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Between Ideology and Praxis:

Zikist Movement and Radical Nationalism in Colonial Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examines 'Zikism' as a political ideology and a universal way of life as propounded by Nwafor Orizu, and epitomised by Nigerian youths organised under the umbrella of the Zikist Movement. It also assesses the contributions of the Zikist movement to the decolonisation process in Nigeria. Drawing from archival documents, the study argues that nationalist agitations in Nigeria in the post-Second World War era were a mixed bag of peaceful protests and radical oppositions to the British colonial rule. The most belligerent opposition to the colonial administration came from Nigerian youths in the Zikist Movement. These youths were guided and influenced by the ideology of Zikism. For Nigerian youths, both in theory and praxis, Zikism became a substitute for the gradual approach to the process of decolonisation, and a potent tool to rid the country of British imperial presence. This paper concludes that: although the movement failed to achieve all its proposed goals, yet throughout its existence, it posed a threat to the colonial government in Nigeria.

Key words: Zikism, Zikist, radical, nationalism, ideology, praxis

Entre idéologie et praxis: Le mouvement zikiste et le nationalisme radical au Nigeria colonial

Résumé

Cet article examine le "zikisme" en tant qu'idéologie politique et mode de vie universel proposé par Nwafor Orizu et incarné par les jeunes nigériens organisés sous l'égide du mouvement zikiste. Il évalue également les contributions du mouvement zikiste au processus de décolonisation au Nigeria. S'appuyant sur des documents d'archives, l'étude affirme que les agitations nationalistes au Nigeria après la seconde guerre mondiale étaient un mélange de protestations pacifiques et d'oppositions radicales à la domination coloniale britannique. L'opposition la plus belliqueuse à l'administration coloniale est venue des jeunes nigériens du mouvement zikiste. Ces jeunes étaient guidés et influencés par l'idéologie du zikisme. Pour les jeunes Nigériens, tant en théorie qu'en pratique, le zikisme est devenu un substitut à l'approche graduelle du processus de décolonisation et un outil puissant pour débarrasser le pays de la présence impériale britannique. Cet article conclut que, bien que le mouvement n'ait pas atteint tous les objectifs qu'il s'était fixés, il a constitué, tout au long de son existence, une menace pour le gouvernement colonial du Nigeria.

Mots clés: Nationalisme, Idéologie, Praxis, Zikisme, Zikiste, Radical

Introduction

Perhaps the most radical political ideology in the post-Second World War Nigeria was Zikism. Propounded by Nwafor Orizu and inspired by political activities of Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, Zikism was the most popular ideology among Nigerian youths who organized themselves under the Zikist movement. Defined as a way of life

that emphasises human personality over all other considerations, and maintains that a New Africa must defend such personality that can reflect active intelligence and dynamic thought, Zikism was for the Nigerian youth a much-needed ideological substitute for the gradual approach to the process of decolonisation, and a potent tool to free the country from the imperial clutch of Britain. Although the ideology and the movement short-lived due to the ban imposed by the British colonial administration, the swift response from the colonial government testified to the threat posed by the Zikist. This paper therefore examines Zikism as a political ideology and the activities of the Zikist movement as a radical nationalist group during the period of decolonization in Nigeria. The paper is divided into four sections. The first section traces the origin of Zikism, conceptualises the ideology and compares it with similar ideologies, like Aggreyism, Gaveyism and Irridentism. The section also identifies and analyses various aspects of the ideology ranging from its political, economic, social to religious features. The second section discusses the formation of the Zikist movement. In addition to the factors that led to the emergence of the movement, the organisational structures and administrative methods of the movement are also discussed. The third section deals with ideological strategies of the Zikist movement in its pursuit of radical nationalism. In the section, the wide gulf between theory and the practice of Zikism are noted. In the fourth section, the patterns of relationship between the Zikist and Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe are examined. The section notes that the forms of relationship between Dr Azikiwe and the movement, poor ideological strategies as well as colonial response contributed to the final collapse of the Zikist movement.

Conceptualising Zikism

Radical nationalism in the post-Second World War era in Nigeria was epitomised by the explosive emergence of the Zikist Movement. Although the existence of this radical group barely lasted beyond five years, it created a shiver of surprise that shook and shot through the British colonial government. In separate studies, Coleman, Olusanya and Iweriebor have argued that radical nationalism in the post-war period as typified by the volcanic rise of the Zikist Movement was ‘a child of Azikiwe’s journalism and charismatic qualities,’ and Nwafor Orizu’s conception of the ideology of Zikism (Coleman, 1986; Olusanya, 1966; Iweriebor; 1996). While adding his voice to this view, Echeruo reconnects us to ‘Aggrey’s rhetoric and sense of duty’ and ‘Garvey’s idea of Africa for Africans’ as important factors in the formation of Azikiwe’s ideal of ‘New Africa’, which became a compass to the nationalist struggle of the Renascent Africans (youths) (See: Echeruo, 1974; Olusanya, 1973 & 1982; Falola, 2001; Tijani, 2006).

The true meaning of Zikism could be located both in the theoretical analysis of the movement by its author, Nwafor Orizu, and the praxis of the ideology. As Orizu argues, Zikism was not a list of the ideas of Azikiwe even though it derived its inspiration from this national hero. Neither was it a sectional philosophy that was destined to be limited to the West African sub-region because it transcended territorial boundaries; nor was it nationalism proper, although it was a way of life which could provide direction to the nationalist movement. Despite the fact that this term was coined from the name of Azikiwe (Azi-eweka-iwe, or Azi-akalilika-n’we) which literally means “The youth is overwhelmingly indignant” or “The New Age is full of revenge,” its proponent claimed that it was not a revenge philosophy. It neither claimed completeness nor finality of principles, but was

characterised by dynamism. It was not the philosophy of the young in age but in mind (Orizu, 1944). In a speech delivered before an audience in 1941 while he was a student at Chicago, Orizu defined Zikism as:

a way of life which puts the personality of man in the fore front of all other considerations, and insists that a New Africa must vindicate such personality that can reflect active intelligence and dynamic thought (West African Pilot, 17 November 1941).

He emphasises that the way of life of Zikism hinged on the principle of the universal in which the New Africa stood for the realisation of the use of man as an end and not a means (West African Pilot, 18 November, 1944).

Orizu points out that ‘Zikism did not drop down from the sky upon the naked earth... Rather it [was] an offspring of previous ideas and ideals.’ He did not claim that his ideology possessed complete originality. But, rather, was rooted in Kwegyir Aggrey’s Aggreyism (New Africa) in which the youth in their self-discovery, self-realisation and restlessness would startle the world. Although Aggrey lived in the Old Africa, he was not oblivious of the New Africa. Aggreyism was a philosophy that was encapsulated in the ideas of ‘live and let live’ and racial harmony (See: King, 1969; Kenworthy, 1946; Smith, 1929). Aggrey’s idea of racial harmony was explained by comparing the relationship between the lives of an African man and a white male Westerner to the relationship between the white and the black keys of a piano in which each key compliments each other to realise musical harmony. However, for Orizu, Aggrey’s racial harmony as an ideal

philosophy could fit into the New Africa only when Africans were treated as equal to the European imperialists.

Orizu identifies 'time' as the major point of divergence between Aggreyism and Zikism. He views Aggrey's Africa as the past, decadent and passive phase of African evolutionary history. In contrast to Aggreyism, Zikism rejected racial harmony that was devoid of recognition of human equality in social life; 'Zikism does not suffer indignity and inhumanity silently. Its ideology is to destroy man's inhumanity to man (Orizu, 1944. P292).' Thus, Zikism sought to eliminate imperialism, racism, illiteracy and economic inequality in Africa (Orizu, 1944). Zikism promised to be a universal philosophy by seeking 'a universal equilibrium in all things. Its aim is to develop theories which in practice can be applied universally' (Orizu, 1944).

In defining their political ideology, the Zikists emphasized that the youths' impulse for freedom and unity of Africa was rooted in Aggrey's idea of 'live and let live,' Garvey's 'Africa for Africa' and Azikwe's 'Renascent Africa'. The constitution of the Zikists defines the movement as:

the mental attitude which unreservedly accepts the ideals of "live and let live" and aims at establishing a system of philosophy and ethics conducive to this idea; where this philosophy of live and let live, conceived by Aggrey, consolidated and crystallised by Zik and codified by Orizu, is the last best hope of man in a world replenished by a society cut across by infinitely divisive stratifications of class and creed and code (British National Archives (BNA): C.O. 537/5801 C96888).

Ziksim proposed to embrace the economic, social, religious and political aspects of life. Hence, Zikism was divided into four components, viz: Social Zikism, Economic Zikism, Political Zikism and Religious Zikism.

Zikism was conceived as a social faith called Social Zikism. Social Zikism was based on “social myth.” By social myth Orizu implies the collective beliefs of people ‘which anathemises social evils of their times, while clinging unfalteringly to a definite programme which conforms to their moral principles and ethical norms...’ (Orizu, 1944, p. 303). The social myth advocated by Orizu was by no means a catastrophic or violent one; nor aimed at instigating any class against another section of the society. It was a universal myth which would bring people of different nations, races and classes to “a common denominator” and responded to their yearning. Social Zikism believed in the discipline of free men. It upheld the belief that while embracing the true kernel of Western democracy, the Zikists should not be carried away by its superficiality and misconceptions; nor denigrated traditional political institutions in Africa.

Orizu proposed that the social myth of Africa should be rooted in African Irredentism, by which he meant: ‘The redemption of Africa from social wreckage, political servitude and economic impotency; it must also mean extricating Africa from ideological confusion, psychological immaturity, spiritual complacency and mental stagnation’ (Orizu, 1944, p.306). Social Zikism held the belief that for African Irredentism to be realizable there must be a rediscovery of African loyalties to the African society. These loyalties in turn depended on the education of the African mind. This education must reject all teachings geared towards the falsification of African capability or undermine its respect or

dignity. Also, this education, Social Zikism insists, should not include racial, national or class antagonism. Instead, African education should be built on loyalties to African political, social, philosophical and religious culture. The loyalties should be extended to the Ziskists' "teacher" who was expected to be the epitome of true leadership (Orizu, 1944, p.310-312).

The religious view of Orizu was encapsulated in the Religious Zikism which was rooted in the vaguely conceived idea of "excuse-recessism" or ofoism. By excuse-recessism Orizu means 'the logic of reasoning with God, the philosophy of "forcing" God to be on our side in executing our design.' The term also connotes the ideas that God is invented in human mind and the morality and holiness of God change with the morality and holiness of man. He justifies his claim on the premise that God as conceived by different people and at different times was invented to serve some purposes. These purposes were: function of the moral code of the people and their age. Orizu views the Christian God, whose universality is acknowledged by the Christians, as the invention of the Jews. The initial localisation and later the universality of the Jewish God reflected Jewish thoughts and interactions with their neighbours. Through the trajectory of history He changed HIS principles and transitioned from being a revengeful localised deity to a universal loving Father of all (Orizu, 1944, pp. 336-337).

It is significant to note that Orizu formulated his conception of universal God within the limit of his interpretation of Bible and the ambient of religious revolution in Europe. While employing history to support his arguments, he rather pretentiously ignored the fact that Christianity represented one of the many in the pool of religions. His critic of the Christian God emanated from the disappointments he had encountered in the Christian faith and

the frustrations as well as hypocrisy he found in Western civilisation. Both Christianity and Western civilisation, which hitherto were regarded as the standards, were to him inadequate for his New Africa. Since Western nations found it expedient to employ God whenever they embarked on any programme affecting their destinies, the Renascent Africa could do same.

But, Religious Zikism did not deny the existence of God nor pretend to affirm it since history had not encouraged Zikism to an intelligent belief in God's existence. Religious Zikism believed in the intelligent design and order of the universe. For want of a better terminology, the origin and the end of these designs and orders was called God. It also believed in human conscience and quest for perfection. This, Religious Zikism also hypothetically called God. Religious Zikism was based on a few acceptance and rejections. It neither denied nor affirmed the existence of God but believed in the universal God that would treat all people of the world equally in spite of their racial differences. It also accepted the knowledge about the existence of God because the physical world appeared orderly and its beginning and end were not yet comprehended by man; this was hypothetically called God. It rejected the Christian God for His particularism which enabled men in their 'excuse-recessism' to engage God in the execution of their self-centred designs (Orizu, 1944, p.341). Zikism believed in God in so far He was characterised by universal stamp and bounded neither by space nor time. In the universalism of God, the New Africa was part of His universe and African ofoism and irredentism were parts of His sanctioned-programmes.

Economic Zikism proposed that African economy should be planned by Africans themselves. Orizu did not ignore the fact that Africa needed the knowledge and assistance of other more

economically advanced nations before leaping forward. He recognised the fact that the economic field presented special challenges such as scientific planning, administration and operation for which African nations were inadequately equipped. But the choice of which foreign nations to consult for advice should rest with Africans themselves. It acknowledged that agrarian economy which had rested on family labour could no longer sustain Africa. While economic Zikism welcomed the roles and contributions of individuals, it wanted 'limited-state-control.' Orizu emphasized the fact that 'Zikist philosophy denies all the pseudo-biological defences of spiritless capitalism which have precipitated the growth of imperialism.' Neither did it support the other extreme, communism, for it was defective. Instead, Orizu proposed a universal economic system, which would be guided by certain principles, viz:

the education of people geared towards appreciation of African resources; a policy to elevate the value of the peasant so that an increase in the food supply [can be] guaranteed; an increase in the agricultural production for export by the state through mechanised farming; encouragement of cooperative system; introduction of farmers' bank; land conservation and prevention of pest and disease by the government; currency and bank control by African government; a definite industrial programme; an intelligent use of raw materials and factors of production; and accessibility to industrial machinery by granting concessions to foreign capitalists (Orizu, 1944, pp.321-322).

Political Zikism was woven around the youths. Orizu argues that politics was not exclusive right of the old. But in participating in politics, the youths must be thoroughly educated. Zikism believed that youth was the age for political life. The aged should not monopolize the game of politics. It should be a game of both young and old. Zikism considered government as the means to ensure peace, order and security in the society. But the sovereignty of the government should belong to the people. Laws should originate from the people, who also constitute one of the sites of its application. Such laws should reflect the customs and traditions of the people and be characterised by their collective interests and resolves. Hence, these features are what would guarantee obedience to the law. On this premise, Zikism held that people of Africa and Asia were not under any moral obligation or natural duty to accept or obey any law made by foreigners or imposed on Africa by imperial powers. It also held that the governance of Africa should be the function and responsibility of African people. Zikism contemplated for Africa a new state with conscience in which its policy and quality would be determined by Africans. Political Zikism did not uphold isolation but embraced internationalism. It objected to imperialism but did not frown at cooperation, because 'To have a truly free Britain, there must be a free Nigeria' (Orizu, 1944, p. 335). It also held that international relations should be guided by healthy relations in which all countries will be ready to surrender part of her sovereignty in equal measure.

The Formation and Organisation of the Zikist Movement, 1946-1950

The sudden emergence of the Zikist Movement resulted from three principal factors. The first was the discontent by the youth

that the gradualist constitutional approach adopted by the old educated elite had created political stagnancy; this thus stirred the youths into scrambling for a new political resurgence (Olusanya, 1966, p. 323). Another crucial factor was the attempt to defend their hero, Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe against the heavy verbal attacks from his critics and official intimidation that followed the alleged assassination attempt (Azikiwe, 1970, pp. 259-260). Four of his admirers, Kolawole Balogun, M.C.K. Ajuluchukwu, Nduka Eze and Abiodun Aloba together with over two hundred Nigerian youth launched the Zikist Movement on 16 February 1946 at Tinubu Methodist School, Lagos. These youths took the pledge: 'Never more shall we allow this John to cry alone in the wilderness, Never more shall we allow this evangelist to cry his voice hoarse, when millions of youths of Nigeria can take up his whisper and echo it to all worldwide' (West African Pilot, March 2, 1946).

For the youths, Azikiwe symbolised the heroic figure of the New Africa. While his political ideology represented one of the components of the Zikist philosophy, his idea of the New Africa appealed to the youths perhaps because it was woven around them. At the formative stage, the Zikist Movement promised to be a well organised youths' group with branches across Nigeria. The supreme authority of the movement was vested in its Annual General Conference which decided broad lines of policies. The administrative power of the movement resided with the Pressidium, which consisted the president-general, deputy president-general, five vice-presidents, secretary-general, deputy secretary-general, central treasurer, liaison officer, director of bureaux, the presidents of district congresses and a maximum of ten members of the Pressidium (BNA: C.O. 537/5801 C96888, 'Article V of the Constitution of the Zikist Movement.').

The Movement was administered through its secretariat that consisted of the secretary-general, deputy secretary-general and other staff (BNA: C.O. 537/5801 C96888, 'Article VI of the Constitution of the Zikist Movement'). The bureaux, which was under the general supervision of the Central Executive, was divided into four: the Political and Security Bureaux, Economic and Research Bureaux, Social and Cultural Bureaux, and Publicity and Information Bureau (BNA: C.O. 537/5801 C96888, 'Article VIII of the Constitution of the Zikist Movement'). The movement raised fund through entrance fees, subscription and levies from members, contributions, donations, collections, sale of newspapers, pamphlets, books and other commercial or industrial undertaking (BNA: C.O. 537/5801 C96888, 'Article IX of the Constitution of the Zikist Movement').

Its fundamental aims and objects as noted in its constitution were pentad. The first objective was to study, practice and promulgate courageously the principles of Zikism as formulated and taught by Aggrey, Marcus Garvey, Azikwe and Orizu. The movement aimed at achieving the redemption of Africa through the establishment of the Zikist-oriented Independent United State of West Africa. The movement also set for itself the task of encouraging interest in events and activities that affected the destiny of Africa. The need to link and cooperate with any similar organizations that encouraged mental emancipation of people, encouraged social regeneration and spiritual balance, promoted political Risorgimento and economic determinism, was also a crucial target (BNA: C.O. 537/5801 C96888, 'Article I of the Constitution of the Zikist Movement'). Lastly, the Zikist Movement aimed at publishing and printing newspapers, journals and pamphlet to educate the masses and disseminate the Zikist ideology.

Membership in the movement was acquired through normal registration, granted as a result of patronage or conferred as an honour. Registered members were required to pledge themselves to live up to the expectations of the movement. There were honours and awards for the outstanding performance of members or any person of African descent. The honours included: the Zik star, the Aggrey star, certificate of honours, certificate of merit and Africa medal (BNA: C.O. 537/5801 C96888, 'Appendix V of the Constitution of the Zikist Movement'). The Zik stars were designed as honours for any African or person of African descent who had significantly contributed to the cause of African redemption (BNA: C.O. 537/5801 C96888, 'Appendix V of the Constitution of the Zikist Movement'). Similarly, the Aggrey stars were awards for those who had impacted the intellectual growth of Africa and enhanced harmonious relations between Africa and the outside world (BNA: C.O. 537/5801 C96888, 'Appendix V of the Constitution of the Zikist Movement'). While the certificates of honour were meant for those who had displayed high heroic virtue and bravery in the struggle against injustice or contributed their resources or lifetime towards the redemption of Africa, the certificate of merit were designed for people who had combined strong faith in, and loyalty to, the cause through their distinct conducts and meritorious service. The Africa medal was to be awarded to any non-African person who had not only contributed to the cause of African redemption but also generally championed the cause of liberty (BNA: C.O. 537/5801 C96888, 'Appendix V of the Constitution of the Zikist Movement').

The banner of the movement had a white background with a red cross, five-cornered golden star, an eagle and blue circle (BNA: C.O. 537/5801 C96888, 'Appendix IV of the Constitution of the

Zikist Movement.’). Each of these symbols was pregnant with meaning. The constitution of the movement interpreted these iconography thus: the white background represented an untrammelled freedom and undisturbed peace; the red cross stood for difficulties, both internal and external, blood, martyrdom, victimisation, corruption and man’s inhumanity to man ((BNA: C.O. 537/5801 C96888, ‘Appendix IV of the Constitution of the Zikist Movement’). The five cornered star symbolised the Zikist Faith; each of the five corners represented one of the five canons of Zikism. While the eagle stood for the Renascent Africa ready to contribute to the pool of world civilizations, the blue circle symbolised unity and love. The banner was displayed during important festivals of the movement such as: the Zik day, anniversary day, revolution memorial day, at the funeral of active members, at National Assemblies and protests participated by the movement (BNA: C.O. 537/5801 C96888, ‘Appendix II of the Constitution of the Zikist Movement.’).

The hoisting of banner during Zikist outings was accompanied by the movement’s anthem and song. The anthem ran thus:

Land of Our Birth we pledge to Thee,
Our love and toils in the year to be;
O Motherland we pledge to Thee,

Head, Heart and Hand through the year to be (BNA: C.O. 537/5801 C96888).

The Zikist song ran thus:

Then raise the eagle standard high,
Within its shade we’ll live and die;
Though cowards flinch and traitors sneer,

We'll keep the Red Star shining here (BNA: C.O. 537/5801 C96888).

Important festival days commemorated by the Zikists were: the Zik Day, 16th November, the Foundation Day, 15th-17th February and All Heroes' Day, 9th – 11th May. The introduction of the Zik Day by the movement was more than simple hero worship. The Zik Day was a form of protest against the celebration of the British King or Queen. For the Zikists, while the British King and Queen personified imperialism in Africa and symbolized colonial burden, Azikiwe was the symbol of freedom and unity against imperial authority. Zik day was also symbolically used to elevate and immortalize Azikiwe as the nationalist hero whose destiny was to liberate the oppressed people of the world. Lastly and more importantly, the celebration of Azikiwe by Zikists represented a desperate search for nationalist and ideological leaders who could lead the Nigerian youths in the revolution from the old to the Renascent Africa. The emotional commitment and unflinching belief of members of the Zikist Movement characterised by excessive enthusiasm has been erroneously described as hero worship (Iweriebor, 1996). In spite of the Zikists' intense devotion to their cause and loyalty to the author of the Renascent Africa, they were by no means blind to the human weaknesses of Azikiwe. Rather, they rose above this sentiment by differentiating between the political ideology and the person.

In spite of the persuasive strengths of Orizu's Zikism, the ideology did not suggest in concrete terms the methods of achieving the final goal of African emancipation. Unlike Orizu, Azikwe's Renascent Africa suggested education and the power of the pen as potent (by this he implied the use of newspaper press and propaganda), but these, too, were insufficient ingredients for

actualizing the dreams of the Renascent Africans. Okoye observed the methodological weakness of the idea of Zikism when he wrote:

The Nigerian rebel prophets did not always take cognisance of the vital forces moving the world in which they lived or if they did they were too dense to reflect [on] them; often too, they merely flaunted social ideas like foundlings at the feet of the people without telling them what to do with these ideas. They showed the people light but left them to find their way (Okoye, 1981, p.108).

The Zikists were left with the choice of devising their own methods of struggle against colonial authority. The constitution of the movement enunciated a number of tactics for the Zikist struggle, viz: assertion, enunciation and declaration; passive protest; peaceful direct protest; impartial third party arbitration; active protest: non co-operation, economic sanctions and social ostracism (BNA: C.O. 537/5801 C96888). In spite of the construction of grandiose strategies, not much was recorded by the movement beyond the organisation of public lectures, annual celebration of Azikiwe's birthday, public procession and salutation.

Boycotting the 'Boycottables': Cultural Renaissance as an Expression of Radical Nationalism in Colonial Nigeria

The political lull that characterised the first two years of the Zikist Movement was disrupted by the cultural nationalism of late 1947, which was directed against European domination. Led by Mbonu Ojike, the cultural nationalism was a protest against the imperial

culture and props. The cultural nationalism declared by Ojike was a “boycott movement” in which African people were asked to ‘boycott the boycottables’ (Okoye, 1981, p.117). As Iweriebor notes, cultural nationalists sought to challenge the ideological and cultural fabrics of colonial rule in Nigeria (Iweriebor, 1996). Whereas Ojike advocated the boycott of foreign food, drink, songs, dance, props and imported luxury, he did not disapprove of the importation and the use of essential items from Europe. It is significant to note that the 1947 cultural nationalism was not the first attempt in colonial Nigeria when the cultural domination of Africans by Europeans would be challenged. The last decade of the nineteenth century had witnessed similar cultural nationalism when a crop of aggrieved African educated elite protested against cultural imperialism. The cultural nationalism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were rooted, and found expression, in economic, social and political grievances.

Cultural nationalism of the post-World War II in Nigeria was in many ways similar with, as it was also different in character from, that of the nineteenth century (Lawal, 2010; Babou, 2010; Hopkins, 2008). Like in the former instance, post-World War II cultural nationalism addressed the economic, social and political prejudices against the Nigerian people by resident Europeans. The first mark of difference was that it was not dominated by the bourgeois or the educated class. Although it was initiated by the youths, the movement was a conscious effort at propagating a universal cultural protest against the colonial culture through the education of the masses. Another difference was that in spite of their exposure to Western civilization, the disseminators of the idea of the new cultural nationalism did not feel excluded. They also did not condemn the non-educated masses. Thus, for them, cultural nationalism was not a process of cultural integration and

adaptation but a renaissance. It was not a complete blind movement; it was a cultural protest of selective boycott characterised by African pride. Hence, Ojike, the 'king of boycott,' was not oblivious of the limited strength of Nigerian technology and science. He warned that essential European products and technology were neither replaceable nor avoidable, at least at that stage of African development (The West African Pilot, June 7, 1947).

There were also those whose selective boycotts were characterised by moral force. Kola Balogun was one example (Balogun, 1947, pp.1-3). For him, European commodities such as cigarettes and alcohol were undisciplined habits and evil. He found the arguments of youth smokers absurd and unjustifiable. For instance, the youth smokers justified imitation of the European smoking habit partly because 'cigarettes had some soothing effect' and because 'it looks fine between the fingers...' (Balogun, 1947, p.2). Balogun argued that most young men drank alcohol in imitation of others and for prestige, but in the final analysis:

It tears asunder youth's prestige and shortens his life career rapidly by exposing him to many dangers – accident (may result in maiming or death), criminal propensity and moral laxity... Then they drink to debt in order to maintain 'dignity'... It is common knowledge that drunkenness tampers with self-control and actually heightens sexual feelings. (Balogun, 1947, p. 3).

Balogun's view on the European films and frequenting cinema were also governed by moral considerations. He considered

European films as windows to display European fashions and institute social vices in African societies. Thus, young men who had formed the habit of visiting the European cinema were wasting their precious time and money; and were being physically and psychologically insulted through the racial films. But he did not forbid films like 'Edison The Man' for their educative roles.

Balogun was not in trim for thorough boycott. His objections against the boycott movement lay in the aspect of religion and arrogance of the youth particularly towards the aged. He preached religious tolerance whereby African traditional beliefs and foreign religions could co-exist and be given equal space. For him, nationalizing African traditional religion could lead the youths further from God and the ideal of the brotherhood of man (Balogun, 1947, p.12). He condemned the youth's disrespect and contempt for the aged, their efforts and wisdom on the grounds that 'Manners maketh a man' (Balogun, 1947, pp. 4-5). Importantly, the moral suasion of Kola Balogun could not be divorced from his religious background. While responding to the questions of a curious Zikist, Kola Balogun confessed that he was a member of the Roman Catholic Church.

In propagating and expanding the ideal of the boycott movement, Ojike embarked on nationwide campaigns against European culture. These campaigns took the forms of series of lecture tours, newspaper debates and formation of alternative African cultural societies such as African Musical Society (Iweriebor, 1996, p. 97). and the Academy of African Authors(The West African Pilot, 10 October 1947.). Significantly, Ojike's cultural nationalism contributed to the Zikist Movement by stirring up excitement and anti-imperial sentiment in Nigeria.

Before its formal affiliation with the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) in May 1947, the Zikist Movement had been supporting the NCNC programmes. With its widespread branches across the country, the movement provided logistic and mobilized crowds for the NCNC anywhere the latter organised campaigns. A good example was the role of the movement in organizing welcome receptions for NCNC delegates during the pan-Nigerian tour between 1946 and 1947 (Iweriebor, 1996, pp.105-106). The NCNC also benefitted from the protests and propaganda of the Zikist Movement. By 1948, the relationship between the Zikist Movement and the NCNC had become strained. This was the result of a number of factors. First, by 1948, the NCNC had become politically inactive due to disputes among the party's delegates to London over the use of funds and personal conducts (Okoye, 1981, p.112). In the course of this political inactivity, the zealous Zikists chose the path of positive action (Coleman, 1986, p. 298). The second factor was the discontent by a section of the Zikist Movement over the failure of some NCNC representatives (including Azikwe) in the Legislative Council to boycott their seats (Iweriebor, 1996, 135). The action was considered a regression of the collective efforts towards the liberation of Nigeria. The third and perhaps the most important factor was not unconnected with the question of strategy of agitations. The emotionally excited youths found the constitutional and gradual approach of the NCNC distasteful. By 1948, the Zikist Movement had begun to apply its own political strategy of positive action independent of the NCNC and Dr Azikwe (Iweriebor, 1996, p. 105).

The orgy of violence that characterised the activities of the Zikist Movement between 1948 and 1950 was not only rooted in the failure of the NCNC delegation to London but also in the derision

to which the delegates were subjected both by the British press and a section of the Nigerian press led by the Daily Service (DS) (Coleman, 1986, pp.293-295). When in August the delegates met the Colonial Secretary, Arthur Creech Jones, they were told to go home and cooperate with the colonial government experiment with the Richard's Constitution before any revision could be made (Iweriebor, 1996, p.131). The refusal by the Secretary of State to grant the delegates deserved attention was considered an insult on the people of the colony.

The second factor that accelerated the agitations of the Zikist Movement towards positive action was the ethnic rivalry between the Yoruba and Igbo in Lagos. Since the Ikoli-Akinsanya crisis of 1941, the relationship between the Igbo and the Yoruba had not been congenial. This was worsened by the press war between the DS which was the mouth organ of the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM), and the West African Pilot (WAP), the mouth piece of the NCNC. With the failure of the NCNC delegation to London, the DS found the excuse to jeer at the NCNC and its leaders. Azikiwe was marked as the object of ridicule and contempt by the NYM and the DS. At the stage of imminent confrontation between the two rivals, the Zikist Movement organised rallies and demonstrations against any organisation or individual instigating ethnic chauvinism in Nigeria. In the commitment of the Zikists to harmonize the warring parties, the need to divert the attention from ethnic conflict to a common enemy, the imperial administration, became the priority. Hence, the radical activities of the movement were geared towards averting an impending inter-tribal war (Okoye, 1996, p.124).

Of significance was the inspiration derived from the NCNC "Freedom Charter" as an alternative to the Richard's constitution.

Following this was the constitution of a shadow state and a shadow cabinet with Azikiwe as the Federal President (Iweriebor, 1996, p. 133). These actions portrayed the NCNC and the Zikist Movement as threats to the colonial state. It also signaled a new anti-colonial era marked by positive actions.

Besides, the activities of the Zikist leaders speeded the tensions towards climax. On 27 October 1948, the Zikist Movement organised a public lecture titled 'A Call for Revolution' delivered by Osita Agwuna (Coleman, 1986, p.298). He presented different charges against the British colonial government in Nigeria. He charged the government of Great Britain for violating rights and liberties of West Africans, for enslaving them, stealing their properties, exploiting their labour and land, and for perpetrating racial discrimination (BNA: CO 537/5801 C396888,'). For all these atrocities, Agwuna proposed a new philosophy characterised by courage, non-cooperation with Europeans, but marred by racial hatred. Agwuna suggested some solutions and recommended some lines of actions to certain sections of the society. He advised vigilance and active participation of people in both political and social life. To the workers he advised the proper use of strikes and collective bargaining to obtain justice from the exploitation and bullying of capitalism. He also proposed that the workers should conjointly with the nationalists attack their oppressors (BNA: CO 537/5801 C396888').

To the African proprietors of schools he suggested inculcation of hatred and contempt for the British Crown in their pupils and the boycott of the commemoration of the Empire Day (BNA: CO 537/5801 C396888'). While African newspapers and nationalist organisations were beseeched to jettison ethnic jingoism and bickering, they were asked to concentrate on liquidating foreign

rule in Nigeria and Africa. Agwuna also advocated the intensification of the boycott movement. European firms, banks, liquor shops, hotels, law courts, government ceremonial parades, dinners and post office saving banks should be ostracised for African owned industries and establishments (BNA: CO 537/5801 C396888'). He also advocated that civil disobedience should include the boycott of military service to the imperialist government; Britain should be abandoned to fight her war. The police and the soldiers were urged to defy the colonial order to beat or shoot the unarmed workers. For Agwuna, war with the imperialist nations was also imminent. Hence, he encouraged that youths in Africa should show interest:

in military tactics of defence, in physical adventures of all kinds and demonstrate more than a passing and academic interest in the methods and tactics of revolutionary movements in other countries and seek communion with them... (BNA: CO 537/5801 C396888')

The call for revolution was followed by the arrest of Agwuna. Other prominent leaders of the movement organised public lectures and mobilized masses to fulfil the aim of the positive action. During this period, Azikiwe and his Zik Group Press dissociated from the activities of the movement. Neither would the NCNC maintain a definite stance in its relation with the movement. Within a month, the Zikist Movement made another 'call for action' (Iweriebor, 1996, p.166) This was followed by violent responses against colonial officials and Europeans in Lagos, Enugu and Onitsha. It was characterised by clashes with the police and beating up of white colonial officials in different parts of colonial Nigeria. The colonial government responded to

the revolution with arrests and seditious trial of prominent leaders of the movement including Agwuna, Enahoro, Aniedobe and Dafe.

Another opportunity for revolution came in November 1949 when miners at the Enugu colliery protested against wage and racial discrimination through the system of “go-slow”. Fearful that the Zikists could seize the explosives in the mines, the government ordered armed officers to remove the explosives. Miners protested police attempt to remove the explosives, misinterpreting it as an attempt to close down the mine (Akpala, 1965; Jaja, 1983). The protest led to shootings and deaths of 18 miners and 3 protesters. The incident was followed by violent agitation, raiding and destruction of European stores in Enugu, Onitsha, Aba, Port Harcourt and Calabar.

The origin and spread of the violence to towns outside Enugu was blamed on the Zikists for two reasons. The secretary-general of the Colliery Workers’ Union (CWU), Okwudili Ojiyi, was a prominent member of the Zikist Movement. It was agreed in the official circle that Ojiyi’s activities were focused on creating tensed relationship between the workers and the Enugu Colliery management. Nor was he regarded as a responsible leader by members of the CWU. The third reason was that the Zikist Movement favoured violence as a potent strategy of protest as outlined by Agwuna in his 1948 lecture.

On 2 December 1949 the general secretary of the Zikist Movement, Mokwugo Okoye, issued a brief national programme on behalf of the national command of the movement to be distributed to all members of the movement. Coded ‘document no-one,’ or ‘code no-one’ it contained codes that were to be

committed to memory by members within three weeks (BNA: C.O. 537/5801 C39688, 'The National Programme'). 'Document no-one' described the "National Command" of the Movement as the trinity of the Amalgamated Union of UAC African Workers (UNAMAG) Ziskist Movement and Nigerian National Federation of Labour (NNFL). While the strategy of the national command was to coordinate the forces of positive action across the country, its motto and objectives were secrecy and ruthless execution respectively (BNA: C.O. 537/5801 C39688, 'The National Programme'). In a more belligerent posture, 'document no-one' urged Zikists to prepare to carry out reprisals by assassinating British officers particularly the Commissioners, Residents, the Governor and the Chief Secretary to the government; destroying oil storage centres, government houses and departments (BNA: C.O. 537/5801 C39688, 'The National Programme'). While the national command was nicknamed 'Crust John', located at 38 Ajasa Street, Lagos, all branches of the movement were requested to choose their code names and addresses. Every member participating in 'document no-one' was to be bound by the oath of allegiance (BNA: C.O. 537/5801 C39688, 'The National Programme'). In spite of the secrecy of the 'code no-one,' the intelligence about the civil disobedience of D-Day by the Zikists was decoded by agents of the colonial government the same day it was conceived (BNA: C.O. 537/5801 C796888, 'Gorsuch to Saloway, Barton, Ramage and Rex Ward').

From December 1949, events that culminated in the final collapse of the movement were rapidly drifting towards climax. In January 1950, the secretary general of the movement, Mokwugo Okoye, released important documents, the Independence Pledge (BNA: C.O. 537/5801 C396888, 'Independence Pledge- January 25, 1950'). and the Zikist Programme of Work, 1950-1951 (BNA: C.O.

537/5801 C396888, 'Programme of Work, 1950-1951'). While the former document outlined the five-fold disaster wrecked on the progress of the people of Africa by the Europeans, the latter was the reiteration of the commitment of the Zikist Movement to the liberation of the people of Nigeria under British imperial rule. Specifically, the Independence Pledge states:

Socially, we have been discriminated against even in our own country, in clubs, schools, employment, hospital facilities, in church and the arms and services of the State;... Customs and currencies have been so manipulated as to heap further burden on the workers and peasantry... Culturally, the system of education being sponsored by the foreign governments and their agents, the missionaries, has torn us from our past... Spiritually, compulsory disarmament has unmanned us... Politically, our status has never been so degraded as under the British regime ('Independence Pledge- January 25, 1950').

The Programme of Work on the other hand was an outline of Zikist methods, publicity and propaganda, economic and financial plan, social and political strategies, and the expected attitudes of the Zikists in courts and prisons ('Programme of Work, 1950'). On 7 February 1950 having obtained intelligence report on the Zikists' proposed next move, Governor Macpherson informed the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Arthur Creech Jones, of the need to search the premises of the principal members of the movement in Lagos and provinces for seditious materials in order to prosecute them (BNA: C.O. 537/5801 C396888, 'Sir John Macpherson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies'). The following day, the police pounced on the leaders of the

movement in Lagos (in the west), Jebba, Kano, Kaduna, Gusau (in the north), Enugu and Aba (in the East) (BNA: C.O. 537/5801 C396888, 'Zik 4 Lagos Feb. 10, Reuter').

Among seditious publications found at Okoye's house were the Constitution of the Zikist Movement, the Zimo Newsletter, a Zikist Movement document for internal circulation, texts of three undelivered lectures titled 'What Sattygraha (Mahatma Gandhi's Policy of Passive Resistance) Means to us,' 'The Call for Revolution,' and 'African Irredentism' (BNA: C.O. 537/5801 C396888, 'Zik 3 Lagos Feb. 10, Reuter'). At the house of Francis Ikenna Nzimiro, the twenty-four year old president of the Onitsha branch of the movement, the National Programme of the Movement was found (BNA: C.O. 537/5807 C396891 'Code 1 Lagos 7 March, Reuter.'). On 9 February 1950, Okoye and 25 other branch leaders were arrested and prosecuted (Okoye, 1981, p.147). Their sentences ranged between six months (for branch leaders) and 33 months (for other members of the central executives) found guilty. While Nzimiro was sentenced to nine months for being in possession of seditious publication (BNA: C.O. 537/5807 C396891, 'Zikist Lagos 23 March, Reuter'), Okoye received 33 months in gaol for the same offense (BNA: C. O. 537/5807 C396891, 'Zikist Lagos 8 March, Reuter').

Although the search and prosecution weakened the movement, Governor Macpherson still felt that Zikists could reorganise to re-launch acts of violence. Hiding under the unanimous advice of the Central Executive Council of colonial Nigeria, Governor Macpherson, in a correspondence to the secretary of state for the colonies, declared the Zikist Movement an unlawful society under Section 62 of the Criminal Code (BNA: C. O. 537/5807 C396891, 'Sir J. Macpherson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 25th

March 1950'). In addition to the above, Macpherson claimed he acted on the conclusive evidence from different parts of the country that showed the aims of the Zikist Movement to be: 'to stir up enmity and lawlessness and violence.' He claimed that its membership strength was a few hundred and that the overwhelming majority of people of Nigeria condemned the activities of the Zikists. More importantly, that although the movement was small and unrepresentative, its goals and methods were inimical to the good government and progress of the Nigerian people (Unlawful Society: Zikist Movement, Nigeria Gazette Extraordinary Vol. 37, No. 21, Lagos, 13th April 1950).

It is believed that the governor's decision was also based on the attack, with a knife, of the government chief secretary, Mr H. M. Foot, by a twenty-five year old member of the movement, Heelas Ugokwe (Okoye, 1981, p. 148). For this, Ugokwe was sentenced to twelve years imprisonment, although he was released after 6 years. He died of tuberculosis two years later (Okoye, 1981, 148).

Before the Cock Crow: Azikiwe and the Story of Valour and Failure, Denial and Frustration

When Dr Azikiwe was propounding the idea of Renascent Africa, he was perhaps oblivious of the difference between theory and praxis. Nor did the architect of the ideology of Zikism, Nwafor Orizu, realize the complexity of establishing his dream of African irredentism. It was not long before Dr Azikiwe himself joined the stream of the elders whom he had earlier accused of decelerating the movement towards the Renascent Africa. Hence, he soon realized that the sparks of youthfulness, whether in the human mind or physique, possessed a time limit. Even at the prime of his

youthfulness, Nwafor Orizu was not found at the forefront of the Zikist protests either. The difference between the theory and praxis of Zikism became fully manifested when the movement was banned by the colonial government.

The personality of Azikiwe, which had cast shadow over the Zikist Movement, contributed in no small way to the fall of the movement. Mokuwugo Okoye sums up the confusion and frustration of the Renascent Africans in the Zikist Movement thus:

Dr Azikiwe's denial of the Zikists before the cock crew twice was painful but understandable. After preaching revolution for a decade, he, a successful businessman and man of pleasure, was terrified when he saw one. He may have been right in restraining the ardour of the young activists and it has been claimed that his timely denunciations saved them from untimely death as martyrs of freedom (Okoye, 1981, p.122).

While Okoye's argument was not incorrect, it is rather delicate to invoke judgement on the author and symbol of the Renascent Africa, Azikiwe, without falling into the trap of accepting a mono-causal explanation for the failure of the Zikist Movement. Yet, this line of argument is very crucial to understanding the fall of the movement and the shape of nationalist movement in Nigeria after 1950.

It is a bit difficult to establish the position of Azikiwe on the activities of the Zikist Movement. For instance, when he was informed of the arrest of the leaders, his reaction was characterised by extreme anger. Although he was not opposed to the activities of the Zikists, yet he was against their rash and

unplanned actions, for 'he had often told Okoye to organise well before taking positive action' (BNA: K.V.2/1818 422256, 'Extract from Letter from S.L.O. Lagos: re- the Zikist Movement mentioning Azikiwe, 11 February, 1950'). His anger was also borne out of the fact that every legal cost which might result from the extreme activities or violence by the Zikist Movement was also a burden on NCNC; and Azikiwe was not prepared to waste the NCNC money 'on the defence of unplanned action of the movement.' In another statement, he hinted at his intention to declare a state of emergency after the NCNC conference in May 1950 and promised free legal assistance to the youth 'who are victimised as "nationalists"' (BNA: K.V.2/1818 422256, 'Extract from Letter from S.L.O. Lagos: re- the Zikist Movement mentioning Azikiwe, 22 February, 1950'). One colonial official complained thus about the inconsistency of Azikiwe over his relationship with the movement:

This attitude of Azikiwe is to my mind typical of the man. At the time of the arrest he was furious and a formal dissociation of the NCNC with the Zikist Movement appeared in the press. We later heard he is considering the granting of legal aid to those arrested and now we find him in the Chair advocating the support of all and sundry to the movement (BNA: K.V.2/1818 422256, 'Extract from Letter from S.L.O. Lagos: re- the Zikist Movement mentioning Azikiwe, 24 February, 1950).

There was no evidence to show that Azikiwe was committed to the ideal of the Zikist Movement beyond the symbolic patronage. Although he enjoyed the fame associated with his name and, his support for the movement did not exceed lip service. A good example could be found in his reaction to an article in the Daily Times that challenged him to declare publicly his relationship with

the Zikist Movement. His response was both incoherent and disowning. Although Azikwe conceded that any organization could adopt any means it considers expedient to attain its goal so long as it is condoned by the verdict of history, he denied the Zikist Movement as the organisation of young Nigerian patriots who used his name ‘without my knowledge and consent’(BNA: K.V.2/1818 422256, ‘Reuter, Lagos 21 April, 1950’).

An important factor in the fall of the movement was its lack of a coordinating strategy. One striking feature of the nationalist movement in the post-Second World War Nigeria was the question of strategies. While the political aspirations of Nigerian nationalists were collectively set toward the same goal of self-rule, they lacked unity with respect to their strategy. Two major factors, age and class, characterised the political strategies adopted by each group. Although the rich and educated nationalists favoured an inclusive political system qualified by the gradualist constitutional approach, the youths preferred immediate action even if it demanded their blood. They regarded the politics of the former to have caused too long a delay in the march towards independence. Hence, when a seemingly revolutionary youth leader in the Zikist Movement called upon them, they hearkened. But the failure to synchronise theory with praxis and the lack of coordinating strategy betrayed their aspirations and goals. Their eventual fanatic commitment to their struggle alienated the older nationalists who denounced them as irresponsible.

Conclusion

Zikism was an action-oriented ideology propagated by Nwafor Orizu, an admirer of Azikwe. The ideology promised universal

relevance to all facets of life. But a critical examination of Zikists' activities showed a wide gulf between the theory and praxis of the principle. Although organised as an anti-colonial movement, Zikism could also be viewed as a revolt against the old gradualist and constitutional approach towards the liberation of Africa and the realisation of the dream of Renascent Africa. The movement was dealt a devastating blow by the colonial government. Despite its setbacks especially the lack of support from older nationalists, particularly Azikwe, it achieved the landmark victory of constituting a big threat to the colonial government in Nigeria in the post Second World War era.

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