or ethnic chauvinism. It is, perhaps, the most important havoc that the educated elite have done to Nigeria, and it behoves us to linger on the origins of the demon that has since the sixties of this century arrived among the most literate in Nigeria—the University people.

¹ CMS CA2/056 several letters and journals from 1875 to 1880.

Practically all the leaders of the educated elite had the tribal blood in their veins. Thus Mọjọla Agbebi who decried tribalism as unchristian and propounded the following aphorism—mankind before Nigeria, Nigeria before Yorubaland, Yorubaland before Ekitiland, Ekitiland before the Agbebi family and the Agbebi family before Mọjọla Agbebi—was an active member of the Ekitiparapo, the military alliance of the Ijẹsa and Ekiti which fought the imperial yoke of Ibadan in the longest war of attrition among the Yoruba peoples in the nineteenth century.¹ Thus J. P. Haastrup who at one breadth was an evangelist among the Kru was the conscious apostle of Rẹmọism which was to splinter the Ijẹbu nation in the thirties of this century. And in order to achieve his end not only did this 'christian' leader falsify and forge history, but he used the British Government to bring about success for the Rẹmọ independence movement against the Ijẹbu Proper.² Even Samuel Ajayi Crowther cannot be absolved from being a *Saro* tribalist. His Niger Mission was dominated by this element throughout his thirty-three years' control of that mission, sufficiently a time for him to raise up indigenes and thereby remove from the Niger Mission *Saro* imperialism. In Abẹkuta, the seat of the educated elite next only to Lagos, the Egbas ministers in the Anglican Church whipped up opposition against non-Egba leaders in the nineteenth century and carried Egbaism to other parts of Yorubaland right into the thirties of this century.³

It is a paradox that the educated elite in Lagos living together in peace under the British, who would have been expected to have, and display, a liberal non-tribal disposition, became the focii of intra-tribal bitterness and fomenters of warfare. Four prominent intra-tribal organizations flourished in Lagos in the second half of the nineteenth century. One would wish to know more and more about them but the little that has survived about them is sufficient to illustrate the origins of what was ultimately to be the most baneful factor in post-independence Nigeria.

First was The *Yoruba National Association* which comprised of the educated elite from the Oyo speaking areas. What is most astonishing about this group is that although their number was small and only a handful of them returned to live in Ibadan or Oyo, or Iseyin or Ogbomosho—and many hardly knew physically their fatherland—

¹ I.U.L. His doctrine in a lecture delivered on 29 June 1883 in Lagos published in *Africa and the Gospel*. His membership of the Ekitiparapo C. O. 147/89 Ekitiparapo to Denton 13/4/1893.

² M. M. A. "Report of Ijebu Remo Division" by J. P. Haastrup 31/1/1893. C. O. 147/95 G. T. Carter to Marquis of Ripon, 22/5/1894.

³ In Lagos in the Anglican Church not until the thirties were another Yoruba group, the Ijẹbu, able to find their way to the Church leadership.

their patriotism was intense as it was dangerous. They contributed liberally for the spread of literary education and Christianity among the Oyo Yoruba, a people absolutely uninterested in the new-fangled innovations which they, the unlettered Oyo, believed were suitable for slaves only. The Yoruba National Association agitated for the opening of rivers and roads in the western half of Yorubaland, directly with the British in Lagos, not caring about inherent violation of the territorial integrity and economic interests of the Egbas and the Ijebu, the two strategically placed ethnic groups who prevented the Oyo Yoruba from having direct links with the white man in Lagos. And they did not hesitate in the least to manipulate the British rulers in Lagos for their own ends. In this respect their most pliable instrument—though he saw that the British interest was involved as well—was John Hawley Glover who, largely influenced by the dangerous Oyo Yoruba jingoists, adopted decidedly anti-Egba and anti-Ijebu policies.¹ Perhaps the most dangerous of the lot was Andrew L. Hethersett, the Government interpreter and copyist whose partisanship in favour of the Oyo Yoruba was discerned by the Awujale Adeyemiwo. Another influential member was Isaac H. Willoughby, whose hatred for the Egbas and the Ijebu was such that, on his admission, he used his position as the head of the Police to punish members of these tribes. He was influential in the persuasion of Governor J. H. Glover of Lagos to open a route to the Oyo Yoruba in 1867 through Ode Ondo in order that the Egbas and Ijebus might suffer economically. So much did he feel that the cause of the Oyo Yoruba was lost with the transfer of Glover from Lagos that he resigned his position in the Civil Service immediately after the governor's transfer was announced.² Undoubtedly the most literate of the Oyo Yoruba was Dr Obadiah Johnson, a brother of the well-known historian of the Oyo-biased *History of the Yoruba*. A great grandson of the Alafin Abiodun, he manifested his Oyo patriotism in the Anglican Church in 1887 by resenting the idea of an Ijebu or Ijesa man, 'Holy' Johnson, being made Bishop of a Yoruba diocese. Although the number of Oyo adherents to Christianity was very small, certainly smaller than that of the Egbas, he urged the location of the seat of the diocese in Oyo, asking that an Oyo man—even though there was no qualified candidate—be appointed Bishop.³ Could he have been thinking of his brother, Samuel, whose knowledge

¹ R. C. L. *Glover Papers*, Bundle 3 I. H. Willoughby to Earl of Kimberley, 30/8/1872.

² *ibid.* Unlabelled bundle. The Yoruba National Association to Pope Hennessy 20/5/1872 Bundle 10. "Native Questions Roads to Interior".

³ CMS Proceedings of the Diocesan Conference at Lagos, April 1887". in *The Church in the Yoruba Country its Needs and its Difficulties*, pp. 24-25.

of the English language was so defective and ability as a catechist so doubtful that only in the previous year the CMS had hesitated to ordain him?

There was the *Egba Association* of which J. S. Leigh and P. Martin were prominent members. As their tribal group was the most fortunate both geographically and in intellectual leadership, they did not have such grievances as the *Oyo Yoruba*. They protested against the opening of the Ondo route, a measure they rightly saw as adverse to the economic interests of their tribal group. However, their activities were confined to mediating between the rulers in Abẹokuta and the British in Lagos. When in 1888 they learned with consternation that the rulers in Abẹokuta were toying with the French, they exerted themselves to persuade the unlettered rulers to drop the French in favour of the British.

The least dangerous was the *Ijebu Society*. Unlike the others who had freedom of movement in their fatherland and were in a position to advise and influence their unlettered countrymen, the educated Ijebu had no respect or *locus standi* in Ijebuland. As far as the uncontaminated Ijebu were concerned, the educated Ijebu had ceased to be an Ijebu by becoming a Christian or a literate person. Nevertheless there were not wanting patriotic people—like James Johnson and J. A. Otunba Payne—the latter a member of the Gbelegbuwa royal family—who formed the association with the aim of introducing Christianity into Ijebuland.

Undoubtedly the most dangerous of all was the *Ijẹsha Association* which was formed as early as 1852. Aggressive in their desire to have Christianity and “Civilization” introduced into their fatherland, they were specially mortified by the terrible suffering which, even in the second half of the nineteenth century, the Ijẹsha were undergoing under the grinding heels of the Ibadan. Their capital, Ilesha, was three times sacked by Ibadan in less than twenty years and very many of them were converted into slaves. Indeed, according to contemporary witnesses, the Ijẹsha seem particularly qualified as slaves. Hence the special demand for them by other Yoruba groups, the Egun and the Itsẹkiri. Their hatred for Ibadan was very great indeed, and they were not unaware that the Ibadan rulers were opposed to the idea of Christianity spreading into Ijẹshaland. The Ijẹsha Association did not conceal its intention to foment rebellion against Ibadan, or even provide military succour. Starting with prayers and *per capita* weekly contribution of a penny, they recruited ‘pagans’ and muslims as members and declared as their objective: “the promotion of the welfare

of the Ijẹsha country in its social, commercial and political condition".¹ They did not hesitate to apply to be given military training by the British in Lagos. In the final analysis, thanks to the opening of the Ondo route, they physically transferred themselves to Itebu and Ayesan as settlers, whence they transmitted arms and ammunition to the Ekitiparapọ throughout the Kiriji war (1877-1893). By 1877, when the Kiriji war broke out, the Ijẹsha Association had merged with the Ekiti—co-sufferers of the imperial yoke of Ibadan. Nothing illustrates better the tyranny of Ibadan over the Ekiti than the boast of the Ibadan chiefs in 1885 that the Ekiti "are our wives, our yams, our palm oil".²

As if the debilitating internal weaknesses of the educated elite were not enough, they lived in a world of phantasies, demonstrating inability to appreciate other forces working in their world. They were lacking in judgment and out of focus and context. On this point the nineteenth century educated elite must be regarded as among the most self-deluding people in the history of our country.³ Even granted that they had the goodwill of their white mentors in Church and State—and goodwill was conspicuously absent—they ought to have realized that they were numerically small; that a tree does not make a forest; that a handful of lawyers, medical doctors, priests and budding businessmen could not achieve the sort of revolution they had in mind. They were very wild dreamers. Take for instance their desire for a university institution in 1881 at a time when primary education was available only to a few; when job opportunities were for clerks and only a few people were resisting the temptation to abandon the classroom for clerkship. And yet in 1896 they went on working out details about a university at Ebute Metta!

Or consider their leadership claim in, and over, a Nigeria that was not yet created—in which there were myriads of kingdoms and states—in which they had no voice and about which they had no adequate knowledge. For the Nigeria of their wish was one that could be created only at the point of the bayonet—the British bayonet was eventually to do that—and the social revolution they required could be accomplished only after centuries and would cost billions and billions of Naira. But even if the money were there and the gun could conquer the country—as it eventually did—was it possible to conquer the minds of the people? To force them to wish away their cultural heritage

¹ CMS CA2/056 James Johnson, "Annual Letter for 1876".

² CMS G3/A3/03 Wood to Lang, 19/8/1885.

³ E. A. Ayandele, "The Phenomenon of Visionary Nationalists in Pre-colonial Nigeria", in J. E. Flint & G. Williams (Ed.) *Perspectives of Empire*, Longman 1973, pp. 112-129.
Obafemi Awolowo, *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, Oxford 1947, p. 33.

in which they had faith and confidence, in place of an imported one? Could the people be expected, at a bounce, to be emotionally and psychologically reconciled to the new-fangled ideologies the educated elite were advocating? Was Christianity ever to sweep through Nigeria? Indeed, was Christianity being successful in Lagos, in spite of the British power there? Was Islam not recording greater statistical success in Lagos? Surely the deluded hybrids were committing the greatest folly a man can be capable, to sit down with a slate and pencil to plan out a new social world.

It is astonishing that the educated elite expected, against every evidence, that they would be leaders of a Nigeria not yet created; that independence was around the corner; that as late as the last decade James Johnson and Mojola Agbebi pentecostally expected that Nigerians would have political independence, following imaginary independence in Church affairs, like cause and effect; that Ethiopia would literally stretch forth her hands unto God.¹

Their continued faith in Christianity as the *open sesame* to the achievement of their vision was part of their delusion. For in general terms their white mentors in Nigeria had never been applying the tenets of this faith. For one thing the white missionaries had all the time believed in lording it over the educated elite, disapproving every independent step the elite took without the prior approval of their mentors. In Yorubaland the hatred of missionaries for James Johnson was such that one of them regretted that the Egbas did not stone him to death in 1879; in the Niger Mission the behaviour of the white missionaries towards the African agents, and in particular towards Bishop Crowther in the eighties, was anything but Christian. Among the Baptist the racist policy of missionaries like W. J. David and P. Eubank—to the point that these Americans believed that no nigger could be suitable for higher training—was clearly demonstrated to the educated elite leaders in the events that led to the founding of the Native Baptist Church. Nor were the white traders a credit to Christianity either. Not only did they unethically throw the educated elite out of the trade of their country, but the quality of their lives was very low indeed. And yet Henry Carr, James Johnson and Mojola Agbebi—to mention a few—went on conceiving of Christianity *per se* in abstract terms, rather than in relation to the behaviour of the white as “Christians” in the Nigerian context. It was not until the colonial era that the magic of abstract Christianity was removed from their thoughts; that they began to understand the imperial nature of the

¹ Mojola Agbebi in *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, 12/11/1892. Also text of speech of James Johnson at Exeter Hall 12/4/1899 reproduced in *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, 3/6/1899.

Church in Nigeria and the imperial instincts of the white missionaries. And yet by 1885 all the ingredients had been there—the white man's ecclesiastical imperialism; the white man's cultural imperialism wrapped in the songs, liturgy, theology, prayer books, ecclesiastical robes and the non-essentials that accompanied to Nigeria the European brand of Christianity; the strong desire of the white man to treat the Nigerian as a subordinate, even when the latter was superior to the former.

It is an irony that, precisely at the time the educated elite were deluding themselves that independence in Church and State was around the corner, themselves were veritable instruments for the establishment of colonial rule. Until long after the evil had been done, they would wear nothing but European clothes; they would wear nothing but the white man's names; the fountain of their ideas and vision was exactly the same as the white man's; the language they revered was the white man's; the life-style they desired to aggregate to was the white man's. Little wonder that, far into the colonial period, the educated elite in Lagos referred to themselves as "British subjects" as a mark of special distinction from the indigenes of Lagos and the people in the rest of the country. The essence of the matter is that they were culturally, and in their disposition, fifth columnists who would mentally and ideologically team up with the British invaders rather than sympathize with the unlettered masses. This was why—as will be explained in the next lecture—the educated elite—even the section that deplored the military expeditions—easily welcomed the *Pax Britannica*.

Nothing reveals more clearly the world of fantasies in which the leaders of educated elite opinion were living than the incongruity of their strong belief that Christianity was indispensable to the progress of Nigeria and the equally strong belief that Nigeria's cultural heritage should be left intact. For even if European culture had been separable from the Christianity introduced into the country, it is extremely doubtful whether Christianity *per se* can be described as being absolutely culturally neutral. Certainly it stands for a special culture, insofar as it proclaims specific moral and social laws of its own which may invalidate moral and social laws obtaining in society. It is very difficult to see how there could be a flourishing of the Christianity of the Bible in Africa and absolute intactness of Africa's cultural heritage. Little wonder that in the last years of his life Mojola Agbebi was himself in the unenviable and absurd position of defending human sacrifice, cannibalism and secret societies.

In their fool's paradise the educated elite were pretending that they understood the aims and objectives of the white mentors in Church and State; that they could identify for the white such interests; that they should assume that their interests and those of their white mentors were necessarily identical or congruent. It was the height of naivety. The essence of the matter is that the missionaries saw themselves as primarily propagating the gospel, but in their own way; that they believed that only they were the best propagators; that, in their view, such worldly objectives that the educated elite had for higher education were reprehensible, intended to move the converts away from spiritual matters and the other world; that in the clear event of Africa being scrambled for, they preferred to have their countries establish colonial rule; that they were human beings endowed with imperious and imperial instincts; that as blood is thicker than water the missionaries would unhesitatingly team up with fellow white secular officers against Nigerians; that in commercial matters they would team up with their countrymen against the educated elite.

Surely the *Saro* were suffering from invincible myopia. For it ought to have been clear to them that the Nigeria they were envisioning could have been created only by hundreds, if not thousands, of white secular and religious leaders; that economic development, in the sense of contemporary European society's, was only fully comprehended by the white rulers; that it was these white rulers only who could introduce a new form of wealth by creating the currency, a new means of exchange; that it was only the white who knew how to exploit the riches of the bowels of Nigerian soil. Incredibly shortsighted the educated elite went on deluding themselves that they had arrived in Canaan when they were deeply in bondage in Egypt; in their delusions they were perceiving only the goal, the ultimate goal, without pondering the necessary price that would have to be paid before that goal could be reached, namely ride on the backs of the white developers of the human and material resources of the country that was to become Nigeria. It was part of their delusion that the educated elite did not perceive that in 1900 they had no jot of authority over the Nigerian peoples about whom, and for whom, they were pretending to speak; that the Nigerian peoples who had not gone with them into mental or cultural or religious exile, that is who had not become enslaved to the milieu of the white man's country, had unconquerable contempt for these self-styled spokesmen of Nigerians and Africans. Evidently it required the physical capacity of the white man to pour fire and sword on the unlettered and uncontaminated

Nigerians to force the latter to accept the white man's rule as well as the programme that the educated elite were dreaming of, but which the latter had not the means to achieve.

It has to be emphasized that the unlettered and uncontaminated Nigerian peoples did not share a particle of the vision being entertained by the educated elite. For the unlettered society the ideas and styles of thought of the past were sufficient guides for conduct in the present; they were governed by the eternal yesterdays of custom and precedence. Whilst they were not averse in principle to change—society went on changing—they would approve only of changes that came from within, or outside influences that had been tried and adapted to their special needs. Their instincts were conservative, as the instincts of all human societies, recognizing with Hegel that "what exists is rational". In religious matters, for instance, it was the conviction of the uncontaminated Nigerians that the much vilified indigenous religion was the only valid religion which gave him spiritual satisfaction, emotional and psychological stability, an explanation of the world in which he was living, the mores and ethoes of the society, his moral and social responsibilities to the community. Moreover this religion gave him a real perception of Jehovah and he was fully convinced that whenever he expired, although his body would decay, his soul would go to the other world. Little wonder, then, that in the pre-colonial period, the uncontaminated free Nigerians were completely dazzled, and on some occasions irritated and mortified, that their peace should be disturbed by a band of uninvented intruders who began to preach a provoking and new-fangled so-called religion. Consequently, throughout the period under survey only slaves, that is the unprivileged in society, who found the new religion a convenient safety-valve for expression of dissatisfaction with the injustices of society, paid attention to the new religion. Of important members in society the record reveals that only three accepted the new religion in spiritual terms. These were John Owolatan Okenla of Abçokuta, Chief Samuel Idigo of Aguleri, near Onitsha, and Eyo Honesty VII, King of Creek Town from 1874 to 1892.

One may illustrate the attitude of the important members of society to Christianity with Chief Manuwa, grandfather of Sir Samuel Manuwa, our Chairman of Council. A member of the royal family of the Mahin in the south-eastern corner of the Yorubaland, he was barred from the Mahin throne because of the Salic Law obtaining in the Mahin country. However he was allowed to found his own settlement at Itebu, over which he presided. An extremely shrewd, resourceful and prepossessing personality, he exploited to the best advantage the Ondo mission which the C.M.S. had opened in 1876 under the

leadership of Charles Phillips. Manuwa made himself an effusive friend of Charles Phillips, communicated with the British in Lagos, that he was the most important ruler in south-eastern Yorubaland and encouraged educated Ijẹsha and Ekiti activists of the Ekitiparapo, to settle themselves in Itebu. He encouraged the educated elite trading between Lagos and Eastern Yorubaland to patronize the Itebu-Ondo route, himself participating in the trade and levying customs duties. Importunate with Charles Phillips that a church be erected and a school opened, he contributed to these projects and physically attended Church services. By 1885 he had sent a son, later Reverend B. I. Manuwa, Sir Samuel Manuwa's father, to the CMS Training Institution in Lagos. But with all his pro-missionary exertions Manuwa would not become a Christian adherent nor encourage any Mahin to become an apostate. By 1892 the only convert among the Mahin had relapsed to indigenous religion because no Mahin woman would degrade herself by marrying an apostate!¹

The reaction of the ordinary people to Christianity was not different: they considered conversion to the new-fangled faith a crime to their conscience and an offence to society. Thus in Oṭta, not far from Abẹkuta, where the CMS had been active for over twenty years, the reaction of the people to the opening of a new church on 24 August 1876 emphasized in bold relief that they had never been a bit interested in the tenets of the Christian faith. They attended the ceremony with the sole aim of eating. "They reckoned upon having a feast", recorded an incensed pastor, "and when they saw no covered plates or calabashes brought in, they became so impatient and noisy that it was with great difficulty that we got through the prayers and the communion service".² Indeed rather than accept the absolutely meaningless new religion, as it seemed to them, the traditionalists believed that it was the Christians who should abandon their religion for the traditional religion. Hence in Abẹkuta, the citadel of Christianity in the interior of Nigeria during this period, the Eḡba would not allow any genuine Eḡba citizen to embrace Christianity. To this end persecution of potential Christian adherents was frequent and severe. As recorded by Samuel A. Crowther, Christian missions were accused of being uncharitable because "we never gave them any person to make Oḡboni, nor to worship Ifa nor Sango etc."³

In Ibadan, though tolerated, Christian adherents were few and far between and were objects of ridicule because they did not possess the military attributes of the state. The Oni of Ifẹ announced that it

¹ CMS G3/A2/03 Wood to Lang, 14/7/1885.

² CMS CA2/077 Charles Phillips to Maser, 1/9/1876

³ CMS CA2/031 S. A. Crowther to H. Venn, 3/11/1849.

would be the worst sacrilege for a so-called missionary to come to his domain where the Yoruba believed man and religion began. In the Edo kingdom, where the *Ọba* was paramount, no Christian mission ever dreamt of moving near his domain for a long time and when in 1896 a member of the elite in the *Ọba*'s kingdom opened his mouth bigger than was expected of him, by saying that the white man would come with his religion, he was ritualistically sacrificed by the Edo.¹ In the Niger Delta, where the chiefs were convinced that Christianity might be fit for slaves only, some of the latter who carried their adherence too far had their heads smashed with impunity. Of course in the Nupe kingdom no infidel had the temerity to preach among the true believers, that is, Muslims.

Another illustration of the world of illusion in which the educated elite were revelling was their opinion about the institution of polygamy. Thus in 1887 many of their members were prepared to fabricate lies that it was the Fulani and Muslims who had introduced this institution into the Yoruba country.² They began to preach the man-made one man one wife dogma, saying that it was the law of God Himself. For the uncontaminated Nigerians polygamy did not raise a moral issue: it was the product of a society at a particular level of development. Polygamy seemed to them quite natural in a society which set much store by high moral standard, which in the name of social justice would not have an unmarried woman or countenance existence of unmarried mothers. In sincerity many chiefs pitied missionaries as inconsequential people because, as the chiefs believed, they, missionaries, were poor and low in society by having just one wife! The gap that separated the educated elite and the unlettered majority on the issue of polygamy is better imagined. And disgusting to the unlettered majority was the brazen hypocrisy of many of the elite who, though monogamists according to British law, were polygamists in practical terms.

Given the pinches of the ecclesiastical and secular imperialism of the mentors which the educated elite were suffering, it was natural that they should not live in a world of illusion for ever; that many of them began to see their mentors as they were, rather than as the deluded hybrids had thought they should be; that they should not for aye be mesmerised by Western culture. Consequently by early eighties thoughtful members of the elite began to perceive that they were rootless deluded hybrids. They began to perceive that they had been educated out of the Nigerian milieu; that they had to throw off

¹ CMS G3/A3/09 James Johnson to F. Baylis, February 1902.

² CMS *The Church in the Yoruba Country its Needs and its Difficulties*, 1887, p. 26.

the incubus of Western culture before they could be in a position to identify themselves and develop into authentic Nigerians. The ideal, they began to perceive, was that they should appropriate the best in the white man's culture but remain quintessentially Nigerian. Their formula was the Cartesian "Know Thyself". The new change in thinking was aptly put as follows by a newspaper in the last decade of the century: "The fact is patent that the rush being made by Negroes in Africa into the habits and customs of the Anglo-Saxon, is a rush to complete and utter distinction. The Negro can only survive and progress on lines laid down by local conditions of his race, climate and history . . . It is hightime that now the Negro should know that trousers and petticoats are not a test of either Christianity or civilization, and that the gauge of progress in religion and morality is not determined by the singing of psalms and pattering off of Scripture texts".¹

The thoughtful among the educated elite realized that the Western-style education they had been receiving did not develop their innate physical and mental powers to achieve individuality; that it was the imitative rather than the reflective faculties that were operating in them. They preached the doctrine of self-hatred, using strong epithets to describe themselves—"community of counterfeit Englishmen"; "mountebank exhibitionists of Western civilisation"; "a community of anglo-plated Africans"—metamorphosed specimens of the negro, cabined and dwarfed by exotic influences; "spurious species and mere turncoats", beings neither thoroughly Africans nor thoroughly Europeans; an invertebrated people; "mongrels of humanity" wallowing in "nauseating mimicry"—"acorns rather than the OAK of the great negro Africa of the future".

The important point to stress is that with such realization that they were deluded hybrids the educated elite began to be emancipated and began to preach the doctrine of African Personality. It is significant that their first admission was that they had been mis-educated and that the proper education system for them was one that would relate to the special milieu of Nigeria. Hence their advocacy that learning in school should begin with the vernacular; that the vernacular should be the language of teaching throughout the secondary school; that text-books should be designed for the special needs of Nigeria. Many of them attempted to do text-books in the vernacular. Hence in 1896, when the sponsors of The Lagos Training and Industrial Institute, a university institution, put out their scheme, the declared idea was to focus on Nigeria's cultural heritage, merely

¹ *Lagos Weekly Record*, 19/10/1895.

borrowing from the white man technology and science, that is do what this University (Ibadan) began to do when it became autonomous in 1962.

In their attempt to become independent the educated elite seized upon Christianity as the prop with which to begin. This was logical, in view of the pivotal position of this religion in their dream. Hence cultural renaissance centred on shedding off the European aspects of the versions of Christianity brought to Nigeria. Thus European and Hebrew names were cast away: David Brown Vincent became Mojola Agbebi, Edmund Macaulay became Kitoyi Ajasa, Joseph Pythagoras Haastrup became Ademuyiwa Haastrup, Jacob Henry Samuel became Adegboyega Edun. Thus many like Mojola Agbebi and Oguntola Sapara began to wear African dress. Thus the institution of marriage began to be seen in rational terms, related to the Nigerian situation and Churches were founded with the idea of making Christianity incarnate within the Nigerian milieu.

The creative result of the cultural and spiritual emancipation of the eighties and nineties was a big credit to the deluded hybrids and should be of interest to scholars. They dabbled into many fields of research. Take for instance the importance of research into the medicinal properties and curative power of the Nigerian flora stressed as early as 12 September 1883 by the *Lagos Times*. Moses Lijadu of Ondo was reputed to have conducted such research. Far more important was the attempt of "Dr" Joseph Odumosu to reduce indigenous therapeutics into writing in his *Iwe Egbogi* (2 volumes) and *Iwe Iwosan* (2 volumes), both of which were allegedly banned by the British colonial administration. No less significant for medical research were the efforts of the Reverend H. Atundaolu and Dr Mojola Agbebi in psychotherapy and hypnotism. The former abandoned evangelism when he became more and more immersed in research into traditional medicine. He set up a centre for patients in Campbell Street, Lagos, where he was Manager of the Astrological Advice, casting horoscopes and judging mental qualities, disposition and health. Mojola Agbebi became a hypnotist of international reputation. Today, in principle, our medical dons of whom this University is proud, have to invoke the spirit of Odumosu, Atundaolu and Agbebi.

Students of African literature may well find appetizing the achievement of their amateurish predecessors who wrote in the vernacular and English. Worth mentioning are the poetic compositions of Mojola Agbebi and the satirical writings of E. M. Lijadu. The Fela Şowandes and Akin Eubas might find inspiration in the original musical compositions of the Reverend Ebenezer Ephraim Collins—Tella Adebisi; scholars of religion in the works of E. M. Lijadu,

James Johnson and the Reverend E. T. Johnson who wrote with the pseudonym "Adesola". And last, but not the least, historians in the efforts of J. A. Otunba Payne, J. O. George, H. Atundaolu, Samuel Johnson and the Reverend Michael Thomas Euler-Ajayi.

The legacy left behind for us by the deluded hybrids was not only in the creative field, revealing in such early days the potential and flowering genius of Nigerians. Nor only in the consolations that University researchers should derive from the knowledge that in them we have predecessors in the founders of "The Lagos Native Research Society", founded in 1903. No less significant was their adumbration of a dynamic view of history and of Nigeria. For incongruous and inchoate as the educated elite were as a group, the thoughtful ones among them held the view that society should not be static, that it was changeable and dynamic; that the traditional society could, and should, be changed and developed in different ways. Sustained by this belief, and seeing themselves as the leaven of the Nigerian dough, they looked forward to a new kind of Nigerian and a new kind of Nigeria. Inherent in their view, that Nigerian society was changeable, is the belief in the biological and organic equality of the races. For they were convinced that the social, political and economic revolutions they were envisioning for Nigeria, in imitation of contemporary Europe, would be carried out by Nigerians ultimately, though in the process the white man was expected to help.

In my judgment such faith in the capacity of the Nigerian to achieve the desired goal is perhaps the greatest contribution of the educated elite to political thought. Indeed many were convinced that by 1880 Nigerians were already in a position to show the way to the Promised Land. It was a credo that was ever to inspire the educated elite to higher and higher ideals, an inspiration that the colonial era could not kill, to which nation-builders in all walks of life in modern Nigeria were ever to respond. In the words of Mojola Agbebi:

"They that must be free
Themselves must strike the blow."¹

The conviction that Nigerians must accomplish the task was so strong with some of the educated elite leaders that they believed that Nigeria would never experience colonial rule. Hence their indulgence in the millenarian vision, that independence in Church and State would be achieved by the end of the nineteenth century.

Inherent in the belief that Africans were biologically equal to other races was the doctrine of racism enunciated by a number of the educated elite—again another major contribution of the deluded

¹ *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, 12/11/1892.

hybrids to the history of ideas. As Mojola Agbebi put it blatantly: "The great Architect has originally 'determined the bounds of the habitation' of every race of man".¹ They believed that mankind was divided into fixed cultural and racial groups—where people preserved for ever their own unchanging physical and psychological attributes. For James Johnson this division was a divine sanction. To this end, he believed, it was a sacred duty of Africans to preserve their physiognomy with the hardihood infused into it by the indigenuous milieu, against deleterious alien influences like fire-water. For Mojola Agbebi, who was literally horrified that the U.S.A. had totally defrocked the "Africans in exile" there, of their Africanness (except their colour) Africa's cultural heritage must be preserved intact; it was the *sine qua non* of true progress and every cultural influence from outside the continent must be abhorred. Whilst in practical terms neither of them was opposed to the mixing of the races through cooperation, the ideal for the good of Africans as well as of other races they felt, was that the white man should not come to Africa at all because he was a moral, cultural and psychical danger.

The engagement of their minds in the realm of thought by repentant members of the deluded hybrids had its counterpart among those of them who did not take part in the cultural renaissance mentioned earlier. It may be added that only a very tiny minority took part in it and many prominent leaders never bothered to pay even a lip service to it. Evidently completely benumbed by European culture in the procrustean fashion, they had no will to get out of it. The fact is that the will was entirely lacking: they had turned their back on African culture—for good, they thought—and they would not return to it, no matter the evidence that they could never become Europeans. This group produced their thinkers and philosophers, who sought to philosophize away the denationalizing and dislocating features of European Civilisation. They deluded themselves that hybridization of Nigerians and the unsavoury aspects of Western civilization were nothing more than the dark before the dawn, part of the price which Nigerians must pay before they became Europeans and Nigeria another Europe.

By far the most outstanding thinker for this group was Henry Rawlinson Carr. With intellectual conviction this "black Englishman" deluded himself until his death in 1945, that the time would come when Nigerians would, in all but their skin, become Europeans; that there was no other path to true and solid progress. For, in his

1 "The West African Problem", in G. Spiller (Ed.) *Inter-Racial Problems*, London 1911, pp. 341-348.

view, there was only one valid culture in the world: this was the culture of the Europeans.¹ This culture had proven itself, producing humans who had a noble and grand conception of Man; the European was the universal and global man, his culture inoculating him with "superior ideas". It behoved Nigerians to join the ranks of humanity by integrating themselves in that culture. By doing so they would be moving away from the "primitive and archaic ideas" of the Nigerian indigenous world. Unyieldingly convinced that the Yoruba had no past, no "old civilization" comparable to that of India, he urged them to say with Sharp: "Blessed are the people without a past", so that seeing themselves as nondescripts it might be easy to "trans-figure" themselves into European.² Henry Carr believed that it was unadulterated nonsense to talk of an indigenous culture. Anyone talking such language was a spirit that wanted no change, no improvement. Nigerians should hasten to go beyond being Europeanised, they should seek to become Europeans. Clearly well-intentioned, he was convinced that he was right. And it should not be thought that Henry Carr was suffering from psychic disorder. For, as mentioned earlier, although his wife was barren he extolled the virtues of monogamy all his life and loved her in the truly Christian fashion. His message to all Nigerians who refuse to aspire to become Europeans is:

Change all around
 O those who changed not
 To think is to live
 To change is to live³

Whilst Henry Carr and his ilk began to indulge in their fancies and sterile eulogies about the European civilisation into which they thought Nigerians should dissolve, the visionary dreamers of independence and emancipation from the white man began to perceive the Sword of Damocles hanging over Nigeria. Since they were a deluded people, they were incapable of seeing that the logical result of the white man's intrusion into Nigeria was colonial rule; they were genuinely and bitterly shocked. From 1887, when Jaja was craftily whisked away from his domain to the West Indies, to the end of the century, the white man began to instal himself in Nigeria brazenly, without counting upon the deluded hybrids, brushing aside with contempt their vituperations. By 1888 the educated elite were already being shocked out of their delusion. Feeling battered, disillusioned

¹ I.U.L. *Henry Carr Papers* Note Book 81 OY 9.

² *ibid.* 049 C.

³ *ibid.*

and helpless they were already trembling at the inevitability of British take-over of Nigeria. As the scales began to fall from his eyes Mojola Agbebi, one of the most deluded hybrids in the nineteenth century, cried in anguish, denouncing the white as "murderers and whoremongers, thieves and robbers". His pathetic observation ends this lecture:

Have they not proposed to open the country with Rum and Gin and Ammunitions of War? Shall these be to the interest of the sons of the soil? . . . It seems to be the express desire of these our professed friends, in the long run, to exterminate the native inhabitants of the country. History would repeat itself, and Winwood Reade in a flight of imagination unwarranted by philanthropy, self-respect, or national honour, has let fall the following expressions relative to the future occupation of the country by the white Race.¹

¹ D. B. Vincent, *Africa and the Gospel*, p. 30.

II

COLLABORATORS

Effect should be given to this (CIVIS BRITANNICUS demand) under the special constitutional conditions of each constituent unit: so that a British citizen shall be a citizen of anyone of the political units of the British Empire in which he may happen to be residing upon the fulfilment of the legally established condition of citizenship obtaining within such particular political unit by the attainment of the same qualifications and by the performance of the self same duties. Herbert Macaulay in *Citizenship within the British Empire*.

Collaborators

The dilemma in which the deluded hybrids with instincts for self-government found themselves on the eve of the British invasion and conquest of Nigeria, arose out of the incredible delusion from which they had been suffering for more than a generation. For at no time had their mentors—missionaries, secular officers and traders—seen themselves as building a Nigerian nation-state; at no time had they seen themselves sponsoring a future Nigeria for the educated elite. We should remind ourselves of the fact that by the scramble era the educated elite had come to be regarded as insolent ingrates claiming equality with their mentors, as “bad allies”, “apt scholars of European vices and almost impenetrable to any of its virtues”.¹

Surely, the mentors contended, the pace of development should quicken, but only as a part of the evolution of the British empire which Rudyard Kipling was to enshrine in poetic terms. It was the “White Man’s Burden”. The direction at which the mentors expected their imperial instincts to fructify was clear and the educated elite ought to have read the *Mene Mene Tekel* on the wall: that the white man should direct the spread of the gospel and control the Church; that the subjugation of Nigerian peoples by the sword of steel was the divine strategy to prepare the way for the sword of the spirit; that the Union Jack should fly over Nigeria; that political leadership and control should be the prerogative of the British colonial rulers; that the civil service should be British Colonial Service with a policy of British heads and Nigerian hands; that economically Nigeria was nothing more than a part of Britain’s “undeveloped estate”.

The essence of the matter is that, even in those moments when they were employing the vocabulary of nationalists, the educated elite were, inescapably, quintessentially collaborators in the establishment of British imperialism and colonial rule in Nigeria. Thus the incessantly wagging tongue of Holy Johnson, with which this Savanarola of Nigeria from 1874 to 1917 was denouncing the white man’s assault on the moral fibre, sovereignty and territorial integrity

¹ Joseph Thomson, “Note on African Tribes of the British Empire”, *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. XVI, 1887, p. 183.

of Nigerian peoples, was only a side of him. His other side was that he was a conscious nurturer of Anglican Christianity and a vigorous exponent of Western-style education system, thereby making himself a vehicle of British ecclesiastical imperialism and a propagator of an educational system that would enslave Nigerians mentally and thereby detract from their African Personality. Thus Dr Mojola Agbebi, the phrase-making, freelance missionary, freelance journalist and a fanatical apologist of Nigeria's cultural heritage, was a conscious promoter of the notion of the British empire, at the expense of indigenous politics and rulers in Nigeria. Therefore on 20 June 1897 he arranged in his Native Baptist Church in Lagos a commemorative service to mark Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. Thus whilst James Johnson, John Augustus Otunba Payne and Joseph Pythagoras Haastrup inspired or encouraged the founding of the Native Baptist Church or the United Native African Church, none of them would taint himself with membership of such "African" Churches because the latter did not have the status and prestige of the Anglican and Wesleyan Churches!

The point being made, that the visionary "nationalists" were still mesmerized by the white man's culture, or that they ever remained in mental slavery, should be borne in mind when contemplating their successors later in the colonial period. No less important—and this point should also be remembered in respect of the post-independence elite political leaders—is the fact that the pre-colonial elite were a cowardly set of irresponsible deserters of the unlettered chiefs and masses when the supreme moment of confrontation came. For the latter were abandoned in the resistance to the British invaders and conquerors of Nigeria in the last years of the nineteenth century and the first decade of this century. None of the vociferous educated elite who questioned the ethics of the behaviour of the British invaders in respect of the smuggling away of Jaja of Opobo, or the murdering of the Ijebu and Edo, or the bombardment of Oyo or the systematic dismantling of the Sokoto Caliphate—all by the British—gave any concrete physical help to the unlettered defenders of their fatherland. Seated in the British-protected Colony of Lagos, all they attempted to do was to exploit the agony of the unlettered Nigerians to present themselves before British philanthropists as the anguished section of the Nigerian population. Thus in 1892 Holy Johnson would not stay in the court of Ijebu Ode, or help in the military defence of Ijebuland, or help smuggle arms to the Ijebu soldiers—in spite of the advance knowledge he had that the British Government was planning to blow up the virile Ijebu kingdom—which felt offended by the British. Rather he kept away from the kingdom until after fire and

sword had descended upon the Ijebu resisters. Thus grieved as he was that in 1895 the Alafin of Oyo, Adeyemi I, was bullied, humiliated and hit by the British bullet in the hands of Captain L. R. Bower and his troops, in circumstances that did little or no credit to British sense of Justice, Samuel Johnson, the historian of the Yoruba, was so timid that he would not protest to his white missionary overlords, how much more send protests to the British Government. Safely hidden away in Agunpopo—having been advised that gunpowder would speak to the chiefs and masses—he not only ran away for dear life but found an excuse to move down to Lagos temporarily after the bombardment.

Indeed by the turn of the century the James Johnsons and Mojola Agbebis seemed tired of protesting against the accelerated conquest of Nigeria. As ever selfish, protests about British conquest ceased to flow from them to Exeter Hall and the headquarters of the British Foreign and Aborigines Protection Society; already attention was being directed by them more and more to measures being taken by the British administration not favourable to the educated elite. Thus the "pacification" of the hinterland of the eastern part of Nigeria and the vast North passed off without the British having any cause to fear the pen or the tongue of the elite. Protests on the injustice of the military subjugation of the country and the atrocities being perpetrated by medal-hunting British officers were made from unexpected quarters—from two British citizens who believed that trade could flourish best in a non-military situation—John Holt, the architect of the John Holt Company and E. D. Morel, the newspaper man and political pamphleteer.¹

Although they had been no more than verbal pugilists people like Holy Johnson, Otunba Payne, Pythagoras Haastrup and Mojola Agbebi were courageous enough to express resentment at all; it was a resentment that was shared by only a very tiny minority. By far the vast majority of the educated elite neither protested nor regarded British invasion and take-over of Nigeria as an untoward or regrettable event. For the majority, the British occupation of Nigeria was most heartily welcome, providing an opportunity for the creation of a Nigeria in which they would be able to participate in the establishment of their longstanding dream. The British were expected to create a new social and political order which would make Christianization and industrialization of Nigeria easy, facilitate growth of literary

¹ (London School of Economics) *Morel Papers* The military subjugation of Nigeria in detail occurred outside Yorubaland and deserved far more protests from the educated elite than the protests made over the few skirmishes in Yorubaland evoked by the British.

education and substitution of Western civilization for indigenous culture. Hence the joy of Charles Phillips that the blowing up of the Ijebu kingdom by the British automatically put an end to human sacrifice among the Ondo and prepared the way for British take-over of eastern Yorubaland, a take-over he had demanded for years; hence the unconcealed joy of a part of the Lagos Press, particularly *The Lagos Weekly Record* that, at last, *Pax Britannica* was becoming a reality.

By the first decade of this century practically all the educated elite, including the James Johnsons and Mọjọla Agbebis, had accepted the establishment of British colonial rule as an event in the nature of things. This event, for the unlettered masses a humiliation, meant for the educated elite personal liberation and opportunity. There was no question of their organizing protests against the Union Jack; they became confirmed loyalists of the British Empire. As they loved to repeat time and again, without any twinges of shame, there was hardly any part of the British empire that could be more loyal to the British Crown than the Nigerian educated elite, their suffering in the hands of white racists notwithstanding. These unauthorized self-styled spokesmen for all Nigerians whose declared hope, at least in the first quarter of this century, was that Nigeria became "the brightest African Jewel within the imperial diadem", defined their attitude to the British Raj as follows:

It has been our good fortune to be critical observers of the evolutionary changes that have been and are being wrought under our very eyes by the advent of European Imperialism in Tropical Africa, and we rejoice today in our British connection because we are persuaded that British Imperialism has conferred upon the inhabitants of British West Africa a maximum of benefits consistent with their social and economic progress, mainly through those traditional principles of British Justice and fairplay by means of which the Empire had attained to its present limits—principles to which all African British subjects have become so endeared that they can never forgo them voluntarily at any price whatsoever and which we in Nigeria have been accustomed to enjoy from time to time through the sympathetic administration of the Government of Nigeria.¹

Such gratitude to the British invaders and conquerors could not be shared by the unlettered masses and the chiefs who fought the wars of resistance to the British. But the educated elite were never tired of eulogies about the *Pax Britannica* and their gratitude to the British. Thus in 1910 Sapara Williams, one of the first lawyers in this country,

¹ I.U.L. *Herbert Macaulay Papers*. Address presented to Prince of Wales in Lagos April 1925.

observed in 1910: "Loyalty to the British Crown is too deeply rooted in the breasts of this Nigerian people".¹ Three years later Herbert Macaulay, in spite of his cumulative grievances against the British establishment in Lagos, still declared: "We are to a man, proud today, Sir, that we are subjects of the British Crown, for the British Government administers Justice without fear or favour".² Even those trained in the United States, and whom students of the Nigerian scene are prone to consider as fiery leaders—Nnamdi Azikiwe, K. O. Mbadiwe, Mazi Mbonu Ojike and Nwafor Orizu—never regretted the establishment of British rule in Nigeria. Rather they professed loyalty to the British Commonwealth and acknowledged the value of British protection to the educated elite class in the colonial era. Just an example. K. O. Mbadiwe declared in 1942: "For its beneficent Government, despite the factors of human frailties, there is no power on earth to shake the confidence of West Africans in Great Britain".³ "The British empire is not only an improvement on the past empires but with it rose ethics in imperialism" and "we love and cherish the British Empire, but we must be assured of a life for all human beings."⁴ Indeed as lately as 1960 R. O. A. Akinjide did declare: "Britain, I should say, has no reason to regret her stay in Nigeria and we too have no reason to be ashamed of Britain being in this country".⁵

In showing their sense of appreciation to the British for imposing colonial rule in Nigeria the educated elite were merely behaving like all human beings—considering their own class interest first, an interest that, to say the least, was hardly identical with, or complementary to, that of the unlettered masses. In self-aggrandizement terms they were partakers of British economic, social and political notions. Economically, like their British masters, they wanted cash crops cultivated for the white man's world in exchange for European manufactured materials; they wanted motorable roads and iron-horse to criss-cross Nigeria in order to increasingly integrate Nigerian economy in world economy. Unlike the unlettered masses who were instinctively suspicious of new-fangled innovations being forced upon them by their uninvited conquerors, who were terribly "ashamed of Britain being in this country", the educated elite did not count the cost of a modernization-at-all-hazards policy: they hardly pondered

¹ (Rhodes House Oxford) APS Br. Emp. 22 Sapara Williams to Rev. J. H. Harris 2/5/1910.

² *ibid.* G. 230 "Proceedings of an interview granted to a deputation of the committee of the Lagos Auxiliary of the Anti-slavery and Aborigines Protection Society at Government House on the 26th February 1913"

³ K. O. Mbadiwe, *British and Axis Aims in Africa*, New York 1942 p. 242.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 164.

⁵ *Nigeria Asks for Independence* (A Report of the Debate in the Federal House of Representatives on January 14, 15 and 16) Government Printer Lagos, p. 69.

the solvent effects of unregulated penetrating European civilization, economic development and technology on indigenous society. Socially, the educated elite looked upon themselves as closer to, if not the equals of, the white rulers. None of them prayed to descend to the social levels of the unlettered masses.

Thus as lately as 1952 a firebrand, Adegoke Adelabu, mistakenly considered culturally closer to the masses than most of the educated elite leaders, wrote euphorically: "we are privileged (sic) to take a cooling draught from the thousand-year seasoned wine of British culture, British Ideals and the British Way of Life. From these we can fashion the pattern of our own national ethos".¹ Thus, until after the Second World War, the educated elite continued to patronise zealously the white man's dress and institutions. Herbert Macaulay wore the white man's dress till his death in 1946, sponsored the white man's freemasonry and established his reputation in alien music.² Benjamin Nnamdi Azikiwe and Jeremiah Obafemi Awolowo had to wait until the thirties before they understood that the Hebrew prefixes to their names portrayed mental enslavement. Henry Carr continued to solace mentally in the white man's context, regarding Britain as the best country to recruit his health and achieved literary perfection in the English language, rather than in the vernacular. Even as lately as the post-independence era Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto, could romanticize the English language and rejoice at the skill with which top educated leaders in the old North could speak the alien language.³

Politically, the educated elite were one with the British that the so-called natural rulers should not continue to hold the reins of power, or that the indigenous polities should be retained. As one of them described the so-called natural rulers: "static, wooly, leaden and generally stupid, men who put themselves up as descendants of the gods".⁴ Rather they wanted the white man's notions of government to prevail, namely that a civil service machine at local and pan-Nigerian levels be established, and that it be greased with literary education; that the language of politics and communication should be English; that it was protagonists of literary education and European-type skills who should direct the affairs of Nigeria.

In the light of the common notions about the creation of Nigeria and the way she should be modernized, all the educated elite in

¹ Adegoke Adelabu, *Africa in Ebullition*, Ibadan 1952, p. 28.

² Herbert Macaulay's interest was not in Beethoven, Brahms, Handel or Bach but in contemporary music of the day, that is the trash of the white man's music! See list of favourites in I. B. Thomas *Life History of Herbert Macaulay*, Lagos 1946, pp. 7-10.

³ Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello, *My Life*, Cambridge 1962, p. 26.

⁴ Eyo Ita, *The Revolt of the Liberal Spirit in Nigeria*, Calabar 1949, p. 10.

colonial Nigeria were collaborators with the British in the establishment of the British Raj and co-exploiters of the unlettered masses whom they had always betrayed. They had betrayed the unlettered by giving no help to the latter in the physical resistance to the white invaders and conquerors. Now in the colonial period, though they were in the lower echelons of the civil service, the Nigerian members of this institution were a part of the colonial government, wielding powers and influence over the masses, sometimes greater than those being wielded by the white rulers. For the point should be stressed that the pinches of colonial rule were felt by the masses from the hands of the letter-writer, the sanitary-inspector, the policeman, the "warrant chief", the court clerk, the interpreter or even the white man's cook-steward and the tax gatherer. They were the veritable oppressors. In the apposite words of an administrative officer: "Give a native a pair of trousers and he at once begins to extort money from his people".¹ The school-teacher was, in the eyes of the unlettered masses, a superior of the village chief and was seen by them as a part of the British administration. As pastors and the chief instrument for the spread of Western-encrusted Christianity, the educated elite were co-religious imperialists with their white superiors. Even as lawyers—independent of the civil service as they were—the educated elite were co-sponsors of the alien judiciary, the relevance of which to the achievement of justice among the unlettered masses was questionable.

This is the point to emphasize the viewpoint of the unlettered about the British and their educated elite collaborators. Though inarticulate the unlettered majority did not accept the colonial era as ideal or as an event in their interest, particularly in the period before the Second World War. Pragmatically they recognized the inevitability of the overlordship of their white and African co-exploiters. They were convinced that they had lost their country and independence for ever and that the white man's ways had to be adopted in some respect! Therefore many saw the writing on the wall and decided to have their children transmogrified into the educated elite; others began to partake of the new economic opportunities by becoming traders, or labourers, hundreds of miles from their home towns; others began to obey or exploit the new regulations of the colonial rulers by depriving fellow citizens of their wives, thanks to the easy divorce laws promulgated by the British; or to purchase judgment by offering bribes to Native Court Clerks. The so-called natural rulers found it easy to gang up with the British, and exploited the

¹ *Nigerian Chronicle*, 1/7/1910.

situation by claiming for themselves more power than they ever had had, whilst not a few communities utilized the new situation to regain some measure of local independence by denying or refusing allegiance to their pre-colonial over-lords.

Nevertheless, by and large, the masses exhibited the attitude of unconcern or indifference, refusing to reconcile themselves to the modernization programme of the British rulers and educated elite. This attitude is, perhaps, clearest in the areas of religion and medical science to which the educated elite attached very great importance. Fortunately for the British rulers they made no attempt to force the unlettered to embrace Christianity or patronize the white man's medical science. Therefore, until this day, by far the majority of unlettered Nigerians outside the Islamic areas remain "pagans". Thus until this day, the exhibitionism of Christians and Muslims notwithstanding, shrines, groves and "idols" are as plentiful as ever, barely within public view and intensely revered by their worshippers. Largely confined to the rural areas, the votaries of African Traditional Religion are predominantly farmers and materially the poorest in society. Mostly illiterate they are conservative and scarcely touched by the modernism heralded by the colonial era and the gospel of the educated elite. In their mental world, religious thought-patterns, attitudes to life and cosmological conceptions they belong essentially to the pre-colonial world. The least affected by the technological marvels introduced by the white man, the 'pagans' of Nigeria have been more of witnesses than participants in the physical, social, mental and political transformation of Nigeria to date. Whether one speaks of the rise of literary scholarship, or the press, or the so-called nationalist movement, or modern economy, the 'pagans' have no place whatsoever. They are neither leaders nor apprentices in the civil service, in government, in technology and in the world of business. Without regretting it at all the 'pagans' have consistently refused to come to terms with the history of modern Nigeria.

And it would be a mistake to think that, because they have refused to join the ranks of the educated elite collaborators, they are less happy than we are. Spiritually the 'pagans' are the richest. They look to the rules and rituals of their religion for their morality. Their religion provides them with an inclusive and commanding system of personal and cosmic values and explanations. For them the present life is providentially determined, that to come a reality. They are articles of faith, beyond theological disputation. The message and obligations of their religion are comprehensible, comprehended, appreciated and accepted wholeheartedly as relevant to their self-fulfilment. The objects of their worship are supremely meaningful.

In the exacting rituals of their religion they live, move and have their being. Their whole being is completely absorbed in worship, prayer, singing and propitiation, in all of which they employ the vocabulary of their own people, highly invocative and evocative. What is more, it is their religion that continues to shape the instinctive attitudes, ethics and aesthetics, if no longer the world-view, of Nigerian Muslims and Christians. They are the real custodians of the traditional value system which remains an essential part of us.

The attitude of the unlettered to medical science—as well as such sophisticated members of the elite portrayed in novels by Nigerians—¹ was hardly different. It is instructive to note that—according to the first generation medical doctors in this century—their clients were principally among the educated class. Thus when this class of doctors faced the prospect of being pushed out of Lagos into the interior by the British administration, they lost no time in admitting that the vast majority of Nigerians did not believe in the white man's medical skill. In the interior, the doctors said, they would starve for want of patients because they could not compete with “the bush doctors who have the advantage of hoary-headed superstition behind them”.² This point of alienation to the white man's medical science is obviously worth considering by advocates of the invasion of the rural areas by medical doctors. I am sure that many in this audience will refresh their minds with the fact that the directors of the affairs of indigenous Ibadan people in 1971—in spite of the existence in Ibadan of the University College Hospital with its reputedly best medical school in Negro Africa—affected to believe that the cholera epidemic of that year was an affliction from the gods and therefore ordered measures intended to appease the gods. Even in Lagos, where the *Saro* were co-conquerors and political and cultural collaborators with the British, for a long time the conquered indigenous inhabitants would not change their attitude to Western-type medical science. Consequently, in the second decade of this century, that is more than two generations of the enforced intrusion of the British and *Saro* into Lagos, the indigenous people would not patronize the hospitals and dispensaries established in the Colony. In the language and observation of Herbert Macaulay, this class of Nigerians “have not yet given the palm to the white man for knowing much about internal diseases of the blackman as they believe it is the fetish priests alone who divine

¹ John Munonye *Obi* London 1969.

T. M. Aluko, *Chief the Honourable Minister*. 1970.

² C. O. 520/50 Enclosure 1 in Egerton to Elgin 30/12/1907.

and tell what is wrong inside where the human eye cannot penetrate".¹ Even among the Igbo in whose society the CMS were sanguine that the Iyi Enu Hospital would perform wonder, the people were apathetic, having much greater faith in traditional healing art. As Dr R. Y. Stones recorded in 1912 "The Ibo people are hardly ready for European medicine and surgery".² In an unabashed candid admission in 1968 Obafemi Awolowo, perhaps the greatest activist in the realm of modernization during the decade of his premiership of the Western Region, declared on the reaction of unlettered Nigerians as well as that of the medical doctors themselves to Western-style medical science:

Fear, superstition, strong belief in black magic, and supreme faith in the native medicine-man are formidable obstacles which will continue for some years to keep the majority of our peoples back from modern medicine and health facilities. In this connection it is highly probable that there are qualified medical practitioners who have greater faith in Juju-men and medicine-men than in their own scientific acquirements, and regularly consult these men in the course of their professional activities.³

Also ranged against the modernization vision and acceptance of British colonial rule were the Muslim masses of Northern Nigeria. For the point should be emphasized that, in their reaction to the British and educated elite infidels, the Muslims put their religion first. There was no question of the Muslims of Northern Nigeria being infected with the view already prevalent in Mediterranean Africa, that the purity of Islam could be preserved alongside science and technology. Like their 'pagan' counterparts in the South the Muslims had been suspicious of the white man and were resolved to give him no quarter. Indeed, far more than the 'pagan' the Muslim in the old North had unconquerable contempt for the white infidel whose brain was likened to that of an ass,⁴ and who in the precolonial period was expected to acknowledge his inferiority to the Muslim. And although the infidel's military capacity had subjugated the Muslims, the British conquest of Northern Nigeria was a cultural and religious compromise. The compromise was that Islam would be left intact whilst the infidel British exploited the economic resources of the country. There was no question of the Emirs wishing to see

¹ A.P.S. G230 "Proceedings of an interview granted to a deputation of the committee of the Lagos Auxiliary of the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society at Government House on the 26th February 1913".

² CMS G3/A3/012 Annual Letter of Dr R. Y. Jones November 1912.

³ Obafemi Awolowo, *The People's Republic*, Oxford 1968, p. 323.

Una Maclean, *Magical Medicine* (A Nigerian case Study) The Penguin Press 1971 reveals the pro-traditional attitude of the educated elite very clearly.

⁴ Denham, Clapperton and Oudney, *Narrative of Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa in the years 1822, 1823 and 1824*, London, 1826, p. 74.

emergence of Western-style educated elite. Whilst reluctantly the British rulers felt the need to give Western-style education to selected children of the aristocracy, the immediate reaction of the latter was that the Roman character was the thin edge of the wedge, a diabolical device by the British infidels to turn them into Christians. Therefore in the early days of British colonial rule only the worst boys—the halt, the slaves, the lame, the blind and the village idiots—were sent to religion-free Government schools. It was not until after strenuous efforts, a good deal of persuasion by the British, that the Emirs consented to have the children of the aristocracy educated in the Western fashion.¹ But even then definite assurance had to be given that the educated elite being produced would not be the Southern-Nigerian type, but a special class, “a new generation of Native Chiefs” who would live in a style as nearly as possible resembling their own normal life, wearing traditional dress, using the vernacular, retaining traditional habits of life “so far as these were in consonance with European ideas of humanity and health”. Their inspiration was to come from the special atmosphere of Islam in the North, and not from the West, where Islamic literature had laid down a standard of philosophy and ethics from which had arisen a form of culture, the destruction of which by the encouragement of the so-called modern ideas of the Southern-type educated elite would be deplorable.

In contrast to the Southern educated elite who were dismissed by British officials as unreliable, ill-educated, undisciplined, lacking in integrity, self-control and respect for authority of any kind, “unfitted to hold posts of trust and responsibility where integrity and loyalty are essential”,² or to become leaders of their community in the path of progress, the educated elite in the North were expected to be disciplined offspring of patricians who would not fly in the face of the Emirs or imitate Europeans blindly.

However the reaction of the unlettered (in the Western sense) masses was not just one of philosophical resignation to the incubus of the British Raj or consolations in their cultural heritage and religion. By and large they were convinced that the white man had come to spoil their world. This conviction which forms a strand in the reaction of Nigerians put in fictional writings by Nigerian literary men is, perhaps, best expressed in the following words of an Ibo character in John Munonye, *Obi*. “Everything has changed since then. The soil

¹ Sonia F. Graham, *Government and Mission Education in Northern Nigeria, 1900–1919* (with special reference to the work of Hanns Vischer) Ibadan, 1966.

² NAI CSO 26/2 Vol. I “Memorandum by Director of Education Northern Provinces”, 1927.

is no longer fertile, for the earth, outraged, has withheld her kindness from them. People cheat these days—they cheat even their brothers. Women bully their husbands and produce children that resemble neither father nor mother".¹ And whenever they were exasperated they spoke with fists rather than with the mouth, hence Satiru (1906), Okeho (1916) Abẹkuta (1918) Warri (1927) and Aba (1929) to cite the notable examples. The warfare of the unlettered was directed against the infidel or overzealous catechist; war was fought against railway lines, against salgars, against the so-called native courts where the masses believed injustice was being dispensed. Of course the masses could not spare the tax-gatherer because the people could not be persuaded that the uninvited white conqueror and ruler had moral or legal rights to tax them. In the light of my current research on the Ijẹbu, it is my judgment that the resentment of the colonial era in the period before the Second World War, by the unlettered majority, was wider and deeper than has been suggested in generalized works. Although the Ijẹbu were the only Yoruba group militarily subjugated by the British and on whom the British imposed the most elaborate colonial administrative system in Yorubaland, the under-current feeling for a long time was that the white man should, and would, quit Ijẹbuland. Whilst the educated elite and British officers were rejoicing that the Ijẹbu had been completely subdued and that British rule had been accepted with gratitude, it was discovered as lately as 1907 that the Awujaleš had been sighing for the day of deliverance which they believed could be hastened with elaborate rituals.²

The aversion of the unlettered majority to the imposition of the British Raj was completely ignored by the educated elite, who went on collaborating with the British in the establishment and consolidation of colonial rule. By 1920 the sparks of independence of the pre-colonial deluded hybrids had disappeared with the deaths of its exponents. Well could the white masters in Church and State be rejoicing by this date that the educated elite had become part of the colonial milieu; that the concept of self-government which had been expressed in the earlier era by the visionary "nationalists" was not only dead but buried. Indeed with the advent of the colonial era the elite apostles of self-government became more and more isolated, continued to live in the wilderness and gained no followers for their views which seemed heterodox to an increasing number of the elite class. Otunba Payne

¹ p. 23.

² N. A. I. Ije Prof. 9/6 *Diary Ijebu Ode* Entry for 15 and 16 April 1907.

and Richard Beale Blaize passed away in 1906 disappointed and disillusioned. Holy Johnson and Mọjola Agbebi died in 1917 with anguish and hope destroyed. Dr Obadiah Johnson, brother of the historian of the Yoruba, who in the first decade of this century vituperated incessantly against the grinding economic exploitation of the country by the white man, became taciturn after 1913. Convinced that the colonial system had become so established and that his verbal attacks on the system were now futile, he diverted his energy towards the further consolidation of the imperial Anglican Church. He died in 1920 as a member of Lagos District Council, Diocesan Board and Chairman of the Nigeria Pastorate Association. The only gifted educated elite leader, himself no less a collaborator with the British Raj than others, who could have constituted a thorn in the side of the British colonial masters was Herbert Macaulay. But by 1920 he was already discredited: he had been convicted for serious crimes and hounded into jail in Old Calabar.

It was with pride and sense of absolute security that by 1920 the white rulers in Church and State had begun to rejoice that the educated elite no longer nurtured the concept of independence or self-government. Thus in 1922 Bishop Alfred Jones who in 1896 had opened the clergy-producing institution, the Oyo Training Institution (later St Andrew's College), was not challenged when he declared:

Take for example this question of self-government. My own feeling is strong that it will be many generations before the natives of Africa can be ready for any form of autonomy, and my conviction is firm that cooperation between the white and the black races is true road to independence.¹

Or consider the impunity with which the Church press pretended to speak for Nigerians, lettered and unlettered, about the Garvey Movement. The idea of Nigerians being involved in any dialogue with the Afro-Americans or thinking in Pan-Negro terms was horrifying to British Church leaders. Said a magazine in an uncharitable language about Marcus Garvey in its editorial of October 1922:

The freedom which Nigeria is dreaming of and working towards is not slavers to a self-appointed dictator, a modern Napoleon of darker hue than the origin of that name, but a freedom which is freedom indeed. It will be a poor exchange to give up the overlordship of Great Britain for servitude to this Great Buffoon who is making himself contemptible in the eyes of his fellow-men, and doing his best, whether intentionally or not, to set back the legitimate aspirations of the true Africans who are living in the Africa which he himself does not yet know.²

¹ *In Leisure Hours*, April 1922, p. 52.

² *In Leisure Hours*

Nothing shows more clearly the disappearance of the self-government vision in colonial Nigeria than the completeness of the control exercised by the white directors of the Western-established Churches over their African lieutenants. With the death of Bishop Crowther in 1891 no African was elevated to the full episcopate until 1953 when Bishop O. Oduṭola was consecrated. From Isaac Oluwole and Charles Phillips in 1894 to Alexander Akinyele in 1933, Africans accepted gratefully to become "Half Bishops".¹ As if they were unaware that the "Half Bishop" status was a backward step, a group of educated elite in Lagos behaved as if history was being made for the first time. Presenting an address to Alexander Akinyele in Glover Memorial Hall, they used words that would have made the deluded hybrids of pre-colonial Nigeria stir in their graves, extolling the Church Missionary Society to the skies. "And should we not express eternal gratitude to God for bringing us in contact with such a Christian and powerful organization as the Church Missionary Society who have lavished men, money and material in bringing the light of the Gospel to us in West Africa", they declared with levity, "we must raise our voices in praise and thanksgiving to Heaven and exclaim: Indeed, Ethiopia is stretching forth her hands unto God".² What a contrast to the reaction of the visionary elite to the appointment of "Half Bishops" Charles Phillips and Isaac Oluwole in 1894? Indeed so complete was the white man's domination in State and Church, as well as in commerce, that as lately as 1953 the Reverend R. A. Wright, the Colonial Chaplain and Pastor of St Saviour's Colonial Church, Lagos, had the temerity to declare as follows at the opening of the November Assizes:

When a nation grows up the same principle is at work. The places of those who are in authority look so good that men struggle to attain them, but with their attainment the terror of irresponsibility raises its head. For if those who win have not also 'grown up' nothing but disaster can happen to that nation. It is that terror that is overshadowing all the great Christian work of civilisation which has been done in Africa during the last two hundred years. The doubt which is over in the minds of those who are struggling that the African should more and more take his place in the affairs of Church and State and Commerce, is—are we going too fast, have these men yet come to that sense of responsibility without which no nation and no men can safely be given any authority?³

¹ A term coined by James Johnson to describe the status of an Assistant Bishop.

² *Nigerian Daily Times*, 7/11/1933.

³ *ibid.*

The self-confidence and sense of security which the white rulers in Church and State had between the world wars reflect the total absence of the concept of self-government among the educated elite in this period. Although more and more newspapers were founded and bones of contention arose between the educated elite and the British Government over the Eleko case, the Apapa land case and the positions that qualified Nigerians should occupy in the civil service, no educated leader expressed in any sustained manner the concept of self-government. Suddenly the word "self-government" disappeared from the vocabulary of the elite: it had been buried with James Johnson, Mọjọla Agbebi and Essien Essien Ukpabio in their graves. Neither Herbert Macaulay, nor any of the members of his Nigerian National Democratic Party elected into the Legislative Council between 1923 and 1938, put before the British Government the vision of self-government and independence which, as we observed in the last lecture, had been seriously entertained by the deluded hybrids in the eighties of the nineteenth century and the torch of which had been kept alive by James Johnson and Mọjọla Agbebi right into the second decade of the present century. Even the dramatic appearance of the then young Nnamdi Azikiwe on the Nigerian scene in the late thirties did not reawaken this vision. And as late as 1942 K. O. Mbadiwe would speak only of Nigerians dissolving themselves into the British Empire with ministerial posts being held by Herbert Macaulay, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Eyo Ita, S. O. Akisanya and S. Ikoli in an Imperial Cabinet based in London.¹ Not until 1943 did Nnamdi Azikiwe, borrowing leaf from the West African Students' Union of London, resurrect the concept of self-government. As if he had been somnambulating since his return to Nigeria from the Gold Coast in 1937, he was flabbergasted that the educated elite had not been torch-bearers of self-government for Nigeria. Forgetting that he was up to that time one of them, he described the educated elite of the period between the wars as "mis-leaders" who had "developed a psychosis which had emasculated them so that they had to cringe and to curry for favours making dolts of themselves and their posterity".² As lately as 1947 Ọbafẹmi Awolọwọ was wondering whether any date could be fixed for self-government for which, in his own observation, the educated elite were neither numerically nor qualitatively qualified.³

The triumph of the white man over the educated elite in Colonial Nigeria is beyond dispute, and so is the fact that all educated elite,

¹ K. O. Mbadiwe, *op. cit.*, pp. 199-200.

² Nnamdi Azikiwe *Political Blueprint of Nigeria*, Lagos 1943, p. 7

³ Ọbafẹmi Awolọwọ, *op. cit.* pp. 33-35.

including those literature and scholarship love to classify as nationalists, were collaborators with the British in that period of Nigerian history. In this respect the tendency to classify them into the *beni oui oui*¹ group and nationalists is rather artificial. In the sense that they endorsed the British presence in, and control of, Nigeria and were in principle totally in agreement with the British on the dynamics that should operate in Nigeria, all the educated elite were collaborators. The disputes that arose between the British rulers and those of the educated elite who assailed their white masters were matters of details rather than of principles, a family affair. Their disputes arose mainly on the means for the execution of the political, social, cultural and economic notions that they shared in common. The British held the view that colonial Nigeria was nothing more than a part of the British empire and that, as its architect, they must direct the affairs of the country.

Certainly many of the British rulers in Church and State believed sincerely that only they—rather than the educated elite, could administer Nigeria ideally and lead her along the paths of true progress. Thus some of the missionaries believed that Colonial Nigeria would see the emergence of an ideal society in which Christianity would predominate, an ideal government would be established and a new form of justice and law and order would prevail. In Nigeria, declared an Anglican Bishop, “the laws of the spiritual world...must be allowed to rule in all departments of human life, not excluding the political”.² The African pastor, it was believed, was good only when he was under the guidance of his white superior. For the political officers there was no question of recognizing that the educated elite should be taken into partnership on equality basis. True they were a good instrument as clerks and unskilled artisans, it was believed, but they should not be encouraged to think of themselves as leaders of their unlettered Nigerians. Consequently besides the special case of Henry Rawlinson Carr, who was appointed Resident for Lagos Colony immediately after the First World War, no educated African was appointed to the grade of a Political Officer before 1951.

The attitude of the British rulers in Church and State should be stressed further if the artificial classification of the elite into Anglo-philés and so-called nationalists is to be fully understood. Whilst there were not wanting British officials who recognised the principle, or wisdom, of taking the educated elite into full partnership in the

¹ A French term meaning “Yes Men” in English or “His Master’s Voice”, to describe unabashed proteges of the French masters. Endorsing everything done by their masters they repeated “very well”, the literal meaning of “*beni oui oui*”.

² In *Leisure Hours*. April 1922, p. 53.

administration of Nigeria, by far the majority had contempt for these hybridized Nigerians. The consensus of opinion was that the question of sharing power with the contemptible elite did not arise in the context of the *British Empire and Commonwealth*. In their view not only could the elite not be regarded as first-class citizens in the Empire: they were also patently unqualified to guide the unlettered masses. After all, their number was few and, with their relative affluence, it would be unthinkable that the destiny of the poor and unlettered elite should be put in their hands. "To put self-government into the hands of such", declared a Church newspaper, "would be to deliver the many poor into the hands of a few wealthy, and to place Nigeria permanently among the badly, governed and non-progressive races of Africa".¹

Economically, too, the belief and policy were that British citizens should be the exploiters of this part of the "undeveloped estates" of the empire. Nigerians—literate and illiterate—were not to be partners, but sharers of the crumbs from the master's table. Little wonder that, having demonstrated to his British audience the ease with which a pharmacist could make money in Nigeria within four years, to the point that he would be able "to start his business at home afterwards", a British pharmacist had no modicum of thought for Nigerian participation in the money-making business, but the following contemptuous words:

Only a few years ago Nigeria was practically a savage country . . . Customers range from the illiterate native, who points to the seat of his pain as the only possible indication of the medicine required to the super-educated and slightly nauseous type, beautifully dressed in shining whites and sun helmet, with his "Good morning. Can you oblige me with a bottle of Pearce's Pleasant Pellets?" in the highbrow manner. There is the Yoruba, the local native, amiable, unintelligent and congenitally dishonest; the Hausa, from the North, dignified and reserved, but a mean thief if he gets the chance; the Warri-man, always with a tightly rolled umbrella balanced crosswise on his head, whatever the weather—dozens of different tongues, so that the English one-and-six becomes "Sile kabo" to the Hausa "Silekan sisi" to the Yoruba, but all with two characteristics in common—all dishonest and all lazy.²

Not only did the British rulers in Church and State say in words that Nigeria was British and that the best the contemptible educated elite could hope for was to be junior partakers of the juices of employment. In continuation of the practice that had been established since the last decade of the nineteenth century, the educated elite—no

¹ *ibid.*, February 1922 Editorial p. 15.

² W. A. Findlay, "Pharmacy in Nigeria" *The Chemist and Druggist* (Special Issue) 27 June 1931.

matter their academic or professional qualifications—were not appointed to posts for which they were qualified. The racial division was clear in hospitals and in burial grounds. In Lagos conscious effort was made to segregate the races in the Church—hence the St Saviour's Church where as lately as 1967 Nigerians were reportedly barred from the Holy Communion on the alleged grounds that they would gulp more wine than necessary.¹ Even the masonic lodges did not escape the segregationist law: St George's Hall, along Yakubu Gowon Street, was erected "for whites only".² In the matter of the civil service the view of successive Governors in this century was that, no matter how qualified on paper, an African would still be inferior to his paperless less qualified European counterpart. Consequently professionally qualified Nigerian hybrids—engineers and medical doctors—who took employment in the civil service were invariably shabbily treated. Take the medical doctors, for instance. In the early days of colonial rule the African doctors were all annoyed out of the civil service, a factor that would seem to explain the anti-government bitterness of people like O. Johnson, J. K. Randle, Oguntola Sapara and Orisadipe Obase. But as lately as 1940, an African doctor could be sacked with an impunity greater than a government today could dismiss an office messenger. Consider the case of Abubakir Ibiyinka Olorunnimbe, later the first Mayor of Lagos. A product of the University of Glasgow, which he attended from 1930 to 1937, he spent six months in the London School of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene on high recommendation from Glasgow. On 14 November 1937 a Professor John Henderson wrote of him that "in class examinations he gained a first class certificate". On 29 April 1938 another Professor J. A. G. Burton wrote of him: "He was keenly interested in his work, and developed a very sound clinical sense, backed by a very considerable theoretical knowledge. He has a cheerful philosophy of life and proved very tactful and gentle in his dealing with patients. I can thoroughly recommend him as a reliable person"! On the recommendation of the Dean of the London School of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, he was appointed a Junior Medical Officer on 12 September 1938. But within a year he was summarily sacked. His crime: he inquired into the death of an African male nurse (one N. C. O. Ezuke) who had been given poison by a Miss A. C. Sample, a European Nursing Sister.³ This was sinning against the Holy Ghost.

¹ *Sunday Times* (Lagos) 9/4/1967.

² *The Nigerian Times*, 19/7/1910.

³ *Herbert Macaulay Papers*, Abubakir Ibiyinka Olorunnimbe to Sir Bernard Bourdillon, September 1940.

It was natural that the educated elite did not respond in the same way to the racist and exclusive conception of the British empire. Therefore they were divided into two. On the one hand were those who believed that the British should be challenged on their exclusive and selfish conception of the empire; on the other were those who felt that the crumbs from the masters were more than enough and that British policy was wholesome, humane and in the best interest of the country in general and of the educated elite in particular. In the view of the Anglophile group, by creating colonial Nigeria the British could not be accused of any crime; they were innocent and humanitarian in their policies; their sins of omission and commission should be forgiven and forgotten; any criticism of the British administration by the educated elite was unjustified and unjustifiable. In their judgment the balance-sheet revealed beyond doubt that much credit was due to the British, and the assailants of the British should repent for misunderstanding their mentors to whom they should be grateful for ever. The Anglophile group fraternised openly with the British without regret.

The point at issue between the two groups was not whether the British should continue to be in Nigeria. Loyalty to the British Crown was for the educated elite, including the so-called nationalists, an article of faith. Their "grievances", they asserted, would never make them anti-British, nor disloyal to the British Crown. As they recorded in 1925, what was intended for the Prince of Wales:

But over and above all these Your Memorialists look back with pardonable pride upon the proverbial loyalty of Nigeria not because Nigeria is some modern utopia in which the millennium is being realised on earth but because Nigeria has never permitted her domestic grievances to outweigh her imperial duties and responsibilities; now even when Nigeria does murmur she has always in articulating her grievances adopted the language and method of constitutionalism . . . and therefore whatever sweet memories Your Royal Highness may carry back to the King—Emperor, Your Memorialists are more than anxious that this golden assurance be uppermost in the mind of Your Royal Highness and whatever crisis the Empire may be called upon to face in the welter of world politics. Nigeria has only one AIM, only one THOUGHT, and only one DUTY and that is Loyalty to the Throne and person of the King-Emperor.¹

The "grievances" of the so-called nationalists were not the grievances of the rest of Nigerian society. They were the "grievances" of the educated elite about the plums of office they wanted to share with the

¹ *ibid.*, Address scheduled to be presented to the Prince of Wales April 1925.

British, which plums would have made them more and more partners in the exploitation of the unlettered masses. And the fact that Herbert Macaulay or Nnamdi Azikiwe or Obafemi Awolowo or Eyo Ita attacked some aspects of the British colonial policy, did not make them nationalists. Not at all. The chief "grievance" of the so-called nationalists was that they should be taken into greater partnership in the distribution of offices, particularly in the civil service. None of them advocated a policy of Nigeria for Nigerians until after the Second World War, and even when this slogan came into vogue what it meant in effect was Nigeria for the educated elite. None of the so-called nationalists attacked the privileges of the white controllers of the civil service because they thought those privileges were extravagant, or that their salaries were too high. Rather they bellowed because they wanted that the educated elite be put into such cushy "for the whites only" positions and enjoy the same privileges. There was no thought whatsoever in the thirties and forties for the masses—the subsistence farmers, the producers, the ordinary porters or even the market women, whom some of them used as wax in their fingers. Indeed they never hesitated to aver that, as "British subjects", they were separate from the rest in society.

This point, that the so-called nationalists were "nationalists" only in the sense that they were hankering after the privileges of "British subjects"—they saw themselves not as Nigerians as such until after the Second World War but as "citizens of the British Empire"—should be clearly illustrated. As lawyers they were propagators of British or Roman laws of land-ownership, inheritance or marriage, with dire, upsetting consequences for Nigerian society. And when they were excluded from the so-called Native Courts—an exclusion theoretically justifiable, on the grounds that they were irresponsibly ignorant of authentic native laws and customs—they nearly hounded themselves out of their breath as if Nigerian society was in danger. Or consider their demands that the high posts in the Central Secretariat was not enough—as it meant that the masses could not see them sharing power with the British—but that they be appointed to the Political Department and thereby be posted into the interior as District Officers and Residents! No less grave was the ease with which the educated elite liked to pass on the burden of tax on to the producers—the farmers—by stressing that Indirect Tax, which was derived from exports, was enough and that they, the educated elite, should never be asked to pay any tax—even when it was they, the educated elite, who would enjoy social amenities like pipe-borne water or electric light for which taxes were intended. Very adept at arguments

to exclude themselves from sharing in the burden of taxation, they contended that as "British subjects" they should never be taxed; that it was only the rest of Nigerians, conquered outside Lagos, who could be legally taxed.¹ And yet they were the wealthiest section of the Nigerian community. Direct Tax, or "poll tax", they contended, should be paid by the rest in Nigeria who were not "British subjects"! In the language publicly made by Dr C. C. Adeniyi Jones, second Lagos Member on the Legislative Council, on 22 January 1927:

In connection with the proposed Native Administration or Native Authority Ordinance some of the questions that naturally arise are (1) Why is the Administration endeavouring to extend this infamous system to the Colony, where the people, though black, are full-grown British subjects who not only owe allegiance to the King-Emperor but whose loyalty is proverbial? (2) Why endeavour to deprive such people of their rights, their status, and their privileges as British subjects? (3) Why attempt to foist upon such people the administration obtaining in a "protected" state and thereby place them in the category of 'protected' subjects though they are British subjects.²

With the foregoing anatomy of the so-called nationalists, it is clear that the distinction that has hitherto been made between the Anglophile group of the educated elite and the so-called nationalist group, is quite unfair to the former, usually labelled by the so-called assailants as collaborators with the British Raj. It is in the light of this analysis that I shall dwell specially on Herbert Macaulay as a collaborator with the British Raj, no less essentially than the Anglophiles to whom scholars have been unfair—Kitoyi Ajasa (later knighted), Adeyemo Alakija (later knighted), Samuel Herbert Pearse, Thomas Adeşina, Jacobson Ogunbiyi, "Half Bishop" Isaac Oluwole and A. W. Howells (Senior). And, if only to show that there were respects in which the Anglophiles were patriots, I shall show a part of T. A. J. Ogunbiyi which portrays him in a better light than Herbert Macaulay as a so-called nationalist.

But first of all, a few words about the Anglophile collaborators. Kitoyi Ajasa was a pure Lagos indigene, the first Lagos indigene to be trained as a lawyer. After twelve years in England he returned to Lagos in 1893, but was infected with the cultural renaissance mentioned in the last lecture by dropping the name Edmund Macaulay. Called to the bar on 14 June 1893, he mixed with the British rulers in Church and State. An Anglican of the deepest hue, he deplored

¹ *ibid.*, Mss IV 36 Memorandum: Objection Against the Enactment of "The Native Courts and Native Authority Extension Ordinance (Colony) and the General Tax Ordinance (colony)" by the Nigerian National Democratic Party.

² *ibid.*, Quoted p. 6.

the venom of the *Lagos Standard* (founded and edited from 1895 by G. A. Williams of the African Bethel Church) and the *Lagos Weekly Record* (edited from 1891 by J. P. Jackson) on white missionaries and British officials. In particular he hated Herbert Macaulay's invectives on the British administration, which invectives go back to 1907, and went on and on for five years in the *Nigerian Chronicle*. In order to show that there were Anglophile members among the elite in Nigeria in general and in Lagos in particular, he decided to found a newspaper which would defend the white rulers in Church and State. This paper was the *Nigerian Pioneer* which in the early years of its existence was printed in the CMS press and controlled editorially for several years by CMS white missionaries. Kitoyi Ajasa went into action in 1912 by organising a most favourable reception for Lugard. As early as 1911 he had written to England about what he considered unjustifiable anti-government posture of some educated elite; "I am sorry to say things are almost upside down in Lagos, everybody at loggerhead with the other. I am referring to my country people. What I have observed, I regret to say is fraught with a good deal of future harm".¹ Ajasa became one of the most effusive friends of the white man; he refused to endorse any agitation against the British administration; even when the Eleko crisis was on for years, he refused to cast his lot with the patriots who felt that the *Oba* of Lagos should not be shabbily treated, or ignored, in the administration of Lagos. Whilst he had a warm faith in the ability of Nigerians to attain the greatest possible heights in any branch of activity, he was of the view that such capable Nigerians should not be in a hurry or talk of self-government. Sir Donald Kingdon, the Chief Justice of Nigeria in the thirties, summed him up as "the possessor of the attributes of an English gentleman". And the British requited him for his gratitude to them. Lugard made him a member of his Nigerian Council, the obscurantist successor to the far more virile Legislative Council of 1886 to 1912. Of course the United Empire Loyalist was knighted. So much hated was Ajasa, as an excessively Anglophile, that when he died in 1937 one Odeziaku wrote of him from Onitsha as a "Negro opportunist":

That Ajasa was a clever man; a brilliant man, a fine advocate, and a skilled lawyer, in no way mitigates the unstable foundations of his character as an African . . . this Prince of Pecksniffs, this Tetrach of all the West Coast's Tartuffes . . . a traitor to his Blood and Breed.²

¹ *Morel Papers* (F. 9) K. Ajasa to Morel, 17/10/19.

² *Herbert Macaulay Papers*, "Mudis Verbis" by Odeziaku, 7/6/1937.

No less hated was Henry Rawlinson Carr (1863–1945). An intellectual by disposition, his ability shone creditably in the civil service between 1889, when he was induced by Governor Moloney to join the Education Department, and 1924, when he retired as Resident of the Colony of Lagos. He was by far the most highly positioned Nigerian in the civil service throughout his life and although he had a higher-quality mind than most of his white bosses under whom he served—a situation that made him grumble in his soliloquizings—he was not liked by the white who were literally confounded that an African should ever be allowed to rise to the levels he attained in the civil service in colonial Nigeria. In his intellectual loneliness and endless moralizings, Henry Carr vegetated about the absence of high-standards of morality, integrity and justice in colonial Nigeria. He was particularly critical of the educated elite whom, he recorded, were misleading the masses for selfish ends. As mentioned in the previous lecture, Henry Carr was a confirmed worshipper of the white man's culture which he romanticized. For him Nigeria ought to aspire to attain Western civilisation at all hazards, make Christianity the touchstone of behaviour and the cultivation of the moral and social virtues that would make Nigerians the most upright people in the world. To this end he was himself a very good Churchman, very hospitable, charitable and kind. Though born in Lagos he believed that the institution of *Obaship* was an anachronistic obstacle to the evolution of the Nigeria of his vision. The picture of him, which is yet to be revised, is that he ganged up with the white rulers, thought like a white man, refused to move with Nigerians and refused to participate in any movement that criticised the British administration. And since he would not say a word publicly—he had implacable contempt for the non-academic public—but found solace in his big library, it was quite easy for rabble-rousers like Herbert Macaulay to pillory him in public,¹ apparently with impunity.

Two *beni oui oui* ecclesiastics in colonial Nigeria worth mentioning are Isaac Oluwole and A. W. Howells (Senior). The former had the honour of being one of the first set of students produced by Fourah Bay College in 1878 and he became the Principal of CMS Grammar School almost immediately, a position he held until 1893 when he was consecrated an Assistant Bishop of Western Equatorial Africa on 29 June. The circumstances of his consecration as a "Half Bishop" in succession to Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther may be mentioned. He had been recommended for the post precisely because he would

¹ Herbert Macaulay, *Transfer or Retirement, Henry Carr Must Go*, Lagos 1924.

be submissive to the white missionaries, even when the latter were his ecclesiastical juniors. When after Crowther's death the visionary "nationalists" were clamouring for nothing less than an African successor, Isaac Oluwole had confessed to the missionaries in a nocturnal meeting that he was for a white Bishop. As a bishop, he tamely accepted the situation of a subordinate to the white agents of the CMS in Yorubaland who made it plain to their headquarters that this African Bishop should never pretend that he could be their ecclesiastical boss. When in 1908 at the Pan-Anglican Congress in London he was consulted about James Johnson's persistent demand for an independent full African Bishop, Isaac Oluwole assured the CMS that the Church in Nigeria was very happy with white bosses. Time and again Oluwole lectured audiences that Nigerians must be ever grateful to the British for the kind of colonial regime they had established in Nigeria. By nature of very humble disposition, he looked contented with his frugal style of living. Among the chief events of his life, in his own view, were the invitations he received to preach in St Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey—both in London—and the fact that he was on one occasion presented to Royalty in London. His devotion to the Anglican form of Christianity may be gleaned from the following words of an admirer who wrote his obituary: "The good Bishop loved also the order and stateliness of our Anglican services. Every detail of every service in which he took part he attended to in the same manner".¹

A. W. Howells, father of the late Bishop A. W. Howells of Lagos, was consecrated on 24 June 1920; he was overtly a worshipper of the British more than any other ecclesiastic in his time. For him the white man was a kind of demigod, far ahead of the educated elite and deserving of the latter's gratitude for ever. As he declared publicly in Abokuta in 1933, when in Britain he told the CMS "unhesitatingly" that they were right that they did not appoint an African as a successor to Crowther, nor could he contemplate the time when Nigerians would be ripe for absolute control of the Church. He was dismayed that any educated African should spend any thought on Gandhi and Marcus Garvey.² In his view the nationalist pulse should not exist at all in any right-thinking Nigerian. Without attempting to ascertain the similarities of Ogboni, a Yoruba freemasonry, and the white man's freemasonry, he condemned the former on no ground

¹ *In Leisure Hours* September 1932, p. 130.

² *The Fombo Papers*, Appendix U p. 272.

other than that it was African, whilst at the same time indulging in infinite pride in being a freemason in the white man's style. As he lectured the Egbas in their capital on 27 September 1927:

It will no doubt stagger some of you who know me to be a staunch Freemason, to say that I do not at all favour Christians taking titles in an Ogboni House. I know I am treading on dangerous grounds . . . The two religions are quite distinct and separate. If it is only a social custom, I will have nothing to say against it. But I think it is more than that. It is as one of our Poets has sung it, Darkness and the day can never come together. 'Osan on oru ko'ma pade ra: nwon a gba ototọ' and we have the same in 2 Cor. 6—there can be no fellowship between light and darkness.¹

The *beni oui oui* elite collaborators were conscious of themselves as being a distinct group and they articulated their viewpoints brazenly in the *Nigerian Pioneer* and the *Nigerian Daily Times*. They had one thing in common, namely that they were, by and large, a set of people who had little record of personal sufferings in the hands of the British. They were people whose parents were rich enough to send them abroad for professional training in law or medicine or were beneficiaries of British philanthropy. A. W. Howells, Isaac Oluwọle and T. A. O. Ogunbiyi were beneficiaries of the CMS; Kitoyi Ajasa and Sir Adeyemọ Alakija came from wealthy families. S. H. Pearse of Elephant House, Lagos, was a flourishing businessman with activities in Old Calabar, Benin and Lagos. He was grateful for the colonial era in which he was able to garner his wealth.

In the opinion of the *beni oui oui* collaborators in Church and State the educated elite should not be critical of British administration. This was because, they believed, the British had created Nigeria on exceptionally humane and humanitarian lines, at the cost of British talents, British resourcefulness, in men and money. The British must be seen in the spectacles of ideal rulers and guides, consumed with the desire to establish "civilized" government and institutions and inculcate civilised ideas in Nigeria. Since the Nigeria that should matter was that in which British institutions and ideas flourished; in which Nigerians should, in their own interest, acquire the white man's standards—moral, social and political—Nigerians should be patient to learn from those who first set these standards and thereby gradually learn how these standards should be realised. And it was the prerogative of the British rulers, who were apt to be the better judges in these matters, to decide when and how Nigerians would be taught and deemed ripe to be brought along the paths of progress;

¹ *Nigerian Daily Times*, 7/10/1933.

Nigerians should be patient learners. The concept of Nigeria for Nigerians was a heresy and "those who entertain such fancy sentiment should be packed off to desert islands and left to rot away and realise their cherished dreams".¹

The *beni oui oui* educated elite collaborators rejected totally the picture of the white rulers as sinners. In their view the British were benefactors and fathers deserving of eternal gratitude. The British were first and foremost governors in the interest of the governed, executors of the real interests of Nigerians. Were they not spreading Christianity, the greatest religion of mankind? Were the British not establishing primary and secondary schools, nurseries of Nigerian clerks? Were the British not introducing Nigerians to democratic form of government by establishing the Legislative Council? Were the British not tolerant to allow the educated elite to enjoy freedom of speech through the newspaper press? Were the British not introducing a new kind of economy and sophisticated commerce into Nigeria? Were the British not doing their best to reproduce their political, social and economic systems in Nigeria in order that *ultimately* Nigerians could aggregate to British men? What further evidence of love was needed that the British were genuine lovers of Nigeria?

The *beni oui oui* worshippers of the British Raj regarded it as evidence of crass ingratitude for any educated Nigerian to cast a stone at the British. Would the educated elite have been able to create the milieu in which they were able to fulfil themselves without the unlettered majority throwing them out of Nigeria? But for the sabre-rattling presence of the British in colonial Nigeria, would the lawyer have a place in the country? Would the Bishop be obeyed by his flock? Would the tax gatherer's head remain on his trunk? Would the elite order-givers at the local government level be in a position to command respect and obedience? Would the so-called natural rulers be in a position to extract obedience from their subjects? In this respect there is some substance in the following address given to the late Sir Ladapo Ademola on 27 September by a 'Half Bishop'!

Your Highness, you are respected today, because people know that the Resident and their European officials are here to assist you to run the administration and that you have H. E. the Governor of Lagos at your back. Similarly the amount of respect that I enjoy today comes from the fact that I am an assistant Bishop to the Bishop of Lagos, and that I have the whole C.M.S. behind me. Let them know that I have not these bodies at my disposal, and I

¹ *ibid.*, 10/1/1934.

will almost be stoned in the streets. That to my mind, is exactly your position as the Alake. Let me urge you to cultivate as much as you can the friendliness and support of such persons: and you will be secure.¹

Racial harmony was the cornerstone of the political doctrine of the *beni oui oui* educated elite collaborators. They deplored the anti-government phillipics of the Herbert Macaulays who were dismissed as doctrinaire and irrational enemies of the true friends of Nigeria. Could Nigeria be developed without the aid and guidance of the traduced British? Was irresponsible hostility towards the British administration the best way to enlist the support of the white man for the development of Nigeria? What evidence was there, asked some of the *beni oui oui* educated elite leaders, that the traducers of the British had the abiding and true interests of the masses at heart? Were they not arch-deceivers of the masses, whom they persuaded to surrender money in order to allow the agitators to put the alleged grievances of Nigerians to the British Government in Britain? Were they not arch-exploiters of the market women for their selfish elitist political interest? As Dr Oguntola Sapara assessed Herbert Macaulay as early as June 1913, an assessment more or less endorsed later by Obafemi Awolowo:

This man Herbert Macaulay has almost given up surveying for political agitating profession and he makes his money out of misrepresenting the actions of the Government—thereby get people to swim in his tide and he exploits them; and no action is too mean for him to perpetrate. The £340 he got from Warri chiefs he paid into his private account; and the day after its receipt £300 was withdrawn by him out of it to pay for Walkden's mortgage debt and secured the papers in connection with his marina property which was sold the next day to Mr Peter Thomas for £2,300. He swindled the Government on Crown Lands to such an extent that a public commission had to be set up to enquire into his conduct and through his family managed to get in a resignation instead of a dismissal.²

The *beni oui oui* educated elite collaborators were convinced that they were lovers of Nigeria and seekers after her best interest. In contrast they believed that the assailants of the British administration were the real enemies of the country. Henry Carr, for instance, saw himself as a patriot and nationalist and believed that his own views were the soundest. Adeyemo Alakija believed that he was not the stooge of the white man but a conscious and conscientious worker in the interest of "my country". As early as 1920 he had advocated a

¹ *ibid.*, 7/10/1933.

² *Morel Papers*. O. Sapara to Morel 19/6/1913.

comprehensive literary education, "especially for the masses, as will ensure to them the chances of earning a decent living", equality of opportunity for all in Nigeria irrespective of creed or colour, a liberal and light tax system for the people in the interior and "schemes by which employment would always be assured to the youths of the country".¹ He saw himself approaching the British rulers for such reforms "with sanity, honesty and with a due regard to government". Since his return from England in 1913, he claimed, he had been keenly interested in the affairs of Nigeria. He disowned completely any picture of him as a betrayer of the interest of the country. As he declared in 1926:

I realize that my political opponents have always used against me with the masses the argument that I am too friendly with Europeans, but I would ask have I at any time hurt the interest of any of my countrymen because I have white men as friends? The interest of Europeans and Africans in this country are very closely interwoven and no one section of them can do without the other, and any man who tells my countrymen the contrary is only deceiving them. As a few others of my countrymen have done before me, my aim is to act as the bridge connecting the two sections, to understand the white man's view and interpret it to my countrymen and to interpret to Europeans the needs and aspirations of my countrymen . . . many an African individually, and many a native cause have I assisted by this very association for which I am held up to the hatred and obloquy of my own people.²

The validity of the assertions and claims of the *beni oui oui* educated elite collaborators, that they identified the true interests of Nigeria and Nigerians, is open to question. Surely they were utterly blind to the shortcomings of their white rulers. They lacked the moral courage to point out to the British administrators the acts of injustice and oppression, of the inhumanity of man to man, in which several British officials indulged. In any case were these Anglophiles correct in their assumption that the British were innocent and altruistic builders of a Nigerian nation? For after all the colonial conquest and rule of Nigeria rested on the principle of Might constituting Right; colonial rule saw the manipulation of man by man, of the Nigerian by the British. Henceforth Nigerians had to do the bidding of the white man to gratify his economic appetite or increase the prestige of his country as a colonial power. It would be untrue to say that all the colonial rulers were mere protectors of European trade and interests; in a certain measure some of them were imbued with a sense of mission, regarding it as a divine duty to provide "good government", security

¹ *Herbert Macaulay Papers*. A. Alakija "Why I seek your Votes".

² *ibid.*

and a new kind of order for Nigerians. But this is not to say that the British colonial rulers did not continue to prefer imperial to Nigerian interests, or that when they acted in what they honestly believed to be the interests of Nigerians, the latter agreed with them or were wrong if they agreed.

It is difficult to understand why, like their deluded predecessors, the *beni oui oui* educated elite collaborators believed that the British were in Nigeria to teach Nigerians to rule themselves. For by their behaviour their white masters illustrated that Britain was grooming Nigerians for a permanent occupation by the British. The universal belief among the British rulers in Church and State was that Nigerians were unable to govern themselves; their existence as thinking and intelligent men was unrecognized. As colonial rule strengthened and lengthened the *beni oui oui* collaborators ought to have seen through the veil, that the policy in vogue was that of British heads and Nigerian hands. They ought to have perceived that the British would not relinquish power unless they were forced to do so. Nigerians, it was believed by a few extremist white rulers, lacked the power of inductive character. Little wonder that when power and authority had to be devolved upon Nigerians in Church and State there were not wanting well-meaning patriotic British citizens who emphasized the unripeness of Nigerians for self-government. In his address to the First Provincial Synod, held in Freetown in April 1951, the Archbishop of Canterbury minced no words to emphasize that the creation of the Province of West Africa, which was to give a measure of responsible government to West African Anglicans, should not make the latter feel that they, as yet, could understand what freedom meant, how much more how to use it; that for this they must continue to look to the white man for guidance:

And yet in a profound sense the spirit of freedom has moved strongly among our British people and the love of it has been deep in such hearts. So it is that we have much more to offer you in West Africa still as you get more and more closely grips with this grand trial of freedom. We must be humble enough to take such help and guidance in a partnership of mutual understanding and true confidence, of patient brotherhood and wise judgment.¹

No less unwilling to see the British quit Nigeria until the end of the Second World War were the verbal assailants of the British administration who have gone down in false history as nationalists. Nothing

¹ N.A.I. R.P. 45, "Pastoral Letter Issued by the Bishop of the Province of West Africa Assembled in conference at their First Provincial Synod held in Freetown from 18th-25th April 1951", Address by Archbishop of Canterbury pp. 9-10.

is as untrue as the picture so often painted of the less *beni oui oui* collaborators like Herbert Macaulay, Nnamdi Azikiwe and Obafemi Awolowo for the period before the Second World War as crusaders for a Nigerians' Nigeria. In this respect Herbert Macaulay, whose career of agitation within the colonial frontiers more or less spans fifty years (1907-1946) is the best illustration.

Herbert Samuel Heleas Macaulay was born in 1864 to the distinguished Crowther family. His father, Thomas Babington Macaulay, was the opener and first principal of the first secondary grammar school in Nigeria, his mother Abigail, a daughter of Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther. By the era of the scramble Herbert Macaulay had witnessed enough of British economic imperialism to turn him into a determined foe of colonial establishment and rule. For two of his uncles, who invested in the trade of the Niger, were squeezed out by the no-nonsense anti-African policy of the imperial company of Taubman Goldie, just as his mother lost her lucrative trade with the Nupe through the Niger river. Then another uncle, the Reverend H. S. Macaulay of Asaba, was with his grandfather the Bishop, a victim of the nihilistic quixotic and negrophobic CMS missionaries in 1890-1891, an event that darkened the last days of Bishop Crowther. A beneficiary of a scholarship award from the Lagos Government in 1890, he studied surveying and civil engineering in Britain and came back in 1893, only to be discriminated against with a salary much lower than that of an unqualified white civil servant in the Department of Works. In 1898 he committed acts of fraud against the Crown and deserved dismissal and imprisonment but because he was the Bishop's grandson he was allowed to resign.¹ In 1913 he was convicted to a sentence of two years for misappropriating the will of a widow of which he had been entrusted as an Executor. By this time, also, he was accused of misappropriating funds collected in the interior in the name of the Lagos Auxiliary of the Aborigines Protection Society, funds with which that organization promised to use to fight the annexationist threat of the British to land in Southern Nigeria.²

Against this background it would have been expected that he would be an unyielding opponent of establishment of British rule over Nigeria. But throughout his career he never opposed the advent of the British. To this extent, and it is by far the most important thing, he was a collaborator. But not only did he not range himself

¹ C.O. 147/135 G. C. Denton to Chamberlain 4/10/1898.

² *Nigerian Chronicle*. 12/9/1913.

on the side of the unlettered resisters to the invasion of Nigeria: he saw himself culturally and religiously a part of the British invasion and establishment of colonial rule in Nigeria. He did not take part in the cultural awakening of the last years of the nineteenth century, wearing till death his alliterative neo-colonialist names; he wore European clothes throughout his life, normally with a bow-tie. Before 1900 he had joined the white man's masonic lodge and although his newspaper, *The Daily News*, endorsed the founding of the "Christian Ogboni Fraternity" he never abandoned the white man's for this indigenous freemasonry. In the same manner although he recognized the value of the so-called African Churches in the religious emancipation of Nigeria, he would never join that organization but remained an Anglican. There was no question of his applying his musical talents in the direction of African music; rather he became skilled in the white man's music and musical instrument.

Herbert Macaulay believed that the greatest event in Nigeria was the establishment of British rule. Hence the fact that he did not think of Nigeria as a separate entity, but only as a unit within the organic whole of the British Empire. He was convinced that it was only as a British citizen that the Nigerian should think; his conceptions of liberty, law and justice were precisely those which the British had been having since the days of the Magna Carta and Habeas Corpus.¹ Time without number he laboured to impress it upon the Nigerian public that the educated elite in West Africa were fully qualified, morally and intellectually, to be offered citizenship of the commonwealth. The alpha and omega of his wish was that Nigerians should "share in the glory and greatness of British progress and civilization". In this grand empire there was to be no distinction of race, creed or colour and any Nigerian should be able to say wherever he went "CIVIS BRITANNICUS SUM".²

The issues on which Herbert Macaulay spent his resourcefulness and for which he has been wrongly proclaimed a nationalist fighter, were those in which he felt the educated elite had not been treated under British concepts of justice, personal liberty and law. In this he was consistent. It was in his quest for British justice that he championed the case of the Eleko; that he backed up Chief Oluwa in the famous Apapa land case; that he was bitterly opposed to the establishment of a colonial Church; that he would not be treated as a second class British citizen; that he protested with all the venom at his disposal

¹ *Herbert Macaulay Papers*, "Citizenship Within the British Empire", by Herbert Macaulay.

² *ibid.*

against the racist policy of the British rulers which, he believed, were patently contradictory to the concept of the British Commonwealth. In his view the greatest crime of the Anglophile group was that they did not recognize, or rather seemed incapable of recognizing, their rights as citizens of the British Commonwealth, which rights and privileges were no less equal than those of the white members. The crime of the racist British officials in Nigeria, he was convinced, was that they denied the right of citizenship of the empire to Nigerians. And always great was his anger whenever these officials introduced laws which the history of the Commonwealth had revealed clearly were incompatible with the status of "British subjects". In this respect he opposed any attempt to impose "poll-tax" on "British subjects". This would be contravening the principle of "no taxation without representation". He forcefully challenged the right of the British administration in Nigeria to tax "British subjects", or enact any legislation as such without their prior consent. In the same vein he was inveterately opposed to the idea of the British introducing the Native Court system or Native Administration kind of local government to the Lagos Colony. The implication was clear: the rest of Nigerians outside the Colony were lower in status and he said so.

Herbert Macaulay would not let any opportunity slip to educate the rest of the Nigerian society about the virtues of British Colonial rule and the obligations of Nigerians to the empire.¹ Writing in the maiden issue of *The African Railway Man* in January 1938 Herbert Macaulay, who eschewed violence and would never endorse strikes by workers, educated the workers about the British whom he described as "the greatest philanthropists this world has ever seen or known; men highly imbued with the highest and noblest sense of that Christian principle and practice of charity; men absolutely unequalled as the best and most illustrious examples of British statesmen who had inherited Rights which cost their Sires their blood; sons of the British Isles who became men of light and leading in England".² For Herbert Macaulay the Nigerian people should stand by the British at all hazards; whatever trials and afflictions being experienced by

¹ It should be remarked that Herbert Macaulay did not have to cultivate the good will of the British colonial masters of whom he had unconcealed bad opinion and who in turn regarded him as a rabble-rouser and an irresponsible agitator. It should be noted, too, that he was oblivious of the fact that the British Empire consisted of two kinds of citizens—those in the Dominions (the first class citizens as defined by the Statute of Westminster in 1931) and those in the Protectorates (second class citizens) of which Nigeria was a part.

² *Herbert Macaulay Papers*. Herbert Macaulay "Our British Connection", *The African Railway Man*, Vol. 1 No. 1, January 1938.

Britain were the trials and afflictions of all the empire, including Nigeria. Hence during the Second World War he appealed to Nigerians that they should never be found wanting in loyalty to Britain. He said:

ALLEGIANCE POUNDS; CONSTANCY SHILLINGS: and LOYALTY PENCE

For the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade by the British Parliament; For the innumerable blessings of the PAX BRITANNICA: For the Liberty of the subject: For the incalculable advantages of education; For protection from Foreign Powers: For free and Lawful Trade: For Religious Toleration: For our Security of Tenure: For the Liberty of the Press; For the establishment and Maintenance of Order and Good Government . . . The Pax Britannica means, that PEACE in the form of Liberty in Tranquillity, imposed by British Rule everywhere, the blessings of which we all in Lagos, and throughout the Northern and Southern Provinces of Nigeria, have for many years enjoyed, and are even today enjoying under British rule.¹

For Herbert Macaulay, then, the concept of Nigeria was merely geographical: it was neither cultural nor political, except in the global context of the British Empire. This is the substance of his assimilationist stance. Nigerians were to dissolve themselves culturally and mentally into Anglo-Saxons and thereby become citizens of a Britain-centred empire. Such assimilated Nigerians were the first-class citizens, "British subjects", whose precedence over the unlettered was beyond question. It was a negation of a Nigerian sovereign nation with a destiny of its own different from that of any other nation; with a culture of its own legitimate and distinct; with an identity that would make it a distinct member of the comity of nations. Herbert Macaulay's concept was supranational, embracing all races, making them one on the imperial platform. But it was a British empire, not a commonwealth: an empire in which the British were more than equals, with their culture holding sway.

No less a blow to Nigeria's stature as a sovereign nation is Herbert Macaulay's concept and definition of citizenship, according to which the Nigerian policy would be a multi-national one and non-Nigerians in terms of cultural heritage or the pigmentation of their skin could not only become members but rank higher than unlettered Nigerians. *The Civis Britannicus Sum* label would qualify non-Nigerian members of the British Empire for automatic citizenship, just as it would qualify Nigerian assimilationists for automatic citizenship in other parts of the empire. It was a citizenship that was marketable, transcending geographical frontiers and ignoring the colour of the skin.

¹ *ibid.*, Herbert Macaulay, "Lagos Honour Your Cheque", 5/9/1944

It must not be imagined that this United Empire Loyalist was only trying to appease the British colonial masters; that there was any credibility gap in his reiterated profession of loyalty to the British Empire. For Herbert Macaulay it was a matter of conviction, a conviction as strong as that of a Christian missionary. He never sought to appease the British officials, whose actions indicated in bold relief that his concept of the British empire was different from that for which he was crusading, whom he regarded as betrayers of his sublime concept and for whom he had severe language.

All that has been said about Herbert Macaulay reveals clearly that, ironically, quientessentially he was closer to Henry Carr—his mortal enemy he hated specially as a *beni oui oui* collaborator—than he imagined. Firstly, he was manacled to Anglo-Saxon culture and derived immeasurable inspiration from Britain's headship of the empire, just as Henry Carr believed in the monoculture of Europeans. Secondly he was no less a deluded hybrid than Henry Carr and his ilk. He was naive to believe in an abstract empire in which equality of races, justice and humanity obliterated sentiments, prejudices and injustice.

It may sound strange to students of the history of the Commonwealth that at a time when Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Mackenzie King of Canada, and J. C. Smuts and J. B. M. Hertzog of South Africa were identifying and asserting national interests at the expense of the Commonwealth; when Eamond De Valera and the Sinn Fein and W. B. Yeats (in his poetry) were praying for a demise of the Commonwealth, educated Nigerians, and in particular the so-called fire-eater nationalists led by Herbert Macaulay, should be seeing the British empire in idyllic and romantic terms. And that in spite of the fact that these educated elite were much worse sufferers in the hands of the British rulers than the white members of the Commonwealth. What greater apologist for the empire could you have than Herbert Macaulay?

Indeed it is clear from the records that Hebert Macaulay was not a bit interested in nationalist agitation as such. He showed no interest whatsoever in the activities of the National Congress of British West Africa, which between 1920 and 1929 attempted to define special and specific interest of Africans.¹ Nor was he infected with the contagion of Garveyism! In vain was he persuaded by two pan-Negro organisations outside Nigeria to participate in their activities

¹ For details of this movement and participants see Magnus J. Sampson, *West African Leadership* London, 1951.

—in 1930 the “League Against Imperialism and for National Independence” based in Berlin and which had been in existence for about ten years;¹ and in 1938 “The League of Coloured Peoples” based in London. In vain did the latter appeal to Herbert Macaulay that: “we must make it unmistakably clear that we will be satisfied with nothing less than self-government. Our demand is both to be trained and to train ourselves for this goal”.²

And yet this unabashed apologist for, and defender of, British Colonial Nigeria has gone down in panegyrics as “Gandhi” of West Africa, Defender of Native Rights and Liberties, Napoleon of Nigerian Politics, “a true leader of indigenous African thought”, a crusader “for the liberation of Africa and the happiness of her sons and suffering daughters and children”. Of him the late Eyo Ita penned in 1949: “Ah immortal Herbert Macaulay, you were eternally right when you dared to stand up against abuses, victimization and persecutions demanding that every God’s child has an indisputable right to demand opportunity for participation in the rule of his country, opportunities for unshackled development of African enterprise”.³

While Herbert Macaulay and his ilk were being ensnared and enslaved by the Anglo-Saxon culture and proclaiming a London-centred Empire, some of the much vilified *beni oui oui* collaborators were recording enduring nationally significant achievements in cultural matters. Perhaps the most important in this group was Thomas Adeshina Jacobson Ogunbiyi, the architect of the Christian Ogboni Society which was founded in 1914 and which twenty years later began to be called Reformed Ogboni Fraternity.⁴

T. A. J. Ogunbiyi was born on 9 August 1867 to a so-called natural chief, Chief Jacob Ogunbiyi, one of the few indigenes of Lagos to embrace Christianity. It was Chief Ogunbiyi’s enthusiasm for and belief in Christianity as a patent force for material and social progress, rather than any desire or inclination or ambition of his son, that persuaded Adeshina to go to school at all and to accept to make his career in the Church. According to his own testimony⁵ his original ambition was to become a farmer, and after his father had persuaded him to go to school to become a printer. He was lured to the Christian ministry with

¹ *Herbert Macaulay Papers*. League Against Imperialism and for National Independence (Berlin) to Herbert Macaulay 25/9/1930.

² *ibid.*, The League of Coloured People to Herbert Macaulay 3/12/1939.

³ Eyo Ita, *The Revolt of the Liberal Spirit in Nigeria*, Calabar 1949, p. 8.

⁴ *Herbert Macaulay Papers*, Bishop of Lagos to Archdeacon Phillips 10/8/1934. Up to this date the name of the cult remained “Christian Ogbeni Society”.

⁵ CMS G3/A2/09 Autobiographical Sketch by T. A. J. Ogunbiyi dated 15/2/1899.

promise of University studentship in Fourah Bay. All along Christianity had been only skin-deep in him, the pull of the esoteric elements of African Traditional Religion remaining strong with him. Initiated into the *Adamuorisha* cult, a secret society peculiar to the indigenes of Lagos, as a child his curiosity into the white man's freemasonry left him dissatisfied as his enforced curiosity into Christianity had left him spiritually unfulfilled. By 1900 he had become convinced that the Christian Church in Nigeria could not become firmly-rooted except *via* an indigenous cult and that indigenous freemasonry was infinitely preferable to the alien imported freemasonry in which the educated elite loved to take pride. He therefore resolved to found the Christian Ogboni Society in 1900, in the hope of achieving both objectives. However his colleagues in the Church, who had never seen Christianity and the white man's freemasonry as being incompatible, were frightened, believing that indigenous freemasonry was irretrievably 'pagan' and impossible of reform. Consequently Ogunbiyi and his disciples—lawyers, medical doctors and ministers of religion—did not take the decisive step until 18 December 1914 when the first and Supreme Conclave was founded in Lagos. Between 1916 and 1934 Ogunbiyi and his followers faced very stiff opposition from ecclesiastical superiors who tabooed its existence but by the outbreak of the Second World War the secret society had begun to march from strength to strength, the Church absolutely powerless to do anything about it, with prominent laymen and ministers of the gospel as members.

With the Christian Ogboni Society Ogunbiyi challenged the methods hitherto adopted by Christian missions to spread Christianity. His primary argument was that Christianity was not intended by its Founder to be fully understood by every Dick and Harry. Only a few people, the "Elect", could understand it fully and that before this few could have this special knowledge they must take an oath and be initiated into rites so that they might achieve "certain obligations, purity of life, purity of purpose and charity, with passwords—the Lord's prayer—and the creed, with pass-grip which unfortunately is lost to the world today but is known in Holy Writ as "right hand of fellowship". In the view of members of the Christian Ogboni Society, Christian adherents would not be able to practise Christianity until and unless biblical theology was indigenized and grafted upon Yoruba freemasonry. "We can only have fellowship one with another by initiation into a mystery", lectured

Ogunbiyi, "by undertaking certain obligations through oath by covenant or sacrament, by entering into mutual pact for a common cause or purpose".¹

Its theological challenge to the Christian Church in Nigeria apart, the Reformed Ogboni Fraternity is an expression of successful cultural nationalism. Apart from spreading all over Nigeria, embracing members of different ethnic groups, it puts thousands of the educated elite on one platform where they share a common feeling of togetherness and brotherliness in ways and to a degree not achieved by any other institution. Moreover the Reformed Ogboni Fraternity, with its passwords and oath in Yoruba, has effectively rivalled the myriads of masonic Lodges in Nigeria and has a number of non-Nigerians and the white as members. In 1948 it established a conclave in London.

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From the different portraits of Herbert Macaulay and T. A. J. Ogunbiyi that have been presented, it is clear that the distinction that it has become the fashion to make between the Anglophile and so-called nationalist collaborators is not along the affirmed direction; that it would be invidious to assert that one group was a greater collaborator than the other; that it all depends on the terms of reference or the framework one chooses to employ; that they were all collaborators with the British Raj.

The educated elite had necessarily to be collaborators with the British Raj if their social and material aspirations were to be fulfilled. It was within the context of British Nigeria that they had to operate and think and to which they owed their liberties to set up business enterprises or legal practice or clinics or a newspaper empire or go abroad to the white man's country, only to further be inducted into the white man's ideas, world view and culture. Indeed, even after 1943 when the self-government concept was revived by Nnamdi Azikiwe and political organizations began to be formed, the educated elite's vision remained essentially the same—how to step into the shoes of the colonial masters, how to become the heirs of the British whom they began to see as the procurers of the stage for them. Whilst they recognized that they were not only a tiny minority and that they were less popular than the white colonial masters and the so-called natural rulers, they were only too conscious of the fact that they

¹ *Nigerian Daily Times*, 31/5/1933.

would inherit the British-created Nigeria. That heritage they conceived as a prescriptive right, "natural rights", as one of their spokesmen put it. Declared he:

It must be realised now and for all time that this articulate minority are destined to rule the country. It is their heritage. It is they who must be trained in the art of government so as to enable them to take over complete control of the affairs of their country. Their regime may be delayed, but it cannot be precluded.¹

It was logical that it was to the collaborators with them, the educated elite, to whom the British began to transfer power in 1951. Apart from the fact that in the civil service, in the Church, in local government and even in the running of the business houses the educated elite had been part of the colonial era, there was the fact that they had learned the art of government, Westminster model, from the British; the colonial service tradition of an unfettered bureaucracy; maintenance of law and order, through a standing army and police; the schools and higher institutions of learning through which the culture and thought-pattern of the West were being effectively propagated; the judiciary, a brazen copy of the British judiciary with the paraphernalia and procedural details; the English language, the greatest instrument for the diffusion of English ideas, and till this day Britain's greatest colonial legacy; the Church through which the Western version of institutionalized Christianity would continue to be spread.

The transfer of power which began in 1951 was accompanied by a new evaluation of the educated elite by the colonial masters. The white officials of yesterday who had vilified the educated elite as congenitally incapable of leading the masses, largely because the former were competitors, began to sing a different song, to genuflect and help the educated class to vastly increase their number. In the process the so-called Natural Rulers were abandoned with shocking-levity,² allowed to be brushed aside or humiliated with impunity by the educated elite. Socially birth had ceased to count. With very few exceptions—the *Saro* had disappeared from the ranks of the leaders—they were offspring of the free in the colonial situation. But, except in the north, they were invariably people of humble origins from Nazareths, many of them resolved on having their pound of flesh

¹ Obafemi Awolowo, *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, London 1947, p. 63.

² T. M. Aluko's latest novel, *His Worshipful Majesty*. (London 1973), has the theme of conflict between a natural ruler and one of the new civil servants in the early 1950s.

from the so-called natural rulers whom they had hated as stooges of the British. They were resolved on modernizing Nigeria economically, industrially and socially, far more than the British had done or ever would have done for a long time. However their colonial heritage was not a bed of roses: politically it became a thorn of thistles which they and their British mentors had planted long before attainment of independence. It is this thorn of thistles that will be the subject of the next lecture.



III

WINDSOWERS

Their ambition to emancipate mother Africa evaporates . . . they are tribesmen, horrible tribesmen. They are not Africans, but Efiks and Ibos. They are not Nigerians but Yorubas, Hausa, and Ibibios and what-nots, very static in their loyalty. Eyo Ita, *The Revolt of the Liberal Spirit*.

Windsowers

By and large for a hundred years, the educated elite retained the characteristics which formed the substance of our earlier lectures. Although by 1940 most of them were "made in Nigeria" and the hegemony of the *Saro* and their offspring was over, they remained hybrids. Neither the dropping of alien names, nor adoption of national dress, nor the purchase of a chieftaincy title, nor membership of indigenous cults, can wipe out hybridism completely among this class of mentally enslaved Nigerians. Again, at least up to 1950, the educated elite remained victims of self-made delusions and hallucinations: they went on imagining that they were national figures, authentic spokesmen for all Nigeria, acceptable as leaders to all Nigerians.¹ And finally, the educated elite remained collaborators with the British.

The last phase of their collaboration with the British about the transfer of power and authority to them between 1951 and 1960 was the most dangerous for Nigeria. For both the British and the educated elite knew only too well that neither of them had been working consciously and conscientiously towards evolution of a crisis-free Nigerian nation-state; both knew that the concept of a Nigerian nation being galvanized by them had never entered their thoughts; that there were in existence centrifugal forces, which they either created or were creating, or strengthened or were strengthening, that must lead Nigeria into cataclysm. They knew that all was not well, yet they went on pretending that the stage had been well set for the birth of a cohesive and united Nigeria.² Their errors of omission and commission were the wind they sowed. The result was the whirlwind

¹ Some of the educated elite leaders were aware that they were unpopular and that they did not represent the wishes of the masses. Thus Obafemi Awolowo wrote in *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, (London 1947), p. 32: "Given a choice from among white officials, chiefs, and educated Nigerians as the principal rulers of the country, illiterate man today would exercise his preference for the three in order in which they are named. He is convinced and has good reasons to be, that he can always get better treatment from the white man than he could hope to get from the chiefs, and the educated elements". But in the same breath he asserted that the leadership of the educated elite was a "must" for the masses for they "were qualified".

² One of the leading "windsowers" has since 1966 heaped all blame on the British, ridiculously absolving the windsowers from any blame. See Obafemi Awolowo *The People's Republic* (Oxford 1968) pp. 60 & 68. But in the same book Awolowo records words and visions of statesmanship which he did not have, nor recorded, in the pre-independence period.

of the civil war, a whirlwind which the British would not reap at all, which the educated elite reaped only slightly but which the masses, who did not participate consciously in the sowing, were to reap abundantly.

The British rulers in Nigeria knew that they had never set as a, or their, goal the building of a Nigerian nation; that they had never intended to prepare the educated elite for a leadership role; that they had all the time had the worst opinion of the educated elite; that the educated elite were evincing more the qualities of politicians than of statesmen; that their semi-Nigerian collaborators were anything but paragons of the virtues of disinterested patriotism and pan-Nigerianism; that none of these agitators for transfer of power to them attained a stature that could be described as national; that the interests of these hybridized Nigerians were dangerously sectional, inherently in conflict with the interests of other classes in Nigeria. As a well-intentioned, though ethnocentric, British observer of the Nigerian scene wrote in 1950; "Will you think for the moment of prominent men whose names spring to your mind now in Nigeria? Are there even among *them* such as you feel could safely lead the destinies of a united Nigeria, or even a section of Nigeria, into happiness, prosperity, unity and freedom? I know of none".¹

And yet in the decade of collaboration about transfer of power the British, more in their own selfish national interest than in response to, or fear of, the so-called nationalist agitation by the educated elite, decided to grant independence to Nigeria. With unconscionable levity they closed their eyes to the seeds of political instability they had sown; they behaved as if all was well, and hurried to hush up the differences that had developed openly in the early fifties between the educated elite from the North and South. The educated elite themselves who deep in their hearts were fully aware of the centrifugal forces in Nigeria, of which themselves were one, began to sink their differences between 1956 and 1960 with an amazing ease.² They began to behave as if Nigeria was about to be launched on a new course of progress and development; of political stability; of harmonious relations, neighbourliness and peaceful co-existence among the peoples; as if the voice and threat of secession had not been issued by a part of British colonial Nigeria, the North. With criminal levity they wished away the gargantuan problems of the country; they saw themselves more

¹ Walter R. S. Miller, *For Africans Only* London 1950, p. 34.

² The ease with which accord was reached by the political parties after 1956 is well discussed in biography of Adegoke Adelabu, W. J. Post and George D. Jenkins, *The Price of Liberty*, Cambridge 1973. pp. 351-394.

as what they should become, nation-makers, than what they actually were: dysfunctional agents who would push Nigeria towards her Niagara and thereby bring disaster upon their country. The spectacle in which they saw themselves, as a centripetal rather than as a centrifugal factor, was a new kind of illusion. It was such an illusion that made them view the ease with which they obtained power from the British—"on the platter of gold"—out of the Nigerian context. Or, as Tafawa Balewa put it in the Independence Motion in the House of Representatives on 14 January 1960: "On the whole, Mr Speaker, we and the British have got on very well together and the road to Independence has not seen any bloodshed or ill-feeling between us and the British".¹

Hence the euphoria, the solemnity, the dignity and the grandeur that marked the transfer of sovereignty to the educated elite at midnight on 30 September, 1960. Quite unreflectingly the thousands of Nigerian witnesses of the event in Lagos, including all the political leaders who had urged a quick termination of British rule, sang with gusto the so-called National Anthem that had been composed by an alien. Oblivious of their verbal pugilism and the tribal chauvinism they had whipped up in the formation and leadership of their political parties, the new Nigerian leaders exhibited a fraternal spirit, as if a sense of Nigerian community had developed already in the country. For these educated elite leaders the ecstasies of independence were irresistibly overwhelming as they contemplated the significance of the event: an end to the one hundred and ten years (1850-1960) of wrongs. They were now come to their inheritance, an inheritance greater than had been dreamed by their deluded visionary predecessors of the pre-colonial days. They were henceforth to assume leadership of an enormously rich country, seemingly united. Internationally, as some observers hastened to prophesy, the emergence of a sovereign Nigeria would prick the bubble of the pride of the smaller African countries, particularly of Ghana, which had obtained independence earlier. The leaders were aware of the large stature that awaited them on the international scene, for with the event of that mid-night one out of seven Africans became free from colonial rule. A sense of destiny filled the air.

Not that the masses, on whose backs the educated elite had been riding for a decade, were unaware of, or unaffected by, the epochal drama of that midnight. All over the country vigils were kept and

¹ *Nigeria Asks for Independence*, p. 3.

for weeks thereafter, characteristically in the Nigerian fashion, prodigality was displayed in respect of clothing, wining, dining and dancing. Foreign guests, particularly the British (to whom the educated elite were the most grateful), on whom hospitality was lavished on a scale beyond their experience in Europe and the New World, and who were made to see only the European-type spots in the country, were given the impression of an affluent Nigerian society. Rejoicings were climaxed with the swearing-in ceremony of the first and only Governor-General of the Federation, Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, on 16 November 1960. A vivacious, prepossessing and athletic personality, around whom myth and halo had gathered for twenty-five years, even outside Nigeria, he had been a crowd-puller in many parts of Nigeria in the last years of agitation for independence. In the address which this charismatic leader of the educated elite gave on the occasion, he created an atmosphere of euphoria with his drenching rhetoric. Literally he sang his *nunc dimittis*. As far as he was concerned, he said, his mission had been fulfilled: Nigeria had safely reached the Promised Land. The history of the colonial era was not worth more than three short sentences: "The British came here in 1851 and found us hopelessly divided in tribal compartments. When Britain transferred power to us on 1st of October 1960, we were no longer an expression of geography but a reality of history... we have crystallized common nationality".¹

And yet for all who had eyes to see, the unmeasured optimism and sense of accomplishment of the leaders, the semblance of unity and extravagant merry-making which featured prominently in the independence celebrations—were all dangerous delusions. For rightly perceived October 1, 1960 created the Nigerian nation-state, not the Nigerian nation. And the non-emergence of a Nigerian nation by 1960 was, to a considerable extent, the making of those very leaders who at independence began to indulge in platitudes; they had all built up their followerships on the fulcrum of tribal jingoism in order to win immediate personal gains which were to be ultimate ruin to Nigeria. Indeed Nnamdi Azikiwe could hardly ignore the fact that, at least in the realm of ruinous personal rivalry, he and his colleagues had sown the wind; that no common nationality had been crystallized; that the signs were there that, rather than work together, the educated elite would allow personal rivalries and tribal considerations to vitiate mutual cooperation. Declared he ominously on that same occasion on 16 November: "Come and join Abubakar with me, Sardauna,

¹ N.A.I. Inaugural titled "Respect for Human Dignity".

Awolowo, Akintola, Osadebay, Okpara, Ikoku, Aminu Kano, Ibrahim Imam and Tarka. Let us bind the nation's wound and let us heal the breaches of the past so that in forging our nation there shall emerge on this continent a hate-free, fear-free and greed-free people, who shall be in the vanguard of a world task before whose assignment is not only to revive the stature of man in Africa but to restore the dignity of man in the world".

Before examining in some detail the way and manner in which the educated elite had sown the wind of tribalism, of secession, of personal rivalries, of greed, of exploitation of the masses for their personal ends—long before 1960—it is pertinent to define and illustrate the part which had been played by the British rulers with whom the elite had collaborated in pushing Nigeria inexorably to the disasters of the sixties.

The biggest and most enduring achievement of the British in Nigeria was the infrastructure of a modern Nigeria which laid, in a large measure, the type envisioned by the pre-colonial deluded hybrids. Only the British, or a colonial power, could have laid such a foundation—the largest political entity on the continent, under one flag; the iron-horse and motorable roads; banks and modern forms of currency; sea and air ports; arteries of trade within the country, all, integrated in the world economy; Western-style medical science; Western-style education; pipe-borne water and electric light; telecommunication; the bureaucratic form of administration and so on.¹

That the British attempted to build and did build well in some directions is beyond dispute. Their heirs, the educated elite, owe to the British the international boundaries which determine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country which the army, a branch of the educated elite, are committed to defend at all hazards. It is also to the British that the educated elite should be grateful for making them the rulers over the *Emirs*, the so-called natural rulers, and the unlettered inarticulate overwhelming majority in the country who are yet to be welded into a nation. Even in the provision of social amenities, the British recorded notable achievements, though these were far much less than the educated elite were to achieve within a few years of the attainment of independence.

¹ Obafemi Awolowo acknowledges this in his characteristic candour and categorical language. *The People's Republic*, p. 61: "Leaving their motives aside, the good that the British did in Nigeria, in material terms, is considerable and cannot be obliterated. They brought peace, order, good government, and flourishing commerce to a territory bedevilled and torn asunder by petty strifes and senseless wars. The credit belongs absolutely to them that Nigeria as we know it today, was their exclusive and unaided creation. In other words, without British rule, there would have been no Nigeria."

However in other directions, mainly political, the British failed to build, or built very badly indeed. Firstly until fifteen years to independence—one might even say ten—the British made no conscious effort to prepare Nigerians for self-rule. The essence of the matter is that until after the Second World War, when instructions from the Colonial Office made them accept that the British would hand over power to Nigerians, the British officials never thought that colonial rule would ever come to an end. Partly because the educated elite were known to be their rivals, and partly because they believed that Africans were incapable of self-rule, British officials adduced different kinds of argument to pronounce their Nigerian rivals for power as unfit for political power. Some argued that it would be putting the poor unlettered majority in the hands of the wealthy and rapacious few; others contended that the unlettered majority had come to accept the white man as the natural ruler and would shudder to come under African rule. Thus declared the Acting Chief Secretary to the Government in the Legislative Council on 7 March 1938 on the matter of educated Africans who were demanding to be employed as District Officers or Assistant District Officers:

In the first place public opinion would at the present be strongly opposed to such appointments. Native Authorities would strongly resent being compelled to turn for advice in administrative, as opposed to technical matters, to Nigerians coming from other parts of the country, and a Nigerian Administrative Officer in his own country would be in the exceedingly difficult position of having to offer advice to chiefs and others who, in native eyes, are his superior.¹

Consequently, as part of their *divide et impera* tactics, the British began from the earliest times to train the wrong set of Nigerians in the wrong way. These were the Emirs and the so-called natural rulers, through the Native Administration system. Invariably illiterate and hardly in a position to understand the modernization programme, which the British were implementing in a rudimentary fashion, the so-called natural rulers succeeded in alienating the leaders of the educated elite by behaving like stooges of the white rulers and the masses over whom many of the so-called natural rulers were tyrants. And yet all the time, ironically—even in Northern Nigeria where the British Indirect Rulers did everything to prevent a large-scale production of the educated elite—the latter, mainly from the South, were indispensable to the British in the running and greasing of the administration machine.

¹ *Herbert Macaulay Papers*, Legislative Council. Reply by the Hon. The Ag. Chief Secretary to the Government to Question No. 14 at the meeting of 7th March 1938 by the Hon. the second Lagos member.

But not only did the British deliberately sow seeds of discord between the educated elite and the so-called natural rulers—witness the tension between both classes revealed by researchers into the administrative history of some areas—but they never made any attempt to resolve the major political problems that existed in the pre-colonial period. Of these problems the biggest was the intra-tribal or inter-tribal factor. In the South the colonial era never healed the wound of the Remo versus Ijebu Proper, the Ijebu versus Ibadan, the Efik versus the Akunakuna, the Akunakuna versus the Umon; the Igbo versus the Igala; or inter-village rivalries and warfare in Igboland. In the North the British never bothered to look into the Kanuri versus Fulani tension, the eternal hatred of the ‘pagans’ of the Bauchi Plateau for the Hausa-Fulani; of the Tiv for the Hausa-Fulani jihadists. In spite of the intermingling of peoples guaranteed by the British Raj—hence the cosmopolitanism of the urban centres in the country—all the British succeeded in doing was to paper over the cracks. National instincts did not exist; only ethnic instincts, and these were kept alive by the various so-called self-improvement cultural and mutual-aid sub-ethnic or ethnic organizations all over the country. And it required no prophetic insight to discern the fact that once the British began to withdraw themselves from the country, their paper would disappear and the cracks reappear. Indeed, in some ways, the British Raj widened and deepened the cracks by accentuating the pre-colonial inter-ethnic feelings. For instance, Remoism would not have had the ghost of a chance of being successful but for the British presence; likewise the various movements for local self-rule and independence from the large units of Native Administration created by the British. In the North the inhabitants of the Middle-Belt had every cause to curse the British for putting over them Muslim rulers who in the nineteenth century had failed to subdue the ‘pagans’ and the Tiv.

The failure of the British Raj to resolve the latent centrifugal forces in Nigeria, which could not be wished away, made some white and Nigerian observers tremble at the fact that between 1950 and 1960 the British had to affect to believe that they could create a Nigerian nation. “In Nigeria”, declared an outspoken missionary observer, “you have many races, antagonistic, mutually antipathetic, utterly incompatible, and even bitterly hostile to each other”.¹ And lest it be thought that the educated elite had become pan-Nigerian in their outlook, their literary achievement and lip service to Christianity notwithstanding, the educated elite themselves knew very well that

¹ Walter R. S. Miller, *For Africans Only*, London 1950, p. 34.

you only had to scratch the educated Nigerian and you had your tribalist. In fact, as will be retailed later in this lecture, the educated elite had indicated by their behaviour in British colonial Nigeria that tribalism was more natural with them, and that they would practise it, than the Pan-Nigerianism to which they were paying merely lip service. Not even their training in Europe or America could efface their tribal instincts. "Their ambition to emancipate mother Africa evaporates", declared a spokesman, "They become hard-boiled tribesmen narrower in their minds and hearts than the village paths from which they had stepped out into the wide world of knowledge and culture. They may walk in high shoes and saunter on the Marina Road in their London style as dignified professional men or 'England Ladies' in a caste far removed from the 'untouchables', but they are tribesmen, horrible tribesmen. They are not Africans, but Efiks and Ibos. They are not Nigerians, but Yorubas, Hausas, and Ibibios and what-nots, very static in their loyalty".¹

In yet another way the British helped to sow the seeds of political conflict and instability. Until 1946 they never thought of welding the North and the South as one political entity. Whilst before they established their rule the North and the South had engaged in mutually beneficial economic relations, and some of the peoples had shared history of common origins, the British deliberately adopted different policies, thereby driving a most dangerous and costly wedge between the two areas. Thus the amalgamation of 1914 was purely a matter of administrative and financial convenience in which the peoples were not taken into partnership. Particularly hated by the British officials in the North was the kind of educated elite being produced by the Western-style, mostly mission schools, in the South. British officials and architects of the policy of Northern Nigeria for Northern Nigerians, including some missionaries—minced no language to stress that it was regrettable that Southern Nigerian educated elite had to be imported into Northern Nigeria, and they looked forward to the day when the better-loved Anglophile type of Northern Nigerian educated elite would be produced to drive away their Southern colleagues. As early as 1903, that is even before the British had completed conquest of Northern Nigeria, Walter Miller, the articulate CMS missionary who believed that his love for the Northerners was the greatest in the world, a belief he held until he died in 1952, had advocated the policy of North for the Northerners.² And so highly placed a director of

¹ Eyo Ita, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18.

² CMS G3/A3/09 Miller to Lugard 29/7/1903.

British Colonial Nigeria, Sir Graeme Thomson, Governor of Nigeria from 1925-1933, went as far as recording in 1927: "one important object of the Education Department in future should be to aim at turning out a sufficient number of trained natives of the Northern Provinces to enable them to compete with the imported Southern natives, and eventually drive those people out of the North".¹ Nor should the element of religion be ignored as a centrifugal factor in the development of separate and potentially unhealthy attitudes between the Northerners and Southerners. For although a significant portion of the North was under the banner of the Cross, the general idea fomented in literature and given to the outside world was that the North was monolithically Islamic and the South essentially "Christian." This element of religion was destined to be a major factor of propaganda by some of the educated elite in the whirlwind of the civil war.

One other legacy of division left behind by the British was the further splitting of the South into Western and Eastern Provinces in 1939. Though done at the time purely for reasons of bureaucratic convenience, rather than as a means to further drive a wedge between the educated elite in the North-South fashion, the windsowers in the South were destined to treat the Niger, the Regional boundary, as a sacrosanct, "old-age" boundary. They were destined to crystallize regionalism around it in a manner inimical to the growth of nationwide political parties and the claims of minority peoples for self-determination.

With a hurry that was to be materially and socially advantageous but politically ruinous to the country, the British stabbed the Emirs and the so-called natural rulers in the back and began to transfer power to the educated elite all over the country between 1951 and 1960. Not only would the British not allow enough period of political training: they behaved as if the educated elite were a cohesive and coherent group with single-mindedness and one agreed way of attaining independence. Apart from the fact that the educated elite in the South could hardly be expected to examine issues with same eyes, there was the fact that among them there was no coordination of thought, no clear-cut objective, no unity, no internal cohesion, no understanding, and no understanding among the leaders.

The educated elite in the North were only too anxious to tell the naked truth, that they were different from those in the South and that the latter, usually arrogant pretenders that they were talking for all the country, should stop deluding themselves that the North formed

¹ N.A.I. CSO 26/2 Vol. I, Minutes of meeting held in the Secretary of State's Room, 7/9/1927.

a part of their future inheritance. In the same manner the educated aristocratic spokesmen in the North pretended that they were speaking for the entire North, including the peoples of the Middle-Belt, 'pagans' who had been chafing under the misrule of their British-imposed Muslim rulers. In the forthright language of the North's "golden voice", Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, in the Legislative Council in 1947:

I think 1947 will always stand as a very important year in the history of Nigeria. Since the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern Provinces in 1914 Nigeria has existed as one country only on paper. It is still far from being united. The country is inhabited by peoples and tribes who speak different languages, who have different religions, different customs and traditions and entirely different historical backgrounds in their ways of life, and who have also attained different stages of development.

We would like the world to know that in the Northern Provinces we have got our own leaders whom we have chosen ourselves, to be our rulers and voices. We do not want, Sir, our Southern neighbours to interfere in our development. If the Southern people feel they are representatives for what they are agitating for and demanding, well they must know that the case of the Northern Provinces is different . . . but I should like to make it clear that if the British quitted Nigeria now at this stage the Northern people would continue their interrupted conquest to the sea.¹

Whilst the educated elite in the North were becoming frightened at the prospect of imperialism from the South, their counterparts in the South had introduced violence into the political scene, a phenomenon that was to culminate in the civil war of 1966 to 1970. At first—and this had become prominent in thirties—it was verbal violence, directed not only at the colonial masters but at themselves. As the forties dissolved into the fifties and tribal and region-centred political parties emerged, the verbal missiles which the leaders hurled at one another increased in size and effects. And the nearer the day of political withdrawal by the British, the fiercer the personal rivalries, and the violence and virulence of the language the political leaders employed against one another; the greater the blind and extremist followership gathered around the political leaders, the greater the hostility and hatred of individuals for political rivals and opponents.

It was such incongruous, incompatible, quarrelsome, tribalistic, disorderly but fiercely politically-ambitious individuals that the British decided to cajole to come together. In the South the sharp division between the *beni oui oui* collaborators and the so-called nationalist collaborators had degenerated in the forties to inter-tribal rivalry

¹ *Mbaeyi Collections The Nigeria/Biafra Conflict, No. 2*, Attitude of Northern Nigeria to "Keeping Nigeria One", p. 1 Quoted.

between the Igbo and the Yoruba. Among the Yoruba themselves serious internal division had by 1948 occurred in the *Egbẹ̀ Ọmọ̀ Oduduwa* between the Pan-Yoruba Ọbafẹ̀mi Awolọwọ and a few spiteful Lagos-based key people who believed that they were the more authentic Yoruba and frowned at an Ijẹbu being Secretary of the Organization.¹ Flabbergasted by the behaviour of the British Government, who in 1950 began to ask the educated elite leaders from all over the country to deliberate together as political leaders with a common goal, Walter Miller, perhaps the most outspoken, but ardently well-meaning missionary commentator and controversialist in Nigeria in the first half of this century, was cocksure that the educated elite leaders were playing with fire; that they were an incompatible lot with different motives, different purposes, different visions, different ideologies; that their marriage of convenience would lead Nigeria to civil war. As recorded by this exuberant Christian fanatic before his death in 1952 in an unpublished manuscript entitled *Nigeria a Dominion in 1965 a Fantasy*: "Strives (sic) between an infinite number of parties, tribes and divisions were practically certain. The breakdown of all order, with resulting chaos of all the internal economy of the country of Nigeria seemed to us a dead certainty. We saw no real, outstanding leaders, men of sufficient ability and outstanding probity".²

Of course, much earlier than Miller had imagined, Nigeria became a dominion. But precisely at the time he was dying the educated elite were being given more say and more way in the government of Nigeria. They had begun to show that in their life-style they would out-Herod Herod. The politicians among them were indicating that they more than coveted the protocols of obeisance which the British Governors and Lieutenant-Governors had been enjoying; the civil servants had their eyes on the newly revised high salaries which the British servants had been earning and the prestige attached to the newly created posts; they all had their eyes on extravagant privileges which they were ultimately to claim as prescriptive rights; they were anxious to excel their British overlords in these matters. Consequently from the early fifties when the educated elite political leaders began to participate in the government of Nigeria, it became possible for the educated elite, particularly those in politics, to acquire wealth and lead a style of life quite fantastic and unexampled in the social history of Nigeria. This new style and affluence, blithely described by some of them as "Life More Abundant", saw them transformed into

¹ *Ijebu Weekly Echo*, 19/6/1948.
African Echo, 22/9/1948.

² In the Africana section of University of Ibadan Library, p. 8.

owners of enormous landed property, strings of houses built with concrete and extravagant taste, glittering expensive cars and enormous wardrobes of voluminous clothes. And concomitant with the material wealth was political power, which threatened for ever the prerogatives and power of the so-called natural rulers in whose eyes, literally, a social and political revolution had occurred.

Naturally, in order to retain and increase their new-found privileges and economic power, the educated elite left no stone unturned. The result was the introduction of a new form of moral and ethical pollution which, as the various Commissions of Inquiries have revealed, have infected a large number of Nigerians. It became common belief that politics was everything—was the lever to power, the *open sesame* to fantastic wealth, the instrument to gain power over enemies. In their scramble for the spoils, the so-called “national cake”, the educated elite unleashed on one another personal animosities. Such animosities were first unleashed at the Regional levels and then carried to the Local Councils. Literally, Kwame Nkrumah’s slogan “seek ye first the political kingdom and all other things shall be added unto you” became the maxim.

It was at this point that the educated elite revealed in bold relief that, as the Yoruba would say, they were an edifice built with sputum which must collapse at the fall of mist. More by facts of history and circumstances beyond their control than by choice, the educated elite became politicians rather than statesmen. Their instincts for survival in the state of their factiousness and personal rivalries dictated that they should be astute politicians in response to historical pre-colonial and colonial rivalries and tensions at local, regional and national levels. Thus the Tiv politician who wanted to ride on the crest of popular wave must keep alive the pre-colonial fact of anti-Fulani-Hausa feelings prevalent in Tivland; thus the Ibadan politician who wanted to live well in the hearts of the indigenous people should dwell on the pre-colonial Ibadan-Ijebu tension, as intensified by the colonial regime that allowed the Ijebu to shift their economic frontier right into Ibadan city; thus the Onitsha Igbo who wanted to be a favourite of his people must emphasize the threat of the non-Onitsha Igbo settlers to indigenous control of the local administration in Onitsha. It was such feuds, rather than considerations about factors of modernization, that determined the style of politics of the educated elite. With such people neither the Westminster-model of parliamentary Government, nor the British notion that politics should be depersonalized and violence-free was relevant. Hence the manner in which within years they parodied the ill-digested and patently unsuitable

(for Nigeria) Westminster-type Parliamentary type of Government. Intent on retaining power at all hazards the group of educated elite in power began to treat their rivals like criminals. In order to achieve this end the politicians in power enlisted the blind support of the ordinary people, whom they inoculated with criminal disposition. For in the way in which the parties were organized, in which the innocently ignorant masses were exploited with the crumbs from the master's table, debasing tactics were used by whichever party was in power to confound or weaken or paralyse the opposition: charges were trumped up, elections were "arranged", ballot pregnancies appeared on election days and in some areas, secret cults were used to compel allegiance to particular political parties.¹⁶ Morality was obliterated from the Nigerian political scene. By the fifties violence had ceased to be merely verbal: it had assumed the physical aspect; physical elimination of political enemies was not only deemed desirable but began to be contemplated and attempted. In other words respect for human dignity and life began to cease to exist. From 1959 onwards "thuggery" became a commonplace word in the political vocabulary of Nigerians.

It was at the national level that the factiousness of the educated elite and their inability to depersonalize politics or operate the Westminster-model Parliamentary Government were most prominently displayed, creating the crisis that eventually assumed a physical form. Insofar as the crisis can be reduced to a denominator, that denominator is TRIBALISM. It was upon the rock of tribalism that the First Republic foundered. And whilst the military, a branch of the educated elite currently in power, have been doing a great deal to neutralise the tribal factor—thanks largely to the creation of States—it is my considered view that for sometime to come, until the Nigerian nation begins to evolve, tribalism will remain in Nigeria a potent centrifugal force and a veritable challenge to statesmanship. From 1960 to 1966 within each Region intra-tribal or inter-tribal tension increased rather than decreased, and in some places determined allegiance to political parties; within each electoral unit traditional feuds were revived and sometimes these determined allegiance to political parties; within the country allegiance was geographically to the party founded around the largest ethnic group in each Region. In the States today the hydra-headed TRIBALISM has ominously rared up its head.

¹ *Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the Owegbe Cult*, (Ministry of Information Benin) 1966.

R. Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties*, Princeton 1963, pp. 251–261.

In their scramble for political power the educated elite gave priority to their personal clashes and division in their ranks, to the point that these determined their membership of political organizations. They did not divide along professional or occupational lines; nor on ideological lines either. Across ethnic frontiers they shared common cultural and occupational lives; none preached a return to traditional culture *per se*; none of them exploited cultural differences as such in concrete terms. By 1960 there was little or no ideological difference between the political parties in matters of economic development, social programmes and their vision for Nigeria. They were all committed to modernization and, for once, throughout the Federation they began to initiate and sponsor, generously, social schemes designed to improve the lot of the masses. And the latter, already convinced that knowledge was power and wealth, began to look upon their elected representatives to provide amenities to an extent far beyond the resources of Governments.

For the first time since their appearance on the Nigerian scene, the educated elite established an effective *rapprochement* with the masses from whom themselves derived. Henceforth there was a community of interests between the masses and the educated elite, the former being made to participate in elections to the various legislatures and in local government. Rather than being descendants of the *Saro*, or concentrated in Lagos or Old Calabar, the educated elite began to be spread all over the country, though most unevenly, and they derived from the localities. The masses now could appreciate the leadership of the educated elite, an effective substitute for that of their British predecessors, and certainly a more welcome state of affairs than the rule of the so-called natural rulers. In very many areas, too, an effective *rapprochement* was established with the *Obas* and *Emirs*, the latter recognizing their new masters and the educated elite themselves sharing royalty by the purchase of chieftaincy titles.

It would have been to the eternal credit of the educated elite had they consolidated their sociological achievement with political maturity by de-emphasizing personal rivalries and class factiousness, whilst at the same time indoctrinating the masses on political virtues and the ideology of pan-Nigerianism. Unfortunately they used their competition for wealth and power to fan ethnic hostility. Far more than has been revealed so far by political scientists, the political leaders of the First Republic—Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo and Ahmadu Bello—were respectively, conscious and astute purveyors and exploiters of defensively aggressive Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani nationalism. Thus whilst the nucleus of the Ibo State Union had been founded in

Calabar in 1936, that is a year before his return from a self-imposed exile in the Gold Coast, Nnamdi Azikiwe became the symbol of a truly menacing Igbo ethnomania. Irrespective of what he said, or might have wished, the fact was that the party which he led from 1946 to 1960, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons, was seen by other major ethnic groups as the political organization of the Igbo and that it was predominantly from this major tribe in Southern Nigeria that he obtained his political support. It was largely in response to the bugbear of Igbo nationalism for the Yoruba that in 1945 Obafemi Awolowo, already an energetic member of the Western wing of the Nigerian Youth Movement, founded the *Egbẹ Omo Oduduwa*, the so-called cultural organization which became the nucleus of the Action Group, predominantly the party of the Yoruba to the eve of independence. There is a great deal of truth in Nnamdi Azikiwe's description of the Action Group as "a political protrusion of the *Egbẹ Omo Oduduwa*".¹ Also at the beginning a product of an avowed cultural organization for "Northerners", the extreme, uncompromising and obscurantist provincialism of the Northern Peoples Congress is only too clear from its unchanging name throughout its existence.

The platform of the party became the theatre of activities for the educated elite, the only class interested in the plums of office, which plums became larger and greater in number as universities and corporations were created at the Regional and Federal levels. Within the Regions the civil servants became infected with the contagion of tribalism or ethnicity, wishing to see men of their localities appointed or promoted; at the Federal level and in corporations the same process was clearly at work. Even the Federal universities were not insulated: the two big tribes, the Yoruba and Igbo, fought overtly on tribal balancing.² It was on matters like these that the masses succumbed to the chauvinistic feelings stirred up by the politicians and the so-called intellectuals. The Ibo, the Yoruba and the Northerners began to look upon their representation in the Federal Civil Service and institutions on ethnic basis. When a Yoruba man held a key post at the Federal level the ordinary Yoruba man felt that this meant a credit to his tribe; when the Igbo predominated in a Federal corporation the Yoruba felt pained, feeling that the pride of his tribe had been wounded. Never mind that back in Yorubaland or Igboland respectively the Ibadan man would not see eye to eye with

¹ *Zik* (A selection from the speeches of Nnamdi Azikiwe), Cambridge 1961, p. 325.

² Acrimonious inter-tribal tension in the University of Lagos became part of the national crisis resulting in mass resignation of Igbo members of staff from the University. For the situation in the University of Ibadan, see Pierre L. Van Berghe op. cit.

the Ijebu man and the Onitsha Igbo would bicker with the Aro Igbo. In the South the Action Group, predominantly a party of the Yoruba and the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons, predominantly a party of the Igbo, became the watchdogs of tribal interests in all "national cake" matters.

There is no doubt that the infection of the ordinary man with tribal feelings was the handiwork of the political parties, and in particular of the political leaders. Nor can the intellectuals be absolved in this matter in view of the prestige the masses attach to university men. For decades scores of Nigerians of different ethnic labels had been living in harmony in the big cities all over the country; true they had town or ethnic organizations, but these were not performing political functions as such. Invariably people of different ethnic groups lived together under the same roof, successfully, behaving to one another as good neighbours, hardly ever parading their tribal labels in any offensive manner. The speaker himself had the good fortune to study in this premier university institution in the middle and late fifties, during which period a large number of ethnic groups from all over Nigeria were represented and friendships, many life-friendships, forged among students without any attention being given to ethnic differences! It was not until the 1959/60 session that tribalism entered student unionism in Ibadan, thanks to alleged instructions by a politically-oriented organization to students of that tribe to devise a tribal strategy to capture some key Union posts.

The dissemination of tribal, or clan, or regional, sectionalism inflamed relations to very dangerous proportions in the years following Independence, proportions not achieved by religious propaganda since the middle of the nineteenth century. Perennially there, too, was the North versus South tension which increased after 1960, partly because of the failure of the Southern leaders to appreciate the peculiar situation in the North that could not make their counterparts in that Region see eye to eye with them; partly because the Northerners, quite rightly, feared that views orthodox in the South but heretical in the North could be spread to the North by the Southern politicians. This fear was not unreal in view of the fact that there were in the key urban centres in the North potential fifth columnists, Southerners, who shared the ethnic jingoism of the two Southern parties. From 1959 the situation became more inflammatory when one of the leaders in the South, Obafemi Awolowo, decided to give his party a truly pan-Nigerian complexion and make the whole of Nigeria his theatre of operation.

The tribal factor as the major cause of the Nigerian crisis and the civil war centred around the Igbo, not because they were worse than the Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani, but because in the circumstances in which history had pushed them they were less discreet, more articulate and abler than the others to irritate and provoke others. It is in this respect that their role as an ethnic group in contemporary Nigeria is singled out as an illustration of tribalism at work. For whilst the Hausa-Fulani were pursuing their dog-in-the-manger policy in the old Northern Nigeria and the Yoruba were anxious to assume leadership in the country, neither of these two peoples was in a position to translate desire into action and thereby attempt to force themselves upon the country. Only the Igbo attempted to carry loyalty to the tribe to the extent that other ethnic groups began to fear that the Igbo were making a bid for domination of the Federation. This fear generated suspicion and hatred for the Igbo, particularly among the Northerners. As a Northern soldier reportedly exclaimed: "(The Ibo) know how to talk and pretend to be brothers. We discovered their treachery late. Most countries have one Judas Iscariot for every one hundred of their people. The Ibos are ninety-nine per cent Judas. My best friend in the army was an Ibo. I discovered afterwards that even he had misbehaved."¹ However, before we explain the phenomenon of the fear instilled into other tribes by the Igbo, we should pause a little on the incapacity or unwillingness of the Fulani-Hausa and of the Yoruba to seek to impose themselves on the rest of the country.

Whilst it is true that there were not wanting Northerners who considered Nigeria as a unit, the fact remains that the NPC leadership, the political party that bestrode the vast North like a colossus, was predominantly and overwhelmingly northern in outlook and in their vision; that they thought more Northernwise than Nigerianwise, that the dream of Islamic conquest southward to the Atlantic seaboard, which had been attempted by the fanatical followers of Usman dan Fodio in the nineteenth century, had been abandoned; that culturally and religiously the peoples of the far north (excluding the Middle-Belt) of the old Northern Nigeria believed that they belonged more to the Islamic world north of the tropical forest than to the rest of Nigeria; that but for the geographical pull that compelled them to depend upon the trans-Atlantic sea routes for their exports and imports

¹ S. K. Panter-Brick (Ed.) *Nigerian Politics and Military Rule: Prelude to the Civil War*, London, 1971, p. 72.

they might not have elected to be part of the Federation of Nigeria.¹ However, although territorially and demographically the old North was bigger than the rest of Nigeria, the Northerners were only too painfully conscious of their lack of Western-style literary education, the indispensable instrument absolutely essential for the leadership of the Federal Government. Therefore they became eager compromisers, offering to share authority and power with any group of Southerners who would regard the North as the exclusive preserve of the NPC. Hence in 1959 and 1964, their majority in the House of Representatives notwithstanding, the NPC—which all the time swept the polls in the Northern Region—gave away to the Southerners far more than they retained. Unable to produce enough personnel for its administration in the Region, the Region was never able to contribute more than an insignificant pittance to the civil service personnel of the Federal Government. Indeed, unlike the other Regions, the Northern Region employed a very large number of Southerners to the lower and middle cadres of the civil service, a gesture never reciprocated by the Southern Regions.

Though qualitatively and quantitatively superior to the Hausa-Fulani in Western-style education, the Yoruba have never overcome the intra-ethnic bitterness and hatred which progressively have proved a source of perennial division among them since the early years of the nineteenth century. It will be remembered that the deluded hybrids of the pre-colonial period increased the tension, a phenomenon that their successors, windsowers, unblushingly revived when the British withdrew. Hopelessly divided, they would rather ally with groups outside Yorubaland against themselves than sink their differences and present a semblance of unity and solidarity.² Consequently since the nineteenth century it has never been difficult for outsiders to exploit their differences and in the process weaken them. Thus whilst the Igbo regarded the NCNC as their national possession, a large number of influential educated Yoruba leaders, with very substantial following, joined the bandwagon of the NCNC and presented a formidable opposition to the largely Yoruba-dominated and Yoruba-sponsored Action Group in the Western Region.³

Moreover in the early fifties the Yoruba produced for the first time since the nineteenth century a Pan-Yoruba apostle, the brain behind the founding of the *Egbẹ̀ Ọmọ Oduduwa*, with a set of ideas and

¹ Sir Ahmadu Bello, *My Life*, pp. 133, 135-6.

² In the nineteenth century the Ekiti ganged up with the Fulani to fight against Ibadan; Ibadan and Ilorin allied with Dahomey against the Egba.

³ This phenomenon is exhaustively treated by W. J. Post and George D. Jenkins op. cit.

a vision which were bound to frighten the Hausa-Fulani rulers of the North. This leader was Ọbafẹmi Awolọwọ.¹ He deserves more than mere mentioning. Born on 6 March 1909 in Iķnne, a small town in the Rẹmọ section of Iķbuland, he passed through the hard school of life with a will-power, fortitude and determination more than the ordinary. By 1943 he had become successful politically to the point of being Secretary of the Western wing of the Nigerian Youth Movement, the first political organization in Nigeria with a pan-Nigerian vision and programme. Self-educated mostly at the post-primary level to the point of obtaining a degree in business enterprise (B. Com.) by correspondence, he went to Britain in 1944 to qualify as a lawyer. Hardly had he secured the golden fleece than he produced his first major political writing on Nigeria, *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, a book which contains several ideas he has continued to entertain for a quarter of a century. One such idea is commiseration with the Hausa whom he believed were being oppressed by their Fulani "impostors". And the latter came for specially severe judgment additionally because they are seen as the propagators of Islam, a religion which Awolọwọ associates with the relative backwardness of the North in the matter of Western-style education and which he believes is palpably inferior to Christianity. Said he in 1947 of the Hausa: "Of the people in Nigeria, the Hausas are at the same time the poorest and the most heavily taxed. They have never been known to grumble". He sighed for the day when they would be delivered from enslavement to the Fulani overlords which he believed had been stamped on the Hausa by Islam. Said he: "The day cannot be too far distant when the Hausas will come to differentiate what Allah has ordained from what man has ordained. That day will be the beginning of sorrow for those (The Fulani) who have exploited the credulousness of their fellowmen".²

The NPC rulers of the North, popularly associated with the Fulani aristocracy, were only too aware that the activities of this pan-Yoruba leader as well as his utterances could bring upon them "sorrow" if he was allowed to have his way in the North. Able, resourceful and shrewd, the social and economic programmes that he had put forward to his people in the West in the years of his premiership (1951-1959) were those of a modernist and modernizer in the best tradition of the deluded hybrids—comprehensive, dynamic and revolutionary.

¹ *The Autobiography of Chief Obafemi Awolowo*, Cambridge 1960, for a self-profile by Chief Awolọwọ.

² *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, cited p. 78.

Certainly they constituted a big threat to the relatively slow and more traditionalist social order favoured by the Hausa-Fulani patrons of Islam in the North. And from him emanated incessantly the ideas of *Path to Nigerian Freedom* which, he declared again and again, he wished to see accepted throughout the length and breadth of Nigeria, even when many of these ideas were incompatible with Islam, as it was understood in the North. An unyielding believer in the virtues of the British parliamentary type of ballot box in the hands of the masses of both sexes, from the age of twenty-one and above, he backed up his ideas with an organization that was efficient, but specially dangerous to the interests of Northern Nigeria, as perceived by the NPC rulers. The latter regarded him as a potential dismantler of the North, a view reinforced by his alliance with the "pagans" of the Middle Belt.

Here, then, was a man of plebian origins who in the West had successfully appealed to the masses above the heads of the so-called natural rulers; who had effectively made the latter subordinate to the leadership of the educated elite; whose free primary school programme was bound to annihilate birth privileges in favour of acquired privileges. Here was a *kafiri*—as he seemed to the Muslims—who was pretending ability to discern and interpret their interests. For the NPC it would have been all right had he confined his activities to the South. But alas he had in Ilorin crossed the frontier and had allied with the less privileged grassroot *Talaka Parapo* against the NPC aristocracy, becoming a thorn in the side of the latter. Temerarious, this infidel—as he was regarded by Muslims—could neither be gagged, nor (in 1959) prevented from moving about freely in the North. And by the way he campaigned during the Federal Elections of 1959 he offended the faithful in many ways. For instance he went on hovering in the sky, very low in a helicopter, so that—as they affected to believe—he might see their wives in the purdah! His temerity and style literally scared the NPC leaders. In the circumstances the NPC felt that desperate efforts should be made to prevent this man's heretical ideas—as it seemed to the rulers—from being imbibed by the Northerners. To this end an agreement was made with the more calculating, more pragmatic NCNC, who were not prepared to be as audacious or fool-hardy like the Action Group to throw the red rag to the Gallic Bull. Evidently the teaming up of the NPC and the NCNC was bound to exacerbate the relations between the Igbo and the Yoruba.

Not long after independence the NPC began to discover that they did not have to pray specially to Allah to save the North from

the wrath of the Action Group infidel leader; that his house, Yorubaland, was not in order. For apart from the effective opposition by the Yoruba NCNC under the Igbo, the Action Group began to dismantle. By 1962 the crisis within that predominantly Yoruba organization had divided the Yoruba to the point of no return. In the classical fashion of the nineteenth century, the leaders abandoned the Pan-Yoruba concept, fought war of words on the Nigerian platform and made it very easy for outsiders in the North and the East to exploit their differences, to the ultimate disadvantage of Nigeria. The "First in Africa" braggarts of the fifties suddenly became the architects of the "Wild West", the hurricane which was converted into a tornado by the educated elite leaders of the NPC and the NCNC who exploited the situation to the fullest. This tornado ultimately engulfed the entire country. By 1964 when the first post-independence election to the Federal Parliament was due, the Yoruba were so divided that one party looked Kadunaward for salvation for itself, but for destruction for the rival party; the other looked Enuguard for salvation for itself and in order to procure destruction for the other party. It was a classical revivification of a major element of the inter-ethnic warfare of the nineteenth century.

But the Igbo were placed in a situation markedly different from that of the Hausa-Fulani and the Yoruba. Historical circumstances and the very nature of the people impelled them to behave as a people—one and indivisible—*vis a vis* outsiders and aspire to dominate the country. The last major ethnic group in the forest belt of West Africa forced to open their society to the forces of European civilization, they became in Nigeria the most eager patrons of two dynamics of modernization, Christianity and Western-style education, in this case excelling the Ijebu in Yorubaland. The school and the Church became their pivotal institutions. Smarting under a sense of loss, that Western civilization had come to them too late, the desire to catch up with the rest of the South, particularly with the Yoruba, was very strong indeed. Within two generations they began to feel that they were already at par with the Yoruba. It will be recalled that in 1934 they had produced their first university graduate; in 1935 their first medical doctor and two years later their first lawyer and "Half Bishop". By 1948, one of their leaders, Mazi Mbonu Ojike, could boast that the Igbo had caught up with their Yoruba rivals.¹

¹ *West African Pilot*, 3/9/1947. Indeed much earlier on Igbo chauvinism *vis a vis* the Yoruba had been whipped up by Nnamdi Azikiwe through the *West African Pilot*. See the instances cited by Qbafemi Awolowo in his autobiography, pp. 140-141.

But like other Nigerian peoples, not content with staying in their fatherland, which was patently too small for this extraordinarily prolific people, they dispersed themselves throughout the rest of Nigeria, taking advantage of the *Pax Britannica*. Extremely energetic and enterprising, at least outside the fatherland, they succeeded in having a good share of retail trade and the transport business. Compared to their Yoruba rivals, no work was too mean for them. It is said that, like the New Zealanders, there were no beggars among the Igbo. Their literary skill was much in evidence, thousands of them being employed particularly in the civil service and commercial houses in Lagos and the old North. However they had the peculiar habit of ganging together, of retaining in a tantalizing fashion their identity in the alien lands of other ethnic groups and forming themselves into associations consumed with the passion of improving the lot of their communities at home.

It was in the old North where there were large immigrants from the South that they were able to show that they were in, but not of, the North, going to the extent of having Igbo schools. It was such Igbo material that was to be fatally useful as the torchbearers of Igbo jingoism in the early months of 1966. But the Igbo impact was being felt among the so-called minority peoples within the old Eastern Region, many of whom began to fear that they would be gobbled up by immigrant loyalists of the NCNC, the party in power in Eastern Nigeria.¹

In terms of acquisition of confidence as a tribe and the nursing of hope that the Igbo would lead not only Nigeria but Africa, the man who more than anyone else became the source and symbol of hope, inspiration and vision was Benjamin Nnamdi Azikiwe. Born on 16 November 1904 at Zungeru to Obed Azikiwe, a one-time CMS agent in Onitsha, precocious Nnamdi Azikiwe was educated within several milieux in the country—in Hope Waddell Institute among the Efik and Methodist Boys' High School among Lagos Yoruba.² In 1925 he found his way, as an adventurer, to the United States where he quickly made his mark in political science in Lincoln University. His skills in sports, particularly boxing, and oratory also received attention. By 1934, when he was about to leave the United States for Nigeria, he had become the darling of young Africans in the Gambia, Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, Nigeria, the Camerouns, Togoland

¹ Sir Henry Willink, *Nigeria* (Report of the Commission appointed to enquire into the fears of Minorities and the means of allaying them), 1958, p. 42

² See Nnamdi Azikiwe's autobiography, *My Odyssey*, London 1970.

and Angola who "inundated" him with letters, asking him to show them the way to success.¹ However, and quite naturally too, it was the Igbo who rejoiced most at his success—he being the first Igbo to boast of a distinguished university studentship. Azikiwe's achievement, the Igbo felt, was not ordinary. In the words of fellow Igbo who welcomed him with a reception in Aba on 27 November, 1934:

We are proud of you; for through you the Ibo land has gained an enviable position in contributing to world professorships. You have laid bare the futility of some unfounded aspersions often, but cursorily cast at us by the ignorant, the prejudiced, and the uncharitable, as to the mentality of the Ibo-Youth. By your achievements the Ibo tribe has been reassured that given equal opportunities with her sister tribes she can cut her niche in the African Temple . . . We have watched with keen interest your career both at home and in the United States; and while you were prosecuting your courses of study there and pulling off one degree after another, we here were offering prayers and praises unto Him who endowed you with the ability and stamina to achieve these successes. Indeed, well might we reaffirm that your tribesmen, your country men, your Africa, share with you all the joy and the felicity of the proud distinction of a "Professor of Political Science".²

Exhorted to take up the nationalist cudgel with his pen, lead the nationalist movement "and contribute your quota to Nigeria's progress and more particularly to Ibo progress", Nnamdi Azikiwe needed no reminder. His stature increased by leaps and bounds in the so-called nationalist movement in West Africa. Denied the opportunity of a job by the colonial government in Nigeria, he transferred his skill in journalism to the Gold Coast where he became Editor-in-Chief of the *African Morning Post*. With his unmatched invectiveness he castigated the colonial system throughout Africa. His newspaper gained reputation among the radicals in the Gold Coast for his vitriolics on the aristocratic go-softly Anglophile so-called nationalists led by Nana Sir Ofori Atta. As a spokesman for the more radical, younger elements in the "nationalist" movement, he preached a philosophy of "New Africa", published in book-form in Lagos in 1937 as *Renascent Africa*. This so-called philosophy of "New Africa" was based on jargon-like principles of Spiritual Balance, Social Regeneration, Economic Determinism, Mental Emancipation and Political Resurgence. His conviction and expulsion by the Gold Coast administration for an article "Have the Africans a God?" only served to enlarge his stature.

¹ *The Dawn*, (Port Harcourt) 24/3/1934. "My Experiences in America", by Zik.

² *ibid.*, 15/12/1934.

Thus when he returned to Nigeria in 1937 his pen had been mightier than that of any journalist in West Africa. In fact in Nigeria no one of his intellectual calibre had ever taken up journalism as a career and no one in Lagos could boast of the reputation this young man had built up outside Nigeria. True there were political and intellectual stalwarts, but these had discredited themselves and had compromised their reputation by personal hatred and campaign of vilification. For instance Herbert Macaulay had so undermined the prestige of people like Adeyemọ Alakija, S. H. Pearse and T. A. J. Ogunbiyi—popularly believed to be the lackeys of the British—that they were never to regain a popular image again; the same Herbert Macaulay had so effaced the image of the intellectually-minded and moralising religious educationist, Henry Carr, that only a full-scale biography can restore the true image of this much-vilified man. Although he had begun to write in the press, Oḃafemi Awolowo was yet to be recognized as a newsreporter, whilst Samuel Akinsanya, H. O. Davies and Ernest Ikoli were puny figures compared to Nnamdi Azikiwe. His erudition, his constant appeal to the world of classics, his usage of very long, verbose and jaw-breaking words—all imposed upon his audience who sought him frequently for lectures and were overwhelmed by his oratorical powers and penchant for dramatic gestures.

Here was the man whose demagoguery and flamboyant style was carried into the newspaper enterprise. With the string of newspapers which he established in Lagos, Ibadan, Jos, Kano, Onitsha, Aba, Port Harcourt and Old Calabar, he appealed to the nationalistic instincts of his ever-increasing circle of readers. He became the most popular and the most erudite verbal champion of the cause of Africans, a man widely acclaimed as being able to stand up to the white man. Staying within the Nigerian Youth Movement which had been founded in 1938, he soon discovered, or felt, that he was an object of hatred and envy by many leaders of the organization. In 1944, after quitting the moribund and bickering NYM, he joined hands with the veteran Herbert Macaulay in the founding of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons, the leadership of which fell on him at the death of Macaulay on 7 May 1946. Henceforth he became a colossus, perhaps the only educated elite political leader with a national prestige in the period before attainment of independence. For not only was he accepted by a section of the Yoruba; he was adored as well by the Zik Vanguard, a movement that had some

Northerners as members, and by the Northern Elements Progressive Union, the radicals of plebian origin in the far north who were posing a challenge to the Northern Peoples Congress.

In the meantime other Igbo sons had gone to America and had returned. They all placed themselves under Nnamdi Azikiwe's leadership and became his ardent supporters for the greater part of the struggle for independence. Prominent among these were Mbonu Ojike, Kingsley Ozumba Mbadiwe and Nwafor Orizu—all of whom wrote works with nationalist message for Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. They were to become prominent leaders of the Igbo State Union, whose activities were later to give concern to other tribes of Nigeria as to the vision of the Igbo for the country. Indeed as early as 1949, Nnamdi Azikiwe's romantic view of the Igbo and their leadership claims had made him declare as President of the Ibo State Union:

The God of Africa has especially created the Ibo nation to lead the children of Africa from the bondage of the ages . . . The martial prowess of the Ibo nation at all stages of human history has enabled them not only to conquer others but also to adapt themselves to the role of preserver . . . The Ibo nation cannot shirk its responsibility.¹

The heroic status which Azikiwe achieved among the Igbo was unmistakable. The National Church of Nigeria, founded by one K. O. K. Onyioha around 1950, made Nnamdi Azikiwe the main subject of eulogy and deification, apart from sublimating the works of Mbonu Ojike, K. O. Mbadiwe, Nwafor Orizu and *Renascent Africa* as the Scriptures of the Church. On 25 November, 1950, when Azikiwe worshipped there, he was elevated to the position of Jesus Christ and Mohammed.² The following composition was made to mark his birthday:

1. Good Lord bless
Bless for us Great Zik of Africa
2. Bless Him protect Him
In His struggle to free Africa
3. May long He live
To lead all Africa out of Bondage
4. O Lord bless for us
Bless this Great Champion of Human rights

¹ Zik (cited) p. 243.

² K. O. K. Onyioha, *The National Church of Nigeria, Its Catechism and Credo*, Lagos, p. 36.

5. Let the ideals He represents
Survive to save man through the ages.¹

Whatever pan-Nigerian predilections Azikiwe had were destroyed by the aggressive Yoruba nationalism from which he had begun to suffer in the forties, a nationalism which, ironically, he had done much to provoke with his Igbomania in his press. Thwarted and agonized in his effort in 1951 to transfer his political ambition to the Western Region, he read the writing on the wall that Yorubaland could not be his constituency; that his power base was Igboland in the Eastern Region, where he could reap the benefit of charity beginning at home. In a meteor-like fashion he descended on the Eastern Region, easily dislodged the non-Ibo leadership of the Regional Government and rapidly succeeded in installing himself as the undisputed head of the Region on the fulcrum of Igbo nationalism, as symbolized by the NCNC.

Nnamdi Azikiwe was prominently and vocally connected with the Igbo State Union. Naturally he did his best to see that the interest of the Igbo was not adversely affected. Thus in the fifties whilst Awolowo was being a quixotic idealist, injuring the most precious feelings of the Fulani-Hausa leadership, Azikiwe was far more restrained and anxious to cooperate with the Fulani-Hausa leadership. There was no question of him being petulantly arrogant like his Yoruba rival who reportedly boasted once that he would never serve under a Northerner. A tactician and strategist, he knew when and where to stop. In 1959 he decided that the NCNC be a junior partner with the NPC in the Federal Government, though in practice the Igbo became the senior partner holding the higher echelons in the civil service and the foreign embassies. Azikiwe himself bade goodbye to politics and became a ceremonial Head of State. However, restrained as he was as President of the First Republic, the tribalist in him surfaced on some occasions, on those occasions when his tribe was in trouble. For instance while the going was good and the marriage of convenience with the Northerners was all right, Nnamdi Azikiwe said nothing whatsoever publicly about the Tiv riots in order not to annoy the political leaders of the North. However, when the marriage was on the path to divorce, as will soon be revealed, and the Northern Nigeria Government began to threaten the opportunities and privileges which had hitherto been allowed the Igbo in that part of the country, Azikiwe began to speak out on the necessity to uphold the fundamental liberties enshrined in the

¹ *ibid.*, p. 47.

Nigerian constitution. Also when in 1964 the NCNC miscalculated their strategy about election to the Federal Parliament to force a showdown with the Northerners, Nnamdi Azikiwe reportedly desired to be offered executive power to have the Igbo reinstated. And in one of his most sentimental addresses, which he delivered at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, he glorified tribalism as a factor for national unity.

But before examining his role and that of the other Igbo leaders in the months prior to the coup of 15 January, 1966 we should mention the triumphs which the Igbo had achieved, which triumphs emboldened their leaders to be undisguisedly contemptuous of the Northerners and threaten to behave like the camel in the Arab-camel story. For, as pointed out earlier, the Coalition Government of 1959 gave a grand opportunity to the Igbo to use Federal Government resources to entrench themselves in key positions and to intensify their education training. It was an opportunity which the "Ibo National Caucus", formed not long after the end of the Second World War—precisely in 1948—would not wish to miss. Its aim was summarized in a moment of indiscretion by C. D. Onyeama in the famous utterance at the Island Club, Lagos, "that the domination of Nigeria by the Ibo is only a question of time". Indeed the Caucus fixed 1964 as the target date, later changed to 1969, "for our perpetual rule of the Federation".¹ Many observers who watched with interest the establishment of the University of Nigeria in 1960, at a time that the Igbo would not require the services of graduates of such a University, began to suspect that it was a masterly-designed strategy to provide "backward" areas in Northern Nigeria with Igbo personnel. This measure led their Yoruba rivals—who also needed no University—to found the University of Ife.

However the discovery of oil in commercial quantities and the creation of the Mid-West State out of the former Western Region, began to make the Igbo leaders in the Eastern Region say things which their Northern partners felt extremely offensive and provocative. Mineral oil raised among the Igbo leaders the hope of inexhaustible resources with which a bold and dynamic social and economic programme for the Eastern Region could be conceived. The Premier of the Eastern Region, Dr Michael Okpara, began to threaten secession and began to argue that revenue be allocated according to the principle of derivation. The control of the Mid-West Government by

¹ IUL *Collections on Civil War*, "Ibo National Caucus—Protocol" marked 'Secret and Confidential

the Igbo Premier, Dennis Osadebay, only served to embolden the Igbo leadership, that the time had arrived to call off the bluff of the Northern Region. The census of 1963, which revealed that the population of the North was even greater than that of the rest of Nigeria by a margin much wider than had been contemplated, put the patience of the Ibo National Caucus on trial. The implication of accepting such figures, they saw, was that the North would be able to control the Federal Government with a simple majority, should the Northerners so decide. And there was no incontrovertible evidence that the Northerners could not decide to so use their position, now that the Southerners were proving ungrateful.

In the circumstances both the Igbo and the Hausa-Fulani leaderships had to be involved in a trial of strength. The stage for embattlement was neither the North nor the East, but the West. Here the Yoruba in the Action Group unleashed towards themselves intra-ethnic hostility of the worst type. On the platform of tribal chauvinism the faction led by Chief S. L. Akintola succeeded in persuading a section of the Yoruba NCNC to see the writing on the wall, that the Igbo were seeking to dominate the country against the interest of the Yoruba. And by the way in which Okpara had been made to succeed to the leadership of the party, thus superseding Chief J. O. Fadahunsi, a national Vice-President, and the way the Igbo went on throwing their dominance in the face of the Yoruba in the Federal Universities and Corporations (Airways, Railway, Nigerian Port Authority) many loyal Yoruba NCNC began to demand an end to Igbolization of the party. But rather than treat such Yoruba NCNC—like T. O. S. Benson—tactfully, the latter were regarded as rebels who should be “dealt with”. The result was the formation of the NNDP, a resurrection of the name of the party which Herbert Macaulay had founded in 1923, by the Akintola faction of the Action Group and a faction of the Yoruba NCNC. The other faction of the Action Group, led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, and the remaining faction of the NCNC became allies. Both the Akintola and Awolowo factions looked beyond the Western Region for protection—the Akintola faction hiding under the umbrella of the Hausa-Fulani leadership, the Awolowo faction under the umbrella of Igbo leadership. The NNDP and the NPC merged as the Nigerian National Alliance for federal purposes while the Awolowo faction and the NCNC too formed the United Progressive Grand Alliance for federal purposes.

Needless to say, the Ibo National Caucus decided to exploit the situation in the West to the best advantage. For the Caucus the North was not a danger: the West was the danger. Worried that the premature

jubilation and indiscreet statements of some Igbo individuals that tended to warn the Yoruba and the Hausa-Fulani “of our objective”—that is seizure of the control of the country—might endanger the cause, the Caucus recorded: “Enemies of our fatherland have alerted the decadent Yorubas and the reactionary Northerners. The indiscreet utterances of many of our own men have contributed largely to the dangers which now beset us when we have almost reached the promised land. These stupid utterances must stop”. However, the Caucus believed that the cause was not yet lost:

Despite the anti-Ibo propaganda now prevailing in the North and West a survey of the situation shows quite clearly that though the situation is critical, it is not hopeless. In the East despite the amateurish leadership of Okpara the Onitsha Ibo and Ibo dispute has quietened. The Efiks, the Ibibios and the Rivers tribes are still under complete control even though their dreams of their own State have been completely shattered. Despite the intrigues of Okoti-Eboh and Omo Osagie we have succeeded in clamping Osadebay firmly on the Mid-West saddle thus taking care of the Urhobos, the Edos, and the Itshekiris. There is then nothing to fear in the Mid-West but threats. The West is now the Problem.¹

The custodians of Igbo chauvinism were convinced that the obstacle of the West was not an insuperable one; that all that needed done was to splinter the NNDDP leadership by tearing away Akintola from Fani-Kayode, an Action Group renegade who had joined the NCNC, and then the NNDDP in protest against Igbolization of the NCNC. The strategy to achieve the desired end, as recorded by them, was as follows:

Play up Awolowo at all times; this will keep up the resistance of the Action Group members and stop them from uniting with the N.N.D.P. to form a solid Yoruba front. This is vital and there is no longer a headache or danger to us. Intensify all propaganda against Akintola. Don't hold that he is sufficiently discredited already, he is still dangerous. We must always keep the quarrel between himself and the Action Group alive, this will ensure the disunity amongst the Yoruba leaders.

Seek all means to discredit Fani-Kayode. He is the real and only barrier to our domination of the West and our ultimate control of the Federation.²

Outside the Eastern Region the rest of the country felt that the danger of Igbo domination was real. By 1964 the educated elite in the Northern Region had begun to react to the believed threat by demanding that the Igbo be expelled from the North. In the Regional House of Assembly and in the Kaduna press, there was no mincing of words:

¹ *ibid.*

² *ibid.*

the Igbo should be deprived of all lands that had been allocated to them; they were too many in Federal establishments in the North; they had infested the North as petty traders; laws should be enacted to the effect that the Northernization policy be extended to the petty traders. The Premier, Sir Ahmadu Bello, and obviously the most grieved by what he regarded as ingratitude of the Igbo, declared in the House of Assembly in February 1964: "It is my most earnest desire that every post in the Region, however small it is, to be filled by a Northerner"¹ In the Mid-West, which had been created in 1962 by the NPC-NCNC coalition to further weaken the Action Group, the non-Igbo NCNCers began to wonder whether the party they had been sacrificing so much to support was not proving synonymous with the Igbo tribe. To this end Festus Okotie-Eboh and Humphrey Omo Osagie began to be less loyal to the NCNC as Osadebay, the Ibo Premier, was clamped upon them and as allegations of Igboism in the civil service of the Region festered.

It was in the midst of the chaos created in Western Nigeria by the controversies over the election to the House of Assembly there that some elements in the Nigerian army struck on 15 January 1966. Whilst one must wait until the authentic sources are made available in Lagos, Benin-City, Ibadan, Enugu and Kaduna—the last four Regional capitals at that time—certain facts are clear. It would appear that the educated elite in the army had been infected with tribalism. The *coup* was executed by and large by the Igbo—witness the killing of all Northern Nigerian officers within reach and of Yoruba officers suspected of being in sympathy with the Hausa-Fulani elite of Northern Nigeria. Moreover no Igbo elite politician and disseminator of tribalism or sectionalism lost his life—the troops in Benin and Enugu, under Igbo control, refused to murder Dennis Osadebay and Michael Okpara respectively. But on the other hand the Federal Prime Minister and Chief Okotie-Eboh, the Mid-Western fighter against Igbo domination, were killed; also murdered were S. L. Akintola, the Premier of the West, and Ahmadu Bello, the Premier of Northern Nigeria. In the circumstances the view began to gain ground that the *coup* was evidence that the Igbo plan for a take-over of the country was maturing. And there was the fact that the first Head of the Military Government, Aguiyi Ironsi, surrounded himself with top Igbo civil servants as advisers.² The suspicion of Igbo domination grew as Igbos within the army were promoted to the rank of officers and the unification decree

¹ *Mbaeyi Collections: The Nigeria/Biafra Conflict*, quoted p. 6.

² S. K. Panter-Brick (Ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 99.

was issued in response to the minority report of only one member—Nwokedi, an Ibo—and against the firm recommendation of the majority of the Committee that had been set up to examine the proposal. Frightened that the unification decree would establish firmly Igbo control all over the country the peoples of the North, in May 1966, rose up against Igbo inhabitants in the Northern Region. This first of a series of spontaneous massacres of Igbos was the last straw which persuaded a number of Igbo leaders that their dream of Igbo domination was beyond achievement; that the size of Nigeria and the factor of loyalty to the tribe, rather than to “One Nigeria”, were strong among the large ethnic groups in the country; that justly or unjustly anti-Igbo feelings had risen very high in the rest of Nigeria. In the words of the academicians, themselves all the time tribalists, who drew up the argument for secession as early as May 1966:

Since the last event (Unification Decree) it has become crystal clear that the former leaders of the Action Group have, as predicted, joined forces with the former leaders of the NNDP in a renewed battle against Easterners. Recent events have further demonstrated that these leaders are clearly striving to counter the efforts of the Military Regime to forge national unity. In this respect the Western leaders are one with the Northern leaders who are similarly opposed to a unitary system of government in Nigeria; and all of them are anxious that the country should revert to the old federal structure which, as everyone knows, was the principal cause of most of the woes of the first Republic.¹

But this is not to say that the generality of the Igbo saw themselves as seekers of dominance over the rest of Nigeria, or that the Igbo leadership saw itself as exploiters of other peoples in Nigeria. The self-styled leaders and spokesmen of the Igbo people, mainly University “intellectuals”, argued passionately that it would be wrong to see the Igbo as grabbers of most of the offices in the country. Rightly considered, they contended, they deserved to hold these posts by virtue of their special talents. They were superior to other ethnic groups in “culture and civilization”; they were the most receptive to new ideas and the most able to assimilate them. It would be most unfair and unjust for any other people in Nigeria, particularly the Northerners, to wish to dominate Nigeria. For Northern Nigeria “lacked education and culture, and was never in a position to contribute to the advancement or progress of the country”.²

The Igbo saw themselves as victims of hatred and envy by other ethnic groups. They described themselves as the veritable exponents,

¹ IUL Collections on Civil War, “Draft Memorandum”

² Mbaeyi Collections: Biafra Newsletter, Vol. I, No. 8, 1st March 1968, p. 6.

embodiment and vanguard of pan-Nigerianism; as exponents and teachers of the virtues of industry, cosmopolitanism, the dignity of labour, democratic process of government and disinterested patriotism. In their opinion the sacrifices which the Igbo had made on behalf of Nigeria were enormous. The ethnocentric Yoruba regarded the Igbo in Lagos as "strangers" in spite of the fact that investment opportunities were greater in Lagos, thanks to the siting in Yorubaland of the federal capital, as well as the two federal universities. The tribalism and conspiracy of the Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani against the Igbo were only too clear from their monopoly of the international airports and the police training colleges, they contended. In the fifties when cocoa was booming and the East was advocating allocation on the basis of needs, the West insisted on the principle of derivation. But immediately mineral oil was discovered in commercial quantities in the East "a large amount of the money derived from this mineral oil has been shared by the West as well as other parts of the country". "Considering all this", the argument went on, "one can easily understand the attitude of the North and West to the proposals of the Military Regime for the unification of the country. The North and the West want to continue to enjoy the resources of the East while treating the Easterner as a stranger in those places; that is why they want to revert to the old form of the federation which would give them political power to continue to persecute the Easterner although they fully realize that the human and economic resources of the East constitute something of the lynch-pin of the economy of Nigeria. This is a clear case of dishonesty and hypocrisy which the Easterner can no longer tolerate".¹

The Easterners did their best to teach the rest of the country how to get above the sentiment of tribalism. Hence in the early months of 1966 scholarships were thrown open to all Nigerians living in the Region. Moreover the Government of Odumegwu Ojukwu expunged from all government forms the requirement of stating one's tribal origin in application for employment, scholarships and so on. In other words, the curse of tribalism had been removed from the Region and all Nigerians in the East were to be treated as equal with equal opportunities. But rather than appreciate the high values and virtues which the Easterners were inculcating, "it is clear from the lack of reciprocity on the part of other leaders—military and civil—in the country that the East is wasting its resources in trying to achieve the

¹ IUL *Collections on Civil War*, "Draft Memorandum", p. 8.

impossible. As a matter of fact these gestures made by the East have been widely interpreted in other parts of the country as evidence of its ardent desire for national unity which the others do not really want".¹

By sheer ability individual Ibos had attained very high positions in the Federal civil service, in the Universities and in Corporations. But this had displeased the Northerners and Westerners who did not want Ibos to be more than "stewards, casual labourers and petty traders". The Northerners and Westerners would tolerate a united Nigeria only if the Igbo would become second-rate citizens. They were tired of the "Eastern domination scandal" and, having reached the limits of human endurance, were convinced that it would not be in their interest to remain in the Federation. They had no choice but ask to break away from the rest of the country and look for their own destiny as a separate country.

Whilst the academicians were pushing Odumegwu Ojukwu to consider taking Eastern Nigeria out of the federation, the tribal factor continued to operate within the Nigerian army. The ethnic tension became essentially one between the North and the East, particularly between the Hausa-Fulani and the Igbo. As they had to use the brawn rather than the brain—the gun being their Parker pen, they moved towards each other on 29 July, with the Hausa-Fulani gaining the upper hand and therefore to an extent avenging 15 January 1966. It would appear that, at this stage, for days, the thinking among the Northern troops was that Nigeria had come to an end and that Northerners should recoil to the Northern Nigerian shell. Although the emergence of Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon was destined to change the course of history, entrench the army firmly on the saddle, and for the first time transform a branch of the educated elite—the soldiers—into nation builders, the feeling among the educated elite in the North was that the federation dissolve into a confederation. Therefore in the paper submitted to the Ad Hoc Conference on the Nigerian constitution in September 1966, the Northern Delegation declared:

Central Authority: The following arrangements are recommended for the future association of the country:

1. The new Nigeria shall comprise a number of autonomous States;
2. The autonomous States of Nigeria, that is to say, Northern Nigeria, Eastern Nigeria, Western Nigeria, Mid-Western Nigeria or by whatever name they may choose to be called later and such other States as may be formed subsequently should agree to enter a Union . . . The powers of the Central

¹ *ibid.*, p.9.

Executive shall be delegated by the component States except that powers connected with external or foreign affairs, immigration can be unilaterally withdrawn by the State Government.

3. Any member State of the Union should reserve the right to secede completely and unilaterally from the Union.¹

Tribalism was incandescently crystallized during the civil war when the intellectuals and top civil servants used efficient facilities to inform the outside world that the rest of Nigerians were tribalists and when the 'Biafrans' were fed on the worst possible hatred of Nigerians. The history of Nigeria was completely rewritten and in that new chronicle the Igbo were innocent and the rest of Nigerians criminals. Tribalism crystallized into racism in which the Igbo was persuaded to see himself as an embodiment of the virtues that had eluded other Nigerians. The crisis, it was argued, was deep-rooted in the past and had been inspired by the unabated and ever-increasing hostility of the rest of the Nigerian community for the Igbo ever since the British Government imposed the British Raj on Nigeria. The Igbo man, the incarnation of all virtues, had been the object of envy by the rest of the Nigerian community who were much less gifted in spiritual and human talents. The Igbo man was the industrious, enterprising businessman whose commercial ability was used to build up the economy of the country outside the fatherland, an evidence of his unselfishness; he was by nature cosmopolitan in outlook, hence his sojourning in other parts of the country and the display of neighbourliness; he was the most genuine Christian and the arch-rejector of Islam which he knew, before the colonial era, could not humanize and civilize the Nigerian to the best level; he was the most zealous patron of Western-style education, and consequently the inheritor of the virtues which this character-moulding and refiner of manners could confer on anybody. This skill he had put at the disposal of the rest of Nigeria in the civil service, in the press and in the nationalist movement. And aware of the consolation of independence as the *open sesame* to the emergence of the Nigerian as a man, he had used his pen as well as his voice to lead the nationalist struggle; believing that a better breed of man would emerge in a Nigerian-wise community, he had been the vanguard of pan-Nigerianism and the decrier of tribalism and sectionalism. However the Igbo man was hated by the rest of Nigeria who were either incapable of appreciating these virtues,

¹ *Mbaeyi Collections*, "Extract from the memorandum submitted by the Northern Nigerian Delegation to the Ad Hoc Conference on the Nigerian Constitution, September 1966", Ministry of Information, Enugu, pp. 8-9.

or were made to hate him by the British imperialists, who so hated the progress of Africans that they did not want Nigerians to be infected with such attributes that the Igbo had acquired and were displaying. The result was that hostility toward the Igbo gathered momentum and culminated in the massacres of 1966 which pushed them, as a rejected people, out of the Federation.¹

The Nigerians, then, were ingrates and brutes, incapable of behaving like the Igbo race, as civilized human beings; they were unabashed perpetrators of the inhumanity of man to man, people from whom the paragon "Biafrans" should flee in order to found a new State in which the qualities of the right-thinking man would be exemplified. In the opinion of the articulate "Biafrans", all of them academicians and many of them *alumni* of this University, no worse people than Nigerians could be found in the world. The Nigerians were "murderers" committed to a programme of total elimination of the Igbo race. In order to achieve this end the Nigerian troops invaded "Biafra". These blood-thirsty "vandals" were hankering after "Biafran" ladies, whom they were to infect with a specially devastating disease called "Bonny Special";² the Nigerian troops were efficient murderers of every Igbo man or woman, young or old, able or ill, whom they captured. The Nigerian leadership was made up of a "pack of criminals, never-dowells and unreliable shifty characters, who have established a record of incompetence, ineffectiveness, inhumanity, unobjectivity, illegality, unpopularity and abuse of office".³ General Gowon was a Christian humbug and leader of a *Jihad* that aimed at Islamization of all "Biafran" children, killing all "Biafrans" above the age of five and one of the murderers of his "benefactor", Aguiyi Ironsi.⁴ His chief lieutenant was Chief Obafemi Awolowo, "an arch-tribalist, a narrow-minded and parochial...a notoriously spineless opportunist with an all-consuming ambition and a particular obsession to realize a self-inspired delusion to become prime minister of Nigeria—an expertise in the embezzlement of public funds, which could be traced right through his career".⁵ Chief Anthony Enahoro was "a violent, conceited and undisciplined character who from youth has been in the centre of crimes against law and order".⁶

¹ *ibid.*, *Genocide Breaks up Nations* (Ministry of Information Enugu).

Chinua Achebe, "Address to the Netherlands press on 28th August 1968 at the Hague, Holland".

Chinua Achebe, "The African Writer and the Biafran Cause", delivered at Makerere College, 25/8/1968.

² *ibid.*, *Biafra Time*, Vol. I, No. 1, March 1968, p. 30.

³ *ibid.*, *Support for Nigeria Challenges the Basis of Responsible Government*, (Ministry of Information, Enugu), p. 2.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 3.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

It should be repeated that no ethnic group in Nigeria can justifiably throw the stone at the Igbo. That other ethnic groups did not exploit the tribal factor as a defense mechanism, or preach the gospel of hatred of other ethnic groups, or reduce Nigerian history to the denominator of tribalism, or descend to the extreme form of racism as the Igbo intellectuals did in the course of the civil war, does not mean that other ethnic groups have less tribal instincts than the Igbo. The Igbo went to the farthest limit of tribal racism in the civil war because physically they were in the defensive. And there is no doubt that the Igbo educated elite believed that members of their ethnic group were far more pan-Nigerian than other ethnic groups; that they believed that, in the way the Igbo had spread themselves all over the country, this people had developed a Nigerian national sensitivity.

The sublimation, or sanctification, of tribalism into a credo by the wind-sowers can be explained. It is the one bait that they were sure the masses would swallow easily, in the same way the Germans and Italians swallowed the baits of Nazism and Fascism respectively between the two World Wars; in the same way the Russian and American peoples have in our generation been swallowing the communist ideology and the capitalism credo respectively. It is no use to express surprise that the Nigerian masses seem unaware that their educated elite leaders have been exploiting the tribal factor primarily for their selfish ends; that the educated elite have been doing so not because they subscribed to the traditional mental world or to the moral and social values of traditional society; not because they believed that the Nigerian nation could be built upon tribes; not because they believed that tribal leaders, or tribal laws, should determine their action. It is quite easy for the ordinary Yorubaman or Igboman or Hausa-Fulani man to be a victim of the myth of the tribe, believing in the pride of the tribe, persuaded that his platform of patriotism or citizenship is that of the tribe. As the educated elite leaders drew up a lurid picture of the disaster that might befall this village or that community if they—the educated elite—were not given a blank cheque, so the ordinary man felt that his ethnic group was vicariously injured or humiliated or honoured in appointments or preferments. It is a phenomenon by no means peculiar to the big ethnic groups, as the resurgence and practice of tribalism within the States of the Federation have begun to reveal.

The magic wand of the ideology of tribalism upon the masses apart, there is also the fact that, in a sense, the educated elite in post-independence Nigeria derive from the masses, in a way their nineteenth century *Saro* predecessors never did: their roots are in the villages or

towns. In their home towns they are invariably the innovators, their "palace of the people"¹ mansions being regarded with pride by the people. Their donations to the local churches bring to the politicians the support of pastors and congregations. The influence of the educated elite to bring about modernization and social amenities, through membership of party or government, is a fact that communities recognize, making them have pride in their educated elite leaders. It is a fact which Nigerian literary writers have been fictionizing for years.²

The tragedy of the exploitation of the masses by the educated elite in the name of tribalism or intra-ethnic rivalry or party politics is that the masses were the greatest sufferers in two ways. Firstly the greatest possible violence has been done to the disposition of the Nigerian, his nature being brutalized to the point that the traditional bonds of relationships—family, clan, age-grades and so on—are being snapped as issues are ever more personalized. Thus whilst the ordinary man did not know or understand the real issues at stake between the different groups of the educated elite, yet he was only too ready to do the bidding of the parliamentarian against the latter's political enemy; or of the tribesman against another tribesman; or nurture hatred towards other ethnic groups at the instigation of his educated elite tribesmen. The brutalization of the disposition of the masses reached the crescendo during the civil war when the academics on both sides became militant armchair warriors, fighting themselves in the air 'transistor', in the columns of the press and in "learned" journals. Over the local radio the mass of the population believed virtually all they heard, partly because it tended to fit the pattern of their own personal suffering or tribal sentiment they had long been taught to possess in pre-war days, but even more so because the propagandists themselves were deeply revered because of their status in the community. Their word, in a time of crisis, was accepted unquestioningly.

Secondly it was the ordinary people who took the brunt of sufferings whenever tension assumed the physical form. Like their pre-colonial forbears who were able to speak 'big grammar' only against the invasion of Nigeria, whilst the masses were physically resisting the British invaders, the colonial elite's radicalism or anti-British philippics was confined to the newspaper press or memoranda, and the 'big guns'

¹ A term used by K. O. Mbadiwe to describe his palatial mansion in his hometown, Arozindiogu Orlu.

² Chinua Achebe, *A man of the People*, London 1966.
T. M. Aluko, *Chief the Honourable Minister*, London 1970.

took care that none of them broke Sedition Laws. There is substance in the observation of a fire-brand patriot about the educated elite politicians:¹

As for the intellectuals, they genuinely desire Freedom for its own sake, but they are not prepared to pay its price. They trust solely to the weapons of the mind—demonstration, explanation, argument and rebuttal. Naturally when the security of the body is threatened, the mind wavers. So at the first sight of the police and the other law-enforcement officers, our brilliant orators canter cowardly into their hide-outs. You get plenty of fun as long as the comic arguments last. In the end you get little or no freedom. Intellectualism is a big joke.²

It is not an accident that throughout the agitation against the British, none of the prominent leaders went to gaol. Thus whilst an Azikiwe could use the mouth and his charisma to stir up the emotions of workers, he knew how to flee for dear life and desert the workers whenever he perceived danger ahead and to abandon the "Zikists" to save his own skin. Thus the Southern politicians on whom their supporters in Kano had fixed much hope for encouragement in 1953 disappeared by air like lightning once they sensed that physical fighting would break out, leaving their ordinary blind followers to die or lose property or bear permanent scars.³

There is nothing to wonder at, then, that throughout the civil war the more ordinary people were the canon-fodder. In the war-affected areas, particularly inside 'Biafra', the educated elite who were responsible for the whirlwind were invariably moving away from the warfront, using their pen or their voices to arouse the ordinary people to make more and more sacrifices. Or they were abroad in Europe and other parts of Africa as roving ambassadors, living extremely well and some of them fattening on the agonies of the ordinary people inside 'Biafra'.⁴ It is remarkable to contemplate on the fact that, with only one exception,⁵ none of the intellectuals, the politicians and the civil servants—the people who had a stake in the crisis—died as a result of physical combats. But hardly had the war been over than it was the same classes of the educated elite, particularly the academicians and civil servants, who either rehabilitated themselves or found

¹ Adelabu used the word "intellectuals" to refer to the best Western-style educated politicians, not to university teachers.

² Adegoke Adelabu, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

³ Even at the worst of tension the political leaders escaped physical molestation and the dead were invariably the ordinary people.

⁴ John Oyinbo (pseudonym) *Nigeria: Crisis and Beyond*, London 1971, pp. xv-xvi.

John de St. Jorre, *op. cit.*, pp. 375-378.

⁵ Christopher Okigbo, the poet who died in the war and fictionalized, by Ali A. Mazrui, *The Trial of Christopher Okigbo*, London 1971.

themselves back in their positions in other universities, or hankered after fulfilment of a ubiquitous role in Nigeria, before they began to have thoughts for the ordinary people.

A tragic element in the educated elite in Nigeria is that the articulate leaders of this class of Nigerians had a perception of the pan-Nigerian concept and knew the dynamics for the creation of a Nigerian nation-state. At some points they are capable of thinking and acting in pan-Nigerian terms. Thus, especially after the 1959 Federal election, Obafemi Awolowo began to assume a pan-Nigerian outlook, began to organize his party, the Action Group, in accordance with this outlook and began to speak of social reforms that he would wish extended throughout the Federation. Of particular importance is the emphasis he has been placing upon a Federally-designed educational system that would aim at bridging the gap between the North and the South. Of no less significance was the ease with which Nnamdi Azikiwe adopted some non-Igbo customs and habitudes and with which he gathered around himself non-Igbo supporters who believed sincerely that he was truly a pan-Nigerian leader.

Unfortunately the pan-Nigerian part of those of the educated elite leaders who were in the centre of things was either small or developed rather too late. Or did they believe that it would be quixotic to advocate the ideal of pan-Nigerianism at a time the unlettered would find such concept unintelligible? At a time the unlettered themselves were more concerned with local problems or more interested in avenging the past offences of this village or that community? Or was it that in their egoistical conceptions of themselves, each individual leader believing he was the superior of the other, and the personal rivalries inherent in the bid for national leadership, the educated elite were using tribalism to undermine one another's influence?

It is happy to note that the picture of the educated elite as windsowers that has been given does not apply to every member of that class. The researcher comes across less prominent members of the elite in unexpected quarters who expressed pan-Nigerianism with transparent sincerity. Take for instance *The Ijebu Weekly Echo* which came into being on 2 August 1947. Financed by an Ijebu Igbo business woman in Ibadan and edited by J. J. Odufuwa, Managing Director of the Swann Press, it was dedicated to a pan-Nigerian approach to affairs and was deadly against tribalism. It had columns in Igbo and Hausa and gave more attention to Nnamdi Azikiwe and the NCNC than to Yoruba leaders. In fact it was deadly against the founding of *Egbẹ̀ Ọmọ Oduduwa*, attacked this so-called pan-Yoruba cultural organization for crying wolf about "Ibo menace" and engaged the

pen of the President of the Nigerian Union of Students, destined to be connected with this University as a teacher. He is Hezekiah A. Oluwasanmi, now Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ife. Oluwasanmi denounced the emergence of Yoruba nationalism and adored the NCNC which he saw in the pan-Nigerian garb as the only party that would lead Nigeria "to our Mecca".¹

There is no doubt that there were many more Odufuwas and the Oluwasanmis of the forties in other parts of the country; that the pan-Nigerian cause was being practically, sincerely, resolutely and selflessly adumbrated by the Sa'adu Zungus, the Aminu Kanos, the Adegoke Adelabus and the Habib Raji Abdallahs. It was such torchbearers of Pan-Nigerianism, who even at the point of our nation's greatest peril, on the threshold of dismemberment, were convinced that Nigeria could, and should be made to, remain a country, one and indivisible. Happily people of such faith and conviction were to be found on both sides of the civil war into which Nigeria slid.

The excruciating pangs of the civil war, in which Nigerians turned upon themselves lethal weapons on behalf of, or against, secession set an increasing number of the educated elite thinking. For the first time since the advent of this class in a large number in the nineteenth century the educated elite, whose number has multiplied numerically, qualitatively and in diverse directions, have been asking themselves relevant questions on basic issues of nation-building. Whilst they remain hybrids, they are no longer under delusions and they have begun to ponder how best to resolve the identity crisis; how to be mentally emancipated; how to cease to collaborate with the white man's cultural imperialism; how meaningfully to integrate science and technology in indigenous culture; how to cease to be neo-colonialists; how to replace the whirlwind that was carried away by the blood of the thousands of masses who died in the civil war with a stable calm; how the Nigerian nation-State is to be transformed into the Nigerian nation. The myriads of educated elite—the soldiers, the civil servants, the ex-politicians, University men, businessmen and journalists—all have begun to transform themselves into nation-builders. The way they have been doing this forms the substance of a fourth lecture which I am not permitted to give by my terms of reference, but which I crave the indulgence of the Vice-Chancellor and of this distinguished audience to publish with the three mandatory lectures.

¹ *Ijebu Weekly Echo*, 1/11/1947.

IV

NEW NIGERIANS?

“Although paradoxical, the crisis presents a unique opportunity for us to establish now and for posterity a nation united and indivisible. It affords us an opportunity to establish our collective identity as one people with a common destiny. It imposes on all of us a supreme duty to remake our own history, to build a new nation in our own image and for our purposes . . . Major-General Gowon, Head of the Federal Military Government and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, has established the foundations for a new nation, purged of the shameful performance of the past”. Professor E. U. Essien-Udom *Towards One Nigeria No. 1.*

New Nigerians?

The appearance of windsowers in the Nigerian Army pushed the country to the brink of disintegration. For whilst, with their mouth and pen, the civilian windsowers' capacity was limited to inflaming the passion and disrupting the psyche of their misled followers, the capacity of the trigger-pulling military windsowers to produce physical violence of the fiercest magnitude and undermine the territorial integrity, unity and sovereignty of the country was, in the Nigerian circumstances, infinite. Dominated and controlled by an educated elite of a status and life-style comparable to that of their civilian counterparts, the Nigerian Army was believed to be insulated against primordial allegiances to the tribe and party politics. Organized on the basis of a chain of commands, the Army was expected to have its inherent cohesion, observe the virtue of discipline within the context of its rigid hierarchical structure and be doctrinally committed against such dysfunctional forces being unleashed by their political class colleagues.

Such expectation disappeared overtly and overnight with the behaviour of the best educated in the Nigerian Army—one of them an alumnus of this University¹—who on 15 January 1966 unmasked their Igbo tribal claws, murdering non-Igbo windsowers and military superiors believed to stand in the way of Igbo domination of the country. The tribal action, reinforced by the activities of the Igbo cabal windsowers with whom Major-General Aguiyi-Ironsi surrounded himself, provoked more than the Newtonian reaction: it produced dialectically a Northern Fury greater than had been bargained for by the fathers and executors of the January coup. On 29 July the Northern troops more than exacted their pound of flesh, whilst on 29 September the Northern masses visited the sin of 15 January Igbo coup leaders on thousands of Igbo citizens in the area north of the Niger-Benue.

¹ Major Emmanuel Ifeajuna. For his part see Robin Luckham *op. cit.*, pp. vii, 17-18, 21-22, 27-28 & 35.

The result of the activities of the military windsowers of January and July 1966 was that Nigeria nearly, very nearly, splintered into rudderless and hostile units. It seemed as though the concept of an independent, virile and united Nigeria vaguely entertained by the deluded hybrids, and for which their successors collaborated with the British Raj, was being turned into ashes by the windsowers, civil and military. It was at this point that providential intervention threw on the scene Lt. Colonel Yakubu Gowon who, at the tender age of thirty-two, began to preside over an unwieldy, complex and cracking country. Part of his very difficult task was to rally round himself the disconcerted, disillusioned, discomfited, discredited and factious members of his class, military and civilian; to turn a state of despair into one of hope and persuade sectionalists to regain vision of One Nigeria. He had to start with his colleagues. Nothing shows more clearly the pervasiveness of the gangrene of tribalism or sectionalism and the almost complete loss of confidence in Nigeria as a coherent nation than the dismal posture undisguisedly assumed by the military governors as late as January 1967 in the historic meetings at Aburi in Ghana.¹ By now the Lincolnian streak in the young Head of State had become apparent: he was resolved that the country should continue to hang together as one entity; that its unity in diversity should be preserved at all hazards.² This Lincolnian stance, which became ever more pronounced with time, struck the appropriate chord in the hearts of a large number of the educated elite, the "New Nigerians", of whom General Yakubu Gowon is the inspiring spirit.

The emergence of the "New Nigerians" raises the question of the type, style and extent of "transformation" of the post 1966 educated elite. Can one describe the military branch of the educated elite class who seized power from the windsowers in 1966 as revolutionaries, a different breed determined to alter the course and complexion of Nigerian society in the direction of authentic nation building? Were they determined to efface from the Nigerian scene the centrifugal curse of tribalism or sectionalism and clear society of the social ills and moral pollution that had been so fatal to the First Republic? Were they a new wine in a new wineskin? Or a part of the old wine in the old wineskin? Or a new wine in an old wineskin!

It is impossible, and a futile exercise, to isolate one branch of the educated class from the other, the army major from the politician, the civil servant from the lecturer, the journalist from the businessman.

¹ See their statements (pp. 8-35) in the verbatim report *Meeting of the Nigerian Military Leaders held at Peduase Lodge, Aburi, Ghana*. Federal Ministry of Information Lagos.

² *ibid.*, pp. 15, 16, 35 & 47.

Apart from the common platform of tribalism on which they all stood before the crisis, the uniformity of their style of life, their material cravings and social ambitions cannot be ignored. Take the Army, for instance. The thorough sociological analysis of the Nigerian army by Robin Luckham¹ proves conclusively that in their origins, their ambition for self-improvement, their imitation of the British Sandhurst style of life, ritualization of the spirit and polish in the mess and their earnings, the military branch of the educated elite shared common characteristics with their civilian counterparts. Nor were they less tribalistic or regional or sectional in outlook, as the patterns of the January and July *coups* of 1966 clearly revealed. Obviously it would be expecting too much of the educated leaders of the Nigerian army that they should be corporately committed to the military organization and professionalism to the extent of shedding the tribal instincts or belief, entirely unresponsive to the goings-on in society. Why should the soldier be expected to behave better than the university professor, the latter theoretically professionally expected to be rational and prejudice-free?

The essence of the matter is that there was no radicalization of the educated elite in Nigerian society in 1966, but that the trauma of the crisis was so devastating that it required the threat of the barrel of the gun to put an end, summarily, to the windsowing by the civilians and put the army at the helm of affairs. Ironically it was the military branch of the educated elite who by their oath were committed to the ideology of an ordered and intact One Nigeria—that of defence of the motherland against foreign aggressors and maintenance of security, law and order within the country. In this respect it should be remarked that the ‘coup of the Majors’ of 15 January 1966 was not aimed at ending but at strengthening Nigeria as a single political entity, just as the restorers of discipline in the army after the “coup of the NCOs” of 29 July, were preoccupied with the federal and centrepetal role of the army.

This is the crucial point missed, it seems to me, by writers on the Nigerian scene in 1966 as well as critics of the educated elite leaders of the army, who dismiss the latter as a bunch of men barren of ideologies for salutary consumption of society.² To my mind this would be a case of the kettle describing the pot as “black”. The Army was much less mentally equipped to father ideologies for propagation among the masses than their more qualified civilian “academic”

¹ *The Nigerian Military* (A Sociological Analysis of Authority and Revolt 1960–67), Cambridge, 1971

² See in particular Wole Soyinka, *The Man Died*, London 1972 pp. 179–182.

critics. Here it is essential to pause a little for a few observations on the ideological barrenness of the post-independence educated elite in Nigeria.

Undoubtedly, the greatest deficiency of the collaborators and windsowers is that, strictly speaking, till this day not a single political thinker has emerged from their ranks. In this respect they compare unfavourably to their deluded hybrid predecessors. The total ideological barrenness of the educated elite is the best illustration of the ill-suited, ill-digested, procrustean and mentally benumbing Western-style education system in which they had been brought up and in which they continued to wallow long after it ought to have occurred to them to ponder a truly national educational system designed to achieve such national objectives envisioned by deluded hybrids like James Johnson, Mojola Agbebi and Henry Carr—an educational system that would have liberated the genius of Nigerians in relation to their authentic social, cultural, economic and political aspirations. How could they be creative when they were, and remain, borrowers of the forms but not the spirit, the shadows but not the substance, of the institutions of Anglo-Saxons? Thus until this day the badly educated soldier, university professor, lawyer and civil servant—persuade themselves that they are respectively fulfilling themselves in the institutional context of Sandhurst, the English red-brick University, Old Bailey and Whitehall. But alas the institutional transfers in which they are all operating are fragile imitations of Anglo-Saxon institutions which are yet to acquire dimensions and characteristics that would take into account the peculiarities of the Nigerian social, political and ethical systems.

The windsowers were ideologically barren as they were politically mischievous because it never occurred to them to examine and understand in historical perspective the Western concepts and institutions they quixotically and naively thought should be applied in Nigeria. Thus none of them had understood the concepts of toleration and Westminster-type parliamentary democracy as logically necessarily connected with evolution of political stability in Britain, which concepts became part and parcel of the British after a slow process lasting more than two hundred years. None of them questioned the obvious inapplicability of such Anglo-Saxon concepts to the entirely different Nigerian scene, where the vast majority of the population do not have the vaguest idea of the context of evolution of the two-party system, the concept of an official "Opposition", and the virtues of the ballot-box in English society for which these concepts were conceived. Nor were the windsowers equipped for

creative and constructive study of indigenous concepts of politics, law, constitution, authority, power and so on, which had worked very well in States and empires before the British colonial intrusion, with the aim of examining these for adaptation to a society that has not entirely turned its back to its rich cultural and political heritage. For the windsowers had been brought up in schools in Nigeria and abroad with the intention that they should be ignorant and contemptuous of the Nigerian past and heritage. Hence the bewilderingly amusing wild-goose chase which the Western-oriented legal and constitutional "experts"—educated elite—will be making to devise for the country a suitable constitution aptly described by General Gowon as "entirely new . . . yet to be found in any political dictionary in the world, but peculiar to Nigeria".¹

The appalling result of the benumbing colonial educational system in which the educated elite had been brought up is that they not only seem incapable of formulating ideologies; they seem as well unable to understand and adapt to the Nigerian situation world conquering ideologies which are being turned to advantage in other parts of Africa. One cannot talk of a system of thought to be dubbed Azikiweism, Awolowoism, Belloism or Enahoroism in the way one can of Nkrumahism. Whilst Senegal can boast of the philosophical exposition on Marxism in relation to African society formulated by Leopold Sedar Senghor² and the Tanzanians can take pride in the Tanzanian edition of socialism expounded in the Arusha Declaration by their Nwalimu, Julius Nyerere, Nigeria cannot boast of a single exponent of a Nigerian version of socialism on the ideological or philosophical plane. Rather the windsowers made a laughing stock of themselves with their cavalier banding about of meaningless terms like "Democratic Socialism" and "Pragmatic Socialism".

Whilst the windsowers were so demonstrably barren of ideologies on which the Nigerian nation could begin to be built, the University teachers were not a whit better. Contrary to the tradition in the developed parts of the world the universities were not arsenals of ideas. Many of the dons were hand in glove with the political windsowers; many were so absorbed in teaching and research that they closed their eyes completely to the world outside the ivory tower; many—and the speaker belongs to this group—were a terribly cowardly lot who, though did not approve of the moral pollution,

¹ Quoted in N. U. Akpan, *The Struggle for Secession 1966-1970*, London, 1971, p. 46.

² I am aware that Leopold Senghor is a mere theorist, as his Marxism is resolutely excluded from the Senegal. With his chateau in Normandy and his annual hivernage, Senghor is almost an archetypal francophone deluded hybrid.

nepotism, tribalism and the other ills plaguing society, simply lacked the courage to articulate censorious ideas or opinions. The Universities produced two sets of critics—commentators and crankish exponents of socialism. Small and incoherent as they are as a group they are an interesting lot for their inherent ineffectiveness. In the first group are the creative writers and playwrights like Chinua Achebe, T. M. Aluko and Wole Soyinka whose satire on their class—the educated elite generally—and insight into the pulverising effects of the so-called Western civilization on indigenous society, are worth taking seriously. But their creativeness does not flower in the direction of ideology formulation, an exercise that requires a detailed understanding of society and the national goals that it should aim at. And like their theoretical Marxian colleagues, about whom a few words presently, their attitude to the problems of nation-building confronting the country has been wholly negative. Though anxious to ridicule—and one of them is a nihilistic activist—they are far more qualified than any other group of intellectuals to produce meaningful ideologies in relation to the Nigerian milieu and in the context of modernization.

Then there are the crankish theoretical Marxists who though they speak the language of commitment to Marxist socialism have never been able to explain ideologically their stance in an intelligible language. In this respect their inferiority to Leopold Sedar Senghor and Julius Nyerere—or even to S. G. Ikoku and Obafemi Awolowo (both of whom have attempted to generate ideas in some measure)¹—is clear! No less a striking feature of the cranks of socialism is the fact that they have not perceived unto this day the contradiction of the cushy “bourgeoisie” position they occupy with the rest of the educated elite and their refusal to make a gesture to aggregate to the life-style of the masses on whose behalf they are eager to employ incendiary language.

A word about the University students who might be expected to behave like their colleagues in other parts of the world in their moments of nation-building. Nigerian university students have been more a bad version of their teachers and windsowers than a positive ideology-oriented force or catalyst. Besides being racked by tribalism or sectionalism, corruption and mismanagement, the students, or rather the few of them who took active interest in unionism, had no time or thought for pan-Nigerian concepts beyond mouth expression. The silent majority, however, were ever ready to join the activists

¹ In *The People's Republic*. Awolowo and, in several scattered articles, S. G. Ikoku are making some effort. The former assumes pedestrian socialism; Ikoku is yet to develop his ideas in any sustained and intelligible manner.

on issues like food and extravagant privileges which they have come to accept as prescriptive rights; their primary aim is to obtain degrees which would qualify them to enter into the life-style of the senior civil servants, graduate teachers and so on. Invariably ignorant of the infinite richness and variety of the cultures and peoples of the country respectively, their unquenchable thirst is to know the white man's country about which most of their formal education had largely centred, and towards which they looked for cultural inspiration and norms.¹ In recent years their irrational imitation of the tactics and ideas of their counterparts in the white man's country has developed in them vandalistic instincts and rebelliousness to an extent definitely unpalatable to university authorities and the Federal Military Government.

On the whole it is clear that no revolutionary group with ideologies has emerged among the educated elite in Nigeria; that the students and staff of universities have been essentially bread and butter agitators, rather than fathers of ideologies to which they would be exemplarily and passionately committed. And yet nothing short of a class of such so far non-existent people would be able to make an effective impact on masses, inspire and lead a revolution similar to that which has shaken other human societies for good. So far I cannot see in the horizon intellectual revolutionaries similar to the Girondists of Revolutionary France, Fabians of Victorian and Edwardian England, Dreyfusards of the Third Republic, Bolshevists of the Soviet Union and the Revisionists of Poland in this generation.²

Enough has been said, I believe, to show that the military grabbers of the reins of government in 1966 were not in a position to be ideology-mongers; that they could not be miracle-makers or heralds of an ideology-propelled revolution in the Bolshevik style or architects of the millenium dream of armchair exponents of socialism. Revolutions require a milieu of intellectual ferment over a long period of time as well as effective *rapport* with the masses, through indoctrination. Hence the total failure of the think-tank in the secessionist 'Biafra' who promulgated the concept of 'Biafranism' in the Ahiara Declaration in the heat of the war, a concept that cannot be remotely classified as an ideology.³

But the military elite leaders had ideas which require little or no intellectual equipment to perceive and promulgate and the application of which are no less effective for nation-building than ideologies.

¹ See Pierre L. Van Berghe, *op. cit.*, pp. 147-186.

² For a good general view of intellectuals, see Lewis A. Coser *Men of Ideas* New York 1970.

³ Dated 1st June 1969, full text in the *Mbaeyi Collections*.

These ideas, it should be remarked, were nothing new; they had been put forward at one time or another by the windsowers in moments when they thought more as statesmen than as politicians. These ideas centre around the issue of nation-building—preservation of the unity of the country, transformation of the nation-state to a nation, abolition of tribalism, nepotism, bribery and corruption, liberation of the country from neo-colonialism, adoption of a truly independent foreign policy and so on. The military elite, then, are nothing more than burglars of the ideas of their civilian predecessors. The difference between them, however, is the most important point. Whilst the windsowers could not implement such ideas by placing party politics and ethnic considerations before the intrinsic interest of the country, the military elite rulers at the federal level consider nothing less than the intrinsic interests of the country and have, with patent salutary results, begun to implement the ideas.

Not that the military elite leaders have been running the show alone. They brought civil servants into the picture very early, and later the windsowers who are being compelled to play the role of statesmen. The former, who by their profession are advisers on matters of policy, found a new release of energy in the fact that the military rulers accept advice on merits rather than on partisan political considerations. They have since 1966 had an opportunity to use to the best advantage initiative and expertise in a way they never were so allowed in the heyday of civilian rule. Prominently on top of the civil service are a number of extremely able young men who are said to display the attributes of the 'New Nigerians'. They are self-confident, pan-Nigerian in outlook, even when they are from the so-called Minority groups; they mix very easily with colleagues in the universities, in business and in sports; many of them are married into ethnic groups other than their own.

Nor have the discredited politicians been left out. It was not long before the military elite began to discover that these windsowers were, after all, a necessary evil; that all that was necessary was to clip their political wings, a measure achieved with the banning of the political parties. It was clear that most of these politicians who retired to their constituencies remained symbols of achievement in their localities, could be an effective channel of communication with the people in a way the military rulers could not be. In this respect they would be filling a gap which could not be filled by the civil servants, the latter confined to their desks and having no contact with the masses. In any case it was a matter of common sense that this class of the educated elite should not be alienated; that their talents be tapped

and harnessed in the overall development of the country. It is essential to remark that very many of the former politicians, called Commissioners, have been behaving like statesmen,¹ working as a team with colleagues from other parts of the country whom they were wont to villify in the days of windsowing.

It was not an easy or mean achievement, for in the last third of 1966 and down to the end of the first half of 1967, the educated elite were divided into regional, sectional or tribal compartments ever more than before. It was much far worse than the North versus South confrontation of 1953 which dissolved as quickly as it had arisen in the atmosphere of the so-called nationalist agitation. Whilst there were not wanting, throughout the Federation, individuals who never lost faith in the pan-Nigerian vision, the educated elite within each Region took stock of their interest more in relation to their regional political than within national boundaries. Thus between July and September 1966 the educated elite from the old Northern Region tergiversated as follows. Momentarily from 29 July to 1 August some part of the military branch were for bidding good-bye to the Federation; then, momentarily again, during September the civilian elite corporately were for the loosest confederation. Then after a week and henceforth they staged a swift come-back to a strong centre Federal idea.

The position of the Igbo elite was already fixed. By September when the *Ad Hoc* Conference on Constitution was to meet in Lagos the seed of secession that had been planted since May 1966 had begun to yield fruits in the clarion call of the Military Governor of the Eastern Region, Odumegwu Ojukwu, to the civil servants in Federal institutions and University personnel to return to their fatherland. In fact those among the Igbo elite who became bomb planters in Lagos had by that date resolved on blowing up the Federation and it is nothing surprising that by October the Igbo elite had become convinced that Nigeria had gone far in the direction of disintegration, that it was useless to talk of the Federation hanging together by constitution-mending. For the elite who by acts, covert and overt, went on strengthening secessionist tendencies in the East, there was no turning back until the very end of the civil war. The Mid-West elite spoke with one voice as avowed Federalists, reflecting a studied and enlightened self-interest rather than greater ideological commitment to One Nigeria than their counterparts in the rest of the country.

¹ See in particular Qbafermi Awolowo's *The People's Republic* in which he advocates what he should have practised in the fifties. It may be added that most of the old windsowers have retained their windsown wealth; their wealth was not sown in the wind but in Swiss bank vaults and in concrete palaces and office buildings.

The Yoruba educated elite presented the biggest puzzle. They had no corporate stance as such. In this respect the representatives at the *Ad Hoc* Constitutional Conference who spoke in a rather ambivalent non-committing language were neither authentic representatives nor corporate voice of the class. Primarily pre-occupied by the division that had rent them in 1962 to the point of no-return, they were pre-occupied more with their eternal bitterness and spirit of vendetta towards each other than with national affairs. Certainly next to the Igbo secessionist elite the Yoruba presented the greatest puzzle and embarrassment to the apostles of the Federal Government right down to the outbreak of the civil war. Little wonder that only a few days before the outbreak of the war the so-called Leader of the Yoruba, Obaḥemi Awolowo, spoke in the vein of an Ojukwu,¹ threatening the possibility of a Yoruba secession and definitely opposed to the creation of States in Nigeria, a terrific blow to the Minority groups in the Eastern Region whose cause—demand for a state of their own—he had championed ostensibly unswervingly as leader of the Action Group.

The danger for Nigeria, however, did not lie in the rhetorics or tactics or kaleidoscopic swift changes of allegiances of the civilian elite: the barrel of the gun could turn the most desperate anti-Federal or pro-Federal of them to a crusading Federalist or secessionist. Thus when it became clear that powder would have to speak the "Leader" of the Yoruba instantly swallowed his anti-Federal words and accepted with alacrity a strategic position in the Federal Government. In the same manner the anti-secessionist voices in 'Biafra' led by Nnamdi Azikiwe, became automatically tongue-tied, their leader renouncing his pro-Federal instincts by composing the national anthem of 'Biafra'. It was certainly a different matter with the military elite. Within days of the 29 July *coup* most of the leaders had taken pragmatic decision, casting to the devil their seniority claims in favour of the principle of acceptance in the political climate of the country. As one of them, Real-Admiral Akinwale Wey put it: "I want to repeat that if we did not have the opportunity of having Jack (that is Gowon) to accept, God knows we would have been all finished . . . If fifty-five million people can be saved let us forget everything about position and for God's sake because of our fifty-five million people let us forget our personal pride."²

In this climate the one and only person around whom the rank and file from the entire North and by far the majority in the South

¹ Text of his address of 1/5/1967 in *Daily Times* 2/5/1967.

² Minutes of the Aburi Meeting cited, p. 13.

were prepared to rally was a young man who had never dreamed of occupying so terrifying a position as that of head of a mutinous army and a country politically at its very nadir. The young man, Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon was born on 19th October 1934 to one of the first generation Christian converts of his small ethnic group on the Bauchi Plateau, the Angas. His father's migration to Zaria and subsequent training in the Nigerian army introduced him to the wider world of Nigeria; his induction into Western-style education at the primary and secondary levels, supplemented by military training in England and professional duties in the Cameroons, put him into the wider world outside Nigeria; his induction in Christianity, which he seems to have absorbed seriously, revealed to him the profoundly moulding universalistic and humanistic ethical values which were to condition his extremely humane attitude towards the "rebels" during the civil war. Unobtrusive by nature, stable by temperament and genial by disposition, it is alleged that although he was courting an Igbo girl for marriage, he was on the murder-list of the mutineers of 15 January 1966 *coup* which eliminated practically all officers of Northern Nigerian origin, ultimately leaving him the highest-ranking officer from that part of Nigeria after that event. It required his intervention in the 29 July 1966 *coup* to persuade the avengers of the earlier 15 January *coup* to put an end to shooting and swallow back their bye-bye-to-Nigeria slogan.¹

For the "North for the Northerners" jingoists among the military and civilian elite Yakubu Gowon's credentials might not be hundred per cent intact, he not being a member of the Hausa-Fulani tribe and a Muslim. But there were more than enough: he was a "Northerner" in the consoling geographical sense that he was born north of the Niger-Benue; he schooled in the North, in an Islamic Emirate, in the process of which he had many Muslim colleagues; he spoke Hausa, the *lingua franca* of the disappearing Northern Nigeria. A "Northerner" of that background was bound to appreciate the feelings and aspirations of the North which the windsowers from the South had threatened to trample under their feet and which Major-General Aguiyi-Ironsi, a Southern infidel, nearly cancelled with his ominous measures in the first half of 1966.

Far more important than his acceptability to the Northerners was his acceptability to Southerners. For the latter his credentials might not be a hundred per cent intact, he being a "Northerner" in the

¹ For details the best work to date is John de St Jorre, *The Nigerian Civil War*, London 1972, pp. 67-75.

geographical sense. Otherwise his credentials were unsullied. In the culturally and politically dangerous sense he was not a genuine "Northerner", he not being a member of the Hausa-Fulani group. His relatively small and obscure tribe, of the existence of which many were hearing for the first time, connoted absolute neutrality. Therefore he would be a leader on whom neither the Yoruba nor the Igbo could visit the sins of the Hausa-Fulani windsowers. Yakubu Gowon's profession of Christianity was for Southerners another asset, making him have in common with them a religion which is a horrendous taboo and bugbear to the fanatical Muslim faithful followers of the Sokoto Caliphate.

One young man, the Military Governor of the Eastern Region, refused to see Gowon in terms of political realism, accept his leadership and recognize him as a providential bridgehead between the North and the South. He refused to understand or accept that the problem that the military elite were to resolve in July/August 1966 was basically political. Rather he interpreted the political climate in exclusively political principles, thereby reducing matters to the purely personal denominator.¹ It is nothing short of a riddle that an erudite politically instinctive governor of Ojukwu's standing—already political leader of a Region for seven months—should fail to perceive the obvious which his own military superiors from the South perceived at once. A few words about this man who was to lead the minority secessionists, military and civilian, against the Federal Government.

Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu was born on 4 November 1933 at Zungeru with silver spoon in his mouth to a millionaire father of Nnewi, not far from Onitsha in Igboland. A Roman Catholic, he seems to have lived most of his life outside Igboland until his appointment to the military governorship of the Eastern Region in January 1966.² He received both his secondary and tertiary education in Oxford, Britain, after which he joined the Army. One of the first set of the University graduates to enlist in the Nigerian Army, he was in life-style and socially member of a class of Majors who, according to an investigator, had contempt for their less educated superiors who had achieved their positions through professional training and experience.³ It is yet to be established how far back he began to have political ambition, but it is alleged that in 1964—the year when the windsowers demonstrated to the world that they could not organize a free and fair election—he favoured intervention by

¹ See in particular his statements at Aburi.

² N. U. Akpan, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-8, 12-27.

³ Robin Luckham, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-50.

the Army and many writers have speculated that he had a hand in the 15 January 1966 *coup*. The more authentic information we have about him from that time onwards suffices for our purpose.

Prior to the 29 July *coup* he was, perhaps, the most unpopular military governor because he was a humourless, iron-ruler who practised barefaced nepotism.¹ Judged, however, by his public utterances—he was the most erudite and garrulous of them all and he could not be unconscious of his literary skill—and the measures he enacted, he emerged as a transparently genuine pan-Nigerian. Not even the first massacres of the Igbo in May 1966 could shake his conviction that Nigeria was already one and indivisible, believing only that the perpetrators of such dastardly act were a tiny minority that would be brought to book.² Among his practical gestures in respect of his pan-Nigerian posture were the appointment of the Emir of Kano as Chancellor of the University of Nigeria, expurgation of the word “Tribe” from all Government documents and secondary scholarships for non-Igbo Nigerians. It is clear that he was transformed to as secessionist leader at the time of the 29 July *coup* which, accompanied by murder of some Igbo citizens in the North, he interpreted as an anti-Igbo *coup*. Incidentally he was never sorry for the 15 January *coup* and never saw the second *coup* as a logical retaliation of the first. Henceforth he saw himself as the messiah of the Igbo tribe and an unyielding denunciator of the Nigerian concept. Ready to encourage him in the standard of revolt he was raising were genuine refugees—victims of the Northern avengers of 15 January *coup*—and the false refugees—“intellectuals” and top civil servants who voluntarily abandoned their jobs, having been haunted by fear that they might be engulfed by imagined holocaust. He found it gall and wormwood to think, how much accept, as Head of State and Commander-in-Chief Gowon, to whom he believed he was superior.

If an individual ever decided the course of events in any country, Odumegwu Ojukwu did—by pushing Nigeria inexorably in the direction of civil war. For it is clear that had he operated within the context of Nigeria he would have extracted from General Gowon solutions for the refugee problem and the process of reconciliation would have been launched. For General Gowon was adamantly resolved within months of his assumption of the headship of the Federal Military Government to take steps to heal the wounds of the country.

¹ N. U. Akpan, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

² Text of his speech 30/5/1966 published in *Nigerian Crisis 1966* (Eastern Nigerian Viewpoint) Government Printer, Enugu, pp. 11–12.

Other groups with grievances less urgent and less patent than those of the Igbos had begun to receive satisfactory attention within the context of Nigeria. For instance the "Wild West" was being tamed, with the release from prison of Obaḡmi Awolḡwo and the Yoruba grievance of inadequate representation in the Army was being removed with quick recruitment of members of this major tribe. Then, as will be discussed later, the door was being opened to the hopes of the Minority ethnic groups in the country who for years had been convinced that they were being oppressed by the three major groups—the Hausa-Fulani, the Yoruba and the Igbo. General Gowon held out the olive branch to Lt. Colonel Ojukwu, going beyond limits that could be endured by only a few statesmen. Ojukwu's answer was to heap insults on Gowon and inflict one rebuff after another on the Head of State whom he, wrongly, ultimately judged as a weak man. Gowon went to the extent of signing what was tantamount to a self-denying Ordinance with the astonishing Decree No. 8 which gave the Regions far more powers than they ever had in the First Republic. Appeasement was of no avail and Aburi literally became Gowon's Munich. After Aburi Ojukwu became ever more arrogant, ever more boastful, displaying gimmick. Whilst Gowon went on appealing to reason, emphasizing that matters had not gone beyond repairs, that more things united than divided the different parts of the country; that the future could and would be made brighter for inter-ethnic harmony, Ojukwu went on emphasizing the immediate past, as it affected the Igbo in particular, took a macabre view of Nigeria's future, was more concerned about the things that divided the country. For him Nigeria was dead and if he had his way, would wish to bury her with his imagined military might which, as he boasted, "no power in black Africa" could trifle with. He had seceded in all but words.

In the circumstances, when it was clear that Ojukwu would follow action with words, General Gowon declared a state of emergency on 27 May 1967 and split the country into twelve states. Three days later Ojukwu proclaimed to the world the birth of a new nation christened "Biafra". The Rubicon had been crossed.

On 6 July the civil war began. This war, the most terrible in the experience of Nigerian peoples, saw the educated elite employ the lethal weapons and techniques of warfare they had learned from their white mentors. In their effect and the terror they caused, these weapons were far more dreadful than those which the British invaders had used to subjugate the masses. The murderous capacity of the automatic weapons and terrifying booming from canons, set people fleeing miles away from areas of military activity, whilst the psychical affliction of

bomber jets was such that long after the war they remained emotionally unreconciled to the noise of civil aircraft. Arrows, spears, axes and dane guns—the old weapons of warfare known to the peoples in the nineteenth century and which they were wont to employ against their white taskmasters and windsower opponents—would be of no avail in any confrontation with the military branch of the educated elite. If the unlettered masses, the so-called natural rulers and traditional aristocracy, ever had any doubt that the educated elite had come to power for ever, the weapons and model of warfare which the military branch of the elite were employing banished such doubt; little wonder that, whether on the Federal or 'Biafran' side, the masses carried out automatically the bidding of the colonial white man's heirs.

Although the various branches of the educated elite were ultimately to come together again, the civil war had divided Nigerian society into unequal two sides. Both sides were led by the educated elite, the military branch. The issue at stake was the continued existence of the Federation, whether Nigeria was to continue as a political entity or whether a part or parts could break away with impunity. Although it was the educated elite who did the debating, producing argument for and against throughout the duration of the war, it should be remarked that the masses participated in the event more than they ever had participated in any national event. In the North and East where anti-Igbo and anti-Hausa-Fulani feelings had been whipped up to fever height respectively, the common people stood on the platform of tribalism or regionalism, believing that the people on the other side were the enemy totally in the wrong and on whom physical vengeance should be wreaked. In the eye of the "Northerner" the Igboman had added two more crimes to his already long list: he wanted to leave the Federation only when he could not dominate it, and at the same time consolidate imperial hold on the Minorities in the Eastern Region, owners of sources of wealth in the Region. In the eye of the Igboman the "Northerner" had become a pathological hater of the Igbo whom he wanted to eliminate in Eastern Nigeria as he had eliminated the Igbo in the North. As the war progressed the Igboman became schizophrenic in his conception of the Northerner who had brought fire and sword right into the heart of Igboland, with his mental and social values that were a complete negation to the Igboman's.

Two groups of people thought that they could successfully sit on the fence—the Yoruba and Mid-Western peoples. Enmeshed in their never-ending intra-ethnic bitterness and chafing under the humiliation that a Northern "army of occupation" was entrenched in Yorubaland,

the Yoruba were unrealistically neutral, as if they were not part of Nigeria. But when in August 1967 the 'Biafrans' threatened an invasion of Yoruba territory they jumped down the fence and became fanatically loyal to the federal cause. Largely fearing that their territory was likely to become a theatre of war between the Federal and 'Biafran' forces, the peoples of the Mid-West behaved like the Yoruba, as if they could be neutral. When in the same month of August the 'Biafrans' invaded them and forced a political decision upon them they took the occasion of the repulse of the 'Biafran' forces by the Federal Government to declare unequivocal and positive allegiance to the Federal cause. Then there were the Minority ethnic groups in the East who from the beginning became involved on the Federal Government side, in the hope that they would be thereby saved from the imperial yoke of the Igbo by administering themselves in their own States which they expected the Federal Government to carve out of the Region.

The civil war, then, can in a sense be described as the people's war and this is the explanation for the people's intense emotional commitment, spontaneous willingness to make sacrifice in material terms or to offer themselves to participate in the actual fighting. Worth stressing is the fact that never had they so voluntarily and enthusiastically joined hands with the educated elite leaders as they did throughout the civil war, an experience that eluded them even in the days of agitation for independence by the educated elite. Most important of all is the fact that the ordinary man knew and believed in what he was fighting for, though this varied from place to place. Thus the Igboman believed that he was fighting for survival and the creation of a virtue-pursuing State; the Efik or Ijaw or Tiv believed he was fighting for the creation of a State that would liberate him from the oppression of the Igboman or the Hausa-Fulani jihadist. But by far the majority in the federal camp believed fanatically that 'To keep Nigeria One is a Task that Must be Done!' The sense of involvement of the masses in the very many issues of the civil war was a definite improvement on the sociological achievement, the *rapprochement*, which the windsowers were in the last lecture credited with achieving with the masses in the fifties and the sixties. For the first time in Nigerian history the educated elite and the unlettered masses saw themselves on a single common course of history.

All this should be borne in mind in order to understand the success which the military elite—as the catalyst—have recorded in transforming the educated elite into 'New Nigerians' since 1966. For the

absence of an ideology on which the military elite could build notwithstanding, the fact remains that in several ways the educated elite of post-1966 Nigeria are different from their predecessors. Before going into a detailed analysis of these ways it is important to stress further that the military elite were the saviours of Nigeria's unity. In this respect they are on a similar plane with the armies in other parts of post-independence Africa where such centrifugal forces as were existing in the First Republic nearly brought about total disintegration of those States.

Whilst the civil war was going on the educated elite were asserting themselves in other directions far more creditably than their pre-1966 predecessors. Their first and major task was to deal the mortal blow at neo-colonialism by either keeping at bay or manipulating, for Nigerian ends, foreign powers or people who, whilst professing to be altruistically interested in Nigerian affairs were primarily concerned in exploiting the differences in the country to further their imperial economic or political ends. Whilst the Federal Government was anxious for arms, it was determined to purchase the hardware war material but run its own policy its own way. There was no question of asking for "aid" with which relations with the 'Biafrans' could have been worsened; no room was given to the neo-colonialists to employ successfully the *divide et impera* tactics.

For the first time in post-independence Nigeria the educated elite showed foreigners that they were masters in their own house. Foreign powers, belonging to Western and Eastern blocs, were put in their proper place, finding it absolutely impossible to achieve an ideological scramble of Nigeria. To this end the Americans were literally shocked by the courage, confidence and *bolte face* with which General Gowon approached the Soviet Union for purchase of weapons which the United States had mischievously refused to sell.¹ It marked a slap in the face for the United States which had hitherto believed that Nigeria was like a wax in its fingers, within the orbit of the Western world. This belief had been definitely reinforced by the fact that the foreign policy of the civilian educated elite, the windsowers, was blatantly pro-Western and anti-Communist. But Gowon broke through the Iron Curtain, treated with the Soviet Union without prejudices and

¹ See E. A. Ayandele, "The 'Humanitarian' Factor in Nigerian Affairs", *Nigerian Opinion* (in four parts)

Vol. 4, Nos 10-11 November-December 1968, pp. 537-364.

Vol. 5 Nos 1-2 January-February 1969, pp. 389-397.

Vol. 5 Nos 3&4 March & April 1969, pp. 419-426.

Vol. 5 Nos 5-7 May-July 1969, pp. 439-448.

Also John de St Jorre op. cit., pp. 272-3, p. 302.

began to allow the Communist world friendship on mutually beneficial bases such as the Western world had enjoyed. But for Gowon there was no question of buying Russian weapons with their Communist ideology. Gowon paid—perhaps inflated prices—for what he bought on purely commercial basis but has since been determined to assess for himself the Russians and other Communist countries, rather than through the eyes of their Western denigrators.¹ In the same manner Odumegwu Ojukwu was resolved on identifying himself what he considered the best interest of 'Biafra' and he took action accordingly. Every effort he took in his relations with foreigners was designed to achieve his main objective—draw maximum attention to his extremities and the hopelessness of his position, coquet them for diplomatic recognition and military hardware. In this direction his resourcefulness was considerable. He lectured them, displayed gimmicks, employed rhetorics and effectively used news media to penetrate the hearts of people outside Nigeria capable of abstract empathy. But at no time was he disposed to allow them to control or influence him, no matter how ostensibly altruistic and pro-Biafran they were. Even the mercenaries were properly controlled to an extent that the latter felt was militarily inadvisable.²

In a way their civilian predecessors never did before, the military elite leaders had self-pride and acquired self-confidence in their dealings with foreigners and foreign powers. It is significant that neither Gowon nor Ojukwu thought of borrowing money from foreign powers for the prosecution of the war. Rather each resorted to internal measures which included appeals to the people to make sacrifices. By choosing the path of independence with self-reliance in preference to dependence with borrowing, the military elite did not have to go sorrowing. Hence the fact that the Federal Government prosecuted the war successfully without the unnerving psychological fear of being held to ransom by foreign money lenders; hence the fact that the victims of the financing of the war in 'Biafra' were the people who patriotically loaned enormous sums to the State for prosecution of the war. The spectacle in the days of windsowers was quite a different one—that of reckless borrowing from Western powers with its concomitant compromising of Nigeria's foreign policy in favour of the West. It was this matter of self-reliance and self-sufficiency that provided the confidence with which Gowon could speak of the civil war as purely an internal affair and warn that on no account would

¹ John de St Jorre, *op. cit.*, pp. 183-302.

² *ibid.*, pp. 321-4, 326-9.

the sovereignty of the Federal Government be compromised. It was this matter of self-reliance—and the 'Biafrans' had to pay for the war through the nose—that enabled Ojukwu to speak severe language about, and harangue in turn, the Americans, the British, the Russians and others when, in his eyes, they did not fulfil the role he had expected of them.¹ Their civilian predecessors dare not speak, never spoke, such language.

No less important was the diplomatic success achieved by the educated elite during the civil war, a success worth comparing with the failure of the unlettered rulers in Nigeria in the nineteenth century. Unlike the latter who, because they were unlettered could not appeal to the outside world to have their grievances advertised—their case had to wait till our generation when historians began to reveal it—the educated elite had the advantage of having been trained to know how to play the white man's game. In the sturdy defence of their independence, the educated elite employed the newsmedia in the white man's world to present their case to the outside world. They had learned enough of the vocabulary, subtleties and tactics that should be employed to make it impossible or possible for foreign countries to intervene on their behalf. Hence the importance both sides attached to propaganda. In the case of the Federal Government propaganda was used to serve several purposes—educate the outside world on the issues of the war as it saw them, advertise the exceptional humanity of the civil war as was being conducted by the Federal Government, and counteract any false propaganda that might be conducted by the enemies of Nigeria to justify foreign intervention. For Ojukwu, propaganda was intended to serve other ends. Primarily it was intended to persuade the foreign powers to intervene on his behalf against the Federal Government in order that the far more powerful latter might be deterred from taking military action against 'Biafra'.

The maturity displayed by the educated elite in the diplomatic relations with the foreign powers during the civil war can hardly be over-emphasized. Hence the fact that Gowon refused to be alienated to the point of breaking diplomatic relations, or taking retaliatory measures against the foreign powers who showed undisguised sympathy for the Biafran cause, in particular France and Israel. He adopted the attitude that relations should not be unduly strained with the partisan Western powers, many of whose citizens carried their pro-Biafran sympathies to ridiculous ends. His policy was one of reconciliation with such powers, but never at the expense of Nigeria's

¹ *ibid.*, p. 328.

sovereignty. Indeed he invited the outside world to witness the course of the war, a measure that was to earn Nigeria the credit of fighting the most humane civil war in the history of the world.¹

Nothing shows more clearly the skill of the educated elite in playing the white man's game to finesse as the way in which they handled the "humanitarian" challenge during the civil war. The Western powers who were finding it difficult to intervene directly suddenly became "humanitarians" and sought to hide in the cloak of humanitarian organizations, the most important of which were the International Committee of the Red Cross, CARITAS and the World Council of Churches.² For these 'humanitarian' organizations the sovereignty of Nigeria was either non-existent or counted for little, though they dare not assume this attitude in relation to any white man's country. Both Gowon and Ojukwu had to profess that their basic concern in the civil war was 'humanitarian'. In accordance with a Yoruba saying, knowing that they were being compelled to dine with the devil, the white man, they began to use a long spoon. Their arguments are worth producing. Gowon's argument was that the war itself was being undertaken to fulfil humanitarian ends, to liberate the Igbo masses from the tyranny and dictatorship of the educated elite leadership who had allegedly misled the former into a state of rebellion, poisoning their minds against fellow Nigerians. The "rebel gang", led by Ojukwu, must be removed if the masses were to be returned to their natural disposition, that of love for fellow Nigerians with whom they were only too willing to continue to live together and thereby obtain protein, milk and other food materials, the lack of which had begun to cause starvation within the first year of the war. In order that food should reach the masses in the East-Central State the Federal Government was prepared to open corridors linked to the coast, and help in the transportation of massive quantities of food to the area. In principle, the Federal Military Government was not opposed to gifts of food materials, medicine and clothes to victims in "Biafra". The only condition that was attached with regards to the efforts of the 'humanitarian' bodies was that their activities should in no way affect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Nigeria. Clearly Gowon did not wish to be a humanitarian first and only secondarily Head of State, who should know and stand by the priorities of the country. He had to shroud his political motives in the humanitarian language, in the same way the Western backers of the humanitarian organizations

¹ *ibid.*, pp. 283-5.

² E. A. Ayandele, "The 'Humanitarian' Factor in Nigerian Affairs", *Nigerian Opinion*, Vol. 5¹ Nos. 3 & 4 March & April 1969, pp. 419-426.

were masking their political motives in the humanitarian garb. Although the Federal Government would not invite any so-called humanitarians to render help in Nigeria, it was not blind to the infinite scope for genuine humanitarian activities in the country. It was a matter of common sense, based on knowledge of the political colouring that humanitarianism had had in the past in Nigeria, that the Government should insist on assuring itself that it was only foodstuff and no ammunition that the so-called relief organizations were flying to the rebel-held areas.

In the same manner, knowing the only language that would sell abroad to his advantage, Odumegwu Ojukwu posed as a veritable humanitarian and reduced the civil war to the denominator of humanitarianism. As the weaker of the two and the leader of a beleaguered people he had more than enough data with which to appeal to the humanitarian instincts of those whom he believed could persuade their Governments in Europe and the New World to effectively intervene on behalf of 'Biafra', in the hope that he would thereby be able to get away with secession. His argument, which he repeated with undiminished fervour and candour in stirring language, was as follows. In the context in which the rest of Nigeria was against the East—"Biafra"—the Igbo became an oppressed minority, oppressed because they were virtuous and innocent, because they were uniquely talented, because they were the greatest patrons of modernization, because they were Christians; they were not "rebels" but a people, "rightly struggling to be free", pushed out of Nigeria by the much less virtuous others, particularly the Islamic Northerners who themselves were ineducable but were murderously envious of the noble qualities and achievements of the Igbo people. The disaster that awaited his people, if the humanitarian world did not come to his rescue in time, he orchestrated time without number, was frightfully unimaginable. Nigeria's aim was to wipe off for ever the entire Igbo race and dislodge the Christian religion there for Islam. What greater proof of the unexampled blood-thirstiness of Nigerians towards the "Biafrans" was required than the blockading of the "Biafran" coast and the mass starvation that was bound to follow? It behoved all peoples in the world who loved democracy and revered legitimacy to behave that, properly considered, there was no Federal Government; that of all the military rulers in Nigeria only he, Odumegwu Ojukwu, was legitimate—having been appointed by Aguiyi-Ironsi to whom the civilian Government had "legitimately" transferred power in January 1966!¹ On the principle of government

¹ IUL *Collections on Civil War*, Address by Odumegwu Ojukwu, 2 March 1968.

by contract the Federal Government, being headed by Gowon, had forfeited its right to administer the "Biafrans"; it had proved itself unable to protect them, hence the terrible massacres of 29 September 1966.

Of course all this sort of argument was primarily designed to persuade the 'humanitarians' and the Western Powers to trample upon the sovereignty of the Federal Government and thereby secure a political objective—recognition. As conceived by Ojukwu humanitarianism divorced from the political objectives of "Biafra" was stuff and nonsense. Hence his rejection of all humanitarian offers that would have made possible a massive flow-in of relief materials through land corridors and air. Why, he asked, should the 'humanitarians' not perceive that any materials under the surveillance of Nigerians would be poisoned? Why did they find it difficult to believe that Nigerians were the worst set of people on the face of the earth? In other words Ojukwu was concealing his political motives by wearing the toga of the humanitarians, his primary motive being to manipulate the 'humanitarian' agencies to undermine the sovereignty of Nigeria and import arms and ammunition.

The skill of the educated elite in successfully asserting independent positions, in putting foreign countries in their place, in manipulating the 'humanitarian' organizations to suit their political objectives—should not be under-estimated. It should not be forgotten that the civil war put Nigeria on the map in a way that no other event did, sometimes making the drama in Nigeria the subject of world attention, the Middle East and Vietnam not excepted. One needs only think of the absence of such educated elite in Zaire (ex-Belgian Congo) which resulted in the successful breakaway of the Katanga province for a while, thanks to the backing of international economic and imperial interests and the intervention of the United Nations Peace Keeping force that made possible the rewelding of the country into one. The correctness of the behaviour of the educated elite can be assessed from the fact that the 'humanitarian' world and Western powers avowing humanitarian concern for Nigerian peoples never lifted a finger to help the "rebels" of the Sudan who in 1955 began warfare with the Sudanese Government, a "rebellion" that was to outlast the Nigerian Civil War. Nothing shows the confidence, self-pride and success of the educated elite in dealing with the international "do-gooders" than the words of General Gowon about the "humanitarians" and of Chief Anthony Enahoro about the Pope in the hour of the final military triumph of the Federal Military Government.

General Gowon, by disposition transparently pious and a good churchman, the deliberately dovish leader of Nigeria who had regarded the civil war as a quarrel between brothers and who had ordered that war—"police action" as he called it—must be fought according to a code of conduct unknown in human history, not only rejected offers of 'humanitarian' help from the Western powers at the end of the war but asked the 'humanitarian' organizations to keep their "blood money".¹ In the same manner Anthony Enahoro, a Roman Catholic, felt strained in his conscience by papal partisan fulminations to the point that he publicly doubted whether words of truth had ever emanated from the Pope.²

It was not only in international affairs that the "New Nigerians" were showing that they were of a sterner stuff than their pre-1966 predecessors. In domestic affairs they had begun to implement ideas that were bound to facilitate achievement of greater and greater national cohesion and evolution of a Nigerian nation. With military precision they had begun to implement parts of the wildest dream of the deluded hybrids, turning windsowers into statesmen, exorcizing the ghost of tribalism by outlawing windsowing, building and reconstructing roads here and there in rational terms rather than because of partisan political considerations, making money available to States more on the basis of need than on the principle of derivation, encouraging coordination of effort and cooperation by States in matters of mutual interest, assessing the interests of the country in pan-national terms and so on.

By far the most important measure of the "New Nigerians" is the division of the country into twelve States, the high priority status of which is clear from the fact that the States were created simultaneously with the declaration of state of emergency on 27 May 1967. Nothing reveals more clearly than the State issue the deliberate failings of the windsowers, their unqualified hypocrisy, their greater commitment to personal, partisan and sectional preference to national interests. The administrative, political and constitutional advantages for the country of dividing the three Regions—North, West and East—into smaller, almost equal and balanced, units were beyond dispute. It would mean, automatically, a strong federation, banish the fear of one Region being in a position to hold the rest of the country to ransom with its geographical and demographic size, banish the fear of the major tribes behaving as if Nigeria was for them alone, make for

¹ 13th January 1970.

² Press statement 11th January 1970.

greater administrative attention to local, State problems and persuade all the peoples of the country to look to the Federal Government for discharge of expensive responsibilities in which all had common national interest. Nor was it a matter of political wisdom to ignore the strong and relentless agitation of Minority groups in each of the three Regions in the fifties, an agitation so strong that a royal commission of enquiry had to examine the matter.¹ The point to note about this is that the grievances of the Minorities were not unjustified but that the independence of the country would be further delayed if the claims of the peoples were to be met. On this matter the three political parties—the Northern Peoples Congress, the Action Group and the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons—ganged up in negotiation with the British against the Minorities because none of them wanted the Minorities in their Regions to achieve Self Determination.² And yet at least two of the leaders of these parties—Nnamdi Azikiwe and Obafemi Awolowo—had in their moments of pan-Nigerian thoughts pronounced publicly that the best interest of the country would be better served by the splitting of the country into more units.³

Why, then, did the windsowers refuse to create States? The answer is simply that they were windsowers or imperialists. None of them wanted to administer an area a square foot smaller than what they inherited from the British. In the last constitutional conference in London in 1958 they all pressed that the British should leave the Regions intact, thereby demonstrating further that they were collaborators with the British Raj and would like in each Region to be imperial rulers over peoples who were not of their own tribe and who were never administered by their tribe before the advent of the British. Thus the Hausa-Fulani-controlled NPC rulers were asking the British to make them rulers over Bornu and the larger part of the Middle Belt over which Sokoto never ruled in the heyday of the Sokoto Caliphate; thus the Yoruba-dominated Action Group were asking the British to

¹ Sir Henry Willink, *Nigeria: Report of the Commission appointed to enquire into the fears of Minorities and the means of allaying them*. cmd. 505 London, H.M. S.O. 1958.

² The story of this ganging up is well narrated in Kenneth W. J. Post and George D. Jenkins op. cit.

³ Nnamdi Azikiwe, *Political Blueprint of Nigeria*, Lagos 1943 advocates the splitting of the country into eight "protectorates" whilst Obafemi Awolowo in 1947 advocated States based on ethnicity in *Path to Nigerian Freedom* (pp. 52-55), a view he has not abandoned ever since. As lately as 1968 he advocated the splitting of the country into seventeen states. See *The People's Republic*, pp. 239-243.

It should be remarked that although the Action Group and the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons submitted to the Willink Commission memoranda which suggested strongly that they were in favour of creation of States, the Commission was able to observe that they were not as sincere as suggested by their memoranda in respect of States within the Region which the Parties were controlling. See pp. 29-30 about the attitude of the Western Regional Government and pp. 46-47 about the attitude of the Eastern Regional Government.

transfer non-Yoruba speaking peoples of the Mid-West for jurisdiction over these peoples for the first time in their history; thus the Igbo-controlled NCNC were asking the British to put under Igbo rule the Minority peoples of the Calabar, Ogoja and Rivers Provinces.

In the sense that the windsowers consciously denied to others the right to self-determination they were black imperialists. In the experience of the Minorities who suffered in the hands of the ruling political parties in the fifties, these black imperialists were likely to be worse exploiters and oppressors than the withdrawing British rulers. As a Minority member of the House of Representatives put it on January 1960: "we should not exchange white imperialism for black imperialism... There are times some of us would prefer the British rule to our black man's rule".¹ It is significant that the spokesmen for the Minorities in the House of Representatives left no doubt in the minds of the leaders of the political parties that creation of new States ought to have preceded achievement of independence by the country. Declared one Mr G. Yilgwen from the Middle Belt, the part of the North the British had more or less forcibly integrated in the Sokoto Caliphate, during the epochal debate on the motion for Independence:

Let me ask, Mr Speaker, what will be the future of the Minority groups who have indefatigably been crying for new States to be created, for that is the only means of allaying their fears. Let me ask, Mr Speaker, what will be the future of the Minority groups, especially the Middle Belt people of Nigeria, who are predominantly dominated by that particular, fastidious, conservative, totalitarian and vicious Government of the N.P.C.? The N.P.C. as a Government is not worthy of its salt. The Sardauna of Sokoto, the leader of the conservative N.P.C. has thus been showing through his public utterances that we people of the Middle Belt who are rightly agitating for a separate State are nothing but fit tools, good only for what can be got out of us. We are regarded as the inherited wealth of his great grand father to be handed over to his generations to come.²

It is essential to stress the difference in the imperialistic conceptions of the major ethnic groups ruling in the three different Regions. For the NPC it was primarily a matter of prestige, a continuation of the survival, consolidation and expansion of the Sokoto Caliphate. The British had created the atmosphere in which Islam spread to areas of the North and "Emirates", an Islamic conception spread over the territory, the ultimate dream of the nineteenth century Jihad. In the opinion of the Sardauna it would be sacrilegious to think of reducing

¹ *Nigeria Asks for Independence* cited. Mr Ezobodor p. 6 describes Awolowo as "the Hitler we have in the West".

² *ibid.*, p. 35.

the area. And of all the party leaders he was the only one who did not indulge in theories of new States until the early days of Independence. But it would not be correct to say that in practical terms the Western-style educated elite from the Minority areas in the North suffered as such. Paradoxically they seem to have gained enormously from the fact that they were the most educated and they held the most important positions in the civil service. The truth of the matter is that the Hausa-Fulani did not have a large number of Western-style educated elite. Hence the fact that there was a strong opposition among the educated elite to the agitation for States. It was more or less the political leaders, with the tacit approval of the masses among whom the sense of independence was strong, who favoured creation of States as such. It is significant that the biggest opposition to Aguiyi-Ironsi arose from the plan to unify the civil services in the country, a measure that would have made most of the educated elite in the North compete disadvantageously with their colleagues in the South.¹

In contrast was the economic imperial interest of the Igbo that was involved in the NCNC opposition to creation of any State out of the Eastern Region. Apart from the fact of the physical spread and distribution of the Igbo among the Ijaw, Efik and Ibibio—to mention a few—was the fact that the bulk of the wealth of the Region was situated in Minority areas, a situation that contrasts sharply with that in the North. First, and that had been so for more than a hundred years, was the vegetable oil—palm oil and kernels and later mineral oil. Then was the no less important fact of the geographically favourable position of the Minorities along the coast. There was no doubt whatsoever—the main reason why Ojukwu forcibly included the Minorities area in his 'Biafra'—that the Igbo would suffer economically, far more than any other ethnic group, whenever the Minorities had their own States.

Rather than recognize the legitimate demands of the Minorities in each Region the party in power resorted to oppression, a phenomenon that had begun before the British withdrawal but which was to assume more and serious proportions after independence. There was no question of appeasing the peoples, particularly when the latter massively demonstrated that they would not support the Party in power. It was at this point that the windsowers further complicated the issue by supporting agitation for more States *outside their own regions only*, not because they had any love for the Minorities but because they so hated their political rivals and believed that the best

¹ S. K. Panter-Brick (Ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 24.

way to paralyse the rivals was to gang up with the latter's biggest enemies. Hence the fact that whilst Obafemi Awolowo's Action Group was making life a hell for the agitators for a Mid-West State in the Western Region, the same party was shamelessly enthusiastic, professing the greatest support for the agitators for the COR State in the Eastern Region and the Middle Belt State in the Northern Region. Thus completely oblivious of the fact that he was living in glass houses Nnamdi Azikiwe's NCNC became the prop of the Mid-West movement, whilst in the East agitators for the COR State were being driven into desperation by oppression. As a COR State agitator declared: "The NCNC has failed us in the Eastern Region woefully... If we are here to talk about political parties I say the NCNC is the worst party in this country".¹ Completely oblivious of the patent boomerang effects of their action the NPC-NCNC Coalition Government used the honeymoon of their marriage—ironically destined to produce a major source of their divorce—to back the Mid-West State movement and in 1962 succeeded in the creation of the Mid-West State, primarily as an act of political vendetta on the Action Group.²

Although with the banning of the political parties and organizations by the Federal Military Government the agitators for States were silenced, the State issue continued to be a major—indeed the major—problem that could not be ignored by the Federal Military Government headed by General Yakubu Gowon. In two ways it had become the issue on which the continued existence of Nigeria as a Federation hinged. Firstly the 29 July *coup* was the greatest blow to the three major groups—the Hausa-Fulani, the Yoruba and the Igbo—which had discredited themselves politically by tearing one another's throats. And by the way in which they carried their windsowing into the Army the two groups—the Igbo and the Hausa-Fulani—succeeded in eliminating themselves to the point that the Minority groups naturally filled the vacuum by having the greatest number of officers as well as rank and file immediately after the 29 July *coup*. It did not require *rapport* between the military elite from the Minority groups and their civilian counterparts, to demonstrate the fact that the finest hour for creation of States had arrived. This lesson was quickly learned, ironically, by the civilian educated elite from the Northern Region who by September had decided and proposed creation of more States in the country. Secondly the rebellious attitude of Odumegwu Ojukwu was a godsend to the Minorities of Eastern Region. Resolutely standing

¹ *Nigeria Asks for Independence*. Mr P. Ekanem, p. 56.

² As pointed out in the third part of this lecture, the creation of this State encouraged the NCNC to demand constitutional changes that would diminish drastically the preponderance of the NPC.

by, and for, the Federal Government from the beginning they became, even more than the Mid-West State, the United Nigeria Loyalists and they expected the Federal Military Government to take the cudgel on their behalf against the frightening imperial noose of Ojukwu over them in the East.

Thus in order to ensure the support of the masses from the Minority areas all over the country, who naturally expected their military representatives to be patriotic on the State issue, and in order to provide such masses with a cause they would deem worth fighting for, the Head of State had little or no choice but take the historic step. By creating the twelve States on 27 May 1967 General Yakubu Gowon, with the stroke of the pen, established the foundation of the New Nigeria, a Nigeria in which has consequently been reinforced the principle of unity in diversity. The popularity, and therefore significance, of the statesman-like measure, among the Minorities, can be judged from the spirit with which the civil war was prosecuted as well as the political, social and economic consequences that have followed ever since.

Politically, rather than being balkanized, the country has become united more than ever before. Emotionally the fear of domination of the Federation by the single ethnic group, or "Region", has been removed, with so many ethnic groups being represented at the federal level in the sharing of the so-called national cake. Rather than the negative direction of fury at the major ethnic groups, the agitators for States, the number of which exceeds (and may still increase) that agitated for, can now look on their erstwhile dominant groups with healthier eyes. In fact in several cases some of the ethnic groups agitating for States themselves have become "majority" group or groups, but not in a position to treat other groups imperially as they had been treated in the past by the Hausa-Fulani, the Yoruba and the Igbo. In fact it would seem that the creation of States has weakened for ever tribalism as a force that could operate dangerously at the State or Federal level. For apart from the Western, the East-Central and Kano States, all the States are multi-ethnic in composition with the various ethnic groups, tension notwithstanding, working out harmonious relationships that have solidified for years. It is significant to note that the States have been carved in such a way that none is coterminous with a single ethnic group. Consequently the new sense of State citizenship being fostered by the Kano State, for instance, diminishes most usefully the Kanawa's feeling of commitment to the Hausa-Fulani cause, just as the Mid-Western Igbo finds himself on the same State citizenship platform as the Urhobo or Edo, rather than

with the member of his ethnic group east of the Niger. Thus the Kwarran Yoruba has necessarily, in a totally healthy fashion, begun to establish an identity with the Kwarran Nupe or Kwarran Igala, rather than with the Lagosian Yoruba. It is significant to remark that—a measure that would further deal the mortal blow at tribalism—people who have begun to ponder the constitutional arrangement for the country have drawn attention to the necessity to achieve demographic balance by further splitting the Western and East Central States, respectively inhabited entirely by the Yoruba and Igbo.

No less politically significant is the fact that rather than fan the ember of ethnicity within the States, the educated elite—in spite of inevitable tension about the sharing of the spoils—have been leading their peoples to work together and see themselves as one in ways unprecedented in the history of these peoples. It is not a question of “papering over the cracks”, the British negative or do-nothing approach to tribalism in the colonial era to which attention was drawn in an earlier lecture. Rather it is a deliberate effort of the Military Governor of every State, the details of whose administration do them immeasurable credit, far more than has been generally appreciated. The healthy inter-ethnic attitude and neighbourliness that are being generated at the State level and reaching down to the grass-roots in the administrative divisions of each State, provide the fulcrum upon which the Federal Government stands and is, to me, the biggest contribution of the educated elite, as a corporate class, to the evolution of Nigeria. The sense of participation by the myriads of ethnic groups in the State administration is clear from their representation in the civil service and State Corporations, apart from the sense of pride and gratification engendered by representation by civil Commissioners at the State or Federal level. For observers of the goings-on in the States the surprise is not that there is so much ethnic problem but that inter-ethnic harmony and feeling of common State citizenship have become so real and solid. Thus today the Angas and Idoma in the Benue-Plateau State, the Gwari and Maguzawa in the North-Central State, the Efik and Ogoni in the South-Eastern State and the Urhobo and Itsekiri in the Mid-West State, have been brought together successfully, to an extent meaningfully fast diminishing memories of inter-ethnic tension and warfare which go back to the pre-colonial period.

The biggest political dividend for the Federal Government does not consist alone in the whittling down of allegiance of Nigerians to the tribe or State, but as well in the fact that the Federal Military Government is automatically strengthened by the existence of so many States,

many of which were certainly not created on the principle of viability. Even the most viable of the States must increasingly look forward to the Federal Government for provision of expensive projects indispensable to the almost insatiable social and economic aspiration of the States. For with the extremely crucial dispersal of the educated elite to their States of origins, the latter have begun to lay the infrastructure of modernization. Potentially this is a socially revolutionary measure that does not only spread uniformly all over the country ideas of modernization, but physically has begun to create a uniform infrastructure. The insatiable hopes and social and economic programmes in all the States, particularly the new ones, are the same: more and more schools, hospitals, good roads, inter-State communication facilities that would encourage better inter-State commerce, industries, encouragement of farmers, irrigation schemes, division and distribution of social amenities like electricity and piped water and so on. Indeed, quite independent of encouragement by the Federal Government, some States voluntarily come together to finance, jointly, schemes. The point to emphasize is that throughout all the States, whilst phrenetic energy is expended to modernize, the universal conviction is that more and more should be expected from the Federal Government. Whilst the issue of the constitution that Nigeria is to have is still in abeyance—one of the nine-point programme the directors of the Federal Military Government have set themselves for the period ending in 1976—there can be no doubt that—as has been the experience of other peoples in the world, there can be no going back to the rather weak-centred form of Federal Government that has been practically brushed aside by the military elite.

The creation of States has usefully revealed the parts of the Federation that are still far behind in the race for modernization, in the sense of the paucity of Western-style educated elite already produced by such areas. This acute and strangely sudden awareness by such areas—predominantly in the Islamic northern quarter of the country—has resulted in a radical change of attitude by them to Western civilization. Thus the tiny but highly political-minded Western-style educated elite, brought up in the obscurantist Lugardian fashion, were to discover that their slogan “North for the Northerners” had been a sham; that the real prop of the civil service in the North were the less genuine “Northerners” from the Middle-Belt. It was the creation of States that opened their eyes to the appalling shortage of manpower. To produce their own manpower became the ultimate objective, but this in turn demanded development of a healthy, positive and rational attitude to Western-style education, a total

rejection of the ossifying attitude of obscurantist *ulemas* who could not persuade themselves to see that Islam *per se* is not opposed to, or irreconcilable with, Western-style education and technology. Hence the enormous effort that such areas, in particular the States of Kano and North-West, have been making to promote a rapid growth of Western-style education from the primary to tertiary level.¹ The long-term result of such effort, certainly, would be emergence of "New Nigerians" still genuinely Muslim but tolerant of their colleagues in other parts of the country, thereby bridging the terrific gap of attitude and unhealthy feeling of separateness deliberately encouraged, as mentioned in an earlier lecture, by the British Raj.

Part of the transformation of the educated elite into "New Nigerians" being achieved by the creation of States is the discovery in themselves of self-confidence. State-creation has released in them unsuspected energies and capacities. This self-confidence, that they understand the import of modernization and that they are able to rise to the challenge, is found practically everywhere, the less developed States inclusive. In each State detailed studies of the social and economic needs, which never could have been perceived by Federal Ministers or Regional Ministers from Regional Capitals, are being made with a view to finding solutions. As should be expected, of course, order of priorities necessarily vary from State to State but roughly speaking, the emphasis in the Northern States has been in the area of Western-style education, whilst in the Southern States, relatively surfeited in the matter of manpower, the emphasis has been on diversification of economy and relatively massive turning of the educated elite to business in the Western-style fashion. Hence the emergence and proliferation of entrepreneurs, industrialists, technocrats, advertisers, consultants, accountants, chemists and druggists and so on among well-trained educated elite who only years before—in the fifties for instance—would have found it undignifying to take on non-white collar jobs or regarded it as risky to enter into the world of business.

The centrepetal pattern of the military regime, which has had a longer life than the civilian regime it replaced, cannot be overlooked in relation to the success of the twelve States. Reorganized since 1966 with emphasis on professionalism and suppression of primordial

¹ The shake-up of the far north being effected by patronage of Western-style education is fantastic. I have seen this myself. Indeed young men who have come to appreciate the fact that the North could have adopted Western-style education without running the risk of being proselytised in the process, have begun to have a new view of Lugard who is now being demythologised. For a recent radical rational view of Islam see Haroun Al-Rashid Adamu *The North and the Nigerian Unity* (Some Reflections on the Political, Social and Educational Problems of Northern Nigeria) Zaria 1973.

loyalties to tribe or Region, the Army is an organic whole of which the Military Governors of the States are integrally a part. The chain of commands is such that, used to obeying their superiors automatically in the same way that their juniors obey them, the Military Governors are accountable to the Head of State in a manner in which the Regional Premiers in the civilian regime were never accountable to the Prime Minister. Moreover, again a situation that never existed in the civilian days, the Military Governors are members of the Federal Executive Council, thereby informing themselves of the problems of other parts of the country and sharing in pan-Nigerian decisions. This regular coming together and recognition of the Cabinet Office in Lagos as the hub of the wheel of the country of which the States are spokes, has been yielding dividends in the inter-State visits undertaken by the Military Governors from time to time, a measure strengthening the unity of the country which has begun to be imitated even by secondary grammar schools all over the country.

Potentially of enormous significance is the National Youth Service Corps which was launched on 2 July 1973 by the military elite. Using for the moment fresh university graduates of thirty years of age and below, the programme is designed to give practical expression to an ideology which political thinkers from Plato to Kwame Nkrumah have emphasized all through the ages, namely that the purpose and objectives of a nation should be clearly defined and adequate relevant training given to the younger elements from childhood to adulthood. It would appear that, judging from the repeated allusion he made to the youth as the hope for future Nigeria, this matter had been uppermost in General Gowon's mind for quite some time. The idea is to give the youth such practical training that would metamorphose them into New Nigerians, completely purged of the vices of the windsowers. Ideally these fresh graduates are expected to discard their ethnic label, be prepared to give absolutely loyal service and dedicate themselves to the service of the country, caring little for the material or financial reward. As the Head of State declared on the occasion of the inauguration of the Directorate of the Corps on 4 June 1973, the scheme was designed to "bring Nigerian youths together under a single umbrella, with the objective of instilling in them those qualities of dedication, patriotism and national consciousness without which no country or people can be truly great and without which our young people cannot have the right to aspire to the future leadership of this nation".¹ For the military elite the scheme was not a programme for

¹ *New Nigerian* 7/6/1973.

nation-building at home alone; it was as well intended to qualify the country for meaningful and salutary impact in Africa and the wider world. Proclaimed the Head of State:

It has been generally accepted that if Nigeria is to make rapid progress on all fronts internally and if she is to make her mark on the continent of Africa, and indeed, in the comity of Nations, then her youths must be fully mobilised and be prepared to offer willingly and without asking for rewards in return, their best in the service of their nation at all times.¹

Ideally the programme should involve the entire youth of the country, in relation to the economic, social and political aspirations of the country in general.² But it is decisively advantageous to start with university elite, the best minds of the country with their influence reaching out to all the nooks and corners of the country in a way no other class possesses corporately. Should the graduate pioneers of the scheme fulfil the hopes expected of them, they could become veritable gossellers and a marvellous instrument for the propagation of the New Nigerian concept. The obvious advantages of starting with university graduates deserve some observation.

The National Youth Service Corps is bound to purge University graduates of the illusion and unrealism in which they had lived within the four walls of the university for three or four years, a world totally different from that of the Nigerian masses. Nothing is as striking as the world of unbridled hopes in which students in Nigerian universities live, in which they indulge in the white man's life-style at exorbitant prices, in which they expect to be served and which they expect to lift them automatically to a new world in which material comfort would be automatically guaranteed. This world, it will be recalled, is the one of the windsowers—a flashy car, a self-contained flat, ever high salary—a world in which they would be jetting or, to use a local term, "swinging". Continuing the mistake of the educated elite since their advent in the nineteenth century, University students behave and think that they matter most in the Nigerian setting; they have no modicum of thought for the under-privileged masses, whose labour and taxes are making them enjoy heavily subsidized university education. With their dispersal into urban areas and villages where they

¹ *ibid.*

Judging from the frequency of the statements he has made on the National Youth Service Corps scheme, there can be no doubt that the Head of State attaches the greatest importance to it. In fact 27 May, anniversary of the momentous creation of the twelve States of Nigeria, has been officially designated "Youth Day".

² With the National Youth Service Corps scheme Nigeria is doing nothing new. It is worth remembering that almost every country in Europe has had national service for at least the past one hundred years, including that most democratic country, Switzerland.

are being compelled to live among the people the scales are already dropping from their eyes, as they see themselves inexorably drawn closer to the authentic Nigerians; as they have no piped water; no electric light for their musical gadgets; as they have the "molue" or "mammy-wagon" or in the more advanced areas, the "dagberes"¹ (flying coffins) for transport; as they look in vain for quaker oats or cornflakes to buy, or are not able to afford it; as they see thousands of fellow Nigerians barefooted and poorly clad; as the ubiquitous mosquito entertains them all night with pleasant noise, but also feeds on their blood; as they discover that for the majority of people the bush serves for toilet facilities and grass enclosures for bathroom; as they discover that in the rural areas few individuals possess as much as ten Naira cash in a year, that is one-twelfth of the monthly earning of a single youth corps, or a third of his monthly pocket allowance.

It is difficult to say how far the attitude of the university elite will alter with such appalling knowledge so poignantly being brought to their minds; how far they would apply intellectual rationalization to a state of affairs in which the town monopolizes amenities at the expense of the rural areas and the gap in the living standards and material comfort of the urban and educated elite group is so ghastly wide; how far the empirical data being made available to them would provide solid basis for crystallization of a socialist ideology that would be constructive, realistic and sound in relation to the social, economic and political objectives of the evolving Nigerian nation.

Another advantage that inheres in the National Youth Service Corps is that a most vital gap in the Western-style education in which the graduates had been brought up would be gradually filled. That is to say that they would begin to acquire relevant Nigeria-centred knowledge, so conspicuously absent in the syllabuses operating in Nigerian universities. Thus the sociologist whose courses had been Euro-centred would have unfolded before him the materials of a rural sociology or urban sociology the typology of which has not been described in any text-books; thus the medical doctor who had spent six or seven years concentrating on human anatomy would discover in the village the existence of religio-psychological factors to which his attention had hardly ever been drawn in the course of his theoretical Euro-centred training; thus the historian, whose knowledge of Nigeria is at best threadbare, would be shocked by the extent of his ignorance of essential local history, as well as his crime of neglecting

¹ A Yoruba term which means literally "say bye-bye", applied to Peugeot 404 Estate taxis notorious for excessive speed on the highways.

the contribution of the unlettered masses to the evolution of Nigeria; thus the political scientist who had been deeply involved in the theories of power, constitution and so on, as these related to societies other than Nigerian masses, would be bewildered at the peculiar forces shaping Nigerian politics at the local level; thus the Education graduate, who for three years had been drenched in educational theories of other societies, would be appalled at his ignorance of the more relevant theories of education in a non-literary society.

Absolutely essential to nation-building is the inter-ethnic and inter-State understanding which the scheme is bound to foster, arising from the fact that, as a rule, graduates are posted to States other than their own. For part of the mischief of the windsowers is the fact that they failed to educate Nigerian peoples to appreciate the moral and cultural properties common to their cultures. Consequently the imagination boggles at what ignorance depicted as the true nature and characteristics of unknown peoples. Thus the picture of Northerners depicted by the windsowers from the South was anything but authentic and pleasant. The Northerner was painted as several generations behind the Southerner, member of a society that went on unleashing upon the South beggars and blindmen, a society full of lepers, the social outcast responsible for the demographic superiority of the north; he was an incredibly ineducable Muslim, fanatical and most unwilling to be initiated into Western-style education; he was a terrible tool in the hands of obscurantist rulers, the Emirs and educated elite aristocracy; xenophobia was his hallmark, he refusing to appreciate the "civilising" mission of the Southerner whom he tabooed and consigned into the *sabongari*. What further evidence of his hatred for Southerners was required than the fact that, rather than employ gratefully Southerners to positions for which he was not yet qualified, he preferred to hire religious colleagues from the Middle East or Indians and Pakistanis with very dubious qualifications. In the same manner the educated aristocracy from the North made the Northerner genuinely frightened of Southerners, presenting the Southerner as a cunning and grabbing imperialist, a cultural and religious leper and a veritable stumbling block in the way of Northerners to be directors of their own destiny.

Of course such inter-geographical prejudices and hatred fostered by the windsowers were not correct and there were not a few Northerners and Southerners who had a better and truer understanding of the state of affairs, and were resolved on promoting inter-ethnic and inter-geographical relations between the North and South. But such people were very rare among the educated elite, indeed were confined

by and large to the unlettered sections with a tradition of trade and inter-ethnic relations antedating British colonial rule. That prejudices and hatred have begun to be removed automatically from the ranks of the Corps pioneers is clear from the revealing statements they began to make within days of their arrival at their postings. Certainly the ground is being cut from under the feet of the windsowers. It is remarkable that not a few of the Corps pioneers have been talking of wishing to opt for permanent jobs in the States to which they have been assigned; that many of them have been learning local languages and dietary habits; that not a few have begun to think of marrying outside their own ethnic group.

Related in significance to the National Youth Service Corps scheme is the grand plan of the Federal Military Government for establishment of Federal colleges in every State. The idea behind the founding of these secondary grammar schools is to bring together, in each of them, boys and girls from the different States, for a period of from five to seven years, thereby enabling them to imbibe much earlier than the Corps pioneers the virtues of inter-ethnic harmony and togetherness, cultural and geographical knowledge of the country, awakening of national consciousness and the healthy desire for national unity. It is a worthy experiment deserving of ever greater expansion and the principle of which is worth applying to the universities.

It is not the military branch alone, with their think-tank of dedicated civil servants and university men, who have been taking measures producing the "New Nigerians". Of far-reaching results are the measures which universities have been taking to examine themselves in relation to the political, economic and technological objectives of Nigeria. Whilst I am aware that other Nigerian universities have been seriously involved in this momentous activity—indeed they started with the advantage of coming into existence in the wake of Independence—I am concentrating my mind exclusively on Ibadan, primarily because I have been privileged to witness from within its metamorphosis from a colonial-oriented university college to an independence-fashioned university.¹

University College Ibadan (1948-1962) was a prototype academic outpost of the British-centred University of London. Whilst there were not entirely lacking individuals who in the earliest days were aware that the aspirations of Nigerians were bound to demand

¹ The idea here is described in the manuscript "New Trends" written by the lecturer for the Silver Jubilee volume but which appears in the printed version in a severely telescoped form.

modifications of syllabuses to suit Nigeria's needs, the emphasis throughout its colonial days remained unabashed production of black Englishmen both curriculum-wise and culture-wise. Not until the death-knell of colonial rule in the country began to toll before syllabus-content, text-books and researches more suitable to Nigeria's needs and aspirations and African drama and plays, began to be shown in the theatre, whilst the English tradition of high-table and formal dress—for many meaning English dress—persisted into the independence era. Almost exclusively whitestaffed until the second half of the fifties, when the number of Nigerians began to increase at an ever faster rate, the tradition was for almost the entire teaching staff, including the Nigerians, to go to Britain on furlough during the long summer vacation rather than to pursue research. Whilst the few Nigerian members of staff retained their family or village ties, and never adopted the Henry Carr attitude of the deluded hybrids before the latter's repentance towards the end of the nineteenth century, they saw themselves as being closer to the white man than to the Nigerian and the latter felt consoled and gratified that the Nigerian lecturer was a companion of the colonial master. If ever a community was an ivory tower, the University College Ibadan, as any of the sister universities in the developing countries, was one. Never was the prestige of the undergraduate as high in the eyes of the rest of Nigerian society as in the days of the Ibadan University College, when he was viewed as a kind of extra-ordinarily lucky person and the social prestige he enjoyed in the community during the long vacation was simply fantastic.¹ So much did the undergraduate believe he had become entirely different from society that as a freshman he might go to the dining-hall in pyjamas, without knowing he was violating British culture, or advocate that he be allowed to go into the city in the academic gown. Hardly did an undergraduate pass the walls of Ibadan University College without making a new European suit.

The situation began to change under the Principalship, later Vice-Chancellorship, of Dr K. O. Dike, the first Nigerian executive head of this University. At the attainment of autonomy in 1962 both the content and structure of degrees were substantially revised to reflect the independence status of the new university; a vigorous staff development plan was launched and postgraduate research, based on

¹ The lecturer himself witnessed this in the period 1950-53 when University College Ibadan undergraduates came to teach in his alma mater, Baptist Boys' High School, now Olivet Baptist High School, Oyo. Moreover he enjoyed this staggering and ridiculous prestige as a long vacation teacher there. As lately as 1969 Pierre L. Van den Berghé could report a student as saying that in his locality "They all look at me as if I am a God", p. 157.

Nigerian themes and problems, began to be undertaken. By 1965, when the first batch of graduates of the University of Ibadan entered the employment market, there was no doubt that in academic orientation they were sound "Made in Nigeria" products, for the country more relevant than their more or less British-make predecessors. It was also during this period that the theory-orientation nature of the physical and natural sciences began to be questioned and that the need for technology-based courses began to be raised.¹

The results of the thinking being done in the decade after independence are already being manifested. Firstly, undergraduates are already taking courses based on the natural resources of the country, combining in a balanced fashion the concepts of education of the Head and of the Hand. The hope is that, provided the Federal Military Government initiate on a massive scale agrarian and industrial policies, the technologists would begin to help in the birth of a Green Revolution and an Industrial Revolution respectively. They are being taught to adore dignity of labour and to be prepared to work with their hand. Secondly, the concept of on-campus accommodation for staff and students is being seriously questioned and an increasingly large number of students are being encouraged to live with the community outside. Thirdly, Departments are increasingly strengthening relations and cooperation with Governmental research institutes. Fourthly, the Faculty of Medicine has embarked on a policy of advising several State Governments about Health problems. Fifthly, enormously significant researches are being done on the social, economic, educational, medical and agrarian problems of the country, researches that in some areas have put Ibadan prominently on the academic map of the world.

Culturally and socially the University community have begun to acquire some important characteristics. Ever more than it used to be in the earlier days, the campus is visited by a very large number of Nigerian visitors and relatives. Nigerian traits have begun to dominate staff quarters, including the pounding of yam in flats and the cultural habit of noise-making. African plays are being shown in the Arts Theatre and Nigerian clothes are far more common than ever. Even the ceremonial academic gowns and hoods are distinctly different from those of the University of London.

In other areas in the country—notably in the world of business where Nigerians are forming their own chambers of commerce—relevant questions are being asked. This is not to say, however, that

¹ E. A. Ayandele, "New Trends" cited.

the New Nigerians are already near Canaan, but they have certainly begun to leave Egypt. Cultural enslavement still persists in some areas; the pattern of social and economic development is not similar to that of the Japanese by which the Japanese borrowed Western-style science and technology alone but rejected Western "civilization". The judiciary, the Church, the civil service and other institutions are yet to re-examine themselves with a view to shaking-off the incubus of the Anglo-Saxons in favour of distinctly rational Nigerian flavoured patterns. Whether we shall ever have an opportunity to achieve this most desirable end is anybody's guess and the big question that will arise for generations to come in a society that seems to have adopted, for good or ill, the Anglo-Saxon language.

FORTHCOMING

The Gold and the Slave Coasts, 1838-1885 T. B. FREEMAN
Edited with an Introduction by E. A. AYANDELE

This is the last writing of Thomas Birch Freeman, the energetic Wesleyan missionary on the Gold Coast (Ghana) and the Badagri coast of Nigeria. The work was recently discovered in the collections of the Methodist Missionary Society where it has remained unpublished for nearly a century. In a way none of his other accounts did, *The Gold and the Slave Coasts, 1838-1885* presents the histories of Ashanti, Dahomey and Yorubaland in a comprehensive manner. Ethnographical data of a rare kind and the evolution of the states and kingdoms of the 'Slave Coast' from their beginnings to the last half of the nineteenth century are presented with clarity and erudition. Social anthropologists, historians, historical geographers and theological students interested in West African studies will find this book very useful.

In preparation

In this book, Professor Ayandele traces the evolution of the educated elite in the Nigerian society, going back to the nineteenth century when this class of citizens first emerged and were looked upon as "a malevolent meteor". He argues that this class of "culturally semi-Nigerians" were at first "harbingers of British colonial rule" and in that capacity "ganged up" with the British for the exploitation of the unlettered; eventually they became leaders of the country when the British retired backstage.

Professor Ayandele points to the reluctance of the British to encourage the rise of the educated elite in the Islamic North, and its consequences on the politico-socio-economic development of the country; he also draws attention to the rivalry between the British rulers and the educated elite for dominance in the country. But the most significant merit of the book is in the author's incisive comments on the nature of elitism, particularly the extent to which members of the elite will go in an effort to maintain themselves as a class regardless of the consequences to society as a whole. And he points out that in an ethnically heterogeneous country, society can pay a very heavy cost for the ambitions of its elite. In such a situation, the added dimension to such tragedy is that society confuses its larger interests with the narrower ones of the educated elite.

Born on 12 October 1936, Professor Ayandele, was educated at the Baptist Boys' High School, Oyo (1948-53); the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology, Ibadan (1954-56); the University College, Ibadan (1956-61); and Kings' College, London (1961-63). He was appointed Professor of History at the University of Ibadan in 1969; Acting Principal of the Jos Campus of the University of Ibadan in 1971 and substantive Principal on 21 June 1974. A member of the Club of Rome, Professor Ayandele has contributed to many important books on African History. He is also author of *The Missionary Impact in Modern Nigeria* (Longmans 1966); *Holy Johnson: Pioneer of African Nationalism* (Frank Cas 1970) and editor of T. B. Freeman's *The Gold and the Slave Coasts* shortly to be published by Ibadan University Press.