The development of local government in a Nigerian township

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RÉSUMÉ

La municipalité d'Abakaliki dont la population est d'environ 17,000 personnes est située dans le comté de Ibo, au sud-est de la Nigérie. C'est une municipalité qui, en ces dernières années, a grandi rapidement en raison de l'introduction de la culture du riz, de l'accroissement du commerce des bestiaux et du développement d'un centre administratif gouvernemental. Sa population est formée en grande majorité d'Ibo d'origine étrangère, les Ibo indigènes ne jouant qu'un rôle effacé dans les affaires urbaines. Comme c'est le cas pour tant d'autres cités africaines, le gouvernement local est de date récente et sa forme est déterminée par une organisation politique supérieure à celle de la municipalité. Il se compose essentiellement d'un conseil et de conseillers permanents. Durant les quinze dernières années, ce conseil a subi plusieurs modifications. En 1960, les conseillers, à l'exception d'un seul, étaient tous des hommes; plusieurs d'entre eux étaient d'âge moyen et la plupart, chrétiens. Aucun des conseillers n'était né dans la région; ils avaient, en général, un peu d'éducation, mais, à l'exception de quelques-uns, aucune expérience dans l'art du gouvernement.

Les activités du conseil sont essentiellement régulatrices et comportent le contrôle des constructions, la règlementation du marché local ainsi que la responsabilité des mesures sanitaires. Le Conseil n'a pas de ressources suffisantes pour développer l'éducation, les écoles ou d'autres entreprises. Il est financièrement dépendant d'autres agences du gouvernement. Ainsi n'a-t-il pratiquement aucun plan d'ensemble d'améliorations des conditions locales. Bien qu'en principe il jouisse d'une autonomie assez grande, en pratique, cependant, il n'a que très peu d'autorité, vu qu'il est sans ressource suffisante. Il faut ajouter que le conseil ne représente qu'une très petite unité dans une administration provinciale ou régionale sans cesse grandissante. Or, c'est précisément sur ce plan que s'exerce de plus en plus, le contrôle des affaires municipales.

Une branche locale du parti politique national exerce quelque contrôle sur la sélection des candidats au conseil, mais n'impose aux conseillers aucune idéologie spécifique. Dans les disputes relativement à ce contrôle, le conseil se divise en deux factions dont l'une représente la majorité, et l'autre,

l'opposition. Ces divisions ont entravé le travail du conseil, mais non sérieusement. Les quartiers de la municipalité peuvent parfois exercer une influence sur la nomination des conseillers. Il n'y a pas en Abakaliki de groupements qui pourraient exercer une pression économique sur le conseil.

La plupart des conseillers ont surtout connu le système relativement égalitaire du contrôle politique traditionel, mais se sont rapidement adaptés à la nouvelle forme de gouvernement local, bien qu'ils ne l'aient pas choisie et que leurs fonctions et activités soient très limitées et de plus en plus dominées par une organisation politique à un niveau supérieur.

Urbanization is a common phenomenon in Africa, and it has been analysed from many points of view (International African Institute 1956; Little 1959). While there is disagreement among scholars as to the nature of the urbanization process it will be accepted here that it involves a high population density where this has not existed before, and greater labour specialization, class distinctions, and cultural heterogeneity among the urban dwellers than in the rural hinterland around the urban center. Furthermore, sooner or later some system of authority and government develops in the urban center which exerts control over its inhabitants. This report will be concerned with a description of political authority in Abakaliki Township, Southeastern Nigeria, as an example of developing urban government in its early stages within the framework of a relatively egalitarian traditional cultural background.[1]

One characteristic of urban government in Africa that sets the framework for the analysis to follow is that its development has generally been guided from above, through governmental organizations above the urban level such as regional, national, or colonial administrations. These have determined the basic structure of the urban government and often have maintained permanent controls over it once it has been established. While there is also some local evolution of authority and leadership, it is often secondary or external to the formal

[1] Field work was carried out at Abakaliki between June and December, 1960 on a research grant from the National Science Foundation, Washington, D.C. I wish to thank the Councillors and staff of the Abakaliki Urban County Council, and the many administrative officers and townspeople in Abakaliki who helped me in this project. Dr. K. O. Dike, Director, Nigerian National Archives, was kind enough to permit me to see certain unpublished materials in the National Archives in Enugu.

government structure. Further, in those urban centers in Africa in which the control of the newly formed government is not mainly in European hands, the Africans who come to form the government, or a major portion of it, come from cultural heritages in which they are generally familiar with a different structure of government and with traditional patterns of authority. These are frequently persons of middle age who in their younger and more formative years were familiar with traditional structures of government as modified by colonial rule. This is particularly true in the newly developing African cities today, and it is certainly so for the urban centers of southeastern Nigeria, including Abakaliki, none of which are of great age or have ever had a large European population. A central problem in these cases, therefore, is how persons socialized in a traditional and colonial rural culture adjust to a new urban government, the structuring of which they have had little or no control. Further, it is relevant to consider what attempts to change the new formal structure occur, and what modes of decision-making develop within it.

This is not, however, an essay on the influence of tribalism on urban government. Following Gluckman (1960) it seems fruitful to approach the problem of urban government in terms other than the influence, or lack of influence, of tribal patterns on urban authority. Traditional cultural factors play important roles in social change, and this is certainly true in Abakaliki, but the nature of the urban setting seems to demand the development of certain government functions irrespective of traditional factors. Rather than tribalism as a basis for study, the problem of change will be approached in terms of how the past experiences of persons are brought to play and are modified by the nature of the urban political scene.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Abakaliki settlement was founded in 1905 when, in the course of the pacification of the northeastern part of Southern Nigeria, troops under British control formed a station there and the Southern Nigerian Government established an administrative center for the area. At this time there was no town at Abakaliki,

but its good water supply and command of the surrounding countryside afforded a convenient place for a government post within range of three large Ibo groups, the Izi, who controlled the settlement area, the Ezza, and the Ikwo, as well as a number of smaller Ibo and non-Ibo groups. Members of these three culturally and historically related groups lived in small hamlets dispersed about the countryside. These Northeastern Ibo (Jones 1961), who form a part of the large and politically dominant Ibo-speaking people of Eastern Nigeria, were and are today primarily yam farmers, growing some of the largest and finest yams in the region, and trading them to neighbouring groups.

Abakaliki became a typical Nigerian rural administrative center with a small government staff consisting of a few Europeans and some African clerks and labourers, who administered the area known as Abakaliki Division, composed of some half million persons, and who sent out patrols from time to time to "pacify the natives." The troops, who were stationed in Abakaliki until about 1935, were mainly Hausa and other Northern Nigerian Moslems, though they also included some Yoruba from Western Nigeria. Practically no Ibo belonged to the force at this time. Wives and children of the troops soon settled with them in the barracks area. Hausa and other Northerners came as petty traders, prostitutes, and hunters, and formed a separate community at the edge of the Government Station. No administration was established over this community, called Abakpa, the common name in southeastern Nigeria for Northerners' quarters, and these Moslems came to have their own traditional ruler, Sarki, and to settle their problems among themselves.

About 1925, when the population was something over 1,000 persons, there was a period of road building in the area, and roads connecting Abakaliki with Afikpo to the south, Enugu to the west, and Ogoja to the east, ended the isolation of the Government Station. Many Ibo came to Abakaliki as road workers, and they settled in their own community, Kingsway, in back of the Station. The road contractors and overseers were mainly stranger Ibo and they generally hired persons from their home area, so that workers came from Afikpo, about forty miles

to the south, Udi about forty miles to the west, and from the Awka and Onitsha areas eighty miles and more to the southwest. Many of these Ibo eventually settled in Abakaliki and became tradesmen, government workers, or farmers. Izi and other indigenous Ibo were relatively uninterested in road work and they took little part in it, but continued to follow their traditional ways while the Station developed in their midst.

No local administration was established over the growing Abakaliki settlement, but gradually, as the system of Native Authority developed in the Division, the Moslem and Ibo strangers came under the control of the Izi Native Authority, and they remained so until the 1950's, particularly in terms of the system of courts and tax collection.

The population of the Abakaliki settlement remained small, numbering only a few thousand, until after the Second World War. During the war the Nigerian Government introduced rice growing into the area, and rice production has expanded until today it is the major rice producing area in the Eastern Region. Ibo from the land-starved overpopulated Awka, Onitsha and Owerri regions to the southwest came in large numbers to grow rice, some settling in the rural areas but others in Abakaliki itself, in Abakpa and the surrounding region. (As a result of the expansion of the Government Station after the Second World War, Kingsway was closed and its inhabitants resettled in Abakpa and the area surrounding the Station.) These farming Ibo hired Izi, Ezza, and Ikwo labourers to do much of the hard work of rice growing, and themselves engaged more and more in rice milling and trading and in other businesses in the town. Other Ibo came as bicycle repairmen, prostitutes, barbers, tinkers, carpenters, petty traders, and middlemen in the yam trade, buying yams from local Ibo farmers and shipping them to Enugu, Awka, Onitsha and other densely populated areas to sell. The town became a milling and trading center for rice, and today ships milled rice as far as Lagos and Calabar by lorry. These stranger Ibo, who came from more acculturated areas of Ibo country than the local inhabitants were used to travelling, and maintained contact with their home country though they brought families with them and they married women from the home area. They

considered the indigenous Ibo of the area, who spoke a distinctly different dialect, to be conservative land-bound people lacking in opportunistic drive. As the stranger Ibo settlement expanded they gradually absorbed the indigenous Ibo hamlets, a process which still continues today.

A second major postwar development was the growth of Abakaliki as a cattle market along a major cattle route from the tsetse-free areas of Northeastern Nigeria, and from Bamenda in the Cameroons. From Abakaliki the route splits, one branch heading south to Afikpo and the southern cities of Umuahia, Aba, Port Harcourt, and Calabar, and the other branch going westward to Enugu and Onitsha. The cattle trade, which has continued to increase as urban centers in southeastern Nigeria develop, has brought a new flow of Northern Nigerians to Abakaliki. Many of them, however, are transient Fulani cattle herders.

A third major development since the Second World War has been the rapid growth of the Government Station, so that today, including daily paid workers, there is a staff of about one thousand persons who are employed by the Divisional headquarters (The District Office), the Provincial Office, the Hospital, Police, Prison, Post Office, Public Works Department, Veterinary Department, the Abakaliki Urban County Council, and other government agencies. This development is part of the growing enlargement of government services in southeastern Nigeria, and there is nothing atypical about Abakaliki in this regard, except that it has recently become a Provincial headquarters and certain new offices have been established there.[2]

Originally most of the African staff in the administration were Yoruba and Bini from Western Nigeria, but by the 1920's Ibo had started to enter the public service and now the administration is mainly Ibo, with a smattering of other groups represented. Characteristically, very few of the Ibo are indigenous

[2] Abakaliki Province was formerly a part of Ogoja Province, whose headquarters was at Ogoja, though certain government departments, such as Agriculture and Education, were always centered at Abakaliki. In 1959 Ogoja was divided into Abakaliki and Ogoja Provinces to facilitate their administration. Abakaliki is also the headquarters of Abakaliki Division, one of the three Divisions which together form Abakaliki Province.

to the area; they come, as in the case of traders and rice farmers, from the more acculturated Ibo areas to the west and southwest. By the time of Nigerian Independence, in October, 1960, this administration, with the exception of the important post of Provincial Secretary, was Nigerianized, and there was at Abakaliki a small group of well-educated senior civil service officers who were mainly Ibo.[3]

A fourth impetus to the development of Abakaliki town after the war was the exploration of the lead-zinc deposits in the area, particularly in the Nyeba area, about fifteen miles south of Abakaliki. The mines at one time employed several hundred Nigerians, mainly stranger Ibo, some of whom lived in town while others were quartered at the mines. These workers helped to stimulate business in Abakaliki. The mines were closed at the time of research.

By 1960 the population of Abakaliki Township was estimated to be about 17,000 persons.[4] The population in 1953, when the last census was taken, was 9,687 (Nigeria. Census Superintendent 1953:11). Since that time new areas have been incorporated into the township and there is considerable evidence of population growth. Like many young urban centers Abakaliki has a considerably higher male than female population, and a preponderance of young adults, with few elders.

The population now consists of four main groups.

1. The Northern Nigerians, about 1,000 persons, who control the cattle trade, and are also petty traders, tailors, and prostitutes. They live together in the original Abakpa settlement

[3] Expatriates living in the area included a number of Dutch engineers, working on the Ogoja road, who lived with their families in the Government Station at the time of this study, and an American poultry expert lived and worked at the Agricultural Farm in the township. Two missionaries, one Scottish and one American, and an English mine manager lived within a radius of fifteen miles of the township. A number of Irish Catholic Priests lived in the township.

[4] This figure is partly based on the number of taxable males in the town and partly on a rough estimate of population growth since the 1953 census. Census figures for the township are not accurate, as some persons living in town were counted in their home areas or in the hinterland farmland areas, where they sometimes also had homes, and some, particularly mobile traders, were never counted at all.

with their own mosque and their traditional religious leader, Liman, as well as their own chief, Sarki. In addition, one of their oldest residents, a Mallam, who speaks English and Ibo, has for many years served as this group's representative in dealing with the administration. He is at present a member of the Urban Council.

2. The stranger population, mostly Ibo, composed of more than 10,000 persons, are traders, farmers, rice mill owners, contractors, and labourers who live around Abakpa and the Government Station. Coming mainly from the Awka and Onitsha areas, they also include persons from other sections of Ibo country, particularly Aro Chuku, Owerri, Umuahia, and Afikpo. These Ibo groups vary somewhat from one another in custom and language, but they unite as a group in considering themselves different from the local Ibo and the Moslems. Members of some of these groups tend to live together, so that there is, for example, an Afikpo "quarter", but residence is on the whole quite variable.

3. The government workers, who number about 1,000, and their families, are, on the whole, better educated than the stranger Ibo just discussed, and except in the course of their official duties they generally take little interest in town affairs. They are transient, being subject to government transfer, and most of them live separately from the townspeople, generally in better quarters and with higher living standards. Their offices and quarters are mainly on the Government Station. This area is Crown Land, now under the control of the Eastern Region, Ministry of Town Planning. The land has a separate legal status from that of the rest of the township, a difference of some importance in Abakaliki local government. While Government workers can vote for Councillors they cannot, as civil servants, run for Council offices or take an active part in township politics.

4. The indigenous Ibo population, several thousand strong, live mainly on the periphery of the township, scattered about in small hamlets, and as the town expands outwards they generally lease their homes and land and move out of the urban area. Most of them work as farmers and labourers. They have never had much influence in the town, and few of them are active

traders or artisans, or hold clerical or teachers' positions. They have benefited from the rice industry, in that they lease their farmland to strangers, hire themselves out as labourers, sell firewood (used in processing rice as well as in cooking) in the town, and so on. The indigenes living in town look outward to their rural leaders and councils and do not take an active part in township affairs.

Some class distinctions have developed in the township within all these groups. Among the Moslems there are a few prominent cattle traders in addition to the Sarki, Liman, and the Mallam who is a member of the Urban Council. Among the Izi there are a few prominent persons; and among the stranger Ibo and other groups there are a number of contractors, lorry owners, traders, and other businessmen who appear distinctly above the average economically, socially, and in political influence. In the case of the Government workers there are the educated elite of the senior service. There is some contact between influential persons in these four groups, particularly the government elite and the businessmen, but class distinctions are loose and ill-defined, and home ties and friendships cut across nascent class lines, so that a member of the elite may include among his personal friends a labourer or a tailor.

Most of the persons residing in the town have a sense of identity with it and enjoy living there. There are some who even though they have retired have chosen to remain rather than to return to their home community. While almost all the strangers in town retain strong ties with their home, they also have a sense of belongingness in the township, with its way of life and its attractive expanding economy. However workers in the government civil service frequently do not share these views, and some who have worked or lived in large cities consider Abakaliki to be quite small and rural in outlook.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Between 1905 and 1946 there was apparently no government organization or council concerned with the Abakaliki settlement area. It fell, as has been indicated, within Izi jurisdiction and was subject to what few powers the Izi Warrant Chiefs, and

later the Native Authority possessed. In fact, however, it appears that the Moslems and Ibo settled many of their problems themselves and the Izi in the settlement followed traditional law and custom.

In 1946 an enterprising District Officer at Abakaliki, O.P. Gunning, initiated the Abakaliki Township Advisory Board, which lasted until sometime after 1950. For the first two years the Board had twelve members: in 1948 it was enlarged to twenty-five and in 1949, to thirty-five. The members were elected by unions or "meetings" representing the various ethnic groups and subgroups in town (Abakaliki Township Advisory Board n.d.). Such unions serve stranger groups as mutual-aid, loan and burial societies (Ottenberg 1955; Little 1957; Coleman 1958: 211-14) and they developed in the town from about 1925 onward. Their members include civil servants as well as other townsmen. Some of them were formed on the basis of provincial or divisional boundaries, but most were based on clans or village-groups. A few were tribal organizations. The Board representatives chosen by the unions were invariably prominent members of the unions. There was no Moslem union, the Sarki choosing his own representative, and there were no members from the indigenous Izi, Ezza, or Ikwo, who had no unions.

The Board held a preliminary meeting once a month in the house of its Secretary to draw up an agenda and then met with the District Officer. It had no financial resources and no real authority; rather, it functioned to guide and advise the District Officer on township matters and to act as a sounding board for administration policy. It also concerned itself with a number of problems that were developing in the growing urban area, which could not be effectively handled through the Native Authority. These included the laying out and leasing of new plots in Abakpa, the development of a new market site, the erection and rental of market stalls, and the selection of a market master. The Board was also concerned with control over housebreaking and other forms of burglary that were rampant at this time, and with clearing "undesirables" from the town. Other questions involved the removal of the public cemetery to a more distant location, the erection of latrines and incinerators, the development of a water supply, the building of a cattle pound,

and the naming of the streets. While the Council had little authority, it provided an opportunity for the development of some form of government to meet specifically local urban conditions. Some of the Advisory Board members have become prominent politicians in the Division since that time.

By 1948 there was talk of eventual Nigerian independence, and a drive was begun by the Government to reorganize the Native Administration in the Eastern Region, following the model of English local government (Anonymous 1950; Stevens 1953; Livingston Booth 1955; Akpan 1955; Harris 1957). This first took the form of the development of Divisional Councils throughout the East, which obtained legal status by the 1950 Ordinance (Nigeria. Eastern Region 1950). By 1955 Local Government was fully introduced into the East through the 1955 Local Government Law (Nigeria. Eastern Region 1955), which was subsequently amended many times and has recently been replaced by the 1960 Local Government Law (Nigeria. Eastern Region 1960a). The purpose of these laws was to develop, throughout the East, a uniform procedure for democratic local government councils which were to possess considerable local autonomy, though they were to be guided by the Regional Government through local administrative officers (Nigeria. Eastern Region 1957).

Between about 1950 and 1955 the attention of the Abakaliki administration seems to have been focused mainly on the development of a Divisional Council, the Abakaliki Native Authority Divisional Council. This was organized as early as 1947 to serve the half million persons in the Division, including the township which had two representatives on this Council. The power to act as agent for leasing land and certain powers over road building and building codes gradually passed to this Council, though other administrative and tax matters affecting the township remained under the control of the Izi Native Authority Council. The Advisory Board gradually disappeared from the scene, with the result that there was no effective local government between about 1950 and 1955. The Divisional Council, predominantly rural in its membership and mainly concerned with rural development, was unable to administer the urban area,

with its special problems, and the District Office at Abakaliki seems to have carried much of the burden of urban administration.

Toward the end of 1954, in anticipation of the formation of a local government in the township, plans were made in the District Office to establish a temporary council. In December, 1954, thirty-eight councillors were selected from seven wards which had been established in the town by the administration to form the Temporary Abakaliki Town Council. Voting was rather informal, each ward holding a meeting and bringing forth its chosen candidates to the election officials. This Council was replaced by a twenty-one member Council about March, 1955. Its members were chosen by having electors in the wards whisper their votes to election officials. This second Council became the Abakaliki Urban District Council in October, 1955, by instrument of the Regional Government. These early councils established working committees and prepared the way for the regular Urban Council which was to come in 1956, but they were too short-lived to accomplish anything notable.

In March, 1956, a new nineteen-member Council was elected by secret ballot from nineteen wards created for this purpose by the District Office with six new members. One of these replaced a member who had died. The Council, according to the 1955 Local Government Law, was to serve a three-year term, but preparations for the Federal election of 1959 delayed the election until April, 1960, when the present Council took office. This latest Council was called, by 1960 Local Government Law, the Abakaliki Urban County Council. It is this Council that we are primarily concerned with in this study. However, two points of interest concerning the earlier Councils should be mentioned. First, the Abakaliki Divisional Native Authority Council gave up most of the controls it had taken from the Advisory Board upon the establishment of the new Urban Council. This Divisional Council itself was reorganized in 1955 as the Abakaliki County Council and lasted for four years. This Council did not collect rates, as the Urban Council came to do, but had the right to obtain sums by precept from the Urban Council and the three Rural District Councils in the Division. The Urban Council elected one of its members as its representative to this

larger Council. The latter was primarily concerned with educational matters, but proved ineffective, and was disbanded, along with sixteen other County Councils in the east, by the Regional Government (Nigeria. Eastern Region 1960b). There has never been a Local Government Council superior to the Urban Council with powers over the latter since that time.

Second, the 1956-1960 Council worked out the basic pattern of operation that has been followed by the present Council. It had, however, a poor reputation in the township, and some persons felt that there was considerable mismanagement of funds and corruption on the part of the Councillors and the Council's office staff. As we shall see, this led to considerable changes in Council membership after the 1960 election which in effect brought in a reform government. However the basic pattern of the Council meetings, and of the committee and staff organization was established by 1960.

STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF THE COUNCIL

Background of the Councillors

The members of the Abakaliki Urban County Council are, on the average, middle aged. There are a few senior persons of influence, but it is the kind of group that in traditional Ibo society would have too many young persons in it to have much influence. Similarly, there is little, if any, pattern of deference to age in Council meetings, as would be the case in the traditional society. This is perhaps one reason why the meetings take a long time to reach decisions; there are few checks on the Councillors' speaking out.

There is only one female member, the first ever elected to an Abakaliki Urban Council. Her husband was formerly the Councillor from their ward, and after he resigned to become a judge in the newly created court of the Council she was elected despite much critical and anti-feminine opposition. Her husband and family were influential in her election, though she is also a popular female leader in town. But the general orientation of the townspeople is that politics is not a women's affair, or that

the most appropriate political activity for them is to take part in the women's branch of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (N.C.N.C.), the major political party in the township.

All the Councillors claim to be Christians except for the Moslem member and one Ibo who come from a Catholic background but is a "traditionalist," that is, he likes to follow traditional ceremonies and rituals, and goes home from time to time to take part in these activities. The Moslem represents the main Moslem ward in town and is one of the oldest citizens of the town. Of the nineteen Councillors nine are Protestants (six Anglican, two Methodist, and one Presbyterian) and eight are Catholics. Not all are churchgoers, though several are elders or hold other positions in their church. The proportions of Catholics and Protestants on the Council seem roughly to mirror those of the population. Differences between them have not been a serious factor in Council decisions so far, though there is some suspicion between the two groups, and Protestants feel that in general matters the Catholics are favoured in the Province, the rural areas being predominantly Catholic. The issue came somewhat into the open over the possibility of the Council's supporting a Protestant secondary school in the township, but other factors, such as the evident inability of the Council to finance the project, were in the end much more significant in the Council's decision not to operate the school than were church rivalries.

The Councillors generally belong to the church they or their parents joined in their home areas, both Anglican and Catholic missions being active in the regions from which most of the members came. None of the members belong to any of the nine small fundamentalist or faith-healing churches that have come into the town in the 1950's (Assemblies of God, Apostolic, Apostolic Faith, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, Faith Tabernacle, Church of Christ, Cherubim and Seraphim, Holy Band of Bethel). Members of these churches are generally at a somewhat lower socio-economic level than the Awka-Onitsha Ibo strangers, are of more recent origin in the township, and in many cases come from Ibo areas other than the Awka-Onitsha region.

The ethnic origin of the Councillors reflects the dominance

of stranger Ibo in town. Eighteen are stranger Ibo, while one is a Hausa from the North. Seven Councillors come from the Awka area, and of these three are from one village-group, Enugu Ukwu, and two are from another, Adazi. There are six from the Onitsha area, mainly from communities around Onitsha Town. Two members are of Aro origin, belonging to the famous Ibo trading and travelling group (Ottenberg 1958), two are from the populous Owerri area, and one is from Udi, only about fifty miles west of Abakaliki. There are no representatives of the indigenous Ibo on the Council. These persons are scattered about the town and do not participate actively in town politics, preferring to join in the activities of the rural Councils. In the former Urban Council there was one Izi, who did not run again in 1960, but instead ran for the Izi District Council. He became its Chairman and is now a member of the Eastern House of Assembly and a Parliamentary Secretary in the regional capital, Enugu. A young man, he is one of the few literate Izi who are active in politics.

None of the Councillors were born in Abakaliki. They seem to come from small towns or rural areas, and not from the larger cities of Eastern Nigeria such as Onitsha, Enugu, or Aba. They are from areas where schools and missions have existed for a long time and European culture has made inroads into traditional custom and belief. It is the only Council in the Division in which English is regularly used at meetings and several of its members have had some secondary school training. Not all Councillors are schooled, however, and there are about five whose English is poor and who take little part in the Council's debates.

The Councillors have lived in Abakaliki for an average of about eighteen years, which is probably longer than most Abakalikians, the oldest, the Moslem representative having dwelt there about forty years and the youngest, about five years. The Councillors are well established in business and trade in the township, and while some of the most affluent townsmen are not on the Council the Councillors are, on the whole, well off. Like many others from the town they are usually involved in a number of business activities at once. For example, one of them is a yam farmer and contractor, and he controls plots (house lots) and farmland. Formerly he was a petty trader and a lorry owner.

Another owns a rice mill and trades in rice and yams that he himself grows and that he purchases from others. Typically the Councillors are traders of some sort, do some contracting (usually housebuilding), have some farms which are worked partly by hired labour, and control a few plots of land in the town which they rent. Despite the fact that the rice industry is a major one (there are more than one hundred small mills in town), only a few Councillors own or have financial interests in rice mills, and while there is an Abakaliki Rice Mill Owners Association, it is not a very powerful group.

The Councillors' level of government experience is low. Ten of them were elected to a Council for the first time in 1960 and apparently had not previously held political office. Only one, the Moslem representative, served on the Abakaliki Township Advisory Board. The Chairman of the present Council, himself a new Councillor, was for many years a Court Clerk in the Abakaliki Divisional area. A few of the Councillors have had experience in the local party organization, the N.C.N.C., but most of the important party officials are not Councillors. Many Councillors hold positions within their ethnic unions and have gained leadership experience and a following in this matter. However, for most of them the Council is a new and complex political organization in which they are feeling their way.

Though the Councillors have not had a great deal of direct political experience they come to the Council with expectations based partly on their experiences at home during their formative years and partly on certain principles of political action that developed during the colonial period and are still operative in their home areas and in Abakaliki.

The majority of the stranger Ibo come from the area classified by Forde and Jones (1950: 30-32) as the Western or Nri-Awka group of the Northern Ibo. This includes the Awka and Onitsha Ibo. It is an area of Ibo country which has had contact with European missionaries, traders, and administrators for about one hundred years. It is very advanced educationally, for Nigeria, and has produced many of Nigeria's prominent politicians.

This traditional culture (Forde and Jones 1950: 30-32; Basden 1938; Thomas 1913; Jeffreys 1935; 1936) is characterized,

like most of Ibo country, by the presence of a considerable number of relatively independent village-groups (Forde and Jones list thirty-two) which are politically autonomous and in which patrilineal clans and lineages form the framework of the organization of the society. These independent traditional political units vary in population size from several thousand to more than fifty thousand persons. The area is thickly populated, the people being yam farmers and palm-wine tappers with some palm fruit production. There is a long tradition in the area of the seasonal migration of blacksmiths, farmers, and diviners. There are four categories of traditional leaders: certain title holders (the titles are frequently achieved rather than inherited), certain priestly chiefs, lineage and clan heads, and elders who represent villages or village-groups. The extent to which these categories are important and to which authority is centralized varies from one autonomous unit to another, but all four seem to play some role everywhere. Decisions are not usually reached until there is considerable discussion among the leaders and elders, and they may take a considerable time to make. There is great respect for seniority of age in public speaking, decision-making and in most aspects of social life. Political favours are usually paid for in money and/or food and palm wine. The leaders expect these payments, and it is considered proper that they should receive such things for the work they do. These Ibo societies are not highly autocratic and they are relatively open politically, like other Ibo areas (Ottenberg 1959). There is considerable emphasis on individual initiative in the economic and political fields and possibilities for social and political advancement exist for most men, though the position of women is much more limited. Factionalism within and between lineages, clans, villages and village-groups, and centering around influential leaders, is endemic. There is no traditional state or super-governmental organization binding the autonomous Ibo groups together (though today, of course, this exists through modern political organizations), and politics is essentially localized. The leadership system in other sections of Ibo country does not differ greatly in general principles from those described above. It is this kind of political background that Councillors bring to Abakaliki from their own traditional culture.

The modifications brought about by the colonial system cannot be discussed here, but they have brought into being an added set of expectations concerning governmental operations. These include an awareness of the centralized authority of the colonial system, now the national and regional system, and of the great power of a few individuals, such as District Officers, formerly European, now mainly Nigerian. There is also a realization that within the administration there are channels of bribery and that contacts are made and jobs or contracts secured by working through officials or more especially their subordinates, and that this is a common practice in Nigeria. The question is not so much whether one should or should not give or accept favours but how one should do it. There is a strong sense that rewards exist within the political system beyond the ordinary salaries and that some sort of favours or presents are necessary to get things done effectively.

There is also a surprising familiarity with debating and parliamentary procedures on the part of many Ibo in Abakaliki, partly gained through the use of modified Robert's Rules of Order in ethnic union meetings and other modern voluntary associations.

While not all Councillors consider the Council as an avenue to more lucrative political positions, some of the more ambitious ones do. The fact is that Council positions in Eastern Nigeria are a recognized step in the political system. The case of the former Abakaliki Councillor who became a Parliamentary Secretary has already been discussed and is well known in Abakaliki; there are others who have gone from the township area to important regional and federal positions within a few years. The Abakaliki area, and most of Eastern Nigeria, is an open society politically. The traditional Ibo political system was also open, but the present-day rewards are much greater in prestige, salary, housing, and in other ways. There are politicians in the Abakaliki Divisional area, for example, who have gone from political positions paying less than £ 100 per annum to positions paying more than £ 1,000 in a very short time. The relatively classless nature of the township accentuates the "openness" of the political system: it is available to nearly all males, not just a certain group or class.

Council Meetings

The Council normally meets toward the end of the month, following the monthly meetings of its four committees, whose minutes are sent to the Councillors to read before this general meeting. The Council also holds extra meetings to discuss special matters such as the preparations for the Independence celebrations, or to greet an august visitor, for example, the Premier of the Eastern Region. The Chairman conducts the meeting according to the Council's own Standing Rules. A number of other persons are usually present, including the Council Secretary (also called the Town Clerk), who explains office actions and answers questions from the Councillors, with reference to whether or not specific decisions the Council had previously approved have been carried out. There is also a clerk who records the minutes, a Treasurer who explains budgetary matters when called upon to do so, a Building Inspector, and a Lands Clerk. In addition, the Local Government Commissioner may be present to introduce a new matter, to get the Council to act on some issue, or to present some plan to the members. This Commissioner is not part of the Council Staff, but he is normally a District Officer or an Assistant District Officer in the Divisional administration who is attached to the Council, though he carries out other duties as well. He is the representative of the Eastern Region Ministry of Local Government in Enugu to the Council. He is in charge of guiding the Council's affairs, as will be indicated below, but he usually does not bother to remain for the whole Council meeting. Since the organization of the Urban Council the Commissioner has sometimes been an Englishman and at other times a Nigerian. Few visitors other than an occasional reporter appear at meetings, even when it is known in advance that major issues may be discussed. Townspeople prefer to make their feelings known at the local level of the ward or through a 'watchdog' organization, the Abakaliki Tax and Ratepayers Association, rather than directly by coming to Council meetings and talking with their Councillor there. By Local Government Law Government minutes of the Council's meetings are supposed to be available through the Council's office, but they are not usually accessible to the public and there is virtually no demand for them.

Townsmen occasionally read their Councillor's copies, but most often they prefer to speak to their Councillor directly.

Attendance at meetings during the period of research was high; there were rarely more than one or two members absent. The Councillors receive a sitting fee of 10s per meeting, including committee meetings, which is their only salary, though the Chairman receives a yearly allowance of £156 (£180 in 1961-1962). Councillors generally feel that the sitting fee is insufficient, that this kind of work takes a good deal of their time away from regular business activities or trade.

There is no emphasis on dress and pomp in the Council; some members wear European clothes and others African, and status symbols are virtually absent. Unlike many rural Councils in the East, there are no chiefs or special members in this Council. It has the right, as do all eastern Nigerian Councils, to recommend the appointment of certain persons to the Council as traditional rulers, and the Council has discussed this several times, but it has reached the conclusion that there are no indigenous traditional chiefs in the urban area.

Monthly Council meetings usually last all day. The main business is, first of all to approve the minutes of its past meeting, and second, and more crucial, to approve the minutes of the Finance and Staff Committee, the Health Committee, the Works and Roads Committee, and the General Purposes Committee. It is in these four committees that much of the legislation and other activities of the Council is carried out, and by approving the committees' minutes the Council formalizes their recommendations. The minutes are therefore scrutinized very carefully, the Chairman of the committee under discussion is carefully questioned, and portions of the minutes may be amended or rejected. The Council rarely takes up an issue on its own and makes a final decision on it there and then. It is more common to refer the matter to a committee for examination. Issues may originate with the Councillors, but they frequently come from the Local Government Commissioner, from some regional ministry, or through letters from private citizens or special interest groups. If a matter is a delicate one the Council may "go into committee" to discuss it, that is, exclude the public and staff, except the

Secretary. This is frequently done for matters affecting the Council's staff.

There is freedom for all members to talk, and the meetings are usually loud, animated with much discussion, and decisions are only slowly reached. It is not that the Chairman is ineffectual, rather there is an expectation, which has a background in traditional Ibo society, that every member should feel free to express his opinions before they attempt to arrive at a decision. There is a majority group, led by the Chairman, and an "opposition" led by the Chairman of the previous Council; most issues are discussed in terms of the points of view of these two groups. The basis of this factionalism will be indicated below, but it should be noted that the majority is a clear one, that many votes in the Council follow this division to some extent, and that this split permeates almost all the Council's activities.

Among the problems that concerned the Council in its meeting during 1960, the following are indicative of the Council's interests and activities:

1. There was considerable nudity among indigenous women in the Abakaliki Divisional area, and the Ministry of Local Government suggested to all four Councils in the Division that anti-nudity by-laws be passed, particularly in view of the impending Independence celebration, in which it was felt that strangers or reporters visiting the Division might receive a poor impression of it. The Ministry provided the Urban Council with a model by-law which it quickly passed.

2. The Council's role in the Independence celebrations, in which it staged a ballroom dance, sports events, and traditional dance contests, as well as other festivities, was discussed.

3. The Council, unlike most of the rural councils, has no schools under its jurisdiction, and it does not support pupils attending any of the six mission primary schools in the township. The Council discussed a plan, initiated by the Christian Council of Nigeria (the Presbyterian, Anglican and Methodist missions were involved) for a secondary school in the township supported by the Council but it did not have the funds to undertake such a venture.

4. The Council discussed the location of a new trenching ground for night-soil deposits, the old one being too near an area which was to be developed.

5. A great deal of attention was given by the Council to changes in the rating system, and to the General Services Rate, the Water Rate, and the Property Rate. The possibility on an Education Rate was discussed. Some changes and recommendations were made. The Council also discussed the system of rate collection but did not make any basic changes in it.

6. The Council was concerned with building codes as well as the regulation of leases in the township and spent a good deal of time discussing possible changes in the building regulations and how to shorten the period of time required to have a leasing arrangement legalized by the Council.

7. The Council argued at great length over the arrangement and allocation of new market stalls, and it agreed on the building of a new shed for the market master. It discussed the failure of the poundmaster to impound enough animals during his working hours.

The Councillors show very great interest in their meetings in questions concerning how projects should be carried out, for example, whether by direct labour of persons employed by the Council or by contract, in questions concerning the hiring of personnel, and in matters affecting the arrangement and leasing of market stalls, petrol stations and other businesses, and most Councillors expressed definite opinions as to how these should be done.

Every year the Council must approve the budget, which is prepared by the Finance and Staff Committee with the assistance of the Council's staff and the District Office. Furthermore, the Council chooses its Chairman and its committee members every year. This is usually arranged by the Council members in private, before being brought up in April at the first Council meeting of the new financial year. Every Council member is appointed to one committee, the Chairman being a member of all of them. Committee meetings are not normally open to the public.

The Committee System

Each committee annually selects its Chairman and Vice-Chairman from among its members. The Secretary of the Council generally attends meetings, and occasionally the Local Government Commissioner comes to them as well, particularly during the period when budget estimates are being prepared. From time to time the Chairman of the Council is present as well. There is a tendency for the committees to overlap in function, and matters may be referred to two or three of them for discussion before coming to the Council floor.

The Finance and Staff Committee. This is the most important of the four committees. It has two main functions, (1) to prepare budget estimates for the coming year, (2) and to recommend the appointment or dismissal of personnel, the upgrading of staff positions, and salary adjustments. These must be approved by the full Council and Ministry of Local Government, and generally by the Local Government Commissioner. The committee is also concerned with special allowances and uniforms for staff, with Council equipment, and with Council rates and their collections, as well as with market-stall fees and fees from hotels and bars, timber sellers, unhulled-rice sellers, and so on. This committee keeps a check on supplies on hand and on the operating budget of the Council.

The Health Committee. This committee is involved with a variety of activities directly or indirectly related to health conditions. Its meetings are usually attended by the Health Superintendent, who is not a member of the Council's staff, but of the Provincial Administration. He plays an important role in this committee's discussion and guides the work of the Council's Health Overseer and Sanitary Labourers. He also has authority to prevent the Council from carrying out any action that he considers unhealthful, such as poor location for a new public latrine. The committee is concerned with sanitation services, public latrines, trenching grounds, incinerators, the town cemetery, and the problem of suitable quarters for the rice mills and the disposal of waste from the milling process. It is also concerned with stall arrangements in the two markets, the placement of sellers, market congestion, and so on. The committee regulates conditions in

eating houses and the meat market. It receives monthly reports from the Council's Building Inspector on the progress of new buildings, from the Market Master on the condition of the market, and from the Health Superintendent on the approval of new building plans.

Works and Roads Committee. The committee is concerned with the construction and maintenance of all Council properties, including offices and staff quarters. The construction and development of the town's markets, lorry park, and streets are under its care. Its most crucial task is to invite tenders (bids) for construction work and to award contracts. Although the Council collects water rates the committee and Council are not in charge of the town's pipe-borne water supply, which is under the control of the Public Works Department of the Eastern Region. The committee makes recommendations for placing new pipe stands, but the P.W.D. determines when and where they will actually be placed. Similarly, the town's limited electricity supply is under the jurisdiction of the Electricity Corporation of Nigeria, a Federal agency.

General Purposes Committee. Designed to handle any activities that do not fall within the strict purview of other committees, this committee has a number of important duties. One is to approve the leasing of land in areas of the township that are not Crown Land (that is, outside of the Government Station and Agricultural Farm). The township lands are owned by indigenous inhabitants. By law they cannot be sold to townsmen, but leases up to ninety-nine years are arranged between the representatives of the indigenous owners and the townspeople. These leases must be approved by the committee, which inspects the site and makes sure that the arrangement is a voluntary one and that the correct parties actually sign the lease. The leases are kept in the Council's files by the Lands Clerk, who is in charge of their preparation. The leasing system functions to protect the indigenous inhabitants against land seizures and to cut down land litigation. The committee is also responsible for the allocation of trading stalls in the market and elsewhere in the town. The demand for stalls is usually greater than the

supply, and strong pressures are placed on Councillors to provide them.

The Council Staff

The staff, in November, 1960, consisted of about seventy labourers and an office staff of about thirty, divided into seven sections or departments: Secretary, Treasury, Court, Works, Market, Motor Park, and Health. The office staff were either selected by the Council or were there as a result of being transferred from another Council by the Ministry of Local Government of the Eastern Region. These are permanent employees of the Ministry; they cannot be dismissed by the Council without the Ministry's approval and they are subject to transfer by the Ministry from one Council to another. Their salaries are paid by the Council, however, which also provides them with staff quarters for which they pay a stipulated rental. Most office staff are stranger Ibo. While it is not possible to consider the operation of the staff in detail, certain features may be briefly mentioned.

The Secretary is responsible to the Council and the Local Government Commissioner for the effective control of the staff. If matters go awry the Council members sometimes become quite critical of him, and there is frequent criticism, by members, of office procedures. The Secretary attends Council and committee meetings and is responsible to see that minutes and other notices are circulated in time. The Treasurer, among other duties, is responsible for the maintenance of the records of rate collection as well as being in immediate control of the Council's finances. Within his department is the Lands Clerk, whose task it is to prepare and file leases, a position that is quite demanding in time and energy.

A Court was established under the Council about 1958 because of difficulties with the previous system whereby cases involving the stranger population in town were being tried in the rural Izi courts. There is a Court Clerk and five Court Messengers. The three judges of the Court, who are appointed by the District Officer, are not paid a regular salary but are given a block payment which they divide equally among them-

selves. Two of the judges are Izi, and represent the two major Izi groups in the township; and the third, the Court President, is an Aro Ibo who represents the stranger Ibo. Although Moslems are involved in court matters they have no representation at all. Proceedings are in Ibo. The Court tries only petty cases, more serious charges appearing before the Magistrate's Court, which is under the control of the Ministry of Justice of the Eastern Region, and over which the Council has no control.

The Works Department includes a Stores Clerk, a Driver, and the Road Overseer, the last-named being responsible for carrying out any construction that the Council performs by itself. The Health Department includes the Health Overseer, the Pound Master, and the Building Inspector. The last is one of the most important positions in the Council; he is responsible for approving building plans for every structure erected outside the Crown Land area and for approving the finished building. The Health Superintendent of the Provincial Administration must also approve the plans, as well as the Abakaliki Town Planning Authority (see below). Use of Crown Land is the concern of a different Lands Clerk in Abakaliki, who works under the Lands Division, Eastern Region, Ministry of Town Planning. This man is under the immediate authority of the Provincial Secretary, Abakaliki. The Council has nothing to do with Crown Land, as has been previously stated.

Staff-Councillor Relations

Most of the senior office staff of the Council consider themselves experts in their field and feel that the Councillors sometimes discuss matters at general or committee meetings in an inexpert way, that they do not understand the operation of the Council's office, and that they do not always make the best appointments or pass necessary regulations in time. Some of the staff members are uneasy about the decision-making powers of the Council and prefer contacts with the Local Government Commissioner and the District Office staff, who they feel understand their roles more clearly. Also, several dismissals from the office for mismanagement of funds and files in recent years have created uneasiness among the staff. The Councillors, on the

other hand, are sometimes critical of staff operations. They do not see why a particular letter was not answered by a certain date, why leasing arrangements take so long, why the rating records are not precisely up to date, and so on. It is perhaps inevitable, given the respective tasks of Councillors and staff, that these feelings should arise, but they are not serious. The Chairman, who has a desk in the staff office area, frequently consults with the Secretary and other staff members, and on the whole, the staff-Councillor relationships is one of mild hostility at worst.

Council Finances

The Council had a revenue during the 1960-1961 financial year of about £ 20,000. Of this about 8 per cent comes from the general per capita rate (the General Services Rate of 7s 6d for a taxable population of about 4,300), 10 per cent is derived from property rates, and about 7 per cent from the Eastern Region Government as reimbursement for the operation of the local court. A fairly large proportion, about 18 per cent, comes from the Regional Government as a block grant on the basis of the total population of the township to be used by the Council as it sees fit. Twenty-one per cent comes from the collection of the Water Rate, but this is money allocated to the Public Works Department for the operation of the pipe-borne water system, and the Council has no control over its use. Another 23 per cent comes from a variety of fees, which include fees from leases, the market, slaughtering, vehicle licenses, hotel licenses, native liquor licenses, the motor park, and rent of the Council's property and the Sport Stadium. An additional 8 per cent comes from court fines and fees. The remainder is from miscellaneous sources. The Council has changed the rate structure for the 1961-1962 financial year, but it will not vary the over-all picture of the Council's finances a great deal. Virtually all the Council's revenue is spent on normal operating expenses and salaries, and very little is available for major projects, such as tarring the streets or the development of a secondary school. The Council is reluctant to increase rates beyond their present level, which comes to a basic minimum of £ 1 2s 6d for adult males. In the past the Council has received special funds for projects, for

example, a loan of £ 800 from the Ministry of Local Government for rebuilding the main township market. Such loans and special grants are difficult to obtain, and the result is that the Council cannot engage in major work projects or educational programmes at the present time. It can and does continue with normal controls of the markets, trade, roads, land leasing and control over house building. It has been unable to plan for new layouts for underdeveloped areas of the township. One layout has recently been developed by private entrepreneurs in town, and a second, in the Government Station, by the Government administration in Abakaliki and the Ministry of Town Planning.

EXTERNAL INFLUENCES ON THE COUNCIL

Other Governmental Agencies

A great deal has already been said concerning the extent to which external governmental authorities influence the Council. The regional Ministry of Local Government must approve the Council's budget and the hiring and dismissal of established staff, and it has the right to transfer staff without Council approval. It suggests necessary by-laws, which it also must approve. The Ministry functions through its Local Government Commissioner, who maintains direct and personal contact with the Council. Other external controls over the Council are almost too numerous to mention. The Court is under the control of the regional Ministry of Justice; the police under the Federal Minister of Internal Affairs; health matters are controlled through the Health Supervisor, who is under the regional Ministry of Health; the water supply is regionally controlled; and the electricity supply is under a Federal agency. As has been mentioned, the Council has no authority over the Crown Land within the township, though it forms an integral and major portion of the town; and the Abakaliki Town Planning Authority, a non-Council body, though having Council representation on it, has final authority over land problems and new layout areas in the non-Crown Land areas. In the past twelve years the authority structure of the town has changed from one of considerable centralization of authority in the hands of the local District

Officer, with an Advisory Board, to a complex organizational pattern in which the Council has quite limited autonomy and where there is a proliferation of controls, mainly emanating from regional ministries, which prevent the extension of local authority. The growth of these external controls has been so great and so rapid that few Councillors understand the over-all organizational pattern of which they are a part. It is true that the Council is represented by its Chairman or other person or persons on a number of external committees, such as the Hospital Advisory Board, the Leprosy Advisory Board, the Provincial Road Safety Committee, and the above-mentioned Town Planning Authority, and thus has a hand in the decision-making processes of these organizations, but the Council itself does not control them and has no authority over them. In addition, the Council lacks the financial strength to initiate major improvement programmes, and it has functioned mainly in terms of land leases, house construction, control of traders and markets, basic sanitation measures, and road maintenance. It is essentially a regulatory agency rather than an organization with strong planning functions or one which initiates new programmes.

The Councillors are aware of their lack of autonomy, and sometimes become quite angry at the Local Government Commissioner, or at a government agency which takes actions in matters the Councillors consider to be their own province. The regional government and its ministries can justify external controls on the basis of better knowledge of what is occuring in all Councils throughout the area, on having trained specialists (for example, in health matters) which the Council cannot provide, and in terms of years of experience in administrative matters. These external government sources also claim that the Councillors have had little training and experience with planning, and that this is one of their major weaknesses which must be compensated by other Government agencies. Furthermore, though this Council has a good reputation in the township, it, like other Nigerian Councils, may show a tendency toward mismanagement or corruption unless external controls over budgeting and expenditure are applied.

The Council is caught between two positions: the members want autonomy and resent external controls, yet they are aware

that the Council needs assistance in financial matters, such as preparing budget estimates, in obtaining grants or loans for development purposes, in preparing by-laws and other regulations, and in legal matters that it may be involved in. Thus while there is sometimes strong resentment toward the Local Government Commissioner, there are other times when there are positive requests for specific assistance from him. This ambivalent attitude of the Councillors, which is quite evident at Council meetings, is a major characteristic of this Council.

Non-governmental Forces

There are a few non-governmental organizations which influence the Council and its decision-making processes. The three major ones, and these are involved in a network of inter-relations, are the ward organizations, the Abakaliki Branch of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (N.C.N.C.), and the Abakaliki Tax and Ratepayers Association.

At least five wards have a regular men's ward organization, and about eight others have some sort of irregular meeting, the remainder having no meeting or organization at all. In the wards that are organized the men meet once a month, or more if necessary, with their Councillor to discuss township affairs and to hear of the activities of the Council. There is usually a Secretary and a Chairman of the organization. During election periods the candidates attempt to capture the support of the ward organizations, some of which have been in existence since the early days of the Council. The ward organizations are not under the control of the N.C.N.C. and seem to have evolved gradually.

In other wards the Councillor calls a public meeting in the ward when some special issue arises, or he calls together a number of influential persons in the ward to discuss Council matters. There are a few wards in which the Councillors rarely call anyone, or at most a few personal friends, but simply feel confident to take the initiative and make their own decisions. In general there is a rough spatial distribution between the degree of organization of a ward and its location in town. The older, more established areas have the more organized ward meetings,

and this becomes less so as one goes out to the periphery of the township, where there is a larger indigenous Ibo population who are indifferent to local politics, and where residences are more scattered. While the Government Station is incorporated into the town's ward system, its personnel do not usually take part in ward activities, and they are forbidden to enter into politics, as mentioned previously. The one predominantly Moslem ward has no organization at all; its representative in the Council merely meets with the Sarki and perhaps a few of the wealthy cattle traders to discuss Council matters.

Thus for many of the wards there is a way in which popular sentiment can develop, and the meetings also serve the Councillor in providing him with an opportunity to present his views on the Council and to ingratiate himself with his ward. Some Councillors are very anxious to maintain this kind of rapport; others seem indifferent to it. The Councillors are also rate collectors in their own wards, a task assigned to them by the administration but which they heartily dislike, and there is some danger of antagonizing ward members by pressing too hard for the collection of rates. Some Councillors avoid this by delegating the task to another ward member (rate collectors receive fees for this work).

The local branch of the N.C.N.C. was firmly founded in 1951, after several earlier starts going back to 1947. Similar branches also developed in neighboring areas in the early 1950's. The party dominates the Eastern Region, particularly the Ibo areas; controls the regional legislature and ministries; and together with the predominantly Moslem Northern Nigerian party, the Northern People's Congress (N.P.C.), forms the coalition government for the Federation of Nigeria. There has never really been any opposition group in the Abakaliki urban area, and all of the Councillors claim N.C.N.C. membership, except the Mallam, who is N.P.C., but who cooperates with the N.C.N.C. Councillors as do the two parties nationally. The Council is thus nominally controlled by one party. The local branch of the N.C.N.C. is in charge of a Chairman who is in the Federal House, and is controlled mainly by non-Councillors, politicians in the Federal and Regional Governments, and some

prominent local businessmen. The party does not seem concerned with the particular issues at stake in the Council, and it does not tell the Councillors how to vote on urban issues; indeed it is indifferent to most local issues. It is, however, concerned with the selection of party candidates from each ward, and, in fact, chooses them.

The role of the N.C.N.C. in local politics cannot be fully understood without reference to the Abakaliki Tax and Ratepayers Association. This group, which started about 1948, seems similar to like-named bodies which have developed in other Eastern Nigerian cities, though it is independent of them. The association was formed by local businessmen and traders to pressure for improvements in the township and to keep the rates from rising. It has become, since its inception, a basis for organizing ward sentiments in the township outside the N.C.N.C., and also a refuge for dissident elements within the party. For over five years there has been a split within the local N.C.N.C. chapter. This is due to political rivalry for control of the chapter between two stranger Ibo and their followers. The dispute is not essentially ideological. Rather it centers around the question of control of the local party machinery, that is, to determine who will nominate Councillors, and help choose regional and federal representatives to stand for election, and who will be in a position to serve on certain governmental agencies which are patronage positions. One faction has been in control for most of this ten-year period, and the opposition group has captured the Tax and Ratepayers Association and attempted to use it to improve its local political position. This opposition also, for a time, controlled two affiliated N.C.N.C. organizations, the Zikist National Vanguard and the N.C.N.C. Youth Association, local chapters of national organizations which have a reputation for being militant and radical but which seem never to have been very active in Abakaliki. A third local organization, the Women's Wing of the N.C.N.C., has remained outside this dispute.[5] The Tax and Ratepayers Association and the opposing factions of the party have attempted to gain support from political elements in the

[5] For a discussion of the background of the N.C.N.C. and its affiliated organizations, see COLEMAN (1958).

regional capital, and in a few cases the Association has tried without success to have Council's decisions revoked by the Minister of Local Government.

The split within the N.C.N.C. had relatively little effect on the 1955-1960 Council, probably because it was not so serious in 1955 when the early Council elections were held. In the present Council there is now a majority and an opposition as a result of this party dispute, which has never been resolved despite attempts of party officials in the Eastern Region to settle it.

By the time of the 1960 Council election there was a great deal of local resentment against the Urban District Council of 1959-1960. Charges were made of bribery in leasing arrangements, allocations of stalls and arrangements for petrol stations, and of general mismanagement of the Council's funds. Whether these allocations were justified or not, there was some feeling at the ward level that certain Councillors should not be renominated by the N.C.N.C. The party insisted on its right to control the selection of candidates running under the party symbol. Thus the N.C.N.C. selected nominees for each ward and renominated some Councillors whom certain townspeople believed to be associated with the mismanagement of the Council. Some of the wards, particularly those in which there was a regular ward organization, objected because they were not consulted, and the opposition group within the N.C.N.C., using ward sentiment, was able to put up candidates of its own, supported by the Tax and Ratepayers Association, under whose banner they ran in the election against the N.C.N.C. while still claiming to be N.C.N.C. members. In some wards the election was hotly contested; in others the Tax and Ratepayers Association approved of the N.C.N.C. party candidate and did not present an opposing candidate. A few candidates also ran as independents. Eight former Councillors, N.C.N.C. candidates, including the Chairman, were re-elected, as well as the N.P.C. representative, who was not involved in this dispute. Four representatives of the Tax and Ratepayers Association and six new N.C.N.C. candidates were elected. When the Council came to choose its new Chairman, the former Chairman was defeated by a coalition of the Tax and Ratepayers Councillors, all but one of the new N.C.N.C.

Councillors, and the N.P.C. member. The former Chairman and five old and one new N.C.N.C. member then formed themselves into a minority group within the Council; it has been divided since April, 1960, according to this split on most major issues. The Tax and Ratepayers Association Councillors claim to be N.C.N.C. (persons in Abakaliki say, "We are all N.C.N.C. here") but along with other townsmen who sided with this group, they are not recognized as being so by the N.C.N.C. It is clear, therefore, that the Council has been affected by ward sentiment on the one hand and the rivalry within the party on the other, and that these two aspects of local political pressure were merged in the last election.

This division is clearly evident at Council meetings. While most Councillors deny the existence of a formal opposition, it actually does exist. The opposition members question the accuracy of the minutes, attempt to reopen matters settled at previous meetings, and frequently insist on a 'division', that is, having their names recorded as a minority vote rather that merely having the clerk of the Council record the total vote: and they walk out of the proceedings when they feel that they have been unjustly treated. They attempt to ridicule the Chairman and show that he is not capable of performing his duties. The Chairman and the majority try to show their effectiveness and their ability to pass meaningful regulations, and they attempt to keep the minority under control. There is nevertheless a good deal of joking among Councillors at meetings, and the atmosphere is rarely a very bitter one.

Other organizations in the township have had some influence on the Council though of a minor nature. The rice-mill owners and some of the operators, through their Rice Mill Owners Association, have asked the Council to set aside a new site for them outside of the present milling area, which is in the residential section, where they may relocate and where there will be more economical disposal of the mill waste. The Council has designated an area for them but, specific plans to move there had not been formulated by 1960. Unions representing ethnic or tribal groups sometimes petition the Council to name a street after their home area. In the case of a few of them that have an occupational

basis, such as the Mgbowo and the Okposi unions of palm-wine sellers, these have asked the Council for specific sites in the market at which to sell their wares. So have a number of informal trading groups, for example, a womens' cassava-trading organization. The Council is not always sympathetic with requests of such a special nature.

The role of the Catholic and Protestant church groups in the township has already been discussed with reference to the proposed secondary school. Catholic-Protestant factional and political rivalries, such as are found in the Onitsha area have not developed in Abakaliki, but it is likely that they will grow in the future as the political stakes in the township become more important.

Two private associations are closely linked with the Council. The Local Government Association, which is found throughout the Eastern Region, brings together Councillors from different areas at monthly and national meetings to discuss mutual problems, and it is concerned with maintaining the influence and autonomy of the Councils in the east and with preventing regional government decisions from being made which would be detrimental to them. The Urban Council is a member, paying regular dues and having representatives at the Association's meetings. Another group, the Nigerian Association of Local Government Employees, a union of Council staff workers in the Eastern Region, has a local chapter. When the Association recently held a region-wide strike for higher wages, some of the Abakaliki staff members joined in but the Councillors and the Local Government Association were unsympathetic. The strike resulted in some adjustments in salaries throughout the region but was not, on the whole, effective, and it was certainly not in Abakaliki.

There are also a number of well-known local businessmen and traders who, through personal contacts with Councillors, sometimes have some influence on Council affairs. In addition there is a newly created Government position of Provincial Commissioner which straddles both government and political party. The Commissioner is appointed, essentially by the N.C.N.C., from among the five members of the Eastern Region House of Assembly from Abakaliki Division. He tours the province and

keeps an eye on its administration and development, including its Councils. He makes recommendations to the Provincial, Divisional, and Urban staffs on possible laws or governmental changes, and he tries to obtain development money, educational funds, and other special monies from the regional government. In addition, he is, as one might suspect, an influential person in the local branch of the N.C.N.C. In terms of the Urban Council he has several times made suggestions concerning desirable regulations. He has also attempted, in his party role, to end the dispute in the township and Council, but without success. His influence on the Council is both governmental and non-governmental, and his relationship to both the Abakaliki administration and to the local party organization is a fluid one.

Thus, while some pressure groups do exist in the township, they are not very strong or effective in influencing the Council, with the exception of the wards, the Tax and Ratepayers Association, and the N.C.N.C. Even in these cases the issues are ones of personnel, not ideology, and the Council is not committed to specific doctrines or platforms, the N.C.N.C. political orientation being broad enough to permit great latitude in Council actions.

CONCLUSIONS

The Abakaliki Urban Council was brought into being to serve the needs of the strangers' community in Abakaliki during a period of general re-organization and growth of the local government system in Eastern Nigeria. It has never developed much autonomy and is essentially a regulatory government agency in a complex evolving political system in Eastern Nigeria, and in Nigeria, in which many governmental agencies have controls over its activities. The Councillors are ambivalent toward these external controls and are attempting to define their roles within the larger government system, which they only partially understand. Non-governmental external pressures, particularly the influence of the N.C.N.C. and the wards, are not ideological but concerned with the control of the political positions. The conflict of local autonomy and more centralized authority between

the Council and the other government agencies is mirrored in the conflict between the centralized party machinery in town and ward autonomy in the selection of candidates for the Council.

The Councillors are not only finding their way in attempting to develop their roles in the Council but some of them are seriously concerned with the furtherance of their own political careers through serving on the Council. The political system is an open one in which those Councillors who are effective politicians will probably rise to higher government positions. This, of course, accounts partially for the pressure to be nominated for election by the ruling party for Council posts that are nominally poorly paid.

The Councillors bring into the Council a background of traditional cultural experience as well as expectations concerning political behavior that arose out of the colonial system and its modified modern national and regional governments. The Councillors come from a relatively egalitarian cultural background, where public debate, factionalism, and personal rivalries are common, and from a people who are used to physical mobility. One is struck, in viewing the Council, not with how well traditional cultural elements have been able to adjust to the present political scene, but how rapidly traditional elements have seemingly become unimportant. In the present Council, age distinctions are not significant; chieftancy, kinship, and title matters are unimportant; and religious and ritual elements are virtually lacking. Tribalism is also insignificant, even though rivalries exist between some of the communities represented on the Council. There is, of course, considerable tribalism between the stranger Ibo and the indigenous Ibo in the area, but because of the nature of the Council's representation this does not appear in the local government sphere. Furthermore, the townsmen have readily taken to party politics, party identification, and party factionalism. The factionalism of traditional Ibo society, which is partly a concomitant of its relatively open political system, is carried over into the modern party system, which is still relatively open, though the party system does differ in many formal essentials from traditional political organizations.

Nonetheless, traditional features have persisted. Examples of these are the idea of adequate payment for political tasks, the need for extended debate and the consequent slowness in reaching decisions, the difficulties over long-range planning that is not generally a factor in traditional life, and the attitude toward women taking part in political life. We cannot deal here in detail with the problem of why certain traditional elements have been retained and others have rapidly disappeared. The significance of kin ties, titles, chiefly and religious elements have been disappearing as aspects of political life because they can be replaced by other more meaningful modern devices even though they were convenient approaches to political power in the traditional society. In short, the basic cultural drive is one for power in which the kinds of elements involved — titles, religious leardership, and so on — can be replaced by others. This is certainly clear if one observes the great variation in leadership symbols and positions that occurred within the different subgroups of the traditional Ibo speaking peoples, yet without there being much actual variation in basic authority patterns. The indifference to age can be explained partially by the lack of many senior men in the town, partially by the lack of a traditional age-grade system, though it is clear (and true of many rural areas) that the drive for influence and power, even in the presence of these features, mitigate their importance under modern conditions. The retention of the attitudes toward payment for political services is clear, for why should politicians give it up under modern conditions when the rewards are so much higher today than before and the checks so ineffectual? The attitude toward women is similar, if only in a negative sense, for why disturb a successful sex-authority relationship when there is little to be gained by it on the part of the men and there is little drive in that direction within the emerging culture and none in the traditional?

The Councillors and townsmen have made a very rapid adjustment to a new political system which is not of their choosing, but which they have come to relish. The "open" quality of the traditional society is a key to understanding the rapid adjustment; the drive for power and prestige continues though new positions replace old ones, and age distinctions are swept

away in the press for advancement. These "explanations" of political change are perhaps *post hoc,* but they do suggest that an overemphasis on the study of form in local government studies may lead one astray and that a consideration of basic attitudes toward political achievement and authority, and some understanding of the culturally learned drives associated with politics, in which formal elements can then be placed, may be of value. In the literature on African local government there has certainly been a very great emphasis on form, with the result that there is considerable shallowness in analysis.

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