

## **Historical Background of Nigerian Politics, 1900-1960**

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**Abstract:** *Before the coming of Whiteman in Nigeria the history proved beyond reasonable doubt that there was a strong organized government without any written constitution. The kind of people that were living in these areas and their system of government, this will enable us to either accept or disprove the erroneous write ups of some authors who claimed that the various kingdoms have no any system of government. The works of archeologist carried out in some areas located within the confine of these major ethnic groups also gave impetus to the claim of historian on politics and political arrangement of these people. Were these institutions destroyed? An answer to this would be proffer in this dissertation.*

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### **I. Introduction**

The work shall be examining the intent and purposes of Colonial Masters in West Africa region particularly the entity now called Nigeria. The work will be using analytical frame work to expose us to how the 3 (three) dominant ethnic groups out of 250 ethnics and heterogeneous groups rule themselves prior to the coming of white man.<sup>1</sup> And how the colonial master used traditional rulers to carry out their indirect rule system to achieve their Economic, political, Educational and religious purpose in the regions. The rising of the elites groups, the agitation of self – government and the granting of independence in 1960 also the Republican Constitution of 1963.

### **The Historical Background Of The Three Major Ethnic Groups In Nigeria Hausa, Yoruba And Igbo**

#### **(1) PRE- COLONIAL TRADITIONAL INSTITUTION**

Before the European occupation and balkanization of Africa the different African tribes had and lived in well organized empires. Very famous among them were Oyo, Mali old Ghana and Songhai empires. Various kingdoms existed within the empire. An early Dutch Merchant who visited the Benin kingdom in Nigeria in the Middle Ages was so impressed of the orderliness that he compared it favorably with the Amsterdam of his age. Other Arabic and French writers have also testified to this orderliness. In addition, Diogo Cam, who visited Bakongo Kingdom in Congo, was greatly surprised and much impressed by its efficient organization.<sup>2</sup> particularly noted for their ability to organize themselves into orderly social, culture and political grouping are the Yorubas, Igbos and Hausa of Nigeria.

#### **(A) THE YORUBA POLITICAL KINGDOM**

Of great significance on the West coast Africa is the Yoruba political system. Bisi Taiwo , Jimoh Bamgbose and Adele Jinadu agreed that Yoruba political kingdom was one of the well organized kingdom prior the advent of the colonial masters.

There are various beliefs as to the origin of the Yoruba kingdom. Some hold the view that Oduduwa the father of the Yoruba came from the East and after which he conquered many land, he finally settled at Ile – Ife. Others believe that while the earth was still covered by water, Olorun (the supreme god) let a chain from the heaven. It was believed that Oduduwa climbed down it and made an island of earth; some having compared the Yoruba and Egyptians arts and cultures asserted that both have common origins and as such the former descended from the later. However our interest is rather to examine the political, social and economic setting of the kingdom and not to bore us in the historical details of the origin of the Yorubas.

Apart from the authentic claim for common descent from Oduduwa and dispersion from Ile-Ife, it is evident that the Alafin of Oyo at one time wielded political as well as military leadership of the Yorubas. Ooni of Ife was and is accepted as the spiritual head of the Yoruba race. Relevant also was the fact that when Oduduwa died, (his eldest son, Akin, having died too) five Oduduwa renowned princes and two princess succeeded him. The eldest of them all, a princess married Oduduwa's chief priest who eventually gave birth to Olowu, later known as the Olowu of Owu. The second, who was a princess, was the mother of Alaketu of Ketu. The Overami of Benin, a renowned prince is the third in the line.

The fourth, also a prince become the Oregun of Ila while Onisabe was fifth in the line. The sixth – Onipopo of popo was followed by Oranmiyan, Seventh and the last born, Oranmiyan, who succeeded their father, his highness Oduduwa was the most famous of the princes. He was progenitor of the Yorubas. What is

particularly very interesting here is the real and the true crown Obas that is. Obas wearing crowns in Yoruba land. In that way, they were direct children who contrast to the vassal and lesser Obas now accepted as crown Obas. What is interesting about the vassal is that they are only qualified to wear coronets. It is thus evidence that from the first batch of Oduduwa princes and princess have emerged the various tribes making up the Yoruba nation today.<sup>3</sup>

### **Political Administration**

The Yoruba kingdom consisted of the Headquarter and number of towns and villages. The Oba and his senior Chief ruled from the headquarters. Every day, the chiefs met at the Oba's palace to discuss the affairs of the kingdom. They discussed the conduct of wars; the kingdom's relationship with the others took decisions and communicated these to the Oba who would issue any necessary directive in his name. In those days, it was not customary for the chiefs to sit together with the Oba because of his sacredness. Thus any decision taken would normally be communicated to him through a messenger.

The autocratic tendencies of the Oba were widely curtailed, if there was a proclivity towards this by an Oba, the line of communicating the Oba's wishes and orders to his people or subjects would paralyzed. In addition to this, any Oba who wanted to rule autocratically would be forced to commit suicide. Other devices to checkmate the autocratic ruling of an Oba if there was a disagreement between him and the chiefs was neglect of religious ceremonies and other rituals.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Executive Function**

The Oba depended on his chiefs, slaves, wives and servants as means of effective communication between him and his subjects. He had no monopoly of either secular or spiritual authority. Throughout Yoruba land, the authority of the Oba is derived from his subject. The Oba was mere figure-head and symbol of authority. He saw nothing and he did nothing by himself, which is the tradition of the people. The fringes around the edge of the crown which veiled the face of the Oba in Yorubaland were not without meaning. They were symbolic of his position and contract with the public. The Oba remaining under the control of his traditional adviser, his chiefs and representative of the people.<sup>5</sup>

To employ the proper language, the Oba, heard and spoke through the eyes, ears and mouth of his chiefs or traditional advisers. He appeared in public, but his face was not seen and his voice was not heard. Therefore, from the foregoing, it is evident that the Oba enjoyed no monopoly of both secular and spiritual authority in Yorubaland. Nevertheless his personality his social, political and cultural positions were highly respected. As there was no written constitution. Customs, conventions and precedents were largely relied upon in decision making. In the regulation of trade, commerce, public works and the maintenance of law and order, the Oba in Council (the Oba, his chiefs and council of elders) are in regular contact with the subjects, initiated and ratified legislation.

The Oba was not only highly respected; a great deal of wealth was attached to the throne. The Oba inherited all that officially belonged to his predecessors. Such might include the late Oba's wives, besides a war spoils usually accrued to the Oba and his chiefs and it was not unusual for the Oba to receive homage like yams, cattle, wine, kola, and other things from his subjects.

### **LEGISLATIVE FUNCTIONS**

Law making was the responsibility of the Obas and his senior chiefs. Thus the enactment of new laws, imposition of taxes and decision to wage wars were carried out jointly by the Oba and his senior chiefs. Allocation of vacant lands was also done in the same way. Sometimes if the senior chiefs took an initiative or a particular legislation, which the Oba had accepted such a new law would be announced by the town carriers.

### **JUDICIARY FUNCTION**

Whenever there were conflicts, lineage, compound heads and elders came together to settle them the guilty party had to seek forgiveness which was granted if the offence was mild. But if the offence was serious and guilty party did not seek forgiveness, he might be ostracized.

Difficult decisions were often made in the private sittings of lineage and compound heads who were often made in the private sitting of lineage and compound heads who were loyally and collectively bound not divulge to the public, such decision which they might have arrived at, especially if such cases required clandestine treatment. When a case had been settled, particularly a civil and not too serious one, kola, alligator pepper and palm wine are shared – an indication that the decision of the elders are accepted to all. Serious cases, which could not be settling, were generally transferred to the Oba who, with his high chief and elders, effected settlement in their capacity as the highest court of the land. The verdicts of this court were not generally challenged, especially when they were reached by the majority decision. The court levied fines on and imprisoned offenders for minor offences. Very serious criminal offences earned death or banishment.<sup>7</sup>

## **(B) THE HAUSA/FULANI POLITICAL ADMINISTRATION**

From historical background, the present Sokoto caliphate and the northern Emirate of Nigeria owe their origin to the holy war which was started by Shehu Othman Dan Fodio in 1804. Before the period of crisis the Fulani had been under the Hausa Kingdom. The holy war however broke out because the Hausa kingdom which used to be Moslems had fallen into semi paganism. Usman Dan Fodio ensured that he installed his flag bearers as Emir of the cities that fell to his armies.

The result was that after the war, the Fulani became masters, and this led to the establishment of the Sokoto caliphate, in the present northern Nigeria for proper and easy administration of the entire empire. Usman Dan Fodio divided it into two, between himself and his brother (Abdullahi), and then established the capital of his caliphate at Sokoto. He took possession of the Eastern part of the caliphate comprising of Kano, Katsina, Zaria, Bauchi, Gombe and Yola.

While the eastern part of the empires was given to his brother (Abdullahi) and this also consisted of Ilorin, Kontagora, and Arungun. Dan Fodio however established his brother as the Emir of Gwandu. On the whole all the Emirs installed by him and their successor acknowledged the over lordship of Sokoto and Gwandu and thus sent tribute to them as was the case in Yoruba kingdom.<sup>8</sup>

### **ADMINISTRATIVE IN THE EMIRATES**

Each of these emirates consisted of large number of officers of state. These officers were assigned with specific portfolio ranging from administrative to military in nature. The Emir of each emirate had the sole responsibility to appoint the officers. Numerous office holders were found within each emirate, significant among them were;

Madawaki – The commander of Calvary Galadima – He performed various duties such as sending him errands by the Emirs sometimes he awarded punishment to the offenders.

Waziri - He was the Emir's administrative adviser

Sarkin Fada - He was the head of the palace officials

Sarkin Ruwa – He was in charge of fishing in the rivers

Sarkin Pawa – He was in charge of butchers

There are the Hakimis, Dogari etc Hakimi settles disputes, Dogaris usually sent to call defendants and run other errands.

It was significant to note here that the consultation Emirs and senior title holders was necessary in conducting the affairs of the state for the purpose of effective governance, the emirate was divided into number of districts headed by a ruler called Hakimi. The Hakimi lived in the emirate's headquarters. He was saddled with the responsibility of tax collection from the people of his district. He maintained laws and orders performed with the help of a small army under a junior title holder.

Each district was made up of village head performed the function similar to those performed by the Hakimi.<sup>9</sup>

### **THE EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS**

The Emir was the executive head of the administration. In executing the functions, the Emir was assisted by his senior officers. As a result of his religious position, the Emir enjoyed great power. Thus it was obligatory for all the subjects to obey him.

### **LEGISLATIVE FUNCTIONS**

The Emir made laws concerning the maintenance of law and order over his subjects in Emirate. He also levied taxes. But in performing these functions, he made such he did not contravene the Islamic laws. The Hakimi and the village head performed similar functions in their different constituencies.<sup>10</sup>

### **JUDICIARY FUNCTIONS**

Muslim laws applied throughout the length and breadth of the Emirates. These laws are derived from the sharia. Sharia laws were based on the teaching of Mohammed. Such laws dealt with debt, property ownership, marriage, divorce, slander, inheritances etc. the Alkalis (Judges) administered such laws. The Alkalis are trained and versed in the basic principles of Islam. There are a number of Alkalis courts in the Emirates which of course varied from one Emirate to the other.

The Alkalis interpreted all the Moslem laws and punished offenders. Dealing with serious offences rested with the Emir as well as settling of all religious disputes, while minor disputes were settled by the village heads.<sup>11</sup>

### **© THE IBO POLITICAL /TRADITIONAL SYSTEM**

Unlike the Yoruba kingdom and Fulani Emirates, the Ibos had no centralized political authority. Often than not, the Ibo political organization has been described as being decentralized. And its government referred to as 'Republican'.

Decentralized is used to describe the political organ of societies without central government which in pre-colonial Africa was usually headed by a single person (King, emperor) etc. Decentralized society is distinguished from stratified, which usually have royal noble families who pass high political office from generation to generation.

In decentralized societies, stable government is achieved by balancing small, equal groups against each other and by the ties of clanship, marriage and religious association. Therefore their system was based upon the family group. Each family was expected to choose its head in each of their villages. There were families and a number of these formed kindred. There could be many of such kindred in villages. For the purpose of administration all the elders from the families formed the council of elders who was called OKPARA would be made the chairman of the council. The okpara wielded much influence. It should be noted that as a check on him, he had no influence outside his village. His influence was restricted to his family and his village.<sup>12</sup>

### **THE EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS**

The executive functions were performed by the council of elders, the age-grades and some other title holders.

### **LEGISLATIVE FUNCTIONS**

There was no clear line of authority in the government authorities among the Ibos. As a result of this, there was no specialized institution for enacting laws. As earlier stated there was council of Elders, the council made laws for the village. Law could again be made by the age-grades which were often acceptable to the elders. Sometimes laws were enacted at the shrine of Ala-the earth goddess.

### **JUDICIAL FUNCTIONS**

Elders were responsible for settling of dispute within the family group, if such involved members of different groups, the groups would reach a compromise. However, if such dispute could not be settled, it is taken to the elders of the village.<sup>13</sup>

The historical background of the three dominant ethnic groups in Nigeria was to refute the claims of some writers or authors from Europe that Africa has no system of government or whatever prior to their coming. This was while a detailed history and analysis of how the indigenous groups besides the unmentioned ethnic groups were able to organize and rule themselves. In the northern and south-west of the country, it could be seen that in spite of the inter-tribal wars and conflicts among the people, the centralized but monarchical kingdom of Yoruba and Hausa/Fulani kingdom of autocratic system and that of Republican in the Eastern part were orderly. Hence, the use of indirect rule system of government in the North and West by the British colony.

### **BRITISH AIMS IN WEST AFRICA PARTICULARLY IN NIGERIA**

During the first half of the 19th century, Britain showed greater interest in West Africa. Many writers have divergent views about British interest in West Africa. However, some deduced the following as the paramount interest of the British in West Africa. That as an industrial revolution in England, a phenomenon which spread to the rest of Europe later, interest of West Africa increased: First was that

i. Raw materials were required to keep the factories going e.g. cotton was needed to feed the Lancashire mills, moreover, oil was required to lubricate the engine and also to manufacture soap.

ii. Surplus manufactured goods had to be sold, and they required an enlarged market.

It must be pointed out here that during this period of industrial revolutions, there was a problem between France and Germany and while the problem is being resolved, Britain had gone ahead industrially. The result was that when she (Britain) needed raw materials for her industries and markets for her manufactured goods, the other countries had not reached this stage, moreover, Britain had much surplus capitals to invest in various projects outside Europe. Thus the prospect of investment in West Africa.

Apart from the above reasons given, the British or Europeans believed that Africa is the Whiteman's burden that their mission was to civilize Africa, and as well popularize missionary work. Aside from this claim, they also saw Africa as Whiteman's grave infested by mosquitoes. Lord Lugard, the British administrator in Nigeria portrayed this in his book - 'the dual mandate in British Tropical Africa as mutual Benefits'<sup>14</sup>

Between the periods of 1850-61, the British came through the coastal part of Nigeria via Lagos. The King of Lagos Kosoko who indulged in the illicit trade of human slavery and the British came to enter into a treaty with the king to stop the slave trade. This treaty however failed and it resulted to the attack of Lagos in 1851 and by 1861 the king was deposed and replaced with the son (Akintoye).

Before balkanization of Africa by the Europeans prior to the full control of the colonies by the British in Nigeria, it would be recalled that, the British government faced serious resistance from some of the indigenous kings in

the various entities now called Nigeria. King Jaja of Opobo was one of the kings who resisted the British and he was deposed and deported to the West Indies.

Therefore, the constructed boat fitted with Cannons and many other weapons demonstrated the psychological conquest of the West Africa particularly the chiefs and kings in areas whose inhabitants had to think twice before coming into conflicts with Europeans. This and many other reasons including introduction of Christianity to their kingdom made some kings to give up their resistance. Example was King George Pepple of Bonny who actually invited the Europeans to bring Christianity to their country, an admission that it was superior to the religion of their people.<sup>15</sup>

### **THE BERLIN CONFERENCE**

The Berlin conference of December 1884 was a conference of all European powers and of how the continent of Africa should be shared among themselves for the purpose of acquisition of raw materials and marketing of their finishing goods. While the conference was still sitting protectorates and colonies were being declared in many areas of the West Africa of which British government had actually declared Lagos a colony and continued to pave way from Epe, Badagry, Ijebu, Igboland to the North.

But before this period, the Royal Niger Company, master – minded by George Taubman Goldie, emerged victorious and succeeded in imposing its authority on the people of the Niger area.

‘Africa was conquered by the Africa soldiers trained and officered by Europeans and equipped with European weapons.’ The resistance in the end was so weak that European writers assumed that because African rulers were despotic and oppressive, European were welcomed and regarded as deliverers.<sup>16</sup>

By the 1900, there were four British West Africa territories. Nigeria, Sierra Leone, the Gambia and Ghana. We shall at this point concern our self with Nigeria and the system of administration adopted by Lord Lugard. It would also be recalled that at initial stage British did not have a clear ideas on how colonies could be ruled. They however adopted a decentralized system of administration.

### **THE COLONIAL INSTITUTIONS**

The colonial institution comprises of the following and its officials

**A.** The governor: The governor was a representative of the crown. He was answerable to the crown through the secretary of the state for the colony. And was saddled with the responsibility of:

- i. The appointment, discipline and dismissal of public officials including judges
- ii. He directed the legislative and executive policy
- iii. He had power to make grants of land
- iv. He exercised prerogative of mercy

**B.** The executive council

This was created to serve as an advisory body. The governor was expected to seek the advice of this body, though he was not bound by the council’s advice.

The composition of this body particularly in Nigeria, were the executive body consisted of chief secretary, lieutenant – Governors of the Northern and Southern provinces of the protectorate, the Administrator of colony, the Attorney – General, the commandant of the Nigeria regiment, the Director of medical and sanitary services, the treasurers, the Director of Marine, the controller of customs and the secretary for the Native Affairs.

### **THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

This body was at initial stage started with official members and one or two unofficial members. And was saddled with the responsibility of making laws in Nigeria particularly, under the 1922 Clifford Constitution, the legislative body consisted of the Governor, 26 officials 15 non- officials nominated by the Governor and 4 elected members, 3 for Lagos and one for Calabar.

It must be noted that the above analysis was necessarily important to understand the method and system used by the colonial master which equally necessitated their dispense with some of the traditional system met on the ground.

The British administration having gained their full ground between the period of 1900- 1906 in the northern part of the country but not without some resistance as noted above, they adopted indirect rule system. By 1914, the Northern protectorate and Southern protectorate were amalgamated to what is called NIGERIA. The name Nigeria was coined by Lord Lugard’s wife Flora Shaw.<sup>17</sup>

**INDIRECT RULE SYSTEM:** This is a system whereby the native chiefs or traditional authorities were used by the colonial government to rule their people. They are regarded as integral of the machinery government recognized by the government and by law. Lord Lugard having being made a high commissioner of the northern protectorate between 1900- 1906 made use of the system. The following reasons were given for the adoption of the system.

- i. The government could not afford to rule the people of such a large country as Nigeria directly, owing to the shortage of man power and British political officers.
  - ii. It was equally expensive. The cost of financing the British personnel even if the personnel were available was scare.
  - iii. That the British colonial policies did not seek to disrupt the existing traditional Administrative and political institution.
  - iv. It was also in accordance with British government policy to prepare the colonies for self – government.<sup>18</sup>
- At this juncture, we shall be examining the use of indirect rule system in the 3 dominant ethnic groups. It is equally necessary to point out here that since the detailed analysis of the historical background of the ethnic had been discussed, we shall focus on successes or failure of the system since it was a rule through the native chiefs or traditional authorities.

#### **INDIRECT RULE SYSTEM: NORTHERN NIGERIA (HAUSA/FULANI)**

To make use of this principle, the north was divided into provinces and residents official were appointed to direct and supervise the Emirs within their provinces administratively. The resident themselves were to follow the directive of the high commissioner. Courts were set up and presided over by the residents. However it must be noted here that Moselem's courts were left intact as the British government was not regularizes. On the whole, the right to legislate was reserved for the British officials. The indirect rule system was highly successful since it was the existing system prior to the advent of the colonial master.

#### **INDIRECT RULE IN THE WESTERN NIGERIA (YORUBALAND)**

The introduction of indirect rule system in the south particularly Yorubaland was met with a little success. The truth was that Lord Lugard did not recognize that there was incompatibility between the northern and western administration in Nigeria prior to their coming. Above all the system in the north was more or less theoretic/autocratic system while the west was monarchical. Oba as discussed earlier on had no absolute authority over his subjects because there was a check over the Oba's rule. However the indirect rule tends to widen the power at the Oba's disposal to the total neglect of the senior chiefs. Aside, the introduction of regularized taxation was incompatible with the Yoruba Traditional System.

#### **INDIRECT RULE IN IBOLAND**

If it was recorded that the indirect rule was fair in the Yorubaland, the same cannot be said in Iboland. It was a total failure. This is because there was no central political authority. The absence of this greatly marred the indirect rule system.

Since it was the intention of the British government to make indirect rule work in Ibo land, warrant chiefs and district heads were appointed. The grave negative consequence of this was that the warrant chiefs and districts heads that had no traditional roots in the areas they were supposed to administer were appointed. This resulted into disturbance in some areas. For instance, there was that of Aba riots of 1929 and that of Warri province.<sup>19</sup>

#### **NATIONALISM/ CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The Nationalism and Constitutional Development would be categorized into 3 phases. The first was the subtle agitation by the educated elites especially in the south, for an accommodation in the system. This was between the periods of 1939.

The second phases which spanned 1939-1950, under this period, decisive attempts were made but the colonial educated lord or elite to force the ruling power to agree with them an opportunity to participate in the determination of their own affairs.

While the third phase spanning between 1951- 1960 was the one in which the issues affecting the country were determined in consultation and agreement between Nigeria Nationalists and Great Britain.

There were many factors that necessitated the Nationalist Movement in West Africa particularly Nigeria which is our focus here. These factors ranges from, marginalization of the educated elites from participating in the government of their people, racial discrimination in term of job opportunities, qualifications and payment of wages or salaries, participation in the first and second world war and many other points made the Nationalist to be vocal and vibrant in their movement.

The Nigeria youth movement was founded in `1943 by a group of leaders who deliberately fostered a feeling of national unity among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria. No wonder the movement has been described as the first truly National Party of Nigeria.

The arrival of Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe in 1937 and the support he gave the movement on the pages of his West Africa pilot enhanced the national outlook of the movement. So powerful was the movement that it defeated

Macaulay's N.N.D.P in 1938 elections. It remained the national political organization in the country until the rise of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) in 1944.

## **II. Constitutional Development In Nigeria**

### **1. THE CLIFFORD CONSTITUTION OF 1922**

The Nationalists were known with series of pressure mounted on the British government especially for their anachronistic attitude towards the nationalist. This pressure informed the British to introduce constitutional reform.

By 1919, Sir Hugh Clifford took governorship of Nigeria from Sir Frederick Lugard. Clifford, it appeared, was not satisfied with the administration he inherited from Lugard, therefore embark on the fact-finding tour to northern and southern provinces with a view to observing how the system handed over to him could work.

By January 1922 the reforms he set out was approved by the British government despite the waves of criticism it initially received.

The main advantage of Clifford constitution was that it made use of elective principle. This was to prepare. This was to prepare the people for eventual self- government. as a result of this constitution, four members were elected, 3 from Lagos and one from Calabar in the persons of Mr. Sapara Williams, the first Nigeria lawyer to practice in Nigeria, Mr. Egerton Shyngle, another lawyer of great importance, Dr. C.C. Jones Adeniyi and Mr. Otoo who represented Calabar.

This development brings about the springing of political parties in Lagos and the formation of N.N.D.P. It also offered citizens of Lagos and Calabar the opportunity for expressing themselves. The constitution eventually did not accommodate the Northern Province from the legislative council. They were sort of isolated. This misnomer brought slow progress of the north political development. The constitution of Clifford however lasted for 24 years<sup>20</sup>

### **The Richard Constitution 1946**

By 1943 Sir Author Richard took over from the governorship of Nigeria. And it was evidently clear that most people were dissatisfied with this constitution and mounted pressure on the then governor whom they promised absolute loyalty if the constitution is changed. Among them was E.O Akerele an elected member of Lagos.

And the proposal aimed at promoting the unity of Nigeria, to provide adequately within that unity for diverse elements which made up the country and to secure greater participation by Africa in the discussion of their affairs.

The nominations of unofficial members were done by the assemblies in the region unlike the 1922 constitution which gave the governor the absolute right to nominate the unofficial members. The constitution had the advantage of bring the north and south together under the same central legislative council.

The constitution also established House of Assembly into North, West and East and it was also remarkable that the legislative council both at the central and regional levels were dominated by the unofficial majority for the first time. This allowed Africans to secure greater political participation.

So we can see that the creation of the regional assemblies gave right for the people to choose representative from their regions to sit in the legislative council in Lagos and to approve regions estimates. Though it has some flaws from onset that the educated Nigerians criticized the manner in which the proposals for the constitution were introduced. The unofficial majority system of the house was equally criticized. Also the inclusion of the chiefs and Emirs in the official category irritated the nationalist. And again the nationalist did not favour the property of income qualification of 200 pounds for voting in Lagos and Calabar which exclude the labour class.

All these factors characterized the clamour for the replacement of the constitution, soon after the agitation for replacement.

### **THE MACPHERSON CONSTITUTION OF 1951**

Macpherson took over the governorship of Nigeria from Richard in 1948. To review the constitution, a committee of legislative council was selected and recommended that public opinion be sought at every level throughout the country.

The committee came up with the following recommendation from the conference that was followed after the public opinion in every district and village level;

- a. Federalism was recommended based on the existing three regions.
- b. The conference recommended that the regions be given legislative and executive authority over a wide range of subjects.

- c. The conference recommended among other things, the executive councils with a majority of Nigerian member and a ministerial system.

These and many other recommendations caused some disaffection /disagreement among the three regions. However the recommendations of the constitution drafting committee came up with the following as the summary of the legislation.

#### **Recommendation Of The Constitution Drafting Committee**

The under listed recommendations which was accepted by all- Nigerians constitutional conference which was convened at Ibadan in 1950 generated some disagreements.

1. A federal system of government made up of the 3 regions.
2. The central legislative, to be called house of representative and central executive to be called the council of state should be set up.
3. The central legislature should have power to review, refer back or even reject regional legislation if such interfered with the general interest of Nigeria as a whole.
4. Inter- regional boundaries between the province of (i) Ilorin and Oyo and Ondo (ii) Kabba and Ondo and Benin and Onitsha should be examined by a commission of enquiry and recommend to the Governor.

These and many others were put forward and were debated and argued. At the end, the 1951 constitution established the following:

- a. It established a central executive known as the council called the house of representative, and a central executive known as the council of Minister. The central legislatures were made up of a single chamber.
- b. The regional legislative and regional executive council of the north, west and east.
- c. The north and west regional legislatures consisted of two chambers, the house of chiefs and the house of assembly.
- d. While the eastern region had only a single chamber that is house of assembly.<sup>21</sup>

#### **THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE OF 1953**

The Macpherson constitution as with other past constitution was characterized with numerous problems and needed some reformations or replacement. The 1953 constitutional conference was set up by the colonial secretary announced in British house of common of the intention of her majesty to redrawn the constitution.

At the behest of the British government 19 representatives made up of 6 from each region and 1 from Cameroon met for the conference which was convened within 30th July – 22nd August 1953.

The decisions reached at this conference were as following among others.

1. Greater autonomy for the regions, separate elections for the federal legislature.
2. There should be no need for uniformity in the electoral procedure between the regions
3. The municipality of Lagos would no longer form part of western region; it would be a federal territory with direct representation in the central legislature.

It would be recalled that the London constitutional conference of 1953 raised some number of issues which could not be resolved. This culminated into the constitutional conference that met Lagos on 19 January 1954 soon after the Lagos conference with certain reached, the Littleton Constitution of 1954 emerged.

#### **THE LYTTLETON CONSTITUTION OF 1954**

Series of decision taken both at the London and Lagos Constitutional conference resulted to 1954 constitution.

This constitution provided the following.

- a. Federal house of representative
  - i. 92 members from north
  - ii. 42 members from west
  - iii. 42 members from east.
  - iv. 6 members from Cameroon
  - v. 2 members from federal territory Lagos.

A speaker and 3 ex- officials nominated by the governor

- b. It also provided for the executive council with 3 ministerial for each region 3 official for each region 1 minister appointed to represent southern Cameroon.

- c. It also provided for division of power between federal and regional legislature i.e the exclusive list and the concurrent list.

It should be noted that 2 chambers from the north and west created during Richard Constitution 1946 was retained and a chamber only in the East. And premier was also appointed for each of the 3 regions as well as executive council for the 3 regions.

Lyttleton constitution brought about the beginning of federal system of government in Nigeria and division of powers between the two levels of government (Federal and regional government). It also marked the beginning of direct election to both the federal and regional legislature and for the first time constitution provided for the offices of the speaker and deputy speaker presiding over each of the Nigeria legislature except the northern legislature which was presided over by a president.

After the 1953-54 constitutional conference in both Lagos and Ibadan, another London constitutional conference of 1957 which was originally schedule to take place in 1956 was the same in London.

The decision of the conference was that North region should become self- government in March 1956. The conference agreed entrenchment of fundamental human right in the constitution. And procedure of amending or altering both the Constitutions and Boundaries, it also agreed to pass a resolution for introduction of a bill to enable the federation to become independent on 1st Oct 1960.<sup>22</sup>

### **INDEPENDENCE CONSTITUTION OF 1960**

The independence Act was passed in the British parliament in July, 1960 this resulted into the independence constitution that came into force on Oct. 1st 1960.

#### **(A) THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT**

The 1960 constitution provided for a bi-cameral legislature consisting of the senate known as the upper house and the house of representative known as the Lower House. The senate was to be composed of 44 senators while the House of Representatives consisted of 305 elected members.

#### **(B) THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR GENERAL**

There was a provision in the constitution for the office of a governor general as the Queen's Representative in Nigeria.

#### **The Regional Governments**

The constitution also provided each region with a House of Assembly and a house of chiefs northern house of assembly constituted of 170 elected members and the house of chief composed of all class chiefs I the region, 95 other chiefs plus an adviser on Muslim law.

The west house of assembly consisted of 125 members and the house of chiefs 115 members. Plus maximum of 4 selected chiefs by the Governor. And finally the eastern House of Assembly comprised of 146 members and these were traditional rulers, first class chief, 55 other chiefs plus 5 special representative member.

#### **(C) REGIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Each regional executive council consisted of the premier and other ministers. In summary, this constitution provided for division of power i.e. the exclusive list and concurrent list, fundamental human rights, judiciary, that is judges of the supreme court and high courts, emergency powers, that is the power to make laws during emergency by the parliament in any part of the country.<sup>23</sup>

It will be recalled that from the onset this discussion, we stated that Nigeria had 3 major languages – Yoruba, Hausa and Ibo with not less than 250 small ethnic groups. Between the people of 1963, the population of the country has risen to 45 million. There was serious hostility and rivalry among the various groups while the large ethnic groups competed for power, there smaller groups struggled against domination by the larger group. In addition to this, ethnicity played their parts. For example, leaders of the Northern people's congress (NPC) and the Northern Elements for Progressive Union (NEPU) were muslims and Hausa/Fulani. Their counterparts, leaders of the other major political parties based in the south, namely, the national convention of N.C.N.C and Action Group, were Christian/muslim Yoruba and Ibo. Divided in this way, elections were fought along those line and politician fanning ethnic hostility. Since it as difficult for a single political party to achieve overall majority in the parliament and form a government fully acceptable to the various groups, a coalition government of two or more political parties was usually the result.<sup>24</sup>

The Nigeria government right from the eve of , and immediately after independence, was a coalition of NPC, an ethnically Hausa/Fulani party, and the NCNC, a party associated with the Ibo. The A.G party which was associated with Yoruba speaking peoples of the South- western part of the country which was thrown into opposition and most of the Yoruba felt left out.

The ethnic gap was widened in the various regions the opposition parties were victimized and persecuted in all of the 3 regions. In the north, the NPC persecuted the NEPU, in a bid to retain power absolutely to itself. In the east, the ruling NCNC persecuted the NC and A.G, while in the west A.G held NCNC to ransom. In 1962 the NPC/NCNC controlled federal government clamped down on the A.G dominated government of the Western Nigeria, suspended it, declared state of emergency (as a result of Killing, and

unlawful destruction Operation wet e) and appointed an administrator for the region. To many western Nigeria, it was purely an ethnic tussle: a struggle between the Hausa / Ibo rulers in the centre and Yoruba in the west. Nigeria political institution between 1964-5 intensified ethnic antagonism and nullifies all effort of the civilian to maintain a stable polity between the 1966 army take over. The Nigeria National Alliance (NNA) and the United Progressive Ground Alliance (UPGA) had their based in the North and the South respectively. To the average Nigerian, while the former stood for Hausa-Fulani interest, the latter cared for the Yoruba –Ibo population. When the NNA won the Federal elections in December 1964 and the NNDP, a party UPGA leaders their supporters found their ethnic interest threatened.

National stability was no longer the important factor to maintain, personal interest was considered supreme. Political instability was openly, visible as broad daylight murders, killings, violence of various forms, arson and theft gained ground on 15 January 1966, a group of young army officers led by Major Nzeogwu staged a moderately bloody coup d'état which ousted the Balewa regime.

### **III. Conclusion**

We cannot conclude this subject without an appraisal or a critique of the colonial master in West Africa particularly in Nigeria. From the foregoing, we have been able to deduce how the various ethnic group majorly the dominant ones rule themselves, the distortion that followed in the traditional system at the advent of the colonial rule.

The intent and the purpose of the British in West Africa had also been examined. The dual mandate of Lord Lugard, the civilization and trade mission, had also been viewed. Therefore, it is pertinent to see if they had developed the country or have multiplied its problems. And this shall be examined in the following sub-headings;

#### **EDUCATION**

It is possible to ascribe the foundation of education to the British missionaries and not the colonial Lords. This is because the colonial master's intention was not to introduce meaningful educational system because they knew that by so doing, their long stay in the region will be short lived abruptly.

It was evident that the very few educated Nigerian who were privileged to acquire true education in the foreign land were seen as a threat to the colonial masters for mere asking for an opportunity to participate in the affairs of the people. Therefore, there was no solid educational infrastructures laid down by the British to enable the people acquire meaningful education.

#### **RELIGION**

Religion was used as a deceit and camouflage to bastardise the people believe and their system of ruler ship. These they projected as their main purpose of coming to Africa to propagate their interest. The question is, if this was their true reason, why were they particularly interested in super imposing Christianity in the South and Islamic religion in the Northern part left intact and unfiltered?

#### **ECONOMIC**

From the religion analyses, it could be seen that paramount in their heart was the economic gain embark upon having discovered the fertility of the land. The cocoa, groundnut, palm oil and cotton were in abundance hence the construction of railway to facilitate easy evacuation of these products from hinterland to the coast for onward transmission to Europe. This formed the bases of the 1914 amalgamation of South and West, which has resulted to the unholy marriage or alliance of the various entities.

In conclusion, it would be recalled that all the past and present problems being faced by the country, was pre-planned arrangement made by the colonial masters to allow a particular tribe or groups to dominate other various groups virtually in every facet of life politically and economically. Therefore, the unholy wedlock of the various ethnic groups, coupled with the cultural and religious differences, was not taken into cognizance by the colonial Lords as a result of selfish ambition.

Consequently, suffice to say that the minority agitations, the resource control, the entire controversial census conducted, and the political domination of the North over the south culminated to the unresolved problems left by the colonial masters. And now staring at our faces like a keg of gun powder ready to explode and these at various times had almost caused disintegration of the count.

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