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# The Acceptance of the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) in Ilesa, Southwestern Nigeria, 1946 – 1966: An Interpretative History

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## Abstract

Party politics in the First Republic was predicated on ethnic affiliation. There were very few areas in Nigeria where political party affiliation was not really based on ethnicity. Ilesa, a town in Southwestern Nigeria mainly followed the National Council of Nigerian Citizens. (NCNC) Some scholars worked on the politics of the First Republic but did not focus mainly on local politics in the interior of Yorubaland. Peel is the only one who did a sociological study on Ilesa and contributed immensely to the study of the Ijesa as a people among the Yoruba of western Nigeria. The aim of this work is therefore to examine the activities of the NCNC and the acceptance of the party among the Ijesa between 1946 and 1966. This study interrogates the hegemony of the party in Ilesa after its victory at election and its subsequent control of the local administration there. The little developmental improvement in Ilesa was done by this administration. This study reveals that the Ijesa people change their attitude when the government of the N. C. N. C. collapsed. The new management committee that was formed by the Action Group could not control the hitherto local assessment of tax and rates through which the bulk of the finances of the council came. This generated several disaffection among the Ijesa. The political crisis that followed changed the climate of political affiliations and association during this period.

## Introduction

Party politics did not start in Nigeria until the late 1920s. This was after the entrenchment of the elective principle in the 1922 Clifford Constitution. Other constitutions followed, particularly 1951 constitution which called elections into the House of Representatives and the Regional House, being the first time the entire country would

be involved in a democratic process. (*Falola and Genova, 2006: 38*) This is not to say that there were no political agitations before the formation of political parties, but the mode and means of political agitations were different from what later developed. Instances of agitation could be cited in the late 1907 and early 1908 when the British government decided to expropriate property on Lagos Island under the Land Acquisition Ordinance in order to provide sites for official residences. Another policy of the colonial government that received peoples' serious resentment was the water rate levy on the local population.

One significant issue that is worthy note about political activities and agitations in Nigeria during this period was that its intensity was only felt in Lagos being apart from Calabar, the major urban centre at the time. In 1920, the National Congress of British West Africa (N. C. B. W. A.) was formed by Joseph Casley Hayford who was a lawyer by profession.

The N. C. B. W. A. was composed mainly of West African intellectuals in the four British West African Colonies. The effort of the organisation which was based in Ghana was concentrated in seeking for opportunities for Africans to have a say in the colonial administration.<sup>4</sup> The delegation which they sent to London to make their views known was rebuffed. Sir Hugh Clifford who was then the Governor of Nigeria described their views as "a loose and gaseous" talk emanating from a self-selected congregation of educated gentlemen who collectively style themselves as West African National Congress. (*Olusanya, 1973: 16*)

Also, the establishment of some newspapers helped in intensifying further the agitations of the people against the colonial government. Prominent among these newspapers were: *West African Pilot, Lagos Weekly Record, Lagos Daily News, Daily Service and Daily Times*. However, various groups such as the People's Union became the organized instrument of unified expression of the people. In the words of Sklar, "The People's Union of 1908 appears to have been the first association which was formed in the wake of the protest against the imposition of a general rate to finance a new water scheme" (*Sklar, 1963: 42*) Another association which was formed for the promotion of the interests of the people was the Lagos auxiliary of the Anti-Slavery and Aborigine Protection Society. All the outbursts of political agitations and newspaper criticisms by various groups of Nigerians were reacted to by the government by passing obnoxious Seditious Offences Ordinance of 1909. On June 24, 1923, the Nigerian Democratic Party (N. N. D. P.) under the leadership of Herbert Macaulay emerged as the most powerful group in Nigeria. The N. N. D. P.'s candidates were victorious in the Legislative Council elections of 1923, 1928 and 1933.

One can however, argue that though the N. N. D. P.'s area of operation was Lagos, it was borne in mind that it was within Nigeria, as Coleman pointed out thus: "it (N. N. D. P) frequently took a national stand on issues, thus it fostered the consciousness among Lagosians at least that Lagos was part of a larger territory called Nigeria." (Coleman 1978: 16) The aims of the was the achievement of municipal status and self-government for Lagos, the provision of facilities for higher education at the primary school level, the encouragement of non-discriminatory private economic participation and the Africanisation of the civil service. (Sklar, 1963: 46)

The Educational policy of the colonial government revived the defunct Peoples Union in 1936 which was renamed the Nigerian Youth Movement (N. Y. M.). its founding members were; Ernest Ikoli, Dr. J. C. Vaughan, H. O. Davies and Samuel Akinsanya. The home coming of Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe after about nine years of academic sojourn in the United States of America further strengthened the activities of the Nigerian Youth Movement. In 1938, N. Y. M. won the election in the Lagos Town Council and all the three elective seats in the legislative council and consequently put an end to the fifteen years electoral rule of the N. N. D. P. in Lagos.

In Lagos the multi-tribal character of the N. Y. M. largely depended on the membership of Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe to whom the growing community of non-Yoruba particularly, the Igbo folks in Lagos were devoted. As a result of the internal dissension within the Nigerian Youth Movement, it was unable again to contend with the colonial government's schemes and policies that were resented by Nigerians. By and large, the rivalry between Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe and Ernest Ikoli in 1941 over leadership issues led to the demise of the N. Y. M. This unfortunate rivalry in the N. Y. M.'s leadership became the point at which tribalism was introduced into Nigerian Party Politics.

### **The Formation of the N. C. N. C**

The N. C. N. C. had been the leading force in the nationalist movement from about 1944 onward. (Blitz 1965:145) In November, 1943, a youth rally organised by the Nigerian Union of Students (N. U. S.) was held at Ojokoro, near Lagos. Prominent among the discussants at the rally were; Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe of the Nigerian Reconstruction Group (N. R. G.) Rotimi Williams, who was of the (N. Y. C.). Several resolutions were passed on the subjects relating to the future of Nigeria. On 10 June, 1944, the Nigerian Union of Students (N.U.S.) convened a mass meeting in the Glover Memorial Hall, Lagos. The N. U. S. issued a call to all organisations for the purpose of forming a national council to

organise the masses of Nigeria into one solid political block. On the 26 August 1944, the inaugural meeting of the National Council of Nigeria was held and a resolution adopted expressing the realisation of the ultimate goal of self-government within the British Empire. Subsequently, Herbert Macaulay was elected president and Nnamdi Azikwe was General Secretary. Membership of the party was indirect, that is, it was through organisations and associations. About 131 organisation including tribal unions, literary associations, religious groups, social clubs and women's organisation were affiliated to the N. C. N. C. Besides, the two Cameroonian associations in Lagos (that is, the Bakweri Union and the Cameroon Youth League) desired to be affiliated to the council; as a result of this the name of the movement was changed to the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (N. C. N. C.). (*Sklar, 1963: 40-48*) The N. C. N. C.'s main goal was to secure the independence of a united Nigeria within the British Commonwealth. The party's ultimate objectives were political freedom, economic security, social equity and religious toleration.

However, it also aspired for an independent Nigeria whose ideals were to be those of what the party described as a socialist Commonwealth. This meant a state in which all citizens would have the same opportunities in political, economic and social aspects of the society's resources. The N. C. N. C. remained leading national front in Nigeria up to the 1950s. Within a short period of its formation, the N. C. N. C. was embroiled in the opening phase of its post-war struggle for constitutional advance. The N. C. N. C. organised a tour of the country between 1946 and 1947 to stir up and mobilise Nigerians against the Richard Constitution proposals. The President of the N. C. N. C. died during a nation-wide tour of the country after a brief illness and Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe succeeded him as President. In the course of time, the N. C. N. C. raised a huge sum of thirteen pounds (£26,000.00) from their tour of the country to send a delegation to London on their rejection of the proposals of the Richard's constitution. Though, the delegation failed to achieve its objective, the party continued in its struggle for political participation and self-government for Nigerians. (*Azikwe, 1978: 23*)

### **The N. C. N. C. in Ilesa: Inception and Organisation**

One main reason why the Ijesa's desired to participate actively in party politics was their predilection for the improvement of their community. The first medium of participation in politics was the formation of an association originally known as the Young Ijesa Improvement Society (*Egbe Atunluse*) which was founded in 1922. (*Peel, 1983:115, 144,175-6*)

The chairman of this society was one J. S. Oginni. The main aim of the Young Ijesa Improvement Society was to enable the Ijesa to occupy a place in the "Hierarchy of communities" in Nigeria. By the late 1930s, there was a greater variety of organised interest groups of an economic and political kind. Another association which became the next local political force was the society of Native Ijesa son's (*Egbe Omo Ibile Ijesa*) which was formed in July 1940. Ironically the rivalry between the *Egbe Omo Ibile Ijesa* and the *Egbe Atunluse* cannot be over-emphasized. But the *Egbe Atunluse* remained the most powerful group in several aspects of Ilesa's political matters. The reason for this was the fact that this *Egbe* was composed of prominent members of the Reformed Ogboni Fraternity (R. O. F.). The R. O. F. was founded by a Yoruba clergyman and was later introduced to Ilesa from Ibadan in 1933 by Chief *Lejoka J. D. E. Abiola* of Omofe quarter. (*Peel*, 1983: 140, 181, 188—195)

In the early 1930s, a political association emerged in Ilesa with one E. A. Fajemisin a clerk with John Holt, as the secretary. This political association was the local branch of the N.Y.M. Again, prior the emergence of the N. C. N. C. in Ilesa, the Zik's Athletic Club had been started, it was mainly a recreational group of young men who eventually associated themselves with party politics. The patron of the Zik's Athletic Club was Mr. S. A. K. Ilesanmi. (*Peel*, 1983: 220, 225) The Zikist Movement was made up of impatient young men who wished to push out the British and introduce a left-wing socialist order. (*Blitz* 1965: 146)

### **Inception of the N. C. N. C.**

Consequent on the visit of the N. C. N. C.'s delegation to Ilesa, the entourage left behind a local of branch of the party in 1946. It was formally launched by Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe himself. The chairman of the N. C. N. C. in Ilesa was Mr. E. A. Ekuseitan while R. A. Awobiyi became its secretary. Others include: Mr. R. A. Ajayi who was the Treasurer, Mr. S. A. Lamikanra was the Vice Chairman, Mr. D. A. Ariyo was the Field Secretary and Chief J. M. Ajayi-Obe was an ex-officio member. Other prominent members of the N. C. N. C. were Mr. S. Akinola, Chief Aduroja and later Chief J. O. Fadahunsi. (*National Archives Ibadan NAI ILE DIV 1, 2387 Intelligence Report on NCNC meeting, 1955*) The N. C. N. C. in Lagos and its leadership there, were informally associated with Ilesa's communal aspirations through the unbroken friendship of Mr. Fadugba (a Lagos based trader from Ilesa) with Ogedengbe Macaulay (the son of Herbert Macaulay), the late founder of the N. C. N. C.

In Nigeria at this time, political party formation was based mainly on ethnic division, while ethnic chauvinism became the hallmark of the politics of the time. It was nurtured in Lagos and most other urban centres of Nigeria. The marked political rivalry between the Yoruba group and the Igbo folks in the southern of Nigeria was apparent. A group of Yoruba nationalist activists led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, formed an organisation for the Yoruba. This was the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* (that is, the Society of the sons of Oduduwa). (*Falola and Genova, 2006: 38-40*) It must be noted that the basic aims of this *Egbe* was to arouse the Yoruba's political consciousness and generally to infuse the idea of a single nationality in the Yoruba throughout the Western Region.

Despite the politics of ethnicity which the Action Group (A. G.) propagated, the Ijesa were not initially enthusiastic about the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* let alone the Action Group which grew from it. The opinion of the leaders of the A. G. was that since under the new Macpherson Constitution of 1951, Nigeria's politics will focus on regional issues and since Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe had taken the N. C. N. C. to the East, the Ijesa too as Yoruba, should opt for the party of the West. The reply of Chief J. O. Fadahunsi to the above opinion of the A. G. leaders was that if the founders of the A. G. had wanted the Ijesa's support, they would have involved them in the initial planning of the party. Having seen the lack of interest of the Ijesa for mass membership of the A. G. (but at least some few individuals were reported to have joined), it is pertinent to look into the reasons for their support for the N. C. N. C. as against the A. G.

First, the Ooni of Ife's known role in the initial planning of the A. G. which coincided with the revived boundary dispute between Ilesa and Ile-Ife. What aggravated the situation or the issue was, according to Rev. A. A. Olalemi, in an interview, was a ritual performed to foster Yoruba unity. This ritual involved the sacrifice of five lambs which were to symbolically represent the significant Yoruba rulers; the *Ooni* of Ife, the *Alaafin* of Oyo, the *Alake* of Abeokuta, the *Awujale* of Ijebu-Ode and the *Oba* of Benin instead of the *Owa* was a second-class *Oba* or ruler. Second, historically, the Ijesa believed that they were superior to the Ife because Ife was purportedly over-ran in a war that ensued between them. Furthermore, the citing of the Native Authority or District headquarters at Ile-Ife as against Ilesa which received the blessing of Chief Obafemi Awolowo counted against the appeal of the A. G. for Ijesa support. (*Odeyemi, interview with, 28 March, 1990*) The A. G. represented the "rising class" in Yorubaland. The strata of this "rising class" is observed or made known by their wealth, their wealth, their control of commercial enterprise and education which depended on

the growth of the capitalist economy and now poised or prepared to take over the colonial administration.

This growing "rising class" in Ilesa which is nurtured by A. G. membership, encountered popular opposition to its growing advantage (that is, their control of commercial enterprise and education). This popular opposition took the political form of support for the N. C. N. C. This is why it was said that Awolowo's party, that is, the A. G. was "Egbe Mekunnu" (the common man's party). This is attested to by the fact that the A. G.'s regional government gave loans to its members (at least, that of Ajanaku and L. O. Omole is known). (*Peel, 1983: 220-225*)

### Structure and Organisation of the N. C. N. C.

The symbol of the N. C. N. C. was a cock. The local secretariat of the N. C. N. C. was at Okesa quarter in Ilesa being the local headquarter of the District. The organising secretary of the Ilesa branch of the N. C. N. C. was Mr. I. Ekundare. The N. C. N. C. accepted direct membership at its local branch in Ilesa its district. The N. C. N. C.'s District headquarters in Ilesa had a committee of management which was composed of chairman, the organising secretary, the general secretary, the financial secretary, the treasurer, four representatives from each quarter of the town and twelve representatives the District villages. (*NAI Ile Div. 656B Vol. I*) Apart from the Ilesa branch of the N. C. N. C. there were branches of the party in the villages in the District. Such branches were in; Ibokun, Imesi, Esa-Oke, Ijebu-Jesa, Erin-Jesa, Ipetu, Ikeji, Iperindo, Etioni, Ifewara, Iwara and Osu. (*Fapounda, interview with, 21 April, 1990*) It must be noted that the Ilesa branch of the N. C. N. C. and even its arms in the subordinate villages comprised mainly of *Mekunnu*, that is, the commoners. This gave the N. C. N. C. a form of communal character. The organizational success of the N. C. N. C. in Ilesa was a result of its use of illiterate folks as party agents (old and feeble men, market women and some were even younger boys). These agents were paid 10 pounds (#20.00) per month to enhance their continuous entertainment of supporters and chanting party slogans.

### The Contributions of the N. C. N. C. in Ilesa

Within a few years of party formation, political party activities became very important in Ilesa. The role of a local newspaper in Ilesa's political life cannot be over-emphasised. This newspaper was called the *West African Vanguard* which was published in Ilesa between the years 1951 and 1960. The primary motives of the paper were to foster unity in Ijesaland and arouse the Ijesa to political consciousness among other things. It must be said that the major political voice in Ilesa was the N.

C. N. C. The N. C. N. C.'s control of the powers of the Ilesa Urban District council enabled it to hold out for a long while in Ilesa. But there was a serious rivalry between the N. C. N. C. and its A. G. counterpart. The most important aim of the leaders of the N. C. N. C. in Ilesa was to promote the development of their community. Obviously, the control of Ilesa's local council by the party will lead to some sort of development. But the preference of the party at this initial stage was the maintenance and extension of its control of local government administration as against its A. G. rival. (*NAI Ile Div. 1, 2387 Intelligence Report on NCNC meeting, 1955*)

In order to accomplish the coveted improvement of Ilesa, additional tax was levied on every taxable male adult. (*NAI Ile Div. 1/2, 1909 Vol. II*) In fact, there was a move to tax women but this idea was later dropped because it lack popularity as it did in other places in Nigeria. By 1959, the N. C. N. C.'s Ilesa Urban District Council (I. U. D. C.) and its councilors who were very zealous for improvement had imposed education, water, electricity and general improvement rates. This additional tax was marginally higher than what was obtained in other towns in the then Western Region. (*NAI Ile Div. 1/1, 2003*) The A. G. used this issue of a higher tax in Ilesa as propaganda against the N. C. N. C. The question that was asked by the A. G. supporters and leaders was the reason for higher levies on Ilesa citizens than what was paid in Ibadan the capital of the Region. The effort of the A.G. stalwart to discredit the N. C. N. C.'s increase in taxation was a total failure. (*NAI Ile Div. 1/1 2010*)

To justify the higher tax levied on every average tax payer in Ilesa, the N. C. N. C. introduced a water supply scheme. The proposal to tap water from Efon-Alaye water-fall started in 1950 through a correspondence sent to the District Officer of Ekiti Province in the defunct Western Region. (*NAI Oyo Prof, 3/986-8/1027*) This water supply scheme was completed in 1955. With the completion of this scheme, standing water taps were erected at strategic locations of the town: Ogburu, Ifofin, Ilesa Grammar School, Muroko, Catholic Mission School, Imo, Wesley Guild Hospital and Isona. Ilesa water supply scheme was formally commissioned on the 13 March, 1955.

Besides the water supply scheme, the N. C. N. C. controlled Ilesa Urban District Council also saw to the electrification of Ilesa. With the desire for *Idagbasoke*, (that is, Improvement or development of the town), the unflinching effort of the Ilesa Divisional Executive Council (which was composed of the senior chiefs, the *Owa Ajimoko II* himself and the N. C. N. C. councilors with some A. G. representatives) saw through the electrification project in Ilesa. The supply and erection of poles in

the town and even its wiring was the responsibility of the defunct Electricity Corporation of Nigeria (E. C. N.) but it was the IUDC that financed the purchase of fittings, bulbs and lanterns for street lightening. (*NAI Oyo Prof, 1/1 521A*)

Moreover, apart from the main Post Office that has been established in Ilesa earlier, the administration of the N. C. N. C. saw also to the erection of Post Boxes (the pillar type of post box) in some quarters in Ilesa. This was to bring the post box nearer to the people, as the General Post Office was located at virtually the centre of the town. (*NAI Ile Div. 1/1 510/17*) It must be noted that the request for this post boxes was put forward by the then Ijesa Student Union whose President was Mr. O Adeyokunnu through a letter to the District Officer (D. O.) dated 24 March, 1954. (Agbele, interview with, 20 April, 1990) His request was supported by Mr. J. O. Fadahunsi, a member of the House of Assembly, who also sent a letter to the D. O. about the post boxes for consideration.

Furthermore, with the effort of Dr. T. M. Aluko, who was the then Osun District Town Planning Engineer, with the cooperation of the Town Planning Committee of the District Council proposed the proper planning of Ilesa. (*NAI Ile Div. 1/2 1388 A*) The decision of the town Planning Committee was that T. M. Aluko be given an assignment of drawing up recommendations for a proper planning the town. In line with this decision, the council took up the responsibility of road construction within Ilesa with the neighbouring villages most especially those that Ilesa's commercial activities depended on. Prominent among these roads were: Ibokun – Osogbo – Ilesa – road, Ipoye – Okebode – Ilesa road etc. (*NAI Ile Div. 1/2 1475*)

Of all the N. C. N. C.'s projects in Ilesa, the establishment of the Atakumosa Market was of great significance. At the time this market project was initiated, A. G. leaders were scornful about it, thinking that the I. U. D. C. would not be able to undertake such a project without seeking financial support of the Regional Government. Surprisingly, work started on the site with unpaid labour which was recruited in a traditional fashion from the various quarters in Ilesa. For the market project an additional improvement rate of five shillings (50 kobo) was raised and eventually this market project received the blessing of the Regional Government which gave a grant of about Fifteen Pounds (#30,000.00) to support the I. U. D. C. in the construction of the stalls in the market. (*NAI Ile Div. 1/1, 1724 Vol. II*)

Finally, the I. U. D. C. established a dispensary at Okeola quarter under the supervision of a Divisional Health Officer. Sanitary inspectors were employed by the council in order to maintain a clean environment in Ilesa. The sanitary inspectors were said to have at a stage become

terror to the people whose houses or surroundings were adjudged to be dirty. Bribes were reportedly taken by them from recalcitrant as an option of paying a higher fine to the council. (*NAI Ile Div. 1/1, 1724 Vol. II*)

### **The N. C. N. C. and Local Council Elections in Ilesa, 1952, 1955 and 1958**

During this period, there were two series of elections which were normally conducted before a final one at any local election. These two series of elections were the primary and intermediate elections. (*Mackintosh 1966: Chap.12; Anifowose 1982: 201-222*) Those who win in the intermediate election are registered to contest for the final local council election. After the primary and intermediate elections at about the end of the year in 1950, a final local council election was held on the 14<sup>th</sup> September, 1951 at the Town Hall. (*NAI Ile Div. 1/2 2359/9 Local Election Results*) this election was contested for by eight qualified candidates and the result of the election was as follows: J. O. Fadahunsi 22 votes, S. Akinola 17 votes, K. A. Shajuyigbe 8 votes, M. A. Adeyemi 2 votes, R. A. Awobiyi 6 votes, W. A. Ojo 2 votes, S. M. Ogunjulugbe 4 votes, and E. A. Ekunseitan 13 votes. This results qualified J. O. Fadahunsi and S. Akinola to represent Ijesa Division in Western House of Assembly. But it must be noted that these two men contested the election of 1951 as independent candidates (though Fadahunsi had been very close to the N. C. N. C. by this time). (*NAI Ile Div. 1/2 2359/9 Local Election Results*)

Consequently, after the election victory of J. O. Fadahunsi and S. Akinola, the D. O. sent a letter to them about their victory at election, asking them about the party they would be willing to be affiliated to. Both of them eventually affiliated themselves to the N. C. N. C. But it was not long after that S. Akinola was impeached. This was because the N. C. N. C. knew that he had close relationship with the A. G. In May, 1952 another local council election which was also an indirect one like that of the previous year. In May 1952, there was another local council which was also an indirect one like that of the previous year. There were nine vacant councilors' seats to be filled. In all, about twenty-seven candidates contested for these nine seats. The first nine candidates on the election result list became the successful candidates for the nine vacant seats thus: (*NAI Ile Div. 1/1 2422 Vol. II Parliamentary and Local Election Results*)

J. M. Ajayi-Obe	N. C. N. C.	112 votes
J. J. Ibrinke	N. C. N. C.	96 votes
E. O. Fajuyitan	A. G.	69 votes

L. O. Omole	A. G.	61 votes
S. A. Famuyide	N. C. N. C.	59 votes
E. O. Ayoola	A. G.	57 votes
M. O. James	A. G.	55 votes
O. A. Williams	N. C. N. C.	53 votes
M. M. Popoola	N. C. N. C.	48 votes
E. A. Lufadeju	A. G.	45 votes
L. Amokeodo	N. C. N. C.	44 votes

The first nine candidates on the election result list above became the successful candidates for the nine vacant seats. The above result shows the popularity of the N. C. N. C. in Ilesa having taken five out of the available nine seats, while the A. G. took the remaining four seats. This success of the N. C. N. C. though marginal, was the result of proper mobilization and campaign it had throughout the District or Ijesa Division. The four seats which the candidates of the A. G. had would not have been possible, but for the individuals that contested on behalf of the A.G. (men who, at a time or the other might have derived one benefit or the other from Regional Government). A prominent example of this was L. O. Omole who had benefited from the Regional Government's loan. (*Peel 1983: 219 - 225*) This success of the N. C. N. C. members further strengthened the hold of the party in the local administration.

By 1955, a year which was to witness another local council election had seen the reorganization of the structure of the local government. The Native Authority Council (N. A. C.) whose administration covered the whole of Ijesa Division was replaced with a new two-tier system of administration. To replace the N. A. C. was the Ijesa Divisional Council (I. U. D. C.) with twenty-four local council under it. Elections were to be held into the I. U. D. C. which also included some senior chiefs as "traditional" members. It is these "traditional" member that nominated members to set in the Ijesa Divisional Council. (*NAI Ile Div. 1/1 2387 Consequences of Elections*)

Furthermore, the election into the council in 1955 changed from the previous indirect election into that which was through wards or constituencies by direct election. Also, the N. C. N. C. won this election and continued to over-see the I. U. D. C. in Ilesa. The local election of 1955 was successfully won by the N. C. N. C. because of its campaign strategies (making use of local and Illiterate men and women for propaganda in the various quarters) which was very effective in the sense that despite the sympathy some had for the A. G., they still voted for the N. C. N. C. at election (since it was secret ballot system). (*NAI Ile*

*Div. 1/1 2387 Consequences of Elections*) It is important to note that these various elections which took place in Ilesa between 1951 and 1955 were not without upheavals an N. C. N. C. conflicts, most especially between the supporters of the two major political parties. (N. C. N. C. and A. G.) A prominent example of such conflicts developed after the local council elections of 1955. The N. C. N. C. proposed a victory dance round the town as a result of its successes at the election. On the other hand, the A. G. local branch sent a letter to the D. O. in Ilesa, Mr. A. F. Mead, informing him about the N. C. N. C.'s proposed victory dance, asking him to stop the purported victory dance in order to maintain peace and order. (*NAI Ile Div. 1/1 2387 Consequences of Elections*)

However, there were also cases of thuggery and vandalistic acts among party supporters. There was even a case of the "importation" of thugs into Ilesa by the N. C. N. C. This was reported to the D. O. by the A. G. officers. As a result of the conflict and uproar that always erupted during electioneering campaigns and after, some surrounding villages appealed to the D. O. to stop political parties' campaigns in their own area. A prominent example of this was the petition sent by the Ijebu-Jesa community to the D. O. at Ilesa about their resentment at political conflicts in any subsequent political campaigns and elections in their town. The D. O. Mr. A. F. Mead turned down their request, he explained to them that for a democratic council to evolve there must be political campaigns in every area of the District for proper awareness.

The year 1958 witnessed another local council election. It is important to note that by this time *Owa Ogunmokun* had ascended the throne in Ilesa after the demise of *Owa Ajimoko II. Ogunmokun* pro- A. G. and he stayed by it openly. Before the local council election of 1958, the structure of the council again changed from what was introduced in 1955. Instead of the small twenty-four local councils under the Ilesa Urban District Council, a new Ijesa Northern and Ijesa Southern Council was established, while the Ijesa Divisional Council remain the higher tier with Ilesa as headquarters. (*NAI Ile Div. 1/1 656 B Executive Committee, matter affecting*) This new structure of local administration favoured the subordinate communities which had been voting intermittently for the A. G. at least, by allowing them some freedom from the domination of Ilesa.

After the election in 1958, the N. C. N. C. had twenty-four seats out of the thirty-two seats from the District while it retained the control of Ilesa Urban with twenty-nine seats out of thirty-six seats. Significantly, the strategy used by the N. C. N. C. in winning over-all majority in most of the local council elections was not only for the use of local and illiterate men and women for propaganda, but the party caucus which

was composed of the party executives and ex-officio members met from time to time drawing up modalities for success in the various elections. In the light of this, rallies and campaigns were conducted by the party officials in all quarters of Ilesa and even its surrounding villages, persuading men and women to give their support and vote for the N. C. N. C. Despite the fact that the N. C. N. C. still held tightly to the control of the Ilesa local council, competition between it and its A. G. opponent continued unabated.

### Events Leading to the Collapse of the N. C. N. C.'s Supremacy in Ilesa

Having looked at the coming of the N. C. N. C. to Ilesa, its activities and its subsequent victory at elections above, it is pertinent to interrogate the incidents which brought about the demise of the of the party in 1960. One of the significant events which culminated in the collapse of the N. C. N. C.'s local hegemony in Ilesa was the succession dispute of the position of the *Owa* in 1956. (*Iyiade interview with, 20 April, 1990*) On 18 October, 1956, the demise of the *Owa* Ajimoko II was made public. The contest for the vacant stool was drawn out for six months. The interregnum reduced the intensity of political party activities considerably. The details of the contest and the subsequent enthronement of a new *Owa* in 1957, is the subject of another study. It is sufficient here to mention that the new *Owa*, one A. O. Ogunmokun was the one who won the contest against others. He was installed in 1957. The fact that *Owa* Ogunmokun was pro- A. G. he did everything to ensure that the cause of the A. G. was promoted. (*NAI Oyo Prof. 1/ 1027 Vol. III*)

The last straw that brought down the N. C. N. C. was the Regional election of 1960 which precipitated the final crisis between the *Owa* Ogunmokun and the I. U. D. C. As a result of the victory of the A. G., the Ilesa branch of the A. G. organised a victory celebration at the palace ground in which *Owa* Ogunmokun himself openly participated. During this victory celebration, there were singing and dancing in a procession round the town from the palace. The crowd sang provocative songs. In response to the procession, the I. U. D. C. banned all drumming and dancing on the streets. It also passed a motion that the *Owa* Ogunmokun should abdicate the throne on the charges that he was levying too high *Isakole* (that is, tributes). In response to all these, the A. G. local opposition sent to the Regional Government a request for the dissolution of the I. U. D. C. and required that an enquiry into the management of its finances. The dissolution was implemented on the ground that it had no right to seek the deposition of the *Owa*

Ogunmokun. Immediately, a management committee was appointed which was predominantly composed of A. G. members. (*Ilori, interview with, 3 March, 1990*)

The fall of the N. C. N. C. hegemony in Ilesa was not without its consequence. It must be noted that the administration of the N. C. N. C.'s controlled I. U. D. C. was more "effective" than the Management Committee which was set up by the Regional Government. The new Management Committee could not control the hitherto local assessment (tax or rates) through which the bulk of the finances of the council came. For this reason, defaulters grew in increasing numbers. Again, cocoa price began to fall while the Regional Government was finding it difficult to meet the recurrent expenditure which it had planned for in the cocoa booming years of the 1950s.

It must be noted that the reason for the fall of the Management Committee was not issue that can be located in the politics of the town itself. It was entirely the problem of the politics in Nigeria generally and in the Western Region particularly. It was the decision of Chief Obafemi Awolowo to go to the federal level as federal opposition Leader. For this reason he needed to choose someone to replace him at the Region. He picked Chief S. L. Akintola, who became the Premier. The modalities to resolve the differences that developed between Awolowo on the one hand and Akintola and his supporters on the other was difficult. Akintola refuse all entreaties to resolve the matter at the party level but he was bent on joining the federal coalition believing that each party's hegemony in its regional base would be respected. Awolowo stayed with the party and which decided to pass a vote of no confidence of the Premier. This led to a crisis in May 1962. (*Falola and Genova 2006: 216 -217*)

The imprisonment of Chief Obafemi Awolowo did not go down well with the generality of the Ilesa. It is true that initially the Ilesa did not support Awolowo's A. G. party but the betrayal of his deputy was a serious concern to them. (*Anifowose 1982: 51- 63*) For this reason, the bulk of the Ilesa refused to support Akintola's new political party: the Nigerian National Democratic Party (N. N. D. P) Efforts were made to make people in Ilesa to support the new political party, but they did not receive any serious welcome or acceptance. The party began to use very severe measures to oppress the people in Ilesa. It was said that Akintola claimed to deal decisively with the Ilesa for not cooperating with his government both at the local level and at the Regional level in Ibadan. (*Oyovbaire 1987: 25*) An incident occurred when Akintola and his Deputy Premier, Fani-kayode, came to Ilesa to inaugurate his party, the N. N. D.P. on 6 April 1964. When his entourage entered the town

there was commotion as the people began to shout them down with the words: thief! thief! – Go back! we don't want you! It took the local government police to quell the crisis.

The Election of 1964 put paid to the crisis. That election was rigged while trouble and riot loom. Forthwith, the U. P. G. A supporters in Ilesa set all out for revenge, which was in form of an offensive attack on any noticeable stalwart of the N. N. D. P. Consequently, there was wanton burning of houses murder and looting. The local government police were virtually powerless to prevent this destruction which U. P. G. A carried out. A slogan given to this mass destruction of lives and properties was operation "wetic" that is operation wet it! A description of how houses were sprayed with fuel and the purpose of burning them.

### Conclusion

In this study, we have been able to examine the advent of the N. C. N. C. in Nigeria as one of the major political parties and its incursion into Ilesa. Party politics did not really start until the first elections in 1951. We have also observed that the N. C. N. C. in Ilesa contributed considerably to the development of the town. We noted that the Ilesa's choice of political party affiliation was the result of a number of factors. The assumption was that the Ilesa would decide for the A. G. but this was not so. We saw that very early in Ilesa, a club was started: the Zik Athletic Club. Several young Ilesa men joined this club which later assumed a political form.

Again, several Ilesa men had associated themselves with the Zikist Movement. This movement was a popular recreational club which counted among its members, young men several of whom later became active in party politics. The influence of Azikwe was the inspiration of the educated men. The Lagos leadership of the N. C. N. C. was also associated with Ilesa community aspirations. This was nurtured by the friendship between one Fadugba and Ogedengbe Macaulay (who was the son of Herbert Macaulay). It must be also be noted that Macaulay supported the agitation of the Ilesa to get a separate administrative Division in 1948. Despite the fact that political party formation in Nigeria, particularly during the late 1940s, the Ilesa did not really give A.G. support that a Yoruba people group should have given. The proverbial 'fingers of the Yoruba hand' in defining the five major Yoruba rulers which did not include Ilesa was regarded as a slight.

In furtherance of its objective of enhancing education for the local populace, the local council (I. U. D. C.) which was controlled by the N. C. N. C. established Modern Schools and Primary schools. This was done perhaps because education was known to be a significant factor

for social change. It was a main ingredient of development. Though Ilesa Grammar school had been started earlier through the efforts of the efforts of the Egbe Atunluse, the I. U. D. C. supported the improvement of the services of the school. Again, it has been observed that Ilesa had little improvement in the 190s under the local administration of the N. C. N. C.'s controlled council. Prominent among the developmental projects in Ilesa was pipe-borne water and the improvement of postal services. The council also saw to the electrification of Ilesa's streets which was subsequently followed by individual consumption of electricity in various households.

Roads in Ilesa were properly planned and maintained by the local council with the expert advice of Dr. T. M. Aluko, who was then the Town Planning Engineer for Osun Division who was invite by the Ilesa Executive council to help his fatherland with his wealth of experience. The I. U. D. C. established and maintained a dispensary for the provision of health care services. This brought about the promotion of commercial relations between Ilesa and her neighbours because of the construction of feeder roads which linked Ilesa with the surrounding villages. A new and larger market was established for commercial activities as against the old *Ojaoba* which was smaller in size. Perhaps, much could have been achieved if the Ilesa had supported the A. G. The fact that the Ilesa always make their history relevant to their politics explains their rejection of the A. G.

It must be noted that the Ilesa are seen to be resolute, assertive and uncompromising about their decisions. The reason for their rejection of the A. G. explains the fact that history usually influences the course of a people's behaviour at every given time. That the Ilesa later sympathized with Chief Awolowo, when he was sentenced to ten years imprisonment in 1962 also explains the fact that events and circumstances can also change the attitude of people. This was proven right during the Second Republic when the Ilesa joined the Unity Party of Nigeria (U. P. N.) which was offshoot of the defunct A. G. The Ilesa's mammoth support for the U. P. N. later represented the fulfillment of the wishes of the leaders of the Party. This was because they, at last, associated themselves with a Yoruba identity. This enabled them to enjoy the free education programme of the U. P. N. which had been a key to their desire for enlightenment. The political party conflicts which later brought the First Republic to an end pulled down what could be referred to as progress that Ilesa made. This was the result of the wanton destruction of lives and properties (both private and public buildings were burnt) and human resources wasted in 1965 before the military finally came to "safe" the situation in January, 1966.

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