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INTRODUCTION

The first decade of the 20th century opened a new vista in the history of Lagos. During the period, two major events that were to play significant roles in the history of the city in particular and Nigeria in general were unfolded. The first was the installation in 1901 of Audu Eshugbayi, a fisherman as the king of Lagos. The second was the introduction of water-rate by the British Colonial government in 1908. These two events affected profoundly the nationalist struggle that eventually led to the termination of British rule in Nigeria in 1960. Concerning the position of Lagos, the events transformed the city which had hitherto been the ‘melting pot’ of commercial activities, to assume a pre-eminent role of being the ‘hot bed’ of political activities in the post 1914 unified Nigeria.

Several other British policies in the period under consideration added fillip to nationalist struggle in Lagos. At the vanguard of opposition to British policies that were deemed inimical to the interest of the people was the educated elite, mainly of Yoruba extraction, supported by eminent traditional elite who acted mainly as financiers and mobilizers of the traditional elements in Lagos against British policies.

The focus of this article will therefore be on those factors that led to the nationalist struggle in Lagos, with emphasis on the following sub themes: Lagos before 1900; background to nationalist struggle; events leading to party formation; prominent Yoruba politicians; and an appraisal, the role of the Yoruba, and the Nigerian Politics (1950-1960).

LAGOS BEFORE 1900: BACKGROUND TO NATIONALIST STRUGGLE

The British intervention in the traditional politics of Lagos through the 1851 bombardment set the pace for the transformation of Lagos from its hitherto commercial nerve centre of the pre-colonial days into commercial cum political hot bed of modern Nigeria.

The decade, 1851 to 1861 saw Lagos transforming from a purely traditional settlement, into an emergent city with all the appurtenances of development. These include the establishment of missionary schools, the
replacement of slave trade with ‘legitimate commerce’, and the
entrenchment of British colonial rule commencing with the 1861 Treaty of
Cession.

One of the major effects of the transformation of Lagos from 1851 onward
was the movement of different categories of people who flocked into Lagos
from the interior of modern Nigeria in search of the proverbial Golden
Fleece. Slave returnees from Sierra Leone, Brazil and the New World who
chose to live the Victorian life style of their former places of abode joined
the people.

It was these categories of returnees and their children that brought into the
fore, the importance of Western education, which was immediately
embraced by mainly Yoruba elements in Lagos. Western education also
brought western acculturation among the elite, who were, however, not
socially accepted by the Europeans.

The European rejection of the educated elite in Lagos manifested in so
many forms. Oshuntokun, highlighted some of these European attitudes
towards Africans and pointed out that the rejection of the educated elite led
to the policy of cultural identification by these mainly Yoruba element who
began to pay attention to Yoruba language, adopted Yoruba names, culture,
and dress as a potent force of change. Apart from this, the educated
Africans began to publish newspapers both in the Vernacular and English to
oppose British policies in Lagos.

By the dawn of 1900 therefore, the African elite in Lagos were not just well
educated, they also realized that their European counterparts were not
better in terms of intellectual capabilities. Consequently, they were
determined to oppose all forms of colonial policies they considered inimical
to their own interests.

Prelude to Political Party Formation

The first major confrontation between the British colonial government, and
the people of Lagos commenced in 1908, when the payment of water rate
was to be introduced into Lagos society: The modern elite formed an
alliance with their traditional counterparts to oppose the introduction and
hinged their opposition on the premise that “no taxation without
representation”. While the educated elite were aware that the provision of
pipe borne water was in the public interest, the traditional elite rejected
payment for water, claiming that the well water they were drinking was free
and good enough for them.

The water rate crisis laid the foundation for the first polarization of the
Lagos society into two mutually opposing camps the pro, and anti water rate
factions; whose activities continued to influence political activities in Lagos
well into the 1940s.

By 1909, the colonial government appropriated the Race – Course land.
This rendered many indigenes homeless and further led to the resentment
among the people. Series of mass meetings were called at Enuowa, to
discuss these measures (i.e. Water Rate and Land expropriation) that were
deemed inimical to the interest of the people. In fact, traditional
mobilization against colonial government became very rampant and it was
this that gave birth to the formation of the first political organization in
Lagos – The Peoples Union that was the brainchild of Doctors Randle and
Orishadipe Obasa, two prominent figures that opposed the introduction of
water scheme.

Further developments in Lagos politics during the first three decades of the
twentieth century added fillip to national awareness and formation of
political parties in Nigeria. A discourse of some of these events may further
clarify our understanding of the pre – eminent role of Lagos and Yoruba
in Nigeria politics.

In 1912, Sir Frederick (later, Lord) Lugard was appointed the Governor –
General of Nigeria. After his appointment, there appeared a series of
columns in Nigerian Gazette that intended to put the lands under the direct
control of the state. When this column was brought to the notice of the
Lagos Auxiliary of the Anti – Slavery and Aborigines protection society, it
was decided that a deputation should be sent to the parent committee in
London.

The London delegation was to be led by Herbert Macaulay who was
becoming popular as an Anti – government leader. However, before the
departure of the delegation, Macaulay was arrested in connection with one
Mary Franklin’s Estate. The owner of the Estate had appointed Macaulay as
her trustee, and after her death, Macaulay was charged for mismanagement
of the Woman’s property, and he was jailed for six months.

The imprisonment of Macaulay was viewed by the people of Lagos (who
regarded him as their protector) as a government attempt to prevent him from leaving the delegation, as well as to put an end to his seemingly recalcitrant stands. An appeal was made to Oba Audu Eshugbayi who could not secure Macaulay's freedom and therefore, incurred the wrath on the people who carried out an attack on Eleko's palace.

The action of the angry mob on the Eleko’s palace was the beginning of what was later known in Lagos political history as the Eleko Episode, since the 1913 event finally ended his (The king)’s neutrality. The Eleko, who had been sitting on the fence, especially when Lagosians were protesting the water levy, was thus forced to team up with the generality of his subjects.

What was however known to be the Eleko Episode in Lagos political history began in 1915 when the first major crisis in the Central Mosque brought the colonial government directly into the politics of the majority population of Lagos. Apart from the Central Mosque crisis, there were other major developments such as the Second Water Rate protest of 1916, the Oluwa Land case, and the Turbaning of some prominent Jamat party by the Eleko in 1919. Due to Eleko’s tacit support for, and at times direct involvement in some of these events, he incurred the wrath of the colonial government through initial suspension, and eventual deposition in 1925.

Although, the Eleko Episode had attracted some attention in recent times such that, a full detail of the event need not delay us here. It is instructive however to point out that the event served as a precursor toward party formation in Nigeria. The suspension and later, banishment of Audu Eshugbayi led to the formation of *Egbe Gbogbanyi* (Committee for the glorification of the king), whose membership cut a cross the traditional and modern elites that took over the Welfare of the king, by paying his stipend when he was suspended.

This committee later metamorphosed into the *Ilu* (Town) Committee, a quasi-political party that comprised of prominent Lagosians who played the role of advising the Eleko on matters concerning the welfare of the Lagos society. Perhaps because of this, and many other functions of the *Ilu* committee, it has been referred to by Kunle Lawal as “an hydra – headed traditional organization dedicated more to the preservation of traditional Lagos values than the defence of the head of the house of Dosumu which it actually professed”.

While the *Ilu* committee lasted, it served as springboard for the formation of the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), established on June 24, 1923 by Herbert Macaulay and his associates such as Egerton Shynele, Dr. C. C. Adeniyi-Jones, Barrister Eric O. Moore and others.

It is apparent so far, that Macaulay’s NNDP was not the first political party. However, it was the first to win an election conducted in line with the Western type of electoral process. While the party lasted, it won most of the elections conducted into both the legislative council as well as the Lagos Town Council. The success of the party in Lagos political terrain could be adduced mainly to the circumstances leading to its establishment, and the support given it by traditional and religious elites that formed the bedrock of the party. These elites were initially concerned with the welfare of their king, Eshugbayi Eleko and they were ready to do anything to oppose the king’s humiliation in the hands of a foreign colonial power.

Another political party, existing contemporaneously with the NNDP was the Union of Young Nigerians, founded in 1923, by Barrister Ayo Williams, Dr. J. C. Vaughan, and Ernest Ikoli. According to Coleman, this party existed for five years (1923-1928) during which it contested elections without success. A major challenge to the successes of NNDP at the polls came fifteen years after its establishment (1938), through the efforts of a group of Young Nigerians who considered Macaulay’s approach a bit conservative, and felt that political agitation required radical changes. These young Nigerians, such as Dr. J. C. Vaughan, H. O Davies, Samuel Akinsanya, and Ernest Ikoli, founded the Lagos Youth Movement in 1934, and by 1938 changed the party’s name to the Nigerian Youth Movement. The party won all the elections conducted into both the Lagos Town Council as well as the Legislative Council in that year.

The NYM like the NNDP was formed by mainly Yoruba elements in Lagos. It was however not regarded as a Yoruba party because it had branches in all urban cities throughout Nigeria. “The party’s accommodation of a few non-Yoruba elements had been attributed as a factor in its demise.”

By the beginning of the Second World War, nationalism in Nigeria assumed a militant dimension. There emerged groups of people, especially students who were of the opinion that a subtle approach to British misgovernment may not yield the desired result. On June 10, 1944, some students under the aegis of Nigerian Union of Students convened a mass meeting in Lagos where they issued an invitation for the inaugural meeting of National Council of Nigeria, slated for August 26, 1944. Herbert Macaulay was
invited to head the organization as the first president of what then emerged as the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon; (NCNC) while Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe was made the first secretary.

Apparently due to the towering influence of Macaulay, and his party NNDP (which was one of the Unions that formed the National Council), NCNC won an overwhelming majority in an election into the Lagos legislative council conducted after Macaulay's death in 1947. The party's popularity in Lagos however nosedived following the ascension of Musediq Adeniji Adele as the king of Lagos in 1949.

Adele was a member of Egbe Omo Oduduwa, a pan-Yoruba cultural society founded by Obafemi Awolowo in conjunction with other prominent Yoruba sons. The installation of Adele as the king of Lagos was opposed by NCNC / NNDP, a party that came into prominence due to Herbert Macaulay's support for the house of Dosumu – a branch of the Lagos dynasty. NNDP's opposition to Adele was challenged in court until his right to the throne was finally sustained by the Privy Council's ruling of June 26, 1957. It was therefore an irony and twist of fate that the Lagos dynasty which was instrumental to the rise of NNDP as the most prominent political party in Lagos since 1923, was equally instrumental to its demise 30 years later (1953), when Adele's efforts swung the indigenes of Lagos into the Pan – Yoruba group, Egbe Omo Oduduwa.

Prior to the collapse of NNDP in 1953, the Pan Yoruba Group had been transformed into Action Group in 1950. The founder of the party was Obafemi Awolowo, who until that time, was the General Secretary of the Egbe Omo Oduduwa. The party's motto was "Western Solidarity" and it used the Machinery of the Egbe to facilitate its expansion.

By 1950 therefore, two main political parties had emerged in Nigeria; namely the NCNC, and A. G; the former being headed by an Igbo man, Nnamdi Azikwe, a successful journalist, and founder of the West African Pilot. The latter, was headed by a Yoruba man, Obafemi Awolowo, a lawyer, merchant, and former secretary of the Nigerian Motor Transport Union.

These two political parties articulated political programmes aimed at securing independence for Nigeria in 1957. The third regionally based political party, the Northern Peoples' Congress was established in 1951, primarily to cater for the interest of the north, as the party's motto "one North, one people, irrespective of religion, rank or tribe" indicated. Unlike the A. G. and NCNC that demanded and had internal self government from early 1950s, the Northern Peoples Congress NPC preferred to be ruled directly by the colonial government based in Lagos.

By 1960 when Nigeria secured her independence, it was the NPC that formed the central government supported by the NCNC. These two parties produced the Prime Minister (Abubakar Tafawa Balewa) and Governor General, (Later President) Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe respectively.

In this way, the political agitation and nationalist struggles that took root in Lagos, and championed by the Yorubas since 1908 when the first political party was formed, finally culminated into Nigeria's independence in 1960, with the last political party and the least of those involved in the struggle against colonial rule being the major beneficiary. Since the focus of this paper is Lagos, Yoruba and Nigerian politics, it is expedient at this point to focus on the Yoruba politicians in the period under consideration.

PROMINENT YORUBA POLITICIANS 1900 – 1960

Available records on nationalist struggles in Nigeria in the period under consideration indicate that two categories of Yoruba politicians could be identified.

In the first category were the groups of traditional and religious elites such as Eleko Eshugbayi, Amodu Tijani Oluwa, and several other Muslims who were opposed to colonial government policies that were considered inimical to the interest of the people.

In the second category were the groups of modern (educated) elites, led by Herbert Macaulay, J. Egerton Shyngle, Barrister E. O. Moore and Dr. C. C. Adeniyi Jones among others. However, most of these records focused mainly on the activities of the educated elite while desultory attention is paid to the roles played by traditional elite. It is therefore expedient to highlight briefly the activities of some of these traditional elite, especially the king, Audu Eshugbayi, Eleko and Chief Amodu Tijani Oluwa.

(A.) AUDU ESHUGBAYI ELEKO

He was the king of Lagos, 1901 – 1925, and 1931 – 1932 who was at the centre of the Eleko Episode in the politics of Lagos during the first three decades of the period under study. Eshugbayi Eleko was a great Lagosian, the number one traditional citizen, the custodian of traditional politics, and culture of Lagos who also became a nationalist per excellence by identifying with the cause of his people against British rule in Lagos.
As pointed out earlier, the Eleko Episode in Lagos politics had been well documented. We should however point out that the Eleko’s case was borne out of the misunderstanding between the colonial administration in Lagos and the perception of the traditional elites of the period. Furthermore, it (Eleko Episode) was also due to the contradiction of the British official position on the king.

While the colonial administration recognized the Eleko only as such person ... “Who had no ruling function beyond the head of Dosumu – Oyekan house”, the people of Lagos on the other hand considered the king as the political head and custodian of their culture. Furthermore, the contradictions in colonial government policies towards Eshugbayi could be seen in the fact that though they failed to recognize his political role, he was however needed as a liaison between the colonial government and the people.

A vivid example of Eleko’s relevance could be seen in his appointment alongside other traditional and Mohammedan (Muslims) elites into the central native council by the Governor, Sir Williams Macgregor since 1901. He was also required on several occasions to send his bellman to town to announce to the people some important colonial government policies, such as the need to pay water rate, the disclaimer of Herbert Macaulay’s statement made in London during the Oluwa land case among others.

A Juxtaposition of the British government statement on the appointment of Eleko and the roles he was saddled with by the same government subsequently could thus be seen as a pointer to the contradictions of the colonial government position. The king, though not educated, refused to be cajoled by the various antics of the government to censure his power. He ensured that issues relating to the colonial government’s were tabled at meetings with his chiefs, traditional and educated elites led by Herbert Macaulay and decisions taken at such meetings became the official traditional government response to colonial government demand.

Viewed from this perspective, Eshugbayi Eleko could thus be seen as the arrow head of traditional nationalist agitators against British rule in Lagos.

(B.) AMODU TIJANI OLUWA:

Sheu Amodu Tijani was appointed Chief Oluwa of Lagos (1914 - 1958). Being one of the land owning group of Chiefs of Lagos, he was at the centre of the Apapa land case, acquired through the Land Acquisition Ordinance of the colonial government. Oluwa, representing the entire family rejected the payment of 500 pounds offered by the British and took the land matter to court.

With the support of Herbert Macaulay, the Apapa land case was taken to the Privy Council in London where it was decided in favour of Oluwa who got 22, 500 pounds from the colonial government in Lagos instead of the 500 pounds offered earlier. The Apapa land cases brought Chief Oluwa into the limelight of Lagos politics, and determined native proprietorial and tenural rights over land in Lagos.

He had the support of the king, Audu Eshugbayi Eleko, who offered Oluwa his staff of office that was taken to London, accompanied by Macaulay who was alleged of making some statements that were deemed inimical to the interest of the British government. It was Macaulay’s statement that led to the suspension of Eleko and his dethronement mentioned earlier.

Chief Amodu Tijani then teamed up with the anti-government group, led by Herbert Macaulay, who were opposed to British colonial policies in Lagos. He was one of the prominent members of Ilu committee, and Herbert Macaulay’s NNPD. At the height of his career, Chief Oluwa moved the motion in the 1947 post – election victory boycott of the legislative council after the NNPD had won all three seats in that year’s election, but refused to take up the seats until such time as the constitution had been amended to provide for responsible government.” Amodu Tijani Oluwa therefore stood out among the traditional elites who played significant roles in the nationalist struggles of the period under consideration.

Apart from Eshugbayi Eleko and Amodu Tijani Oluwa, there were other traditional elites such as Abibu Oki, Buraimoh Igbo, Bakare Misahun, Braimoh Ekun – Giwa, Kasumu Ayanrile, Alifi Sanni and several other very vocal anti – government elements, including market men and women especially Madam Pelewura, whose contributions to the nationalist struggle have yet to be given their rightful places in Nigerian history. It was on record that some of these traditional elites such as Abibu Oki, Bakare Misahun, and others mortgaged their landed properties to finance anti – government activities, especially during the Eleko’s alteration with the colonial government.

There were other traditional elites who were prominent in the politics of the period. However, due to the fact that they were pro – government in action and deeds, they could not be regarded as nationalists. Among these were
Adamo Akeju (The Obanikoro), Ycsufu Omoba, Ali Balogun (also known as Ali Olowe), Faro Odunsi Esinlokun and Imam Ibrahim (the Chief Imam of Lagos) among others.

C. THE EDUCATED ELITE:

As pointed out earlier, political activities in Nigeria in the period under study centered around Lagos. In fact, Lagos was Nigeria and Nigeria was Lagos in almost every aspect of life. Apparently added to this enviable position of Lagos, the earliest forms of political opposition to British rule began there with educated Lagosians and other Yoruba elements at the Vanguard.

Among these elites were Drs. J. K. Randle and Orishadipe Obasa, two prominent Yoruba men that founded the first political party, The Peoples Union. They were supported by Dr Akinwande Savage and Sir kitoye Ajasa. These Politicians seem to have lost their places of pride in Lagos and Nigerian politics due to their pro-government stands, taken from 1916 when the water levy was re-introduced. Other prominent Yoruba politicians include Herbert Heelas Samuel Macaulay, the man who never contested any elective post, perhaps because of various jail sentences; he served for his recalcitrant posture toward colonial government policies. He was however instrumental to the various electoral victories of the NNDP such that he was acknowledged as the father of Nigerian Politics.

Macaulay's colleagues and co-founders of the NNDP included Dr. C. C. Adeniyi – Jones – a Yoruba of Sierra – Leone origin and second president of NNDP; Barrister Eric O. Moore, a legislator and vice president of NNDP, and T. A. Doherty, also a legislator and one of the founders of the National Bank of Nigeria.

In 1923, when the Union of Young Nigerians was formed, the party was controlled by Barrister Ayo Williams, Dr. J. C. Vaughan and Ernest Ikoli an jaw. Other prominent Yoruba in Nigerian politics in the period under study included H. O. Davies, an economist, lawyer, and one of the founders of Lagos Youth Movement, (later Nigerian Youth Movement). The party was established ostensibly to encourage Nigerians to study abroad and improve on the limited educational programme of the colonial government that established the Yaba Higher College as a vocational institution that could only confer Nigerian diplomas on the citizenry.

Others included Samuel Akinsanya, a prominent Ijebu politician, one of the founders of the Youth Movement and former secretary of the Nigerian Motor Transport Union. When the NCNC was established in 1944, the conveners were said to be Yorubas, who continued to play prominent roles in its formative years. The positions of Prince Adeleke Adedoyin, NCNC's general Secretary after the death of Macaulay, Dr. A. B. Olorun – Nimbé, General Treasurer and Ogedengbe Macaulay, Assistant Secretary and several others readily come to mind.

When the Pan Yoruba Association, Egbe Omo Oduduwa was established, it had the following Yoruba people among its gladiators; Dr. Oni Akerele, Obafemi Awolowo, A. B. Oyediran, Mr. Akin Reis, S. O. Biobaku (later professor), Akintola Williams (a successful chartered Accountant), Barristers Ayo Rosji, Ayo Okusaga and Professor Ayo Ogunseye.

Other prominent Yoruba politicians include Dr. Akinola Maja, S. O. Gbadamosi, Barristers Bode Thomas, T. O. S. Benson, Ladoke Akintola (Awolowo's successor as premier of the Western Regional Government), Adegoke Adelabu, S. O. Awokoya, Remi FaniKayode, Adeniran Ogunsanya and Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome Kutiu. Mention must also be made of the role of Sir Adeyemo Alakija, an eminent lawyer and successful businessman, who played prominent roles in the formation of the Peoples Union, the Eleko saga (he was one of the lawyers that defended the Eleko), and the legislative council where he was a government nominated member for the Egba Division. It is also on record that Barrister Jibiri Martin, a Yoruba Muslim of the Brazilian quarters was the first elected Muslim member of the Lagos Town council. He won the seat on the platform of the Nigerian Youth Movement in 1935 and was noted for his move against the introduction of crematorium by the Lagos Town Council in 1953. The list of Yoruba politicians of the period under consideration is in-exhaustive in an essay of this nature. We may now consider the British colonial Government's attitude towards the most prominent Yoruba politician of the decade 1950 – 1960, Chief Obafemi Awolowo and how the British perception of his politics made it difficult for the Yorubas to assume the leadership of Nigeria at independence.


The period 1950 – 60 was the decolonization decade in Nigeria. It was a period when the British granted some limited autonomy to the three regions. The Yoruba at the period made Obafemi Awolowo, the founder of the Action Group and the most prominent leader of the Egbe Omo Oduduwa, a pivot of its political agenda. The A. G. thus came into being out of the consciousness of Yoruba educated elites with the aim of developing the
Western region, and creating a platform for participation in national politics. The party's major policy preferences as perceived by the British government, and which the party itself made public included: free and compulsory education between the ages of five and thirteen, the establishment of secondary and technical schools, and extension of adult and rural education; immediate improvement of communications and postal services. Also, the party advocated that health services should be developed, free for all workers and called for more Nigerian doctors to be trained, the establishment of a Nigerian mineral corporation; among others.

Within the first five years of limited regional self government in the early 1950s, AG government made strides that earned it the commendation of the British officials. In 1955, Sir John Rankine wrote on the West as being on the move economically, socially and politically. However, the party's shortcomings were also acknowledged by the local British officials who noted these to include: occasional outbursts or excesses which offend our democratic ideals as well as the fact that it was largely a party of "big business", the professional men and the African "white collar class", which in turn made most of its programme beneficial (apart from the U. P. E. and five shillings a day minimum wage) to the privilege classes.

The colonial government attributed majority of the strides made by the AG government in the West to the personality and force of character of its leader, Chief Obafemi Awolowo. At the mundane level, Chief Awolowo was seen by leading officials as:

"Abstemious and a hard worker, permitting himself only the relaxation of taking part in public and social engagements. He is undoubtedly inspired with a sense of mission, a determination to demonstrate that Africans in general and Yoruba in particular are capable of managing their own affairs and have supreme confidence in his (sic) own ability."

To Sir John Rankine, Chief Awolowo was a man who displayed considerable qualities of drive and initiative backed up by a ruthless determination in the execution of policy. Awolowo was an "outstanding lawyer and a reasonably good administrator who had little demagogue about him".

Governor Rankine noted in 1957 that while, the AG was ruthless and overbearing, it was largely realistic and responsible. "It was believed that the AG retained its power over the masses "through its propaganda machine".

just as Rankine noted, also, that in spite of the great expansion in social services under the AG, gaps between the privilege and the man-in-the-street increased. Britain's officials then saw the AG under Awolowo as a party so much in a hurry. This tendency to be in a hurry or what Rankine often referred to as "unguarded or embarrassing haste" might have determined Britain's perception of the AG and its leadership as suffering from "chronic, almost pathological suspicion and impatience...". Rankine attributed this urgency to the AG's seeming need to convince electorates that 'they were good'. With Awolowo at the apex of its organizational ladder, the AG thus became, in much the same way that the NPC and the NCNC did, for the North and the East respectively, a body committed to the progress of the Western region. From the beginning, Awolowo's aspiration was to use the West as a launching pad for the AG's transformation into a national party. This aspiration was to draw the body into direct conflict with the other parties as some of its positions expectedly contradicted those of the others.

Sir John Rankine's positive perception of Awolowo was shared by Sir John Macpherson (Nigerian colonial Governor General, 1948 - 55) who notes in a post - tenure interview that Awolowo was "the only statesman out of Africa." Macpherson also recalls that someone once told him that many colonial office staff "could have skinned him alive and drummed him out of office for falling out with Awolowo". At the same time, Sir John notes that Awolowo made friendship between them somewhat difficult because "he thought I might make use of certain passages favourable to Britain in his book...and use him as a stalking horse". To this phobia, Macpherson added the AG's policy of non - fraternization arising from its disagreement with an aspect of the 1951 constitution in which the AG felt considerably short - changed.

In similar terms, Sir James Robertson who was the colonial Governor - General in Nigeria between 1955 and 1960 recalled that he had known Awolowo since 1952 when he (Awolowo) led a delegation to Khartoum where he was then serving as a Governor - General. On his assumption of office as Governor-General in Nigeria, Sir James "went first to Ibadan and Awolowo was very friendly...". Available data from Awo's private papers would seem to confirm this view and even suggest that they enjoyed a very warm personal relationship.

But official views about Awolowo were not always pleasant. To some officials Awo was 'hyper-sensitive' and had a complex about Europeans, particularly administrative officers. Chief Awolowo's undisguised hostility
towards the 1951 constitution was interpreted by Sir John Macpherson as an evidence of an overweening pride. Macpherson’s position found agreement in the view expressed by Rankine, who worked closely with Awolowo as colonial Governor of the West. Rankine noted in 1956 that:

_The premier presents a split personality. For 90% of the time he commands respect: able, hardworking, moderate, and open to reason. The remaining 10% is in complete contrast. He becomes quite unprincipled, fanatical, and vindictive. One of his list attractive traits is an overweening personal conceit. Usually, he manages to keep this under control, and when things are going well, he is full of affability and bonbomie, but when it is touched heaven help the offender._

The AG’s position on some salient issues of the decolonization decade such as the status and administration of the police, the question of the Nigerianisation of the public service, boundary adjustment (especially as it related to the definition of the boundary between the West and the North around the Ilorin province), the status of Lagos as the Federal Capital territory, revenue allocation, and the structure of the Federal Government and the nature of the relationship between the centre and the regions did not endear it to the colonial office and its officials.

For instance, the AG’s support for the regionalization of the police was a matter of concern to the colonial bureaucracy who preferred a centralized force for the whole country. On the Nigerianisation of the public service, the AG supported outright Nigerianisation while the issues of re-definition of regional boundaries and the status of Lagos provided the irredentist slant to its politics. The AG gave consistent support to the principle of derivation in matters of revenue allocation, and advocated a strong regional government as opposed to the NCNC which wanted a strong central government. As hinted already the AG’s position on these issues were antithetical to the ideals favoured by the British officials.

Both as an individual and leader of a party Awolowo was himself a moderate by any standard. In fact up till 1953, Awolowo and his AG enjoyed a warm relationship with the colonial administration. One of the issues that changed this was the excision from the West and the efforts of the colonial bureaucracy at protecting the North from the influence of the other regions and their leaders. Its was in fact the attitude and position taken by the colonial office over the Lagos issue and the powers of Regional Ministers that turned the AG into a foremost anti-colonial party, and which appeared to have turned a seemingly bourgeois and conforming organization into a ‘radical’ one.

In more direct political matters, some British officials noted that Awolowo and the AG were not making efforts to understand the North and concluding that they (AG) were planning to destroy Northern unity by encouraging any extremist group and exploiting any grievances in the region. This view was not without basis. Awolowo himself told a visiting British Minister of state for the colonies in April 1953 that relations between the West and the North could be likened to a man with a stone tied to his leg who, if he wished to walk, could only cut off the stone. The Minister suggested that a better analogy was a man with a broken leg who needed time for the bone to set and would be foolish to amputate the leg merely to gain time.

Chief Awolowo himself often indicated his believe in the unity of Nigeria by stressing the complimentarity of the regions’ resources and by suggesting that a common bond be maintained between all parts. However, it would appear that such professions of faith in Nigerian unity did not necessarily convince British officials that these were deep commitments. To Britain the threat towards separatism by some AG leaders who often opposed Southern positions on some fundamental issues was an indication of the latent tendency in the AG’s make – up. On its own part, AG’s secessionist tendencies seemed to have grown out of its believe that the West carried he main burden of the cost of developing the country, a belief which Macpherson noted had upset the AG “almost to the point of paranoia”. Britain’s attitude towards Awolowo, the western region and the AG would then appear to have been borne out of this potent threat of separatism which the Yoruba and their leaders seemed to represent in the nascent Nigerian nation.

By implication, the divergent interests of the AG and the British did not encourage the latter to favor the former in the transfer of power in Nigeria. In the first place, the party stood directly opposed to the NPC which was the most “pampered favorite” of the colonial administration. Apart from this, AG’s policy of self-government in 1956 stood parallel to that of the NPC and the colonial government’s ‘self-government when practicable’. Indeed, to some officials, Awolowo was an intellectual but not a politician, for this reason and because he was in no way a good rallying point for the divergent opinions in Nigeria in the 1950s in the same way that Tafawa Balewa was in the perception of the colonial bureaucracy. Awolowo was not considered a candidate suitable for the headship of the central government on the eve of independence. This was in spite of his acknowledged hard work and
brilliance. This factor, rather than that he was regionally based before contesting the office of Prime Minister, appears to be useful in explaining why Awolowo was not favored by the colonial administration.

CONCLUSION

The transformation of Lagos from an indigenous society into an emergent centre following British intervention in 1851 affected profoundly the socio-political development of the city. Further transformation of the city as the capital of the Nigeria and the British colonial policies in Lagos were major factors that shape the colonized people’s responses to British rule.

Nationalist agitation in Nigeria began in Lagos with two categories of people being the major players. These were the traditional and modern elite, who were in the vanguard of opposition to colonial government policies. Since Lagos was Nigeria and since almost all things that happened in Nigeria happened in Lagos, it is not surprising that nationalist agitation and formation of political parties began in Lagos.

The major players of Nigerian politics in the period under consideration were mainly Yoruba elements, who exploited their control of the press, the school as well as the church in the development of Nigerian politics. They were supported later by other non-Yoruba people, such as Ernest Ikoli, and Nnamdi Azikiwe, to mention but few. At least two of the three political parties that led Nigeria to independence in 1960 were formed by the Yorubas. One of these parties, the Action Group, formed by Obafemi Awolowo introduced various programmes such as free education, free health services, integrated rural development as well as other socio-infrastructural facilities that were considered second to none during the period 1950–65.

It could therefore be concluded from the foregoing that the Yorubas have always been in the mainstream of Nigerian politics, not only because they were the dominant ethnic group in Lagos where political agitation began, but also because they formed the nucleus of the first set of Nigerians who rejected every aspect of colonial policies that were considered unfavorable to their interests. Although the Yorubas were unable to control politics at the centre in 1960, this was however not due to their inability to deliver the dividends of democracy to their people. Rather, it was due to the perception of the British Colonial government officials to hand over power to a more moderate personality than Awolowo, the pivot of Yoruba politics.

NOTES AND REFERENCES


3. Jide Oshuntokun; highlighted the colonial government policy’s opposition to Africans in the Civil Service, in the church, through the introduction of racial discrimination by the “white party,” in the Church Missionary Society, and also in the area of land allocation, through William Mac Gregor’s attempt at building separate residential areas, and a colonial church for the whites. For detail see Jide Oshuntokun, “Lagos and Political Awareness”.

4. The Water Rate crisis had been a subject of many scholarly works. One of the scholars who had paid special attention to it was Patrick Dele Cole, Modern and Traditional Elites in the Politics of Lagos (C. U. P. 1975). Chapter 4.


8. Available record shows that The Peoples Union formed in 1909 appeared to be the first political party in Nigeria. Musiliu Anibaba owere, said that the Iju Committee, rather than the Peoples Union was the first Political Party in Nigeria. While the Iju Committee might have been in place since 1908, it remained a veritable avenue for the Peoples of Lagos to discuss pressing public matters. It is the view of this writer therefore that it was not so named until much later when Eleko’s trouble with colonial government became so rampant. See Habeeb Abiodun Sanni, “The Eleko Affair”. See also Musiliu Anibaba, A Lagosian of the 20th century: An Autobiography (Lagos:Tison, 2003) p.11

9. Recent discussion with Honourable Adekunle Alli aged C70 indicated that the society was formed in 1905. He therefore considered it the first attempt atPolitical Party formation in Lagos. However, Gabriel Olusanya opined that (LAARPS) was established two years after the Peoples Union i.e. 1910. See Gabriel Olusanya, “The Nationalist Movement in Nigeria” in Obaro Ikime (ed), Groundwork of Nigerian History p 553


15. Richard Sklar *Nigeria political parties* p 52


17. The formation of NCNC in 1944 had been linked to a group of Yoruba students led by Late Hezekiah Oluwasanmi (later Professor and Vice - Chancellor of the University of Ife, Nigeria, 1966 - 75), see Isaac Akinjobiogin, *Milestones and Concepts*. P 87


19. The Egbe Omo – Odua was first inaugurated in London in 1945 by Awolowo and other Yoruba sons. Following Awolowo’s return to Nigeria in 1946, he continued to be the harbinger of Yoruba Unity and launched the *Egbe* formally in June 1948 with Sir Adeyemo Alakija as president. For detail of the founders of the *Egbe* in London, see Obafemi Awolowo, *Awo*. P 168. Also see Richard Sklar, *Nigeria Political Parties* pp 67 – 69.


21. Isaac Akinjobiogin; *Milestones and Concepts* p 88


23. See letter from the Resident to Eleko, November 1920, in Herbert Macaulay’s collection Box 40, file 2 in University of Ibadan Library, Manuscript section.


25. Musilu Anibaba; *A Lagosian of the 20th century* p. 87

26. Herbert Macaulay was jailed on two different occasions first in connection with Mary Franklin’s Estate in 1913, mentioned earlier; and was later jailed for sedition.


30. Alakija was the founding chairman of the *Daily Times* Newspaper. He was said to have intervened in the 1945 nationwide workers strike that paralyzed public services, pleading that the strike be called off. Due to his close association with the colonial government he earned the wrath of the people and his political status diminished. See Musilu Anibaba, *A Lagosian of the 20th century*. P 90.31.


33. Rankine to Secretary of State 8th sept. 1957.

34. Rankine to Secretary of State 8th sept. 1957.

35. ‘Biographical notes on Members of the Executive Council’ in Rankine to Secretary of State 19th Jan. 1955.

36. ‘Biographical notes on Members of the Executive Council’ in Rankine to Secretary of State 19th Jan. 1955.

37. ‘Biographical notes on Members of the Executive Council’ in Rankine to Secretary of State 19th Jan. 1955.


41. Rankine to Lennox - Boyd 8th May. 1957.
42. Rankine to Lennox - Boyd 8th May. 1957.
43. See interview of Sir John Macpherson by Kirk-Greene in RHL, Oxford.
44. See interview of Sir John Macpherson by Kirk-Greene in RHL, Oxford.
45. Part to Nigerian Freedom Faber and Faber, London 1947
46. See interview of Sir John Macpherson by Kirk-Greene in RHL, Oxford
47. See interview of Sir James Robertson by Kirk-Greene in RHL, Oxford
48. See file 2514 Correspondence between Awolowo and Colonial Officials, in Sopolu Library for the details of this.
49. CO554/313 Macpherson to Marshall 18th June, 1952

52. Rankine to Secretary of State 8th sept. 1957.
54. CO554/269 Sharwood – Smith to Williamson 1st May, 1953.
55. CO554/260 The Minister of State in a letter to The Secretary of State, 29th April, 1953.
56. CO554/260 The Minister of State in a letter to The Secretary of State, 29th April, 1953.
57. See chapter four pp. 238-9 for AG’s position on the insertion of a right to secession in the constitution. This however, failed. Also, see T. N. Tamuno ‘Separatist agitations in Nigeria since 1914’ in Journal of Modern African Studies (JMAS) 8, 1970.
58. This was stated by S. L. Akintola in a chat with Sir John Macpherson in 1953. See CO554/911 note of interview granted by H. E. to S. L. Akintola 23rd Dec. 1953.
59. This was stated by S. L. Akintola in a chat with Sir John Macpherson in 1953. See CO554/911 note of interview granted by H. E. to S. L. Akintola 23rd Dec. 1953.
60. CO554/262 contribution by Gorell – Barnes in a note of the meeting with the Governor of Nigeria on 21st July, 1955

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