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Nationalism, Ethnicity, and the Cultural Politics of Identity

by David William Cavers

In recent decades nations and nationalism have become increasingly important topics of interest in anthropology. This is likely the result of the fact that the people that were traditionally studied by anthropologists are now in control of the state apparatus left to them by colonial regimes, and because anthropology has also recently taken more interest in communities of European origin.

Work on nations and nationalism has brought up many interesting and innovative points about culture change and production, and about ideology. However, work on nationalism has suffered in its analytical usefulness due to an artificial differentiation between nations and nationalism on the one hand, and other "imagined communities" (Anderson 1991) and "primordial sentiments" (Geertz 1973), in particular ethnic groups and ethnicity, on the other hand (e.g. Anderson 1991, Gellner 1983). This differentiation is based on the assumption that there is something intrinsically unique in the nature of the phenomena labeled nations and nationalism that excludes them from being studied in relation to ethnic groups and ethnicity. Dissolving this artificial differentiation is both theoretically and practically important. Theoretically, work on nationalism (e.g. Anderson 1991, Foster 1991, Spencer 1990a & b, 1992:209) and work on ethnicity (e.g. Barth 1969, Cohen 1974, Moore 1989) can each benefit from the insights that the other has into the phenomena covered under those same titles. Practically, the study of nationalism would benefit from an integration with the study of ethnicity in that, contrary to what Benedict Anderson would have us believe, we do not live "in a world in which the nation-state is the overwhelming norm" (1991:135) nor do we live in a world in which nation-states will inevitably become the norm, as Gellner would have us believe (1983). A quick review of Rand McNally's "Gazetteer of the World" (1983) demonstrates that we live in a world in which nations are not coterminous with state boundaries. The relations of the state and its people are tied to relations with, and between, other foci of "primordial sentiments" (Geertz 1973), "imagined communities" (Anderson 1991:200) and "imagined life possibilities" (Appadurai 1991:200). They are also social organisations that provide symbols of identity and the potential for acceptable and credible civil authority over large populations. The ability to make authority credible and to act as cultural mediators between the local and the global differentiates nations and ethnic groups from "imagined communities" of Coca-Cola drinkers and CNN watchers, which have only limited potential as bases for solidarity. Here, I hope to demonstrate that the roles of nationalism and ethnicity in these relations are such that they should not be analyzed as distinct orders of phenomena. Rather, in order to understand the roles of nationalism and ethnicity in the dynamics of local and global "cultural flow" and cultural politics they must be understood as integrally linked phenomena.

In the first section of this essay I will discuss certain problems with the separation of nationalism and ethnicity, and in the second section I will demonstrate the utility of understanding these phenomena as linked, using the development of nationalist organisations in modern Nigeria as an example. Several social scientists identify the symbols of the nation with those of the state, and perceive the state to be integral to the nation (e.g. Anderson 1991, Foster 1991, Williams 1989). According to Foster, Lofgren identifies an "internationally approved check-list of ingredients necessary to form a nation. These include...not only..."
flags and anthems, but also ideas about national history and landscape, and specific institutions such as national museums and educational systems" (Foster 1991:252). The concentration on the symbols of the state in understanding the symbols of nationalism neglects the importance of symbols of nationalism that correspond to symbols used in ethnic identification of the dominant culture group in a state. This concentration on symbols that are, I expect, more important as symbols of identification in the international community than to the people of a nation or state distorts the nature of nationalism by presupposing that it is of a different order than ethnicity.

For Benedict Anderson a nation is an imagined community that is opposed to two other forms of social organisation: the dynastic realm and the religious community. The nation's distinctive features are that whereas these other forms are hierarchical and centripetal, the nation is imagined as horizontal and boundary oriented (Anderson 1991:15). In "A Class Act" Brackette Williams provides a relatively simple differentiation between nationalism and ethnicity (although the language she uses goes a long way to conceal that simplicity):

In sum, ethnicity labels the visibility of that aspect of identity formation process that is produced by and subordinated to nationalist programs and plans - plans intent on creating putative homogeneity out of heterogeneity through the appropriate processes of transformist hegemony (1989:439).

Williams argues that a nation consists of that social formation that identifies itself with the dominant ideology and culture of a state. Ethnic groups, then, are those social formations that exist within that same state and are subordinate, and in opposition, to the nation. An ethnic group becomes a nation through the process of acquiring a state that it may ideologically dominate. This type of definition is consistent with lay ideas about ethnic groups in North America. That is, ethnic groups are those sets of people who are perceived by the dominant group to be culturally atypical.

The understanding of nations as distinct forms of socio-political organisation, as exemplified by Anderson and Williams, creates problems of a transitional nature. That is, it problematises the point at which an ethnic group becomes a nation. An example of this problem should be sufficient to illustrate the confusion caused by such a definition. Each of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria, the Igbo, Hausa-Fulani and the Yoruba are culturally, politically and demographically dominant within particular regions of Nigeria: the east, north and west, respectively. None of these groups were, in the 1960s, culturally, politically or demographically dominant in Nigeria as a whole. Therefore, in looking at Nigeria as a whole, they were all ethnic groups rather than nations. After independence in 1960, each of these three regions constituted states within a federation and the political parties that ran the governments within these Regions were supported and dominated by the regional ethnic majorities. Considering this situation with reference to the understandings of the constitution of nations as described above, the Igbo-Eastern Region, Hausa-Fulani-Northern Region and the Yoruba-Western Region, would constitute nations within their Regions. Groups such as the Ijaw, Tiv and Edo would constitute ethnic groups in these Regions, respectively. All three of these ethnic groups did eventually acquire states within which they were the dominant groups. Would they, then, be nations?

In 1966, after the Hausa-Fulani leaders of Nigeria's First Republic had been assassinated in Nigeria's first coup, much of the Hausa-Fulani population was in favour of the secession of the Northern Region of Nigeria, however, problems with minorities in the north lead the Hausa-Fulani leaders to back away from this position (Hatch 1970:281-283). During the same period of turmoil, anti-Igbo rioting in the Northern Region and the assassination of the recently installed Igbo leader of Nigeria culminated in the secession of the Igbo dominated Eastern Region from Nigeria as the Republic of Biafra. Under Williams' model, would the Igbo be considered a nation and the Hausa-Fulani an ethnic group, once Biafra was independent? It should be noted that upon the secession of Biafra, Nigeria was enveloped by a war between federal and Biafran forces. The federal army, and the military government, were almost entirely dominated by northerners, and in particular, Hausa-Fulani. Under these conditions the Hausa-Fulani could be seen to be the dominant culture group in Nigeria, therefore they too would be a nation. However the United Nations did not recognize Biafra as an independent state, therefore possibly, the Hausa-Fulani were now a nation but the Igbo were not.

This example should demonstrate that, if William's differentiation between nations and states is used, then there are no intrinsic defining features that make a nation different from an ethnic group. The difference is in the decision by others to grant the legitimacy of a state in which a particular ethnic group is dominant. The undue concentration on the link between the state and nationalism relies far too heavily on the United Nations' or other external organisations' designation of legitimate state status. This cannot be a useful distinction in the anthropological analysis of such units. The above example would
suggest that ethnicity and nationalism are not different orders of phenomena in any essential way. Rather, they are temporally, structurally and perspectively contingent, and are analytically of the same order.

Kapferer (Spencer 1990a:293) and Handler (1985) identify nations that are not dominant within a sovereign state, but do however identify with a region of that state as a homeland. Coplan describes nationalism among the Sotho as identifying with a territory larger than Lesotho (1992); in a like manner Somali nationalism in the 1970s identified with an area that extended beyond the boarders of Somalia into Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti. If that territoriality is an aspect of nationalism, it would appear that boundaries and state dominance are not necessary components. Rather, it is the conception, on the parts of the members of the nation, of having a homeland. Whether or not these homelands are actually dominated by, or even occupied by, the members of the nation is less important. In fact, the lack of dominance may incite stronger nationalist sentiment than dominance will. Quebecois nationalism in Canada, Sotho nationalism in South Africa (Coplan 1992), Catalanian and Basque nationalism in Spain, Tamil nationalism in Sri Lanka, Palestinian nationalism in Israel and Hutu nationalism in Burundi (Malkki 1990) exemplify this, as does Eritrea's recently successful struggle for separation from Ethiopia.

If nations cannot adequately be differentiated for analytical purposes from ethnic groups on the basis of identification with the state, we must then turn to another focus to find a distinctive characteristic that would make nations of a different order than ethnic groups.

One focus of attention for several authors has been the identification of an essentialised common national unity. Anderson (1991) claims that the nation is imagined as an horizontal, as opposed to an hierarchical, social organisation. One can imagine that a nation could be horizontal in that every member of it is equally a member of it, however, this causes problems in several ways. Even in Anderson's exemplary nation, the U.S.A., it is obvious that differences of race, age, class and gender have always been understood to be the basis of hierarchy. Certainly those members of the population that are taken to symbolize it by position or charisma (e.g. George Washington, the Queen of England, the King of Lesotho) are not considered to be citizens of the nation on the same level as the 'average citizen'. "Hindian" nationalism is, according to Fox, based on ideas that stem from Hindu and Indian traditions that cannot be considered liberal or egalitarian, such as the caste system (Fox 1990b). Kapferer depicts Anzac and Sinhalese nationalism (1988, 1989) as distinct types of nationalism. Anzac nationalism is of an egalitarian type that is anti-state, whereas Sinhalese nationalism is based on an hierarchical ideology derived from Buddhism and Sinhalese cultural traditions. The importance on hierarchical features in nationalism noted above disrupts the differentiation Anderson makes between nations, imperial realms and religious communities.

The imagining of a common identity is an important aspect of national identity, however it cannot be considered to distinguish a nation in any significant way from other "imagined communities" (Anderson 1991) such as ethnic groups and religious communities that are the foci of "primordial sentiments" (Geertz 1973). For example, all Muslims share a unity that is horizontal rather than hierarchical in that Muslims can imagine all the members of their religious community facing Mecca at the same time every day. Max Gluckman's understanding of "the reasonable man" in the Barotse judicial system demonstrates that ethnic groups have "imagined communities" (1955), as does Fredrik Barth's understanding of ethnic groups' providing rules for judgment of behaviour from which "others" are exempt (1969:14). The "imagined community" is not a distinctive characteristic of nations, however it points to the fact that nations have idealised stereotypes of themselves that are essentialist. For example, America is often essentialised as the land of freedom and opportunity where everyone has equal rights. An example from Nigeria demonstrates that 'ethnic groups' also have these essentialist stereotypes of themselves, and others:

One day three men set off on a jaunt. Soon they come (sic) to a wild mango tree laden with well-ripened fruits. "Allah be praised" exclaimed the Hausaman. "How nice it will be for me to share these fruits with my kith and kin." The Yorubaman felt the same. "I will take these to my wife and children." he said. But the Igbo man said nothing, he was busy working out how much money he could make it he picked the whole tree and took the crop to market. (Uguru and Ezeh 1988:34)

The Igbo version of this story is as follows:

One day a Hausaman. Yoruhaman and an Igbo set off on a trip and came across a wild mango tree laden with fruit. The Hausaman said 'These fruit look lovely let us pray that Allah makes them fall for us.' And the Yorubaman said, 'I will go home and seek the help of my kinsmen to help me climb up and pick some.' The Igbon man simply rolled up his sleeves, climbed the tree and after much sweat and toll picked the lot, but when he climbed back onto the ground he found

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his two friends were already arguing and politicking about sharing the harvest. (Ugunu and Ezeh 1988:34)

This example demonstrates, inter alia, particular essentialist characteristics of three ethnic groups. The Igbo are considered to be entrepreneurial by nature, Hausa identity is strongly tied to Islam and Yoruba identity is strongly linked with the lineage system. Thus, we can see that the essentialisation of characteristics of a community does not distinguish nations from ethnic groups but rather is integral to both of them.

The essentialisation of the nation, producing the appearance of homogeneity among heterogeneous people, is dependent on the use of symbols of commonality and the understanding of a common history. Spencer (1990a and b), Williams (1990), Kapferer (1989), Anderson (1991) and other authors discuss nationalism as an essentialising ideology or process, by which people create stereotypes of themselves and others, with the use of symbols. These ideas about the importance of symbols of commonality can be related to Cohen's theories on the use of old symbols for new purposes, and new symbols for old purposes in ethnicity (1974). The particular symbols that are used may vary from nation to nation, however they serve the same purposes. This is also true for ethnic groups. Apple pie, George Washington, freedom and the American flag symbolise American Identity; the tank, temple and paddy field symbolise Sinhala identity (Spencer 1990a:286); the lineage, Obas, Ile Ife, Orisa and Oduduwa symbolise Yoruba identity; egalitarianism, ch'i, 'Zik' and "getting up" (Uchendu 1965:34-38) symbolise Igbo identity and Islam, Hausa language, Usman Dan Fodio and the Caliphate of Sokoto symbolise Hausa-Fulani identity. Each of these examples are only samples of symbolic figures or features of these groups, however, they should be sufficient to demonstrate that there is little reason to distinguish between the significance and use of these by designating some of these groups as ethnic groups and others as nations.

Many authors point out that nations are identified with histories or traditions that provide the members of the nation with the sense of a common past (e.g. Handler 1985, Spencer 1990a and b, Anderson 1991). Here too we find that this is not only applicable to nations but to ethnic groups as well. The origin myths of the Yoruba descent from Odudua at Ile Ife and the tradition of their kings' authority stemming from the Oni (king) of Ife provide the Yoruba with a sense of a common past and identity no less than the tartans and bagpipes of the Scottish Highlanders provide a sense of common past and identity for Scots.

The difficulties in differentiating nationalism from ethnicity and in understanding it as an essential social formation are demonstrated by Kapferer (Spencer 1990a) and Fox (1990a). Both of these anthropologists have chosen to abandon essentialised characterisations of what nationalism is, but in different ways. Kapferer claims that nationalism cannot be reduced to one form:

...I do not think that diverse nationalist ideologies boil down to the same thing. Maybe they are arguments in the same world, but sometimes they are only in the most trivial sense about the same thing, like "identity" and "belonging," as Spencer states. They can only be so if they are treated as empty categories and devoid of significant content..." (Spencer 1990a:293)

Richard Fox claims that nationalism is one of many terms that are used to designate a much broader cultural phenomenon:

I use the phrase "nationalist ideologies" to refer to sets of cultural meanings that are labeled "nationalisms," "subnational identities," and "ethnic nationalisms"... nationalist ideologies commonly get termed "racial identities," "ethnicities," or "subnationalisms." The variety of terms now in use obscures what we take to be better understood as a single phenomenon: the production of ideologies of peoplehood. That is ideologies of common ("national") culture. (Fox 1990a:2-3).

Taking into account the insight provided by Kapferer, there is no reason to consider Fox's "nationalist ideologies" as a single phenomenon. Instead, it is better to regard Fox's phrase as a broader label for a range of phenomena that cannot be distinguished from each other by essentialist labels and are therefore better considered under a label that is more inclusive and malleable. Under this title the contributors to Fox's Nationalist Ideologies and the Production of National Cultures (1990a) discuss such diverse phenomena as "nationalism" in Hutu refugee camps in Tanzania (Malkki 1990), the production and display of "nationalist" identity among Iranian Jews in Israel (Goldstein 1990), nationalism in Guyana (Williams 1990) and the rise of Hindu consciousness in contemporary India (Fox 1990b). What then is it that makes it reasonable to discuss these diverse phenomena under the same heading? What is "the production of ideologies of peoplehood, that is, ideologies of common ("national") culture" (Fox 1990a:3) and is this what really binds these phenomena together?

Having questioned the idea that nationalism is a discrete phenomenon, distinct in an essential way from ethnicity, and having
rejected its necessary connection with the state, it is possible to come to some understanding of the types of phenomena that are delineated by nationalism and similar terms without being reduced to Seton-Watson's statement:

> All that I can find to say is that a nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation, or behave as if they formed one. (Spencer 1990:283)

From the insights into the nature of nations and nationalism gained in the above discussion, it is possible to describe nations in a way that gives at least a tentative depiction of their characteristics.

Nations, and ethnic groups, are imagined communities that are both cultural and political in nature. This separates them from states, which are political and economic in nature. They are identified with unitary, essentialised, and essentialising ideologies and unique histories, understood as common to, and possessed by the members of nations. These nations are perceived, by their members, to be unique and discrete units that identify with a territorial homeland and other symbols of common identity. Identification with these imagined communities, their symbols and social organisations, provides individuals with frameworks that help them to negotiate the dynamics of global and local cultural and political systems.

In understanding any ideology—we need to differentiate in principle between the circumstances of its production as an ideology and the circumstances of its use. The circumstances of its use are political circumstances, and each nationalism has its own distinctive story. (Spencer 1990a:288)

Anderson and Spencer provide insights into the roles played by elites in nationalism. For both these authors, and others, intellectual and political elites are the producers of nationalism. In 1974 Cohen recognised that elites manipulate ethnic symbols and identification for political purposes. Below, I shall provide a brief overview of the role of particular elite individuals and organisations in the 'production' of nationalisms in Nigeria. Through this example, I hope to demonstrate that ethnicity and nationalism are not discrete phenomena, and that theories of the production of nationalism, and the manipulation of ethnic symbols of identification are equally applicable in Nigerian national/ethnic politics, and elsewhere.

The politics of contemporary Nigeria has been, and still is, dominated by ethnic factionalism that has prevented centralised hegemonic rule. Electoral politics has been continually dominated by parties that draw their support from particular ethnic groups, in particular the Igbo, Hausa-Fulani, and Yoruba. The stability and legitimacy of central governments has been dependent on support from ethnic leaders at the regional and local levels (e.g. Barnes 1986, Apter 1987). The civil war, eight attempted or successful coups and continual political unrest can be linked to the relationship between ethnicity and the failure of central political hegemony in Nigeria (see Cavers 1991).

It is possible to understand this as the failure of nationalism due to the prominence of "primordial sentiments" (Geertz 1973:302-306), and in particular, ethnicity. However this superficial understanding of the political situation in Nigeria depends on an artificial and unwarranted differentiation between ethnicity and nationalism and would lead to a distorted representation of Nigerian political culture. To illustrate this I will give a brief overview of the development of nationalist organisations in Nigeria, concentrating on three nationalists in particular, Obafemi Awolowo, Nnamdi Azikiwe and Ahmadu Bello, and relating their development to ethnicity.

In 1923 Herbert Macaulay founded the Nigerian National Democratic Party in Lagos, the seat of colonial government. This was, ostensibly, the first Nigerian nationalist organisation to emerge (Awolowo 1960:113). At this time colonial dominance was still being established in much of the hinterland, and Nigeria was organised into the principality of Lagos, the Iboland Protectorate, Yorubaland and the Northern Region. The organisation and degree of colonial rule differed greatly between these regions and Nigeria could in no way have been said to constitute a nation or even a single colony.

Macaulay's organisation was based in Lagos and represented the rights of indigenous people primarily within Lagos. Support for the organisation came almost exclusively from privileged urban Nigerians who wanted to be integrated into the governmental apparatus of the colony (Awolowo 1960:114).

In 1934 the Lagos Youth Movement was founded under the leadership of Ernest Ikoli, Dr. J.C. Vaughan and Oba Samuel Akisanya (Awolowo 1960:116). The Lagos Youth Movement was generally geared toward Africanisation of the civil service and better, and higher levels schooling within Nigeria. This organisation was quickly renamed the Nigerian Youth Movement and produced a charter pledging to work for independence within the Commonwealth, "the development of a united nation out of the conglomerate of peoples who inhabit Nigeria" (Awolowo 1960:121), economic equality and progress for the people, and to oppose...
discrimination (Awolowo 1960:121-123).

The structuring of the charter reveals that those who drafted it and led the movement were elite urbanites. Most of the reforms that they were interested in were concerned with advances in higher education, including Indigenes in governmental positions and improving the state of workmen and encouraging local industries. Considering that the majority of the population had little or no European style education, and relied on farming for their subsistence, the charter could not have been aimed at mobilising these people.

All of the leaders of the NYM were urbanites (Awolowo 1960:152) and had British style educations and most were Yoruba (Awolowo 1960:132). A considerable number of the major leaders of the Nigerian Youth Movement were involved in newspapers published in Lagos. This is interesting in light of Anderson's stress on the importance of print media in the production of nationalism (1991). Primary among these was Ernest Ikoli, the editor of the Nigerian Daily Telegraph, the major paper critical of the colonial government (Awolowo 1960:82). Shortly after its founding, The NYM began to publish The Daily Service as an official mouthpiece (Awolowo 1960:89).

In 1937, Nnamdi Azikiwe, an Igbo, returned to Nigeria after being educated in the United States, first at Storer College (Azikiwe 1970:chapter 5), then at Howard and Lincoln University earning his Doctorate and working as an instructor in political science at Lincoln University (Azikiwe 1970:chapters 6 and 7). Prior to his return he was already considered the most promising Nigerian nationalist.

Upon his return he joined the NYM and began printing his own newspaper, the West African Pilot (Jones-Quartey 1965:137). The perception, on the part of some of the prominent members of the NYM, that the Pilot was competing with the Daily Service brought about conflict between Azikiwe and Ernest Ikoli, Chief H.O. Davies, Chief S.L. Akintola and Obafemi Awolowo (Hatch 1970:235). Resentment between these men and their supporters increased as Azikiwe published columns that were critical of NYM activities (Awolowo 135-145).

Tensions reached a peak when in 1941, Azikiwe supported Akisanya against Ikoli, who was supported by most of the NYM leaders in a by-election. Azikiwe accused the other leaders of being opposed to Akisanya's candidacy due to anti-Ijebu (a Yoruba sub-group) and anti-Igbo sentiments. Whether this was true or not, a rift was created between the supporters of Azikiwe and 14 Akisanya and the supporters of Ikoli, Davies, Awolowo (an Ijebu [Peel 1989:211-212]) and Akintola during the hard fought election campaign won by Ikoli. This rift ended with Akisanya, Azikiwe and their Ijebu and Igbo supporters leaving the NYM (Awolowo 1960:147-152, Hatch 1970:241-242, West Africa 1990).

As a result of the difficulties outlined above, the NYM began to weaken in Lagos. However, it gained support in Yorubaland, particularly in Ibadan where it was led by Obafemi Awolowo (Awolowo 1960:155-164, Hatch 1970:242). Azikiwe then joined the Ibo State Union and shortly thereafter formed the Ibo Federal Union with branches in Nigeria and in London (Awolowo 1960:165). In part, these organizations were formed in response to the perception by the Igbo, that they were the victims of discriminatory policies that benefited the peoples of other regions and the Yoruba in particular (Azikiwe 1961:242-253, Hatch 1970:242-243).

The Ibo Federal Union found support not only from the general Igbo population but from local associations that had been formed to provide help for Igbo's who were in pursuit of higher education. These associations were based on the ideology of independent success benefiting the community as a whole, what Uchendu calls "helping the town to get up" (1965:34-38). The student, having received aid from local patrons would in return help members of the community to seek positions and acquire benefits through his or her advantaged position. In unifying these organizations, the Igbo Federal Union unified Igbo throughout Nigeria. Azikiwe's position as a nationalist then focused on advancing the cause of the equality of the Igbo with the other peoples of Nigeria and self-determination of the Igbo within a federally organized Nigeria (Azikiwe 1961:242-253).

In 1944 Azikiwe and Herbert Macaulay formed the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons, the NCNC, as a political party (Furlong 1992:434). This party originally claimed to be non-ethnic, however, it is evident from electoral support that it remained an Igbo dominated party. The extent to which this party was an Igbo national party, rather than a Nigerian national party is exemplified by Furlong's quote of Azikiwe:

In July 1949 for instance he stated that due to their 'martial prowess, the God of Africa has specially created the Ibo nation to lead the children of Africa from the bondage of the ages' (1992:441).

Azikiwe's nationalism used the rhetoric of American nationalism and applied it to the ideology and traditions of the Igbo. In a speech to the Igbo State Union, Azikiwe states, "our native political institutions are essentially democratic—in fact, more democratic than any other nation in Africa, in spite of our extreme individualism" (Azikiwe 1961:244) and uses "the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" (Azikiwe...
Awolowo's Ibadan chapter of the NYM was becoming dominant over the other regional as Igbo. did not do so until the turn of the century claimed that the Igbo had been a united, strong and within Igbo traditions to legitimize his eventual

Egbe Omo Odudua

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It is interesting that while Azikiwe described the Igbo as democratic he had to resort to a tradition that was an undemocratic anomaly within Igbo traditions to legitimize his eventual ascendancy as the primary leader of his people. The position that he claimed was the legitimate descendant of the first king of Onitsha. The Onitsha, one of very few sub-groups within the Igbo to have such a paramount inherited position (Azikiwe 1970:1-16). A second claim made in the pursuit of creating a united political front among the Igbo is more clearly a fabrication. Azikiwe claimed that the Igbo had been a united, strong and independent nation prior to accepting the protectorate of the British (Azikiwe 1961:246-249). It appears, contrary to this statement that a large number of the groups that now identify themselves as Igbo, did not do so until the turn of the century (Uchendu 1965:3). This is not to say that they did not share many cultural characteristics and forms of social organisation.

While Azikiwe was establishing the politicisation of the Igbo at the state level, Obafemi Awolowo's Ibadan chapter of the NYM was becoming dominant over the other regional chapters to the extent that the NYM was based almost exclusively in Yorubaland (Awolowo 1960:155-166, Hatch (1970:242). In 1944 Awolowo left Nigeria to study law in London, where he organised the Egbe Omo Odudua, the descendants of Odudua (Awolowo 1960:165-166). The stated purpose of the Egbe Omo Odudua was to unite the Yoruba within a federal state. As Awolowo states:

[Whilst there was an Ibibio Union and an Ibo Federal Union, there was no comparable all-embracing union for the Yorubas. Since the strength of a chain is that of the weakest link, I thought it would be in the interest of the federal unity of Nigeria if one was founded. The Yorubas were a highly progressive but badly disunited group. They paid lip-service to a spiritual union and affinity in a common ancestor-Odudua. But in all their long history they had waged wars against one another...the younger elements thought that the Yorubas were inferior to the go-ahead Igbo people, and that whatever might be their past glories they had become effete and decadent... I decided, therefore, to do all in my power to infuse solidarity into the disjointed tribes that constitute the Yoruba ethnic group, to raise morale, to rehabilitate their self-respect, and to imbue them with the confidence that they are an important factor in the forging of the federal unity of Nigeria. (Awolowo 1960:166)

Shortly after its founding in London, chapters were established in Ibadan and Lagos, and eventually spread through Yorubaland (Awolowo 1960:168-180, Hatch 1970:243). In rallying support for the Egbe Omo Odudua, Awolowo called on a unified past of glory that would be resurrected and the symbolism of the common ancestor, Odudua, that Yoruba saw as a central symbol of legitimate authority an unity. The use of Odudua and the mythic origin of all Yoruba from him at Ile Ife brought the Ooni of Ife, the most important symbolic figure of political authority among the Yoruba, from whom all other kings receive their authority, into the national political scene on the side of the Egbe Omo Odudua thus bringing it great symbolic support (Apter 1987:494). Legitimisation through heritage was also sought through the continued use of the Oba's (Yoruba kings) blessings and consultations and Chieftaincies became important symbols of authority for Yoruba nationalists in the politics of the Nigerian state. Interestingly, the importance of chieftaincies over Oba's was not inconsistent with traditional Yoruba political organisations in which Oba's could be deposed by and were obligated to consult chiefs on political matters. What changed in this new context was that whereas prior to colonisation the Oba were dependent on the chiefs for legitimacy among the people, now the nationalists were dependent on the Oba for legitimacy among the people. Extending this ethnic association into national politics Awolowo later formed the Action Group as a Yoruba based political party. This party continued to use Yoruba symbols and maintained its base of support in Yorubaland into the 1980s as the renamed Unity Party of Nigeria (Apter 1987, Peel, 1989).

While southern Nigeria had seen nationalists, educated in Britain, and fully integrated into the urban capitalist system that came with colonialism in the south, move from an attempted Western style nation-state nationalism to nationalisms calling on the cultural heritage of their ethnic groups, the situation in the north had been quite different.

During the colonial period the major regions of Nigeria were governed quite differently. Whereas in the south, missionisation, economic, and educational reorganization had been considerable, the north was in many ways little changed by the colonial experience. The Northern Region was changed in three significant ways. First, the reorganization of trade routes in the south toward the coast and away from trans-Saharan.
Jihad that consolidated Islam in the Hausa states during the colonial period was Ahmadu Bello. The Westemised political and economic systems that dominated independent Nigeria thus disadvantaged them against the peoples of the south. The recognition of this disadvantage was a primary factor in nationalism in the north.

The primary nationalist figure in the north during the colonial period was Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto. Bello was a direct descendent of Usman Dan Fodio, the founder of the Caliphate of Sokoto, and the leader of the Jihad that consolidated Islam in the Hausa states that made up the center of the Caliphate, unified the Hausa states under one rule and extended their power throughout the central Sudan. Bello was educated at a Muslim college in the north, and came to lead his people by inheritance of his political position. As a nationalist his claims to legitimacy were through an ongoing tradition, however his major burden was to extend loyalty to the Caliphate to the entire Northern Region. Bello's nationalist policies and his hopes for the future of the people of Nigeria were expressed in terms of the Jihad. The politics of the party he created in 1951, the Northern People's Congress (later renamed the Nigerian People's Congress and the National Party of Nigeria) were intricately linked to Islam and dominated by the Hausa-Fulani sarakuna, thus maintaining an authority structure that had been integral to the Hausa states for several hundred years. Among many of the Muslims of the north and the among the Hausa (not all of whom were, or are, Muslim), this consolidated Bello's position as a leader, however for those who were neither Muslims nor Hausa it was ineffective, particularly among the large minorities of the middle belt such as the Tiv. Thus like Awolowo and Azikiwe he could only unite those that shared an identity with a common tradition.

As Nigeria moved toward unification under independent rule this use of pre-existing bases of ethnic specific hegemony became entrenched in the political parties that were formed by these three nationalists, regardless of attempts to make them pan-Nigerian, non-ethnic parties. In the federal elections of 1959, Nnamdi Azikiwe's National Congress of Nigeria and the Cameroons gained an overwhelming majority of votes in the Igbo dominated east, Ahmadu Bello's Nigerian People's Congress, originally the Northern People's Congress, won overwhelming support in the North and Obafemi Awolowo's Action Group won an easy majority in the Yoruba dominated western region. In this election, and later elections, the majority of support that was given to 19 parties outside of the region's of their origin was from regional minorities that were played off against the dominant groups.

In Nigeria, then, central hegemonic rule has failed not because atavistic ethnic sentiments have prevented nationalism, but because the tools of, and conditions for nationalism were readily apparent and accessible within the cultures and social organisations of ethnic groups, none of which were dominant enough outside of their region to suppress the others. I expect that this is the case within states where there are developing nationalist sentiments and hegemonic central rule, however, the importance of the ethnic origins of these nationalisms do not make themselves readily apparent as they are not opposed by major competing nationalisms as in Nigeria. Therefore, we tend to concentrate on nationalism in these states as unique from ethnicity. As the example of Nigeria demonstrates, theories and methods used in the study of nationalism can be applicable to ethnicity. The study of the invention of tradition, the role of elites, media and educational systems in the production or politicisation of nationalist sentiments, the use of symbols and essentialisations in creating a homogeneous identity among heterogeneous populations could all be further studied fruitfully in the context of ethnic politics in Nigeria. Further, the study of nationalism can benefit from the investigation of ethnic heritage and "primordial sentiments" as in Nigeria. Therefore, we should not limit our fields of analysis by artificially separating nationalism and ethnicity as distinctly different orders of phenomena. By doing so we may neglect ideological, cultural and socio-political continuities that are reinterpreted in new situations. We also run the risk of neglecting theories and methods that may be applicable to the analysis of the politico-cultural phenomena discussed.

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